

**TAIWAN'S POLITICS IN 2015:
FRAYING AT THE DAWN
OF A NEW ERA?**

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Executive Summary

1. The resistance to China's economic carrots continued in Taiwan in 2015. The Ma government was weakened in terms of its role and capability to align the differing interests.
2. Taiwanese politics in 2015 was overshadowed by enduring party infighting in the ruling Kuomintang (KMT), restive social atmospheres as a legacy of the Sunflower Movement in 2014 and the coming presidential election scheduled in January 2016.
3. The contempt of the rule of law by protesters in the Sunflower Movement has huge ramifications for Taiwan's political landscape.
4. The inertia of the administration and inefficiency of the legislative system have not only catalysed the protest, but also continued to impede the much-needed reforms in the aftermath.
5. Cross-strait relations experienced a downturn in 2015. The monitoring bill for cross-strait negotiations has been delayed in the Legislative Yuan. Yet, a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou in Singapore in November 2015 had cast intriguing impacts on future cross-strait relations.
6. China intends to cement the "92 Consensus" as one general template for future cross-strait exchanges. This is directed more to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) which is likely to win the election. Evidently, Xi wants to flesh out the One China policy with the 92 Consensus.
7. The tepid response from Taiwanese society to the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II can be largely attributed to the rise of a new Taiwanese identity, which paid lesser attention to history.

8. Taiwan's closeness with Japan is likely to put itself in escalating risks. Japan has deemed this closeness mainly out of strategic convenience.
9. Poised to win big at the coming presidential election, Tsai Ying-wen of the DPP needs to take a second look at her cross-strait policy and to elaborate on her "maintaining status quo" discourse.
10. The Ma government leaves behind several thorny issues. One primary failure is its incompetence in carrying through its structural reform of the government.
11. Second, it also fails to respond timely to the new Taiwanese identity that has left society with a confrontational mindset that exhibits increasing gaps between the ruler and the ruled.
12. The new leader will be confronted with a multitude of challenges, from domestic reforms in both societal and economic aspects and cross-strait relations to the possible adjustment in US Taiwan policy.