

THE SUNFLOWER MOVEMENT IN TAIWAN: AN ASSESSMENT

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Executive Summary

1. In Taiwan, hundreds of protestors forcefully occupied the Legislative Yuan (LY, Taiwan's Parliament) on 18 March 2014 to express their frustration with the hasty review of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA). A KMT legislator had sent it to the legislative floor for vote earlier that day.
2. The protestors condemned the procedural slip and demanded for an item-by-item review of the CSSTA and the establishment of an oversight mechanism for future cross-strait negotiations.
3. The Kuomintang (KMT, the ruling party) justified its position according to the Act Governing Relations between the People in Taiwan area and the Mainland area. The Sunflower Movement as it was called finally ended with the KMT backing down to the demands.
4. Though the KMT's position is legal, it was insensitive to public fear of increased Chinese influences over Taiwan's economy and politics.
5. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the opposition party, did not have a clear strategy in the face of the uproar, and showed incompetency in dealing with cross-strait affairs.
6. The protest had put China in an awkward position. Hawkish voices might challenge the peaceful and development direction of the Xi administration in its Taiwan policy.
7. The United States welcomed vibrant civic power from Taiwan society, albeit with restraint.
8. Protestors, mostly students, initiated the sit-ins and the occupation for many reasons. Besides economic stagnancy, they are petitioning the authorities directly

to redress inter-generational injustice, asking the current power holders to take more responsibilities for future generations.

9. The changing perception of China among these young protestors leads to a growing Taiwan-centered independence consciousness, which is more intractable than the one once embraced by DPP extremists.
10. The KMT needs to resolve party infighting between President Ma and Legislative Speaker Wang to catalyze the effect of the delay of the CSSTA review.
11. The DPP would also have to deal with its relations with rising civic power.
12. Taipei would do well to take the young generation in mind in its policy-making and to initiate public consultation before proposing policies. Further, Taipei would need to improve its outdated policy propaganda methods and negotiation capacity.
13. The greatest challenge to Beijing is the growing Taiwan-centered identity among the Taiwanese public.