

A REPORT OF THE CSIS
FREEMAN CHAIR IN
CHINA STUDIES

Taiwan's 2012 Presidential Elections and Cross-Strait Relations

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Since Ma Ying-jeou assumed the presidency in Taiwan in May 2008, relations across the Taiwan Strait have improved dramatically. In the past three and a half years, 16 agreements have been signed on practical matters that have largely benefited the people on both sides of the Strait.

The presidential election in Taiwan, scheduled for January 14, 2012, will have a significant impact on the cross-Strait situation regardless of the outcome. If President Ma is reelected for a second term, Beijing may become impatient for faster progress toward reunification and put pressure on Ma's government to launch talks aimed at settling political differences. Absent a domestic consensus on the island, cross-Strait political talks could be extremely divisive with possible negative repercussions both within Taiwan and between the two sides of the Strait.

A victory by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate, Tsai Ing-wen, would create different challenges. Tsai is unlikely to accept the two pillars on which mainland China has based its willingness to engage with Taipei: the 1992 Consensus on "one China" and opposition to Taiwan's independence. In the event that Beijing and Taipei were unable to agree on a new formulation to guide their relationship, it is possible that cross-Strait interaction would slow and negotiations would cease. In a worst-case scenario, tensions that characterized the era of the first DPP president, Chen Shui-bian (2000–2008), could reemerge. As of early November, polls show Ma in a dead heat with Tsai.

Beijing is watching the presidential campaign in Taiwan with great concern, and China's leadership is pessimistic about the prospects for maintaining cross-Strait stability and progress if the DPP returns to power. Some mainland Chinese scholars suggest that the return of DPP rule could embolden domestic critics of Hu Jintao's policy of pursuing "peaceful development" in cross-Strait relations to push for a tougher approach. Such a development on the eve of the leadership transition on the mainland could influence personnel arrangements and policies of the new leadership.

Official discussion of military confidence-building measures (CBMs) is currently taboo in Taiwan due in part to the proximity of the election, but some officials suggest privately that CBMs could be on the agenda if Ma Ying-jeou is reelected. A decision by Taipei to pursue cross-Strait military CBMs would receive U.S. support, as would the opening of cross-Strait political talks, assuming that such initiatives were backed by the majority of the people of Taiwan and were undertaken voluntarily rather than as a result of coercion.

President Ma has said that Taiwan could "cautiously consider" signing a peace agreement with mainland China within the next decade if the pact meets three preconditions: it wins strong support from Taiwan's people, whose views would be polled in a referendum; it meets the actual needs of the nation; and it is supervised by Taiwan's legislature.

Much is at stake for the United States in Taiwan's upcoming elections. Washington has a strong interest in the conduct of a free, fair, and open presidential election in Taiwan, not in supporting any particular candidate. At the same time, sustaining cross-Strait peace and stability is especially critical as the United States manages friction with Beijing on a broad range of economic, political, and security issues.



TAIWAN'S 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS AND CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED STATES

Introduction

Since Ma Ying-jeou assumed the presidency in 2008, relations across the Taiwan Strait have improved dramatically. In the past three and half years, 16 agreements have been signed on practical matters that have largely benefited the people on both sides of the Strait. Restrictions on trade and economic ties between Taiwan and mainland China are gradually being dismantled. Cooperation is taking place between government bureaucracies on both sides of the Strait in many areas, including crime fighting by law enforcement agencies, establishment of a cross-Strait medical emergency hotline, and search-and-rescue exercises by coast guards and local maritime agencies. Habits of cooperation are being formed that could pave the way for discussion of sensitive political and military issues in the years to come.

The presidential election in Taiwan, scheduled for January 14, 2012, will have a significant impact on the cross-Strait situation regardless of the outcome. If President Ma is re-elected for a second term, Beijing may become impatient for faster progress toward reunification and put pressure on the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) government to launch talks aimed at settling political differences. Absent a domestic consensus on the island, cross-Strait political talks could be extremely divisive with possible negative repercussions both within Taiwan and between the two sides of the Strait.

A victory by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate, Tsai Ing-wen, would create different challenges. Tsai is unlikely to accept the two pillars on which mainland China has based its willingness to engage with Taipei: the 1992 Consensus on “one China” and opposition to Taiwan’s independence. In the event that Beijing and Taipei were unable to agree on a new formulation to guide their relationship, it is possible that cross-Strait interaction would slow and negotiations would cease. In a worst-case scenario, tensions that characterized the era of the first DPP president, Chen Shui-bian (2000-2008), could reemerge.

Beijing is watching the presidential campaign in Taiwan with great concern, and China’s leadership is pessimistic about the prospects for maintaining cross-Strait stability and progress if the DPP returns to power. While mainland China recognizes that a second Ma term would not

“The presidential election in Taiwan, scheduled for January 14, 2012, will have an impact on the cross-Strait situation regardless of the outcome.”

necessarily produce a peace accord or other agreements that would bring reunification closer, it has confidence that Ma would continue to eschew independence, and thus cross-Strait stability and predictability would be preserved.¹

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Taiwan Views of Cross-Strait Relations

Since Ma Ying-jeou took office as president of the Republic of China (ROC) in May 2008, cross-Strait relations have seen an impressive reversal of the tensions that began in the mid-1990s. A cornerstone of Ma’s approach to the mainland—and one endorsed by his Kuomintang party—has been his “three no’s” policy: no unification, no independence, and no use of force. Of critical importance to Beijing has been Ma’s acceptance of the 1992 Consensus—the formula that made possible the historic Singapore talks between Taiwan and the mainland in 1993 and essentially represents an understanding that there is only one China, though disagreement persists on how to define it. On the island of Kinmen during ROC Centennial Peace Day ceremonies on August 23, 2011, President Ma stated that support for the 1992 Consensus was “support for the ROC and support for the sovereignty, territory, and the status of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait as set forth in the Constitution.”²

Ma Ying-jeou deserves credit not only for reducing cross-Strait tensions, but also for easing competition between Taipei and Beijing in the international community. Early in his tenure, Ma introduced a “diplomatic truce,” which halted, at least temporarily, the fierce rivalry between the two sides for diplomatic recognition from other countries and enabled Taiwan to keep its 23 diplomatic allies. In addition, Ma’s “flexible diplomacy” has allowed Taiwan to further develop relations with countries with which it lacks formal diplomatic ties, begin to expand its participation in international organizations, and achieve more amicable interaction between the island and mainland China in international society. Talks between Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and mainland China’s Association for Relations Across the Strait (ARATS) resumed in June 2008 after a 10-year hiatus and have produced 16 agreements so far, including the landmark Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Negotiations are under way with Singapore on a bilateral economic cooperation accord, a joint feasibility study on a similar agreement is being conducted with New Zealand, and talks with other countries aimed at promoting trade and economic ties are likely to follow. In September 2011, Taiwan signed an investment agreement with Japan that is expected to bring more Japanese enterprises to Taiwan and boost both countries’

1. A delegation led by the Center for Strategic and International Studies traveled to Beijing and Taiwan August 22–26, 2011, where they discussed the issues in this paper extensively with senior officials and scholars.

2. “President Ma attends ROC Centennial Peace Day in Kinmen,” August 23, 2011, <http://www.taiwanembassy.org/br/ct.asp?xItem=218993&ctNode=2237&mp=1>.

industrial development.³ There has also been progress on the question of Taiwan's international space more broadly. As of October 2011, Taiwan had joined six new international organizations as either a full member or an observer, including participation since 2009 as an observer at the World Health Assembly, the executive arm of the World Health Organization, and four nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) since 2008.

Yet many of Ma's demands remain unmet. For example, Ma hopes Taiwan can join more international organizations and has proposed observer status in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), but Beijing remains opposed and continues to block progress. In addition, Ma's calls for the mainland to reduce the military threat to the island have gone largely unheeded. Gains have been confined to the mainland's movement of major military exercises to military regions farther away from Taiwan⁴ and a possible capping of the number of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) deployed against the island.⁵ As the cross-Strait military balance shifts further in the mainland's favor, President Ma has stressed the need for Taiwan to bolster its defense capabilities, including enhancing soldiers' skills, manufacturing weaponry indigenously, and purchasing advanced weapons from the United States.⁶

President Obama notified the U.S. Congress on September 21, 2011, of an arms package worth \$5.85 billion that included upgrades for Taiwan's 145 F-16 A/B fighters, bringing the total of U.S. weapons sales approved for sale to Taipei in the past three years to more than \$18 billion. Ma welcomed the decision but also reiterated his request for 66 new F-16 C/D jets.⁷ Taiwanese interlocutors, including government officials, argued that upgrades for the existing planes and the new fighters are not interchangeable but instead fulfill different needs of the air force, and they insisted that an upgrade of the F-16 A/Bs alone would be insufficient to meet the requirements of Taiwan's air force. Prior to the announced sale, officials and scholars in Taipei cautioned that the U.S. response to Taiwan's request to purchase F-16 C/Ds would be viewed by Taiwan and other regional states as a test of U.S. willingness to stand up to Chinese pressure. A senior Ministry of National Defense (MND) official highlighted an incident on June 29, 2011, involving two People's Liberation Army (PLA) Su-27 fighters that crossed the unofficial centerline of the Taiwan Strait in pursuit of a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft.⁸ He argued that such events underscored "Taiwan's need for advanced fighters to protect its Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) and contribute to the maintenance of regional stability." A future F-16 C/D sale has not been ruled out by Washington,

3. "Ma touts ECFA as catalyst for Taiwan-Japan investment pact," *Want China Times*, September 23, 2011, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20110923000036&cid=1101>.

4. Exercises carried out in the Nanjing Military Region opposite Taiwan in 2009 were small in scale and did not appear specifically directed at a Taiwan scenario. Ni Eryan, "Proactively and Immediately Establish Military Mutual Trust across the Taiwan Strait," *Wen Wei Po*, May 19, 2009.

5. In 2009, Chinese deployments of short-range ballistic missiles reached a plateau in terms of numbers, with more advanced models replacing older versions (many of which are being used in live-fire exercises). The annual report on the Chinese military issued by the Pentagon reported that in 2009 the number of SRBMs was in the range of 1,050–1,150 and in 2010 the range was 1,000–1,200.

6. President Ma Ying-jeou's National Day Address, October 10, 2011, <http://english.president.gov.tw/Default.aspx?tabid=491&itemid=25514>.

7. Rachel Chan, "Taiwan thanks US for F-16 A/B upgrades," *Taiwan Today*, September 22, 2011, <http://www.taiwanembassy.org/ct.asp?xItem=221596&ctNode=2300&mp=12>.

8. "Taiwan Says Chinese Fighter Jets Entered Its Airspace on 'Routine' Mission," *Bloomberg News*, July 25, 2011, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-07-26/taiwan-says-chinese-fighter-jets-entered-its-airspace-on-routine-mission.html>.

although it is unlikely to take place any time soon. In the meantime, there are indications that Taiwan may have begun to look beyond F-16 technology as Taiwan defense officials express interest in purchasing F-35 fighters.⁹

Despite urging from Beijing—or perhaps in part because of it—Ma has been unwilling to start cross-Strait negotiations on more sensitive political and security issues. During his candidacy and early in his presidency, Ma indicated strong support for pursuing both a peace accord that would end the state of hostility between the two sides of the Strait and military confidence-building measures (CBMs) with the mainland.¹⁰ Public mistrust in Ma’s administration and the absence of a domestic consensus in Taiwan on issues pertaining to sovereignty subsequently imposed political constraints on the KMT, however. According to a poll conducted in August 2011, only 35.7 percent of people in Taiwan believed that Ma was “trustworthy and has integrity” and only 30.8

“... officials in Taipei maintained that cross-Strait ties would continue to improve incrementally, insisting that neither side of the Strait was ready to embark on talks on political issues at this time.”

percent considered that he “safeguards sovereignty and secures Taiwan’s interests and peace across the Strait.”¹¹

In private discussions with U.S. experts, officials in Taipei maintained that cross-Strait ties would continue to improve incrementally, insisting that *neither* side of the Strait was ready to embark on talks on political issues at this time. While one can only speculate about views on the mainland, public opinion polls in Taiwan suggest that there is indeed discomfort about accelerating the pace of improvement in cross-Strait ties. Recent polls conducted by the government’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) revealed that 46.4 percent of the public considered the current pace of cross-Strait exchanges to be just right, followed by 29.5 percent who thought that the pace is too fast, while 14.4 percent reported that the pace is too slow.¹²

It therefore came as a surprise to the many people on both sides of the Strait who had assumed that the idea of a peace agreement had been shelved at least until after the January 2012 election when President Ma stated in mid-October that Taiwan could “cautiously consider” signing a peace accord with mainland China within the next decade. Realizing such a goal, Ma indicated, would require meeting three preconditions: it must win strong support from Taiwan’s people; it must meet the actual needs of

9. “Taiwan looking at tech beyond F-16s: official,” *China Post*, September 20, 2011, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2011/09/20/317235/Taiwan-looking.htm>.

10. In September 2007, Ma’s campaign published a white paper on defense policy entitled “A New Military for a Secure and Peaceful Taiwan” that stated his intention, if elected, to initiate military-to-military exchanges and negotiate to establish a CBM mechanism. Office of Ma Ying-jeou, “Defense White Paper of the KMT: A New Military for a Secure and Peaceful Taiwan,” September 2, 2007, <http://www.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=111&anum=3284>. See also “Ma says cross-Strait peace accord is around the corner,” *Taipei Times*, November 24, 2007, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2007/11/24/2003389302>; and “Ma’s peace accord plan draws mixed reactions in Taiwan,” *Central News Agency*, October 18, 2008, http://www.taiwannews.com.tw/etn/news_content.php?id=767202.

11. Global Views Survey Research Center, August 23, 2011, <http://www.gvsr.net.tw/>.

12. “Opinion Poll on Current Cross-Strait Relations,” Mainland Affairs Council via Kuomintang Official Website, September 26, 2011, <http://www.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=114&anum=10174>.

the nation; and it must be supervised by Taiwan's legislature.¹³ He subsequently pledged that the government would obtain the approval of the people through a referendum before signing a peace agreement.

The mainland's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) welcomed the move, saying that ending hostilities across the Strait and concluding a peace agreement would serve the interests of the "entire Chinese Nation." Careful to not appear impatient, the TAO spokesman reiterated that cross-Strait talks should tackle "economic issues and later political ones, easy things first and difficult matters later" and should promote cultural exchanges. The spokesman noted, however, that political issues "objectively exist" and would have to be faced sooner or later. On the question of the referendum, the spokesman maintained that cross-Strait political talks should be undertaken only when conditions were ripe, and he warned that "we should not allow any political force to make use of this issue for political capital."¹⁴

Subsequent polling shows that Taiwan voters are divided on whether to sign a cross-Strait peace accord. A poll by the pro-KMT media outlet United Daily News found that 41 percent of the voters supported the signing of a peace accord, 29 percent opposed signing, and 29 percent expressed no opinion. Nearly 67 percent said that signing the deal should be subject to a referendum, with only 17 percent saying a referendum was not necessary. Among supporters of the pan-Blue camp (the KMT, the People First Party (PFP), and the New Party), 69 percent favored signing a peace accord; in contrast, among pan-Green supporters (the Democratic Progressive Party, the Taiwan Solidarity Union, and the minor Taiwan Independence Party), 59 percent opposed the idea.¹⁵

Views of the DPP Opposition

The KMT administration's accomplishments in promoting cross-Strait ties have not gone without criticism. The DPP and its presidential candidate, Tsai Ing-wen, charge that Ma has sacrificed Taiwan's sovereignty as well as relations with the United States for short-term economic gains from Beijing, and that expanded economic ties between Taiwan and mainland China have not benefited the majority of Taiwan's population. In addition, the DPP condemned Ma's proposal to consider signing a cross-Strait peace accord as evidence that the KMT seeks to rush unification with the mainland. Tsai has consistently denied the existence of the 1992 Consensus and has called for expanding Taiwan's ties with other countries to prevent further marginalization and overdependence on China economically.

While the DPP refuses to rule out the option of independence for Taiwan, the party has nevertheless learned lessons from the eight years that Chen Shui-bian was in power. During his two terms in office, Chen's provocative policies toward Beijing escalated cross-Strait tensions and strained Taiwan's relations with the United States. U.S. intervention was critically important in averting a cross-Strait crisis when the first-ever national referendum was held in March 2004, asking the people of Taiwan whether they supported the government's acquisition of advanced missile

13. "Ma: Cross-Strait Peace Agreement Possible If Three Conditions Met," Kuomintang Official Website, October 18, 2011, <http://www.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=112&anum=10283>.

14. "国台办新闻发布会辑录" [Press Conference Transcript of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council], October 26, 2011, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/201110/t20111026_2122103.htm.

15. "Talk of the Day—'Peace deal' impact on opinion polls," CNA, October 25, 2011.

defense systems to defend against mainland China's growing ballistic missile force, and whether they wanted the government to negotiate with China to conclude a peace and stability framework.¹⁶ The referendum failed because the number of ballots cast for both questions fell short of the required threshold of 50 percent of eligible voters.

Under Tsai Ing-wen's leadership as party chairwoman, the DPP has adopted a more moderate approach to cross-Strait relations. On August 23, 2011, Tsai unveiled the DPP's 10-year policy platform, which comprises 18 chapters detailing the party's guiding principles and differences with the KMT. Addressing cross-Strait relations, the national security strategy chapter charges that "the Ma government simplistically views China as the only path to rely upon for Taiwan's security and development." Further, it argues that China is "a possible opportunity for development," but is an "unpredictable factor" and "carries an unfriendly attitude toward Taiwan's sovereignty." The policy paper acknowledges but does not accept Beijing's "one China" position, and proposes that the two sides of the Strait "reach an understanding that is based on reality and the fact that the two sides are different" while seeking "commonality and strategic mutual interests." The overarching goal is to develop "a stable mechanism that would benefit the pursuit of peaceful development on both sides."¹⁷

Alongside the 10-year policy guidelines, Tsai introduced what she dubbed the "Taiwan Consensus," in which she pledged to employ democratic processes to formulate a consensus position to negotiate with the mainland. Recognizing the "conflicting interests" between her party and Beijing, Tsai called for the mainland to "face the fact that Taiwan is a democracy" and must be treated as such.¹⁸ On defense and security, Tsai asserted that the DPP is "committed to a strong defense capability, not because we want to have a war with China, but because we believe that being equipped with a strong defense capability" would give Taiwan not only the confidence but also the necessary leverage to negotiate with the mainland.¹⁹

Tsai has signaled some flexibility as the election grows closer. Her shift in stance on the ECFA is an example. Initially, Tsai staunchly opposed the agreement and called for a referendum to let the people decide.²⁰ More recently however, she has advocated a review and reevaluation of the ECFA using "democratic procedures" and international norms.²¹ Speaking at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington, Tsai provided reassurances that the DPP would adopt a stable and balanced approach to cross-Strait relations and would not pursue extreme or radical policies. Rather, the party would "seek to achieve a strategic understanding that is based on reality, where

16. On December 9, 2003, sitting alongside Premier Wen Jiabao of China, who was visiting Washington, President George W. Bush criticized the "comments and actions" of Taiwan's leader, who, he said, "may be willing to make decisions unilaterally to change the status quo, which we oppose." *Taiwan Communiqué*, No. 106, January 2004.

17. *National Security Strategy*, Democratic Progressive Party, August 2011.

18. Paul Mozur, Jenny W. Hsu, and Aries Poon, "Taiwan's Tsai Stresses Slower Track for China Ties," *Wall Street Journal*, September 1, 2011, <http://dpp taiwan.blogspot.com/2011/09/wall-street-journal-interview-september.html>.

19. "Taiwan Candidate Says She Can Run the Military," *Defense News*, August 29, 2011, <http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-tMg2GUsDem4/TluXoyRJIII/AAAAAAAAAC4/oIs6GBtQcEU/s1600/viewer.png>.

20. "DPP's Tsai Ing-wen calls for referendum on ECFA signing," *China Post*, March 28, 2010, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2010/03/28/250145/DPPs-Tsai.htm>.

21. "On ECFA, Tsai pledges to use 'democratic procedures,'" *Want China Times*, August 23, 2011, <http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1101&MainCatID=&id=20110823000072>.

the two sides across the Strait can interact in a stable and peaceful manner.”²²

Discussions with DPP officials in Taipei suggest that the party is confident that if Tsai Ing-wen is elected president, mainland Chinese leaders will be inclined to strike a deal with the DPP, even if the party does not accept some version of “one China,” because Beijing will want to avoid setbacks in cross-Strait relations that could divert attention from the priority of maintaining domestic stability. This expectation that the current level of cross-Strait interaction, including negotiation mechanisms, would be maintained in the absence of steps by the DPP to satisfy Beijing’s concerns was suggested by Tsai in her comments at AEI. She maintained that by reaching a “strategic understanding” on differences but agreeing to engage in order to pursue common interests was the most “realistic” way forward in cross-Strait relations.²³ However, given increasingly strident Chinese nationalism, diminished tolerance throughout Chinese society for perceived challenges to the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity, the pending leadership transition, and the ongoing discourse on the mainland about “core interests”—which include Taiwan—it may be unrealistic to anticipate that Beijing will compromise on its bottom line of “one China.”

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Mainland Chinese Views of Cross-Strait Relations

The upcoming Taiwan presidential election and the implications for future cross-Strait relations are being intensely discussed on the mainland. Regardless of the outcome, the Chinese have concerns. A Ma Ying-jeou victory, while undoubtedly Beijing’s preferred outcome, will raise questions about how hard to press for political talks and whether to respond positively to Ma’s demands for greater international space, economic cooperation agreements with other countries, and reductions in Chinese military deployments opposite Taiwan. At least for the time being, mainland officials assure that Beijing is patient and willing to develop cross-Strait relations at whatever pace with which Ma is comfortable. President Hu’s “peaceful development” policy would continue, allowing for increased cultural and educational exchanges alongside expanded economic cooperation. Experience gleaned from Ma’s first term in office has lowered expectations on the mainland for signing a cross-Strait peace accord that would virtually rule out independence for the island.

“... mainland officials assure that Beijing is patient and willing to develop cross-Strait relations at whatever pace with which Ma is comfortable.”

In private conversations, Chinese officials and scholars do not conceal their disappointment and frustration with Ma’s cautious approach to mainland China and his insistence that many cross-Strait agreements yield greater benefits for Taiwan than for the

22. Tsai Ing-wen, “Taiwan’s national security challenges and strategies in the next decade,” remarks at the American Enterprise Institute, September 13, 2011, <http://dpptaiwan.blogspot.com/2011/09/tsai-ing-wens-remarks-at-american.html>.

23. Ibid.

mainland. One senior official privately stated that negotiations should be give and take, but when dealing with Ma's administration it is "all take and no give." He cited the ECFA as a prime example, and indeed the agreement was skewed to Taiwan's advantage. On rare occasions, irritation with Ma Ying-jeou's policies is voiced publicly, as when Academy of Military Sciences researcher Maj. Gen. Luo Yuan accused Ma of pursuing a policy of peaceful separation.²⁴ Experts engaged in deep study of Taiwan fully understand the constraints under which Ma must conduct policy due to the polarization of Taiwan's politics. Officials maintain that in a second Ma term, even if no substantial progress toward reunification is achieved, cross-Strait relations will at least be stable and predictable, enabling Beijing to focus attention on other pressing matters.

Mainland China is anxious about a possible DPP return to power in Taiwan and is especially suspicious of Tsai Ing-wen, due in part to her role in former president Lee Teng-hui's administration as head of an advisory group that recommended in 1999 that a "special state-to-state" relationship existed between Taiwan and mainland China.²⁵ In addition, Tsai served as Mainland Affairs Council chairperson during Chen Shui-bian's administration when he announced that there was "one country on each side" of the Taiwan Strait. One mainland official implied that Beijing is bracing itself for a DPP presidency that from the outset might be confrontational and provocative, in contrast to the beginning of Chen's first term that was highlighted by his "five no's" pledge, enunciated in his 2000 inaugural address:— as long as mainland China had no intention to use military force against Taiwan, Chen said, he would not (1) declare independence; (2) change the national title from the Republic of China to the Republic of Taiwan; (3) include the doctrine of special state-to-state relations in the Constitution of the Republic of China; (4) promote a referendum on unification or independence; or (5) abolish the National Unification Council or the National Unification Guidelines (which were subsequently eliminated in 2006).

Responding to Tsai's 10-year policy platform, the Taiwan Affairs Office stated that there was no indication that the DPP had changed either its stance on Taiwan independence or its advocacy of the "one country on each side" policy.²⁶ It also warned that if the DPP's proposed policies were implemented, cross-Strait negotiations would not be able to continue and the relationship would again become turbulent.²⁷ Wang Yi, minister of the TAO, described pursuing peaceful development of cross-Strait relations as a multistoried building, with the 1992 Consensus and opposition to Taiwan independence as the foundation and each agreement signed between SEF and ARATS as new stories added to the building. "If someone calls for the foundation of the building to be

24. "解放军少将罗援：马英九三不政策是和平分裂" [PLA Major General Luo Yuan: Ma Ying-jeou's three no's are peaceful separation], 联合早报网 (*Lianhe Zaobao Wang*), November 23, 2009, <http://www.zaobao.com/special/china/taiwan/pages12/taiwan091123b.shtml>. Luo Yuan made his argument in a speech at the China Economic Growth and Security Forum (中国经济增长与安全论坛) hosted by Beijing University on November 21, 2009.

25. In response to questions submitted by Deutsche Welle, Lee Teng-hui stated that "the 1991 constitutional amendments have designated cross-Strait relations as a state-to-state relationship or at least a special state-to-state relationship, rather than an internal relationship between a legitimate government and a renegade group, or between a central government and a local government." July 9, 1999, <http://www.fas.org/news/taiwan/1999/0709.htm>.

26. "Mainland Says Taiwan Opposition Leader's 10-Year Policy Unacceptable," Xinhua News Agency, August 24, 2011.

27. "Spokesman for State Council Taiwan Affairs Office Responds to Questions on Tsai Ing-wen's '10-Year Policy Guidelines,'" Xinhua News Agency, August 24, 2011.

demolished, but says that we can continue to add new stories to the building, this is definitely unrealistic and irresponsible,” he warned.²⁸

The mainland is preparing for the possibility that Tsai will become Taiwan’s president and will refuse to accept the “one China” principle as embodied in the 1992 Consensus, which mainland scholars consider an integral part of the status quo. One expert warned that without the 1992 Consensus on one China, “nothing can be achieved.” However, mainland officials are privately signaling that Beijing might be able to demonstrate limited flexibility. A senior official privately offered that if the DPP considers the 1992 Consensus to be an understanding between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the KMT, the mainland is willing to negotiate a new consensus, so long as the DPP (1) rejects Taiwanese independence and (2) accepts a “one China” *framework*. The official cautioned that Beijing is already quite close to reaching its bottom line. In July, Minister Wang Yi reportedly stated that if the DPP continued to deny the 1992 Consensus, it would be hard to imagine how talks could continue, how political trust could be built, or how cooperation currently in place would be able to continue.²⁹

Managing ties with the DPP and the KMT during the presidential campaign presents a challenge for Beijing. On the one hand, frequent and excessively harsh criticism of the DPP could be seen as interference in Taiwan’s elections that could backfire and boost support for Tsai Ing-wen. Lessons have been learned from previous elections in Taiwan, such as the 2000 election that was preceded by major PLA maneuvers and threats by Chinese premier Zhu Rongji that “the election of the independence candidate would mean war.” On the other hand, the mainland cannot remain a disinterested bystander, and officials feel compelled to inform the Taiwan people that the DPP’s claim that progress in cross-Strait relations would invariably continue unimpeded in the event of a Tsai victory is wrongheaded. In the words of one mainland official, Beijing must issue clear statements so that the Taiwan public will “make the right decisions.” Since the mainland’s ability to influence the election is strictly limited, but so much is at stake for Chinese interests, some mainland Chinese urge the United States to help boost Ma’s reelection prospects by publicizing American concern about the possibility of a setback in cross-Strait relations should the DPP return to power.

The impact of the election of a DPP president on cross-Strait relations is uncertain and will depend on the policies that Tsai pursues. Nevertheless, mainland scholars and officials are already considering possible responses based on their expectation that her policies will be unacceptable and even provocative. For example, experts hint that mainland policies of buying agricultural products from Taiwan could cease. Officials suggest that other punitive measures could include suspension of SEF-ARATS talks and a reduction in visits by mainland tourists and local officials as well as mainland students studying in Taiwan. Others indicate that cross-Strait economic relations, including two-way

“The impact of the election of a DPP president on cross-Strait relations is uncertain and will depend on the policies that Tsai pursues.”

28. “Mainland Reaffirms Opposition to DPP Tsai’s ‘Platform for the Next Decade,’” Kuomintang Official Website, September 1, 2011.

29. David Brown, “DPP must clarify its China policy,” *Taipei Times*, August 19, 2011, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2011/08/19/2003511079>. See also “王毅主任的‘三个难以想象’ [Director Wang Yi’s ‘Three Unimaginables’], 华夏经纬网 (*Huaxia Jinwei Wang*), August 2, 2011, <http://www.huaxia.com/thpl/tdyh/yh/2011/08/2523890.html>.

investment and implementation of the ECFA, could also be curtailed. A retired Chinese ambassador specifically warned in a mainland journal owned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the “Macau model,” which the DPP and the mainland used previously to permit industry-to-industry and group-to-group negotiations on Macau, would be an unacceptable alternative to discussions based on the “one China” principle.³⁰

“... the return of the DPP to power could embolden domestic critics of Hu Jintao’s policy of pursuing “peaceful development” in cross-Strait relations to push for a tougher approach.”

Some mainland Chinese scholars suggest that the return of the DPP to power could embolden domestic critics of Hu Jintao’s policy of pursuing “peaceful development” in cross-Strait relations to push for a tougher approach. Such a development on the eve of the leadership transition on the mainland could influence personnel arrangements and policies of the new leadership beyond Taiwan, they warn. Other scholars worry that a DPP victory would spark a confrontation between public opinion on both sides of the Strait. In this scenario, a DPP win would be interpreted by the mainland’s public as a vote against reunification by the majority of the people on Taiwan, which in turn could produce public demands on the mainland for a strong response that Chinese leaders could not ignore. Despite these warnings, it is notable that there have been no hints in either public or private statements about any consideration of taking military action.

Mainland Chinese officials and scholars adamantly reject the contention of Obama administration officials that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan play a role in preserving cross-Strait stability and shaping an environment in which relations between Beijing and Taipei can continue to improve. Rather, they argue that U.S. sales of weapons to Taiwan are harmful to the process of improving cross-Strait relations as well as to efforts to build a relationship based on trust and cooperation between Beijing and Washington. Some individuals acknowledge, however, that at this particular juncture, selling arms to Taiwan will help Ma Ying-jeou to secure a second term in office. And even mainland officials admit privately that a failure by the United States to abide by its security commitments to Taiwan could weaken America’s credibility with its regional allies. Yet even this reasoning is not convincing to mainland Chinese who dismiss U.S. alliances as “Cold War relics” that should be disbanded or restructured. Furthermore, mainland Chinese experts urge the United States to fundamentally re-think its policy of providing arms to Taiwan and to engage in bilateral discussions with Beijing to find a way out of the dilemma.

Potential for Military Confidence-building Measures

Official discussion of military CBMs is currently taboo in Taiwan due in part to the proximity of the election, but some officials suggest privately that CBMs could be on the agenda if Ma Ying-jeou serves a second term in office. Research into the topic by the Taiwanese military has been conducted intermittently for the past decade, but remains superficial; insufficient consid-

30. Wang Jianmin, “What If Tsai Ing-Wen Was to Take Office,” *Shijie Zhishi*, July 1, 2011, translated by Open Source Center (OSC), CPP20110720671022.

eration has been given to how Taiwan might advance its own interests through the pursuit of specific CBMs. That said, the establishment of dialogue mechanisms for problem solving in nonmilitary spheres has been impressive. Currently, numerous working-level officials in Taiwan communicate regularly with their mainland counterparts by phone, including officials from the coast guard and the fishery administration.

Beyond the sensitivities due to the election, Taiwan has several concerns that inhibit serious consideration of entering into negotiations on cross-Strait military CBMs. First, there is pervasive fear that due to its weaker position, Taiwan would be at a disadvantage and would be forced to make concessions. Another prominent concern is that progress in cross-Strait military CBMs will enable the mainland to convince the United States that it is no longer necessary to sell weapons to Taiwan. Moreover, at least some in Taiwan hope that the United States will play a role in cross-Strait CBM negotiations. Citing Taiwan's relatively inferior position militarily, the lack of mutual trust across the Strait, and Taiwan's limited capacity for verification and monitoring mechanisms, Taiwan scholars argue that the U.S. could provide "intellectual facilitation" or play the role of guarantor of a cross-Strait agreement. Another suggestion for a U.S. role is to bolster Taipei's bargaining leverage to ensure that CBMs are not simply symbolic but actually enhance Taiwan's security.

Researchers in Taiwan and on the mainland generally differ over the objectives of military CBMs. Taiwan scholars argue that the main purpose is to create a more predictable security environment and prevent accidental conflict, while PLA researchers maintain that the main goal should be to establish mutual trust. As a result of these divergent objectives, experts on both sides of the Strait usually advocate radically different military CBMs: Taiwan military officers propose transparency and communication measures, whereas PLA officers suggest interactions such as military song contests, sports competitions, calligraphy demonstrations, and discussions of shared military culture and heritage such as Sun Tzu's *Art of War* and of experiences shared fighting the Japanese in the 1930s and 1940s.³¹ Some PLA researchers, however, have a similar approach to that of their Taiwan counterparts. In discussions with mainland Chinese in August 2011, one PLA officer suggested drawing lessons and ideas from CBMs under the Helsinki Accord and the application of CBMs in the Middle East. There is obviously an ongoing debate on the mainland regarding CBMs with Taiwan. There is agreement on one aspect, however, and that is that recognition of "one China" is the mainland's bottom line and must be met in order for negotiations on CBMs to proceed.

Post-Election in Taiwan: Prospects for Cross-Strait Relations

Public opinion polls vary, but suggest that the election will be close. Ma Ying-jeou's lead over Tsai Ing-wen widened in September and early October, but narrowed after he floated the idea of a

“Official discussion of military CBMs is currently taboo in Taiwan due in part to the proximity of the election.”

31. Bonnie S. Glaser, *Building Trust Across the Taiwan Strait: A Role for Military Confidence-building Measures* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, January 2010), http://csis.org/files/publication/100107_Glaser_BuildingTrust_Web.pdf.

peace pact with the mainland. A third candidate, James Soong from the PFP, announced on November 1 that he will enter the race after collecting the requisite number of signatures to add his name to the ballot. Most polls indicate that Soong can obtain 10–14 percent of the total, drawing votes from both of the other candidates approximately equally. However, it is more likely that if Soong remains in the race (there is speculation that he is bargaining for a certain number of at-large seats for the PFP in the legislature and will withdraw his candidacy if the KMT grants them) and the vote is very close, he would siphon more votes from Ma and tip the results in favor of Tsai. In the 2000 elections, Soong ran as a third-party candidate, splitting the pan-Blue vote, which enabled Chen Shui-bian to win with only 39.3 percent of the vote.

As of mid-November, polls show Ma in a dead heat with Tsai. A November 10 poll conducted by TVBS showed 39 percent would vote for Ma, 38 percent would vote for Tsai, 9 percent would vote for Soong, and 14 percent were undecided.³² On November 14, xFuture, a market operated by Taipei's National Chengchi University at which users bet on future events similar to investors in a stock market, predicted that Tsai would receive 49.5 percent of the expected vote, Ma would receive 46.2 percent, and Soong would receive 7.9 percent.³³ A pro-Blue *United Daily News* poll conducted November 12 found 41 percent would vote for Ma, 36 percent for Tsai, and 9 percent for Soong, while 13 percent were undecided.³⁴

Regardless of who emerges with the most votes, the new president will likely have a small margin of victory and will lack a broad mandate to push through major policy changes. If Ma Ying-jeou is reelected, he will likely continue policies pursued in his first term, including following the three no's, pursuing flexible diplomacy, and adhering to the 1992 Consensus; thus, cross-Strait relations can be expected to remain generally amicable and stable.

Beijing's professed patience notwithstanding, pressure will likely build on the mainland for Ma to launch talks on political matters. Ma represents mainland China's best chance to secure

“Beijing’s professed patience notwithstanding, pressure will likely build on the mainland for Ma to launch talks on political matters.”

an agreement that would rule out independence for Taiwan, and Beijing is unlikely to let that opportunity pass easily. Even though Chinese leaders are loathe to see a referendum conducted on Taiwan, they may be willing to tolerate a plebiscite if it is a necessary hurdle to signing a cross-Strait peace accord and there is a high-degree of certainty that it would pass. In the event that opening talks on a peace agreement is deemed premature by Ma in a second term, there is still potential for agreement on the implementation of military CBMs aimed at reducing the risk of accident and miscalculation and at enhancing mutual trust.

If Ma is reelected, the United States would likely maintain its policy of engaging both sides of the Strait and shaping an environment that allows cross-Strait relations to further improve. A decision by Taipei to pursue cross-Strait military CBMs would receive U.S. support, as would the launching of cross-Strait political talks, assuming that such initiatives were backed by the majority

32. “Opinion Poll on 2012 Presidential Election,” TVBS via Kuomintang Official Website, November 10, 2011, <http://www.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=114&anum=10418>.

33. “2012 年總統選舉得票率預測” [2012 Presidential Election Vote Forecast], xFuture, November 14, 2011, http://xfuture.org/contract_groups/d659b8a0-fa9c-4041-8d5f-2a702f3484ce.

34. “Opinion Poll on 2012 Presidential Election,” *United Daily News* via Kuomintang Official Website, November 12, 2011, <http://www.kmt.org.tw/english/page.aspx?type=article&mnum=114&anum=10416>.

of the people of Taiwan and were undertaken voluntarily rather than as a result of coercion. Because of Taipei's vulnerability to mainland Chinese pressure, the United States will need to maintain strong ties with Taiwan so that Ma remains sufficiently confident of U.S. backing to sustain negotiations with Beijing.

Should Tsai Ing-wen be elected president, the intervening four months prior to her inauguration would likely be a probing period in which Beijing and Taipei each seek to maximize their advantage and extract concessions from the other. Active diplomacy by the United States would be critical to persuade both sides to demonstrate maximum flexibility and reach a compromise that would enable negotiation channels to remain open and cooperation to continue. Failure to agree on a formulation that is acceptable to both sides as the basis for their relations would likely result in a suspension of SEF-ARATS negotiations, a reduction of visits to Taiwan by mainland tourists and officials, and a slowdown in the implementation of agreements reached during the Ma administration. In a worst-case scenario, a resumption of efforts to promote a separate Taiwan identity and implement "de-sinification" policies could spark renewed cross-Strait tensions.

Under such circumstances, Beijing would face a serious dilemma. China would undoubtedly be tempted to use economic and other means to punish pro-independence forces in Taiwan. However, such a course of action would risk a reversal of progress made thus far in winning the hearts and minds of the Taiwan people. The newly elected DPP government could point to these punitive actions as further evidence of the mainland's malevolent intent and respond with tougher policies of its own, further agitating cross-Strait tensions. Faced with this conundrum, Beijing might seek to pursue a policy that preserves past gains but at the same time deters the DPP from challenging the mainland's bottom line, and wait for the KMT to return to power. Once again, the United States would have an important role to play to ensure that neither side unilaterally seeks to change the status quo.

“Beijing might seek to pursue a policy that preserves past gains but at the same time deters the DPP from challenging the mainland’s bottom line.”

U.S. Interests and Cross-Strait Relations

The United States has a strong interest in seeing Taiwan's democracy continue to flourish and in the conduct of free and fair elections. Taiwan is a vibrant democracy that is widely viewed as a vanguard for political development in Asia and a role model for China in particular. The people of America and Taiwan share the same values of freedom and liberty, and they cherish their rights to choose their leaders and participate in the political process. At the same time, the United States has an equally compelling interest in the preservation of cross-Strait stability. The tensions that prevailed in relations between Taipei and Beijing beginning in the mid-1990s until 2008 were profoundly contrary to American interests. Thus, Washington is

“Washington . . . prefers to not interfere in Taiwan’s elections, but also insists that its leaders manage ties with Beijing in a way that minimizes friction and reduces the possibility of military conflict.”

ambivalent: it prefers to not interfere in Taiwan's elections, but also insists that its leaders manage ties with Beijing in a way that minimizes friction and reduces the possibility of military conflict.

This ambivalence was apparent during the visit to Washington by Tsai Ing-wen in September 2011. Although Tsai told various audiences she would be flexible in dealing with the mainland

“Regardless of who is elected Taiwan’s president in January, the United States will likely maintain its important unofficial relationship with the government and people of Taiwan.”

and pledged to work closely with the United States if elected, U.S. officials were worried by the absence of concrete details. Keeping channels of communication open between both sides of the Strait is deemed of the utmost importance. A suspension of dialogue could result in miscalculation and potentially war. It is likely that such concerns were at play when an unnamed senior Obama administration official reportedly told the *Financial Times* that Tsai’s visit to the United States “left us with distinct doubts about whether she is both willing and able to continue the stability in cross-Strait relations the region has enjoyed in recent years.” The official also stated that it was “far from clear... that she and her advisers fully appreciate the depth of mistrust of her motives and DPP aspirations” coming from the mainland.³⁵ At the same time, a U.S. State Department official, responding to an inquiry from the office of Senator James Inhofe (R-OK), reiterated that “the administration does not take sides in Taiwan’s

election. It’s up to the people of Taiwan to choose their own leaders in an election. Our interest is in a free, fair and open presidential election, not in supporting or criticizing any presidential candidate.”³⁶

Regardless of who is elected Taiwan’s president in January, the United States will likely maintain its important unofficial relationship with the government and people of Taiwan and abide by U.S. commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act. Arms sales to Taiwan are also likely to continue, though advanced weapons requests from Taipei can be expected to be increasingly controversial as the cross-Strait military balance shifts more decisively in Beijing’s favor and as China’s national power grows.

35. Anna Fifield, Robin Kwong, and Kathrin Hille, “US concerned about Taiwan candidate,” *Financial Times*, September 15, 2011, <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/f926fd14-df93-11e0-845a-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1ZSyvhapz>.

36. William Lowther, “US official worried about Tsai: report,” *Taipei Times*, September 17, 2011, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2011/09/17/2003513466/1>.



APPENDIX DELEGATION MEMBERS

A delegation led by the Center for Strategic and International Studies traveled to Beijing and Taiwan August 22–26, 2011, where they discussed the issues in this paper extensively with senior officials and scholars.

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Former Director of National Intelligence*

Ralph A. Cossa
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