

**THE XI-MA MEETING: A VARIANT
PERSPECTIVE ASSESSMENT**

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Executive Summary

1. On 7 November 2015, China President Xi Jinping and Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou met at the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore in what was reported to be a brief, informal meeting. No document or written agreement was expected and there was none.
2. Despite the informality of the meeting it had import. It was the first encounter of the two heads of state in more than six and a half decades.
3. The two were bitter opponents during the Cold War and remained so thereafter. In the 1990s there was a serious face-off between the militaries of the United States and China over Taiwan. During the presidency of Taiwan's Chen Shui-bian (2000-2008), tension was high between Taiwan and China.
4. The meeting was a surprise. It also attracted considerable attention and press coverage. Officials as well as numerous pundits offered interpretations to its occurrence and implications.
5. The responses to the meeting were generally positive. Most saw it as contributing to a better understanding between the two participants and thus to peace in the Taiwan Strait and the region.
6. There were outliers and some took issue with the meeting; the most vociferous was the opposition in Taiwan that viewed the meeting as bad for Taiwan and hurtful to its cause.
7. China, Taiwan and the United States exhibited quite different perspectives on the meeting. Populism affected Taiwan's view. The Obama administration's hostility towards China impacted America's view.