

**TAIWAN'S NATIONALIST PARTY (II):
THE TAIWANESE IDENTITY**

Katherine TSENG Hui-Yi

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Executive Summary

1. Kuomintang (KMT) has a role in the development of a new Taiwanese identity. Yet, the “de-Sinofication” trend in the wake of the strengthening of a Taiwanese consciousness has largely deterred the KMT from deepening this Taiwanisation process and from defending its Republic of China (ROC)-themed narratives.
2. In the 2016 presidential election, pan-blue and pan-green electorates showed their confluence on ROC as a common denomination and a more objective stance that went beyond conventional blue-green distinction. This confluence has extended due to increasing public resentment against Tsai government’s unsatisfactory reforms.
3. To avoid being blamed for betraying Chinese ancestors, Taiwan President Tsai Ying-wen proposed the term, “naturally independent” when describing Taiwanese youths. The term is to de-stigmatise the claim of “Taiwan independence” and depict an educated choice reinforced by the new history education under DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) regimes.
4. Further, by linking KMT with the Chinese Communist Party, this term gains further credit as it echoes the perceived Chinese threats to Taiwan’s aspiration for more autonomy in economic and external issues, and eventual independence.
5. KMT’s Taiwanisation process has long begun before the democratisation. Despite having grudges with the KMT, former President Lee Teng-hui’s strong support of Lien Chan, a KMT patriarch who later proposed a confederation model to accommodate ROC and PRC government, indicated some primary successes in KMT’s Taiwanisation.
6. This process had stalled during the Chen Shui-bian (DPP, 2000-2008) regime. KMT had to adopt a dualistic approach to befriend CCP externally and compete with the DPP internally for policy performances.

7. When Ma Ying-jeou came to power in 2008, this dualistic approach could not sustain. KMT would need to pursue closer economic cooperation with China, while defending that the strategy would not be at the cost of Taiwan's interests.
8. Other factors, such as KMT's failure to cultivate community support, party infighting and incompetence in capitalising on rising Taiwan-centred consciousness had contributed to KMT's defeat in 2014 and 2016 elections.
9. KMT's Taiwanisation has long been an opportunistic and expedient reaction to contextual situations. The party needs to rebuild this process and refocus efforts particularly by taking into account its ROC origin and characteristics.