TAIWAN'S 2012 PRESIDENTIAL/VICE PRESIDENTIAL
AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: ASSESSING CURRENT
POLITICS AND CHARTING THE FUTURE

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I. INTRODUCTION

On January 14, 2012 voters in Taiwan (officially known as the
Republic of China) went to the polls to cast ballots for their presi-
dent and vice president, and for members of the lawmaker branch
of government (Legislative Yuan) both to serve four-year terms.¹

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1. For this author’s assessment of Taiwan’s previous elections including the pre-
vious metropolitan city elections in 2006, see John F. Copper with George P. Chen, Tai-
wan’s Elections: Political Development and Democratization in the Republic of China
(Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 1984); John F. Copper, Taiwan’s
Recent Elections: Fulfilling the Democratic Promise (Baltimore: University of Maryland
School of Law, 1990); John F. Copper, Taiwan’s 1991 and 1992 Non-Supplemental Ele-
cctions: Reaching a Higher State of Democracy (Lanham, MD: University Press of
America, 1994); John F. Copper, Taiwan’s Mid-1990s Elections: Taking the Final Steps
to Democracy (Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher, 1998); John F. Copper, Taiwan’s 1998
Legislative Yuan, Metropolitan Mayoral and City Council Elections: Confirming and
Consolidating Democracy in the Republic of China (Baltimore: University of Maryland
School of Law, 1999); John F. Copper, Taiwan’s 2000 Presidential and Vice Presidential
Election: Consolidating Democracy and Creating a New Era of Politics (Baltimore: Uni-
versity of Maryland School of Law, 2000); John F. Copper, Taiwan’s 2001 Legislative,
Seventy-three legislators were chosen by simple majority vote in their constituencies. Voters cast a third ballot for their preferred political party that then selected proportionally thirty-four additional lawmakers plus another six to represent the Aboriginal population. Approximately eighteen million citizens of a population of just over twenty-three million were eligible to vote.\(^2\)

For a number of reasons this was regarded one of Taiwan's most important elections. It was the first time Taiwan's national executive and legislative elections were held simultaneously.\(^3\) Since these two sets of elections were considered the most important among Taiwan's various levels of elections, being held together made this Election Day even more significant.\(^4\) The electoral system (voting for a president and vice president, legislator, and a party) was also new. Thus the system was to be tested.\(^5\)

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Magistrates and Mayors Election: Further Consolidating Democracy (Singapore: World Scientific/Singapore University Press, 2002); Taiwan's 2004 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election: Democracy's Consolidation or Devolution (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2004); Taiwan's 2004 Legislative Election: Putting it in Perspective (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2004); John F. Copper, Taiwan's 2006 Metropolitan Mayoral and City Council Elections and the Politics of Corruption (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2006); John F. Copper, Taiwan's 2008 Presidential and Vice Presidential Elections: Maturing Democracy (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2008); John F. Copper, Taiwan's 2010 Metropolitan City Elections: An Assessment of Taiwan's Politics and a Predictor of Future Elections (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2010).

\(^2\) The president and vice president are chose to serve four-year terms. The candidates with the most votes win; there are no runoff elections. There is a limit of two consecutive terms. The voting age is twenty. See "Factbox: Taiwan's presidential and legislative election process," Reuters, December 13, 2011 (online at reuters.com).

\(^3\) Taiwan's Election Commission rendered this decision on April 22, 2011. Those who opposed the change said it would reduce the status of the legislature since more attention would be given to the presidential and vice presidential candidates. The DPP also opined that it would give an advantage to the KMT. Proponents of merging the elections cited this being done in many other countries while it reduced the cost of holding elections and reduced the time of campaigning and the disruption too many elections had caused to Taiwan's society.

\(^4\) Taiwan has nine categories of elections. Two are at the national level: presidential and vice presidential elections and legislative elections. Seven are local elections: municipal mayors, municipal council members, county magistrates (city mayors), county council members, township chiefs, township council members, and village heads. All are elected for four-year terms, the terms of legislative elections having been changed from three to four years recently. Further details on Taiwan's elections are provided by the Central Election Commission (online at ccc.gov.tw).

\(^5\) In 2005, the electoral system was changed from a three-year term with members of the legislature chosen in multimember districts to a single member district system using two ballots: one for the voter to pick members for his or her constituency, the
The salience of this two-in-one election was amplified by the widely held perception that Taiwan was at a turning point in many ways and that the outcome of the voting would set Taiwan on a new and perhaps semi-permanent course politically and likely in other respects as well. The main argument for this view was that many issues, such as how to manage the economy, independence versus unification, relations with China and the United States, and how to effectively deal with serious social problems, might be decided at this time. In addition, during much of the campaign period, especially toward the end, it appeared the election would be close. Also making the results difficult to predict, around a third of the electorate was defined by pollsters as undecided or swing voters. Finally, there were strong views expressed on each side on most issues.

The incumbent, President MA Ying-jeou, won by a significant margin, though not as big as in 2008. The central issues were the economy, good governance, plus relations with China and the United States. Stability was also a major concern to voters. The campaign and voting went smoothly and Taiwan’s democratic system benefited. The results of the election suggested a general continuation of people and policies.

II. THE DOMESTIC POLITICAL MILIEU

During the months leading up to the election several important domestic issues made up what may be called the backdrop of the campaign: the state of the economy and a host of political issues that had to do with governance, plus a number of unanticipated events and controversies that happened during the run-up to Election Day.

First the economy. During the 2008 presidential and vice presidential election campaign MA Ying-jeou and his running mate Vincent Siew promised to “rehabilitate” Taiwan’s economy, arguing that it had been badly mismanaged by then President CHEN Shui-bian and his administration. They said that they could restore rapid growth and recreate a healthy economy. This claim was quite credible in view of the fact that the Kuomintang (KMT, ruling party) was in power during the time of Taiwan’s economic growth miracle and various KMT officials have long been given credit for engineering it, plus the fact Taiwan experienced an economic recession soon after CHEN Shui-bian assumed the presidency in 2000—seen by other for a political party that would chose at-large or party members for four year terms.
many as caused by his unwillingness to cooperate with the KMT-controlled legislature and his anti-business policies.  

Specifically, the Ma team advanced a slogan called the 6-3-3 plan (gross domestic product growth of six percent or better, unemployment of three percent or less, and per capita income of US$30,000 to be reached by 2016). To most voters this looked doable. Accordingly, Ma and Siew won many votes on their assumed ability to promote good economic times.  

But half a year after Ma’s inauguration the world economy fell into recession and Taiwan’s economy, being very linked to international commerce, was severely impacted. The third quarter of 2008 saw Taiwan’s GDP growth fall to just one percent. Exports, the main driver of Taiwan’s economic vitality, fell by forty percent through November. Fewer than expected tourists from China and higher oil prices (in spite of the global downturn) also hurt. In the fourth quarter Taiwan’s economy contracted by a whopping 8.36 percent, causing the growth for the year to average less than two percent.  

In 2009 economic conditions in Taiwan got worse. In the first quarter GDP growth was negative by 9 percent and in the second quarter minus 6.8 percent. By August, unemployment had risen from 3.81 percent in April 2008, just before Ma became president, to 6.13 percent. The economy rebounded well during the last part of the year (9.1 percent expansion in the fourth quarter), but growth for the year averaged out to minus 1.9 percent.  

Continuing to pull out of the recession, in 2010 Taiwan’s economy performed very well. GDP growth was spectacular: 13.7 percent in the first quarter, 12.5 percent in the second and 9.8 percent in the third. These figures put Taiwan’s economic expansion rate above China’s. The overall growth rate for the year was 8.3 percent, ranking Taiwan ninth in the world in this important category. Unemployment was 5.2 percent, ranking Taiwan number fifty among

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11. Ibid.
other nations that kept this figure. Inflation was 1.3 percent—ranking Taiwan number thirty-one. Taiwan’s foreign reserves gave it the rank of fourth in the world (behind only China, Japan, and Russia).\textsuperscript{12}

In early 2011, the government announced that unemployment, year-on-year, had dropped one percent to 4.29 percent—the lowest since October 2008. Most of the jobs were created in manufacturing and by wholesale companies. The industrial production index rose to 130.99 or 6.85 percent over the previous year—the forth-highest figure ever.\textsuperscript{13} Meanwhile, the average monthly wage rose to NT$56,434 (US$1,945)—an all time record.\textsuperscript{14}

In fact, concern was voiced that the economy was overheating. The Central Bank thus increased interest rates several times.\textsuperscript{15} It also issued warnings of hot money coming into Taiwan to speculate on the rising New Taiwan (NT) dollar.\textsuperscript{16}

In June, 2011, Taiwan’s unemployment rate fell to the lowest level in thirty-three months—to 4.27 percent. This was less than half the rate of the United States (9.1 percent) and much lower than the U.K., Germany, and even Japan (7.7 percent, 7 percent, and 4.7 percent respectively). All of this was good news; the less than good news was that Taiwan’s rate of unemployment was higher than that of Hong Kong, South Korea and Singapore (3.5, 3.3, and 1.90 percent), with whom Taiwan is often compared, and youth unemployment remained high: 11.73 percent.\textsuperscript{17}

Meanwhile, in June, the consumer confidence index set a new record. More jobs, a stronger economy, and better household finances caused the index to rise to 86.84—the highest since the record has been kept beginning in 2001.\textsuperscript{18} The Industrial Production Index (IPI) also looked good, posting an annual increase of 3.61

\begin{itemize}
  \item[\textsuperscript{12}] "Taiwan Economy 2011," CIA World Factbook, January 12, 2011 (online at cia.gov).
  \item[\textsuperscript{13}] Aaron Hsu, "Taiwan’s April industrial production index remains strong," Taiwan Today, May 24, 2001 (online at taiwantoday.tw).
  \item[\textsuperscript{14}] Meg Chang, "Taiwan’s April unemployment rate drops to 4.29 percent," Taiwan Today, May 4, 2011 (online at taiwantoday.tw).
  \item[\textsuperscript{15}] Aaron Hsu, "ROC Central Bank raises key interest rates," Taiwan Today, July 1, 2011 (online at taiwantoday.tw).
  \item[\textsuperscript{16}] Meg Chang," ROC Central bank on outlook for currency speculation," Taiwan Today, March 11, 2001 (online at taiwantoday.tw).
  \item[\textsuperscript{17}] Adam Hwang, "Taiwan May unemployment rate lowest in 33 months," Digitimes, June 23, 2011 (online at digitimes.com).
  \item[\textsuperscript{18}] Meg Chang, "Taiwan consumer confidence index hits record high in June," Taiwan Today, July 28, 2011 (online at taiwantoday.tw).
\end{itemize}
percent—the sixth highest figure in history. Construction, electricity and gas supply, and manufacturing all showed good growth (11.9 percent, 4.59 percent and 3.52 percent). Taiwan’s IPI figures were considerably better than those of Japan, South Korea and Singapore.¹⁹

At mid-year, Taiwan’s gross domestic product passed the NT$15 trillion (US$500 billion) mark for the first time ever. Cathay Financial Holdings predicted growth in the GDP for the year would be 6.28 percent—quite a respectable figure. Putting this in the context of the coming election, it was very good news for the KMT—offset, however, by predictions the economy would grow considerably slower in the coming quarters.²⁰ Another piece of good news for the KMT was a quite remarkable increase in Taiwan’s exports to emerging market countries—up 27.7 percent during the first half of the year compared to the year previous. This contrasted with an increase in exports to China of but ten percent, thus offering a counter argument to Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, opposition party) critics that said Taiwan was becoming economically dependent on China.²¹ More good news came in August when the press reported that Taiwan ranked number thirty-three in the World Bank’s Doing Business 2011 Report. (Taiwan’s ranking in 2009 was forty-six and in 2008 it was sixty-one.²²)

In September 2011, the U.S.-based Business Environment Risk Intelligence group ranked Taiwan the third best place in the world to invest, trailing only Singapore and Switzerland.²³ Meanwhile, the Global Competitiveness Report 2011-2012 ranked Taiwan thirteenth among one hundred and forty-two countries surveyed, surpassed in Asia by only Singapore, Japan, and Hong Kong and better than South Korea and China (twenty-four and twenty-six respectively). The report praised Taiwan for innovation—registering the largest number of patents in the U.S. per capita (higher even than Americans), and an excellent education system. Taiwan on the

¹⁹. Aaron Hsu, “Taiwan’s industrial production continues climbing,” Taiwan Today, July 26, 2011 (online at t.aiwantoday.tw).
²⁰. “Taiwan’s Economic Growth May Reach 6.28% in 2011: Cathy Financial,” Taiwan Economic News, June 15, 2011. The prediction for Taiwan’s GDP growth was a bit higher than other organizations, though based on more recent data.
²². Meg Chang, “Taiwan makes strides in bettering business environment,” Taiwan Today, August 3, 2011 (online at t.aiwantoday.tw).
²³. Aaron Hsu, “BERI ranks Taiwan No. 3 for investment,” Taiwan Today, September 1, 2011 (online at t.aiwantoday.tw).
other hand was criticized for inconsistent government policies and low government efficiency.\textsuperscript{24}

The same month, according to the International Monetary Fund, Taiwan’s per capita GDP based on purchasing power parity rose to a new high, ranking it number twenty in the world, passing the UK and Finland (and already ahead of Japan and South Korea).\textsuperscript{25} It was also reported that the government’s budget deficit had been cut for the third year in a row indicating Taiwan’s finances were in good shape.\textsuperscript{26} President Ma and the KMT had good cause for optimism.

A drop in the TAIEX (Taiwan Stock Exchange Capitalization Weighted Stock Index) in late September, however, was not good news. In fact, Taiwan’s stock market subsequently fell to a two-year low following a huge drop in the U.S. stock market.\textsuperscript{27} At the same time it was reported Taiwan’s exports, the dynamo of the economy, had fallen 4.6 percent from the previous month.\textsuperscript{28} President Ma, feeling some sense of urgency, reminded the business community and citizens that he had revived the economy, that economic conditions were generally good, and that the DPP, whose policy it was to consider Taiwan a “locked country” (meaning it favored protectionism and isolationism), would not be able to handle an economic crisis. Ma stated that he would “save the nation.”\textsuperscript{29}

In October the economic news was mixed. The stock market rebounded based on better economic news in the United States. Foreign investments increased and news of growth in Taiwan’s exports to China helped.\textsuperscript{30} Predictions of more private investment coming into Taiwan were also considered favorable news. This was especially true in the area of build-operate-transfer public infrastructure projects which some said would help Taiwan’s economy

\textsuperscript{24} “Taiwan listed 13th in global competitiveness ranking: WEF, “ China Post, September 8, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\textsuperscript{25} “Taiwan per capita GDP ranks ahead of UK, Japan, South Korea,” Taiwan Today, September 23, 2011 (online at taiwantoday.tw).
\textsuperscript{26} “ROC budget deficit set to drop for 3rd year.” Taiwan Today, September 27, 2011 (online at taiwantoday.tw).
\textsuperscript{27} Lisa Wang, “TAIEX plunges to two-year low,” Taipei Times, September 24, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
\textsuperscript{28} “Monthly exports decline 4.6% from August: MOF,” China Post, October 8, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\textsuperscript{29} “Ma vows to save Taiwan from recession,” China Post, October 3, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\textsuperscript{30} “TAIEX weighed index rises 46 points to 7,428.33,” China Post, October 14, 2001 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
even if the global economy did not improve.\textsuperscript{31} On the negative side it was announced that consumer confidence had fallen.\textsuperscript{32} In addition, the Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics revised the figure on growth anticipated for the year downward from 4.81 percent of GDP to 4.56 citing the weak global economy as the reason.\textsuperscript{33}

In early November the stock market continued to recover following what seemed to be better news about the Greek problem and a rise of the market in the U.S.\textsuperscript{34} However, this good news was offset by reports that Taiwan’s economy had slowed during the third quarter to just 3.37 percent growth in the GDP—attributed to Europe’s debt crisis and high unemployment in the U.S. both of which cooled the demand for Taiwan’s exports.\textsuperscript{35} This prompted the government to report on Taiwan’s limited exposure to Italian debt and to list failed financial institutions.\textsuperscript{36}

In mid-December, less than a month before the election, Taiwan’s unemployment increased by 0.02 percent to 4.3 percent. Though new jobs were expected to increase in the run-up to Chinese New Year (January 23), which would mean an increase just before the election, that increase was expected to be less than a year earlier.\textsuperscript{37} Taiwan’s science parks witnessed a decrease in employment for the first time since 2008. Meanwhile, a number of companies were allowing, even encouraging, employees to take unpaid leave in order to acquire more training and prepare for different jobs.\textsuperscript{38}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{31} Meg Chang, “Taiwan eyes record high BOT private investment,” \textit{Taiwan Today}, October 18, 2011 (online at taiwantoday.com.tw).
\item \textsuperscript{32} “Taiwan’s consumer confidence drop 1.54 points in October,” \textit{China Post}, October 27, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\item \textsuperscript{33} Meg Chang, “DGBAS revised GDP forecast for Taiwan,” \textit{Taiwan Today}, November 1, 2011 (online at taiwantoday.com.tw).
\item \textsuperscript{34} “Taiwan share prices rebound above 7,600 points,” \textit{China Post}, November 5, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\item \textsuperscript{35} Chinmei Sung, “Taiwan GDP Rises Least in 2 years as Global Recovery Falters,” \textit{Bloomberg Businessweek}, November 8, 2911 (online at bloomberg.com).
\item \textsuperscript{36} “Taiwan has limited exposure to Italian debt impact: FSC,” \textit{China Post}, November 11, 2011 and “Premier wants names of failed financial institutions published,” \textit{China Post}, November 11, 2011 (both online at chinapost.com.tw).
\item \textsuperscript{37} “Jobless rate to show rise amid euro crisis,” \textit{China Post}, December 19, 2011 (online at chiapost.com.tw).
\item \textsuperscript{38} “Over 13,000 local workers taking unpaid leave: CLA,” \textit{China Post}, January 3, 2012 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\end{itemize}
Countering this bad news to some degree, export orders were up and so was private investment. But although this news suggested future growth; it was not the kind of news that might influence voters in January to vote for Ma and the KMT. The government took further actions on the economy by offering assistance to small and medium-sized businesses and by taking measures to stabilize the TAIEX.

After not saying much about the economy for months, the DPP cast blame on Ma and his administration for the bad economic news. Noting that exports were down 4.6 percent in September, DPP critics pointed out that South Korea (with which Taiwan is often compared) had developed its U.S. and European Union markets while Taiwan depended upon China—which was “Ma’s mistake.” DPP spokespersons also assailed the KMT for the increasing gap between rich and poor, saying that incomes of the richest households were seventy-five times higher than the poorest and that applicants for civil service jobs reached an all-time high because of uncertainty in the private sector. A DPP observer also pointed out that Taiwan’s stock market was volatile suggesting the economy was shaky and that the TAIEX was 9,296 when Ma took office and was 6,922 in December—a 25.5 percent drop.

In summation, the Ma administration witnessed a recession shortly after winning election in 2008. A quick and very impressive recovery followed in 2010 and 2011. But as the election approached the economic news was not good; in fact, it appeared there might be another economic decline in store. President Ma took quick and what appeared to be wise measures to deal with the economy; but whether this would register well with voters was uncertain.

39. Meg Chang, “Taiwan export orders up 2.54 percent in October,” *Taiwan Today*, December 21, 2011 (online at taiwtenantoday.com.tw) and “New major private investment tops NT$1 trillion,” CNA, December 21, 2011 (online at cna.org.tw).
40. “Vice premier orders assistance for small, medium enterprises,” CNA, December 21, 2011 (online at cna.com.tw) and Aaron Hsu, “Taiwan weighs measures to stabilize TAIEX index,” *Taiwan Today*, December 21, 2011 (online at taiwtenantoday.com.tw).
41. Huang Tien-lin, “Taiwanese economy sidelined, absorbed,” *Taipei Times*, November 5, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com)
42. Lo Chih-cheng, “Statistics blinding Ma to reality of economy,” *Taipei Times*, December 14, 2001 (online at taipeitimes.com). The author does not define richest or poorest households. He notes that civil service job applicants were 750,000 compared to 520,000 during the Chen administration.
43. Huang Tien-lin, “Economic situation is a matter of dire straits,” *Taipei Times*, December 15, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com)
For the KMT governance was more a constant problem, if not its Achilles Heel, throughout the campaign. During the November 2010 metropolitan elections the DPP had constantly chided the KMT for poor performance in local government and cited considerable evidence for their charges. The KMT did little to fix the problem. As noted in the World Competitiveness Report Taiwan ranked low in government efficiency. In an early 2011 list of ratings of heads of municipal governments published by *CommonWealth* magazine, DPP and independent municipal chiefs were ranked higher than their KMT counterparts. The DPP boasted that all six of its mayors and commissioners finished in the top ten (on a list of twenty-two).  

DPP legislators also assailed President Ma and his administration for not fulfilling promises to allocate increased funding for defense, education, and small businesses. The KMT replied that budget allocations had been divided into different parts and the issue needed to be seen in that light.

Academics meanwhile criticized the KMT’s proposal to restructure the government and reduce the number of ministries and councils from thirty-seven to twenty-nine by January 2012. They said that little of the plan would be completed on time and that it looked mainly like an effort to appear to have accomplished some reform before the election. Others said the reorganization showed no evidence of making the government more cost effective and in some ways would have negative consequences.

The opposition regularly made negative comments about Taiwan’s judicial system noting Ma was a lawyer by education and he should be able to fix the system. DPP leaders cited often what they called questionable court decisions. The problem for the DPP in making this stick, however, was that the criticism did not apply directly to the Ma administration since Ma had been careful to respect the principle of separation of powers in the Constitution and not interfere with the actions of the Judicial Yuan (a Constitutional oversight body). Also the judicial system seemed to be working better and was fairer than it had during the Chen administration. Nevertheless, the DPP’s criticism, which a number of foreigners

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44. Mo Yan-chih, “KMT municipal chiefs rank poorly,” *Taipei Times*, September 7, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
45. Huang Wei-chu, “DPP lawmakers question Ma on policy failures,” *Taipei Times*, September 13, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
weighed in on, did not seem to be falling on deaf ears in terms of influencing voters. It thus remained an issue the DPP continued to use. In fact, Chairwoman TSAI Ing-wen included a judicial reform chapter in her Ten-Year Program and promised a “people’s judiciary” if elected.

In addition to the two leading categories of issues, the economy and governance (security and foreign policy are assessed in the next section), a number of events occurred during the campaign that portended to influence voters. They were not predicted.

In late June, 2011, the public was shocked when prosecutors announced that former president LEE Teng-hui was indicted on corruption charges for allegedly embezzling US$7.8 million from a National Security Bureau secret diplomatic fund and for laundering money when he was in office. Lee’s former aide, LIU Tai-ying, was also indicted.

Lee’s response was to depict the indictment as politically motivated and launch a counter-attack. He stated that President Ma was incompetent and his “China-leaning policy” was the reason behind Taiwan’s loss of competitiveness and the growing wealth gap. He reiterated a slogan he often used: “Vote against Ma to protect Taiwan.” TSAI Ing-wen declared that the timing of the indictment was suspicious, suggesting it was intended to help the KMT in the upcoming election. President Ma told reporters at a press conference that the indictment was not political and that he would respect the judiciary and not interfere in the case.

There followed considerable speculation as to the impact the case would have on the election. Some pundits opined that it would be seen as a KMT dirty trick. Most of the political talk shows gave it this spin. Others said it would help Ma since his supporters lacked enthusiasm and the case would unite the KMT, which was

47. See “Worried ‘foreign observers’ appear to be misinformed,” China Post, August 11, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
48. “President should lead the nation in judicial reform: Tsai,” China Post, August 26, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw). Tsai, however, did not mention if she would pardon Chen Shui-bian, a question she was frequently asked.
51. Ibid.
53. Ibid.
split between elder party members that were generally not happy with President Ma and younger more mainstream members. Also the case reminded voters of the corruption of the Chen administration that Lee had aligned with and the issue that brought Ma into the presidency.

Refuting the charge made by the DPP that President Ma had ordered the indictment to help him in the election, the media reported that prosecutors had opened the case when CHEN Shuibian was president with leads provided by Chen. Specifically, in 2008, when Chen was under investigation for corruption, he told prosecutors Lee had been involved in laundering US$50 million in Singapore. It appeared this would divide Lee and Chen supporters.

In early October it was reported that the case would go to trial late in the month. Lee was charged for the crimes cited above. The money Lee allegedly took from a secret diplomatic account was, it was stated, used to establish the Taiwan Research Institute, which made Lee honorary chairman. Ruentex Group laundered funds and some money was used to purchase luxury offices in Taipei for Lee and Liu. Liu also allegedly pocketed $400,000. If convicted Lee faced imprisonment for up to ten years.

Within days of this news breaking the media reported the Taiwan High Court had confirmed former president Chen guilty of receiving bribes and sentenced him to eighteen years in prison and NT$180 million (US$5.95 million) in fines. The court also stripped him of his civil rights for nine years. Chen had been found guilty of these charges earlier, but that finding was overturned in November 2010. The court then reversed that ruling. DPP leaders said little about the decision, indicating they did not want to hear more about the Chen case as it was hurting their election chances.


55. “Ex-President Chen refutes Lee whistleblower claim,” China Post, July 2, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw). This report seems to suggest that Chen first supplied information on Lee’s corruption in 2008 to deflect the attacks on Chen. Another source suggests the investigations on Lee’s corruption started in 2000. See “Taiwan: Former President Indicted on an Embezzlement Charge,” Associated Press, June 30, 2011 (online at associatedpress.com).


57. Loa Lok-sin, “Chen found guilty of receiving bribes,” Taipei Times, October 14, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
If the Lee imbroglio was probably not going to hurt the KMT in the election and news about CHEN Shui-bian would help its cause, the matter of former Taiwan provincial governor (and presidential candidate in 2000 and vice presidential candidate in 2004) James Soong possibly running for the presidency and, if not, seeking a Legislative Yuan seat, was clearly unwanted news. The first thought was that if Soong ran for president he might well drain off enough votes from President Ma to give TSAI Ing-wen the victory. Even if he just ran for a legislative seat it portended to split the conservative vote (as he would be a People First Party (PFP) candidate and other PFP candidates would compete with KMT candidates if they could not agree in advance on who should compete where). 58

In July the public heard rumors to the effect that Soong and his People First Party (PFP) were not happy with their treatment by the KMT and that Soong may, in fact, run. The issue also had some interesting twists. KMT Legislator CHIU Yi stated publically that LEE Teng-hui was pushing Soong to run. The China Times reported that the DPP was involved, suggesting Soong might be premier if TSAI Ing-wen won election. 59

At first blush much of this seemed little more than wild speculation, particularly in view of the fact that Soong and his party were ideologically distant from the DPP (even more than the KMT) and that Soong and Lee were known to be bitter enemies. In any event, the KMT’s Honorary Chairman LIEN Chan invited Soong and Ma to dinner in an apparent reconciliation effort. Soong replied that he would rather not meet Ma. KMT officials quickly expressed worry the pan-blue alliance might be splitting. 60 The gravity of the situation was confirmed when Soong subsequently announced that the PFP would nominate twenty or so candidates and that it would “go its own way in the elections.” 61

The end of July, Soong gave an interview to the Liberty Times, during which he spoke of serious problems Taiwan faced. He sounded like a candidate for office. On the other hand, Soong

seemed more likely to run for the legislature either as a district or at-large candidate. He said that he wanted to gain seats for his party, enough so that it would gain the right to caucus.\textsuperscript{62}

In September, citizens of Taiwan were entertained and shocked, by a spate of WikiLeaks tidbits released about their leaders and politics. For example, according to WikiLeaks, Kaohsiung Mayor CHEN Chu reportedly tried to enlist U.S. support against what she called “judicial suppression” in Taiwan and that China (contrary to conventional wisdom) had wanted Taiwan in the World Health Assembly.\textsuperscript{63} After a few days many observers questioned if any of these scraps of information, many of which were gossip or assumed anyway by most to be true but not terribly important, would have any impact on voters four months hence.

In any case, according to WikiLeaks reports, which came mainly from cables from the American Institute in Taiwan, President Ma wanted to marginalize the elders in the party, loathed James Soong, didn’t think much of LIEN Chan’s advice, and may still be an American citizen. Further, Lien didn’t think Ma was a good candidate in 2008 and hence the KMT consulted a fortune-teller.\textsuperscript{64} Ma and Vincent Siew, according to WikiLeaks both took seriously reports of a plot by former President Chen to have them assassinated.\textsuperscript{65}

On the other side of the political divide, TSAI Ing-wen, it was said, had helped former President LEE Teng-hui devise the “two countries with a special relationship” policy vis-à-vis China when she was Lee’s advisor. Much more startling, however, was the report she was not running for the presidency in 2012 to win (but rather hoped she might win in 2016). Other revelations included: SU Tseng-chang opined Tsai was a weak leader and lacked support in the party. Frank Hsieh sent envoys to China before the 2008 election hoping to convince leaders in Beijing he was not an advocate of independence as was CHEN Shui-bian. He also said Tsai was too

\textsuperscript{62} “Interview: Soong unclear on electoral role,”\textit{Taipei Times}, July 30, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).

\textsuperscript{63} Shih Hsiu-chuan, “WIKILEAKS: Cable details Chen Chu, AIT talk,”\textit{Taipei Times}, August 25, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com). The Ma administration had taken credit for getting Taiwan into the World Health Assembly.

\textsuperscript{64} See Jens Kastner, “Taiwan still ruled by the occult,” \textit{Asia Times}, September 15, 2011 (online at atimes.com) for more information on this topic.

\textsuperscript{65} “Talk of the Day—WikiLeaks shows politicians’ true color,” Focus Taiwan News Channel, September 8, 20100 (online at focustaiwan.tw).
much a scholar and did not have much in common with the rank and file of the DPP.

III. EXTERNAL ISSUES IN THE CAMPAIGN

In contrast to the previous major election held in November 2010 comprised of five metropolitan city elections, this was a national election and foreign policy matters were a relevant part of the campaign and made a difference to voters. In question was the degree to which foreign policy issues would influence voters and to what extent Chairwoman Tsai and her party were at a disadvantage due to the DPP’s inherent provincial nature and its inclination toward protectionism and isolationism. Put another way: would Tsai and the DPP be able to employ local nationalism to counter a palpable Ma edge in the foreign arena? The two overriding external (or foreign affairs) issues that weighed on voters during the campaign were Taiwan’s relations with China and its ties with the United States. Other external affairs matters had little impact on the election.

The main “China issue” was the cross-Strait commercial relationship. The military balance in the Taiwan Strait and China’s growing threat to Taiwan constituted a second issue. Concerning relations with the United States, the ongoing question was how reliable the U.S. would be in the event of a military crisis amid in view of various pieces of evidence and a lot of commentary suggesting there was an erosion in Washington’s willingness to defend Taiwan in the event of China employing its military forces to bring about unification. Naturally Taiwan’s relations with China and the United States were connected.

In simple terms the Ma administration’s policies toward China, as far as election politics were concerned, meant arguing persuasively that China is a huge and fast growing economic power and that eschewing relations with it was unrealistic and further that doing so would do irreparable damage to Taiwan economically. Hence Ma stated repeatedly that his administration would advance economic ties with China and doing so Taiwan would benefit markedly. At the same time, to counter the DPP’s position he would be

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66. Ibid.
67. See Copper, *Taiwan’s 2010 Metropolitan Elections*, p. 61 regarding how foreign policy issues did not play in this election.
trapped by China, he promised that he would avoid political strings and would protect Taiwan's sovereignty.69

The touchstone of the Ma administration's evolving economic relationship with China was the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), an important commercial deal signed between Beijing and Taipei in mid-2010. President Ma parsed its major benefits to include increased cross-Strait trade, larger Chinese investments in Taiwan, and more tourism from China.70 He mentioned these frequently.

Besides pitching the benefits of the agreement President Ma argued that globalism has made every nation more dependent on others. Furthermore, he noted because of an agreement China signed in January 2010 creating a common market with the ten nations of Southeast Asia. The China-ASEAN Free Trade agreement indeed was a juggernaut; it was the biggest such agreement in history and one that created a regional trade zone comprised of nearly two billion people and almost two hundred billion dollars in annual trade.71 The nature of the agreement meant that Taiwan would find it difficult dealing with the countries of Southeast Asia economically without a China connection.72

Ma seemed to be on the right track inasmuch as most citizens in Taiwan (as the polls showed) believed that Taiwan benefitted from growing trade with China and that Taiwan's very impressive economic growth in 2010 and early 2011 was in considerable part the result of its growing relations across the Taiwan Strait.73

The devil is in the details. By 2010 China was already Taiwan's number one trading partner, accounting for forty percent of Taiwan's exports and the lion's share of its outward investment, esti-

69. This, of course, was not new. For an early explanation by Ma, see "Strait talking," Economist, December 30, 2009 (online at economist.com).

70. See John F. Copper, The China-Taiwan Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement: Politics, not just Economics (Singapore: East Asian Institute, 2010) for an assessment of the politics of the agreement.


72. Observers noted that Taiwan has membership in the World Trade Organization, but it was not useful in dealing with this issue. Taiwan was also a member of Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, but China's voice was so large in that organization that Taiwan could not use it to pursue its economic interests to any extent. Taiwan was not a member of any other organization that might be useful to prevent its economic isolation in East Asia.

73. See Terry Cooke, "Taiwan's Economy: Recovery with Chinese Characteristics," The Brookings Institution, November 2009 (online at brookings.edu).
mated to be an accumulated $150 billion (but probably much larger). Trade had increased by sixty-eight percent in the first four months of the year and investment was up by forty-seven percent.\(^{74}\) Allowing Chinese capital into Taiwan accrued some other advantages: it helped offset the large investments from Taiwan that have gone to China and provided capital to some industries in Taiwan that needed more investment funds. ECFA would also, some opined, normalize cross-Strait economic and trade ties.\(^{75}\)

In 2010, 1.6 million Chinese tourists visited Taiwan pouring $3 billion NTD into the local economy, or 0.72 percent of the GDP.\(^{76}\) The economic stimulus from Chinese visitors in 2011 was even larger with new and relaxed regulations including provisions allowing Chinese to come as individuals rather than only in groups. KMT officials not only spoke of the economic stimulus to Taiwan but also noted that the relationship helped Chinese “learn about democracy.”\(^{77}\)

President Ma, of course, realized that the opposition would make an issue of Taiwan’s growing dependency on China. Anticipating this Ma pointed out that there were no good prospects of increasing trade with the United States, Europe, or Japan due to their slow growth. He added, pointing to the charge that he was overseeing excessive and therefore perilous commercial ties with China, that Taiwan’s export reliance on the China market had increased from twenty-four percent to forty percent under President Chen and had increased but one percent since he took office.\(^{78}\)

If the benefits of commercial ties were easy to explain, more difficult for President Ma and the ruling party were political relations with China and China’s military threat to Taiwan. Ma had argued that commercial relations would not lead to any political agreements. Yet it appeared to many that business and politics could not be separated. Ma indeed had difficulty trying to play down the presence of more than a thousand Chinese missiles across

\(^{74}\) Janet Ong, Taiwan to Sign China Trade Pack, Deepening Trade Ties as Relations Thaw Under Ma,” Bloomberg, June 24, 2010 (online at bloomberg.com).

\(^{75}\) “Taiwan ready for Chinese investment,” China Post, May 13, 2010 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

\(^{76}\) Andrew Jacobs, “As Chinese Visit Taiwan, the Cultural Influence is Subdued,” New York Times, August 10, 2011 (online at nyt.com).

\(^{77}\) Ibid.

the Taiwan Strait aimed at Taiwan. China’s military buildup should not have continued, argued the DPP, if Ma’s overtures toward Beijing were really working. China’s missiles, especially the increasing numbers of them, constituted an existential threat to Taiwan according to the DPP and many other observers as well. Hence, Taiwan’s national defense policies seemed to constitute a campaign weakness for the Ma administration.79

On the other hand, Ma argued that he could protect Taiwan’s sovereignty better than Tsai and the DPP and there seemed to be good evidence that he could. Still the question remained: could he convince the public of this? One element of Ma’s case was that the China military threat was a product of the Chen administration provoking China. He also cited America’s commitment to Taiwan, U.S. weapons sales, and the improved status of Taiwan’s military.80

In October, President Ma announced that he was seeking a peace accord with China. He posited the proposal in the context of Taiwan’s need for security and opposition criticism that he had overseen a deterioration in Taiwan’s defenses.81 At first glance it appeared that Ma was doing just what the DPP had warned about—allowing economic links to meld into political ties. DPP leaders called the proposal “naïve” and “playing with fire.”82 TSAI Ing-wen accused Ma of risking Taiwan’s sovereignty and its democratic values and compared it to China’s deal with Tibet in 1951.83

Upon further observation, however, it seemed Ma may have outmaneuvered the DPP. He spoke of the peace agreement being reached within a decade, which might thus be seen as something he was bequeathing to a future administration (which might be the DPP). Ma also promised a referendum on the issue.84 The DPP liked referendums so could hardly fault Ma for that. Ma also

79. Ma made the case that China has stated that it will reduce its missiles. See “Taiwan welcomes Wen’s remarks on missiles,” China Post, September 15, 2010 (online at chinapost.com.tw). However, nothing has materialized on this comment. See Natalie Tso, “Taiwan Will Deploy Missiles, Despite Improved Relations with China,” Voice of America, September 16, 2010 (online at voanews.com).
80. Andrew N.D. Yang, “Mainland China’s Military and Taiwan’s Countermeasures,” Brookings Institution, August 2011 (online at brookings.edu).
81. “Taiwan’s Ma seeks China peace accord,” Associated Press, October 17, 2011 (online at associatedpress.com).
84. Ibid.
pointed out that the DPP had proposed a similar deal in February 2004 when CHEN Shui-bian was president. Finally, Ma linked the proposal to his "three noes" policy; hence it could hardly be seen as sacrificing Taiwan’s sovereignty. Some called it a brilliant tactic on Ma’s part since it showed the KMT was "in command" in dealing with China.  

Opinion polls indicated that the public favored the agreement.

On the campaign trail President Ma’s plans to deal with China’s growing military remained generally unaltered from past campaigns. Ma had stated his policy succinctly before and during the 2008 election campaign. It was called the "three noes" policy: no reunification, no independence, and no use of force. Each of these tenets of policy enjoyed broad public support during the 2008 campaign. Underscoring this policy Ma and KMT candidates frequently asked: Do you want to die or wish your sons and daughters to die in a war? Promoting peace and the status quo also seemed to have resonance throughout 2010 and 2011.

Still President Ma had to worry that voters might perceive that he was too close to Beijing. The DPP at every opportunity portrayed him as doing exactly that.

Ma’s salvation was the fact that formulating a China policy was much more difficult for Chairwoman Tsai. Tsai had pretty much avoided the issue of relations with China until mid-2011. As a candidate for election in 2010, she claimed that this was an external matter and did not relate to her seeking a metropolitan city mayorship. Later, even after she won the party’s nomination for the presidential race, she said little about China. She promised to formulate the DPP’s China policy at a later date.

Finally, in June Tsai announced her long awaited China policy, which she said was based on inputs from the New Frontier Foundation and considerable thought given to the issue. She asserted that cross-Strait issues must be put into the context of relations with Eu-

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87. During the campaign in 2008 Ma spoke of one hundred years of peace if he were to serve as president for eight years. See “Eight years for 100 years of peace: Ma,” China Post, January 17, 2008 (online at chinapost.com.tw). He spoke of this again during this campaign.

88. Copper, Taiwan’s 2010 Metropolitan Elections, p. 63.
_boundary, the U.S., Japan, and other countries. She said: “We cannot allow political conditions to narrow our space and we need international strategic thinking.” She declared peace was her central objective, but also an international responsibility. She claimed that the Ma administration had sought “peace toward unification” and that the KMT’s approach was too historical. She declared that developing relations with China must start with the recognition of a “Taiwanese identity” and Taiwanese values.  

When former representative to the U.S., Joseph Wu, suggested that cross-Strait relations would be given “less weight” in a DPP administration, Tsai contradicted his statement. But when asked about the 1992 consensus (an agreement reached between WANG Daohan of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait and KOO Chen-fu, head of the Straits Exchange Foundation in Taiwan to the effect that both sides accepted the one-China principle, but could have their own definition of “China”), she pretty much dodged the question; she said she had discussed this many times. She did, however, note that the consensus was a “fabrication” and could not be used resolve any conflict. HSU Hsin-liang commented at the time that cross-Strait policy was the party’s Achilles Heel. Other DPP stalwarts said that Tsai should stop being vague.

In any case China did not like her discourse. WANG Yi, director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council in China stated that should TSAI Ing-wen win the election and repudiate the 1992 Consensus implementation of ECFA would be suspended. Wang declared, in response to a question about China’s missiles, that there would be no issues of independence, missiles, or the military if MA Ying-jeou and the KMT won the election.” Clearly Wang was rooting for Ma and the KMT.

In August, Tsai added a new tenet to her and the DPP’s cross strait policy: a “Taiwan consensus” (as opposed to a consensus on one China). She said she would start with the status quo and build a “democratic, non-partisan consensus.” She noted the “so-called 1992 consensus” did not exist until 2000 when SU Chi, the former

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90. Ibid., p. 12.
head of the National Security Council, invented it. She also said she would present ECFA to the legislature for review. Subsequently moderating her statements she said that she would "sit down with related parties and discuss the issue."  

Tsai elaborated saying that a "real consensus" should be constructed and it would make the '92 consensus irrelevant. She declared her consensus should be reached democratically as only then it would have meaning. She also argued China trade should be put into the context of Taiwan’s trade with other countries. She said that Ma’s policies had "boxed in" Taiwan and he had not done enough to sign free trade agreements with other countries.

Wang responded saying that Tsai was "unrealistic and irresponsible." He declared that China would never agree, adding that the "92 consensus" was the "foundation upon which ECFA was built." The question for those assessing Taiwan’s election politics was: would this disagreement, especially if it continued or escalated, give the KMT and President Ma more votes or less (by causing a backlash)?

Soon after this Tsai backtracked and iterated a desire to reach some working relationship with China. Tsai’s campaign office replied to Wang’s statements saying that the DPP was willing to work with China "irrespective of the '92 consensus." Tsai then stated that there are "many olive branches and good will" in her policy and that she hoped it would be looked at from a higher level.

Meanwhile SU Chi stated that he had indeed coined the term "'92 consensus" personally and the term was not actually used at the time; but he asserted that there was a spirit of consensus at the meeting in 1992, otherwise it could not have taken place. He added there were many follow-up meetings that assumed that a consensus had been reached. Certainly there was common ground established, Su asserted. He further stated that the idea of a consensus was the

94. Chris Wang, “Tsai details DPP’s cross-strait policies,” Taipei Times, August 24, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
95. “DPP chief denies '92 consensus, calls for new mechanism,” Focus Taiwan News Channel, August 23, 2011 (online at focustaiwan.com).
98. Ibid.
basis for President Ma’s election victory in 2008 and thus reflected the public will.\textsuperscript{100}

President Ma then weighed in on the matter. He noted that President CHEN Shui-bian had twice registered support for the “92 consensus”—once in 2000 when he told a group of U.S. guests that he supported it and again in 2006 when Chen repeated to Ma what he had said in 2000. Ma added that Chen’s statement can still be found on the Presidential Office website.\textsuperscript{101}

Soon after this Chairwoman Tsai released her “Ten Year Policy Program”—that included statements on cross-strait policy. She said she would promote relations with China for mutual benefit while avoiding economic dependence. The eighteen-chapter document, however, didn’t get much notice from the media or the public, probably because much of it had been said before and it was too vague to excite supporters or even critics.\textsuperscript{102} Subsequently more than half of respondents to a public opinion survey said they had no idea about the proposal. More than a quarter said they knew of the proposal but did not understand it.\textsuperscript{103} Clearly Tsai was having difficulty communicating her China policy.

Tsai also had trouble dealing with Beijing’s subtle efforts to sway the election in Ma’s favor. China stepped up buying produce to help farmers, directed its tourists into KMT areas, and suggested tourism may drop off if Tsai and the DPP won the election. Meanwhile Chinese officials requested the Taiwan business community in China support Ma with money and votes.\textsuperscript{104}

Chairwoman Tsai’s China policy remained a handicap for her campaign. As voting day came closer, Tsai, seemingly in desperation, declared that relations with China would not stagnate or regress, but would advance—based on her administration’s “Taiwan consensus.” She even stated, referring to the “little three links,”

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{100} Su Chi, “The 1992 Consensus was not conjured from thin air,” \textit{Want China Times}, August 27, 2011 (online at wantchinatimes.com).
  \item \textsuperscript{101} “Ma claims Chen Shui-bian backs ‘1992 consensus,’” \textit{China Post}, August 28, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
  \item \textsuperscript{102} “Tsai unveils China policy platform,” \textit{Want China Times}, August 23, 2011 (online at wantchinatimes.com).
  \item \textsuperscript{103} Survey on the Presidential Election in 2012 and the Evaluation of the Presidential Candidates,” Global Views Survey Research Center, September 23, 2011 (online at taiwansecurity.org). According to the survey 50.4 percent had no idea about the proposal; 19.4 percent said they understood it; 26.4 percent said they knew about it but did not understand it.
  \item \textsuperscript{104} Sreeram Chaulia, “Dead heat election raises Taiwan stakes,” \textit{Asia Times}, December 3, 2011 (online at atimes.com).
\end{itemize}
that she had helped "lift the wall" barring business with China when she was head of the Mainland Affairs Council. KMT spokespersons chided Tsai's comments saying that she had assailed Ma for pursuing more friendly relations with China while the Chen administration had eight years to do something and only made things worse. China responded saying that the DPP might threaten the hard-won state of peace. A spokesperson at the Taiwan Affairs Office, said returning to the days of CHEN Shui-bian would be a disaster and that trashing the view of "one country on either side of the Taiwan Strait" would threaten peace. Clearly Beijing was not accepting Tsai's overtures.

Just as President Ma took the position that he was better able to deal with China he said the same of relations with the United States. He noted that the Chen administration had very badly sullied relations with Washington and that he had in the past four years repaired the damage. Helping Ma make this argument, U.S. officials on numerous occasions confirmed what Ma said.

Yet there remained the matter of a growing lack of confidence in the United States. During the run-up to the election many Taiwanese citizens judged whether relations with the United States were good or not by whether Washington was willing to sell arms to Taiwan or not and/or if the Obama administration remained committed to protecting Taiwan from its one threat—China. Human rights, democratization, and other issues that had affected the relationship in the past were hardly heard.

Regarding U.S. arms sales, a review of the recent background is instructive. In April 2001 the George W. Bush administration announced a package of arms sales valued at $18 billion to Taiwan in the wake of the EP-3 Incident and in what was said to be an effort to help Taiwan balance China's rapid military growth. The deal

106. "China says Taiwan's opposition a threat to peace," Reuters, December 26, 2011 (online at reuters.com).
107. See, for example, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Brent Scowcroft and David Ignatius, America and the World: Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy (New York: Basic Books, 2008), pp. 122-23. State Department officials on numerous occasions have remarked that tension in the Taiwan Strait has subsided since Ma Ying-jeou became president in 2008.
included four Kidd class destroyers, twelve P-3C Orion anti-submarine aircraft, eight diesel submarines, and an array of other weapons. This was the largest U.S. weapons sale promised to Taiwan since the first Bush administration when the U.S. sold Taiwan one hundred and fifty F-16 jet fighters. President Bush subsequently stated that the U.S. had an obligation to defend Taiwan with “whatever it took.”

However, the sale became the victim of politics in Taiwan with the Nationalist Party, then in opposition, arguing that Taiwan could not afford such a large expenditure considering the Chen administration’s mismanagement of the economy. KMT leaders added that the price of some items was too high and Taiwan should bargain to get the costs down. The KMT also made the point that Taiwan would not need so many weapons if President Chen would stop provoking Beijing with his statements about independence that caused China to allocate more of its military to intimidate Taiwan.

President Chen blamed the KMT for blocking the sale and making Taiwan vulnerable. Chen, on the other hand, had his own reasons for not pushing the sales. The fact was that weapons procurement would benefit Mainland Chinese who occupied top positions in the military (thus it became an ethnic issue). Moreover Chen had not maintained good relations with the defense establishment.

With the Ma administration in power in 2008 the politics of arms procurement shifted and so did the arguments made by both sides. The thrust of the opposition’s (now the DPP) position was: one, Ma wanted to sell out Taiwan (via reunification) and, therefore, he didn’t really want to buy the weapons. Two, Ma assumed, mistakenly said his opponents, that by pursuing closer economic (and political) ties with China, China would reduce its weapons aimed at Taiwan (and so far China had not).


111. For details, see Hickey, Foreign Policy Making in Taiwan, pp. 63-64.

112. Interestingly the Ministry of National Defense went on its own to pursue the arms sales thus creating a fight within the Chen administration. See Hickey, Foreign Policy Making in Taiwan, p. 36

113. See Chris Wang and Shih Hsiu-chuan, “Tsai slams Ma’s “simplistic” proposal,” Taipei Times, October 21, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com) regarding the DPP position that this issue was tied to Ma’s peace proposal.
The opposition also suggested that Ma during his election campaign had argued that President Chen and the DPP had ruined relations with the United States and that he, Ma, could repair the relationship and thus Taiwan could and would benefit from better relations with Washington under his presidency. They asserted he had not demonstrated that as the still delayed weapons sales proved. Ma replied that the U.S. had announced a $6.4 billion sale in January 2010, Beijing had protested the sale, and the deliveries of essential arms were assured.\textsuperscript{114}

In any case, in late June the issue took on more gravity when Taiwan’s ministry of defense announced a test of a new supersonic anti-ship missile designed to offset China’s rapid naval developments had failed. Making the situation worse, this came after a number of previous setbacks.\textsuperscript{115} Meanwhile there were reports in the media to the effect that the U.S. would turn down Taiwan’s request to buy advanced F-16 fighter planes, though it was uncertain if this was because of bureaucratic problems or because the U.S. had agreed to refurbish and upgrade the F-16A/Bs in lieu of selling F-16C/D (a more advanced version of the plane Taiwan had asked for).\textsuperscript{116}

In an effort not to appear derelict in maintaining Taiwan’s defenses, President Ma, from the cockpit of one of Taiwan’s locally-made fighters, announced that seventy-one of Taiwan’s Indigenous Defense Fighters would be upgraded to carry better weapons, including an anti-radiation missile.\textsuperscript{117} Ma told U.S. visitors and the local media that he was both working to realize better relations with China while keeping up Taiwan’s defenses, which had been neglected for eight years before he became president.\textsuperscript{118}

Within days, it was announced that Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation in the U.S. was awarded a contract for $48.6 million to build four UH60M helicopters for Taiwan to be delivered in 2013 as part of the sixty helicopters that were part of the $6.4 million agreement

\textsuperscript{114} See Charley Keyes, “U.A. announces $6.4 billion arms deal with Taiwan,” CNN, January 29, 2010 (online at cnn.com) for the weapons included, which included patriot missiles and helicopters among other items.

\textsuperscript{115} “Isle navy missile flops again,” The Weekly Standard, June 29, 2011 (online at weeklystandard.com).

\textsuperscript{116} J. Michael Cole, “MND denies claims new F-16 bid failed,” Taipei Times, June 29, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).

\textsuperscript{117} “Taiwan unveils upgraded fighter jet,” Associated Press, June 30, 2011.

\textsuperscript{118} “Taiwan cannot neglect national defense: Ma,” China Post, June 30, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
reached in January 2010. Other weapons were not mentioned; the reason was said to be President Obama’s desire to avoid a dispute with China. It was rumored the submarines and some other weapons were not going to be delivered as well.

At this time Ma reversed an earlier statement that he did not want to become dependent on the U.S. for weapons, apparently calculating that it was now a better strategy to admit that Taiwan sorely needed U.S. arms sales as well as Washington’s verbal support. The DPP charged that Ma was employing scare tactics about the danger of war as a campaign ploy. DPP spokespersons parenthetically noted that China had tried to intimidate Taiwan in 1996 and it had backfired.

In the meantime, the U.S. Congress, which for some time seemed to be in hibernation on the Taiwan issue, came out in support of Taiwan. A number of Senators and one hundred eighty-one members of the House of Representatives called for the sale of F-16C/D fighter aircraft to Taiwan. Some doubted this would move the Obama administration, but the Congressional support was nevertheless good for President Ma. In any event the administration soon announced that a decision would be made by October 1, 2011.

On September 13, two of Taiwan’s F-5C fighters crashed. Shortly after that the U.S. announced an arms package to Taiwan that included upgrading its F-16 fighters and some other weapons, but not the sale of the sixty-six F-16C/Ds Taiwan wanted. The DPP chided President Ma for not having as much clout with Washington as he led people to believe and that China had pressured the U.S. not to make that sale. It was also reported that the Obama administration wanted this to be the last sale of arms to Taiwan.

Meanwhile, Chairwoman Tsai took a delegation on a nine-day visit to the United States to meet with U.S. officials to discuss her China policy among other issues while seeking to build support

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120. “US to upgrade F-16s, KMT lawmaker says,” *Taipei Times*, July 4, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
among Taiwan residents in the U.S.\textsuperscript{127} Tsai was well received by Congress and by various groups elsewhere in the U.S. However, it was reported that she was treated badly by the Obama administration as U.S. officials harbored serious doubts about whether she was willing or able to maintain stability in cross-Strait relations. Obama advisors even warned, in what became shocking news to Tsai and the DPP, that her victory might raise tensions with China.\textsuperscript{128} A pro-DPP think-tank in response stated that some in the Obama government do not trust the DPP and would be working to help President Ma get reelected.\textsuperscript{129}

Less than two weeks before the election, observers of Taiwan’s politics opined that recent U.S. actions clearly indicted Washington wanted Ma to win. They cited the recent U.S. decision to grant visa-free travel to Taiwan’s citizens and it sending high officials to Taiwan for visits.\textsuperscript{130} The U.S., of course, denied the charge but was not very convincing in doing so. Chairwoman Tsai declared: “Foolhardy or malicious, inadvertent or by design the U.S. has taken sides in next month’s election.”\textsuperscript{131} A few days later, the American Institute in Taiwan (Washington’s representative office) gave a briefing to the National Security Council (an advisory body to the president). Again observers said the U.S. was showing a preference for Ma and the KMT, especially since this move came so close to Election Day.\textsuperscript{132}

As voting time drew near, it seemed apparent to most voters that both China and the United States wanted Ma and the KMT to win the election. The question was: would either or both taking sides during the campaign help the incumbents or would it generate a backlash? It seemed only the voters could answer that question.

\textsuperscript{127} “Tsai’s 90day trip to US starts with delay,” \textit{China Post}, September 13, 2011 (online at chinapost.com).

\textsuperscript{128} Anna Fifield, “US concerned about Taiwan candidate,” \textit{Financial Times}, September 15, 2011 (online at ft.com).

\textsuperscript{129} He Ming-guo, “US biased against Tsai Ing-wen: DPP thinktank,” \textit{Want China Times}, September 24, 2011 (online at wantchinatimes.com).

\textsuperscript{130} “Highest-ranking U.S. official to visit Taiwan in a decade,” CNA, December 7, 2011 (online at cna.com.tw). The official was Daniel Poneman, deputy secretary of energy.


IV. FORECASTING THE ELECTION’S RESULTS

During the evolution of Taiwan’s election politics, there have been a host of efforts to devise a theory or theories to predict the winners and losers of elections.\textsuperscript{133} Among the most popular have been the “watermelon theory” (that voters want to finish a delicious watermelon once they have started), or, put another way, they tend to vote as they did in the most recent election(s) since they are probably satisfied with whom they voted for or do not want to admit they made a mistake, and the “pendulum theory” (that assumes that governing is very difficult in Taiwan and that losing parties usually regroup and fix their campaign strategies while winners become over confident, fight the last war in the campaign, which usually doesn’t work as circumstances and issues change, or become lazy). The two, of course are opposing or contradictory theories.

Another theory (or something that should be considered self-evident to those who look at Taiwan’s elections) is the “pocketbook theory,” namely that voters cast votes for a candidate or candidates that they think can improve their economic situation.\textsuperscript{134} This is sometimes referred to as an economic theory of elections. Another “economic theory” often heard in Taiwan is that the candidate(s) with the most money will win. Some observers assume that Taiwan’s election campaigns are very similar to those conducted in the United States (from where Taiwan’s politicians learned about democracy as well as election tactics) and that due to the costs of campaigning, especially buying television and other advertising that the richest candidates can afford, they, therefore, have an advantage. Some say that vote buying, which is also expensive, is an integral part of Taiwan’s election contests and although illegal persists in the form of candidates giving gifts (as a part of Taiwan’s culture) to introduce themselves or simply as a matter of good manners.\textsuperscript{135}

Some election analysts look at demographics to see any changes in population of various voting groups such as age and

\textsuperscript{133} For a more detailed discussion of these theories and ideas about predicting Taiwan’s elections, see Copper, Taiwan’s 2010 Metropolitan and City Elections, pp. 15-19.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{135} Vote buying can certainly be seen as a custom and as a form of political advertising, even as a means whereby candidates introduce themselves. That it is not just bribery is suggested by the fact that often candidates give the same gifts or the same amount of money as others. Also the claim has been made that vote buying did not have much of a deleterious affect on Taiwan’s democratization. See Alan M. Wachman, Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994), pp. 242-43.
ethnic groups and their shifts in views of the parties and the candidates. Then there are those who look at changes in liberal versus conservative views that might impact the election. Another theory is what is called the "critical elections theory" (meaning that one watershed or decisive election has a strong, perhaps decisive, impact on several elections that follow). Then there is the rather simple view that if one party (knowing Taiwan has essentially a two party or two bloc system, though there are four or more operating political parties) splits the other party or bloc it will win. Finally, regional voting patterns are noted in campaign strategies as are commanding or dominant issues at the time.

Another view of Taiwan's politics that has been suggested as a theory or predictor of elections is the construct that campaigns, and this was mentioned during this campaign, divides the campaign platforms into three main concerns: national identification, constitutionalism, and public policy. Since DPP supporters vote based more on local identification they are more exclusivist and more united at election time. The KMT focuses more on government and is less exclusivist. This analysis explains who will more likely win if it is possible to define the trends and also why the KMT has suffered from splits that have caused it to lose important elections whereas the DPP often seems factionalized but in the end is usually not.

136. Basically conservative and liberal have similar meanings to the United States. Conservatives favor smaller government, lower taxes and less welfare, and are pro-business. Liberals favor larger government and more social spending. Taiwan is basically a conservative society and this dichotomy favors the pan-blue parties. On the other hand, conservative and liberal are also defined in terms of pro-unification versus independence and this dichotomy favors the pan-green parties, though most people in Taiwan favor the status quo rather than either unification or independence.


138. This is sometimes known as the divide and conquer strategy. The KMT lost elections in 1994 (Taipei mayor) and 2000 (president) to Chen Shui-bian because the KMT vote split.

139. According to the regional voting theory the northern part of Taiwan belongs to the KMT or the blue camp; the southern part of the island is DPP or pan-green territory. One or the other can win an election by winning central Taiwan or by making inroads into the other's area.

140. Hu Fu, Academic Sinica scholar devised this theory of Taiwan's politics. See, for example, Hu Fu, "The Electoral Mechanism and Political Change in Taiwan," in Steve Tsang (ed.), In the Shadow of China: Political Developments in Taiwan since 1949 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993), p. 134. Following the logic of this theory James Soong running in the election will have a more serious impact on the prospects
None of the theories discussed above proved especially useful in predicting or even assessing the last major set of elections—the metropolitan city elections (mayors, city councils and borough chiefs) held in November 2010.\textsuperscript{141} Had the DPP won the election, its victory would have supported the watermelon theory since it had won a string of local and replacement elections (for legislators that left the Legislative Yuan) before that. The pendulum theory didn’t appear to be in play, or at least this could not be demonstrated to be operating since it was uncertain when the starting point should be. In addition, the KMT victory was not a clear-cut one. The KMT could claim it prevailed based on the fact that it won three of five metropolitan mayorships and this is what was talked about most during the campaign and after. Also, two of the big guns of the DPP were defeated: TSAI Ing-wen (in Taipei county) and SU Cheng-chang (in Taipei city). On the other hand, the DPP won in terms of total votes cast (their candidates having won by large margins in Kaohsiung and Tainan with the KMT winning by much smaller margins in Taipei County, Taipei City and Taichung City).\textsuperscript{142}

The advocates of the various theories also had difficulty with the fact that the KMT had a big issue on its side in these elections that it probably wouldn’t have in 2012, or at least not so much—the matter of corruption that infested the CHEN Shui-bian presidency, which was underscored by his trial and conviction (along with his wife, son and daughter-in-law and a number of cronies). This was very hurtful to the DPP and its candidates running in the 2010 election.\textsuperscript{143} Balancing this to some extent the DPP had an advantage in these elections in that it has generally done better in local elections and is reported to be more adept at dealing with local issues and it did not have to deal with national issues—notably relations with China.\textsuperscript{144}

During the 2012 election campaign the two economic theories appeared to favor the KMT and President, at least at first. As noted earlier, economic growth figures and other data on the economy early on favored the KMT. In the previous election this was true

\textsuperscript{141} See Copper, Taiwan’s 2010 Metropolitan City Elections, pp. 60-66.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid. Both Su and Tsai had been in important positions in the Chen administration and were associated with Chen’s corruption, Tsai less so. Both supported Chen during his trials, though they eventually disassociated themselves from Chen.
\textsuperscript{144} Ibid., pp. 62-63.
also, but it was to a large extent offset by the DPP's quite adroit and well orchestrated strategy of publicizing data indicating that Taiwan's economic growth favored the rich, large companies as opposed to small companies, and north Taiwan rather than south Taiwan. This time this appeared to be working less effectively even though spectacular economic growth faded into mediocre (for Taiwan) performance close to Voting Day.

The amount of funds in the parties' coffers during this election campaign favored the KMT. While the DPP took in more money in 2010 according to the Control Yuan, the KMT raised more in 2011. The KMT's edge, it was reported, was NT$240 million (US$8.28 million) compared to the DPP's NT$ 190 million. The KMT's advantage was offset to some degree by the fact the Taiwan Solidarity Union (an ally of the DPP) took in NT$21.5 million compared to the People First Party that brought in NT$10.9 million and the New Party with NT$8.7 million (both KMT allies in the pan-blue bloc). The DPP received a larger percentage from individual donors and civic organizations compared to the KMT, which received more from businesses, though these differences were not large.

The "splittist" or the divide and conquer theory appeared prominently during the campaign to offer an explanation for the results if Ma were to lose the election or not do as well as expected. When James Soong entered the race there was widespread debate to the effect that he would divide the blue bloc vote and throw the election to Tsai. (This issue is discussed in greater detail below.)

In addition to the theories propounded to predict elections in Taiwan, there has long been a plethora of opinion surveys to anticipate the outcome of elections. This election was no exception. The polls, however, as usual, suffered from biased survey questions and were subject to very different, in some cases opposite, interpretations. The fact that Chinese (by culture) do not like opinion polls and, compared to Westerners, do not think polls are accurate or say very much accounts for this to some degree. So does the fact that

145. Ibid., p. 55.
146. See "Control Yuan details money donated in '10 to KMT, DPP," China Post, August 27, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw); Shih Hsiu-chuan, "KMT overtakes DPP in donations," Taipei Times, August 27, 2011 (online at taiptitimes.com).
147. See Li Ming-hsien, "KMT voters urged to avoid pan-blue split in New Taipei," Want China Times, October 10, 1011 (online at wantchinatimes.com).
148. Having said this, the polls in Taiwan's recent elections have been quite accurate, including the polls taken before the most recent election, the 2010 metropolitan elections. See Ibid, p. 59.
many polling organizations report results that favor their candidate(s). Still the polls have been generally right in predicting Taiwan’s recent elections.

Going back to early 2010, President Ma did not fare well in the polls, losing to SU Tseng-chang and tying TSAI Ing-wen on the question: who would you vote for?149 In addition, Ma had a considerably higher dissatisfaction rating than satisfaction rating when compared with Tsai.150 The main reasons for Ma’s low poll ratings were the economy and the government’s handling of natural disasters, among other reasons.151

This changed in late April after a public debate between Ma and Tsai on the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), which most pundits and the polls said Ma won. After the debate Ma bettered Tsai on the question: whom do you support in the presidential election? In fact, the margin was considerable.152 Observers, of course doubted this Ma advantage would last very long.

President Ma, however, got another big boost in the polls after the November metropolitan city elections, ostensibly due to the fact that Tsai and Su both lost their bids for a mayorship and the fact it was unclear who the DPP’s presidential candidate would be at the time. Tsai was the most popular among opposition presidential aspirants, but a number of pundits and even DPP stalwarts said she was disqualified by her election loss. Also mentioned was her lack of experience and the fact she had not been a party member for very long.153 In any case, on the question of which candidate you would support, Ma beat Tsai by fourteen percentage points and Su

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151. The public’s view of Ma’s less than deft handling of several disasters, the most important being typhoons (notably Typhoon Morakot in August 2009) influenced earlier elections, including the most recent important election in 2010. See Copper, Taiwan’s 2010 Metropolitan City Elections, p. 8.

152. Ibid. Ma led Tsai by more than ten points (38 percent to 27 percent) on April 25: The Prediction Market (a mock buying and selling of shares in their candidates) at National Chengchi University provided a similar reading. See Ko Shu-ling, “Prediction market shows boost for Ma poll hopes,” Taipei Times, April 30, 2010 (online at taipeitimes.com).

153. Tsai was a newcomer to the party, joining in 2004. Most other top leaders had been members much longer, many of them since the party was formed in 1886.
by seventeen according to a pro-KMT pollster shortly after the election.  

In January 2011, Ma bested Tsai in another pro-KMT poll by eleven percentage points and Su by eight (and WANG Jin-pyng by twenty-three). Ma also won in a university-sponsored poll allowing participants to “buy” (though not with real money) “shares of predictions.” Two months later a different poll showed Ma defeating Tsai by six percentage points and Su by four. In these polls Ma was advantaged by the fact the DPP had not yet picked its candidate. In almost all of the polls there were a large portion of undecided voters—around one-third.

The DPP’s selection process began in April. During televised debates among the DPP candidates, the polls indicted most viewers thought Tsai had performed better than Su. Tsai’s good performance and the attention that the event focused on her gave Tsai a boost in the polls. Tsai was neck and neck with Ma in several presidential election polls and ahead of Ma in the Apple Daily poll done at that time. She was clearly viewed as better than Su against Ma.

In early May, the Global Views Survey Research Center conducted its first poll on the January 2012 election. Asking who is better in terms of personal characteristics, Ma won over Tsai on political experience and performance (45.5% to 28.3%) and on integrity, honesty and trust (38.8% to 35.0%); Tsai won on public communications (41.4% to 34.3%) and on major policies, leadership and team management (42.1% to 31.4%). Ma won on safeguarding the interest of Taiwan and peace across the Taiwan Strait (48.3% to 31.7%), reducing political confrontation and promoting social unity (49.3% to 34.7%), and on promoting economic development while ensuring social justice (41.17% to 36.2%). Tsai won

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156. Ko Shu-kun “Center says odds on Ma winning,” Taipei Times, January 25, 2011 (online at taipetimes.com).
158. See Rich Chang, “Polls show Tsai ahead of Su after televised appearance,” Taipei Times, April 11, 2010 (online at taipetimes.com); “Tsai, Ma running neck and neck,” China Post, April 29, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw). The China Times, TVBS and United Daily News, all showed Ma and Tsai within one percentage point of each other. See Tsai, Ma Running Neck-to-Neck,” Taiwan Security, April 29, 2011 (online at taiwansecurity.org).
on implementing judicial reforms and eradicating corruption (39.1% to 34.1%). On the question, if you voted today, whom would you vote for, the result was: Ma 38.9% to Tsai 38.6%.

Tsai’s bump in the polls as a result of her nomination, however, soon faded. During late May, June, and July, various polling organizations gave Ma a lead over Tsai from two to six points. One poll recorded Ma’s support to be higher among women (forty-six percent for Ma and thirty-two percent for Tsai as compared to men who favored Ma forty-three percent to Tsai’s forty percent), young (age 20 to 29) and middle aged voters (40 to 59) and voters in north and central Taiwan.

Toward the end of the period, Ma’s lead in most polls moved toward the larger end of the spread. Tsai accused one polling organization, Global Views, which had showed Ma’s lead as increasing, of cooperation with the KMT. A DPP spokesperson, however, said that its own internal polls (not published) were consistent with Global Views polls the previous month.

In July, when reports circulated that James Soong might enter the race as a candidate for a legislative seat and might even run for president, the gap between Ma and Tsai in the polls narrowed. It was presumed that because Soong (and his party the PFP) and Ma (and the KMT) were ideologically close, and Soong and LIEN Chan in 2004 had run together, that Soong would take a considerable amount of votes away from Ma. However, the polls did not confirm that; rather they indicated Soong would take only a small


160. The China Post gave Ma a six-point lead in May. See “Ma enjoys narrow margin over Tsai: Poll,” China Post, May 14, 2011 (online at chinatpost.com.tw). The Global Views Survey Research Center poll done in May gave Ma a 38.9 percentage points to 38.6 percentage (just 0.3 difference).

161. “Ma enjoys six-point leader over Tsai, ‘UDN’ poll says,” Taipei Times, July 16, 2011 (online at taitime.com).


163. Vincent Y. Chao, “Ma takes slight lead over Tsai in poll,” Taipei Times, June 11, 2011 (online at taitime.com).
portion of the vote from Ma. The possible explanation was that Soong possessed, in the eyes of the public, strong traits in the areas of vision of the country’s future, leadership for crisis management, and safeguarding the nation’s sovereignty, that were qualities where Tsai exceeded Ma; thus Soong competed with her more than it appeared might be the case.

Meanwhile the polls reflected stronger public support for KMT candidates than DPP candidates running for seats in the Legislative Yuan. In July the polls said the KMT was preferred by a margin of thirty-one percent to the DPP’s twenty-five percent and the PFP’s one percent. In August the polls showed the public preferred the KMT by thirty-two percent to twenty-six percent for the DPP. The PFP garnered two percent support. When asked specifically which party you would vote for on the party vote, thirty-six percent said the KMT, thirty-one percent said the DPP, eight percent replied the PFP, and two percent said the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU). Other parties received one percent or less support. Undecided voters were thirty-nine percent (down from forty-one in July) on the question which party candidate they would vote for (and down twenty percent on party preference). The undecided category being large meant the election results were difficult to predict, though considerably less than the previous month apparently due to the “Soong effect.”

A TVBS poll (considered pro-KMT) taken the very end of August showed Ma defeating Tsai by forty-six percent to thirty-seven percent. Soong registered seventeen percent. When James Soong was included Ma won by forty percent to Tsai’s thirty-two percent. Soong took only one percent more from Ma than from Tsai. On


165. See ibid for the traits the public evaluated high for each of the candidates. A poll done by TVBS confirms the fact that Soong did not hurt Ma as much as might be expected and also hurt Tsai. According to the TVBS poll the “Soong factor” increased the number of undecided voters and that the data should damaged Tsai more than Ma. See “TVBS Opinion Poll on 2012 Presidential Election,” TVBS, August 15, 2011 (online at taiwansecurity.org). However, according to another poll sixteen percent of Ma supporters said they may change their mind and vote for Soong; thirteen percent of Tsai supporters may change their mind and vote for Soong. See “UDN Opinion Polls on 2012 Presidential and Legislative Elections,” United Daily News, August 15, 2011 (online at taiwansecurity.org). This poll indicates Soong entering the race would hurt Ma a bit more.

166. Ibid. This poll was very similar to others taken in the two to three months earlier by different polling organizations.
issues that favored one presidential candidate or the other or to one party or the other, thirty-seven percent approved of the 1992 consensus while thirty-one percent opposed. Forty percent said relations with China were friendly as opposed to thirty-two percent who described the relationship as hostile. Sixty-seven percent said they favored the status quo regarding relations with China, a considerably higher percentage than in recent years (with sixteen percent leaning toward independence and five percent leaning toward unification). Public opinion on these issues advantaged Ma and the KMT.

In September, a new organization, the Taiwanese Association for Pacific Ocean Development, got into the polling business, promising to release an opinion survey on the presidential race monthly. Its first poll based on 1,600 respondents showed President Ma would win the election by a margin of 41.1 percent to 39.4 percent for Tsai. If Soong were in the contest Ma would get 33.1 percent of the vote compared to 32.4 percent for Tsai, with Soong picking up 12.7 percent of the popular vote. Two findings in this poll that the poll takers called unexpected were: Ma won over Tsai on the issue of who could best defend Taiwan’s interests in the face of a threat from China and supporters of independence exceeded the number that supported the status quo.

During September and October, Ma was fairly consistently predicted to win reelection according to various polls, though the margins varied considerably. There were, however, some noticeable exceptions. In late September, Global Views Survey Research Center published a poll that showed that Tsai would win the presidential bid in a three-way race (with James Soong in the contest) by


168. Loa Lok-sin, “Ma edges Tsai in new TAPOD poll,” Taipei Times, September 5, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com). The officials of TAPOD said the much higher than usual support for independence probably reflected Ma using the term Republic of China so frequently.

169. ERA Survey Research Center reported 35.2 percent, 28.6 percent and 14.3 percent for Ma, Tsai and Soong respectively. China Times reported 38.8, 31.5 and 22.7 respectively. GVSRC got 35.8, 36.0 and 10.0—the only polls showing Tsai winning. TVBS indicated 40 percent, 30 percent and 14 percent. In another China Times poll the result was 38.5, 35.1 and 12.1. See Taiwan Security Organization (online at taisecurity.org) for further information on these polls.
a very slim margin.\textsuperscript{170} In October and again in early November, the 
Taipei Times (a pro-DPP newspaper) published stories citing opinion 
polls indicating that Ma’s lead over Tsai was increasing.\textsuperscript{171} A 
few days after the second story, the China Post (pro-KMT) carried 
a story citing a poll that showed Tsai winning the presidential 
race.\textsuperscript{172} This seems to indicate that the KMT, and perhaps the DPP 
too, was not encouraging friendly polling organizations to show 
they were in the lead as has long been seen to be the practice.\textsuperscript{173} 
The explanation was that they did not want their supporters to be 
come too confident in their win or loss and not vote.\textsuperscript{174} However, 
this shift was more evident in the case of KMT polling.\textsuperscript{175} 

In November, a number of opinion polls indicated the race was 
getting tighter; Tsai had closed the gap and was ahead in some 
polls. In mid-month, a Now News poll showed Ma ahead by less 
than 2 percent.\textsuperscript{176} A TVBS poll indicated Tsai would win if swing 
voters were considered; another poll by TVBS showed the race was 
a virtual tie assuming James Soong stayed in the race.\textsuperscript{177} In early 
December, the Cheng Chi University Center for Prediction Mar- 
kets showed Tsai ahead by a large margin, at one point by more


\textsuperscript{171} Cris Wang, "Ma increases lead against DPP’s Tsai, poll indicates," Taipei Times, October 3, 2011 and Cris Wang, "PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION: Ma’s lead on Tsai surges, survey says," Taipei Times, November 7, 2001 (both online at taipeitimes.com).

\textsuperscript{172} "Swing voters could make Tsai president: latest poll," China Post, November 12, 2001 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

\textsuperscript{173} I spoke to a number of Taiwan scholars during October and November who opined that encouraging or pressuring pollsters to report good news was not party policy although some still did it. They said that both parties, but especially the KMT, worried that optimistic polling favoring their candidates may be seen as bad election strategy since it would discourage their supporters from voting. This seemed to be a new phenomenon.

\textsuperscript{174} A number of Taiwan scholars told me they thought this to be the case to some degree at least.

\textsuperscript{175} The explanation for this is that KMT voters were more likely to not vote than DPP voters if they perceived the election would not be close.


\textsuperscript{177} “Swing voters could make Tsai president: latest poll,” China Post, November 12, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw); “TVBS Opinion Poll on 2012 Presidential Election,” TVBS, November 10, 2011.
than fifteen percent. Poll officials noted the shift in support favoring Tsai came after the official registration of candidates.¹⁷⁸

A poll conducted by an American academic at this time showed Ma leading Tsai thirty-four percent to twenty-six percent, with ten percent going to Soong and thirty percent undecided. The poll reflected Ma winning the Hakka vote sixty to forty percent, the Mainland Chinese vote by sixty to thirty percent, and splitting the vote fifty-fifty among Fukien Taiwanese voters (compared to Tsai). Female voters favored Ma; male voters percent-wise went to Soong in larger numbers. Ma supporters were better educated and favored more trade and other ties with China. Thirty percent of interviewees, with Soong in the race, said they were undecided; twenty-five percent without Soong in the race. The undecided were younger on average, were more likely to be female, slightly more educated, and slightly less wealthy.

Without Soong in the race Ma would win by forty-five percent to thirty percent. Forty-seven percent of Soong voters said they would vote for Ma if Soong were not in the race; seventeen percent would vote for Tsai; the rest were undecided. On the other hand Soong supporters saw themselves as more similar to Tsai. This poll, an Internet survey, was larger than other similar polls and for that reason plus the fact that it was done by a foreign academic organization, was considered by many to be more accurate than other polls.¹⁷⁹

In mid-December the polls showed the race getting tighter with most polls still reporting higher support for their choice of candidates. A TVBS poll and a China Times both indicated Ma was ahead by a small amount: one and two percent respectively.¹⁸⁰ The Exchange (National Chengchi University) showed Tsai would get 51.7 percent of the vote; Ma would attain 41.4 percent.¹⁸¹ Late in the month TVBS and China Times predicted Ma would win by a

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¹⁷⁸. Jake Chung, “2012 ELECTIONS: Tsai’s lead over Ma increasing, prediction site says,” Taipei Times, December 3, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).

¹⁷⁹. Mo Yan-chih, “2012 ELECTIONS: Poll shows Ma back in the lead,” Taipei Times, December 3, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com); “Latest poll gives Ma 8-percent lead over Tsai,” China Post, December 3, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw). Peter Gries from the University of Oklahoma’s Institute conducted this poll for an organization called U.S.-China Issues.


¹⁸¹. 2012 ELECTIONS: Tsai’s share of voter preferences passes 50%: online platform,” Taipei Times, December 18, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
somewhat larger margins. The Exchange indicated Tsai would win by 7.4 percentage points while the Taiwan Thinktank poll showed Ma ahead by 0.4 points.\(^{182}\) Whether TSAl Ing-wen had the momentum on her side and was catching up and might surpass Ma or whether there was simply a tightening of the race as is typical of election campaigns was difficult to say.

Summing up, the polls prior to ten days before the voting, after which it became illegal to publish polls, were quite mixed in terms of their predictions. Ma was ahead in most of the polls. As usual pro-KMT newspapers and other organizations showed him leading; a DPP survey showed Tsai winning. In any event, Ma’s lead, according to some observers, had to be seen in light of the fact that in 2008 Ma was ahead in the polls by twenty points, but won by just seventeen points.\(^{183}\) Other pundits noted that Soong’s support had diminished to from under six percent to seven percent. Thus it seemed voters were abandoning Soong, thinking he could not win, and would probably go to Ma. The number of undecided voters remained between thirteen and just above eighteen percent. Some observers said they and the young or first time voters would cast more votes for Tsai than Ma.\(^{184}\) The number of citizens residing overseas was less than in other recent elections; they, especially those living in China, would more likely vote for Ma.\(^{185}\) A Liberty Times (pro-DPP paper) showed Ma winning, though by just over one percent. A Now News poll recorded that 43.7 percent of re-

\(^{182}\) 2012 ELECTIONS: Predictions diverge on Tsai’s chances,” Taipei Times, December 27, 2011 (online at taipeitime.com).

\(^{183}\) Janet Ong, “Taiwan’s Ma Leads Chief Rival Tsai in Final Opinion Polls,” Bloomberg Businessweek, January 3, 2012 (online at bloomberg.com) and “Ma leads in Taiwan presidential race: polls,” AFP, January 3, 2012 (online at afp.com).

\(^{184}\) Ibid. The author also spoke to a number of Taiwan’s election observers who provided these opinions. First time voters numbered 760,000 out of an electorate of eighteen million or just over four percent. See “2012 ELECTIONS: First-time voters could decide the election, DPP says,” AFP, January 6, 2012 (online at afp.com). This was contradicted by the fact that the recent polls indicated Ma had a lead of ten points over Tsai among female voters who constituted a disproportionate share of the undecided and half of the young voters.

\(^{185}\) Only 4,672 registered to vote. This is the lowest recorded since the beginning of direct presidential elections. However, it may be this lower number can be explained by the fact that more citizens living abroad have to keep a household registration to qualify for national health insurance and they are not categorized as living abroad. See Shih Hsiu-chuan, “2012 Elections: Fewer overseas Taiwanese set to vote this year,” Taipei Times, January 6, 2012 (online at taipeitime.com).
spondents thought Ma would win as opposed to 28.3 percent that opined that Tsai would win.186

V. THE PARTIES’ NOMINATIONS AND THE CANDIDATES

For the DPP, picking its presidential candidate generated a heated contest among several party leaders hoping to get the nomination not to mention intra-party debates on personalities, campaign strategies, issues, and more. For the ruling party there was no contest; the KMT’s incumbent President MA Ying-jeou was not challenged.

DPP candidates began early. In fact, in the wake of the November 2010 metropolitan city elections DPP hopefuls began testing the waters. At the time most opinion polls favored DPP party head TSAI Ing-wen for the nomination. In one poll she was ahead with twenty-three percent support among those queried. Former Premier SU Tseng-chang was second with seventeen percent. LIN Yi-hsiung (former chairman of the DPP) and SU Jia-chyuan (DPP Secretary General) each registered five percent.187

SU Tseng-chang’s lower number in the polls, however, seem to have been influenced by what some DPP luminaries said at the time. Former President CHEN Shui-bian asserted that Su should not seek the nomination given the “new political and social situation in Taiwan.” Former DPP chairman HSU Hsin-liang opined that Su’s humiliating performance in the race for Taipei metropolitan mayor ruled him out.188 In any event, the polls didn’t change much in subsequent weeks.

In January 2011, former premier (and the DPP’s presidential candidate in 2008), Frank Hsieh, declared that he might run for the party’s nomination for president even though he had promised after he was defeated badly in the 2008 presidential election to get out of

188. Ibid. Su losing the mayoral race hurt his image and prospects to win the presidential more than Tsai since he lost by a bigger margin against a candidate that was not known as a good campaigner. See Copper, Taiwan’s 2010 Metropolitan City Elections, pp. 49-50
politics permanently. He explained that politicians shouldn’t make an absolute statement of denial on certain things.\textsuperscript{189}

In February, on the anniversary of the February 28, 1947 Incident, former vice president Annette Lu told the media that she would soon announce her candidacy. She said she was motivated to do so by both sides’ (the KMT and the DPP) weak handling of an imbroglio with the Philippines created when Manila deported fourteen Taiwanese fraud suspects to China. To many observers this did not appear to be a good reason for declaring her candidacy and her chances of getting the nomination did not appear to be very good.\textsuperscript{190}

The nomination process also seemed stacked against her. In any case, she perceived that and harshly criticized the decision made by the DPP to pick its presidential nominee using a national poll. She asserted that party members should have a greater say in the process. In anger, she labeled the party the “Democratic Regressive Party” and charged that focusing on unity without dealing with genuine policy differences resembled the ways of Adolf Hitler and CHIANG Kai-shek.\textsuperscript{191} Lu was critical of Tsai and Su, but said that she would ultimately support a candidate if she believed he or she had the ability to handle Taiwan’s “five crises” (in DPP parlance: national sovereignty, military readiness, diplomatic isolation, financial stability, and prosperity of the people).\textsuperscript{192}

In early March, TSAI Ing-wen announced she would compete for the DPP’s nomination. She pledged to bring back trust in the government and hope for the future of the country. She also said she wanted a “fair country” where Taiwanese are in control of their destiny. Last she cited what she said was a very serious problem: the growing gap between rich and poor and those with status and those without.\textsuperscript{193}


\textsuperscript{190} “Annette Lu should offer proposals instead of criticism,” \textit{China Post}, March 2, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).


\textsuperscript{192} “Annette Lu planning presidential bid,” \textit{Taipei Times}, February 26, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).

\textsuperscript{193} Vincent Y. Chao, “Tsai Ing-wen official launches presidential bid,” \textit{Taipei Times}, March 12, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
Shortly after this Annette Lu dropped out of the race, saying her decision was based on a "sign from God." Low poll numbers were probably the real reason.\(^{194}\) At the same time, SU Tseng-chang announced his candidacy, saying that he would tackle Taiwan's main problems: youth unemployment, rising deficits, and an aging society. He said Taiwan "needed a strong leader during times like these."\(^{195}\)

In late March, HSU Hsin-liang, former chairman of the DPP for two terms (1992-93 and 1996-98), entered the race. Disillusioned with CHEN Shui-bian, in 2000, Hsu ran as an independent. In 2004, further alienated from Chen, he campaigned for KMT candidates. He rejoined the DPP when TSAI Ing-wen was elected chairperson. At the time he filed nomination papers he praised Tsai and Su.\(^{196}\) Hsu clearly was a maverick in the DPP and was considered to have only a very small chance of winning the nomination.

In early April the three DPP candidates set forth some of their campaign planks. TSAI Ing-wen stated that if elected she would reassess the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement. She did not, however, say she would nullify the agreement noting that China was Taiwan's largest trading partner. Her objection to the agreement was that it was not referred to the World Trade Organization as promised and that the pact had had an adverse impact on employment and wages.\(^{197}\)

SU Tseng-chang proposed "smart power" to resolve what he said was Taiwan's "diplomatic plight." He argued smart power should take precedence over hard power, that soft power should be based on a management approach, and Taiwan needed a clear-cut diplomatic strategy.\(^{198}\) Su had met Singapore's Senior Minister LEE Kuan Yew at this time leading some to speculate that he had

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194. Vincent Y. Chao, "Annette Lu drops bid for DPP's nomination," *Taipei Times*, March 23, 2011 (online at taitime.com). A recent United Daily News poll showed her the least likely of DPP candidates to defeat President Ma—17 percent to Ma's 41 percent.


196. Vincent Y. Chao, "Third candidate vies for DPP ticket," *Taipei Times*, March 26, 2001 (online at taitime.com).

197. Vincent Y. Chao, "Tsai promises to reassess ECFA if elected president," *Taipei Times*, April 6, 2011 (online at taitime.com).

198. Critics said that Su's ideas seemed vague and that he did not explain them well. The concept of soft power, however, has been propounded at length by Harvard Professor Joseph Nye and had been used by U.S. Secretary of State Clinton.
gotten some ideas from him. Su also reiterated a proposal he had made earlier for redistricting Taiwan.

HSU Hsin-liang spoke of a “one-China, EU model” to resolve the issue of relations with China that he had been advocating for years. He said it was the best peaceful solution to the sovereignty issue.

As the three candidates vied for the party’s nomination rumors floated around and there were even reports in the media of some candidates using unfair and even “vicious” tactics. Talk circulated, ostensibly started by Tsai supporters, that the KMT was supporting Su, to suggest he was a weak candidate. Leading up to the polling, Tsai’s supporters were said to have told respondents to support only Tsai and to say that they prefer Ma to the others or think Ma would defeat them. Su called this a dirty trick. Tsai, however, denied that she was behind the scheme. In response, the candidates met to reach some agreements to get along so that they would not split the party.

In mid-April MA Ying-jeou announced his candidacy; as anticipated he was unopposed. The question at the time was who would be his running mate. Vice President Vincent Siew had stated in 2008 that he would not run again and in 2009 had an operation for lung cancer. Siew was 72 years old. The mostly likely pick, according to KMT sources, was Premier WU Den-yih. President Ma said he would make the decision after the KMT formally made him its nominee.

In preparation for the party’s primary, Tsai purchased television ads in which she talked of the needed qualities of Taiwan’s future leader, relations with other countries, and “peaceful development” with China. She declared that the future of Taiwan was in the hands of the common person. Su paid for bilingual (Mandarin and Taiwanese) ads on the radio in which he talked about Taiwan’s his-


200. Chao, “Tsai promises to reassess ECFA if elected president,” Taipei Times, April 6, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).


204. “President Ma registers with KMT for re-election,” China Post, April 24, 2001 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
tory, relations with other countries in Asia, and Taiwan as a member of the "global village." Hsu addressed "constitutional government, fairness, and audacity." 205

The DPP's pick of its candidate was done during April 25-26. The "primary election" consisted of five polling agencies each calling 3,000 people to measure their opinions on Tsai, Su, and Hsu and each one's chances of defeating President Ma. Candidates who polled below Ma would be eliminated. If all polled below Ma the one with the highest rating would be picked. The polling agencies drew from a list of 4.27 million people that had telephones for at least one year. 206

Critics of the process agreed with Annette Lu that neither the party hierarchy nor party members had much input. They noted in particular that responses by those that were called saying that all three DPP candidates could defeat Ma were not counted, and that pro-KMT respondents could deliberately pick whom they considered a weaker candidate to hurt the DPP's chances. 207 Pundits said the process was flawed and lacked openness and broad participation. The media criticized the DPP for not holding debates that would allow the questioning of the candidates by reporters. 208

During the run-up to the polls, former DPP chairman SHIH Ming-teh startled listeners when in a public setting he asked Tsai (who is not married and had no known boyfriends) to state her sexual orientation and "come out of the closet" to "make Taiwan more progressive"—implying she was lesbian. Shih cited a legal reason for asking the question: according to the law in Taiwan only opposite-sex spouses are regulated and hence a same-sex spouse could not be controlled from taking bribes. Tsai replied that she was not angry with Shih but that she would not reply to his question because doing so would make her an "accomplice in gender oppression." Both parties, human rights organizations, and gay rights groups criticized Shih for asking the question. 209

207. Vincent Y. Chao, "Question of single candidate support clouds DPP poll," Taipei Times, April 14, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
208. Ibid.
209. "DPP chairwoman brushes off homosexual jibe," Focus Taiwan News Channel, April 24, 2011 (online at focustaiwan.tw).
The results of the DPP’s “primary” were published on April 27. Tsai was the winner by a narrow margin over Su. She, according to the poll, would defeat President Ma by a margin of 42.5 percent to 35 percent; Su got 41.1 percent to Ma’s 33.8 percent.\textsuperscript{210} After the results were in, Su announced his support of Tsai, though he said he would not consider the vice-presidential nomination.\textsuperscript{211} Other top DPP leaders also voiced their support of Tsai. Tsai’s win marked the first time in Taiwan’s history that a female was nominated by a major political party to be its presidential candidate.

In mid-June, President Ma announced his vice-presidential running mate: Premier Wu Den-yih. Ma described Wu as a history scholar and the best choice for the job. Ma also said that since Wu was appointed premier in 2009 he had demonstrated exceptional leadership. Ma mentioned specifically Wu’s administrative abilities and the fact he had helped Taiwan’s private sector become one of the top ten most competitive in the world. Ma announced Wu would head the campaign and would also remain premier.\textsuperscript{212}

DPP critics said that Wu’s selection showed that the KMT lacked creativity and talent. One DPP legislator noted that it is rare for the ruling party to pick its vice presidential running mate first, indicating, he said, that the KMT was panicking.\textsuperscript{213} Other pan-green pundits said that Wu’s selection mirrored the patriarchal system of the KMT and its lack of young blood, noting that Tsai Ing-wen had promised a running mate in his or her forties—suggesting that the DPP would win the youth vote.\textsuperscript{214}

In mid-June, Chairwoman Tsai announced that her erstwhile rival for the party’s presidential nomination, Su Tseng-chang, would be chairman of the campaign, while Frank Hsieh would be “chief campaign commander,” and YU Shyi-kun (a former premier and DPP chairman) would be chief supervisor and chairman of fundraising. The announcement signaled there had been a reconciliation between Su and Hsieh. (The two had not on good terms since their defeat in the 2008 presidential and vice presidential elec-

\textsuperscript{210} Vincent Y. Chao, “DPP’s Tsai to run for president,” \textit{Taipei Times}, April 28, 2011 (online at taitpeetimes.com).
\textsuperscript{211} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{212} “President names Wu as running mate,” \textit{China Post}, June 20, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\textsuperscript{213} “Wu announced as Ma’s running mate,” \textit{Taipei Times}, June 20, 2011 (online at taitpeetimes.com).
\textsuperscript{214} “Editorial: The KMT’s talent gap is showing,” \textit{Taipei Times}, June 20, 2011 (online at taitpeetimes.com).
tion).^{215} The following day, Tsai announced that "Taiwan Next" would be the party's slogan for the campaign to be emblematic of a new generation and a new and better Taiwan under her and the DPP's leadership.^{216}

In early July, Tsai officially launched her campaign. She laid out four policy initiatives that she said would pave the road back to the presidency. She stated that she would close Taiwan's nuclear industry, enact judicial reform, spur localized economic development, and create a better social welfare net. Tsai also declared that she would close the income gap in Taiwan, balance the urban-rural divide, and push new industries into areas that are less developed. She charged that Ma had not fulfilled his 6-3-3 pledge and that he had been "too silent" in using the word "Taiwan."^{217} Her campaign was clearly a liberal, nativist one; critics characterized it as big government, higher taxes, protectionism, provincialism, and one that divides Taiwan's ethnic groups.

Soon after this the KMT convened its national congress in Taichung. MA Ying-jeou was officially ratified the KMT's presidential candidate and WU Den-yih the vice presidential candidate. The KMT, observers noted, chose the central Taiwan city as the site for the meeting since it would be the "battleground region" in the election.^{218} Ma said he hoped WANG Jin-pyung would continue to serve as leader of the legislature. He thanked Vice President Vincent Siew, former KMT chairman LIEN Chan, and the KMT's honorary chairman WU Po-hsiung for their work.^{219}

In September, following two to three months of guessing and speculation about whom TSAI Ing-wen would pick as her running mate, she announced it would be DPP Secretary General SU Jia-chyuan. Su appeared to be a good choice from a number of perspectives. At fifty-four he was considered young — one of the "next generation" that Tsai had said she wanted. In terms of the geopolitics of the campaign (north Taiwan belonging to the KMT, south Taiwan to the DPP, and middle Taiwan being in play) Su seemed

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216. Vincent Y. Chao, ""Taiwan Next' announced as Tsai's campaign slogan," *Taipei Times*, June 24, 2011 (online at taiptitimes.com).
217. Vincent Y. Chao, "Tsai Ing-wen launches her campaign," *Taipei Times*, July 2, 2011 (online at taiptitimes.com).
the right candidate. Su very nearly defeated the popular mayor of Taichung Jason Hu in the metropolitan mayor’s race in 2010 even though had been in the contest for only six months. Su won almost every township in the county. The election made him a political star. A host of DPP luminaries praised Su as the right choice for Tsai. Premier WU Den-yih called Tsai and Su “estimable adversaries.”

The KMT otherwise played down Su’s candidacy saying that Tsai had to settle on an insider, that Su would not be a “plus” to the campaign, and that since both Tsai and Su both hailed from Pingtung in the south it was not a balanced ticket. The media noted that Su was not Chairwoman Tsai’s top choice; some described him as a “spare tire.” Some also doubted whether Tsai would pick up more DPP support with her choice as she had “picked the wrong Su” (meaning she should have chosen SU Tseng-chang).

At this point the media, pundits and the public began to ponder who the candidates were as individuals, their backgrounds and experience. Their political views also became the focus of scrutiny. Voters soon learned a lot more about the candidates.

MA Ying-jeou was born in 1950 in Hong Kong, though his parents moved there from Taiwan shortly before that and moved back to Taiwan when he was one year old. Because his parents were recent immigrants to Taiwan (after World War II), Ma is considered ethnically Mainland Chinese.

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221. Copper, Taiwan’s 2010 Metropolitan City Elections, pp. 50-51.
223. Su Jia-chyuan named as Tsai’s running mate for election,” China Post, September 10, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
226. Taiwan’s population is comprised of Taiwanese, or Chinese who migrated to Taiwan in centuries past, Mainland Chinese, who went to Taiwan after World War II, and the Aborigines or the original inhabitants of Taiwan. Taiwanese are 84 percent of the population. The Mainland Chinese are about 14 percent and the Aborigines less than 2 percent. Hakka, who are one group of Taiwanese, comprise around 15 percent of the population. Fukien Taiwanese, or Fukienese (also called Hoklo) are nearly 70 percent of the population and are considered the majority ethnic group; the others are considered minorities. It is not accurate to see Taiwan’s ethnic relations in terms of the Mainland Chinese versus the Taiwanese, as many writers do. In past centuries the
Ma received his B.A. degree in law from National Taiwan University. He went to the United States after graduation and received an LL.M. from New York University and a S.J.D. from Harvard University. He returned to Taiwan and worked in the Presidential Office from 1981 to 1988 while serving concurrently during the latter four years as deputy secretary-general of the KMT Central Committee. From 1991 to 1993 he served as Deputy Minister of the Mainland Affairs Council and from 1993 to 1996 he was Minister of Justice. He subsequently returned to teaching, but in 1998 ran successfully for mayor of Taipei and served until 2006. Meanwhile he was elected chairman of the KMT and served in that position for two years.\textsuperscript{227} Ma, of course, was elected president in 2008 and was the incumbent at the time of this election. He was also the chairman of the party from 2009.

Of all of Taiwan’s candidates for high office, past or present, Ma is considered to be the best educated. Most people in Taiwan regard Harvard University as the world’s premier institution of higher learning. Ma has published in various Western academic journals and during his campaign for president in 2008 published the book \textit{Silent Courage}. Ma is also considered the most honest of Taiwan’s officials, having maintained very high standards of ethics in an out of politics. Ma’s handicaps have been said to be that he is Mainland Chinese, is too honest, and too academic.\textsuperscript{228}

WU Den-yih was born in 1948 in Nantou County in south Taiwan. He is Fukien Taiwanese. He earned a B.A. degree in history from National Taiwan University in 1970. He was appointed mayor of Kaohsiung, Taiwan’s second largest city, in 1990 and was elected to that same position in 1994 and served until 1998. Wu was general secretary of the KMT from 2007 to 2009 at which time President Ma appointed him premier.\textsuperscript{229} Wu was a popular figure in Taiwan,

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\textsuperscript{227} Copper, \textit{Taiwan’s 2008 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election}, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{229} Background and further information on Wu can be found on facebook (on line at facebook.com/pages/We-Den-yih/105885026112888).
which in some part explains why President Ma chose him as his running mate.230

TSAI Ing-wen was born in Pingtung County in southern Taiwan in 1956. She is ethnically Hakka. She was the youngest child in the family. Her father was described as a wealthy businessman and a property investor. The family moved to Taipei when she was eleven.

Tsai graduated from the College of Law at National Taiwan University, considered Taiwan’s best institution of higher learning, in 1978. In 1980 she obtained a master’s degree in legal science from Cornell University in the United States and then a PhD degree from the London School of Economics. After her education abroad she returned to Taiwan and taught at Soochow University and Chengchi University. She was appointed to positions in the Fair Trade Commission and the Copyright Commission and served as a consultant to the Mainland Affairs Council and the National Security Council under President LEE Teng-hui.231

Tsai began a high-level political career in 2000 when President CHEN Shui-bian appointed her chairperson of the Mainland Affairs Council. This was a high-profile job and she instantly became well known throughout Taiwan. In 2004 she joined the Democratic Progressive Party and that year took a seat in the Legislative Yuan as a party or legislator-at-large member.

In 2006, Tsai was appointed Vice Premier under SU Tseng-chang while also serving as the chairwoman of the Consumer Protection Commission. The next year she was replaced after a cabinet reshuffle and took a position as chair of TaiMedBiologics, a Taiwan biotechnology company.

Though Tsai had received two important appointments from President Chen, she was not considered to have strong ties to either Chen or the DPP (having not been a party member for very long). Thus, in 2008 when MA Ying-jeou started to search for a vice presidential running mate her name was mentioned. Ma stated that gender, occupation, and even political affiliations would not be considered a barrier. Tsai was considered honest and talented by the KMT and with her on the ticket it was said she might attract


DPP voters. In any event, the idea passed and later seemed little more than a rumor.  

In May 2008, when Ma was inaugurated president and at a time the DPP was at a low point due to corruption and various other scandals of the Chen administration and a devastating loss in the presidential and vice presidential election in March, Tsai was elected the DPP’s chairperson, defeating KOO Kwang-ming. Fortwith, Tsai said she would work to promote the Taiwan localization movement and defend social justice. She questioned President Ma’s stance on Taiwan’s sovereignty and refuted the 1992 Consensus.

In May 2010, Tsai was reelected chairperson of the party with a vote of 90.3 percent of party members, thus solidifying her leadership of the DPP. This was the product of what many saw as her effective leadership that produced victories for the party in various elections in 2009 and in legislative by-elections in early 2010.

On March 11, 2011, Tsai announced she would run for the presidential nomination of the DPP. On April 27 she won the nomination. Tsai was an unusual choice for the DPP in some respects: she was regarded as a scholar (like Ma) and sought more educated DPP members to run for office and lead the party after she became chairwoman. She was also viewed as a conservative “no surprise” leader. Clearly Tsai represented a break from the past in many ways for the DPP.

China did not respond kindly to Tsai’s nomination (though it probably have been even less happy had another candidate won the DPP’s nod), the central issue being her rejection of the “1992 Consensus”—an understanding reached at that time that Taiwan was part of China while allowing each side to define the meaning of “China.” The U.S. made no official comment on her nomination.

SU Jia-chyuan was born in southern Taiwan 1956, the same year as Tsai and in the same area. He received his B.A degree in food science from National Taiwan Ocean University and his M.A. in Public Affairs Management from National Sun Yat-sen University. He served as a member of the National Assembly from 1986 to 1993 and the Legislative Yuan from 1993 to 1997. He was a magis-

trate in Pingtung County from 1997 to 2004. In 2004 he returned to national politics when President Chen appointed him Minister of Interior. He served in that position for two years after which he was minister of agriculture for two years. He served as Secretary General of the party briefly in late 2009 and early 2010 and again from December 2010 until he was chosen Chairwoman Tsai’s running mate.236

In the interim, in November 2010 Su ran for mayor of Taichung Metropolitan against the KMT’s popular incumbent Jason Hu. Su lost but, as noted, performed exceptionally well, nearly winning the election. This election propelled him to the status of a DPP luminary prompting many observers to see him as a DPP leader with a future.237

James Soong was born in 1942 in China. He is Mainland Chinese by ethnic group. He graduated from Chengchi University in Taiwan with a B.A. degree in diplomacy. He went to the United States for graduate study, receiving his M.A. degree at the University of California at Berkeley and his PhD degree from Georgetown University. He returned to Taiwan and from 1979 to 1984 was director general of the Government Information Office where he became well known to the public. Soong was considered bright, handsome and charismatic. Soong subsequently served as head of the Nationalist Party’s Department of Cultural Affairs and secretary general of the party.238

In 1988, upon the passing of President CHIANG Ching-kuo, Soong supported Vice President LEE Teng-hui to head the party in the face of opposition from “old guard” KMT members who did not want Lee to consolidate power in large part because he was Taiwanese. Some say Soong put his career on the line to support Lee and because of Soong’s support Lee succeeded. In 1990 Soong again stood for Lee when he was challenged for reelection in the National Assembly by LIN Yang-kang and CHIANG Kai-shek’s second son CHIANG Wei-kuo.

In 1993, Lee appointed Soong Taiwan’s provincial governor and supported him in 1994 when he ran for the post and became Taiwan’s first ever elected governor. Soong won close to eighty-five percent of the vote against three other candidates while bridging the ethnic gap in so doing. Soong was very popular as governor.

237. Copper, Taiwan’s 2010 Metropolitan City Elections, pp. 50-51.
238. Copper, Taiwan’s 2000 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election, pp. 22-23.
In 2000, Soong sought the party’s nomination to run for president. Lee did not support him and instead supported his vice president LIEN Chan. Soong and Lee then became enemies. Soong ran for president as an independent and split the conservative vote, which enabled CHEN Shui-bian to win the presidency. Soong won the largest percentage of the ethnic minority and female vote and most of the districts in north Taiwan, but did less well in south Taiwan. He lost to Chen with little over two percent of the popular vote without a political party and little money. Following the election Soong formed the People First Party, which aligned with the KMT on most issues in opposition to President Chen and the DPP. Soong ran for vice president in 2004 with LIEN Chan. The two narrowly lost that election.

LIN Ruey-shiung was born in 1940. He received his M.D. degree from National Taiwan University in 1965. He also received an M.D. degree from Heidelberg University in 1971 and a Doctorate in public health and epidemiology from John Hopkins University in 1977.

Lin served as a professor in the College of Public Health at National Taiwan University from 1986 to 2006. He was also dean of the College of Public Health from 1993 to 1996. He was a professor emeritus from 2006.239

VI. THE CAMPAIGN

It is difficult to say at exactly what point the campaign began. Certainly it started long before the announced official campaign period. For the DPP it began soon after the party picked its presidential candidate. Signaling the campaign had begun in earnest the two major parties established national and local campaign centers, put out campaign signs and advertising, made various kinds of appeals to voting blocs, honed their campaign platforms, and looked for money and campaign workers. By August both parties were in a campaign mode.

That month the KMT put up billboards and campaign pictures at its headquarters. A KMT spokesperson said that the party was now in a “combat mode.”240 In September, President Ma announced his plans for a “golden decade.” Included would be a new north-south expressway with connecting highways, three circular

239. Chang, “Voting for Tomorrow’s Taiwan,” p. 11.
expressways around New Taipei, a mass rapid transit system for
Taichung, expansion of the MRT system in Kaohsiung, a new free
trade zone, and the expansion of digital TV and music stations. The
government admitted this would require deficit financing but noted
that Taiwan’s arrears were low and would remain that.241

Also in August, the People First Party nominated ten district
candidates for the election. Pundits viewed this as more evidence of
a serious pan-blue split that would hurt the KMT on voting day.
Some said it had resulted from the KMT seeking to dominate the
pan-blue bloc and not honoring promises to cooperate with the PFP
while acting to absorb the PFP.242

The next month Soong declared that he was now more willing
to run for president, but would not make any announcement imme-
diately. This fueled more speculation about the “Soong effect” on
the campaign. Soong seemed a serious obstacle to a Ma victory in
view of the fact Ma and Tsai were running fairly close in the polls.243 Observers suggested Soong was motivated to return to
politics by the bitter partisanship in Taiwan, the low level of support
for both parties, Soong’s ambitious nature, and LEE Teng-hui pro-
posing a moderate “third force” in Taiwan politics. Others said
Soong was angry with Ma and the KMT and he personally disliked
Ma. One observer suggested Soong running for president would
help his party more than his seeking a legislative seat.244

The KMT obviously wanted to reconcile with the PFP. Ma an-
nounced that he was willing to negotiate legislative nominations.
The KMT’s Secretary-General KING Pu-tsung stated that he would
drop a lawsuit against Soong charging him with using public opinion
surveys fraudulently during the 2000 election campaign.245 King
dropped the suit but the issue of nominating candidates, especially
at large candidates, and the attitude of the KMT that it would even-

241. Yo May-chih, “Ma unveils his ‘golden 10-year’ prospects,” Taipei Times, Sep-
tember 30, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com); Lu Hsueh-hui and Staff Reporter, “Ma to
unveil ‘golden decade’ construction projects,” Want China Times, October 11, 2011 (on-
line at wanchinatimes.com).

242. “KMT seeks dominance, not consolidation with pan-blues,” China Post, August
12, 2011 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

243. “Soong voices stronger interest in the presidency,” Taipei Times, August 13,
2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).

244. Mo Yan-chih, “Analysis: PFP to run own campaign despite KMT unity call,”
Taipei Times, August 14, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).

245. Mo Yan-chih, “KMT willing to negotiate with PFP: Ma,” Taipei Times, July 30,
2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).
tually incorporate the PFP plus Soong’s desire to remain a separate force were at play.\textsuperscript{246}

Soong needed to obtain the signature of 1.5 percent of the voting population (257,695 people) to be an official presidential candidate. But Soong promised he would stay in the race only if he collected a million signatures.\textsuperscript{247} Some observers opined he wanted to keep his candidacy in question longer and thus give him a better bargaining position with the KMT. In any event, the KMT made another public plea to Soong not to run saying he was part of “one big family.” At this juncture some thought that Soong might end his campaign. However, the fact the PFP needed five percent of the legislative seats to set up a caucus and the fact Soong would lose credibility if he changed his mind about running convinced other observers he would stay in the race.\textsuperscript{248} Even though there were polls that indicated Soong entering the race would not hurt Ma’s chances appreciably more than Tsai, both parties assumed it would hurt Ma more.\textsuperscript{249}

Soon Soong announced that he had obtained the required signatures to run for president and that they were sent to the Election Commission for verification. Describing the other candidates as “one being unsatisfactory and the other untrustworthy,” Soong said he would serve the public and would push for changes in the national health insurance system, judicial and agricultural reform, and would deal with the widening gap between rich and poor.\textsuperscript{250} Soong’s platform appeared more like the DPP’s than the KMT’s.

Meanwhile, in early October TSAI Ing-wen and her running mate SU Jia-chyuan set out on an eleven-day campaign tour starting from Oluanpi in South Taiwan. Chairwoman Tsai noted that the south was her early home. During the trip she referred frequently to the imbalance in economic development in Taiwan. Specifically she spoke of improving the economy and creating jobs in areas that were lagging behind the rest of the island. The sojourn ended in Taipei.

\textsuperscript{246} “EDITORIAL: Pan-blue camp: Is it war or peace?” \textit{Taipei Times}, August 3, 2011 (online at taitimestimes.com).

\textsuperscript{247} Mo Yan-chih, “Soong remains confident about his signature drive,” \textit{Taipei Times}, September 30, 2011 (online at taitimestimes.com).


\textsuperscript{249} Jan By Shou-jung, “What is Soong bid really about?” \textit{Taipei Times}, September 29, 2011 (online at taitimestimes.com)

\textsuperscript{250} “James Soong collects enough signatures to run for president,” CNA, November 1, 2011 (online at cna.com.tw).
During the trip she missed the October 10 National Day festivities held in Taipei. KMT officials cited her for not attending that event noting that she was running for president of the Republic of China (the establishment of which was being honored) and that President Ma had attended the ceremonies when CHEN Shui-bian was president.

On October 24, the DPP set up a national headquarters in the Banchao District of New Taipei City outside of Taipei. At the opening ceremony Chairwoman Tsai spoke about fairness and social justice and said that President Ma “doesn’t know how to solve peoples’ problems.” The DPP at this time began presenting other issues to the electorate. One of these was a proposal to change the Referendum Act passed in 2003 such that a referendum would be required before and after negotiations that related to the national interest (meaning talks with China). The DPP connected the proposal to a statement issued by a top security official saying that China would become more assertive now that easier issues had been settled, concluding that Taiwan was entering a dangerous “deep water” period. It was clear one of the DPP’s stratagems, perhaps its core one, was to exploit local nationalism against Ma and the KMT on the issue of relations with China.

Meanwhile the KMT focused its campaign efforts on promoting President Ma, vice presidential candidate Premier Wu, and KMT Legislative Yuan candidates at the October 10 National Day celebrations. This was the 100th anniversary of the Republic of China and the festivities were large accordingly. President Ma took the opportunity to promote the nation’s history and current democratic system as well as its sovereignty. The focus on the sovereignty issue was intended to counter the DPP’s strategy and to create concern cum fear that Ma and the KMT were selling out Taiwan. After the national day events were over the KMT set up

campaign headquarters in Kaohsiung and other cities and began to focus on different campaign themes to fit the city or region of Taiwan.\(^\text{257}\)

It soon became apparent that the parties and their candidates were looking for and finding core issues that they could use to attract voters, expanding negative campaigning against opposition candidates, and making campaign promises that would make their candidates more appealing. President Ma focused on his accomplishments in office, notably his success in easing tensions across the Taiwan Strait. He also talked about Taiwan’s economic progress over the past two years. Chairwoman Tsai said she sought to lead a “no surprise” campaign that was less emotional while giving attention to social issues and gap between rich and poor. She said she wanted to attract swing voters and do well in north Taiwan.\(^\text{258}\) It was clear she intended to base her and the DPP’s campaign less on localism and fear and loathing of China and appeals to ethnic politics than previous DPP campaigns.

In November, the DPP went into a full court press with the “Three Little Pigs” movement that started a month earlier with a young boy giving piggy bank full of coins to the Tsai campaign. The symbolism of the concept connected to Tsai’s platform that included alleviating the gap between rich and poor while underscoring the idea that she was supported by the less fortunate masses. It also related to Taiwan’s “pig culture” and relations with China.\(^\text{259}\) The DPP purchased thousands of piggy banks to hand out to supporters.

Meanwhile President Ma announced a new nuclear energy policy that putting another plant into operation in 2016 with more comprehensive tests to meet safety requirements while not extending the life span of three nuclear plants in operation. Ma said his policies conformed to the Basic Environment Act that says Tai-

\(^{257}\) See, for example, Mo Yan-chih, “Ma sets up headquarters in Pingtung, touts reduced prices of cooking wine,” \textit{Taipei Times}, October 24, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com); Mo Yan-chih, “Ma opens his Kaohsiung headquarters,” October 23, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).

\(^{258}\) Oscar Chung, “Voting for Tomorrow’s Taiwan,” \textit{Taiwan Review}, January 2012, pp. 5-6.

wan should gradually become nuclear free. Tsai said this meant that Taiwan would not become nuclear free as she advocated.260

In November, President Ma announced that if re-elected he would not meet with China’s top leader as long as he is president and would not do anything to undermine Taiwan’s national sovereignty and its dignity.261 Ma subsequently refuted the “abandon Taiwan” argument that was being iterated in U.S. academic and media sources. Ma said this was not mainstream thinking and asserted that to the U.S. Taiwan is a solid security and economic partner.262

On Saturday December 3, the three presidential candidates participated in a two and one-half hour nationally televised debate. The debate was split into three parts: The first gave eight minutes to each candidate to set forth their platforms and views; the second part consisted of answering questions posed by five media organizations (the Central News Agency, China Times, Liberty Times, United Daily News, and Apple Daily); the third part allowed each candidate to ask questions of the other two.263

Contrary to expectations President Ma was quite aggressive during the debate, while Soong was much less so. Ma employed considerable data to support his contention that he was able to manage the economy better than his opponents and show that the economic deal with China, ECFA, reached in mid-2010 was good for Taiwan. He stated that Taiwan’s economic growth in 2010 was over ten percent and noted that since the recent financial trouble no bank in Taiwan closed (though three hundred in the U.S. had). Ma described Tsai as inexperienced and associated her with former president CHEN Shui-bian. He described her policies as back-pedaling. President Ma also presented data that showed that, contrary to the DPP charge, the gap between rich and poor in Taiwan was higher during the Chen era and had narrowed since he was president.264

Chairperson Tsai criticized the Ma administration for sealing the economic deal with China, that, she charged, had widened the gap between rich and poor and was done in an "undemocratic fashion." She asserted that the "92 consensus" was not a consensus at all and called for a "Taiwan consensus." She distanced herself from the Chen administration, but argued that many of the figures Ma cited regarding Taiwan’s better economic performance were the result of a foundation laid by the previous administration.  

Soong was not the target of the other two; in fact, he was treated politely by both (since he was seen as controlling considerable swing votes). Soong criticized both Ma and Tsai: the former for lack of judicial reform and Tsai for her cross strait policy. But his criticisms were not harsh.  

Critics said that the debate was not as exciting as past debates as the three candidates were too cautious and set forth no new policies or positions. They noted that none of the candidates had much to say about relations with China. Some said Ma was not convincing when he said he could handle the economy; Tsai was too soft, didn’t offer anything new, and didn’t understand the discussion about information technology; and Soong was much milder than expected. Some described the debate as boring and said it didn’t affect the campaign.  

Polls done after the debate picked winners, but it was obvious most did so in accordance with their political leanings. TVBS showed Ma winning, followed by Tsai and Soong; Now News indicated Soong won followed by Tsai and Ma. A Yahoo-Kimo’s poll showed Tsai the winner by a large margin.  

On December 10, the three vice presidential candidates took part in a televised debate. This was the first time for vice presidential candidates to debate in Taiwan. If there was a dominant theme in the debate it was corruption, with each candidate promoting his own record in that realm. Premier WU Den-yih touted the Ma administration’s clean and efficient governance and its good manage-
ment of the economy, noting Taiwan was still repaying debts incurred by the “corrupt DPP government under President CHEN Shui-bian.” SU Jia-chyuan accused the Ma administration of not delivering on its campaign promises while always blaming its failures on the Chen administration. Su defended himself against charges of corruption regarding property his family had purchased, his wife’s attending a party where male strippers performed, and her consulting soothsayers. LIN Ruey-shiung accused the DPP of promoting ideology and not focusing on issues and chided the Ma government for incompetence. He spent much of his time addressing medical issues.270

Premier Wu appeared to be the winner of the debate in view of Su spending considerable time defending himself and the fact that after the debate Su mentioned Wu’s eloquence. After the debate Lin rated his performance as a failure because he lacked experience. In the end, the debate probably did not influence voters very much.271

At this time a potential scandal broke that involved TSAI Ing-wen. She had allegedly used her position while she was vice premier in the Chen administration to “feather the nest” of Yu Chang Biologics Company—a startup she later chaired. Legislative Speaker WANG Jin-pyng confirmed the charges stating that Chairwoman Tsai presented the Act for Development of Biotechnology and New Pharmaceuticals Industry to him; but he said that he was the initiator of the bill. The DPP responded that the meeting in question happened after Tsai was no longer vice premier and that what she did was for the benefit of an important industry in Taiwan that had promise and whose growth would benefit the country.272

However, the case took on a more serious tone when the Special Investigations Division (SID) of the Supreme Prosecutor’s Office seized files concerning the matter from the National Development Fund. SID officials said they had to ensure that evidence was not destroyed or altered. Meanwhile KMT officials charged that Tsai was guilty of violating the “revolving door” law


that barred officials from working for businesses under their supervision for three years after retiring from the public sector. This appeared to have some resonance. DPP leaders replied that the KMT was using the case to smear Tsai and hurt her chances of being elected.²⁷³

On December 17, another debate, the final debate of the campaign, was held. MA Ying-jeou and TSAI Ing-wen began with comments about the TaiMed scandal. Ma said that allegations that he had personally instructed prosecutors to launch the case were an insult. He said he would withdraw from the campaign if this could be proven. Tsai charged that false documents had been used in the case and that the prosecutors had violated administration neutrality and judicial independence in pursuing the case. James Soong directed his statements to national safety including nuclear power plants and preparations for national disasters and cited the Ma administration for using statistics to show the economy had improved when it had not helped the poor. Ma responded by citing more of his accomplishments in office and better governance.²⁷⁴

Only a few days before voting day, former president CHEN Shui-bian’s mother-in-law passed away. Government authorities decided Chen would be permitted to attend her funeral—in handcuffs and without permission to speak to the media.²⁷⁵ But those rulings were changed and Chen attended without restraints and spoke for twenty minutes to three hundred supporters present. Some held dolls representing Chen. Some called for Chairwoman Tsai to pardon Chen when she becomes president.²⁷⁶ A number of pundits opined Tsai and the DPP had struggled hard to rid itself of the bad image caused to the party by Chen’s corruption and this was not good news for Tsai. Others said that Chen was seen by many as a martyr and this would impact voters to favor the DPP.

²⁷⁶. “Taiwan’s jailed ex-leader addresses supporters,” Channel News Asia, January 6, 2012 (online at channelnewsasia.com).
Still others thought voters were paying more attention to issues and were not influenced much by the event.\(^{277}\)

In the closing days of the campaign several well-known business leaders endorsed Ma and the KMT. Critics said they were doing business in or with China and their actions would be good for their future commercial prospects. Some academics suggested, however, that because they had experience in China, they did not espouse the negative attitudes toward China that many in Taiwan held who had little contact with or knowledge of China.\(^{278}\)

Some did more than simply support the Ma administration. Terry Gou, head of Foxconn and one of Taiwan’s richest and most famous entrepreneurs, gave his Taiwan employees an extra week’s vacation and a free flight back to Taiwan to vote.\(^{279}\) Douglas Tong Hsu, head of the Far Eastern Group endorsed Ma and the KMT’s candidates saying they were the “lowest risk.”\(^{280}\) Tsai had some support from the business community, but it was clear Ma had more. It was also quite apparent that a number of business people had switched their support from the DPP to the KMT.

Less than a week before the voting, Chairwoman Tsai broached the idea of a coalition government and said she would appoint the best people regardless of party and would respect the opposition parties. The KMT promptly assailed her proposal saying it indicated she was certain that the DPP would not win control of the Legislative Yuan and that if she were elected she would face a divided government that would mean ineffective government.\(^{281}\) Tsai followed up the next day mentioning the possibility of a non-DPP premier. She criticized both the Chen and Ma administrations, in fact conflating the two, citing “twelve years of Machiavellian politics.” KMT officials replied that President Chen spoke of building a coalition and tried it and it didn’t work. They pointed out that Chen appointed TANG Fei, from the KMT, premier and then dismissed him calling him “an obstacle.” Tang’s term as premier was thus the shortest in Taiwan’s history. Another KMT spokesperson

\(^{277}\) Ibid; “Restraint is a requirement to avoid politicizing a funeral,” *China Post*, January 8, 2012 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

\(^{278}\) Phillip Wen, “Big business tries to sway increasingly tense Taiwan election,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 16, 2012 (online at smh.com.au).

\(^{279}\) Ibid.


\(^{281}\) Eric Huang, “Tsai’s coalition plans draw heavy KMT fire,” *China Post*, January 8, 2012 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
noted that coalition governments were formed in wartime conditions and asked rhetorically if Tsai wanted to drive Taiwan into war. Later President Ma responded to the idea saying that Taiwan didn’t need a coalition government, but rather would benefit from an honest and efficient one. Tsai said that the other parties supported her position. James Soong, however, said that she was “fiddling with politics” and did not give his nod to the idea.

The last Sunday before voting day, the candidates held large rallies in a number of cities. President Ma enlisted his wife and a number of KMT stalwarts to help. During the rallies Ma called on Tsai to apologize for former president Chen and his administration. Chairwoman Tsai cited Ma and the KMT for the illegal mobilization of government officials to help in the campaign charging it was a breach of administrative neutrality, playing the stability card, and its alleged plans to buy votes. Soong criticized both Ma and Tsai. He said, regarding Ma’s reportedly having had his swimming trunks mended rather than buying a new one, that with the amount he had spent on election propaganda he could buy a million pair of trunks. He stated, regarding Tsai’s “three little pigs” fund raising, that there were too many “big wolves” backing her as well.

Three days before the election, honorary KMT chairman LIEN Chan urged James Soong to end his campaign and support Ma. He said this is what former president CHIANG Ching-kuo (whom Soong was very close to) would have wanted. Lien praised Soong for his ability and his potential to help the country and said that he was sure Soong did not want to help Tsai get elected.

The next day Soong responded saying he was in the race to stay and that Ma should be ashamed for enlisting a high ranking official to try to persuade him to drop out. He also chided KMT

leaders for promoting an “abandon Soong to save Ma wave.” It seemed clear that Ma and KMT leaders were afraid the theory of splitting one camp giving the other a win might be in play.

The other leading election issue late in the campaign came from what many considered as more evidence that the United States was unabashedly helping Ma win the election. The Obama administration sent two high-ranking officials to Taiwan late in the campaign and announced Taiwan’s citizens would be given visa-free privileges to travel to the U.S. The timing of these moves were seen by giving President Ma aid in getting reelected.

Just before voting day Douglas Paal (former head of the American Institute in Taiwan—Washington’s unofficial embassy in Taipei) arrived and told the media that the U.S. supported the ’92 Consensus and felt that Tsai’s Taiwan consensus was vague. Paal also asserted that both the U.S. and China were sitting on the edge of their chairs worried about the outcome of the election (meaning a possible Tsai win). He said if TSAI Ing-wen won there would be negative implications for security in the region and more. It was very clear that Paal felt that Ma should be reelected.

There was a quick negative reaction to Paal’s statements. Former senator from Alaska Frank Murkowski, who was in Taipei at this time, called a press conference whereupon he declared that Paal’s statements were “inexcusable” and “contrary to U.S. commitments to Taiwan’s democracy.” He further stated he took strong issue with U.S. policy favoring any candidate or party. He concluded that Paal’s comments about Tsai were condescending.

Pundits and members of Congress promptly weighed in on the controversy. Several said President Obama would be very happy if Ma won the election and that his recent actions showed that. Republican Representative and chairperson of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, wrote a letter to Secretary of State Clinton saying that the electorate in Taiwan might misinter-

pret these “deliverables” sent by President Obama and that the U.S. should maintain strict political neutrality.292

The issue provoked Republicans in the U.S. to propose that support for Taiwan’s democracy and weapons sales be made a Congressional resolution and put into the Republican Party’s fall campaign as an important foreign policy tenet. Republicans cited the Obama’s administration’s interference in Taiwan’s election and its “Munich” and “Yalta” stance toward Taiwan.293

There were three ironies associated with this story. One, most of the favors the Obama administration provided to Taiwan at this time were items the DPP had asked for at one time or another. The problem for the DPP about the U.S. actions was its timing only. Two, the “deliverables” were things that China had opposed; China, however, said nothing as Beijing apparently considered that U.S. actions would favor President Ma, which it also favored.294 Three, the items of Paal’s statement to the media were strongly criticized in the U.S., but not in Taiwan. Apparently the DPP did not see how criticizing the U.S. would help it in the election or did not know how to react.

VII. THE ELECTIONS’ RESULTS

Voting throughout Taiwan began at 8 am on Saturday, January 14 and ended at 4 pm that day. The process proceeded relatively smoothly. There were some destroyed or defaced ballots and some arrests, including two fugitives that attempted to vote.295 However, there were no major incidences and no shootings as there had been during the 2004 and 2010 election campaigns. The ballots were counted quickly and the results were known early that night.

MA Ying-jeou and his running mate WU Den-yih received 6,891,139 votes or 51.6 percent of the popular vote. TSAI Ing-wen and her running mate won 6,093,578 votes or 45.63 percent. James Soong and his running mate got 369,588 or 2.7 percent. It was a clear victory for Ma and Wu: almost a six percent margin in votes

294. See ibid for further comments on these points.
over the DPP's flag bearers. In total votes the Ma team won nearly 800,000 more votes than the pair of DPP candidates.296

Judging from the after-election reactions on both sides it was clear the night belonged to Ma and the KMT. Ma, his team, and his supporters displayed their pleasure throughout the vote counting and celebrated as soon as the votes were tallied early that evening. President Ma expressed his delight with the results, thanked his supporters, and discussed what he would do in his next four years. Tsai conceded defeat, took responsibility for the loss, congratulated Ma, and tendered her resignation as chairwoman of the DPP.297

James Soong's performance was patently below what was expected. Soong received less than three percent of the popular vote; many had predicted he would get ten percent or more.298 The election results constituted clear evidence that Soong's presidential bid was a disappointment. The KMT had convinced voters that Soong could not win and voting for him would help Tsai. Tsai no doubt made an error in treating Soong as an ally or at least creating that impression.

In the Legislative Yuan election the KMT also won a clear victory, attaining 47.6 percent of the popular vote compared to the DPP's 37 percent. The Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) got 9.6 percent and the PFP went away with 5.9 percent. This resulted in the KMT getting forty-four of the district seats compared to the DPP's twenty-seven. Others got two. In addition, the KMT got sixteen of the at-large or party chosen seats while the DPP received thirteen; three went to the Taiwan Solidarity Union and other parties got two. Thus in the new legislature there will be sixty-four KMT members, forty DPP, three TSU, and six others. The KMT will have 56.64 percent of the seats compared to the DPP's 35.40 percent.299

296. Loa Iok-sin and Chris Wang, “Ma wins re-election,” Taipei Times, January 15, 2012 (online at taipeitimes.com).
297. Ibid.
298. The polls showing what Soong might receive in percent of the popular vote are cited above. Almost all indicated he would receive a higher percent of the vote than he actually got.
299. Taiwan's Constitution was amended prior to the 2008 election and the Legislative Yuan was cut in size from 225 to 113 and a single-member-district system replaced the previous multi-member district system. At large seats were kept, but instead of allocating them to the political parties in proportion to the total member of votes the party received for district candidates voters cast a separate ballot for a party. This system advantaged the KMT; however, the DPP had long advocated getting rid of the previous system and thus supported the changes. See The Republic of China Yearbook 2009 (Taipei: Government Information Office, 2009), pp. 12-13.
Clearly the election was not as close as many had predicted it would be. In fact, observers considered Tsai’s margin of defeat surprisingly large.\textsuperscript{300} Some had expected the election would result in no party winning a majority and would require the formation of a coalition government; some even thought the DPP might win the presidency and get more seats in the legislature than the KMT. Obviously that did not happen. Many of the polls, the media generally, and a host of pundits anticipated a close race; they were wrong.

The opinion polls were inaccurate for three reasons. One, the pollsters (as had been true in the past) favored one side or the other and doctored the polls or altered the results to show their candidate or candidates would win. This would have balanced out had it not been for the fact that KMT pollsters, fearing that reporting favorable polls too extensively might cause their voters to not vote assuming their candidates would surely win. They did not change poll results so much to favor Ma and KMT candidates as did their counterpart DPP’s pollsters.\textsuperscript{301} Second, the media wanting to sell newspapers and advertising portrayed the election as being very tight, no doubt closer than they really thought it would be. A competitive election was also more exciting to cover. Third, the pollsters did not factor in the likelihood that many pan-blue voters felt the election would be close and that James Soong could draw enough votes that Ma would lose, so they decided not to vote for Soong and instead voted for Ma. Ironically, one might say, the media, especially the foreign media, which generally did not favor Ma, by reporting the election would be tight, helped Ma and the KMT.

Some observers, however, gave a different interpretation to the results. In spite of what was a big KMT win, in some ways the DPP had cause to celebrate or at minimum feel that the party still had a promising future. President Ma received a lower percentage of the popular vote than he got in 2008: 51.53 percent versus 58.45 percent. The DPP’s presidential and vice presidential candidates garnered 45.63 percent of the popular vote versus 41.55 percent in

\textsuperscript{300} Chris Wang, “Tsai’s defeat surprisingly large,” \textit{Taipei Times}, January 15, 2012 (online at taipeitimes.com).

\textsuperscript{301} This writer heard from several Taiwan and some officials that pollsters were not reporting inflated numbers for Ma and the KMT late in the campaign. DPP leaders, notably former presidential candidate Frank Hsieh, criticized DPP pollsters for reporting that Tsai would win by one percentage point. See “DPP prepares for crucial election review,” \textit{China Post}, January 24, 2012 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
Hence in terms of popular vote for president and vice president, the KMT’s count fell while the DPP’s rose. In the Legislative Yuan election, the DPP gained thirteen seats; the KMT lost seventeen. The DPP’s party ally, the TSU, won three seats. The DPP now controls more than a quarter of the Legislative Yuan seats, which will enable it to demand the president report to the legislature on certain matters, ask for emergency sessions, and put forth a presidential recall motion.

Yet to argue that the KMT should not be viewed as having necessarily won the election does not tell the true story. Few expected the KMT to repeat its 2008 performance in either part of this election. The KMT’s smashing performance that year was attributed largely to the fact that CHEN Shui-bian had severely damaged the DPP with his criminal acts and corruption. As a consequence, in January 2008 the DPP suffered its worst setback in a legislative election since the party was formed. There is another factor that explains the DPP’s dismal performance that year: a new election system. It advantaged the KMT, which was better organized and planned better. It also gave the winning party a disproportionate number of seats. Finally, the DPP’s big defeat in the legislative election that year gave momentum to Ma in the presidential election two months later and probably increased his margin of victory.

Hence one should not have expected the KMT to perform in 2012 as it did in 2008. If one views the 2008 election as being a unique one and the DPP having recovered from the Chen era (which it had to a large extent), the advantages and disadvantages accrued to of each set of candidates and the two parties and how these translated into votes (which will be assessed below), it was without question a win for Ma and the KMT.

The parties’ performances by regions, cities, and counties mimicked past elections. Simply put, the KMT performed better in the north and central parts of the island; the DPP did better in the south. The exceptions were Yilan County in the northeast and Hu-
alien in the east. Yilan went for the DPP; Hualien, a PFP, stronghold, went for the KMT. 305

The KMT did best in the offshore islands, gaining more than eighty percent of the vote there. On the island of Taiwan the ruling party got the highest percentage of votes in Hualien, Taitung, Hsinchu, and Miaoli respectively with sixty percent or higher in all of these districts. The KMT performed the worst in Chiayi City and Tainan Metropolitan. The DPP did the best in Chiayi County, Tainan Metropolitan, Yunlin, Pingtung, Yilan, and Chiayi City, getting more than fifty percent of the popular vote in all. 306

In terms of various groups voting for the one or the other of the presidential candidates and one or the other of the parties, the data are quite revealing. Both Ma and Tsai made special efforts to win the Hakka vote. 307 Both claimed to be Hakka, though this is less clear in Ma’s case. Since the Hakka vote was traditionally KMT based on the fact the Hakka and Fukien Taiwanese (the latter being the support base of the DPP) were traditional antagonists, Tsai’s task was to persuade Hakka to switch and vote for her. She did not accomplish this. Some said it was because Hakka people were very loyal to the KMT, did not like the DPP, and because Tsai was not considered a real Hakka because she did speak Hakka. 308 In contrast Ma addressed some Hakka communities in Hakka. 309 Of course, like most countries’ voters party preferences do not change quickly and this was no doubt a factor.

Hualien, Hsinchu and Miaoli, the districts in Taiwan that are the most Hakka went for Ma and the KMT decisively. In fact, these districts (if excluding the offshore island districts) constituted three of the top four biggest successes for Ma and the KMT in terms of the percentage of the popular vote they received. 310 Thus Tsai failed badly in her effort to win the Hakka vote.

Tsai and the DPP also failed to capture the female vote. Ma has always attracted a significant portion of the female vote because

308. Several Hakka living in Taiwan the author spoke to and who said they voted for Ma gave this explanation.
309. Mo Yan-chih, “Ma visits Ma Village, stresses Hakka roots,” Taipei Times, January 24, 2012 (online at taipeitimes.com).
310. See list of provinces above that supported the KMT and the DPP most strongly.
of his good looks and strong family values. In this election First Lady CHOW Mei-ching was also a big help to Ma during the campaign. Some described her as an ordinary woman with a unique charisma. Many appreciated the fact that she has never been accused of corruption or interference in the political processes, quite unlike WU Shu-chen, President Chen's wife. Clearly Tsai in some measure failed to get the women's vote because of the popularity of First Lady CHOW Mei-ching. In counterpoint, others said a lot of women didn't vote for Tsai because she has never been a wife or mother, had never run a household, and, as one voter put it, "needs her mother to take care of her."

Chairwoman Tsai and DPP campaigners made a strong pitch for the swing or undecided voters that they viewed as a large bloc and as the key to winning the election (pre-election polls showed this observation to be true). This group also went for President Ma. They were influenced by concerns over stability, relations with China, and fear about the financial crisis in Europe and its impact on Taiwan. They saw Ma as being able to handle these problems better than Tsai.

Another interpretation is that Tsai (thought to a lesser extent than legislative candidates) and the DPP as in previous elections played the bei ching or sorrow card, or, as others have labeled it, the Taiwan victimization syndrome. Both comported with an appeal to ethnic voting, a campaign strategy the DPP has long utilized. But this no longer swayed Taiwan's voters very well. In fact, with each recent election and the passing of time these tactics have worked less well. In fact, during the campaign Tsai used an ad saying, "I am Taiwanese," suggesting Ma was not; this was not received well and was dropped. The explanation was that there were too many swing voters and young voters for this to work. This election was about

311. Lawrence Chung, “First lady winning votes for Ma with her charm,” South China Morning Post, January 4, 2012 (online at scmp.com).
312. Ibid.
314. “President Ma has support of most young voter: poll,” CNA, December 28, 2011. Ma bested Tsai more than three points according to a poll done by the First-time Voters Policy Observation Group that was done from December 14 to 20. However, there was no exit poll to confirm this. Also see Elaine Hou, “Observers see stable Taiwan-China ties behind Ma’s re-election,” CNA, January 15, 2012 (online at cna.org).
315. Goh Sui Not, “Economy, not emotion, Moves Taiwan,” Taipei Times, January 17, 2012 (online at taipeitimes.com). This piece was originally published in the Straits Times.
other matters. It was first and foremost about the economy. Second it was about stability. These were the causes of the day.

The business community played an important role in this election in particular because it turned sharply into the KMT camp, having been split in the past. This was especially true of those working in China. Estimates of Taiwan citizens (most business people or Taishang) and their families living in China range from one to three million. There are no official statistics though it is fairly certain 600,000 reside in Shanghai alone.316 Probably 200,000 returned to Taiwan to vote and most voted for Ma and the KMT.317

One of the groups that supported Ma most strongly (though not many could vote) was the 300,000 or so Chinese spouses (the vast majority being wives) that reside in Taiwan. They had suffered grievously from discrimination under the Chen government. They had to wait for eight years before they could receive I.D. papers (even though Indonesian and Vietnamese spouses waited only six years) and could not work in the interim. For this and other reasons they claimed they were treated as second-class citizens under Chen. In addition, many charged that his administration did not act when they reported they were victims of violence at the hands of their Taiwanese husbands and instead of being extended their legal rights many were deported.318 The Ma administration allowed them to work upon their arrival in Taiwan and acquire local identity cards after six years.

Pundits not to mention various observers offered a host of other reasons for Ma’s win and Tsai’s defeat. The various explanations say much about the nature and results of this election. Hence they need to be assessed in greater detail.

First, the Ma campaign was well organized, well financed and but a few exceptions ran smoothly.319 Ma ran on his record and very cogently presented arguments and data to prove that he had been an effective president for four years and that Taiwan had im-

317. “Ma defeats Tsai by over 790,000 votes,” China Post, January 15, 2012 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
319. See Qi Dongtao, “Taiwan’s 2012 Presidential and Legislative Elections,” Background Brief (East Asian Institute), January 17, 2012, p. 10. The most important exception was, of course, not persuading James Soong to drop out of the race.
proved economically and in other ways under his leadership. Most noticeably Ma eradicated the corruption of the previous administration and set Taiwan on a new course in terms of honest and clean government. Comparing his administration to the one before in this and in a variety of other ways afforded very convincing evidence that Taiwan was better under his stewardship.

Ma also handled effectively what many suggested during the campaign to be his handicaps or weak points. The most important were the most recent data on the economy, KMT governance, and James Soong’s campaign. None of these matters ultimately hurt Ma’s campaign or the KMT’s legislative candidates.

Regarding the economy, as noted earlier economic growth declined in the late months of the campaign, unemployment increased, and a number of other indicators showed the economy was not moving in the right direction. Ma and KMT spokespersons made the case that this was temporary and reflected problems in Europe and the U.S. Also the Ma administration took measures to deal with the economic downturn that appeared to reflect quick actions and good decisions. More importantly, however, Ma convinced voters that he and the KMT could handle the economy, including it’s slowing down, better than Tsai and the DPP.

Underscoring this view, a large number of citizens from Taiwan that were engaged in business in China as noted returned to vote and most voted for Ma. The fact that business people supported Ma had a double whammy in that they came out strongly in favor of Ma’s China policy including the 1992 Consensus, both major Tsai weaknesses. Hence the DPP’s anti-China stance became perceived as also anti-business. In fact, the DPP post-election analysis combined the two in topping the list of reasons for losing the elec-

320. This was quite discernable from the international press conference Ma presented the day before the election. Most of those in attendance, including this writer, were impressed with the way it was handled and Ma’s grasp of facts and arguments.

321. For a summary of the indicators that showed a declining economy leading up to January 14 and the actions the government took, see Jane Rickards, “Macroeconomics,” Topics, December 2011, p. 7.


323. Ibid. What made Tsai especially vulnerable on this issue was the fact that in 2000, Tsai, then head of the Mainland Affairs Council, told President Chen who wanted to accept it not to. So she was on record.
tion: “anti-business, anti-business people and anti-cross strait exchanges.”

On the issue of governance, as noted earlier, KMT local officials did not compare favorably with either their DPP or independent counterparts. But Ma campaigned on the issue of good governance by his administration at the national level, not KMT officials in local politics. He made that case strongly and convinced voters. He was aided by the fact that Chairwoman Tsai had little to no experience governing; she had never won or served in elective office. Further, both Tsai and her running mate lost election bids to executive offices in 2010.

Regarding the “Soong factor,” during the campaign Ma and KMT officials made friendly overtures to Soong and pointedly refrained from castigating him to avoid alienating his supporters. At the same time they made the case that voting for Soong would help Tsai. Meanwhile the KMT successfully conveyed a sense of urgency about this election due to the economic situation, relations with the U.S. and China, and general stability. Ma and the KMT connected these matters to the idea that voting for Soong would give Tsai a victory “by accident.” Judging from the variance between Soong’s poll numbers during the campaign and the actual vote he received, they were persuasive.

Two frequently heard criticisms of Ma, that he is too honest and too scholarly, did not work against him effectively either. Ma’s high ethical standards indeed had prevented some talented KMT candidates from running and in the short run had hurt the KMT at the polls. But in the long run it helped both Ma and the KMT, especially with younger more idealist voters and because of a rash of corruption cases in a number of countries throughout the world plus Taiwan’s improved ratings in corruption and transparency published before or during the campaign by global organizations.

Concerning Ma’s scholarly mien and demeanor, Ma was indeed seen by many as too much an academic and, therefore, not tough enough for Taiwan’s rough and tumble politics. But the DPP could hardly fault him for this during the campaign since their candidate was also characterized as a scholar. Also Tsai had made the case that the no-gloves fighting kind of campaigns many DPP candi-

326. See Copper, *Taiwan’s Democracy on Trial*, chapter 5.
dates had run in the past had not worked. She stood for more civil election contests and more urbane behavior by her party. This arguably helped the DPP, but it also worked to Ma’s advantage in the sense that his being too scholarly was not heard much during this campaign.

One of Ma’s biggest problems was Taiwan’s military strategy and its sovereignty. Ma could not boast of KMT’s dual accomplishments of creating democracy and prosperity (which people have long felt are complementary). China has proven they are not. Ma also faced a problem in terms of fiscal planning in terms of social welfare versus austerity. The KMT for a long time pre-empted the DPP by enacting social programs (even national health care); but it could not afford to do so in the past four years. Neither could President Ma make much ground on the “Taiwan political miracle,” the “great transition,” or the “first Chinese democracy” or avoiding social conflict while it made progress in political modernization. Finally, Ma, it seemed, put too much reliance on ties with China in his economic policies. But Ma and the KMT overcame these “inherent” problems.

Chairwoman Tsai’s weaknesses going into the election clearly weighed more heavily than President Ma’s. Her major handicap was in formulating policies dealing with external relations, especially relating to China and the U.S. Put simply Tsai faced a serious problem of a disconnect between what her base wanted and expected of her, and what was realistic and rational. She likewise encountered related challenges defining her and the party’s views of the country in terms of its title, Constitution and its future.

The main problem in dealing with China for Tsai was the contradiction she faced between not wanting to deal with China, extensively at least, and the well-known “China juggernaut.” China had become a formidable global economic power and Taiwan had few options to continue expanding commerce with China lest its economy underperform. This was particularly true in view of the fact that Taiwan’s other main trading partners, the U.S., Europe, and

327. Jens Kastner, “Taiwan subs plan tests the waters,” Asia Times, June 1, 2011 (online at atimes.com).

328. Ian Inkster, “Crowding out other election issues,” Taipei Times, December 20, 2011 (online at taipeitimes.com).

Japan, were not doing well economically and were not expected to grow very much in the immediate future.\textsuperscript{330}

Chairwoman Tsai’s tactic to counter the KMT’s economic policies was to advance the view that under Ma and the KMT the gap between rich and poor had widened and the benefits of economic growth were felt by only the advantaged. In other words, rich people, large companies, and north Taiwan benefited; their opposites did not. This had resonance.\textsuperscript{331} But Tsai’s strategy was rendered less effective than it might have been by the fact that the rich-poor gap had been wider during the early Chen years than during the last four years. Also raising taxes, which was a widely suggested bromide, was something Taiwan had long been reluctant to do, as it would make its exports less competitive than those of its competitors in particular South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore. Also it had not worked in other countries (most well known in Taiwan were Japan and Europe), as in a global economy increased taxation causes capital to go elsewhere. In addition, Tsai being rich was not a good messenger. Add to that the fact that in the 1990s the KMT oversaw a major trend toward economic equity in Taiwan. Finally, the KMT announced a slate of candidates for at-large legislative seats that represented disadvantaged groups and social reformers; the DPP’s list included a number that were tainted with corruption.\textsuperscript{332}

The corruption issue also handicapped Tsai. Though Tsai was regarded as a clean politician, at a critical time during the campaign she was accused of corruption when she was part of the Chen administration (vice premier). In her defense it was not a big matter and she was assisting an important industry in Taiwan; yet she had violated the law. Her association with former president Chen, which this drew attention to, also damaged her; she had repudiated him but she could not criticize him too harshly since he still influenced voters. Last she was hurt by the accusations of corruption leveled against her vice presidential running mate during the campaign regarding a property he owned.

\textsuperscript{330} The U.S., Japan and the Euro area grew 1 percent, minus 2.1 percent and 0.6 percent in the previous quarter. The projection for growth in 2012 in these three was 2 percent, 2.5 percent and 1 percent respectively. See “Economic and financial indicators,” \textit{Economist}, September 17, 2011, p. 101.

\textsuperscript{331} This worked better in the 2010 election possibly because in the election campaign it was undermined by Tsai’s China policy. See Chris Wang, “DPP ponders reasons for defeat,” \textit{Taipei Times}, January 17, 2012 (online at taipeitimes.com).

Tsai was not able to connect effectively with women, young people, or minority groups. As noted these groups voted for Ma and the KMT. Tsai’s problem in this regard was the fact the DPP was viewed as a male chauvinist party notwithstanding having picked a female presidential candidate, and was an ethnic party of the Fukien Taiwanese. It is also seen as a party of rural south Taiwan that is insular and isolationist in its views and focused on local issues and consequently is not able to offer rational views on foreign policy.

Finally, there were a number of issues and problems Tsai and her party encountered before and during the campaign. While none were alone decisive collectively they mattered. The DPP’s opposition to nuclear power generated little enthusiasm. Taiwan needed electricity and this issue was not a good one in the context of economic uncertainty. Tsai’s choice of a vice presidential running mate did not help her much and in some ways hurt her campaign. Although it was not obvious during the campaign the DPP seemed to be internally divided. The nomination process revealed this. Whether Tsai and the DPP should have apologized for former president Chen was an issue. It was an unresolved dilemma. All of these things no doubt caused a lower than expected turnout of DPP voters in some districts (while the KMT’s voting based turned out better than expected).

A few weeks after the election DPP leaders and election strategists assessed the reasons for their loss. Initially they tried to avoid admitting fault. They mentioned that a significant number of their supporters in south Taiwan working in the north were not able to return home to vote because the Lunar New Year holiday came just after this and they could not get away from their job twice. In fact, this, they said, accounted for the low voter turnout.

Indeed the voter turnout in this election was lower than the presidential election in 2008. However it should be noted that if the turnout is compared to the previous legislative election (it seems unfair to compare it just to the last presidential election) then the voter turnout increased from 58.5 percent to 73 percent. If this election is viewed as a presidential election, which, of course, it was in

333. The fact some DPP heavyweights did not attend meetings after the election to assess the party’s defeat seemed to indicate serious disagreements and dissention in the party. See, for example, Lee, “‘Consensus’ not a key to loss: DPP.”
335. Wang, “DPP cites six main reasons for loss.”
part, the trend from the 2000 election to this one showed a steady decline in voter turnout: from 82.7 percent in 2000, to 80.3 percent in 2004, to 76.3 percent in 2008, to 74.4 percent in this election. This can be said to reflect a maturing of Taiwan’s democracy and less emotion in each successive election.336 Anyway the voter turnout was high by most standards. Finally, the turnout would likely have been higher had the DPP not opposed absentee voting as the KMT had proposed since many more of Taiwan’s citizens living in China would have voted.

DPP officials also mentioned the KMT’s advantage in resources, its vote buying, its use of scare tactics, and the help in got from China.337 The KMT did have the edge in fund raising, but that was in large part the product of convincing donors it could revolve Taiwan’s economic problems more effectively. The charge of vote buying is not borne out; there were not a large number of charges filed or arrests.338 The KMT did play the security card; but this was nothing new and did not seem to most voters an unfair election tactic. The KMT certainly benefited from China’s help during the campaign, though it was not certain at the time if the statements made by Chinese officials would help the KMT or create a backlash. It could have been either. In the final analysis China came across as quite measured in its efforts to influence the election.339 And, of course, the U.S. helped the KMT. During the campaign the DPP did not make issue of U.S. actions to any extent and certainly did not attempt to make America’s Taiwan policy a campaign issue.340

Some DPP leaders argued that not accepting the 1992 consensus was not the reason Tsai and the DPP lost, but rather it was the failure to articulate a coherent China policy.341 This contradicts the conventional wisdom about the election. Many observers, including

337. Ibid.
338. There were only two requests for a vote recount in the legislative districts. See “Free and Fair,” Taiwan Review, March 1, 2012 (online at taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw).
340. The DPP did blame the U.S. after the election though neither Tsai nor DPP candidates said much in criticism of the U.S. during the campaign. See “Tsai refuses to meet AIT chief as DPP reiterates US bias claim,” China Post, January 31, 2012 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
a number of scholars, said the election was a "referendum" on the '92 consensus.\textsuperscript{342} In any case, since not accepting the '92 consensus was one of the important tenets of Tsai's China policy it is hard to distinguish between the two. Opposition to ECFA was another element of Tsai's China policy. DPP leaders cited Chairwoman Tsai's oscillating position on ECFA as a reason for losing the election.\textsuperscript{343} Finally, the Taiwan consensus idea that Tsai propounded did not gain much traction.\textsuperscript{344}

Chairwoman Tsai and DPP officials also admitted other mistakes and shortcomings. Tsai stated her party did not do well in northern and central Taiwan and attributed that to insufficient connections in local communities.\textsuperscript{345} She also admitted to personal deficiencies and cited her shortcomings in handling party unity, personnel arrangements, campaign nominations, campaign team, election strategy, policy defense and offense, and communicating with society.\textsuperscript{346} The chairwoman gave special mention to her mishandling the "mainland issue."\textsuperscript{347}

Some DPP leaders cited CHEN Shui-bian's legacy as one of the reason for their defeat, though a few said the party failed to cite his accomplishments as president and this was a mistake.\textsuperscript{348} The party indeed faced a dilemma regarding Chen: whether to treat him as history to be forgotten and not mention him, or argue that his accomplishments should be cited while admitting his faults. Some said this problem remained and had to be faced and dealt with.\textsuperscript{349} That was clearly so.

Having assessed the reasons for Ma and the KMT's win and Tsai and the DPP's loss, it is in order to look at some of the responses from foreign governments and foreign media to the election. A brief examination shows that outside views were generally

\textsuperscript{342} "Scholars debate whether polls were referendum on '1992 Consensus,'" \textit{China Post}, January 16, 2012 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\textsuperscript{343} Chris Wang, "Forum examines DPP failings," \textit{Taipei Times}, February 15, 2012 (online at taipeitimes.com).
\textsuperscript{344} Chris Wang, "DPP soul-searching on Taiwan, 1992 consensus," \textit{Taipei Times}, January 30, 2012 (online at taipeitimes.com).
\textsuperscript{345} Loa Iok-sin, Lee I-chia, Chris Wang and Mo Yan-chih, "KMT maintains majority," \textit{Taipei Times}, January 15, 2012 (online at taipeitimes.com).
\textsuperscript{346} Enru Lin, "Kaohsiung mayor to serve as interim DPP chair: Tsai," \textit{Asiaone}, February 23, 2012 (online at asiaone.com.sg).
\textsuperscript{347} "Tsai admits mishandling mainland issue," \textit{China Post}, February 24, 2012 (online at chinapost.com.tw).
\textsuperscript{348} Loa et al, "KMT maintains majority."
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid.
very positive, with some caveats. However, there was restraint on the part of the Western media in its praise of the victors.

Officials in both China and the United States responded in a very upbeat way about the results of the voting. The White House issued a statement saying that Taiwan was “one of the great success stories in Asia” and that it has again “demonstrated the strength and vitality of its democratic system.” U.S. President Barack Obama congratulated Ma on the win. “Cross-strait peace, stability and improved relations, in an environment free from intimidation, are of profound importance to the United States,” he said.

China’s official news agency reported on the glory of Ma’s win citing supporters, in the midst of rain, who yelled after the results were made known: “Go for it.” “I love you.” The agency noted that Ma had maintained good cross-Strait relations, had supported the 1992 Consensus, and worked for peace. Also observed was the “more rational” nature of voters, especially in south Taiwan.

Pundits said China and the U.S. alike were elated and breathed a sigh of relief upon learning of the results. In fact, it was quite obvious neither wanted to see Chairwoman Tsai win the presidency or the DPP win a majority in the Legislative Yuan. Yet their reactions were a bit guarded; they did not want to gloat or make too much of a show of their feelings, as both knew they had to deal with Ma on some difficult issues in the next four years and realized they would not always agree.

Taiwan received praise from various quarters for a proper campaign and election. Some said that Taiwan should be viewed as a good example of a democracy working well. They noted the candidates were talented and managed good campaigns. Issues were debated thoroughly. President Ma’s mentor at Harvard University, Jerome Cohen, even suggested Ma could be a Nobel Price nominee.

352. “Ma re-elected Taiwan leader, mainland reiterates 1992 Consensus,” Xinhua, January 14, 2012 (online at xinhuanet.com).
353. “2012 ELECTION; Analysis: Despite U.S. praise for Taiwan vote, relations still likely to remain the same,” Taipei Times, January 14, 2012 (online at TaipeiTimes.com).
for his successful efforts in dampening tensions in the Taiwan Strait.\(^{355}\)

Some commentators applauded Taiwan’s democratic progress indicating that it might have considerable influence on China. Indeed netizens in China watched the election with considerable interest. Some said they expected Taiwan to have a positive or democratic influence on the Chinese leadership. In other words, Taiwan’s 2012 election would promote democratic change in China.\(^{356}\)

This may be true; but there are reasons not to exaggerate this point. Taiwan was a model for democratic progress in the past. It democratized fast, under stress, and successfully. However, Taiwan was seen as less of a prototype for China to follow as a result of the gridlock and chaos that characterized the Chen years. In fact, Chinese intellectuals and certainly Chinese leaders no longer viewed Taiwan as a model for political change. This may now change. Yet until recent years democratization was viewed as a necessary condition for engineering economic growth; now that is not the case. The major democracies of the world, the U.S., Europe and Japan, are faring very poorly in terms of economic growth while China has been growing rapidly and has become the envy of the world. In fact, China is now seen as a model for economic growth and many observers attribute this to its less democratic political system.\(^{357}\)

One should also note that Ma won the election in large measure based on the perception that he would promote stability. China, of course, can appreciate that. In addition, Tsai promoted policies of fostering economic equality and closing the gap between the rich and the poor as opposed to pushing economic growth per se. She lost the election, which says that the voters were more concerned about economic growth than economic equality. China faces this same issue and might see Ma’s win as confirmation of its policies. Finally, in the context of a new leadership that will take charge in China in 2012 it is difficult to say what conclusions Chinese leaders might make about Taiwan’s election. They are clearly preoccupied with other matters.

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The Western media generally praised the election, characterizing it as a major step in the process of Taiwan’s democracy maturing. Mention was made in many newspaper and magazine articles of it being a calm, smooth and orderly election.\textsuperscript{358} However, numerous articles noted that Ma was pro-China not necessarily in a positive way.\textsuperscript{359} Western reporting likewise made it clear that the United States wanted Ma to win, but generally did not say that the U.S. aggressively made this known or may have interfered in the election. Articles in the Western press were notably not laudatory of Ma personally and made little mention of his outstanding qualities such as his honesty, intelligence, etc. Nor was there much mention of his and the KMT’s ability to manage the government, their role in Taiwan’s democratization, or their popularity. Nothing was said about Taiwan being a conservative country and this being to Ma’s advantage. Very little was said about the legislative election or about the KMT victory there. Finally, there was little variance in the Western media’s reporting on the election.

The Asian press reported on the election from quite different perspectives than the Western media. They noted that there was a danger of conflict in the Taiwan Strait and voters saw Ma as being able to handle this.\textsuperscript{360} The view from Japan was that President Ma fixed the problem of ill will between Taiwan and China and won a large victory as a result.\textsuperscript{361} The Korean media stated that world’s capitals were relieved by Ma’s win.\textsuperscript{362} Korean newspapers also

\textsuperscript{358} See “Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou wins second term,” BBC, January 14, 2012 (online at bbc.com);

\textsuperscript{359} Andrew Jacobs, “President of Taiwan Is Re-Elected, A Result that is Likely to Please China,” \textit{New York Times}, January 15, 2012 (online at nyt.com); Tania Branigan, “Relief in Beijing as Taiwan’s pro-China president wins a second term in office,” \textit{Observer}, January 15, 2012 (online at lexis-nexis.com); “Taiwan stays on course; China-friendly president is reelected Saturday,” \textit{Toronto Star}, January 15, 2012 (online at lexis-nexis.com); “Taiwan’s pro-China chief reelected,” \textit{Washington Post}, January 15, 2012 (online at lexis-nexis.com).

\textsuperscript{360} Lee Seak Hwai, “Sense of crisis key to Ma’s win,” \textit{Straits Times}, January 15, 2012 (online at lexis-nexis.com); “Taiwan’s Ma wins 51% of vote,” \textit{Nation} (Thailand), January 15, 2012 (online at lexis-nexis.com).

\textsuperscript{361} “Mr. Ma wins second time,” \textit{Japan Times}, January 18, 2012 (online at lexis-nexis.com).

\textsuperscript{362} Frank Ching, “People of Taiwan should decide their own fate,” \textit{Korea Times}, January 18, 2012 (online at lexis-nexis.com).
stated that Ma won because he is a clean politician and that during his first term Ma did what he promised to do.\textsuperscript{363}

A Malaysian newspaper noted that the voters did not trust the DPP to handle relations with China as it might undo sixteen agreements reached during Ma’s four years in office. Also mentioned was the DPP’s not accepting the national flag or the anthem.\textsuperscript{364} An Indonesian newspaper reported that Tsai had not been able to convince the public in Taiwan that Ma’s policies were to blame for higher prices and an economic slowdown.\textsuperscript{365} An Indian paper reported that Ma had prevented the global economic downturn from hurting Taiwan.\textsuperscript{366}

VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Among the various theories about Taiwan’s elections, this election supported the watermelon theory more than any other. Beginning with the 2008 legislative election and counting this election, the KMT won the last four major elections. The KMT was returned to power in both the executive and legislative branches of government and kept there. In January 2012, voters stayed with the presidential candidate and party in power. In contrast, the pendulum theory does not explain the results of this election. Voters were not looking for a change and didn’t vote for one.

Helping explain the watermelon theory working, this was a national election; the KMT does better in national elections than the DPP because of the nature of the two parties and their voting bases. In addition, during the campaign President Ma and the KMT created a sense of national crisis and a perception Taiwan was at a crossroads. This helped the KMT win votes; it also countered James Soong’s presidential bid that might have funneled votes away from Ma and the KMT.

The pocketbook theory was validated by the results of this election. Ma and the KMT won on the matter of whom best could handle the economy. Voters perceived that the less than good news


\textsuperscript{364} Frank Ching, ”Taiwanese can decide their own fate,” \textit{New Straits Times}, January 19, 2012 (online at nst.com).

\textsuperscript{365} “Taiwan’s president wins re-election,” \textit{Indonesia Katakami}, January 14, 2012 (online at indonesiakatakami.wordpress.com).

\textsuperscript{366} Swagate Ganguly, “Crouching dragon, hidden tiger,” \textit{Times of India}, January 30, 2012 (online at timesofindia.indiatimes.com).
toward the end of the campaign was mainly the product of economic difficulties elsewhere, namely in the U.S., Europe and Japan—three of Taiwan’s important trading partners. The electorate also accepted Ma’s perspective on the economy more than Tsai’s: that it is more important to engineer growth and improve the country’s general economic health than it is to ensure economic equality. Taiwan’s voters were too aware of the negative impact of egalitarianism on the economy in China under Mao and recently the European and to some degree the American experiences. They also saw South Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore as competitors for exports and noted their focus was on growth more than equity.

The idea that the party with the most money will win was also demonstrated. A better financial position means that the party can afford to hire better experts and consultants and can buy advertising. But it also means that contributors of campaign funds, who are intelligent and seen as patriots, favor it. The fact that well-known business people in Taiwan are seen as models, even heroes, and many of them turned away from the DPP to support the KMT, had salience. Thus, not only did the business community provide funds to the Ma and KMT campaigns, they provided support that translated into the view that the KMT was better able to manage the economy and, therefore, do what was best for Taiwan.

The critical election theory and the split the other bloc to win strategy both seemed to operate in this election. The 2004 election set a trend that impacted this election. The fact that election “accidently” kept the President Chen in power was on the minds of voters. Some, especially pan-blue voters, recalled that election was unfair. The splitist theory seemed to work in the sense Ma and the KMT were afraid James Soong might decide this election’s results and acted to prevent that from happening. Voters were aware of what happened in 1994 and 2000 and thus refrained from voting for Soong.

It may be said that instead of a split hurting the KMT, division worked against the DPP. The DPP was at odds over its candidates, its nominating process, and more, and this caused dissention in the party. Its leadership was not united. While this condition was not exploited to any degree by the KMT it was reflected in a lower level of enthusiasm in the DPP and the turnout of its supporters.

The view of Taiwan being separated into north and south regions and to win an election the center is vital also functioned during this campaign. The campaigns of the KMT and the DPP
reflected a carefully planned geographic strategy. Ma and the KMT won the center and thus won the election.

The idea that foreign policy concerns may trump local nationalism and that external relations and economic growth as well as national security are related likewise seemed to have been in play. The DPP was not able to draw voters to its view on local nationalism and portray Ma and the KMT as perpetrating a danger to Taiwan’s sovereign status. Instead Ma and the KMT were able to interpret Taiwan’s preferred future to include maintaining workable relations with China and the United States. In other words, the KMT’s more global views prevailed over the DPP’s localism. It was too obvious to most voters that the DPP’s view was not appropriate for Taiwan given its present situation and its place in the world.

A number of other observations can be made about the election campaign and its results that are worth citing. Some maybe said to be telling in terms of the significance of this election.

Mass rallies, polarizing issues such as referendums, and negative campaigning were less a part of this election than previous elections. There was less emotion in this election. The two major parties behaved with more moderation during the campaign as witnessed by their using their party colors less. All of these things suggest Taiwan’s electorate has more confidence in democracy and gives more importance to issues and rational views during campaigning. After the election there was widespread acceptance of the election being fair and that the voters were free to choose without undue pressure. In short, Taiwan’s democracy matured.

There was less resorting by the presidential and vice presidential candidates to claiming they could decide matters that are beyond the realm of political leaders to resolve or were the purview of other countries. There were fewer appeals to emotions. The voters were assumed to be intelligent and informed, and they were.

The independence issue, Taiwan’s national identity, and sovereignty were talked about less. The United States, as mentioned earlier, will decide whether Taiwan survives or not, not Taiwan’s government or the voters. The electorate seemed aware of this. That seems to explain why there was no blowback caused by what seemed to be American interference in the campaign.

There was little concern expressed by the candidates or the voters about the ethnicity, sex, or sexual preferences of the candidates. Looking at Taiwan’s past and elections elsewhere one would have expected these matters to have played a central role in the
campaign and in deciding the election's results. Surprisingly they didn't.

Former president LEE Teng-hui had little impact on the voting. Neither did KMT elders. The issue of judicial reform did not develop salience. Negative campaigning did not work very well.

It appears that both participants and voters have accepted the rotation of political parties and thus change of political leadership and power is legitimate and an important characteristic of Taiwan's democratic system. The concept of a loyal opposition may grow out of this. This certainly should be regarded as a positive development.

Even though a third candidate ran for president and third parties won some legislative races, this election appears to have again confirmed that Taiwan's political party system is a two-party one. This too may be regarded as good for Taiwan's polity.

In summation, in the future this election may be seen as marking the transition in Taiwan's democratization toward more rational politics and a political system that is more stable, more fair, more accepting, and simply better. That means this Election Day was more important than most, perhaps much more important.
## Glossary of Selected Names

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