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# Lessons of Defeat and Success: Taiwan's 2012 Elections in Comparative Perspective

Dafydd FELL and Charles CHEN

**Abstract:** In early 2011, the Kuomintang (KMT, Guomindang) government appeared to be in danger of losing power in the upcoming presidential elections. The DPP had recovered sufficiently from its disastrous electoral performance in 2008 to pose a real challenge to Ma Ying-jeou (Ma Yingjiu) and had matched the KMT's vote share in mid-term local elections. Ma also faced the challenge of an independent presidential candidate, James Soong (Song Chuyu), who had come a close second in 2000 and now threatened to divide the pro KMT vote. Nevertheless, the KMT was able to win reduced majorities in both the presidential and legislative elections in January 2012. This article seeks to explain how the KMT was able to hold on to power by comparing the campaign with earlier national-level elections. We are interested in identifying the degree to which the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, Minjindang) learnt from its electoral setbacks in 2008 and whether the KMT employed a similar campaign strategy to the one that had been so effective in returning it to power in 2008. Our analysis relies of an examination of campaign propaganda and campaign strategies as well as participant observation and survey data from 2012 and earlier contests.

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**Keywords:** Taiwan, elections, political parties, KMT, DPP

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## Introduction

In January 2012, Taiwan held combined national presidential and parliamentary elections on the same day for the first time in its history. One year earlier, the Kuomintang (KMT, Guomindang) government had appeared to be in danger of losing power in the upcoming presidential elections. After coming to power through landslide election victories in 2008, the party's popularity had slumped in the middle of the Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九, Ma Yingjiu) first term. This led Shelley Rigger (2010) to write of "Ma's midterm malaise". An economic recession in 2009, together with poor handling of disaster relief, contributed to public satisfaction rates in Ma falling from 41 per cent after his inauguration to only 16 per cent in late 2009 (TVBS Poll Center 2012a). Such a low level of public satisfaction was similar to that of Ma's predecessor Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁, Chen Shuibian) for much of his second term. The main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), had recovered sufficiently from its disastrous electoral performance in 2008 to pose a real challenge to Ma and the KMT. Under its new leader, Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文, Cai Yingwen), it had matched the KMT's vote share in the mid-term local elections of 2009 and 2010 and won some remarkable Legislative Yuan by-election victories in KMT strongholds (Fell 2011: 229). Ma also faced the challenge of a presidential candidate named James Soong (宋楚瑜, Song Chuyu) and his People First Party (PFP). Soong had come a close second in the 2000 presidential election and now threatened to divide the pro KMT vote in both presidential and parliamentary contests.

Nevertheless, as Tables 1 and 2 show, on voting day the KMT was able to win with reduced majorities in both the presidential and legislative elections in January 2012. In fact, the margin of victory was larger than most academic and party observers had predicted (Schubert 2012: 144–145). In the presidential election, Ma won, with 51.6 per cent of the vote compared to Tsai's 45.6 per cent, while Soong mustered a mere 2.7 per cent. Four years earlier, Ma had gathered a historic high of 58.4 per cent of votes, compared to the DPP candidate's 41.6 per cent. Ma's vote share was higher than the previous record high gained by Lee Teng-hui (Li Denghui) in 1996 of 54 per cent. In the parliamentary election, the KMT seat share fell from almost 72 per cent to 56.6 per cent and, while the DPP's party list

vote share actually fell slightly, its seat share rose from 24 to 35.4 per cent. In the 2008 parliamentary elections, third parties had almost completely disappeared, but in 2012 the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) and the PFP both won three seats each. The TSU's 9 per cent party list vote share was its best performance since its creation in 2001. Despite the KMT's vote and seat reductions, it had retained a working majority in parliament, which meant that Taiwan would see another four years of unified government, with the presidency and parliament in KMT hands.

**Table 1: Vote and Seat Shares in National Parliamentary (Legislative Yuan and National Assembly) Elections**

	1998	2001	2004	2005	2008	2012
KMT	46.4 (54.7)	28.6 (30.2)	32.8 (35.1)	38.9 (39.4)	51.2 (71.7)	44.5 (56.6)
DPP	29.6 (31.1)	33.4 (38.7)	35.7 (39.6)	42.5 (42.8)	36.9 (24)	34.6 (35.4)
NP	7.1 (4.9)	2.9 (0.4)	0.1 (0.4)	0.9 (1)	4 (0)	1.5 (0)
PFP		18.6 (20.2)	13.9 (15.1)	6.1 (6.1)	0 (0.9)	5.5 (2.7)
TSU		8.5 (5.8)	7.8 (5.3)	7.1 (7.1)	3.5 (0)	9 (2.7)
TIP	1.5 (0.4)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.6 (0.6)		
GP	0.1 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)		0.6 (0)	1.7 (0)
NHSU						1.2 (0)
Relevant parties	3	4	4	4	2	4

- Note 1: Vote shares for the main political parties in legislative and National Assembly elections; seat shares are in parentheses.
- Note 2: Party abbreviations: KMT: Kuomintang; DPP: Democratic Progressive Party; NP: New Party; PFP: People First Party; TSU: Taiwan Solidarity Union; TIP: Taiwan Independence Party, GP: Taiwan Green Party, NHSU: National Health System Union.
- Note 3: One of the PFP's three official candidates won a seat in 2008. The PFP only had one (unsuccessful) district level candidate in 2008, who won 47.04 per cent of the vote in Lianjiang (連江) County. This only amounted to 2,064 votes and represents 0.02 per cent of the national vote share. The successful PFP candidate won an aboriginal constituency seat with 11,925 votes; however votes for the aboriginal constituencies were not included in the Central Election Commission's party vote share figures.

Note 4: The party vote share figures for the 2008 and 2012 legislative elections are from the party list votes.

Source: National Chengchi University 2012a.

Table 2: Vote Shares in Presidential Elections

	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012
KMT	54.0	23.1	49.9	58.45	51.6
DPP	21.1	39.3	50.1	41.55	45.6
NP	14.9	0.1			
FPF		36.8			2.7

Note 1: The vote share for the NP in 1996 refers to the Lin Yang-kang ticket, which was supported by the NP but not officially a nominated NP candidate.

Note 2: The FPF vote share in 2000 refers to James Soong’s independent candidacy. Soong went on to form the party following his narrow defeat in 2000.

Source: National Chengchi University 2012a.

This paper builds upon earlier analyses of the 2012 elections by Gunter Schubert (2012) and Jonathan Sullivan (2013), with the two following main objectives. Firstly, we seek to compare the 2012 elections with some of the more recent national-level campaigns. We focus our comparison on public opinion and the content of political communication. Secondly, by looking at the elections comparatively, we consider how the KMT was able to hang on to power. Here we are interested in whether the parties have learnt the lessons of success or failure from previous campaigns.

Although it would seem like common sense that parties would try to learn the lessons of defeat to improve their electoral prospects for the next round of elections, empirical evidence shows that often parties react irrationally to defeat. For example, the British Labour Party (after 1979) and Taiwan’s New Party (NP, after 1998) both moved away from the median voter after major defeats (Fell 2006: 47–67). In both cases, they paid a severe electoral price for moving to extremes in the subsequent elections. How parties react to defeat often depends on who wins the struggle over the post-election post-mortem. Norris and Lovenduski (2004: 85–104) suggested that parties may suffer from “selective perception” in terms of how they understand election results, whereby leaders misinterpret opinion polls and other data to match their own existing convictions. Scholars have shown how the outcome of internal power struggles after election defeat is also a central factor that drives party change. For in-

stance, when electoral moderates became dominant in the DPP following its 1991 defeat, they gradually steered the party in a more centrist direction (Kuo 1998). Lastly, we need to remember that promoters of party reforms face severe constraints from factions opposing reforms, particularly in older established parties. It is often safer to avoid what may seem like necessary but radical reform to avoid splitting the party and potentially losing existing core voters. In this study, we assess the degree to which the DPP learnt from its electoral setbacks of 2008 in terms of its party image, nomination, policies and campaign style.

We argue that there was more change than continuity in the key factors leading to the KMT victory in 2012 compared with 2008. In terms of continuity, the electoral system again favoured the KMT and as in most previous elections the KMT outspent its rivals on campaign advertising by a significant margin. However, the central issues were completely different from 2008, with the KMT focusing on its achievements in economic growth and improved China relations, while the DPP stressed social justice. Thus, the KMT chose to use a very different set of appeals in 2012 compared to its winning issue formula from 2008. The DPP attempted to learn the lessons of defeat from 2008 in a number of policy and campaign adjustments. For instance, it tried to project itself as more pragmatic and moderate on relations with China. However, the DPP's adjustments were not quite enough to overcome the KMT's incumbency advantage.

## Data and Methods

Despite a growing literature on political communication in Taiwan, the topic was initially neglected by political scientists. Instead, much of the best research has been published by scholars based in advertising departments. Three of the most prolific writers on the subject of Taiwan's election advertising have been Cheng Tzu-leong (鄭自隆, Zheng Zilong), Chang Ching-ching (張卿卿, Zhang Qingqing) and Niu Tse-hsun (紐則勳, Niu Zexun), all of whom are based in advertising departments and have published predominantly in Chinese. Cheng Tzu-leong can be regarded as the pioneering figure in the study of Taiwanese election advertising and his books offer readers detailed reviews of advertising strategies for almost every election campaign since the early 1990s (Cheng 1992, 1995, 2011). Chang

Ching-ching has often looked at the subject comparatively. For instance, she has compared political advertising in Taiwanese and American presidential campaigns, as well as comparing the ability of candidates and the media to set the presidential campaign agendas (Chang 2000, 2007). The most recent entrant has been Niu, who has already published a number of volumes examining Taiwan's local and national elections after 2000 from the perspective of advertising theories (Niu 2002, 2005).

The English-language literature on Taiwanese political communication began to develop in the post-2000 period. For instance, Gary Rawnsley has examined the growing professionalisation of campaigning and critiqued the use of the Americanisation approach on Taiwan's campaigning (Rawnsley 2003, 2006). A number of studies have applied statistical analysis as well as detailed qualitative content analysis to Taiwanese election advertising. For instance, Dafydd Fell has used a mix of qualitative and quantitative content analysis to plot patterns of party change in Taiwanese elections before and after 2000 (Fell 2005, 2011). In other words, the focus has been on what political communication can tell us about whether Taiwan's parties were moving towards the centre or becoming more polarised. More recently, Jonathan Sullivan has published a series of systematic content analysis studies that rely on quantitative methods (Sullivan 2008, 2009). These studies give readers a clearer picture on the balance between negative and positive advertising and the degree to which advertising addresses issues, values, traits and strategy.

In our study, we have employed a range of data to compare the 2012 campaign with earlier elections. For instance, we have made extensive use of polls conducted by the TVBS polling centre related to party image, pre-election support rates and responses to election debates. As Schubert (2012: 150) notes, "Many opinion polls in Taiwan are politically biased in Taiwan". Therefore, we must keep in mind the political orientation of the polling organisations' proprietors. For instance, TVBS polls do often appear to underestimate support for the DPP. However, TVBS polls have the advantage of accessibility and their polling frequency allows time series analysis. In fact, both 2008 and 2012 TVBS pre-election polls actually turned out to be quite accurate in their predictions.

We chose to conduct a qualitative review of television election advertising for the last two presidential campaigns. The reason for

focusing on television advertising is that this represents one of, if not the largest single spending item in election campaigns in Taiwan. Moreover, the high penetration of election ads across TV channels means they are unavoidable in Taiwan. In contrast to the statistical approach adopted by Sullivan, we chose to conduct a qualitative content analysis of television election ads. The main reason for this was to highlight the core issues and appeals that dominated the agenda. Our dataset included all election television ads that were broadcast between June and voting day for elections in 2008 and 2012 and our dataset was supplied by the advertising analysis company Rainmaker XFM. The ads were divided into three main categories: those issued by presidential campaigns, party centre ads, and those for individual legislative candidates. The full details of the ads are shown on Tables 5–7. While both Sullivan and Schubert concentrated their analysis on the China issue in the 2012 campaign, we have attempted to use our content analysis to reveal a broader range of campaign appeals and issues.

A final element of our examination involved long-term observation and participation in Taiwanese election campaigning. One author has joined multiple Taiwanese election observation groups, while the second author worked in multiple elections as a campaigner, including as a presidential campaign spokesperson in 2012.

## Pre-election Opinion Polls

A first place to compare this campaign is the pre-election opinion polls. The TVBS candidate support-level polls between July 2011 and January 2012 are displayed in Table 3. This suggests that although the election was close, Ma consistently led the field and, in the final month, Ma's support level was actually on the rise, as opposed to a slight decline in Tsai's support. The most important shift appears to have been the gradual erosion in support for the third candidate, Soong, which appears to have favoured Ma. The majority of polls, regardless of partisan bias, did suggest Ma held a narrow lead throughout the campaign. In 2008, Ma was also consistently ahead of his DPP challenger; the difference was that while in 2008 Ma's lead averaged about 20 points, this time it was rarely more than 5–6 per cent (TVBS Poll Center 2012c). As in 2008, the DPP had hoped that its support rate would gain momentum during the campaign, but

Table 3 again shows that this surge in support failed to materialise. Thus 2008 and 2012 stand in stark contrast to 2000 and 2004, where the DPP progressively eroded the KMT’s lead as the campaign progressed, so that it was finally able to win by narrow margins (Fell 2011: 213, 218).

Table 3: Pre-election Presidential Polls for 2012

	7/ 21	8/ 15	8/ 30	9/ 14	10/ 6	10/ 26	11/ 23	12/ 10	12/ 29	Jan 13
Ma	38	39	40	42	40	42	39	41	44	43
Tsai	36	35	32	34	33	33	39	37	38	35
Soong	13	16	17	15	14	13	9	8	6	6
DK	12	9	12	11	13	12	12	14	12	16

Source: TVBS Poll Center 2012d.

Another way to examine the competitiveness of the campaign is to compare the sociological background of the supporters of the rival presidential campaigns. A key feature of the 2008 campaign opinion polls was that Ma was ahead by wide margins among almost all major ethnic groups, education levels, genders, geographical regions and age groups (TVBS Poll Center 2008a). For instance, Ma had a 53 to 23-point lead among female voters and even in the supposedly pro-DPP far south (Gaoxiong (高雄), Penghu (澎湖) and Pingdong (屏東)) he led by 47 points to 34. Amongst non-partisans, Ma led by 45 percentage points to 17. A sign of the greater level of competition in 2012 was that Tsai had higher support rates in the south and south-central counties (Yunlin (雲林), Jiayi (嘉義) and Tainan (台南)), amongst voters in the 20–29 and 30–39 age ranges, those who had up to junior high school education, and among Minnan voters (TVBS Poll Center 2012c). Tsai also narrowed the KMT lead in many of the KMT’s strongholds and support groups. One key such geographic region was central Taiwan, where in 2008 Ma led by 52 percentage points to 26, compared to a lead of 45 to 30 in 2012. However, although Tsai was the first female presidential candidate and made her gender an important component of her campaign, she still trailed Ma amongst female voters by 32 to 44 per cent. Tsai’s expansion of support was also limited among Hakka voters, with a rise from 21 per cent in 2008 to 30 in 2012, but this still left Ma with almost a 20-point advantage

with this ethnic group. The DPP’s support had risen in almost all TVBS background groups, with the exception of Mainlanders. Here Tsai’s support rate was actually lower in 2012 at 12 per cent compared to 20 per cent for Hsieh in 2008, while Ma’s rose from 72 to 74 per cent.

These trends suggest that the DPP had learnt some key lessons from 2008. Firstly, it had won back much of the lost support in the south that had defected to Ma in 2008. It had also regained its advantage among younger voters, with whom it had been the most popular party from the mid-1990s through to 2005. It had also narrowed the KMT’s lead in its stronger areas, particularly in central Taiwan. However, the data suggests that Tsai was not able to expand DPP support level sufficiently in key groups such as females, the highly educated and in northern Taiwan to win the election.

Table 4: Party Identification Trends 2004–2012

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
KMT	21.2	31.2	35.5	34	35.5	33.9	32.8	39.5	35.5
DPP	24.7	21.6	18.7	20.1	21.2	19.5	26.2	24.9	24.5
NP	1	0.5	0.6	0.6	1.6	0.9	0.8	1.1	0
PFP	9.6	4	2	1.1	1.5	1.2	2	3.3	3.1
TSU	2.4	3.4	2.7	1.2	1.9	1.2	1.1	1.1	2.4
Ind	41.1	39.3	40.5	42.9	38.3	43.3	37.1	30.4	33.9

Source: National Chengchi University 2012b.

When it came to the parliamentary election, the KMT was in an even stronger position. It not only had a huge incumbency advantage, but it also had much higher levels of party identification than the DPP. The key trends in party identification change over the last nine years are shown in Table 4. In both pre-election years (2007 and 2011) the KMT had a 15-point lead on the DPP. The table suggests that Tsai’s leadership did contribute to the DPP’s recovery, with the highest DPP party identification in 2010 at 26.2 per cent. However, in the pre- and post-election polls (2011 and 2012), DPP support was close to its average for Chen’s first term of about 24 per cent. Interestingly, the KMT recorded its record high identification in 2011 of 39 per cent. Therefore, the table suggests that while the DPP won back much of its lost support under Tsai, the DPP had reached a similar

ceiling to that hit during the Chen Shui-bian era of approximately 25 per cent. If the DPP wants to ever become the majority party in the Legislative Yuan, it will need to find a way to break through this ceiling.

When we examine the respective party images in surveys in early 2008 and 2012, we can see a remarkable pattern of change. The TVBS party image survey tests respondents' views on the degree to which parties value public opinion, are free from corruption, have vitality, stress reform, possess party unity and have the ability to be introspective (TVBS Poll Center 2008c, 2012b). In 2008, the KMT had clear leads on all these dimensions, but this was largely reversed four years later, with the DPP ahead on all but two dimensions, on which the parties remained more or less tied (TVBS Poll Center 2008c, 2012b); namely, being free from corruption and party unity. The degree of change is apparent in the item that asks whether the parties emphasise public opinion. On this dimension, the KMT fell from 56 per cent in January 2008 to 29 per cent in April 2012, while the DPP rose from 33 per cent to 57 per cent during the same period. Similarly, the DPP had improved its reputation on the political corruption issue, an issue that had contributed significantly to its fall from power in 2008. At the height of the Red Shirts Anti-Corruption movement in 2006, only 14 per cent of respondents viewed the DPP as being free of corruption, but this had risen to 34 per cent in 2012. Lin Chiung-chu (林瓊珠, Lin Qiongzhu) (2006) has argued that changing party images contributed to Taiwan's changed party system in the 1990s. In other words, the KMT's shift to predominantly negative images while the DPP was improving its image both contributed to their respective electoral fortunes in the period leading up to the KMT's fall from power in 2000. The trends observed in these party image surveys show that the DPP had gone some way towards repairing the damage to its reputation suffered during the second Chen term, and this was a factor in the parties' improved electoral performance in 2012. These trends also serve as a warning to the KMT for the next round of elections in 2014 and 2016.

The party identification and actual election results suggest that the 2012 election came at the wrong time for the DPP. In 2010 it had won a larger vote share in the special municipality elections than the KMT and tied with the KMT on council seats (130 each). Therefore, by the time of the presidential election in early 2012, Tsai Ing-wen

may have already passed her peak of popularity. Another potential explanation is that voters were prepared to trust the DPP with local executive and assembly office but were not yet ready to return it to national government.

## Impact of Election System and Combining the Elections

One of the key features of the 2008 election was the first use of Taiwan's new electoral system. This was the result of constitutional reforms passed in 2005 that halved the number of legislators from 225 to 113 and replaced the old predominantly multiple-member district single non-transferable vote system with what is commonly called the single-member district two-vote system (Cabestan 2008). Taiwan's new system is very similar to that adopted by Japan after 1993. In this system, voters have two votes: one for a single member district candidate and the second for their party of preference. There are now 73 single-member districts, with a further 34 seats allocated proportionally between parties receiving more than 5 per cent of the vote on the second ballot. The remaining six seats are allocated to two three-seat aboriginal constituencies.

In 2008, the new electoral system had two critical results, as visible in Table 1. Firstly, it squeezed the space for smaller third parties, so that they were no longer competitive at the district level and struggled at the party list level to break the required 5 per cent threshold needed to win seats. Thus, in 2008, a single PFP candidate was the sole third party representative elected. Secondly, the new winner-takes-all system seemed to favour the KMT, as it managed to gain almost three quarters of the seats with just over 50 per cent of the overall vote. Thus the new system produced a disproportional parliament.

In contrast, combining the two elections in 2012 appears to have contributed to a more proportional election result. The KMT's seat bonus fell to just over 10 per cent, while the DPP achieved rough parity in its party list vote (34.6 per cent) and seat (35.4 per cent) shares. A major feature of 2012 was the re-emergence of the third parties. This time, the PFP challenged the KMT in both districts and the party list. Moreover, a key motivation for Soong to stand in the presidential election was to create space for his own PFP legislative

candidates. The fact that the PFP party list vote share exceeded Soong's presidential vote and that he had three legislators elected suggests the strategy worked. Even though the TSU did not have a presidential candidate, the support of its spiritual leader Lee Teng-hui (李登輝, Li Denghui) for Tsai at the closing election evening rally appeared to have been instrumental in the party's quite extraordinary party list vote of almost 9 per cent.

These figures show that the DPP and the smaller parties have learnt some of the lessons from 2008 in terms of how to adapt to the new electoral system. A key comparative success for the DPP was that it persuaded the TSU not to nominate district-level candidates that had diluted the pro DPP or Pan Green votes four years earlier. In contrast, in 2012 the KMT faced difficulties handling its relations with its allied parties compared with 2008. In 2008 the KMT had been in effect the sole Pan Blue party. Four years later, however, in addition to Soong's presidential challenge, official KMT candidates were challenged by the PFP in ten districts, and the PFP and NP competed with the KMT for party list votes. Despite the PFP's challenge to the KMT, all the former PFP legislative candidates who had stood on the KMT ticket in 2008 chose to stay with the KMT in 2012 rather than defect back to Soong.

As mentioned above, the legislative and presidential elections were held together on the same day for the first time ever in 2012. There have been clear efforts in recent years to combine elections to a greater extent than in the past. Although the official reason given for this was to save resources, partisan motivations would have been paramount in decision makers' minds. The KMT's original motivation would have been that combining the two would enable incumbent legislators to promote Ma's presidential campaign. Tables 1 and 3 show that the DPP has generally performed far better in presidential elections than in parliamentary elections. Therefore, we can surmise the DPP was hoping that a strong presidential campaign could boost the chances of new and less well-known legislative candidates. In 2008 the legislative election had been held just two months before the presidential one in March. On that occasion, the overwhelming KMT legislative majority did give a boost to Ma's presidential campaign.

At this stage it is impossible to reach definite conclusions on which side benefitted most from combining elections, but we can

reach some tentative hypotheses on the impact. Firstly, it is possible the KMT would have benefitted more from separate elections, as it did in 2008. However, the slump in Ma's popularity after winning in January 2012, to a public satisfaction level on inauguration in May of just 20 per cent suggests that a later election might have been risky (TVBS 2012a). A second finding is that combining the elections actually had a greater impact on raising legislative turnout, which rose from 58.7 per cent in 2008 to 74.2 per cent in 2012. Another key feature of the campaign in 2012 was that the legislative campaign was almost completely submerged by the presidential one, as the former struggled to attract media attention. This naturally has implications for democratic accountability as one lesson of the post 2000 era for Taiwanese politics has been the increasing importance of the Legislative Yuan.

A long-term feature of the DPP's electoral performance has been that its parliamentary vote share has tended to lag behind its presidential vote share. This was evident when Chen came to power in 2000 and his party held less than one-third of the legislative seats. However, if we compare the parties' presidential and district vote shares of 2008 and 2012, combining the elections seems to have served to reduce the gap between presidential and parliamentary vote shares at the district level. DPP legislative candidates appear to have benefitted the most, with a rise of almost 6 per cent in vote share, while the presidential rise was only 4 per cent. This was by far the DPP's highest ever parliamentary vote share for its district candidates and the first time there has been approximate parity between its presidential and legislative vote share.

Nevertheless, in some regions local factors meant that legislative candidates gained higher vote shares than their presidential candidates in 2012. Key instances of this were Taidong (台東) and Penghu, where the DPP legislative candidates won with vote shares exceeding those of Tsai. This was the first time the party had won these legislative seats in general elections since the lifting of martial law and in 2008 the DPP had not even been able to find a candidate for Taidong. The combined elections also allowed some districts to return to normality. For instance, the KMT did manage to win back some of the seats it had lost in by-elections, such as in Taoyuan (桃園) and Xinzhu (新竹) Counties.

## Candidates and Nomination

Candidate nomination has often been a critical variable in explaining results in Taiwan (Fell 2013). In 2000, the KMT's failure to resolve its nomination dispute in the presidential election led to two KMT candidates standing, enabling the DPP's Chen to win with just 39 per cent of the vote. In 2008, the KMT was more successful at handling nomination in both presidential and legislative elections, which contributed to its strong performance. For instance, it essentially resolved its presidential nomination in 2005. Similarly, its party primaries ensured it had fewer rebel legislative candidates. In contrast, the DPP suffered from quite divisive primaries that served to undermine both its campaigns in 2008. Both parties had quite successful nomination processes in 2012. Ma was unchallenged at the presidential level and although there were more KMT legislative rebel candidates in 2012 than 2008, the problem was not too severe. Both main parties used opinion-poll-based primaries where nomination was contested for the first time at the national-level elections. This time, the DPP's primaries were concluded far more successfully and amicably than four years earlier.

The four-person competition in the DPP for the presidential nomination was largely between the party leader Tsai Ing-wen and former premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌, Su Zhenchang). The fact that Tsai won the primary, albeit by a small margin, suggests the party was trying to project an image starkly different from the past. Su, like most previous DPP presidential candidates, had begun his political career in the struggle for democracy under martial law and had extensive electoral experience at a range of executive and legislative levels. In contrast, Tsai was a Western-educated former academic who had only joined the DPP a few years before becoming chairperson in 2008. The 2012 presidential election was only Tsai's second ever campaign as a candidate. The DPP hoped this fresh image would enable the party to expand its support vote among swing voters. However, the presidential vote share suggests that other than winning back voters lost in 2008, she did not expand the party's vote share sufficiently among floating voters to unseat Ma.

Under the old legislative electoral system, a key aspect of winning was to nominate the right number of candidates in a district and to ensure an even distribution of votes amongst these candidates. The new single-member district operates quite differently, as the key to

success is to nominate a single candidate who has the district-wide strength to gain 50 per cent of the votes. Even though the DPP did significantly improve its district vote and seat share in 2012, it also made some serious nomination errors that undermined its overall campaign. One such instance was its handling of Taipei (台北) city legislative districts, where, apart from Taipei City 2, most of the DPP's candidates were extremely weak. This enabled the KMT to win easily in all these districts. In contrast, many of its more electorally experienced politicians, who had the ability to compete at the district level, were safely nominated on the party list. For instance, although Hsiao Bi-khim (蕭美琴, Xiao Meiqin) had rich experience in Taipei and even almost won in the KMT stronghold of Hualian (花蓮) in 2010, she was nominated on the party list in 2012. The KMT gained positive media attention by nominating what it called “assassins” against prominent DPP candidates. These were younger candidates with clean images, such as the 35-year-old former Government Information Minister Su Chun-bin (蘇俊賓, Su Junbin), who stood against the former DPP Tainan City Mayor Hsu Tian-tsai (許添財, Xu Tiancai).

## Campaign Methods and Communication

Traditionally, the KMT has had the key advantage of having the financial resources to outspend its rival parties in campaign spending. This was best illustrated in the 2000 presidential election when the KMT's presidential TV ads amounted to over 28,000 minutes of broadcast time, more than the combined total for the DPP and Soong (Fell 2011: 71). In the first three presidential elections the KMT had double the number of TV ads of its DPP rivals (Sullivan 2008: 905). We can get a taste of levels of campaign spending in 2008 and 2012 from Tables 5 and 6, which show the numbers of election television ads. A first lesson is that there was a significant reduction in the number of ads in 2012 of all three categories. This indicates that holding the legislative and presidential elections on the same day clearly caused a drop in the number of advertisements. When comparing parties, we can see that whereas there was rough parity in the number of TV ads in 2008, four years later the DPP reduced the number of its ads, leaving the KMT with more than double the number of ads placed by the DPP. In 2012, KMT had 67 presidential ads

compared to 30 DPP ones and the corresponding figures for party ads were 47 to 13. Here we should note that the scale of KMT production of ads was even larger on its online-only broadcast advertisements. For instance, it included a number of short films, such as the 20-minute-long *National Flag Girl* (國旗女孩, *Guoqi nǚhai*) (2011), which were available online but not broadcast on television. One estimate from the advertising analysis company Rainmaker XFM suggests that in the seven months prior to the 2012 voting day, the KMT spent 265 million TWD on election advertising, compared to 179 million TWD by the DPP (Rainmaker XFM). In other words, the KMT again outspent its rivals in political advertising.

Table 5: Television Election Advertisements in 2008

	Presidential ads	Party Centre ads	Legislative candidate ads	Total ads
KMT	68	32	30	130
DPP	49	45	41	135
PFP		0	0	0
TSU		11	1	12
NP		14		14
Independents			1	1
Other parties		15		15
Total	117	102	73	292

Note 1: In 2008, other parties included the Home Party (紅黨), Third Society Party (第三社會黨), Taiwan Farmer's Party (台灣農民黨), Taiwan Constitution Association (制憲聯盟), Non-Partisan Solidarity Union (無黨團結聯盟).

Note 2: Data starts from completion of nomination in June 2007.

Note 3: This shows the number of individual advertisements that were broadcast on television, but does not reflect the actual broadcast time of each ad.

Source: Dataset supplied by Rainmaker XFM International Corporation.

Table 6: Television Election Advertisements in 2012

	Presidential ads	Party Centre ads	Legislative candidate ads	Total ads
KMT	67	47	15	129
DPP	30	13	12	55
PFP	2	2		4
TSU		3		3
NP		2		2
Independents			17	17
Other parties			3	3
Total	99	67	47	213

Note 1: Tsai support ad was added to the presidential total.

Note 2: Other parties in 2012 were National Health System Union (健保免費連線), Taiwan Basic Law Party (中華民國台灣基本法連線).

Note 3: Data starts from completion of nomination in July 2011.

Source: Dataset supplied by Rainmaker XFM International Corporation.

Taiwan has held televised election candidate debates since the 1994 Taipei mayoral election. These have also been held for presidential elections since 2000, and in 2012 two such debates were held for the three presidential candidates and one for the vice-presidential candidates. Such debates should have placed Ma in a stronger position, as he had participated in televised debates since the 1998 Taipei mayoral election. He also had conducted a televised debate with Tsai over the proposed Economic Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China in April 2010, a debate that most pundits felt Ma had won. A TVBS (2010) survey showed viewers generally agreed, with 46 per cent of viewers believing he had performed better against 34 for Tsai. In 2008, viewers also felt Ma performed better in the two debates than Frank Hsieh (謝長廷, Xie Changting) by a margin of 42 to 28 per cent (TVBS 2008b). Tsai and her team had clearly tried to learn some of the lessons from these earlier debates, as while viewers felt Ma had narrowly edged the first debate in the 2012 campaign, they felt Tsai had won the second (TVBS 2011).

Table 7: Main Campaign Appeals in 2008 and 2012

2008	KMT	DPP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attacking DPP government performance</li> <li>▪ Ma's appeal</li> <li>▪ Economic record and pledges</li> <li>▪ Stable cross-Strait relations</li> <li>▪ Attacking DPP's corruption</li> <li>▪ Attacking Chen</li> <li>▪ Ma's performances (long stay and cycle tour)</li> <li>▪ Taiwan identity</li> <li>▪ Ethnic harmony</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Questioning KMT loyalty to Taiwan</li> <li>▪ One China Common Market</li> <li>▪ Don't let Taiwan become another Tibet</li> <li>▪ Attacking KMT's assets</li> <li>▪ Social welfare</li> <li>▪ UN referendum</li> <li>▪ Anti-Ma (corruption and green card issue)</li> <li>▪ Attacking KMT for blocking good legislation</li> </ul>
Negative or Positive	More negative in legislative campaign and largely positive in presidential campaign	Both negative and positive in both campaigns
2012	KMT	DPP
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ ROC nationalism and Taiwan identity Go Taiwan)</li> <li>▪ Achievements on China relations</li> <li>▪ Accusations of corruption against Tsai</li> <li>▪ DPP-era corruption</li> <li>▪ Ma's wife</li> <li>▪ Ethnic harmony</li> <li>▪ Clean governance</li> <li>▪ Golden 10-year period</li> <li>▪ Ma's character</li> <li>▪ Comparing KMT achievements with those of the DPP era</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Piggy banks,</li> <li>▪ Social justice and inequality</li> <li>▪ Anti-nuclear power</li> <li>▪ Vague on China</li> <li>▪ First female president</li> <li>▪ Tsai's appeal</li> <li>▪ Change</li> <li>▪ Economic failures, (unemployment, price rises)</li> <li>▪ Taiwan identity</li> </ul>
	Both but more negative than 2008	Both but more positive than 2008

Source: Dataset supplied by Rainmaker XFM.

Both major parties showed elements of continuity and change in their approach to campaign issues and appeals in 2012 compared to four years earlier. We have attempted to summarise some of these in Table 7, which shows the main appeals adopted by the parties in the two campaigns. The KMT's identity message showed considerable change from 2008. For instance, it reintroduced its dual ROC Chinese and Taiwan identity appeal in contrast to the much more Taiwan-themed campaign of 2008. For instance, the ROC flag was prominent in a large number of ads and, of course, the above-mentioned short film *National Flag Girl*. This is best represented in the *Real Taiwan Spirit Ad* (真台灣精神篇, *Zhen Taiwan jingshen pian*), where we see images of youngsters celebrating and riding bikes with ROC flags. Meanwhile we see images of Ma writing the characters "Real Taiwan" (真台灣, *Zhen Taiwan*) with a calligraphy brush and ending with the red ink stamp ROC. Ma narrates the ad, telling the audience about what he calls the "real Taiwan spirit". An ad that attempted to promote the KMT style ROC nationalism was the *National Flag Ad* (國旗篇, *Guoqi pian*), which shows people from different generations waving and wearing ROC flags (including the bra version) with an upbeat version of the national flag anthem as background music. The ad ends with the slogan "thanks to all those that have waved the national flag; compared to the DPP you are the ones that really protect the ROC's dignity". The national flag anthem is the one Taiwan uses in international sports events, including the Olympics, and is therefore designed to remind Taiwanese people of moments of national sporting pride. Even more traditional was an ad on programmes promoting Confucianist education in Taiwan and China for infants, which was a real appeal to Chinese traditional cultural identity. There were again appeals to ethnic harmony. The best example of this appeal is the *Happy Gathering Song Ad* (歡樂歌篇, *Huanle ge pian*), which uses Taiwanese, Hakka and aboriginal lyrics to sing about ethnic harmony and has images of the main ethnic groups. Ma is again shown in his traditional Chinese clothes and writing "Go Taiwan" (台灣加油, *Taiwan jiayou*) with a calligraphy brush. This song has been used repeatedly by Ma since 1998 and was the first TV ad released by the Ma Camp in the 2012 election.

Overall, the tone of the KMT campaign was more negative in 2012 than in 2008. For instance, a series of newspaper ads placed by the KMT legislative party caucus accused Tsai of personally profiting

from a biotech company investment case that she had approved while she was vice-premier under Chen (*United Daily News* 2012a). By talking of the KMT's record on cracking down on corruption, the ad asked voters to recall DPP scandals. For example, in one KMT TV ad the former Health Minister Yang Chih-liang (楊志良, Yang Zhi-liang) argued that he is concerned that the people surrounding Tsai are from the Chen era. The KMT had benefitted considerably by using this anti-corruption appeal in 2008, but four years later its impact would have been much reduced as memories of DPP scandals had faded.

As in 2008, the KMT tried to inspire hope for the future in its ads. For instance, 2012 again saw KMT ads featuring sky lanterns with people's wishes for the future. However, while in 2008 the KMT had made a range of pledges on what it would do in the future regarding China and economic goals, this time it was much more cautious on new pledges, beyond talking of a Golden Ten Years (黃金十年, *Huangjin shi nian*). In fact, three months before the election, Ma had to apologise for his failure to deliver his 2008 pledge of 6 per cent economic growth rate, per capita GDP of 30,000 USD and a 3 per cent unemployment rate (Sullivan 2013: 69). Yang Chih-liang also fronted ads carrying the slogan that "Reforms cannot stop" (改革不能停, *Gaige bu neng ting*), although it was not made clear what kind of reforms were envisaged (*United Daily News* 2012b). Instead it concentrated much more on its record. For instance, many ads compared the KMT's record on a range of issues (such as agricultural exports, dealing with corruption and attracting overseas tourists) to that of the DPP's eight years in power.

As this was a presidential election, the KMT candidate was prominent in its ads, although there were some differences in this regard compared to 2008. For instance, in many districts KMT candidates did not include Ma in their campaign literature, especially in southern districts where the DPP enjoys stronger support than the KMT. In contrast, in 2008 Ma was much more prominent in KMT legislators' candidate's literature. Another major difference was that Ma's wife Chou Mei-ching (周美青, Zhou Meiqing) received far more coverage at rallies and in TV advertising in this campaign than ever before. This may have been partly to counteract the DPP's female candidate appeal.

The degree of political communication change was much greater on the part of the DPP than the KMT. This is not entirely surprising, considering how Tsai's background is so different from earlier DPP presidential candidates. Much of the DPP campaign was centred on Tsai herself and her personality. At the outset of the campaign we see ads showing her on her 2011 European trip, with one ad shot in Berlin and another at her alma mater, the London School of Economics. On both occasions the music was Western and youth-oriented. She appealed to voters as being Taiwanese and as potentially the first female president. Overall, however, while she did use Taiwan identity appeals, the tone was much lighter than previous DPP campaigns. Her central slogan was "Taiwan Next". Like Barack Obama in the United States and Ma in 2008, change was a key theme for Tsai. For instance, in the *Last Four Years Ad* (這四年篇, *Zhe si nian pian*), voters are asked to "Give Tsai Ing-wen a chance to Change Taiwan" (給蔡英文一個改變台灣的機會, *Gei Cai Yingwen yi ge gaibian Taiwan de jihu*). Nevertheless, she used the term "next" much more often than "change" in the campaign, implying reform rather than revolutionary change. We should also note that she was generally rather vague on what kind of change she envisaged. There were some niche appeals such as a nuclear-free homeland; however, environmental issues are rarely central issues that determine voting behaviour in Taiwanese campaigns. Overall, the more moderate tone visible in the DPP's propaganda in 2012 was meant to reassure floating voters that if Tsai were elected it would not bring domestic or cross-Strait instability.

If Tsai had one major theme, it would be social justice. She addressed this in a number of ways. The terms fairness and justice were prominent in campaign literature. Voters were frequently reminded of the growing inequality of the last four years. For instance, in front of the KMT party headquarters a huge DPP poster showed the picture of an unemployed man sitting disconsolately on a park bench and the slogan "Ma Ying-jeou, it's your turn to take a non-salaried vacation" (馬英九, 換你放無薪假了, *Ma Yingjiu, huan ni fang wuxinjiu le*). In the "Last four years" ad the DPP tries to remind voters of what has gone wrong under Ma by asking questions like:

How have you been the last four years? Have you bought a house?  
 Can you stand the rises in the cost of oil, pot noodles, milk powder and tuition fees? Have you found the job you want? Has your salary risen?

We then see the image of a Ma Ying-jeou key ring (suggesting the ad is aimed at voters who opted for Ma four years earlier). It then asks “Can you take another four years like this?” It then calls on voters to: “On January 14, implement social justice” (一月十四號施行公平正義, *Yi yue shisi hao shixing gongping zhengyi*). The DPP also tried to visualise the growing disparities in society in the *Equal Society Government’s Responsibility Ad* (公平社會政府責人篇, *Gongping shehui zhengfu ze ren pian*), which had similarities to the famous British Labour Party ad of 1992 known as *Jennifer’s Ear*. In this case we see two young men about the same age at a bus stop and are told that though they are close together, what they are thinking about is far apart. One looks at a flyer for short-term loans, while the other checks the latest stock market trends on his iPad. One closes the door to his Porsche and the other gives up trying to start his battered motorbike. Another key element of the social justice appeal was its piggy-bank initiative. This involved grassroots supporters using small plastic piggy-banks to make donations to the Tsai campaign. This was designed to contrast small donations to the DPP with the KMT’s backing from big business and its massive party assets. Of course, social justice had been something the DPP had given much attention to since the early 1990s. However, the way it dealt with the issue in 2012 was quite different. In the past, the DPP had stressed resolving the issue through social welfare programmes, such as old age allowances in the 1990s and 2000 campaign. Even in 2008, the message had been that if Taiwan can recover the KMT’s party assets then the state would be able to expand welfare schemes. Thus, the major difference of Tsai’s social justice campaign was that it lacked the substance of earlier DPP campaigns.

## The China Issue

It is common for overseas journalistic reviews to simplify Taiwan’s elections as battles between unification and independence or being pro-China versus anti-China. At times the Taiwanese press carries a similar message. For instance, the day after the 2012 election, the *United Daily News* front page headline was “Ma Ying-jeou has won; the 1992 Consensus has won” (馬英九贏了 92 共識贏了, *Ma Yingjiu ying le 92 gong shi yingle*) (Qian, Lin, and Wang 2012). In other words, it framed the election as a referendum on Ma’s handling of Cross-Strait Relations over the last four years. The China issue did play a more

important role in the campaign in 2012 than 2008, though it was more complicated than the newspaper headline suggested.

Both in 2008 and as recently as 2010, DPP TV ads had warned of the dangers of KMT plans for economic integration with China. In 2008, the focus was on the threats of what it called the “One China Common Market”, as the DPP claimed this would lead to a flood of Chinese labour migration to Taiwan. Moreover, the DPP warned that the KMT would sell out Taiwan through its CCP–KMT alliance, with its ads showing images of KMT leaders shaking hands with Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) and then images of Chinese missiles. Two years later the theme switched to ads attacking the proposal for ECFA and its potential consequences. These themes were largely dropped by the DPP, which instead adopted a vague stance on China in 2012, preferring to ignore the issue in its propaganda. The anti-China or anti-unification rhetoric of previous campaigns was also missing. Tsai did appear willing to accept most of the agreements reached under the first Ma term with China, implying she would not risk the cross-strait instability associated with the DPP era. She also raised the idea of establishing a “Taiwan consensus” on how to deal with China, but was vague on the practicalities. Like Chen in 2000, Tsai was trying to convince voters that she would be a safe pair of hands regarding China. One such signal was her statement on ROC National Day 2011 that “Taiwan is the ROC, the ROC is Taiwan, and the ROC government is the government of Taiwan”. Schubert (2012: 147) suggests this was “invoking the spirit” of the 1999 Resolution on Taiwan’s Future, in which the DPP recognised the ROC and made the argument that there is no need to declare independence as Taiwan is already independent. However, cross-strait relations have changed so radically over the last decade since the resolution was originally passed. Thus, Tsai struggled to convince voters that she really had an answer to how she would handle cross-strait relations differently from Chen or build on what had been achieved under Ma.

In the 2008 campaign the KMT was relatively cautious on China policy in order to avoid the accusation that it would betray Taiwan. Thus, it focused more on attacking the DPP for corruption and poor government performance. In contrast, because the most important achievements of the first Ma term lay in its breakthroughs in cross-strait relations and Tsai was uncomfortable with this issue, the KMT tried to set the agenda on this matter. The KMT adopted a number

of strategies to address the issue. A first method was to stress the positive consequences of integration for Taiwan's farmers. A number of KMT ads explained how Taiwan had exported more fruit in three years under the KMT than in eight years under the DPP and that certain fruits have sold especially well in China, Japan and even America. One such ad visualised these exports through images of people with fruit-shaped heads being widely acclaimed abroad. Similarly, it issued an ad on 12 December 2011 praising the role of the ECFA in increasing Taiwan's economic growth rate, GDP and increased agricultural exports (including tea and fish), along with growth in consumer spending. A second approach was to convince the Taishang (Taiwanese business community) that only the KMT government could protect the interests of the Taishang through its cross-strait policies. On 27 November 2011, the KMT issued a TV ad that was designed to look like a TV news interview in which Ma praised the role that Taishang play in improving cross-strait relations and promoting Taiwan's economic growth. This was part of a concerted KMT attempt to appeal to the Taishang to come back to vote and thus ensure Ma was re-elected. A third approach was to compare the KMT's cross-strait record with that of the DPP. On 3 January 2012, a KMT ad started with images of economic prosperity in 2011, and then pressed the rewind button with some poor economic figures from the DPP era. It urged voters not to let everything go back to the start point (別讓一切退回原點, *bie rang yiqie tuihui yuandian*). It then showed positive economic statistics, including the 10.72 per cent growth rate in 2010 and the 65 per cent growth in tourists coming to Taiwan. The ad does not specify Chinese tourists and tourist numbers have increased from a range of markets. However, any viewer who has recently been through a Taiwanese airport, one of Taiwan's tourist hotspots or large hotels, would be aware that the fastest growing source of new tourists is from China. Another of the comparative-style ads accused the previous DPP government of locking up the nation's economy, which was visualised in the form of a Gulliver's Travels-type giant tied down by hundreds of tiny ropes. Then under the KMT these ropes are broken by policies such as ECFA and the visa-free expansion. Finally, Ma and his running mate Wu Den-yih (吳敦義, Wu Dunyi) call on the Taiwanese giants that created the Taiwan miracle to stand up again over the next golden ten years. This ad again reflects the KMT message used in both 2008 and 2012 that,

under their management, Taiwan can have international space, harmonious cross-Strait relations and strong economic growth.

In 2012 the KMT tended to leave direct attacks against DPP presidential candidate Tsai's cross-Strait policies to newspaper ads. For instance, an ad carrying the slogan "Supporting Ma" (挺馬, *ting Ma*) was sponsored by the Mainland Taishang Ma Wu Campaign Support Association (大陸台商馬吳競選後援總會, *Dalu Taishang Ma Wu jingxuan houyuan zonghui*) (*China Times* 2011). It first outlined the benefits for Taiwan under Ma's continued presidency. These included

- how Taiwan benefits from the stable cross-Strait relations under the 1992 consensus and Ma's three noes (no unification, no independence, no use of force);
- how commercial opportunities for Taiwanese business have rapidly expanded under Ma, touting the benefits of cross-Strait agreements such as ECFA and proposed investor protection agreement for Taiwanese business;
- Taiwan's expanded international relations under Ma; and
- how cross-Strait cooperation will be the best way for Taiwan to avoid being affected by the European debt crisis.

The ad then goes on to list what its sponsors believe would happen if Tsai were to win. Firstly, it argued that without the 1992 consensus and by supporting one country on each side (一邊一國, *yi bian yi guo*), Mainland China would not have contacts with a DPP government. This would reduce Chinese tourist groups and Taiwanese exports to China, which would have a damaging impact on Taiwan's economy. The ad also claimed that this would prevent further SEF-ARATS talks and create obstacles for the implementation of the 16 existing cross-Strait agreements. This would severely damage the interests of Taiwanese people. It also argued that a Tsai win would damage Taiwan's international relations. Lastly, the ad stated that a Tsai government with limited government experience and lacking support in the huge Chinese market would lead Taiwan into recession, reduced household income, stock market crash and increased unemployment. This was just one of a large number of supposedly Taishang sponsored ads in support of Ma and his contribution to better cross-Strait relations and economic benefits.

Considering the vagueness of the DPP's stance on China in 2012, it is surprising how little the KMT attacked Tsai's cross-Strait

policies in its ads. In one KMT television ad, the former Health Minister Yang Chih-liang commented, “I really have not heard or seen what are her (Tsai) actual policies are”. While the analysis of the ads seems to confirm this, the same could also be said about Ma’s plans for his second term regarding China. Unlike in 2008, where the KMT offered a clear vision on what it hoped to do on China, in 2012 it preferred to concentrate on contrasting its record in power to the alleged failures of the DPP era. One of the few occasions Ma offered anything new on China policy was when he raised the possibility of a peace agreement with China in his Golden Ten-Year plan in October 2011. However, when public opinion reacted badly to the idea, he quickly reassured voters that this would need to be approved by a referendum (Schubert 2012: 148). Nevertheless, when the post-election surveys asked why voters had opted for Ma, the most popular reason chosen was because of his cross-Strait policy (TVBS Poll Center 2012c).

Closely related to the role of the China issue was that of big business on the 2012 campaign. Traditionally, big business has tended to be more supportive of the KMT than the DPP. However, there have been occasions when major entrepreneurs have come out in support of the DPP, such as in the 2000 presidential campaign entrepreneurs Hsu Wen-long (許文龍, Xu Wenlong) from Chimei Group and Chang Yung-fa (張榮發, Zhang Rongfa) from Evergreen backed Chen. In 2012, there appeared to be a clearer preference of big business for the KMT. In the final week of the campaign, over a hundred prominent local entrepreneurs came out in support of Ma. This was quite damaging to Tsai’s campaign, as some of those entrepreneurs were usually considered as pro-DPP supporters, such as Chang Yung-fa, Liao Chin-hsiang (廖錦祥, Liao Jinxiang) from Chimei and Huang Mao-hsiung (黃茂雄, Huang Maoxiong) from TECO (*Taipei Times* 2012). Without naming any candidate of preference, most of them publicly stated their support of the 1992 Consensus and, therefore, stable cross-Strait relations – an implicit way of supporting Ma.

## Looking ahead to 2016

Looking ahead, should we expect the national elections in 2016 to resemble any of the earlier campaigns? The local elections in November 2014 will be a barometer of the mood of the nation. However,

despite outpolling the KMT in 2010 local elections, the DPP failed to win in 2012. The overall political situation looks more similar to the half-way point in the second DPP term. In both cases, the incumbent president has/had low public satisfaction rates and faced a very hostile social movement(s). In 2006, this was the anti-corruption Red Shirts and today Ma faces a very hostile civil society. However, unlike in 2006 when the KMT was preparing to implement its China policies once it returned to power, today the opposition DPP party does not yet look like government in waiting. As in 2012, it appears likely that cross-strait relations will again be the dominant issue, although the Sunflower movement and the controversial Cross-Strait Services Agreement suggests it may no longer be such a positive issue for the KMT. A final possibility that cannot be ruled out is that there will be a divided Pan Blue set of candidates, as this has occurred in three out of five previous presidential campaigns.

## Conclusions

In this paper we focused on comparing the 2012 elections with earlier national campaigns. The DPP attempted to regain power in 2012 by learning some of the lessons from its disastrous defeats of 2008. However, its recovery was not quite enough to convince voters it was ready to return to power. The KMT opted to take a very different approach to its winning formula from 2008. Ma and the KMT were able to campaign quite effectively on their record from the first term, particularly on the revolution in Taiwan's external relations. Despite the attention to external issues in the media coverage of this campaign, we suggest that domestic factors were as important in determining the outcome. The election has created a much more balanced party system and greater checks on ruling party power. Thus, unlike in 2008, today the KMT does not have a sufficient mandate for the kind of radical reforms seen in Ma's first term.

Both leading parties will need to learn key lessons from the 2012 campaign if they are to win the next round of national elections in 2016. A crucial challenge for the DPP will be to develop a convincing China policy, as this issue needs to be addressed for national-level elections. This will require the party to first reach an internal consensus on China and may require sacrificing of some of the party's core values and possibly risk party defections. The KMT will also face a

similar challenge when devising its vision for Taiwan's future in the post-Ma era. Both parties will face difficulties regarding how to resolve the nomination for 2016, and this struggle has already begun. Since the late 1990s, Ma has generally been the most popular KMT politician and the party became increasingly dependent on his appeal to win elections after 2000. A smooth nomination process to select Ma's successor will be critical for the KMT's re-election chances. The DPP faces a similar challenge and it is quite possible that Tsai will emerge as the presidential candidate again. However, she will need to find a way to broaden her and the DPP's appeal beyond its core support bases. Lastly, if the DPP wishes to become the ruling party, it will need to place greater emphasis on winning legislative seats. For too long, the party has prioritised presidential elections. However, a lesson from the Chen era is that without a legislative majority, a DPP president would again be severely constrained.

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