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DEMOCRATIZATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS IN TAIWAN

===== Shui-Yan Tang and
===== Ching-Ping Tang

During the past decade of democratization, Taiwan's ruling party, the KMT (Kuomintang), has encountered numerous political challenges, one of which is the environmental protest movement. Being the owner and promoter of many heavily polluting industries, the KMT regime has become the target of increasing numbers of environmental protests, many of which were supported by elected local officials and opposition parties. The regime attempted to use its informal client-based political machinery at the local level to resolve these conflicts. As illustrated in several case studies, these attempts succeeded in locations in which the regime's traditional political power remained intact but failed in those where such power had been eroded. This article contributes to the growing literature on democratization by (1) focusing not just on electoral politics but on how various groups participate in policy processes; (2) examining how national and local political processes interact to affect resource distribution and conflict resolution; and (3) illustrating how informal political institutions affect the evolution and functioning of formal democratic institutions.

Scholars paying close attention to the "third wave" of democratization may consider Taiwan an interesting case. Since the mid-1980s, Taiwan's Leninist authoritarian regime has taken steps to introduce democratic institutions and processes, beginning with granting legal status to opposition parties in 1986, followed by the lifting of martial law in 1987, open elections of the entire National Assembly and Legislative Yuan in 1991 and 1992, respectively, and

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the direct election of the President in 1996. The regime has also lifted most of its control on the media and abandoned most practices that restricted citizens' personal freedom and political rights. Such a peaceful retreat from authoritarianism is not unique given what has happened in other countries such as South Korea, but what is special about Taiwan is that during democratization, the ruling KMT Party has been able to maintain its power in most open elections. This represents a major exception to Huntington's observation that in the "third wave," almost all authoritarian regimes that tried to legitimize their de facto authority via open elections were eventually defeated by the ballot.¹

Many reasons can be cited for the KMT's continual success in maintaining power in spite of competition from opposition parties in open elections. One may, for example, attribute the KMT's success to its party organization, which has remained a formidable vote-gathering machine in both local and national elections.² Taiwan's continued economic success has also accorded a certain degree of legitimacy to KMT rule. Furthermore, recent threats from mainland China may also have convinced many voters that the KMT remains the only party that can help to avoid military confrontations with the mainland.³ Despite these favorable factors, KMT rule has encountered numerous challenges. First, the KMT itself has been internally divided along various factional and ideological lines, which sometimes made it difficult for the party to maintain a united front. Second, with substantial numbers of mayoral, magistrate, and local assembly seats occupied by members of opposition parties, the central government has increasingly found it difficult to secure local government cooperation in implementing its decisions. Third, there have been drastic increases in organized protests demanding that the KMT government address redistribution issues that were previously neglected, ranging from labor and consumer rights to environmental protection. While this can be interpreted as a result of political liberalization that allows for open airing of social frustration, the protests also represent a fundamental challenge to the KMT regime: How can the KMT adjust its political machin-

1. Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

2. Chen Ming-tong, *Pai-hsi cheng-chih yu Tai-wan cheng-chih pien ch'ien* [Faction politics and political transition in Taiwan] (Taipei: Yueh-tan Ch'u-pan-she, 1995).

3. The explanation can go deeper to the long-standing social and political cleavages in Taiwan, e.g., the cleavage between the pro-stability and pro-democratization viewpoints and that between those who want Taiwan to be an independent country and those who want it to be part of China. For how these and other cleavages have affected Taiwan's elections, see Wu Nai-teh, "She-hui fen-ch'i yu cheng-tan ching-cheng: Chieh-she Kuo-min-tang we-he chi-hsu chih-cheng" [Social cleavages and party competition: Explaining the continuity of KMT's regime] *Chung-yang-yen-chiu-yuan min-tsu-yen-chiu-so chi-k'an* [Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology], no. 78 (1994), Academia Sinica, Taipei, pp. 101-30.

ery to protect its political and financial interests and, at the same time, be responsive to redistribution concerns of citizen-voters?

In this article, we examine the third challenge by focusing on the KMT regime's responses to the environmental protest movement in the past decade and a half. As the owner or promoter of many heavily polluting industries, the regime has become the target of increasing numbers of environmental protests, many of which were supported by elected local officials and opposition parties. Nationalist government leaders were initially uncertain about how to handle these demonstrations but as the regime learned to adjust its policy and political machinery to meet the challenge, it gradually was able to contain some of the protests and, in certain cases, produce outcomes in its favor. From a larger political perspective, the KMT's ability to respond to this and similar political challenges may well be part of the reason for its continued success in major elections. A better understanding of the interactions between the KMT regime and the environmental protest movement sheds light on the political dynamic of Taiwan's democratization process. In the following sections, we first examine how structural and strategic factors have affected the evolution of Taiwan's environmental protest movement, and then discuss how the KMT regime has adapted to meet challenges posed by the movement. We conclude by assessing the prospects of Taiwan's environmental movement and the theoretical significance of our case to research on democratization.

The Evolution of Taiwan's Environmental Protest Movement

Widely regarded as one of the economic miracles in the post-World War Two era, Taiwan has enjoyed rapid economic growth but at the same time suffered from serious environmental degradation.⁴ Such degradation initially did not get much attention from Taiwan's citizens, who were enjoying the economic benefits associated with the fast pace of industrialization, and it was not uncommon for residents in less-developed areas on the island to celebrate the construction of large polluting factories in their communities. Widespread dissatisfaction about the environment began to surface in the early 1980s. In its initial phase, the environmental protest movement was mostly localized—residents organizing sporadic protests against such local polluting sources as petrochemical factories and garbage dumps. As they were technically illegal

4. Deborah Chan, "The Environmental Dilemma in Taiwan," *Journal of Northeast Asian Studies*, 12:1 (1993), pp. 35–57. See also Chun-chieh Chi, "Growth with Pollution: Unsustainable Development in Taiwan and Its Consequences," *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 29:2 (1994), pp. 23–47; and Michael Hsin-huang Hsiao, Chiang Pen-chi, L. L. Severinghaus, and Chu Yun-peng, *Tai-wan liang-ch'ien nien* [Taiwan 2000: Balancing economic growth and environmental protection] (Taipei: Tien-hsia cha-chih-she, 1993).

under the martial law in effect at that time, these activities were usually small in scale and involved only moderate forms of protest⁵; and only rarely was the central government a target.

The environmental protest movement reached a major turning point in 1986 when the anti-DuPont incident began to unfold. Led by an energetic local leader and endorsed by many elected local officials, residents in Lukang organized to oppose DuPont's plan to build a petrochemical plant in their community.⁶ Since DuPont's initial plan was supported by major ministries in the central government, the protesters from Lukang, who demonstrated not only in their own communities but also in Taipei, represented a major challenge to the KMT government's authority. In 1986 and early 1987, when martial law was still in effect, the protesters were unsure whether the government would crack down on them, but central officials turned out to be rather restrained in their response. The protests ended without violence when DuPont voluntarily withdrew its construction plan, signaling Taiwan's citizens that if they are determined and well-organized they can achieve their collective objectives even if they have to take on the KMT government. This and similar incidents directed people's attention not only to existing pollution but to preventing the construction of new polluting sources in their communities. According to one calculation, between 1980 and 1987 only four (2.6%) of all environmental protests were preventive in nature; the numbers increased to 24 (15.4%) in 1988–90 and 69 (17.9%) in 1991.⁷

Through widespread media coverage, the anti-DuPont incident heightened citizens' sense of political efficacy and thus helped to fuel the environmental protest movement. This sense of political efficacy was strengthened with the abolition of martial law in 1987, drastically reducing the marginal costs for individuals to participate in protests as the threat of prosecution and imprisonment diminished. The number of environmental conflicts now increased markedly. According to one estimate, between 1980 and 1987 there were an average of 13.75 environmental conflicts per year; the average increased to

5. Wu Chieh-min, *Cheng-t'i chuang-hsing-ch'i te she-hui k'ang-i* [Social protests during polity transformation], master's thesis, National Taiwan University, 1990.

6. James Reardon-Anderson, *Pollution, Politics, and Foreign Investment in Taiwan: The Lukang Rebellion* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1992).

7. Hsiao Hsin-huang, "Tai-wan ti-fang huan-pao k'ang-cheng te hsing-ko yu chuan-pien: 1980–1991" [Characteristics and change of Taiwan's grass-roots environmental movement: 1980–1991], in *Tai-wan yen-chiu chi-chin* [Taiwan Research Foundation], ed., *Huan-ching pao-hu yu ch'an-yeh cheng-ts'e* [Environmental protection and industrial policy] (Taipei: Ch'ien-wei ch'u-pan-she, 1994).

31.33 protests per year between 1988 and 1990 and to 258 in 1991 alone.⁸ After 1991, the number of protests began to decrease.⁹

Besides the lifting of martial law in 1987, other structural changes helped to fuel environmental protests. First, increasing numbers of members from the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) were elected to major executive and legislative positions in local governments, thus weakening the dominance of the KMT in many jurisdictions. These DPP members are highly motivated to support local environmental causes, especially when the protests are targeted at state-owned enterprises or businesses closely associated with the KMT regime. Second, political entrepreneurs have emerged to take advantage of new electoral opportunities at the provincial and central levels. Although these political entrepreneurs may not necessarily have any common interest with those who suffer from local environmental nuisances, many of them seek to gain visibility and other political capital by helping to organize protests on behalf of local residents.

While the anti-DuPont incident symbolizes a turning point in Taiwan's environmental protest movement, it also illustrates one of the movement's major weaknesses, that is, its limited contribution to actual environmental betterment in many of the communities in which protests originated. Leaders of the DuPont demonstrations created an opportunity for local residents to express their frustration at the authorities in Taipei, but they appear to have failed to raise people's environmental consciousness. Several years after the incident, Lukang still had streets filled with piles of garbage, streams of dirty water, and gritty air.¹⁰ When asked, local leaders were unable to cite any current projects to clean up the city, and some even said the environmental movement in the community was dead. The same problem arose in many subsequent environmental protests, which were focused more on seeking monetary compensations from factory owners than in actually improving the environmental quality of the communities.

Such a characteristic of the environmental protest movement is caused by a combination of structural and strategic factors. First, during the post-World War Two era, a major political concern of the KMT regime was to restrict as much as possible people's rights to organize nationwide organizations that

8. Hsiao Hsin-huang, *op. cit.*

9. Based on a different survey by the Environmental Protection Administration, a total of 108 public nuisance disputes arose in 1989, decreasing to 24 in 1993, 12 in 1994, and 10 in 1995. While the EPA's method of identifying and counting public nuisance disputes appears to differ substantially from Hsiao's, its survey identifies an unmistakable decline in the numbers in the 1990s. See Hsing-cheng-yaun huan-pao-shu [Environmental Protection Administration, the Executive Yuan] *Huan-ching poa-hu nien-chien* [Yearbook of environmental protection] (Taipei: Chung-hua-min-kuo cheng-fu ch'u-pan-pin, 1995) p. 12.

10. Reardon-Anderson, *Pollution, Politics and Foreign Investment*, p. 85.

could potentially challenge its authority. When such organizations were occasionally approved, they were always subject to close supervision by the KMT and served as its instrument for social control. That is part of the reason why, up to the mid-1980s, there were no nationwide environmental organizations in Taiwan to facilitate and coordinate local environmental protests and address such general ecological concerns as ozone depletion and wildlife preservation. Most environmental protests were initiated by local leaders who mobilized residents by promising them such exclusive benefits as monetary compensation from owners of pollution sources.¹¹

Another strategic factor that affects the organization of local environmental protests is the involvement of local factions and other traditional social networks. The contribution of local factions to the environmental protest movement has been mixed. On the one hand, local factions help to overcome collective action problems by using traditional social networks as an organizing device, but these factions are not necessarily ideologically committed to environmental protection. When they are offered monetary benefits by polluters, factional leaders may be equally enthusiastic in helping to dissolve a protest movement. A case in point is the movement against the construction of the fifth naphtha cracker in the southern city of Kaohsiung.¹² The cracking plant was planned as an addition to the existing petrochemical complex belonging to the government-owned Chinese Petrochemical Company. When residents in the neighborhood of the complex, Houchin, learned of the plan in 1987, they were concerned about the additional air and water pollution the plant would create and organized a "self-salvation" association to fight its construction. Comprising major local leaders and supported by scholars, students, DPP members, and environmental organizations, the association organized a series of protests in front of the industrial complex in

11. Huang Jung-tsun, "Tai-wan-ti-ch'u huan-pao yu hsiao-fei-che pao-hu yun-tung: T'e-se yu hu-tung" [Taiwan's environmental protection movement and consumer protection movement: Characteristics and interactions], in Shu Cheng-kuang and Song Wen-li, eds., *Tai-wan hsin-hsing she-hui yun-tung* [New social movement in Taiwan] (Taipei: Chu-liu ch'u-pan-she, 1989); and Wu Chieh-min, *Social Protests*.

12. Hsu Shih-jung, "Shih-lun ko-chi tsai ti-fang huan-pao k'ang-cheng chung so pan-yen te chiao-se: I Hou-chin fan wu-ch'ing wei li" [Technology becomes the best weapon for the government to defuse an environmental movement: Case of the 5th naphtha cracker in Taiwan], *Tai-wan she-hui yen-chiu chi-k'an* [Taiwan: A radical quarterly in social studies] no. 18 (1995), pp. 5-52. See also Wang Ming-hui, "Fan kung-hai chi-t'i k'ang-i hsing-tung kuo-ch'eng chih t'an-t'ao: I Hou-chin fan wu-ch'ing wei li" [Collective action in anti-pollution protests: Case of the protest against the fifth naphtha cracker plant in Hou-chin], master's thesis, Tung-hai University, Taiwan, 1989; and Wu Chin-lien, "Wu-ch'ing chien-ch'ang chih cheng-chih ching-chi fen-hsa" [A political and economic analysis of the fifth naphtha cracker project] master's thesis, National Chung Hsing University, Taiwan, 1992.

Kaohsiung as well as various central government ministries and the Legislative Yuan in Taipei.

Confronted with demonstrations, the central government promised to undertake a careful environmental assessment before starting construction but showed little intention of canceling the plant. At the same time, Chinese Petrochemical began extensive public relations activities, promising to award contracts to local contractors, hire more workers from the local community, initiate local beautification projects, and contribute to local temples and other civic organizations. The original "self-help" association eventually split into two factions, one insisting on the original goal of preventing construction, and the other, composed of such traditional local leaders as village heads, city councillors, and temple management committee members who would be the major beneficiaries of the selective benefits offered by the company, advocating conditional compromises with the central government. After further struggles and dealings with the two factions, the government promised to establish an NT \$1.5 billion (US \$55 million) foundation for compensating local residents. The protest movement finally lost its steam, and construction of the plant began in 1990 without any organized protests. Since then, local factions have turned their attention to seeking control of the foundation.

Regime Responses to the Environmental Protest Movement

When it began to unfold in the early part of the 1980s, the environmental protest movement did not constitute a major challenge to the authority of the KMT regime because most protests were targeted either at private businesses or local governments. Neither did they touch on the KMT's political taboo by calling for Taiwan's independence. The government considered these localized protests mostly as occasional aberrations, and most of them were readily and peacefully resolved through compensatory arrangements between contending parties. The martial law at that time also acted as a major deterrent against any attempt to escalate the level of conflict. The anti-DuPont incident in 1986 was one of the first to directly challenge the authority of the KMT regime because the protest was directed at a major industrial project supported by all major economic ministries.¹³ Officials in these ministries initially failed to realize the implication of the anti-DuPont demonstrations, as reflected in their initial advice to DuPont executives to ignore local protests and refrain from contacting community leaders. When these central officials later realized that it was politically infeasible to ignore the local

13. Chou Fen-tzu, "Tai-wan fan wu-jan tzu-li-chiu-chi hsing-tung yu ti-fan pai-hsi" [Self-Salvation anti-pollution actions and local factions in Taiwan], master's thesis, Tung-hai University, Taiwan, 1990.

protests, they found themselves short on the institutional means to resolve the dispute.

After Lukang residents demonstrated in Taipei, DPP candidates preparing for the December 1986 election used the incident to criticize the KMT government and the national media expected a statement from the government. After a few days, Premier Yu Kuo-hwa issued an official statement saying that the sale of the factory site to DuPont would be approved only if an environmental impact assessment was complete and approved by the Environmental Protection Bureau, a full public accounting of the DuPont plan was made available, and the concerns of the local residents were resolved.¹⁴ However, this failed to change the mind of the protesters because they had never trusted the government to be genuinely interested in protecting their interests. The statement also met with resentment from officials in the economic ministries who thought it showed the government's weakness. Although the conflict was eventually resolved by DuPont's voluntary withdrawal of its plan, the incident served as a wake-up call to the KMT government that an institutionalized solution was needed to handle future environmental protests, especially when the political and financial interests of the central government collide with those of local communities.

Since then the KMT government has introduced many new policy measures aimed at resolving environmental disputes. The Environmental Protection Bureau was elevated to cabinet-level status in 1987 and renamed the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA). It was granted additional administrative authority, personnel, and budgets, and proceeded to develop more detailed environmental regulations to replace the originally sketchy ones.¹⁵ The EPA also drafted the "Law to Settle Public Nuisance Disputes" and introduced a system of environmental impact assessment. Nevertheless, because of opposition from various economic interests within the Executive Yuan, the formal adoption and implementation of these policy measures were delayed for several years.¹⁶ Later, when the government tried to use these legal instruments to settle environmental disputes, it was usually met with skepticism by protesters who tended to mistrust the government's impartiality.

14. Reardon-Anderson, *Pollution, Politics and Foreign Investment*, pp. 52-53.

15. Shing-cheng-yuan huan-pao-shu [Environmental Protection Administration, the Executive Yuan], *Chung-hua-min-kuo Tai-wan ti-ch'u huan-ching t'ung-chi nien-chien* [Yearbook of environmental statistics, Taiwan area, the Republic of China] (Taipei: Chung-hua-min-kuo Cheng-fu ch'u-pan-pin, 1994); see also Dennis Tang, *On the Feasibility of Economic Incentives in Taiwan's Environmental Regulations: Lessons from the American Experience* (Taipei: Institute of American Culture, Academia Sinica, 1990).

16. Chiou Chang-tay, *P'ou-hsi wo-kuo kung-hai chiu-fen* [Analysis of our nation's public nuisance conflicts] (Taipei: Shu-hsing ch'u-pan-she, 1995).

Besides trying to develop legal means for resolving environmental conflicts, the KMT government has also been searching for preventive measures.¹⁷ More stringent pollution control regulations have been introduced, and tax incentives encourage industrial investment in pollution reduction facilities. There also have been talks about upgrading some industries to make them less polluting. Active efforts are made to identify suitable but less populated locations for polluting industries, and long-term environmental monitoring arrangements are being developed. In addition to these policy measures, government and KMT-owned enterprises have begun to invest more resources in pollution control and take steps to build relationships with local residents. While all these efforts represented positive steps toward lessening industrial pollution and environmental conflicts, it would be a long time before they would become established enough to produce discernible results. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the environmental protest movement continued to intensify while most government and industrial initiatives had yet to take hold. In the face of direct local challenges to its authority, the KMT regime chose to rely on political means to diffuse them.

Interestingly, one political means adopted has been the liberalized mass media, a product of democratization itself. At its earlier stage, the environmental protest movement generally received sympathetic reporting in the media, but as more and more of the protests focused on seeking monetary compensation from industries, the government was occasionally able to win public opinion support by stressing the "self-serving" elements among the protesters and the "ulterior" motives of the organizers. A case in point is the fifth naphtha cracker case in which central government officials emphasized the scientific nature of the environmental impact assessment and accused the protesters of being unreasonable and anti-development. Such accusations were echoed in the reports and commentaries of some major newspapers, thus undermining the level of public support for the protesters. The government has also relied on its traditional clientele system to resolve environmental conflicts with local communities. The case of the fifth naphtha cracker illustrates how the KMT regime was able to secure support from local elites by offering them selective benefits in the form of public funding to civic organizations represented by these elites. There was also evidence suggesting that local gangsters were directly solicited by officials of the government-owned Chinese Petrochemical Company to help undermine the protest movement.¹⁸

17. Chiou Chang-tay, *Tai-wan huan-ching kuan-chih cheng-ts'e* [Taiwan's environmental control policy] (Taipei: Shu-hsing ch'u-pan-she, 1995).

18. Hsu Shih-jung, "Case of Fifth Naphtha Cracker," p. 145.

It is important to emphasize, however, that not all attempts by the KMT to diffuse environmental challenges have been successful. Among the most difficult have been the ones in areas in which the DPP has established a strong political foothold. A case in point is the protest movement against construction of the sixth naphtha cracker in I-lan, proposed by the private petrochemical giant, Formosa Plastics Group.¹⁹ The conglomerate began its negotiation with the local county government and public relations work among local residents as early as 1986. The plant was strongly endorsed by the central government because it fitted well into its plan to achieve a closer integration of the up-, mid-, and down-stream production processes of the petrochemical industry; it was also expected that many KMT-owned mid-stream enterprises would benefit from such an integration. But despite the advance work and the strong government support, opposition from local residents remained insurmountable, which ultimately led the corporation to withdraw its plan.

Two critical factors help to explain this outcome—one political and the other socioeconomic. Politically, the county government was split between a KMT-dominated council, which supported the construction plan, and the DPP magistrate, who maintained a neutral position toward the project publicly but privately utilized various administrative powers to block its implementation. The latter was strongly motivated to oppose the plan because if the plant were built, the pro-KMT business group together with the other mid- and down-stream enterprises would hire tens of thousands of local residents, who would then likely become KMT supporters, thus undermining the magistrate's chance for reelection in the future. Furthermore, local economic prosperity itself may not be a positive factor for DPP incumbents because people usually credit economic growth to the KMT and its business allies instead of the DPP, which tends to be supported by the underclass.

The socioeconomic situation in I-lan also contributed to the strength of the protests. I-lan is close to metropolitan Taipei and younger residents can easily commute to work in the capital. Thus, local job opportunities created by the plant would be less attractive to these residents. For those who prefer to work near home, the plant would be more a negative than a plus because they are mostly of the older generation who have worked as farmers or fishermen for most of their lives and are more sensitive to air and water pollution that would harm their traditional means of livelihood. These people became dedicated participants in the protests that eventually forced the Formosa Plastics

19. Chang Shih-hsien, "Huan-pao hsieh-t'iao kuo-ch'eng chih yen-chiu" [Period structures and developments in negotiation of environmental protection: Case study of the 6th naphtha cracker in I-lan 1986–1988], *Chung-kuo hsing-cheng ping-lun* [Chinese public administration review], 2:3, Taipei (1993), pp. 39–66. See also Huang Shih-i, "Liu-ch'ing, cheng-fu, min-chung, ch'ang-shang" [Sixth naphtha cracker, government, citizens, and enterprises], master's thesis, University of Chinese Culture, Taiwan, 1991.

Group to cancel its plan. But the Group received a very different reception in 1991 when it proposed the plant to Yun-lin County. On the day it was formally granted a zoning permit by the county government, tens of thousands of people paraded on the streets to welcome the project, which the media described as the community's first step toward industrialization.²⁰

Several favorable factors were at work in Yun-lin. First, being a predominately agricultural economy and far from any major industrial city, the county had lost much of its younger generation through migration in recent years. Its land is relatively arid and highly saline, making agricultural productivity one of the lowest on the island. For many local residents, industrialization appeared to be the only way for the county to prosper, and pollution problems arising from it were not an immediate concern for them. Second, several small local factions in the county were dominated by the KMT-supported magistrate and there was little DPP influence. Even though some 10,000 fishermen and aquafarm owners stood to suffer from the pollution to be created by the plant, efforts by nationwide environmental groups and outside DPP politicians failed to mobilize them into an effective protest organization because no local leaders were willing to help activate the social networks needed for the purpose. Furthermore, under the leadership of the magistrate, the KMT political machinery was able to secure active support from local elites by arranging such selective benefits as favorable zoning permits for landowners who would benefit from the plant's construction.

The histories of the fifth and sixth naphtha cracking plants illustrate the informal political factors that affected the KMT regime's ability to handle environmental challenges that threatened its political and financial interests. Democratization had created localities like I-lan in which the party's local political machinery became ineffective, while in other areas it had remained relatively effective. Although the KMT might not be able to ward off all challenges to its authority, it remained capable of protecting its interests in some instances by the use of informal political instruments.

Nevertheless, such capability may have eroded further in recent years as the environmental movement underwent transformation.²¹ First, scores of nationwide, membership-based environmental organizations have emerged since the abolition of martial law in 1987. As these organizations grew larger toward the end of the 1980s, they were able not only to support and coordinate local environmental protests but to turn the nation's attention to larger

20. Yang Hsiao-jung, "Mai-liao ti-fan i-chien ling-hsiu tui liu-ch'ing chien-ch'ang chih fan-ying" [Leaders' responses to the 6th naphtha cracker plant in Mai-liao], *Tung-wu she-hui hsueh-pao* [Sociology Journal of Soochow University], no. 3, Taipei (1994), pp. 1-46.

21. Shih Shin-min, "Tai-wan huan-ching pao-hu yun-tung hui-ku" [Review of Taiwan's environmental protection movement], *Tai-wan huan-ching* [Taiwan environment], no. 81, Taipei, (1995), pp. 8-13.

ecological issues such as wildlife, forest, and water resource preservation. They were also instrumental in mobilizing several rounds of nationwide demonstrations against nuclear power in the late 1980s and early 1990s.²² Because of their ideological orientation and large-scale operations, it has become more difficult for the KMT regime to undermine these organizations by arranging selective payoffs to their leaders.

Second, further democratization of the political system in the late 1980s has created more avenues for environmental interests and organizations to exert their influence in policy-making processes. They have, for example, actively participated in electoral campaigns for candidates at local, provincial, and national levels, thus helping to establish support for environmental causes within the formal political establishment. Furthermore, as the Legislative Yuan has become an important forum for challenging administrative agencies since the 1992 election, environmental organizations have begun to try to influence environmental policy-making and implementation by directly lobbying legislators. Anti-nuclear organizations even initiated a recall on a KMT legislator in 1994 for his pro-nuclear stance. Even though the attempt failed because of low voter turnout, it demonstrated to legislators the potential power of environmentalists. As environmental groups gained more access to formal policy-making and implementation processes, the KMT has had to reconsider how it can successfully balance its political and financial interests with further environmental challenges.

Conclusion

Many of the early environmental protests in Taiwan resemble NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) problems in other countries. In fairness to the KMT regime, one needs to point out that even for many well-established democratic governments, such problems are equally intractable because it is inherently difficult to develop win-win solutions for all the contending parties in these situations. What is interesting about Taiwan is not the serious conflicts that emerged but their special methods of resolution, reflecting the changing configuration of a democratizing system. In this case, a retreating authoritarian regime found itself obliged to respect local residents' rights to a clean environment. In order to protect its own financial interests in many polluting industries, the regime had to revert to its client-based political machinery for conflict resolution. These attempts succeeded in locations in which the regime's traditional political power remained intact but failed in those where such power had been eroded. While NIMBY and other environmental

22. Chang Mao-kuei, "Tai-wan fan-he yun-tung chih ping-ch'i" [An assessment of Taiwan's anti-nuclear movement], in Shu Cheng-kuang and Song Wen-li, eds., *New Social Movement*, op. cit.

problems will remain, their solution in the future will likely be quite different from the past as Taiwan becomes more pluralistic and environmental advocates are more integrated into its formal political institutions and processes.

Our research contributes to a better understanding of processes of democratization. As argued in many recent studies, successful democratization requires the crafting of institutional rules for peaceful resolution of political conflict. The rules that have received the most attention in this literature are those that govern the selection of political representatives and executives at the national level. Our research suggests that there are other equally important political and institutional issues that can affect resource distribution and conflict resolution during democratization.

First, as argued by Dryzek, an important issue in democratization is to what extent and in what ways various groups and interests can be included in policy processes.²³ In the early stage of Taiwan's democratic transition, environmental interests were accorded a much lower priority by the ruling regime than such policy issues as economic growth. With limited access to formal policy processes, environmental interests were articulated mostly by collective protests. As the political system became more open and large-scale environmental organizations were established, these interests began to seek access to formal processes by participating in electoral politics and directly lobbying legislators. It remains to be seen how such a progressive inclusion of environmental interests in the formal political system will contribute to effective conflict resolution; nevertheless, Taiwan serves as an interesting case for understanding how progressive inclusion of various interest groups in policy processes affects democratic consolidation.

Second, besides the national government, local governments play an important role in affecting resource distribution and conflict resolution. As argued by O'Donnell, in many South American countries, even though the national government has become more democratic, various "neofeudalized" regions remain that continue to deprive many citizens of even basic legal protection.²⁴ In Taiwan, such "neofeudalized" regions may no longer exist; still, traditional political machines may have much stronger staying power at the local than at the national level. To have a better understanding of democratic consolidation, one needs a better understanding of the interactions between national and local political processes.

Finally, our research illustrates the changing relationships between formal and informal institutions during democratization as long-lasting, informal

23. John S. Dryzek, "Political Inclusion and the Dynamics of Democratization," *American Political Science Review*, 90:1 (1996), pp. 475-87.

24. Guillermo O'Donnell, "On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Glances at Some Post-Communist Countries," *World Development* 21:8 (1993), pp. 1355-69.

practices may strongly affect the functioning of newly created formal institutions. In many democratizing countries, informal social and political practices originating from authoritarian eras persist even after formal political institutions have been democratized. In Taiwan the continued relevance of such informal practices is illustrated by the KMT regime's ability to adapt its traditional patron-client networks to mitigate some political challenges it encounters during democratic transformation. A challenge for Taiwan and many other democratizing countries is to further transform these informal practices so that they become more compatible with formal democratic institutions.