

**Who Wants Checks and Balances?  
Endogeneity of the Balancing Perspective**

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**Abstract**

The premise of the intentional model of split-ticket voting is that some voters split their tickets simply because they prefer divided government and believe in constant “checks and balances.” This article examines whether this premise stands firm in an emerging democracy like Taiwan. That is, by using survey data in Taiwan, we explore whether one’s attitude toward divided or unified government is “real.” We hypothesize that a citizen’s attitude toward “checks and balances” is subject to change, and conditional on whether her preferred party is in power. Specifically, we speculate that a citizen would tend to hold the balancing perspective or favor divided government, if her preferred party is in opposition. However, if her preferred party becomes the ruling party, she would be more likely to oppose (hold) the balancing (non-balancing) perspective or favor unified government. We then utilize panel survey data embedded in Taiwan’s Election and Democratization Studies (TEDS) to verify our hypothesis.

Keywords: checks and balances; straight- and split-ticket voting; endogeneity

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The phenomenon of divided government has attracted considerable scholarly attention in the study of American politics over the past decades. One of the major controversies is its cause. While divided government is an aggregated result of certain voting patterns, scholars tend to develop micro-level theories to explain why voters cast their votes in those ways.

In the context of American politics, a divided government is not unusual. Yet, unlike the periods of divided government in the late nineteenth century, during which divided government mainly occurred in off-year elections as the electorate changed the majority party in congressional elections, divided government in the post World War II period is driven by the rise of split-ticket voting in presidential elections—votes for one party for president and the other party for their members of Congress (Brady, 1993; Fiorina, 1992). As split-ticket voting appears to be a common practice for a portion of voters and can be regarded as the main cause of a divided government, then the question becomes why voters tend to do so.

Empirical research purports two major models to explain split-ticket voting: the intentional and unintentional models. The intentional model of split-ticket voting mainly follows the logic of “balancing theory” argued by Fiorina (1992, 1996). The intuition behind the theory is fairly straightforward—some voters split their tickets simply because they prefer divided, but “balanced” government. In other words, a portion of voters tend to engage in intentionally, sophisticated voting behaviors (i.e., ticket splitting) to cause different partisan control of Congress and the presidency in order to ensure moderate policy (Alesina & Rosenthal, 1995; Carsey & Layman, 2001; Frymer, Kim, & Bimes, 1997; Lacy & Paolino, 1998; Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2004; Mebane, 2000; Smith, Brown, Bruce, & Overby, 1999). The balancing theory is appealing as it takes into account not only the policy differences between the two parties, but also the main feature of the US constitution—namely, constant checks and balances due to the separation of powers purported by the nation’s Founders. Thus, some scholars also label the intentional model of split-ticket

voting as the “cognitive-Madisonianism” model (Ladd, 1990; Lewis-Beck & Nadeau, 2004). In contrast, the unintentional model argues that voters split their votes mainly for other reasons (incumbency advantage, issue-ownership) rather than an intention for a divided government (Alvarez & Schousen, 1993; Born, 1994; Burden & Kimball, 1998; Garand & Lichtl 2000; Grofman, Koetzle, McDonald, & Brunell, 2000; Geer, Carter, McHenry, Teten, & Jennifer Hoef, 2004; Petrocik, 1991; Sigelman, Wahlbeck, & Buell, 1997). Thus, the unintentional model does not predict a divided government but argues that such phenomenon could be simply an accident.

The major critique on the intentional model of split-ticket voting (or balancing theory) is that in order to make any balancing act, a voter needs to have sufficient knowledge about institutional factors as well as a certain level of information about each party’s policy position (Garand & Lichtl, 2000). Additionally, uncertainties regarding the outcomes of presidential and congressional elections may also prevent voters from deliberately voting for any balancing purpose (Alesina & Rosenthal, 1995; Saunders, Abramowitz, & Williamson, 2005). It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine that a significant proportion of voters are capable of filling the information gap and cast their votes in a way to create a divided government.

In fact, the balancing theory is more suitable to explain voting behavior in off-year elections than in presidential elections. As Alesina and Rosenthal (1995) indicate, in terms of balancing, voters may easily adjust their voting behaviors in off-year elections simply because they already know the result of the last election. By presuming the linkage between the intention for a divided government and voting behavior, Erikson (1988) labels votes against the president’s party in off-year elections as a type of “lagged ticket-splitting,” meaning that those voters who preferred a divided government would intentionally vote for congressional candidates nominated by a party different from the incumbent president.

On the basis of the balancing theory, numerous studies utilized survey data and entertained different empirical models to test the linkage between the intention for divided

government and split-ticket voting behavior.<sup>2</sup> While the findings are mixed, the core assumption of these empirical analyses is the same—that is, the preference toward divided government can be regarded as an exogenous variable that determines one’s combination of vote choices. Yet, such setting may contain an endogenous problem that would not only bias the estimates but also invalidate the theory. In particular for those studies using post-election survey data, for example, it is likely that respondents rationalize their preferences toward divided or unified government according to their vote choices and the actual election outcomes. If that is the case, the linkage between preference toward divided government and split-ticket voting behavior, if any, could be spurious.

This article addresses the above methodological concern by tackling a number of theoretical questions. The basic premise of Fiorina’s balancing theory is that some voters prefer a divided government to unified government. Yet, does this premise stand firm? What if the calculation for checks and balances in fact rarely exists among voters? If the intention to make a divided government is conditional on a priori, is the balancing theory still valid? Instead of testing the linkage between split-ticket voting and intention to have a divided government, this study considers voters’ intention to make a divided government endogenous and attempts to answer the above questions by examining whether one’s attitude toward divided or unified government is “real,” and the extent to which such attitude is actually subject to change.

### **An Endogenous Theory of the Balancing Perspective**

We argue that in an emerging democracy where political parties are often tied to some deep social cleavages, the idea of “checks and balances” is barely related to constitutionalism or policy moderation as it is in some advanced democracies. Instead, such an idea may be perceived as a way to rationalize power struggle and party dominance by

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<sup>2</sup> A number of scholars also adopted the same approach to study split-ticket voting in Taiwan’s local elections (See Huang, 2001, Hung, 1995; Hsu, 2001; Shyu, 2001; Hsu, 2001; Wu, 2001). The reason why scholars only paid attention to split-ticket voting in local elections is simply due to the fact that there exists no concurrent elections in the central government level. Thus split-ticket voting could have no chance to occur.

rank-and-file party supporters in new democracies. Intuitively, party supporters tend to prefer a unified government under her preferred party's full control. Divided government is preferred only when her preferred party has lost the previous legislative/presidential election and thus she hopes her party can gain control in the other branch of the government so as to "check and balance" the opponent party. In short, one may change her preference toward divided or unified government according to the result of the last election as well as the expected outcome of the upcoming election, regardless of election types.

### **Case Selection and Data**

Taiwan's staggered election schedule offers a great opportunity to test whether one's preference toward unified/divided government is subject to change. In 2008, the legislative election was held in January, followed by the presidential election held in March. The pan-Blue camp (led by the Kuomintang or KMT) successfully defeated the pan-Green camp (led by the Democratic Progressive Party or DPP) in both elections. Specifically, the pan-Blue camp garnered three-quarters of the seats in the January legislative election. And in the following March presidential election, Taiwan's second party turnover occurred as the KMT nominee Ma Ying-jeou defeated the DPP candidate Frank Hsieh by the widest margin since the beginning of direct presidential elections in Taiwan. The KMT has come back into power as the ruling party and enjoyed full control of both executive and legislative powers since then.

After its catastrophic loss in the legislative election, the DPP tried to build its presidential campaign around the theme of "checks and balances." They urged voters to vote for Frank Hsieh in order to avoid KMT's dominance in both the legislative and executive branches. On the other hand, the KMT criticized the ineffectiveness of a divided government and offered a counter argument by reminding voters of how much gridlock there was over the past eight years.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the KMT asked voters to vote for Ma Ying-jeou

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<sup>3</sup> Between 2000 and 2008, the DPP President Chen Shui-bian controlled the executive power while the pan-Blue camp maintained a majority in the legislative chamber.

in order to form unified party control of the government and to let the KMT take full responsibility for future policies.

The 2008 election schedule is not a typical setting for studying split-ticket voting as the two elections were not held at the same time. Yet, the time span between the two elections is not long enough (i.e., only about two months) for voters to evaluate the performance of the winning party in the first election. And because the legislative election took place first, it is more difficult for voters to swing their votes due to the performance of the legislative branch.

Of course, whether a voter intentionally “splits” her tickets in these sequential elections in order to create divided government is of great scholarly interest (Huang & Wang, 2009). Yet, it is equally interesting to explore why (or why not) Taiwanese citizens intend to have a divided government. If the general public in Taiwan rarely has a clear idea about checks and balances, then how can we expect them to cast their votes accordingly? And if their attitudes toward “checks and balances” are not fixed and may change back and forth, what factors may contribute to such fluctuation?

The panel data embedded in the 2008 Taiwan Election and Democratization Studies (TEDS)<sup>4</sup> will be ideal for us to empirically test our hypothesis that a citizen’s preference toward divided or unified government will change according to the result of the last election as well as the expected outcome of the upcoming election. By utilizing the panel data, we are able to trace an individual’s preferences toward divided/unified government, conditioning on the outcomes (or expectations) of the last (or future) elections.

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<sup>4</sup> In this paper, we use two waves of survey data collected by Taiwan’s Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) in 2008. The first wave of the survey was conducted in between the 2008 Legislature Yuan election (January) and the presidential election (March), named TEDS2008L. The second wave was conducted about three months after the 2008 presidential election, named TEDS2008P. It is also worth noting that the TEDS2008P contains two types of interview design. One is a cross-sectional dataset that includes 1,905 respondents selected through an independent and random sampling procedure. The other one is a panel dataset, in which 755 respondents were interviewed twice in the TEDS2008L and TEDS2008P, respectively. Details about both datasets are listed in Appendix 1.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: The next section shows aggregate changes of voters' attitudes toward "checks and balances" before and after the 2008 presidential election. The following section tests an empirical model to see who changes his/her preference toward divided government. The final section concludes our findings and suggests avenues for future research.

### **Aggregate Changes of Attitudes toward "Checks and Balances"**

The main purpose of this paper is to show that a citizen's attitude toward "checks and balances" is subject to change, and conditional on whether his/her preferred party is in power. Specifically, we expect that a citizen would tend to hold the balancing perspective or favor divided government if her preferred party is in opposition. However, if her preferred party becomes the ruling party, she would be more likely to oppose (hold) the balancing (non-balancing) perspective or favor unified government.

By using the panel data collected before and after the 2008 presidential election, the first thing we intend to explore is to see whether citizens change their balancing/non-balancing perspectives due to the change of ruling party. For example, if one prefers divided government in a survey prior to the presidential election and her preferred party (say pan-Blue) actually won the presidential election, she may change her preference from divided government to unified government in the post-election survey, under which her support for her preferred party in the future legislative election can be rationalized. Or, if one prefers unified government in a survey prior to the presidential election and her preferred party (say pan-Green) actually lost the presidential election, she may change her preference from unified government to divided government in the post-election survey.

Both TEDS2008L and its follow-up panel in TEDS2008P include questionnaire items tapping respondents' attitudes toward checks and balances, although the wording in the two waves of survey are somewhat different. In the first wave, namely TEDS2008L conducted after the January Legislative Yuan election and before the March presidential election, the questionnaire item V7 reads as:

<b>V7: Which of the following two statements do you agree with more?</b>	
(In TEDS2008L)	
Statement (L1): (Balancing)	<i>The opposition parties should have a majority of seats in the legislature so that they can provide checks and balances on the government.</i>
Statement (L2): (Non-balancing)	<i>The president's party should have a majority of seats in the legislature so that it can implement its policies.</i>

At the time that the first wave of interview (TEDS2008L) was conducted, the opposition party was the pan-Blue camp and the incumbent president, Chen Shui-bian, had led the pan-Green camp as the ruling party. If our endogenous theory of the balancing perspective holds, then we expect to observe that the pan-Blue supporters would be more likely than their pan-Green counterparts to agree with Statement (L1)—the balancing perspective, while the ruling pan-Green supporters would be more likely to agree with Statement (L2)—the non-balancing perspective.

In the second wave of the survey conducted in the second half of 2008, the TEDS2008P questionnaire item F5 reads as:

<b>F5: Which of the following two statements do you agree with more?</b>	
(in TEDS2008P)	
Statement (P1): (Balancing)	<i>The president's party and the majority party in the legislature should be different so that they can check and balance with each other.</i>
Statement (P2): (Non-balancing)	<i>The president's party and the majority party in the legislature should be the same so that it can implement its policies effectively.</i>

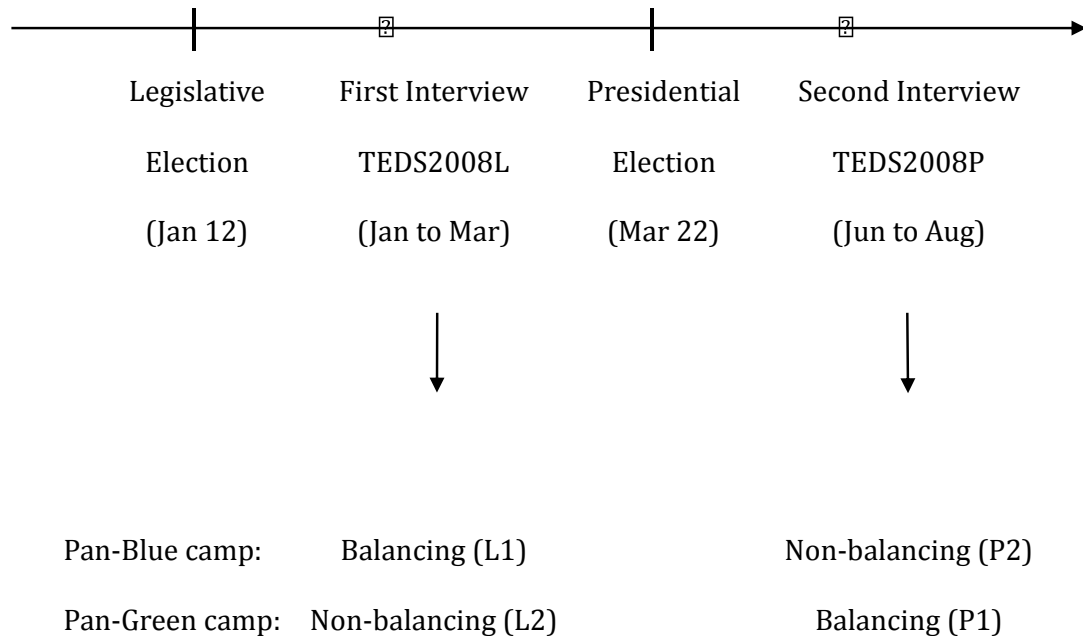
It is also important to note that the KMT has already become the ruling party and successfully formed a unified government at the point that the second wave of interview



(TEDS2008P) was conducted. Again, if our theory is correct, then we should expect an interesting swap in citizens' attitudes toward "checks and balances," i.e., the ruling pan-Blue supporters will be more likely than pan-Green supporters to agree with Statement (P2)—the non-balancing perspective, while the opposition pan-Green supporters will turn to embrace Statement (P1)—the balancing perspective. Figure 1 illustrates the complete timeline of the two elections plus both waves of TEDS interview. Additionally, the figure summarizes the expected attitudes toward "checks and balances" for party supporters. Our theory predicts that pan-Blue supporters will be likely to change their attitudes from "balancing (L1)" to "non-balancing (P2)" while pan-Green supporters will tend to change theirs from "non-balancing (L2)" to "balancing (P1)".

Figure 1

*Respondents' Expected Attitudes toward "Checks and Balances" in the Two Waves of TEDS2008, pan-Blue camp vs. pan-Green camp*



Before we explore the possible attitude changes due to the party turnover, we need to set up a reference point to examine whether different party supporters (plus Independents) have different attitudes toward “checks and balances” prior to the 2008 presidential election. In Table 1, we observe that pan-Green supporters were less likely to favor the balancing perspective as the DPP was still in power. Specifically, only about 32% of pan-Green supporters favored Statement (L1) while nearly 48% of them opposed it. This result is somewhat puzzling—that is, given the fact that the pan-Green camp just lost the legislative election prior to the survey interview, its supporters should be in favor of divided government as they hope they can win the upcoming March presidential election. Yet, it is important to note that the wording of the questionnaire item V7 in TEDS2008L identifies president’s party as the ruling party. Thus, it is not surprising that most pan-Green supporters rejected the balancing perspective specified in Statement (L1), which argues that the opposition should gain a majority of legislative seats.

On the other hand, pan-Blue supporters were indifferent between the two options (i.e., balancing vs. non-balancing) even though they were the opposition party at the time. Part of the reason that they were not in favor of the balancing perspective might be simply due to the timing of the survey—that is, at the time that TEDS2008L was conducted, the KMT had just scored a landslide victory in the Legislative Yuan election and expected to win the upcoming presidential election within two months. Thus, it is not surprising to see Pan-Blue supporters, who were the opposition but ready to turn the corner at that moment, had mixed attitudes toward “checks and balances.”

Table 1

*Party Support and Balancing Perspective BEFORE the 2008 Presidential Election*

	<b>Balancing</b>	<b>Non- Balancing</b>	<b>Non- response</b>	<b>Total(n)</b>
Pan-Blue (Opposition)	40.0% (3.6)	42.5% (3.2)	17.5% (-7.2)	100.0%( 463)
Pan-Green (Ruling)	31.9% (-0.8)	47.5% (4.4)	20.6% (-3.9)	100.0%( 301)
Independent	28.7% (-2.9)	24.5% (-7.1)	46.8% (10.5)	100.0%( 474)
<b>Total</b>	<b>33.7%</b>	<b>36.8%</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>100.0%(1238)</b>

Data source: TEDS2008L.

Note 1:  $X^2=121.321$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p<0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V= 0.221$

Note 2: Figures in ( ) are adjusted residuals

Did Taiwan's second party turnover in 2008 influence citizens' attitudes toward "checks and balances" as we expected? As Table 2 shows, after the 2008 presidential election, the proportion of pan-Blue supporters who opposed the balancing argument reached 56.1%, which increased by almost 14 percentage points in a comparison with that of TEDS2008L (i.e., 42.5%). In contrast, 65.2% of pan-Green supporters held the balancing perspective—the number increased substantially by over 33 percentage points compared with that in Table 1 (i.e., 31.9%). Additionally, Independents' attitudes toward "checks and balances" were also influenced by the party turnover. Before the 2008 presidential election, more than 46% of Independents had a non-attitude response toward "checks and balances" (see Table 1). Yet, after the 2008 presidential election, near half of them held the balancing perspective (i.e., 45.7%), which can be regarded as a response to the unified government under the KMT control. In short, the above findings suggest that citizens' balancing perspectives are considerably versatile. We may hypothesize that party supporters may change their balancing perspectives depending on whose party is in charge (i.e., the ruling party), while Independents may also change their attitudes in response to divided or unified government.

Table 2

*Party Support and Balancing Perspective AFTER the 2008 Presidential Election*

	<b>Balancing</b>	<b>Non- Balancing</b>	<b>Non- response</b>	<b>Total(n)</b>
Pan-Blue (Ruling)	33.8% (-8.7)	56.1% (14.3)	10.1% (-6.6)	100.0% (695)
Pan-Green (Opposition)	65.2% (10.1)	22.0% (-7.8)	12.9% (-3.5)	100.0% (551)
Independent	45.7% (-0.8)	24.7% (-7.1)	29.6% (10.0)	100.0% (659)
<b>Total</b>	<b>47.0%</b>	<b>35.4%</b>	<b>17.6%</b>	<b>100.0%(1905)</b>

Data source: TEDS2008P.

Note 1:  $\chi^2 = 281.224$ ;  $df = 4$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.272$

Note 2: Figures in ( ) are adjusted residual.

In order to directly test whether citizens' balancing perspectives may change as we hypothesize, a longitudinal (panel) survey data is needed. Specifically, we utilize panel data to examine whether the respondents' attitudes toward "checks and balances" are consistent across the two waves of survey interview (i.e., TEDS2008L & TEDS2008P).

If respondents' attitudes toward "checks and balances" can be influenced by whether their preferred party is governing, we may observe a significant proportion of respondents changing their attitudes after the March 2008 presidential election. On the other hand, if respondents' balancing and non-balancing perspectives are deeply held, then we may observe a very small proportion of respondents who change their preferences due to the presidential election outcome.

As Table 3 indicates, only about half (50.9%) of respondents stick to the same preference on balancing/non-balancing across the two waves of the survey while all the rest shift one way or the other. Both the tests of gross changes (i.e. test of symmetry) as well

as net changes (i.e., test of marginal homogeneity)<sup>5</sup> are statistically highly significant. We can thus easily reject the null hypothesis of no change in the balancing perspective before and after the 2008 presidential election.

Table 3

*Change in Respondent's Balancing Perspective BEFORE and AFTER the 2008 Presidential Election*

<b>before</b> \ <b>after</b>	<b>Balancing</b>	<b>Non-Balancing</b>	<b>No-response</b>	<b>Total</b>
Balancing	145 (19.2%) [58.2%] <b>I</b>	88 (11.7%) [35.3%] <b>II</b>	16 (2.1%) [6.4%] <b>III</b>	249 (33.0%)
Non- Balancing	96 (12.7%) [32.4%] <b>IV</b>	179 (23.7%) [60.5%] <b>V</b>	21 (2.8%) [7.1%] <b>VI</b>	296 (39.2%)
No- response	98 (13.0%) [46.7%] <b>VII</b>	52 (6.9%) [24.8%] <b>VIII</b>	60 (8.0%) [28.6%] <b>IX</b>	210 (27.8%)
Total	339 (44.9%)	319 (42.3%)	97 (12.9%)	755 (100.0%)

Data source: TEDS2008P.

Notes: 1. Figures in ( ) are total percentages, while figures in [ ] are row percentages.

2. Test of symmetry (H0: no differences in net changes):  $\chi^2=72.49$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p<.0001$

3. Stuart-Maxwell test of marginal homogeneity (H0: no differences in gross changes):  $\chi^2=70.23$ ,  $df=2$ ,  $p<.0001$

Given the substantial changes in citizen' attitudes toward "checks and balances" before and after the 2008 presidential election, our next step is to explore who are more

<sup>5</sup> See Huang (2005) for an explanation of net change vs. gross change, and Agresti (2002, Chapter 10) for categorical panel data tests of symmetry and marginal homogeneity.

likely to change. However, due to a limited sample size (as Table 3 already shows some sparse cells), further analysis may worsen the situation. We therefore recode the variable of our interest, i.e., nine patterns of stability and change in balancing perspective, into the following five categories.

1. Three stable patterns for those who maintain the same position in both waves of the survey:

- (1) stable balancing (i.e., cell I)
- (2) stable non-balancing (i.e., cell V)
- (3) stable no-response (i.e., cell IX) , and

2. Two mixed patterns of changes:

(1) shift toward balancing: including those who changed from an initial non-balancing position into either balancing or neutral (no response), as well as those who were initially neutral but later converted to balancing (i.e., cells IV, VI, and VII);

(2) shift toward non-balancing: including those who changed from an initial balancing position into either non-balancing or neutral (no response), as well as those who were initially neutral but later converted to non-balancing (i.e., cells II, III, and VIII) .

Additionally, the party turnover may also result in changes of respondents' party support. Thus we categorize six types of party support based on the two waves of interview, <sup>6</sup> including "ruling to opposition" (stable pan-Green supporter as their preferred party shifted from ruling to opposition after the 2008 presidential election), "independent to opposition" (claimed independent in the first wave of interviews but changed to support the pan-Green camp in the second wave), "independent to ruling" (claimed independent in the first wave of the interview but changed to support the pan-Green camp in the second wave), "opposition to ruling" (stable pan-Blue as their preferred party shifted from opposition to

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<sup>6</sup> Please refer to Appendix III for details.

ruling after the 2008 presidential election), “stable independent” (claimed independent in both waves of interview), and “others”. Table 4 summarizes the possible linkage between the different types of party support and the possible changes of balancing /non-balancing perspectives.

Table 4

*Correlation between Changes of Preferred Party and Changes of Attitudes toward “Checks and Balances”*

	Stable Balancing	Shift toward Balancing	Shift toward Non- balancing	Stable Non- balancing	Stable No- response	Total (n)
Ruling to Opposition	24.2% (1.8)	41.0% (4.0)	8.7% (-4.2)	23.6% (0.0)	2.5% (-2.9)	100.0% (161)
Independent to Opposition	12.3% (-1.4)	47.4% (3.3)	12.3% (-1.6)	21.1% (-0.5)	7.0% (-0.3)	100.0% ( 57)
Independent to Ruling	17.6% (-0.3)	23.5% (-0.8)	43.1% (4.1)	7.8% (-2.8)	7.8% (0.0)	100.0% ( 51)
Opposition to Ruling	20.9% (0.8)	12.1% (-6.8)	24.7% (1.9)	37.7% (6.1)	4.6% (-2.3)	100.0% (239)
Stable Independent	15.7% (-1.3)	32.7% (1.3)	20.8% (0.0)	11.9% (-3.9)	18.9% (5.7)	100.0% (159)
Others	17.0% (-0.5)	33.0% (1.0)	23.9% (0.8)	18.2% (-1.3)	8.0% (0.0)	100.0% ( 88)
Total	19.2%	28.5%	20.7%	23.7%	7.9%	100.0% (755)

Data sources: TEDS2008L and TEDS2008P.

Note 1:  $X^2 = 142.469$ ;  $df = 20$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ; Cramer's  $V = 0.217$

Note 2: Figures in ( ) are adjusted residuals.

Table 4 shows that 41% of stable Pan-Green supporters changed their attitudes toward “checks and balances” as shifting toward the balancing perspective after the

presidential election. That is, once the pan-Green camp became the opposition, a significant proportion of stable pan-Green supporters tended to change their attitudes toward “checks and balances” by emphasizing the balancing perspective. In a similar vein, among Independents who changed to support the opposition party (i.e., the Pan-Green party), about 47% of them shifted toward the balancing perspective.

On the other hand, among Independents who changed to support the ruling party (i.e., the Pan-Blue party), nearly 43% of them shifted toward non-balancing perspective. And among stable Pan-Blue supporters, about 25% of them shifted toward the non-balancing perspective. Yet, around 38% of them did not change at all and consistently held the non-balancing perspective. The relatively high proportion of stable pan-Blue supporters who consistently held the non-balancing perspective could mean that they did not believe that “checks and balances” should be the norm. However, it might also be due to the fact that they had predicted the KMT’s winning the 2008 presidential election right after the Legislative Yuan election.

### **Who Changes Attitudes Toward “Checks and Balances”**

In this section, we construct a multinomial logit model to explain the changes of voters’ attitudes toward “checks and balances.” The dependent variable consists of four categories—namely, “stable balancing,” “shift toward balancing,” “shift toward non-balancing,” and “stable non-balancing.”<sup>7</sup> The category of “shift toward non-balancing” is set to be the reference in the model. Our greatest interest is to see whether the dependent variable is associated with the five types of party support (e.g., “ruling to opposition,”

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<sup>7</sup> The coding scheme for the dependent variable is based on an assumption that the cognition of checks and balances can be regarded as a spectrum and is transitive—that is, balancing and non-balancing are on the two extreme points and no-response is in the middle. The change of an individual’s attitude from non-balancing to no-response was seen as a shift toward balancing and vice versa. One may suspect that such a strong assumption could affect the following analysis and even alter the findings. Thus, we also tried to release such assumption by eliminating those “no-response” cases and re-run the data analysis (please see Appendix IV). As we do not find any clear distinction between Table 5 and Appendix IV, we believe that the transitive attribute of the cognition of checks and balances holds.



“independent to opposition,” “independent to ruling,” “opposition to ruling,” and “stable independent”). Our model also includes education and political knowledge as control variables to account for political sophistication. Table 5 lists the coefficient estimates and their odds ratios of the multinomial logit model.

Who are more likely to shift toward the balancing perspective (relative to the non-balancing perspective with respect to the types of party support? All the coefficients for the types of party support in Column B of Table 5 are significantly different from zero. Specifically, the respondents whose preferred party switched from ruling to opposition (i.e., stable pan-Green supporters) and Independents who became the opposition supporters are more likely than stable Independent to shift toward the balancing perspective. The odds of “shift toward balancing” relative to the reference category (i.e., shift toward non-balancing) are 3.14 times greater for stable pan-Green supporters than for stable Independents, holding education and political knowledge constant. Similarly, the odds of “shift toward balancing” versus “shift toward non-balancing” are 2.36 times greater for Independents who became opposition supporters than for stable Independents, holding education and political knowledge constant. These results partially verify our hypothesis that citizens may begin favoring the balancing perspective as their preferred party lost power and became the opposition party.

In contrast, the respondents whose preferred party switched from opposition to ruling (i.e., stable pan-Blue supporters) as well as Independents who became ruling party supporters are more likely than stable Independents to shift toward the non-balancing perspective. Comparing “opposition to ruling” with “stable Independents,” the odds of “shift toward balancing” versus “shift toward non-balancing” decrease by a factor of 0.33, holding all other variables constant. Correspondingly, in a comparison between Independents who became the ruling party supporters and stable Independents, the odds of “shift toward balancing” relative to “shift toward non-balancing” decrease by a factor of 0.34, holding education and political knowledge constant. In short, citizens may begin favoring the non-

balancing perspectives as their preferred party won the presidential election and became the ruling party.

Among the coefficients for party support in Column A of Table 5, we observe only one coefficient— for “ruling to opposition”—obtains statistical significance. That is, the respondents whose preferred party switched from ruling to opposition (i.e., stable pan-Green supporters) are more likely than stable Independents to maintain the balancing perspective across the two waves of survey. The odds of “stable balancing” relative to “shift toward non-balancing” are 3.75 times greater for respondents whose preferred party switched from ruling to opposition than for stable Independents, holding all other variables constant. This result suggests that stable pan-Green supporters tend to continue holding the balancing perspective once they prefer the balancing perspective. It is understandable as the pan-Green lost both elections so that their supporters might always want “balance” when they took surveys right after both elections.

With respect to the types of party support, Table 5 also reveals who is more likely to maintain the non-balancing perspective across the two waves of survey (relative to “shift toward non-balancing”). Column C of Table 5 indicates that all the coefficients for party support are statistically significant. Specifically, both the respondents whose preferred party switched from ruling to opposition (i.e., stable pan-Green supporters) and the respondents whose preferred party switched from opposition to ruling (i.e., stable pan-Blue supporters) are more likely than stable Independents to maintain the non-balancing perspective. As stable party supporters can be regarded as strong partisan supporters, they may always want to see their preferred party take over both executive and legislative branches. In other words, stable party supporters are less likely to have an awareness of checks and balances but to have a stable non-balancing attitude. Additionally, as the two elections (i.e., the legislative and presidential elections) took place within just two months, stable pan-Blue supporters may expect their preferred party to win both elections and consistently hold the non-balancing perspective.

Table 5

*Multinomial Logit Model on Changes of Balancing Perspective*

	Stable Balancing (Column A)		Shift toward Balancing (Column B)		Stable Non-balancing (Column C)	
	$\hat{\beta}$ (S.E.)	exp( $\hat{\beta}$ )	$\hat{\beta}$ (S.E.)	exp( $\hat{\beta}$ )	$\hat{\beta}$ (S.E.)	exp( $\hat{\beta}$ )
Constant	-0.664 (0.412)		0.582 (0.354)		-2.350*** (0.471)	
<b>Education</b>						
<b>(Junior high school or below=0)</b>						
Senior high school or Junior College	0.704* (0.307)	2.022	-0.191 (0.282)	0.826	1.020** (0.315)	2.773
University or Above	0.529 (0.339)	1.697	-0.674* (0.326)	0.510	0.876* (0.340)	2.401
<b>Political Knowledge (0~5)</b>	-0.008 (0.109)	0.992	0.018 (0.103)	1.018	0.373** (0.110)	1.452
<b>Types of Party Support (Stable Independent=0)</b>						
Ruling to Opposition	1.323** (0.413)	3.755	1.143** (0.373)	3.136	1.456** (0.435)	4.289
Independent to Opposition	0.356 (0.600)	1.428	0.858\$ (0.484)	2.358	1.251* (0.571)	3.494
Independent to Ruling	-0.683 (0.494)	0.505	-1.068* (0.425)	0.344	-1.183\$ (0.630)	0.306
Opposition to Ruling	0.044 (0.331)	1.045	-1.124*** (0.321)	0.325	0.853* (0.343)	2.347

**Model Information**

n = 609

Log-likelihood = -753.246

LR X<sup>2</sup> = 169.54, df=21, P < 0.001

Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> = 0.1012

Data sources: TEDS2008L and TEDS2008P.

Note 1: \*\*\*: p < 0.001 ; \*\*: p < 0.01 ; \*: p < 0.05 ; \$: p < 0.1.

Note 2: Dependent variable is "Change of the Respondent's Balancing Perspective", 0 = Abandon Balancing or shift to Non-balancing.

Note 3: The multinomial logit model passes the Small-Hsiao tests of Independence from Irrelevant Alternatives (IIA) assumption, although the Hausman and result in negative X<sup>2</sup> values indicating that the estimated model does not meet asymptotic assumptions of the test.

Column C of Table 5 also suggests that independents who became opposition party supporters are more likely than stable Independent to maintain the non-balancing perspective. Yet, independents who became ruling party supporters are less likely to maintain the same perspective. It is important to note that the reference category is “shift toward non-balancing.” In other words, those “independent to opposition (pan-Green)” respondents tend to not change their cognition of checks and balances (to “shift toward non-balancing”) while the “independent to ruling (pan-Blue)” respondents, tend to move toward the non-balancing perspective after the pan-Blue won both the legislative and presidential elections.

It is worth noting that the coefficients for all the control variables (i.e., two education dummy variables and political knowledge) in Column C of Table 3 are positive and significantly different from zero. Specifically, the odds of “stable non-balancing” relative to “shift toward non-balancing” are 2.77 times greater for respondents whose education level is “high school or junior college” and 2.44 times greater for “university or above” than for respondents whose education level is junior high school or below, holding all other variables constant. Additionally, for a unit change of political knowledge, the odds of “stable non-balancing” versus “shift toward non-balancing” are expected to change by a factor of 1.45, holding all other variables constant. In short, it seems that respondents who have higher education or better political knowledge are more likely to favor “stable non-balancing” over “shift toward non-balancing.”

Yet, the same relationships between the dependent variable and the control variables do not hold when we examine the odds of “stable balancing” relative to “shift toward non-balancing.” Among the control variables specified in Column A of Table 5, only the coefficient for the “high school or junior college” dummy variable is positive and different from zero at the 0.05 level of significance. Thus, higher education and better political knowledge are not necessarily associated with consistent preference toward constant checks and balances (or the balancing perspective). Similarly, lower education and less political knowledge are not necessarily associated with the tendency to shift toward

the balancing perspective. Among the control variables specified in Column B of Table 5, only the negative coefficient for the “university or above” dummy variable attains statistical significance.

In addition, to explain the coefficient estimates of our multinomial logit analysis, we also interpret our findings by using the coefficient estimates to calculate predicted probability changes with respect to different types of party support holding all other variables constant.

Table 6 suggests that when respondents’ preferred party moved from “ruling to opposition” (i.e., stable pan-Green supporters), the probability that they will “shift toward balancing” increases by 2.2 percentage points (or 0.022) while the probability that they will “shift toward non-balancing” decreases by 18.9 percentage points (or -0.189), holding all other variables constant (see the first row of Column B & C). On the other hand, when respondents’ preferred party moved from “opposition to ruling” (i.e., stable pan-Blue supporters), the probability that they will “shift toward balancing” decreases by 26.9 percentage points while the probability that they will “shift toward non-balancing” increases by only 0.9 percentage points, holding all other variables constant (see the fourth row of Column B & C). Thus, although stable pan-Green supporters do not necessarily “shift toward balancing” after the party turnover, they are indeed less likely to hold the non-balancing perspective. And a reverse pattern seems to apply to stable pan-Blue supporters.

Additionally, when we compare stable pan-Blue supporters with stable pan-Green supporters, we found that the former are more likely to have stable non-balancing attitude than the latter. It might be due to the political atmosphere at that time—that is, the pan-Blue camp was very strong in 2008 and its supporters expected to win the presidential election in March after winning the legislative election in January. Thus, in the surveys, particularly in the first wave that took place after the legislative election, stable pan-Blue supporters may give their answers based on their expectation but not on the reality (i.e., their preferred party was NOT in power yet).

Table 6

*Changes in Predicted Probabilities of Balancing/Non-Balancing Perspectives*

	Stable Balancing (Column A)	Shift toward Balancing (Column B)	Shift toward Non-balancing (Column C)	Stable Non-balancing (Column D)
Ruling to Opposition (Stable Pan-Green Supporters)	0.064	<b>0.022</b>	<b>-0.189</b>	0.103
Independent to Opposition (Independent to Pan-Green)	-0.076	<b>0.040</b>	<b>-0.123</b>	0.160
Independent to Ruling (Independent to Pan-Blue)	-0.003	<b>-0.098</b>	<b>0.203</b>	-0.102
Opposition to Ruling (Stable Pan-Blue supporters)	0.020	<b>-0.269</b>	<b>0.009</b>	0.240

Note: Change in predicted probability is compared with “Stable Independents.”

### Conclusion

The mainstream intentional model of split-ticket voting mainly follows the logic of “balancing theory,” which argues that some voters split their tickets simply because they prefer divided, but “balanced” government. In other words, a proportion of voters tend to engage in intentionally, sophisticated voting behaviors (i.e., ticket splitting) to cause different partisan control of legislature and presidency in order to ensure moderate policy. We instead argue that in an emerging democracy where political parties are often tied to some deep social cleavages, the idea of checks and balances is less related to moderate

policy but more as a way to rationalize party support. In other words, citizens' attitudes toward "check-and-balance" tend to be influenced by whether their preferred party is governing or not.

Taiwan's staggered election schedule offers a great opportunity to test our hypothesis. Using two waves of panel survey before and after the March 2008 presidential election, we find that there is indeed substantial shift in respondents' attitudes toward checks and balances. The changing patterns also fit our hypothesis, that is, those whose preferred party is governing are more likely to emphasize the importance of unified government (or the non-balancing perspective) and deemphasize the feature of divided government (or the balancing perspective), while those whose preferred party is not governing are likely to feel in the opposite way.

The theoretical implication of our study indicates that whether balancing perspective can be treated as an exogenous variable should be carefully examined and tested. In new democracies, to say the very least, citizens' balancing perspectives may change depending on the election results and thus cause a typical endogeneity problem in research methodology. We suspect that even in advanced democracies such changing views of checks and balances might also exist if not to a lesser degree than emerging democracies. Due to such potential endogeneity problem, in future research, if one wants to test the impact of preference for checks and balances on voting behavior (e.g., ticket splitting), it might be better to use Fiorina's (1996) policy balancing measure rather than the subjective "cognitive-Madisonianism" measure mentioned here (Chen, Liu, & Wu, 2014).

**Appendix I: Description of the Survey Projects**

Dates of Interview	Survey Project	Method	Sample Size
2008.01~03	Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study: 2008 Legislative Election (TEDS2008L)	Face-to-face Interview	1,238 (cross-section)
2008.07~09	Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study: 2008 Presidential Election (TEDs2008P)	Face-to-face Interview	1,905 (cross-section) 755 (panel)

Data sources: TEDS2008L and TEDS2008P.

Note 1: Voting date of 2008 Legislature Yuan Election was on Jan. 12 2008.

Note 2: Voting date of 2008 Presidential Election was on Mar. 22 2008.



### Appendix II: Questionnaire Item and Operationalization of the Variables

Variable	Questionnaire Item	Operationalization
Balancing Perspective	<p><b>【TEDS2008L, Item V7】</b>                      Which of the following two statements do you agree with more? (1) The opposition parties should have a majority of seats in the legislature so that they can provide checks and balances for the government. (2) The president's party should have a majority of seats in the legislature so that it can implement its policies.</p> <p><b>【TEDS2008P, Item F5】</b>                      Which of the following two statements do you agree with more? (1) The president's party and the majority party in the legislature should be different so that they can check and balance each other. (2) The president's party and the majority party in the legislature should be the same so that it can implement its policies effectively.</p>	(1) balancing (2) non-balancing (3) no-response
Party Identification	<p><b>【TEDS2008L, Item M1~M1b】</b>  <b>【TEDS2008P, Item N1~N1b】</b>                      (a) Among the main political parties in our country, including the KMT, DPP, PFP, NP, and TSU, do you support any particular party?                      (b) Relatively speaking, do you lean toward any particular party?                      (c) Which party is that?</p>	The responses are recoded into three categories: (1) Pan-blue party (including KMT, NP and PFP), (2) Pan-green party (including DPP and TSU), and (3) Independent.
Education	<p><b>【TEDS2008L, Item X6】</b>                      [Respondent's] Education level?                      (1) illiterate                      (2) literate but no formal schooling                      (3) some primary school                      (4) primary school graduate                      (5) some junior high school                      (6) junior high school graduate</p>	The responses are recoded into three categories: (1) junior high school or below (2) senior high school or junior college, and (3) university or above.

	(7) some high school or vocational school (8) high school or vocational school graduate (9) some technical college (10) technical college graduate (11) some university (12) university graduate (13) some graduate education (14) post-graduate education	
Political Knowledge	<b>【TEDS2008L, Item K1~K5】</b> (a) Who is the current Vice President of our country? (b) Who is the current President of the PRC? (c) Who is the current President of the United States? (d) How many years is a legislator's term? (e) Which body has the power to interpret the Constitution?	Cumulated score ranging from 0 to 5 correct answers. The higher the score, the more knowledgeable.

Data sources: TEDS2008L and TEDS2008P.

**Appendix III: Change of the Respondent's Party Identification BEFORE and AFTER the 2008 Presidential Election**

<b>before \ after</b>	Ruling (Pan-Blue)	Opposition (Pan-Green)	Independent	Total
Ruling (Pan-Green)	239 (82.7%) <b>I</b>	8 (2.8%) <b>II</b>	42 (14.5%) <b>III</b>	289 (100.0%)
Opposition (Pan-Blue)	10 (5.0%) <b>IV</b>	161 (80.9%) <b>V</b>	28 (14.1%) <b>VI</b>	199 (100.0%)
Independent	51 (19.1%) <b>VII</b>	57 (21.4%) <b>VIII</b>	159 (59.6%) <b>IX</b>	267 (100.0%)
Total	300 (39.7%)	226 (29.9%)	229 (30.3%)	755 (100.0%)

Data source: TEDS2008P.

Notes: Figures in ( ) are row percentages.

We categorize six types of party supports based on the two waves of interviews prior to and after the 2008 presidential election, including “ruling to opposition” (i.e., stable Pan-Green supporter; Cell I), “independent to opposition” (i.e., independent to Pan-Green supporter; Cell VIII), “independent to ruling” (i.e., independent to Pan-Blue supporter; Cell VII), “opposition to ruling” (i.e., stable Pan-Blue supporter; Cell IV), “stable independent” (Cell IX), and “others” (Cells II, III, IV, and VI).

**Appendix IV: Multinomial Logit Model on Changes of Balancing Perspective**

	Stable Balancing (Column A)		Shift toward Balancing (Column B)		Stable Non- balancing (Column C)	
	$\hat{\beta}$ (S.E.)	Exp( $\hat{\beta}$ )	$\hat{\beta}$ (S.E.)	exp( $\hat{\beta}$ )	$\hat{\beta}$ (S.E.)	exp( $\hat{\beta}$ )
Constant	-0.649 (0.423)		0.591 (0.371)		-2.380*** (0.485)	
<b>Education (Junior high school or below=0)</b>						
Senior high school or Junior College	0.738* (0.316)	2.092	-0.070 (0.296)	0.933	1.030** (0.323)	2.801
University or Above	0.590\$ (0.349)	1.804	-0.529 (0.342)	0.589	0.933** (0.350)	2.543
<b>Political Knowledge (0~5)</b>	0.030 (0.113)	1.031	0.008 (0.109)	1.008	0.425*** (0.115)	1.530
<b>Types of Party Support (Stable Independent=0)</b>						
Ruling to Opposition	1.326** (0.432)	3.766	1.152** (0.397)	3.165	1.471** (0.455)	4.352
Independent to Opposition	0.210 (0.604)	1.234	0.702 (0.494)	2.018	1.098\$ (0.577)	2.999
Independent to Ruling	-0.742 (0.504)	0.476	-1.103* (0.445)	0.332	-1.242\$ (0.640)	0.289
Opposition to Ruling	-0.007 (0.342)	0.993	-1.189*** (0.340)	0.304	0.821* (0.355)	2.274

**Model Information**

n = 578  
 Log-likelihood = -714.520  
 LR X<sup>2</sup> = 162.59, df=21, P < 0.001  
 Pseudo R<sup>2</sup> = 0.1022

Data sources: TEDS2008L and TEDS2008P.

Note 1: \*\*\*: p < 0.001 ; \*\*: p < 0.01 ; \*: p < 0.05 ; \$: p < 0.1.

Note 2: Dependent variable is "Change of the Respondent's Balancing Perspective," 0 = shift toward non-balancing. Please note that the coding scheme here is different from that of Table 5. Specifically, the category of "shift toward non-balancing" does not include those cases that "shift from balancing to non-response" (i.e., coded as

missing values) and the category of “shift toward balancing” does not include those cases that “shift from non-balancing toward no-response” (i.e., coded as missing values). In short, we exclude all the “no-response” cases in the second wave so that the total number of respondents decreases from 609 (see Table 5) to 578 here.

Note 3: The multinomial logit model passes the Small-Hsiao tests of Independence from Irrelevant Alternatives (IIA) assumption, although the Hausman and result in negative  $X^2$  values indicating that the estimated model does not meet asymptotic assumptions of the test.

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Date of the submission: 2015-03-09

Date of the review result: 2015-05-17

Date of the decision: 2015-05-29