

The KMT's China Policy: Gains and Failures

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Introduction

The KMT's China policy under President Ma Ying-jeou was based on four overarching aims. First, to stabilize cross-Strait relations, which effectively came to a halt at the semi-official level during his predecessor Chen Shui-bian's tenure. Second, to revive Taiwan's economic fortunes through closer integration with the Chinese economy.¹ Third, to balance the imperative of economic development with the maintenance of "national dignity". Fourth, to roll back the "de-Sinicization" elements of Chen's "Taiwanization" program by emphasizing elements of Taiwan's Chinese cultural heritage and situating Taiwan within the framework of the greater Chinese nation. The underlying device used to pursue these aims was the "1992 Consensus", a rhetorical position regarding Taiwan's status vis-à-vis China characterized by Taipei as "One China, separate interpretations". The "1992 Consensus" is controversial in Taiwan,² but its ambiguities created space for

1 Throughout this paper, "Taiwan" is used as shorthand for the Republic of China on Taiwan.

2 The DPP points out that the "1992 consensus" terminology was invented much later, prior to the 2000 presidential election, a fact that former KMT official Su Chi, who coined the term, has acknowledged. Lee

the two sides to develop a workable platform and a new level of momentum. During Ma's tenure, this platform yielded a number of practical agreements across several socio-economic sectors, including a limited free trade agreement, the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Standing down at the end of his second term on May 20th 2016, Ma Ying-jeou left cross-Strait relations in significantly better shape than when he began his presidency in 2008. In that sense, his China policy can be considered a success. However, such is the complicated and multifaceted nature of Taiwan's engagement with China that Ma's China policy cannot be measured by the tone of cross-Strait relations alone, or by the tenor of particular leaders' personal interactions or KMT-CCP relations. Taiwan's China policy has implications for its economy, society, foreign relations and many other policy sectors, and it remains one of the most contested arenas for domestic political competition, often, but not exclusively, refracted through the prism of national identity. Expanding our analytical lens to include these other arenas demonstrates that the KMT's China policy under Ma produced mixed results that can be interpreted as successes or failures depending on one's point of view. The landslide losses for the KMT in legislative elections in January 2016, and DPP candidate Tsai Ing-wen's comfortable victory in the presidential election, suggest a "change election" where voters rejected the policies pursued by Ma and/or the outcomes of his policies. While accepting this judgement, this chapter aims to provide a balanced assessment of Ma's China policy incorporating multiple perspectives and covering multiple policy sectors.

Gains

Teng-hui, Taiwan's president in 1992, denies such a consensus was reached. Others have argued there is no consensus because Taiwan should not be constrained by agreements between an unelected KMT and the Chinese leadership, or that since the PRC itself does not acknowledge the "separate interpretations" qualifier there is no consensus.

Judged against the overarching goals noted above, the KMT's China policy under Ma made gains in a number of ways. First, the tenor of cross-Strait relations reached an all-time high, manifest in the absence of the periodic tensions and diplomatic gridlock that characterised the tenures of Chen Shui-bian and Lee Teng-hui. The reinvigoration of the SEF-ARATS and TAO-MAC frameworks,³ and the institutionalization of party-to-party talks, culminated in the first ever meeting of sitting PRC and ROC presidents in Singapore toward the end of Ma's second term. Observing Taiwan from the outside, from the perspective of the US government for example, the KMT's China policy was a resounding success, decreasing the likelihood of conflict at a time when tensions were rising in the region due to emergent territorial disputes in the South and East China Seas. The stability of cross-Strait relations during this period of increasing friction between China and Japan, Vietnam, the Philippines, and other territorial claimants, was a development warmly welcomed by global leaders, particularly in Washington. Taiwan's foreign policy behaviour, as a claimant of disputed territories itself, was conciliatory and responsible, with gains made not just in cross-Strait relations but in resolving points of contention with Tokyo and Manila, including a landmark fishing agreement covering territories disputed with Japan. Despite President Ma's negative public opinion and low approval ratings, maintaining stable and peaceful cross-Strait relations enjoyed widespread support in Taiwan. And while there were heated debates in Taiwan about the

3 The Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) are semi-official organizations established by Taiwan and China, respectively, to conduct cross-strait relations on their respective governments' behalf. The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) is Taiwan's official China affairs agency, and the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) is China's official Taiwan affairs agency. While the MAC and TAO frequently state official government positions on cross-strait relations, the lion's share of cross-strait negotiations and agreements have been conducted by the SEF and ARATS, owing in large part to the theoretical sensitivity of government-to-government talks between two governments that do not officially recognize each other. Exchanges under both frameworks stalled during the Chen administration.

level of the “concessions” needed to achieve it, the Ma administration demonstrated the possibility of cooperation with China in a productive way, reversing the trajectory of his presidential predecessors.

Second, the incremental opening up of the Taiwanese economy to the mainland and the expansion and deepening of economic integration led to positive results for parts of the Taiwanese economy, particularly large corporations and individuals with the capital and skills to exploit new opportunities. However, the promised results of opening Taiwan’s economy up to China were hampered by the global financial crisis and subsequent recession that negatively affected Taiwan’s export markets, especially in the US and Eurozone. Most economic indicators rebounded impressively in 2010, although the effects of this recovery were less felt in the population at large than in specific sectors. Taiwan’s exports grew robustly during President Ma’s first term despite the global financial crisis. Total annual exports grew 20 percent from 2008 to 2011, with one third of that rise coming from exports to mainland China, which totalled US\$557 billion in the first seven and a half years of Ma's tenure. This was more than double the US\$257 billion of China-bound exports in the equivalent period of the Chen Shui-bian administration (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2015). While there were numerically more Taiwanese investments in China during the Chen administration, the value per investment rose significantly under Ma. As a result, according to Mainland Affairs Council statistics the top five years in terms of monetary amount invested in China by Taiwanese businesses all occurred during Ma’s tenure (Mainland Affairs Council, “Taiwan Investment”, 2015). Remittances to and from China also grew (Mainland Affairs Council, “Taiwan Remittance”, 2015). In defence of the economic consequences of Ma’s China

policy, many of the serious issues faced by ordinary Taiwanese people (wage stagnation, rising cost of living, an increasing sense of relative deprivation) were a consequence of more general globalization processes faced by other economies, which Taiwan must confront through the course of needed economic reforms.

Third, although still circumscribed and subject to various obstacles, mainly emanating from Beijing's direct pressure and global influence, Taiwan's participation in international society increased during Ma's tenure. The extent of participation remains incommensurate with an economy of Taiwan's size, or a liberal democracy that is a global trading power, but its group of diplomatic allies remained stable and Ma could point to a number of successes. For instance, the number of countries and territories that grant ROC citizens visa-free entry, landing-visa privileges, and other entry facilitation programs increased to 153, including the US and EU.⁴ The number of intergovernmental organisations (IGOs) or their subsidiary bodies in which Taiwan enjoys full membership increased to 37 during Ma's presidency (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2015). Taiwan gained membership to (in chronological order) the International Forum of Independent Audit Regulators, Inter-American Tropical Tuna Commission, International Council for Information Technology in Government Administration, Standards and Trade Development Facility, South Pacific Regional Fisheries Management Organisation, Association of World Election Bodies, Asset Recovery Inter-Agency Network of Asia/Pacific, and North Pacific Fisheries Commission. Taipei now has observership or other status in 22 other IGOs or their subsidiary bodies, a modest increase on the situation

⁴ Granted, a major contributor to the expansion in visa waiver rights was the introduction of Taiwan's e-passport on December 29th 2008, initiated by President Chen's administration, which increased the security of the ROC passport (Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2009).

in 2008. Notably, in 2009, Taiwan became a signatory to the World Trade Organization Agreement on Government Procurement and the World Health Organization's health alert system, the International Health Regulations. President Ma was keen to emphasize these successes as indicators that he acted with great resolve to uphold Taiwan's "dignity" and "respect" (*zunyan*/尊嚴). Within Taiwan there is longstanding controversy over what constitutes "dignity" and the means to achieve it, but the scope of Taiwan's international participation and the way that Taiwan was perceived by outsiders⁵ improved under Ma compared to the Chen Shui-bian and Lee Teng-hui administrations.

Fourth, the policies pursued by President Ma established a proven platform for engaging China, including the institutionalization of Track II, party to party, city-to-city and other sub-national fora, in addition to practical arrangements for handling increasingly diverse, intense and complex socio-economic interactions between the two sides. Ma's embrace of the "1992 Consensus", while emphasizing the "different interpretations" qualifier to "One China", and consistent discursive positioning of Taiwan within a one China (the Republic of China) framework, provided the demonstration of "sincerity" demanded by Beijing as a condition for cooperation. Informal interactions, particularly Taiwanese businesspeople (*Taishang*) operating in China, burgeoned in the decade prior to Ma's ascension to the presidency in 2008, coinciding with Presidents Lee and Chen's progressive move toward a "two state" position that effectively halted semi-official cooperation between the two sides, creating numerous difficulties for individuals and inefficiencies for businesses. While Beijing periodically evinced frustration with Ma's inability to push formal interactions forward on the Taiwan side, his "sincerity"

⁵ Consider for instance that the single major frame employed by western media throughout Ma's tenure, has been to juxtapose the stability of cross-Strait relations under Ma with Chen-era turbulence.

removed a major obstacle to cooperation across a number of sectors including transportation, crime, education, tourism, investment and the protection of *Taishang* interests. The re-invigoration of the relationship between the Taiwan Affairs Office and the Mainland Affairs Council allowed the two sides to cooperate on the management of intensifying people-to-people and commercial relations.⁶ The institution of Track II dialogues provided a framework, and much needed momentum, for both dialogue and practical measures. Although many problems remain, for example in the implementation of practical economic agreements, the lack of consular services, and unilateral decisions such as Beijing's plan to require Taiwanese visitors to use IC cards,⁷ the management of Taiwan-China interactions became significantly more effective under Ma.

Failures

There are a number of areas where the KMT's China policies under Ma failed to achieve the desired outcome. First, while the temperature of cross-Strait relations had in many ways never been better, the underlying militarization of the Strait, manifest most obviously in the approximately 1,800 Chinese missiles stationed in Fujian, remained unchanged. Despite Ma's China-friendly orientation, as friendly as Taiwanese domestic politics would allow any president to be, China's military posture and rhetoric signal an undiminished threat to Taiwan's national security. In January 2015, Beijing rattled Taipei by declaring new air routes just off the centreline of the Taiwan Strait and ROC Air Force training areas (Cole, 2015). President Xi's reported remark during his meeting with Ma in

⁶ Including the semi-permanent population of more than one million Taiwanese business people in China

⁷ Without consulting Taiwan, Beijing in the summer of 2015 announced that it would replace its Mainland Travel Permit for Taiwan Residents with an IC card allowing automatic entry (Chung, 2015), and that fall began issuing such cards (Chin, 2015). The DPP warned the Ma administration of the new policy's similarity to Beijing's treatment of Hong Kong and Macau residents.

Singapore⁸ that missiles were not directed at Taiwan and therefore Taiwanese should rest assured was at best disingenuous and at worst a high-profile dismissal of genuine concerns that superficially friendly relations are underpinned by a threatening military stance (Formosa News, 2015). Furthermore, the détente in cross-Strait relations did not apply to cyberspace, where Taiwan is a frequent target of cyber-attacks and hacking attempts (Kovacs, 2012). Then-vice premier, Chang San-cheng told Reuters in January 2015 that the percentage of attacks originating from China was “very high” and many hacks into government systems were traced to sites belonging to the PLA (Gold and Wu, 2015). *The Age* reported that Taiwan’s executive branch experienced nearly 2,000 attacks per week in 2013 (Zappone, 2014), and Chang described Taiwan as a “testing ground” for Chinese hackers.

For all the gains made under Ma, passage of the PRC’s Anti-Secession Law (albeit three years before Ma assumed the presidency), China’s growing military capacity and modernization, the changing military balance in the Taiwan Strait, and the undiminished pressures of “hawks” within the broader CCP leadership (including the PLA) and in terms of popular nationalism, meant that Taiwan’s underlying security environment did not significantly change under Ma. While it is unfair to expect President Ma alone to have affected major changes in this area, critics pointed to China’s military posture as a reason to be more cautious in embracing an obvious potential threat, and to maintain Taiwan’s military preparedness via an appropriate level of defence spending,

8 Ma and Xi met the afternoon and evening of November 7th 2015 at the Four Seasons Hotel in Singapore. After shaking hands, posing for photos, and making official statements for their respective sides in front of the press, the two leaders and their delegations convened for private talks. Afterward, TAO Director Zhang Zhijun and President Ma conducted separate press conferences about the private discussion, and the two delegations attended a banquet. The negotiations and preparation for the meeting were conducted in secret, with the *Liberty Times* breaking the story and Taiwan’s Presidential Office confirming it the night of November 3rd.

the pro-active procurement of weapons from the US and the professionalization of the Taiwanese armed services. These tasks stalled during Ma's tenure. Other observers noted the reduction in morale among the Taiwanese defence forces, manifest in the defection of senior military personnel and numerous successful Chinese espionage operations targeting the Taiwanese military (Enav, 2014; Stanton, 2013). While Ma pointed to the dramatic increase in group and individual tourism to Taiwan from China as having economic benefits, they also raised security concerns. For instance, in November 2015 ROC military officials stated that Chinese intelligence operatives were posing as tourists to take photographs and gather information about Jioupeng Military Base (Pan, 11th November 2015). According to Taipei prosecutors, former PLA officer Zhen Xiaojiang (鎮小江), who led a Chinese spy ring that recruited ROC military officers for espionage, entered Taiwan on tourist and business visas (Pan, 17th January 2015). Meanwhile, domestic and overseas confidence in the ROC military was damaged by repeated security breaches, such as civilians taking photos inside AH-64E Apache helicopters (Pan, 10th April 2015), an air force officer wearing a NT\$2 million helmet to a Halloween party (Tsao, 2015), and a woman gaining entry to the Ministry of National Defence headquarters by pretending to be the Minister's wife (Cole, 2014). While Ma was not directly responsible for these incidents, the extent to which he prioritized Taiwan's national security, in the face of continuing outside threats, was questionable.

Second, while numerous economic agreements were signed, there were significant obstacles to implementation. Furthermore, the intended keystone policy of Ma's second term, a follow-up agreement to ECFA, the Cross-Strait Service and Trade Agreement (CSSTA), failed to achieve ratification in the legislature. In attempting to

push through the CSSTA, Ma overplayed his hand, causing rifts between different branches of government and within his own party, as well as an explosion of discontent dramatically manifest in the Sunflower Movement and occupation of the Legislature. The protests against Ma's modus operandi (an alleged penchant for authoritarian and opaque decision-making) marked a watershed in his second term, prompting landslide losses in local elections in November 2014 and handing the political initiative to the opposition. The CSSTA would have granted Taiwanese businesses access to 80 service sectors in China, while Taiwan would have opened 64 sectors (Shih, 2013). Ma argued that the pact would increase Taiwan's international competitiveness, and framed it as a response to the FTAs signed by Taiwan's regional competitors rather than in terms of economic integration with China. Rather than the content of the agreement, which many people struggled to understand, it was Ma's seemingly undemocratic behaviour that caused the greatest alarm. With a DPP victory in presidential and legislative elections in January 2016, the probability of the CSSTA being passed is low, limiting Ma's legacy on cross-Strait economic integration.

Third, the calibration of Ma's presidential discourse, featuring an emphasis on Chinese identity and downplaying Taiwanese identity (Sullivan and Sapir, 2012), positioned Ma and his party on the margins of a significant trend in public opinion. Through his tenure, the proportion of Taiwanese people identifying as "Taiwanese only" increased from 45 percent to over 60 percent (Election Study Center, 2016). President Ma's development and frequent references to his and Taiwan's Chinese origins signalled a personal commitment to the idea of the centrality of the Chinese nation to Taiwan that was incompatible with Ma's previous rhetorical position as Lee Teng-hui's "new

Taiwanese”. It was also out of sync with the lived reality and national identity preferences of a majority of Taiwanese, particularly younger people for whom Ma’s pet notion of being descended from the Yellow Emperor was incongruous. Despite instrumentally appealing to a sense of Taiwanese identity during his election campaigns, Ma increasingly identified with the Chinese nation, to the detriment of the specificity of Taiwan’s contemporary experience (Sullivan and Sapir, 2013). As a result of Ma’s discursive behaviour and the deliberate marginalization of the “Taiwanese wing” of the party embodied by Wang Jin-pyng, the KMT aligned with “Chinese-ness” at a time when the appeal of “Chinese-ness” was waning. Although political fortunes are cyclical and national identity is one of a range of contested areas in Taiwanese politics, by returning the KMT to its roots as the party of Chinese nationalism and moving it away from a centrist position with broad instrumental appeal, Ma must take responsibility for diminishing the party’s electoral prospects in the near-to-mid-term. Indeed, having lost control of the presidency and legislature in January 2016 the KMT could face a period of significant decline. As one of the major driving forces in the KMT during his tenure as President, Ma is culpable for poisoning the well for his party.

Fourth, while Ma’s China policy yielded numerous economic integration initiatives, the benefits were unevenly felt across Taiwanese society. To a certain extent, difficulties, particularly among the young, are a common growing pain for liberalizing economies. However, Ma’s China initiatives led to specific consequences. Taiwan’s trade became heavily dependent on China, with trade with mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macau accounting for around one third of total volume (Bureau of Foreign Trade, 2015); Taiwanese companies’ outsourcing of investment and production to China depressed the

job market and wages (Dou and Hsu, 2012). Chinese investment contributed to the real estate bubble started by Taiwanese capital that made it difficult for ordinary people to buy a house (Lee and Hung, 2014). The DPP argued that over-dependence on the Chinese market threatens Taiwan's economic and political autonomy (Democratic Progressive Party, 2008), as did U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton (Pan, 25th June 2014). Foreign direct investment in Taiwan has paled in comparison to Taiwanese investment abroad: According to Ministry of Economic Affairs Investment Commission statistics, outbound investment outstripped inbound investment by US\$22 billion from 2000 to 2007 and by US\$56 billion from 2008 to 2014 (Investment Commission, 2015). 61 percent of Taiwanese businesses' overseas investment since 1991 has gone to mainland China (Mainland Affairs Council, "Taiwan Approved", 2015). Taiwanese banks have built up significant exposure to China according to the central bank; as of the second quarter of 2015 outstanding international claims by Taiwanese banks to China on a direct risk basis totalled US\$48.5 billion (Tsai and Huang, 2015). Average disposable income rose just 1.6 percent for Taiwanese from 2008 to 2014 and actually decreased 6.7 percent for those with a university education over those six years (Directorate-General, 2009; Directorate-General, 2015). Meanwhile, according to Taiwan's Consumer Price Index, the cost of living rose 7.9 percent from May 2008 to October 2015 (Statistical Information Network, 2016). Property prices increased substantially. The Ministry of the Interior (MOI) estimated in the first quarter 2015 that the price of a Taipei home was 16 times average annual income; for Taiwan as a whole it was 8.5 times (Ministry of the Interior, "Fangjia", 2015). The MOI's national housing price index estimated that prices nationwide rose 45 percent from March 31st 2008 to March 31st 2015 (Ministry of the

Interior, “Dushi”, 2015). From 2009 to 2013, gross fixed capital formation nearly doubled in residential property, from NT\$168 billion to NT\$317 billion, and increased by roughly half for non-residential property, showing how lucrative the market had become (Statistical Information Network, 2015). The range of livelihood issues was not solely due to Ma’s China policy, but there is little doubt that it exacerbated them.

The emergence of Ma Ying-jeou’s China Policy

Under former presidents Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, Taipei moved progressively towards a “two-state theory” of “special state to state relations” or “one country on each side” (Sullivan and Lowe, 2010). This position on ROC sovereignty, and an emerging consensus on Taiwanese national identity, undermined Taipei’s once-firm commitment to the “One China” principle under KMT authoritarian rule (Schubert, 2004). Consequently, rapidly growing informal socio-economic connections across the Strait were accompanied by political relations that were essentially deadlocked in Lee’s term as elected president and during Chen’s two terms. The “pro-independence” tendencies of Presidents Lee and Chen, and a cyclical pattern of “working silences” punctuated by “provocative statements” (Dittmer, 2004), created an atmosphere of mistrust and antagonism that hindered the formalization of economic interactions carried out by Taiwanese businesses exploiting economic complementarities. Ma entered office with a significant popular mandate (58 percent of the vote) having campaigned on improving cross-Strait relations and reinvigorating the economy. With a glowing personal reputation and sufficient acknowledgement of “Taiwan identity” to remind voters of Lee Teng-hui’s previous endorsement of him as a “new Taiwanese”, Ma enjoyed popular support as an antidote to Chen’s over-emphasis on ideology, corruption scandals and a stillborn China

policy. In his inaugural address, Ma pledged adherence to “no unification, no independence and no use of force,” to the framework of the ROC Constitution, and to the “1992 Consensus” of “one China, respective interpretations.” He called for the “normalization of economic and cultural relations [as] the first step to a win-win solution” (Ma, 2008).

Soon into Ma’s first term, the semi-official Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and Beijing’s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) resumed dialogue for the first time since the mid-1990s. Focusing on “easy” economic issues, regulating practices that were already a reality and smoothing economic interactions that did not impinge on security or sovereignty issues, they quickly endorsed an agreement to allow regular weekend charter flights across the Taiwan Strait, soon followed by agreements to allow mainland tourists to visit Taiwan, direct shipping links, daily cross-Strait flights and improved postal services. A year later further initiatives on food safety, crime, and financial cooperation were quickly passed by the KMT majority in the Legislative Yuan. These practical successes paved the way for the more ambitious, and within Taiwan politically contested, Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Despite domestic opposition, ECFA passed in June 2010, removing tariffs on hundreds of products and becoming the centrepiece policy of Ma’s first term. Between 2011 and 2013, the two sides reached agreements on currency clearing cooperation, financial supervisory platforms, and allowing individual tourists and more Chinese students to visit Taiwan. Overall, the two sides had held 10 rounds of talks, producing 21 formal agreements, three memoranda of understanding (MOU) and two joint statements (Executive Yuan, 2015).

In return for the *entente cordiale* ushered in by the Ma administration, Beijing made concessions on Taiwan's participation in international organizations (a key issue for Ma's domestic opponents and public opinion). The two sides reached an understanding that would enable Taiwanese representatives to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting in 2009 under the Chinese Taipei designation (DeLisle, 2009). Participation in the WHA had been a reasonable goal for Taipei since the SARS crisis in 2003, but unattainable under the name "Taiwan" that the Chen administration had insisted on. In September 2013, after years of efforts, Taiwan received an invitation to attend the ICAO Assembly⁹ for the first time since 1971 (Yeh, 2013). In January 2014, the Seoul-based Asset Recovery Interagency Network-Asia Pacific¹⁰ admitted Taiwan (Ministry of Justice, 2014). Since signing ECFA, Taiwan has signed free trade agreements with New Zealand and Singapore (Gao, 2014).

A tacit unspoken agreement was reached to suspend competition for diplomatic allies (*waijiao xiubing* 外交休兵). The two sides had been competing for diplomatic recognition for many years since the ROC lost its UN seat in the 1970s. In some cases, various forms of "dollar diplomacy" had destabilizing impacts on the mainly small and easily unbalanced countries that recognize Taiwan. The number of ROC allies declined progressively through the 2000s as China sought to leverage its increasing economic power to isolate the "independence seeking" Chen administration. When Ma took power

9 The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is a United Nations specialized agency dedicated to managing the administration and governance of the Convention on International Civil Aviation as well as establishing relevant international standards and practices. Taiwan has long sought to attend the Assembly in order to improve its aviation safety and standards; China's resistance to Taiwan's participation was one front of the cross-strait sovereignty dispute.

10 An international organization devoted to the exchange of information and best practices for the purpose of facilitating the pursuit and recovery of the proceeds of all crimes.

only 23 allies remained, but the ROC's relationships with these countries remained stable. The only diplomatic ally Taiwan lost during the Ma administration was the Gambia, which severed ties in November 2013. By contrast, during Chen Shui-bian's final year in office alone the ROC lost two allies, Costa Rica and Malawi (Government Information Office, 2008). At the time China professed it was unaware of the Gambia's plans and did not take the opportunity to formally establish diplomatic relations with the country, a move observers considered a gesture of goodwill toward Taiwan (Atkinson, 2013). Subsequent to Tsai Ing-wen's election victory, the PRC established diplomatic relations with Gambia, which many have interpreted as a warning to Tsai (Bush, 2016).

Ma's tenure saw a series of face-to-face meetings between ROC and PRC officials of increasingly high rank. In November 2008, ARATS chairman Chen Yunlin visited Taiwan for a meeting with SEF head Chiang Pin-kung (CCTV, 2008). At the time it was the highest-level meeting between PRC and ROC officials ever held in Taiwan. Then in February 2014, ROC Mainland Affairs Council Minister Wang Yu-chi met PRC State Council Taiwan Affairs Office Director Zhang Zhijun in Nanjing, the first face-to-face meeting between high-level officials of the two governments since the 1940s civil war (Wang, 2014). They referred to each other by their ministerial titles, agreed to establish a mechanism for regular communication, and affirmed exchanges under the "1992 Consensus." Zhang went on to visit Taiwan that June, becoming the highest-level PRC official to do so.

Finally, the first-ever meeting between the presidents of the two governments took place in November 2015, when Ma and Xi Jinping met in Singapore. They referred to each other as "the Taiwan leader" and "the mainland leader" and as "mister" rather

than “president.” After a long handshake for the cameras, they each gave public addresses, then held a private meeting attended by seven officials of each side. Afterwards, Zhang Zhijun gave a press conference, followed separately by Ma Ying-jeou. Ma stated that the meeting established a precedent and protocol for future talks between leaders of the two sides.

At the meeting, each side affirmed the “1992 Consensus.” The variance of their definitions of the consensus became the subject of intense discussion in Taiwan. Beijing has always defined the consensus as “the 1992 Consensus of one China” without acknowledging that each side has its own interpretation. During the Ma-Xi meeting, Beijing continued to define the consensus solely as “one China.” Ma said in his press conference that he affirmed the consensus as “one China, with respective interpretations” in his private meeting with Xi. In his public remarks to Xi, however, Ma defined it as “the 1992 Consensus of one China,” without mentioning the respective interpretations qualifier (Ma, 2015).

These landmark official meetings sit alongside the normalization of party-to-party talks building on the establishment of the KMT think tank the National Policy Foundation, and Lien Chan’s unofficial visit to Beijing in 2005. With Lien working as intermediary, the two parties established a KMT–CCP Forum, also known as the Cross-Strait Economic, Trade and Culture Forum, with large delegations meeting annually in China (Beckershoff, 2014). On the side-lines of the most recent meeting in Shanghai in May 2015, then-KMT Chairman Eric Chu met Xi Jinping in his capacity as Chairman of the CCP (BBC News, 2015). Throughout the Ma administration, there were regular lower level meetings between officials of the KMT and the CCP, with periodic higher level

contact, such as then-KMT Chairman Wu Po-hsiung's meeting with Hu Jintao in 2008, at which both sides affirmed the development of relations under the "1992 Consensus" framework (Mainland Affairs Information and Research Center, 2008). Taiwanese and Chinese representatives have also met on the side-lines of international gatherings, such as APEC and the Boao Forum (*Taiwan Today*, 2015).

Discontent with Ma's China policy

President Ma's policies, performance and personal modus operandi were the cause of discontent within his own party, across branches of government, and within society at large. Despite a relatively comfortable re-election campaign, Ma's approval ratings dropped precipitously soon into his second term and barely reached 20 percent thereafter (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 24-25 November 2015). Although the KMT won a comfortable majority in the legislature in both 2008 and 2012, Ma's relationship with the KMT's legislative caucus was not straightforward. The most obvious example was the reaction to Ma's CSSTA policy. Passage stalled in the Legislature when several lawmakers, including KMT Speaker Wang Jin-pyng, one of Ma's old adversaries, raised concerns over inadequate communication from the government (Tang, Kuan, and Cheng, 2013). That KMT legislators were unaware of the content and extent of the pact spoke volumes about the breakdown of communication between Ma and the legislative caucus. Wang's support for the DPP argument that CSSTA should be passed line by line, rather than as a whole on an up-or-down vote, frustrated Ma.

The crisis escalated when Ma clumsily tried and failed to expel Wang from the party and by extension the Legislature. While Wang was abroad attending his daughter's

wedding, the Supreme Prosecutors' Office Special Investigation Division (SID) accused him of meddling in a legal case to assist the opposition legislative caucus leader (Wang, 2013). Soon after, Ma made a statement calling it "the most shameful day in the development of Taiwan's democracy" (BBC News, 2013). The KMT stripped Wang of his party membership. Since Wang was a party list legislator, according to legislative bylaws his seat would have to be vacated and Ma could arrange for a more malleable politician to replace him at the head of the chamber. Rather than accepting his ouster, however, Wang appealed the KMT's decision. The courts ruled in Wang's favour and the SID case fell apart on flimsy evidence gathered by illegally wiretapping the Legislature's phone system (*Taipei Times*, 2013). Ma was forced to backtrack, with KMT power brokers appearing to support Wang. Soon after the debacle, Ma's popular approval sank to nine percent (*Liberty Times*, 2013).

Refusing to give up on the ill-fated CSSTA, Ma then attempted to force the bill through the Legislature without the promised oversight. During a March 17th 2014 meeting of the legislative committee reviewing the agreement, committee chair Chang Ching-chung of the KMT declared that because the review process had already exceeded the allotted three months, the review was over and the agreement was to be sent to the floor of the Legislature for a direct vote, skipping the line-by-line review promised to the DPP in earlier negotiations (Wung, 2014). The Executive Yuan then issued a press release praising Chang for getting the bill out of committee (Executive Yuan, 2014). But on the night of March 18, student protesters and social activists outraged by Chang's actions stormed the Legislature and began a three-week occupation of the site. The

official with the right to decide whether to request police to forcibly evict these activists was none other than Wang Jin-pyng, who demurred.

A significant portion of Taiwanese public opinion appeared supportive of the students throughout the ensuing standoff—most visibly in a March 30 demonstration which the National Police Agency said had 116,000 participants (ETtoday, 2014) and the organizers said had 500,000 (Liu, 2014). While a plurality of citizens did oppose approval of the CSSTA, a larger majority was against the Ma administration's heavy-handed methods. In a March 20-21 TVBS poll, 70 percent said the agreement should be reviewed line by line, while just eight percent agreed with Chang Ching-chung that it be voted on as a package (TVBS Poll Center, 20-21 March 2015). In a March 31st TVBS poll, 59 percent agreed with the protestors' position that the agreement be shelved and a monitoring bill for cross-Straits agreements be passed first (TVBS Poll Center, 31 March 2014). Following weeks of failed attempts by the Ma administration to persuade the occupiers and society of the economic necessity of passing the bill, Wang Jin-pyng resolved the impasse by promising the students—who were by then known as the Sunflower Movement—that the Legislature would not negotiate on the agreement further until it had approved a bill for monitoring cross-Straits agreements (Tiezzi, 2014). The students agreed and went home. A DPP draft monitoring bill has subsequently passed first reading.

Days after the students vacated the Legislature, a hunger strike by former DPP chairman Lin I-hsiung inspired huge anti-nuclear protests that forced the government to mothball the fourth nuclear power plant. New corruption scandals implicated companies suspected of having received the president's protection, such as disgraced food

manufacturer Ting Hsin (Ramzy, 2014), which *Next Magazine* alleged had received Ma's help in securing cross-Strait trade deals for agricultural products (Hsiao, 2014). Netizens widely shared a video of Ma, in a nationally televised 2010 debate with Tsai Ing-wen, calling Ting Hsin a “tonic” that ECFA had brought back to Taiwan (YouTube, 2014). An October TVBS poll found 77 percent of citizens were dissatisfied with the Ministry of Health and Welfare's handling of the Ting Hsin cooking oil scandal, that 73 percent did not have confidence in the safety of Taiwan-manufactured food, and that 45 percent believed the premier should resign due to the scandal (TVBS Poll Center, 21-23 October 2014).

The Sunflower-inspired backlash handed momentum to the DPP, and in the 9-in-1 local elections in November 2014, the KMT suffered losses of historical proportions. In the Mayoral elections, the KMT ran a traditional slate of faction leaders and princelings promising greater prosperity through economic integration with China. Standard examples were Taoyuan County Magistrate John Wu, son of Wu Po-hsiung, who pledged to continue re-zoning thousands of hectares of the county into a giant business park (Shan, 2014) open to Chinese investment (Chang, 2012), and Taipei City candidate Sean Lien, son of KMT grandee Lien Chan. But it appeared that Taiwanese voters had lost confidence in this message, and believed such projects would not benefit them and that the KMT had become greedy. Polls showed majorities agreed that the Taiwanese economy was too dependent on China and that the benefits of cross-Strait trade development had been monopolized by the few (Taiwan Thinktank, 2014). During one debate, independent Taipei mayoral candidate Ko Wen-je memorably called KMT politicians “no more than cross-Strait compradors” (*Apple Daily*, 2015). Ko defeated

Lien by 16 percent, and Wu was deposed by a DPP challenger. Overall the KMT lost more than half the counties and special municipalities it had formerly administrated.

Following this performance, President Ma stepped down as KMT chairman. His replacement, New Taipei City Mayor Eric Chu, was unable to chart a new course for the party during his short time in charge. In cross-Strait relations he held to the Ma formula of “one China, respective interpretations” and the “1992 Consensus” even as an October 2015 poll showed their support had eroded to just 36.2 percent and 27.4 percent, respectively (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 12-13 October 2015). The KMT's first presidential candidate of the 2016 campaign, Hung Hsiu-chu, even proposed a “one China, same interpretation” formula that was supported by just 12 percent of citizens. Throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, Tsai Ing-wen led her challengers by double digits, her lead rising to as much as 30 percentage points in October 2015 (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 26-27 October 2015). She ultimately won election in January 2016 with 56 percent of the vote, a stunning victory for the DPP, which had never exceeded 50.2 percent in a national election. Furthermore, the DPP won a majority in the Legislative Yuan for the first time. By the time Ma left office in May 2016, the political landscape in Taiwan had changed substantially, with the KMT a minority party facing a period of uncertainty. As Chair of the KMT for much of the preceding period, Ma's legacy includes a party in disarray.

During their meeting in Singapore, Presidents Ma and Xi each emphasized that the residents of China and Taiwan were members of the *Zhonghua minzu* (中華民族), or Chinese ethnicity, and were all descendants of the mythical Yan and Yellow Emperors. This shared DNA was implicitly considered a basis for political unity. However, the

National Chengchi University Election Study Center's Taiwanese/Chinese Identity Survey Results reveal that the number of Taiwanese identifying as “Taiwanese only” rose from 43.7 percent in 2007 (the year before Ma's election) to 60 percent in 2015, and the number identifying as “both Taiwanese and Chinese” fell commensurately, from 44.7 percent in 2007 to 33.7 percent in 2015 (Election Study Center, 2016). The number of citizens identifying as “Chinese only” held steady at four percent. It is little surprise that in a November TISR poll 56 percent of citizens said President Ma was unable to represent their opinions at his meeting with Xi (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 8-10 November 2015).

Likewise, in a Taiwan Indicators Survey Research tracking poll asking the question, “If Taiwan’s and mainland China’s central governments could give each other recognition, should they move toward forming an alliance or even a union as a new country in the future?” the No responses increased from 43 percent in October 2013 to 56 percent in May 2015, while the number of Yes responses slid from 31 percent to 25 percent (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 11-12 May 2015). In 2006 the number of people who agreed and disagreed with the statement “Taiwan should become a new independent country someday no matter what” were roughly even at about 40 percent. Currently, 50 percent support eventual independence unconditionally and 30 percent oppose it (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 25-26 August 2015).

Perceiving and hoping to capitalize on concerns about the scale of Ma’s cross-Strait policies, DPP presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen advocated prudence and patience in dealing with China. She consistently said that she supports the status quo in cross-Strait relations, and “maintaining the status quo” was the cornerstone of her cross-strait

policy platform. In her 2012 presidential bid she supported an alternative “Taiwan Consensus” to establish bi-partisan agreement within Taiwan as a pre-requisite to further interactions with China (Sullivan, 2013). She proposed deceleration rather than negation of already enacted cross-Strait policies, while senior DPP figures pointed to Beijing’s leverage over Taiwanese business interests, its commercial leverage in Taiwan, and manipulation of tourist visits as important vulnerabilities that require redress. In a speech at the Legislative Yuan press club in February 2015, former President Lee Teng-hui warned that:

For more than a decade, Taiwan’s capital, technology, and industry have flowed out to China in large quantities. The only thing the government has kept its sights on during this period is the interests of business conglomerates. Large enterprises have ceaselessly beaten the drum for opening up cross-Strait trade, and as a result a cartel of cross-Strait political and business elites has emerged (Lee Teng-hui, 2015).

The failure to deliver generalized benefits was a major cause of discontent with Ma’s China policy. Big businesses were the major benefactor, while the middle classes and blue and green collar workers did not make commensurate gains. A November 2015 TISR poll found that just eight percent of Taiwanese believed their economy was in good shape, while 86 percent believed it was in bad shape (Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, 8-10 November 2015). Three months before the 2012 presidential election Ma was forced to apologize for the failure of one of his major 2008 campaign pledges, the ‘6-3-3’ targets of six percent annual growth, per capita GDP of US\$30,000 and an unemployment rate of less than three percent. In fact GDP growth, which reached double digits in 2010, fell to almost zero in 2015 as China’s slowing economy dragged down Taiwanese exports

(*South China Morning Post*, 2015). Economic inequalities increased markedly during Ma's tenure, creating a fusion of social justice and quality of life issues that Tsai Ing-wen and the DPP harnessed effectively in the 2016 elections.

Conclusion and prospects

When Ma Ying-jeou was re-elected in 2012 it was the fifth time that the ROC president had been directly elected. Nearly two decades of democratically elected leadership in Taiwan provides a comparative context across time by which to evaluate Ma's China policy. This perspective helps reveal the areas in which Ma's policy was comparatively successful and where it was found wanting. The one area where Ma made significant strides compared to his predecessors was the tone of cross-Strait relations. From the missile crisis during Lee's tenure to the gridlock, "dollar diplomacy" and international isolation characteristic of the Chen era, cross-Strait relations had never been as friendly as they were under Ma. Apart from the early breakthroughs made during Lee's time as unelected President, the institutionalisation of cross-Strait interactions fostered by Ma's China policy were by far the most impressive. Ma oversaw a substantial increase in trade and the economic value of cross-Strait interactions. On the other hand, by the end of Ma's reign Taiwanese society was more unequal, with a greater sense of widespread relative deprivation than ever before. Taiwan's dependence and exposure to the Chinese economy is greater than at any point in history, with concomitant vulnerabilities for Taiwan's national security.

Ma Ying-jeou's successor as President of the ROC, Tsai Ing-wen, faces a relationship that is more intense and multifaceted than any of Ma's predecessors.

Managing the vast scale of interactions has implications for virtually every policy sector in Taiwan, touching on the most basic elements of Taiwanese life, from education and housing to employment opportunities and the cost of living. The processes that Ma initiated will to a certain extent constrain Tsai's policy alternatives. Acceptance of the "1992 Consensus", for instance, solidified as a necessary condition for cooperation with China. The momentum in economic interactions is such that Taiwan will be unable to halt the pull of economic forces. And as China's global influence continues to grow, Tsai must balance domestic constraints with the reality of China's preferences and power. The DPP's victory in presidential and legislative elections is a reflection of the issues outlined in this chapter, and represents a new dynamic for cross-Strait relations. Tsai Ing-wen has consistently evinced a moderate position on cross-Strait relations, insisting that she will uphold the "status quo", recognizing the diplomatic and economic constraints that Taiwan faces. However, Tsai rejects the notion of a "1992 Consensus" and Beijing views her with great suspicion, including her ability to control the factions within the DPP that support "Taiwan independence". Despite the justified domestic opposition to Ma's China policy, his tenure can be characterized as having successfully overseen the management of the cross-Strait relationship, a challenge that Tsai Ing-wen and the DPP now take up.

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