

Taiwan's Democratic Institutions: The Electoral Rise and Recall of Kuomintang's Han Kuo-YU Mayor

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Abstract : The results of Taiwan's presidential election, which took place on 11 January 2020, were alarming for the Kuomintang (KMT). A party that was once the pillar of Taiwan's institutional apparatus is now losing its direction. Since 2016, the inability of KMT to construct a winning presidential election campaign strategy has made its Chinese ancestry an obstacle in Taiwan's vibrant and transparent democracy. The appearance of the little-known legislator Han Kuo-yu as the leadership alternative opened the possibility of reigniting the party. Han's victory in the Kaohsiung mayoral election in November 2018 provided hope that Han could also win the presidency. Wrongly described as a populist, Han, however, was defeated in the January 2020 presidential race. This article analyses why Han is not a populist, his triumph in Kaohsiung, humiliation in running for the presidency and suffering a complete 'loss of face' when Kaohsiungers democratically ousted him from the mayoral post on 6 June 2020.

Keywords : populism, 1992 consensus, youth vote, Taiwan, recall

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