

**ON THE FUTURE STATUS OF TAIWAN:
DIFFERENT VIEWS FROM
BEIJING AND TAIPEI**

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Executive Summary

Military conflict across the Taiwan Strait has been avoided because of the respect for status quo: Taipei does not seek *de jure* independence while Beijing does not use force on Taiwan.

In recent years, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government of Taiwan has adopted a series of policies to challenge the status quo, but they are often interpreted by the international community as DPP's strategy to attract votes in domestic elections rather than as a general will of the public.

Despite suffering a defeat in the recent Legislative election, the Pan-Green coalition (including DPP and Taiwan Solidarity Union) still received 40 percent of votes, which can be considered as the number of people endorsing Taiwan independence.

Although the US government reiterates its opposition to Taiwan independence, the mainstream view within Taiwan's pro-independence camp sees the US as the decisive force behind Taiwan's quest for independence.

Some independence advocates suggest pursuing a neutralization policy: declaring neutrality and avoid leaning toward either the PRC or the US. The obstacle to this formula is the lack of support for Taiwan from the international community, and Beijing is unlikely to tolerate Taiwan as an independent state, neutralized or not.

Confederation, integration, and common market are unification models proposed and discussed in Taiwan. All suggest a gradual process of unification in which Taiwan retains a high degree of autonomy. Although DPP and Kuomintang (The Nationalist Party) leaders have embraced the ideas, Beijing has not responded to any of these models in a positive way.

Both the ideas of "interim agreement" and "law of cross-strait peaceful co-existence" suggest legalizing the status quo, a situation preferred by the majority

of residents in Taiwan. Whether these ideas will be realized in the future is largely determined by Beijing's response.

With regard to Taiwan's status, Chinese leaders have consistently demonstrated little flexibility: Taiwan is an unalienable part of China and must be reunited with the mainland.

In recent years, Chinese leaders continued to promote the "one country two systems" model initiated by late leader Deng Xiaoping as a solution to Taiwan's status after unification, but little adjustments have been made about its contents.

Former President Jiang Zemin's Eight Points was just a rephrasing of the One China (New Three-Stage Theory on One China) concept, and President Hu Jintao's proposal of signing a "formal peace accord" did nothing to improve it either.

The emergence of diverse views about Taiwan's future status in Taiwan shows that the Taiwan society has become more tolerant of debates about the island's future, and elites are also encouraged to explore new models. The international community should avoid interpreting Taiwan's public opinions as purely pro-independence or pro-unification.

There is still consensus on how the nature of the Taiwan issue should be defined and what the possible solutions are. Since the presidential candidates in Taipei and leaders in Beijing have avoided adopting provocative policies, cautious optimism prevails over cross-strait relations in the aftermath of the 2008 presidential election.