

Those who thought the intra-party squabbles that overshadowed the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) chairperson election would die down after former vice president Wu Den-yih (吳登益) won the race by a landslide on May 20 should think again. Yet another power struggle is in full play within the party.

At about 7pm on Tuesday, just one day before the KMT was scheduled to hold the weekly meeting of its Central Standing Committee, the party's headquarters decided to call the session off after rumors emerged that several pro-Wu committee members were plotting to put forward proposals to diminish the power and influence of outgoing KMT Chairwoman Hung Hsiu-chu (洪秀柱).

At the center of the latest episode of KMT power games are the party's upcoming elections of Central Committee and Central Standing Committee members on July 8 and July 29 respectively.

According to the KMT's electoral regulations, members of the party's 210-person Central Committee are elected by representatives from a pool of no more than 420 candidates, half of whom should be nominated by the chair and the rest by the party's nearly 1,600 representatives.

Only Central Committee members are eligible to vie for the 32 openings in the Central Standing Committee, the party's highest decisionmaking body. These members are also to be elected by party representatives.

Given that Wu is not scheduled to take over the KMT leadership until Aug. 20, based on the election schedule, he would not be able to nominate candidates for the Central Committee race and would therefore be unable to fill the Central Standing Committee with his own people.

For Wu, having a Central Standing Committee dominated by members siding with the leaders of other party factions is like a president leading a minority government. His policies would be blocked and authority undermined.

Self-interest disguised as justice

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That is arguably the reason Wu's camp has been pushing for Hung to transfer power earlier than scheduled, while calling foul play on the election schedule and blasting it as violating the party's charter.

They claimed that as the new representatives are to also be inaugurated on Aug. 20, after the two elections, allowing the incumbent representatives to elect the Central Committee members "when a new mandate has been formed" is problematic.

However, the real problem is that no one seemed to have an issue with the election dates when they were announced by the KMT headquarters in December last year. Why the sudden fuss? The party representatives' election being held on May 20 — the same day as the chairperson race — could provide an answer.

On May 20, 1,535 party representatives were elected. The Chinese-language Liberty Times (sister newspaper of the Taipei Times) quoted a member of Wu's camp as saying anonymously on election day that because the majority of pro-Wu incumbent party representatives, amounting to about 800, were re-elected, the new KMT leader is expected to enjoy majority control in the Central Standing Committee.

Perhaps due to stupidity or naivete, Wu's camp failed to factor in the potential effects of Hung nominating half of the Central Committee member candidates.

Regardless of the reason Wu's camp came to realize the problem so late, as the KMT's next chairman who has vowed to help the party regain power in 2020, the correct first step would be to refrain from bending the rules to his advantage and respect the system as it is.

Wu's failure to do so would just go to show that the rule of law remains a foreign concept to the KMT and that it is unfit to govern a democratic nation.

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