

Unravelling Mnemonic Manipulations in Electioneering: Investigating Mind Engineering in the Han Camp during the 2018 Election

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Abstract

This study attempts to unravel mnemonic manipulation in electioneering. The results of the 2018 nine-in-one election in Taiwan can be explained by the “Han tide” and its spillover effects, and so this study aims to decipher the emergence of the Han tide using a memory-studies approach. While admitting that other social factors played a role in the formation of the Han tide, this study suggests that four elements were found in Han’s electioneering: (re)defining the present as negative and (re)directing attention to the future, switching the commemorative focus from politics to economics, encouraging people to forget the political past and embrace the economic future, and employing an awakening narrative to evoke change. Moreover, four additional aspects were observed in the Han tide: canceling the challenges of counter-narratives by redirecting people’s attention, solving the issue of lacking a shared past with Kaohsiung City, downplaying and/or editing “out” the negative aspects of “our side,” and degrading the mnemonic framing and nostalgic capital of the Democratic Progressive Party. Although scholars of memory studies have shed

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light on politics in memory, this study argues that memory in politics should also be emphasized by investigating more empirical cases.

Keywords: memory in politics, mnemonic strategies, electioneering analysis, mind engineering, political psychology

Introduction: Explaining Political Competitions with Mnemonic Perspectives

The results of the 2018 nine-in-one election in Taiwan left many Taiwanese people utterly astonished, and social actors such as political critics and scholars began to attribute the results to the emergence of the “Han tide” and its spillover effects during the election (Batto 2021).¹ While acknowledging that factors such as economic and political contentions offer valid explanations for the 2018 election results, this article goes further to argue that the memory-study approach can enhance our understanding of political competitions in general, and elections in particular. Additionally, while scholars of memory studies have extensively emphasized the politics of memory, I contend that the role of memory in politics is often overlooked, and that further examinations of empirical cases are necessary to uncover related details.² The memory-study approach suggests that not only are collective

¹ The term “Han Tide” was coined to describe the feverish wave of support for Han Kuo-yu (the candidate for mayor of Kaohsiung municipality from the Kuomintang party) in 2018’s nine-in-one election. Han was recalled in 2020 and he became the 1st mayor to be recalled in Taiwan. Moreover, Han stood for the presidential election in 2020 and didn’t win the election. These events further encouraged us to comprehend his success in 2018.

² The field of memory studies has made efforts to illuminate the politics of memory: that is, “memory” is far from being something natural or neutral; it is socially constructed through strategies, sometimes with strong motivations behind mnemonic engineering (Zerubavel, 2003). Nevertheless, I suggest that the concept of “politics of memory” (and the usually interchangeably used term “politics in memory”) should actually be further distinguished into two aspects: one is “politics in memory,” and the other is “memory in politics.” I maintain that “politics in memory” indicates that memory is far from neutral and is rife with political aims and strategies. On the other hand, “memory in politics” refers to the significant roles memories play in the political realm and their salient influences. While various studies articulate and illuminate politics in memory, for example, by pointing out the constructed nature, employed strategies, and goals attained by collective memories, “memory in politics” is rarely examined. Although it is simply the other side of the same coin, unraveling “memory in politics” guides us to reconsider how collective memories can be manipulated by political camps and what strategies are employed in political competitions. The distinction between “politics in memory” and “memory in politics” will be further discussed in the following sections.

memories mainly socially constructed, but also that the remembered “shared” past, present, and future can influence people’s identity, and therefore their preferences.

The salient effects of mnemonic work are to shape people’s memory, and thus influence their identity, cognitive framework, and behaviors that they would adopt accordingly (DeGloma 2014; E. Zerubavel 2003; Mink 1978; Yeh 2016). Following this logic, how collective memories are (re)narrated and manipulated in elections is a crucial question to unveil. Taking the 2018 nine-in-one election as a salient example, this current study aims to explain political competitions through mnemonic perspectives and refine our understanding of issues such as mnemonic narratives and the politics of nostalgia. In other words, the core interest of this study is to focus on unveiling how memories play a role in electioneering.

The 2018 Nine-in-One Election: The Han Tide and Its Spillover Effects

The 2018 nine-in-one election was held on November 24th in Taiwan to elect all municipality mayors, county magistrates, city mayors, municipal, county, city council representatives, township mayors, chiefs of village, and aboriginal district chiefs.³ The victory of certain candidates in this election surprised many social

³ Although more political parties were established after 2000, Taiwan’s elections are mostly a competition between two main political parties: the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). After being defeated by the Chinese Communist Party in the Chinese Civil War, the KMT retreated to Taiwan in 1949, where it began its decades-long one-party rule. In the 1980s, the political forces outside the KMT finally established the DPP after martial law was lifted. The DPP won presidential elections several times and caused a regime transition in the central government. Generally speaking, although the KMT experienced localization, people regard the KMT as a “pro-Unification” political party (even though there are significant actors in the KMT who do not support unification with Mainland China) because it has made efforts to seek the recovery of Mainland China by the ROC government, and the DPP as a “pro-Independence” political party due to its encouragement for the emergence of Taiwanese national identification. In addition to the presidential elections, in the local elections, a “pendulum effect” is evident: The KMT and DPP took turns winning the local elections. Nevertheless,

actors. Han Kuo-yu, the candidate for mayor of Kaohsiung municipality from the Kuomintang (KMT) party, not only won the election as a “dark horse” candidate, but also the so-called Han tide had spillover effects that resulted in many KMT candidates in other elections defeating their rivals from rival political forces (Liberty Times Net, 2018.11.25; 2018.10.26).⁴ While weeks before election day the indications of Han’s rise was observed, the emergence of the Han tide and the stunning outcomes of the 2018 nine-in-one election are deemed a “political miracle” or “mission impossible” because the Han tide dramatically changed the political situation in at least two ways.⁵ On one hand, Kaohsiung city has long been governed by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP); Indeed, for the last two decades, the overwhelming majority of the electorate had voted for the DPP’s mayoral candidates. On the other hand, the KMT had fallen to a low ebb in previous elections (Fell 2018; Ho 2015; Rowen 2015)⁶ and many candidates of the KMT in the 2018 nine-in-one election held inferior positions with respect to candidates from other political forces. However, the Han tide worked to break through the KMT’s awkward circumstances.

Han received 892,545 votes, which accounted for 53.87% of the total votes,

prior to the 2018 election, the DPP had governed Kaohsiung for decades.

⁴ Among 22 mayoral elections, KMT won 16 cities, that is, 10 cities more than in previous elections. Many people attributed this victory to the Han tide. See Chiu, Yen-Ling, Yu-Fu Chen, and Hsin-Po Huang. 2018. “Blue Camp Wins 15 Mayoral Seats, Green Camp Left with Only 6.” *Liberty Times Net*. November 25. <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/1249393> (accessed June 12, 2024) and Liberty Times. 2018. “County and City Mayoral Elections: KMT Wins 15 Seats, DPP Left with 6.” *Liberty Times Net*. October 26. <https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/2624030> (accessed June 8, 2024).

⁵ Etoday. 2018. “Han Kuo-yu’s Victory Leads KMT to Unprecedented Win in Kaohsiung.” *Etoday News*. November 19. <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20181119/1310217.htm> (accessed June 6, 2024) and Etoday. 2018. “Han Kuo-yu Gains Momentum in Kaohsiung Mayoral Election.” *Etoday News*. October 27. <https://www.ettoday.net/news/20181027/1291468.htm> (accessed June 12, 2024) for general comments on the election results.

⁶ Many claim that the Sunflower social movement of 2014 can be seen as a watershed in Taiwan’s political history since it represented the “awakening” of various social actors, most of whom had an affinity for the DPP’s positions (Fell 2018; Ho 2015; Rowen 2015). In fact, we observe that the KMT confronted failures in several elections after the Sunflower movement.

while his main rival, Chen Chi-mai from the DPP, received 742,239 votes (44.8%). In other words, Han Kuo-yu not only won this election but also achieved a significant victory over his opponents in this battle. In winning the Kaohsiung mayoral election (not to mention its positive effects on other elections), Han Kuo-yu executed a “turnaround” by overcoming several difficulties. Firstly, in the Kaohsiung mayoral election, Han had no geopolitical relation with Kaohsiung: He only moved to Kaohsiung months before the election, and he was considered the so-called “airborne troop” in this competition.⁷ Secondly, Han had never been a nationally known political figure before the 2018 election, and he had also been far from a noted personage for Kaohsiung’s electorate. Thirdly, since the KMT had not been the governing party in Kaohsiung City for decades, KMT elites held a pessimistic attitude toward the 2018 Kaohsiung mayoral election; consequently, Han’s electioneering had a sparse budget and few resources and personnel.⁸ Fourthly, being the candidate in Kaohsiung’s mayoral election indicates that Han overcame keen competition from the long-term ruling party, the DPP, which was by no means easy. Lastly, despite Han’s holding the office of general manager of the Taipei Farmers Association (TFA) from 2013 through 2017 usually being evaluated positively, Han had some “dishonorable records” from his early political career, which were dug out and trumpeted by

⁷ One of the official regulations for participating in the mayoral election is that the candidate must have lived in the municipality for more than four months. The KMT decided to nominate Han as the candidate for Kaohsiung city’s mayor on May 21, 2018, and Han moved to Kaohsiung city solely to qualify himself as a candidate. Otherwise, he didn’t have any geopolitical relationship with Kaohsiung, which is why some criticized him as the “airborne troop,” referring to his coming from “outside” the region and his status as an “outsider” among the Kaohsiung people.

⁸ In many public speeches during the election campaign, Han mentioned that he did not have unlimited financial resources to throw into his campaign. Even though the custom in Taiwan was for political candidates to give voters small gifts like T-shirts or ball caps, Han could not afford even such modest gifts. Instead, he aimed at “winning by distributing only a bottle of mineral water to voters.” See *China Times*. 2018. “Election Results: KMT Achieves Major Victory in Mayoral Elections.” November 25. <https://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20181125000543-260118> (accessed July 24, 2023).

his opponents during the election period.

Regardless of the above-mentioned disadvantages, Han Kuo-yu won his mayoral election; Moreover, the halo effect of his positive impression spilled over to other KMT candidates in all types of campaigns. Han mocked himself in a TV interview, saying that “At first, it is the young chicks leading the bald chicken, then we can see the bald chicken and the young chicks fighting side by side, and in the end the bald chicken eventually guides the young chicks in the elections” (SETN, 2018.08.01).⁹ The “bald head” is constructed as the symbolic feature of Han’s appearance in the 2018 election, and he humorously analogized himself as the bald chicken and other candidates, all of whom were better known than Han in the early stage of the election, as young chicks. Nevertheless, at later stages of the election, Han rose abruptly and took on the responsibility to promote other candidates.¹⁰

While some had delved into it and explained how Han won this election with “populist rhetoric” (Batto 2021), the Han tide and its spillover effects during the 2018 election deserves more academic attention in general and to decipher the content of his mnemonic rhetoric in particular. By adopting memory-study perspectives, the research question of this article can be summarized as follows: “*How is the ‘dark horse’ (Han Kuo-yu) in the 2018 nine-in-one election constructed with mnemonic strategies?*” Answering this research question can indeed go beyond facilitating our understanding of this single election (and/or this single political figure) and can further our comprehension of the role of memory in political competitions and in mind engineering. As mentioned earlier, memory in politics should be examined closely

⁹ Li, Ying-Ting. 2018. “Taipei City Candidate Gives Braised Pork Rice; Han Kuo-yu Self-Mockingly Says: Bald Rooster with Chicks.” *SETN News*. Aug.1. <https://www.setn.com/News.aspx?NewsID=410908> (accessed March 12, 2023).

¹⁰ In addition to being the candidate for mayor of Kaohsiung, Han took the position of director of the KMT’s Kaohsiung subdivision. The former position usually indicates that the candidate enjoys a higher profile than other types of election candidates and hence, is expected to take a leading role in the electioneering. The latter position’s main responsibility is to strive for votes in all types of elections.

to be aware that collective memories can be harnessed in numerous political conditions, and conducting more empirical investigations on mnemonic manipulation in electioneering serves to enrich our understanding. Furthermore, shedding light on election results through mnemonic perspectives is an innovative approach.

Deciphering the 2018 nine-in-one election with Memory-study approach

Political critics have suggested that the “political miracle” of the Han tide observed in the 2018 election should be understood by considering factors such as the economic depression after the DPP had held the reins of central government, Han Kuo-yu’s “unique” personal characteristics attracting voter support, several significant policies conducted by the DPP in the central government resulting in lost votes, the DPP’s ineffective strategies in the 2018 election campaign, and the transformation of voters’ “tastes,” which resulted in a shorter “honeymoon period” between the people and the ruling party’s political personages.¹¹ While admitting that each of these factors played a role in explaining the outcomes of the 2018 nine-in-one

¹¹ Wu, Yan Chong. 2018. “Why Did the DPP End Up with This Outcome in the 2018 Kaohsiung Mayoral Election?” *Storm Media*. Dec. 11. <https://www.storm.mg/article/697316> (accessed Aug 21, 2023); Liberty Times. 2018. “Why Did the Nine-in-One Elections Result in a Shift? Scholars: The Public’s ‘Shelf Life’ for Politicians Is Shortening.” *Liberty Times Net*. Dec 3. <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/2631456> (accessed May 21, 2023); and Shih, Hsiao-kuang. 2018. “KMT’s Major Election Victory Explained - Wu Den-yih: ‘Under Tsai’s Administration, the Economy Is the Worst in 20 Years.’” *Liberty Times Net*. Nov 30. <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/2629263> (accessed May 21, 2023) for various reasons that observers mention. An anonymous reviewer insightfully suggests that it is possible that, since Han was broadly expected not to win the mayoral election, he therefore adopted an “unusual” style in his campaigning, which ultimately led him to become a “dark horse” in the election. I agree that the expectation of not winning the election may ironically provide Han Kuo-yu with room for experimentation in his campaigning, enabling him to try different strategies and innovative narratives. It is the rhetoric used in his campaigning that I would like to analyze from a mnemonic perspective.

election, this current research suggests that considering collective memories can significantly enhance our understanding and accountability regarding this issue. In this section, several salient concepts derived from memory study research are introduced, forming the analytical basis of the current research.

Scholars of memory study point out that memories are collectively constructed (Gillis 1994, 3-24; Halbwachs 1992, 38; Olick 1999, 333-335) and there is a tight relationship between people's memories and their identifications (Olick and Robbins 1998, 123-124). National-identity-building, thus, is a social process that is heavily related to people's perceptions of the invented shared past, present, and future (Halbwachs 1992). Following this logic, people indeed remember their identifications and every social group can be seen as a mnemonic community (Irwin-Zarecka 1994, 55). Moreover, collective memories have a normative aspect, and people experience mnemonic socialization in getting to know the memorability (that is, what should be remembered and what should not) (E. Zerubavel 2003).

Acknowledging that the constructed-ness and malleability of collective memories is bounded (Schwartz 1982), scholars have nevertheless claimed that we have to examine "politics in memory": Various mnemonic techniques are employed to craft the preferred version of collective memory and thus guide people to memorize the intended identities (Berger et al. 2008; Lowenthal 1994, 41-57; Mink 1978, 129-149; White 1985, 81-100). In other words, investigations into mnemonic work must consider the power and strategies behind the work. However, what makes the picture even more complicated is that the mnemonic organizers do not get involved in the mnemonic engineering (and thus mind engineering) merely for interest-oriented reasons. After all, all people need identifications to situate and direct themselves. That is, mnemonic organizers usually engage in mnemonic work with mixed motivations. For example, interests, identification, and cognitive security are all possible considerations.

Collective memories need to be stored in various sites (E. Zerubavel 2011), and among these various forms of memory, narrative stands out as the most abstract yet

core and effective form (Somers 1994; White 1985).¹² According to Y. Zerubavel (1995), mnemonic communities all too often have their own master commemorative narrative to relate the shared past and lead people toward solidarity. Consistent with Y. Zerubavel's statement, I argue that the master commemorative narrative indeed also includes the (re)definition of the shared present and future. In other words, while observing collective memories, how to shared past, present, and future are (re)constructed constitutes a significant dimension to be investigated.

Previous studies have argued that, on the one hand, mnemonic "techniques" can be harnessed to produce preferred social identifications, including, for example, highlighting the pedigree, assigning positive or negative symbolic meanings to specific events, bridging a linear storyline and de-bridging from an undesirable lineage, attributing differential characteristics to various time periods, and centralizing or marginalizing (or even muting) certain events in the commemorative narration (Trouillot 1995; White 1985; Y. Zerubavel 1994). On the other hand, "plots" are frequently employed in commemorative narratives to capture people's attention, including, for instance, the contrast between "hero" and "villain," the emphasis on "beginning," "turning point," "watershed," "awakening," and "decisive moment" (to dramatize and exaggerate specific events and years), and the use of analogy (and other similar techniques) to equal individuals, events, and places (DeGloma 2007; E. Zerubavel 2003; 2011). According to memory studies, abstract narration and rhetoric play critical roles in storing collective memories, and mnemonic engineering influences through the (re)construction of commemorative narratives. Therefore, examining mnemonic strategies to a great extent is equivalent to investigating the rhetoric used in electioneering.

¹² It is worth mentioning that there are concrete and physical sites for storing collective memories, such as street names, museums, stamps, songs, and so on (E. Zerubavel 2003). Nevertheless, scholars typically consider abstract commemorative narratives as the "core" sites, with concrete sites reflecting these core narratives. In this current research, due to length limitations, the focus is primarily on the narratives in electioneering.

Although the discussion of “politics in memory” (how collective memories are strategically constructed and invented) is rich, as aforementioned, studies on “memory in politics” are comparatively insufficient. Especially when investigating politics in memory implies unraveling the general and nearly inevitable characteristics of collective memories conceptually, research on memory in politics should focus on expanding a large number of empirical cases to consider heterogeneous political competitions and conditions, thereby sharpening our insights into this issue and comparing their similarities and differences. Hence, more empirical investigations of how memories play a role in political competitions in general and election campaigns in particular should be encouraged. Some of the extant research has refined our understanding of this aspect, but I maintain that more academic effort should be devoted to seeking synthesized understandings. Scholars have limited their studies to, for example, how competing memories have influenced the political field in specific areas (Cole 2006; De Brito et al. 2001; Fine 1996; Mudge and Chen 2014; Steiner and Zelizer 1995), how political parties seek a shared past and evoke the emotion of nostalgia in elections and general politics to encourage public support (Allan et al. 1995; Farthing and Kohl 2013; Jobson and Wickham-Jones 2010; Schuman et al. 2003; Vinitzky-Seroussi 2002), and how collective memories lead people to imagine their collectivity during elections and moments of risk (Lupion 2017; Osipian and Osipian 2012). I suggest that researchers broaden the scope of their studies to discover and report a holistic view of memory in politics.

In brief, an analysis of “memory in politics” may redirect academic attention to how collective memories are mentioned, refreshed, employed, redefined, and manipulated in the political realm. The case study of the 2018 election serves as an excellent opportunity to unveil memory in political competition. The mnemonic strategies employed in (re)constructing commemorative narratives, as discovered in the given research, are thus applied to investigate Han Kuo-yu’s camp’s rhetoric in electioneering.

Data and Methods

This article regards the 2018 nine-in-one election as its main case to unravel mnemonic engineering in political competition. Among others, Han Kuo-yu's electioneering is targeted to illuminate the mnemonic techniques that were employed.¹³ Moreover, this research collects research data from various resources to grasp narratives related to collective memories during the 2018 election. More specifically, because of the various types of elections occurring during the 2018 election, I narrow the investigation to gathering mnemonic discourses and narratives in the Kaohsiung municipality mayoral election. While the Han tide had its spillover effects, Han was the candidate for Kaohsiung mayor and most of his crucial statements and arguments were first proposed and proclaimed in his own election battle. Nevertheless, I collected speeches and discourses that were relevant during the 2018 elections to supplement the research materials. Considering that the perspectives of different media outlets may influence their content and editorial angle, particular attention was paid to gathering materials from both pan-blue and pan-green media in order to strike a balance.

The gathered data resources can be classified into several types: newspaper articles, press commentaries, posts, announcements of candidates from different camps on their official Facebook and Instagram accounts, candidates' speeches in their campaign rallies, and related news clips and political commentary programs. This research collected data from April 2018 to December 2018.¹⁴ Several key-

¹³ It is worth mentioning that the electioneering of Han Kuo-yu's camp is a special case. It has been particularly successful, resulting not only in Han's victory in his own election but also in a "Han tide" that has had a spillover effect.

¹⁴ Han officially announced his participation in the Kaohsiung mayoral primary on April 9, 2019. This study began collecting research data related to this election from that time point. However, there was relatively less data available before the official start of the election campaign. As the campaign intensified, a rapid increase in relevant research data was observed, resulting in denser information.

words were used to narrow down the search, such as “Han Kuo-yu,” “2018 nine-in-one election,” “Chen Chi-mai,” “mayoral election in Kaohsiung,” “election night,” “campaign rallies,” and so on. Eventually, 403 newspaper articles, 45 press commentaries, 91 posts and announcements from candidates’ official FB and IG accounts, 25 speeches, and 42 news clips were gathered and analyzed.¹⁵

The speeches and conversations in clips and programs were transcribed for the purpose of content analysis. The collected data were carefully read, and I inductively developed several significant analytic aspects. The gathered materials were coded into several categories based on the developed aspects. Two “third parties” were invited to go through the data coding to double-check the material classification and ensure credibility.¹⁶ After several rounds of data reading, classifying, and cleaning, the data were eventually coded into the following categories: economic past, present, and future; political past, present, and future; bridging and de-bridging to the DPP’s mayoral lineage; the role of Kaohsiung’s people (electorate) in the 2018 election; and other related discourses. The other related discourses mainly included “personal past, present, and future,” “attitudes toward Taiwan’s status,” and “reactions to critiques from opponents.” The data codifications guided me to clarify how the mnemonic narratives and strategies facilitated the construction and prevailing of the Han tide.

¹⁵ It is comparatively difficult to quantify the amount of analyzed content from political commentary programs. During the 2018 elections, I consistently watched 4 commentary programs from September to December 2018. Research notes were taken to keep a record of relevant information.

¹⁶ This is an effective method in qualitative research to ensure that data selection, coding, classification, and interpretation are appropriate, while also avoiding cherry-picking during data analysis. The two third parties I invited were a post-doctoral researcher and a full-time research assistant. We meticulously checked whether we coded the materials in the same way and assigned similar meanings to the collected data.

The Construction of the Han tide via mnemonic narratives and strategies

Before the emergence of the Han tide, Kaohsiung city had been deemed by DPP supporters (most of whom were Taiwanese nationalists) to be “the sacred place for Taiwanese democracy” because the DPP had been the ruling party of Kaohsiung since 1998. On one hand, after the DPP was founded, Kaohsiung city became one of the first cities in which the DPP’s candidates defeated their opponents and successfully won the mayor’s position. On the other hand, several significant social movements and protests (organized and mobilized by members of the Dangwai movement and DPP members) occurred in Kaohsiung during the 1970s and 1980s¹⁷ and played salient roles to encourage the lifting of martial law and the normalization of elections (Chou 2009; Fell 2012; Lynch 2004; Roy 2003). Nevertheless, the formation of the Han tide ended the continuity of DPP candidates being elected as mayors. According to the collected data, four main narrative strategies related to mnemonic aspects can be identified: Redefining the present as negative and directing attention to the shared future instead of the past; shifting the mnemonic focus from politics to economics; encouraging people to forget the political past and embrace the economic future; and employing an awakening narrative to evoke change. Consequently, these elements form the master mnemonic narrative in Han Kuo-yu’s electioneering,¹⁸ and depending on the election results, these rhetorical strategies

¹⁷ “Dangwai” refers to the political forces that fought for the lifting of martial law and democratization of Taiwan before the founding of the DPP in 1987. “Dangwai” means “outside the political party”: Before political parties were legally established, various political forces gathered under the flag of “Dangwai,” and a large portion of Dangwai’s members joined DPP once it was officially established (Corcuff 2002; Rigger 2002; Rubinstein 2006).

¹⁸ The master mnemonic narratives play the role of “master commemorative narrative,” as scholars have pointed out (Y. Zerubavel 1995). That is, they encompass the main core components and aspects of mnemonic engineering.

had significant influences in gaining voters' support.¹⁹

These four elements, although they may appear as “merely” abstract narration, constituted commemorative narratives and facilitated the transformation of people's preferences in the election. It was through the rhetoric officially and publicly presented during the 2018 mayoral election that Han's camp (re)constructed citizens' collective memory and led them to consider Han as the preferred candidate. In other words, these abstract narrations during the election represented mnemonic manipulations which functioned as mnemonic work in Kaohsiung's 2018 mayoral election. The four elements (or say mnemonic techniques) are maintained and delineated as follows.

1. Redefining the present as negative and directing attention to the shared future

In his election campaign, like all the opposition party's candidates, Han criticized the current status of Kaohsiung as “old and poor” and blamed the long-term incumbent DPP for this predicament. He claimed that people in Kaohsiung were generally older and their average incomes were lower than in other cities. Han went further to claim that, due to the developmental disadvantages, a great number of Kaohsiung young people had been forced to be “Northern drifters” (Beipiao). In his election campaign, Han pointed out:

Today, our kids drift to the north since we no longer have money.

We don't have so many job opportunities.

We have no ways to provide enough “nutrition” to our following gen-

¹⁹ Interestingly, while the reception of mnemonic strategies usually is difficult to examine, since the case of 2018 election is considered a landslide election victory of the KMT and most people agree that the victory can be greatly attributed to the Han tide, Han's mnemonic strategies are undoubtedly a success.

erations.

This is what we Kaohsiung people have to confront.

We, as Kaohsiung people, MUST face this plight.

(October 26, 2018. In Fengshan, Kaohsiung)

In other words, Han suggested that the economic difficulties of Kaohsiung had caused residents to leave and find better job opportunities in Northern Taiwan, for instance, in cities such as Taichung, Taoyuan, and, especially, Taipei. More importantly, Han argued that, the above-mentioned disadvantages of Kaohsiung indeed unraveled an even more fundamental problem that Kaohsiung had been confronting: the regional imbalance in Taiwan (Taipei Times, 2018.11.06).²⁰

Despite the ruling party's candidate, Chen, Chi-mai, and other of DPP's significant political elites rejecting Han's critiques as sheer nonsense,²¹ Han's argument obviously rocked public opinion. Sensing the climate, Han went even further to create advertisements and a forum to tell stories of the young Northern drifters. In short, contradicting the DPP political elites' argument that Kaohsiung had been greatly developed under DPP governance for two decades, Han suggested that Kaohsiung was actually "impressive only in appearance."²² Han gave examples such as "Kaohsiung people's pockets are in fact empty" and "five thousand holes

²⁰ Taipei Times. 2018. "EDITORIAL: Regional balance needs addressing." *Taipei Times*. Nov 6. <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2018/11/06/2003703668> (accessed August 11, 2023).

²¹ In response to criticisms of Han, Chen angrily refuted them, asserting that Han was speaking ill of Kaohsiung and denying its twenty years of development. See Ebc News. 2018. "Election Tensions: Chen Chi-mai Angrily Refutes Han Kuo-yu's Pessimistic Remarks on Kaohsiung." *EBC News*. July 23. <https://news.ebc.net.tw/news/politics/122210> (accessed March 11, 2023).

²² The debate between the Han and Chen camps on this matter echoes the confrontations witnessed in policy debates. See Li, Hsien-Feng. 2018. "Intense Back-and-Forth in Kaohsiung Debate: Aging and Poverty Become the Focus Between Chen Chi-mai and Han Kuo-yu." *First News*. Nov 19. <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/firstnews/201811190274.aspx> (accessed May 21, 2023).

appear on roads after a serious downpour.” In one of his speeches, Han said,

For the past 20 to 30 years, my dear Kaohsiung people... so many of you voted for DPP candidates hoping to have a better quality of life. However, most of you are not satisfied with the current circumstances of Kaohsiung. While DPP politicians put their eye on Kaohsiung people's votes, in Kaohsiung people's minds, you are worrying that there is no money in your pockets, right? (November 08, 2018, in ChiShan, Kaohsiung)

That is, while Han (re)defined the current status of Kaohsiung as negative, he effectively challenged the broadly remembered shared present in a mnemonic manner. Moreover, in his electioneering, he nevertheless (re)directed voters' attention to the future instead of dwelling on the past. Although (re)defining the “present” as negative surely indicated that the incumbent ruling party lacked capacity, Han insisted that the last thing he would do was engage in verbal battles and negative campaigning. He generally did not dwell on the past and mainly focused on projecting a shared future for the people of Kaohsiung (for electorates to remember).²³

2. Shifting the mnemonic focus from politics to economics

Due to the specific political and historical development of Taiwan in general, and the political party landscape in particular, candidates in almost every election

²³ Another possible reason that Han avoided mentioning Kaohsiung's past in his campaign might be that, before the DPP's governance, the KMT had been the long-term ruling party in Kaohsiung (and the whole country), so getting involved with the shared past “too much” and “too deep” may have evoked unnecessary disputes on the KMT's governance in Kaohsiung. After all, most of the KMT's governance in Kaohsiung was under the martial law period. Even so, Han did mention the “honored economic past” of Kaohsiung city under the KMT's rule in speeches.

commemorate political figures and events that symbolize their standpoint, especially regarding national identity, in public speeches. However, while Han was widely known as the KMT candidate, he asserted that, for Kaohsiung's own sake, the focus should be switched from politics to economics. Han suggested that Kaohsiung should get rid of "too much politics" and argued that ideally Kaohsiung should "be graded 0 on politics and score 100 on economy." Han further attributed Kaohsiung's negative present to the economic depression and suggested that a focus on political issues contributed nothing to the betterment of Kaohsiung people's lives. In other words, in his rhetoric, Han shifted the mnemonic focus from politics to economics: Attention should be concentrated on economic development instead of struggling with "unnecessary" political issues.

On one hand, Han publicly proposed that if he won the election, social movements and protests would no longer be welcome (and would even be officially banned) in Kaohsiung. He believed that Kaohsiung had to focus on economic development, and all political discontent should be expressed to the central government in Taipei. On the other hand, while most candidates in Taiwan are expected to declare their stance on national identity, Han said:

All my dear local people, we Kaohsiung people, this time, should be clear-headed and sober-minded. We have to say "no" to poverty; we will never tolerate poverty. We will never be bogged down in the mire of (political) ideology and we will not be haunted by pan-political considerations. (November 08, 2018, in Chishan, Kaohsiung)

Han implicitly suggested that indulging in political ideologies and focusing too much on political dimensions had caused Kaohsiung's economic slump. He maintained that Kaohsiung's people had to redirect their attention to practical issues: making money and improving quality of life. Han even redefined what "Kaohsiung's value" should be:

Kaohsiung's value, I would summarize it as "to live in peace and enjoy one's work." I suggest that Kaohsiung city has been haunted by "political consideration" for more than 20 years, and I suspect that Kaohsiung people can tear down this frame in their mind...If Kaohsiung people agree with me and want to live in a happy city and a rich city, we need to add all the "happy" elements, including creative industries, eSports, and tourists. I argue that Kaohsiung city can turn into the happiest city in South Taiwan, and political activities, please move to North Taiwan, the political center at Taipei. (November 10, 2018, in official debate)

By reiterating the positive image of his past position as general manager of the Taipei Farmers Association, Han attempted to portray himself as a wise and far-sighted chief executive officer (CEO) for all of Kaohsiung, capable of generating significant revenue for the city (to remind voters of his managerial capacity). In this manner, he utilized mnemonic narratives to shift attention away from politics and toward economics.

While some may perceive this shift from politics to economics as trivial and insignificant, I argue that it is actually a significant mnemonic strategy. Given that the DPP has already gained a great reputation for its efforts in promoting democratic development for the Taiwanese people through political channels, Han's redirection of attention to economics could provide him with an opportunity to move away from a disadvantageous battleground.

3. Encouraging people to forget the political past and embrace the economic future

Combining the aforementioned two aspects, it is not surprising that Han's overall electioneering appealed to the people of Kaohsiung to forget the political past

and embrace the economic future. While the DPP's political elites often reminded the general public of "significant" political figures and events to commemorate the DPP as a political force contributing to the democratization of Taiwan,²⁴ Han proposed leaving the political past in collective oblivion. According to Han, nostalgia for the political past was an unnecessary distraction hindering the economic development of Kaohsiung city. He argued that the people of Kaohsiung were hopelessly entangled in a common negative emotion:

...during the past year or so, I have encountered various people from different types of employment, from urban and rural areas, from different industries, from mountain and seaside, from all corners of the land. I have met a great variety and diversity of people, and their common heartfelt voices were commemorating the past, worrying about the present, and fussing over the future. (November 10, 2018, in official debate)

Han believed that all the negative feelings that lingered in Kaohsiung people's minds could be dispelled by projecting a bright and shared economic future. Hence,

²⁴ Compared to Han, Chen Chi-mai often reminisced about "predecessors and significant events on the path of democracy" during numerous campaign rallies and public speeches. He emphasized the need to "build upon the past foundation" or "inherit the aspirations and surpass predecessors." The most frequently mentioned figures are Chen Chu, who served as Kaohsiung mayor for two terms, and the 228 Incident. See Yan, Chen-Kai. 2018. "220,000 Rally Passionately in Fengshan; Chen Chi-mai Moved to Tears, Calls on Voters to Protect Kaohsiung." *The Storm Media*. Nov 24. <https://ynews.page.link/eYRC> (accessed August 21, 2023). Moreover, at Chen Chi-mai's campaign rally, Chen Chu, Lai Ching-te, and Hsieh Chang-ting (all three of whom have previously served as mayors of Kaohsiung and are referred to as democratic predecessors by Chen Chi-mai) appeared to support him. See Liu, Pin-shi. 2018. "Chen Chi-mai Holds Rally in Gangshan on the 18th, Joined by Lai Ching-te, Hsieh Chang-ting, and Chen Chu in Support." *Radio Taiwan Intl*. Nov 15. <https://www.rti.org.tw/news/view/id/2002315> (accessed August 21, 2023). Additionally, Chen Chu emphasized the role Kaohsiung has played in the democratic process in the past and urged voters to support Chen Chi-mai, whom she wishes to see succeed her.

he degraded the DPP's mnemonic narratives (which urged people to refresh their memory of the political past from time to time) and replaced its atmosphere of reminiscent sorrow with a promising hopeful ambience. Consequently, Han's best-known slogan in this election was, "Things can be sold, people can come in, and Kaohsiung will become superrich." He concluded that:

We (Kaohsiung people) have been poor for such a long time, really. We do not deserve such living conditions, and Kaohsiung city absolutely must offer the best quality of life. Kaohsiung people deserve a much better life, right? (November 17, 2018, in Fengshan, Kaohsiung)

Consistent with his mind engineering strategies, all the symbols that Han's camp laid out during the election campaign were tightly related to making money and creating fortunes. For instance, a widely recognized logo of Han's camp was a cartoon picture featuring a Shiba dog and a cutified version of Han Kuo-yu holding a cabbage in his hand. On one hand, the Shiba dog is called "Chai-Quan" in Mandarin, with "Chai" representing the sound of "money." That is, the Shiba dog symbolized a money dog that can bring big fortune. On the other hand, Han's cartoon avatar reminded people that he was adept at selling agricultural products (from his experience at TFA) and was thus assumed to be excellent as a CEO to reverse the financial depression for Kaohsiung. In fact, the address of Han's official electioneering website was the abbreviation of "Kaohsiung becomes rich" (richkh). His slogans on the website's home page were "believe, begin, and become" and "let's retrieve the energy and fortune of Kaohsiung". Right beside Han's name was the phrase, "a guy who sells agricultural products and is a CEO."

Despite the fact that Han's political opponents attacked him for failing to provide substantive policies to fulfill his "making a big fortune" future,²⁵ Han fought

²⁵ According to Han's opponents, even when Han did bring up possible ideas to generate revenue for the future of Kaohsiung, the ideas were usually not practicable. Nevertheless, in his own

back in his public speeches and claimed, “My opponents criticized me for failing to propose political views and policies, but the abstraction indeed reveals my determination!” Moreover, in his public speeches, he assured voters that “in the future Kaohsiung, we will enjoy gold mountains, silver mountains, and strong support!” In short, Han attempted to direct people’s attention not only to economic aspects but also to remember a shared bright future (if he won the election). Thus, these aspects constitute the core elements of his mnemonic narratives.

4. Employing Awakening Narrative to Evoke Change

The last crucial element in Han’s mnemonic strategy in this election campaign was that, based on the above-mentioned narratives, Han went further to employ awakening narrative to evoke a change in Kaohsiung (DeGloma 2010; Yeh 2016). Generally, in all awakening narratives, people are inclined to dramatize and exaggerate the transformation of status, highlight the “turning point” of change (as waking up from a nightmare), and construct two “selves” that represent the past-self as blinded, passive, and unthoughtful and the present-self as enlightened, active, and smart (DeGloma 2010; 2014). Han’s election discourse is no exception. To construct his version of an awakening narrative, Han mentioned five aspects to form the mnemonic narrative: *Kaohsiung had once been affluent, Kaohsiung was a “sleeping giant” that should awaken, the DPP’s political influence should be broken, right now is the decisive moment, and Kaohsiung people have to rescue themselves*. In the following, I articulate each aspect and explain how they all worked together to urge the electorate in Kaohsiung to awaken and vote for Han.

While Han rarely mentioned Kaohsiung’s past, he did refer to a shared honored economic past. For him, Kaohsiung was abundant and attractive during that time period (which happened to be ruled by KMT mayors):

rhetoric, believing that change can be made (by voting for Han) is an important first step for voters to take.

Consider Kaohsiung way back to 30 and even 40 years ago; I was serving as a soldier in our national army at Fengshan. I was 18 years old, and this was the first time in my life that I had left home and Fengshan is where I went. During that time, the Kaohsiung people were so proud. There were great amounts of Mercedes-Benz and BMW cars in Kaohsiung. It was also a time when Kaohsiung was the most spirited city: When people said that there was so much money in Taiwan that it covered a person's foot, Kaohsiung earned even more, enough to cover a person's navel. It was a time when Kaohsiung was the richest city in Taiwan. People in other cities were drawn to Kaohsiung: People from places such as Penghu, Tainan, Chiayi, Yulin, and Pingdong all drifted to Kaohsiung. Why? Because we had money, because we offered job opportunities, that's why people from all the other cities drifted to Kaohsiung. (October 26, 2018, in Fengshan, Kaohsiung)

In this speech, in addition to mentioning his biographical shared past with Kaohsiung, Han detailed that Kaohsiung was once a well-off city and had enjoyed prosperity. Nevertheless, Han continued to argue that, despite the honored economic past, Kaohsiung city had experienced decades of depression (under DPP mayors). He analogized Kaohsiung city as a “sleeping giant” with tons of advantages that unfortunately had long ago fallen asleep (i.e., fallen into economic sluggishness). Below are two excerpts from one of Han's public speeches:

The mighty Kaohsiung city! Our great Kaohsiung city has slept for such a long time. Kaohsiung is a giant: It has mountains, seas, airports, and harbors. How can Taipei city even compare with Kaohsiung city? Taipei does not like Kaohsiung (because it enjoys these superiorities). We have astonishing industry and an intact agricultural

industry as well as a fishery industry...In terms of Kaohsiung's territory, Kaohsiung is three times bigger than Hong Kong and ten times bigger than Taipei city. We slept for such a long time; for more than two or three decades, Kaohsiung didn't engage in economic development. Nevertheless, the mighty Kaohsiung city, the giant, is going to awaken! (October 26, 2018, in Fengshan, Kaohsiung)

For me, having a dream makes a great city. More importantly, the new mayor of Kaohsiung needs to have wonderful managing capacity. This is because the middle and lower classes have tolerated such bitter conditions. We in Kaohsiung need to make money immediately, and I mean right now. Kaohsiung people don't have any money in their bank accounts, and the Kaohsiung giant has to stand up. The Kaohsiung giant had slept too long a time. (November 19, 2018, in public debate)

Both excerpts reveal that Kaohsiung city needed to immediately make a change. Nevertheless, to make sure that the electorate did not seek “salvation” in the “wrong” direction, in his public talks, Han negated the DPP as a possibility for reversing the economic low ebb and degraded the DPP's decades-long governance:

What kind of life have we had since the DPP took the mayor's position? People have asked for a change wholeheartedly; they can't tolerate the situation of poverty anymore. People are eager for a better, richer, nicer life, right? (November 14, 2018, in Gongshan, Kaohsiung)

To further break the “spell” that a majority of Kaohsiung people had voted for the DPP mayoral candidates for decades because they believed the DPP had made

great contributions to Taiwan's democratization and, thus, its people to some extent "owed" the DPP (and paid with their votes), Han stated:

My dear Kaohsiung people, we have given so much precious time to the DPP to rule our place. We dote on the DPP so much and you all believe in the DPP, and then? Let me say something rude: The DPP is not Kaohsiung people's father, for which reason we have voted DPP in every election...Nowadays, we have mature democratic politics, which means the people are the political parties' father...Let us return to the most primitive spirit of democracy; democracy indicates that people make the decisions, right? (November 14, 2018, in Gongshan, Kaohsiung)

Moreover, according to Han's camp, the 2018 election can be (re)defined as the decisive moment for Kaohsiung city, thereby significantly magnifying the role of this event. On one hand, Han emphasized that Kaohsiung city had to seize the 2018 election as an opportunity to make a change since it was really a critical point in time. Additionally, he said that all the other cities were making progress, and Kaohsiung needed to catch up (by electing a new mayor):

Brothers and sisters, and all my dear Kaohsiung people, there will not be a single country or a single city that will wait for Kaohsiung... Let's examine from the South by looking at the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam, mainland China, Hong Kong, and Japan. Each of them is making progress. They don't wait for us; they do not care about us. If Kaohsiung city falls behind, and if Kaohsiung's economy becomes worse, other countries will respond, "you deserve it and it is your own choice." Hence, our Kaohsiung should be rescued by us, and our own future should rely on us. Okay? (October 26, 2018, in Fengshan, Kaohsiung)

On the other hand, Han reminded Kaohsiung's voters that, while Kaohsiung's mayoral elections might have been of marginal importance before, this time was different and the city was in the spotlight:

All of Taiwan, and the whole wide world, are watching Kaohsiung's election. (November 17, 2018, in Fengshan, Kaohsiung)

As a result, the 2018 election was constructed as an inevitable salient event, and the electorate had to understand that the election marked a decisive moment that could determine the future of Kaohsiung.

Last, but not least, after (re)defining the 2018 election as a decisive moment, Han continued to maintain that it was the general electorate who held the decision-making power, not Han himself. Despite many of his political opponents criticizing the Han tide as merely a hallucinogenic phenomenon (and thereby implying that the Han tide was an unrealistic “bubble” supported by the ignorant masses), Han suggested that all the Kaohsiung people were “amazing” and would ensure a significant and positive transformation for their city:

My dear Kaohsiung people, the Han tide is not a hallucination. This phenomenon represents that people in Taiwan cannot tolerate their circumstances anymore, and people shout out. This is definitely not a drug which makes people feel bewildered. (November 14, 2018, in Gongshan, Kaohsiung)

Han argued that he himself was at most a CEO who was good at selling products, and it was the Kaohsiung people who were worthy of great admiration:

If I can really win the 2018 election by offering voters only a bottle of mineral water (as the gift)···it doesn't mean that Han Kuo-yu is any-

thing extraordinary or amazing. Han Kuo-yu is just a guy who sells agriculture products. Instead, it indicates that the people in Kaohsiung are terrific! (October 26, 2018, in Fengshan, Kaohsiung)

According to Han, each and every Kaohsiung voter was a “quasi-hero” who should accept the responsibility to make a “wise” and “correct” decision: That is, they should vote for Han since that would be the only way to give Kaohsiung a “bright” future:

Last, I would like to make a request to all of you again. You must control your own fate. Your own future should be created and controlled by your own hands. (November 08, 2018, in Chishan, Kaohsiung)

Let us make history. My dear brothers and sisters in Gongshan Kaohsiung, my dear people and elders, let us write history! (November 14, 2018, in Gongshan, Kaohsiung)

As a consequence, Han’s electioneering dramatized the role of the 2018 election and claimed that all of Kaohsiung’s people had to “awaken” from their long-term sleep and that the future relied heavily on their own “right” decision.

5. Summary

In brief, the elements considered salient in forming the mnemonic narratives of Han’s electioneering include the redefining of shared present memory regarding the situation of Kaohsiung, redirecting people’s attention to the shared future instead of the shared past, and reorienting voters’ concerns toward economic development rather than political contentions. Furthermore, all the “plots” employed to compose a more convincing “awakening call,” and the “awakening narrative” itself,

are significant components that constitute mnemonic engineering. Viewing from a memory-study perspective can enhance our understanding of the electioneering in Kaohsiung's 2018 mayoral election.

Discussions

Han's narratives during the election campaign in fact encapsulated how he (re) defined the shared past, present, and future of Kaohsiung city. Every election is a chance for candidates to (re)define their attitudes and plans toward specific issues, policies, and places; thus, it is also an opportunity for voters to examine political figures' (and even political parties') orientations. Analyzing the emergence of the Han tide as a case reveals that the successful mnemonic narrative plays a salient role to help a candidate win the hearts of the people. Aside from being a "dark horse" to turn around the election results, the case of Han Kuo-yu's electioneering is especially significant because he adopted alternative mnemonic strategies (differing from the conventional KMT style) and bestowed abundant new implications in the perspective of mnemonic work. Even though it is possible that Han's employment of alternative mnemonic strategies²⁶ may have stemmed from his camp's initial assessment of his own disadvantaged status in the mayoral election, after his electioneering effectively garnered voters' attention and even support, Han continued with what he did in the early stages and reinforced his mnemonic manipulations.

In addition to the mentioned elements that constitute Han's mnemonic narratives, in this section, five more intriguing aspects are discussed to advance our understanding of not only the emergence of the Han tide but also the mnemonic competition between political forces. This includes how to negate the challenges from counter-narratives via redirecting attention; how to overcome difficulties posed by

²⁶ Here, the term "alternative" refers to deviating from the KMT's conventional style of election campaign.

the candidate's own background and the lack of a shared past with Kaohsiung; how mnemonic narratives manage negative elements through downplaying or "editing-out"; how Han's electioneering undermines opponents' mnemonic frameworks and nostalgic capital; and the bounded, interactive, and dynamic characteristics of mnemonic engineering. These five aspects represent advanced reflections based on descriptive analysis of the case, allowing for deeper dialogue with arguments and concepts proposed by the memory-study approach. Each will be elaborated upon below.

1. Cancelling the challenges of counter-narratives by redirecting attention

During the election, Han faced counter-narratives because the Han tide formed and strengthened only gradually. The counter-narratives suggested that Han's political views were unrealistic and unsubstantial, Han didn't provide substantive policies to achieve his goals, some of Han's information was incorrect and ridiculous, Han had a "disgraceful and infamous" biographical past, and Han didn't really know about Kaohsiung city.²⁷ However, Han mainly met all challenges from the counter-

²⁷ Before the Han tide clearly emerged, the DPP candidate didn't regard Han as a strong rival at all. It wasn't until Han gradually attracted people's attention in the last months before the election that Chen Chi-mai and other political figures from the DPP began to react. On various occasions, Chen criticized Han for being "hollow," "making empty promises," and "having no understanding of Kaohsiung." See Yan, Chen-Kai. 2018. "220,000 People Rally in Fengshan with Passion; Chen Chi-mai in Tears Urges Voters to Protect Kaohsiung with Their Ballots." *The Storm Media*. Nov 24. <https://ynews.page.link/eYRC> (accessed May 11, 2023). The last two critiques are related more to Han's biographical history and will be discussed in further detail later in this article. Due to length limitations, this research cannot delve into the details of counter-narratives (which mainly came from Chen's camp). Briefly, two points are worthy of mention: On one hand, according to the final election results, over 50% of voters dedicated their choices to Han. It means that not only did Han's mnemonic narrative evoke people's resonances, but the counter-narrative from Chen's side didn't work well or didn't exert effects in time. On the other hand, the campaign in elections should be a dynamic and interactive social process that both camps would undoubtedly put efforts into counteracting.

narratives head-on through redirecting attention. As E. Zerubavel pointed out, situated communities and reference groups all too often offer socialized individual “attention rules,” which normatively guide them to know what should be attended to and what should be ignored (E. Zerubavel 2003; 2015). As a consequence, some issues are highlighted and others are “blind spots” for people in various groups. I argue that Han skillfully redirected people’s attention to a different level, different unit, different scale, or different aspect to counteract the counter-narratives.

First, reacting to the criticism that he failed to offer substantive planning to achieve his political goals, Han claimed that “the abstraction (of my political views) represents my determination”: I suggest that, attention should be placed at the abstract instead of the substantive level. Second, facing the judgments regarding his dishonorable past, Han maintained that attention should be focused on the fate of Kaohsiung city as a whole instead of on himself (since he is “merely a guy who is good at selling agriculture products”). In short, he adjusted the unit of paying attention. Third, whereas his political opponents pointed out that he either made mistakes when offering information about Kaohsiung city or knew very little about Kaohsiung’s issues, Han believed that attention should be put on bigger issues (e.g., setting the direction for Kaohsiung) instead of trivial things. For example, when his rival Chen blamed him for not knowing about Kaohsiung in the public debate, Han said, “Those are only of negligible importance” (Han even coined the term “dididada” to refer to these trivial things) and are not worthy of too much attention during the election debate. Fourth, as the previous section details, Han’s election engineering emphasized that attention should be given to the shared (bright) future and economic development was the critical aspect that deserved attention.

2. Solving the issue of lacking a shared past

Having a shared past is an effective way to evoke social solidarity and a sense of togetherness among individuals (Bellah et al. 1985, 153; Halbwachs 1992).

Nevertheless, Han did not enjoy this advantage: While most candidates had some geopolitical origins in where they ran for election, Han had come to Kaohsiung city only months before the election (to comply with the official regulations on being a candidate) and the only connection he had was that he had served as a soldier in the national army at Kaohsiung when he was young. Han found ways to solve the problem of lacking a shared past with Kaohsiung city and even overturned this disadvantageous circumstance. Although they do not exhaust all the strategies that Han employed, four examples are covered here.

First, given that Han did not have a shared past with Kaohsiung's people, he adopted an "outsider's" position and turned it into an advantage: He mentioned in speeches that, "you' guys are so poor," "you' guys deserve a better life," and "I, as a newcomer, have a clearer mind and sharper eye to diagnose the problems of Kaohsiung." In other words, while all of "you" have been sleeping for too long, "I" (Han) bring fresh insight into the whole picture and know how to solve the city's plight. Second, Han readily admitted his disrespectful past, but indicated that he experienced a "watershed" in his personal life that changed him into a sagacious CEO who could make huge fortunes easily. Third, despite the period being relatively short and the depth being thin, Han did bring up his experiences of serving as a soldier in Kaohsiung. In addition, as mentioned, Han said his shared past with Kaohsiung city represented a positive period that made him "aware of the drastic change and difficult position of current Kaohsiung." Fourth, Han aligned his "not having a shared past with Kaohsiung" with the DPP's successive mayors: He pointed out that the DPP mayors over the past decades also didn't have a shared past with Kaohsiung city (contrary to most people's perceptions), and he himself was just like them. Following this logic, he stated that one of the most precious values of Kaohsiung was "inclusion": That is, people voted for candidates regardless of whether they had a geopolitical relation (shared past) with Kaohsiung. According to Han, this had been proven by having had so many DPP mayors who didn't have a shared past with Kaohsiung city (just as he didn't).

I suggest that, in an election campaign, we actually can investigate multi-layer mnemonic battles simultaneously. Taking Kaohsiung's mayoral election as the case, we can observe the competition between mnemonic narratives from different camps on national, regional, and even biographical levels.

3. Downplaying and/or editing “out” the negative aspects of “our side”

Yet another characteristic of Han's mnemonic narrative in his electioneering is that he not only rarely mentioned himself as the KMT mayoral candidate, but he also downplayed and/or edited “out” the negative aspects of “our side.” I suggest that both strategies function to avoid bridging Han to the lineage of the KMT. Intriguingly enough, whereas it is almost certain that people in Kaohsiung city had less and less confidence in the DPP (due to decades of holding ruling power) being able to reverse the economic depression, this does not mean that they came to admire and/or have confidence in the KMT. Considering the long-term “texture” (such as political disposition and preferences) of Kaohsiung's people, although Han did invite many political elites to campaign for him, it was safer to downplay and/or marginalize his political background (as a central and dedicated KMT member) in the 2018 election.

I distinguish the strategies of downplaying and editing out “our side” as two aspects: One limits the span of tracing back and the other treats the social actors as a marginalized issue. On one hand, when Han wanted to explain what caused the shared sluggish present of Kaohsiung city, he was very careful and only traced back through a limited time period. Since the time span that Han assigned negative attributions is about two decades (the period that Kaohsiung city was under DPP governance), the retrospection cannot be too “deep” in history. Reaching back “too deep” may have evoked unnecessary refreshing of memories regarding the KMT's governance. Moreover, when Han did mention Kaohsiung city under the KMT's governance (about 40 or 50 years ago), he described it positively as an affluent and

competitive place. On the other hand, in Han's narratives, he rarely mentioned any substantial actors, which resulted in marginalizing them as an issue. When Han described the current status of Kaohsiung city as unacceptable and suggested that issues such as regional imbalance and Northern drifters should be greatly improved, he either did not refer to the social actors who created these circumstances or (abstractly) blamed the people who held the mayor position and the DPP as a political party. In other words, Han did not blame or mention specific individuals by name. I suggest that this served to avoid a possible war of words over the KMT holding the ruling power not only at the central government but also at the Kaohsiung city for more than five decades before the DPP governed the city; also, the KMT by no means had responsibility for the regional imbalance or other problematic issues.

4. Degrading the mnemonic framing and nostalgic capital of the mnemonic enemy

For a long time, the DPP had constructed a set of mnemonic framing and logic, which included several elements suggesting, for example, that Kaohsiung city should be seen as a special place and remembered as a “democratic sacred place.” Also, through commemorating various political events to narrate, the DPP played a salient role in facilitating and enhancing Taiwan's democracy; hence, the DPP further should be remembered as *the* symbol of Taiwan democracy. To some extent, in the DPP's mnemonic framing, by employing synecdoche, the DPP represented “Taiwanese democracy” and “democratic value.”²⁸ This set of mnemonic framing did help the DPP win elections in both the central government and local governments, and the DPP had been the long-term ruling party in Kaohsiung city. I suggest that,

²⁸ Due to space limitations, direct quotations of word-for-word transcripts are not included here. However, Chen's speech from the night before the election can be regarded as a highly classic and vivid example of DPP's mnemonic framing. See Fount Media. 2018. “Night Before the Election: Chen Chi-mai's Emotional Speech Transcript.” *Found Media*. Nov 23. <https://www.foundmedia.io/article/2086> (accessed July 22, 2023).

by narrating its mnemonic framing, the DPP attracted a substantial number of followers during past decades in Taiwan, and its candidates and elites frequently made use of its master mnemonic narrative of the *nostalgic emotions*. As a result, it is not surprising that DPP candidates and elites described all elections as “the last defensive battle of Taiwan’s democracy!”²⁹

The most significant “accomplishment” of Han’s mnemonic narrative during the 2018 election might be that he degraded the mnemonic framing and nostalgic capital of the DPP. As mentioned, in the 2018 election, Han (re)defined the shared present of Kaohsiung city as negative, (re)directed the focus to economic aspects instead of politics, and emphasized a shared prosperous future. While the embedded political timing and social context surely had influence, Han’s mnemonic narrative worked to render the DPP’s mnemonic framing invalid during the 2018 election. Han not only pointed out that Kaohsiung’s people no longer owed the DPP anything, but he also cried out in an attempt to awaken the Kaohsiung people to make their own “wise” choice. Moreover, Han cast himself as future-oriented (one who can bring progress and hope) to highlight the DPP as a nostalgic party.³⁰

Consequently, through the effects of “awakening” the electorate, we can see that Han’s electioneering assigned new characteristics to Kaohsiung city: The “texture” became future-, positive-, and economic-oriented. The following excerpt is a vivid example of this:

²⁹ *Nostalgic capital* is a term I coin. I believe this concept can help us facilitate the conceptualization of interesting social phenomena. For instance, when social actors can derive benefits, be it interests and/or identification, from bringing up elements from the past, such as specific events and figures, to attract and earn people’s support, these social actors enjoy nostalgic capital by evoking nostalgic feelings. Additionally, due to specific historical development, the dynamic embedding of social context, and the skills of narrating the past, some political camps entail more nostalgic capital than others.

³⁰ Every political party seeks the past to evoke collective consciousness and social identification of its target population. Nevertheless, I claim that which political party is more nostalgic depends. In Taiwan, the KMT tends to be the more nostalgic party during the decades after 1949 and the DPP is inclined to be more nostalgic during recent decades: Both can derive nostalgic capital from their mnemonic framing and retrospective span.

Every dear Kaohsiung person, my dearest brothers and sisters! After spending so much time and putting in so much effort, the democratic politics in Taiwan have made a great advance. With all the troubles and difficulties, this has by no means been easy. Chinese people all over the world are observing 2018 (the election). I would like to request of all the dear friends who support Han Kuo-yu: Let us overflow with laughter, glow with pleasure, offer no hatred or defamation in this Kaohsiung mayor's election. (I hope that the) People who support Han Kuo-yu can always smile, just like all the street vendors outside today's meeting place. Let everyone who comes to my events be full of joy. Let us make the 2018 Kaohsiung mayor's campaign happy and bright, okay? (November 17, 2018, in Fengshan, Kaohsiung)

The outcomes of the 2018 election clearly reveal the influence of the Han tide and its spillover effects, so much so that days after the election, the DPP's party chief Lin Yo-chang said:

From now on, we should never bring up the contributions that the DPP has made to Taiwan's democracy! Taiwan has already experienced a transition in the ruling party three times and, furthermore, the DPP has taken the position as the ruling party twice. That is, Taiwan's people do not owe the DPP anything. The DPP should rely on what we contribute to the future Taiwan to earn Taiwanese people's support and identification. (LTN, December 5, 2019)³¹

This excerpt aptly resonates with the observations made earlier: The DPP derived

³¹ See Lin, Hsin-Han, and Lu Hsien-Hsiu. 2018. "Acting Chair Lin You-Chang: No More Mentioning the DPP's Past Contributions to Taiwan's Democracy." *Liberty Times Net*, December 4. <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/2632455> (accessed October 3, 2023.)

nostalgic capital by commemorating how it had contributed to Taiwan's democracy, and the Han tide worked to negate the DPP's mnemonic framing; the election results caused the DPP to reconsider and adjust its strategies.

5. The bounded mnemonic work and the interactive and dynamic characteristics

In the case of the 2018 mayoral election in Kaohsiung, Han's use of mnemonic techniques and manipulation of minds through mnemonic work can be both intentional and unintentional.³² After all, predicting the exact reactions of voters is difficult, and unexpected outcomes may arise during a months-long election campaign. Therefore, Han's camp can only "test the waters" with his mnemonic strategies and "address issues as they arise," at least in the early stages.

Some argue that Han was initially seen as unlikely to win the mayoral election, providing an opportunity for his camp to pursue an unconventional campaign approach. From a memory studies perspective, this entails adopting an alternative style of mnemonic work and manufacturing new implications into the mnemonic narrative during the election. However, it's worth noting that Han and his team cannot fully control the construction of this narrative. Collective memory manufacturing relies on audience resonance and is subject to counter-narratives and unexpected factors. Therefore, it is observed that, in the early stages of his campaign, Han and his camp may have adopted an alternative style of mnemonic work, with his mnemonic strategies "accidentally hitting" positive responses from supporters, thus guiding their strategy to continue in later phases.

³² Whether social actors consciously or unconsciously engage in mnemonic work is not seriously addressed by memory-study scholars. However, since the memory-study approach emphasizes highlighting the constructed nature of collective memories, it implies that there are social actors and strategies involved. I suggest that mnemonic work is inevitably done both knowingly and unknowingly. In this current research, due to the lack of in-depth interviews with Han and his staff members, there is insufficient information on this aspect.

In fact, the characteristics observed in Han's electioneering echo findings from studies on mnemonic work. Scholars have pointed out that mnemonic work is unavoidably bounded (Halbwachs 1992; Y. Zerubavel 1995). The bounded construction of collective memories indicates that the content of mnemonic narrative is not created in a vacuum; the narration needs to consider historical realities. Moreover, the bounded construction also implies that the coupling and decoupling between the manufacturing and reception ends of collective memory should be considered, as mnemonic work aims to evoke resonance from audiences. Additionally, challenges from counter-narratives and the path-dependence of mnemonic work (maintaining the internal consistency of mnemonic narrative) are also significant aspects contributing to the bounded construction of collective memories.

Briefly, mnemonic work in elections is a bounded construction, as claimed by existing research. Based on the empirical case of the 2018 mayoral election in Kaohsiung, it is found that social actors engage in mnemonic engineering with mixed motivations. Mnemonic work encapsulates multiple characteristics, including interactive, productive, unexpected, improvisatory, dynamic, and so on. Collective memory is more frequently employed than we believe to influence people's cognitive framework and to consolidate social actors' identification in various social realms. In the political realm, collective memory is also often harnessed, especially in electioneering. Academic attention to empirical cases of elections can enhance our understanding of the related dynamics.

Concluding Remarks

The results of the 2018 election in Taiwan and the emergence of the Han tide have drawn academic curiosity. While admitting that multiple reasons played roles, this article suggests that the memory-study approach facilitates our understanding of the narrative strategies and mind engineering used in elections and memory in

politics. Focusing on the mnemonic narratives in the Kaohsiung's mayoral election campaign of 2018, this article analyzes how Han successfully replaced mnemonic framing and (re)defined the attentional rules (E. Zerubavel 2003). That is, Han (re) directed the electorate's attention to the shared (bright) economic future and urged Kaohsiung's people to awaken and make a "wise" decision. As mentioned, mnemonic work, and the subsequent mind engineering as well as manipulations, eventually have effects on people's cognitive framework and behaviors, particularly in this case, to change electorates' preferences and voting choices. Collective memories frequently, and even inevitably, appear and are employed to consolidate people's identification, and the 2018 mayoral election in Kaohsiung is undoubtedly a great case to reveal its influences.³³

Highlighting the constructed nature of people's collective memories, I believe that the memory-study approach actually works to unravel the power and strategic dimension behind mnemonic battles and thus leads us to examine the characteristics of mnemonic engineering. That being said, the memory-study approach is nevertheless rarely applied to the empirical case of election competitions. This article discusses how mnemonic elements function in specific electioneering while embedded in a specific social context. Based on limited research cases, this study fails to provide a synthetic framework for subsequent studies to examine general electioneering. More empirical studies are needed to further refine understandings of the mnemonic narrative's roles in the political realm in general and election campaigns in particular.

³³ After all, after several decades, the Han camp emerged as a dark horse and won this election, resulting in a change of power in Kaohsiung. More importantly, despite the success of the mnemonic narrative in securing Han's victory in the election, it could not avoid subsequent scenarios such as recall and failure in the presidential election. This further highlights the need for us to examine the characteristics and implications of mnemonic narratives in this election.

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選舉活動中的記憶操控：以2018年選舉中韓國瑜陣營的心理工程為例

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《本文摘要》

本研究旨在探討選舉活動中的記憶操控（mnemonic manipulation）。2018年台灣九合一選舉的結果，可用「韓流」（Han tide）的崛起及其外溢效應來解釋。本文試圖透過記憶研究的取徑，分析「韓流」的形成及其影響。儘管其他社會因素在「韓流」的形成中亦扮演了重要角色，本文認為韓國瑜的競選活動中有四個關鍵元素：（重新）定義當下為負面情境，並將注意力（重新）引導至未來；將焦點從政治轉移至經濟；鼓勵人們忘記政治過去，擁抱經濟未來；並運用覺醒敘事來推動變革。此外，本文在「韓流」背後的心理工程中還觀察到四個值得關注的面向：第一，透過轉移注意力來削弱反敘事（counter-narrative）所帶來的挑戰；第二，解決韓國瑜與高雄市缺乏共同過去的難題；第三，淡化或剔除(edit out)「我方陣營」的負面形象；以及第四，削弱民主進步黨所使用的記憶框架（mnemonic framework）和懷舊資本（nostalgic capital）產生的效果。儘管記憶研究學者已指出集體記憶的政治意涵，本文進一步主張應通過探討更多實證案例，釐清集體記憶在政治場域中的影響力。

關鍵詞：政治中的記憶、記憶策略、選舉活動分析、心理工程、政治心理學

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