

Social Bases of Taiwan's Political Parties: Regionalism and Ethnicity under MMM

Chung-li Wu 吳重禮¹、Hsiao-chien Tsui 崔曉倩²、Tzu-ping Liu 劉自平³
and Shih-chan Dai 戴士展⁴

¹ Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica, Taiwan
中央研究院政治學研究所籌備處

² Department of Economics, National Chung Cheng University, Taiwan
國立中正大學經濟學系含國際經濟研究所

³ Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica, Taiwan
中央研究院政治學研究所籌備處

⁴ Institute of Political Science, Academia Sinica, Taiwan
中央研究院政治學研究所籌備處

The adoption of a mixed-member majoritarian (MMM) system in 2005, after five decades of the single nontransferable vote (SNTV) system, transformed the landscape of party politics in Taiwan. With Anthony Downs' median voter theorem in mind, we hypothesize that political ideology tends to be emphasized less under MMM, while SNTV tends to stimulate the development of extreme ideologies. This study uses national sample survey data for the 2001, 2004, and 2008 Legislative Yuan elections to examine the social bases of Taiwan's political parties, focusing on the variables of regionalism and ethnicity. The findings reveal that region and ethnic group exerted considerably more influence on the choices of individual voters in the 2008 elections under MMM than these factors did in 2001 and 2004 under SNTV. In view of Taiwan's historical background and sociopolitical environment, this study concludes that, contrary to expectations, the new electoral system aggravates, rather than mitigates, the geopolitical and ethnic divisions which might be regarded as serious social cleavages in Taiwan.

Keywords: median voter theorem, regionalism, ethnicity, mixed-member majoritarian system, single nontransferable vote, legislative elections