

Taiwan: KMT Leadership Moves To Cut Influence Of Veterans' Branch In Major Internal Shake-Up

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In a surprise move, the KMT has moved to [demote the position](#) of the Huang Fu-hsing and to integrate the Huang Fu-hsing into local KMT party chapters. Although the Huang Fu-hsing will become a “veterans service working committee” and be a second-tier part of the party, this is a move aimed at undercutting the power of what has sometimes been termed a “party within a party.”

The Huang Fu-hsing is a branch of the KMT that organizationally is separate from local party branches, and whose members are primarily veterans. Indeed, the rebranding of the Huang Fu-hsing as a “veterans service working committee” is ironic, in that it is true that the Huang Fu-hsing originates from efforts by the KMT to care for the millions of soldiers that it brought to Taiwan in the wake of the Chinese Civil War.

But the significance of the Huang Fu-hsing is its capacity to mobilize votes, in that they are known for a high voter turnout rate. To this extent, the Huang Fu-hsing occupies a large portion of the KMT party occupation. [Of 370,000 members in 2022, 100,000 were Huang Fu-hsing, meaning that 27% of party members are part of the Huang Fu-hsing.](#)

Particularly as KMT [had less than 9,000 members](#) under 40 in 2020, the Huang Fu-hsing could potentially be a liability for it going forward. The Huang Fu-hsing are also known for hardline views in favor of unification with China that are at odds with the views of the general public. This is all the more so for young people, at a time in which poll after poll shows that youth identify as Taiwanese rather than Chinese, contributing to an inability for the KMT to make inroads among youth in past years.

One notes that the Huang Fu-hsing, as veterans who may have fought with the CCP in armed conflict but have now come around to the idea of friendly relations with the CCP, set the template for the KMT's rapprochement with the CCP in past decades. Otherwise, the Huang Fu-hsing have been [highly active in protests](#) against the Tsai administration on pension reform, involving several attempts to storm government buildings as the legislature. Though the reforms were aimed at preventing Taiwan's pension system from going bankrupt as a result of the lucrative pensions paid by the KMT government to veterans during the authoritarian period to maintain their loyalty, veterans were incensed by what they viewed as a denigration of the respect they saw themselves due for having put their lives on the line for the country.

The move from KMT party chair Eric Chu, interestingly enough, occurs at a time when Chu might be expected to be quite weak. The 2024 election resulted in a narrow win for the KMT in the legislature and defeat in the presidential race.

In order to try and increase their hold over the party, the deep Blue wing of the KMT [called for Chu's resignation](#), framing the election outcome as a defeat rather than a victory. Resignation is traditional for party chairs in the event of electoral defeats in Taiwanese politics.

It can be seen why deep Blues would want to be rid of Chu, seeing as Chu is historically a moderate in the party, and was previously seen as unusually pro-US for a KMT politician. To date, Chu managed to shrug off such calls for him to resign.

As such, it is unclear if Chu's push to weaken the Huang Fu-hsing occurs from a position of power, in that he is ousting those who previously tried to push him out. Or it is possible that Chu is acting out of desperation because his position is weak.

Former president Ma Ying-jeou could have been expected to restrain Chu's actions previously. But a disastrous interview with German public broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* in which Ma called for having faith in Chinese president Xi Jinping may have resulted in Ma being marginalized, with [Ma not invited](#) to the KMT's final election rallies. This may have created more room for Chu to maneuver.

Some have sided with Chu including, surprisingly enough, [2024 KMT vice presidential candidate Jaw Shaw-kong](#), best known as a deep Blue firebrand and media personality. But others, such as former KMT lawmaker and [legislative defense committee chair Lin Yu-fang](#) have pushed back, calling for Chu to resign over his ungratefulness and apparent disrespect to veterans. A number of Huang Fu-hsing chapters [have suggested](#) that they will resign from the KMT and instead join the New Party or TPP.

This is not the first time that Chu has seen fit to change longstanding precedents in the KMT to try and maintain political power. For example, one notes that in the course of the 2024 elections, Chu successfully pushed for the KMT not deciding its presidential candidate through an open primary, [but instead using a closed nomination process by the party leadership](#). This was because Chu hoped to become the KMT's presidential candidate himself, while in a primary he was likely to be defeated by New Taipei mayor Hou You-yi.

Still, it is to be seen whether this gamble is successful in Chu's favor. Certainly, the move is a risky one, affecting over a quarter of the party's overall members, and either allowing Chu to retain power or resulting in a premature end to his chairmanship. And if the move ends up alienating the over 25% of party members that compose the Huang Fu-hsing, resulting in their distancing themselves from the party, this would mean a significant loss of support for an already weakened KMT. Chu may hope to win over younger supporters through this move, as part of efforts to change the party's image, but one wonders if this would truly occur.

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