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By: Russell Hsiao

*Russell Hsiao is the executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute (GTI) and editor-in-chief of the Global Taiwan Brief.*

### Polls: DPP Party Identification Surges Amid China's Intensifying Pressure

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been [pulling out all the stops](#) in recent years to pressure Taiwan and isolate the government currently led by President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨). Amid the CCP's intensifying campaign against the island-democracy, party identification with the ruling DPP—which traditionally supports a more defiant approach to dealing with Beijing—is surging, especially over the past two years. According to the [latest polling data](#) released by the National Chengchi University's Election Study Center (政治大學選舉研究中心), the percentage of Taiwan's population that identifies with the DPP increased sharply over the past two years, rising 16.7 percent (from 20.1 percent in 2018 to 36.8 percent in 2020). Meanwhile, party identification with the opposition Nationalist Party (Kuomintang or KMT, 國民黨)—which has traditionally favored a more conciliatory approach toward Beijing—experienced a sharp decline of 9.6 percent, from 25.4 percent in 2018 (which was at the time higher than party identification with the DPP) to 15.8 percent in 2020. During the same two-year period, the percentage of independent respondents or those without a response decreased from 49.1 percent to 37.8 percent—a decline of 12.7 percent. The polling also accounted for identification with the smaller parties, such as the Taiwan People's Party (TPP) with 5.3 percent, the New Power Party (NPP) with 3.3 percent, and the People's First Party (PFP) with 0.6 percent.

The results of this poll from the Election Study Center—which has been tracking party identification within Taiwan since 1992—shows party identification with the DPP at its highest point since the poll started, a remarkable shift since its lowest point in 1992, when it registered at a mere 3.3 percent. Simultaneously, party identification with the

*The Global Taiwan Brief is a bi-weekly publication released every other Wednesday and provides insight into the latest news on Taiwan.*

#### Editor-in-Chief

Russell Hsiao

#### Staff Editor

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Global Taiwan Institute  
1836 Jefferson Place NW,  
Washington DC 20036  
contact@globaltaiwan.org

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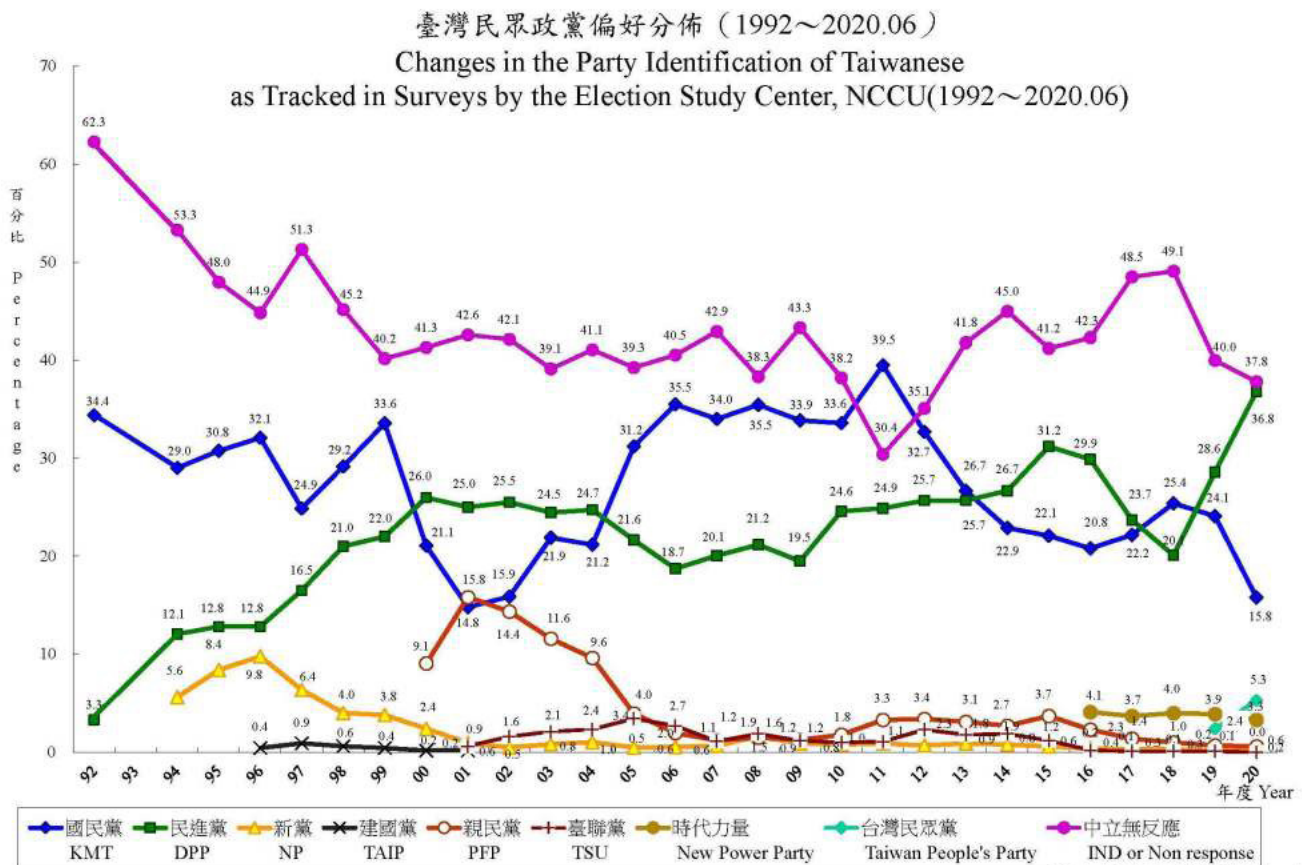


Photo courtesy of National Chengchi University's [Election Study Center](#).

KMT is currently near its lowest point, only slightly higher than its nadir of 14.8 percent, which was registered in 2001 following the first transfer of political power from the KMT to the DPP in the 2000 presidential election. Notably, the KMT still retained a [majority](#) in the Legislative Yuan after that the 2001 election, a luxury it does not enjoy today.

It is worth pointing out that party identification in Taiwan tends to shift between the two major political parties, with both the KMT and DPP experiencing regular increases and decreases in support. For instance, the recent surge in identification with the DPP comes on the heels of a precipitous decline, which began at 31.2 percent in 2015 (immediately after the 2014 Sunflower Movement) and dropped for three consecutive years to 20.1 percent in 2018. In the past, party identification has tended to ebb and flow depending on the health of the economy and in response to significant political events, such as the Sunflower Movement in

2014. However, the recent surge in party identification in favor of the DPP during a period of a relatively underperforming economy and in the absence of any major political shocks raise the question of whether what we're seeing right now in terms of public sentiment in Taiwan is a transition to something more permanent.

Indeed, China's aggressive poaching of Taiwan's diplomatic partners, increased military exercises, and its hardening rhetoric towards Taiwan over the past several years—especially since 2016—could be having generational effects on Taiwan, as the KMT and DPP have been traditionally seen to represent starkly different approaches to China. According to the recently released [polling data](#) from Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (大陸委員會), the cabinet agency in charge of cross-Strait policy, 75.4 percent of the respondents believed that China was unfriendly towards the Taiwan government and 60.5 percent believed that it was unfriendly toward the Taiwanese people. The views

of younger generations toward Beijing offer an even starker contrast. According to a [2018 survey](#) conducted by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD), 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.” According to the [same poll](#), 86.2 percent of 20-39 year-olds agreed that democracy is the best political system.

While the poll from the Election Study Center on party identification is not broken down in terms of age groups, it stands to reason—by inference from the country’s 2020 presidential election—that a sizeable portion of the youth identifies with the DPP. The youth vote was widely recognized as a determining factor in the 2020 presidential election. In fact, the [Institute of Sociology at Academia Sinica](#) found that 72 percent of voters below the age of 40 had cast their ballot for Tsai Ing-wen in that election, while more than 60 percent of college graduates had also chosen to re-elect the president.

The poll administered by the Election Study Center, which is an academic institution and is considered non-partisan, is consistent with the findings of other polls that are more aligned with either of the two ruling parties. For instance, [a poll](#) conducted by the DPP-leaning Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation (台灣民意基金會), which asked respondents which political party they support, revealed that among Taiwanese adults over the age of 20, 28.2 percent support the DPP, 16.2 percent support the KMT, 10.7 percent support the TPP, 10.6 percent support the NPP, 4 percent support the Taiwan Statebuilding Party, and 25.6 percent did not support any specific party. Moreover, according to [polling data](#) released in June by the KMT-affiliated National Policy Foundation (國家政策研究基金會), the DPP’s party support is as high as 32.9 percent, compared to the KMT at 13.7 percent, the TPP at 6.6 percent, the NPP at 5.9 percent, the Taiwan Statebuilding Party at 0.8 percent, and the PFP at 0.2 percent. Whether Beijing’s hardening stance against Taiwan is having generational effects remains to be seen, but the correlation between surging party identification with the DPP and Beijing’s increasing belligerence cannot be easily ignored.

**The main point:** Amid China’s intensifying pressure

against Taiwan, party identification with the ruling Democratic Progressive Party is surging and has reached a new high, according to a recent academic poll.

### **Former Japanese Prime Minister’s Tribute Visit Underscores Tokyo’s Delicate but Affirmative Approach to Cross-Strait Relations**

All countries that maintain relations with both Taipei and Beijing have to balance their contacts with Taiwan due to Beijing’s sensitivities toward official and even semi-official interactions between other governments and the island-democracy. Certain countries like the United States and Japan—despite not having formal diplomatic relations with Taipei—maintain strong and extensive economic, people-to-people, and even security ties with the country. The relative depths of these ties were on clear display this week, as US Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary [Alex Azar](#) and former Japanese Prime Minister [Yoshiro Mori](#) both arrived in Taiwan at around the same time—albeit for different purposes.

While the two delegations had different missions, both demonstrated similar motivations. As countries begin to realize that China’s rise on the international stage comes part and parcel with grave political and military implications, capitals across the region and the world have been recalibrating their relations with Taipei and Beijing. In this regard, Tokyo is no exception. While Washington has been actively supporting Taiwan vis-à-vis China and has even raised the level of contact with Taiwan in recent years with the current visit by Secretary Azar—the highest-ranking US cabinet official to visit since 1979—the first *de facto* [official foreign delegation](#) to pay tribute to the late Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) was led by former Prime Minister Mori. The respectful nature of the visit underscores Tokyo’s delicate but affirmative approach to cross-Strait relations.

Mori, the prime minister of Japan from 2000 to 2001, is the highest-ranking non-governmental official with a history of relations with former President Lee. The former prime minister, and a senior member of current Prime Minister Shinzo Abe’s political faction, [acknowledged Abe’s role](#) in helping to arrange the delegation’s

one-day visit to Taiwan. Although, as noted by [some in the media](#), Mori was not designated as a “special envoy” of the Japanese government or of Prime Minister Abe—due to the absence of diplomatic ties—he is widely seen as the *de facto* surrogate for Prime Minister Abe at this official event. Mori “effectively acted on behalf of the prime minister,” a lawmaker from the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) [stated](#). The former prime minister himself [alluded](#) to this arrangement in his formal response to the media. Mori is famously [known in Taiwan](#) for allowing Lee to visit Japan after he stepped down as president, despite strong objections from within the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the People’s Republic of China.

Compared to the United States’ visible and strong act of support for Taiwan in light of China’s tightening squeeze of Taiwan’s diplomatic space, the approach taken by the Japanese government has been subtler but also increasingly more affirmative. This is reflected in part by [Tokyo’s decision](#) to join the Global Cooperation and Training Framework as a full partner in 2019. Governmental acts have been reinforced by the growing people-to-people ties between the two East Asian democracies. There appears to be a stronger and arguably deeper public awareness about Taiwan among the Japanese public. According to a [public opinion survey](#) of Japanese attitudes toward Taiwan conducted by Japan’s Central Research Services, Inc. (一般社団法人中央調査社) in late 2019, which was commissioned by the Taiwan representative office in Japan, revealed that more than 78 percent of the respondents felt “familiar” with Taiwan, 74.9 percent felt that the Taiwan-Japan relationship was “good,” and more than 63.1 percent answered that Taiwan was “trustworthy.” Also, according to the survey results, 55 percent said that Taiwan is the most familiar place in the Asian region. When asked why they feel that Taiwan was familiar, 78.1 percent answered that they feel “friendly” to Taiwan, and the reason that “Taiwanese people are kind and friendly” was the most common at 77.6 percent, followed by the “long historical relations” between the two nations at 46 percent, and “because of the assistance provided by Taiwan to Japan during the Great East Japan Earthquake” in 2011 was 36.2 percent. On the issue of trust, the reasons for the high-level of trust was “because they [Taiwanese people] are friendly to Japan” was the most common at 66.6 percent, fol-

lowed by “having a sense of (shared) values such as freedom and democracy” at 53.7 percent. Regarding the future of Taiwan-Japan relations, 57.8 percent said that the relationship will become more “developed.”

One plausible explanation for the seeming disconnect between the favorable public opinion towards Taiwan and relatively measured government action from Japan could be because, as RAND analyst Jeffrey Hornung wrote in a [Brookings study](#) in 2018, “Despite a trend of strengthening ties between Japan and Taiwan, Japan’s relationship with the PRC will continue to dictate how fast and how far any Japanese administration can push bilateral ties with Taiwan.” [Hornung added](#), “In practice, this has meant that when reaching out to Taipei, Tokyo maintains a constant focus on Beijing’s response. While unspoken, this has given China an indirect role in Japan-Taiwan relations and sets real limitations on how fast and how far Japan’s relationship with Taiwan can progress.” The same logic by and large seems to still hold true today.

The momentous breakthroughs of the past week are occurring against the backdrop of deepening people-to-people ties between Taiwan and Japan, as evidenced by the [2019 survey](#). While Secretary Azar’s visit represents the highest-level US government representative to visit Taiwan since 1979, it is also worth noting that Japan has also taken steps to elevate its contact with Taiwan in recent years. In March 2017, in the highest-level Japanese government representative official visit to Taiwan since 1972, Vice Minister of Japan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications [Jiro Akama](#) attended a tourism event in his official capacity.

Purposefully planned to be the first foreign delegation to [pay tribute](#) to the late Taiwanese president, Prime Minister Mori’s visit is indicative of Japan’s subtle approach to deepening people-to-people relations with Taiwan. While progress in relations between Taiwan and Japan at the governmental level have improved in recent years, the steps have generally been sparse despite the fact that Prime Minister Abe is considered one of Japan’s most pro-Taiwan prime ministers. It remains far from certain whether and to what extent Tokyo will advocate for further deepening of its ties with Taipei—especially after the Abe administration. In any case, the strong people-to-people relations between

Taiwan and Japan should act as a buffer against any radical shift in the opposite direction.

**The main point:** Incremental improvements in governmental relations between Taiwan and Japan are reinforced by growing people-to-people ties between the two East Asian democracies.

## Maritime Relations between Taiwan and the Philippines Post-Pompeo Statement

By: I-wei Jennifer Chang

*I-wei Jennifer Chang is a research fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute. Special thanks to GTI interns Charlemagne McHaffie and Joseph Ross for their research assistance.*

On the fourth anniversary of the [Hague's 2016 ruling](#) against the People's Republic of China's (PRC) claims vis-à-vis the Philippines in the South China Sea, US Secretary of State [Mike Pompeo](#) made a pivotal speech putting the United States explicitly on the side of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) member countries in the disputed region. On July 12, Pompeo [said](#), "Beijing's claims to offshore resources across most of the South China Sea are completely unlawful, as is its campaign of bullying to control them." That same day, Manila issued a strong statement calling on Beijing to comply with the arbitration ruling, which it called "[non-negotiable](#)" and "[without any possibility of compromise](#)." Taiwan's government took a more understated approach, indicating its [support for Pompeo's statements](#) without reference to its own claims—similar to those of China—in the South China Sea. "Our country opposes attempts to resolve the South China Sea disputes by means of threats, coercion, and force," Taipei's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) spokesperson [Joanne Ou](#) (歐江安) said.

While mainly directed at China, Washington's new principled position on the South China Sea could also serve to deter Taiwan and the Philippines, which continue to disagree on maritime and territorial claims in the South China Sea as well as [fishing rights](#) in their overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZs), from us-

ing force or military measures. Instead, there may be greater pressure for Taipei and Manila to focus on dialogue and negotiations to mitigate and resolve their maritime issues.

### **Regional Dynamics**

Notwithstanding the South China Sea dispute, China and the Philippines have improved their bilateral relations since the Hague ruling in 2016. In fact, [President Rodrigo Duterte](#), who came to power shortly after the tribunal's ruling in favor of the Philippines, changed the country's posture towards engaging with China while distancing itself from its longtime ally, the United States. Duterte said his country "[has long ceased to be a colony of the United States](#)," hitting back at Washington's criticism of his [bloody war on drugs](#). Duterte vowed to repair relations with China, which he called "[the only hope for the Philippines economically](#)," while trying to de-emphasize ongoing disputes in the South China Sea. The Philippine [president](#), however, has admitted that he has failed to make Beijing adhere to the Hague ruling given the apparent power disparities. The thorny South China Sea issue remains unresolved and will likely continue to stoke tensions between the two sides in the near term.

At the same time that Duterte has sought to improve relations with China, he has also worked to hedge against US influence and military power in the region. In February 2020, [the Philippines](#) informed the United States it was ending the Philippines-US Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA), which provides [guidelines](#) for the US military when operating in the Philippines. The move came after the US government [revoked the visa](#) of Duterte's political ally. However, in early June, the Philippines' Foreign Secretary [Teodoro Locsin Jr.](#) announced that Manila would suspend termination of the agreement. Analysts have argued that having the VFA in place would [facilitate US military cooperation](#) with the Philippines, particularly in the face of Chinese belligerence in the region. Manila, however, continues to play both sides, attempting to advance its national interests while preventing both major powers from gaining dominant influence in its country. Shortly after Pompeo's speech on the South China Sea, [Locsin Jr.](#) met with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi (王毅) to discuss managing their territorial disputes in the region, with both representatives pointing to the "[positive turn](#)" in

bilateral relations in the COVID-19 era.

In an uncertain environment created by the Duterte government's close yet contentious relations with Beijing, Taipei has struggled for greater recognition and respect from Manila. In the past, [Taiwanese suspects](#) arrested and detained by the Philippine government were deported to China, despite sustained diplomatic protests by Taipei. Earlier this year, Manila temporarily included Taiwan in a [travel ban](#) on visitors from China to stem the transmission of the coronavirus. The next day, following protests from Taipei and a threat to [terminate visa-free privileges](#) for Filipinos, the Philippine government [dropped the Taiwan travel ban](#). Then, in April, an incident involving a Filipino caretaker in Taiwan ignited controversy when Philippine Presidential Spokesman [Harry Roque](#) said the deportation of the caregiver was a matter for Taiwan and China to decide because "Taiwan is a part of China." In response, [Taiwan's MOFA](#) asserted that Taiwan is a "sovereign and independent country and has never been part of China."

### ***Robust Trade and People-to-People Ties***

The positive markers in bilateral relations between Taiwan and the Philippines are the strong economic and people-to-people links between the two sides. As part of Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP, 新南向政策), Taipei has prioritized the Philippines as a key market and [gateway](#) to other ASEAN countries. In 2017, both sides renewed their [Bilateral Investment Agreement](#) (BIA)—first signed in [1992](#)—to facilitate Taiwanese investments in the Philippines. The agreement marked the Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) administration's [first updated BIA](#) with a NSP country. [Beijing](#), however, rebuked the new BIA, accusing the Philippines of conducting an "[official](#)" exchange with Taiwan.

Meanwhile, bilateral trade between the two sides reached [USD \\$8.2 billion](#) in 2019, making the Philippines Taiwan's [fifth-largest trade partner in Southeast Asia](#), following Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Thailand. In 2019, Taiwan imported [USD \\$2.1 billion](#) from the Philippines, while exporting [USD \\$6.1 billion](#), enjoying a sizable trade surplus. Over the past decade, bilateral trade has held steady, hovering between [USD \\$8 billion](#) and [USD \\$12 billion](#) annually. Last year, Taiwan was the Philippines' [9<sup>th</sup> largest](#) trading partner,

export and import partner, and foreign direct investor.

Taiwan's government has sought to strengthen [bilateral cooperation](#) with the Southeast Asian nation in agriculture, green technology, fisheries, law enforcement, climate change, education, and people-to-people exchanges. Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, tourism and people-to-people ties were flourishing, with more than [331,000](#) Taiwanese visitors to the Philippines and more than [509,000 Filipinos](#) traveling to Taiwan in 2019. The island is also a host to more than [115,000 Filipinos](#), many of whom serve as factory workers, domestic housekeepers, and caregivers.

However, a 2017-18 survey conducted by the [Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation](#) (台灣民意教育基金會) found that nearly [53 percent](#) of Taiwanese respondents said that the Philippines was their least favorite country. Overall, the Southeast Asian country ranked as the [second most disliked country](#) in the survey after North Korea, while China ranked third. While some commentators have attributed some Taiwanese peoples' negative perceptions of the Philippines to [Duterte's policies](#), many in Taiwan still remember the public outrage over the [2013 murder](#) of a Taiwanese fisherman by the Philippine coast guard—an incident that almost brought the two neighbors to the brink of a military showdown during Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration.

### ***Maritime Tensions between Taiwan and the Philippines***

In perhaps the single biggest incident to rock bilateral relations between Taiwan and the Philippines in recent decades, the 2013 killing of Taiwanese fisherman Hung Shih-cheng (洪石成) nearly led to a severing of relations between Taipei and Manila. On May 9, 2013, a Taiwanese fishing vessel named [Guang Da Xing No. 28](#) (廣大興28號) was operating in the Balintang Channel in the overlapping exclusive economic zones claimed by Taiwan and the Philippines when it came under fire from a [Philippine coast guard ship](#). The firing lasted for more than an hour, killing Hung on the spot. The Philippines [alleged](#) that the Guang Da Xing illegally fished in their EEZ and tried to collide with their coast guard vessel—claims that [Taiwan's own investigation](#) found to be false.

President Ma Ying-jeou subsequently put forward [four demands](#) for the Philippines, including a formal

apology, compensation for losses, a thorough investigation of the facts and severe punishment of the perpetrators, and the launch of negotiations on the Taiwan-Philippines fishery agreement. Ma requested that Manila meet his requests within 72 hours. In response, the Philippines government said it was adhering to its “[One-China Policy](#)” and thus claimed it could not make concessions, apologize, or negotiate the fisheries issue with Taiwan. Ma’s government responded with [sanctions](#) against Manila, including freezing Filipino labor applications, recalling its representative to the Philippines, and requesting the Philippine representative in Taiwan to return home. Taipei was also prepared to initiate a more [stringent second wave of sanctions](#) if its demands were not met, including the suspension of high-level exchanges, economic links, agricultural and fishery cooperation, negotiations on aviation rights, and tourism and visa exemptions. These measures would have been tantamount to a breakdown in bilateral relations. [President Benigno Aquino III](#) formally apologized to Taiwan on May 15, 2013. However, in a show of military force against the Philippines, Taiwan’s military dispatched warships to conduct [naval maneuvers](#) in the Balintang Channel, causing the [US State Department](#) to express concern about the rising level of conflict between the two sides.

After two years of negotiation, the two sides reached the [Taiwan-Philippines Fisheries Agreement](#) (臺菲有關促進漁業事務執法合作協定) in November 2015. The pact states that both sides will [avoid the use of violence](#) or unnecessary force in law enforcement and includes [other measures](#) aimed at protecting Taiwanese fishermen’s rights and reducing fisheries disputes in the overlapping EEZs. The agreement also set up [Technical Working Group](#) (TWG, 技術工作小組) meetings to maintain regular communication on fishery issues. The [fourth TWG meeting](#) was held in Taipei in March 2018, but some issues remain unresolved, including [law enforcement](#) in areas bordering the Philippines. Therefore, Taiwan’s [Fisheries Agency](#) (漁業署) continues to warn Taiwanese fishermen about the risks of operating in areas near northern Philippines. Also, it was not until September 2019 that [eight Philippine coast guard members](#) were finally indicted for Hung’s murder.

While Taiwan and the Philippines enjoy strong eco-

nomics and labor ties, unresolved issues over fisheries and South China Sea claims remain major sources of friction. The Philippines’ construction and military build-up in the South China Sea are mainly [directed at China](#), but they also negatively affect Taiwanese maritime interests. Taipei has protested Manila’s [recent work on Thitu Island](#) (中業島), which was [seized](#) from the Republic of China (ROC) in 1971. There are also concerns that the Philippines’ decision to build a [military base on Mavulis](#) (Yami Island, 雅米島), only 60 miles southeast of Taiwan’s Orchid Island (蘭嶼), could impact the fisheries disputes, leading to calls on the Tsai government to [strengthen measures](#) to protect Taiwanese fishermen in the South China Sea. In terms of economics and trade, Taiwan has found a partner in the Philippines. However, Taipei has taken a more cautious approach towards the intentions of its southern neighbor in the maritime arena. The new US position on the South China Sea could deter all disputed parties—including Taiwan and the Philippines—from using force to achieve their territorial claims and maritime interests.

**The main point:** Taiwan’s maritime and fisheries disputes with the Philippines remain major sticking points in an otherwise strong economic bilateral relationship. The new US position on the South China Sea could put pressure on the Taiwan and the Philippines, along with other regional stakeholders in the disputed region, to refrain from using force to resolve their disagreements.

## On President Lee’s Passing, Beijing Demonstrates It Still Doesn’t Understand Taiwan

By: J. Michael Cole

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

Beijing did not disappoint following the [death](#) of former President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) on July 30, at the age of 97. The passing of the politician—who ushered in an era of democracy in Taiwan and fathered the “[two-state theory](#)” (兩國論) for Taiwan and China—was a moment of great sadness for the people of Taiwan. Yet across the Taiwan Strait, Lee was a much-reviled

figure, whose participation in Taiwanese politics both in and out of government was seen as a driving force behind what Beijing regards as “separatism.”

No sooner had condolences from around the world begun coming in than China’s foreign ministry felt compelled to repeat its usual platitudes and warnings. Following a [statement](#) by US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Wang Wenbin (汪文斌), a spokesman at the foreign ministry in Beijing, [asserted](#) at a press conference that “we have taken note of the statement. Taiwan secessionism is a dead end, and the reunification [sic] and national rejuvenation of China is the trend of history, which is unstoppable to any individual or force.” He continued: “We urge the relevant countries to uphold the ‘One-China Principle’ (一中原则) to cautiously handle the matters about Taiwan, and not to send wrong information to Taiwan separatist forces.” This is a misleading statement, given that most states have their own “One-China Policy” (一中政策) and do not abide by Beijing’s so-called “One-China Principle.”

In an [editorial](#) published on the day after Lee’s death, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) tabloidesque mouthpiece the *Global Times* referred to the former president as the “godfather of Taiwan secessionism,” adding that the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) would likely seek to “capitalize” on his death to promote its political agenda while deepening ties with “enemies” of China, such as Japan and the Trump administration.

The editorial epitomizes everything that is wrong with the CCP’s perceptions of Taiwan, and shows us why a negotiated resolution to the longstanding conflict, along lines which would be acceptable to both sides, will remain elusive as long as the current leadership in Beijing is in charge.

In [the article](#), the *Times* almost immediately launches a tirade against Lee. It accuses him of denying his Chinese identity, which was “heavily criticized by Chinese on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.” The sobriquet “godfather of Taiwan secessionism,” meanwhile, is due to his “flattering attitude toward Japan.” Kinship with Japan, therefore, is tantamount to support for Taiwanese independence in the eyes of the CCP.

To support its argument, the *Times* then extensively quotes Chang Ya-chung (張亞中), a professor at the

National Taiwan University and a reliably pro-Beijing voice in Taiwan. In the very sentence introducing Chang, the paper describes him as a member of the “pro-reunification Kuomintang,” which mischaracterizes the nature of the party today. Years of localization, democratic development in Taiwan, and markedly different paths taken by the countries on both sides of the Taiwan Strait—all legacies of the Lee era—have forced the KMT to adjust its policies so as to better reflect public expectations. For reasons that probably have much to do with the CCP’s need to deny the very possibility of alternatives to its despotic rule, Beijing cannot openly admit that the KMT may no longer be a party that is committed to “reunification.” While there are undoubtedly some elements within it, particularly the old guard, that remain attached to the idea of a union of some sort at some point, the idea that the mainstream KMT is “pro-reunification”—and that it favors unification on Beijing’s terms (no other terms are possible at the moment)—is a gross mischaracterization of the party’s modern ideology. Indeed, the KMT has become a party whose current leadership now [questions the viability and usefulness of the so-called “1992 Consensus”](#) (九二共識) and which has [stated](#) that the “one country, two systems” (一國兩制) formula for “reunification” offered by Beijing is unacceptable to the Taiwanese. And for all its faults and past crimes, the KMT has largely internalized the rules of democracy, in that it has respected electoral outcomes and is committed to fielding candidates in that democratic contest. Furthermore, in describing the KMT as “pro-reunification,” the *Times* was contradicting some of the key thinkers in China, who in recent years have [bemoaned](#) the KMT’s lack of commitment to collaborating with the CCP on “reunification.” Whatever the reason for mischaracterizing the nature of the KMT, the *Times* (and the CCP, presumably) is creating false expectations and maintaining the illusion that only a small number of people (i.e., the DPP and its allies abroad) are committed to “separatism.” Logic follows that, once such people are gotten rid of, there should no longer be any obstacles to “reunification” and the “great rejuvenation” of China—Xi Jinping’s (習近平) aspiration. What the *Times* provides is a lie, a version of the KMT that hasn’t existed for decades.

The *Times* then fires its next salvo, arguing that Lee’s “separatist tendencies in the 1990s almost caused a



military conflict between the mainland and the island [sic], after he broke with the “1992 Consensus” and the “One-China Principle” to promote separatism for the island.” There is a great deal that is downright wrong with that sentence. First and foremost, it wasn’t Lee who almost caused military conflict in 1995-6. Rather, it was Beijing, which used provocative military exercises to warn Lee against giving a talk in the United States and, the following year, to influence Taiwan’s first direct presidential election (the latter effort backfired and helped Lee win the election by a wide margin, forcing Beijing to rethink the value of military coercion and to refrain from resorting to this type of behavior until very recently). The notion that Lee broke with the “1992 Consensus” is a naked act of revisionism, given that the alleged consensus—which Lee never recognized—wasn’t until 2000, by Su Chi (蘇起), a KMT politician, and had never been a variable in cross-Strait negotiations until Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) became president in 2008.

In his reliably pro-Beijing fashion, Professor Chang Ya-chung then hits all the standard tropes in his attack—again in the same article—on Lee and the democracy he helped build. “The West praised Lee for transforming the island into a democracy, but don’t know [sic] that the democracy built by Lee is based on dividing the local people in Taiwan and people from the mainland [sic] who have been living on the island since 1949, when the KMT authority was defeated by the Communist Party of China, and retreated to Taiwan.” Chang, who lives in a democracy, evidently doesn’t understand that democracy doesn’t compel, but rather provides options. What Lee gave the people of Taiwan is the ability to choose for themselves. And today, [more than 90 percent](#) of the people in Taiwan—including large numbers of people who vote for the KMT—choose either the “status quo” (*de facto* independence) or *de jure* independence. Lee’s leadership may have encouraged that trend, but it never came at the end of a barrel of a gun, or under the tracks of a tank—a far cry from what Beijing imposes on its own people.

Chang then adds that another “cost” of Lee’s “democracy”—the latter quotes are the *Times*’—in Taiwan was corruption. “Lee started to engage with the local forces in power-for-money deals to increase localism

and separatism,” he argued, adding that “these are the evil facts hidden behind the ‘democracy’ Lee established on the island.” Although corruption does occur in Taiwan, the notion that it was the result of “Lee’s democracy”—or democracy in general—is downright false. One need only look at the astounding [amount of corruption](#) that exists in China, which Xi [has vowed](#) to root out. Decades of CCP rule in China have resulted in levels of corruption that Taiwan cannot even approach. Surely, then, Lee’s democracy is not the cause of whatever corruption exists in Taiwan.

In his closing remarks, Chang then states that following the announcement of Lee’s passing, “people in Taiwan were divided [...]. Why some are celebrating and some others [are] praising him [...] is a proof of the dividing society that he created.” Some people indeed celebrated. A group of people [set off firecrackers](#) outside Taipei Veterans General Hospital when his death was announced. And others, like the marginal pro-unification New Party’s Wang Ping-chung (王炳忠), [welcomed the news](#) (“Finally!”). What Chang and his friends back in Beijing, ostensibly, don’t get is the fact that Lee didn’t divide; what he did was allow people to express themselves freely. He gave them the freedom to support him, to oppose him, and to resent him, even to the extent that they would celebrate his death. For all its power, the CCP doesn’t even have the confidence to allow its subjects to criticize it.

This is proof—if proof ever was needed—that Lee was more powerful a figure than any of the CCP leaders who have used censors, law enforcement, paramilitary agencies, the courts, gangsters, proxies, tanks, and armored personnel carriers to silence, disappear, and crush their critics.

**The main point:** The Chinese Communist Party could not remain silent on the passing of its nemesis, Taiwan’s former President Lee Teng-hui. Its response highlighted everything that Beijing gets wrong about Taiwan.

## Moving to a New Normal in US-Taiwan Relations

By: Michael Mazza

*Michael Mazza is a senior nonresident fellow at the Global Taiwan Institute, a visiting fellow with the American Enterprise Institute, and a nonresident fellow at the German Marshall Fund of the United States.*

Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar has just concluded his trip to Taiwan, where he met with President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and other officials. With President Donald Trump's first term winding down and a [distinct possibility](#) that he will fail in his reelection bid, the president's Asia advisers may well be seeking to set a new baseline for US-Taiwan relations with this visit.

### ***The Timing Is Right***

The first cabinet-level official to visit Taiwan since 2014 (when the Environmental Protection Agency administrator went) and the highest-ranking US official to visit since the severing of diplomatic relations in 1979, Secretary Azar made his trip at a delicate time for Taiwan. [1]

Taiwan has thus far handled the COVID-19 crisis with aplomb, but it has still not been an easy year for the country. Taipei has faced down the global pandemic in relative isolation, with China continuing to hinder Taiwan's efforts to engage with the World Health Organization. Beijing's imposition of the National Security Law in Hong Kong, meanwhile, yet again confirmed China's malicious intentions towards Taiwan; Xi Jinping (習近平), after all, has explicitly pushed for a "one country, two systems" (一國兩制) arrangement for cross-Strait union.

Meanwhile, Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu (吳釗燮) last month described the number of Chinese military activities around Taiwan thus far in 2020 as "[unprecedented](#)." Indeed, Wu is worried that the era of peaceful coexistence across the Taiwan Strait may be coming to an end. "A country will often use an exterior crisis to change the domestic focus," he told reporters. "If we look at the contested issues around China's periphery, we see that for China, Taiwan would be an extremely convenient sacrificial lamb."

On top of all that, Taipei has faced renewed concerns about the man in the Oval Office, with former National Security Adviser John Bolton recently [painting](#) a pic-

ture of a president that thinks little of Taiwan.

The Azar visit, then, kills several birds with one stone. It reassures Taipei that Donald Trump is not about to forsake Taiwan nor give China a veto over American Taiwan policy. The move sends a similar signal to Beijing. It also provides an opportunity for what should be a valuable conversation about public health in the midst of a global pandemic.

### ***A New Normal***

Perhaps most importantly, the Azar visit may contribute to the establishment of a new normal in US-Taiwan relations. It has been six years since the EPA administrator went to Taiwan (during the second Obama term) and 20 years since a cabinet secretary did so (the secretary of transportation [made the trip](#) in 2000). Given the nature of the US-Taiwan relationship and the two countries' many shared challenges, interests, and values, there is much to discuss at the highest levels of government. Future presidents should have few qualms about dispatching cabinet members to engage in those discussions.

To ensure that Azar's visit does mark a reset of sorts—rather than a one-off as the EPA administrator's was—Trump should send another cabinet secretary to Taiwan before the year is out. A visit from the secretary of commerce to discuss high-tech supply chains or from the US Trade Representative (a cabinet-level position) to launch free trade agreement negotiations would be appropriate, and would go far to establish high-level delegations to Taiwan as something the US government does as a matter of course.

If the president's Asia policy team is interested in establishing a "new normal" for US-Taiwan relations before January 20, 2021, there are a number of other meaningful undertakings they might consider as well.

### ***Global Health Intelligence Fusion Center***

Comparing the American and Taiwanese responses to the COVID-19 outbreak makes for a stark contrast. Taipei's effort to stymie the virus has been exemplary, while Washington's has left much to be desired. Indeed, the HHS [announcement](#) of Azar's trip all but explicitly admits that the United States has plenty to learn from Taiwan:

*“Secretary Azar’s historic visit will strengthen the US-Taiwan partnership and enhance US-Taiwan cooperation to combat the global COVID-19 pandemic. Taiwan’s role in the international community is critical, as demonstrated by its remarkable success battling COVID-19 as a free and transparent democratic society.”*

The reasons for the pandemic’s divergent paths in Taiwan and the United States are many and varied, but one key reason for Taiwan’s success—though not necessarily the most important one—is the early rumblings Taipei heard of a new disease emerging in Wuhan. Taiwan reacted more quickly than anyone else in large part because it had information upon which to act. Importantly, that information was not found in reports from China to the World Health Organization, but rather in a [post](#) on a Taiwanese online message board.

Meanwhile, the United States has hamstrung its own capacity for gathering “health intelligence” in China. The US Centers for Disease Control presence in China has [shrank](#) in recent years, from 47 employees in 2017 to 14 last year:

*“Reductions at the US agencies sidelined health experts, scientists, and other professionals who might have been able to help China mount an earlier response to the novel coronavirus, as well as provide the US government with more information about what was coming, according to the people who spoke with Reuters.”*

In order to address this American shortcoming and to ensure Taiwan has a more comprehensive outlook on global health threats, the two governments should consider establishing a global health intelligence fusion center. Staffed by American and Taiwanese public health and medical professionals and headquartered in Washington or Taipei, the center would enable rapid sharing and analysis of emerging threats. Ideally designed to easily include additional country partners in the future, the fusion center would exemplify practical cooperation and normalize a state of affairs in which US and Taiwanese officials work hand-in-hand on a permanent basis.

#### **Democracy Assurance Joint Standing Committee**

Chinese and Russian actors, respectively, have at-

tempted to covertly interfere in both Taiwan’s and the United States’ domestic politics in recent years. In particular, they have sought to manipulate electoral outcomes, sow societal divisions, and undermine faith in democratic processes and institutions. According to the [Mueller Report](#), Russia interfered in the 2016 US presidential election in two primary ways:

*“First, a Russian entity carried out a social media campaign that favored presidential candidate Donald J. Trump and disparaged presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. Second, a Russian intelligence services conducted computer-intrusion operations against entities, employees, and volunteers working on the Clinton Campaign and then released stolen documents.”*

Meanwhile, in Taiwan, as Gary Schmitt and I described in a GTI [occasional report](#) last year, People’s Republic of China (PRC) “interference in Taiwan’s democracy came to a head in the November 2018 elections.” China used both new and traditional media to propagate disinformation harmful to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨), while also weaponizing ties with local officials, organized crime, and business leaders in order to support Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) candidates.

The threats with which Taiwan and the United States have grappled are not identical, but there are enough similarities to warrant closer cooperation. What’s more, the United States is beginning to come to grips with PRC influence operations on its own shores—indeed, National Counterintelligence and Security Center Director William Evanina recently [highlighted](#) both Russian and Chinese efforts to affect the outcome of the 2020 presidential election. To foster cooperation on these issues, Taipei and Washington should consider establishing a democracy assurance joint standing Committee. Meeting every six months in alternating capitals, committee members would provide updates on malign influence in their home countries, exchange best practices, identify areas for collaboration, and prepare a joint report—with public and confidential versions—to be disseminated to relevant government agencies in Taipei and Washington. As with the health intelligence fusion center, the standing committee should be envisioned as a permanent engagement mechanism within the bilateral relationship and should be open to participation from other interested countries.

### ***Fortress Formosa 2020***

A new normal in US-Taiwan relations should feature not only mechanisms to enhance the resilience of both countries in the face of global health and political warfare threats, but also efforts to ensure greater security as traditionally understood. With the People's Liberation Army posing an ever-greater threat to Taiwan and its neighbors, it is counterproductive for the Pentagon to continue keeping the Republic of China (ROC) Armed Forces at arm's length. Instead, the American and Taiwanese navies should announce that their first annual bilateral exercise—perhaps called *Fortress Formosa 2020*—will be held later this year.

The first iteration might focus on search and rescue, cross-deck helicopter landings, and communications. Over time, the Pentagon and the Ministry of National Defense should seek to scale up to focus on the full complement of surface warfare operations.

Navies will play a significant role in any armed conflict over Taiwan's fate. The United States has an interest in ensuring that the ROC Navy is highly capable and highly prepared. The US Navy likewise has an interest in ensuring it can communicate and operate seamlessly with its Taiwanese counterpart.

Committing upfront to an annual exercise not only sets a precedent, but makes abundantly clear that US-Taiwan defense relations will look different going forward—that bilateral exercises will be a feature of the broader relationship and not just a product of this current moment in time.

### ***Conclusion***

Each of the four proposals offered here—a second cabinet visit to Taiwan this year, a global health intelligence fusion center, a democracy assurance joint standing committee, and a new annual bilateral naval exercise—is designed to outlive the current administration. Were any of these adopted now, the next administration—whether a second Trump term or first Biden term—would be faced with a decision to cancel what had been clearly intended as new and enduring features of the US-Taiwan relationship. Such a decision would not be taken lightly. A new normal is within reach—the Trump administration need only grasp it.

**The main point:** Secretary Azar's trip to Taiwan should

be just the first step in establishing a new baseline for US-Taiwan engagement going forward.

[1] Seniority is determined by line of succession to the presidency as defined in the Presidential Succession Act.