Outside or Inside the Box of the “1992 Consensus”:
Taiwan’s 2016 Elections and Cross-Strait Relations

Wei-chin Lee
Wake Forest University

Abstract

In January 2016, the Taiwanese people completed the third regime change in Taiwan’s democratic development. The DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen won a solid electoral mandate with 56.12% against the 31.04% of the KMT candidate Eric Chu. Because President-elect Tsai and the DPP have refused to accept the one China principle stated in the 1992 Consensus, the research aims to examine and explore Taiwan’s evolving identity politics and the impact of Tsai’s rejection of the 1992 Consensus on future cross-Strait relations.

Among the electoral campaign slogans and policies appealing for voters’ support in the 2016 elections, one issue dominating significant space in media coverage and debates has been the “1992 Consensus.” The Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) has firmly asserted the Consensus as the ultimate foundation for smooth and productive cross-Strait relations. On the contrary, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the largest opposition party prior to the 2016 elections, has constantly challenged the origin and utility of the Consensus. The debate about the 1992 Consensus is a classical display of identity politics that implies an uneasy settling of the collective soul in charting Taiwan’s political future. These divergent identity affiliations in Taiwan, which rely on an emotional sense of belonging and discourse simplification, operate as electoral coalitions working in tandem to obfuscate reality for voters’ choices. In the case of the 2016 elections, the tug of war of campaign slogans and narrative propositions between the KMT and the DPP not only provides an interesting examination of major parties’ agenda setting and policy direction, but also offers a splendid opportunity to see each contender’s manipulation of and navigation through the political juggernaut of identity politics and cross-Strait relations.
This study will begin with a brief genesis of the 1992 Consensus and its distinctive features, followed by an analysis of the campaign agendas and policy stances of both the KMT and the DPP, and end the discussion with implications for our understanding of Taiwan’s identity trend and future cross-Strait relations.

The Genesis of the “1992 Consensus” for Cross-Strait Relations

Taiwan’s loss of the UN seat in 1971 to China (People’s Republic of China, PRC) was the first major blow to the Republic of China (ROC), diminishing Taiwan’s status in the international community. The US switch of recognition from Taiwan to China in 1979 was an additional hit to Taiwan’s role as a solid state member in intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), including major economic organizations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD).\(^1\) China’s steady ascent on the world stage meant the shrinking number of Taiwan’s IGO affiliations, from 39 in the 1960s to a meager 10 by 1977. Taiwan was concerned that the inability to maintain a visible international profile in the early 1990s might affect its vibrant trade-oriented economic performance.\(^2\)

Several points for consideration took place in the early 1990s. First, as Taiwan’s democratization in the late 1980s began to step up its pace and scope, the former ruling establishment and rising opponents had to begin competing for electoral support through populist appeals by advocating disparate nationalistic goals for Taiwan’s future status. Taiwan’s democratization ended the governmental monopoly on power and ideological systematization

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and unleashed the force of mass nationalism in a competitive political atmosphere full of prolific ideas and agendas. Aspiring political entrepreneurs hence advocated and politicized Taiwanese indigenous nationalism. At the beginning, they emphasized an ethno-centric notion of primordialism over against the preceding “China-centered” social constructs in order to broaden their vote shares and electoral approval. Each contending group tried to carve out a political market niche for targeted constituencies rather than share power for segmental distinction and differentiation in electoral competition. While ethno-nationalism had long existed in Taiwan, the urge to win the majority support of ethnic Taiwanese made politicians adopt identity appeals as a powerful tool for political mobilization between parties, the KMT and the DPP. Each party has since projected its own vision of Taiwan’s future relations with China, either unification or independence, to convince voters. The ruling government’s identity propositions accordingly have affected Taiwan’s cross-Strait policy toward China.

Second, Taiwan fully understood China’s accumulating political weight in stifling Taiwan’s international space and China’s abundant labor force, promising market potential, and rich resources essential for Taiwan’s economic growth. Hence, Taiwan eagerly sought a delicate balance between how to resist China’s political reunification intent on the one hand and how to reap copious benefits from China via cross-Strait economic interactions on the other hand. Put simply, Taiwan’s high degree of economic dependence on China carried political risks of vulnerability and sensitivity. Still, geographic proximity, similar cultural traits, and economic complementarity with China made it impossible to ignore China’s existence for Taiwan’s

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economic sustainability. Taiwan has had to find a golden mean without being sucked into the extreme on either side.

Third, although Taiwan has remained close to the US in an informal security cooperation after learning painful lessons of US abandonment in both 1972 and 1979, the lack of an alliance treaty and the implicit nature of the US security guarantee led Taiwan to prepare for future potential setbacks, should China’s waxing weight tip the US self-strategic calculation and policy priority unfavourably to Taiwan. Thus, the ever-present fear of US abandonment prompted Taiwan to look deep and hard at the option of engagement with China as a preventive mechanism to mitigate China’s military threat. The subtlety rested in how to ensure that the US would not construe Taiwan’s engagement with China as a betrayal to the US goodwill commitment nor an act of joining forces against the US regional hegemony. As a result, Taiwan needed to negotiate for an ambiguous but mutually agreeable understanding with China, to which all concerned parties did not object.

Against this backdrop, both Taiwan and China reached an “agree to disagree” understanding through unofficial organizations--Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China’s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) in Hong Kong in October 1992. Taiwan later coined this mutual understanding the “1992 Consensus” (usually referred to in Taiwan as “yizhong gebiao,” 一中各表), and China finally adopted it as the fundamental principle to manage cross-Strait interactions as well as Taiwan’s participation in international affairs. The 1992 Consensus refers to the idea that there is “one China,” but each side reserves the right to interpret the political contents of “one China.” In essence, each side does not deny

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the other’s sovereign assertion of “China.” The reciprocal moves and responses actually demonstrated a spirit of pragmatism and innovative thinking in reaching a common ground within which a list of principles and actions derived from those principles were practically reasonable and acceptable to each party. The pledge of the 1992 Consensus was to ensure that each side’s inducements to adhere to the Consensus would be higher than their burdens and sacrifices. There are several features of the 1992 Consensus.

First, each side’s position virtually reflected its domestic governing power configuration and the identity preferences of political elites and the general public in the 1990s. China’s sacred mission of unifying Taiwan with the “mainland motherland” since 1949 had to compromise with its own desperate need for economic reforms, though China remained committed to the military option as a deterrent to Taiwan’s declared independence. Likewise, Taiwan’s various interpretations of historical, cultural, and political linkages with mainland China and partisan disputes about the “China-oriented” social construct embedded in the KMT’s rule clearly showed a public divide in identity preferences in 1991 or 1992. As Taiwan’s identity composition and preference evolved and shifted, party leaders would correspondingly adopt an electoral strategy to cultivate and captivate shares of voters as much as possible to ensure winning.

Second, 1992 Consensus has since aroused a lot of debate concerning its substance and interpretation. The phrase did not exist in the 1992 Hong Kong talk, but it was explicated post facto by Su Chi, Taiwan’s former Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Minister, as a term of reference in April 2000. The DPP President Chen Shui-bian later adopted this term on June 26, 2006.

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6 Here the idea of common ground is similar to the zone of indifference. See Chester Irving Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968), 168-169.
2000, but the following day his MAC minister, Tsai Ing-wen, publicly rescinded Chen’s statement. Tsai further clarified what both Taiwan and China had reached: “each side would respectively interpret one China” (gebiao yizhong, 各表一中), rather than “one China with different interpretations” (yizhong gebiao, 一中各表). The wording rearrangement signifies a different concentration and priority. The DPP staunchly opposed the idea of accepting the “one China” principle and suggested that the order of phrase be correctly reversed to “each side respectively interpret China” (“gebiao yizhong”) in order to show the prominence of the autonomous subject, i.e., Taiwan, in making an authoritative determination of the lower ranked object of “China.”

Accordingly, the so-called 1992 Consensus has generated various interpretations and concerns over its functionality across the Strait and interparty disputes within Taiwan. The treatment of the 1992 Consensus between China and Taiwan has evolved into Taiwan’s reading of “China” as the “Republic of China” in contrast to China’s interpretation of “China” being the “People’s Republic of China.” Within Taiwan’s partisan dispute, the KMT has upheld its essentiality in dealing with China; but the DPP has denied the 1992 Consensus and downgraded it as an illustration of the “1992 Spirit” or “1992 Meeting” to facilitate bilateral dialogues, exchanges, and agreements to shelve political disputes across the Strait.

Third, semantics aside, the “agreement to disagree” on the meaning of “China” contained in the 1992 Consensus has not placated Taiwan’s pro-independence supporters’ anxiety and frustrations. In contrast, China has increasingly embraced the utility of the Consensus and

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frequently touted the significance of “yizhong” (一中, one China) and deliberately ignored the phrase “gebiao” (各表, separate interpretation) to assert its sole representation and legitimacy of the whole China. Certainly, the Taiwanese government and general public are aware of China’s intentions and action.  

Taiwan hence consistently has tried to poke China’s position as shown in President Lee Teng-hui’s 1994 proposal of the “divided-nation” model or the 1999 “two-state theory,” an idea designed by the 2016 Presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen to upend China’s one-China principle. However, these revisionist efforts have instantly faced China’s dramatic opposition and US alarming concern.

Fourth, be it consensus or spirit, the referred 1992 Consensus appears to have served both sides positively and culminated in a series of bilateral negotiations and agreements since then. Its utility is as much ideational for each side’s commitments to its own image of “China” as it is institutional in regulating bilateral interactions. Even so, China has never wavered from its one-China principle in stifling Taiwan’s international participation, except only when a very few political realities dictated that China compromise. This has surely irked the Taiwanese public regularly. China’s controversial 2005 Anti-Secession Law reaffirmed its determination to crush Taiwan’s search for autonomy or independence. Since the PRC has been perceived as the sole

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10 See the speech by Li Yafei, China’s Vice President of China’s Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), the counterpart of Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), <video.chinatimes.com/video-bydate-cnt.aspx?cid=1&nid=35720>. Also, Shiquan Xu, “The 1992 Consensus: A Review and Assessment of Consultations Between the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait and the Straits Exchange Foundation,” in Breaking the China-Taiwan Impasse, Donald S. Zagoria, ed., with the assistance of Chris Fugarino (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 82-83.


12 Articles 2, 3, and 8 of the Anti-Secession Law, adopted at the 3rd Session of the 10th National People’s Congress, March 13, 2005. <english.people.com.cn/200503/14/eng20050314_176746.html>. With a proclamation that “both the Mainland and Taiwan belong to one China,” the Anti-Secession law also reconfirms its rejection of any interference by outside forces as an apparent reference to Washington’s intervention.
legitimate government in representing China internationally, China would like to confine Taiwan, the “other” China (ROC), within China’s self-defined rigid enclosure of reference framework. In this case, China has failed to nurture a favorable circumstance or present a positive image in winning the hearts and minds of the Taiwanese people in a democratic society.

China’s harsh acts have only provided Taiwanese political elites with an impetus to inflame public passion for electoral gains and to endorse a distinctive Taiwanese indigenous identity separate from China. The feeling of “being different” in identity generates an increment of public disinterest and distaste for association with China and the recession of the China-oriented social construct. Concurrently, it helps conscription and construction of a Taiwan-centered mindset in Taiwan. During the Lee Teng-hui era (1988-2000) and followed by Chen Shui-bian’s presidency (2000-2008), Taiwan’s society and government policies actually dismantled the KMT social constructs through a mostly structured and organized social engineering of the Taiwanese indigenous identity. Chen’s well-known three step process of social construct, i.e., “confrontation-compromise-advance,” referred to the DPP’s political contention and competition with the KMT. This process serves as a perfect example of his regime’s repeated efforts at revising institutional names, government procedures, educational policies, and others, during his governance through 2008.\(^\text{13}\) While Chen’s confrontational tactics might have been disruptive and distasteful, confrontation set the stage for media publicity to “show and tell” as well as ridicule the “alien” KMT regime’s “undemocratically imposed” identity and “China-centered” constructs. Thus, confrontation reinforced DPP supporters’ commitments and potentially garnered independent voters’ sympathy and shuttered their political opposition. Although Chen would make political compromises, the hope was to gain a devoted critical mass of true believers

to propagate Taiwan’s distinctive status and dismantle the old identification with China for a cascading effect of a full re-configuration of Taiwan’s identity. Any compromise would pave the way for the DPP’s advance to the next stage of confrontation to chip away at the KMT’s identity base. The whole process has been long, and the speed has been incremental, but the result has spawned doubts, called for self-reflection, and attracted individual sympathy and empathy for the netting and webbing of inter-subjective understandings among the public.

In a temporal dimension, the trend of Taiwan’s identity politics appears to have evolved toward the “stickiness” of Taiwan-centered identity, as shown in the survey data tracked by the Election Study Center at the National Chengchi University. In June 1992, the year of the 1992 Consensus, solely “Taiwanese” identifiers were 19.5%, in comparison to 25.5% of solely “Chinese identity” respondents and 54.8% of people with “double identity of both Taiwanese and Chinese.” When Ma took over from Chen’s governance in 2008, “Taiwanese” identity sharply climbed to 48.4%, and the percentage of “double identity” respondents decreased to 43.1%, along with the steep drop of “Chinese” identifiers to 4.5%.

Even after Ma’s rapprochement policy toward China, 2008-2016, “Taiwanese” identifiers surged to 59-60%, with “double identity” respondents hovering around 32-33% and “Chinese” identity remaining 3.3-3.5% in 2014 and 2015.14 Public attitudes toward unification have steadily declined from 20% in 1994 to 9.1% in 2015, if one combines “unification as soon as possible” and “status quo and move toward unification” in survey data. During the same time period, 1994-2015, surveys showed an increase from 11.1% to 21.1% in those preferring

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“independence as soon as possible” and “status quo and move toward future independence” respectively.

Should one combine all status quo supporters, regardless of their future preference of either unification or independence, the broad category of “status quo” would claim a predominant domain with 83.3% of respondents in 2015, an 11.4% increase from 1994. Similar findings of 87.6% and 89.5% of status quo supporters, respectively, were also registered in Duke University’s Taiwan National Security Survey conducted in December 2014 and October 2015.

In sum, identity reconfiguration has been an unending process. Even so, in the deliberation of Taiwan’s future, the Taiwanese public has attempted to balance the reality check of China’s security threat with their identity calling. Their calculated preference to cross-Strait status quo has become a safe bet, and politicians have been keen to take notice of voters’ preferences. With regard to the rise of a Taiwan-centered identity, no major political party in Taiwan would dare to defy the divine gravity of voters’ preferences by advocating a campaign platform of unification in a contentious race.

The KMT: the Recession of China-centered Identity in the 2016 Elections

In 2008, when Taiwan’s President Ma Ying-jeou of the KMT was sworn in, his supporters were exuberant about the end of the turbulent years of the DPP’s President Chen Shui-bian’s era of governance. In 2012, Ma won a solid mandate for another presidential term in a hotly contested race with the DPP Presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen, though Ma’s vote share shrunk from 58.5% to 51.6%. However, the DPP challenger Tsai has improved the DPP’s vote share

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from 41% in 2008 to 45.6% in 2012, in a voter turnout rate of 74.38%. The discrepancy in the 2012 election between Ma and Tsai was close to 800,000 votes, out of a total of 13.45 million votes cast. Multiple reasons likely contributed to Ma’s victory. Pundits and analysts have frequently attributed the loss to the “1992 Consensus”—the Achilles’ heel of Tsai’s mainland policy.\(^{17}\)

While the KMT’s victory in 2012 reconfirmed the value of the 1992 Consensus, the relatively narrow margin of vote shares also hinted at the diminishing return of the 1992 Consensus as an effective campaign agenda. Although Ma has been accused of being a “China-friendly” leader, his policies have not seen the recession of Taiwanese identity but instead a steady rise of either “Taiwanese” identity (54.3%) or “double identity” (38.5%) in 2012 surveys. Should one add them together, 92.8% of Taiwanese would broadly identify as “Taiwanese.” At the same time, 85.4% of the Taiwanese public in 2012 expressed a general desire for maintaining cross-Strait status quo. Going forward, any candidate wishing to grab a larger share of support would have to frame campaign agendas and slogans with this in mind, especially as “Taiwanese” identifiers have passed the 50% mark. Thus, each party’s campaigns have since endeavored to project the candidate’s sincerity and efforts in doing the right thing, charting a politically correct path of “loving Taiwan” to stir up the voters’ inner sense of identity and their enthusiastic Taiwanese spirit.

During Ma’s second term, his administration has experienced mounting internal and external economic challenges, mistakes and flip-flops in policy design and execution, problems in coordination and compromise for legislative approval of governmental initiatives, and intra-party fights and elite disunity, not to mention volumes of political accusations, criticisms and ridicules

by opposition parties, talk show commentators, and social media bloggers. Meanwhile, the conventional style of politics has mixed with a new style of politics to form a hybrid of the digital age. Kindness and gentleness in politicking would have difficulty fitting into this sour season of public anger. The increased use of cyber commentaries and sharp critiques has swept aside the traditional retail style of electoral campaigning and policy deliberation through regular media venues, and it has sidestepped traditional vote brokers (tiao-ka in Taiwanese) in agenda manipulations. The new role of social media in dis-intermediation—a reduction of intermediate layers of communication—has brought political elites closer to their target audience and opened them to the front line of cyber barrages. Communication has transformed from conventional “face-to-face” dialogues into “facebook-to-facebook” cozy chats, unpleasant encounters that are one stroke away, or tweets that arrive 24 hours a day. The availability of anonymity and disguise in virtual identity has made it easy for participants to forego the treasured value of civility in a reasonable and rational deliberation of political issues in a democratic society.

Ma’s rivals, partisan opponents, and critics have easily seized the populist momentum to the seething satisfaction of their supporters and audience. Political elites or officials, whoever has declined to growl on cue or failed to perform to public expectation, have had to endure mocking abuses and sharp critiques. The fallout has included low approval ratings, gradual erosion of dignity and legitimacy in governance, and declining public trust for Ma and his government. Ma has surely been neither loved nor feared by opponents, including some of his own party comrades. Failures in governance has been a mantra frequently uttered by commentators.

Public feeling about the ruling elite’s governance failure has been compounded by soaring economic inequality, which many have attributed to cross-Strait economic benefits that failed to
trickle down from big business enterprises to the ordinary people. Stated differently, Ma’s active “China-friendly” policy under the premise of the 1992 Consensus has profited only politically well-connected business corporations and tycoons at the expense of the public. The pace and scope of cross-Strait relations, along with the concern of excessive dependence on the China market, has become the primary culprit for the widening domestic income gap. Ma’s accomplishments of cross-Strait flights in 2008, the facilitation of Chinese investments in Taiwan in 2009, and the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement in 2010, only engendered opponents’ vehement charges and criticisms by branding Ma and the KMT for “selling out Taiwan to China,” a claim already levied by the DPP in the 2008 presidential election. And critics have championed a reversal or deceleration of Ma’s cross-Strait policies. The unabated anti-China sentiments and the shift in public opinion has made Ma’s former pledge of “no unification, no independence, and no use of force” lose its luster. The pendulum has swung toward independence. The KMT’s expectation, heading into the 2016 election season, to rely on its pro-engagement cross-Strait campaign agenda based on the 1992 Consensus consequently has faced a daunting task in recruiting voters. Against this backdrop, several noted features have also undercut the KMT’s efforts in employing its cross-Strait agenda as a salient issue to rejuvenate its slumped 2016 electoral momentum.

First, the selection and replacement of the KMT presidential candidate Hung Hsiu-chu by Eric Chu was a self-inflicted injury to the Party’s unity. Hung’s haphazard remarks of “yizhong tongpiao” (one-China with the same interpretation) opened the floodgate for unnecessary confusion and attacks from commentators and contenders. Regardless of journalistic simplicity in reporting or his opponent’s deliberate framing, Hung’s exclusion of “gebiao” (separate interpretations) as a qualification of the 1992 Consensus was construed to be an endorsement

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19 Shelley Rigger, Why Taiwan Matters (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 159.
China’s long-term practice of omitting Taiwan’s insistence on “separate interpretations.” Although Hung’s party comrades rushed to clarify and defend for damage control, the enduring “1992 Consensus” treasured by the KMT as an electoral agenda began to lose its power of persuasion. It reminded voters of the previous association of the KMT with lingering “Chinese” identity, a link which the KMT has tried to dismiss. It also opened up intra-party disputes between the “indigenous faction” and the “non-indigenous faction” regarding the liability of Hung’s candidacy to the legislative election tightly associated with the presidential election. It alienated the younger generation, which has acquired a different collective memory, and younger voters, who have been deeply inspired by the 2014 Sunflowers Movement. It drove away some independent voters who strongly identify as Taiwanese but have felt uncomfortable with the DPP rule. Although the KMT candidate Eric Chu attempted to minimize the damage after his replacement, the DPP effortlessly labelled Hung’s statement as a general rumination of the KMT’s identity profile. This nudged indecisive voters and lukewarm KMT supporters to the center of the political spectrum where Tsai and the DPP (the green camp) have comfortably secured their votes. And despite the unprecedented meeting between Ma and Xi in Singapore in November 2015 that generated media publicity during the election, opponents still sternly portrayed Ma and the KMT as a party without fortitude to boldly reconfirm “one China with different interpretations” in open and official occasions. As follows, opponents portrayed the KMT’s 1992 Consensus as an ostrich’s head-hiding deceit, rather than an effective principle of strategic ambiguity to facilitate Taiwan’s completion of 23 pacts with China during the Ma reign.

Second, political events unfolded in 2014 and 2015 that truly foreshadowed the dilemma the KMT would encounter in the 2016 elections. The debacle of the legislative review and approval

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process of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) in 2013-2014 had been a seriously controversial issue among experts and the public concerning its positive and negative impacts on Taiwan. The controversy later erupted into the Sunflowers student protest and was followed by the occupation of the Legislative Yuan in March 2014. Some surveys showed that more than half of respondents had no sufficient knowledge about the CSSTA and were concerned with its impact on job opportunities. More than 60% of them nevertheless endorsed the protesters’ occupation to force a renegotiation of the CSSTA. This attested to the clear defeat of CSSTA, the challenge of legislative procedures and the KMT legislator’s maneuvers, and doubt over Ma’s trustworthiness and his government’s competence in cross-Strait relations. On the other hand, student protestors and opponents, including the DPP, won support from youngsters and momentum for later contentious acts to block and stall any of the government’s cross-Strait policies with China. Thus perceived as “China-friendly” in orientation, the KMT lost its credibility in safeguarding Taiwan’s core interests, as illustrated in a circulated slogan of derision: “Guomindang budao, Taiwan buhui hao” (Taiwan will not be better, if the KMT still stands). Consequently, 74.5% of the 20-29 age group and 69.9% of the 30-39 age group, higher than the 66.27% of the national voter turnout in the 2016 election, went to the ballot booth in 2016. A majority of the younger generation voted for Tsai, while only a slim 11.4% of them supported the KMT presidential candidates. In brief, an aura of decrepitude shrouds the KMT’s political future.

22 “Taiwan zhiku: nianqingren toupiaolu 74.5%” (Taiwan Thinktank: Youngsters Voting 74.5%), Liberty Times Net, Taiwan, January 21, 2016. <news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/1579950>. Also see Taiwan Thinktank, Post-2016 election’s survey. <www.taiwanthinktank.org/chinese/page/2411/2410/3086/0>.
Third, the decision of Lien Chan, the KMT’s former chairman, with other pan-Blue politicians (i.e., those elites sharing similar “China-friendly” feelings), to attend China’s military parade presided by Xi Jinping on September 3, 2015, in commemoration of China’s 70th anniversary of the Sino-Japanese War, reinforced Taiwanese public impression of the KMT’s innate affinity to China and exacerbated its already flattened polls. Even under Ma’s strenuous request to forego his trip at this critical moment, Lien Chan’s disregard of Ma’s plea underlined the party’s anxiety as well as disunity. While China had its own multiple domestic and international interests for hosting such a huge military spectacle, the parade definitely relayed vibrating waves of sensitivity in Taiwan’s identity politics. China’s premeditated exclusion and non-recognition of the “ROC’s” indelible contributions and immeasurable suffering in the Sino-Japanese War not only gave the pan-Green and DPP’s supporters full excuses to mock the KMT’s quixotic adherence to the “one China” vision, it also aroused feelings of disgust and humiliation among pan-Blue supporters. After all, the ROC in Taiwan has been so proud of and treasured this particular period of history, wishing for the PRC’s reciprocal gesture to validate the KMT’s past deeds for the elections.

One noteworthy point in this episode was the incredible level of public support of “ROC” in most of Taiwan’s media reports and social media blogging, in defiance of the PRC’s military parade. The near-consensus among critics in defense of the national title of ROC might have been an unintended consequence to China. The military parade dispute also rekindled the preceding controversy over the high school textbook revision launched by a group of high school students closely related to the Taiwanese independence movement. The textbook controversy dwelt upon the exact status of the ROC, assessments of sensitive historical events, classification of Japanese colonialism, and even the voluntary or coerced nature of comfortable women in
WWII. Basically, the debates intended to delineate the relationship of Taiwan’s indigenous and unique development to China as well as Japan. Should the representation of Japanese colonialism and modernization in textbooks be favorable, it would offer a stark contrast to China’s backwardness, negligence, or domineering attitudes toward Taiwan. Such a struggle over a sensible assessment of Taiwan’s history reflects two former KMT leaders’ acts in dealing with China and Taiwan—former KMT chairman Lee Teng-hui’s public denunciation of the KMT as an “alien regime” from China and blatant fondness for Japan versus another former KMT Chairman Lien Chan’s sentimental affinity with China.

By all means, the overall impact has been the diminishing appeal of the KMT’s cross-Strait narratives in electoral persuasion, as 65.3% of survey respondents in late October 2015 felt comfortable with Tsai being a future Taiwan president in dealing with China, and only 24.9% of them expressed some degree of concern. And China unsurprisingly lost another perfect opportunity to extend an olive branch to Taiwan, the “ROC,” for a symbolic reconciliation and reconnection of both “ROC and PRC” as one big, inclusive China in a united front of defense against Japan in its 70th anniversary of victory. Had it occurred, the bridge-making event would have energized KMT supporters and bolstered the KMT’s 1992 Consensus as a positive prelude to the coming Ma-Xi meeting on November 15, 2015. Instead, China’s intentional exclusion of Taiwan, the ROC, in the military spectacle as well as ceremonial inference really “hurt Taiwanese people’s feeling,” as depicted by the usual Chinese government’s expression to ward off unfriendly foreign criticisms. Coincidentally, when the Chou Tzu-yu’s ROC flag waving

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incident became an electoral hot button issue, DPP candidate Tsai commented that this incident truly “hurts Taiwanese people’s feeling” on the 2016 Election Day.24

Fourth, Taiwan seldom had a chance to articulate its national interests in international institutions during the Ma era. A few noted cases of international participation since 2008 have been Taiwan’s participation in the World Health Assembly (WHA) and the special guest role in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Taiwan’s meager wish to join some functional international organizations, such as the International Criminal Police Organizations (Interpol), had fallen on China’s deaf ears.25 China’s refusal increasingly made younger generations question the usefulness of the “one China” claim and envision that an assertive Taiwan under the DPP might be a better option for their voices to be heard.

In fact, neither China nor the KMT have taken concrete steps to prepare for the impact of Taiwan’s demographic changes, i.e., the annual passing, addition, and natural increase of eligible voters. Taiwan’s eligible voters have increased from 14.3 million in the 1996 presidential election to 18.7 million in 2016, with an approximate increase of one million in each past presidential election.26 The successive alternations of generations in the composition of voters have not meant the successful transmission and adoption of identity knowledge and social constructs without profound modification. Additionally, a series of episodes of cross-Strait confrontations has also increased momentum to challenge the initial Consensus of 1992.

Without China’s active, public, and reciprocal acquiescence to Taiwan’s “one China with different interpretations,” the 1992 Consensus is unlikely to remain intact across regime changes. Thus, a major event like the 2016 election becomes a testing ground for the 1992 Consensus.

**The DPP: the Upsurge of Taiwanese Identity in the 2016 Elections**

Taiwan’s social construct is obviously evolving in favor of the DPP due to contextual alternations of demographic composition, recent social climatic changes, and the spirited support of the pan-Green supporters in media visibility and public sentiment. The DPP and Tsai also became more adaptive than the KMT on the front of identity politics to meet voters’ expectations. As a front-runner in the 2016 presidential race with a double-digit lead in pre-election polls, Tsai usually remained tight-lipped about details revealing how she would conduct cross-Strait relations, except to announce her principle of “status quo maintenance.” Her minimum expression on the cross-Strait agenda prevented her from contenders’ frenzied prodding and punching. Nevertheless, her campaign trail revealed part of her strategic framework.

First, Taiwanese voters’ identity composition has inched toward the path of independence, though not outright into *de jure* independence. The majority of Taiwanese voters’ wishes have gradually progressed toward the DPP’s longstanding platform. Thus, the DPP’s safe bet is to stick to the status quo, which does not require extraordinary agitation by the DPP. If necessary, the DPP could simply aggravate China on cross-Strait issues. Any of China’s likely forceful countermeasures would only provoke more anger and disgust to convert more believers to the DPP’s noble cause. The result would see a further dwindling of China-friendly supporters in Taiwan’s future political market. In the DPP’s calculation, stay calm and carry on the current course. Time is on the DPP’s side.
Second, Tsai’s status quo policy can carve some shares of traditional KMT supporters and calm their previous anxiety and concerns about the appalling governance of former DPP President Chen Shui-bian. During the campaign process, Tsai further revealed that if elected, her cross-Strait policy would be based on the “current constitutional framework of the Republic of China.” In addition to pan-Green supporters, her campaign pledge soothed skeptics who feared the DPP’s pro-Taiwan independence stand might make her regime a déjà vu of the Chen Shui-bian era. However, later during presidential debates, she advanced a pro-active diplomacy vis-à-vis Ma’s diplomatic truce with China. Her comments immediately invited KMT’s strong critique for a possibility of repeating Chen Shui-bian government’s radical approach to cross-Strait relations. Tsai had to retreat back to her defense line afterwards by replying “communication, communication, and communication” to media prodding concerning cross-Strait relations.

No doubt, Tsai’s “status quo” policy has been aligned with the majority of Taiwanese people as indicated in various longitudinal surveys for the past two decades. A policy of “status quo” maintenance is self-explanatory, and it easily conveys to most voters that the new DDP regime under Tsai does intend to disturb most current cross-Strait policies and practices. Even though the KMT constantly challenged Tsai for further details regarding how to maintain the current status quo without the “magic wand”—the 1992 Consensus, the DPP simply chanted its status quo mantra in response. Some challengers considered the recitation of maintaining the status quo a cunning move, given DPP’s previous track record of anti-China statements on cross-Strait relations. Still, Tsai’s status quo policy put her toward the center of the political spectrum, and her verbal promises calmed voters’ anxiety and resistance. In the DDP’s electoral calculus, as long as the cross-Strait issue becomes inconspicuous, other electoral issues, such as disgust with
Ma’s incompetence or disappointment with the KMT’s intra-party soap opera of power struggles would captivate media attention and reprioritize voters’ issue preferences. Consequently, the DPP won the chance to be a third-time regime change in Taiwan’s presidential elections.

Third, should one venture beyond Tsai’s cautious campaign statements and electoral profile in commenting on the cross-Strait issue, one could preliminarily conclude that Tsai would try to maintain the status quo as she tried to assure both the US and Japan during her trips abroad. After all, she will chart Taiwan’s strategic course tilting toward the US and Japan for powerful balancing wedges against China’s security threat and seek the opportunity to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP) to lessen Taiwan’s economic dependence on China. This has been a perennial issue between the KMT and the DPP concerning the priority of China in Taiwan’s overall national security and economic sustainability. While the KMT believes that Taiwan’s future relies on peaceful and stable cross-Strait relations as the primary priority due to China’s rapid market and global presence, the DPP harbors an opposing logic by arguing for the essentiality of the US, Japan, and other western countries as a check against China’s unification threats. In brief, the KMT roadmap would go through a friendly China to connect with the world by defusing China’s obstruction; the DPP, on the contrary, would go first through the world, i.e., the US and others, prior to detouring back to engagements with China. It is foreseeable that the Tsai government will follow the DPP path, though this does not imply a complete foreclosure to existing exchanges with China. The electoral mandate naturally gives Tsai and the DPP a chance to carry out their ideas. The future route might be bumpy if Tsai’s skillful negotiation is unable to navigate China’s layers of obstacles. Moreover, Tsai’s dealing with China also depends on the willingness and commitment of the US and Japan to accommodate Taiwan’s needs under China’s pressures.
Fourth, Tsai’s low key, no surprise, cautious “status quo maintenance” message implied no desire to make an abrupt departure from current policies and practices in cross-Strait policies. However, the hidden text of her status quo remarks might imply some necessary deviations from Ma’s rapprochement policy. The electoral victory made her feel more confident to express explicitly some concrete principles in managing cross-Strait status quo, mainly “the Republic of China constitutional order, the results of cross-strait negotiations, interactions and exchanges, and democratic principles and the will of the Taiwanese people.”

As much as Tsai would acknowledge more or less Ma’s past practices and policies, her government may want to reflect the democratic will of the Taiwanese people, particularly pan-Green supporters, exhibited in the 2016 elections as faithfully as possible in policy changes by abiding by the ROC constitutional order and legal stipulations. She would loudly claim her commitment to the wording of status quo. Accompanying this is the intriguing qualification of her status quo pledge in tandem with the shift of public sentiment toward national identity. With China’s indisposition to compromise on its self-defined “one China” principle to satisfy Taiwan’s public aspiration, the passing of previous “China-centered” generations in voter composition, and the entry of younger eligible voters who tend to be “natural supporters of Taiwan independence” (tianran du) in instinct without extensive collective memory of China, one would expect continuous augmentation of Taiwanese identity devotees.

As the status quo continues to evolve, one should not be surprised if one day a critical mass of voters articulates a newly formulated “status quo” of Taiwanese identity through ballots, and the new majority yearns for Taiwan’s “independent” status away from China in democratic

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27 The text of Tsia’s speech in Chinese and English after her electoral victory on January 16, 2016, can be found in <iing.tw/posts/533>. The English translation might be slightly different from the Chinese text. For example, Tsai used xianzheng tizhi (constitutional framework or order), instead of xianfa (constitution). The use of constitutional framework, in her supporters’ view, contains all constitutional interpretation, amendments, cases, and others. The use of “constitution” confines on those constitutional articles only.
procedures under the current Republic of China’s constitutional stipulation. Clearly, election is the best, peaceful democratic procedure to express the collective will, as the 2016 elections have demonstrated.

Such a future would be fully compliant with President Tsai’s prescribed principles in approaching cross-Strait relations, potentially putting both the US and China in a bind. As Tsai explicitly answered in the presidential debate, Taiwanese independence is surely an option available to the public. And her pledge to constitutional rules and democratic will lays out a legitimate institutional way to substantiate the independence calling. An intricate follow-up issue is whether or not the threat of China’s persistent military option for unification would be a powerful enough deterrent to the Taiwanese public and elites, convincing them to put the brakes on a Taiwanese declaration of independence. It also depends on whether all concerned parties, i.e., China, the US, and other regional powers, are ready to recalibrate their regional strategic interests for worst-case scenarios, as Taiwan’s continuous identity reconstruction rolls toward a brand new Taiwan.

An additional impetus to show the manifest alteration of Taiwan’s identity was the Chou Tzu-yu event, days before the 2016 election. It drove the already weakened KMT’s electoral support further into a downward spiral in the last days before the election. After waving an ROC national flag in a South Korean televised show in November 2015, Chou faced accusation by another pro-China entertainer for her implied “pro-Taiwan independence” behavior. One day before Taiwan’s 2016 general elections, the South Korean entertainment company, JYP, apologized to the Chinese audience for fear of boycotts and profit losses in China by releasing a video of Chou’s distressed apology, affirming the one China principle. China even acquiescently permitted its massive group of Chinese netizens to “fanqiang” (climb the wall, bypass China’s
great cyber firewall of control) to criticize and smash pro-independence opinions. This sparked a cyber-clash of Taiwanese nationalism versus Chinese nationalism.\textsuperscript{28}

Chou’s video vibe instantly stimulated rage that mobilized most Taiwanese youngsters, including 1.34 million newly eligible voters, to rush to vote the next day. While all parties and candidates in the elections as well as the Taiwanese government swiftly condemned such an outrageous event, this incident became an instant reminder of Taiwanese sadness and frustration under China’s unreasonable and bullying behavior all these years. It also extracted public sympathy for Chou because of China’s harsh treatment of a 16-year-old Taiwanese singer.

As anticipated, public sentiment targeted the Ma government for being responsible for past portrayal of a rosy and unfulfillable promise of “one China with different interpretations,” when China had seldom reciprocated sincerely and equally by openly acknowledging Taiwan’s legitimate existence. The KMT and other pan-Blue parties suffered from this event, and the DPP and the New Power Party, a party spawned from the Sunflowers Movement, naturally reaped electoral benefits in party ballots for legislative seats and also boosted Tsai’s presidential bid with a solid 56% winning share, despite the lowest 66.27% voter turnout since Taiwan’s first presidential election in 1996.\textsuperscript{29}

The incident has caused a political tsunami with multiple implications. The most important consequence of Chou’s event is that youngsters swarmed out on Election Day to cast their votes. It is a testimony to younger generations’ assertion of their national identity and symbolic display in election. They openly defy China’s consistent “bossy and bullying” acts against Taiwan’s


\textsuperscript{29} Minnie Chan, “Teen Pop Star Chou Tzu-yu’s Apology for Waving Taiwan’s Flag Swayed Young voters for DPP,” \textit{South China Morning Post}, January 17, 2016. Later, some talk show commentators even commented the impact of Chou’s incident on some legislators’ electoral results overnight and led to the successful election of three legislators from constituencies and two seats allocated from proportional share of party ballots, though there is no openly available documentation for verification of such claims.
reasonable request to equality, dignity, and representation in international participation. The younger voters’ favorable enthusiasm toward the DPP and other pan-green parties may continue with the annual addition of eligible voters in sustaining Taiwan’s fear and apprehension of China. Their political attitudes will continue to be a crucial variable in charting the course of future cross-Strait relations.

Conclusions: Sliding In and Out of the “1992 Consensus” Box

Taiwan’s 2016 elections illustrated that the change of identity composition would influence electoral results. As Gillis once remarked, identity is not simply “things we think about, but things we think with” (original emphasis).\(^\text{30}\) When an identity narrative attempts to define and mobilize supporters and believers, it frequently privileges one particular symbolic meaning and magnifies the self-consciousness of the specific community by excluding and scorning those favoring the others. Very much like Duara’s study in historicizing China’s national identity, Taiwanese elites’ initial soft boundaries drawn upon the differentiation of identities based on populist sensationalization has gradually advanced to hardened boundaries in differentiation regarding electoral agenda.\(^\text{31}\) After the electoral victory, supporters and parties within the winning coalition will be likely to pressure the fulfillment of identity platforms to assert Taiwanese distinctive constitutive principles of a community in governance. The DPP’s main task is to translate the current status quo of Taiwan’s identity preferences into concrete policies without endangering Taiwan’s security and survival.


Thus, any proclamation of “status quo” refers only to the temporal, spatial, and momentary presence of the situation in allusion. In Taiwan’s situation, the formerly proclaimed China-centered imagined community has transformed into an increasingly self-reinforcing, “locked-in,” imagined, Taiwan-centered political community, in Benedict Anderson’s terms of reference.\textsuperscript{32} Ergo, political campaigns and election results provide ample opportunities and battle grounds for multiple contestants to scramble in the game of identity politics by proposing specific institutional agenda and inspiring supporters’ enthusiasm in elections.\textsuperscript{33}

The 2016 elections testified to several features of Taiwan’s political development in recent years. First, pundits and analysts unsurprisingly foresaw the KMT’s defeat in the 2016 elections as the electoral campaign proceeded. The shock was that the defeat was so catastrophic to the KMT, in losing both the presidency and the legislature, turning Taiwan’s political terrain dramatically “green.” As the biggest loser, the KMT now faces an immediate crisis in national identity discourses, and its future prospects for re-capturing the political stage remains unpromising.

China is another loser in Taiwan’s election and should also bear the burden of blame for its repeatedly missed opportunities to endorse the “separate interpretations” of China as requested by the KMT regime. China neglected the crucial element of reciprocity for the construction of an intersubjective understanding of “Chinese” identity between the “self” (“China” in the PRC) and the “other” (“China” in Taiwan). China’s over-confidence in realist calculus and its belief in its own material strength in dealing with Taiwan’s cross-Strait asymmetry made China feel that time is on its side, given both Taiwan’s unavoidable economic dependence on China and China’s powerful military deterrent.

With a similar hope that time is on its side, the DPP is convinced that identity politics in a
democratic society will eventually lead to the DPP’s promised land—an independent Taiwan.
Taiwan’s identity politics and the 2016 elections demonstrated a classical match across the Strait
between democracy and non-democracy as well as a duel between solid identity conviction and
brutish power display. The belief that time is working in their own favor has made both Taiwan,
particularly in the case of the DPP, and China reluctant to compromise. The cross-Strait
stalemate will continue election after election, unless either side begins to feel that the clock is
ticking faster than before.

Second, the 2016 elections are much like a combined repackaging and reframing process, as
illustrated by scholars advocating the idea of substantive or symbolic bricolage in institutional
change.\(^{34}\) Although advocating Taiwan’s unique identity separate from the “one China” defined
by the PRC, the DPP views of Taiwanese independence during the election process have not
significantly dismantled or eliminated formerly established symbolic references, rhetorical
narratives, or culturally accepted principles essential to the normative and cognitive institutions
under the “Republic of China.” Regardless of their disgust toward the symbol or substance of
ROC, the DPP’s identity connotations and historical understandings in this campaign have been
partially restrained or compromised under the “status quo maintenance” campaign pledge. This
has been demonstrated by its willingness to follow the “Republic of China” constitutional
framework, its deliberate display of the ROC flag in Tsai’s victory speech, and DPP’s political
elites’ appearances and indistinguishable murmurings of the ROC national anthem at ceremonial
events. Apparently, the end justified the choice of electoral means. The electoral result in 2016
perhaps spelt rhetorically the end of the 1992 Consensus, a term that might have exhausted its

political functionality. On this point, Tsai and the DPP have bid farewell to the name of the “1992 Consensus” and sought their own outside-the-box idea for a fresh approach to cross-Strait relations. The DPP has not unveiled any new term or phrase to ensure a peaceful, regular, and steady process of cross-Strait consultation and cooperation. Tsai has, at least, hinted her intent to honor most of Ma’s policies in the near future. Naturally, the tempo, scope, and eventual fate of Ma’s policies under Tsai’s helm might be carefully screened and revised with a plain reference to “status quo maintenance.” The pledge of “status quo” is thus a big basic template into which nearly all political interpretations and policies would fit nicely. Also, Tsai does not need to be confined within Ma’s pledge of “no unification, no independence, and no use of force,” a timely principle contributing to Ma’s past electoral victories. However, the first two slogans might restrain Tsai’s future freedom of movement in dealing with China.

Consequently, the election results de-legitimized the phrase of the “1992 Consensus” and somewhat rejected China’s self-defined “one China” in Taiwan’s public discourses and official references. While Taiwan has not been bound by the Consensus nominally and officially, the segment of “different interpretations” of each side’s “China” might remain intact to permit either side to blow its own horn. Since Taiwan cannot call for de jure outright independence and risk China’s possible military threat, the title of ROC serves its purpose of keeping in line with China’s “one China” demand. As for the interpretation of the contents of “China,” the debate can wait until its substance has been incrementally modified through the Tsai government’s skillful policy manipulation for a reconstruction of cultural norm and social constructs, as President Chen Shui-bian did before. In line with the idea of “quantity change will naturally lead to quality modification,” the consolidation of Taiwan’s separate identity from China may pave the way for Taiwan’s independence. Based on the DPP’s past track record in identity politics, it
is almost certain that the DPP will continue to excel in its task of molding the Taiwanese indigenous identity. The general public might not feel the necessity of keeping the 1992 Consensus. Still, pre-election polls steadily show that the principle of “one China with different interpretations” in cross-Strait interactions, without explicit reference to the 1992 Consensus, has public support. Surveys show support from 55.2% and 53.5% of respondents in December 2014 and October 2015, respectively, in comparison to 31.6% and 31.7% in opposition to the phrase.\footnote{Taiwan National Security Survey, 2014 and 2015, the Program of Asian Security, Duke University. <dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/43428880/index.html>, Question C23.}

In other words, Tsai’s designation of such a common expression of “status quo” is analogous to the “no brand name” policy initiated by the Japanese well-known apparel company Muji’s in cross-Strait interactions. Thus, Tsai and the DPP can avoid the hassle of political disputes triggered by names and connotations as well as the waste of political energy in explicit explanation to voters. It can easily denounce the “illegitimate” and “unfounded” 1992 Consensus, a term long rejected by her party and devoted supporters, and at the same time unobtrusively continue most of the current status quo policies favored by all concerned parties, including the US, Japan, and maybe even China. Thus, Tsai’s status quo proclamation is out of the box of the “1992 Consensus,” but to some extent parts of its principle remains inside the box.

Third, Taiwan’s democratic principles based on popular sovereignty have surely spoken loudly in the 2016 elections. In Tsai’s political calculus, as long as the people collectively decide, China would have no choice but to accept Taiwan’s democratic terms. Such an expectation for Xi Jinping to concede to Tsai’s commanding will must be subjected to reality testing in the future. Tsai has nudged Taiwan’s public opinion towards the center, close to her party’s position. The question is how to harness and consolidate this newly emerged Taiwanese consensus, should the public feel that a non-democratic and nationalistic China chooses not to
meet her conditions and cross-Strait relations becomes tense. Above all, China has repeatedly signaled its demand for Tsai to echo China’s preferred term of reference. Xi even drew the line to treat the 1992 Consensus as the “divine stabilizer to calm the seas” (dinghai shenzhen) to prevent “earth-moving and mountain-shaking” (didong shanyao) consequences in cross-Strait relations. Xi also would seek a “final resolution” of cross-Strait difference during his terms of office.36 Perhaps, Xi would like to wait and see what Tsai can offer. If the 1992 Consensus is impossible, then Tsai may need to come up with concrete substance to ensure China’s aspiration of the “one China” principle would be sustained in a pragmatic way.

Tsai certainly could adopt Deng Xiaoping’s “black cat and white cat” analogy to convince China that pragmatism in problem-solving is far more important than senseless disputes in naming the consensus. Deng’s predominance within the CCP’s power hierarchy permitted him to have the luxury to preach his “cat” gospel to convince his skeptics and allies and condemn his opponents. In the cross-Strait power asymmetry, Taiwan’s relative weak position would require more allies, resources and stamina to persuade a powerful and stronger China to meet Taiwan’s terms beyond reasonable and rational dialogues and negotiation.

Fourth, during the 2016 elections, Tsai proclaimed that younger Taiwanese generations have acquired and internalized the idea of Taiwanese independence. And Beijing will have to realize this unpleasant truth in Taiwan’s identity composition and will need to deal with this issue in the wake of the DPP’s election win. Indeed, more than 89% of Taiwanese respondents endorse the idea of “status quo maintenance,” and 80.9% understands Taiwan’s insufficient defense capability against China in an October 2015 survey. The intrigue is that only 15.3% of them

would be willing to actively resist or join the army to fight against China’s military campaign in a worst-case scenario of Taiwan’s declaration of independence.\textsuperscript{37} It is a paradoxical contrast in the struggle between “the heart versus the head.”

Such a dilemma between an idealistic wish and the brutal reality existed even among the young generation in 2015. Despite both the 20-29 age group and the 30-39 age group displaying a higher Taiwanese identity affiliation, those willing to work in China among the 20-29 age group fell from 48\% in 2013, 40\% in 2014, to 32\% in 2015 based on Taiwan’s United Daily’s long term of track of public opinions. However, those among the 30-39 age group who were interested in a job in China climbed from 24\% in 2014 to 35\% in September 2015.\textsuperscript{38} The boost of Taiwanese identity and anti-China social atmosphere due to the Sunflowers Movement seemed to affect the 20-29 age group, but the 30-39 age group might have a stronger desire to explore China’s job opportunities as a result of Taiwan’s stifled economic development. This clearly shows Taiwan’s public dilemma as well as the DPP’s government’s predicament in searching for a medium between political identity assertion and the economic quest for Taiwan’s sustainability.

At this moment, while the US has consistently expressed its desire for the maintenance of the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, China has adopted a wait and see approach by not reacting forcefully to the DPP’s victory in any concrete measures, except repeated declarations of the

\textsuperscript{37} Taiwan National Security Survey, 2015, the Program of Asian Security, Duke University. <dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/43428880/index.html>, Questions C22, C28 and C33 in the 2015 Survey. In Question C28, 10.3\% of respondents expressed their support whatever the government decides, while 17.5\%, higher than 13.5\% in 2014, of them would flee or go abroad and 30\% of them will follow “the natural development of the situation” (shunqi ziran) in 2015. Also, for the complex interaction between emotional attachment and security concerns, see Rou-Lan Chen, “Taiwan's Identity in Formation: In Reaction to a Democratizing Taiwan and a Rising China,” Asian Ethnicity, 14(2), 2013, 229-250.

1992 Consensus in governing future cross-Strait relations. Neither China nor the US would stand by should Taiwan drift too far from each country’s orbit. So far, the “Republic of China” has endured all clamor and commotion and remained the common denominator in holding all domestic identity contenders together and soothing international anxiety.

As Chao Chien-min, former Deputy Minister of the Mainland Affairs Council, aptly put it, “The US does not recognize the Republic of China, but will not allow the Republic of China to give up the Republic of China; Beijing intends to terminate the Republic of China, but will not permit Taiwan to terminate the Republic of China; and Tsai Ing-wen wants to maintain the status quo, the choice remains the status quo under the Republic of China’s current constitutional system.” Plainly speaking, the identity focal points perceived by all three parties—the US, China, and Taiwan—still converges on the ROC, though the details of the ROC remain unsettled in domestic politics. And the DPP’s preferred interpretation of the ROC is the ROC after Taiwan’s democratization in the late 1980s, not the ROC favored by the KMT established in China in 1912 or the ROC sustained by the authoritarian KMT after 1949. In conclusion, the “one China” principle will continue to be a controversial issue even after the DPP has won complete governance authority with a confident majority in legislative seats and a majority mandate in presidential votes in the 2016 elections.

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39 Li Mingxuan, “Zhongguo jiousan dayuebing daodi yange shuikan?” (China’s Big Military Parade Was Really a Spectacle for Whom?), Tianxia zazhi (Commonwealth Magazine), Sept. 2, 2015, 183.