

Election results in maintenance of pan-blue status quo in Taiwanese local politics

Monday 5 December 2022, by [HIOE Brian](#) (Date first published: 26 November 2022).

THE RESULTS OF nine-in-one elections today resulted in the KMT regaining control of traditional territories in Taoyuan, Keelung, and Taipei, while edging out the DPP competition. On the other hand, the DPP held onto its own traditional territories in southern Taiwan in Tainan and Kaohsiung. However, the DPP clearly was unable to gain new ground or to hold onto traditional pan-Blue territory that it had captured in past years.

The victor in Taipei was Chiang Wan-an of the KMT in a narrow race with former Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung and Huang Shan-shan of the TPP. By the time that Chen Shih-chung conceded victory around 7 PM, Chiang was ahead by 30,000 votes, with around 400,000 votes compared to Chen's 370,000 and Huang's 280,000. Clearly, Chen benefitted from the split vote in the pan-Blue camp between Chiang and Huang, but this was not enough.



CHEN SHIH-CHUNG RALLY IN TAIPEI LAST NIGHT. PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN HIOE

The DPP, too, was unable to retain Taoyuan, with legislator Cheng Yun-peng defeated by Simon Chang by at least 120,000 votes, with 470,000 votes for Chang to 350,000 for Cheng, as of press time. Likewise, the DPP was unable to retain Keelung, with around 96,000 votes to 71,000 at press time, with Tsai Shih-ying defeated by Hsieh Kuo-liang. The DPP was hoping to keep both, despite that Taoyuan and Keelung traditionally lean pan-Blue, because of the successes of Taoyuan mayor Cheng Wen-tsan and Keelung mayor Lin Yu-chang.

Nevertheless, the DPP was unable to do so after its initial Taoyuan mayoral candidate, Lin Chih-chien, was forced to withdraw after [a plagiarism scandal that led to his withdrawal in favor of legislator Cheng Yun-peng](#). This hurt the DPP's chances of holding onto Taoyuan when polling previously suggested that it would be able to before the scandal.



HUANG SHAN-SHAN RALLY IN TAIPEI LAST NIGHT. PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN HIOE

As Lin was previously Hsinchu mayor, it is thought that this also contributed to the DPP losing control of Hsinchu, with the unexpected victory of the TPP's Ann Kao. [Kao won despite facing numerous scandals, ranging from plagiarism accusations, to infidelity, to corruption.](#) The TPP now has a stronger hand than ever before, with Kao's victory, and Huang's strong performance in Taipei.

One saw a similar result in Miaoli, with the victory of pan-Blue independent Tung Chung-chin. Historically a member of the KMT, Tung ran as an independent with the support of incumbent Hsu Yao-chang of the KMT, but not as the KMT. [Tung won in spite of old gang-related murder and assault charges.](#)

Lin Zi-miao and Hsu Chen-wei of the KMT won in Yilan and Hualien respectively, though also facing corruption charges. [Attempts by the DPP to attack the KMT on the issue of corruption were clearly unsuccessful.](#) Lin faced corruption charges over the purchase of rezoned land that was originally protected land by a relative, while Hsu and her husband legislator Fu Kun-chi have long faced insider trading charges-Hsu originally became county commissioner after Fu was jailed, with Fu divorcing her and naming her deputy country magistrate.



CHIANG WAN-AN RALLY IN TAIPEI LAST NIGHT. PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN HIOE

The KMT won handily in New Taipei and Taichung, with Hou You-yi defeating Lin Chia-lung and Lu Shiow-yen defeating Tsai Chi-chang. This result was largely expected, with Hou widely seen as a frontrunner for the KMT's presidential candidate in 2024. The DPP did manage to hold onto Tainan and Kaohsiung, in spite of KMT attempts to make inroads into southern Taiwan after the 2018 victory of Han Kuo-yu in Kaohsiung.

Overall, then, one saw a restoration of the pan-Blue status quo in local politics. The DPP has long struggled with regard to local politics, which were historically dominated by the pan-Blue camp. No different with the present elections, then, though the absence of any phenomenon analogous to the 2018 "Han wave" may not make the results as much of a game-changer for the KMT.

President Tsai Ing-wen later from her position as party chair to take responsibility for the

DPP's defeats in the nine-in-one elections. This is likely to open up a power vacuum in the DPP ahead of 2024 presidential and legislative elections, affecting the DPP's choice of presidential candidate.

Likewise, the referendum to lower the voting age passes. But with low turnout, it is thought that the odds of the referendum passing were comparatively low. It may have been a strategic error pushing for a referendum on a local election, rather than a presidential election year.

Brian Hioe

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<https://newbloommag.net/2022/11/26/2022-election-results/>

The outcome of Taipei's mayoral race will not be indicative of overall trends in Taiwan

WITH THE UPCOMING midterm elections in Taiwan, much coverage-both domestic and international-has focused on the Taipei mayoral race.

In particular, the Taipei mayoral race features a three-way match-up between former legislator Chiang Wan-an of the KMT, former Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung of the DPP, and former deputy mayor Huang Shan-shan of the TPP. The three candidates all resigned from their positions in order to run.

The race has attracted a great deal of attention because of the candidates' backgrounds. Chen Shih-chung headed Taiwan's response to COVID-19 as Minister of Health and Welfare and head of the Central Epidemic Command Center, the government body that handles Taiwan's response to pandemics. Chen held daily press conferences through the course of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide updates on the COVID-19 situation. Consequently, he is credited with much of Taiwan's successes fighting COVID-19-or, for detractors, he is seen as responsible for the shortcomings of Taiwan's COVID-19 response under the Tsai administration.



CHIANG WAN-AN OF THE KMT. PHOTO CREDIT: CHIANG WAN-AN/FACEBOOK

Likewise, Chiang Wan-an was one of the KMT's better-known and youngest legislators. He is the youngest of the three candidates, at age 43. However, what has drawn the most

attention about Chiang is with regard to his family background. Chiang is the apparent great-grandson of former dictator Chiang Kai-shek, [though some have raised questions about the veracity of this claim](#). Chiang was originally surnamed Chang, but he and his father John Chiang changed their last name in order to seek public office.

Lastly, Huang Shan-shan is running as the candidate of Ko Wen-je's TPP, though she is actually a member of the People First Party. Huang's success or lack of success in challenging both Chiang and Chen will prove an important test for the "light blue" third party. Namely, though a pan-Blue party, the TPP has distinguished itself from the KMT by taking less hardline positions on Taiwan's sovereignty. This may create a political opening for the TPP, seeing as the biggest difficulty that the KMT has faced in past years is its inability to turn around its pro-China image, but the TPP has significantly less resources and mobilization capacity than the KMT.

It may not be surprising, then, that the Taipei mayoral race sees disproportionate attention. Taipei is Taiwan's capital, as well as its political, economic, and cultural center. Consequently, the Taipei mayoral race often sets the tone for other races nationwide. There is also the historical precedent of Taipei mayors later becoming presidents, as is the case with three of Taiwan's four democratically elected presidents-Tsai Ing-wen being the major example notwithstanding.



CHEN SHIH-CHUNG OF THE DPP. PHOTO CREDIT: CHEN SHIH-CHUNG/FACEBOOK

At the same time, it is important to note-particularly for international media-that the Taipei mayoral race is not indicative of broader trends in Taiwan, overall. Because it is the Taiwanese city that has the most international recognition, the outcome of the Taipei race is likely to be reported on as though it were a marker of broader views of the pan-Green and pan-Blue camps in Taiwan.

This would be to ignore the large disparities between Taipei and other parts of Taiwan, however. Taipei has historically swung toward the pan-Blue camp, as a city with a large population of waishengren-individuals descended from those that came with the KMT to Taiwan. Waishengren comprise around 10% of the population, in addition to the 2% Indigenous and 88% benshengren population, the latter of which are Han individuals descended from prior waves of migration to Taiwan in the past centuries. Likewise, Taipei served as the KMT's seat of power during the authoritarian period.

It is significant to note the significant demographic differences between Taipei and other parts of Taiwan before seeing the Taipei race as a benchmark for Taiwan as a whole. Taipei is the city in Taiwan that speaks the least Taiwanese Hokkien, after all, which is much more widely spoken outside of Taipei. Taipei residents have also often been regarded as a minority of elites-the term "celestial dragon people" (龍城人) is sometimes used to refer to Taipei residents. The term comes from the Japanese manga One Piece, in which the "celestial dragons" are a race of nobles that wear space suits when venturing outside of

their homes in order to avoid breathing the same air as the common masses. As the joke goes, residents of Taipei more often travel to other countries than they do to other parts of Taiwan.



HUANG SHAN-SHAN OF THE TPP SPEAKING AT A RALLY. PHOTO CREDIT: HUANG SHAN-SHAN/FACEBOOK

Taipei fits the classic pattern of a capital city that drains resources from the rest of the country and is demographically very different from the country that it rules over. But consequently, it is necessary to examine the overall picture of election outcomes in Taiwan, rather than see dynamics in Taipei as reflective of Taiwan overall. That would be to repeat a longstanding issue of international media coverage of Taiwan that has excluded perspectives from outside of Taipei.

This Taipei-centrism proved to be something that historically allowed the KMT to monopolize the narrative about Taiwan in order to justify its authoritarian rule, covering up resistance against its rule from outside of Taipei because of the disproportionate international focus on Taipei and failure to be attentive to other places in Taiwan. Indeed, particularly if a pan-Blue party wins the Taipei mayoral race, this hardly means that Taiwan is tilting back toward the pan-Blue camp-rather, this would simply be the longstanding status quo in Taipei reasserting itself-which is not at all what the outlook is for Taiwan as a whole.

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• New Bloom. 11/21/2022:
<https://newbloommag.net/2022/11/21/taipei-race-2022-midterms/>

P.S.

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