

Taiwan's 2016 Presidential and Legislative Elections

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Introduction

The January 16, 2016 ROC elections, represent the sixth time the ROC president has been elected by popular vote and the eighth general election of all representatives to the Legislative Yuan.¹ They also represent the third turnover of party-in-power, and the first time that the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has won simultaneous control of the presidency and the legislature. In this election note, we assess the Ma Ying-jeou presidency, the conditions that led up to the 2016 elections, including the “mid-terms” in November 2014, describe the campaigns and analyse the results with an eye to the implications for domestic political competition and cross-Strait relations of the DPP winning control of the executive and legislative branches of government.

The Ma Ying-jeou presidency

President Ma of the KMT is constitutionally obliged to stand down in May 2016 after two terms in office. The January 16th 2016 elections to choose his successor and determine the composition of the 113-seat Legislature were conducted against a backdrop of widespread discontent with Ma's policies and performance, and can be characterised as a “change election”. On entering office in 2008, with 58% of the vote and a substantial legislative majority for his party (Muyard, 2008), Ma's aims were: to stabilise cross-Strait relations

1 “Taiwan” is used throughout as shorthand for “Taiwan, Republic of China (ROC)”

after a period of instability and deadlock during his predecessor Chen Shui-bian's tenure from 2000-2008; to revive Taiwan's economic fortunes through closer integration with the Chinese economy; to balance the imperative of economic incentives with the maintenance of "national dignity"; and to roll back the "de-Sinicisation" elements of Chen's "Taiwanisation" programme by emphasising Taiwan's Chinese cultural heritage and situating Taiwan within the framework of the greater Chinese nation. The underlying device Ma used to pursue these aims was the "1992 Consensus", a rhetorical position regarding Taiwan's status vis-à-vis China characterised by "One China, respective interpretations". The "1992 Consensus" is controversial in Taiwan (not least because the PRC does not recognise the "respective interpretations" qualifier), but its ambiguities created space for the two sides to develop a workable platform and a generated an unprecedented level of momentum, yielding a number of practical agreements across several socio-economic sectors, including a limited free trade agreement (FTA), the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). On the surface, Ma leaves cross-Strait relations in significantly better shape than when he began his presidency in 2008, but his policies have had mixed results for Taiwan's economy, society, foreign relations and many other policy sectors.

Under President Ma the tenor of cross-Strait relations reached an all-time high. The reinvigoration of semi-official frameworks and the institutionalisation of party-to-party talks culminated in the first-ever meeting of sitting PRC and ROC presidents in Singapore in November 2015 (Hu & Langfitt, 2015; Office of the President, 2016a; Perlez, 2015). The stability of cross-Strait relations during a period of increasing friction between China and Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and other territorial claimants in the South and East China Seas, has been warmly welcomed by global leaders (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014; Thornton, 2015). As a claimant to disputed territories itself, Taiwan has generally been conciliatory and responsible in its foreign policy, with gains made in resolving points of contention with Tokyo and Manila. Moreover, the Ma administration demonstrated that it is possible for Taiwan to cooperate with China, reversing the trajectory of his predecessors. However, while superficially the temperature of cross-Strait relations has never been better, the underlying militarisation of the Strait, manifested in the approximately 1800 Chinese missiles stationed across the Strait in Fujian

Province, remains unchanged. Despite Ma's China-friendly orientation, China's military posture represents an undiminished threat to Taiwan's national security (Cabestan, 2010). Passage of the PRC's Anti-Secession Law (albeit three years before Ma assumed the presidency), China's growing military capacity and rapid modernisation, the changing military balance in the Taiwan Strait, broad popular nationalism and the undiminished pressures of "hawks" within the CCP leadership (including the People's Liberation Army), mean that Taiwan's security environment has not significantly changed despite Ma's détente policies. Ma's domestic opponents have pointed to China's military posture as a reason for caution in embracing an explicit national security threat, and called for the maintenance of Taiwan's military preparedness via an appropriate level of defence spending, the pro-active procurement of weapons from the US and the professionalisation of the Taiwanese armed services: pressing tasks which stalled during Ma's tenure (Chao & Shih, 2011; Thim, 2013).

Ma's policy of opening up parts of the Taiwanese economy to Chinese investment and expanding and deepening cross-Strait economic integration has had positive results, particularly for large corporations and individuals with the capital and skills to exploit new opportunities (Muyard, 2010). The promised results were hampered by the global financial crisis and subsequent recession that negatively affected Taiwan's export markets, especially in the US and Eurozone. Although most economic indicators rebounded impressively in 2010, the effects of this recovery were less felt in the population at large than in specific sectors of the economy. Taiwan's exports grew robustly during President Ma's first term despite the global financial crisis. Total annual exports grew 20% from 2008 to 2011, with one third of that rise coming from exports to China, which totalled US\$557 billion in the first seven and a half years of Ma's tenure (more than double the US\$257 billion of China-bound exports in the equivalent period of the Chen Shui-bian administration) (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2016). But while numerous economic agreements have been signed, there have been significant difficulties in implementation and the intended keystone policy of Ma's second term, a follow-up agreement to ECFA, the Cross-Strait Service and Trade Agreement (CSSTA), remains in a state of limbo having failed to achieve ratification in the legislature. Furthermore, in attempting to push through the CSSTA, Ma overplayed his hand, causing rifts

between different branches of government, and within his own party, and an outpouring of popular discontent dramatically manifested in the Sunflower Movement and the student-led occupation of the Legislature in the spring of 2014 (Rowen, 2015). Though he comfortably secured re-election in 2012 (Sullivan, 2013; Tsang, 2012), the Sunflower protests, primarily aroused by Ma's apparently authoritarian and opaque decision-making, marked a watershed halfway through his second term (Rowen, 2015). Ma argued, with some justification, that the CSSTA would increase Taiwan's international competitiveness, and framed it as a response to the FTAs signed by Taiwan's regional competitors, rather than in terms of economic integration with China per se, but his neglect of democratic procedures repelled many Taiwanese who increasingly expect transparency and accountability in government.

One of the major points of discontent during Ma's second term was that the benefits of his economic policies have not been evenly distributed across Taiwanese society. Average disposable income rose just 1.6% for Taiwanese from 2008 to 2014, while the cost of living rose 7.9% in the same period, producing widespread feelings of relative deprivation exacerbated by property prices inflated by Chinese investment in Taiwan's real estate sector (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting, and Statistics, 2016). The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) estimated in the first quarter of 2015 that the price of a home was 16 times the average annual income for Taipei residents and 8.5 times average annual income in Taiwan as a whole. The MOI's national housing price index estimates prices nationwide rose 45% from March 31, 2008, to March 31, 2015 (Ministry of the Interior, 2016). These livelihood issues are not solely due to Ma's China policy, but there is little doubt that it exacerbated them, whilst increasing Taiwan's dependence on China's economy: trade with China, Hong Kong, and Macau accounts for around one third of Taiwan's total trade volume, while Taiwanese investments continue to head to China in record amounts (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2016; Chen Yung-chi, 2015).

While the extent of Taiwan's participation in international society remains incommensurate with an economy of Taiwan's size, or a consolidated liberal democracy and global trading power (Winkler, 2008), it did expand during Ma's tenure. Taiwan's small group of diplomatic allies remained stable; Taiwan

was able to join several international organisations (increasing to 37 under Ma, including the World Health Organization's health alert system); and ROC citizens now enjoy visa-free entry, landing-visa privileges, and other entry facilitation programmes in 153 countries, including the US and EU (Department of Information Services, 2015). President Ma's administration is keen to emphasise these successes as indicators that it has acted with great resolve to uphold Taiwan's "dignity" and "respect" (Office of the President, 2016b). Within Taiwan there is longstanding controversy over what constitutes "dignity" and the means to achieve it, but a broad consensus appears to have emerged that national dignity lies in upholding Taiwan's status as a discrete, functionally autonomous, liberal democracy that is not China. This notion is apparent in longitudinal public opinion surveys, but does not translate into a widespread preference for formal independence, at least not in the face of Beijing's steadfast equation of "Taiwan independence equals war" (Sullivan and Lowe, 2010).

Notwithstanding developments in public opinion, Ma's presidential discourse has emphasised Chinese identity (Sullivan and Sapir 2013). Through his tenure, the proportion of Taiwanese people identifying as "Taiwanese only" increased notably from 45% to 60% (Election Study Center, 2016). President Ma's references to his own and Taiwan's Chinese origins illustrate a personal commitment to the idea of the centrality of Chinese nation to Taiwan that is incompatible with the lived reality and national identity preferences of a majority of Taiwanese, particularly younger people for whom Ma's pet notion of being descended from the Yellow Emperor is incongruous. Despite instrumentally appealing to a sense of Taiwanese identity during his election campaigns (Sullivan and Sapir, 2012), Ma increasingly identified with the Chinese nation and disregarded the specificities of Taiwan's contemporary experience. As a result of Ma's discursive behaviour and the deliberate marginalisation of the "Taiwanese wing" of the KMT, embodied by Ma's battles with his personal *bête noire* Wang Jin-pyng, the KMT became a party aligned with "Chinese-ness" at a time when the appeal of "Chinese-ness" has become marginal. By returning the KMT to its roots as the party of Chinese nationalism, and moving it away from a centrist position with broad instrumental appeal, the KMT under Ma damaged its electoral chances.

2014 'mid-term' elections

Despite advances in cross-Strait relations, Taiwanese society under Ma Ying-jeou became more unequal with a greater sense of widespread relative deprivation than ever before. Ma's approval ratings sunk below those of Chen Shui-bian (whose corrupt activities as president landed him in jail when he stepped down), at one point reaching single digits. The writing was on the wall for the KMT's chances in 2016, with a catastrophic performance in the "9-in-1" local elections held in November 2014. However, the KMT's woes ran deeper than the unpopular president. With its "old guard" and "princelings", the party appeared to have lost touch with the electorate, neglecting its changing demographics and preoccupations. The extent of this estrangement should have been clear in the spring of 2014, when two years of large-scale popular protests over various issues culminated in students occupying the Legislature for three weeks (Rowen, 2015). Inexplicably, the KMT, which had long proved so skilful in adapting from authoritarian rule to the conditions of democratic competition, failed to heed the warnings. Instead, the mid-term campaign strategy relied on using vastly superior financial resources to attack opponents through negative campaigning and by leveraging long-nurtured factional networks. In the post-Sunflower era, these tactics failed to connect with voters, particularly the younger generation and their lived reality of stagnant wages, poor job prospects and little hope of getting on the property ladder. The KMT's tone-deafness was exemplified by Jason Hu, a veteran KMT figure who lost his position as Taichung Mayor after 13 years. Hu rightly identified that the KMT had lost because it did not understand young people. But he then proceeded to dismiss them as materialistic and ungrateful, saying "if you give them an iPhone 5 they are still mad at you because you did not give them an iPhone 6" (Shih, 2014), despite abundant evidence of the seriousness, dedication and sacrifice of many young Taiwanese activists during the previous three years.

The extent of voters' alienation from the KMT was highlighted in the highest-profile contest of all the 11,000 public offices up for grabs in 2014: the race for Mayor of Taipei City, a long-time KMT stronghold. Sean Lien, scion of the fabulously wealthy political family that had given us an earlier benchmark in electoral futility (KMT Honorary Chairman Lien Chan's feeble 23% third

place in the 2000 presidential election) ran against DPP-backed independent candidate Ko Wen-je, a surgeon with no political experience. Ko's "anti-politics-as-usual" candidacy perfectly captured the post-Sunflower zeitgeist, while Lien's campaign was peppered with tone-deaf faux pas that contributed to the prevailing image of an arrogant young princeling flailing out of his depth. Ironically, Ko's political inexperience, manifest in a number of gaffes of his own, became a badge of honour, the difference being Ko's unpractised sincerity and indifference to politicking. In the post-Sunflower ecology these characteristics resonated strongly with many of the city's voters, especially the young, and Ko's campaign created the kind of "we want change" buzz later associated with the campaigns of UK Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Democratic presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders in the US.

The KMT's landslide losses handed the initiative to the DPP. To stand a chance of winning the national elections in 2016, the DPP would have to appeal to broader interests than simply Taiwanese nationalism as it had in previous elections, and having been bypassed by the civic movements that eventually coalesced under the Sunflower banner, the party succeeded in communicating its message of economic and social justice. Following the local elections, the DPP could no longer be dismissed as a "party of the south" (the hotbed of Taiwanese nationalism). It did indeed sweep the south, but the DPP and its ally Ko also won the KMT's northern strongholds of Taipei, Taoyuan, Keelung and Hsinchu City. The KMT's ultimate presidential candidate, Eric Chu, held on to the Mayorship of New Taipei City (also known as Xinbei City) by just over 1% against the veteran Yu Shyi-kun, widely considered a no-hoper. Meanwhile, the KMT's high profile "princelings" (Sean Lien; Hau Lung-bin, son of former Premier Hau Pei-tsun; and John Wu, son of former KMT Chairman, Taipei mayor, and Taoyuan magistrate Wu Po-hsiung) were embarrassingly defeated. In all, the KMT won just six of the 22 mayoral and commissioner contests, its worst showing since 1997. To "accept responsibility" for the catastrophe, Premier Jiang Yi-huah and his Cabinet resigned, and top KMT figures stepped down from their party positions, including a number of vice chairs, the secretary-general, and Chairman Ma himself.

In equivalent local elections in 2010 (with a slightly different slate of posts), the DPP won two of the then-five special municipalities, which signalled a

rebound from the nadir of landslide national election losses in 2008. The 2010 mid-term performance encouraged the party to think that Tsai Ing-wen, competitive in losing the New Taipei City race, could compete for the presidency in 2012. Tsai had emerged as leader of the DPP from the wreckage of Chen's second term, and is acknowledged to have done a sterling job in resuscitating the party. Unlike many DPP politicians, Tsai had little factional or ideological baggage and proved capable in balancing competing factions within the party. While Tsai lost to Ma in the presidential election in 2012, she again performed creditably, and overseeing the huge local election gains in 2014 as party chairwoman, she consolidated her status as the DPP's obvious candidate for the presidential election in 2016.

2016 Campaigns

The run-up to the national elections held concurrently in January 2016 was dominated by dissatisfaction with the outcomes and trajectory of President Ma's policies, embodied in a raft of livelihood issues. Under Ma, Taiwan's famously even distribution of wealth became a thing of the past and social mobility was no longer something that Taiwanese could take for granted. Education in particular no longer appeared to be the passport to mobility it once was, with an increasing proportion of graduates earning a derisory NT\$22,000 monthly starting salary (US\$650). While widespread feelings of economic dissatisfaction have taken hold, corporations and individuals with political connections have profited from opening up Taiwan's economy to China. Squandering a long-held reputation as stewards of the "Economic Miracle" in the 1960s and 70s, the KMT came to represent the privileged and well connected. Taiwanese companies have swapped investment in Taiwan for China (61% of Taiwanese investments since 1991 have been in China), moving out R&D operations and depressing the domestic jobs market. Chinese investment in real estate has caused bubbles and made housing unaffordable for ordinary Taiwanese. As in Hong Kong, an influx of Chinese tourists has exacerbated the sense of difference and antipathy towards Chinese people. Ma's espousal of Taiwan's commitment to being part of the imagined Chinese nation created resentment at perceived attempts to lock Taiwan into a

narrowing range of future options. It was against this backdrop of discontentment that the campaigns were conducted.

Tsai Ing-wen officially announced her presidential campaign on February 15, 2015 (Tsai Ing-wen, 2015). Since she was the only DPP member to apply for the party's nomination (Blanchard and Gold, 2015),² she had nearly an entire year to prepare for the general election and could take her pick of staffers and volunteers from the pan-green camp's recently concluded 2014 campaigns. The DPP also began preparing its legislative campaigns, holding primary polls for "competitive" seats (where it earned at least 42.5% of the vote in the 2012 elections) and either drafting candidates for the other districts or endorsing independent or third-party contenders for them, including social activists Huang Kuo-chang, Freddy Lim, and Hung Tzu-yung of the newly established, Sunflower-inspired New Power Party (NPP) (Gerber, 2016), which endorsed Tsai Ing-wen's presidential campaign, burnishing her credibility with a veneer of youth and progressive leftism.

From the outset, Tsai sought to address a major weakness in her losing 2012 campaign by cleverly sidelining her China policy through constantly pledging adherence to the "status quo". The fact that the "status quo" is a nebulous concept (for example it could equally refer to "one China" or Taiwan's functional autonomy) was to the DPP's advantage. The DPP has traditionally been vulnerable on China policy, but since the vast majority of Taiwanese citizens over many years have evinced favour for some version of the "status quo" (with the qualifiers "leading to independence/unification" or "indefinitely"), Tsai's policy position became a non-issue, inoculating the DPP from attacks on its China position and helping livelihood-minded voters set China policy to one side. Tsai also sensibly sought to expand DPP support beyond its traditional *Minnan*-speaking and Taiwan-nationalist base. With Hakka heritage herself, Tsai admitted in one televised debate that the DPP had not done enough for the Hakka, mainlander, and indigenous citizens but she would do her utmost for them as president (Hung, 8th January 2016). Her campaign was very active on social media, releasing new videos several times a week and Facebook posts several times a day. She campaigned hard for the

² The party officially nominated her on April 15, 2015.

DPP and its allies' legislative candidates, emphasizing to voters that without a legislative majority her hands would be tied even if she won the presidency (Wang Po-jen, 2016).

In stark contrast to the unusually serene DPP, the KMT endured a tortuous presidential campaign, with intraparty intrigue consuming media attention from the beginning of the cycle to the end. Controversies embroiling KMT elites revealed divisions within the party and a deficit of effective leadership. The incumbent president's unpopularity ensured that any KMT candidate would face an uphill struggle, and this seemed to discourage most aspirants from running. Vice President Wu Den-yih considered running (Tsai Hui-chen, 31st March 2015) but ultimately decided against it. Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng prepared a campaign (Luo, 31st March 2015) but announced near the end of the party's registration period that he would stand aside (Chen Chih-ping, 2015) as party sources whispered to the press that President Ma strongly opposed Wang becoming the KMT's candidate (*Apple Daily*, 13th May 2015). Eric Chu, the only KMT candidate to win a special municipality election in 2014, was widely considered "next in line" for the KMT, but from June 2014 through September 2015 he steadfastly and repeatedly refused to run for president, promising his New Taipei City constituents that he would faithfully serve out his second term as Mayor, and even ignoring a petition signed by dozens of KMT legislators facing re-election (*Apple Daily*, 5th October 2015; *Formosa News*, 20th March 2015; Hsu, 18th October 2015). Other potential candidates, like former Taipei mayor Hau Lung-bin and former Chiayi City mayor Huang Min-hui, chose not to step into the vacuum.

When the KMT's registration period for aspiring presidential candidates ended, the only two registrants were former health minister Yaung Chih-liang, who had no electoral experience, and Deputy Legislative Speaker Hung Hsiu-chu, a Chinese nationalist who had never run in a first-past-the-post general election and whose electoral base was in the most KMT-friendly areas (Alison Hsiao, 2015). Talk of the party drafting a more electorally viable candidate was repeatedly dismissed by Hung, who demanded the party stick to its rules. When Yaung was disqualified after failing to gather the requisite number of signatures (Luo, 25th May 2015), the KMT ran a public poll to decide whether to nominate Hung, who had to clear a certain threshold to win the nomination.

Once word got out they could help the KMT saddle itself with a relatively unelectable (though intrepid) candidate through open polling, pan-green supporters apparently began mendaciously telling pollsters they supported Hung (*Apple Daily*, 1st June 2015)³. Regardless of how this happened, Hung performed outstandingly in the KMT's poll (Tsai Pei-fang, 2015), paving the way for her nomination on July 19, despite negative reactions among some KMT legislators and the media (*Apple Daily*, 21st June 2015; Chen and Chen, 2015).

With Hung staking out pro-China positions on the far-right (campaign "highlights" included her comparison of Taiwan's student activists to the Cultural Revolution's Red Guards and comparing Taiwanese to Nazis) (Hu, 28th July 2015; Lai, 2015) a vacuum opened in the centre-right, which the opportunistic James Soong stepped into by declaring his own presidential campaign August 6 (Hsu, 7th August 2015). Soong, formerly a powerful KMT apparatchik who had suppressed press, speech, and language freedom as Government Information Office director during the authoritarian era but also enjoyed a popular reputation as a politician who "gets things done", apologised for the suffering of Taiwanese under martial law (Hsu, 22nd August 2015). He also courted local factions that had been turned off by Hung's Chinese nationalism (PTS, 21st July 2015) and lambasted the performance of President Ma (Formosa News, 9th October 2015) whom Hung likened to a father figure (Chou Yi-tzu, 2015).

With the candidates announced, the campaign settled into an equilibrium with Tsai running far ahead of Hung and Soong, who were splitting a minority of the votes. With Hung's support never exceeding 20%, and concern growing about the spill-over effects of her extreme positions on the prospects of its legislative candidates (who had been chosen by a central committee led by Hau Lung-bin rather than by the local party chapters as had been customary) (Wang and Chen, 2015), the KMT's Central Standing Committee turned the race on its head by calling an extraordinary party congress to rescind Hung Hsiu-chu's nomination and nominate Chairman Eric Chu in her place (Hsu, 8th

³ *Apple Daily's* media poll results shifted from Tsai 54%, Hung 28% in a May 15-18 survey, to Hung 50%, Tsai 28% in a May 30 survey.

October 2015). Chu went along with the plan, breaking his countless promises not to run. The party congress was held October 17, violating the KMT charter, which stipulates that two months' notice must be given for any KMT party congress (Chen Chang-wen, 2015). Moreover, because the KMT charter did not vest a party congress with the authority to rescind a rule (and a law-abiding presidential candidate's nomination), the party congress had first to pass a resolution to amend the party charter in order to give itself the power to replace Hung with Chu the very same day.

The KMT and Chu were, not surprisingly, pilloried for hanging Hung out to dry. According to a Cross-Strait Policy Association poll, 60% of voters thought the KMT's method of replacing Hung was unreasonable while only 15% found it reasonable, and 76% thought the KMT, not Hung, was to blame for the poor performance of her campaign (just 6% blamed Hung) (Cross-Strait Policy Association, 2015). Hung and Chu sniped at each other in the press (PTS, 6th October 2015) and some observers accused the KMT of sexism against Hung, noting it had never fully financially supported her campaign in the first place (*Apple Daily*, 9th October 2015; Ku, 2015). During the December vice presidential debate, DPP vice presidential candidate Chen Chien-jen himself questioned whether the KMT had been sexist against Hung, and KMT vice presidential candidate Jennifer Wang declined to respond (Hsiao Ting-fang, 2015). The CSPA poll also found 64% thought Chu should resign from his mayoral position if he were running for president (as had been the custom for Taiwan's public officials cum presidential candidates); Chu refused, instead taking a three-month sabbatical (Chang, 2015). Now considered faithless by many citizens, Eric Chu's popularity declined, and his own presidential poll numbers turned out to be almost as low as Hung's had been (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 2015).

The November vice presidential nominations followed a similar pattern to the presidential nominations. Tsai selected the well-liked and well-known epidemiology researcher Chen Chien-jen, who as health minister in 2003 had helped Taiwan respond to the SARS epidemic. Soong nominated Legislator Hsu Hsin-ying, a local faction politician and Hakka from Hsinchu County who was chairwoman of the Minkuotang (MKT) (Republican Party), a nascent party that splintered from the KMT and ran against it in numerous districts. And Chu

selected former labour minister Jennifer Wang, a lawyer who helped pioneer women's rights legislation. While Chen and Hsu both performed competently, Wang became mired in scandal nearly as soon as her campaign began. Labour activists derided her performance as minister, drawing particular attention to her ministry's lawsuits against laid-off workers designed to recover compensation they had received from the government (*The Liberty Times*, 2015). An even bigger story was the revelation she had handsomely profited from buying and selling over a dozen military housing units, using complicated legal structures to avoid running afoul of the law, and was living in publicly subsidised civil servant housing (Chou Chih-hao, 11th November 2015; Chou Chih-hao, 9th December 2015). The scandal seemed particularly to damage the KMT's support among some of its most loyal members, military veterans, who had already been turned off by the replacement of ideological fellow-traveller Hung Hsiu-chu (*Wealth Magazine*, 2015). A December CSPA poll found that Wang's disapproval rating was 63%, and 68% of respondents thought her housing speculation was inappropriate (Hsu, 9th December 2015).

Eric Chu failed sufficiently to distance himself or his campaign from President Ma's record and policies, and while he was closer to the centre and more palatable to local factions than Hung had been, Soong was now able to argue he was the more honest candidate (Lin, Chung, and Kuo, 2015). Opposition legislative candidates seized the opportunity to damage KMT candidates and incumbents by associating them in voters' minds with the party's unpopular headliners. Citizens slapped stickers on KMT legislative candidate posters proclaiming they were recommended or supported by Ma or Wang (Wytze, 2016), and a large Taoyuan billboard argued supporting the KMT legislative candidate equalled supporting Jennifer Wang (*China Review News*, 2015).

A record number of parties, 18, ran for the party-list legislative election (*Apple Daily*, 23rd December 2015). The party lists of the DPP, NPP, TSU, and Social Democratic Party-Green Party (SDP-Green) alliance included numerous NGO members, social activists, and professors (Chen Hui-ping, 2015; Chiu, 2015; Yeh, 2015; Yen, 2015). The PFP's list was headlined by KMT defector Lee Hung-chun and included representatives of various social sectors (Hu, 24th November 2015). The New Party originally declined to nominate a party list

because it fully supported Hung Hsiu-chu's presidential candidacy, but once Eric Chu replaced her it reversed its decision and put forward a slate of Chinese nationalists to draw protest votes from dissatisfied deep blues (Yang, 2015). The MKT's party list made news for the inclusion of former spy Chen Hu-men, who had served a prison term for his involvement in the 1984 murder of journalist Henry Liu in California (Gerber, 2015). Chen's nomination drew attention to Buddhist monk and former intelligence officer Miao Tian's influence over the MKT. The KMT's party list (*Apple Daily* 20th November 2015) attracted the most attention and controversy: several members of the party itself ridiculed it (Hsu, 21st November 2015), and rumours swirled that Eric Chu had personally made the list, breaking with the past custom of KMT leaders of assembling the list by committee (Lee, 2015). The "safe seats" at the top of the list were largely occupied by local faction politicians, while representatives of traditional party constituencies, like the military and labour unions, were relegated to the lower ranks where they were unlikely to be elected (and ultimately were not). The list did have one bright spot: the high ranking of Lin Li-chan, an immigrant from Cambodia who had worked in civil society for the rights and interests of other women who had immigrated to Taiwan through marriage (Amber Wang, 2016).

The final month of the campaign featured three presidential debates: a vice presidential debate, three presidential forums and one vice presidential forum. Chu was strongly negative during these events, constantly criticizing Tsai Ing-wen, such as by calling her policies unclear, equivocal, or dangerous and linking her to the Chen Shui-bian administration. His own policies were similar to Ma's. Tsai fended off Chu's attacks while promising a clean break from the KMT and laying down an outline for her future plans. Soong rose above the fray by promising to be a nonpartisan uniter. In the vice presidential events, Chen Chien-jen laid out DPP policies, Hsu Hsin-ying called for non-partisan solutions while advocating for the MKT, and Jennifer Wang defended her integrity and her past actions as labour minister. Chu, Alex Tsai, and Chiu Yi made headlines with near-daily accusations against Tsai, including a claim by Chu that she planned to open up Taiwan to the import of US pork with ractopamine residue (Yang, 2015) (Tsai denied having made any such promises) and a claim by Alex Tsai that most of Taiwan's diplomatic allies would switch recognition to the People's Republic of China if Tsai Ing-wen were elected (the

Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied this) (Chen Yao-tsung, 2015), but they failed to alter the basic dynamics of the race. Over the campaign's final two weeks, with Tsai maintaining a support base greater than the combined support of the other two candidates, media attention finally turned to the tight legislative battles around the island. With Chu having promised to step down as chairman if he lost the election, and the KMT widely expected to lose, reports even surfaced about KMT leaders like Hung Hsiu-chu and Hau Lung-bin considering campaigns to replace Chu after the general election (Stacy Hsu, 8th January 2016; Tsai Hui-chen, 8th December 2015).

The Results

Tsai Ing-wen won the presidential election with 56% of the vote. Eric Chu finished second with 31% and James Soong third with 13% (Central Election Commission, 2016a). Tsai's 25-point margin of victory was the largest since Lee Teng-hui's 31-point win over three opponents in 1996, and her vote total of 6.894 million was second only to Ma Ying-jeou's 7.658 million in 2008. Tsai won every region except the sparsely populated counties of Hualien, Taitung, Kinmen, and Lienchiang, where Chu placed first, and she earned over 50% of the vote in each of the six major cities.⁴ Her performance was the best ever by a DPP presidential candidate, while Chu's was the worst by a KMT candidate since Lien Chan's third-place, 23% result in 2000. At 66%, voter turnout dropped to a historical low for an ROC presidential election, 8 points lower than the 74% turnout of 2012. The total number of voters decreased by a little over 1 million. It is unclear how many people stayed at home because they expected the race to be a whitewash and how many were protesting against the poor performance of the KMT. Regardless, Tsai entered office with a much stronger mandate than her predecessor Chen Shui-bian did in either 2000 or 2004.

In the 113-seat legislative election, 68 seats went to the DPP, 35 to the KMT, 5 to the NPP, 3 to the PFP, 1 to the Non-Partisan Solidarity Union (NPSU), and 1 to an independent (Central Election Commission, 2016b). The independent

⁴ The special municipalities of New Taipei (55%), Taipei (52%), Taoyuan (51%), Taichung (55%), Tainan (68%), and Kaohsiung (63%).

afterwards joined the DPP caucus, swelling it to 69 (Liu, 2016), while the NPSU legislator joined the PFP caucus (Hsu Yi-chen, 2016). The NPP formed its own caucus, led by Soochow political science professor Hsu Yung-ming; this is expected sometimes to assist the DPP caucus led by Ker Chien-ming and at other times to put pressure on it from the left. With the PFP caucus working independently from the KMT's, the KMT caucus is without coalition partners. The DPP has a legislative majority and the KMT is in the legislative minority, both historic firsts.⁵ Tsai Ing-wen will thus be free of the divided government that frustrated many of Chen Shui-bian's efforts during his 8-year presidency. Moreover, the new legislative speaker, elected with all 74 DPP and NPP caucus votes, is none other than Tsai Ing-wen's 2012 running mate Su Jia-chyuan; the DPP's Tsai Chi-chang will be deputy speaker (Tsai, 2016). Thus the next four years could bring myriad long-awaited legislative amendments, with particular priorities including food safety, social housing, and the nationalisation of controversial KMT assets (*Apple Daily*, 15th October 2015; Hung, 2nd February 2016; Wu, 2016).

Table 1: Presidential voting by city/county

| District | Voters | Tsai (%) | Chu (%) | Song (%) |
|-----------------|-----------|----------|---------|----------|
| New Taipei City | 3,204,367 | 54.8 | 33.3 | 11.9 |
| Kaohsiung | 2,254,324 | 63.4 | 26.0 | 10.6 |
| Taipei City | 2,175,986 | 52.0 | 37.5 | 10.6 |
| Taichung | 2,138,519 | 55.0 | 29.8 | 15.2 |
| Taoyuan | 1,627,598 | 51.0 | 34.4 | 14.6 |
| Tainan | 1,528,246 | 67.5 | 22.1 | 10.4 |
| Changhua County | 1,022,962 | 56.5 | 28.8 | 14.7 |
| Pingtung County | 689,170 | 63.5 | 27.0 | 9.5 |
| Yunlin County | 566,207 | 63.4 | 24.9 | 11.7 |
| Miaoli County | 448,520 | 45.5 | 37.6 | 17.0 |
| Chiayi County | 430,885 | 65.4 | 23.4 | 11.2 |
| Nantou County | 415,122 | 52.2 | 32.1 | 15.7 |
| Hsinchu County | 412,731 | 42.5 | 35.3 | 22.2 |

⁵ The DPP was the largest caucus from 2001-2004, but the KMT formed a majority coalition with the PFP.

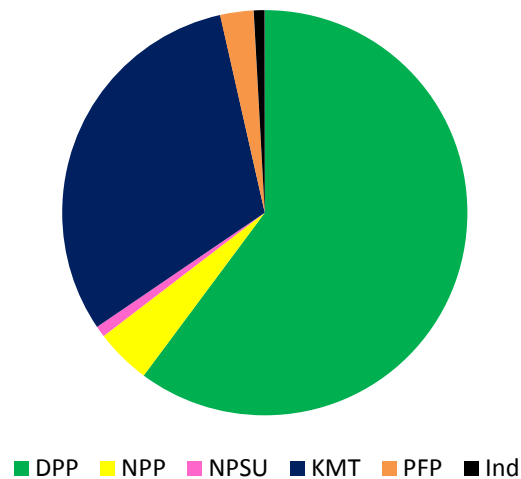
| | | | | |
|----------------------|---------|------|------|------|
| Yilan County | 369,211 | 62.1 | 25.4 | 12.6 |
| Hsinchu | 328,580 | 51.2 | 32.4 | 16.4 |
| Keelung | 306,548 | 48.2 | 35.3 | 16.5 |
| Hualien County | 267,862 | 36.9 | 47.7 | 15.3 |
| Chiayi | 210,758 | 59.9 | 28.0 | 12.2 |
| Taitung County | 179,547 | 38.4 | 44.6 | 17.0 |
| Kinmen County | 111,386 | 18.0 | 66.1 | 15.9 |
| Penghu County | 84,222 | 50.8 | 29.5 | 19.7 |
| Lienchiang County | 10,240 | 16.5 | 68.6 | 14.9 |

The DPP's biggest gains in the historic 2016 legislative election came in the Taipei suburbs of New Taipei and Taoyuan. In the 2012 election, the KMT had won 10 of 12 New Taipei seats and all 6 Taoyuan seats; this time it won just 2 New Taipei seats and 2 Taoyuan seats, with the other 14 going to the DPP and its coalition partners Huang Kuo-chang (NPP) and Chao Cheng-yu (independent). Chen Ying won the DPP's first-ever seat in an indigenous district. The DPP candidates took the former blue strongholds of Hualien and Taitung. In the south the KMT was not remotely competitive, with the DPP sweeping every seat in Yunlin, Chiayi, Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung. The KMT's best performance (on a relative scale) came in central Taiwan, where local faction-supported candidates such as Yen Kuan-heng (son of Yen Ching-piao) and Hsu Shu-hua ran far ahead of the pan-blue presidential candidates. The KMT also held on to 6 of 8 Taipei seats, as 5 of the 6 non-DPP candidates the DPP endorsed in the city fell short with other opposition candidates splitting the non-KMT vote. The KMT also held on to four of the six indigenous district seats, though one of its winners, Uliw Qaljupayare, may ultimately have his victory invalidated due to suspected vote-buying (*Apple Daily*, 19th February 2016).

In several districts numerous voters split their tickets, with many supporting the KMT's district legislative candidate but not its party list or its presidential candidate. On the other hand, Tsai's total was about equal to the combined party list votes for the DPP, NPP, SDP-Greens, TSU, and third-tier pan-green parties, and Tsai typically ran ahead of the DPP's district legislative candidates.

In the party list election where seats were allotted by proportional representation, the DPP won 44% of the vote and 18 seats, the KMT 27% and 11 seats, the PFP 6.5% and 3 seats, and the NPP 6.1% and 2 seats. The New Party earned 4.2%, just short of the 5% threshold for representation but strong enough to qualify for annual government subsidies for the next four years. The SDP-Green alliance and TSU each won 2.5%. With the TSU bereft of legislative seats, the week after the election the outgoing party chairman raised the possibility of the party disbanding (United Daily News, 2016). The other two parties to exceed 1% were the Faith and Hope League—a new party with informal ties to conservative Christian churches—and the MKT, which received 1.7% and 1.6% of the vote, respectively.

Chart 1: Legislative seats



Overall, the results of the 2016 elections showed a similar pattern to the 2014 ‘mid-term’ elections (Sung, 2016) and were consistent with opinion polls through the campaign. The election eve scandal involving the teenage pop singer Chou Tzu-yu, forced by her Korean record company to apologise for holding an ROC flag, had a minimal effect on the results (Lin, 2016). With a public appetite for change expressed through a number of channels during the

past four years, the outcome of the 2016 national elections reflects a new balance of power where the DPP has the upper hand over the KMT.

Implications of a “change election”

While there are divisions in Taiwanese politics, and a lot of noise, there is a high degree of consensus in society and convergence between the major parties. Fundamentally, both major parties have limited room for manoeuvre when it comes to China policy: public opinion does not support extreme moves in either direction and the range of policy options is limited by Beijing’s position and the reality of cross-Strait economic interdependence driven by market forces. Thus the fact that the DPP controls both branches of government is unlikely to lead to radical changes in China policy. President Tsai is more pragmatic than former President Chen Shui-bian and she inherits a complex set of foreign policy and socio-economic dynamics that will require careful judgement. On the domestic front, the DPP has promised to recalibrate the Taiwanese economy, with a greater focus on distribution and addressing ongoing livelihood issues such as increasing the provision of affordable social housing and raising graduate salaries. While this reorientation is welcomed by many Taiwanese, Tsai will face obstacles outside her control that come with being closely tied to the turbulent global economy. The DPP has aspirations to internationalise Taiwan’s economy, reducing reliance on China and integrating Taiwan into regional and pan-regional projects such as the TPP. These are reasonable ambitions, but Taiwan’s participation in international agreements will depend on unlikely PRC goodwill, or at a minimum, Beijing’s acquiescence. Beijing views Tsai with deep suspicion, including her ability to rein in the more independence-minded factions of a party they view as “secessionist”. Officially, Beijing will adopt a wait and see attitude, while preparing to put the squeeze on Taiwan in the absence of demonstrations of “sincerity” from Tsai. A major stumbling block will be the “1992 Consensus” that Ma has enthusiastically promoted as the “status quo”. Tsai, along with many Taiwanese, rejects the notion that an ad hoc agreement between the CCP and a then-unelected KMT should dictate democratic Taiwan’s options. As Xi Jinping has taken personal leadership of the PRC’s Taiwan policy decision-making, marginalizing the Taiwan Affairs Office, Beijing’s position on acceptance of “one China”, even in

the guise of “one China, respective interpretations”, has hardened. In the absence of significant conciliatory noises from Tsai, Beijing will seek to woo Taiwan’s handful of diplomatic allies, increase pressure on the large community of Taiwanese businesspeople living in China and work to support the KMT and marginalise the DPP. Given the momentum of market forces, there is not a lot that Tsai can do to stem the flow of investment to China, and the hollowing out of Taiwanese industry is a serious vulnerability.

Perhaps the biggest implication of the 2016 elections is the emergence of a generational shift in Taiwanese society. The notion that wise elders should take care of decision making, in the family and in politics, has long been deeply embedded in Taiwan’s political culture, underpinning, and propagated by, four decades of KMT one-party rule. Taiwan’s transition to flourishing democracy is a constant rebuttal to the self-serving narratives of conservative, change-resistant elites: Taiwanese have proven that there is nothing inherent in the Chinese or Confucian cultural heritage that disqualifies them from having a fully functioning democracy. Yet, the legacy of one party rule and instrumental quasi-Confucian notions did not disappear with the coming of elections. Political elites retained their sense, and their carefully framed narrative, of knowing what was best for the people. And many citizens, conditioned by decades of priming through the media and the education system, continued to have a narrow understanding of what democracy means, sometimes complaining to pollsters that democracy was too messy and divisive. There is no democratic tradition in Chinese culture, and the late political scientist Tianjian Shi argued that many Taiwanese came to understand democracy via the idea of *minben* (民本), a restricted form of government by benevolent elites that he called “guardianship democracy” (Shi, 2015). More recent research shows that the attitudes towards authority that underpin support for this form of government are not widespread among young Taiwanese. The age 19-35 cohort is more supportive of democracy as a political system, and acceptant of the noise and contention that accompanies it. And while they are more likely to call themselves Taiwanese, it is identification with democracy that is a crucial part of this trend. The cohort that has grown up under a democratic system takes for granted liberal democratic norms like freedom of speech, accountability and transparency to a much greater extent than their elders, who had to “learn” them. This attitudinal change represents a

significant challenge to the foundations of “guardian democracy”, which is magnified by the popularisation of digital and social media. Unlike their parents, the younger cohorts have grown up with the norms associated with internet culture, where there is little deference to authority and obvious scepticism and mistrust of government. Befitting the generation that has rejected the notion of “guardian democracy”, Taiwanese young people are politically active on a greater scale than their forbears, and their demand for accountability and transparency is something that will affect the contours of political competition for years to come.

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