The Electoral Effect of Voter Turnout in Taiwan: Who Benefits from a Low Turnout in the 2009 Local Election?

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the effect of low turnout rate in Taiwan's 2009 local election, with respect to the 2005 and 2008 turnout rates as reference points. Taiwan's recent electoral outcomes seem to suggest that a low turnout may benefit the DPP, particularly in 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. We thus focus on exploring who actually turns out in midterm elections as we analyze the 2009 local election as an example. Our findings are three-fold: first, 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 are somehow reluctant to continuously support KMT candidates due to their dissatisfaction with President Ma. They might choose not to turn out to vote in the election, which cause the drop of the overall turnout rate. Third, in midterm elections, the performance of the ruling party, particularly on economic dimensions, usually becomes an important factor that affect voting intention.

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I. 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 major local elections in 2009 and 2010 (i.e., the 2009 "Three-In-One" local election¹ and the 2010 "Five Municipalities" election²) 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 out of the total 17 seats), its vote share reached a new high record of 45.32%, which exceeds its performances in any of the previous local elections. On the other hand, in comparisons with the results of the 2005 local and the 2008 presidential elections, the vote share gained by the ruling party KMT in 2009 dropped by 2 and 10 percentage points, respectively. Additionally, in the most recent "Five Municipalities" election, 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, it is important to note that 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; Tuft 1975)

¹ In a "Three-in-One election", voters will have 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.

The lack of mobilization theory states that because 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—that is, whether party supporters in the previous major election turn out to continuously support the party will become a crucial factor to determine the result 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, those 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 will cast their votes on a basis of their assessment of government performance, will play a key role in determining the result 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 fluctuate between 50% and 60% and sometimes drop 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 a good 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 examine who benefits from a low turnout rate, we need to focus on who actually turns out. This paper utilizes Taiwan's 2009 local election as an example to test the lack of mobilization hypothesis vs. the swing voters hypothesis—that is, was the defeat of the ruling party in midterm elections mainly due to the lack of its mobilization, or due to the changing preferences of swing voters? Section II of this paper will use aggregate-level data to show whether the previous KMT supporters turn out to vote in the 2009 local elections. Section III uses the pre-election survey data to show whether swing voters caused the defeat of the ruling party in the election. Section IV concludes the analysis.

II. Where were the KMT Supporters?

In the 2009 local election, the overall turnout rate was 63.34%, which was down about 4.15 percentage points in a comparison with that of the previous local election in 2005. We wonder whether the decline of turnout rate causes 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 will be defined as a competitive district.
- 3. Then we calculate the differences of turnout rates in these three types of districts.

Figure 1 illustrates the differences of turnout rates in different types of districts between the two 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 0.65 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

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.

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, the turnout rate dropped by a very small magnitude in most of the DPP districts, which suggests that 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. Additionally, the result also suggests that the KMT seemed to fail to mobilize their supporters in its previous hardcore districts in the 2009 local election.





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.

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 the DPP nominee by 22 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. 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 also worth noting that the similar situation also happened in the "top" battle ground of the 2009 election, Yilan County. As a close and 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 0.86 percentage points, it increased by 1.6 percentage points in the DPP districts (as shown in the dash-line circle). Thus, it seemed that the DPP's successful mobilization of its supporters to turn out to vote become an important factor that contributes to its win in Yilan County.

In short, the KMT seemed not successfully mobilize its voters to come out to vote in most contests of the 2009 local election. At least from the aggregate data, the turnout rates in almost all the KMT districts dropped greater than those in the DPP districts, although Hsinchu and Penghu counties might be exceptions.⁷ Additionally, in those counties that turnout rates actually grew in the 2009 election, such as Chiayi County, its DPP districts also enjoyed a better increase in turnout rate than its KMT districts did.

By applying the same rules, we compare village level vote shares in 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

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.

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).





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.

Compared with the 2008 presidential election, the DPP was apparently successful in mobilizing its supporters in the 2009 local election by increasing the turnout rates in its advantageous districts. For example in Chiayi and Taitung Counties, the turnout rates in the DPP districts increased 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 reflect on the increasing turnout rates in both advantageous districts. Particularly, Taitung County used to be a KMT-dominated county. Yet, due to DPP's successful mobilization, the magistrate contest in Taitung County was close in 2009.

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 did not turn out to support again.

III. 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. 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 Ying-jeou'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 rate (or a president's popularity) more or less has 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 will

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

directly affect the central 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 a 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 that 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 past three seasons; from a viewpoint of subjective assessment, President Ma's approval rate was around 30% while 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.

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 pre-election survey data to answer this question. The survey took place one month prior to the election and used telephone survey method to collect a random sample of 869 respondents across 15 counties/cities. It did not reach any respondents in the two island counties, Kinmen and Liangchiang.

First, we explore whether voters who voted for the KMT president nominee Ma Ying-jeou were more likely to vote for the KMT candidates in the 2009 magistrate election. Table 1 shows a two-way analysis of the 2008 and 2009 vote choices.⁹ In Table 1, we found that about 48% of the Ma Ying-jeou supporters are still willing to vote for the KMT magistrate candidates while only about 9% of them tend to swing toward the DPP candidate. Additionally, 43% of the Ma Ying-jeou supporters will not go to vote (or have not made the decisions). On the other hand, among those who support the DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh, 51% of them are willing to vote for the DPP candidates in the 2009 local election, only 7% will shift to support the KMT candidates, and 42% have not decided yet. While the majority of the DPP supporters (more than 50%) in the 2008 presidential election tend to maintain their partisan preferences when they consider who they will vote for in the 2009 local election, less than the majority of Ma Ying-jeou's supporters tend to maintain their partisan support across the two elections. It seems that the degree of cohesion among the DPP supporters is better than that among the KMT supporters. Yet, the difference between the two parties in cohesion seems marginal (i.e., 51% vs. 48%).

Vote Choice in the 2008	Voting Intention in the 2009 Local Election					
Presidential Election	KMT	DPP	Total			
				(# of respondents)		
KMT: Ma Ying-jeou	47.8%	8.8%	43.4%	100% (464)		
DPP: Frank Hsieh	7.3	50.8	41.9	100% (124)		
Others	13.2	10.7	76.2	100% (281)		

 Table 1: Vote Choices of the 2008 and 2009 Elections

Note1: "Others" in the 2008 presidential election includes those respondents who answered "forget", "not eligible to vote", "did not vote", "cast an invalid ballot", and "refuse"; "Others" in the 2009 local election includes those respondents who answer "vote for any other candidate", "undecided", "not willing to vote", "may cast an invalid ballot", "it depends", "no comments", "don't know", and "refuse". We assume that those respondents who did not answer their vote choices are likely to not go to vote.

Note 2: The sample size is 869.

Additionally, a very similar proportion of partisan supporters in the 2008 election tend to change their supports toward the opposite party candidates in 2009 (KMT 8.8% vs. DPP 7.3%). And the respondents who have not decided prior to the 2009 election also almost equally distributed between the two party supporters (KMT 43.4% vs. DPP 41.9%). In short, in Table 1 we are not able to detect whether a

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 if tomorrow were the election date?"

considerable proportion of voters tend to swing their votes from the KMT to the DPP. And we are also not able to conclude whether Ma Ying Jeou's supporters are more hesitant to decide who they will vote for in the 2009 local election.

	Voting Intention in the 2009 Local Election					
Vote Choice in the 2008	KMT DPP Others Total					
Presidential Election				(# of respondents)		
KMT: Ma Ying-jeou	15.3%	10.2%	74.5%	100% (98)		
DPP: Frank Hsieh	6.7	23.3	70.0	100% (30)		
Others	9.0	7.9	83.1	100% (177)		

Table 2: Vote Choices of the 2008 and 2009 Elections (Independent Voter Only)

Note1: "Others" in the 2008 presidential election includes those respondents who answered "forget", "not eligible to vote", "did not vote", "cast an invalid ballot", and "refuse"; "Others" in the 2009 local election includes those respondents who answer "vote for any other candidate", "undecided", "not willing to vote", "may cast an invalid ballot", "it depends", "no comments", "don't know", and "refuse". We assume that those respondents who did not answer their vote choices are likely to not go to vote.

Note 2: The sample size is 305.

How about independent voters? Did they tend to switch from one party to the other? We then only collect the sample of "independent voters" (those who insist they do not have any partisan attachment) in the survey and conduct the same two-way analysis. Table 2 shows that among those independent voters who support Ma Ying-jeou in 2008, only about 15% of them are willing to vote for the KMT candidate in the 2009 local election. And more than 10% of them are ready to switch to support the DPP candidates. On the other hand, among those independent voters who support Frank Hsieh in 2008, over 23% of them are still willing to vote for the DPP candidate in 2009. And only less than 7% of them tend to change their support toward the KMT candidates. This cross-tabulation analysis seems to suggest that the independent voters were more likely than partisan voters to shift from the KMT to DPP. Yet, due to the very small sample size (only 305 independent voters), we are not able to assure such finding.

The above analyses seem to suggest that only a small proportion of voters may switch their support in the 2009 local election. Next, we further explore why Taiwanese voters remain/change their support between the 2008 and 2009 elections. Specifically, on the basis of referendum voting model, we focus on four 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?
- Did the non-voters in the 2008 presidential election come out to vote for the KMT candidate in 2009 because of their positive assessment of Ma Yig-jeou's performance?¹⁰
- 4. Did the non-voters in the 2008 presidential election come out to vote for the DPP candidate in 2009 because of their negative assessment of Ma Yig-jeou's performance?

Corresponding to the above four questions, we define four dependent variables, and set up four logistic models (Model I ~ IV). Following is the coding scheme for the dependent variables, respectively:¹¹

- 1. Do Ma Ying-jeou's supporters still intend to vote for the KMT magistrate candidates? (Ma Yin Jeou's supporters vote for the KMT = 1; Ma Yin Jeou's supporters do not vote for the KMT = 0.)
- Do Frank Hsieh's supporters still intend to vote for the DPP magistrate candidates? (Frank Hsieh's supporters vote for the DPP = 1; Frank Hsieh's supporters do not vote for the DPP = 0.)
- 3. Do non-voters in the 2008 vote for the KMT magistrate candidate? (2008 non-voters vote for the KMT =1; 2008 non-voters do not vote for the KMT = 0.)
- 4. Do non-voters in the 2008 vote for the DPP magistrate candidate? (2008 non-voters vote for the DPP =1; 2008 non-voters 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 voting intention will be driven by his/her 1) level of satisfaction with Ma Ying-jeou's job performance; 2) assessment of Ma's policy impact on personal economic well-being; and 3) assessment of Ma's policy impact on national economy.¹²

¹⁰ By non-voters, we assume that those respondents who did not clearly answer their vote choices are very likely to not go to vote. Thus we classified those respondents as non-voters. This is indeed a very strong assumption.

¹¹ Please refer to Table A1 in Appendix for details.

¹² The wordings of the three questions are as follows: 1. Are you satisfied with President Ma's overall performance? 2. Do you think your household economic well being gets better, worse, or no change due to President Ma's cross-strait economic policy? 3. Do you think national economy gets better,

It is important to note that the latter two variables are set to test the so-called "pocketbook voting" and "sociotropic voting" models, respectively: While the pocket book voting model suggest that a voter may support the ruing 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 affect his/her intention to vote for the ruling party (Kinder and Kieweit 1979, 1981). Yet, our question wordings are little 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 also measures a respondent's assessment of the central government performance.

In addition to the above three independent variables, we also include demographic variables (e.g., gender, age, and education level) and party identification variables as control variables. And as voters actually cast their votes in different local contests, in order to control geographic differences, we include an additional control variable that indicates whether there is a KMT or DPP incumbent running for reelection. It is argued that an incumbent candidate certainly enjoy some advantage in Taiwan's electoral context (e.g., name recognition, resource distribution, and so on) when running for reelection (Lo 2001).¹³

	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV
Dependent Variables	Consistent	Consistent	Non-voter to	Non-voter to
	KMT	DPP	KMT	DPP
Indonondont Voriables	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.	Coef.
independent variables	(Std)	(Std)	(Std)	(Std)
Performance of Central				
Government				
Satisfaction with Ma	0.742**	-0.589	0.092	0.176
	(0.186)	(0.446)	(0.314)	(0.383)
Assessment of Personal	0.010	-0.262	1.005	-1.525**
Economic Well-being	(0.318)	(0.565)	(0.632)	(0.642)
Assessment of National	0.199	-1.030**	-0.148	0.178

 Table 3 : Determinants of Changing (or Maintaining) Voting Intentions, 2008-09

worse, or no change due to President Ma's cross-strait economic policy?

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

Economic Status	(0.221)	(0.452)	(0.427)	(0.511)
Demographic Variables				
F 1	-0.344	0.630	0.348	-1.067*
remale	(0.248)	(0.483)	(0.453)	(0.551)
A	-0.041	0.272	-0.162	0.274
Age	(0.124)	(0.212)	(0.227)	(0.243)
	-0.145	0.086	-0.004	-0.208
Education	(0.123)	(0.218)	(0.231)	(0.237)
Partisanship				
	2.238**	-0.392	1.348**	(
KM1 Amnate	(0.395)	(1.350)	(0.541)	(omitted)§
Independent				
(base category)				
DDD Affiliate	1.664**	1.746**	-0.048	2.088**
DPP Ammate	(0.657)	(0.598)	(0.703)	(0.531)
Incumbency				
VMT In our hon ou	1.041**	0.378	0.150	0.646
KIVIT Incumbency	(0.271)	(0.558)	(0.506)	(0.779)
Open Seat				
(base category)				
DDD Incumbanay	-0.968**	1.507**	-1.341*	1.640**
DFF Incuitioency	(0.363)	(0.684)	(0.829)	(0.795)
Constant	-3.675**	-0.223	-3.569**	-1.030
	(1.039)	(1.655)	(1.651)	(1.517)
Sample Size	377	114	207	170
Pseudo R2	0.215	0.258	0.145	0.268

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.

Table 3 summarizes the results of logistic regression analyses. In Model I, the coefficient for satisfaction with Ma is positive and significantly different from zero. That is, a respondent who is satisfied with Ma's job performance is more likely to support the KMT in the two consecutive elections. The other two variables that we use to test the theory of economic voting are not significant.

In Model II, the coefficient for satisfaction with Ma is actually not significant. On the other hand, the coefficient for assessment of national economic status is negative and statistically significant. It means that among Hsieh's supporters, those who think Taiwan's overall economy gets better due to Ma's economic policy will be less likely to support the DPP magistrate nominees. The variable we use to measure the effect of pocketbook voting is still not significant here.

In Model III, all variables with respect to the performance of the central government are not statistically significant from zero. And in Model IV, the coefficients for satisfaction with Ma and for assessment of national economy are not significant. However, the coefficient for assessment of personal economic well-being is negative and significant. That is, if non-voters in the 2008 presidential election feel that President Ma's cross-strait economic policy improves their personal economic well-beings, they will be less likely to vote for DPP's candidates in the 2009 local election.

Our findings with respect to the four models in Table 3 are three-fold: first, for those who support the KMT (Ma Ying-jeou) in the 2008 presidential election, whether or not they are satisfied with Ma's performance become an important factor determining their continuous support for the KMT nominees in the 2009 local election. Second, for those who support the DPP (Frank Hsieh) in the 2008 presidential election, their assessment of the impact of Ma Ying-jeou's cross-strait economic policy on Taiwan's overall economy affect their intention to support the DPP candidates in the 2009 local election. Third, for those non-voters in the 2008 presidential election, whether or not they feel the improvement of their personal economic well-being brought by Ma's economic policy affect their intention to support the DPP candidates in the 2009 local election.

Since Model I ~IV are logistic models, we are not able to tell the substantial impacts of the independent variables on the dependent variables. Thus, in the following section, we calculate the probability change of the dependent variable with respect to the variation of the key independent variable. Specifically, holding other variables constant, we use Model I's coefficient for satisfaction with Ma, Model II's coefficient for assessment of the national economy, and Model IV's coefficient for assessment of personal economic well-being to calculate the substantial impact of the corresponding variables on the dependent variables.¹⁴

Figure 3 shows the relationship between the degree of satisfaction with Ma administration and the probability of voting for the KMT magistrate candidates

¹⁴ In the following section, we only discuss those key variables. Regarding the substantial impact of the control variables, please refer to Table A2 in Appendix.

among Ma's 2008 supporters. The probability of voting for the KMT magistrate candidate is only about 15.4% for those Ma's supporters who are very dissatisfied with Ma's performance. On the other hand, for those Ma's supporters who are very satisfied with Ma's performance, the probability of voting for the KMT magistrate candidate is 62.9%. The difference between the two is indeed substantial (about 38 percentage points). In short, Figure 3 demonstrates that whether Ma's supporters continuously support the KMT depends on their assessment of Ma's overall performance.





Note: very dissatisfied; 2: little dissatisfied; 3: little satisfied; 4: very satisfied

Figure 4 shows the relationship between assessment of national economy and probability of voting for the DPP magistrate nominee among Frank Hsieh's supporters. For those who think Ma's cross-strait economic policy improves Taiwan's overall economy, the probability of voting for DPP candidates is less than 5%. On the other hand, for those who think Ma's policy makes Taiwan's economy get worse, the probability of voting for DPP candidates in 2009 increase to 25.7%. The difference between the two estimates is greater than 20 percentage points. Thus, the extent to which Hsieh's supporters vote for DPP's magistrate candidates may highly depend on

their assessment of the impact of Ma's cross-strait economic policy on Taiwan's national economy.



Figure 4: Assessment of National Economy and Predicted Voting probability for DPP Candidates in the 2009 Local Election (among Hsieh's supporters)

Figure 5 shows the relationship between assessment of personal economic well-being and voting probability for DPP's magistrate candidates among non-voters in the 2008 presidential election. Similar to the pattern found in Figure 4, the probability of voting for DPP candidates for a non-voter who agrees that Ma's policy makes his/her personal economic situation get better is less than 1% (0.93%). In contrast, if a non-voter thinks that Ma's policy makes his/her personal economic well-being get worse, the probability of voting for DPP candidates increases significantly to about 16%. In other words, non-voters are very sensitive to their personal economic condition. They tend to turn out to vote against the ruling party when they feel that their worse personal economic well-being is a consequence of Ma's cross-strait economic policy.

Figure 5: Assessment of Personal Economic Well-being and Predicted Voting probability for DPP Candidates in the 2009 Local Election (2008 Non-voters)



IV. Conclusion

By using both aggregate and individual level data, this paper analyzes the effect of low turnout rate in Taiwan's 2009 local election, with respect to the 2005 and 2008 turnout rates as reference points. Taiwan's recent electoral outcomes seem to suggest that a low turnout may benefit the DPP, particularly in 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. We thus focus on exploring who actually turns out in midterm elections as we analyze the 2009 local election as an example. Our findings are three-fold:

First, the turnout rate for the 2009 local election is lower than the past elections. Who actually benefit from such low turnout? Our analysis indicates that the turnout rates in previous KMT advantageous districts drop more then those in previous DPP advantageous districts. In fact, in some close county magistrate battles, the turnout rates in DPP districts increase while in KMT districts decrease. 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, there is no evidence that a significant proportion of voters shift their

support from one party to the other. Yet, by using pre-election survey data, we do find that previous KMT supporters are somehow reluctant to continuously support KMT candidates. They might choose not to turn out to vote in the election, which cause the drop of the overall turnout rate.

Third, in any election, there must be some voters who decide not to turn out to vote, or change their previous voting preference toward different parties. In midterm elections, the performance of the ruling party usually becomes an important factor that affect voting intention. Our analysis concludes three points: first, the KMT supporters care more about Ma's overall performance. Only those who think Ma's performance satisfactory may turn out to continuously support KMT magistrate candidates. On the other hand, the DPP supporters care more about economic conditions. If they think Ma's cross-strait policy does not improve Taiwan's overall economy, they will go out to vote for DPP candidates. Last, those non-voters in the 2008 presidential election may possibly turn out to cast their "protest vote" against the KMT candidates as they think their personal economic well-being is getting worse due to Ma's cross-strait economic policy.

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Appendix

Figure A1: Taiwan's Electoral Map by Counties/Cities, 2005-2009



Note: Blue—the KMT won a plurality of vote share; Green—the DPP won a plurality of vote share; Grey—a third party candidate won a plurality of vote share; white—no election held in the administrative unit.

Model	Dependent Variable		CodingFrequency		Accumulated%	
Ι	Ma's supporters vote for KMT	1	222	47.84	100	
	Ma's supporters not vote for KMT	0	242	52.16	100	
II	Hsieh's supporters vote for DPP	1	63	50.81	100	
	Hsie's supporters not vote for DPP	0	61	41.19		
III	2008 Non-voters vote for KMT	1	37	13.17	100	
	2008 Non-voters not vote for KMT	0	244	86.83		
IV	2008 Non-voters vote for DPP	1	30	10.68	100	
	2008 Non-voters not vote for DPP	0	251	89.32		

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 Table A1: Coding Scheme of Dependent Variables and Descriptive Statistics for

 All Variables

Independent Variables	Size	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min	Max
Satisfaction with Ma	757	2.172	0.862	1 (Very Dissatisfied)	4 (Very Satisfied)
Assessment of Personal Economic Well-being	850	1.835	0.472	1 (Worse)	3 (Better)
Assessment of National Economic Status	804	2.095	0.732	1 (Worse)	3 (Better)
Female	869	0.514	0.500	0	1
Age	866	2.925	1.183	1	5
Education	866	3.419	1.213	1	5
KMT Affiliate	855	0.460	0.499	0	1
Independent (base category)	855	0.357	0.479	0	1
DPP Affiliate	855	0.184	0.387	0	1
KMT Incumbency	869	0.423	0.494	0	1
Open Seat (base category)	869	0.613	0.487	0	1
DPP Incumbency	869	0.190	0.392	0	1

	Probability Change of Dependent Variables					
	Model I	Model II	Model III	Model IV		
	Consistent	Consistent	Non-voter	Non-voter		
	KMT	DPP	to KMT	to DPP		
Male (base category)	34.19%	7.85%	12.97%	8.73%		
Female	26.91%	13.80%	17.44%	3.18%		
KMT Affiliate	51.81%	6.47%	27.16%	(omitted)		
Independent (base category)	10.28%	9.29%	8.82%	3.63%		
DPP Affiliate	37.70%	37.01%	8.44%	23.30%		
KMT Incumbency	48.81%	9.92%	20.05%	5.54%		
Open Seat (base category)	25.19%	7.01%	17.76%	2.98%		
DPP Incumbency	11.33%	25.39%	5.34%	13.69%		

Table A2: Predicted Probability Change of Dependent Variables, by Control Variables

indicates that the calculation is based on significant coefficients.