

Environmental Movement in Democratizing Taiwan (1980–2004): A Political Opportunity Structure Perspective

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Environmentalism in Taiwan

Since the lifting of martial law in 1987, for the past 20 years, Taiwan has been riding on the global wave of democratization. In place of single-party dominance by the Kuomintang (KMT) over 50 years, a genuine system of party politics and contested elections gradually took root, with the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) victory in the 2000 presidential election as the climax. Past scholarship on Taiwan's transition tended to stress its controlled gradualism and the willingness to reform on the part of KMT leadership (Huntington 1991, 125–140). Newer studies have focused on the role of civil society, or “popular contentions” involved in the political transition (Diamond 1999, 235).

While “bringing civil society back in” is important in order to understand Taiwan's transition toward democracy, a crucial question of how social movements act upon as well as are influenced by the shifting political terrain between civil society and political elites. This chapter analyzes the more-than-two-decades development of environmentalism in Taiwan in order to understanding the social movement dynamics in the political transition toward democracy.

Simply put, environmentalism is a collective pursuit of better living quality. This definition, however, overlooks the fact that environmentalism comes in “many varieties.” Guha and Martinez-Alier (1997, 16–21), argue that the Northern environmental movement has focused on preserving the wilderness, while their poorer movements in the South have evoked themes of justice and

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human rights. While Taiwan as a developing nation witnessed both streams of environmentalism, focusing on the livelihood-centered environmentalism in Taiwan can help to shed light on the relationship between social movement and political transformation for following two reasons.

First, after tacitly giving up the militarist pledge to retake mainland China in the late-1950s, the KMT sought to build its legitimacy upon economic growth. To this end, the KMT claimed the need of strong leadership to suppress political dissents. As Taiwan successfully embarked upon export-oriented industrialization after the 1960s, prosperity became a convenient excuse to postpone the agenda of returning to constitutional democracy (Castells 1992, 56). To use Przeworski's (1991, 58) phrase, there was "a tacit barter" in which political acquiescence was obtained through economic affluence. The single-minded pursuit of economic strength without democratic accountability led to environmental degradation (Arrigo, 1994; Chi, 1994). In fact many popular anti-pollution protests in the 1980s targeted the much-touted Ten Great Construction Projects (*shih ta chienshe*). These projects included the construction of nuclear power plants and the development of the petrochemical industry. These projects were used by leaders to magnify the image of Taiwan's economic helmsmanship in the turbulent 1970s when diplomatic setbacks and succession crisis violently shook support for KMT authoritarianism. Since growth was taken to be the proof of "Great and Capable Government (*tayuwei te chengfu*)," pollution victims blamed their misfortunes upon the KMT incumbents. The rise of environmental protests demonstrated the existence of discontents under developmental dictatorship. Environmental grievances easily give rise to "a demanding civil society" (Hsiao 1990) that could have wider political reverberations during democratic transition.

Second, among advanced democratic countries, ecological questions constitute a *sui generis* site that cannot be squarely placed in the right-left ideological spectrum (Beck 1997, 148–151; Paehlke 1989, 184–193). As a new political issue, environmentalism challenged the hitherto pro-growth consensus shared by capital and organized labor. Offe (1990, 233) takes the emergence of widespread environmental protests as an indication of the decline of absorbing capacity of "normal politics," such as political party, parliament, and judicial system. However, in the case of late-democratizing Taiwan, nascent environmentalism encounters a declining authoritarianism. With the avenues of normal politics in the process of opening up, environmentalists found ample opportunities to form political alliance, lobby elected officials, and even run for political offices. Environmentalism inevitably becomes a political issue of contention between the DPP and the KMT.

Taiwan's environmentalism was thus "politicized" and played an important role in Taiwan's democratic transition. The political opportunity approach is a useful tool in understanding how movement activists in emerging democracies have responded to the shifting political atmosphere and how they have helped to build a more democratic political order.

The development of Taiwan's environmentalism is closely synchronized with successive stages in transition to democracy. Environmentalism came into being during the so-called soft authoritarianism period (1980–1986), as grassroots, intellectuals, and political opposition began to notice the severity of environmental degradation. The 1987 lifting of martial law ushered in the period of liberalization (1987–1992) when environmentalism was rapidly radicalized with more disruptive tactics and more overt alliance with the DPP. In the democratization period (1993–1999) environmentalism, using both protests and newly opened institutional venues, became institutionalized as a vital component of political life. After the 2000 power transfer, environmentalists were incorporated into the regime as a junior partner, though still critical of the DPP's conservative turn.

Democratic Transition as Shifting Political Opportunity Structure

Scholars on social movements during political transition have utilized the notion of political opportunity structure (Ekiert and Kubik 1999; Hipsher 1998a, 1998b; Kubik 1998; Oxhorn 1991, 1994, 2001). Political opportunity structure (POS) is a set of state-related variables that enable or constrain collective actors by either reducing or enhancing the cost of action. POS is a useful tool to measure the extent of shifting relationship between state and civil society in times of political turmoil. The POS approach in examining the trajectory of social movements can help to specify the casual mechanisms that either facilitate or hinder political transformation.

In order to understand the environmental movements' role in Taiwan's political transition POS is conceptualized as the combination of the following components:

- (1) *State autonomy*. State autonomy is the capacity with which incumbents formulate and promote policy independently of the dominant sectors or classes. Ruling elites with high-degree autonomy are not easily persuaded by social movements. But under emerging democracies incumbents, with the consent of ruling elites, can become a powerful instrument to promote movement goals. On the other hand, weaker states can be effortlessly penetrated by movements, but they are also less effective in realizing their promises (Jenkins 1995, 24). Generally, an insulated system of authoritarianism is more autonomous than an open democratic regime; hence, democratic transition predictably reduces state autonomy. In Taiwan the KMT's long incumbency helped it maintain power during transitional uncertainties with relatively few concessions in autonomy. The DPP's coming to power in 2000 drastically changed the hitherto familiar political terrain by weakening the state autonomy.
- (2) *Policing of protests*. This term "policing of protest" refers to whether policing agencies repress or tolerate street protest or crowd behavior (della Porta 1995, 55–58). Democratic states tend to tolerate popular protests.

But in the case of Taiwan, the policing of protest under the transition to democracy is far from straightforward. Before liberalization in 1987, unauthorized gatherings were outlawed. Liberalization served to restore some of the frozen civil liberties, which easily leads to the escalation of protests. After a brief spell of repression in the late-1980s, there is a clear trend to routinize and localize the policing decision as the political incumbents holding power become more tolerant of protests.

- (3) *Policy channel*. The availability of policy channels encourages environmental groups to adopt an assimilative strategy, rather than a confrontational one (Kitschelt 1986). The assimilative strategy is evident when activists garner routine access to policy decision-making, and can influence the incumbents, thus gaining an “insider” status with guaranteed leverage to promote desired policy outcome. Democratization, in a sense, entails what Dryzek (1996) calls political inclusion, or granting institutional representation to the excluded interests. In this regard, obtaining new policy channels is a concrete form of inclusion. Taiwan’s environmentalists have struggled in the political wilderness for many years until the regime shift in 2000 when they finally became an established, albeit junior and frequently disillusioned, insider.
- (4) *Political ally*. The presence of established allies helps social movements to gain political influence. Elites’ support comes in many forms, such as introducing legislative bills, championing movement causes, and protecting protestors from repression. With incumbents’ sympathy, movement demands have a greater chance of becoming policy initiatives and activists are more likely to be granted access to decision making. On the other hand, opposition elites’ support is also vital for a social movement to gain political visibility. In Taiwan’s case, environmentalists’ alliance with the DPP begins shortly after the lifting of martial law in 1987. Repression in the late-1980s unifies the alliance; however, the DPP’s centrist turn in the mid-1990s brings occasional conflicts. After 2000, with the DPP’s conservative orientation and the opposition parties’ indifference, the environmentalists are further deprived of political allies.

State autonomy, policing of protest, policy channels, and political allies are specific factors that affect how environmental groups organize their constituencies and present their political claims. The analytical utility of these factors help us to locate and specify the interaction between environmentalism and government.

Periodization of Democratic Transition and Environmental Protests

A series of critical events punctuated Taiwan’s transition toward democracy. In December 1979, authorities ruthlessly cracked down on an opposition-led human rights demonstration. The *Formosa Magazine Incident* led to the

imprisonment of many opposition leaders and marked the end of the first wave of political mobilization since the establishment of authoritarian regime in the 1950s. The lifting of martial law in June 1987 was a decisive concession by the KMT government and signaled tolerance toward political activities and protests within certain prescribed limits. Bans on public assembly, association, expression, and publication were loosened so as to accommodate the rise of civil society. The first open election for Legislative Yuan in December 1992 served as was the precursor to subsequent top-level elections. These elections included races for the Provincial Governor and Municipality Mayors in 1994 and President in 1996. These elections helped to constitute the new rules of democratic game. In March 2000, an unprecedented regime shift took place as the DPP's Chen Shui-bian won the presidential election. The DPP's coming to power, ending the KMT's protracted rule, was nothing less than the crowning achievement of Taiwan's democratization.

These events divided the democratic transition into four periods. The years between 1980 and 1986 can be characterized as a time of “*soft authoritarianism*” (Winckler, 1984). Despite the 1979 setback, the opposition was not vanquished and continued to challenge the KMT's rule by mobilizing electoral campaigns and publishing dissent magazines (Moody 1992, 162–166). In September 1986, the opposition gathered to proclaim the birth of DPP in defiance of the KMT's repeated warnings. During this period, partly due to the resilience of opposition, the KMT government did not revert to the previous “hard authoritarianism,” that is, coercive rule of security forces and threat. A greater degree of societal pluralism was tolerated and electoral seasons became “political holidays” when control was not fully enforced.

The second period (1987–1992) is *liberalization*, or “the process of making effective certain rights that protect both individuals and social groups from arbitrary or illegal acts committed by the state or third parties” (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 7–8). The 1987 decision to dismantle martial law entailed extending civil liberties. Right of public assembly and demonstration were partially restored in 1988 and right of association in 1989. The lowered cost of collective action encouraged various social movement sectors to use radical and politicized tactics, inevitably leading to a showdown with the KMT government. The interlude of Hau Pei-tsun's premiership (1990–1993) represented a backward-looking attempt to crack down on social and political protests. However, Hau's failure to curb the DPP's persistent electoral growth as well as the diffusion of protests pushed Taiwan's transition beyond the point of returning to the status quo.

Democratization (1993–1999) requires “open contestation over the right to win control of the government, this in turn requires free competitive elections, the results of which determine who governs” (Linz and Stepan 1996, 3). While liberalization removes restrictions on citizenship, democratization establishes a new rule of the game. In Taiwan, democratization begins with the convocation of popularly elected Legislative Yuan in early 1993, in which the DPP consolidated its status of the opposition party by gaining more than one-third of

seats. Contested elections in the mid-1990s signified the coming of age of party politics, which was largely aligned along the cleavage between the DPP and the KMT. By this time, the DPP was already poised to become the ruling party in Taiwan.

The fourth period of the DPP government occurred under the first term of Chen Shui-bian (2000–2004). During this period, polarizing conflicts between pan-blue and pan-green camps flared up. The DPP promising political reforms was first crippled by inexperience and then resisted by the stronger opposition parties in the parliament. Finally, the party was abandoned by the DPP incumbents themselves. A deep sense of disappointment arose because of “the regime’s failure to live up to its often extravagant election pledges” (Fell et al. 2006, 17). Nevertheless, the regime shift still produced far-reaching effects on civil society, including environmentalism.

The close relationship between the POS and environmental protests over the past two decades is clear. Figure 1 utilizes the above political periodization and the distribution of environmental protests from 1980 to 2002.

It is clear that protests grew steadily during the soft authoritarianism period, from four cases in 1980 to 30 cases in 1986. Evidently, popular discontents accumulated and occasionally burst out even under highly unfavorable condition. Secondly, the termination of martial law gave an impetus to the nascent protest wave. While the average annual case number in soft authoritarianism was 17.9, the figures for the first 3 years in the liberalization period were 29, 67 and 122. As the KMT’s harsher stance toward environmentalism took shape in 1989, the ascending tendency was temporarily bought to a halt before reaching



Fig. 1 Environmental protest cases in Taiwan (1980–2002)

Note: My data are mainly based on journalistic reports. For detailed methodological discussions, see Ho (2006, appendix)

the all-time peak in 1991 with 215 cases. Hau's repression certainly curbed the diffusion of protests, but only with momentary effect. More importantly government's crackdown backfired and incurred stronger responses from environmentalists.

Furthermore, during the 7-year period of democratization, protests reached a high point, with the annual average of 153.9 cases, much higher than that before the mid-1980s. The persistence of protests indicated that democracy raised the propensity to engage in protest among the populace. The frequency of protests during this period no longer varied as in the liberalization period. As the democratic rule of game were progressively established, environmental protests went beyond the turbulent climax and generated a more predictable pattern. In this sense environmentalism was institutionalized.

Although the data in Fig. 1 is limited to 2002, it is apparent that the DPP government brought about an additional downward trend in environmental protests. The first 3 years under the DPP saw 134, 73, and 96 cases respectively, significantly lower than that in the mid-1990s. With much weaker state autonomy, the DPP government did not and could not repress environmentalism. Rather, the POS was further opened as environmentalists were partly incorporated into the new regime. As a result, rule-breaking protests were more and more replaced by rule-following negotiations.

In sum, a longitudinal survey of Taiwan's environmental protests confirms that the frequency of protests is politically mediated (McAdam 1982, 40–43). Successive stages of democratic transition illustrate different combinations of facilitation and constraint that influence the frequency of protests. Taiwan's case is in congruent with Eisinger's (1973, 12) observation: protests are most likely to happen with a mixture of openness and closeness. In extreme repression (the soft authoritarianism is an approximate case) fear discourages private grievances from converting into public discontents. In extreme openness (the DPP government period) less demanding forms of collective action are chosen over protest.

Moreover, a cyclic pattern of "parabola of protest" (Tarrow 1989) is discernable. But it should be noted that authoritarianism is not the direct opposite of democracy just as two opposing curves of protest parabola are not perfectly symmetrical. Authoritarianism suppresses autonomous articulation of interests and thus any relaxation of control is bound to kick off a sharply ascending wave of protests. On the other hand, democracy guarantees basic rights of association and public assembly and, as a result, no matter how fully an interest is politically incorporated, protests are going to take place anyway. Hence, the descending curve of environmental protests is obviously more protracted and, arguably, unlikely to fall below the pre-1987 level. A more detailed analysis of the interaction between environmentalism and state in four periods can help demonstrate the complex wave of protest dynamics in the transition to democracy.

Fermentation Under Soft Authoritarianism (1980–1986)

Policy Channel: Exclusion by Official Environmentalism

In the late-1970s, the KMT government began to embrace the idea of national parks and recruited conservation experts and literary writers for planning and communication purposes (Huang 2002, 144–157). This occasion served as an important avenue through which conservation scholars exerted broader influences beyond their professional sphere. Beginning in 1980, these scholars grew more vocal in their opposition to some ecologically questionable projects, such as a housing project that endangered the mangrove along Tanshui River (1980), a proposed highway across the precipitous Jade Mountain region (1983) and a hydropower plant in Liwu River (1985). Though opposing these governmental projects, conservation scholars still enjoyed good relationship with some KMT officials, especially those who were younger, better-educated, and moderate in political outlook, whose patronage was vital in their campaign against economic technocrats. In 1982 these conservationists founded a quasi-official Society of Nature, Ecology, and Conservation with an ex-Minister of the Interior as the chairperson.

Due to the promotional effort by conservationists, the KMT government was more aware of the problem of environmental degradation. A sub-cabinet level Environmental Protection Board (EPB) was established in 1982. Its first director frankly acknowledged the severity of pollution and attributed its cause to the previous “development-first” orientation (Chuang 1984). Even President Chiang Ching-kuo mentioned the need to cultivate the “sense of law-obeying as a duty among businesspersons and general populace” in order to protect environment better (Chang 1984).

The cooperation between conservationists and KMT liberals gave rise to what could be called “official environmentalism” (Hicks 1996, 76–78). Voluntarily or not, pro-regime conservationists’ scope of action refrained from mentioning politically sensitive issues (ex. nuclear energy and industrial pollution). The KMT was willing to tolerate the criticisms of conservationists as long as they could provide professional advice to aid in modernizing environmental administration.

Another group of academic scholars raised questions concerning nuclear power. Since the energy crisis in the 1970s, the KMT government stepped up the use of nuclear technology and had built three nuclear power plants by the end of the decade. Nuclear energy remained a sensitive issue because the KMT government was believed to be involved in covertly developing atomic weapons. In the early-1980s, environmental scholars, best exemplified by Lin Jun-yi (Edgar Lin), a biologist and Chang Kuo-lung, a physicist, became more and more vocal in their opposition to nuclear energy. These America-trained professionals were galvanized by the aftershock of Three Mile Island Incident in 1979 and were dismayed to find lack of discussion back home in Taiwan.

They wrote anti-nuclear articles in the beginning, and then as a series of domestic nuclear incidents and the 1986 Chernobyl disaster heightened the salience of nuclear issues; they were invited to participate in nationally telecast debates (Ho 2003, 688–690).

As the proposed Fourth Nuclear Power Plant project underwent budgetary review, its inflated cost and other management issues raised eyebrows among politicians and officials. In 1985, fifty-five KMT legislators as well as six opposition legislators moved to suspend the controversial project. The executive branch finally agreed to this suspension. This unexpected victory boosted the morale of anti-nuclear activists. Later that year, they launched the publication of the environmental magazine entitled *New Environment* [*shin huanching*]. Choosing the organizational form of a magazine publication was an expedient way to get around the martial law regulation which outlawed more than one public association aimed at a specific issue.

Political Ally: The Political Opposition as a Bystander

As environmental issues received more public attention, the opposition took note of the political opportunities available to the movement. Taiwan's opposition movement was stimulated by the electoral victory in 1977 (Gold 1986, 116). Following the election were 2 years of intensive mobilization leading to an inevitable showdown with the KMT regime. During this period the opposition leadership became bolder and ready to challenge the KMT's political hegemony. In 1979, the opposition coalesced into a magazine publisher that served as a de-facto party organization. At that time, no other political parties aside from the KMT and its two puppet parties were allowed. On December 10, the opposition staged a Human Rights Day parade that resulted in violent clashes with police. The KMT government launched a nationwide round-up and court-martialed opposition leaders. The so-called Formosa Magazine Incident brought about an abrupt halt to the escalating opposition movement (Jacobs 1981).

In the early-1980s, the opposition gradually recuperated from the Formosa Magazine incident. Aside from challenging the regime during elections, the opposition also published dissent magazines aimed at exposing and criticizing the KMT's wrongdoings. With the senior leadership in prison, the younger generation of activists advocated a more broadly based perspective to guide the opposition movement. For young activists, Taiwan's environmental troubles were not only proof of dysfunctional authoritarianism, but also could serve as a useful leverage to mobilize a popular front against the KMT. One of the opposition's publications during this period, the *Life and Environment Magazine* [*shenghuo yü huanching*] (1981–1982), was a short-lived attempt to merge political criticism and ecological awareness. In another publication, the writers and editors from *Forward Weekly* [*ch'ienchin*] (1983–1988) introduced ecological thought and

Table 1 Environment-related articles in dissent magazines (1981–1986)

Year	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986
Number of articles	4	5	5	30	59	61

argued for a German green party model of domestic opposition. Environmental awareness was not limited to these two publications. From a content analysis of the ten leading dissent magazines published from 1980 to 1986, a total of 164 articles touched on environmental topics (see Table 1).

This content analysis clearly demonstrates the progressive attention that the opposition paid to the burgeoning environmental problems all over Taiwan. While 45% of the articles dealt with nuclear energy and 36% with pollution, politically “harmless” conservation issues only took up 5%. The opposition’s political focus on the tangible grievances of the pollution and nuclear waste fueled the growing anti-KMT public sentiment.

However, oppositional leaders maintained the role of bystander instead of as participants in anti-pollution protests that began to mushroom during this period. Perhaps the political oppositional leadership refrained from environmental protest because before 1987 the opposition was simply too weak to offer patronage to protestors. In 1986 the political opposition with limited seats of elected officials and representatives, low media attention under martial law censorship, and no bona-fide national-level organization until the founding of the DPP, had few political resources to offer to the environmental movement. Second, the opposition was under greater surveillance than anti-pollution protests. The environmental movement was less vulnerable to government repression since their mobilizing networks were localized and their protests unpredictable. Under this situation, environmental protest activists had little need for outside assistance from the oppositional leadership. Finally, even though opposition leaders and activists were sometimes involved in environmental protests, their high political profile was often in conflict with the majority of victims whose protest were aimed at targeting polluters rather than challenging the authoritarian nature of the KMT regime.

The Emergence of Environmental Movement

The emergence of the environmental movement in Taiwan was marked by protest against a chemical plant of Sunko Ink Co. in Taichung County (1982–1986). Local villagers complained about the poisonous gas emitted by Sunko since 1982 but their constant petitions to higher authorities were ignored.¹ Several times angry farmers broke into the factory compound and sabotaged production facilities. In 1985 Sunko owners formally agreed to

¹ *China Times* 1986/4/28.

relocate their production within 1 year. Strong grassroots pressure forced the factory owner to keep his promise.² Liao Yung-lai, the opposition activist who later became the first DPP Taichung County Magistrate (1998–2001), was an important figure in the Sunko protest. Originally a local schoolteacher, Liao joined the writing staff of a dissent magazine before he turned his attention to Sunko pollution. His opposition background raised suspicions among local protest leadership who kept a good relationship with the KMT Magistrate. The magistrate could play a vital role in mediating and securing the 1985 relocation agreement. After the factory's successful relocation, pragmatic leaders wanted to redevelop the polluted land with the government's assistance. And this redevelopment proposal gave rise to a fractional fracas that ended in Liao's ousting in 1988 (Liao 1989, 92–94).

The Sunko protest was significant in that it gave birth to the first grassroots-based environmental organization in Taiwan, the Taichung County Pollution Prevention Society formed in 1984. In addition this protest also served as a model for the Lukang protest against DuPont (1986–1987) (Reardon-Anderson 1992). Lukang was a seaside commercial town in Changhwa County, also located in central Taiwan. In early 1986 a nonpartisan candidate for town mayor staged a mass petition against a government-approved investment plan by the American corporation DuPont. The electoral success of this nonpartisan candidate led local opposition to form a bona-fide environmental movement. In June 1986 an unprecedented mass demonstration was held in Lukang. Though police intervention kept the marching crowd from completing their planned route, the movement instantly became a national sensation. In December Lukang townspeople staged a guerrilla-style protest in front of the Presidential House in Taipei. On their 200-kilometer route to Taipei, their buses were intercepted and harassed by military officers. They were granted permits to continue travel only after a lengthy negotiation (for details see Nien 1997, 26–35). These episodes clearly demonstrate the limited space for public assembly under the martial law regime.

Like the Sunko case, the oppositional leadership and activists only played a marginal role despite their effort to take the credit after DuPont decided to pull out its investment in March 1987. During the 1986 Legislative Yuan election, an opposition candidate staged a campaign rally in Lukang with an explicit anti-DuPont message. But this move was rejected by local movement leadership because the opposition candidates were seen as unabashed political opportunists (Lin M. 1989b: 180). Lukang's environmental leadership wanted to stay away from the troubled water of partisan politics. When some guest speakers tried to raise criticism on the KMT government, they were quickly hushed and asked to step down the podium.³ Despite the failure of environmentalist to form

² *Chunghwa Daily* 1985/6/6.

³ Interview with the Chairperson of Hsinchu City Pollution Prevention Society (1987), 1999/4/20.

coalitions with opposition leaders, grassroots environmental activism continued to grow during this period. Inspired by the Sunko protest, Lukang activists also organized a Changhwa County Pollution Prevention Society in 1986 to mobilize local opposition.

From a historical perspective, Tilly (2004, 52) saw special-purpose association and special-purpose public meeting as two defining characteristics of social movements. By using this criterion, we can safely date the birth of Taiwan's environmental movement back to the mid-1980s. The Sunko protest gave rise to a special-purpose association in 1984, while the Lukang townspeople demonstrated the power of special-purpose public meeting in 1986. In other words, the period of soft authoritarianism could be seen as long and gradual fermentation for Taiwan's environmentalism.

Radicalization in Liberalization (1987–1992)

Policy Channel: Exclusion by Preemptive Response

Facing the mounting domestic pressures, the KMT government decided to lift the martial law in July 1987. This reform was a means by which the government sought to preempt the growing demands of the environmental movement. According to Gamson (1975, 29), preemption meant that officials acknowledged the validity of movement claims and readdressed the grievances, but refused to accept the legitimacy of movement organization and their protests. A cabinet-level Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) was formed in August 1987, and many regulatory laws concerning waste, wildlife, and pollution were speedily enacted or revised (Yeh 1993, 28). At that time, officials were confident in their policy initiatives as evidenced by Premier Yu Kou-hua's pronouncement to "preserve environmental qualities even at the cost of economic growth."⁴

Officials' optimism did not entail their tolerance or acceptance of environmental protests. Grassroots environmentalism were still viewed with suspicion, thus when some Legislators suggested to incorporate environmental groups into the 1992 Public Nuisance Disputes Mediation Act, the EPA officials were adamant in their opposition. An earlier inside document revealed such bias in that the general populace were said to be "too emotional to be rationally negotiated with" (EPA 1988, 13). In fact the first EPA Director once deplored the fact that while environmental consciousness was widespread, environmental knowledge was limited to a few.⁵ Under this situation, meaningful policy participation was out of the question for environmentalists.

⁴ *Independent Evening Post*, 1987/9/7.

⁵ *Independent Evening Post*, 1987/9/8.

Policing of Protests: From Tolerant to Repressive

The demise of martial law regime also necessitated a more liberal style of policing of protests. A system that specified advanced application and police approval as requirements for legal public gathering was decreed immediately and formally enacted in 1988.⁶ In addition to opening the space for public assembly, officials were also uncharacteristically lenient toward environmental protests. Less than 2 weeks after the lifting of martial law, Houchin community in Kaohsiung City organized a blockade against an expansion project by the China Petroleum Company. For more than 3 years, Houchin protestors prevented the state-owned refinery from using one of its main entrances. Though local policemen sought to break local opposition by force to no avail, several minor violent clashes did not lead to prosecution (Ho 2005a: 239).

With sharply rising environmental protests, the tolerant style of policing during the early liberalization period underwent considerable strains. In September 1988, the whole Linyuan petrochemical zone was shut down by angry fishermen for 3 weeks. Since that industrial complex was a key upstream provider, the conflict evolved into a severe crisis of Taiwan's petrochemical industry. During lengthy negotiation, economic officials threatened to use police force to disperse the crowd. After the government and companies agreed to pay an unprecedented compensation of NT\$ 1.3 billion to local victims, the crisis was finally settled.⁷

The Linyuan incident demonstrated the explosive disruptiveness of the anti-pollution issue. Alarmed, Taiwan's capitalists began to voice their impatience with these "non-economic factors" which they viewed as damping investment incentives (Wang 1993, 84–85). For officials, the Linyuan incident was also an embarrassing lesson. It exposed the fact that they did not possess any guideline or procedure to deal with these aggressive claims for compensation. After the incident, there was a visible shift in the official attitude. The initial tolerance was gradually replaced by a more repressive stand. In 1989 the EPA explicitly stated that the government would never accept violence as a legitimate means for monetary compensation, legal impunity, plant relocation, and other demands (EPA 1994, 40).

The authoritarian turn culminated in the appointment of Hau Pei-tsun as Premier in May 1990. During his tenure, Hau viewed the rise of popular protests as a deplorable consequence of weakened public authorities. Thus he adopted a repressive stand by branding environmental activists as "bullies [*liumang*]" and beefing up the police force.

Hau espoused a zero-tolerance attitude toward disruptive anti-pollution protests. In May 1992 Talinpu residents in Kaohsiung City staged a blockade against one China Petroleum Company refinery. In many ways the Talinpu

⁶ *China Times* 1987/7/15.

⁷ *Central Daily* 1988/10/13, 15.

incident was similar to the Linyuan incident 4 years ago. Talinpu and Linyuan were adjacent, and both communities suffered from petrochemical pollution since in the late-1970s. Like its predecessor, Talinpu people demanded immediate compensation in regard to an industrial accident. Hau visited the besieged plant and denounced the protesters vehemently. Four days later, police broke up the blockade, brutally beat up the local people, and as a result prosecuted thirty-nine participants.⁸

Political Ally: Alliance with the DPP

Liberalization also brought about closer relationship between the opposition and environmentalism. When the DPP was founded in September 1986, the party charter was enshrined with an anti-nuclear clause and a pro-environmental platform. More specifically, the DPP sought to build working ties with environmentalists through both its party organization and individual politicians. The DPP set up a Department of Social Movements with the explicit purpose of maintaining liaisons with other movement organizations. The DPP's New Tide faction that originated from a coterie of dissent magazine writers in the early-1980s, advocated a more radical approach against the KMT. The New Tide was instrumental in the founding of the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (TEPU) in November 1987, a federated environmental organization with local chapters, with Liao Yung-lai as its first secretary-general. Finally, DPP's elected politicians possessed all kinds of resources important for environmentalists. Many TEPU local chapters shared the same office space with DPP politicians for the sake of rent.⁹ Politicians' campaign vehicles were loaned to environmentalists during public protests.¹⁰

Obviously the DPP played a vital political role in shepherding the emerging environmental protests. For the DPP, environmental protests invariably weakened the KMT's entrenched local base. While the DPP's calculation was largely responsible for the pull factor in forging a political alliance with the environmental movement, the push factor came from the KMT's repression since 1989. In order to resist Hau's imposition of martial law, environmentalists visibly tilted toward the DPP camp. As an activist put it, DPP politicians' participation came with "the right to be exempted from being beaten up in the street."¹¹ In other words, the KMT's tougher stance on public protest resulted in a tighter alliance between the opposition party and environmentalism.

⁸ *China Times*, 1992/7/28.

⁹ Interview with the Chairperson of Hualien County TEPU (1990-1992), 1999/8/19.

¹⁰ Interview with an Executive Director of Northern Political Victims Foundation (1988), 1999/7/15.

¹¹ Interview with the Vice-chairperson of TEPU (1999), 1999/3/3.

Radicalization

The combined effect of tolerant policing, a preemptive policy response by political authorities and a political alliance bridging the DPP with environmental groups, radicalized the environmental movement during this period. The lifting of martial law immediately triggered a climbing protest wave. One discernible trend was the diffusion of mass demonstration tactics by various activists across the political spectrum. Beginning in 1989 the anti-nuclear demonstration became an annual event to highlight popular opposition to the controversial Fourth Nuclear Power Plant. Even among more moderate conservationists street politics was an irresistible *zeitgeist*. Middle-class conservationists held a mass rally to preserve Taiwan's forest in 1988,¹² and another to expedite the ratification of Wildlife Conservation Law in 1989.¹³

Another sign of radicalization was the rapid political shift of environmentalists toward a pro-DPP stance. Taiwan's anti-nuclear pioneer Lin Jun-yi obtained DPP membership and won a position in the Legislative Yuan election in 1989. Li Jun-vi explained his motive for shifting to electoral concerns: "Deplorably, all big and small problems in Taiwanese society for the past more than 40 years came from the anti-democratic politics. If this anti-democratic original sin cannot be eradicated, civil society and intellectuals will not be effective..." (Lin J. 1989a)

More environmentalists followed the trend by jumping on the election bandwagon. According to Lin's assessment, as the KMT stepped up its repression of social movements, political solution became the only choice. Another anti-nuclear academic scholar Chang Kuo-lung was active in the students' movement against the KMT government in March 1990. Later he was recruited by the newly elected DPP Taipei County Magistrate to serve as a privy aide.

Likewise, the TEPU (Taiwan Environmental Protection Union) had seventeen members who joined the 1989 election¹⁴ and twelve for 1991 election.¹⁵ The fact that all these TEPU candidates were of the DPP membership is no surprise since that organization was pro-DPP from the onset. Nevertheless the TEPU's approach to election gravitated toward more direct involvement. The TEPU utilized the slogan "Don't Vote the KMT, If You Are Anti-Nuclear" and endorsed eight DPP mayor and magistrate candidates in 1989. In the following elections of 1991 and 1992, the TEPU joined hands with other movement organizations and spoke at campaign events nationwide.¹⁶ Scantly disguised partisanship was a tolerable risk for environmental activists because they had

¹² *China Times* 1988/3/13.

¹³ *Minsheng Daily* 1989/4/15.

¹⁴ *Taiwan Huanching* [Taiwan's Environment] 19(1989): 3.

¹⁵ *China Times* 1991/11/22.

¹⁶ *Taiwan Huanching* [Taiwan's Environment] 42(1991): 8-11.

no access to the KMT-controlled media, but could use the DPP's electoral campaign to broadcast their messages.

Taiwan's anti-nuclear movement rode the radicalizing wave during these years. While the nuclear debate was largely a "gentlemen's disagreement" among scholars, experts, and politicians prior to the liberalization, within less than 6 months after the end of martial law, mass rally and grassroots organizing came onto the stage. Residents of Kongliao whose hometown was the designated construction site for the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant, were mobilized and became the vanguard of the recent anti-nuclear camp (Ho 2003, 692–696). Further the anti-nuclear movement established a solid alliance with the DPP. While the DPP's long tenure in Taipei County Magistrate (1990–2005) provided Kongliao activists a reliable ally to fight the pro-nuclear central government, the KMT's crackdown on a local blockade in October 1991 pushed them closer to the DPP.¹⁷

The KMT's reinforced political repression failed to curb the growth of environmentalism. First as stated in the above, the majority of Taiwan's anti-pollution protests were locally embedded. When dealing with a formalized social movement organization, a repressive regime could round up the movement leadership, confiscate physical property, and deprive organizations of their legal status. However the highly decentralized nature of anti-pollution protests stultified a concerted repression from above. There was simply no way to single out the targets unless the incumbents were willing to risk the political ramifications of indiscriminate violence. Consequently when the government concentrated its attention on the major cases, such as Houchin (1990), Kongliao (1991), and Talinpu (1992), protest activity escalated.

Second, the issue of environmental protests touched a sensitive nerve in the liberalizing KMT regime, which was then largely composed of two potentially conflicting sectors of bureaucratic technocrats and elected politicians. Unlike officials in the central government, local representatives and executives were directly accountable to their constituencies, whose voice often spoke louder than their partisan superiors. As democratization made elections more competitive, politicians had more incentives to support the pollution victims in their district. Thus even local KMT politicians would endorse protests in defiance against their national leadership. During the 1991 election, four township mayors in northern Taoyuan County took the lead to demand compensation from a nearby power plant. They claimed the power plant had damaged fishery, farms, and public health and thus deserved instant compensation.¹⁸ This incident precipitated a wave of compensation demands, as politicians in Taipei County and Taichung County sought similar demands at the site of their local power plants.¹⁹ What was especially embarrassing for Premier Hau was the fact the political leadership was

¹⁷ *United Daily* 1991/10/4.

¹⁸ *China Times*, 1991/11/1.

¹⁹ *China Times*, 1991/12/1.

mostly of KMT membership. Clearly environmental grievances succeeded in driving a wedge in the KMT ruling bloc and as the rift between bureaucrats and politicians widened, the effect of repression was greatly cushioned.

Last, Hau's premiership ended with the KMT's debacle in the 1992 election, in which the DPP obtained more than one-third of the seats in Legislative Yuan. While it was certainly impossible to precisely assess, many analysts contend that the contribution from environmentalism as well as other movement sectors was significant in the election outcome. The DPP was a net gainer from the alliance with environmentalism since it had succeeded in monopolizing the political market of pollution victims and the environment-conscious middle class.

Institutionalization in Democratization (1993–1999)

Democratization by definition means a process of establishing new political institutions that enable peaceful contestation for power through elections. It also involves what Foweraker (1993, 145) calls "linkage politics," or the realignment between civil society groups and political institutions. This section is going to show how changes in policy channel, policing of protests, and political alliance affected Taiwan's environmentalism in the 1990s.

Partially Open Policy Channel

Compared with the earlier period of liberalization in Taiwan, policy channels opened in the mid-1990s. Two newly formed institutions, the wildlife conservation advisory committee and the environmental impact assessment (EIA), were critical in shaping the relationship between environmental groups and government.

Taiwan's Wildlife Conservation Law was passed in 1989 and substantially revised in 1994. This modification was partly a defensive response to the international criticism aimed at Taiwan's alleged rhino horn trade that erupted as a scandal 1 year earlier (Chen 2001, 632). The law was also a result of extensive domestic environmentalists' lobbying efforts. During this period, there was confluence between anti-pollution protests and conservationism. Both sectors joined forces since many developmental projects were located in ecologically sensitive areas. Environmentalists began to pay attention to the wildlife issue and successfully obtained the official agreement to incorporate their participation.²⁰ In 1996–1998, twelve out of the twenty-five wildlife conservation advisory committee members were recommended by NGOs, including eight activists and four independent experts.²¹

²⁰ *United Daily* 1995/7/2.

²¹ This information was provided by Ecological Conservation Alliance (1999/12).

During this period of democratization, environmentalists were officially invited to join the governmental decision-making process. Needless to say, NGO advisory committee members were eager to promote the establishment of conservation areas to forestall some ecologically unsound projects. These projects included the Hsiangshan industrial zone, the Pinnan industrial zone, and the Meinung dam.²² As a result of the political inclusion of environmentalists, these controversial projects were immediately suspended. Yet, officials in charge of these projects did not take these advisory committee decisions seriously. As a participant on one committee put it, "It is one thing how we argue in the meeting and another how they make it after the meeting."²³ Officials could simply cite a host of reasons to ignore the committee's recommendations.

The EIA in Taiwan underwent a period of development involving the process of experimenting, training, and promoting environmental assessment before it was finally enacted as a law in 1994. During the legislative process from 1990 to 1994, democratization continued, a newly elected parliament with a substantial block of seats occupied by the DPP, supported the TEPU-led lobbying effort to boast the EIA's regulatory power. As stipulated in the 1994 law, the EIA was granted an enlarged scope of review and empowered to veto developmental projects. Another EIA reform involved detailed specifications outlining the procedures for public participation in EIA hearings. All these changes were made in defiance of economic officials who suspected that a more powerful EIA would delay their capital investment projects (Ho 2004, 240–244).

These environmentalists' victories in the EIA legislation clearly demonstrated the extent of Taiwan's democratization (Tang and Tang 2000). However, these reforms constituted partial victories for environmentalists since they were still barred from meaningful participation in the EIA review process. Citing the precedent of wildlife conservation advisory committee, environmentalists requested the EPA for the right to recommend EIA reviewers.²⁴ The EPA Director resolutely turned down this suggestion by characterizing environmental groups as "extreme" and "biased."²⁵ Consequently, environmentalists were prevented from gaining an officially recognized place in EIA, though this did not preclude environmentalists from testifying at public hearings during EIA meetings. By the use of friendly politicians' pressure, environmentalists could still force the reluctant EPA officials to accept their testimony and to publicize embarrassing facts about controversial projects.²⁶

²² *United Daily* 1996/12/7.

²³ Interview with the secretary-general of New Environment Foundation (1994–1996), 1999/4/21.

²⁴ *Independent Morning Post* 1995/8/25.

²⁵ *Minsheng Daily* 1995/7/14.

²⁶ Interview with the chairperson of Taiwan Greenpeace (1999), 1999/2/9.

In sum, policy channels were slightly opened for environmentalists under a period of democratization in Taiwan. Once opened, environmentalists became disillusioned with the policy-making process when they were granted the right to participate in inconsequential official public hearings, and to help in redesigning a critical institution to which they were formally denied access. Yet, democratization certainly improved the status of environmental activists in the eyes of officials. In addition these partially opened avenues had the effect of reshaping the strategy of the environmental movement.

Policing of Protests: Routinization and Localization

During the period of democratization in Taiwan, environmental movements were institutionalized. As protests were routinized, they became less threatening to the regime. Two trends in policing of environmental protests took place in the mid-1990s. First, the politicized policing promoted by Premier Hau gave way to the routinized policing that treated protest as an orchestrated event. Second, localized policing meant that command was delegated to the lower level of police system, rather than controlled by the central government. EPA officials acknowledged that the direct intervention of central government “was viewed with suspicion and even had the potential to intensify public nuisance conflicts” (EPA 1994, 52).

These reforms involving the routinization of protest and localized policing were tested and proved effective in a series of protest incidents. In April 1993, the polluted Tashe petrochemical industrial zone was blockaded and shut down by residents. In a fashion similar to the 1988 Linyuan Incident and 1992 Talinpu Incident, Taiwan’s petrochemical industry production was seriously disrupted. During the month-long negotiation, newly appointed Premier Lien Chan threatened to halt the blockade declaring the tactic “the illegal method.”²⁷ Meanwhile the besieged companies declared “their nostalgia for Premier Hau,” or more explicitly, advocated the active deployment of the police force by the central government.²⁸ Nevertheless it was the local government of Kaohsiung County that mediated the dispute and maintained public order in the protest scene. The peaceful conclusion of the Tashe Incident established the precedent for the new style of policing.

In 1995, two environmental disputes related to the Taiwan Cement Corporation and the Formosa Plastic Group prompted the KMT government to reconsider its hitherto tolerant attitude. Since the two companies were well-endowed with political and economic resources, they were able to exert tremendous political pressure on government officials. In a vehement denunciation of environmental protests, the Minister of Economic Affairs likened

²⁷ *Economic Daily* 1993/4/8.

²⁸ *United Daily* 1993/4/13.

environmental protests to “amphetamine addiction.”²⁹ Nevertheless the government finally came to a formal decision not to “interfere in the local affairs which should be processed by local governments according to the legal procedure.”³⁰ Yet, in the following year the Executive Yuan submitted an amendment proposal to the Public Nuisance Disputes Mediation Act that would require local executives to direct the police force to remove protestors exhibiting “violent behaviors.”³¹ During the legislative review, the DPP Legislators opposed this addition and their insistence dissuaded the officials from advocating this restriction on public protest.

The power shortage crisis after the 1999 earthquake likewise threatened to curtail routinized and localized protesting. The KMT government issued an emergency decree to expedite the review process of some controversial power plants and use police force to suppress popular opposition. When opposed by politicians and the general public, the KMT government agreed to limit the scope of emergency decree and sought approval from the Legislative Yuan.³² Thus, routinized and localized policing was established as the official policy around the mid-1990s and was maintained even after the power transfer in 2000.

Political Ally: Estranged Alliance with the DPP

As the DPP consolidated power throughout the 1990s, its political alliance with the environmentalists suffered from growing estrangement. In the past few if any DPP elites envisioned electoral victories over the KMT, but now with more seats in Legislative Yuan and local executives, the more confident DPP was ready to looking for broader constituencies beyond the social movement sector. By championing environmental protests since the late-1980s, the DPP were often branded as “anti-business [*fan shang*],” an unsightly label which the DPP now desired to quickly whitewash.

The estranged political alliance between the DPP and the environmental movement was clearly evident in three instances. First, the DPP remained silent on new environmental controversies. The 1994 Pinnan Industrial zone project included an ambitious land reclamation that would destroy an ecologically sensitive wetland in Tainan County. The project was fiercely opposed by environmentalists. The DPP, however, was internally divided since its County Magistrate was in favor of it, while one of its locally elected Legislators, Su Huan-chi, led the opposition movement. Environmentalists once petitioned the

²⁹ *Commercial Times* 1995/11/29.

³⁰ *United Daily* 1995/9/13.

³¹ *Chunghwa Daily* 1996/1/23.

³² *Independent Evening Post* 1999/10/21.

DPP national office but only got an equivocal answer.³³ Thus the national office distanced the party from local environmental issues.

A second example was the DPP's reversal of promises made to the anti-nuclear movement. In May 1996 a motion to terminate all nuclear power plant construction was co-sponsored by the DPP and another opposition party, the New Party. Since the KMT Legislators, were divided, the anti-nuclear proposal successfully passed three readings.³⁴ In October the KMT government in an attempt to overturn the anti-nuclear proposal, utilized the constitutional tool requiring only one-third of the Legislators to pass "re-consideration." Anti-nuclear activists asked the DPP to resist the re-consideration of the anti-nuclear bill from being placed in the agenda. However, the DPP leadership tacitly made a deal with the KMT and publicly projected opposition to the reconsideration bill in order to satisfy the anti-nuclear camp. On October 18, as startling news of the DPP's betrayal was divulged to the anti-nuclear crowd outside the Legislative Yuan, they vented their anger at the DPP Legislators and a violent clash ensued. This unhappy incident further aggravated the already tenuous relationship between the DPP and environmentalists (Ho 2003, 701–703).

A third example of the DPP's distancing from the environmental movement, occurred when the DPP sought to cultivate friendlier relations with business. A relevant case here was the Bayer investment proposal in Taichung County in 1996–1998. The DPP politicians played an important role in organizing local opposition to this project which was showcased by the KMT government.³⁵ Things took a drastic turn as the anti-Bayer leader, Liao Yung-lai, was elected as County Magistrate in December 1997 vowing to put the Bayer case on a local referendum. The prospect of a local referendum on the investment proposal frightened business leaders, the KMT, as well as the DPP national leadership.³⁶ Facing mounting pressure, the DPP chairperson overrode its local executive by arguing for a public hearing instead of a referendum.³⁷ This unprecedented move triggered a factional in-fight, which was abruptly ended by the Bayer's decision to pull out the investment. Though initially firm on environmental ground, Liao also had to concede as the Bayer incident set off a national wave of criticism. As a result of the political pressure, he personally visited the Bayer Company in a gesture of apology and expressed his welcome for less hazardous investment.³⁸ These three cases demonstrated an increasing centralist turn on the part of the DPP, whose political alliance with environmentalists became strained. As the DPP elites set their eyes on the ruling position, environmentalists found it harder and harder to obtain their support.

³³ *United Daily* 1994/11/3.

³⁴ *China Times*, 1996/5/25.

³⁵ *Liberty Times* 1997/12/20.

³⁶ *Commercial Times* 1997/12/6.

³⁷ *United Daily* 1997/12/11.

³⁸ *Central Daily* 1998/4/11.

Institutionalization

Institutionalization refers to a “self-activating” regular pattern whose persistence does not rely upon mobilization from external resources (Jepperson 1991, 145). An institutionalized social movement relies on its own resources, rather than depending on an external political ally. For a movement to become institutionalized, a supportive environment is necessary where opposition is at least minimally tolerated, and social movement organizations no longer have to fight for their survival (Kubik 1998, 137). Meyer and Tarrow’s (1998) notion of “a social movement society” captured the essence of institutionalization. Social movements are viewed as becoming an element of normal democracy, characterized by regular, predictable, and even mundane way of raising political claims.

Taiwan’s environmentalism showed signs of institutionalization, as quantitatively evidenced by the plateau of environmental protests in the mid-1990s (see Fig. 1). The institutionalizing trend was also discernable in the co-existence of mass demonstration and professionalism and declining partisan identification. Environmentalists were not satisfied with the partially opened policy channel; nevertheless, the latter could still be used as a vital leverage to oppose certain controversial developmental projects within legally stipulated process. Professional capacity, such as the ability to present a convincing argument in the EIA review meeting, now might have a comparable effect with a successful mass demonstration. To oppose the Pinnan industrial zone project, activists set up a division of labor in studying its EIA reports in order to raise as many questions as possible. Opponents made an effort to attend every site inspection, public hearing, and review meeting of EIA. Their well-prepared professional arguments helped to highlight many potential impacts that were originally slighted or muddled through, and as a result, the EIA took almost 5 years to complete (Ho 2004, 247).

However this should not be taken as a proof that environmentalists had abandoned the tactic mass demonstration, which characterized the environmental movement in the late-1980s. Opponents still needed to create political pressure by mobilizing local opposition and garner support of officials at the EIA. The DPP Legislator Su Huan-chi led a highly dramatized march throughout Tainan County to underscore the imminent threat of industrial pollution in August 1996.³⁹ In October the local movement also bused more than five thousand supporters to take part in a rally in Taipei.⁴⁰ Environmentalists hailed this successful mobilization as critical in halting the Pinnan developer from obtaining the EIA permit in a timely fashion as promised by economic officials.⁴¹

³⁹ *China Times* 1996/8/12.

⁴⁰ *Liberty Times* 1996/10/5.

⁴¹ Interview with an Assistant of Legislator Su Huan-chi, 1999/12/30.

According to the DPP legislator, Su Huan-chi's, the anti-Pinnan movement was a special combination of "armed struggle" (*wutou*) and "civilized struggle" (*wentou*).⁴² Su believed that the EIA would approve environmentally threatening projects if opponents failed to pressure officials through public demonstration and participation in public hearings. Su's remarks aptly demonstrate the dual strategies of environmentalists during the period of democratization. This resulted in a dilemma for the environmental movement. While anti-pollution protests were no longer repressed by authorities, environmentalists were excluded from exercising power as decision-making insiders.

As a consequence of an estranged political alliance with the DPP, environmentalist adopted a nonpartisan identity. The 1994 election of Provincial Governor and Municipality Mayors was the last race in which environmentalists endorsed the entire DPP slate. From that point environmentalists adopted a cautious approach to political endorsements, closely reviewing the individual candidate's environmental positions regardless of party affiliation. As a result of these efforts, environmentalists decided to support two ex-KMT candidates in the 1996 Presidential election who deviated from the KMT's avowedly pro-nuclear stand.⁴³

The formation of the Taiwan Green Party (TGP) in 1996 was also an indicator of environmentalists' detachment from the DPP. Beginning in the late-1990s, the TGP took part in elections with explicitly pro-environment demands, but with minimal success in winning political positions. This attempt by the TGP to outflank the DPP on environmental issues demonstrated the extent of environmentalists' disillusionment with the DPP (Ho 2003, 703–704).

Another movement strategy to circumvent the DPP's diminishing support of environmental issues was to cultivate linkages between environmentalist and other social movements. Through these coalition-building efforts the *Meinung* anti-dam movement successfully broadened its appeal to many audiences, including community organizers, Hakka cultural activists, and even the independent rock artists. By broadcasting their anti-dam messages through diverse channels, *Meinung* activists demonstrated the power of coalition building for environmentalists throughout the 1990s. Central to these coalition-building efforts was the idea "not to repeat the lesson of anti-nuclear movement and the cooptation by the DPP."⁴⁴ Consequently, the insistence on movement autonomy from the DPP paved the way for a brand-new movement strategy.

During this period of democratization, the environmental movement was characterized by a steady generation of protests. The co-existence of mass and professional strategy, along with the declining partisan identity constituted the new contour of environmentalism. As activists struggled to make their voices heard, environmentalism was institutionalized as a solid sector in Taiwan's civil society.

⁴² Interview with Su Huan-chi, DPP Legislator (1999), 1999/12/30.

⁴³ *China Times* 1996/5/25.

⁴⁴ Interview with the Executive Secretary of *Meinung* People's Association, 1999/6/2.

Incorporation Under the DPP Government (2000–2004)⁴⁵

In 2000 Taiwan underwent a political transition when power was transferred to the DPP's President Chen Shui-ban. While this unparalleled peaceful and democratic regime shift was exhilarating, political leadership would prove to be a daunting task for the inexperienced DPP elites who were constantly beleaguered by hostile media and merciless rivals. For environmentalists, the political terrain under the DPP government proved equally treacherous. While environmentalists were incorporated into the new regime, they saw their influence eclipsed by rising business power. Several dimensions of the political opportunity structure were transformed after the 2000 elections impacting social movement mobilization.

State Autonomy: Weakened State

Transition away from authoritarian rule results in reduced state autonomy since incumbents have to face the pressure of periodic re-election. Yet, long-time government parties such as the KMT managed to retain power and state autonomy in decision making throughout the 1990s. Throughout the 1990s, criticisms of "money politics" were frequent, but failed to discredit the KMT's skills in economic management (Rigger 2001a: 948). The challenge of taking the helm of a KMT-inherited state proved to be a formidable task for the DPP. Under the DPP, the state capacity to formulate and implement its policy independently was deeply undermined. As the DPP was forced to make concessions to the powerful opposition parties, the state itself became more penetrable to a plethora of interests.

DPP's vulnerability came from three sources. First, the DPP was unable to possess a comfortable parliamentary majority. When Chen Shui-bian was inaugurated as the new President in May 2000, the DPP had less than one-third of the seats in Legislative Yuan. Elections in 2001 and 2004 improved the DPP's standing, but the pro-government pan-green alliance was still below the threshold of a majority. Second, there were visible problems of policy coordination within the DPP government. The DPP was accustomed to a democratic culture of open debate and disagreement, which constantly disclosed factional infightings to the public (Wu 2002, 632). Furthermore, DPP politicians encountered resistance from bureaucrats who were predominately appointed by and supportive of the KMT. For example, economic officials sought to undermine the DPP's environmental reforms either by leaking unfavorable information to the press or taking a passive stand on the issue. Finally, when a severe economic recession hit Taiwan in 2001, rising unemployment constrained the DPP's

⁴⁵ This section is mainly adapted from Ho (2005b, 2005c).

policy options. The reforms promised by the DPP were cast aside as the economic agenda became the central focus.

The weakness of the DPP's government was vividly demonstrated in the nuclear controversy in 2000–2001. As promised in Chen's campaign, the DPP resolved to terminate the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant project. This resolution immediately provoked all-out resistance by the opposition-dominated Legislative Yuan. As a result, the DPP was forced to backtrack on its decision and construction on the nuclear power plant resumed in February 2001. The seemingly innocent issue of redwood forest conservation turned out to be contentious as well. In a defeat for both environmentalists and the DPP, the budget for the Makao National Park was suspended in January 2003 when aboriginal movement activists and the KMT pan-blue camp joined forces to oppose conservation measures. These failures showed the DPP government's limited capacity to uphold their environmental platform.

In addition to the problem of a weak and unstable state, counter movements fought further extension of environmental regulations. Forces mobilized to oppose EPA regulatory polices in 2000–2004, included the electrical scooter industry, pork producers, illegal scrap metal refineries, and the plastic business (Ho 2005b: 348–349). Such intense anti-environmental lobbying was new to Taiwan under the DPP government. Though these anti-environmental efforts did not necessarily succeed in fully realizing their goals, their high-profile presence made the policy process more protracted and complicated.

In sum, the state under the DPP was severely strained in carrying out environmental reforms. It was also unable to resist the growing encroachment of business pressure. As a result, the state was constantly caught in a tug of war between environmentalists and business.

Policy Channel: Gained Procedural Participation

Continuing a trend emerging in the mid-1990s, the DPP government closed the gap between environmentalists and the state by further opening policy channels. President Chen appointed Lin Jun-yi as his first EPA Director (2000–2001). With Lin's anti-nuclear stance and his environmental movement experience, he appointed many environmental activists to positions in the EPA. Many former activists obtained the opportunity to work with the national administration and gained precious first-hand knowledge of government decision-making.⁴⁶ Aside from recruiting individuals to governmental office, the DPP also opened up many decision-making committees for environmentalists. In 2001, the EPA made an important change in the rules for selecting EIA reviewers. The EPA Director no longer handpicked all the committee members,

⁴⁶ Interview with an Assistant to Legislative Yuan Society for Sustainable Development, 2001/12/21.

but allowed professional associations, academic institutions, and civil groups to submit their recommendations. Applicants with environmental experience in non-governmental organizations were encouraged to apply.⁴⁷

The top advisory committee for environmental policy in Taiwan became the National Advancement for Sustainable Development Committee. This group, originating in 1997 to tackle the policy challenges of global environmentalism, was an exclusive club of officials and scholars with no input from environmental NGOs. In 2002 the DPP broke this tradition by appointing eight “representatives of social groups,” who were mostly veteran environmentalists.⁴⁸ The Nuclear-Free Homeland Communication Committee was a newly formed official organ to propagate the anti-nuclear message after the DPP’s 2001 debacle to terminate the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant project. As a concession to disgruntled environmentalists, this Committee was designed for the participation of anti-nuclear activists. This was the first time that the anti-nuclear camp had the chance to make use of national state committees in order to counterbalance the one-sided pro-nuclear education promoted by the previous KMT government.

Despite the fact that environmentalists gained an insider status with increased access to decision making, their influence did not directly translate into pro-environmental policy outcomes. There were many reasons to explain their limitation. First, environmentalists obtained access to the environment-related agencies such as the EPA, but these agencies proved relatively powerless in the face of the pro-development economic officials. Second, the predominantly KMT officialdom was not enthusiastic about the initiatives these ex-activists promoted. Consequently procedural participation did not mean a radical change in overall policy under the DPP. However, increased participation in governmental agencies and committees expanded the ways in which environmentalists promoted their agenda.

Political Ally: The Collapse of Political Alliance with the DPP

Environmentalists’ political alliance with the DPP was visibly strained during the 1990s. The DPP’s political rise and subsequently pro-business turn further led to the collapse of its political alliance with environmentalists.

After cursorily concluding the nuclear controversy, the DPP moved toward a more conservative orientation emphasizing economic recovery rather than social reform. The Economic Development Advisory Conference held in August 2001 attempted to build a national consensus on economic matters. Testifying at this conference were business leaders arguing that environmental regulations, such as the EIA, and the ban on developing hillside slopes and forestland impeded

⁴⁷ *Liberty Times* 2001/6/20.

⁴⁸ *Commercial Times* 2002/6/6.

economic growth. This testimony became part of the official records that the DPP avowed to uphold. Environmentalists excluded from this conference were naturally frustrated and highly critical of the anti-environmental outcome.⁴⁹

In accordance with the conclusions reached at the Conference, the EPA in August 2001 began to improve the EIA's "efficiency" by simplifying its legal procedures and standardizing its decision-making processes.⁵⁰ In September the EPA also revised the pollution standard for wastewater in order to convince the dyeing industry to stay in Taiwan.⁵¹ Clearly, the DPP had sacrificed its environmental commitments, and adopted a pro-business agenda of less environmental regulation to stimulate economic growth.

As the 2004 presidential election approached, the DPP began to play the "construction trump" to attract votes in economically stricken rural area. In a local by-election in 2003, the DPP government re-initiated the controversial proposal to build the Suao-Hualien highway in the mountainous eastern region. This massive construction project was overwhelmingly opposed by environmentalists. Later the DPP put forward the ambitious "New Ten Great Construction Projects" to boost Chen's re-election campaign. In the past construction projects were utilized by the KMT as a campaign tactic, but now the DPP had adopted the KMT's development-first ideology and practice. Not surprisingly, the "New Ten Great Construction Projects" proposal incurred a nationwide protest by environmentalists.⁵²

The DPP's conservative turn dissolved their lingering alliance with environmentalists. After losing its ruling position, the KMT had adopted an opportunistic approach to social protests. Eager to embarrass the DPP, the KMT-led pan-blue camp endorsed protest issues, such as rising college tuition fees, school-teachers' right to unionize, and unemployment, as long as these issues targeted the government (Ho 2005c: 416–418). However, the KMT preserving its conservative position avoided environmental issues including nuclear energy, forest conservation, and highway construction (Rigger 2001b: 39). Accordingly, environmentalists maintained an aloof, if not distrustful, attitude toward the KMT.

Incorporation

The DPP government triggered a change of status of environmentalists from distrusted outsider to government insider. Though environmentalists lost the DPP as political ally in the Legislative Yuan, the administrative reforms initiated by the DPP helped to incorporate environmentalists into government positions in a non-partisan and institutional basis. Figure 1 shows the drastic decline of

⁴⁹ *United Daily* 2001/8/25.

⁵⁰ *Minchung Daily* 2007/8/22.

⁵¹ *Economic Daily* 2001/9/5.

⁵² *United Daily* 2004/5/31.

environmental protests after 2000. Incorporation necessitated a shift of movement tactics, as mass demonstration gave way to negotiation, lobbying, and institutional advocacy. For example, the redwood conservation movement won an initial victory in securing the government's promise to enlarge the area of Makao national park and to invite aboriginal people into the governing mechanism in 2001. To obtain these concessions, activists did not stage demonstrations, but rather lobbied "high-ranking government officials until they agreed to these demands."⁵³

With more open institutional accesses, opponents of nuclear energy underwent a metamorphosis to become advocates for renewable energy. In July 2001 an international conference on new energy sources was held with wide attendance from government officials. As an organizer put it, this conference was based on the idea that officials could be "reeducated" by exposing them to newer information to counterbalance their pro-nuclear prejudice.⁵⁴ One year later, these activists succeeded in organizing a quasi-official association with participants from industry, government, and academics with the goal of making renewable energy a viable industry.⁵⁵

A more cooperative relationship emerged between environmentalist and the state resulting from increased access to policy makers and procedural transparency. Activists were no longer viewed as disruptive protestors by officials, but reliable partners in environmental governance. For instance, a group of activists was commissioned by the EPA to popularize the latest information of soil pollution regulation among industrial producers.⁵⁶ Arrigo and Puleston (2006, 172) also documented the fact the TEPU was contracted by the Ministry of Education to provide on-campus training and educational programs nationwide.

Though the environmentalists' role in the DPP government was never friction-free, incorporation brought about a new way of raising environmentalist claims. To use a term by Charles Tilly (1978, 52), environmentalists increasingly became a "polity member" who enjoyed routinized and low-cost access to governmental resources.

Conclusion

This chapter traced the development of Taiwan's environmentalism over the past two decades with the central question of how the environmental movement was linked to the overall democratic political transition. Analytical focus on the political opportunity structure enabled us to locate the concrete sites where

⁵³ Cited from a speech by the Director of Ecological Education Center of Kaohsiung Teachers' Association, 2003/5/6.

⁵⁴ Interview with an Assistant to Legislative Yuan Society for Sustainable Development, 2001/12/21.

⁵⁵ See <http://e-info.org.tw/news/taiwan/ta02061301.htm> (2005/10/17).

⁵⁶ Interview with the Vice-chairperson of Environment and Disaster Policy Association, 2001/12/21.

Table 2 POS and environmentalism in Taiwan (1980–2004)

	Soft authoritarianism (1980–1986)	Liberalization (1987–1992)	Democratization (1993–1999)	DPP government (2000–2004)
POS				
Policy channel	Closed	Closed Preemptive policy response	Partially open	Open
Political allies	None	Alliance with the DPP	Estranged alliance with the DPP	Collapse of alliance with the DPP
Policing of protests	Highly repressive	From tolerant to repressive Politicized and centralized command	Tolerant Routinized and localized command	Tolerant
State autonomy	Strong	Strong	Mildly strong	Weak
Environmentalism	Fermentation	Radicalization	Institutionalization	Incorporation
Exemplar cases	Sunko Protest (1982–1986) Lukang Anti-DuPont Movement (1986–1987)	Houchin Protest (1987–1990) Linyuan Incident (1988) Talinpu Incident (1990) Anti-nuclear Movement (1988–)	Meinung Anti-Dam Movement (1992–2000) Tashe Incident (1993) Anti-Pinnan Movement (1994–) Anti-Bayer Movement (1996–1998)	Makao National Park Controversy (2000–) Suao-Hualien Highway Controversy (2003–)

protestors faced state power and to understand how their subsequent interactions shaped the trajectory of environmental movement. Table 2 summarizes the political opportunity structure of environmentalism.

It should be noted that environmentalism was not a passive weathervane merely reflecting the direction of political wind. Rather, environmental protests played a critical role in shaping elites' decisions that had wider political consequences. An early wave of environmentalism prior to the mid-1980s served to arouse oppositional politicians. This mobilization pushed the nascent DPP to adopt a more pro-environmental stance. Increasingly, radicalized and politicized protests in the late-1980s persuaded the KMT reformers to reverse their initially tolerant approach. Finally, environmentalists' support for the DPP was among the contributing factors that helped the latter to secure the consequential electoral victory in 1992. This led to the fall of KMT hardliners. These cases illustrate how social protest exerts an often unanticipated impact upon the larger political environment.

Clearly the environmental movement served a critical role in the democratic transition in Taiwan. After 2000 environmentalists gained legitimacy and were appointed to government positions. However, this did not mean the process of incorporation was irreversible. With the recent conservative turn on the part of DPP, a likely regime shift could occur in 2008. Other unforeseeable political factors might tip the current balance of forces and thus affect the insider status of environmentalists. The analytical framework of the political opportunity structure employed here will continue to provide a useful tool in accessing the latest evolution of Taiwan's environmental politics.

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