

# The Emergence of Tsai Ing-Wen and the Presidentialization of DPP, 2008-2016<sup>1</sup>

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## **Abstract**

This article suggests four important factors which help explain the emergence of Tsai Ing-wen and the revival and presidentialization of DPP during Ma Ying-Jeou era (2008-2016): the 2008 election fiasco, the balance and decline of (former) factions, the change that the 2012 Legislative and Presidential election being held concurrently, and the development of communication technology. Framing from the 2008 humiliating election loss, Tsai emerged originally as the Pareto optimal among the declining factions owing to her consensus-seeking personality and return-to-the-median-voter approach. However, through a series of institutional reform on DPP nomination process and campaign organization, which was further consolidated by the decision of concurrent election and the Taiwanese voters' behavioral change along with the advance of information technology, Tsai gradually centralized the power of DPP chairmanship and transformed DPP from a fiercely factional competition battlefield into a top-down, presidential-candidate-centered party machine. Its implication on Tsai's governing and party politics in Taiwan after 2016 is also discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> Preliminary draft.

## **Introduction**

On January 16, 2016, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP hereafter) candidate Tsai Ing-Wen won the Taiwan Presidential election in a landslide (56.12% of the vote, compared to the incumbent party Kuomintang (KMT hereafter) 31.04%) and became the first female president in history. For anyone who roughly followed the pre-election polls or witnessed the implosion of KMT's nomination process, the 2016 election result was not surprising. However, if you asked any Taiwanese voter right after the 2008 elections, he or she would be much likely to bet on DPP losing for the next twenty years then on a young, non-faction, and ideologically moderate female leading DPP to return to power. How did Tsai Ing-Wen successfully emerge and eventually win the presidency?

This article aims at reviewing Tsai Ing-Wen's strategies and her interaction with other DPP politicians and the political context during Ma Ying-Jeou era (2008-2016). Especially, I propose four important factors shaping Tsai and DPP's strategies: (1) Framing from the DPP's 2008 fiasco, (2) the balance and decline of (former) factions inside DPP, (3) the change that the 2012 Legislative and Presidential election being held concurrently, and (4) the development of communication technology.

The former two factors created a special intra-party political opportunity structure for Tsai Ing-Wen to emerge and win the chairmanship, which her moderate position on the cross-strait issue, "consensus-seeking" personality, non-faction membership, and personal background ironically became "advantageous." Meanwhile, the interaction of the four factors enabled Tsai Ing-Wen to clinch the leadership, reform the DPP itself to be a party

machine and, as I will argue in the following sections, eventually presidentialize the DPP (Passarelli 2015).

Indeed, Chen (2015) provides an extensive review of DPP's Presidentialization process from 1986 to 2015. He mostly focuses on the factional competition and the function of the DPP chairmanship. Also, Shih (2016) illustrated how the concurrent election helped the power centralization and institutional reform inside the DPP. In this article, however, I will also discuss how the development of communication technology changes the information consumption and the political engagement among the Taiwanese people, which also impacted on the relative strength between factions in DPP and helped Tsai's emergence.

Reviewing Tsai Ing-Wen's failures and successes during the Ma era is important for several reasons, theoretically and practically. First, this case illustrated how a loosely-organized opposition party with multiple factions could be gradually centralized. Second, Tsai's decision-making tendency before her victory can shed light on the recent policy conflicts under her. Third, the evolution of DPP's campaign strategies evidenced the rapid change of information consumption and public opinion in Taiwan in the past decades. In the end, the combination of Tsai and presidentialization helped DPP win the 2016 presidency, but it may also increase the uncertainty of DPP's future, especially on its cross-strait policy perspectives.

### **Framing from DPP's 2008 Fiasco**

In the evening March 22, 2008, KMT presidential candidate Ma won the presidency by huge margins; Ma received 58.45% of total votes, compared with DPP candidate Frank

Hsieh's 41.55%. Two months before this election, KMT also won overwhelmingly 81 in 113 seats (71.7%) in the Legislative election. This turnover not only reflected the great effort of KMT and Ma's campaigning strategies but also indicated several fallacies that DPP and its first president Chen Shui-Bian had made in his previous eight years of ruling. The four major fallacies discussed below then shaped the DPP's decision-making process and intraparty politics after the 2008 elections.

First, the "remove-the-blues" survey did not work. After the outbreak of President Chen Shui-Bian's scandal in 2006, Chen was sharply criticized by the highly-organized New Tide faction and some other DPP party members. Chen and the DPP chair Yu Shyi-Kun established the "remove-the-blues" survey for the primaries, which only accounted for the pan-green respondent's opinion for choosing candidates. This change called for loyalty to the DPP members and successfully prevented New Tide members from winning the primaries by criticizing Chen. Yu further reasoned that this "remove-the-blues" survey design could prevent the KMT supporter's crossing-over influence. However, the humiliating loss in the 2008 Legislative election evidenced its deficiency (Shih 2016). Considering the primary and the general election as a two-stage game, the remove-the-blue surveys tend to pick up the candidate far from the median voter's position.

Second, the openly and fiercely factional competition became much harmful to the DPP then before. Before Chen became the president in 2000, DPP was widely known as a loose coalition of numerous anti-KMT factions. Some factions were composed of victims of KMT's political repressions or lawyers who helped them, some were labor movement

activists, and some others were oversea Taiwan independence advocates.<sup>2</sup> During Chen's presidency, however, factions spent more energy on competing with each other for the executive resources rather than the policy debate (see Hsieh 2013). Chen deliberately cultivated Su Tseng-chang, Yu Shyi-Kun, Frank Hsieh, and Annette Lu to develop their own individual-centered faction which balanced each other. During the 2008 DPP presidential primary, openly mudslinging among the four personalized factions was rampant, which were harmful to not only the four politicians but also DPP as a whole. The seventh constitutional reform in 2005, which replaced the SNTV with the Single-Member-District rule (SMD hereafter) and cut the number of seats in the Legislative Yuan in half, further aggravated the factional competition inside DPP.<sup>3</sup>

Third, DPP sullied its brand as a "progressive" party and lost support from the young generation. Shadowed by President Chen's scandal, the proportion of Taiwanese people thinking DPP as corrupted increased from 24.5% in 1996 to 44.9% in 2008 (for KMT, 57.4% to 43.5%), and the anti-corruption issue (the slogan for Chen's presidential campaign in 2000) could no longer help explain vote choice in 2008 (Lin and Yu 2009). The factional competition and intraparty mudslinging also seriously defamed DPP. Before 2000, college students were strong supporters of DPP; many of them volunteered in DPP's campaign activities, which helped DPP build the first BBS, website, video game, and online broadcasting system. Without the support of the young generation, DPP's

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<sup>2</sup> Based on the election results from 1986 to 2004, Hsu and Chen (2007) also reveals that the negotiation among the factions helped DPP to overcome the under-representation problem in the Legislative election under the Single non-transferable vote (SNTV hereafter) electoral system.

<sup>3</sup> Apparently, Chen and DPP recognized that factional competition was harmful to the party image, so DPP announced to dissolve all factions in July 2006. However, the announcement was widely believed that it targeted the New Tide faction. Moreover, all factions just turned underground (Hsieh 2013). Regarding the impact of the constitutional reform, one former DPP legislator admitted that "90% of legislators did not know the impact of SMD on DPP's future" when interviewed with Hsieh (2013: p. 241)

technological advantage was largely reduced by Ma before 2008 (Wang 2016). Director of the DPP department of youth even complained that he failed to hire enough young people for the campaigning activities.

Fourth, in 2008, there was a huge discord on campaigning strategies and resource allocation between the DPP presidential candidate Frank Hsieh and the party machine controlled by President Chen. Legislative election was held in January, while the Presidential election was two months later. After winning the fiercely primary, Frank Hsieh ran the presidential election only with the help of his faction, DPP and President Chen were, therefore, responsible for the campaign in the Legislative one (Hsieh 2013). However, President Chen not only promoted the remove-the-blues survey in 2006 but also announced the *Resolution for a Normal Country* in 2007, which indicated that the nation should "accomplish rectification of the name "Taiwan" as soon as possible and write a new constitution." Chen further pushed for that "Joining the United Nation under the name of "Taiwan"" referendum which took place on the same day of the presidential election. Chen's agenda-setting seriously overshadowed Hsieh's campaign, and Hsieh's nearly independent campaigning strategy also undermined the mobilization ability of DPP. Even though Hsieh became the chairman after the Legislative election, it was all too late.

### **The Emergence of Tsai: Consensus-Seeking and Factional Balancing**

After the 2008 fiasco and turnover, the investigation on Chen Shui-Bian had just started. DPP needed a new chairman to deal with the four major problems above, but its option was few; as Frank Hsieh described right after the election, "All DPP elites and anyone with power are responsible for the loss."

Two voices emerged during the DPP chairmanship election in May 2008. The fundamentalist camp was initially led by Chai Trong-rong, a 73-years-old faction leader and the founding father of the World United Formosans for Independence in the U.S. Chai argued that DPP needed to push for independence further so as to fight against the cooperation between KMT and China and to provide a much clearer ideological stance to attract voters. Later, Chai cooperated closely with another chairman candidate Koo Kwang-ming, an 82-years-old businessman and activist who led Taiwan independence movement in Japan before.

The second group went the opposite direction and decided to follow the median voter theorem. To solve the four problems discussed above and regain the popular support, some DPP members, mostly young and calling for “generational replacement”, believed that DPP needs a chairman that is ideological moderate, not belonging to any faction but is able to reach the balance among the factions, has a progressive image, and young. Meanwhile, DPP was under serious deficit (about six million USD) after the 2008 elections, so the new chairman also be able to seek financial support for the party.

Tsai Ing-Wen was seemed to be the only option above the table in 2008 (Shih 2016). Tsai had never participated in, or been suffered from, the series of democratization movement before 1987<sup>4</sup>; therefore, she did not strongly link to any of the factions, and only had joined the DPP for four years. Compared with Chai and Koo, Tsai was 52 years old, and her gender<sup>5</sup> and highly-educated background may help restore the progressive image of DPP.

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<sup>4</sup> Chen, Fang-min. 2010. “Tsai Ing-Wen and the Rebirth of DPP.” [http:// cdm.lib.nccu.edu.tw /cdm /ref /collection /fmc/id/5659](http://cdm.lib.nccu.edu.tw/cdm/ref/collection/fmc/id/5659)

<sup>5</sup> Hsu (2005) found that the proportion of Taiwanese female voters supporting the pan-green camp increased sharply from 1992 to 2004. In the 2004 Presidential election, female voters were much likely to vote for DPP

Moreover, Tsai's "consensus-seeking" personality enhanced the flexibility of DPP's cross-strait policy and made her acceptable to many factions, at least in the short run. The consensus-seeking personality can be best illustrated by an interview with Tsai in July 2009: on discussing the future of the cross-strait relationship, Tsai stated that "Taiwanese people need to form a consensus on the cross-strait relationship before meeting with China."<sup>6</sup> One of my interviewees who works closely with Tsai mentioned that she tends not to preclude any viewpoint or make decisions soon, but prefers to find a median point among all related actors; Tsai is patient enough to wait until a consensus can be reached.

Therefore, Tsai's non-faction characteristic and consensus-seeking personality enabled her to be the *Pareto optimal* among many DPP factions in the post-2008-election context, especially for those looking to regaining their factional power such as the New Tide. Compared with Chai and Koo, Tsai's personal background may help improve DPP's party image.<sup>7</sup> However, Tsai's "open-ended" stance on cross-strait relationship troubled many pro-independence DPP members.

In the DPP chairmanship election held on May 19, 2008, the turnout was highest since 1998 (around 13 thousand DPP member voted), and the number of votes Tsai received was also the highest in DPP history (73865, 57.14%). Granted Tsai had received cross-factional support, she did not win overwhelmingly, implying the mistrust from the pro-independence members. The highest turnout rate also indicated that this election result

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rather than KMT for the first time. However, a follow-up study by Yang and Lin (2013) show that this pattern was completely overturned by Ma in 2008; Ma received a widely support from Taiwanese female voters, even among those in the pan-green camp.

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.cdnews.com.tw/cdnews\\_site//touch/detail.jsp?coluid=130&kindid=0&docid=100857190](http://www.cdnews.com.tw/cdnews_site//touch/detail.jsp?coluid=130&kindid=0&docid=100857190)

<sup>7</sup> One month after Tsai became the new DPP chairman, DPP's approval rate increased from 36% to 58%. Yen et al. 2008. "DPP's Approval Rate is increasing" *Apple Daily*, June 15.



was critical to DPP on its plan in the Ma era: choosing Tsai to lead DPP going back to the median voter.

### **Institutional Reform, 2012 Concurrent Election, and Presidentialization**

Since Tsai became the DPP chairman in 2008 as a balancing among factions, she did not have too much power, and her predecessors left no executive resource but the deficit. Therefore, compromising with factions is a salient feature in Tsai's first and second term of chairmanship (2008-2012). However, the lessons from the 2008 fiasco and the returning-to-the-median strategy endorsed by the chairmanship election enabled Tsai to centralize and institutionalize the power of DPP chairman gradually. Meanwhile, the decision of the concurrent election in 2012 announced by the Central Election Committee, which some KMT campaign staff and DPP legislators believed to help Ma's reelection, also help Tsai consolidate her leadership (Shih 2016).

DPP decided to abolish the remove-the-blues survey in April 2008 owing to the election loss. Two months after becoming the chairman, Tsai announced to abolish the closed primary for the 2009 local election (and 2010 later). Instead, the mayor candidates were decided through "negotiation," while the county and city legislative candidates were decided through telephone survey including all respondents. Moreover, the candidate needs not to join the DPP for at least one year. Tsai reasoned her decision for avoiding the fiercely intraparty competition and for increasing popular support.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, Tsai further closed 84 DPP village offices, the lowest local office which has a serious problem of

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<sup>8</sup> Yen, Chen-Kai. 2008. "The Pan-green camp is preparing for the 2009 local election" *Apple Daily* July 11.

nominal party membership and corruption, for the sake of cost-saving (Hsieh 2013)<sup>9</sup>. Another apparent reason for these changes is to reduce the possibility of party member being arrested owing to corruption in the closed primaries (Shih 2016). These changes were challenged again by the pro-independence fundamentalists and the elder party members. However, the “negotiation” design was believed to enhance the power of some factions, and the survey may help the incumbents,<sup>10</sup> so both were passed.

Since the election result of the 2009 and 2010 local elections were not bad, DPP had higher confidence that its new strategy was effective. In early 2011, DPP further passed the following institutional reforms. First, the presidential and district legislative candidates (2/3 of seats) will be fully decided by simple telephone poll, rather than the remove-the-blues survey or closed primaries. Second, the definition of the “non-competitive legislative district” was revised from DPP receiving 30% of votes in the last election to 42.5%. According to the nomination process, the DPP chairman can appoint the candidate for the non-competitive district directly, so this change largely increased the number of districts that DPP chairman can assign a candidate from 13 to 40 (Shih 2016). Third, the non-district legislative party list (1/3 of seats) will be fully decided by a nomination committee appointed by the chairman; in comparison, in 2008 the chairman can only decide one-third of the list, and the remains were decided through the closed primary. These changes were protested by Annette Lu in the DPP national committee on January 22, 2011, but were supported by two-third of the committee members (227 in 311).

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<sup>9</sup> It had been proposed in 2005, but chairman Su failed to pass it.

<sup>10</sup> Yen, Chen-Kai, and Shen-Yi Su. 2010. “The elder and younger DPP members disagreed with the new nomination process.” *Apple Daily* January 24, 2010.

The logic behind these changes is three-fold. First, Tsai increased the short-term influence of factions by inviting the faction heads joining the nomination committee or becoming candidates. The growing nomination power of chairman was the “resource” created by Tsai to appease the factions.<sup>11</sup> It was evidenced by DPP’s 2012 non-district legislative party list, which was largely occupied by the prominent members of many factions. Second, at the time of institutional reform, Tsai cannot ensure that she will be the presidential candidate, so the reform was perceived as fair. The telephone survey would benefit experienced and already-famous politicians such as Su Tseng-chang and Frank Hsieh. Indeed, Tsai almost failed to win the DPP presidential nomination in 2011; Tsai received 42.5% of support among the five surveys, while Su received 41.15%.

Third, Tsai gradually reduced the long-term strength of the factions by closing local offices and abolishing the closed primaries under the name of cost-saving, 2008 loss, and avoiding prosecution. Moreover, time is on Tsai’s side:<sup>12</sup> according to the interviews in 2011 by Hsieh (2013), most of the DPP faction leaders (rather than the New Tide, Su, and Hsieh) admitted that they are not cultivating the next generations, and the factional competition is not for policy debate but power-pursuing.<sup>13</sup> Since many DPP factions were created through the joint experience of political repressions, which would unavoidably erode over time. Even though some faction leaders pushed their son or daughter as the successor, their influences were largely restricted to the local level. It was evidenced by the increase of non-faction DPP legislators. According to Batto and Huang (2016, p.121),

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<sup>11</sup> Yen, Chen-Kai, Chia-Shan Wu, and Yang-Ming Huang. 2011. “The DPP’s new party list nomination rule was attacked as “dividing the spoils” *Apple Daily* January 21, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Cheng, Min-Te. 2016. “Say good-bye to DPP’s lawyer generation” *China Times*, July 18, 2016.

<sup>13</sup> Moreover, Su, Hsieh, and Yu had a stronger ability on collecting donation because of their Primer experience, so they had more resource to cultivate their factions. But the financing ability cannot be passed down neither.

the number of non-faction legislators is 29 in 89 (32.6%) in 2004, 9 in 27 (33.3%) in 2008, and 19 in 40 (47.5%) in 2012. Another evidence can be found on Su, Yu, and Hsieh's failed attempt in 2012. After the 2012 Presidential election, Tsai stepped down and was replaced by Su. Su, Hsieh and Yu proposed on May 26, 2013, to replace the telephone survey with the closed primary again, but this proposal was not supported by the majority of DPP national committee members (66 in 287).

At the same time when Tsai was promoting institutional reform, the Central Election Committee announced on January 4, 2011, that it would start discussing the possibility of holding the 2012 Legislative and Presidential elections concurrently for the sake of cost-saving, which means that the Presidential election will be held two months earlier than in 2008. This move was believed to benefit Ma's reelection since the 2012 Legislative Election Day was the week of the final exam for the college students, and the college students tended to support the pan-green candidate.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, suggested by one KMT campaigner, if DPP gained seats in the 2012 legislative election, it would impact on Ma's vote share two months later when there was no concurrent election (Shih 2016).

However, Tsai herself did not show strong opposition to the concurrent election, and the decision was made and announced by the Central Election Committee on May 22, 2011. According to Shih's interviews and statistical analysis (2016), the concurrent election instead helped Tsai consolidate her power and presidentialize the DPP. First, the turnout rate in the presidential election is usually 20% higher than the legislative election, and those additional voters are motivated and mobilized by the presidential candidates.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> However, this change may also influence the Taiwanese businessman who worked in China, a group who mostly support the pan-blue camp, since that weekend was one week before the lunar New Year, so it is costly for those businessman flying back to Taiwan only for voting.

<sup>15</sup> In 2008, the turnout rate of the Legislative election is 58.72%; in 2012, it is 74.72%, a 16% increase.

Second, mass media would mostly cover the presidential race rather than the legislative one. Shih provided evidence (2016, p.71) that the average number of news coverage for the legislative candidates sharply reduced from 186.8 in 2008 to 121.9 in 2012, a 34.7% drop (in 2016, the number is 118.07). These two impacts from the concurrent election, accompanied by the lack of resource, motivated the DPP legislative candidates to cooperate closely with Tsai since their fortune will be largely decided by Tsai's performance in the campaign. In contrast with the discords in 2008, DPP 2012 legislative candidates mostly followed Tsai's campaigning theme (social justice) and slogans with the same color (yellow) and same design and preferred to run the campaigning activities with Tsai, especially for those less-known candidates. Empirical evidence of the presidential coattail effect in this 2012 concurrent election was later provided by Huang and Wang (2014). Since Tsai became the chairman and the presidential candidate at the same time, and for the concurrent election, Tsai saw able to combine the party machine with the whole election activities together, which revitalized the campaigning capability of DPP (will further discuss in the next section).

The effect of DPP chairman's power centralization was much clear in the 2016 presidential and legislative election. After Su and other's failed attempt to returning DPP to a closed primary, the Sunflower movement happened in March 2014. During the Sunflower movement, Su, as the DPP chairman after 2012, was deeply criticized by students and protesters for his inability to slow down President Ma's trade agreement with China,<sup>16</sup> so he returned the chairmanship back to Tsai in late 2014.

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<sup>16</sup> Kuo, Chung-li. 2014. "The conflict of Lungmen Nuclear Power Plant awaked Su" *The Journalist* May 6, 2014.

Facing no challenger in 2016 DPP presidential primary, Tsai can further exercise her returning-to-the-median strategy. First of all, she directly stopped the discussion of “freezing independence stance clause” on DPP national committee,<sup>17</sup> which should be used to clarify Tsai’s willingness to support independence ultimately. Second, with the decline of former factions discussed above, she can fully control the nomination process for the 2014 local and 2016 legislative elections under the same “negotiation” and “nomination committee” rule as in 2010 and 2012. No former faction heads were able to be listed on the DPP’s 2016 non-district legislative party list. Instead, Tsai closely followed the salient policy issues that the majority of Taiwanese voters cared, including food safety, long-term care, daycare, and housing,<sup>18</sup> and then nominated specialists and activists from the related fields to the party list. Hence, the 2016 non-district legislative party list was no longer the resource for appeasing the factions, but part of the campaigning tool for the DPP presidential candidate.

Third, Tsai can not only share the campaign resource with 2016 DPP legislative candidates; she can even require the candidates and their campaigners to follow specific formats of the campaign, or not to promote extreme policies (Shih 2016). Furthermore, she can even ask DPP politicians for not running in some districts, but to support candidates nominated by the New Power Party, a pro-independence party emerged from the 2014 Sunflower Movement. Through survey experiments, Wang and Chen (2016) showed that the emergence of the ideological extreme candidate could help the moderate candidate on the same side to be perceived as much moderate without changing its manifesto, which

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<sup>17</sup> Wu, Chia-shan, Hsiu-hui Lin, and Yang-min Huang. 2014. “Strongman Tsai silenced the freezing independence clause in 5 minutes” *Apple Daily* July 21, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Lin, Hsiu-huei, and Shan-Yi Su. 2015. “Tsai set up 2000 fans clubs nationwide” *Apple Daily* July 9, 2015.

may reason Tsai's decision to let the New Power Party run. As a result, according to the Taiwan National Security Survey conducted in late 2015 by the Duke University Program in Asian Security Studies, 65.3% of Taiwanese people believed that the tension between China and Taiwan would not rise if Tsai and DPP win the 2016 elections.<sup>19</sup> This survey result suggested Tsai's return-to-the-median strategy is successful in this eight year.

To sum up, the institutional reform of DPP chairmanship led by Tsai was originally designed to balance the factions and to hide the openly intraparty competition. However, the generation replacement of factions and the impact of the concurrent election enabled Tsai to exert the chairmanship for her own sake eventually. Compared with the discord between DPP and Hsieh and intraparty mudslinging in 2008, Tsai as the 2012 and 2016 DPP presidential candidate can fully steer the party machine and set the "Tsai-centered" campaign agenda for the whole party toward the median voter's position.

### **Information Technology, Campaign Strategy, and Presidentialization**

A novel aspect to reveal the power centralization of DPP during 2008 to 2016 is to investigate how DPP adjusted itself in the trend of rapid development of information technology. The innovation of search engine, personal blog, smartphone, and social network sites largely changed how Taiwanese voters consume political information and their capability to respond. Tsai and DPP made two significant top-down institutional reforms in 2009 and 2015 to ride the wave, especially after the Sunflower Movement in 2014 and conducted a series of evidence-based experiments of micro-targeting and micro-mobilization to secure its success in the 2016 presidential election eventually. These

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<sup>19</sup> <http://sites.duke.edu/pass/data>

reforms not only changed how DPP runs the campaign but also centralized Tsai's leading role in DPP.

The number of Internet users and their online behaviors changed dramatically in Taiwan. The percentage of internet users increased from 20% of adults in 2000, 68% in 2008, to 82% in 2016. Meanwhile, according to the TEDS datasets,<sup>20</sup> the percentage of Taiwanese people who read political news online also increased from 15% in 2000, 35% in 2008, to 55% in 2016. Besides, Yahoo! and Google (and their email service) appeared around 2000, personal blog, Youtube, and Plurk became popular around 2005, while smartphone and Facebook came out and dominated how Taiwanese people communicate after 2008. The search engine provides the opportunity for users to search information actively rather than waiting for the incoming news from the traditional media; the emerge of personal blog enables the Internet users also to become a media and spread information on their own; the social network sites further strengthen the bidirectional transmission and possibly create the echo chamber of people with similar attitudes; in the end, smartphone breaks the physical limitation of individuals – people can receive and transmit information even they are on the street. Based on the time series analysis of cell phone usage and the number of protests in Taiwan, Lin and Su (2015) suggested that cell phone can reduce the coordination problem in the mass mobilization. In short, citizens' capability and mobility are fully released with the advance of information technology in all generations.

Before 2008, DPP did not have a comprehensive strategy on online campaigning. Faction heads such as Yu and Hsieh developed their own "online army" which fought against each other (through posting news, sending emails, and sharing arguments) in the

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<sup>20</sup> <http://teds.nccu.edu.tw> Access: December 1, 2016.



2008 DPP presidential primary.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, the online army was mostly targeted the young generation. Apart from the factional armies, DPP's online campaign strategy was decided by the Propaganda Department and the Department of Youth, which implies that the online campaign was seen as the extension of traditional media (Wang 2016).

On February 8, 2009, Tsai established the new Internet Department in DPP, which the members were reorganized from the former factional online armies. In my opinion, the Internet Department played a paramount role in DPP's presidentialization process and Tsai's power centralization. First of all, the Internet Department regularly provides formal training and advice to all DPP candidates and their campaigners. According to the teaching materials used in its 2009 training camp,<sup>22</sup> the Internet Department led the assistants and legislators to build up their website and Facebook page and provided professional recommendations on brand-building, design, user flow analysis, collaboration tools, and live stream. This training resource also enhanced the future cooperation between Tsai and other DPP candidates in the 2012 and 2016 concurrent elections.<sup>23</sup>

Second, the Internet Department recommended DPP to micro-target variety of groups online rather than the young generation only as early in 2009. To follow Tsai's returning-to-the-median strategy and to make the best use of Tsai's personal background, the Internet Department focuses on the young generation, female, non-partisan, and absentee voters before 2012. The Internet Department believed these groups are much easier to touch through the Internet, which it learned from U.S. President Obama's 2008

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<sup>21</sup> Fang, Ling-jia. 2007. "Hsieh, Yu, and Su created "online army" to attract the young voters." *United Evening News*, A15, May 29, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> <http://dppnet.blogspot.com/> Access: October 10, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> The training camp is still provided after Tsai became the president. See Su, Fang-he, 2016, "DPP provides new class for "ads to the elder generation"" *Liberty Times* June 16, 2016.

campaign strategies.<sup>24</sup> It is a reasonable strategic change since the Internet users and voters who read political news online in Taiwan had reached a considerable number. Moreover, the Internet Department also successfully predicted the trend of smartphone and created the first smart-phone-friendly DPP website and first App for Tsai and DPP in 2009 (when only 15% of adults has a smartphone).

Third, the effect of these online campaigning was empirically tested several times before and during the elections, which introduced the evidence-based evaluation on campaigning to DPP. For example, Tsai and other DPP candidates held several fan meeting activity to test how much they can successfully mobilize their online supporters.

The burst of the Sunflower Movement in March 2014 further extended the scope and strategic importance of the online campaigning. One month the Sunflower Movement, the head of the Internet Department mourned on his personal blog that DPP was “totally defeated” by the movement: DPP not only failed to predict its burst, nor could DPP mobilize so many people to the street at that time. DPP also underestimated the capability and mobility of Taiwanese people. The department head then concluded that “the number of fans or website visitors is not at all important; they need to get-out-and-vote.”

To adjust for the post-Sunflower context, Tsai merged the Internet Department and the Propaganda Department to be the “Media and Creative Center (MCC hereafter)” in February 2015.<sup>25</sup> According to the head of MCC, this reform indicates that DPP will devote most of its resource on online campaigning, especially for micro-targeting.<sup>26</sup> Actually, the

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<sup>24</sup> Lin, Ho-min. 2008. “Learning from Obama, DPP prepared to establish the Internet Department” *United News* A4, December 4, 2008. Lin, Shiu-Chiun. 2011. “DPP develops new platform for smartphone to attract voters” *United News* A2, June 2, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Meanwhile, the “News and Opinion Center” was also established. There are 20 employees in the MCC, and 5 employees in the News and Opinion Center.

<sup>26</sup> Ln, Shotme, 2016, “Internet as the New Make-up for candidate,” *Liberty Times Net*, February 18, 2016. Access: <http://talk.ltn.com.tw/article/breakingnews/1605398>

idea of MCC came from the experience of non-partisan Doctor Ko Wen-je's campaign in the Taipei City mayor election in late 2014. Tsai borrowed half of the Internet Department to Ko and let them test all kinds of micro-targeting and mobilization.<sup>27</sup>

The function of MCC indicates that how Tsai fully controls DPP's party machine and features the DPP's top-down, presidential-candidate-centered campaign in 2016. Micro-targeting is capital-intensive, labor-intensive, and requires long-term preparation. For example, MCC created more than 80 campaigning videos from the materials DPP had collected for four years to attract a variety of subgroups, which is not affordable for most candidates except for the presidential one; one for young people looking for housing, one for pet adoption, one for musicians and artists, one for anime cosers and comic book fans, and so on.<sup>28</sup> After broadcasting the videos, MCC held a series of meetings for these groups with Tsai focusing on one or even no political issue. Additionally, MCC not only posted different policy issues with various framing on different websites and platforms, but also made the use of micro-targeting tool provided by Google, Facebook, and other web services.

Once again, these materials and tools are shared to other DPP candidates and their campaigners. When Tsai showed a high probability of winning the presidency, DPP reset its goal to win the majority in the Legislative Yuan, and it, therefore, provided more campaigning resource and technical help to all DPP candidates (Shih 2016).

## **Conclusion and Looking Forward**

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<sup>27</sup> Yen, Chen-kai. 2015. "DPP established the new departments to prepare for the 2016 election" *Storm Media* January 2, 2015. Access: <http://www.storm.mg/article/39783>

<sup>28</sup> Yen, Li-Chien. "Tsai's online campaigning: Precise, Micro-targeting, and Localization" *Business Next*, May 19, 2016. Access: <https://www.bnnext.com.tw/article/39637/BN-2016-05-19-175914-178>

Framing from the 2008 DPP fiasco, Tsai emerged originally as the balance among declining factions by her consensus-seeking personality and return-to-the-median approach. However, through a series of reforms on DPP's nomination process and campaign organization, with the help of 2012 concurrent election and the advance of information technology, Tsai gradually centralized the power of DPP chairmanship and transformed DPP from a fiercely factional competition battlefield to a top-down, presidential-candidate-centered party machine. DPP's transformation under the Ma's era in 2008-2016 shows how a humiliating loser can learn from experience and gradually revive shaped by both internal force and external surroundings.

Reviewing DPP's transformation and Tsai's emergence in the previous eight years can help us explain what DPP and Tsai Ing-wen is doing after her inauguration. First of all, Tsai's consensus-seeking personality motivates her to decelerate promoting highly-controversial policies such as same-sex marriage and pension reform. One interviewee suggests that Tsai usually reset the perceived "median point" of policies after witnessing violent protests or reading new poll results. Since Tsai tends to define her as a platform for discussion rather than the shaper of public opinion, it can be expected that the number of social movements and protests would rather increase in the Tsai era even though DPP won the presidency. Similarly, if there is no strong consensus among Taiwanese people on the cross-strait relationship, currently there is no reason to believe that Tsai will make an abrupt shift from the status quo.

Second, with the decline of former fundamentalist faction and the consolidation of the inclusive poll for candidate selection, it can be expected that the extremely pro-independence will be further repressed in the near future. However, results from the

Taiwanese National Security Survey from 2003 to 2016 suggested that the number of Taiwanese who preferred independence even though China will attack Taiwan increased from 30% to 40%.<sup>29</sup> If the reform of nomination process and Tsai's personality cannot resolve the disjunction between the trend of public opinion and intraparty politics, the pro-independence minor party such as the Taiwan Solidary Union and New Power Party may further grow, at least in the SNTV local congress election.

In the end, it is still not clear how much the DPP's institutionalization can be kept if Tsai stepped down from chairmanship again. DPP's successfully presidentialization depends partly on Tsai's personality (and possibly personal resource). It is evidenced in 2012 when Tsai stepped down for the first time, many employees and campaigners in the Internet Department and Propaganda Department also left the DPP and joined Tsai's private think tank. Even though the institutionalization can be maintained, if a not-so-moderate DPP politician unexpectedly won the chairmanship, the power of negotiation and nomination may largely steer DPP's direction. Whether this dramatic shift will appear in Tsai's last two years depend on how much DPP can further consolidate a formal and open nomination process which is supported by the majority of party members and the emerging new factions.

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<sup>29</sup> Wang, Austin Horng-En et al. 2015. "Taiwan and mainland China in talks? Here are the 5 things you need to know about what Taiwanese people are thinking." *Washington Post*, November 6, 2015. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/06/taiwan-and-mainland-china-in-talks-here-are-the-5-things-you-need-to-know-about-what-taiwanese-people-are-thinking/?utm\\_term=.d6682ad59522](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2015/11/06/taiwan-and-mainland-china-in-talks-here-are-the-5-things-you-need-to-know-about-what-taiwanese-people-are-thinking/?utm_term=.d6682ad59522)

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