

THE LOCAL DIMENSION OF IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN A WEB-BASED POLITICAL ORGANIZATION: THE TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE PARTY

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I. INTRODUCTION

This paper studies the discourses of Taiwanese nationalism represented by the web site of a marginal political party in Taiwan. The purpose of this paper is to examine how the web site serves as an effective way for the Internet to create cultural resistance. This paper explores the voices of Taiwanese independence in the web site environment. As Internet researcher Ananda Mitra (1997) notes, web sites allow unrestricted authorship for the web site owner, and he or she is able to produce texts and access audiences all over the world. This paper shares Mitra's view by examining the representation of Taiwanese identity on the Internet. By focusing on the web site of the Taiwan Independence Party (TAIP),¹ this paper addresses an important dimension of the Internet that has been discussed in related web-studies, that is, the "local" dimension of a web site in presenting marginal voices in domestic politics.

Web sites in general create a virtual environment for under-represented people to produce their voice of authenticity (Nakamura 2000). As the Internet allows people who are under oppression in the real world to overcome, at least to some degree, restrictions along racial and gender lines, it creates a new kind of "identity tourism," inviting people who surf the Internet to be creative about their social identity in the actual world. Internet users are thus able to enjoy a new form of travel, which enables them to appropriate their racial identity into a secure position even if they don't encounter it in real life (Nakamura 1995). This paper addresses the

¹ The Taiwan Independence Party is abbreviated with TAIP in this paper. The paper also uses DPP to describe Taiwan's largest opposition party before 2000, the Democratic Progressive Party. The KMT stands for Taiwan's largest Chinese party, the Kuomintang. The term Taiwanese represents people of Taiwanese ethnicity whose ancestors lived in Taiwan before the arrival of the Chiang Kai-Shek government in 1949. Chinese stands for people of Chinese ethnicity who now live in Taiwan but followed Chiang Kai-Shek to Taiwan in 1949. In this paper, mainland Chinese stands for Chinese people who currently live in China under the rule of the government of the People's Republic of China.

concerns of marginal groups regarding their participation in local politics. As the TAIP is one of the smaller political groups striving for Taiwanese independence, the paper analyzes how its web site assists it in gaining media exposure. In this way, the party is able to compete with other political groups in Taiwanese party politics.

This paper is divided into five main sections. The first section gives an overview of the general Internet development and Information Communication Technology (ICT) penetration in Taiwan. After a brief introduction to the current political situation, the paper then provides some background on Taiwan's media industry. The ICT development is evaluated in relation to the long-term dominance of government politics in the mainstream media. The paper then focuses on one of the most marginal political groups – the TAIP – in the context of the media. The paper uses textual analysis of the party's web site content as well as personal interviews with the party leaders to analyze the social and cultural discourses significant for the media phenomenon. Data analysis is based upon information that has been available on the web site from January 2002 to January 2004. The paper also includes a discussion on the TAIP in Taiwan's online political movement and concludes with the TAIP's transformation from a marginal to a more influential position in representing Taiwan's politics in both the local and the global Internet space.

II. SIMILAR RESEARCH

Research on the Internet shows that web sites are a powerful means of communication with three foci. That is, web sites are powerful in facilitating resistance movements, promoting religious beliefs, and constructing transnational immigrant identities. As to the level of influence of resistance movements, research focusing on the Internet and its significance to the Zapatista movement shows that the Internet is able to transform a local resistance movement into a global event by addressing different groups of people in a transnational context. For instance, in the case of the Zapatista movement in Mexico, the speed and connectivity of its web site allowed local uprisings connected to the Zapatista movement to become international events at a low cost (Dominquez 2002, Froehling 1999, Grussing 2000, Russell 2001). The international focus of the Zapatista network of web sites remains intact even while Internet access in Mexico is very limited, and the Zapatista phenomenon still receives support from people outside the country. People outside Mexico who feel sympathetic to the Zapatistas receive updates on the situation by reading information posted on EZLN, an

online information network created by the Zapatistas. Thus, the resistance movement in Chiapas can be powerful, because the Zapatistas can mobilize supporters to take action when government brutality over the indigenous people takes place in Mexico. These international supporters can collectively crack down the information system of the Mexican government by "virtually sitting in" and hacking a government homepage on the Internet (Dominquez 2002).

As for religion, web sites also offer a space to broadcast religious beliefs to various religious communities. Bunt (1999) argues that people tend to use web sites to proclaim their religious worldview. In the case of Muslims in Britain, for instance, Bunt shows that British Muslim communities present their specific "British Muslim" identity by placing links to several different mosques in the United Kingdom on their web site. He points out that British Muslims demonstrate their "Muslim" views about British politics with, say, the inclusion of statements by Prime Minister Tony Blair from a visit to the Muslim Council of Britain. With the use of hyperlinks to the government web page containing Blair's speech, Bunt argues that British Muslims participate in British politics with the representation of "unified" views shown through the web site. Other similar studies about the practice of the Hindu religion show that the texts on the Internet provide their readers with "specific religious discourses" (Lal 1999, Mitra 1997). That is, the religious texts distinguish "in-group" and "out-group" readers by how they describe and structure religious discourse. Texts on religious web sites tend to "exclude" certain discourses and only speak to their "in-group" readers without offering any form of interpretation to those visitors who are either not familiar or disagree with the perspectives expressed on the web sites. For instance, strong believers of Hinduism may present in great detail traditional religious practices such as the worship of specific deities on their web sites. The "in-group" and "out-group" boundary is particularly obvious in religious web sites because the producers of these may not be concerned with providing introductory pages so that visitors who do not share the beliefs of the particular religion could be considered potential readers of the sites (Mitra 1997). More often, they may even use their web sites as an ideal forum to criticize other religions.

On the level of identity, web sites can restore cultural values for immigrants to construct their diasporic identities. Particularly for those immigrants who have left their homeland to settle in the West, a web site can build a transnational path that allows them to "look for" cultural roots that may be lost in Western societies. Emily Ignacio (2000), who studies the construction of Filipino identity on the Internet, comments that the Internet allows Filipinos to go back home and see what's happening

there. Because identity construction is so fluid, reading how “other Filipinos” think on the Internet allows Ignacio to confirm her multiple layers of identity, such as Filipina, Asian, and American. As the Internet offers information about “real Filipinos,” Ignacio is also able to find a “virtual homeland” where thousands of Filipinos like her can convene to exchange and discuss Filipino culture and society.

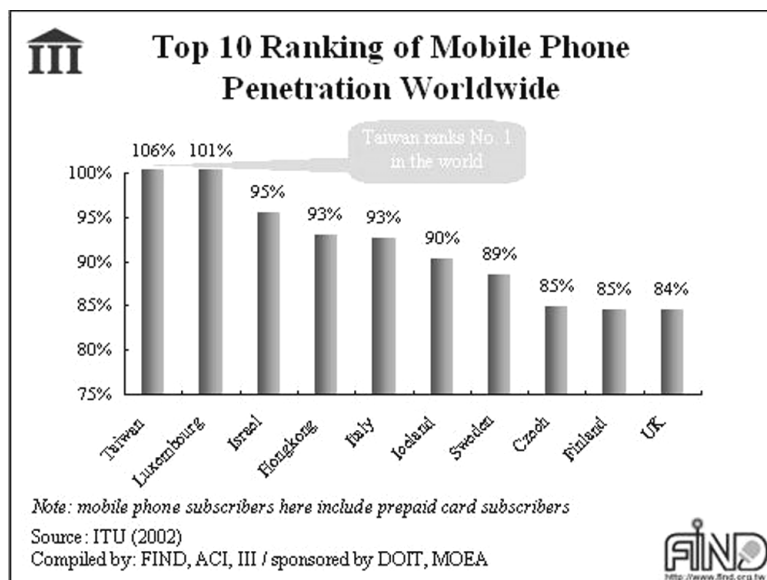
III. RECENT DEVELOPMENT OF INFORMATION COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN TAIWAN

The development of ICT in Taiwan shows that it is emerging as a competitive industry. The domestic market demonstrates rapid growth in the information infrastructure. In 2003, access to the Internet reached 53 percent of the total households (FIND 2003a). Such penetration indicates Internet readiness with promising potential to reach the majority of the Internet population with online content. It is reported that about forty percent of the total population, that is 8,570,000 people, were regular Internet users by the end of 2002 (FIND 2003a). In 1996, only two percent of the total population used this technology. By 2002, 72 percent of households had computers and 58 percent of these households subscribed to broadband services (FIND 2003b). In comparison, the domestic broadband penetration in Japan reached 12.6 million people in 2002, which constitutes 6.1 percent of the total Japanese population. However, in the same year, Taiwan had about 2.7 million broadband subscribers – or a density rate of around 9.7 percent. According to a report by the International Telecommunication Union, Taiwan ranked fourth in worldwide broadband penetration, while Japan ranked thirteenth (FIND 2003c).

The ICT development also shows a promising future in terms of international development when compared to other countries in the world. Taiwan ranked number nine among 178 economies and number three in Asia in a report on digital access published by the International Telecommunication Union (FIND 2003d). That is, while Northern Europe, headed by Sweden (1), Denmark (2), and Iceland (3), has the highest rate of Internet access in the world, Asia, under the leadership of South Korea (4), Hong Kong (7), and Taiwan, makes up to the next most developed region in terms of general Internet development. In addition, Taiwan shows an even better performance in particular technologies, such as mobile phone and Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) penetration. As shown in Figure 1, Taiwan ranked number one in mobile phone penetration. There were a total of 23.9 million mobile phone subscribers in Taiwan by the end of 2002 (FIND 2003e). The subscriber density rate is 106 percent, six percent more

than Taiwan's population. Taiwan also ranks number two, following South Korea, in DSL technology. With more than two million households, the DSL penetration rate for Taiwan was 18 percent in 2002 (FIND 2003f). It is noteworthy that Japan, which has the highest total DSL population in the world, ranks only sixth in terms of DSL penetration.

Figure 1: Top 10 Ranking of Mobile Phone Penetration Worldwide



Source: Based on International Telecommunication Union (FIND, 2003e).

IV. TAIWANESE POLITICS AND MEDIA STRUCTURE

1. Politics

Politics in Taiwan is heavily influenced by the long-term standoff between two lines of national politics: Taiwanese nationalism and Chinese nationalism. Disparity in national identity originates from the ethnic conflict among Taiwanese and Chinese, a conflict that has existed in Taiwanese society for more than five decades. One of the major causes of the ethnic conflict is due to the unjust jurisdiction of the Chinese government, led by Chiang Kai-Shek. The unfair treatment began after the historical tragedy, the 228 Incident, which took place two years after Taiwan was returned to the Republic of China (ROC) from Japan. In 1947, as many

Taiwanese were still celebrating the departure of the Japanese troops, tension between the local Taiwanese and the Chinese who arrived in Taiwan with the Chiang Kai-Shek government from Mainland China increased. A dispute on February 27, 1947, in Taipei between a female street cigarette vendor and an anti-smuggling officer from Chiang's government triggered civil disorder. The ROC's army attacked local Taiwanese and massacred nearly 30,000 civilians and imprisoned thousands more (Taiwan Communiqué 2000). The families of the victimized Taiwanese natives consider this event to be Taiwan's "holocaust." Unfortunately, the 228 Incident was never mentioned in the public record of Chiang Kai-Shek's government. The Chinese nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) administration remained repressive and corrupt and covered the brutal act of random killings. This continuous repression, followed by the KMT's high power "White Terror" policy, led to the imprisonment and execution of even more members of Taiwan's elite in the consecutive decades.

As a result, the authoritarian control of the KMT's military regime cultivated a strong sense of opposition in many native Taiwanese and implanted in them a deep-rooted bitterness toward the arrivals from the mainland (Nationmaster.com, 2003). While Chinese make up 14 percent of the total population and Taiwanese 85 percent, the Chinese have always been the most powerful ethnic group, benefiting from all kinds of resources in Taiwanese society. In hindsight, the political segregation of the KMT resulted in a significantly favorable perception on the imperial rule of Japan. To many members of the Taiwanese elite and their families, the Japanese way of living turned into a refreshing philosophy in comparison to Chiang Kai-Shek's government. They considered Taiwan as yet another colony under the Chinese nationalist regime after World War II. "Taiwanese consciousness" was formed out of the comparison between the rule of the Japanese Empire and the nationalist ROC. The discrepancy led to negation of the latter, thus raising the perception of aggressive resistance among the Taiwanese people in their participation in local politics.

Table 1: A General Comparison of Taiwanese and Chinese Nationalism

Taiwanese Nationalism	Chinese Nationalism
Taiwanese	Chinese
Anti-Kuomintang (Chiang Kai-Shek's Government)	Anti-Communism (People's Republic of China)
Pro Independence	Pro Unification with China
Taiwan vs. China	One China
Lower Social Status	Higher Social Status
Nostalgia regarding Japanese Occupation	Anti Japanese Empire

Table 1 shows the differences between Taiwanese nationalism and Chinese nationalism. Taiwanese nationalism is mostly supported by people in the Taiwanese population. Many of them are family members of the victims of the 228 Incident and hold opposite opinions to those of the ruling Kuomintang. Their political agenda aims for the political independence of Taiwan and they believe that Taiwan and China are separate countries within the international community. Supporters of Taiwanese nationalism blame Taiwan's lack of legal national status on the long-term standoff with the People's Republic of China (PRC). While rejecting Chinese rule, these people further feel nostalgic toward the Japanese occupation. Unlike most of the Chinese nationalist supporters, who oppose Japan, Taiwanese people are often very fond of any Japanese influence, including the former colonial social order as well as the more modern influence, in particular the Japanese audio and visual popular culture.

In contrast, the population's Chinese members support Chinese nationalism. The political agenda is set on the unification with China. However, these people tend to only support China under the KMT's rule rather than the current China under the leadership of a communist government. Unlike Taiwanese nationalists who seek separation, supporters of Chinese nationalism believe that Taiwan belongs to Chinese territory. They support the "One China" policy and consider all Taiwanese cultural elements as having originated in China. These Chinese have benefited from their higher social status by sharing consciousness with the KMT's government – a government that recognizes Chinese influence as the central cultural heritage that should be preserved in Taiwanese society. Their attitude toward Japan is opposite to that of the Taiwanese. These Chinese focus on the massive killings of Chinese by Japan during World War II, while the 228 Incident is seen as a less important historical event when national identity is concerned.

2. Media Structure

The media is one of the areas most influenced by politics in Taiwan. The nature of the Internet, which allows free expression of opinion by any online user, is significant to Taiwan's politics (Chen F. 1999). Generally speaking, and where mainstream media is concerned, the Taiwanese voice was silenced for a long time. Not until the lifting of martial law in 1987 has the Taiwanese voice begun to emerge again. But the Taiwanese have effectively used new electronic media to express political ideas that are in opposition to those of the government (Chen S. 1998, Feng 1995). Whereas in the early 1990's cable TV provided an alternative space for the Taiwanese nationalists to express their political agenda, in the late 1990's

the Internet became another emerging alternative media producing counter narrative to resist Chinese dominance.

The media structure in Taiwan was put under strict censorship by the Chinese government in the first forty years after the arrival of the Chinese nationalist army. In 1949, Taiwan had a total of ten radio stations. The number of radio stations grew to 33 in 1987, but more than 70 percent of these stations were either owned by the ruling party or the military (Liu 1992). The government continued to use radio to broadcast anti-communist information to local and overseas listeners. Most of the television stations in Taiwan were state-owned as well. Professionals belonging to the high-ranking managerial level in Taiwan's television industry employed very few Taiwanese people before 1987 (Wang 1993). Such long-term ethnic discrimination in the employment policies of the television industry led to an over-focus on Chinese programming. In the 1970s, for instance, the Taiwanese language began to disappear in television broadcasting because the government stipulated that Chinese language had to be used in more than 70 percent of the programming (Wang 1993). Only two Taiwanese songs were allowed to be aired every day. Similarly, in the film industry, language censorship was also a critical factor contributing to the disappearance of the Taiwanese language in Taiwan's media. In the 1960's, the production of Taiwanese language movies reached its peak with 874 movies produced. The language cleansing policy on Taiwanese came into effect in 1972 and led to a rapid drop: only 63 movies were produced in the 1970's (Lu 1998). Similarly, the discriminative structure also existed in the print business. Two major newspapers, *China Times* and *United Daily News*, occupied eighty percent of the newspaper market for more than four decades (Chen S. 1994). The two newspapers were both owned by the Chinese elite who maintained close connections with the government of Taiwan.

In contrast, alternative media in Taiwan did not break away from governmental control in the martial law period before 1987. After the lift of martial law, while the mainstream media was still dominated by the KMT's government, backyard satellite dishes started to burgeon, allowing illegal reception of foreign programs such as HBO, NHK and CNN. Illegal underground cable services that aired political channels attracted the attention of the Taiwanese audience. Because cable programming provided coverage on political and social issues that were still unavailable on mainstream media, audiences began to turn to cable services (Chu 1994). As a result, environmental groups, political minorities, and Taiwanese activists were able to advocate their anti-government agenda via the underground electronic media. A similar situation also emerged on the Internet. After the introduction of the first Internet line, Taiwan Area Network

(TANET), in 1992, students with an email account were able to discuss politics without governmental censorship on the Bulletin Board System (BBS). As the government still lacked new laws to regulate this phenomenon, a BBS talking culture on Taiwanese politics established itself. The BBS has featured the most discussed topics on Taiwanese politics since 1992 (Su and Wu 1997). The wide range of topics – from controversial issues to entertainment – discussed on TANET was in stark contrast to the content provided by the mainstream media. As the Government Information Office was still busy cracking down on the illegal operation of political cable service providers in 1993, uncensored political discussions promoting Taiwanese independence ironically existed on the BBS on TANET.

V. THE WEB SITE OF THE TAIWAN INDEPENDENCE PARTY

The Taiwan Independence Party (TAIP) is one of the three political organizations in Taiwan that support Taiwanese independence (Chung 1997). This party has the least influence in Taiwan's opposition politics, as compared to the other two organizations, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the World United Formosans for Independence (WUFI). Both the DPP and the WUFI are able to reach out to a larger number of independence supporters, as the two organizations started operating long before the TAIP. Founded in November 1996 as the smallest political opposition group and the most fundamentalist independence group in Taiwan, the TAIP has been receiving little media attention from the mainstream media. As Taiwan's mainstream media tends to favor anti-independence points of view, it has rarely covered any TAIP party news. According to my interview with the spokesman of the TAIP, even if the mainstream media covered the TAIP, the stories would always be negative.

Under such limitations, the TAIP has no choice but to rely on the most recent Internet technology to avoid media hostility, which results in the party not being able to build a positive image. The main approach the TAIP uses to reach out to the Taiwanese public is by use of the Internet, for example by posting news releases and disseminating information about the party. As a matter of fact, the TAIP is one of the earliest political parties in Taiwan to use a web site as its most important media channel in order to increase publicity. While the TAIP usually chooses mail delivery to send out newsletters to party members, it has found a new way to "talk" to its potential members by the use of the web. In fact, since the establishment of the party in 1996, the TAIP has released its announcements in the same way as one would address an audience in a real-time

news conference. The web site advocates the TAIP in terms of bypassing mainstream media and promoting its party principles on the Internet, giving the call for Taiwanese independence a strong voice.

Content of the TAIP Homepage

The TAIP homepage consists of thirteen subsections. They are (1) the most recent news releases, (2) news releases from the past three years, (3) information on affiliate offices in different Taiwanese cities, (4) an introduction to the party program and structure, (5) the party's guiding principles, (6) the party manifesto, (7) party newsletters, (8) online publications, (9) donation information, (10) a report on the party's most recent annual meeting, (11) a message from the party's chair, (12) friends from Japan, and (13) an online campaign to officially change the name of Taiwan. These subsections can be grouped into three general categories: one that sees the web site as a broadcasting center to disseminate news, one to manifest self-identity by presenting party propaganda on the web, and another one to communicate with non-party members and to form coalitions.

News Releases to Generate Media Presence

The TAIP web site maintains a tradition of having a front page with a list of recent news releases, and this tradition has continued as a direct way to introduce the TAIP to its online readers since the establishment of the party in 1996. Basically, the TAIP is a web site that is primarily aimed at readers who are able to read Chinese. The majority of the web site consists of Chinese texts, with only a few texts in English. For instance, one of the English texts is a news release in response to an American newspaper editorial proposing that the U. S. pressure Taiwan to reach unification with China. As the TAIP monitors newspaper comments in the United States, the party can respond to particular editors on its web site. Another feature is a flash file as one first enters the web site. The video shows different ethnic faces in Taiwan and describes Taiwan as the center of the globe. The video is accompanied by marching music, the lyrics sung in Taiwanese. The music further uses Chinese lyrics such as "nation-building" to describe the spirit of the TAIP. With this, the party underlines its goal of Taiwanese independence and the will to establish a just government for the Taiwanese people.

The TAIP's strong commitment to Taiwanese sovereignty repeatedly features in the party's news releases. Topics range from political issues such as criticism of local politicians who support unification with China,

social issues such as protests against environmental pollution and labor inequality, cultural issues like the use of the Taiwanese language as the mother language of the society, and issues on international affairs such as protests against China's militarism. Overall, they demonstrate that the TAIP is a movement-oriented party. For instance, some news releases try to show the connections that the TAIP has established with other independence groups in the Asian region. For example, when the Japanese foreign minister, Tanaka Makiko, announced to the international media on December 28, 2001, that Taiwan should follow the format used to reunify Hong Kong with China, the TAIP immediately staged a demonstration at a Japanese Cultural Center in Taiwan. The TAIP demanded an apology from the Japanese prime minister to the Taiwanese people. In another news release, the TAIP represents itself as one of the many political groups of activists joined in the global independence movement, and thus the party invites leaders of the East Turkistan independence group to visit Taiwan. There is also another new release on March 31, 2003, that praises a Taiwanese immigrant who now resides in Japan, King Mei-Ling (金美齡), as the founding mother of the Taiwanese nation. King is active in the television broadcasting industry in Japan. She is a member of the TAIP and has been successful in introducing several Japanese right-wing writers to Taiwan, including Kobayashi Yoshinori (小林善紀), a well-known writer of comic books including one called "On Taiwan."

Basically, the TAIP establishes its political significance as the most authentic voice of Taiwanese independence by responding to political events that suggest Taiwan should be a part of China. The following news release is a good example of the TAIP's tone when criticizing its adversaries:

The Taiwan Independence Party (TAIP) has an objection to China violating Taiwan's sovereignty today. The TAIP says China has no right to "permit" or "decide" whether the Taiwanese delegation will attend the annual gathering of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). China has obviously violated Taiwan's sovereignty... The APEC gathering in Shanghai is the right time to talk about China's ties to the Taliban. The Chinese government has been one of the foremost benefactors of Afghanistan's government, the Taliban, since Sept. 11, 2001 ... China definitely had something to do with the planning of the "911 Attack," indicates Ho, the chairman of the TAIP, in his conclusion. (TAIP 2001)

With this news release the TAIP launched a protest against China refusing to let a Taiwanese delegation join the annual meeting of the Asia Pacific Economic Corporation (APEC) that was held in Shanghai, China, in 2001.

The APEC meeting is one of the most important economic meetings in Asia, which invites important economic leaders from different nations in Asia to try to improve regional trade among these countries. Since the APEC meeting is one of the few international meetings that Taiwan is able to participate in despite its lack of a legitimate status as a nation within the international community, the TAIP's hostility toward China's hindrance of Taiwan is obvious in the party's rhetoric when it links China with the Taliban government as being responsible for the U.S. World Trade Center attack on September 11, 2001.

Introducing Party Propaganda as a Way to Manifest "Self"

Documents in the section on party propaganda propound the general theme that Taiwan is an ocean country with its own "island" characteristics and does not belong to any "continent," including that of its neighboring country, China. This theme, which implies that Taiwan is an independent nation, runs through most of the documents in the propaganda section. The section focuses on four different types of propaganda.

Recently, the TAIP has made most use of the first type of information in the propaganda section: that part of the web site which introduces the organization by means of information on the party's most current developments. The web site, for instance, provides information on how to contact affiliate offices in various cities in Taiwan. Most of the TAIP branch offices are located inside Taiwan. The only exception is a branch office in California in the United States. This kind of information reflects the nature of the party itself. Compared to other opposition parties in Taiwan that tend to attract supporters of Taiwanese independence living in many parts of the world, the TAIP reveals itself as a place-based political party. Such a geographical focus implies the limitations of the TAIP in developing outreach programs abroad. And since overseas independence supporters have been the backbone of the independence movement in Taiwan for decades, this local focus adapted by the TAIP indicates the party's strength in occupying a media space for voicing Taiwanese nationalism as a participation of local politics. The web site is more functional in building a domestic networking than for the party to reach potential supporters among Taiwanese in the diaspora in other parts of the world.

Another type of information covers the basics of the party constitution, the party structure, the party program, and party principles. This information was sketched out between 1996 and 1998 and was intended to show the early development of the party. It is the TAIP's goal to set up a basic framework for Taiwan to draft a new constitution if it becomes independent in the future. The web site criticizes problems that exist in the

current political structure as a result of the ROC's policies. By outlining flaws in the ROC's policies, the TAIP proposes a vision that will create a new Taiwanese constitution by singling out specific changes based on the comments from a few TAIP members who are well-known legal scholars in the constitutional field. Some information covers the TAIP's personnel, giving people's names and positions, in order to show there are many activist leaders from other grassroots organizations who joined the TAIP and served in important positions in the early years. These lists of personnel are significant, since they present the TAIP as an elitist party. That is, only 27 out of a total of 277 members came from the lower strata in society. Most of the founding members of the party are successful medical doctors, well-established university professors, and famous cultural workers who have prestige and receive respect as members of their professions. However, these lists of personnel also show limited change in the kind of people who serve in these positions. They are "revolving" lists with a limited number of TAIP members taking turn serving in the party's important positions.

Newsletters and online journals published by the TAIP form the third type of information offered as party propaganda. While the TAIP primarily uses traditional mailing methods to send out newsletters to its members, the party also selects a few of the newsletter's issues and publishes them online. The online versions of the newsletters include issues published from late 1998 to 2000. Most newsletters are simple text files with no background design. The content of these newsletters tends to begin with editorials from local newspapers, in which the political point of view of the newspaper editors corresponds with the TAIP's regarding certain aspects of Taiwanese politics. Sometimes party members, in particular scholars with knowledge in the fields of law and history, also contribute articles. These articles discuss changes in Taiwanese society and history that have been distorted by the KMT. The TAIP's newsletters also include articles that discuss the Palestinian issue. These articles present a strong identification with and sympathy toward Palestinians, since they share a similar fate with the Taiwanese, namely, not being able to establish their own country. In addition, there is a significant number of articles that try to revive languages that have been repressed by the KMT's educational system. These articles provide instructions on how to speak Taiwanese aboriginal languages correctly, allowing members to learn the languages before they disappear.

The TAIP's online journals focus on organization-related articles published in 1997. There are three journals published on the TAIP's web site. One is a typical elitist publication that offers articles compiled by well-known legal scholars and college professors who are also TAIP members.

These are articles that scholars published in the public media in order to promote the idea of independence before the TAIP came into being. Another is a journal focusing on the revival of Taiwanese culture by gathering articles from artists or writers who are not members of the party. These journals try to present a lost dimension of Taiwanese society by constructing an oral history around early Taiwanese and the survivors of the early Taiwanese whose lives were taken when the KMT first began its rule. Gender consciousness is one topic that receives particular attention from the contributors to this journal. Another journal presents the grassroots side of the TAIP, since this journal's articles are written by college students who participate in lectures that the TAIP and other independence organizations jointly hold in order to reach prospective members in the city of Taichung. All three journals were short-lived. The total number of issues published ranged from five to seven, with some journals being published very irregularly. These journals, from a certain perspective, reveal the year of 1997 as the heyday of the TAIP, because it was able to sign on a lot of new members who stimulated each other with new concepts and ideas. The following is one of the many reflective articles written by a member of the TAIP in the *Lily Taiwan* journal. A TAIP member shares her feelings on her identity change from Chinese to Taiwanese. She describes how she developed her Taiwanese consciousness by joining in on street activities led by the TAIP:

Five years ago, I was a happy little woman living in my own world. I thought of everyone as a good person and considered politics as a dark game. I believed the "opposition" leaders were people addicted to violence. At that time I was a Chinese. Of course Taiwan was a part of China. The Yangtze River and the Yellow River, I had no doubt, were the rivers of my homeland, China...

It wasn't until the 26th of June in 1997 that I began to change. At that time, my life was that of a fish out of water. On that day I took to the streets for the first time. It was also my first time to leave home without my daughter. I was nervous. I had been a wife and a mom for ten years. But that day, I wanted to be myself.

There were flags waving. On those flags I saw the words "Happy Nation Building." "Yes!" I responded. It must be a wonderful feeling to be able to have one's own nation... Most people in the crowd were people of an older generation. They looked dark but I felt warmth for them because of their passion to build a new Taiwan nation. I felt I was too young to fit into this group. My outfit did not match theirs. I was a bit embarrassed...

The firework program brought everyone to a heightened state. When the fireworks lit up the sky, everyone began to applaud and cheer. The brightness of the sky seemed to tell the world that Taiwan wanted independence. It was saying that Taiwan wanted to be herself. I was touched by the loud voices from the crowd around me. I left for home early, but kept thinking about those sincere cheering faces in the crowd. Those were people made from flesh and blood, and people who had real love and hate. What about me? I had lived in innocence for my first thirty years. What had I been doing in Taiwan? People say that seeds grow and germinate. I wished I were one of those seeds. When I grew into a big tree, I was able to defend this beautiful island, my country, and my home – Taiwan! (Yu 2001)

In this article, the author shares her discovery of her Taiwanese identity by recalling mixed feelings she had toward herself as a mother, a wife, and a citizen of Taiwan as she joined the TAIP's rally for the first time. On the one hand, this article helps web site readers to understand the group structure of the TAIP. That is, most of the supporters of the TAIP are people belonging to older generations. On the other hand, the experience, in particular in the last paragraph quoted, also presents the theme of "loving Taiwan" that the TAIP has always tried to promote as the most essential part of its independence discourse.

The words of the late party leaders make up the fourth type of information that comes under the category of party propaganda. In total, nine short articles are included in this section. One late party leader, He Wen-Qi, contributed these articles between March and August 2001. Most of the issues that He Wen-Qi raises in the articles reflect the typical point of an independence supporter responding to Taiwanese politics. In these articles, the party leader restates the party's position of opposition to nuclear power plants, criticizes the pro-China phenomenon in Taiwan's media, and protests against the corruption of the legal system by the KMT. The topics discussed in these articles comprise issues that are well known to independence supporters, as they challenge the legitimacy of the current government's claim that the ROC is a state. The result is that He Wen-Qi sometimes sets up an emotional tone when speaking of the TAIP's advisory parties and Chinese ethnicity in his writings. This style is in stark contrast to that of another opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which became the governing party of Taiwan in 2000. To be more specific, in an article in which He Wen-Qi comments on the ethnic problem of Taiwan, he uses the somewhat bigoted term "taro" to describe other party leaders and people who support unification with China. He asks:

As a matter of fact, who causes the ethnic problems in Taiwan? This is a good question to ask those of you who don't want to settle in Taiwan. It is also a good issue to challenge those of you – old and young “taros” – who always think of yourselves as strangers in Taiwan. It is certain that the Chiang Kai-Shek family caused unbearable damage to Taiwan. There is no need for us to wait for a historian to reach this conclusion. Everything has already been proven... (He 2002)

While “old taro” is a term commonly used among Taiwanese to describe the old KMT soldiers who came to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-Shek in 1949, the term used in this context expresses He Wen-Qi negative feelings toward first and second-generation Chinese living in Taiwan. Part of the reason for the negative connotation of this term is the direct leadership that Chiang Kai-Shek claimed over these “old taro” soldiers. From the perspective of independence supporters, first generation KMT soldiers represent a dubious group of undesirable people who lived in Taiwan for decades but never considered Taiwan as their home. This term reflects the opposite of “yam,” an orthodox term referring to a Taiwanese. Yam shows the “native” orientation of the Taiwanese who claim ownership of the land, whereas “taro” implies the “alien” position of these Chinese who still think of returning home to China while living in Taiwanese society.

Communication and Public Coalition with Non-Party Members

Another particular section of the TAIP information on the web site is made up of reader responses from non-party members. “Talk with the Chairman,” “Letters from Japanese friends,” “Public Forum” and “Call for Public Coalition” are the four sections featuring important information for understanding the TAIP's engagement with the public. This category offers various perceptions of the TAIP by its party supporters. Comments in the online forum often voice support regarding the functions and contributions of the TAIP. As a small and elitist political party in Taiwan, fundamentalist speeches attract admiration from people who identify with the party's principles in claiming independence. One particular case is the unknown supporters from Taiwan's neighboring country, Japan.

Appendix I features one TAIP page that lists all the letters mailed from unknown Japanese friends who support Taiwan from the party's point of view. Some letters offer encouragement to the TAIP's members and compliment them on their courage to speak out against the military invasion by Taiwan's enemies, the KMT and the People's Republic of China. There

are letters in the "Japanese friends" section written by Japanese on "The Future of Japan," "Japan and Taiwan," and "Japan's Worst Enemy," etc. These letters support Taiwanese independence and emphasize the importance for Japan to remain on friendly terms with Taiwan. In an interview with the president of the TAIP, Huang Chien-Ming (2003) reveals his feelings on receiving these letters:

These letters are all from unknown friends in Japan. Some sent them by mail and some used the Internet to email us. Readers from the People's Republic of China tended to hack our web site. They often exchanged images on our pages with x-rated pictures. But friends from Japan were really supportive. There was one letter that told us how Taiwan is Japan's friend. The person who wrote the letter said that Taiwan is the guardian gate to Japan's ocean business. Taiwan is the friendliest neighboring country. Taiwan is also a place where many old Japanese spirits and traditions have been preserved. His letter touched me deeply.

Taiwanese people overseas, in particular those currently living in China due to the economic exchange between Taiwan and China, also contributed a portion of the messages in the TAIP's online forum. The transnational nature of the TAIP web site offers an ideal space for these Taiwanese to engage in interaction with a locally based political party. These overseas Taiwanese are interested in discussing the influence of Taiwanese independence and like to share their experiences as immigrants or visitors living in other countries. Their comments offer the TAIP an alternative perspective, as the political situation in these countries comes into play in their analysis of Taiwan's future. In my interview with the TAIP spokesman, he told me that these email messages are especially important because they sometimes provide constructive points for the TAIP to use when formulating its policy. The spokesman, Cai Ding-Lin (2002), gives an example of how the TAIP sets up its policy on Taiwan's communication with China based on a reader's comment:

We consider the online forum an important channel for us to understand how other people think. For instance, many businessmen who now live in China share their experiences by posting messages in this forum. This type of information is important to us, because it provides good information in order to understand China. This forum is also of good use to us because we are able to reach potential members abroad. We always reply to those foreign Taiwanese who write us emails. We answer their questions via email. If the comments are valuable, we even turn these readers' suggestions into our policy toward China.

An example that shows the transnational dimension of the TAIP web site is provided in the following message by a young Taiwanese woman who lives in the city of Shanghai in the People's Republic of China. Being the daughter of a Taiwanese businessman, this reader, only identified as Ban, moved to China with her family. She stayed in China as a college student for four years. However, in her message she indicates that living in China is not her long-term plan. She conveys a view on the definition of Taiwan in response to the problem of ethnic aversion between the Taiwanese and the Chinese as reflected on the web site. She provides an example of how a Taiwanese person living in Shanghai has a different economic standing than the local Chinese in terms of consumer power. To her, people in Taiwan have a similar standard of living – one that is very different to that of people living in China. While most Taiwanese businessmen who now invest in China are struggling to balance capital gains with great losses in a “foreign” country, Ban expresses her disappointment in seeing the internal Taiwanese conflict continue to deteriorate the consensus on Taiwanese society:

It does not matter whether one is a “taro” or a “yam.” As long as a person identifies with this land he or she should be a Taiwanese. This is what the opposition has been telling us, isn't it? It does not matter if one physically lives in America, Japan or Africa. As long as a person considers Taiwan as his or her nation then that person is Taiwanese... Nobody should care if one is a “yam” or not. Your party is the only one pondering this question... I remember there was once a professor whose family came from Mainland China who said that he did not want to be called a sojourner. He is like everyone else living in Taiwan. He is a real Taiwanese... (Ban 2002)

VI. POLITICS OF MANIFESTING SELF-IDENTITY ON THE WEB

The complexity of manifesting a self-identity on the web is seen in the multiple layers of exclusion found when the TAIP writes about its “negative” others in order to define a “positive” self. Reaffirmation of self-identity relies upon identifying the Taiwanese people as struggling social agents who are not Chinese, have Japanese heritage, but are always encountering the challenge to turn into “real Taiwanese.” Therefore, the identity struggle on the TAIP's web site takes place in a process where exclusion and inclusion discourses constantly wrestle with each other in the multi-layer content.

1. The Exclusion Discourse for Independence

The TAIP's independence discourse on its web site can be represented by one general theme – a total rejection of China. The TAIP defines itself as a minority group like many other groups in other parts of the world. Because minority groups tend to use web sites as the best way to strengthen their identities, they are likely to try to prove their existence by using a discourse of exclusion and inclusion to set up boundaries between their groups and the groups that they are opposed to (Mitra 1997). Similarly, the TAIP develops four types of exclusion discourse and tends to use critical rhetoric to define the KMT, China, the DPP, and a few old TAIP members who left the party and joined the DPP in order to assist it in gaining political power over the ROC after the opposition won the Taiwan presidential election in 2000.

A. The Kuomintang (KMT)

First and foremost, even though the Kuomintang (KMT) controlled Taiwan for more than five decades, the TAIP considers the KMT a “colonizer” who took control of Taiwan under the illegal occupation by the Chiang Kai-Shek government. The TAIP rejects the name “Republic of China” (ROC) as a description of Taiwan, because from the TAIP's perspective it represents a tyrannous government that has slaughtered tens of thousands of Taiwanese since 1947.² On its web site, the TAIP depicts the KMT as a “defeated” political party that lost its political power over China during the Chinese civil war with the Communist Party. The TAIP believes that the KMT “occupies” Taiwan for the purpose of “escaping” from its enemy. The KMT, however, considers its stay in Taiwan as temporary, and that it will some day be able to rouse all these Chinese settlers to follow the will of Chiang Kai-Shek to fight the Communist Party and reclaim their right to rule their homeland in China. To the TAIP, the KMT is a foreign government and an authoritative regime that rules Taiwan with “double ethnic standards” for Taiwanese and Chinese people. The TAIP also argues that Chiang Kai-Shek built a dynasty and created a KMT kingdom to enslave the Taiwanese. From the TAIP's perspective, Taiwanese people are treated as second-class citizens compared to the Chinese. Thus, KMT education taught the Taiwanese to forget their historical roots and made the Taiwanese believe their false “Chinese” origins. The TAIP's

² The number of lives that were claimed by the KMT in political incidents is yet to be confirmed. A general account from scholars who study the Taiwanese independence movement estimates that nearly 30,000 Taiwanese lives were taken in the single event of the 228 Incident. The KMT executed about eight thousand Taiwanese during its “white terror” era in the 1950's (Shu 1998).

hatred of the KMT is revealed in the following text that discusses the KMT's Chinese colonial culture in Taiwan:

Taiwanese society is filled with [the KMT's] colonial culture. The KMT ... creates a colonial system that destroys the native language of the Taiwanese people. The Taiwanese are educated to learn Chinese history and Chinese culture. With this colonial system they become China-centric in every aspect of their lives. The KMT-controlled society has deprived the Taiwanese people of their ethnic roots. Now many young Taiwanese do not recognize the land they grew up in. They have become very ignorant about their history and try to identify with a small group of KMT political elitists who use the excuses of "social stability" to prevent the Taiwanese from asking for a change in party politics. (TAIP 2000a)

In addition, the TAIP describes the KMT as an "absurd" government by means of three kinds of exclusionary discourse on its web site. The TAIP argues that the KMT uses the name of "Republic of China," even though such a name is not objective because most countries in the international community consider Taiwan as a part of China. This name not only causes most of the people in the world to mistake Taiwan for China as either name of "Republic of China" or "People's Republic of China" does not reveal the sovereignty of Taiwan as an independent state. The KMT's claiming itself to be a Chinese government also turns Taiwan into an international orphan due to China's insistence on the One China Policy in international politics. The TAIP also regards the KMT as an impertinent regime because it imposes an unreasonable constitution on Taiwan. Even after fifty years of governance in Taiwan, the TAIP says the KMT still participates in Taiwan's party politics by insisting that the ROC's rule also includes the PRC's Mainland China and the already independent country of Outer Mongolia. The TAIP argues that the KMT is an unrealistic party by ignoring the legitimate state of the above two countries. The KMT is criticized as having an "absurd" diplomatic policy in international politics. On its web site, the TAIP argues that while most of the KMT's foreign representatives isolate Taiwan by claiming that it is the only government that can justly represent China, the KMT also makes Taiwan insignificant because none of the major countries will consider building international relations with a country in such a dilemma. In addition, the TAIP also criticizes the KMT for its Lenin style intelligence system. The TAIP argues that such a system exists only so the KMT can spy on Taiwanese who demand the right for democracy. The TAIP proclaims its official exclusion of the KMT using the following tone:

The TAIP will never recognize the government of the Republic of China. The Republic of China belongs to old politics in China, and therefore does not apply to Taiwan. There is a need to change the name of the Taiwanese government into "Republic of Taiwan." We need to formulate a new Taiwanese constitution and set the goal of becoming an active member in the international community... On the psychological level, the KMT never granted Taiwanese people equal status to Chinese when it ruled Taiwan. The KMT is like Japan, treating Taiwan as a colony. The TAIP therefore does not need to recognize such an empirical ruler to as our government. Taiwan has never been part of China, but of course this is history that the Chinese leaders in Beijing fail to understand. (Chen M. 1999)

The above statement shows the typical exclusive rhetoric that the TAIP uses to deny the legitimacy of the KMT; however, one needs to focus on history, in particular early Taiwanese history right after the KMT's arrival in the late 1940's, in order to understand the reason why the TAIP attracts members to join. Basically, the TAIP represents a political group that strongly emphasizes the connection between the Taiwanese independence movement and early Taiwanese history (Chung 1997). The most memorable event that the TAIP members bear in their minds is the political tragedy of the 228 Incident in 1947. Most of the TAIP's key members are older Taiwanese people who are either in their late sixties or early seventies (Cai 2002). The TAIP attracts older Taiwanese because Taiwan's early history is connected to the life experiences of these members. On the web site, many texts are reflections on the personal experiences of the older TAIP members, who published articles online in order to memorialize their relatives who lost their lives in the late 1940s. The loss of their loved ones explains why members of the TAIP build their collective memory on the agony that comes from their seeing the KMT as being "responsible" for the deaths of those loved ones. Thus, one member shares his pain at the loss of his father on the TAIP's web site:

The reason why I gave up my job in music education and became involved in fieldwork investigation on what had happened in the 228 Incident for more than ten years is because I wanted to know why my father disappeared, how he died, and where he was buried. These have been dark secrets imbedded inside my heart for my whole life. As the years went by and my disappointment grew, I thought I could never discover the answers... It wasn't until a few months ago that an elderly gentleman came to visit me. He told me that his friend knew how my father died. The truth is that my father had a hard time after he was taken to the administration office of

military law. They tortured him to death. They pulled out his fingernails and finally took him to the mountain area near Liuzhangli. Liuzhangli was in suburban Taipei and they abandoned his body there. His friend was the driver of the prison car that delivered my father's body. His friend said that my father never closed his eyes. Even now, he still cannot forget my father's facial expression... It has taken almost half a century for me to finally learn the truth that our government has concealed from us for so long... (Ran 1998)

This article justifies the opposition of the TAIP toward the KMT, and in some way offers the TAIP's members a way to connect with each other in compassion and understanding. Such understanding can be seen in another article that indicates the author's justification of his anti-KMT discourse with the rhetoric of a political "awakening." The author describes his new realization of "Taiwanese history" in the following way:

The date of February 28 is still close! Even though already fifty years have passed since the tragic event, sadness still overwhelms this island. There is no inscription on the stone tablet in the 228 Memorial Park. The KMT gets its way to avoid responsibility. It successfully covers crimes that perpetrator Chiang Kai-Shek has committed. The 228 is history! It is fact! How the KMT deals with its mistake shows what a cold-blooded government it is!

I am awakened. I am Taiwanese. I have a strong desire to know what really happened to us in the past. But there is no longer a complete picture for me to look back on. Taiwanese history is a scattered history, crumbling at the edges. It is sad that the KMT has turned us into an ethnicity that has no history. (Wu 1997)

B. The People's Republic of China

The TAIP defines China as a "terrorist" country in its exclusion discourse. The web site rhetoric says that China is a military nation that openly threatens Taiwan. The TAIP perceives China as a foreign nation with which Taiwan does not share relations. Unlike the KMT, which sees the Chinese Communist Party as a rival party within the context of domestic politics, the TAIP believes that the relations between Taiwan and China should be placed outside the context of Chinese politics. The TAIP argues that the Taiwanese, seeing that the Taiwanese are also victims of the KMT's authority, should not be held responsible for what the KMT has done to China. The relationship between Taiwan and China should focus upon equal respect and mutual understanding. The following news release entitled "Campaign for a Name Change of Taiwan" explains the TAIP's perspective on China:

When the Chinese Communist Party defeated the Kuomintang in 1949 during the Chinese Civil War, the Republic of China was replaced by the communist People's Republic of China. The sad thing is that the KMT retreated from China and occupied Taiwan. The government in exile, that is, the Republic of China, controlled Taiwan and claimed Taiwan as China's thirty-sixth province. But the historical truth is ... Taiwan was never part of China ... It does not matter if the problem is that "the communist party illegally occupied China" as the KMT claims or that the communist party "won the revolution." The conflict should be the responsibility of the Chinese and therefore should be solved by the Chinese. What does the problem have to do with Taiwan? (He 2002)

However, as the Chinese government does not care about the different perceptions of the KMT and the Taiwanese, the latter supporting independence and the former continuing to intimidate Taiwanese people with threats that indicate a military invasion by the PRC if Taiwan declares independence. In addition, the TAIP considers Chinese aggression to have worsened the chances that the Taiwanese will ever think of building a harmonious relationship with China. Therefore, the TAIP takes a most aggressive attitude toward China. While the party constantly claims a need for the Taiwanese to prepare for war with China for the cause of independence, the TAIP also reveals its exclusion by identifying China as an "invader" on the web site. In a newsletter that was circulated among the TAIP's members, the party talks about a possible way for Taiwanese people to pursue peace with the "invader" in the following terms:

China is an invader and also a peace breaker. This country is not qualified to talk about peace. In facing the security threat from China, we should choose to bravely face the threat and resist it. It is impossible for the lamb begging the wolf for peace to prevent itself from being killed. We only have one choice: that is to let China realize that the Taiwanese are not weak. When China invades, we will fight to the last moment with our bare hands. It is only by letting China be aware of our determination that we will stop China from invasion and then, finally, peace can arrive. (TAIP 2000b)

C. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)

While the TAIP positions the KMT and the PRC as two external forces working against Taiwan gaining independence, the party also, to a lesser degree, considers Taiwan's major opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party, a destructive influence that breaks down internal cohesion

among the groups in favor of Taiwanese independence. Basically, the TAIP rejects the DPP, the party that won Taiwan's 2000 presidential elections, as the leading party in terms of representing Taiwan's opposition movement. On its web site, the TAIP denounces any compromises with the DPP when the latter becomes less critical toward the KMT in order to win votes from those citizens who are against independence. The TAIP compares its loyalty to independence to that of the DPP. Its disapproval of the DPP is made clear when the TAIP mentions that the DPP is trying to remove the goal of independence from its party platform. The TAIP clearly distinguishes itself from the DPP by weighing each party's belief in the supremacy of independence. The TAIP's exclusion rhetoric toward the DPP is clearly seen in the following:

When the DPP was first established, the party agreed to add "the building of a Taiwanese Republic" to the DPP's party platform. This decision was a result of several heated debates among the members at that time, and the clause called for the condition of independence based upon a plebiscite of all the Taiwanese people. But when the DPP grew bigger, its direction began to shift... We the TAIP believe that independence is the only way for Taiwan to have a future ... Retaining the status quo will lead to destruction. If the Taiwanese cannot recognize the importance for us to build a nation, we are only waiting for Communist China to rule us. Or we are waiting for the Chinese in Taiwan to betray us and force us to unite with China some day. (TAIP 1998)

This article suggests the discourse of "betrayal" in regard to the DPP. The TAIP criticizes the DPP for its lack of idealism in maintaining independence as a political dream that needs to be put into practice. And such a "traitor" discourse provides the party with a clear political stance that distinguishes it from the DPP. Thus loyalty from its supporters is maintained. This discourse has been the axis that has allowed the TAIP to criticize the DPP on its web site. The result is that even though the TAIP is usually unable to provide a sufficient number of candidates who can run in the local elections and therefore needs to support candidates from the DPP, the party still maintains the flexibility to use different strategies for each political event – based, of course, on the discourse that makes clear that it will be the TAIP which will lead the independence movement. Thus, it must carefully watch the DPP in order to maintain the cause of the Taiwanese people and their future.

D. The Former Members of the TAIP

The TAIP uses criticism of former members who have left the party as a way to retain its unique party identity. These older members of the TAIP played significant roles in the establishment of the party, but they left the party after the DPP won the presidential election. The TAIP thus disputes the deserters of the party with the claim of those people who argue that the TAIP fulfilled its goal of helping Taiwan to defeat the KMT in the 2000 presidential election. And since Taiwan's first opposition party, the DPP, won the political power to rule Taiwan, the old members claim that the TAIP should stop operation as an "opposition" party in Taiwanese politics. Such a split inside the TAIP itself reveals an internal crisis, and the TAIP uses the web site to renounce the old members who call for the annulment of the TAIP. Though not using as many "negative" comments to describe these former members as it does when referring to the DPP, the party still describes these people as "opportunists" who have failed to show consistence in their political acts. The TAIP calls these people "traitors" because they used to be comrades who believed in the future of the Republic of Taiwan. Now, since these people have turned to the DPP and have begun to embrace the ROC, the TAIP excludes them by bringing up the concept of loyalty as a way to encourage other members and also to maintain party-internal cohesion.

2. The Inclusion Discourse for Independence

The inclusion discourse of "independence" gives the TAIP the legitimacy to participate in Taiwan's party politics. The TAIP emphasizes independence so as to determine who the "enemies" and "allies" of the party are. It also uses "loyalty" to independence as a criterion for the *raison d'être* of the party itself. The TAIP considers the party's pursuit of independence a form of political activity. As independence may imply a form of revolution, the TAIP also considers independence an opposition movement. In addition, the independence movement brings hope for powerless groups. While independence is a nationalist movement, it is also an international movement, because only if Taiwan receives support from the international community can the independence movement bear positive results in reality. The TAIP styles itself as a revolutionary, opposition, social, and nationalist movement.

Revolutionary Movement. The TAIP puts Taiwan's search for independence in the context of a revolutionary movement by insisting on Taiwan's readiness to prepare for war with China at any time. While in the past the TAIP may have considered the KMT the most destructive exter-

nal force in Taiwan, it is now the People's Republic of China that is most likely to obliterate the country. The TAIP repeatedly launches open calls for an immediate revolution by addressing its members via its web site. Such rhetoric can be seen in news releases, in which the party responds to certain social phenomena that indicate fears among the Taiwanese people toward a Chinese invasion. For instance, in one news release in which the TAIP responded to the decreasing performance of the stock market in Taiwan, the party criticized the Taiwanese people for their lack of confidence simply because China was holding a military exercise near Taiwan again in 1999. The TAIP argued that the "Taiwanese should recognize their shared destiny," which is to fight invasion. The party asserts that only determination on the part of the Taiwanese people will ensure that the Taiwanese will be able to live the lives of their own choice. Thus, the TAIP calls for immediate psychological readiness from its members to go to war with China. Suggesting revolution as the best form of self-help, the TAIP argues that Taiwan cannot put its destiny in the hands of the international community. The party makes its case in the following way:

China does not have the capability to invade Taiwan at the present time. But it will be ready to use military force to take over Taiwan in the year 2010. At that time, China will not need to use any rhetoric to justify its military act, and Taiwan will disappear from the world permanently. If we do not recognize the political facts and continue to use the name of the Republic of China, Taiwan will forever be considered as a mere domestic problem of China, and the international community will have no means to become involved. It is only through claiming independence that we are able to call for help from the international community. The United States has a "Taiwan Relations Act" in its legal system to protect the security of Taiwan. But who can guarantee that the policy of the United States will not change? The final decision-makers are still the Taiwanese people. We have no choice but to claim our independence so as to secure our own future. (TAIP 1999a)

Opposition Movement. The TAIP shows its devotion to the independence movement by opposing any type of repressive power from the government, the media, political parties, and so forth. For the TAIP, democracy can develop only through the people's endless battle with hegemony. The TAIP has thus repeatedly voiced strong criticism of the new government, even though the DPP's government has its own credentials in the opposition community. For instance, the TAIP has published many articles bashing the "outrageous" results of the government's nuclear policy. When the new government of the DPP announced that it would build

a fourth nuclear power plant for Taiwan in 1999, the TAIP reproved the government for its lack of consideration of basic human rights.

The TAIP also opposes the mainstream media for the political bias it imposes on the Taiwanese public. The TAIP argues that the major media in Taiwan reflect a pro-China point of view in their news. The party also criticizes them for setting up a conspiracy that allegedly tries to shape public opinion in favor of unity with China. By contending that Taiwan needs full communication with China to maintain Taiwan's economy, the media are rebuked as being irresponsible in the matter of Taiwan's future. Charges that the TAIP is guilty of posturing when it criticizes the mainstream media are seen in the following news release, which was published on the web site in September 2000:

The media should be made responsible for a certain kind of thinking that has become popular in the business world. Recently, the media has started to disseminate ideas about the necessity of complete openness with China. The media try to make the public believe that Taiwan's business cannot survive if Taiwanese businessmen do not invest in China. It is very irresponsible of the media to promote these ideas – and we all know they want to do that to establish close ties with China. It is the political goal of the unification supporters in Taiwan who dominate the media and then abuse their power to present biased information. How can our media ask us to be friends with a country that is trying to destroy us! How can our media ask us to decrease our alertness and to surrender to our enemy? How can we fend off the enemy when there is foreign treachery? (TAIP 2000c)

Social Movement. The TAIP bases its search for independence on the perspective of people who do not have political power in Taiwan's political system. In the section that features the change of the official name of Taiwan, the TAIP uses the web site to call on its readers to register themselves to become citizens of the Republic of Taiwan. The TAIP states that "basic citizen rights are the prior condition for a nation to achieve democracy," which is the reason why the party embraces the independence movement and pleads for an official change of name. While so far 26 countries in the world have established official diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the TAIP advocates the eradication of China in the official name of Taiwan to avoid confusion by people who are not familiar with the two China policy between Taiwan and China. On its web site, the party publishes passports for the "Republic of Taiwan" and shows how these have successfully received travel visas from immigration offices in certain Latin American countries. The Taiwanese Passport issued by the TAIP is seen in Appendix II.

Nationalist Movement. TAIP considers the independence movement in Taiwan a nationalist one because the “Taiwanese should recognize their roots in the land they live in” (TAIP 2000c). The TAIP argues that the reason why Taiwan is still unable to claim its independence is that there is a lack of a collective awareness of a national Taiwanese identity. The party thus states that some people in Taiwan are not ready to sever their emotional ties to China. In order to promote a national Taiwanese ideology, the TAIP publishes articles that compare the independence movement in Taiwan to the one in Palestine, and encourages the Taiwanese people to pursue nation building with the same determination as the Palestinians. The rhetoric of the TAIP in its newsletters maintains that the justification for the Taiwanese to claim their independence is more firmly rooted than that of the Palestinians. Unlike the Palestinians, whose dream of independence depends on land that they do not own, the Taiwanese, who live on their land and have possession of it fail to declare their sovereignty with the independent name of the Republic of Taiwan. The TAIP criticizes the Taiwanese for their willingness to continue to accept the name “Republic of China” from their colonizer, the KMT. The TAIP reflects on the ironic side of the Taiwanese government, because no country recognizes Taiwan as independent, but Taiwan still announces its political legitimacy as the true representative of China on its own. The TAIP thus argues that Taiwan lacks the courage to demand its rights under international law. In an article that introduces the burgeoning concept of the intifada, the party praises Palestine for the sacrifice and courage of its people. It also points out the energy of the Palestinian independence movement when compared to that of the Taiwanese one:

It is time to reflect on our independence movement by looking into the nation building process of Palestine... Unlike Taiwan, the Palestinians will never say such things as “Palestine is already an independent country and will never announce independence.” The Palestinians always emphasize their legitimacy from the perspective of international law. They claim their right to pursue independence by referring to a constitution and to resolutions passed by the United Nations. They will not be such fools as the Taiwanese and claim that “Palestine is already a country despite the fact that no country in the world recognizes it as a country.”

The spirit of the Palestinian independence movement is admirable in that any Arab who lives in Palestine or in exile in a nearby country always shows a strong will to fight against any force that prevents him from gaining independence and in that he never gives up hope that his dream will come true. Even occupation, military casualties,

and expatriation cannot lessen the political identification of the Palestinians with their own nation. The Palestinians never look back, never surrender, and only face their destiny to look forward.... Their national consciousness is growing and is becoming a strong national will. That is the power of the intifada... (Cai 2000)

As the TAIP strongly identifies with independence groups around the world, it often publishes articles on the glory of independence at the international level when certain independence groups take action to demand independence from their oppressors. To the TAIP, Taiwan's independence movement has always been part of an international coalition movement. By constantly echoing Taiwanese support for other international groups, the TAIP expects that the international community will hear Taiwan's voice in return. Even if the news releases are usually written in Mandarin when the TAIP gives its views on international independence events, the web site of the TAIP offers to act on and participate in international affairs immediately as a concerned member of the international independence movement. The TAIP tends to publish its views on international events at the crucial moment when news of conflicts in other countries breaks. For instance, the TAIP reveals its concern about the international independence movement in the following news release, in which it criticizes the military brutality of the Indonesian government, which killed hundreds of East Timorese in a riot that took place in East Timor in 1999.

The people in East Timor deserve to celebrate the glory of their independence and to be blessed by people from all over the world. Their courage will bring them independence. Despite the fact that civilians now are facing difficulties, military oppression will end soon. As human beings, the TAIP's members offer their most humane concern. The TAIP condemns the violence of the Indonesian government... Similarly, people who pursue independence in Taiwan deserve equal compassion. The Taiwanese should have the right of self-determination. The East Timorese impress us with their bravery in fighting off a military threat from Indonesia. They have gained support from the international community with their will and determination for independence. The independence of Taiwan also needs support from the international community. We Taiwanese should assert ourselves more like the East Timorese so the world will hear our plea. (TAIP 1999b)

VII. CONCLUSION

This paper can be concluded by summing up the significance of the TAIP's web site. In relation to similar web site studies, the presentation of local politics by the TAIP shows that the TAIP's case shares similarities but also has its own particular differences when compared with other activist groups. First, the TAIP is similar to the Zapatista movement in the sense that its web site is also used to participate in local politics. The difference is that whereas the Zapatista movement has transformed itself into an internationally involved activist group by use of the Internet, the TAIP chooses to remain a domestic movement, only using its web site to make its idea on Taiwanese independence available to supporters inside Taiwan. That is to say, while international supporters play a significant role in restraining the Mexican government to continue to use military force over the Zapatista reformers, the TAIP does not benefit much from foreign support over the party's participation of local politics. However, since the Internet is a global medium, the independence message still circulates across geographic boundaries and connects Taiwanese politics to Japanese politics to a certain degree. Supporting letters from Japan show the open space that the Internet creates between the TAIP and its Japanese supporters. Even though the TAIP does not transform such Japanese support into substantial political power in its activity in local politics, the party's web site still demonstrates the transnational capacity of the World Wide Web for easing the association and communication between people with different nationalities.

Secondly, the TAIP web site is similar to those web sites produced by religious groups. The content of these is usually made up of descriptions of strict religious practices and political beliefs, but purposefully excludes thoughts by other religious groups. The TAIP is similar to these religious groups in the way that its rhetoric only targets a particular group of readers. The writing style, the use of language, and the foci of topics all indicate textual strategies that have the goal of building a restricted but cohesive cyber-community.

Thirdly, while many case studies on the use of web sites for identity building focus on the transnational dimension for immigrants in the West, the TAIP provides an example where the construction of a "national" identity is emphasized. Even if the TAIP's members do not construct their identity based on the need to travel back "home" and see what it is like by use of the Internet as Ignacio (2000) indicates as the need of immigrants in the West in her research, they do rely upon the web site to broadcast their discourse of resistance to global users. The global intent still exists in the case of the TAIP and members of the TAIP do hope to estab-

lish a “hyper-real state” through their web site. They disprove of the notion that they lack acknowledgment from Taiwan’s mainstream media by transforming their voice into a strong national discourse in cyberspace. The web site reaches out globally to people who are able to read Chinese characters and are concerned about Taiwanese politics.

Regarding the contribution of the TAIP to local politics in Taiwan, the party demonstrates the successful use of a web site to counter negative or only partial reporting by the mainstream media. Thus, marginal voices are presented in a mediated space visible to global web site visitors. A new relationship between global Internet users and local political activists is established in Taiwan’s independence movement. Despite the lack of news coverage on the TAIP in the local media, the TAIP successfully crafts a strong “national” voice in cyberspace.

The site’s contributions are clearly directed to two groups of people: independence supporters in general and the TAIP’s members themselves. In general, the TAIP’s web site shapes a strong and fundamentalist independence discourse for Taiwan. Though in reality the fundamentalist approach to achieving independence has already become a political discourse that is gradually waning in Taiwan’s rapidly changing party politics, the TAIP web site still attracts attention from independence hardliners and further strengthens ties between the party and its supporters.

The TAIP uses the transnational feature of the web site to gather independence supporters. Such a transnational use of the Internet echoes previous literature about immigrants looking for their identities in online space. For the TAIP, feedback from non-party members also feeds the TAIP’s independence discourse to a certain degree. In addition to the Taiwanese who live outside Taiwan and who are able to show support for the party, the web site also attracts Chinese people, and on a few occasions these readers even provide valuable comments that encourage the TAIP to continue to pursue Taiwanese independence. As the TAIP web site manager states in my interview, the “web site connects the TAIP to Chinese people and helps them to understand how regular people in the People’s Republic of China think” (Cai 2002). Despite some inflammatory messages that condemn Taiwanese independence as an act of betrayal to Taiwan’s motherland, China, the TAIP also receives entries in the guest-book forum by Chinese intellectuals who are currently living in China and are able to talk about Taiwanese independence with reason and profundity. The effect of communication through the mediation of its web site is that the TAIP is able to reach potential independence supporters even in the territory of the PRC. The result of such communicative interaction is seen in the following text, on the occasion of the TAIP announcing the new membership of two mainland Chinese persons:

Recently two Chinese people have sent an email and called us up after they read articles that we posted on the web site. They identify with our goal of independence and requested to join our party... One of the new members told us that it is only through the independence of Taiwan that China can speed up its process of democratization and liberalization... He told us that the current political progress in Taiwan was achieved by the Taiwanese people and not in any way by the KMT... (TAIP 1999c)

To the TAIP, despite its lack of voice in the mainstream media, the web site secures the presence of the party in Taiwan's online culture. It even places the TAIP in a position to compete with the dominant political powers in Taiwan such as the KMT and the DPP. The web site allows the party to maintain its autonomy by transmitting its message of independence into the mediated space. As a matter of fact, the news release channel on the TAIP's web site is unique in the way that when major news about the TAIP breaks, the party is able to create its own media rhetoric and pass it onto its readers by means of the web site.

Therefore, in response to literature that discusses the use of web sites by other activist groups in the earlier part of this paper, the TAIP web site confirms the existence of the party. While the Zapatista activists use the Internet to amend the problem of a shortage of media outlets in the mainstream media, the TAIP is able to create a strong voice of independence via its web site. Therefore, the independence movement promoted by the TAIP is similar to the Zapatista movement since both groups are able to empower themselves through the use of web sites. The TAIP bypasses its silenced position in the mainstream media and is able to compete with state power to craft a national discourse representing Taiwan. In addition, the TAIP web site shows the universal value inherent to the Internet as a tool. There is a great deal of similarity on how the web site is used to promote the particular ideologies of the TAIP and between many religious groups in other parts of the world. On the one hand, the TAIP uses its web site to exclude the KMT, the PRC, the DPP and the old members of the TAIP. It also uses the web site to explain the party's agenda by showing the importance of Taiwanese independence from five perspectives. That is, the TAIP considers the Taiwanese independence movement a movement of revolution, opposition, and nationalism. Such movements need to bypass local media restrictions so that the voice of independence may be heard globally.

APPENDIX I

List of Letters from Japanese Supporters on the TAIP's Web Site



APPENDIX II

Republic of Taiwan Passport on the TAIP's Web Site



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