

**The Spiral of Deinstitutionalization Untangled:
An Observation about the Field Opinion within Kuomintang against Public Opinion
During the 2016 Presidential Election Campaign**

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Abstract

As political scientists start applying the complex-system approach to study party politics and as business scholars start to apply communication theories to study deinstitutionalization, we prospect a new possibility to study and explain politics within a political party. This study employs a systematically collected field observation data to evaluate Clemente and Roulet's (2015) "the spiral of deinstitutionalization" framework. Based on analysis of news events and internal reports within Kuomintang from April 20 to October 17, 2015, we summarize that this framework explains how the decision of nominating Hung Hsiu-Chu as the party's first female presidential candidate was abandoned three months before the Election Day. We restore the whole story and provide details that contribute to enriching the framework for future organizational and political party research.

Keyword: deinstitutionalization, KMT, public opinion, party politics

Introduction

As political scientists start applying the complex-system approach to study party politics (Laver & Sergenti, 2012) and as business scholars start to apply communication theories to study deinstitutionalization (Clemente & Roulet, 2015), we adopt this prospect to study and explain the dynamics of politics within a political party. This study collects data from field observation with we examine Clemente and Roulet's "the spiral of deinstitutionalization" framework.

The case we selected for this study is the controversy about Kuomintang or the Chinese nationalist party (KMT) dealt with its candidate nominee Hung Hsiu-Chu (洪秀柱), the deputy chair of Legislative Yuan, about six months before the 2016 presidential election. This case is salient and important for this study of deinstitutionalization because KMT, which has been in power for the past eight years, has been challenged since 2013 for its ideology of maintaining positive relationship with Mainland China in terms both economy and politics. How it fell into chaos and deinstitutionalized in 2015 demand theoretical explanation and better understanding.

As well documented in the literature (Chang & Holt, 2014; Gries & Su, 2013; Hao, 1996; Lin, 2008; Wu, 2011), KMT's "friendly to China" ideology was once recognized the key factor of the second rotation of ruling party in 2008 after Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)'s ruling from 2000 to 2008. Voters seemed to mandate KMT for keeping interaction with Mainland China and KMT managed to meet this expectation. However, as Taiwanese consciousness and ethnic identification rises, progressive actions of paving way to Mainland China starts to lose its legitimacy. Negative atmosphere merged the time when cross-strait talks about the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), a political arrangement that aims to liberalize trade in services between the two economies, was initiated 2010. As the sentiment accumulated and KMT continued to walk down the path of talks, KMT was forced to face the incongruence between its and the majority of voters' will.

On March 18, 2014, a group of young scholars and students broke into the Legislative Yuan, using it as a radical means to call for the public's attention to the Ma administration's attempt to ratify the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), a treaty that was extended from ECFA and signed in June 2013. This so-called Sunflower Movement of "occupying the [Taiwanese] Congress" was the result of a continuous social movement against the ratification of

CSSTA. This movement, in which 500,000 citizens participated, successfully called for an island-wide attention to the controversial trade talks with Mainland China and it led to KMT's defeat in the 7-in-1 local election in the end of 2014. Interpreted as a strong signal or resentment to the Ma Ying-Jeou (馬英九) administration, Ma resigned from the KMT chairman on December 4, 2014. Eric Chu (朱立倫), the mayor of New Taipei City and one of few KMT candidates that kept the office, was elected with high approval rate as the new chairman of KMT on January 17, 2015.

In the face of 2016 Presidential and Congressional elections, KMT fell into deep chaos in the spring of 2015, struggling to nominate a proper presidential candidate to compete DPP's chairman Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and her group of legislator candidates. KMT had been silent about the whole month between Tsai's expression of running for the office on March 11 and DPP's formal nomination on April 13, 2015.

From March to June, KMT supporters suffered from the embarrassing situation where they found no one that led the campaign. As no one expressed willingness to lead the election and compete, including chairman Chu, Hung became the only choice that passed KMT's whole nomination process on July 15. The problem is, suddenly KMT elites and supporters have to face the reality that Hung is the only one to lead the party. As poll results continued to show that Hung by no means to win the election (Hung seldom goes higher than 30% and Tsai no lower than 40%), rumors within the party and across the news media emerged and continued to cast doubt about KMT's attempt to recruiting Chu to replace Hung. From July to October, Chu and Hung keep rejecting the rumors in public, but on October 14 Chu sent his apology to Hung and KMT's Central Standing Committee passed the proposal of rescinding Hung's candidacy, leaving the society astonished. On 17, in the extempore congress a majority of the 891 KMT representatives at the congress approved Eric Chu's nomination and formally rescinded Hung's candidacy.

Could this uncommon and dramatic change in the presidential candidate nomination occurred within Taiwan's largest political party is simply attributed to the calculation of winning the election? How could it happen given that Hung had passed all required legal nomination

process set by KMT itself? Could the polls showing the slim chance that Hung would win decide the decision shift?¹ If so, how could that happen?

As a special case in Taiwan party politics, KMT's internal chaos from April to October requires a theoretical understanding. As a special case in Taiwan party politics, KMT's internal chaos from April to October of 2015 requires a theoretical understanding. While some Taiwan politics observers tried to comment on this chaos in October in terms of betrayal of the "change Hung" camp against the authentic, deep-blue "retain Hung" camp and the struggle for power between Ma Ying-jeou, Eric Chu and Wang Jin-Pyng (王金平), the chairman of Legislative Yuan (Turton, 2015), they fell short of providing a systematic explanation about how the cleavage within KMT occurred.

Employing the perspective of deinstitutionalization (Clemente & Roulet, 2015), we evaluate the extent to which this "spiral of deinstitutionalization" theoretical framework explains the case. Based on field observations from inside the KMT from April 15 to October 17, 2015, we point out that the theoretical framework correctly explains how "field opinion" within the party conflicts with "public opinion" revealed by news polls and how such dynamics leads to deinstitutionalization of KMT. We further add our observations and suggestion about how to advance the framework.

Theoretical Framework

Deinstitutionalization is a process by which practices are abandoned because they have lost their social approval (Oliver, 1992). A deinstitutionalization process relies on discursive struggles between actors who push to abandon a practice and those who try to maintain it and public opinion empowers actors of one side to oppose the other side (Clemente & Roulet, 2015). "In fields that exert a strong silencing pressure on their members, insiders are less likely to align with public opinion's hostility initially, but once a majority of field members agree with public opinion, field opinion exerts a greater pressure on other members to comply and abandon a practice." (p.36)

¹ <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/10/17/asia/taiwan-kmt-president-candidate-swap/>

Clemente and Roulet's theoretical framework of "spiral of deinstitutionalization" borrows the analogy of Noelle-Neumann's (1974) theory of spiral of silence and applied it to explain how some actors in one group are more dominant in a decision-making process. In the original "spiral of silence" theory, voters of one side of an issue hesitate to express their preferences when they perceive via public opinion polls that they are in the minority. As other voters of the same side also perceive that they are in minority, this side can become even more silent. When this theory is applied to decision-making within an institution or a group, the analogy "spiral of deinstitutionalization" suggests that public opinion outside the institution becomes a mean rather than simply a reference for key actors to achieve their goal, such as whether or not to engage in a practice, or abandoning a decision.

Outside the institution the news media are "crucial vehicle for assessing the climate of opinion at the public level" (p.15). Inside the institution or the "field," the field media play a crucial role of targeting at field members and "exerting a strong pressure for conformity" (p.18). The dynamic of deinstitutionalization occurs when interpersonal communication effects (e.g., voicing out one's preferences) join media influence. Scenario one: "it may be easier to reach a tipping point when field opinion swings toward opposing a practice, but once this happens, the spiral of silence exerts less pressure on other insiders to abandon the practice" (p.22). One reason, according to the original theory of spiral of silence, is that the minority at the field level fear to be in the minority. Scenario two: institutions where the silencing pressure is weak are "more permeable to public opinion and are more receptive to influences from other institutional arenas" (p. 22). It is expected that such fields are more likely to win insiders in the first place and then find it difficult to make all actors converge.

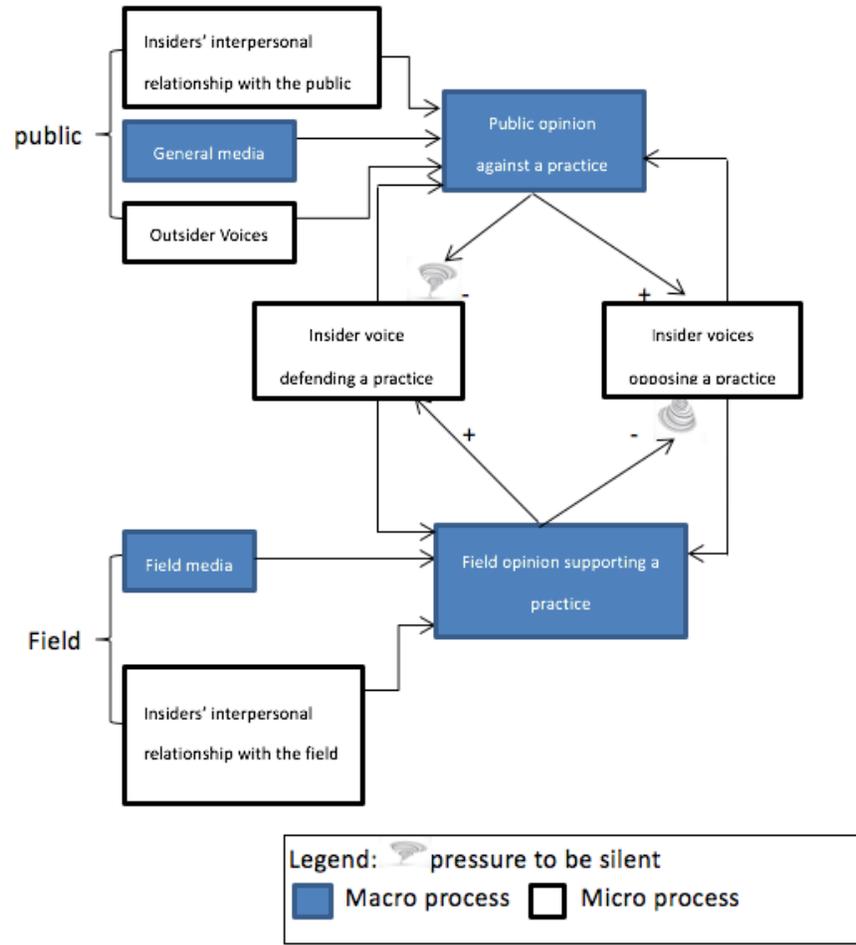
Besides the fear of being in the minority, there are four factors that influence conformity. First, normative motives lead actors to avoid disapproval within their groups. Second, strategic motives lead actors to rely on outsiders to create values. Third, cognitive motives lead actors to avoid ambiguity and uncertainty. The fourth is identification that could moderate actors' fear of being in the minority" (p.34).

Figure 1 is a representation of Clemente and Roulet's theoretical framework, which gives a visual guidance about how actors behave in the field. In the initial situation when public opinion opposes a practice,

“the field defends it, and insiders have to decide whether or not to defend the practice. If they do, they will face a spiral of silence at the public level and if they oppose it, they will face a spiral of silence at the field level where they are in the minority. Spirals of silence at the public and field levels are in opposition, pulling insiders in different directions. This tension remains until the field opinion changes and becomes aligned with public hostility or vice versa” (p.20).

If field actors decide to comply with the field opinion and oppose the public opinion's sentiment of a practice, the influence of public opinion on field opinion slows down and results in “upward” spiral of silence. If field actors comply with the majority of the public opinion, they will tend to silence other field members; and if they become the majority at the field level, the spiral of silence in the field will become aligned with the one in the public sphere. The “downward” spiral of silence refers to magnified conformity from the public to the field.

Figure 1: Schematic summary of the impact of public opinion on deinstitutionalization



Source: Clemente and Roulet (2015) Figure 3

Research Method

We take two approaches to contrast our empirical observation of the KMT case against the theoretical framework. First, we collected and analyzed a journal of the news and KMT's internal reports daily from April 20, the first day of the nomination process, to October 17, 2015, when Hung's candidacy was rescinded. This long-term consistent effort helps us to systematically evaluate the theory of spiral of deinstitutionalization and observe how KMT succeeded and failed online and off-line during the campaign. Second, we conducted indirect observation of Hung Hsiu-Chu and Eric Chu by tracking their Facebook public fan pages between September 8 and October 5, 2015, the most critical month where the majority was over turned to become minority.

Findings and Discussion

Our one-year long observation and findings are presented in three parts. The first is a summary of the observation journal and provides more details about the case, particularly the two sides of the controversy. The second presents the parts of observation that match the predictions drawn from the theoretical framework. The third part focus on additional insights that go beyond the theoretical framework.

1. Summary of the Observation

The whole story can be arranged into three stages according to the important dates. The first stage is from Hung's claiming to run for nomination on April 20, 2015, to the release of internal poll results that were conducted on June 12-13 to justify her popularity. The second stage is from the release of the poll results to the KMT's national party congress on July 19, where the party formally nominated Hung. The third stage is from the party congress meeting to the extempore congress meeting on October 17, where Hung was rescinded as the party's president candidate.

As the Deputy Legislative Speaker, Hung Hsiu-chu earned rich experienced in her legislator career since 1989 and won eight consecutive terms as KMT's legislator. She has been named several times in different organizations as top legislator for her overall excellent professional performance. However, to the general public she has not been seen as a nationally known figure

inside and outside the KMT. Hence, her active participation in the presidential candidate nomination process on April 20 in the face of absence of candidate was unfavorable but appreciated by primary actors of KMT. In this first stage, although no-one in KMT claimed to run the election, key actors such as the Legislative Yuan Speaker Wang Jin-Ping (王金平) and Vice President Wu Den-yih (吳敦義) were possible figures to be called by the party as the presidential candidate if Hung did not pass the nomination criteria. Therefore, by the time Hung passed the “popularity check” by KMT with three poll figures (in average of 46% support nationwide) on June 13, three groups had formed within the party: one favoring that Wang to be called, one for Wu, and one favoring chairman Chu. None of the group was satisfied with the result that the party had to nominate Hung as the presidential candidate. Therefore, the rumor about “changing Hung” started to circulate in the news media right after the nomination process was completed. Note that the rumor had never ceased since the Hung’s nomination, leaving Chu, KMT, and Hung continued to claimed publicly to the news media that the nomination was fully legitimate, endorsed and won’t be changed for anyone.² The rumor even more unscaled later in October.³

The second stage is from the release of the poll results in June to the KMT’s national party congress, where the party formally nominated Hung, on July 19. Within this month, Hung seemed confident and started to talk publicly about her public policy stances, while the actors within the party were watching closely about what she said and continued to evaluate her. Two that shocked both the party and the public were that she interpreted that cross-Straits relation as “One China, Same Interpretation,” which is inconsistent with KMT’s “92 consensus” policy that emphasizes “One China, Separate Interpretation”. And the second is that she said she could not recognize Republic of China (ROC).⁴ Her campaign talks like such seriously influenced her popularity within KMT,⁵ so right before the party congress she and her campaign office has been warned and regulated to avoid acting alone.⁶

2 <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2015/10/07/2003629453>

3 <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/taiwans-kmt-moves-to-replace-its-presidential-candidate/>

4 <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2015/07/04/2003622215>

5 <http://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/asiapacific/kmt-s-hung-faces/1992774.html>

6 <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2015/07/19/441074/Hung-wont.htm>

Hung and her campaign office were expected to follow KMT's campaign strategy, but the acting alone style of Hung and her campaign office director Joe Chen-Chung (喬正中) enraged the core decision makers, including, Director of Organizational Development Committee Su Jun-pin (蘇俊賓), Director of Administration Committee Lin Yu-hsien (林祐賢), and most importantly Secretary-General Lee Shu-chuan (李四川). They influenced the chairman Eric Chu's decision and actions about "changing Hung".

The third stage is from the party congress meeting to the extempore congress meeting on October 17, where Hung was rescinded as the party's president candidate. The relationship between Hung and KMT decision makers was worsened along with the frequent public polls showing slim opportunity that Hung would win the election. This is the most critical stage to evaluate the theory of spiral of deinstitutionalization, as in the field (KMT) both groups rely their actions on field opinion and public opinion, while the practice is "changing Hung".

2. The Match of Observation and Theoretical Expectation

Public and field opinions are critical means by which KMT decision makers justified their practice of "changing Hung". In the first stage (April 20 to June 13), supporting for Hung was the majority inside the party. To KMT supporters the public polls of average 46.6% well justified that Hung can be the right candidate to compete with DPP's chairman Tsai Ying-wen.⁷

As the theoretical framework suggests, the tipping point (converting the opposite voice to cooperate with the majority) was quickly reached when the field opinion was inconsistent with the greater pressure from public opinion. This is the stage where key actors and groups were not allied. The Secretary-General Lee Shu-chuan put aside their proposal of urging chairman Chu to run for the election. But the Director of Organizational Development Committee Su Jun-pin and

7 While there has been systematical explanation for this figure, ours is that (1) the poll question wording, (2) DPP supporters' calculation, and (3) KMT supporters' sentiment about the absence of candidate lead to this result. First, the questions of the internal poll conducted in June include "Do you support Hung Hsiu-Chu or not" (請問你支持或不支持洪秀柱?) and "Comparing DPP's Tsai Ying-wen and KMT's Hung Hsiu-Chu, which one will you support as the president?" (在民進黨的蔡英文和國民黨的洪秀柱中, 請問您會支持哪一位來做總統?) KMT supporters were given no options but choosing "support" and "Hung". Second, DPP supporters knew well that KMT chairman Eric Chu is more competitive than Hung to compete against Tsai. It is hence likely that they strategically chose Hung in telephone surveys, aiming at blocking Chu. Third, right before the polls KMT supporters have been worried and anxious about the absence of a presidential candidate. It is likely that they expressed their support of whomever is on the list.

Director of Administration Committee Lin Yu-hsien had showed their unwillingness to cooperate with Hung. Our insider's reports show that Su is the key actor that had been opposing Hung from the beginning of the campaign.

The second stage (June 13 to July 19) is when these key actors of KMT decided to allied and oppose the practice of officially nominating Hung as the presidential candidate. Hung's public talks about "One China, one interpretation" and "I cannot recognize the existence of ROC" triggered such actions. Pressures and complains from within KMT, such as senior officers and local leaders such as Liao Liouyi (廖了以), Chang Jung-wei (張榮味), and Cheng Ru-Fen (鄭汝芬), and from outside KMT started to put pressure to KMT decision makers to consider NOT to formally nominate Hung on July 19. KMT entered the phenomenon of deinstitutionalization. Given that the head of the Congress Wang Jin-Pyng remained silent about his willingness to replace Hung and no other candidates available, Chairman Chu followed the legal procedure to complete the nomination.

To us, these first two stages make KMT a near-perfect case to evaluate the spiral of deinstitutionalization theory. Decision makers were divided into two groups, including those who liked to keep staying on the path (united and supporting Hung) and those who prefer changing the path (rescinding Hung and call someone better as the presidential candidate). The former alliance was the majority in the first stage but not in the second stage as the anti-Hung alliance empowered themselves with both field and public opinions.⁸

What happened in the three months of the third stage (July 19 to October 17) seems to fit the theoretical framework. This is a pattern consistent with the downward spiral of silence in Figure 1. On August 6 the chairman of People-First Party (PFP) James Soong (宋楚瑜) declared that he would run in the presidential election. Since then, Hung suffered even more lower poll figures.⁹ Hung and her alliance, including KMT's Institute of National Research and Development and KMT's think tank National Policy Foundation (NPF), formulated a series of policy proposals as

⁸ For example, internal poll showed that Hung's support has dropped from 46% to 33.8% in early July (<http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20150707000427-260102>) while public polls in general showed that Hung's support is no higher than 30%.

⁹ Internal poll showed that Hung's support continued to drop to lower than 20% (<http://www.ettoday.net/news/20150819/552385.htm> and <http://news.tvbs.com.tw/politics/news-619853/>), while public polls show a similar pattern (15% and 21%).

defense against Soong. Some KMT legislators cooperated and endorsed the policies but the KMT administrative organizations were slow in action. For example, KMT was supposed to full-fledged to run the campaign in July but Hung's office even did not receive the party's staff name list and money to run a series of national activities by the end of September. Youth branch and local branch attributed their delayed actions to the reelection of the Standing Committee of the Kuomintang Central Executive Committee. The cultural and communication branch joined Hung's alliance but did not go along well with Hung in terms of who taking the lead and the if quality of materials are acceptable to print. Our tracking of online activities of Chu and Hung's Facebook public fan pages echoed this switch. Hung suffered the decrease in the number of active registered fans from 73,418 (September 8-14) to 68,170 (September 15-21), then from 61,922 (September 22-28) down to 46,999 (September 29-October 5).

These incompatible problems are both a cause and a consequence of the opposition alliance's actions. Hung did feel the frustration and asked around on September 26 if it is ok that she resigned. This is about the time the opposition alliance became the majority, and the alliance gained the support of Secretary-General Lee Shu-Chuan and chairman Eric Chu. These days the two groups contacted for few times. Lee represented the opposition alliance to pass the message if Hung resigned Chu would take over. Chu joined Lee in the second talk with Hung the next day but Hung, based on her judgment that KMT will collapse if she resigned, refused to resign. This can be seen as the last time that the majority alliance held out the olive branch before the national day on October 10.

As we observed from the whole process and interactions between the key actors, we saw that Hung and her office continued to believe in the legal procedure to justify her candidacy and ignore the expansion of the opposition alliance that kept drawing legitimacy of its actions from both field and public opinion. The voice and reaction from Hung's side became weaker. On October 7, standing committee member Jiang Shuo-Ping (江碩平) sent out the issue to hold an extempore congress to solve this Hung case. The opposition alliance hence landed "united" to isolate Hung and her office. The practice of "changing Hung" was realized in the national extempore congress meeting held on October 17. Hung was rescinded as the party's president candidate and chairman Chu completed the legal process of replacing Hung to run the election

with the approval of 812 out of 891 national representatives who attended the congress that day.¹⁰ In effect, 993 representatives showed up that day but 102 left the hall earlier. This scene showed to us how the minority expressed their silence.¹¹

This case of KMT talks to the theory: once field opinion swings toward opposing a practice (“changing Hung”) the spiral of silence exerts less pressure on other insiders to abandon the practice. Hung’s resistance came mainly from her normative motives but it is an importance source of her ignorance of a new majority-minority balance within KMT.

3. Extra Insights Drawn from Observation

The theoretical framework guides us to see how the minority voice became majority by empowering itself with both field and public opinion, consolidating its alliance, and making the other actors to conform with the new majority, or at least making the new minority silent. Although the episodes fit quite well with what the theory of spiral of deinstitutionalization suggests, we like to add four more points that the theory has not detailed.

First, it is not clear if the whole story of KMT’s deinstitutionalization is built upon the fear of isolation. Hung’s alliance shrank primarily due to the pressure of both field and public opinion. It is possible that members of this alliance are still KMT members and feared that they become minority and labelled. What we could add here is that under the same roof the fear of being labelled or isolated can be stronger than fear being in the minority side of an issue.

Second, strategic motives drive the use of both field and public opinion. KMT primary administrators seemed divided in the first and second stage in terms of opposing or protecting Hung. The minority in the first two stages are not silent and doing nothing. Instead, they silently empowered themselves by given public poll figures (proving that they are right: Hung is a weak and not capable candidate for KMT) and using such information as means to achieve their goals. Spiral of deinstitutionalization may not be just a one way down or up spiral process. We suspect that it can be a battle with multiple battlegrounds, such as using field opinion to confront the other group within KMT, while creating another battleground outside the field, such as using

10 <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2015/10/17/448592/Hung-forced.htm>

11 <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/paper/924666>

field opinion to influence public opinion and then employing the favorable public opinion as means of attack.

Although we don't have more data showing that the attacking side on the third stage created or generated favorable polls, we suspect that such actions fit the expectation of strategic motives and were likely to have occurred. The attacking side's news media alliance outside KMT is important helpers to create such favorable atmosphere. Not to say that DPP is also likely to adopt similar means to redistribute the public's attention to the chaos of KMT or to keep KMT's attention on this "changing Hung" issue.

Third, in theory identification with a field could moderate the views of those in the minority to resist conversion. In this case, we have seen that Hung interpreted her strong identification with KMT as the primary motive to "keep fighting" (i.e., not resigning from the candidacy as a means to save and unite KMT). However, in the third stage, the majority group took advantage of such identification with KMT as an excuse to reject Hung. This strategic move of calling for other alliance's identification became the new majority's means to conquer the loyal minority.

Fourth, resource arrangement can be a critical cause of division within the field. The fights between groups within KMT are likely to originate in quarrels between stakeholders. If Hung and her office have sufficient resources and did not need to completely rely on the financial, personnel and organizational assistance from, her team would not have been surpassed by the minority so quickly.

Six people are critical in this dynamic as we like to recap below: Because Hung's office director Joe Chen-Chung was strong in his attitudes of protecting Hung, initiated a series of quarrel with the director of Organizational Development Committee Su Jun-pin, who later detained Hung's office and started to make alliance with Secretary-General Lee Shu-chuan. This further influenced the director of Administration Committee Lin Yu-hsien, and finally chairman Eric Chu. Here we present how power politics functions. We see that the quarrels and debates about poll results are excuses or covers of purposes. In theory field and public opinion are static and neutral but in this case they are effective means or tools by which to achieve the goals, particularly effective to a political party like KMT that has been sensitive to poll figures.

Conclusion

As political scientists start applying the complex-system approach to study party politics and as business scholars start to apply communication theories to study deinstitutionalization, we prospect a new possibility to study and explain politics within a political party. This study, departing from a scientific realist inquiry about mechanism, employs a systematically collected field observation data to evaluate Clemente and Roulet's (2015) "the spiral of deinstitutionalization" framework. Based on analysis of news events and internal reports within Kuomintang from April 20 to October 17, 2015, we are able to restore the whole story and provide details that contribute to enriching the framework for future organizational and political party studies.

Basically, the story evolves along the expectation of the theory: minority in KMT that was suppressed by field opinion and public opinion in the beginning expanded its alliance to influence field opinion and then use both field and public opinion to rescind Hung Hsiu-Chu's candidacy. Drowning from our field observation data, we like to suggest four points to the framework: First, fear of being in the minority in the theory should be better understood as fear of being labeled or isolated from those in power. Second, actors in the field can create, use, and manipulate both field and public opinion for their strategic motives. Third, identification with the field is not always a factor of resistance but can be a factor of coercion, conformity, or exclusion. Fourth, power relationship among key actors within an institution is fundamental to understand the development of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization. The origin of a spiral dynamics of deinstitutionalization came from competition for resource arrangement.

Although the field observation presented here enriches the theory of spiral of deinstitutionalization, there are some limits prohibits us from providing deeper details for this study. First, we were not able to reach out for the key actors and check the extent to which our interpretation and description fit their true motives. We welcome a series of interviews with them by which we could know more about (1) how key actors create and maneuver field opinion and (2) how these field opinions are connected or linked to public opinion. Future studies into this field are very welcomed, as these mechanisms go beyond the original theory and reach a broader field of human politics and the future of democracy.

Future studies may not need to adopt the same framework and continue to adopt the analogy of “spiral of silence”. Instead, we look forward to more studies that both create meaningful and useful analogy and at the same time take into account our four points. Clemente and Roulet’s work is a great beginning and a milestone for the cooperation between business scholars and political scientists. We expect that future works following down this path will not only render descriptive power for cases like the one of this paper, but will contribute to a human-politics framework that explain and predict phenomenon that are critical to both disciplines.

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