

**TAIWANESE PERCEPTION OF STUMBLING
CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS (I):
THE POLLS**

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Executive Summary

1. Prospects of cross-strait relations are overshadowed by intensifying tensions resulting in the suspension of formal communications.
2. Escalating tensions across the strait influence Taiwanese perception of future cross-strait relations. In November 2017, Taiwanese had a general amicable impression of China.
3. While interviewees were generally dissatisfied with the Tsai Ing-wen government's handling of cross-strait relations and were willing to work and study in China, they viewed cross-strait relations as on the edge of more fierce competition.
4. Two other polls conducted respectively in December 2017 and January 2018 show more nuanced results due possibly to the frame effect of polling questions, the organisation conducting the poll and the timing.
5. In the Taiwan National Security Studies Survey conducted in December 2017, interviewees showed strong support for "maintaining the status quo". However, they had not identified any presupposed goal.
6. Interviewees also opine that Taiwan should declare independence if there is no risk of China's attack. Meanwhile, more and more interviewees believe that China would not attack Taiwan should the latter declare independence.
7. In the Taiwan Foundation of Democracy poll conducted in January 2018, interviewees showed extraordinarily high support for democracy, while they admitted that Taiwan's democratic system has been stagnant and in need of reconfiguration.
8. Interviewees showed higher willingness to defend Taiwan when China initiated the attack but a significant number also preferred to maintain the status quo. Many

Taiwanese perceive Taiwan as already an independent sovereign entity from China. Further, interviewees would consider unification if China becomes a democratic country.

9. Viewed together, the Taiwanese tend to adopt a pragmatic view, with flexible and expedient measures, towards cross-strait exchanges.
10. In a cross-strait conflict, the Taiwanese showed a passive defence consciousness, but would defend more actively when China attacks first.
11. These poll data and implications can be seen in the course of gradual consolidation of democracy. The Taiwanese subjectivity is still developing and has cast a decisive voice in future cross-strait relations.