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Politics has abandoned Taiwan's young people

Taiwanese society appears normal on the surface, but is deeply distorted beneath. From politics and education to the media and public sector, many systems and values have strayed far from their original purpose — yet they are still accepted as part of everyday life.

I have come to care about these issues not just as a student of international affairs, but as someone shaped by personal observation and reflection. My father is a police officer, a profession often seen as stable, respectable and even admirable. However, I never spoke with him directly about the details of his work, but his silence only deepened my curiosity.

Growing up, I witnessed the constant stress and fatigue he carried home, and I began to wonder: What exactly causes this kind of pressure?

Much of what I have come to understand comes from older mentors and acquaintances — people with firsthand knowledge of Taiwan's justice system, law enforcement and political machinery. Their stories helped me see that the exhaustion I witnessed was systemic.

One of the most persistent issues I have come to recognize is the enduring presence of organized crime. Politicians form symbiotic relationships with gangs to secure votes and consolidate power, while law enforcement often turns a blind eye.

Over time, “not getting involved” becomes an unspoken rule. This moral compromise, replicated across institutions, has allowed corruption to blend seamlessly into the structure of everyday governance.

I used to believe that if you worked hard and did the right thing, society would reward you. However, seeing my father — a man of principle — slowly worn down by a system that offers no real justice or support, I began to understand that what truly erodes faith is the institutions that enable bad actors.

My political views have also been shaped by discussions with my peers at university and engagement with independent media, and I have come to see that many young Taiwanese feel disillusioned.

Faced with high housing prices, stagnant wages and limited career prospects, many feel that political participation does not lead to meaningful change. As a result, some turn to third-party or independent candidates, not out of idealism, but out of desperation. The traditional parties have lost their credibility.

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Recent political events have only intensified this disillusionment. For example, the pretrial detention of former Taipei mayor and Taiwan People's Party chairman Ko Wen-je (柯文哲). To many observers, it appeared less like a matter of justice and more like political retaliation.

In a functioning democracy, the principle of “innocent until proven guilty” should be sacred. Yet the state's actions seemed to challenge that core value.

This is no longer just about one political figure. It is about a broader system in which the law becomes a tool of power, not protection.

Even more troubling is the growing tendency among citizens to accept these conditions as normal. However, normalization of dysfunction is dangerous — it breeds apathy and civic disengagement. When people no longer believe in fairness or accountability, they lose trust in the system and withdraw from it. This withdrawal does not just hurt politics — it damages the social fabric.

If the next generation gives up on politics, who would shape Taiwan's future?

We are taught to trust the government, obey the law and believe in democracy. However, reality keeps challenging those teachings. The most heartbreaking part is not that the system is broken — it is that we have started to accept the brokenness.

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