

Where next for the DPP?

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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“Where to go from here?” pan-green supporters pondered on election night, as many burst into tears following Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen’s (蔡英文) defeated presidential bid, after she conceded and announced her resignation as DPP chairperson.

Following the disappointing result, it would be easy to let gloom take hold and to start feeling pessimistic about the nation’s future in terms of the development of pro-localization policies and the fight for social justice — a position championed by the DPP and vociferously argued for during the just-concluded electoral campaign.

However, as Tsai put it so well during her concession speech, her supporters must not get depressed over the result of one election.

“It’s okay to cry, but not to lose heart. It’s okay to feel sad, but not to give up. We must stay hopeful, brave and keep fighting for Taiwan,” Tsai said.

From a broader perspective, first of all, it was laudable that the nation has demonstrated itself to be a mature democracy, in which Saturday’s presidential and legislative elections ended peacefully and voters dealt with the election results rationally.

At the party level, although Tsai was defeated by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) by about 6 percent of the votes, a closer look at the electoral numbers suggests the DPP nonetheless fought a respectable battle, considering that a mere four years ago it was crushed by Ma by a 2.2 million-vote margin in a landslide victory.

That Ma’s winning margin slipped from 2.2 million votes in 2008 to 790,000 votes this year serves as an encouraging sign for the pro-localization party that Tsai’s campaign must have done many things right to woo more than 1 million votes away from the KMT.

Without a doubt, a certain level of post-election analysis and evaluation is needed for the DPP to review the reasons for its loss in the presidential election.

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Some have been quick to regard Tsai's loss as the defeat of her proposed "Taiwan consensus" and asked whether the DPP should turn around and embrace the so-called "1992 consensus" trumpeted by Ma and the KMT.

However, it is a bad idea to lose sight of reality or to go overboard in self-recrimination.

If the presidential election was a referendum on the "1992 consensus," as has been suggested in some quarters, and the result suggests the Ma administration's cross-strait policy is right, then how would one explain that the Taiwan Solidarity Union, the party that most adamantly rejects the existence of the "1992 consensus," managed to take 8.69 percent of the party vote — a massive surge from its 3.53 percent share in the last legislative elections?

To quote legendary basketball player Michael Jordan: "I've missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I've lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I've been trusted to take the game-winning shot and missed. I've failed over and over and over again in my life. And that is why I succeed."

The 2012 presidential and legislative elections may be over, but rather than lose heart, the DPP must take to heart the desires and expectations of the 6.09 million people who cast their votes for Tsai, in the expectation that the party will continue to push its core values of pursuing social justice and fairness for the entire nation.

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