

Observations About the DPP's Election Campaign

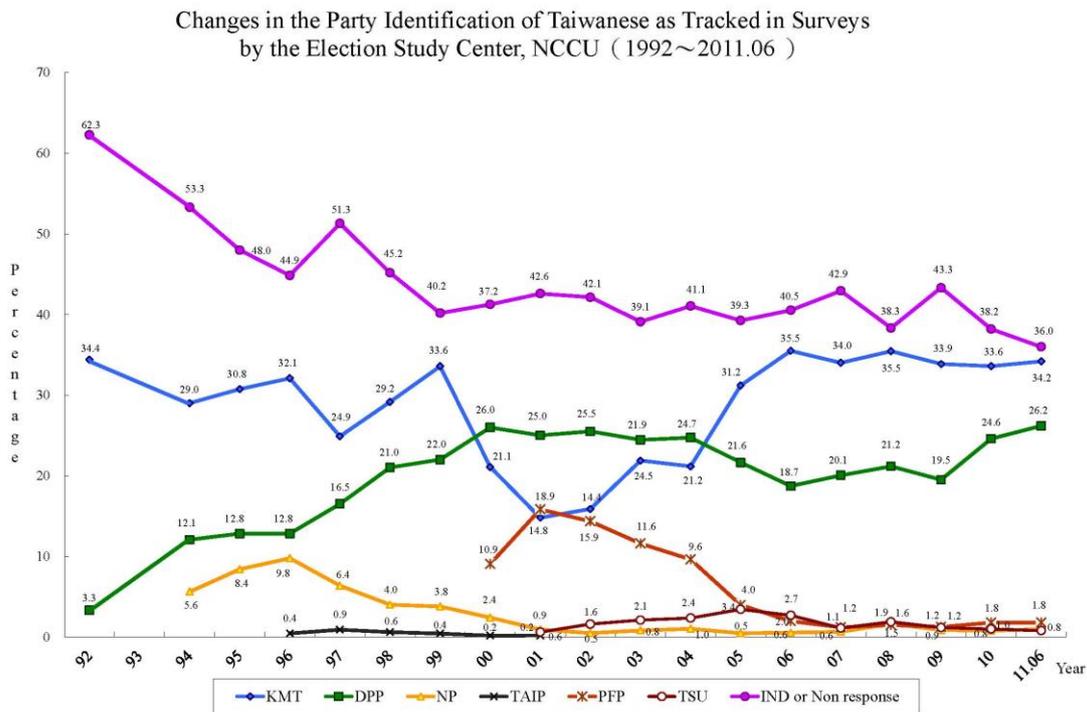
By Ko-hua Yap

Broadening the Voter Base is the Name of the Game

The voting tendency of the vast majority of the electorate has formed long before an election campaign kicks off. It takes at least several years to change voters' political leanings. It is impossible to effect such changes within the short span of several months of campaigning. The significance of an election campaign lies in building enthusiasm among supporters so that they are willing to take the time to turn out and cast their votes on election day. Successful campaign tactics will increase the willingness of a political party's own supporters to cast their votes or reduce the willingness of supporters of the opponent parties to go to the polls. This may sometimes lead to an election upset. Supposing the voter base for parties A and B is 40 to 60 and voter turnout stands at 80 percent and 50 percent, respectively, then the two parties will gain 32 versus 30 votes. In this example Party A had a smaller voter base to begin with, but won the election thanks to successful voter mobilization. However, while relying on electioneering to stage a turnaround as the underdog could occasionally prove successful, such an approach is unlikely to work all the time. It's like working through the night before an exam in a last minute effort after failing to study regularly on ordinary days. You may thank the stars if you are lucky enough to pass. The same goes for elections, political parties had better make efforts to expand their voter base during ordinary times. If a political party's voter base is broader than its opponents', it won't have to fight such a hard campaign and won't have to completely drain its supporters' enthusiasm each time.

Now, how big is the voter base of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) at the moment? What kind of changes and trends occurred during the past few years? These questions can be answered by measuring party identification. Since 1992 the Election Study Center at National Chengchi University (NCCU) has been tracking the identification of Taiwanese citizens with certain political parties. Thanks to an average sample of more than 10,000 participants per year the survey is highly reliable. Political identification is gauged through a set of two questions. In telephone interviews the participants are first asked "Of the following five political parties – Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT), the Democratic Progressive Party, New Party (NP), People First Party (PFP), and Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) do you support the most? If the

respondent does not voice unequivocal support for a specific party, he or she is asked “Which do you prefer more: the KMT, the DPP, the NP, the PFP, or the TSU or do you not prefer any of these? Based on the answers to these two questions, voters’ party identification can be categorized as follows: KMT, DPP, NP, PFP, TSU, independent (IND) or Non response.



Source: Trends in Core Political Attitudes Among Taiwanese, Election Study Center, NCCU

Graph 1: Changes in the Party Identification of Taiwanese Voters

Graph 1 shows the changes in party identification among Taiwanese voters since 1992. Among these the “IND or Non response” category does not necessarily stand for voters without any party identification, but rather for people who “won’t tell.” As not such a long time has passed since Taiwan became democratic, many voters are still not willing to reveal their personal party preferences. This phenomenon was particularly pronounced before 2000. Between 1992 and 2000, the share of those identifying with the DPP rose 23 percent, while the share of those in the IND or Non-response category declined by 22 percent during the same period. This shows that before 2000 a high number of DPP sympathizers were hidden in the IND or Non response category.

Between 2000 and 2004 identification with the pan-green camp (DPP, TSU) remained

at a stable 26-27 percent. From 2005 identification with the pan-green camp began to slip. During the 2006-2009 period pan-green identification had declined to just about 21 percent. From 2010 pan-green identification began to rebound and has meanwhile returned to the 2000-2004 level. On the other hand identification with the pan-blue camp (KMT, PFP, NP) has steadily hovered around 34 percent over the past decade. This demonstrates how slow changes in party identification are. Over the past ten years the voter base of the two major political camps has returned to where it was a decade ago. If we assume a similar turnout for both sides, the final election outcome will be around 44 versus 56. This means that as long as the DPP's voter base continues to lag considerably behind the blue camp, it only stands a chance to stage an election upset if the pan-blue supporters stay at home instead of casting their ballots, because they are dissatisfied with the government's performance. Without doubt the DPP's foremost task is now to run a good campaign for next year's presidential and parliamentary elections, but in the long run the party still needs to find ways to expand its voter base.

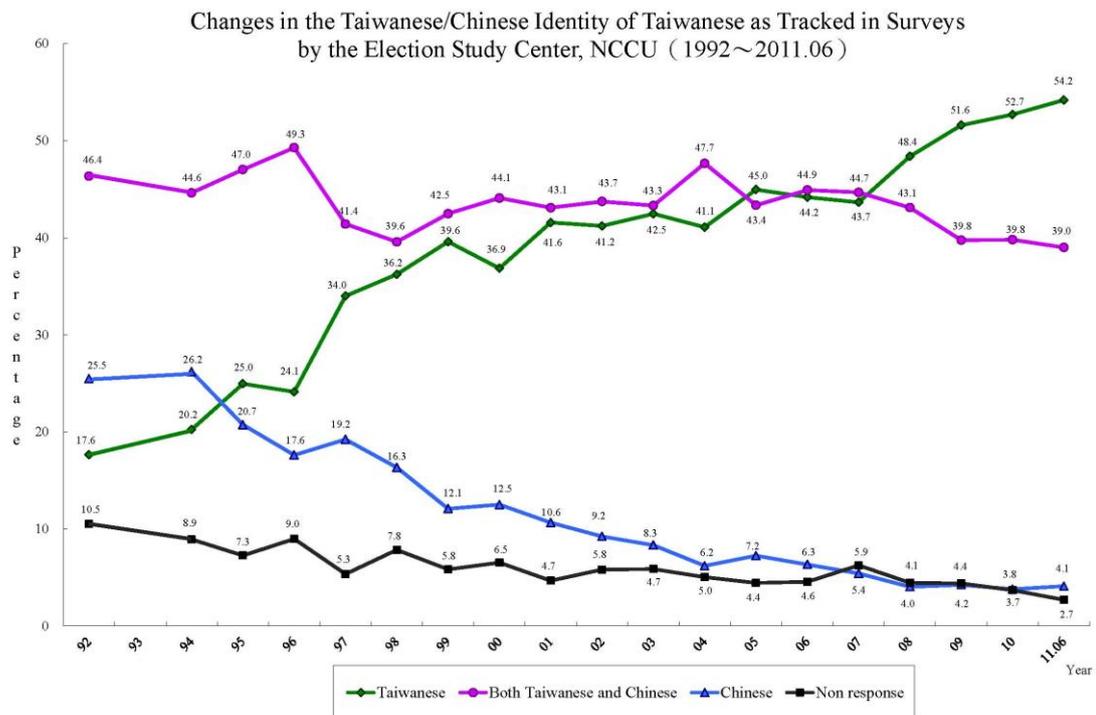
(2) Taiwanese Identity Focus Not Enough to Win

Why has identification with the DPP failed to increase over the past decade? As everyone knows, the vast majority of people who identify with the DPP regard themselves as Taiwanese (rather than as Chinese or both). So could it be that the ratio of those with a Taiwanese identity has not increased in the past ten years? The Election Study Center has also been tracking the national identity of Taiwanese voters since 1992. The survey questions are as follows: "In our society there are some people who call themselves 'Taiwanese,' some who call themselves 'Chinese,' and some who call themselves both. Do you consider yourself to be 'Taiwanese,' 'Chinese,' or both?" Responses are scored into one of four categories: Taiwanese, Chinese, both or no response.

Graph 2 shows changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese identity of Taiwanese voters since 1992. It is very obvious that the ratio of those with a Taiwanese identity has steadily increased over the years, while the ratio of those calling themselves Chinese has continuously declined. The cross-strait missile crisis of 1996 in particular contributed to the first spike in Taiwanese identity. Surprisingly, the second phase of rapid growth of Taiwanese identity occurred after President Ma Ying-jeou took office in 2008. It is quite ironic that eight years of DPP rule contributed less to boosting Taiwanese identity than Ma. This shows that the broadening of Taiwanese identity is mainly triggered by a "counter force." After 2008, the ratio of those with a Taiwanese identity for the first

time exceeded the ratio of those saying they are both Taiwanese and Chinese and has meanwhile reached a historic high of 54 percent.

How can it be that identification with the DPP does not grow correspondingly although the ratio of people with a Taiwanese identity continues to increase? These results seem to indicate that the differences (in political attitudes) between the supporters of the two major political camps do not completely correspond to the divide in national identity. In fact there is a considerable number of voters with a Taiwanese identity who do not support the DPP for certain other reasons. For sure the DPP must continue to promote Taiwanese identity, but it must also find out why it has not been able to win the support of all voters with a Taiwanese identity. Yet by only relying on Taiwanese identity the DPP is still not able to win.



Source: Trends in Core Political Attitudes Among Taiwanese, Election Study Center, NCCU

Graph 2: Changes in the Taiwanese/Chinese Identity of Taiwanese Voters

(3) Ten-Year Platform Won't Broaden Voter Base Much

With its recently released Ten-Year Platform the DPP seems to position itself as a leftist party in a bid to look after the interests of workers and farmers and

disadvantaged groups. While such ideals are of course great, they will probably not be very helpful in expanding the voter base. This is because the workers and farmers that the DPP views as its clientele, originally tended toward supporting the DPP, but this segment of the population is shrinking.

Graph 3 shows the persons employed by occupation as percentage of total employment since 1990. As one would expect the share of people employed in agriculture and fishery has slipped from 13 percent to 5 percent. On top of that the share of blue-collar workers has declined from 41 percent to 31 percent. In contrast, the share of professionals and technicians has steadily increased from 5 percent to 9 percent and from 12 percent to 21 percent, respectively. In the foreseeable future the trends described above will still continue.

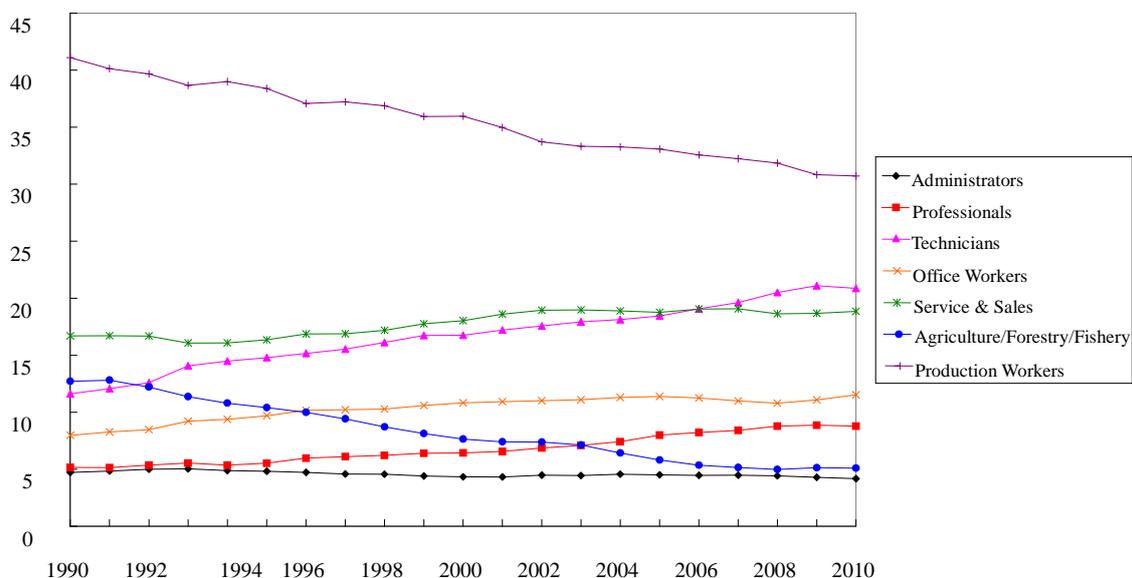
What deserves our attention is that support for the DPP tends to be higher among the gradually dwindling population of farmers and laborers, whereas support for the DPP is somewhat lower among the gradually growing groups of professionals and technicians. Based on the 2004 *Taiwan Social Change Survey*¹ and *Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) Survey*² less than 40 percent of professionals and technicians voted for the DPP during the party's peak times. On the other hand more than 50 percent of laborers and more than 60 percent of farmers voted for the DPP (Graph 4). And as the 2008 *Taiwan Social Change Survey*³ shows, the ratio of professionals and technicians voting for the DPP is still lower than the ratio of farmers and laborers (Graph 5).

1 Using a stratified random sample of Taiwanese aged 18 and older, the survey was conducted in face-to-face interviews between July and September 2004. The survey yielded 1,781 successful interviews, which were weighted to be representative of Taiwan's population. When calculating the ratio of DPP voters for this article, respondents who were not eligible to vote or refused to answer were excluded, which resulted in 1,500 valid responses.

2 Using a stratified random sample of Taiwanese aged 20 and older, the survey was conducted in face-to-face interviews between June and September 2004. The survey yielded 1,823 successful interviews, which were weighted to be representative of Taiwan's population. When calculating the ratio of DPP voters for this article, respondents who refused to answer were excluded, which resulted in 1,538 valid responses.

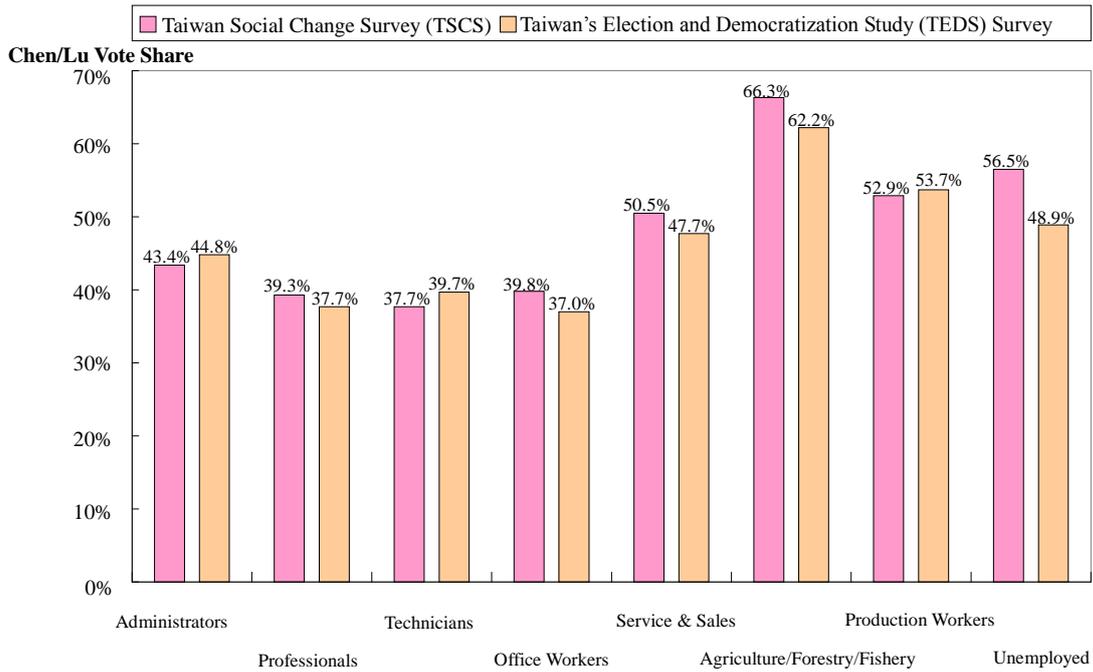
3 Using a stratified random sample of Taiwanese aged 20 and older, the survey was conducted in face-to-face interviews between June and August 2008. The survey yielded 1,905 successful interviews, which were weighted to be representative of Taiwan's population. When calculating the ratio of DPP voters for this article, respondents who refused to answer were excluded, which resulted in 1,690 valid responses.

Given that the ratio of farmers and workers keeps shrinking, while the ratio of professionals and technicians in the workforce is on the rise, the DPP's voter base is bound to get smaller if the party only attaches importance to the former. In much of its content the Ten-Year Platform emulates the policies of Britain's old Labor Party. Therefore the Labor Party's history can also serve as reference for the DPP. The Labor Party used to be the spokesperson for the working class and labor unions. As Britain transformed into a post-industrial society from the 1980s, the working class population continued to decline, which also gradually undermined the power of the labor unions. As a result the voter base of the Labor Party continued to shrink, causing it to spend 18 years as an opposition party. Only when Tony Blair became the leader of the Labor Party and had the resolve to adjust its position, it was able to win support from the middle class. Blair believed that given that two thirds of British society belonged to the capitalist class and just one third were still members of the proletariat, the Labor Party should not tenaciously defend this one third of the vote, thus giving up on regaining government power. Consequently New Labour emphasized that it will no longer fight against market liberalization and privatization, but that it will carry out these policies in a fairer manner than the Conservative Party. The demands of New Labour resonated with voters to that the Labor Party eventually returned to power in 1997. Similarly the DPP cannot only look after workers, farmers and disadvantaged people, but needs to convince professionals and technicians that the DPP is able to look after their interests too.



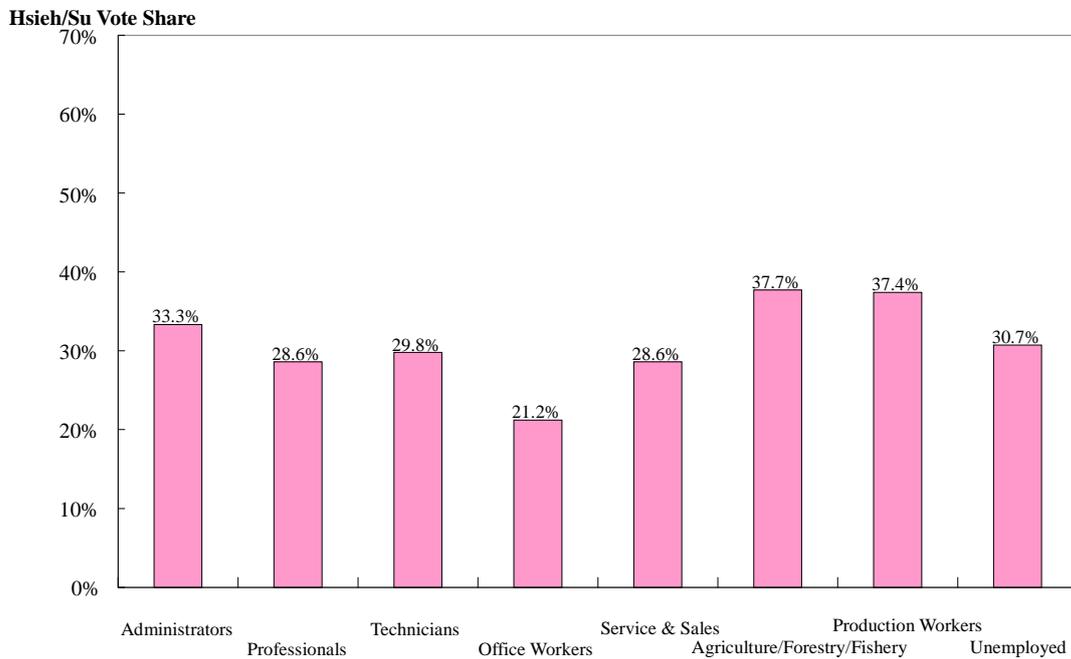
Source: Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics (DGBAS)

Graph 3 Persons Employed by Occupation over the Past 20 Years as Percentage of Total Employment



Source: Taiwan Social Change Survey (TSCS) Fourth Phase and Fifth Wave of Questionnaire on Citizenship, Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study (TEDS) Survey 2004P

Graph 4 Ration of DPP Voters by Occupation in the 2004 Presidential Election



Source: TEDS Survey 2008P

Graph 5 Ratio of DPP Voters by Occupation in the 2008 Presidential Election