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Discussion Paper
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After the 2008 Elections: Domestic Politics on Taiwan

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After the successful completion of both parliamentary and presidential elections on Taiwan in January and March 2008, the attention of foreign observers and the international media has to a large extent been focused on the impact the results of the two elections will have on the relations between Taiwan and China, the chances for a reduction of conflict and the prospects for future accommodation between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The development of the relationship with China will without doubt be one of the central policy areas that the new administration of President Ma Ying-jeou has to concern itself with. His administration is also facing a number of domestic issues it will have to cope with in the immediate future, however. Furthermore, in dealing with these challenges, it will have to come to terms with several systemic problems inherent in the political system of the Republic of China on Taiwan. The resulting dysfunctions have seriously impacted upon the performance of the outgoing Chen administration.¹

This paper will deal with several aspects of domestic politics on Taiwan since the beginning of 2008: a short analysis of the elections and their political implications; the political agenda of the new president; the functional problems of Taiwan's political system that are likely to influence the performance of the new administration and, finally, the state of the new Ma administration after 100 days in office.

1. The elections

Electoral campaigns in Taiwan have been described as 'energetic, emotional, and at times ugly'.² Moreover, these campaigns took and take place in a society that has been characterised by a number of analysts as 'mildly divided' on a range of issues, most importantly that of national identity.³ Since the presidential election campaign in the year 2004, observers also discovered that a lack of political trust existed between different groups of the population, but most noticeable between the actors of the two political camps,⁴ pan-blue and pan-green.⁵

Approaching the 2008 elections the domestic political situation on Taiwan has been marked by tense relations between the Chen administration and the political opposition, but also between the Chen administration and considerable parts of Taiwan's society over the issue of corruption. The elections would also have some far-reaching implications for the major

1 Cf. Halbeisen, Hermann; Taiwan's Domestic Politics since the Presidential Elections 2000. Duisburg 2003 (Duisburg Working Papers on East Asian Studies, 53).

2 Gunde, Richard; The Election in Taiwan: A Forum. P. 1, www.international.ucla.edu/ccs/print.asp?parentid=9435.

3 Cf. Hsieh, John Fuh-sheng; Institutional Design for a Mildly Divided Society: The Case of Taiwan. In: Issues & Studies 42:1 (2006), 81-102.

4 Cf. Yu, Ching-hsin; 2004 nien T'ai-wan tsung-t'ung hsüan-chü; cheng-chih hsin-jen ti ch'üeh-fa yü mei kung-ku ti min-chu. In: T'ai-wan min-chu ch'i-k'an 1:2 (2004), 193-200

5 In this paper Taiwan's political chromatics will be used to designate the two major political camps and their adherents: pan-blue comprises the KMT, the New Party and the Peoples' First Party, pan-green the DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union. Dark-blue is used to designate the adherents of a Chinese identity of Taiwan, dark-green for those in favour of Taiwan nationhood.

competitors, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Kuomintang (KMT) that went beyond the usual impact of elections, i.e. the redistribution of power and mandates among the competing parties and personalities.

After eight years in control of the administration the DPP was most interested in the continuation of its nation building project. For the upcoming elections this implied that a priority be given to the presidential elections. In the past eight years modifications in policy areas relevant to this project – like changing the contents of teaching materials on history or the establishment of university institutes focusing primarily on Taiwan etc. – were all implemented by means of the DPP controlled administration. Aware of the party's limited resources and the disadvantages of the new election law, the DPP's election goals for the Legislative Yuan (LY) elections thus did not aim at winning the majority of seats. Chen Shui-bian declared the winning of 'over 50' seats – well below the majority of 67 seats in the LY – would be tantamount to victory.⁶

On the side of the KMT, the upcoming elections were also perceived as decisive for the party's future development. Having lost the previous two presidential elections and having undergone a reorganisation of both membership and party organisation during the past eight years another defeat in the presidential election would not have led to the extinction of the party as some commentators predicted. The reformed KMT can count on a large and remarkably dedicated membership. Lack of control over the administration and the ensuing control over financial allotments might have endangered the continuing adherence of local factions, however, whose loyalty depends to a considerable extent on a skilful handling of pork barrel politics.⁷

Even though the two electoral contests were marked by a considerable level of acrimony between the two major camps and in spite of numerous speculations concerning 'dark moves' (*au-pu*) by the DPP, both sides played largely by the rules and the institutions responsible for administering the elections proved to be up to the task.⁸. Although ruminations that President Chen might not be willing to accept the results of the presidential elections and revert to some extra-constitutional measures were spread in the media, both elections were carried through without noticeable incidents and the transfer of political power from the Chen to the Ma administration proceeded according to law.

The controversies between the two opposing camps concerning the combination of elections with referenda and the procedures of voting for the referenda demonstrated that divergent legal perceptions existed among the parties involved – as well as different calculations of which procedures might work to their respective advantage. They cannot be considered as machinations employed by one side in order to gain an unfair advantage at the polls, however.

Speculations concerning the use of illegal or unconstitutional means to influence the results of the elections or even to negate a possible defeat by the ruling DPP and the Chen

6 China Post News Staff; President vows to lead DPP to victory at polls. In: The China Post Internet Edition, October 18, 2007.

7 Interview Taiwan 17.09.07; former member of the KMT Dept. of Organisation and Development.

8 Bruyas, Dimitri; Saturday polls went smoothly despite minor incidents: CEC. In: The China Post, March 23, 2008.

administration have been quite widespread, especially among adherents of the dark-blue camp. They even seemed to have gained some currency among Mainland political observers as well, but in the end turned out to be unfounded.⁹

2. Creation of a unitary government

Both elections – the legislative one as well as the presidential one – saw the KMT victorious. The new electoral system, used for the first time in this year's legislative elections, favours the KMT. Due to this structural advantage, the KMT – in league with the few legislators that remained from the former pan-blue camp – obtained a three-fourths majority of seats in the LY, with a vote share of slightly more than 51 percent.

The presidential elections were also won in a convincing fashion by the blue camp. The KMT's candidate, Ma Ying-jeou, received 58.45 percent of the votes, while his opponent Hsieh Ch'ang-t'ing from the DPP received 41.55 percent.

The victory of the KMT in both legislative and presidential elections put an end to the era of divided government in Taiwan. While the formation of a unitary government has been welcomed by a majority of voters as providing the basis for efficient government by the new administration, this optimism has not been shared by all citizens. A number of political groups of a more nativist dark-green orientation articulated their concern that the political situation on the island might revert to the situation before 1988, when rule by one dominant party (*Yi-tang tu-ta*) provided the basis for arbitrary rule.¹⁰ Sizeable parts of the electorate continue to doubt that the KMT really has changed from the authoritarian China-oriented party of the past into a democratic Taiwan-based political party and therefore watch the establishment of a unitary government with considerable uneasiness.

While these fears seem to be somewhat farfetched to a foreign observer, the new administration, the KMT and its parliamentary party in the LY will be under close public scrutiny whether they will use the newly won majority for the advancement of particularistic interests or whether they will devise policies that are in the interest of the majority of the population.

The impressive election results of both the KMT and Ma Ying-jeou should not give rise to an overestimation of the political support they enjoy. The election results have been strongly influenced by voting abstention, especially among the so-called light-green voters. They did not participate in the elections out of frustration over the performance of Chen Shui-bian and the DPP since 2006. Even without their support, the DPP and the dark-green organizations still command a considerable following that can be mobilized if the new administration's policies concerning economic recovery or the negotiations with China should not work out satisfactorily.

9 These rumours have even found expression in an article by Nan Fang-shuo published in *Yazhou Zhoukan* shortly before the presidential elections. See: Nan Fang-shuo; Weiqing shitian. In: *Yazhou Zhoukan* March 23, 2008, 24-27. For a different interpretation see Wang, Jen-chieh; 520 au-pu ch'iu-lü cheng. In: *The Journalist/Hsin Hsin-wen* (HHW) 1103 (24.4.2008), 18-23

10 Cf. the reports and discussions in HHW 1097 (13.3.2008), 18-26

3. Second transfer of power

The smooth transfer of power from Chen Shui-bian to Ma Ying-jeou signifies that the political system on Taiwan – whose stability and quality as a democratic polity have been questioned by a number of political scientists in recent years – has successfully accomplished the second transfer of power. It can thus be qualified as a mature democratic system.

This successful completion of an important stage in political development is accompanied by a second change that merits a short mentioning. The process of democratization on Taiwan has been accompanied by a decline of the mainlanders' political influence on all levels of the political system and a concurrent increase in the number and influence of Taiwanese politicians in the island's electoral offices. For a while politicians of mainlander origin could compete for office only on the national level – with the highest office, the presidency, beyond their reach. While this trend has been reversed lately at the local level, where magistrates or mayors of mainlander origin head the county- or city-governments of Taipei hsien, Taoyuan hsien and Taichung city, the victory of Ma Ying-jeou seems to have finally put the provincial origin of the candidates as a relevant category in political competition to rest.

This perception is shared by local observers. Asked for his assessment of the elections and their outcomes, Antonio Chiang, a longstanding activist in the opposition *Dangwai* movement and close collaborator of President Chen Shui-bian during the first Chen administration, replied: 'It was meaningful to have the first (democratically elected) China-born president in Taiwan.'¹¹

Some observers have drawn even more far-reaching conclusions from Ma's victory and ascertain that the pattern of identity politics prevalent in Taiwan during the last decades has finally come to end. Whether this optimistic assessment turns out to be true remains to be seen.¹²

4. Political agenda of the new president

President Ma's policy announcements concerning economic and political exchange with China received widespread attention internationally, the central tasks of his new administration will be of a domestic nature, however: to restart economic growth and catch up with Taiwan's neighbours in Northeast Asia, which achieved higher economic growth rates during the last decade. 'Taiwanese voters ... have elected Mr. Ma to focus on fixing the economic problems ... more than (on) political reconciliation with the Mainland.'¹³ The new administration's short term plans with regard to China – to set up direct charter flights between the island and the Mainland and to open Taiwan to Chinese tourists – are pursued because they are expected to stimulate the island's economic growth.

11 Ko, Shu-ling; Analysis: Extent of DPP election loss surprises many. In: Taipei Times, March 25, 2008, p.3. Actually, in the new Ma administration both president and premier are of mainlander origin.

12 Cf. Wu, Yü-shan; Kao-pieh tsu-chün cheng-chih ying-mai. In: Chung-kuo shih-pao, 23.3.2008, A22.

13 Wang, Xiangwei; China Briefing: Taiwanese voted for Ma to fix the economy above all else. In: South China Morning Post, March 24, 2008, A4.

Talking about the main challenges confronting the new administration, Wang Jin-pyng, the speaker of the LY, singled out four policy areas that have to be dealt with forthwith: Taiwan's bid to join international and regional economic organisations as a full member, balancing the government's spending with its revenues, and the stagnant cross-strait exchanges in the absence of formal ties between the two sides. He also pointed to a number of social problems that have to be addressed, especially political and ethnic conflicts as well as the increasing gap between the rich and the poor.¹⁴

President Ma himself outlined the tasks that will receive priority during the first 100 days of his administration. They comprise some long-standing problems of the political system, like the nomination of candidates for the Control Yuan, that had been dysfunctional for some time, financial policies and a number of measures and initiatives concerning cross-strait relations, for instance the establishment of direct links and the development of cross-strait tourism, the establishment of a dialogue with China and the establishment of an understanding concerning diplomatic reconciliation.¹⁵

The new Ma administration is thus confronted with a number of tasks that comprise the realization of his campaign promises, coping with the heritage of the Chen administration and, finally, a number of issues affecting the character and the stability of Taiwan's polity.

I will address two of these issues, the new administration's attitude toward the constitution and the attenuation of polarization among the people on Taiwan, in the following paragraph.

4.1 Returning to the constitution

The former Chen administration displayed an ambivalent attitude towards the constitution of the ROC: on the one hand, it was the foundation of the legitimacy of its rule and the basis for the claim that Taiwan as the ROC was an independent nation. On the other hand, this constitution had to be replaced by a new – 'Taiwanese' – constitution in order to complete the process of turning Taiwan into a 'normal nation'.

In the run up to the elections as well as in his inaugural address President Ma has made it clear that he will respect the spirit of the constitution and will operate within its institutional framework, in order 'to re-establish a robust constitutional tradition'.¹⁶ Although the new administration could muster the number of votes necessary for a constitutional revision, it will refrain from doing so, thus putting one of the issues that served as a constant source of irritation in Taiwan's relations with both the United States and China to rest.

While this effect will certainly be welcomed by Taiwan's neighbours and the international community, this approach is not without its problems. There exists a discrepancy between the

14 China News Agency; Four tough tasks to challenge Ma's new government: Wang. In: The China Post Internet Edition, May 18, 2008.

15 China Post News Staff; Ma outlines list of priority jobs. In: The China Post Internet Edition, May 22, 2008.

16 'We must ensure that the government is based on the rule of law. The executive yuan must answer to the Legislative Yuan. The judiciary must guarantee the rule of law and protect human rights. The Examination Yuan must make the civil service sound. The Control Yuan must redress mistakes by the government and censure malfeasance by civil servants. All told, we must take this opportunity to re-establish a robust constitutional tradition.' See President Ma's Inaugural Address; English. www.gov.tw/fp.asp?fpag=cp;20.05.08, p.2.

popular perception of the president's role in Taiwan's polity and the constitutional definition of his jurisdiction, a discrepancy that will test the political acumen of the incumbent. In the public's understanding the role of the president is conceived pretty much in terms similar to the role the American president plays within the political system of the United States – as chief executive and initiator of government policy. Ma Ying-jeou's understanding of his new role, however, reverts to the limited powers the constitution grants to the president in Taiwan, which are restricted to the fields of foreign and security policies. These limited powers find their expression in the small number of political staff attached to the presidential office, which is insufficient for monitoring the performance of the various ministries, commissions and agencies of the EY as well as for the formulation and initiation of policies.

This discrepancy between a conception of the president's role as being the nation's chief executive and the very limited institutional resources of the office of the president can be identified as one major reason for the weak performance of the Chen administration. To chart a way between popular expectations of the president and his own commitment to follow constitutional precedent will force President Ma to find some creative solutions to overcome this difficult challenge.¹⁷

4.2 Reducing polarization

The second problem has been formulated succinctly by a participant in one of the numerous roundtables analysing the results of the presidential race that convened in Taipei in the aftermath of the elections. Hsiao Hsin-huang, one of the better known public intellectuals on Taiwan and a dedicated supporter of Chen Shui-bian and the DPP, raised the question whether 'Ma (can) heal Taiwan?'¹⁸ Though this formulation is somewhat dramatic it points to one important task that the new president has to confront: to ameliorate the ethnic discomfort of Taiwan's society that has grown over the last few years. This antagonism is not primarily related to ethnic tensions in a narrow understanding of the term, but is a consequence of the nation-building policies undertaken by the Chen administration.

Reducing these tensions will require careful political action in three distinct policy fields: the relations between the major groups on Taiwan, dealing with some of the outcomes of the former administration's de-sinification policy and, finally, mitigating Taiwan's North-South divide.

The most delicate topic is related to the interpretation of Taiwanese identity and its repercussions on the government's policy toward China. While President Ma has received a mandate by the electorate to pursue his pragmatic approach in dealing with the Mainland, this policy is certain to arouse considerable uneasiness among those parts of the population which attach great importance to Taiwan's identity and sovereignty. It will also be watched closely by the DPP and the considerable number of civic organizations working for the establishment of Taiwan's nationhood.

17 Cf. also Wang, Yeh-lin; Ma facing difficult legislative balancing act. In: Taipei Times, www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2008/07/14/2003417373.

18 Donald, James; Taiwan Think tank reflects on election outcome, implications. In: The China Post Internet Edition, March 25, 2008.

Addressing the uneasiness and the fears concerning Taiwan's status and future will certainly be a continuous task for Ma's administration, since the intended rapprochement with China, especially once it reaches those stages that go beyond the primarily economic aspects of the relationship and affect the status of the island, will certainly rekindle controversy between the political camps on Taiwan and create anxieties among an ever larger part of the population. The president and his administration thus will have to proceed carefully in order not to provoke the apprehensions of the adherents of the dark-green camp concerning any dealing with China and the loyalty of the KMT which still perceived in these circles as primarily China-oriented.

A related topic that also needs to be handled carefully comprises some of the outcomes of the Chen administration's de-sinification policy, as they relate to conflicting perceptions among Taiwanese and Mainlanders. Examples of these issues would be cases like the renaming of Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall or Taoyuan Chung-cheng Airport, a step that pleased the dark-green supporters of the DPP as much as it offended both light-blue and dark-blue supporters of the KMT.

Also included in this list of issues is Taiwan's 'North-South Divide' that has given rise to various discussions in the past years.¹⁹ Its most obvious manifestation is the fact that Taiwan north of the Cho-shui River is politically dominated by the KMT while the counties and cities south of it are DPP strongholds. In contradistinction to the above-mentioned two points the North-South divide is not primarily caused by ethnic factors but by a combination of uneven economic development and a growing sense among the population in Southern Taiwan that they have been put at a disadvantage by the central government.

Ma Ying-jeou has already started to address these challenges. In an early statement he commented that he was aware that he had won only 58.42 percent of votes cast, but pledged to serve 100 percent of Taiwan's voters. And in a central passage of his inaugural address he gives expression to his attachment to Taiwan. Talking about 'Taiwan's Legacy and Vision', he states: 'Taiwan is not my birthplace, but it is where I was raised and the resting place of my family. I am forever grateful to (this) society for accepting and nurturing the post-war immigrant. I will protect Taiwan with all my heart and resolutely move forward.'²⁰

4.3 Staffing the new administration

In choosing the members of the staff at the presidential office, the new president gave preference to experience over new faces with untested potential. His major collaborators in the presidential office, Chan Ch'un-po and Yeh Ching-ch'uan, as secretary-general and deputy secretary-general respectively, are both experienced politicians and long-time collaborators of Ma Ying-jeou during his time as mayor of Taipei and chairman of the KMT. Similar criteria guided the choice for the major officials of the National Security Council, which is headed by

19 Cf. Lee, Pei-shan, and Yung-ming Hsu; Southern Politics? Regional Trajectories of Party Development in Taiwan. In: *Issues & Studies* 38:2 (2002), 61-84.

20 Cf. President Ma's Inaugural Address; English, www.gov.tw/fp.asp?fp=cp; 20.05.08.

the former chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council and deputy-secretary general of the presidential office under Lee Teng-hui, Su Chi.²¹

One of the major criticisms levelled against former President Chen was aimed at his selection of personnel for the branches of the EY, but also for selecting the members of the two other major organs of government, the Control Yuan (CY) and the Examination Yuan (EXY). Two tendencies dominated: in many instances the political orientation of a candidate was more important than his professional qualifications for the position. Once a person was entrusted with an office it was unlikely that he would stay in this office for long and accumulate experience since the Chen administration saw a continuous change of personnel in the wake of numerous changes in the office of Premier.

In the case of the CY, the major institution in the government structure dealing with disciplinary aspects of government personnel, impeachment and audit, President Chen choose to let the institution become inoperative rather than have to reach an arrangement with the pan-blue majority of the LY concerning the selection of its members.

In choosing the members of his own administration and nominating candidates for the other two Yuan, Ma Ying-jeou had to reconcile between diverging considerations: to combine experience with potential in the case of the EY in order to lay a sound basis for the immediate realization of his ambitious campaign promises. The nominations for the CY and EXY seem to be have been guided by a different approach: to demonstrate the new president's all-party approach to national affairs.

His choice as premier, Liu Chao-shiuan, is an experienced technocrat, who held the post of vice-premier in the last KMT led government from 1997 to 2000. The other choices of persons to fill the leading positions in the various branches of the EY displayed a similar tendency: they were guided by a marked preference for technocrats with considerable government experience, especially in departments and agencies related to economic and financial policy.

A second characteristic of the new administration can be found in the considerable number of persons that have an academic background: 30 of the 36 members of the EY have acquired an advanced academic degree. Thus, the dominant tendency displayed in the choice of personnel is a bias in favour technocrats, while there are only a few positions filled with persons with political experience in the legislative branch – one person – or within society at large.²²

In two cases, the choices made can be interpreted as representing a conscious approach to broaden the EY's membership into political groupings outside the pan-blue camp. The first is Jiang I-hua, chairman of the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission, a political science professor from National Taiwan University and campaign manager of the Third Society Party during the legislative elections 2008.

21 Mo Yan-chih; Ma picks top Presidential Office aides. In: Taipei Times 20.04.08, www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2008/04/20/2003409787; Mo Yan-chih; Su Chi gets top job at the NSC. In: Taipei Times 12.05.08, www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2008/05/12/2003411736.

22 For a detailed analysis see Wang, Ming-yüan; Ssu-ta chih-piao, chien-shih hsin nei-ko. In: HHW 1103 (24.04.08), 30-31 and Lin, Huan-ch'eng; Ch'i-ssu-ch'i yi t'iao-p'iao, liu-san-san pu le-kuan. In: HHW 1105 (08.05.08), 34-39.

The second case is the new head of the Mainland Affairs Council, Lai Shin-yuan, a former legislator and member of TSU, the pro-independence party affiliated with Lee Teng-hui. The mainland policy of the new cabinet will thus be formulated and executed by an interesting team, Lai Shin-yuan as the person responsible for policy formulation, while Chiang Pin-kung, a deputy chairman of the KMT with a strong dark-blue orientation, has been appointed as head of the Strait Exchange Foundation and is thus the person directly responsible for negotiations with the mainland authorities.

In defining his role as president, Ma Ying-jeou mentioned two characteristics that should distinguish his administration from that of former presidents belonging to the KMT: he would differentiate between office and party and abandon the practice of earlier KMT administrations, which were characterised by the dominance of the party, i.e. the KMT, over the institutions of the government (*yi tang ling cheng*). Ma expressed his intention to act as a president of the whole nation and not representing just the blue part of the electorate.

His efforts to put these principles into practice in the selection of nominees for the CY and EXY were only partially successful, however. His nominations, which included some respected members from the pan-green camp, were based on the recommendations of a committee headed by Vice-President Hsiao Wan-chang. The KMT-dominated LY administered some stinging setbacks to the president, however, rejecting four of his nominees for the CY, among them his candidate for the vice-chairmanship, former DPP-legislator Shen Fu-hsiung. The party caucus also refused to support Ma's choice for chairman of the EXY.²³ Ma's new list of candidates shows a stronger political flavour by nominating Kuan Chung, a deputy-chairman of the KMT, as president of EXY.²⁴

5. Functional problems of the political system

5.1 Role of the president

Some of the institutional problems that impede the president in performing the role of chief executive have already been mentioned. Before the change of political power from the KMT's Lee Teng-hui to the DPP's Chen Shui-bian in the year 2000, the coordination of political tasks at the national level of the political system was arranged outside of the constitutional framework – by the KMT and its central party headquarters. The president of the republic doubled as the chairman of the KMT – and party institutions like the Central Standing Committee, the Central Policy Commission (CPC) and the staff of the central party headquarters took care of policy coordination between the various institutions involved.²⁵

Although the KMT has recovered control of the presidency and the legislature in this year's elections, this arrangement cannot simply be reactivated, however. There are two reasons that

23 Chiao, Wei; Shen Fu-hsiung luoma, tsung-t'ung lu ma-chiao. In: HHW 1114 (10.07.08), 32-33.

24 China Post News Staff; Ma makes nominations in 3 branches. In: The China Post Internet Edition September 13, 2008.

25 For a more detailed discussion of this arrangement see Halbeisen, op.cit.

obstruct a return to the old model: the president does not double as party chairman – at least for time being – and – more importantly – the KMT's central party headquarters can no longer perform this task. As a consequence of both the financial difficulties the party encountered after two consecutive defeats in the presidential elections and the organisational consequences of the reorganization of its membership and party structure, central party headquarters are now faced with limited financial and personal resources.

President Ma obviously is aware of the importance of the coordination problem for the smooth functioning of his administration as demonstrated by the establishment of a new top level coordination arrangement. This 'National Affairs Meeting' in the parlance of the media provides for weekly meetings of the president and the vice-president with the heads of the EY and the LY as well as the chairman of the KMT and will provide an opportunity to exchange views on political problems and to coordinate political activities.²⁶

5.2 Relations between the administration and the legislature

A decisive role in the strategy of the new administration for efficient policy-making will be played by the LY, especially the parliamentary party of the KMT. The strained and conflict-prone relationship between an administration led by the DPP and a legislature dominated by the pan-blue camp severely limited the political options of the Chen administration. In the post-election situation of a unitary government, quite a number of pundits prognosticated the establishment of harmonious and efficient working relations between the president, the EY and the LY.

A number of systemic and institutional problems have already become obvious and render the likelihood of an efficient operation of the LY and a smooth cooperation between the executive and legislative arms of government elusive, however.

One major problem consists of a mismatch between the overall number of representatives, the number of legislative committees in the LY and the number of government institutions that fall into their purview. Following the reduction of the number of parliamentarians by half – from 225 to 113, the number of legislative committees has been reduced by one third, from 12 to 8. Though this measure provides for a sizable membership in each legislative committee it also increases the purview of the commissions, in some cases dramatically. The committee on educational and cultural affairs, to mention just one example, deals with the Ministry of Education, the Council for Cultural Affairs, the National Palace Museum, the Government Information Office, the National Youth Commission, the National Council on Physical Fitness & Sports, the Academia Sinica, the National Science Council and the Atomic Energy Council. The efficient working of the LY is further inhibited by a number of procedural problems and a legislative tradition that favours neither seniority nor professionalism. It will require considerable attention on the side of the president, the premier and the KMT's party leadership

26 China Post News Staff; 'Ma heads coordination meet on big issues.' In: The China Post Internet Edition, May 27, 2008.

to provide the conditions necessary for a smooth parliamentary process in the LY in order to enable timely deliberation and decision of bills introduced by the EY.²⁷

Another likely point of friction can be located in the divergent perceptions of the roles the legislators are expected to perform, held by the public, the executive and the KMT central leadership on the one hand and the legislators themselves on the other. To oversimplify, from the point of view of public and party the legislators are supposed to function as a reviewing board for government initiated bills and initiators of members' bills in policy fields where the government failed to take the initiative, displaying both professional competence and strong awareness of the public good. The majority of the legislators, however, especially those representing constituencies, conceive of themselves as a counterweight to the administration, representatives of local interests and providers of services to their voters. This attitude will probably become even stronger due to the new electoral system, as each directly elected legislator represents only one distinct geographical area and is beholden more to the advancement of the interests of his or her constituency than to the interest of the party or the general public.

Indications that basic tensions exist between the KMT's parliamentary party and both the EY and central party headquarters have already become apparent. Legislators belonging to the KMT's parliamentary party have reacted very negatively to the party leadership's attempts to regulate the legislators' behaviour in the LY by means of party disciplinary regulations. Concerning the relations between the EY and the LY, legislators from both camps have shown strong resentment against the technocratic approach adopted by the new premier in formulating a policy packet for immediate action against Taiwan's economic crisis. The premier expected prompt compliance by the legislature, although neither the LY as an institution nor the KMT's parliamentary party had been consulted beforehand.²⁸

5.3 Relations between the administration and the KMT

During the first 100 days of the Ma administration, shortcomings in the coordination and communication process between the administration and the KMT party headquarters have been exposed. The dimensions of this challenge surpass the problem solving capacities of the 'National Affairs Meeting' mentioned above.

The task of incorporating the party's headquarters, its functional departments and leading representatives with the administration's decision making process as well as devising an adequate role for the party to play in the power triangle combining the administration (president and EY), the legislature and party headquarters has been a problem haunting politicians in Taiwan since the change of government in the year 2000.

During its eight years in power, the Chen administration and the DPP party headquarters tried various mechanisms – for example creation of an informal coordination body or co-opting

27 Cf. HHW 1094 (21.02.2008), p. 16-21.

28 Young, David; KMT lawmakers, Cabinet in a love-hate relationship. In: The, China Post Internet Edition, May 28, 2008; China Post News Staff; Legislature 'ignored' by the Cabinet. In: The China Post Internet Edition, May 24, 2008.

an acting DPP president as ex-officio party chairman – without arriving at a solution that proved to be both efficient and politically viable.

While the DPP never achieved a majority in the LY and thus only had to coordinate party and administration, the Ma administration is confronted with different circumstances, a solid legislative majority. While this situation certainly makes governing easier, it also makes a solution of the problem of how the president and the party – which should control the legislators – structure communication and coordination imperative. Diverging perceptions on how much importance president and party should be accorded in the policy making process complicate this task even further.²⁹

For the time being all parties involved are looking for an informal solution: in addition to the weekly luncheons of president, vice-president, premier, speaker and party chairman, the 'National Affairs Meeting', an enlarged version of the party's 'Chung-shan hui-pao', a weekly meeting comprising high ranking officials from the president's office, the EY, the LY, the KMT's CPC and parliamentary caucus as well as leading cadres from the KMT's party headquarters will provide a forum to raise relevant issues.³⁰

6 The first 100 days

After 100 days in office, President Ma and his administration are confronted with shrinking support, the result of considerable disappointment among the population, and a growing wave of criticism mainly from the supporters of the pan-green camp.

Ma's brilliant victory in the presidential elections was based to a considerable extent on his promise of quick improvement of Taiwan's economic situation (*ma-shang hao!*). But his administration has not been able to fulfil the electorate's expectations. It could not provide quick remedies in dealing with the effects global economic developments exerted on Taiwan – raising inflation and lacklustre economic performance. The establishment of direct charter flights between Taiwan and the Mainland as well as the relaxation of restrictions for tourists from the Mainland – both touted by the administration for their positive effects on Taiwan's economic growth – did not show the intended results.³¹

The administration's pragmatic approach in dealing with the Chinese authorities – putting emphasis on achieving concrete results instead of stressing Taiwan's sovereignty – as well as its restrained approach in dealing with the annual application for UN membership and other diplomatic initiatives has provided the adherents of the dark-green camp, devastated by the results of the elections, with a convenient issue to mobilize its supporters anew.³²

29 In the words of a high ranking party cadre, the relations between the president and the party depend to a large extent on how one views the result of the 2008 elections: has the president or has the party won executive power? Comp. Chen, Yen-yu; Kuo-min-tang yao shih-hsien wan-ch'üan chih-cheng wan-ch'üan fu-ts'e. In: HHW 1118 (8.7.2008), 26-28.

30 Ibid.

31 For an analysis, see China News Agency; Benefits of China tourism opening to be seen: agent. In: The China Post Internet Edition, September 9, 2008.

32 The China Post News Staff; Anti-Ma crowds rally. In: The China Post Internet Edition, August 31, 2008.

It remains to be seen whether the DPP can profit from this impetus. Since the loss of the two elections the DPP has been confronted with rather grim political and financial circumstances. It commands only a limited number of representatives in the LY and is facing huge organisational efforts to maintain a presence in those constituencies that elected a KMT representative. The party itself is encountering severe financial problems, not to speak of the impact that the revelations about former President Chen's financial dealings might exert on the party's standing among voters. Under these circumstances, Taiwan might see a return to the extra-parliamentary movements that the *Dangwai* organized decades ago, as various NGO's affiliated with the cause of Taiwan's sovereignty have to find their own ways to articulate publicly their opposition to the government's approach in dealing with China.

President Ma and his administration are thus confronted with three challenges in the coming months: to deal effectively with the economic problems of the island, to devise a political approach to handle its negotiations with China that is effective in achieving results without offending considerable parts of the people on Taiwan, and, finally, to structure the relations between its four bases of power, the presidency, the EY, the parliamentary party and the KMT in such a way that the impact of the systemic dysfunctions upon its policy making efficiency is minimized.