〈特集2　海外における選挙研究〉

Examining the "Midterm Loss" in Taiwan:

An Analysis of the 2009 County Magistrate Election

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Abstract: This paper regards Taiwan's 2009 local (i.e., county magistrate) election as a kind of midterm election and explains why the ruling party Kuomintang (KMT) got defeated by the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) from two theoretical perspectives—namely, the "lack of mobilization" theory and the "swing voter" theory. By using both aggregate-level voting records and individual-level survey data, our empirical findings are three-fold: first, in general, the DPP successfully mobilized their supporters to get out to voting in the 2009 local election while the KMT failed to do so. Second, previous KMT supporters in the 2008 presidential election were somehow reluctant to continuously support KMT candidates in the 2009 local election. Specifically, in the KMT advantageous county, such as Taoyuan County, previous KMT supporters were less likely to turn out to vote than those previous DPP supporters. On the other hand, in the DPP advantageous county, such as Yunlin County, a significant proportion of previous KMT supporters actually turned out to vote for the DPP incumbent candidate. Third, The conventional wisdom suggests that the performance of the ruling party usually becomes an important factor that affects voting behavior in midterm elections. Our analysis partially confirms such "referendum voting model" in the sense that some Taiwanese voters, particularly those who voted for the ruling party in the previous national election, may took into account the performance of the central government when casting their votes in the next election, even if it was just a local-level election.

1. Introduction

Since the Kuomintang (KMT) won both the 2008 legislative and presidential elections, the overall support for the KMT has been declining with the falling of President Ma Ying-jeou's approval rate. In a number of following legislative by-elections as well as the two local elections in 2009 and 2010 (i.e., the 2009 "Three-In-One" local election[1] and the 2010 "Five Municipalities" election[2], the opposition party, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), has gradually recovered from the two catastrophic losses in 2008 and surprisingly re-gained its previous support[3]. Specifically, in the 2009 county magistrate election,

although the DPP only gained one additional seat (i.e., an increase from 3 to 4 seats out of the total 17 seats), its vote share reached a new high record of 45.3%, which exceeds its performances in any of the previous local elections. On the other hand, the vote share of the ruling party KMT dropped by 2 and 10 percentage points in comparisons with the results of the 2005 local and the 2008 presidential elections, respectively. Additionally, in the most recent "Five Municipalities" election in 2010, the DPP vote share in fact exceeds the KMT vote share by almost 5 percentage points (i.e., 49.8% vs. 44.5%). As the KMT has seemed to go all the way down while the DPP has gradually turned up over the past three-

plus years, the 2009 local election can be regarded as a watershed that determined the recent dynamics of the two-party competition in Taiwan[4].

Yet, it is not surprising that the ruling party lost in the so-called midterm elections. By definition, midterm elections refer to local or legislative elections that take place between the two major national elections (e.g., presidential election). Previous literature suggests that the ruling party is very likely to lose in midterm elections. Two major hypotheses have been formed to explain the ruling party's "midterm loss"—that is, the "lack of mobilization" theory and the "swing voters" theory (Campbell, 1966; JE Campbell, 1985; Erikson, 1988; Kernell, 1977; Tufte, 1975).

The lack of mobilization theory states that as midterm elections are less salient than major national elections, the level of voter participation tends to be low. Thus, only loyal (or hardcore) party supporters will turn out to vote in midterm elections. And those non-partisan voters who supported the ruling party in the last national (presidential) election, on the other hand, might disappear and choose not to come out to vote by various reasons in midterm elections. From this perspective, voter mobilization becomes the key concern in winning midterm elections—specifically whether party supporters in the previous major election turn out to continuously support the party will become a crucial factor to determine the outcomes of midterm elections.

The swing voter theory starts with the assumption that the ruling party always takes the burden of its performance. When the ruling party's performance does not reach voters' expectation, voters may support the opposition in midterm elections. Additionally, voters who are dissatisfied with the ruling party's performance are more likely than those who are satisfied to turn out in midterm elections to cast their protest votes. Thus, from this perspective, swing voters, who do not have any long-term partisan attachment and tend to vote on a basis of their assessment of government performance, will play a key role in determining the outcomes of midterm elections.

The turnout rates in midterm elections are almost always low. Taiwan, a new democracy, used to maintain relatively high voter turnout rates since its democratization in the 1990s. In some critical elections, such as presidential elections and Taipei (capital city) mayoral elections, turnout rates usually reached as high as 80%. Yet, in the 2009 and 2010 local elections as well as various by-elections for legislative seats, turnout rates mainly fluctuated between 50% and 60% and sometimes dropped to less than 30%. As the low turnout rates seemed to benefit the DPP in recent midterm elections, the KMT usually contributed their losses to the failure of effectively mobilizing their supporters to vote. The premise under such argument is that if the previous KMT supporters had turned out to vote in those low turnout elections, they would have continuously supported the KMT.

However, is the lack of mobilization the only reason to explain low turnout rates in Taiwan's midterm elections and in turn to explain why the KMT got defeated in those elections? When we analyze the dynamics of party competition in midterm elections from the viewpoint of party mobilization, we need to focus on who actually turns out as well as why some people turn out and some don't. Additionally, from the viewpoint of the swing voter theory, we would like to understand for whom those voters vote and why they change their party support, if any, in midterm elections. This paper utilizes Taiwan's 2009 local election as an example to test the lack of mobilization hypothesis vs. the swing voter hypothesis—

that is, was the defeat of the ruling party in mid-term elections mainly due to the lack of its mobilization, the changing preferences of swing voters, or actually due to both? Section 2 of this paper examines aggregate-level data to see whether the KMT indeed failed to mobilize its supporters to turn out to vote in the 2009 local elections. Section 3 investigates post-election survey data to see whether swing voters caused the defeat of the ruling party in the election. Section 4 concludes the analysis.

2. Where were the KMT supporters?

In the 2009 local election, the overall turnout rate was 63.3%, which was down about 4.2 percentage points in a comparison with that of the previous local election in 2005. We wonder whether the decline of turnout rate caused the struggle of the KMT in the 2009 election.

To answer the question, we compare more than 4000 voting records in the village level between the 2005 and 2009 local elections[5]. Following is a set of steps we use to conduct our comparison[6]:

1. We first calculate the differences of turnout rates between the 2005 and 2009 elections by using the 2009 turnout rate minus the 2005 turnout rate.

2. We then categorize three types of villages by the KMT vote share in 2005: a) if the KMT vote share exceeded 55%, we label that village as a KMT advantageous district (hereafter KMT district); b) if the DPP vote share exceeded 55% in 2005, we label that village as a DPP advantageous district (hereafter DPP district); and c) any village that is not labeled as a party district (i.e., either KMT district or DPP district) will be defined as a competi-

tive district.

3. Then we calculate the differences of turnout rates between elections with respect to the three types of districts.

Figure 1 illustrates the differences of turnout rates in different types of districts between the two local elections (i.e., 2005 and 2009 local elections). On average, the turnout rate dropped by 3.2 percentage points between 2005 and 2009. It dropped by about 4.5 percentage points in the KMT districts while decreasing by only 0.7 and 3.5 percentage points in the DPP and competitive districts, respectively (i.e., as shown in the solid-line circle). In other words, while the turnout rate by all means dropped between 2005 and 2009, it clearly dropped more in most of the KMT districts. By assuming that voters in the KMT districts have a greater chance to vote for the KMT, the less the voters turn out in the KMT districts, the less vote share the KMT would be able to garner. In contrast, as the turnout rate dropped by a very small magnitude in most of the DPP districts in the 2009 election, the DPP supporters tend to support their party as they did in 2005. In short, when the KMT supporters were less willing to come out to vote and the DPP supporters turned out as usual, it is inevitable that the KMT had a difficult time in the 2009 local election. The result also suggests that the KMT seemed to fail to mobilize their supporters in its previous hardcore districts in the 2009 local election.

When we narrow down our focus to some salient battle grounds, we are more likely to detect the imbalance of voter turnout between the KMT and DPP districts in the 2009 local election. For example, Taoyuan (as shown in dot-line circle) used to be in the KMT's column. In the 2005 magistrate election, the KMT candidate upset

Figure 1 Differences of Turnout Rates by Counties/Cities, 2005-2009
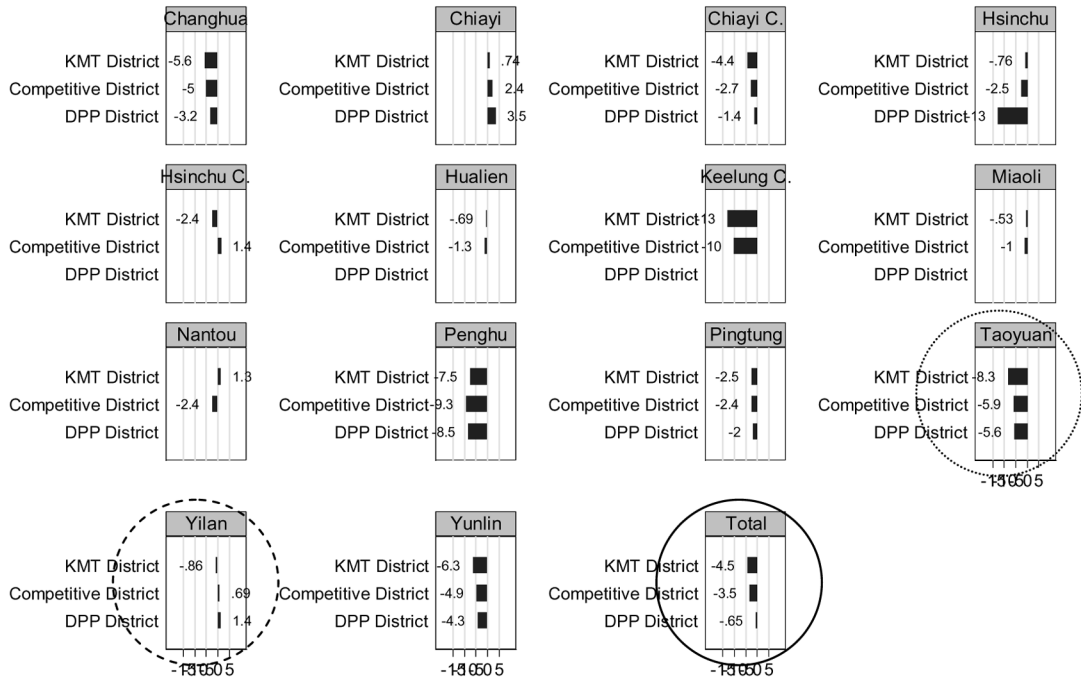
Differences of Turnout Rates by County/City between 2005 and 2009 (Average = -3.2%)

Graphs by County/City

Note 1: Based on the calculation of the 2005 vote share, some counties/cities do not have any DPP advantageous villages, including Hualien County, Nantou County, Miaoli County, Keelung City, and Hsinchu City. Thus, we are not able to calculate changes of turnout rates for the DPP districts in those counties/cities.

Note 2: Three counties (Kinman, Lienchieng, and Taitung Counties) are excluded in the analysis.

the DPP nominee by 23 percentage points (60.8% vs. 38.3%). Yet, in the 2009 election, although the KMT still won the seat, the margin between the two parties became only 7 percentage points (52.2% vs. 45.7%). The narrow margin might be due to the absence of the KMT supporters—namely, that the voter turnout decreased by 8.3 percentage points in the KMT districts from 2005 to 2009. While the voter turnout also slipped by nearly 3 percentage points in the DPP districts, it is still significantly smaller than that of the KMT districts.

It is worth noting that the similar situation also happened in the "top" battle ground of the 2009 local election—Yilan County. As a close and arguably the most important magistrate race in the

2009 local election, the overall turnout rate in Yilan County actually increased a little bit, compared with that of the 2005 election. While the turnout rate in the KMT districts slipped by 0.9 percentage points, it increased by 1.6 percentage points in the DPP districts (as shown in the dash-line circle). Thus, the DPP's successful mobilization of its supporters to turn out to vote seemed to become an important factor that contributed to its win in the 2009 Yilan magistrate election.

In short, the KMT did not successfully mobilize its voters to come out to vote in most contests of the 2009 local election. At least the aggregate-level data shows that the turnout rates in almost all the KMT districts dropped greater than those in the DPP districts from 2005 to

2009, although Hsinchu County and Penghu County might be exceptions[7]. Additionally, in those counties that turnout rates actually grew in the 2009 election, such as Chiayi County, the DPP districts also enjoyed a better increase in turnout rate than the KMT districts.

By applying the same method, we compare village-level turnout rates between the 2008 presidential election and the 2009 local election (i.e., a total of 4049 villages). Figure 2 shows a very similar pattern as Figure 1 does—the turnout rates in the KMT districts in general decreased more than those in the DPP districts from 2008 to 2009. Specifically, the turnout rates in the KMT districts on average dropped by 9.5 percentage points while those in the DPP districts dropped less than 1.2 percentage points

(i.e., as shown in the solid-line circle). In some counties, such as Taoyuan County, the difference between the KMT and DPP districts is much more significant (i.e. –24 percentage points vs. – 12 percentage points). The only county that has a greater decrease of the turnout rates in the DPP districts than in the KMT districts is Pingtung County. Yet, the difference between the two party-districts is in fact only 1.2 percentage points (–3 percentage points of –1.8 a Percentage points).

Compared with the 2008 presidential election, in the 2009 local election the DPP was apparently successful in mobilizing its supporters by increasing the turnout rates in its advantageous districts. For example in Chiayi and Taitung Counties, the turnout rates in the DPP districts in-

Figure 2　Differences of Turnout Rates by Counties/Cities, 2008-2009
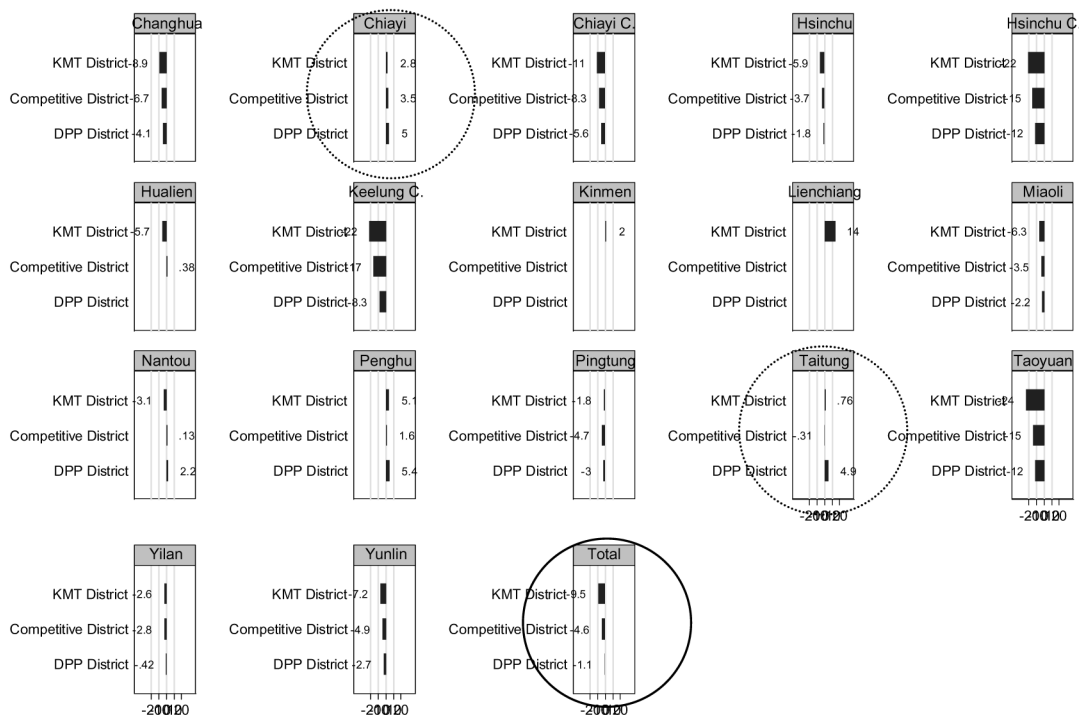
Differences of Turnout Rates by County/City between 2008 and 2009 (Average = -6.7%)
Graphs by County/City

Note: Based on the calculation of the 2008 vote share, Kinmen and Lienchiang Counties do not have any DPP advantageous villages. Thus, we are not able to calculate changes of turnout rates for the DPP districts in the two counties.

creased more than 5 percentage points (as shown in dot-line circles). As the two counties had open seat contests, both parties tried to mobilize their support in their advantageous districts as much as they could. Such efforts reflected to the increasing turnout rates in both advantageous districts. In particular, Taitung County can be regarded as a KMT-dominated county. DPP has never won any magistrate race over there. Yet, DPP's successful mobilization made the 2009 Taitung contest become a very close race.

According to Figure 1 and 2, we may conclude that the KMT failed to fully mobilize its supporters in its advantageous districts while the DPP did in the 2009 local election. Additionally, when we compare voter participation in the 2008 presidential and 2009 local elections, we also verify the hypothesis that the ruling party may suffer from the low turnout rate in midterm elections as some of its previous supporters in the major election (e.g., presidential election) did not turn out to support again. Thus, the lack of mobilization theory seems to be appropriate to explain KMT's loss in the 2009 local election.

3. Did swing voters made the differences?

From the swing voters perspective, the poor performance of the central government is the major reason that some previous ruling party supporters swing their votes to the opposition party in midterm elections. Such argument is based on the retrospective voting theory—that is, voters tend to cast their votes to either reward or punish the ruling party after evaluating the government performance (Key, 1966; Fiorina, 1978). According to the theory, it is straightforward to think that voters would take President Ma Yingjeou's performance into consideration when casting their votes to the incumbent president in the next presidential election. Yet, in the two local

elections, such as the 2009 and 2010 elections, did voters still vote for/against the ruling party based on the policy implementation of the Ma administration? Did the retrospective voting theory also explain the linkage between the performance of the central government and results of the local governments?

Previous scholars have adopted the concept of retrospective voting theory to develop the so-called referendum voting model to explain voting behavior in the (midterm) elections that between the two major (national) elections. The model suggests that even in local elections where none of the candidates takes direct responsibility for the success/failure of policy implementation of the central government, the performance of the ruling party in the central government still play a significant role in determining the results of local elections simply because voters may take local elections as a venue to exercise a vote of confidence in the ruling party (Piereson, 1975; Simon, Ostrom, and Marra, 1991).

For example, empirical studies on US gubernatorial elections suggest that presidential approval ratings more or less have an impact on the outcomes of gubernatorial elections (King, 2001)[8]. Additionally, as the state of the economy is a common indicator that researchers use to assess the performance of the central government, it has been shown that a country's economic situation may directly affect the ruling party's performance in local elections (Niemi, Stanley and Vogel, 1995; Svoboda, 1995; Partin, 1995; Stein, 1990; Remmer and Gelineau, 2003). In short, on the basis of referendum voting model, scholars analyzing either micro- or macro-level data have found that the outcome of local elections, particularly the winning odds for the ruling party, tend to be tied with the performance of the central government (Simon, 1989).

Taiwan's relevant literature, mainly in focus on presidential and legislative elections, has provided mix empirical evidence regarding retrospective voting: while some studies found that one's assessment of the economic situation will affect his/her vote choice (Wang, 2004; Chen, 1998), some found no significant linkage between the two variables (Hsieh et al., 1998). And very few studies have paid attention on the linkage between the performance of central government and the outcomes of local elections. One of the exceptions would be Huang and Cheng's (2005) research, in which they explored aggregate level data and found that national economic well-being (measured by unemployment rate) has a greater impact than local economic situations on the ruling party's prospect in magistrate elections.

Prior to the 2009 election, the ruling party KMT's performance clearly did not match the expectation of the general public. From a viewpoint of objective assessment, Taiwan's economic condition has been bad as the economic growth rate has been negative for the first three seasons of 2009; from a viewpoint of subjective assessment, President Ma's approval rating was around 30% and about 45% of survey respondents were dissatisfied with President Ma's performance. After all, the Ma administration did not provide a satisfying score card right before the 2009 election. Yet, the extent to which the performance of the central government affects the outcome of local election should be an empirical question that needs further investigation.

Was the loss of the ruling party KMT in the 2009 local election mainly due to KMT's lack of voter mobilization or in fact because of swing voters? The following section utilizes the 2009 Taiwan Election and Democratization Studies (i.e., TEDS

2009M) data as an example to answer this question. TEDS2009M is a face-to-face survey that took place two months after the election. It surveyed two random samples of 1,337 and 1,346 respondents in Taoyuan County and Yunlin County, respectively. While Taoyuan has an open seat contest in the 2009 magistrate election, Yunlin has a strong incumbent candidate, DPP's Su jhih-fen, for reelection. As one of the northern, semi-urban counties in Taiwan, Taoyuan has a strong KMT base and has been ruled by a KMT's magistrate for 8 years prior to the 2009 election. On the other hand, as one of the southern, rural counties in Taiwan, Yunlin is under DPP's column and has been ruled by Su since 2005.

In order to investigate whether voters swing their votes between the 2008 and 2009 elections, we first explore whether voters who voted for the KMT president nominee Ma Ying-jeou continuously supported the KMT candidates in the 2009 magistrate election. Table 1 and Table 2 show two-way analyses of the 2008 and 2009 vote choices in Tauyuan and Yunlin, respectively [9]. In Table 1, we found that about 64% of the Ma Ying-jeou supporters still voted for the KMT magistrate candidates while only about 8% of them swung toward the DPP candidate. Additionally, 28% of the Ma Ying-jeou supporters did not caste their votes. On the other hand, among those who supported the 2008 DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh, 72% of them voted for

Table 1 Vote Choices of the 2008 and 2009 Elections, Taoyuan County

Vote Choice in the 2008 Presidential Election	Vote Choice in the 2009 Taoyuan Magistrate Election			
	KMT	DPP	Did Not Vote	Total (# of respondents)
KMT: Ma Ying-jeou	63.9%	8.0%	28.0%	100% (685)
DPP: Frank Hsieh	11.2	72.0	16.9	100% (296)
Did Not Vote	11.7	12.6	75.7	100% (181)

Note 1: We drop those respondents who answered "forget", "not eligible to vote", "cast an invalid ballot", "refuse", and "don't know".
Note 2: The sample size is 1,062.

**Table 2　Vote Choices of the 2008 and 2009 Elections,
Yunlin County**

Vote Choice in the 2008 Presidential Election	Vote Choice in the 2009 Yunlin Magistrate Election			
	KMT	DPP	Did Not Vote	Total (# of respondents)
KMT: Ma Ying-jeou	35.4%	48.6%	16.0%	100% (463)
DPP: Frank Hsieh	2.0	87.2	10.7	100% (392)
Did Not Vote	2.5	36.7	60.8	100% (120)

Note 1: We drop those respondents who answered "forget", "not eligible to vote", "cast an invalid ballot", "refuse", and "don't know".

Note 2: The sample size is 975.

the DPP magistrate candidate in the 2009 local election, only 11% of them shifted to support the KMT candidate, and about 17% did not vote. As the DPP supporters were more likely than their KMT counterparts to caste partisan vote, it seems that the degree of cohesion among the DPP supporters was better than that among the KMT supporters. It is also worth noting that Ma Ying-jeou's supporters were more likely to abstain (i.e., less likely turn out) than Frank Hsieh's supporters in the 2009 Taoyuan magistrate election. Yet, we do not observe substantial voters changed their partisan support either from KMT to DPP or vice versa between the 2008 and 2009 elections in Taoyuan.

Yunlin's case demonstrates a different dynamic. Table 2 suggests that most of Frank Hsieh's supporters maintained their support for the DPP candidate (about 87%) while only a little more than one-third of Ma Ying-jeou's supporters maintained their support for the KMT candidate (about 35%). In fact, nearly one-half of Ma Ying-jeou's supporters (49%) turned to support the DPP candidate in the 2009 Yunlin magistrate election. Thus, while we do not detect a significant proportion of voters swinging their votes from the KMT to the DPP in Taoyuan (as shown in Table 1), we do observe a great proportion of voters shifting their support from

Ma Ying-jeou to the DPP incumbent candidate in Yunlin (as shown in Table 2). Of course, such change of partisan support may be due to the candidate factor—that is, DPP's incumbent candidate Su jhih-fen consolidated her "personal votes" in her reelection. Yet, Table 2 still shows that the degree of cohesion among the DPP supporters was much better than that among the KMT supporters in Yunlin. Additionally, more than one-third of non-voters (i.e., people did not vote) in the 2008 presidential election turned out to support the DPP candidate (i.e., 36.7%) in the 2009 Yunlin magistrate election. In other words, at least in Yunlin, a significant proportion of the 2008 non-voters indeed turned out to support DPP in 2009.

How about independent voters? Did they tend to switch from one party to the other between the 2008 and 2009 elections? We then use a subsample of "independent voters" (those who insist they do not have any partisan attachment) in the survey and conduct the same two-way analysis. Table 3 shows that among those independent voters who supported Ma Ying-jeou in 2008 in Taoyuan, only about 53% of them voted for the KMT candidate in the 2009 magistrate election. But more than 12% of them switched to support the DPP candidates. It is important to note that 34% of them did not cast their votes in the 2009

**Table 3　Vote Choices of the 2008 and 2009 Elections
(Independent Voter Only), Taoyuan County**

Vote Choice in the 2008 Presidential Election	Voting Intention in the 2009 Local Election			
	KMT	DPP	Did Not Vote	Total (# of respondents)
KMT: Ma Ying-jeou	53.4%	12.3%	34.2%	100% (146)
DPP: Frank Hsieh	28.0	58.0	14.0	100% (50)
Did Not Vote	8.3	9.7	81.9	100% (72)

Note 1: We drop those respondents who answered "forget", "not eligible to vote", "cast an invalid ballot", "refuse", and "don't know".

Note 2: The sample size is 268.

local election. On the other hand, among those independent voters who supported Frank Hsieh in 2008 in Taoyuan, about 58% of them still voted for the DPP candidate while about 28% of them changed their support toward the KMT candidates in 2009. Additionally, only 14% of them did not go to vote. Although this cross-tabulation analysis does not suggest that the so-called "independent voters" were more likely than partisan voters to shift from the KMT to DPP, it does show that among independent voters, Ma Ying-jeou's supporters were less likely than Frank Hsieh's supporters to go to vote.

In Yunlin, Table 4 indicates that among independent voters, about two-third of Ma Ying-jeou's supporters (65.7%) and more than 81% of Frank Hsieh's supporters casted their votes for the DPP incumbent candidate. In other words, Yunlin's independent voters largely supported the DPP candidate in the 2009 magistrate election regardless of whom they vote for in the 2008 presidential election. As Su Jhih-feng attracted considerable "personal votes" among independent voters, we do observe different types of independent voters in Taoyuan and Yunlin.

Regarding whether voters swung their votes between the 2008 presidential and 2009 local elections, the above cross-tabulation analyses reveal three findings: first, in both Taoyuan and Yunlin, Ma Ying-jeou's supporters were more likely to abstain than Frank Hsieh's supporters; second,

while only a small proportion of Ma Ying-jeou's supporters switched their votes to the DPP candidate in Taoyuan, the majority of them did so in Yunlin. Third, the majority of the independent voters in Taoyuan remained abstain in both 2008 and 2009 elections. Yet, the independent voters in Yunlin tended to turn out to support the DPP incumbent candidate in 2009.

Next, we further explore why Taiwanese voters remain/change their support between the 2008 and 2009 elections. Accoording to the referendum voting model, we focus on two questions as follows:

1. Does the poor performance of the central government cause Ma Ying-jeou's supporters to swing toward the DPP candidates in the 2009 election, or simply cause Ma's supporters to not turn out to vote?

2. Did Frank Hsieh's supporters swing toward the KMT candidates or choose not to vote in the 2009 election simply due to their positive assessment of the central government's performance?

Corresponding to the two questions, we define two dichotomous variables as dependent variables and analyze logistic models with Taoyuan and Yunlin datasets, respectively. Following is the coding scheme for the dependent variables:[10]

1. Do Ma Ying-jeou's supporters still intend to vote for the KMT magistrate candidates? (Ma Ying-jeou's supporters vote for the KMT = 1; Ma Ying-jeou's supporters do not vote for the KMT = 0.)

2. Do Frank Hsieh's supporters still intend to vote for the

Table 4 Vote Choices of the 2008 and 2009 Elections (Independent Voter Only), Yunlin County

Vote Choice in the 2008 Presidential Election	Vote Choice in the 2009 Local Election			
	KMT	DPP	Did Not Vote	Total (# of respondents)
KMT: Ma Ying-jeou	19.1%	65.7%	15.2%	100% (178)
DPP: Frank Hsieh	3.7	80.7	15.6	100% (109)
Did Not Vote	4.2	30.6	65.3	100% (72)

Note 1: We drop those respondents who answered "forget", "not eligible to vote", "cast an invalid ballot", "refuse", and "don't know".
Note 2: The sample size is 359.

DPP magistrate candidates? (Frank Hsieh's supporters vote for the DPP = 1; Frank Hsieh's supporters do not vote for the DPP = 0.)

According to the referendum voting model, a voter's assessment toward the performance of the central government will determine his/her voting behavior even in local elections. We set up three major independent variables and hypothesize that a voter's vote choice will be driven by his/her (1) level of satisfaction with the central government; (2) assessment of the impact of Ma's cross-strait economic policy on personal economic well-being; and (3) assessment of the impact of Ma's cross-strait economic policy on national economy[11] The latter two variables are set to test the so-called "pocketbook voting" and "sociotropic voting" models, respectively: While the pocket book voting model suggests that a voter may support the ruling party simply because his/her (personal/household) economic well-being is getting better (Campbell et al., 1960), the sociotropic voting model argues that a voter's assessment of the state of national economy affects his/her intention to vote for the ruling party (Kinder and Kieweit, 1979; 1981). Yet, our question wordings are different from the traditional ones. That is, we ask whether President Ma's cross-strait economic policy has positive/negative impact on personal/national economic conditions. As cross-strait economic relationship is the most important policy dimension in Taiwan, we think that this kind of question wording is actually better in the sense that it directly measures a respondent's feeling toward the major policy implemented by the central government.

In addition to the three major independent variables, we use a variable to summarize the assess-ment of local government performance as a control variable. It is a 1-4 scale that includes five policy dimensions with respect to infrastructure, social welfare, law and order, environment and health, and transportation.[12] Additionally, three demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, and education level) as well as party identification variable are also included.[13]

Does the performance of Ma Ying-jeou's administration really matter in the 2009 local election? Table 3 summarizes the results of logistic regression analyses, as Model I & II use Taoyuan data and Model III & IV analyze Yunlin data. As this study focuses on whether the performance of central government affects local elections, our following discussion would limit to those variables that directly related to the subject.

In Model I, the coefficient for satisfaction with the central government is positive and significantly different from zero (at the 0.1 level of significance). That is, Ma Ying-jeou's supporters who were satisfied with the central government tended to support KMT in the two consecutive elections. The other two variables that we use to test the theory of economic voting provide mixed findings: while the pocketbook voting variable is not significant, the sociotropic voting variable is positive and significantly different from zero. Thus, Ma Ying-jeou's supporters who thought President Ma's cross-strait economic policy had positive impact on state economy tended to keep supporting KMT in the 2009 Taoyuan magistrate election.

In Model II, the coefficient for satisfaction with the central government is also significant with an expected negative sign. This result suggests that Frank Hsieh's supporters in Taoyuan also took into account the performance of the central government when they casted their votes in the magistrate election. Specifically, Frank Hsieh's

supporters who were satisfied with the central government were less likely to support DPP in the two consecutive elections. On the other hand, The coefficient for assessment of either personal or national economic status is not statistically significant.

In Model III, all variables with respect to the performance of the central government are not statistically significant from zero. Thus, it seems that the performance of Ma administration had no impact on determining whether Ma Ying-jeou's supporters in Yunlin voted for the KMT candidate in the magistrate election. In Model IV, the coefficients for satisfaction with the central government and for assessment of national economy are not significant. Yet, the coefficient for assessment of personal economic well-being is negative and significantly different from zero. That is, if Frank Hsieh's supporters in Yunlin felt that President Ma's cross-strait economic policy improved their personal economic well-beings, they would be less likely to vote for the DPP candidate in the 2009 magistrate election.

Our major findings with respect to the four models in Table 5 can be summarized as follows; first in Taoyuan County, a voter's satisfaction with the central government became an important factor to determine his /her continuous support for either the KMT or DPP nominee in the 2009 local election. Second, for those who supported KMT (Ma Ying-jeou) in the 2008 presidential election, their assessment of the impact of Ma Ying-jeou's cross-strait economic policy on Taiwan's overall economy affected their support for the KMT candidate in the 2009 magistrate election. Third, for those who supported Frank Hsieh in the 2008 presidential election, whether or not they felt the improvement of their personal economic well-being brought by Ma's economic policy affected their support for the DPP candidate in the 2009 Yunlin magistrate election.

Table 5 Determinants of Changing (or Maintaining) Vote Choices, 2008-09

	Taoyuan		Yunlin	
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV
Dependent Variables	Consistent KMT	Consistent DPP	Consistent KMT	Consistent DPP
Independent Variables	Coef. (Std)	Coef. (Std)	Coef. (Std)	Coef. (Std)
Performance of Central Government				
General Assessment of Central Government Performance	0.27 (0.16)*	−0.68 (0.26)**	0.04 (0.22)	−0.03 (0.36)
Assessment of Personal Economic Well-being	0.04 (0.23)	−0.07 (0.38)	0.29 (0.29)	−0.83 (0.50)*
Assessment of National Economic Status	0.33 (0.18)*	−0.36 (0.27)	0.23 (0.25)	−0.01 (0.33)
Performance of Local government				
General Assessment of Local Government Performance	0.20 (0.26)	0.01 (0.36)	−0.86 (0.36)**	0.03 (0.52)
Demographic Variables				
Female	−0.06 (0.21)	0.08 (0.33)	0.28 (0.29)	0.18 (0.45)
Age	0.27 (0.09)**	−0.02 (0.15)	0.42 (0.13)**	0.27 (0.20)
Education	−0.36 (0.10)	−0.11 (0.16)	0.22 (0.13)*	−0.61 (0.20)
Partisanship				
KMT Affiliate	0.46 (0.27)*	−0.98 (1.20)	1.35 (0.32)**	(omitted)§
Independent (base category)	−	−	−	−
DPP Affiliate	−1.68 (0.57)*	0.95 (0.39)**	−0.52 (0.67)	1.23 (0.51)**
Constant	−1.23 (0.86)	2.39 (1.33)*	−2.60 (1.32)**	3.52 (2.17)
Sample Size	492	230	297	264
Pseudo R-squared	0.13	0.11	0.18	0.23

Note: *p > 0.10; **p > 0.05, two-tailed test.
§: Because the dependent variable for KMT affiliates has no variation in Model IV, we have to drop that variable in the model.

4. Conclusion

Taiwan's recent electoral outcomes seem to suggest that low voter turnout may benefit the

DPP, particularly—according to the results of a series of midterm elections. Yet, why it is the case in fact deals with the nature of midterm elections. A high or low turnout rate may not necessarily benefit certain parties. Who actually turns out may be the issue that affects a party's wining odds in elections. By using the 2009 local election as an example, we thus explore who actually turned out in such midterm election and investigate why some voters kept supporting the same party but some did not. Our findings are three-fold:

First, the turnout rate for the 2009 local election was lower than the past elections. Our aggregate-level data analysis indicates that the turnout rates in previous KMT advantageous districts dropped more than those in previous DPP advantageous districts. In fact, in some close county magistrate battles, the turnout rates increased in the DPP districts while decreased in the KMT districts. We may imagine that the DPP successfully mobilized their supporters to get out to voting in the 2009 local election while the KMT failed to do so.

Second, we use individual-level data to explore whether there exist a significant proportion of voters shifting their support from one party to the other between the 2008 and 2009 elections. By using post-election survey data in Taoyuan and Yunlin, which are KMT's and DPP's advantageous counties, respectively, we do find that previous KMT supporters (i.e., Ma Ying-jeou's supporters) were somehow reluctant to continuously support KMT candidates. Specifically, we found that Ma Ying-jeou's supporters in Taoyuan were less likely to turn out to vote while his supporters in Yunlin tended to shift their support toward the DPP incumbent candidate.

Third, is the performance of the central government an important factor to explain the result of

midterm election such as the 2009 local election? We found that the answer could be yes, particularly in an open seat contest like the 2009 Taoyuan magistrate election. Yet, in the election where a strong incumbent candidate is running for reelection like the 2009 Yunlin magistrate election, the performance of the central government seemed to be irrelevant. But it is worth nothing that some voters (like Hsieh's supporters shown in Model IV) did care about whether the economic policy implemented by the central government affected their personal economic well-being and may maintained/changed their voting pattern accordingly.

In short, it seems that the lack of mobilization theory and swing voter theory can both explain the dynamic of Taiwan's 2009 local election. In future research, we may study under what condition one theory has a better explanatory power than the other. Additionally, although we do find that the performance of the central government has certain impact on local elections, we still do not fully uncover the linkage between the two. The so-called "referendum voting model" indeed deserves more careful studies particularly in a newly democracy like Taiwan as it is directly related to the subject of democratic accountability.

(1) In the "Three-in-One election", voters had a chance to vote for county/city magistrates, county/city council members, and township managers in a single election.

(2) Taiwan has five municipal areas, including the newly upgraded New Taipei City, Taichung City, and Tainan City, plus the two original municipal areas, Taipei City and Kaohsiung City. These five municipal areas is consisted of 60% of Taiwan's total population while other county-/city-level areas is consisted of 40% of the total population.

(3) In the 2008 Legislative Elections, the DPP only won 27 out of the total 113 seats while the

KMT gained 81 seats; In the 2008 presidential election, the KMT nominee Ma Ying-jeou defeated the DPP candidate Frank Hsieh by over 2.2 million votes (58.5% vs. 41.5%). After then, some pundits and commentators argued that the DPP would not be able to compete against the KMT in the following decade and Taiwan's two-party system might be ready to reshuffle again.

(4)　For the changes of Taiwan's partisan landscape over the past few years, please refer to Figure A1 in Appendix.

(5)　In Taiwan, villages are the smallest administrative unit. The total number of villages may change over time. But in fact only a small proportion of them may change over a relatively long span of time. For example, there were 4,015 villages in 17 counties/cities holding the 2005 local election. But in 2009, the total number of villages holding the local election became 4,053. The additional 38 new village were consisted of less than 1% of the total villages.

(6)　Because both the KMT and DPP did not nominate any county magistrate candidate in Kinmen, Lienchiang (Matsu) and Taitung Counties in the 2005 local elections, we are not able to label any village in those three counties by our rules. Thus, we exclude the three counties when we analyze the change of turnout rates between the 2005 and 2009 elections.

(7)　The high turnout rate in the KMT districts of Hsinchu County might be due to the intra-party competition. Hsinchu's 2009 magistrate race was a three-way tussle in which two of the three major candidates have KMT background. Thus, they competed against each other among KMT supporters and in turn mobilized voters in the KMT districts. The similar situation also happened in Huanlien County, where a three-way competition also took place.

(8)　King (2001) provided a thorough review regarding how national factors influence gubernatorial elections in the US.

(9)　For the 2008 presidential election, the wording of the question is: "Who did you vote for in last year's (2008) presidential election?" For the 2009 local election, the question becomes: "Who would you vote for in the 2009 magis-

trate election?"

(10)　Please refer to Table A1 in Appendix for details.

(11)　The wordings of the three questions are as follows: 1. How satisfied are you with the overall performance of the central government under the KMT over the last two years years? Very satisfied, satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied? 2. Since President Ma Ying-jeou took the office, the scope of cross-strait economic exchanges have been largely expanded. Do you think such development increase or decrease your economic well-being? Or does it have no influence at all? 3. Due to President Ma's cross-strait economic and trade policies, do you think Taiwan's economy has been getting better, worse or about the same?

(12)　The wordings of the five questions to assess local government performance includes: 1. General speaking, how satisfied are you with the infrastructure of [interviewee's household] County in the past four years? Very satisfied, satisfied, somewhat dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied? 2. How about social welfare? 3. How about law and order? 4. How about environment and health? 5. How about transportation? As all items (questions) are measured by a 4 point scale (from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied"), we added up all of them and obtained an average score.

(13)　Please refer to Table A1 in Appendix for descriptive statistics of all variables used in this part of the analysis.

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Figure A1 Taiwan's Electoral Map by Counties / Cities, 2005-2009
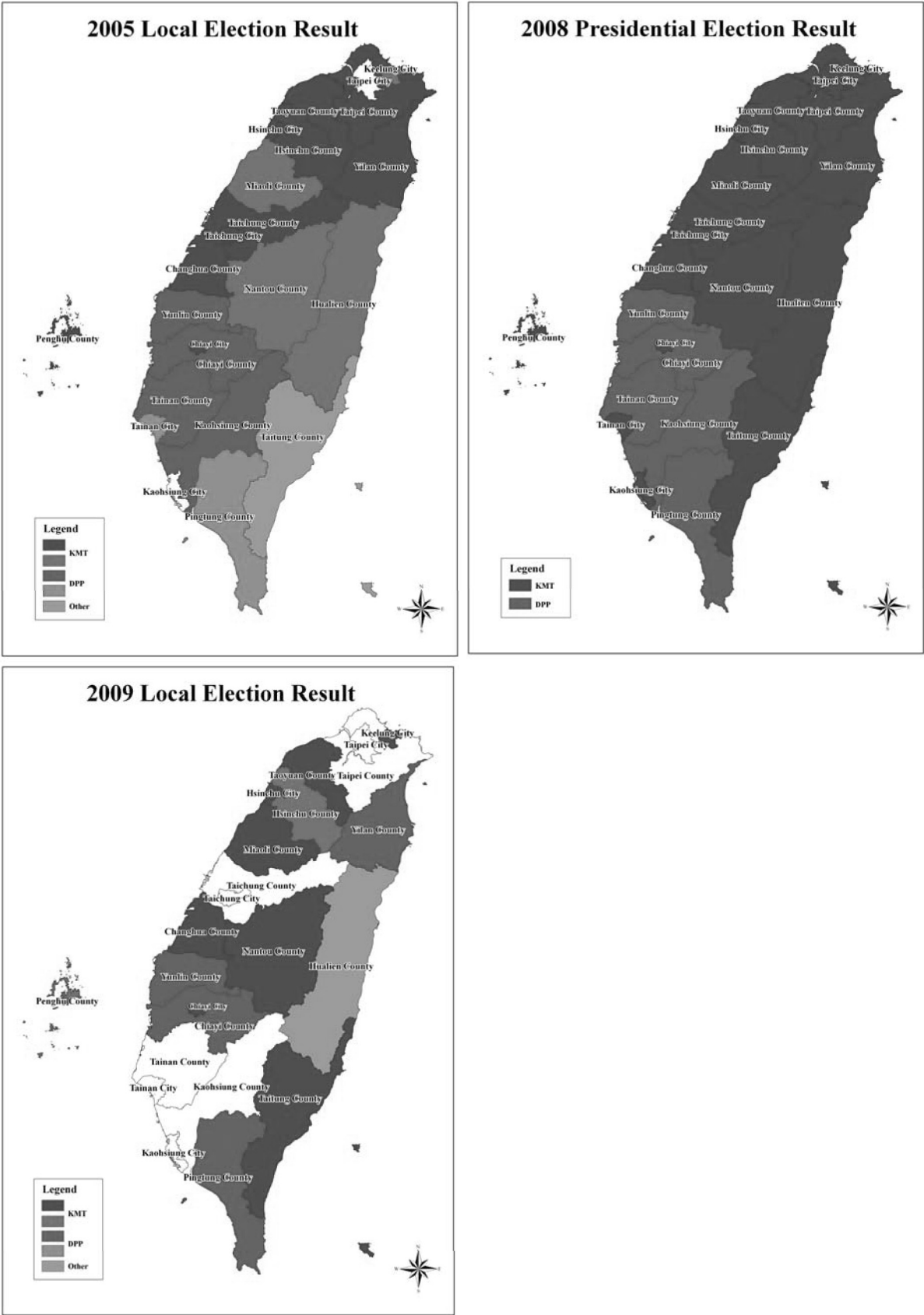
Note: Deep Gray—the KMT won a plurality of vote share; Grey—a third party candidate won a plurality of vote share; Light Gray—the DPP won a plurality of vote share; white—no election held in the administrative unit.

**Table A1 Coding Scheme of Dependent Variables and
Descriptive Statistics for All Variables**

County	Model	Dependent Variable	Coding	Frequency.	%
Taoyuan	I	Ma's supporters vote for KMT	1	247	36.06
		Ma's supporters not vote for KMT	0	438	63.94
	II	Hsieh's supporters vote for DPP	1	83	28.04
		Hsie's supporters not vote for DPP	0	213	71.96
Yulin	III	Ma's supporters vote for KMT	1	299	64.58
		Ma's supporters not vote for KMT	0	164	35.42
	IV	Hsieh's supporters vote for DPP	1	50	12.76
		Hsie's supporters not vote for DPP	0	342	87.24

Taoyuan County   **Yunlin County**

Independent Variables	Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max	Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
General Assessment of Central Government Performance	1271	2.158	0.761	1 Very Dissatisfied	4 Very Satisfied	1179	2.042	0.775	1 Very Dissatisfied	4 Very Satisfied
Assessment of Personal Economic Well-being	1261	1.907	0.573	1 Worse	3 Better	1195	1.712	0.581	1 Worse	3 Better
Assessment of National Economic Status	1174	2.147	0.778	1 Worse	3 Better	1060	1.801	0.785	1 Worse	3 Better
General Assessment of Local Government Performance	1055	2.553	0.473	1 (Very Dissatisfied)	4 Very Satisfied	886	2.583	0.446	1 (Very Dissatisfied)	4 Very Satisfied
Female	1337	0.474	0.500	0	1	1346	0.493	0.500	0	1
Age	1337	2.972	1.379	1	5	1346	3.349	1.419	1	5
Education	1332	3.208	1.390	1	5	1341	2.483	1.456	1	5
Independent (base category)	416	31.35%				639	47.690			
KMT Affiliate	577	43.48%				291	21.720			
DPP Affiliate	334	25.17%				410	30.600			