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STIMSON

VOLUME 6
2015–2017

ACROSS THE TAIWAN STRAIT:
from **COOPERATION**
to **CONFRONTATION?**
2013–2017

Compendium of works from the China Leadership Monitor

ALAN D. ROMBERG

STIMSON

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September 9, 2015–September 11, 2017

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Preface

Brian Finlay and Ellen Laipson

It is our privilege to present this collection of Alan Romberg's analytical work on the cross-Strait relationship between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan. Alan joined Stimson in 2000 to lead the East Asia Program after a long and prestigious career in the Department of State, during which he was an instrumental player in the development of the United States' policy in Asia, particularly relating to the PRC and Taiwan. He brought his expertise to bear on his work at Stimson, where he wrote the seminal book on U.S. policy towards Taiwan, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice*, and facilitated countless meetings between policymakers and scholars of the U.S., Taiwan, and the PRC.

Alan was also a contributor to the Hoover Institution's *China Leadership Monitor* on the U.S.-PRC-Taiwan triangle, and these three volumes collect his essays written between 2013 and 2017. These volumes accompany volumes 1-3, *From Confrontation to Cooperation*, which compile Alan's articles written between 2006 and 2012. We have reprinted the body of Alan's work for the Monitor so that his meticulous record and analysis of a decade of cross-Strait relations can be an ongoing resource for students, scholars, and practitioners.

We are thankful to Dr. Alice Lyman Miller, editor of the *Monitor*, for reflecting upon Alan's contributions in the introduction to these three volumes. We are also grateful to Alan's colleagues for enriching Alan's work throughout his career and for their support now, especially Jeffrey A. Bader, the members of the Harvard University Taiwan Studies Workshop led by Professor Steve Goldstein, and Yun Sun, each of whom wrote reflections to close each volume.

Over almost two decades at Stimson, Alan worked with and mentored many staff and interns. Our gratitude goes to the East Asia team who worked closely with Alan for many years, especially Program Co-Directors Yuki Tatsumi and Yun Sun. Assisting Alan in his thorough documentation and study of cross-Strait developments were many dedicated interns, including Ran Zheng, Emily Chen, Xiao Han, Rongfei Gou, Michelle Chang, Antonio Liao, Guan Wang, Emily Law, Sandy Lu, and Summer Tan. Thanks are also due to Research Associate Pamela Kennedy and Research Intern Summer Tan for helping to prepare this book for publication, and to former Research Associate Hana Rudolph for supporting Alan's research.

Finally, a special thank you to the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in D.C. for recognizing the value of Alan's work, supporting his research during his years at Stimson, and for making this publication possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Finlay', with a stylized, looped end.

Brian Finlay
President and CEO

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ellen Laipson', written in a cursive style.

Ellen Laipson
President Emeritus

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Introduction

Alice Lyman Miller

I began as the *China Leadership Monitor's* founding general editor in 2001. The *Monitor* was inspired by a good idea by Michel Oksenberg, who had played a central role in the normalization of U.S.-PRC relations in 1979. Mike observed that analysis of Chinese leadership politics – once a staple of the China-watching field – was disappearing from public discourse about contemporary China and U.S.-China relations.

As political science departments turned to investigating issues in Chinese affairs that were susceptible to quantitative methods, as area studies were in decline, and as U.S.-PRC normalization afforded direct access to aspects of China previously impossible, academic China specialists could increasingly tell us about issues in ward politics in Shanghai or anti-Japanese protests in local Fujian. But dissections of the political balance of power in the Chinese Communist Party's Politburo remained a black box and rarely appeared in even the most prominent academic journals on contemporary China. Journalists working in Beijing on occasion wrote about leadership politics, but most brought to their work little or no background in Chinese affairs or in the politics of communist political orders, and their tours in China were usually too short to enable them to build the long-term perspectives needed to follow the Chinese leadership. From its inception, the *Monitor* sought to address the emerging gap that Mike perceived.

The intended audience for the *Monitor* has been American policy-makers in government and the broader policy-interested public. Writing analysis of leadership politics for the *Monitor* therefore requires several skills: precision and clarity; deep background in the history of Chinese politics; thorough acquaintance with proven Kremlinological methods of analyzing elite politics as they apply to the leadership of the People's Republic; big files and a good memory; a direct, get-to-the-point writing style, and a large dose of humility ingrained from the difficulty of penetrating the black box of Politburo politics. Neither the quantitative preoccupations of contemporary political science nor the social science jargon of academics address these requirements well. The pool of potential candidates therefore has drawn largely from specialists in the U.S. Government, analysts in the public policy think tanks that seek to inform government policy, and academics who have some government experience under their belts.

The *Monitor* has regularly published four, later three issues a year. A team of the same authors write for each issue, each writing on the specific policy area in which they have recognized expertise. The *Monitor*'s first writers on the politics of Chinese foreign policy were Tom Christensen, who left the group in January 2006 to serve as deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asia under the Bush administration, and Bob Suettinger, a career analyst of Chinese affairs who had served several years as Asia director on President Clinton's National Security Council and who pinch-hit for Christensen for five issues.

Christensen's departure required finding a replacement to cover his package of the politics of Chinese foreign policy-making, arguably the foremost topic among those addressed by the *Monitor*. As in the case of enlisting ghost-busting services, the basic question was, "Who ya gonna call?"

At that point I had known Alan Romberg for almost 30 years. I knew of his long, distinguished service at State, especially in posts on U.S. relations with Asia. In debates in informal settings over that time, I had heard him expound credibly on issues ranging from intermediate missile deployments in Europe, Japanese defense policy, Hong Kong politics since unification with the PRC, Beijing's approach to the two Koreas, and, of course, sensitive issues in U.S.-China relations. He had graduated from Princeton, my own alma mater, but I did not hold that against him. He seemed the right guy.

I was delighted, therefore, when he agreed to join the crew of *Monitor* analysts. But there was a catch: he preferred not to cover all of Chinese foreign relations, only the PRC-Taiwan cross-Strait relationship and the U.S. role in it. I knew from numerous previous informal interactions that this topic was of sustained interest to Alan. In addition, his *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy toward Taiwan and U.S.-PRC Relations* had been published by Stimson three years earlier and offered the most authoritative and thorough analysis of the Taiwan question in U.S.-China relations available. So his proposal was sensible, and I agreed. I resolved the need for *Monitor* coverage of the larger topic of Chinese foreign relations by gaining funding for a seventh slot in the *Monitor* crew and recruiting Carnegie specialist Michael Swaine, who remains a regular and reliable contributor.

The *Monitor*'s crew of authors is not exactly an anarcho-syndicalist autonomous collective. But its internal dynamic does seem to replicate the collective leadership ground rules that Deng Xiaoping sought to instill and that seemed to prevail for a long time in the Politburo we all sought to analyze. Each member is a recognized authority on the topic they cover for the *Monitor*, and each possesses a strong personality and holds strong opinions. As a group they often came to divergent conclusions about the same topic, and I recognized at the outset that there could be no hope of imposing an office line on the issues of the day – much better to let our intended readership

see our differences and draw their own conclusions. Nevertheless, what members of the *Monitor* group shared in common has been only the most nominal respect for the authority of their general secretary...er, I mean, general editor.

Consequently, editing the *Monitor* has been a great school in the personalities, character, priorities, and foibles of the publication's authors, in addition to their analytical and writing skills. Alan's precision and clarity with regard to sensitive political questions was immediately apparent from an exchange we had over the heading in the *Monitor's* table of contents for his first submission, in January 2006. Without much reflection I had proposed the rubric "China-Taiwan-United States." Alan responded immediately by proposing the rubric "PRC-Taiwan-United States," reflecting the prevailing ambiguities of contending ideas of what constitutes "China" in the triangular relationship.

Over time, I came to appreciate that, in addition to the many other skills he brought to the *Monitor*, Alan was a master of the art of strategic submission. At the beginning of each project year, we negotiate deadlines for submission of drafts for the issues to appear that year, taking into account anticipated major events in leadership politics such as party congresses and Central Committee plenums, National People's Congress sessions, and the like. These agreements in deadlines turned out to be less like mandatory state plans and more like advisory plans. Some authors, marching to some inner clock set by experience in government bureaucracies or by an admirably compulsive need to get things done, reliably hit the negotiated deadlines. Others dithered, torn by the hope for some new shred of evidence that would clarify an ever-ambiguous interpretive picture or by demanding professional schedules or by innate tendencies in favor of procrastination. The resulting spread in submissions between those who hit deadlines and those who did not could be a matter of weeks.

For Alan, this situation evoked a strategy that tried to reconcile his characteristic respect for professional discipline in hitting deadlines and his preoccupation for timeliness in analysis – even in a quarterly publication. Sometimes Alan submitted close to the deadline, but he would then insist in a chain of emails on revising what he had submitted in light of some new development or piece of evidence. Later on, he developed the technique of carefully watching the submissions by other members of the crew and timing his submission not to be absolutely last, but close enough to it to allow him to present his most up-to-date analysis. Eventually, we agreed that he could post his submissions on the Stimson Center's website ahead of their appearance in the *Monitor*, but that did not alter his shrewd tactics of strategic submission.

For me as editor, managing the various tactics of submission deployed by Alan and his *Monitor* colleagues was a course in appreciating the different sensibilities of talented analysts while extending sufficient latitude to coax their best analytical efforts. I have long pondered how much my understanding of the dimensions of

leadership politics in Hu Jintao's frustrated second term as party general secretary reflected this experience as *Monitor* editor.

Between January 2006 and September 2017, Alan wrote 37 articles for the *China Leadership Monitor* on the complex dynamics of cross-Strait relations and the U.S. role in them. Each reflected his deep understanding of the triangular politics, his exhaustive research apparent in his footnotes, the clarity of his straight-ahead prose, and his abiding interest and concern for this sensitive area in U.S. foreign policy. They will stand for a long time as representing not the first cut at history but rather something much closer to history's final cut.

Abbreviations

4NPP	4 th Nuclear Power Plant
ADIZ	Air defense identification zone
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
AIT	American Institute in Taiwan
APEC	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARATS	Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAA	Civil Aviation Administration
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CBM	Confidence building measures
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CCTV	China Central Television
CEC	Central Executive Committee
CPC	Communist Party of China
CPPCC	Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party
EACS	European Association for Chinese Studies
ECFA	Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EY	Executive Yuan
FEPZ	Free Economic Pilot Zones
FTA	Free Trade Agreement
HFAC	House Foreign Affairs Committee
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
INTERPOL	International Criminal Police Organization
JIDD	Jakarta International Defense Dialogue

KMT	Kuomintang
LY	Legislative Yuan
MAC	Mainland Affairs Council
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
NPC	National People's Congress
NPF	National Policy Foundation
NSC	National Security Council
PFP	People First Party
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RCEP	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
ROC	Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
S&T	Science and technology
SEF	Straits Exchange Foundation
STA	Services Trade Agreement
TAO	Taiwan Affairs Office
TiSA	Trade in Services Agreement
TPP	Transpacific Partnership
TSU	Taiwan Solidarity Union
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
U.S.	United States
USN	United States Navy
WHA	World Health Assembly
WHO	World Health Organization
WTO	World Trade Organization

Consolidating Positions

China Leadership Monitor, No. 48
September 9, 2015

In recent weeks all parties within Taiwan and across the Strait have focused on consolidating their positions. Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen, holding a commanding lead in polls, focused on gaining control of the legislature. Her Kuomintang (KMT) opponent, deputy Legislative Yuan (LY) speaker Hung Hsiu-chu, formally nominated in July, espoused a number of controversial positions and has not yet recovered from the fallout. Hung also lost ground to a new entry, veteran conservative politician and former KMT elder James Soong, who presented himself as the candidate of reason and experience.

Beijing left no doubt about its continuing insistence on adherence to some form of “one China” if cross-Strait relations are to go well under the next Taiwan administration. It also continued to raise warning flags about the impact of heightened cross-Strait tensions on U.S.-People’s Republic of China (PRC) relations.

Politics in Taiwan

The DPP Seeks to Score Big

Tsai Ing-wen focused most of her recent attention on domestic issues and the constituencies she hoped would not only bring her victory in January but would also place her party and its allies in control of the legislature. According to some reports, the Pan-Greens hoped to win as many as 64 out of the total of 113 seats.¹ Although there was some dissent within the party, it was decided that the DPP would cooperate with “compatible” non-DPP candidates where the latter had a better chance of defeating KMT opponents. As Tsai put it, “To have the forces of reform occupy more than 50 percent of the seats in the legislature, we must endorse the most competitive candidate in each electoral district...When there is a candidate in the progressive camp who is most likely to win, of course the person does not have to be nominated by the DPP.”² Tsai spoke of forming a “majority coalition” in the LY, asking those “with similar ideas and ambitions” to form a stable majority.³ Reports indicated that

the DPP would not nominate candidates in 11 electoral districts to provide a clear field for third-party contenders who had a better chance of defeating the KMT.⁴ At the same time, she continued to caution supporters against overconfidence, urging the DPP not to let up in campaigning efforts.⁵

As Tsai continued to hammer away at the Ma administration's alleged incompetence, she tried to push forward policies on energy, education, and social welfare that would have broad appeal. At present, it isn't entirely clear how successful she has been in that effort, but there is no indication that Hung (or Soong) has found a way to erode Tsai's lead or threaten what most observers see as an inevitable outcome.

Regarding cross-Strait policy, Tsai seemed satisfied to rest on the points she made while in the United States in June. As the DPP spokesman said in response to the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) call for Tsai to define the cross-Strait "status quo" she would maintain,⁶ Tsai had "made herself quite clear" that she would base her cross-Strait policy on the Republic of China (ROC) Constitution, the people's will, and the fruits of the labor of the past 20 years of negotiation.⁷ Repeating a frequent theme, the DPP spokesman added that both sides have responsibility to maintain cross-Strait peace and stability and development. And he called for continuing communication and dialogue to help "enhance understanding, resolve differences, and seek common ground, while shelving differences."⁸

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je's statements during his August visit to Shanghai that he "understands and respects" the Mainland's position that the 1992 Consensus is the foundation of cross-Strait peaceful development, and his endorsement of the idea that both sides of the Strait were "one family," occasioned some kudos for skillfully finessing sensitive questions (not picking a fight while not actually endorsing the PRC position, at least on the 1992 Consensus).⁹ But they also occasioned criticism. Independence supporters said Ko had abandoned principle and that his stance was even worse than Ma Ying-jeou's.¹⁰ The popular DPP mayor of Tainan, Lai Ching-te, was among those who bridled at Ko's statements, declaring that Taiwan had its own ethnicity, so if the two sides were parts of one family they were no more than "distant relatives" (遠親). In any case, Lai said, if one wanted to talk about being family, the PRC first needed to dismantle the missile threat to Taiwan.¹¹

For her part, Tsai Ing-wen said she respected Ko's use of the term "one family." On the other hand, she observed that city-to-city exchanges were not based on a "political premise" (政治前提) and were only intended to achieve greater understanding between municipalities.¹² By implication, she was dismissing the notion that this was a model to follow at a higher level.

The KMT Evinces Disarray and Loses Leverage

Meanwhile, although not focusing exclusively on cross-Strait issues, the KMT continued to hammer away at Tsai and the DPP, pressing for a definition of the “status quo” they were seeking to maintain and for details on how they intended to maintain it.

The KMT’s leverage to press this issue was somewhat undermined, however, by the controversy its candidate, LY Deputy Speaker Hung, caused in calling for “advancing” Ma Ying-jeou’s “one China, respective interpretations” (一中各表) formula to “one China, common interpretations” (一中同表), widely taken as an actively pro-unification position. Similarly, Hung’s statement that she “couldn’t say the ROC exists,” later explained to mean that otherwise she would be endorsing state-to-state relations, also caused a ruckus.¹³

By the time Hung was formally nominated at the KMT’s July 19 congress by a 45-second round of applause, she had been reined in and had sworn to adhere to the existing party positions, which were written into the party’s campaign platform.¹⁴ But in the meantime, though Hung asserted she had been grossly misinterpreted and was only seeking to promote Mainland recognition of the existence of the ROC government, not unification, she had already alienated many in the public and frightened many in the party, a number of whom resigned. As one high-ranking KMT member said, “The impact caused by Hung’s remarks is palpable.”¹⁵ Her call to negotiate a cross-Strait peace accord had a similar effect. None of her proposals appeared in the KMT political platform.¹⁶

Both because of her weakness going into the KMT congress, and her continuing poor polling numbers afterward, rumors persisted up until the congress and even afterward that she would either not be nominated or would be replaced. As late as the third week of August, as this article was being written, Hung was still fending off rumors that she would be forced to step down from the nomination, perhaps accepting the position as vice presidential candidate alongside either a KMT “heavyweight” or even People First Party (PFP) veteran James Soong, who announced his candidacy in early August.¹⁷

Hung’s problems within the KMT seemed typified by the differences she appeared to have with party chair Chu Li-luan about whether she would visit the United States.¹⁸ Eventually it appeared decided Hung would not go due to time constraints, but the issue has arisen again¹⁹ and is still unresolved as of this writing. But whether it will be Hung or Chu who takes the lead in making the final decision, Hung has stated that she has “every respect for Chu” and that in the future she would respect his campaign strategy.²⁰

The Horse Race

Once Soong entered the race, he moved slightly ahead of Hung in the polls, and his team seemed to hope that pan-Blue voters would drop support for Hung and move to him at the last minute in order to stave off a DPP victory, a move that in Taiwan political parlance would be called “dump Hung, save Soong” (棄洪保宋). But Tsai’s support in several polls exceeded the combined totals for Hung and Soong,²¹ and thus such a movement seemed an extreme long shot at best.

Some people thought Soong’s main aim was not really to win the presidency but to win a substantial share of votes in that contest and to ensure that the PFP also did reasonably well in the LY election. By denying Tsai an outright majority either for herself or for the DPP in the LY, the PFP would garner some political leverage while ensuring the DPP agenda did not automatically become policy.

As we turn our attention to how the PRC has been addressing future cross-Strait relations, it is worth noting that, at least according to one poll, while economic uncertainties abroad have taken a heavy toll on projections for Taiwan’s economic growth this year,²² investors’ concerns over political uncertainty posed by the January elections overshadow all else. Whereas between 13 and 18 percent of surveyed investors worry about the impact on Taiwan’s economy of such factors as Eurozone debt problems, the pace of economic recovery in emerging markets, further volatility in China’s equity market, or a possible interest rate hike by the U.S. Federal Reserve, over 35 percent of respondents believe that the January 2016 Taiwan presidential election poses a greater threat than anything else to the Taiwan domestic economy.²³

PRC Attitudes

Seeking Clarity from the DPP

As indicated earlier, in the wake of Tsai Ing-wen’s trip to the United States and her carefully crafted positions about basing her cross-Strait policies on the “existing ROC constitutional order” and the “accumulated outcomes” of more than 20 years of negotiations and exchanges,²⁴ Beijing pressed for a clear answer about how Tsai defines the relationship across the Strait and the status quo she says she seeks to maintain.²⁵

Whether phrased in terms of “demands” or articulation of views about what is necessary to maintain peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, the Mainland continued the drumbeat of exhortations on this subject, both in public and in private throughout the recent period. As part of this effort, various elements in the Chinese system expressed concern about the reception Tsai received in Washington and about

studied American neutrality in the election, and they warned that the U.S. should not underestimate the stakes in Taiwan's election or send "wrong signals" to "Taiwan independence forces" about the U.S. position.²⁶

PRC spokespeople continued to insist that the Mainland would not interfere in Taiwan's election (as well they might given the negative experiences when Beijing tried to tilt the table directly in the past). But, as distasteful as some aspects of Ma Ying-jeou's policies may have been for Beijing, and whatever qualms it may harbor about the KMT candidate, it was clear that the Mainland's mistrust of the DPP and Tsai Ing-wen, personally, far outweigh any qualms about the KMT. This may explain why in recent statements Mainland officials have come closer to openly taking sides than in any other recent election.²⁷

Even if some of the things Tsai has been saying during the campaign, including in her important Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) speech, seemed intended to reassure that she would avoid provocation, the dominant tone of remarks from Mainland officials was skeptical and reflected concern about her ultimate intentions. While there were hints that Beijing's response would be "proportionate" to what Tsai said and did, the bottom line was that it would also be "principled," and that there *would be* negative consequences if the next Taiwan administration did not embrace some form of "one China." Clearly those consequences would be far worse if that administration actively rejected "one China" or advocated some form of separatism.

Laying Out the Options

The most important public statement in recent weeks was a speech by TAO Director Zhang Zhijun at a conference on August 6.²⁸ While touting the benefits that have accrued to people on both sides – especially those in Taiwan – over the past seven years under the "1992 Consensus," Zhang echoed an earlier warning by Xi Jinping that cross-strait relations were at an historic juncture. Either they would continue to advance along the path of peaceful development toward a brighter future or they would "retrogress, turn back the wheel of history, once again returning to the evil road of 'Taiwan independence,' causing cross-strait relations once again to sink into tension and turbulence, confrontation and conflict" (走回头路，开历史倒车，重新回到“台独”邪路上去，使两岸关系再次陷入紧张动荡、对抗冲突).

Zhang held out a vision of greater peace and stability rather than instability or conflict in cross-strait relations. Previous gains would be guaranteed and vast opportunities would be opened, whether for cross-strait economic bilateral cooperation in various fields, regional economic cooperation, or Taiwan's participation in international organizations and events.

On the other hand, Zhang warned, the “Taiwan independence” forces that persist in promoting splittist positions constitute the greatest threat to cross-Strait peace, and the biggest obstacle to advancing cross-Strait peaceful development. The Mainland sincerely hoped for a positive course, he said, but with regard to the major issues of upholding national sovereignty and territorial integrity, “our position is clear and steadfast and there will not be the slightest vacillation” (我们旗帜鲜明、立场坚定, 不会有丝毫动摇).

Zhang emphasized that the “essence” (核心意涵) of the “1992 Consensus” is that Taiwan and the Mainland both belong to one and the same China, and that *this* is both the fundamental status quo in cross-Strait relations and an immutable “fact.” Using nautical allusions, Zhang said that upholding the essence would allow cross-Strait relations to break through the waves and maintain course; otherwise, those relations would inevitably go off-course and be battered by the raging storm, ending up on a reef or running aground.²⁹

Zhang rebutted suggestions that the Mainland was slowing the pace of cross-Strait relations, allowing them to stagnate or even move backward. As if to give proof of his point, with Taipei and Beijing having recently agreed to raise the number of round-trip cross-Strait flights to 890 per week from 840,³⁰ the 11th “high-level” Straits Exchange Foundation-Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (SEF-ARATS) meeting (the first in 18 months) was convened in late August in Fuzhou, where agreements on avoidance of double taxation and aviation safety were signed.³¹ Although the issue of instituting transit stops in Taiwan for Mainland passengers heading to onward destinations was discussed, hoped-for progress on the May agreement on this subject between the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) and TAO heads³² did not materialize.³³ When Zhang and his Taiwan counterpart, MAC head Andrew Hsia Li-yan, meet again in September, that subject along with the reciprocal establishment of SEF and ARATS offices will obviously be on the table.³⁴

Zhang’s basic line was, of course, not new. And it was consistent with what he stressed during his mid-August visit to the United States. But the fact that he and others³⁵ continued to press that position with some vigor served to reinforce the impression that there would be meaningful consequences if a new Taiwan administration merely failed to embrace “one China,” even if it avoided attacks on the notion of “one China” or active support for separatism.³⁶

Factoring In the U.S.

It is anticipated that Xi Jinping will raise the issue of Taiwan in his meetings with President Obama in late September, but most observers feel that it will not occupy a prominent place on the agenda. That said, it is obvious that Beijing believes the

United States does not take seriously enough the risks involved – to cross-Strait relations and to U.S.-PRC relations – should the next Taiwan government fail to endorse the “one China” foundation, and Xi may well want to alert Washington to the potential problems.

Meanwhile, the U.S. reaffirmed its “one China policy” after Tsai’s meetings in Washington,³⁷ with the head of the “unofficial” agency that handles Taiwan relations making clear that “stable management of cross-Strait relations has been a major factor that has made possible significant progress these past seven years in U.S.-Taiwan relations.”³⁸ On the other hand, the U.S. reaffirmed its commitments to Taiwan under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act.

We remain committed to fulfilling our responsibilities under the Taiwan Relations Act. Key priorities with Taiwan include ensuring it has the ability to defend itself, and remain free from coercion or intimidation. When free from coercion, Taiwan has increasingly engaged China with confidence.³⁹

Conclusion

As we head into a more intense phase of the Taiwan election campaign, one in which we will presumably see the candidates come together in a head-to-head debate, some elements seem to have firmed up, others remain in flux. In the former category, Tsai Ing-wen seems well settled on her cross-Strait policy. Her main challenge will be holding to that line in the face of pressure from both her political opponents in Taiwan and the Mainland to define her position with greater clarity or else be vulnerable to the charge that, while she is trying to please everyone, in fact she is pleasing no one – or at least not some important audiences.

Hung Hsiu-chu may or may not prosper as the KMT candidate. She has accepted the disciplined platform positions the party has adopted and is unlikely to reiterate the sort of problematic statements she made earlier in the year. It will be of considerable interest to observers of the Taiwan political scene to see how the party seeks to reverse current trends and achieve a victory – including in the LY – that many pundits currently see as all but impossible.

James Soong may not achieve the success he has so long sought in terms of winning the presidency, but he might well make himself a quite relevant player in terms of the new LY structure and his own personal leadership role on Taiwan’s political scene.

While committed to continue benefiting the people of Taiwan, the PRC seems to have firmed up its determination to impose penalties on the next Taiwan government if it refuses to embrace “one China,” something that a DPP administration will likely refuse to do. A victory by either Hung or Soong would, of course, generate a quite

different scenario. But assuming a DPP victory, it remains to be seen how far Beijing will go with its “principled but proportionate” approach.

What the Mainland does will depend on what is said before the January 16 election, between the election and the May 20 inauguration, and in the inauguration speech; and on what is done once a new administration is in office. Some astute observers on the Mainland believe that opportunities were lost during both the Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian administrations to advance cross-Strait relations; they fear Beijing may be about to do the same thing with Tsai Ing-wen. Assuming Tsai wins, and assuming she does not fulfill the Mainland’s worst nightmares by becoming an active separatist once in office, one presumes those people will try to temper Beijing’s reaction. But whether they can have meaningful influence over Xi Jinping’s decisions is questionable, as he seems to be his own closest adviser on matters relating to Taiwan (as on much else). However, at least there is creative thinking going on.

Notes

- 1 “Pan-Greens expect to take 64 seats in the next legislative elections,” Formosa Television News (FTVN), August 20, 2015, <http://englishnews.ftv.com.tw/read.aspx?sno=685E87ABAC6846D036C73670993B4D09>. Tsai has sought to downplay expectations, looking for half of the LY seats in a coalition with others (see below), suggesting that 64 is overly optimistic. (Chao Chia-lin, “Tsai Ing-wen: Respects Ko Wen-je’s statement that ‘the two sides of the Strait are one family’” [蔡英文：尊重柯文哲 “兩岸一家親” 的說法], *China Review News*, August 20, 2015, <http://www.zhghpl.com/doc/1038/9/7/1/103897196.html?coluid=93&kindid=5670&dodid=103897196&mdate=0820160541>. Now at <http://hk.crntt.com/crnwebapp/touch/detail.jsp?coluid=153&kindid=0&dodid=103897196>.)
- 2 Lao Lok-sin, “Tsai signals more space for third-party hopefuls,” *Taipei Times*, June 7, 2015, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2015/06/07/2003620129>.
- 3 Wang Cheng-chung and S.C. Chang, “DPP vows to form legislative, executive coalition if elected,” Central News Agency (hereafter abbreviated as CNA), August 23, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201508230013.aspx>.
- 4 Chi-hao James Lo, “DPP forfeits 11 districts for legislative election,” *China Post*, June 26, 2015, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2015/06/26/439254/DPP-forfeits.htm>.
- 5 “DPP presidential candidate Tsai downplays expectations while KMT’s Hung reassures supporters,” FTVN, August 21, 2015, <http://englishnews.ftv.com.tw/read.aspx?sno=59B26E3C8DB607B55D39552BE34F70C4>.
- 6 “Taiwan Affairs Office: DPP must clearly answer what the relationship is between the two sides of the Strait” (国台办：民进党需明确回答两岸之间是什么关系), June 10, 2015, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201506/t20150610_10005936.htm.
- 7 Stephanie Chao, “Tsai sets out four missions to complete following US tour,” *China Post*, June 11, 2015, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2015/06/11/438145/Tsai-sets>.

htm. The four missions were to improve negotiations with third-party forces for the LY election; have DPP-backed think tanks continually put forward policy proposals on current issues such as long-term care, unemployment, a new economic system, food safety and other social welfare issues; have DPP members from local governments propose a “consolidated governance plan” to carry out the “regional governance” approach raised in 2014; and to hold a transparent election campaign as a precondition for uniting and renovating the nation.

- 8 Lu Hsin-hui and Lilian Wu, “DPP head to promote cross-Strait ties under Constitution: spokesman,” CNA, June 10, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201506100019.aspx>.
- 9 Ko said he believed that under current conditions, the two sides should conduct exchanges based on what he called the “2015 new perspective” (一五新觀點), i.e., adhering to mutual trust, mutual understanding, mutual respect, and mutual cooperation. (“Ko: I respect Mainland’s position on ‘1992 Consensus,’” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), August 4, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=16542>.) Defending his statement, Ko said he meant his “one family” remark as a gesture of “goodwill.” (Huang Li-yun and Y.F. Low, “Taipei mayor explains controversial ‘one family’ remark,” CNA, August 22, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201508220018.aspx>.)
Beijing’s only reported response was from Politburo Standing Committee member Yu Zhengsheng, who was quoted as saying Ko’s reference to “one family” was a “good thing” (好事). (Chèn Yan-ch’iao, “Regarding Ko Wen-je’s statement on the two sides of the Strait being one family, Yu Zhengsheng: Good thing” [柯提兩岸一家親 俞正聲：好事], *United Daily News* [hereafter abbreviated UDN], August 21, 2015, <http://paper.udn.com/udnpaper/PID0005/283855/web/#2L-6282688L>.)
- 10 Sean Lin, “Ko comes under fire from pro-independence groups,” *Taipei Times*, August 22, 2015, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2015/08/22/2003625922>.
- 11 “Are the two sides of the Strait one family? God Lai says ‘distant relatives,’ and [in any case] first remove the missiles” (兩岸一家親? 賴神籲「遠親」先撤飛彈掉), *Liberty Times*, August 19, 2015, <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1417730>; “Lai on Ko’s ‘Both sides of the Strait are like family’ remark: Echo unlikely in Taiwan,” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), August 20, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=16623>.
- 12 Chao Chia-lin, “Tsai Ing-wen: Respects Ko Wen-je’s statement that ‘the two sides of the Strait are one family’” (see endnote 1).
- 13 Chen Yan-t’ing, “Hung Hsiu-chu: I can’t say the ROC exists, otherwise . . .” (洪秀柱：我不能說中華民國存在 否則 . . .), *Liberty Times*, July 2, 2015, <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1367208>.
- 14 “Hung: I will adjust my cross-Strait policy discourse,” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), July 8, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=16418>.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 “KMT releases draft of new political platform,” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), June 26, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=16362>.
- 17 Alison Hsiao, “KMT’s Hung vows not to quit,” *Taipei Times*, July 30, 2015, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2015/07/30/2003624230>; Tseng Ying-yu and Lilian Wu, “Hung quashes rumors of her quitting presidential race,” CNA, August 19, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201508190032.aspx>.
- 18 “KMT’s Hung ‘unlikely’ to visit US, says source,” *China Post*, June 22, 2015, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2015/06/22/438954/KMTs-Hung.htm>. Hung argued that time was short and, although the U.S. really didn’t know her, she did not need to visit the United States because Washington clearly understood her cross-Strait policy. (Tai Ya-chen and

- Y.F. Low, “National interest main consideration whether to visit U.S.: Hung,” CNA, June 20, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201506200023.aspx>; Alison Hsiao, “US doesn’t understand me, Hung says,” *Taipei Times*, June 20, 2015, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2015/06/20/2003621139.>)
- 19 Wang Cheng-chung and Y.F. Low, “No decision yet on whether to visit U.S.: KMT presidential candidate,” CNA, August 18, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201508180024.aspx>.
 - 20 “Hung: No two suns within the KMT,” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), June 23, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=16344>.
 - 21 Typical results were seen in the Taiwan Indicator Survey Research (TISR) poll of mid-August, which showed Tsai holding at 37.1 percent, Soong at 20.5 percent, and Hung at 13.9 percent. (TISR_TMBS_201508_1, 台灣民心動態調查、總統參選人評價, August 14, 2015, http://taiwansecurity.org/files/archive/381_40b74183.pdf.) A TVBS poll from the same period showed Tsai at 38 percent, Soong at 20 percent, and Hung at 17 percent. (蘇迪勒風災後, 2016 總統大選民調, August 11, 2015, http://cc.tvbs.com.tw/portal/file/poll_center/2017/20170602/0408061.pdf.) In both cases this represented an increase for Tsai over preceding weeks, a basically steady support rate for Soong, and a precipitous drop for Hung. In both polls, the fall in Hung’s numbers was reflected in every demographic group regardless of age, geography, or party affiliation.
 - 22 Earlier projections of growth in 2015 in the neighborhood of 3.5 percent dropped precipitously to 1.56 percent following poor performance in the second quarter according to the official estimates as of mid-August. (Directorate-General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, Executive Yuan, ROC [Taiwan], “GDP: Preliminary estimation for 2015Q2 and outlook for 2015–6, August 14, 2015, <http://eng.dgbas.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=37987&ctNode=3339>.) Growth in 2016 was forecast at 2.7 percent.
 - 23 Tien Yu-pin and Frances Huang, “Investors worried over political uncertainty in Taiwan: poll,” CNA, August 20, 2015, http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/etn/news_content.php?id=2790897, reporting on a poll taken by the Cathay Financial Holding Company.
 - 24 Alan D. Romberg, “Squaring the Circle: Adhering to Principle, Embracing Ambiguity,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 47, July 14, 2015, p. 3, <http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm47ar.pdf>.
 - 25 Tsai may face increasing pressure on this issue from the KMT, as well. A recent article in the Taiwan press observed that when one takes into account how the “Republic of China” was defined in the Lee Teng-hui era, in which Tsai played a key role, questions arise about whether Tsai’s ambiguous phrasing does not, in fact, conceal a commitment to the “two states theory.” (Shao Zonghai, “One cannot over look the implied meaning of Tsai Ing-wen’s ‘existing constitutional order’” [邵宗海：不能忽略蔡英文「現行憲政體制」的話外音], August 21, 2015, *China Times*, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20150821003936-260409>.)
 - 26 “China reprimands US over Taiwan meeting,” Xinhua, June 10, 2015, http://www.chinadailyasia.com/nation/2015-06/10/content_15275107.html; Zhang Weiran and Diao Haiyan, “Fan Changlong calls on U.S. side not to send wrong signals to Taiwan independence forces before elections” (范长龙要求美方在台湾大选前不向“台独”势力发错误信号), *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, June 13, 2015, <http://military.people.com.cn/n/2015/0613/c1011-27149495.html>.
 - 27 At a press conference in late August, having underscored the critical importance of the “1992 Consensus” as the essential foundation of political trust and related consultation mechanisms, TAO head Zhang Zhijun pointedly concluded that he had faith the Taiwan people “can make the proper choice” (能夠做出正確選擇; Kuo Mei-chun, “Zhang Zhijun: Without the 1992 Consensus, I’m afraid the cross-Strait consultative mechanism will

- collapse” [張志軍：沒九二共識 兩岸協商機制恐塌], UDN, August 26, 2015, <http://udn.com/news/story/8525/1146172>).
- 28 The full text of Zhang’s remarks is available at http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201508/t20150806_10418375.htm.
- 29 Zhang’s counterpart, Hsia Li-yan, a couple of weeks later rebutted Zhang’s definition of the “core” of the “1992 Consensus,” saying it was to defend the sovereignty of the Republic of China under the formula “one China, respective interpretations.” (“Zhang Zhijun: Cross-Strait relations face two choices,” KMT News Network [from Taipei papers], August 17, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=16603>.)
- 30 Lee Hsin-yin, “Cross-Strait scheduled flights increased to 890 per week,” CNA, July 3, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201507030019.aspx>.
- 31 As it has been explained to this writer by a senior official at the MAC, the double taxation agreement will require LY approval since it entails amendment of existing Taiwan laws. Given the stalemate over an LY oversight bill, for the moment that agreement is unlikely to be taken up. The aviation safety agreement, however, does not affect existing legislation, so will only need to be sent to the LY for its information and can proceed without LY action. (Private correspondence.)
- 32 Romberg, “Squaring the Circle,” endnote 63, p. 22 (see endnote 24).
- 33 Unsurprisingly, each side points a finger at the other as the one responsible for failure to come to terms. Taiwan has indicated that Beijing is insisting on crossing the center line at this stage, which Taipei considers a security threat. A Mainland official involved in cross-Strait affairs, however, was quoted as saying that “Beijing never said it wanted to immediately cross the center line of the Taiwan Strait but Taipei merely tried to avoid any discussion about this issue. This is too passive.” Moreover, that official charged that it was unreasonable for Taiwan to request that the Mainland increase the number of flights while refusing to expand flight routes, and to call on the Mainland to grant Mainland travelers permission to transit through Taiwan before completing the Taoyuan Aerotropolis project. (“Transits of Mainland travelers in Taiwan not included in new SEF-ARATS agreements,” *China Times* [translated in KMT News Network], August 19, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=16620>.) Nonetheless, both sides say they are committed to resolving the problems, and now seem somewhat more optimistic about the prospects for agreement by the end of the year.
- 34 Before the latest high-level SEF-ARATS meeting, Taiwan officials said a commodities trade agreement was unlikely to be concluded by the end of 2015. (Lin Meng-ju and Romulo Huang, “Pre-negotiation talks on cross-Strait trade pact set for Beijing,” CNA, August 17, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201508170033.aspx>). After that meeting, however, negotiators held out hope that such an agreement could, in fact, be wrapped up by the end of the year. (Hung Chiao-wen and Lee Hsin-Yin, “Officials hope to conclude cross-Strait trade pact before year-end,” CNA, August 21, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/asoc/201508210029.aspx>.) Moreover, although no date was set for the next SEF-ARATS high-level meeting, major items to be addressed were said to include not only the pending transit agreement but cooperation on environmental protection, reciprocal establishment of SEF and ARATS offices, the commodities trade pact and dispute resolution agreement that remain to be negotiated under the June 2010 Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), along with exchanges in education, culture, and science and technology. (“Mainland, Taiwan sign agreements on flights safety, Taxation,” Xinhua, August 16, 2015, http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2015-08/26/content_36416156.htm.)
- 35 Zhang Zhijun’s deputy, Li Yafei, addressed a conference in mid-August where he made similar points. Without “naming names,” he said that if there were individuals persisting in taking the “Taiwan independence” position of “one country on each side [of the Strait]” or rejecting the

common political foundation of the “1992 Consensus” while claiming that they could inherit and share the results of cross-Strait peaceful development, they were not only engaged in self-delusion and wishful thinking, they were cheating and misleading Taiwan society and people. (Wang Yu-yan, “TAO’s Li Yafei: If cross-Strait relations are unstable, I’m afraid exchanges will retrogress” [國台辦李亞飛：兩岸關係不穩 交流恐倒退], UDN, August 20, 2015, <http://paper.udn.com/udnpaper/PID0005/283758/web/#2L-6278290L>.)

Speaking at the same conference as Li, Zhou Zhihui, head of the Taiwan Studies Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), was even more direct. He said the DPP lacked four capabilities necessary to maintain peace and stability in cross-Strait relations: the capability to maintain cross-Strait peace (because it would not abandon support for the Taiwan independence movement); the capability to deal with cross-Strait relations (because it did not endorse the common political foundation); the capability to develop cross-Strait economic and trade relations (because of Tsai’s pursuit of an economic development model that did not depend on the Mainland); and the capability to deal with Taiwan-U.S. relations (because cross-Strait problems would undermine the stability of Taipei-Washington ties). (“Zhou Zhihui: DPP cannot maintain cross-Strait peace and stability,” KMT News Network [from Taipei papers], August 12, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=16582>.)

Finally, Zhou’s deputy, Zhu Weidong, gave a lengthy talk at the Central Party School on July 21 entitled “The current Taiwan situation and the future prospects for the development of cross-Strait relations” (当前台湾局势与两岸关系发展前景. A video of the lecture is available at <http://www.71.cn/2015/0721/823485.shtml>; the text is at <http://www.71.cn/2015/0721/823494.shtml>.) Although Zhu said he is a long-term optimist, he highlighted a number of immediate challenges. One is that Tsai Ing-wen advocates “soft independence,” not the sort of readily identifiable (and hence easily opposed) threat represented by a plan to declare *de jure* independence. Moreover, Zhu noted, the KMT is very weak and unable to present a counterforce to contain the DPP’s independence tendencies, especially in the LY. Still, given his long-term perspective, Zhu argued that the Mainland should make no compromises on its principled stand, but rather should use its economic leverage to bring Tsai around to accept what is necessary. Also of note, Zhu argued that the U.S. does not want to see cross-Strait relations develop too fast, and so, despite previous support for Ma and surface neutrality in this election, Washington not only is willing to acquiesce in the DPP’s return to power but would be happy to see Tsai win in order to slow the pace of cross-Strait reconciliation. (Similar reasoning seems to be making the rounds in certain circles in Taiwan as well.)

- 36 “Zhang Zhijun: Cross-Strait relations face two choices,” see endnote 29.
- 37 Daily Press Briefing, Department of State, June 5, 2015, <https://20092017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2015/06/243249.htm#CHINA>.
- 38 Rita Cheng, Huang Chao-ping, and Lilian Wu, “Stable cross-Strait ties key to growing U.S.-Taiwan ties: AIT head,” CNA, July 13, 2015, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/2770562>.
- 39 Daily Press Briefing, Department of State, August 13, 2015, 2015, <https://20092017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2015/08/246080.htm#CHINA3>.

The “1992 Consensus” – Adapting to the Future?

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In the January 16, 2016, Taiwan presidential and legislative elections, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) inflicted a devastating defeat on the incumbent Kuomintang (KMT or Nationalist Party). As a result, Taiwan politics will likely undergo massive changes in the years ahead. Realizing the economic and social changes President-elect Tsai Ing-wen has promised will also be extremely challenging. Overlaying and seriously affecting all of these efforts will be the dynamic of cross-Strait relations. This essay focuses on that last question.

Introduction

Despite the best efforts of the KMT to focus voters’ attention on what it saw as the inadequacies and risks of Tsai Ing-wen’s rather vague reassurances that she could maintain the cross-Strait status quo of peace and stability, Taiwan voters seem to have been convinced by her stance, and the issue did not play a very big role in the election. Now that the election is over, however, Taiwan – and Tsai – must face the reality that the course of ties to the Mainland will have an enormous impact on Taiwan’s future.

The focus of attention in Beijing has been on the central importance of adhering to the “1992 Consensus” and opposing “Taiwan independence.” The former means acceptance that Taiwan and the Mainland belong to one and the same China, while the latter means ceding any option for Taiwan’s people to choose their own future.

Given her own history and that of her party, there is no way Tsai will directly accede to either condition. But the Mainland has said that if she does not, then, in Xi Jinping’s words, “the earth will move and the mountains will shake” and all manner of existing relationships will be cut off. Further cross-Strait negotiations will come to a halt and implementation of existing ones could become questionable. Given Taiwan’s economic dependence on the Mainland market and on other relationships with the People’s Republic of China (PRC), as well as Beijing’s influence over Taiwan’s economic partners, the costs could be quite serious.

The consequences would also likely involve curtailing much of Taiwan's activity in international organizations and poaching by Beijing of a number of Taiwan's 22 remaining diplomatic partners.

While Beijing has been steadfast in its demands, Tsai has tried to find ways to convince both the voters and the leaders on the Mainland that she is not going to overturn either the bases or substance of the achievements over the eight years since the last DPP president, Chen Shui-bian, stepped down and the KMT's Ma Ying-jeou assumed office. Among the most important steps was her Washington speech in June. But against a background of deep mistrust of Tsai for her role in both the Chen and the Lee Teng-hui administrations, each step, while ostensibly helpful, also fed doubts in Beijing about how she would define the terms she was using. For example, when she spoke of observing the "existing ROC [Republic of China] constitutional order," did that mean acceptance of the constitutional provisions that incorporate both Taiwan and the Mainland into the Republic of China? That was unclear, and many on the Mainland were prepared to assume the worst.

Tsai also refrained from attacking the "1992 Consensus" and spoke in terms that seemed to point to an embrace of the achievements under the rubric of the Consensus. But she did not refer to the Consensus or indicate that she accepted its "core connotation," as the PRC would define it: that Taiwan and the Mainland both belong to one and the same China.

Since the election, Tsai has voiced some views that have taken her further toward Beijing's position than ever before, albeit still avoiding directly endorsing the Mainland's mantra or abandoning the principles that she has previously espoused. The PRC has not clearly rejected her position, but – unsurprisingly – there are numerous indications that it is not satisfied with what some have called Tsai's "micro-adjustments" and that it wants her to be more explicit.

We clearly have not heard the last word on the subject, and our purpose in this essay is to lay out in some detail the course of the "dialogue" over the past several months as background for understanding its evolution over the near to medium term, as Tsai moves toward her inauguration on May 20 and her presidency.

Adhering to the 1992 Consensus: Before the Election

Throughout the fall and up until the January 16, 2016 election, Beijing maintained a steady drumbeat about the central importance of adhering to the "1992 Consensus" (and its core assumption that Taiwan and the Mainland belong to one and the same China (大陆和台湾同属一个中国) and of opposing "Taiwan independence" if cross-strait relations were to remain on an even keel. As in the past, sometimes this was expressed in "positive" ways (as long as we adhere to this path, we can create a wonderful

future¹). Often, however, this happy vision was paired with a dire warning that failure to endorse the “one China” essence of the “1992 Consensus” would lead to the collapse of political trust and systematic negotiating mechanisms, and likely result in disaster.² Any responsible political party needed to take a clear stance, Beijing insisted.

Most readers will know that these were not new or unusual themes, but they were repeated essentially without let-up. Against this background, the KMT, whether President Ma, the original KMT presidential nominee Hung Hsiu-chu, or the eventual nominee Eric Chu Li-luan, pummeled Tsai Ing-wen, insisting that she explain how she could fulfill her promise to maintain the status quo of peace and stability without accepting the “1992 Consensus.” Tsai declined to go beyond her early June position that she would “push for the peaceful and stable development of cross-Strait relations in accordance with the will of the Taiwanese people and the existing ROC constitutional order” and that the “accumulated outcomes of more than twenty years of negotiations and exchanges...will serve as the firm basis of my efforts to further the peaceful and stable development of cross-Strait relations,”³ and most public opinion polls revealed that respondents trusted in her ability to succeed.

In the course of adhering to this position, Tsai had to parry pressure from all sides. Among the more sensitive challenges was a statement by Tainan mayor William Lai Ching-te advocating Taiwan independence.⁴ Although not wanting to break with an important rising DPP leader, Tsai had to quell the media furor that this created. She sought to do so by saying that there was “no need to blow this issue out of proportion” (沒有必要去無限上綱). Rather, she reiterated her basic position as spelled out in the Washington speech, and “explained” that Lai’s basic meaning, like hers, was that the two sides could mutually understand one another and get along peacefully.⁵

From the other end of the spectrum, the KMT supported the “1992 Consensus” vigorously, warning that failure to adhere to it would overturn the achievements of peaceful development garnered over the years since Ma assumed office in 2008.

Having based his cross-Strait policy on it for over seven years, Ma Ying-jeou offered perhaps the most spirited defense of the “1992 Consensus” and its critical role in maintaining productive cross-Strait relations. Of five principles he identified in his 2015 National Day address as having helped maintain the cross-Strait status quo over his term of office,⁶ the most important, he said, was the “1992 Consensus.” “If we diverge from it, relations will deteriorate. And if we oppose it, there will be turmoil in the Taiwan Strait.” Clearly aiming his words at Tsai Ing-wen, who was sitting immediately behind him, Ma said: “Without the ‘1992 Consensus,’ ‘maintaining the status quo’ is just a slogan – empty words that can never become a tangible reality, or help promote peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait.”

Ma-Xi Meeting

When Ma met with PRC leader Xi Jinping in Singapore on November 7 in an event scrupulously choreographed to ensure that dignity and prerogatives were preserved on both sides,⁷ a clear goal of both leaders was to consolidate their common commitment to the “1992 Consensus” as the essential element that had made possible the wide range of positive results since 2008 and led eventually to their historic meeting. Although they did not seek a common definition of that Consensus – it was no more within reach that day than any other day – they shared the view that it was its “one China” essence that had been the critical element.⁸ Ma expressed this explicitly in his closed-door meeting with Xi.

The consensus reached between the two sides in November 1992 is that both sides of the Taiwan Strait insist on the “one China” principle, and each side can express its interpretation verbally; this is the 1992 Consensus of “one China, respective interpretations.” For our part, we stated that the interpretation does not involve “two Chinas,” “one China and one Taiwan,” or “Taiwan independence,” as the Republic of China Constitution does not allow it.⁹

When Ma was asked at the post-meeting press conference about the impact if the next president does not accept the 1992 Consensus, he responded indirectly.

The two sides today have a clear consensus that the 1992 Consensus is the primary foundation that has allowed cross-Strait relations to make tremendous advances over the past seven years, and created the most stable and peaceful cross-Strait relations we have seen in the past 66 years. Mr. Xi and I both hold this view... Without the 1992 Consensus, how would today be possible?¹⁰

As one would have anticipated, the DPP attacked the meeting both before it took place and afterward. Nonetheless, doubtless considering that she might want to participate in a Tsai-Xi meeting at some point, Tsai and her colleagues avoided criticizing cross-Strait leadership meetings in principle. Indeed, Tsai said she would not rule out such a meeting if “relevant conditions are met” regarding following “democratic procedure,” with open information, transparency, and monitoring by the legislature.¹¹ And DPP Secretary General Joseph Wu said there was no objection to normalizing such meetings, again, as long as the process was transparent.¹²

But Tsai slammed Ma for having planned everything in secret and informing the public “in such a hurried fashion.”¹³ This was “harmful to Taiwan’s democratic politics,” she insisted, accusing Ma, as she had done with regard to many of his cross-Strait dealings, of having conducted arrangements “in a black box.”¹⁴

On the eve of the meeting Tsai called on Ma to respect democracy, eschew political conditions, and maintain equality and dignity. Without that, she said, it would only be a “news-making moment,” not an “historic moment.”¹⁵ Immediately after the

meeting concluded she said none of these goals had been achieved, predicting that Ma would return home to even greater controversy about cross-Strait relations than before he went to Singapore.¹⁶ She launched a withering attack on Ma’s performance as “disappointing, even infuriating to a lot of people,” and charged that he had created more anxiety and division among the people by attempting to lock Taiwan’s future into a political framework out of consideration for his own political status.¹⁷

No doubt the attacks and expressions of skepticism had something to do with the decision to release the transcript of the closed-door Ma-Xi meeting, both to rebut the charges of secrecy and to demonstrate, even beyond what Ma had spelled out in his Singapore press conference, the ways he had, in fact, laid out for Xi his definition of the “1992 Consensus” as “one China, respective interpretations,” affirmed the “Republic of China,” pressed for more international space, and stressed the importance of according people in Taiwan dignity and respect.¹⁸

Some speculated that Ma had arranged the meeting as a way of promoting the KMT in the upcoming election or to consolidate his own legacy. The first seems unlikely at that stage, though there may well have been an element of the latter. But primarily, the meeting was an effort to lock in, to the extent possible, the “1992 Consensus” as the mutually acknowledged basis for promoting stable and productive cross-Strait relations.

Xi Jinping, of course, shared this objective. Although Xi did not strike any notably new themes, he noted that the development of cross-Strait relations currently faced a choice regarding its direction and path.¹⁹ Hence, while he seized the occasion to press for faithfulness to the “one China” principle, he also raised, briefly but pointedly, the dangers of not doing so. Without that common foundation, he said, “the boat of peaceful development will encounter terrifying waves or even capsizes.”

Zhang Zhijun Lays Out the Standard

Of some importance in assessing the significance of the nuanced adjustment in Tsai Ing-wen’s rhetoric after the election (to be discussed below), it is worth focusing for a moment on what Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) director Zhang Zhijun said in his Singapore press conference about Xi’s position regarding acknowledgement of the “1992 Consensus.” The language wasn’t particularly new, but it provides a standard against which to judge Tsai’s later position.

Xi Jinping emphasized that he hoped all Taiwan political parties and organizations could squarely face up to the “1992 Consensus,” that no matter which political party or organization, and no matter what its past advocacy had been, *as long as it recognized the historical fact of the 1992 Consensus and accepted its core connotation*, we are willing to interact with it.²⁰

PRC Perceptions of Tsai

Throughout this period, Tsai Ing-wen was still seen by Beijing as evasive regarding the “1992 Consensus.” Mainland observers noted that she had stopped denying its existence since spring, but focused on the fact that she nonetheless still declined to embrace it.

Asked in late November what the DPP would do if the Mainland insisted on adherence to the “one China” principle, the 1992 Consensus, and opposition to Taiwan independence, Tsai responded with a pitch for “candid talks.” Arguing that any pledges contrary to Taiwan public opinion could not long endure, she said, “I believe that the Mainland authorities will respect Taiwan’s public opinions and take them into consideration when making decisions.”²¹

Responding to these comments, a TAO spokesman told a press conference that as long as parties agreed on the “core meaning” of the 1992 Consensus cross-Strait exchanges should continue. He said that the “core” of the Consensus is to oppose “state-to-state” relations across the Strait, which is another way of saying that Taiwan and the Mainland both belong to the same one China.²²

Tsai Argues for Balance, Dialogue, and Respect

Tsai spent some effort arguing that while her policy toward the Mainland would be one of “no provocation and no surprises,” and that she would continue to safeguard cross-Strait stability on the basis of the ROC constitutional order, still, policy needed to be based on the people’s will and in conformity with the people’s interests “regardless of any political party stance.” “Beijing’s attitude is very important,” she said. But in a democratic society, where the people’s will is very important, “there is a need to balance” Beijing’s attitude with the popular will.²³

In the December 27 presidential debate, Tsai laid out her position on the “1992 Consensus” at some length.

I have said that both sides did have a meeting in Hong Kong in 1992, but everyone had different opinions at the meeting. However, they at least agreed on pushing cross-Strait relations forward based on mutual understanding and setting aside differences and seeking common ground. We do not deny the historical fact. We accept it. However, on how to interpret the historical fact and use what name to call it, everyone has different opinions. As a result, my position is simple. On this matter, we continue to set aside differences and seek common ground, and sit down to have a conversation. We can talk about anything. This is a very rational attitude. I also believe the Chinese mainland side will hold a rational attitude to interact with the DPP. After all, Taiwan is a democratic society. In a democracy, there must be party alternation and there must be parties with different positions in office. Accordingly, I believe both the Chinese leader and the policy-makers

will realize that it is the reality of the democratic life in Taiwan and that they will show us some respect.²⁴

It was during that debate that Tsai said “the 1992 Consensus is an option, but not the only option” (九二共識是一個選項但不是唯一的選項),²⁵ a statement that caused some of the more independence-minded members of the DPP to fear she was cracking the door to possible acceptance of that concept. However, Tsai quickly “clarified” that what she meant was that both sides had sat down and talked about different interpretations and wordings in 1992, but while they disagreed, the “most important conclusions and achievements made at that time” were found in the spirit of the meeting to “reach mutual understanding, seek common ground and reserve differences.”²⁶

Beijing’s Reaction

Beijing’s reaction was not long in coming. The TAO spokesman said that in 1992, the two “white glove” organizations, Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Mainland’s Association on Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) had, “on authority” (受权), not only held talks, but had agreed that the two sides of the Strait belonged to the same one China and that cross-Strait relations were not state-to-state relations. This consensus, the spokesman maintained, “clearly defined” (明确界定了) the fundamental character of cross-Strait relations.²⁷ This was “crystal clear” (十分清楚).

Implying possible consequences if the consensus were no longer in effect, the spokesman said that the “1992 Consensus” was not only the common political foundation of consultations and negotiations, but also the common political foundation for the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations since 2008 and the reason that the Taiwan region had maintained peaceful stability and gained other benefits. The key to upholding the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, he said, was “to recognize the historical fact of the ‘1992 Consensus’ and accept its core meaning” (承认“九二共识”的历史

事实, 认同其核心意涵). It was the “anchor” (定海神針) of cross-Strait relations, and if it were destroyed, peaceful development of relations would be thoroughly overturned.

As the election approached, although she had denied that she as yet had a channel to Beijing,²⁸ Tsai opined that the key to dealing with Xi Jinping was to “communicate, communicate, and communicate.”²⁹

Adhering to the 1992 Consensus: After the Election

On election night, Tsai reiterated her cross-Strait position much as she had articulated it in the campaign, albeit in somewhat abbreviated form.³⁰

In its immediate reaction to the elections, the TAO “noted” the results and reiterated the central role of the “political foundation” (政治基础) of adhering to the “1992 Consensus” and opposing “Taiwan independence” in garnering all of the achievements of the past eight years. Expressing a willingness to enhance contacts and exchanges with all political parties and groups that recognize both sides belong to “one China” and so forth, the statement held to the Mainland’s consistent approach to the fundamentals.

Our major policies and principles toward Taiwan are consistent and clear and will not change because of the outcomes of the elections in Taiwan region. We will continue to adhere to the “1992 Consensus” and resolutely oppose any forms of “Taiwan independence” splittist activities. On the major principled issue of safeguarding national sovereignty and territorial integrity our will is as firm as a rock and our attitude has always been consistent.³¹

Both through what one assumes were authorized editorials as well as commentaries, the media immediately noted Tsai’s caution in her victory speech about pursuing a “consistent, predictable, and sustainable” cross-Strait policy; her ceasing to deny the existence of the Consensus; and her stress on seeking common ground while reserving differences. Based on these factors, and on their view that dissatisfaction with the Ma administration and the KMT was the root cause of the election result, they maintained that the vote was neither a gauge³² nor a mandate³³ for independence. At the same time, some cautioned that the Mainland should be “more prudent” toward the power shift in Taiwan, not wavering in opposing any form of pro-independence movement but also adhering to a policy that maintains the importance of peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. Some noted that the rise of a multifaceted “Taiwan national identity” was perhaps the gravest challenge for the Mainland’s cross-Strait policy.

The dismissal of cross-Strait relations as a salient issue in the campaign or a defining issue in the election outcome was, in fact, strongly echoed by DPP Secretary General Joseph Wu Jaushieh in a speech in Washington in January.³⁴ Taking pains to say that the election outcome was not a “defeat” for “China,” instead, he said, what the DPP found people cared about were the general economic situation, food safety issues, long-term care, income distribution, housing cost, pension reform, and social housing. He also said the DPP victory was due not only to the party platform, but also to the enthusiastic support of voters below 40 years of age, public discontent with local KMT administrators, and the DPP’s determined assumption of balanced positions on potentially controversial foreign affairs issues. Assuming Wu is correct about the low relevance of cross-Strait issues despite the emphasis placed on them by the KMT and the PRC’s steady drumbeat on the theme, the most obvious explanation for this is that voters put faith in Tsai’s pledge to maintain the status quo of peace and stability and in her ability to follow through.

The Liberty Times Interview

Interestingly, Tsai’s response to Beijing’s initial commentary was to compliment the Mainland’s attitude before the election. “The best form of communication takes place when the other side understands your good will,” she said. “The other side of the Strait actually showed a high degree of restraint. This kind of understanding, appreciation, and good will makes the best form of communication.”³⁵

This otherwise somewhat odd comment is perhaps explained by looking at Wu’s speech and the hint he gave about what was to come two days later: “I’m sure there will be more opportunities for us to send goodwill out to the Chinese side, and I also hope that the Chinese side can respond in a reciprocate [sic] manner so that the cross-Strait relations can move on and the confidence and the trust can be built step-by-step.”

What was to come two days later was an interview Tsai Ing-wen gave to *Liberty Times*, headlined “Tsai Ing-wen: 1992 is an historical fact, promoting cross-Strait relations.” Tsai began by noting that her position on “maintaining the status quo” represented mainstream public opinion, and that maintaining peace and stable development of cross-Strait relations was both the common expectation of both sides and their common responsibility.

She then went on to voice positions on the future conduct and basis of cross-Strait relations in carefully chosen language. Some of it was quite familiar, but there were important nuanced formulations.

During the press conference on election night I said the future foundation for cross-Strait relations will be based on the existing ROC constitutional order, the results of cross-Strait negotiations, interactions and exchanges, as well as democratic principles and the will of the Taiwan people. As president-elect, I reaffirm that after the new administration takes office on May 20, it will transcend partisan politics (秉持超越黨派的立場), respect the will and consensus of the Taiwan people, and be mindful of the public interest (以人民利益為依歸) in maintaining cross-Strait peace and stability, based on the existing ROC constitutional order.

In 1992, SEF and ARATS engaged in discussions and negotiations based on the political mindset of mutual understanding as well as the need to set aside differences and seek common ground. They achieved several common understandings and acknowledgements (若干的共同認知與諒解). I understand and respect this historical fact (我理解和尊重這個歷史事實). I also believe that both sides of the strait should cherish and protect the accumulated status quo and outcomes (協商所累積形成的現狀及成果) that have been the result of more than 20 years of exchanges and negotiations between the two since 1992. On the basis of this fact and the existing political foundation (在這個基本事實與既有政治基礎上), we

should continue to move forward on the peace, stability, and development of cross-Strait relations.³⁶

Tsai argued that the biggest difference between the incoming administration and the Ma administration on cross-Strait policy was her government's adherence to the people's will and democracy as two big pillars of managing that policy, as well as its insistence on guaranteeing to the people of Taiwan the right to choose in the future. In this context, she laid out four "key elements" (關鍵元素) that comprised the "existing political foundation" she had referred to.

The first is the historical fact of SEF-ARATS discussions of 1992 and that both sides had a common understanding to set aside differences and seek common ground. The second is the Republic of China's current constitutional order. The third is the accumulated results of the more than 20 years of cross-Strait negotiations, exchanges and interactions. The fourth is Taiwan's democratic principles and the general will of the Taiwan people.³⁷

While these four elements did not meet the Mainland's definition, in the other two paragraphs she took a step forward, not to abandon her previous position but to bring it closer into line with Beijing's view in at least two respects. First, she had previously gone no further than to acknowledge the "historical fact" that the meetings had taken place in 1992 and that the two sides had agreed to set aside differences and seek common ground. Here, however, she said that they had "achieved several understandings and acknowledgements" and that she "understands and respects that historical fact."

This brought her much closer to the PRC insistence that what was achieved in 1992 was not simply a process but substantive agreements. She doesn't say that those "understandings and acknowledgements" were with regard to the existence of "one China," but it does not require too much of a leap to conclude that this is within the scope of what she was talking about – and that it was the "historical fact" regarding those aspects for which she was expressing "understanding and respect."

Second, although she has persistently declined to embrace Beijing's concept of a "common political foundation" (共同政治基础), here she adopted new language regarding an "existing political foundation." Again, it was not precisely the formulation that the Mainland was calling for (and certainly neither was the definition she then assigned to it), but it would seem clearly to have been designed to recognize that there is a "political foundation" and that she accepts that fact.

There are at least three other points worth noting in the interview. One is Tsai's assertion that her administration will "transcend partisan politics" – again, not new, but in this context a reminder that she will not be the agent of the DPP (which isn't even mentioned in the interview) but president of all the people. Another is her reference to the "accumulated status quo and outcomes," going beyond the previous formulation on the "accumulated outcomes." And the third is her statement that she

not only will respect the people’s will but also “be mindful of the public interest.” This suggests that she is willing to take hard decisions on the basis of *realpolitik* where necessary in Taiwan’s interest in maintaining cross-Strait peace and stability. There is no suggestion of a “sell-out” of democracy and public will here, though undoubtedly some people will worry about that. But it is a clear statement that she will not be bound by formulaic partisan ideological considerations when she can make progress by embracing pragmatism while not abandoning principle.

The Mainland’s Response

The report of the TAO’s response was also noteworthy.³⁸

First, the Xinhua report on the response managed to put in the mouth of the questioner the entire second paragraph cited in full above, ensuring that readers would know what Tsai said.

Second, although the spokesman referred to the essential role of adherence to and maintenance of the “common political foundation” for steady, long-term peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, in his lead substantive sentence, he referred to the “1992 Consensus” only as “the political foundation” of peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. He didn’t fail to mention that the core connotation was that the two sides of the Strait belong to “one China.” But by leaving out “common” in the first reference to the foundation, one might imagine he was echoing to some extent Tsai’s language.

Finally, the response did not criticize Tsai nor, as the TAO has been known to do on other occasions, say that “this won’t work” (行不通). This did not imply agreement with what Tsai said, or that her remarks measured up to Beijing’s standards. But by not rejecting what she said, it left open the possibility that the Mainland views this as not only a step forward, but likely as much as they will get at least until the May 20 inaugural address and quite possibly beyond that. Moreover, Beijing might have made a judgment that this is sufficient to allow it to hold off from taking the kinds of punitive steps that have been much talked about in terms of suspending cross-Strait links, clamping down on Taiwan’s international activities, and so forth.

Not all commentators in the PRC were as reticent to specify Tsai’s shortcomings and accuse her of once again evading the core question about the “one China” essence of the “1992 Consensus.” One example is Zhou Zhihuai, director of the Taiwan Studies Institute under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and a senior person in the circle of Taiwan experts on the Mainland.

Having published an op-ed article three days earlier insisting that Tsai had to choose between peace and confrontation,³⁹ after Tsai’s interview *Liberty Times* appeared Zhou followed up with a Xinhua interview noting that Tsai had made “some micro-adjustments” (一些微调) and gone a step forward compared with her previous

statements.⁴⁰ But, he said, she was still vague and ambiguous regarding the critical issue of “the nature of cross-Strait relations” (何种性质的关系) and of “the two sides of the Strait belonging to one and the same China.” “Seeking common ground while reserving differences,” he chided, is the path to reaching the “1992 Consensus,” not the Consensus itself. This issue brooks no evasion, Zhou said.⁴¹

Finally, it is worth noting that in his press briefing a week after Tsai’s *Liberty Times* interview and the TAO’s initial response, TAO spokesman Ma Xiaoguang held a regular, extended press briefing, where the question of future cross-Strait relations featured prominently.⁴² Throughout the course of the briefing, and as he reviewed all of the cross-Strait accomplishments during 2015, Ma referred numerous times to the fact that those accomplishments were due to adherence to the “1992 Consensus” and he referred to the perils of dismantling that foundation. Through the entire recitation, though he responded to numerous questions that mentioned Tsai by name, Ma himself did not do so.

Still the conditional nature of relations going forward was suggested in Ma’s separate responses to questions about the future of the transit program,⁴³ the future flow of tourists, and the prospects for negotiating completion of a commodities trade agreement. In each case, while he mentioned something specific to the issue at hand that would govern progress, Ma also referred to “the situation in cross-Strait relations” (两岸关系形势) or “the overall environment in the development in cross-Strait relations” (两岸关系发展的大环境) as a determinant.

Similarly, in commenting on a proposal from a senior DPP legislator to reopen negotiations on the long-pending services trade agreement, Ma said the Mainland’s first priority was maintaining the political foundation that allows SEF and ARATS to engage in consultations. And on the durability of the newly established hotline between the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) and TAO, again he engaged in a recitation of the importance of maintaining the common political foundation as a stabilizing force in cross-Strait relations, without which those relations would inevitably suffer.

A similar hint of tentativeness was evident in TAO head Zhang Zhijun’s remark to MAC head Hsia Li-yan during their second-ever hotline conversation. Zhang drove home (once again) the point about how acceptance of the core implication of the “1992 Consensus” of “both sides belonging to one China” made possible the maintenance of the status quo. He added: “At present, cross-Strait relations are very sensitive and complex, with increasing uncertainty about the future.”⁴⁴

One should not expect PRC officials to express joy over Tsai’s positions in her *Liberty Times* interview. She obviously did not repeat the mantra as Beijing would have liked, and however far forward she in fact did lean, the fact is that she remained somewhat vague about the exact wording. That said, one might hope that, as many have urged, Beijing will be creative and flexible, and will reciprocate what they must see as, if a small

step for them, a significant step for her. But the continuing references to uncertainty and the doubt hanging over the future of the relationship merit close attention.

Authority

If anyone had any doubts about where the guidance on Taiwan policy is coming from, one only needs to turn to the recent remarks of fourth-ranked Politburo Standing Committee member Yu Zhengsheng.⁴⁵ Yu’s points about the positive and negative possibilities were quite familiar. But what was striking was Yu’s comment, “We will unswervingly uphold the principles and policies decided by the central leadership on Taiwan affairs.” Such a reference is certainly not out of place given Xi Jinping’s personal attention to the issue at various junctures throughout the past year or so. Nonetheless this is not a phrase one often sees in the Taiwan context and undoubtedly was not idly included in Yu’s remarks.

Notes

- 1 Li Hanfang, “General Secretary Xi Jinping meets representative personages of various circles in Taiwan” (习近平总书记会见台湾各界代表人士), Xinhuanet, September 1, 2015, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n/2015/0901/c1024-27538430.html>.
- 2 Transcript of Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) press briefing, September 16, 2015, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201509/t20150916_10681724.htm.
- 3 Alan D. Romberg, “Squaring the Circle: Adhering to Principle, Embracing Ambiguity,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 47, July 14, 2015, <http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm47ar.pdf>, pp. 2–3.
- 4 Tsai Wen-chu, “Lai Ching-te for the first time openly declares ‘I advocate Taiwan independence!’” (賴清德首度公開宣示「我主張台灣獨立!」), *Liberty Times*, September 30, 2015, <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1460674>.
- 5 Tsai’s discussion of Lai’s comment was thrown in (“On another topic” [此外]) at the end of a very long posting on the DPP website about totally unrelated issues: “Promoting Asian Silicon Valley, Tsai Ing-wen: Combining central and local governments’ resource and energy to produce the greatest result” (推動亞洲矽谷產業 蔡英文: 結合中央和地方政府的資源與能量, 發揮最大效能), DPP, October 1, 2015, http://www.dpp.org.tw/m/index_content.php?sn=8233. Now at <http://iing.tw/posts/163>.
- 6 “President Ma Ying-jeou’s National Day Address—Taiwan’s Future: Sustaining Peace and Prosperity,” Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan) (hereafter abbreviated OOP), October 10, 2015, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=35810&rmid=2355> (Chinese text at <http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=131&itemid=35809&rmid=514>):
 - 1) Under the ROC Constitution, maintained the status quo defined by three principles: no unification, no independence, and no use of force.
 - 2) Based on the 1992 Consensus of “one China, respective interpretations,” promoted peaceful cross-Strait development.
 - 3) In interaction with the Mainland, put Taiwan first, for the benefit of the people.

- 4) In negotiations with the Mainland, address urgent matters before non-urgent ones, easy issues before difficult ones, and economic matters before political matters.
 - 5) Interactions with Mainland based on equality, dignity, and reciprocity.
- 7 Examples of the exquisite protocol were that Ma and Xi attended as “leaders of the two sides,” addressed each other as “Mister,” and equally shared the cost of the meal they had together. (“Xi-Ma meeting breakthrough in cross-Strait ties,” Xinhua, November 11, 2015, http://www.china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2015-11/04/content_36980226.htm.)
 - 8 In the public and private meetings and at dinner, Ma raised a number of issues with Xi ranging from military security – including reduction of hostility and peaceful handling of disputes – to expansion of cross-Strait exchanges; establishment of a cross-Strait hotline between the heads of the cabinet-level officials who manage cross-Strait policy (Mainland Affairs Council [MAC] in Taiwan, TAO in the Mainland); joint cooperation for cross-Strait prosperity; PRC missile deployments; Taiwan’s urgent need to participate in regional economic institutions; the need to build mutual trust on a foundation of dignity, respect, sincerity and good will; Taiwan’s quest for more international space (including for nongovernmental organizations [NGOs]); trade in goods; reciprocal establishment of representative offices; transits in Taiwan for mainland Chinese travelers; and Mainland vocational students studying in Taiwan. The above draws on the following documents:
 - “Opening remarks by President Ma Ying-jeou at his meeting with Mainland Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Singapore,” OOP, November 7, 2015, <http://english1.president.gov.tw/NEWS/4779> (Chinese-language text at <http://www.president.gov.tw/NEWS/19939>).
 - “Full text of ROC President Ma Ying-jeou’s remarks in meeting with Mainland Chinese leader Xi Jinping, November 7, 2015,” MAC, November 9, 2015, <http://www.mac.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=113323&ctNode=6337&mp=3>, (Chinese-language text at <http://www.mac.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=113316&ctNode=5650&mp=1>).
 - “Opening remarks by President Ma at an international press conference following meeting with Mainland Chinese leader Xi in Singapore,” (including transcript of questions and answers), OOP, November 7, 2015, <http://english1.president.gov.tw/NEWS/4780> (Chinese-language text at <http://www.president.gov.tw/NEWS/19942>).
 - “President Ma, Mainland Chinese leader Xi meet in Singapore, agree to jointly consolidate cross-Strait peace and prosperity,” MAC, Press Release No. 62, November 7, 2015, https://www.mac.gov.tw/en/News_Content.aspx?n=2BA0753CBE348412&sms=E828F60C4AFBAF90&ss=242AD8FB83369E93 (Chinese-language text at <http://www.mac.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=113310&ctNode=5649&mp=1>).
 - 9 “Full text of ROC President Ma Ying-jeou’s remarks” (see endnote 8).
 - 10 “Opening remarks by President Ma at an international press conference” (see endnote 8).
 - 11 Lilian Wu, “DPP presidential candidate does not rule out meeting with Xi,” Central News Agency (hereafter abbreviated CNA), November 5, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201511050028.aspx>.
 - 12 H.H. Lu and Lillian Lin, “DPP has no objection to normalization of cross-Strait meetings,” CNA, November 5, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201511050017.aspx>.
 - 13 As MAC head Hsia Li-yan revealed, although the notion of a Ma-Xi meeting had of course been on the cross-Strait agenda for some time, the inspiration for this meeting only emerged at the October 14 meeting in Guangzhou between Hsia and TAO head Zhang Zhijun. According to Hsia, Zhang broached the subject once more and Hsia suggested Singapore as the venue after Zhang turned down the idea of a meeting at the APEC leaders meeting in Manila. (Yuan-ming Chiao, “Details emerge on Ma-Xi meeting,” *China Post*, November 5, 2015, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2015/11/05/450151/Details-emerge.htm>. Now at <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2015/11/05/details-emerge-ma-xi-meeting.html>.)
 - 14 Matthew Strong, “Tsai condemns Ma-Xi meeting,” *Taiwan News Online* (TN), November 4, 2015, http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/etn/news_content.php?id=2830754. The DPP spokesman issued

a formal statement condemning the meeting, as well. (“DPP statement regarding the matter of the Ma-Xi meeting” [民主進步黨針對馬習會一事之聲明], November 4, 2015, http://www.dpp.org.tw/news_content.php?sn=8344.)

- 15 Sophia Yeh and Elizabeth Hsu, “DPP’s Tsai makes three recommendations for Ma-Xi meeting,” CNA, November 7, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201511070009.aspx>.
- 16 “Dr. Tsai Ing-wen reacts to the Ma-Xi meeting,” DPP, November 7, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/dpptaiwan/posts/1172201752794736:0>. (The original Chinese text of Tsai’s statement was posted at http://www.dpp.org.tw/news_content.php?kw=&m1=10&y1=2017&menu_sn=&sub_menu=43&show_title=&one_page=10&page=1&start_p=1&act=&sn=8361&stat=&order_type=desc&order_col=add_date&data_type=.)
- 17 Sophia Yeh and Jay Chen, “Tsai continues criticism of Ma’s performance at Singapore,” CNA, November 8, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201511080017.aspx>.
- 18 See “Full text of ROC President Ma Ying-jeou’s remarks,” endnote 8.

In an interesting commentary on the meeting, Renmin University Professor Huang Jiashu discussed the question of why the Mainland has never acknowledged Ma’s “different interpretations” formulation. He said it was out of concern that some people might try to put independence arguments into the basket of “different interpretations.” But when Ma told Xi that the “interpretations” do not include “two Chinas,” “one China, one Taiwan,” or “Taiwan independence” because those are not allowed under the ROC Constitution – a statement that Huang reports Ma read word-for-word from a prepared text – this was taken as a commitment. Although the formulation was still not identical to the words Xi used (the 1992 Consensus “makes it clear that the Mainland and Taiwan belong to the same one China and the relationship across the Strait is not a state-to-state one or between one China and one Taiwan”), these two statements obviously have the same meaning, Huang said. That is, both sides belong to one country. “The two sides now do have a ‘consensus,’” he concluded, “and mutual commitment as to ‘what the 1992 Consensus does not mean.’” He judged this to be the “highlight” of the meeting. (Huang Jiashu, “A Cross-Straits meeting of the minds,” *China-US Focus*, November 16, 2015, <https://www.chinausfocus.com/political-social-development/a-cross-straits-meeting-of-the-minds>.)
- 19 当前，两岸关系发展面临方向和道路的抉择 (Lin Yan, Yang Benyao, Xu Mengxi, “Full text of Xi Jinping’s speech: Collaboratively pursue the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” [习近平致辞全文：共谋中华民族伟大复兴], *China Review News* [hereafter abbreviated CRN], November 7, 2015, <http://bj.crntt.com/doc/1039/9/5/7/103995794.html?coluid=7&kindid=0&docid=103995794&mdate=1107193702>.)
- 20 习近平强调，希望台湾各党派各团体能正视“九二共识”，无论哪个党派和团体，不论其过去主张过什么，只要承认九二共识的历史事实，认同其核心意涵，我们都愿意同其交往. (Lin Yan, Yang Benyao, Xu Mengxi, “Full text of Zhang Zhijun’s press conference: History will remember this day” [张志军记者会全文:历史将会记住今天], CRN, November 7, 2015, <http://bj.crntt.com/doc/1039/9/6/0/103996053.html?coluid=1&kindid=0&docid=103996053&mdate=1107222913>. Emphasis added.)
- 21 “Tsai still evasive on 1992 Consensus in TV interview,” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), November 23, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&num=17032>.
- 22 “Mainland official stresses 1992 Consensus on cross-Strait affairs,” Xinhuanet, November 25, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/25/c_134854548.htm.
- 23 Lu Hsin-hui and Lilian Wu, “DPP’s Tsai promises ‘no provocation, no surprise’ China policy,” *Taipei Times*, December 22, 2015, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-11/25/c_134854548.htm.
- 24 The Chinese text of her remarks is at “Full text of presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen at the first televised debate, first phase, detailed statements” (總統候選人蔡英文首場電視辯論會 第一階段申論全文), Light up Taiwan blog, December 27, 2015, <http://iing.tw/posts/462>.)

- 25 “Full text of presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen at the first televised debate, third phase, interactive questions” (總統候選人蔡英文首場電視辯論會 第三階段交互詰問全文), Light up Taiwan blog, December 27, 2015, <http://iing.tw/posts/465>.
- 26 “Tsai’s ‘1992 Consensus not the only option’ remark questioned within DPP,” *China Times* (as translated by KMT News Network), December 30, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17180>.
- 27 “Transcript of TAO press conference,” December 30, 2015, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201512/t20151230_11345139.htm.
- 28 “Tsai still evasive on 1992 Consensus in TV interview,” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), November 23, 2015, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17032>.
- 29 George Liao, “Communication is key to face China leader: Tsai,” TN, January 12, 2016, <https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/2867039>.
- 30 “During this election I had promised on many occasions that I will build a consistent predictable and sustainable cross-strait relationship. As the 14th president-elect of the Republic of China I reaffirm that after my new administration takes office on May 20 the Republic of China constitutional order the results of cross-strait negotiations interactions and exchanges and democratic principles and the will of the Taiwanese people will become the foundation for future cross-strait relations. My position will move past partisan politics. Following the will and consensus of the Taiwanese people we will work to maintain the status quo for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait in order to bring the greatest benefits and well-being to the Taiwanese people.
- “I also want to emphasize that both sides of the strait have a responsibility to find mutually acceptable means of interaction that are based on dignity and reciprocity. We must ensure that no provocations or accidents take place. The results of today’s election showcase the will of the Taiwanese people. It is the shared resolve of Taiwan’s 23 million people that the Republic of China is a democratic country. Our democratic system national identity and international space must be respected. Any forms of suppression will harm the stability of cross-strait relations.” (This English translation and the original Chinese are both available on the DPP website at http://www.dpp.org.tw/news_content.php?sn=8770)
- 31 们的对台大政方针是一贯的、明确的，不因台湾地区的选举结果而改变。我们将继续坚持“九二共识”，坚决反对任何形式的“台独”分裂活动。在维护国家主权和领土完整的重大原则问题上，我们的意志坚如磐石，态度始终如一。（“Responsible person of the CCP Central Committee Taiwan Affairs Office [and] State Council Taiwan Affairs Office makes a statement about the results of Taiwan region’s election” (中共中央台办、国务院台办负责人就台湾地区选举结果发表谈话), Xinhuanet, January 16, 2016, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201601/t20160116_11366668.htm. Translation provided by Open Source Enterprise, CHR2016011655375950, January 16, 2016.)
- 32 “Taiwanese choose Tsai, not independence,” *Global Times* (Editorial), January 17, 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/963985.shtml>.
- 33 Zhang Hua, “Tsai’s win not a mandate for independence,” *Global Times*, January 17, 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/964084.shtml>.
- 34 Tony Liao and Evelyn Kao, “Cross-Strait policy not salient issue in elections: DPP official,” CNA, January 20, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201601200017.aspx>.
- In the end, it would seem that Wu’s assessment is justified, which also underscores another point he made, that (at least in this election) viewing the election through a prism of independence versus unification might be outdated. The full transcript of Wu’s speech and Q&A is at http://www.brookings.edu/~media/events/2016/01/19-taiwan-elections/20160119_taiwan_elections_transcript.pdf.
- 35 Jay Chen, “China shows ‘good will’ before Taiwan’s election: Tsai,” CNA, January 18, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201601180004.aspx>.

- 36 Tsou Ching-wen, “Tsai Ing-wen: 1992 is an historical fact, promoting cross-Strait relations” (蔡英文：九二歷史事實 推動兩岸關係), *Liberty Times*, January 21, 2016, <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/focus/paper/951154>.
- 37 第一是，一九九二年兩岸兩會會談的歷史事實、以及雙方求同存異的共同認知。第二，是中華民國現行憲政體制；第三，是兩岸過去廿多年來協商和交流互動的成果；以及第四，是台灣的民主原則以及普遍民意。(op. cit.)
- 38 Chen Jianxing, “TAO: Only by maintaining well the political foundation of the ‘1992 Consensus’ can cross-Strait relations stably move forward in the long run” (国台办：维护好“九二共识” 政治基础 两岸关系才能行稳致远), *Xinhua*, January 21, 2016, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201601/t20160121_11371098.htm.
- 39 “Zhou Zhihui: Peace or confrontation, which choice will Tsai Ing-wen make?” (周志怀：和平或对立，蔡英文将作何选择), *Global Times*, January 18, 2016, <http://opinion.huanqiu.com/1152/2016-01/8396717.html>.
- 40 Cha Wenye, “Zhou Zhihui: Tsai Ing-wen still needs to face the core connotation of the ‘1992 Consensus’” (周志怀：蔡英文仍需面对“九二共识”核心意涵), *Xinhua*, January 21, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/tw/2016-01/21/c_1117854958.htm.
- 41 Although most of the published commentary more or less followed this same line, at least one did not. Arguing that the change of regime is an inevitable step in Taiwan’s political development and the restructuring of Taiwan society, Shanghai East Asia Institute director Zhang Nianchi said people should not view the election results as a failure of PRC policy or be pessimistic about the prospects for future reunification. On the other hand, he suggested that the Mainland’s model of “peaceful reunification, one country two systems” has no appeal in Taiwan and lacks inspirational force. Reunification is inevitable, he said, but we need a better narrative that puts us on the high ground. (Zhang Nianchi, “How to view another turn of the wheel in Taiwan” [怎麼看待台灣再度「變天」], *China Review News*, February 1, 2016, No. 218, pp. 4–6).
- This approach was also consistent with a comment Zhang offered to the *Washington Post* in mid-January (before Tsai’s *Liberty Times* interview). What he said was: “Tsai’s [election night] speech showed that she has switched her role from being a party leader to a ruler. If she is on this track, we should accept and encourage her. We shouldn’t be unsatisfied with her not accepting the 1992 Consensus. Tsai was chosen by Taiwanese people, and that is a reality we have to face, too.” (Simon Denyer, “Opposition leader’s landslide win in Taiwan puts onus on China to respond,” *Washington Post*, January 17, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/opposition-leaders-landslide-win-in-taiwan-puts-onus-on-china-to-respond/2016/01/17/1f2fec52-b954-11e5-85cd-5ad59bc19432_story.html.)
- 42 “Transcript of TAO press briefing,” TAO, January 27, 2016, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201601/t20160127_11376021.htm.
- 43 Agreement for the first tranche of such transit visitors—Mainland passengers passing through Taiwan airports on their way to onward destinations—was announced in early January and the transits began in early February.
- 44 “Cross-Strait chiefs speak via hotline,” *Xinhua*, February 5, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-02/05/c_135078098.htm.
- 45 “Mainland committed to peace, stability across Taiwan Strait,” *Xinhua*, February 2, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2015-01/27/c_133950749.htm.

Tsai Ing-wen Takes Office: A New Era in Cross-Strait Relations

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In her May 20 inaugural address Tsai Ing-wen laid out in stark terms the daunting economic and social challenges that Taiwan faces in the months and years ahead, as well as her determination to meet those challenges. Addressing cross-Strait relations, which will have a significant effect on her ability to realize domestic goals, Tsai took further steps, in her speech and through actions, to try to allay Mainland concerns about any “Taiwan independence” aspirations. But she still refrained from openly embracing the “1992 Consensus” or any other form of “one China,” and from disowning “Taiwan independence.” In response, Beijing gave her partial credit for her “incomplete test answer” but suspended some links and made clear that it is looking for a more definitive commitment to “one China” before existing institutional relationships can continue unhindered.

Balancing Principle and Pragmatism

As noted before, while Tsai Ing-wen has been seeking to allay People’s Republic of China (PRC) concerns about her intentions regarding “Taiwan independence,” she has also been quite open in saying that, for a democracy, “there is a need to balance both (Beijing’s attitude and Taiwan’s public will).”¹

Following the evolution in what Tsai has said (and refrained from saying) over the past year, culminating her January interview with *Liberty Times*,² the question for Beijing and everyone else was whether her inaugural address would take her rhetoric further toward acceptance of the “1992 Consensus” and its “core connotation” that Taiwan and the Mainland belong to one and the same China.

In late February, Foreign Minister (and former Taiwan Affairs Office [TAO] head) Wang Yi made remarks in Washington that seemed to many people to offer Tsai a feasible way to move to “one China.” In response to a question, Wang followed standard talking points in saying that what Beijing cares about is not who holds power

in Taiwan but how that person handles cross-Strait relations, including whether that person will commit to the common political foundation of those relations.

Wang did not refer to the “1992 Consensus” but focused on the fact that Taiwan’s “own constitution” (他們自己憲法) under which Tsai was elected provides that Taiwan and the Mainland belong to one and the same China. Wang said he expected that Tsai would, “in her own way” (以她自己的方式 – not translated to the audience) accept that constitutional provision.³

Wang’s remarks were seized on by Taiwan media to suggest that Beijing had “softened” its terms, both moving away from the 1992 Consensus as well as perhaps accepting the legitimacy of the Republic of China (ROC) constitution.⁴ Neither, in fact, was true, although Wang’s formulation laid out a path Tsai could follow that would arguably not have her yielding to Beijing but rather basing her embrace of “one China” on “domestic” Taiwan considerations.

However, in light of the media frenzy in Taiwan, Beijing quickly “corrected” any misimpression that might have been created, observing that Wang’s “core message” was that both sides belong to one China.⁵ Reference to “their own constitution” was also noted as being of relevance within Taiwan, but not in cross-Strait relations.

Moreover, several days later Xi Jinping spoke to a Shanghai delegation attending the National People’s Congress (NPC). Although he essentially repeated points about the “1992 Consensus” that had been made many times before, in the context of perceived ambiguity following Wang’s statement, Xi clearly felt he needed to set out Beijing’s position in an unambiguous and authoritative way.⁶

Pledging to “safeguard the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, and never allow the historical tragedy of national secession to happen again” (维护国家主权和领土完整, 绝不让国家分裂的历史悲剧重演), Xi observed that the “1992 Consensus” “clearly defines the nature of cross-Strait ties” (明确界定了两岸关系的性质) and asserted, “we will adhere to the ‘1992 Consensus’ political foundation” (我们将坚持“九二共识”政治基础). “Only by accepting the historical fact of the ‘1992 Consensus’ and recognizing its core implications can the two sides have a common political foundation and maintain good interactions” (承认“九二共识”的历史事实, 认同其核心意涵, 两岸双方就有了共同政治基础, 就可以保持良性互动).

Xi reiterated his intention to “continue to advance the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations” (继续推进两岸关系和平发展), and some observers argued that this plus his statement that the Mainland “does not mind” internal party rotations in Taiwan showed Xi’s “flexible side.”⁷ At the same time, however, Xinhua reporting of Xi’s remarks included comments from various NPC deputies to the effect that the speech constituted a “stern warning” to Taiwan independence activists as well as a

signal that the ultimate goal of the peaceful development of cross-Strait ties is to achieve peaceful reunification.

In comments highlighting Xi's "important speech on Taiwan," TAO Director Zhang Zhijun reiterated the PRC stance that failure to recognize the historical fact of the "1992 Consensus" and its core meaning would constitute a change in the status quo of peaceful development of relations.⁸ Others went further, directly suggesting that all official and semi-official exchanges such as Straits Exchange Foundation-Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (SEF-ARATS) talks as well as Mainland Affairs Council (MAC)-TAO links would be suspended.⁹

PRC Premier Li Keqiang said that preferential policies for Taiwan businessmen operating on the Mainland would be maintained (and Mainland officials sought to enlist people in that community as advocates for maintaining the "1992 Consensus"¹⁰), but somewhat contradictorily he also stressed that Beijing would only push for greater trade with Taiwan when the island's new government recognized the "one China" principle.¹¹

In this same vein, ARATS Vice Chairman Sun Yafu indicated that, whatever happened, "people-to-people" exchanges would continue to be encouraged. However, if Tsai did not accept "one China" there would be no further progress on institutionalized arrangements of cross-Strait economic cooperation. Thus, follow-on consultations on a commodities trade agreement and even the continued functioning of the dispute-resolution mechanism under the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) would cease.¹² Cross-Strait economic cooperation regarding Taiwan's participation in regional economic integration talks would inevitably also be affected.¹³

Meanwhile, at a political level, senior Chinese officials made clear that the Mainland would have no direct contact with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) unless the party changed the 1991 Taiwan independence clause in the party charter.¹⁴

Another important theme emerged in PRC commentary regarding possible "covert independence" (暗独) via cultural and educational "desinicization."¹⁵ This concern was not new. However, while Mainland analysts believed Tsai was unlikely to move to a formal declaration of independence, they continued to worry that her repeated assurances regarding "consistent, predictable, and sustainable" cross-Strait relations¹⁶ would be undermined by a more insidious approach to separatism.

In any event, with May 20 fast approaching, the Mainland unleashed a further barrage of warnings regarding the dire consequences if Tsai did not openly embrace the "1992 Consensus." Among the most authoritative, a *People's Daily* "Commentator" article said that the cross-Strait status quo would be destroyed, leading to a collapse of mutual trust and of systematized cross-Strait consultation mechanisms.¹⁷

Moreover, although in the end, after much drama, Taiwan did send an observer to this year's annual World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting, warnings were issued that without recognition of the "1992 Consensus" Taiwan would be unable to continue to participate in international organizations in the future.¹⁸

Tsai's Inauguration Speech

In her May 20 inaugural address,¹⁹ Tsai took a number of new steps to try to convince Beijing (and others) that she would not pursue a major shift in Taiwan's cross-Strait policy but would, as she had long promised, seek to maintain the status quo of peace and stability.

Tsai placed cross-Strait relations in a regional context, saying they had become an "integral part" (重要一環) of building regional peace and collective security. Pledging to be a "staunch guardian of peace" (和平的堅定維護者) and a "proactive communicator for peace" (和平的積極溝通者), she spoke of establishing mechanisms for routine and intensive communications to prevent misjudgment, establish mutual trust, and effectively resolve disputes.

In a section on cross-Strait relations, she then sought to balance the considerations laid out by Beijing with essential democratic principles and the will of the people of Taiwan.

Constitutional responsibility to safeguard ROC sovereignty and territory – including in the East and South China Seas

Virtually echoing some of the constitutional language Wang Yi had used in Washington as well as Xi's March 5 sovereignty theme, Tsai noted that she was elected under the ROC constitution and "thus" it is her responsibility to safeguard the sovereignty and territory of the ROC. Significantly, in the same sentence she proposed setting aside disputes in the East and South China Seas so as to enable joint development.

This handling of issues relating to maritime space was an obvious message of reassurance to Beijing. By addressing those questions in the context of safeguarding sovereignty and territory Tsai conveyed the message that she would not, as Beijing feared, abandon existing claims as a step toward establishing separate status.²⁰

1992 results to be respected

As expected, Tsai did not embrace the "1992 Consensus" or any other form of "one China."²¹ But she reiterated that the two institutions "representing each side across the Strait" (兩岸兩會, i.e., representing authorities, not just political parties as the DPP frequently asserted in the past) "arrived at various joint acknowledgements

and understandings...in a spirit of mutual understanding and a political attitude of seeking common ground while setting aside differences.” As she had in her January 21 *Liberty Times* interview, Tsai said that she respected that “historical fact.”

Once again she referred to the “accumulated outcomes” of over 20 years of interactions and negotiations. Essentially repeating points made with *Liberty Times*, she called for continued forward movement on peace, stability, and the development of cross-Strait relations on the basis of those outcomes and “existing realities and political foundations.”

Regarding trade diversification through adoption of a “New Southbound Policy” designed in large part to end overreliance the Mainland market, Tsai had already sought to preempt controversy. “Everyone can be assured that I stand by my campaign pledge to maintain the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, because this is a precondition for Taiwan to conduct negotiations on free trade agreements with other countries.”²² In succeeding weeks, she also sought to reassure a nervous Mainland-invested business community that the new policy did not conflict or compete with cross-Strait trade but, rather, complemented it.²³ The MAC even argued that it intended to expand Taiwan’s Mainland market, not replace it.²⁴

All of this justification for a high-priority effort to reorder economic relations was clearly designed to provide reassurance that, despite greater attention to trade diversification, Tsai would continue to adhere to current cross-Strait arrangements and that her administration would not depart from the assumptions and foundations—the “existing realities”—on which those arrangements had been based.

Acting within the law

While again avoiding the “one China” political third rail, Tsai cited the legal basis of her approach to cross-Strait relations, saying she would conduct cross-Strait affairs in accordance with the ROC Constitution, the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (兩岸人民關係條例), and other pertinent legislation.

It is relevant to note that the preamble to the 2000 constitutional amendment package says the amendments were “[to] meet the requisites of the nation prior to national unification” and that Article 11 mandates that “[rights] and obligations between the people of the Chinese mainland area and those of the free area...may be specified by law.”²⁵ The Act Governing Relations implements that provision and follows the same approach. It applies to the situation “before national unification,” and the “Mainland area” is defined as “the territory of the Republic of China outside the Taiwan Area.”²⁶ All of this is consistent with the “one China” approach.

Dispensing with historical baggage

Two other points in Tsai's inaugural speech merit particular attention. First, she said: "The two governing parties across the Strait must set aside the baggage of history and engage in positive dialogue for the benefit of the people on both sides" (兩岸的兩個執政黨應該要放下歷史包袱,展開良性對話,造福兩岸人民). "Governing parties" as referred to here are the "governing political parties," meaning the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and DPP.

This raises the intriguing question of what either side might have in mind as "historical baggage" that can be set aside. One example might be the DPP charter's 1991 Taiwan independence plank, which has once again become a focus of some PRC commentary.²⁷ Moreover, several DPP politicians have suggested introducing a new formulation into the party charter reflecting Tsai's positions on maintaining the status quo. This either would displace or downgrade even further the Taiwan independence plank.²⁸ Assuming the Mainland could act on something equally significant, one wonders if that DPP party plank isn't a disposable piece of historical baggage in a reciprocal process aimed at reinforcing cross-Strait peace and stability.

Finally, Tsai repeated the four-point definition of "existing political foundations" she had included in the *Liberty Times* interview.²⁹ For the most part it seemed to "condition" the points she had made elsewhere, defining them in a way the Mainland might not reject but certainly would find irritating. The most prominent was her characterization of agreements reached in 1992 as "joint acknowledgement of setting aside differences to seek common ground." This formulation could be interpreted to mean that agreement on process was "the historical fact" that Tsai accepted, not that she accepted there were substantive agreements, as she seemed to recognize elsewhere in her speech.

Of great importance in the four-point definition, of course, was reference to democratic principles and the prevalent will of the people. After all, as other comments in her speech underscored, a critical goal was to preserve for the people of Taiwan the ability to make their own decisions about their future, including future ties to the Mainland. This point is central to much of Tsai's political agenda and stands in stark contrast to Beijing's desire to pin down a commitment to "one China."

Beijing's Response

The Party and State Taiwan Affairs Offices not only issued a Chinese-language response to Tsai's inaugural address³⁰ but also "an English-language statement on cross-Straits relations"³¹ with essentially the same content.

Issued in the name of the "head" (English) or "responsible person" (Chinese) of the Taiwan Affairs Offices, the statement did not denounce Tsai's remarks. However,

adopting what many considered a condescending posture, it awarded Tsai “an incomplete test answer” for her failure to explicitly recognize the “1992 Consensus” and its core meaning or to make any concrete proposal (具体办法) for ensuring the peaceful and stable growth of cross-Strait relations. It charged Tsai with being unacceptably ambiguous about the “fundamental issue,” that is, the “nature” of cross-Strait relations.

The statement conjured up a binary choice for Taiwan: on the one hand, upholding the common political foundation that embodies the “one China principle” or, on the other, pursuing a separatist agenda of “Taiwan independence” framed as “two Chinas” or “one country on each side.” This structure, of course, leaves unaddressed the vast space between these “alternatives,” a space that Tsai and most people in Taiwan occupy.

The statement made clear that SEF-ARATS and MAC-TAO contacts were at risk and that “only affirmation of the political foundation that embodies the one China principle can ensure continued and institutionalized exchanges between the two sides of the Strait” (只有确认体现一个中国原则的政治基础，两岸制度化交往才能得以延续). In fact, those channels have been frozen since May 20,³² though it appears that some routine lower-level links, likely between other government agencies, remain open to manage day-to-day issues.³³

Additionally, the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Committee created under ECFA to handle disputes, has not met for over a year and has now likely also been suspended.³⁴ The disruptions appear also to extend to exchanges between municipal and county officials, apparently to avoid giving the “wrong impression” that any official exchanges are possible without the “1992 Consensus.”³⁵

It is unclear if or when Beijing might disrupt the “diplomatic truce” in effect since 2008, in essence, a tacit agreement not to steal each other’s diplomatic allies. Establishment of relations between the PRC and Taiwan’s former diplomatic partner Gambia in March was a shot across Taiwan’s bow.³⁶ But so far (as of mid-June) no current Taiwan diplomatic partners have switched to Beijing. That said, the TAO spokesman stressed that the “one China principle” also must be safeguarded with regard to Taiwan’s external exchanges,³⁷ including not only diplomatic relations but also participation in regional economic cooperation.³⁸ As if to underscore that point, Beijing announced that Taiwan’s membership bid for the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) would have to go through the PRC finance ministry, effectively putting it into a “domestic” Chinese category.³⁹ The Ma administration quickly rejected this as inconsistent with Taiwan’s “equality and dignity”⁴⁰ and dropped its AIIB application; the Tsai administration has not yet announced its intentions.

While some Mainland scholars were highly critical of Tsai’s inaugural speech,⁴¹ others saw it as stabilizing cross-Strait relations⁴² or even showing “goodwill.”⁴³ All

were unanimous, however, in saying that Tsai needed to go further, to affirm in some way that cross-Strait relations were not state-to-state relations.

Listen to Her Words, Watch Her Actions

The TAO response to Tsai's inaugural speech, as discussed above, laid out the sharp choice between upholding the common political foundation and pursuing Taiwan independence. It then cautioned, "The Taiwan authorities must use concrete actions to give clear answers to these major questions" (在这些重大问题上,台湾当局更须以实际行动作出明确回答).

In his press briefing five days later, the TAO spokesman reiterated the importance of "practical action" in order, "without any equivocation," to clearly state Tsai's stance on cross-Strait ties.⁴⁴ This same emphasis on "action" was evident in ARATS head Chen Deming's mid-June statement that the actions of the new Taiwan government were what were more important than its words.⁴⁵

On the one hand, this approach may be designed to help chart a path forward in a circumstance where it is evident that Tsai will not recite the "one China" mantra. In fact, Tsai has indicated she wants the Mainland to watch what she does (or doesn't do). Her quashing of a movement to remove Sun Yat-sen's picture from public buildings, her paying tribute to Sun at the Martyrs Shrine after her inauguration, the DPP's change of the title of the draft Cross-Strait Agreements Oversight Act to refer to "cross-Strait relations" rather than "Taiwan" and "China" —all done in the face of considerable criticism from independence advocates —are among the actions she presumably hopes the Mainland will take note of.

On the other hand, focusing on actions could also be challenging for Tsai. For example, in stating his view on the importance of action, Chen Deming expressed concern that the Legislative Yuan (LY) and the education and culture ministries were "moving in a different direction" from the "1992 Consensus." Among other things, one presumes he had in mind the LY action to stop high school text changes.

A Testing Period

The most hopeful interpretation of the present situation is that a process has begun which could eventually lead to a stable relationship. For that process to succeed, Tsai will need to rein in enthusiasts in both the executive and legislative branches who may be inclined to see the January election results as giving Tsai, and the DPP, a mandate to press an ideological agenda.⁴⁶ And Beijing will have to pull back from its most rigid requirements, allowing "interpretation" of Tsai's words and actions to fill the gap.

So far, while various links have been suspended, there has been no “announcement” that this is the case. Moreover, Tsai’s new minister of health attended the annual WHA meeting in Geneva in late May, in spite of being invited belatedly via a letter that controversially referred to the 1971 United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and WHA resolutions expelling the Republic of China and recognizing the PRC as the representative of all of China. However, indirectly making the point that Taiwan’s future attendance was not guaranteed, a TAO spokesman said that this was a “special arrangement under the one China principle” (在一个中国原则下做出的特殊安排),⁴⁷ and ARATS head Chen Deming said future participation in international organizations would not be possible without recognition of the “1992 Consensus.”⁴⁸

Regarding one specific area that has received much attention, for months rumors have circulated in Taiwan suggesting that Beijing would, or actually had, cut tourism to the island. Although many of the rumors seemed unfounded, it now appears that group tours have been curtailed —perhaps by over 30 percent in May compared with 2015, even though individual Mainland tourist arrivals actually rose by 12 percent, producing a net drop of 15 percent for the month.⁴⁹

Looking Ahead

A general consensus seems to exist both in Taiwan and on the Mainland that any process to stabilize relations —or decide that is not possible —will take about six months. But while the view in Taipei seems to be hopeful that all will be well by the end of that period, one senses a rather more downbeat expectation on the Mainland. There, some people believe that if Tsai does not openly embrace some form of “one China,” not just in actions but also in words, cross-Strait relations will take a decided turn for the worse.

One hopes the more optimistic view prevails, but we will have to wait and see.

Notes

- 1 The source of this quote was improperly attributed in endnote 23 of *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 49. It should be Lu Hsin-hui and Lilian Wu, “DPP’s Tsai promises ‘no provocation, no surprise’ China policy,” Central News Agency (CNA), December 22, 2015, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201512220036.aspx>.
- 2 Alan D. Romberg, “The ‘1992 Consensus’—Adapting to the Future?” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 49, March 1, 2016, <http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/clm49ar.pdf>.
- 3 “Statesmen’s Forum: Wang Yi, Minister of Foreign Affairs, PRC,” Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), February 25, 2016, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/event/160225_statesmen_forum_wang_yi.pdf. A video of the event is at <https://www.csis.org/events/statesmens-forum-wang-yi-minister-foreign-affairs-prc>; the Taiwan exchange is at 1:05.
- 4 “Beijing’s new flexibility looks to commit Tsai to ‘one China,’” *China Post* (editorial), February 28, 2016, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/editorial/taiwan-issues/2016/02/28/459385/Beijings-new.htm>.
- 5 Lawrence Chiu and Lilian Wu, “Don’t misread Chinese foreign minister’s remarks on Taiwan,” Central News Agency (hereinafter abbreviated as CNA), March 1, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201603010021.aspx>.
- 6 “President Xi warns against ‘Taiwan independence’ in any form,” Xinhua, March 5, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-03/05/c_135159093.htm. The Chinese-language version of Xi’s remarks is at http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016lh/2016-03/05/c_1118243972.htm.
- 7 Ge Chung, “Expert analysis: Bright ‘bottom line,’ show of flexibility” (專家解讀：亮明「底線」展現靈活), *Wen Wei Po*, March 6, 2016, <http://paper.wenweipo.com/2016/03/06/CN1603060022.htm>.
- 8 “Zhang Zhijun: Refusal to recognize to [sic] ‘1992 Consensus’ means change of cross-Strait status quo,” KMT News Network, March 9, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17447>. (A Chinese-language report of Zhang’s statement is on the TAO website at http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201603/t20160308_11404920.htm.) NOTE: All cited KMT News Network articles are translations of unattributed articles in Taipei papers.
- 9 Minnie Chan, “Recognise ‘one China’ or risk deep rift in cross-Strait ties, Beijing think tank warns Taiwan’s Tsai,” *South China Morning Post* (hereinafter abbreviated as SCMP), March 10, 2016, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1922768/recognise-one-china-or-risk-deep-rift-cross-strait-ties>.
- 10 Chen Bai-t’ing, “Zhang Zhijun hopes Taishang will unite, firmly uphold the 1992 Consensus, oppose Taiwan independence” (張志軍盼台商團結 堅守維護九二共識 反台獨), *China Times*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20160425004894-260409>.
- 11 Minnie Chan, “‘One China’ is cornerstone of cross-Strait trade, China’s premier says,” SCMP, March 17, 2016, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1926272/one-china-cornerstone-cross-strait-trade-chinas-premier-says>.
- 12 “ECFA follow-up consultations to be suspended without 1992 Consensus” (不認92共識 ECFA後續商談 將中斷), *China Times*, <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20160516000595-260301>. PRC Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen also told Taiwan business leaders that consultation on the services trade agreement would not proceed without acceptance of the “1992 Consensus.” Moreover, he cautioned, “the Mainland does not welcome Taiwanese business[men] who make money on the Mainland, on the one hand, and support Taiwan independence movement, on the other.” (“Mainland: Taiwan businessmen who support Taiwan Independence movement not welcomed,” KMT News Network, May 26, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17785>.)

- 13 Wang Xiuzhong, "China Review News [CRN] [reports] important interview: Sun Yafu discusses difficult cross-Strait issues" (中評重磅專訪：孫亞夫論兩岸難題), May 17, 2016, http://hk.crntt.com/doc/19_0_104233000_1_0517002224.html. The interview was with Xinhua.
- 14 Lawrence Chiu and Elizabeth Hsu, "China will not make direct contact with DPP: Beijing negotiator," CNA, March 6, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201603060007.aspx>. See earlier discussion of this issue in Romberg, "Squaring the Circle," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 47, July 5, 2015, <http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm47ar.pdf>.
- 15 "Spokesperson warns of cultural de-sinicization in Taiwan," Xinhua, April 27, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-04/27/c_135317536.htm. See TAO press briefing transcript, April 27, 2016, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201604/t20160427_11445344.htm.
- 16 "Tsai Ing-wen vows to maintain peaceful and stable cross-Strait status quo based on new Taiwan public opinion," *United Daily News (UDN)*, translated by KMT News Network, April 28, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17655>.
- 17 *People's Daily* Commentator, "To not recognize the '1992 Consensus' is to damage the common political foundation of cross-Strait relations" (不承认“九二共识”就是破坏两岸关系共同政治基础), *People's Daily*, May 5, 2016, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/2016-05/05/nw.D110000renmrb_20160505_5-01.htm.
- 18 Lan Hsiao-wei and Chen Chun-shuo, "New government determined to attend WHA, ARATS Chair Chen Deming: Without the 1992 Consensus Taiwan will not be able to continue to participate in international activities" (新政府決定出席WHA海協會長陳德銘:無九二共識 台國際參與無以為繼), *Commercial Times*, May 9, 2016, <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20160509000086-260203>.
- 19 An English-language version of Tsai's inaugural address is at <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=37416&rmid=2355>. The Chinese-language text is at <http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=131&itemid=37408&rmid=514>.
- 20 One expert on maritime matters still appeared to harbor suspicion, however. ("Mainland scholar [Wu Shicun]: Tsai would cross red line if she renounced 11-dash line in South China Sea," KMT News Network, May 30, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17797>.)
- 21 Even Ma administration polls showed massive resistance to the notion that Taiwan and the Mainland belong to one China. ("MAC poll finds 72 percent of respondents disagree with one China principle," Formosa Television News (FTVN), March 30, 2016, <http://englishnews.ftv.com.tw/Read.aspx?sno=8E60620025363FAF54C8592ADF1DB1D6>.) Moreover, over two-thirds of respondents to a different poll agreed the new government should initiate negotiations with the Mainland on a new political concept to replace the "1992 Consensus," and 60 percent viewed cross-Strait relations as diplomatic relations between two sovereign nations. (Tseng Wei-chen and Jake Chung, "Strong support shown for new cross-Strait concept," *Taipei Times*, April 29, 2016, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2016/04/29/2003645093>. The poll cited was by the Taiwan Indicators Survey Research and is available at <http://www.tisr.com.tw/?p=6701>.) On the other hand, a poll taken immediately after Tsai's inauguration reported that 40 percent of respondents thought Tsai should accept the "1992 Consensus" so that cross-Strait communication mechanisms would continue to function, whereas 30 percent disagreed. ("Latest UDN poll: 40% agree Tsai should accept '1992 Consensus,' 30% disagree," KMT News Network 23, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17761>.)
- 22 "Tsai: I will maintain very good relations with the Mainland," KMT News Network, February 26, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17403>.
- 23 Tsai Yu-han, Tsai Hao-hsiang, and Cheng Jen-nan, "President Tsai meets with Taiwanese businesspeople, the New Southbound Policy and cross-Strait economics and trade complement one another" (蔡總統會台商 新南向和兩岸經貿相輔相成), *China Times*, June 8, 2016, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20160608006921-260401>.

- 24 Tai Hui-yu, "Will the Southbound policy replace the Mainland market? MAC: absolutely not" (新南向政策取代大陸市場? 陸委會: 絕對沒有), *China Times*, June 8, 2016, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20160608002481-260409>.
- 25 Additional Articles to the Constitution of the Republic of China (Sixth Revision, 2000), <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/constitution04.htm>.
- 26 Ministry of Justice, "Act Governing Relations between Peoples of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area" (臺灣地區與大陸地區人民關係條例), October 29, 2003, http://law.moj.gov.tw/Eng/news/news_detail.aspx?SearchRange=G&id=763. Chinese text is at http://law.moj.gov.tw/Eng/news/news_detail_ch.aspx?SearchRange=G&id=763.
- 27 Sun Yafu referred to it, for example, in his Xinhua interview shortly before Tsai's inauguration. (See endnote 13.)
- 28 Some reports indicate such language would "replace" the 1991 Taiwan independence plank. (George Liao, "Ruling DPP mulls adopting new party constitution," *Taiwan News Online*, June 16, 2016, http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/etn/news_content.php?id=2938564.) Others believe the plank would remain in the charter but new language would be added. (Private conversations.)
- 29 "By existing political foundations, I refer to a number of key elements. The first element is the fact of the 1992 talks between the two institutions representing each side across the Strait (SEF & ARATS), when there was joint acknowledgement of setting aside differences to seek common ground. This is a historical fact. The second element is the existing Republic of China constitutional order. The third element pertains to the outcomes of over twenty years of negotiations and interactions across the Strait. And the fourth relates to the democratic principle and prevalent will of the people of Taiwan." (Romberg, "The '1992 Consensus,'" p. 9.)
- 30 Cha Wenye, "Responsible person of the Taiwan Work Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council makes remarks regarding the current situation in cross-Strait relations" (中共中央台办、国务院台办负责人就当前两岸关系发表谈话), Xinhua, May 20, 2016, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201605/t20160520_11463128.htm.
- 31 "Full text of mainland's Taiwan affairs authorities' statement on cross-Straits relations," Xinhua, May 20, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-05/20/c_135375950.htm#.
- 32 At one point SEF sought to portray a situation of normalcy in communications with ARATS. ("Cross-Strait liaison mechanism operating normally: SEF," CNA, May 27, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201605270028.aspx>.) However, ARATS quickly refuted that claim, observing that ARATS had received more than 60 faxes from SEF since May 20 but had neither replied to any of them nor answered any phone calls from SEF or initiated calls to SEF. ("ARATS heavyweight: Cross-Strait communication channels suspended after 5/20," UDN (translated by KMT News Network), May 31, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&num=112&anum=17802>.)
- 33 Lai Hsiang-ju, "MAC: Contact at section-chief level being maintained" (陸委會: 兩岸處長級聯繫 仍持續), *China Times*, June 7, 2016, <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20160607000145-260203>.
- 34 Chiu Wan-jen and Kuo Mei-chun, "Cross-Strait exchanges cold, no applications after May 20" (兩岸交流遇冷 520後零申請), *UDN (Economic Daily)*, May 10, 2016, <http://money.udn.com/money/story/5603/1683826>.
- 35 "Mainland official warns city-to-city exchanges to be suspended without '1992 Consensus,'" KMT News Network, June 4, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=17826>.
- 36 Austin Ramzy, "China resumes diplomatic relations with Gambia, shutting out Taiwan," *New York Times*, March 18, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/19/world/asia/china-gambia-taiwan-diplomatic-relations.html?_r=0.
- 37 Qi Xianghui, Liu Huan, and Li Hanfang, "TAO: Will handle the question of Taiwan's external exchanges on the basis of the one China principle" (国台办: 以一个中国原则对待台湾

- 的对外交往问题), Xinhuanet, May 25, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-05/25/c_1118929821.htm.
- 38 “Taiwan’s attitude toward cross-Strait ties must be clarified: Mainland spokesman,” Xinhua, May 25, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-05/25/c_135387722.htm.
- 39 Yuan-Ming Chiao, “Taiwan AIIB member bid must go through PRC ministry: China,” *China Post*, April 10, 2016, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2016/04/10/463044/Taiwan-AIIB.htm>.
- 40 Cheng Ting-fang, “Taiwan rejects joining AIIB under China’s supervision,” *Nikkei Asian Review*, April 13, 2016, <http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Taiwan-rejects-joining-AIIB-under-China-s-supervision>.
- 41 “Tsai shows no goodwill on cross-Strait ties: Mainland scholar [Ni Yongjie],” Xinhua, May 23, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-05/23/c_135381483.htm.
- 42 Chèn Yen-ch’iao, “Mainland scholar [Liu Guoshen]: Tsai’s speech stabilizes cross-Strait relations” (陸學者: 蔡的演說讓兩岸關係穩下來了), *UDN*, May 20, 2016, <http://udn.com/news/story/9833/1707854>.
- 43 Chèn Yen-ch’iao, “Mainland scholar [Zhou Zhihui]: Sees Tsai Ing-wen expressing goodwill toward the Mainland” (陸學者: 看到蔡英文向大陸表達了善意), *UDN*, May 20, 2016, <http://udn.com/news/story/9833/1707789>. Recall that Zhou had minimized the importance of Tsai’s January 21 *Liberty Times* interview. (Romberg, “The ‘1992 Consensus,” p. 11.)
- 44 TAO May 25 briefing transcript is at http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201605/t20160525_11466675.htm.
- 45 Yuan-Ming Chiao, “Actions are what count in cross-Strait relations: ARATS,” *China Post*, June 11, 2016, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/china-taiwan-relations/2016/06/11/468993/Actions-are.htm>.
- 46 Recall that in her *Liberty Times* interview Tsai affirmed her administration would “transcend partisan politics” (秉持超越黨派的立場) and “be mindful of the public interest” (以人民利益為依歸). (Romberg, “The ‘1992 Consensus,” pp 8–10.)
- 47 TAO press briefing transcript, May 25, 2016 (see endnote 44).
- 48 Lan Hsiao-wei and Chèn Chun-shuo, “New government decides to attend WHA, ARATS chairman Chen Deming: Without the 1992 Consensus, there is no way for Taiwan’s international participation to continue” (新政府決定出席WHA 海協會長陳德銘: 無九二共識 台國際參與無以為繼), *Commercial Times*, May 9, 2016, <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20160509000086-260203>.
- 49 Chen Chia-lun and Elizabeth Hsu, “Chinese visitors to Taiwan down 15% in May,” CNA, June 3, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201606030011.aspx>. Reportedly, reduction in Mainland tourists will occur in three stages bringing total arrivals to under 2 million for 2016 vs. 3.85 million in 2015. (“Beijing to cut Taiwan-bound tourists in 3 stages,” *China Post*, June 11, 2016, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/china-taiwan-relations/2016/06/11/469010/Beijing-to.htm>.)

The First 100 Days: Crossing the River While Feeling the Stones

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As Tsai Ing-wen strives to jumpstart her priority domestic programs, she is finding that governance is hard. Not only are the economic and social challenges she faces inherently daunting, so is keeping her own troops in line, not to mention coping with the opposition, once again demonstrating the truth of Mario Cuomo's dictum about campaigning in poetry but governing in prose. This reality forms an important part of the background explaining why cross-Strait relations appear to be marking time. Still, with much chatter about "channels of communication," one senses that the two sides are in fact "feeling the stones as they seek to cross the river" to arrive at a stable and peaceful *modus vivendi*. So far, however, it is hard to discern any signs of a breakthrough.

Maintaining Control

Whether an act of nature such as the flooding that crippled Taiwan's main airport, a decision by an arbitral tribunal 6,000 miles away that challenged the scope of national territory in the South China Sea and aroused nationalist passions, or workers' issues that sharply divided business and labor, Taiwan's new president, Tsai Ing-wen, has found after only three months in office that governance is hard.

It isn't as if she didn't already know that. After all, Tsai had been in senior positions under two past presidents, and served as the leader for some time of her often fractious political party. But as any national leader will attest, it's different when the responsibilities of running a government are squarely on your shoulders and you are "the decider."

All of that said, it was evident that Tsai was looking forward to that role and the opportunity to shape policies to meet the priorities she had identified as best serving Taiwan's interests.

Given the ill repute in which Taiwan's judicial system has long been held in many quarters, instituting judicial reform was one such priority. But even there Tsai almost

immediately ran into a buzz saw, having to hastily withdraw two key judicial nominees and then, after announcing she would head a new judicial reform committee, facing criticism from some judges for allegedly impinging on judicial independence and acting in a “hot-headed and naïve” way.¹

Under the cumulative weight of these challenges, Tsai’s satisfaction and trust ratings fell noticeably during her first three months in office.² This was not entirely surprising. Enthusiasm for virtually any new leader is bound to ebb as reality kicks in and different interests assert themselves. In Tsai’s case, however, at least some observers believe this natural political tendency has been compounded by what they see as her penchant for excessive micromanagement of the Executive Yuan (EY, the prime minister’s office) and her mishandling of relations with the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) caucus in the Legislative Yuan (LY).³

Business criticism has been particularly harsh, especially regarding labor issues,⁴ complicating Tsai’s relations with a constituency critical to success in achieving her number one goal, reinvigorating the economy.

This observer is not in a position to render a judgment about these matters. But one might recall that controlling policy and facilitating communication between different “branches” of the DPP were important factors in Tsai’s decision to retain her party chairmanship after becoming president.⁵ And one might see justification for that decision when recalling the pressure Premier Lin Chuan immediately received from the DPP’s LY caucus to withdraw his proposal for coping with an impending electricity shortage by restarting a repaired nuclear reactor.⁶ On that occasion among others, Tsai employed her dual position to try to foster better coordination.⁷

Whether the problems lie with the policy, a lack of executive-legislative communication, or Tsai’s governance style, the president is aware that her administration will need to turn things around.⁸ She told DPP members that, no matter if problems encountered since May have been due to long-term structural factors or unanticipated emergencies, the people care only about how the DPP government responds. She urged all DPP politicians to recall the ideals that motivated them to enter politics in the first place, and to work to overcome challenges in order to meet public expectations.⁹

Implications for Cross-Strait Relations

Limiting Tsai’s Freedom of Action

However one wants to apportion responsibility for the handling of these issues and the public’s negative reaction, the reality is that Tsai’s reserve of trust is now notably reduced compared with May, not only limiting her ability to persuade people to be

patient as she strives to implement her domestic program but also constraining her ability to gain backing for any further accommodation toward Beijing.

In our last essay, we noted Tsai's inclusion of an intriguing passage in her inaugural address regarding setting aside "the baggage of history," and suggested it might point toward a way of dealing with the "one China" issue.¹⁰ A particular focus of attention in this regard has been possible replacement of the 1991 "Taiwan independence plank" in the party charter and two later DPP resolutions (the 1999 Kaohsiung resolution on Taiwan's future and the 2007 "normal country" resolution) with a new charter provision embracing Tsai's focus on maintaining the status quo. As in 2014, a proposal along those lines was submitted to the DPP's July national congress.

But even if Tsai were tempted by that approach, given its controversial nature, her ability to move in that direction would be conditioned not only by her will to do so (which many question) but also by her reserve of political capital. And as we have seen, at least for now the controversies with which she has had to cope have taken a significant toll on that reserve.

When the proposal was introduced, as she did in 2014, Tsai referred it to the Central Executive Committee (CEC) which, in turn referred it to the party's China Affairs Department and Policy Committee,¹¹ where it now sits.

The significance of this handling is unclear. Some people see it as a way of avoiding any serious consideration. Others, however, have suggested it is a way for Tsai to preserve her options for reconsideration at a more propitious time.¹²

A PRC Deadline?

Given Tsai's current political difficulties, it is not unreasonable to assume that the People's Republic of China (PRC) will forego rushing to take further steps beyond the current cutoff in official communication. Although the "one China" requirement for restoration of the suspended ties and avoidance of further punitive steps has not changed, it is hard to see what Beijing might think it could gain from greater pressure at this point.

In a late-July *Washington Post* interview Tsai was asked about what some saw as an impending deadline to accept the "1992 Consensus." She responded that it was unlikely Xi Jinping would establish a deadline for the Taiwan government to do something that went against the democratic will of the people and that therefore had only a small chance of success.¹³

This response received substantial press attention both in Taiwan and on the Mainland, with many interpreting it as a definitive rejection of the "1992 Consensus." However, Tsai's answer was not framed that way, and in any case a

well-informed senior Mainland academic commented that he had “never heard any talk of a deadline.”¹⁴

A low-key approach to Tsai was also evident in Beijing’s reaction to her having signed a guest book at the Panama Canal in late June as “President of Taiwan (ROC).” Although in his speech several days later on the 95th anniversary of the Communist Party Xi Jinping again expressed his resolute determination to uphold the “1992 Consensus” and oppose “Taiwan independence,”¹⁵ he did not directly address the signing issue. Nor, when asked about it, did the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) spokesman.¹⁶

The “One China” Requirement Applies across the Board: The Case of ICAO

Still, as noted, accepting “one China” has remained the essential first step to addressing any cross-Strait issues. Hence, it has not been possible to arrange the cross-Strait consultations regarding Taiwan’s participation in the September 27–October 7, 2016, International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) triennial assembly meeting in Montreal¹⁷ that the Mainland insists upon as a precondition for considering Taiwan’s application.

The irony of this is that, contrary to the DPP’s previous position, the Tsai administration *wants* to consult with Beijing on ICAO. In its press release, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) cited the importance of cross-Strait consultation and expressed hope that Taiwan could participate in the ICAO Assembly “based on mutual goodwill from both sides of the Strait.”¹⁸

The Civil Aviation Administration (CAA), which will represent Taiwan in Montreal if Taipei’s application is approved, also issued a press release that explained in an accommodating mode that the CAA had applied to ICAO to participate “under an appropriate name” (以適當名義) and was willing to “abide by the related regulations of ICAO” (遵循ICAO相關規章). The CAA also called for cross-Strait talks because “this is a matter that can be resolved through consultation” (這是透過協商可以解決的事情).¹⁹

Still, the idea of consulting with Beijing on Taiwan’s ICAO application has been controversial. Many in the DPP are opposed, and a former DPP vice foreign minister, though agreeing that cross-Strait consultations were necessary, nonetheless argued that allowing MAC to play the lead role rather than the foreign ministry risked turning an international question into a cross-Strait matter, a position he characterized as “too weak and self-belittling” (太軟弱,也是自我矮化).

Taiwan officials responded to these criticisms by explaining that they were seeking consultations with the Mainland in this case not just because Beijing could wield an effective veto as a major ICAO member, but because China currently plays a leading

institutional role in ICAO since the Secretary-General is a Chinese national. However, the officials also said that consulting with the Mainland and forging a cross-Strait consensus “will not become the general rule” (不會成為通案做法) in other cases where Taiwan seeks to increase its international role.

Finishing the Test Paper

As we noted in our last essay, the Mainland responded to Tsai’s inauguration speech by giving her an “incomplete” test grade, following up with a series of statements about the unchanging need to openly accept the “one China” principle.²⁰

Accordingly, when Taiwan sought in late June to discuss with Beijing the extradition from various countries to the Mainland of a large number of Taiwan telecommunications fraud suspects, TAO spokesmen said such consultations were not possible as long as Taipei refused to recognize the “1992 Consensus.” Indeed, it was in the context of discussing the extradition issue in June that the TAO officially confirmed for the first time that Straits Exchange Foundation-Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (SEF-ARATS) and TAO-MAC links had been suspended.²¹

The most recent high-level statement on the question of cross-Strait consultations was made by TAO head Zhang Zhijun to a Taiwan business delegation visiting the Mainland in mid-August. On the one hand, Zhang reassured the delegation that Beijing would not unilaterally suspend the 23 cross-Strait agreements already signed, including the Services Trade Agreement currently languishing unratified in the LY. Further, he affirmed that the Mainland remained willing to share the fruits of PRC development with the people of Taiwan.²²

On the other hand, he said that further consultations or negotiations under the 2010 Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) could not proceed without accepting the “foundation” provided by the “1992 Consensus.” Otherwise, Zhang said, China was uncertain whether it was negotiating with “a foreign country.”²³ Asked whether, in light of President Tsai’s refusal to endorse the “1992 Consensus,” there were any other paths to resuming official cross-Strait communication, Zhang said there were not; without recognition of the “1992 Consensus” and its core “one China” connotation, there was no way to resume official exchanges.²⁴

Moreover, the head of ARATS suggested that without affirmation of the “one China” political foundation routine high-level visits by SEF and ARATS officials to the other side would end this year, even visits to farmers or local economic enterprises unrelated to official meetings.²⁵

The Mainland has also begun to “adjust” its participation in municipal fora. For example, after much dickerings it was finally agreed to hold the annual Taipei-Shanghai

Forum in Taipei in late August. The agenda centered around the theme “vibrant cities” and included health care, youth exchanges, “smart cities,” culture, and transportation.²⁶

But although this municipal exchange has been led by the two mayors since its creation in 2010, the senior Shanghai representative this time was neither the mayor nor any of his eight deputies. Rather, it was the head of the Shanghai Communist Party Committee United Front department. Although as a member of the Standing Committee of the Shanghai Municipal Communist Party of China (CPC) Committee he was reasonably senior, many people viewed him as of considerably lower rank than the Taipei mayor.²⁷ Moreover, observers felt that the very nature of his united front post signaled an important shift in the character of the event, diminishing its city-to-city importance and elevating its status as a venue for united front work.²⁸

Nonetheless, in their desire to see any level of “official” cross-Strait engagement go forward, both the DPP²⁹ and president’s office³⁰ welcomed this arrangement on the grounds that more exchanges would help enhance mutual understanding.

To bring about the forum, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je repeated his 2015 statement expressing his “understanding and respect” for the PRC’s adherence to the “1992 Consensus,” his view that the two sides were “one family,” and his willingness to cooperate on the basis of the “existing political foundation” (既有政治基础).³¹ Ko claimed that he persuaded the PRC to proceed with the forum this year by explaining that political transitions are the norm in Taiwan, so there was no need to change cross-Strait exchanges because of them. “They thought that it made sense,” Ko said, “and agreed to carry on with the forum.”³²

Ko also claimed that the connotation of united front work is different on the Mainland, where it is considered “fairly normal,” whereas in Taiwan it is “stigmatized.”³³ Moreover, he said that Shanghai officials had told him that, in the absence of their mayor, who was in the United States, the reason they didn’t pick a deputy mayor to lead the delegation was because sending a “higher-ranking official” showed their “respect” for Taipei.³⁴

For his part, the TAO spokesman gave a somewhat different explanation. He restated yet again that only by adhering to the “1992 Consensus” with its political foundation of the “one China” principle can cross-Strait relations and peaceful development be upheld. “As long as there is a proper understanding of the nature of cross-Strait relations and cross-Strait municipal exchanges, we will hold a positive and open-minded attitude toward cross-Strait municipal exchanges” (只要对两岸关系及两岸城市交流的性质有正确认知, 我们对两岸城市交流持积极、开放的态度).³⁵

Consistent with this, the Shanghai visitor told the Taiwan press that other counties and municipalities, including those where the DPP was in power, could also have

exchanges as long as there was a clear understanding and consensus on a fixed political foundation.³⁶

While Ko (who is not a DPP member) evidently met that standard, Kaohsiung's DPP Mayor Chen Chu apparently did not. Although Chen has previously had several exchanges with the Mainland, as of late August none of the five Mainland harbor cities (Shanghai, Shenzhen, Tianjin, Fuzhou, and Xiamen) had yet responded to invitations she issued over a month earlier to attend the Global Harbor Cities Forum in Kaohsiung in early September.³⁷ This seems to affirm not only Beijing's insistence on a clear "one China" understanding but also, as Sun Yafu recently indicated, "separate" handling for DPP-run cities.³⁸

Channels?

Some people speculate that despite the apparent stalemate there may actually be some movement beneath the surface. Conjecture about a secret channel has existed for some time, from well before the January 16 election, and despite Beijing's denials Tsai Ing-wen keeps referring cryptically to "diverse" communication channels. In her July interview with the *Washington Post*, for example, Tsai made several comments on the subject.³⁹

Asked about channels, Tsai said "we have always had diverse channels of communication across the Strait" (雙方的交流其實非常多元而且頻繁), including not just official ones but also people-to-people contacts. Pressed on whether, as president, she is in touch with her Mainland counterparts, Tsai responded that "many government agencies have mechanisms for a certain level of communication and mutual exchange of ideas with their Mainland counterparts" (很多政府機關跟他們在中國大陸的對口, 也都有一定程度相互通訊息與交換意見的機制). Switching to English she said, "I'm saying different levels of government have different ways of communicating with their counterparts in China."⁴⁰ But then she closed off the subject: "At this stage I cannot go into too much detail" (我不能在這個階段進入太多細節).

Asked whether she felt she was succeeding in closing the gap of cross-Strait misunderstanding, Tsai said "At this point we are very careful in managing relations with Mainland China. In addition to not adopting a provocative attitude and guarding against unforeseen things happening, we also hope that through exchange of information we can build up mutual trust" (這段時間以來, 我們都非常謹慎處理與中國大陸的關係, 我們除了不採取挑釁的態度, 防止意外的發生之外, 也希望透過資訊的交流能夠建立起雙方的互信). Left hanging was the question of what means were employed for such an exchange of information.

That same day a TAO spokesman rejected Tsai's remarks: "Only by affirming the political foundation that embodies the one China principle can systematized cross-Strait interaction continue."⁴¹

Soon thereafter an authoritative PRC official dealing with Taiwan also refuted the idea that there are private channels of communication,⁴² reiterating the "one China" requirement for holding consultations.⁴³

Nonetheless, Tsai stirred the pot yet again when meeting with reporters in late August. She said, "While the official mechanism of communication has not been restored, unofficial communication channels with the Mainland remain available."⁴⁴

When some people suggested moving to Track II dialogue, Premier Lin Chuan said he would not rule that out presuming there were dignity and reciprocity.⁴⁵ However, Track II was quickly rejected by the Mainland if such dialogue were sponsored by the government.⁴⁶

Beijing's Conundrum: Pressuring Tsai While Winning Hearts and Minds

As we have discussed before, the Mainland seems to think that if it pressures Tsai at the same time it continues to offer opportunities to the private sector, especially courting young people,⁴⁷ it can effect a change in Taiwan's political climate and lead Tsai to alter her policy.

We may already be witnessing a relatively focused example of such pressure in the form of a declining number of Mainland tourists traveling to Taiwan. (While individual Mainland tourists between Tsai's inauguration in late May and mid-August actually increased by almost 5 percent, those traveling in groups declined by close to 40 percent, bringing the overall total down by 20 percent.⁴⁸)

Despite efforts at diversification, Taipei obviously attaches great importance to cross-Strait economic ties (including tourism) for Taiwan's well-being. Of political relevance, so does the business community. Therefore, while the Tsai administration has rolled out an extensive new program of activities to be pursued with South and Southeast Asia under the "New Southbound Policy,"⁴⁹ they have been careful to characterize that policy as a supplement to cross-Strait relations, not a replacement. Moreover, when issuing new guidelines on that policy, the president's office went so far as to suggest there could be cross-Strait discussions on dealing with the region since Taiwan and the Mainland could bring different advantages to the table when forming economic partnerships with the related countries.⁵⁰

That being said, doubts exist on both sides. In her *Washington Post* interview, Tsai raised questions about whether the Taiwan and Mainland economies will continue

to be complementary, or whether they were increasingly becoming competitors. Implicit in her comment was a question about whether the Mainland would remain an attractive export market and destination for Taiwan investment. And on the Mainland side, TAO head Zhang Zhijun expressed suspicions that the New Southbound Policy reflected political considerations rather than economic ones.⁵¹

Waiting for Clarity

All of this uncertainty reflects the fact that formal cross-Strait relations may be stalemated, but paradoxically, beneath the surface they may be in a state of intense flux. Some people have suggested that Tsai's October 10 National Day speech will bring some clarity to the situation. Perhaps. But perhaps equally likely we may need to wait somewhat longer than that to have a clearer picture of where things are heading.

Notes

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- 2 In one poll, trust in Tsai dropped from 59.3 percent to 49.2 percent since inauguration, while satisfaction with her, which had held steady at 50–56 percent, dropped to 45.5 percent during the first half of August. Her mistrust and dissatisfaction ratings deteriorated even more, rising from 20 percent to 32.5 percent and 16.3 percent to 39.8 percent, respectively. ("Survey of trends in Taiwan public opinion, assessment of the first quarter of the new government" (台灣民心動態調查、新政府首季總評), Taiwan Indicators Survey Research (TISR), August 15, 2016, http://www.tisr.com.tw/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/TISR_TMBS_201608_1.pdf.) Another poll produced higher ratings, but one DPP legislator said Tsai's numbers still showed the government has been too slow to carry out its pledges and needs to step up the pace and scope of reforms. (Wendy Lee, "First 100 days—More than half approve President Tsai: poll," *Taiwan News Online*, August 22, 2016, http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/etn/news_content.php?id=2969377.)
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 - 8 “President Tsai asks DPP legislative caucus for patience and support over Cabinet missteps,” *FTVN*, June 23, 2016, <http://englishnews.ftv.com.tw/read.aspx?sno=5CB6E42ACD48E64903DB2BCE42119344>.
 - 9 Loa Iok-sin, “Tsai reviews crises at DPP congress,” *Taipei Times*, July 18, 2016, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2016/07/18/2003651259>.
 - 10 Alan D. Romberg, “Tsai Ing-wen Takes Office: A New Era in Cross-Strait Relations,” *China Leadership Monitor (CLM)*, no. 50, July 19, 2016, <http://www.hoover.org/research/tsai-ing-wen-takes-office-new-era-cross-strait-relations>, p. 5.
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 - 12 Tai Ya-chen, Lu Hsin-hui, Chen Chun-hua, and Evelyn Kao, “Measure to change DPP’s independence clause sent to party committee,” *CNA*, July 17, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aall/201607170016.aspx>.
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 - 15 “Xi Jinping: resolutely uphold the ‘1992 Consensus,’ resolutely oppose ‘Taiwan independence’” (习近平：坚持“九二共识”坚决反对“台独”), *Chinanet*, July 1, 2016, <http://news.scol.com.cn/gdxw/201607/54641805.html>.
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 - 17 Chiu Kuo-chiang, “Mainland: To participate in the ICAO assembly, first affirm the one China principle” (參加 ICAO 大會 陸：先確認一中原則), *CNA*, August 14, 2016, <http://www.cna.com.tw/news/acn/201608040465-1.aspx>.
 - 18 “MAC press release No. 51,” Office of the Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China (Taiwan), August 4, 2016, <http://www.mac.gov.tw/ct.aspx?xItem=115342&ctNode=6337&mp=3>.

- 19 “Ministry of Transportation Civil Aviation Authority Press Release, August 5, 2016” (交通部民用航空局105年8月4日新聞稿), <http://www.caa.gov.tw/big5/news/index01.asp?sno=886>.
- 20 Romberg, “Tsai Ing-wen Takes Office,” p. 6. (See endnote 10.)
- 21 “Mainland spokesman says cross-Strait communication mechanisms in suspension,” Xinhua, June 25, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-06/26/c_135466191.htm. As ARATS head Chen Deming later confirmed, while the Mainland does not fax or phone SEF, it does receive and read SEF’s faxes. (“ARATS speaking of Taiwan-Mainland communication mechanisms, Chen Deming: The fax machine is on” [海協會談台, 中溝通機制 陳德銘: 傳真機開著], *Liberty Times*, August 1, 2016, <http://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1781626>.) Hence, when a tragic bus accident in Taiwan killed two dozen PRC tourists in July, it was possible to notify the Mainland and work out the necessary arrangements. On the other hand, the TAO stressed that this did not mean cross-Strait consultations had resumed. (“TAO: Cross-Strait consultations not resumed despite contacts over bus tragedy,” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), July 21, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=18023>.)
- 22 “Economic exchanges continue despite deteriorating cross-Strait relations: Mainland official,” CCTV, August 18, 2016, <http://newscontent.cctv.com/NewJsp/news.jsp?fileId=370859>.
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- 24 “Zhang Zhijun: Existing cross-Strait agreements not to be changed by Mainland,” KMT News Network (from Taipei papers), August 18, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=18133>.
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- 44 "Taiwan President says unofficial communication channels remain with China," Reuters, August 20, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-china-idUSKCN10V0AP?il=0>. This statement was apparently in response to a question. In her prepared remarks, Tsai reemphasized the importance of maintaining the status quo and reiterated her goal of creating a consistent, predictable, and sustainable cross-Strait relationship on the basis of the existing constitutional system. ("President chats with the media over tea on the occasion of celebrating Journalists' Day with reporters," (慶祝記者節總統與媒體茶敘), Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), August 20, 2016, <http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=131&itemid=37889&rmid=514>.)
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The Bull in the China Shop

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As Tsai Ing-wen continued to struggle with implementation of her ambitious reform programs – losing public support in the process – Beijing maintained pressure to accept the “1992 Consensus” or some other expression of “one China.” Everything became substantially more complicated with Tsai’s congratulatory phone call to Donald Trump and Trump’s subsequent tweets and media statements putting the U.S. “one China policy” on the auction block.

Tsai Still Struggles to Implement Reform and Win Public Backing

As noted in our last essay,¹ Tsai Ing-wen is finding governance hard and the public impatient. According to one poll, her approval rate has stagnated below 30 percent for three months running.² Although dissatisfaction with Tsai exceeded satisfaction by August, “confidence” (信心) exceeded lack of confidence for several more months. However, by early 2017 this measure had also slipped into negative territory.³

The government has ambitious plans for growing the economy over the next four years, and they may work. But the administration must face the here and now. Dissatisfaction with the administration’s economic performance is growing particularly rapidly (even within the Democratic Progressive Party [DPP]) and dire warnings are surfacing about an impending “major crisis.”⁴

Tsai is well aware of the dilemma of long-term reform versus short-term public impatience, and in late summer she convened top central and local leaders to discuss next steps. After spurring them to redouble their reform and legislative efforts Tsai enjoined them to “mak[e] it known to the public what we are doing, the progresses of our agenda, and when they will be completed.... In short, we must do our best to communicate with all sectors of society to gain the people’s understanding and earn their trust.”⁵

One prominent magazine summed up Tsai’s problems this way: failing to choose the right people for senior positions; exhibiting poor executive ability (making but not

implementing good policies); failing to establish prioritization among her policies; and vacillating on next steps without strong determination.⁶ Against that background, successfully navigating the complicated and controversial maze of pension reform in the coming months will be seen as a litmus test of Tsai's performance.

Although in the long run a robust two-party system is important to Taiwan's democracy, in short-term political perspective Tsai is fortunate that the Kuomintang (KMT), while still managing to cause some problems for her and the party, remains in disarray. Even People's Republic of China (PRC) officials and scholars who place great stock in the KMT's role as a balancing political force⁷ believe it is unlikely to be competitive again by 2020, much less by the time of the 2018 local elections.⁸

Beijing Continues Pressing For "One China," Taipei Pushes Back

Efforts to reduce dependence on the Mainland market and to enhance Taiwan's access to international activity have been hallmarks of the Tsai presidency. Part of what led to the DPP victory a year ago was a sense that Beijing had too much leverage over Taiwan. This has motivated the "New Southbound Policy" as well as Taipei's active outreach to others, including Japan and the Trump administration.

Tsai Ing-wen knows that the wholesale replacement of the Mainland's market is not feasible and that conveying a perception of movement toward separation would be unwise and even dangerous. Thus, all her actions are cast as contributing to cross-Strait peace and stability.

Lack of Trust in Tsai

But as discussed many times before, Beijing neither trusts nor believes Tsai. The Mainland sees every step to implement a "pragmatic" approach as either laying the foundation for future independence or an effort to establish de facto "peaceful separation" — possibly even de jure "independence" — now.⁹

Hence, although working-level cross-Strait communication apparently continues, the Mainland persists in rejecting any high-level or formal dealings with Taipei. Beijing is also pressing others not to engage in any "official" or even quasi-official relationships with the island and is blocking Taiwan's efforts to expand its international participation unless and until it embraces "one China."

Beijing Continues to Squeeze Taiwan

Specific pressure points are becoming apparent. Even though Beijing has repeatedly said existing agreements will be honored, reports are growing of less than robust

implementation.¹⁰ Indeed, a Mainland spokesman directly confirmed that execution of existing agreements would be affected.¹¹ The precipitous drop in Mainland tourists — initially affecting only groups but now spreading to individual tourism as well — is seen as a particularly visible form of economic pressure.¹²

As Beijing blocked Taiwan's participation in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) head Chen Deming openly stated that without the "one China" political foundation "there is no opportunity that Taiwan will be able to participate in international activities."¹³

On Taiwan itself, although Beijing denies a discriminatory policy¹⁴ it increasingly grants privileges to Blue-run communities while shunning Green ones. In mid-September a delegation of eight pan-Blue local government officials was cordially received in Beijing¹⁵ and participants were treated to a return visit by a PRC agricultural purchasing mission in November.¹⁶ Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) head Zhang Zhijun pointedly noted that the Taiwan participants "all acknowledge the '1992 consensus.'"¹⁷

Some Tsai Successes

On the plus side for Taiwan, despite PRC threats to block him, James Soong attended the late November Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Leaders Meeting in Lima, Peru, as Tsai's representative, and even had a brief exchange with Xi Jinping — though how brief and how substantive is subject to some debate.

Moreover, despite domestic criticism of the policy¹⁸ and PRC suspicions about its motivation, Taiwan reported some progress in establishing relationships under the aegis of the New Southbound Policy.¹⁹

Most visibly, in January Tsai successfully visited four Central American diplomatic allies (Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador), including appropriately low-key but dignified transit stops in Houston and San Francisco en route. Defying some predictions of diplomatic disaster, Tsai was treated royally by Daniel Ortega at his third inaugural. The Nicaraguan leader welcomed her as his "sister" and made a special point of introducing her to inaugural guests as the "president of Taiwan" or, according to some reports, the president of the Republic of Taiwan (República de Taiwan).²⁰

And Some Pushback against Beijing

Overall, Tsai has maintained a consistent approach to the Mainland. Despite urging from the business community that she address the "1992 Consensus" in her October

10 National Day speech,²¹ she did not do so. Instead, reacting to Taiwan's exclusion from the ICAO assembly, in her September 29 Facebook posting commemorating the DPP's 30th anniversary Tsai wrote: "We must resist China's pressure and develop relations with other countries. We must leave our overdependence on China and establish healthy, normal economic relations."²²

In her National Day speech,²³ Tsai softened her tone somewhat ("resist" disappeared as did "overdependence"), but she promoted what is now a regular feature of her speeches, what some call her "four noes": "Our pledges will not change, and our goodwill will not change. But we will not bow to pressure, and we will not revert to the old path of confrontation." Conversely, she expressed concern that Beijing was returning to "the old path of dividing, coercing, and even threatening and intimidating Taiwan."

In that speech (as well as in a letter to Pope Francis in late January 2017²⁴), Tsai again spoke of discarding "historical baggage." Perhaps she now means it to have a more generalized application than when she first used it in her inaugural address in May. But as previously discussed, in May it evidently meant dealing with the DPP charter's Taiwan independence plank. Although she is obviously in no position to move on that issue now, reliable interlocutors²⁵ as well as authoritative PRC statements strongly indicate that eventually freezing or eliminating this plank would generate an even more positive response from Beijing than embracing the "1992 Consensus."²⁶

No PRC Flexibility — Yet

Meanwhile, however, the "1992 Consensus" remains the touchstone for restoring normal relations, and Beijing was quick to react to Tsai's National Day speech. The TAO spokesman refuted Tsai's claim of enduring goodwill by stating that "goodwill" lies in whether or not the island's leadership accepts the "1992 Consensus."²⁷

Adopting a similar position when speaking in late October, Director Zhou Zhihui of the Mainland's Taiwan Studies Institute suggested somewhat ominously that confrontation might become the "new normal" in cross-strait relations for the foreseeable future.²⁸

An Eventual Opening?

A month later, however, Zhou struck a different note. He argued that while the principle that "the two sides belong to one country" is not replaceable, the phrase "1992 Consensus" is.²⁹ It is still premature, Zhou said, to create a new consensus. But in addition to defusing "pressure points," think tanks should actively discuss ideas for a new consensus that embodies the "one China" framework and rejects "Taiwan independence" and "desinicization." Zhou said it is critical that, "under certain

[unspecified] circumstances” (在一定條件下), the “two sides of the Strait begin to contact each other through sending messages in a controllable manner” (兩岸可進行傳話性接觸與可控性接觸). Without clear, consistent, and complete messages, conveyed in a direct and effective manner, he said, the chances of misjudgment would greatly increase.

Zhou’s speech created some controversy on the Mainland. Informed people said that these ideas had been much discussed internally, but Zhou’s airing them at this time was a personal decision with which many disagreed.³⁰ In Taiwan, however, they were greeted with great interest. As one senior official put it, “We welcome his words and the opportunity to discuss these ideas; let’s talk.”³¹

At the same time, as reflected in Tsai Ing-wen’s New Year’s Eve press conference, people were aware that Zhou’s proposals were ahead of policy: “Whether cross-Strait ties can take a turn for the better in the coming year will depend on our patience and resolve. But it will also depend on how Beijing sees the future of cross-Strait relations, and whether it is willing to assume its share of the responsibility for building new models for cross-Strait interactions.”³²

In the event, Tsai’s patience and resolve were soon to be tested — not by Beijing, but by Washington.

Good Relations with the Mainland and the U.S. Are “Equally Important”

“The Phone Call”

During 2016, Presidents Barack Obama and Xi Jinping managed to calm down some of the more contentious bilateral issues (notably the South China Sea) and to advance some important international agenda items (in particular climate change).

Within two months of their final meeting in September, however, much that had been achieved was put in doubt by the newly elected Donald Trump, who not only challenged China on a number of important issues including trade, the South China Sea, and North Korea, but did so in the context of raising what has always been identified by Beijing as the most sensitive and important issue in Sino-American relations: Taiwan.

Tsai’s congratulatory note to Trump immediately after his election victory passed without incident.³³ But a congratulatory phone call from Tsai to Trump on December 2 changed the situation dramatically. The very fact of the call would have been a challenge to Beijing. What followed elevated its importance beyond anyone’s expectations.

The Best Surprise Is No Surprise

Having been rather pleased with the “unprecedented” conversation, the first between Taiwan’s leader and an American president or president-elect since the U.S. broke relations with Taipei in 1979, Taipei awoke the next morning to learn that the Trump transition team had unexpectedly publicized the call (albeit in a brief, low-key paragraph),³⁴ triggering what one newspaper called a “deluge of criticism” from the world press, including accusations that Trump had committed a “breach of diplomatic protocol”³⁵ that would infuriate the Chinese government. Commentators questioned Trump’s understanding of the American “one China” policy that guides relations with Taiwan as well as his awareness of the potential problem he had created. Worse from Taipei’s perspective, the notoriously thin-skinned Mr. Trump had already responded with two tweets justifying the call.³⁶

Taipei proceeded with its planned low-key announcement the morning of December 3 Taiwan time along lines it had originally thought would suffice to give the call publicity yet manage the fallout.³⁷ Already sensing the dimensions of the problem being created, Tsai’s office responded to questions about a Mainland backlash by asserting that good cross-Strait relations and good relations with the United States are “equally important” for maintaining peace and stability in the region.³⁸

Beijing Seeks to Manage the Fallout

Beijing blamed the call on Tsai,³⁹ PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi calling it a “petty maneuver” (小動作) by Taiwan that would not change the “one China consensus” in the international community and would “never change” the “one China” policy long recognized by the United States.⁴⁰ The “one China principle,” Wang said, is “a cornerstone for healthy development of China-U.S. relations” and China does not want this political foundation to be interfered with or damaged. Trump’s transgression, on the other hand, was characterized by official media as merely “his and his transition team’s inexperience in dealing with foreign affairs.”⁴¹

Nonetheless, the Mainland lodged “solemn representations” with what it termed “the American party concerned” (美国有关方面).⁴² At the same time, Beijing reportedly quickly deleted messages about the call from the popular WeChat blog site, in order, observers said, to prevent public opinion from forcing the government’s hand.⁴³

Similarly, the TAO pushed aside “experts” suggestions to “refine” the Anti-Secession Law to make it more operational in “suppressing” (遏制) Taiwan independence. The TAO argued that the law already safeguards sovereignty and suppresses Taiwan independence while also promoting peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and national reunification.⁴⁴

As Trump once again weighed in two days later with a tweet implicitly justifying the call in light of unilateral actions by Beijing,⁴⁵ Tsai once again sought to downplay the call's significance: "I have to stress that one phone call does not mean a policy shift...I do not foresee major policy shifts in the near future because we all see the value of stability in the region."⁴⁶

"Why should I be bound by 'one China'?"

But rather than being finished with the matter, Trump obviously thought he had found a point of negotiating leverage with Beijing and escalated things to directly involve the "one China" issue. During an interview with Fox Sunday News on December 11, the president-elect laid out at some length a rationale questioning why he should be bound by a "one China" policy "unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things, including trade."⁴⁷

Beijing immediately ratcheted up its comments. The TAO expressed "serious concern" about Trump's interview. Noting that the Taiwan question touches China's core interests and reiterating Wang Yi's point that the "one China principle" is the foundation for development of China-U.S. ties, Beijing stated that should this foundation be disrupted or damaged, the sound and steady development of bilateral relations and cooperation in major fields would be "out of the question" (无从谈起).⁴⁸

"Everything is under negotiation" vs. "The one China principle is non-negotiable"

Although in a New Year's Eve comment Trump said, "hopefully we're going to have great relationships with many countries...and that includes China," less than two weeks later he gave the China world another jolt when he told the *Wall Street Journal*, "Everything is under negotiation, including 'one China.'" He would not commit to the "one China" policy, he said, until he saw progress in Beijing's currency and trade practices.⁴⁹

The PRC foreign ministry responded with a statement the next day that the "one China principle" is "non-negotiable" (不可谈判的).⁵⁰

Contrary to Trump's statement, at his confirmation hearing Secretary of State-designate Rex Tillerson said he was not aware of any plans to scrap the "one China" policy.⁵¹ Trump's incoming chief of staff, Reince Priebus, told ABC News that both Trump and Tillerson were right: there are no plans to change the "one China" policy, but "certainly" that policy will be on the table if China does not work with the U.S. on trade and the South China Sea. As part of the negotiation to "get our relationships with China straightened out," Priebus said, all these issues are going to be on the

table. But there's no predetermined path. "It's something that is going to be discussed and decided down the road."⁵²

Those looking for a quick and forceful Chinese response to Priebus were not disappointed: "[T]here are things in the world that are not for trade.... Any attempt to undermine the 'one China' principle or use it as a bargaining chip by anyone for any purpose shall be met with firm opposition from the Chinese government and people and the international community and [would have] severe consequences" (literally, "would be picking up a rock only to drop it on one's own foot").⁵³

In light of all this, Beijing's continuing pressure on Taiwan was not confined to words alone. Not only having cut communications links, but having flown nuclear weapons-capable aircraft around Taiwan in late November, before the Tsai-Trump phone call,⁵⁴ Beijing followed up in the wake of the Trump furor by sending its lone aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait.⁵⁵ The Mainland also snared one of Taiwan's smaller diplomatic partners, São Tomé and Príncipe⁵⁶ and secured agreement by Nigeria to downgrade the Taiwan representative office and move it out of the capital.⁵⁷ In addressing both of these latter cases, Beijing emphasized the importance of those countries' adherence to the "one China" principle.

Afterword

The dilemma for Tsai was vividly encapsulated by Taiwan's plaintive plea to the incoming Trump administration to make continued efforts to maintain cross-Strait peace and not to treat Taiwan as a bargaining chip.⁵⁸ Of course President Tsai wants close relations with the United States, including help with Taiwan's economy, security, and international participation. Moreover, she identifies with the United States as a democracy and a market economy. But as we have noted, Taipei sees its self-interest best served by a balanced relationship between Washington and Beijing. It wishes neither to be a sacrificial pawn in the great power game, nor to be drawn into a U.S. effort to isolate and confront the PRC.

Going forward, even if President Trump moves away from threats to abandon the "one China policy," how he chooses to implement it will matter. Now bolstered by the National Defense Authorization Act provision on enhancing U.S.-Taiwan military exchanges and security relations and prospectively spurred on by the pending Taiwan Travel Act, which calls for upgrading high-level official travel and contacts, Trump may well judge that he can "do more" with Taiwan without opening himself up to criticism that he is recklessly breaching precedent.

Whether Beijing would see it that way, of course, is a different matter. Although a harshly negative PRC response is predictable, what specific actions the Mainland might take are unclear.

Moreover, Taiwan's judgment about how far to go in accepting an "upgrade" in relations is uncertain. As one colleague in Taiwan put it, Taipei wants closer U.S. ties, but there may come a time when Taipei has to turn down such an offer in the service of its larger interests.

Notes

- 1 Alan D. Romberg, "The First 100 Days: Crossing the River While Feeling the Stones," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 51, http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm_51ar.pdf.
- 2 TVBS, "Survey of satisfaction rate for President Tsai Ing-wen after 8 months in office," (蔡英文總統就職八個月滿意度民調), January 19, 2017 <http://other.tvbs.com.tw/export/sites/tvbs/file/other/poll-center/0601161.pdf>. By January, those believing Tsai was guiding Taiwan in the right direction had slipped to 35 percent (down from 56 percent immediately following her inauguration) while those seeing her leading it in the wrong direction had risen to 31 percent (up from 8 percent eight months earlier).
- 3 Ibid. Even a pro-Green poll registered its lowest approval rating for Tsai since she took office, a slide from 69.9 percent last May to 33.8 percent in January 2017 that included a four-point drop from December to January alone. ("Economic performance mars Tsai's approval ratings," *China Post*, January 24, 2017, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2017/01/24/490248/Economic-performance.htm>.) A detailed account of that survey is at <http://www.storm.mg/article/216212>.
- 4 Stephanie Chao, "Economy edging to brink of crisis: forum," *China Post*, January 24, 2017, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/business/2017/01/24/490215/Economy-edging.htm>.
- 5 Sophia Yeh and S.C. Chang, "President calls high-level meeting on key policy initiatives," Central News Agency (hereinafter abbreviated CNA), September 4, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201609040019.aspx>.
- 6 Ouyang Feng, "Being indecisive leads to Tsai Ing-wen accomplishing nothing in the past half year; Rushing around, confused, blind and without a main axis, she makes four big mistakes in governing" (搖擺蔡英文讓她半年一事無成, 缺乏主軸的忙茫盲執政的4大錯誤), *Wealth Magazine*, November 30, 2016, http://www.wealth.com.tw/article_in.aspx?nid=9373&pg=1.
- 7 For example, in his meeting with KMT chair Hung Hsiu-chu in November, Xi Jinping stressed the importance of KMT-CCP cooperation in opposing "Taiwan independence" and safeguarding cross-Strait peace and stability. (Chen Jianxing, "General Secretary Xi Jinping meets with Hung Hsiu-chu, chair of the Chinese Kuomintang" [习近平总书记会见中国国民党主席洪秀柱], Xinhua, November 1, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-11/01/c_1119830924.htm.) Zhou Zhihuai, director of the Taiwan Studies institute under the China Academy of Social Sciences made a similar point about the "irreplaceable" role of the KMT in a speech we discuss in greater detail below. (Shu Mu, "Zhou Zhihuai: It is possible to construct a new cross-Strait consensus that embodies the one China principle" [周志懷：可建立有一中原則內涵的兩岸新共識], *China Review News*, November 30, 2016, <http://hk.crntt.com/doc/1044/8/8/4/104488421.html?coluid=3&kindid=12&docid=104488421&mdate=1130171656>.) A detailed English summary of Zhou's speech is at "Beijing scholar: Mainland not opposed to a new cross-Strait consensus so long as it embodies the connotation of

- one China,” KMT News Network (Taipei papers), December 1, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnun=112&anun=18504>.
- 8 Lin Liang-sheng and Jake Chung, “KMT chaos destabilizing to ties: ex-China official [Wang Zaixi],” *Taipei Times*, January 8, 2017, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2017/01/08/2003662731>.
 - 9 Tsai’s nomination of two members of the Judicial Yuan who outspokenly advocate “one country on each side” has been taken by many on the Mainland as “proof” that she means to achieve de jure independence through constitutional reinterpretation. Proposals to ease the requirements for passing referenda are seen as another backdoor effort to amend the constitution for this purpose. (Tsai Hao-hsiang, “TAO: Absolutely oppose revising laws to open a convenient door for Taiwan independence” [陸國台辦: 堅決反對修法為 台獨開方便之門], *China Times*, December 20, 2016, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20161220002292-260407>.)
 - 10 Lin Liang-sheng, “China side holding back cross-Strait ties, sources say,” *Taipei Times*, January 22, 2017, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2017/01/22/2003663583>. Reportedly, a majority of meetings to implement the existing agreements have been delayed, the PRC is sending only lower-level officials to attend meetings in Taiwan, and only Taipei division heads or lower-ranking officials are allowed by Beijing to visit the Mainland.
 - 11 “Suspension of communication mechanism affects cross-Strait agreements,” Xinhua, September 14, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-09/14/c_135687592.htm.
 - 12 The Mainland continues to insist that there is no policy or regulation causing the drop, but rather that it reflects travelers’ personal decisions. Nonetheless, PRC tourism to Taiwan dropped by 16 percent in 2016, some 670,000 travelers (“Mainland tourists decline by 670,000 last year,” KMT News Network [Taipei papers], January 25, 2017, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnun=112&anun=18728>). While tourism from other places increased, the reduced Mainland numbers brought the growth of all tourist visits down to only 2.4 percent in 2016, the lowest increase in the past 13 years.
 - 13 “Chen Demin[g]: Not blindly optimistic that Tsai will recognize 1992 Consensus,” KMT News Network (Taipei papers), September 21, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnun=112&anun=18256>.
 Chen also asserted that the Mainland would continue to view the people of both sides as “family” and thus promote exchanges and cooperation in every field, creating circumstances beneficial to people in Taiwan, especially the youth. (“Mainland’s Chen Demin[g] again insists on 1992 Consensus in Hangzhou,” KMT News Network [Taipei papers], September 22, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnun=112&anun=18260>.)
 At the same time, TAO director Zhang Zhijun made clear that pro-independence companies were not welcome. “China will not allow those Taiwan investors that advocate Taiwan independence to make money here.” (Yin Chun-chieh and Frances Huang, “China says pro-independence Taiwan firms not welcome,” CNA, December 2, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201612020013.aspx>.)
 - 14 “Chen Demin[g]: Not blindly optimistic that Tsai will recognize 1992 Consensus.”
 - 15 Lawrence Chiu, Liu Kuang-ting, and S.C. Chang, “8 Taiwan local government leaders visit Beijing,” CNA, September 18, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201609180017.aspx>.
 - 16 Chan Che-fon and Y.F. Low, “Chinese delegation visits Taiwan to procure agricultural products,” CNA, November 21, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201611210018.aspx>.
 - 17 “8 Taiwan local government leaders visit Beijing.”
 - 18 “Both KMT and DPP legislators lambast New Southward Policy,” KMT News Network (Taipei papers), September 14, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnun=112&anun=18242>.

- 19 Tang Pei-chun and Lilian Wu, "Taiwan's New Southbound Policy sees initial fruit," CNA, January 13, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201701130026.aspx>.
- 20 Yeh Su-ping, "Ortega is inaugurated; calls her President Tsai and his sister" (奧蒂嘉就職以姐妹稱呼蔡總統), *China Times*, January 11, 2017, <http://appweb.cna.com.tw/webm/news/aip/201701110165.aspx>.
- 21 Yang Shu-min and Elaine Hou, "Business community urges President Tsai to address '1992 Consensus,'" September 23, 2016, <http://m.focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201609230029.aspx>.
- 22 Matthew Strong, "Tsai calls on DPP to resist China pressure," *Taiwan News Online*, September 29, 2016, http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/etn/news_content.php?id=2986999.
- 23 "President Tsai's 2016 National Day Address," Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan) (hereinafter abbreviated OOP), October 10, 2016, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=38133&rmid=2355&sd=2016/10/10&ed=2016/10/11>. Chinese text is at <http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=131&rmid=514&itemid=38134>.
- 24 "President Tsai's response to Pope Francis' message for the World Day of Peace 2017," OOP, January 20, 2017 (letter dated January 5), <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=38679&rmid=2355>. Chinese text is at <http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=131&itemid=38678&rmid=514>.
- 25 Private conversations, fall 2016.
- 26 In his speech marking the 150th anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's birthday, Xi Jinping unsurprisingly reiterated China's commitment to "the common political foundation of the '1992 Consensus.'" His strongest words, however, were focused on blocking separation and establishing national unity. Having noted the "painful history" of breakup and division of the nation, Xi pledged: "We will absolutely not allow any individuals, any organizations, or any political parties to split any piece of territory from China at any time or in any form!" (我们绝不允许任何人、任何组织、任何政党、在任何时候、以任何形式、把任何一块中国领土从中国分裂出去!) ("Xi Jinping: Speech at meeting marking the 150th anniversary of Sun Yat-sen's birthday" [习近平：在纪念孙中山先生诞辰150周年大会上的讲话], *Xinhua*, November 11, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2016-11/11/c_1119897047.htm.)
- 27 "No force can stop cross-Straits reunification: mainland official," *Xinhua*, October 10, 2016, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2016-10/10/c_135743676.htm. Chinese text of the spokesman's statement is at http://www.gwyttb.gov.cn/wyly/201610/t20161010_11588116.htm.
- 28 "Zhou Zhihui: Confrontations may become 'new normal' in cross-Straits relations," KMT News Network (Taipei papers), October 26, 2016, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=18378>.
- 29 Shu Mu, "Zhou Zhihui: It is possible to construct a new cross-Straits consensus" (see endnote 7).
- 30 Officials avoided publicly contradicting Zhou, but the TAO underscored the essentiality of "one China." (Tsai Hao-hsiang, "Zhang Zhijun: No matter what new consensus the two sides discuss, it must embody the one China principle" [張志軍：兩岸無論談任何新共識得體現一中原則], *China Times*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20161201005304-260409>.)
- 31 Private conversation, January 2017.
- 32 "President Tsai's remarks at year-end press conference," OOP, December 31, 2016, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=38528&rmid=2355>. Chinese text is at <http://www.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=131&itemid=38527&rmid=514>.

Perhaps anticipating Beijing's openness to a new model of interaction after the 19th Party Congress, the MAC announced that creating a new cross-Straits interaction model was a key task for 2017.

(Chang Chia-lun and Elizabeth Hsu, “MAC to draw up, implement new model for cross-Strait interaction,” CNA, January 11, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201701110025.aspx>.)

- 33 Christie Chen and Tai Ya-chen, “Taiwan congratulates Trump on winning U.S. presidency,” CNA, November 9, 2016, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201611090021.aspx>.
- 34 “President-elect Trump spoke with President Tsai Ing-wen of Taiwan, who offered her congratulations. During the discussion, they noted the close economic, political, and security ties exists [*sic*] between Taiwan and the United States. President-elect Trump also congratulated President Tsai on becoming President of Taiwan earlier this year.” (“Readout of Calls with World Leaders Held Today by President-Elect Donald J. Trump,” Trump-Pence Transition Team, December 2, 2016, <https://greatagain.gov/readout-of-calls-with-world-leaders-held-today-by-president-elect-donald-j-trump-827473a60060#.umv57w8xh>.)
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- 35 Anne Gearan, “Trump speaks with Taiwan’s president in major break with U.S. policy on China,” *Washington Post*, December 2, 2016, <https://www.adn.com/nation-world/2016/12/02/president-elect-trump-in-break-with-tradition-speaks-to-taiwans-leader/>.
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- 40 “Wang Yi answers question from journalist over Donald Trump’s call with Tsai Ing-wen” PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, December 3, 2016, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1421645.shtml. Chinese text is at <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjzbhd/t1421116.shtml>.
- 41 “No need to over-interpret Tsai-Trump phone call,” *China Daily* (Editorial), December 3, 2016, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2016-12/03/content_27560464.htm.
- 42 Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang’s remarks on US President-elect Trump’s phone call with Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen,” December 3, 2016, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/t1421132.shtml. Chinese text is at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/dhdw_673027/t1421084.shtml. It was later clarified that the U.S. side, “President-elect Trump’s team included,” is fully aware of China’s solemn attitude on the issue. (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lu Kang’s regular press conference on December 5, 2016, <http://>

- www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1421494.shtml. Chinese text is at http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1421469.shtml.)
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- 44 Transcript of TAO press briefing (Chinese), December 14, 2016, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201612/t20161214_11653363.htm.
- 45 “Did China ask us if it was OK to devalue their currency (making it hard for our companies to compete), heavily tax our products going into their country (the U.S. doesn’t tax them) or to build a massive military complex in the middle of the South China Sea? I don’t think so!” (“All the President’s tweets,” December 4 [see endnote 36]).
- 46 Susan Heavey, “Taiwan’s Tsai: no major policy shifts, despite Trump call—reports,” Reuters, December 6, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-china-tsai-idUSKBN13V1T7?il=0>.
- 47 After denying that he had been thinking about a phone call with Tsai for weeks, saying he had heard the call was coming through only an hour or so ahead of time, Trump then raised the stakes by raising questions about the “one China” policy: “I fully understand the ‘one China’ policy. But I don’t know why we have to be bound by a ‘one China’ policy unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things, including trade. I mean, look, we’re being hurt very badly by China with devaluation, with taxing us heavy [*sic*] at the borders when we don’t tax them, with building a massive fortress in the middle of the South China Sea, which they shouldn’t be doing. And frankly, they’re not helping us at all with North Korea. You have North Korea, you have nuclear weapons, and China could solve that problem. And they’re not helping us at all. So, I don’t want China dictating to me. And this was a call put into me. I didn’t make the call. And it was a call, very short call, saying, ‘Congratulations, sir, on the victory.’ It was a very nice call. Short. And why should some other nation be able to say, I can’t take a call? I think it would have been very disrespectful, to be honest with you, not taking it. (“Exclusive: Donald Trump on Cabinet picks, transition process,” *Fox News Sunday*, December 11, 2016, <http://www.foxnews.com/transcript/2016/12/11/exclusive-donald-trump-on-cabinet-picks-transition-process/>.)
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- 55 Lu Hsin-hui, “Chinese aircraft carrier completes passage through Taiwan Strait,” CNA, January 12, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201701120001.aspx>.
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Cross-Strait Relations: Marking Time

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There have been no dramatic developments in cross-Strait relations of late. Instead, Beijing continues its steady pressure on the Taiwan authorities while courting private interests. President Tsai's bid for acceptance of reciprocal responsibility for the improvement of cross-Strait relations was pushed aside by the Mainland and Taiwan's hopes to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA) were unrealized. Meanwhile, President Trump seemed to be marking time on Taiwan while seeking Xi Jinping's support on North Korea.

No Let-up from Beijing

Throughout the recent period, there has been a lot of talk in Taiwan about how the table was being set for the next phase in cross-Strait relations. As part of that process, President Tsai Ing-wen reportedly gave the nod in early February to a business community proposal to expedite a bill on the rules for the Legislative Yuan's (LY) monitoring of negotiations between the two sides. At the same time, she indicated that the latter half of the year would be a better time to launch a "new policy."¹ By then, she reasoned, with the fall's 19th Party Congress behind him, Xi Jinping would have greater ability to deal flexibly with Taiwan. Just as Tsai was not prepared to endorse "one China," she did not assume Xi would be prepared to abandon it. But as an experienced trade negotiator, she seemed convinced that there would be a way around that obstacle.

The supervisory bill still languishes in the LY, and in any case, as one commentator explained, the issue for the Mainland is not whether Taiwan adopts a "new" policy but whether it adopts the "right" policy.² In Beijing's mind, that means acceptance of the "1992 Consensus" and its core connotation that Taiwan and the Mainland belong to one and the same China. As this commentator put it, Tsai's continued unwillingness to embrace any "one China" position is the key reason for the cross-Strait stalemate inasmuch as she is not giving the Mainland a clear strategic guarantee of "no independence" ("不独" 的清晰战略保证).

Hence, at least for the moment, instead of showing flexibility Beijing continues to differentiate between how it treats the people of Taiwan, whom it is courting, and how it treats the authorities, whom it seeks to pressure. Appealing to private citizens, especially younger people, the Mainland has announced that it will gradually adopt new policies granting Taiwan residents equal “national treatment,” facilitating their integration into Mainland society whether in terms of studies, employment, entrepreneurship, or daily living. These measures are aimed at encouraging these residents to put down roots on the Mainland and promoting cross-Strait economic and social integration.³ In addition, Beijing wants everyone to “see clearly” who is responsible for hindering cross-Strait economic cooperation and investment in the Mainland.⁴

Fundamentally, Beijing has underscored that its beneficence is based on a foundation of the “one China principle.”⁵ As had already been made clear, this means that businesses that support Taiwan independence are not welcome.⁶

Underscoring growing public negativism on the Mainland toward the Tsai administration, rumors began circulating early in the year about a toughening of the March 2005 “Anti-Secession Law.”⁷ By the time the National People’s Congress (NPC) met in March, the focus had shifted to the more threatening possibility of a “National Unification Law” (though it quickly became clear that there would be no serious attention to any such law until the 2018 NPC at the earliest).⁸

Although Xi Jinping – unlike at the 2016 NPC – made no remarks on Taiwan this year, one heard toughened rhetoric that seemed to be part of an effort to highlight Xi’s personal role on cross-Strait matters.

Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) head Zhang Zhijun issued stern warnings regarding the “grim challenges” (严峻挑战) peaceful development of cross-Strait relations faced due to the Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) refusal to accept “one China.”⁹ He predicted that the situation would become even “more complicated and grimmer” (更加复杂严峻) in 2017, with rising uncertainty, risks, and challenges in Taiwan-related work.

Zhang then went on in a vein that seemed to have as much political purpose as policy relevance.

The party’s Central Committee, with comrade Xi Jinping as the core, has studied and made accurate judgments about the situation, made decisions and plans scientifically, and gotten a firm grasp of the main direction of the development of cross-Strait relations.... Under the new circumstances, we must earnestly study General Secretary Xi Jinping’s important ideas on the work related to Taiwan affairs, firmly implement the general policies and guiding principles of the party’s Central Committee toward Taiwan, and comprehensively carry out all work plans.¹⁰

Zhang's most widely cited remark in this period was that "pursuing Taiwan independence will ultimately result in reunification, but the manner of said reunification will be one that has a pernicious effect on both Taiwan's society and its people. They will face huge consequences as a result."¹¹

Asked about the meaning of Zhang's statement, Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) vice chairman (and former TAO vice minister) Sun Yafu responded that it was a principally a warning that even though Taiwan independence activity would ultimately fail, it would stir up troubles and seriously harm cross-Strait relations and Taiwan's fundamental interests.¹²

While Sun stressed the importance of the DPP authorities recognizing the "1992 Consensus," the examples he chose to illustrate his point about "Taiwan independence" activity were striking. They were extreme actions and drew on the experience of the Chen Shui-bian era that most observers outside of the Mainland would consider to have zero likelihood of being repeated.

Sun spoke of perniciously promoting the rectification of Taiwan's name by enacting a new constitution. Echoing the language of the 2005 Anti-Secession Laws provision regarding the triggers for the use of force, he identified holding a referendum on joining the United Nations as an example of a "major incident" of Taiwan independence.

Not all remarks from the Mainland reflected doom and gloom. For example, the head of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots, reportedly occupying a position equivalent to Cabinet rank, said the 19th Party Congress will formulate "new language" on Taiwan in its work report that he hoped would contribute to a warming trend in the currently strained cross-Strait ties.¹³ "I believe and expect that there will be new prospects for cross-Strait relations in the wake of the party's 19th national congress."¹⁴

Even so, Beijing continued not only to issue warnings but also to engage in what Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) called "completely unacceptable" practices such as identifying a Taiwan table tennis team competing in the Mainland with the politically fraught name "China Taipei" (中國台北). This was a name the Mainland had used before Ma Ying-jeou's election in 2008, rather than the current, mutually acceptable "Chinese Taipei" (中華台北).¹⁵ In a similar vein, the People's Republic of China (PRC) delegation to an intercessional meeting of the diamond trade-regulating Kimberly Process also insisted – successfully – that the Taiwan delegation be ousted even though Taiwan had reportedly been regularly participating under observer status granted since 2007.¹⁶

Of more serious import, Beijing also took into custody a Taiwan human rights worker, Lee Ming-che, for "engaging in activities which endanger state security" and refused to allow his wife to visit him, withholding most information about his situation except

for a claim he was in good health.¹⁷ This created a significant backlash in Taiwan, which was then exacerbated by Mainland actions blocking Taiwan's participation in the WHA meeting several weeks later (discussed below).

Taipei Refuses to Be Provoked –Tsai Adopts a “Three New” Concept

Nonetheless, not only did Taipei determinedly stick to its commitment not to provoke Beijing, it sought in various ways to keep the door open to possible progress after the 19th Party Congress this fall.

Tsai recognized that the impact of the party congress was still an unknown. Nonetheless, in early May she introduced a “three new” (三新) concept.¹⁸ The “three new” ideas were that cross-Strait relations now operate in a new situation, there is need for a new “test paper,” and the two sides must adopt a new framework of cross-Strait relations. Both sides must view the new set of circumstances objectively, she argued, and must work together to decide on a new, mutually beneficial framework. Such an achievement would ensure peace and stability not only across the Strait but also in the region.

Tsai emphasized that the Mainland's continued reference to her as having submitted an “incomplete test answer sheet” was not an act of goodwill. There must be a new test paper to be answered not by any individual but through “concerted efforts” grounded in “mutual interactions of goodwill.”

Though Taipei justified the action as being in accordance with Taiwan law, its refusal to grant political asylum to a visiting PRC human rights advocate was obviously intended as a demonstration of such goodwill.¹⁹ Similarly, the Tsai administration's apparent steps earlier in the year to turn away Uighur activist Rebiya Kadeer reflected a similar intention.²⁰

As to the creation of a new framework for cross-Strait interaction, Tsai said, “whenever the Mainland is ready and willing to show goodwill, we can all come together to work it out.”

Although many scholars on the Mainland²¹ and even a media website operated by the TAO²² were more direct in dismissing Tsai's ideas than the TAO spokesman,²³ the basic message was the same: “one China” was the key to resolving the current problem and she was evading it. As Zhang Zhijun put it, there is only one “new” thing that is certain, and that is that there has been a negative change in cross-Strait relations since Tsai took office on May 20, 2016.²⁴

Nonetheless, Tsai's office characterized her “3 new” concept as “more vigorous,” indicating that for the time being the government would not take any stronger

position on cross-Strait relations and would decide on any future changes depending on the Mainland's attitude.²⁵

World Health Assembly

Readers may recall that although the WHA convened after Tsai took office in 2016, an invitation was issued while Ma was still president. Recognizing that it was Tsai who would send a delegation, the invitation made specific reference to U.N. Security Council (UNSC) and World Health Organization (WHO) resolutions of 1971 recognizing the PRC as the legal government representing all of China in those bodies.²⁶ This was a temporizing move to see how Tsai would handle “one China” as she took office, including in her inaugural address.

By May 2017, however, Beijing was no longer temporizing. It had made the judgment that Tsai had destroyed the common “one China” political foundation on which progress during Ma Ying-jeou's eight years in office had rested. And unless and until she accepted that same political foundation, however expressed, there would be no high-level cross-Strait consultation or dialogue to agree on “fair and reasonable” arrangements for Taiwan's international participation and no political basis for such participation. Accordingly, much to Taipei's frustration and clearly at Beijing's direction²⁷ the WHA declined to issue an invitation for Taiwan to attend its annual session as an “observer” for the first time since 2009.

Setting aside the fact that WHO is a U.N. specialized agency, Tsai and her administration argued that WHO is a “non-political organization” (非政治性組織) and they characterized equal health treatment as an inalienable “human right.”²⁸ In making this case, Tsai herself tweeted 10 times in the run-up to the final registration date.²⁹

But Beijing was having none of it. Having reprised the claim that Beijing passes on relevant health information to Taiwan in a timely way, that Taiwan can attend all WHO technical meetings, and WHO experts can visit the island if needed (all being claims that Taipei firmly rebutted³⁰), the Mainland drew a bright line between the health of people in Taiwan and exclusion from meetings. On the latter score, Zhang Zhijun explained, “The precondition and basis for Taiwan's presence at the WHA no longer exist. And everyone is quite clear as to which side should be responsible.”³¹

This all came in the face of Tsai's wide-ranging April 27 interview with Reuters,³² in which she laid down a broad hint of flexibility. She said, “If China shows flexibility and goodwill, I believe that the Taiwanese people will then think about how Taiwan can be more flexible. A relationship cannot be led by just one side. There has to be a process of engagement. If this relationship is to develop, there must be an accumulation of goodwill.”³³

In this context Tsai brought up the fate of Taiwan's representation at WHA, saying it would be a "very important indicator in cross-Strait relations" (兩岸關係上非常重要的指標). Having suggested that a positive decision on WHA would generate a positive response, she said that if China made a negative decision this would have a major adverse impact on cross-Strait relations; Taiwan people will not understand why they cannot participate in a non-political experts meeting.

It was intriguing that she set this up essentially as a litmus test when, in light of the recent experiences with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Police Organization (INTERPOL),³⁴ a negative outcome was almost certain. If there were an authoritative back channel, that could help provide an explanation. And with the WHA spokesman hinting even after the registration deadline had passed that a later-than-last-minute reversal was possible,³⁵ and with Taipei saying it still was trying,³⁶ that cannot be totally ruled out.

But there have been no other indicators of such a channel at this point, and two quiet "front channel" efforts by Taiwan to communicate with Beijing in recent weeks were ignored.³⁷ Moreover, Beijing denounced Taipei's plan to send a high-level delegation to Geneva to meet with other delegations on the margins of the WHA session, saying it was "severely damaging" to cross-Strait peace and stability.³⁸

One can only conclude that if, in fact, the PRC's right hand is maneuvering behind the scenes, the left hand either does not know about it or is doing a very good job at dissembling.

Taiwan's exclusion will probably not lead to a reversal of Tsai's pledge not to return to the road of confrontation, but it could affect the tone of her approach to Beijing, as the negative public reaction in Taiwan could limit her flexibility to take further positive steps.

Other openings?

As this article is heading to the printer, the May 22 opening of the WHA meeting is fast approaching. Tsai's inaugural anniversary, two days earlier, will provide an occasion for her to speak – and for Beijing to react. That exchange will obviously be closely watched. But even if Tsai's poll numbers were not continuing to lag,³⁹ without some gesture from the Mainland in the form of a compromise over WHA, it is hard to see where she will find the incentive to make a unilateral gesture.

Perhaps by the time of the DPP party congress in July, one or more of Tsai's major legislative reform efforts will have succeeded to the point where she has enough political capital to consider a step forward such as addressing the Taiwan independence plank in the DPP party charter. Yet even if one of her controversial priority programs

such as pension reform is enacted, not only is it unlikely to have had a sufficient impact by then to generate public support for a controversial cross-Strait initiative but, as now, without a firm indication from Beijing of a significant reciprocal step to justify it, it is hard to foresee Tsai promoting any major cross-Strait measures before the 19th Party Congress.

Implications of Trump's Courting of Xi

The post-U.S. election period appeared to start out with Taiwan-U.S. relations likely to experience an upgrade in both substance and visibility.⁴⁰ However, Trump's recommitment to the U.S. "one China policy" in a late February telephone conversation with Xi Jinping⁴¹ as well as the subsequent Mar-a-Lago summit in early April and the active Trump-Xi dialogue since then have significantly changed the dynamic of U.S.-PRC relations. This has had a limited but measurable impact on Taipei-Washington relations.

Taipei's fears of a "4th U.S.-PRC Communiqué" that might redefine American commitments to Taiwan⁴² seemed unjustified from the outset. Despite Trump's toying with the "one China policy" in hopes of gaining leverage with Beijing, a fourth communiqué seems never to have been under serious consideration. Moreover, during his confirmation process, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson reaffirmed the U.S. commitment not only to the three U.S.-PRC joint communiqués, but also to the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances. As he said, "The people of Taiwan are friends of the United States and should not be treated as a bargaining chip. The U.S. commitment to Taiwan is both a legal commitment and a moral imperative."⁴³

On the other hand, it was certainly untrue that Taiwan was ignored at Mar-a-Lago, as the Taiwan press initially reported.⁴⁴ PRC Foreign Minister Wang Yi noted in his post-summit press briefing that "[t]he Chinese side reiterated its principles and positions on the Taiwan issue and Tibet-related issues, and urged the U.S. side to stick to the principles of the Three Joint Communiqués and the one-China policy to prevent the China-U.S. relations from being disrupted."⁴⁵

In subsequent weeks, as President Trump worked hard to promote Xi's cooperation on North Korea, it became obvious that aspects of Washington-Taipei ties would be affected to some degree. As the Mar-a-Lago summit was still under way, it was reported that an arms sales package for Taiwan had been sent to the White House for review.⁴⁶ Perhaps, as the report said, further consideration would be held up until relevant assistant secretaries of state and defense had been nominated (which still has not happened), but it is at least worth noting that nothing further has been heard of such a sale.

Moreover, although press reporting that Tsai Ing-wen had suggested a possible second phone call with Trump appears to have been misleading,⁴⁷ nonetheless, what is noteworthy is that Trump not only pushed aside the idea of such a call but went as far as to say that it was a sensitive matter for Xi Jinping and he would want to talk with Xi about it first.⁴⁸

Thus, although cooperation in a number of important areas continues to grow, and it would be wrong to suggest that U.S.-Taiwan relations were in any fundamental way at risk, it seems unlikely that the U.S. will go along with Tsai's expressed hope that bilateral relations can be elevated to an "upgraded version" of strategic partnership that will cover regional security, at least in any publicly recognized form.⁴⁹ Moreover, upgraded economic and trade relations, which Tsai has also called for, will likely be approved only on economic grounds, not political ones, and will require that Taiwan demonstrate that a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) would meet what one Taiwan daily called "U.S. first and fair trade" principles that would solve bilateral trade imbalances, create U.S. jobs and, given the history of Taiwan renegeing on trade commitments, generate renewed trust that Taiwan will keep its word, even in the face of critical public opinion.⁵⁰

That begs the question, of course, of what will happen not only in Taiwan policy but in other areas of U.S.-PRC relations if at some point Mr. Trump determines that Xi is not delivering what Trump expects, especially on North Korea or trade issues. At this point, however, that also falls into the realm of sheer speculation.

Notes

- 1 Miu Tzung-han and S.C. Chang, "Tsai nods at suggestion to speed up bill to monitor cross-Strait talks," Central News Agency (hereafter abbreviated CNA), February 5, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201702050013.aspx>.
- 2 Wang Dake, "Why is little attention being paid to the 'new model of cross-Strait interaction?'" ("两岸互动新模式" 为何被看淡?), *People's Daily* (Overseas Edition), February 7, 2017, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2017-02/07/content_1748058.htm. Taipei officials denied that Tsai ever intended to push a new model but rather that, after the 19th Party Congress and with a new American President in place, opportunities for progress would be greater. (Chung Ning, "In the second half of the year will there be a push for a new cross-Strait policy? MAC: This is not the President's intention" [下半年推兩岸新政策? 陸委會: 與總統原意有出入], *China Times*, February 9, 2017, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20170209006384-260409>.)
- 3 "Mainland plans to give Taiwan residents 'national treatment,'" *United Daily News* (UDN), translated by KMT News Network, February 9, 2017, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=18774>. The TAO spokesman spelled out detailed measures to effect this policy in his press briefing on May 10 (http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201705/t20170510_11778512.htm).

As usual, tourism seemed to be an exception, where arrivals from the Mainland during 2016 dropped 18 percent over 2015, with a drop of 33 percent between the time Tsai took office and the end of the year. Non-tourist visitors from the Mainland dropped over 16 percent in 2016. (Elaine Hou and Hsieh Chia-chen, “Chinese tourists to Taiwan down 33 percent since May 2016,” CNA, February 11, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aall/201702110008.aspx>.) In the first four months of 2017 tourism dropped to only half the previous year’s level. Of this decline, group tours were down by 61.8 percent while independent tourists declined by 35 percent. (Ting Yang-chieh, “MAC: Mainland tourists declined by 50 percent from January to March” [陸委會：1至3月陸客年減5成], *China Times*, March 23, 2017, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20170323005918-260409>.) While tourists from other countries made up the gap in the number of arrivals, Mainland tourists reportedly spend far more than others. For example, each tourist in a Mainland group spends five times more in duty-free shops than Korean and Thai counterparts. (Yang Wen-chi, “The value of tourism falls to a 10-year low” [觀光產值 掉十年低點], UDN, March 21, 2017, <https://udn.com/news/story/7238/2354627>.)

- 4 “Chinese mainland to issue preferential policies for Taiwan compatriots,” Xinhua, February 8, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-02/08/c_136041234.htm.
- 5 “Zhang allays worries of Taiwan businessmen on the Mainland,” UDN, translated by KMT News Network, February 16, 2017, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&num=112&anum=18808>. Both the touting of favorable treatment and expressions of “resolute opposition” to Taiwan independence separatist activities were incorporated into Premier Li Keqiang’s Government Work Report to the National People’s Congress. (“Full Text: Report on the Work of the Government,” Xinhua, March 16, 2017, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017twosession/2017-03/16/content_28583634_13.htm#.) While Li privileged his reference to sovereignty and territorial integrity over his reference to favorable treatment in the work report as well as in his post-NPC press conference, he concluded the latter remarks with what struck one as emphasizing his hopefulness: “Anyway, we are one family.” (“Chinese premier stresses peaceful development of cross-Strait relations,” Xinhua, March 15, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-03/15/c_136130925.htm.)
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- 8 Minnie Chan, “Push to absorb Taiwan ‘is growing’ on Mainland,” *South China Morning Post*, March 11, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2077920/push-absorb-taiwan-growing-mainland>.
- 9 Cha Wenye, “Zhang Zhijun: We must continue to uphold the ‘1992 Consensus’ and firmly oppose and check ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist activity” (张志军：继续坚持“九二共识”，坚决反对，遏制“台独”分裂行径), Xinhua, March 6, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017lh/2017-03/06/c_1120578744.htm.
- 10 以习近平同志为核心的党中央准确研判形势，科学决策部署，牢牢把握两岸关系发展大方向…新形势下，我们要认真学习习近平总书记对台工作重要思想，坚决贯彻党中央对台大政方针，全面落实各项工作部署。
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 - 14 Lawrence Chung and Choi Chi-yuk, “Beijing planning new approach to Taiwan affairs,” *South China Morning Post*, April 30, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2090432/beijing-planning-new-approach-taiwan-affairs>.
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 - 18 Lin Ching-yin and Ch’iu Tsai-wei, “Tsai Ing-wen tosses out cross-Strait ‘three new’ concept [and] the need to have a relationship of structural cooperation” (蔡英文拋兩岸「三新」主張 需有結構性合作關係), (Interview), UDN, May 3, 2017, <https://udn.com/news/story/9829/2439457>. An English-language summary translation is at “President Tsai enumerates ‘3 new’ concept on cross-Strait relations,” UDN, translated by the National Policy Foundation (NPF), May 3, 2017, <http://www.taiwannpfnews.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=18983>.
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 - 24 Tu Tsung-hsi, “Tsai Ing-wen raises the cross-Strait 3 new theory. Zhang Zhijun: Only one new thing is certain” (蔡英文提兩岸三新論。張志軍：只有一個新是肯定的), UDN, May 8, 2017, <https://udn.com/news/story/7331/2449225>.
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 - 30 Miao Chung-han and Evelyn Kao, “China accused of blocking Taiwan from attending most WHO meetings,” CNA, May 11, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201705110026.aspx>.
 - 31 Chang Shu-lin and Elizabeth Hsu, “No 1992 consensus, no basis for Taiwan to attend WHA: China,” CNA, May 8, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/acs/201705080010.aspx>.
 - 32 “President accepts an interview with Reuters” (總統接受「路透社」[Reuters]專訪), transcript, Office of the President, Republic of China [Taiwan], April 27, 2017, <http://www.president.gov.tw/News/21258>. An English-language account is at Sophia Yeh and Elaine Hou, “Taiwan’s WHA status key indicator of cross-Strait ties: Tsai,” CNA, April 27, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/search/201704270021.aspx?q=WHA>.
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- 46 Nadia Tsao and Jake Chung, "U.S. officials say large arms sales package has been sent to White House for review," *Taipei Times*, April 8, 2017, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2017/04/08/2003668296>.
- 47 Media reported that she proposed a call. In fact, she responded to a question by stating she wouldn't exclude it, but it depended on the overall situation and U.S. priorities in the region. ("Office of the President responds to media reports concerning President Tsai's recent interview with Reuters," <http://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/5127>.)
- 48 "My problem is that I have established a very good personal relationship with President Xi. I really feel that he is doing everything in his power to help us with a big situation [in North Korea]. So I wouldn't want to be causing difficulty right now for him. I think he's doing an amazing job as a leader and I wouldn't want to do anything that comes in the way of that. So I would certainly want to speak to him first." (Jeff Mason, Stephen J. Adler and Steve Holland, "Exclusive: Trump spurns Taiwan president's suggestion of another phone call," Reuters, April 28, 2017, <http://in.reuters.com/article/usa-trump-taiwan-exclusive-idINKBN17U05O>.)

- 49 Chen Cheng-wei and S.C. Chang, "Taiwan ready to take on greater role in regional peace, security: Tsai," CNA, March 22, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201703220031.aspx>.
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Cross-Strait Relations: Skepticism Abounds

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Whether the issue is internal splits within Taiwan's two major political parties or Beijing's view of the parties and their leaders, the predominating mood today is skepticism. Not only have Tsai Ing-wen's poll numbers continued to drop, she also faces increasing pressure from the Mainland. And although Wu Den-yih successfully assumed chairmanship of the badly riven Kuomintang (KMT), his reversion to Ma Ying-jeou's carefully crafted cross-Strait policy has contributed to People's Republic of China (PRC) doubts about the depth of his commitment to "one China." Finally, while strengthening ties with Taiwan, even the United States has shown some frustration with both Taipei and Beijing about the need to do more to promote cross-Strait dialogue.

Beijing Tightens the Net — Slowly

After blocking Taiwan's effort to send an "observer" to the May 2017 World Health Assembly (WHA),¹ Beijing upped the ante in its campaign against Tsai Ing-wen and her Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration, including but going beyond issues of international space.²

Regarding WHA, with the departure of China-friendly World Health Organization Director-General Margaret Chan in mid-2017,³ China's support for her successor was clearly related to the new DG's pledge to handle the Taiwan issue, including at WHA, in accordance with the "one China" principle.⁴

The Mainland also applied pressure on Taiwan's diplomatic relations, finally allowing Panama to switch from Taipei to Beijing after deflecting it for several years.⁵ In the process, Panama's recognition of "one China" of which Taiwan is an "inalienable part," and its severance of all diplomatic and official "relations or exchanges" with Taiwan featured prominently.⁶ As PRC foreign minister Wang Yi noted, this agreement demonstrated that the "one China" principle is the fundamental premise and political basis on which the two countries could establish diplomatic ties.

Although Beijing did not proceed immediately to steal more of Taiwan's 20 remaining diplomatic partners, nonetheless more such actions were anticipated. Meanwhile, despite PRC denials that it was responsible,⁷ several of Taiwan's trade offices in non-diplomatic partner countries suddenly were forced to move or change their names to eliminate any reference to the "Republic of China" or "Taiwan."⁸

There was also some sabre-rattling. Although presented as routine "far-sea flight training,"⁹ when four People's Liberation Army (PLA) military aircraft flew adjacent to Taiwan's air defense identification zone (ADIZ) within two weeks in late July¹⁰ and another penetrated the ADIZ in mid-August,¹¹ one clear purpose was to send a message to Taiwan. On a related note, this followed an early July round-trip transit of the Taiwan Strait by the PRC's only operational aircraft carrier battle group.

Moreover, Xi Jinping's "six any's" (六個任何) remarks on the 90th anniversary of the PLA had obvious meaning for the island.

We absolutely will not permit any person, any organization, any political party, at any time, in any form, to separate any piece of Chinese territory from China. No one should expect us to swallow the bitter fruit of damage to our sovereignty, security and development interests.¹²

It would be unduly alarmist to suggest that Beijing is considering near-term use of force against Taiwan. It is not unreasonable, however, to suggest that the Mainland seeks to remind everyone that the goal of unification is unchanging and that not only formal independence but also perpetuating the current situation to the point of consolidating "peaceful separation" of Taiwan would be intolerable.

Indeed, recent Mainland discussion of future cross-Strait relations has (re)introduced the notion of timetables.¹³ On the first anniversary of Tsai's presidency, the *Global Times* editorialized that Tsai's failure to "complete the answer sheet" about "one China" was a delaying tactic to consolidate DPP rule and buy time to move toward independence.¹⁴ Therefore, "it is now time to set a timeline for Tsai to complete the answer sheet."

Nonetheless, for several months the spotlight continued to concentrate on defining the "nature" of cross-Strait relations, with Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Politburo Standing Committee member Yu Zhengsheng underscoring the necessity to do this not only in words but through "concrete action" (实际行动).¹⁵

But in late July, a prominent PRC Taiwan expert argued that Beijing should start studying a 30-year reunification timeline. Asserting that this was a question that could no longer be evaded,¹⁶ he said unification was a "requirement" (必然要求) of the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (中華民族偉大復興).

Several weeks later this expert published an opinion piece laying out his argument to a broader audience in *Global Times*.¹⁷ As before, he reasoned that not only public opinion in the Mainland but “the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation pushes us to set a timetable for reunification.” He acknowledged there were divergent views regarding the connection between rejuvenation and reunification and about a timetable. (Moreover, some officials argued the connection is positive, affording Taiwan greater opportunities to share development opportunities.¹⁸) But he argued that, while past proposals to apply a time limit had been put off due to “strategic considerations,” now unification and rejuvenation of the Chinese nation are “organically connected” and “conditions for the Mainland to set the timetable are now mature.”

Perhaps revealing a principal near-term impetus for his proposal, the author concluded by linking his position to the current situation in Taiwan.

Under the One China principle, the mainland could be patient with Taiwan, but if the DPP government accelerates its provocative activities,¹⁹ the mainland will for sure speed up its efforts to realize the complete unification of China and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

In light of this comment, one might speculate that Zhou’s goal was actually to goad Tsai into action.²⁰ Whether it was or not, the comment did reflect a growing consensus on the Mainland that Tsai and the DPP will not accept the fundamental principle of the “two sides belonging to one China.” As a consequence of this consensus, Beijing was reported to have moved from a “period of observation” (觀察期) to a “period of evaluation” (評價期),²¹ seizing the initiative and squeezing Taipei harder, focusing even more than before on separating the island’s government from the people.

Attention to “cultural independence” has risen on the Mainland’s list of concerns about “soft independence.”²² Recently, Beijing has focused its attacks on efforts it sees as promoting a separate “Taiwanese nationality” (台灣國族性), splitting conceptions of China as a “state” (國家) and as a “nation” (民族). Of special concern were proposals to revise history textbooks to treat “Chinese” history as part of “East Asian” history, separate from Taiwan history and without any connection to the Cairo Declaration about “returning Taiwan to China.” Similarly, Beijing has assailed Taipei’s “diversification of national language”²³ and promotion of minority cultures as a path by which the Tsai administration is systematically and strategically pursuing desinicization to promote “real Taiwan independence” (真台獨) based on “Taiwan-centric consciousness” (台灣主體性) and identification with a distinct “Taiwan nation” (台灣民族) different from the “Chinese nation” (中華民族).²⁴

It's Not Your Father's KMT

At the same time Beijing has been upping the ante with Tsai and the DPP, a certain testiness has entered into Mainland interaction with the KMT in the wake of Wu Den-yih's election as party chairman in May.

Wu's election did not come about because he was universally loved. Rather, it was because he represented a credible — perhaps the only — opportunity to unify a very divided party and win back local offices in 2018 and maybe even national office in 2020. A critical element in Wu's success was abandonment of the more extreme positions of his predecessor Hung Hsiu-chu, such as “one China, same interpretation” (一中同表) and of her determination to negotiate a peace accord. Instead, Wu returned to Ma Ying-jeou's mantra of “one China, respective interpretations” (一中各表) and Ma's “three noes” (三不) policy: no unification, no independence, no use of force. Because of this “retreat” from Hung's positions, even though Wu has stated many times that he endorses “one China” and is strongly opposed to “Taiwan independence,” even writing it into the party platform, some people in the Mainland suspect that, with his Taiwanese roots, Wu's commitment may not be absolute. Referencing the KMT and DPP party colors, some describe him as a man with “Blue skin but Green bones” (蓝皮绿骨).

Hence, from the time of Wu's election as party chair there have been indications of less than total Mainland confidence that he will be a stalwart defender of the “1992 Consensus” and all it implies. This was evident in the use of the non-honorific form of address (你 rather than 您) by Xi Jinping in his letter of congratulations in May²⁵ as well as in early “background” comments by relevant PRC officials about how Wu's “setting aside” the Xi-Hung November 2016 meeting conclusions “gave them a chill” (冒冷汗).²⁶

Moreover, this grumbling was evident at the time of Wu's August ascension to KMT leadership. Not only did Xi fail to send Wu a congratulatory note,²⁷ but the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) issued what could only be interpreted as a conditional statement of willingness to work with the KMT “on the basis of the common political foundation” of the 2005 Hu Jintao-Lien Chan joint vision on adhering to the “1992 Consensus” and opposing “Taiwan independence.”²⁸

But the hard reality is that Hung's position was not only unacceptable to KMT members beyond a certain cohort of “dark Blue” adherents; it was generally rejected by the Taiwan electorate and destined to perpetuate the KMT's minority position in Taiwan politics.

Consequently, Wu has had to walk a tightrope between making clear to Beijing his commitment to the “1992 Consensus” on one side, and, on the other, demonstrating

to Taiwan voters his empathy with their strong opposition to unification and their ambiguous feelings about negotiating a peace agreement.²⁹

Some PRC scholars view Wu's approach as simply "another form of the special state-to-state theory advocated by Lee Teng-hui."³⁰ Others understand that Taiwan's political reality imposes real constraints on Wu and have argued that the Mainland shouldn't demand he do things he cannot do.³¹

In any event, unless it is willing to use force against Taiwan — highly unlikely for now — in order to keep pressure on Tsai while she is in office, and perhaps to force her out of office at the earliest possible opportunity, Beijing has no obvious alternative to treating the KMT as the only viable political opposition force in Taiwan.

Much Depends on Tsai's — and the DPP's — Performance

Whether Wu's approach will bring voters back into the KMT fold remains to be seen. Disaffection with the DPP³² does not automatically translate into support for the KMT. But to the extent that views regarding Tsai Ing-wen and the DPP matter in the voting booth, the news for the incumbents is not encouraging.

Despite a brief uptick in her polls in July following passage of the pension reform bill, there is a persisting sense of the public discontent with Tsai's governance. One late August poll showed her satisfaction rating dropping to 24 percent, the second lowest level since her inauguration, with dissatisfaction commensurately rising to 58 percent.³³ As in previous polls, a significant problem people see is Tsai's leadership style, but the DPP as a whole got poor grades not only for its performance and trustworthiness but also regarding whether it even understands public opinion.³⁴

Of particular note is the fact that "neutral" (中立) respondents are becoming increasingly dissatisfied as are young people. A sharp drop in support among a younger cohort (20–29 years of age),³⁵ so critical to Tsai's election in 2016,³⁶ is obviously a warning sign.

According to one analyst, Tsai's continuing top-down, centralized leadership style in approaching domestic reform is largely to blame.³⁷ However, her hands-on approach to reform programs has become a well-established pattern, manifested among other ways by having cabinet ministers frequently report directly to her rather than through the premier.³⁸ Although this practice is consistent with Tsai's having retained party leadership in an effort to maximize coordination, at least some people believe it has serious drawbacks.

Whether the replacement of Premier Lin Chuan with rising DPP star Lai Ching-te³⁹ will lead to a change in this pattern, and whether it will improve public perception of the effectiveness of the administration's policies, remains to be seen.⁴⁰ But Tsai knows she needs something to reverse her fortunes and this appears to be a bold step in that direction.

Lai is generally viewed as a moderate in his attitude toward cross-Strait relations as reflected in his “be friendly to China, love Taiwan” (親中愛台) policy. Despite his outspoken advocacy of Taiwan independence, initial indications are that Beijing will focus on the DPP's Mainland policy from here on out, not Lai's history.⁴¹

Polls show varying appraisals of Tsai's current cross-Strait policy. There is clearly a general desire to calm things down and reestablish more-productive relations with the Mainland. However, views differ with respect to whether Tsai has fulfilled her commitment to maintain the status quo, government-sponsored polls indicate the public believes she has,⁴² while other polls disagree.⁴³

In its initial response to Panama's switch, Taipei said it would reevaluate cross-Strait relations and would not rule out any possibility, including potentially changing its approach to the status quo.⁴⁴ This was a caution both to Beijing not to take things too far and to others who might consider toeing Beijing's line. But the reality is that the government does not want to roil cross-Strait waters or lose the benefits of pragmatic relations with other countries.⁴⁵ So while it will try to maintain as many diplomatic partners as possible, Taipei is preparing for further defections and has stressed that “substantial” and “economic” relations are even more important than formal diplomatic ties.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, it will maintain its existing cross-Strait policy.⁴⁷

In August, Tsai called for a “new model of cross-Strait interactions” (兩岸互動的新模式).⁴⁸ But Mainland commentators have responded skeptically, arguing that the issue is the need not for a new model but for the creation of cross-Strait trust that can only come through properly addressing the common political foundation. As one scholar argued, the model used during the Ma administration is not outmoded, it just needs the right key to reopen it.⁴⁹

Very few experts on either side expect any important developments before the mid-October CCP 19th Party Congress. After that, expectations vary, with the preponderance of expert opinion in the Mainland being that there will be no dramatic change, but that what change there is will be in the direction of continuing to tighten up. In that regard, there is some chatter about “clarifying” the Anti-Secession Law to address specific variants of “soft independence.”⁵⁰

While Taiwan experts hope a way forward can be found, overall they tend to hold a pessimistic view.

The U.S. Role

President Tsai Ing-wen's desire to strengthen ties with the United States⁵¹ has been reciprocated by Washington in various ways.

- Defense Secretary James Mattis said at the Singapore Shangri-La Dialogue in June that the U.S. would continue to abide by its commitments to Taiwan consistent with the requirements of the Taiwan Relations Act, the first time Taiwan has been mentioned by a U.S. delegation to that forum since its inception in 2002.⁵²
- In the wake of Panama's switch from Taipei to Beijing, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson reaffirmed the long-standing American "one China" policy.⁵³
- The acting deputy assistant secretary of state responsible for Taiwan and PRC affairs paid an unusual (though not unprecedented) visit to Taiwan in mid-June.⁵⁴
- The Trump administration sent notifications to Congress regarding its intention to sell \$1.4 billion in weapons systems to Taiwan.⁵⁵
- AIT Chairman James Moriarty indicated that "very senior" U.S. officials would visit Taiwan in coming months.⁵⁶
- Congress took various actions to support enhanced civilian⁵⁷ and military exchanges with Taiwan, including possible Taiwan port calls by the U.S. Navy (USN).⁵⁸

Predictably, Beijing voiced strong objections to all of this. PRC Ambassador to the United States Cui Tiankai charged that "especially arms sales to Taiwan" not only violate the three joint U.S.-PRC communiqués and undermine China's sovereignty and core interests, but they run counter to the "spirit" of the April 2017 Mar-a-Lago summit.⁵⁹ He also complained about inconsistency in the U.S. approach to China.

The United States cannot ask China to cooperate on the Korean Peninsula on one hand, while continuously taking actions that harm Chinese interests on the other.⁶⁰

Though most observers believe USN port calls to Taiwan will never come to pass, many PRC commentators expressed concern, predicting potentially dire consequences.⁶¹ Moreover, rumors emerged of U.S. plans to reprovision ships in Taiwan waters.⁶²

Despite PRC complaints, the U.S. continues to praise Tsai for attempting to reach out to the Mainland within the bounds of her political constraints. However, American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) chairman James Moriarty elaborated that the U.S. still urges "both sides" to show creativity and flexibility and indicated that,

while the U.S. may not know everything Taiwan is doing in this regard, Taipei's efforts are "not totally sufficient."⁶³

On the military side of the relationship, Taiwan is now pushing more formally than before for provision of F-35 aircraft despite discouragement from U.S. officials,⁶⁴ who favor less-glitzy systems necessary to meet more urgent needs.⁶⁵ And although U.S.-Taiwan economic ties have been robust, problems remain, even beyond beef and pork.⁶⁶ (Ironically, Taiwan worries about U.S. trade action against the Mainland, fearing that any American retaliation could harm Taiwan if there were a finding of forced technology transfers or PRC intellectual property theft.⁶⁷)

Notes

- 1 Alan D. Romberg, "Cross-Strait Relations: Marking Time," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 53, May 25, 2017, http://www.hoover.org/sites/default/files/research/docs/clm_53ar.pdf, pp. 4–6.
- 2 Scarlett Chai and Lilian Wu, "Taiwan suffers new setback in trying to attend ILO conference," China News Agency (hereafter abbreviated CNA), June 3, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201706030010.aspx>. Preemptively Beijing also made clear it would oppose Taipei joining a "curtailed" Transpacific Partnership (TPP), saying adherence to the "one China" principle was a prerequisite (前提) for Taiwan's participation in regional economic cooperation arrangements. (Taiwan Affairs Office Press Briefing, June 28, 2017, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201706/t20170628_11809826.htm.)
- 3 Chan asserted that Beijing never pressured her on Taiwan's participation. "I communicated with the Beijing government and gained approval to invite Taiwan as a non-voting observer only after it recognises the 'one China' policy." (Kimmy Chung, "Beijing never pressured me in office, former WHO chief Margaret Chan says," *South China Morning Post* (hereafter abbreviated SCMP), July 7, 2017, <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2101770/beijing-never-pressured-me-office-former-who-chief-margaret>.)
- 4 Yin Chun-chieh, "New WHO General Secretary: Will handle Taiwan issue according to 'one China' principle" (WHO新秘書長：一中原則處理涉台議題), CNA, May 25, 2017, <http://www.cna.com.tw/news/acn/201705250022-1.aspx>.
- 5 "Panama establishes ties with China, ditches Taiwan in win for Beijing," Reuters, June 12, 2017, <https://www.cnn.com/2017/06/12/panama-establishes-ties-with-china-ditches-taiwan-in-win-for-beijing.html>.
- 6 "China, Panama establish diplomatic ties," Xinhua, June 13, 2017, http://china.org.cn/china/Off_the_Wire/2017-06/13/content_41017149.htm.
- 7 Ministry of Foreign Affairs press conference, June 27, 2017, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/t1473592.shtml.
- 8 Justin Su, Liu Kuan-ting, and Lilian Wu, "Trade missions under pressure from China to change names: official," CNA, June 14, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201706140013.aspx>. Those involved were Dubai, Nigeria, Bahrain, Ecuador, and Jordan.
- 9 Ben Blanchard, "After Taiwan alarm, China says air force drills were routine," Reuters, August 31, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-taiwan/after-taiwan-alarm-china-says-air-force-drills-were-routine-idUSKCN1BB121>.

- 10 “MND: M’land’s bombers fly past airspace near Taiwan four times in two weeks,” *United Daily News* (hereafter abbreviated *UDN*), translated by KMT News Network, July 26, 2017, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=19569>.
- 11 Lu Hsin-hui and Y.F. Low, “Chinese aircraft enters Taiwan’s ADIZ: MND,” *CNA*, August 15, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201708150011.aspx>.
- 12 我们绝不允许任何人任何组织, 任何政党, 在任何时候, 以任何形式, 把任何一块中国领土从中国分裂出去, 谁都不要指望我们会吞下损害我国主权, 安全, 发展利益的苦果 (from “Xi Jinping: Speech at conference celebrating the 90th anniversary of the PLA” [习近平: 在庆祝中国人民解放军建军90周年大会上的讲话], *Xinhua*, August 1, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-08/01/c_1121416045.htm.)
- 13 Deng Xiaoping had indirectly spoken of a unification timetable and Jiang Zemin had made known he favored one. But in recent years, it has not been part of the Mainland’s overt consideration. That it is beginning to resurface reflects not only frustration with the current DPP administration’s position but also concern with the trend of public opinion in Taiwan toward greater “Taiwanese” identity and opposition to unification.
- 14 “CCP Global Times urges timeline for answer sheet to cross-Strait questionnaire,” *China Times*, translated by KMT News Network, May 22, 2017, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=19227>.
- 15 Chen Fei, Liu Huan, and Xu Xueyi, “Yu Zhengsheng meets with personages from various circles on both sides of the Strait who are attending the ninth Strait Forum” (俞正声会见出席第九届海峡论坛两岸各界人士), *Xinhua*, June 17, 2017, http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2017-06/17/c_1121162233.htm.
- 16 Lai Chin-hung, “30 years? Zhou Zhihui: Need a timetable for unification of the two sides of the Strait” (30年? 周志懷: 兩岸統一 應有時間表), *UDN*, July 26, 2017, <https://udn.com/news/story/7331/2604480>.
- 17 Zhou Zhihui, “Timetable needed for unification of Taiwan,” *Global Times*, August 13, 2017, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1061100.shtml>.
- 18 Wang Yu-yan, “Zhang Zhijun: Willing to share opportunities with Taiwan compatriots” (張志軍: 願與台灣同胞分享陸機遇), *UDN*, August 31, 2017, <https://udn.com/news/story/7331/2673781>.
- 19 Tsai’s call for a new model of cross-Strait interaction was accompanied by a call for mutual goodwill. In response, a TAO-sponsored website published an article debunking Tsai’s assertion of “goodwill” and listing 13 measures of the Tsai government aimed at “desinicizing” Taiwan. (“TAO Criticizes President Tsai’s proposal of new interaction model between two sides” [台提互動新模式 陸國台辦媒體撰文批評], *CNA*, August 10, 2017, <http://www.cna.com.tw/news/acn/201708100366-1.aspx>.)
- 20 Readers might recall that it was not so long ago that Zhou was positive about the prospects for a new consensus, urging renewed dialogue and creation of authoritative channels between Tsai and the Mainland. (Romberg, “The Bull in the China Shop,” *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 52, February 14, 2017, p. 4.)
- 21 Lan Hsiao-wei, “Having confirmed that Tsai rejects one China, the Mainland turns from defense to offense” (確認蔡拒一中 陸反守為攻), *China Times*, July 27, 2017, <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20170727000382-260108>.
- 22 Li Chong-wei, “TAO website: The Tsai administration’s ‘cultural independence 2.0’ must not be underestimated” (國台辦旗下網站: 蔡當局「文化台獨2.0」不可小覷), *UDN*, August 18, 2017, <https://udn.com/news/story/7331/2649678>.
- 23 “Guoyu” (国语) or “national language” was explicitly promoted by the KMT to create a continuing link with the Mainland.

- 24 Wang Ping, “The story behind the Taiwan administration’s vigorously pushing ‘diversification of national language’ (台当局力推“国家语言多元化”的背后), *People’s Daily*, August 22, 2017, http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrbhwb/html/2017-08/22/content_1799574.htm.
- 25 Shih Hsiao-kuang, “Wu stresses ‘1992 consensus’ in Xi reply,” *Taipei Times*, May 22, 2017, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2017/05/22/2003671071>.
- 26 Kao Ta-mei, “Wu Den-yih’s inconsistent stand on one China gives Beijing a chill, ‘one China, respective interpretations’ previously squeezed into the 1992 Consensus has become an alternative ‘two states theory’” (吳敦義一中髮夾彎 讓北京冒冷汗, 一中各表塞在九二共識之前成了另類「兩國論」), *Wealth Magazine*, No. 530, June 5, 2017, http://www.wealth.com.tw/article_in.aspx?nid=10929.
- 27 Luo Yin-ch’ung and Tsai Hao-hsiang, “Wu irritates Xi, KMT-CCP relations are tense” (吳惹毛習 國共關係走鋼索), *China Times*, August 22, 2017, <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20170822000362-260102>. Beijing sources indicated Xi was upset that Wu had elaborated on “one China, respective interpretations” in his reply to Xi’s congratulatory message in May and had made no mention of opposition to Taiwan independence.
- KMT officials sought to downplay the lack of a message as the product of a tacit agreement that it was unnecessary in light of the congratulations Xi sent in May. (“KMT explains Beijing’s lack of congratulatory message on Wu’s swearing-in,” *China Times*, translated by KMT News Network, August 22, 2017, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&num=19695>.)
- 28 “TAO: Willing, on the basis of the existing common political foundation, to uphold the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait with the KMT” (国台办：愿与国民党在既有共同政治基础上 维护两岸关系和平发展与台海 和平稳定), *Xinhua*, August 20, 2017, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201708/t20170820_11832987.htm. The text of the “joint vision” was in the April 29, 2005, press statement following the meeting between then-KMT Chairman Lien Chan and then-CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao. It is available in Chinese at <http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2005-04-29/19065787389s.shtml> and in English translation at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4498791.stm>.
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- 31 Yang Chia-hsin, “Is the Mainland dissatisfied with Wu Den-yih? Mainland scholar Li Zhenguang: Don’t be too harsh in a difficult time” (大陸對吳敦義不滿? 陸學者李振廣：艱難時刻 不應太苛刻), *China Times*, August 19, 2017, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20170819003044-260409>.
- 32 Latest polling by the National Chengchi University’s Election Study Center shows identification with the DPP at its lowest level since 2010 (23.9 percent), only slightly higher than identification with the KMT (22.5 percent). (Important Political Attitude Trend Distribution, July 31, 2017, <http://esc.nccu.edu.tw/course/news.php?Sn=165>.)
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- (Sophia Yeh and Elizabeth Hsu, "President's rating hits new low, Taipei mayor liked by 70%: poll" CNA, August 14, 2017, <http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201708140021.aspx>.)
- 34 TVBS, "DPP party image survey after one year in office" (民進黨執政周年政黨形象調查), June 2, 2017, http://cc.tvbs.com.tw/portal/file/poll_center/2017/20170612/714e3b29d1f9dadd5fedb610d87b6179.pdf.
- 35 "DPP poll shows more than 50% dissatisfaction from youths," *China Times* translated by KMT News Network, May 22, 2017, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=19228>.
- 36 "China Times Survey: Nationwide, Ko Wen-je beats Tsai Ing-wen and Wu Deng-yi [sic]" translated by KMT News Network, July 10, 2017, <http://www1.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=19493>.
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- 40 One poll taken after Lai's appointment showed a slim majority supporting him but no improvement in Tsai's own favorability rating. (Wang Cheng-ning, "Over half support Lai as premier, especially young people" [逾半民眾挺賴揆 愈年輕愈挺], *China Times*, September 7, 2017, <http://www.chinatimes.com/newspapers/20170907000345-260118>.)
- 41 Chèn Chun-shuo, "On Lai's taking office, Zhang Zhijun: Will watch his Mainland policy with interest as the point of departure" (賴揆就任 張志軍：重視關注他的大陸政策出發點), *China Times*, September 8, 2017, <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20170908005644-260409>.
In the course of commenting, Zhang introduced an unusual phrase: "one China, one country" (一個中國、一個國家). Its future use will merit attention.
- 42 Yeh Yi-che, "Are President Tsai's polling numbers down? MAC makes public its own poll defending the boss" (蔡總統民調低? 陸委會公布自家民調護主), NEWTALK, June 5, 2017, <https://newtalk.tw/news/view/2017-06-05/88500>.
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- 44 "Taiwan says it will rethink cross-Strait policy, 'considering all options,'" *China Post*, June 14, 2017, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/china-taiwan-relations/2017/06/14/498697/taiwan-says.htm>.
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- 49 “Mainland scholars: Cross-Strait relations only lack the key to unlock the door, why do we need a new model?” (大陸學者：兩岸只缺開門鑰匙 何必新模式), *UDN*, August 9, 2017, https://udn.com/news/story/9263/2631433?from=udn-catelistnews_ch2.
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- 60 美方更不能一方面要求中国在朝鲜半岛上合作，另一方面又不断采取行动，损害中方利益 (“Ambassador Cui Tiankai answers questions from Chinese and foreign reporters regarding PRC-U.S. relations and other issues” [崔天凯大使就中美关系等问题回答中外记者提问], PRC Embassy, June 30, 2017, <http://www.china-embassy.org/chn/zmgx/t1474380.htm>.)
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Reflection: Alan D. Romberg as a Scholar

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In their afterwords, Jeffrey Bader and Yun Sun have respectively highlighted Alan Romberg's contributions to the making of the Asia policy of the United States and his role as a mentor. In this conclusion, we would like to highlight another area where Alan has made a vital contribution – advancing the understanding of Taiwan by the scholarly community and the interested public.

Alan knew the difficulties of doing so. Controversy regarding the Taiwan issue is deeply enmeshed in the United States' domestic politics and Asia policy. Much of the commentary on politics on the island or its place in Sino-American relations has been shaped by competing positions on these controversial issues. His experience in government service had shown him that these assumptions had contributed to the creation of a policy that sought to reconcile support for Taiwan and the mainland's demands, creating a Sino-American relationship that was not only complex but characterized, at times, by competing interpretations, ambiguity, and lacunae.

This conviction was present in Alan's 2007 Charles Neuhauser Lecture at Harvard University on the "One China Policy" of the United States. The importance of understanding the past record of Sino-American negotiations regarding Taiwan had been a central theme and underlying rationale of his 2003 book, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice*. The potential for war over Taiwan, he argued here, was a real danger. Thus, it was essential that "those making policy better know what they are doing." In his opinion, this was only possible if they did so from a "more informed base of knowledge" drawing on "what has gone before."

It was his commitment to adding to this "base of knowledge" that lay behind his contributions to the China Leadership Monitor republished here. Between 2006 and 2018, Romberg wrote twenty-seven commentaries on Taiwan politics and foreign

policy. These were eventful years characterized by sharp cross-Strait conflict as well as rapprochement; by progress toward democratization as both major parties alternated in office; and by a sometimes close, sometimes conflictual, relationship with the United States. These pieces are not simply commentaries or narratives. They are extensively researched analytical articles that constitute a valuable and reliable body of scholarship chronicling these years and providing not only essential insights and information for policymakers, but also an essential source for those doing academic research on this period.

We were privileged to benefit directly from Alan's wisdom. He was an early participant in the Taiwan Studies Workshop of the John K. Fairbank Center at Harvard University. Beginning with the administration of Chen Shui-bian, he participated in our annual trips to Taiwan and the mainland to discuss issues related to cross-Strait relations and America's Asia policy. Although some of us had spent time in Taiwan and were familiar with the island's postwar development, our previous focus had been on the politics and foreign policy of the People's Republic of China. The dialogues that took place on this trip, both with our interlocutors and among ourselves, made it akin to a traveling educational seminar under the tutelage of Alan Romberg. Now, after more than a decade of meetings on both sides of the Strait, members of the Taiwan Workshop are teaching and writing on subjects related to the island's domestic and external policies.

At the most basic level, Alan contributed to our discussions simply by his presence. He was viewed with great respect by our hosts on Taiwan and on the Mainland who clearly valued both his knowledge of the area and his government experience. The result was that, more often than not, the content and candor of our discussions went beyond propaganda or platitudes. Clearly, when dealing with Alan Romberg, interlocutors were careful to be on their best game.

And the same went for us, his colleagues. As noted above, Alan had concluded from his government experience and research that accurate knowledge of a complex and sometimes contradictory diplomatic history was essential for a successful Taiwan policy. This attention to detail and demand for precision that were repeatedly noted by his colleagues in government were present in our academic discussions. Alan would not ignore any misstatement regarding an event or policy made by either our side or the other. Most importantly, he was always there for his colleagues, explaining issues or policies that were unknown or misunderstood. He helped us to understand not only what we didn't know, but also what we thought we knew. Yet Alan was not all business. He had a wry sense of humor and rarely missed an opportunity to poke fun at others as well as at himself.

Finally, something must be said about Alan as a traveling companion. It was virtually impossible to miss a flight or be without a hotel reservation when traveling with Alan.

Two hours were not early enough to arrive at the airport. All hotel confirmations needed not only to be reconfirmed (at least once), but to have iron-clad, rock-solid assurances that the internet would work in his room when he checked the previous day's news before breakfast. Even when traveling, he never stopped working, providing a model for all of us to follow. But he was also a curious, energetic tourist and a relentless shopper in search of bargains for everything from Ming porcelain bowls to "so-called" Omega watches.

Alan Romberg provided intellectual rigor and spirited companionship to the Taiwan Studies Workshop at Harvard University. It will not be the same without him.

About Stimson and the Author

Alan D. Romberg

Alan D. Romberg was a Distinguished Fellow and the Director of the East Asia Program at Stimson from 2000 to 2018. Before joining Stimson, he enjoyed a distinguished career working on Asian issues including 27 years in the State Department, with over 20 years as a U.S. Foreign Service Officer. Romberg was the Principal Deputy Director of the State Department's Policy Planning staff, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs and Deputy Spokesman of the department. He served overseas in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Additionally, Romberg spent almost 10 years as the CV Starr Senior Fellow for Asian Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, and was special assistant to the secretary of the navy. Romberg received an M.A. from Harvard University, and a B.A. from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University.

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Across the Taiwan Strait

These volumes compile the articles by Alan D. Romberg previously published in the Hoover Institution's China Leadership Monitor. A dedicated scholar of East Asia, Romberg wrote on Taiwan for the Monitor for over a decade, closely tracking the political and economic developments of cross-Strait relations and analyzing them for American observers.



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