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Democratization and Civilian Control of the Military in Taiwan

DAVID KUEHN

Over the last 20 years, Taiwan has witnessed an impressive transition from authoritarian one-party rule to liberal democracy. This included considerable changes in the relations between the civilian political elites and the armed forces. While under the emergency laws of the authoritarian regime the military had been a powerful political force, during democratization the elected civilians have managed to curb military political power and have successively widened their influence over former exclusively military prerogatives. This article argues that the development of Taiwan's civil–military relations can be explained as the result of civilians using increasingly robust strategies to enhance their influence over the military. This was made possible by a highly beneficial combination of historical conditions and factors inside and outside the military that strengthened the political power of the civilian elites and weakened the military's bargaining power. The article finds that even though partisan exploitation of civilian control instruments could potentially arouse civil–military conflict in the future, civil–military relations in general will most likely remain supportive of the further consolidation of Taiwan's democracy.

Key words: civil-military relations; democratization; military; Taiwan

Democratization and Civilian Control of the Military in Taiwan

On 15 July 2007, Taiwan celebrated the 20th anniversary of the lifting of Martial Law and the beginning of a remarkable transition from authoritarian one-party rule to liberal democracy. This development is widely regarded as one of the few outstanding successes of the 'third wave of democratization' in Asia. While almost all aspects of Taiwan's transition have been extensively studied by a large volume of often excellent research, civil–military relations have thus far played only a marginal role in this analysis.[1] This article contributes to an understanding of Taiwan's transition by addressing the following three questions: How have Taiwan's civil–military relations evolved during the democratization period? Why did they develop that way? What impact might civil–military relations have on the prospects for further democratic consolidation in Taiwan? To answer these questions, the article proceeds in four steps. The first section outlines the conceptual and theoretical framework for the empirical analysis. The second part examines the development of Taiwan's civil–military relations from the authoritarian era to 2007. The third section analyses the reasons for these dynamics. The paper concludes with an analysis of the study's implications for the wider field of civil–military relations research and an interpretation of the results in view of Taiwan's democratic consolidation.

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Civilian Control of the Military – Conceptual and Theoretical Perspectives

Four Dimensions of Civilian Control of the Military

Civilian control of the military is a necessary condition for democratic governance.[2] Only when the elected civilian officials enjoy uncontested decision-making power in all relevant political issues can democratic institutions properly link political processes and outcomes to the consent of the governed.[3] Beyond this definitional consensus, however, transition theory lacks a generally accepted analytical concept of the dimensions, areas, and contents of civilian control of the military. Instead, large segments of the literature seem to equate civilian control with the presence of a civilian supreme commander and the absence of overt military intervention. Recent research suggests a more differentiated approach based on the civil–military share of decision-making power in relevant sub-fields of the political arena. In his work on the institutionalization of civilian control in Venezuela, Harold Trinkunas identifies four functional areas of civil–military relations (external defence, internal security, public policy, and leadership selection).[4] By analysing who dominates the decision-making processes in these areas, various degrees and forms of civilian control can be distinguished and their respective impact on the quality of democracy can be mapped.[5] Democratic consolidation requires that elected civilian authorities succeed in securing political decision-making power in all four decision areas by cutting the military's formal prerogatives, defending against informal intervention, and institutionalizing effective control mechanisms.[6]

'External defence' comprises all state activities of defence policy and military organization. While a certain degree of military autonomy in this area is considered functional, the decisive measure for civilian dominance is if and to what extent civilian authorities are able to control the defence policy agenda, make relevant decisions, and effectively oversee their implementation by the military. Concerning the area of 'internal security', even liberal democracies occasionally deploy their armed forces on anti-insurgency missions, for riot control and in support of civilian police forces. Civilian dominance in this area depends on the abilities of civilian authorities to decide the range, duration, and frequency of such missions and the effectiveness of civilian oversight over military internal security deployment. The area of 'public policy' refers to the processes of policy-making and policy implementation in all political matters except internal and external security, e.g. budget decisions, foreign policy, and daily governance. Military participation in this area impinges on the elected authorities' effective power to govern and thus constitutes a significant democratic deficit. Finally, civilian dominance in the area of 'political leadership' is crucial for the existence of a democratic regime. If the recruitment, functioning or persistence of civilian government depends on the approval of the military leadership, civilian control is constricted, the democratic principle is undermined, and the civilian character of the regime is threatened.

Crafting Civilian Control

How do civilians manage to curb military political power and institutionalize civilian control during democratization? Harold Trinkunas proposes an agency approach,

arguing that the assertion of civilian control depends on the strategies civilian actors employ to gain influence over the military.[7] The general argument is that robust strategies enable civilian elites to expand their political influence, whereas weaker strategies allow the military to retain their prerogatives. Based on the degree of intrusion into the military institutional sphere, four ideal types of control strategies can be distinguished: appeasement (least robust strategy), monitoring, 'divide and conquer', and sanctioning (most robust strategy).[8]

'Appeasement' means that civilian authorities try to bribe the officers into political restraint by granting the armed forces institutional autonomies and offering them material and political gratifications for loyalty to the regime. When 'monitoring' is employed, civilians install bureaucratic agencies inside or outside of the military organization in order to oversee the armed forces and to reduce the informational asymmetry between the military and civilians. 'Divide and conquer' strategies exploit cleavages and rivalries inside the military in order to weaken the political power of the armed forces. 'Sanctioning' provides incentives to accept the principle of civilian supremacy by rewarding loyal officers (positive sanctioning) or punishing military insubordination and political dissent (negative sanctioning).

However, the agency perspective alone is unable to explain the motivation of civilian elites to implement certain strategies. It therefore has to be embedded in a systematic analysis of those contextual factors that modify the civil–military balance of power: the greater the civilians' relative bargaining power vis-à-vis the officers, the more likely their opportunity structures are to employ robust strategies. Based on recent research, three sets of context factors can be distinguished: initial conditions, military-endogenous factors and military-exogenous factors.[9]

The role of the military in the authoritarian regime and the mode of transition together define the initial conditions for the civil–military interaction processes. If the civilian elites are able unilaterally to control the mode, speed, and scope of the democratic transition, then the chance to employ robust strategies increases.[10]

Endogenous factors mould the military's disposition and ability to compete with the civilian elites for political prerogatives. First, the opportunities for robust civilian control strategies are favourable if the officer corps predominantly share a corporate ideology based on the ideal of 'democratic professionalism' that defines external defence as the prime function of the armed forces and limits the scope of military professional competence to this area. Second, internal fragmentation and programmatic differences weaken the military's capability to formulate and defend a coherent policy position. Thus, civilian authorities will be more likely to employ robust strategies when the degree of military organizational cohesion is low.[11] Third, the ability to curb military prerogatives is further heightened if the military possesses no autonomous economic resources that could render material sanctions against the armed forces ineffective and might provide incentives to resist civilian control.[12]

Exogenous factors modify the civil–military balance of power from outside the military. First, if the civilian regime has a sound and uncontested legitimacy, then it is likely to provide an important insurance against military intervention, supplying the civilian authorities with political capital and enabling them to employ robust control strategies.[13] Second, the actual constellation of civilian elites is conducive

to curbing the military's political autonomy if they share the norm of not utilizing the military for their own parochial interests and if they can rely on autonomous sources of defence expertise. Third, an active civil society supports the institutionalization of civilian control by providing alternative means and mechanisms of information and by imposing public pressure on the armed forces to abandon prerogatives and refrain from political intervention. Fourth, the existence of an external security threat and the absence of internal conflicts are conducive to civilian control by directing the military's mission towards external defence and inciting civilians to develop interest as well as autonomous expertise in defence policy. As shown in the Argentine military's decision to occupy the Falkland Islands (Malvinas) in 1982, it is less the objective security threat that is important in this regard than the threat perception of the relevant actors. Fifth, international influences can modify the civil–military balance of power by supporting the stability of the civilian regime and setting incentives for the institutionalization of civilian control.[14]

In combination, initial conditions and exogenous and endogenous factors form the context for civil–military interactions and thus affect the bargaining positions and opportunity structures for strategy choices during democratic transition. Civilian control is likely to be institutionalized if civilian elites can profit from favourable conditions and choose robust strategies to curb the armed forces' political prerogatives in all four areas of civil–military relations.

Civil–Military Relations in Taiwan

Civil-Military Relations during the Authoritarian Era: 1949–1987

Founded in 1924 as the Kuomintang's (Chinese Nationalist Party, KMT) party army, the Armed Forces of the Republic of China (AFROC) were the party's most important power base during the three decades of internal and external warfare against warlords, the Communist Party, and Japan. After the regime fled to Taiwan in 1949, the military remained an integral part of its power structure, defending KMT rule against internal and external competitors.[15] While the party and its paramount leaders Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo dominated the political power centre, under the conditions of Martial Law and a complex system of emergency provisions, the military enjoyed wide-ranging influence in almost all political areas until 1987.[16] This outstanding role manifested itself in largely uncontested autonomy in the security sector, almost non-existent mechanisms of institutional control and oversight, and co-optation of officers into top political decision-making structures.[17]

External defence policy-making was almost completely dominated by the military. Thanks to their clout in the supreme security policy-making body, the National Security Council (NSC), the armed forces had direct influence on all stages of defence policy-making.[18] Furthermore, effective oversight of the military by state and party agencies was forestalled by a split command structure. The Operational Command, responsible for the lion's share of the defence budget, military organization, deployment, and arms procurement, was under the authority of the military General Staff Headquarters (GSH). In this line of command, the Chief of General

Staff (CGS) reported directly to the president, thus taking the operational command completely beyond the grasp of institutionalized governmental, parliamentary, and party control. The Administrative Command, encompassing matters of general defence policy planning and administration, rested with the Ministry of National Defence (MND), and was thereby at least theoretically subject to oversight by the premier-led government and the legislature.[19] In fact, however, civilian oversight and control of the administrative line of command was moot as well. On the one hand, the MND was dominated by active and retired military personnel and the minister himself was inevitably a former general or had in other ways close personal relations to the armed forces.[20] On the other hand, under the emergency provisions, the legislature was a mere rubber stamp for decisions made in the KMT Central Committee and did not play any autonomous role in policy-making and parliamentary control of government agencies.[21] In addition, thanks to their representation in the top party decision-making bodies, the military also dominated defence policy-making inside the KMT. In this division of labour, civilian officials focused on domestic policies and foreign policy, leaving defence issues largely to the military.[22]

This autonomy in the area of external defence was paralleled by the military's prerogatives in internal security issues. Bestowed with comprehensive executive and judiciary powers, the AFROC was the most important actor in this area during Martial Law. At the local level, all executive and legislative agencies were subject to direct jurisdiction of the respective military district commander. The national civilian police force was subordinate to military command, and political as well as capital crimes were under exclusive jurisdiction of military courts.[23] Furthermore, the military was responsible for censorship and media control.[24] These internal security duties were executed by the military's notorious Taiwan Garrison Command (TGC). Established in 1950 to fight Taiwanese resistance against the exiled KMT-regime and communist infiltration, the TGC soon became the most important internal security agency. Because of vaguely formulated laws and the complete absence of civilian oversight institutions, the TGC's functional autonomy was largely unchecked.[25]

The military had decisively less leeway in the political arena. However, by direct participation of active and retired officers in all relevant decision-making agencies, the armed forces enjoyed some degree of institutionalized influence on public policy decision-making. Particularly important was military representation in the KMT's party organs. Even though the share of active service officers in the KMT Central Committee and that body's Standing Committee had declined from 31.3 per cent in 1952 to 10.0 per cent in 1987 and from 30 per cent to 18.5 per cent respectively, when transition started the top brass still constituted a relevant force in these party organs.[26] This gave them direct influence on all aspects of public policy-making. Although the evidence suggests that these military representatives were mostly concerned with security-related issues, the limits of their responsibilities had never been formally defined.[27] For instance, in order to ensure a steady supply of soldiers, the generals had repeatedly vetoed the legalization of birth control and family planning policies.[28] Moreover, since the NSC had to approve the annual budget bill before it could be sent to the legislature, the military effectively had

veto power over the state budget.[29] Together, these channels of influence safeguarded the material and political interests of the military and led to a civil–military sharing of power in the area of public policy.

Only in the area of leadership selection did the military not hold institutionalized prerogatives. The armed forces did not play an autonomous role as an alternative recruitment body for the political leadership. Rather, the KMT monopolized the political market and controlled the recruitment channels into the political system.[30] Thus, for the political ascent of military officers in the authoritarian regime the same criteria applied as for any other political actors: party membership and loyalty to the Chiangs.[31] This pattern was particularly evident in the office of the president itself. While Chiang Kai-shek, given his past as leader of the KMT army, was frequently dubbed a 'military strongman', the transfer of power to his son Ching-kuo in 1978 underscored the dominance of civilian politicians in the political elite. Even though the younger Chiang had cultivated close networks of personal loyalty and trust with the generals, he had never been part of the professional military. Furthermore, Chiang Ching-kuo was resolved to prevent any strengthening of the military's political power. This was made clear when he personally intervened to end the political ascent of General Wang Sheng, who for many observers had been the most promising candidate for succeeding the younger Chiang in the presidency.[32]

Civil–Military Relations during Democratization and Consolidation: 1987–2007

Following the party elite's decision to acquiesce in the illegal founding of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in 1986, Taiwan experienced a profound political transition. The lifting of Martial Law in 1987 paved the way for a comprehensive democratic reform of the political system and readjustment of the military's political and social role.

The process was particularly slow and cumbersome in the area of external defence. Prior to the implementation of the 'National Defence Act' (NDA) and the 'Organization Act of the Ministry of National Defence' in March 2002, the defence structures had been largely untouched. It is not surprising, therefore, that in conflicts of interest between the top brass and the civilian elites, the military repeatedly prevailed against Chiang Ching-kuo's successor, Lee Teng-hui. The failure of the 'Chung Yuan' (Centre Field) reform is an enlightening example. Supported by the civilian leadership, Chung Yuan was aimed at restructuring the military in order to promote a new defence strategy that focused on the navy and air force and implied substantial financial and personal cut-backs for the ground forces. Following intense opposition by the politically influential army, however, the programme was abandoned and a more balanced reform, 'Jing Shih' (Streamlining and Consolidation), was substituted.[33] Political pressure from the military also hindered the political goal of civilianizing the defence bureaucracy. In the early 1990s, President Lee appointed Chen Li-an and Sun Chen as the first genuinely civilian defence ministers. The top brass, however, refused to cooperate with their civilian superiors, thus forcing Lee to appoint a former general as Sun's successor.[34] Given these failures, it is not surprising that, by and large, Lee did not play an active role in the management of the security sector, largely leaving defence policy in the hands of the military.[35]

It was only after the National Defence Act and the Organization Act of the Ministry of National Defence came into effect that the defence structures were substantially reformed.

The most obvious change was the strengthening of the MND's role in defence organization. First of all, the bifurcated command lines were unified and the president's direct military command was abolished. Under the new rules, the supreme command ran from the president through the defence ministry to the Chief of General Staff; for the first time allowing effective bureaucratic control of all defence matters.[36] Also, the GSH was now under full authority of the MND; the former's prior autonomous jurisdiction over strategic, operational, and procurement issues resting with newly established ministerial agencies.[37] Even before the 'Two Defence Laws' were enacted, transparency in the security sector and the possibilities of legislative oversight had successively been increased. From 1992, the ministry biannually published defence white papers and since the late 1990s, ministers and high-ranking military officials, including the CGS, have been routinely questioned by legislators. Furthermore, classification rules for military secrets have been codified and the classified parts of the defence budget have been incrementally reduced, thus removing serious obstacles to effective parliamentary oversight.[38]

These improvements notwithstanding, some problems remain. Despite being known as a defence expert and firm critic of the Taiwanese armed forces, Lee Teng-hui's successor, DPP chairman Chen Shui-bian, was not able to significantly expand civilian management of defence policy.[39] Most positions in the MND are still held by active and retired servicemen, and the May 2007 appointment of former CGS Lee Tien-yu as Minister of National Defence showed that, even 20 years after the lifting of Martial Law, it still seems impossible to hand over bureaucratic control of the military to a civilian.[40] Furthermore, even though there are no formal incisions, the legislature's capabilities for effective oversight still suffer from its general weakness regarding parliamentary control of government agencies and from a lack of civilian defence expertise.[41] However, even though the military still enjoys much influence in relation to external defence, it is neither able to single-handedly decide defence policies, nor can it completely bypass civilian oversight.

In contrast to this protracted process, civilian control over internal security was institutionalized rather early in Taiwan's democratization. Following the abolition of Martial Law, the military gave up its predominant role in internal security. Jurisdiction of military courts over civilians was ended in 1987, while in 1992 the TGC was dissolved, its duties either completely eliminated or transferred to civilian agencies. Civilian police took over the Command's law-enforcement agencies, customs and immigration control went to the Ministry of the Interior, and the ministry-level Government Information Office and the Ministry of Transport and Communication took over censorship and media regulation.[42]

Similarly, military capabilities to influence public policy were radically cut. Following the NSC's restructuring in the early 1990s, its authority over the state budget was abolished.[43] From 1993 there were no active duty officers in government, parliament or the KMT Central Committee. In addition, the numbers of former officers in parliament dropped to two out of 225 after the 2004 legislative elections, and with

one exception discussed below, since 1994 the only retired officers in the cabinet have been the various defence ministers.[44] The military's declining influence in policy-making is particularly obvious in the most sensitive issue of Taiwanese politics: the policies toward mainland China. Even though Lee and Chen's goal of strengthening a genuine Taiwanese national identity and widening the international space for Taiwan have encountered heavy criticism from conservative groups in the KMT and the military, there is no evidence suggesting that the top brass at any time have tried actively to influence foreign policy-making.[45]

Regarding leadership selection, since the democratic founding elections of 1992 and the first direct presidential election in 1996, all top political authorities have been chosen through free and fair electoral processes. Even though the KMT made use of the military's General Political Warfare Department (GPWD) to mobilize military voters, this pattern of undue influence on the electoral process ended after the DPP came to power in 2000.[46] Even more important, the political activism of former officers was effectively prevented, for example, in the early 1990s when President Lee Teng-hui stopped the political ascent of Premier and former CGS Hau Pei-tsun.[47] When Lee took over the presidency in 1988, Hau had already served an unprecedented six years as the nation's top officer. Not only had he cultivated vast networks of loyal officers in the military leadership, but he had also been the most prominent representative of the conservative 'anti-mainstream' faction in the KMT leadership. Since Lee lacked a power base in the party's conservative wing, he named Hau Minister of National Defence in 1989 and Premier in 1990, thereby co-opting him into his government. This not only safeguarded the military's loyalty to Lee, but also weakened Hau's ties to the officer corps and put the former general under increased public and parliamentary scrutiny. Following the ruling party's heavy losses in the parliamentary elections of 1992, Hau stepped down from office in early 1993. Except for the continuing tradition of appointing former servicemen as defence ministers, after Hau's retirement only one ex-general managed the transfer to the political centre. Following his electoral victory in 2000, Chen Shui-bian appointed Tang Fei as prime minister. As a Mainlander, a highly respected former CGS and Minister of National Defence and KMT member, Tang's appointment reflected Chen's efforts to bridge the bipartisan divide between the DPP-led government and the KMT parliamentary majority. Furthermore, some observers interpreted Tang's appointment as a political signal towards the anti-independence establishment, in the sense that Chen would be likely to follow a moderate course vis-à-vis China.[48] This, however, was neither a result of military pressure, nor did Chen's decision lead to a lasting extension of military political influence; following continuous political gridlock in parliament and widespread public criticism of the government's handling of a number of high-profile political issues, Tang stepped down only five months after his appointment, to be replaced by the civilian Chang Chun-hsiung.[49]

During the 1990s, it remained unclear whether the top brass would accept an electoral victory of the DPP, a party that was openly advocating Taiwan's independence.[50] However, immediately following Chen's election in March 2000, then-CGS Tang Yao-ming publicly pledged loyalty to the new president, emphasizing that the military was politically neutral and respected democratic principles.[51] However,

allegations of a 'soft coup' following Chen's narrow re-election in 2004 suggest that relations between the president and segments of the armed forces were still tense, even after his first term in office. Shortly after the elections, Chen claimed that the KMT and allied retired officers had tried to persuade active senior generals to step back en bloc in order to destabilize the government. In December 2005, however, Chen lost a libel suit against the leaders of the opposition party on grounds of not providing sufficient evidence to his 'soft coup' allegations.[52] These accusations aside, there are no signs that the military as an institution abandoned its general position of political restraint at any time. Rather, the MND has consistently been eager publicly to stress the military's political neutrality, quickly reacting to any signs of military personnel's individual political activism. In late 2006, for instance, following public protests by a number of active service officers, the MND dismissed the soldiers and proposed changing the National Defence Act, prohibiting all public expression of political opinions by active duty soldiers.[53]

Strategies of Civilian Control and the Contexts of Democratization

Changing Strategies

Under Martial Law, the KMT primarily relied on a combination of appeasement and positive sanctioning in order to secure military loyalty. On the one hand, the defence sector received an impressive share of the government budget, ranging from 66.1 to 51.8 per cent in the years 1970–1987, with an average share of 8.27 per cent of GNP.[54] In addition, large parts of the budget were classified, thus shielding it from civilian scrutiny and leaving decisions regarding the allocation of defence expenditures at the military's disposition. These financial benefits were couched in a deliberate granting of autonomy in security issues and the co-optation of officers into the political leadership. This appeasement approach aimed at preventing possible civil–military conflict and rewarding military loyalty while at the same time securing the convergence of military interests with those of the civilian government. The creation of a civil–military 'community of destiny' was furthered by the positive sanctioning strategy of banning non-KMT members from access to high military positions and the recruitment of Mainlanders into the top brass. Monitoring and negative sanctioning, on the other hand, were rarely used. Despite the fact that the GPWD had institutionalized a Political Commissar System (PCS), which was responsible for supervising the ideological alignment of the officers, the commissariat was a genuine military institution under the control of the MND and its officers were integrated in the professional military hierarchy. As a result, the PCS has never been an independent and effective mechanism of KMT party control over the armed forces.[55]

While this combination of control strategies secured military loyalty and prevented the emergence of an independent military power centre, it politicized the armed forces, perforated civil–military boundaries, and granted the top brass direct access to the political sphere. For democratization this implied a double challenge: the political system had to be demilitarized and the armed forces had to be depoliticized. To implement these goals, the democratic authorities used a mix of all four

strategies. When they entered office, both Lee Teng-hui's and Chen Shui-bian's relations with the top brass were uneasy. Lee, as a civilian technocrat, had been unable to build personal networks with the military leadership prior to taking office in 1988. Some observers even warned that the Mainlander-dominated military might not accept the Taiwanese Lee as commander-in-chief.[56] Similarly, Chen was known to be a high-profile critic of the armed forces and a stout advocate for Taiwan independence, and therefore faced considerable opposition from the officers. Hence, particularly in the early phases of their terms, both tried to appease the military leadership. By appointing ex-CGS Hau Pei-tsun to the premiership and leaving the military's external defence autonomies largely unscathed, Lee averted open military opposition to his policies.[57] Likewise, in his first two years in office, Chen stepped short of major changes in the military leadership and took great efforts to underscore that he would stand by the general guidelines of Lee's foreign and security policy.[58] Later in their terms, however, both presidents employed more robust strategies and thereby gradually extended civilian influence over the armed forces.

After disbanding the PCS in April 1988, state monitoring instruments were continuously strengthened. In particular, the oversight capabilities of the parliamentary National Defence Committee were widened, and the committee played an active role in the drafting of the NDA.[59] Furthermore, particularly from the mid-1990s, 'divide and conquer' strategies were combined with positive sanctioning to expand civilian control of the military. After Hau Pei-tsun's dismissal, President Lee made use of his appointment powers to place several young Taiwanese officers in command posts and thereby successively diminish the weight of Mainlanders in the military leadership. With Liu Ho-chien he appointed a Taiwanese as CGS and charged him with reducing the army's political dominance and promoting a new defence strategy in the Chung Yuan reform. Even though Liu was unable to enforce Lee's favoured policies, his nomination marked an important step towards recalibrating the military's internal balance of power and increasing civilian influence in the defence sector.[60] President Chen followed his predecessor's general line of soft and gradual change, again mainly relying on appointment powers. Following the implementation of the NDA, he promoted a large number of Taiwanese officers and supporters of his defence vision into the military leadership. This enabled him to weaken the networks of KMT supporters in the general staff and to build up a personal loyalty base of his own.[61] It is remarkable, however, that both presidents primarily relied on the institutionalized rotation system in the military and mostly refrained from purging the top brass by outright dismissing or relocating politically disagreeable military leaders on a large scale. Table 1 summarizes the outlined changes of civilian control strategies.

Contexts of Change

This considerable change in control strategies and the resultant strengthening of civilian control was made possible by a combination of favourable initial conditions and factors internal and external to the military. Regarding initial conditions, Taiwan's regime was already largely civilian-dominated when democratization began in 1987 and the KMT managed to stay in power until Chen Shui-bian won the

TABLE 1
CHANGING STRATEGIES OF CIVILIAN CONTROL

	Authoritarian Regime (1949–1987)	Democratization and Consolidation (1987–2007)
Appeasement	Incorporation of top military officers into the political leadership Granting of institutional autonomies	In early phases of respective presidential terms (1988–1992 and 2000–2002), soft hand vis-à-vis the military Later in presidential terms, decrease of appeasement in favour of more robust strategies
Monitoring	No instruments for effective oversight of the security sector PCS integral part of the military organization, no independent control mechanism	Gradual strengthening of state oversight instruments, particularly parliamentary National Defence Committee (e.g. since 1992 biannual publication of National Defence Report)
Divide and Conquer	No 'divide and conquer' strategies employed	Civilians use inter-service rivalries to enhance their leverage over the armed forces (e.g. appointment of Admiral Liu Ho-chien as CGS and launch of Chung Yuan reform program in early 1990s)
Sanctioning	Appointment of Mainlanders into top military posts	Appointment of Taiwanese officers and supporters of preferred defence strategy into top military posts (e.g. Lee's appointment of young Taiwanese into the officer corps in mid-1990s, Chen's appointment policy after 2002) No political purges of the officer corps

Source: Author's compilation.

presidency in 2000. This democratization from above favoured the restriction of military political power in four ways. First, since civilians directed the course, speed, and scope of political change, the military leadership was not able autonomously to decide its political prerogatives but instead had to negotiate with the civilian authorities. Second, the stability of the civilian regime during the whole period of democratic transition prevented a power vacuum that may have prompted military intervention. Third, the democratization process unfolded gradually and successively over a decade, giving civilian and military elites the time and opportunity to adapt to the new democratic rules of the game. Fourth, the ability of the KMT to stay in government in the decisive early years provided continuity amidst profound institutional changes and contingencies: the close connections between party and military thus made communication between the spheres easier and reduced mistrust between civilian and military leadership.

In terms of the military-endogenous factors, a changing corporate ideology within the military promoted institutionalization of civilian control by gradually redefining professional duties and the range of functional responsibilities of the officer corps. The doctrine of internal security, which had prevailed under the authoritarian regime, gave way to an explicitly external mission that defined the defence of Taiwan's national integrity and sovereignty as the military's primary duty.[62] This shifted the professional focus toward external enemies and supported the military's

withdrawal from internal security missions. Furthermore, the normative foundation of the corporate ideology was changing. While officer training during the Martial Law period focused on the values of anti-communism, anti-independence and pro-reunification, reforms in 1999 realigned these fundamental values towards freedom, democracy, and human rights. This helped in fostering the officers' loyalty toward civilian leaders and the acceptance of pro-democratic political values.[63] In May 2007 this process climaxed in the abolition of the last ideological remnants of the authoritarian legacy, when the loyalties to the 'Leader' and the 'Three Principles of the People' were dropped from the canon of military values.[64]

With the liberalization and 'Taiwanization' of the political system in the 1970s, the former high degree of officer corps cohesion was gradually weakened by the emergence of two intertwined cleavages. On the one hand, the barriers for Taiwanese officers to enter the officer corps were removed so that in 1988 already 16 per cent of generals and 33 per cent of all field officers were Taiwanese.[65] This enabled President Lee to appoint a large number of young and highly qualified Taiwanese officers in order to cut back Mainlander influence in the mid-1990s. On the other hand, civilian leaders took advantage of the increasing rivalries between the different services. The conditions of more transparent security and procurement policies and shrinking defence budgets heightened inter-service competition for resources, thereby providing Lee and Chen with opportunities to play off the military services against each other and to widen civilian influence in the defence sector.[66]

Furthermore, the military's autonomous economic resources were considerably cut back, increasing civilian leverage over the armed forces. The complex of military-led research institutions and arms suppliers that developed in the 1970s was dismantled and its agencies were either privatized or put under civilian oversight during the 1990s.[67] The large media holdings of the military were also privatized, climaxing in the 2003 'Broadcasting and Television Law', following which the military was divested of its terrestrial television station.[68]

Military-exogenous factors also proved highly conducive to employing robust control strategies. First and foremost, the civilian government was able to secure a high degree of citizen support during the whole period of democratic transition. In the 1990s, citizens expressed continuous support for the democratic system and a fierce rejection of a possible military takeover. This general support for civilian democratic institutions was supplemented by a highly positive economic performance. During the transition period, Taiwan's economy continued to grow, and neither the Asian Financial Crisis nor the bursting of the 'dot.com bubble' had a lasting negative impact on Taiwan's economy. This enhanced citizen belief in the performance of democratic institutions and strengthened the democratic elites' positions.[69] However, a serious economic slowdown in the early years of Chen's presidency diminished his political space to engage in restructuring the defence sector more actively.

The civilians, on the other hand, were able to benefit from citizen support because of an existing intra-elite consensus on civilian supremacy and the common goal of demilitarizing the political system.[70] However, lack of political will and civilian expertise resulted in the above-mentioned weakness of civilian oversight in the defence sector. While President Lee was primarily hampered by limited civilian

expertise, Chen's reluctance to intrude into the military's professional sphere was mainly due to his limited political capital. Confronted with an opposition-controlled legislature and economic problems, Chen simply could not spend much political energy on policy areas that were of little interest to the electorate.[71]

However, the civilian elites benefited from a vibrant civil society. On the one hand, the mobilization of Taiwan's civil society in the transition period was peaceful and thus did not provoke a military backlash that might have led to a remilitarization of internal security. On the other hand, civil society exerted pressure on civilians and the military alike, expressing public rejection of the latter's political role and demanding a reduction in the armed forces' social, economic, and political influence.[72] Public outrage came to the fore in the mid-1990s, following high-level procurement scandals and repeated incidents of abuse of conscripts, creating a political momentum that was used by civilian elites to discharge high-ranking officers and restructure the procurement infrastructure. Furthermore, independent media and pressure groups acted as public watchdogs, supporting the official civilian monitoring instruments and working towards greater transparency and civilian oversight of the security sector.[73]

In addition, Taiwan's security environment proved conducive to the institutionalization of civilian control. With the onset of Taiwan's democratization, the tensions with mainland China became more acute. While in the Peoples' Republic, the goal of national reunification became more important as an ideological foundation of communist one-party rule, in Taiwan, democratization promoted the emergence of a genuine Taiwanese identity. This widened the ideational gap between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, leading to repeated sabre-rattling from Beijing and threats of military intervention should Taipei unilaterally declare independence.[74] These heightened tensions, however, had a positive influence on civilian control. First of all, they reduced the Taiwanese politicians' incentives to take radical steps and unilaterally strive for independence that would have been contrary to the military's corporate interests.[75] Furthermore, Taipei's need to balance China's military build-up strengthened the political willingness to grant the armed forces the necessary resources to defend Taiwan's national security, thus defusing serious resource conflicts. At the same time, Taiwan's 'best case democratization' featured very low social costs and lacked violent internal conflicts.[76] This combination of a serious external security threat and internal stability directed the military's orientation outwards, leaving the internal security apparatus and political arena to civilian agencies.

Concerning other external factors, Taipei's close relations with the US had a positive influence on the institutionalization of civilian control. In the military sphere, the US–Taiwan officer exchange programme helped to diffuse pro-democratic values and professional norms into the AFROC officer corps.[77] Taiwan's close relations with Washington also proved helpful in the civilian sphere. Since many of the civilian elite had been trained in the US, the civilian politicians who managed the transition process enjoyed advantages over the military in the areas of economy, finance, and social regulation, thereby forestalling military meddling in these areas.[78] Furthermore, the continued US criticism of the AFROC's army-centred defence strategy supported civilian endeavours to change the defence

TABLE 2
CONTEXT FACTORS AND THEIR INFLUENCE ON CIVILIAN CONTROL STRATEGIES

	Factor	Value	Influence on Control Strategies
Initial Conditions	Authoritarian regime type	Civilian-dominated one-party regime	Civilians direct course, speed, and scope of democratization; military not able to decide over its autonomies
	Mode of transition	Transition 'from above'	
Military-endogenous factors	Corporate ideology	Increasing democratic professionalization of the officer corps	Promotes the principles of political neutrality and civilian supremacy
	Institutional cohesion	Sub-ethnic cleavage and inter-service rivalries	Weakens the military's ability to act as an unitary power group; enables 'divide and conquer' strategies
	Economic resources	Decreasing economic activity of the military	Reduces material independence and increases civilian leverage over the military
Military-exogenous factors	Support for civilian regime	High support rates for democratic regime, good economic performance, no civic preferences for military regime	Stabilizes civilian elite position and discourages stronger political role of the military
	Civilian elites	Civilian consensus, but lack of civilian defence expertise and political capital	Conducive for demilitarization of politics, but hampers stronger civilian role in external defence
	Civil society	Active but peaceful civil societal mobilization	Provides public scrutiny and pressure to support official civilian control instruments
	Security environment	Existential external threat, no internal threats	Mitigates political conflicts, directs military attention towards external mission
	International influence	Dependence on military support from the US	Supports civilian efforts to change defence strategy

Source: Author's compilation.

structure. Given Taipei's dependence on US arms supplies and military support, this put additional weight on civilian efforts to gradually extend their influence into the area of external defence.

In combination, these initial conditions and endogenous and exogenous factors proved conducive for civilian elites to employ increasingly robust control strategies and to curb military prerogatives. Table 2 summarizes the context factors and their influence on the control strategies.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to analyse the reconfiguration of civil–military relations during Taiwan's democratic transition and consolidation. Employing an actor-centred theoretical framework, it found that a combination of beneficial context and the skilful employment of increasingly robust control strategies allowed civilian governments to reduce military prerogatives in the political sphere and gradually to

expand civilian control over national defence. While this case study does not allow for theoretical generalizations *per se*, its results provide support to four findings and general trends contained in recent comparative studies on democratization and civil–military relations.

First, it stresses that civilian control of the military means more than the absence of overt military intervention. The empirical analysis has shown that it is fruitful to distinguish various areas of civil–military relations. This not only avoids misleading dichotomies but is of particular relevance for assessing democratic quality, a topic that has recently received increased scholarly attention.[79] While the absence of coups and civilian dominance over policy-making and elite selection is a necessary condition for any democracy, the degree of civilian influence in the security sector marks an important difference between full-fledged liberal democracy and what Wolfgang Merkel and colleagues have termed 'defective democracy'.[80] In Taiwan, civilian control of defence policy-making was weak and lacking institutionalization long after other elements of liberal democracy were already on the way to consolidation. Until the National Defence Act came into effect, this constituted a relevant incision into the elected governments' effective power to govern, thus reducing democratic quality.

Second, and connected to this, the case study supports arguments made by Andrew Cottey and others that the institutionalization of civilian control in young democracies is a sequential process consisting of two 'generations'.[81] In Taiwan, the 'first generation problems' of preventing military coups and demilitarizing the political centre indeed were solved in the early years of democratization. Today, the elected government has no need to fear being deposed by a military coup, nor does military veto power impinge on democratic elites' political decision-making. The 'second generation' challenge of institutionalizing effective democratic governance of defence policy-making, however, was a protracted venture, only achieved after the implementation of the NDA in 2002. Thanks to the idiosyncratic structures of Taiwan's political system and the paucity of non-military defence expertise, even today the effectiveness of the civilian defence bureaucracy is still below par.[82]

Third, from a theoretical perspective, the case study underlined the importance of the complex interplay of strategic actors' decisions and the structural and situational contexts in explaining the crafting of civilian control. The high degree of military political powers and institutional autonomies during the authoritarian era was due to the predominance of weak control strategies. While these strategies guaranteed military loyalty to the regime, they extended the armed forces' political influence into the civilian sphere and politicized the military. Following the abolition of Martial Law in 1987, Presidents Lee and Chen relied on increasingly robust strategies to push back political involvement of the AFROC and to widen their influence on former exclusively military domains. The successive reductions on appeasement and the expansion of 'divide and conquer' strategies increased civilian leverage over the armed forces.

These findings support the recent turn towards actor-centred approaches in civil–military research as exemplified by Peter Feaver, Wendy Hunter, and Harold Trinkunas.[83] These scholars depart from older analyses that primarily focus on

cultural and structural factors, arguing instead that it is rational actors' strategic behaviour that chiefly explains changes in civil–military relations. However, since civil–military interaction does not take place in a historical or social vacuum,[84] agency and historical, cultural, and structural factors can be fruitfully combined into a comprehensive analytical framework. In Taiwan, civilian actors were able gradually to employ more robust strategies because of a highly beneficial combination of initial conditions and factors, endogenous as well as exogenous to the military, that provided them with the necessary political power and weakened the political bargaining abilities of the military.

Fourth, despite these overall positive developments, a caveat needs to be added. Recent comparative research has pointed out that establishing firm civilian control over the military and the separation of civilian and military spheres of authority is only one aspect of democratic civil–military relations. The other side of the coin is civilian respect of this separation and a consensus among the elected elites on not involving the military in political controversies.[85] The case of Taiwan fits well with this warning, since the successive widening of civilian influence in the security area has become a weapon for partisan political struggle: following its proposal in 2004, a special arms procurement programme to bolster Taiwan's defence capabilities was blocked by the opposition-dominated legislature more than 50 times in a move that was widely regarded as political manoeuvring.[86] At the same time, President Chen utilized security issues and military policy to foster his vision of Taiwanese national identity and to garner political support from pro-independence parts of the electorate.[87]

This raises the question of how civil–military relations might impact on the process of Taiwan's further democratic consolidation. Over the last 20 years, the establishment of civilian control and democratic consolidation were closely intertwined dynamics. On the one hand, civilians benefited from the smooth pathway of democratic transition in their efforts to widen and deepen civilian control of the military. At the same time, the institutionalization of civilian supremacy was a major asset for the consolidation of Taiwan's democracy in general. The experiences of other Asian 'third wave' democracies underline that precarious civil–military relations, the existence of military prerogatives, and military veto power are serious obstacles to democratic consolidation, as they undermine the legitimacy of elected governments, endanger the rule of law, and challenge the democratic principles of people's sovereignty, political equality, and public control of politics.[88] Up to now, Taiwan has been spared those pathologies and there are no signs at present that anything remotely similar to Thai praetorianism, Indonesian military autonomy or Filipino-style military adventurism are likely future scenarios for Taiwan's democratic trajectory. Thus, it is most likely that the ongoing intensification of civilian control will continue to have a positive influence on democratic consolidation in the country.

However, civil–military relations will remain a sensitive issue as long as the consolidation of elite competition is not concluded. The partisan exploitation of civilian control instruments outlined above is a direct result of the zero-sum political psychology of the elite and the polarized politicking in the legislature. Should this behaviour

persist in the future, it might lead to an increasing gap of trust between the officers and civilians and could provide incentives and justification for military resistance to the final steps of consolidating civilian oversight over external defence. This, in turn, could solidify the remaining deficits in democratic accountability of national security-making and might even endanger prior gains of civilian influence over former exclusive military domains. Particularly given the essential relevance of national security issues for Taiwan's political survival, this would constitute a serious democratic constraint. However, this is not a likely future trajectory. As Richard C. Bush recently pointed out, responsible political leadership and efforts to reduce partisan polarization in the political elite are conducive to building trust between Taiwan's competing political blocs.[89] The same holds true for the relationship between elected civilians and the military leadership.

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NOTES

1. Recent exceptions are M. Taylor Fravel, 'Towards Civilian Supremacy: Civil-Military Relations in Taiwan's Democratization', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (2002), pp. 57–84 and Wei-chin Lee, 'The Greening of the Brass: Taiwan's Civil–Military Relations since 2000', *Asian Security*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2007), pp. 204–27. For a concise overview of the general literature on politics in Taiwan see Shelley Rigger, 'Political Science and Taiwan's Domestic Politics: The State of the Field', *Issues and Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 14 (2003), pp. 49–92.
2. Robert A. Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 250.
3. Richard H. Kohn, 'How Democracies Control the Military', *The Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1997), p. 142.
4. Harold A. Trinkunas, *Crafting Civilian Control of the Military in Venezuela* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 5–8.
5. Cf. Muthiah Alagappa, 'Investigating and Explaining Change: An Analytical Framework', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Coercion and Governance. The Declining Role of the Military in Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 33–4; Douglas Bland, 'Patterns in Liberal Democratic Civil–Military Relations', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2001), pp. 532–5; David Pion-Berlin, 'Military Autonomy and Emerging Democracies in South America', *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (1992), p. 87.
6. I shall define a regime as civilian if the area of leadership selection is dominated by civilians and if the military is not able to control the public policy area. A civilian regime is labelled 'democratic' if the civilian authorities are chosen in free and fair elections. Cf. Felipe Agüero, *Soldiers, Civilians, and Democracy: Post-Franco Spain in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), p. 25.
7. This argument is based on two assumptions pertaining to the different preferences regarding civil–military relations in transition processes. First, civilian elites are interested in maintaining or expanding their political influence. Second, military elites are interested in maintaining or expanding their institutional autonomy. While the first assumption can be considered an axiomatic proposition, the latter is based on sound empirical evidence on the behaviour of bureaucratic organizations. Cf. Wendy Hunter, 'Reason, Culture, or Structure? Assessing Civil-Military Dynamics in Brazil', in David Pion-Berlin (ed.), *Civil–Military Relations in Latin America: New Analytical Perspectives* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 36–58.
8. Trinkunas (note 4), pp. 8–13; Peter D. Feaver, 'Civil–Military Relations', *Annual Review of Political Science*, Vol. 2 (1999), pp. 211–41.

9. Alagappa (note 5); Aurel Croissant, 'Riding the Tiger: Civilian Control and the Military in Democratizing Korea', *Armed Forces and Society*, Vol. 30, No. 3 (2004), pp. 357–81.
10. Agüero (note 6), pp. 43–67.
11. For a general discussion of cohesion and its impact on the assertiveness of collective actors, see George Tsebelis, *Veto Players. How Political Institutions Work* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 38–45.
12. Eric A. Nordlinger, *Soldiers in Politics: Military Coups and Government* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Halls, 1977). Nicole Ball, 'The Military in Politics: Who Benefits and How', *World Development*, Vol. 9, No. 6 (1981), pp. 569–82. J. Samuel Fitch, *The Armed Forces and Democracy in Latin America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Agüero (note 6), pp. 28–40.
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15. For a comprehensive account of the military's role on the mainland, cf. Hsi-sheng Ch'i, *Nationalist China at War* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982).
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17. Brian G. Martin, 'The Relationship between the Kuomintang and the Military in Taiwan', in Gary Klintworth (ed.), *Modern Taiwan in the 1990s* (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1991), pp. 23–38.
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19. Wen-cheng Lin and Cheng-yi Lin, 'National Defence and the Changing Security Environment', in Bruce J. Dickson and Chien-min Chao (eds), *Assessing the Lee Teng-hui Legacy in Taiwan's Politics. Democratic Consolidation and External Relations* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), pp. 241–63.
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25. Martin (note 17), p. 27.
26. Teh-fu Huang, 'Elections and the Evolution of the Kuomintang', in Hung-mao Tien (ed.), *Taiwan's Electoral Politics and Democratic Transition: Riding the Third Wave* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), pp. 105–36.
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30. Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 21–70.

31. Tien, *The Great Transition* (note 23), p. 71.
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36. Ministry of National Defence, ROC, *National Defence Report 2006*, http://report.mnd.gov.tw/95/.
37. Michael S. Chase, 'Defence Reform in Taiwan. Problems and Prospects', *Asian Survey*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2005), p. 368.
38. Hung *et al.* (note 27), p. 192.
39. Michael D. Swaine, 'Taiwan's Defence Reforms and Military Modernization Program: Objectives, Achievements, and Obstacles', in Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (ed.), *Dangerous Strait* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), pp. 105–6.
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41. Denny Roy, *Taiwan's Threat Perceptions: The Enemy Within* (Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies, 2003), http://www.apcss.org/Publications/Occasional%20Papers/OPTaiwanThreat.pdf.
42. Hung *et al.* (note 27), p. 188.
43. Ding and Huang (note 33), p. 257.
44. John F. Copper, *Taiwan's Mid-1990s Elections: Taking the Final Steps to Democracy* (Westport: Praeger, 1998); Republic of China Legislative Yuan, *Lifa Yuan Weiyuan Mingdan* (Members of the Legislative Yuan), http://npl.ly.gov.tw/do/www/commissioner?act=exp, 28 June 2006; Republic of China Executive Yuan, *Taiwan Nianjian* (Taiwan Yearbook), various volumes.
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48. Ibid. As opposed to the Taiwanese born on the island, the term 'Mainlander' refers to those members of Taiwan's society who came to the island with the KMT after 1949. Large parts of this group shared a common ideological outlook and the goal of eventual reunification with the mainland. Cf. Chi-lin Yang, *Military Politics in the Transition to Democracy: Changing Civil-Military Relations in the Republic of China (Taiwan), 1949–1994* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1996), pp. 234–51.
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57. Lin and Lin (note 19), p. 241.
58. Lee (note 1), pp. 209–13.
59. Ching-pu Chen, 'Defence Policy-Making and Civilian Roles', *Taiwan Defence Affairs*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2003), pp. 182–209.
60. Shambaugh (note 18), p. 1292.
61. Lee (note 1), pp. 210–21.

62. Ministry of National Defence, ROC, *National Defence Report 2006*.
63. Chin-ming Sun, 'Taiwan: Toward a Higher Degree of Military Professionalism', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.). *Military Professionalism in Asia* (Honolulu: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 68–9; Jang-ruey Tzeng, 'Revolutionary Trends in the ROC's Professional Military Education', in Martin Edmonds and Michael M. Tsai (eds), *Defending Taiwan. The Future of Taiwan's Defence Policy and Military Strategy* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), pp. 220–2.
64. The term 'Leader' originally referred to the supreme role of President Chiang Kai-shek, to whom the officers had pledged their loyalty during Chiang's rule. The Three Principles of the people (Nationalism, Democracy, Peoples' Welfare) had been developed by the founder of the KMT, Sun Yat-sen, and were the ideological foundation of the KMT regime. Cf. *Taiwan News*, 16 May 2007.
65. Peter R. Moody, Jr., *Political Change on Taiwan: A Study of Ruling Party Adaptability* (London: Praeger, 1992), p. 59.
66. Swaine, *Taiwan's National Security, Defence Policy, and Weapons Procurement Processes* (note 22), pp. 57–9.
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69. Do Chull Shin and Jason Wells, 'Is Democracy the Only Game in Town?', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2005), p. 91.
70. Lo (note 47), pp. 151–2.
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72. Yun Fan, 'Taiwan: No Civil Society, No Democracy', in Muthiah Alagappa (ed.), *Civil Society and Political Change in Asia. Expanding and Contracting Democratic Space* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 171.
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78. Hung *et al.* (note 27), p. 190.
79. See for instance Larry Diamond and Leonardo Morlino (eds), *Assessing the Quality of Democracy* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005).
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America. New Analytical Perspectives (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), pp. 36–58; Trinkunas (note 4).
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