

Evolution and Limitations of Modern Campaigning in East Asia

A Case Study of Taiwan

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In recent years, there has been a lively discourse on the globalization of political marketing among scholars around the world. Modern and postmodern campaigning seem to have not only become dominant forces in advanced democracies but have also made major inroads into the political domains of newly democratized polities. The global trend toward the adoption of this new media and money driven modus operandi of political campaigns seems to be unstoppable. But there still are several questions to be addressed: how effective is (post)modern campaigning? Will it be able to completely substitute pre-modern forms of electoral processes? What are the limitations of (post)modern campaigning? These questions are of great significance especially when talking about electoral campaigning in societies that have transformed from agrarian to (post)modern within a few decades. In this chapter, I would like to answer this set of questions by looking at the evolution and the current modus operandi of modern electoral campaigning in Taiwan, one of Asia's most vibrant democracies.

Evolution of Electoral Campaigning

In analytical works about the changes in electoral campaigning, the international academia usually mentions three standard models of campaigning. At different times in modern political history, each model has been the dominant modus operandi of electoral campaigning. The evolution process started with the pre-modern form of campaigning, and progressed into the modern and post-modern types.

Figure 27.1 outlines the most important characteristics of the three standard models. In Taiwan, pre-modern campaigning had dominated the electoral process until shortly after the lifting of martial law in 1987. The subsequent process of liberalization and democratization led to the adoption of several modern and postmodern forms of campaigning, as I will explain further below.

Pre-modern Campaigning in Taiwan (1935–1987)

Taiwan's experience with electoral campaigning dates back to the Japanese colonial period. In 1935, local elections were held for the first time. The right to vote was, however, restricted to wealthy male residents aged twenty-five years or older. There were several local political

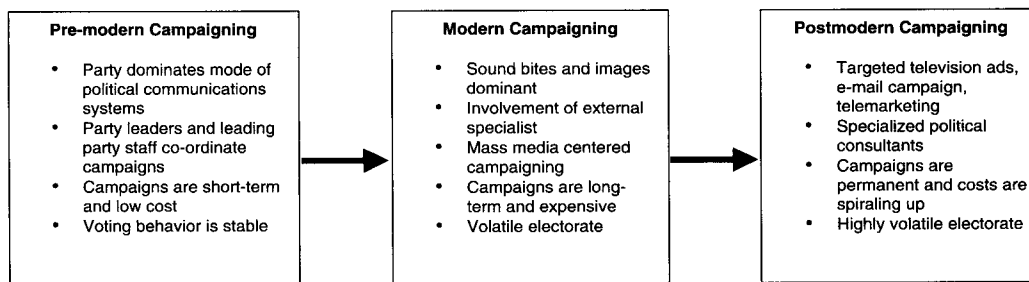


Figure 27.1. Typical Evolution and Characteristics of Electoral Campaigning in Modern Societies

Source: Modification of Fritz Plasser with Gunda Plasser, *Global Political Campaigning: A Worldwide Analysis of Campaign Professionals and Their Practices* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2002), 6.

movements that performed the functions of modern political parties. They nominated candidates and engaged in campaign activities, which were very rudimentary and included home visits, small rallies, distribution of leaflets and the spread of campaign slogans. Observed illegal activities ranged from the involvement of unauthorized campaign aides, distribution of free tickets for public transportation or exhibitions and voting without the right to vote.¹

Nationalist Takeover and the Emergence of Machine Politics

After World War II, the Chinese Nationalist government under Chiang Kai-shek acceded control over Taiwan with the blessing of the United States. A significant part of the population could not identify with the mainland Chinese arrivals and considered the new government a foreign regime that came to Taiwan to “loot the island.”² As to ease tensions between the Chinese Nationalists and the inhabitants of Taiwan, the Nationalists had to find a way to co-opt local elites and infiltrate Taiwan’s society. Elections were functional in that attempt. The first elections at the grassroots level were held in 1946, about a year after the takeover. Taiwan’s local elite was not satisfied with these rather meaningless elections and demanded full participation in the electoral processes at higher levels.³ Growing public dissatisfaction about the new regime and its social and political policies culminated in the 2-28 Massacre, in which Nationalist Chinese troops brutally killed several thousand Taiwanese.⁴

At the end of the year, delegates to the upper house of parliament (*guomindahui*) were elected in Taiwan as well as in most parts of war-torn China. In January of the following year, elections of the members of the lower house (*lifayuan*) took place. In Taiwan, seventy-five candidates contested twenty-seven seats in the upper house, and thirteen for eight seats in the lower house. Competition and electoral campaigning was virtually non-existing.⁵ A year later, the Chinese Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek lost the civil war on the mainland and retreated to Taiwan. Between 1947 and 1949, more than 800,000 mainlanders fled to Taiwan, accounting for about 10% of the population.⁶ The dramatic increase in the number of Chinese Nationalists led to further suppression of the local Taiwanese. As to prevent social and political unrest, martial law was imposed the same year. In addition, the KMT (Kuomintang or Chinese Nationalist Party) government stepped up its effort to infiltrate Taiwan’s society by means of public participation in state-controlled elections and expanding the KMT party network. In 1950/1951, the first direct elections of municipality mayors and county magistrates were held, extending the scope of local direct elections.

At about the same time, the KMT launched the so-called reconstruction movement, which aimed at establishing grassroots organizations that would recruit more Taiwanese into the party and to “guide” the society at large. Within a year, the party had set up 234 local branches around the island.⁷ Moreover, the KMT began to grant special rights and benefits to government

employees and teachers as to build up solid votes. Workers' and farmers' associations were formed and strictly controlled by the party. The 1950s experienced a massive build-up of the KMT state-apparatus, which had a tremendous impact on the social and political transformation of the society, and of course on electoral politics. "Gentry" politics was gradually replaced by machine politics with the growing involvement of criminals in electoral activities.⁸

By the 1960s, the KMT had succeeded in establishing an electoral machine deeply rooted in Taiwan's society. Whenever there were elections, the regime would mobilize its party, local faction leaders, military and governmental networks at provincial, county and grassroots levels to guarantee the success of its candidates.⁹ As a consequence, the percentage of elected non-KMT candidates decreased over the years. The most dramatic changes happened at the grassroots level. In 1946, the majority of those elected were unaffiliated, whereas a decade later two-thirds were members of the KMT. At the higher level, elections were first held in the early 1950s and the share of elected non-KMT hopefuls accounted for 20%. The share dropped by five percentage points within a decade.¹⁰

The KMT never intended to completely wipe out the opposition, as it was instrumental in providing legitimacy. The policy was to limit and control the activities of the opposition, instead. Opposition candidates were isolated warriors who could only challenge the KMT locally but not nationally. The formation of political parties was illegal. Those who broke the rules of the KMT were either imprisoned or executed. Until the late 1960s, electoral politics was elite politics. There was no involvement of the general public. To attract voters, the KMT's main strategy was to offer benefits to the voters and spread fear, as a retired secret police officer recalls:

Fear and greed were the motives of the people to support the KMT regime. One may not imagine how easy it was to convince your neighbor to denounce their best friends and even their husbands and wives. We were everywhere: in factories, schools, playgrounds, restaurants, simply everywhere. I am a mainlander. I came with the others in 1949. I lost everything on the mainland. The party gave me a new identity. I did not care about others, nor did the others. Our job was to make sure that the party gained support at the polls. We faked ballots. But that was one of the harmless ways to secure votes. We would pay visits to ordinary people and inform them about whom they had to vote. Sometimes we offered money or promises. We would use other methods whenever we met resistance. I did not like it, but times were different then. They were imprisoned and often tortured. Some died. We said that they had committed suicide out of guilt. It was not only us who helped the KMT in this matter, local party cadres and especially local faction and gang leaders were also involved in these activities.¹¹

The opposition, on the other hand, had very limited electoral tools, such as leaflets, slogans, magazines and government-organized speeches (see Table 27.1).

Emergence of Popular Politics

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the KMT government faced several challenges and mapped out new strategies as to cope with them. On the international floor, the KMT government became more and more isolated. There was a dramatic decrease in the number of individual United Nations (UN) member states recognizing the legitimacy of the KMT government, which finally led to the expulsion of Chiang Kai-shek's representatives from the UN in 1971.¹² The late 1960s also brought about a change in leadership. In 1969, Chiang Kai-shek was involved in a car accident from which he never fully recovered. His son, Chiang Ching-kuo, gradually assumed control over party affairs, the military, youth organizations and the secret service. The new leadership and other policies, such as the holding of limited national elections in 1969, did not however substantially increase the people's acceptance of the KMT. On the contrary, overseas Taiwanese (allegedly with CIA backing) tried to assassinate Chiang Ching-kuo during a short

Table 27.1. Main Characteristics of Electoral Politics, 1945–1987

<i>Elite Politics (1945–1969)</i>			
	<i>Gentry Politics (1945–1953)</i>	<i>Machine Politics (1954–1969)</i>	<i>Popular Politics (1970–1987)</i>
Agents	Local intelligentsia, mainland Chinese arrivals	Mainland Chinese arrivals, local faction leaders	KMT government apparatus, democracy activists, social movements, overseas Taiwanese organizations
Power formation and struggle	KMT vs. local intelligentsia; KMT nourishes local factions and promotes local elections	KMT vs. liberal intellectuals; local factions controlled by KMT through electoral process, society infiltrated	KMT vs. opposition; KMT vs. local faction leaders; KMT vs. social movements
Role of media	Mostly controlled by the KMT especially after 1949; a mouthpiece for KMT propaganda	Mouthpiece for KMT propaganda; engine of fear	Three terrestrial TV stations and two major newspaper networks controlled by KMT; one newspaper favorable to opposition, opposition figures publish magazines
Main campaign tools			
KMT	Vote rigging, threats, physical attacks, executions	Massive vote rigging, threats, executions, kidnapping, physical attacks, involvement of gangsters and military	Massive vote rigging until 1977, vote buying, threats, physical attacks, involvement of gangsters and military, nomination of attractive and young Taiwanese party cadres
Opposition	Speeches, leaflets, magazines	Speeches, leaflets, magazines; some successful attempts to organize across electoral districts	Public speeches, rallies, street demonstrations, verbal attacks on incumbents, appeals to people's compassion, campaign slogans, populist rhetoric, books, magazines, leaflets, fundraising banquets, nationwide election activities

stay in the United States. The failed assassination attempt and the growing legitimacy crisis were instrumental in Chiang Ching-kuo's subsequent efforts to initiate several policy reforms.

The KMT leadership intended to use the reforms as a means to increase the KMT's legitimacy to rule Taiwan, while expanding the authority of the party itself. The first goal was achieved by recruiting more talented Taiwanese into the party. To obtain the latter objective, Chiang Ching-kuo tried to minimize the power of the local factions. At that time, about 60% of KMT-nominated candidates running in elections at provincial and county levels were affiliated with a local faction. Chiang's plan was to replace factional candidates with party cadres, which would have increased the party's authority.¹³

Although the reform helped the KMT to stabilize its position in the beginning, the reforms failed to extend the party's authority in the long run. To a substantial degree, the policies were ill fated because Taiwan's electoral politics of the 1970s was no longer elite politics. Taiwan had already entered the period of popular politics. In the past, the KMT had to fight against localized powerbrokers, but in the 1970s the party increasingly had to deal with the power of the people, that is the growing demand for mass participation in the electoral process (see Table 27.1).

The KMT government's economic, social and educational policies brought about several societal changes, such as rising labor problems, urbanization and a growing, politically more demanding, middle class. The KMT failed to respond appropriately to the changing environment.

It made every effort to discourage socially concerned politicians (or scholars) from running for office and tried to diffuse criticism. The government, for instance, implemented “reform” programs to meet with the growing discontent of factory workers. The Teacher Chang counseling program, for example, aimed at training college students to become volunteer counselors to workers. Their mission was not to solve conflicts but to emphasize that workers had to adjust to factory life.¹⁴ Candidates of the opposition took advantage of the KMT’s ignorance and soon social problems and the government’s failure to deal with them became a central theme among the new opposition. The time appeared to be ripe to address social issues and mingle them with political ones. Most of the opposition candidates were hardly interested in socialism, rather they tried to explore the power of the people, as one activist noted:

A person with only a little capital and some education and earthy knack for speech-making can ride the wave of popular resentment against the regime in elections. Though the population generally appears cowed and quiescent, there is admiration and secret support for those who dare to step forward.¹⁵

It was the time when populism entered Taiwan’s electoral campaigns. Using Margaret Canovan’s typology, it was politicians’ populism, a “broad, non-ideological coalition-building that draws on the unificatory appeal of ‘the people.’”¹⁶ The most successful populist at that time certainly was Hsu Hsin-liang, who was elected to the Provincial Assembly in 1972 under the KMT banner. He was a very ambitious young politician who sought to reach out to the masses. In his constituency, Taoyuan County, he spent hours talking with people from different walks of life. The farmers loved him and said that he was one of them. The business community loved him and said that he was one of them. Wherever he gave a speech, he would make sure to mention the problems of the ordinary people, the *laobaixing*.¹⁷ In 1976, Hsu began to prepare for his participation in the 1977 county magistrate election. The KMT did not nominate him: Hsu appeared to be too progressive, especially when it came to political management.

Notwithstanding, Hsu contested the election as an independent and worked out a campaign strategy that made the KMT understand that the period of elite politics was over. His electoral strategy made use of conventional campaign tools, such as books, leaflets and public speeches. But what was different was the successful attempt to integrate ordinary citizens in his campaign. His campaign headquarters, a huge tent, attracted large crowds of people who would donate all types of foods and drinks, and spend hours there talking about life and politics. The KMT tried to counter Hsu’s campaign strategy by applying its traditional campaign techniques, such as vote rigging and buying, but massive protests against the rigged result (known as the Chungli Incident) forced the KMT leadership to accept the victory of Hsu Hsin-liang.¹⁸

In retrospect, Hsu Hsin-liang’s political management style not only influenced future electoral campaigns but also showed the KMT that the involvement of massive vote rigging in the electoral process no longer guaranteed the party’s success at the polls. Chan Pi-Hsiang, a former KMT activist involved in vote buying and vote rigging, noted in her book *Vote Buying: A Confession* that with the Chungli Incident the application of systematic and widespread vote rigging became obsolete.¹⁹

The 1977 local elections were a success for the candidates of the opposition. They brought about the highest number of non-KMT provincial assembly members, chief executives of counties and provincial municipalities. At least fourteen of the twenty-one independent assembly members were genuine opposition figures, eight of whom were the highest vote getters in their constituencies. Moreover, four out of twenty chief executives of Taiwan’s twenty counties and provincial municipalities were anti-KMT activists. In thirteen counties and provincial municipalities the number of votes cast for candidates of the opposition almost equaled the KMT votes, which took the party by surprise and can be seen as some evidence that the KMT’s reform

policies initiated earlier that decade failed to materialize.²⁰ This unprecedented electoral success gave the opposition confidence to challenge the KMT's ban on political parties.

In the past, opposition candidates could not form coalitions, nor could they run on a common platform. They were isolated warriors. Any attempt to break these rules ended in unfortunate accidents. The campaigns for the 1978 parliamentary elections (National Assembly and Legislative Yuan) were groundbreaking. Several opposition leaders, such as Huang Hsin-chieh and Shih Ming-teh, jointly founded a special electoral campaign committee (*dangwai zhuxuan tuan*). The aim of the committee was to maximize the support of the opposition candidates and to co-ordinate campaign activities throughout the island. Well-known opposition figures, such as independent legislator Huang Hsin-chieh, toured the island in a united effort to canvass votes. The committee also organized a series of fundraising banquets, something new in Taiwan's electoral campaigns. (Opposition candidate Chang Chun-hong was the first politician in the country to hold fundraising banquets during his electoral campaign in 1973.) Another invention was the use of a common logo printed on all the various campaign materials.²¹

In general, the electoral campaign environment appeared to be much freer than in previous elections. Opposition candidates were even allowed to make public the committee's common platform. US president Jimmy Carter's decision to recognize the regime in Beijing and de-recognize Taipei as the only legitimate government of China just a few days before the election was a shock to the KMT government, and elections were postponed indefinitely. (In December 1980 the elections finally took place.)

A year after the postponed elections, the opposition founded the *Formosa Magazine*. Although the application of regular publication was nothing uncommon among opposition figures, the *Formosa Magazine* was different in many ways. It was more than just an ordinary publication dealing with social, economic and political problems; its branch offices soon developed into community help centers, where ordinary people could get advice on legal, social and economic issues. It more and more became a fully-fledged political party in disguise.²² Being aware of the magazine's true (political) function, the KMT regime staged the so-called Kaoshiung Incident to obtain legitimacy for the imprisonment of the magazine's leaders. The imprisonment of the opposition activists helped to shape new electoral campaigning techniques, such as the utilization of the people's compassion. In the 1970s, a number of opposition candidates made emotional appeals as to win support at the polls.

The Kaoshiung Incident turned the people's compassion into one of the most frequently applied electoral tools in local and national elections of the 1980s. A year after the incident, for example, the relatives of the imprisoned democracy activists participated in national elections. Whenever there was a campaign activity, there was little need to give lengthy speeches. The candidates only had to play the popular song *Hope You'll be Back Soon* (*wang ni zao gui*) and people would feel sympathetic enough to cast their votes for the relatives of the imprisoned activists. Another group of opposition activists, riding the wave of the people's compassion, comprised the defense lawyers of the indicted activists of the Kaoshiung Incident. Among the most prominent were You Ching, Chen Shui-bian, Hsieh Chang-ting, Su Chen-chang, Chiang Peng-chian and Chang Chun-hsiung. All of them won elections consecutively; most of them were the highest vote getters in their constituencies. Their campaign strategy was to present themselves as the defenders of human rights. It was because of their willingness to defend the Formosa activists that the electorate was convinced about their honesty and commitment to democracy. Their popularity was beyond description. No matter where they went to give speeches, tens of thousands of people would cheer enthusiastically.²³

The 1970s marked the beginning of a new era in electoral campaigning. Elite politics dominated the postwar years and was gradually replaced by popular politics. Hsu Hsin-liang's successful populist appeal to the masses confirmed the waning of pure elite politics. In the 1980s, public participation in the electoral processes increased drastically, especially in the form of social

movements. There were at least eight major social movements promoting the interests of consumers, environmentalists, laborers, women, aborigines, farmers, students and teachers. Even though some of these movements emerged earlier than the 1980s, they all gained considerable political significance in that decade. Moreover, they succeeded in determining election issues and thus the political agenda of the regime. In the 1983 national election campaign, consumer protection emerged as the issue. Three years later, "environmental protection was the issue raised by almost every candidate."²⁴ Opposition candidates benefited from the increase in social protests and the rising power of the movements. They were instrumental in enlarging popular support in constituencies previously controlled by the KMT, such as the functional parliamentary seats for labor organizations.

Modern Campaigning

The lifting of the martial law decree in 1987 and the subsequent political liberalization led to an over-politicized society.²⁵ There was great enthusiasm and it looked as if all of a sudden everyone wanted to be a politician and have his or her own political party. Consequently, political competition increased. Both the KMT and the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party), Taiwan's largest and first true opposition party, had to adjust themselves to the new environment as to survive. This search for new concepts paved the way for a new era of electoral campaigning, namely the era of commodification politics, that is, the encroachment of political marketing into spheres previously subjugated by conventional wisdom. Conventional campaigning (pre-modern campaigning) is merely the art of attracting voters by intuition, whereas modern campaigning is science in action.²⁶ Despite the fact that it was the opposition that had sophisticated electoral campaigning and successfully applied a number of new campaign techniques, the idea to apply professional marketing management concepts to the domain of electoral campaigning first came from the ruling KMT.

A year after the lifting of martial law, a group of liberal intellectuals stressed the need for a modernization of the KMT through the application of modern political marketing (management) concepts. One of the most outspoken supporters of such reforms was John Kuan, a senior party official. John Kuan described the changing political and social environment of the late 1980s with the following words:

During the past four decades, our society has undergone three major changes in development. In the 1950s and early 1960s, political forces predominated. From the 1960s on, economic forces had the upper hand. Now we are entering a third stage where social forces are predominant. People are better educated and more resourceful today. They are more concerned with social issues such as environmental protection, law enforcement, and public health measures. Moreover, they are ready to act if necessary to make their voices heard.²⁷

Kuan viewed those changes as a challenge not as a threat to the existence of the KMT, and contradicted the conservative forces in the party, who considered the above-mentioned trends symptoms of social disorder. Between April 1988 and October 1989, Kuan delivered a number of speeches at party meetings highlighting the urgency of a modernization of the KMT so it could adapt to the changing political and social environment. He believed that the problems the KMT faced were the consequences of the new social forces, the failure of the KMT to react timely to the changing environment and the subsequent growth of the opposition movement. Kuan noted that the KMT was confronted with several worrisome trends, such as a worsening party image, a steep decline in the membership recruitment rate since 1986 and disillusioned supporters, especially at the grassroots level.

He outlined three key strategies that should help to overcome these difficulties:

1 *The application of scientific methods (keijihua)*. Kuan acknowledged that the KMT had lost track of a considerable part of its 2.4 million members. In the past, the party could rely on teachers, government employees, military personnel and high-school students to mobilize support for the party, but in the mid-1980s "about 75% of the party groups were not reasonably active and about 80% of the total had not held party meetings on time."²⁸ A related shortcoming was the party's failure to analyze the wishes of its members and the general public.

Kuan argued that the application of modern technology was inevitable in the attempt to boost the party's performance and to prevent the party's collapse. Under this new paradigm, the KMT should set up a computerized database containing all sorts of information about its members, and apply modern survey techniques in formulating electoral strategies. "From now on, we must strive to adopt scientific concepts and methodology, and apply them to the party's democratization and build-up of its competitiveness."²⁹

2 *The sophistication of entrepreneurship (qiyehua)*. Kuan compared the KMT with the American company Procter & Gamble. Both "companies," he believed, harbored similarities. Both had a long history, the KMT a history of ninety-four years and P&G one of 150 years, and both had developed a strong and vigorous entrepreneurial culture, "which perpetuates its functions and prosperity."³⁰ He also noted that during the martial law period the party had enjoyed a virtual monopoly on political resources. The party had merely functioned as a mechanism for "the internal distribution of power," whereas "today the party is confronted with political competition."³¹ Kuan called for a sophistication of the KMT's entrepreneurship, that is, the application of professional marketing techniques, as to cope with the changing environment.

In this open, competitive and market-conscious society, consumers can pick and choose from among many commodities. Rational consumers will always choose those commodities that are of good quality with reasonable prices. We must not forget that we are entering the age of marketing. In a market-driven age, producers must take whatever measures are necessary to produce attractive commodities. Everywhere we turn today, we run into the "SP" acronym for sales promotion. For a political party, its platform and candidates can be considered products. Voters can be considered consumers. The question is how do we make our party platform and candidates attractive to the voters. In this age of enlightenment, voters know their personal preferences. They are autonomous and independent. Under these circumstances, our primary job is to design comprehensive plans for promoting and advertising our party platform and our candidates during non-election times as well as at election time.³²

3 *Democratization of the party (minzhuhua)*. Kuan described the KMT as a revolutionary party, that is, a political party that originates outside conventional democratic institutions, such as the electoral and legislative process. According to Kuan, outside factors, such as social injustices and wars, form a revolutionary party. Revolutionary parties can thus be referred to as "outside parties" (*wai-zao de zheng-dang*).³³ He spoke of the necessity to transform the KMT from a revolutionary party into a democratic party, to "institutionalize" (*zhiduhua*) the KMT. Institutionalization here meant to make the KMT part of the new political environment so that a new party, a democratic one, is formed by "internal factors," that is, by electoral processes. Kuan believed that such transformation was crucial because the KMT as a revolutionary party could not persist to exist in a democratic environment.

In the past, the KMT was virtually the only political power and monopolized social resources. Over that long period, through government service and training a large number of elites became accustomed to enjoying a monopoly on political power. At present, however, the KMT is unable to continue monopolizing political power. Rather, it must live in a competitive world.³⁴

The KMT should, thus, change from "a political monopolist to a political competitor," or in other words "abandon its position as a monopolistic power distributor and play the role of a social mobilizer."³⁵

According to Kuan, the institutionalization process required a streamlining of the party apparatus, an increase in intra-party competition and a substantial buildup of highly trained party cadres. Kuan acknowledged that KMT's party apparatus at that time was too difficult to maintain in a competing environment. Greater emphasis had to be put on the efficiency of party organs, especially the party cadres who had "sufficient knowledge to maintain the status quo but lack[ed] enough expertise to deal with a changing society."³⁶ Party cadres should thus receive professional training and attain the necessary professional skills to mobilize the people. They should become the sales managers of a new modernized KMT. Any party cadre "must know how to sell his product to the customers."³⁷

Moreover, Kuan believed that the KMT had to encourage intra-party competition as to survive in the new competitive environment:

Because the KMT has monopolized social resources and enjoyed such great power, members have been dependent on the party so much that it weakens their morale when forced to face outside challenges. The sometimes demoralizing effects of these challenges stems from KMT institutions and past elections, when mere nomination by the party used to be equal to winning. In dealing with this changing society and its challenges, party members and candidates must learn to be less dependent on the party. Only by combination of members, efforts, and party support can success be achieved and the party's power base grow stronger. The party will become increasingly weaker with each round of elections if its members continue to compete only for the limited resources of the party.³⁸

Kuan argued that the KMT party leadership ought to empower lower-ranking officials and integrate the opinion of grassroots supporters in the party's decision-making process. Since the mid-1980s, membership recruitment rate had plummeted. Apart from other contributing factors, the party leadership's ignorance of grassroots supporters certainly was a major one, as Kuan himself acknowledged.³⁹ In the past, only the top leadership had the right to make policy decisions. The opinion of lower-ranking party officials, grassroots supporters or experts was simply ignored, especially when electoral issues, such as party nominations, were discussed. Kuan saw in the holding of transparent party primaries a way out of the crisis. He fiercely defended the introduction of transparent selection processes and frequently listed four major reasons why they were an indispensable part of the KMT's modernization efforts:⁴⁰

- 1 Party primaries allow members at all levels to fully express their opinion. This active participation in the party's decision-making progress creates a sense of identification and loyalty to the party, which enhances the party's mobilization capabilities.
- 2 Party primaries help to polish the party's image and assist the electorate to better evaluate hopefuls. Party primaries are marketing activities that aim at educating the electorate about candidates' real potentials. They should assist the electorate to better distinguish between those contestants with "proper democratic attitudes" and those who "have no concrete political opinions."⁴¹ Kuan believed that politicians of the opposition comprised the latter type of candidates, whereas those of the KMT made up the group of candidates with "proper democratic attitudes."⁴² Party primaries should prove to the electorate that the KMT is really democratic.
- 3 Party primaries strengthen the party "because they strengthen the ability of our candidates to compete."⁴³ Kuan argued that primaries would force candidates to appeal to grassroots supporters, which would be instrumental in the party's effort to secure future electoral success: "If they can win the support of party members they will be more likely to win the people's votes."⁴⁴
- 4 Party primaries create unity in the party, since they allow for transparency (fairness) in the nomination process. In the past, the nomination process was kept secret and excluded

ordinary party members, which caused disharmony and lowered the morale of grassroots supporters.

Toward a New Political Marketing Management Model

Kuan's approach was revolutionary in the way that it tried to put an end to the KMT's conventional campaign strategies and instead incorporated scientific methods of political management into the party. From the point of marketing management theory, the KMT of the past clung to the selling concept, whereas Kuan's party reforms aimed at the application of a more expedient management form, namely the marketing concept.

The selling concept if applied to the political domain holds that the electorate is apathetic and unwilling to support a political party "unless it undertakes a large-scale selling and promotion effort," as Gary Armstrong, Philip Kotler and Geoffrey da Silva note about its usage in the conventional business domain.⁴⁵ The concept is usually practiced in transactions that involve unsought goods—those that ordinary consumers do not normally want to buy, such as insurance and encyclopedias. Politicians, party memberships and votes can be considered unsought goods, especially during periods of authoritarianism. The selling concept requires the establishment of well-designed sales networks and aggressive sales methods as to obtain the company's objectives.

Kuan questioned the appropriateness of the selling concept in a democratizing environment. The political domain should no longer be considered to be a mere pool of unsought goods. As Kuan observed, the electorate at the late 1980s was better educated, more concerned about social issues and well prepared to take to the streets as to get their voices heard.⁴⁶ The KMT, therefore, had to listen to people's wishes and design its policies (products) accordingly. With Kuan's reform the KMT changed its political management philosophy. The party no longer intended to act as a provider of unsought goods. It believed exactly what marketing management gurus define as the marketing concept, namely, that "achieving organizational goals depends on knowing the needs and wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfactions better than the competitors do."⁴⁷ Under this concept, the KMT had to alter its focus, means and goals (see

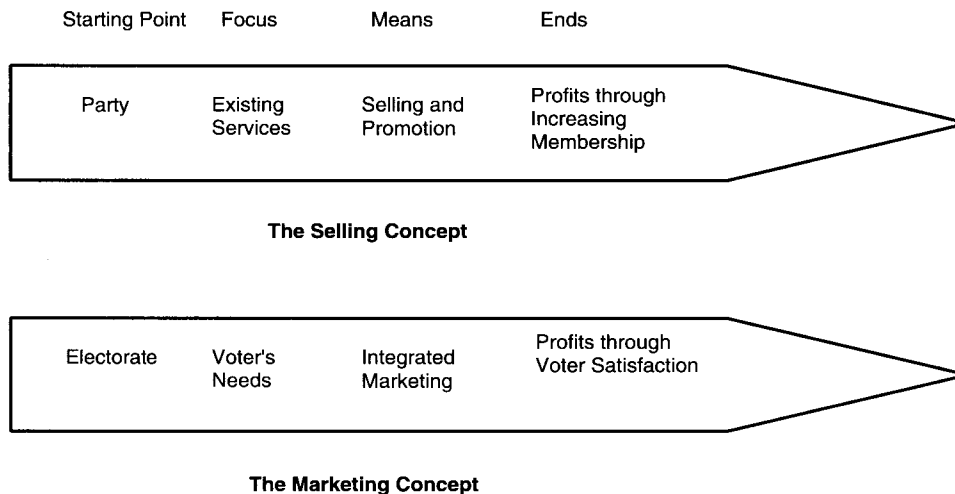


Figure 27.2. Political Marketing Management Concepts

Source: Adapted from Gary Armstrong, Philip Kotler and Geoffrey da Silva, *Marketing: An Asian Perspective* (New York: Pearson, Prentice Hall, 2005), 21.

Figure 27.2). The new management concept required the party to shift its focus from itself to the wishes of the people. Profits through voter satisfaction was the new maxim.

But was the reform really necessary? A former senior party member argued that the reforms were inevitable given the tremendous social and political changes that had occurred in the 1980s:

The KMT was a revolutionary party. But where was the revolution? Most of the Mainlanders, who had fought against the Communists on the mainland, had either passed away or given up the idea of unification. They did not care about the revolution; what they cared about was where the future source of income would be. Would the KMT continue to pay their bills? The KMT at the time was ideologically bankrupt. The party had to go shopping for ideas. Kuan and his fellows were highly educated intellectuals. Their ideas were promising. The party had to give in.⁴⁸

Even though the new political management concept appeared to be promising, not all party members were favorable to it. This same party official continued:

Of course there was opposition from the old guard, especially from those of Mainland origin who despised [Chairman] Lee Teng-hui. Party primaries, adjust party policies to the wishes of the people, and utilize scientific methods: These all were phrases they did not like. Some say because the new concept contradicted their Confucian culture, but that was not the real reason. They were frightened to death by the new concept. Why? Because the new concept was expected to turn the KMT into a Taiwanese party without fat pension plans for the retired Mainland Chinese party cadres. And who knows, maybe one day they would have to stand trial to defend the injustices of the past. Uncertainties create fear and resistance.⁴⁹

The modernization of the KMT mostly benefited the mainstream faction led by Chairman Lee Teng-hui. Critics argue that Lee was supportive of the modernization processes just because they were instrumental in minimizing the power of the non-mainstream faction. As a former senior KMT election aide stated: "The KMT since Lee Teng-hui has used the people's wishes to exterminate enemies. The party has become a full-service wholesaler exactly because of this required function."⁵⁰

Whatever his true motives were, Lee was very susceptible to the wishes of the ordinary people. The growing public demand for a variety of political reforms, such as direct presidential elections, met considerable resistance among the non-mainstream faction of the KMT. Lee used public opinion to force most of his outspoken critics out of the party. His populist leadership style made him popular with the electorate. Even those voters who strongly disliked the KMT supported him. With the use of the people's power, Lee pushed through constitutional reforms mandating direct presidential elections. Lee's popularity seemed to be unbreakable and there was little doubt among political analysts that he would win the first direct presidential election that was scheduled to take place in March 1996. The so-called Lee Teng-hui complex dominated the political sphere of the early and mid-1990s.

The Perils of the New Campaign Paradigm

It did not take long and the adoption of consumer-oriented marketing strategies sparked off a serious debate about the perils of modern political management concepts. Several scholars were concerned that the KMT's new management philosophy would undermine democratic institutions and eventually lead to a new dictatorship. Members of the local academia, such as Wang Chen-huan and Chian Yong-hsiang, publicly criticized the commodification of politics.⁵¹

Huang Kuang-guo, professor of psychology at National Taiwan University, elaborated on Wang and Qian's observations in his popular book, *About Populism and the End of Taiwan*.⁵² Huang

branded Lee a populist who would in the end bring about the collapse of the country. He asserted that most people misunderstood the true meaning of liberal democracy. In a liberal democracy, he argued, the government should protect the rights of the individuals. The rules and regulations concerning the question of how to protect those rights should be obtained through a democratic process. In his view, the government should guarantee the execution of those rules and regulations. Elections should only be part of the democratic process, not the ultimate goal. Huang believed that in Taiwan elections were viewed as the core value of democracy, which he thought was a misconception that would finally lead to populist authoritarianism and the end of the rule of law and social justice. Huang cited several examples illustrating how commodification politics had already trivialized politics and cultivated mob rule. For these reasons, Huang and other conservative mainstream scholars favored elite politics over popular politics, and were outspoken opponents of commodification politics.

At the late 1980s and early 1990s, there were indeed several candidates who trivialized politics and heavily relied on the involvement of the mass media, celebrity politics and variety shows. The Labor Party is a good example of what Huang and other scholars would describe as the perils of commodification politics. Socialist intellectuals and labor activists under the leadership of former DPP legislator Wang Yi-hsiung founded the party in 1987. At the end of the 1980s, labor disputes were on the rise and Wang Yi-hsiung thought that a party representing the interests of Taiwan's 3.4 million industrial laborers would have a political future in democratizing Taiwan.

From the beginning, Wang assumed that listening to the hearts of Taiwan's workers and utilizing the mass media would lead him and his party to election victories. Some socialist intellectuals could not identify with Wang's approach and left to found their own party. The 1989 parliamentary election was the first national election after the lifting of martial law. Wang Yi-hsiung had great expectations and his party nominated candidates in eight constituencies. Wang himself ran in the industrial city of Kaoshiung. The party, however, garnered only about 1% of the total votes cast, and none of the hopefuls was elected.

In 1992, the party took part in elections for the last time. Hope was vested in artist Hsu Hsiao-tan, who contested in the city of Kaoshiung. The party adopted a rather different way of attracting voters in that election campaign: the candidate, Hsu Hsiao-tan, undressed publicly on various occasions and promised an *open* campaign. She also challenged her rival female candidate (KMT) with the size of her nipples. The party's strategy almost worked: Hsu Hsiao-tan succeeded in getting 32,349 votes and would have needed another 108 votes to be elected. It was not only the Labor Party that tried to attract votes by entertaining the electorate.⁵³

Moreover, the KMT and its candidates were increasingly engaged in event marketing. Well-known singers, entertainers and even strippers were invited to perform during election rallies. Such events known as *gewuxiu* become very popular at the beginning of the 1990s.⁵⁴ The trivialization of politics was often the issue of critical debates among liberal intellectuals and was highlighted in the movie *The Candidates* by movie producer Hsu Li-kong.⁵⁵

As to the DPP, the largest opposition party, the lifting of martial law not only brought about positive developments. The party experienced unprecedented difficulties in mobilizing voters. During the martial law period, any political activity was severely restricted or even illegal, and thus was something out of the ordinary. Whenever a politician of the opposition camp appeared at a public place, openly attacking the government, 30,000 to 50,000 people would show up to listen. After the lifting of martial law, things changed. Whenever a candidate could attract a crowd of 200 people, he or she was said to be fortunate. A speech attacking the ruling KMT suddenly was not enough to have tens of thousands cheer enthusiastically.⁵⁶ The opposition adjusted itself to the changing environment by either holding a series of smaller events or by creating political stunts. Both of these new approaches became common at the end of the 1980s. Any election rally had to be dramatic, mysterious and something out of the ordinary as to attract the masses.⁵⁷

Telemarketing and Mass Media Advertising

Apart from the variety show character of electoral campaigns (see Table 27.2), the involvement of modern technology in the electoral process was a further observable trend. Computerized telemarketing was one of the new electoral tools used by a growing number of candidates in the early 1990s.⁵⁸

The utilization of the mass media as a campaign tool was legalized in 1989, when candidates could place advertisements in newspapers and magazines. In 1991, legislation allowed for a limited number of political ads to be aired on Taiwan's three terrestrial television stations. In 1994, regulations were relaxed. Since then, political ads have paradoxically only been limited in parliamentary elections. The election law states that only publicly funded ads may be aired during the official campaign period of ten days.

In general, political ads are common in Taiwan's media. In recent years, there has been a trend toward permanent advertising campaigns. Not surprisingly, expenditures have risen dramatically since the early 1990s, especially in presidential election campaigns. Estimates suggest that the total market value of political advertisements amounted to about NT\$4 billion in the last presidential election. Although the effective advertising expenditure was estimated by experts to be only one-tenth of the market value, the number is still impressive.⁵⁹

Underground Radio

In the early 1990s, opposition figures attempted to break the KMT monopoly on the island's broadcast media by illegally setting up their own television and radio stations. Soon, underground radio stations and later cable television networks became an important and new campaign tool. The most popular and most influential radio station at that time was Hsu Rong-chi's *Voice of Taiwan*, which went on air in November 1993. Hsu's radio station was the first equipped with powerful transmitters and could be received in most parts of Taipei. His *Voice of Taiwan* soon became an inspiring example all over the island. Hsu himself hosted most of the programs that focused on various social and political problems. *Voice of Taiwan* as well as other stations became popular because the common people could (by calling in) publicly and anonymously air their grievances against the ruling KMT.⁶⁰

Underground radio stations have since then been an important campaign tool of the DPP, especially in southern Taiwan, where farmers are used to listening to underground radio stations while working in the fields. The influence of underground radio stations on the voting behavior of farmers is still substantial. In the 2008 presidential election campaign, the KMT, thus, bought airtime on radio stations in the South as to compete with the popular pro-DPP underground stations.⁶¹

Cable Television and Political Talk Shows

Cable television was a further way to counter the terrestrial network's pro-government election coverage. At the end of February 1990, DPP supporters launched the first political cable network, Democratic Cable TV (*zhonghe minzhu youxian dianshitai*) in Taipei County. In October, other networks were set up around the island.⁶² By the end of 1993, fifty-four cable systems labeled themselves as Democratic Cable TV.⁶³ Cable television had a profound influence on election campaign strategies. It was cable television that first aired debates between candidates and call-in talk shows with politicians, which gave opposition candidates the opportunity to get the attention of the electorate. For the DPP, cable television took party leaders from the streets turning "street politics" into "media politics." Cable television, especially the call-in programs, fundamentally changed the DPP's campaign style. These changes included: (1) to be brief and to the

point; (2) to modify the party's campaigning emphasis from negative personal attacks to issues and credentials; and (3) to reposition the party as a "rational" party rather than street protesters by softening the gestures and expressions of its members appearing on television.⁶⁴

Until 1993, cable television was illegal. The legalization brought about even more cable television stations and networks. At the end of the decade, over 80% of Taiwan's households had cable television. Since then, cable television has played an important role in the marketing mix of political parties and candidates. A number of networks air political talk shows. The main characteristics of such television programs are that (1) the moderator and his/her guests are in most cases the same people; (2) there is a lack of discussion between the participants; (3) they unanimously attack either the KMT or the DPP; (4) their audiences tend to be the same group of voters who belong to the same political camp as the participants. In short, there is no such thing as an objective political talk show. Nevertheless, cable television is very powerful because it influences the agenda setting of other television stations and the print media.

Product Placement

In general, there has been a tendency toward permanent media campaigning in recent years. Political advertisement wars are only part of the picture, though. Probably more effective is the airing of entire campaign rallies, being a guest at popular entertainment programs and/or obtaining favorable news coverage.⁶⁵ As to ensure co-operation, companies affiliated with political parties or government agencies offer lucrative advertising revenues to media outlets in return. This political advertising in disguise (product placement) has become the issue of numerous confrontations between all political parties. Each side accuses the other of abusing the media for campaign purposes.

Professional Consultants

In Taiwan, the campaign consultancy industry emerged in the early 1990s. One of the first campaign professionals was Wu Hsiang-hui. Like other campaign professionals, Wu had previously been involved in electoral campaign work for opposition candidates during the martial law period. In 1991, he founded the Good Morning Political Marketing Corporation. Since then,

Table 27.2. New Trends in Campaigning during Period of Commodification Politics

1989–2000	2000–2008
Variety shows (<i>gewuxiu</i>) since 1989	Mobile phone texting since 2000
Stunt politics 1989–1997*	Placement marketing since 2000
Computerized telemarketing since 1989	Blogging since 2005
Underground terrestrial TV 1989*	
Print media advertising since 1989	
TV advertising since 1991	
Illegal cable TV 1990–1993*	
Underground radio since 1992*	
Call-in political talk shows since 1992	
Professional consultancy since 1991	
Cable TV since 1993	
TV debates between candidates since 1993	
Polling since 1994	
Internet since 1996	
Campaign merchandise since 1998	

Note: * Only applied by non-KMT candidates.

candidates of all political camps have hired him to design electoral campaigns. During the first ten years of operation he had successfully advised over forty hopefuls. Although the industry has grown over the years, the number of campaign professionals who make a living out of campaigns is limited: “probably not more than a few dozen,” according to a senior campaign professional.⁶⁶

Opinion Polls

In Taiwan, opinion polling became an electoral tool in 1994. Since then, its application in the electoral process has only been restricted in presidential elections: individuals, political parties and organizations are prohibited from releasing opinion polls ten days before election day. Mass media may neither cite newly released nor previously released outcomes of opinion polls during this period. Apart from that blackout time, opinion polls are abundantly used to influence voting behavior. Most opinion polls are either fake or unprofessionally conducted. The media are biased and often misinterpret poll results or use unreliable data. The majority of newspaper articles and television news analyses reveal a fundamental misunderstanding of what “margin of error” means. Inaccurate poll reporting has become a serious problem in Taiwan and has already led to several disputes after media-declared winners lost elections. Local analysts claim that the abundant misuse of opinion polling reached a high in the 2000 presidential election.⁶⁷ Four years later, faked and misinterpreted opinion polls contributed to social unrest, when incumbent president Chen Shui-bian officially won the election with a margin of 0.3% of the vote and the media, nevertheless, proclaimed rival candidate Lien Chan as the winner, since he had ‘led’ in opinion polls.

Moreover, candidates frequently use opinion polls conducted by major cable news networks, such as TVBS, to manipulate voting behavior. When opinion polls show that the candidate is right behind the highest vote getters in his or her constituency (multi-member under SNTV), that candidate is likely to place a newspaper ad quoting the poll and urging the electorate not to let him or her down. Opinion polls may also suggest that the rival candidate lags behind. In such a situation, the candidate is likely to urge the electorate to give up supporting the rival candidate since he or she obviously has no chance whatsoever to win the election.

The Internet as a Campaign Tool

In the first direct election of the provincial governor in 1994, the three main hopefuls used a bulletin board system (BBS) to communicate with the electorate. BBS allowed computer users to dial into the system over a phone line and, with the help of a terminal program, to view and exchange messages. At the early 1990s, BBS was widely used and highly popular in Taiwan, especially among the younger generation. In the mid-1990s, however, its popularity faded as the World Wide Web became popular. Prior to the 1995 parliamentary election, the three major political parties, the KMT, the DPP and the NP (New Party), set up party websites. During the election campaign, however, the Internet was hardly used. In total, only seven candidates made use of the new media.⁶⁸

The first time the Internet was more seriously used in electoral campaigns dates back to the 1996 presidential election. The election was a watershed in Taiwan’s political development, since it was the first time that the president of the island-state was directly elected by people. All four presidential candidates and their running mates had their own websites. Peng Ming-min and his running mate Hsieh Chang-ting of the DPP, Taiwan’s largest opposition party, were the first to set up their campaign websites. The site contained extensive information on the candidates’ personal backgrounds and political visions. Independent candidate Chen Lu-an and his running mate Wang Ching-feng had their website designed by volunteers. It was similar to Peng’s website but less professional. Independent candidate Lin Hsiang-kang and his running mate first had an

English website designed and maintained by an overseas supporter residing in the United States. It was hoped that the website could help promote Lin among the overseas community. Three months before the election, a Chinese website was set up. Lin and his running mate expected the website to counter the pro-government mainstream media. The campaign team of the ruling KMT was the last to set up a website. The site was designed and maintained by students. Unlike the websites of the other candidates, the target group of this website was young people.⁶⁹

In the 1996 elections, websites of candidates were more considered a must-have item, rather than an effective campaign tool. Since then, the involvement of the Internet in electoral campaigning has increased. The impact of websites run by politicians and political parties on campaigning has been limited, though. One of the rare exceptions is incumbent president Chen Shui-bian's campaign website, *abian.net*, which was extremely popular with the electorate. The website offered a large variety of functions ranging from downloading video clips to online shopping of campaign merchandise. Chen's website was set up in 1998 in the run-up to the Taipei mayoral election and soon developed into the most popular website of a politician.

In 1998, Chen's rival candidate was Ma Ying-jeou, who was extremely popular among female voters who found him "charming and handsome." Nevertheless, Chen's website outperformed Ma's in terms of visitors. A few days before the election, about 140,000 people had visited Ma's site and almost 400,000 that of Chen Shui-bian.⁷⁰ Chen's website was permanent rather than temporary. His campaign team wanted to create a stable and long-term relationship with the Internet community. The website constantly improved and became an important campaign tool in the 2000 presidential race.

Apart from the politicians' websites, online mock voting, popularity ratings and special election websites have become popular. Major media networks, such as TVBS, usually set up special websites containing all sorts of information regarding upcoming elections, such as profiles of candidates and opinion polls.

In the 2005 mayoral and county magistrate elections, several candidates set up their own blogs. A year later, several candidates running in the parliamentary election used the free Internet encyclopedia Wikipedia as a campaign tool by modifying their entries as to receive more favorable media reporting. An increasing number of politicians have also incorporated YouTube into their Internet campaign strategies. Nevertheless, Web 2.0 applications are in general still underutilized in Taiwanese electoral campaigns.

Structure of Campaign Organizations

Figure 27.3 shows the typical structure of a candidate's electoral campaign organization. The size of the official campaign team depends on the type of election and the financial capabilities of the candidate. At the core of the team are the candidate, the campaign manager (*zongganshi*) and his or her assistants. They are the major decision-makers. Under their office, there are several key divisions responsible for different tasks.

The survey division, for example, uses opinion poll data and computer-assisted calling systems to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate and his/her rivals. The division also engages in telemarketing activities and more recently in the utilization of the text messaging function of mobile phone operators for campaign purposes. In the 2004 presidential election, for example, the campaign team of the KMT candidate extensively used text messaging to convey campaign messages to the electorate and urge them to join the candidate's election activities.

The media relations division is in charge of drafting press releases, organizing press conferences and establishing/utilizing private relationships with journalists. The propaganda division is responsible for designing and producing campaign literature, posters, advertisements and campaign merchandise. External advertising agencies or advisors usually support the division. The

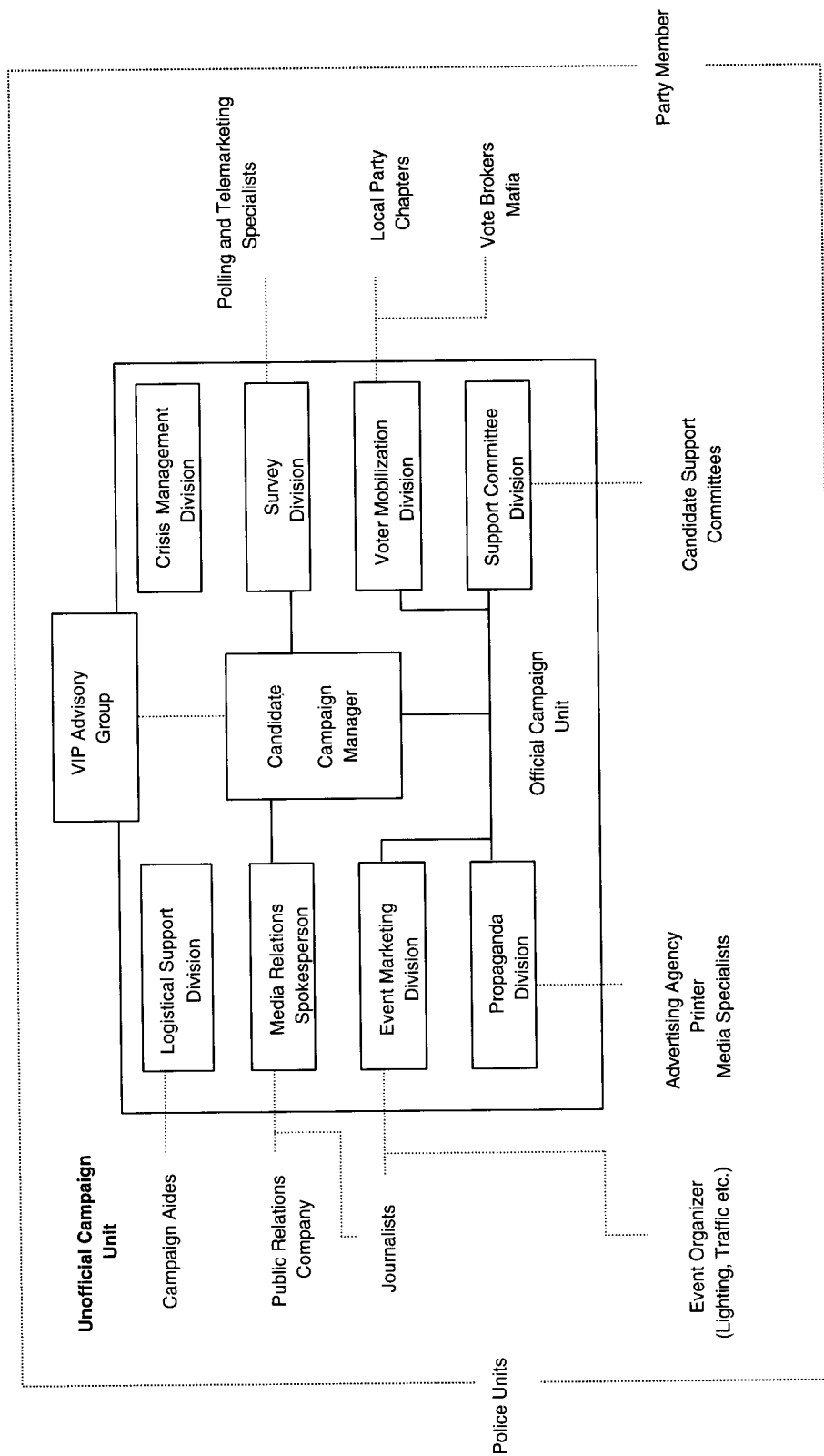


Figure 27.3. Typical Election Campaign Organization

Source: Based on Chian-wu Chiu, *Shei shuo xuanju wei shifu [Who Says Elections Have No Master?]* (Taipei: Blueline, 2007), 52.

campaign event division organizes electoral activities, such as rallies, visits to traditional markets and campaign speeches. The candidate support committee division has to co-ordinate and supervise the activities of the various support committees that may exist outside the official campaign unit.

A very important campaign function is the vote mobilization division. It plans vote buying activities. In Taiwan, vote buying emerged in the 1950s when businessmen entered electoral politics and gradually replaced the local gentry. In the 1980s, electoral competition intensified and most candidates had little to offer except money to convince voters to support them. In the 1990s, vote buying became commonplace, with price tags ranging from NT\$500 (US\$16) to NT\$2,000 (US\$67). "This was particularly true of the KMT, whose candidates rarely campaigned on their good image or on ideology," as political scientist Tien Hung-mao notes in his works on Taiwanese politics.⁷¹

The voter mobilization division has to recruit vote brokers, the so-called *tiau-a-ka*. Chin Kuo-lin, a leading expert on organized crime involvement in Taiwanese politics, claims that "anybody who can persuade about twenty people to vote for a particular candidate is a potential *tiau-a-ka*."⁷² The big *tiau-a-ka*, the vote wholesalers, however, are usually local politicians, underworld figures, head of interest groups, influential business people and other individuals with high social status.⁷³ In practice, the candidate directly or through the voter mobilization division solicits wholesalers, who use their connections to recruit smaller voter brokers, the vote captains. Each of these vote captains has to deliver between fifty and a hundred votes. They have to submit a list of possible target voters to the wholesaler who will hand it over to the campaign unit, where names are keyed into a computerized database. All names are cross-checked as to make sure that bribes are only once distributed to each target voter.⁷⁴

Vote buying is still common in Taiwan, especially in rural areas and smaller cities. Although several local election experts believe that the impact of vote buying on the electoral process has decreased since the late 1990s, those involved in electioneering at grassroots level doubt that vote buying is "just a lubricant," as renowned political scientist Chu Yun-han noted during a post-election discussion in 1998.⁷⁵

Another important part of the campaign unit is the VIP advisory group (*darenwu guwentuan*), which typically consists of well-known and respected local personalities, such as leading politicians, and members of the business community and academia. They serve as advisors to the candidate and publicly endorse the candidate.

Involvement of the Underworld

The growing electoral competition after the lifting of martial law and the inability of the KMT to cope effectively with the changing environment has substantially increased the involvement of underworld figures in politics.⁷⁶ Even ranking KMT members in the party's Taipei headquarters admit quite frankly that criminal records do not matter in the selection of candidates and that the KMT fully supports underground figures as long as they help the party to defend constituencies against the DPP.⁷⁷ Local political analysts estimate that in the 1970s, about 10% of city and county councilors had gang backgrounds. A decade later, the figure increased to 40% and in the 1990s, approximately half of the councilors belonged to the underworld.⁷⁸ Moreover, over 60% of Taiwan's major crime syndicates had publicly elected officials at all administrative levels, including the parliament.⁷⁹

There are several reasons why underworld figures have succeeded in winning elections despite the fact that they are criminals. Political scientist Chao Yung-mao, a leading expert on local politics, stated that they are popular because they help the community in a better and more efficient way than other politicians. They (1) help the supporter to find a job; (2) try to help to solve personal problems of the supporter (for example, make sure that a husband who hits his

wife would be beaten up); (3) they put sentiment above the law; and (4) they are very aggressive in improving the streets and temples in the supporter's neighborhood.⁸⁰

Underworld figures who do not run in elections themselves have several other functions in the electoral process.⁸¹

- 1 They help the candidate to establish a vote base, and ensure that the candidate's constituency is his or her turf and recruit vote-brokers.
- 2 They work as bodyguards for the candidate and they will make sure that the audience applauds when the candidate delivers a speech.
- 3 They will make sure that the voters who were bribed to vote for their candidate did, indeed, do so. If not, they will make sure that the bribe is returned in full.

The significant influence and role of underworld figures in electoral campaigning (especially in rural areas) cannot be denied, even today.⁸²

Limits of Modern Campaigning

How modern or postmodern are Taiwanese electoral campaigns today? In the first part of this analysis, I have outlined the main characteristics of the overall electoral process in the immediate postwar years. State-controlled elections during the martial law period transformed gentry politics into machine politics and contributed to the growing involvement of the underworld in the electoral process. Social, economic and political changes in the late 1970s and early 1980s brought about the involvement of the general public in politics. Electoral campaigns became more competitive and campaign strategies diversified. Using Fritz Plasser's typology of standard campaign models (see Figure 27.1), Taiwan's electoral campaigns were still pre-modern at that time.

The lifting of the martial law decree in 1987 even more intensified electoral competition, which in turn forced the opposition as well as the ruling KMT to adopt new methods of campaigning. As I mentioned earlier, the opposition relied on stirring the people's emotions and the utilization of illegal radio and TV stations to increase its popularity in the early 1990s. The KMT, on the other hand, responded by adopting two different approaches: the first called for a shift toward more professional campaigning and the second approach sophisticated conventional campaign methods, such as the mass mobilization of the electorate through vote brokers and underworld figures. The first approach was the official one and was proposed by senior party figures, such as John Kuan, who wanted the KMT to apply modern and highly sophisticated marketing techniques as to deal with the changing environment. Although the new approach boosted the popularity of Chairman Lee Teng-hui, the majority of ranking KMT members distrusted the modern form of campaigning because they saw their own power waning. Consequently, John Kuan lost the internal strife within a couple of years and the KMT had to rely more than ever on traditional forms of campaigning, such as vote buying and the involvement of underworld figures.

At the end of the 1990s, the KMT was again confronted with internal rifts over the nomination of the party's presidential candidate. Finally, Song Chu-yu, former provincial governor, could not obtain the party's endorsement and contested the election as an independent candidate. The move hit the KMT hard since Song had a very strong support base, especially in the South, where the KMT traditionally had less support. Song practically overnight robbed a substantial number of the KMT's vote brokers and other influential grassroots "campaign aides." The consequences were a foregone conclusion rather than a surprise. Although the KMT engaged in cost-intensive advertising wars, hired specialists and reportedly applied modern

survey techniques, their presidential candidate received by far fewer votes than the DPP candidate and Song Chu-yu. The KMT felt so bitterly what it meant to fight a war without having the ability to utilize traditional forms of campaigning. Its defeat in the 2000 presidential election was a major and devastating setback for the party. Losing the election meant losing even more power and money. In the 1990s, the KMT still was one of the richest (if not even the richest) parties in the world, but the defeat in the year 2000 cut it off from substantial future revenues.

No matter how sophisticated electoral strategies may appear to be, the truth is that the KMT has never left the stage of pre-modern campaigning. As a senior KMT official observed:

They never intended to adopt something like modern campaigning. They never believed that the party could rely on modern campaigning. Why should they? Vote buying had always worked in the past. . . . In Taipei, perhaps, media campaigning and images are important to win elections. Mob involvement is low there. But in most other areas, I would say, the party headquarters does not like to waste money on sophisticated campaigning. . . . Anyhow, what is the purpose of hiring campaign specialists and conducting surveys? The party leadership does not care about what experts say. They rely on their own sources, mostly friends and relatives.

Take the last two presidential elections as an example. The campaign manager had little to say. It was mostly his [the presidential candidate's] daughter and other relatives who made decisions on how to run the campaign and what issues we should emphasize. . . . I would say that the DPP is much more professional. The party leaders respect the decisions of lower-ranking officials. Their strategies make more sense. They have real issues, so they can set up long-term marketing plans. The KMT is a loose organization of different groups with different ideas. . . . Modern campaigning is just one layer of campaigning. It is to attract the 30%-unaffiliated voters that possibly won't take bribes. Nowadays, election results are very close and if we can get some of these votes in addition to the ones we bought than we will succeed at the polls.⁸³

Another example highlighting the limited impact of modern campaigning is the 2005 National Assembly election. In that election, delegates to the National Assembly were for the first time elected based on a party-list proportional representation system. Unlike other elections, the voter had to select a party and not a candidate. Consequently, individual candidates did not engage in campaigning at all, grassroots campaign activities were non-existent, and political parties engaged in media-oriented campaigning only. Unsurprisingly, voter turnout dropped to a historic low of 23%. (Voter turnout in parliamentary elections usually is above 60% and in presidential elections above 80%.)

It is, thus, safe to say that the current mode of campaigning in Taiwan is a dual process of campaigning, that is the utilization of modern and postmodern campaign techniques in combination with traditional forms. Applying Plasser's typology (Figure 27.1), it is, however, debatable whether Taiwan's mode of campaigning is pre-modern with modern and postmodern features or vice versa.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have tried to give the reader a picture of the evolution of modern campaigning in Taiwan and its limits. A further interesting question is how far the Taiwan case is representative for other polities in the region. In East Asia we have four democracies (Taiwan, South Korea, Mongolia and Japan) and two authoritarian regimes (China and North Korea). If we look at the other three democracies of the region, each has a distinct form of electoral campaigning, but none could be described as a polity that clearly fits into one of the three standard campaign models. There are tendencies toward postmodernity, though.⁸⁴

Political theorists have frequently stated that the application of postmodern campaigning faces certain limitations that usually arise from the institutional, legal and socio-political background of the transforming polity. I believe, however, that the most crucial factor determining the growth of postmodern campaigning lies in the answer to the question whether previous campaign techniques have lost in effectiveness or not. In Taiwan, legal and institutional barriers are very rare, but still postmodern campaigning has neither outperformed nor entirely replaced traditional forms of campaigning. What limits the scope of postmodern campaigning is the affirmative answer to the question whether traditional forms of campaigning are still effective or not. In Taiwan, traditional campaign methods are still effective and it is this fact that limits the adoption of postmodern campaigning. From this perspective, this chapter is not only representative for East Asia, but for all transitional societies.

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