

Taiwan Studies Workshop – Taiwan Elections 2022 The analysts' perspective. Nov, 17 2022.

– [Commentator] Hello everyone, and thank you for joining us. We'll get started momentarily as we give a couple seconds for people to log on. Have a great day.

– Good morning. Boston?

– Good evening, Taipei. My name is Steve Goldstein and I'm the director of the Taiwan Workshop at Harvard University. This is the second in a series of meetings that we've had to talk about the November 26th elections in Taiwan. The 9-in-1 elections, that'll be for mayors and magistrates in major cities, down to the village level. This year, there'll also be a constitutional amendment lowering the voting age from 20 to 19. On Tuesday, a couple days ago, we heard from, a presentation from the major parties. Today we're gonna hear a panel of analysts on the elections. And on December 7th we'll have a postmortem meeting talking about the results of the elections. Most analysts have drawn a distinction between the two sets of elections. Local elections are said to be shaped by local issues. The strength of local organizations. And frequently family ties. While presidential and national legislative elections are shaped by island-wide organizations and policy issues. Especially mainland policy. This appeared to be the case during the last local elections. In the last local elections the Kuomintang opposition defeated the ruling DPP badly. Only to be defeated itself a year and a few months later in the presidential and legislative election. That's the basis of the frequent organizat-. That's the basis for the frequent argument that the two elections are fundamentally different. But, there was a clear connection even last time. In terms of first the emergence of the Kuomintang presidential candidate, Han Kuo-yu, who ran in the local election and suddenly, excuse me, and suddenly became the presidential candidate in the island-wide election. Secondly, as a result of the defeat, Tsai Ing-wen resigned as chairman of the DPP, the Democratic Progressive Party. And it's said this year that unless the Kuomintang does well, that Jun Li-lun, who's the chairman of the Kuomintang will have his status and possible presidential candidate status in the party damaged. And of course, thirdly, despite the fact that this is supposed to be local elections on local issues, the mainland question looms strong over this election. And if I could just inject something that I've been thinking for the last couple days, it seems to me that the recent apparent, I wouldn't call it warning, the recent apparent improvement in US-China relations is possibly going to have an effect on these elections. It's simply because there are indications that some of members of the opposition of the Kuomintang are using the improved relationship between the United States and China, as a way of arguing that the Democratic Progressive Party, President Tsai's policy towards the mainland, is too harsh, too negative in terms of the mainland during a time of apparent improvement. So it allows the

Kuomintang, which has a, a so-called China-friendly attitude, perhaps to gain some traction in this local election. Anyway, I've said enough. Let me introduce the panel. The panel is Sarah Newland, who is at Smith College. And she is a Taiwan specialist and mainland specialist. Chia-hung Tsai, who's from National Chengchi University in Taiwan. With the Election Study Center, one of Taiwan's most prominent pollsters. Lev Nachman, also at National Chengchi University, has written extensively on these, on the elections as well as on Taiwan's domestic politics. So Sarah, if you could go first, that would be great.

- Sure, thanks Steve. I'm gonna just fill in a little bit more detail, in you know, sort of following on from some of Steve's comments to lay the land about the 9-in-one elections and how they're running, sort of why they matter in Taiwan. Kind of leave the horse race aspect of these elections to the other two panelists. So as Steve mentioned, these are elections for multiple types of seats. All of which are some version of local government. The biggest prizes are the mayoral and county magistrate races. These are pretty big players in Taiwan. I think the most relevant comparison case in the US is probably not mayors, but state governors, in terms of their importance and also in terms of the fact that these folks are often, kind of waiting in the wings as potential candidates for national office. So they're important races to run, not only because they are, you know, running large cities or counties with, you know, sizable population in some cases, but also because some of these folks are potential presidential candidates for 2024. City council races are also going to happen in these upcoming elections, as are races that move to sort of ever smaller levels of geographic, you know, detail and precision. So township mayors, folks who are kind of the equivalent of like a neighborhood warden or a block captain. And you know, these races I think in some cases have a reputation for being kind of personalistic. But they're also the folks who do a lot of the kind of bread and butter work of local governance. So, you know, the people you would call if the streetlights are out on your street. Or there's a pothole, right? That, those kinds of races are up for election. And then finally there is a referendum on the ballot, which would change the voting age in Taiwan from 20 to 18. And so that is something that is, you know, a, a chance for citizens to sort of vote on policy directly. This has been really an important development in Taiwan in the last few years. There was an election last year in which there were several referendums on the ballot. And referendums also played a big role in the 2018 local elections, that Steve mentioned. In part sort of driving the electoral failure of the DPP. So I wanna talk a little bit about how these different elections are organized. One of the things that makes them a kind of complicated set of elections to talk about is that the different elections have different electoral rules. So for the mayoral and county magistrate positions and also the, some of the local, more local level positions like the sort of township head. These positions are what political scientists call first past the post

elections, which means a bunch of people run for them and whoever wins the most votes wins the seat. It doesn't matter if they win an outright majority of votes or not, whoever wins the most gets the seat. The city council elections are somewhat more complicated. They are run by something that political scientists use an awkward acronym for this, the Single Non-Transferable Vote Multi-Member District, SNTVMMMD system. And so this is a system where a given local, so a city would be divided into districts. Each district is allocated a certain number of city council seats. When voters go to the polls, they vote for one person for their district, and then the top X number of vote getters are elected, right? So if a given district has five seats, the people who get the, you know, five, the the first through fifth highest vote getters win those seats. And so this is a kind of complicated electoral system. I think it creates some incentives that can be a little bit, they have some upsides and some downsides. It has created an opportunity, I think, for smaller parties to kind of enter the political scene in Taiwan and win some seats because you can win one of these elections with, in some cases just a few thousand votes. But it also, I think in some ways privileges the larger parties who can afford to run a whole bunch of different candidates and also who maybe have a better, sort of more developed ground game in terms of deciding where to allocate resources, where to allocate candidates, because they need to think of course about, you know, if there's multiple seats up for election, are they gonna win three seats in one district or are all the voters just gonna vote for the one most popular candidate? And then they will have sort of wasted resources on running some other candidates. And so, you know, I think this is a system that can yeah, kind of has some upsides and some downsides. So, and then in the referendum, a majority of eligible voters in Taiwan have to vote in favor for that to pass. So that's a pretty high bar. And so what I think we might see, I'll leave a more detailed discussion of this maybe to the other panelists, but I think it's entirely possible that we would see a situation in which there's fairly widespread support for this referendum and yet it might not pass. You know, so there's, you know, not really been like strong opposition from any major political party to the referendum. If you look at polls, I think on the whole, a majority of people support them, but are you actually gonna get a majority of eligible voters turning out to vote? Yes, I think it's, there's a, a good chance that, you know, it will not pass just because that bar is so high. So as Steve mentioned, I think the presumption about the local, or the, you know, local midterm 9-in-one elections. Those terms all get sort of used interchangeably. I think the presumption is that they run according to a pretty different logic than the national elections, which will next occur in 2024. And as Steve said, in the national elections, the cross strait issue is really front and center in voter's minds. In local elections, voters are voting more on sort of local governance issues. So, you know, are, is the mayor doing a good job of providing basic services to us as citizens? You know, I think there are some reasons why. So there's like a, I guess a couple of

different reasons why we see that disconnect. So, one is just that people are voting on different, you know, sets of issues, right? The things that the president is responsible for are different from the things that your township mayor is responsible for. And so those kind of economic concerns, in some cases, social policy concerns too, like in, in 2018, like the gay marriage issue was really important in the midterm elections. You know, so that's not as much of like a bread and butter kind of, daily life issue for many voters. But it was made salient in lots of voters' minds. But you know, in general I think these tend to be largely driven by people's satisfaction with the quality of local governance. And so I think this is part of why, you know, KMT candidates, I think, are probably poised to do reasonably well in this election. Even though I think on the, in the national elections, the KMT has a real messaging problem right now. Which is that their fundamental message on China is not appealing to many Taiwanese voters and its appeal is declining over time. But in the, in the local elections, voters aren't voting as much on the cross strait issue. And so if they have a KMT mayor who they think has done a pretty good job of governing their city, I think they're willing to vote for that person. And we shouldn't necessarily interpret that as evidence that, you know, the KMT is likely to perform extremely well in in 2024, in the next presidential election. I think the other thing to keep in mind is that those different electoral rules, especially for the city council seats, mean that small parties can compete and win seats in local elections more easily than they can in the national elections. It's slightly more complicated than that by the, by the fact that the national elections have a proportional representation component. Which also has been somewhat favorable, to some local candidates. But in general, I think it's been easier for some of the small parties that emerged after the Sunflower Movement to elect candidates to city councils than it has to to elect them to some of the national level positions. It is still, I think, hard to see, with the first past the post rules, how some of those parties might become successful at winning something, like a city mayoral election or a presidential election. It seems like, you know, there's strong pressures for a kind of two, for two major parties to be primarily competing against each other for something like the presidency, in a way that makes it hard for some of the smaller parties to compete. At the same time, I think, as Steve was saying, the local elections do have some important implications for national politics. And I wanna talk about a few different ways in which they do. So one is that mayoral elections are an important testing ground for potential candidates for national office. Three presidents of Taiwan, former presidents of Taiwan, all served as the mayor of Taipei. So that's a really good example of something where being mayor of a major city obviously is, you know, kind of helps to position you potentially for the presidency. Steve also mentioned the KMT's presidential candidate in 2020, Han Kuo-yu, who was sort of vaulted to a position of national prominence by winning the mayoral race in what had been a traditionally DPP strongholds in Kaohsiung. And then he kind of swept

into office and people immediately started talking about him as the potential KMT presidential candidate. He turned out to not be a great candidate. But, I don't think that was necessarily clear at the outset. And there are several candidates this year on the ballot who could potentially be contenders in 2024 in the presidential election. I think a second way that local elections can matter for national politics is that they can be kind of a test of the popularity of a new party. And so I think a good example of this is Mayor Ko Wen-je who is finishing his second term as mayor of Taipei, has been kind of building a party organization, the TPP. And this is kind of a test I think of whether the TPP will have appeal beyond Ko as an individual because the TPP is now running several candidates for mayoral races. And you know, I think whether it's a party that some people have talked about as a potential real third party challenger to the KMT and the DPP. But I think they have to sort of prove that they can win some of these, like, big races or at least compete for big races and at the mayoral level, in order to show that they might have any kind of viability for national office. And then the third point I wanna make, I won't talk about this too much 'cause Steve mentioned, is it already is that I think local elections can be a referendum on national party leadership. So in 2018, think the na, the local elections really punished the DPP in part because people were dissatisfied with some of the policy choices that the party was making at that point. That punishment didn't last very long, in part because the Hong Kong protests, I think, really raised the sort of salience of the China issue in people's minds. And the DPP wound up obviously winning in a landslide in the 2020 elections. But you know, I think we can sort of look in some ways at these results, you know, if they're disastrous for the DPP, I think that might lead to a sort of change in direction or a little bit of rethinking about what's gonna happen next. Especially given that Tsai is not gonna be eligible for reelection anyway in, in 2024. And then the last thing I'll say, I wanna leave time obviously for the other folks, is I think local elections in Taiwan are interesting to watch because they both highlight the sort of vibrancy of Taiwan's democracy, but also some of its remaining challenges. And you know, these are obviously now this is a system where top to bottom leaders are elected. People really care about elections. Election season in Taiwan is really like exciting and fun. Taiwan election rallies are kind of like rallies, nowhere else I've ever been. And so that is all great. I think there are still a couple of, of sort of weaknesses with Taiwan's democracy that are really highlighted by these local elections. One is that in every set of local elections there are accusations of corruption. There's currently scandal sort of evolving involving one of the TPPs mayoral candidates who's being accused of sort of misuse of funds and mistreating her staff. And you know, there have been kind of other corruption issues often in, in the ultra local, ultra local races. Accusations of vote buying remain really common. And so those, I think, are issues that, you know, they aren't necessarily more serious in Taiwan than they are in lots of other electoral democracies. But I do think that

they are a little bit of, you know, sort of a flaw, remaining flaw in some of the local races. And then I think the other issue that's really important to watch is disinformation and fake news. This is something that people really started talking about in the 2018 elections. That part of the popularity of Han Kuo-yu was driven by fake news. Some of it sort of produced by mainland Chinese producers and then spread by gullible voters in Taiwan. And so, you know, I think that this is kind of a testing ground for the degree to which Taiwan can protect its media environment and ensure that voters are getting accurate information and using that to base to as the basis of their decisions. So I'll stop there. Thanks.

- Sarah. Thank you very much. I forgot to mention in the introductions that all three of our speakers today have connections with Harvard. Sarah and Lev are part of the Taiwan Workshop, and Chia-hung is spending a year here as a visiting scholar.

- [Chia-Hung] Okay,

- So I should also, I can't resist adding that one of the corruption issues in local politics this year has been plagiarism. On both masters and PhD thesis. And I think it would help if some of our local candidates wrote a few more masters and PhD thesis, but that's another issue. Chia-hung please.

- Okay, thank you Steve. Okay. Thank you for having me in this workshop. And so I'm going to share my screen. Okay. Let me see. Okay. Okay. I'm sorry, it's not, it's, now, sorry about this. It's not showing right. I, yeah, what, what happened? New share. Hmm, but, oh, let me see... What happened.

- I don't know.

- Sorry, I if you get, hmm. I thought I already have it. Too bad. Okay. Let me. Let me quickly find the... slides.

- Maybe Lev could go next? Could you?

- [Lev] I was gonna add as much you like.

- Okay. Okay. Do you see that?

- Yeah.

- Okay, good. Yeah, great. Great, it's the right one. Okay, thanks. Thank you Steve again and like to share some of my observation in these, in these local elections. Okay. So I'm going to talk about some background, some issues and some challenges. And some uh problems for polling in Taiwan. Okay. So Sarah has mentioned the background is local elections will be held, actually next Saturday, and about 19

million people are eligible to vote. So the turnout rate could be, I dunno, it could be 70%. Around 70% according to previous elections, but we will see. But then right now KMT is holding 50 city mayor or county mayor, DPP six and TPP one. So lots of people are talking about how many cities can DPP hold on. And because most county mayors have high popularity. I mean according to the polls done by magazines, they, they, we found that most of county incumbent mayors are popular. They keep low key to counter the DPP challenges even though the DPP send many current legislators to challenge the KMT or mayors spot. But they just keep saying that we are, we are doing very well. So there's no need to change, right? And I think the DPP government is not created for funding the local government even though the KMT government have some legislation to, to, to have more funds for local government. To do like museum, libraries or sports center. But, it seems that the DPP strategy is not working out very well. So it's expected that most of KMT incumbents can win their reelection. But we can also see the DPP very strong at southern Taiwan, such as Chiayi, Tainan, Kaohsiung, Pingtung. Those are so-called deep green districts. But since the DPP struggle to keep Keelung, Hsinchu and Taoyuan, but you know, we are about seven days to go before election, so lot of things can happen. And right now we are not allowed to talk about any popular opinion polls. So, so it's hard to say how, it's hard to say whether or not people have changed their mind or they have decided. Right? And one of the major reasons that the DPP cannot coordinate nominees in New Taipei, Taipei and Taoyuan city until September. So. Steve just mentioned there's some plagiarism issue. So, the DPP has to change their nominee of the Taiwan city at a very last meeting. Okay? The Taipei, New Taipei also a little bit controversial because someone wants to run for, Shih-Chung wants to run for Taipei city mayor, but he was, he was sent to a New Taipei after all. Okay? So the most important national issue is related to Covid-19 pandemic because the KMT argue that the DPP government failed to, you know, save more lives. And they failed to manage the quarantine of airplane pilots. Now it can be also criticized DPP for purchasing not enough vaccines based in the beginning. So you can see people in, when the pandemic broke out in 2020, people have a panic for mask. Then we have panic for vaccine. So Chen Shih-chung, who is the DPP Taipei mayoral candidate, but, and also the, the commander of the DPP becomes the top, become the top target. Also the DPP tries to rally with resisting China for testing, protecting Taiwan slogan. And then the KMT condemned DPP for provoking China. And they say that cooperating with us while engaging China is for Taiwan's best interest. So, yeah, so the recent development between Taiwan, between China and the United States, seems to prove the KMT's point, but... Right, but I think yeah, we still have to observe the effect, okay. And the economic issue like inflation, economic development, corruption and the energies are not very steady in this local election. And Sarah just mentioned the constitution amendment referendum and unfortunately it seems that no party is really seriously competing for the, to confirm that even though it is the first one since we abolished the National

Assembly in 2005. Okay? And you, you still can see people have different opinion to lowering the voting age to 18. Okay, so I also want to talk a little bit about young voters because the conventional wisdom said that the DPP can have very strong, very serious support for the young voter. but it says that even though the DPP remains the most popular party in terms of party identification in the polls. Some young voters seems to lose zeal for the DPP. I think they still prefer independence, but some they are not very satisfied with delayed reports such as inflation, housing price and the social in, social inequality. I think Taiwan needs to do best. They need to do better. On the other hand, TPP, the Taiwans People Party gain some momentum by emphasizing clean politics and good governance. Especially during the pandemic because Taipei mayor, Ker Wen-je, is also the founder of the TPP. And about the KMT, has gradually recovered from 2020 presidential election. In 2021 four-ballot referendum. So right now KMT's major strategy is changing the DPP's governance, especially the shortage of masks, vaccines and rapid test kits. So... so basically I think KMT is using kind of a negative campaign to, to attract voters. And, but, but I think the, the DPP may need to do a better job to to persuade people and that they are, they are doing a good job, okay? And so, I'm going to switch my focus to the polling. And you may see many polls before the election and because the cop, but, but I think there are some questions or some issues need to be think about. First of all, the coverage rate of household telephone survey is getting lower. So I think its not easy to get enough sample size from a single county/city for local elections. So some, so there's, so we, we see some polling companies adopt internet survey and on cell phone via text message. So basically their strategies is to send text message to, to many, many people and asking if they can join the panel to do internet survey. So the consequence is that many, there are many non-probability sample in data and you may also want the, if there is any more effect. So some people get a get a, get. Some people do the survey on telephone, but some people do a survey on internet survey. On internet platform. So I wonder how they combine different source of data and, and even do the waiting. And then you can also see some companies tap into website member data bank. And of course there are long probability samples, okay? And the same surveys finish, I'm sorry. Finish a survey in two days and to cover multi streets or to make the news. So you can, you can imagine there's a selection bias, so they only talk to people who are always home. Okay. And the some polling companies combined prior election results with survey result from household and internet samples to make election forecast. So they are very, very complicated formula to, to take a previous election results and the census data and the current survey result and, and the some internet sample adjustment to make forecast. And, but I think there are lots of nonrandom errors. Not just bias but error. So of course they are challenge for polling not only in Taiwan but also in many countries. But in any, in the 2022 election, I think we can imagine that many people right now are moving from Taiwan city because the housing price is too high. To Hsinchu and the to Taoyuan City. And that's why the

target and the Hsinchu city are, are also are getting more and more populated. But they may start change the electoral map in northern Taiwan. The reason why, the reason why I say that is because city, I think, will become more and more polarized because only senior people can stay in Taoyuan City. But Hsinchu and Taoyuan City are quite like a three cities. So that may explain why the DPP, have, is struggling to control or target Hsinchu and Taoyuan City this time. But we can also refer the, the election, maybe eight years ago, when KMT lost Taoyuan Cities. Furthermore after Covid 19, echo chamber effect gets stronger and stronger because people don't contact each other in person and instead they rely on information for in-group. For why of for Facebook. So people are, they're likely to answer polls or show up in campaign rallies. I think He Jiwei two days ago in the workshop, in the workshop series one, he also said people don't, don't really show up. There are not many compared 10 years, two years ago or four years ago. So, in this sections, in this section just study I just mentioned is also hard to identify any key issues. Like perjuries, scandals and even DNA. So it's difficult to verify responsible intention or use issue position as a process of their preference. So when we want to break down people who refuse to answer, we just have very, very few crew, right? And then the proportion of nonpartisan is around 50%, which makes also difficult to draw information for non-response. Okay, this is my last page, okay? And the long-lasting purpose in Taiwan's polling is. Well first of all, we often overestimate the turnover rate. So if you look at results you find that, oh, the turnover rate is so high, but actually is, I think, that there is some kind, like 10% difference, right? So we, we have to be cautious about the, the turnover rate. And we also have institution effect. So some media have their own surveys and the political party also announced their survey results. But you can, you can imagine that the political polarization is very severe, so they must be institution effect. And you can imagine that some voters may refuse to answer questions raised by some media or companies. So sometimes the media has to pretend that they, they are asking questions for some faces. So it is very ironical, but it's true. So there's always concern that polls are used to make news. So when, when there's, there's some news and erupting, the media may want to do a poll very quickly to refer people sentiment about the news. But you can imagine that people, there is some institution effect there, right? Okay, the last problem is refusal rate. So many people may refuse to interview to avoid phone scams, especially, I'm not sure if you will, if you heard about the Cambodia scams stories recently. So lots of people are thinking that they can make, they can have a, like a gold rush to, to Cambodia, but it turns out are all scams, right? So many people refuse to take any phone. And I think they will cost lots of selection bias as well. Okay? I think the concluding remarks that we have to think about the rate, we also have to think about how to take care of institution effect, I think if we can continue to use multiple-level model that use past voting results to model long response in a national sample survey, can, you know, redeem low election, local election try to, you know, fix a problem

from there. I, well my colleagues and I had done that before, but, but we, we had to think about it with the latest census data and the survey results as well. So we, I will recommend both pre- and the post-election surveys to explain voting behavior and to interpret the election results, okay. Okay. I will stop here. Thank you.

- Chia-hung, thank you. Thank you very much. Now can we get the screen back?

- Okay, stop sharing.

- There ya go. Okay.

- Lev? You're up.

- Thank you Steve and thank you very much for organizing this panel. So I'm gonna talk a little bit about what some of the issues are with this midterm, why it kind of matters, and kind of what's at stake for each party. Also, please, please excuse my very American centric use of the phrase midterm. I know local elections is the preferred nomenclature. I just, my brain automatically goes to midterm since America just had its midterm. So, I wanna start by talking a little bit about this common wisdom that in midterm elections, voters care about local issues. And I don't really know what that means. Because what are local issues and, and what are the local issues that people are voting on in the midterm? Because if you just compare 2018 to now, the issues are so radically different that it really feels that, you know, this, this kind of common wisdom of local issues is a really idiosyncratic kind of thing from midterm to midterm. Which only makes explaining what motivates voters in local elections all the more difficult. You know, in 2018 you had you had marriage equality, you had, I mean, in 2018 you had 10 different referendums that were all really confusingly worded. This time around, there's no , there's no large list of referendums. And so, you know, the headlines and the things that people are discussing are, are so very different. So I, I think it's important to remember that, you know, what exactly motivates voters on midterms isn't particularly well known. What's also interesting, I mean we have so much public opinion data on national elections, we know very well, and very confidently, that on national elections people vote on cross state relations, the future of Taiwan, China, but we don't have a lot of public opinion on what motivates voters during the midterm. So I think it's just important to like know that this is a known unknown. That we don't actually have a ton of good data on what drives local election voting. But that doesn't mean we can't know what are the important issues during each, each local election. So, you know, what's driving local elections this time? You know, the headlines are not about who's offering plans to fix the roads or to help fund communities. It is scandal, scandal, scandals. That has really been the central issue all over Taiwan. It's not just a Hsinchu problem, it is a problem everywhere. In Taipei

there's scandals over whether Chiang Wan-an is really Chiang Kai-shek's great grandson. That dominated headlines for a while. In Miaoli, one of the mayoral candidates has been accused of murder. That's another scandal. One of the mayoral candidates in Jilung was accused of bribery, I think. And then of course there's the thesis scandals in Taoyuan, which like, ever since Tsai Ing-Wen was accused of, of having her dissertation plagiarized or faked or something. That's just become a go-to tactic for like every political party. And it's really become a mainstream way of attacking. And this is not a partisan way of attacking a party. We see both blue and green camps trying to find any sort of hint of corruption and swing that at their opponents. It is, it has become the go-to strategy of this local election. And I, it really is hard to think of places where there is not an example of corruption being talked about. Even earlier this month, Xi Jinping in a speech, you know, said, you know, we need to push back against politics. That seems like something outta the 1990s. But that's still, you know, what's being talked about. You know, then there is the elephant in the room and perhaps the number one question that I get asked is, "So how is China playing into this midterm?" And the answer is it's kind of not. Not nearly as much as people think it is. So of course you have Chen Shi-chung in Taipei really hammering in on this kind of slogan and it doesn't seem to be really picking up a whole lot of steam. There was one poll from My Formosa which is a more green leaning public opinion outlet who asked voter, asked respondents what they think the most important job of a mayor is. And one of the options was, you know, protecting Taiwan from China. And only 8% of respondents thought that was their most important job. That's not a perfect measure, but it's, but it's kind of a data point for us to look at, you know, whether or not voters are really seeing this whole, you know, issue really being an important driver in the local elections. I really don't think it is, despite Chen Shih-chung and some members of the DPP really trying to make it a local issue. The reason they want to do that is because that's become a very successful electoral tactic for them. We saw that in 2020, the more they lean into this idea of the, the better the DPP did. But we're not seeing that being a successful tactic this time. I think the DPP has kind of learned its lesson that you can't copy paste one election strategy into another and assume that it will go perfectly well. So I'll talk, 'cause I don't wanna go for too long so we have plenty of time for Q&A. I'll talk about what's at stake for, kind of, each major party. So with the DPP, this is a really, really big election. Because the forecast, you know, before we, there's, there's a law in Taiwan that I think it's like 10 days before the midterm, you can't talk about public opinion polling in public anymore or do any more public opinion polling. So we're kind of going blind on how people feel. But before now, the polls for the DPP were, were a bit more pessimistic. And if the DPP does poorly all over the north, so, you know, and kind of their, the, the DPP worst case scenario is, you know, losing Taipei, Keelung losing Taoyuan and losing Hsinhu and you know. Losing New Taipei, but I think that was, that was pretty given. If the DPP

does very, very poorly, there will be an expectation that Tsai Ing-wen, as the party chair will ceremoniously step down. And if she steps down from party chair, it's going to create a new internal factional dispute within the DPP. And that's going to have very real implications for the 2024 nomination, primary, and a kind of whole, whole outlook on their, on their election process. The reason now, now it's important to kind of remember that like she has to step down a year from now anyway because she's not gonna be president anymore. But this really kind of speeds that forward. The reason this matters is because currently the front runner is Lai Ching-te to be the next DPP nominee. But as we all remember in 2019 or 2020 Lai challenged Tsai for the nomination. For the nomination. And it's not so much, it's kind of the DPP's open secret that faction fighting is happening pretty intensely right now. And that those in Tsai's faction are not super keen on Lai necessarily becoming the next president. There's a bit of a push to have a alternative candidate. The kind of rumor is Su Jia-chyuan and the former vice president being the champion person to compete against Lai Ching-te. And if Tsai has to step down and if Tsai's faction becomes very marginalized as the result of this midterm, then Lai Ching-te has a much easier time getting the nomination. And that's why this is a, a kind of important at stake deal for the DPP. And you know, for some of these, these races, I think it's kind of known that they're not gonna go well for the DPP. Like again, New Taipei, Hou You-Yi is just such a popular mayor that Lin Chia-lung really does not have a good chance. So for that race, it's not so much, you know, if Lin Chia-lung loses, but like by how much does he lose? 'Cause if he gets, you know, say 40% of the votes, that's an amazing race for him. But it's really gonna, you know, and it's similar to, to some of these other races as well. For the KMT of course, what's really important to remember, and this is kind of goes along with the question of how does China matter. The KMT doing really well in this local election is not indicative of them doing really well in 2024. Nor, and this is perhaps the, the line I've said the most nor is the KMT doing well, a reflection of Taiwanese fears of the August Chinese military drills. On paper it would look like, you know, in August we had all these Chinese military drills and then in November you have the KMT doing really well in election and a lot of people are eager to kind of make a link between those two things. And we should not do that, because that would be wrong. The KMT victories, in a lot of these races, can be explained much better and much more convincingly by what's happening locally and domestically than by anything related, to do with the Chinese threats. Which, by and large, have not been part of kind of local discourse here, in any way. At least in regards to the local elections. Now that being said, Jiang Wen-an is a very strong candidate. He, he ceremonially stepped down from his position as a legislative, from the Legislative Yuan to run. And I think he's definitely going to have his eyes on the future as a presidential candidate potential. If he wins this mayoral race, it would, it would be a very big victory for the KMT. Now of course it, the KMT does poorly and then Eric Chu Li-lun, the current party chair

is gonna have a much more difficult time, you know, kind of rallying troops for the 2024 election. And the KMT is also facing its, you know, fair share of factional disputes. All parties in Taiwan are run by factions. That's just kind of a common truth. Now of course Hou You-yi is the most popular KMT candidate just from polling. But it's not a sure thing that Hou will be the presidential nominee because Hou and Ju Lin-tung don't always identify as being a part of the same faction, to put it nicely. And so really the KMT's performance is also going to be just as indicative for, you know, the nomination process and who we should expect to see shortlisted for 2024 as it is with the DPP. So next is the TPP, Mayor Ko Wen-je's party. And you know, there is the common wisdom that this is the party that young people support. I'm sure there are plenty of young people that do support it. But just by the sheer number of votes that they got in 2020, I think it is important to remember that it is not only young people voting for the TPP. Because they are getting a lot more of, kind of, the light blue, older votes as well. And we also know that just because young people don't vote that much in Taiwan. They're the lowest voter turnout rate. And that's true of all democracies. So the TPP is probably getting some of that young vote, but they're also getting votes from somewhere else. And I'm guessing that's also from light blue voters who are feeling disenfranchised by the KMT as well. Now Hong, , I'm so sorry. Now Mayor Huang Shan-shan mayor, excuse me, former deputy mayor Huang Shan-shan is, is a very strong candidate in Taipei. And there is a very real chance that she could win. Gao Hong-an in Hsinhu right now, despite the scandals, because that hasn't stopped candidates from winning in the past, is, has a very good chance of winning. So there is, there is a potential in which the TPP actually wins two mayoral races in this local election. There's not a super high chance that both will win, but there is a chance. If the TPP gets both mayoral victories, then the odds of Ko Wen-je running are just through the roof. Like it's a, it's pretty much a sure thing. Now Ko Wen-je might run no matter what. That's a very real possibility. But Ko Wen-je running with two TPP mayors, versus Ko Wen-je running without any mayors or, or that's two, that's those two very different kind of setups for his potential presidential run. Now if he does run and he has a strong backing, that means that 2024 is going to be a three way race between Ko and two other candidates. From, one from the DDP and one from the KMT, which is going to be a very messy timeline for us to deal with and have to explain when 2024 comes. So finally, I am, I must say something about the New Power Party. So they are not nominating as many people as they did in 2018 'cause the New Power Party has been going through some number of growing pains over the last few years. But they have nominated, still, a good number of local city council candidates and they actually have three different mayoral candidates. One in Jilong, one in Miaoli and then one in, oh goodness, Pingtung I believe. But forgive me if I'm messing up that last one. And I think they're, they're hopeful to be able to get some number of city council seats as Sarah noted, it really is kind of a prime way for small parties, like the New Power Party, to keep their foot in the

door even when they're not able to grow as much as they would like. It's also worth saying something about the Taiwan Statebuilding Party who after Chen Po-wei was recalled, currently have no elected officials in office. And what's also interesting is, actually the first time the Taiwan Statebuilding Party participated in formal politics was in 2018, in the last midterm. And they didn't win anything. So they actually are yet to win a city council seat, but they have nominated a ton of people. Which I really think is an effort for them to try to remain relevant and to try to show that they can still win a win a vote without Chen Po-wei as being part of their party. But we're, we're all very eager to see how, how those smaller parties do. I will stop there, but welcome any questions and, and thank you again Steve and thank you to my fellow panelists.

- Yeah, thank you very much. I. We have a question that was asked by one of the members of the audience, which I think is an important question. And that's the question of misinformation. The presumption seems to be, as was mentioned by I think Sarah, that the mainland intervened in the last election actively. Particularly in favoring Han Kuo-yu. And Taiwan also has a very active anti-misinformation movement, which could, could be a model for other unnamed countries to use. And I was wondering if one of the panelists would like to elaborate on that. Because I think it's an important aspect of the elections in Taiwan. Anybody, anybody?

- I can talk about it a little bit and then maybe others can jump in as well. So I, if this is a topic that's especially interesting to you, there's a really comprehensive report by the Doublethink Lab that, you know, sort of details some of the strategies, disinformation strategies that were used in Taiwan in 2020 and in 2018. I think one of the things that's complicated about this topic is that disinformation from China is very decentralized. I think sometimes people have this perception that there's like one office that's sort of directing lots of information into Taiwan or potentially into the US and other places. And that's not really how it works. There is a combination of, you know, individual sort of nationalistic Chinese citizens generating content that then is picked up by people in Taiwan. There are content farms that are, you know, in some cases private, in some cases government or military affiliated in China, that are creating fake news and disseminating it. And then there also is an issue that is, is now, you know, not an especially new issue in Taiwan, but the question of sort of red media in Taiwan and you know, pro-China, formal media outlets that are in close communication with mainland Chinese media and are kind of like parroting their messages. And so I think one of the things that is complicated about, you know, stopping the spread of disinformation is that it's coming in through multiple panels being sent via multiple actors and then also disseminated via a lot of different platforms. So if someone is sharing, you know, incorrect information, propaganda with relatives in a line group, that's a, that's hard to stop, right? And, you know,

that is a different, so that, so there's that kind of like social media influence. Things like YouTubers that are sharing sort of anti, it's kind of complicated. It's like in some cases it's explicitly supporting a particular candidate. In other cases it's kind of sowing doubt about the value of Taiwan's democracy in general, and kind of trying to, maybe, depress turnout by raising people's doubts about, you know, whether democracy has served Taiwan well. In some cases it's sort of like amplifying messages around how great a job China has done at something and how bad a job the Taiwanese government has done at that comparable thing. And so, you know, there's really I think a, a sort of vast landscape. You know, Taiwan has been fairly active. So in the, in the last election there was a group that was I think set up basically by former Taiwanese journalists who then founded a nonprofit that was trying to sort of combat this. Other folks jump in if I'm misremembering. But they were going through and actually, you know, people would flag Facebook posts as containing disinformation and then this group would vet it. And was in collaboration with Facebook where then something would show up if they determined that it was fake. If someone clicked on that story on Facebook, the the story would be sort of grayed out and there was like a message over it that would say, oh this is, you know, has been determined by independent experts to be fake news. Are you sure you wanna click on this story? And then also I think people who com, who repeatedly re-shared fake news, they like stopped showing up in other people's Facebook feeds as much and stuff. So, you know, there was a level of kind of, I think, you know, Facebook was open to, or was, was working with this group more actively in Taiwan than I think would ever be possible in the US just because of the kind of regulatory environment here. But you know, so I think that there has been a sort of active effort in Taiwan to address this issue in a variety of ways. But it is a little bit like a kind of whack-a-mole problem, where there's just so many different sources of information and you know, Taiwan is a very open society and a very wired society and there's lots of benefits to that, but it also means that there's lots of potential entry points for someone who might want to, you know, share fake news or try to use social media to influence an election for instance.

- Anyone else wanna comment on that?

- Yeah, I'm happy to. I'll second Sarah's recommendation think and the Doublethink report. What I think I, so the Doublethink report is really great for showing how many different ways that we can see this information. One of the things that I think is important to keep in mind though, is that, you know, the Doublethink report shows all these different ways that disinformation were present in the 2020 election. And yet Tsai Ing-wen still won by a landslide. So even though there's disinformation, it doesn't seem to have a very big effect on voter behavior. Or at the very least it didn't in 2020. What I think is a frustration of mine personally is there, there's always desire to talk about Chinese disinformation and not about disinformation in general.

We often forget that in 2018 the marriage equality referendums were plagued by disinformation and that disinformation didn't come from China. That was homegrown disinformation from Taiwan. Things like, you know, if we pass marriage equality, all your kids will get AIDS and all these other just really horrendous fake reports that were not started by China, they were started in Taiwan. And really that's a reflection of just how susceptible Taiwan can be to disinformation regardless of where it comes from. But ever since 2018, I think there have been so many groups that have become incredibly vigilant to the ideas of disinformation. And especially after the 2020 election. I really think that shows that a lot of these tactics that, you know, many people in the PRC may have thought would be a viable way of pushing votes away from the DPP don't necessarily work as well. Even though we can, we can still see that they're happening. The the effect on elections, I think, is kind of to be determined more.

- Okay, thank you. Chia-hung, I have a question for you.

- Yeah?

- In, have you, uh One of the recent of events in the United States with polling was that there were a number of affiliated polls towards the end of the election that misled a lot of commentators and were basically tools of political influence to try to shape the voters. We always, when we see Taiwan polls, it's always identified as pro-green or pro-blue. My question to you is, is there really that much difference? There are so many polls in Taiwan. Many of them are identified with either blue or green. Is there really any difference in their findings of any significance?

- Yeah, thank you. Right, so. So I think there are many polls right now and many, many polls are done by the media such as TVBS or Liberty Times and, and the United Daily News. So United Daily News and TVBS are often considered as for news media and Liberty Times. Liberty Times is quite pro-green or pro-independence media. Right. And, and so, but. But United News and TVBS are more constantly doing survey and announcing the results, right? So other than that, you still can see some, some posts not very affiliate with news media such as Formosa Mianyi Dao Dianzi Bao I dunno how to say that. Formosa. Formosa News Center Right? Right. Thank you. And so. So they also constantly announcing their poll results. But, but the, the person who run the organization is a little bit controversial because he used to be, Gu Zi-jiang he used to be a DPP member, but right now he criticized DPP and Tsai Ing-Wen a lot. So. So, but. But so what I try to say is that of course we can see some, see some affiliation or see some connection between the the poll results and the pollsters. But. But it's hard to say they're, their polling are very skewed. Or overestimate a particular candidate. Right. And the point is that because we don't allow, because the government doesn't allow any polls 10 days before the election day. So it's not easy to verify the, the poll results.

And by the election results at the last meeting. So you can always say, oh, because something happened in the last 10 days. So our polls can be a little bit biased or can be wrong. But so, so my, my argument or my recommendation is that we still have to keep in mind that some pollsters want to, they, I don't think they really want to steal the result and to, to mislead, but they, they may be unconsciously overestimate or over report the, the supporting rate of certain candidates. And the, that's the, the main side. I mean the surprise side is that some voters or some responders also want to strategically or very, you know, intentionally to influence the poll by taking or not taking survey for certain for, from the out group, right? In group they are. I think some I can, I can make an example. So. So maybe like two or three years ago when Ko Shu-ju was running for the, the KMT presidential primary. She got lots of support from the telephone surveys. But she is very extreme, right? She must be defeated by the DPP badly if she really becomes the candidate. But by so, so you can tell that some poll DPP responders of voters intentionally, you know, skew the results, skew the polls. So, so you had to, right. So, so. So right now people are are more and more cautious about the polls and, and even though we don't want to accuse any pollsters of sending out misleading results, but, but still have to think about to, to look at refusal rate or the turnout rate to, to make a good judgment. Yeah.

- Yeah. Thank you Chia-hung. Does anyone else wanna talk about polls? We have a question from the audience. And it's about ticket splitting. In the sense that, do voters sometimes vote one way in the local elections and another way in the island-wide elections? Anyone want to take that one?

- Yeah, so I think it's worth highlighting that depending on which thing you're voting for, that the options you have are going to be very different. So, and like Sarah was talking about in a first past the post kind of race where typically that's only two candidates. Usually one KMT, one DPP, then you often end up voting for either the DPP or the KMT. But with city council, or in during national elections, the party vote, you can vote for way more choices than just the DPP or the KMT. So you end up seeing voters voting for different parties for different positions. And you know, again, just to echo what Sarah said, you know, you might have someone who really likes their mayor but would never vote for that party for a national election. I think that's, you know, perhaps something we might see in some cities this term. But, but yeah, you most certainly see switching around and, and like one of the slides said before, there's a big proportion of Taiwanese voters who are not affiliated. So, you know, just looking at the 2020 results, the KMT got 1/3 of the PR votes, the DPP got 1/3 of the, of the PR votes and third parties got 1/3 of the PR votes. Which tells us that on any, on the national election when it really mattered, there was about 1/3 of Taiwan that did not vote for the KMT, the DPP, and didn't identify with them at the moment.

- And anyone else on that? That question?

- I would just add one minor, or I guess two minor things. One is that for some local seats, actually a lot of candidates run without even having a party label. So, you know, these party labels are super, super important in terms of national politics. And Taiwan is relatively polarized at the national level in terms of like people not trusting, you know, people from the, who are strong supporters of the other party. But a lot of those, those labels actually, literally don't exist for many of the candidates who are running in these ultra local races that are, that are on the ballot for this upcoming election. And then the second piece, I think Professor Tsai maybe can get the number more accurately down than I can. But of high percentage of Taiwanese voters are independents, right? So it's something like half of Taiwanese voters identify as independent. So you know, presumably, you know, in a two-way race, those folks are voting for someone, right? But they're not necessarily gonna come down on the same side every single time.

- I was in a follow up on that, Sarah. The high percentage of so-called independents, that don't identify with one of the parties. It's unknown in the United States and it's unknown in many political systems for there to be this number of non-identifiers with the two major parties. What are the consequences of that for Taiwan politics? Anybody wanna take that?

- Yeah, I can talk about it a little bit. Yeah. And right, so yeah, so the, this identifier or independent proportion is really, I think it's really high, but. But compared to the United States, I think yeah, it is, it's relatively, little bit higher and, but by still it it's related to the, the labor or party or politicization, so, political polarization. So I think. So Sarah just mentioned that in the national labor, people are quite polarized because of course there are only two parties, maybe there be three parties in 2024. But before then there are, there are only two major parties competing on the presidential office. So, so it, it is not hard to imagine that people are, people have to be a little bit polarized because, you know, there's only one seat, right? And, and we don't have the. Well of course we have some states in the Legislative Yuan for the party list. So some people indeed try to balance between major party and the minor parties, right? And even though in the same camp, right. So some people may vote for DPP in the district election and they vote for, for example, Taiwan Statebuilding in, in a party list or vote for another one. I don't know. So they belong to the same ideological camp, right? And so you still can see that, okay, the two camps or two blocks are quite, you know, against each other, right? But so the, the so-called independents, I mean they, I think they still, I think they are certainly are motivated independents. They just try to, they, they just don't want to answer party application as a sensitive question. So they still will vote for either DPP or KMT very constantly, but

they just don't want to answer the question before, before interviewers. At least one possibilities. Another one is that some of them are, are waiting for party cues. Or waiting for some group cues. In the, especially in the national labor election. And I think they. I think most of them are still following of night or national identity, right? And especially in 2020 election, right? But, maybe things will change and. Well, I think we talk about, I think people talk about party realignment two days ago. So maybe TPP will, will become stronger and stronger and the, the three way race will become a little bit more balanced. We will see, especially after the local election. But. But if nothing changed, I think people still follow the line of venture identity, which is you are exclusive Taiwanese or you are dual identity. So. Right, so. My theory or my arguments that Taiwans is still very polarized, but maybe it is not like, like it's not it's a cultural polarization. Like, you know, these days people can still talk to each other and, and the people you know, are not so effective polarized. But in terms of election, or in terms of party parties, I think Taiwan remains polarized. But, maybe in, in a good way. A not lot of bad way. Okay. Thank you.

- Yeah, I'll just tag on. I think it's important to remember that independent doesn't mean that they don't have an opinion on Taiwan's identity or an opinion on unification independence. They most certainly do. And I think it's just a matter of their perception. I mean, political parties in a place like Taiwan have such a qualitatively bigger meaning than say the United States because they represent these, these platforms that have sway over the future of Taiwan. That I think like identifying with them is such a very big part of, part of one's identity. If you identify the DPP or the KMT, that I think that just makes it different than say in the United States. But I will totally echo the sentiment that especially after being in the US last year, it feels that, it feels like the United States is far more polarized than than days. Which is saying a lot because Taiwan's a pretty polarized place. And just in the spirit of the, the Wudang people who run, I was just handed this on my way home by a non a, a independent candidate who calls himself the rock and roll Professor Ya-Wen Jiaoso , who's running for local city council. So you see plenty of independents running as well.

- One of the things that came out of the meeting that we had a couple days ago with the representatives of the various parties was that when it, it came to identifying issues, they almost identified the very same issues. Inflation, cost of living. It seemed that there was sort of uniformity in the problems that each of the parties see. And, and yet that makes me think that voters are not necessarily issue voters because the same arguments are being presented by, by these two or three parties. But rather the issue is something else. Is it party loyalty? Well, that doesn't seem to work because of the gets more than its very small percentage of identification. Or there must be some sort of underlying, it seems to me, dis-identification with something

that makes voters given identical platforms to choose one of the others. Does that make any sense,? Lev, how would you explain that?

- Yeah, so you know, in Taiwan when the main political cleavage is not iden- is not left/right in the way that we think of it in the United States, It's instead this fundamental issue of who are we and where are we and what's our future going to be? That means that things like policy plans don't motivate voters in the same way. That doesn't mean voters don't care about policy, but that's not what really is gonna drive people to support a candidate or not. Now that's, that's much more true, especially during national elections. But say for local elections, you know, really my, my read on all these thesis scandals and the corruption scandals left and right, you know, they're very, you know, headline grabby and they might seem silly to a degree, but really I think it's a reflection on people evaluating the quality of their candidates and not just the quality of the candidates, but the quality of the parties that these candidates come from. Because it's not just an attack on the candidate, it's an attack on the party system or the party that's boast, that's boosting these candidates. And I think that goes back to identity. I think really it is a fundamental reflection of identity and party identity. And again, in Taiwan, the DDP and the KMT aren't just parties, they are the parties. Where to accuse someone who's a member of the KMT or a member of the DPP of corruption is not just a reflection of the individual candidate, but the the bigger party itself.

- I think this also, yeah, I think this goes back to Professor Tsai's point before about how the KMT is running mostly on a kind of anti-DPP or critical of the DPP platform. And you know, in some ways I think it, it makes sense that they're doing that because the DPP has been really dominant in politics now, you know, despite the losses in the 2018 election. I mean, they really have, you know, dominated the national scene, obviously, for the last six years. And, you know, and so I think it makes sense that in some ways the cleavages are not around parties talking about different issues, but more just the KMT saying, we don't think the DPP has done a good job on these issues. Rather than carving out, you know, kind of a separate ideological set of focuses for themselves. I think Lev's point about the fact that there isn't a clear sort of left right spectrum on social issues between the, the parties or even really clear policy identities for the parties setting aside the cross street issue is another really important point. And then the last thing I'll say is I, you know, I'm a little surprised we haven't really talked at all about identity and kind of the historical roots of these parties, but I think that that's something that's really important to think about as well. You know, that the DPP is a party that really emerged out of the democracy movement. It was supported traditionally by very different kinds of people, right? Much more of a local party than the KMT, which was traditionally more of a kind of outsider Waisheng party. And so, you know, I think in some ways those old distinctions between like why are

less important than they used to be. But I do think that the kind of family histories that people are bringing to their support for a political party remain really important. And you know, just as in the US, if your parents are, you know, democrats, then you're pretty likely to be a Democrat too. I think that's true in Taiwan with this added element that, you know, these two parties are intimately tied to Taiwan's development as an independent place over time.

- Thank you. Well, thank you all to all the panelists. I, I've, I've learned a lot from this session. And we're very appreciative. There'll be another, third session, on December 7th, as I mentioned. Talking about the results of the election. And although they don't know it yet, I'm gonna bring this group back and this will be recorded. Of course this will be available on YouTube. And we'll see how we all did. Thank you very much, really. I appreciated this and I hope the audience appreciated the quality of discussion that, that they, they heard. Thanks guys.

- [Lev] Thanks Steve.

- Yeah. So you're in right?

- I, I'm, so it's very nice to see you in person. I hope.

- Time when.

- You're back in Taipei, I would love to spend some time chatting.

- Sure, yeah.

- I hope you enjoy your year in Boston. I'll see you when you're back.

- Thank you. Okay, bye.