

**DECLINING TAIWANESE NATIONALISM
AND RISING INDEPENDENT VOTERS
IN TAIWAN SINCE 2016**

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Executive Summary

1. Taiwanese public opinion has taken an unexpected turn since 2016 when the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took power: two trends have emerged, namely, declining Taiwanese nationalism amid improved public views of China, and weakening public identification with the DPP amid the rise of independent voters.
2. A result of internal and external factors, the phenomena may have direct impact on Taiwanese politics and indirect impact on cross-strait relations.
3. Internally, after the Kuomintang (KMT) lost the local elections in 2014 and the presidential and legislative elections in 2016 to the DPP, diminishing public concerns about the KMT's pro-China policy and China's influence have led to declining nationalism.
4. Growing dissatisfaction with President Tsai Ing-wen and her administration has further reduced nationalism and public identification with the DPP, alienating many DPP supporters to become independent voters.
5. Tsai's non-provocative China policy has also helped mitigate nationalism in Taiwan.
6. Externally, China's carrot and stick strategy towards Taiwan since 2016 seems to be working as it inflicted significant pressure on the DPP administration while keeping Taiwanese society's resistance at bay.
7. The two trends indicated that the DPP is declining faster than anticipated, which will jeopardise its election performance in November 2018 and January 2020.
8. The new trends have encouraged more independent candidates, including Taipei Mayor Ke Wen-je, to join the elections, which will bring more uncertainty to Taiwan's politics and more opportunity for cross-strait relations.

9. The new trends may also encourage Beijing to enhance its carrot and stick strategy and revive its patience for peaceful unification through winning the minds and hearts of the Taiwanese.