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Corruption Perception in Taiwan: reflections upon a bottom-up citizen perspective

CHILIK YU*, CHUN-MING CHEN and MIN-WEI LIN

Taiwan’s transition from authoritarian to democratic rule has not necessarily resulted in lower levels of perceived corruption on the island. Indeed, many Taiwan citizens have come to view the problem of corruption as worsening in recent years. To understand what these perceptions are and why they have emerged, this study examines Taiwanese attitudes toward corruption and its control from a bottom-up approach. By utilizing data from an original, nationwide public opinion survey, the authors identify the most prevalent corrupt behaviors and the institutions in Taiwanese society that are most susceptible to corruption. The paper then investigates three ‘bottom-up’ factors that help explain variations in the perception of corruption by citizens: encounter with government bureaucracy, party identification, and the effect of media. Analysis of survey data indicates that all three factors influence how Taiwanese people feel about corruption and corruption-related issues.

Introduction

Taiwan’s slow, if sometimes chaotic, political transformation into a consolidated democracy has meant that its citizens have become increasingly informed and have increasingly held the government and public officials accountable for their actions. Many recent studies, however, have shown that the problem of corruption, as well as the level of government integrity as perceived by ordinary Taiwanese citizens, has actually worsened since the process of democratization began in the late 1980s. In fact, a large proportion of the public in Taiwan remains rather pessimistic about the government’s ability to combat corruption and its sincerity in doing so, regardless of which of the two main political parties is in power.

Using the latest public opinion data collected on behalf of the Ministry of Justice, this article examines, from a bottom-up approach, how Taiwanese citizens feel about
government corruption. Specifically, the authors analyze what the people of Taiwan believe or perceive with regard to the following issues: (1) the types of corrupt behavior or practices which are most prevalent; (2) the government officials—from the perspective of principal–agent theory—who are most affected by corruption; (3) the effectiveness of the strategies and measures adopted by the government in curbing corruption; and (4) the institutions in the Taiwanese society—from the standpoint of a comprehensive National Integrity System—which are most vulnerable to corruption. Utilizing the survey results, the authors assess three possible theoretical explanations to help ascertain the origins of differences in public perception: the encounter effect, the party identification effect, and the media effect. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of a bottom-up citizen perspective are evaluated.

Can corruption be measured?

Obviously, as an issue of grave public concern, the control of corruption first requires a means of measuring the phenomenon for only then can problems be correctly diagnosed and solutions properly evaluated. From a philosophical point of view, some argue that the use of subjective perception for the measurement of corruption is justifiable, because public issues are a projection of the collective cognition of the society as a whole rather than simply a reflection of the objective reality.\(^1\)

However, the governing elite and advocates of more objective measures may feel uncomfortable with measures that are based solely on citizens’ perceptions. First, there may be objective, ‘hard’ statistics that show whether significant progress has been made over time.\(^2\) Second, the majority of people may be only barely aware of what the government has accomplished or has tried to accomplish. Since corruption is by nature an illegal and hidden activity, the practice (and utility) of surveying people who have absolutely no knowledge of or direct involvement with corruption is questionable.\(^3\)

Without doubt, perception-based or subjective measures of corruption are not problem-free and a gap may exist between citizens’ perceptions and actual practice.\(^4\) However, a democratic government cannot govern effectively without taking into consideration the perceptions of those at street level. Since direct measures and objective data are often difficult to obtain, it is reasonable for governments to take surveys of citizen perceptions of corruption seriously.

The question, therefore, is whether corruption, or perceptions of corruption to be more exact, can be measured. To find the answer, as Kaufmann, Kraay and Mastruzzi

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2. Objective or ‘hard’ measures of the prevalence of corruption may include the number of cases filed or investigated, the number of indictments or convictions, the frequency of references to corruption in the media, amongst others. Ko and Hui in this issue employ three objective statistics of corruption to test the effect of fiscal decentralization in mainland China. See Kilkon Ko and Hui Zhi, ‘Fiscal decentralization: guilty of aggravating corruption in China?’, *Journal of Contemporary China* 22(79), (2013), DOI: 10.1080/10670564.2012.716943.


point out, it is necessary to clarify six myths that often pervade common understanding of the nature and utility of corruption measurement. The six myths are as follows: first, corruption is not measurable; second, subjective data merely reflect the vague and generic perceptions of corruption rather than specific objective realities; third, subjective data are too unreliable to measure corruption; fourth, anti-corruption efforts rely on the hard objective measurement of corruption; fifth, the fact that subjective measures can hardly be ‘actionable’ prevents them from serving as a guide for anti-corruption decision-makers; and sixth, the coincidence of rapid economic growth and extensive corruption in many countries has contributed to close corruption monitoring being placed low on the agenda.

In response, Kaufmann and associates highlight three broad ways to undertake corruption measurement so as to get things back on track: (a) gathering the perspectives of relevant stakeholders; (b) tracking the institutional features of the given states; and (c) carefully auditing specific programs or projects. It has become impossible to gauge corruption objectively and precisely without the use of subjective data.

Attempts to measure corruption abound. Among the most well-known empirical measures of corruption are two separate subjective indexes: namely, Transparency International’s (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and the World Bank’s (WB) Control of Corruption Governance Indicator (GI). Transparency International has published the CPI annually since 1995, expanding from 42 countries in 1995 to 178 in 2010. The World Bank initiated its own ratings in 1996, increasing its coverage from 152 countries in the first year to 204 countries in 2009. Both corruption indexes rely on the aggregated perceptions of the public and business executives, as well as experts’ assessments, to determine the extent of corruption. Both TI and the WB have sought to generate worldwide, cross-national rankings of perceived corruption. According to the CPI, Taiwan is moderately clean, ranking between the 25th and 39th positions over the past 16 years. As far as the WB’s Governance Indicator (of which the control of corruption is one of the six dimensions) is concerned, on average Taiwan usually ranks ahead of more than 72% of the total countries surveyed in each survey update.

What has been missing from both indicators is that they do not take into account the local perspective, identify the targets and details of corruption, assess the performance of the Taiwanese government’s anti-corruption efforts, or explore the sources of perception from a theoretical point of view. This paper intends to fill this gap in the research. It attempts to do so by using a bottom-up perspective, taking into account the citizenry’s perception of corruption. In the next section, the study’s data and methods are described in detail.

**Research methods**

The data used in this study are based on the Taiwan Integrity Survey (TIS), an ongoing longitudinal research project initiated by Taiwan’s Ministry of Justice in

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Starting from 2003, TI’s Chapter in Taiwan has been commissioned by the Ministry of Justice to conduct the TIS on its behalf. The main purpose of the Taiwan Integrity Survey is four-fold: (a) to gauge public opinion of the integrity of government and public officials in Taiwan; (b) to allow comparisons of perceptions of integrity over time; (c) to develop better integrity perception indicators; and (d) to provide government with insights for policy reform.

To these ends, the TIS takes into account three broad (but separate) dimensions of integrity perception in its survey questionnaire design: (1) behaviors that violate government integrity; (2) public attitudes toward government officials/public servants; and (3) public assessments of the government’s anti-corruption efforts. Clearly, all three dimensions are subjective measures of integrity. The first dimension measures the problem severity of various corrupt behaviors or misconduct as perceived by the general public. The second dimension investigates the public’s perception of the integrity of public officials. Finally, the third dimension provides an indication of public satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the government’s performance in fighting corruption and promoting integrity.

In terms of survey administration and implementation, the TIS is a nationwide telephone survey of adult citizens (20 years old and over) living in the greater Taiwan area (that is, including Penghu but excluding Kinmen and Matsu islands). Target respondents represent a cross-section of Taiwanese residents, who were chosen using the Random Digit Dialing (RDD) method. Except where noted, the effective sample size \( N \) is usually set at more than 1,600 respondents to minimize potential sampling error. The survey sample is later weighted with ranking according to the respondents’ gender, age, and geographical region to ensure representativeness.

Under normal circumstances, the TIS is conducted at least once each year. For the 2010 TIS, two separate surveys were administered: the first from 4 to 9 July \( (N = 1,650, \text{maximum sampling error below } \pm 2.41\% \text{ at } 95\% \text{ confidence level}) \), and the second from 10 to 13 September \( (N = 1,078, \text{maximum sampling error below } \pm 2.95\% \text{ at } 95\% \text{ confidence level}) \). The July 2010 survey included questions that were identical or similar to those asked in previous years. The September 2010 survey, however, contained questionnaire items that sought to identify vulnerable institutions as well as to ascertain the sources of perception variation among respondents. This article analyzes TIS data collected across various years, focusing mainly on the two sample-independent surveys conducted in 2010.

Taiwan citizens’ perceptions of corruption

In this section, the results from the Taiwan Integrity Survey are presented and discussed. To ensure a tidier presentation of findings, survey data from the following five years of the TIS are used: 2005 (July), 2006 (July), 2007 (July), 2009 (June), and 2010 (July and September). Data from 2004 and 2008 are not included in the analysis because both were presidential election years in Taiwan, times during which the respondents’ perceptions could be affected by electoral results. Effectively, the use of these five-years’ worth of data allows for a rudimentary comparison of citizen perceptions of corruption and government integrity between

Corruption behavior

Although definitions of corruption vary from society to society, this study considers three particular behaviors that threaten the integrity of government officials in Taiwan: vote-buying, illegal lobbying (or favor-asking), and the giving of the so-called ‘red envelopes’ either to facilitate an official transaction or as the presentation of a gift. In the survey, respondents were asked how serious (or prevalent) each of these corruption practices was on a measurement scale from 0 to 10, with 10 representing ‘very serious’ and 0 representing ‘not serious at all’. Figure 1 presents the results for these questions for the period between 2005 and 2010.

Figure 1 shows that vote-buying remains the most serious problem in Taiwan when compared with the other two corrupt practices. Vote-buying by politicians during elections received an average score of 6.85 over the period 2005–2010, followed by lobbying (5.71) and paying public officials with ‘red envelopes’ (4.29). Moreover, according to the data, none of these commonly recognized forms of corruption showed any signs of diminishing over the period.

Who’s corrupt? A principal–agent approach

According to the principal–agent framework, the relationship between principals and agents in a democracy can be divided into three levels (see Figure 2). At the first level, the people (citizens) elect representatives to government via regularly-held elections. Here the people are the principals and the elected officials are the people’s agents. At the second level, elected officials select and appoint qualified people to senior executive leadership posts (such as cabinet ministers), entrusting them with performing government duties while also holding them accountable for their actions. Here the elected officials are the principals, and the cabinet members constitute the elected officials’ agents. At the third level, cabinet members rely on their subordinates in the civil service (or bureaucracy) to fully implement the will of the people and the policies of the state; here, the cabinet members are is the principals, while the civil servants act as their agents.

The principal–agent theory thus specifies the relationship among the people, the elected officials, the cabinet members, and the civil servants in a straight-forward way. From left to right, the elected officials are the people’s first-level agents, cabinet members/political appointees are the second-level agents, and civil servants are the third-level agents. The most serious problem faced by principals and agents in democratic governance is that of institutional design: if the system is not properly

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designed or set up, agents may act in a manner that is opposite to the intentions or preferences of the principal, raising the possibility that the agents will abuse the powers entrusted to them for their own private gain. In a widely-cited work, Klitgaard stated that a system is especially prone to corruption and illicit behaviors when agents possess an unrestrained monopoly of power and great discretion, but low levels of accountability to the principal.10

The Taiwan Integrity Survey is uniquely positioned to answer which level of agent in the principal–agent framework (as presented in Figure 2) Taiwanese citizens perceive as having the highest levels of integrity. On a scale of 0–10 (with higher scores indicating higher levels of integrity), survey respondents were asked to grade the integrity of (a) legislators; (b) executive officials in the central government; and (c) civil servants in general. Figure 3 provides the results from the 2005–2010 TIS.

Of the three types of public officials, Figure 3 shows that civil servants (the ‘third-level’ agents, farthest away from the people in terms of democratic accountability) maintain their status as the ones whom citizens perceive to have the highest integrity among those who work in the public sector. Consistent with previous TIS data, corruption in the civil service is not a major problem in Taiwan in the eyes of the public, which lends support to Goodsell’s argument that bureaucracy has been

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unfairly portrayed as inherently ineffective or corrupt. More interesting, however, is the evolution of people’s perceptions of the integrity of the other two types of government officials. After reaching respective low points in 2006, public perceptions of integrity for both cabinet ministers/executives (the ‘second-level’ agents) and legislators (the ‘first-level’ agents) had bounced back to 2005 levels by 2010. The perceived integrity of cabinet ministers/executives climbed over a point (from 3.83 in 2006 to 4.92 in 2010) while for legislators the increase was slightly less (from 3.65 in 2006 to 4.37 in 2010). The effect of the governing party turnover in 2008 on the public’s attitude toward government officials appears to be significant despite the fact that the perceived integrity of both legislators and cabinet ministers/executives was already on an upswing before Ma Ying-jeou became President. It remains to be seen whether the Taiwanese public will remain upbeat in the near future with regard to those ‘agents’ whom they can most hold accountable, or whether the perceived integrity of government will taper off once again.

Anti-corruption strategies and performance
Since Taiwan began the slow process of consolidating its democracy in the late 1980s, the government has been an active player in eradicating corruption in the country.

12. For possible reasons why cabinet ministers/executives had significantly lost the trust of the people during 2006, see Yu et al., ‘Evolving perceptions of government integrity’, pp. 195–197.
With varying degrees of success, the government has enacted numerous anti-corruption statutes and regulations over the past two decades in an effort to clean up the public sector, combat the influence of money politics (‘black gold’), and create a more honest, competent, open, transparent, and accountable government. For the most part, Taiwan has developed a relatively sound control and oversight mechanism that can monitor and handle issues such as asset declaration by public servants, money laundering, citizens’ access to government information, and conflict of interest.13 Through various anti-corruption education and awareness-raising campaigns, the government has also devoted considerable effort to demonstrate its determination and will to root out corruption.

Yet despite these past and current government anti-corruption endeavors, a sizeable percentage of the Taiwanese public remains skeptical about the future (see Figure 4). When asked to assess whether or not the government’s integrity would improve in the future in the 2005 survey, 47.7% of the respondents felt that it would not improve, compared with 38.6% who believed that it would improve. The election of Ma Ying-jeou to the Taiwanese presidency in 2008 significantly shifted the dynamic in public opinion about the future: amid high expectations, over half of the respondents in 2009 (51.7%) felt optimistic about the future improvement of government integrity, compared with 36.7% who felt the opposite. Citizens’ optimism for the new Ma administration was not permanent or unwavering, however. In the 2010 survey, there were still slightly more respondents who were confident about the future than those who were not (44.2% versus 42.4%) but it is clear that the Taiwanese people’s pessimism about government integrity is on the rise.

The gloomier outlook after 2009 regarding the level of government integrity may be related to mounting reservations about the Ma administration’s capacity and effectiveness in weeding out corruption in the public sector. Unlike Singapore, Hong Kong or Macao, all of which rely on a single, dedicated anti-corruption agency, Taiwan employs several government agencies to enforce its anti-corruption laws. According to comparative research conducted by Quah, this strategy of relying on multiple agencies has not proven to be particularly effective. The lack of central coordination has the potential to lead to overlapping functions (or jurisdictions), wasteful competition for recognition, staff and resources, and the dilution of the country’s anti-corruption efforts, among other possible setbacks.14

Proposals for creating a dedicated and professional anti-corruption agency similar to that of Hong Kong or Singapore are not new to Taiwanese citizens. According to TIS data collected from 2005 to 2010, an overwhelming majority of respondents believe that the establishment of a major anti-corruption agency would help to raise

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the perceived integrity of government (see Figure 5). In 2005, about 68% of the survey respondents felt that a major anti-corruption agency would be helpful while 24% felt that it would not be helpful. In 2006 and 2007, the gap between these two
opposing opinions narrowed slightly, but after the presidential turnover in 2008, the gap increased. In the 2010 survey, nearly 76% of respondents felt that a dedicated anti-corruption agency would be beneficial in improving the integrity of government, compared with about 18% who held the opposite view. With such strong public support (and following another high-profile bribery scandal involving several Taiwanese High Court judges), the Ma administration finally decided to establish a major corruption-fighting agency in July 2010. The new anti-corruption agency is set to begin operations in July 2011 and while its impact on public perceptions still remains unclear, it is certainly a significant new development.

**Vulnerable institutions: an NIS approach**

The preceding sections provided a brief look at how Taiwanese people feel about government integrity in the future and whether they think the formation of a major anti-corruption agency would be helpful in controlling corruption. To the extent that these overall perceptions are of concern, it is also crucial to find the particular agencies or institutions that are most susceptible to corrupt practices with the aim of reducing the opportunities for corruption. The search for vulnerable areas or sectors is the approach taken by Transparency International’s National Integrity System (NIS).

Briefly stated, the NIS is a concept developed by Transparency International to help countries design, monitor, identify, and compare anti-corruption mechanisms and initiatives in a more comprehensive or holistic way. The system encompasses 11 major institutions (or ‘pillars’) that contribute to the integrity, transparency, and accountability in a country, consisting of the legislature, the executive, the judiciary, the auditor-general’s office, the ombudsman, watchdog agencies, the civil service, the media, the private sector, civil society, and international actors.

Thus, to determine the institutions most vulnerable to corrupt activities in Taiwan (as modified by NIS studies), respondents were asked to assess the extent to which corruption affected nine different types of institutions, sectors or organizations in the country. Possible answers range from 1 to 5, with 1 representing ‘not at all corrupt’, and 5 indicating ‘extremely corrupt’.

In Table 1, the distribution of responses to two questions regarding the extent of private sector corruption in Taiwan is provided. When asked how serious the problem of corporate fraud was (such as embezzling money and engaging in false accounting), about 37% of the survey respondents judged the situation to be very serious or extremely serious

As to the second question—‘How serious is the problem of the private sector/businesses using bribery to influence government policy?’—the answer was unmistakably clear: nearly 61% of the survey respondents considered the problem of private sector bribery to be very serious or extremely serious. This result indicates a serious rent-seeking problem in Taiwan, which is not all that different from the rampant problem of ‘commercial bribery’ in mainland China.\(^\text{17}\) According to TIS data, the public–private ‘partnership’ of corruption is becoming less and less tolerable to the public.

### Sources accounting for variations in perception

To recap, the Taiwan Integrity Surveys have thus far produced the following findings on public perceptions of corruption and government integrity: (a) vote-buying

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remains a serious problem in the eyes of citizens, even more prevalent than either illegal lobbying or giving ‘red envelopes’; (b) civil servants are perceived to have higher integrity than either cabinet members or legislators; (c) while an overwhelming majority believe that the creation of a new anti-corruption agency would help to check and control corruption, Taiwanese citizens are about equally split on whether government integrity would improve in the future; and (d) the legislature, the judiciary, the political parties, and the private sector top the list of institutions that are perceived to be the most vulnerable to corrupt and illicit behavior.

Of the results obtained from the TIS, the message contained in the findings above shows that a variation in perception clearly exists with regard to the integrity of government. If this variation were treated as the dependent variable, then a set of related research questions emerges: why do the people in Taiwan assess government integrity differently? How do we account for these differences in perceptions of government integrity?

This article suggests that three factors may account for, and provide contexts to, the variations in the perception of government integrity: the encounter effect, the party-identification effect, and the media effect. Each of these three proposed explanations is explored in turn.

The encounter effect

Scholars have paid considerable attention to studying citizen attitudes towards public services and to whether citizens’ experiences or encounters with those services met prior expectations.18 Early research conducted by Katz and colleagues showed that when people were asked directly about their most recent encounter with a service agency, a large majority expressed satisfaction with the way the agency had handled their problems.19 Later research produced much more complete (and nuanced) findings. Citizens’ levels of satisfaction with a government service or agency depended on many factors: the type of service under question, the agency’s actual performance in providing the service, the wider social context, how citizens assessed their interaction with government officials/bureaucrats, and so on.20

Nevertheless, a common result obtained from the literature is that citizens’ recent contact with a government agency would shape their opinion of the agency, usually for the better. Briefly stated, then, the encounter effect is the idea that citizens tend to rate personal experiences with specific bureaucratic organizations more favorably than general references to the government as a whole, partly because the encounter experience helps overcome their stereotype of government. 21

The encounter effect was tested using two questions from the 2010 TIS. One question asked respondents to indicate whether or not they (or a member of their

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household) had had contact with the public sector in the past year. A second question asked them to evaluate the problem of corruption in the public sector on a scale of 1 (‘not a problem at all’) to 5 (‘extremely serious problem’). The answers to both questions have been cross-tabulated. As Table 3 indicates, corruption assessment scores for citizens who had recently had contact with the public sector were lower than those for citizens who had not had contact. On average, people who had an encounter with the public sector within the previous year rated the problem of corruption as less serious (2.68) than those who had not (3.18), a 0.5-point difference. The chi-square test for the entire table also indicates that there is a significant association between a citizen’s encounter and assessment of corruption ($\chi^2 = 38.93$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.0000$).

The party-identification effect

The party-identification effect refers to the tendency of people to perceive issues or candidates in strict partisan terms or according to their political party allegiance. Partisan identity can be defined as a sense of personal and emotional attachment rooted in feelings of closeness to social groups associated with political parties. Along with core political values, party identification is a central, stable, and enduring element in the political belief systems of ordinary citizens. According to the long-established literature on voting behavior and public opinion, citizens often use partisan cues to guide their opinions, to shape their policy preferences, and to inform their votes.

Since Taiwan embarked on its democratic journey in the 1980s, politics has been dominated by two main political parties: the Kuomintang (or Nationalist) Party (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). There have been two peaceful and orderly transfers of power: one in 2000, when the DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian emerged victorious in a historical presidential race, ending more than a half-century of KMT rule in Taiwan, and the other in 2008, when the KMT candidate Ma Ying-jeou defeated the incumbent party’s candidate, Frank Hsieh, for the presidency.

Before determining whether the party-identification effect exists in Taiwan, however, it is imperative to take into consideration which party is the ruling party at a given time. The DPP broke the KMT’s long-standing grip on power in May 2000 and ruled Taiwan for the next eight years. The KMT’s return to power in May 2008 after a series of corruption scandals involving President Chen and his close associates sunk any chance of the DPP candidate retaining the presidency beyond Chen’s two terms in office.

If a strong party-identification effect exists, then when the DPP was ruling Taiwan, supporters of the DPP and its political allies (referred to as the ‘pan-green’ coalition because the DPP’s party color is green) would hold a more favorable view of the administration, its officials, and its policies, while supporters of the KMT and its political allies (referred to as the ‘pan-blue’ coalition since the KMT’s party color is

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blue) would view all three in a much more negative light. Alternatively, after the KMT won back the presidency in 2008, it would be the pan-blue supporters who would hold more favorable views of the government and its policies. Pan-green supporters, now that DPP is in opposition, would then be less enthusiastic and more critical of the (ruling) KMT administration and its policies. The following tables examine the effects of party-identification in Taiwan using three variables: respondents’ perceptions of the integrity of the executive leadership (i.e., cabinet ministers), their views concerning the establishment of a major anti-corruption agency to fight corruption, and their assessment of improving government integrity in the future. As before, data from 2008 have been omitted because 2008 was a presidential election year.

As Table 4 indicates, in the years 2005–2007, during which the DPP held power, pan-green supporters on average rated the integrity of the executive leadership in the central government higher than either the pan-blue supporters or independents did. Pan-blue supporters graded the DPP officials the lowest. For all three years,

Table 3. The encounter effect: citizens’ encounters with the public sector in relation to their assessment of corruption in the public sector

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (Not a problem at all)</td>
<td>123 (21.5%)</td>
<td>41 (10.9%)</td>
<td>164 (17.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>133 (23.2%)</td>
<td>78 (20.7%)</td>
<td>211 (22.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>181 (31.6%)</td>
<td>111 (29.5%)</td>
<td>292 (30.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>78 (13.6%)</td>
<td>63 (16.8%)</td>
<td>141 (14.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (Extremely serious problem)</td>
<td>58 (10.1%)</td>
<td>83 (22.1%)</td>
<td>141 (14.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>573 (100%)</td>
<td>376 (100%)</td>
<td>949 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average corruption score</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $\chi^2 = 38.93$, df = 4, $p = 0.000$; cell entries are frequencies and numbers in parentheses are column percentages.
Source: Taiwan Integrity Survey, September 2010.

Table 4. The party-identification effect I: citizens’ party identification and their assessment of the integrity of the executive leadership (cabinet ministers/executives), 2005–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>‘Pan-blue’ coalition (KMT and allies)</th>
<th>‘Pan-green’ coalition (DPP and allies)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Statistical test (ANOVA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>4.69</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A higher score indicates higher perceived levels of integrity (on a scale of 0–10).
the difference in perceptions of integrity held by the three groups of supporters is statistically significant at the 0.05 level using the ANOVA test. When the KMT gained the presidency after 2008, a new era began: pan-blue supporters now perceived the executive leadership to have higher levels of integrity, but the same could not be said of the pan-green coalition members. Indeed, just as the party-identification effect hypothesizes, pan-green supporters rated KMT officials in government lower in terms of integrity. Unsurprisingly, political independents are located somewhere between the pan-blue and pan-green supporters during all five years under study although a closer inspection shows that their views were generally closer to whichever party was not ruling at the time. For example, political independents stood closer to pan-blue supporters during the DPP administrative era but they became closer to pan-green supporters during the KMT era. Moreover, the independents are the only group that did not show wild swings in their perceptions and attitudes toward issues at the 2008 changeover point. Figure 6 presents the same information as Table 4 in a graphic manner.

In Table 5, citizens’ perspectives on the establishment of a dedicated government unit to fight corruption are compared across party lines for the period 2005–2010. During 2005–2007, pan-green supporters who believed that a new anti-corruption agency would be helpful in fighting corruption ranged between 85% and 87%. Yet their endorsement for the new agency dropped considerably to between 65% and 72% in 2009–2010, a 13–22% decrease during the first two years of the new KMT administration. Between 64% and 69% of pan-blue supporters thought that the new

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**Figure 6.** The party-identification effect I: citizens’ party identification and their assessment of the integrity of the executive leadership (cabinet ministers/executives), 2005–2010.  
*Note*: A higher score indicates higher perceived levels of integrity (on a scale of 0–10).  
agency would help Taiwan curb corruption during the period of the DPP administration (2005–2007) but their approval of the new agency dramatically increased to between 85% and 88% after their candidate won the elections in 2008. Analyses of the 'not helpful' responses yield a similar conclusion: the party-identification effect appears to be a strong factor in explaining citizen attitudes toward the creation of a new anti-corruption agency. Figure 7 displays the preceding results graphically.

Finally, in Table 6, citizens’ assessments of improving government integrity in the future are tabulated against their party affiliations. As expected, the party-identification effect is strong: between 64% and 70% of pan-green supporters were optimistic that government integrity would improve when their candidate was in the presidential office, but this number dropped to an average of 30% after 2008. For pan-blue supporters, the opposite trend is true: between 52% and 73% were pessimistic about the future during 2005–2007, but after 2008, between 78% and 84% of them had swiftly become optimistic. Just as the earlier tables show, the effect of party affiliation on respondents’ political judgments and evaluations appears to be broad and deep. Figure 8 shows the effect of party-identification on survey respondents’ views about the future graphically.

Table 5. The party-identification effect II: citizens’ party identification and their assessment of the establishment of a new anti-corruption agency to fight corruption, 2005–2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Party identification</th>
<th>Anti-corruption agency Helpful (%)</th>
<th>Anti-corruption agency Not helpful (%)</th>
<th>Statistical test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 44.21$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>68.8</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>70.6</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 44.66$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>69.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 43.63$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>67.3</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 82.67$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>72.3</td>
<td>27.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>34.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 31.10$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>85.2</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are row percentages; the ‘pan-blue’ coalition includes the KMT, the People First Party, and the New Party; the ‘pan-green’ coalition includes the DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union. Source: Taiwan Integrity Survey, 2005–2010.
The media effect

The agenda-setting function of the media is often described as a process in which the media can affect both the topics the public thinks about (‘salience’) and how they think about those topics (‘framing’). Through the media’s ability to select, influence and frame issues they consider to be newsworthy, the salience of the most important topics is transferred from the media agenda to the public agenda. The empirical evidence for the media’s agenda-setting effect is abundant and well-documented in the literature.

In the Taiwanese Integrity Surveys, the media’s effect on public opinion cannot be underestimated. When respondents were asked in the 2010 TIS to specify the source of their impressions of government officials, for example, almost half (49%) indicated that they had obtained their impressions from watching TV, followed by personal experience (14%), reading newspapers (11.1%), and from family and friends (10.7%). In other words, if the percentages for TV and newspapers are combined, then as much as 60% of all judgments regarding the integrity of public officials might have been shaped by the respondents’ choice of TV network or newspaper.

In Taiwan, media companies can be roughly divided into three camps, much in the same way as the Taiwanese electorate: ‘pan-green’ media, ‘pan-blue’ media, and

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those who do not belong to either (the ‘independents’). The editorial stance and coverage of the pan-green media leans towards the DPP while that of the pan-blue media has a political orientation closer to that of the KMT. Normally, the pan-green media would be unanimously disapproving of almost everything the KMT’s Ma administration does or intends to do.

To test whether a media effect exists in Taiwan with respect to corruption perception, TIS respondents’ TV viewing habits have been cross-tabulated with their assessments of the government’s actions in fighting corruption (see Table 7). To make interpretation simpler, viewing habits have been categorized according to whether or not the respondents only watch Sanlih E-Television and Formosa TV, two prominent pan-green TV networks. As the 2 × 2 table indicates, there is a statistically significant relationship between TV viewing habits and the assessment of government’s efforts to eliminate corruption ($\chi^2 = 42.09$, $df = 1$, $p < 0.05$). To be specific, a large majority (105 out of 131, or 80.2%) of those who only watch pan-green channels deem the government’s anti-corruption efforts to be ineffective. By contrast, among those who do not only watch these two pan-green TV networks, slightly fewer than half (178 out of 375, or 47.5%) judge the government’s anti-corruption efforts to be ineffective. Viewing pan-green channels only is thus related to a more negative evaluation of the government’s corruption-curbing efforts,


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Party identification</th>
<th>Optimistic(%)</th>
<th>Pessimistic(%)</th>
<th>Statistical test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>55.6</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 139.23$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>27.0</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>57.7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>55.0</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 74.07$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>63.8</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>69.2</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46.9</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 42.07$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>63.6</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>41.7</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 313.37$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>83.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>47.2</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>$\chi^2 = 201.56$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-blue’ coalition</td>
<td>78.2</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>$p &lt; 0.05$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Pan-green’ coalition</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>69.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cell entries are row percentages; the ‘pan-blue’ coalition includes the KMT, the People First Party, and the New Party; the ‘pan-green’ coalition includes the DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union. Source: Taiwan Integrity Survey, 2005–2010.

26. Unlike pan-green media, pan-blue media in Taiwan are generally much harder to specify.
suggesting that media—at least the pan-green media—can strongly influence their viewers’ perceptions.

**Conclusions**

In May 2000, when the KMT peacefully handed over the presidency to the DPP after controlling the central government for 50 years, Taiwan’s progress in democratic political modernization was considered to be a ‘political miracle’ and one of the best cases among...
the third-wave democratizations. As Rigger noted, ‘Taiwan’s transformation from single-party authoritarianism to multiparty democracy came about with very little violence or bloodshed. Nor did it require wrenching economic or social upheavals. In fact, one might describe Taiwan’s experience as “best-case” democratization’.

Yet Taiwan’s transition to democracy has not marked the end of corruption in the country. According to Hsueh, there are five possible reasons for how democratization may have actually fueled greater corruption in Taiwan: (1) due to increasingly competitive elections, political campaigns had become extremely expensive, thus forcing candidates to become dependent on political contributions; (2) the growing power of legislatures to bestow political favors; (3) infrastructure expansion in the 1990s provided ample and lucrative opportunities for corruption; (4) the rise of corrupt local factions and conglomerates at the national level; and (5) Taiwan’s economy produced substantial resources to grease the wheels of political corruption. Without question, the recent corruption scandals involving President Chen Shui-bian—ironically, a former anti-corruption and anti-‘black gold’ crusader—and his cronies have seriously put in peril the further development of Taiwan’s nascent democracy.

In 2008, Taiwan experienced a second party changeover in the central government, moving from a democratic transformation period to a democratic consolidation stage. With all the important conditions of democracy already in place, including power rotation in successive elections, an independent judicial system, a free mass media, and the presence of a strong civil society, the aim was to ensure that no corrupt act could be committed with impunity. The establishment of a new anti-corruption agency in 2011 to exclusively combat and prevent corruption is a step towards achieving that goal. Of course, many questions remain, including whether the new agency can effectively prevent public corruption as successfully as Hong Kong’s Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) using the right combination of rules and values, or will it fall prey to political pressure in the enforcement of laws and regulations as appears to have happened in Macao.

In a newly democratic regime, where there is great interest in public affairs, including the problem of corruption, information about citizens’ perceptions of corruption is vital to anti-corruption efforts. Citizen perceptions are an indicator of the success or failure of anti-corruption policies and initiatives. If data are made available to show which sectors, institutions, or public officials are considered the most corrupt, they can be of further help in assigning priorities to policy initiatives, managerial actions, and anti-corruption efforts. Accordingly, a bottom-up citizen perspective becomes a rational (but also pragmatic) approach to understanding the phenomenon of corruption and the performance of anti-corruption efforts, complementing the more macro-level or elite perspectives as provided by the CPI, GI and the like.

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27. John Copper, ‘The devolution of Taiwan’s democracy during the Chen Shui-bian era’, *Journal of Contemporary China* 18(60), (2009), p. 463.
Although a bottom-up citizen perspective seems indispensable in a democracy, it is not without limitations. Because of disinterest and inattention or the incomprehensibility of modern government, the public is likely to have no more than a superficial knowledge of government or its operation. When the public is inattentive or rationally ignorant about government, the quality of democracy suffers since a well-functioning democracy demands an informed and participatory electorate. Any interpretation of the data collected from a bottom-up citizen perspective thus must be cautious.

Concerning corruption, this article finds that three ‘bottom-up’ factors—citizens’ encounter with government bureaucracy, their party identification, and their TV network viewing preferences—have an effect on their perceptions of corruption and on corruption-related issues. These results suggest that future opinion surveys about corruption ought to consider these three factors, as a way to contextualize citizens’ perceptions by identifying additional factors which may influence them.32

It is especially worrisome, for example, to find that citizens’ party identification has a significant effect on three separate survey measures: on the perceived integrity of the executive leadership, on the attitude toward the establishment of a major anti-corruption agency, and on the assessment of the likelihood government integrity improving in the future. When everything is considered and determined from a purely partisan point of view, a society inevitably becomes a divided one. While these strong partisanship findings are not by themselves groundbreaking or solely unique to Taiwanese politics, they are valid nonetheless. The cliché ‘where you stand depends on where you sit’ is assuredly true, even with regard to the issue of corruption, which should be seen as a non-partisan issue, but unfortunately not by (KMT) ‘blue’ or (DPP) ‘green’ supporters.

What can be done to overcome these bottom-up effects? The bureaucratic encounter effect, while not a partisan issue, merely suggests that when interpreting perception-based data, researchers must take into account how much citizens are truly informed about government and the services it provides, that they are not simply guided by their personal biases or self-fulfilling stereotypes. Regarding the effect of partisanship, the clear answer is that any future political socialization and engagement between citizens must begin with an emphasis on mutual empathy and tolerance toward one another’s viewpoints. The same goes for the free and independent media companies in Taiwan, which, as part of their professional and journalistic responsibility, should strive towards a more neutral and balanced reporting of the news. Until that happens, Taiwanese society threatens to become even more polarized and its citizens more disenchanted. Additionally, the issue of corruption needs to be depoliticized by ensuring that transparency, accountability, integrity, the rule of law, and good governance are not simply empty campaign slogans (‘bumper stickers’) put forward during elections. Corruption is the main source of public discontent in Taiwan and corruption scandals seriously endanger its cherished democracy because they erode the public’s trust in the democratic system and in the established democratic institutions.

32. Two additional ‘bottom-up’ factors influence citizens’ perceptions of corruption/government integrity: the utility effect (the proposition that people who think bribery is effective tend to perceive the overall system as more corrupt), and the civic responsibility effect (the proposition that people who would act as whistleblowers upon witnessing an illegal act tend to be more optimistic that government integrity would improve in the future). Future work will attempt to disentangle the different bottom-up factors discussed herein, and identify the most significant ones through the use of multivariate regression analysis.