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CCP Appoints New Deputy Director for TAO with Hong Kong Experience

On July 23, the website of the State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) of the People's Republic of China (PRC) revealed the fourth deputy director of its leadership team. Close observers of the TAO, which is in charge of implementing the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) policy towards Taiwan, have been waiting for the TAO to fill this [vacancy](#) since the last position in the agency was filled back in December 2018. Liu Junchuan (劉軍川, b. 1963), who most recently served as the TAO liaison department's (聯絡局) director, was recently appointed as the newest deputy director. In his capacity as the liaison department's director, Liu has been on the frontline of dealing with Taiwan-related affairs. Liu would often be seen in public accompanying senior officials from the TAO in meetings with senior visitors from Taiwan. Recent [meetings](#) included those with Kaohsiung Mayor and Kuomintang (KMT) presidential candidate Han Kuo-yu, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je, and the former Taipei City Mayor Eric Chu. The former two could possibly become the next president of Taiwan. Having worked in various bureaus within the TAO for over 26 years, Liu is a well-known figure among Taiwan counterparts at the working level.

The leadership of the TAO is now comprised of one director and four deputy directors. The last position that was filled within the TAO was in late 2018 when Pei Jinjia (裴金佳, b. 1963) was announced as the TAO's lead deputy director. The TAO had been busy shuffling the deck of its executive leadership after former deputy director [Gong Qinggai](#) (龔清概) was investigated and convicted of bribery in 2016. Prior to his posting at TAO, Pei served as the party secretary of [Xiamen city](#) of Fuzhou province. The other two deputy directors are [Chen Yuanfeng](#) (陳元豐, b. 1963) and [Long Minbiao](#) (龍明彪, b. 1962). The newest deputy director's [appointment](#) seems to break from the trend of previous appointments into the CCP's broader Taiwan policy apparatuses, which drew from outside the agency and appeared to prefer bureaucrats with functional expertise beyond Taiwan. Another [position](#) held by Liu that bears mentioning is that he also taught at the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force Command College and

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served as the Political Department Officer of the 45th Division of the Airborne Forces.

In an article titled "[The great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation necessarily requires the complete reunification \[sic\] of the motherland](#)" (中華民族偉大復興必然要求實現祖國完全統一) in *Study Times* (學習時報), which was published by the elite CCP Central Party School, Liu wrote:

"The 19th Party Congress report continues to clearly define the completion of the motherland's reunification [sic] as one of our party's three historical tasks, and unite [this task] with the goal of realizing the 'China dream' of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The clear implementation of reunification [sic] of the motherland is the sacred historical mission of our party in the new era, and fully embody the fundamental interests of the majority of the people and the Chinese nation."

According to the Taiwan-based pro-Beijing *China Times*—which praised his appointment—Liu had previously served in the TAO's economic bureau as well as its liaison bureau. The paper claimed that Liu was a good friend of many Taiwan businessmen, since he had worked in the economic bureau from 2001 to 2009, and served as the first division's deputy chief, chief, and deputy director. While serving as deputy director, he [worked](#) very closely with Taiwan business associations operating nationally, in Beijing, and in other various cities throughout China.

Prior to his current appointment, Liu served as the director of the liaison department for 10 years from 2009 to 2019. The function of the department is to serve as the interface for political parties and groups in Taiwan, make arrangements for visitors from the island, and serve as the go-between for the central government and local TAOs. During the previous administration in Taiwan of KMT President Ma—during the height of KMT-CCP exchanges—many of these dialogues were reportedly spearheaded by Liu. Moreover, he reportedly played an important role in helping to coordinate the [Ma-Xi summit](#) in Singapore in 2015.

In 1998, just after the retrocession of Hong Kong to China, while barely mentioned in most news report covering the appointment, Liu was on secondment to the *Xinhua News Agency* in Hong Kong (which served as the Central Government's Liaison Office until 2000) to work on Taiwan-related matters. He served in that [role](#) until October 2001 after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) won its first presidential election in Taiwan. Liu's ascension in a senior position within the TAO comes at an interesting time in light of the ongoing political crisis in Hong Kong. Against the backdrop of increasing interaction between

the people of Hong Kong and Taiwan, especially following the pro-democracy protests in both Taiwan and Hong Kong in 2014, the new appointment may reflect Beijing's growing concerns of the increasing connectivity between the people of Taiwan and Hong Kong. Indeed, in March 2018 it had been rumored that the Chinese government was considering to [merge the TAO](#) with the Hong Kong and Macao Offices within the State Council—although those speculations have not materialized.

The main point: The appointment of a new deputy director of the TAO comes at an interesting time in light of the ongoing political crisis in Hong Kong and may reflect Beijing's growing concerns of the increasing connectivity between the people of Taiwan and Hong Kong.

New Polling Data Reflect Deepening Taiwanese Identity, Preference for Status Quo, Party Identification, and Strengthening Will to Fight

In a series of [polls](#) conducted annually and released by the National Chengchi University's Election Study Center in Taiwan, which surveys people's political attitudes towards national identity, independence or unification, and party identification since 1992, the most recent results released on July 10, 2019 reflect a shift which highlights a strengthening sense of Taiwanese identity, preference for the status quo, and party identification over recent years.

On people's [national identity](#) of being either "Taiwanese" or "Chinese," the most recent polls conducted in June 2019 show that 56.9 percent of respondents identify as Taiwanese (up from 54.5 in 2018), 36.5 percent identify as being both Taiwanese and Chinese (down from 38.2 in 2018), and those identifying as being only Chinese at 3.6 percent (down from 3.7 in 2018), with a 3.0 percent (down from 3.6 in 2018) of non-respondents. Interestingly, the increase in people's identification as Taiwanese follows a year-on-year drop since the peak of Taiwanese identification in 2014 at 60.6 percent (the year of the Sunflower Movement) for four consecutive years through 2018 when it reached 54.5 percent.

When asked about people's preference for [independence or unification](#), the most recent polling data show a consistent and overwhelming support among the respondents for maintaining some form of the "status quo" with an aggregate total of 86.1 percent. More interestingly, a deeper dive into the polling data shows that 30.6 percent of respondents indicated that they prefer to maintain the status quo and decide later (down from 33.4

percent in 2018), 26.9 percent prefer to maintain the status quo indefinitely (up from 24 percent in 2018), whereas 19.9 percent prefer to maintain status quo and move towards independence (up from 15.1 in 2018), and 8.7 percent prefer to maintain status quo and move towards unification (down from 12.8 in 2018). Moreover, 6.3 percent preferred to not respond (down from 6.6 in 2018), 5.8 percent of those polled stated that they prefer independence as soon as possible (up from 5.0 percent in 2018), and only 1.7 percent stated that they want unification as soon as possible (down from 3.1 percent in 2018).

On people's [party identification](#), the most recent polling data also show that a plurality of respondents still identifies as independent or provided a non-response at 42.5 percent (down from 49.1 percent from in 2018). Interestingly, party identification for both the ruling party (the DPP) and the opposition party (the KMT) increased with 24.5 percent identifying as DPP supporters (up from 20.1), and 27.6 percent of respondents identifying as KMT supporters (up from 25.4 percent). Moreover, 4.7 percent of respondents said they identify themselves as New Power Party (NPP) supporters (up from 4.0 percent), while other parties received less than 1 percent.

In a separate [poll](#) publicly released on July 19 by the country's government-sponsored national democracy assistance foundation, the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD), which gauges the people's willingness to fight against China's invasion, among those polled, 57.4 percent said that if China were to launch an attack in response to Taiwan's declaration of independence, they would be willing to go to war to defend Taiwan. This is up from 55 percent in 2018. The same poll also shows that the percentage of respondents who would be unwilling to fight also dropped to 31 percent from 35.9 percent in 2018.

The previous year's poll, which was released in a public seminar at the [Global Taiwan Institute](#), also unveiled a more detailed look into the question of the youth's willingness to fight. When asked specifically: "Would you fight for Taiwan if mainland China uses force against Taiwan for unification?" 70.3 percent of the respondents under the age of 39 said "yes" and only 26.5 percent said "no." Whereas, 66.1 percent of the respondents above 40 years of age said "yes" and 24.9 percent said "no." When [asked](#): "Would you fight for Taiwan if Taiwan formally announced independence that causes mainland China to use force against Taiwan?" 63.4 percent of respondents under the age of 39 said "yes," and only 32.6 percent of respondents said "no"; whereas 49.9 percent of the people above 40 said "yes," and 39.2 percent said "no."

Contrary to Beijing's belief and some concerns in Washington of Taiwan's resiliency, including whether the people in Taiwan have the will to fight, [polling data](#) indicates that a majority of people in Taiwan will fight if China invades the island. China's intensifying pressure campaign against Taiwan has coincided with the increase in the people's willingness to fight to defend Taiwan, an increased sense of the Taiwanese identity felt among the people in Taiwan, as well as society's consolidated preference for the status quo.

The main point: China's intensification of its pressure campaign against Taiwan has coincided with the increase in the people of Taiwan's willingness to fight, as well as the society's strengthening sense of a Taiwanese identity, preference for the status quo, and party identification.

Can Germany be a Diplomatic Advocate for Taiwan?

By: I-wei Jennifer Chang

I-wei Jennifer Chang is a research fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.

Over the past several months as an increasing number of international allies and partners voiced support for Taiwan in the face of China's intensifying pressure campaign, Germany has played a greater role than expected—one that has gone relatively unnoticed—in providing sympathy and support for Taiwan and its participation in international forums. Specifically, German government officials [backed Taiwan's inclusion in the World Health Assembly](#) (WHA) and [voiced opposition](#) to China's self-proclaimed right to use force against the island to achieve unification. These developments raise questions about the German government's cross-Strait policy, the extent of German official support for Taiwan's national security and foreign policy interests, and Berlin's potential role in broadening Taipei's public diplomacy.

Unlike many foreign governments that switched recognition from the Republic of China (ROC) to the People's Republic of China (PRC), Germany never had diplomatic relations with the ROC after World War II. Following Germany's division into two states in 1949, the eastern German Democratic Republic (GDR) quickly established [diplomatic relations with the PRC](#). The western Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), however, withstood US pressure to form official relations with Chiang Kai-shek's government on Taiwan and [refused to recognize](#) both Beijing and

Taipei. More than two decades later, the FRG established diplomatic relations with the PRC on October 11, 1972, and since then, and after the country's reunification in 1990, the FRG has strictly adhered to Beijing's "One-China" policy.

The German government's official position that there is only one China and Taiwan is part of China [has not changed](#) over the past four decades. As German scholar Gunter Schubert notes, "[Germany's Taiwan policy is 'One-China' policy as defined by the PRC.](#)" By contrast, the United States only "[acknowledges](#)" that China claims Taiwan as part of its territory. Berlin is unlikely to change its official position on the "One-China" principle or Taiwan's legal status, or politically upgrade relations with Taiwan unless the [European Union \(EU\) shifts its stance](#), lest China plays the European countries off against each other, argues Mr. Schubert.

Meanwhile, Beijing has used its historical support of German reunification to promote unification between China and Taiwan. "[China always supports the national unity of Germany, thereby it hopes Germany to take the same attitude to China,](#)" according to the Chinese Embassy in Berlin. Just as China backed Germany's reunification, "[It goes without saying that we will do the same,](#)" German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder told Chinese leaders in 2003. At the same time, Berlin has espoused the [peaceful resolution](#) of the conflict between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

German officials rarely speak publicly about Taiwan, but earlier this year a high-ranking German official reiterated his government's stance on the use of force against Taiwan. In January 2019, German Minister of Foreign Affairs Heiko Maas told the German Bundestag, the national parliament, that he [opposed China's threat of using military force](#) to achieve reunification with Taiwan. Maas made the remarks in response to a [question by Klaus-Peter Willsch](#), a Christian Democratic Union lawmaker and Chairman of the Germany-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group, on Chinese President Xi Jinping's hardline speech on Taiwan. In a [January 2 speech](#) commemorating the 40th anniversary of the "Message to Compatriots in Taiwan," Xi said, "We make no promise to renounce the use of force and reserve the option of taking all necessary means." Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [thanked Maas](#) for speaking for Taiwan and said it would [continue to work with Germany](#) to preserve regional peace. The Germany-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Group has been a voice for Taiwan in the German parliament by taking a stance on Taiwan's difficulties vis-à-vis China and reminding German lawmakers of the importance of supporting democratic countries. [1]

In another uncharacteristic German public statement on Taiwan, Germany's top envoy to Taipei spoke up for Taiwan's participation in international forums on global governance issues. In October 2018, Thomas Prinz, director general of the German Institute Taipei (德國在台協會), said Germany recognizes the "[constructive role Taiwan plays in international affairs,](#)" and voiced support for Taiwan joining the [WHA and Interpol](#). Under intense pressure from Beijing, Taiwanese health officials [were blocked](#) from attending the WHA's meeting in Geneva in May 2019. While the German parliament and government privately hold the position that Taiwan should participate in international organizations, the norm was not to express that publicly. [2] Yet, Prinz's public statement does not indicate any change to German policy, said Mr. Schubert. [3]

In June 2019, *Politico* published an [article](#) claiming that Germany was considering dispatching a warship to sail through the Taiwan Strait, following transits by the US and French navies. After two Chinese J-11 fighter jets made a brief incursion on March 31 across the median in the Taiwan Strait that divides China and Taiwan's airspace, the US and France responded by dispatching their respective naval vessels to the Taiwan Strait in April and May. However, the German government [rejected this report](#), in line with the country's general [reluctance](#) to project military power abroad outside of [UN peacekeeping missions](#), while other media reports suggest German ships may also [transit through the South China Sea](#).

If either scenario is realized, it would be a new step for Germany to take on China over the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea. Any German decision regarding passage through the Taiwan Strait has more to do with China than Taiwan, said Mr. Schubert. [4] Germany sending a naval vessel to the Taiwan Strait would be a "symbolic act" telling the Chinese that Europe also has a line on certain Chinese practices domestically and internationally, he said, pointing to the European Union's critiques of Chinese policies on [Xinjiang](#) and the South China Sea. [5]

With China's recent poaching of several Taiwan's diplomatic allies in the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa, Taipei faces a formidable challenge in its international public diplomacy. Such smaller countries are important sources of Taiwan's formal recognition and have issued [statements of support](#) for Taiwan on various occasions, but in the realm of international politics, it is still the major powers, emerging powers, and key regional actors that hold disproportionate sway in international and regional institutions—and may pave the way for Taiwan to garner more international diplomatic space.

Traditional European powers, such as the United Kingdom, France, and Germany, represent the older models of Western-liberal democracy, rule of law, and human rights—and, along with the US, are the core of Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen’s calls to [like-minded democratic nations](#) to defend Taiwan’s sovereignty. Europeans are attracted to Taiwan’s democratic consolidation, and these shared democratic values undergird European constituencies that support Taiwan. “[Germany and Taiwan are united in respect for Democracy and Rule of Law. Based on this, we maintain close economic and cultural relations](#),” said Mr. Prinz.

Two major international trends will impact Europe’s relations with Taiwan. First, heightened US-China tensions have put Europe in a sandwiched position between the two strategic rivals, and the EU could become an informal mediator and a more prominent actor influencing US-China relations, argues Mr. Schubert. [6] Second, as China continues to consolidate its economic and diplomatic profile in Europe as part of its global ambitions, and courts a large swathe of European states, ranging from traditional democracies and former communist states to Balkan countries and EU and non-EU countries, such extensive engagement will ultimately impact Taipei’s relations with Europe.

The Taiwanese government may be frustrated that Europe tends to be cautious on cross-strait relations, but that should not deter Taipei from investing in building and fostering stronger relations with European countries. Taiwan may be upset at what Germany says or does publicly, but it should understand that Germany sympathizes with Taiwan on its situation with China and that Taiwan has much support throughout the German government, said Mr. Schubert. [7] Thus, Taipei must be ready to strategically engage European countries including Germany.

President Tsai’s strategic orientation to Southeast Asia, as epitomized by the New Southbound Policy, surpasses the level of attention and diplomatic capital paid to Europe. “The Tsai Administration is focusing more on Southeast Asia and South Asia than Europe now, and Europe has become a little less important,” Mr. Schubert said. [8] Tsai’s approach makes geographic and economic sense, but traditional European democracies merit receiving more attention. Europe is very sympathetic to Taiwan, and even if EU governments cannot express that publicly, the region provides another pathway for Taiwan’s public diplomacy.

Perhaps Taiwan needs a European version of the New Southbound Policy that also focuses on enhancing relations in a number of areas, including trade, tourism, technology, political consultations, and cultural and academic exchanges. Ger-

many is already Taiwan’s [largest trade partner in the European Union](#), while Taiwan is Germany’s [fifth largest trade partner](#) in Asia. Around [250 German companies](#) are operating in Taiwan, and [Taiwanese smart machinery and technology companies](#) are collaborating with German firms. The German government also has sent numerous [parliamentary delegations](#) and [ministry officials](#) to Taiwan. [9] At a time when Europe and Taiwan are both facing challenges from China, Taiwan needs a more systematic policy approach to strengthen unofficial relations with the European Union and individual European countries such as Germany.

The main point: Germany, along with the European Union, presents an alternate source of support for Taiwan’s diplomatic efforts, but this requires expanded strategic engagement and regularized consultation between Taipei and Berlin, Brussels, and other European governments.

[1] Author’s interview with Gunter Schubert, July 11, 2019. Mr. Schubert is the Professor and Chair of Greater China Studies at the Institute of Asian and Oriental Studies and Director of the European Research Center on Contemporary Taiwan at the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen in Germany.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid.

Taiwan’s Democracy the Key Focus During Tsai’s US Stopovers

By: J. Michael Cole

J. Michael Cole is a senior non-resident fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute.

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) on July 21 concluded her 12-day trip to diplomatic allies in the Caribbean. Tsai and her delegation bookended her state visits to Haiti, St. Kitts and Nevis,

St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and St. Lucia—four of Taiwan’s 17 official diplomatic allies—with high-profile stopovers in New York City and Denver, Colorado, where she made various remarks emphasizing Taiwan’s determination to resist pressure from Beijing and its commitment to democracy. While publicized in the visited countries and in Taiwan, the state visits were a side show for the stopovers in the two US cities. President Tsai has made 10 public transits through the United States so far during her administration, where, as Tsai contended, US authorities showed [greater flexibility](#) and afforded her more time to interact with various groups than in the past.

While in New York on a two-day transit, Tsai [met](#) with several UN envoys from Taiwan’s official diplomatic allies at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO), Taiwan’s representative office in the city. During the meeting, Tsai called on Taiwan’s allies to continue to voice their support for Taiwan’s “meaningful” participation in various UN bodies, such as Interpol, the World Health Assembly (WHA), and International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Since 2016, Beijing has used its influence at the UN to block Taiwan’s efforts to join annual meetings as an observer, despite various efforts behind the scenes by the US and other major democracies, as well as Taiwan’s official allies at the world body, to ensure Taiwanese representatives can participate. As one precondition for not blocking Taiwan’s participation, Beijing has demanded the Tsai government recognize “one China” and the so-called “1992 Consensus.” In Denver, Tsai became only the second head of a foreign state to [visit](#) the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR). British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher did so in 1990. Tsai also visited the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL). After touching down, Tsai had a meeting with US Senator Cory Gardner, where they discussed arms sales to Taiwan, cross-Strait and regional security issues, the deteriorating situation in Hong Kong and “fake news.” Tsai also met Colorado Governor Jared Polis, with whom she discussed renewable energy in Colorado, as well as cooperation in the fields of culture and education. Tsai also had a banquet with the expatriate Taiwanese community, also attended by Gardner, Polis, AIT Chairman Jim Moriarty and US Representative Doug Lamborn (see below).

The Democracy Battleground

One of the highlights of Tsai’s stay in New York was her rousing 16-minute [address](#) at Columbia University, during which she called on the international community to support Taiwan’s efforts to make a place for itself amid growing pressure by China and to understand its many accomplishments in democratization. “History tells us that democracies are strongest when

united, and weakest when divided,” Tsai said. “Without Taiwan, the international coalition of like-minded countries will lose a crucial link in working to ensure our values are passed on to the next generation.”

During a dinner hosted by TECO, Freedom House president Michael J. Abramowitz [lauded](#) Taiwan’s “exemplary democracy,” saying, “Taiwan stands in a select group of new democracies which have continued to improve their free institutions and challenge the global slide towards populism, illiberalism, and autocracy.”

“President Tsai,” he said, “on behalf of Freedom House, I want to express how deeply moved we are to have you with us in the United States. You have one of the world’s toughest jobs. You must lead a democratic society with different factions and interest groups. And you must endure the relentless pressure from a powerful neighbor, a country with a massive economy and sophisticated military capacity, which regards your democratic freedoms—by way of the extraordinary contrast they present—as an existential threat to its own regime of control, regimentation, and censorship.”

Earlier in the day, Tsai also made remarks during the [US-Taiwan Business Summit](#), which was also attended by Michael Splinter, the chairman of the board of Nasdaq, and Rupert Hammond-Chambers, president of the US-Taiwan Business Council. A large delegation of Taiwanese businesspeople and investors accompanied Tsai on the trip.

During her stopover in Denver—the first visit by an incumbent Taiwanese president to the state of Colorado—Tsai [told](#) an informal audience that the January 2020 elections would represent a “choice of value system and way of life” and be a determinant turning point as to the sustainability of freedom and democracy in Taiwan.

The previous day, also in Denver, Tsai [told](#) a gathering of more than 700 overseas Taiwanese that Taiwan “will not succumb to pressure and will continue to safeguard its freedom, democracy, and sovereignty” amid signs that Beijing is ramping up the pressure on Taiwan and an escalating crackdown in neighboring Hong Kong. For his part, Gardner, who authored the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) of 2018, said that “As China continues its aggressive campaign to delegitimize Taiwan, it’s important for the United States to reaffirm our support for the people of Taiwan and maintain our strong friendship.”

The highly favorable rhetoric, and Tsai’s commitment to dem-

ocratic ideals, were all part of the battleground that has been shaping up in the lead-up to the 2020 elections, in which Tsai's principal opponent will be Daniel Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) of the Kuomintang (KMT), who is regarded as Beijing's favorite. The high-level support by various members of the US government and, as we saw, the flexibility afforded to the Taiwanese delegation by Washington, sent a strong signal of US support for President Tsai and her efforts since 2016, possibly as close as we could get to the US government expressing its preferences in the upcoming election.

Ironically, while experts on democracy promotion like Abramowitz were celebrating Taiwan's democratic accomplishment and the Tsai administration's commitment to those ideals, the KMT, along with Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲)—who has yet announced whether he will enter the presidential race—along with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Beijing, have launched a series of attacks on Tsai's governance, accusing her administration of undermining democracy and creating an authoritarian regime. In an address at the "Distance between Taiwan and Democracy" (台灣與民主的距離研討會) on July 14, former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) even [claimed](#) that the Tsai administration was "worse than the Hong Kong government," a hyperbole that is unlikely to have much traction outside Beijing and hardened Han supporters. The seminar was hosted by the Fair Winds Foundation (長風基金會), an organization created by former premier Jiang Yi-huah (江宜樺), who in recent years has also launched a series of [attacks on Taiwan's democracy](#)—including at a lecture in Hong Kong in February 2017.

Tsai's stopovers also attracted protests—a handful in Denver, and a more substantial group in New York City—by the local chapters of pro-Beijing, United Front-linked [organizations](#) in the US. Chief among them were the National Association for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China (NACPU, 全美中國和平統一促進聯合會), the China Council for the Promotion of Peaceful National Unification, New York chapter (CCPPR, 紐約中國和平統一促進會), and the American East Chinese Association (美東華人社團聯合總會). All three organizations, which [accused](#) Tsai of separatism stirring tensions in the Taiwan Strait with her visit, were involved in a "[Cross-Strait Development Forum](#)" (兩岸和平發展論壇) held in New York City in December 2017, where representatives from Taiwan's China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP, 中華統一促進黨) and New Party (新黨) were present. The protests in New York resulted in a few clashes and reported injuries.

Prior to Tsai's trip, the Foreign Ministry in Beijing [complained](#) to Washington about Tsai's US stopovers, saying this could dam-

age Sino-American ties. In the current environment, those complaints were brushed off by officials in Washington. A number of Western media also unwittingly played along and reinforced Beijing's rhetoric, with references in their headlines to the "[first-class treatment](#)" reserved Tsai risking to "[infuriate](#)" Beijing.

While not "groundbreaking," Tsai's unusually long stopovers in the US and the high-level access given her in the two states was in line with the incremental approach adopted by the two countries, substantive yet calibrated enough, and still within the bounds of the US' "One-China" policy, that the contacts would not undermine the cross-Strait balance. The strong emphasis on democracy by both Tsai and her American counterparts also underscored the extent to which such values are shared by her administration and the US, and their determination to work together to defend those against authoritarian influence and backsliding. Such signs of support were also important for Tsai, who will be seeking re-election in the January elections.

The main point: President Tsai's first state visit to Taiwan's Caribbean allies was overshadowed by lengthy stopovers in New York City and Denver, where Taiwan's democracy was the main feature, setting the scene for the 2020 elections—which Tsai and others claim will be a battle for values and Taiwan's future direction.

Defending Against Drift Amid Advancing US-Taiwan Relations

By: Michael Mazza

Michael Mazza is a senior non-resident fellow at GTI. He is also a visiting fellow in foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), where he analyzes US defense policy in the Asia-Pacific region.

In my previous [article](#) for the *Global Taiwan Brief*, I argued that Taipei and Washington should agree to a shared agenda for the future of their bilateral relationship. At present, ties are as strong as they have been in years, if not decades. The Trump administration has [normalized](#) the arms sales process and [approved](#) the sale of needed big-ticket items, the president has [signed legislations](#) meant to deepen bilateral ties, two-way trade is robust, senior officials across the Trump administration are strongly supportive of the US-Taiwan relationship, and Taiwan has been a dependable [partner](#) in pursuing a number of diverse US foreign policy priorities.

Even so, there is no guarantee of future progress. Indeed, there is a real risk of drift in the relationship, especially with presidential elections in both Taiwan and the United States scheduled for 2020. President Tsai Ing-wen's transits through the United States were successful, but are now in the rearview mirror. There are ongoing negotiations regarding the purchase of several dozen new F-16 fighter aircraft, but the notification of that sale will likely soon be behind us as well. What comes next for US-Taiwan relations? There is no obvious answer to that question.

A Model Agenda

Negotiators from the United States and Taiwan—perhaps American Institute in Taiwan Director Brent Christensen and his foreign ministry counterparts—should sit down to settle on an answer. In my [previous piece](#), I suggested the answer should come in the form of a shared agenda, “a succinct but wide-ranging public plan to deepen ties that both sides can use to measure progress and to hold each other accountable.” The agenda should be specific enough to require action from both parties to meet stated goals, but vague enough to allow for flexibility in how those goals are pursued. A basic bilateral agenda might look like this:

Diplomatic Relations

The United States will continue to base its approach to bilateral relations on the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances. The United States will carry out Taiwan policy in accordance with the American “One-China” policy, which it will modernize as needed to ensure that the policy advances American interests in Asia in the current century.

Taiwan conceives of the United States as its most important diplomatic partner and will continue to prioritize the US-Taiwan relationship in the conduct of its foreign policy. Taiwan recognizes the United States' interest in stability in the Taiwan Strait and will take active steps to ensure long-term stability there and in the Indo-Pacific region more broadly.

While continuing to invest in bilateral people-to-people, educational, cultural, and broader societal ties, the United States and Taiwan will adopt a collaborative approach on the international stage. In particular, the United States and Taiwan will work together to advance a shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The United States and Taiwan will explore opportunities to jointly promote international religious freedom, advance global health, counter transnational crime, uphold international law, and assist third parties enhance their resilience in the face of

foreign malign influence.

The United States will support and, where possible, facilitate Taiwan's New Southbound Policy or its successor. It will encourage Taiwan's diplomatic partners to maintain their formal relations with Taiwan. It will also continue to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations. Where Taiwan lacks such participation, the United States will support Taiwan's interests as long as those interests are not contrary to those of the United States.

Taiwan will seek to expand its role in providing foreign aid and infrastructure investment in the Indo-Pacific region. It will leverage its formal diplomatic ties to support US goals in the South Pacific, as well as in the Caribbean and Latin America. It will continue to support US efforts to denuclearize North Korea, to encourage market reform in China, and to encourage responsible choices in the design and build-out of next-generation communications networks.

Defense Relations

The United States and Taiwan agree that an equitable balance of military power across the Taiwan Strait is necessary to maintain stability in the Taiwan area. The United States and Taiwan will work together to enhance Taiwan's ability to defend itself in the air, at sea, on the ground, and in other domains. They will strive to ensure Taiwan's armed forces are well prepared to respond to a variety of contingencies, from military intimidation up to and including invasion.

Taiwan will commit the resources needed to do so and strive to grow its defense budget at a rate that outpaces the rate of inflation. Taiwan will adopt reforms deemed necessary to meet growing challenges.

When considering arms sales, the United States will adopt an approach consistent with Ronald Reagan's secret presidential directive regarding the 1982 US-China Communiqué. [1] The United States will provide equipment, logistical support, and training as deemed necessary to enhance Taiwan's multi-domain self-defense capability. If requested, the United States will provide advice to Taiwan regarding defense strategy, force structure, and force posture.

The United States will ensure its own military is capable of defending American interests throughout the Indo-Pacific region. The United States and Taiwan militaries will work together to enhance their abilities to defend against, and to conduct, offensive political warfare. The United States and Taiwan will explore opportunities to deepen Taiwan's involvement in the regional

security architecture, to include engagement with the United States' treaty allies in the Indo-Pacific.

Economic Relations

The United States and Taiwan will commit to a continued expansion of trade and financial ties. Each will explore ways to address its own barriers to such expansion and both will engage in bilateral talks, held at least annually, to raise issues and take up concerns. The United States and Taiwan will consider both formal and informal tools to expand economic relations.

Taiwan will seek ways to expand access to its agricultural market for American farmers. It will continue to enact laws and regulations to strengthen intellectual property rights protections and will work towards stringent enforcement. Taiwan will also take steps to further open and enhance the flexibility of its financial system and adopt regulations and regulatory processes that are in line with international practices.

The United States will work with Taiwan to address its concerns over section 232 tariffs on steel and aluminum imports.

The United States and Taiwan will cooperate in designing a strategy to ensure the security of global high-tech supply chains. The United States and Taiwan will pursue collaboration to safeguard global leadership in chip design and fabrication. They will fortify their respective export control regimes and bolster efforts to counter industrial espionage in order to deny potential adversaries access to technology with implications for national security and human rights concerns.

Taiwan will strive to diversify its economic partners so that it is not overly reliant on a single market. The United States will assist Taiwan in this effort.

The United States will support Taiwan's efforts to engage in multilateral forums focused on economic issues and to join international trade agreements from which Taipei will benefit.

Conclusion

The Trump and Tsai administrations have taken important steps to enhance their partnership and deepen bilateral relations. There should be a desire on the part of both sides to continue doing so, as *shared interests*—from peace in the Taiwan Strait to a free and open Indo-Pacific—are both significant and substantial. In order to advance those interests and to set the relationship on a firmer footing for the future, the United States and Taiwan should adopt a roadmap, such as the one offered above, to guide the relationship over the coming years. To avert drift or stagnation in US-Taiwan relations, it is time for Washington and

Taipei to answer a fundamental question: "What comes next?"

The main point: In order to ensure that US-Taiwan relations continue to advance in a productive fashion, the United States and Taiwan should negotiate and adopt a shared agenda for their bilateral relationship.

[1] "In short, the US willingness to reduce its arms sales to Taiwan is conditioned absolutely upon the continued commitment of China to the peaceful solution of the Taiwan-PRC differences. I should be clearly understood that the linkage between these two matters is a permanent imperative of US foreign policy."

"In addition, it is essential that the quantity and quality of the arms provided Taiwan be conditioned entirely on the threat posed by the PRC. Both in quantitative and qualitative terms, Taiwan's defense capability relative to that of the PRC will be maintained." Quoted in James Lilley and Jeffrey Lilley, *China Hands: Nine Decades of Adventure, Espionage, and Diplomacy in Asia* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 248.

Observations on Rising Populism in Taiwan Politics

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There are currently three dominant trends in Taiwan's politics: 1) the increase of anti-establishment, 2) the birth of anti-reform mobilization, and 3) the rise of populist politicians inside established mainstream political parties. These trends are reflected in the political figures dominating politics in Taiwan today. These trends are not unique to Taiwan and can be observed globally.

The first trend is the growing public distrust in the establishment wings of the political leaderships. The second trend is the existence of overt anti-reforms and anti-progressive mobilization, and consequently, a growth of socially and politically conservative forces. The third new phenomenon resulting in the creation of a number of populist politicians whom are seizing the opportunity created by the first and second political trends. Indeed, these trends are widely visible in today's European party politics. This commentary seeks to provide some observations on the sociological factors contributing to these political trends and

their implications.

The current features of populism globally appear to have three central elements: 1) a right-wing nationalistic xenophobic and racist/anti-immigration conservative ideology, 2) a form of charismatic leadership with politicized mobilization of the masses, and 3) a style of rhetoric reflecting absolute principle that “the people”—especially “the common people” and not the elites—should rule all aspects of politics. Populism can be an ideological inclination, a policy preference, charismatic leadership and the followers’ loyalty to the leaders, or a style of political rhetoric of the primacy of the people in politics. [1]

In today’s Taiwan, all the above described types of populist politics are thriving due to the collective sentiments of groups of people feeling left behind by the pro-reform movements, and by perceptions of growing political support from the administration and political elites of progressive (e.g., same-sex marriage) and reformist (e.g., pension reforms) policies. The “followers” are prone to be attracted or mobilized by “easy or empty slogans” (“get rich, Taiwan safe, people rich”, or “make money diplomacy” as repeatedly announced in Han Kuo-yu’s mayoral campaign in 2018) so as to be politically co-opted by populist rhetoric.

There is also an anti-establishment and anti-elite political mindset among the populist leaders and their followers. They tend to be easily influenced by rumors and disinformation spread through traditional radio programs and social media, such as those promoting “[the China dream](#)” and PRC’s unification policies. In many respects, Taiwan’s rise of populist mobilization also explicitly contains the external “influences from China,” an illusion that connecting with China could offer an easy solution to the prevailing frustration of “the common people.”

Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu

A frequently mentioned populist politician in Taiwan is Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜), who fits the majority of elements of political populism. Han’s victory in the election for the seat of Kaohsiung mayor in November 2018 was made possible thanks to his populist appeals, slogans, and mobilization. His campaign had two main strategies: the first was emphasizing many sensational issues facing Kaohsiung with catchy slogans yet without practical solutions so as to arouse general voters’ collective frustration, derision, and even hospitality. The second was that his campaign mobilization was conducted primarily by means of social media and the content created by aggressive and even hatred-driven Han-fan netizens. It was often argued by many media observers that Han’s aggressive fans on the social

media platforms and on the internet were assisted and mobilized by China and that a large number of accounts distributing these hostile messages were registered in many other countries outside Taiwan. Yet, Han claimed that those hatred-driven Han-fan was a fake fan group.

Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je

Next on the roster of populist political figures is Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), an unusual politician with a medical background and a past career as surgeon. His rise in the political arena in 2014 by winning the mayoral election, though with the evident support of DPP—although Ko claims to be “non-affiliated”—could be characterized as the first manifestation of populism in Taiwan. He has a unique personality and speaks without much political jargons, which appealed to the younger generation and urban new middle-class professionals. He succeeded also in his reelection in 2018 with a very small margin, which perhaps may be a sign of the populist retreat.

Unlike Han, Ko is not an aggressive political agitator. The Taipei mayor uses less politicized yet simplistic slogans to arouse his followers’ and voters’ emotions. In other words, like Han, Ko is a populist politician, both are seemingly without an overt ideological position, but with a similar populist rhetoric. Likewise, Ko has also been successful in internet mobilization through social media. He also has a large number of aggressive supporters with a tendency to attack any critical comments on Ko over the social media. Like Han, Ko is also not critical of China’s threat; he would often repeat in public what China used for unification propaganda such as “close affection like a family across the strait” to please China’s authorities. For a period of time, he was even considered by China to be an acceptable contact in Taiwan. For example, China’s official TV even ran a special feature story about him before the 2014 mayor election. For that, he was criticized by the strong pro-independence supporters within DPP and the pan-green camp.

Similarly, both Han and Ko share political propensity to deemphasize the significance of rising Taiwanese national identity and pro-Taiwan sentiments. It is understandable for KMT’s Han to disregard the new Taiwanese national identity and to support the so-called “92 Consensus,” thus favoring unification with China for ideological reasons. As for Ko’s somewhat pro-China stand, in my view, he is motivated by his political calculation to take intentionally ambivalent and even opportunist stand in cross-Strait politics.

Business Tycoon Terry Gou

The third populist political figure is Terry Gou (郭台銘), a tycoon who has made a big fortune in China. During the KMT presidential primary, Gou styled himself as a people-oriented political figure. At times, he speaks like a populist, making simplistic campaign slogans about Taiwan's economic vision to appeal to the so-called "economic voters." Gou claimed that he can speak and meet directly with both China's Xi and America's Trump, and thus he could solve Taiwan's political dilemma. As a rather successful businessman, he often brands himself as "Trump" of Taiwan. Yet, his failure to clinch the party's nomination may demonstrate a lack of his ability to engage in populist mobilization of his followers. He has tried to use the populist rhetoric and often expresses his right-wing and sometimes pro-China conservative and pacifist ideology to attract the attention from the pan-blue camp and a-political economic voters.

Factors Contributing to the Populist Swing

Without big party assets and strong central party bureaucracy to dictate the intra-party electoral process and politics from the top down within the KMT, Han and Gou appear to have seized the opportunity to challenge the weakening KMT power center from the bottom up and even the peripheries. Han's capacity for populist mobilization has attracted anti-pension reform groups, middle-aged and retired Mainlanders generations, self-claimed common people across different ethnic backgrounds, a few local political factions in Taichung, Yunlin, and Hualien—and even a well-endowed religious cult organization. Han's rising populism signifies a split and even an intra-party struggle within the KMT with the social base consisting of the existing lower class and disadvantaged groups and more importantly, local factions seeking to regain political influence. Gou has tried to take an unconventional way to pressure and even coerce the KMT party with his substantial financial assets. In other words, the populist rise of Han and Gou have taken the KMT hostage, putting the KMT central headquarters in an embarrassing position. More significantly, the populist wave engendered by Han and Gou have even marginalized and pushed aside the two traditional and senior KMT presidential candidates: Eric Chu (朱立倫) and Wang Jin-pyng (王金平), as they represented the old-school KMT politicians who could not ride on the wave of populism.

The emergence of KMT's populists also casts the Party's ideological diatribe against DPP in a hypocritical light. For well over 30 years since the birth of non-party forces (黨外) and the establishment of DPP in 1986, the authoritarian KMT regime has long criticized the opposition DPP for being an immature pop-

ulist political party exploiting the tactics of mass agitation and mobilization of lower class and discounted population. How can the KMT authority rationalize the outburst of so-called "immature populism" within KMT itself? In addition, even if KMT and the camps of Han and Gou argued that it is the self-transformed KMT that intends to deepen Taiwan's democratic consolidation, realize economic breakthrough, and resolve cross-strait tension and conflict, the public could question the substance of such populist slogans. However, it is improbable that KMT as a whole would turn itself into a populist party in the foreseeable future.

Indeed, the Taipei mayor could be said to be the first populist politician of Taiwan. Interestingly, he rose up with no party affiliation even though he was indirectly supported by the DPP. His electoral victory for the Taipei mayor seat in 2014 was significant back then as the DPP candidate could not win over the election in a tense KMT-DPP electoral fight. In a way, both DPP and KMT have used the populist streaks in Taiwan politics for their political gain. For the DPP in 2014 Taipei mayor election, it prevented a KMT victory by supporting a non-party affiliated populist candidate, while in 2018, KMT won the Kaohsiung mayor election to go along the populist wind. However, it is unlikely the both KMT and DPP could actually transformed themselves into populist parties as a whole.

Is William Lai a Populist?

Finally, some may wonder whether William Lai (賴清德) from the DPP could be considered as a populist leader from within the DPP. He has been in line with DPP's political tradition of emphasizing mass mobilization of his electorate. As a member of a non-mainstream political faction within the ruling party, he might have argued and advocated for more liberal and even progressive political positions during the DPP presidential primary, such as "pardoning Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁)" and "pragmatic independence." Yet, he does not fit any criteria mentioned in this article. He is more of a grassroots politician rather than a populist figure. Moreover, DPP is not in any position to join the populist fade of political winds at the moment.

In conclusion, the upcoming 2020 presidential and legislative elections will certainly witness the continued clash of conventional party politics and the rising populist mobilization politics which will surely add to the conflictual nature of the elections. The result of the elections and the fate of the emerging populist figures will be determined by the "rational" choice by the voter majority in this liberal democratic Taiwan.

The main point: The populist politics started in 2014 Taipei mayor election by the non-party affiliated Ko Wen-je. Han Kuo-yu in

his Kaohsiung mayor election in 2018 further amplified and dramatized such populist swing within KMT. Such populist political culture even penetrated into the wider society in creating an aggressive and hostile collective political mood against political establishment and liberal tolerance. However, it is unlikely that both DPP and KMT could turn themselves into populist parties.

[1] See Paul D. Kenny, *Populism in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Norris, Pippa and Ronald Inglehart, *Cultural Backlash: Trump, Brexit and Authoritarian Populism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019); Rovira Kaltwasser, Cristóbal, Paul Taggart, Paulina Ochoa Espejo, and Pierre Ostiguy (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Populism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).