

TAIWAN'S NATIONALIST PARTY (I): SETBACKS AND PROSPECTS

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Executive Summary

1. After its rout in the 2016 presidential election, the Ma government of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT) slumped into passive mode and devoted its attention mainly to external issues such as Taiwan's South China Sea claims.
2. After Tsai Ing-wen assumed presidency, KMT's reactions to pension reforms pushed by the Tsai government has been lacklustre. The party shows not only a lack of well-orchestrated strategies but also an indifference to the prevailing sentiments of society.
3. Political wrestling between the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and KMT is intense in parliament, the Legislative Yuan (LY). Parliamentary reform, transitional justice issue and illegally obtained party assets of the KMT are issues of contention.
4. KMT has lost the power of discourse and agenda-setting in the LY. KMT legislators' performance is based on personal dedication and long-term experiences of parliamentary services. They cannot count on the ambitionless and dispirited KMT legislative caucus.
5. The unpopular Hung Hsiu-chu's term as KMT chairwoman from March 2016 to May 2017 met with party-wide resistance. Hung's position on cross-strait relations was also too extreme to both the Taiwanese public and KMT comrades.
6. Wu Den-yih was elected the new KMT chairman in May 2017; he faces daunting challenges in reforming the KMT: to re-establish a theme to distinguish KMT from other parties; re-build central-local connections; and establish institutionalised channels to facilitate the inflow of youth talents to the KMT.
7. The lack of strong leadership leads to an absence of a unified party command which affects KMT lawmakers' performance in the LY. Hung's efforts in reviving

the KMT had departed from traditional KMT fare. Her efforts are nevertheless aborted due to strong resistance.

8. In its future development, KMT may have to focus on capacity building and reinforcing cross-strait relations. It has to continue with the cultivation of professional talents in administrative bureaucracy and redress its neglect of the development of local human capital.
9. A Republic of China-themed narrative is one important factor which would also help KMT's continuing Taiwanisation process.