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**The 1997
Local Elections
in Taiwan**

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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.

Nominated by political parties	57	71%
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%
Independent candidates	23	29%
Total number of candidates	80	100%

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 Association². 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.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵

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 election⁶

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.⁷ 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.⁸ 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 safety⁹

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 Alliance¹⁰, 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.¹¹

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.¹² 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.¹³

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.¹⁴

Several days later, a high-ranking DPP official, Peng Wan-ju¹⁵, 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.¹⁶

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-jeou¹⁷ 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 drivers¹⁸, 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 children¹⁹, (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.²⁰ 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.²¹

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.²² 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.²³ 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.

Growing public dissatisfaction: Large demonstrations

NT\$ 20 million were offered to anyone providing information leading to the capture of Bai Hsiao-yen's kidnappers. The government constantly assured the public of its efforts to find the key suspects. Nevertheless, public anger grew from day to day and finally on Sunday, May 4, 1997, more than 50,000 people marched peacefully through the streets of Taipei, chanting slogans and carrying banners to protest at the government's apparent indifference to the deteriorating social order: They claimed that more than 100 police officers had been diverted from the investigation into Pai Hsiao-yen's kidnapping to guard President Lee Teng-hui and Premier Lien Chan while playing golf. A puppet resembling President Lee could be seen at the demonstration. Lee was holding a golf club in his hands and in front of him there was an eye supposed to be a ball. The protest was organised by about 170 welfare organisations and the main slogan was "President, apologize! Lien, step down!"²⁴ Consequently, Minister of the Interior Lin Feng-cheng resigned and with him one of Taiwan's most popular and active politicians, Minister of State and former Minister of Justice Ma Ying-jeou. He said that he felt ashamed of all the things that had happened and in particular about the fact that he was a cabinet member in charge of administrative affairs. Furthermore, he stressed that the 50,000 protesters had been the key factor for his decision to resign.²⁵ Two weeks later President Lee Teng-hui apologized fearing that a further demonstration scheduled to take place on the following day would attract an even larger crowd of people. He said that he was sorry for the recent upsurge of violence in Taiwan and pointed out that the government was determined to improve social order. However, he refused to accept Premier Lien Chan's resignation.²⁶ On the same day, the premier announced he would give up playing golf and turn down all invitations to private parties and banquets unless they were important or had to do with his political duties.²⁷ Several other politicians joined Lien Chan and also announced that they would refrain from playing golf in future.²⁸ Nevertheless, more than 500 civic organisations called on the people of Taiwan to take part in the so-called 518 event. An estimated 100,000 people marched through the streets of Taiwan on 18 May 1997. The march started at Sun Yat-sen Memorial and ended in front of the presidential office, where protesters used laser beams to project messages onto the walls of the office building saying "admit you were wrong". The main slogan of the demonstration was "women yong jiao ai Taiwan", i.e. we use our feet to show our love for Taiwan.²⁹

On a number of occasions, the opposition tried to pass a vote of no-confidence and to recall the president.³⁰ This failed however, as the Taiwan Independence Party did not support it. TAIP secretary-general Wei Rui-ming said that his party did not support the vote of no-confidence as neither the premier nor the president could be held responsible for the Pai Hsiao-yen case. Wei was of the opinion that in a democratic country the president cannot be held responsible for an inefficient police-force. TAIP was the only opposition party that did not take advantage of the Pai Hsiao-yen case.

In the following months, the three most wanted fugitives hid themselves in the Taipei area. Several times, the police failed to catch them after receiving tip-offs on their whereabouts, which contributed to further criticism of the government's ability to clamp down on crime. In addition, there were rumours of high-

ranking KMT officials being involved in the killing of Taoyuan County Magistrate Liu.

In August 1997, the police was again involved in a gunfight with the three kidnapers and murderers. Although the police failed to catch all of them, one of them, Lin Chun-sheng, committed suicide when he was surrounded by police. The shoot-out was shown live on all nation-wide television channels.

On August 22, Lien Chan finally announced his resignation as Premier and on November 1, the new government was sworn in. Newly appointed Premier Vincent Siew promised to focus on improving social order and raising the standard of living.

Further highly publicized crimes

At the beginning of October, a further serious crime shocked Taiwan's public and sparked off numerous discussions about the state of society. 14 teenage youths were involved in the crime. The nine male and four female school drop-outs said that the 14-year-old victim Chien Li-chung had stolen a pager and some clothes belonging to them and that they had therefore abducted her to an unoccupied house. For five days, the teens beat Chien using aluminium bars and clothes hangers. Moreover, they sprayed pesticides on her body and set her on fire. After Chien had died, the teens buried her body near a pond. Consequently, Premier Vincent Siew faced great difficulties. He was lambasted even by his own party members for not doing enough to improve the public safety situation.

About a week later, the two most wanted fugitives, Chen Chin-hsing and Kao Tien-ming, murdered a well-known plastic surgeon, his wife and a nurse. Police believed that the two criminals had forced the plastic surgeon to alter their appearance before raping the nurse and shooting all of them at close range in the head.

The final days of the Pai Hsiao-yen case

Two weeks before the election, the police received a tip-off that Kao Tien-min was hiding out in an apartment with several others in Tienmu. About a dozen police officers were first sent to the scene to seal off the area and to search for Kao in the building. On entering it, shots were fired at them. Minutes later, a massive police operation was underway and of course the mass media provided live coverage of the event. After several hours, police entered an apartment on the second floor and found Kao Tien-min face-down with a semi-automatic pistol at his side. He had obviously decided to commit suicide rather than surrender. Chen Chin-hsing, the third and last key suspect in the Pai Hsiao-yen kidnapping was seen fleeing the scene on a motorcycle.³¹ During the following 48 hours, Chen Chin-hsing became almost a national hero: He broke into the residence of the South African military attaché, McGill Alexander, and took him and his family hostage. Chen and the hostages could not talk to each other due to language difficulties. Chen, however, made it clear to his hostages that he wanted to internationalize his case and demanded to talk to foreign journalists. The hostages were free to use the telephone and called a friend who informed Jason Blatt, the editor of the English newspaper *China Post*. Jason Blatt called Chen Chin-hsing, who urged Blatt to call as many foreign media as possible, expressed his grievances about the police and the justice system, and pointed out that he had several people and a baby as hostages. Blatt informed the police

and minutes later the residence of the South African diplomat was surrounded by police and TV cameras. For the next 24 hours, there was almost no other programme to be found on all four nation-wide TV stations than Chen Chin-hsing's hostage crisis and some commercials in between. When police tried to enter the building, Chen shot at them and two of the hostages. Chen later allowed the injured to leave the house. Among the injured people were McGill Alexander, who was shot in the leg, and his daughter Melanie (22), who was hit in the back. At 11.45 p.m., it was known that Chen had made three main demands: (i) that he be given safe passage out of the country; (ii) that his wife and brother-in-law be released and (iii) that a Cable News Network reporter be brought to him. About an hour later, he was put through to a nation-wide television channel and talked live with the news anchorman. The conversation lasted for over an hour. Chen said that he would be prepared to be shot, he only wanted the world to know how corrupt and inefficient the police was. He blamed society for what had become of him and repeatedly mentioned that if the clock could have been turned back he would have studied hard and become a high official. He went on to describe how the kidnapping had happened and where he had hidden several guns and large sums of money. Furthermore, he demanded to be interviewed by *CNN*.³² After that interview others followed. However, the questions posed to Chen were rather absurd. For instance, *Super TV* anchorman Chou Hui-ting questioned Chen's abilities as a singer and ended up singing with him the children's song 'Two Tigers'³³. Until the next morning, there was no sign of an early end to the hostage crisis. Chen's wife entered the residence at 10.36 a.m. and the seven-month-old baby was released. 12-year-old Christine Alexander emerged at 4.30 p.m. with former DPP vice-presidential candidate Frank Hsieh, who had been called in by Chen. The last hostage was released at 19.55 p.m. after Chen's demand to be escorted by Frank Hsieh, the Taipei City Police Department Director Ho Yung-yi, Panchiao Chief Prosecutor Yeh Chin-pao and a fortune teller named Chen had been met.³⁴

During the following days, it was revealed that Chen had raped at least fifteen women during his seven months on the run and he had together with Kao and Lin extorted at least NT\$ 9 million from a businessman and politician. Moreover, the nation's top criminal investigator, Yang Tzu-ching, admitted during a local television call-in programme that the police operation at the grass-roots level was highly ineffective and that the available crime-fighting equipment was inadequate. According to him, low-ranking police officers frequently covered up reports made to them by the public.³⁵

The public considered Frank Hsieh of the DPP the main figure in solving the hostage crisis, whereas the KMT government was criticized as incapable of solving the crisis. No cabinet official was present at the scene, which again was interpreted by the public as the government's negligence of issues vital to them. Frank Hsieh participated in several DPP election rallies after the hostage crisis, which certainly had an impact on the election result.

Public safety: An election gimmick

A reliable public survey conducted at the beginning of November revealed that 54.75 percent of the interviewed felt that the issue of public safety would considerably influence the election, whereas only 24.66 percent thought that the issue would not affect the outcome.³⁶

During the election campaign, approximately 48 percent of all candidates emphasized their intention to improve public safety if elected. Two out of ten hopefuls particularly mentioned the implementation of a safety programme aimed at protecting women. Public safety for women, however, turned out to be of more importance to the DPP than the KMT (Table 3). Moreover, the DPP provided the electorate with concrete ideas for improving public safety. For instance, the party's election platform called for a new structure of the police force, which allows police officers to deal with crimes more efficiently, e.g. a 24-hour patrol car network to enhance communication and response times. According to the DPP proposal, female police officers must be present at every station, hotlines for kidnapping and rape be set up, and child day-care, women's rescue centres and a taxi network free of criminal drivers be established.

Public safety in general	KMT	DPP	NP	TAIP	SRP	Ind.	Total
Number of candidates	17	9	3	2	0	7	38
Percentage	68	43	43	67	0	30	48
Public safety for women	KMT	DPP	NP	TAIP	SRP	Ind.	Total
Number of candidates	4	9	1	1	0	3	16
Percentage	16	43	14	33	0	13	20

Table 3: Public safety emphasized during election campaign³⁷

Two weeks before the election, the Ministry of the Interior launched a campaign called *Safe*, which was aimed at making women aware of safety issues. Booklets and other educational material were distributed at public places such as railway stations. Local observers, however, considered the *Safe* campaign as just another KMT election gimmick.

Social welfare

The government has enacted laws and set up programmes to guarantee the social rights of the people, which have been incorporated into the constitution. It also increased its social welfare expenditures from 6.7 percent of its total budget in 1955 to almost 27 percent in 1996. Nevertheless, most welfare programmes are still incomplete and people in need have to rely on the help of non-governmental organisations.³⁸

Welfare for the elderly

The government still sees itself as advocate and co-ordinator of social welfare rather than a provider. In the early 1990s, the then Minister of the Interior, Wu Poh-hsiung, stated in his administrative report to parliament:

Welfare for the elderly means providing basic subsistence aid and health care to poor and helpless senior citizens. The government advocates that the elderly people live with or near their sons and daughters, so that care will be close by and the elderly may enjoy the natural bonds and ethical relationships between members of their family.³⁹

However, social and demographic changes have recently demanded the adoption of different policies regarding the social welfare services offered to the elderly in Taiwan. It is estimated that 60 percent of the 1.6 million people in

Taiwan who are over 65 are personally cared for by their children in their own homes. The percentage has considerably dropped since the 1970s. In addition, the age distribution has changed over the last decades: In 1955, 2.5 percent of the population fell into the category *65 years or older*, whereas forty years later almost 8 percent of the people of Taiwan were 65 years of age or older. It is estimated that by the year 2010, more than ten percent will fall into that category.⁴⁰

Apart from the social and demographic changes, immense pressure from the DPP has forced the government to set up more social welfare services in recent years and pass several laws providing better assistance to the elderly, handicapped and others in need. Social welfare has thus become a major issue in elections. The KMT has recognized the usefulness of social welfare as an effective tool to enhance its chances of success and has frequently adopted social welfare policies previously promoted by the DPP. In this election, the KMT once again tried to win DPP votes by adopting a former DPP policy, namely the policy of offering subsidies to people aged 65 or over:

Already in the 1993 elections for city mayors and county magistrates, DPP candidates promised to introduce old-age allowances. At that time, the KMT opposed such a programme. The DPP introduced the allowance assuming that the provincial and central government would share the costs with the county/city government. Neither the provincial nor the central government, however, agreed to such a policy. The welfare programme, thus, caused considerable financial difficulties to most DPP controlled counties and cities: Kaoshiung County had to terminate the programme four months after its implementation there. Taipei City stopped the programme a year after the DPP election victory. Tainan City started the welfare for the elderly programme in 1995 with NT\$ 1,000 monthly. A year later, the amount was increased to NT\$ 2,000 per month but was paid only for the period of nine months. In the election year, the amount was changed to NT\$ 500 per month and the programme terminated six months later. The counties of Ilan, Taipei, Hsinchu, Taoyuan and Penghu were still providing old-age allowances prior to the election. Hsinchu County offered the highest amount, namely NT\$ 5,000/month. Taipei County has paid NT\$ 3,000 nine times a year since 1995. In none of the KMT-controlled constituencies was such a subsidy offered, and independent Chiayi City made just one old-age allowance of NT\$ 5,000, but this was terminated four months after implementation.⁴¹

Old-age subsidy: One way to win votes

Despite the above-mentioned difficulties, President Lee Teng-hui announced at the end of October 1997 at a rally in Yungho, Taipei County, that each person aged 65 or older would receive NT\$ 5,000 per month if the KMT candidate were elected. The rally was attended by several thousand people, about 1,000 of whom were elderly.⁴² Consequently, Lee's campaign promise was the front-page story in almost all newspapers. Critics argued that Lee's policies increasingly resembled those of the DPP. Other newspaper articles claimed that Lee's offer was a clear signal that the KMT was aware of its waning public support. Moreover, analysts claimed that it would be impossible for the county government to finance such a programme and called Lee's promise irresponsible. Others questioned whether a monthly subsidy of NT\$ 5,000 could really solve the

problems of the elderly, or whether Lee's highly publicized campaign promise was just a campaign gimmick.⁴³

Several groups of senior citizens held protests outside the KMT headquarters. The protesters carried a mock check bearing a sum of NT\$ 396 billion allocated for the subsidy and demanded that Lee should guarantee that the check would not bounce. They insisted that not only the elderly in Taipei County should be eligible to receive a monthly subsidy but also those living in other counties.⁴⁴

The DPP doubting the honesty of the KMT as to their interest in assisting the elderly, tried to speed up legislation of a nation-wide old-age subsidy plan by raising a proposal to push the stipend bill directly onto the second-reading review process. However, the KMT and NP rejected the proposal. NP legislators argued that they were only opposed to a hurried legislation. The KMT preferred to address the issue of a nation-wide old age subsidy programme after the election, since reliable public opinion polls revealed that 49.3 percent of the people interviewed felt that the issue of the old-age subsidy would considerably influence the election and only 19.25 percent thought that the subsidy would not have any effect on the outcome of the election.⁴⁵

Welfare measures proposed by hopefuls

Almost 40 percent of all candidates made the subsidy a major campaign issue. With more than half of its candidates advocating the implementation/ continuance of the old-age subsidy programme, the KMT had the largest share of candidates promoting such a welfare measure. TAIP was the only party not to mention the programme in its campaign, although one of its hopefuls (Taichung County) stressed the necessity of welfare for the elderly. Six out of the 23 independent candidates regarded the subsidy a crucial issue and specifically mentioned it in their campaign literature and speeches (Table 4).

Old-age subsidy	KMT	DPP	NP	TAIP	SRP	Ind.	Total
Total number of candidates	25	21	7	3	1	21	80
Number of candidates promoting the issue	13	9	1	0	1	6	30
Percentage	52	43	14	0	100	26	38

Table 4: Candidates promoting old-age subsidy⁴⁶

Welfare for women and the handicapped was also frequently addressed by the candidates. In general, the KMT put far more emphasis on social welfare than the DPP or other parties. Ironically, about 60 percent of the KMT nominated hopefuls (15 out of 25) dealt with the issue of welfare for women despite the party's chauvinist campaign. Only 20 percent of the DPP candidates (4 out of 21) addressed the issue. Moreover, 20 out of the KMT's 25 hopefuls (80 percent) mentioned other welfare programmes, such as free education, in their campaign literature and speeches. Only 12 out of 21 DPP candidates (57 percent) did so.

Social welfare: A bargaining chip

It is interesting to note that social welfare measures were particularly stressed in those counties/cities with only two widely supported candidates and by those

candidates lagging behind in popular support. One example is Taoyuan County: Here, there were three candidates, each nominated by the KMT, DPP and SRP. Prior to the election, it appeared obvious that Hsu Yun-teh of the SRP would not get more than one percent of the votes and that there would thus be a polarisation of votes between the KMT's Chen Ken-teh and Lu Hsiu-lien of the DPP. Lu Hsiu-lien is a highly popular politician and well-known for her independence stance, anti-corruption attitude and her feminist views. Social welfare played a minor role in her campaign efforts. Her main focus was on infrastructural development and making Taoyuan County internationally known. The KMT hopeful's popularity lagged far behind Lu's. Thus, the KMT candidate made social welfare his crucial campaign strategy in his bid to win the election. He promised to offer NT\$ 5,000 per month to every county citizen aged 65 or more and guaranteed not to suspend the subsidy for the duration of his term. Prior to the election, Taoyuan's elderly received only NT\$ 6,000 per year. Moreover, he put emphasis on welfare for teachers, women and the handicapped. He even promised to implement a subsidy programme for the county's unemployed.

Another example is Kinmen County, where the KMT and NP had nominated one candidate each. The county was originally a KMT stronghold. In previous elections, however, the NP succeeded in gaining considerable popular support. The KMT's election platform did not focus on social welfare, but rather outlined plans on how to make the county a major tourist attraction. However, the NP candidate explicitly mentioned the old-age subsidy in order to catch up with his rival.

Environmental protection

'Global Views Monthly' and its survey

At the beginning of November, about four weeks before the election, a monthly magazine called *Global Views*⁴⁷ published its 1997 *Public Opinion Report*.⁴⁸ The report revealed that of the 12,000 surveys conducted in all the 23 counties and cities in Taiwan more than 60 percent of the people interviewed expressed concern over the environment and most were not happy with their local governments' tackling of the issue. Residents cited garbage as the main problem affecting the environment. Air, water and noise pollution were also considered to be serious. Asked whether they thought that their local governments were concerned about the environment, residents living in KMT-controlled areas generally doubted the local governments' interest in improving the state of environment, whereas in DPP-ruled cities/counties a different view was expressed. A questionnaire designed to determine the level of satisfaction with mayors'/magistrates' performance brought a similar result.⁴⁹

At a press conference, National Chinghua University professor Wang Chu-chu, who carried out the research related to the report, claimed that the election candidates could not escape the environmental issue. He further said that given the result of their analysis the environmental issue would become crucial in determining the outcome of the election. All major newspapers extensively covered the report and prompted a serious debate in academic circles about the possible impact of the environmental issue on election campaigning.⁵⁰

