

Taiwan's State and Social Movements Under the DPP Government, 2000–2004

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This article explores the evolution of social movement politics under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government (2000–2004) by using the perspective of political opportunity structure. Recent “contentious politics” in Taiwan is analyzed in terms of four changing dimensions of the opportunity structure. First, the DPP government opens some *policy channels*, and social movement activists are given chances to work within the institution. Yet other features of the political landscape are less favorable to movement activists. Incumbent elites’ *political orientation* shifts. As the economic recession sets in, there is a conservative policy turn. *Political instability* incurs widespread countermobilization to limit reform. Last, the Pan-Blue camp, now in opposition, devises its own social movement strategy. Some social movement issues gain political salience as a consequence of the intervention of the opposition parties, but its excessive opportunism also encourages the revolt of antireform forces. As a result of these countervailing factors, social movements have made only limited gains from the recent turnover of power.

KEYWORDS: social movement, democratization, political opportunity, Taiwan, Democratic Progressive Party

The rise of social movements has been an integral dimension of democratization in Taiwan. Social protests of various issues emerged as early as the time when the political opposition coalesced into the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986. Disadvantaged sectors such as farmers, workers, and marginalized ethnic minorities made use of the liberalized political atmosphere to launch collective actions. A commentator characterized this proliferation of social protest as “a demanding society.”¹ As a powerful force, social movements changed the political landscape. Antipollution protest helped to erode

the local clientelism of the Kuomintang (KMT), while the labor movement undermined the party-state infrastructure in the factory. The political activism of the urban middle class was channeled into effective education reform and antinuclear movements. At the same time, the DPP sought to incorporate these reform demands into its political agenda. Social movements became politicized and came to have a vital stake in party politics.

After a fiercely competitive presidential election in March 2000, the DPP ousted the incumbent KMT, which had ruled Taiwan for fifty-five years. The assumption of power by an opposition political party produced a favorable environment for social movements. Given the DPP's previous alliance with movement sectors, it was expected that relations between the government and social movements would improve. The DPP advocated a broad series of political reforms, which were largely welcomed by the social movement circle. The fact the DPP did not possess the personnel to take over the reins of national government opened up the prospect that movement leaders might be invited to share power and thus have the opportunity to introduce significant policy changes. However, post-KMT political developments proved unexpected for movement activists. At best, social movements made only limited gains during the first term of Chen Shui-bian (2000–2004). The DPP government was crippled from the very beginning by not possessing a parliamentary majority. When it sought to promote those reforms desired by social movements, opposition parties were often able to block their initiatives. In addition, the DPP hesitated on certain reform pledges and then took a more conservative turn as the economic situation worsened in 2001. The political imperative to boost economic performance made the DPP elites less willing to respond to the interests of social movements. Further, a new wave of popular protests began to target reforms that the social movement sector had achieved. With the rise of these countermovements, reform advocates faced an uphill battle in widening the reform agenda.

"In the past we did not have the opportunity; now we do not have the capacity," as a Taiwanese women's movement activist succinctly described the recent situation.² Why did Taiwan's social movements fail to secure significant policy gains as a result of the DPP's electoral victory? In this article, I seek to untangle the knotty combination of favorable and unfavorable factors that helped social movement activists gain institutional access to political power while at the same time limiting their actual policy impact. To do this, I employ the political opportunity structure approach. This concept helps to decompose

the political environment of DPP government into several analytically distinct, yet structurally related, aspects. As a result, we can map out the overall environment facing movement politics and specify both the enabling conditions and the restraining ones.

I draw on three social movement cases: the labor movement, the environmental movement, and the education reform movement. Although these movements had different constituencies (i.e., industrial workers, rural residents, and urban middle class), they all aimed at progressive reforms that redistributed power and resources in favor of the underprivileged. In terms of their collective action repertoire, these movements frequently used mass demonstrations to pressure reluctant officials. To use David Rucht's classification, they were "power-oriented" rather than "identity-oriented." While identity-oriented movements tend to focus on the cultural sphere, shying away from involvement with the state, power-oriented movements adopt instrumental action to change current policy.³ Given this explicitly political emphasis, the effect of these movements is largely determined by the shifting political environment.

The DPP Government as a Political Opportunity Structure

The political opportunity structure refers to the ever-changing degree of regime openness to social movement claims. Social movement scholars use this term to understand the uneven distribution of social protests. Certain political regimes are more prone to incur widespread extrainstitutional participation than others.⁴ Social protests also tend to cluster in time.⁵ To explain these phenomena, scholars contend that regimes differ in their tolerance regarding protest behavior, which affects the cost-benefit calculation of would-be protesters. It is widely agreed that the political opportunity structure undergoes a periodic cycle of expansion and contraction even within the same regime.⁶ Accordingly, social movements follow different trajectories of ups and downs.

To understand the DPP government as a new political opportunity structure for the social movement sector, it is important to clarify some conceptual issues. First, this concept is not a dichotomous one. According to Doug McAdam, the state is best conceptualized as a composite system that exerts different and even contradictory influences on social movements at the same time. For example, while sympathetic incumbents are important for ensuring that movement demands are placed on

the political agenda, their weakness vis-à-vis the opposition can compromise actual results. Since a state is not a monolithic entity, the political opportunity structure is best viewed as multidimensional; a movement faces both facilitating conditions and constraining ones at the same time. As McAdam suggests, specifying the dimensions of the political opportunity is a key to this research strategy.⁷ Both Sidney Tarrow and McAdam have suggested a list of relevant dimensions of the political opportunity structure, including⁸ the existence of political channels, degree of political stability, availability of political allies, and state repression. It should be noted that this inventory is not to be taken as an invariant formula to deal with all research questions, but must be customized to fit particular cases. In this study, I propose the following dimensions to understand the specific situation under the DPP government.

1. *Political channels.* This term refers to routine accesses to the decisionmaking process. As a component of the political opportunity structure, the availability of political channels affects the behavior of social movement organizations. With the possibility to work within the state, movement strategy tends to be more assimilative than confrontational.⁹ As movement activists gain new avenues, it becomes possible for them to gain “insider” status and to use this leverage to engineer policy change. Consequently, the likelihood of movement success is enhanced.
2. *Incumbents’ orientation.* Hanspeter Kriesi and his colleagues use the term “prevailing strategy” to understand the government’s informal procedures for dealing with collective challengers. It can be broadly classified as either exclusive or integrative, depending on the ruling elites’ perception and assessment as well as preexisting political tradition.¹⁰ In this article I use the term “incumbents’ orientation” and distinguish between a reformist or conservative line. As expected, the more proreform the incumbents are, the more likely that social movements receive favorable responses.
3. *Political stability.* Electoral instability in a liberal democracy encourages “challengers to try to exercise marginal power.”¹¹ Unstable elite alignment signals the possibility of new coalitions emerging. One of the political ramifications is that incumbent elites have to spend extra attention on grieved sectors to prevent further erosion of their political base. The elites’ concessions are most likely to happen when the atmosphere of uncertainty augments the political weight of social protests.¹²

4. *Political allies.* The presence of established allies helps social movements to translate their mobilization into political influence. Elites' patronage can come in many ways, such as introducing reform bills in the parliament, championing movement causes, and protecting protestors from repression. With incumbents' sympathy, movement demands can become policy initiatives and movement activists are allowed to gain political channels. Conceptually, possessing an influential ally should be distinguished from political channels in that the latter refers to institutionalized access to decisionmaking for movement activists themselves. In addition, political allies can also be found in the opposition camp. Opposition elites' support is also instrumental for a social movement to obtain political visibility. Without it, incumbents generally find it easier to ignore movement claims.

The concept of political opportunity structure risks the danger of structural determinism when the elements of agency and contingency are neglected.¹³ Without taking into account how collective actors interpret these political signals, the explanation is not complete. A chance can be missed or misused. Arguably an unperceived opportunity is not an opportunity at all.¹⁴ Nonetheless, this concept can be effective when the interactions between the movement and government are specified and demonstrated empirically.

The Embittered Comradeship: The Evolving Relationship Between the DPP and Social Movements (1986–2000)

The birth of the DPP as the first successfully organized opposition party in postwar Taiwan coincided with the escalation of street demonstrations in the mid-1980s. In 1986, when the DPP was formed, there were 75 events of political protest. In 1987 and 1988, the annual numbers of political protest became 173 and 189 respectively.¹⁵ Obviously, opposition leaders sought to pressure the reluctant KMT into more substantial reforms by using noninstitutionalized tactics. At the same time, social movements were emerging. In the turbulent year of 1986, Lukang townspeople were mobilized to protest against a Dupont investment that had been endorsed by Taiwan's government. The so-called Lukang rebellion¹⁶ inspired would-be environmentalists and planted the seed for many antipollution protests in the following years. In the same year,

workers of the Hsinchu Glass Company took over management after the irresponsible desertion of its owners. Workers proved their capacity to run the factory in a democratic manner and in defiance of a probusiness court ruling. Likewise, the Hsinchu Glass Company incident paved the way for the coming of greater workers' militancy.

Analyzing the simultaneous rise of political protests and social movements, scholars have stressed the importance of a liberalized political atmosphere, which lowered the cost of collective action.¹⁷ The KMT's decision to lift martial law in 1987 further increased the incentives to resort to protest activities for opposition politicians and movement activists as well. Scholars also noticed an "umbrella effect," by which political protests helped to shelter social movements from state repression, and vice versa.¹⁸ To use our terminology, both types of collective action were "opportunity-making,"¹⁹ and the result has been an increasing propensity to protest in the late 1980s.

During this critical period, a tactical alliance between the DPP and social movements emerged. In May 1987, the DPP set up a department of social movements with the aim of cooperating with social movement organizations to "form a great wave of democratic movement and to reform the political institutions thoroughly."²⁰ The radical New Tide faction within the DPP envisioned a strategy of "politicization of social movements and socialization of political movements" to present a united front in the common struggle against the KMT government.²¹ To match its words with deeds, the New Tide faction had its cadres assuming the leadership in many social movement organizations, such as the Taiwan Association for Human Rights (founded in 1984), the Taiwan Labor Legal Assistance Association (founded in 1984), and the Taiwan Environmental Protection Union (founded in 1987).

During Hao Po-ts'un's premiership (1990–1992), the alliance was further strengthened as the state sought to reassert its challenged authority by cracking down on both the DPP and the social movements. As many movement activists were prosecuted and jailed, the tension between state and civil society escalated. The Kongliao incident on October 13, 1991, epitomized this conflict. As the KMT government made clear its intent to build the widely opposed fourth nuclear power plant, Kongliao villagers rose to erect a barricade on the construction site. A violent clash with the police took place, resulting in one policeman's death and a nationwide manhunt for "antinuclear criminals." With this growing polarization, it was no wonder that many movement activists came to endorse the DPP in the consequential 1992 Legislative Yuan election, which opened all its seats to competition for the first time.

In the 1992 election, the DPP scored an unprecedented victory by taking more than one-third of seats in the Legislative Yuan. The DPP's success led to Premier Hao's fall and the dominance of KMT's reformist faction. In the following year, the DPP also secured six seats in a local executive election. The DPP consolidated its political foothold at both the national and local levels and began to challenge the KMT's ruling position. The DPP's growth triggered a change in its relationship with the social movement sector. As the DPP sought to shed its uncouth image and present itself as an "electable" party, it became less willing to champion the movement cause.²² The new centrism was a noticeable tendency in the DPP's transformation, which angered its movement allies. As early as 1993, movement activists had been voicing their discontent about the DPP's instrumental attitude.²³ What these activists found particularly irksome was the chronic brain drain from the movement circle to the DPP.²⁴ Social movement organizations suffered a severe hemorrhage of leaders as activists became politicians.

Facing this situation, movement activists contemplated the possibility of forming their own political party for more than a decade, especially among labor activists²⁵ and environmentalists.²⁶ These attempts all ended up in failure. Throughout the 1990s, movement activists were caught in a tactical dilemma: either they had to work with a DPP that had become increasingly centrist, or they could jealously preserve their autonomy while being deprived of political influence.

The DPP's growth was beneficial for social movements in certain ways. First, the DPP's parliamentary seats were instrumental in pushing legal reform in the direction social movement organizations desired. For example, the 1994 Teacher Education Law, which broke the monopoly of conservative normal colleges,²⁷ and the 1995 Teacher Law, which legalized teachers' association,²⁸ were both joint products of education reform advocates and DPP legislators. DPP legislators helped to persuade reluctant bureaucrats to accept more progressive reforms. The 1994 Environmental Impact Assessment Law was such a case. The finally codified version of the law adopted much stricter regulatory guidelines than the original draft.²⁹ Though the labor movement did not produce an unambiguous success in the legislative arena, DPP legislators' support was vital to resist the KMT government's attempts to deregulate labor policy in the early 1990s.

Locally, the DPP-controlled municipality and county governments proved more hospitable to movement activists. Less encumbered by local factionalism, the DPP local executives were free to engage in policy innovation. Some DPP local governments were well known for their

stricter pollution monitoring, prolabor regulation, and tolerance of alternative schooling experiments. Owing to the congruence of ideals as well as personal trust, some movement activists were recruited into the local government. Chen Shui-bian's mayoralty of Taipei City (1995–1998) is an important example. During his term, Chen conducted a referendum on nuclear power, convened a nuclear disaster rescue drill, legalized the local confederation of industrial unions, set up an advisory commission on gender policy, and adopted the policy of preschool education vouchers. All these policy innovations came in response to the demand of movement organizations. Movement activists served in his "little cabinet" as well. Lin Jun-yi (Edgar Lin), a prominent biologist and antinuclear crusader, occupied the position of director of the Environmental Protection Bureau, while Kuo Chi-jen, a labor lawyer and activist, led the Bureau of Labor.

Thus, both nationally and locally, democratization created opportunities for collaboration between the DPP elites and movement activists, though their relationship was never tension free. The DPP leaders were willing to champion movement causes to the extent it embellished their proreform profile without alienating their conservative constituencies. Their support was contingent upon a delicate political calculation of gains and losses. It was exactly this undisguised instrumentalism that prompted idealist activists to consider the possibility of a movement party from time to time. In sum, prior to the DPP's assumption of power, the originally cordial comradeship had already turned sour to some extent as movement activists learned not to wager all their hopes on the DPP. Still, the quicker-than-expected regime turnover in 2000 raised activists' hopes.

The Newly Gained Political Channels

Under the DPP government, a plethora of participatory channels were opened up for movement activists. Unlike the KMT, which was used to a top-down style of governance and inclined to view citizen groups as troublemakers, the DPP was much more prepared for broadly based participation. For the first time, social movement activists were given meaningful chances to work within the government.

First, the most obvious political channels were the positions of cabinet minister. In continuance with the past practice of DPP local governance, many movement activists were appointed as top-level executives. During Chen's first term, the following persons served in the

cabinet: Lin Jun-yi (environmentalist) as director of the Environmental Protection Administration (2000–2001), Kuo Chi-jen (labor activist) as vice-director of the Labor Affairs Council (2000–2004), Ha-ni Yu (aboriginal movement activist) as director of the Council of Indigenous People (2000–2002), Lin Fan-mei (feminist) as director of the National Youth Commission (2000–2004), and Chen Jin-huang (community movement activist) as minister without portfolio (2000–2003).

Further, beneath the ministerial level, many junior activists also found opportunities to work as assistants or aides. The opposition parties had been surprised and outraged to find that the DPP incumbents brought many younger people into the government. In their words, this was nothing less than “a country ruled by a bunch of boy scouts.” In fact, many of the so-called boy scouts were activists from movement organizations. These former activists played an important role in two ways. First, they helped to bridge the gap and reduce needless misunderstandings between officials and movement organizations. Second, since they had spent many years monitoring relevant policy areas, they could familiarize political appointees with relevant policy areas.³⁰

For the movement sector as a whole, the experience of working in the government proved productive. Activists learned the actual working of the public sector and could use this valuable know-how after they resumed their movement careers.³¹

To take an example, Taiwan’s EPA used to spend money in broadcasting updated environmental information by hiring professional public relations companies. Without sufficient knowledge and commitment, these commercial contractors tended to focus on formality rather than substance. As Taiwan’s environmental activists learned the EPA’s working procedures, they were now capable of applying for these projects. On the other hand, officials no longer took activists as irresponsible troublemakers and were more willing to work with them. In 2001, some environmental activists were contracted by the EPA to conduct a nationwide campaign to inform major industries about new regulations concerning soil pollution.³² Such a case showed that the movement’s participation also encouraged state–civil society cooperation.

Social movement organizations also now found it possible to take part in some ad hoc governmental committees. Under the DPP government, environmentalists were present in the National Advancement for Sustainable Development Committee and the Nuclear-free Homeland Communication Committee.³³ Organized labor’s role in the 2001 Economic Development Advisory Conference was quite substantial in that union leaders were granted some agenda-setting powers. Education

reform organizations, too, were able to influence the policymaking from the inside. They were present in the official working groups that promoted curriculum reform and national scholastic testing, to the extent that conservatives were outraged.³⁴ These cases showed that a pattern of extensive consultation was beginning to take shape.

Concomitantly with the broadened scope of participation, public financial support of nongovernmental organizations was on the increase. Most of the funding was project based and followed the legal process of government procurement that required open announcement and competitive bidding. Nevertheless, many social movement organizations were capable of winning those projects and secured a large portion of their financing through them. Though some critics warned that financial dependency could compromise movement autonomy, these public resources were critical for those organizations with weak fundraising capacities.³⁵ These projects also broadened the extent of movement participation. In the past, movement activists tended to focus on the legislative phase of policy, where they could work with sympathetic politicians. Now, as movement activists were contracted by public authority, their influence extended to policy implementation as well.

With activists in government offices, certain perceivable changes came as a result. Labor politics can be taken as an example. True, far-reaching reforms, such as liberalizing the current labor union regime, have not been on the DPP agenda. The 2004 revision draft of labor union law still contained inhibitions against schoolteachers and public employees forming unions.³⁶ Nonetheless, once the independent Taiwan Confederation of Trade Unions (TCTU) was legally recognized in 2000, organized labor was able to engineer important procedural changes. By participating in the meetings of the Council of Labor Affairs, the TCTU representatives succeeded in persuading officials to liberalize the ban on the unionization of employees in political organizations and to open up the labor pension fund for low-interest loans to unemployed workers.³⁷ Such reforms, though local in their scope, were not possible without newly opened political channels.

In sum, the DPP government made it possible for a more meaningful extent of movement participation. Certainly, the DPP had its own political agenda. First, the DPP simply did not have enough personnel to fill the official positions left vacant by the outgoing KMT. Second, it did not trust the predominantly KMT bureaucrats, and the involvement of social movement organizations could serve as a countervailing check on their power. For the movement sector as a whole, the partici-

pation resulted in some progressive changes in policy implementation. However, they were not strong enough to resist the conservative drift of the DPP leadership; it is to that development that I now turn.

The DPP Government's Orientation: From Reform to Stability

During his campaign, Chen Shui-bian presented a proreform platform by vowing to clean up the "black-gold" politics under the KMT government. The so-called black-gold phenomena referred to various forms of corruption, such as vote buying, financial irregularities, and political connections to organized crime that came into public exposure as Taiwan became more democratized.³⁸ The black-gold accusation was also a convenient weapon of social movement activists in their demand for reform.³⁹ Nevertheless, once elected, the DPP government gradually drifted from reform advocacy to a pro-status quo stance. Within the first year of Chen's incumbency, two social reform attempts evolved into severe political confrontations. Both cases ended with the DPP's tactical withdrawal from the reformist line.

The first case had to do with the shortening of legal working hours. Despite the fact that public employees and white-collar workers began to work 40 hours a week in the late 1990s, the legally allowed maximum working hours per week was still 48. In Chen's campaign platform, he vowed to reduce the work week to 44 hours in 2000, and finally to 40 in 2004. As soon as the DPP assumed power, the executive branch put forward a revision in accordance with Chen's promise. However, owing to the numerical superiority of the KMT in the Legislative Yuan, the opposition succeeded in passing a revision that called for an 84-hour limit over two weeks, or a proposition in which 40-hour weeks alternated with 44-hour weeks. As soon as the DPP manifested its intention to go back to the original 44-hour formula, a polarizing class mobilization followed. Organized workers rose to defend their windfall benefit, while the small and medium business in labor-intensive industries mobilized to curtail the reform. On December 29, 2000, after intensive lobbying and counterlobbying, the DPP failed to persuade the Legislative Yuan to reconsider a compromise bill.⁴⁰ Thus, beginning in 2001, 42 hours per week had become the official labor policy in Taiwan, despite the reluctance of the DPP government.

Roughly in the same time span, the nuclear controversy became another litmus test of the DPP's reform commitment. The DPP, with its

antinuclear clause enshrined in the 1986 party charter and Chen's electoral platform, was widely expected to scrap the fourth nuclear power plant. After an initial round of indecisiveness and internal recriminations that led to the resignation of Premier Tang Fei, the DPP made a bold move to terminate the construction without seeking the approval of the Legislative Yuan. Needless to say, the antinuclear forces were thrilled by Chen's decision. The opposition parties waged a savage campaign to recall Chen Shui-bian, who had barely served as president for five months. To prevent further escalation of the political crisis, the DPP changed its previous unilateralism by agreeing to seek the intervention of the Constitutional Court. After the justices' equivocal ruling came out on January 15, 2001, Chen decided to back off for the sake of political reconciliation. One month later, the DPP government resumed the halted construction in spite of much hand-wringing on the part of antinuclear activists.

If these two cases portrayed the DPP's initial hesitation between reform promises and the stability imperative, the following development showed its turn toward the latter, at least in its overall policy orientation. As Taiwan's economy plunged into an unprecedented recession in 2001, the remaining reform commitments faded. The dismal economic performance constrained the DPP's policy options. "To salvage the economy" (*p'inchinchi*) became the number one goal of the government, while other reform issues were shelved. In order to boost business confidence, the DPP government had to create a good atmosphere for domestic investment.

The Economic Development Advisory Conference, held in August 2001 to build a national consensus for recovery, could be seen as a clear dividing line. During this conference, business was vocal in its criticism of "legal barriers to investment."⁴¹ Some proposals, such as to abolish environmental impact assessments and the Labor Standard Law and to exclude foreign labor from minimum wage regulation, would have annulled the achievements of the labor movement and environmentalists in the previous two decades had they actually been put into effect. Though business received only partial concessions from the DPP government, social movements were obviously forced to take a defensive position.

The political imperative of economic recovery gradually pushed the DPP government to pick up KMT-style developmentalism, in which economic growth was prioritized at the expense of welfare redistribution and environmental protection. Much to the disappointment of welfare

movement organizations, the DPP leaders began to view welfare policy as a drag on growth and shelved many of its proclaimed programs.⁴²

As the 2004 presidential election approached, the DPP government began to play the so-called construction trump (*chienshep'ai*) to attract votes. The construction trump used to be the KMT's privilege, but now the DPP had learned the trick as well. In order to boost its campaign in a local by-election in 2003, the DPP government resuscitated an ecologically and economically questionable proposal to build a highway in the mountainous eastern region. After the DPP candidate's defeat, the DPP became less enthusiastic about the highway project, while the local KMT politicians took the lead to become its champions. In the presidential election in 2004, the DPP government put forward an ambitious "New Ten Great Construction Projects," in which the developmentalist values were again reaffirmed. Environmentalists spared no time to voice their criticism and stage protests.⁴³ Nevertheless, the most conspicuous aspect of this development was the very name, "ten great construction projects." By reinvoking the much mystified policy of Chiang Ching-kuo in the 1970s, the DPP appeared to come full circle in accepting the KMT's ideological orientation. The case demonstrated not only the power of local interests, but also the tenacity of conservative mainstream public opinion as well as the DPP's inability and unwillingness to promote an altogether different policy vision.

The issue of nuclear energy provides another example of the DPP's conservative policy drift. After the debacle of its haphazard attempt to scrap the fourth nuclear power plant in 2001, the DPP promised anti-nuclear activists that a referendum would soon be held. Taiwan's environmentalists have long advocated a nationwide referendum as a strategy to terminate the contested project. The DPP government, however, did little to redeem this political promise. The scheduled date of the nuclear referendum was put off indefinitely. After the referendum obtained legal status in November 2003, the DPP did propose a referendum on presidential election day 2004. This referendum, which was focused on China's missile threat, was widely regarded as a political attempt to boost Chen Shui-bian's reelection. The DPP did not attempt to include the nuclear energy issue in Taiwan's first legal referendum. Thus, within a short span of three years, the promise of a nuclear referendum evaporated and the referendum itself degenerated into a mere campaign tactic. This case again showed that the DPP elites were willing to sacrifice their reform pledges for other political ends.

Political Instability as an Ambivalent Factor

To an outside observer, Chen's first term was characterized by no less than "political droughts and typhoons."⁴⁴ The political landscape was riven by an uncompromising struggle between the pan-green and pan-blue camps. The DPP government was persistently handicapped by its parliamentary minority position and inexperience at coordination. Opposition parties, on the other hand, spared no time in frustrating the government's initiatives. The fact that Chen appointed three premiers in his turbulent first term while the KMT used the same number of premiers throughout the whole 1990s testified to the heightened degree of political instability.

Still, the instability itself was not an unmitigated blessing for social movements. Though social movements might capitalize on the intricate political balance and deadlock to win the incumbents' concessions, the conservative sectors also stood to gain. Weak government itself was an invitation to countermobilization, or collective action, to forestall or even annul the achievements of another movement. As a matter of fact, owing to their better resource endowment, vested interests often wielded more political influence in an unstable situation than did the movement circle.

During the 1990s, as Taiwan moved in the direction of democracy, social protest became increasingly a universal and popular political gesture. Sometimes even those dominant sectors that used to be the target of protest learned how to stage their own protests. For example, in November 1993, a county magistrate led his constituencies to protest the conservation of the endangered black-faced spoonbill, which delayed an industrial zone project.⁴⁵ One month later, Taiwan's golf business mobilized their workers to fight environmentalists' campaign to close illegal golf courses. They argued that the "right to work" was more important than land preservation.⁴⁶ Countermobilizations were by nature reactive to a previous movement. More often than not, they sought to restore a challenged privilege by resisting the proposed change by social movements. As democratization enabled the excluded populace to resort to collective action as a means to advance their claims, it also opened up the possibility that protest as a form of political participation could be co-opted from above.

It was a noticeable phenomenon that countermobilizations were more frequent under the DPP government. In the previously mentioned incidents, such as shortening working hours (2000) and the Economic Development Advisory Conference (2001), business proved its capac-

ity to mobilize their employees against further labor protections. Taiwan's labor unions were strong in large-size companies, especially in state-owned enterprises, but when it came to the workers in small- and medium-sized firms, there was simply no organizational link to mobilize them. These workers could be easily influenced by their bosses. In both cases, labor activists were forced to fight an uphill battle against stronger opponents.

Two large-scale demonstrations by schoolteachers and farmers in 2002 could be seen in this context. Both cases were mixed in nature, involving status quo defense with demands for new rights. While schoolteachers demanded the right to organize their labor union, they also sought to preserve their tax-exempt privilege, which was the immediate trigger for their protest. Farmers' protest came as a result of the DPP government's attempt to reform the crisis-ridden rural credit cooperatives, which had degenerated into a cash machine for vote-buying politicians. Nevertheless, while farmers' association leaders were spurred by the fear of losing their local power, the farmers' movement also demanded progressive compensation, as the agricultural sector had been bleeding with the relentless onslaught of trade liberalization. In both cases, the DPP government was forced to jettison its original reform schemes.

Beginning in 2003, a concerted effort to roll back education reform began to gather force among schoolteachers and among professors at normal colleges. The schoolteachers rose to fight the curriculum reform that had been devised under the KMT government and implemented under the DPP government. The new integrated curriculum, which aimed to promote balanced development of pupils, increased the job burden and encountered fierce resistance among schoolteachers. On the other hand, the normal college professors sought to restore the unified entrance examination that had been replaced by a plural admission system that weakened their monopoly of teachers' education. It was noteworthy in that these education reform measures were largely planned before the DPP came to power. But once political instability was visible, silent endurance turned to loud discontent as teachers and professors sensed a chance to take back what they had lost. In this manner, the DPP government was forced to take a defensive position, while former reform advocates had to spend energy in justifying the existing policies rather than proposing new reform plans. Facing these counter-mobilizations, Chen Shui-bian once claimed, "Education reform should never take the reverse course."⁴⁷ Nevertheless, his education policy did not venture beyond the premises set by the KMT government during the mid-1990s.

To be sure, social movement organizations could also make strategic use of political instability to advance their claims. A relevant case here was the controversy surrounding college tuition fees. In 2003, there arose a renewed wave of protest against the tuition fee hike. To parry growing criticism, Chen Shui-bian claimed in one of his papers that education was an individual investment and tuition fees had never been an obstacle to class mobility.⁴⁸ Such blatant neoliberal rhetoric turned out to be quite scandalous for the general public and fueled further protests. One week later, Chen changed his tone by characterizing education investment also as part of the government's responsibility.⁴⁹ In the meantime, the Ministry of Education quickly announced a reduction of interest rates on student loans.⁵⁰ This abrupt about-face was possible simply because the DPP did not have enough political capital to risk an unpopular policy or remark. In fact, according to a DPP opinion poll, roughly three-quarters of people believed the policy of high tuition fees would endanger the opportunity of the underprivileged.⁵¹ In this case, the DPP's precarious position turned out to be an opportunity for social movement organizations.

To recapitulate, the political instability under the DPP government was more like a double-edged sword that cut both ways. Rather than favoring social movements unequivocally, the weakened public authority provided ample chances for the conservatives to roll back the existing reforms and to forestall the new ones.

The Pan-blue Social Movement Strategy: A New Pattern of Political Alliance?

Taiwan's social movements per se were not strictly partisan in the sense that some movements belonged to a particular political party. However, the political alliance with a party over time tended to strengthen the party identity among movement activists. Prior to the regime shift, such was the case among reform movements concerning labor, education, and environment issues. Many movement organizations did not disguise their pro-DPP outlook, while others claimed their neutrality at most, and none of them openly adopted a pro-KMT stance.

Once the DPP was in power and began to drift in a more conservative direction, there opened up a new landscape for political alliances. The pan-blue camp began to curry favor among social movements, and in some cases, the opposition elites even tried to launch their own

protests. Whether the pan-blue movement strategy resulted in a new pattern of political alliances is the central question of this section.

Before answering the question of how the KMT came to adopt the movement strategy, the question of *why* should be dealt with. First, since the primary political cleavage in Taiwan was centered on national identity and ethnic division, the pan-blue camp thought they could “left-flank” the DPP on some social issues, at the same time maintaining their largely conservative outlook.

Second, Taiwan’s party politics was young and relatively undeveloped. Anthony Downs observed that it was rational for a political party to remain loyal to its own ideology despite the fact that politicians formulated their policy proposals in order to win elections, not vice versa.⁵² Ideology could be seen as a promise, and once a party’s creditability was ruined, its most valuable asset was destroyed as well. In Taiwan’s case, nascent democratization meant less rigid ideological divides, which in turn encouraged opportunistic behavior among the main political contenders. That was one of the reasons why there was less internal tension when the DPP took a conservative turn and the pan-blue camp adopted a promovement image. Third, sheer opportunism was clearly an important factor in explaining KMT behavior; the KMT supported some countermobilization that fought against reforms the KMT itself had adopted. In a word, the pan-blue camp itself came to appreciate the political potential of using social movements to embarrass the DPP government.

There were several aspects of the pan-blue movement strategy. The KMT made a number of symbolic overtures to the movement organizations. Quite surprisingly, movement activists found themselves asked by the KMT to offer policy suggestions.⁵³ The KMT-affiliated National Policy Foundation also conducted several conferences in which movement leaders were invited as guest speakers.⁵⁴ During the presidential election, Lien Chan even said that he would like to visit major social movement organizations to learn their opinions.⁵⁵ The KMT used this symbolic move to counter the DPP’s campaign tactics to stigmatize the pan-blue camp as “prorestoration.” No wonder the KMT christened these campaign activities as a “link to the path of social reform.”

Beside these gestures, the pan-blue camp staged its own social protests. In August 2003, the opposition parties conducted a nationwide signature-collecting campaign to protest “three-highs”—high tuition fees, high unemployment, and high health insurance premiums.⁵⁶ As the presidential election drew near, the pan-blue camp paid special attention to the controversy over tuition fees because this issue was

immediately relevant to college students as first-time voters. Originally the opposition parties even planned a national referendum and a "farmer-worker-student" demonstration in their electoral campaign.⁵⁷

As a matter of fact, the pan-blue camp was rather indiscriminate in sponsoring social protests. While Lien Chan was premier (1993–1997), the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the increase in college tuition, and education reform were all KMT policies. Once out of power, the pan-blue bloc offered its endorsement to any social discontent as long as that discontent was directed against the DPP government. Once asked by the press about his relationship with education reform, Lien claimed that he never "interfered in Lee Yuan-tseh's work," despite the fact he was the incumbent premier who invited Lee to chair the official committee on education reform.⁵⁸ In other words, the KMT skillfully evaded the question of responsibility and blamed everything on the DPP.

There were incidents in which the pan-blue camp made self-contradictory moves. The opposition parties had been strongly pronuclear in the 2000–2001 controversy. One and a half years after the DPP's agreement to resume the construction of the fateful nuclear power plant, the aboriginal people on Orchid Island staged a protest because the government failed to remove the temporary storage of nuclear waste as promised. As the protest gained momentum, the pan-blue camp quickly swung to the antinuclear side and demanded the resignation of the minister of economic affairs again.⁵⁹

It would be a difficult task to evaluate the actual impact of pan-blue strategy on the movement sector. Whatever the pan-blue motives, the support of opposition parties added some political weight to social protestors. With the politicians' backing, social movement organizations gained more media attention and bargaining resources vis-à-vis government officials. On the other hand, with the heightened polarization during the electoral campaign, high-profile pan-blue involvement gave rise to internal discord within the social movement sector. In one notable incident, Lien Chan's unexpected visit to an organization protesting high tuition fees resulted in a violent clash and a split between pro-pan-blue and pro-pan-green factions.⁶⁰ In addition, the pan-blue camp's indiscriminate endorsement of countermobilizations, such as the anti-education reform movement, further alienated movement organizations whose reform accomplishments were severely challenged.

In sum, the pan-blue movement strategy had an ambivalent effect on social movements as a whole. Owing to the KMT's opportunism, a new pattern of political alliance between the KMT and social move-

ments failed to materialize. After the electoral defeat in March 2004, the pan-blue parties underwent a painful process of repositioning and struggle over the nature of the party line. Among the most heatedly contested issues were national identity, indigenization, and ethnic relationships. To date, there has been no discussion of social movements and social reform within the KMT. With the debacle of the 2004 presidential election, the pan-blue movement strategy came to an abrupt end.

Conclusion

As Larry Diamond points out, "In this third wave of global democratization, no phenomenon has more vividly captured the imagination of democratic scholars, observers, and activists alike than 'civil society.'"⁶¹ Indeed, civil society as a slogan has captivated a generation of movement activists, and has produced a rich research agenda as well. Now, as the democratic transition in many countries comes to an end, it is time to explore the political consequences of this newly emerging civic activism. As many former opposition parties now assume political power, it becomes an intellectually stimulating question to understand the posttransition dynamics of social movements.

Does the transfer of power to opposition forces enlarge the space for social mobilization and increase the likelihood of realizing movement objectives? Do movement activists gain new institutional access with which they can put into practice their vision of a better society? Do new incumbents honor their reform pledges to their movement allies?

To answer these questions, I have analyzed in this article the recent evolution of Taiwan's movement politics. As it turns out, social movements have made only limited gains from the opposition's recent assumption of power. I have also tried to clarify the multifaceted evolution of contentious politics under the DPP government by using the perspective of political opportunity structure and have analyzed the political opportunity structure under the DPP government along four dimensions.

On the enabling side of the equation, the DPP government opened new policy channels. Social movement activists were given the chance to work within existing government institutions. Once they secured government positions, these activists were able to produce some procedural changes as favored by social movements. Other features of the political

opportunity structure were less favorable for social movements or, at best, ambiguous in their effects. In terms of incumbents' orientation, the DPP government was caught in a reform-stability dilemma in its first year. As the economic recession set in, there was a perceptible conservative turn in a number of policy areas. In order to boost the confidence of business interests, social reforms had to be shelved—to the disappointment of movement activists. Political instability turned out to have ambiguous effects. On the one hand, the weak DPP government incurred countermobilization to roll back existing reform measures or to forestall the attempts to upset the status quo. On the other hand, social movements also capitalized on these conflicts to advance their claims. Last, the impact of pan-blue camp strategy to sponsor social movement was also complicated. Some social movement issues gained political weight as a consequence of the intervention of opposition parties, although the opposition's excessive opportunism also encouraged the revolt of antireform forces. To sum up, rather than a linear development that could be extrapolated from the trajectory of the late 1990s, post-KMT Taiwan turned out to be unfamiliar terrain for social movement activists.

Finally, let us return to the issue of democracy and social movements. Charles Tilly characterizes one essential dimension of democracy as “protected consultation,” or the degree to which citizens enjoy status equality, similar access to public authority, binding control over governmental agents, and freedom from the latter's arbitrary action.⁶² Measured by this yardstick, Taiwan's regime change enables further democratization of the relationship between the state and social movements. As movement activists obtain regular avenues to public authority and increasing influence on the policymaking process, social movements become a more or less permanent feature in the new democratic polity. To use Tilly's terminology again, social movements in Taiwan are becoming more like a polity member, rather than a challenger or outsider. Indirectly, the rise of conservative countermobilizations also testifies to the fact that movement activists are closer to the political center.

However, the improved political status of social movements does not necessarily imply their efficacy. The democratic guarantee of equal access can always be subverted by persistent material inequalities. The preceding analysis has shown that the social movement sector was not particularly successful in resisting the DPP's conservative turn. As Phillippe C. Schmitter points out, liberal associability has a built-in bias that favors the more resourceful sectors.⁶³ Still, only in democracy

can formal equality triumph over material inequalities. How to make possible this desired scenario is going to be a great challenge for social movement activists in Taiwan.

For movement activists, an urgent task is learning how to practice the “politics of engagement,” or a political strategy to establish “relationships and communications with those who work in and set policy for mainstream institutions.”⁶⁴ Given the opportunity to work inside state departments, social movement activists will have to be familiar with the role of bureaucratic politics in promoting progressive social changes without being co-opted. A social movement is dead when it is no longer accountable to its rank-and-file constituencies or when it is unable to exert some political influence. Walking the fine line between these twin dangers will become a challenge for Taiwan’s movement activists in the years to come.

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Notes

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