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Su Tseng-Chang's Election as DPP Chairman**

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Direction of Cross-Straits Ties Development after Su Tseng-Chang's Election as DPP Chairman

Yan Anlin

In May 2012, Su Tseng-Chang was elected as the chairman of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party after winning 55,894 votes, or 50.47 per cent of the total, ushering in the DPP's post-Tsai Ing-wen era. Will Su lead the DPP into a Su's era? It all depends on his handling of four challenges facing the DPP, namely, integration of DPP factions, uplifting of DPP's image, increase of policy discourse, and regulation of the DPP's stand for Taiwan independence.

I. Party consolidation - a hard nut for Su to crack

On May 27, Su Tseng-Chang was elected as the chairman of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party. But it was a victory that might make him happy for that day only. Lying ahead will be too many challenges, and his win will be tested in 2014 when local elections at the municipality, country and township levels will be held in Taiwan. The first challenge he will face will be the task to integrate and unite the DPP which has been plagued by factional strife. After all, 'unity is the first goal to be achieved,'¹ as some DPP members have pointed out. The key tie for Su to untie is the structural contradictions haunting the DPP, including the political ecology of its different factions and division of powers between them. Specifically speaking, Su is exposed to the structural contradictions inside the DPP, but lacks any magic tool for their solution. Neither will it be easy for him to handle three major relations.

1. Division of powers - one of the structural contradictions plaguing the DPP

First come the consequences of his election as the DPP chairman. During the run-up for the post, the other four candidates joined voices to demand that Su take part only in the campaigning for the party post instead of the 2016 general election. This is not a justified demand, of course. As a political figure, Su will never agree. The demand runs totally opposite to Su's dearest determination: going first for the party post and then the 2016 general election. Su gave a standard answer: without 2014, there will be no 2016. What he means is that without winning the 2014 seven-in-one local elections, the DPP can never hope to return to power through

¹ Zheng Minsheng and Chen Wenxin: Kuan Bi-ling Too Optimistic About DPP Win in Key Election Battle, China Times, January 19, 2012

the 2016 general election. Su's win or failure in the local elections will determine, indeed, his outcome in the 2016 general election. For this reason, the first challenge before him after becoming the DPP chairman is his ability to bring together the numerous factions. What he has to do includes not only promotion of unity between the New Tide faction and the Green Friendship faction that supported him during the election, but also their integration with the followers of former DPP heads Hsieh Chang-ting and Tsai Ing-wen, the One Country on Each Side faction headed by its spiritual leader Chen Shui-bian, and other separatist forces. If these forces differ from each other in their expectations for the 2016 general election, and Su fails to effectively assemble all these forces and factions under one and the same banner, the DPP can never hope to win the seven-in-one local elections. Having gone through the fierce competition for the party post, the DPP has become a party that can hardly be united as one. Given the rampant factionalism, the strong resistance against him and his lack of popularity, Su will have a really hard time to win any majority support or achieve any consensus when it comes to the formulation of party policies. He will surely be tightly cornered by other factions.

Another problem facing Su Tseng-chang is the decentralization of the political forces inside the DPP. The fundamental political ecology of his party is its co-governance by different factions including the New Tide faction, the Su Tseng-chang faction, the Hsieh Chang-ting faction, the Green Friendship Alliance faction, and the One Country on Each Side faction. All these factions have a say on the division of party powers and its direction of development. Given the rules of the game observed by the DPP – power comes out of factional support², Su does not enjoy much space for free maneuver even as the party chief. He will be subject to the alignment of the factions in the DPP's decision-making bodies including the Central Executive Committee and the Central Standing Committee.

Then comes the divergence of political goals, with Su Tseng-chang eyeing for a victory the 2016 general election and other factions possibly preferring Tsai Ing-wen's return to power. This is a contradiction that is hardly reconcilable. Su has run for the DPP chairman with the ultimate aim to head his party against the KMT in the 2016 general election. In words, Su has emphatically pointed out that without the seven-in-one local elections in 2014, there will not be the 2016 general election, and that the latter will come only when it is totally left out of one's mind. In actuality, however, Su's plan to run in the 2016 general election is a secret that has come to be known to all DPP members. Most of the factions in his party, however, believe that the biggest chance of a DPP win of the 2016 general election will come only from Tsai Ing-wen's participation in the run. Such being the case, Su as the party chief will find it difficult to stand aloft and bring in all factions to

² Zhu Zhenkai: Expansion Hardly Seeable with Party-confined Vision – Luo Wenjia, China Times, January 19, 2012

share resources when it comes to division of powers inside the DPP. Knowing that Su will run in the 2016 general election, all other factions will contend against him and his followers in the scramble for power and other resources, especially the top posts of local party headquarters. A vicious circle will be started as a result.

2. Lack of magic tools for achieving faction integration and party unity

Su Tseng-chang is not broad-minded enough to push for DPP integration and unity. With eyes cast on the 2016 general election, he can hardly focus his attention on his job as the party chief and work out any overall strategic arrangements for his party. In other words, he can never truly get beyond himself. As a result, he will hardly be trusted by other factions for whatever he does.³ On the one hand, he lacks the 'softness' needed for boosting party integration and unity. Political softness is a must for consolidating the DPP. The biggest problem with Su in his political career, however, is his lack of such softness. He is daring and resolute, and boasts great executive ability. But he has never been very popular among his colleagues, and has come to be widely known among both his colleagues and journalists as a man too aggressive and not yielding enough. On the other hand, Su does not boast the resources for party consolidation. He commands very few factions, and relies on support almost totally from the New Tide faction. With the DPP as the party out of power, he as its chairman enjoys access to a comparatively scanty amount of both political and economic resources. Meanwhile, he has tried painstakingly to maintain his clean image, and as a result kept himself in comparatively loose contact with entrepreneurs, limiting his access to resources needed for drawing over supporters.

3. A hard time for handling three major relations

First of all, Su will find it difficult to handle his relations with Tsai Ing-wen who has been gaining political ground constantly. Su was Tsai's senior during the Chen Shui-bian era. But in political reality, Tsai is much more popular than Su. They competed fiercely in the 2011 inner-party primary, and recently rivaled with each other for the party chief position. In addition to the contention between their respective agents for party chairmanship of New Taipei City and Taipei City, there is fierce competition in the election of the chairs of local Party branches (New Taipei City and Taipei City branches) between their respective agents, the seed of discord has been buried even deeper. While Tsai has vowed to keep her option for a run in the 2016 general election, Su has set up his mind to campaign, giving rise to a structural contradiction blocking any improvement of their relations.

³ 'Forum of Thinkers: Development Direction of the DPP and its Mainland Policies,' Hong Kong-based China Review, September 2009 issue, p72

Secondly, Su will have a hard time to deal with the faction leaders represented by Hsieh Chang-ting. A tie was already tied tightly between him and Hsieh in 2008 when they first scrambled for DPP candidature and then competed covertly against each other in the following race. Also, Su stays at a distance from other DPP bigwigs such as Yu Shyi-kun and Lu Hsiu-lien. His aggressiveness might have won some applause from the public and the media. Inside the DPP, however, he is almost totally isolated. Few personages of weight or faction leaders truly support him.

The third hard nut for Su to crack is his relations with Chen Shui-bian and the forces standing for Taiwan independence. Su Tseng-chang is a persistent pursuer of a public image of cleanness, in contrast to Chen Shui-bian who opted for corruption. So when it comes to the issue whether Chen should be given amnesty, Su will be thrown into a dilemma: He must take into consideration his personal image, one the one hand, and on the other hand, he has to take a stance on Chen's case. The Taiwan independence extremists inside the DPP, meanwhile, have never counted Su as being of their kind. Su's relations with Chen will hardly see any improvement so long as any faction standing for Taiwan independence continues to maneuver in the DPP.

To sum up, any expectation for Su Tseng-change to consolidate the DPP for the purpose of the 2016 general election will only be wishful thinking. It will hardly become a reality because it is a task of impossibility.

II. Moral alienation in the DPP, another hard hut for Su to crack

Since its establishment in 1986, the DPP has kept growing thanks to the split of the KMT time and again and the introduction of the election system across the island. In 2000, it even became the ruling party. For all the progress it has made, the DPP is still exposed to quite a number of predicaments. Moral, **alienation**⁴ in particular, has become a key barrier blocking its win of swing voters, as has been pinpointed by China Review, a Hong Kong-based monthly, in an editorial in its April 2013 issue.

1. Main facts telling moral **alienation** in the DPP

First comes corruption, with Chen Shui-bian and his family members being the typical incarnations. There was once a time when green administration and quality guarantee were the loudest slogan of the DPP in general elections, for which it had won support from quite some voters, especially the middle class constituency. Soon after Chen Shui-bian came to power, however, many officials in his

⁴ Editorial: Desperate diseases must have desperate cures -- a Diagnosis for the DPP, Hong Kong-based China Review, April issue, 2012, p2

administration sank deep into the mire of corruption. It all came at such an unimaginable speed and to such an unimaginable extent that the general public simply could not figure out the reason. The corruption of Chen Shui-bian and his family members, in particular, even triggered a mass campaign headed by Shih Minte to oppose corruption and demand the removal of Chen Shui-bian from office. After stepping down, Chen was prosecuted for fraudulent practices and jailed.

Loss of ideals is another fact demonstrating moral dissimulation in the DPP. The DPP longs for power, but doesn't understand its purpose. In a society following an election system, a political party goes for nothing more than the right to rule, and its purpose of execution of this right is to materialize its policy stance, promote social progress, and increase public welfare. It does not seek power for the sake of power, or control for the sake of control. The DPP, however, has always campaigned simply for the purpose of campaigning. To win an election, it would resort to all tricks, never caring about the righteousness and morality of their campaigning tactics. A constant reaction by the DPP in its political life is to disagree with Ma Ying-jeou for whatever policy views the latter puts forward, regardless of whether his views are justifiable or cater to the needs of the majority of the general public. A notable instance is his view on beef imports from the United States. What the DPP cares about is not the food security for the general public. It stands against such imports simply because it is advocated by Ma Ying-jeou.

Then comes its shameless harboring of corruption. Instead of cutting them off, the DPP takes pride in its relations with the corruptive Chen Shui-bian and his family, even though Chen and some of his family members have been either prosecuted or thrown into prison. Chen Shui-bian knows only too well, however, that he might reverse the situation only by hooking to the DPP that still enjoys some public support. Although he once announced to withdraw from the DPP for committing deeds not allowed by law, he has never stopped putting pressure on the DPP through some of his followers ever since his imprisonment. What he is attempting is to rescue himself through the DPP. He has even asked for readmission into the DPP. Unfortunately, some DPP members have morally become so degenerated that they follow each other to visit Chen in prison. They have even counted such visits as a criterion testing their political righteousness and testifying their political support to Chen. Now they are demanding amnesty for Chen, and now they are demanding Chen's medical parole on humanitarian grounds. Many of them have even signed up together for Chen's readmission into the DPP. Drawn by Chen into deep water, the DPP does not even know how to rescue itself. It hates to isolate itself from Chen, and takes delight in shame.

The first reason is that many DPP members have received bribery from Chen Shui-bian. For the purpose of election, Chen Shui-bian was given control of most

of the party's disposable economic resources at that time. Many DPP members received economic aid from Chen as a result. Some even got drawn into Chen's ring of corruption. When Chen told them either to support him or be exposed for the dirty dealings, many opted to support him.

The second reason is their belief in the moral righteousness of their goal for Taiwan independence. So long as their goal is rightly set, they believe, they can resort to any tricks in political struggles, including even corruption, hence the so-called 'Founding Fund' coined by Chen Shui-bian after his prosecution for corruption. Following such false reasoning, many DPP members have wantonly given themselves up to corruption.

Another reason is the great temptation of power. Having been in power for eight years, the DPP knows the taste of power, a taste it can never forget. When it comes to a choice between morality and power, it would naturally choose the latter. No wonder it has come to suffer a moral dissimulation and degeneration.

III. Lack of policy discourse, the third hard nut to crack

Since its establishment in September 1986, the DPP has put forward a series of proposals and viewpoints on economic and political development on the island, including some that have once provided a driving force behind social progress. This helped it to expand its social base and win over support from swing voters. In 2000, it came into power, thanks in part to the split of the KMT. What has become noteworthy, however, is its growing inability for policy discourse during its rule and even after its loss of power. In the executive body, for instance, all it has been doing is to voice disagreement for the sake of disagreement. Except disagreement with the policies proposed by Ma Ying-jeou, it has never come up with any presentable or well-conceived proposals or viewpoints. It is true that to serve her campaigning, Tsai Ing-wen once mobilized a big force and spent lots of time to produce a 10-year program. It was a program, however, that looked good but totally strayed from the island's social and economic development and the changes taking place beyond. The populace is losing their warmth toward the DPP, as has been admitted by Chen Chu, adding that no people now pride themselves in being DPP supporters and that a severe crisis is looming ahead for her party.⁵ How has it all come? The answer may be found in the following factors:

1. *Obsession with election results and indifference to policy discourse*

For the DPP, the temptation of power is too big to resist. Apart from winning local elections, the DPP even became the ruling party in 2000. Once in power,

⁵ Financial Dispatch, a Taiwan-based monthly, October issue, 2005, p72

the DPP leaders were tempted to indulge in money and power and retreated from policy discourse expected by the society. The DPP is a party with a big pool of campaign talents but a small one of polity talents from the very beginning. Seeing the temptation of power, more and more of its members have come to join the ranks of campaigners in search for greater power. To serve campaigning purposes, some policy discourse may be organized. Merely formalistic, however, such policy discourse usually lacks substance and is out of line with the needs of the people and the trends of social development, a situation that fed the following smart commentary: “Obviously, the DPP is an election-oriented political party with vested interests. Its leadership cares about only their win or loss in elections, and none of its elite members would lend any attention to social justice, cross-Straits relations, human rights, security or other issues of true value. Continuation of such a situation will only turn the DPP into a political party that will see the constant monopoly internally generated powers, that cannot come up with any national development programs, that does not concern itself with national interest and the people’s livelihood, and that curries favor from the public with nothing more than its glorious past when it pursued democracy.”⁶

2. *Confinement of thinking in policy discourse*

Taiwan independence is the top goal of the DPP. In addition to the need to serve the political interests of many political figures, this stance has come to stand as a moral benchmark no DPP member dares to modify. This, however, has also greatly restrained the thinking of DPP personages in policy discourse. With the rise of the mainland and the economic integration of East Asian, the outlook for Taiwan independence has kept dimming. As the situation stands, the DPP will have no way out when it comes to policy discourse involving the mainland. It can never come up with any policy conforming to the trend of peaceful development of cross-Straits relations. Now that the development of cross-Straits relations is leaving an ever greater impact on Taiwan’s local development, no solutions or policies can come from any source in Taiwan that does not involve the mainland or take the mainland factor into consideration. Stubbornly sticking to its stance against Ma Ying-jeou and the mainland, the DPP may end in an even deeper historic abyss.⁷ Meanwhile, its cling to the goal of Taiwan independence will deter its efforts in cross-Straits policy discourse.

⁶ ‘Where Will the DPP with Its Ageing Power Structure Go’ in C5 of the local Want Daily on May 28, 2013

⁷ Wang Kunyi: To Know the Source of Power Vital for Revival of Taiwan’s Pan-Green Coalition, Hong Kong-based China Review, January issue, 2009, p35

3. Narrow-minded pursuit for localization and lack of international vision

During the wave of localization, it seems that localization signifies patriotism. The Liberty Times, for instance, has been advocating all the time that instead of touring foreign countries or the mainland, Taiwanese politicians had better go around the island including its rural areas. It has even set this as a yardstick to measure their love of Taiwan. For the sake of campaigning and the purpose of winning more votes, the political figures of the DPP will naturally focus on local communities. As a result, their understanding and knowledge of the world situation and global economic development will be extremely limited, and very few of them will have an international vision. Su Tseng-chang, for instance, has been frequently criticized for his lack of an international vision and shortsightedness on cross-Straits relations. He wasn't the only one doing so in DPP, there are too many of his kind in DPP.

4. Insufficient self-cultivation due to moral alienation

In an editorial in its April issue, the Hong Kong-based monthly China Review relentlessly pinpointed the headache plaguing the DPP – moral dissimilation. One notable consequence of such dissimilation is the insufficiency of self-cultivation among DPP members, which has in turn disabled their production of any policy proposals or viewpoints answering the needs of the development of times.

5. Downgrading of social base of supporters

Out of power for a long time, the DPP has become expert in the role of an antagonist. As the opposition party, it has always kept to its primitive stand of doing nothing more than disagreeing. Such a mentality has kept it from making any progress all these years. Also, almost all of its pillar supporters are from the rural areas in central and southern Taiwan, a factor that has contributed to its development of a 'rustic' mentality and expectably resulted in the 'poverty' of its policy discourse.

IV. Regulation of DPP's Taiwan independence stance, the fourth hard nut for Su to crack

The fourth crux lying before Su Tseng-chang is how to regulate his party's Taiwan independence stance and play a positive role in the peaceful development of cross-Straits relations. Tsai Ing-wen's failure in the 2012 general election has already proved that the Taiwan independence stance taken by the DPP stands as the

biggest barrier blocking the DPP's return to power. If Su Tseng-chang is to show his ability to lead the DPP to power in the 2016 general election, he should first of all work the party to modify its cross-Straits policy, abandon the Taiwan independence position, and adapt to the tide of peaceful development of cross-Straits relations. So far, Su has taken three steps toward modification of the DPP's cross-Straits policy: chairing of several mainland-oriented forums, restoration of the China Affairs Department, and creation of the China Affairs Committee. All these efforts will help the DPP to gain a better understanding of the mainland. They also show the realization by Su and his party of the importance and urgency of looking at and dealing with the mainland. Examined objectively and rationally, however, the DPP has not yet given up and will hardly depart from its core stance on Taiwan independence.

1. Possible positive effects from restoration of the China Affairs Department

By restoring the DPP's China Affairs Department, Su Tseng-chang is actually driving at three ends: to demonstrate his party's heeding to the aspiration of the Taiwanese society for its modification of cross-Straits policies, as demanded by the general public and media during and after the January election; to help the DPP and its members gain a better understanding of the mainland and see more clearly the trend of development of cross-Straits relations through interaction between this department and mainland departments concerned; and to gain a priority say about the party's cross-Straits policy. The restoration and operation of this department has done good to the DPP in two aspects. First of all, the DPP and leading personages have come to see the importance and urgency of looking at and handling cross-Straits relations in a pragmatic manner. Many DPP members have seen clearly the chief barrier blocking Tsai's win in the general election: her failure to correctly handle cross-Straits relations and abandon the Taiwan independence stance, which has raised some concern among the majority of voters with the DPP's return to power. Restoration of the China Affairs Department will get the DPP another platform for discussing cross-Straits relations. In this sense, it is better to restore this department than not to. Secondly, the daily operation of this department will add to the understanding of the mainland by DPP members and increase their knowledge of the objective status of cross-Straits relations. In this sense, it is better to have this department than not to.

2. Reflection of the DPP's stance on one country on each side and Taiwan independence

Ever since the start of discussion about the restoration of this department its naming became a hot topic of debate inside the DPP and among the general public. Some people called for using its original name, and some others recommended its

renaming as the Cross-Straits Relations Committee. But the DPP finally decided to keep the original name, a decision that reflected the DPP's cling to its stance on one country on each side of the Taiwan Straits. If the DPP honestly wishes to use the department as a channel of contact with the mainland, it would be more appropriately to name the department as the Cross-Straits Relations Committee or the Cross-Straits Affairs Committee, names that are more neutral and convenient for contacts and exchanges with pertinent research institutes on the mainland. Use of the original name will kill the chance for such contacts and exchanges because it will not only keep mainland personages at a distance, but also hinder the DPP's positive modification of its cross-Straits policy.

3. Divergence of opinions about cross-Straits relations

The DPP is divided over its path to follow in the course of development of cross-Straits relations, with one camp led by Hsieh Chang-ting advocating reconciliation with the mainland and the other headed by its present chairman Su Tseng-chang clinging to an anti-mainland stance.

The political idea cherished by Hsieh Chang-ting about cross-Straits relations is the most pragmatic in the DPP. During his term as mayor of Kaohsiung, he put forward the idea of 'one country, two cities,' expressed his wish to visit Xiamen, and even came up with the concept of 'one constitutional China.' After the DPP's failure in the 2012 general election, Hsieh Chang-ting and his followers have come to feel deeply that given the current tide of peaceful development of cross-Straits relations, the DPP must take earnest steps to modify its current political stance because, with the rise of the mainland, Taiwan has to step up exchange and cooperation and strive for peaceful co-existence with instead of isolating itself from the latter. This is the only way out for Taiwan's future. Knowing well the great importance of cross-Straits relations, Hsieh has vowed to do something in this regard as a preparation for the 2016 general election.⁸ It is out of this motive that he resolutely decided to visit the mainland in October 2012 and push for rational inner-party deliberation of the DPP's cross-Straits policies. He has also come up with several original concepts, such as 'constitutional consensus,' 'separate constitutional expression' and 'one China only,' hoping to start an earnest deliberation of Taiwan's present and future by DPP personages and the Taiwanese society as a whole.

Present DPP chairman Su Tseng-chang, however, has been following an opposite direction. Su has seldom said much about cross-Straits relations. After becoming DPP chairman in May 2012, however, he has taken a conservative and rigid political line to confront Hsieh Chang-ting and Tsai Ing-wen when it comes

⁸ Editorial: All Cross-Straits Policies Are Futile Without Including the China Factor, China Times, May 27, 2013, A15

to cross-Straits policies. He has also joined forces with the Taiwan independence fundamentalists and the anti-mainland diehards in the DPP. All he has been attempting is to win the 2016 general election and become Taiwan's leader. In pursuit of his end, Su even proposed a so-called alliance of democratic values during his visit to Japan and sought collaboration with rightist political forces in Japan to contain the mainland. When visiting the United States, he also said that Taiwan is not part of China, that the DPP hates to be locked inside the one-China cage all the time, and that the mainland should not try to drive Taiwan into corners. He even openly denied the 1992 Consensus, and ruled out the existence of any 'magic formula' for settlement of all cross-Straits disputes. Given the big gap between Taiwan and the mainland in terms of political and military development, he pointed out that the two should try to improve their relations step by step instead of sticking stubbornly to the one-China formula.

The followers of the two lines mentioned above represent the two main forces inside the DPP. Given Su Tseng-chang's control of the party machine and its big number of traditional conservatives, the anti-mainland forces under his banner are enjoying a dominating position in the DPP. The line of reconciliation with the mainland followed by Hsieh Chang-ting and his followers has not yet become the mainstream, although it is the right direction of the future development of the DPP. To represent the DPP in the 2016 general election is Su Tseng-chang's stated objective. The political forces under Hsieh Chang-ting's banner, however, prefer Hsieh and are determined to block Su. If not strong enough to achieve their goal, they will join forces with the followers of Tsai Ing-wen to bring her to the forefront again. Since the dispute between the different forces over their party's cross-Straits policy is entangled with their scramble for party powers, the strife in the DPP will remain complex, long-lasting, and fierce.

4. No hope for Su's completion of DPP's policy remodeling

Su Tseng-chang has missed the opportunity offered to him by history. Neither has he led the DPP to complete remodeling its Taiwan independence policy, nor will he be capable of fulfilling this historic mission in the foreseeable future. This may have something to do with his vision and style, the social status of his supporters, as well as his own ideals. After becoming the DPP's chairman, he pledged to keep Taiwan to Taiwanese and for Taiwanese forever, revealing his persistent faith and ideal – Taiwan independence. Such being the case, it seems absolutely unrealistic to expect the DPP completing its 'last mile of journey' under Su's leadership.