

Local factions and the Kuomintang in Taiwan's electoral politics

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Abstract

Local factions in Taiwan exert considerable influence over elections, facilitating their role as intermediaries in both the candidate selection process and grassroots voter mobilization. This study examines the tangled relationship between the Kuomintang (KMT) and local factions in the electoral process. For decades, the KMT used patronage to ally itself with local factions to maintain its dominance in elections and to legitimize its governing base. Its monopoly over economic privilege permitted the authoritarian KMT regime to construct electoral alliances with local factions by sharing political power and material benefits with them in exchange for their KMT allegiance. Although factional allegiances serve the interests of the KMT, its alliance bonds are far from permanent. Change in electoral politics, then, is one of the best vantage points from which to observe the transformed relationship between the KMT and local factions. Furthermore, due to its flourishing economic relationship with mainland China since the late 1980s, the Taiwan government has come under pressure from local factions to adopt more liberal trade policies toward China. This research concludes that factionalism should remain an important component in Taiwan's political and economic arenas for the foreseeable future.

1 Introduction

This article focuses on Taiwan's local factions, as they have played an important role in the fields of politics and economics. Over the past several decades,

the Chinese Nationalist Party or Kuomintang (KMT) allied itself with local factions in an attempt to continue its electoral success.¹ After the KMT government retreated to Taiwan, its governing authorities instituted popular elections at the local level beginning in the early 1950s. Due to a lack of connections to local society, the KMT used patronage to co-opt local élites, to dominate elections and to legitimize its governing base. Local factions, especially in some rural and agricultural communities, provided informal links between the ruling KMT and the electorate via patron–client networks. The roles of factions include candidate selection, campaign activities, electoral mobilization and securing votes in local politics.

A monopoly of economic and political privilege permitted the KMT regime to construct electoral alliances with local factions. In turn, local factions, without challenging KMT domination, shared political power and material benefits in exchange for allegiance to the regime. Over time, the alliance strategy enabled the KMT to consolidate its rule at the expense of political democratization. The alliance also enabled local factions to control economic advantages at the expense of public resources. For decades, local factions were considered an essential element in KMT rule. Nevertheless, alliance bonds between the KMT and factions were neither fixed nor permanent. Furthermore, elections since the mid-1980s saw a gradual reduction in the KMT share of the vote, while that for the opposition parties, especially the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), increased. As a competitive party system began to take shape, the relationship between the KMT and local factions changed substantially. Moreover, in view of the booming China market and huge potential profits, factional leaders have become an active component in the making of Taiwan's cross-strait China economic policy.

In developing this analysis, this study explores four interrelated issues. First, it addresses the general character of factions and factionalism and describes the relationship between the KMT and local factions as patron–client politics. Second, attention is paid to the role of factions in electoral contests, particularly the candidate selection process and election outcomes. Third, it then moves to an examination of the development of factionalism from the 1990s through to the present. It concludes by examining the effects of factionalism on Taiwan's politics and Taiwan–China economic interactions.

1 This research focuses mainly on the relationship between Taiwan's local factions and the KMT. For more information about the origins of factionalism, and the interaction between local factions and national factions, see the recent work of Huang (1990), Chen and Chu (1992), Bosco (1994), Wachman (1994), Chen (1995), Hood (1996) and Tan *et al.* (1996).

2 The concept of factions, and the characteristics of Taiwan's local factions

The word 'faction', in a general sense, means a subgroup or clique within a group or organization. One generally accepted academic definition is the identification of a 'dyadic non-corporate group' based on a patron–client relationship (Landé, 1977a, p. xiii). A dyadic tie is established by 'a voluntary agreement between two individuals to exchange favors and to come to each other's aid in time of need' (Landé, 1977a, p. xiii). Typically, a patron–client relationship is a vertical dyadic alliance, referring to 'two persons of unequal status, power or resources each of whom finds it useful to have as an ally someone superior or inferior to himself' (Landé, 1977a, p. xx). The superior individual in such an alliance is termed a patron. The inferior is termed a client.

As the literature has shown, factional ties enable leaders to mobilize their followers in traditional communities (Scott, 1969, 1972; Powell, 1970; Nicholson, 1972; Huntington and Dominguez, 1975; Landé, 1977b; Belloni and Beller, 1978; Lerman, 1978). Along the political dimension, the patron either controls resources or has access to their allocation, such as largesse, public revenue, employment, power, official connections, etc. The patron distributes the largesse to the client in exchange for loyalty, support, votes, delivery of votes and campaign contributions, etc. In the electoral process, the patron gives the client benefits and looks forward to receiving an important resource from the client, namely the vote. Viewed in this way, a faction in parochial societies comes to resemble a 'political machine' in the United States (Wu, 2001a). 'In states with powerful factional machines the line between party organization and faction is sometimes thin', according to Key (1949, p. 389), 'but in reality the faction has independent foundations and takes over party posts as an incident to its general dominance'. Simply put, patronage is always the base of patron power.

To that extent, as two or more factions compete for any given benefits, the phenomenon of factional politics, or 'factionalism,' appears (Landé, 1977a, p. xxxii; Nicholson, 1978, pp. 162–163). Factionalism is a fact of political life in many developing countries (Huntington, 1968, p. 44), and it has played an important role in US politics, especially in the south (Key, 1949; Sindler, 1955; Price, 1970). Even in a highly developed democracy like Japan, party factions (*habatsu*) play a key role in its two major parties: the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Japan Socialist Party (JSP) (Ike, 1972; Fukui, 1978; McNelly, 1982; Shiratori, 1988). Japanese politics, according to Fukui (1978), is made up of coalitions of factions. 'For both parties [the LDP and JSP], factionalism serves as the major mechanism for the allocation of important party positions and government jobs. Above all, factional competition structures the processes of choosing top party leadership' (Fukui,

1978, p. 56). A party leader is the leader of both a faction and an *ad hoc* alliance of factions. Each faction has its vehicles to get votes in elections and political resources to obtain benefits.

Although Taiwanese and Japanese factionalism do share certain commonalities, Taiwan's faction politics has different implications. Taiwan's factions and factionalism can be classified into several types: (i) mainlander factions within the KMT who survived the Chinese civil war and retreated to Taiwan; (ii) the ethnic cleavage, mainlander versus Taiwanese factions, in the KMT leadership circle in the 1970s and 1980s; (iii) the mainstream and the non-mainstream among the KMT inner circle since the late 1980s and 1990s; (iv) the factions within the DPP given the disputes over Taiwanese independence scenarios and ideologies, including the Meilidao, New Tide, Justice Alliance, New Nation Alliance, etc.; and (v) local factions comprised mostly of Taiwanese politicians and local élites. Among these, the conservative mainlander factions are insignificant to Taiwan's political stage; conversely, local factions play a relatively leading role in electoral politics, and are therefore the main focus of this study.

Geographically speaking, Taiwan's local factions are limited to regional administrative units at the county, township and village levels, a phenomenon closely related to two electoral features. Electoral districts for public office at the city and county levels were apportioned as fixed geographic units. When electoral districts for the 1969 national assembly elections started to depart from county boundaries, factions were already well entrenched at the local level. By the 1994 gubernatorial and the 1996 presidential elections, national executive posts were attained either by appointment or by indirect election rather than direct popular suffrage (Tien, 1989, p. 165). Therefore, Taiwan's factions construct social alliances in the local administrative hierarchy.

Beyond the territorial basis, local factions share certain characteristics. For one, strong affective social ties provide effective components to foster and maintain factions. Some terms are frequently used to describe individual social bonds, including connections (*kuan-hsi*), interactions (*chiao-wang*), affections (*kan-ch'ing*), faces (*mian-zu*) and human sentiments (*jen-ch'ing*). In all, affective social ties are defined as 'a perceptive mixture of personal affiliations, feelings, kimochi [sentiments], geographic and kindred appreciations, and political beliefs' (Chen, 1994, p. 5). The influence of personal ties depends on the affective content of mutual sentiment in a dyadic relationship. Mutual commitment requires reciprocal favoritism that provides an attitudinal basis for the patron–client exchange in politics (Lerman, 1978, pp. 108–109; Jacobs, 1979, p. 239; Bosco, 1994, pp. 126–127). In general, any local faction functions within three-level transactional alliances: factional networks, supporter networks and grassroots networks. The three networks

shape a hierarchical structure by which factions mobilize their grassroots supporters in the electoral process. Via interactive networks, the faction is thus best characterized by the nature of ties binding leaders and followers. To maintain and expand their authority, factional leaders may carry out heroic acts, allocate rewards and favors or adopt populist ideological stances.

Social and individual bonds are conducive to political clientelism, but they are not the only reason for the prevalence of factionalism in Taiwan. Additional factors such as the need for security, power consolidations, ideological identifications, traditional élitist structures and corporate institutions promote the establishment of clientelism. For example, Pye (1981, p. 6) focuses on factional activities in the Chinese community, finding that the prime bases of factions are power constellations of clusters of individuals 'who for some reason or other feel comfortable with each other, who believe that they can share mutual trust and loyalties, and who may recognize common foes'. In addition, the formation of factions could be motivated by the need for security, which stresses the threat of insecurity and hence 'the need for protection against these dangers' (Lerman, 1978, p. 195). I argue that the motivations and bases for local factions could be dynamic rather than static. In my view, urbanization and concomitant social changes transform local factions from patterns of personal affective ties to utilitarian associations; the structures could change from social-cultural alliances to political-economic associations; for that reason, the leadership forms could replace closed oligarchic structures with open pluralistic leadership arrangements.

It is widely accepted that Taiwan's local factions often play important roles in candidate selection, in campaign activities and in securing votes. Over time, since most local politicians join the KMT, factions sometimes act as intra-party political groups competing for political patronage and/or political power. As noted, factions are always circumscribed within countries or cities with respect to size and influence. Of the twenty-one counties and cities in Taiwan, sixteen have factional networks. Six areas – Taipei County, Nantou County, Yunlin County, Tainan City, Penghu County and Taitung County – have no countywide factional networks, but they do have numerous factions in their subordinate townships and rural districts. Taipei Municipality is the only case without factionalism because of its high degree of economic modernization and urbanization. As shown in the Appendix, more than one hundred local factions existed in Taiwan from the early 1950s up to the present.² Every county and city but Taipei Municipality had at least two distinct factions.

2 In Taiwan an organized 'faction' and its relevant activities are often difficult to identify because the general term 'faction' implies negative and disreputable connotations. Two reliable methods

Some factions take the family names of their founders as their labels, e.g. those in Taipei County, Keelung County, Hsinchu County, Taichung City, Miaoli County and Pingtung County. In both Changhua and Kaohsiung counties, the factions adopt colors as their labels. In Taichung County both surnames and colors are used. In Tainan County, the labels represent geographic areas. In Hsinchu City, Ilan County and Penghu County, factions use both surnames and geographic names. In Taoyuan County and Hualien County groups with distinct ethnic identities, the Fukienese and the Hakkas, are always at the core of local politics. In Kaohsiung Municipality and Taitung County, factions take the name of the city/county of origin of their founders. In all, Taiwan's local factions are limited to specific geographic areas and have no uniform labels.

Local factions are often found to intervene in election contests. Their access to the economic resources necessary to effectively subsidize electoral activities comes from economic privileges granted to them by the KMT. They include: (i) monopolies of local commercial activities such as banks, credit unions and transportation companies; (ii) special loan privileges from provincial and national banks; (iii) procurements and construction contracts from provincial and local government agencies; (iv) other economic benefits, such as favorable zoning laws or public construction schemes for land speculation, bestowed by KMT controlled governments; and (v) the use of official KMT power to protect illegal businesses such as underground dance halls, erotic barber shops and casinos (Chen and Chu, 1992, pp. 81–82). KMT–factional alliances, then, are considered ‘an investment in power and prestige that offers many money-earning opportunities’ (Bosco, 1994, p. 131).

Beyond economic advantages, factions also have personal networks. The county- and city-level factions always forge alliances with township-level factions. The alliances, in general, are stable because the loyalty of factions is critical for both their leaders and members. Faction members in any locale are arrayed in hierarchical structures that include leaders, loyal followers, grassroots supporters, and reliable voters. The concentration of reliable votes for a faction is called its domain (*di-p'an*). Faction leaders and their

used to identify local factions and their candidates are the ‘fieldwork’ and ‘ruler identifying’ approaches. In the fieldwork approach, intensive interviews are conducted with informants, including factional leaders and candidates, party professionals, government officials, and some figures familiar with local politics (such as local journalists). The ‘ruler identifying’ approach relies on the KMT’s internal confidential electoral documents to define local factions and their candidates. Obviously, each approach has its strengths and weaknesses. Here, local factions were identified with a mixed approach. Relevant data from Chen (1995) was used with permission and supplemented with journalist reports compiled by Chang and Huang (1996) and subsequently confirmed by KMT national and provincial party officials, local KMT party cadres, faction members, parliamentarians and their assistants, journalists, and scholars of Taiwan politics during intensive interviews conducted in 1997 and 1998.

key members could be mayors, county magistrates, provincial assemblymen or even national parliamentarians (Tien, 1989, p. 170; Chen, 1994, pp. 1–2). The patronage that they dispense to mobilize the electorate comes in many forms, the most common being lower-level jobs, material benefits, personal services and channels of upward social mobility for factional cadres and their local allies (Lerman, 1978, pp. 127–131). Viewed in this light, Taiwan's local factions have no organizational structure; they have informal and broadly extended networks of clientelism.

3 The KMT and local factions in electoral politics

Over the past several decades, local factions became integral to the continuation of KMT rule. The critical factor linking the KMT and local factions is their role in popular elections. Local factions arose from personal social networks that existed before the KMT regime retreated to Taiwan in 1949. After moving to Taiwan, the KMT regime searched for grassroots support with the help of local élites. Furthermore, because the KMT creed, The Three Principles of the People, required its rulers to base their governance on the approval of the people, the KMT had to rely on local factions to win the electoral majorities necessary to rule Taiwan legitimately. To reward local factions for support in the electoral process, the KMT granted them specific monopolistic economic privileges, as mentioned previously. Through this patronage system, the KMT and local factions institutionalized a ruling entity of mutual state–society dependency. This clientele relationship, however, was not permanent.

In fact, the KMT leadership (and most ordinary citizens) always held a negative view of factions because local factions were widely blamed for ruining KMT party prestige and for retarding democratization of the political system. For one thing, local factions supported KMT-favored candidates and mobilized voters to win elections, after which they distributed political and economic benefits among themselves. The KMT continued its monopoly over the political and social resources that were used to establish strong alliances with local factions, hence a KMT nomination virtually assured the election of a candidate until the mid-1980s. Without KMT party blessing, candidates had little chance of election (Winckler, 1984, pp. 496–497). Furthermore, although ordinary citizens were eligible to vote, their only choice was between competing KMT candidates. Local candidates organized into factions consolidated by the distribution of patronage and favors. In the end, widespread illegal practices and corrupt behavior (vote buying, bribery, violence, etc.) caused the demise of inter-party competition in the electoral process.

Being aware of the impact of factionalism, the KMT could employ various strategies to keep factions from capturing too much power (Wu, 2001b,

pp. 111–113). For instance, where KMT and faction strength was reasonably even, the KMT supported electable faction candidates or likely winners in an attempt to increase its influence through the success of its nominees. Likewise, if no one faction was influential or predominant, the KMT nominated fewer candidates than the number of available seats and allowed KMT members without party nominations to run. The divide-and-rule strategy was also common. When one faction was clearly dominant, the KMT supported candidates offered by the weaker faction in order to prevent any one faction from gaining too much power and control over local politics. Where factions were roughly even in political strength or when factional conflicts became intensive, the KMT nominated non-faction candidates under the guise of pacifying factional strife while, in reality, it was attempting to strengthen its influence in local politics.

The KMT used many practices to select candidates for various national and local elections. While the KMT national party organizations centralized power in the candidate selection process for the national elections, at the same time it gave local factions control over the candidate selection process for local elections. The KMT national leadership played a decisive role in the selection of candidates to run for the national-level offices regardless of any influence of local factions.

Local factions were also in conflict with the KMT at times. The maintenance of local factions was based mainly on the clientele relationship of interest and patronage. In this respect, an ideological consensus was not a prime basis for a faction (Nicholas, 1977, p. 58; Nathan, 1978, pp. 395–396). Ties between the KMT and factions, then, were far from permanent. Local factions adopted tactics to preserve their power against KMT moves to control the nomination process. One common strategy was to boycott the KMT party nominees. When factional candidates did not get KMT party approval, they decided not to run if their careers were at risk. Hence, factional candidates sometimes claimed to support KMT party nominees without waging any substantial campaign activities. In some cases, factions even switched to support opposition party candidates. Second, factions dedicated themselves to the support of party nominees on condition that the KMT granted factions more economic privileges.

Third, factional leaders made informal compromises with each other. In multi-member districts with the single non-transferable vote (SNTV) electoral system, candidate quotas were distributed according to the ability of factions to mobilize votes. In the single member at-large district system contests, factions took turns nominating candidates as administrative officers. Finally, factions sometimes campaigned against KMT party nominees because of the enormous human and material resources necessary to keep their

organization alive through fielding candidates. As Winckler (1984, p. 496) put it, 'the party's [KMT] main problem is preventing those party politicians denied nominations from sabotaging the nominee or running as mavericks'.

The strategy of forming alliances with local factions enabled the KMT to maintain its electoral dominance in Taiwan for decades. An examination of its nominations and election outcomes sheds light on the faction-based strategy. For example, in the Provincial Assembly elections between 1954 and 1994, an average of 61.89% of KMT-nominated candidates were affiliated with local factions, as shown in Table 1. The share of faction nominees was highest (75%) in 1954, during the early years of the KMT regime in Taiwan, a phenomenon that gradually declined with the increase of authoritarian power since the late 1950s. The share of faction nominees peaked again during the first half of the 1980s in the face of increased challenges to the KMT from the opposition. Over the past five decades, the average election rate of factional candidates was 92.63%, higher than that of non-factional candidates (73.14%).

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In brief, the statistics show that KMT-endorsed candidates had a relatively high election rate over the years, confirming Winckler's (1984, p. 496) observation that the main problem for a politician was to secure nomination, something which assured election. Further, faction-tied candidates generally did better than non-factional candidates in elections, but, because of strong opposition challenges since the late 1980s, being a KMT-sanctioned candidate was no longer a guarantee of victory. Under such circumstances, the electoral interests of factions and KMT were not closely interrelated.

Table 1 KMT nomination and election outcomes for the Taiwan Provincial Assembly, 1954–1994

Year	Seats, n^a	Nominated						Elected					
		Candidates		Faction		Non-faction		Seats		Faction		Non-faction	
		n^b	% ^c	n^d	% ^e	n^f	% ^g	n^h	% ⁱ	n^j	% ^k	n^l	% ^m
1954	57	44	77.19	33	75.00	11	25.00	39	88.64	30	90.01	9	81.82
1957	66	55	83.33	33	60.00	33	40.00	45	81.82	31	93.94	14	63.64
1960	73	58	79.45	37	63.79	21	36.21	53	91.38	37	100.0	16	76.19
1963	74	74	100.00	48	64.86	26	35.14	61	82.43	42	87.50	19	73.08
1968	71	60	84.51	38	63.33	22	36.67	56	93.33	36	94.74	20	90.91
1972	73	60	82.19	30	50.00	30	50.00	54	90.00	29	96.67	25	83.33
1977	77	69	89.61	42	60.87	27	39.13	55	79.71	39	92.86	16	59.26
1981	77	38	49.35	27	71.05	11	28.95	34	89.47	25	92.49	9	81.82
1985	77	60	77.92	41	68.33	19	31.67	52	86.67	37	90.24	15	78.95
1989	77	62	80.52	36	58.06	26	41.94	49	79.03	32	88.89	17	65.38
1994	79	55	69.62	28	50.91	27	49.09	43	78.18	26	92.86	17	62.96
Total	801	635	79.28	393	61.89	242	38.11	541	85.19	364	92.62	177	73.14

Notes: $c = b/a$, $e = d/b$, $g = f/b$, $i = h/b$, $k = j/d$, and $m = l/f$. Sources: Chen (1995, p. 224; see also Chen, 1996, p. 178) and Central Election Commission (various years); the data have been compiled by the author.

Table 2 KMT nomination and election outcomes for the Legislative Yuan and National Assembly, 1980–1992

Year	Seats, * n^a	Nominated						Elected					
		Candidates		Faction		Non-faction		Seats		Faction		Non-faction	
		n^b	% ^c	n^d	% ^e	n^f	% ^g	n^h	% ⁱ	n^j	% ^k	n^l	% ^m
The Legislative Yuan Elections													
1980	70	30	42.86	11	36.66	19	63.33	29	96.66	11	100.00	18	94.74
1983	71	45	63.38	20	44.44	25	55.56	43	95.55	20	100.00	23	92.00
1986	73	46	63.01	19	41.30	27	58.70	40	86.95	16	84.21	24	88.89
1989	101	58	57.43	29	50.00	29	50.00	46	79.31	26	89.66	20	68.97
1992	125	98	78.40	58	59.18	40	40.82	62	63.26	38	65.52	24	60.00
Total	440	277	62.95	137	49.18	140	50.54	220	79.42	111	81.02	109	77.85
The National Assembly Elections													
1980	76	27	35.53	8	29.62	19	70.38	25	92.59	8	100.00	17	89.47
1986	84	38	45.24	15	39.47	23	60.53	34	89.47	13	86.67	21	91.30
1991	225	183	81.33	79	43.16	104	56.84	161	87.97	77	97.47	84	80.77
Total	385	248	64.42	102	41.13	146	58.87	220	88.71	98	96.07	122	83.56

Notes: $c = b/a$, $e = d/b$, $g = f/b$, $i = h/b$, $k = j/d$, and $m = l/f$.

*Excludes the number of seats of the overseas Chinese communities for years before 1989, and the numbers of seats of the national and overseas Chinese representatives distributed to the political parties based on the proportion of votes won by these parties since 1991. Sources: Chen (1995, pp. 226–227; see also Chen, 1996, pp. 187–189), and Central Election Commission (various years); the data have been compiled by the author.

4 The development of factionalism in the 1990s

Taiwanese society has experienced a series of dramatic political changes since the mid-1980s: the establishment of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in September 1986, the termination of martial law in July 1987, the proliferation of social protest movements beginning in 1987, and an unprecedented intra-party power struggle for the leadership of the KMT after the death of Chiang Ching-kuo in January 1988. These events signaled the decline of KMT authoritarian rule and the development of competitive politics (Wu, 1997, pp. 242–243). In the light of the DPP's electoral challenge, some KMT officials considered the time ripe for party reform, including a change from the top-down nomination system to a more democratic one.

In April 1989, the KMT approved a plan for closed primary elections although some expressed reservations. One common concern was that aspirants were subjected to two campaigns – primary and general election – for one election. Primaries, then, increased both election costs and the risks of rejection. Other critics openly raised fears of the possibilities of vote buying, factionalism and the under-representation of KMT party members among the total eligible electorate (Wu, 2001a, p. 28). Despite the criticisms, the KMT proceeded with the US-style primary election system for the year-end elections. The primary elections were expected to improve KMT ability to win more seats and public offices. Unexpectedly, the KMT vote share dropped from its normal level of 70% to below 60%. The KMT leadership considered the election its worst ever electoral setback, placing most of the blame on the primary election system (c.f. Wu and Fell, 2001).

Following the disappointing election performance in 1989, the KMT experienced internal strife that culminated in the party split in 1990. The intra-party elite conflict can be traced to the time of Chiang's death in January 1988 and Vice-President Lee Teng-hui's assumption of the presidency. Compared to the charismatic Chiang, Lee, a native Taiwanese, was considered a figurehead by some important mainlander players in post-Chiang transition politics. The setback at the polls caused KMT officials to ponder the party's leadership and the distribution of power within the party. The KMT's relationship with local factions was also hotly disputed. The party's official pronouncements were hostile to local factions, although the KMT continued constructing electoral alliances with them.

In February 1990, President Lee faced an unexpected intra-party challenge to his re-election bid, even though he had a highly favorable image and his approval ratings typically ranged between 80 and 90%. Lee's hesitation about deciding on a running mate for the pending presidential election created tensions between KMT leaders who hoped to be nominated. Open confrontation finally erupted when Lee announced his choice of Li Yuan-ze,

Secretary-General of the Presidency. Lee's major opponents then formed their own presidential ticket for approval by the KMT Central Committee. The counter-ticket was headed by Lin Yang-kang, President of the Judicial Yuan, with Chiang Wei-kuo, head of the National Security Council, as his vice-presidential nominee. The Lin-Chiang candidacy was viable because the president was not popularly elected, but chosen by the National Assembly, which, in turn, was mainly controlled by elderly mainlander parliamentarians, elected in 1947 and not subject to popular election.

The power struggle ended with decisions by Lin and Chiang to withdraw from the race in March 1990. By this time, the KMT inner circle was fractured between two opposing camps, the mainstream and the non-mainstream. The mainstream, known as the 'Taiwan KMT', was led by Lee and composed primarily of Taiwanese. Its counterpart, the non-mainstream, nicknamed the 'China KMT', was led by Lee's conservative adversaries and was predominantly composed from the mainlander élite.

In the midst of this party power struggle, the local factions played an increasingly important role in national politics, because of the mainstream's reliance on them to defeat its rivals. To reinforce political power, both the mainstream and non-mainstream camps sought allies in their struggle for control of the KMT. For one, in the Legislative Yuan, the Wisdom Club, a group of faction-backed native-Taiwanese KMT legislators, embraced a 'Taiwan first' agenda, placing priority on Taiwan's immediate development and needs over China's reunification. This group became the strongest supporters of the mainstream camp and harsh critics of the non-mainstream camp. In contrast, eleven young (second-generation) mainlander members of the New KMT Alliance advocated that the government should adopt further strategies to promote reunification; they were associates of the non-mainstream camp, and the most outspoken challengers of President Lee. In the National Assembly, KMT deputies also split over the practice of selecting the president. The mainstream camp members, mostly factional members, argued that the president should be subjected to direct election, shaping the government structure as a presidential system. Conversely, although non-mainstream adherents endorsed some reform, they opposed fundamental changes to the structure of government outlined in the Constitution, including indirect election of the president. The political cleavages and bickering between the two intra-party camps were often fiercer than those between the KMT and other political parties.

As a competitive party system began to take shape, the KMT leadership found itself challenged by both an assertive opposition outside the party and a cleavage among the ruling élite within the party. The 1991 and 1992 elections to the National Assembly and Legislative Yuan were considered a

milestone because all senior parliamentarians were forced to retire involuntarily. Therefore, the elections brought Taiwan two 'new' parliamentary bodies with delegates directly accountable to the voters. The elections also provided a critical public forum for disagreement between members of the mainstream and non-mainstream camps. The non-mainstream associates publicly advocated the holding of primary elections, because primaries benefited them. It was easy to see why. Their cohesion and conservative ideology encouraged the Huang Fu Hsing mainlander sympathizers to go to the polls, thus giving the non-mainstream camp an advantage. However, the coalition strategy of the mainstream camp, under President Lee's leadership, was quite straightforward, and that was to nominate more faction-supported aspirants (as shown in Tables 1 and 2), and to scratch the non-mainstream members from the nomination list. As expected, some non-mainstream cohorts decided to run without party approval. Those mavericks that ran as independents were mostly elected. They finally split from the KMT and announced the establishment of the New Party (NP) in August 1993.

With the departure of major non-mainstream figures, internal KMT disunity eased. With the full support of local factions, the KMT continued its electoral success and retained its political dominance, and local factions in turn steadily shared the privileges of access to political power and economic benefits through their connections to the KMT regime. The 1995 election to the Legislative Yuan was considered the prelude to the 1996 presidential and National Assembly elections. In the face of growing election competition from the DPP and NP, the KMT endorsed a large number of faction-supported candidates running under the party banner. The electoral results revealed that the governing party continued to hold onto a relative majority of the popular vote, although the percentages of votes (46.1%) and seats (52.3%) won by the KMT decreased modestly.

Among the four viable tickets competing in the 1996 presidential race, KMT incumbent Lee garnered a respectable majority (54%) of the total vote and became the first popularly elected president. With respect to elections for the National Assembly, the KMT received 49.7% of the votes to win 54.8% of total seats.³ The reasons Lee won a landslide victory are numerous. However, the collective support of local factions was a crucial contributing factor. Again, the KMT distributed patronage, favors and party nominations to co-opt local factions, and factions helped the KMT win the elections. Through this patronage system, the KMT and the factions institutionalized a mutual state–society dependency. Such a clientele structure, however, was

3 Election data for various years can be retrieved from the CEC & NCCU Election Databank. The system was jointly developed by the Central Election Commission, ROC and the Election Study Center, National Chengchi University; the website is: <http://vote.nccu.edu.tw/cec/cehead.asp>.

far from permanent. Once the KMT leadership consolidated its ruling base, it used strategies to diminish the importance of factionalism. One salient example was the critical agreement reached by the National Development Conference (NDC), a special non-partisan forum on national affairs convened in December 1996.⁴ The KMT proposed a resolution to suspend the election of Taiwan's provincial assembly and governorship, and then to abolish or downsize the provincial government.

According to the KMT, the objective of the elimination of the provincial assembly and government was to increase administrative efficiency, since the jurisdictions of the central and provincial governments were highly overlapping. Nevertheless, informants privy to the party's inner circle felt the undisclosed motive was to diminish the influence of local factions. In past decades, the provincial government and assembly were important vehicles by which resources and largesse were allocated to local factions in exchange for support, delivery of votes and campaign contributions. Once the KMT leadership had consolidated its political power, this device became functionally unnecessary. Meanwhile, the KMT, by abolishing provincial government, placated the politically significant Governor James Soong who was believed to be cultivating his own factional base and jockeying for a future presidential bid.⁵ To advocates of the freezing of provincial elections, a single move achieved several objectives simultaneously.

In the 1997 election for county magistrates and city mayors, the KMT nominated some non-factional candidates and in some districts allowed members without party nominations to run, its justification being the settlement of factional bickering. However, the maneuvering backfired. A number of factional aspirants that did not receive party blessing claimed to support party nominees, but did not mobilize substantial campaigns, and even decided to boycott the nominated candidates. As a result, the KMT suffered a crushing electoral loss. For the first time, DPP candidates received more seats than KMT candidates, and captured twelve out of twenty-three executive posts. The KMT captured eight of these posts, and independents captured three. In view of the unprecedented setback, the KMT reverted to the faction-coalition policy.

In the 1998 year-end elections, the KMT gained majorities in the Legislative Yuan and Kaohsiung city council and regained the Taipei mayoral post. Yet it lost the Kaohsiung mayoral election to the DPP and won less than half the seats in the Taipei city council. An examination of its nominations for the 1998 election to the Legislative Yuan shed light on the faction-based

4 For further details about the NDC, see Chao *et al.* (1997).

5 The above came from in-depth interviews with a number of unnamed KMT officials in August and September 1999.

strategy. According to the author's calculation, the share of faction nominees peaked; of the 115 KMT-recommended candidates for 168 district seats, 68 nominees (59.13%) were affiliated with local factions, 56 of whom (82.35%) were elected. In a sense, faction-backed candidates were apparently assured electoral success.

The 2000 presidential election was obviously a critical event that drastically changed Taiwan's political landscape. In August 1999, Lee Teng-hui's intra-party opponent, James Soong, argued in favor of a closed primary to nominate the KMT presidential candidate. His effort failed because Lee and the KMT hardliners felt that the primary system would render the nomination process totally unmanageable. Lee subsequently appointed Vice-President Lien Chan as the nominee, although the official candidate suffered from lukewarm grassroots support. Following his failure to get party blessing, the highly popular Soong decided to run as an independent for the presidency. The departure of this leading figure left the party on the verge of a split. In the DPP camp, Chen Shui-bian, the former mayor of Taipei municipality, effortlessly defeated his rivals.

A large number of KMT supporters and factional leaders were wondering whether Lien or Soong had a better chance to win. To a certain degree, both Lien and Soong sought to convince local factions to support them in order to prevent Chen's election. The electoral results showed that most of the KMT electorate and faction leaders chose Soong, who gained 36.8% of the vote to Lien's 23.1%. Chen won 39.3% of the vote, defeated the other candidates and won the election. No sooner had Chen declared his victory than furious KMT supporters placed the blame on Lee Teng-hui, encircling the party headquarters and demanding Lee's resignation as Chairman for the election débâcle (Wu, 2001, pp. 40–43). Subsequently, Lee and several of his associates were relieved of their KMT posts, and Lien took over Lee's position as acting chairman. Meanwhile, Soong and his core supporters split from the KMT and announced the establishment of the People First Party (PFP).

Chen's victory ended half a century of KMT control of central government, but left it with a majority in the Legislative Yuan. In other words, in 2000 Taiwan's political situation could be described as one of 'divided government' (Wu *et al.*, 2000). Divided government exists when both the chief executive and the legislators are separately elected and the executive's party is unable to control a majority of seats in the legislative chamber. Although Chen dominates the executive branch, the KMT remains the majority party in the Legislative Yuan (115 out of 225 seats). Taiwan's experience seemingly demonstrates that divided government leads to policy gridlock, executive-legislative deadlock, inefficiency and political stalemate.

At the time of writing, the Chen administration has been in power for

over thirteen months. In the past year, the government experienced such critical challenges as a shaky economy (characterized by a high unemployment rate and a slow economic growth rate), disputes over working hours between business leaders and labor unions, fragile cross-strait relations, controversies over the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant, the threat of impeachment of the President, and fierce antagonism between the DPP and the KMT–PFP–NP alliance in the Legislative Yuan. Chen and other DPP leaders placed most of the blame on the divided government. They firmly believed that the solution to political deadlock and stalemate is to win the year-end congressional election.

To that end, Chen invited the KMT ex-chair Lee Teng-hui to form a strategic alliance in June 2001. Lee was thought to feel the need to facilitate the DPP governing base. They proposed an '85 plus 35' majority-coalition plan; in the race, the DPP captures 85 seats in the parliament, while Lee's backers hold 35 seats. The Chen-Lee bloc is generally called Pan-DPP. As for the opposition, KMT, PFP and NP party leaders perceived a convergence of interests and decided to work together to continue their domination of Parliament. This alliance is commonly termed Pan-KMT. Not surprisingly, both Pan-DPP and Pan-KMT camps are trying to ally themselves with local factions in an attempt to dominate the electoral process. Simply put, factional clout should still play an important role in Taiwan's electoral politics.

5 Conclusion

Electoral politics is one of the best vantage points from which to observe the transformed relationship between the KMT and local factions. For decades, local factions exerted considerable influence over Taiwan's politics. Elections facilitated the role of factions as intermediaries in candidate selection and in the mobilization of grassroots voters. Factions, in partnership with the KMT, shared both political power and material benefits in exchange for their allegiance. The patron–client bond between the KMT and local factions helped solidify the KMT power base at the expense of political democratization. The alliance, moreover, helped preserve the economic privileges enjoyed by factions at the expense of public resources. Being aware of the negative influence of factionalism, the KMT changed its candidate selection strategies in an attempt to diminish the importance of factions in elections. The introduction of direct primary elections in 1989 and reforms to freeze provincial elections in 1997 were aimed at breaking the influence of local factions. They failed because local factions retaliated by not campaigning for KMT party candidates, thereby causing the KMT crushing electoral setbacks.

Over time, factional members cooperating with the KMT developed close relationships with various constituencies, and made them intimately aware

of the needs and desires of the people in their localities. As the political system opened up, not only for the opposition but also for the KMT rank-and-file, local factions began to exert greater pressure on KMT headquarters to address local demands. In part, this meant that traditional power-holders had to share power with factions when it came to setting the party's agenda, including the national political agenda and policies on Taiwan–China relations.

It goes without saying that economic resources are always the major incentive to local factions. Factionalism in the 1990s has been different from the patron–client relations of the authoritarian era. This transition is also reflected in the realm of Taiwan's cross-strait economic policy. A large number of Taiwanese enterprises, including faction-controlled ones, have rushed into the booming China market since the late 1980s. Due to its flourishing economic relationship with the mainland in the past decade, the Taiwan government has come under pressure to adopt more liberal trade policies towards China. Since the KMT has formed solid alliances with local factions, the influence of factional interests on the ruling authority is increasing. Also, faction-controlled enterprises could be an effective vehicle to put pressure on the government to make decisions that reflect their interests. With Taiwan's economy facing stagnation and entrepreneurs demanding that the government loosen its control over business investment in China, factional leaders push even harder to remove restrictions on cross-strait economic activities. To sum up, the influence of local factions and their business groups on Taiwan's cross-strait economic policymaking has been on the rise since the mid-1990s.

Political history repeats itself, but in a different arena. As Taiwan has gradually transformed from an authoritarian to a democratic country, the governing KMT has steadily lost ground to the opposition DPP. By 2000, the DPP controlled not only most governments at local level but also the central government. Even though in the past it has harshly denounced local factions and money politics, the DPP now pursues a faction-based electoral strategy because of the increased political and economic privileges associated with patronage. Viewed in this light, factionalism will remain an important component in Taiwan's politics for the foreseeable future.

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Appendix

Taiwan's local factions, 1951–2001

Municipality/county/city	Faction label(s)	Founding leader(s)
Keelung City	Su (Wen Hsieh) faction Hsieh faction Chen (mainstream)	Su Te-liang and Tsai Ping-huang Hsieh Kuan-yi and Hsieh Ching-yun Chen Cheng-hsiung
Taipei County	Tai faction ^a Shanchung Pang Chiu faction Kuo faction Liu faction Cheng faction Kuo Chih faction Lo faction Ta Chen faction Hsiao Chen faction Mai faction Chen faction (Tanshui) Li faction Lu faction Yu faction Lin Chiang faction Lin faction Chen faction (Wuku)	Tai Te-fa Lin Jung-shan Chiu Hai-shui Kuo Cheng-yi Liu Shun-tien Cheng Feng-shih Chen Kuo-chih Lo Fu-chu Chen Hsin-chiang Chen Ching-jiang Mai Chun-fu Chen Ken-wang and Lu Zu-chang Li Chien-hsin and Li Chien-ho Lu Fang-chi Yu Chien-tzu Lin Teh-his and Chiang Kuei-yuan Lin Ta-kun Chen Lin-jiang
Taoyuan County	Hakka faction ^a Yeh faction ^a Chung Li faction ^a Wu faction Chang faction ^a New faction ^a Liu faction	Hsu Shan-tung Yeh Han-ching Chen Chang-shou Wu Hung-shen and Wu Hung-lin Chang Fang-hsien Hsu Hsin-chih Liu Hsin-shan and Liu Pang-yu
Hsinchu City	West Hsu faction East Hsu faction	Hsu Chin-teh Hsu Chen-chieh
Hsinchu County	Su faction Sung faction Chen faction (Hsinpu) Lin faction Fan faction Wei faction ^a Chen faction (Kuanhsi) ^a Lo faction ^a New faction ^a Old faction ^a	Su Ting-ching Sung Chih-fa Chen Ting-hui and Chen Yi-peng Lin Pao-jen and Lin Kuang-hua Fan Cheng-chung Wei Yun-chieh Chen Chin-hsin Lo Peng Hsi-mei Yeh Kao-huo Hsu Yi-chuan
Miaoli County	Ta Liu faction Hsiao Liu faction Old Huang faction New Huang faction	Liu Kuo-chai Liu Ting-kuo Huang Yun-chin Lin Wei-kung
Taichung City	Chang faction Lai faction Ho faction Liao faction Chiu faction ^a	Chang Chi-chung Lai Jung-mu and Lai Jung-sung Ho Chun-mu and Ho Chun-shu Liao Jung-chi Chiu Chin-chou

Municipality/county/city	Faction labels	Founding leader(s)
Taichung County	Chen (Black) faction Lin (Red) faction Yang (the Third Force) faction	Chen Shiu-tan Li Ho-nien and Tsai Hung-wen Yang Tien-sheng
Changhua County	Lin faction White faction Chen faction Red faction	Lin Lu and Hung Fu Su Cheng-hui Chen Chieh-shang and Chen Ta-fu Lu Shih-ming
Nantou County	Li faction Hung Chiao-jung faction Chen faction Tangwai/DPP	Li Kuo-cheng Hung Chiao-jung and Chien Ching-chang Chen Wan and Lin Yi-chuan Chen Chi-chi and Lin Chung-nan
Yunlin County	Young China Party/Tangwai Lin faction Anti-lin faction Hsu faction Liao faction	Li Wan-chu, Su Tung-chi and Wang Yin-kui Lin Ching-sheng Chen Hai-shui Hsu Wen-chih and Liao Fu-pen Liao Chuan-yu
Chiayi City	Hsu Chia Pan Hsiao Chia Pan	Chan Chin-tung and Hsu Shih hsien Hsiao Teng-wang and Hsiao Teng-piao
Chiayi County	Huang faction Lin faction Liu faction ^a	Huang Lao-ta and Huang Wen-tao Lin Chen-jung Liu Chuan-lai
Tainan City	Wang faction ^a An Nan faction ^a Hsin faction ^a Huang faction ^a Lin faction Yeh faction ^a Ou faction ^a Wen Hsieh faction ^a Su faction ^a	Wang I-chi Hsin Wen-ping and Huang Yeh Hsin Wen-pin Huang Yeh Lin Chuan-yi and Lin Chuan-hsing Yeh Ting-kuei Ou Yun-ming Han Shih-chuan and Shen Jung Su Nan-sheng and Chen Sen-mao
Tainan County	Sea (North Gate) faction Mountain (Hu) faction Kao faction Shan Hsin faction	Wu San-lien, Chen Hua-chung and Kao Wen-ju Hu Lung-pao, Hung Ching-hisen and Yang Pao-fa Kao Yu-jen Yang Chun-yin
Penghu County	North faction ^a West (Lan) faction ^a East (Hsu) faction ^a South faction ^a Hsu Shu-yeh faction	Kao Shun-hsien Cheng Ta-chia Kao Shun-hsien and Hsu Chi-sheng Kuo Shih-tou Hsu Shu-yeh and Wang Chien-tung
Kaohsiung Municipality	Chia Ti (Local-born) Old faction Chia Ti (Local-born) New faction Wang faction Tainan faction Penghu faction Chiayi faction	Chen Chi-Chuan and Lin Chia Chen Chi-ching and Chen Tien-miao Wang Yu-yun Wu Chung-ling and Chen Wu-chang Hsueh Cheng-chiang and Huang Yao Chang Chun-hsiung
Kaohsiung County	Red faction White faction Black faction	Hung Jung-hua and Tai Liang-chin Chen Hsin-an and Lin Yuan-yuan Yu Teng-fa
Pingtung County	Chang faction Lin faction	Chang San-chung Lin Shih-cheng

Municipality/county/city	Faction label(s)	Founding leader(s)
Taitung County	Huang faction ^a	Huang To-jung
	Wu faction	Wu Chin-yu
	Taichung faction ^a	Hung Kua
	Yunlin faction ^a	Hsu Tien-chih
	Tainan faction ^a	Wang Hsi-wu
	Shao Chung (Youth) faction	Cheng Lieh
Hualien County	Fukienese faction	Yang Chung-ching and Huang Shou-fu
	Hakka faction	Lin Mao-sheng and Huang Ching-feng
Ilan County	Chen faction	Chen Chin-tung and Chen Chin-fu
	Lin (Lo Hsu) faction	Lin Mu-tien, Lo Wen-tang and Hsu Wen-cheng
	Chen Huo-tu faction	Chen Huo-tu
	Kuo Yu-hsin faction ^a	Kuo Yu-hsin
	Lu faction	Lu Chan-hsiang and Lu Yi-feng

^aDenotes faction which no longer exists in 2001.