

## Wave of change sweeping the nation

Written by Lee Min-yung 李敏雄

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As we enter a new year, the arrival of a new batch of mayors and county commissioners who are not members of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) may bring new prospects for local politics. In 2008 the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lost the presidency, and local power has also been in the hands of its rivals since then, but now the party's hopes have been rekindled.

The fireworks that lit up the night sky on New Year's Eve also cast their glow over the ascent of these new leaders. Some politicians who handed their power to the newcomers chose to stay away from the New Year celebrations, letting their successors bask in the limelight, and this could be seen as an initial acceptance of their responsibility.

Although these changes are at the local level, their impact is sure to be felt in next year's presidential election.

Local politics are generally not obscured by the convoluted issues of national sovereignty and differing identities, so it is relatively easy to judge local leaders' performance on their merits. When the DPP had control of just six county and municipal governments, most assessments showed that DPP mayors and county commissioners performed better than their KMT counterparts. Now that it is at the helm of 13 counties and municipalities, the DPP has all the more reason to cherish the chance to do a good job.

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) won the election by presenting himself as belonging to the "white" force, transcending the blue and green political camps headed by the KMT and DPP respectively. It was this image that made the impossible possible for Ko and his supporters.

However, in view of Taiwan's overall political shift, Ko's poll victory should be seen as an extension of the DPP's gains. It can be expected that Ko will work in concert with the now-stronger DPP, building an impetus that may bring the KMT's ramparts tumbling down.

There are now 13 DPP-

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controlled counties and municipalities, in addition to Taipei with Ko as mayor. Together, they form five new geopolitical clusters — Taipei and Keelung together with Yilan County; Greater Taoyuan and Hsinchu County; Greater Taichung and Changhua County; Yunlin County, Chiayi County, Chiayi City and Greater Tainan; and Greater Kaohsiung and Pingtung and Penghu counties.

While this sea of green has turned the KMT-run municipalities and counties into lonely blue islands, these clusters may interact to form a new geopolitical formation. By working together for regional development, they may act as bellwethers so that people across the nation can hear the call and see the light of a new kind of politics.

Long ago, the DPP declared that it stood for clean government, diligence and love of the land. These are ideals that will never go out of date. At a time when people are sick of the KMT for clinging to ill-gotten party assets and claiming to be clean when it is really corrupt, it is all the more important for these 13+1 city and county governments to put these ideals into practice and make them into their political trademarks.

The wave of change extends all the way from north to south. No longer is the Jhuoshuei River (濁水溪) an obstacle to stopping the KMT's arbitrary rule. The public has given the DPP another chance, and they want to see the DPP and other non-KMT politicians working together to bring new hope. The new political forces in Taipei, the capital city, are echoing these calls for change. If all goes well, we will see a new face of Taiwan emerge from north to south.

*Lee Min-yung is a poet.*

Translated by Julian Clegg

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