The Dynamics of Taiwan’s Party Politics and the 2014 9–in-1 Local Election

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The Nature of the 2014 Election

• A no-confidence vote for Ma’s presidency
  – DPP tried to define the election as an approval vote on Ma’s performance (9.2% approval)

• A prelude to the 2016 presidential race
  – It is a test for the DPP aspirant, Tsai Ing-Wen, seeking the party’s presidential nomination

• A mid-term election
  – A country-wide election
    • It involves 100% of the total electorate
  – Have direct consequences for the incumbent party’s governing capability at the national level
Expectation before the Election

• KMT will not be happy
  – Ma’s popularity has been ebbing low for quite some time
  – Sun Flower Movement & Food Scandal
  – KMT needs to hold on to its control in its traditional strongholds of Taipei, New Taipei and Greater Taichung to appease its supporters.
  – Some pundits predicated that Ma is likely to be inflicted by the same kind of shellacking as Obama’s has suffered in the recent U.S. mid-term election

• Goal:
  2 – 3 seats in the 6 special municipal elections.
  (New Taipei, Taoyuan + Taichung)
Goals before the Election

• Great Timing for DPP
  – The DPP, however, needs to show that it can challenge outside its southern base of Tainan and Kaohsiung if it wants to gain control of the presidency and parliament.

• Goal:
  3 – 4 seats in the 6 special municipal elections. (Taipei, Tainan, Kaohsiung + Taichung)
Pre-Election Poll – New Taipei

2013/12/19
朱立倫 56

2013/12/19
朱立倫 56
Pre-Election Poll – Taoyuan

Source: TVBS

2013/12/19
鄭文燦 25
Pre-Election Poll – Taichung

02/06 林佳龍 47

2013/12/16 2014/02/06 2014/07/11 2014/09/29 2014/10/29 2014/11/16
Electoral Outcome

Mayoral Election

Local Councilors Election

Township chiefs election
What’s wrong with the poll?

• Young Voters
  
  The easiest inference is that the wave of young voters came out overwhelmingly against the KMT. Young voters often do not reside in the place where they vote, so they might not have been counted in pre-election polls.

• Prof. Ko Effect – Ko P effect expanded
  
  “The wall of ideology is about to fall” drove students’ votes.

• Telephone survey is problematic
Why KMT would lose in landslide?

KMT did not get it!

• The “Fundamental Three” did not work
• Leaders’ image and their performance evaluations are important
• More importantly – What is the valence issue(s) in this election?
President Ma’s Approval
President Ma’s Approval (Pan Blue Supporters)
Fundamentals

“Old Fashioned” factors in Taiwan elections:

1. National Identity
2. Tondu Issue
3. Partisanship
Figure 1. National Identity

Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU (1992 ~ 2014.06)
Figure 2. Tondu Issue

as Tracked in Surveys by Election Study Center, NCCU (1994~2014.06)
Figure 3. Party Identification

Changes in the Party Identification of Taiwanese as Tracked in Surveys by the Election Study Center, NCCU (1992～2014.06)
Reconsider......

Who are the voters?
Young voters
What does young voter want?

- 40-45% of voters in this election is under 40 years old
- Taiwan political demographics are radically changing
- China is a neighbor – Taiwan should have economic relations with our cultural and linguistic neighbors, much as Canadians do with the United States, but not anything more. Support for unification will continue to whither away. ⇐ No more Tondu card
- The next presidential contests in Taiwan will be about how best to manage de facto independence.
Internet War

How did you receive election information?

- TV News: 64.1%
- Internet News: 10.0%
- Family and Friends: 6.5%
- Newspaper: 4.8%
- Social Network: 2.5%
- Election Announcement: 1.3%
- Propaganda: 1.0%
- Candidate Website: 0.8%
- Candidate Door-to-door: 0.2%
- Political Forum: 0.1%
- Unclear Opinion: 7.6%

Question: During this election period, please tell me where you primarily obtained election news.
Candidate Image and Dissatisfaction Matter

Why did you vote for the candidate?

- 候選人特質 (Candidate Image) - 43.1%
- 對中央政府的不滿 (Dissatisfaction with Central Government) - 25.1%
- 政黨認同 (Party Identification) - 9.6%
- 對地方政府的不滿 (Dissatisfaction with Local Government) - 6.8%
- 施政滿意度好 (Satisfaction with Administration) - 3.4%
- 想換人做看看 (Wish to Try Someone New) - 3.2%
- 親友介紹 (Recommendation by Friends) - 0.6%
- 無明確意見 (No Clear Opinion) - 8.2%

題目：這次的縣市長選舉，請問您投票給Q5的最主要原因是？

[Bar chart showing the reasons for voting for the candidate]
The DPP has regained its momentum

- The shadow of Chen Shui-bian’s scandal has gone!
- The DPP has been able to capitalize on the growing discontent among the middle and lower-middle class (due to economic insecurity, frozen salary, the widening of income gap, a regressive tax structure, and run-away housing price)
- The DPP not only won 5 out of 6 special municipal elections, but also poses strong challenge to KMT’s incumbency in New Taipei City (also the most likely 2016 presidential candidate, Eric Chu)
The DPP after the election

- DPP won, but Tsai Ing-Wen did not.
- Tsai Ing-wen has became the front-runner for the presidential nomination in 2016.
- Who actually managed to woo more independent and younger voters to DPP side?
- “The wall of ideology is about to fall” – if this is the key for this victory, can DPP hold on to this?
- For 2016, whether the DPP is able to shelf its confrontation approach to cross-Strait relations and define a new centralist line is critical to its electability in 2016. Tsai did the same strategy in 2012, but failed. Can she make it next time? This depends on whether Tsai Ing-wen can rein in the deep green constituency.
The KMT after the election

• President Ma’s era officially ended, who will be the next leader? The chance for 2016 is fading away.

• It has to revisit its pro-business agenda and address the social equity issues with real vigor. ← This is what young voter care about!

• Get rid of Old Fashioned party culture – Completely destroy and completely start over! “Reset the entire party system”

• Eric Chu is still the most likely candidate for KMT in 2016, however, he will face a tough battle.
Thank you!
The Impact on grassroots politics

Total local councilors seats