

**TAIWAN'S POLITICS IN 2013:
STUMBLING FORWARD
AMID UNCERTAINTIES**

Katherine TSENG Hui-Yi

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Executive Summary

1. In 2013, the Ma administration faced a row of domestic political issues. In August, the military trial system, a long-existing problem of torture and ill-treatment in Taiwan's military, was abolished.
2. In the same month, the construction of the fourth nuclear plant raised heated debates. Construction quality, safety standard and management capability were core issues. The Taiwanese parliament has yet to approve the revival and continuation of the construction plan.
3. A scandal involving alleged illegal wiretapping broke out in September. The scandal between the president and the head of parliament has put the Kuomintang's (the ruling party, KMT hereafter) integrity at risk. This is apart from the growing rift between President Ma and the KMT.
4. The rapprochement policy pursued by Ma with the Mainland continues. The latest effort is the Service Trade Agreement. The KMT has vowed for the considerable would-be considerable trade gains. The Democratic Progressive Party (the opposition force, DPP hereafter) sticks to a tough position by upholding a stringent examination of the Act clause by clause.
5. Japan and Taiwan sealed a fishery deal in April 2013. Concerns arose pertaining to how the fishery agreement had been set without giving due regard to Taiwan as an equal sovereign country. China had expressed serious concerns over the possible cooperation between Taiwan and Japan in the East China Sea dispute.
6. Taiwan resumes trade talks with the US, and has reached a consensus on trade principles concerning information and communication technology, and on ways to nurture bilateral trade and investment.

7. Taiwan signed an economic partnership agreement with Singapore, covering trade in goods and services, investment, government procurement and other areas. Meanwhile, Taiwan has severed formal ties with Gambia, revealing the deteriorating external environment in Taiwan's foreign relations.
8. Misgovernance and the low approval rate of the Ma administration cast an ominous outlook on the rest of his presidential term (to May 2016), in particular with the coming local municipal election in end 2014. Ma may become more bodacious in his cross-strait policy to gain support in the domestic domain.
9. Chinese President Xi is adopting a tougher stance on Taiwan than his predecessor and is starting to push for talks on political issues. In view of the cross-strait exchanges and the rapidly changing security conditions in East Asia, Taiwan would need to adopt a more realistic stance to better react to the challenges.