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**The 1997  
Local Elections  
in Taiwan**

ruhr-universität bochum

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## The 1997 city mayor and county magistrate elections in Taiwan

On November 29, 1997, the people of Taiwan elected five city mayors and 18 county magistrates. The election brought about significant changes in Taiwan's political society. Such changes appeared to be obvious given the increasing public discontent, caused by the government's inability to improve public safety, the negligence of the environment and the alleged involvement of public officials in organised crime. This paper will attempt to find answers to the questions (a) why public safety, environmental protection, social welfare and women's rights were the key issues in this election; (b) how the candidates made use of those issues in order to gain popular support; and (c) why the defeat of the ruling party was a foregone conclusion. Finally, the impact of the election result on the two major political parties will be analysed.

### Political affiliation of the candidates

Seven out of ten candidates were nominated by political parties. The ruling Kuomintang (KMT) had the largest, and the Society Reform Party the smallest share of nominated hopefuls (Table 1A). Two parties, TAIP and SRP, had never competed in any election before.

<b>Nominated by political parties</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>71%</b>
Kuomintang KMT	25	31%
Democratic Progressive Party DPP	21	26%
New Party NP	7	9%
Taiwan Independence Party TAIP	3	4%
Society Reform Party SRP	1	1%
<b>Independent candidates</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Total number of candidates</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1A: Candidates and their political affiliation

### New participants: TAIP and SRP

TAIP was founded in October 1996. The idea to form a new party was first made public soon after the DPP's presidential election defeat in March 1996, when the party's presidential candidate, Peng Ming-min, established the so-called Nation Building Association<sup>2</sup>. The association became a platform for those dissatisfied with the DPP because of its weakening adherence to the founding principle of establishing a sovereign nation, and its continuing co-operation with the ruling party. The party's main objective is similar to the one of the DPP; however TAIP expresses its independence stance more clearly, and believes that Taiwan is not yet fully independent. The DPP has developed a different theory over the years, according to which Taiwan is already independent, since it has never been ruled by the Chinese Communist regime. TAIP, however, looks deeper into the independence issue and argues that Taiwan is de-facto independent but not de-jure. It, thus, is the aim of the party to reach de-jure

independence, join international organisations under the status of a sovereign state, establish diplomatic relations and enact the constitution of the Republic of Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> The formation of the party annoyed several DPP leaders such as the party's former chairman Shih Ming-teh. On numerous occasions, he endorsed a tough stance on defending the DPP from assaults made by supporters of TAIP. Shih Ming-teh and other key members of the DPP are advocates of multi-partisan co-operation and claim that such a co-operation is vital to maintain Taiwan's national security and helps to energise the political environment.<sup>4</sup> A number of DPP supporters claim that the formation of the Taiwan Independence Party triggered the largest crisis of Taiwan's independence movement. The outcome of this election has, however, proved that TAIP has rather strengthened Taiwan's opposition than weakened the DPP's position.

Contrary to all other parties, TAIP openly admitted that it would have no chance of success in this election. The reason why the party participated was simply to make its platform known to the electorate to gain a better position in the forthcoming parliamentary election.<sup>5</sup>

The Society Reform Party (SRP) was founded by Hsu Yun-teh in July 1997. Hsu's party was established with the aim of improving the living conditions of the Hakkas, one of Taiwan's largest ethnic groups. The Hakkas originally came from southern China and were the first Chinese arrivals to Taiwan. Currently, approximately 10 to 15 percent of Taiwan's population belong to this ethnic group. Hsu himself is a Hakka.

He took part in the election with the sole aim of taking Hakka votes away from incumbent DPP Taoyuan County magistrate and candidate Lu Hsiu-lien, herself a Hakka. Hsu claimed that Lu had done nothing for the Hakka people in return for their votes. He said that she had betrayed her people and that as a consequence of her negligence unemployment and poverty had affected a disproportionate number of Hakkas in Taoyuan County. Thus, in his campaign literature Hsu strongly criticised Lu Hsiu-lien and promised the Hakka people a number of social welfare measures, such as child support, and subsidies for the old and unemployed. To win sympathy from the people in need, he frequently showed up at election rallies dressed as a poor farmer. Although it was obvious that he would have no chance of winning against the highly popular DPP candidate, he told reporters that he had dreamt God came to him and told him that he would win. His confidence, humour and appearance, however, merely amused political analysts and voters.

### **Constituencies and their candidates**

Eighty candidates were competing in eighteen counties and five cities. The KMT nominated candidates in all constituencies. The NP had hopefuls in five counties (Taipei, Miaoli, Nantou, Kinmen and Lienchiang) and two cities (Taichung and Tainan). TAIP candidates ran in Taichung County and in the cities of Taichung and Chiayi. The newly formed Social Reform Party nominated only one candidate, namely in Taoyuan County. Independent candidates competed in almost all constituencies (Table 1B).

County	
Taipei	3
Hsinchu	2
Miaoli	1
Taichung	2
Changhua	1
Nantou	2
Yunlin	2
Kaoshiung	2
Pingtung	1
Taitung	1

City	
Keelung	1
Hsinchu	1
Chiayi	1
Tainan	3

*Table 1B: Independent candidates and their constituencies*

### **KMT worst affected by factionalism**

Due to the KMT's internal disagreement on whom to nominate as the party's official candidate several members either quit the party or were expelled from it.

Candidate	Affiliation	Constituency	Registered as	Consequence
Ou Ming-hsien	KMT	Yunlin County	Independent	expelled
Wang Shao-chuan	KMT	Hsinchu City	Independent	expelled
Wu Ching-chiang	KMT	Nantou County	Independent	expelled
Chen Chen-sheng	KMT	Nantou County	NP	expelled
Liu Chuan-chung	KMT	Taichung County	Independent	membership rights suspended
Lin Shou-hung	KMT	Tainan City	Independent	membership rights suspended
Lin Chih-jia	KMT	Taipei County	Independent	expelled
Hsu Tsai-lee	KMT	Keelung City	Independent	expelled
Hsu Ching-yuan	KMT	Taitung County	Independent	expelled
Chiu Ching-chun	KMT	Hsinchu County	Independent	expelled
Chang Rong-wei	KMT	Yunlin County	Independent	quit
Fu Hsueh-peng	KMT	Miaoli County	Independent	quit
Chou Chuan	NP	Taipei County	Independent	quit

*Table 2: Candidates changing political affiliation as to take part in election<sup>6</sup>*

In October and November 1997, respectively, eight KMT members were expelled from the party and two others found their membership privileges suspended for two years for their proposed participation in the election without party consent. Another two members quit the party for the same reason (Table 2).

In several constituencies, more than one well-known KMT-affiliated candidate tried to gain public support, thus splitting KMT votes among them and offering

the opposition the opportunity to win. In Taichung County and Tainan City two hopeful candidates even challenged one another under the KMT banner.

Although the DPP was less confronted with the problem of mavericks, former party members turned out to be opponents in Taipei County, Nantou County and Tainan City, where former DPP-legislators Liao Hsue-kwang, Pang Pai-shien and Hsu Tien-tsai decided to take part in the election as independent candidates.

As to the NP, one founding member and legislator, Chou Chuan, quit the party after it had failed to nominate her as the official candidate, and became an independent one in Taipei County.

### **Handicapped New Party**

Not only the KMT was affected by internal conflicts, but also the NP: At the beginning of the election year, NP legislative whip Ju Gao Zheng accused one of his colleagues, Yao Li-ming, of swindling huge sums of money out of Taiwanese businessmen investing in China. Ju made the accusation at a news conference in the legislature. He also accused NP national campaign committee convener Chen Kuei-miao of sheltering some NP legislators, who had been engaged in illegal activities, and of encouraging factional struggles to consolidate his leadership.<sup>7</sup> Most NP legislators did not share Ju's view and even accused him of undermining the party's image and unity for the purpose of expanding his personal influence.<sup>8</sup> At the beginning of March, the party decided to expel Ju Gao Zheng. The conflict was covered extensively for almost three months by Taiwan's media and seriously damaged the party's reputation for being free of corrupt officials. Further inter-party fighting, Chou Chuan's insistence on her nomination as the party's Taipei County candidate, her quitting and the subsequent media attention caused further harm to the party's already damaged image.

### **Analysis of key election issues**

Four key issues played a significant role in determining the outcome of the election. These were the issues related to public safety, environmental protection, social welfare and women's rights.

#### **Public safety<sup>9</sup>**

Public safety has been the most crucial issue in Taiwan politics for a couple of years now and also significantly influenced the election result. The issue of public safety had on numerous occasions caused KMT officials to step down and questioned the ability of the KMT government throughout the election year.

#### *Attacks on politicians*

Public outrage started in 1996 when several politicians who strongly criticised their colleagues for their involvement in syndicates were physically attacked. On February 28, 1996, for instance, DPP Secretary General Chiou I-Chen read a DPP-released statement condemning the KMT's close connections with organised crime and money politics. The statement referred mainly to independent legislator Luo Fu-chu, who has on several occasions been accused of being a leading member of the Heavenly Way Alliance<sup>10</sup>, one of Taiwan's largest syndi-

cates. Three days later, Chiou I-chen was attacked by four unidentified men outside the DPP headquarters. In a similar case, DPP legislator Peng Shao-chin was seriously injured when he was stabbed outside his home in Taipei in May. A few months later, independent legislator Liao Hsue-kwang was taken to a remote mountain area and locked into a dog cage in the early morning hours. He was found unharmed several hours later. The kidnapping was a result of his criticism about Luo Fu-chu's involvement in organised crime. Luo Fu-chu openly admitted having relations with organised crime and that he was responsible for the kidnapping. In an interview he said that it was not his style to hide the truth and it was his nature to speak out openly and honestly.<sup>11</sup>

#### *New laws and crackdowns*

In order to clamp down on organised crime, President Lee Teng-hui promised the National Assembly in August 1996 to improve the law-and-order situation within the next six months. At the end of August, a nationwide campaign to crack down on organised crime took place. More than 70 suspects, including the leader of the Four Seas Gang, were arrested. On September 5, 1996, the cabinet approved the Organised Crime Control Law and submitted it to the Legislative Yuan. The law was to prevent syndicates from drug trafficking, smuggling, blackmailing, money laundering and controlling public construction projects, manipulating elections and whitewashing their activities by running for public office. Thus, the major aim of the law was to keep criminals out of politics. According to the proposed law, anyone convicted of a crime could be prohibited from running for public office for up to ten years. If convicted as a member of organised crime, sentences would range between three to ten years imprisonment and fines up to US\$ 110,000. Organised crime is defined by the law as a group consisting of at least three people conspiring to commit a crime. The proposed law would also target corruption: Public servants convicted of corruption would face penalties up to life imprisonment in addition to a maximum fine of NTS 100 million.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, if a party has nominated a candidate who is convicted of a gang-related crime within five years of his or her election registration date, the party will be liable to pay between US\$ 364,000 and US\$ 1.82 million. If this person holds a seat in parliament the vacancy will not be permitted to be filled. In addition, assets of syndicates will be confiscated and those of individual members be returned to the victims or government unless evidence indicates that the assets were obtained legally before the suspect's involvement in organised crime.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Further waves of crime: The Liu Pang-you and Peng Wan-ju case*

Before the Organised Crime Control Law was passed in parliament, two high-profile crimes were committed. The first happened on 21 November at the official residence of Taoyuan County Magistrate Liu Pang-you. Two people entered Liu's home in the early hours. They first bound the security guards, taped their eyes and shot them point-blank in the head. They then gathered the other victims in a recreation room, tied them up, taped their eyes and shot them one by one at point blank range in the head. The dead were identified as County Magistrate Liu Pang-you, City Councillor Chuang Shun-hsing, Liu's driver and cousin Liu Pang-ming, Liu's secretary Hsu Chun-kuo, his cook Liu Ju-mei and the wife of Taoyuan Agricultural Bureau Chief Chang Tao-mei. Teng Wen-

chang, a county councillor survived the shooting with serious brain damage. President Lee Teng-hui said that he was shocked about the crime and Premier Lien Chan made a passionate address to reporters after arriving at Taoyuan County Hospital to check on Liu Pang-you's condition. It is believed that Liu was shot because of his influence in re-zoning land. In the past Liu had been accused several times of being involved in land speculation scandals.<sup>14</sup>

Several days later, a high-ranking DPP official, Peng Wan-ju<sup>15</sup>, was believed to have been kidnapped or even murdered, as she disappeared after leaving a meeting held on Saturday 30 November 1996 at Top Plaza Hotel in Kaoshiung. The public was outraged a few days later when police found Peng's naked body in a field in Niaosung Village, Kaoshiung County. She had been stabbed more than 30 times. Police believed that the murderer had been a taxi driver and ruled out any political motive. Subsequently, the government was blasted in parliament for its inability to improve social order.

#### *Demonstrations and further government efforts to clamp down on crime*

Shortly after Peng Wan-ju's body had been found, the first demonstration took place, which was attended by about 300 people. Activists demanded that the government should ensure public safety. Two weeks later, about 5,000 women's rights activists took part in a demonstration in Taipei. Activists demanded a deadline to be set for the police to solve Peng's murder and other cases of sexual violence. If the cases were not to be resolved within the time limit, National Police Administration Director Yao Kao-chiao should step down.<sup>16</sup>

Those events again prompted the government to step up its efforts to crack down on crime. On 5 December 1996, Vice-President and Premier Lien Chan instructed Minister of State Ma Ying-jeou<sup>17</sup> to convene a two-day nation-wide conference to formulate comprehensive measures to combat crime and improve social order. The National Public Safety Conference was held on December 30 and 31 at the Taiwan Police College in Taipei. More than 400 government officials from the police, intelligence and education departments, criminologists and community leaders took part in the conference, which was divided into three seminars, focusing on the cracking down of syndicates, the prevention of crime and violence, and the promotion of public-safety awareness. Among the issues discussed were the safety of women and children, the problem of the high rate of criminals among taxi drivers<sup>18</sup>, anti-crime campaigns, drug-trafficking and weapon smuggling. During the closing ceremony of the conference, Vice-President and Premier Lien Chan declared 1997 an anti-crime year and said that the government would set up a comprehensive programme to (i) strengthen coastal vigilance in order to curb arms and drug smuggling, (ii) better protect the safety of women and children<sup>19</sup>, (iii) step up efforts to crack down on syndicates and persuade their members to disband their organisations, and (iv) set up household on-line alarm systems.

On January 17, Taiwan's largest attack on syndicates was launched to publicly demonstrate the government's determination to wipe out organised crime. Over 5,000 prosecutors, investigating agents, police officers and military guards were involved in the operation. A total of 77 criminals were arrested during the first day of the campaign, among whom were the Tachia Township Council Speaker Kuo Chih-chou, Four Seas member Chen Jen-tung and key members of a num-

ber of other syndicates.<sup>20</sup> On the following day, police continued raids on another 320 buildings and arrested 107 criminals across Taiwan. During the operation, police seized 12 handguns, one kilogram of heroin and 508 kilograms of amphetamines.<sup>21</sup>

#### *The Pai Hsiao-yen case and the perceived deterioration of public order*

Public dissatisfaction at the government's efforts to improve public safety reached a further climax in April 1997, when news of the kidnapping of Pai Hsiao-yen, the only child of popular TV host and actress Pai Ping-ping, emerged. Pai Hsiao-yen was kidnapped on April 14, 1997 on her way to school and was taken to an apartment in Wuku, Taipei County. The kidnappers were identified as Lin Chun-sheng, Kao Tien-min and Chen Chin-hsing. They demanded a US\$ 5 million ransom. Pai Ping-ping was informed about the drop-off location. However, the kidnappers did not show up, since Pai Ping-ping had been followed by local media. Although several drop-off locations were subsequently made known to Pai, the kidnappers never showed up. On April 23, Pai Ping-ping received a mail containing one severed little finger and a photograph of her bound and half-naked daughter. At the end of April, Pai Hsiao-yen's body was found in a ditch in Wuku, Taipei County.

The opposition, in particular the DPP, called for the resignation of Premier Lien Chan and demanded that President Lee Teng-hui should apologize. Newspapers and television reports focused heavily on the murder of Pai Hsiao-yen and emphasised the need for immediate government action to clamp down on crime.

The business community took advantage of the event and expressed its concerns about the so-called deteriorating public order. The government and the foreign business community claimed that during martial law there had been no underworld activities, no rapes etc. The KMT, in particular Lien Chan and the government's chief economic planner and former minister of economics, Chiang Pin-kung, described crime as a virus that emerged with democracy and finally infected Taiwan's society. Premier and Vice-President Lien Chan repeatedly expressed his preference for a Singaporean style of democracy. Chiang Pin-kung even said that the lifting of martial law brought about a disorderly society.<sup>22</sup> In his speeches he made it clear that he preferred martial law to a society appraising democratic values. Most intellectuals seriously questioned such an interpretation and put the blame solely on the government.

Whether the public order situation is really deteriorating in Taiwan is a question that cannot be answered by merely looking at statistics. Crime has increased after the lifting of martial according to these.<sup>23</sup> However, there may be various reasons to explain this phenomenon, one of them being that crime has in fact increased, another that several laws, such as those related to drugs, have only recently come into effect. Other laws have been enforced for the first time. Moreover, during the martial law period and to a lesser extent even after that period, law enforcement agencies were reluctant to include reports on crime in their statistics, so as not to undermine the regime's legitimacy. In addition, criminal offences, such as rape, have been reported to the police more frequently in recent years than during the martial law period due to the encouragement of women's rights groups. Taiwan's opposition failed to look carefully at these statistics and took advantage of the obvious deterioration of public order.

