

Taiwan's Ma Ying-jeou, When Apologies Are Not Enough

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.
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I remember listening to Ma Ying-jeou explain why his 6-3-3 policy failed miserably; his advisers simply missed the boat, made bad evaluations, and caused Ma to make a false promise. Is a man responsible for the poor judgment of his advisers? Technically, Ma did not make the judgment that 6-3-3 was achievable in his first term. (Note that after it was seen to be failing miserably, Ma changed the time-line and said he really meant he would do that by the end of a 2nd term) Of course if it failed by that time as well, Ma would be long gone and with a hefty pension to live on.

But let's return to the issue; is a man responsible for what his advisers recommend? No, not entirely, but he is responsible for picking competent and reliable advisers and that is a consistent problem for Ma, whose advisers so often prove to be boy scouts or sycophants. This too reflects another characteristic of Ma, he always finds someone to be the fall guy for his actions. For Ma, the buck stops somewhere before him.

Given this, Ma was recently asked in a TV interview why voters should support him for re-election. First he apologized for his failures and then tried to say why he is worth re-election. Ma's answers follow.

1-- He said he had integrity. Questionable. True it was his secretary that put the illegal funds in his bank account and while we all would like to have a secretary bite the bullet for us, somehow that does not quite cut the mustard. As for the days when Ma is accused of being a KMT informer on fellow Taiwan students pro-democracy activities in the USA; here Ma says "That was a different era."

Further, while one may want to admire questionable integrity, integrity does not trump competency in office.

2--Ma says he had not abused his powers. Again questionable. During his "reign," (he did say he was a descendant of the Yellow Emperor) human rights have slipped, police have abused authority and numerous questionable court cases have favored Ma's friends and associates. Reference again the above statement that for Ma, the buck always stops somewhere before him.

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3--Finally, Ma says that he had made great efforts to revitalize the economy. Once again, Ma falls short. There is a huge difference between making great efforts and actually achieving success. Simply because he "tried hard" is not enough to re-elect a man.

No, Taiwan, needs new blood and new ideas. Let Ma go out to pasture, he will have a healthy enough pension for his four stagnant years in office; he may even be a nice guy, but that is still not enough to re-elect a person.

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