

Taiwan: Hou You-yi announced as presidential candidate of the KMT

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THE KMT OFFICIALLY announced that its 2024 presidential candidate would be New Taipei mayor Hou You-yi today, putting an end to months of speculation and confusion. Namely, the KMT decided on its choice of presidential candidate through a closed nomination process, rather than an open primary.

The two primary contenders for the KMT's presidential nomination were New Taipei mayor Hou You-yi and FoxConn founder Terry Gou.

Originally, KMT chair Eric Chu was also thought to have hoped to run for president, hence the closed primary process. In particular, [this would be a way of keeping Hou out](#). Despite that Hou has consistently polled strongly and was thought to be the most viable candidate that the KMT could run, he is distrusted within the KMT as a benshengren, and because of the fact that he was close to the DPP in the past. Namely, while [Hou has a checkered record during the authoritarian period](#), as the police officer that oversaw the series of events that led to Nylon Deng's self-immolation, the DPP tried to recruit him during Chen Shui-bian's presidency.

As such, the KMT internal establishment distrusted Hou, in spite of his popularity. Chu was likely hoping to take advantage of that through a closed nomination process in order to field a run.

This would be Chu's third attempt at running, as after an unsuccessful 2016 run, he also sought the KMT's presidential nomination in 2020 but did not win. When Chu [became the KMT chair in 2021](#), Chu promised that he would not run himself, but [instead serve as a "kingmaker" that would groom the strongest prospective candidate for the party](#). Nonetheless, it was widely thought that Chu still harbored presidential ambitions.

Chu was ultimately marginalized after [Gou announced his plans to seek the presidency and stated that he would not be running](#). In this, Gou apologized to the KMT for leaving the party in anger after his own unsuccessful bid for the party's presidential nomination ahead of 2020 elections, and stated that if he was unsuccessful this time around, he would not run as an independent but would support whoever the party nominated. This put pressure on Chu as to whether to let Gou back in the party, seeing as he would be paving the path for another political rival to challenge him, but Gou's strong performance in the polls eventually pushed Chu aside.

[Gou did not make a personal appearance at the KMT central standing committee meeting where it was announced that Hou would be the KMT's presidential candidate](#), but released a statement on Facebook that he would support Hou. The KMT has stated that Gou will make public appearances with Hou later on, as a show of party unity.

The KMT would be highly concerned about Gou breaking off from the party to run as an independent, seeing as Gou's personal wealth would allow him to finance his own run. If so, this would divide the vote further when the pan-Blue vote is already slated to be split because Ko Wen-je

of the TPP will be running. Some rumors suggest that Chu may seek to recruit Gou for Hou's vice presidential candidate, but this is unclear.



HOU YOU-YI (CENTER) AND OTHER MAJOR FIGURES OF THE KMT. PHOTO CREDIT: HOU YOU-YI/FACEBOOK

Although Hou is the leader in polls, the lack of an open primary process makes it impossible to take the result as a sign of the pan-Blue camp's political consensus at present.

On cross-strait issues, Hou has [attempted to frame himself as a moderate candidate, stating that he was opposed to both Taiwanese independence](#) and "One Country, Two Systems," and framing both as extreme positions. By contrast, in a speech in Kinmen, [Gou lashed out at the DPP for provoking China](#), and claimed that China's recent military threats directed at Taiwan were only because of the DPP changing the contents of the 1992 Consensus' view that there is "One China, Respective Interpretations."

Yet more generally, Gou's run this time was marked by Gou leaning into Han Kuo-yu-style populism, including [making outlandish claims such as advocating the construction of nuclear reactors across Taiwan, that he would finance the construction of 80,000 robots to defend Taiwan, and releasing a photoshopped image of himself and Han](#). As this differs substantially from Gou's political style during his previous run, this reflects to what extent the deep Blue wing has grown in strength in past years, with Gou likely catering to this wing of the KMT to bolster his chances. That being said, Han supporters have remained an active if marginal force within the KMT, and Han supporters did call for Han to run again, [including holding rallies in front of the KMT headquarters during the nomination process](#).

The candidates of the pan-Blue and pan-Green camps are clear then. The 2024 race will be a three-way match-up between William Lai of the DPP, Hou You-yi of the KMT, and Ko Wen-je of the TPP.

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P.S.

• NEW BLOOM. 05/17/2023:
<https://newbloommag.net/2023/05/17/kmt-candidate-hou/>