

## Poll Trends in the Presidential Election

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As Taiwan's presidential election enters the final countdown, the difference in support ratings between the two major presidential tickets still has not widened. Poll figures showed the race between the two teams remains all tied up. The latest poll conducted by the Taiwan Brain Trust (TBT) showed that, although the Tsai-Su (Tsai Ing-wen and Su Jia-chyuan) ticket led the Ma-Wu (Ma Ying-jeou and Wu Den-yih) ticket by 2.1%, Tsai's lead was within the poll's margin of error. The poll puts the Tsai-Su ticket on 40.4%, the Ma-Wu ticket on 38.3% and the Soong-Lin (James Soong and Lin Ruey-shiung) ticket on 7.3%; 14% were undecided. However, on the possibility of winning the election, the poll gave 43.1% to the Ma-Wu ticket and 30.4% to the Tsai-Su ticket; the Ma-Wu ticket held a significant 12.7% lead over the Tsai-Su ticket in terms of the possibility of getting elected. The gap between support for the Tsai-Su ticket and the team's perceived chances of getting elected revealed that supporters of the Tsai-Su ticket still lacked confidence in the pair.

With the presidential candidates running an extremely tight race in the election, any single event that can sway the voting tendency of the electorate will have the potential to completely alter election results overnight. Domestic or international economic factors, stock market and foreign exchange market trends, China's methodology of intervening in this election, China-based Taiwanese businessmen's intention of returning to Taiwan to vote, the possibility of the spread of vote-buying, or major public security incidents such as those that had happened in past elections are all factors that make the public nervous because they can affect the outcome of the election.

The latest poll conducted by the TBT poll

research center interviewed respondents aged 20 or older across Taiwan (including outlying islands) to investigate and understand the three presidential tickets' support ratings, ratings of the presidential candidates' possibility of getting elected, and how the interviewees intend to cast party votes. As unemployment problems, vote-buying, the ruling party's mobilization of government resources to intervene in elections, major incidents, and China's interference are all crucial variants that had influenced previous elections, the TBT poll had also included a telephone survey to find out what the respondents thought about these issues. This poll, which was taken from Dec. 23-24, 2011 and successfully interviewed 1,071 adults, has a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of  $\pm 3\%$ . Below is the analysis of this opinion poll:

**1.Support for the presidential tickets:** The Tsai-Su ticket on 40.4%, the Ma-Wu ticket on 38.3%, and the Soong-Lin ticket on 7.3%.

This poll showed the Tsai-Su ticket led the Ma-Wu ticket by about 2.1%. Compared with the previous TBT survey, the Tsai-Su ticket rose by a slim 0.3% from 40.1%, whereas the Ma-Wu ticket was up 4.8% from 33.5%. These two polls showed the Tsai-Su ticket's lead over the Ma-Wu ticket has shrunk from 6.6% to 2.1%. It is noticeable that the Soong-Lin ticket had slid from 13.7% in the first TBT poll to 11.2% in the second TBT poll, and had further slumped to 7.3% in the latest (third) TBT poll.

A cross analysis of the latest poll revealed that although the Ma-Wu ticket held lead in the Taipei City-New Taipei City-Keelung region, the Taoyuan-Hsinchu-Miaoli region, and the Taichung-Changhua-Nantou region, it only had a slight 1% lead over the Tsai-Su ticket in the

Taichung-Changhua-Nantou region. This indicated the outcome of the election will be determined by how the contending camps fight the crucial battle in central Taiwan in the last days of campaigning. The Tsai-Su ticket maintained certain lead over the Ma-Wu ticket in the Yunlin-Chiayi-Tainan region and the Kaohsiung-Pingtung region. However, compared with the second poll, support for the Ma-Wu ticket had surged by more than 10% in both the Yunlin-Chiayi-Tainan region and the Kaohsiung-Pingtung region, where the ticket had weaker standing before. The Ma-Wu ticket's rising poll numbers in these regions was the main reason that narrowed the gap between the support ratings of the Tsai-Su ticket and the Ma-Wu ticket (see Chart 1 and Chart 2).

**2.Possibility of getting elected:** The Tsai-Su ticket at 30.4%, the Ma-Wu ticket on 43.1%, and the Soong-Lin ticket on 3.4%.

The majority of the respondents still believed that the Ma-Wu ticket will be elected. The poll showed that up to 43.1% of the interviewees thought the Ma-Wu ticket will get elected and 30.4% considered the Tsai-Su ticket will. A cross analysis revealed that 66.3% of the Tsai-Su ticket's supporters thought the Tsai-Su ticket will be elected while as high as 83.4% of the Ma-Wu ticket's supporters believed that the Ma-Wu ticket will get elected. The survey suggested the Tsai-Su ticket's supporters still lacked confidence in their favored team.

**3.Party votes:** The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) received 32.8% and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) 37.1%.

The poll showed that only the KMT and the DPP will cross the 5% party vote threshold to receive legislator-at-large seats. Support for the People First Party (PFP), which is eager to cross

the threshold, dropped to 4.3% and thus failed to achieve the 5% requirement. The PFP will have to work harder to cross the hurdle. Besides, 2.4% of the respondents haven't decided for which political party they will cast their party votes, but they said they will cast their party votes for one of the pan-blue parties such as the KMT, the PFP or the New Party. The PFP is vying for the votes of this segment of the electorate that holds the key to determining whether it can cross the party vote threshold. A cross analysis revealed that the percentage points of party votes that the KMT and the DPP received were rather consistent with the support ratings of these parties' respective presidential candidates, but among the respondents who intended to cast party votes for the PFP, only 48.2% supported the Soong-Lin ticket, 22.9% backed the Ma-Wu ticket, and 10.8% the Tsai-Su ticket. This indicated PFP supporters' voting tendency was splintered; they can be easily persuaded to abandon whom they originally supported in order to secure the election of another candidate.

圖 1 圖 2



圖一 Chart 1

蔡英文 蘇嘉全支持度三次調查趨勢變化 支持度與地域別交叉分析 Trends and changes in the Tsai-Su ticket's support ratings in the three TBT polls: A cross analysis of the ticket's support ratings in different regions

第一波 The first poll

第二波 The second poll

第三波 The third poll

總計 Total ratings

北北基地區 The Taipei City-New Taipei City-Keelung region

桃竹苗地區 The Taoyuan-Hsinchu-Miaoli region

中彰投地區 The Taichung-Changhua-Nantou region

雲嘉南地區 The Yunlin-Chiayi-Tainan region

高屏地區 The Kaohsiung-Pingtung region

東部及外島地區 Eastern Taiwan and the outlying islands

圖二 Chart 2

馬英九 吳敦義支持度三次調查趨勢變化 支持度與地域別交叉分析 Trends and changes in the Ma-Wu ticket's support ratings in the three TBT polls: A cross analysis of the ticket's support ratings in different regions

#### 4. Several factors that can sway the election:

Nearly 30% of the respondents (29.8%) were worried that major emergencies such as the shooting incidents before the 2004 presidential election and before the 2010 municipal elections will happen again; 37.8% considered the problem of China's interference in Taiwan's elections is serious and 49.0% thought vote-buying is a serious problem in Taiwan (very serious: 30.5%; serious: 18.5%). Moreover, about 12% of the respondents have heard rumors about vote-buying in this presidential election, the highest bribe having reached more than NT\$2001. Other forms of bribes have also been given to voters, including

gifts like rice, noodles, tea leaves, electronic appliances, etc., showing the situation of vote-buying remains a significant factor that will affect the presidential election.

In answering "how serious is the situation of the ruling party's mobilization of government and administrative resources to assist in its election campaigns," as high as 42.8% of the respondents considered that the situation is serious (very serious: 27.2%; serious: 15.6%) while 35.4% didn't think the situation is serious (less than serious: 6.0%; not too serious: 29.5%). In answering "how serious is the judicial, prosecuting, and investigation agencies' intervention in the presidential election and how serious is the situation of selective prosecution," 43.1% thought the situation is serious (very serious: 26.3%; serious: 16.8%) and 35.4% didn't think the situation is serious (less than serious: 8.8%; not too serious: 26.6%).

#### 5. Changes in the trends of support ratings:

The latest TBT poll puts the Tsai-Su ticket on 40.4%, slightly higher than the Ma-Wu ticket's 38.3%; the Soong-Lin ticket was at 7.3% and 14% were undecided. If the undecided voters are segmented and analyzed according to their party affiliations and other variants and influential factors such as China-based Taiwanese businessmen's return to Taiwan to vote are taken into account, it is estimable that, for the two major contending camps in the election, the margin between victory and defeat will fall within 300,000 to 500,000 votes. As campaigns intensify, whether supporters of the Soong-Lin ticket will change their minds to vote for other candidates as a result of heightening confrontation between the blue and green camps will be the decisive factor which will finally determine the outcome of the election.

Meanwhile, when it comes to statistical

methods, as survey sampling is conducted according to established theories, strict sampling and inferential statistical techniques can yield relatively reliable estimation of the characteristics of the population. Although support ratings published by various polling agencies showed different gaps between leading and trailing candidates, compiling the polls in accordance with their survey dates can allow us to analyze changes in support ratings of major presidential candidates, to observe shifts in the trend lines in the polls, and to eliminate sampling or execution errors that may be contained in the results of a single poll.

Shifts in the trend line of the Tsai-Su ticket's support ratings in the below chart showed the pair's poll numbers have continued to climb since Dec. 13 and the rise has gradually picked up speed after Dec. 19. The trend line of the Ma-Wu ticket's support ratings, however, has slightly dipped after Dec. 7 while the trend line of the Soong-Lin ticket's support ratings shows mild but continuous decline. The trend line of undecided voters has been going down and its shifts are in obvious inverse relation to changes in the support ratings of the Tsai-Su ticket.

The chart below, which is a comprehensive analysis of changes in the trends of support in polls conducted by various agencies, reflected how the presidential candidates' respective popularity has risen or fallen after their camps launched fierce attacks or put up spirited defenses on hot issues. For example, Dec. 13, the day when support for the Tsai-Su ticket began to rise, is also the day when DPP spokesmen showed an attachment to an original document related to the Yu Chang Biologics Co case and accused the government of fabricating evidence against Tsai.

Analysis of the trends of support also showed negative campaign strategy could actually achieve the effect of cementing the party base. Starting Dec. 19, DPP spokesmen had for several days kept

questioning the relationship between politicians and businessmen that caused Fubon Bank's acquisition of Taipei Bank, alleging that Ma had inappropriately attended luxurious banquets hosted by the Fubon Group in its guesthouse when he was the mayor of Taipei. This barrage of strong attacks on Ma's attendance at the Fubon Group's shark-fin banquets has not only rid the DPP's presidential candidate Tsai of the KMT government's continuous assaults on Tsai's alleged role in the Yu Chang case, but has also, as Tsai's support ratings showed, boosted the morale of the Tsai-Su ticket's supporters and emboldened them to clearly express support in the polls. This observation is further validated by the fact that the percentage points of undecided voters had begun to go down around the same time [when the DPP hit out at the Fubon case].



馬英九 Ma Ying-jeou; 蔡英文 Tsai Ing-wen; 宋楚瑜 James Soong; 未表態 Undecided voters

## 6. Conclusion

Analysis of the trends of support revealed that negative campaign mode targeting rival candidates can effectively accomplish the strategic objective of consolidating the party base. However, using administrative resources improperly or giving free rein to government officials' operation as political thugs for the sake of negative campaigning is not a

practice that democratic politics or the rule of law society can condone. For instance, the political manipulation of the Yu Chang case seemed to have harmed a rival presidential candidate on the surface, but what it really hurt was the Taiwanese society's not-yet-stable values of democracy and the rule of law.

The TBT poll asked respondents questions about “the ruling party’s mobilization of administrative resources to assist in its election campaigns” and about “judicial, prosecuting, and investigation agencies’ intervention in the presidential election as well as selective prosecution.” The fact that the majority of the respondents considered the above situations are serious indicates that there is still much room for improvement in Taiwan’s election environment. Judicial agencies should be asked to actively discover and eliminate vote-buying. Instances such as the abuse of administrative and fiscal resources during the election period, government agencies’ failures to remain neutral, and the judiciary’s lack of independence should be reviewed. We should further investigate how to enhance the rule of law so that civil servants, members of the judiciary, and administrative agencies may remain neutral in handling public affairs and may honor the public nature of administrative resources. We should also study how to maintain the fairness and reliability of the electoral system and how to deepen our democracy and the rule of law. These are all issues concerning Taiwan’s democratic system that need further examination. **T**