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**Taiwan's Electoral and Party Politics:  
Towards a One Party Dominant or Competitive Multi-Party System?**

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In early 2008, Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT) party returned to power on the back of landslide national level election victories. It won almost 60 percent of the presidential vote and almost three quarters of the Legislative Yuan seats. These were unprecedented election results in Taiwan's electoral history, giving the KMT the kind of political dominance that it had last enjoyed in the authoritarian era. Although the scale of these KMT victories suggested that 2008 represented the start of a new era, I challenged that contention in my Xiamen paper two years ago.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I argued that the turning point or potential "critical election" had been the 2005 Local Executive Elections. In terms of party image, party vote share, party system fragmentation, and party identification, the trends set in 2005 were maintained through to the DPP's fall from power in 2008. In other words, while 2005 was the potential critical election, the two national level elections in 2008 should be categorized as maintaining elections.

In this study, I return to some of the questions of party and electoral politics discussed at Xiamen. In particular, I am interested to see the degree that the KMT's political dominance has been maintained since it became the ruling party in 2008. Are we seeing a continuation of the drift towards a one party dominant system that had begun in 2005 or will there be a return to competitive multi-party politics? These are more than just questions of political science typology. The answers can be used to judge whether Taiwan is moving towards a Singapore style semi-democracy or will be able to retain its status as one of the most consolidated Third Wave democracies. One of the key ways of classifying a consolidated democracy is its ability to survive changes in ruling parties. Thus can we envisage the KMT once again losing national power through forthcoming elections? The way that I will tackle these questions is to examine the record of the late 2009 local executive and early 2010 national parliamentary by-elections and to look ahead to the critical municipal elections of November 2010.

## Local executive elections of December 2009

Unlike national level elections, Taiwan has held the county and city level local executive elections every four years since the 1950s.<sup>2</sup> In the previous four city and county level local executive contests a total of 23 seats had been up for election each time. However, in 2009 as a result of administrative district upgrading and mergers only 17 districts held local executive contests. The districts that were merged and upgraded were Tainan city and county, Kaohsiung city and county

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1 The significantly revised version is now forthcoming for journal publication, "Critical Elections in Taiwan: Locating the start of a new political era," *Asian Survey* (forthcoming).

2 Taiwan only began to hold supplementary national level elections in 1969, while full national parliamentary elections had to wait until 1991 and 1992.

and Taichung city and county, while Taipei county was just upgraded to become known as Sinbei city. This meant that the 2009 elections only covered about 40 percent of the total population. Nevertheless, they represented the first island-wide electoral test after the KMT came to power or to use Taiwanese terminology it was Ma Ying-jeou's first "mid-term examination."

## The campaign

The 2008 elections had left the KMT with an overwhelming political domination at all levels of government. The new regime had moved quickly to take advantage of its position to transform cross-Strait relations in the form of a series of significant economic agreements with the People's Republic of China. Domestically, the KMT has been far more cautious, as apart from the administrative district reforms there have been no particularly eye catching pieces of legislation in Ma's first two years in office.

The KMT faced quite a different DPP from 2008 as now former president Chen was in detention on political corruption charges and the DPP was now led by Tsai Ing-wen, a former academic and Mainland Affairs Council Chairwoman. The KMT had come to power in landslide victories and generated high hopes of a new style of politics; however, its popularity fell quite rapidly in the first year. One factor was economic as Taiwan was hit by the global financial crisis, with negative economic growth in 2009 and record high levels of unemployment. Equally serious was the increasing reputation of poor government performance. This was highlighted in its poor handling of the Morakot Typhoon disaster. Ultimately this perception of poor government performance led to the replacement of Ma's first cabinet led by Liu Zhaoxuan with one led by Wu Tun-yi in late 2009. Ma's own popularity also plummeted. His public satisfaction and dissatisfaction rates one month after coming to office were 41 and 39 percent, but by August 2009 were 16 and 65 percent. These were the kind of levels that Chen had for the latter part of his second term.

The political communication themes in 2009 showed both continuity and change from earlier campaigns. As in 2005 the KMT reminded voters of the DPP's record of political corruption. Some of its ads were reminiscent of the 1990s in stressing its ability to deliver economic growth and modernization. In fact one KMT televised ad actually contained material directly recycled from 2008 on this theme. As in many previous campaigns the KMT also tried to appeal to multiple identities. In other words, that it employed Republic of China such as the national anthem and Taiwan identity symbols such as Yushan. The major differences in KMT propaganda were that it could no longer focus attacks on Chen Shui-bian and also that unlike 2005-8, Ma was rarely seen in the party's advertising. In contrast there was more change in the DPP's campaign themes. It

had ads opposing the proposed Economic Framework Agreement with China and attacking the KMT over its handling of beef imports from the US. This was an appeal that the DPP had taken over from the TSU, that has now largely ceased to be an electoral vehicle. Another key theme was the renewal of the DPP and on its Chairwoman's image in this recovery. The one noteworthy theme of continuity was its appeal to the memory of former Yilan magistrate Chen Ting-nan, who had stood in 2005 and died in 2006.

Unlike 2005 the campaign in 2009 was focused on key targeted districts rather than the national campaign. This meant that the traditional campaign or what Shelley Rigger calls the private face of the campaign was more important than the modern campaign.<sup>3</sup> We can see this from the relatively low numbers of television advertisements. There were only 18 DPP TV ads and 14 KMT ads. Of these Party Centre ads made up only 7 for the DPP and 4 for the KMT. Instead the parties targeted their ads on the following constituencies: Targeted Seats for the DPP: Yilan (3), Chiayi County (2), Pingdong (2), Keelung (2), Targeted Seats for the KMT were Yilan (5), Hsinchu County (2), Changhua (2). There was also a similar pattern in the realm of party leader visits, with clear disparities in the number of visits. In short, the seats that the main parties were targeting were as follows. The KMT targeted Yilan, Hsinchu County, Hualien, and Chiayi County, while for the DPP it was Yilan, Chiayi County, Taoyuan, Hsinchu County and Nantou.<sup>4</sup> Out of all these districts the one seen as most competitive was Yilan.

## The results

The first data examined is shown in Table 1, which puts the overall results of 2009 in time series comparison. In terms of seat share, it does appear that the one party dominant argument is strongly supported, with the KMT actually increasing its overall seat share to 70.6 percent, while the DPP's seat share has actually fallen. In total out of the 17 contested seats the KMT won 12, the DPP 4 and a KMT rebel one. As is so often the case in single member district elections, the results are highly disproportional, with the KMT receiving a record vote-seat bonus and the DPP suffering its worst ever vote-seat deficit. At this stage, it looks to have been another KMT victory, reinforcing the party's existing dominance. However, within Taiwan this local executive election was perceived as being a setback for the KMT and a sign of DPP recovery.

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3 Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan*, London: Routledge, 1998, p. 41.

4 For details on party leader endorsement visits see Peng Huai-en, Norman Peng and Chen Hui-ling "The Coattail Effect and the Permanent Political Party Campaign - Empirical Research from Taiwan," paper presented at the Political Studies Association annual conference 2010.

The first sign to show that the election picture is more complicated than the seat share suggested is in the vote share. We do have to take into account the fact that fewer seats were contested in 2009 compared to 2005. However, the vote shares show a small rise in DPP support and small decline in KMT support, both of 3 percent. The DPP has equalled its highest local executive vote share of 2001, while the KMT is back to the kind of levels it was getting in the early 1990s.

In terms of our question on the state of the party system, these party vote shares suggest two verdicts. Firstly, that the voter structure is that of a two party competitive system, as the two main parties share an almost equal share of the votes. Secondly, that the demise of third parties seen first in 2005 has been maintained, as the space for both challenger parties and non aligned independents has been squeezed.

*Table 1: Local Executive (Vote Share and Seat)*

	1993	1997	2001	2005	2009
KMT	47.3 (61.9)	42.1 (34.8)	35.2 (39.1)	51 (60.9)	47.9 (70.6)
DPP	41.2 (28.6)	43.3 (52.2)	45.3 (39.1)	42 (26.1)	45.3 (23.5)
NP	3.1 (0)	1.4 (0)	9.9 (4.3)	0.2 (4.3)	
PFP			2.4 (8.7)	1.1 (4.3)	
TSU				1.1 (0)	

Note 1: This table shows the main parties' vote and seat shares in local executive elections. The party seat shares are shown in parenthesis.

Note 2: While in 2005 23 local executives were elected, in 2009 due to administrative district changes only 17 local executive posts were elected.

*Table 2: 2009 Local Election Results by District, Vote Swing and Prediction*

District and Incumbency	KMT Vote Share	DPP Vote Share	Other/ Rebel	2005-2009 Vote Swing	Fell Prediction
Keelung (KMT INC)	<b>55.1</b>	42.1	2.8	KMT +1 DPP+40	Correct
Yilan (KMT INC)	45.7	<b>54.3</b>		<b>KMT-5.6 DPP+6.5</b>	<b>Wrong</b>
Taoyuan (KMT INC P)	<b>52.2</b>	45.7	Rebel: 2.1	<b>KMT-8.6 DPP+7.4</b>	Correct
Hsinchu City (KMT INC P)	<b>55.6</b>	41.3		<b>KMT-13.6 DPP+10.6</b>	Correct
Hsinchu County (KMT INC P)	<b>38.5</b>	30.6	Rebel: 30.2	<b>KMT-28.6 DPP-2.4</b>	Correct

Miaoli (KMT INC)	<b>63.8</b>	33.6	2.6	<b>KMT+15.9 DPP+3.7</b>	Correct
Changhua (KMT INC)	<b>54.9</b>	43.6	1.5	KMT-0.6 DPP+3.1	Correct
Nantou (KMT INC)	<b>50.8</b>	39.8	Rebel: 8.2	<b>KMT+5.5 DPP+9.4</b>	Correct
Yunlin (DPP INC)	34.6	<b>65.4</b>		<b>KMT-9.8 DPP+12</b>	Correct
Chiayi County (DPP INC P)	40.7	<b>55.9</b>		KMT+3.3 DPP-6.5	Correct
Chiayi city (KMT INC)	<b>52.2</b>	45.7	Rebel: 2.1	KMT-2.4 DPP+0.3	Correct
Hualien (KMT INC P)	25.4	No C	<b>Rebel: 56.4</b> Rebel: 18.2	<b>KMT-17.21</b>	Wrong
Taidong (KMT INC P)	<b>52.5</b>	47.5		Both did not contest 2005	Correct
Pingtung (DPP INC)	40.7	<b>59.3</b>		KMT-1.1 DPP+13.1	Correct
Jinmen (KMT INC P)	<b>37.3</b>	No C	Rebel: 30.	Both did not contest 2005	Correct
Penghu (KMT INC)	<b>49.4</b>	48.1	2.6	KMT-1.3 DPP -0.1	Correct
Lianjiang (KMT INC P)	<b>KMT1:</b> <b>57.2 KMT2:</b> 41.4	No C	1.4	Both did not contest 2005	Correct

Note 1: Column 1 shows the district and which was the incumbent party. DPP INC refers to where a DPP incumbent stood for re-election, KMT INC refers to where a KMT incumbent stood for re-election, DPP INC P refers to where the DPP was the Incumbent party but with a new candidate, KMT INC P refers to where the KMT was the Incumbent party but with a new candidate.

Note 2: The Fell prediction column refers to my predictions in the 2009 conference see Dafydd Fell, Taiwan's 2009 Local Executive Elections: Significance and Prospects, available at: [www.swp-berlin.org/en/projekte/projekt.php?id+9484](http://www.swp-berlin.org/en/projekte/projekt.php?id+9484)

Next I look at the results in more detail in Table 2. It is interesting to look back at my predictions from our previous conference in May 2009. Out of the 17 districts 15 were correctly predicted and the two I predicted incorrectly were Hualien and Yilan. In the case of Hualien, the DPP finally did not even nominate a candidate and chose to back a KMT rebel, while the election was won by another KMT rebel that had been disqualified from the KMT's nomination primary. Yilan was the

most surprising of the results, as a relatively unknown DPP politician was able to unseat a KMT incumbent. Since both parties framed Yilan as the most important of the 17 districts, the DPP's success in regaining this seat is a major factor in the way the 2009 election is perceived in Taiwan as being a KMT setback.

In elections globally incumbents have a clear advantage in single member districts. Therefore I have tried testing this by dividing these 17 districts into four categories: KMT Incumbent seeking re-election (KMT INC), KMT new candidate after its incumbent completed term (KMT INC P), DPP Incumbent seeking re-election (DPP INC), DPP new candidate after its incumbent completed their term (DPP INC P). Out of the 17 districts the KMT incumbent was seeking re-election in seven districts and the KMT was also the incumbent party in a further 7 districts. In contrast there were only 2 districts with DPP incumbents seeking re-election and one where the DPP was the incumbent party. To a large extent then it is clear that the majority of seats contested were KMT safe seats or seats where it had a clear advantage. The importance of incumbency is all the more significant when we look at the correlation with actual election results. In all cases except Hualien and Yilan the incumbent party won re-election.

When we look at the results in further detail we see an interesting trend that I did not predict last year. That was how close many of these races would be in what appeared to be KMT safe seats. For example, the races in Penghu, Taoyuan, Chiayi city, and Taidong were all far closer than I expected or than opinion polls predicted. I have also included the 2005-2009 vote swings for the main parties. There are some quite remarkable swings that require some explanation. Generally KMT incumbents either held their original vote share or increased their vote share. For instance, the best performing KMT incumbent was in Miaoli where the KMT vote share increased by almost 16 percent. In contrast, in a number of other districts such as Chiayi city or Jilong, though there was a slight decline or no change in KMT vote share, but the DPP's increase was not sufficient to overturn the KMT incumbent. The exception to this pattern was of course Yilan, where for once the swing did unseat the KMT. Where the DPP was the incumbent party it increased its vote share by double digits. Where the KMT was the incumbent party but with a new candidate there were even more remarkable swings away from the KMT to the DPP, for instance in Taoyuan, Taidong, and Hsinchu City. However, in these cases again the swing was not quite enough to bring the DPP to power. Again the exception was in Hualien where the KMT badly mishandled its nomination process and as a result a KMT rebel won election.

Next I look briefly at the recent national level parliamentary by-elections from January and February 2010.

*Table 3: National Parliamentary By-elections*

	KMT	DPP	Rebel/Independent	Swing compared to 2008
Taoyuan 2 KMT INC P	40	<b>58.1</b>	DPP R: 1.9	KMT: -14.6 DPP: +13.2
Taichung County 3 KMT INC P	45	<b>55</b>		KMT: -10 DPP: +10
Taidong KMT INC P	45.3	<b>49.5</b>	5.3	KMT: -15.8
Taoyuan 3 KMT INC P	44.4	<b>47.3</b>	KMT rebels X 2: 8.4	KMT: -18.8 DPP: +11
Hsinchu County	44	<b>56</b>		KMT: -22.52
Chiayi County 2 DPP INC P	32.1	<b>67.9</b>		KMT: -10 DPP: +10.9
Hualien KMT INC P	<b>48.3</b>	40.8	KMT Rebel: 10.9	KMT: -18.1 DPP: +11.92

Out of the seven by-elections the DPP won six. Naturally the scale of the KMT's majority in 2008 meant that these results have not changed the parliamentary balance of power. Nevertheless there are some noteworthy results that do have relevance to my original research questions. The first noteworthy dimension is that the DPP had won in four KMT safe seats where the KMT had previously been the incumbent. The degree that these were shock results is apparent from the size of the swings, with double digit swings from the KMT in all seven districts. Moreover, in Hsinchu and Taidong the DPP had previously been so weak the party had not bothered nominating a candidate in 2008. This time, the DPP had won in two of the safest KMT districts on the Taiwan mainland. In 2008 the DPP had almost been wiped out in parliamentary districts in northern, central and eastern Taiwan, but in these by-elections, the DPP had won important symbolic victories. If these kinds of trends had been repeated on a national scale the DPP would have won its first ever parliamentary majority.

These legislative results do suggest that we now have a competitive two party political system, in which once again the DPP is able to compete beyond its southern strongholds.

### Explaining the results and their implications

The next question is how can we best explain these local executive and national parliamentary by-election results? Below I will assess a number of potential variables.

A first way is to view these elections as a means for voters to express their dissatisfaction both with Ma and his government. If we look at Ma's public satisfaction rates this is quite persuasive, especially as Ma spent so much time in the local executive campaign stumping for candidates. Thus he made the election into a vote of confidence in his government. In contrast to 2005 where Ma was central in the KMT's advertising, Ma was largely absent in the party's TV ads, suggesting he was now viewed as a vote loser. Ma was far less active in stumping for KMT candidates for the subsequent legislative by-elections, suggesting the KMT feared an anti-Ma backlash. Moreover, the government's handling of the Typhoon and the US beef import question all appear to have reinforced its image of poor government performance.

Ma's presidential election campaign raised quite unrealistic expectations of change that almost guaranteed that voters would be disappointed. He naturally was unlucky with regards to coming to power just before the global financial crash. However, Ma's optimistic presidential campaign goals of economic growth, unemployment reduction and per capita income, all have proved unachievable so far. Therefore it is quite likely that Ma suffered from a degree of economic voting.

An important lesson from 2009 is that the appeals that won the KMT such success in 2005 and 2008 have gone rusty. For instance, the combination of attacking Chen for political corruption, poor government performance and economic mismanagement had all helped the KMT to win swing voters. However, with Chen in jail, a new look DPP and memories of the DPP administration fading, the KMT's old appeals were either not available or ceased to work.

Should the DPP chairwoman Tsai Ing-wen take the credit for the DPP's improved results? Clearly she has helped to give the party a new image and allowed it to keep distance from Chen Shui-bian and the reputation for political corruption. Tsai's most important party reform was to centralize nomination powers, and to a large extent this was quite successful, as the party avoided rebel candidates. Nevertheless, we should not give Tsai too much credit, as it was more that the KMT lost than the DPP won. The DPP does not yet have a clear set of appeals that can reach out to base and swing voters in the same way that it did have for the mid to late 1990s. It has also been highly cautious on its policy positions, particularly related to China. The DPP's talk of a new Ten Year Policy Programme is a positive sign, but we are still waiting to see the content and details.

Although some observers have blamed Ma's pro China policies for the election defeat I have not yet seen much convincing empirical evidence to support this argument yet. If we look at public opinion on many of the developments on cross-Strait relations in Ma's first year, they have been cautiously favourable. Measures such as direct flights and more Chinese tourists are quite consensual and have clear economic benefits. However, the current debates over ECFA reveal that public opinion is still divided and cautious about Taiwan's economic and political

relationship with China. During 2009 the DPP did attack ECFA in its election propaganda, trying to tap into widespread public concerns. The KMT has appeared defensive on the issue. One very common complaint I have heard regarding Ma's China policies has been that it ignores opposing opinions on China and is unwilling to seek consensus. Recently, it appears to have been making some grudging compromises, such as sometimes not ruling out a referendum on ECFA and agreeing to hold the Ma-Tsai ECFA televised debate. At least so far the KMT's China policies have not paid off at the ballot box.

Likewise we should not see these results as a sign of rising support for Taiwan nationalism. Public opinion appears to remain quite stable despite the change in ruling parties. Taiwan's voters remain quite conservative on issues related to national identity and will normally reject candidates on either side of Taiwan's political divide that favour extremist positions. Instead there is what Gunter Schubert calls an overarching national identity consensus within Taiwan that it is already independent. It was Ma's acceptance of this reality that enabled him to get elected in 2008. His critics within Taiwan regularly complain that he has distanced himself from that position since coming to power. It will be interesting to see how Ma deals with this national identity issue as he seeks re-election in 2012.

Overall the political environment was favourable for the DPP, with an unpopular KMT in power. However, rather than looking for a general variable that explains all these elections we need to look at local factors that often apply to a group of districts.

Firstly, there were clearly a group of legislative by-elections whereby the KMT was being punished as these had been districts which had had the 2008 winners' results cancelled due to vote buying convictions. This applies to the Taoyuan 2, and Taichung 3, in which the victims of KMT vote buying in 2008 were elected in 2010.

Secondly, there were a group of districts where incumbents or former incumbents were rewarded for perceived good performance. For instance, the vote shares for the DPP incumbents in Pingdong, Yunlin, and KMT incumbents in Miaoli and Nantou all had strong positive swings. In contrast poor performance was punished when the former KMT local executive for Taidong stood in the legislative by-election and of course the defeat of the KMT in Yilan.

In a number of districts though DPP candidates ran strong campaigns, they did not quite overturn KMT victories as they were nominated too late to develop the necessary support networks and local alliances. This applies to districts such as Taoyuan and the by-election in Hualien, where the DPP candidates did surprisingly well.

In a number of districts the KMT suffered setbacks or almost lost as a result of failures in its nomination system or where it was unable to resolve factional differences. For instance, in Hualien, Pingtung, Yunlin and Taoyuan 3 the party

centre attempted to impose its preferred candidates on local factions. The results were rebel candidates and a divided party, making DPP victory far more likely. It is also likely that factional divisions left over from the KMT's local executive nomination disputes in Hsinchu County contributed to its surprising defeat in such a safe seat in the legislative by-election.

A final argument that is worth considering is the impact of turnout. Back in 2008 I was often told by DPP politicians and activists that they were struggling to get their core voters out. This time in 2009-10 I have heard the reverse argument, that while the DPP base has come out in force, Pan Blue voters are staying at home, and so handing the election to the DPP on a plate.<sup>5</sup>

### Looking ahead to the November 2010 municipal elections

The elections in November 2010 for the five new municipal districts will cover about 60 percent of Taiwan's population and thus represent an even greater public opinion test of Ma's government. Whoever wins three out of five will go into the 2012 presidential campaign with a huge advantage. Now all ten major parties candidates have been officially nominated. It looks highly unlikely at this stage that there will be any significant rebel candidates or third party participation on either side, so we can expect one on one contest between the KMT and DPP. Currently opinion polls suggest that the DPP will win both Tainan and Kaohsiung. In both these cases KMT big shots chose not to contest nomination, while for the DPP nomination was highly competitive with incumbents and legislators standing in the public opinion poll primaries. In Kaohsiung, the current DPP city mayor Chen Chu stands in a strong position to defeat city veteran KMT legislator Huang Zhao-shun. While after defeating both the incumbents of Tainan county and city in the DPP primary, legislator Lai Qing-de also is way ahead of the KMT's former legislator Guo Tian-cai in the polls. In both these races the only danger that the DPP faces is whether or not the primary losers will try to undermine the winners. Since DPP incumbents lost in both Tainan and Kaohsiung, sabotaging remains a possibility, but should not be enough to change the outcome. Taichung is also looking quite clear cut as the current incumbent Jason Hu is well ahead of the DPP challenger Secretary General Su Jia-quan.

A year ago it looked like the DPP would retake Taipei county, as the KMT incumbent Chou Hsi-wei was viewed as having poor performance and unlikely to beat Su Zhen-chang if he once again stood in Taipei county. A year later the picture is quite different. The KMT persuaded Chou to stand down and instead has nominated the vice premier and former Taoyuan local executive Zhu Li-lun. Zhu

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<sup>5</sup> This point was made to me when I showed a former KMT party campaign manager the first draft of this paper.

is widely viewed as a potential successor to Ma in 2016. However, the DPP position has also radically changed as Su decided not to stand in Sinbei city (old Taipei county) but throw his hat into the ring for Taipei City. Originally the DPP struggled to find a replacement for Su Zhen-chang in Sinbei city. Originally the open candidate for the DPP in Sinbei City was former premier and Yilan executive You Xi-kun, but he lagged Zhu in the polls. Eventually Tsai Ing-wen chose to stand for this election after she easily won re-election as party chairwomen. Currently, polls show Sinbei as neck and neck.

A year ago Hau Longbin looked a good bet for Taipei city, not because of especially good performance but because the voter structure in Taipei makes a DPP victory unlikely unless there is a severe Pan Blue split (as in 1994). Since Chen Shui-bian lost in 1998 the DPP has actually struggled to find a strong candidate willing to stand, leading to rather poor results in 2002 and 2006. However, Su Zhen-chang's decision to contest Taipei city when combined with Hau's perceived poor government performance makes this now look quite a close race. Most polls show Hau slightly ahead, but the election will depend on who is best able to convince the swing voters and to mobilize their core supporters.

Interestingly, in both Taipei contests the DPP challengers appear more popular among non-partisans. The turnout could again be important, as if the KMT is not able to mobilize its faithful, then a surprise is possible. Some see Su as standing in Taipei as a stepping stone for the 2012 presidential bid. In other words, if as was expected he had won in Sinbei city, he would have not been able to contest the presidency. But by losing narrowly in Taipei city, he would be in a strong position to contest the presidency, having strong election bases in both north and southern Taiwan.

Su's bid for Taipei city looks good strategy from a personal point of view but could well be damaging for his party. While before the DPP looked likely to gain three out of five, now polls suggest that the KMT will win three out of five. Nevertheless, if the DPP runs a strong campaign in either of the Taipeis it could change the equation. Both do look too close to call.

## Party identification and party image change

The last set of data I would like to discuss is on party image and party identification. In my 2008 paper I argued that the critical moment in the change in party identification came in 2005, with a record level rise in KMT identification and fall in DPP support. Table 4 suggests that there has been continued stability in both parties' support levels since 2005, even after the change in ruling parties. It is interesting to see that this table suggests that Tsai's impact has been less than expected, while Ma's recent unpopularity has not especially eroded KMT identification. The only slight shifts seem to be an increase in voters not aligned

with a major party and the virtual disappearance of the third parties. The data suggests a one large and one medium sized party support structure. Also note the large numbers of potential swing voters turned off by both main parties.

*Table 4: Party Identification for Taiwan's Main Parties 2000-2008 (December figures)*

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
KMT	14.5	14.1	18.9	21.4	21.9	33.2	34.7	35	33.3	32.9
DPP	26.6	24	24.5	25.1	26.3	20.6	19.3	19.8	21.7	19.6
NP	1									
PFP	17.5	15	13.4	11.2	7.1	2.9	2.1	1.2	1.3	1.3
TSU		1.5	1.7	2.1	2.7	2.9	2.6	1.2	1.3	1.0
DK	40.2	44.2	40.4	39.3	41.5	39.8	40.6	42.2	41.1	44.5

When looking for the roots of Taiwan's critical shift in party support in 2005 I argued that a key variable was how the KMT gained the clean governance reputation and the DPP corruption scandals tarnished its image. This translated into party image data whereby in late 2005 the DPP had a more corrupt party image than the KMT for the first time. Recent TVBS survey data suggest that for the first time since 2005 the KMT has lost its advantage on clean government.<sup>6</sup> In January 2010 31 percent of voters saw the DPP as free of corruption compared to 26 percent for the KMT. Moreover on the eight criteria of party image in the survey the DPP gets higher scores than the KMT on seven. These were: (1) stresses public opinion, (2) clean governance, (3) has vitality, (4) stress on reform, (5) unity, (6) ability to examine yourself, (7) satisfaction with legislators' performance. Only on (8) trustworthiness, did the two parties receive equal scores. In the past Lin Chiung-chu's work has suggested that the shift from KMT positive to negative party images and vice versa for the DPP in the 1990s-2000 period contributed to their changing balance of power. This recent party image data should be a warning for the KMT and suggests once again that one party domination is no longer on the cards for the next election cycle.

## Conclusion

The legacy of 2005 and 2008's elections left Taiwan looking like a one party dominant political system. The local executive seat shares in 2009 have not radically changed the pattern set in 2005 of KMT dominance and the legislative by-elections though encouraging for the DPP, still leave the KMT with a huge

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<sup>6</sup> TVBS Party Image Survey January 2010.

majority in parliament. However, the significant swings towards the DPP in both types of elections and DPP victories in formerly safe KMT districts suggest that we are back to a competitive two party system. Despite the systematic advantages that the KMT enjoys in the parliamentary electoral system the DPP is likely to at least return to its status as a medium sized party in 2012. While Ma would still be favourite for 2012, it should be much closer than 2008.

Lastly the question of whether the DPP is ready to govern Taiwan again in 2012. Despite the boost that it has been given by Ma's perceived poor performance and these elections, my conclusion is that the DPP does not yet look ready for government. From my own observation it still lacks certain qualities. Firstly, it needs to develop a set of appeals to attract middle class voters that are not solely motivated by identity questions. Many of those voters in the don't know/non-partisan category in Table 4 are there to be won. In the 1990s it was successful at attracting the youth vote, but by 2008 it had lost its advantage with that age group. Thus far we have not yet seen a new and distinctive set of policy or even symbolic appeals from the DPP under Tsai. Just relying on the KMT's failures is unlikely to bring the DPP back to office, especially if the economic climate improves. Thus far on policy Tsai has either been too weak or cautious. Secondly, the DPP will need to make clear what its position is on the critical national identity questions. Tsai will need to reach a consensus within the party on moderate positions, in the same way that Chen did in 1999 with the Resolution on Taiwan's Future. Lastly, Tsai needs to develop a set of policies on cross-Strait relations for the DPP to be viewed as a prospective government party. In other words, what would the new DPP do differently from the old regime that could avoid the stalemate in relations of 1995-2008? Would the DPP be able to maintain cross-Strait agreements made by the KMT administration? The DPP has not yet answered these questions, and will have to in future presidential debates.