

Quo vadis, Taiwan?

An election and a referendum on March 22nd 2008



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1 Abstract

This paper is a study of the presidential election and the coinciding referendum on United Nations membership, held in Taiwan on 22nd March 2008. Two questions lie at the heart of the study: “What were the alternatives for voters on 22nd March?” and “In what ways were the ballot-casting on 22nd March important?”

In order to answer these questions, Taiwanese history is presented briefly, with heavy focus on recent times leading up to the election and to the referendum. To summarise, the alternatives were the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), lead by Frank Hsieh, and the Kuomintang (KMT), lead by Ma Ying-jeou. Both parties were prepared to lead Taiwan closer to China to a higher degree than the incumbent president, Chen Shui-bian, but differed in how far and how fast such a change in policy ought to be pursued.

The alternatives can also be said to be either pragmatic, focusing on economy (KMT); or ideological, focusing on Taiwan’s rights to international acknowledgement (DPP). The presidential election seems to have been more important than the referendum on United Nations membership.

The referendum put two questions to the voters. The first, initiated by DPP, asked if Taiwan should apply to the United Nations under the name of Taiwan (done once before and was blocked by China). The second was initiated by KMT as a counter-manoeuvre, and asked if Taiwan should apply to the United Nations under any name (since the early 1990s, applications under the official name Republic of China have been blocked annually by China). The referendum is deemed to have little practical effect, except to stir up agitation in Beijing and further isolate Taiwan from the international community by presenting her internationally as trying to change the *status quo* which is at present a safeguard for peace in the area.

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3 Introduction

Before I began my studies of North-East Asia, I had only a vague notion of the complex relationship between Taiwan and China. Soon, I learned that two important events would coincide on 22nd March 2008: A presidential election and a referendum on United Nations membership. My interest for the issue slumbered for a while, until an opportunity to go to Taiwan in order to study Chinese presented itself. This happened at the same time as the framework for this assignment was revealed to me.

Feeling that it would be stimulating and challenging to choose a topic so recent that few in-depth analyses have been made of it, I decided that the 22nd March election and referendum would be a suitable topic for the assignment. After sifting media for information and news about the then upcoming event, I had difficulties discerning the various standpoints and what significant differences separated them. A bewildering labyrinth of specific terminology used when discussing Taiwan-China relations, made the question ever more obscure. I decided to untangle the various threads, and find out what the election and the referendum were really about. Also, I decided to try to assess the importance of the events taking place on 22nd March, and see if they were as important as some journalists have proposed.

Some say that if Kuomintang (KMT) wins, it is the beginning of the end of Taiwanese independence, and that China will then one day rule the island, destroying whatever democracy has developed over the last few decades.¹ On the opposite side, economic reasons are often cited, claiming that further financial integration with China is necessary to instil energy into Taiwan's economy. Many voters have also grown weary of a relatively hard-line attitude towards China advocated by the Democratic People's Party (DPP), which has ruled since 2000.²

The gravity and importance of the situation is emphasised by the fact that the United States is deeply involved in a complex situation with both countries, vowing to defend Taiwan in case of war, but at the same time being attentive to China's point of view.³

3.1 Aim

The aim of this paper is to shed light on the election and the referendum on 22nd March 2008 in Taiwan, as well as the circumstances leading up to them. The

¹ Forster, 2008

² Fireman and Peng, 2008

³ Fireman and Peng, 2008

people of Taiwan were asked to cast their votes on two separate, yet related, issues: A presidential election, and a referendum on whether and how Taiwan should join the United Nations.

Although formally separate, it can be argued that both topics were linked together by Taiwan's relationship to China. It was fiercely debated what ramifications the election and referendum would have. According to some, Taiwan was standing at a crossroads in history, but others said that neither the election nor the referendum would have any serious consequences on cross-Strait relations with mainland China. This paper focuses on the following two questions:

- What were the alternatives for voters on 22nd March?
- In what ways were the ballot-casting on 22nd March important?

The first question is more straightforward than the second, although it is by no means simple. Superficially, the alternatives were clear, but what they represented and what they would entail for cross-Strait relations in the long run was not. The second question is complex, and requires more than just a brief glance at the election and the referendum.

3.2 Limitations

In answering the above questions, several limitations have been imposed to increase focus and accuracy of the text. The roads leading up to the election and the referendum can arguably be traced indefinitely back through time, and some line of demarcation has to be drawn. Martial law was lifted from Taiwan in 1987, which led to democratisation and liberalisation of the political climate. This seems like an appropriate point of origin, so the background study largely ignores earlier Taiwanese history. Besides, heavy emphasis is put on events transpiring under DPP rule from 2000 up to the present.

Furthermore, the outcome of the election itself and its actual implications are not part of this study, together with opinions, facts or statements promulgated after the 22nd March. However, impressions of the election and the referendum, as perceived by the ballot-casting population, politicians, journalists and analysts, foreign or otherwise, are highly interesting.

Moreover, even though cross-Strait relations were important on 22nd March, other factors, such as domestic economy, were also essential. These have been left out in favour of a broader and more international focus. The scope of this paper in this area is limited, too. The stance of China, as well as that of other states around the world, is incorporated only when pertinent to the election and the referendum.

3.3 Methodology

The first stage of work on this paper has already been described in the introduction, and was completed long before any actual questions were posed and a coherent text was put together. Beginning to sift news media for articles pertaining to the ballot-casting in Taiwan rendered vast amounts of information, which was simply organised and stored at first. In the meantime, I read Murray A. Rubinstein's *Taiwan: A New History*⁴ in order to grasp the main development of Taiwanese history.

The second stage involved a lot of reading, skimming through a couple of books describing recent events in Taiwan. However, to my knowledge, not much has been printed about the election and the referendum outside magazines, so reading more than a hundred news articles on the web was necessary in order to grasp the situation clearly.

The third stage involved trying to put the abovementioned grasp into a structured and lucid paper. Focusing first on extracting germane information from the huge volume of text. This was the most demanding task, along with organising the information.

The fourth and final stage involved analysis and comparison, as well as seeking and formulating answers to the questions this paper focuses on. Evaluation and reflections on the paper itself also played a role here.

3.4 Terminology

Talking about Taiwan and China entails a unique predicament: Whatever terms are being used, they can be regarded as political statements concerning the ongoing conflict. In other words, there are no neutral terms available for a student who does not desire to ally himself with either side. In trying to avoid making political statements, certain words still have to be used when discussing the issue at hand.

3.4.1 Taiwan and China

It is customary in English to use the terms "Taiwan" (meaning both Republic of China and the territories it currently governs from Taipei) and "China" (referring to the People's Republic of China as governed from Beijing), although this could be regarded as favouring the government in Beijing (withholding that Taiwan is a province of China and not a republic of its own).

Language usage in this text does not deviate from this norm, but the choice is not a political one, but is instead purely pragmatic. Both the terms "Taiwan" and "China" are short, clearly distinguished from each other and commonly

⁴ Rubinstein, 1999

used by other authors. Still, the two official names of the two states are used occasionally when a specific purpose is served in so doing.

There are some (but not entirely) neutral terms for the issue itself, such as “the Taiwan Strait Issue” or simply “Cross-Strait Relations”; both terms striving to avoid placing blame on one side. They are used interchangeably in this text.

3.4.2 State, Country and Nation

Likewise, it is not obvious what definitions apply to Taiwan. Should she be called state, country, nation, or perhaps all three? The definition of the term “state” is often derived from Max Weber’s definition: “a corporate group [...] that claims a monopoly of force over a territory and its population”.⁵ Webster’s is a *de facto* definition of the word, which would motivate Taiwan being called a state, since its government has a monopoly of force.

There are also *de jure* ways of defining “state”, which share many of Weber’s characteristics, but add the requirement that a state has to hold the right to enter into direct relationships with other states. By this definition, it can be argued that Taiwan is not a state because of the lack of widespread recognition of its independence and sovereignty⁶ (23 minor countries recognise Taiwan, whereas 170 recognise China⁷). To balance the choice of terminology concerning Taiwan and China, the *de facto* definition will be used henceforth, meaning that Taiwan is considered a state.

“Country” is more or less synonymous with “state”, and both share the same problems. Thus, the same reasoning as above is applicable, and the two terms will be used interchangeably in this paper.

Even if there is disambiguation concerning the two previous terms, “nation” is more straightforward, and refers to a group of people with a sense of common history, culture and/or language. Although it can be argued that the question of Taiwanese identity is complicated,⁸ Taiwan will also be considered a nation in this text.

3.4.3 Chinese names

Romanising Chinese names used in Taiwan is not a simple matter, because there are many systems used. Often, there is a common way of writing a person’s name, used by the person in question and the media. In those cases this paper goes along with the norm. In other cases, or where it is not clear if there is a standard, pinyin is used.

⁵Jackson and Rosberg, 1982, page 3

⁶Jackson and Rosberg, 1982

⁷Jennings, 2008b

⁸Wennerlund, 1997

3.4.4 Political Parties

Kuomintang is sometimes referred to as Nationalist and is part of the Pan-Blue coalition in Taiwan. Although this coalition really consists of more than the Kuomintang, the other players are relatively speaking not as important. The same goes for The Democratic Progressive Party and its Pan-Green coalition. Often, these two parties stand for their respective coalitions, a simplification motivated by the fact that they are the most important factions.

3.4.5 List of abbreviations

DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
KMT	Kuomintang
PRC	Peoples Republic of China
ROC	Republic of China
UN	United Nations

3.5 Disposition

The remainder of this paper is subdivided into seven chapters. In chapter 4, a general background of Taiwanese history is presented, with a special focus on events important to the 22nd March voting. The chapter also incorporates a special focus on political development after the year 2000.

In chapter 5, the presidential election is studied, this being one of the two main parts of the paper. In chapter 6, the referendum is examined, constituting the other of the two main parts. In chapter 7, an attempt is made to answer the questions put forth earlier in this chapter. In chapter 8, a conclusion is drawn from the results of the analysis. In chapter 9, the bibliography is presented. In the 10 and final chapter, some extra information is presented in an appendix.

4 Background

In order to understand the events of 22nd March 2008, it is necessary to wind the clock further back than to the inception of the Republic of China in 1912. It is also essential to sketch an outline of the development of the cross-Strait relation, dating back to the Chinese Civil War of 1927 to 1950. This section is therefore dedicated to providing background information which is indispensable to understanding the election and referendum earlier this year.

4.1 Overview of Taiwanese History before 1987

The first recordings of Taiwan in Chinese history dates back to the third century, but the island remained in the periphery of mainland interest for a long time. In the meantime, representatives of the Dutch East Indian Company colonised Taiwan in 1624, and used it as a base for further expansion in South-East Asia. Control was then wrested from the Europeans in 1662, and the island was dominated by Ming loyalists until the Qing Dynasty had consolidated its power and made Taiwan a Chinese prefecture, which it would remain for several centuries.⁹

After the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, Taiwan was ceded to Japan, whose ascendancy was enforced until her defeat in the Second World War. An internecine civil war on the mainland followed in the wake of the international conflict, and the losing Nationalists fled to Taiwan to establish a new home for the Republic of China. After gradually losing control to the communist government on the mainland, soon only Taiwan and a number of small islands remained under Nationalist hegemony.¹⁰

After Nationalist influences started to affect Taiwan, the island's population faced an arduous epoch, because not only did they have to find some way to fit into their new existence under Chinese rule, and to re-evaluate the Japanese legacy, but they also had to suffer the restraints of a government that did not grant freedoms to the people at a pace commensurate to that of the impressive growth of Taiwan's economy.¹¹ This suppression was sometimes brutal, and vestiges of the fight for democracy are still present in modern Taiwan, such as the memorial of the February 28th Incident in 1947,¹² an uprising in which the government killed approximately ten thousand people, and wounded many

⁹Rubinstein, 1999

¹⁰Gernet, 1996

¹¹Rubinstein, 1999

¹²Gluck, 1997

more.¹³

However, even though KMT managed to keep power within their own ranks for more than four decades, it was only while at the same time admitting more freedoms and more rights, especially after the death of the Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek in 1975.¹⁴

Impressive economic expansion followed in Taiwan, leading to more integration with China,¹⁵ as well as increased pressure for democratisation, which also, slowly but inexorably, made way for liberation of media and political climate.¹⁶

4.2 Overview of International Relationships

On the international arena, Taiwan experienced tougher competition as China grew stronger. During the fifties and sixties, Taiwan had faced no real threat of losing her role as representative for the whole of China in international organisations such as the United Nations, but as soon as the Communist Party had consolidated its power on the mainland, it began to annually demand that Beijing instead of Taipei should represent China in the United Nations. Fearing war with China, Nixon finally had to support Beijing, which ultimately led to Taiwan's loss of her seat in the United Nations General Assembly in 1971,¹⁷ because of UN resolution 2758.¹⁸ It also led to severed official liaisons after United States President Jimmy Carter formally recognised the People's Republic of China in 1978.¹⁹

Even though China acquired Taiwan's seat in the General Assembly in 1971, the international struggle between Taiwan and China began again seriously in the 1990s.²⁰ In the last decade of the twentieth century, the relationship was reinterpreted as being more like that of two separate sovereign states. Attempts at communicating were made, but broke down because of disagreements concerning the status of Taiwan. Beijing still retained a link to Taipei via KMT, the opposing party to the ruling DPP between 2000 and 2008. Fierce campaigning in the run-up to the presidential elections of the new millennium

¹³ Rubinstein, 1999

¹⁴ Rubinstein, 1999

¹⁵ Song, 2005

¹⁶ Gough, 1998

¹⁷ Rubinstein, 1999

¹⁸ Allies protest UN treatment of Taiwan, 2008

¹⁹ Rubinstein, 1999

²⁰ Rubinstein, 1999

has not amended the relationship to the PRC,²¹ but change was on the way. The ruling party's fierce attitude towards Beijing had instilled internal tension within the party, as well as the general public, since most people deemed economic prosperity more important than independence and UN membership.²² A stronger KMT has emerged, unified for the first time since the party lost power eight years ago.²³

Discrepancies in political liberalisation and diverging aims concerning China's future are still important, since there exists a legal controversy concerning the sovereignty of Taiwan. China adamantly pursues a "One-China" policy, according to which "One China" is the same as the PRC, and that the ROC (as well as Hong Kong and Macau) is included in that "One China".²⁴ Attitudes from Taiwan leaders are much more divergent compared to KMT, which still harbours hopes of reunification with China, which links them closer to the mainland than is the case for DPP.²⁵

4.3 Recent political development

Before going into the details of the ballot-casting on 22nd March 2008, it is necessary to consider Taiwan's political development from 1987 and onwards. During this period, Taiwan gradually underwent democratisation and further liberalisation, the former clearly marked by the shift of power in the presidential election of 2000. This section provides the background necessary to understand the complicated circumstances predominant in 2008. Please note that even though the various sections have titles referring to elections, this is merely a convenient structure.

Although economic liberalism set foot on Taiwan fairly early in comparison with China, democratic development was late in coming. After martial law was lifted in 1987²⁶, the first multiparty election was held in 1989, although a substantial degree of manipulation seems to have affected the results. Not many voters cast their ballots for the opposition, DPP, but gradually reinforced its positions throughout the 1990s.²⁷

²¹Johansson, 2006

²²Taiwan's opposition presidential candidate widens lead - poll, 2008; Opposition grows in Taiwan on "UN referendum", 2008

²³Johansson, 2006

²⁴The Taiwan Affairs Office and The Information Office of the State Council, 2000

²⁵Williams, 2007a

²⁶Tucker, 2005

²⁷Rubinstein, 1999

4.3.1 The 2000 Presidential Election

In the 2000 presidential election, Chen Shui-bian of the DPP managed to win by a very slight margin, mainly because of a schism within the KMT, whose sympathisers split their votes between the two factions, thus giving Chen a better chance.²⁸

The ensuing years were marked by economic turmoil following the 1997 general financial crisis in East Asia, aggravated by an inexperienced government. Stubborn ideological thinking in certain issues (the withdrawal of funds for a debated fourth Taiwanese nuclear power plant, for instance) lead not only to fierce opposition, but also to anxiety for investors.²⁹ Hence, the economy stagnated (for instance, GDP dropped 4.3 percent in 2001³⁰) with business further hampered by the fact that President Chen reneged on his promise to relieve restrictions imposed on cross-Strait trade and transportation, a promise he had made to sway those parts of the electorate that would profit from such a relief. Many ideas were put forth, but few of them were ever realised.³¹

Also, a changed and harsher tone towards China predominated, in which a clear tendency of increased independence from the mainland was salient.³² Even though the DPP is commonly associated with more independence-oriented ambitions, President Chen announced in his inaugural speech that he would avoid pursuing politics that would disturb the *status quo*. However, this was regarded as a tactical move by many, who believed that Chen still harboured intentions of pushing for independence. Yet, he distanced himself from the independence movement during his first two years of office, but his overtures being coldly met by China, he soon reverted.³³ In July 2002 he stated that "...Taiwan is an independent sovereign state".³⁴ However, not only the ruling DPP was to blame for the political gridlock in cross-Strait relations; KMT was also labelled obstructionist, and cooperation between the two parties were gravely inadequate.³⁵ Also, China herself required of Taiwan to accept the One-China policy before negotiating, something that Chen strongly refused.³⁶

²⁸Tucker, 2005

²⁹Tucker, 2005

³⁰Johansson, 2006

³¹Tucker, 2005

³²Johansson, 2006

³³Tucker, 2005

³⁴President Chen Shui-bian's speech, 2002

³⁵Taiwan's Election: Ma's horse comes in, 2008-04-28; Tucker, 2005

³⁶Williams, 2007b

4.3.2 The 2004 Presidential Election

The presidential election of 2004 was held on 19th March, in tandem with a referendum on the relationship with China,³⁷ but the campaigning began as early as the previous spring. Discontent with the incumbent president had given Lien Chan, the opposition leader, a firm lead. This advantage was gradually decreased, mainly because the economy was beginning to recover, as well as widespread sympathy for Taiwan due to China's hard-line attitude towards Taiwan during SARS crisis. With a two-million-people manifestation across the nation, the DPP showed Taiwan's independence from China. Counter-manifestations by the opposition rallied a similar number of participants, albeit not as spectacularly.³⁸

The situation was delicately balanced, with both candidates equally strong. On the day before the election, a failed assassination attempt on President Chen and his vice-president, sparked chaos in the last moment of the campaign. The opposition accused the DPP of having staged the attack to gain sympathy. After it was proclaimed that DPP had won yet another slight victory, KMT refused to accept the result. Their protests were two-fold. Firstly, they said that the attack on the president had swayed the public opinion in an unfair way, and secondly, they said that DPP had cheated in the election. The former remains an uncertain factor, but the second was settled in court, reiterating DPP victory.³⁹

4.3.3 The Predominant situation in March 2008

Regardless of how unreliable Taiwanese opinion polls might be,⁴⁰ a true indication of what the population wanted was given on 12th January 2008, when the election to the legislature was held. The KMT won 81 seats, compared to only 27 from the then-ruling DPP. Some analysts viewed this as a litmus test of the population's opinions on Chen's push in the direction of Taiwan's independence.⁴¹ Some also regarded it as a sign that voters are growing tired of President Chen's confrontational style.⁴²

Many observers feared war over Taiwan, should the independence movement push too far ahead and trigger a reaction from Beijing, which has vowed to thwart any clear move towards independence by force if necessary.⁴³

³⁷ See chapter 6

³⁸ Johansson, 2006

³⁹ Johansson, 2006

⁴⁰ See section 4.3.5.

⁴¹ Taiwan swears in new legislature ahead of vital presidential poll, 2008

⁴² Cody, 2008

⁴³ Williams, 2007a; Tsai, 2008; Jennings, 2008a; Yu, 2007a; Yu 2007b; Bandow, 2007

At the same time, the United States is still committed to defend Taiwan in case of war, according to Congress' Taiwan Resolution Act.⁴⁴ This commitment was reinforced by President George W. Bush in 2001, when he said that the United States would do "whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself".⁴⁵ Lack of cooperation and attempts at alleviating the friction in cross-Strait relations, could also spark war in East Asia, possibly with global ramifications if the US would entered the conflict on Taiwan's side.⁴⁶

On 3rd March 2008, Hu Jintao emphasised the importance of the Taiwan issue by stating that it was "the biggest menace to national sovereignty and territorial integrity, the biggest obstacle to the development of cross-Strait relations, and the biggest threat to peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits".⁴⁷

4.3.4 A Note on Opinion Polls in Taiwan

Opinion polls in Taiwan are unreliable in that they are often based on too scarce a statistical basis, and that they are often used as a politically biased tool rather than a means of neutral inquiry. The selection is seldom random enough and sometimes incorporates people who cannot even vote in the election or the referendum in question, such as mainlanders.⁴⁸ It should also be noted that it is forbidden by law to publish opinion polls the last days before any election.⁴⁹

⁴⁴ Gomez, 2008; Williams, 2007a

⁴⁵ George Bush in Fireman and Peng, 2008

⁴⁶ Key Facts About Taiwan's Election, 2008

⁴⁷ Hu Jintao: "Taiwan independence" activities doomed to fail, 2008

⁴⁸ Johansson, 2006

⁴⁹ Fireman and Peng, 2008

5 The Presidential Election on 22nd March

Together with economic policy, the relationship to China was arguably the most important questions in the debate leading up to the election.⁵⁰ Both parties favoured a closer relationship to China than has been the case of the eight previous years of DPP reign. Thus, in some ways, the election can be said to be less determining for the future of Taiwan, compared to the elections of 2000 and 2004, but it was still important since the candidates varied in how much and how quickly they were prepared to push for further integration with China.⁵¹

DPP and its candidate, Frank Hsieh, advocated an approach in which independence aspects were downplayed compared to earlier elections, but they were still important,⁵² because a long-term goal of independence was still on the agenda.⁵³

KMT and its candidate Ma Ying-jeou promoted a policy striving to uphold the *status quo* of Taiwan being a *de facto* independent state, but lacking worldwide recognition. He has criticised President Chen for the damage he has caused during his eight years in power. In the long run, the party's goal is reunification with a democratised China.⁵⁴

This chapter begins with an overview of the development over time, and continuing with a presentation of the two candidates, including a study of their respective parties and their history, along with criticism raised by opponents.

5.1 Development

A number of opinion polls may serve as indication of how the electorate favoured the different candidates during the run-up to the ballot-casting. On 19th September, 2007, a poll showed that Ma had roughly 53 percent of the votes, whereas Hsieh had around 30 percent.⁵⁵ More than four months later, on 1st February, Ma had a firm grip, leading over Hsieh with 25 percentage points, even though it seemed possible that Hsieh would be able to close the gap if he distanced himself from the incumbent president's policies. Ma's support stayed on approximately the same levels as in September, but support for Hsieh

⁵⁰Key Facts About Taiwan's Election, 2008

⁵¹Wong, 2008

⁵²Wong, 2008

⁵³Jennings, 2008a

⁵⁴Jennings, 2008a

⁵⁵Taiwan opposition candidate's gap with rival further widens, 2008

declined.⁵⁶

However, results from the week after, on 5th February, indicated that the gap seemed to widen further, increasing to 38 percentage points in favour of Ma and KMT. Still, a large part of the population remained undecided.⁵⁷ Various polls reported different results during February, but at the end of the month, Ma still had a solid lead with 54 percentage points against 20.⁵⁸ March showed no real surprises, with a 36 percent lead for Ma on 7th March⁵⁹ and some final polls giving him a lead of between 21 percent and 32 percent.⁶⁰

5.2 DPP and Frank Hsieh

The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was formally founded in 1986, when the ban on parties opposing KMT was lifted.⁶¹ The party has its origins in an older striving for self-governance and liberalisation of Taiwanese politics during the martial-law period ending in 1987, only a year after the official founding of the DPP. A main goal for the DPP was realised in 2000, when it won the presidential election. Since assuming power, the DPP has matured and stopped being a party of dissent and general protest, as was its characteristics earlier.⁶²

5.2.1 Cross-Strait Relations

According to a White Paper on cross-Strait relations, DPP clearly stated that Taiwan was not a part of China, and that the two were indeed separate nations with no mutual ownership of any kind. Taiwanese sovereignty was placed high on the party's agenda, stating that it "reflect[s] historical realities as well as the present situation, and at the same time form[s] part of the consensus of the international community".⁶³

Even though DPP traditionally favoured more independent-oriented politics compared to KMT, their attitude on this subject softened notably in the run-up to the presidential election. Apart from relaxing the stress on Taiwanese independence,⁶⁴ the party also promulgated a more China-friendly economic policy that included allowing some Chinese tourists to visit Taiwan, granting

⁵⁶Taiwan swears in new legislature ahead of vital presidential poll, 2008

⁵⁷Spy claims hit Taiwan presidential hopeful's support: poll, 2008

⁵⁸Taiwan's opposition presidential candidate widens lead - poll, 2008

⁵⁹Taiwan opposition candidate's gap with rival further widens, 2008

⁶⁰China-friendly Ma leads Taiwan pre-election polls, 2008

⁶¹Rubinstein, 1999

⁶²Democratic Progressive Party, 2008

⁶³Democratic Progressive Party, 2008

⁶⁴Taiwan swears in new legislature ahead of vital presidential poll, 2008

the right to work to Chinese citizens married to Taiwanese citizens, as well as lifting bans on banks wanting to invest indirectly on the mainland.⁶⁵

However, Frank Hsieh was still more restrictive than his opponent. For instance, even though he wanted to relax caps on Taiwanese investment in China, he still wanted to keep most of the limitations intact.⁶⁶ He raised fears that too much economic integration with China might produce an influx of Chinese products and workers, flooding and unsettling the domestic market, raising prices and creating a dangerous housing bubble.⁶⁷

Creating a common market with China would, according to Frank Hsieh, create a situation in which Taiwan was dependent on China, something he regarded as disturbing since more than a thousand Chinese missiles currently target Taiwan and such a relationship would be lopsided. Extrapolated in time, a common market would endanger Taiwanese sovereignty, something that could not be sacrificed.⁶⁸ Further worries about economic integration with China involved doubts about the stability of Chinese economic growth.⁶⁹

Hsieh also made attempts at distancing himself from his predecessor, Chen Shui-bian, because the latter's hard-line independence rhetoric had recently not gone down well with the general public. For instance, Hsieh stated that he favoured a *status quo*, rather than push for independence.⁷⁰ Moreover, he refrained from saying much about the referendum on United Nations membership, although it is clear that significant parts of his party still supported the referendum initiated by Chen. Possibly, this was meant to soothe Taiwanese weary of too much agitation towards China.⁷¹

5.2.2 Criticism

Criticism regarding DPP and Frank Hsieh can be summarised relatively easily, since most of it concerned increased friction with China and the United States.⁷² However, this issue is more effectively dealt with in the next chapter on the referendum on United Nations membership. In other words, criticism of the referendum proposed by DPP is highly relevant for Frank Hsieh as presidential candidate as well.⁷³

⁶⁵Where a common market is divisive, 2008

⁶⁶Taiwan swears in new legislature ahead of vital presidential poll, 2008

⁶⁷Where a common market is divisive, 2008

⁶⁸Taiwan presidential rivals trade barbs in last debate, 2008; Chiang, 2008

⁶⁹Chiang, 2008

⁷⁰Wong, 2008

⁷¹See chapter 6

⁷²Wong, 2008

⁷³See section 6.4.

5.2.3 Frank Hsieh

Frank Chang-ting Hsieh was born in Taipei in 1946. With a background in law, defending Taiwanese dissidents during the martial-law period, he was part of the founding of DPP in 1986. He was the vice presidential candidate in 1986 and later become mayor of Kaohsiung. In 2005, he was appointed premier of the government under Chen Shui-bian.⁷⁴

5.3 KMT and Ma Ying-jeou

The role of the KMT has changed over the decades since its new existence was established on Taiwan roughly 60 sixty years ago. In early 2008, the party was surrounded by a somewhat nostalgic shimmer, reminding people of the pursuit of freedom in the days of Chiang Kai-shek. During the last two decades, KMT has evolved, and became more pro-China than its main rival, DPP.⁷⁵ For instance KMT favoured a common market with free movement of goods and capital.⁷⁶

KMT had a burdening legacy of authoritarianism and corruption, something that had to be overcome if the people were to invest their trust in Ma and his party. The presidential candidate did much to distance himself from this legacy, for instance by a yearly apology for the KMT involvement in the February 28th Incident.⁷⁷

5.3.1 Cross-Strait Relations

Ma's policies regarding integration with China were more far-reaching than Hsieh's. To revitalise the economy, he intended to create a common market based on the European Union model, which would include free movement of capital and goods, but not of labour. Furthermore, he advocated the opening of direct passenger flights between Taiwan and the mainland, something that had been suspended since 1949.⁷⁸

Integration with China was deemed to have economic benefits, but had recently been limited by law in order to reduce dependence on China. Still, exports to China continued to grow, while exports to the United States kept falling. Taiwan's economy was growing significantly slower than its neighbours', possibly because of the lack of synergy with Chinese expansion.⁷⁹

Ma as president, combined with a KMT dominated legislature, would be

⁷⁴Bios of Taiwan's Presidential Candidates, 2008

⁷⁵Shaheen, 2008

⁷⁶Where a common market is divisive, 2008

⁷⁷Fireman and Peng, 2008

⁷⁸Taiwan presidential rivals trade barbs in last debate, 2008

⁷⁹Fireman and Peng, 2008

decisive enough to take advantage of economic opportunities on the mainland. During the past eight years of DPP rule, Taiwan has missed out on these opportunities, according to critics, with limitations and caps to investment hampering economic growth.⁸⁰

However, it is not accurate to define Ma as being a weak conformist, even though it is true that he was more so than his rival. For instance, he was not hesitant to emphasise Taiwanese sovereignty, to condemn China for its brutality in Tibet⁸¹ and to push for further import of advanced military equipment from the United States.⁸² He has also stated that “Taiwan is not Tibet, Taiwan is not Hong Kong. We are a sovereign country”.⁸³ Furthermore, Ma was clear in stating that changes to economic regulation and laws needed to be implemented slowly and gradually; protecting Taiwan’s interests and security were still of paramount importance.⁸⁴

In general, people can be said to have sided with KMT for economic reasons. A young generation that did not remember the iron grip with which the KMT ruled for decades were prepared to vote the back into power.⁸⁵

5.3.2 Criticism

Some critics cast doubt on whether more integration with China would actually stimulate the economy as much as enthusiasts claimed. Looking at Hong Kong after its integration with China’s economy, it seemed clear economic momentum had declined. Still, there might not have seen to be much choice, save taking as much advantage as possible from Chinese ascension.⁸⁶

Criticism of the One-China policy that promised to incorporate Taiwan in the same political country as China, but with a separate system, involved the fact that such a system did not work very well in Hong Kong. For instance, democratic elections have been postponed indefinitely and corruption has increased.⁸⁷

Some argue that there was danger in too much reliance on the Chinese economy for Taiwanese growth; instead, more emphasis ought to be put on further integration with the United States, Japan and other Asian countries.⁸⁸

⁸⁰Taiwan swears in new legislature ahead of vital presidential poll, 2008

⁸¹Hille, 2008

⁸²Taiwan's Election: Ma's horse comes in, 2008

⁸³Hille, 2008

⁸⁴Fireman and Peng, 2008

⁸⁵Jennings, 2008a

⁸⁶Where a common market is divisive, 2008

⁸⁷Shaheen, 2008

⁸⁸Stokes, 2008

5.3.3 Ma Ying-jeou

Ma Ying-jeou was born in Hong Kong in 1950. He has spent a considerable time outside Taiwan, including earning degrees from New York University and Harvard Law School. He served as Minister of Justice 1993-1996 and mayor of Taipei 1998-2006. Since 2005, he has been the chairman of KMT.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Bios of Taiwan's Presidential Candidates, 2008

6 The Referendum on UN Membership

Since 1971, when Beijing replaced Taipei as the representative of China in the United Nations, Taiwan has continuously tried to regain a seat in the United Nations General Assembly. A request to join has been sent each year since 1993, but all have been blocked by China, a permanent and veto-wielding member of the Security Council.⁹⁰ However, in July 2007, the first attempt was made to apply for membership under the name of Taiwan (as opposed to the official name of The Republic of China). The Chinese foreign ministry said that the attempt “was doomed to failure”.⁹¹ This application was also rejected, with the motivation that it was impossible for Taiwan to join with the 1971 resolution in force.⁹²

Referenda were made possible by changes to the constitution passed by legislature in November 2003, introducing non-binding referenda to Taiwanese politics. This possibility was previously present in Taiwan’s constitution, but it was only after this piece of legislation was passed that it became practically possible. These were only to have effect if at least 50 % of the entire voting population voted in favour.⁹³

The Pan-Blue Coalition (primarily KMT) opposed the introduction of referenda, but was only successful insofar as it managed to limit the purview of the new law; a referendum had to deal with a threat to Taiwanese sovereignty in order to be legitimate. However, President Chen soon thereafter circumvented that limitation and announced that Taiwan’s sovereignty was indeed threatened all the time by the Chinese missiles constantly targeting the island.⁹⁴

In March 2004, voters were asked to cast their ballots not only for their choice of president, but also in a referendum with two questions, one about beginning negotiations with China concerning its missiles targeting Taiwan, and the other about strengthening missile defences. Although these two questions were not directly connected to Taiwanese independence, the referendum was seen as a step further along the road to Taiwanese independence, and naturally led to fierce protests from the opposition as well as from China itself.⁹⁵ United States President George W. Bush also made

⁹⁰Trevelyan, 2007

⁹¹Taiwan applies for UN membership, 2007

⁹²Trevelyan, 2007

⁹³Government Information Office, Republic of China, 2008

⁹⁴Tucker, 2005

⁹⁵Yu, 2007a; Taiwan set to hold UN referendums, 2008

public that he did not look favourably upon anything that would change the *status quo* in the Taiwan Strait situation.⁹⁶ Most other countries worldwide shared this view.⁹⁷

The referendum was a failure for President Chen, because even though merely 8 % voted against, only 43 % vote for, falling short of the required majority.⁹⁸ This was the result of Pan-Blue campaigning to boycott the event, but still, the referendum took place and laid the foundations for future referenda, something far from innocuous in the eyes of Beijing leaders.⁹⁹

In early 2008, another pair of referenda was held in tandem with the election to the legislature. However, these were not overly important for cross-Strait relations. In total, there have been six referenda in Taiwanese history, including the two held on 22nd March 2008.¹⁰⁰

6.1 The 2008 Referendum on United Nations Membership

In March 2008, another referendum coincided with an election, but this time two new questions were posed to the electorate. Even though both major parties approve of Taiwan joining the United Nations, and agree that it would be beneficial to the nation, their approach to the issue was very different. These two divergent views on United Nations membership resulted in two referenda on 22nd March 2008, the first asking if Taiwan should join the United Nations under the name "Taiwan", and the other specifying no name. The first was advocated by DPP and the second by KMT. Applying for membership as "Taiwan" is an overt statement to the international community and to China that Taiwan is not China, and herein resided the controversy.¹⁰¹

KMT announced that it would hold a counter-referendum on joining the United Nation under any name. This was a sign of the fact that symbols and language were important in cross-Strait politics, because KMT initiative should perhaps not be interpreted a sign that the party approved of such a thing as a referendum on the United Nations question, but rather a as symbol that KMT is still firmly Taiwanese and supports Taiwanese sovereignty.¹⁰² KMT had no choice but to offer a counter-referendum, because otherwise they might be

⁹⁶Tucker, 2005

⁹⁷Lai, 2003

⁹⁸Johansson, 2006

⁹⁹Tucker, 2005

¹⁰⁰See section 10.1.

¹⁰¹Fireman and Peng, 2008; Buckley 2008

¹⁰²Cody, 2008; Taiwan set to hold UN referendums, 2008

viewed as too China-friendly by the electorate.¹⁰³

6.2 Proponents

For proponents of the referendum, United Nations membership was seen as a link to the international community,¹⁰⁴ a way to escape a “giant with its hands around our neck, trying to suffocate us, trying to shut off our space on the international stage”.¹⁰⁵ The overall goal can be said to be ideological, to quote Chen Shui-bian: “[T]he long-term goals [...] are the aspiration for realization of the universal values of democracy, freedom, and human rights”.¹⁰⁶

Apart from local people supporting DPP, a number of foreign states also claimed the right of Taiwan to join the United Nations in its own right under the name of “Taiwan”. In February 2008, twelve of Taiwan's allies signed a petition protesting against the United Nations' treatment of the Taiwan issue. This protest was a follow-up to another posted to General Secretary Ban Ki-moon in late September 2007e; neither had any significant effect. The petitioners stated that a misinterpretation of Resolution 2758 is present, and that Taiwan should be treated as a new applicant, not as a part of China.¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, some argued that the United States' position was somewhat hypocritical in that it refused to promote Taiwanese independence, while acknowledging Chinese hegemony. This in itself is not hypocritical, but considering that the United States also refused to acknowledge another communist government, Cuba, while supporting Kosovo's independence, made the situation much more complicated. On the other hand, it can be argued that the United States is playing a subtler game than that, managing to appease China without really acknowledging anybody's hegemony.¹⁰⁸

6.3 Opponents

Domestically speaking, many parties and factions urged the people of Taiwan to boycott the referenda, including KMT, Democratic Action Alliance, the Taiwan New Party, Taiwan-based Non-Partisan Solidarity Union, the Taiwan Farmers Party, to name a few.¹⁰⁹ Criticism focused mainly on increased friction across the Strait, as well as economic disadvantages of not cooperating more

¹⁰³Fang, 2008

¹⁰⁴Williams, 2007b

¹⁰⁵Hsiao Bi-khim in Wong, 2008

¹⁰⁶Transcript: Post Interview With Taiwan's Leader, 2006

¹⁰⁷Allies protest UN treatment of Taiwan, 2008

¹⁰⁸Gomez, 2008

¹⁰⁹Opposition grows in Taiwan on "UN referendum", 2008

with China, which would supposedly lead to increased growth.¹¹⁰

Furthermore, it was argued that the referendum could have no real effects and that it would only contribute to a harsher relationship with China and the United States. Whatever the outcome, it was highly unlikely that the referendum would have had any practical effect. Fifteen applications to join the United Nations have previously been rebuffed, one under with the name Taiwan¹¹¹. There was no reason to believe that China would have hesitated to use its veto as a permanent member of the Security Council to block any attempt to join by Taiwan.¹¹²

Instead, some analysts said that the two questions in the referendum were used more for political reasons as a tool to influence the balance of the presidential election, rather than as something important in itself.¹¹³ Criticism of the referendum included the idea that using a democratic tool in such a way undermines its usefulness. Referenda should be used in questions where they matter, not simply as means to an end not directly related to the referenda.¹¹⁴

Not only did the referendum undermine referenda and the people's votes in general, but it was also damaging to Taiwan. The insistence on an essentially pointless referendum increased tensions with the United States, the country on which Taiwan was dependent for its security.¹¹⁵ The referendum might also have had reverse effects for DPP. In the beginning, the party thought it could win voters in the same way as it claimed it did in the 2004 election. However, it might be the other way around. In case the referendum was turned down by the electorate, as was the last one, Beijing would know that its tactics of letting Washington put pressure on Taiwan is working, and that the people of Taiwan do not want independence as much as they once did.¹¹⁶

Failing to gather support for the referenda was devastating for President Chen's cause. In spite of heavy protest from the United States, he went ahead anyway, showing that the United States cannot influence politics in Taiwan as they wanted to. If that was the case, it could be argued that the united States have all the more reason side with Beijing.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁰ Fang, 2008; Jennings, 2008a

¹¹¹ Cody, 2008

¹¹² Jennings, 2008a

¹¹³ Presidential election 2008: 20 days to go, 2008; Opposition grows in Taiwan on "UN referendum", 2008

¹¹⁴ Opposition grows in Taiwan on "UN referendum", 2008

¹¹⁵ Jennings, 2008a

¹¹⁶ Tsai, 2008

¹¹⁷ Tsai, 2008

6.4 China

Why did China oppose the Taiwanese referenda so fiercely? There were two principal reasons for this. Firstly, historically speaking, referenda have been closely linked to independence movements in other countries, and thus seemed ominous to political leaders in Beijing, a sign of an undesired future development of politics in Taiwan. Secondly, the very fact that the citizens could affect Taiwan's destiny was further evidence of the sovereignty that the island already had. This highlighted the fact that Taiwan was *de facto* independent already.¹¹⁸ Allegedly, "Chinese diplomats have warned their U.S. counterparts that President Hu Jintao's government takes the issue seriously, suggesting the vote may approach the red line for some kind of military response."¹¹⁹

China was clear in her condemnation of the Taiwanese referendum, saying that it threatens peace and stability in the region. Such a referendum would alter the *status quo*, something which would not benefit anyone; it was viewed as a push for *de jure* independence, according to an article in China View. A statement issued by the Taiwan Work Office of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council reiterated that Taiwan is a matter of domestic policy and that all 1.3 billion Chinese should decide on the islands future, not the minority of 23 million living there. If the referendum was held, the statement said, a heavy price would be paid.¹²⁰

While being loud and clear when condemning the referendum, Beijing was relatively silent. This strategy first emerged sometime after 2000, and was possibly an attempt to urge Washington to choose between Taipei and Beijing in the long run, accepting the idea of a united China. The fear of war between Taiwan and China, sparked by what appeared like Taiwanese disturbance of the *status quo* would gradually increase reasons for the United States to accept China's position. Such a military build-up also seemed to have taken place.¹²¹ Maintaining *status quo* would, on the other hand, bring stability and keep peace in the area.¹²²

This way of using Washington as a go-between is entirely new, says a "former senior Taiwanese cross-Strait affairs official, who spoke on condition of

¹¹⁸Tucker, 2005

¹¹⁹Cody, 2008

¹²⁰Chen warned against Taiwan 'referendum', 2008

¹²¹Tsai, 2008

¹²²Yu, 2007b

anonymity".¹²³ He said that DPP has failed both to recognise the change of tactics and do something about it.¹²⁴

Along the same lines, the Taiwan Affairs Office in China announced measures to facilitate life for the over one million Taiwanese currently living or working in China. This might have been an attempt to use the carrot rather than the stick, hoping that Taiwanese voters would nullify the referendum simply by not partaking.¹²⁵

China made clear that it is ready to cooperate, and talked about mutual efforts, exchange dialogue and negotiation. However, Hu Jintao was always adamant that anything along these lines would have to be founded in the One-China principle, demanding that any partner across the Taiwan Strait, had to "recognize that both sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to one China".¹²⁶ Hu Jintao stressed the importance of long-term planning on how the two countries could co-operate to promote stability across the Taiwan Strait.¹²⁷ However, it takes two to reach an agreement, and China was unwilling to negotiate on terms different than those described above, which was unacceptable to Taiwanese leaders.¹²⁸

6.5 International

Most important international players were against the referendum to join the United Nations. First and foremost, the United States firmly warned Taiwan that "this referendum is not going to help anyone, and, in fact, it shouldn't be held".¹²⁹ Furthermore, the referendum was condemned or negatively commented on by several important countries apart from the United States¹³⁰: Britain¹³¹, the European Union¹³², Russia¹³³ and Australia.¹³⁴

The United States and China voiced strong opposition to the referendum,

¹²³Tsai, 2008

¹²⁴Tsai, 2008

¹²⁵Cody, 2008

¹²⁶Hu Jintao: "Taiwan independence" activities doomed to fail, 2008

¹²⁷Chinese President urges cautious handling of Taiwan issue, 2008

¹²⁸Williams, 2007b

¹²⁹Condoleezza Rice in Wong 2008

¹³⁰Cody, 2008

¹³¹U.S. and Britain rap Taiwan over referendum plans, 2008; British Foreign Secretary reiterates opposition to "referendum on Taiwan's UN membership", 2008

¹³²Bruyas, 2007

¹³³Russia concerned over Taiwan's UN referendum, 2008

¹³⁴Australian PM: Taiwan's referendum not conducive to peace

viewing it as a step closer to Taiwanese independence¹³⁵ as well as a possible threat to stability in the Taiwan Strait. They hoped that voters would heed the call to boycott the referendum. Although perhaps not for the same ideological reasons, this joint condemnation was a sign of the fact that the two countries policies did indeed overlap when it came to Taiwan's role in the world. However, the United States still refrained from actually stating that it would use some of its influence to prevent the referendum from taking place. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, explained that "Taiwan is a democratic entity. [...] Its leaders will decide for themselves".¹³⁶

U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte, said that "[f]rom the perspective of the United States, the conduct of such a referendum is a mistake [...] We think it is a provocative policy on the part of the Taiwanese authorities." Chinese Foreign Minister Yang told Negroponte that "opposing secessionist activities such as the referendum [...] is vital for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and overall China-U.S. relations." Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao also told the senior American diplomat "that Washington should 'properly' deal with sensitive issues such as Taiwan."¹³⁷ Even though descriptions such as "provocative", "mistake"¹³⁸ and "bad idea"¹³⁹ were uttered, Washington's opposition to the referendum never went further than words.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁵Cody, 2008

¹³⁶Cody, 2008

¹³⁷Gomez, 2008

¹³⁸John Negroponte in Tsai, 2008

¹³⁹Condoleezza Rice in Cody, 2008

¹⁴⁰Fang, 2008

7 Analysis

This analysis section is further subdivided into three parts, the first two discussing the questions posed in the introduction, and the last part discussing the paper itself.

7.1 What were the alternatives for voters on 22nd March?

This question has been studied in the previous chapters, but some further comments and analysis are necessary. First and foremost, the presidential election was the more important of the two events occurring on March 22nd. It is true that the election was closely related to the referendum, but the latter was more restricted in its scope and would have had less significant ramifications, had it passed. As has been argued by opponents to the referendum, it is not very likely that the referendum would have affected Taiwan's situation in any positive way. Instead, more friction between Taiwan and her most important ally, the United States, was harmful to Taiwan. So even in failing to gather support, the referendum had serious consequences.

On the other hand, the arguments of the proponents should not be overlooked. If handled in a pragmatic way, it seems clear that the referendum was a bad idea, but speaking in terms of rights and principle, the case is not as straightforward. There might be merit in the claims that the United States handling of the cross-Strait issue is hypocritical, and the same can be said of many other international players, including the United Nations. A common urge to benefit from expanding Chinese economy is likely to be the cause of this behaviour.

It should also be noted that most people on Taiwan believe in Taiwanese independence, so people's ballot-casting on 22nd March did not really reflect what they thought about the questions at hand. Instead, the referendum was tied to what attitude Taiwan should have towards China. Voting for DPP and "yes" to the referendum would mean a less pragmatic view, supporting Taiwanese independence in the face of international condemnation and ever tightening relations between Washington and Beijing. On the other hand, voting for KMT and "no" to the referendum is a sign of more pragmatic thinking with focus on economics. So, in essence, since all seem to agree on fundamental levels, the alternatives were either focused on principle or on pragmatism.

This situation is akin to Taiwan walking a tightrope. On one side, if independence is pursued, a war with China looms ominously. On the other side, if integration with China is promoted, a reunification under non-optimal conditions might be the result, in the likeness of Hong Kong (where the Beijing

government has not fulfilled many of its promises concerning democratisation). The majority of Taiwan's population does not want any of these two outcomes, but collectively voting for which direction to shift balance so as not to fall off the rope will remain a tricky business.

7.2 In what ways were the ballot-casting on 22nd March important?

Continuing the reasoning above, the presidential election was without doubt important. It regulated the pace at which Taiwanese politics would adjust and conform to Chinese demands.

Even though it might be unlikely, a landslide victory for the DPP might have resulted in increased friction, and a higher risk for a future war. If negotiations should fail, the United States would become involved in such a war, which would then throw the world into a third world war. Indeed, this outlook might be unlikely or far away, but it is a possibility nevertheless.

A victory for KMT, on the other hand, means that the risk of military conflict decreases drastically. As long as Taiwan is not moving away from China, Beijing has little reason to threaten with violence and thereby further jeopardise its reputation in the world. China might be adamant in its eventual claim of Taiwan as a province of China, but it is not very likely that it would risk a war if events are moving in the right direction anyway.

As for the referendum, "much ado about nothing" might be a phrase with some merit, at least if one takes a pragmatic point of view. As discussed in the previous section, the referendum itself is only interesting symbolically, because its outcome could not affect the United Nations in any case. Instead of gaining ground for DPP, the referendum has instead managed to move the electorate closer to KMT and has possibly made Taiwan's position in the international community even more perilous. Countries that previously did overtly condemn Taiwan did so in the run-up to the referendum, and China and the United States have found more common ground. When the referendum actually took place, voters were convinced that it was a bad idea and perhaps even the DPP had realised that it was a mistake. KMT had, but could not withdraw the referendum without losing too much face. Nevertheless, the electorate heeded the call to boycott the referendum.

7.3 Discussion about this paper

Working with the above questions have been challenging in many ways, not in the least because the topic is so recent that few in-depth analyses are available. Instead, a plethora of superficial articles have been used, combining them together to form a whole which is hopefully greater than the sum of the parts. This might make this paper adequate in terms of discussing the atmosphere

and opinions prevalent in the run-up to 22nd March 2008, but it might also make the paper inadequate when it comes to true understanding of the issues at hand. Insightful information might be released or revealed a long time after the events to which they pertain. Such information can of course not be part of a paper such as this.

The credibility of sources used might have been a problem if the aim was to understand the situation in its fullest, but since the goal was to understand opinions and outlooks rather than facts, the credibility of the news sources used do not pose a problem or seriously endanger the credibility of the analysis as a whole.

Further studies are of course motivated by a paper like this; for instance, the international ramifications of the election and the referendum have here merely been glance briefly at. The relationship between China and the United States concerning Taiwan is fascinating, complicated and merits much more focus that can be incorporated in this paper. Also, the interplay between Taiwan and China has been mostly omitted in this paper, apart from those relatively few instances when it has been directly relevant to the election or the referendum.

8 Conclusion

Based on the analysis in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that the alternatives for voters on 22nd March 2008 were of two types. Firstly, the people chose between varying degrees of integration with China, with KMT the more China-friendly of the two parties. Secondly, the people voted either from a pragmatic point of view, with KMT focusing on politics to stimulate economic growth, even though it would entail some conformation to Chinese policy. DPP stood for a more ideological standpoint, stressing that Taiwan is an independent state that deserves international acknowledgement.

The presidential election was important because it decided what attitude Taiwan should hold with regard to China, who had reiterated vows to stymie Taiwanese independence by force if necessary. The referendum on whether and how to join the United Nations was symbolically important, and had unforeseen, negative consequences for the DPP. However, it had little practical importance, since other factors decided whether the United Nations would accept an application by Taiwan.

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10 APPENDIX

10.1 Referenda held in Taiwan

The following are excerpts from the Government Information Office, Republic of China¹⁴¹ on the subject of referenda held in Taiwan. In total, there have been six questions, the first two in tandem with the 2004 election, the second two at the same time as the election to the legislature in early 2008 and the last two coincided with the presidential election.

National Referendum Proposal No. 1 advocated acquiring anti-missile weaponry to strengthen Taiwan's self-defense capabilities.

National Referendum Proposal No. 2 advocated engaging in negotiations with the People's Republic of China on a basis of parity with the aim of establishing a peace and stability framework for cross-Strait interactions.

National Referendum Proposal No. 3 calls for legislation aimed at recovering the allegedly illegitimate assets acquired by the Kuomintang (KMT) political party.

National Referendum Proposal No. 4 calls for legislation that would empower the Legislature to investigate allegations of high-level corruption.

One proposal (principal initiator: You Si-kun, former premier and former chairman of the governing Democratic Progressive Party) calls on the government to apply for new membership in the United Nations under the name "Taiwan."

Another proposal (principal initiator: Vincent Siew, former premier and Kuomintang candidate for vice president) calls on the government to apply for restoration of the nation's UN membership, and for entry into other international organizations, under the name "Republic of China" or other appropriate name.

10.2 Sökuppgift

När jag började med projektarbetet i januari visste jag inte exakt vad det skulle handla om, bara att frågeställningen skulle ha någonting med relationen mellan

¹⁴¹ Government Information Office, Republic of China, 2008

Kina och Taiwan att göra. Därför var frågeställningen jag utgick ifrån från början mycket vag och jag samlade på mig stora mängder material som senare visade sig irrelevant för projektarbetets fokus. Allteftersom jag smalnade av frågeställningen till att gälla valet, blev också frågeställningen för informationssökningen tydligare. Framförallt växte ett tydligt fokus fram rent tidsmässigt och låstes kring årets folkomröstning och val, vilket förpassade stora mängder material till bakgrunden.

Frågeställningarna har framkommit dels som en pragmatisk följd av vad vilka ämnen det finns intressanta material kring, men naturligtvis också styrt av mitt eget intresse för vad jag vill lära mig mer om och förstå bättre. I dylika situationer försöker jag att komma på så många idéer som möjligt för att sedan sälla och välja ut vad som är gångbart eller intressant i efterhand. Informationssökningen är också en process som blir lättare ju mer man lär sig om ett ämne, då analys av artiklar andra har skrivit ger uppslag till nya frågeställningar och ämnen som man sedan kan ha som utgångspunkt för nya frågeställningar och vidare studier.

Till största delen har jag använt mig av bibliotekets katalog för mina sökningar, men eftersom webbsidor och nyhetsartiklar är det allra viktigaste för mitt arbete har Internet varit långt viktigare än biblioteket. Precis som jag nämnt tidigare har jag nyttjat mig av Google samt en mängd nyhetsbyråer. Det är naturligt att dessa lämpar sig bäst för att hitta mycket färsk information (tänk på att mycket av det mitt arbete tar upp hände mer eller mindre samtidigt som jag skrev). En mycket liten del av informationen om sådana händelser har hunnit ut i tryckta böcker, vilket gör den lokala katalogen mindre viktig. Dock finns det ett flertal tidskrifter jag använt mig av som naturligtvis varit tryckta, även om jag inte ser någon fundamental skillnad på dessa och liknande artiklar hämtade på nätet. Mitt arbete har handlat mycket om åsikter och uttalande.

Jag har redan nämnt svårigheter med sökverktygen i den mån de uppkommit, se exempelvis uppgift ett. Jag kan dock tillägga att långsamhet är det största problemet för allt utom nyhetsarkiv på Internet. Få större tidskrifter har hunnit publicera uttömmande analyser och mig veterligen finns inga böcker. Fördelarna med dem tycks mig uppenbara i det att de gör vad de ska göra. Googles nyhetsportal ger tillgång till en mycket stor del av världens digitalt publicerade nyheter, bibliotekets katalog och Libris ger tillgång till tryckt (och kanske också mer eftertänksam) information.

Då jag varit intresserad av att kartlägga hur läget såg ut kring folkomröstningen och valet 2008 har jag i princip försökt ta med det mesta som

är relevant för ämnet. Eftersom åsikter och tankar är viktiga har jag sällan valt bort källor för att de skulle vara mindre pålitliga. I den mån faktamässigt innehåll tycks tveksamt har jag naturligtvis letat upp kompletterande källor som kan verifiera att uppgifterna stämmer.

Jag kan inte påstå att jag lärt mig något nytt av avgörande betydelse för mina fortsatta studier, eftersom jag skrivit liknande arbeten tidigare och känner mig någorlunda bekväm med att söka information på biblioteket, på Internet och i databaser. Det jag däremot kan ta med mig är att databassökningar efter artiklar kan vara otroligt givande, men också otroligt frustrerande då det är svårt att veta var man ska leta.