

New Taipei City Mayor Eric Chu (朱 立 倫) has announced his bid for the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) chairmanship. Since he is the only candidate, his election is certain. Chu's proposal for constitutional change is progress of sorts compared with how President Ma Ying-jeou (馬 英九) is clinging to an outdated Constitution to protect himself.

Chu should be more focused on amending the KMT charter than the Constitution, because without a normalized political party, how would he be able to engage in a project as major as a constitutional amendment? Furthermore, given the problems with the party charter, there is no legitimacy behind Chu's run for the chairmanship.

Article 17 of the charter says that when a member of the KMT is president, that member will also be party chairman from the day he or she takes up the presidency.

Based on this regulation, Ma should of course be chairman. If Chu wants to be a legitimate chairman, there are two possibilities: Either Ma quits the party, or the KMT expels him. Ma has made no indication that he intends to leave the party, so short of expelling Ma after Chu is elected, there will be no legitimacy to Chu's chairmanship.

Chu's advocacy for constitutional change includes amending the Referendum Act (公 民 複 決 法), replacing the semi-presidential system with a Cabinet system, lowering the voting age to 18, lowering the threshold for entry into the legislature to 3 percent, voting where one lives rather than where one has one's household registration, and reviewing the single member district, double ballot electoral system.

Constitutional amendments are dependent on the legislature, which means that passing an amendment requires legislators capable of truly representing public opinion. Therefore, the first priority should be to reform the electoral system.

Allowing people to vote where they live rather than where they have their household registrations, which is part of this, implies an intent to cooperate with Beijing to control the nation, because it involves Taiwanese businesspeople living in China, something that was made very clear by the recent visit of China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan

Straits Chairman Chen Deming (陳水扁) in pursuit of ongoing interaction with Taiwanese middlemen.

The reason this is a concern is the word “Chinese” in the KMT’s name. This is also why the Republic of China (ROC) Constitution cannot be made to fit Taiwan, despite several amendments. Because the KMT held a majority in first the National Assembly and then the legislature, the Chinese specter has always haunted the Constitution. If this problem is not resolved, it will remain difficult for Taiwan to become a normalized country — unless the KMT implodes — of course.

The Chinese specter is lurking in the KMT charter, too. Article 1 says the intention of the party is to make the ROC a free, democratic and unified country with even distribution of wealth. What does “unified” mean? If it cannot be clearly explained, it should be removed.

Article 2 states the intent to fight for the overall benefit of Chinese. What does “Chinese” mean? Do Taiwanese see themselves as part of the “Chinese” group? Should not the KMT change direction and become Taiwan-centered?

Before the conflict over a presidential or a Cabinet system can be resolved, it would probably be more important to establish a democratic system with separation of power into three government branches. The current division into five branches weakens the checks and balances provided by the legislature and empowers arbitrary rule with “Chinese characteristics.” The Control Yuan acts even more in concert with the executive powers, since it is appointed by the president.

In addition, the party charter says nothing about the source or handling of ill-gotten party assets, the lifeblood of the KMT, the world’s wealthiest political party. At the very least, the omission makes it quite clear what the party wants to keep out of the public eye.

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Fix KMT first, then Constitution

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Saturday, 20 December 2014 08:12

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2014/12/20](#)