

## KMT defeat a new start for Taiwan democracy

Written by Chiu Hei-yuan 邱輝元

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The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) was routed in the nine-in-one elections. It managed to win only one of the six special municipalities [including the soon-to-be-upgrade Taoyuan County], and garnered only 41 percent of the total number of votes for mayors of the municipalities — compared with 48 percent for the Democratic Progressive Party.

In light of the significant defeat, President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) approved the resignations of Premier Jiang Yi-huah (江宜樺) and KMT secretary-general Tseng Tung-chuan (曾榮光), but stopped short of taking responsibility himself, despite his prior insistence that he would not avoid accepting responsibility for election results.

It is classic Ma to deny that the fault lies with him. For him, it has always been because due to the actions of others.

Former vice president Lien Chan (連戰) and former KMT chairman Wu Po-hsiung (吳伯雄) were left battered by the results — their sons lost their respective campaigns — and New Taipei City Mayor Eric Chu (朱立倫), who many regard as a strong candidate for the 2016 presidential election, barely scraped through the night. He was the single saving grace of the day for the party.

Unless there are any influential senior members of the KMT willing to come out and criticize Ma, or if grassroots members get together and demand that he step down, he is likely to hold on to his positions as KMT chairman.

Ma has said that he has heard the message that the voters were trying to tell him in this election. Well, he said virtually the same thing during the Sunflower movement. Clearly, what he has heard is not what the public is saying, and not what the Sunflower movement was trying to convey to him.

His actual response has been to ignore the message he has been sent, while insisting on continuing with policy decisions that the public opposes.

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The democratic system is keeping Ma in his position as president, even though the public has long since rejected him. His remaining in the top position and dominating national politics can only spell disaster for the nation.

The KMT political elite care only for their power and interests. They might be incensed with Ma, but they are not going to openly voice their anger.

Indeed, although Ma does carry a huge amount of the blame for the trouncing his party received nationwide, the central party leadership, as well as leadership at the local level, have to shoulder a hefty part of the responsibility for the electoral drubbing too.

The mudslinging tactics with which the KMT leadership and its main candidates attacked their opponents were examples of the ugliest side of campaigning, and totally failed to win over the electorate.

In Taipei, the party threw everything it could at its rival, even resorting to groundless accusations of the unethical procurement of human organs to dispatch their enemy.

In Greater Kaohsiung the party set its attack dog, Minister Without Portfolio “Little Big Man” Yang Chiu-hsing (楊秋興), after the incumbent. None of this struck the electorate as good examples of how democratic elections should be conducted.

The KMT’s defeat is a positive thing, as it challenges the idea that the party can rely on certain sections of the electorate for its support. This gives democracy in Taiwan a chance to start anew.

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