

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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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 believe that this framework facilitates explanation about how the decision of nominating Hung Hsiu-Chu as the party's first female presidential candidate was replaced three months before the Election Day. We interpret the whole

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story and provide details that contribute to enriching the framework for future organizational and political party research.

KEYWORDS: Deinstitutionalization; KMT; public opinion; party politics.

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

The case we selected for this study is the controversy about how the Kuomintang, or the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), dealt with its candidate nominee Hung Hsiu-Chu (洪秀柱), the deputy chair of Legislative Yuan, approximately six months before the 2016 presidential election. This case is salient and important for this study of deinstitutionalization because the KMT, which has been in power for the past eight years, has been challenged since 2013 for its ideology of maintaining positive relationships with Mainland China in terms of both economics and politics. How it fell into chaos and became deinstitutionalized in 2015 demands a theoretical explanation to provide a 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 as the key factor in the second alternation of ruling party in 2008 after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)'s rule from 2000 to 2008. Voters seemed to have given a mandate to the KMT to maintain interactions with Mainland China, and the KMT managed to meet their expectations on this matter. However, as Taiwanese consciousness and ethnic identification rises, the progressive actions that pave avenues of interaction between Mainland China and Taiwan start to lose their legitimacy. An atmosphere of pessimism arose at the time when cross-Strait discussions concerning the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), a political arrangement that aimed to liberalize trade in services between the two economies, was initiated 2010. As this sentiment grew, at a time when the KMT continued down the path of discussions with Mainland China, the party was forced to confront the incongruence between its will and that of the majority of voters.

On March 18, 2014, a group of young scholars and students broke into the Legislative Yuan, and used it as a radical means to call the public's attention to the Ma

administration's attempt to ratify the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA), a treaty that was an extension of ECFA signed in June 2013. This so-called Sunflower Movement, which "occupied the [Taiwanese] Congress," was the result of a continuing social movement against the ratification of CSSTA. This movement, in which 500,000 citizens participated, successfully called island-wide attention to the controversial trade talks with Mainland China and led to the KMT's defeat in the 7-in-1 local election at the end of 2014. Interpreted as a strong signal of resentment toward the Ma Ying-Jeou (馬英九) administration, Ma resigned from the KMT chairmanship 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 a high approval rate as the new chairman of the KMT on January 17, 2015.

In the face of the 2016 Presidential and Congressional elections, the KMT fell into deep chaos in the spring of 2015, as they struggled to nominate a proper presidential candidate to compete with the DPP's chairman Tsai Ing-Wen (蔡英文) and her group of legislative candidates. The KMT had been silent during the whole month between Tsai's declaring her run for the office on March 11 and DPP's formal nomination on April 13, 2015.

From March to June 2015, KMT supporters found themselves in an embarrassing situation in which they found no one to lead their campaign. As no one expressed willingness to lead the election and compete, including Chairman Chu, Hung became the only choice and completed the KMT's entire nomination process on July 15.¹ This led to a problem, as KMT elites and supporters were suddenly faced with the implications of having Hung as the party's only leader. As poll results continued to show that Hung had no means of winning the election (Hung seldom polled higher than 30% and Tsai never lower than 40%), rumors within the party and across the news media emerged and continued to generate suspicions about the KMT's attempts to recruit Chu to replace Hung. From July to October, Chu and Hung kept rejecting the rumors in public, but on October 14, Chu sent his apology to Hung and the KMT's Central Standing Committee passed the proposal to rescind Hung's candidacy, leaving society astonished. On October 17, in the extempore congress a majority of the 891 KMT representatives present approved Chu's nomination and formally rescinded Hung's candidacy.

While some Taiwan political observers tried to comment on this chaos in October in terms of (1) poll figures that determine elites' actions, (2) the betrayal of the

¹A KMT member, former Health Minister Yang Chih-Liang (楊志良) joined the nomination process on April 22, 2015, but he did not pass the threshold of self-nomination on May 18, 2015.

“replace Hung” camp against the authentic, deep-blue “retain Hung” camp and (3) the struggle for power between Ma, Chu, and Wang Jin-Pyng (王金平), the Chairman of Legislative Yuan (Chin, 2015; Cole, 2015; Hioe, 2015; McLean-Dreyfus, 2015; Turton, 2015; Wang, 2015; Wildau, 2015), a few questions remain untouched and unanswered. How could the dislike of Hung form a force that lead to a repeal of her candidacy within six months? Was it simply because of poll figures and her “ideological” and “pro-unification” campaign language? Could this uncommon and dramatic change in the presidential candidate nominee, which occurred within Taiwan’s largest political party, simply be attributed to the calculation of winning the election? How could this happen, given that Hung had gone through all of the required legal nomination processes set by the KMT itself? How could the polls, showing that Hung had a slim chance of winning, create this shift in decision? Most importantly, how did the dispute at the elite level interact with the ambivalence at the mass public level in the process of making this dramatic decision? Current observers’ comments on this event fell short of providing a systematic explanation of how the cleavage within KMT occurred a few months before the Election Day.

As a special case in Taiwan party politics, the KMT’s internal chaos from April to October of 2015 requires a theoretical understanding. 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 facilitates the explanation about how “field opinion” within the party conflict with “public opinion” revealed by news polls and how such dynamics lead to the deinstitutionalization of the KMT. We further add our observations and suggestions about how to advance the framework.

By definition, 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. 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” (Clemente & Roulet, 2015, p. 36).

This study, following this definition, is about how KMT became divided and then internally chaotic within the year of 2016 regarding its practice of nominating a presidential candidate. We did not mean to expand the meaning of concept to a moral

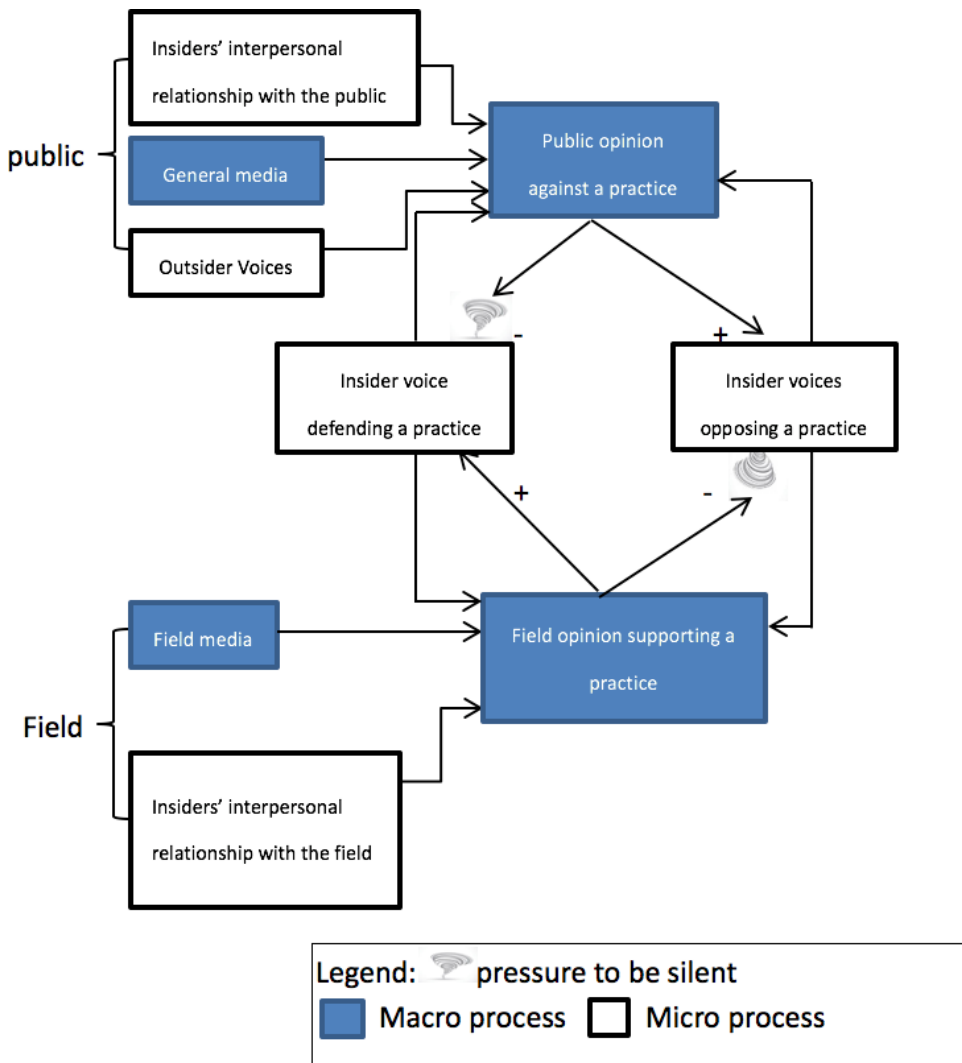
one, which further refers to the “destruction,” “deterioration,” and/or “disintegration” of the party organization; instead, we focus on the “division” and “dynamics” of KMT’s internal conflicts regarding the candidate nominees. Therefore, when we say KMT was “deinstitutionalized” we do not imply that the chaos was created by Hung or any specific actor. We also hesitate to predict or imply the segmentation of the party beyond 2017 but suggest that we think about what could happen to the party’s system of decision-making based upon what we learned from the theoretical framework.

Theoretical Framework

Clemente and Roulet’s (2015) theoretical framework of “spiral of deinstitutionalization” borrows the analogy of Noelle-Neumann (1974) theory of spiral of silence and applies 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 the minority, they may 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 means rather than simply a reference for key actors to achieve their goal, such as whether or not to engage in a practice, or abandon a decision.

Outside the institution the news media are a “crucial vehicle for assessing the climate of opinion at the public level” (Clemente & Roulet, 2015, p. 15). Inside the institution, or the “field,” the field media plays the crucial role of targeting 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 fears being 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. In the KMT’s case, when public opinion polls showed increasing support for “replace Hung” key actors inside KMT, who opposed Hung, felt less pressure when expressing their opinion.

In addition to 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 an actors' perception of being in the minority (p. 34). To elaborate on these four factors, we can take the group of actors in the KMT



Source: Clemente and Roulet (2015, Figure 3).

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

who dislike Hung as an example. They took no action against Hung in the first stage of her nomination, i.e., they conformed to the majority supporting her to represent the KMT because (1) they believed that “standing united” was a moral standard that every political party member should hold to, (2) they relied on field opinion (poll figures) to justify that their cooperative actions, (3) they needed a clear message and action (staying quiet) for themselves to avoid long-term cognitive conflicts between disliking her and having to support her, and/or (4) they wanted to conform to the majority to avoid being labeled as minority troublemakers.

Figure 1 is a representation of **Clemente and Roulet’s (2015)** theoretical framework, which gives us 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 on a practice, the influence of public opinion on field opinion slows down and results in an “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.

Research Method

Scientific realism is a branch of epistemology that emphasizes the construction of a system of thought. Like positivism, it demands evidence and logical reasoning; unlike positivism, it prioritizes theoretical framework based on logical reasoning rather than causal inference. We initiate our inquiry about the deinstitutionalization of KMT during the 2016 presidential campaign in the scientific realist way and take **Clemente and Roulet’s (2015)** framework as a reference (rather than simply applying it) to the (re)construction of the dynamics within KMT.

We take three approaches to contrast our empirical observation of the KMT case with the theoretical framework. First, we collect and analyze a journal of the news and the KMT’s internal daily reports from April 20, the first day of the nomination process, to October 17, 2015, when Hung’s candidacy was rescinded. This helps us to

systematically evaluate the theory of a spiral of deinstitutionalization and observe how the KMT succeeded and failed online and off-line during the campaign. Second, we conduct an indirect observation of Hung Hsiu-Chu and Eric Chu's Facebook public fan pages between September 8 and October 5, 2015, the most critical month. This provides some sense of the dynamics in which the majority group was losing their influence. The third and most important approach is direct participant observation, which has been used in political science to understand politicians and politics (Fenno, 1978; Jorgensen, 2015). One author of this study was granted permission to participate in core meetings at the KMT headquarters, where he witnessed the changes of the "climate" within the party. He started observing before January 2015 and continued his work throughout all stages of the "replace Hung" event. He wrote a weekly journal using spreadsheets that detailed dates, events, actors, statements, and relevant news reports. This journal was cross-validated by two other KMT staff members (one was working at the headquarters of the KMT and the other in Hung's campaign office) in November and December of 2015. Both indicated that the participant's journal matches their experiences.

Findings and Discussion

Our one-year long participant 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 observation details that match the predictions drawn from the theoretical framework. The third part focuses on additional insights that go beyond the theoretical framework.

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 announcement that she would 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 had gained rich experience in her legislative career since 1989 and won eight consecutive terms as a KMT legislator. She has been named several times in different organizations as the top

legislator for her excellent overall professional performance. However, to the general public she has not been seen as a nationally known figure inside or outside of the KMT. Hence, her active participation in the presidential candidate nomination process on April 20 in the face of the absence of another candidate was viewed unfavorably (because she was not seen as the strongest candidate) but appreciated (because she is the only one that declared her intention to seek the party nomination) by the primary actors within the KMT. In this first stage, although no one in the KMT officially sought the party nomination key actors, such as the Legislative Yuan Speaker Wang Jin-Ping and Vice President Wu Den-yih (吳敦義) were viewed as possible alternatives for presidential candidate if Hung did not meet the nomination criteria. Therefore, by the time Hung passed the “popularity check” of the KMT with three poll figures (an average of 46% support nationwide) on June 13, three groups had formed within the party: one advocating that Wang be called upon, another for Wu, and a third favoring Chairman Chu. None of the groups were satisfied with Hung as the presidential candidate. Therefore, the rumor about “replacing Hung” started to circulate in the news media right after the nomination process was completed. Note that the rumors were ceaseless after Hung’s nomination, leading Chu, the KMT, and Hung to continue expressing to the news media that the nomination was fully legitimate, endorsed and irrevocable by anyone (Hsu, 2015). Rumors were even more rampant later in October (Tiezzi, 2015).

The second stage covers 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 what she said and continuing to evaluate her. Hung made two statements that shocked both the party and the public. First, she interpreted cross-strait relations as “One China, Same Interpretation,” which was inconsistent with the KMT’s “92 consensus” policy emphasizing “One China, Separate Interpretations.” The second was her statement that she could not recognize the Republic of China (ROC) (Shih, 2017). Because her campaign statements seriously influenced her popularity within the KMT (Jen, 2015), she and her campaign office were warned, and their actions were constricted in order to avoid their acting alone right before the party congress (Yang, 2015).

Hung and her campaign office were expected to follow KMT campaign strategy, but the tendency to act alone presented by 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 Chairman Eric Chu’s decision and actions in “replacing Hung.”

The third stage is from the party congress meeting to the extempore congress meeting on October 17, where Hung was removed as the party's official presidential candidate. The relationship between Hung and KMT decision makers worsened at a time when frequent public polls showed Hung had a slim opportunity of winning the election. This is the most critical stage to evaluating the theory of spiral of deinstitutionalization, as in the field (KMT) both groups based their actions on field and public opinion, while the practice here refers to "replacing Hung."

The Agreement of Participant Observation and Theoretical Expectation

Public and field opinions were a critical means by which KMT decision-makers justified their practice: "replacing Hung." In the first stage (April 20 to June 13), support for Hung was the majority position inside the party. To KMT supporters the public polls, an average 46.6%, well-justified that Hung was the right candidate to compete with DPP Chairwoman Tsai Ing-Wen.²

As the theoretical framework suggests, the tipping point (converting opposing voices 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 the proposal of urging Chairman Chu to run for election. But the Director of Organizational Development Committee Su Jun-pin and Director of Administration Committee Lin Yu-hsien showed their unwillingness to cooperate with Hung.³

The second stage (June 13 to July 19) is when these key actors of KMT decided to ally and oppose the practice of officially nominating Hung as the presidential candidate. Hung's public talk about "One China, Same Interpretation" and her stating that she "cannot recognize the existence of the ROC" triggered such actions. Pressures

²While there have been systematical explanations for this figure, ours is that (1) the poll question wording, (2) DPP supporter calculation, and (3) KMT supporter sentiment about the absence of a 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 beside "support" and "Hung." Second, DPP supporters knew well that KMT Chairman Chu was more competitive than Hung 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 had been worried and anxious about the absence of a presidential candidate. It is likely that they expressed their support for whomever was on the list.

³Our insider's reports show that Su is the key actor that had been opposing Hung from the beginning of the campaign.

and complaints from within the KMT, such as senior officers and local leaders like Liao Liouyi (廖了以), Chang Jung-wei (張榮味), and Cheng Ru-Fen (鄭汝芬), and from outside the KMT started to put pressure on KMT decision-makers to consider not formally nominating Hung on July 19. The KMT was confronted with the phenomenon of deinstitutionalization. Given that the head of the Congress, Wang Jin-Pyng, remained silent about his willingness to replace Hung and there were no other candidates available, Chairman Chu followed legal procedure to complete the nomination process.

To us, these first two stages make the KMT a near-perfect case for evaluating the spiral of deinstitutionalization theory. Decision-makers were divided into two groups, including those who wanted to stay the path (united and supporting Hung) and those who preferred another course (rescinding Hung). 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.⁴

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 presented 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. From this time Hung's poll numbers dropped further.⁵ Hung and her alliance, including the KMT's Institute of National Research and Development and KMT think tank National Policy Foundation (NPF), formulated a series of policy proposals as a defense against Soong. Some KMT legislators cooperated and endorsed the policies but the KMT administrative organizations were slow in action. For example, the KMT was supposed to run a full-fledged campaign in July, but Hung's office had not even received the party's staff name list and money to run a series of national activities by the end of September. The 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

⁴For example, internal poll showed that Hung's support had dropped from 46% to 33.8% in early July (see <<http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20150707000427-260102>>) while public polls in general showed that Hung's support was no higher than 30%. We were not able to access KMT head actors' closed door meetings and could not be sure of how they debated the public opinion poll figures. However, we did indicate that some polls were conducted and released to the public by KMT itself. Therefore, we have theoretical reasons to believe that the minority who opposed Hung's candidacy gained leverage from these polls, by which they expanded their alliance, composed of local party members and legislative candidates who were worried about losing battles to DPP candidates in their districts.

⁵Internal poll showed that Hung's support continued to drop to lower than 20% (see <<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%).

but did not coordinate well with Hung in terms of who would take the lead and on the question of whether the quality of materials were acceptable to print. Our tracking of online activities of Chu and Hung's Facebook public fan pages echoed this switch at the elite level. Hung suffered a 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 she was expected to resign. This is about the time the opposition alliance became the majority, and it gained the support of Secretary-General Lee and Chairman Chu. During this period, the two groups met several times. Lee represented the opposition alliance and passed along the message if Hung resigned Chu would take over. Chu joined Lee in the second talk with Hung the next day but Hung, judging that the KMT would collapse if she resigned, refused. 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, Hung and her office continued to believe the legal procedure justified her candidacy and ignored the expansion of the opposition alliance, which continued to draw legitimacy for 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 summons to hold an extempore congress to solve the Hung case. The opposition alliance hence became "united" to isolate Hung and her office. The practice of "replacing Hung" was realized in the national extempore congress meeting held on October 17. Hung's official nomination as the party's presidential candidate was rescinded 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 ("Hung 'forced to accept,'" 2015). In effect, 993 representatives showed up at the party congress, lower than the half of the total number of KMT representatives, 102 left the hall earlier, and more than 300 representatives did not show up in person but sent their deputies. A request for an anonymous vote was rejected. This scenario shows to us how the minority expressed their silence and how this case is more than simply a struggle at the discourse level. Both sides within the KMT deployed strategies to affect the formal procedure that a candidate must undergo to become the official nominee, as well as the formal procedure rescinding a candidate's official nomination (Shi, 2015).

This case of the KMT addresses the theory: once field opinion swings toward opposing a practice ("replacing 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 was an important source of her misunderstanding and/or misreading of a new majority-minority balance within KMT.

Extra Insights Drawn from Participant 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 conform with the new majority, or at least silencing the new minority. Although the episode fits quite well with what the theory of spiral of deinstitutionalization suggests, we would like to add four more points that the theory has not detailed.

First, the fear of isolation within a political party like the KMT is different from that in a general public context as described in the original spiral of silence theory, and from that in a business entity, which puts less emphasis on organizational loyalty (as described in the spiral of deinstitutionalization theory). The fear of isolation in the original spiral of silence theory refers to the fear of making one's own voter preferences known, while the fear of isolation in the spiral of deinstitutionalization theory refers to the avoidance of being in a minority that cannot sustain a practice, a proposal, or a decision. In our study of the KMT, Hung's alliance shrank primarily due to the pressure of both field and public opinion. Members of the "replace Hung" camp were less concerned about being in the minority and more worried about being branded as troublemakers who violated the publicly-validated nomination procedures. What we could add here is that, under the same roof, the fear of being labelled as troublemakers within a party can be stronger than fear of being in the minority.

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 was not silent, nor did they do nothing. Instead, they silently empowered themselves by providing public poll figures (proving that they were right: Hung was a weak and incompetent candidate for the KMT) and using such information as a means to achieve their goals. Spiral of deinstitutionalization may not be just a one-way downward or upward spiral process. We suspect that it can be a battle with multiple battlegrounds, such the use of field opinion to confront the other group within the KMT, while creating another battleground outside the field, such as using field opinion to influence public opinion and then employing favorable public opinion as a means of attack.

Although we do not have more data showing that the attacking side in 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 the KMT was an important ally in creating such a favorable atmosphere. It further goes that the DPP was also likely to adopt similar means to redirect the public's attention to the chaos within the KMT or to keep the KMT's attention on the "replacing 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 the KMT as the primary motive to "keep fighting" (i.e., not resigning from the candidacy as a means to save and unite the KMT). However, in the third stage, the majority group took advantage of such identification with the KMT as an excuse to reject Hung. This strategic move of calling for identification with another alliance became the new majority's means of conquering the loyal minority.

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

Six people are critical in this dynamic, as we would like to recap below: Because Hung's office director, Joe Chen-Chung, was strong in his resolve to protect Hung, he initiated a series of quarrels with Director of Organizational Development Committee, Su Jun-pin, who later detained Hung's office and started to form an 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 function. We see that the quarrels and debates about poll results are excuses meant to obscure intent. In theory field and public opinion are static and neutral but in this case they are an effective means or tool by which to achieve goals, and particularly effective to a political party like the KMT that is sensitive to poll figures.

Conclusion

Institutions are human processes, "a mechanism, a process within which and upon which individual actors pursue their goals" (Lane, 1996, p. 379). As political scientists start applying this scientific realism perspective and the complex-system approach to study party politics, and as business scholars start to apply communication

theories to study deinstitutionalization, we see a new possibility for studying and explaining politics within a political party. This study, departing from a scientific realist inquiry about mechanism, employs 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 the Kuo-mintang from April 20 to October 17, 2015, we are able to recreate the whole story and provide details that contribute to enriching the framework for future organizational and political party studies.

Basically, the story evolves in accordance with theoretical expectations: the minority in the KMT, which was suppressed by field opinion and public opinion in the beginning, expanded its alliance to influence field opinion, it then used both field and public opinion as leverage to rescind Hung Hsiu-Chu's candidacy. Immersed in our field observation data, we would like to suggest four points for future development of 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, the power relationship among key actors within an institution is fundamental to understanding the development of institutionalization and deinstitutionalization. The origin of a spiral dynamic of deinstitutionalization came from competition for resource arrangement.

Although the field observation presented here enriches the framework of the spiral of deinstitutionalization, we find that the original framework has some limits that are worth discussion. First, although we were not able to reach out to the key actors and check the extent to which our interpretation and description fit their true motives, our participatory observation provides some insights that help fill the gaps: From an outsider's perspective, Hung's statement on “One China, Same Interpretation” led to her failure, but this should not have cost her the candidacy if she was officially nominated via a formal procedure. Our observation suggests that blaming Hung for this statement was the KMT legislators' leverage by which to deal with the pressure placed on them for losing in their own districts to DPP candidates. And the KMT's strategy for the 2016 joint presidential and congressional elections was preserving and maximizing seats in Congress to make it a strong opposition party even if Hung lost the presidential election. Therefore, Hung's statement was heavily used as an excuse by the leading actors in the KMT to both comfort legislative candidates who wanted to keep their seats and to generate pressure within the party to make Hung's supporters conform. To keep filling the gap between theoretical perspectives and empirical

observation, we welcome a series of interviews with the actors 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. By definition, deinstitutionalization does not refer to a static concept but a dynamic process along with “institutionalization” and “re-institutionalization.” Future works are welcomed to further deliberate about the concepts of deinstitutionalization that may differ in their definition across disciplines and fields of application (e.g., [Clemente & Roulet, 2015](#); [Harmel, Svasand, & Mjelde, 2016](#); [Janda, 1980](#); [Michels, 1949](#); [Panebianco, 1988](#)). We also look forward to studies that bring both concepts together and complete this political mechanism framework.

We acknowledge that there is room for improving our participant observation or field work as guided by experienced sociologists and anthropologists (e.g., [Hume & Mulcock, 2012](#); [Musante & DeWalt, 2010](#); [Spradley, 2016](#)). This study was initiated at a fortuitous time when the theoretical framework and an empirical case interacted. We could not have foreseen the case or deployed better field observation plans. We believe that more interdisciplinary collaboration will be needed in terms of both methodology and methods when it comes to studying politics within a political party.

The theoretical framework we examined in this study provides some insights for more case studies. Future studies of the politics of presidential candidate nomination processes will benefit from this framework and its modified versions, which will shed light on the study of political policies that involve either corporations or governmental agencies. For example, the officers in a bureau of energy may become divided along whether or not to abandon nuclear power. Either side may quote public polls for their needs and as their means. Although this framework helps uncover the dynamics within an organization, the purpose of this study is not simply an application of the theoretical framework to the KMT but an attempt to enrich the framework as a means of advancing our inquiry about a political process.

Future studies may not need to adopt the same framework and continue to adopt the analogy of a “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 \(2015\)](#) 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 provide descriptive power for cases like the one in this paper, but also contribute to better understanding of human-politics dynamics that explains phenomena that are critical to both social and business sciences.

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