

STATE-PRESS RELATIONS IN TAIWAN:  
THE SHIFTING BOUNDARIES OF CONTROL

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## ABSTRACT

In order for democracy to perform as it should, the press must provide citizens with a diverse range of information. The democratic process is enhanced, if the press is independent of both the state and the market. A study of the issues in state-press relations and how these relations may prevent the press from performing its democratic function, lies at the centre of this work. In an authoritarian society in transition such as Taiwan, where the press is subjected to state control, these issues are of central importance.

This study aims to examine the democratic relationship between the press and politics in Taiwan and its relevance to the democratic process. It focuses on three areas: (1) what is the nature of state control over the press, (2) how have the boundaries of control shifted as the state is faced with a more vigorous civil society influenced by the development of the democratic movement as well as the growing role of market forces, and (3) to what extent the press has played a role in the development of Taiwanese democracy.

A multi-method research design is set out in an attempt to understand the changing political and economic role of the press. Intensive library research and a detailed content analysis of administrative records were conducted in order to examine the mechanisms of press control exercised

by the party-state over both the mainstream and alternative media. Moreover, an ethnographic approach is used to enable a study of state-press relations which focuses on the reporting of politics.

We conclude that the confrontation between the party-state and civil society has altered the close links between the Nationalist Party, the Kuo Min Tang (KMT) and the press. The transformation of state-press relations marks a change from direct control by the party-state to a form of market censorship, with the party-state manipulation of the press shifting from regulation and censorship to news management. In the years before the rule of martial law, the party-state exercised power over the press by means of its licensing of newspapers, giving financial support to the press industry, and seducing proprietors through the provision of political and economic favours. By the late 1980s, the strategies of public relations had become important for a party-state which was undermined by an increasingly aware populace and was faced with a less manageable press. Finally, we suggest that unless newspaper barons are willing to distance themselves from the party-state and divert power to journalists; and the journalists are willing to rely on professional judgement and to energetically pursue facts, the press will exercise little impact on making the party-state more accountable to the public during Taiwan's transition to a democratic society.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### RESEARCH PURPOSE

Media democracy is an integral part of a democratic society. The essence of democracy lies in citizens' right to gain access to information upon which they make rational political decisions. Underpinning this assumption, is the idea that the media enhance the democratic process by providing citizens with a space in which they can contribute to the shaping of public culture and render governments accountable.

This ideal vision of the marketplace of ideas is undermined, however, because the media are subject to state and market censorship (Garnham, 1990; Habermas, 1989; Keane, 1991). In democratic societies, the problem begins as news organizations compete for audiences and advertising revenue. By maximizing profits, newspapers tend to provide the familiar and simple news their audiences and advertisers want. Consequently, market competition prevents reporters from supplying the kind of news that would allow citizens to practice sophisticated citizenship. Apart from economic competition, state intervention in journalism through legal censorship and news management also affects the press's

autonomy in political reporting. Consequently, the media are not always able to provide the range of views needed to meet the conditions of an informed democracy.

In fact, the defence of media independence from political-economic pressures continuously needs to be worked towards, especially in Taiwan, an authoritarian society in which the state has traditionally controlled the media.

Between 1949 and 1987, Taiwan was under the rule of martial law and civil society was absorbed into the party-state, controlled by the Kuo Min Tang (KMT). During this time, Taiwan was a society which lacked the necessary institutional infrastructure, such as the free press, independent judiciary and autonomous civil associations required by a modern democracy. By the mid-1980s, a variety of authoritarian legal constraints-- notably the thirty-eight-year-old martial law was abolished, and rules for democratic politics were gradually established. After nearly four decades of authoritarian rule, a civil society created by the opposition movement in which citizens might advance their social interests and scrutinize the KMT's conduct has emerged.

Taiwan is in democratic transition. Taiwan's experience with democratization makes possible a comprehensive understanding of issues relating to media and democracy. The theoretical interest here is how and to what extent the process of democratization in Taiwan has gained from the rise of media power, or the democratic process has been an impetus behind the development of an independent



press.

This study aims to examine the political role of the press in Taiwan's move toward democratization. In other words, it is interested in understanding the relationship between the press and politics in Taiwan and its relevance to an informed citizenship. Three areas are focused on: (1) what is the nature of state control over the press, (2) how have the boundaries of control shifted as the state is faced with a more vigorous civil society as well as the growing role of market forces, and (3) to what extent the press has played a role in the development of Taiwanese democracy.

The theoretical assumption underlying this study is that the press is a contested terrain in which social groups, especially those rich in political, economic and cultural capital participate for political ends. Furthermore, the linkage between the press and politics is not simply evident at a structural level, but also is affected by dynamic social situations. The long-term relationship of the press to politics can be enriched by adopting a system outlook (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1977). However, an examination of the political institutions' interaction with the press which takes place in the routine practice of journalism can better capture the essence of the changing nature of political influence (Schlesinger, 1990; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994). Therefore, this study proposes that a theoretical perspective which combines structural constraints and the dynamics of daily control is appropriate in a study of the changing political and

economic role of the press in Taiwan.

## ORGANIZATION OF THIS STUDY

This study is divided into seven substantive chapters which engage with the three research questions set out above. In Chapter Two, an overview of current western writing on state interaction with the press is presented, raising issues about the equality of access among citizens to information. Beyond this, the state is viewed as a potential threat to the press, because of its increased involvement in the practice of journalism through news management and censorship. In general, the debates on the political impact on the media have centred around official-press relations. Specifically, this chapter includes an important but largely neglected area focusing on dissenting groups and their interaction with the media.

Social and political contexts make possible a fuller appreciation of issues regarding media, politics and the problem of democracy. Therefore, Chapter Three provides a sketch review of confrontations between civil society and the state in Taiwan. The Nationalist Party, Kuo Min Tang (KMT) has colonized civil society through its mobilization of the political, economic and cultural state apparatuses since 1949 when it retreated from mainland China. Through sustained political opposition, civil society emerged in the late 1970s, and began to undermine the one-party system by the mid-1980s. Chapter Three demonstrates that only a

democratic civil society can expand the freedom of the press, and first and foremost sustain the democratic state.

By relating the history of politics and the press in Taiwan, the fourth chapter focuses on the press system in Taiwan examining the mainstream and alternative press. It gives a historical account focusing on the changes to the press system as it responded to the changing political, economic and social circumstances between 1949 and 1992. Control of the press under the KMT's authoritarian rule was facilitated by a number of emergency decrees. Furthermore, the party-state has intervened in the economics of the press through the licensing and patronage systems, and regulated journalistic performance through directly running the papers or through a system of interlocking directorships by means of instructions and warnings delivered at the negotiating table or by telephone. Nevertheless, the KMT control over the press began to decline by the early 1980s. This chapter shows how market forces played a dual role in liberalization of the press. On the one hand, economic interests encouraged the papers to override political directives. On the other hand, market forces also limited the range of the press, driving the small radical press out of the market.

In a discussion of media and democracy, Chapter Four also probes the contribution of the alternative media in Taiwan towards the process of democratization. Specifically, this chapter is concerned with the evolution of the alternative media and their relationship with the process of censorship.

In the next three chapters, the daily interaction between the press and politicians are scrutinized. An ethnographic approach is adopted to look at the ways in which the competing politicians make use of the press. Chapter Five gives an account of the use of ethnography in studying the reporting at politics. Chapter Six examines the party-state's interaction with the press. The party-state known as the Executive Yuan, the Presidency and the ruling party headquarters are considered most difficult to report due to the control of information. On these news beats, journalists are denied access to top administrators, instead, the information is released by the party-state public relations machine.

In Chapter Seven consideration is given to the Legislative Yuan which functions like the parliament in a representative democracy. Here the battle between competing groups, such as the political parties or lobbyists to win media attention is examined.

Chapter Eight evaluates how and to what extent the press in Taiwan has contributed towards the process of political democratization. This begins with conclusions which are drawn from an empirical investigation into the party-state intervention in the press through legal control or financial assistance or by routine news management. Also, the last chapter attempts to provide some suggestions for further research and speculates about how alternative media are likely to accelerate current trends toward media decentralization and democratization.

## METHODOLOGY

According to the theoretical approach mentioned previously, a multi-method research design is required to gather evidence. Apart from library research, the major empirical research used in this study is based on three projects. The first project deals with the evolution of the opposition movement in Taiwan. This project was conducted in 1990 in which the *Taiwan Provincial Assembly Record* and the *Legislative Yuan Record* from 1957 to 1988 were subject to a content analysis in order to gather evidence on the political message articulated by the opposition legislators. This evidence is cited in Chapter Three.

The second project, conducted between 1989 to 1990 aimed to examine how the Taiwanese newspapers portrayed the opposition groups. This project consisted of an analysis of the content of three newspapers from 1960 to 1988. Some of the evidence gathered in this project is cited in Chapter Four.

In the third project, an ethnographic approach was adopted to study the reporting of politics. Direct observation, interviews and a study of the content of seven newspapers was conducted between September and December 1992. The field work is reported in Chapter Five, and the findings are described in chapters Six and Seven.

## A NOTE ON PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In Taiwan, under martial law media democracy was seen as a research area which was politically sensitive. Consequently, there has been little intellectual effort devoted to the study of media, politics and democracy.

This study differs from previous studies on Taiwanese media and politics. The position adopted here is that the context of social and political change has to be taken into account to understand the political role of the press. Chen Sheue-yun (1991b), Cheng Jei-cheng (1988), Jacobs (1976) and Tien Hung-mao (1989) have attempted to map out the institutional configurations in which the press operates in terms of ownership and control; however, they fail to identify that the party-state has controlled the press at its foundation through the patronage system.

The contribution of alternative media in Taiwan's political development is under-researched. Berman (1992) and Lee Chin-chuan (1991) are two studies concerning the evolution of Taiwan's alternative media. It seems that the infrastructure of the alternative media is under-developed in their studies. More importantly, they only concentrate on the relationship between opposition magazines and state control. The newly developed electronic media which are used by the opposition to disseminate its political message are largely neglected.

Taking a view of the dialectical control of news production, this study considers not only how the ruling

party makes use of the press, but also how the opposition attempts to win media coverage. Surprisingly, there is almost no academic work in either Chinese or English devoted to examining the interaction between both the ruling party and the opposition with the press on a daily basis in Taiwan. As already mentioned, the lack of academic attention to the relations between media and politics at the system level is largely due to the legacy of censorship. By contrast, part of the reason that researchers neglect the importance of news management employed by either the party-state or the opposition to exert influence over the press lies in their research interest. Taiwan's academic community seems to focus on studying the content of political news, on the basis of which press-official relations are generalized. Almost none of these studies would involve an examination of press-official relations in the real world.

The press in Taiwan changed much between 1949 and 1992. There can be little doubt that the press in Taiwan has become a vital part of the political system. Therefore, the press can not be divorced from its links with political institutions. Any attempt to loosen the political control over the press still remains problematic. This study attempts to add to our knowledge about the state of citizenship, and the limits that exist on journalism and the implications for both in the changing society of Taiwan.

## CHAPTER 2

# A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE ON STATE AND PRESS RELATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a theoretical perspective, drawing upon current western writing in an attempt to apply it to the changing political economy of the press in Taiwan. It explores issues of media control and accessibility by reviewing the literature on the connections between the media, and the political and economic establishment in general, and interaction of the media and source organizations in particular. It also evaluates the consequences of the media-source entanglement on the possibilities for democratic communication.

The democratic role of the media is to serve society by cultivating people for participatory democracy. The media are central to the public sphere which has the function of supervision of the conduct of the state and civil society. The boundaries of public sphere are determined by the interaction between the state and civil society. The dynamics of the state and civil society are elucidated in the first section of this chapter in order to offer a full picture of how the democratic project which includes political liberalization and freedom of communication is



realized.

The emancipatory function of the media is bound up with how the media system is organized in a specific social and political context. The second part of this chapter looks at how the broad economic and political structures interact with the news media, and assesses their consequences for the freedom of media operation. At the system level, because the state and economy structure the news media through legal regulation of media and market censorship, to what extent do the media serve people with a special interest in the politics and economy, rather than all citizens in a democracy?

By challenging the viewpoint of structural restraints on the media, discussion of the possibility for the media to offer dissenting views shifts to the routine practice of news gathering and processing. At the situational level, media control and accessibility are informed by the daily interaction between the news workers and the various sources of information including the powerful and less powerful groups involved in the negotiation of news.

## THE STATE, THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND PUBLIC SPHERE

The conventional dichotomy of 'state' and 'civil society' is used as an analytical tool by political sociologists and political scientists to investigate the changing structures and dynamics of social and political systems.

The concepts of the state and civil society are

difficult to define precisely, since they are open to differing interpretations. In the liberal tradition, the state is associated with public affairs, and the civil society is linked to the private domain (Bobbio, 1989:22-23; Hall, 1984:20). Here, 'public' means everything which is directly administered by the state, while 'private' is defined as everything which is outside the control of the state and is left to the voluntary arrangements made by individuals. As a retreat from the public world, civil society consists of two private spheres: the family and free market economic transactions and social labour (Habermas, 1989:30). Under the principle of separation between public and private, the state should not interfere in the family where the personal, familial, emotional and sexual relations are domestically cultivated; and the market where economic transactions are self-regulated and self-articulated.

However, the boundaries between the state and civil society are constantly changing. Therefore, the public and private realms are not natural divisions, but socially and historically constructed. Within any specific social and historical conditions, civil society and the state are two moments which interact in a complex way. In other words, these two moments act separately but contiguously, distinctly but interdependently to combine the social system into a whole (Bobbio, 1989:43; Hall, 1984:23; Touraine, 1981:104). By taking this view, as the state colonizes civil society, there is also a reverse process by means of which civil society colonizes the state. Although an

asymmetry of power distribution between the state and the civil society is to be expected, it will never be an absolute domination of one over the other.

The notion of a state having permeated society has been widely discussed, although the manner and scale of the role which the state performs is historically specific. The state is undeniably a messy concept. The state is defined in terms either of its function, or what form it may take. The way in which the state interacts with civil society is depicted in terms of the state's functions. For instance, the capitalist is conceived as the organizer who occupies a crucial position between contradictory demands to safeguard capitalist accumulation and to secure political legitimation. The major task of the capitalist state is to create the conditions in which a certain way of life is possible. For instance, economically, the state must secure the conditions for reproduction of capital and maintain capitalist accumulation. Politically and judicially, the state must manage the crises created by specific forms of class struggle and to serve the general interest of all classes. Ideologically, the state must cultivate some sort of social, moral and cultural basics in order to maintain the unity and cohesion of social formation. Also, the state has to carry out the task of maintaining its own legitimacy (Frankel, 1982:257-258; Hall, 1978:205). Here, the state is treated as a materialized concentration of the class relations of a given society. In capitalist society, the state acts more or less in favour of the basic interests of

dominant classes, because state forms and activities function for modes of production (Poulantzas, 1974:27), and state elites are ideologically aligned with dominant classes (Miliband, 1989:20).

As mentioned above, the state inevitably interferes in the social, political and cultural relations of society. The power with which the state actually influences civil society is acquired legally. In other words, the state's rule must be responsible to and framed by law.

From an institutional point of view, the state is a set of administrative, policing and military organizations coordinated by an executive authority through which legitimate power is exercised within and over a given territory (Held, 1989:41; Skocpol, 1993:310). Legally, the state is considered as the sole monopolistic source of coercive power. Firstly, the state is endowed with sovereign power and entitled to rule within its own boundaries. Sovereign power is a type of absolute and enduring power, other centres of power must obtain a licence or permit from it in order to function and exist. Secondly, the state is endowed with the public power to defend itself from external attack or to prevent its own internal disintegration (Bobbio, 1989:61-75). Due to the fact that the state is founded predominantly on 'legal authority' and succeeds in consistently getting its orders obeyed, state actions, whether carried out by the judiciary or administrative apparatuses, can stretch across both public and private domains.

In addition to the legitimate monopoly of force, the presence of an administrative apparatus which has the function of taking care of the provision of public services is another necessary constitutive element of the modern state (Bobbio, 1989:61). The state enforces its authority and power through the administrative apparatus which embraces a wide range of functions. Politically, the state is armed with a repressive apparatus which includes the police, prisons, judiciary and civil service in order to settle conflicts of interest and repress offences against established law embodied in civil society.

Ideologically, the state may intervene in the ideological apparatus for providing the common interest and the supervision of morality. The State Ideological Apparatus includes the educational apparatus, the religious apparatus (the churches), the information apparatus (radio, TV, press), the cultural apparatus (cinema, theatre, publishing), the trade-union apparatus, the family and so on (Poulantzas, 1974:25). However, the manner and scope of state intervention in civil society are very much dependent on the historical conditions in which the state exists.

Economically, any state has to extract resources from society in order to support its coercive and administrative organizations. Therefore, the state has itself to link to the economic apparatus in order to sustain the process of accumulation and private appropriation of resources (Offe and Volker, 1982:253-254).

In capitalist democracies, the state strongly links to

individual members in civil society through its infrastructure. Although state officials are functionally and socially related to the dominant economic groups, the power of state officers is largely controlled by the electorate and by law. By contrast, in an authoritarian society, the state elites are unaccountable and empowered to undertake a wide range of actions without routine institutionalized negotiation with civil society groups. Furthermore, the machinery of the state is endowed with enormous capacity to coordinate and influence all areas of social life (Mann, 1993:316-317).

Apart from the interference of the state, civil society itself also has permeated the state. Theoretically, civil society is seen as the private realm and the domain of the life world, relatively separate and distinct from the state. Also, civil society comprises both the domain of economic relations and the intimate sphere of personal relation anchored in the institution of the conjugal family (Habermas, 1989:30). Civil society is a place where economic, social, ideological and religious actions are generated for maintaining a broad base of the state. But, equally important is the fact that civil society is also a place where new sources of legitimation and new sources of consensus can be generated in order to make the state more accountable (Bobbio, 1989:25). That is to say, it is within the private realm that individuals and various collectivities are able to participate in the articulation of their needs and to pressure the state into meeting their

needs and interests. If the state lacks the capacity for solving the conflict which occurs in the civil society or simply ignores the demands of that civil society, the state experiences a crisis of legitimacy.

By reviving the concept of civil society, this is seen in action terms as the domain of struggles, public spaces and political process. Much attention focuses upon emancipatory potential in the civil society. By taking this view, the public sphere which mediates the state and civil society is introduced. The public sphere is a space within which public opinion is crystallized, thereby putting the state in touch with the needs of society.

The public sphere sustained by a network of institutions including libraries, press, parties and parliament, is thus the arena in which individuals publicize their needs and debate over issues affecting themselves. The public sphere is distinct both from the public authority of the state and the private realm of civil society, because its concern is not with private interests but the public good. Theoretically, the public sphere embodies the idea of rational and universalistic politics (Habermas, 1989:73-74). Only when a community of citizens can equally and freely have access to and control over the public sphere can its political function be achieved. By participating in rational-critical discussion, the personal opinion of private individuals may evolve into public opinion. Through the vehicle of public opinion, the regulation of civil society and the conduct of the state are effectively

scrutinized.

The formation of collective actions or social movements allows publics to engage in deliberation and decision making in order to bring pressure to bear upon the state. A movement is a collective enterprise launched by individuals having a sense of their belonging to a wider collective and building their future by challenging the appropriation of production, of social resources, the logic of governance, and the interpretation, control and implementation of social knowledge exercised by the state (Giddens 1984:204; Touraine, 1981:81). The individuals who participate in a movement are no longer attributed to social classes, they are defined by a specific social condition and culture. In practice, the major task of movements in mobilization is to recruit enough people sharing a conflictual culture and a collective identity. Resource mobilization is a process of careful calculation and rational decision-making on the control and use of money, personnel and information (Turner, 1981:8-18).

A movement is developed within the society, its members are situated in the same social-historical contexts as their adversaries (Touraine, 1981:77; 1985:785). The development of movements is inevitably restrained by the social, economic and political structures under which the movements emerge. However, some form of political representation is necessary for the survival of any movement. For instance, the social and political environment is open enough to allow the existence of individual and collective identities.



Also, the movements must be able to maintain their autonomy, rather than become institutionalized themselves. Moreover, an open information system is necessary to circulate the messages carried by movements. The movement itself is the incarnation of public opinion, which in turn creates a public space between the state and the civil society. This space symbolizes the survival of societies and of cultural differences.

Apart from social movements, the news media are considered as another significant element of the public sphere. Ideally, the media play a potentially emancipatory role in society, because they have a potential influence over the political establishment by the formation of a discursive public sphere. According to the political function of the public sphere, the media must be open to all members of society and provide the rational discourse through which citizens are cultivated to concern and understand public affairs and to collectively pursue the public good (Habermas, 1989:29-31; Park, 1940:684). Since all private people are guaranteed to take part in rational-critical debate by the free and equal use of the news media, a critical consensus and a coherent opinion are effectively crystallized.

In sum, the function of public opinion can be grasped only in relation to the development of civil society and the state in any specific historical situation. The dynamics of public opinion channelled through social movements, mass media, unions, or political parties are the means by which

civil society calls the state to account. Without public opinion, civil society loses its typical function; at the extreme civil society is absorbed into the state and saturated with official opinion. Therefore, the boundaries of public opinion which are generated by social movements and the mass media in the pursuit of public interest influence the expansion and democratization of civil society.

## MEDIA CONTROL AND ACCESSIBILITY

In contemporary societies the media have become a major institution of power. In serving democracy, the media are expected to have substantial independent resources which allow them to become an important institution of power. The fact that the media have been tightly interwoven with the major institutions of power,--government and economy, suggests that this media function in democracy has become questionable.

As elaborated above, the news media serve democracy by creating an undistorted communicative situation within which citizens are cultivated to be concerned about and understand public affairs in order to collectively pursue the public good (Park, 1940:684). Put differently, a critical consensus is achieved, the news media follow the rule of rational discourse through which divergent and sufficient political views are subject to open discussion, and all individual citizens are guaranteed to gain access to the

media freely and equally (Habermas, 1989:73-74).

Ideally, the media are regarded as a necessary safeguard in a democratic society. The media offer a space for the formation and articulation of public rational-critical opinion which makes established power accountable to the individual. To fulfil this function, the media must to be open to all and free from domination.

However, this ideal situation of communication has been undermined by an increase of state intervention and market control over the media. From the political point of view, the capitalist state becomes an active and major participant in the development of an advanced capitalist society, including those aspects of society structured and shaped by political institutions (Hall, 1978:212-215; Offe and Volker, 1982:253-254). In the meantime, the state also becomes increasingly assertive in the field of political communication. For instance, apart from the old techniques such as the system of licensing and state censorship, the new strategies of public relations and opinion management are widely adopted by the state to influence the market on which the media rely on for news production (Habermas, 1989:196-197; Keane, 1992:19-21). Under such circumstances, the media have been criticized for failing to provide sites for public participation, because they generate a kind of quasi public opinion, rather than a critical consensus.

From the economic point of view, market competition produces market censorship that has undermined the practice of the news media in public life. Unrestrained market

competition facilitates the exchange of opinion among those who are financially powerful. Through the practice of public relations and advertising, powerful interest groups employ the media effectively and regularly and thus distract the media from their pursuit of the general critical public good. Furthermore, the integration of mass entertainment with advertising has damaged the existence of the critical consensus that the media once provided. To some extent, the commercial media have devoted themselves to cultivating a passive spectatorship which distracts the private individuals from political action (Habermas, 1989:193-195).

In summary, control and accessibility of the news media are determined by the political and economic contexts within which the media operate. The relations between the media and the state and economic structure have consequences for the range of ideas available in the public arena. First, state intervention in the media is seen as threatening to narrow the field of public discourse; however, state intervention is also a necessary evil to liberate the media from market censorship. Secondly, the economic structure of the media restricts the field of public discourse by promoting certain commercially driven ideas over others.

### **1. A Structural View of State, Economic and Media Relations**

Political-economy approaches to media studies which involve an examination of the complex connections between political

and economic power and the media may offer an explanation of how the public sphere is limited or liberated within these boundaries of control.

#### (1) Control through Political Power

The political economy perspective primarily concentrates on the impact of the economy on the media, with a consequent neglect of political and legal determinants on news production. In general, the impact of the political establishment (designated as the state, the government, political parties) upon journalism is both through legal regulation of the media and informal control over news production. The state, the government and the political parties may exercise their power over the news media by direct control over ownership. Moreover, the political establishment may control the media either through management by representation on the media's policy-making bodies or by imposing informal strategies on the media (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1977:175-176). It is true that the press-party parallelism exists in both the authoritarian countries and democratic countries. Press partisanship is evident in the authoritarian countries, because the ruling party is involved in media ownership. By contrast, in democratic countries, the fact is that press partisanship does exist, although the media are not directly controlled by political parties or the government. The evidence that the press is biased in favour of certain political parties

is based on a correspondence between the editorial policies of newspaper and party lines, and given the party affiliations of readers.

First and foremost, formal legal restraints on the media are the most important factor in shaping the structure and the content of the media. The notion of freedom of communication is determined by the constitution and legislation of every country. Legal constraints derive from rules and regulations which define the rights and obligations of the news media.

Regulation has become a new institution of social control mediated through the state. In theory, regulation is conceived of as a form of control which legally provides the executive and judicial arms of the state with powers to intervene in the private realm (Horwitz, 1989:42). To some extent, apart from the laws, regulation also consists of the rules which are implemented and made by some government bodies (Michael, 1990:43). The scope and manner of regulation needs to address the following questions: (1) the range of operation and content which are subject to regulation; (2) the degree of specificity in regulation; (3) who carries out the regulation and to what extent this control system is used (Blumler and Gurevitch, 1975:174-175).

In general, according to most systems of regulation, the government is empowered to intervene in the ownership and content of the media (Michael, 1990:43). At first, the state is authorized to decide on who is allowed, forbidden

or required to communicate information. In terms of ownership, licenced monopolies are seen as a traditional method of government regulation. According to this system of licensing, the government is authorized to create a body of subsidiary legislation to define the scope of licences. Moreover, the government is able to decide between rival claimants for licenses, to approve and renew permits.

Secondly, the state is armed with laws which decide on what kinds of information are allowed to be transmitted. Broadly speaking, content censorship normally conducted by the state is by means of prior restraint and post-publication censorship (Keane, 1991:96). Strategies taken by the state against the media prior to publication include the friendly chat, gentleman's agreement, requests or warnings and the issuing of mandatory guidelines. Post-publication censorship operates from the time of the initial publication of material to its dissemination. The confiscation of publications and the printing machine are normal practices. It may also lead to the closing down of the media organizations and legal action being taken against the communicators.

Legal constraints imposed by the government on the media are wedded to the historical and political circumstances surrounding them. The law relating to the media varies greatly from one nation to another and from time to time within the same country. For instance, in the Eastern European countries, the national media were largely interwoven with the Marxist-Leninist party and functioned as

a conduit for party definitions of reality (Downing, 1984:11-15; Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1963:121-130). Control of the press under these regimes was regulated by specific laws. In the case of China and the Eastern Bloc, formal legal restraints on the media have been explicit. Freedom of the press in these countries was established in constitutions and special press laws (Jakubowicz, 1990:50). In the United States with its First Amendment tradition, the media, especially the press, enjoy rights against interference from the state. Nevertheless, the press must respect values protected by the legal system. Furthermore, press laws are usually formulated and are limited to an ordering framework that legitimates state intervention in the media in an attempt to sustain a variety of press markets and eventually to ensure freedom of the press.

In the authoritarian or communist states, the media serve more or less directly as agents of state social control. Therefore, state assistance is a necessary support for the media to carry out this task (Jakubowicz, 1990:49-50). In the capitalist and democratic societies, the state will only interfere where there is a problem of monopolistic power.

As already mentioned, the state has the function of absorbing the costs of capital and ameliorating the harmful effects of capitalism in a capitalist and democratic society (Horwitz, 1989:41-42; Offe and Volker, 1982:253-254). Along the same lines, state intervention in the economics of the press is justified. Since the press market which once was



conceived as a free marketplace of ideas has been hampered by economic power, the state is allowed to intervene in the press to ensure it is able to provide all citizens with the same quality of information (Picard, 1985a; Sparks, 1992:47-50).

For example, in Western Europe, especially in the Nordic region, the state has played an active role in the protection of a financially and culturally weak press from competition in order to sustain the health of the newspaper industry. In these countries, the manner of state intervention in the economics of the press include some of the following: (1) funds to help train journalists, (2) the provision of aid and information to newspapers by government public information personnel, (3) postal rate reductions, telecommunications advantages and exemptions from sales taxes and profits are introduced to help the press reduce operation costs, and (4) the provision of funds including subsidies, loans and grants to help cover newspapers' operating expenses (Picard, 1985a:101-108; 1985b).

In practice, an increase of state involvement in the media, especially the press where once there had been little governmental interference, is still regarded as a potentially dangerous aspect of political influence on the media. With a growing awareness that potential abuses of state power over private media markets exist, state media intervention must be both open and accountable (Keane, 1992:241).

## (2) Control through Economic Power

Traditionally, the media operating in the free market are seen as a safeguard against state interference. In a pluralistic society, commercial media serve as primary means of communication for citizens. However, in the face of the accumulation of economic power in the media market, such as the growth of monopoly control, the concentration of ownership and the need to pursue and secure a share of the audience market, a media system dominated by private ownership is no guarantee of providing the diversity of information that is essential for effective citizenship.

### 2.1 The Structure of Ownership

Over the last two decades, newspaper proprietorship has become both more concentrated and more closely integrated with core segments of economic and financial capital (Bagdikian, 1985:100; Curran, 1978:73; Murdock, 1982:140). Three main types of interlocking relationships between the media and economic sectors are found, and each of these three types fulfil a particular function (Murdock, 1980:51; 1990:4-5). For example, the media which connect to financial services, such as banks and insurance companies offer sources of advice and provide channels for the negotiation of insurance, loans etc. on favourable terms. Also, the media which link to suppliers, competitors and others in the immediate business environment exert influence

on the formation of corporate financial policy. Moreover, since the media are integrated into the wider network of monopoly capital, they are unlikely to avoid playing a role in generating both solidarity and a common consciousness among the various segments.

Apart from a narrow and uniform ownership of the media, it seems that the prevailing market dynamics operate in favour of the existing media and against newcomers gaining entry into the market (Murdock, 1980:59). Generally, the established media have large financial resources and accumulated expertise that enable them to effectively cope with the changes in the market. More importantly, the established media have already an established position in the market, and financial consolidation may enable them to buy out rivals at above the market rate. As for the disadvantaged groups, the chances of survival in the marketplace can be limited. Firstly, the level of investment required to enter the market can be too high and too risky for many groups (Curran, 1978:104). Secondly, the advertisers tend to place advertising with established newspapers rather than with newcomers, therefore, economic survival of newcomers is fragile (Sparks, 1992a:45). Since the dynamic inequalities inherent in competition between weak and strong media is unlikely to be neutralized, the media environment necessarily diminishes the availability of new ideas in the marketplace.

## 2.2 Advertising Control

Another important structural constraint which limits the operation of the media derives from the dynamics of supply and demand in the commercial market (Murdock, 1982:124). Like all enterprises in a capitalist economy, the media are profit-making enterprises that have significantly changed the form and content of the media (Bagdikian, 1985:104).

The commercial media not only need to produce information, but also have to ensure this information is marketable and sellable. As a consequence, profit and advertising are the fundamental and intractable forces which shape the nature of media product either in its form and content.

Competition for advertising patronage has significantly narrowed down the range of ideas in the media (Bagdikian, 1985:104). Since the media sell their audiences to advertisers, the media have to narrow the desired audience for the advertisers by controlling the nature of their content. In this way, the media product is determined by the advertisers who represent the capitalist groups, rather than the consumers those who express their demands in a free marketplace.

In the United Kingdom, the development of the commercial press has resulted in two separate markets: the quality press and the tabloid press. The quality papers which depend on part on advertising revenues to finance their publications tend to attract affluent minorities by

providing cultural and political information while paying little attention to the poor. By contrast, the tabloid papers which rely on the cover price for their main revenues tend to focus on non-informational content in order to maximize the size of audience. Consequently, those readers who numerically are not large enough for the mass advertisers and yet are not wealthy enough to interest the luxury advertisers are denied access to the papers (Sparks, 1992a:40-42).

One common strategy which has been adopted by the new media competing for a steadily shrinking market against a background of rapidly increasing costs, is to broaden their circulation by appealing to the widest possible cross-section of readership. By so doing, more space is given over to content with a common denominator to increase the circulation. For instance, under this market pressure, the left media have altered their content to be depoliticalized and deradicalized in an attempt to serve large audiences for advertisers (Curran, 1980:102-104). More importantly, the proportion of space devoted to human interest material has increased at the expense of public affairs coverage (Curran, 1991a:116). Much media attention has been concentrated on some areas of political life and consumption, such as health, fashion, leisure, personal relations, holidays and so on (Murdock, 1980:59). Furthermore, in news reporting current events are portrayed as a matter of recency and speed. Therefore, the news is an account seemingly without a process and history which are crucial elements in the

development of a critical consensus for citizenship (Curran, 1978:74). In addition, intense market competition has changed the character of television news substantially. For instance, in America, television evening news has a greater attention on ordinary people's health and family life, rather than focusing on people in politics. Stories on crime, heroism or tragedy still are highlighted in news bulletins. The dramatic change in journalistic practice is that the journalist no longer presents himself or herself as a neutral person but increasingly shares the emotions of the audience (Hallin, 1992:22).

### 2.3 Control through Interlocking Directorships

Media control and accessibility is not merely a structural phenomenon related to economic and political structures. It is also that power elites, particularly those in the realms of government and the economy are allowed to gain access to the daily operation of news media in a way that ordinary citizens do not. The people who are leading members of political or economic power blocs also exert influence on the media on a daily basis by means of interlocking directorships: people who are owners of media corporations, journalistic executives and creative communicators.

The key individuals and groups of news media proprietors share the same interests and general outlook as the dominant blocs within the capitalist class. Therefore, the capitalist class may interfere with media practice by

having interlocking directorates with the people who own the media or hold high ranking positions in the media. For instance, media proprietors are in constant contact with the business community through sharing a similar social background, education, circle of friends, and way of life. The elites in the realms of media and economics share a cluster of common values and perspectives (Dreier, 1983:443-448; Murdock, 1980:45; 1982:124).

Furthermore, the owners of the media have property rights to control their own media and output, either by intervening in day to day operations, or by establishing general goals and appointing staff to implement them (Murdock, 1980:43-45). In reality, press owners may intervene in the operation of their own papers for promoting their private interest (Golding and Murdock, 1992:23). Apart from exercising power over their own media, owners are able to control competitors. In general, the major moguls have advantages in establishing the rules for the competitive game. Meanwhile, they have the economic power to drive out the small and weak competitors in the marketplace by launching expensive campaigns, offering discounts to advertisers or buying up key personnel (Golding and Murdock, 1992:24).

It is equally true that advertisers can exert power to censor the news media in their favour. For instance, American media were silent about the medical evidence on tobacco use in order to protect a major advertiser (Bagdikian, 1985:107). In the United Kingdom, examples

demonstrated that advertisers intervene in television production in order to get their message into the programmes themselves. Common tactics adopted by advertisers include some of the following: sponsoring a sporting or cultural event for television in return for screen credits, financing original programme production, paying to have products displayed or used naturally in a feature film or television drama and so on (Murdock, 1992a:36-37; 1992b: 205-207).

Generally, the assumption of a relationship between patterns of control and patterns of content is confirmed by the data which derives from the analysis of media content, rather than examining the concrete activities which are performed to exert influence on the media practice (Garnham, 1990:6-9; Murdock, 1980:42; 1982:144-148). News media proprietors are integrated into social or political elites and usually adopt a similar ideological position. The opportunities of gaining access to the media are largely given to dominant groups through which they have a strong influence on the shaping of political, economic and social reality. For example, news is predominantly about the actions and opinions of political elites, rather than financial and industrial elites (Murdock, 1980:61). Furthermore, news media endorse the ideology that legitimates the dominance of certain groups as well as ignoring, discrediting, marginalizing or problematizing the opinions or actions of non-dominant groups. Therefore, the media attempt to reinforce political and social norms by mobilizing public to marginalize radical groups. For



instance, in coverage of industrial news, the structural position between capital and labour is regularly transformed into a simple political confrontation between 'them' and 'us', citizens versus bureaucracy, the moderate majority versus the militant minority, the law-abiding versus the deviant (Murdock, 1982:147). Also, taking a particular view of social structure and process, the media tend to transform structural inequalities into individual difference (Curran, 1978:74). As a consequence, the media fail to reflect the diversity of ideas in the society.

It is true that the media are strongly interwoven with different key social institutions. It is equally true that the consequences of these relationships with both the state and the economic have significantly eroded the media's commitment to provide all citizens with high quality of impartial information. However, neither the market nor the state are uniform or omnipotent structures. Moreover, an examination of news content is not sufficient to explain the logic of determination or mediation between market and state censorship and diversity of ideas. Therefore, in understanding the fact that the media serve established power, not just in its structural features, a greater attention to the interaction of sources and media in the social organization of news work and actual practices of creating the news product is necessary.

## 2. The Dialectic of Control of Source-Media Relations

A theory of news production cannot be properly developed unless the notion of the dialectic of control is taken into account. The news making processes either within or between organizations are connected with the organization of power. By taking this view, it is in the relationships between the powerful and less powerful members of society designated as the state and the civil society, the state and the media, news organizations and news sources, even journalists and editors and newswriters and publishers etc., that negotiated control over the definition of social reality takes place.

The argument that the news media are the extended social relations of the ruling apparatus is based on the analysis of strategies and perspectives used by the news media for the gathering of news, or the ability of power elites in the realms of government and the economy to exert influence on journalistic performance.

### (1) Media Dependence on Authoritative Sources

A stream of studies in source-media relations tends to concentrate on the viewpoint of news organizations. Due to the fact that the news media are spatio-temporally linked to the bureaucratic routines of legitimate authorities, news is a potentially important instrument for government agencies in the shaping of public opinion.

Drawing on phenomenological, ethnomethodological and

symbolic interactionalist perspectives, Fishman (1980, 1981, 1982), Lester (1980), Molotch and Lester (1974a, 1974b), and Tuchman (1972, 1973, 1978, 1982) propose that news is constructed reality, and it is pre-constituted by the powerful institutions.

At first, news is regarded neither as a reflection nor as a distortion of reality. Within this paradigm, reality does not exist by itself, but it is constituted through the process of news gathering or news production. Therefore, the news making process is perceived as a series of activities by which the newswriters define social events, rather than merely record them. For instance, when newswriters are faced with events, they immediately invoke routines in order to handle these happenings. That is, newswriters transform happenings into a meaningful structure that has potential as a news event. Also, such raw material should be capable of being subjected to routine processing and dissemination. The source organizations which routinely provide events for newswriters to report on also operate in the same way.

Within this research paradigm, empirical studies involving an examination of the routine activities of news gathering demonstrate that the news organizations are spatio-temporally constrained by their relations to legitimate bureaucracies. Since the media are reliant on the powerful and legitimate institutions for raw materials to produce the news, the bureaucratically created and ideologically embedded versions of news are easier to get

across to the public. Therefore, they conclude that the news media reinforce official versions.

### 1.1 The Organizational Level

As mentioned previously, news organizations are embedded in an environment within which they interact with other institutions. The concepts of 'the news net' and 'the news beat' are used to explain how the rhythm of newsmaking is embedded at the intersection of news organizations and legitimate institutions.

Theoretically, a news net is a special kind of spatio-temporal arrangement adopted by the news organization to plan the use of both human and physical resources and so control the flow of work (Tuchman, 1978:25; 1982:6). In the business of newsmaking, the news organization schedules its work in time and space by administering a news net to identify social phenomena and to organize elements of everyday occurrences as news. The news net imposed by the news organization to recognize news events inevitably constrains news production, despite the private intention of the individual newswriters.

By studying the anchoring of the news net in time, the news organizations are found to have a close relationship with political and economic institutions. For instance, the time-rhythms between news organizations and legitimate institutions are so compatible that the framing of news is subservient to the industrialization of time (Tuchman,

1982:7; 1983:334). Furthermore, news organizations have a large amount of personnel and physical resources available to cover the stories which happen during business hours. Therefore, the occurrences which take place during normal business hours, 9 AM to 6 PM during weekdays possess a greater potentiality to become news.

But, Tuchman (1983:335) admits that the media may possess some degree of autonomy, especially when they have to work out a frame for an unexpected occurrence. Under such circumstances, news organizations have to suspend previous frames, because they no longer are adequate to order new experiences. Moreover, in real situations more than one definition of time is always available. Therefore, many organizations make attempts to justify and to claim that their definitions of time are applicable.

For the purpose of economic investment, news organizations recognize news events through the anchoring of the news net in space. Generally, the news organizations wed themselves to specifically territorial and institutional beats including civic, state, national or international sites, through which a huge amount of information conceived of having a significant consequence for the public use is efficiently gathered.

By examining the scheduling structures of news organizations, the evidence shows that this is closely connected to the institutional structures of the powerful, such as government agencies and other legitimate social and political institutions (Tuchman, 1982:6). For instance,

news organizations allocate a vast majority of resources to cover the news which occurs at those institutional locations indicated above, but not at other sites. In general, government agencies are targeted, because government business is assumed to be significantly influential on ordinary people's daily lives. Moreover, newswriters have a tendency to work with legitimate institutions, because their information is stored in a form that is readily accessible in the light of their scarce resources (Tuchman,1978). The high degree of predictability of prescheduled activities are very often grounded in bureaucratic settings. Since the legitimated social and political institutions are identified as a reliable and steady source of news, the news organizations are assumed to provide an image of reality which favours the status quo.

Taking a similar view, Fishman (1980,1981,1982) and Roshco (1975:67) suggest that the official point of view is reinforced by news beat reporting. The source organizations such as government agencies organize a social world in which reporters work. This bureaucratically structured arrangement inevitably restricts journalistic conduct. A news beat is defined either by geography or by the subject matter which a reporter is assigned to cover and to work with their sources. They argue that when newswriters face situations which have no clear beginning or end, they usually adopt an idealized 'phase structure', that is break down the situations into discrete steps. The phase structure is created by the source organizations to

transform complex occurrences into procedurally defined events. However, such bureaucratic phase structures are significantly taken by newswriters as a criterion of newsworthiness. For instance, by covering crime news, journalists usually obtain crime incidents from law enforcement agencies, such as the police (Fishman, 1981:107-108). Furthermore, on the police and court beats, crime news is organized through bureaucratic procedures, each beginning with an arrest and ending with sentencing (Fishman, 1980:54-63). Moreover, in City Hall and County government, methods used by newswriters to view the newsworthiness of occurrences are based on schemes of interpretation which originate from and are used by those institutions. Consequently, non-events which take place outside the formal procedures are treated as illegitimate occurrences (Fishman, 1982:231-235). Therefore, routine news legitimates the existing political order by disseminating bureaucratic definitions of the world and filtering out troublesome perceptions of events. Because newswriters are seduced by the social arrangements of source organizations, they are deprived of seeing a different or contradictory reality.

In sum, the framing of news is subservient to the rhythms of source organizations, especially those of the legitimate agencies. Therefore, news can be viewed as a practical and political accomplishment. If news reflects anything, it mainly reflects the practice of the reporters on the beat, because the news media spatio-temporally rely

on the government agencies and legitimate authorities for information, power elites in the realm of government can more easily gain access to the media than other less powerful groups in society.

## 1.2 The Individual Level

The power of the authorities is inherent in the gathering of news. The content of much news is generated as a by-product of the exercise of authority.

In the process of fact-finding, newswriters engage with the practical rather than theoretical activities that make sense of the world. In science, the problem of facticity is embedded in the process of verification and replication. In news, verification of facts is both a political and a professional accomplishment (Park, 1940:699; Roshco, 1975; Tuchman, 1978). Unlike in science where knowledge is the result of systematic investigation, news is a form of knowledge that the newswriters depend upon news sources for transposing into content.

In practice, two strategies are adopted by newswriters to build up facticity (Tuchman, 1978:88-89). In the first place, newswriters use more facts to validate an alleged source fact. That is, newswriters accumulate facts, then constitute a web of facticity by establishing cross-references. In the second place, newswriters attempt to intermesh fact and source, especially regarding any facts that are unable to be verified in a short period of time.



Basically, the identification of the source is a matter of convention. During the process of the gathering of news, newswriters consistently choose authoritative sources over other potential sources, such as quasi-legitimate sources or average citizens. Newswriters believe that some people especially in positions of authority, offer information that is more accurate, because they have more facts at their disposal (Tuchman, 1978:93), or they control a flow of information from one part of a social network to another (Gans, 1979:130-131; Roshco, 1975:62; Sigal, 1986:20). Furthermore, newswriters assume that in legitimate organizations information is more accurate, because they are socially and politically significant constituents (Tuchman, 1978:93), or information there is more accessible, because it has been in a form ready for transcription (Murphy, 1978:178; Sigal, 1986:178).

However, if the individual becomes a news source, he or she has to make contact with newswriters and prove his or her reliability as a news source (Murphy, 1978:117; Tuchman, 1978:93). Most routine events are deliberately promoted by political or bureaucratic sources. To accomplish routine events, the event needs news promoters (political or bureaucratic sources) and news assemblers (newswriters) both being complementary with each other (Molotch and Lester, 1974a, 1974b). Therefore, the news media routinely carry stories that are defined by the institutionalized power as public events.

## (2) The Dynamics of Media and News Sources

In contrast to the previous perspectives paying much attention to the newswriters gaining access to the authorities sources, some more recently developed approaches focus on how the authorities deliberately exploit the news media for making publicity. By taking this view, the power relations between the news media and the powerful or less powerful source organizations are conceived of as a kind of dialectic of control, rather than just focusing upon the actions of the media or of the source per se. Put differently, news production is a contestable field within which sources, including the powerful and less powerful organizations, are able to have access to the media to construct their preferred meaning and to promote news events for public use (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989; Schlesinger, 1990; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994; Schlesinger, Tumber and Murdock, 1991).

Much attention has highlighted the access government enjoys to the news media, at the expense of perspectives and media strategies adopted by the less powerful groups (Schlesinger, 1990:76). For example, this is shown in studies of reporter-source relations in news reporting surrounding election campaigns (Gurevitch and Blumler, 1982), the criminal justice field (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989; Schlesinger and Tumber, 1994; Schlesinger, Tumber and Murdock, 1991), legislature (Cook, 1989; Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989), local government (Murphy, 1978) and

the state (Bruce, 1992; Hess, 1984; Keane, 1992; Mancini, 1991; Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliott, 1983; Sigal, 1973; Tiffen, 1989).

### 1.1 Official Sources

Recently, the fact that modern state intervention in the media by means of information management and public relations practice have received a much greater emphasis.

The state is not only a regulator of the media, it is itself a communicator. Therefore, in addition to old tactics, such as secrecy or censorship imposed by state authorities or government agencies on the media, new techniques of information management including public relations practice and image making have been regularly exercised by the state or government agencies to promote their own views of the development of policy and ensure the policy is properly understood and supported (Bruce, 1992; Hess, 1984; Keane, 1992; Schlesinger, 1991; Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliott, 1983). To some extent, state intervention in defining and regulating political information is seen as a new source of power which is neither accountable to the legislature, nor subject to the rule of law (Keane, 1991:95). Therefore, state mechanisms for powerfully regulating the information that the media rely on for their news production are considered harmful to the media's position in a democratic society.

### 1.1.1 Publicity Activities

The exercise of public relations is a pervasive practice of all modern organizations to exploit their use of the media. Strategies and perspectives of public relations adopted by the government toward reporters have become more sophisticated and regular. As a matter of fact, government agencies have actively devoted an enormous amount of effort and resources, in an effort to manage information in order to promote public policy, to maintain a public image and to keep hidden private conduct. With an intention to shape public opinion, government agencies attempt to control the news in an organized and self-conscious way.

The exercise of public relations is a highly controlled and calculated endeavour. Every organization inevitably transforms occurrences into verbal or written forms according to its own political or organizational purposes in order to communicate with the outside world (Smith, 1984:59). For instance, a state press office is a system which is a spatio-temporal arrangement set up by a government agency to make public its activities. Instead of permitting reporters to make contact with public officials directly inside the agency, the press office actively provides the media with suitable information to construct a news story.

Bruce (1992), Gandy (1982), Hess (1984) and Keane (1992) indicate that this device of information subsidy and management launched by the press offices of government

results in carefully planned and highly controlled accounts. Generally, under the orchestration of the press office, media rooms are organized within organizations, interviews are consolidated into news conferences or briefings, more routine material is distributed, even transportation and accommodation for news gathering are arranged. For example, the White House has routinely used a variety of information channels including press releases and pseudo-events, the presidential press conference or the daily briefings to stage news events (Gandy, 1982:74; Hess, 1984:50-51). Ultimately, the White House serves up what the reporters want, and also deprives the reporters of having the opportunities to work on the material for themselves.

The press conference is a typically formal information channel used by government agencies to deliver their message to the public. The press conference is a carefully planned account within which statements are tightly structured; questions are pre-planned; specific topics may not be given priority; certain reporters may be accredited and follow-up questions may not be allowed (Bruce, 1992:169-171; Keane, 1992:19-21). Furthermore, the supplementary documents and press kits offered by government agencies are designed as a package of knowledge in which certain primary facts, suitable values, summaries of speeches with quotable quotes from the spokespersons are included in order to limit the work for a reporter (Hess, 1984:49; Murphy, 1978:178-179).

More frequently, information subsidies from news sources are delivered in the form of briefings and leaks.

The form of briefings is a special design which allows participants, including the sources and the journalist, more freedom in the exchange of information. However the sources have the authority to decide the rules of games for the journalists. The rules played in the briefing including: (1) quotes being off-the-record (unable to identify the source); (2) on-the-record (the speaker is identified); (3) background (the position and status of source is described, but no specific source can be identified; and (4) deep background (no attribution is allowed) (Hess, 1984:119; Keane, 1992:20). A leak is the unauthorized release of confidential information initiated by the source to manipulate public opinion. The anonymity of the source of information and obscuring the fact are two tactics that make a leak possible (Sigal, 1973:144; Tiffen, 1989:96-97).

Therefore, media reporting based on leaks or informal briefings is unattributable. Since the sources of both a leak and off-the-record briefings are disguised, they are not only free from public demands of individuals taking responsibility for the information they claim, but also have a greater opportunity of pursuing these individuals' private goals. Meanwhile, to some extent, the reporters enter into some kind of exchange, trading part of their own professional autonomy for access to information that will help them carry out their news-gathering tasks. However, following the rules laid down by the authorities, this process casts doubt on the media's credibility as an impartial and objective institution.

The creation of a pseudo-event is another kind of method used by public relations experts in government agencies to promote publicity. Theoretically, pseudo-events refer to happenings which are carefully designed and created for the immediate purpose of being reported (Bruce, 1992:152; Schudson, 1978:170). Therefore, the contents and the timetables of these events are consciously planned to meet the needs of news media.

The authorities' influence over the media goes far beyond their ability to stage events and plant favourable stories, the state authorities have ways of retaliating against unfavourable coverage. For instance, in the case of a White House press release, tactics used against awkward reporters include some of the following: denying interviews, withholding access to information, giving exclusive information to favoured reporters and misleading information to disfavoured ones, and awarding prestigious government positions to especially cooperative newswriters. On some occasions, informal procedures are taken by top government officials, including the President himself, to express their dissatisfaction with certain aspects of news coverage. For instance, they telephone news executives to convey strongly worded 'suggestions' and to complain about particular reporters and stories (Parenti, 1993:64-65).

#### 1.1.2 Censoring Activities

In addition to making publicity, the state may also impose

censorship on the media to limit political debate on an issue which poses an obvious threat to national security. The evoking of national security by the state exerts powerful control over media reporting. The media's right to challenge official definitions of national security and national interest are undermined, and the media's independence from government agencies and their ability to provide relevant information for citizenship are questioned.

When the authorities are faced with a state of crisis, a form of regulation which is secretive and deceptive is used to control the media. In the name of national security, well organized political censorship in accordance with specific political ends, is conducted as a legitimate measure to regulate the information pertaining to the crisis (Keane, 1991:95-100).

Examples of political censorship imposed by government agencies in wartime and peace time are well documented, although in peace time, the modes of control are weaker and yet more subtle. For instance, during the Falklands War and the Gulf War, information was subject to direct censorship. In the Falklands crisis, the movement and communication of journalists covering the war was completely controlled by the armed forces (Harris,1983). As for the Gulf War, the reporters were reliant on the information released by the Pentagon, the White House and other allied powers. As a consequence, the news especially on television, simply promoted the policies of the United States government and military, while strengthening the power of the National



Security State (Kellner, 1992:52-55).

In normal periods, the practice of information management enacted by the authorities results in more complex news management, rather than overt censorship. In the cases of specific British crises, such as a siege, or the kidnapping and hostage taking which occurred during the 1970s, the modes of control and pressure imposed by the political establishment on the media are much more complicated. Some common practices were adopted by the authorities in the name of effective security to control the news. First, a gentleman's agreement was established between the media and government officials to control and manage the information with the purpose of securing the lives of victims. Moreover, when publicity might endanger hostages' lives, a news blackout was implemented. Under such circumstances, usually a regular daily briefing meeting was offered to secure the media's compliance. Finally, faced with the issues concerning national security matters, voluntary self-censorship and self-restraint of the media was requested in order to assist the state to preserve order (Schlesinger, 1990:37-39; Schlesinger, Murdock and Elliott, 1983:113-119).

The Northern Ireland case is another example of the British way of censorship. In this case, direct bans have been imposed by British government on the message delivered by the terrorists. For instance, television interviews with Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Irish National Liberation Front (INLA) are banned in accordance with the Prevention of

Terrorism Act which has been in effect since 1974 (Murdock, 1991:108). The Northern Ireland case also shows that the British army and the police use many techniques to restrict the activities of newswriters within given boundaries (Curtis, 1984:248-254). For instance, well organized facilities trips were offered to reporters and supplementary information packages were attached.

Furthermore, apart from routinely making contact with the media and suggesting suitable stories for newswriters, legal action was occasionally taken against reporters, and any kind of contact with terrorists could put newswriters in danger of prosecution.

## 1.2 Non-official Sources

According to the notion of a dialectic of control, the powerful or less powerful sources are able to mobilize media resources to advance their specific political interests. Although both powerful and less powerful sources try to extend their influence with the media, the less powerful sources usually do not have established legitimacy in gaining access to mainstream media in order to satisfy their political agenda. For instance, all kinds of social movements carry their own message through unique channels to make their society hear their voices. Despite having access to the mainstream media, the movements are more likely to gain greater visibility by marching on the street, by lobbying and negotiating with the political and economic

establishment and by delivering messages through campaigns, educational programmes and more importantly through alternative media (Offe, 1985:829).

It is not surprising that the media have been viewed as a powerful institution through which their intended meaning can be widely disseminated to the public. Various groups always compete for media access in order to gain greater visibility, win more adherents, and create a groundswell of public opinion change. Therefore, news production must always be conceived as a contestable field in which groups with unequal symbolic and material positions are in competition for the mobilization of intended meanings.

As has been mentioned, for a comprehensive understanding of news production, the nature and extent of strategic actions conducted by both the powerful and less powerful source organizations should be equally taken into consideration. However, the research areas associated with the less powerful groups who devote resources to promoting an oppositional and alternative view through the media has been under-developed. There has been little systematic study of their production processes or an examination of how and why the perspectives of less powerful sources can appear in the news media. In general, most of the studies concerning the relations between the less powerful groups and the media often involve an analysis of news content, rather than an examination of concrete media strategies which the less powerful groups carry in their approach to the media. Evidence derived from studies of news coverage

indicates that youth (Fowler and Kress, 1979), immigrants (van Dijk, 1988), unions (Morley, 1981), terrorists (Elliott, Murdock and Schlesinger, 1986) and political dissidents (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991b; Cheng Jei-cheng and Chen Sheue-yun, 1991) are portrayed unrealistically, and concludes that these groups have lacked advantages in competition for the space in the media.

A few studies such as Gitlin (1980) and Jones (1986) place great emphasis on social interaction from the point of view of the source as well as the media. It has been shown that disadvantaged groups are able to make efforts to allow their visions to be negotiated through the news media, although the media are not always on their side (Gitlin, 1980).

The study of British industrial disputes in the late 1970s and the early 1980s provides a good example for the illustration of the negotiation over control between groups whose material and symbolic advantages are unequally distributed. Jones (1986) shows that throughout the industrial disputes, unions, employers and the government all tried to exploit the news media in order to seek publicity and to manage information about the dispute. However, as may be expected, the government and employers held the advantage in this battle for publicity.

Generally speaking, the nature and extent of publicity are very much dependent on certain characteristics of the less powerful group, such as its size, cohesiveness, economic importance, national role, or even the personality

of leaders (Seaton, 1991:265). For instance, during disputes, unions, especially the National Union of Mineworkers, were primarily dependent on their leaders for seeking regular publicity. Moreover, they lacked a reliable system for providing a constant flow of information about the impact of their action and the likely consequences for the public (Jones, 1986:92). Nevertheless, throughout the disputes, some strategies had been taken on board by unions to exploit the use of the news media. For instance, someone was appointed to monitor media coverage and watch for bias on a daily basis in order to request a right of reply. Furthermore, the policy of accusing the news media of bias was implemented to increase the newsworthiness of the union and to create an air of self-doubt among the reporters themselves, thereby hopefully reducing biased reporting. Moreover, some interview accounts and supplementary materials were carefully designed to present the union in a favourable light and management as being unreasonable (Jones, 1986:90-94).

## CONCLUSION

In the present study, the media are regarded as a site of social and cultural struggle. Ideally, all citizens have a right to participate in shaping media cultures. In reality, under most circumstances, the people in positions of power certainly have a greater chance to use the media.

Studies on the complex connections between the media

and political and economic institutions provide a knowledge base of how and in what ways the media function to favour the political and economic establishment. Also, an explanation of the complex relations between the media and social institutions is necessary to understand the broad features of news production (Davis, 1993:42; Schudson, 1991:145). However it seems that a structural approach does not articulate well with a social and political situation that is changing rapidly. For instance, a perspective concerned with the social structure of the media tends to focus on long-term and friendly relations between the media and political and economic institutions. Consequently, the media's confrontations with the political establishment, whether to pursue their own political interest (such as by the underground press) or to secure business profits (such as is the case with papers in authoritarian societies which deviate from official lines) are excluded from the research agenda. As will be shown, in a situation of change, a more flexible theoretical approach is needed.

A citizen's access to the media is central to the function of a democracy. The fact that economic and political constraints on the media result in the disappearance of diversity and quality information indicates that ordinary citizens are denied access to the media. The exercise of public relations by news sources, whether the powerful or less powerful groups aiming to win media attention, suggests that ordinary citizens are at times able to gain access to the media, although this may be slight in

contrast with the access privileges enjoyed by powerful sources. In exploring the issues of news management engaged by these competing groups on a daily basis, a theoretical approach falling beyond the structuralist argument is necessary. To sum up, a theoretical perspective which combines structural constraints and the dynamics of daily control is taken by the present study to explain the transformation of state-press relations in the process of democratization in Taiwan.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE STATE AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN TAIWAN

### INTRODUCTION

The essence of democracy lies in the absence of inequality of opportunity, whether political, economic or social. However, democracy in terms of freedom of political participation and freedom of the press is always a state to be achieved.

Democratization - in society emerges from the confrontations between civil society and the state. Theoretically, the state and civil society interact in a complex way within specific historical conditions (Bobbio, 1989:43; Hall, 1984:23; Keane, 1988:62; Touraine, 1981:104). State power exercised through its military, policing, legal, administrative and cultural apparatuses inevitably determines the scope and manner of actions taken by groups within civil society; reciprocally, these actions can challenge state rule and make it accountable to civil society. Therefore, the boundaries between the state and civil society are constantly changing through time.

Taking a view that the ultimate foundation of democracy is the institutionalized communication between the state and



civil society, the purpose of this chapter is to depict the democratization in Taiwan based on the dialectical process between state intervention and civil liberalization.

## TAIWANESE REALITY

In 1945, the Nationalist Party also known as Kuo Min Tang (KMT) took control of Taiwan from Japan. Four years later, the KMT was defeated in China's civil war and retreated to Taiwan. The KMT has ruled the island for more than four decades. Over the years debates about ethnicity have been an important factor which have had a great impact on Taiwan's political, economic and social life.

### 1. Ethnic Conflict

The conflict between two ethnic groups the Taiwanese and Mainlanders is the core issue for democracy in Taiwan. Ethnic conflict has been a medium for the extension of citizen rights. To some extent, it reflects the crisis of national identity among ordinary citizens on the island. Ethnically, the twenty million population of Taiwan can be divided into four groups. The Taiwanese are the largest ethnic group and constitute almost three-quarters of population. Taiwanese speak the Fukien dialect of Chinese and their ancestors migrated from Fukien Province either before 1885 or during the period of Japanese occupation. There are also 3.2 million Hakkas who migrated from Guangdong

province in the nineteenth century, while 2.9 million are mainlanders who came to Taiwan during the KMT regime after the Chinese civil war in 1949. There are about 325,000 aborigines who are the offspring of the earliest inhabitants of the island and racially designated non-Chinese; most of these people live in mountain areas (Harrison, 1991:22).

The first confrontation between mainlanders and Taiwanese is known as the 228 Incident which occurred on 28 February 1947. The 228 Incident remains a bitter memory centred on the political legacy of KMT rule on Taiwan. This incident concerned a Taiwanese woman who was physically beaten by mainland soldiers, which triggered an island-wide rebellion against Chen Yi's administration. In this instance, between several thousand and twenty thousand Taiwanese, mostly local students and elites were killed by Chen Yi's forces (Tien Hung-mao, 1989:36). Moreover, thousands more living on the island were harassed and labelled as criminals during what was known as the KMT's 'white terror' of the 1950s and 1960s. The 228 Incident has haunted relations between Taiwanese and Chinese mainlanders ever since.

After the arrival of the KMT regime in 1949, the task of nation building was carried on. The nationalist heritage which the KMT advocated was rooted in the territory of mainland China where its sovereign power was no longer exercised. By claiming to be the legitimate government of all China, the KMT operates a state machinery to create a spirit of solidarity and collective commitment to the

Chinese 'nation'. For instance, the structure of government that existed on the mainland is preserved. More importantly, the culture which derived from China was diffused through Taiwan. Also, Mandarin used on the mainland as an official language was implanted into Taiwan. The opposition nationalism started by Taiwanese intellectuals in the late 1970s, rejected the mainland-rooted KMT government and argued for acceptance of the de facto separation of Taiwan from the mainland. For them the KMT represents a 'Chinese political entity' as opposed to a native 'Taiwanese identity'.

The cleavages between mainlanders and Taiwanese do exist, because there is a substantial difference in attitude towards KMT rule between these two groups. For instance, mainlanders perceive themselves as being much more 'Chinese' as opposed to 'Taiwanese' (Chang Mao-kuei and Hsiao Hsin-hung, 1987:36-39). For most Taiwanese, China is another country. They regard themselves as Chinese by culture; they would like trade with China, visit it as tourists, but at least for the moment, they have no intention of becoming integrated into the mainland (Feldman, 1991:9). By contrast, Taiwanese more or less politically detach themselves from the mainland, instead they identify with Taiwan and its local culture (Chang Mao-kuei and Hsiao Hsin-hung, 1987:36-39). Such differences in perception have profound political ramifications for the government's goal of political unification with mainland China.

Furthermore, compared with the Taiwanese, mainlanders

tend to support the KMT and the existing government institutions. According to a survey carried out in Taipei, mainlanders are more satisfied with the government, they appreciate a stable political system and wish to pursue a harmonious social and political order. Moreover, the mainlanders are willing to restrict individual freedom (Hu Fo and Yu Ying-long, 1983:38). By contrast, Taiwanese ask for the protection of civil liberties, freedom of speech and a wider participation in the political process. Furthermore, they want to share political power with mainlanders, and upgrade their status to exercise a greater influence on politics. Ethnic difference is also reflected in voting behaviour. In general, KMT candidates draw about an equal number of votes from both groups. However, opposition candidates (most of them are Taiwanese) draw about 87.6% of their votes from Taiwanese voters, and only 12.4 % from mainlanders (Hu Fo and Yu Ying-lung, 1983: 37-38).

The task of nation building is a site in which the ethnic groups compete against each other for cultural sovereignty. During this process, major ethnic groups will attempt to incorporate sovereignty and administrative power and to diffuse their own language and culture within the nation-state (Giddens, 1985:219; Smith, 1991:68). In Taiwan's case, by exerting control over the state, including the military, administrative, judicial and ideological apparatuses, the KMT has a great advantages in the mobilization of its nationalist heritage on the one hand,

and suppressing Taiwanese resistance to this on the other. Nevertheless, with the economy booming, an increasing per capita income and literacy rate, increased use of mass communication, and a differentiated urban sector, the opposition nationalists who wish to establish a democratic structure with a Taiwanese identity came into existence in the mid-1970s.

## **2. The KMT Controls the State Apparatuses**

### **(1) The Party-State**

From 1949 to the mid-1980s the KMT regime was characterized as a one-party authoritarian regime. In a one-party state, the ruling party is the key source of power in the regime to promote national unity and encourage economic development. By contrast, opposition parties are effectively prohibited or excluded from any significant political role (Huntington, 1991:12-13). In terms of its party structure and party-state relationship, the KMT regime is a Leninist party-state (Cheng Tun-jen, 1989:477; Chou Yang-sun and Nathan, 1987:277-278; Chu Yun-han, 1992:17-18; Myers, 1987:1003; Tien Hung-mao, 1989:9-11).

A Leninist-type party has a single powerful leader, at the zenith of the KMT rule, the party leader held four posts simultaneously that included the head of the state, leader of the party, executive head of government and the active commander-in-chief of the military-security apparatus (Chu Yun-han, 1992:25). In such a party, the authority of the

party is placed above all government agencies and representative bodies. For instance, under KMT rule all major government appointments and policies and legislative proposals have to be endorsed by the party headquarters. All middle to high ranking government officials and military officers are recruited and selected by the KMT (Chu Yun-han, 1992:20).

In practice, the structure of a Leninist party is to establish a close interlinked relationship with the state apparatus. The party functions as a government within government, and the distinctions between the party and the government are blurred. For instance, personnel appointments among the party, the government and legislative institutions often develop and follow a path of inter-institutional circulation (Winckler, 1984:488-489).

Not surprisingly, there is an organizational parallel between the KMT and the state apparatus. In order to effect a complete monopoly over the state apparatus, a sophisticated system is implemented to channel directions from the party to the state apparatus. The normal practice is that an array of party branches are structured within the government bodies and the legislature. The mechanism between the party and the government can be depicted at two levels (Tien Hung-mao, 1989:89-90).

At central government level, the Policy Coordination Committee is charged with resolving conflicts among and within the three representative bodies in the Legislative Yuan, the Control Yuan and the National Assembly. It links

the Central Standing Committee (the highest decision-making body of the KMT) to three representative bodies which allow them to carry out directions from the party centre. Party branches also exert an influence within the Executive, the Judicial and the Examination Yuan. In each of these central government institutions, there is a political cell consisting of party members who hold key positions.

At the provincial and local levels, an organizational device is developed to make sure that the public policies are in line with the party directives. At the provincial level, a political cell is formed which consists of the governor and heads of departments and bureaux. This pattern is replicated in county and city governments.

Furthermore, at each level of the legislature there is a party caucus which is organized by all KMT members. Each party caucus is directed by a party secretary who coordinates overall legislative action in conjuncture with the committee chairmen on the floor. The party secretary in the legislature, the speaker, the deputy speaker and the legislative committee chairmen are organized into the executive committee of the party caucus. The main duty of the executive committee is to persuade party members to support government policy.

Finally, at each level of territorial administration, a political coordination group is set up to link party headquarters, government offices and the legislature together. This inter-institutional group includes: (1) the party committee chairman and two members of the party

committee designated by the chairman, (2) the governor (or mayor or county magistrate) plus two members of the administrative body appointed by him; and (3) the speaker of the provincial assembly (or local legislative council) plus two assemblymen who are party members.

## (2) Sovereign Power

The legal system administers a range of rights attributed to those who govern and those who are governed. As a political institution of social control, the legal system legitimatizes state intervention in the citizen's private life (Horwitz, 1989:42). In Taiwan, the legal control operated by the executive and judicial arms of the party-state have significantly undermined the development of citizenship.

From 1949 to 1991, in the face of military confrontation with communist China, Taiwan was in a permanent state of emergency. Therefore, government institutions and civil rights in Taiwan were under constraint by at least sixteen emergency laws, decrees and judicial interpretations (Hu Fo, 1990:34-35). Generally speaking, the Provisional Amendment for the Period of Mobilization of the Suppression of Communist Rebellion, known as the temporary provisions and martial law, has the most profound effects on the scope of government power and the citizen's political life on the island.

The temporary provisions introduced on 10 May 1948 as



a result of the threat from communist China were lifted in May 1991. According to the temporary provisions, the President was endowed with an unlimited authority. For example, Article 1 of the temporary provisions gave the President the power to take emergency measures to avert an imminent danger to the security of the state or to the people-- without being subject to the procedural restrictions prescribed in Article 39 or Article 43 of the constitution. Furthermore, the President is accountable neither to the populace nor to any legislative bodies. The President and Vice-President's tenure in office is no longer limited to two six-year terms prescribed in the constitution. Moreover, the President was empowered to change the structure and personnel of Central government. In addition, the President could authorize additional members to be elected or appointed to the three national representative bodies-- the National Assembly (one of whose functions is to elect the President), the Legislative Yuan and the Control Yuan.

More importantly, the temporary provisions froze the membership of the three national representative bodies-- the National Assembly (Presidential Electoral College), the Legislative Yuan (the parliament) and the Control Yuan (control over the efficacy and discipline of government officials) in place until 1991, in keeping with the KMT's claim to be the only legal government of all China. Although elections for supplementary seats had been held every three years between 1969 and 1989, only approximately

one third of the parliamentary seats were open to competition.

Martial law was declared on the Mainland in 1934, and remained in effect until July 1987. As a matter of fact, martial law was implemented on the basis of an administrative order issued by the Executive Yuan since Taiwan was designated a combat area in China's civil war in December 1949.

Under martial law, civil rights guaranteed by the constitution, such as the right of assembly, the right of association including formation of new political parties and freedom of publication were suspended. Therefore, the development of citizenship within civil society was severely inhibited. For instance, Article 11 of the martial law stipulates that in areas falling under martial law, the senior commander could prohibit popular assemblies, organized associations, mass rallies and petitions and could impose sanctions against speeches, lectures, newspapers, magazines, photographs, postcards and other printed materials deemed harmful to the military.

According to martial law, the Taiwan Garrison Command (TGC) was the most powerful agency between 1950 and 1987, because it took charge of all matters (either the local administrative or judicial) in the implementation of martial law. Under martial law, the TGC was heavily involved in every aspect of political life. For example, the TGC was in charge of authorizing citizens to travel abroad, monitoring all entries into Taiwan, approving meetings and rallies,

receiving and sanctioning books and periodicals and maintaining social order (Hu Fo, 1985:17).

Article 4 of the martial law empowered the TGC to conduct precirculation censorship. Also, Article 3 defined speech and writing sedition if they were deemed to be propaganda supporting the Chinese communists, if they slandered the head of state, stirred up animosity between the government and the people, or violated the national policy of anti-communism.

In addition to the temporary provisions and martial law, the National Mobilization Law was another emergency decree which was implemented to regulate the actions of civil society. Two articles in the National Mobilization Law are often applied to actions which are seen as a political or military threat to government. For example, Article 23 allows the government to restrict freedom of speech, publication, correspondence, public assembly and association if circumstances should require such actions. Also, Article 22 stipulates that the government may restrict or prohibit newspapers, wire services and printing (such as pamphlets or books) whenever it deems necessary.

### (3) Administrative Power

The structure of the KMT government has departed from the constitution, because the operations of government are based on the series of emergency laws mentioned above. With the KMT claiming to be the only legitimate government of all

China, the structure of central government brought over from the mainland was maintained. Therefore, there is a duplication in administrative structure between the central government and the provincial government, particularly in education, transportation, police, finance and economic policy (Tien Hung-mao, 1989:105). As two governments are ruling within approximately the same territory, the degree of autonomy of the provincial government is quite limited.

For almost four decades the KMT regime did not much rely on democratic legitimacy for its rule. In other words, political participation of ordinary citizens was very limited. Starting in 1950, gradual steps were taken to implement local self-rule at provincial and local level, while the national representative bodies remained tightly controlled until 1992.

By 1969, elections opened to the public were confined to the township, county and city levels. In practice, ordinary citizens have been allowed to elect their representatives up to provincial level and government executives up to the county and city levels since 1946.

As already mentioned, in keeping with the legacy of the KMT government the only government of all China, the members of three representative bodies-- the National Assembly, the Legislative Yuan and the Control Yuan elected in 1947 on the mainland were allowed to hold their posts until the recovery of the mainland permits new elections. Therefore, elections for supplementary seats were held every three years from 1969 to 1992. After the 1970s the number of national

representatives for the supplementary elections was increased year by year. For example, in 1972, 53 new members were added to the National Assembly, 51 to the Legislative Yuan. In the 1983 election, a number of 73 legislators were elected, however, only a third of members of the legislature were elected by the people of Taiwan.

In Taiwan's case, the right to vote has never been in question, but the extent to which government officials have been subject to electoral scrutiny has been a matter of public debate. For instance, key government officials including the provincial governor, the mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung municipalities are still not accountable to the electorate. The President and Vice-President are indirectly elected by members of the National Assembly. According to the constitution, the Premier is nominated by the President, and approved by the Legislative Yuan.

In the 1970s, the KMT faced two challenges. One came from the international community, another came from the domestic political situation including the growing middle class and the political opposition. In the 1970s, the KMT was besieged by a series of diplomatic setbacks including the loss of membership in the United Nations and the ending of formal diplomatic relations with Japan and the United States. As a consequence, its claim to be the representative of all China had been seriously undermined. In response to these legitimacy crises caused by drastic changes in the external environment and the native Taiwanese demanded a right to share political power, the KMT made some

concessions in its authoritarian rule. For instance, the KMT began to incorporate Taiwanese into the party's high decision making bodies and initiated supplementary elections to replenish the ageing national representatives. However, these initial political reforms were seen as political measures designed more to co-opt the opposition than to expand participation (Cheng Tun-jen, 1989:485; Wang Cheng-huan, 1989:94). The most significant political reforms conducted by the KMT to accommodate public pressure for a representative democracy took place between 1986 and 1987. These reforms included lifting martial law and press bans, allowing the establishment of new political parties, a search for a new formula for electing representatives to parliament and Taiwanese citizens being allowed to visit the Chinese mainland.

Although the KMT tried to step up recruitment of the Taiwanese into the party, army and government, most of the high ranking positions in the party-state were still controlled by the mainlanders until the 1980s. For instance, at the height of KMT rule, the asymmetry of political power between Taiwanese and the mainlanders was significant. Between 1950 and the mid-1980s, the important positions of the KMT and the government were occupied by mainlanders, especially those evacuated from China in 1949. Although 80% of its members were Taiwanese, the KMT's leadership remained firmly in the hands of the mainlanders.

In the early 1970s, when Chiang Ching-kuo was serving as Premier, more Taiwanese were recruited into the party and

the government. In May 1972, the number of Taiwanese in the Central Standing Committee was increased from two to three out of 21 (Tien Hung-mao, 1975:616). In December 1979, the number of Taiwanese in the Central Standing Committee remained the same. In February 1984, the number of Taiwanese in the Central Standing Committee was increased to 12 out of 31 (Winckler, 1984:489). In 1988, mainlanders still controlled 17 seats (55%) of the total 31 in the Central Standing Committee (Tien Hung-mao, 1989:38).

Furthermore, ethnic difference was also salient in the disproportion of representatives among top administrators in the government. In the early 1970s, six positions at cabinet level in the Executive Yuan were held by Taiwanese including that of Deputy Premier which had previously been occupied by Chiang Ching-kuo himself. As for the other four Yuan of the Central government, namely the Judicial, Legislative, Examination and Control, three out of four Vice-Presidents were Taiwanese. Also, for the first time a Taiwanese, Hsieh Tung-min was appointed as the governor of Taiwan Province.

In 1984, in the cabinet of the Legislative Yuan, three-quarters of the key posts were held by mainlanders (Tien Hung-mao, 1989:37-38). For instance, within the cabinet, the Deputy Premier, ministers of the Interior, Communication and Justice and two ministers without portfolios were Taiwanese. But ministerial posts which were in charge of policies related to defence, foreign affairs, finance, economic affairs and education remained in the hands of

mainlanders. Furthermore, mainlanders still held all top positions in the military and security apparatus except two: garrison commander and Vice Minister of Defence.

#### (4) The Economic Apparatus

A form of state capitalism has been adopted in Taiwan. Under KMT rule, the government has played a pivotal role in anchoring economic development. First, from 1949 to the present many policies have been carried out which had a great impact on economic development. For instance, in the early 1950s three major economic policies were implemented: land reform, price stabilization and import substitution behind a protectionist tariff policy (Tien Hung-mao, 1989:19). From 1962 to 1971, some export promotion policies were created to stimulate an economic boom. Furthermore, in 1972, the government decided to invest public capital in ten major construction projects to sustain economic growth against a worldwide economic recession, and provide additional employment and improve the industrial infrastructure of the country (Tai Hung-chao, 1989:1). These ten projects developed a north-south freeway, instigated railway electrification, built a railway in northeastern Taiwan, a new international airport in Taoyuan, a nuclear power plant, an integrated steel mill, a giant shipyard in Kaohsiung, petro-chemical complexes, Taichung harbour, and Suao port.

After 1978, the government continued to channel public



investment into twelve new major construction projects. Also, policies devoted to develop high-tech and capital-oriented industries were conducted. During 1986-1988 the economic policies were focused on the promotion of international commercial trade, therefore, some measures were adopted to liberalize trade by relaxing import and foreign exchange restrictions (Tai, Hung-chao, 1989:8).

Second, in order to exert an influence over the economy, the government not only regulates economic matters (licenses firms, manages foreign exchange and controls a cumbersome tariff structure), but also owns, operates and invests in many enterprises. Furthermore, most public enterprises are in the sectors of basic industry and banking (Lin Chung-cheng, 1989:166, Liu Chin-ching, 1988:68).

For example, the total number of national corporations is 27, and the largest 12 operate under the supervision of the Ministry of Economic Affairs. Some of them, such as China Steel, China Shipbuilding, China Petroleum and Tai-Power, are ranked as the largest enterprises in the country. In 1985, these public enterprises employed more than a hundred thousand people. A majority of chairmen and general managers were former officials of the government, retired senior military officers, or former KMT county and city executives.

The provincial government also supervises 33 enterprises which include the Taiwan Wine and Tobacco Monopoly Bureau, and 11 major commercial banks, insurance companies and trust banks. In addition, the vocational

Assistance Commission for Retired Soldiers which is heavily subsidized by government, runs some forty firms including many of the largest so-called private enterprises.

The KMT itself also has accumulated a huge amount of financial resources. From 1949 through to 1987, little distinction was made between party and state in business affairs. The KMT itself controls a number of enterprises. In 1994, the KMT has NT\$ 38.5 billion (US\$ 1.5 billion) in real properties (*The Journalist*, 6-12 March 1994:12). Party property is controlled through holding companies that in turn embrace around 100 firms in which the KMT holds shares. The KMT holds investments in commercial banks, insurance and investment companies, and the petroleum and construction industries. More specifically, the KMT has holdings in the ownership of the media. Three television networks and the China Broadcasting Corporation, Central News Agency, *China Daily News*, *Central Daily News* and Cheng Chung Publishing Corporation are all run by the KMT (*Wealth*, Dec. 1991:114).

In general, the power distribution along ethnic lines is much more symmetrical than in the political sectors. Although more Taiwanese than mainlanders engage in medium and small size business, the basic industries and public corporations are controlled by mainlanders-- these include the steel industry, shipbuilding industry, petroleum industry and banking etc. (Lin Chung-cheng, 1989:178; Liu Chin-ching, 1988:68; Tien Hung-mao, 1989:38).

## (5) Social Associations

Apart from exploiting the use of the judicial apparatus, the military, police and security forces to monitor the civil society, the KMT also mobilizes support from citizens for its nationalist tasks through the regulation and controlled ownership of the ideological apparatus.

In general, social control was derived from martial law and emergency regulations. Also, the KMT implemented a series of administrative orders to regulate the practices of the publishing industry in the 1960s. For example, the New Literature and Art Movement was launched by the Ministry of Defence to strengthen the ideology of anti-communism in 1965. Furthermore, in 1967, the Committee of Cultural Recovery directed by the Executive Yuan, and the Cultural Bureau by the Ministry of Education were established to manage cultural affairs (Kuo Foong, 1990:17).

In fact, the KMT itself is closely connected with all the existing social organizations. The KMT has broadly penetrated all voluntary associations since the party was reorganized in the early 1950s. The groups with a political orientation, such as trade unions, the farmers' associations and the irrigation associations are significantly controlled by the KMT (Chu Yun-han, 1992:27). Therefore, opposition forces, if they exist, do not coalesce around these groups.

According to the organizational structure of the KMT, party units within each association are brought under the direct control of the provincial party committee, the Taipei

Municipal Party Committee, or the Kaoshiung Party Committee, except those involved with the armed forces, the security apparatus, overseas Chinese communities, manufacturing industries, transportation and communication sectors and college campuses. The party headquarters of manufacturing industries is in charge of public and private industries, and the party headquarters of employees supervises the sectors of shipping, railroads, highways, the postal service and communications (*The Journalist*, 31 June-6 July 1989:41-43). Both headquarters are directly supervised by the Department of Social Work of the KMT.

In order to infiltrate deeply into everyday life, party cells and local party branches permeate Taiwan Society. In addition to mobilizing support for KMT candidates, the local party branches provide many kinds of social services or social support to citizens (Lin Cha-long, 1989:14; Tien Hung-mao, 1989:72). Such services include arranging easy access to major hospitals, the establishment of a local library, free sewing and cooking classes, free legal aid, and other consultations, and material assistance to poor families etc.

During the election, local factions are used to mobilize voters. Generally speaking, each faction consists of a leader, his key lieutenants, grass-roots supporters and reliable voters in a given geographical areas or local association. After the election, the cadres of the local faction are offered benefits, favouritism or channels of upward social mobility in return for their support (Lin Cha-

long, 1989:135; Tien Hung-mao; 1989:164-165). Thus even though factions may not have a formal structure, their informal networks of affiliation can be widely extended.

In sum, under KMT rule, the party-state permeated deeply into civil society from 1949 to the mid-1980s. The KMT was empowered to colonize civil society by the introduction of martial law and at least sixteen emergency laws, decrees and judicial interpretations. Under the rule of martial law, the right of assembly, the right of association, including the formation of new political parties, and freedom of publication were denied. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that Taiwan was a society which lacked the necessary institutional infrastructure, such as a free press, independent judiciary and autonomous civil associations for a modern democracy.

### **3. The Actions of Civil Society**

The state and civil society are two areas which articulate in a complex way. The development of civil society is intimately bound up with the scope of the actions of the state. As the state colonizes civil society, there is also a reverse process by which civil society colonizes the state (Bobbio, 1989:43; Hall, 1984:23; Touraine, 1981:104).

In Taiwan's case, because of heavy party-state involvement in civil society, the public sphere, where the conduct of party-state was open to public scrutiny, was relatively restricted. However, by scrutinizing the

historical and social development of Taiwan from 1949 to the present, or at least until 1986, it can be seen that actions derived from civil society did attempt to make the KMT accountable. The political opposition is seen as the most significant and consistent anti-KMT collective action in Taiwan in terms of its qualitative mobilization success and manifest political impact.

In Taiwan, the central thrust of the political opposition is the pursuit of citizenship rights in general and Taiwanese national identity in particular. The spread of citizen rights has by no means blunted ethnic divisions, however; conflict between the mainlanders and Taiwanese symbolizes the extension of civil and political rights. The political opposition mobilized by the Taiwanese started as a political reform movement in an attempt to press the KMT to loosen its authoritarian rule in the mid-1970s. At the initial stage, most criticism voiced by the opposition was centred on certain issues, such as the abolition of martial law, freedom in the formation of new political parties, fresh elections for the three national representative bodies, the disclosure of government corruption, the abolition of unfair practices in election campaigns, and the lifting of government control of the media. Such criticism essentially attacked the foundations of the political system. However, in the early 1980s, the opposition went beyond these political demands, and began to question Taiwan's sovereignty and destiny.

The opposition movements can be examined by focusing on

three areas: the actors, modes of action and issues. In general, the development of political opposition can be divided into three periods: 1957-1960, 1975-1979, and 1984 to the present.

#### (1) The *Free China* Group

The activities of *Free China* Group began in 1959 and ended a year later. They advocated political reform and constitutional democracy. In the second half of 1960, after making a formal announcement of the establishment of a new party, the leader Lei Chen was arrested and charged with being a communist agent. The KMT thereby blocked the first effort to create an opposition party on Taiwan.

##### 1.1 Actors

In the initial stages, the actors of the opposition movement were confined to the intellectual and political elites. They consisted of two groups: the mainlanders and the Taiwanese (Lee Shao-foong, 1989:222). The mainlanders concentrated their activities around the *Free China Journal*. The *Free China* Group included liberal intellectuals, dissenting members of the KMT, and leaders of the political parties which were in alliance with the KMT. Most actors in the *Free China* Group were not involved directly in electoral politics.

By contrast, Taiwanese groups were organized by native

politicians who tried to win electoral contests against KMT candidates. They included Wu San-lien, Kao Yu-Shih, Li Wan-Chu, Kuo Yu-hsin and so on, and they ran in individual elections at the local level.

## 1.2 The Modes of Action

Generally speaking, publication of newspapers and political journals and the electoral campaigns were two methods used by the *Free China* Group to communicate with the external world and challenge the political situation. *Free China Journal*, *Democratic Currency Journal* and *Public Forum Daily* were the mouthpieces of the opposition movement. But they had problems in gaining grass-roots support, because the circulation of these two journals rarely reached the public. Moreover, during this time, all electoral practices were confined to the local level and held every four years.

Although *Public Forum Daily* owned by local politician Li Wan-Chu was recognized as a most eloquent newspaper in the 1950s, it was embroiled in serious financial trouble by the 1960s and was sold to the *United Daily News* (Chen Kuo-hsiang and Chu Ping, 1987:80-81).

In 1958, local politicians organized the Association for the Study of China's Local Self-Government to reform what they thought of as the corrupt electoral politics in Taiwan (Lee Shao-foong, 1989:227). Under martial law, freedom of association was banned; therefore, the association was never accepted as a civil organization by



the KMT authorities.

In 1960, the *Free China* Group and local politicians joined together and tried to organize a party to challenge the KMT. A series of meetings dealing with the formation of a new political party were held from June to August (*Public Forum Daily*, 15 and 26 June, 23 and 31 July, 1960:3). Finally, on 23 August, they publicized a draft of a party constitution. As the formal announcement of a new party approached, political tension increased. This attempt failed on 4 September 1960, when Lei Chen was arrested and charged with having contact with a communist agent. After this instance, the *Free China Journal* was shut down and Li Wan-Chu lost the ownership of *Public Forum Daily*.

### 1.3 Issues

The issues promoted by opposition movements at this stage were confined to two categories: constitutional structure and government policies. The *Free China* Group emphasized the need to reform the constitutional structure; they called for a replacement of the one-party dictatorship with a constitutional democracy and the restoration of civil liberties.

For example, 70 of 84 articles in the collections of essays of the *Free China Journal* entitled *Lei Chen and Democracy* are discussions of the constitutional structure of the ROC. Within this category, 45 articles discuss the government structure and push for greater autonomy for the

provincial government, 25 articles press for raising the standard of civil liberties and personal rights. Within the category of government policies, they request the KMT to amend unfair electoral practices and end its involvement in the armed forces, judiciary and administration (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991a:178).

As for local politicians, they more or less concentrated on demanding effective public policies. For example, questions regarding government policies were frequently raised by the non-party assemblymen who were known as liberal local politicians in the Taiwan Provincial Assembly. In 1957, 67 out of 91 questions posed by the non-party assemblymen were concerned with the government's unlawful electoral practices and called for the Taiwanization of public offices. In 1960, 114 questions were asked, 68 on the reform of public policy, and 46 on the amendment of the constitutional structure (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991a:180).

In sum, dissenting activities at this stage were limited to elites including KMT's intellectuals and local politicians. Except during elections, their message rarely got across to ordinary citizens. Since no effective channels could link the intellectuals to the public, the political opposition was unable to pose a serious challenge to the KMT.

(2) 1975 - 1979

After 1960, the political opposition stopped trying to organize or lead a political movement. Following the rapid economic growth and the development of the middle class, the opposition movements began to revive in 1975, and reached a peak in 1979.

In contrast to the previous stage, the Taiwanese played a dominant role within this movement. They were not only the primary source of political activities, but they also actively engaged in literary activities, electoral campaigns and street actions. More importantly, apart from demands for political reform, they began to raise the issue of national identity. For instance, in 1979, the political opposition announced a common political platform in which they called for self-determination for Taiwan.

### 2.1 Actors

In comparison to the preceding stage, the opposition leaders were distinct from the previous group which had been mainly organized by the mainland intelligentsia. Leading members of opposition movements (except Kang Ning-hsiang and Huang Hsin-chieh) were young (mostly in their thirties) people like, Yao Chia-Wen, Chang Chu-Hung, Hsu Hsin-liang, Lin Yi-hsiung, and Shih Ming-te were the generation of Taiwanese brought up and educated under KMT rule.

Also the demographic backgrounds of the new opposition

group were much more diverse than previous ones. They were drawn from diverse career backgrounds such as: politics, journalism, the law, education and even business (Lee Shaofoong, 1989:272). Their most crucial characteristic was that they possessed a strong sense of Taiwanese heritage. They feared that in the long run a Chinese Taiwan meant a Chinese Communist Taiwan, therefore, they were reluctant to identify with the Chinese mainland and a government aiming to rule the mainland.

## 2.2 The Modes of Action

The methods used by the opposition movements to campaign for their political reality were diversified at this stage. Although the publication of political journals and books and an engagement in electoral practices were still important, in addition, the street protests and mass assemblies began to play an increasingly important role in their course of political action.

The *Taiwan Political Review* published in August 1975 was the first political journal offering a forum for oppositional Taiwanese politicians. Huang Hsin-chieh was the publisher and Kang Ning-hsiang was the editor. In December 1975, the magazine was suspended for one year, because the content of the fifth issue went beyond what the KMT would accept (Armbruster, 1976:19; Jacobs, 1976:787). The circulation of the *Taiwan Political Review* was 25,000 (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 Jan. 1976:19). After

*Taiwan Political Review* was closed down, another journal *The Eighties* was subsequently published by Kang Ning-hsiang.

In 1979, *Formosa* was the flagship of the opposition movement and was published by Huang Hsin-chieh in the August and closed down four months later, because the publisher and editors were arrested for provoking a riot known as the Kaohsiung (or *Formosa*) Incident. The circulation of *Formosa* was between 62,000 to 94,000 (Lin Cheng-yi, 1989:106).

As for electoral practices, the 1977 election was the turning point for opposition movements, because they scored impressive victories. They won 21 out of the 77 seats in the Taiwan Provincial Assembly and 4 of the 20 magistrate and mayoral seats. Encouraged by these results, the non-party leaders looked forward to broadening their mass support through electoral practices. In the 1978 election for the national parliament, they organized themselves as a quasi-party, and publicized a 'common political demand' (Lee Shao-foong, 1987:127; Shih Ming-te, 1988:52; Tsaw Chun-han, 1979:34). But the election was cancelled, after the U.S. made a decision to give official recognition to the People's Republic of China.

By 1979, the opposition movement had adopted a new mode of action to promote their political views. This was the public rally. In January 1979, the first public gathering was held in Kaohsiung to protest against one of the opposition leaders having been arrested by the KMT. After that, the non-party forces held a series of mass assemblies to challenge the KMT authorities during 1979, such as 'Hsu

Hsin-liang's Birthday Party' (Cheng Mu-sing, 1987:233), 'Taichung Park Concert' and 'Farewell to Jail Party for Wu Che-lang' etc. (Chiang Chuan-nan, 1989:17).

*Formosa* magazine launched in August 1979 was the flagship of the opposition. *Formosa* was intended to expand the opposition forces and to recruit new supporters. For instance, *Formosa* maintained 11 'service offices' throughout the island and organized 13 mass meetings and demonstrations island-wide (Shih Ming-te, 1988:50). As the pace of political mass action quickened, the KMT authorities grew increasingly alarmed. Eventually, on 10 December, the Kaohsiung Incident occurred, and as a result the development of the opposition movements came to an end. On 10 December, the *Formosa* office held a rally to promote human rights. After a serious clash between the demonstrators and the police a riot developed. More than one hundred policemen and civilians were injured. Within two days, leaders of the *Formosa* group Huang Hsin-chieh, Yao Chia-wen, Chang Chun-hung, Lin Yi-hsiung, Shih Ming-te and dozens of followers were arrested. In the Martial Law court the leaders were charged with an attempt to overthrow the government and given prison sentences ranging from twelve years to life. Thirty-three followers were tried in the civil courts and received lighter sentences.

### 2.3 Issues

Generally speaking, the opposition movement still paid much

attention to pursuing constitutional reform. For instance, they urged the KMT to lift martial law, reform the national representative system, increase civil liberties, legalize opposition parties, allow the free establishment of the press and to open up the election process for the provincial government. In addition, the opposition group demanded the Taiwanization of public offices and the removal of the KMT from its involvement in the armed forces, schools, media and judiciary. In addition, the opposition movement promoted a new slogan related to issues of national identity which was 'self-determination by Taiwan residents of Taiwan's political future'. Politically, this principle of self-determination symbolized the opposition's rejection of the KMT's mainland-rooted government structure. Ideologically, they began to realize that the KMT was a 'Chinese political entity' which was opposed to a native Taiwanese identity.

For instance, in the 1978 election campaign, the non-party publicized its candidates' common programme which contained twelve issues which included: self-determination, a reform of the national representative system, an end to martial law and increased civil liberties including political, economic and social human rights, the legalization of opposition parties, freedom of the press and the release of political prisons and so on (*Ming Pao*, Feb. 1979:28).

When the subjects raised by the non-party members in the interpellation sessions of the Taiwan Provincial Assembly and the Legislative Yuan were analyzed, evidence

suggests that the direct election for numerous government posts were filled by appointments and the KMT's monopoly over political power was frequently questioned.

For example, in 1979, 74 out of 171 questions asked by the non-party assemblymen in the Taiwan Provincial Assembly were related to the reform of the constitutional structure (35 to the reform of governmental structure, 29 to increasing civil liberties), the other 97 questions were associated with political policies (25 with the corruption of government, 21 with illegal electoral practices and 18 with the removal of KMT involvement in the armed forces, schools, media and judiciary). As for the Legislative Yuan, 24 questions were raised. Ten questioned constitutional structure (2 the reform of governmental structure, 8 increasing civil liberties), 10 questioned political policies (5 the KMT monopoly over political power, 4 related to an independent foreign policy) (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991a:181).

### (3) 1984 to the Present

At the beginning of 1985, civil society in Taiwan was in ferment. The opposition movement and new social movements were growing rapidly, therefore, the space where oppositional political discourses existed was wide open. From 1984 to 1987, especially during 1985, many kinds of new social movements emerged which demanded that the KMT authorities meet their needs. The consumer movement was the



first new social movement which was formed in 1980. Before 1986, the women's movement (1982), anti-pollution movement (1984), labour movement (1984) and ethnic minorities' movement (1984) were to emerge on the scene. The Farmers' movement (1988), student movement (1987) and teachers' movement (1987) subsequently developed after 1986 (Chang Mao-kuei, 1989:92-93).

These new social movements were rather uniform, but their political bases lay mostly outside the KMT party, and they usually aligned themselves with the opposition movement. Basically, the issues pursued by the new social movements were within the areas of politics. For example, the anti-pollution movement requested compensation from chemical and petrochemical complexes owned by the government. The women's movement usually criticized the shortcomings of educational policies. They proposed that teaching practice should be free from political intervention, and also that Taiwanese cultural values should be included in the curriculum. The student movement very often endeavoured to take up human rights issues documented in the constitution and called for the reform of the representative system and the ending of the party and military domination of educational institutions.

From 1984 to 1986, the opposition movements became institutionalized and as a result in 1986 a new Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was finally born. However, because the ROC's President, Vice-President and Premier and Taiwan's Provincial Governor were not subject to popular elections,

the DPP could not control these powerful executive posts. Moreover, the legislators who were elected on the mainland still held these posts, and the DPP were unable to act as an effective opposition. Furthermore, just like the other institutionalized movements, the DPP began to face the formidable challenge of attempting to hold together its own diverse factions.

### 3.1 Actors

At this stage, the leading members of the opposition movement included the relatives and dependents of the Kaohsiung Incident and even the defence lawyers of the Kaohsiung Incident. Moreover, some young political campaigners for non-party forces in the 1980s began to play an important role within the oppositional group (Lee Shao-foong, 1989:278).

### 3.2 The Modes of Action

The formalization and legalization of an opposition party became the primary objective pursued by the oppositional group at this stage. This process can be explicated through modes of action adopted by the opposition movement to transform itself into a social force. Generally speaking, electoral practices, street demonstrations, the publication of political journals, and actions (verbal or physical) in parliament were adopted by the opposition to express their

political or cultural identity.

During the 1980s, the opposition movement designated itself as 'Tangwai' (a party outside the KMT) in public and also organized and functioned much like a political party. In February 1984, about twenty Tangwai legislators, provincial assemblymen and Taipei city councillors established the Association of Tangwai Elected Officials for the Study of Public Policy. In March, despite the threats from the KMT authorities, the Association began to build up local branches. By the end of June 1986, the opposition movement was developing into a party rather than a loose coalition of groups, because the Tangwai had instituted thirteen local branches throughout the island as an infrastructure for a coherent political party of opposition in the future. Finally, on September 28 a new party called the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was established, even though such a party was denounced by the government as illegal.

After 1984 public rallies were widely used by the opposition movement to push for political liberalization and democratization. A content analysis of the *Independence Evening Post* which is known as a liberal newspaper indicates that the opposition movement launched 15 street actions in 1986, and 99 street actions between June 1987 and May 1988 (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991b:225). Other evidence shows that there were 1285 mass protests between January and September 1987 (*China Times*, 4 Jan. 1988:3). Police sources estimated that there were 729 demonstrations during the first four

months of 1988, 70% of which were anti-government in nature (Seymour, 1988:59).

As for publications, the number of magazines published by oppositional groups was approximately 40 in 1990 (Li Ming-shui, 1986:106). These magazines were often suppressed by the KMT authorities, therefore they had a short lifespan and very often went underground. However, many suspended publications were quickly brought back by the publishers under different titles. Because key actors often shifted from one journal to another, it is difficult to calculate the total number of oppositional journals (*New Line*, Nov. 1986:22-31).

Generally speaking, the oppositional magazines can be divided into the moderate and the militant magazines that reflect two factions in the opposition party. In general, the moderate magazines advocate power through parliamentary politics and reform within the system. By contrast, the militant magazines strive for political change through mass protest. The vast majority of oppositional publications are more militant than moderate. *Asian* and *Warm Current* are two important moderate journals which were published by Kang Ning-hsiang. *Deep Plough*, *Great Sympathy*, *Striking Roots*, *New Trends*, *New Line*, *New Perspective*, *Age of Democracy* are known as militant journals (Lu Ya-li, 1985:159).

### 3.3 Issues

At this stage, the issue of national identity was high on

the opposition's agenda, although the opposition still called for the reform of constitutional structure and government policies. By the early 1980s, the principles of self-determination for Taiwan and an independent Taiwan began to enjoy increased prominence within the opposition. For instance, they announced in 1983, that self-determination for Taiwan was part of their political programme (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 24 Nov. 1983:27). However, slogans regarding national identity, such as 'Taiwan is an independent unit', 'The people of Taiwan have the right to advocate Taiwan's independence' and 'The establishment of the Republic of Taiwan' were more likely to be made in the chamber where opposition legislators could have immunity from prosecution rather than as public statements. Before 1992, according to the Sedition Law and the Criminal Code, advocacy of Taiwanese independence was a crime that could bring the death penalty.

During this period of time, the magazines also served as an important channel for the opposition movements to disseminate political messages. Generally speaking, moderate magazines called for political democratization, respect for human rights, the reform of government institutions, a free press and the legalization of the opposition party. By contrast, the militant journals took a more radical stand. The militant journals not only endeavoured to promote native Taiwanese consciousness, but also called for 'an Independent Taiwan' or 'Republic Of Taiwan'. Furthermore, during 1984-1985 some opposition

magazines launched personal criticisms of major KMT leaders who were alleged to be involved in corruption (Lu Ya-li, 1985:159-161).

When the questions raised by the non-party legislators in the Legislative Yuan are examined, the results show that issues related to questions of national identity were frequently raised after 1985. For example, in 1981, the questions raised by the non-party legislators were associated with two categories: constitutional structure and government policies. 37 of 55 questions called for the reform of government structure and respect for human rights. Also, 18 questions addressed the reform of electoral practices and the removal of the KMT's involvement in political, economic and ideological institutions (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991a:201).

In 1986, 2 of 154 questions were in connection with the issue of national identity, 82 questions requested constitutional reform, such as respect for human rights (52) and the lifting of martial law and emergency decrees (9). Furthermore, 29 out of 70 questions demanded the KMT stay outside of political, economic and ideological institutions (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991a:203).

Between June 1987 and May 1988, 21 out of 427 questions raised in the parliament requested self-determination for Taiwan. 196 questions pressed for constitutional reform, such as the reform of government institutions(69), the abolition of emergency decrees (28) and respect for human rights (99). There were 427 questions related to government

policies, of which 116 attacked the monopoly of the power structure (political, economic and ideological) by the KMT, 29 pressed for the legalization of contacts between Taiwan and the Mainland and 27 pushed for changes in the quorum rules (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991a:205).

The opposition movement in Taiwan mobilized by the middle-class intellectuals in the pursuit of a liberal democracy and a distinctive Taiwanese identity began in the mid-1970s. After one decade, the opposition movement had become a significant political force, bringing a far livelier level of public debate in society. By 28 September 1986 it had built a legitimate opposition party. After nearly three decades of mobilization by the political opposition, the public space for articulating a diversity of political interests had gradually opened up in Taiwan.

## CONCLUSION

Democratization in Taiwan consists in the struggle led by Taiwanese who are attempting to establish a civil society alongside an authoritarian state. The KMT has played a key role in Taiwan's politics since 1949. Through the monopoly of the state apparatus, the KMT orchestrated political and economic development and mobilized its nationalist heritage on the island. Under such an officially dominated public sphere, civil society was effectively absorbed into the party-state until the mid-1980s.

From 1977 to 1979, a weak oppositional sphere mobilized

by Taiwanese intellectuals to achieve civil rights and to pursue a Taiwanese identity came into existence. Faced with harsh actions taken by the military apparatus, police and security forces, the opportunities by which the Taiwanese might take to the street or issue publications advocating political change was heavily restricted.

From 1986 to the present, the oppositional sphere has widened through the mediation of an institutionalized opposition party and new social movements. The confrontation between civil society and the party-state had shaken the one-party state to its very foundation in the mid-1980s, for instance, the KMT's response to the challenge from civil society was to democratize the legislature, replace martial law with an independent legal system, end party domination of the media and educational institutions and allow people to visit mainland China. As a result, the KMT regime which was once referred to as a 'hard authoritarian' state has moved to being a 'soft' one. The mainlander-dominated rule under a one-party dictatorship has been replaced by joint mainlander-Taiwanese rule.

In sum, the mainlanders' ideological commitment to constitutional democracy, and persisting political struggle of the Taiwanese opposition, and, first and foremost, the economic and political maturity of ordinary citizens are part of the long-term impetus towards Taiwan's liberalization and democratization. It has not been without bitterness that the authoritarian KMT regime based on a Leninist party structure has moved forward democratic rule.



However, political and social transformation in Taiwan has been profoundly significant for the people of Taiwan. Perhaps, Taiwan's democratic reform and political liberalization can serve as an example for communist China which often declares its intention to pursue political unification with Taiwan either through negotiating table or by force.

## CHAPTER 4

# THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE STATE AND THE MAINSTREAM AND ALTERNATIVE PRESS

### INTRODUCTION

Freedom of the press lies at the heart of the democratic process. Ideally, media democracy means that the people have equal access to the media. In the real world, this vision is undermined, because the media are often subject to state control and market censorship (Garnham, 1990; Habermas, 1989; Keane, 1991). Arguably, media democracy only exists on the condition that the press is relatively independent from political and economic pressures. Therefore, the defence of the freedom of the press is always a state for which to be strived, especially in an authoritarian society like Taiwan, where the press has been subjected to state control.

This chapter sets out a framework for the discussion of how the party-state has interfered with both the mainstream and alternative press to pursue its own communicative interests, and in what ways its intervention has been significantly diluted by the economic and democratic political forces generated by civil society. Underlining this discussion is the concept of dialectical control between the state and civil society. The liberalization of

civil society introduces the new dimension of power arising from the advance of social interest and scrutiny of state conduct. Thus, despite the authoritarian regime offering less media democracy, the possibility of autonomous communication by ordinary citizens still exists. Therefore, a search for models of democratic communication in Taiwan would involve an examination of not only the exploitative use of the mainstream media by the party-state, but also the development of underground media speaking on behalf of various dissenting groups that the party-state struggles to suppress.

## TAIWANESE REALITY

According to the liberal press model, one political role of news media is to publicize and scrutinize the actions of government on behalf of the citizens. Generally speaking, in a highly ideological and authoritarian system, the news media are often used as socializing agents for the ruling party or the government. Taiwan is a case in point.

The party-state has intervened in the media through involvement in the economics of the media, by controlling ownership and regulating journalistic performance for four decades. Although Taiwan has a highly commercial radio and television broadcast system as well as newspapers and periodicals, these media are also subject to substantial official control. Recently, apart from the electronic media which are still controlled by the party-state, the

development of democratisation and free market forces in Taiwanese society has significantly altered the nature of state censorship over the press.

### 1. The Party-state and the Press

The Nationalist party, also known as the Kuo Min Tang (KMT) in Taiwan was characterized as a one-party authoritarian regime from 1949 to the mid-1980s. In such a one-party state, the party is the key source of power, because all government agencies, representative bodies and civil organizations are tightly controlled by the KMT (Cheng Tun-jen, 1989:477; Chu Yun-han, 1992:17-18; Chou Yang-sun and Nathan, 1987:277-278; Huntington, 1991:12-13; Myers, 1987:1003; Tien Hung-mao, 1989:9-11). In Taiwan's case, the KMT enjoyed privileged access to the state, including its administrative, economic, judicial and ideological apparatuses, through which its nationalist heritage was disseminated into society.

Under KMT rule, the media were used to cultivate the KMT's nationalist programme and to motivate the people to actively support government policies. The media were also used to condemn those who opposed its governing system and national identity. For instance, according to the Radio and Television Law, the functions of radio and television enterprises are making known national policies and government orders, reporting news, making commentaries, promoting social education, developing Chinese culture,

providing decent recreation and enhancing public welfare.

According to the liberal press model, the media are independent of state authorities; thereby they perform as a watchdog making state authorities accountable to ordinary citizens. By contrast, in a highly ideological and authoritarian society, the media are integrated with state agencies and seen as socializing agents for the purpose of ideological purity.

According to the constitution, freedom of speech and freedom of the press are conceived as rights of all citizens in the Republic of China (ROC), fully guaranteed by the party-state. However, the KMT was in confrontation with communist China between 1949 to 1987, freedom of speech and freedom of press was suspended in accordance with martial law in order to maintain the security of the country. Since the KMT established its rule in 1949, an anti-communist policy has been adopted to justify its restriction of political and civil rights. The media are viewed as an ideological arm of the state, therefore, they have to function as an educator to promote the solidarity of the people and to strengthen the rule of law in accordance with the ideology of anti-communism. Furthermore, the media must challenge those who attempt to undermine this basic policy. For example, in 1958, in a speech to publishers, the late President Chiang Kai-shek insisted that the government welcomed newspapers criticizing its policies. Furthermore, there would be no great objections, even if newspapers should exercise greater freedom in commenting on public

affairs. But the President stressed that all criticisms should be made in a manner not contravening the fundamental interest of the nation (Hansen and Bishop, 1981:40).

In 1974, in a message for the Fourth Journalists' Conference, the late President Chiang Kai-shek urged that every journalist should accept responsibility for publicizing the greatness of the Three Principles of the People, attacking heresy and cultivating the people's conscience and desire to aspire for the better. In so doing, the journalists could help the government complete the sole task of the National Revolution (*The KMT's Fourth Journalists' Conference*, Sept. 1974).

In 1978, the late President Chiang Ching-kuo addressed the Fifth Journalists' Conference, he also urged local journalists to enhance the morale of the people and encourage the government's anti-communist policy.

'First, ... We must swear to be dedicated and courageous. We must be faithful and loyal to our country. We should support the government's anti-Communist policy all the way and fortify the nation's position and power....  
Second, ... I am convinced that in these times no one should undermine our constitutional foundations by spurning public opinion and giving false accounts of the facts....  
Third, ... I am convinced that no one should continue to seek private gain at the expense of the people, undermine stability, attempt to fish in troubled waters or put obstacles in the way of national progress....  
Fourth, ... I am convinced that there should be no one who continue to undermine social stability and peace with the intention of plunging the world into disorder by doing evil things and confusing the people with rumours....' (*China Yearbook*, 1978:31-34)

In sum, it is evident that the news media have been seen as socializing agents for the KMT government. By taking their social responsibilities, the news media should serve as a channel for enunciating state policy or

exercising ideological control, never act as the fourth estate which is independent of the government.

#### (1) The Party-state and the Press Control Machines

The state is the sole monopolistic source of judicial and coercive power (Held, 1989:41; Skocpol, 1993:310). A great volume of power that the KMT exercises over the media is mediated through the state apparatus.

The regulation of the news media in Taiwan was extensive from 1949 to 1988. Before 1988 deregulation, most of the laws and regulations implemented by the KMT to interfere in the media industry or journalistic performance were administrative ones. The KMT government tightly controlled the media in accordance with the following regulations: (1) the Publication Law (promulgated in 1952, revised in 1958 and 1973); (2) martial law (revised in 1948, again in 1949 and lifted in 1987); (3) the National General Mobilization Act (promulgated in 1942 and revised in 1949, abolished in 1991); (4) Sedition Law (promulgated in 1949); and (5) press bans (issued in 1950 and abolished in 1988).

In Taiwan, legal control of the news media has been directly operated by political authorities rather than judicial agencies. In general, three government or semi-government agencies are in charge of managing and regulating the news media: these are the Government Information Office (GIO) of the Executive Yuan, the Taiwan Garrison Command (TGC) under the Ministry of Defence and the Department of

Cultural Affairs (DCA) of the KMT.

According to the Publication Law, the GIO is in charge of the registration of newspapers, magazines and other publications. It empowers the GIO and the TGC to enact publishing bans and deny newspaper licenses, including disregarding court decisions. Under the rule of martial law, the TGC primarily suppressed the opposition periodical press from 1949 to 1987. The task of managing the political outlook of the press is left primarily to the DCA. The DCA coordinates contacts between the KMT's press branch and the network of party branches in individual news organizations.

(2) The Party-state Involvement in the Economics of the  
Press

Legally, the press industry in Taiwan had been heavily regulated by press bans known as the three restrictions implemented by the Executive Yuan between 1951 and 1988. The first restriction concerned the legal requirement for the registration of new newspapers. From the early 1960s to 1988 no licenses for new newspapers were issued. Accordingly, the KMT government foreclosed registration of new press licenses citing the need to conserve scarce foreign exchange for buying imported newsprint. Therefore, until 1988 the total number of newspapers in Taiwan was frozen at 31.

The second restriction concerned the regulation of the page limit. The government ordained a 6-page limit on all



newspapers before 1967, although it was revised several times. From 1967 to 1976 the number of pages was confined to 10, and between 1977 and 1987 12 pages were imposed on all newspapers (Wang Hung-chun, 1986:67). The maximum in 1988 rose from 12 to 20 pages (Wang Hung-chun, 1988:20). However, this provision allowed newspapers to include an extra 4 pages on special occasions, such as the Founding of the ROC (1 January), Youth Day (29 March), Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Day (5 April), Birthday of Confucius (28 September), National Day (10 October), Taiwan Restoration Day (25 October), Chiang Kai-shek's Birthday (31 October) and Constitution Day (25 December) (*The Manual of News Work*, 1956:44).

The third restriction was that the location of a newspaper's printing facility should be near to its intended area of distribution. Moreover, the price of all newspapers was set by the government and the Press Council, with no freedom for adjustment by the publisher or the market.

In addition to the regulation of the press industry previously mentioned, much of party-state intervention has involved fiscal advantages and subsidies being offered to promote better economic conditions for newspapers. The KMT government has heavily intervened in the economic infrastructure of the press since the mid-1950s. According to the *Manual of News Work* issued by the Taiwan Provincial Government, advantages, including tax rate, transportation rate and telecommunication rate concessions, have been provided by administrative agencies to the news media since

1956 (Wen Shih-kung, 1984:eight).

Moreover, the government has reduced taxation on advertising revenues and exemptions from sales taxes and duties on imported news print and ink to help the operating costs of the press. The newspapers in Taiwan are exempted from taxes on their profit. Unlike other businesses, the shares of newspapers are not sold on the open market. According to the regulation of the Department of Economics, any company with NT\$ 200 million (US\$ 8 million) in capital is required to make the transaction of shares public. However, two media conglomerates, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, each had an annual revenue of more than NT\$ 5 billion (US\$ 1.4 million) in 1985, and none of them were listed in the stock market (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 March 1987:40). The government only taxes 5% of the newspapers' advertising avenues. Also, tax privileges are granted in importing modern printing facilities. For instance, the newspaper industry has to pay duties on imported newsprint (10%) and on printing facilities (14%) (Lee Chin-chuan, 1987:65). This is far less than the duties which are paid by other publishing industries, such as the book and magazine sectors.

Furthermore, subsidies and loans are given to help cover the newspapers' operating expenses. Generally speaking, before the mid-1970s, almost all the newspapers in Taiwan were funded by the KMT government. The *Manual of News Work* published by the Taiwan Provincial Government in 1956, indicated that journalists had been subsidized as well

as civil servants since 1953. Furthermore, an official who was responsible for news work in the Taiwan Provincial Government pointed out that the privately owned papers including the two big paper groups were regularly asking the government for financial assistance to cover the costs of staff until the late 1960s (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991b:135). Also, they were dependent on government loans to upgrade print facilities and to build office blocks.

It is worth discussing how the DCA played an important role in providing financial assistance to help ensure the continued existence of some privately owned newspapers. Generally, these papers were not able to survive in an economically competitive marketplace. The main reason for the KMT's assistance for preserving politically docile, but economically weak papers was a wish not to increase the availability of newspapers which might introduce diverse views or opinions into the marketplace. In addition, by protecting existing small papers through the provision of funds, this helped most papers avoid being taken over by opposition groups and made them less willing to challenge the KMT regime. For instance, the DCA provided NT\$ 80 million (US\$ 2.2 million) to help the *Min Tsu Evening News* survive in 1982, and insisted that the paper should continue to be controlled by the founding family (*The Journalist*, 3-9 Aug. 1987:41). In 1986, with the DCA's endorsement, the *People's Daily* was given a loan of NT\$ 140 million (US\$ 4 million) by some banks in order to establish modern printing facilities (*Wealth*, April 1987:216). In 1987, Hwa Xia

Investment Holding Co. which is controlled by the KMT Central Finance Committee provided NT\$ 70 million (US\$ 1.7 million) to the *Great China Evening News* to help the paper compete more economically (*Wealth*, Nov. 1987:191).

Finally, the government provides financial assistance through public advertising and subscription to newspapers. For instance, the government provided 70% of advertising revenues for the newspapers in the 1950s (Lee Chin-chuan, 1991:13). The most prominent example of the government's indirect intervention in aiding the press is that 134,748 heads of neighbourhood and community associations have been subsidized to subscribe to the newspapers since 1970. Before the mid-1988, they had to subscribe to the party-state owned newspapers (*Brain*, May 1989:17). Also, the Ministry of Education has subsidized the *Central Daily News* to publish the Foreign Edition for students (including Chinese) studying abroad. Accordingly, the provision of funds was NT\$ 120 million (US\$ 4.8 million) in fiscal year 1988 which began 1 July and NT\$ 79 million (US\$ 3.2 million) in fiscal year 1989 (*Wealth*, May 1988:147). Another example is that the Central News Agency annually received more than NT\$ 250 million (US\$ 10 million) from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This provision of funds was used to help cover 80% of its operating expenses in 1991 (*Wealth*, March 1992:99).

Generally, before 1980 the newspapers published by the government and KMT authorities had a circulation advantage. For instance, public institutions, agencies and offices

ranging from national government bodies to local community centres, and even secondary and primary schools had to subscribe to these newspapers. Furthermore government enterprises, such as railways and bus stations, and even some tourist hostels often offered only these so-called public dailies for sale (Tien Hung-mao, 1989:200). By contrast, public institutions, agencies and offices were rarely permitted to subscribe to either the *Independence Evening Post* or the *People's Daily News* which are best known for a relatively critical stance and balanced coverage on politically sensitive issues (Berman, 1992:143).

### (3) The Party-state Intervention in Control over Ownership

Media control is exercised through the complex interplay between legal structural constraints and control of ownership (Murdock, 1982:123-125). Before 1988, apart from state intervention in the economics of the press, the KMT also involved itself directly in the ownership of some of the media and in preventing political opponents from taking over the privately owned media.

#### 3.1 The Party-state Ran a Third of Newspapers

As mentioned previously, from 1960 to 1988, the number of newspapers was 31, because the government foreclosed registration of new press licenses.

By 1988 Taiwan had 31 newspapers, 19 of these were privately owned, while 4 were run by the KMT and the government, and 6 by the military. Taiwan's press structure can be explained by two variables: newspaper ownership and geographical scope of circulation.

According to Table 4-1 (p.159), geographically, Taiwan's newspapers can be classified into three categories: island wide, regional and local before 1988. The 8 newspapers in the island-wide category published local editions readily available only in the relevant portion of the island. The same first four pages and the supplement of each issue were distributed throughout Taiwan, but local editions of the island-wide newspapers typically covered such areas as the Great Pingtung Plain and Eastern Taiwan. The local edition of an island-side paper gave extensive coverage about areas of the island.

The regional newspapers were circulated over about half of the island, but distribution patterns naturally depended on the paper's place of publication. Papers in the regional category published one edition to appeal to the entire market. This was accomplished by printing local pages such as a Central Taiwan page, a Cha-nan Plain page and so on.

Generally, local newspapers located in a county seat, tended to restrict local coverage to their home town and its neighbouring counties. These newspapers usually depended on news agencies for non-local coverage.

Table 4-1 (p.159) also shows that 7 newspapers were affiliated with the KMT and the government. Three of them--

the *Central Daily News* and the *Chinese Daily News* (northern and southern editions) were directly owned by the KMT. The *Central Daily News* was the official publication of the KMT Central Standing Committee. Its editorial line and treatment of controversial issues exposed the current views of the party's policy makers and set the direction of the others. The *Chinese Daily News* was a primarily KMT controlled paper including southern and northern editions. Unlike the *Central Daily News*, the *Chinese Daily News* emphasized local news and also 'soft' news.

Various government agencies controlled 8 newspapers. The *Shin-sheng Pao* Company, an affiliate of the Taiwan Provincial Government issued two dailies: the *Hsin Sheng Pao* in Taipei, and the *Taiwan News Journal* in Kaohsiung. The circulation of the latter was limited to southern Taiwan. The other 4 newspapers were associated with the General Political Department in the Ministry of Defence: the *Youth Daily News* (previously known as the *Youth Soldier News*), *Matsu Daily News*, *Kinmen Daily News*, *Chung Chen News*, *China Daily News* and *Taiwan Daily News*. Except for *Taiwan Daily News* and *China Daily News*, their circulation was mainly confined to active military personnel and students and their editorial policies maintained a strongly conservative tone.

When privately owned newspapers are examined, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* are in the island-wide category. The *United Daily News* was the flagship of a newspaper conglomerate which owned two other newspapers: the *Economic Daily News* and the *Min Sheng Pao*. The *China Times*

was the centrepiece of another conglomerate which also included one daily, the *Industrial and Commercial Times*.

The three Taipei evening newspapers (the *Independence Evening Post*, the *Min Tsu Evening News*, the *Great China Evening News*) formed a specific category of the regional press. Circulation generally remained restricted to the northern part of the island. The *China Post* and the *China News* were two English papers that form another category within the regional press.

Another privately owned paper, the *Mandarin Daily News* was unique for its use of 40 phonetic symbols next to the Chinese characters and was intended for primary students and aimed to help adult readers to learn Mandarin.

### 3.2 Interlocking Relations Between Publishers and the KMT

Generally speaking, the KMT intervenes in the press, especially the privately-run papers, through interlocking relationships. Before 1988's deregulation, most publishers of privately owned papers were more or less associated with the KMT-- for instance, the owners of two media conglomerates, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, monopolised approximately 80% of newspaper circulation. There were Yu Chi-chung and Wang Tih-wu, whose political power was symbolized by their position on the KMT's highest decision organ--the Central Standing Committee.

By examining the social backgrounds of the newspaper



publishers, it becomes clear that there is a high degree of media-political elite integration. Firstly, the publishers of government and party owned newspapers are linked by their common pattern of education. Most have either gone to Central Chengchi School or National Chengchi University, with the former being established to train information officers for the KMT. As for the publishers of military newspapers, they have all graduated from the Political Warfare College of the Ministry of National Defence which was built up to educate information officers for the armed forces.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, personal appointments, among publishers of party and government owned papers and political elites in the party and the government often follow a path of inter-institutional circulation. In general, they may start at government (party) agencies, then transfer to the newspaper publishers, and back to the higher ranking posts in the government or the party.<sup>2</sup>

When the social backgrounds of the publishers of privately owned newspapers are analyzed, three patterns are found. Firstly, the vast majority of publishers, especially the mainlanders are closely associated with the KMT. Table 4-2 (p.160) shows that 13 out of 15 newspapers' publishers are KMT party members. For example, the owners of two newspaper conglomerates, Wang Tih-wu and Yu Chi-chung were

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<sup>1</sup>Data compiled by the researcher based on *Who's Who* published by China Book Corporation in 1978 and *China Yearbook* (1949-1988) published by the Government Information Office of the Executive Yuan.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

members of Central Standing Committee which is the highest organ of the KMT. Wei Chun-mung served as Director-General of Government Information Office, while Yu-Huang Nancy was with the KMT Central Advisory Council. Keng Hsiu-yeh and Wan Jung-taw worked for the *Central Daily News* as editors-in-chief before they established their own newspapers.

Secondly, four privately owned newspapers were published by the Taiwanese. Two of them are considered relatively independent on many politically sensitive issues. Wu San-lien, publisher of the *Independence Evening Post*, was a well-regarded non-KMT political figure and served as Taipei's mayor in the opposition party. The *People's Daily News* publisher Li Jei-piao, was a businessman with four owners more or less related to private business enterprises.

A third pattern is that the privately owned newspapers display a highly-concentrated pattern of ownership which may be characterized as being family ownership centred. Table 4-2 (p.160) points out that the privately owned newspapers whether controlled by the mainlanders or Taiwanese were largely dominated by their original founding families and their associates.

### 3.3 The Party-state Involvement in the Takeover of the Newspapers

Before 1988, in addition to owning a significant number of newspapers, the KMT government tactically controlled the privately owned newspapers by ensuring these remained in the

hands of loyal KMT backers. Generally speaking, the existing licenses for newspapers were allowed to be traded, but only the people who were politically affiliated with the KMT could participate in any ownership transaction. Apart from that, the high price of these licenses effectively prevented groups who challenged the KMT from acquiring the press.

The KMT government had heavily intervened in the transfer of newspaper ownership during the period of 1970-1985. For instance, under the mediation of the KMT, the *United Daily News* acquired the *Hwa Pao* for NT\$ 40 million (US\$ 1 million) in 1977, and the *China Times* took over the ownership of the *Mass Daily* for NT\$ 21 million (US\$ 520,000) in 1978 (*Wealth*, April 1986:174-175). As has been noted previously, the owners of these two paper groups, Wang Tih-wu and Yu Chi-chung are closely associated with the KMT.

A notable case in the transfer of newspaper ownership is the *Taiwan Daily News*. The *Taiwan Daily News* known as an outspoken newspaper which did not black out news on opposition activities was sold to the KMT for US\$ 2.2 million in 1978 (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 Sept. 1978:22). Moreover, the KMT purchased the *Commercial and Industrial Daily News* with a price of NT\$ 60 million (US\$ 1.5 million) in 1982 in order to prevent it from being taken over by opposition groups (*Wealth*, April 1987:230). Shortly after, the DCA also invested NT\$ 90 million (US\$ 2.5 million) in modernizing its equipment and facilities. In 1985, the Department of Defence took control of the *People*

Voice with a price of NT\$ 100 million (US\$ 2.5 million) (*Wealth*, April 1987:179).

#### (4) The Party-state Involvement in the Regulation of Journalistic Practice

##### 4.1 Content Regulations

Under sets of laws and regulations, the KMT government is empowered to censor the contents of news media, in order to protect national defence secrets, maintain social order, and first and foremost to curtail the voice of its political opponents. Generally speaking, Taiwan's publications were banned through violating some vague restrictions. According to martial law which was in force from 1949 to 1988, the TGC could prohibit newspapers, magazines photographs, postcards and other printed materials deemed harmful to the military.

After an examination of the regulations related to publications, it becomes clear that most of the regulations are designed to suppress political dissent and punish individuals involved in the production and distribution of politically undesirable print matter. Except for the Publication Law, religious and moral issues are not of direct concern. Article 33 of the Publication Law stipulates, 'no publication shall make comments on a lawsuit currently under investigation or pending judgement, or on the judicial personnel handling the case, or on the parties concerned; nor shall it publish details of debates about a lawsuit closed to the public'.

Martial law empowered the TGC to conduct pre-circulation censorship of printed materials which was deemed supportive of the Chinese communists, slandered the head of state, stirred up animosity between government and the people, or violated the national policy of anticommunism.

Furthermore, the Regulation for the Censorship of Wartime Publications declared that publication was forbidden, if it made any attempt to: (1) reveal any secret documents of a military, diplomatic or any other official organ without authorization; (2) support the Chinese communists; (3) slander the head of state; (4) violate the national policy of anti-communism; (5) stir up animosity between the government and the people; (6) impair public morals and (7) endanger the public peace. Furthermore, Article 6 of the Seditious Law prescribed a prison sentence of seven years to life for those convicted on the charge of 'disseminating false news with the intent of confusing public opinion'. Article 7 prescribed a minimum prison term of seven years to anyone 'providing propaganda benefit to the bandit rebels (Chinese communists) through writing, illustration or speech'.

In sum, the essence of these laws and regulations was to ensure that the publications conform to the KMT's basic policy. This means that under regulations such issues as the relaxation of martial law and other emergency decrees, the continued unchallenged rule of the KMT, news of the political opposition, the KMT's refusal of contacts with Beijing, the KMT's rejection of independence for Taiwan, the

military's role in Taiwan's politics and personal matters of Chiang's family were not open for discussion.

#### 4.2 Informal Control

The KMT party apparatus has played an important role in monitoring media activities, especially before the mid-1980s. Generally, the DCA which coordinates contacts between the KMT's press branch and the network of party branches in individual news organizations is responsible for managing the political rectitude of the press.

One task of managing the press is to convey KMT policies about press work and to transmit party directives on the format and content of the media. In order to fulfil this aim, the DCA held five work conferences for the news media between 1963 and 1978 (*China Yearbook*, 1963, 1964, 1969, 1974 and 1978).

For example, more than 200 newswriters participated in the Fourth Press Work Conference held in April 1974. The participants included (1) 131 KMT publishers, board chairmen or general managers of newspapers and electronic media, plus editors and department heads from all major media; (2) 100 KMT party functionaries in charge of propaganda activities in the party or government administrations; and (3) 13 KMT scholars and experts specializing in communications (*The KMT's Fourth Press Work Conference*, 1974:83-88).

At the conference four themes were widely discussed. These were (1) how to bring press policy in line with the

Three Principles of the People, (2) how to mobilize the media to support the nation's development programmes, (3) how to coordinate the media's anti-People's Republic of China coverage through joint efforts with party and government offices, and (4) how to improve the content and management of the mass media to serve the interests of the nation.

As elaborated previously, publishers and top editors of major newspapers are party loyalists. They usually act as gatekeepers to prevent certain kinds of information from reaching their audience. Broadly speaking, the journalists who failed to follow the party line, were punished through reprimands by party officials, or by being transferred to less desirable posts, or even by dismissal. Sometimes, KMT officials would approach reporters about how the party hoped to see certain issues covered. Very often the pressure imposed on reporters did not involve direct contact by officials, but through a superior who gave warnings about their possible loss of employment (Jacobs, 1976:786). For example, when the Sino-British agreement on Hong Kong's future was signed in 1984, the DCA instructed the press not to print the text of the agreement. After the full text was discovered in the *United Daily News*, the chief editor Chao Yu-ming was removed from his position (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 Dec. 1985:26).

More importantly, some tactics have been used by DCA officials to ensure that news coverage is within politically acceptable boundaries. Before the mid-1980s, the DCA

frequently made phone calls to editors with instructions or suggestions on how a story should be treated (Hansen and Bishop, 1981:42).

Generally, events concerning electoral campaigns or other major political events, whether domestic or foreign, that may have affected the political stability needed special handling. Therefore, the DCA usually met the publishers and top editors of major newspapers in advance to discuss the proper orientation of press coverage to the event concerned. For example, on 19 November 1977, a mass protest against alleged irregularities in counting votes took place in the Central Taiwan town of Chungli. In this instance, a serious clash between angry voters and the police occurred. Consequently, a district police station was burned and a number of casualties were reported. On that day, the GIO met the newspaper's publishers and editors and laid down three guidelines for the press to deal with the first major outbreak of popular anti-government violence in 30 years. At the GIO's requests, the news stories pertaining to the incident were not allowed to appear on the front page or make the main headlines. Also, no photographs in connection with the riots were allowed to get into print (*The Journalist*, 23-39 Nov. 1987:37). As a result of this pressure, all newspapers complied with the GIO's restrictions.

In 1983 the U.S. edition of the *China Times* violated unwritten taboos by running a front page story about the achievements of athletes from China at the Los Angeles



Summer Olympics. Its owner Yu Chi-chung was condemned by the KMT's conservatives (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 Dec. 1985:26). After two years of operation, the paper was forced to close down in November 1984 (*Track of the Times*, 1991:78). Another notable case is when the *People's Daily News* was charged with violating the Publication Law in 1985. On 10 June 1985, the *People's Daily News* published six out of eight news items regarding Communist China on its front page. In this instance, the GIO took an unprecedented administrative measure against the *People's Daily News* by suspending its publication for seven days (Chen Kuo-hsiang and Chu Ping, 1987:210-211).

Since the mid-1980s, press comment has been far more open than the previous 10 years yet the party cultural department remains active in advising editors on how to handle certain sensitive topics. On 28 September 1986, the DCA met with the editors of the major newspapers with suggestions that they should drop news stories regarding the formation of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). In this instance, the major newspapers, such as the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* were reluctant to completely toe the party line, in part due to market competition. They still printed stories about this event, although it was treated lightly (*Wealth*, Feb. 1990:170).

## **2. Liberalization of Civil Society and the Press**

In Taiwan, commercial journalism emerged between 1970 and

1980. During this period, the growth of the economy led to social pluralism, urbanization, and increased mass exposure to the media. More importantly, popular demands for more civil and political rights led to a challenge of the KMT's authoritarian rule and a demand among readers for a range of opinion.

Between 1960 and 1980, Taiwan's gross national product increased at an annual rate of 9%; its exports expanded by around 20% a year; the average annual individual growth rate increased from 25 to 45% (*GNP Per Capita In Taiwan, 1988*). High growth in the industrial sectors not only changed patterns of employment, but also brought about the growth in advertising investment. Moreover, high growth rates for income had meant widespread improvements in the living standards for residents. As a consequence, they were able to spend more money on purchasing consumer goods and cultural items, resulting in record rates of ownership for televisions, radios, magazines and daily newspapers. For example, the ownership of newspapers increased significantly from 9.7% to 14.1% between 1976 and 1979 (*Taiwan Social Index:1989*).

Newspaper sales rose from 1.8 million to 3.5 million between 1976 and 1979 (*China Publication Yearbook, 1981:16*). During the period of 1976-9, advertising investment in newspapers increased from an estimated NT\$ 1.94 billion to NT\$ 4.42 billion (Yen Po-chin, 1987:67).

In the early 1970s, in order to cope with the change in the audience market the major newspapers deliberately

invested in new printing plant and new printing technology. For example, the *United Daily News* (1971), the *China Times* (1971), the *Taiwan News Journal* (1976), the *Central Daily News* (1963), the *Chinese Daily News* (southern edition) (1971), the *Min Tsu Evening News* (1971), and the *Independence Evening Post* (1971) built new offices and printing plant and all adopted new technologies, such as high speed printing machines (Lee Jang, 1975:96-98).

In western countries, the growth of the concentration of ownership and competition for advertising patronage has significantly narrowed the range of ideas in the print media (Bagdikian, 1985:104; Sparks, 1992a:40-42). In Taiwan's case, the audience market and advertising played a crucial role in emancipating newspapers from state economic control. Commercial interests and consumer pressure sometimes force the papers to run counter to the political establishment. As a result, Taiwan's papers maintain a degree of independence that is not found in many other authoritarian regimes (Berman, 1992:156).

Because of economic growth in the early 1970s, most privately owned newspapers, especially the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, are no longer reliant on government advertising. However, at that moment the economic interests in a commercial media system were not powerful enough to override KMT directives. The reasons are several. At first, no new papers were allowed to be established in accordance with the press bans and all the existing papers were still controlled by or affiliated to the KMT.

Secondly, the political opposition forces derived from Taiwan society were not strong enough to create an audience market in which the politically independent papers could come into existence.

According to the Taiwanese experience, competition for audience markets may not necessarily threaten the media marketplace of ideas, especially the papers operating in a rapidly changing political environment. Under such circumstances, the gap between the number of ideas in society and the number of ideas in the media is great, therefore, the alternative opinions and ideas are easily introduced into the marketplace. For instance, in the early 1980s, so-called liberal papers emerged in response to the steady development of the political opposition. These papers deliberately ran counter to the KMT or at least distanced themselves from the party line in order to attract an audience which was ignored in the market. For instance, on 2 December 1986, thousands of opposition supporters clashed with troops at Chiang Kai-shek International Airport. In this instance, the *Independence Evening Post* was the only paper to cover that the demonstrators were bullied by the police (Chen Kuo-hsiang and Chu Ping, 1987:209). The *Independence Evening Post* and the *People's Daily News* enjoyed a great boost in their sales, because they turned the spotlight on the political opposition in the first half of 1980s.

The role that two major newspapers, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* played in the political transition was

much more complex. Traditionally, these two big paper groups were politically affiliated to the KMT. Furthermore, they seemed to collaborate with the KMT in suppressing the opposition (Lee Chin-chuan, 1991:48). This was particularly true by the mid-1980s.

In the late 1980s, the KMT was no longer an unified party. Faced with a divided KMT, the political orientation taken by these two rival papers was quite different. The *United Daily News* displayed an ideological kinship with the KMT's conservatives, while the *China Times* was associated with the liberal wing (Lee Chin-chuan, 1991:47). The role that the *United Daily News* played in reporting KMT's political conflict was very controversial. For instance, it was widely accused of participating in the KMT's internal battles in February 1990 and November 1992, and condemned as biased in favour of the party's conservative wing, a grouping who directly challenged Taiwan's first native-born president (*Wealth*, Jan. 1993:237 and 253).

Under the commercial media system, the economic power with the readers is another force generated from civil society to shape the papers' policy (Murdock, 1980:42). In Taiwan's case, the consumers exercised little influence on the journalistic performance. Even though, in 1977, the *United Daily News* failed to cover the Chungli anti-government riot that resulted in a subscription cancellation movement targeted at the paper (Berman, 1992:140).

In post-martial law Taiwan, the pressure from readers to loosen the media's ties with the KMT took place

occasionally. For instance, hundreds of opposition supporters gathered to throw eggs and stones at the Taiwan Television Corporation (TTV) to protest about unbalanced coverage on 5 April 1988 (*The Independence Daily Post*, 6 April 1988:1).

In May 1990, some liberal scholars campaigned to boycott the *United Daily News* (*Wealth*, Jan. 1993:237). The 'Return Papers, Save Taiwan' campaign launched by the opposition groups on 23 November 1992 was the most well organized and comprehensive campaign to protest against the *United Daily News*. In addition to encourage the readers to end their subscription, the campaigners persuaded businessmen to stop running advertising in this paper. Accordingly, the circulation of the *United Daily News* reduced 80,000 copies and lost 20% of its advertising revenues during the time period of the campaigns (*Wealth*, Jan. 1993:241).

Coverage of opposition movements is a specific example of how the media have been shaped by market forces and political influence. In Taiwan, the political opposition movement launched by the Taiwanese to challenge the KMT's legitimacy emerged in the mid-1970s and by the mid-1980s had gained a strong foothold. Since the political opposition has been viewed as a threat to KMT rule, censorship is inevitably imposed on the media to limit the political debate.

Generally, the press was compliant with the party in reporting the opposition before 1980. Firstly, almost all

newspapers deliberately suppressed or diluted the news regarding the opposition. For instance, when a debate about elections to the national parliament took place on 7 December 1971 at the National Taiwan University, publicity had been substantial and a large number of people including many reporters attended the debate. The next day, however, only one of over 20 newspapers reported the debate (Jacobs, 1976:786). In reporting parliamentary activities, the opposition lawmakers hardly received media attention before 1980 (see Table 4-3, p.161). In contrast, the officials and KMT lawmakers were prominent in the news coverage.

Secondly, before 1980 the political opposition movement was portrayed as a tiny minority who threatened national security and social stability. For instance, in coverage of the Formosa Incident which occurred in 1979, the opposition were labelled as follows: (1) they were people with a military intention to overthrow the government (traitors, rebels, insurrectionalists, communists); (2) they were people with a violent tendency (insurgents, saboteurs, mobs, militants, agitators, rioters, troublemakers); (3) they were irrational people (psychopaths, crazy, egocentric, conspirators); (4) they were extremists and radicals; (5) they were criminals, not decent members of society (gangsters, lawbreakers); (6) they were the marginal members of society (aliens, deviants, minority, outsiders) (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991b:290). Since the opposition was attributed as the source of violence and chaos, the authorities were encouraged to take tough coercive action against them,

rather than to conduct political and constitutional reform (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991b:307; Cheng Jei-cheng and Chen Sheue-yun, 1991:86-87).

In the mid-1980s, the press was faced with both market competition and a rapidly changing political climate. During this period, only the party-state controlled newspapers still treated the opposition as a violent criminal group. By contrast, this negative coverage of the opposition group in the privately-run papers was significantly decreased.

The privately owned newspapers, such as the *Independence Evening Post* and the *People's Daily News* began to take a openly defiant tone with the government by the mid-1980s. For instance, the *Independence Evening Post* began to pay attention to the opposition's publicity. Its coverage of non-violent public gatherings and mass rallies organized by the opposition to challenge the KMT was more extensive than the other papers (see Table 4-3, p.161). Taking as an example the *Independence Daily Post*, throughout its 1986 and 1987 coverage of mass rallies launched by the opposition, liberal scholars' and opposition leaders' statements were frequently quoted. In these statements, apart from calling for respect for law and order, they suggested that the KMT government should adopt proper policing devices and reform the political system in order to defuse the violent situation (Chen Sheue-yun, 1991b:314).

Apart from political information, Taiwan's newspapers like the commercial papers published in western societies,



began to increase non-political material including consumer information and human interest stories in order to meet demands from cross-sections of the readership. For instance, in 1984, all major newspapers began to significantly devote more space to coverage of private affairs in order to adjust to increasing market competition. Compared to 1975's coverage, these newspapers increasingly carried news related to cultural, religious, entertainment, scientific and medical affairs (see Table 4-4, p.162). After 1988, the government-ordained 12-page limit on all the papers was lifted, and there was an increase in the number of pages used to cover features and news concerned with private affairs, such as the stock market, consumer information, entertainment features, sports, travel information, leisure activities and so on (Wang Hung-chun, 1988:22). Despite this, crime news also received great attention with, for instance, many sensationalist strategies being employed, such as big headlines, big pictures, investigative journalism and dramatic reports.

In sum, free-market forces can be seen to have played a positive role in contributing to the county's political development. However, in the late 1980s, the concentration of ownership which started by the late 1970s has become significant. Like the press tycoons in western countries, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* had sufficient power to drive out the small and weak competitors in the marketplace.

The big leading papers-- the *China Times* and the *United*

*Daily News* began to increase their dominance in the marketplace by the late 1970s. For instance, due to political privilege the *United Daily News* acquired the *Public Forum* published by an opposition politician Li Wan-chu in 1967, and renamed it as the *Economic Daily News*. Furthermore, in 1978, the *United Daily News* bought the license of the *Hwa Pao*, and renamed it *Ming Sheng Pao*. The *China Times* also took over the publication of the *Mass Daily* and changed its name to the *Industrial and Economic Times* in 1978 (*Wealth*, April 1987:149).

In the early 1980s, the *United Daily Group* owned: (1) five newspapers: three published domestically (the *United Daily News*, the *Economic Daily News* and *Min Sheng Pao*) and two published abroad for the overseas Chinese (The New York-based *World Journal* and *Europe Journal* in Paris); (2) three magazines: *The China Tribune* (an academic bi-monthly) and *The Historical Journal* (an academic monthly), *The United Literature* (an academic monthly); (3) a book-publishing company; (4) one news agency: the English-language China Economic News Service. At present, the *United Daily Group* owns 4 newspapers.

At the beginning of 1980, the *China Times Group* owned: (1) two newspapers: the *China Times* and the *Industrial And Economic Times*; (2) three magazines: *The China Times Weekly* ( a general-interest weekly), *The China Times Economic And Business Weekly*, and a U. S. edition of *China Times Weekly* (published in New York); (3) two publishing companies; (4) a transport firm. At present, the total number of

newspapers owned by the *China Times* Group is 3.

Furthermore, the prevailing market forces were favourable to these two newspaper groups. By the early 1980s, in terms of circulation, the dominance of the two newspaper conglomerates had become strengthened. For example, in 1985 the *United Daily News* and the *China Times*, each had a circulation of between 1 and 1.2 million copies that accounted for about two-thirds of Taiwan's total newspaper sales (Goldstein, 1985:27). In the early 1990s, the two conglomerates controlled an estimated 80% of newspaper sales (*Wealth*, Feb. 1990:144).

Furthermore, the two big newspaper conglomerates began to attract much of the available advertising revenue. For instance, in 1979, they collected about 35% to 45% of all newspaper advertising revenue (Jen Pao-chin, 1987:140 and 142). In 1980, they accounted for over 50% of total advertising expenditure on newspapers (Jen Pao-chin, 1987:120). By 1985, the two newspaper conglomerates attracted more than 60% of total advertising revenue (Goldstein, 1986:27). They also secured more than 70% of the country's newspaper advertising revenue of NT\$ 200 million (US\$ 8 million) in 1986 (Berman, 1992:142).

In January 1988, restrictions on the publication of new newspapers were lifted. Under such circumstances, any citizen was free to start his paper. Therefore, papers which impartially represented consumer demands and quality and diversity of information were expected to appear. At the same time, through intensive competition over market

share, a growing liberalization in reporting and press commentary was also assumed.

After this deregulation, a process of consolidation took place in Taiwan's press market. By the early 1990s, the newly-launched papers which were financially insecure and relatively small eventually lost out in the marketplace. Only the papers which affiliated to the established ones held enough circulation to continue publishing. Accordingly, the most successful new papers were the *United Evening News* and the *China Times Express* which were owned by the two large paper groups (*Wealth*, Feb. 1990:126).

While the Government Information Office (GIO) issued 203 paper licenses, only 97 were actually used to publish the newspapers (*China Yearbook*, 1988:1102). In 1989, among 275 licensed publishers only 50 persons ran their business on a regular basis (*Wealth*, Feb. 1990:125).

The prevailing market conditions worked against the newly-established papers for several reasons. Firstly, the newspaper market reached saturation point in the late 1980s. For instance, the circulation of newspapers did not sharply increase after new papers joined the market. In fact, multiple household purchases of newspapers declined in 1988. Part of the explanation can be attributed to their expensive price and homogeneous content (Wang Hung-chun, 1988:24).

Secondly, levels of expenditure in the press industry increased, therefore the total investment required to launch a new newspaper needs to be considered. In general, the capital required to establish a newspaper must cover several

aspects: costs of editorial staff, typesetting, platemaking, working office space, and the circulation which newspapers need to reach before they break even. In Taiwan's case, the total costs required to establish a newspaper in 1987 was NT\$ 2 billion (US\$ 60 million) (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 March, 1987:39). The progressive escalation in the operating costs acts as a barrier to entry into the market. Perhaps, the largest constraint for new papers is the fact that the two large paper groups have drained off much of the available advertising revenue. Therefore, the chances of a new paper surviving in the marketplace are relatively limited. For instance, the *Capital Morning Post* was the first opposition paper since 1963 published by a former DPP legislator, Kang Ning-hsiang in June 1989. Due to difficulties in attracting advertising, the *Capital Morning Post* was closed down after only 15 months operation and with a loss of US\$ 16 million (Lee Chin-chuan, 1991:50).

For the old established newspapers, with the exception of the two newspaper conglomerates, circulation of many newspapers has declined, especially those newspapers who followed the government line. For instance, in the late 1980s, the *Central Daily News* had a circulation of less than 100,000 copies, compared with a circulation of 140,000 in 1971 (Lee Chin-chuan, 1991:17 and 51).

In Taiwan, the party state had played a key role in regulating the press until the easing of press regulations in 1988. With the sharp decline in state power in 1987, the

market, which was once viewed as the safeguard against party-state interference, has actually become a new source of threat to press freedom.

## **2. The State and Opposition Media**

It is true that all less powerful groups have difficulties in gaining access to the mainstream media. It is equally true that they often operate alternative media to create a sphere where their experiences, ideas and opinions are conveyed. However, the fact that the small-scale media are used by particular groups to communicate with society is often neglected (Downing, 1988:168-169). In the Taiwanese experience, the political opposition was the most important seedbed of many alternative media. The coincidence of the development of the political opposition which began in the mid-1970s, building steadily until the mid-1980s, the boundaries of the alternative public sphere were gradually expanded.

As mentioned early, the most striking characteristic of the press laws in Taiwan is the state's perceived right to control and censor the media, especially the opposition media. Under martial law, a diverse and formidable array of censorship techniques were used by the KMT authorities to suppress the opposition press. The opposition also developed methods to evade the state censorship.

Because of the KMT government's tight control over the news media, the opposition in Taiwan has traditionally been

denied access to the newspapers and television. Therefore, from 1960 to the mid-1980s, magazines had served as the most important medium through which a link existed between the public and the opposition groups. In post-martial law Taiwan, the opposition also operated some underground television stations to communicate their political ideas.

### (1) The Opposition Press

In Taiwan's case, the opposition political movements from the *Free China Group* in 1950 to the formation of the Democratic Progress Party (DPP) in 1986 centred around political magazines. Although the opposition is allowed to convey its political viewpoints through magazines, there are considerable inconveniences and high risks involved. A short life span very much characterizes almost every magazine which is linked to the opposition. Before 1980, opposition magazines, such as the *Taiwan Political Review* and *Formosa* only lasted five issues. Between 1980 and 1989, every opposition magazine published was suspended or banned after no more than two issues (Berman, 1992:190).

#### 1.1 The Censorship Machines

Before the lifting of martial law, the censorship of opposition magazines in Taiwan was carried out under the various laws and regulations relating to publications. Censorship meant the banning or confiscation of a single

issue of a magazine or the suspension of its publication, usually for one year.

From 1949 to 1987, the Taiwan Garrison Command (TGC) and the Government Information Office (GIO) were two powerful regulatory bodies which monitored opposition publications, especially the TGC.

The publication Law enforced by the GIO of the Executive Yuan addressed the registration of magazines. According to Article 9, the publisher of a magazine must submit application forms prior to publishing the first issue to the special municipal government in whose area the publishing establishment is to be located. This is then forwarded to the provincial government concerned. After screening the application and finding all the information therein to conform with prescribed criteria, the special municipal or provincial government shall recommend approval to the GIO for issuance of the registration certificate.

Apart from the authority to deny registration, the GIO is also empowered to suspend publication in which articles are deemed seditious or likely to incite social disorder. Article 41 stipulates that the GIO may revoke the registration of a publication on the following grounds: (1) that the publication is found guilty in law of sedition or treason, or of instigating others to sedition or treason; or (2) if continues to publish indecent articles, which are offensive against public morals or may incite others to commit offences against public morals, or have been subjected to suspension for a specified period of time more



than three times.

More importantly, the Publication Law gives the GIO the authority to take some administrative measures against publications which disregard judicial decisions. According to Article 36, these administrative measures include (1) issuing a warning; (2) imposing a fine; (3) prohibiting the sale, distribution or importation of the publication in question or the seizure or confiscation of the publication; (4) the suspension of the publication for a specified period of time; or (5) revoking the registration of the publication.

The TGC was an arm of the Ministry of Defence and had served as the KMT government's main tool in suppressing the opposition press from 1949 to 1987. Thus, under martial law, the TGC was empowered to censor publications. According to the Provisional Regulations Governing the Registration of Periodicals, the contents of the publications should not as such slander the head of state, stir up animosity between the government and the people, or violate the national policy of anticommunist. Martial law was replaced by the State Security Law in 1987, and the TGC's provisions were incorporated into the Publication Law.

## 1.2 The Evolution of the Opposition Magazines

The opposition magazines reflected the development of the political opposition movement that has emerged since the mid-1970s. In general, the *Taiwan Political Review*, a

monthly published by a Taiwanese politician Kang Ning-hsiang in August 1975 was viewed as the first of the opposition magazines. Before the 1970s, there were some outspoken political magazines, such as *Free China* and *University*. These journals were published by the KMT's liberal intellectuals, and even financially sponsored by the KMT, but a hard editorial line was taken pressing the KMT government to promote political reform and a genuine constitutional democracy.

The *Taiwan Political Review* was suspended for one year, after publishing its fifth issue. The circulation of the *Taiwan Political Review* was 25,000 (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 Jan. 1976:19; Jacobs, 1976:787).

In 1979, magazines began to serve as the chief organizational and ideological instruments around which the opposition was organized. In August 1979, *Formosa* was published by leading members of the opposition movements, such as Huang Hsin-chieh, Yao Chia-wen, Chang Chun-hung, Hsu Hsin-liang, Lin Yi-hsiung and Shih Ming-te. *Formosa* published five issues and faced the threat of confiscation with each. Finally, *Formosa* was closed down in December 1979, because its publisher and editors were arrested for provoking a riot known as the Kaohsiung Incident and charged with an attempt to overthrow the government. The circulation of *Formosa* at this time was between 62,000 and 94,000 (Lin Cheng-yi, 1989:106).

Generally, the *Taiwan Political Review* and *Formosa* represented Taiwanese dissatisfaction with KMT rule. They

shared the same political aims: (1) an abolition of martial law, (2) increased civil rights for Taiwan, (3) parliamentary reform so that representation reflects the governing constituency, (4) direct election of the city mayors and the Taiwan provincial governor, (5) a free press, (6) the legalization of opposition parties, (7) amnesty for political prisoners, (7) an independent judiciary, and (8) removal of KMT control from schools, military and media. However, *Formosa* sought confrontation with the government, and appealed emotionally to the social discontent among the public and based its tactics on mass mobilization. In contrast the *Taiwan Political Review* proceeded with caution and called for changes in the KMT government rule through parliamentary politics (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 28 Dec. 1979:27).

In the first half of the 1980s, because of liberalization of civil society, a great number of new opposition magazines came into existence. Heavy censorship of the opposition magazines also took place during this period. Since the opposition movement in Taiwan was always involved in publishing magazines, the opposition press inevitably reflected the diversity of the opposition itself. In the early 1980s, the opposition press regained its momentum. Furthermore, two major editorial lines emerged from various magazines during this period. One was moderate magazines, the other militant. The moderate magazines included *Asia*, *Warm Current* and *Progress Weekly*; their political viewpoints could be traced back to the *Taiwan*

*Political Review*. The moderate reformers took electoral politics as the main avenue for achieving parliamentary democracy. Apart from criticizing the KMT's dominance and demanding political reform, the moderate magazines also advocated incremental reforms and acknowledged the KMT's dominant role in the political process. By contrast, the militant magazines emphasized the need to build a mass movement to force reform upon an unwilling KMT and cultivate a popular Taiwanese consciousness (Lu Ya-li, 1985:159-161). *New Trends*, *Striking Roots*, *Deep Plough*, *New Movement Weekly*, *New Line*, *New Perspective* and *Freedom Era* were typical proponents of this approach which connected with the journalistic tradition initiated in 1979 by *Formosa* magazine. The militant reformers were reluctant to participate in the existing political system, because the parliamentary seats open to popular electorate were so limited.

Most magazines linked to the opposition were low-capital and short-lived. For instance, the capital needed to publish *Formosa* in 1979 was NT\$ 500,000 (US\$ 12,500) (*The Journalist*, 9-15 Oct. 1989:16). On average, an investment of NT\$ 300,000 to 400,000 (US\$ 7,500 to 10,000) was necessary for publishing an issue of the magazine in the early 1980s (*The Independence Evening Post*, 26 July, 1984:2). Between 1980 and 1985, the opposition magazines enjoyed a boom market. For instance, during the same period of time, some magazines achieved an impressive circulation, and it was estimated that between 13,000 and 14,000 copies

were sold. However, at that time any magazine at least sold 7,000 to 8,000 copies per issue. Accordingly, a circulation of 7,000 was necessary for a weekly magazine to cover operating expenses. In sum, a total of 400,000 copies was available on the market in 1984 (*The Independence Evening Post*, 25 July 1984:2).<sup>3</sup>

During the mid-1980s, the opposition magazines faced heavy censorship imposed by the government. For instance, the opposition magazines which numbered 12 in early 1985, were down to 3 by the end of that year (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 Dec. 1985:30). Furthermore, between May and October 1985, the government confiscated 976,000 copies of various oppositional magazines. *The Taiwan Communique*, a Netherlands-based publication which monitors human rights issues in Taiwan, counted 230 actions (including the banning of magazines and their confiscation) through the first nine months of 1985, a large increase over the previous year (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 Dec. 1985:31).

The most heavily censored magazines were *New Trend* and *Freedom Era Weekly*. *New Trend* published seven issues and faced the threat of confiscation of almost every issue (*The Journalist*, 24-30 July 1989:124). *Freedom Era Weekly*, a pro-independence magazine, published by Cheng Nan-jung, had 22 successive titles suspended for a year, while 12 individual issues were banned between July 1987 and October 1988 (*The Journalist*, 24-30 July 1989:124; Seymour,

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<sup>3</sup>During the 1980s, a circulation of 15,000 in Taiwan was roughly comparable a circulation of 175,000 in the United States, in terms of copies sold per total population (Berman, 1992:174).

1989:59). According to the *Information Freedom and Censorship: World Report 1991*, several thousand copies of *Freedom Era Weekly* were confiscated at news stands. Early in 1989, Cheng Nan-jung of *Freedom Era Weekly* was charged with treason for publishing a new draft constitution for Taiwan.

In the late 1980s, suspensions and the banning of opposition publications had decreased but not disappeared. According to *Information Freedom and Censorship: World Report 1991*, in October 1988, the Kaohsiung City authorities suspended the publishing licence of the monthly magazine *Taiwan Culture* for one year for 'disseminating separatist sentiment'. In February 1989, the Taipei City authorities ordered *The Movement* magazine to be suspended for one year on similar grounds. Between January and November 1989, the authorities banned at least 31 issues and suspended 16 licences among the 6 opposition weeklies.

### 1.3 The Techniques of Censorship

In Taiwan's case, the laws and regulations taken by the GIO and the TGC to suspend or confiscate the opposition magazines were vague. Almost every opposition publication was banned by the authorities under the terms of 'confusing public opinion', 'adversely affecting public morals', or 'destroying relations between the government and the people'. Furthermore, all the censorship actions taken by the authorities against the opposition magazines were

controversial. Therefore, censorship quickly became a partisan political issue. For instance, in mid-March 1978, a one year suspension of registration for news magazines was imposed by the GIO citing a need to prevent publication of inferior magazines and to aid the upgrading of existing magazines. At the same time, the GIO also announced that books, pictorial matter, speeches or biographies related to government officials should be subjected to a process of pre-publication screening by either the person involved or the GIO. Surprisingly, this moratorium began on the first day of March, not the day which was announced. The GIO's decision was regarded as an excuse for declining the leading opposition member, Kang Ning-hsiang's application for a licence that was submitted in early March (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 12 April 1978:24).

In reality, the authorities were empowered to decide and justify what kinds of censorship actions were taken regardless of court decisions. Most of the time, the authorities were even unwilling to consult with the agency which was supposed to be responsible for the interpretation of the administrative laws and regulations. For instance, the Taipei City Press Division has never consulted with the Regulation Committee before taking censorship actions against a number of opposition magazines (*The Journalist*, 24-30 July 1989:124).

Under martial law, from 1949 to 1987 the TGC had been the most important agency responsible for suppressing opposition magazines. Several tactics were used by the TGC

to tighten up the censorship of the opposition magazines.

First, the TGC agents and police officers were dispatched to seize magazines in the printing shops or at the bindery. The TGC agents might show an order which specified an article in a given issue which had incurred its wrath. Sometimes, they even filled in the name of the entire banned issue in the printing shop. Then the officers simply took away the magazines either in type-script or finished forms (*The Legislative Yuan Records*, July 1984:54; Oct. 1984:105 and 127). Sometimes, the TGC even intercepted the vehicles which were distributing the magazines in order to confiscate the opposition magazines (*The Independence Evening Post*, 2 Nov. 1984:2). In the late 1984, typewriting shops in Taipei were required to submit photocopies of the manuscripts of the opposition magazines to the TGC (*The Independence Evening Post*, 2 Nov. 1984:2). It was widely alleged that the TGC intended to track down the authors who worked for the opposition.

Secondly, TGC agents and police officers were regularly sent to patrol news stands in order to prevent the sale of banned publications. Furthermore, some administrative measures were taken against the staffers who sold the banned magazines. For instance, a fine of NT\$ 2,400 (US\$ 60) was imposed by the police on the owners of paper stands which were found selling opposition magazines. Since the profit on each cover price was only NT\$ 5 (US\$ 0.125) in the mid-1980s, the owners seemed unlikely to recoup the cost of a fine through sales. Furthermore, these owners were charged



with violating the Regulations on the Management of Mobile Stands, rather than defying the laws or regulations regarding these publications. Moreover, at the request of the Taipei City authorities, owners of bus-ticket stands signed an agreement that no opposition magazines would be sold at their stands (*The Independence Evening Post*, 2 Nov. 1984:2).

#### 1.4 Counter-Censorship Techniques

The opposition is always in competition with the authorities over the production and dissemination of knowledge in society. A diverse array of technical manoeuvres were used by the opposition press to ease the realities of repeated censorship.

At first, the opposition magazines were distributed through underground chains. Generally, only special news stands sold the opposition magazines, with the opposition magazines not being on public display. The owners of news stands only sold the magazines to customers that were acquaintances. Also, the magazines resold a number of times at news stands (Berman, 1992:174).

Secondly, the opposition widely adopted a policy known as 'the spare-tyre' publication in the late 1970s to cope with the censorship imposed by the government. The normal practice was that publishers applied to the GIO for several separate licences at any one time. When one magazine was suspended or banned, another would be brought into use. In

general, the new magazine was basically a reincarnation of its predecessor, under a different name. Its staff and editorial line remained the same (Lee Chin-chuan, 1991:36). For example, Kang Ning-hsiang applied to the GIO for three licenses in the early 1980. In February 1980, his *The Asian* replaced *The Eighties* which had been suspended. After *The Asian* was banned in April 1980 charged with violating the Publication Law, *The Current* was published in July. Another example is *Progress* which was published by the *Formosa* group defence attorney Cheng Sheng-chu in May 1981. The first issue was confiscated at the printing shop for 'incitement' and suspended for one year. Two months after the suspension of *Progress*, the publisher began to publish *Cultivate*. In September 1982, Yu Ching published *Outlook*, a monthly, the magazine was suspended from further publication after its fourth issue, because of its open discussion of taboo subjects, such the formation of a legal opposition party. However, this magazine was continually published under the title *Outlook Series* (Berman, 1992:191-192). Perhaps, *Freedom Era Weekly*, known as the most heavily-censored magazine, is a typical example of the use of spare-tyre publications. Because of facing the government's repeated censorship, *Freedom Era Weekly* legally owned 10 alternative titles (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 26 Dec. 1985:30).

Another method used by the publishers of the opposition press to protest against the TGC's suppression was through the lawmakers in opposition inside the national or provincial parliaments who questioned the government's

censorship policy. Some questions concerning the TGC's abuse of the laws and regulations were regularly raised in the Legislative Yuan. For instance, under Taiwan's laws, there is no provision for prior censorship. Therefore, the TGC and the GIO had to wait until a magazine left the printing shop before seizing it. Moreover, while the TGC had to authorize the decision to confiscate, the carrying out of the raid was the duty of the municipal government. Legally, the TGC was only allowed to issue an order to the publishers stating the books or magazines banned (*The Legislative Yuan Records*, July 1984:54 and 127; Oct. 1984:105; Feb. 1985:2). However, the TGC's chief commander was not accountable to the parliament in accordance with martial law. Therefore, the parliamentary action taken by the opposition could only question and condemn the GIO's censorship. Since the Legislative Yuan was acting as a rubber stamp of the executive branch, the opposition's interpellation was never a political threat to the KMT government.

After 1985, the market for the opposition magazines was declining. Some of the magazines were unable to survive, due to financial difficulties brought about by the confiscation of nearly every issue. Accordingly, each confiscation could result in a loss of NT\$ 300,000 to 400,000 (US\$ 7,500 to 10,000) for the publisher (the *Independence Evening Post*, 26 July, 1984:2). More importantly, some of the opposition editors began to publish many ethically and journalistically dubious stories in an

attempt to attract public curiosity and maximize their audience. For example, some of the opposition magazines devoted a large amount of coverage to criticising major KMT leaders for their allegedly corrupt private life-style. Also, accusations of conspiratorial arrangements made by the KMT leaders to protect their interests were made (*New Line*, 1986:28). As a result, due to its neglect of comprehensive political discussion and analysis, the opposition press seriously undermined its own credibility. In comparison to the opposition magazines of the 1970s, the magazines in the mid-1980s offered a significant loss of momentum for the moral or political crusade.

## (2) 'Democracy Television'

After the collapse of the market for opposition magazines, the opposition groups came to realize that perhaps a radio station or low-power television station would better suit their needs. As was mentioned previously, during the mid-1980s, Taiwan's civil society was in considerable turmoil. Most opposition groups, especially the DPP, attempted to articulate their political and cultural visions through large outdoor rallies. Apart from marching in the street to get the message across, the DPP members began to transmit their speeches through transcripts and video cassette tapes. Also, film makers who sympathized with the opposition began to produce documentaries concerned with Taiwan's social movements. For instance, the 'Green Team' used mobile VCR

cameras to document the opposition's activities; footage included attacks by the police on demonstrators (*The Capital Morning Post*, 23-24 Aug. 1989:7). Generally, these videotapes were not registered with the authorities, and no mention appeared on the party-state dominated television. However, the opposition groups' message still got across to the audience through its videotape distribution network or cable television system.

In Taiwan, the opposition has been traditionally denied access to the electronic media. On the one hand, the government blocked applications for new broadcasting licenses by claiming that all frequencies had been used. On the other hand, the party-state has been firmly in control of the existing television and radio stations through the appointments and programming. In Taiwan's case, three television stations are monopolized by the party-state, even although television networks are financed by commercial advertising. Furthermore, the television's programme schedule is centrally controlled and networked country-wide.

The government, the KMT and the military are the major shareholders in the three television networks. The Taiwan Provincial Government through its affiliated commercial banks hold 48.95% of the shares of the Taiwan Television Corporation (TTV). Also, KMT affiliated enterprises and Taiwan commercial interests own 31.07% and Japanese corporations hold 19.98% (*Wealth*, Jan. 1992:76). Consequently, the chairman of TTV's board have always been a prominent KMT government official. Moreover, the

Director-General is always appointed by the KMT (*Wealth*, Feb. 1991:125).

The China Television Corporation (CTV) operates as a KMT enterprise, because KMT's Hwa Xia Investment Holding Corporation holds 70% of its shares (*Wealth*, Feb. 1991:115).

The Chinese Television System (CTS) is controlled by the military. The military through its affiliated organizations, such as the Li Min Cultural and Publishing Company holds 45% of the shares. The remaining shares are owned by the Ministry of Defence (29.76%), the Ministry of Education (10.39%) and Taiwan private interests (*Wealth*, Jan. 1992:77). Generally, the military has been closely linked with the operation of the CTS network through putting personnel with military backgrounds in top management positions (*Wealth*, Feb. 1991:131).

The same picture applies to Taiwan's radio stations. By the end of 1993, thirty-three radio broadcasting networks in Taiwan were more or less linked with the KMT government. The Military ran 6 stations. Another 6 stations were controlled by government affiliated organizations. The leading station, the Broadcasting Corporation of China (BCC) is owned by the KMT. The BCC included 20 local stations, 3 AM and 4 FM networks. Although 20 stations were privately owned, most of them were financially and technologically weak. For instance, the number of BCC's transmitters is twice the total of the 20 privately owned stations' (Cheng Jai-cheng, 1993:109-111).

The nature of the party-state domination of the

broadcasting industry is most clearly reflected in the news broadcasts. In Taiwan's case, the television journalist seldom behaves like journalists with genuine independence in judgement and commentary. The KMT's Cultural Affairs Department has been criticized by liberal scholars and the DPP for constantly giving guidance to television on sensitive issues. Not surprisingly, the contents of news bulletin faithfully reflect the KMT line on controversial issues. For instance, during the 1993 election, news coverage in the television stations was still biased in favour of the KMT candidates, although it was not quite as unfair as the 1992 election (*The Journalist*, 28 Nov.- 4 Dec. 1993:49).

In addition to tight control over existing electronic media, the government also constantly denied opposition requests to set up an independent radio and television station until the late of 1993. For instance, former DPP legislator Kang Ning-hsiang and the present DPP legislator Chang Chun-hung were denied their applications for radio licenses in the late 1980s with the reason that no frequencies were available. On the same grounds, Taipei county executive Yu Ching failed to obtain a licence to establish an independent station in 1989.

The opposition nonetheless disregarded the government's restrictions and determined to establish radio and television stations. For instance, on 30 November 1989, DPP television with 3 networks was launched to beam DPP's propaganda. This station was equipped with a U.S. made

portable television transmitter which had a 20-km broadcast radius and was mounted on a moving lorry in order to evade detection by the government (*The Capital Morning Post*, 19 Nov. 1989:1; 1 Dec. 1989:1 and 2). Furthermore, 'The Voice of Democracy', an island-wide network of radio and television stations was established by the DPP on 1 March 1990 to loosen the KMT's dominance of the electronic media (*The Capital Morning Post*, 2 March 1990:5). However, none of these attempts was really successful or effective. Generally speaking, the capital needed to start an underground radio station was NT\$ 2,000,000 to 3,000,000 (US\$ 80,000 to 120,000) (*Wealth*, May 1994:206).

More importantly, the DPP has run a series of small cable stations, so-called 'democracy television' since 1989. 'Democracy television' is one part of the independently operated, clandestine broadcasting stations commonly known as the 'fourth channel'. The stations of the 'fourth channel' have emerged since the mid-1980s. However, it was not until the second half of 1993, that the operation and construction of cable networks as such the 'fourth channel' was declared illegal.

By the end of 1992, 800,000 households were connected to the 'fourth channel'. Among them, 'democracy television' reached an audience of 200,000 to 300,000 households.<sup>4</sup>

Like the 'fourth channel', the stations linked with 'democracy television' also carry light entertainment

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<sup>4</sup>These figures were given by a cable TV operator who made a speech to the Seminar on The Fourth Channel and the Election held by the Ming Chan College on 29 November 1992.



programmes. Apart from this, a specific political channel is operated by every 'democracy television' for broadcasting the DPP's political message and providing coverage of legislative sessions on a daily basis (*The Journalist*, 6-12 Dec. 1992:38-46). During the election, the DPP's candidates were given free air time to make propaganda on the political channel (*The Liberty Times*, 9 Nov. 1992:5). Furthermore, 'democracy television' has served as a platform for the grass-root movements whose voice has been absent from the KMT dominated state television. For instance, the news bulletin produced by 'democracy television' has concentrated on local affairs and been presented in a Taiwanese dialect (*The Journalist*, 6-12 Dec. 1992:38-46). Furthermore, much attention has been paid by 'democracy television' to the campaigns launched by anti-pollution and anti-nuclear groups. Some stations also have made efforts to cultivate the audience's Taiwanese consciousness through carrying programmes concerned with native culture, such as Taiwanese opera, local folk arts and architecture (*The Journalist*, 21-27 Jan. 1991:74).

Before the second half of 1993, the operation of a cable station was illegal in accordance with the Radio and Television Law. Not surprisingly, the GIO had taken a series of measures to suppress the 'fourth channel'. Article 45 of the Radio and Television Law stipulates that a citizen may set up a broadcasting and television station only after having obtained authorization from the authorities, otherwise, a fine of between 30,000 and 400,000

dollars (US\$ 6,000 to 80,000) will be imposed by the GIO, and his or her entire equipment will be confiscated. Therefore, the normal practice taken by the GIO officers was to cut the cable and confiscate the transmitters, boosters and converters. For instance, the GIO confiscated 160 transmitters and 480,000 tons of cable from August 1992 to May 1993 (Wan Shui-chi, 1993:471).

Faced with the GIO's harsh actions, the counter-action taken by the opposition cable operators was to inform the subscribers of the censors' home and office telephone number and urge them to make complaints to the authorities on a regular basis.<sup>5</sup> All in all, the relationship between the state authorities and the opposition was developed as a sort of dialectical control, as each tried to anticipate the other's strategy.

## CONCLUSION

In Taiwan's case, the function and structure of the mass media are determined by the party-state. Under such circumstances, the official public sphere in which the KMT's ideology of anti-communism and its nationalist heritage were articulated has been dominant. Nevertheless, an oppositional public sphere came into existence in the late 1970s and widely expanded its boundaries in the span of ten years. This public sphere was created by the political

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<sup>5</sup>Personal interviews with general manager of the Taichung Democratic TV Station, Lai Mao-chou on 29 November 1992.

opposition through large scale outdoor rallies and underground media, and thus could be distinguished from the official public sphere.

Faced with strict state control through martial law and press censorship, the effectiveness of underground media in shaping public opinion is relatively small in comparison with the officially dominated mainstream media. But, nevertheless, they did serve as an important channel for the dissenting groups to compete with the official voice. With the decline of state censorship in the late 1980s, the market became the sole source of threat to the existence of underground media. Without an adequate media policy, it seems that chances for the dissenting groups to develop an oppositional public sphere will be quite limited in the future.

In general, the media can serve as an instrument for the state to colonize civil society, or they can play an active role in liberalizing civil society and placing the conduct of the state under public scrutiny, or both. Taiwan's situation confirms that the mainstream press seems to serve the KMT's wish for it to mirror changes in society, rather than instigate democratic development. The barriers that prevent the mainstream papers from playing a role in democracy are due to interlocking directorships between the elites in the party-state and the press rather than state censorship. In other words, the reason that the KMT has privileges in the usage of mainstream media to directly speak for itself is because the owners of privately-run

papers are politically affiliated with the KMT. The essence of this relationship is that the KMT provides political and economic benefits to the owners of major privately-run papers in exchange for their loyalty. As a consequence, traditionally the press has collaborated with the KMT in promoting its political reality and marginalizing its political opponents.

In the late 1980s, the interactions between the KMT and the press became more sophisticated, because the papers were in alliance with the deeply divided KMT. Since the papers' elites took sides with KMT's different political factions, that made it difficult for them to distance themselves from the KMT's internal rifts. The role of the press in this controversy deserves close scrutiny. However, in so doing, research would have to involve an examination of day-to-day interactions between the party-state and the press in news production rather than analyzing how the party-state structures the media. In subsequent chapters, this study goes on to demonstrate what can be achieved by this approach.

Table 4-1 A typology of Taiwan's Newspapers (from 1960 to 1988)

Geographic scope	Ownership			
	Party	Government	Military	Privately
Island-wide	Central Daily News	Taiwan Hsin Sheng Pao	Youth Daily News	China Times, Industrial and Economic News, United Daily News, Min Sheng Pao, Economic Daily News
Regional	Chinese Daily News (Northern and Southern)	Taiwan News Journal	Taiwan Daily News	Independence Evening Post, Min Tsu Evening News, Great China Evening Post, China Post, China News, People's Daily News, Liberty Times, Taiwan Times, Mandarin Daily News
Local	China Evening News		Matsu Daily News, Kinmen Daily News, Chung Chen News, China Daily News	Rebirth Daily News, Shang Kung Daily News

(Source: Cheng Jui-cheng, 1988:33; Jacobs, 1976:784. Data have been rearranged by the researcher.)

Table 4-2 Social Background of Publishers of Privately-run Papers (from 1960 to 1988)

Publishers	Newspapers	Ethnicity	Backgrounds
Wan Tih-wu (Wan Pi-li, Wan Pi-chen' Wan Hio-lan)	United Daily News Economic Daily News Min Sheng Pao	Mainlander	Member of KMT's Central Standing Committee
Yu Chi-chung (Yu Fan- yung)	China Times Commercial And Industrial News	Mainlander	Member of KMT's Central Standing Committee
Keng Hsiu- yeh	Great China Evening News	Mainlander	Chief Editor of Central Daily News
Wang Jung- taw (Wang Cheng-yung)	Min Tsu Evening News	Mainlander	The Military Committee
Yu-Huang Nancy	China Post	Mainlander	Member of KMT's Central Advisory Council
Wei Chun- mung	China News	Mainlander	Head of Central Daily News, Director- General of the GIO
Hsieh Ying- yi	Rebirth Daily News	Mainlander	The Military Committee
Hung Yung- chu	Mandarin Daily News	Taiwanese	Legislator
Wu San-lien (Wu Fan- sang)	Independence Evening Post	Taiwanese	Businessman, Mayor of Taipei
Li Jei-piao	People's Daily News	Taiwanese	Businessman, Assemblyman
Wu Chi-fu	Taiwan Times	Taiwanese	Physician, Businessman

(Data compiled by the researcher based on *Who's Who* published by China Book Corporation in 1978 and *China Yearbook (1949-1988)* published by the Government Information Office of the Executive Yuan.)

Table 4-3 Frequency of Coverage of the Political Opposition  
in Three Newspapers, Selected Years

Year	Legislative Actions (Interpellation)			Campaigns		
	IEP	UDN	CDN	IEP	UDN	CDN
1956	2	3	3	1	0	0
1957	8	7	5	1	2	0
1960	4	8	6	7	13	2
1961	2	6	2	0	1	0
1971	2	0	0	0	0	0
1972	3	0	0	2	1	0
1979	17	13	10	9	3	2
1981	23	13	3	6	3	1
1984	37	14	3	14	6	1
1986	60	13	10	69	14	4
June 86- May 87	81	16	13	60	14	6

(This content analysis was conducted by the researcher.)

IEP: the *Independence Evening Post*

UDN: the *United Daily News*

CDN: the *Central Daily News*

Table 4-4 Size of Coverage of Public and Private Affairs, 1975 and 1984

Year	Newspapers											
	CDN	CT	UDN	IEP	TNJ	Ave	CDN	CT	UDN	IEP	TNJ	Ave
1975	9.1	10.2	9.1	10.3	9.0	9.6	12.1	14.3	12.9	12.4	11.1	12.6
1984	8.1	11.3	8.1	16.2	9.9	11.0	14.0	13.3	17.7	16.8	15.2	15.4
	1.5	9.6	1.5	15.9	7.9	10.3	10.7	--	14.3	14.8	13.4	10.6
	10.0	4.5	10.0	8.0	9.0	6.9	6.0	--	--	7.0	9.7	4.5
	7.9	9.6	7.9	6.1	9.9	9.0	4.7	5.9	7.6	9.0	4.5	6.3
	2.5	21.8	2.5	23.0	9.3	6.7	11.7	20.7	6.8	13.0	20.3	14.5
	13.9	15.0	13.9	14.5	10.5	12.0	15.1	12.1	12.6	15.7	15.5	14.2
	11.3	13.0	11.3	15.6	9.0	12.9	15.9	17.7	17.8	17.1	14.1	16.5
	4.0	5.2	4.0	6.3	4.8	5.2	6.6	11.0	7.3	8.8	7.9	8.3
Average												11.45
						9.30						
Public Affairs	11.4	11.5	11.6	12.3	11.1	11.6	15.6	15.6	16.0	15.6	13.3	15.2
Politics	12.2	11.7	10.8	15.6	12.4	12.5	14.9	15.1	15.9	11.9	13.2	14.0
Economy	8.3	7.3	3.5	2.5	11.5	6.6	6.0	5.0	6.0	--	5.0	4.4
Military	11.1	8.3	7.1	9.7	9.8	9.2	15.7	8.5	9.6	11.5	6.0	10.3
China	10.6	10.0	9.3	10.3	11.2	10.3	11.2	11.1	10.6	10.3	9.0	10.4
Foreign	10.4	11.5	4.0	18.8	8.6	10.9	9.8	11.8	13.0	10.7	10.7	11.2
Court news												
Average						10.18						10.99

(Source: Chen Shih-min, 1988:76. Data have been rearranged by the researcher.)  
 CDN: The Central Daily News      TNJ: The Taiwan News Journal  
 CT: The China Times              UDN: The United Daily News  
 IEP: The Independence Evening Post



## CHAPTER 5

# STUDYING OFFICIAL-REPORTER RELATIONS: ASPECTS OF FIELDWORK

### INTRODUCTION

To fully understand state-press relations, both the structural connection between the political establishment and the papers and the interaction between politicians and reporters in shaping the actual practices of creating news products need to be taken into account.

Taking a view that news is a joint product between journalists and politicians, the practice of participant observation was used in order to observe how reporters interact with politicians on a daily basis.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an account of my field work which involved approximately four months intensive research into the practices of news making in the parliament (the Legislative Yuan) and the executive branch (the Executive Yuan), the Kuo Min Tang's (KMT) headquarters and the Presidency in 1992. The findings of this research are presented in the following chapters.

The ethnographic approach is highly regarded by some media researchers for studying news production. For instance, Schlesinger (1980) suggested that doing participation observation within news organization is the

most appropriate for detecting the dynamic and complex aspects of organizational control involved in the process of news production. Also, Ericson et. al. (1989) recommended that long-term direct observation allows researchers to produce knowledge of reporter-source relations on the basis of everyday business.

The following discussion draws upon two studies in which I was the sole researcher and did all the interviewing by myself. The first is a study of the legislature beat from 15 September to 31 October 1992 which was based on 15 days direct observation and interviews with 16 reporters, 4 legislators' research assistants and the directors of the Press Office and the Stenography Office. The second is a study of political news making in three top government agencies from 4 November to 29 December in which 12 days direct observation was carried out and 11 reporters and 4 information officials including the KMT's Spokesman were interviewed.<sup>1</sup> This research was supplemented by an analysis of news content pertaining to parliamentary and governmental reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> Interviews were held with 27 political journalists in Taipei between September and December 1992. The journalists concerned worked for the following newspapers: *Central Daily News*, *China Times*, *China Times Express*, *Chinese Daily News*, *Economic Daily News*, *Hsin Sheng Pao*, *Independence Daily Post*, *Independence Evening Post*, *Liberty Times*, *Min Sheng Pao*, *People's Daily News*, *Ta Chen Pao*, *United Daily News*, *United Evening News*, *Youth Daily News*, and Central News Agency. For reasons of confidentiality, interviews were assured that no more detailed identification could be given.

## THE FIELD WORK

### 1. Warm Up

Before the study began, I began studying ethnographic research in general and ethnographic studies of news production in particular. In the first place, I reviewed some articles that set out to do ethnography. Generally speaking, the essence of ethnographic research is the prolonged participation of the researcher in the daily life of the people under study. Such work requires that the ethnographer live and work with the people that he or she is studying over a long period of time in order to empathize with their norms, beliefs and behaviours (Agar, 1986:12; Fetterman, 1989:4; Sanday, 1979:20).

Research within the ethnographic paradigm shows that participant observation characterizes most studies, although other data gathering techniques including archival searches, formal interviews and questionnaire work are not excluded. It seemed to me that participant observation research should not be regarded as a single method. As a number of authors suggest, participant observation seemed to be a blend of methods and techniques. For instance, Fetterman's *Ethnography* (1989), and Butters' *The Logic-of-Enquiry of Participant Observation* (1976) concerning the practice of ethnography, and McCall & Simmon's *Issues in Participant Observation* (1969) illustrate a number of data collection techniques including direct observation, formal interviews, documentary analysis, informant interviewing and direct

participation. These writers suggest that these data gathering methods are to some degree necessary in a field study of any complex social organization. Furthermore, Becker (1970:39-62) and Whyte's (1955:279-358) field work experiences also clearly show that participant observation research must make use of observation informant interviewing and participation with self-analysis.

More importantly, ethnographic research, as mentioned above, places emphasis on the researcher's ability to know and understand the people being studied from their point of view. Only by actively participating in the life of the observed and gaining insight by means of introspection, can the researcher understand and reconstruct human behaviour. The researcher, interacting with those he or she studies is essential to the concept of field work. In putting together a field study involving participant observation the researcher becomes a research instrument. In other words, the researcher is participating with the people being studied in their natural life setting, and sees life from their points of view. Some problems are inherent in using this method instrument for gathering data and deserve close attention.

The first problem faced by the researcher is to develop a dialectical relationship between being a researcher and being a participant. One of the most critical decisions the participation observer must make is what kind of research role he or she will play in the field. A role taken by the researcher in the field for gathering information is a set

of behaviours in which the researcher's self is involved in developing relations with people. Gold (1969:30-37), Junker (1960:32-40), Schwartz and Schwartz (1969:95-100) suggested four types of roles that occur in some natural settings for researchers conducting field work. Theoretically, these range from the complete participant at one extreme to the complete observer at the other. Between these, the participant-as-observer nearer the former, and observer-as-participant is close to the latter.

Observation-as-participant is a role in which the researcher's activities are publicly known and more or less sponsored by the people in the field. This role only demands that the researchers establish relationships with the people that they are studying for a short period of time. Therefore, these brief relationships may affect researcher's ability to sympathy with the observed. In contrast, participant-as-observer is a role in which the researcher becomes involved in the activities of people in order to conduct the observation. By performing this role, the researcher's activities are not wholly concealed, but some sort of pretence is necessary. Generally, these relationships are developed through time. To some extent, long term relationships can be a threat to the researcher's ability to remain detached. All in all, there are no simple set of roles for the field worker in a given situation. But, nevertheless, the researcher still must choose the one that best fits the situation in which people are informed who he is.

Another problem concerning researcher-subject relations are the personal anxieties inevitably inherent in using the human instrument for data-collection. Gans (1968:300-317), Schwartz and Schwartz (1969:100-103) indicated the influence of anxiety in any participant observation research.

In addition to learning the methodological issues of field work, I also devoted much time to reviewing the ethnographic approaches to the study of news production in the political field.

As I read over some research carried out in Western countries, I found that only a few shared experiences relevant to my work. For example, the most recent and comprehensive study examining the gathering of news on the legislature, such as Timothy E. Cook's *Making Law and Making News* and R. V. Ericson, P. M. Baranek and J. B. L. Chan's *Negotiating Control*, gave little attention to the actual process whereby the research was conducted, although some useful statements on methods of research were provided. Furthermore, Hess (1984), Mancini (1993), Sigal (1973) and Tiffen (1989) conducted research on reporter-official relations in the executive branch but also failed to give a real explanation of how the research was done.

After inspection of literature on ethnographic approaches to the study of news, it seemed to me that media researchers pay less attention to the basic processes of field work. But perhaps, I should say that Philip Schlesinger's *Between Sociology And Journalism* (1980) is one of few exceptions. I found that this article was extremely

useful in offering an insight into the use of ethnography in the study of news production. For instance, the research role he described provided some insightful experiences to me, when I began to think about where I was most likely to fit with the journalists in my own field work and as I attempted to develop my research role. More importantly, I learned that doing ethnography in any news organization should be an immersion in its culture. It seemed to me that Schlesinger's research design was never preplanned rather it emerged from episode to episode and was sensitive to changing patterns in British broadcasting organizations. This kind of methodological approach was not quite the same as the quantitative endeavour that I was familiar with.

Surprisingly enough, I found out that there was little or no previous ethnographic research in Taiwan into how reporters constructed parliamentary reporting or their work in the executive branch. According to my own understanding, Taiwan's media studies have been influenced by positivism. Moreover, much effort has been devoted to conducting textual analysis of media products or questionnaire surveys on media consumption. Since there has been no serious interest among media researchers in the practice of participant observation, intellectual arguments affirming the value of ethnographic studies are relatively limited.

In attempting to shape my research role, I communicated with the people who are acquainted with news production. At first, I consulted with several reporters about journalistic routine work. The reporters I talked

with were those who had a certain affinity. During the discussion, they brought up some of their concerns about how to deal with the reporters. For instance, I should remember to speak with reporters in their own terms. Also, I should play dumb on some occasions, or at least try not to appear more knowledgeable than I really was. Also, I had to avoid sounding as if I believed their work was influenced by forces they were unable to cope with. Besides, we spent some time in discussing how to dress for the field work on the news beats. I was told to dress in a formal suit on every occasion.

Secondly, I conducted participant observation within a news organization in order to develop some knowledge of how the political news process works. In so doing, I believed that this might help me better place the activity of news gathering on the political beats.

The best way of ensuring successful entry, I decided, was through somebody who was a relative of the chairman of the *Independence Daily Post* (IDP). The IDP is known as a liberal paper established on 21 January 1988. But the *Independence Evening Post* is Taiwan's oldest evening newspaper established in October 1947.

Without having any difficulties, I was able to do a one month study in the newsroom in November 1992. Usually, I had to stay in the newsroom from 4 PM to 10 PM. I spent 2 days a week doing this for most of that period. My focus was on selection decisions newswriters made about news concerning the parliament and the party-state.



At my first editorial meeting I was introduced to the editors. The chief editor said, 'Ms Chen is a Ph.D. student who is studying news decision-making. She is going to be with us for a while.' It was arranged for me to sit at a spare desk close to the chief editor.

I attended my first editorial meeting with great surprise, because I could hardly hear anything in the course of their discussions, even from a very short distance. It seemed to me that the editors were very nervous, and attempted to keep their voices down. At that time, I could imagine how deeply they felt uncomfortable about my presence.

After the meeting, the chief editor told me in private that he lectured in the Graduate School of Journalism at the National Taiwan University. He allowed me to study his newsroom as a way of paying back the profession. He wanted me to know that there was no restriction on what I could do in the newsroom.

After a few days in the newsroom, I found that I could improve my understanding of decisions made on political news by chatting with the editors before the meeting. Therefore, I decided to come to the newsroom 30 minutes before the meeting. My impression was that some of the editors were happy to display to me their professional competence. Shortly after, they began to treat me almost as a student who was learning how to edit a paper. They would give me a long explanation of the information flow within the news organization. Also, they would take time to answer my

questions or point out something they thought would interest me, even when they were really busy. I found them practical and realistic, and developed a certain affinity with them.

## **2. Research Settings**

As elaborated previously, ethnography is what ethnographers actually do in the field. Doing ethnography, an ethnographer employs a variety of methods and techniques to describe various events, situations and actions that occur in a particular social setting. The following sections provide examples of how I incorporated ethnographic inquiry into my studies on the relations between news sources and journalists in several institutional sites.

The first methodological issue of my field work was the entrée. Cooperation from the political institutions in general and the reporters in particular was crucial. Apparently, the degree of acceptance by the agencies and the individuals that I intended to deal with would shape the breadth and depth of my understanding. I required a relatively prolonged exposure to the research institutions including the parliament, the KMT headquarters and the Executive Yuan. Some measures were taken to assure that the proposed duration of study could be achieved.

## (1) Case 1: The Legislature

### 1.1 Accomplishing the Entrée

In the early weeks of September 1992, I considered entering the Legislative Yuan without assistance--simply by asking the Press Office of the Legislative Yuan for admittance to do research in the parliament. This thought was abandoned soon after I discussed field research methods with some media researchers. Almost all of them suggested that an introduction by a parliamentary reporter was the best ticket into the parliament. Partly, there was not enough time for me to seek to apply for formal admittance. More importantly, it was clearly impossible for me to understand the workings of parliament without some insider knowledge.

The best way of ensuring success on access to the Legislative Yuan came through an introduction by a parliamentary reporter who had been on the legislature beat for three years. In a sense, my field study in the parliament began on 15 September 1992, when I paid my first visit to the Legislative Yuan.

I met the reporter at one of the side doors of the parliament. Because she had no acquaintanceship with the security officer on duty, she was unable to take me into the Legislative Yuan without permission. Therefore, we turned to the main entrance to apply for admission. The reporter showed her Parliamentary Journalist ID to the security officers at the main entrance. Then we entered the reception room. Unlike her, I had to register at the

information desk and submit my personal ID in exchange for visitor pass. Because the parliament was not sitting, we made a round of administration offices, legislators' offices and the parliamentary library. Also, I was introduced to the Director of the Press Office and his subordinates. The introduction opened with something like this, 'She is a teacher in the National Taiwan Normal University. Now she is doing her Ph.D. in the United Kingdom.' Then, I was given some leaflets including information of the names and telephone numbers of legislators and the members of the parliamentary corps.

On 23 September, I arranged to meet my friend and her colleagues at the parliamentary cafe. She gave me a Parliamentary Journalist ID for a photographer which was issued by the Press Office to her newspaper. She said, 'This card is valid for a legislative session. Whenever you want to approach the Legislative Yuan, you show the ID to security officers at any entrance and go directly to the Assembly Hall.' My question was, 'How can I pass through the security officers with an ID for a photographer without proper equipment?' She replied, 'Just tell the security officers, you left the cameras in the reporters' room.' 'If you were a good reporter, you should behave like a spy rather than a reporter. Find your way in, even without an ID.' I was being teased. To my knowledge, in the first place, the reporter had intended to ask for a parliamentary reporter's ID, but her request was refused by the parliamentary staff. However, they made a compromise deal

that an ID with no photo on it was issued instead.

On the way home, one of my friend's colleague said that in his judgement, the security measures would tighten up with the opening of the Legislative Yuan. Therefore, he warned me that I might have to take the risk of getting arrested by using the Parliamentary Journalist ID. He suggested that a more appropriate way of approaching the debating chamber was to seek permission from the legislators and he generously offered to help.

That night, I felt that I must somehow do something in order to gain official admittance to the parliament for the study. Finally, I decided to contact the Director of the Press Office as soon as possible to see whether I could freely approach the Assembly Hall without using the ID.

The day before the opening of the parliament, I was determined to visit the Press Office of the Legislative Yuan. Like all visitors, I informed a security officer about whom I was supposed to meet. After that I gave my personal ID to the information desk. Then I went to the Press Office and explained my intention to the director. During the brief conversation he told me that either a statement signed by a legislator or a journalist's ID is necessary to gain access to the Assembly Hall. According to the regulations, he was unable to give me a journalist's ID, but he made a promise that whenever I requested, he was always willing to accompany me to the Hall.

On 25 September, on the opening of the Legislative Yuan, I visited the Press Office again. Outside the

Legislative Yuan, three groups of demonstrators were gathering. When I arrived at the Press Office, the director was talking to a visitor. Apparently, he could not take me to the Hall, and therefore, I had better turn to someone in the office for help.

According to my observation, a clerk who was busy dealing with reporters should be the person in charge of issuing IDs. I asked him if it was possible for me to get into the Hall. He said, 'I am glad to help you. If I am authorized by my superiors, I might give you a special ID which is usually issued to the reporters who are not regulars on the beat.'

Finally, I obtained a special card for non-regular reporters, although it was still an illegal one. Because I was not a journalist, the parliamentary staff had no alternative, simply keeping my name on the record and leaving the column for occupation blank. According to the regulations, the special ID was only valid for the morning session. I was told that after the morning session, I had to come back to ask for another ID for the afternoon session. My days in the Assembly Hall would pass in this manner.

Ten minutes before the opening, I headed for the Assembly Hall. The entrance at the left hand side is for legislators. The one on the right hand side is for non-parliamentarians. The security officers on this entrance deliberately checked every non-parliamentarian's ID and hand bag.

After the security check, I climbed up the stairs to the second floor of the Assembly Hall. Having this ID, I could freely do my work in the reporter's rooms and the press gallery.

## 1.2 Developing the Research Role

On the legislature beat, most of time I was more like a complete observer. For instance, my activities were completely public in the reporters' rooms and the press gallery where all levels of information were equally accessible to me and the reporters. It seemed that there were no restrictions on what I could do. I was free to hang around the press gallery, attend the press conferences, and collect the news releases and official documents. However, when parliament was sitting, the reporters were heavily engaged in their work. My presence made few of them curious. Therefore, I had no trouble remaining uninvolved with the reporters and the legislators' daily routines.

Theoretically, in the role of complete observer, the researcher has no chance to develop the reciprocal relations with the group being studied (Junker, 1960:35). Soon I faced some problems regarding my data collection.

First, there were times when I was not able to build a good sense of the legislative process. In this instance, I found it would be helpful to have someone with whom I could consult. I desperately needed an informant who could help me with floor deliberations.

On the legislature beat, the informant was a veteran reporter for a respectable newspaper. He lectured two hours a week about the practices of news-making in a private college. I was introduced to him through an associate professor of that college. During the first conversation, we found out that the two of us studied under the same supervisor in the National Chengchi University. This proved to be important in his acceptance of my work.

During the conversations, I told him quite frankly what I was trying to do, what problems were puzzling me and so on. After this conversation, he frequently took time to talk to me in the afternoon. Much of our time had been spent on the discussion of the validity of my observations.

The second problem I faced was how to get the parliamentary reporter alone and to carry out a more formal interview. As noted before, I was a pure observer in the parliament which made it difficult for me to have a close relationship with the reporters. Moreover, I had little confidence in approaching the reporters. Because the interview should be carried out without any rapport with the reporters, I decided to ask for assistance from some friends to bring me into contact with the reporters, especially at this early stage.

On 3 October 1992, I got in touch with a news agency's chief reporter who was an acquaintance. With his mediation I began my first formal interview. I arranged to meet one of his reporters in the parliamentary reporter's room. Then, we went for coffee. As he walked with me to the



coffee room, we got to talk about my relations with his superior. Because the parliament was sitting, the cafe was empty. We conducted the interview here. At first, I briefly explained to him my study, with an attempt to ease him into a discussion of his business I deliberately told him of my own experience of studying abroad. In fact, I was afraid of allowing too much of myself to emerge during conversations, and striking a balance was difficult for a while. He said with hesitation that he would like to have this interview anonymously. Also, he refused to allow me to use a tape recorder. However, he promised me that he would explain everything to me as slowly and clearly as possible.

As my experience increased, I felt more confident in my skill at approaching the reporters. I learned to make attempts to contact the reporters by myself. I always contacted the reporters by telephone a few minutes after they had met their deadlines to arrange the interviews. On the line, I said something about myself and my research first. Generally, I identified myself to reporters as a graduate student from a University in the United Kingdom and an instructor of the National Taiwan Normal University. I described my research purpose only in broad terms: 'I was studying the practices of news-making in the parliament.' Then I asked for forty minutes to discuss their work with them. Most of the reporters asked me whom I had talked to.

Nearly all told me that they were busy, but that they were pleased to take the time. Among 16 reporters I had arranged to interview, 2 did not show up in the first

interview with an excuse of being really too busy. One reporter came half an hour late. In total, I interviewed 16 parliamentary reporters from all the important papers which covered the whole range of the political spectrum. There was no attempt at a random sample, and I simply selected most of the reporters who were the chief journalists of their reporting team.

I emerged from interviews with the feeling that the reporters deliberately prevented me mentioning their names in my study. At first, almost all the reporters I interviewed wanted me to keep the interviews confidential. Only one reporter told me that he would not mind being identified. Secondly, most of the reporters felt uneasy about the use of a tape recorder and encouraged me to take notes during the interviews. Fortunately, more than half of interviews were conducted at lunch time, and because the reporters wanted me to eat well, I was allowed to use the tape recorder. However, I verbally assured them that I would make any public references to them anonymous.

One thing I must add was that the reporters paid the bills. I was told that their news organizations would cover the expenses. On average it cost approximately US\$ 20 for two people to have lunch at the restaurant close to the Legislative Yuan.

It seemed to me that most of the reporters enjoyed talking about their work, although a few reporters were rather self-conscious. The formal interview ordinarily started with questions concerning their journalistic

routines. I listened to the reporters who gave their definition of the legislature beat and the division of labour within the reporting team and so on. As the conversations went on, I tried to read the reporter's characteristics in order to adjust my interview skills.

In the later stages of interviewing, I began to probe more sensitive matters. I asked the reporters about self-censorship and organizational control over the legislative news and their relationships to the legislators. My impression was that once the interview topics had shifted to their personal experience, reporters were less willing to talk about them, especially the questions pertaining to how they established good relations with the legislators.

Generally, a tactic was used to elicit the information that was crucial to understand certain relationships. That is I told the reporter that these relationships were implicit in the previous interviews, but that reporters preferred not to state them openly. Therefore, I needed more information from them to clarify my doubts. Moreover, I pretended not to know certain matters which were derived from the news media, therefore I asked for their opinion. I found that this was an effective way of preventing the reporter from clamming up on the questions in sensitive areas where my relationship to the reporters interviewed was not well enough established to directly ask their opinions on them.

## (2) Case 2: The Executive Branch

### 2.1 The Executive Yuan

This time I attempted to find my way into the Executive Yuan by myself. On 2 November, I contacted the Government Information Office (GIO) of the Executive Yuan by telephone. I picked on the First Division of the Domestic Information Department which was supposed to be responsible for the news releases coming out of the Executive Yuan. The chief of the First Division was away for a week. Instead, I asked the press coordinator whether I could make an appointment and discuss my research with him on the practices of the government's news management. After we had exchanged information, I was told, 'I know you. We were in the same class on the postgraduate programme at the National Chengchi University. Of course, you are always welcome to visit me.' This was quite a pleasant surprise.

The meeting was arranged at 3:00 PM. On paying my first visit to the GIO, I found out that gaining access was much easier than getting into the Legislative Yuan. Broadly speaking, I just let the porters at the information desk know who I was supposed to meet. The porters gave me directions and did not bother to ask for my personal identification card.

I made several useful contacts, and in the GIO's reporter's room, I met another acquaintance who had enrolled in my course several years ago. He was a reporter with 3 year experience on the beat.

I was introduced to every reporter in the room. He said, 'She is my former teacher. She is studying how we are making a living here. Listen! Fellows, help her as much as you can.' When he was finished, a reporter asked, 'Is it true that he was your student? He is very naughty. He always makes fun of us.'

Then I briefly explained my research to them. Every reporter gave me his or her card politely said, 'Now, you are our teacher.' When they found out that I did not have a card in return they joked, 'You are Lee Teng-hui (the President). He doesn't need a card.' I really did not feel comfortable interacting with the reporters' room humour, it was part of a culture I was not familiar with.

On the GIO beat, I faced a new problem in my data collection. That is that only a tiny part of the reporters' activities were open to my observation. It was quite a contrast to the parliament where I could witness most of the activity of reporting.

It was surprising to me that the reporters here were not allowed to conduct daily journalistic work in the Executive Yuan. Instead, the reporters made their rounds in the GIO which was located one street away from the Executive Yuan. I also found out that no local reporter could interview the Premier on public or private occasions. All news events taking place in the Executive Yuan were released by the GIO. For such reasons, the GIO's news conferences were the only occasions that allowed me to see reporter-source relations on the GIO beat.

Unlike parliamentary reporters who were always on the beat, here the reporters came to the GIO's reporters' room from 4PM to 6PM. Outside of the press conferences held by the GIO on a regular basis, the normal practice of getting their work done was by making contact with sources by telephone. Since the reporters did their work in separate phone rooms, attaching myself to them seemed impossible.

Moreover, the spatial arrangements of the GIO's reporters' room made it very difficult to join in with the reporters' daily conversations. Here, the reporter had his or her own desk, and during working hours, there was no vacancy for me. Generally, the individual reporters preferred to take me aside to talk. Again, this measure kept me from knowing the reporters' daily routines which I was really interested in.

While conducting the ethnography, I began to think that a formal interview would be a more effective data gathering technique than direct observation, especially in a situation where I could not see and experience much. Formal interviews would allow me to elicit more information regarding the reporters' news gathering activities behind closed doors, but any formal interview had its down side. Formal interview materials were, unlike direct observation, obtained in conditions somewhat removed from the natural setting. The fact that I could not observe fully the GIO had worried me a lot through my field work there.

## 2.2 The KMT Headquarters

### 2.2.1 Gaining Entry

At the KMT headquarters, gaining entry was more difficult than the GIO. At first, I tried to telephone the KMT spokesman, also the Director of the Cultural Affairs Department, to ask if he could see me. Unfortunately, because he was busy with the coming parliamentary election, it was very difficult to reach him.

The time available to carry out my research on the KMT headquarters was limited to 30 days. Therefore, after my last effort on 7 November 1992, I made up my mind to ask a reporter to take me in. On 10 November, I phoned a reporter whom I had met at the GIO at 11:30 PM. He wanted me to ring back, because he had to file a big story around midnight. After a short discussion, we came to the conclusion that by hiding my research role, I could enter into the KMT headquarters more easily.

The next morning we met in front of the KMT headquarters. When I was waiting for the reporter on the street corner close to the KMT headquarters, a security officer came and asked me to leave. I felt ill at ease at this intrusion. Apparently, he never noticed that I was standing on public property. I thought that every citizen could stay there whenever he or she liked. At that moment, the reporter came and showed his journalist's ID to the security officers in front of main entrance. 'She is my colleague. She is on a pre-job training.' said he. Then

the two of us reached the reception room. When I submitted my personal ID to a security officer, he stared at me and asked, 'Are you in the teaching profession?' I must confess that it was somewhat awkward to reply that I was no longer a teacher. The reporter took over the conversation, he explained, 'She is my colleague. She is on a pre-job training.' Shortly after, the security officer gave us each a card that allowed me to hang around in the courtyard of the KMT headquarters.

This way of gaining entry became a source of anxiety. Quite often, I felt so guilty about deceiving people that I was hesitant in entering the KMT headquarters. Usually, I had to walk around Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall for 10 minutes in order to get up my courage, yet remain relaxed enough so that the reporters would be glad to have me around.

On 9 December 1992, I had one of my most vivid and unpleasant memories of my field work. When we arrived at the main entrance, I was not allowed to get in. The main reason was that the reporter told the security officer that I was a former student of the Director of KMT's Department of Cultural Affairs and that I was invited to attend the news conference. The security officer denied my access vehemently, because he was not informed by his superiors on this matter. At that moment, the reporter did most of talking. He tried hard to persuade the security officer to confirm with his superiors. But I decided to talk to someone who was on a higher level. I waved to an officer



who stood on the door step. He came forward and asked, 'What is the problem here?' I took a deep breath and said, 'Dr. Chu told me last week, I can come to his news conference today. But this officer was not informed.' He smiled consent and told the security officer, 'Let her register at the information desk.' A few minutes later, I approached him to express my appreciation. He talked to me in private, 'I saw you interviewing Director Chu last week. You are a reporter, aren't you?' It was difficult to explain to him that I was not. I avoided answering the question directly. But I assured him that Director Chu was my teacher in the National Chengchi University and that I had graduated from the University's Journalism School.

### 2.2.2 Developing the Research Role

The reporters usually interviewed the senior politicians before and after the KMT's Central Standing Committee meeting. Therefore, most of the time the reporters were waiting in the briefing room or hanging about in the courtyard, as the meeting went on.

At first, the reporter who took me there introduced me to the reporters inside the briefing room like this, 'She is an instructor of the National Taiwan Normal University. She is working for her Ph.D. in the United Kingdom. Her research aims to show how we do the work here.' Some reporters knew who I was already, because they met me previously in the GIO's office, however most of them did

not. I learned the names of the reporters, although I always had some difficulties in doing that.

To remain uninvolved was not easy on the KMT beat, because the briefing room was so small. I simply could not just sit and listen, and take notes. In the very early stages, my role as an observer in the room did make some reporters curious and a bit self-conscious. For instance, during a discussion about a story on the reactions to a National Policy Consultant's resignation, a reporter made a lot of complaints against his superiors and some reporters joined in with these discussions. During the conversation, suddenly a reporter turned to me and said, 'Don't make this part of your thesis.' I realized that I had to take part in conversations in order to minimize the reporters' reactions to me being there.

On this occasion, my role was participant-as-observer. In theory, that is the role in which the researcher's observer activities are subordinated to activities as a participant (Gold, 1969:35; Junker, 1960:36). Since I decided to take a more active role, I faced the problem of involvement. It was bothersome to me how much spontaneous participation was possible as part of the group without endangering my neutrality. I learned that it was not difficult to be spontaneous when the conversations dealt with subjects which were not related to my study (for instance, the reporters' room humour, or reporters' personal matters, such as how to prepare for the entrance examination for doing a Ph.D. in Journalism). But when the discussion

turned to topics I was studying, like actual daily reporter-editor relations or reporter-source relations, I had to be careful to keep aloof. Generally, skimming over the major newspapers before entering into the KMT headquarters was necessary. In so doing, I could easily engage in and follow the reporters' conversations.

It seemed that this role only allowed me access to some kinds of information and not others. Soon I learned that I was not able to see the whole range of reporter-source relations only through participant observation. A notable example occurred on 10 November 1992. After ending my morning field work at the KMT headquarters, I bought three evening papers. I was quite surprised by the news stories concerning the KMT's morning news releases published by the *China Times Express*. At least, I was certain that the *China Times Express's* front page headline story was unlikely to have been written by reporters I was talking to on the KMT news beat that morning. Part of the reason is that the KMT spokesman had refused to comment on this matter at the news conference. According to my observations this exclusive story was developed neither by a car-door interview nor by telephone, as no reporter in the reporting team had portable telephones. My problem was how and who had produced this story?

There was another problem in doing the field work under these conditions. That is I always had to struggle to record my research data after a day's work. In an effort to minimize reactions, I eased the situation by not taking any

written notes. Because the conversations between the reporters moved quickly and were fragmented, I felt it difficult to make mental notes during the conversation. With a few exceptions, I always managed to make a few notes right at the end of my work in the KMT headquarters. Sometimes, I sat in the Chiang Kai-shek Memorial Hall's garden to dictate notes on my micro-cassette recorder. More often, I went to the canteen in the National Central Library located two blocks away to write down the key points of my observations. But most of the details were developed from memory after I had gone home in the late evening.

Since I regularly met the political reporters doing their work on the GIO and the KMT beats, I had no difficulty in arranging formal interviews. Most of the formal interviews were conducted between 3:30 and 4:30 PM. That was an hour before the reporters made their rounds on their beats. Most of the time we met in the coffee shop near to the GIO. A few reporters were interviewed in the GIO or at the KMT headquarters.

Eleven reporters I had interviewed seemed to love to talk about current political affairs more than their work. I was informed about some inside stories concerning power struggles among the senior officials. Of course, the reporters wished to remain anonymous in my report.

Strategies used in interviewing were similar to those used in dealing with the parliamentary reporters. I started with questions related to factual details (e.g. how the reporters made their rounds on the beat). Then the topic

shifted to more sensitive matters (e.g. how did they establish good relations with the high-ranking officials? how did they make the senior officials more accountable to the press? etc.)

It seemed that the reporters were willing to explain how the reporters from other news organizations had dealt with these sensitive matters. While some of them had tactically avoided to tell me their own stories.

## CONCLUSION

In this final section I shall endeavour to generalize about my field experiences with the journalists and their sources. Basically the problems encountered in researching news production overlap to a considerable extent with the dilemmas found in most observation studies.

There are some specific aspects peculiar to ethnographic studies carried out in Chinese society. It seemed to me that the most effective way of gaining entry to political institutions was through informal contacts. For instance, my affinity with the reporters allowed me to outwit the institutional obstacles and facilitated my access to the parliament and the KMT headquarters. Furthermore, my acquaintance with the officials allowed me to have advantages in gaining access to certain human or material resources. In my judgement, my acceptance by some of the reporters and the officers was facilitated, because we had been at the same university or had mutual acquaintances. In

fact, I never encountered a negative response from the reporters and officials during my field work, even if not all of them were interested in my research. Perhaps, it is reasonable to say that the reporters actually enjoyed being studied.

Generally speaking, I engaged in three kinds of research roles in my field studies. In parliament, I performed as a complete observer on the press gallery and observer-as-participant in the formal interviews. In contrast, in the Executive Yuan and the KMT headquarters, I had to join with the reporters in some of their daily business in order to get material. Therefore, I had to devote much effort to learning the norms, roles and beliefs that the reporters had when covering their news beat. However, I enjoyed being accepted by the reporters who worked in the Executive Yuan and the KMT headquarters. To some extent, they let me share in their professional and political frustration, and even their personal grievances. This experience was not evident in my parliamentary field studies, because I acted as a pure observer and was not allowed to develop close relations with the parliamentary reporters.

Theoretically it has been assumed that the longer the participant observer remains in the social setting, the more knowledgeable he or she becomes about the people being studied. Classical ethnography requires from two to six years or more in the field (Fetterman, 1989:18). Most ethnographers, regardless of their theoretical perspectives

agree that at least a year is required for doing ethnographic studies (Sanday, 1979:20). However, there is often no natural end-point for a field study. In my own study, long-term continuous field work was impossible. I was restricted by the four month permission authorized by my sponsor for returning to Taiwan to collect data. In total, I spent four months on several political news beats. I only spent six weeks at the KMT headquarters, but I encountered a series of unprecedented leadership conflicts in Taiwan's politics during this period. These accounts are at the heart of my study which aims to understand the issues involved in government news management. Moreover, I left the legislature beat as the parliament completed a legislative session. This seems to be an acceptable minimum. However, this compares unfavourably with Ericson et. al. (1987) 200 research days and Schlesinger's (1980) several periods of observation at the BBC, not to mention classical community studies such as Whyte's (1955) four years in Cornerville.

I was never certain that I saw or heard everything I should have during my study, or even if I understood everything accurately. No matter how hard I tried, I still found that conducting ethnographic research brought with it a fair amount of uncertainty. For instance, in the parliament I constantly worried about the flow of research activities, because I had to be in many places simultaneously in order to study the reporter-politician relations properly. This being impossible, I had to make a

choice of what to study every day. At the same time, I took the risk of having missed something elsewhere. Usually, I found that if I missed something, I always went back to talk to the reporters concerned. But, what I lost by not being there did worry me a lot.

Research roles were another problem in my own field work. Having some knowledge of journalists' daily routines, I thought that I would have no difficulties in deciding on the use of a particular type of role in advance. However, once I was in the field, I realized that this was wishful thinking. When I was at the KMT's headquarters, I had to make some forms of adjustment. All these problems I had never faced in my previous studies.

It seemed to me that carrying out the research role is not always a problem of scientific inquiry. It is worth stressing that it has to be considered as a personal problem. Initially, I was beset with severe doubts about my ability as a field worker. This was due in part to the fact that I had no previous field experience. Nevertheless, I had an educational background in journalism that was directly relevant to my research problem. But that was not all. I was told by colleagues that I lacked some of the personal elements which were crucial to be a effective fieldworker. For instance, I was not sociable, active and intelligent enough to communicate with the reporters and the politicians. I admit that I am not the kind of person who could fit into a news situation and develop friendly relations with news people within a short period of time.



But it seemed that I had some special personal qualities which made it peculiarly easy for me to get reporters to talk. One reporter who I had interviewed said that she found me an easy person to talk to. Another reporter told me after the interview that he was willing to give me confidential information because I looked like a honest and sincere type of person. I mention these instances not to show off my interview skills. But these instances demonstrate that the researcher must be able to take on the character of an intimate conversation, even if the interview is conducted in a formal way.

In addition anxiety, whatever its source, inevitably affects the ability of the observer to play his or her role (Gans, 1968: 300-317; Schwartz and Schwartz, 1969: 100-103). So, I would like to offer a final word about being sensitive to anxiety that stemmed primarily from my personal make-up. For example, I do not agree with the idea that the only way of getting honest data is to be dishonest in getting it. Therefore, during my field studies, I did strongly feel guilt about deceiving the authorities in trying to gain access. Taking the example of my field work at the KMT headquarters, my anxiety over pretending to be a reporter never led me to physically withdraw from there, but I must confess that my own anxiety may have led me to perceive the security measures as more intense than they actually were.

## CHAPTER 6

### REPORTING THE PARTY-STATE

#### INTRODUCTION

The idea that the government is accountable to the public lies at the heart of the process of democracy. By performing as a watchdog on government business, the press is seen as central to the democratic process. To perform this function, the press must remain independent of government. Due to the growing state intervention in news practice through censoring or manipulating political information, the media have difficulties in conveying adequate, relevant and diverse information (Habermas, 1989; Keane, 1990). Consequently, this can make the ordinary citizen more vulnerable to manipulation by government.

Government efforts to control the flow of information on which the press depends for news production are crucial in the relationship between the media and politics. In research into the dynamics of state-press relations on a routine basis, a number of studies, such as Hess (1984), Murphy (1978), Sigal (1973) and Tiffen (1989) attempt to describe how the administration manages the conduct of news gathering, and Jones (1993) and Seymour-Ure (1989) try to depict how top government administrators deal with

broadcasting. In addition, Cockerell, Hennessy and Walker (1984) and Seymour-Ure (1991) provide a historical account on British media relations with government. There seems to be a growing consensus that government is heavily involved in the manufacture of news through the practice of public relations. It deliberately provides the journalist with information which is reportable as news. Therefore, some journalists dependent on government services tend to accept official views without further investigation.

Taking a view of the dialectic of control of news production, this chapter aims to describe how and why politicians and reporters negotiate control over the practice of journalism in defining news during the democratic transition in Taiwan. In doing this, a study of the process of news coverage of national politics in the top administration agencies is conducted.

## THE PARTY-STATE'S PUBLIC RELATIONS MACHINES

In Taiwan, the ruling party Kuo Min Tang (KMT), the Presidency and the Executive Yuan compose what is known as the party-state. Formally, the 1947 constitution specifies a National Assembly as the embodiment of popular sovereignty, a president as chief of state and five Yuan (councils)--administrative, legislative, judicial, examination (of government personnel) and control (of government performance). In reality, the structure of the party-state combines Leninist, presidential and

parliamentary systems in an ambiguous way. The party chairman, the President and the Premier are the most powerful politicians who steer the whole state machinery. Generally, the party chairmanship is very important because the party legitimates and coordinates the entire system, and provides the arena for cultivating and selecting all institutional leaders. The premiership is the operative executive post in charge of the government which includes economics, finance, planning, banking, transport, all public and large private corporations, and commercial associations and labour unions. According to the constitution, the Premier is appointed by the President and accountable to the Legislative Yuan. At present, Lee Teng-hui has commanded the political system by simultaneously holding the post of party chairman and president since 1988. Hau Pei-tsun who was appointed by President Lee with the consent of the Legislative Yuan in May 1990, resigned in February 1993 after the general election.

As noted above, the party-state includes three key institutions in the political system: the Presidency, the Executive Yuan and the ruling party Kuo Min Tang (KMT). But the Presidency is excluded from this study. The relations between party-state and the press are grounded in the institutional sites of the Executive Yuan and the KMT headquarters.

The Presidency established a Spokesman's Office in April 1991. Before that, the Government Information Office (GIO) of the Executive Yuan was responsible for the

Presidency's public relations. However, because a spokesman made several misstatements at news conferences, the Presidency's Spokesman's Office has not held a news conference since August 1991.<sup>1</sup> In practice, the press handout is the principal routine channel through which most information passes from the Presidency to the reporters. Moreover, the reporters are allowed to make contacts with the Presidency in person or by telephone, but they are confined to the Spokesman's Office. By comparison, the relations between reporters and the Presidency are less reciprocal than the Executive Yuan and KMT headquarters. Therefore, only the big newspapers, such as the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, assign reporters to the Presidency on a day-to-day basis.

#### 1. The Executive Yuan Case

The Executive Yuan is the administrative arm of the Republic of China (ROC) government. Its organizational structure consists of eight ministries, seventeen commissions, councils and bureaux and the Central Bank. Also, the Executive Yuan supervises the administration of the municipalities of Taipei and Kaohsiung and the Taiwan Provincial Government which in turn directs the administrative work of local governments. The Executive Yuan sets the policy for all levels of government. In this

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<sup>1</sup>The information was given by the reporters on the Presidency beat. (see Interview, reporter, 10-11-92:p1 and 11-23-92:p3)

study, the news gathering activities in the sub-organizations of the Executive Yuan, such as ministries, are excluded.

In reality, the Executive Yuan's news policy is to set the rules governing disclosure through routine and formal channels, rather than allowing reporters to make contacts with the officials directly. The strategic control of news in the Executive Yuan is exercised in two ways. Firstly, some strategies are employed to tighten controls over reporters' access to the civil servants inside the Executive Yuan. Secondly, information about the Executive Yuan's plans and activities is channelled through the Government Information Office (GIO).

#### (1) Restricted Access

Generally, no area of government activity at the Executive Yuan is available to be directly scrutinized by a reporter, because no reporter is allowed to observe the routine work of the executive organizations and the subordinate departments at the Executive Yuan. Since Hau Pei-tsun was nominated as the Premier in May 1990, no requests for interviews made by the local newspapers have been granted. Furthermore, the news stories about the Premier's activities, such as the greeting of foreign heads of government, delivering speeches to civil associations in the private sector, giving instructions to subordinates, or even chatting with ordinary citizens, are all released through

the GIO.

To control information at source, the Executive Yuan set up a standardized channel for reporters to get access to civil servants during office hours. But, this rule does not apply to the Premier.

Asking for entry to the Executive Yuan, the reporter has to register at the reception desk and request permission. Then a special identification card is issued. Generally, the reporter is allowed to visit only one office each time. The purpose of this tactic is to track down the person who might be the source of any leak.

'In practice, I prefer to reach the sources by phone rather than go to the office. I know that if I conduct a face-to-face interview inside the Executive Yuan, I might put them in a vulnerable position when the authorities seek any leakers.' (Interview, reporter, 21-12-92:p1)

As a consequence, in reporting the Executive Yuan, the reporters visit the GIO instead. Generally, they have to visit the GIO every day which is segregated from the compound of the Executive Yuan.

'By comparison to other government agencies, the Executive Yuan is a place that is really quite difficult to get into. Frankly, we are trapped in a place which should be the news beat for media correspondents, rather than for political reporters. In the GIO we can hardly witness any official business directly, and whatever we have is second-hand information.' (Interview, reporter, 11-26-92:p3)

## (2) News Management of the GIO

The Executive Yuan is the agency which has equipped itself with the most sophisticated public relations machine in

Taiwan. The GIO has been the mouthpiece of the Executive Yuan since the 1960s. The GIO has played a double role in dealing with the media. On the one hand, the GIO is responsible for the government's news releases and propaganda activities. On the other hand, the GIO is the governing body of the media in accordance with the Publication Law and the Radio and Television Law.

### 1.1 The Settings

Most reporters make a daily visit to the GIO to check what news has happened on their beat. Routinely, the reporters spend two to three hours in the GIO's reporter's room. The reporters from early evening newspapers usually come around 9 AM. The reporters from dailies come at 3 PM. The reporters' room is a spatio-temporal arrangement by which the reporters are kept together. Within the reporters' room, the reporters conduct their business. They have their own desks, they can use facsimile machines, telephones, photo copier machines, and they can read newspapers and magazines. Moreover, they can contact their sources using phones supplied on their desks or in private phone booths. Very often they go to a room next door to chat with press officers or to request information. Occasionally, the Government spokesman, the GIO's Director-General comes to the reporter's room to give a briefing around 6 PM, but on that occasion he will not make hard news.



More importantly, within the reporter's room the reporters make friends and enemies. They pass gossip and share secrets. Through exchange of information with colleagues on the beat, the uncertainty and tensions built by denial of access to the Executive Yuan are relieved.

'In the absence of the reality out there to be reported, I am always uncertain about what is going on there. Further, I am lacking information on where the others go and what kinds of information they get. Having a chance to chat with colleagues is very important to me, because I listen to what they say and compare this to what I have that prevents me from the omission of significant details.' (Interview, reporter, 26-11-92:p3)

Some standard operational procedures are set up by the GIO to govern the reporters' activities and exercise control over information. These procedures include providing handouts, and organizing press conferences and briefings.

Actually, for reporters on the beat accomplishing entry is rather easy. Every reporter can enter into the GIO's building without asking for a permit. Furthermore, the reporters, no matter who they work for, have equal access to GIO's news releases. Reporters can collect any handout at the reception desk and they can take part in each press conference. At the press conference, there are no assigned seats and no restriction on the right to ask questions.

## 1.2 News Releases

To prepare information for the news media is the major activity of the GIO's Domestic Information Department. Four press officers are in charge of this matter.

Not surprisingly, the GIO's production of news releases is an organizational and political accomplishment. In the first place, the press officers encounter almost all the bureaucratic aspects associated with the Executive Yuan. Then they construct a second-hand account and channel these through handouts and press conferences to the news media. Not surprisingly, the 'news' released by the GIO is a product which best advances the government's interests. The information given by the GIO is a special kind of 'reality' within which sensitive information is restricted, and the politically embarrassing issues are hidden. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the press officials inevitably exercise political selectivity in what they have observed and what they have described.

'The GIO will not be adverse to the press... A spokesman should release as much information to the press. If the reporters can get information from the spokesman, they won't hunt for news from someone else. Moreover, they won't construct the stories based on their own imaginations.... Therefore, my advice is to feed them enough information that may prevent a more uncontrolled and damaging search by reporters. For example, when I chaired the first news conference last year, I revealed whatever I could say about the meeting of Executive Council. I remember many colleagues were so worried about my up front performance. I was told the news conference was quite different from the previous cases.' (Public speech, GIO's Director-General, 9-11-92:p2)

### 1.2.1 Handouts

Since the GIO is the principal public relations machine of the ROC government, it is hardly surprising that it produces a mountain of news releases. For instance, according to the

*GIO Annual Report*, 658 news releases and 26 additional releases were issued in the first 6 months of 1992.

Generally, handouts are the version of events constructed by press coordinators at GIO's Department of Domestic Information based on their second-hand data or direct observations. The four press officials all with a background in journalism are responsible for this matter. Also, each handout must go through three stages of perfunctory approval inside the department. On matters of special importance, the handouts must be cleared by the GIO's Director-General.

In practice, the GIO's handouts are divided into two categories. One common topic of the handouts is the Premier's daily routines. Generally, the press coordinators are assigned to take part in and cover the stories of these accounts. Another kind of handout is associated with the news conferences held in the Executive Yuan. These handouts are constructed by the press coordinators based on the verbal accounts given by the Government spokesman at the news conferences and the information provided by other agencies.

No reporters are allowed to cover the Premier's daily routines, such as greeting chief politicians of other states, delivering speeches to civil associations from the economic, industrial or academic sectors, giving instructions to his subordinates, or even chatting with ordinary people. All activities are described in a verbal or in a written form by the press coordinators and given to

the press.

'We do have difficulties in allowing the reporters to cover the premier's routines. For example, we did not let the reporters take part in the meetings of "Premier Versus District Officials", because the room was too small and lacking space. But we attempted to release the handouts as soon as possible after each meeting. As for the reporters working for the early evening papers, we gave them a verbal account that should guarantee that they could meet their deadlines.... Also, we let three networks' cameramen shoot their film at the beginning of meetings.' (Interview, press coordinator, 4-11-92:p1).

Practically, most of the GIO's releases are simply brief recitations of some facts about the Premier's daily routines. However, in order to save the reporters time the information in handouts is arranged in an inverted pyramid style. In each handout the most newsworthy bits are presented first, then details of lesser significance follow in descending order. Also, some handouts are couched in extremely narrow and stylized vocabulary.

'I usually tailor my messages to the requirements of journalists' formats. By doing that, I have to try to keep myself up-to-date on what the reporters think and want. To chat with reporters in the reporter's room is an important way of knowing their news values and working habits. Also, some of the information comes from nonsystematic reading. Often, I study our daily clips in order to know what gets reported and how it is being reported. For instance, the extent that handouts are rewritten by the papers.' (Interview, press coordinator, 4-11-92:p2)

The Premier always plays the leading character in the news releases about his daily routines. For instance, reporting the meetings is almost entirely a matter of reporting what the Premier said. Generally, the common style of a news story begins with a speech which is a general summary of the Premier's expectations of and

instructions to the audience. Then follows a sequence of paragraphs which function as a category for eliciting the Premier's political perspectives rather than for describing the setting of the meeting. Since what the Premier said is the main theme of the story, within this category only one or two paragraphs give information about time, place and other participants' viewpoints. By contrast, the majority of paragraphs contain information about the premises and arguments of the Premier's speeches.

'In the meetings, for example "Premier Versus District Council Officials" the officials from the local council raised some questions. But, most of their opinions are rather fragmentary. By comparison to the Premier's statements, local officials' opinions are far less significant. I think the reporters will agree with me on this point.' (Interview, press coordinator, 11-26-92:p2)

In the GIO's news stories, the audience's responses at the meeting are hardly revealed. For instance, a handout which contains information about the Premier attending a seminar, the audience's voices are reported, but they are represented in a passive way. In this news story, only one audience voice is mentioned and phrased as follows:

'Responding to a question about reducing postal rate of delivery of publications, Premier Hau Pei-tsun said that the government must consider the cost and benefit of the postal system....'  
(Handout 002, 3-12-92).

### 1.2.2 Press Conferences

At the GIO, press conferences are held on a regular basis. The press conference is designed to consolidate reporters'

views about the important meetings held in the Executive Yuan.

The press conference of the meeting of the Executive Branch Council is the most important one, because the Executive Branch Council is the highest policy making organ of government. This news conference is scheduled on every Thursday at 11:30 AM half an hour later than the meeting. The second news conference associated with 'The Joint Meeting of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs' is held every Saturday at 11:30 AM. Besides that, a news conference of 'The Meeting of Policing' is held biweekly on a Thursday at 4 PM. The GIO's news conferences typically last for 30 minutes.

Ten minutes prior to the news conference, the Executive Yuan reporters gather in the GIO's news centre. Although there are no assigned seats in the news centre, no reporter sits in the front two rows. Generally, the whole news conference is tape recorded either by the GIO or by the reporters.

The GIO's news conferences proceed as though a government spokesman is giving a speech, rather than the reporters questioning him. In practice, the government spokesman is always in control over the ongoing dialogue at the news conference. He spends more than 20 minutes in delivering his messages, then only answers one or two questions raised by the reporters. As for the reporters, they always listen politely and no one imposes outrageous or combative questions. It seems that the reporters docilely

accept the government spokesman's perspectives, because they hardly attempt to penetrate or probe a given comment in detail, not even to start a debate with the government spokesman. Overt collusion between the government spokesman and the reporters is never the case.

'We are very competitive on the beat. Therefore, we are unlikely to share important information with each other. If I have a splendid question, I am definitely not going to raise it at the news conference. You know on that occasion, if I ask the question, everyone is going to have the answer. As a consequence, it inevitably creates a silence among us.... The reporters from early evening newspapers are more likely to raise questions, even an exclusive one, because they can get their stories printed after the news conference. Generally, if their topics were newsworthy, the reporters from daily newspapers will keep pursuing them in the afternoon. However, some of the reporters just rephrase the stories printed by the early evening papers.' (Interview, reporter, 5-11-92:p2).

Apart from professional reasons, psychological barriers play a large part in preventing reporters from raising questions at the news conference. Consequently, no reporter imposes outrageous or combative questions on the government spokesman.

'Why do the reporters avoid asking questions at the news conference? Frankly speaking, preventing themselves from sharing confidential information with others is just part of the reason. You see I am reluctant to ask questions in public, because I am not used to it. Ultimately, I am afraid an unsubstantiated question will cause me embarrassment in front of colleagues. I can be sure that some reporters are besieged by this psychological barrier.' (Interview, reporter, 27-10-92:p2).

For instance, after every news conference when the government spokesman ends the news conference and steps down from the platform, a dozen reporters push forward and gather

around him for a few minutes of questions and answers. The reason behind the practice is that the reporters feel more free and easy to raise questions on this occasion, rather than that the government spokesman is more frank in giving information.

At the news conference, the government spokesman is an objective and impersonal narrator. His pattern of story-telling coincides with the proceedings of the Executive Branch meeting. But, matters in connection with the meeting are not communicated naturally. It seems that the government spokesman deliberately heightens the legitimacy of the KMT government and the Premier. Legitimacy means that the government is naturally the right one for society, and that the officials rightly hold and exercise power. In story-telling, the legitimacy of an authority can be created by using official language, referring to collective decisions, using a respectful tone and minimizing jurisdictional and procedural disputes (Paletz and Entman, 1984:82-83).

At the news conference, the government spokesman always rationalizes time by condensing the meeting into a neat package. The normal practice is that the government spokesman starts with a very brief introduction of the proceedings of the meeting, and follows this by discussing information under a series of headings 'The Current Public Opinion Briefing', 'The Routine Working Report', 'Examination of and Debate on Ordinances' and 'The Nomination'.



Under each heading, the government spokesman highlights and emphasizes the Premier's activities at the expense of other cabinet members' activities. Furthermore, he not only conveys the specifics of the Premier's statements, but he also always treats the Premier with a great respect. For instance, the government spokesman always uses neutral or unmarked terms such as 'say', 'mention', and 'ask', and descriptive verbs such as 'urge' 'appeal' and 'address' to describe the conversational contexts between the Premier and his cabinet, but, he never uses more controversial terms such as 'refute' or 'squabble'. Therefore, the Premier's image presented in these contexts is that he is a rational, persuadable, considerate and responsible politician.

For example, when the government spokesman gives information about 'Recent Public Opinion', he pays little attention to the contents of the report. On the contrary, the government spokesman gives a great deal of detail about how the Premier responded to this matter, such as what questions were raised by him, what instructions were given by him and what decisions were made by him and so on.

'In the meeting, I briefed on some issues which were salient in the newspapers recently. Taking the example of the Formosa Plastics Corp. case, I explained to the cabinet why Mr. Wang Yung-ching decided to make investments in communist China. After my report, some cabinet members gave their opinions. Then the Premier concluded this case on the following grounds. The Premier said that the government would base itself on existing principles when we tried to develop economic relations with communist China. The Premier demanded the ministers evaluate this case carefully. Apart from small business, the figures counted by the government showed that the number of medium and large size enterprises that invested in communist China was increasing. He stressed

that the economic policy of trade with communist China should be able to secure the independence of our economy....' (Field notes, 26-11-92:p1)

Under the rubric 'The Routine Working Report', a report made by ministries, commissions or subordinate departments of the Executive Yuan, the government spokesman uses the same tactic again. That is, in the government spokesman's stories little attention is devoted to depicting the activities of other cabinet members. Also, the cabinet members are always endowed with a passive voice, because their views hardly appear, unless they echo the Premier's questions.

'Following up my briefing, the analysis of "Economic Trends in Taiwan" made by the Council for Economic Planning and Development proceeded. Of course, some cabinet members commented on this matter. After that, the Premier said that although Taiwan's economy picked up in October, we still had to remain cautious. He constantly mentioned that social stability including political stability was the driving force for Taiwan's economy. Recently, some statements made by the candidates in their election campaigns seemed to destabilize our society. Therefore, he said that he had to highlight the significance of political stability on every occasion....' (Field notes, 11-26-92:p2)

In the period allocated to the 'Examination of Debate on Ordinances', the government spokesman ties up the process of discussion and emphasizes the collective nature of decisions. For example, when the government spokesman depicts a debate on a bill, he deliberately gives a summary report rather than the full discussion which includes what everyone has said. It is no surprise that the Premier's comments, opinions, expectations and instructions are elucidated in detail and conclude the discussion. By

contrast, he rarely specifies the cabinet members' names or their utterances. Furthermore, it seems that the discussions have been carried out through a rational and efficient process by which everything has gone smoothly and harmoniously and without any procedural disputes or individual frustrations.

### (3) Reactions to GIO's News Management

As has been elaborated, the GIO's news releases are the only bureaucratic and open reality on which reporters can make a direct observation. In practice, the reporters heavily rely on the GIO's news releases for doing their routine work, although they may be sceptical of the spokesman's intention.

*'I think the spokesman system is a necessary device for any modern government agency, because it ensures that we can get the basic information we need. Of course, we can not completely rely on the government news releases, because partisan argument in the releases is expected, mistakes and half-truths are unexceptional. Truly speaking, some spokesmen even tell outright lies. I don't like the spokesmen who always remedy their stories by making a denial of what had been said. If the briefings must be off-the-record, he just makes a direct request to me not to print it. Definitely, I will not break the rules of the game.'*  
(Interview, reporter, 10-12-92:p1)

In general, there is no dramatic difference in media coverage of GIO's news releases. A high degree of uniformity in the coverage implies that the media are telling the public what the government wants them to hear. Unanimous reportage reflects that the reporters here are less energetic in their search for other information to elaborate on the GIO's news releases, although reporters,

who are professionally proud, deny this.

'As you know, the reporters working for the big two papers are always faced with a severely competitive circumstance. How can I just depend on the formal channels and hand in the GIO's handouts all the time? Also, I am a person who really commits oneself to the profession. Therefore, I always attempt to develop my stories through my own networks of sources.' (Interview, reporter, 21-12-92:p1)

'My newspaper is identified as a liberal and grass roots one. Under the newspaper's politics, I always take a critical stand to reading the GIO's news releases. From a political viewpoint, the GIO's news releases always show people the bright side of their stories. This kind of ideology is unacceptable to my superiors. Further, from a professional viewpoint, the press coordinators are simply not skilful enough to deal with news items. For example, the GIO's handouts are not only restricted to primary facts and rule out background information, but also full of jargon. In my opinion, these stories desperately need to be reworked.' (Interview, reporter, 3-12-92:p2)

The executive Yuan receives extensive media attention (see Table 6-1, p.267). When news coverage across the papers is examined, the evidence shows that the party-state owned papers, such as the *Central Daily News* (KMT owned), the *Hsin-sheng Pao* (government owned) and the *Youth Daily* (military owned) serve as a conduit for the Executive Yuan.

Table 6-1 (p.267) shows that the GIO's releases about the Premier's daily routines receive extensive coverage in these papers. As already mentioned, the reporters are not allowed to observe the Premier's routines, therefore, any news in connection with the Premier all depends on the GIO's releases. Under most circumstances, party-state owned papers simply duplicate the GIO's handouts with small changes in the order of paragraphs. As for coverage of the GIO's news conference, much attention is focused on the

Premier's instructions. Generally, the reporters frame the stories by combining the spokesman's verbal account and the GIO's handouts. However, in their stories no additional information obtained from other sources is used to scrutinize the official accounts or to make them more sophisticated or more accessible to the reader.

The papers published by the two large media groups, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* also devote much of their space to printing the GIO's news releases. They cover most of the GIO's handouts which contain information on the Premier's routines. Unlike party-state owned papers, the two big papers seldom publish GIO's handouts in full, instead they cut down the size of each handout. Moreover, the GIO's handouts are rephrased. For instance, the reporters rewrite the lead and make some changes in the order of the release.

When the reporters cover the news conferences held by the GIO, they tend to develop the stories based on the spokesman's verbal accounts, rather than relying on the handouts issued in the late afternoon. Generally, the government spokesman's verbal accounts are framed as straight news to which no additional information from other sources is added. However, if the given account is significantly newsworthy, the reporters will write a by-line story, a so-called supplementary news analysis. In this supplementary story, the reporters put the official account into a broader context. More importantly, they produce the kind of information that would fully support the official

information, especially the Premier's statements. For example, at the 19 November 1992 news conference, the government spokesman announced that a panel headed by the Deputy Premier was being set up to study the issue of cabinet resignations at the Premier's request. In response to this announcement, the *United Daily News* reporter featured a story in which the Premier's decision was positively appraised. He stated that the Premier had chosen the right person and the right time to tackle a fundamental institutional problem. Therefore, he argued that whether the Premier intended to resign or not was no longer an important issue. The *China Times* reporter also wrote a feature story on this matter. At the beginning of the story, the reporter repeated the Premier's comments on cabinet resignations that had been given on numerous public occasions. He pointed out that the Premier had decided to resign after the election. Furthermore, an anonymous source was quoted as indicating that the Premier was a responsible politician. For example, in order to campaign in the national election as a united party, the Premier would take full responsibility in tackling the problems over which the party was divided, especially those concerned with his personal business conduct. Finally, the reporter concluded that the Premier was a most diligent campaigner for KMT candidates in comparison to his predecessors.

In comparison, the spectrum of the *China Times'* coverage is wider than the *United Daily News*. While the *United Daily News* almost exclusively depended on the GIO's

releases, the *China Times* carried another two stories on this matter. In these, the opinions of legislators from both parties and a scholar in constitutional studies were printed. With the exception of the New KMT (KMT's faction) legislator who was on the same side as the Premier, the other legislators were from the opposition party and the Wisdom Alliance (KMT's faction) and both stressed that the cabinet should resign after the national election.

In contrast to the papers noted above, the *Independence Daily Post* and the *Liberty Times*, so-called liberal papers paid less attention to the GIO's news releases. At first, the GIO's handouts which related to the Premier's routines hardly appeared in these papers. Moreover, these papers devoted less space to covering the GIO's news conferences. In general, only one or two news stories given by the government spokesman got into print. Most of these stories were associated with the problems of the political structure or with trade policies with communist China. The normal practice of identifying themselves as a liberal paper is to feature a story in which the official viewpoints are interpreted or criticized. For instance, on 20 November 1992, the *Independence Daily Post* ran a two-paragraph story to cover the government spokesman's announcement about the panel organized to examine the issue of cabinet resignations. Also, a by-lined story written by its Executive Yuan reporter was printed. In this story, the reporter indicated that the Premier's intention was to stay in power after the national election. She used the

Premier's statements which were made in the parliament and at the annual press conference to support this argument. She also predicted that the panel would come under a great deal of political pressure. The *Liberty Times* reacted negatively on this matter. In a feature story, the reporter (not the reporter who covers the Executive Yuan) argued that the cabinet should resign after the national election. Therefore, there was no point in setting up a panel. Furthermore, it was observed that cabinet members studying an issue related to their own future would always lack credibility. Generally speaking, the statements given by alternative sources, such as liberal scholars, and the opposition party were used regularly by liberal papers to contrast with the official viewpoints.

An unusual instance which happened in the *Independence Daily Post* on 5 November needs clarification. On 6 November 1992, the *Independence Daily Post* reproduced three stories issued by the GIO, including a handout which described the Premier's speech to the local officials (see Table 6-1, p.267).

'The Executive Yuan reporter was on vacation. I was assigned to cover the GIO's news conference for her. Besides that I still have to take care of my own beat.... There was not enough time for me to handle everything. Therefore, I simply passed on the GIO' handouts to the editorial desk.... Also, yesterday was a rather slow news day.' (Interview, IDP reporter, 6-11-92:p1)

The essence of news is timely and urgent. In this instance, the scarcity of manpower had undermined the quality control of news production. It is evident that without sufficient time, manpower and the raw materials, any



news organization will fail to defend its own news policy and journalistic professional practices. Since the press heavily relies on the GIO for news and information and may pass its message to readers relatively cursorily, the press is subject to political influence.

#### (4) GIO's News Management: A Special Case

Let us consider the first occasion that the Premier agreed to meet the press in 'Asking Questions' on television. 'Asking Questions' is produced by Taiwan Television Corporation (TTV). It is a 60-minute pre-recorded programme. The object of the programme is to provide information, and consists of an interview with a politician which takes up the whole of the programme.

Generally, the interview is carried out by three reporters from the electronic or print media. The guest interviewee in this programme is the senior official of the executive branch of government. The key speaker is TTV's chief reporter. The case in question began in mid-November 1992. The GIO notified TTV that the Premier would like to appear on 'Asking Questions', and that the programme should be broadcast on 6 December. According to a previous agreement, the video-taping of the news conference was scheduled for 3 December, but one day before the programme was due to be made, the Premier decided to postpone it until 4 December (*TTV Weekly*, 20-26 Dec., 1992:127).

In the political structure of the Republic of China,

the Premier is second in importance only to the President. Due to the fact that the guest interviewee was such a celebrity, TTV declined to have reporters as interviewers, and opted instead for the chief editors of national newspapers. The so-called 'big three' papers were invited to take part in the programme. They were the chief editors of the *China Times*, the *United Daily News* and the *Central Daily News*.<sup>2</sup> The key speaker, TTV's own chief reporter, remained the same for the programme.

It is reasonable to argue that this interview was a vehicle for political persuasion. The rules of the game regarding such matters as (1) the engagement of the Premier to appear on the programme, (2) the topics to be covered in the programme, and (3) the precise content of the broadcast were all laid down by the GIO.

The questions used at the conference were formulated by the three chief editors and TTV's chief reporter. Then a complete written list of questions was sent to the GIO to seek prior approval from the Premier a week before the programme was recorded. Furthermore, on 3 December, the key speaker and three interviewers spent 30 minutes with the GIO's Director-General exchanging detailed information about the procedure of the interview.

At the GIO's Domestic Information Department, intensive preparation was undertaken with a team of press coordinators a week before the video-taping. The press coordinators

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<sup>2</sup>The *China Times* and the *United Daily News* are published by two private media conglomerates, and the *Central Daily News* is a party-owned newspaper.

spent 3 working days developing answers to the questions on the list.

'This was different from the annual news conference. At the annual news conference, questions were not anticipated. Therefore, we recruited a team of professors in the fields of social science from leading universities. The professors were requested to draw up a list of questions which were more likely to be raised and prepare responses. But, this time we were told to prepare recommended responses for the Premier. Some of the information come from systematic reading that included speeches made by the Premier at the Legislative Yuan and on public occasions. Other information come from data provided by the subordinate agencies, such as....' (Interview, press coordinator, 9-12-92:p1-2)

On 3 December, the Director-General of TTV inspected studio 5. At his request some old props were replaced. He also told his subordinates to bring a new chair from the meeting room for the honourable guest (*Ming Sheng Pao*, 5-12-92:12).

On 4 December, the Premier, accompanied by the GIO's Director-General, arrived at TTV at 3:40 PM. The Director-General of TTV remained with the Premier in the studio throughout the video-taping.

After the interview, the Premier reviewed the film as had been arranged. Because he was not satisfied with the last part of the programme, the production team had to come back to the studio and resume the video-taping. At the same time, a team of 12 press officers stationed at TTV produced a written text of the interview.

The reporters on the beat were not allowed into the TTV studio while the programme was being recorded. Instead, every newspaper received a package of information from the

GIO at 11 PM. This package contained a news story and the full text of the conference. Also, at the GIO's request two copies of a 10-minute film of the conference were edited by TTV and given to two networks: China Television Corporation (CTV) and Chinese Television System (CTS).

This evidence shows that the rules governing the interview were designed to let the Premier say what he liked, rather than to make the Premier answerable to the public. Therefore, the interview amounted to the Premier making a speech to the interviewers rather than the interviewers questioning him.

At the news conference, interviewers were given very little speaking time to challenge the Premier. In contrast the Premier was allowed unlimited time to reply. Further, when the Premier was giving information, no interruption was allowed by the interviewers. The Premier could therefore elicit his opinions and expectations at great length.

In 60 minutes only 12 questions were raised. The average duration of each question was a mere 30 seconds. By contrast, the average duration of the answers was 5 minutes. More importantly evidence derived from this series of interactions suggests that the Premier was put in a position where no interviewer violated the politeness principle and no one attempted to threaten his face.

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#### The Topics Covered in the Programme

1. You are the most prominent politician in the country, what sort of beliefs do you hold?
2. The general election campaign will formally start

within 2 days. This is the most important election since the implementation of the constitution, and people are very concerned about it. What sorts of expectations do you have about the election? And what kind of influences will the election have on the development of democracy and the future of the nation?

3. Recently, we have heard people say that there is a discrepancy between public opinion in the south and in the north. From your visits across the whole country do you think this discrepancy really exists? Furthermore, as head of government how are you going to deal with this matter in policy-making?

4. During the election campaigns our attention was drawn to the fact that candidates, not just those of the opposition party, but even some ruling party candidates challenged you in order to appeal to the voters. What are you going to do with regard to this matter?

5. Premier, the six-year National Construction Project was mentioned earlier in the programme. I think people are very concerned about the financing of the project. What stage is the project at? Will it be completed in 1996 as scheduled? What sort of objectives can be achieved?

6. During the election campaign, some candidates of both parties have criticized you in order to appeal to the voters. Recently, the cabinet's resignation has been asked for and a team was organized by the Deputy Premier on your instructions to examine this problem. Now they are about to reach a final decision. What is your opinion on this matter?

7. At the latest meeting of the Executive Branch Council, you told your cabinet members to prepare for the next 3-year term. A lot of public attention is currently focused on this matter. People would like to know the answer to the question 'Premier, are you willing to remain in your position?'

8. We have been making some progress in developing relations with communist China. What direction do you foresee future developments taking? By what means can we secure stability?

9. Earlier, you talked about the stability and security of the Taiwan Straits. Also, in a meeting, you discussed this matter with managers from the industrial and economic sectors. You said that stability is desperately needed in Taiwan and that stability of the Taiwan Straits is one of three types of stability. Can you give more details about the tactics we are going to employ to maintain the stability of the Taiwan Straits? For instance, how are we going to deal with this matter in the three critical areas of interaction with communist China, politics, the economy and

culture?

10. I would like to ask the Premier a question in connection with foreign policy. Recently, I interviewed the heads of state of some countries in south Asia. They expressed a sincere desire to develop relationships with our country. However, on the domestic scene, political disputes have been one factor influencing foreign policy. For example, the ideological confrontation between independence and unification. I would like to ask the Premier, 'What do you think about our foreign policies? And what concrete policies should be pursued?'

11. Continuing on this topic, making foreign policies has of course to be closely tied to developments in the international situation. Since the Soviet Union collapsed, some structural transformations in the international order have taken place. It seems that economic geography is going to replace political geography. How do you think we can step in and adjust to this changeable international order?

12. Sorry, we are running out of time, so I am going to ask the final question. When you were appointed Premier, your career began to move from the military into the political domain. At that time there was for a brief period a rather sceptical atmosphere in our society. But, since the end of that short episode right up to the latest polling, your popularity has been at a peak. People seem to have accepted you already. Recently, you have continuously addressed the notion 'love Taiwan'. Can you spend some time in telling us what kind of person you are? What kind of affection do you have towards this piece of land?

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Examples given above show that the interviewers' utterances were always in the form of a 'question', with which they elicited information from the Premier. Generally speaking, no directive form was used by the interviewers to request the Premier to provide information.

In particular, all questions raised by interviewers had a preface relating to the Premier's opinion, for example, what he thought or felt about a particular state of affairs. By this strategy, the Premier was given ample space in which to answer the questions. For instance, when the Premier talked about foreign policies, he was able to say what the

policies were and what he felt about them.

Furthermore, interviewers were most formal and polite in the manner in which they framed their questions. For example, in many cases, the questions were phrased in a neutral open-ended manner. In many cases, the interviewers simply asked what the policy was and what was the Premier's opinion of it. Questions concerning shortcomings in government policy or the Premier's opinion on government malpractice were never mentioned. As a consequence, the Premier was put in a position where he was able to publicise and promote government policies, while he was never forced to defend his policies, so there was no risk of his losing face.

Generally, there was no major negative reaction made by the reporters on the beat towards the GIO on this matter. On 3 December, some reporters expressed their complaints to the government spokesman in the corridor. The reporters asked for permission to be in the studio when the news conference was video-taped, although they were not allowed to conduct interviews. The government spokesman replied that he would pass their requests on to his superiors. (Field notes, 3-12-92:p4)

On 6 December, the day after the televised news conference, some reporters, especially the reporters from local news media, argued with the press coordinators at the reporter's room. Because the GIO's news releases about the televised news conference were issued at 11 PM, they simply could not meet deadlines. (Field notes, 6-12-92:p2)

'Because we are on the front line, we are always faced with reprimands from the reporters.... The rows started in the late evening of 5th December. The film making was finished at 5:30 PM, and the news story was completed at 6:30 PM. But my superiors were busy reviewing the film, so I could not get prior approval from them. Otherwise, the news story could have been filed earlier. Besides, my colleagues spent a lot of time putting together the full transcript of the conference. Anyway, it was our fault, we should have issued the news story earlier.' (Interview, press coordinator, 9-12-92:p1)

Generally speaking, the majority of newspapers took this incident seriously. This study examines 7 newspapers located on both sides of the political spectrum. Two of three party-state owned papers ran a headline story on the front page and printed the interview in full on the third or fourth page. The government owned *Hsin-sheng Pao* put the GIO's news release on its front page, but no full text of the conference was given. Because the paper's deadline was 10 PM, it was not possible to print the full text of the conference, which came in at 11 PM. The party-state owned newspapers reproduced completely the GIO's news releases regarding the conference.

Of course, the full text of the conference was printed by the two big newspapers whose chief editors were invited to carry out the interviews. Unlike the party-state controlled papers reproducing the GIO's news release, they rephrased it and published it as the headline story on the front page. Furthermore, the *United Daily News* printed another story written by its media correspondent, in which the Premier's good performances in answering questions was described by TTV's chief reporter.



In contrast, the liberal newspapers, such as the *Liberty Times* and the *Independence Daily Post* portrayed the televised news conference differently. No full text of the conference was given in these papers. The *Independence Daily Post* ran a front page story based on the GIO's news releases. But the theme of their news story was focused on the Premier's opinion of the cabinet resignations. Also, 3 short stories by the paper's political reporter were printed on page 9. In them, the reporter described the GIO's interference in the televised news conference in general and depicted the unhealthy development of relations between the Premier and the news media in particular. Finally, she then pointed out that the role of the press in a democracy should come under public scrutiny.

In this instance, the media took part in a game in which the rules were set up by the government. To some extent, these news organizations deliberately traded their journalistic independence to please senior politicians in order to carry out their news gathering tasks. However, they failed to see this was evidence of how thoroughly they themselves functioned as a conduit for government propaganda.

## **2. The KMT Case**

The Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) is the KMT's public relations machine. Also, the DCA and the Taiwan Garrison Command were the two most powerful media governing agencies

up until the mid-1980s. Covering the news regarding the KMT's headquarters, the reporters come to the DCA's reporter's room routinely to collect handouts, confirm some information with the KMT's spokesman (also Director of DCA), or attend briefings. But if the reporters want to interview the other party workers, they have to visit the headquarters which is located a few miles away from the DCA. Permission is needed to visit the KMT's headquarters. First reporters have to show a special identification card which is issued by the Government Information Office to the security officers at the main gate. Then, they have to register at the information desk in the reception room. Only after that are the reporters allowed access to the office located on the first block of the building.

In reality, the KMT's Chairman (also President of the ROC) hardly gives interviews to the news media, except foreign correspondents. Furthermore, requests for interviews with the KMT's Secretary-General should be arranged by the DCA, however the reporters prefer to intercept him in public places and ask him to say something.

(1) Reporting the Meeting of the Central Standing  
Committee

Covering the meeting of the Central Standing Committee (CSC) is relatively important for the reporters here. Under the KMT constitution, the CSC is a decision-making centre. The CSC has 31 members who have the most prestigious positions

in the KMT hierarchy. The CSC meets every Wednesday at the KMT's headquarters.

### 1.1 Settings

The reporters arrive at the KMT's headquarters around 9 AM. In front of the main gate, the reporters have to show an identification card to security officers. Then they have to register at the information desk in the reception room which is right behind the main gate. In the reception room, a special identification card is issued. Furthermore, cameras or tape recorders are checked and labelled.

Strictly speaking, the reporters' activities are confined when they cover the CSC meeting. That is the reporters are only allowed to stay in the courtyard and at the door step of the KMT's headquarters.

### 1.2 Press Conferences

The press conference for the CSC's meeting is held on every Wednesday morning at 10 AM. The KMT spokesman meets the reporters after the meeting. The news conferences last 15 to 20 minutes.

Generally, all news organizations are equally served at the news conference. No seat is assigned. The spoken texts of routine reports made by the government agencies or the legislature are delivered before the news conference.

At the news conference, the spokesman dominates the

scene completely. Most reporters tape-record the spokesman's statements in order to verify their notes later. Occasionally, one or two questions are raised after the spokesman's briefing. However, no reporter asks sharp questions. Therefore, the spokesman is never under any pressure to answer questions. One exceptional instance took place on 10 November 1992. At that news conference, one of the *United Evening News* reporters made an interruption to request the spokesman to change the order of announcements, because he was unlikely to meet the deadline. His request was granted.

Generally, the spokesman tells his stories based on the proceedings of the meeting. He opens the conference by briefly mentioning the title of a routine report made by the government or the legislature in the meeting. Then he states the responses given by the CSC members. Finally, the chairman's decisions are highlighted and marked as a conclusion. It seems that the rhythms of his stories are rather monotonous. In other words, no participant is portrayed vividly in the spokesman's verbal accounts. For example, the spokesman always reads the chairman's speeches after the introductory phrase: 'the chairman's decision is....'. Therefore, the chairman's instructions are never conveyed in an active way by using transitive verbs, such as 'the chairman says', 'the chairman replies' and so on.

'At first, the Chief of the Council of Labour Affairs, comrade Chao Shou-po made a report on the policy of foreign labourers in the meeting. Then comrade Sheu Sheng-fa commented on it. He said, "The Council of Labour Affairs had performed well in arbitration of industrial disputes. Therefore,

there were no major industrial actions taken by the unions over the past years....". Finally, the chairman's decision was on the following grounds. "The Council of Labour Affairs should properly introduce the foreign labour force in order to cope the problem of labour shortage. Furthermore, the foreign workers should be properly managed in order to maintain social stability....".' (Field notes, 25-11-92:p2)

One canon of the spokesman's briefing is to stress the collective decisions at the expense of any individual members' opinions. At the news conference, the spokesman always announces the meeting's decisions. Sometimes, a summary of individual member's reactions is released, but the spokesman never discloses who said what in detail. Moreover, the CSC members are treated with respect in the spokesman's verbal accounts. In the spokesman's stories, the CSC is a rational and efficient body, because any jurisdictional and procedural disputes never appear however complex the reality of the situation may be.

### 1.3 Interviews

Since the reporters are allowed to stay in the courtyard, their chances of success in obtaining the information generated from outwith the formal channels are increased. The common way of getting news is to intercept the CSC members and conduct short interviews when they are attending or leaving the meeting. But the reporters have no chance to meet the President and the Premier, because they enter the main building through a side door. Most reporters confirmed that this kind of interview is a good way to cadge

information from heavyweight politicians. Under certain circumstances, some reporters would choose to wait on the door step in order to have access to the politicians rather than attend the KMT's news conference.

'I know some CSC members are still inside the building. I prefer to stay here. It does not mean that they will talk. But, at least I get a chance to conduct the interviews. You see, I always prepare a list of more than ten questions in my pocket.... The colleague is going to tape-record what the spokesman says for me. Otherwise, I can wait for the DCA's handouts.... However, no big case was discussed in today's meeting.' (Field notes, 9-12-92:p2)

Sometimes, the reporters use this occasion to get the politicians' reactions on some matters which are not related to the CSC's meeting. For instance, on 9 December, the reporters were busy interviewing the CSC members. Some members were asked to comment on the resignation of a National Policy Advisor.

More commonly, on this occasion the reporters' essential task is to get detailed information from CSC members about the tenor and content of the meeting. In practice, the information derived from quick interviews is more suitable in adding 'colour' to the DCA's releases, rather than to reframe the DCA's stories in a different way. The reason is that this kind of interview only lasts a few seconds, therefore, sophisticated interpretations are not possible.

Another tactic adopted by the reporters to get inside stories on the CSC's meeting is to interview the participants by telephone. This can even involve reporters asking the CSC members to take notes for them at the

meeting, with the reporters conducting a telephone interview afterwards.

Looking at the coverage of the CSC's meetings held on 11 November and 2 December 1992, the evidence shows that any KMT/press connection taking place outside the formal channels is not unusual, despite the fact that the CSC members are not allowed to talk to the press.

'Some of the CSC members love to talk to the press, and they always deliver some messages to the reporters after the meeting. If you stay in the headquarters' courtyard long enough, you will find out whom the reporters choose to favour.... As I know, some members even took notes in the meeting, then gave them to the press.' (Interview, information officer, 9-12-92:p1).

'The News Release Guidelines of the Central Committee Meetings' have been implemented by the KMT since November 1988 in order to clamp down on the unauthorized disclosure of information and to seal off potential leaks (*The Journalist*, 28 Nov.- 4 Dec., 1988:72). According to its guidelines, any discussion and decisions made in a CSC meeting is classified as top secret, therefore, no participant is allowed to leak any information to the press, or harsh disciplinary action will be taken. If it is necessary, the DCA is the unit which is responsible for public disclosure.

A notable case in which reporters got sources to cover the CSC meeting for them took place on 10 December 1992. That CSC meeting was expected to make a decision on how to punish the 7 KMT legislators who failed to follow the party's policies. Two KMT rebels were charged with advocating a 'one China, one Taiwan' policy. At Question

Time in the Legislative Yuan that policy had been viewed as the opposition Democratic Progressive Party's separatist slogan. The other five legislators were accused of violating party policy by approving cutting the stock transaction tax when they convened a session of the Legislature's Finance Committee.

At that news conference, the principles of collective responsibility and of the secrecy of the decision-making process were tightly adhered to by the KMT's spokesman. Not surprisingly, he announced what decisions were made on the matters in the meeting. However, information about what the CSC members discussed or how they reached their decisions was withheld. At a reporter's request, the KMT spokesman released the list of names of those who took part in the debates, but he refused to give any statements from individuals.

However, that afternoon, stories about the heated debate between the KMT chairman (the Taiwan-born president) and conservative CSC members were carried on the front page of the major evening papers, except the *Independence Evening Post* which was solely dependent on the KMT's releases. For example, the *China Times Express* and the *United Evening News* vividly described the debates on how to punish KMT rebels in their headline stories in terms that never appeared in the spokesman's verbal account. In these stories, the interactions between the chairman and some KMT conservatives were depicted as an eye-witness account. It seemed as if the reporters had actually attended the meeting.



'A private source leaked the story to me.... We expected that the CSC's meeting was going to have a whole-hearted debate on the punishment of the KMT rebels. Therefore, one day before the meeting, the team of political reporters decided to ask for some help from a private source.... The private source is an old friend who has been very reliable and cooperative. Also, the private source is a knowledgeable person with a good memory. We can depend on this person's mental notes.... In this case, we deployed three reporters at the scene, and one behind the scenes. The former had to interview the CSC members when they were arriving or leaving the meeting. Also, they had to cover the KMT's news conference. The latter was responsible for making contact with the private source and writing up the source's dictation.' (Interview, reporter, 23-11-92:p1)

This example shows what can be done to contextualise official briefings when resources are invested in fuller reporting.

## (2) The Coverage of the CSC's Meeting

In this instance, apart from the DCA's releases, the two major evening papers, the *China Times Express* and the *United Evening News* simultaneously printed another story on the debates among participants in the meeting. The story was based on information from interviews and direct observation. The stories in the *United Evening News* and the *China Times Express* are illustrated as follows.

### The *United Evening News*

Li Huang said, the issue of 'one China one Taiwan' closely relates to the fundamental principle of the party; the party should deal with this matter carefully.

Sheng Chang-huang argued the same. He quoted Li Rui-

### The *China Times Express*

Li Huang said, recently most of the CSC members had been consulted by the chief of security of the Presidency, and they tended to agree that the punishment in the two cases should be equal. The party headquarters

huan's warning that Beijing will crack down on any action seeking an independent Taiwan by force. Then he urged that the CSC should severely punish the two legislators who advocated the 'one China one Taiwan' policy.

Li Kuo-ting expressed his concern in this case and agreed with the proposals made by the others.

Then Premier Hau gave his three viewpoints on this matter. He said, he personally did not take sides on the disciplinary matter. But he insisted that the important thing was whether the two legislators sincerely regretted their actions. He stressed that the government should reject the 'one China one Taiwan' policy, because it threatened Taiwan's security. Through the episode of dealing with the 'one China one Taiwan' matter, ordinary people would understand that one China policy is essential to our society.

Hsu Li-nung expressed his concerns on the 'one China one Taiwan' matter.

But, Chairman Lee Teng-hui said, one China should be referring to the Republic of China. He ruled that the punishment needed to be evaluated again by the party's Evaluation and Discipline Committee. He also instructed the Political Division to study the definition of 'one China'.

Premier Hau left for the Sun Yat Sen Memorial Hall at 11 AM before the meeting ended.

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should explain the reason that the punishment proposed by the Evaluation and Discipline Committee was different.

Sheng Chang-huang made a long statement. He stressed that the assertion of Taiwanese independence will threaten Taiwan's security. He cited the communist China propaganda chief Li Rui-huan's saying that Beijing will stop Taiwan from getting independent, even with 'bloodshed'. He said, the Chinese communists are closely watching how we deal with this issue. If the KMT failed to take this matter in hand, then serious consequences are expected.

Chairman Lee said, since many comrades were on the list waiting to give their opinions, he suggested that the case be returned to the Evaluation and Discipline Committee for further investigation.

Li Kuo-ting raised his hand and said, the two cases should be passed simultaneously, rather than one being delayed.

Premier Hau said, since the chairman had made the decision, he should not say anything. But, the event of 'one China, one Taiwan' had occurred at Question Time, so he was obliged to make a supplementary statement. He said, the KMT has opposed the policy of 'one China, one Taiwan' since 1949. Also, the chairman gave several announcements on this matter. Apparently, the party's stand is clear, no member should defy it. He said, the disciplinary action proposed by the party's Evaluation and Discipline Committee should be able to give people a clear idea that the KMT's

policy is 'one China'. The KMT should reach a consensus that it opposed a 'one China, one Taiwan' policy, because it could endanger 20 million people's welfare.

Chairman Lee said, some people speculated that the KMT's one China means the People's Republic of China. But he made a firm announcement that 'one China' should be the Republic of China.

Hsu Li-nung said, the two cases should be simultaneously taken into account, rather just considered as one case. He insisted that the 'one China, one Taiwan' policy was nothing short of advocating Taiwanese independence. It would have serious consequences.

Chairman Lee stopped Hsu's arguments and said, the case of 'one China, one Taiwan' would be returned to by the Committee for review. He said, 'Now, we discuss the 5th case.'

Hsu continued with his arguments, he said, if only one case was passed, the outcome would be serious. He opposed that only one case was taken into account.

KMT's Secretary-General Soong said, if the meeting decided to return two cases to the party's Evaluation and Discipline Committee, he suggested that the party had better find someone to replace him. He said, this matter will create difficulties for the party in the election campaign.

Here is a breakdown of the order of interactions among the CSC members with the news stories published by the

newspapers mentioned above.

<i>The United Evening News</i>	<i>The China Times Express</i>
Li Huang _____	Li Huang
Sheng Chang-huang _____	Sheng Chang-huang The Chairman
Li Kuo-ting _____	Li Kuo-ting
The Premier _____	The Premier The Chairman
Hsu Li-nung _____	Hsu Li-nung The Chairman Hsu Li-nung
The Chairman _____	KMT's Secretary-General

Examples given above show that the rhythms of both stories are very similar, with the exception of the statements made by the KMT's Secretary-General. This appeared in the *China Times Express*, but not in the *United Evening News*.

'Any statement made by the KMT's politicians on that occasion should be newsworthy. I agree that the *China Times Express* did a better report than my paper on this matter. Actually, our reporters missed that piece of information, rather than it being killed by the editors.' (Interview, UEN editor, 17-11-92:p1)

In this case, the handouts which contained the information previously given by the KMT spokesman at the news conference were available at 6 PM. In responding to the *China Times Express'* coverage on the chairman and the secretary-general's statements which it had not been authorized to release, the DCA issued two pieces of information to the news media later in the evening. These were the transcriptions of verbatim speeches made by the chairman and the secretary-general in the morning's meeting. This measure was an attempt to stop the reporters pursuing

their stories through second-hand channels (*Hsin Sheng Pao*, 11 Dec. 1992:2).

Generally speaking, this case received extensive coverage in the daily papers. Furthermore, the study of seven daily papers' coverage of this event showed that there was a high degree of uniformity among them. In other words, the papers, regardless of their politics, reproduced the DCA's news releases and the *China Times Express*' story regarding the disputes of the CSC.

At first, apart from the *Independence Daily Post*, the other papers reproduced the full text of the chairman's speech on the front page and the secretary-general's was printed on page 2 or 3. Unusually, the *Independence Daily Post* published the secretary-general's verbatim speech, and included a brief story on the chairman's speech written as a DCA news story.

'Of course, if I knew the chairman's verbatim speech text had been sent in the late evening, I would have definitely got it into print. It was the reporter's negligence. That night, she insisted on handling this case by herself, therefore, no other reporter knew that DCA had released that piece of information.' (Interview, IDP chief-editor, 13-11-92:p1)

Secondly, each daily paper also reported a story which depicted the disputes between the chairman and some conservative members at the CSC meeting. Generally, these stories were framed in a way which was very much like the story in the *China Times Express*. When the contents of seven newspapers were scrutinized, the evidence suggests that the rhythms of all these stories were very much like the *China Times Express*, although some sentences were

paraphrased and a few detailed contexts were added. The reasons for this unanimous reportage are partly because the dailies simply reproduced the KMT's releases, and partly because they directly duplicated the *China Times Express*' stories.

'I admit that some reporters from daily papers might check it (the news disclosed by the evening newspapers) with a private source or the KMT spokesman. In this case, I think most reporters just directly made a copy from the *China Times Express*.... After the story appeared in the early evening papers, during the whole afternoon no complaint was made about this disclosure. That means this story is fair. Therefore, we are safe to make a subsequent report.' (Interview, reporter, 12-11-92:p1)

In this case, there is a general and rather uncritical reproduction of the story which is uncontested by the authorities. However, this process introduces another problem regarding journalistic professionalism. That is to what extent a published story can be reproduced without attribution. All in all, that fact that Chairman Lee and Secretary-General Soong's statements were reproduced verbatim in the dailies reflected that the reporters lacked an occupational ideology which allowed them to defy the KMT's news management. They played a passive role in reporting authorities and they often recorded the information without interpretation, not mentioning or seeking opposition testimony and facts.

## INFORMATION EXCHANGE ON THE BACKSTAGE

With the aim to break through the news control imposed by

the Executive Yuan, the reporters always have to cultivate rapport with news sources. Routinely, the reporters make contacts with their private sources in order to remedy misinformation or add to the information received from the official news outlets. For instance, in the cases mentioned early, private sources are mobilized to do the reporter's work.

On the front stage, the relationships between reporters and politicians are always adversarial, except with the spokesmen. In Chinese political culture, the leading members of the KMT have no tradition of personal contact with journalists. They might interact with publishers, perhaps only limited to the party-state owned papers and the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, but rarely with reporters. This is certainly a matter of social status. Traditionally, the top ranks of the bureaucracies in Taiwan are staffed with older officials. Therefore, the senior politicians in the ruling circles are generally much older than the reporters. More importantly, in Chinese culture, leaders are proclaimed to be deserving of respect (Pye, 1991:16-18). Of course, they are generally immune to harsh criticism from the media. As for civil servants, they are reluctant to talk about their business in public. In general, they incline toward reticence in dealing with the news media. Legally, according to the Civil Servant Service Act, Article 4 stipulates that civil servants are not allowed to disclose official business.

## 1. The Reporters Make Efforts to Cultivate Politicians

Since the high ranking officials, such as the President and the Premier, have insisted that news must be released by the spokesman and have deliberately avoided seeing journalists, their subordinates, especially the civil servants located in the Executive Yuan and the Presidency have to be self-restrained in dealing with reporters.

To visit an official in his office is one way to obtain information, but it is not the most important one. In reality, the reporters are unlikely to conduct a face-to-face interview with a senior official, because the chances of this being granted is small. As was mentioned above, the President and the Premier rarely give interviews to domestic reporters. Also, other senior government executives such as, the Vice-President and the Deputy Premier, seldom meet the news media.

'As far as I know, no interview was granted by the Deputy Premier, except last year he met the press corps once.' (Interview, reporter, 23-11-92:p2)

Furthermore, because of being afraid that the authorities might track down their sources as leakers, the reporters hesitate to interview the low-ranking officials in the Executive Yuan or the Presidency. Therefore, they prefer to reach their sources by phone.

Instead of having a face-to-face encounter with the senior officials in the office, the reporters intercept them in a public place. But, the reporters are not allowed to approach the President and the Premier. In practice,



certain occasions are targeted by the reporters on which they can confront senior officials and try to conduct a sound-bite interview. These occasions are meetings held in honour of a special event, or for a discussion on certain public policies and also parties organized to commemorate a birthday, a retirement, a marriage, and even a funeral.

In practice, the reporters make an effort to get to know a politician's routines. Generally, they contact the individuals who are functional or in physical proximity or both to the senior officials. There are a number of ways that reporters find out about the movements of a politician.

First, the reporters request the information from the GIO's press officers or the secretarial staffs of the senior officials. Some reporters even try to get the information from the official's chauffeurs. But most reporters admit that the Executive Yuan and the Presidency is a closed system, and difficult to get information from.

Secondly, the reporters seek the information from other administration agencies which are considered to have a more open information system, such as the departments under the Executive Yuan (except the Ministry of Defence), the Legislative Yuan and many organizations in the private sector.

Finally, a systematic reading of news announcements in the newspapers serves as an important channel for the reporters in getting information about the whereabouts of politicians.

'Every morning, I will look through the advertising items of "The Funeral Announcements".

Because it contains a list of celebrities who are going to take charge of funeral honours symbolically, I can get some ideas of who is going to show up on that occasion. At that moment, I might go there and get them to say something, even just few words. I know it will not get enough information to write a story. Also, it is not very polite to rush to interview with someone before or after a memorial or funeral. But, I don't have any choice. On the beat, it is so difficult to hold them down.' (Interview, reporter, 5-11-92:p1)

Although the officials always keep a distance and are reluctant to deal with reporters publicly, it does not mean that interactions between the reporters and the officials are ruled out. On the contrary, they are transformed into private situations.

Many modes of interaction between the officials and the reporters are enacted in private situations. Generally, conducting an interview at the senior official's home or other private place rarely happens. On these beats, the telephone interview is the most important and popular method used by reporters to obtain confidential information.

In daily routines, the reporters attempt to contact the officials by phone in the late afternoon, especially around 6 PM, when the officials hold daily meetings and go back to the office. Otherwise, the reporters have to reach the senior officials by phone after 9 PM, because by that time the officials will have returned to their residence. Generally, ringing a senior official in the late evening is considered as the most productive way of doing journalistic work.

'I take phone calls from reporters at home every evening from 9 to 11 o'clock. Approximately, I have to answer 20 to 30 phone calls each night.

I always say, "why don't you raise your questions at the news conference?" The reporter replies, "I don't like colleagues to know the questions and the answers as well..." Sometimes, because of no new development of state affairs, I have to repeat the same thing on the line over and over again.' (Public speech, GIO's Director-General, 9-11-92:p2)

To make private contacts is always a matter of friendship. Friendship is probably the most common factor mentioned by the reporters in contributing to their news gathering process. What this actually means is that friendship represents a special connection with the officials which is an essential part of news gathering, because based on this relation the reporters can facilitate entry to controlled and restricted situations.

'We are not talking about the legislators who are always kind to the news media. I feel that the officials in the government agencies are very cautious in dealing with the press, especially the officials at the low bureaucratic levels. Therefore, a telephone interview is granted, it is always a deliberate agreement to trade favours. Also, if a piece of information is given, not to mention confidential information, it always symbolizes some kind of trust relationship or friendship.' (Interview, reporter, 26-11-92:p2)

'Here, I can not meet the official directly and I can not hang around in front of them. Therefore, there is always a shortage of chances to make contact with politicians, especially the low-ranking officials. Generally, I can meet the senior officials on some occasions, but I always have difficulties to make the acquaintance of low-ranking ones.' (Interview, reporter, 9-12-92:p1)

Of course, friendship is a state which is achieved through repeated interactions over time and producing good quality work which omits the contact's name.

'Generally, to cultivate rapport with officials is a time consuming task, you have to accumulate it bit by bit through routinely repeated interactions. Further, you have to demonstrate

your own credibility by producing good quality work. First and foremost, you have to bear it in mind to drop their names in your news stories.' (Interview, reporter, 26-11-92:p2)

'I have been on the beat for 10 years. Long tenure on the beat always offers an advantage in making contacts with officials. The first step in establishing rapport is to chat with them. I always use any chance I can find to chat with the officials, especially low-ranking officials in my spare time. I use the affiliation networks, such as friends, classmates, teachers and relatives to gain access to the officials. When I chat with them, the topics are not limited to news items. I think something related to academic work is a good way to start talking. Of course, by doing this I have to study the official's backgrounds....Since a connection is established, I can ask them for some information. This type of information is always helpful to me in eliciting on-the-record information from other sources, such as the spokesmen or official documents.' (Interview, reporter, 10-11-92:p1)

A reporter's chances of success in making contacts with the officials in private situations are very much dependent on the identity of his or her employer. Generally, the reporters from the two newspaper conglomerates, the *China Times* group and the *United Daily News* group which hold more than two-thirds of the readership market always have advantages in establishing rapport with the officials. By contrast, the papers with a small circulation which include party-state owned papers and so-called liberal papers are short of resources to engage in a process of public relations with politicians. Therefore, they always feel it difficult to feign closeness with the officials.

It has been mentioned above that most officials try to keep their distance from the news media, therefore, the relationships between the reporters and the politicians have to be deliberately cultivated. Actually, it can not be

denied that many efforts have been made by the two big newspaper groups to encourage this. For example, the superiors at the two groups often encourage their reporters to set up relationships with politicians. Therefore, a certain financial allowance is provided to the reporters for engaging in social activities with politicians. Also, certain types of travel which are required as a means of producing socializing among reporters and the officials are financed. Furthermore, the senior staffs of newspapers, such as publishers or chief editors, arrange parties regularly in hotel facilities where their reporters and politicians can chat with each other. Finally, the owners of these papers Wang Tih-wu and Yu Chi-chung have been heavyweight members of the ruling party since the 1970s. Because of the employer's affiliation networks, the reporters from these papers always have a great advantage in gaining access to the senior officials. In conclusion, all these tactics mentioned above are used by the news media to tackle the problems of spatial segregation and psychological distance between the reporters and the officials in order to facilitate their news gathering activities.

As for the reporters from liberal and the party-state owned papers, the chance of confronting officials in private situations is less than if they worked for one of the big newspapers. Part of the reason is these papers lack financial support or affiliation networks to make contacts with the officials. Another is that these papers have a small circulation and are presumed to have no great impact

on public opinion, therefore, they have difficulty in getting the officials' attention. But for the liberal papers, such as the *Independence Daily Post*, the *Independence Evening Post* and the *People's Daily News*, their anti-government ideology is also a burden to the reporters who seek a rapport with government officials.

'I do have great difficulty in getting access to officials on the beat. Because of spatial segregation, I couldn't meet the officials. Since they don't know me, how can I expect them to answer my calls. Further, because of my paper's ideology, the officials are always sceptical of my intentions. Therefore, even if they answer my telephone calls, they won't give me the same type of information that they give to the reporters from the big papers. Suspicion always exists between the government officials and my paper.' (Interview, reporter, 3-12-92:p2)

'The *Independent Evening Post* has been identified as a native Taiwanese paper since the 1970s. Needless to say, many officials hold the belief that the paper's editorial guidelines never come into line with the government, therefore, they always keep a great distance from us. But, I think, it is simply a question of time. If you make attempts to get the officials to remember who you are not who you work for, you will make some friends.' (Interview, reporter, 10-12-92:p1)

## **2. The Politicians Exploit the Reporters**

### **2.1 News Management through Background Briefings**

News management encompasses more than the press release and the press conference. The channel of background briefing is widely used by senior politicians to disclose the information they want, when they want. As for the political reporters who are situated in a rather closed information system, such as the Presidency, the Executive Yuan and the

KMT headquarters, they inevitably take part in the rules which are laid down by the people in politics.

'Under most circumstances, the officials here are reluctant to give any comment.... More importantly, the officials here always persist in speaking for background only and are unwilling to have news stories attributed to them, therefore, I can not help but drop their names and simply quote from an anonymous source....If a given item is newsworthy, I will confirm with the government spokesman, or other suitable officials, such as the Premier's Secretary-General.' (Interview, reporter, 23-11-92:p2)

News gathering taking place on these occasions is a game played by the reporters and the senior officials, the rule of thumb based on the gentleman's agreement among them to keep the politician's name out of their report. However, the name of the source is only unknown to the readers. Either the politicians or the reporters who know the rules of the game have no difficulty in reading between the lines and identifying the source.

'In theory, information given by officials in a public place is allowed to be attributed. But, it is not always the case. For example, on 22 November, we covered the story about the President and the Premier playing golf. We were not allowed to follow through the whole game so we had to wait after the game started. At that moment, the President's private secretary conducted a background briefing on many political issues. Conventionally, it was supposed to be off-the-record, but it seemed that he was not to float an idea or to disclose something on purpose. Therefore, the reporters on the beat decided to get the story printed. Of course, we still followed the rules of the game that his name was dropped. You have noticed that *The New Journalist* reporter attributed his name in the story. The President's private secretary wanted me to pass the message to this reporter that he was not happy about her performance.' (Interview, reporter, 9-12-92:p2)

'I think every political reporter knows that most of the unattributed stories associated with the

Presidency are given by the secretary for background only. He is very close to the reporters. Because he is such an important source for us to request information about the President, we simply can not detach ourselves from him.' (Interview, reporter, 23-11-92:p2)

Coverage of the Incident of Lee-Hau's Talk is a good example of how reporters pursue news for anonymous publication. In this instance, a series of behind-the-scenes discussions on the issue of Cabinet resignations were held by the President and the Premier. From 24 October to 25 November 1992, the President met the Premier four times. It was widely speculated that the aim of the talks was to settle political conflicts and cement consensus within the ruling party. Therefore, the talks of the top administrators were regarded as politically sensitive. During that time, the formal news channels including GIO, DCA and the Presidency's Spokesman's Office were keeping silent on these matters. Therefore, most reporters pursued the news through their own networks. Needless to say, if the reporters must rely on confidential informants, they have to follow the rule that the informants are giving something on a non-attributable basis. Therefore, the news stories about the talks of the two administrators were printed without attribution of the source. For example, an exclusive story reported by the *China Times* on 3 December used the same tactics without attribution. In this front page headline story, its Executive Yuan reporter pointed out that the Cabinet would resign after the election, because the Premier had accepted the recommendations made by the panel group. However, no named source was given in the



story.

In general, the reporters use the quotation and attribution of information obtained from private contacts with caution. In their news stories, the sources are commonly attributed to 'an informed source', 'high-ranking officials', 'political circles' and 'KMT sources'. Also, no attribution is given to indicate the source's agency.

Some examples show that information provided by the background briefings are commonly published without attribution to the source by name. But the reporters often suggest the backgrounder's identification in their stories through divulging the name in a vague attribution, such as 'a high-ranking Presidency official'.

More importantly, taking the example of the Incident of Lee-Hau's Talk mentioned above, it clearly demonstrates that the papers were exploited by the top administrators for engaging in a private dialogue. On 27 November 1992, the *United Daily News* which has been affiliated with the KMT conservative wing led by the Premier printed a front-page exclusive story about a private discussion between Chairman Lee and Premier Hau on the issue of Cabinet resignations. The story was quoted from an anonymous source and highlighted that Chairman Lee said to Premier Hau that he ruled out the issue of Cabinet resignations after the national election in a private meeting. There was strong speculation that the KMT conservatives deliberately used the *United Daily News* to control ownership of this issue.

In the late afternoon, the Central News Agency (CNA),

a party-owned news agency, released a news story to deny the *United Daily News's* report:

'(CNA: Taipei) According to the informed source, KMT Chairman Lee Teng-hui discussed the issues of Cabinet resignations with Premier Hau Pei-tsun recently.

A local paper said Chairman Lee told Premier Hau that the cabinet had no need to resign in the coming year. But, a source of high ranking authority told the reporter that he knew there was a discrepancy between what the Chairman said and what was reported.

The reporter was told, Chairman Lee said, because the issue of Cabinet resignations has not been specified in the constitution, he would like to discuss this matter after the national election.'

This story was written by the chief-editor of the Central News Agency at the request of the Presidency in order to attack the unfavourable coverage made by the *United Daily News*.

'Our chief-editor wrote that story by himself in accordance with the instruction given by the Presidency. To my knowledge, that story was dispatched without passing the editorial desk for final approval.' (Interview, CNA reporter, 5-12-92:p1)

A huge majority of papers prominently carried the CNA's story. In this instance, the *United Daily News* ran the CNA's story on its second page. Meanwhile, it carried a headline story and featured it to defend its previous coverage. In the headline story, the statements made by the authorities were presented to confirm that its previous story was correct. However, the source of information was attributed to 'a high-ranking authoritative source'. The feature story was written by its Executive Yuan reporter, who elaborated the Premier's attitude towards the issue of resignation. Not surprisingly, she featured and attributed

her story to an anonymous source.

The *United Daily News*' rival, the *China Times* tended to avoid involving itself in the KMT's internal rows. It only ran a front page headline story on this matter. In this story, its Presidency reporter pointed out why and how the Presidency sought to correct the unfavourable report. She also divulged the source of the coverage in a vague attribution as 'the Presidency official'. However, in this story the reporter just mentioned another paper without identifying the *United Daily News* by name.

The party-state controlled papers, the *Central Daily News* and *Hsin-sheng Pao* printed the CNA's story on their front page. The military-owned paper, the *Youth Daily* has been viewed as having a close relationship with the Premier. It printed the CNA's story on page 2 and carried another story quoting from a high-ranking official of the Executive Yuan in order to balance the report.

The *Liberty Times* has its tradition of supporting the Presidency. Therefore, it seems that the *Liberty Times* had distorted this event in a partisan way. It devoted the full front page to covering this matter with the content skewed toward the KMT's liberal wing. The CNA's story was the main headline and followed by three stories. In them, an anonymous official of the National Assembly and two legislators of both parties argued that the Premier should resign after the election.

The *Independence Daily Post* was probably the only paper in which the *United Daily News* was mentioned by name. A

headline story was published on page 3 within which its Executive Yuan reporter explained how and why the Presidency requested the CNA's chief-editor to file the story. Furthermore, she indicated that this story was to remedy the *United Daily News* report. However, the *Independence Daily Post* attributed its story to a Presidency official.

In accordance with the canons of good journalism, news stories should be attributed to named sources. In theory, an attributed story means that the reporter and the source are making a joint commitment to tell the truth, because the public are allowed to judge the validity of a story against the source's subsequent actions. Giving private reassurances to politicians not to be named, the reporters also provide opportunities for politicians to evade their responsibility in disclosing authentic information. As a consequence, they might be less hesitant to float ideas including half-truths or outright lies. Meanwhile, reporters who lean heavily on information announced on a non-attributable basis, also make themselves more open to manipulation.

'If someone is going to justify the problem of source anonymity, the fact that the reporters are denied access to the news sources must be taken into account. The political reporters are always in a dilemma. On the one hand, we are faced with great pressure from the boss that we have to get our work done every day. On the other, we are faced with an extremely restricted situation within which whatever we can do is in a rather limited way.... We have to try very hard to develop private contacts and go beyond the routines of government news releases.... If sources know they can talk without being directly quoted, we can get more pertinent information. Moreover, we may enlarge the public domain of knowledge, because we can tell people things which

the government does not want them to know. For example, the top government agencies always attempt to cover up leadership conflicts between the Presidency and the Executive Yuan. In fact, the politicians should be there to be criticized.' (Interview, reporter, 10-11-92:p1)

'We accept the information on non-attributable basis, we have to pay a price that we might run the risk of being manipulated for certain purposes. To my knowledge, some of the media were used by the politicians to manage the crises during last year's political struggle.' (Interview, reporter, 23-11-92:p3)

Moreover, the anonymous nature of news leaves the reporters with greater flexibility to construct the substance or format of their stories. Since there is no named source which is available to the public to verify the given stories, it is very likely to encourage the reporters to amplify or dilute the information which they get.

'I agree that the tactic of withholding attribution to the source by name is a necessary device used by reporters to get confidential information in political circles. Nevertheless, I think to some extent that is against our professional duty. In my organization, every reporter is required to write down the sources' names for internal reference, when an unattributed story is filed. For certain news items, which touch on political disputes between the Presidency and the Executive Yuan, the reporters have to explain to their superiors who are the news sources..... Of course, the abuse of background briefings has existed for years in political circles. If the information is passed on for background only, I will use it critically. That is I will consult with other relevant sources and get the information verified, although most of the time things do not go so smoothly. Time is one of the issues. If I suspect that I might be the instrument of other people, I will kill the story. But, I will let my superiors know the whole picture.... However, I have to point out that many reporters are abusing the use of the tactic of non-attribution. As far as I know, a lot of unattributed news stories reported by colleagues are figments of journalistic imaginations.' (Interview, reporter, 21-12-92:p1)

The anonymous source has been permanent in the news stories regarding Taiwan's politics. The reporters' practice of disguising their source has resulted in tremendous harm being done to the reader's knowledge and understanding of politics. It is this knowledge which is essential for them to participate in Taiwan's transition to a democracy.

## 2.2 The Party-State Attacks over the Offending Coverage

Generally speaking, the news media are not all equally favoured by government officials, especially those media which continue to write critical reports on government policies. A feature of Chinese political culture is a preference for compromise rather than confrontation (Winckler, 1984:484). As a part of Chinese culture, government agencies seldom take harsh action against the troublesome media. Moreover, the routine controversies between the government and the press are always conveyed in a manner that is known only to themselves, not to the readers.

'In our society, some papers always take an adversarial stand towards the government. Also, some of their stories are constructed wholly without any foundation. Some government officials are irritated by these papers, and say, "You are the Director-General of GIO. Can you do something about these baseless stories?" I have to declare that the GIO does not interfere in or control journalistic practices in any circumstances.... When I asked a reporter, "Why did you write such a politically biased story?" the reporter answered, "Running a paper is for the purpose of revolution....". These papers believe that no government business is good business. Therefore,

whatever has been done by the government must be indiscreetly subjected to adverse criticism.... Personally, I don't agree with their paper's politics. Also, I believe their performances are harmful to our society. However, recently I realized that it was a price to be paid for the process of democratization.' (Public speech, GIO's Director-General, 9-11-92:p4)

'My job is to serve reporters. If the news can be announced, I announce it. If it can not, I have got to watch what I say.... Some papers have their own political stands on reporting the KMT. For example, after the news conference, they have to seek other information from someone else, and add to my news releases. I hesitate to say that they produce politically biased stories. But I have to point out that there is always a strong discrepancy between the DCA's news releases and the press coverage on these matters.' (Interview, DCA's Director, 19-11-92:p1)

#### 2.2.1 The Routine Measures against Troublesome Papers

The high-ranking government agencies, apart from the Defence Department seldom take the news media to court. Therefore, the distribution of handouts and the arrangement of press conferences to verify or deny stories are considered as the strongest actions taken by government executives in reprimanding the media.

'For instance, on 19 October 1992, we held a special news conference. At the conference, the government spokesman announced that a headline story published in today's evening paper misled readers. The government spokesman told reporters on the beat, the Premier never said that the government considered cracking down on the pro-independence movement by force during Question Time in the Legislative Yuan. Although the spokesman only mentioned an evening paper at the conference, I think everyone on that occasion knew that he pinpointed the *Independence Evening Post*.' (Interview, press coordinator, 10-12-92:p1)

In this instance, the GIO's press conference was

published by all the major newspapers. However, only the *Youth Daily*, a rival of the *Independence Evening Post*, and its sister paper, the *Independence Daily Post*, identified that the *Independence Evening Post* was the paper concerned.

Another example shows the Presidency taking action against the offending media. On 24 November 1992, the Presidency's Spokesman's Office issued a handout to every news organization correcting a biased report made by a certain paper. Again no paper was mentioned by name in the handout.

'The Presidency's Spokesman's Office made an announcement yesterday. The office said, President Lee Teng-hui telephoned the Taiwan Provincial Governor, the Taipei City Mayor and the Kaohsiung Mayor on his behalf to pay a visit to the newly elected legislators on 20 December. The Office stressed that the purpose of this visit was to consult with legislators on the issues of public policy, rather than on the nomination of the new Premier. The Spokesman's Office said the announcement was aimed at verifying a certain paper's report.' (Presidency's handout, 23-12-92).

After examining papers published on 23 December, it becomes clear that the Presidency had pinpointed the *Liberty Times*. On 23 December, the *Liberty Times* carried a story about the Taiwan Provincial Governor visiting the newly elected legislators. In the final part of the story, its Taiwan Provincial Government correspondent quoted from an informed source the prediction that Governor Lien was very likely to be the nominee for the premiership, and that on this trip he was expected to consult with the legislators to obtain their consent for his nomination. It is not surprising that most papers were very cooperative in publishing the Presidency's announcement. They carried this



matter on the second page, either in full or merely rephrased it. By contrast, the Presidency's announcement was never printed in the *Liberty Times*.

Under most circumstances, some moderate actions, such as making complaints to the reporter concerned or his or her superiors, or seeking a correction, are taken by high-ranking government agencies to deal with issues of incorrect coverage.

'Most of the time, we just talk to the reporter in person in order to find out why he or she produced such a story. After that we might decide whether to notify his or her superiors.... Sometimes, we do post a letter to the editor and request a correction to a story. For example, on 30 November 1992, the *China Times* printed our letter on page 13. Of course, this letter was put in a less significant place in comparison with the story in question. However, the 15th Article of the Publication Law stipulates that the letter which demands corrections or rebuttal should be published on the same page as the story in question originally appeared. But it does not specify how much space the rebuttal letter should be allowed.' (Interview, press coordinator, 10-12-92:p2)

### 2.2.2 A Special Case: The Rows between the Presidency and the *United Daily News*

The disputes between the Presidency and the *United Daily News* provide us with a good example of how politicians deal with offending media. The *United Daily News*, the flagship of Taiwan's largest newspaper group has been viewed as a conduit for the KMT's conservative wing which openly challenges the President's 'one China' policy.

In political circles, it has been circulated that

Premier Hau always disregards the *Independence Daily Post*, the *Independence Evening Post* and the *Liberty Times*, and President Lee dislikes the *United Daily News* (*The Journalist*, 21-27 Feb., 1993:91). In fact, the *United Daily News* has been in trouble with the Presidency for years. In November 1992, the tensions reached a peak. The Presidency intended to cancel subscriptions to the *United Daily News* in November 1992. At least, the President's personal secretary has no longer subscribed to the *United Daily News* since October 1992 (*Wealth*, Jan. 1993:252). Furthermore, in a meeting with the Democratic Progressive Party's Caucus on 9 February 1993, the President told an opposition legislator, 'I no longer read that paper (the *United Daily News*), don't you too?' (*The Journalist*, 14-20 Feb., 1993:52).

The Li Rui-huan Incident mentioned above, triggered a series of controversies not only between the Presidency and the *United Daily News*, but also with the liberal papers and the *United Daily News*.

On 11 November 1992, during the meeting of the KMT Central Standing Committee, conservatives called for the crushing of pro-independence voices within the party by heavily disciplining two maverick legislators. A CSC member quoted a Beijing official's statement which was printed in the newspapers on 29 November 1992, and he argued that communist Chinese was ready to 'shed blood' to maintain a unified China. Therefore, the surging of the pro-independence movement would give an excuse for Beijing to invade Taiwan.

But, Chairman (also the President) Lee Teng-hui responded by criticizing some KMT members who he claimed, were using Beijing's threat to suppress their comrades. Furthermore, Chairman Lee asserted that the Beijing official's remarks were misinterpreted by a certain local newspaper. He condemned the paper as deliberately misleading readers.

'According to my (the chairman) understanding of what Li Rui-huan recently said, there was not the serious threat which Sheng (Chang-huang), a member of the KMT Central Standing Committee had described. The reporters on that occasion should be aware of this matter. But a certain paper published a horrible story to threaten ordinary people here....' (DCA's handouts, 11-11-92)

In the President's comments, no paper was identified by name. Furthermore, on 29 October, Li Rui-huan's remarks that communist China would use any means to prevent the independence of Taiwan were reported in a majority of papers. However, the President's comments were widely interpreted as referring to the *United Daily News*.

For example, on 23 November 1992, some pressure groups led by the Taiwan Association of University Professors (TAUP) in response to the President's comments launched the 'Return the Paper to Save Taiwan' campaign to persuade ordinary people to boycott the *United Daily News*. The campaigners accused the *United Daily News* of being 'Beijing's mouthpiece' on the Li Rui-huan's matter. They urged readers to drop their subscriptions and to display the label of 'We Don't Read the *United Daily News*' on their front door. The campaigners also visited and called on companies in the industrial and economic sectors to stop

running advertisements in the *United Daily News*. On 16 December, TAUP held a public gathering to mark an end to the campaign. They claimed that the circulation of *United Daily News* had decreased by 80,000 since the campaign had started. (Field notes, TAUP's meeting, 16-12-92:p4)

Finally, the President's criticisms ended the dispute between the *United Daily News* and liberal papers, such as the *Independence Evening Post*, *Independence Morning Post*, *Liberty Times* and *People's Daily News*. On 26 November, the *United Daily News* printed two announcements on page 3. In the first announcement, its solicitors demanded that TAUP should stop the libellous campaign immediately and make a public apology within 3 days, otherwise, the *United Daily News* would sue them for libel. In the second announcement, the *United Daily News* warned 4 papers mentioned above that no story in connection with TAUP's campaigns should be published, or legal action would be taken. On 29 December, the *United Daily News* sued TAUP for libel in court. At the same time, it ran 4 pages denying the accusations.

In this instance, the *United Daily News*' rival, the *China Times*, and the party-state owned papers avoided involvement in the row, although their reporters agreed with the President's comments on the coverage of the *United Daily News*. However, no effort was made by these papers to publish TAUP's campaigns.

In conclusion, gentle measures have been taken by the party-state against the media, when it views their coverage as unfavourable. The party-state usually avoids naming the

specific offending media. In addition, the media seem to be willing to collaborate with the party-state in not being fully open about the direct and indirect pressures that are brought to bear on their work. In so doing, the papers evade their responsibility for offering information which is intelligible to the public.

## CONCLUSION

News is a joint product of the interaction between politicians and reporters. In Taiwan's case, the relationship between reporters and the politicians is not one of equals, and it is not surprising that the dominant role is enjoyed by the politicians.

The party-state has its historical connection with the media through control over ownership or by interlocking directorships. Since the media are largely controlled by KMT loyalists, the KMT politicians are privileged in their access to media to achieve the outcome they desire.

The exercise of public relations in exerting controls over the flow of information which the press depends on for the production of news is characteristic of every government. The normal practice of public relations conducted by the government is to increase the supply of information on the one hand, and the attempt to control the information released and limit the access on the other (Bruce, 1992; Cockerell, Hennessy and Walker, 1984; Gandy, 1982; Hess, 1984; Parenti, 1993; Sigal, 1973; Tiffen, 1989).

In Taiwan's case, the party-state's public relations machine functions on the same principles. The strategies used by the KMT government in dealing with the media are to exclude the reporters from encountering government business, with all information being released by its spokesmen.

Perhaps, the fact that reporters are denied the opportunity to contact top administrators is the most distinguishing characteristic of Taiwan's journalistic practice. Due to the division of social status, the senior politicians have no tradition of dealing with journalists. Therefore, their publicity is mediated through their spokesmen.

In Taiwan's case, the press office staffed within the state bureaucracies offers an opportunity for the reporter to make contact with politicians on a face-to-face basis. Having no personal contacts with the top administrators can significantly alter the nature of journalistic performance. In reporting the party-state, the reporters are reduced to an utter dependence on what the spokesmen have said about what the Premier and the President have said, but without attribution.

Furthermore, the KMT government limits the political information communicated. Apart from covering up any embarrassments, the party-state's public relations machines aim at projecting a sense of the greatness of leadership to the ordinary citizens. The content of the news releases fully reflects this intention in which the message projects the good character of leaders, rather than a disclosure of

substantive government practice.

More importantly, the reporters seem to perform a rather passive role in interrogating the work of government. In Taiwan, the reporters are deferential to political authority. The reason that the reporters faithfully reproduce the official line is in a large part due to self-censorship. For instance, reporters rarely refuse to accept government information. At news conferences, they act as uncritical scenographers for the information given by spokesmen for the party-state. Therefore, they seldom try to probe or challenge the spokesmen and make them more answerable. In response to the supplied information, the reporters seldom try to search for other sources in order to place what the spokesman has said within a broader context and make the message more intelligible to readers.

The series of briefings and leaks are central to the routine interactions between politicians and reporters in the production of news. Carey (1986:152-158), Cockerell, Hennessy and Walker (1984:120-141), Hess (1984:75-94), Sigal (1973:111-114), and Tiffen (1989:97-119) well illustrate in their case studies that governments have widely employed these tactics to manipulate the information in accordance with their own private interests. In Taiwan, background briefings serve as an important channel through which reporters work to gain more information. In so doing, reporters inevitably trade some of their journalistic independence for access to sources which help them to carry out their news gathering tasks. The reporters who enter

into this kind of exchange give the politicians another stake in manipulating political information. Since the information is made for background use only, the source remains concealed. Thus, politicians are allowed to evade the responsibility of being accountable for their disclosures. Moreover, the reporters fail to take responsibility in telling readers that their stories are not the figments of journalistic imaginations.

The prevalence of source anonymity in Taiwan's newspapers has had a detrimental effect on the readers who manage to understand government business. In fact, reporters pursue the news for anonymous publication that has limited the dialogue between government and the public. In other words, the public who lack a knowledge of political practices and journalistic conventions are being misinformed. They have difficulties not only in putting names to anonymous sources, but also in considering motives hiding behind their conduct. The fact that the public play no role in assessing the authenticity of political and journalistic conducts is a formidable obstacle in the mobilization of an active informed citizenship.

Active citizens are essential to a rigorous democracy, but a participatory public needs to be nurtured in an environment where more and better information is provided. One role of the media in a democracy is to offer a space within which the citizens can question the politicians and voice their own experiences. Obviously the Taiwanese press still has a long way to go to achieve this objective.



Table 6-1 News Coverage of the Executive Yuan

Date	GIO's news releases		Newspapers						
			Party-state run			Privately-run			
	Items		CDN	HSP	YD	UDN	CT	IDP	LT
06-11-92	Premier's daily routines	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	
	Press conference								
	1. Premier's instructions	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	2
	2. Bills	1			1				
20-11-92	Premier's daily routines	2	2	2	2	2	2		
	Press conference								
	1. Premier's instructions	4	1	2	3	4	3	1	1
	2. Bills	4		1		1	1	1	1
	3. Appointments	3		1					
	4. Routine reports	1	1	1	1				
24-11-92	Premier's daily routines	3	3	1	3	2			1
	Press conference								
	1. Premier's instructions	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	2
	2. Bills	3	1						
	3. Appointments	1							
29-11-92	Premier's daily routines	2	1	2	1	1	1		
	Press conference								
	1. Premier's instructions	3	3	2	4	3	2	2	1
	2. Bills	2			1	1	1		
	3. Appointments	2		2	2				
	4. Routine reports	1							

CDN: The Central Daily News  
 HSP: Hsin Sheng Pao  
 YD : The Youth Daily  
 UDN: The United Daily News  
 CT : The China Times  
 IDP: The Independence Daily Post  
 LT : The Liberty Times

# CHAPTER 7

## REPORTING THE LEGISLATURE

### INTRODUCTION

The principal characteristic of representative democracy is the existence of an institutionalized opposition which has a reasonable opportunity at some stage of becoming the government. Generally, the legislature is the key area in which the opposition challenges the government.

The Parliament in Taiwan is central to this study of the media's relationship with politics. The Parliament is a contestable site in which dynamics of political forces come into existence. The complicated symbiotic relationships among all political parties introduce a new dimension of power contestation that is distinct from the Executive Yuan and the Presidency when media impact on politics is assessed.

By taking a view of dialectical control in a study of media impact on politics, political news concerning the executive branch is seen as the product of a process of negotiation between, and mutual construction by, reporters and politicians (Hess, 1984; Sigal, 1973; Tiffen, 1989). By comparison, the impetus behind parliamentary reporting is much more complicated. In parliament, reporting politics is

an endeavour accomplished by reporters and various sources, such as politicians who are characterized as a heterogenous group, separated by conflicting interests, and pressure groups or lobbyists.

Cook (1989), Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989) and Robinson (1984) spotlight how the reciprocal influence between the media and parliament affects the course of politics. In parliament, the media are exploited by competitive political groups in order to accomplish legislative goals or to help the parliamentarians get re-elected. Ultimately, effectively and regularly employing the media has become an inseparable part of legislation.

The media function of public enlightenment is at the heart of democratic theory. Parliamentary relations with the media which involve substantial ambivalence provide an opportunity to assess the reality of these claims.

The core of this chapter examines how the members of parliament who have unequal political capital attempt to control information, and how this may affect the political information which the people in Taiwan receive. In so doing, a two-month ethnographic study was conducted in the Legislative Yuan to discover the strategies used by both the ruling party Kuo Min Tang (KMT) and the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to advance their political interests.

## THE LEGISLATURE BEAT

The Legislative Yuan, the highest legislative organ of the party-state, functions like the parliament in a representative democracy. It has a number of parliamentary powers enshrined in the Constitution. In Taiwan, the Executive Yuan's president, usually referred to as the Premier is appointed by the President, and requires the consent of the Legislative Yuan.

The Executive Yuan must present to the Legislative Yuan an annual state-of-the-nation report and an annual budget three months before the fiscal year begins. Members of the Legislative Yuan may question the Premier and any cabinet ministers on policy matters and administration. Moreover, the Legislative Yuan holds authority over a broad range of government bills.

Although the Legislative Yuan functions like the parliament in a representative democracy, it is less powerful and to some extent is not independent of the party-state. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, from 1949 to 1986, the Legislative Yuan was firmly controlled by the ruling party, the Kuo Min Tang (KMT). In keeping with the KMT's claim to be the only legal government of all China, two thirds of the seats in the Legislative Yuan were held by the legislators who were elected on the mainland in 1947. Before 1992, the parliamentary elections were viewed as supplementary to those last held by the KMT on the mainland in 1947.

Secondly, according to the structure of the KMT, the legislators are subservient to the party authorities. In practice, meaningful discussions on legislative bills often take place in a private caucus organized under the auspices of the KMT where party leaders can crack the whip. Although the KMT legislators can use question and answer sessions to question and criticize the government, this legislative strategy does not pose a political threat to the Premier or to his cabinet members. It merely provides an avenue for discontented legislators to air their views or to seek clarification on some government business (Tien Hung-mao, 1989:141).

Thirdly, effective opposition has never existed in Taiwan over the past four decades. The largest opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), only had twenty legislators in the parliament before 1993. Therefore, the DPP has had little influence on the legislative process.

After many years of acting as a rubber stamp, the Legislative Yuan is now becoming more independent. In the 1992 legislature sessions, all legislators elected from the mainland were retired. The remaining legislators who were Taiwan-elected now act more autonomously, because they are accountable to their voters.

Growing factionalism is an index of the increasing independence of the Legislative Yuan. Recently, legislative politics on Taiwan have been characterized by factional realignments within and between political parties.

Generally speaking, previous inter-party disputes and recent intra-party rivalry within the KMT reflected the historical tension between the native Taiwanese and the mainland Chinese who came to Taiwan forty years ago. For instance, at the legislative session in 1988, the 92 KMT legislators including a bloc of 21 Overseas Chinese representatives divided into factions. The Wisdom Coalition which claimed 45 members was the KMT's largest faction. Almost all were native-born Taiwanese. The Wisdom Coalition's rival, the New KMT Alliance claimed about a dozen members, most of whom were second generation mainlanders. A newer, less ideological group called itself the Parliamentary Reform Association claimed 51 members. Most of the members of this faction were also members of the other two factions. The DPP in opposition also split into factions, though its 18 legislators tend to cooperate in parliament more so than their colleagues at party headquarters.

By the end of 1992, with the differences between the factions becoming increasingly well-defined, the parliamentary actions on both the floor and in committee looked like a three-legged race between the DPP's softer pro-independence line, a 'One China' wing of the KMT advocating unification with the mainland and a 'Taiwan KMT' which endorsed the 'Two China' concept. This parliamentary ecology is now more complex than previously, where debates focused on the government's 'One China' policy and the opposition's 'One China, One Taiwan' response. Viewed in this way, the legislative Yuan has become a contestable site

where the opposition in general, the KMT mavericks in particular, frequently challenge the party-state's fundamental principle. Under such circumstances, the Legislative Yuan provides a real social setting which is central in any study of the relationship between the media and politics.

### 1. Seeking a Legitimate Space in the Legislative Yuan

As the parliament became more independent, the coverage of news from the Legislative Yuan developed. The parliamentary press corps grew considerably. For instance, during the 90th Legislative Session which was between September and December 1992, there were 105 journalists from 58 news organizations on the beat.<sup>1</sup>

Generally speaking, it is rather easy for news organizations, such as newspapers, radio and television stations to deploy their reporters to the Legislative Yuan, although advance permission is required. The normal practice is for each news organization to have a legitimate space in the parliament and to submit their list of parliamentary reporters to the Press Office three weeks before the opening of the Legislative Yuan. In democratic theory, the legislative activities should be open to the public and the press. In Taiwan, the reporter's right of access to the parliament is recognized, but the parliament

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<sup>1</sup>The figures are counted by the research based on *The Directory of the Parliamentary Press Corps in 90th Legislative Session* which was published by the Press Office in September 1992.

still holds the power to decide the conditions of that access.

Access granted by the Press Office vary from one type of news organizations to another. In comparison with newspaper and broadcasting reporters, magazine reporters have more difficulty in gaining access to the parliament.

'We only give IDs to the reporters who are licensed. Legally, magazines are not eligible to apply for journalist cards, because magazine reporters are not licensed by the Government Information Office. According to the Government Information Office's definition, the licensed reporters are those who are working for newspapers and the electronic media. But, the newspapers are confined to the journals which are published daily or at regular intervals of six or less than six days in accordance with the Publication Law. Generally, the political journals or magazines are published every week or longer than that, therefore, their reporters are unable to obtain a license from the Government Information Office. So, we cannot issue the ID to magazine reporters' (Interview, Director of the Press Office, 1-10-92:p1)

Furthermore, the number of reporters who are allowed to be regulars on the beat differs from newspaper to newspaper. The big newspapers who publish 48 pages per day, and those which concentrate on covering political affairs are allowed to dispatch more reporters to the beat. Nevertheless, 5 reporters from any one news organization is the maximum.

'We have to set up some criteria to limit the number of reporters who are regulars on the beat. Otherwise, each news organization would send a great many reporters to the Legislative Yuan. I believe, all news organizations are equally favoured.... At present, we give 5 journalistic cards to each of following papers: the *United Daily News*, the *China Times* and the *Independence Daily Post*. By comparison, the two big papers (the *United Daily News* and the *China Times*) publish more news regarding the Legislative Yuan than the other papers. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that they will need more



reporters to cover the parliament. The *Independence Daily Post* is a special case. The *Independence Daily Post* is a paper which only prints political news. It always devotes a huge amount of space to reporting the parliament. We still allow the *Independence Daily Post* to have 5 reporters on the beat, although it just publishes 24 pages a day.' (Interview, Director of the Press Office, 1-10-92:p1)

If the request for conducting journalistic work in the parliament is granted, each reporter in the reporting team is issued with a journalist's card. Normally, the journalist's card is valid only for a legislative session. Taking an example, the card which designated the 90th Legislative Session was valid only from September to the end of December 1992. Having this card, the reporter can register with the press corps in the parliament. Also, he or she is allowed to gain access to all parts of the parliamentary building. More importantly, the reporters can occupy a legitimate space at every open sitting whether it is held on the floor of the Legislative Yuan or in committee.

Strictly speaking, without this journalist's card issued by the Press Office, reporters, especially magazine reporters, are still able to do their work in the parliament. But they have to seek a series of admittances. Firstly, the reporters can approach the Legislative Yuan as a visitor. As a visitor, they have to enter into the Legislative Yuan through the main entrance not the side doors. Then they have to register at the information desk and get a visitor ID. With this ID, they are allowed to visit certain parts of the building, and are mainly

restricted to the administrative offices. However, another identification card is needed, when they intend to reach the legislator's office.

Secondly, if the reporters attempt to gain access to the parliamentary proceedings which take place on the floor or in committee, they have to seek permission from the Press Office. Generally, a special journalist's card is given that is only valid for the morning session or the afternoon session. In other words, the reporters who want to stay in the press gallery during a legislative day have to report to the Press Office twice.

Although the Legislative Yuan is able to establish the rules by which reporters' right of access may be restricted, this does not mean that the parliament controls the journalist. In comparison with the Executive Yuan where the reporter's access is denied, the Legislative Yuan is seen as a happy hunting ground for journalistic enterprise. On the legislature beat, the reporters are legally guaranteed access to the formal legislative process, except the closed sittings. Formally, the parliamentary reporters are excluded from the closed sittings which are convened to discuss confidential matters relating to national defence and foreign relations. However, the reporters seem to have little difficulty in knowing what goes on behind closed doors.

'As a matter of fact, almost no secret can be held in the Legislative Yuan. Here, I don't have to fall on my knees to get the work done. In general, just a few closed sittings are held in the parliament. Moreover, if a reporter has a close relationship with the legislators, he or she

has no difficulty in penetrating this secrecy. For instance, some closed meetings were held to examine the budgetary bills regarding defence and foreign relations in the last legislative session. To be honest, I obtained the white paper of the defence budget before the meeting. It was leaked by a convenor of the National Defence Committee who has been a close friend of mine for years.' (Interview, reporter, 16-10-92:p3)

'The reporters can interview the legislators after a closed meeting. There is no doubt, the legislators love to engage in self-publicity. They will disclose something, such as how they attempted to establish the ownership of a special issue in the meeting and how decisions were brought about and so on.... We don't want to shut off the flow of confidential information, therefore the disclosures are always treated as unattributed stories. The Legislative Yuan is a place which is saturated with publicity.' (Interview, reporter, 12-10-92:p2)

The legislature beat is an environment where a diversity of information is available (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989:182-184).. In Taiwan, the Legislative Yuan is also a place where a variety of political forces fight to secure publicity. Here, the media are valued by the legislators, especially the opposition DPP legislators who are short of media resources needed not only to accomplish a policy-related goal, but also to advance their own careers. Therefore, legislator-reporter relations are certainly cultivated by both sides.

## **2. The Symbiotic Relationships among Reporters**

To some extent, the power of the Legislative Yuan dictates journalistic practices. That is particularly true when the manufacture of news becomes subservient to the rhythms of the parliament. In reporting the legislature, some special

arrangements are adopted by the media in order to schedule their work in accordance with the parliamentary proceedings. A reporting team is necessary for covering the legislation which simultaneously proceeds in various locations. For instance, during the 90th Legislative Session in 1992, 10 newspapers, 3 television networks and one news agency deployed a reporting team in the parliament.<sup>2</sup>

A reporting team consists of two to five full time reporters. One reporter usually having long tenure is designated as a chief and functions as a liaison person with the desk editor in the main newsroom. On a daily basis, the chief of the reporting team is expected to call the chief reporter of the political division in the main newsroom before the early editorial meeting at which the team has to report its work on that legislative day. More importantly, he or she is responsible for informing the desk editor at any time when they feel a piece of a legislation may require reactions from other political beats. Also, he or she is expected to be available at all times, when the desk editor has to assign reporters to cover stories which require parliamentary commentary.

In practice, the legislative reporters enjoy considerable autonomy from the main newsroom, especially the reporters from evening newspapers who file their stories directly on the beat without having to return to the main newsroom. As noted previously, the reporting team is

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid:1.

required to keep in touch with the desk editor regarding story developments. However, it is rare for the main newsroom to give orders to the reporters directing them to work on a particular part of the legislative process or to interview specific legislators. Signs of autonomy include the fact that most stories dealing with legislative actions are generated by the reporting team rather than by the main newsroom.

Reporting on the legislature is not only labour intensive, but also time consuming. When the Legislative Yuan is sitting, the reporters are required to work seven days a week from 9 AM until the late afternoon. After that, the daily reporters have to return to the main newsroom to write up the stories until midnight. The members of the reporting team meet after each day's work to discuss what will be the most important scheduled events or the following day and decide who will cover what stories and what subjects are worth focusing attention on. Generally, production expectation is high on the legislature beat. On average, a reporter team often files more than ten stories in a legislative day. That can be between 7,000 to 10,000 words a day.

The division of labour within the reporting team is clearly structured. From Monday to Saturday, the parliamentary reporters have to cover stories located elsewhere in the parliament. Of course, much attention is devoted to covering the formal legislative process, such as actions and decisions taking place on the floor and in

committees. In reporting the floor deliberations scheduled on Tuesday and Friday, the division of labour in the reporting team is in accordance with the official phase structures. In other words, the reporters are rotated from one to the other to monitor the continuing legislative proceedings. Covering legislative actions carried on in committee that are scheduled on a Monday, Thursday and Saturday is more complex than those events which take place on the floor. In general, there are several committees which hold their meetings simultaneously during a legislative day. Therefore, the division of labour is based on the political significance of the Committees concerned. Most of the time, the Education Committee, the Overseas Chinese Affairs Committee and the Frontier Affairs Committee are deemed less newsworthy than the others. More frequently, the parliamentary reporters have to request from the main newsroom that special reporters are assigned for assistance.

In addition, the parliamentary reporters have to cover party caucus meetings that are seldom held during office hours. For instance, the KMT caucus holds their meeting on every Tuesday between 7:00 and 8:00 AM. The DPP caucus schedules its meeting every Tuesday at noon. The legislators of the KMT's factions, the New KMT Alliance and the Wisdom Coalition meet on a regular basis. In reporting the routine meetings held by all political parties, the division of labour is very much dependent on the paper's political orientations. Normal practice is that the

reporters who are responsible for covering the KMT and the DPP are separate. Big papers rich in resources can therefore assign 4 reporters to cover the KMT (the KMT caucus, the New KMT and The Wisdom Coalition) and the DPP caucus on a daily basis. However, the party-state owned papers tend to fully concentrate on the KMT and its factions, no reporter is assigned to cover the DPP caucus.

On Sunday while the Legislative Yuan is not sitting, the parliamentary reporters still have to attend the news conferences. In addition to individual legislators, some interest groups or parliamentary watchdogs, such as the Foundation of Parliamentary Observation, routinely call a press conference to publicize their reactions to parliamentary politics. Moreover, demonstrations or petitions launched by social groups in front of the Legislative Yuan are also expected to be reported by the parliamentary reporters.

Many channels are used by the parliamentary reporters to detect what will be the most potentially newsworthy events in the Legislative Yuan. At first, the formal agendas which organize parliamentary work are used by the reporters as guidelines in sorting out newsworthy events. Secondly, information provided by Caucus leaders of both parties before the proceedings and the previous experience and knowledge that the reporters have of the legislative proceedings help them to anticipate events. Thirdly, the reporters study the prestige papers, such as the *United Daily News* and the *China Times*. The daily reporters also

pay attention to evening papers, such as the *United Evening News* and the *China Times Express* in order to find out what events in the morning session are viewed as big events and how these events may be developed further.

Since the parliamentary reporters are bombarded by a huge volume of legislative actions, they feel under pressure to make sure they get the story that everyone else is covering. This is particularly true of reporters from financially weak newspapers. Therefore, some small newspapers have to cooperate with other news media in order to overcome their scarcity of manpower and materials.

'Although I am the only full time reporter representing my paper in the Legislative Yuan, I am still expected to get the story which everyone else is covering.... With all the activity in the parliament, chances are relatively high that you could be accused of missing a big story. No doubt, I must have a cooperative relationship with colleagues from other papers, especially those working for the party-state owned papers. For example, they are willing to lend me their notes.... As far as I know, with the exception of the reporters from the big papers who may feel under pressure to get an exclusive or to do an in depth report, most colleagues on the beat are likely to cover every story.' (Interview, reporter, 28-10-92:p1)

Generally, the newspapers with similar political affinities are more likely to cooperate with each other. They often exchange information and reporting tasks during or after the working day. Also, they share readily available information.

'We, the reporters working for public papers (the party-state owned papers) have an affinity with one another. Part of the reason is that we don't have sufficient personnel to cover all the activity in the parliament. Ultimately, we are all working for the government, there is no reason why we cannot cooperate with each other.... Under



some circumstances, without having the cooperation of colleagues, we simply would be unable to accomplish our work. For example, because of my paper's ideology, one of the KMT faction, the Wisdom Coalition always keeps our reporters at a great distance. Generally, we have to get our work done through colleagues who are close to this group. However, as they are KMT legislators, not the opposition we cannot ignore them.' (Interview, reporter, 2-11-92:p2)

The cooperative and competitive relations among the reporters is also reflected in the division in the legislature corps. For instance, the reporters who work for party-state run newspapers and those who work for big newspapers and liberal newspapers always occupy separate reporters' rooms. The former group frequently do their stories together. Sometimes, they even exchange privately developed information. By contrast, the cooperation between the reporters from big newspapers and liberal papers is less significant. Although they frequently exchange ideas through chatting with each other in the reporters' rooms, conducting reporting tasks for one another seldom takes place.

### **3. The Symbiotic Relationship between Legislators and Reporters**

At the Legislative Yuan, the relationships between reporters and legislators is based on mutual dependence. Legislators need publicity, while reporters need news. Therefore, under most circumstances, the reporters and the legislators perform valuable services for each other.

In contrast to civil servants, legislators are more

aware of the importance of publicity. The means used in pursuit of establishing rapport with the reporters on the beat are sophisticated. Generally, the research assistants direct considerable efforts towards cultivating contacts and good relations with reporters.

'It is less difficult for the research assistants to get along with the parliamentary reporters, because we are the same age and the same background.... I learn to deal with the paper reporters through experience. The relations with reporters must be worked at on a daily basis. For instance, when the Legislative Yuan is sitting, very often I am hanging around the reporter's rooms to getting to know what the reporters are doing, what they are telling each other about legislative actions. By contrast, some reporters always come to the legislator's office to have a chat or ask for information. But, I always initiate contacts.... I am playing some sort of liaison role. I try to give the reporters easy access when they want it to my boss.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 24-11-92:p1-2)

In addition to working for the legislators, the parliamentary research assistants also act as a research assistant to reporters. They constantly supply reporters with information, thus establishing a relationship which could be beneficial in future dealings.

'Having a good relationship with reporters, I always attempt to facilitate the reporter's job by providing information. I supply useful information to the reporters so that they can develop news stories. Before I took this job, I was a parliamentary reporter for four years. Because of my extensive experience as a reporter, I have gained the trust of reporters and have an insiders knowledge of their work. When I provide the reporters with knowledge about certain legislative actions, they trust me as providing a reliable newsworthy product. Sometimes, I disclose news which is still developing. Also, I will tell them where to look for information, even advise on who are the most appropriate sources.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 1-12-92:p2)

Apart from constantly feeding reporters with useful knowledge, some legislators deliberately cultivate good relations with reporters by inviting the reporters to private parties or giving them expensive gifts. In general, the legislators frequently socialize with reporters who are of the same political orientations.

'For Chinese having luncheon or dinner together is a popular way of getting business done. I have been encouraged to engage in public relations practices with politicians, therefore, my expense allowance is subsidized by my employer.... Generally, most of the legislators are well off economically, and they will not let me take care of the bills.... On average, I have lunch with the legislators, or staffs of the parliament at least two to three times a week.' (Interview, reporter, 27-10-92:p3)

'I have received gifts from legislators in the past. Actually, the presents are never expensive ones, each costing about NT\$ 2,000 to NT\$ 3,000 (US\$ 80 to US\$ 120). But we are acting like friends, on certain occasions, I also have to return the favours.' (Interview, reporter, 21-10-92:p1)

'It is very common here that the legislators banquet the parliamentary reporters. Some of the legislators entertain the reporters who have the same political orientations with a Karaoke evening.... To my knowledge, the reporters who attended the banquet hosted by a newly elected legislators a few years ago were given a small diamond.... Some legislators even gave gold coins to the reporters.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 21-11-92:P1)

Furthermore, some legislators even provide personal facilities at the Legislative Yuan to support a reporter's job. For instance, a legislator allows a reporting team from a respectable paper to occupy his office either to do journalistic work or simply to take a rest. In general, the Legislator's office is furnished, facilities include telephones and closed circuit TV.

Under most circumstances, reporters rely on legislators to create the events or provide the observations that can become the basis of a story (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989; Cook, 1989). However, some parliamentary reporters are also involved in legislative matters. In the United States, some reporters did serve as an information source, or as a supporter of legislation for their psychological rewards, even in some small way (Denton and Woodward, 1980:293). By comparison, Taiwan's parliamentary reporters are much more involved in legislative matters whether they aim to facilitate news making or to establish rapport with legislators.

'Indeed, some reporters often turn to us for help, when they have difficulties in doing their stories on certain occasions. For instance, a reporter was assigned to cover the beauty contest of Miss China. She was sceptical of the authenticity of the scores.... Afterwards, my boss issued a written interpellation about this matter immediately, and questioned the Minister of Interior on the floor later. Because the matter was raised in the parliament, the reporter could file her story with no hesitation.... One way of discovering scandals and developing the issues for question and answer sessions is in accordance with the information which is provided by the ordinary citizens. Reporters are also ordinary citizens, they have a right to have their voice heard.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 24-11-92:p1)

Apart from serving as an information source to the legislators, some reporters even work for the legislators as a private assistant or as an image maker. This information is used to help legislators develop legislative strategies. In return legislators help the reporters to push the stories they want or provide financial assistance.

'Parliamentary reporters providing their opinions

to the legislators is quite common here. It has been an open secret that some reporters work for the legislators as a part time research assistant. On a daily basis, these reporters develop questions that the legislators will use in answer and question sessions. In so doing, a reporter can get his or her political opinions through the parliament. Also, he or she can make some money.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 21-11-92:p1)

'Day in and day out the reporters and the legislators are working in a symbiotic relationship. Therefore, the reporters may feel it difficult to distance themselves from the legislators, especially those who are from the same ideological background. The reporters depend on someone to suggest news, not surprisingly, the reporters do something in return. For instance, some colleagues on the beat did engage in campaigns which were taken up by the legislators to win posts in the parliament. As far as I know, when legislator Hsieh Sen-shan was running the election of the speakers last year, one reporter organized the campaign for him.' (Interview, reporter, 11-11-92:p1)

As already discussed, the reporters and the legislators perform valuable services for each other. However, fundamentally adversarial relationships between the reporters and the legislators do exist. In the Legislative Yuan, partisanship is distinctive in the practice of journalism. There is a self-selection process between the legislators and reporters, with the policy taken by a paper binding reporters to certain legislators and not others. For instance, the reporters from the party-state controlled papers collaborate with the KMT legislators, because they have a political affinity. In contrast, these reporters do not cooperate with the DPP legislators, because they are ideologically opposed.

'As a reporter from the public papers (the party-state owned papers), I always feel it is difficult to make contacts with the non-KMT legislators,

especially the DPP legislators. My paper has a definite political line- they are strongly opposed to the assertion of an independent Taiwan.... The DPP has received negative coverage in my paper, and they are unwilling to talk to me. At least, the experience taught me, they will not give me information in detail, because they believe that the information is going to be used against themselves.' (Interview, reporter, 1-11-92:p2)

There is no doubt that the reporters from party-state papers keep a great distance from the non-KMT legislators, especially the DPP. It is also true that the DPP Legislators pay less attention to the reporters working for the party-state owned papers. However, faced with a deeply divided KMT, the whole picture of reporter-legislator relations has become more complicated. The papers have definite preferences and prejudices not only toward the political parties, but also the factions within a party. For instance, the reporters from the party-state owned papers are not equally favourable to all KMT legislators. The military-run paper, the *Youth Daily* is viewed as politically oriented towards the New KMT Alliance. Therefore, its reporters are more or less excluded from the New KMT's rival, the Wisdom Coalition.

'In the meantime, I (the party-state run paper reporter) also have trouble in doing stories on the Wisdom Coalition. The members of the Wisdom Coalition always think my paper is taking a stand which is favourable to the New KMT. Therefore, they won't talk much to me.' (Interview, reporter, 1-11-92:p2)

Generally, the legislators are reluctant to seek remedies, because they believe that no remedy is effective. Correction of press coverage by the various legislators is considered a laborious and fruitless task.

When the legislators are faced with problematic coverage, some measures are taken against troublesome papers. More typically, the legislators retaliate against unfavourable treatment by making complaints to the reporters or editors or through seeking a correction.

'How do we deal with distorted coverage? First, we contact the reporter concerned in an effort to understand why the unfavourable story came about. If we find out the reporter lacked the knowledge to handle the news, we'll contact senior editors in the paper to request reassignment of an experienced reporter. Anyway, most of the papers deploy a reporting team here.... Seeking remedies for unreasonable coverage is in vain. In fact, prevention is the best way of minimizing distorted coverage. In the first place, the information should be given as adequately as possible. We have to prevent it happening in advance of reporting. We are reluctant to take legal action, because fighting a court battle is time and labour consuming.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 1-12-92:p3)

'In addition to talking to the reporter immediately, we also seek out the chief reporter or editors. We phone the chief reporter to ask for a correction. It is very difficult to obtain a retraction or apology from the press. Personally, I believe that issuing a letter to the editor is a more effective and practical remedy. The papers prefer to print the letter than to make a correction to the original story. Making a correction to the previous story means that the papers have to admit that they make mistakes. The acknowledgement of error is a matter of losing face. It is a matter of undermining the paper's credibility.... However, in the pursuit of remedy through the letters to the editor is a process of a negotiating and renegotiating. Most of the time, the papers won't print the complete letter.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 24-11-92:p2)

Sometimes, the legislators reduce cooperation with the offending reporters by the denial of access. Also, they give scoops to favoured reporters.

'Complaining always makes things worse. If you complain to the papers, you just dig the hole

deeper. You simply can not win your reputation back.... According to my own experience, the press seldom run corrections. For instance, we made a complaint against *The Journalist* through the letters to the editor, but no response was given.... As far as I know, the legislator who I am working for rarely takes legal action against the offending paper. Commonly, he just refuses to be cooperative with the reporters who cause the problem. For example, the reporter from the *Independence Evening Post* was denied access to further interviews. Moreover, he always releases the confidential or exclusive stories to friendly papers only. These releases often produce the hottest news stories.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 4-12-92:p2)

However, no legislator tries to obtain a retraction through the National Press Council, because it has no powers to regulate the papers. More importantly, legal action is hardly taken by the legislators against the reporters or the papers.

In the Taiwan experience, a special measure has been taken by the legislators against unfavourable coverage. Here they attempt to seek cooperation with the offending papers' rivals and have them publish a direct complaint. For example, on 27 November 1992, the *Liberty Times* published the Wisdom Coalition legislator Huang Chu-wen's letter on its 3rd page. In this article, legislator Huang condemned the fact that the Wisdom Coalition had been mistreated by some papers. Although no paper was mentioned by name, legislator Huang stated that he gave full support to the 'Return Newspaper, Save Taiwan' campaign. At the same time, the *Liberty Times* also published the news stories concerning the 'Return Newspaper, Save Taiwan' campaign launched by the pro-independent group against the *United Daily News* on the same page.



Furthermore, on 28 November 1992, the *Liberty Times* and the *Independence Daily Post* simultaneously ran a story on the letter issued by the leader of the Wisdom Coalition, Legislator Lin Yu-hsiang. The *Liberty Times* even printed the complete text of the letter. In the letter, Legislator Lin accused the *United Daily News* of giving harmful coverage to the Wisdom Coalition legislators. He also threatened to withdraw political advertising from the *United Daily News*.

The reasons why a paper allows itself to be used by politicians to attack rivals lies in its political sympathies. To some extent, the press gives space for those parliamentarians who are of the same political substance, as they are allowing room for the politician's manoeuvres.

## REPORTING THE LEGISLATURE

At the Legislative Yuan, floor deliberations encompassing the Premier's Question Time and debates on a great many bills on various subjects take place in the Assembly Hall. As has been mentioned previously, the parliamentary reporters have a designated space in which they work within the Assembly Hall.

Generally, the journalistic activities are confined to the second floor of the Assembly Hall. There are two reporter's rooms which have telephones, facsimiles and closed circuit TV to facilitate distributing information. Furthermore, the press gallery is arranged at the upper level of the floor between the public gallery and the

official government gallery. From the press gallery, the reporters can observe the legislative actions proceeding on the floor from behind the glass shield.

In reporting floor deliberations, the parliamentary reporters always rely on performative accounts of the legislators and the cabinet members. They rarely bother to search for other personal sources or use the documentary detail which is available to them.

In practice, the reporters break down the formal legislative process into discrete phrases based on the manpower available. For instance, in covering the opening of the Legislative Yuan, one reporter is assigned to do the stories on the Administrative Report delivered by the Premier. Then all the reporters in the team take turns in covering the question and answer session which proceeds after the Report. Generally, one reporter is responsible for attending a session of questions and answers which proceeds with the debates between a legislator and the Premier and several cabinet members. The reporters assigned to the scene have to act as stenographers. By contrast, the stand-by reporters gather in the reporters' rooms. On certain occasions, the stand-by reporters have to interview the legislators who are involved in the heated debate on the floor. This interview is conducted downstairs through the parliamentary staff who pass messages to the legislators on the floor. Furthermore, stand-by reporters are responsible for covering informal press conferences chaired by the legislators in the reporters' room. However, most of the

time they stay in the reporter's rooms either chatting with each other or watching the closed circuit TV.

### **1. Reporting on Non-Legislative Actions**

Public relations are used by the legislators to gain media attention in the parliament. It seems that the legislators make more effort to attract the media than the government executives.

In the past, some un-parliamentary behaviour has been conducted by the opposition as a legislative tactic to highlight the issue that the structure of parliament was unreasonable and as a flamboyant tactic to capture media attention. For example, bedecking themselves with slogans, hijacking the speaker's rostrum and jumping on the table were common measures taken by the DPP legislators to paralyse the formal legislative process and demand the retirement of 80 old guard legislators who had not stood for election since 1947.

Fist fights between the opposition and the KMT legislators which turned legislative proceedings into a farce received prominent coverage in the news media. Therefore, the dramatization of legislative actions has been viewed as a tactic used by legislators from both parties for ensuring media coverage since the mid-1980s.

'To some extent, I agree that the DPP legislators do dramatize their legislative actions in order to attract media attention. But, as journalists, when we ask why the DPP is engaged in violent behaviour on the floor, the fact that the structure of parliament was unreasonable should be

taken into account. Under previous quorum rules, the DPP was kept from using parliament to spread its message, therefore, it had to carry out un-parliamentary behaviour to break through the blocking devices set up by the ruling party.... For commercial purposes, the legislative actions which can generate conflict have the advantage of getting the coverage. To my understanding, a great many readers are interested in reading the stories about the brawls between the KMT and the DPP, rather than the rational discussion between the two parties. However, as a journalist, I prefer to take this matter cautiously. On the one hand, I would like to tell readers that some legislators were physically abused on the floor. On the other hand, I would like readers to be informed that the parliamentary rules were unfair to certain parties. I disagree with the self-censorship policy previously launched by television networks when they deliberately wanted to purify the legislature news of violence on the screen.' (Interview, reporter, 16-10-92:p3)

Since the retirement of old guard legislators in December 1991, the violently un-parliamentary behaviour carried out by the DPP has decreased. At present, the legislators have become more skilful in the use of un-parliamentary behaviour to generate publicity. For instance, instead of bedecking themselves with slogans, the DPP legislators often display a poster on the rostrum on which information pertaining to the questions which they have asked of the Premier is highlighted. Generally, most of the legislators in opposition have difficulty in getting their message across through television, especially as television reporters deliberately silence their voices. Therefore, the exhibition of the message on the rostrum could provide a chance for them to do this when the legislative actions are in the spotlight.

Another tactic used by the legislators to win media coverage is to create a heated debate with the Premier. By

doing this, the tone and style of the floor performance are deliberately cultivated. For instance, when the legislators conduct the debate on the floor, they tactically use strong emotional language and exaggerated gestures in an attempt to create an intense atmosphere.

Some public relations practices are carried out by the legislators to enforce the legislative strategies and to capture media attention. For instance, some legislators' assistants regularly come to the press gallery and the reporter's rooms to issue hand-outs 15 minutes before the legislative process proceeds. In these hand-outs, subjects and detailed topics of questions which will be asked in the question and answer session are specified in the hope that this would make it easier for reporters to understand details of their proposals.

A special tactic adopted by legislators to secure publicity is to launch an informal news conference in the Assembly Hall linked with legislative actions. First and foremost, the format of the news conference is designed to save the press time and effort. For instance, the press conferences are scheduled to coincide with the reporters' working times, and only last 15 to 20 minutes. Furthermore, the news conferences are less formal, without microphones, and with a bunch of reporters sitting around a desk. Finally, the conferences often take place in one of the reporter's rooms used by journalists working for the large papers and the liberal papers.

As already mentioned, a lot of information flows around

parliament. Therefore, in an attempt to attract media attention, publicity events are well planned. As noted above, the press conference is designed to suit the time-frame of reporters. Besides this some informal and personal contacts are made before or after the conference to ensure that the given message will attract the reporters' attention and will be treated as significantly as possible by the press.

'The preparation of the news conference is very important. First, the legislative Yuan is a place where there is an awful lot of competition. There are many sources competing for media attention. Second, the parliamentary reporters have been fed too much violent and dramatic raw material. They get addicted to sensational events. Therefore, a legislator who raises a less controversial topic in the parliament always feels it difficult to attract media attention.... I was a parliamentary reporter. I am friends with most of the reporters here. Before the news conference, I will inform some formal colleagues personally including photo journalists that my boss is going to release some news. Of course, some hand-outs are given in the meantime.... After the news conference, I try to telephone some of the chief reporters or editors in the hope that my story will be arranged on the prominent pages. At least, I hope that they don't drop my story. By so doing, I have to be careful not to run the risk of intruding on their professional autonomy. Fortunately, I know the way newspaper men work.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 1-12-92:p1)

To achieve publicity is also a matter which has to be carefully calculated. Not surprisingly, the legislators make efforts to establish a rapport with the larger circulation papers which are assumed to have a great influence on public opinion.

'Apart from putting announcements on the notice-boards in the reporter's rooms, the research assistants or legislator himself may ring some friendly reporters to inform them about the topics, but it depends on the case.... Generally,

we contact the reporters by facsimile. For special cases, at the request of my boss, we have to deliver the news releases to the reporters of the major news organization, such as, the two paper groups (the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*), the *Independence Daily Post*, the *Liberty Times* and the *Taiwan Times* in person.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 4-12-92:p1)

Furthermore, in the calculation of efficiency, the legislators are willing to devote resources to the politically sympathetic papers that are most likely to cover their messages, rather than those that are politically hostile.

'Generally, I will notify every paper about when the press conference is scheduled. But only facsimile the news releases regarding the press conference to two big papers (the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*), the *Liberty Times*, the *Independence Daily Post*, the *Taiwan Times* and the *People's Daily News*.... The party-state owned papers have a prejudice against the DPP. I know their orientations very well, therefore I don't expect that their reporters will attend the news conferences. Because of having limited funds to work with, I am definitely not going to waste money and energy on them.... However, if they ask for the materials, I will give them to them.... In my own experience, the reporters working for party-state owned papers seldom contact the DPP legislators or their research assistants.' (Interview, Legislator's research assistant, 11-24-92:p3)

In Taiwan's case, the exercise of public relations is necessary, but it is not sufficient to win media coverage. Partisanship has characterized the Taiwanese press. The paper's political prejudices have excluded the possibility of information exchange between certain reporters and legislators. Therefore, public relations practice alone can not make a difference.

(1) Case One: KMT Legislator's Press Conference

A KMT faction, the New KMT Alliance called a news conference on 20 September 1992. The news conference was scheduled at 8:40 AM; this was 20 minutes before the opening of the Legislative Yuan. The news conference was held at the reporter's room located on the left hand side of the Assembly Hall. More than 15 reporters were crowded around the desk. At the news conference, an incumbent New KMT legislator Lee Sen-fong who was not endorsed by party headquarters for running in the forthcoming election announced that he had decided not to seek re-election. In the announcement, legislator Lee criticized the KMT's candidate selection procedures and demanded more internal democracy within the party and less money politics. Furthermore, he announced that the New KMT faction had decided to drop the previous proposal of splitting away from KMT and forming a new political group. Then the leader of New KMT, the chief of Environmental Protection Administration Jaw Shaw-kong and the other six New KMT members commented on this matter.

It was an emotional news conference. When New KMT legislators paid sympathy to Lee's decision to withdraw from running in the election, every person burst into tears. At that moment the camera crews and photographers all stepped forward with a rush to take pictures. None of the reporters raised questions. After one reporter said, 'Hau Pei-tsun (the Premier) is on the floor', a handful of reporters left



and headed to the press gallery on the floor.

The New KMT's news conference was significantly reported in the next day's papers. Without question, the picture with the New KMT members wiping their eyes was prominently printed in each paper. Moreover, every New KMT member's remarks at the news conference were covered in great detail, even his or her personal feelings were vividly portrayed.

In this case, commentary from counter sources was published in the papers. However, the selection of the information sources was very much dependent on each paper's political affinities. For instance, the party-state owned papers and the *United Daily News* were viewed as having close relations with the KMT, and therefore they balanced opinion by offering comments from KMT headquarters. By contrast, so-called liberal papers, such as the *Independence Daily Post* and the *Liberty Times* seemed to slant toward the opposition line. For instance, the *Independence Daily Post* only quoted statements from the DPP's Secretary-General and the *Liberty Times* produced a story in which a diversity of sources were drawn from KMT headquarters, and the caucus leaders of both parties.

## (2) Case 2: The DPP's Press Conference

Holding an impromptu news conference has been widely used by the DPP to generate publicity. Many examples demonstrate that when the DPP legislators fail to introduce bills on the

floor, they immediately call a news conference to articulate their political position. Under some circumstances, the DPP legislators also use this occasion to release some information which is not related to legislative matters.

For example, on 2 October 1992, the DPP legislator Yeh Chu-lan chaired a 20 minute news conference at the reporters' room. At the news conference, she explained the bill on the 'One Taiwan, One China Diplomatic Strategies' that was voted against by the KMT ten minutes earlier on the floor. Then the leader of the 'One Taiwan, One China Action' Alliance, Professor Lee Ying-yuan was introduced to the reporters. He spent 10 minutes briefing reporters on the purposes of the Alliance. Afterwards, the reporters were told that a public rally organized by the Alliance would be held on the forthcoming Sunday. Finally, he urged the news media to support and cover this campaign.

Only a dozen reporters were at the conference. Three questions were raised by a reporter who joined in later. Her questions only dealt with primary facts, such as when and where the march would take place and whether the rally was approved by the local police authority. None of the camera crews from the television networks were at the conference.

Another example shows how legislators use the news media to highlight issues which they are not able place on the legislative agenda. On 6 October 1992, the DPP legislator Chen Shui-bian introduced a resolution on the floor and he proposed that Defence, Finance and Justice

ministers should come to the committee meeting to give a report on a scandal called 'The Fraudulent Loans of the Iran Arms Sale'. After his resolution was defeated by the KMT on the floor, legislator Chen held a news conference. At the news conference, he gave the background to the scandal in detail. In the announcement, a senior government official was identified and accused of involvement in this case. Furthermore, in an attempt to convince the press, he declared that he would give up the right of immunity and was willing to take the risk of committing libel. Although opinions given by legislators outside the formal legislative process are not immune from prosecution, he insisted that he had a strong case and had to make the allegation.

As was elaborated previously, the informal news conference is a special arrangement through which parliamentary reporters are efficiently targeted. Therefore, the omission of the reporting of the DPP legislator's news conference is related to a paper's ideology, and not a question related to constraints on time and materials. Therefore, a newspaper's political ideology is the dominant factor which shapes the reporter's attitudes toward the DPP legislator's news conference.

Taking the DPP Legislator Chen Shui-bian's case, the party-state owned papers deliberately ignored and played down the significance of the news conference. This decision was made on the basis of private interest--protecting their ultimate employer, the KMT government, rather than professional judgement--that the DPP's accusations were not

substantial.

'In general, public run papers (party-state owned papers) are unwilling to print the DPP legislators' actions and words in the parliament. Since there are only a few chances to get the DPP's stories into print, colleagues will not waste time and effort in covering the DPP including legislator Chen's news conferences.... When I knew the senior government official was accused of involvement in this matter, I telephoned the main newsroom to inform them what allegations were made about whom.... We are working for the government, we would like to let the government put its case.... Personally, I do agree with some privately owned papers' news policy, such as the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*. They attempt to present two sides of an issue. In fact, the reporters should support the government, when a good policy is implemented. The reporters should not indiscriminately support every policy set up by the government.' (Interview, reporter, 2-11-92:p2)

In this case, legislator Chen's news conference went unreported in the party-state run papers. By contrast, the accused senior government official, the Secretary-General of the Presidency, was provided with space in which he dismissed the charge. In an attempt to minimize damage to the official's reputation, these papers significantly played down Chen's accusation by reducing his statements to one sentence or one short paragraph.

By comparison, the major privately owned newspapers including the big two papers (the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*) and the so-called liberal papers (the *Independence Daily Post* and the *Liberty Times*) were less hesitant in covering the informal news conferences held by the DPP legislators, especially those news conferences used to disclose political scandals. In this case, these papers took legislator Chen's conference seriously, because

political scandals were always guaranteed to sell newspapers.

In fact, for the papers covering the allegations made by the DPP outside the formal legislative process this is a matter which not only runs the risk of libel, but also of discrediting the government. Therefore, for the reporters who report the stories at the DPP's news conference it is more a choice of 'take it or leave it'. For instance, as some reporters are afraid of being used as an instrument for undermining the government's credibility, they attempt to verify the information issued by the DPP legislators. It is quite often that the reporters check the truth of allegations against the credibility of legislators and the validity of given evidence. Whether the given remarks are reported or not very much depends on the validity of information and the levels of trust the reporters have with the legislators.

'The reporting team decided to file this story, because legislator Chen provided us with a great deal of information. More importantly, it seemed that he was not a person with an axe to grind. He seemed very decisive in disclosing the scandal. In my view, the reporter should not accept a legislator's allegations against the government as fact. As far as I know, some papers do print whatever they are given by the legislators outside the parliamentary proceedings.... I am working for a big newspaper whose policy of dealing with troublesome events, such as government scandals and government malpractice, is very rigid. We are asked never to take any legislator's accusation or allegations for granted.... When we covered events, such as, 'The Fraudulent Loans of the Iran Arms Sale', we judged the credibility of legislator Chen, then we examined the validity of verbal or written accounts that were given at the news conference. Finally, we asked the main newsroom for help cross-checking with other sources, such as the alleged government

executives, documents or whatever.... If the allegations are too difficult to be verified, we prefer to drop the story, especially those stories expected to cause huge damage to the reputation of the government. However, the rule of thumb is to make sure that the statements from the government side are presented regardless of what has been said.... Verification of fact is always a time consuming task. Since we are working against the clock, we rarely conduct more elaborate investigations. Under most circumstances, we just put statements of both sides in the news.' (Interview, reporter, 7-10-92:p1)

The parliamentary reporters seem to accept the face value of the given information. When challenged on this, the reporters will argue that they get both sides of the story. This balancing creates a false impression: the actual truth of the matter is reduced to getting both sides of a story.

'My paper rarely avoids covering the scandals and government wrongdoing disclosed by the DPP legislators, if they have a strong case. The conventional way of treating the scandals is to present opinions from both sides, especially the alleged government officials. Of course, printing both sides' stories does not mean that the press provides a comprehensive and meaningful picture to its readers. Since each side has an axe to grind, the reporters have difficulties in verifying the statements given by both sides.... Perhaps, the responsible press should allow its reporters to conduct an investigation reporting on such kinds of cases. Because every reporter in the team is bound to the formal legislative actions, he or she has no chance of carrying out independent research.' (Interview, reporter, 27-10-92:p8).

Generally speaking, except for the party-state owned papers which consistently suppress the DPP, most of the major privately owned papers are able to follow this practice of reporting both sides. In this case, the *United Daily News* tended to play down the significance of the news conference. By contrast, the *China Times*, the *Independence*

*Daily Post* and the *Liberty Times* treated the news conference more significantly.

For instance, the *China Times*, the *Independence Daily Post* and the *Liberty Times* put the news conference in a broader and more sophisticated context. Firstly, much detailed information released at the news conference was presented in these papers. Therefore, an image was created that legislator Chen did have a strong case to challenge the senior government official. Moreover, Chen's determination to get the message through by declining to exercise his right of immunity was specified. All these devices seemed to inform the readers that the legislator and the papers themselves were telling a story that was authentic.

By contrast, the accused side's story was reported in a less complicated manner. In this case, an identical story was published by every paper regardless of its political ideology. According to Taiwan's journalistic convention, unanimous reportage is often due to the duplication of the news release issued by the official press office or reproduction of the news filed by the Central News Agency.

The coverage of the DPP's news conference clearly illustrates that there is a close link between politicians and journalists. The party-state owned papers deliberately suppressed the DPP's publicity. By contrast, some DPP sympathizers tended to get the DPP's message through without appropriate investigation. By and large, almost all the reporters tended to take the government's statements for granted in an attempt to neutralize the political

embarrassment or humiliation caused by the DPP. Consequently, the political affiliation of reporters with the politicians inhibits what the reporters reported and leaves them vulnerable to politicians who may wish to pursue private political objectives through press coverage. Also, the political partiality of the papers creates two versions of the same story making it difficult for the audience to know which to believe.

## (2) Reporting on the Premier's Administrative Report

The conventions of reporting politics reflect the role of the press and the nature of politics in any society (Schudson, 1982:98-100). Coverage of the Administrative Report addressed by the Premier on the opening of the Legislative Yuan serves as an example illustrating the relations between the Premier and the press. The form of news reporting on the Administrative Report mirrors the fact that the Executive Yuan is far more important than the Parliament in Taiwan's political culture.

Before 1980, the press seemed to confine itself to being a recorder of the Report. By taking this role, the press served as a conduit for the government. Every paper took the Administrative Report seriously. For instance, the message of the Report was printed in full by every paper. The typical form of the coverage of the Report was to run a headline story on the front page in which a brief summary of the Report was listed. Then the reader was referred to the



paper's later pages for the full message. Generally, no separate news story was published to interpret the contents of the Report or to convey the legislator's reactions to the Report.

By the early 1980s, the coverage of the Report had been partially transformed, although it did not happen in all papers simultaneously. In 1982, except in the party-state owned papers, no paper still printed the full message of the Administrative Report. Instead, the press ran a number of news stories on prominent pages in which the contents of the Report were cited in great detail.

The dramatic change in reporting the Administrative Report occurred in the late 1980s. For instance, the Premier's message is no longer guaranteed to occupy the front page headlines, although the press still treated the report significantly. On 21 September 1988, the Premier's Report made in the 82nd Legislative Session was moved off the front page by the *Independence Daily Post*. It seems that the press began to shift from a simple recorder of the Report to a mediator. Some papers began to take responsibility for identifying the salient points in the Reports for their readers, instead of printing each item that the Report contained. For instance, on 21 September 1988, the *Independence Daily Post* ran a story in which only two items were highlighted. By contrast, the *United Daily News* published six items relating to the Report. The party owned paper, the *Central Daily News* still continued to reprint the full text.

Much more important, instead of passively transmitting the Premier's message, some papers began to function as an interpreter by incorporating the information which was not mentioned in the Report into their stories. For instance, on 20 September 1989, the *United Daily News* featured a story in which a key issue mentioned by the Premier in the report, 'the relations between the President and the Premier' was commented on. In this story, the Premier's immediate opinions on this matter were compared to his opinions given on other occasions. In addition to place the Report in a broader context, some papers started to pay more attention to the legislators' reactions to the Report. For instance, on 20 September 1989, the *Independence Daily Post* published a story on the second page in which four legislators' comments on the Report were conveyed.

At present, the news conventions used to cover the Report addressed by the Premier are more brief and interpretive than before. Taking an example of the press coverage of the opening of the 90th Legislature Session in September 1992, with the exception of the liberal papers, most of the papers ran a headline story on the Premier's report to the legislature. In this story, the Premier's statements regarding the issue of national identity were highlighted. Then, readers were referred to the paper's second page for the news stories related to the public policies addressed by the Premier. However, the party-state owned papers, such as the *Central Daily News*, *Hsin Sheng Pao* still continued to reprint the full speech on a later page.

Generally speaking, the big two papers, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* began to treat the Premier's report as a part of the day's proceeding in parliament. For instance, the big two papers, especially the *China Times*, put the Report within the context of legislative actions. For instance, in the *China Times'* headline story, the Premier's message about national identity was highlighted in both the lead paragraph and in the headlines. In addition, the *China Times* included some legislators' actions which took place before the Report in the body of its story. By comparison, the Premier's report was framed as the sole legislative proceeding on the opening of parliament in the party-controlled papers.

Without question, in liberal papers such as the *Liberty Times* and the *Independence Daily Post* the attention was focused on the parliament with less emphasis on the Premier's report. For instance, the *Liberty Times* printed its front page headline story on the resolution of cabinet resignations introduced by the DPP legislators. The Report was carried in second place. In this story, the Premier's assertions on the relations between Taiwan and communist China were briefly reported. Besides that, the *Liberty Times* carried another news story on the second page to denote the public policy comments given by the Premier. The *Independence Daily Post* paid less attention to the Report. It ran a very short story on the second page in which only the Premier's statements on the issue of national identity was covered.

The change of coverage of the Administrative Report suggests that some of the papers began to question the doctrine of the greatness of leadership during Taiwan's democratic transition. In Chinese political culture, the success of the nation is associated with having a superior leader. Therefore, the personal character of the leader is usually considered more important than policy issues in shaping Chinese politics (Pye, 1991:16). Under such circumstances, the media always treat the leaders, such as the President, the Premier and the KMT chairman with great seriousness and deference.

### (3) Reporting on the Premier's Question Time

The Premier's Question Time is an example which demonstrates why the legislative process is addressed differently by papers in accordance with their political orientation.

In theory, participating in the question and answer session is one way that legislators are guaranteed to carry legitimacy in the media. However, the parliamentary reporters who cover the Premier's Question Time are interested in what government executives say rather than what legislators do.

From a reporter's viewpoint, the Legislative Yuan is still a subordinate institution to the Executive Yuan, although it is becoming more independent. Therefore, what makes the Legislative Yuan newsworthy is its involvement with the Executive Yuan.

'To be honest, the news media overemphasize the significance of the question and answer session.... The Legislative Yuan remains subordinate to the Executive Yuan on important issues, though it is beginning to act more independently. In my view, the legislators are at a disadvantage, because inadequate staffing and lack of knowledge of government policies make it difficult for them to properly scrutinize government practices and proposed bills. As far as I know, some legislators are too incompetent to raise substantial questions, they usually ask questions which embarrass the government and make the government look bad.... The question and answer session is a political show. Most legislators prefer to conduct the debate on ideological issues rather than public policy on the floor. Since the KMT and the opposition DPP have less common ground on the issue of national identity, there is no dialogue during question time. How can people expect that they can reach consensus through parliamentary debates?' (Interview, reporter, 27-10-92:p2)

Reporters often state that the executive is worth reporting, because it controls public policy which affects almost every citizen. On the contrary, what the legislators do on this occasion is less newsworthy, because most of them are unable to hold the government accountable. As already mentioned, the government has control over the parliament through the party machine, therefore, legislators criticizing the government in the question and answer session do not pose a political threat to the Premier or to his cabinet members.

'Why are reporters more energetic in reporting the government's words and actions than legislators at the question and answer sessions? I think it is a matter related to the nature of parliamentary politics. Let me put it in a simple way. In the parliament what the government does is always more important than what the legislators do, especially where the question and answer session is concerned. The Premier in general, and the government executives in particular, are newsworthy, because their actions and words are representing government policies which could

affect almost every citizen. By contrast, individual legislators become newsworthy only by raising pertinent, penetrating or debunking questions. Otherwise, I have to let it go unreported. In rare instances, this kind of antagonistic question can obtain satisfactory reactions from the government branch. In my opinion, a reporter does have difficulties in framing a story which consists of a good question without a relevant solution.' (Interview, reporter, 15-10-92:p4)

Question periods are viewed as the legislature's regular news conference (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989:232). In the Taiwan experience, the question and answer session is also viewed as a news conference in everyday reporting practice on the legislature beat. At this conference, the legislators stand in for the reporters to question the government executives, especially the Premier who bears important and newsworthy messages of state and always distances himself from the media.

'The reason that the coverage of parliament is preoccupied with the government executives is at the employer's requests. Taking an example from my paper, the main newsroom demands reporters to cover the government executives' performance in great detail. The question and answer session provides a good opportunity for reporters to pick the stories on the government. The government executives have to say something on that occasion, although most of the time they are reluctant to speak to the press and the public.' (Interview, reporter, 27-10-92:p2)

'Of course, the Premier's performance at Question Time is worth covering, because his statements illustrate government attitudes toward certain issues.... Part of the reason that the press treats the Premier significantly, is because he is not answerable to the news media. In parliament, legislators make the Premier and the cabinet members accountable to the ordinary people. To some extent, legislators also make the government executives, especially the Premier, answerable to the media. Although the Premier is a person who does not like to deal with the news media, he still has to defend his policy in the

parliament.... In my view, the question and answer session serves as a formal news channel by which the news media can elucidate some information from the top administrator.' (Interview, reporter, 16-10-92:p2)

Individual legislators who are worth reporting are dependent on what subjects are given space during the Premier's Question Time. In Taiwan, the legislators are newsworthy except when they are connected with national issues not local issues. Furthermore, it seems that when they raise questions regarding fundamental political beliefs, such as unification versus independence it is more likely to get a better press than those issues dealing with public policy.

For instance, on 6 October 1992, 17 legislators raised questions in the Premier's Question Time. Among them, two members of the KMT faction had a heated debate with the Premier on the 'One China' policy. The floor debate gained extensive news coverage in the papers the following day. By contrast, the press coverage given to the leader of the Democratic Socialist Party Chu Kao-cheng who questioned the Premier about the social security benefits of senior citizens was less significant.

### 3.1 Case 1: Reporting on the Leadership Conflict within the KMT

Before 1992, according to the Sedition Law, especially the ambiguous provision of Article 100 of the Criminal Code, the advocacy of an independent Taiwan was a crime that could

bring with it the death penalty. Therefore, only the legislators who enjoyed the right of immunity were able to openly discuss issues relating to it. By the late 1980s, coverage advocating an independent Taiwan as discussed in the Legislative Yuan was viewed as a politically taboo subject by the papers. Recently, the news concerning political conflict within the ruling party was considered politically sensitive.

'Since the government can no longer use sedition laws to silence the separatists, the reporting of the independence issues advocated by the DPP are no longer politically sensitive. In my opinion, quarrelsome factions within the KMT itself makes it difficult for us to cover this. Basically, the conflict between the two KMT factions, the Wisdom Coalition and the New KMT Alliance in the parliament reflects the tension between the Taiwan-born President and the Premier who represents the conservative mainlanders. Ultimately, it reflects the historical controversial matter between native Taiwanese and mainland Chinese.... The members of the Wisdom Coalition are native born Taiwanese. They support the KMT's unification doctrine, but they assert that the KMT's primary commitment is to Taiwan. In my understanding, this faction is seen as the President's strongest source of support in the legislature.... The New KMT Alliance is organized by second generation mainlanders. They are committed to defending the interests of the mainlanders. The mainlanders arrived in Taiwan with armies in 1949. Generally, the New KMT Alliance are viewed as having powerful links with the military. Also, they have support from the Premier.' (Interview, reporter, 21-10-92:P3)

The problem of covering a politically sensitive news story rests with the papers. As already mentioned, most of the limitations placed on parliamentary reporting come from the paper's political orientation and the journalists' self-censorship. By and large, most of the papers tend to play down the significance of politically sensitive issues. For



instance, the news policy adopted by the privately owned papers in dealing with the KMT's leadership conflict is to please the politicians on both sides in order to make the stories safer and less troublesome.

'The principal policy laid out by my chief editor to deal with political conflict between the President and the Premier is to please both sides. For example, recently, we were told that the news in association with the Finance Minister's resignation should follow the principle: "To support President Lee's judgement, to back Premier Hau's decision and to conciliate the Finance Minister's determination." In this case, to some extent, the Finance Minister was sacked by the President, because in a public speech the President opposed or at least disagreed with the land reform policy which was set up by the cabinet.... If a reporter intends to write a story on the allegation which is conceived as a sensitive one, such as the conflict between senior politicians, he or she inevitably has to find more facts which are sufficient enough to validate the case. Journalists have to get their work done in a short period of time. My own guess is that most of the reporters will avoid holding the hot potato.' (Interview, reporter, 15-10-92:p2)

Part of the reason that reporters working for privately owned papers suppress sensitive issues is because they are reluctant to devote much time and effort to an unpromising story. As for reporters employed by the party-state run papers who ignore the political taboo it is because they censor information which may damage the government's credibility.

'Without doubt, my superiors will pay special attention to the news regarding the leadership conflict.... Since the basic news policy of my paper is to serve as a channel for enunciating government policy, they expect that the news stories shall make a contribution to national unity and maintain social stability.... In general, I don't cover the sensitive events, such as the leadership conflict alleged in the parliament. There is little doubt that this kind of political information would court social

unrest.... Speaking as a responsible reporter, I reluctantly carry news stories on the rows within the government and the party (the KMT), even though my paper allows me to do so.' (Interview, reporter, 2-11-92:p4)

Legislator Lin Hung-tsung questioning the issues concerning the cabinet resignations on 6 October 1992 is a good example illustrating how the papers have been cautious in dealing with politically sensitive news. That day, the non-party legislator Lin posed several questions to the Premier. In one question, he urged that the Premier should resign after the forthcoming election. He pointed out that 70% of respondents in his opinion poll supported the cabinet resignations.<sup>3</sup>

Legislator Lin's statements which call for the Premier's resignation were only reported in the *Liberty Times* which has a tradition of being hostile to Premier Hau. Although no story was published by the other papers, it does not mean that none of the other parliamentary reporters paid attention to this matter. In fact, the reason that this question failed to achieve coverage was partly because of the main newsroom's interference.

'Recently, the main newsroom took a tough censorship policy in dealing with the news regarding two top administrators: the President and the Premier. Taking the example of legislator Lin Hung-tsung's question about the cabinet resignations, I filed a story on this matter. Anyway, it was killed by the editor.... Before, I was asked by the editor to check the reliability of this survey. He wanted me to look through every questionnaire and carefully check its answers.... Finally, the story still was buried by the editor. To my knowledge, part of the

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<sup>3</sup>This poll was conducted on 2 October 1992 with a sample of 1,000 and 80% of effective respondents.

reason is that the editor questioned the representativeness of the survey. This poll was not a nation-wide survey, it was carried out in Kaohsiung region. I guess the editor thought that the poll only reflected public opinion in southern Taiwan. More importantly, since any of the matter concerning the Premier is considered politically sensitive, the editor must exercise a rigid standard to scrutinize the news stories. Consequently, letting it go unreported is the conventional way of tackling the problem.' (Interview, reporter, 7-10-92:p1)

### 3.2 Case 2: Reporting on the Question and Answer Session

In the parliament, the proceedings of the Premier's Question Time is an institutional arrangement ensuring that the legislators and the government executives engage in a dialogue. According to parliamentary regulations, a legislator has the right to make an impromptu interpellation<sup>4</sup> about administrative policy, an administrative report or any other report of the Executive Yuan in 15 minutes. Furthermore, the same interpellator may make another 15 minutes impromptu interpellation on the reply to his or her previous interpellation. At the same time, the Premier, the relevant ministers or the Commission Chairman shall answer the interpellation immediately after its presentation, except for confidential matters relating to national defence and foreign relations. Although an interpellated party is required to answer the questions, who

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<sup>4</sup>Interpellation means that legislators or assemblymen formally question the head of the executive branch about government policy or action in legislative bodies.

and how to answer are not specified in the parliamentary regulations.

In comparison with the real situation, the Premier's Question Time is portrayed differently in the news. Generally, the papers treat the executive branch more significantly than the legislators. Ultimately, the dialogue between the government and the legislators on the debate is almost replaced by one-way rhetoric.

### 3.2.1 The Premier versus the KMT Legislators

On 6 October 1992, 17 legislators participated in the question and answer session. Among them, 2 members of the KMT faction, Wisdom Coalition, had a heated debate with the Premier on the 'One China' policy.

KMT legislator Wu Tzu proposed the idea of 'Two China, but Taiwan in priority'. Also he pushed for the KMT to be Taiwanized. Another KMT legislator Chen Jen-nan voiced support for the Democratic Progressive Party's separatist slogan of 'One China, One Taiwan'. He advocated the view that 'without the Republic of China, Taiwan will still exist tomorrow.' These views angered Premier Hau, therefore, he severely criticized the two KMT legislators.

This floor debate won extensive news coverage in the next day's papers. But the reason that reporters took the events seriously varied from paper to paper. For the reporters employed by the privately owned papers, conflict and the drama generated by the clash between the KMT rebels

and the Premier were the core ingredients for ensuring coverage.

'We were willing to take up the Wisdom Coalition members' interpellation, because it was signifying a conflict within the ruling party. The 'One China, One Taiwan' policy is nothing new in the parliament. It has been proposed by the DPP for years. Now, it is an important subject for the media because some KMT legislators openly challenge the party's basic policy. In this case, signs show that the KMT is heavily divided in its dealing with the national identity question, and is experiencing increasing erosion of consensus in its bedrock principle.... Frankly speaking, legislator Wu Tzu deserved some credit for his performance. During the question and answer session, he dramatized the legislative actions. For instance, his speech was full of emotional appeals that created a tense atmosphere and generated a sense of strong conflict on that occasion. I was very impressed by his words and actions.' (Interview, reporter, 21-10-92:p3)

By comparison, the reporters working for the party-state controlled papers tended to emphasize that the Premier who is the media star of the beat himself is sufficient to warrant news coverage.

'I am working for a government paper. To help government promote and diffuse its public policy is one of my important tasks. Therefore, I have to focus fully on the government's disclosures.... Answers given by the Premier were definitely more important than the questions raised by the legislators. The 'One China' policy declared by the Premier represented the government's attitude toward the future of our country. It is a principal policy that no one is supposed to be doubtful about. The papers should let the Premier's remarks get across.' (Interview, reporter, 21-10-92:p2)

The debate between the Premier and the KMT rebels was portrayed in the party-state controlled papers as the Premier addressing the Legislative Yuan. These papers only mentioned that legislator Wu questioned the KMT's 'One China' policy. However, the other issues, such as

government wrongdoing were ignored. In this instance, the party-state run papers were biased in favour of the Premier, because his refutation of the 'Two China' policy was significantly covered. By contrast, legislator Wu's assertion on 'One China policy would simply drive Taiwan into a deadlock' was published in just one paragraph.

Furthermore, the coverage in the party-state run papers was hostile to the Wisdom Coalition. For instance, the KMT mouthpiece, the *Central Daily News* featured two highly opinionated stories condemning legislator Wu's conduct on the floor. In one story, the 'Two China' policy endorsed by the Wisdom Coalition was severely criticized. The KMT reporter argued that the 'Two China' policy was equivalent to an independent Taiwan, and any attempt to make Taiwan an independent country would endanger the welfare and safety of the 20 million residents of the island. In the other, the parliamentary reporter criticized legislator Wu's performance on the floor as poor, because some of his questions, such as the unfair decisions on candidate selection were internal KMT issues and not suitable to be raised on the floor. However the reporter never criticized the Premier who also devoted a certain amount of time to defending his own stand on the selection of the candidates.

The privately owned papers' coverage of the floor debate between the Premier and legislator Wu was quite different from the party-state owned papers' stories. They gave more space in which the legislators could voice their political feelings. The floor exchange was portrayed as one

in which the Premier and legislator Wu were engaging in some sort of dialogue. That is, legislator Wu raised a question and the Premier gave an answer. This sequence of paired questions and answers was drawn from two temporal dimensions. In reality, taking an example of the first interpellation, legislator Wu spent 15 minutes stating his questions, and the Premier gave a 25 minute response.

It seems that liberal papers including the *Independence Daily Post* and the *Liberty Times* treated the KMT rebels more significantly than the two big papers. For instance, in addition to printing a story on the floor debate, the *Liberty Times* also published another story in which legislator Wu's criticisms of government malpractice were described in detail. However, none of the Premier's reactions were mentioned in this story.

### 3.2.2 The Premier versus the DPP Legislators

By participating in the formal legislative process, the legislators are guaranteed to carry legitimacy in the media. However, the DPP legislators seldom receive fair media attention in comparison with the Premier.

On 13 October 1992, 6 DPP legislators took part in the floor debate. Because the DPP has been strongly identified with Taiwan through its independence platform, a huge amount of floor time was devoted to attacking the KMT's doctrine on the unification of China. The DPP's counterparts, the Premier who has a strong connection with the KMT's right-

wing and the military, severely denounced the DPP's 'One China, One Taiwan' policy advocating dual recognition. Heated debate over the issue of national identity and relations with communist China dominated that day's legislative agenda. For instance, some legislators questioned the Premier about his commitment to the future of the island. Some legislators demanded that the government be more active in gaining international recognition for Taiwan, including joining GATT and re-applying to the United Nations under the name 'Taiwan'.

In addition to the politically sensitive 'One China' policy, some legislators criticized the Premier's policy on the maintenance of law and order, which had been one of the priority goals of his administration. Moreover, some legislators urged the Premier to take tough action on the practice of vote-buying and other questionable vote-winning tactics used by KMT candidates in the run up to the forthcoming election. Furthermore, the Vocational Assistance Commission for Retired Soldiers which is heavily subsidized by the government, was alleged to be involved in monopolizing the business of public construction.

The debate between the Premier and the DPP legislators over the national identity issue was printed on the front page in the next day's papers. But coverage of the DPP legislators' performance in the question and answer session varied among the papers in accordance with each paper's political orientations. Most of the reporters from the privately owned papers do not refuse to write reports on the



DPP's performance, because they believe that the legislative actions are legitimate to report regardless of who is taking part and what is being said.

'My paper's policy in dealing with ideological questions involving national identity, such as advocating an independent Taiwan is very clear. In practice, any of the legislators who speaks on this issue on the floor will receive fair attention. However, novelty is another criterion of newsworthiness that has to be taken into account. When I cover this matter, I prefer that the legislators raise a newly developed subject, not tell the same old story.' (Interview, reporter, 21-10-92:p3)

However, the DPP's deliberation on the floor has been consistently ignored by the reporters from the party-state owned papers and some privately owned papers. Generally, these privately owned papers are regarded as being in alliance with the KMT. It seems that their reporters conflate the journalistic profession with their papers' policy. Just like the government, these reporters intend to educate the readers and to socialize them into the official view of the political situation. Since the DPP's political assertions are justified initially as being against people's social welfare and the societal consensus, the reporters believe that they have to take the responsibility for moving the DPP to the margin of the media and political agenda.

'Today, our country is facing a crisis in national unity. In a free society, every person is allowed to give his or her opinions on any issue including an independent Taiwan. Under such circumstances, there is a problem which needs to be reconsidered. Are we abusing freedom? I think the DPP legislators are those who have to think about this problem.... As a responsible journalist, he or she is not supposed to get every legislator's assertions into print. No reporter can report everything happening in the Legislative Yuan. Selectivity is inevitable, but the decision shall

be made in accordance with professional and ethical judgements. In my view, the legislative actions or words which undermine the people's unity and threaten people's welfare should not be reported. Otherwise, the reporters have to attach a story called "news analysis" in order to tell readers what is wrong with these actions.' (Interview, reporter, 21-10-92:p2-3)

Also, these parliamentary reporters seem to be granted a degree of autonomy, but they will use it within politically acceptable limits. In other words, they are independent agents in a conditional way, free to report what they like as long as the story well fit their employer's pro-government policy.

'I well understand my employer's new policy. The political spectrum of my paper is viewed as moderate and more or less pro right-wing. The DPP's legislators are a group of politicians who play some sort of political game and try to embarrass the government in the parliament. Therefore, from the first day I was assigned to the legislature beat a year ago, I was told to play down the stories regarding the DPP.' (Interview, reporter, 28-10-92:p1)

Since the party-state controlled papers serve as a conduit for the government, much news framing aims at transforming the legislative actions happening on the floor into information that reinforces the legitimacy of the government. The conventional way of covering the question and answer session is to replace the dialogue between the Premier and the opposition legislators with a one-way speech.

In general, regarding coverage of the Premier's Question Time, the party-state owned papers almost all rely on the concerns of the government to constitute the bulk of their report, and offer no statement from the opposition

legislators. Their stories on the Premier's Question Time were reconstructed solely around the Premier's and the ministers' remarks. In the headlines, the Premier was presented as the responsible agent making declarations, explanations or rejecting points. By applying the active voice to the government, the papers offered sufficient space for the government, especially the Premier to defend his policies and attack his political opponents. By contrast, the DPP legislators were passive actors in the news. The common practice was that the DPP legislators' questions were reduced to one paragraph and used to echo the government executives' arguments. For instance, one phrase, 'In responding to legislator (name)'s question' was regularly used in the news stories to denote that all statements given by the executive branch answered the DPP's interpellation. Since even the titles of the interpellation were always omitted in the news, the DPP had great difficulty in getting their message through the party-state run papers. Apart from carrying straight news stories on the Premier's Question Times, the reporters from party-state owned papers often featured stories appraising the Premier's performance on the floor, or condemning poor legislative action taken by the DPP.

In this case, the coverage of the DPP's interpellation in the privately owned papers was not all of a piece. Generally speaking, the news framing of the interpellation regarding the public policy was less complex than those concerning the issue of national identity. The press

coverage of the public policy debate on the floor had a high degree of uniformity. The typical form of representing the public policy debate on the floor was that the government's remarks were dominant in the headlines, the lead paragraph and the body of the story. However, the press coverage of the interpellation concerning national identity varied from paper to paper.

The *United Daily News* has a close relationship with the Premier. In reporting the Premier's Question Time, the *United Daily News* ran a front page story on which the floor debates over the issue of national identity between the Premier and the DPP legislators were briefly reported. Then the readers were referred to the stories on page three. Generally, the *United Daily News* treated the Premier significantly. For instance, the Premier was dominant in the headlines and the lead paragraph. Moreover, the news stories were full of the Premier's remarks. By contrast, the DPP legislators' statements was summarized in one paragraph. It seems that the DPP was disadvantaged in its press coverage in the *United Daily News*.

The *United Daily News*' rival, the *China Times* seemed to adopt a more equitable balance in dealing with the floor debate. For instance, the *China Times* printed a front page story which was very similar to that which appeared in the *United Daily News*. That is, official discourse was prominent in this story. Furthermore, half the space of its second page was devoted to describing the floor exchange between the Premier and the DPP legislators on the issues of

independence and unification. This long story was built up in a point and counterpoint format. That is, the arguments from the Premier and the DPP legislators were more or less equally covered, in spite of the fact that the Premier was still portrayed as an active agent in the headlines and the lead paragraph. Besides that, the *China Times* published an announcement issued by the DPP headquarters. In this, the DPP spokesman criticized the Premier's remarks on the 'One China' policy.

Not surprisingly, DPP legislators got better coverage in the liberal papers. For instance, the *Independence Daily Post* devoted almost all its second page to covering the floor debate. Like the *China Times*, it ran a long story on the floor debate over the issue of national identity. Unlike the *China Times*, the *Independence Daily Post* took the DPP legislators more seriously. For instance, the DPP legislators and the Premier were simultaneously portrayed as active agents in the headlines and in the lead paragraph. Furthermore, two DPP spokesmen representing its factions were interviewed to give their reactions to the Premier's performance.

Because the Executive Yuan is presumed responsible for the welfare of all citizens, the press treatment of the Premier's Question Time tends to lay much emphasis on the officials rather than the legislators. As the conventions of covering the question and answer session emphasize the prominence of the Premier and his cabinet at the expense of the legislators in general, and marginalize the opposition

legislators in particular, this in turn diminishes the Legislative Yuan's importance in the eyes of the public.

### 3.3 Case 3: Reporting on the Passage of Bills

As already mentioned, covering floor deliberations, such as the question and answer session, reporters rely solely on the legislators' performative accounts that are directly and immediately observable. Not surprisingly, in reporting the final passage of bills, the reporters also confine themselves to observation of the legislators' behaviour on the floor. Furthermore, it seems that the press neither exploits backdrops of the ongoing floor discussion nor delves into impacts of the special bills. Such an emphasis has its reasons. Among the reasons are lack of time to seek out other sources, and a concern that the readers would be bored by reading heavy, dull and abstract parliamentary discussions. The most important explanation that the press's cursory coverage of the bills stems from the reporters themselves, because they lack the knowledge to deal with the legal and policy issues in detail.

'In my view, why the bills are poorly reported is partly due to time. Regardless of longevity of tenure, almost every reporter here is acting as a stenographer. Since every reporter has always to be available on the scene, he or she rarely has opportunities to search out further information.... Partly, it is a matter regarding readership. I don't think ordinary people are willing to read a story that is full of dry discussions.... First and foremost, most parliamentary reporters have limited knowledge of legal and policy issues and operations. Therefore, they have no sense of history or context for the particular bills. Dealing with

the discussion on the bills is far more complex than the debate on the national identity issue. In reporting the debate on the issue of national identity, a reporter can simply represent the opinions given by the legislators and the government executives. However, in covering complex policy and legal issues, the experienced reporters are expected to discover multiple competing interests behind the formal legislative process. For instance, in my report on the third reading of the amendments of Lawyers Law, I did mention that some military lawyers were lobbying in the parliament. I am the only reporter who pays attention to this matter. In my view, people concerned with particular policies should include the legislators, executive agencies and interest groups. As a reporter you should be sensitive enough to detect those strangers appearing inside the parliament, not just merely focus on the public rallies gathering outside the parliament.' (Interview, reporter, 27-10-92:p9)

The typical news convention of reporting a bill's final passage consists of two parts: the floor discussions and a summary of the amendments. In general, the reporters cover the passage of the bill by duplicating the official documents issued by the Conference Department of the Legislative Yuan. The discussions on the bills are depicted in accordance with the performative accounts taking place on the floor.

There is a tendency among reporters to concentrate on the chaos that is caused by the DPP's tactics to delay the bill rather than the gradual, orderly nature of the way that bills are discussed. Therefore, the controversial bills regarding the reform of government structure receive much more media attention than the others. These kinds of bills are highly controversial, because both parties have difficulty in reaching a consensus in the course of the negotiation. According to previous experience, during

discussions over the bills which are a long way short of meeting opposition's demands, the DPP will take non-parliamentary action to underline its dissatisfaction and to prevent the bills from being passed into law.

By contrast, the less controversial bills which are remote from the ideological disputes between two political parties attract less media attention. For example, reporting the final passage of the Lawyers Law was very superficial and no major difference in the papers was found as far as their content was concerned. In general, the reporters tended to put their stories together by summarizing the amendments at the expense of the detailed discussion which took place among the legislators. Since the coverage of the amendments of the Lawyers Law was treated as an abbreviation of the documents provided by the Department of Conference of the Legislative Yuan, the coverage across the papers was highly similar.

In the 90th Legislative Session, the Provisions in connection with the Control Yuan Organization, the Public Officials Selection and Recall Law were considered as highly controversial bills.<sup>5</sup> These bills received extensive press coverage, because of the dramatic and sensitive actions used by the DPP to slow down the proceedings. Taking as an example the third reading of the 31st Article of the Public Officials Selection and Recall Law which proceeded on 22

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<sup>5</sup>This information was provided by the parliamentary reporters. These bills dealt with the fundamental reform of the political system in Taiwan. The KMT and the DPP were sharply divided on these matter in private negotiation held by the Caucus of both parties.



October 1992, papers varied as far as their content was concerned. In general, regardless of their political orientations, all papers took the un-parliamentary behaviour carried out by the DPP to boycott the bills in the final process seriously. Nevertheless, the DPP's rational debates conducted in the earlier stages were not treated equally favourably in all the papers. Only privately owned papers printed part of the dry discussion which took place before the parliament had voted on the bills.

In this case, all papers were interested in the parliamentary actions taking place in the last 15 minutes when the amendments were passed. Therefore, an action-packed, exciting story was run by the press to represent how the parliament had voted on the bills. This story was depicted chronologically in which a KMT legislator proposed the vote, the DPP legislator Lu Hsiao-yi then threw documents at the speaker, the DPP legislators seized the podium, and the KMT and the DPP got involved in a shouting match on the floor.

However, there was a dramatic difference in the papers' reporting of the earlier floor discussions on the bills regarding the Public Officials Selection and Recall Law. Reporters working for the party-state owned papers tended to speed up the discussion by omitting the DPP's utterances. By so doing, the reporters only mentioned the fact that the opposition opposed the bills without reference to details of their reasons for such action.

In contrast to the party-state owned papers, the

privately owned papers treated the floor discussion which took place before the bills were voted into law much more significantly. The floor deliberations were depicted as divisions between the supporters who were the legislators representing overseas Chinese communities and the opponents who were the DPP. Then the core arguments of each bloc were selectively represented. In this case, these papers framed the floor debate in a way favourable to the DPP. The DPP's legislators had no difficulty in getting their message across via the privately owned papers. In comparison with the DPP, its counterparts, the legislators who were representative of Overseas Chinese communities, apparently lacked chances to gain access to the papers. Only one report made by the *China Times* mentioned Overseas Legislator Tasi Fan-dao's statements on this matter.

Liberal papers, such as the *Independence Daily Post* and the *Liberty Times* provided more space to the DPP legislators to get their message across. For instance, the *Independence Daily Post* produced a more diverse range of coverage than the two big papers. In addition to carrying a story on the third reading of the bills, the *Independence Daily Post* also featured a headline story in which it explained why the DPP fought hard to make the amendments to the bill.

A bill's final passage is seen as the most newsworthy moment for the parliamentary reporters (Cook, 1989:50-51). Taiwan's parliamentary reporters also share this view. More importantly, Ericson, Baranek and Chan (1989) and Russell (1984) point out that parliamentary reporters tend to focus

on the sensational events, rather than dealing with the more important debate or discussion. In Taiwan, the press coverage of a passing bill also skews towards the dramatic and confrontation at the expense of rational discussion. But stressing the trivial and the sensational information has its costs. The superficial and action oriented coverage of legislature can have a detrimental impact on the reader's understanding of parliamentary politics.

#### 3.4 Case 4: Reporting on the Parliamentary Reaction

The government spokesman is designated to speak for the Executive Yuan in which reporters' tasks are simplified. Frequently, they only turn to the government spokesman when a given topic becomes newsworthy. With the Legislative Yuan the solution is less simple. Who can speak on behalf of the legislature or political parties is very much dependent on the topics and the availability of legislators.

When the parliamentary reporters are assigned to cover a subject which requires parliamentary commentary, they may choose their sources by trying to maintain parity among the KMT and the DPP. Of course, the reporters working for the party-state owned papers will not follow this rule, because they faithfully echo the official voice.

In general, parliamentary reporters choose their sources by trying to maintain a parity among the major political parties. Nevertheless the major party which takes more responsibility for legislative action is usually the

first to be covered (Cook, 1989:55). In Taiwan reporters may choose their information sources based on the familiar division between the KMT and the DPP, between the executive branch and the legislature, or between supporters and opponents. In some special cases, the balance between the two KMT factions, the Wisdom Coalition and the New KMT Alliance is also taken into account. Then the leaders of each political group are selected to give their comments. The legislators who hold the institutional position are considered as stars on the legislature beat, because they are assumed to have greater influence than the average member. To some extent, these leaders also are expected to be good communicators. Otherwise, the reporters turn themselves to those who are able to convert their questions into answers in a timely, concise manner. However, the non-leaders still could be an authoritative source, especially the legislators who have a strong background knowledge in the fields of economics, law and technology.

'Taking an example of Finance Minister Wang Chein-shien's resignation (7 October, 1992), the parliamentary reporters were asked to fill out a story on parliamentary reaction. In this case, theoretically, the legislators in the Finance Committee should have been targeted, because they are responsible for the legislative actions regarding Wang's land reform policy.... In the Finance Committee, some legislators with a strong finance and economic background are seen as the authoritative source, although they don't hold posts in the parties or parliamentary hierarchy.... So far as I know, Wang's case is a matter of political conflict within the ruling party, nothing to do with the policy. Therefore, the reporters did not particularly seek the information about land policy from the Finance Committee members. Since the reason behind Wang's resignation was because of a political struggle, commentary from both parties, and the KMT's two

factions were necessary ingredients to write up the story.... In this instance, most reporters just drew on their sources in committee meetings.' (Interview, reporter, 21-10-92:p2)

Since reporters tend to save time and effort, the convenient way of getting their work done is to look at who is participating in a floor proceeding or committee meeting. Without doubt, the legislators who are always on the scene are more likely to attract media attention.

For example, when the press coverage of the parliamentary reaction to the Finance Minister Wang Chein-shien's resignation is examined, it is found that most sources used drew upon the legislators participating in the committee meetings on that legislative day. In addition, the diversity of sources is very much determined by the news organization's political affinities. Table 7-1 (p.340) shows that the party-state owned papers, such as the *Youth Daily* and the *Central Daily News* deliberately avoid publishing the DPP legislator's response. The *Central Daily News* even twisted a DPP legislator Chen Shui-bian's remarks in order to fit its news policy. However, the government owned paper, *Hsin Sheng Pao* held the principle of balance well in this case, because it published the statements from both political parties. Strictly speaking, the privately owned papers present the statements from the two major parties. The *Independence Daily Post* and the *China Times* even quoted the announcement released by the DPP Caucus.

The media stars of the legislature beat are often those who hold high positions in the party hierarchy and who master communication skills (Cook, 1989:54-56; Ericson,

Baranek and Chan, 1989:211). In Taiwan's case, perhaps more importantly, the legislator's star status is somewhat attributed to his political affiliation with the press. At least, communication skills and institutional prominence are taken into account only within politically acceptable limits. This is particular true for the party-state owned papers.

## CONCLUSION

As already mentioned, the party-state can afford to obstruct the free flow of information, because it controls the primary sources of political information. By comparison, the Legislative Yuan is less able to attempt the tight control over journalism. Consequently, press coverage of the Legislative Yuan does represent somewhat of an opening in the authoritarian political system, although it is still limited.

On the legislature beat, the legislators and reporters are working in a symbiotic relationship. The Legislative Yuan relies on the press to inform the public about its legislation. The press also relies on the parliament for information.

Like the executive branch, the Legislative Yuan institutionalizes parliamentary reporting by providing reporters with galleries from which to work, and offering a host of legislative reports, bills and digests which are reportable. However, in Taiwan's case, the press generally

interacts with individual legislators, rather than with the parliamentary institution. In attempting to publicize their political perspectives and seek to get re-elected, the legislators are adept at media manipulation. They release handouts and launch news conferences on a regular basis.

In the Taiwan experience, partisanship is the most important aspect of the relationship between the press and the Legislative Yuan. The press has its tradition in affiliating with political parties and factions which prevents its reporters from reporting impartially a parliamentary matter. Parliamentary reporting demonstrates that having greater freedom of access to the information sources does not guarantee a better quality of political news coverage. Because the press collaborates with particular political interests, the coverage of parliamentary actions is significantly biased in favour of certain groups. Also, the voice of opponents is constantly suppressed and ignored. Perhaps, only if the reporters act in good faith to defend their journalistic profession by loosening this process of self-censorship will the democratization of political news become possible.

The greatest concern of the legislative news is its superficiality and lack of context. There is a common tendency for the parliamentary reporters to trivialize and dramatize the legislative news (Ericson, Baranek and Chan, 1989:210-216; Russell, 1984:227). In Taiwan, parliamentary reporters apart from avoiding publication of news concerning political embarrassment and humiliation to the party-state,

also have a tendency to pursue less abstract and complicated subjects, disregarding the potential impact of legislation on the whole nation. For instance, the press regardless of its political orientation, seems to focus on the dramatic aspects of legislation at the expense of the fundamental issues of political structure or public policy which are the essence of parliamentary politics.

Part of the reason that parliamentary news is superficial is because the press attempts to cover events which take place elsewhere. In Taiwan, the press believes that parliamentary news must cover whatever the officials and legislators do in committee or on the floor. Therefore, the reporters are not allowed freedom from routine to pursue news somewhat more idiosyncratically or historically specific. Partly, the reporters also lack the special and recipe knowledge to interpret the legislation which also contributes to a poor quality of legislative news. As a result, the press is not very successful in circulating information which the public requires to understand parliamentary politics.

Good quality press coverage of parliament ultimately depends on the quality of the legislature. Taiwan is in a process of transition into a democracy. In such a particular political environment, the Legislative Yuan itself bears some responsibility for healthy parliamentary reporting. The more interests that are formally represented in parliament, the better representative democracy seems to work. To a large extent, only the media can help promote a



healthy parliamentary politics. To achieve this aim, political news needs to impartially reflect political news; it needs to reflect perspectives provided by a range of legislators and officials as well as the public. Unfortunately, the press is working within a parliament where non-parliamentary behaviour has been frequently conducted to delay the legislation. It seems that the Legislative Yuan is not yet mature enough to function well in order to serve a democratic society.

Good quality of parliamentary reporting is also very much dependent on good legislators. The better legislators are those who use media strategies to help open the legislative process to public scrutiny, and who release information that will contribute to better parliamentary reporting, first and foremost; ideally, their motives and actions behind information manipulation will not go against the public interest. As a consequence, information provided by legislators is more objective and relevant to the democratic process.

All in all, the press has to take the responsibility for making legislators more responsive to the public interest. In Taiwan, the relationship between the press and legislators is based on political preferences, rather than responsibility, fairness and trust. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the press will continue to have difficulties in fulfilling its role as the watchdog of the legislators for the foreseeable future.

Table 7-1 Sources Quoted in the Press Coverage of the Finance Minister Wang Chein-shien's Resignation

Information sources		Newspapers							
Political parties/ factions		Legislators	Party-State run			Privately run			
			YD	CDN	HSP	CT	UDN	IDP	LT
The KMT	New KMT	Chou Chuang Wang Tien-chung	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
	Wisdom Coli-tion	Tasi Pi-huang						*	
	Others	Ting Shou-chung	*	*	*	*	*	*	
	KMT Caucus	Li Tsung-jen Li York-gi			*				*
The DPP		Chen Shui-bian		*	*	*		*	*
		Hsieh, Frank			*	*	*	*	*
		Hung Chi-chang			*	*		*	
		Wei Yao-chien				*		*	
		Lu Hsiao-yi						*	
Non KMT & DPP		Lin Cheng-je Tsai Fan-dao Lin Hung-tsung	*		*	*	*	*	*

(The data have been analyzed by the researcher.)

YD : The Youth Daily  
 CDN: The Central Daily News  
 HSP: The Hsin Sheng Pao  
 CT : The China Times  
 UDN: The United Daily News  
 IDP: The Independence Daily Post  
 LT : The Liberty Times

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION

If the press performed as ideally as it should, if the press actually served to create an informed citizenship, democracy might more closely approximate its ideal. However, it can be argued that in reality democracy has gained little from the rise of press power. The centrality of journalism to modern democracy makes the issues that prevent the press from performing its democratic function more important than ever. The power of the state and the market are two factors blamed by scholarly research which have inhibited journalism in communicating democracy.

This study has given a detailed explanation of state-press relations which have impacted on democratic citizenship in Taiwan. The history of journalism in Taiwan records the close links between the Nationalist Party, Kuo Min Tang (KMT) and the press and notes the change from press control by the party-state to a form of market censorship. Specifically, party-state manipulation of the press had by the late 1980s been transformed from regulation and censorship to news management.

We propose that the history of the press in Taiwan needs to be located in a broader history of society as a whole. The nature of the party-state intervention in the press varies greatly depending on the stage of

liberalization of civil society. Along with the liberalization of civil society which has marked Taiwan's passage through the last 20 years has come a shift in the relationship between the party-state and the press. To argue this issue further, the party-state manipulation's of the press is assumed to be a process which comprises a number of juxtaposed and changing political and economic elements. This demands that we look beyond the political-economy perspective in an attempt to understand the issues of state-press relations toward democracy.

Beginning with the political-economy perspective, we show that the party-state exercises power over the press by means of its licensing of newspapers, giving financial support to the press industry, and seducing proprietors through political and economic interests in the heyday of authoritarian rule. A revised theory which concentrates on the daily interactions between the party-state authorities and journalists yields a more detailed map of how the party-state exerts power over the press through a process of news management when the party-state faces a civil society in turmoil.

As an immigrant regime, the KMT's nation-building task began in 1949 in an attempt to consolidate its legitimate rule of Taiwan during this period. The press was assigned a crucial role in the task of national development. Freedom of expression was subordinated to the larger and more pressing goal of nation-building.

The party-state control of the press industry through

statutory constraints was justified by the urgency of nation-building and economic growth. Between 1950 and 1988, the number of papers was fixed at 31. The number of pages which a newspaper would have and the price of all papers was determined by the party-state.

In hostile economic conditions the party-state's control of the press industry made a positive contribution to preserving a diverse press market. Faced with widespread poverty and illiteracy, privately-run papers would not have survived in a marketplace which was dominated by the party-state owned papers without the provision of government advertising and grants. Since the KMT had actively interfered with both civil society and the press market, none of us can argue that the press had much role in calling the party-state to account.

Between the early 1970 and 1988's deregulation, state-press relations certainly changed, and almost as certainly strengthened. In response to the liberalization of civil society emerging in 1977, the need to keep an integrated and docile newspaper industry was more important than ever. However, the development of opposition movements and economic growth acted as two impetuses for expanding and changing journalism in the country.

Between 1949 and the mid-1970s, the language of political debate in Taiwan was restricted by the KMT. The undermining of the KMT's national building task had in fact been simmering since 1977, the year the political opposition crystallised in the building of a legitimate opposition

party. In this period, the dissemination of the political opposition which attacked the KMT's monopoly of power was precisely what aroused the hostility of the party-state toward the press. Under such circumstances, the manipulation of the press aimed at not only promoting the KMT's ideology, but also eradicating dissenting views in order to maintain the stability of a political consensus.

A commercial press was one other factor that altered state-press relations. It is evident that the market served as a moderating influence on the liberalization of the press in the early 1970s. In Taiwan, privately operated newspapers have existed alongside the party-state owned papers. However, economic development in the early 1970s spurred the growth of this sector of the press, especially the 'real' privately held newspapers which were free from party-state financial control.

The privately owned papers, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, which replaced the party-state owned papers, played a leading role in the marketplace by the mid-1970s. The significant development of the privately owned papers forced the party-state to devote much of its energy into cultivating media relations.

Taking those trends into account, statutory controls alone were no longer effective enough to keep dissenting groups off the media agenda. As already mentioned, the party-state restrictions on the economics of the press were used to protect the financial health of the press. Fifteen years later, these press restrictions turned into a weapon

to be used against the opposition which attempted to purchase newspapers in order to voice its political message.

To speak of direct party-state control of the privately owned newspapers is misleading. It is certainly true that the KMT government was entitled to regulate the papers through the Publication Law, or to arrest and bring to trial journalists who disseminated information deemed to threaten the security of the state through the Sedition Law and martial law.

In the case of Taiwan, during the first 40 years of KMT rule, the party-state constantly exercised prerogative powers over opposition magazines, but these were never the primary methods for keeping the mainstream newspapers in line. In fact, the party-state won over the privately held papers by providing political and economic favours to their proprietors in exchange for their loyalty. The big newspapers, such as the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*, were granted rights to acquire papers which were expressing sympathies to the opposition or financially unable to survive in the marketplace. Moreover, the proprietors of these two paper groups were recruited into the party-state's hierarchy. In contrast, the small papers were subsidized with state funds to help them be more competitive in the marketplace. There is no doubt that the effectiveness of party-state control will be aided as long as the proprietors' intervention in the practice of journalism remains strong. Reporting the opposition movement in Taiwan was an example of the party-state's

control over the press through an informal prior censorship. Indeed, it illustrates very clearly how the party-state controlled reporters through mediating proprietors and news executives.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the opposition and commercial interests had triggered the press into making some fundamental changes in its reporting of politics. The conventions of reporting the opposition which were largely biased in favour of the party-state reflected the fact that most of the newspapers remained closely linked with the party-state. However, the privately-run newspapers enjoyed a relative autonomy in reporting political information. In the late 1970s, the boundaries of the freedom of the press were ill-defined. There is no one simple explanation for this. Firstly, the growth of a political opposition created an alternative forum in which the press could market a diversity of political versions. Secondly, boosted circulation figures tempted the privately operated newspapers to continually test the limits of the boundaries imposed by the party-state; this was helped by the press's desire to roll back the party-state censorship. Perhaps, finally, the party-state authorities themselves were not clear about how much relaxation of control was acceptable when some privately owned newspapers began to toe the KMT's unwritten guidelines.

As far as there is room in the market for papers willing to challenge the party-state censorship, there always was the potential for a freer press. We witness this



in that the pursuit of commercial interests did encourage some privately-run newspapers to loosen their ties with the party-state in the late 1970s. Such a trend became significant when some privately-run papers, such as the *Independence Evening Post* and the *People's Daily News* began to turn the spotlight on the opposition and enjoyed a boost in circulation by the mid-1980s as a result. This fact demonstrates that the audience market played a crucial role in emancipating newspapers from the party-state control under martial law. To some extent, economic interests encouraged the press to override political censorship, and market forces drove the press to provide a wider range of political views.

The implication for state-press relations in the post-martial law era is that news management became crucial for a democratic government. We argue that only a democratic or democratising government needs to interfere with a pluralistic press because of its own accountability, and that only an independent press can hold government accountable to the public.

Close analyses of reporting politics provides a clear example of the complex interactions between the party-state and the press, and demonstrate the dilemma this poses for a free press as guardian of democracy. During the years 1980-90, Taiwan's society changed a great deal. The authoritarian KMT regime based on a Leninist party structure moved towards democratic rule. A new political forum required different political skills. When the party-state

was not able to maintain its unity and the dominance over the opposition, and no longer exerted the same degree of control over the press industry, perhaps the press may be able to fulfil its role as a watchdog in society. In the same vein, state-press relations entered a new era, with the extra edge of the party-state paying new attention to the issue of news management.

In the early 1990s, the accountability of the party-state may not yet lie through the Legislative Yuan, but the increasing influence of the parliament in Taiwan's political structures has changed relations between the press and political parties. The rise of mass suffrage has made the parliament dependent upon the media, therefore, the legislature is less able to attempt the tight control over journalism which previously existed. This has led to the two major political parties undertaking a continuous effort in cultivating media relations in order to publicize their own policies, and to seek re-election.

Looked at differently, the weak power exercised by the parliament in controlling the press has helped the press act counter to the party-state's news management to foil accountability. Reporting the legislature shows that the information gathered in the parliament serves as an instrument allowing newspapers to break through the party-state's reticence on politically or diplomatically embarrassing issues, and to report more fully all aspects of the party-state. The reporter's right to free access to the parliament has created the potential for a restructuring of

how journalists report politics.

A more independent legislature has forced the party-state to be more answerable to the press, but in reality state-press relations have not been fundamentally transformed. The historic connection between the party-state and the press has not altered that much, even in the years after the rule of martial law. The party-state still controls the primary sources of information that is a clear advantage over the legislature. Therefore, the party-state can afford to obstruct or restrict the free flow of information. Reporting the party-state clearly illustrates that the exercise of public relations through staged events-press conferences, briefings and news releases, and denying reporters interviews with anyone, except the official spokesman- is a common practice employed to restrain the flow of political information. The top administrators, such as the President and the Premier are not answerable to the press. One can argue that the Executive Yuan tightened controls over journalists' access to information about its plans and activities partly because of Premier Hau's ultra conservative ideologies, or that President Lee and Premier Hau were reluctant to deal with reporters because of their social status. However, there is a slow trend showing that the party-state has been forced to open itself up to the press, with even the President and the Premier symbolically meeting reporters once a year, but more often they directly address the people through the media.

The party-state has adopted a new mode of press control

in the early 1990s. Now, the party-state's news management is aimed not only to convey the image of a great government, but also to compete with the opposition, and even their opponents within the ruling party. Previously, the KMT government, after a long period in power had had few public rows. After the late 1980s, the party-state has divided as its political interests as a power centre have multiplied. The fact that the party-state no longer speaks with one voice could increase the possibility of a greater diversity of views in the news; however, there is no guarantee this will be the case.

The KMT's leadership challenge occurring in 1992 yielded a more complex picture of state-press relations. In this instance, news tended to emerge as a by-product of political struggle or debate. The party-state factions dramatically enlarged their own creative 'news' flows through the conventions of deep background and off-the-record briefings with journalists. The coverage of the KMT leadership contest became biased in one direction or the other in accordance with a newspaper's political preferences, proving that while the press was less manageable, the party-state still exerted a heavy influence on the press. The frequency of anonymous sources in the press coverage suggested that the press was not performing its role of calling to account politicians for the benefit of the citizens. The party-state's accountability was much harder to pinpoint, because ordinary citizens without political and journalistic knowledge had difficulties in

reading names into anonymous sources, and were prevented from taking part in the political dialogue. Taken as whole, the press did provide more information to the public, however, its coverage was biased in one direction or the other in accordance with a newspaper's political orientation. Under such circumstances, the readers seemed to be told, 'Bias does not matter, you are aware of it and rival papers exist supporting the opposite viewpoint.'

As already elaborated, the press is most effective at countering the party-state's news management when disunity wracks the KMT. There is no denying that the party-state continuously exploits the press, however, its control over the press is limited, even under the best circumstances. The implication is that the press may provide more information to the public when the party-state is weak. However, the partisan press seems to lead us to believe that there is little ground for such expectations. Greater attention should be directed to press partisanship which has developed since the mid-1970s, and its cumulative effect which has resulted in voluntary self-restraints in the early 1990s. Arguably, the collaboration with the press and KMT's factions has significantly decreased its ability to hold the party-state accountable to the public. For instance, reporting politics clearly shows that reporters consciously refuse to gain access to politicians who are prejudiced against their employers. Consequently, because of the proprietor's intervention in the practice of journalism, the reporters tend to aggressively criticize the politicians who

are not of the same political persuasion, and fail to scrutinize the political process impartially.

Apart from the party-state news management, the threat to diversity in news which stemmed from declining competition in the industry has emerged in the late 1980s. The previous assumption that economic competition enhances a 'marketplace of ideas' requires rethinking. We argue that the market which served as a safeguard against the party-state interference is sustainable only in an authoritarian society. In a democratic society, the market inevitably becomes a new source of threat to press freedom.

In the late 1980s, the two big paper groups, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* took 80% of the market. This level of concentration has seriously threatened the existence of liberal papers and the party-state owned papers. The decline of opposition magazines and liberal newspapers has foreclosed the newly developed diversity of papers and ideas. In addition, the interplay of the party-state and market censorship seems to prevent the press from providing enough high-quality news to enable an informed citizenship to develop. Since the proprietors of the two newspaper groups are still close to the party-state and the papers are still under 'one man' control, we have to presume that their market domination will further restrict certain dissenting political ideas, certainly including KMT's factions, because deliberate partisanship has changed from the divisions between political parties to support for political factions. However, we have reason to believe that

the declining of competition among newspapers limits the number of ideas in the marketplace may be somewhat overstated. To some extent, monopolistic markets may have more diverse journalism because the competition has led the two papers to pursue better journalistic performance. It seems that after enjoying monopoly status and revenues, the *China Times* and the *United Daily News* have more political and economic capital to report more extensively, and impartially on political information, and more innovatively on non-political information. For instance, these two big paper groups generously spend their competitive energies in staging 'pseudo events' for their own reporting.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that the newspapers engage in public relations operations to create information for their own ends that are somewhat professionally trivial, they also provide the readers with more analytical, comprehensive and diverse news.

If the questions of the interplay between state and market censorship are addressed in the future as they are being at present, then journalistic practices will continue to grant space to the party-state and exercise little impact on making the party-state accountable to the public. Unless, the newspaper barons are willing to divert power to

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<sup>1</sup>See *The Journalist*, 3-9 April 1994:52-54 and *Wealth*, May 1994:40. Recently, many large scale cultural festivals have been sponsored by the *China Times* and the *United Daily News*. They also held some seminars on current political and environment issues and sponsored celebrities including former American President G. Bush and former British Prime Minister M. Thatcher to visit Taiwan. The most notable example is that the *United Daily News* spent US\$ 1,000,000 on inviting M. Gorbachev to visit Taiwan in April 1994.

professional journalists, and first and foremost, journalists are more sincere, intelligent, and willing to energetically pursue facts and rely on professional judgement rather than self-restraint, the press will never have a proper relationship with the party-state in a political democracy. If the press is still economically and politically controlled, then democratic structures and practices are not safe.

In order for democracy to improve, the bottom line is that ordinary citizens must demand better standards in government and journalism. The press has been manipulated by the party-state, but does that mean we in turn have been manipulated by the press? To answer this question, we have to understand whether media messages significantly influence what the public think with by affecting what they think about. With the exception of voting for legislators, we simply do not know very much about the interrelationship between the party-state, the press and the ordinary citizens' political identity. To develop this understanding will require a deeper grasp of the role that the press plays in each citizen's processing of political information. It is a task for another day.



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