

While campaigning in Yilan ahead of this Saturday's local government elections, President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) broke a ban on publicly discussing election-related opinion polls when he mentioned support figures for Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) candidates and those for the opposition.

Since taking control of both the executive and the party, Ma's behavior has become increasingly irresponsible. If voters do not teach him a lesson in the elections and allow the KMT to emerge unscathed from these blunders, Ma is likely to pay even less attention to public opinion in future.

Since Ma is so fond of referring to opinion polls, let us take a look at another one.

A poll conducted by the Program for Globalization Studies at National Taiwan University tells us that 60 percent of respondents were dissatisfied with the performance of Ma's administrative team. This included many of his supporters who voted for him in the presidential election last year. Despite his poor performance, the failure to fulfill campaign promises ("Ma will turn things around right away") and of his 6-3-3 policy, high unemployment and salaries dropping to levels not seen in 13 years, Ma is still stumping for KMT candidates around the country.

Doesn't he know that many of the party's candidates are trying to avoid a "box office flop" like his?

In addition, the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission's (RDEC) list of the top 15 public complaints include rampant telephone and Internet scams, high unemployment, high consumer prices, high housing prices in urban areas and food safety. These complaints are the result of Ma's neglect of the domestic economy and living standards in favor of an all out effort to connect Taiwan with China.

Despite these complaints, Ma is still going to recognize Chinese degrees and allow Chinese students to study in Taiwan while ignoring the risks that this will create for Taiwanese seeking employment.

Ma is also allowing Chinese to invest in the Taiwan stock market and the real estate sector, further exacerbating already high consumer and housing prices. The signing of an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA), meanwhile, will create dangerous dependence on China.

So what if the RDEC conducted a survey on public complaints? Ma, who always claims to treat the public hardships as his own, does not really respect public opinion, nor is he bothered by some top 15 list of public complaints.

The real problem, what we should really worry about, is at the source of these complaints — Ma belittling Taiwan's sovereignty, his China slant, as well as economic and trade policies that

It's time for electoral retribution

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will compound an already dangerous reliance on China.

In the past year, Ma's pro-China policies have ignored the needs and fears of Taiwanese while benefiting a few pro-China conglomerates.

The result? The great majority of us are victims.

Ironically, in the long term the Taiwanese firms that for the moment appear to benefit from Ma's policies will lose out if China assumes control of Taiwan.

The poll by the Program for Globalization Studies underscores the assault on Taiwanese democracy. Ma, who was appointed by the public, is harming the country and its people to serve the selfish agenda of a few greedy individuals.

Still, there is reason for optimism. For more than a year, Ma has been unflagging in his efforts to create the conditions for the "eventual unification" sought by Chinese President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) and his clique. Amid this, the poll shows that 44.78 percent of respondents want a perpetual "status quo" in the Taiwan Strait; 29.97 percent want to maintain the "status quo" and move toward independence at some point in future; and 9.11 percent want to declare independence as soon as possible. In sum, 83.86 percent of respondents are against unification.

During the presidential election campaign, Ma pretended to embrace mainstream opinion by claiming that Taiwan's future must be decided by the 23 million Taiwanese, without Chinese interference, and that he would continue Taiwan's efforts to join the UN as this aspiration is shared by the great majority of Taiwanese. As with everything else, however, Ma's promises were meaningless.

This nation cannot afford to allow a fraudster like Ma, whose credibility is in tatters, continue with his cheating ways. Ma, as well as those in his administration who support his policies, can be taught a lesson on Saturday.

A resounding defeat could provide the kind of jolt that will make him sit up and realize that he's gone too far, that Taiwanese will not allow him to flush this beautiful country down the drain.

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