

## Ma should not confuse leadership with force

Written by Taiwan News Editorial  
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The success scored by the ruling Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) in ramming undemocratic changes to the local government act Monday and the Control Yuan's impeachment of the supreme public prosecutor for malfeasance and laxity in prosecuting "corruption" cases involving the former first family hint that the KMT will play "hard ball" to rebuilt "enthusiasm" among its core supporters.

In the wake of a poor performance in local elections last December and the sweep of three legislative by-elections by the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Jan. 10, President and KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou and new KMT Secretary-General King Pu-tsung decided that the setbacks were due to the erosion of "enthusiasm" for the "one party dominant" KMT administration among its core supporters and "middle voters."

In a meeting of the ruling party's Central Standing Committee last Wednesday, King cited concerns that the ruling party was not acting like a "completely dominant government with complete responsibility" and had been too soft in prosecuting former president Chen Shui-bian for "corruption" and needed to "improve efficiency" in securing executive implementation and legislative support for its policies and, by implication, too compromising with the opposition DPP in the Legislative Yuan.

Pro-KMT media have pointed to a "crisis of leadership" in the Ma administration and, according to analysts of cross-strait relations, Beijing authorities have become deeply concerned over Ma's inability to entirely curb the rebellion of the Taiwan electorate and many KMT mayors and lawmakers over the unpopular protocol signed by the KMT government with the U.S. on expanding beef imports in the wake of public concerns over "mad cow disease."

After all, if the KMT government could not implement the US-Taiwan beef protocol over the opposition of the Taiwan people, it would be difficult to anticipate that Ma would be able to ensure acceptance of major cross-strait pacts, such as the touted "economic cooperation agreement" or a future accord for eventual unification disguised as a "peace pact."

The forcefulness with which the KMT used its nearly three-quarters legislative majority to secure the "smooth transfer" of mostly KMT township mayors and grassroots representatives into borough chiefs and advisors (effectively extending their terms from four years to nine years) in four new metropolitan regions and yesterday's sudden impeachment of Supreme

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Public Prosecutor Chen Tsung-ming indicate that the KMT will no longer act as a "nice guy" to secure its partisan interests and curry favor to "reignite the enthusiasm" of its hard-line supporters.

The question that Taiwan's people, as well as Ma and his party and the DPP, will face is whether the cure will be worse than the diagnosed disease.

Besides its blatant use of "majority violence" to ram the revisions to the local government act through the Legislative Yuan without discussion in the face of an opposition boycott, the content of the changes confirm the KMT's contempt for fundamental democratic principles and even the ROC Constitution.

After all, the timid Constitutional Court has upheld the core principle that extension of the terms of public elected officials or representatives after their terms have expired "is not justifiable" as such officials no longer have a mandate to represent the electorate and that such extensions are therefore "is incompatible with the principle of sovereignty of the people," as declared in Interpretation 499 of March 24, 2000 unless in the case of a "major national emergency."

No more 'nice guy'

Claims by KMT officials that there were "precedents" for such "smooth transitions" in administrative mergers ironically confirm this principle because the cases cited occurred in 1966 in Taipei City and 1979 in Kaohsiung City when the KMT ruled Taiwan with its 38-year martial law decree and underline the DPP's position that these changes are unconstitutional.

There was actually no pressing urgency to rush to add the extension of the tenure of these officials to the perfectly adequate draft revisions to the Local Government Act approved by the Executive Yuan last September in this legislative session in this legislative session other than the fact that four more legislative by-elections are scheduled for Feb. 27.

While King's explanation cannot be excluded, Ma and the KMT leadership should refrain from confusing authoritarian "forcefulness" with "democratic leadership" and consider the possibility

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that Taiwan voters generally, including pro-KMT and "middle" voters, are dissatisfied with the KMT's hubris and incompetence in all fields with the exception of the undermining of Taiwan's domestic democracy and international dignity.

What most citizens want is for our elected government to manifest the political leadership required in a democratic society through consensus building through persuasion and equal and transparent dialogue instead of returning to the KMT's habitual use of majority legislative violence to trample opposition and silence dissent.

Whether the KMT's demonstration of intent to "walk the talk" of a one-party dominant government will revive the "enthusiasm" of voters for restored KMT "complete governance" will be seen on Feb. 27 and the upcoming the five special municipal mayor and council races in December.

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