

Media Panic or Manic: The 2004 Taiwan Parliamentary Election in the Local English-Language Press*

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Abstract

Periods of national and local elections can be profiled as perfect moments to create an open observation sphere for political actors, the electorate and the news media to articulate their convictions. Electoral campaigning across the world has increasingly been played out in the media, the arena par excellence for politicians to influence voting behavior. It is in this context that the present study investigates ideological investments underlying the R.O.C. 2004 parliamentary elections coverage in the Taiwanese English-language dailies. Drawing on the insights of Discourse Analysis and Linguistic Pragmatics this paper illustrates how each daily participates in the pre-election campaigning and how ideological positions still shape the newspapers' post-election coverage. Linguistic strategies are investigated in all LY election-related articles over a ten-day period in December 2004.

Keywords: discourse analysis, electoral campaigning, ideology, media representation, pragmatics, Taiwanese English-language press

* The author wishes to thank the anonymous reviewers of the *Taiwan International Studies Quarterly* for their valuable suggestions and advice.

Introduction

The present paper aims to investigate the extent to which media participate in shaping public opinion at critical moments of historic importance for a community such as national or local elections. In particular, it attempts to recover ideological meaning generation in the Taiwanese English-language newspaper coverage of the December 2004 parliamentary or Legislative Yuan (LY) elections. Drawing on the insights of discourse theory and methodology of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2001) and linguistic pragmatics (Verschueren, 1999), the study consists of a critical investigation of representational practices and the underlying interpretive frameworks of the three dailies (*China Post (CP)*, *Taipei Times (TT)* and *Taiwan News (TN)*) in a comparative perspective over a sampling period of nine days (December 7-15, 2004), comprising the latter days of the pre-electoral campaign and the first few days of the post-electoral period.

As public stages: “the media generally constitute a major domain in society where power is circulated, thus socially constructing truth and knowledge and as a result (re)producing assumptions and ideologies” (Lams, 2005: 117). Media coverage is often the primary source of political information for citizens and as such, their role in covering campaigns and elections is a critical element in the process of electing a community’s representatives or prime leader. In normative media theory the tasks which the media should have in a democratic society are seen to revolve around two central themes: how media should relate to “those who govern” and how they should relate “to the governed” (Asp, 2007: 32). As theoretical premises of the functions of news media in a democratic society, one can look at their democratic value as well as normative and descriptive functions. The democratic value of the media consists of their contribution to free opinion formation. This rests on two

normative functions: informing the citizenry and scrutinizing those who govern. The informative function can be described as follows: supplying different opinions in a fair and impartial manner as well as providing information on issues, the value of which can be assessed in terms of relevance, density, breadth and depth. Scrutinizing those in power includes exposing misbehaviour with a correct attitude in using truthful, relevant material from an independent and fair perspective (Asp, 2007: 33).

If we hold news executives to these highest possible standards of coverage in a democratic polity, we can expect a press coverage of the 2004 Taiwan LY elections that is issues and candidates-oriented and that aims to educate voters about democratic processes and devote equal room to diverse political perspectives. Reporters should be dedicated to helping the public make sense of competing political arguments by defining terms and filling in needed information. It is expected that accuracy of the evidence offered is duly assessed and “truth checks” of political ads, slogans and promises are provided. Additionally, it makes good journalism if any claims/counterclaims can be related to the probable impact of the proposed policies on the citizenry.

A central research question therefore focuses on whether the three dailies under examination fit the above sketched ideal picture of what electoral coverage should be all about or whether they take part in the pre-election campaign by presenting some particular issues in a way that caters to their own presumed constituencies. Are the papers presenting a balanced picture and in-depth analysis of the candidates’ platforms or are they frantically trying to influence voting behavior? Is there any manic enthusiasm to evoke a sense of discursive community by giving ample forum to public statements of their favorite candidate(s) and by using particular discursive strategies in their narratives invested with the ideological messages of their preferred political party?

A further question, dealt with in the first part of this textual analysis,

probes into the presence of any signs of panic in the sense of (participating in) negative campaigning by discrediting the opponent. Creating panic by amplifying diverging sensations whenever societies are divided over political ideologies and other polarizing issues such as identity and ethnicity allegiances can be a tactic to evoke a certain sentiment of crisis to steer voting behaviour, especially of swing voters. What is the calibration between coverage of the tactical game and opinion polls about who is ahead on the one hand and reports on what the candidates have promised and done on the other hand? The second section of the analysis investigates whether the same ideological positions underlie the papers' post-electoral coverage. How does each daily reflect upon the outcome and how are interpretations presented? Will the post-electoral coverage be more interpretive than descriptive? Is Patterson's argument that "Today, facts and interpretation are freely intermixed in election reporting" (Patterson, 1993: 67) still applicable in this particular corpus of election coverage? Is any electoral setback minimized in a frantic effort of image rebuilding or will it lead to introspective reflection of possible causes leading to this perceived setback and, conversely, will any positive result spark image reinforcement and manic euphoria?

The corpus comprises all LY-related articles, which total 277 (87 *(CP)*, 112 *(TT)* and 78 *(TN)*) over a nine-day period from 7 to 15 December 2004. The reason of this focus on the English-language press is inspired by their explicit mission to not only bring the world to Taiwan but especially deliver Taiwan news to the foreign community, as professed in their mission statement. For this case study, however, the picture gets more complicated, when considering that this targeted international audience does not belong to the voting constituency. It follows that the particular hybrid readership (mix of local Taiwanese citizens as well as foreign nationals) will have to account for any participation in campaigning activities. Indeed a sizeable proportion of the targeted readership consists of the Taiwanese electorate, eager to enhance their English language skills and/or interested in reading domestic and foreign news coverage from a

more international perspective.¹

Before outlining the main results of our study we first have a look at methodology and the significance of context in its broadest possible sense for a pragmatic textual analysis, the focus of which is on “the empirically observable meaningful functioning of linguistic forms in their cognitive, social and cultural context,” as outlined by Verschueren (2001: 79). The identification of traceable recurrent patterns of discourse thus forms the core of this study of the LY election coverage. These parliamentary elections were of special interest to Taiwan and its media organizations, as they involved a wider context of regional politics, historical, and socio-cultural processes. Hence, a good understanding of the background to this political event was essential, even though our research is not a study of the electoral campaign itself. Contextualization of the most salient campaign issues surrounding the election, such as the “name rectification” proposal forms the backdrop for our pragmatic text analyses.

One more consequence of the basic premise that language use is bound by context is a concern for not only the product of the journalistic activity, but also the situational process of reporting, the ideological and cultural context from which the news workers emerge and which constitute the producer/interpreter's mental map of the social order (Van Dijk, 1989). News accounts are shaped by the personal views of the journalists, who often also unconsciously select and interpret a number of facts. As news is also a collective and organizational

¹ Anthony Yuen, former editor-in-chief of the *Taiwan News*, and Patrick Kearns, assistant managing editor at the *China Post*, both asserted in interviews, conducted with the author in April 99, that the category of students of English, has gradually taken up the lion's share of readership by now. According to figures of an internal *Taiwan News* survey in 1998, 37% of readership was taken up by the foreign community (comprising businessmen, foreign representatives, scholars, teachers and students) and 63% by local readers. Half of the local readership went to the category of college students, one third to college professors, 14% to businessmen and 10% to government officials. Similar figures were given by Patrick Kearns of the *China Post* in our April 1999 interview.

product, it is shaped by routine occupational practices in an institutional setting with specific performance demands guided by the relentless thrust for readership as well as constraints of time and resources. Pressure is put on the journalists to deliver copy within the strictest possible time limit. Additionally, ownership, editorial guidelines and commercial pressures all play a role in the news production process. Some of these factors will be briefly discussed in section two.

Wider Socio-Political Context of Narratives

The contextualization of the narratives in terms of the wider context of social structures and processes, as sketched in this section, does not mean to give an exhaustive analysis of the key electoral issues and the contenders. It merely aims to provide some background to the contentions made in this paper and the news actors' quotes referred to. The following topics deserve our attention: key contenders, significance of LY elections, Taiwanese LY electoral system and vote allocation schemes, exact result figures, constitutional reform and last-minute campaign issues such as name rectification.

Key Contenders

Two ideologically opposed camps competed in a hotly contested race until the last day before the elections: (a) the “pan-blue” alliance, for whom a Chinese identity takes precedence over Taiwanese consciousness and who advocate unification with China. For the KMT (Chinese Nationalist Party or Kuomintang) this is less urgent than for the New Party and the People's First Party (PFP); (b) the “pan-green” camp, highlighting a distinct Taiwan identity (Democratic Progressive Party, DPP), aspires to a diluted form of “independence” for the Taiwanese citizens in realizing their own destiny and fighting for their dignity as autonomous subjects on the world stage rather than

being marginalized by the international community. The Taiwan Solidarity party (TSU) in a more extreme sense advocates de jure independence from China. Throughout this paper we shall refer to these colors, blue and green, as referential shortcuts for the respective alliances. The term “deep” (blue/green) refers to the extremes of the political spectrum, i.e. the NP and PFP as well as the TSU.

Significance of Local LY Elections

The elections were deemed to be of crucial importance particularly in view of the heated debates around the legitimacy of Chen Shui-bian’s position as president due to the shooting event on the eve of the presidential elections in March 2004, which at the time of the LY elections, was still being investigated by a truth commission, set up by the blue alliance. In response, the green camp proposed to establish a “Taiwan truth commission” to investigate the cases of social injustice perpetrated by the KMT martial law regime. The LY elections were also perceived to be the ultimate chance for the blue camp to protect its last bastion of political influence on the one hand and an opportunity for the ruling party to break through legislative gridlock so that important bills could be passed and government policies could be carried out.

Results in terms of Concrete Figures

Voter turnout rate was lower (59.16%) than previous LY elections (67.7, 68.1, 66.2% in 1995, 1998, 2001 respectively). These are the Central Election Committee results:

1. The pan-green alliance maintained over 40% of popular vote (DPP: 37.98% with 89 seats, up two from LY 2001+TSU: 8.28 % with 12 seats, down one from last time). DPP and TSU together mustered 46.26 %, and 101 seats (up

two seats).² Green thus gained two seats and percentage of voter share remained stable. Even though the social base for DPP support remained strong, green fell short of its goal to win parliamentary control.

2. The pan-blue camp (KMT 34.90 % with 79 seats, up 11 from last time + NP 0.13% with one seat + PFP 14.78% with 34 seats, down 12 from last time) together garnered 49.81% and 114 seats (down one seat).³ Blue thus lost one seat, but still kept its thin legislative majority. KMT won in voter share and seats at the expense of its ally PFP, which lost both seats and voter share.
3. Other candidates, including NPSU and independent contenders, together canvassed 3.93% of the voter share.

The Taiwanese LY Electoral System and Vote Allocation Schemes

Owing to the multi-member district system with a single non-transferable ballot, multiple contenders within the same party were vying for votes in each district, which made candidate selection a game of chance. This explains the emergence of vote allocation or rationing schemes, which is a complex technique to help distribute votes evenly between candidates of the same political group in a region by shifting portions of supporters' votes from likely winning candidates to ones found trailing far behind in opinion polls. These schemes are especially designed to ensure a maximum number of parliamentary seats.

DPP Administration's Constitutional Reform Proposal

The R.O.C. constitutional reform proposal has been subject to diverging

² The Central Election Committee's vote percentages differ from the (unattributed) figures provided by the *Taiwan News*: DPP: 35.72%+TSU 7.8% (together: 43.51%, 2.3% more than 2001 LY elections).

³ Figures according to the *Taiwan News*: KMT 32.8%+PFP 13.9%, which together with the NP (0.13%) make 46.85% , 3% down from 2001 LY.

interpretations between the blue and the green camp. The former insists that it is just another move to further independence whereas the latter claims the proposal aims to make an ancient instrument of government, designed before 1949 for Republican China, more consistent with modern-day realities in Taiwan. According to a government poll, the majority consider the current constitution to be out of fashion (Fanchiang, 2005: 2). In an article promoting the need for an entirely new constitution, created by the Taiwanese citizenry and tailored to its needs, Shih refers to President Chen using the simile that “Taiwan is currently like a child wearing a grown man’s clothes”. The R.O.C. constitution was established for the vast population of China and the administrative system of the country was grafted onto Taiwan by the KMT regime without the consent of the people (Shih, 2004). The constitutional amendment bill was endorsed by the legislature in August 2004 and a National Assembly of 300 newly elected members was formed to ratify the bill on June 7, 2005.

Last-minute Campaign Issue of Name Rectification

The proposal to use the word “Taiwan” in its overseas representative offices and state-owned enterprises became a campaign issue, first advanced by the pro-independence party, the TSU, in a stronger version advocating an “official” name change for the ROC itself. A softer version was later embraced by President Chen, who unexpectedly announced his plan just before a TSU rally the weekend prior to the polling day. The president’s public proposal to alter the title of these overseas missions and state-owned enterprises sparked strong reactions both on the domestic front by the blue camp as well as in some circles of the U.S. Administration.⁴ After Chen publicly pledged to launch the

⁴ The US State Department spokesman, Adam Ereli, criticized the proposed name changes as follows: “These changes of terminology for government-controlled enterprises or economic and cultural offices abroad, in our view, would appear to unilaterally change Taiwan’s status and for that reason we’re not supportive of them” (Bradsher, 2004).

policy, the opponents on the domestic front (i.e. the blue camp) dismissed the proposal as yet another election gambit but also heavily criticized it by warning against this “independence-by-stealth” approach, i.e. moving one more inch toward independence. Dropping the proper noun “China” in, for example, the Taiwanese airline company “China Airlines,” which the green argue the foreign community confuses with airline carriers from the PRC, is, as the blue alliance has it, tantamount to gradual de-sinicization of the island. However, it is argued within the green camp that choosing the term “Taiwan” over “R.O.C.” bears the advantage of reality and would be a sign of true pragmatism. The new title of convenience would not only prevent confusion, but could also offer Taiwan more manoeuvring room and open doors for representation in international organizations, such as the WHO.

It has to be acknowledged that this name rectification issue is far from new. Changing the designation of the island’s overseas offices has been subject of negotiations with the host countries for many years but used to be an extremely low-key affair, without much fanfare not to ruffle Beijing’s feathers. Similarly, the R.O.C. English-language government publications have gradually changed their titles from “the Free China Journal/Review” to “Taipei Journal/Review” to eventually “Taiwan Journal/Review” over the last five years. (Lams, 2006a: 253-57). Official changes in naming strategy were introduced gradually in the second half of the last decade, first without much debate but by 2001 the political climate was considered ripe enough for this topic to be openly discussed even at government level.

Situational Context Utterer/ Interpreter

Our focus on context also requires a look into the situational process of reporting, in particular the ideological and cultural environment within which the news workers operate. The following lines sketch some brief background

information on ownership, publishers, and copy writers of the three papers under investigation and look into their presumed readership.⁵

The *China Post*, the *Taiwan News* and the *Taipei Times* are the main English-language papers published on a daily basis in Taiwan. Just as the Chinese-language dailies are linked to political parties ideologically, if not organizationally (Lo, *et al.*, 2005), the English-language press has its partisan affiliations. The *China Post* has been owned and published by the “mainlander” family Huang,⁶ with a strong KMT background, since it was founded in 1952. The *Taiwan News* was formerly called the *China News* (Lams, 2006b: 147), which since its first publication in 1949 was owned by the “mainlander” family Wei until it was taken over by a large food conglomerate with a strong Taiwanese identity, a process that took from 1997 to 1999. This name change bears witness to the localization or “Taiwan consciousness” process (Lams, 2006a: 261; Lams, 2006b: 148) getting a strong foothold from the mid-90s onwards. In 1999, a new contender in the field, the *Taipei Times*, was launched and is owned by the founder of its sister publication, *Liberty Times*, one of the top Chinese-language dailies, widely believed to be invested with a “pro-Taiwan” ideology.

As to sources of news stories, the *China Post* most often uses wire stories for their international news coverage and for domestic news relies more frequently than the other two papers on foreign journalists. The other two papers employ more local news writers, especially the *Taipei Times*, which has assembled a team of Taiwanese reporters with overseas experience and who fully understand the complexity of political and social life in Taiwan. The *China Post* focuses strongly on foreign news, in particular from the U.S., and relegates

⁵ More extensive information on the English-language press in Taiwan is provided in Lams (2004).

⁶ The term “Mainlander” here refers to the immigrants from mainland China since 1945, when the KMT retreated to Taiwan after losing the mainland in the civil war to the Communist Party.

its local news to the last page. This contrasts sharply with the *Taipei Times* and the *Taiwan News*, which print their local news on the first pages of the newspaper.

A crucial question deals with the reception side of the journalistic practice. Exact figures of readership are hard to find and those provided by publishers are usually inflated. Judging from the papers' diverging ideological messages, we argue that they are all trying to present a certain social order or ideology to the foreign community in the R.O.C. and abroad so as to shape foreign opinion. Of particular relevance to the present case study, however, is the fact that the majority of this foreign readership does not belong to the voting constituency. Judging from the saliency of the three papers' discursive participation in electoral campaigning activities, it must be concluded that a dual readership, local Taiwanese citizens as well as foreign nationals, is targeted.

Textual Analysis Narratives

The analysis is divided into two main sections, the first one dealing with the campaigning period from the day President Chen's name rectification plan was pronounced (7-11/12). The second part analyzes the post-electoral period, in particular the way the poll results were framed (12-15/12).

Pre-Electoral Campaign Coverage

Perloff (1998) sees an election campaign as a conversation among the political elite, the media, and the citizens about the future of the nation. This transactional process can be understood as exchanges of influences among various agenda-setters (Min, 2004: 192) Palmaru (2005) argues that election campaigns are primarily communication campaigns, in that the distribution of political information prior to elections constitute an important part of the struggle for power. Following these arguments, a central research question in

this paper revolves around the question whether and how the Taiwanese English-language dailies take part in the pre-election campaign by presenting some particular issues in a way that caters to their own presumed reader constituencies. Can we observe any frantic attempt to steer voting behavior or do the papers present a balanced and in-depth analysis of all parties' manifestoes, candidates' platforms and/or other electoral issues? Do the papers show any signs of panic in issuing warnings (or less conspicuously and more indirectly publishing informative reports) about the competitive edge an opponent might already have according to opinion polls? This is what we might call indirect campaigning. Alternatively, do the dailies participate in negative campaigning by reporting candidates' discrediting of opponents? Is any caution urged by making projections about a future, possibly dangerous, political constellation when the opponent is given a popular mandate? Creating panic by highlighting certain schisms within a society about political ideologies and other polarizing issues such as identity and ethnicity allegiances can be a tactic to evoke a certain sentiment of crisis in order to influence voting behavior especially of swing voters.

Very much related to the above questions in that it presents the reverse side of the same coin is the following query: is there any manic enthusiasm from the part of the news workers to evoke a sense of discursive community and loyalty by giving ample forum to public statements of their favorite candidate(s) or party representatives and by using particular discursive strategies to disseminate ideological messages of their preferred political party?

Amplifying Panic

In this section we make a distinction between indirect campaigning versus negative campaigning. One way of engaging in the former type is creating a sense of last minute crisis stemming from electoral experts' estimations as well as opinion polls about chances of securing seats per constituency. Negative campaigning, meanwhile, can be seen at work when ample news room is

provided to certain candidates who primarily discredit challengers rather than presenting a clear platform and focusing on particular issues of concern for the voters. Besides mudslinging, negative campaigning can also be cast in the form of cautionary notes about future political chaos in the case of a victory for the adversary.

1. Indirect Campaigning

Even though all three papers print detailed information about chances of so-called frontrunners (popular incumbents) and weaker candidates with little name recognition or newcomers (with parties' instructions on how to follow the vote allocation schemes), it is especially the *Taiwan News* which can be said to excel in creating panic or issuing warnings about the estimated chances of their favorite party (DPP) and those of the main competitors in the legislative race (pan-blue alliance). These warnings are usually cast in a seemingly neutral informative report, which, nonetheless, has the surplus value of providing all the elements needed for the voters to help them "save" a particular candidate who is reported to be on the borderline.

Throughout our sampling pre-electoral period (December 7-11) the *TN* prints news articles spreading a sense of crisis not only in the pan-green camp but also amidst the pan-blue alliance. The vote allocation scheme issued by the KMT is not only reported to be a sign of their desperate thrust for a maximum of seats but is also said to put greater pressure on the pan-green ticket. Only the *TN* publishes a series of articles over several days which give a clear survey of the most hotly contested seats in the following constituencies: two Taipei districts where "green needs to win 16 seats to secure a legislative majority"—these districts are said to be holding the "decisive votes" and the pan-blue camp is said to be fighting hard (Shih, 2004a; Shih, 2004b); Chiayi city, where the TSU/NPSU might siphon supporters away from the DPP (Wang, 2004c), Nantou County, where the blue camp has a stronghold (Wang, 2004c), and Changhua as well as Taichung City and County (Wang, 2004a). Once again, the

DPP is reported to “urge trust in their vote allocating system” in Taichung, where four candidates have to be “saved” (Wang, 2004d). The *TN* also creates panic by printing reports of KMT vote-buying in Yunlin county, which reduces chances for the green ticket (Wang, 2004b). Ample forum is provided to the Taitung County Magistrate, who urged constituents to vote for the DPP, which is “very important to upgrade Taitung infrastructural projects” (Lu, 2004). In Hualien, where the competition is said to be chaotic, the incumbent DPP lawmaker reportedly made a last-minute appeal to be saved from loss (Lu, 2004). On the last day before the polls on Dec.11, the *TN* prints an article with the message that a DPP victory in Tainan is “important to save President Chen’s face,” as this is his hometown. Again the outcome is said to depend on how voters follow the vote allocation instructions (Tsai, 2004).

Besides detailing instructions on how to follow the vote allocation schemes to avoid major setbacks for the preferred alliance, other warnings are also issued. For example, on the 11/12, the *TN* points at the DPP overnomination of candidates in some areas, statistics which forecast that neither camp will win and the fact that President Chen’s popularity might not transfer to DPP legislative candidates. All these elements may serve as indirect awareness raisers that every vote will count to help the green camp win a legislative majority.

2. Negative Campaigning

Our findings indicate that caution is urged in all three papers by making bold projections about a foreseeable disastrous political future of instability and chaos if the opponent wins the ballot. In addition, all dailies participate in negative campaigning by reporting and participating in candidates’ verbal assaults on each other.

For the *China Post*, the most salient powerful means to deter voters from electing candidates of the pan-green camp is the “China threat.” For the *Taipei*

Times and *Taiwan News*, doom lies in a pan-blue victory promising continued political gridlock in the Legislative Yuan.

Constant warnings about the China threat if Taiwan abandons the official goal of unification and declares independence tend to form a recurrent pattern in the *China Post*, already pointed at in our former analysis of the Hong Kong handover coverage in 1997.⁷ The *CP* subscribes to the idea of threat as propagated by the KMT, which has been brandishing the weapon of imminent danger to national security ever since General Chiang Kai-shek retreated to the island of Taiwan. This particularly powerful weapon continues to be useful for the current generation of KMT leaders, who are fighting to preserve a thin majority in parliament, and to reclaim their lost executive power from the current ruling party. The P.R.C. has indeed given them cause to worry given its annual increasing military expenditure and number of missiles aimed at Taiwan. Moreover, Beijing's repeated warnings and the anti-secession law passed by the NPC in March 2005 are intended to instil a sense of fear in the Taiwanese population.

Whereas the green camp tends to downplay the China threat during that particular electoral period, the blue alliance uses it as a tool to discourage the electorate from "helping President Chen to damage the hope on survival of the nation" (*China Post*, 2004a: 4) and to consolidate voter support for their own candidates. Playing the China threat card serves to convince the Taiwanese citizens as well as the foreign community that President's Chen's push for constitutional reform and name rectification are moves that provoke Beijing and are inherently detrimental to peace and stability in the region. The sense of threat, as presented in the *CP*, escalates through recurrent warnings against an explicit declaration of independence. By conjoining the two notions, the *CP* frames Taiwan independence as an imminent threat in virtually every single news article, comment and editorial of the sampling period, including the post-

⁷ Lams, L., op.cit.

electoral coverage. Hence, the China threat represents the most dominant theme in the *CP* narratives. In fact, the following equation is constructed: voting for the green camp equals Taiwan independence, which means Chinese invasion and devastating conflict (*China Post*, 2004b: 4). Even the U.S. is said to worry about Chen's "provocative" commissive speech acts, such as the promise to rectify names of overseas missions and state-owned enterprises and to update the R.O.C. Constitution to present-day realities. Several articles mention the reaction of A. Ereli, U.S. State Department's spokesman, against Chen Shui-bian's name rectification proposal as this would mean a unilateral change of the status-quo. The Taiwanese president's so-called "defiance" of this cautionary advice from Washington and the warnings from Beijing is constantly foregrounded in the *CP*.

Time and again, the discursive construction of this China threat equation is debunked by the *Taipei Times* and the *Taiwan News*, which go through great effort to undermine this framing practice, not only in editorials but also in news articles quoting official sources claiming that changing the name of overseas missions does not equal changing the official designation of the nation and that the president has vowed to adhere to the promises made in his inaugural speech, which are outlined in a news article by the *TN* on 10/12 about a press conference by the DPP Secretary-General, Chang Chun-hsiung. Chang is further quoted as stating: "As a leader, Chen has to coordinate diverging opinions and he takes a responsible approach." In addition, the large forum given to official sources indicates that the *TN* endorses the official position.

As to the warnings about the future in the *Taipei Times* and *Taiwan News*, both papers issue gloomy projections and warnings of continued political gridlock and partisan rivalry in the parliament if a pan-blue alliance retains a legislative majority. They forecast that Lien Chan's proposal that the winning party should form a new Cabinet will cause a constitutional crisis. A headline (with subheading) at the top of a front page article in the 8/12 *TT* issue reads:

“Chen blasts Lien’s ‘Cabinet’ idea/Destruction: green majority needed to make much needed reforms and ensure blue doesn’t wreak havoc with country,’ Chen said.” The article gives a large forum to President Chen, outlining five crises “that would continue to plague Taiwan if green fails to win.” The same warning features in a headline on the front page of the *TN* 8/12 issue: “Pan-blue victory to bring 5 crises, says president/ Chen warns of 2 governments in 1 country.” Lien Chan’s proposal is interpreted as an indication of continued intimidation and boycotting of government policies.

The *China Post* directs its attacks against President and DPP chair, Chen Shui-bian, as well as his entire green administration, whereas the other two papers target their arrows against KMT chair Lien Chan, PFP chair James Soong, and the pan-blue legislators in general.⁸ It feels like the *Taipei Times* and *Taiwan News* still have old scores to settle in highlighting the wounds of Taiwan history inflicted on the local population by the former KMT regime. Both papers print antagonistic portrayals of the outgroup (i.e. pan-blue alliance and China).

The *China Post* constructs the negative “other” through selective quotations, reverberating KMT positions in line with perceived semantic roles, with negative agency to the villain, and a preponderance of denigrating comments, descriptions and negative attributes for the incumbent President Chen and former President Lee. Interpretive framing of both personalities contain overtly monolithic identifications of the “perpetrator” and are meant to make readers adopt a negative attitude towards them. The most salient indicator of this evaluative framing process is the fixed epithet “independent-minded” or “pro-independence” preceding many references to President Chen.

President Chen is criticized in the *China Post* for a plethora of reasons, but

⁸ For an illustration, see *Taipei Times* (2004a: 8) which constitutes an indictment of Lien Chan’s unconstitutional proposal to form the Cabinet if pan-blue wins the elections.

around this electoral period, two issues stand out: (1) Chen's last minute campaign proposal of name rectification as well as his vow to make the R.O.C. Constitution more consistent with modern-day realities in Taiwan. As said above, both moves have been framed by the opponents as tantamount to a declaration of independence (see introductory contextualization); (2) the "suspicious" circumstances of Chen's presidential re-election on March 20, 2005.

Examples can be found across the different genres of narratives: news stories, features, comments and editorials. To exemplify the first disparagement, we refer to a news article on 7/12, in which a KMT legislator is quoted depicting the "shrewd" electoral campaign as a "sophomoric scheme" used by Chen to "fool" Taiwan voters. In the editorial of the same day Chen is called "a separatist pursuing non-Chinese statehood," which promises a "military showdown to break the status quo sooner or later." Even Washington is censured for "conniving at Chen's insistence on more trappings of statehood and for having given Chen a free hand to provoke China and whip up separatist sentiments." Both Lee Teng-hui and Chen are called "reckless leaders" as they do not endorse the "one China" principle. In a comment in the same day's issue, Chen is attacked for not repairing the cross-strait relations and for his excessive military spending proposal.⁹

Chen's credibility is further undermined when in a report about a KMT press conference, KMT chair Lien Chan gets the floor in defending his proposal to replace the Premier should the blue alliance win the elections. Even though the Constitution does not allow parliament to make up the Cabinet as Taiwan does not have a parliamentary system, which is an argument brought forward by

⁹ The Chen administration deems this arms procurement deal with the US critical for defensive purposes. It claims that the proposed purchase also serves to prove to the US that Taiwan is willing to invest in its own defence (an issue which was being questioned in some US circles). The bill has been blocked several times by the pan-blue majority in the Legislative Yuan as it is perceived to be overpriced in times of economic recession.

Chen Shui-bian and highlighted in both the *TN* and the *TT*, the *CP* still preserves ample news room to Lien Chan's comment on Chen's "verbal attacks" concerning the Cabinet proposal in the following question: "Can the president refuse to respect a parliamentary majority?" The negative connotational value of the verb "refuse" combines with the semantic role of agent attributed to Chen.

Quite significantly, when the *Taipei Times* and the *Taiwan News* report the same press conference, other quotes by the same news actor are chosen. In the *TT*, Lien Chan is reported to remain "low key on the question about the controversial call for a new Cabinet." The *TN* does not report this part of the press conference but focuses on how Lien Chan defends the KMT campaign strategy (i.e. conservative nominating policy and vote dividing scheme) against criticism from PFP, KMT and NP candidates. A sense of crisis is apparent in Lien Chan's argument, "the KMT has no choice but to try out a measure to capture as many seats as possible." The *TT* also refers to Lien's statement that this particular KMT campaign strategy to check Chen's "recklessness" is the reason for his guarded optimism about a blue victory. The keyed form "recklessness" indicates editorial distancing from the quote itself.

Lien Chan's reference to KMT strategy is missing in the *China Post's* coverage of this press conference, as his attacks on Chen take precedence, for example: "The elections will give a chance to take a no-confidence vote on Chen" and further accusations insinuating that Chen is an illegitimate president. The editorial of the next day, headlined "Chen losing trust of a long-time ally" once again focuses on Chen as a devotee of Taiwan independence. In a news report on 10/12 about a DPP press conference, analysts remark that "Chen's aggressive strategy might fetch dividends, but alarm China and Washington." The same day's editorial describes the president as a "populist by calling for people to back his politically charged rectification plan and to be undaunted by all opposition from Washington and Beijing."

The second reason why the pan-blue opposition (and therefore the *CP*, which reverberates its ideological perspective) frantically lashes out at President Chen is its doubt about the legitimacy of Chen's re-election as president on March 20, 2005. Indeed, the pan-blue camp has not yet accepted defeat and articles abound in the *CP* about the special Truth Commission set up to investigate the "mysterious" shooting event on the eve of the presidential election. Not a day goes by without a reference to the Truth Commission investigating the "mysterious" two bullets garnering Chen sympathy votes and the government's "boycotting" of its smooth operation. Chen is not only called a disloyal president for abandoning the "R.O.C." but he is also presented with the deprecatory epithets of the "bullet/lame duck" president.¹⁰

By contrast, the *Taipei Times* quotes former president Lee Teng-hui in a news article about the launch of a Chinese dissident's book "Value of Independence," taking the opportunity to pan the KMT for "manufacturing their own truth" (Huang, 2004a).

Manic Propagating of Favorite Party/ Ideology

Enthusiastic promotion of the paper's own political viewpoints is realized in various ways, for example by giving a special forum to upbeat political speeches of their favorite candidate(s) and by using particular discursive strategies to spread the political platform of their preferred party. This is clear in the rhetorical argumentation patterns of editorials and semiotic messages of illustrations and cartoons. Additionally, the reporting of favourable forecasts and opinion polls about their preferred party's chances also helps galvanize

¹⁰ Although the *China Post* (2004c, 4) does not venture into directly predicating these attributes to the President, two indirect references to these terms in consecutive paragraphs may resonate in the readers' minds. "He needs to rid himself of the infamous title 'bullet president' given to him by skeptics who allege that two mysterious bullets fired on him on election eve helped him win the presidency by a razor-thin, 0.22 percent margin"; "The president is seen as a lame duck" [author's mark].

people's support for the latter. This tactic tends to undermine the aforementioned strategy of creating panic in order to mobilize undecided voters to help save some borderline candidates. But as both strategies (creating panic and euphoria) are two sides of the same coin, they are utilized concurrently in all three papers albeit in different degrees.

All papers predict stability if their favorite party brings home the winning ticket. For example, the *China Post* argues that given the China threat in the case of a "green" victory and the fact that Beijing favors the pro-unification KMT and PFP parties, a blue legislative majority offers the best chances for stability and peace in the Taiwan Strait (*China Post*, 2004c: 4). The *Taipei Times* and the *Taiwan News*, by contrast, predict the end of legislative gridlock if the ruling party is also given a legislative majority. The *TN* gives considerable newsroom to the MAC chair, stating that a green majority will force China to deal with Taiwan and is therefore good for cross-strait relations. These are types of quotes which tend to debunk the China threat argument. A comment in the *TT* suggests that voting for green will serve the voters' interest best as this will be "conducive to promoting good governance, efficiency, stable party competition and a unified country under the theme 'Taiwan first'" (Liu, 2004).

Given their mission statement to bring the Taiwan story to the foreign community, the *Taipei Times* also frequently focuses on the media's role and features several articles not only condemning the local vernacular media outlets for being driven by press conferences and sensational news and for viewing news as a partisan affair to be controlled by the establishment, but especially criticizing the foreign media for being tools to be manipulated and for misrepresenting Taiwan's policies. Examples are provided of headlines and story leads in Reuters and AFP articles in a large *TT* feature on how "the GIO [Government Information Office] hurts Taiwan's image" (Bishop, 2004). The Reuters' headline of Aug 4 reads "Can Taiwanese Chen's provocation of China be stopped?" and the AFP story lead of Nov 22 goes as follows: "In a move

likely to anger China, Taiwan's president has vowed to push through a new constitution describing the island as an independent state and threatened to hold a referendum on Taiwan's future." The *TT* feature explains that President Chen did no such thing, but on the contrary vowed repeatedly not to address issues of sovereignty in the new constitution. Moreover, considering to hold a referendum on an issue such as "one country, two systems" is deemed to be a far cry from holding a referendum on independence. The same argument is repeated in a *TT*'s front page article quoting US scholars who, while commenting on the electoral results, cite the need to fight the foreign media's spin (Huang, 2004b).

Further examples of the "Taiwan first" ideological stance of the *TT* are its editorial on 13/12, a news article on 15/12, and two comments on 14/12. In a letter to the Editor, the *TT* gives news room to an Australian reader, who claims the term "R.O.C." has become irrelevant and refutes the KMT's complaint about "Chen's maneuver in his independence-by-stealth campaign." To this foreign reader, Chen's rectification plan is simply the DPP's way of erasing the fallacy that is the R.O.C.

Post-Electoral Result Coverage

This section examines whether there is continuity in ideological perspective of the three dailies once the electoral results are released. Do the papers adhere to positions defended in the pre-electoral period or can we observe more or less subtle shifts in perspective when the expected results did not meet the expectations? How is the electoral outcome perceived and presented? The following sections examine whether any "positive" result will prompt image reinforcement and perhaps lead to manic euphoria and, conversely, whether any electoral "setback" will be minimized in a panicky effort of image rebuilding and/or whether it will lead to introspective reflection of possible causes leading to this perceived defeat.

Reinforcing Image for the Ingroup by Maximizing Opponent's Setback

Our prime attention in this section goes to the *China Post* as it perceives and consequently portrays its favorite alliance to have won the elections. The other two papers, which diverge from the *CP* in their interpretation of the result, are dealt with in this section for comparative reasons only.

1. Manically Blowing Up Victory for “Us” and Defeat for “Them”

Labeling the poll results as a “victory” for the opposition and “defeat” for the ruling party sets the tone for the *China Post's* interpretation of the results. Lien Chan is said to be calling the elections a “triumph for the R.O.C./KMT.” When comparing the *CP's* headline on the front page of 12/12: “Opposition wins majority in poll/Pan-blue grabs 114 seats; President Chen concedes defeat after DPP wins 101 seats” with the top headline of the *Taipei Times* “Pan-blues retain majority” and the *Taiwan News* “Pan-blues retain majority,” the difference between the terms “win” and “retain” stands out.

The framing of the result in the *CP* rests on its interpretation in terms of divergence from expected figures and is thus not anchored on absolute figures. The latter, indicating a decrease of “blue” seats in comparison with the previous LY election outcome and a gain of the majority of seats as well as the largest vote percentage by a single party, the DPP, are neglected in the *CP*. Nevertheless, considering the green camp's anticipated projections, the result can be viewed as a “failure to meet its expectations” for the DPP. Essential here is the additional specification of what constitutes the object of the failure. Whereas the *CP* does not specify this object, the other two papers, who diverge from the *CP* in their interpretation of the result, draw the attention to this particular object of failure. The *CP's* overlexicalization of terms belonging to the semantic field of “defeat” exemplifies the editorial perception and framing of the results for the pan-green alliance (*China Post*, 2004d). In the rare occasions where the DPP's gain is actually mentioned, like in the front page

news article on 13/12, this gain is evaluated with the belittling term “only.”

Constructing the significance of the outcome as the popular will saying “No to Chen, Yes to China, and Yes to the pro-status quo of pan-blue” gives the *CP* more legitimacy and renewed strength to amplify its negative portrayal of Chen and his DPP administration. The red thread of “Chen vilification” and “China threat” running through the pre-electoral coverage continues to be woven into the post-election narratives. In all four editorials, accusatory remarks against Chen and Lee Teng-hui prevail.

We note a marked contrast between the *China Post* and the *Taipei Times* when discussing Chen’s resignation as DPP chairman in their editorials on 15/12 (*China Post*, 2004e: 4; *Taipei Times*, 2004b: 8). Whereas the *CP* posits that he offered his resignation under pressure, the *TT* applauds Chen’s gesture to step down and is called a model personality for his political accountability. The same message is reverberated in the 15/12 editorial of the *TN*, which sets up the president’s courageous determination in the face of electoral setback against other leaders who have refused to concede successive defeats (i.e. Lien Chan and James Soong) (*Taiwan News*, 2004a: 6). In the *TN* front page article on 14/12 Chen is said to have insisted on taking full responsibility for the defeat and on 15/12 it is reported that some city and county mayors oppose his resignation. A front page article in the *TT* on 15/12 reports that Chen has realized he “had to serve as a president belonging to all of the people and willing to reconcile with the opposition parties” (Huang, 2004). The divergence between descriptive frameworks of Chen in the *TT/TN* and the *CP* is particularly striking.

2. Reflecting on Factors Leading to Poll Outcome

The *China Post* does not proffer its own analysis until the second day after the elections and even then do opinions of foreign analysts, especially U.S. scholars, and foreign media reports earn primacy over analyses by local

politicians, think tanks and academia. In fact, the emphasis on the figure of Chen precludes any in-depth analysis of other factors contributing to the voters' decisions. In the *CP* editorial on the first day after the elections, Chen is said to have made two faux pas: ordering the name change and defying Washington as well as alienating the R.O.C.'s diplomatic friends. In an article on the next day entitled "DPP's poor showing due to overconfidence: analysis" a new explanation of the final outcome, namely overconfidence, is introduced but not without giving floor to foreign analysts reiterating the DPP's overly radical platform with the destabilizing name change campaign theme and the TSU's extremist image.

A comment on that day, entitled "New poll deals Chen a serious blow" casts the elections as a choice between blue and the pro-independence cause, thus starting from a taken-for-granted premise about the green cause, which is simply equated with independence. The blame for the DPP's setback is entirely put on President Chen throughout the newspaper's post-electoral coverage. Presenting this result as his personal defeat, as an interpretive article on 13/12 illustrates (Hung, 2004), reinforces the blue camp's doubts about Chen's presidential victory in March. Current defeat is taken as a proof the president received last-minute sympathy votes in his bid for the presidency. The same interpretive article further states that "result *shows* that Chen pushed the envelope too far by calling for too much de-sinicization" [authors' mark]. The verb "show" is a more outright statement than the tentative alternative "suggest." Chen is said to have scared not only his own electorate, but also Beijing and Washington with his proposal for a new Constitution and the name rectification. The *CP* thus foregrounds its interpretation of the electoral result as the electorate's rejection of the green agenda. Only one comment on 13/12 in the *CP*'s post-electoral sampling period hints at another reason for the pan-blue's victory, viz. the effective use of electoral tactics, rather than an actual enlargement of the blue power base (Fang, 2004: 4). Precisely this argument is foregrounded in the other papers, which also quote KMT officials advancing the

same analysis.

Restoring Image by Minimizing Ingroup Setback and Outgroup Success

In contrast with the previous paragraphs, this subpart discusses how the *Taipei Times* and the *Taiwan News* interpret the outcome, considering their preferred alliance did not gain a legislative majority as anticipated. When one takes the target as standard to evaluate performance, the green camp can be said to have suffered a serious blow. The following two subsections outline how both papers depict the results in their attempt to recover damage and probe into the factors determining the outcome.

1. Frantically Playing Down Defeat for “Us” and Victory for “Them”

Both the *Taipei Times* and the *Taiwan News* argue that the social base for DPP support has remained strong, which they view as a sign that DPP is becoming more firmly entrenched in Taiwan’s mainstream. It is frequently pointed out that the DPP remains the largest party in the LY. On the micro-syntactical as well as macro rhetorical level, we note that the green “success” is often fronted before other sentence components or at the beginning of the text or paragraph (*Taipei Times*, 2004c: 8). This strategy obviously undermines any “blue” attempt to claim victory. Meanwhile, the paper refrains from casting the result for the DPP in terms of defeat. The subtitle of the *TT* front page story on 12/12 reads: “DPP gained two seats, well short of its pre-electoral hopes and conceded last night.” The green camp thus only falls short of its ambitions of gaining a legislative majority. Therefore, the noun phrase “poorer than expected performance” is preferred to the debatable term “defeat” with its negative connotation.

Findings of the textual analysis suggest that the *Taiwan News* accounts follow this particular interpretation of the poll results, in choice of news sources as well as in metapragmatic framing. For example, a quote of DPP Secretary

General Chang Chun-shiung in a news article on 15/12 shows that the result should be considered “not as good as expected and could not be considered a defeat nor said to be a major blue victory” (Engbarth, 2004b). While in a front page news article of the *TN* on 15/12 about Chen’s resignation as DPP chair the president admits that “not achieving the anticipated result is a loss” (Engbarth, 2004a), another article in the 12/12 issue carries the headline “DPP calls LY election result a ‘failure’” (Wang, 2004e), where this very interpretation is metapragmatically undermined by the inverted commas. In addition, fronting lexical terms with positive connotations (e.g. “strengthening its legislative clout,” “remaining the largest party,” “winning a majority of votes”) is a strategy to highlight the DPP’s accomplishment.

Conversely, the success of the opponent is minimized by framing it as a “slight” majority, the impact of which should “not be exaggerated” (*Taiwan News*, 2004b: 4). Furthermore, on 12/12 the *TN* writes that the KMT victory comes at the expense of its partner, the PFP, which lost several seats. Therefore, the end result for the pan-blue alliance is said to be a loss of one seat. The poll outcome is interpreted as an indication that people want moderation. Hence, the *TN* argues against extreme advocacy of sensitive issues, such as sovereignty, “which need to be launched when time is ripe and in a more subtle way to resist annexation by China” (*Taiwan News*, 2004b: 4).

Concerning the post-electoral portrayal of the “other,” The *TN* and the *TT* join the *CP* in continuing their pre-electoral discursive practice of discrediting the opponent. Their scapegoats are still the chairmen of the opposition camp, KMT chair Lien Chan and PFP chair James Soong. Time and again, Lien Chan is condemned for not accepting defeat in the presidential election, for being power-thirsty and refusing to resign from his KMT chairmanship, for inciting ethnic divisions, and for proposing an unconstitutional Cabinet reshuffle. The former KMT-regime as well as the current blue legislators keep being depicted negatively, as a *TT* editorial on 13/12 demonstrates in its outspoken dismissive

appellations such as “thugs, thieves, fraudsters” whom a “disappointing majority casts their votes for” (*Taipei Times*, 2004d: 8). This sentiment is echoed in the *TN* editorial on the same day (*Taiwan News*, 2004c: 7). A determining factor in the feeling of frustration with the five-decade long KMT regime has been the so-called unlawful way in which the KMT’s assets have been accumulated, i.e. their “black gold” and fraudulent corruption practices. This is yet another theme often repeated in both papers’ post-electoral reports. Unsurprisingly a news article in the *CP* on 15/12 metapragmatically undermines the portrayal of these assets as “allegedly” “inappropriately” obtained by the use of distancing quotation marks (*China Post*, 2004f: 20). The *CP* actually reports the contrary, viz. the KMT is said to now have financial woes. The *TT* and *TN* also level criticism against the KMT by letting James Soong vent his anger at the so-called KMT’s failure to honor its cooperation accord with the PFP. The *CP*’s narrative, on the contrary, preserves negative agency for the PFP instead.

Concerning forecasts about the local impact of the elections, all three papers wonder whether some items on the legislative agenda will now remain mired in the partisan gridlock, as they foresee continued animosity and mistrust between the two camps. However, only the *TT* and the *TN* focus in great detail on the current 33 bills that need to be passed in the last LY session of its term. Some of these relate to major construction projects, but also to more sensitive issues such as ill-gotten party assets and the weapons procurement bill. The latter concerns a proposal of arms purchase from the US, which the government says is badly needed for its national defence but has been blocked repeatedly by the blue LY majority. Much as the two papers prefer to move on to the reporting of every-day issues of concerns for the local population, the *CP* prefers to start dreaming about the remote future, i.e. the next chances for the KMT to recapture power in the 2005 mayoral elections, 2007 LY polls and 2008 presidential elections.

One more significant difference between the *CP* and the other two papers lies in reporting a seminar hosted by the Formosa Foundation where Taiwan was urged to rebuild trust with the USA. Whereas the *CP* insists that the US distrust was caused by Chen's controversial name change plan, the other two papers quote arguments of U.S. scholars explaining the annoyance of Washington in terms of the gridlock on the arms procurement bill. Again this contrast between the papers fits the general picture of diverging ideological positions sketched so far.

2. Reflecting on Factors Leading to Poll Outcome

Whilst the *Taipei Times* offers a more balanced coverage of all voices in the news reports on the first day after the election (with a clear distinction between arguments of "the winners" and "the losers," each receiving a full page spread), the *Taiwan News* reserves its first-day coverage of the results for quotes of the green camp, which contrasts significantly with the *China Post's* focus on quotes of the blue alliance, apart from the foreign observers' analysis. As from the second day, however, a better balance of perspectives in the news reports appears in the *TN*.

Introspective reflection about the green camp's erroneous tactics as likely causes for the result as well as excuses can be found in both papers (*TN+TT*). A variety of variables affecting performance are provided in the *TN* editorials of 12 to 14/12. This makes a difference with the *CP*, which prefers to adopt a primarily ideological view of the result while disregarding the complexity of factors involved in LY elections. The variables range from the complexity of the LY electoral system (*Taipei Times*, 2004c: 8), erroneous campaign tactics, success of vote allocation strategy for the opponent (Hsu, 2004: 1), voter fatigue (*Taipei Times*, 2004c: 8), to the perceived DPP's inability to mobilize its moderate backers due to Chen's last minute electoral strategy (Engbarth, 2004b). Chen is believed to have stirred a sense of crisis by stressing sensitive and high-profile ideological issues related to national identity and sovereignty.

As campaign issues these were deemed to be too extreme. “More subtle methods are needed to defend Taiwan sovereignty and resist annexation by China” (*Taiwan News*, 2004d: 7).

Further reasons are said to be the failure to forecast KMT’s strong networks at grassroots level and vote-buying in southern and rural districts (*Taiwan News*, 2004b: 4; *Taiwan News*, 2004c: 7). According to the TSU chairman, cited in the *TN* on 12/12, the LY election is only a local election, whereby most candidates are chosen on the basis of their close relations with the people.¹¹ As such, the result has nothing to do with what ideology is most widely accepted by the people. Other arguments point at an ineffective crackdown on electoral fraud and the KMT’s last-minute promises to pass nine major bills on legal and economic reforms (Hsu, 2004). In addition, rallies “are said to have been overwhelmed” with the star personalities of the President and Vice-President at the expense of local candidates. Further reasons include voters’ disappointment because DPP government has not sufficiently realized the aspirations of long-time supporters in terms of promoting social equity and redressing injustices from authoritarian KMT regime (*Taiwan News*, 2004c: 7) as well as a misreading of Chen’s slogan and mixing it up with the TSU’s more extreme campaign issue to rectify the official designation of the country (Lin, 2004). Finally, “the green camp is said to have misjudged the difference between a presidential election, revolving around symbolic issues of identity politics and a legislative election,” focusing on bread-and-butter basics. (*Taipei Times*, 2004d: 8). Therefore, especially the *TN* perceives the rectification issue as an inappropriate campaign theme and as “source of failure to secure majority win” (Wang, 2004f). Unlike in the *CP*, no indication was found that the *TN* argues against rectification as such. In several news articles and editorials alike, its perception on this matter is that there is no need for a public approach on the

¹¹ This argument was also advanced by several people during vox-pop interviews with the author (Dec. 2004).

issue, “given the country’s past success in quietly changing official names or promoting civil groups to participate in international organizations under the name ‘Taiwan’” (quote DPP legislator in Wang, 2004f).

This sudden spotlight on the name rectification campaign issue once the results are out demonstrates a change in the attention the *TN* gives to this theme prior to the elections. Yet, this does not mean that the *TN* adopts an ideologically different perspective. Its pre-electoral editorials already argued in favour of moderation, but the *TN* initially refrained from giving this rectification issue explicit emphasis, probably preferring to remain on the fence.

Spending a sizeable amount of news room on all of the above variables determining voter behavior and poll outcome suggests that both the *TT* and the *TN* provide a more in-depth analysis than the *CP*, even though arguments of image reinforcement for the green camp tend to prevail. That the *CP* is nonetheless also aware of these contentions will be proven in the following subsection on debunking the opponent’s claims. It can be concluded that the *CP* deliberately chooses to highlight its own interpretive framework, as the poll outcome indeed offers a long-awaited chance for those harboring ideological allegiances with the blue camp to claim that its platform carries popular support.

Conclusion

Our findings sustain the argument that facts and interpretation in election reporting are freely mixed. According to Patterson, “interpretation provides the themes and the facts illustrate it. The theme is primary; the facts are secondary” (Patterson, 1993: 67). By foregrounding election results in metaphorical “win/lose” game terms, media coverage presents interpretations rather than giving the bare election figures themselves. In this sense, politics are framed as a strategic game rather than as a debate on issues, which are merely

presented as political tokens in the struggle for power (Patterson, 2000). In the *China Post's* pre-electoral coverage, the newspaper's ongoing vilification of Chen and its choice of strongly loaded terms with negative connotation amass to convey a scary sense of crisis in the case of a green victory scenario. In its post-electoral narratives, the paper presents Chen's electoral strategy as having stirred a sense of crisis by stressing sensitive ideological issues related to national identity. Voters are presented as having been frightened by Chen's bold statements about achieving a distinct Taiwan identity and changing the denotational label for Taiwan's overseas representative offices and state-owned enterprises. For the *CP*, Chen's radical de-sinification agenda has alienated middle voters. The name rectification issue also takes center stage in the *Taipei Times*, but, contrary to the *CP*, it is adamantly defended throughout the corpus. The *Taiwan News* reserves judgement on this issue until the second day after the elections, when the theme pops up in the electoral results' analyses as one of the major factors contributing to the electoral setback for the green camp. However, both the *TT* and *TN* invoke public support for Chen's rectification plan and publish several illustrations of laborers protesting in favor of this name change, even before Chen launched his proposal.

In general, what this study demonstrates is that the three English-language papers in Taiwan participate in the LY campaigning process and highlight a preferred ideological perspective in their analysis of the poll results in line with their pre-electoral stance. By trying to steer voters in a certain direction during the pre-electoral period, especially in the editorials, the three papers must deem the local Taiwanese audience, constituting a part of their hybrid readership, at least as important as their other presumed reception channel, the foreign community, which is not part of the voter constituency.

Judging from the many quotes of political actors' speeches during press conferences and mediatized campaign rallies, it is clear that the latter are using the media to influence voting behavior. The study thus demonstrates a

symbiotic relationship between politics and journalism. Both news makers and news workers need and use each other. Although the three papers under investigation can be said to adhere to the journalistic rule that accusations are followed by an opportunity to counter them, they all tend to give more prominence to those sources congruent with their own preferred ideological orientation. In other words, the papers seek to combine their editorial partisanship with the arena role of the media in the marketplace (Allern, 2007) in giving some news space to major political adversaries, only these do not all get the same treatment.

Whereas the ideological line of the *China Post* clearly follows a KMT, pro-Chinese (re)unification stance, the *Taiwan News* defends perspectives taken by the DPP. On the surface, the *Taipei Times* seems to give a more balanced coverage of all news players in their news articles, yet it also engages in ideologically inspired framing practices. Its coverage is based on a Taiwan-centric, anti-KMT and anti-Chinese identity. The focus of the *TT* on local Taiwan politics is also reflected in its extensive use of domestic journalists and sources, emphasis on local observers' analysis of the elections, positioning of local news in front of the newspaper in contrast with the *CP*, which relegates local news to its last page and uses agency services and foreign reporters more extensively.¹² The emphasis in the *CP* lies more strongly on foreign affairs, in particular the U.S. and this is illustrated in its first day's coverage of the poll results, which zoom in exclusively on foreign observers' comments, besides Lien Chan's reactions.

¹² During a dialogue with Prof. Stephan Feuchtwang at the author's lecture at the London School of Economics (28 Feb. 2008), Feuchtwang wondered whether these media, because of their keen interest in foreign perspectives on Taiwan, might well perform as a "self-manufactured mirror," in which the Taiwanese society is recognized in the way these media want it to be recognized. Hence, trawling foreign agency reports, even about news in Taiwan, could give them a reassurance in the face of Taiwan anxiety about its place in the international order.

A common strategy in the three papers can be found in their macro-structural marginalization of themes that are deemed ideologically divergent from their partisan line. In addition, the opponent's point of view is often criticized or explicitly debunked, indicating a high degree of metapragmatic awareness of discursive power in framing social reality. Where the *CP* portrays a blue majority in parliament as a welcome counterbalance to the reckless Chen administration, the pan-blue legislative majority is presented in the *TT* and *TN* as obstructing the DPP government policies.

Besides a convergence between the three papers in adopting structural discursive strategies, this study identified only one point in common concerning content, viz. strong criticism of the weak political campaigning, said to be rhetoric-heavy, missing any constructive and clear proposals. The three papers strongly condemn the contenders' inflammatory statements and mudslinging at each other as well as the use of ideologically divisive and the use of ideologically divisive topics as campaign themes at the expense of bread-and-butter issues voters care about.

To conclude, the three newspapers take part in priming public opinion and steering voter behavior through indirect and negative campaigning and using interpretive frames to analyze poll results. They thus engage in the same discursive practices of the candidates and their supporters on the campaign trail, which they so adamantly criticize. Is the pot calling the kettle black?

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促生驚懼抑或鼓動狂熱——2004年台灣 國會選舉期間的地方英文報紙報導

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摘 要

全國性與地方性選戰的期間，可視為觀察政治人物、選民和大眾傳播媒體藉機強化所恃政治信念的絕佳時段。觀察世界各地政治選舉活動中，政客藉媒體來影響選民投票行為的情況，亦日趨相對顯要。作者係觀察前述現象，以2004年中華民國國會選舉前後為研究觀察採樣時段，選取台灣3家英文日報因不同意識形態立場，於選舉投票日前後所做選舉相關報導為研究材料。按照論述分析及語用學研究的方法，披露各家英文日報如何在各相逕庭的意識形態立場下，以新聞報導為體，一則在選前造勢支持特定對象；又，選後按意識形態立場的不同來分別解讀支持對象的選舉結果與意涵。再透過2004年12月台灣立院選舉投票日前後10日之採樣，分析3家英文報紙選舉事件報導中的新聞報導語用策略。

關鍵字：論述分析、競選活動、意識形態、新聞事件報導撰述、語用學研究、台灣英文報紙新聞報導