

**TAIWAN’S 2016 PRESIDENTIAL/VICE PRESIDENTIAL AND  
LEGISLATIVE ELECTION: REFLECTIONS ON THE NATURE  
OF TAIWAN’S POLITICS AND SHIFTS THEREIN**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

On Saturday January 16, 2016 voters in Taiwan (officially known as the Republic of China) went to the polls to cast ballots for candidates for president (and his or her running mate) and members of the Legislative Yuan (Taiwan's lawmaking body of government).<sup>1</sup> This was Taiwan's fourteenth presidential election and its sixth wherein the electorate cast direct votes. It was the second that did not have an incumbent president or vice president in the race. It was the second election that resulted in a change of ruling parties. It was the first election to see the main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), win a majority in the legislature.

This was also Taiwan's second "joint" or "two-in-one" combined election of the two main branches of government. Initially, it was not certain whether or not it would; but in early 2015 the Central Election Commission decided, after three public hearings, that the executive and legislative contests would be held together. The reasons given were that it would boost citizen participation, better institutionalize the electoral process, minimize spending, and maintain stability in the society. Proponents also cited a poll showing 68.4 percent of respondents favored a

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1. For this author's assessment of Taiwan's previous elections, see John F. Copper with George P. Chen, *Taiwan's Elections: Political Development and Democratization in the Republic of China* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 1984); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's Recent Elections: Fulfilling the Democratic Promise* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 1990); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 1991 and 1992 Non-Supplemental Elections: Reaching a Higher State of Democracy* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's Mid-1990s Elections: Taking the Final Steps to Democracy* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publisher, 1998); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 1998 Legislative Yuan, Metropolitan Mayoral and City Council Elections: Confirming and Consolidating Democracy in the Republic of China* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 1999); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 2000 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election: Consolidating Democracy and Creating a New Era of Politics* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2000); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 2001 Legislative, Magistrates and Mayors Election: Further Consolidating Democracy* (Singapore: World Scientific/Singapore University Press, 2002); *Taiwan's 2004 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election: Democracy's Consolidation or Devolution* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2004); *Taiwan's 2004 Legislative Election: Putting it in Perspective* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2004); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 2006 Metropolitan Mayoral and City Council Elections and the Politics of Corruption* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2006); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 2008 Presidential and Vice Presidential Elections: Maturing Democracy* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2008); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 2010 Metropolitan City Elections: An Assessment of Taiwan's Politics and a Predictor of Future Elections* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2010); John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 2012 Presidential/Vice Presidential and Legislative Elections: Assessing Current Politics and Charting the Future* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 2012); and John F. Copper, *Taiwan's 2014 Nine-In-One Election: Gauging Politics, the Parties, and Future Leaders* (Baltimore: Carey School of Law University of Maryland, 2014).

joint election.<sup>2</sup> Opponents countered that merging the elections would reduce the importance of legislative contest. There was also concern that under a joint election system the new legislature and the new president would not assume office at the same time and that might create problems.<sup>3</sup>

This election took place little over a year following Taiwan's Nine-in-One Election, a series of local elections in which voters picked the mayors and city councils of Taiwan's metropolitan cities and local officials on down. Most pundits opined that because the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won that election it had momentum going into this one, while the Nationalist Party or Kuomintang (KMT) lost and was divided and dispirited and was therefore handicapped.<sup>4</sup> Also there were 700,000 new voters, mostly young, and this favored Tsai and the DPP.<sup>5</sup>

However, some observers opined this was a very different kind of election, a national election wherein the issues were broader and foreign relations played a much more important role. This disadvantaged the DPP. Another factor was the electorate's disillusionment with party politics, its fading loyalty toward both of the two major parties, and its pining for a "new politics"—whatever that meant.<sup>6</sup> This "third force," as some called it, translated, it was thought, into voters favoring independent candidates (this was buoyed in part by the election of Taipei Mayor KO Wen-je, an independent and the most important official to win his post via the election in 2014). Finally, several new political parties formed.<sup>7</sup> What they would do after the election was difficult to predict. They

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2. Li Hsin-feng and Chen Wei-han, "Merged elections gaining favor," *Taipei Times*, February 2, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)). The KMT and the DPP both supported a merged election proposal with some reservations. The Taiwan Solidarity Union and the People First Party did not.

3. "ROC legislative, presidential elections set for 2016," *Taiwan Today*, February 13, 2015 (online at [taiwantoday.tw](http://taiwantoday.tw)). In 2008, after the KMT won the presidential election President Chen remained in office for two months. During that time the price of oil spiked, but the government did not raise the prices of fuel and electricity thus forcing the Ma administration to raise them immediately after it took office, which was not popular. See "Political risk in 2016 presidential, lawmaker election high," *Want China Times*, February 21, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

4. Copper, *Taiwan's 2014 Nine-In-One Election*, p. 64.

5. "An election battle for the identity of Taiwan," BBC, January 1, 2016 (online at [bbc.com](http://bbc.com)).

6. Copper, *Taiwan's 2014 Nine-In-One Election*, p.59.

7. "Sunflower seeds," *Economist*, April 11, 2015, p. 37. For further details on the Sunflower Movement see Copper, *Taiwan's Nine-In-One Election*, pp. 31-34.

aligned with the DPP; yet they also sought to act independently and represent new ideals.”<sup>8</sup>

The 2016 campaign was imbued with populism that was advanced wholeheartedly by opposition candidates. This both energized and distorted public support for democracy, good government, and reform in Taiwan. Initially, it was difficult to discern whether constructive reform or emotional arguments over Taiwan’s independence or unification, in other words a future closely connected to China or not, had more spark. However, as the campaign proceeded clearly the issue over Taiwan’s independence overshadowed fixing problems in the system and/or promoting better government; thus reform was either ignored or was framed by campaign partisanship.<sup>9</sup>

The KMT suffered throughout the campaign from a badly diminished brand, falling public support, and party disunity. This was manifested in its difficulty in choosing a presidential candidate and then changing horses mid-stream. The ruling party’s original candidate, HUNG Hsiu-chu failed to win over much of the electorate, and was replaced. Eric Chu, who then became the KMT’s standard-bearer, did not gain much traction either in terms of appealing to voters.

In a surprising contrast, at least from a historical perspective, the DPP’s candidate, TSAI Ing-wen, did not face these problems. Her party, which has been known for its factional disputes in the past (sometimes destructive ones), remained unified behind her. Its image and confidence improved up to and during the final weeks of the campaign. Above all, DPP leaders and supporters alike wanted to win.

Thus, Tsai attained the presidency handily. In fact, she was victorious by a larger margin than any candidate since Taiwan adopted a direct election system for presidential elections. Arguably just as important, the DPP won the legislative half of the election by a clear margin; this was somewhat unexpected. (Before Election Day most observers predicted that the KMT would lose its majority in the legislature, and that the DPP might have to try to form a coalition with some other parties and independents.)

The two solid wins meant that the DPP became the party in control for the first time. This afforded the DPP with the good fortune of unimpeded governance and an opportunity to profoundly change Taiwan politically and in other ways.

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8. Gwenyth Wang, “A ‘Green’ Legislature: “Taiwan’s New Parliament More Different Than Ever,” Ketagalan Media, February 17, 2016 (online at ketagalanmedia.com).

9. See Jin Kai, “Hong Kong and Taiwan: Populism or Democracy?” *The Diplomat*, April 16, 2015 (online at thediplomat.org).

During the election season there were two “elephants in the room”: China and the United States. In the past they had exerted a major influence on Taiwan’s politics and its elections. They did so again, though in different ways.

Chinese leaders in Beijing pledged not to intrude during the campaign, and didn’t. They apparently calculated this would be counterproductive. Nevertheless, both during and after the campaign they warned Tsai and the DPP about rejecting the 92 Consensus (an understanding reached in 1992 to the effect that there is only one China but each could have their own interpretation as to the meaning of China, which paved the way for much improved cross-Strait relations) and/or pursuing independence. Beijing’s notifications, though, seemed more like a gentle reminder than a threat, or were something to activate later.

The United States, which had heretofore unabashedly opposed the DPP’s call for independence and supported the KMT, changed its tune during the campaign. Officials in Washington applauded TSAi Ing-wen’s status quo cross-Strait policy and accorded her a cordial, in fact quite unprecedented welcome, when she visited. During the rest of the campaign America’s Taiwan policy remained for the most part neutral, which helped Tsai and the DPP.

While there were some incidences of nasty campaigning and even violence as during previous election times, they did not distract from an otherwise smooth election that advanced Taiwan’s democracy. In fact, Taiwan seemed unique in that its democracy was flourishing, as was not the case in most of the rest of the world. This was to Taiwan’s credit. Whether this might translate into global support for Taiwan, however, was quite another matter.

## II. THE ELECTION’S BACKDROP

The year 2015 began with the green camp (the DPP and its allies, particularly the Taiwan Solidarity Union or TSU) basking in the glory of a victory in the November 2014 Nine-in-One election. DPP leaders as well as the party’s rank and file exuded confidence about the chances of winning this election, tempered somewhat by the reality that the 2014 election win was probably as much a defeat for the KMT as it was a victory for the DPP. The electorate throughout the election had expressed some negative views toward all political parties. The KMT was meanwhile licking its wounds over its defeat, while many party leaders ex-

pressed apprehensions that the party would suffer another election loss in 2016.<sup>10</sup>

On a more abstruse level, during the election campaign both sides pondered whether the “watermelon theory” or the “pendulum theory” (terms used frequently in Taiwan) would prove correct.<sup>11</sup> The former suggests that a person eating a watermelon finds it tasteful and cannot resist finishing it. In Western parlance an election win creates momentum and a high probability that a party which triumphs in one election will win the next one. The pendulum theory, on the other hand, reflects the fact that defeated parties may learn quickly from their setbacks and try harder the next time around, while the winning party becomes complacent and even lazy, or worse—corrupt. It also recognizes that voters often have an urge for change and become disillusioned and even angry that parties that win elections do not keep their promises. The fact that there has been considerable turnover in ruling parties in recent years in democracies around the world supports the view this theory has the greater validity.<sup>12</sup>

The KMT acted to reform the party, resolve intra-party divisions, and repair the party’s image. But, as time passed it became apparent the reforms were not seriously pursued or were ineffective. This, however, needs further explanation. Immediately after the November 2014 election President Ma accepted blame for the defeat and apologized to the public and his fellow KMT members. He forthwith stepped down as chairman of the party. Members of the Ma administration, including Premier JIANG Yi-hua, then resigned.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the KMT seemed for the moment to fully recognize its failings.

New Taipei Mayor Eric Chu, the sole winner among KMT candidates for mayors of the six metropolitan cities, was without contest elected leader of the Nationalist Party. Chu, it appeared, understood the situation. He compared the election defeat to a tsunami and called for soul searching, a revival of the party’s founding spirit, standing side-by-side with the people, and open-mindedness to attract young people. He called for changes in the tax system to correct what he tagged as a lack of fairness in the market economy. He went on to say that while President Ma bore responsibility for the election defeat, “life in general,” meaning

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10. See Copper, *Taiwan’s 2014 Nine-In-One Election*, pp. 64-70.

11. See Copper, *The KMT Returns to Power*, pp. 32-33 and pp. 113-16 for details on both of these theories.

12. See John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Fourth Revolution: The Global Race to Reinvent the State* (New York: Penguin, 2014), p. 11. The authors associate this with a general decline in public confidence in government and political institutions.

13. Copper, *Taiwan’s 2014 Nine-In-One Election*, p. 52.

deeper problems, were also relevant and the entire party should share blame.<sup>14</sup>

But Chu failed to deal with what some called the KMT's "sinking ship" or a number of top officials leaving the party. In January, Legislator HSU Hsin-ying withdrew from the KMT. Two days later, National Development Council minister KUAN Chung-ming did the same. Then National Security Council secretary general KING Pu-tsung, considered President Ma's most trusted advisor, left the Ma administration. Shortly thereafter Mainland Affairs Council Minister WANG Yu-chi resigned.<sup>15</sup> Virtually all top Ma officials stepped down (although many were reappointed to new jobs).

The bottom line was that Chu had to fix a fractured party. His first step was to arrange reconciliation with Legislative Speaker WANG Jin-pyng. In September 2013, President Ma had accused Wang of corruption, based on charges for which there seemed to be clear evidence, and orchestrated his dismissal from the party and the speakership. But this was not handled well and didn't pass muster with many party members, and Wang remained where he was. The incident further divided the party, which was already split by one faction aligned against another. It also further exposed an ethnic divide in the party.<sup>16</sup>

In short, Chu had to deal with the end of the Ma era: the retiring of many of the old guard, a loss of faith among many party members, Ma's consistently low public approval ratings, the decline of public support for its elite politics, the rise of populism, and much more. Further complicating matters was the issue of Chu being a candidate in the presidential election, or not. Chu said he would not be; he had, he asserted and pledged to finish his term as mayor when campaigning in 2014. However, some asked: "If Chu didn't have the courage to run for president how could he fix the party?"<sup>17</sup>

If Chu's challenges appeared formidable TSAI Ing-wen's were obviously less so. Tsai was reelected chairwoman of the DPP in May 2014. She finished building party unity leading up to and during the campaign before the November Nine-in-One election. She kept her party's candidates from alienating voters (as well as the United States and China) by

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14. Alan D. Romberg, "Cross-Strait Relations: The Times They Are A-Changin,'" *China Leadership Monitor*, March 19, 2015, p. 4 (online at [chinaleadershipmonitor.org](http://chinaleadershipmonitor.org)).

15. Shyu-tu Lee, "KMT inexorably slides into oblivion," *Taipei Times*, February 18, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

16. Lawrence Chung, "Ma Ying-jeou risks splitting Taiwan's KMT, lawmakers warn," *South China Morning Post*, September 10, 2013 (online at [scmp.com](http://scmp.com)).

17. "To rescue the KMT, Chu must be bold and swift," *Want China Times*, February 2, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

admonishing them to keep their mouths closed about former president CHEN Shui-bian, the 1992 Consensus, Taiwan's independence, one China, and some other hot button divisive issues. Most listened to her.<sup>18</sup>

But Tsai was not completely free of problems. Many party supporters as well as some of its top leaders thought the results of that election meant keeping silent was no longer necessary. In the election's wake DPP supporters, the party's sympathetic media, and in some cases its leaders, stated that the election had changed things, and that China and the United States would have to "come around."<sup>19</sup> Tsai also had to try to restrain (and counsel) and maintain cordial ties with KO Wen-je, the popular independent (but pro-DPP) Taipei City mayor the DPP had supported and who won election handily in 2014.<sup>20</sup> Ko was notorious for making controversial and often impolitic statements, and now, decisions.<sup>21</sup> But he remained popular, and for many members, offered a breath of fresh air in politics, not to mention an alternative to the two parties. Thus he was a possible threat to the DPP.

On the other hand the DPP's confidence about its future and its hopes for winning the election were justified by a host of public opinion surveys. According to a poll conducted by Taiwan Thinktank in February, more than 75 percent of citizens polled believed Tsai would win the 2016 election, including a similar percentage of pan-blue (supporters of the KMT, the People First Party, the New Party) respondents. Over 50 percent thought the DPP would win more than half of the seats in the legislature. In the same survey TSAI Ing-wen's performance was deemed favorable by 63 percent of those queried.<sup>22</sup>

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18. Copper, *Taiwan's Nine-in-One Election*, p. 38.

19. See "DPP gains should prompt Beijing to modify its approach," *Want China Times*, December 2, 2014 (online at wantchinatimes.com).

20. Tsai could, of course, claim that Ko was not a member of the DPP and thus downplay what he said that did not fit her narrative during the campaign. However, it was known that Ko and the DPP leadership had made a verbal agreement in June 2014 to the effect that Ko would coordinate his platform with other DPP mayoral candidates and would stump for DPP candidates running for the Taipei City Council among other pledges of cooperation.

21. Ko, for example, stated in public that Taiwan's colonization contributed to progress and praised former President Chiang Ching-kuo for the government's integrity during his presidency. These statements did not at all fit the DPP's narrative. Ko also made diplomatic gaffes and displayed odd mannerism in public that he attributed to Asperger syndrome. See "EDITORIAL; The mis-education of Ko Wen-je," *Taipei Times*, February 4, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com). Ko also launched policies that were controversial and that sometimes generated strong resistance. Ko, however, was quick to correct mistakes and openly apologized when necessary. He also remained popular, some said, because he was so different from other politicians.

22. Lao lok-sin, "Power shift expected in 2016: poll," *Taipei Times*, February 10, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

Meanwhile, on January 5, the Ma administration granted former president CHEN Shui-bian a medical parole allowing Chen to leave prison to be with his family in south Taiwan. The reasons for granting the release were not clear; nor were what the effects might be. Some said President Ma acted on humanitarian grounds. Others said he sought to create a diversion from problems he and his party faced in the wake of the November 2014 election defeat. Still others said he sought to cause a quandary for TSAI Ing-wen, who was at that time making efforts to maintain party unity and formulate a more moderate China policy.<sup>23</sup>

Chen's medical parole was subsequently extended by three months; the reason given was his deteriorating health—including severe depression and early signs of Parkinson's disease. The parole board, however, stated that the extension did not mean Chen was not guilty of the crimes he had been convicted of or that it would affect the twenty-year sentence he had received, of which he had served six years.<sup>24</sup> In any event, shortly after this the DPP accepted Chen's son, CHEN Chih-chung's, reapplication for party membership (that had been rescinded in 2008) and the younger Chen forthwith announced he would run for a seat in the legislature.<sup>25</sup>

In late February, TSAI Ing-wen declared that a "union" of DPP and "grassroots reformers" might be formed in the legislature.<sup>26</sup> Tsai's comment mirrored her concern that the DPP would not obtain a majority in the legislature (though neither would the KMT) and, if elected, she would need allies to form a ruling coalition. At the time HUNG Tsuyung, the sister of an army recruit whose death in 2013 during training set off a series of protests against the military (and by inference the KMT), declared that she would run for a legislative seat sponsored by the newly founded New Power Party (NPP). More talk of a coalition followed when it was reported that James Soong, former KMT general secretary and candidate for president in 2000 and vice president in 2004, might form a joint ticket with KO Wen-je (though Ko denied this and there was subsequently a report in the media Soong and his People First

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23. See "A-bian back home," *Economist*, January 10, 2015, pp. 35-36.

24. "Medical parole for Chen Shui-bian extended by 3 months," *Taiwan News*, February 4, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw). See also See Chi-hao James Lo, "Son of Chen withdraws from election to jump into media," *China Post*, May 27, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

25. Loa lok-sin, "DPP takes back Chen Chih-chung," *Taipei Times*, February 26, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com). In May, however, the younger Chen withdrew from legislative race to pursue an opportunity in radio where he could speak on behalf of his father.

26. Chen Wei-han, "Tsai open to cooperative options," *Taipei Times*, February 25, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

Party would form a joint ticket with the KMT).<sup>27</sup> Even more such talk of a coalition ensued when HUANG Kuo-chang, leader of the Sunflower Movement, announced he would join the New Power Party and run for a seat in the legislature.<sup>28</sup> Finally, soon after another new party, the Taiwan Independence Party, was launched.<sup>29</sup>

On February 28, TSAI Ing-wen addressed an event commemorating the anniversary of the 228 Incident (when local citizens in February 1947 revolted against the KMT-run government and many were killed). Tsai spoke of how Taiwan's youth would benefit from "transformative justice, democratic education, and fairness" if the DPP won the 2016 election. Taipei City Mayor Ko was invited to the event, but he did not attend. Ko instead spoke at a gathering attended by President Ma. Ko talked in emotional terms about the death of his grandfather during the incident. But Ko also called on people to put aside hate and learn the truth of the event. President Ma and Premier Mao promised to continue to heal rifts in the society.<sup>30</sup>

At this time the DPP remained the frontrunner in the campaign. An opinion survey published by Want China Times Media Group showed that more people (41.7 percent) believed TSAI Ing-wen would win the election against Eric Chu or WANG Jin-pyng (33.1 percent) if either decided to run. Taipei Mayor Ko, however, also polled high with 36.9 percent of respondents saying they would support him, though 49.2 percent said they expected him to campaign for Tsai.<sup>31</sup>

On March 18, students and other activists celebrated the anniversary of the Sunflower Movement with a number of events and announcements of new goals. They urged legislators to pass amendments to the Referendum Law and the Election and Recall Law. They called for debate on the Constitution and the electoral system. They asked that action on the issue of trade with China be held in abeyance before the post-2016 election inauguration. The tenor of the activities was clearly anti-Ma and anti-

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27. See Mathew Strong, "Ko and Soong dismiss election speculation," *Taiwan News*, May 6, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw); Huang Su-yu, "James Soong hints at KMT-PFP coalition in 2016," *Want China Times*, May 2, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com).

28. Li Wen "Top Sunflower joints NPP, eyes legislative run," *Taipei Times*, May 5, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

29. Jason Pan, "Taiwan Independence Party is inaugurated," *Taipei Times*, May 9, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

30. "Mayor and president meet at 228 ceremony," *Taiwan News*, February 28, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw). It was uncertain if he refused to shake hands with President Ma or considered it improper since he was holding a wet tissue and thought it unhygienic and improper.

31. "57.4% of voters favor DPP for Taiwan's presidential election," *Want China Times*, February 28, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com).

KMT.<sup>32</sup> TSAI Ing-wen spoke of cooperation with the Sunflower supporters. But she seemed to have mixed feelings about the movement because she thought their efforts to seek seats in the legislature might hurt DPP candidates.<sup>33</sup>

KMT chairman Eric Chu also addressed the Sunflower anniversary event. He stated that the KMT is reflecting on its mistakes, noting its heretofore “lopsided” focus on economic growth and cross-strait relations at the expense of a fair distribution of wealth and intergenerational equality, which was ill advised. He pledged that the KMT would give more thought to housing and other issues of concern to young people. Furthermore, he promised tax-reform legislation so that the rich would pay more. Lastly, he criticized the education system that produced graduates that did not fit the job market.<sup>34</sup> Meanwhile, business leaders declared that the Sunflower Movement had hurt the economy and that growth in the past year had improved, but was not as fast as it should have been.<sup>35</sup>

At that juncture, it was unclear if the Sunflower Movement would regroup and seriously impact this election. Only around 100 students showed up to renew its activities on its first-year anniversary.<sup>36</sup>

Subsequently Chairwoman Tsai proposed what became known as her “status quo policy” as the basis for relations with China. Both President Ma and KMT spokespersons, as well as some DPP leaders, soundly criticized her pronouncement. Ma contended that her plan had no content, that it depended on the 1992 Consensus, and that it needed to embody the Cross-Strait Trade in Services Agreement and other arrangements to increase trade and commercial relations with China that the DPP had opposed. Some DPP leaders called her proposal boring and said it was easy to talk about but difficult to do. Beijing took a wait-and-see attitude.<sup>37</sup>

However, Tsai’s main purpose was to signal she wanted cordial relations with China and persuade Washington that she would not ignite a

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32. “Focus on Legislative Yuan on first Sunflowers anniversary,” *Taiwan News*, March 18, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

33. “Tsai Ing-wen: 318 plus one year brings ‘mixed feelings,’” *Taiwan News*, March 17, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

34. Ho Yu-hua and Chen Wei-han, “SUNFLOWER ANNIVERSARY: Chu says KMT to address youth issues, inequality,” *Taipei Times*, March 19, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

35. Ecu Lin, “Sunflower protest slowed down nation: industry,” *China Post*, March 19, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

36. “Taiwanese mark first anniversary of Sunflower Movement,” Associated Press, March 23, 2015 (online at ap.com).

37. This point is assessed in greater detail below.

cross-Strait conflict. China's reaction was not immediate and the U.S. response to the policy was not positive. Barbara Schrage, former managing director of the American Institute in Taiwan, stated that a difficult issue remained—the 92 Consensus.<sup>38</sup>

Tsai's status quo policy was indeed vague. She stated, for example, that it was founded on the "existing ROC constitutional order and the accumulated outcomes of more than 20 years of negotiations and exchanges." Alas what Tsai said could be interpreted in a host of ways. But given she did not want to provoke Chinese leaders in Beijing and also wished to avoid appearing soft on the independence issue she had to be imprecise.<sup>39</sup> In fact, some observers labeled her policy "strategic ambiguity."<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, she won support for her policy with the electorate in Taiwan. The Taiwan Brain Trust conducted a poll that showed 70 percent of people in Taiwan approved and an even higher number felt she was correct in proposing it, although almost half believed maintaining the status quo meant keeping the 92 Consensus.<sup>41</sup> In any case, Tsai seemed to have created a policy toward China that could win votes and eventually gain her favor with the United States.

In any event, Tsai sought to focus on domestic issues that were her strength and the KMT's weakness. She charged that President Ma had not reprioritized his agenda to focus on the economy, income distribution, food safety, etc.<sup>42</sup> She put forward her own ideas, which resonated with voters, and maintained a good image. Helping her, in June TSAI Ing-wen was on the cover of *Time* (Asia edition).<sup>43</sup>

Further bolstering Tsai's candidacy were more polls that indicated she and the DPP were popular with Taiwan's citizens.<sup>44</sup> Repeated surveys showed that Tsai was easily the frontrunner. In August, an average of ten polls showed Tsai at 38 percent, the KMT's HUNG Hsiu-chu, the KMT's elected presidential candidate in July, at 18 percent, and James

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38. Enru Lin, "DPP will strive to maintain status quo," *China Post*, March 22, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

39. See Alan D. Romberg, "Consolidating Positions," *China Leadership Monitor*, September 9, 2015 (online at chinaleadershipmonitor.org) for further details.

40. Emily Chen, "The DPP's strategic ambiguity toward China," *PacNet* (CSIS), August 19, 2015 (online at csis.org).

41. Somy Murtaugh, "Tsai's call for status quo in cross-strait relations criticized," *Taiwan News*, April 30, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

42. Romberg, "Squaring the Circle: Adhering to Principle, Embracing Ambiguity," *China Leadership Monitor*, July 14, 2015, p. 4 (online at chinaleadershipmonitor.org).

43. Emily Rauhala, "She could lead the only Chinese democracy, and that makes Beijing nervous," *Time*, June 29, 2015.

44. See, for example, "Taiwan Insider," *Thinking Taiwan*, January 27 to July 3, 2015 (online at thinking-taiwan.com).

Soong, the People First Party's candidate, at 20 percent.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, surveys showed that more people were identifying as Taiwanese rather than Chinese, which worked to the advantage of Tsai and the DPP.<sup>46</sup>

As the fourth quarter of 2015 approached, a time when pundits suggested the campaign had reached a final stage, TSAI Ing-wen focused even more on issues that she perceived would ensure her election and would help her party win a majority in the Legislative Yuan. Some in her party opined that the DPP might win as many as 64 seats. Meanwhile, HUNG Hsiu-chu lost both credibility and public support when she referred to "common interpretations" about one China instead of "respective interpretations" of the 92 Consensus. Her view was seen as very overly pro-unification. Meanwhile, the DPP and its allies continued their criticism of President Ma and the KMT for their poor governance and not caring about citizens.<sup>47</sup>

### III. THE ECONOMY

One theory about elections in Taiwan that compliments, if not supersedes, all others is that voters vote according to their pocketbooks.<sup>48</sup> In other words, the electorate favors a leader, a party, or a bloc (of parties) that has the best record for promoting economic growth and/or makes a convincing case it can oversee future economic growth and prosperity.<sup>49</sup>

However, in recent years persuading voters of this has become more complicated. In 2000, CHEN Shui-bian ran a campaign espousing the view that he could operate the government both cheaper and more efficiently (since the KMT was corrupt) and further that his government

45. "Taiwan's 2016 Presidential Election," Resource Page (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace), September 9, 2015 (online at [carnegieendowment.org](http://carnegieendowment.org)).

46. See Tseng Wei-chen and Chen Wei-han, "'Taiwanese' identity hits record level," *Taipei Times*, January 26, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)). According to a survey done by the National Chengchi University 60.6 percent identified as Taiwanese. This figure remained similar for some months after this. Identifying as Taiwanese means the person is more likely to vote for the DPP than the KMT (which is favored by those who identify as Chinese or both Chinese and Taiwanese).

47. Alan D. Romberg, "Consolidating Positions," *China Leadership Monitor*, September 9, 2015 (online at [chinaleadershipmonitor.org](http://chinaleadershipmonitor.org)).

48. The reason for this is that government almost universally seeks to control their economies and dominate economic matters. In democratic systems they also seek to maximize their support among their citizens and managing the economy is a way to accomplish this. See Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957), p. 1 and p. 11. Applying this theory to Taiwan, see Copper, *The KMT Returns to Power*, p. 115. Also see Eun-Jung Choi, "Economic Voting in Taiwan: The Significance of Education and Lifetime Economic Experiences," *Asian Survey*, October 2010, pp. 990-1010.

49. To apply this to Taiwan, see Copper, *The KMT Returns to Power*, p. 175 and p. 210.

could sustain good growth while at the same time ensuring a fairer distribution of wealth. Chen's ideas were to a considerable extent accepted as evidenced by his election victory.<sup>50</sup>

But President Chen oversaw a recession his first year in office that saw the gross domestic product (GDP) growth plummet into negative territory and the unemployment rate increase to what most people thought was impossible. In his second term Taiwan's GDP growth was respectable, but Chen's economic policies were no longer as appealing as the KMT's.

Hence, as noted in 2008 former Taipei Mayor MA Ying-jeou won the presidency based to a large extent on the popular belief he could engineer impressive economic growth as the KMT had done in the past and the DPP could not. However, Taiwan was hit hard by the global recession that year. This hurt his reputation and weakened his presidency. Fortunately for Ma, by late 2009 Taiwan's economy had bounced back and growth was not just respectable but was very impressive. This helped the KMT win the collection of local elections in 2010.<sup>51</sup> But, the economy turned south again and Ma and the KMT fared less well in the 2012 combined executive and legislative election. They won in considerable measure due to the fact the opposition did not offer better ideas for economic growth.<sup>52</sup>

Leading up to the 2014 Nine-in-One local election, the economy early on was performing somewhat below its weight; later it did a bit above the bar (gauged mainly by comparing Taiwan's GDP growth with the other three "Asian tigers"—South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore—that constitutes Taiwan's voters' frame of reference). However, trumping concern about GDP growth were other related issues: unemployment, stagnant wages, an increase of poor paying jobs (and not good ones), growing income and wealth inequality, Taiwan's companies hollowing out or moving to China, a weakening of the work ethic, and a brain drain.<sup>53</sup> Meanwhile, Taiwan's economic reliance on China engen-

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50. It is probably not accurate to say that Chen's economic agenda gave him the election victory. However, to some degree it undermined the KMT's argument that it was the only party that could do well in running the economy and maintaining growth or that expansion of the gross domestic product *per se* was all-important. In any case, the best explanation for Chen's victory was the fact the KMT suffered a serious party split. See Copper, *Taiwan's 2000 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election*, p. 53.

51. Copper, *Taiwan's 2010 Metropolitan City Elections*, p. 54.

52. Copper, *Taiwan's 2012 Presidential/Vice Presidential and Legislative Election*, pp. 81-82.

53. Copper, *Taiwan's 2014 Nine-in-One Election*, p. 59.

dered public angst that transmogrified into something close to alarm, or this was made so by the opposition.<sup>54</sup>

The DPP won the economic argument (since it handily won the election). It was abetted by the Sunflower Movement (a youth protest movement that nominally centered on the perceived lack of transparency regarding an agreement with China on trade in services. Voters linked what they deemed less than adequate economic growth to Taiwan's economic inequity, and a lack of fairness or the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer, (which ties with China allegedly caused)).<sup>55</sup>

Economic issues remained heavy on the minds of voters during the months leading up to January 2016. Was the ruling party able to reignite credible economic growth? Could the KMT and the government enhance Taiwan's employment prospects and reduce the income and wealth gaps? And, if not, how much was it to blame for current economic conditions? Was the global economy a factor? To what extent was China accountable for Taiwan's economic health, or lack thereof? Was Taiwan overly dependent on China and what should it do about it?

In early 2015, looking back at the previous quarter Taiwan's economy appeared to be quite strong and moving on an upward trajectory. The previous year had ended with Taiwan's GDP growing at 3.8 percent—higher than the other Asian tigers (more than a point above Hong Kong's 2.5 percent growth). Taiwan's growth was also well above the world's average of 2.9 percent and better than Japan, Europe, and the United States.<sup>56</sup> On the less optimistic front, Taiwan had made little progress establishing the free economic pilot zones proposed by President Ma in 2012 and approved by the cabinet in August 2013. The DPP opposed the proposal. Thus the plan stalled.<sup>57</sup>

In March, the Asian Development Bank issued a forecast of Taiwan's GDP growth for the year, putting it at 3.7 percent—the highest in three years.<sup>58</sup> This prediction was proximate to those made by several other organizations.<sup>59</sup> Meanwhile, Taiwan's unemployment dropped to

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54. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

56. "Economic and financial indicators" and "World GDP," *Economist*, March 21, 2015, p. 80 and p. 81.

57. "DPP has not followed up on alternatives to FEPZ plan," *Want China Times*, February 7, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

58. "ADB forecasts Taiwan GDP economic growth of 3.7 percent for 2015," *China Post*, March 25, 2015 (online at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)).

59. Yuanta Polaris and the *Economist*, for example, made similar predictions.

the lowest level in fourteen years.<sup>60</sup> As a result Taiwan's American Chamber of Commerce, in its annual Business Climate Survey, reported 60 percent of its members espoused optimism about Taiwan's economic prospects for the next five years. AmCham, however, expressed concern (and criticism) about inconsistent regulations, excessive bureaucracy, and outdated laws. The organization also cited political wrangling, Taiwan's overall investment climate, difficulties joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership deal being advanced by the United States, and the incomplete ratification of the cross-strait trade in services agreement with China.<sup>61</sup> In contrast to AmCham's assessment there were other less optimistic reports or warnings about the economy. The Importers and Exporters Association of Taipei predicted that Taiwan's trade competitiveness would fall.<sup>62</sup> Another matter suggesting caution concerned Taiwan's banks' exposure to China that was at a record high, while Taiwan's brain drain caused by stagnant salaries in the high tech sector continued to hurt its competitiveness.<sup>63</sup>

In April, President Ma reaffirmed Taiwan's development was on the right track and linked Taiwan's economic growth to closer cross-strait ties and expansion in the global economy. Ma argued that his policies were working.<sup>64</sup> At the end of the month the media reported that Taiwan's Consumer Confidence Index hit an all-time high, helped by high stock investments.<sup>65</sup> However, in a survey conducted by the Social Democratic Party, most workers (62 percent) said their salaries were insufficient to pay for basic living expenses. In fact, more than 80 percent of low paid workers said this.<sup>66</sup> Thus it remained uncertain as to what extent economic growth was "seeping down."

In addition, a better economy was not having a salutary effect on Taiwan's youth. There were several explanations for this: One, Taiwan

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60. "Unemployment drops to lowest level in 14 years in Taiwan," *Want China Times*, January 23, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com). The Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics supplied this figure.

61. "AmCham report raises six Achilles' heels for Taiwan," *Want China Times*, January 19, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com).

62. "Taiwan trade competitiveness waning: survey," *Want China Times*, January 24, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com).

63. "Taiwanese banks' exposure to China hits new high," and "Serious brain drain continues in Taiwan's job market: ECCT," *Want China Times*, January 11, 2015 and January 31, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com.)

64. "President Ma reaffirms Taiwan's development path," *Taiwan Today*, April 8, 2015 (online at taiwantoday.tw).

65. "ROC consumer confidence hits new heights in April," *Taiwan Today*, April 28, 2014 (online at taiwantoday.tw).

66. Stacy Hsu, "Low pay, long hours still a problem, survey shows," *Taipei Times*, May 2, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

had become a welfare state (like the U.S. and Europe and more so than other Asian countries). Young people were scarcely beneficiaries of this. The military, civil servants, and teachers received generous retirement benefits not to mention subsidized rates of interest on their savings. There were no such programs in place to help young people. Furthermore, it appeared the government could do little to help its youth because Taiwan had a burdensome national debt. Taiwan's arrears were reported to have reached NT\$6 trillion, not including NT\$17 trillion in other liabilities—or 160 percent of the GDP.<sup>67</sup> This, it was said, was roughly the same as Greece at the time of its default. Going forward, due to Taiwan's low birth rate, this burden would fall heavily on young people. Then, many of Taiwan's companies were still moving operations overseas causing job opportunities to contract. Many jobs went to China. While most young people said they would like to take employment in China, many realized they would have to work harder and they didn't like the prospects of that. Making the situation worse, Taiwan had a glut of young people with redundant college degrees, a problem exacerbated by the fact that Taiwan's institutions of higher learning were falling behind their peers in ranking while university brands had increased in importance.<sup>68</sup> This resulted in some calling Taiwan's youth a "lost generation."<sup>69</sup> Combined with a bleeding of Taiwan's top talent because of other Asian nations (notably Hong Kong and China) paying increasingly better salaries Taiwan was said to becoming the world's most talent deficit country.<sup>70</sup>

In this context a point of contention arose between the KMT and the DPP over the issue of raises given to public sector employees versus workers in the private sector. DPP officials charged that the government as a regular practice had provided salary increases to civil servants to keep their votes and in so doing violated the Labor Standards Act.<sup>71</sup> Nei-

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67. "Debt obligation near NT\$24 tril: TIER," *China Post*, July 15, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw). This figure was based on current debt and future spending obligations. It exaggerated the gravity of the situation yet it was shocking to the public.

68. "Taiwanese schools disappearing from the Asian rankings," *Taipei Times*, June 10, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

69. "The LIBERTY TIMES EDITORIAL: Tragedy of the young generation," *Taipei Times*, February 17, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

70. "Taiwan's poor economic situation worsened by brain drain," *Want China Times*, February 18, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com). The claim Taiwan will be the worst country in the world in terms of its brain drain was made by the British research report *Global Talent 2021*. According to the study Taiwan had been losing "brains" at a rate of 27,000 per year for more than ten years while regulations and red tape not to mention promoting local nationalism alienated outsiders and discourage international talent from coming to Taiwan.

71. Alison Hsiao, "KMT puts pay raises at top of agenda," *Taipei Times*, March 5, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com.com).

ther side, however, addressed seriously the need for policies that would slow the brain drain. Neither gave much attention to the fact that, according to the International Labor Organization, global unemployment passed 212 million and 42 million new jobs were needed annually just to keep up, while 36 percent of employers reported difficulties finding talent (a seven year high), and finally that additional capital (spending) was not the answer.<sup>72</sup>

In June, optimism about Taiwan's economic prospects continued to decline. According to a survey conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers in Taiwan, only 33 percent of CEOs were confident about the economy compared to 60 percent a year earlier. Slower growth in China and the United States were the reasons cited. Less cordial relations with China were also a major factor since 82 percent of Taiwan's companies reported China was their main target of expansion compared to 78 percent the year before.<sup>73</sup>

In fact, some analysts believed Taiwan's economy was in trouble due to a decline in sales to China, caused by the DPP provoking cross-strait tensions following its 2014 election victory, China signing a free trade agreement with South Korea (one of Taiwan's competitors for exports), no movement on the trade in services agreement, and China taking more of the global supply chain in electronics and related products. Taiwan's exports to China fell by 7.3 percent in the first four months of the year causing a 6.2 percent decline in exports overall.<sup>74</sup> Precisely half of the decline in foreign orders was accounted for by China cutting back for five consecutive months.<sup>75</sup>

In July, the Miaoli County government announced that it did not have the funds to pay its employees and asked for assistance from the central government. This precipitated fears that Taiwan was really in similar straits to Greece. Miaoli Magistrate HSU Yao-chang told Premier Mao that the county was NT\$64.8 billion in debt and was obligated to spend NT\$600 million on salaries and another NT\$600 million on pensions.<sup>76</sup> Opposition politicians, including candidates for office in the

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72. See Klaus Schwab, "Talent versus capital in 21st century," *Taipei Times*, May 19, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

73. Yeh Wen-yih, "Taiwan CEOs less confident about growth: survey," *Want China Times*, June 13, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

74. "Taiwan brands should learn from HTC's effort and prioritize China," *Want China Times*, June 12, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

75. John Liu, "Foreign orders fall for a second month," *China Post*, June 24, 2015 (online at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)).

76. "Miaoli's government out of money to pay salaries: county magistrate," *China Post*, July 11, 2015 (online at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)).

coming election, excoriated the Ma administration for excessive welfare policies, an unfair tax system, and economic and political mistakes that ruined Taiwan's "economic miracle."<sup>77</sup>

Throughout the summer the news about the economy did not encourage much hope and by autumn prospects looked even worse. In mid-October, the Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research, one of Taiwan's well-known think tanks, forecast that the economy would end the year with just 0.9 percent growth. It laid the blame on contracting exports of 13.8 percent during July to September noting that exports comprised 60 percent of Taiwan's economy and that 40 percent go to China. The think tank also asserted that a 7.2 percent depreciation of the Taiwan dollar against the U.S. dollar last quarter failed to have a positive impact.<sup>78</sup> Another think tank reported a 7.4 percent drop in manufacturing output, which it attributed to a slowing of the global economy and the rise of supply chains in China.<sup>79</sup> A decline in bank lending and fewer purchases of luxury homes also appeared to indicate that a turnaround would not occur soon.<sup>80</sup> In November, it was reported that export orders were still in decline.<sup>81</sup>

Meanwhile, opponents of the Ma administration charged that the true state of the economy had been covered up and that the administration had raided the government pension fund to prop up the stock market.<sup>82</sup> Critics of the government also charged that new fiscal policies would not work well to revitalize the economy inasmuch as they had been used too frequently for too long to help the economy and influence elections.<sup>83</sup>

During December, the month preceding the election, the economic news in Taiwan was still unfavorable. Export orders dropped for the

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77. "Taiwan from Little Dragon to New Greece," *Taiwan News*, July 16, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

78. Crystal Hsu, "CIER cuts GDP forecast to 0.9 percent," *Taipei Times*, October 16, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

79. John Liu, "Nation may see 7.36 drop in manufacturing output," *China Post*, October 22, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw). The think tank mentioned was the Industrial Economic and Knowledge Center.

80. "Weak economy slowing loan growth: commission," *Taipei Times*, October 12, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com) and "Luxury home transactions in New Taipei down 67% this year," *Want China Times*, October 20, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com.tw).

81. John Liu, "Export orders decline for seventh month in a row," *China Post*, November 21, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

82. Kuo Chen-hero, "Economy's true state kept from the public," *Taipei Times*, October 14, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

83. "Fiscal policies not enough to revitalize Taiwan's economy," *Watch China Times*, October 24, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com.tw).

eighth consecutive month, attributed to a lower value of Taiwan's petrochemical products, a sluggish global economy, and lower economic growth in China.<sup>84</sup> Unemployment ticked upward by 0.01 percent. The industrial production index declined for the seventh consecutive month, with manufacturing falling by 5.03 percent.<sup>85</sup> All of this provided grist for critics of the Ma administration to label its economic policy a failure and warn of China's "economic invasion" of Taiwan.<sup>86</sup>

In summary, the economic news leading up to the election was troubling for the KMT. In that context TSAI Ing-wen's credentials for dealing with economic problems were in some important ways a plus. She had broad experience in handling trade related matters. She was a key negotiator in Taiwan gaining membership in the World Trade Organization in 2002. She had also made fixing the economy a priority goal. She had spoken specifically of shifting the focus of economic planning from one driven by efficiency to an innovation driven one, which to most economists made sense. Finally, she sought to help small and medium-sized businesses, which had resonance to many citizens.<sup>87</sup>

In mid-December, a well-known and respected magazine in Taiwan, *CommonWealth*, published a survey-based article that cited how the business community looked at the economy and the presidential candidates. More than 80 percent of top executives were pessimistic about the economy in 2016 and said slower economic growth in China was the main reason. Most expected GDP growth to be less than two percent. They cited Taiwan's exclusion from regional integration as a major problem. Also, over 30 percent of those interviewed said a lack of talent was an obstacle.

The KMT's platform for improving the economy focused mainly on promoting external commercial relations. However, in view of the state of the economy under KMT rule since 2008, especially if seen against President Ma's early promises, the KMT was not able to generate much public confidence in its policies. Also, voters looked at other facts: Real wages had been stagnant for some time, public debt had increased, in-bound investment slowed, problems facing Taiwan's top export market

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84. "Taiwan export orders drop for 8th consecutive month," *Taiwan News*, December 21, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

85. George Liao, "Taiwan IPI down 7 consecutive months," *Taiwan News*, December 23, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

86. Paul Lin, "Beware of China's economic invasion," *Taipei Times*, December 23 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

87. "Taiwan Voters Want Government That Listens, Tsai Says," *BloombergBusiness*, January 2, 2016 (online at bloomberg.com).

(China) caused consternation in the business community in Taiwan and most of all GDP growth during late 2015 and into 2016 was near zero.<sup>88</sup>

The DPP's plan to invigorate the economy was based on expanding social welfare, raising the minimum wage, and encouraging local innovation. It was Keynesian in spirit, which had recently not worked well in improving the economies of Europe, Japan and the United States. The DPP also promoted joining the U.S. Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement to increase trade.<sup>89</sup> But, heading toward voting time the TPP had not been finalized and anyway Taiwan's participation remained uncertain. Still the DPP's ideas had not been demonstrated not to work or not work as well as the KMT's strategy, arguably giving Tsai and the DPP an advantage in terms of economic policy.

The bottom line? The public believed a change in ruling parties would improve Taiwan's economic fortunes. The main reasons were the widespread perception that the Ma administration did not care about the poor and the youth, slow growth produced even slower increases in incomes (an average of 2.3 percent GDP growth compared to a 1 percent rise in incomes), businesses had benefitted from ties with China but citizens had not, and pension schemes and taxes were not handled fairly.<sup>90</sup> Increasing housing prices that made some of Taiwan's cities among the most expensive in the world relative to salaries also constituted a problem that hurt the KMT.<sup>91</sup>

#### IV. DOMESTIC POLITICS AND ISSUES

During the run-up to the 2016 election two major issues in domestic politics in Taiwan had special salience. Both affected other matters bringing some to the fore or sidelining others. Both were divisive.

The first issue was Taiwan's national identity, the essence of which is whether Taiwan should be regarded as separate from China (meaning independent), or part of China pending reunification.<sup>92</sup> Since Taiwan already possesses most of the qualifications for statehood, this generally

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88. Ibid.

89. Ibid.

90. Benjamin Yeh, "Taiwanese voters bank on new leader to spur economy," AFP, January 9, 2016 (online at [afp.com](http://afp.com)).

91. "A Tsai is just a Tsai," *Economist*, January 9, 2016 (online at [economist.com](http://economist.com)). A study published at this time showed that housing prices in Taipei since 2005 increased, relative to income, by a ratio of 8.9 to 15.7 in 2014—almost twice the level of London.

92. For background, see Alan Wachman, *Taiwan: National Identity and Democratization* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1994). Wachman states that Taiwan's national identity is founded on upheaval and dislocation and that most of the population identifies with either Taiwan or the mainland (p. 15).

referred to Taiwan's future. Discussions about Taiwan's identity and its sovereignty served to define both the political parties and voters' views of candidates.

The second issue was reform broadly defined.<sup>93</sup> This included systemic changes that were not accomplished in the past, but that should have been, plus some new issues of considerable import. A number of them related to the Constitution and/or the political system. Some were economic in nature, especially tax and welfare policies.

These two issues connected closely to growing populism in Taiwan, which has for some time pervaded its politics, especially during election campaigns. In important ways populism was the common denominator.

In most democracies populism is a positive force insofar as it frames issues for debate or creates new ones and increases public interest in the democratic processes. However, it is a negative in that it encourages emotionalism as opposed to rational thinking and election strategists use it to find ways to make gains against other candidates or opposing parties based on prejudices and even hatred. It is also considered anti-intellectual, xenophobic, and connected to the rise of fascism and communism. Finally, it is a distraction from political and economic reform, and the tool of the opportunist turned tyrant. In recent years, the latter view has been more widely accepted even though populist appeals have become commonplace in democracies throughout the world.<sup>94</sup>

Taiwan's populism is in a number of ways unique. It did not play an important role in Taiwan's history or its politics until recent years, though it might have. For example, the potential (or demand at least) for popular government was brought to Taiwan by early immigrants that had abandoned Chinese elitism and admired individualism spawned by a "frontier mentality" (self-reliance, toughness, etc.), which had proven conducive to planting the seeds of democracy in other places.<sup>95</sup> This, however, did not become a central part of the political culture in Taiwan due to the elitist nature of government during the period of Chinese rule (1683-1895). Similarly, Taiwan did not learn much about popular rule

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93. For reference, see Herman Halbeisen, "In Search of a New Political Order? Political Reform in Taiwan," in Steve Tsang (ed.), *In the Shadow of China: Political Developments in Taiwan since 1949* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1993) and Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan: Voting for Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1999).

94. Barbara Werner and Dwayne Woods (eds.), *The Many Faces of Populism: Current Perspectives* (Bradford, UK: Emerald, 2014).

95. See Peng Ming-min, *A Taste of Freedom: Memoirs of a Formosan Independence Leader* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972).

during the short period of democracy in Japan; rather the focus was on winning local representation and that was led by a local elite.<sup>96</sup>

CHIANG Kai-shek employed populist themes in advancing SUN Yat-sen's mandate for making China a constitutional democracy and in his efforts to win favor and support in the West, especially the United States. He arranged local elections almost as soon as he moved his government to Taiwan. He promoted constitutionalism and a democratic form of government in Taiwan. Still his ruling circle was limited to a small "core group" of elitist officials (in a single party system). Finally, Chiang's attentions were mainly on reforms of the KMT, the government, and building a strong economy.<sup>97</sup>

CHIANG Ching-kuo (CCK), unlike his father, was a man of the people and aggressively promoted popular rule. But his approach was democratization by edict. Given the opposition to rapid democratization and peoples' respect for CCK, commanding political modernization aimed toward implementing a democratic system was CCK's most effective strategy. CCK also viewed democratic change as a means to realize reform, especially clean and honest government, and sustain economic growth. Very important he also saw it as a way to combat communism and win support abroad for Taiwan's sovereignty at a time when it was under threat.<sup>98</sup>

LEE Teng-hui, CCK's successor, learned from his predecessors. He found promoting popular rule and democracy enhanced his image and his authority to govern. He also discovered that in order to advance both democratization and reform it was convenient to exploit populist sentiments. But Lee was confronted by populist opposition politicians that challenged him to realize majority (meaning, Taiwanese, Taiwan's largest ethnic group) interests while those in his party wanted to advance SUN Yat-sen's ideals. He had to maintain a balance. He was in many respects an elitist; he was called an "authoritarian populist."<sup>99</sup>

The advent of serious populism and it becoming the favored approach to attaining and wielding political power followed the founding of

96. George H. Kerr, *Formosa: Licensed Revolution and the Home Rule Movement, 1895-1945* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974), pp. 169-73; Tay-sheng Wang, *Legal Reform in Taiwan Under Japanese Colonial Rule, 1895-1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

97. See David J. Lorenzo, *Conceptions of Chinese Democracy: Reading Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

98. See Steve Tsang, "Transforming a Party State into a Democracy," in Steve Tsang and Hung-mao Tien (eds.), *Democratization in Taiwan: Implications for China* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 1-23.

99. Guo Zhongjun, *Populism in Taiwan's Democratic Transition: 1987-2008* (Academia Press, 2004).

the Democratic Progressive Party in 1986 and even more with the election of CHEN Shui-bian president in 2000. The DPP aggressively promoted local nationalism without respect for minorities—mainstay traits of populism.<sup>100</sup> Exploiting ethnic differences and provoking China resulted in a loss of American support which along with his horrendous corruption caused the ruination of the Chen presidency and the demise of Chen's populism with it.<sup>101</sup>

MA Ying-jeou was essentially an anti-populist president. He was a Confucian-style leader. He idealized the traditional Chinese ideals of moral and upright rule (which he contrasted to Chen's corrupt regime) while condemning exploiting ethnic differences and ill will, local nationalism (that he equated to protectionism and isolationism), and emotionalism that he saw as tyranny of the majority. He viewed his governance as "enlightened and paternalistic."<sup>102</sup>

President Ma's approach to governance worked well while the memory of the failed Chen presidency remained an important element of the national psyche. But this faded. And Ma showed little appreciation for the reality that populism had become a part of Taiwan's politics. In short, it was an effective tool that most politicians and political parties felt they could not abandon. Ma was different.<sup>103</sup>

In August 2009, Ma suffered a serious blow to his personal reputation and to the image of his administration as a result of Typhoon Morakot. Morakot was a very severe storm even for Taiwan in terms of the destruction and loss of life it caused. Ma's response was correct, if unfortunate. Given Taiwan's federal system the first responders should have been, and were, local governments. But because local action was not enough and there were delays caused by confusion over jurisdiction Citi-

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100. See Antonio C. Hsiang and Jerome S. Hsiang, "Democratic Peace Across the Taiwan Strait," in Sujian Guo and Banging Guo (eds.), *Greater China in an Era of Globalization* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2000), pp. 100-02 and John F. Copper, *Taiwan's Democracy on Trial: Political Change During the Chen Shui-bian Era and Beyond* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010), p. 59.

101. Though it can be argued that populism does not grow in the milieu of an expanding middle class and absent unions and/or farmers organizing large groups of active supporters, Chen's actions seem more the cause of populism being discredited. See Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World* (New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2008), p. 98.

102. John Fu-sheng Hsieh, "Taiwan in 2013: Stalemate at Home, Some Headway Abroad" *Asian Survey*, January/February 2014, p. 149.

103. Ku Er-teh, "Populism does Taiwan no favors," *Taipei Times*, July 18, 2010 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

zens came to see the Ma administration's response as inefficient and uncaring, a view that Ma's opposition happily fueled.<sup>104</sup>

Ma bounced back from this setback succored by a much improved economy, the multiple trials of CHEN Shui-bian (that kept his malfeasance, corruption, race baiting, and poisonous populism in the media), and applause from the United States for maintaining serenity in the Taiwan Strait helped Ma.

The next year after Ma's second presidential election victory, 2013, saw the opposition's more frequent (and more successful) use of populist themes. Meanwhile, Ma was affected by the so-called second term curse and his and the KMT's popularity, anyway not high, suffered.<sup>105</sup> There was no palpable backlash caused by DPP politicians and/or the media advancing populist ideals, though they were said (by the business community) to hamper economic growth.<sup>106</sup>

The 2014 election campaign saw a steep rise of populist emotionalism manifested in street politics, demands for more economic fairness, appeals for equality and compassion, etc. This contributed to increased citizen participation, especially by younger citizens. But it also engendered greater political polarization and caused the electorate to focus on style rather than substance in evaluating candidates. Reform as an ideal was center stage; but proposals for specific change were not while reforms were seldom framed in a way that made them actionable. In any event, populist emotions largely defined the election campaign.<sup>107</sup>

In the wake of the Nine-in-One election advancing populist themes were the DPP's favored approach to the 2016 campaign. This made sense. Populism worked in 2014; it had even more resonance now to DPP (and new third parties) candidates running for office. DPP officials and candidates assailed the gap between rich and poor even though it was clear that the causes were mainly globalism and advances made in information technology and that regimes that acted to correct it elsewhere caused economic growth to slow down. In Taiwan's case, egalitarian appeals to correct wage inequities exacerbated the brain drain problem.<sup>108</sup> But few connected the two. Populist politicians attacked the government

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104. See Copper, *The KMT Returns to Power*, p. 109.

105. Ming-tang Chen, "Taiwan in 2012: Curse of a Second-Term President," *Asian Survey*, January/February 2014, pp. 206-13.

106. "Commercial Times: Populism Hampers Progress," *Focus Taiwan*, June 12, 2013 (online at focustaiwan.tw).

107. Yang Tai-sheen, "KMT faces midterm election curse," *Taipei Times*, August 25, 2014 (online at taipeitimes.com).

108. See John F. Copper, "Populism Infecting Taiwan Politics," *Review of Global Politics*, No. 51, 2015.

for being too close to China and for “selling out” Taiwan, even though this was not just a Taiwan problem. Chinese tourists, it was alleged, engaged in bad behavior and many were spies.

The KMT had no effective contretemps to the various populist tactics the DPP employed. The ruling party was in a funk. It had to deal with party disunity, halt members fleeing the party, find good candidates, and cope with a host of other problems. In short, the KMT had little choice but to play defense and it didn’t do that well. The opposition painted Ma and the KMT as elitist; they arguably were. The DPP’s intended or declared candidates had an opening to exploit.<sup>109</sup>

But the situation did not totally fit for the DPP. The DPP’s history is replete with elitism. It was a party of rural Taiwan; its supporters were less educated and less cosmopolitan. They had to be led. The DPP was also an ethnic party to a large degree. This was an obstacle to democracy, at least popular democracy.<sup>110</sup> Finally, the DPP adopted the KMT’s organizational principles and structure. It is a Leninist party built on strong leadership that it found handy to cope with internal squabbles that often became a serious problem.<sup>111</sup>

Further, TSAI Ing-wen is not by nature a populist. She had even said so.<sup>112</sup> By background she is an elitist. She grew up in a wealthy family. She prefers to speak Mandarin, not Taiwanese (the language of the masses). She acquired a top-flight education in Taiwan and abroad, including a master’s degree from a top U.S. university and a doctorate from one of England’s best. Her early experience in government was dealing with global issues, not local matters that her more provincial brethren worked with.<sup>113</sup>

During the campaign Tsai appeared to fully grasp the reality that playing the hate China card would damage Taiwan’s economy and that maintaining cordial relations with the U.S. was a *sine quo non* since the two were connected. She understood that Taiwan would not long exist without America’s support. Thus, she adopted a “maintain the status quo

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109. “The Liberty Times Editorial: Ma can idle away next two years,” *Taipei Times*, May 25, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

110. The-fu Huang and Ching-hsin Yu, “Developing a Party System and Democratic Consolidation,” in Steve Tsang and Hung-mao Tien (eds.), *Democratization in Taiwan: Implications for China* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), p. 95.

111. Shelley Rigger, *From Opposition to Power: Taiwan’s Democratic Progressive Party* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2001), p. 12.

112. Jonathan Standing, “Taiwan’s Tsai put pragmatism over populism,” Reuters, January 5, 2012 (online at [reuters.com](http://reuters.com)).

113. Tsai’s background is discussed in further details in pages below.

policy” vis-à-vis China. This contradicted the populist views of the DPP’s base.<sup>114</sup>

Tsai consequently hedged her language. She stopped referring to Taiwan’s sovereignty separate from China and instead spoke of “popular sovereignty” as a product of democracy. Addressing Taiwan’s status she spoke of “safeguarding Taiwan’s future autonomy, its right to choose.” These were ideas that smelled like independence but did not frontally challenge China’s views on Taiwan, making it evident Tsai wanted reconciliation with Beijing.<sup>115</sup> She spoke in populist terms of cross-Strait relations being formulated in accordance with the will of the people, but added, “whichever party was in power.” Clearly she was not basing her statements on the party’s 1991 Independence Clause, the 1999 Resolution on Taiwan’s Future, or the 2007 Normal Nation Resolution—all of which presumed Taiwan to be a sovereign, independent country separate from the People’s Republic of China.<sup>116</sup>

Meanwhile, Tsai could not allow her attention to be diverted by pursuing reform. She needed to win the election. Her party was of the same mind. Hence reform became pretty much a sideshow during the campaign with Tsai and her party posturing on reformist issues to their political advantage. This mimicked the 2014 election campaign.

Meanwhile, Eric Chu, who was elected chairman of the KMT in the wake of the 2014 election, suggested a number of reforms. These included shifting from a presidential (or a semi-presidential system as most called it) to a parliamentary one, introducing absentee voting, lowering the voting age to 18, reducing the requirement for a party to sponsor legislators-at-large to just 3 percent of the vote, and reviewing the current electoral system.<sup>117</sup>

Changing Taiwan’s political system to a parliamentary one was the most serious of the reforms he broached. A parliamentary system is arguably what the Constitution set forth, but was altered (or nullified) via the “Temporary Provisions” (of the Constitution) by CHIANG Kai-shek and also by practice.<sup>118</sup> Most of the democracies in the world are parlia-

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114. This issue is assessed further in the next section.

115. Alan D. Romberg, “Squaring the Circle: Adhering to Principle, Embracing Ambiguity,” *China Leadership Monitor*, July 14, 2015, p. 4 (online at [chinaleadershipmonitor.org](http://chinaleadershipmonitor.org)).

116. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

117. Wang Kun-yih, “Is Eric Chu’s parliamentary proposal viable?” *Want China Times*, December 14, 2014 (online at [wantchinatimes.com.tw](http://wantchinatimes.com.tw)).

118. Harvey J. Feldman (ed.), *Constitutional Reform and the Future of the Republic of China* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), p. 4. For an assessment of constitutional development and reform in Taiwan, see Hungdah Chiu, *Constitutional Development and Reform in the Republic of China on Taiwan (with Documents)* (Baltimore: University of Maryland School of Law, 1993).

mentary systems, including the Western European democracies and Japan. A parliamentary system would have precluded the extreme gridlock that characterized the CHEN Shui-bian presidency due to the presidency being in the hands of the DPP while the legislature was controlled by the KMT. It would dampen the current polarization in Taiwan politics and perhaps reduce the likelihood of divided government (including after this election).

But Chu's proposal got short shrift. The reasons were that the KMT had overseen the evolution of a presidential system, most citizens felt that a strong leader was needed (and a presidential system was thus preferable), and it was the system in use in the United States and was SUN Yat-sen's model. Many felt that the issue had already been debated sufficiently and that further discussion would only revisit already decided issues (during national conferences held on political/constitutional issues during the 1990s).<sup>119</sup> Finally, DPP leaders favored a presidential system. They perceived that the president represented the entire people and based on their support among Taiwan's largest ethnic group they had an advantage. Some also perceived that Mainland Chinese favored a parliamentary system because "they did not want Taiwanese to seize power."<sup>120</sup> Finally, the DPP was confident their candidate would win in January; so why dilute the power of the executive branch of government?

Another issue that Chu broached was the matter of absentee voting. Seeing the number of voters that returned from China to vote in 2008 (and most voted KMT) and the fact that most democracies in the world had a provision for absentee voting, plus it represented furthering the process of democratization in Taiwan, KMT officials talked about it during the 2010 election campaign for metropolitan city and other local offices.<sup>121</sup> But nothing was done. It was brought up at other times; but it never became a serious or popular issue. Thus, neither the KMT nor the DPP gave it much support when Chu proposed it.<sup>122</sup>

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119. See Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 265 and 268 and Dafydd Fell, *Government and Politics in Taiwan* (London: Routledge, 2012), pp. 43-49.

120. Feldman (ed.), *Constitutional Reform and the Future of the Republic of China*, p. 45. Parris Chang, a DPP leader, made this comment.

121. "Taiwan needs absentee voting system," *China Post*, October 6, 2010 (online at chinapost.com.tw) cited in Copper, *The KMT Returns to Power*, p. 124.

122. Several scholars in Taiwan told this writer that the KMT was not enthusiastic about the idea because they did not think it strongly favored the party in the 2016 election. The DPP did not want to turn the matter into an issue of reform because they had other priorities and because Chu proposed it. Several in-the-know observers in Taiwan told this author that there

The other reforms Chu proposed did not gain any traction either. The DPP agreed with his suggestion that the age for voting be lowered to 18; but DPP leaders appeared to want to make this their own issue later rather than cooperate with the KMT to put it into effect now. The DPP showed little or no interest in other “hoped for” reforms. They focused on the campaign and winning the election. The atmosphere was one of competition not cooperation.

In October, shortly after Chu became the KMT's candidate for president he proposed some ideas for legislative reform. Chu called for a more neutral speaker, more transparency, and a “State of the Union” address to the legislature each year. He also suggested more openness in meetings between the various caucuses to avoid the appearance of “black box” deals. Finally, Chu recommended an end to term limits and abolishing the KMT's rule that the speaker cannot run for election as an at-large candidate—both of which appeared designed as a sop to WANG Jinyng.<sup>123</sup>

While talking of reform, Chu also criticized the DPP for its boycotts and it disrupting legislative sessions.<sup>124</sup> This was not conducive to bipartisanship, if there was any of that around. Chu probably knew the DPP would not help him push any of his reforms, but he proposed them anyway to help unify his party and put the DPP on the defensive.

As voting day got closer there was more talk of reform. But this was mostly vague campaign rhetoric. Chu still did not win any support from the DPP for his proposals. Many KMT candidates regarded his proposals as too late or not effective campaign issues.

TSAI Ing-wen, not wanting to be upstaged by Chu even though his proposals found little support, issued a statement of her reforms—five of them: generational justice (focusing on the dire situation facing the youth), improving government institutions (noting the current lack of effective communications with the people), “fixing” the legislature (arguing it was not representative), transitional justice (looking at rectifying past regimes' transgressions), and making reforms (to deal with social antagonisms and political fighting).<sup>125</sup> Tsai's proposals, coming less than four months before the election, had to be seen as campaigning or ideas

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was another factor: Chu had lost on the issue of adopting a parliamentary system and this weakened his other reform proposals.

123. Wang, “Is Eric Chu's parliamentary proposal viable?”

124. Matthew Strong, “Chu presents legislative reforms,” *Taiwan News*, October 28, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

125. “VOTE 2016: Tsai Ing-wen's Five Major Reforms,” *Thinking Taiwan*, September 17, 2015 (online at thinking-taiwan.com).

to take up once she was president—not proposals to act upon immediately.

In conclusion, the national identity or sovereignty issue and proposals for reform were mutually at odds. Functionally the two could not work in tandem. During the campaign the former gained greater resonance, to the disadvantage of the latter. Finally, one of the problems with populism is that it succeeds when the public thinks its political favorites are doing what works, not what actually works.<sup>126</sup> The pursuit of independence (as will seen below) fit this description.

## V. THE CHINA FACTOR

The People's Republic of China, referred to here as just China, is one of two countries (the other being the United States) that impact Taiwan's politics and its elections. The point is that what China does and what its leaders say influence Taiwan's voters.

To fully understand the "China factor" it is necessary to understand Chinese leaders' thinking and China's policy vis-à-vis Taiwan. At the heart of China's relationship with Taiwan is that China regards Taiwan as its territory and recovering it is a "core interest" (meaning one it is willing to use force to realize).<sup>127</sup> In recent years, meaning for a couple of decades, China's specific policy tenets have been quite consistent: advance unification under the "one country, two systems" formula and employ military force if Taiwan declares independence.<sup>128</sup>

On the other hand Chinese leaders are arguably not in a big rush to bring Taiwan under their control. Evidence of this is in the fact that Beijing's main tactic is promoting commercial ties with Taiwan so as to integrate the two side's economies, which it perceives will lead to advancing other ties.

China's policy toward Taiwan has also been described as "concessionary." Specifically China offered trade favors to Taiwan and provided profitable opportunities to Taiwan businesses operating in or investing in China. And that has produced results: Nearly ten percent of Taiwan's workforce is in China, almost two-thirds of its investment goes there, and

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126. Bryan Caplan, *The Myth of the Rational Voter: Why Democracies Choose Bad Policies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 162.

127. For details on Beijing's policy, see *The Taiwan Question and the Reunification of China* (Beijing: Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office, State Council, 1993).

128. John Fu-sheng Hsieh, "Cross-Strait Relations After 17th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party" in Wuxing Chen and Yang Zhong (eds.), *Leadership in a Changing China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 193-204.

40 percent of its exports are China bound.<sup>129</sup> All of this has significantly helped Taiwan's economy. In fact, Chinese leaders want it to be known that there exists an asymmetric dependency relationship that would hurt Taiwan to break.<sup>130</sup>

The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement concluded in 2010 was a centerpiece of this policy. Western analysts reported that it would raise Taiwan's gross domestic product by 5.3 percent above the previous trend line.<sup>131</sup> The agreement also increased Taiwan's agricultural exports to China by 33 percent in the first half of 2011.<sup>132</sup> Meanwhile, Chinese tourists increased in number from 300,000 when MA Ying-jeou became president to an estimated 2.3 million in 2012 and became a major engine of job creation. In the first half of 2015 more than 2.5 million tourists from China visited Taiwan—55 percent of Taiwan's total.<sup>133</sup>

Beijing has indeed sought to make Taiwan dependent on China economically. But to a considerable extent it has created the same relationship with a host of countries around the world. This is the product of growing trade and other interconnectedness in a globalizing world and China becoming an economic powerhouse.<sup>134</sup>

China has also pursued a policy of isolating Taiwan diplomatically. It has kept Taiwan from participating in international organizations and has reduced its diplomatic partners to a small number. By 2008, Beijing had defeated Taiwan in their foreign aid and investment "war" and then

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129. Tom Wright and Aries Poon, "Taiwan Grapples with Closer China Ties," *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 2014 (online at wsj.com). The exact numbers are 8 percent of Taiwan's workforce (850,000 workers), 62 percent of investments (9.1 billion annually) and 40 percent of exports (\$121 billion) in 2013. These figures have increased in recent years especially since 2013. In all of these categories Taiwan's commercial ties with the United States are a small fraction of China's and growth remains flat.

130. China, of course, could also display a tough mien. China has threatened business people from Taiwan that were operating or living in China that were openly supporting Taiwan's independence or were considered helping the DPP. Beijing has also steadily increased its military presence across the Taiwan Strait that has application vis-à-vis Taiwan and that is intimidating to the latter. But for the most part Beijing's stance was friendly and non-threatening.

131. Daniel H. Rosen and Zhi Wang, "Deepening China-Taiwan Relations through the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, Policy Brief (Peterson Institute), 2010; Sarah Mishkin, "Chinese Tourists Boost Taiwan's Economy," *Washington Post*, August 30, 2012 (online at washingtonpost.com).

132. "ECFA one year on," *Taiwan Review*, November 1, 2011 (online at taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw).

133. "Taiwan receives nearly 5 mil. Inbound visitors in H1," *China Post*, August 2, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

134. See David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), chapter 5. Also see "China Eclipses US as Biggest Trading Nation," *BloombergBusiness*, February 10, 2013 (online at bloomberg.com).

agreed on a truce.<sup>135</sup> China has also stopped taking Taiwan's diplomatic partners and has allowed Taipei to join some important international organizations. Basically, during the Ma presidency, China halted its efforts to reduce Taiwan's "international space."

Will this continue? Perhaps. But Tsai and the DPP have to consider that China's generosity might be reduced or even terminated and reckon with the possibility that Beijing might revert to its former strategy of isolating Taiwan if Tsai repudiates the 1992 Consensus or the one-China principle. In fact, it has been estimated (in Taiwan) that Taipei might promptly lose 10 or more of the 22 nations with whom it has formal diplomatic ties.<sup>136</sup>

Finally, Beijing embraces a strategy of intimidating Taiwan with its growing military strength. Again Taiwan is not singled out: China has been increasing its defense budget by around double-digits every year for three and a half decades, affecting most of the world. On the other hand, China's short-range missiles and its amphibious attack capabilities have special application vis-à-vis Taiwan and both have grown in numbers markedly in recent years. The former has been called a "sword of Damocles" hanging over Taiwan's head, meaning that Taipei's air and naval capabilities would be eliminated in a first strike and Taiwan's missile defenses would be unable to prevent this.<sup>137</sup> China has also upgraded its navy with an aircraft carrier (and more on the way) and landing craft.

The "Taiwan issue" must also be viewed in the light of China's ambitions to be a global power and perhaps eventually to rule the world. One might presume that Taiwan is an initial stepping-stone in this strategy and therefore Chinese leaders view its reunification as a top priority. However, there are reasons to think otherwise. If China is successful in becoming a first rate world power or more, Taiwan will likely not be an obstacle; it will want to have cordial relations with China and may even seek to become part of China. Second, looking at what China fears, an increase in Japanese influence in Taiwan, the U.S. reversing its one-China policy, or a formal declaration of independence by the government in Taiwan, currently none of these seems likely. Thus, it is reasonable to think Chinese leaders want to avoid turning the Taiwan issue into a crisis.<sup>138</sup>

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135. See John F. Copper, *China's Foreign Aid and Investment Diplomacy Volume II: History and Practice in Asia, 1950-Present* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), chapter 4.

136. Stacy Hsu, "Taiwan's allies fleeing to China: KMT," *Taipei Times*, December 29, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

137. Goldstein, *Meeting China Halfway*, p. 63.

138. Yuan Peng, "Be Vigilant against the Ailment of Taiwan's Strategic Anxieties," *Taiwan Studies*, January 2014, cited in *ibid*, p. 67.

It is also important to grasp the fact that Chinese leaders were aware of the Ma administration's failings. They realized that Ma was unpopular due to his poor handling domestic problems, the fact former president CHEN Shui-bian's divide (along ethnic lines) and conquer governance and his rampant corruption had faded from the public mind, and the growth of populism began to play a much bigger role in Taiwan's politics (advantage to the opposition). Chinese leaders likewise understood Ma was perceived as overreaching in advancing closer cross-Strait relations. Finally, Beijing was attuned to the fact that the trade and other "goodies" China provided Taiwan were unpopular in China and granting them were not seen as that productive in changing minds in Taiwan.<sup>139</sup>

Thus, in the last two or so years, Beijing did not increase the "aid" it provided Taiwan. Cutting back was also caused by its own economy slowing and its companies increasingly competing with those in Taiwan. This came at a bad time for Taiwan. Combined with efforts by the opposition to portray Taiwan's connections with China as less beneficial than President Ma and the KMT said and, furthermore, dangerous inasmuch as they undermine Taiwan's sovereignty, the electorate became increasingly uneasy about the relationship.<sup>140</sup>

Before the 2014 election campaign ended, opposition leaders declared that China would have to make compromises and deal with the DPP if the DPP won. Beijing, however, gave no indication that it agreed with this; on the contrary, it rejected the idea.<sup>141</sup> President Xi even said that the "Taiwan issue" could not remain indefinitely unresolved.<sup>142</sup> After winning the election DPP stalwarts stuck to their position, often in even stronger terms. Again Chinese leaders' response was negative. In fact, there was near "unanimity" among foreign China experts that Beijing stance would be harsh and even punishing if the DPP rejected "one Chi-

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139. Several Chinese officials told this writer that there was palpable opposition in the party and among the public to Beijing's generosity toward Taiwan that was unrequited and that it was expensive and the many residents of Taiwan working in China had cost locals job opportunities.

140. See, for example, Kuok Chen-hero, "Economic benefits of closer ties a mirage," *Taipei Times*, November 20, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

141. See "DPP gains should prompt Beijing to modify its approach," *Want China Times*, December 2, 2014 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)) and Faith Hung, "China officials satisfied with Taiwan ties but warns on 'bottom line,'" Reuters, December 16, 2014 (online at [reuters.com](http://reuters.com)).

142. Alan D. Romberg, "Cross-Strait Relations: Portrayals of Consistent Calm on the Surface, Padding Like Hell Underneath," *China Leadership Monitor*, September 14, 2014, p. 1 (online at [chinaleadershipmonitor.org](http://chinaleadershipmonitor.org)).

na” or aggressively promoted independence.<sup>143</sup> It appeared Beijing had “drawn a line in the sand.”

In March, at the annual meeting of China’s National People’s Congress, President XI Jinping stated that the 1992 Consensus was the “foundation” for cross-strait relations and warned that rejecting it might create a “state of turbulence.” At the end of the month, China announced that it had approved 57 nations as founding members of its vaunted Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), but Taiwan’s application was not accepted. China’s Taiwan Affairs Office said that Taiwan would be welcome “under a different name.” It was reported elsewhere that Beijing was taking a “wait and see” position in view of the likelihood TSAI Ing-wen would win the January 2016 election.<sup>144</sup>

In mid-April, when TSAI Ing-wen was about to be formally chosen the DPP’s presidential candidate, a spokesman for the Taiwan Affairs Office in Beijing stated on three separate occasions China’s view on Taiwan: that the peaceful development of cross-strait relations depended on “holding firm” to the 1992 consensus and opposing Taiwan independence. He condemned what he called the “splittist” position of “one country on each side” (of the Taiwan Strait) advanced by the DPP.<sup>145</sup>

Upon receiving her party’s nomination, Chairwoman Tsai announced her policy toward China would be one of keeping the status quo. Beijing reacted by stating that the “anchor” of cross-Strait relations must be based on the understanding that “the mainland and Taiwan both belong to China.” Chinese leaders also publically recalled that she said in July leading up to the 2014 election that if the DPP wins the 2016 election China “will adjust its cross-strait policy in favor of the direction of the DPP.” They strongly pooh-poohed this idea.<sup>146</sup>

Tsai’s cross-Strait policy faced another hard reality. Frank Hsieh, former party chairman and the DPP’s presidential candidate in 2008, led a faction of the party that advocates engaging with China more actively. In addition, some of Taiwan’s mayors, notably Taipei Mayor Ko, were dealing with China on their own. So were a number of DPP local offi-

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143. Romberg, “Cross-Strait Relations: The Times They Are A-Changin,’” *China Leadership Monitor*, March 19, 2015, p. 1 (online at [chinaleadershipmonitor.org](http://chinaleadershipmonitor.org)).

144. Yu Xiaodong, “The Name Game,” *News China*, June 2015, p. 13. Taiwan was invited to participate only in “practical consultations.”

145. Shannon Tiezzi, “As Taiwan Election Season Begins, Beijing Points to Red Lines,” *The Diplomat*, April 16, 2015 online at [thediplomat.org](http://thediplomat.org)

146. Jenny W. Hsu, “Taiwan’s Opposition Presidential Nominee Tsai Ing-wen says won’t change China Ties,” *Wall Street Journal*, April 15, 2014 (online at [wsj.com](http://wsj.com)).

cials.<sup>147</sup> There was likewise a realization in Taiwan that the United States did not support Taiwan's independence; thus to pursue a "separation" policy would make Taiwan an "orphan" in the international community.<sup>148</sup> Some party members even stated that the DPP had to abandon the goal of formal independence lest cross-Strait relations become destabilized.<sup>149</sup>

On her other flank hard-line DPP members assailed Tsai's policy as contrary to party doctrine. SHIH Ming-teh, a former chairman of the DPP, accused Tsai of "waffling" and assailed her "pandering to the wealthy that favor better relations with China."<sup>150</sup> Later Shih said disparagingly, regarding her status quo policy, that Tsai was the "female version of MA Ying-jeou."<sup>151</sup> Another former chairman, LIN Yi-hsiung, asked sarcastically about the status quo: "Can someone running for the presidency leave the nation's prospects up in the air?" Well-known Taiwan independence advocate, KOO Kwang-ming, said Tsai's status quo policy would be a "fatal wound to the nation."<sup>152</sup>

Tsai was relieved to a considerable degree when attacks on her status quo policy abated after KMT chairman Eric Chu shortly after this made a trip to China. Chairman Chu's meeting with President (and chairman of the Chinese Communist Party) XI Jinping was technically unofficial since the two met as heads of their respective parties. Nevertheless, it was considered an important meeting and it was given extensive press coverage in Taiwan.<sup>153</sup> DPP stalwarts went on the offense and made Chu and the KMT's "pro-China policies" their targets.

In any event, Xi used the visit as an opportunity to restate and even elaborate on China's Taiwan policy. In particular he spoke of the *sine quo non* nature of adhering to the 1992 Consensus and opposing inde-

147. "DPP official's visit to Taiwan unrelated to ties with the CPC," *Focus Taiwan*, August 4, 2015 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)).

148. See Wang Kun-yih, "DPP cannot be ambiguous on the 1992 Consensus," *Want China Times*, February 2, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

149. Lu Hsin-hui and Scully Hsiao, "DPP elder urges end of pursuit of Taiwan de jure independence," *CNA*, April 6, 2015 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)).

150. "Shih Ming-teh criticizes Tsai for Currying Favor with the Wealthy," National Policy Foundation, May 22, 2015 (online at [taiwannpfnews.org](http://taiwannpfnews.org)). Shih noted, among other things, that Tsai had said that workers have too many days off.

151. "Tsai Ing-wen may pose greater risk to cross-strait ties than Chen Shui-bian," *Want China Times*, June 6, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com.tw](http://wantchinatimes.com.tw)).

152. Loa lok-sin, "DPP's China policy draws fire," *Taipei Times*, April 30, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

153. Austin Ramzy, "Chinese Leader and Head of Taiwan's Kuomintang Discuss Economy and Disaster Relief," *New York Times*, May 4, 2015 (online at [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com)).

pendence. China's official news agency, Xinhua, referred with some alarm to an "important new juncture" in cross-Strait relations.<sup>154</sup>

Subsequently President Xi said he welcomed Taiwan joining China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. But he also reiterated an earlier statement to the effect that if there is a failure to accept the "foundation of relations," namely one-China and the 1992 Consensus, "the earth will move and the mountains will shake (which many in Taiwan took to be an unveiled threat).<sup>155</sup> SUN Yafu, vice chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait, added that issues relating to foreign affairs would be "hard to handle." He also asserted that benefits Taiwan had accrued from trade and investments with China, not to mention its participation in regional economic activities, required "compatible" cross-Strait relations.<sup>156</sup>

After Chu's China visit, DPP candidate TSAI Ing-wen made a trip to the United States. China said little—probably because Tsai did not bring up the issue of one-China or the 1992 consensus and only obliquely touched on the matter of Taiwan's sovereignty. Probably the Chinese leadership also wanted to gauge Washington's response to the trip.

On the other hand, just prior to Tsai's trip, during a visit by President Xi to Belarus, Chinese negotiators put a provision in a joint communiqué saying that China opposed Taiwan joining any international or regional organization that requires statehood and condemned foreign arms sales to Taiwan. This was already China's policy; but it had not been stated in such a formal way for some time. Beijing also sent Taiwan signals by arranging talks with the Pope in late December (hinting of establishing relations with Taiwan's only diplomatic partner in Europe) and finalizing a free trade agreement with South Korea.<sup>157</sup>

After Tsai's trip to the U.S., ZHANG Zhijun, director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, reiterated President Xi's earlier statement that relations were at an historic stage. He declared that Taiwan had accrued important economic benefits from its relationship with China "as a result of the 92 Consensus." Zhang spoke of a vision of greater peace and stability, regional cooperation, and Taiwan's participation in international

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154. Romberg, "Squaring the Circle," pp. 6-7.

155. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

156. Ibid., pp. 9-10.

157. Nathan beaycgano-Mustafaga and Jessica Drun, "President Xi's Visit to Belarus Prompts Questions of New Line on Taiwan," *China Brief*, May 29, 2015 (online at jamestown.org). The author cites an article in Taiwan's *China Times*, May 20, 2015 regarding China's ability to undermine Taiwan's global diplomacy.

organizations and events; but he also cited “consequences” if a new administration in Taiwan failed to embrace “one China.”<sup>158</sup>

In early November, unexpectedly to almost everyone in Taiwan, the government announced that in a few days President Ma would meet China's President XI Jinping in Singapore. Top leaders of the two sides had not met since the Nationalist government fled to Taiwan in 1949. Furthermore, President Ma had hoped to meet with President Xi for some time, but that had not happened.<sup>159</sup>

The meeting was informal. No document resulted as none was expected. President Xi's objective was ostensibly to draw attention to the Ma's administration's successful cross-Strait policy and obligate TSAI Ing-wen (assuming she would win election to the presidency in January) to adhere to the tenets of that policy inasmuch as she had promised to maintain the status quo.<sup>160</sup>

Tsai and the DPP contended that President Ma's intention was to improve his deficient legacy and impact the coming election. Ma said his purpose was to maintain cross-Strait comity and improve the chances for peace in the region. DPP leaders retorted Ma should have not made the trip since he is about to leave the presidency, that Ma failed to bring up the issue of China's missiles aimed at Taiwan, and that the content of the visit did not mirror mainstream public opinion in Taiwan. Tsai criticized Ma for not referencing Taiwan's democracy and said she would win the election notwithstanding the visit.<sup>161</sup>

After the meeting, it was apparent that the Xi-Ma (Ma-Xi in Taiwan) meeting would not affect the election outcome, the presidential part of it at least. (The evidence was less clear about the legislative contest.) Tsai held onto a healthy lead in the polls in the wake of the meeting.<sup>162</sup>

During a presidential debate in late December, TSAI Ing-wen stated that the 92 Consensus “is an option, but is not the only one.” She also called on Beijing to respect Taiwan's democratic way of life.<sup>163</sup> China's reaction was quit caustic. MA Xiaoguang, head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, replied that the 92 Consensus was a “core concept that could

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158. Alan D. Romberg, “Consolidating Positions,” *China Leadership Monitor*, September 9, 2015 (online at [chinaleadershipmonitor.org](http://chinaleadershipmonitor.org)).

159. See John F. Copper, “The Xi-Ma Meeting: A Variant Perspective Assessment,” EAI Background Brief (East Asian Institute), December 1, 2015.

160. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

161. *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

162. J.R.Wu, “Taiwan opposition leader remains election frontrunner after Xi-Ma summit: polls,” Reuters, November 9, 2015 (online at [reuters.com](http://reuters.com)).

163. “DPP chief speaks on ties with China,” *Straits Times*, December 28, 2015 (online at [straitstimes.com](http://straitstimes.com)).

not be questioned.” He went on to say that without it the “institutionalized cross-strait dialog mechanism will be affected and could even collapse.”<sup>164</sup>

In the immediate run-up to the election, Tsai made some concessionary comments aimed at Beijing. She restated that her status quo policy was one of not provoking China. (See below for details on this point.) She stated that in Hong Kong in 1992 Taipei and Beijing agreed that they should set aside differences and that “everyone has a different view on how to interpret that part of history or how to term it.” She also said that after the election she did not rule out high-level cross-Strait contacts, would not cut the number of independent Chinese tourists, and supported inclusion of Chinese students in Taiwan in the National Health Insurance program. Beijing stuck to its position on the 92 Consensus and one-China, but did not make any new or particularly hostile statements about Tsai or the DPP.<sup>165</sup>

In the last few days before January 16, Beijing issued no hostile proclamations toward Tsai or the DPP and did not take any overt actions to try to influence the voting. Chinese leaders had obviously concluded Chu and the KMT had little hope of winning and seemed satisfied that Tsai would not adopt policies that required China to take immediate drastic measures in response. They appeared to assume that they could deal with provocations. In fact, some may have perceived that Tsai and the DPP winning the election may be a good thing inasmuch as if they did not pursue independence with any verve, since no one else of consequence would, the issue may die.

## VI. THE U.S. FACTOR

Taiwan’s relations with the United States showed marked improvements during the months leading up to the election. The change was evidenced by the number of U.S. officials visiting Taiwan and the general tenor of the statements emanating from Washington about Taiwan. More importantly, America’s official stance toward TSAI Ing-wen and the DPP shifted markedly. This evoked some important questions. Would this trend continue? How far would it go? How would it impact the election?

During the LEE Teng-hui presidency (1988 to 2000) and even more so during the CHEN Shui-bian presidency (2000 to 2008), U.S. officials

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164. “China Says Taiwan Talks Could ‘Collapse’ If Framework Challenged,” Bloomberg News, December 29, 2015 (online at bloomberg.com).

165. David G. Brown and Kevin Scott, “China-Taiwan Relations: A Meeting and a Campaign,” Comparative Connections, January 2016 (online at csis.org).

opposed the Taiwan government's provoking China and/or otherwise "upsetting the status quo in the Taiwan Strait." Washington's criticism of President Chen at times was especially strident, and was intended to show its serious displeasure with Chen's inciting tensions with China at a time when the U.S. was enmeshed in a war on terrorism. Washington concluded that Chen was not a loyal U.S. ally.<sup>166</sup>

This situation changed in early 2008 with the KMT's legislative election win and MA Ying-jeou's victory in the presidential contest two months later. During these elections as well as the 2012 joint national election it was obvious that the U.S. favored Ma and the KMT. Putting this on display again, in the throes of the 2012 election campaign when TSAI Ing-wen visited the U.S. as the DPP's presidential candidate the Obama administration treated her coldly.<sup>167</sup> The U.S. even "interfered" in the 2012 election campaign when a former U.S. official in charge of U.S.-Taiwan relations visited Taiwan and publically spoke out against Tsai and the DPP.<sup>168</sup>

During the campaign leading up to the Nine-in-One election it was obvious nothing had changed. Credible sources even reported that the U.S. would favor the KMT in the 2016 election due to on-going doubts about DPP policies that "did not accord with U.S. national interests."<sup>169</sup>

Richard Bush, director of the Center for East Asia Policy at the Brookings Institution and former head of the American Institute in Taiwan, counseled Taiwan that China could "overreact" to a Tsai victory in 2016. He further stated that China had significantly improved its military capabilities to deal with Taiwan and that it would be difficult for Taiwan to defend itself "while America's will and policies were in doubt."<sup>170</sup>

In March, former Managing Director of the American Institute in Taiwan (Washington's representative office in Taipei), Barbara Schrage, stated that the DPP should clarify its China policy before the coming election, to deal with "public skepticism," and it should not "evade" the 1992 consensus.<sup>171</sup> DPP leaders were obviously unhappy. One of the

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166. Copper, *Taiwan's Democracy on Trial*, pp. 80-82.

167. Copper, *The KMT Returns to Power*, p. 175

168. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

169. Richard C. Bush III, "Taiwan's Elections and United States Interests," *Up Front* (Brookings Institution), September 15, 2014 (online at [brookings.com](http://brookings.com)).

170. William Lowther, "China may 'overreact' at Tsai win: US expert," *Taipei Times*, February 8, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

171. Lu Hsin-hui and Y.F. Low, "Schrage does not represent U.S. government: DPP," *Focus Taiwan*, March 21, 2015 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)).

DPP's supporting newspapers quipped that the U.S. should regard Tsai as a U.S. partner, not a "wayward student."<sup>172</sup>

But there soon appeared evidence of an important turn in U.S. Taiwan policy. This was especially poignant given its context. When Barack Obama assumed the presidency he sought to avoid what he called zero-sum thinking in U.S.-China relations and welcomed China's rise.<sup>173</sup> During the new president's first trip to China, he concurred with the Chinese leaders' position that Taiwan is one of China's "core interest" (a matter over which China would engage its military).<sup>174</sup> Shortly after this, a spate of statements and articles emanating from Obama supporters, primarily scholars, the media, and even former and current military brass, suggested that the U.S. should abandon Taiwan (because it was the only obstacle to better relations with China, it could not be defended easily, and that the U.S. public did not favor spilling the blood of American soldiers to protect Taiwan).<sup>175</sup> But then this changed.

The turnaround in U.S. China/Taiwan policy began in 2011 after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton announced the U.S. pivot to Asia. By 2013 it had noticeably affected U.S.-Taiwan relations.<sup>176</sup> There was no more talk, directly or indirectly, from the Obama administration to the effect that Washington should ditch Taiwan. It also appeared, judging from more attention the Obama administration gave Taiwan, officials visiting Taiwan, and some subtle policy or policy related statements, that Washington now saw Taiwan and the DPP in a different light. However, U.S.'s Taiwan policy to a large extent was being made in secret and it had not (yet at least) become a means of leverage against China.<sup>177</sup> In other words, it appeared the U.S. was heading in a new direction on relations with Taiwan but was treading lightly and carefully.

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172. "Tsai is a US partner, not a wayward student," *Taiwan News*, March 26, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

173. Colin Dueck, *The Obama Doctrine: America's Grand Strategy Today* (London: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 75

174. Wang, *Obama's Challenge to China*

175. See John F. Copper, "Will the United States Desert Taiwan," in Wang Gungwu and Zheng Yongnian (eds.), *China: Development and Governance* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2013), pp. 480-81. On the last point opinion polls in the U.S. had indicated there was no public support for the use of American forces to defend Taiwan. In a recent poll, of 12 scenarios presented wherein U.S. troops would be deployed abroad, Taiwan ranked the lowest with only 26 percent support. See "Americans 'neutral' on Taiwan; China not a threat: poll," *Taipei Times*, September 18, 2014 (online at taipeitimes.com). The Chicago Council on Global Affairs did the poll. On the question about how Americans feel about Taiwan, its ranking was 12<sup>th</sup> among 25 American friends, just above Turkey.

176. See Robert Sutter, "More American Attention to Taiwan Amid Heightened Competition with China," *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, April 2015, pp. 1-16.

177. *Ibid.*, p. 3, 9, and pp. 12-16.

But soon there were better “indications” that the U.S.’ Taiwan policy had “made a change” such that Taiwan might become part of the Asia pivot (now called rebalance). Official Washington proffered its view about the “nine dashed line” that Beijing used to delineate its territorial claims in the South China Sea (that Nationalist China had drawn in the 1940s): that Taipei should reevaluate it—apparently to justify America’s confrontation with China over Beijing’s claims.<sup>178</sup> But most importantly, U.S. officials responded in a positive manner to Tsai’s “maintaining the status quo” China policy.<sup>179</sup>

In early May, U.S.-China friction over China’s military presence and its land reclamation activities in the South China Sea escalated. The U.S. dispatched the USS Fort Worth, one of the most advanced ships in the fleet, to patrol in the area surrounding the Spratly Islands. Subsequently rumors spread to the effect the U.S. might escalate the conflict if China established an air defense identification zone there. Thus the nine-dash line came into play as a frame of reference to deal with a potential flashpoint that some opined might trigger a war.<sup>180</sup>

Following this a number of U.S. officials visited Taiwan, some making comments touching on U.S. strategic cooperation with Taipei. Raymond Burghardt, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the American Institute in Taiwan (which manages U.S. relations with Taiwan) and former director of the AIT office in Taipei, made a six-day visit to Taiwan. He cited improved relations with Taiwan and mentioned arms sales and Taiwan’s inclusion in America’s visa waver program. In response, Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs spoke of the “best U.S.-Taiwan relations in 36 years.”<sup>181</sup> At this time President Ma proposed his South China Sea Initiative that called on involved parties to focus on develop-

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178. Jeffrey Bader, “The U.S. and China’s Nine-Dash Line,” Research Opinions (Brookings Institution), February 6, 2015, cited in *Ibid.*, p. 11. Bader was senior director in the National Security Council on Asian affairs from 2009 to 2011.

179. There were two forces that were impacting U.S. Taiwan policy at this time: Concern cum anger over China’s aggressive actions in the East China Sea and the South China Sea on the one hand and anticipation that Tsai and the DPP would win the election in January 2016 on the other. It was difficult to discern which was having an influence or the relative significance of each.

180. Lin Chuan-tiong, “US must deny legitimacy of Beijing’s nine-dash line,” *Want China Times*, May 24, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

181. “AIT chief Burghardt in Taipei for a six-day visit,” *China Post*, May 12, 2015 (online at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)).

ing resources and delaying any moves to resolve sovereignty issues.<sup>182</sup> Washington praised President Ma's proposal.<sup>183</sup>

Additional evidence of improved ties with Taiwan included backing Taipei to participate in the U.S.-sponsored Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement, support for Taiwan to join Interpol, and a Congressional proposal on military cooperation.<sup>184</sup> U.S. Secretary of State Kerry even described Taiwan as a "fundamental element" in the Obama administration's Asia pivot.<sup>185</sup> Ben Bernanke visited Taiwan, the first former chairman of the Federal Reserve to do so. And Charles Rivkin, U.S. assistant secretary of state for economic affairs, made a trip to Taiwan. Rivkin praised President Ma's South China Sea peace initiative.<sup>186</sup> In the meantime, the Department of State published a "comprehensive report" on the U.S.' Taiwan policy, which Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Asian and Pacific Affairs, Susan Thornton, said characterized Taiwan as a U.S. partner with whom Washington has "friendly and intimate relations."<sup>187</sup>

While President Ma and the KMT could take credit for a warming of relations with the United States since they had overseen close ties with Washington, what was subsequently called by some the "U.S. Taiwan diplomatic offensive" seemed motivated by America's anti-China policy shift and that played well for the DPP. The State Department's polite tone expressed in advance of TSAI Ing-wen's visit to the U.S. confirmed this.<sup>188</sup>

With warming relations as a backdrop, on May 30, Tsai embarked on a 12-day trip to the U.S. She visited six U.S. cities (Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, Washington, DC, Houston and San Francisco) and met

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182. "Ma proposes South China Sea Peace Initiative," *Taiwan Today*, May 26, 2015 (online at taiwantoday.tw).

183. "EDITORIAL: S China Sea peace plan a right step," *Taipei Times*, May 28, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

184. See William Lowther, "US Taiwan-Interpol bill introduced," *Taipei Times*, April 18, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com);

185. "Kerry says U.S. will continue to step up relations with Taiwan," *China Post*, April 15, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

186. "Washington appreciates President Ma's South China Sea Peace Initiative: official," *China Post*, May 28, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

187. Tung Chen-yuan, "US support for Taiwan is critical," *Taipei Times*, June 9, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

188. Tung Chen-yuan, "US supports peaceful presidency," *Taipei Times*, May 30, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com). U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Susan Thornton made friendly statements about future cooperation with Tsai in stark contrast to some earlier comments she had made.

with Taiwan support groups, local think tanks, and other organizations.<sup>189</sup> Her advance team labeled the trip the “Light up Taiwan U.S. Campaign Tour.” Most critical to the success of her trip Tsai promoted her status quo policy on cross-Strait relations and advanced what was called a “four pronged foreign policy”: broadening cooperation with the United States, participating in projects benefiting the international community, protecting Taiwan’s economic autonomy through trade diversification, and enhancing “principled cooperation” with China.<sup>190</sup>

Tsai received an unprecedented welcome in Washington from the Department of State and the White House. Tsai met with Evan Medeiros (who was known as a top Obama administration official not friendly toward Taiwan) in the White House—constituting the first such visit of a presidential candidate from Taiwan. Following this she went to the Department of State to meet with Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken—marking the first time a Taiwan candidate for president visited the building. All of her meetings were characterized as friendly and constructive.

All of this clearly mirrored a new and distinctly different official attitude toward Taiwan—in particular the DPP—in Washington.<sup>191</sup> Several explanations were offered. One was that the White House recognized that Tsai was likely to win the presidential election in January 2016 and the U.S. needed to prepare to deal with her and the DPP. Two, Tsai’s “status quo policy” toward China convinced American foreign policy makers that she would not be a troublemaker as former president Chen had been. Three, there was a new realization by the administration that Taiwan was important to the U.S. Four, U.S. relations with China had deteriorated seriously and the Obama administration sought to respond and even vent its anger toward Beijing by adopting a friendly policy toward Taiwan.<sup>192</sup>

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189. Stephanie Chao, “Hundreds welcome Tsai Ing-wen to Los Angeles during tour of the US,” *China Post*, May 31, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw) and “New DPP Chief Tsai Ing-wen in the US on first foreign trip,” *South China Morning Post*, May 31, 2015 (online at scmp.com).

190. Matthew Strong, “Tsai presents four-pronged foreign policy,” *Taiwan News*, June 2, 2015 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

191. Nadia Tsao, Chen Hui-ping and Chen Wei-han, “DPP’s Tsai visits White House, US State Department,” *Taipei Times*, June 6, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

192. Both the public and official view of China had declined for some time when Tsai visited the United States. See “Friendly sentiment toward China in the US on the wane,” *Want China Times*, June 3, 2015) and Tseng Fu-sheng, “Mistrust continues to overshadow China-US Relations,” *Want China Times* June 2, 2015 (both online at wantchinatimes.com). China’s actions in the South China Sea were one of the biggest sources of friction between the U.S. and China at the official level.

In any event Tsai's trip constituted a big positive step forward in her bid for the presidency. After she returned to Taiwan, an opinion poll conducted by the Taiwan Brain Trust confirmed that her trip was well received at home and boosted her bid for the presidency. More than 60 percent of those queried said they were satisfied with her performance in the U.S. and more than 70 percent thought it would contribute to her presidential bid. Also more than 70 percent agreed with her "status quo" policy. The same survey put her well ahead of all of the KMT's possible candidates for the presidency.<sup>193</sup>

However, Tsai's U.S. visit also exposed some nettlesome questions. Some of the pundits at think tanks in Washington were quick to point out Tsai's status quo policy did not comport with the independence position held by many in her party and most DPP voters.<sup>194</sup> How would she reconcile this?<sup>195</sup>

The conclusion reached by many observers was that there was no denying there had been a tectonic shift in the official U.S. stance toward Tsai and the DPP. Still Tsai had to assume that the U.S. "change of heart" toward her and the DPP had to be cultivated. In fact, notwithstanding her favorable treatment in Washington, State Department officials said, at the end of Tsai's visit, that U.S. policy had not changed.<sup>196</sup> Finally, many U.S. foreign policy making officials made it known they liked President Ma. One might conclude from all of this the makers of U.S. China/Taiwan policy had taken a new look at Tsai and the DPP, but cautiously so. Tsai thus had a job to do in keeping the U.S. on her side.

Yet perhaps the best way to explain the new U.S. Taiwan policy was that hostility toward China was fast on the upswing. The U.S. condemned China's actions in the South China Sea and assailed China for alleged cyber attacks on U.S. government personnel files. At this time the Council on Foreign Relations, known to have close ties with policy makers in Washington, issued a special report entitled "Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China." The authors cited the need to "limit the dangers that China's economic and military expansion pose to U.S. inter-

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193. Loia lok-sin, "Tsai's US trip leads to boost in public support: survey," *Taipei Times*, June 13, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

194. William Lowther, "Tsai 'in difficult spot' on US visit: US think tank," *Taipei Times*, May 31, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)). Several U.S. scholars pushed her on whether she supported the 1992 consensus, but she refused to talk about this. See William Lowther, "Tsai vows 'consistent' cross-strait ties," *Taipei Times*, June 5, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

195. Yang Shu-mei, "DPP chair criticized by independence advocate over cross-strait policy," *Want China Times*, May 30, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

196. William Lowther, "Tsai completes DC visit, US says policy still same," *Taipei Times*, June 7, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

ests in Asia and globally.” They recommended “less hedging and more active countering.”<sup>197</sup> In any case, the deterioration in U.S.-China relations worked to the benefit of Taiwan, especially Tsai and the DPP.

There was even some talk to the effect that the U.S. might play the “Taiwan card.” While this term was not mentioned in the current context, it had been in the past—during the face-off between the U.S. and China over Taiwan in 1996.<sup>198</sup> It was also cited more recently, in 2012 at time the Obama Administration began to adopt a more hostile China policy.<sup>199</sup>

On the other hand, there were strong voices in the U.S. that argued China was important to America and the two had to cooperate to keep the global financial system stable, deal with such issues as nuclear proliferation, terrorism, and global warming. Individuals that had been or still were close to the Obama administration expressed these views quite openly.<sup>200</sup>

In addition, not long after Tsai’s trip to the United States, amidst what otherwise appeared to be a serious souring of U.S.-China relations, President Obama suggested that some of China’s claims in the South China Sea might be legitimate.<sup>201</sup> After the U.S. deal with Iran was finalized that would limit work on the latter’s nuclear weapons program, President Obama telephoned President Xi to thank him for his help.<sup>202</sup> In late July, Admiral Scott Swift, while in Tokyo stated that it was crucial for the United States to deepen ties with China notwithstanding tensions in the East China Sea and the South China Sea.<sup>203</sup>

President Ma visited the United States at this time and spoke at his alma mater, Harvard University. U.S. officials praised Ma in language

197. Robert D. Blackwill and Ashley J. Tellis, “Revising U.S. Grand Strategy Toward China,” Council on Foreign Relations, April 15, 2015 (online at cfr.org).

198. See Suisheng Zhao, “Changing Leadership Perceptions: The Adoption of a Coercive Strategy,” in Suisheng Zhao (ed.), *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan and the 1995-96 Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 119.

199. Jin Canrong, “New border entry term shows US tendency to play Taiwan card,” *Global Times*, July 30, 2015 (online at globaltimes.com). The United States had just allowed residents of Taiwan to use Taiwan as their country of citizenship on entry forms.

200. See, for example, Henry M. Paulson and Robert E. Rubin, “Why the U.S. Needs to Listen to China,” *Atlantic*, June 2015, especially for the economic arguments. See Wei-chin Lee, *The Mutual Non-Denial Principle, China’s Interests, and Taiwan’s Expansion of International Participation* (Baltimore: University of Maryland Carey School of Law, 2014) for details regarding Taiwan’s difficulties in getting around China’s influence on its diplomacy.

201. “Some of China’s claims may be legitimate, says Obama,” *Want China Times*, June 3, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com).

202. “Obama thanks China’s Xi for work on Iran deal,” AFP, July 21, 2015.

203. “Commander of US Pacific Fleet hopes to deepen relationship with China,” *Want China Times*, July 24, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com.tw).

they did not employ to laud Tsai.<sup>204</sup> Later, with the election just a month away, U.S. officials applauded President Ma's fisheries agreement signed with the Philippines, saying Ma is "solving problems."<sup>205</sup> Shortly after this several members of Congress hailed Ma's South China Sea initiatives.<sup>206</sup>

In November, KMT Chairman Eric Chu embarked on a seven-day visit to the United States. This was his first U.S. visit as KMT chairman and presidential candidate. His itinerary included talking with academics at the Brookings Institution, interviewing with the *Washington Post*, attending a welcome party at the Twin Oaks Estate, meeting with the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, and speaking on Voice of America.<sup>207</sup> He also called on officials at the Department of State, the National Security Council, the Department of Defense, and the Office of the United States Trade Representative. Chu met with more and higher officials than Tsai Ing-wen when she visited.<sup>208</sup> The media described Chu's visit as important, yet not all of the details were disclosed, leading to some speculation that some very confidential issues were discussed.<sup>209</sup>

Subsequently the White House and the Department of State stated it gave equal status to Tsai and Chu and that it would not interfere in the coming election.<sup>210</sup> Given that the U.S. had previously favored the KMT, this was a significant change in policy.

On December 16, the Obama administration announced a new arms sales package to Taiwan worth \$1.83 billion. Coming before the election and far from the end of Obama's term in office, the sale was seen by some observers as both trying to provoke China and helping Tsai Ing-wen and the DPP.<sup>211</sup> Others said it was a win for the Ma administration, noting that total U.S. sales amounted to \$20 billion and that translated

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204. "Tsai falls short of US acceptance of her cross-strait position," *Want China Times*, July 24, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com.tw](http://wantchinatimes.com.tw)).

205. "Randall Schriver praises president's diplomatic efforts," *Taipei Times*, December 16, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

206. "US representatives hail S China Sea initiatives," *Taipei Times*, December 20, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

207. "KMT presidential candidate Chu starts US visit," *Taiwan Today*, November 10, 2015 (online at [taiwantoday.tw](http://taiwantoday.tw)).

208. "Eric Chu Meets Senior US Officials in Washington, D.C.," Kuomintang Official Website, November 13, 2015 (online at [kmt.org.tw](http://kmt.org.tw)).

209. "Details withheld as Eric Chu meets with US officials," *Taipei Times*, November 14, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

210. See "US maintains neutrality in Taiwan election: Washington," *China Post*, November 15, 2015 (online at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)).

211. William Lowther, "Arms sales indicate tacit acceptance of Tsai: report," *Taipei Times*, December 23, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)). Lowther calls it an "acceptance, if not endorsement" of Tsai.

into an average of \$2.5 billion per year compared to \$1.35 when LEE Teng-hui was president and \$1.05 during the CHEN Shui-bian years.<sup>212</sup>

However, U.S. other foreign analysts gave a different interpretation to the sale. The authors of a piece in the *Wall Street Journal* noted that the sale broke a hiatus of four years (the longest gap in weapons sales to Taiwan since the Taiwan Relations Act was passed in 1979) and did not include cutting edge weapons (such as a more advanced version of the F-16 fighter and help getting submarines as was promised in 2001); they concluded that the Obama administration had decided to exclude Taiwan from the U.S. Asian pivot.<sup>213</sup>

Two U.S. military/strategic policy experts wrote elsewhere that the arms package did not contain any high priority items for Taiwan and consideration of the next generation weapons would have to wait for the next U.S. administration in 2017 at the earliest. In the context of China's growing capabilities, including a marked increase in the number of short-range missiles it has aimed at Taiwan, they concluded the sale "fails to reflect the growing importance of Taiwan to U.S. strategy in Asia."<sup>214</sup>

Still, in the few weeks ahead of voting day in Taiwan Chairwoman Tsai and the DPP had reason to be optimistic about their connections with the U.S. At minimum they had good reason to expect Washington's neutrality during the last days of the campaign. From Washington's perspective much depended on the course of U.S.-China relations and how Tsai managed cross-Strait relations leading up to January 16 and afterwards.

## VII. THE CANDIDATES AND THE CAMPAIGN

In the immediate wake of the 2014 Nine-in-One election, Taiwan's two main parties set to work to pick their candidates for president, vice president, and the legislature (all seats being in contention). Selecting a presidential candidate was the first order of business. As it turned out, for the DPP this was an easy task; for the KMT it was not.

In mid-February, TSAI Ing-wen, announced she would put her name forward in the party's primary. Tsai spoke of her taking over the party's leadership in 2008 when the party's future looked dim, after which she quickly created a positive outlook among party members, and

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212. Joseph Yeh "Taiwan thanks US over latest arms sale," *The China Post*, December 18, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

213. "Punting on Taiwan's Security," *Wall Street Journal*, December 21, 2015 (online at wsj.com).

214. James A. Lyons, Jr. and Richard D. Fisher, "Strengthening Taiwan's defenses," *Washington Times*, December 21, 2015 (online at washingtontimes.com).

the DPP, under her leadership, won some election victories. She cited her resumption of the party's leadership again in 2014. Tsai alluded to her dream for Taiwan. She touted launching an "era of new politics" meaning transparency and honesty, greater public participation, tolerance, a clear division of power and responsibility, and protection of the national sovereignty that she said had suffered during the Ma presidency.<sup>215</sup>

At this juncture Tainan Mayor William Lai, who had been mentioned as a possible candidate, announced that he was not running. Tsai's nomination thus went unchallenged with a few caveats: Lai was supported by former presidential advisor KOO Kwang-ming and some other DPP stalwarts, including veteran DPP member HUANG Yung-tien and Kaohsiung Mayor CHEN Chu. They voiced concern that Tsai had lost two major election contests (the race for New Taipei City mayor in 2010 and the presidential election in 2012). Also, she was weak on the issue of Taiwan's independence.<sup>216</sup>

But very quickly opposition to Tsai faded and she became the standard bearer of the DPP that was unified behind her and determined to win the election. She also garnered support among some other opposition parties and various social and civic groups.

The KMT's "natural" candidate was Eric Chu, the only candidate for metropolitan mayor in 2014 that won election (reelection in this case) and who replaced President Ma as chairman of the KMT after the election. Chu was also the most popular among KMT possibles and arguably the most electable. However, Chu had vowed that he would serve out his term as mayor and, therefore, would not be a candidate for president. Several KMT leaders opined that there was still plenty of time to choose a candidate and that it could be done in May or June, and, furthermore, the party could "demand" that Chu accept the nomination.<sup>217</sup>

The KMT did have time; but as it turned out matters only got worse. Officially the choice of a presidential candidate was to be made by a party primary, the registration for which was to open on April 20 and close on May 16. In reality, however, public opinion polls and a vote by party members would decide: seventy percent weight being given to the former

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215. Loa lok-sin, "Tsai Ing-wen declares candidacy," *Taipei Times*, February 15, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

216. Huang Wen-huang, Wu Chen-feng and Chen Wei-han, "Supporters urge Lai to run in primary," *Taipei Times*, February 4, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)) and Lao lok-sin, "Lai's presidential chances assessed," *Taipei Times*, February 7, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)). Also see "William Lai encouraged to declare for 2016 presidential run," *Taiwan News*, February 5, 2015 (online at [taiwannews.com.tw](http://taiwannews.com.tw)).

217. Chen Yan-ting and Shih Hsiao-kuang, "KMT cagey on presidential candidate," *Taipei Times*, February 9, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

and thirty percent to the latter. The favorite contenders were Eric Chu; Speaker of the Legislative Yuan, WANG Jin-pyng; Vice President WU Den-yih; and former Taipei Mayor HAU Lung-bin.<sup>218</sup>

When the twenty-seven day period to register ended, none of the KMT's top guns had put forth his name. Wang and Wu both declared several times during this period that they would not run. KMT Chairman Chu stuck to his position. He said that the party could afford to lose the election but not a generation of voters or sacrifice its doctrines. Chu declared it was his first concern to get the party back on its feet. He dismissed speculation that he would not run because he knew that he would not win. President Ma said Chu should run and that if he were Chu he would.<sup>219</sup> In the meantime, two others, deputy legislative speaker HUNG Hsiu-chu and former health minister YANG Chih-liang, registered to run. But they were considered very much dark horses. The situation was obviously troubling for the KMT.<sup>220</sup>

The KMT's prospects for finding a viable presidential candidate worsened as days and weeks passed. A popular magazine in Taiwan, *Next*, reported that many KMT members vowed not to support Wang because in 2014 in violation of the law he had helped a DPP leader who was in trouble and that his fairly high poll numbers came from DPP members who wanted to see him run, but would not vote for him.<sup>221</sup> WU Den-yih was seen as having been too close to President Ma and as having done little as vice president. HAU Lung-bin was seen as less hopeful than the other three.

This served as the backdrop to the KMT's national party congress on July 19 and, by default, it nominated legislator HUNG Hsiu-chu as its presidential candidate. In her acceptance speech Hung cited intra-party strife and the challenge of maintaining Taiwan's economic competitiveness in the light of increasing globalization as problems that needed to be addressed. She promised, if elected, a fairer society that would transcend class, gender, ethnicity, and generations. She spoke of her being an "unlikely candidate" because of her family background, even mentioning the

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218. "KMT works to corral Chu into presidential primary," *Taipei Times*, April 28, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

219. Shih Hsiu-chuan, "KMT nominations close without Chu," *Taipei Times*, May 17, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

220. Yang Yi, "KMT might have to headhunt presidential candidate," *Want China Times*, May 15, 2015 (online at [wantchinatimes.com](http://wantchinatimes.com)).

221. Alison Hsiao, "KMT lacks clear leader as primary deadline looms," *Taipei Times*, May 14, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

fact her father had served three years in a maximum-security prison for political prisoners under KMT rule.<sup>222</sup>

Hung was an unusual candidate: the KMT's first female candidate for the presidency and the party's first legislator chosen as a presidential candidate. Previous candidates had come from the executive branch of government or from local governments. She thus had no executive experience to speak of. She also had little international experience, less than any presidential contender since CHEN Shui-bian. This was a handicap given that the KMT had often made issue of Chen's lack of such experience and associated it with his failed presidency.

Even more troubling, Hung was at odds with her party owing to her headstrong support of a peace treaty with China, her view of the 1992 Consensus (one China same interpretation versus different interpretations), and her in-your-face opposition to Taiwan independence. Observers explained that her less than mainstream views came from the fact Hung was elected to the legislature under the old Single Non-Transferrable Vote in Multi-Member Districts system that allowed (even encouraged) less moderate candidates, and later was chosen from the party list; both meant she did not have to appeal to a broad segment of the population during a campaign. Finally, she had been a member of the more traditional New KMT Alliance faction whose members broke from the KMT and formed the New Party in 1993, though she stayed with the KMT.<sup>223</sup>

In any event, Hung alienated many KMT members. As a consequence, party leaders forced Hung to accept their campaign platform; but by that time she had, to some degree, undermined the KMT's criticism of TSAI Ing-wen's status quo cross-Strait policy. This and her persistent low poll numbers engendered rumors that she would have to be replaced as the KMT's presidential candidate.<sup>224</sup>

In August, James Soong, head of the pan-blue People First party, announced he would be a candidate for the presidency. Soong stated that he would help the country "rise above political confrontation" and would strive to forge a consensus among political parties (recognizing the public's dissatisfaction with party politics). He also said he would maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait. His proclamations had resonance. Yet it also

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222. Yuan-ming Chao, "KMT give Hung's candidacy the OK," *China Post*, July 20, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

223. Dafydd Fell, "KMT's Presidential Nomination: Significance and Historical Comparisons," *China Policy Institute Blog* (University of Nottingham), July 23, 2015 (online at blogs.nottingham.ac.uk).

224. Alan D. Romberg, "Consolidating Positions," *China Leadership Monitor*, September 9, 2015 p. 3 (online at chinaleadershipmonitor.org).

appeared he would split the conservative vote and help TSAI Ing-wen win the election.<sup>225</sup>

In any event, Soong quickly passed Hung in the polls, thus further bringing her candidacy into question.<sup>226</sup> In fact, Soong's supporters called for a "dump Hung, save Soong" movement hoping the KMT would support Soong. But this didn't happen. Meanwhile observers opined Soong had entered the race not thinking seriously he would win, but rather calculating his campaign would help his party's candidates running for legislative seats.<sup>227</sup>

In the ensuing three months Hung's candidacy appeared less and less viable and as a consequence the KMT's hopes of winning the presidential election grew dimmer. Hung was unable to win favor with voters, as a host of opinion surveys indicated. Many KMT members lost faith in her and there grew fear that Hung might precipitate a party split.<sup>228</sup> In October, KMT chairman Eric Chu apologized to Hung for the failing campaign ahead of an effort to remove her as the party's candidate.<sup>229</sup> Days later the KMT held an emergency meeting and voted overwhelmingly to oust Hung and nominate Eric Chu the party's presidential candidate. However, it was uncertain if this would improve the KMT's chances to win the election.<sup>230</sup>

The saga did not end there. Making matters worse for the KMT, Taiwan's Special Investigative Division (of the Justice Department) began an investigation of a possible violation of Taiwan's election laws. DPP legislator CHEN Ting-fei then publically accused Eric Chu of political scheming that included offering money, a post-election position, and other enticements to get Hung to step down.<sup>231</sup>

225. "James Soong announces presidential bid," *China Post*, August 6, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw); Stacy Hsu, "James Soong declares presidential bid," *Taipei Times*, August 7, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

226. Russell Flannery, "Soong Debuts At No. 2 In Taiwan Presidential Poll, Shakes Up Important Race," *Forbes*, August 8, 2015 (online at forbes.com). The author cites a *United Daily News* poll that showed 24 percent support for Soong, 26 percent for Tsai, and only 12 percent supporting Hung.

227. Romberg, "Consolidating Positions," p. 3.

228. "Horses in midstream," *Economist*, October 24, 2015, p. 38.

229. "Stephanie Chao, "Chu says sorry to Hung over election," *China Post*, October 14, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

230. Certainly it did not have an immediate positive impact as many citizens felt the matter was not handled well. See Stacy Hsu, "Poll finds majority disagree with KMT ousting Hung," *Taipei Times*, October 9, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

231. Jason Pan, "SID to investigate KMT move to remove Hung," *Taipei Times*, October 14, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com.com).

Chairman Chu then apologized to the residents of New Taipei City for breaking his promise not to run for the presidency and took a three-month leave from his job. Chu spoke of this being the KMT's "darkest hour," but he also said that polarization might be turned into unity. In addition, he stated he had entered politics seventeen years earlier to ensure a better future for later generations and this was his goal now.<sup>232</sup> Chu then warned that if the DPP wins in January, "we will lose cross-strait peace."<sup>233</sup>

Based on Chu's more moderate China policy, his ability to campaign, and his considerable experience in government, some thought he had a good chance to win.<sup>234</sup> But the opinion polls taken in the weeks after Chu became the KMT's nominee did not bear this out. In one poll, 47.1 percent of respondents said they planned to vote for Tsai and only 16.4 percent favored Chu. Also most citizens still had a much better perception of the DPP than the KMT.<sup>235</sup>

Soon the presidential candidates picked their vice presidential running mates. TSAI Ing-wen selected CHEN Chien-jen, vice president of Academic Sinica from 2011. Eric Chu selected Jennifer Wang, a lawyer who had been head of the Council of Labor Affairs from 2008 to 2012. James Soong chose HSU Hsin-ying, who served as county councilor in Hsinchu and was elected to the legislature in 2012 (but withdrew from the KMT in January). Chu's choice was more problematic than the others, both owing to the fact he had contemplated picking another person and because Wang forthwith became the target of media criticism for her previous financial dealings.<sup>236</sup>

Oddly, none of the presidential candidates chose running mates from their own party. Moreover, all three chose vice presidential candidates of the opposite sex. This appeared to reflect concern about the low status of political parties among voters and for Chu and Soong the importance of appealing to female voters.

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232. Stacy Hsu, "Presidential Election: KMT's Eric Chu takes over campaign," *Taipei Times*, October 18, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

233. "Taiwan's embattled KMT ousts presidential candidate," Channel News Asia, October 17, 2015 (online at [channelnewsasia.com](http://channelnewsasia.com)).

234. "Taiwan's KMT party ditches Hung Hsiu-chu as candidate," BBC News, October 17, 2015 (online at [bbcnews.com](http://bbcnews.com)).

235. Stacy Hsu, "Chu fares worse than Hung in polls," *Taipei Times*, October 30, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)). Taiwan Indicators Survey Research took the poll.

236. Stacy Hsu, "Rumors rife over vice presidential picks," *Taipei Times*, November 16, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

The three presidential candidates, however, soon dominated the campaign. They differed in backgrounds and experience in a host of ways and offered disparate views on important issues.<sup>237</sup>

TSAI Ing-wen was born in southern Taiwan in 1956 to a well-to-do Hakka family. However, the family moved to Taipei when she was young. She graduated from the College of Law of National Taiwan University (Taiwan's foremost institution of higher learning). She went to the United States for further study and received an LLM degree from Cornell University. She went from there to the U.K. where she studied for and received a PhD degree from the London School of Economics. She then returned to Taiwan.

Tsai served on the Fair Trade Commission and the Copyright Commission under President LEE Teng-hui and was a consultant to the Mainland Affairs Council and the National Security Council. In 2000, President CHEN Shui-bian appointed her chairwoman of the Mainland Affairs Council. In this position she became well known in Taiwan. In 2004, she joined the DPP and became a party-appointed member of the legislature and in 2006, she was selected vice premier.

In 2008, Tsai was elected chairwoman of the DPP at a time when the party's fortunes look bleak. She literally turned the party around. In 2010, she was reelected chairwoman of the party with 90 percent of the vote. In November that year she ran for the position of New Taipei mayor, but lost. The defeat, however, did little if any damage to her career since the district was comprised of a majority of KMT voters.<sup>238</sup>

The next year she won her party's nomination to run for president in 2012—the first female to attain that honor from a major Taiwan political party. She was also a unique DPP candidate. She was regarded as a scholar that espoused moderate to conservative views and did not take a strong stance on Taiwan's independence. She was defeated in the election in large measure because of the still strong residual effect of the Chen presidency, the DPP's confused China policy, and her campaign's inability to make inroads into central and north Taiwan. In addition, the United States supported the KMT and was hostile toward her and the DPP. MA Ying-jeou won 51.6 percent of the popular vote; Tsai won

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237. For details on the candidates' backgrounds, see John F. Copper, *Historical Dictionary of Taiwan (Republic of China)* fourth edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman Littlefield, 2015); various issues of the Republic of China or Taiwan yearbooks published by the government in Taiwan; "The Upcoming Presidential Election in the Republic of China (Taiwan)," Portal of the Republic of China (Taiwan) Diplomatic Mission, January 13, 2016 (online at roc-taiwan.org). The Central Election Commission in Taiwan also carried information on the candidates on its website. See [engweb.cec.gov.tw](http://engweb.cec.gov.tw).

238. Copper, *Taiwan's 2010 Metropolitan City Elections*, pp. 49-50.

45.6 percent. Tsai admitted responsibility for the loss and resigned as head of the party. However, she remained popular with her party and generally throughout Taiwan.<sup>239</sup>

In 2014, she was reelected chairwoman of the DPP. At the end of the year she led the DPP to a stunning victory in the Nine-in-One collection of local elections. This gave the party confidence and momentum leading up to the campaign for the 2016 election. Most members of her party as well as most citizens gave her credit for the win.<sup>240</sup>

Eric Chu was born in Taiwan in 1961 to a prominent political family with KMT roots. He grew up in Taiwan and received his B.A. degree in management from National Taiwan University. After completing his compulsory military service he went to the U.S. for graduate education, receiving his M.A. degree in finance and PhD degree in accounting, both from New York University. He then taught at the City University of New York.

Chu subsequently returned to Taiwan to teach. But in 1998 he left his university to enter political life when he sought a seat in the legislature and won. In 2001, he ran for Taoyuan county magistrate taking the position formerly held by former Vice President Annette Lu. In 2005, he was reelected. From 2008 to 2009, he served concurrently as vice chairman of the KMT. In 2009, he was appointed vice premier, at age 48 the youngest person ever to serve in that office. In 2010, he was elected the first metropolitan mayor of the newly established New Taipei City (formerly Taipei County).

Winning election to the executive head of Taiwan's largest municipality and in the process defeating TSAI Ing-wen (with 52.6 percent of the vote compared to Tsai's 47.4 percent), Chu was deemed a rising star in the party.<sup>241</sup> In 2014, Chu was reelected, though by a small margin, while other KMT candidates for mayors of municipal cities lost. This led to his election (unopposed) to the chairmanship of the KMT in early 2015.

James Soong was born in Hunan Province in China in 1942. The family moved to Taiwan in 1949 when CHIANG Kai-shek's forces were defeated in the Chinese civil war. Soong earned his B.A. degree in diplomacy from National Chengchi University and went to the United States for further study. He received an M.A. from the University of Cal-

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239. Copper, *Taiwan's 2012 Presidential/Vice Presidential and Legislative Election*, pp. 73-77.

240. Copper, *Taiwan's 2014 Nine-In-One Election*, pp. 79-81.

241. Copper, *Taiwan's 2010 Metropolitan City Elections*, p. 49

ifornia at Berkeley and a PhD from Georgetown, both degrees in political science.

Soong returned to Taiwan and served as President CHIANG Ching-kuo's interpreter. In 1979, he was appointed Director General of the Government Information office where he served until 1984. He became a popular figure in Taiwan at this time. He then served as head of the KMT's Department of Cultural Affairs from 1984 to 1987. In 1988, upon President CHIANG Ching-kuo's death, Vice President LEE Teng-hui assumed the presidency at which time Soong openly and aggressively (especially given Soong's age) supported Lee against KMT members that did not trust him because he was Taiwanese. President Lee subsequently appointed Soong governor of Taiwan (province).

When the position of governor of Taiwan became an elected one, Soong ran and won—with President Lee's support. However, the two subsequently became estranged and in 1999, when Soong sought the KMT's nomination to run for president, Lee supported his vice president, LIEN Chan, even though Soong was way ahead of Lien as well as the DPP's CHEN Shui-bian in public opinion polls. Soong then ran as an independent. This split the conservative vote allowing Chen to win the election.<sup>242</sup>

In 2004, Soong ran as LIEN Chan's vice presidential candidate, but the two were defeated in a successful reelection bid by President Chen (though Lien and Soong were ahead in the polls and it appeared they would win until Chen was shot by an assailant just before voting day). In 2006, Soong ran for Taipei mayor and in 2012 ran for president against MA Ying-jeou. He was not successful in either race.

In mid-December 2015, the Central Election Commission arranged three public debates for the presidential and vice presidential candidates. The first was for the vice-presidential candidates on Saturday December 26. The second and third were presidential debates scheduled for December 27 and January 2. Nine media outlets sponsored the debates.<sup>243</sup>

During the two and one-half hour vice presidential candidates' televised debate, the contestants focused on a range of issues: stagnant wages, high housing prices, long-term care for the elderly, disease prevention, education, and the low wages of women. The three were able to ask

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242. Copper, *Taiwan's 2000 Presidential and Vice Presidential Election*, pp. 53-54.

243. "Schedule set for presidential debates," *Focus Taiwan*, December 18, 2015 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)).

questions of each other including about their presidential running mates and take questions from the audience.<sup>244</sup>

There were few sparks during the debate. In fact, the three candidates agreed on a number of issues. All advocated reform and changes in government. All said that Taiwan's citizens should decide its future. The debate certainly was not expected to change many voters' minds.<sup>245</sup>

In contrast, the two presidential debates saw more lively presentations on issues and a clear delineation of views and platforms among the three candidates. The main issues discussed during the debate were the economy, relations with China and the United States, and the candidates' leadership and vision. Specific issues included the 92 Consensus, "one China," the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, Taiwan's industries moving to China (referred to as "hollowing out"), the "red supply chain" (production networking with China), food safety, and education.<sup>246</sup>

TSAI Ing-wen restated her position that she sought to maintain the status quo in cross-strait relations, although she said the 92 Consensus was "an option and not Taiwan's only option." She asserted that Taiwan should develop a "national team" to support industries that had to compete with those countries that had government support (meaning mainly China), and diplomacy based on a stronger economy and democracy. Boasting of her leadership abilities she cited the cohesiveness of the DPP in contrast to the fractured KMT.<sup>247</sup>

Eric Chu spoke of the importance of economic ties with China and amicable cross-strait relations so that Taiwan could expand its economic ties elsewhere. He stated that Taiwan should stick to the 92 Consensus. He advocated that Taiwan pursue free trade and the economy remain open. He talked of Taiwan needing confidence in pursuing its diplomacy. He said he had helped make the KMT a "democratic party" where various ideas could be expressed, in contrast to a DPP that was dominated by the "Ing faction" (meaning TSAI Ing-wen).<sup>248</sup>

James Soong presented himself as not being bound by either of the two major parties and thus as having a clear and meaningful vision for

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244. "Vice presidential debate," *Focus Taiwan*, December 26, 2015 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)); Allison Hsiao, "TV debate held for vice presidential candidates," *Taipei Times*, December 27, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)); "Vice presidential debate," *Focus Taiwan*, December 26, 2015 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)).

245. "VP hopefuls align on political reform," *China Post*, December 27, 2015 (online at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)).

246. "How Taiwan's presidential candidates responded to debate questions," *Asia Times*, January 2, 2015 (online at [atimes.com](http://atimes.com)).

247. *Ibid.*

248. *Ibid.*

Taiwan. On several major issues he took a middle ground position. For example, on the matter of one China he supported keeping the title of Republic of China while pushing for the autonomy of the people of Taiwan. Diplomatic success, he said, depended on good relations with China and mutual trust. He boasted that among the three candidates he had the most experience in politics and had the ability deal with both parties (since if elected he would have to form a coalition government).<sup>249</sup>

For Eric Chu the debates afforded an opportunity to present his views and correct misperceptions of him and the KMT. Chu needed to change the commonly held view that he and the KMT had been pushing “production over distribution” and “capitalists over workers.” Because Chu and his party were perceived to favor the rich over the middle class and the poor, he promised to increase taxes on the wealthy in order to lower taxes on others. He also pledged he would deal with the generation gap.<sup>250</sup>

Chu hoped to capitalize on the fact that he was a very skilled debater and could best TSAI Ing-wen. In fact, prior to the debates Chairwoman Tsai stated that debates and public performances were not her strong suits, though she said she had been preparing for weeks.<sup>251</sup> After the debate, observers opined that Chu had won the debate from the presentation point of view. But Tsai’s careful planning and Soong’s well-honed debate skills prevented Chu from “capturing the moment.”<sup>252</sup>

Since Tsai did not perform badly, meaning she made no real blunders, it was difficult to imagine that Chu could dramatically change public opinion that had favored Tsai and the DPP by a big margin for some time. Hence, one would conclude that the debates had limited impact. Tsai’s weak point, in Chu’s estimation, was her vague stance on the 92 Consensus. Tsai, when question about this, repeated her position that she would “respect public opinion and democratic mechanisms to promote cross-strait relations within the current Republic of China system.” While her position was still unclear, it ostensibly satisfied a majority of voters. Meanwhile, Tsai’s attack on Chu for his unclear “one Taiwan” concept and her criticism of him for the fact the KMT had not engaged in “some hard introspection” had resonance.<sup>253</sup>

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249. Ibid.

250. “Taiwan presidential election: Can KMT’s Eric Chu debate his way to more votes?” *Asia Times*, January 5, 2016 (online at atimes.com).

251. “Different approaches planned for upcoming debates,” *China Post*, December 21, 2015 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

252. See “Taiwan Election held,” YouTube, December 26, 2015 (online at youtube.com).

253. “EDITORIAL: Debates are for show, not reality,” *Taipei Times*, December 29, 2015 (online at taipeitimes.com).

Clearly the debate produced no winners and losers. After it was over, the campaign resumed its prior track.

Little happened that was of consequence during the last two weeks of the campaign. There was no surprising event as there had been in 2004, CHEN Shui-bian and Annette Lu being shot, to change the results of the voting. Campaigning proceeded as it had been. Hence, it was pretty certain to most observers what the outcome of the election would be.

### VIII. THE ELECTION RESULTS

Voting began early in the morning of January 16. For voters the casting of balloting took some time since 18 political parties were competing for 34 at-large seats in the Legislative Yuan, the largest number ever. Also there were three ballots (one to vote for president, one to choose a constituency legislator, and one to support a political party—the latter some 73 centimeters long in some districts).<sup>254</sup> Nevertheless, by the time the polls closed enough ballots had been tallied that the results were readily apparent.

At 7 p.m., Chu apologized to his supporters for failing to live up to their expectations. He stated that he must shoulder the blame and promised to resign as chairman of the KMT. He further said he respects the electorate's decision and hoped Tsai and the DPP would "steer the nation toward a brighter and happier future."<sup>255</sup>

James Soong also conceded defeat. He stated he hoped Tsai would keep her campaign promises. He asserted that peace is what people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and around the world want and "the ball is now in the DPP's court."<sup>256</sup>

President Ma declared that the election was testament to the democratic achievements of Taiwan and the Republic of China's constitutional framework. He went on to say: "I expect the new president to continue upholding the current state of peace and prosperity across the Taiwan Strait."<sup>257</sup>

Premier Mao then announced he would step down. He stated: "A new public consensus has been formed with the ending of the last weekend's elections." He went on: "In respect of this, and to also ensure the

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254. "18 political parties vying for 34 at-large legislative seats," Central News Agency, January 2, 2015 (online at focustaiwan.tw).

255. Loa lok-sin, Stacy Hsu and Abraham Gerber, "ELECTIONS: Madam President," *Taipei Times*, January 17, 2016 (online at taipeitimes.com).

256. Ibid.

257. "Tsai Ing-wen wins 2016 ROC presidential election," *Taiwan Today*, January 17, 2016 (online at taiwannewstoday.com).

smooth execution of future government matters, I have tendered my resignation to the president and have announced a Cabinet reshuffle.”<sup>258</sup>

At an international news conference at 8:30 that evening, TSAI Ing-wen formally announced her victory. She thanked her rivals and promised cross-party collaboration. She said Chu and Soong had upheld democratic values during both the campaign. Tsai promised to work with the current government to “complete the power transition with the purpose of maintaining political stability.” She didn’t chide or taunt the other side.<sup>259</sup>

In fact, president-elect Tsai quickly turned to her and the DPP’s responsibilities. She spoke of working on reforms and maintaining stability. She said she would honor her promises about cross-strait relations and vowed “communicating with no provocations or accidents.” She called on members of the DPP and those who would be joining her administration to “be humble, humble, and humble.”<sup>260</sup>

Others, however, chose to talk more about the utter defeat of the KMT, the significance of the Tsai/DPP victory, and how Taiwan would henceforth be different—better. Many wanted to enjoy the glory of the election win. Some saw it as an opportunity for revenge. Most viewed it as historic.

Tsai’s supporters met at the DPP’s headquarters to express their glee about the election results and to congratulate Tsai and her running mate CHEN Chien-jen. Some carried placards. One read: “Taiwan would not be good if the KMT had not gone down.” Another: “Tsai is Asia’s Angela Merkel.” Many chanted *zongtong hao* (greetings president). In a milieu of yelling, cheering, waving flags, blowing horns, and exploding fireworks, Tsai told the crowd: “I’ve said that I would sacrifice my life to make you happy and now I have kept my promise.” She further stated: “Let’s welcome a new age of Taiwan with joy.”<sup>261</sup>

An editorial writer for the pro-DPP *Taipei Times* summarized the significance of the election and explained why the DPP victory happened. First, he said the successful transfer of power had become routine, which meant Taiwan’s democracy rested on a strong foundation. Second, Taiwan reached a milestone in electing a female president thus breaking the “female glass ceiling.” Third, the KMT was relegated to the status of

258. Stephanie Chao, “Premier, Cabinet step down in masse,” *China Post*, January 19, 2016 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

259. Loa et al, “ELECTIONS: Madam President.”

260. Ibid.

261. Loa lok-sin, “ELECTIONS: Ecstatic crowd welcomes president-elect Tsai,” *Taipei Times*, January 17, 2016 (online at taipeitimes.com).

an opposition party due to its inferior policies, its disconnect from the public, internal power struggles, its nomination of flawed candidates, and its pursuing party reforms that did not work. Fourth, some smaller parties did well. The Corporal HUNG Chung-chiu case and the Sunflower Movement that mobilized the nation's youth which helped speed up social reform explain this. Fifth, President Ma overreached in pursuing ties with China to Taiwan's disadvantage. Ma's strategy, he wrote, was to move toward the international community through China; in contrast the DPP's strategy was, and is, to move toward China through the international community.<sup>262</sup>

Writers at the *South China Morning Post* in Hong Kong suggested four reasons for the KMT loss: poor handling of the economy, failing to win over young voters, party infighting, and policy flips on key domestic issues.<sup>263</sup> Other pundits and observers agreed but cited still other reasons: the KMT was an aging party, the "spirit of democracy" eluded Ma and his party, KMT officials were arrogant, HUNG Hsiu-chu was not a good candidate, Eric Chu entered the race too late, and top KMT leaders did not sincerely examine the party's deficiencies and correct them.<sup>264</sup> One writer also mentioned the KMT's relationship with local factions and the network of local party branches had not functioned well.<sup>265</sup>

How big were Tsai and the DPP's wins? The final results were as follows: Tsai and her vice presidential running mate won 6.89 million votes, or 56.12 percent of the popular vote. Eric Chu and his running mate took 3.81 million votes or 31.04 percent of the votes cast. James Soong won 1.58 million or 12.84 percent. The DPP's candidates defeated Eric Chu and his running mate by 3.08 million votes. They won more votes than the two conservative or pan-blue party candidates combined.<sup>266</sup> Tsai and her running mate won in districts that were KMT strongholds.<sup>267</sup> They won in all counties and municipalities except

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262. "EDITORIAL: A historic day for politics in Taiwan," *Taipei Times*, January 17, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

263. Gloria Chan and Nectar Gan, "Four key reasons Kuomintang lost the Taiwan election," *South China Morning Post*, January 17, 2016 (online at [scmp.com](http://scmp.com)).

264. See "Why the KMT LOST the Election in Taiwan, YouTube (video), January 10, 2016 (online at [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)); "EDITORIAL: Defeated, outdated KMT faces crisis," *Taipei Times*, January 28, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)); "Bret Hinsch, "Ma Ying-jeou's accidental presidency," *Taipei Times*, February 18, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

265. Wang Yeh-lin, "Analyzing the KMT's meltdown," *Taipei Times*, January 26, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

266. "Tsai Ing-wen wins 2016 ROC presidential election," *Taiwan Today*, January 17, 2016 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)).

267. For details see data provided by the Central Election Commission on its website at [engweb.cec.gov.tw](http://engweb.cec.gov.tw)

Hualien, Taitung, Lienchiang, and Kinmen—18 in total compared to Chu's four. Tsai even won in New Taipei City where Chu was mayor.<sup>268</sup> In short their election victory was huge.

The results of the legislative election were almost the same. The DPP won 68 of the 113 seats in that body for a comfortable majority. (57 seats constitute a majority.) The KMT won but 35 seats (compared to 64 it held before the election). More specifically the DPP won 49 electoral district seats, 18 at-large seats, and one lowland Aborigine seat (compared to 27, 13 and zero they won in the 2012 election). Of the at-large seats (which represents the party vote) the DPP took 18 and the KMT 11. The People First Party and the New Power Party won two and three respectively. The percentage vote of the four was 44.06, 26.91, 6.52 and 6.11. The DPP's win was decisive, giving it a majority in the lawmaking body of government for the first time ever.<sup>269</sup>

Among the third parties, only the People First Party (PFP) and the New Power Party (NPP) won enough party votes (five percent) to obtain at-large seats. The PFP won a larger portion of party votes; but the NPP won district seats giving it a larger representation in the Legislative Yuan. Five parties won enough votes (at least 3.5 percent) to qualify for government subsidies amounting to NT\$50 (US\$1.49) for each vote received for the next four years. Neither the New Party nor the Taiwan Solidarity Union won any seats.<sup>270</sup> The TSU (with only 2.5 percent of the vote) discussed disbanding after the election.<sup>271</sup>

The third parties did not perform well enough to challenge the DPP's new hold on political power. This indicates that Tsai's concern about the new political parties precluding the DPP from winning a majority in the legislature was unfounded. Yet, there are some other facts to consider. There were many vote splitters. A full 29 percent of voters cast ballots in the party preference part of the election for one of the 16 minor parties—3.5 million out 12.2 million party ballots cast. Nearly 2 million citizens voted for parties left out of the cohort of winners of legislative

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268. "ELECTIONS: Changing political landscape," *Taipei Times*, January 17, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

269. Allison Hsiao, "ELECTIONS: DPP secures absolute majority in Legislative Yuan," *Taipei Times*, January 17, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)). Also see "DPP takes ROC Legislature for first time," *Taiwan Today*, January 17, 2015 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)). The DPP was the largest party in the Legislative Yuan from 2000 to 2004, but it did not have an absolute majority; that was owned by the KMT and the PFP combined, meaning the DPP and its allies did not control the legislature.

270. *Ibid.*

271. Chang Hsiao-ti and Jonathan Chin, "TSU considering disbanding after election loss," *Taipei Times*, January 20, 2015 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

seats. This does not suggest the smaller parties are dead or that there is no longer anti-political party sentiment among voters.<sup>272</sup>

Some observers also mentioned the status of independent politicians, such as Taipei Mayor Ko. In fact, there had been talk of a “Ko effect.” There were also a number of “maverick” candidates that won election. This gave rise to speculation on whether candidates’ political views may outweigh their party affiliation in future elections.<sup>273</sup> This suggests the two-party system may not be as solid as it seemed. Finally, there were palpable sentiments of aloofness among voters who were arguably suffering from “voter fatigue” and/or doubt that the two major parties’ core issues, independence and unification, were the “call” of common people.<sup>274</sup>

What happened to the so-called “legislative races to watch”? A number of candidates who were not expected to win did win. The explanation is easy: some were simply attractive (or charismatic) to voters or they campaigned very well. But some were also anti-establishment or “third force” candidates. Some won with a small percentage of the votes due to multiple candidates running in some districts. In some cases party loyalty and/or discipline were missing.<sup>275</sup>

In any event, the makeup of the new legislature is different in some notable ways. It has 43 females, 5 more than the previous legislature. (Taiwan now ranks tenth in the world in the proportion of women in the national legislature.) The new legislature is younger: those aged 30 to 39 rose from 8 to 11. There is one member that is less than 30 years old (before there was none). Those over age 60 dropped in number from 25 to 18. There are 54 that challenged incumbents and won. Voters elected seven percent Aborigines (who are but 1.5 percent of the population) to the lawmaking body of government. However, the level of education declined: There were 27 in the old legislature that held PhD degrees; now there are 20.<sup>276</sup>

The level of seniority was dramatically reduced by this election. The 19 KMT incumbents who lost had 68 terms of seniority collectively;

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272. Kevin Hsu, “What Happened to the Votes for the Minor Parties?” Ketagalan Media, January 23, 2016 (online at ketagalanmedia.com).

273. Yuan-Ming Chiao, “Is ‘change’ the new normal in politics in Northern Taiwan,” *China Post*, January 11, 2016 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

274. George Liao, “Taiwanese voters grow more aloof: media,” *Taiwan News*, January 10, 2016 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

275. “What Happened to the Legislative Races to Watch?” Ketagalan Media, February 1, 2016 (online at ketagalanmedia.com).

276. “Taiwan’s legislature to be younger, more female,” *Taipei Times*, January 31, 2016 (online at taipeitimes.com). Also see David Prentice, “Tsai’s Victory Speech Hails in New Era of Democracy,” Ketagalan Media, January 21, 2016 (online at ketagalanmedia.com).

non-KMT challengers that had only a total of 6 terms of service took their seats. The 24 KMT candidates who won district or indigenous seats have but a total of 48 terms of seniority. Thus, some referred to one result of the election being a “new generation of politics.”<sup>277</sup>

One piece of less than good news: voter turnout in this election was a record low since the enacting of a direct presidential and vice presidential election system. The rate was 66.27 for the presidential part of the election. For voting for the district seats of the legislative election it was 66.58 percent; for the party or at-large vote it was 66.25 percent.<sup>278</sup> This appeared to reflect a growing disenchantment with politics in Taiwan, even its democracy, and/or with party politics. Alternatively it mirrored Taiwan's maturing democracy.

There were, however, other explanations. In part causing the low voter turnout (and also affecting the election results though not the fact Tsai and the DPP won) was the fact that a number of likely or potential KMT voters chose to stay at home and not vote yet they did not want to vote for DPP or other candidates. In fact, the number by some estimates may have been as high as one million.<sup>279</sup>

Another factor was that not many of the one or two million people from Taiwan living in China (some say as many as four million, certainly a number that has been growing fast), who have been, and presumably still are, mainly KMT supporters, did not return to vote.<sup>280</sup> Using the lower figure (one million) and assuming most are adults, this could mean 10 percent of the electorate. The media in Taiwan reported that the number of returned voters was not large compared to previous elections. Also, the number of flights and the seats on the airplanes going back and forth had not increased thus confirming the view that a large number of voters residing in China were missing. One might assume that since the large majority of these potential voters favored the KMT and they were disillusioned or thought the KMT had little chance of winning, so they

277. Wang, “A ‘Green’ Legislature.”

278. “Voter turnout was lowest since 1996,” *Taipei Times*, January 18, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

279. “Jiao bu chu men, lan ying bai wan xuen piao xiao xi le, “ (Blue camp one million voters vanished) Yahoo News, January 17, 2015 (online at [yahoo.com](http://yahoo.com)). Also see Kyle Churchman, “The Real Surprise in Taiwan's Election,” *National Interest*, January 20, 2016 (online at [nationalinterest.org](http://nationalinterest.org)). The author states that Eric Chu got in the race specifically to protect the KMT's position in the legislature and that his vice presidential running mate was to help accomplish this; but that effort failed and many KMT voters stayed home.

280. See Linette Lim, “Taiwan's upcoming elections: Why they matter,” Channel News Asia, January 8, 2016 (online at [channelnewsasia.com](http://channelnewsasia.com)). The writer states that several days before the election only 2,217 Taiwanese had registered to vote compared to over 10,000 in 2004.

did not choose to return. Finally, Chinese authorities did not do much to persuade them to go back to vote.

How does this square with the fact that opinion polls during the few months before the election predicted the results consistently and accurately?<sup>281</sup> Those who chose not to vote may have had this intent much earlier and expressed this to pollsters. The no-shows from China were not factored in since those taking polls did so only in Taiwan. Thus, the polls were accurate considering their stated parameters.

During the campaign, the gambler's odds did not offer predictions that differed much from the pollsters. Anyway the odds were not widely known to the public since the government cracked down on the gamblers' activities and made arrests during the campaign and this dominated media reporting rather than their predictions.<sup>282</sup>

The government also cracked down on vote buying. Vote buying has long been a factor in Taiwan's elections though it has been less a problem in recent years.<sup>283</sup> Ballots, by regulation, are kept from the view of others and many voters do not do as they are instructed or as they are paid to vote; thus the effectiveness of vote buying has been in question. Finally, special efforts were made ahead of this election to prevent vote buying.<sup>284</sup>

Some "special" candidates running for Legislative Yuan seats deserve mention. HUANG Kuo-chang, HUNG Tsu-yung and Freddy Lim representing the NPP all won in traditional KMT strongholds.<sup>285</sup> Huang was a former professor of law at Academia Sinica and one of the leaders of the Sunflower Movement. Hung is the sister of HUNG Chung-chiu,

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281. See "Taiwanese general election, 2016," *Wikipedia* (viewed January 2, 2016) (online at wikipedia.org).

282. "Biggest gambling website busted by Taiwan police," *China Post*, January 6, 2016 (online at chinapost.com.tw) and Jason Pan, "Election-related crime crackdown nets 1,796," *Taipei Times*, January 14, 2016 (online at taipeitimes.com). The latter reported 1,044 cases. This writer asked a number of people in Taiwan if they had heard of the betters' odds on the election and they had not. Information was put online but unlike during previous elections campaigns the media did not report it very much.

283. See I-Chou Liu, "Campaigning in an SNTV System: The Case of the Kuomintang in Taiwan," in Bernard Grofman, Sung-chull Lee, Edwin Winkler and Brian Woodall, *Elections in Japan, Korea and Taiwan: A Comparative Study of an Embedded Institution* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999), p. 199. Liu states that vote buying is to a large degree an effort to get voters to go to the polls and vote and that many voters take money or gifts offered only when they are going to vote for the person the giver wants them to anyway. Also see Fell, *Government and Politics in Taiwan*, p. 75. Fell notes that vote buying is in decline though it is used as a technique to smear the opposing party or candidate.

284. "Anti-vote buying task force set up in Taipei ahead of election," *Want China Times*, August 8, 2015 (online at wantchinatimes.com.tw).

285. Hsiao, "ELECTIONS: DPP secures absolute majority in Legislative Yuan."

the soldier who died during training in 2013 causing mass protest and a demand for military reform. Lim is a singer, an ardent advocate of Taiwan's independence, and the founder of the New Power Party. Former premier SU Tseng-chang's daughter, SU Chiao-hui, won a legislative seat in New Taipei's fifth district with 56 percent of the vote representing the DPP.<sup>286</sup> HSIAO Bi-khim (who is Eurasian of an American mother and who had been President CHEN Shui-bian's interpreter, won a legislative seat in Hualien with 53.8 percent of the votes in a four-person race even though TSAI Ing-wen got only 37 percent of the vote there. One of the candidates she defeated, she had lost to in the previous election.<sup>287</sup> HAU Long-bin, former Taipei mayor and earlier considered a possible KMT candidate for president, lost his bid to represent Keelung. CHIANG Kai-shek's great grandson, CHIANG Wan-an, won a seat in the legislature representing the KMT.<sup>288</sup> LIN Li-chan, who was born in Cambodia and married a man from Taiwan 18 years earlier, won a seat for the KMT.<sup>289</sup>

Shortly after the results of the election were announced the United States officially congratulated Tsai and the DPP. However, the State Department message also included congratulations to the people of Taiwan for "once again demonstrating the strength of their robust democratic system" and mentioned a "profound interest in the continuation of cross-strait peace and stability." The message even thanked President MA Ying-jeou for developing a strong partnership with the United States and applauded him for improving cross-strait ties.<sup>290</sup>

Subsequently a number of members of the U.S. Congress sent messages of congratulations and/or support. Edward Royce, chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, promised to strengthen security relations and garner support for Taiwan to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement. Former chairwoman, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, dispatched a letter to TSAI Ing-wen describing Taiwan as a "beacon of freedom." Others, including members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, made

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286. George Liao, "Former premier's daughter wins seat in legislature," *Taiwan News*, January 16, 2016 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

287. "DPP's Hsiao Bi-khim wins legislative seat in Hualien (update)," *Taiwan News*, January 16, 2016 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

288. Brian Hioe, "Who are the Winners and Losers of the 2016 Elections in legislature," *New Bloom Magazine*, January 17, 2016 (online at newbloommagazine.net).

289. Amber Wang, "Foreign bride from Cambodia to make history in Taiwan election," *Asia Times*, January 8, 2016 (online at atimes.com).

290. "On Taiwan's Election," (statement by John Kirby, Spokesperson, Bureau of Public Affairs) Department of State, January 16, 2016 (online at state.gov). Also see William Ide, "Taiwan Elects First Female President," *Voice of America*, January 16, 2016 (online at voanews.com).

similar statements.<sup>291</sup> While campaigning in the coming presidential election, U.S. Republicans Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz issued statements of support for Taiwan. Hillary Clinton did not.<sup>292</sup>

The Obama administration was uncharacteristically quiet about the election, odd given what appeared to be a profound change of policy and support for Tsai and the DPP during the campaign and even talk, in the context of strained U.S.-China relations over China's activities in the South China Sea, China's currency devaluations, and cyber-attacks on the U.S., the effect Obama was playing the "Taiwan card" against China.<sup>293</sup>

But other evidence suggested something different. Washington sent a representative to Taiwan following the election, former Deputy Secretary of State, Bill Burns, currently president of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace. Burns met with both president-elect Tsai and President Ma. Also, at this time it was reported current Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken would visit Beijing.<sup>294</sup> Some pundits opined the White House had adopted a stance of negligible, if any, involvement of Taiwan in Washington's "rebalance" policy in Asia because of concerns over China's reaction.<sup>295</sup> Finally it was disclosed that it was unlikely the U.S. would sell advanced fighter planes to Taiwan in the next decade.<sup>296</sup>

Nevertheless, president-elect Tsai promised U.S. officials that she would continue to cultivate close relations with the United States and would strive to maintain peace and stability in the region. In the immediate wake of the election Tsai dispatched DPP Secretary-General Joseph Wu, who had been Taiwan's representative to Washington from 2007 to 2008, to the U.S. to reassure American officials of her intent to pursue a pro-U.S. policy and maintain stable relations with China.<sup>297</sup>

Japan sent an official note of congratulations to Tsai on her victory. The Foreign Ministry also issued an official statement saying the Abe government looked forward to "deepening cooperation." Chief Cabinet

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291. William Lowther, "Result message to China: ex-AIT chief," *Taipei Times*, January 18, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

292. David Feith, "A Troubling U.S. Silence on Taiwan," *Wall Street Journal*, January 21, 2016 (online at [wsj.com](http://wsj.com)).

293. Ibid.

294. "AIT confirms ex-US official's visit following election," *China Post*, January 16, 2016 (online at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)).

295. William Lowther, "US policy limits Taiwan's role in 'rebalance,'" *Taipei Times*, January 22, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

296. Ibid.

297. "Senior DPP official set to visit U.S. after Jan. 16 polls," *China Post*, January 7 2016 (on line at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)) and "Tsai woos US with stability vow," *Taipei Times*, January 19, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

Secretary, Yoshihide Suga, reiterated Japan's support for Taiwan to join the TPP. The explanation for Japan's unusually cordial response was this: The DPP has fonder feelings toward Japan than the KMT while its culture reflects more Japanese influence. TSAI Ing-wen visited Japan in October and cemented close ties with leaders of the ruling Japanese Liberal Democratic Party and top government leaders.<sup>298</sup> Last but not least, some said it was a reaction to Japan's strained relations with China.

A host of other countries sent messages of compliments to Tsai and the DPP. Most commented in a positive way about Taiwan's democracy and its first woman president. But many also expressed concern about the new government maintaining peace with China and advised caution and constraint.<sup>299</sup>

China's immediate reaction to the Tsai/DPP victory was not as unwelcoming as many had expected. However, initial comment was sparse. Yet, there was some casting of blame. GONG Qinggai, the deputy head of Taiwan Affairs Office was reportedly under investigation for "serious violations of discipline."<sup>300</sup> President Xi may have been dissatisfied with the office because of the Tsai and the DPP's win, or may have used the election as a reason to inspect this office.<sup>301</sup> On the other hand, there was blogging on the Internet and elsewhere to the effect that the party Beijing wanted to win did not, that the KMT had not performed well so lost the election, and even that a change of parties was a good thing.<sup>302</sup>

The Chinese government through Xinhua News Agency subsequently warned Tsai and the DPP that its determination to protect China's sovereignty was "hard as a rock" and it would resolutely oppose any secessionist activities. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs then issued a statement on the election saying the Taiwan issue is an internal matter. It went on to state that there is only one China and China's sovereignty and territorial integrity will not be broken up. But this position had been stated many times before and was cited before the election.

A few days later, an army unit stationed in the city of Xiamen across the Taiwan Strait from Taiwan conducted live fire exercises and

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298. Ayumi Teraoka, "What's Next for Japan-Taiwan Relations," Council on Foreign Relations, January 19, 2016 (online at cfr.org).

299. "Nations congratulate Tsai, stress cross-Strait relations," *China Post*, January 18, 2016 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

300. "China warns on Taiwan independence after election," Channel News Asia, January 16, 2016 (online at channelnewsasia.com).

301. Christopher Bodeen, "China's Taiwan office deputy head under investigation," Associated Press, January 20, 2016 (online at news.yahoo.com).

302. Didi Kirsten Tatlow, "China Largely Shrugs at Shake-Up After Taiwan Elections," *New York Times*, January 18, 2016 (online at nyt.com).

landing drills. However, the Ministry of National Defense declined specific comment on the matter and said a CCTV report gave an “exaggerated and false report” by using footage of an exercise conducted a year earlier. Apparently the military wanted to do something to show force and top officials in Beijing allowed that.<sup>303</sup> Taiwan subsequently conducted small military drills on the Offshore Islands, very near China, but Beijing did not respond.<sup>304</sup>

Later, a Chinese admiral, LOU Yuan, was quoted in the media saying, “war is inevitable if Taiwan keeps pushing for independence” though he tempered that comment adding that “we will respect public opinion” (meaning opinion in both China and Taiwan). But Lou’s position in the navy was not one that made his statement seriously threatening.<sup>305</sup> On another front, it was reported that China was cutting the number of tourists going to Taiwan by one-third to one-half ahead of TSAI Ing-wen assuming the presidency and that this would affect Taiwan’s economy.<sup>306</sup>

The following week China’s Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) stated that its policy toward Taiwan would remain unchanged following the national elections in Taiwan. LONG Mingpu, deputy director of TAO added: “Following elections for the leader of the ‘Taiwan Region’ . . . relations will become more complicated. But . . . our larger Taiwan policy will remain unchanged.”<sup>307</sup>

In sum, China did not act rashly or seriously threaten Taiwan after the election. Its stance was one of wait and see.

## IX. CONCLUSIONS AND FORECASTS

To reach meaningful conclusions about Taiwan’s 2016 election—the campaign, the results of the balloting, and its implications—it is necessary to reexamine the election theories cited earlier, consider other as-

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303. “In wake of Taiwan elections, Chinese TV reports PLA live-fire drill,” *Economist*, January 21, 2016 (online at economist.com).

304. Johnson Lai, “Taiwan stages military drills on island off Chinese coast,” Associated Press, January 26, 2016 (online at newsyahoo.com).

305. Zheping Huang, “War with China is inevitable if Taiwan keeps pushing for independence, a Chinese general says,” Quartz, January 26, 2016 (online at quartz.com). Since Lou position was in a “civil research group” he probably had no direct influence on military decisions.

306. Yuan-Ming Chao, “Chinese visitors may drop by 1/2: reports,” *China Post*, January 23, 2016 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

307. Yuan-Ming Chiao, “Policy toward Taiwan ‘unchanged,’ say the mainland authorities,” *China Post*, January 27, 2016 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

assessments, judge the short-term and long-term effects of the election, and forecast the success (or failure) of Taiwan's new leadership.

First, there is the pocketbook theory. There is little doubt that the economy weighed heavily on voters. Before and during the campaign there were serious concerns, even worries, on the minds of citizens about the economy and considerable loss of confidence in the KMT about managing it. Tsai and the DPP won (or the KMT lost) the argument about who could best fix Taiwan's economic problems. In other words, the economic theory of who wins elections goes far in explaining the results of this election.

But this demands further elaboration. The truth is that the Ma administration's economic performance in its eight years at the helm was nearly the same as that of the previous (CHEN Shui-bian) administration. In terms of the average growth in the GDP it was very close. The setbacks were also similar. Both administrations were affected very adversely by global recessions. In fact, what Ma faced was worse than that which had impacted the Chen administration. Moreover, Chen's problems were in large measure of his own making since he hurt economic growth by his stance (and actions) on nuclear energy, his pro-welfare budget, and other positions that troubled the business community, not to mention political gridlock he caused.<sup>308</sup>

However, in Ma and the KMT's case the public's perceptions were quite different. For some time leading up to this election the media reported extensively on the bad side-effects of the poorly performing economy. Never mind that these problems also plagued other places throughout the world and that cutting or reducing ties with China would have had serious negative economic consequences for Taiwan.

There were two other critical factors. One, as noted before, Taiwan's economy in late 2015 and into January 2016, leading up to the election, performed very poorly. This affected voters. Two, populism had become a major variable in Taiwan's politics and populist politicians as well as academics and the media were quick to cast blame on the KMT for Taiwan's travails.

In this milieu Tsai and the DPP offered solutions that voters thought would work. Clearly their ideas looked better in terms of helping remedy Taiwan's immediate problems. Especially appealing to voters were promises to change the inequality drift and generate opportunities for small businesses, the youth, and workers.

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308. See John F. Copper, "Taiwan in Gridlock: Thoughts on the Chen Shui-bian Administration's First Eighteen Months," in John F. Copper (ed.), *Taiwan in Troubled Times: Essays on the Chen Shui-bian Presidency* (Singapore: World Scientific, 2002), pp. 19-51.

Thus the economic theory of elections, especially if perceptions are weighted more heavily than facts, and if it is noted that one side (the DPP) presented a better case to the public than the other (the KMT), appeared to be valid in explaining the results of the election.

The watermelon and the pendulum theories were less explanatory. Both appeared to have validity, but each contradicted or refuted the other. The watermelon theory appeared correct in the sense that the 2016 election was, particularly in terms of the voters' perceptions and preferences and the way they voted, a continuation of the 2014 election. Finally, the results of the 2016 election were correctly predicted based on the results of the 2014 election.

Yet looking at what some considered a better frame of reference or comparison point, the presidential/legislative election in 2012, the pendulum theory seems to better explain the winners and losers. Ma and the KMT's slide began mainly after this election. There was no second term curse before this. As shown clearly in the results of the 2016 election voters were dissatisfied and strongly desired change; this was not the case in 2012.

Concerning the significance of this election, it is easy to make a case that it stands out among Taiwan's many recent elections in a number of respects. This is true not only of the election results, but probably what lasting impact it will have.

What the media most often mentioned in assessing the election was the obvious. It was precedent breaking for Taiwan to elect a female president. But there was more to it than that. Little noticed was the fact TSAI Ing-wen, unlike other female heads of state in Asia, did not come from a political family nor could she be considered a member of a dynasty. Her family was rich, but not political. Also, male chauvinism defined her party more than most political parties, certainly more than the KMT. She had to overcome that. Tsai also represented her party's claim (and Taiwan's) to be progressive and to be ahead of other places in the world in terms avant-garde historical change. This gave her being the first female president even more salience.<sup>309</sup>

Second, the opposition won control of the legislature. The DPP had never held a majority in the legislature before. This was a handicap when the DPP was the ruling party from 2000 to 2008. There were a number of explanations cited for this. Tsai had coattails. She was popular and won

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309. This was facilitated by the fact Tsai and the DPP are liberal and in the West academe and the media are liberal. However it need to be noted that liberal and conservative, or left and right, in Taiwan are defined in large measure by pro-independence or pro-unification views. This makes Taiwan different from other countries.

big. The DPP offered talented candidates, many whom had excelled in local politics on the way up. The DPP's election strategy was sound.

In any case, the DPP's majority position in the legislature will mean it can determine the lawmaking agenda. It will help Tsai be a stronger and more effective president. The two branches of government should now be in sync. (This was not the case during the Ma presidency due to disunity in the KMT and the Ma-Wang feud.) There are, of course, some caveats; but they at least now seem minor. One, the DPP will likely need KMT cooperation to pass Constitutional amendments. Two, it is uncertain to what degree the new minor parties will stick with the DPP.<sup>310</sup>

The third takeaway from this election is that Taiwan's democracy is alive and well. The democratic processes worked well and for that Taiwan gained respect and admiration both at home and elsewhere. This is especially meaningful given the fact that democratic systems are not working well around the world. Hence, Taiwan may be seen as a model.<sup>311</sup>

Fourth, this election will by all accounts mean that needed reform in Taiwan will be accomplished, including important matters got missed in Taiwan's past efforts at reform.<sup>312</sup> In recent years, political polarization impeded reform. Now the situation is different. One might expect that reforms are coming in spades. Likely the gap between the election and the new president assuming office will be closed. The voting age will probably be lowered. The relationship between the executive and legislative branches of government can be clarified. Taiwan's presidential system will remain; but some facets of it may be repaired. The issue of absentee voting may be resolved. The path to citizenship and the rights of new citizens to vote hopefully will be fixed. The issue of nuclear energy could be resolved once and for all. The education system in Taiwan needs to be improved, and chances are it will be in some ways at least. Reform of the judiciary seems a good prospect. Businesses in Taiwan complain of overregulation; this needs to be fixed. It can be. The cost of the national health care system is a burden and good doctors are leaving; this and the welfare system in general need attention and will probably

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310. Brian Hioe, "Who were the Winners and Losers of the 2016 Elections in the Legislature," *New Bloom Magazine*, January 17, 2016 (online at [newbloommag.net](http://newbloommag.net)).

311. The "Taiwan political miracle"—which was talked about as Taiwan democratized quickly and without violence in the 1970s, 80s and 90s—may again be a widely acclaimed phenomenon. For details see various chapters of John F. Copper, *The Taiwan Political Miracle: Essays on Political Development, Elections and Foreign Relations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1977).

312. See Linda Chao and Ramon Myers, *The First Chinese Democracy: Political Life in the Republic of China on Taiwan* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 213-15.

get it—though the DPP will not want to cut social programs. There are a host of other issues to deal with.

Last but not least, it is necessary to assess the election from the perspective of the challenges President Tsai and the DPP as the ruling party now face. The two most often concerns or worries cited by the pundits and the media in the election's aftermath were Taiwan's economy and relations with China.

Tsai and the DPP assumed power at a time when Taiwan's economy was not performing well and the prospects for an upturn, at least in the short run, were not good.<sup>313</sup> Voters' confidence in Tsai and the DPP to improve the economy was a large reason for their casting votes for them. After the election many voters reported they were banking on them to spur economic growth.<sup>314</sup> However, the population's expectations may far exceed the ability of Tsai and the DPP to deliver.

Tsai's ideas about fixing the economy that she put forth during the campaign were simplistic. Many are not easy to implement. Some will probably have little effect. Hence for Tsai and the DPP the post-election economic situation was not unlike what MA Ying-jeou faced shortly after he became president. The trends for the coming year or even further out do not appear to warrant optimism for Taiwan's economy to grow.<sup>315</sup> This is likely to weigh heavily on Taiwan's new political leadership.

Not only is the global economic milieu unfavorable, TSAI Ing-wen and the DPP face serious micro-economic problems. Taiwan's economy needs restructuring. Something has to be done about real wage stagnation. However, increasing wages for lower paid employees following proposals Tsai and the DPP made during the campaign run contrary to resolving Taiwan's brain drain. Talent is leaving Taiwan due to pay in Taiwan's tech sector not competing with other countries in Asia. Another problem is that Taiwan's industrial sector is not sufficiently diversified; it leans heavily on the electronics industry, which is being threatened by China developing its electronic industries that will both compete with Taiwan and may exclude Taiwan companies from its production chains.<sup>316</sup> Tsai touted the U.S. backed Trans-Pacific Partnership agree-

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313. "EDITORIAL: Tsai faces economic challenges," *Taipei Times*, January 18, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

314. Benjamin Yeh, "ELECTIONS: Taiwanese voters bank on new leader to spur economy," *Taipei Times*, January 11, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

315. Andrew Palmer, "The going gets tough," in *The World in 2016* (London: Economist, November 2015), p. 26.

316. Elaine Huang, "Buying Up the World," *CommonWealth*, December 15, 2015 (online at [english.cw.com](http://english.cw.com)).

ment as one solution. But it will hurt some of Taiwan's industries.<sup>317</sup> Furthermore, it is hardly a panacea to resolve Taiwan's economic problems and is likely to create new political and other problems for the Tsai administration.<sup>318</sup>

During the campaign Tsai Ing-wen advocated Taiwan cement free trade agreements, or FTAs. But President Ma successfully negotiated FTAs with two countries, Singapore and New Zealand, in large measure because China did not try to block the agreements. Can Taiwan now reach more such deals without China's concurrence? This seems doubtful. Meanwhile, China and the U.S. signing FTAs hurts Taiwan's economy, notably one with South Korea (one of Taiwan's main trade competitor).<sup>319</sup> Tsai also hinted of using fiscal stimulus to prod economic growth. As cited earlier, Taiwan has a significant debt burden; this will be an impediment to using this tactic to increase economic growth. Anyway the KMT used it and it did not prove very effective.

A special problem is that Taiwan's economic growth for some years has been underpinned by cutting edge industries, notably computers and electronics. Recently slumping demand has hurt local companies such as Acer and Asustek that flourished during the PC boom. Smartphone maker HTC once lauded as Taiwan's successful post-PC high tech company has seen its global market share fall because of competition from Apple, South Korea's Samsung, and China's Xiaomi and Huawei. Many of Taiwan's company heads perceive Taiwan faces two serious problems: China is breaking into the area of sophisticated electronics and the "red supply chain" cuts Taiwan out of global interconnectedness.<sup>320</sup>

Taiwan's business community, including its high tech sector, is not happy about Tsai and the DPP condemning it for profiteering on commerce with China to the disadvantage of small businesses and workers and thus causing the rich-poor gap to increase. Business's falling confi-

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317. Wang Meng-lun, "New president faces big economic issues: expert," *Taipei Times*, January 27, 2016 (online at [taipeitimes.com](http://taipeitimes.com)).

318. See "Can Taiwan join the TPP as an equal partner?" *China Post*, December 3, 2015 (online at [chinapost.com.tw](http://chinapost.com.tw)). It is likely Taiwan can join without resolving the importation of U.S. beef, which the DPP has strongly opposed. Also Taiwan can probably not get concessions Japan received during the negotiations, such as "equal partner" status.

319. Chia Lee, "U.S.-Korea FTA an adverse impact on Taiwan's exports: MOEA," *Taiwan News*, January 6, 2016 (online at [taiwannews.com.tw](http://taiwannews.com.tw)).

320. "Taiwan's New Leader Inherits a Mess," *Bloomberg Businessweek*, January 25-31, 2016, p. 15. Recently China's Tsinghua Unigroup has agreed to buy a major stake in Taiwan's Powertech Technology for \$600 million and has offered \$2.1 billion for a twenty-five percent share in Siliconware Precision Industries and ChipMOS Technology. President Tsai will find it difficult to approve of these deals in view of her warnings about the threat of China's investments in Taiwan. But these industries cannot do well without China's involvement.

dence in the future of the economy and in Tsai's ability to fix it have made relations between the two worse.

A related problem is Taiwan's spending on social welfare. The DPP is an advocate for the poor and disadvantaged and has long pushed for more government help to these groups. In this connection it needs to be noted that the KMT has been the main implementer of government assistance programs (the national health care system and many others) in order to preempt the DPP's "people agenda."<sup>321</sup> In fact the KMT has overreached. Tsai and the DPP will thus find it difficult to expand social welfare.

President Tsai and the DPP can, of course, argue that they inherited a bad economy and in 2016 there was a global slowdown. This is true. But President Ma and the KMT made this case. The real question is: How long will this argument work for the new leadership?

Judging from the international media's reporting the second overriding problem for Tsai and the DPP is Taiwan's relationship with China. In fact, this is seen as their most daunting task. Furthermore, this challenge for the new regime is very much related to the first, the economy.<sup>322</sup>

The problem is this: the DPP's support Taiwan's independence and its possessing sovereignty conflicts with China's position that there is only one China and Taiwan is a part of China. Tsai cannot, without risking a loss of party support, repudiate the party's stance. Yet she needs good relations with China. She will need to continue to be vague about Taiwan's status. But that will not be easy.

Beijing's reaction to Tsai not accepting the 92 Consensus and one-China, initially at least, will probably begin with economic pressure. In fact, some say this started well before the election—perhaps. As noted, three months before the election, it was reported Chinese authorities would cut the number of tourists going to Taiwan in the month prior to the election by 95 percent.

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321. See Yeun-wen Ku, *Welfare Capitalism in Taiwan: State, Economy and Social Policy* (New York: Macmillan Press, 1997). Of course, the KMT initiated welfare programs to prevent social unrest and to impress the international community at a time when Taiwan was losing support abroad. But many of the welfare ideas were proposed by opposition politicians but implemented by the KMT-controlled government.

322. See Austin Ramzy, "Taiwan's New Leader Faces a Weak Economy and China's Might," *New York Times*, January 16, 2016 (online at nyt.com). Also see Tung hen-yuan, "A model for cross-strait economics," *Taipei Times*, February 17, 2016 (online at taipeitimes.com). Tung recommends a number of policies for the new Tsai administration; but most of them presume cordial relations with China, which of course are conditional and uncertain.

The travel industry in Taiwan expressed serious concern, even alarm, over this.<sup>323</sup> Taiwan's hotel sector was already suffering from over capacity. It was reported that 899 new hotels had opened for business from July 2008 and 150 more were to be ready in 2016. Occupancy rates during 2015 fell. Other tourist-related businesses from airlines and tour companies to small stores and restaurants feared a fall in Chinese visitors.<sup>324</sup>

China can put enormous pressure on Taiwan in other ways. It might cut investments in Taiwan. The DPP has recently expressed opposition to China obtaining part interest in some of Taiwan's high tech companies even though this would facilitate exports. Beijing could pare Taiwan out of the production chains that China controls. China's companies are already filling the gap.

Any of these actions, certainly two or three together, could be enough to cause a serious economic downturn. A recession may follow.

China might also "forget" to invite Taiwan to partake in its huge global investment projects. Some of them are cover regions Taiwan is not part of. The Silk Road naturally does not include Taiwan (Taiwan being a geographic outlier), though arguably Beijing could expand it to do so. During the first ten months of 2015 Chinese companies signed contracts worth \$64.5 billion with countries involved.<sup>325</sup>

The reality is China is a large, formidable, player in the world economy—especially in foreign trade and investments. As the record shows it is the foremost dynamo behind economic growth in the world. China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, its New Development Bank, and its Silk Road projects will each inject tens of billions of dollars into the global economy. It is estimated that China's global financial investments by 2025 will total \$1.25 trillion (giving that a frame of reference the U.S. Marshall Plan after World War II was \$103 billion in today's dollars).<sup>326</sup>

Taiwan not being involved will mean that it foregoes an important stimulant to its economy. Yet Tsai and the DPP take the position that Taiwan is too tied to China economically and this will handicap Taiwan's future economic growth. Hence China can hardly be blamed for an economic downturn in Taiwan.

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323. "Cuts in Chinese tourist numbers before Taiwan election confirmed," Focus Taiwan, October 6, 2015 (online at [focustaiwan.tw](http://focustaiwan.tw)).

324. Matthew Fulco, "Tourist businesses fear fall in Chinese visitors," Nikkei Asian Review, December 22, 2015 (online at [asianikkei.com](http://asianikkei.com)).

325. He Bin and Li Jia, "Along the Belt and Road," *News China*, March 2016, p. 29.

326. David Shambaugh, "China's Soft Power Push," *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2015, p. 100.

China might also apply diplomatic pressure on Taiwan. As noted, Taipei expanded its international space during the Ma years largely as a product of it promoting better cross-Strait relations and Beijing allowing it the freedom to do so. Taiwan kept nearly all of the nations with which it had formal diplomatic relations. Beijing did not try to take them away and even suggested to some that they not seek to establish formal ties with China.<sup>327</sup> Now the Chinese leadership might terminate this “concessionary” policy toward Taiwan. If China so acted, many of Taiwan’s diplomatic partners would no doubt quickly set up shop (embassies) in Beijing.

The result of that would be, as some in Taiwan have feared, forthwith losing five or ten diplomatic partners. This would push the number of Taiwan’s formal ties down into the teens. If this were to go further, which it might given the possibility of a bandwagon effect or if China were to make this a diplomatic offensive, Taiwan would see the number of its embassies reduced to single digits, or worse. This would inevitably have a negative impact on the image, and more of, on the Tsai administration.

China’s third means of dealing with an unfriendly or provocative Taiwan is its military option. This is far from being Beijing’s favored option, but it cannot be discounted because of the threat Taiwan’s independence poses to China. Chinese leaders would see Taiwan seeking separation as possibly spreading similar intentions to Tibet and Xinjiang Province. Furthermore, China’s President Xi has consolidated his power yet is facing serious domestic problems such that to deal with them he may want to further promote Chinese nationalism and with that a more aggressive foreign policy.<sup>328</sup>

In any event, Beijing would probably first choose fairly innocuous moves such as giving more publicity to its ability to destroy Taiwan’s defenses. Or it might stage military maneuvers near Taiwan. Either would cause Taiwan’s trading partners to face increased insurance rates and could even disrupt or reduce Taiwan’s trade.<sup>329</sup> Beijing could always

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327. In 2008, China reportedly discouraged Paraguay from seeking formal diplomatic relations with China. In 2009 China turned down an overture from Panama to establish relations. In 2010 President Ma stated that we (Beijing and Taipei) have a tacit agreement “not to steal each other’s diplomatic ties.” See Copper, *China’s Foreign Aid and Investment Diplomacy, Volume II*, p. 169.

328. Robert D. Blackwill and Kurt M. Campbell, “Xi Jinping on the Global Stage,” Council Special Report (Council on Foreign Relations), February 2016, pp. 1-4.

329. See John F. Copper, *Playing with Fire: The Looming War with China over Taiwan* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), pp. 66-67 for an account of this and more happening before.

move on from there to escalate its threat likely without provoking anyone to assist Taiwan or come to its rescue.

The Tsai administration would, of course, seek out the United States to come to its rescue if China were to seriously threaten Taiwan. However, there are a number of reasons to doubt whether this would be successful.

First, Beijing's actions just mentioned, at least up to the military one, will most likely seem mild, unthreatening, and short of being sufficiently provocative to justify the United States making any serious response. Certainly Washington would not be able to arouse public opinion at home or garner support from Asian allies to act against anything less than truly threatening Chinese acts. Yet less than menacing moves by China would be lethal to Taiwan's economy and to Tsai and the DPP's reputations.

Second, U.S. foreign policy makers will likely recall the deliberate provocations the previous DPP administration made and the U.S. reaction, which was to view Chen and the DPP as loose cannons wanting to incite a conflict between America and China to their advantage. American policy makers must see some resemblance to the situation now. After the election the U.S. sent words of caution to Tsai about igniting cross-Strait tension.<sup>330</sup> If she doesn't listen, or if the U.S. perceives this, how can she expect the U.S. to render help?

Third, the United States is already involved in conflict situations and/or serious foreign policy problems elsewhere: with ISIS, with Russia in Ukraine, Iran, and more. Washington does not want to add Taiwan to the list. As noted earlier public opinion surveys in the U.S. show that the American population does not want to engage China's military over Taiwan.

Fourth, as noted above the United States needs cordial relations with China to effectively deal with a host of important problems ranging from the global financial situation to global warming. This is likely to be truer and even more salient in the future.

Fifth, it is the reality that Washington cannot easily influence much less effectively coerce China anymore. This has been shown in America's arguably feeble responses to China's assertive cum aggressive actions in the South China Sea. In any case, China has not been moved much by them. It is also doubtful sanctions will work against China. Anyway they are viewed as unwise and unfeasible because China is "too big to fail" and owing to China's huge and diversified economy America

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330. Matthew Pennington, "US urges post-election Taiwan-China talks," *China Post*, February 13, 2016 (online at chinapost.com.tw).

cannot cause pain to China without hurting itself while countries that might be willing to cooperate with any such plan will be hard to find.<sup>331</sup>

There is also no meaningful support outside of the U.S. government, such as in the media or academe, for Taiwan's separation even though both applauded Tsai and the DPP's election victory and Taiwan's democracy and even connect its democracy to its right to choose its future. But they are simply not willing to support U.S. military action. Also, in counterpoint it is said there is an element in academic and the media that wishes that the Tsai administration would provoke China to justify American abandoning Taiwan. This would, in their view, finally end Washington's "wrong" involvement in the Chinese civil war, remove the only real obstacle to better U.S.-China relations, and get the U.S. out of a situation that might lead to military conflict and possibly war.

Tsai and clearer minds in the DPP no doubt understand this situation. As noted, Tsai has avoided provoking China or the United States. In the immediate wake of the election she promised that she would "bear the responsibility" of maintaining peace and stability on regional issues.<sup>332</sup> There is no reason to think she was not serious about this. Yet if the DPP does not push for Taiwan's separate sovereignty, no one, at least no organization of any significance, will protest. There have been political parties in Taiwan founded on the call for independence. They have come and gone. An independence party formed during the campaign; but it got few votes. The independence issue may die without DPP support.<sup>333</sup>

Summing up, Tsai and the DPP won the election handily. That suggests they are ready to govern and they have good ideas and public support. Still, governing will not be easy for them given the challenges they face.

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331. Zack Cooper and Eric Lorber, "Sanctioning the Dragon," *National Interest*, March/April 2016, pp. 36-42.

332. George Liao, "Tsai to maintain close and friendly relations with U.S.," *Taiwan News*, January 18, 2016 (online at taiwannews.com.tw).

333. Some Chinese officials have told this writer that if they can deal with the DPP and it abandons the cause of independence it will become a dead issue, as was not the case when the KMT was in power.

## GLOSSARY OF SELECTED CHINESE NAMES

CHEN Chien-jen 陳建仁	JIANG Yi-hua 江宜樺
CHEN Chih-chung 陳致中	KUAN Chung-ming 管中閔
CHEN Chu 陳菊	KING Pu-Tsung 金溥聰
CHEN Shui-bian 陳水扁	KO Wen-je 柯文哲
CHEN Ting-fei 陳亭妃	KOO Kwang-ming 辜寬敏
CHIANG Ching-kuo 蔣經國	LIN Li-chan 林麗蟬
CHIANG Kai-shek 蔣介石	LO Chih-chiang 羅智強
Eric Chen 朱立倫	LONG Mingpu 龍明彪
FAN Yun 范雲	MA Xiaoguang 马晓光
Frank Hsieh 謝長廷	MA Ying-jeou 馬英九
Freddy Lim 林昶佐	SU Chiao-hui 蘇巧慧
GONG Qinggai 龚清概	SU Tseng-chang 蘇貞昌
HAO Lung-pin 郝龍斌	SUN Yafu 孫亞夫
HIAO Bi-khim 蕭美琴	SUN Yat-sen 孫中山
HSU Hsin-ying 徐欣瑩	TSAI Ing-wen 蔡英文
HUANG Kuo-chang 黃國昌	WANG Jin-pygn 王金平
HUANG Yung-tien 黃永典	WANG Ju-hsuan 王如玄
HUNG Chung-chiu 洪仲丘	William Lai 賴清德
HUNG Hsiu-chu 洪秀柱	WU Den-yih 吳敦義
HUNG Tsu-yung 洪慈庸	YANG Chih-liang 楊志良
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