
Transforming Asia

What impact of international politics and grand strategies on regional stability?

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As the regional balance of power in East Asia continues to evolve and tensions in a number of hot spots - from the East and South China Seas to the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait - either simmer or intensify, the future of regional stability is increasingly uncertain. Within this context, the region's major players - in particular China and the United States - have in recent years developed grand strategies that could either prove sources of greater stability, or of division and further tension. This conference called upon experts from throughout East Asia to offer their analyses on the risks and the ways forward. It furthermore examined how France and Europe more broadly define and seek to promote their interests in an increasingly tumultuous region.

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Agenda

9:45 **Welcoming Remarks**

- **Thomas Gomart**, Director of Ifri
- **Alain Richard**, Senator, Val-d'Oise (Ile-de-France), former Minister of Defense of France
- **Ming-zhong Zhang**, Representative, Taipei Representative Office in France

Morning Session

Whither stability in East Asia? Hot spots, grand strategies and ways ahead

10:15-12:15

- **Renato C. de Castro**, Professor and Charles Lui Chi Keung Chair in China Studies, De La Salle University, Manila
- **Renwei Huang**, Vice President and Research Professor, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, Shanghai
- **Heungho Moon**, Dean of the Graduate School of International Studies, and Director of Institute of Chinese Studies, Hanyang University, Seoul
- **Kao-cheng Wang**, Professor, Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies, and Dean, School of International Studies, Tamkang University, Taipei
- **Shingo Yamagami**, Director General (Acting), Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), Tokyo

Interactive debate led by **François Picard**, Host/Presenter of *The Debate* for France 24

Afternoon sessions

Chaired by **Françoise Nicolas**, Director, Center for Asian Studies, Ifri

Panel 1. Grand strategies, Europe and Asia's stability

13:45-15:15

- **Gudrun Wacker**, Senior Fellow, Asia Research Division, German Institute of International and Security Affairs (SWP)
- **Frédéric Laplanche**, Counselor for Asia and the Americas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, France
- **Michael Reiterer**, Principal Advisor, Asia-Pacific Department, European External Action Service (EEAS)

Panel 2. Taiwan after the elections – Cross-strait and regional impacts

15:30-17:00

- **Alice Ekman**, Research Fellow, Head of China Research, Center for Asian Studies, Ifri
- **Kao-cheng Wang**, Professor, Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies, and Dean, School of International Studies, Tamkang University
- **Chih-chung Wu**, Professor, Department of Political Science, Taiwan Soochow University, and Deputy Minister, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan)

Opening Remarks

Thomas Gomart, Director of Ifri, opened the days discussions by welcoming the audience and asking participants to reflect and discuss throughout the day on the various dimensions of regional stability in East Asia – what are the factors of stabilization and destabilization in the region, what are the ways forward, and what is the role of Europe. At least two levels of discussion should be considered at the outset: the more immediate ‘hotspot’ issues that could serve as focal points of conflict (such as North Korea, the South or the East China Sea); and the longer-term strategic picture in East Asia, the ever-evolving balance of power and the strategic postures adopted by the region’s major players.

Alain Richard, Senator of Val-d’Oise (Ile-de-France) and former Minister of Defense of France, pointed out the deepening of interactions among Asian countries in terms of investments, innovation and capital, despite huge contrasts still existing between them. He moreover emphasized that China’s interaction with its neighbors is strongly related to how it sees itself and its own history. The legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party is based on its capacity to guarantee national unity while being respected by other countries of the region. The Minister also pointed out a key challenge for Japan: if it is considered as one of the best global actors and contributors, the way Tokyo considers its past and its future policy development on security and defense represent a significant challenge.

Ming-zhong Zhang, Representative of the Taipei Representative Office in France, underlined that Taiwan is ready to play the role of a positive contributor to regional peace and stability. Mr. Zhang emphasized that Taiwan is not and will never be an expanding military power, but is very confident in protecting its democratic system. A lot of countries want to benefit from China’s rise, while being concerned by its implication. France sees Taiwan as an economic opportunity and a chance to expand its market. Nevertheless, Taiwan faces many challenges at the moment.

Morning Debate :

Whither stability in East Asia?

Hot spots, grand strategies and ways ahead

The morning’s discussion began with speakers giving a brief assessment of the risks to regional stability from their own perspectives.

View from The Philippines

Renato C. De Castro, Professor and Charles Lui Chi Keung Chair in China Studies at De La Salle University in Manila, shared his view on the situation in the region from the Philippines’ standpoint.

He pointed out that East Asia has seen the rise of great powers in the region, provoking a major tectonic shift from Europe to Asia. China became the world’s second largest economy, and has increased its defense budget, built military facilities and its navy, and taken part in joint naval exercises with Russia. China has also managed to effectively divide ASEAN members since the ASEAN meeting in Cambodia in 2014. According to Professor De Castro, Beijing’s goal is to push the US – and the US Navy in particular – out of the region. America has responded to China’s rise with a strategic rebalancing (“pivot”) to Asia since 2011, with a view to defend the second island chain. Japan has also shifted its priorities away from Northeast Asia, now looking to its southern-most islands and

focusing increasingly on Southeast Asia. The region has seen the emergence of a certain level of stability but no dispute has been resolved yet, and China is watched carefully by its neighbors and by Washington.

In Professor De Castro's view, the situation in East Asia and Southeast Asia is similar to that of Europe before 1914. A single incident could start a fire, and smaller powers like Taiwan or the Philippines would be the battleground.

View from China

Renwei Huang, Vice President and Research Professor at Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences in Shanghai underlined that China is not a threat to other countries. China has been rising for more than 20 years, and is now the most important and stable factor in Asia. America's rebalancing to Asia has focused more on military than on economic matters, and for Professor Huang, it is a mistake.

He highlighted the fact that most countries in East and Southeast Asia have a dual policy. They need China's market for their economy, but also need America for security reasons. Thus, they tend to shift from one country to the other to maximize their benefit.

According to Professor Huang, China will support the Philippines in infrastructure investment and trade, and will encourage Chinese tourism. President Duterte was visiting China in October in order to boost the Philippines' economy, and not to talk about the South China Sea issue. If the South China Sea becomes a hot spot, it will be bad for the Philippines' economy, but also for the security of the whole region. Professor Huang stressed the fact that for him, the South China Sea is not a fundamental issue, considering that boats and America's military fleets are free to navigate in this area, and that all maritime lines remain open. China is not a threat to other countries.

Concerning China's relations with Taiwan, Professor Huang explained that recently elected president Tsai Ing-wen, while she can't discard it, has still refused to recognize the 1992 consensus. This has become a factor of destabilization in the region.

China is trying to improve its ties with Japan, and both countries had a good discussion on sensitive issues, with many proposals and agendas for future cooperation, at the Tokyo-Beijing forum in September 2016.

Relations are more complicated with South Korea because of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile (THAAD) deployment on the peninsula. Professor Huang pointed out that the long distance radar system could cover 2000 km, and thus reach not only North Korea but territories in China as well, which is why Beijing is particularly sensitive to that issue. Still, he thinks that Beijing is ready to negotiate with everyone, including Washington, in order to stabilize these hotspots, and that Western media tend to exaggerate tensions in the region.

View from South Korea

Heungho Moon, Dean of the Graduate School of International Studies and Director of Institute of Chinese Studies at Hanyang University in Seoul explained that North Korea's future and stability are highly dependent on China. Pyongyang is facing tightening economic sanctions from the UN, and needs Beijing's support. Roughly 90% of North Korea's foreign trade is with China, and while Beijing supports UN sanctions, they shouldn't be used to strangle its economic partner and provoke the collapse of the Pyongyang regime. China is now promoting a strategy of balancing between military alliance and normal bilateral relationship with the two Koreas, thus serving its own national interest.

According to Professor Moon, China's balancing act should also initiate peace in the Korean peninsula, because no peace or stability can be achieved in the Northeast Asia region if the two Koreas don't get along.

View from Taiwan

Kao-cheng Wang, Professor at the Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies and Dean of the School of International Studies at Tamkang University in Taipei, pointed out that China's quick rise since the 1980s changed the power structure in East Asia. China's intentions are very hard to grasp, and the Beijing regime is still in the process of power adjustment, provoking suspicions, uncertainty and tensions in the region. Furthermore, China has a distinctive ideology, different political, social and economic systems that further provoke distrust among major powers.

Professor Wang also emphasized that countries in the region still struggle with issues inherited from World War II, such as territorial disputes between China and Japan, Japan and Korea, Japan and Russia or China and The Philippines, frictions on the Korean peninsula, or the difficult relations between China and Taiwan. China is thus adopting a more assertive and proactive stance, using more of its power and increasing military expenses in order to safeguard its national interest.

On the Taiwan Strait issue, the newly elected president Tsai Ing-wen wants to maintain the *status quo* and continue dialogue with China in settling the dispute. However, her policy will be based on the Taiwanese Constitution, which implies that she will stick to the one-China policy, but from the Republic of China's point of view, and not from the People's Republic of China standpoint. She was elected by the will of the majority of the people, who asks neither for independence nor reunification, but for *status quo*.

View from Japan

Shingo Yamagami, Director General (acting) of the Japan Institute of International Affairs in Tokyo, noted that Japan is enjoying unusual political stability, after changing its Prime Minister six times in a row during the previous years. For Mr. Yamagami, the main problems are the challenges against the existing liberal international order, and the too many unilateral attempts to change the *status quo* by force and intimidation.

Pyongyang is developing nuclear weapons regardless of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), UN resolutions and Six Party Talks. In the South China Sea, there have been a number of attempts to accomplish territorialization by force and intimidation without paying due regard to interests of other nations. Mr. Yamagami pointed out the similarities between what happened in Crimea and what is occurring now in East Asia: the rule of law is being undermined, and it will have both regional and global implications. He also expressed "shock" at Chinese officials discarding July's international court ruling on the South China Sea as a political farce and a "waste of paper".

Mr. Yamagami also offered some advice to the international community and to France. He stressed that those disputes are not merely regional issues, as they have a global impact. Emerging countries need to be incorporated into a rules-based system. The international community should speak up and use some of its international tools. It should also use its power of deterrence, and take part in joint exercises, send vessels through the South China Sea and help in the capacity building of states in the region.

Discussion

On the South China Sea Ruling

For Professor Huang, the South China Sea issue cannot be solved by a court of arbitration, which has no right to decide which territory belongs to whom. The judgment delivered by the court was totally wrong and not based on facts, in his estimate. He also pointed out that Japan's increasing involvement in the issue is a bit unsettling, considering the fact that Tokyo itself is not a claimant. Also, Japan has been building up some territories in the West Pacific (Okinotorishima) that China considers as rocks. The dispute between China and the Philippines is a bilateral matter, which needs

to be solved by the countries concerned. No other country needs to be involved, and President Duterte is well aware of that fact.

Professor De Castro, meanwhile, underlined that President Duterte did not discard the judgment delivered by the court on the South China Sea. Even though Duterte's visit to China focuses on economic partnership and not on territorial disputes, it doesn't mean that he refused the court's ruling.

Mr. Yamagami raised questions about China's "peaceful" rise. He recalled that China and the Philippines had both signed the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which pre-validates the dispute settlement mechanism. For Mr. Yamagami, it's not up to China to decide if the court has jurisdiction or not. Furthermore, Japan has significant interests in the South China Sea, considering that 90% of oil and 60% of imported natural gas come through it. Japan has also a historical engagement in the region, as the disputed islands were once under Japan's jurisdiction, up until San Francisco Treaty. Still, Japan has absolutely no territorial ambition in the South China Sea, and is only concerned with solving the issue in a peaceful way.

Responding to Mr. Yamagami, Professor Huang emphasized that China is still learning how to be the number one in Asia and the number two in the world. Japan's "historical engagement" in the region is a legacy of World War II, which is a very sensitive issue for China. Beijing will continue to look very carefully at Japan's posture in the South China Sea.

On North Korea's nuclear program development

According to Professor Moon, China passed sanctions against Pyongyang but doesn't necessarily apply them. He underlined that China's worries about the THAAD system are rather directed to the emergence of the military alliance between America, Japan and South Korea.

Professor Huang clarified China's position on North Korea's nuclear development, stating that Beijing will have a very firm policy regarding Pyongyang's nuclear program. It would directly affect China, as North Korea's nuclear facilities are too close to China's rivers and villages.

Still, China cannot afford a massive flow of refugees, which is why Beijing cannot tolerate a collapse of the Kim regime. China will support sanctions directed at military matters, but will not support them if they target peoples' necessary means of living. Beijing and Washington can cooperate to make Pyongyang stop its nuclear progress.

On the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative

For Professor Wang, China wants to use its resources abroad, and is thus creating a new market for strategic benefits, which will allow more economic interests and development opportunities for countries that need assistance, especially for infrastructure. Still, this project will have political implications on those countries' attitude towards China and America, and on issues like the South China Sea.

Professor Huang underlined that OBOR is not a strategy but an initiative, as countries joining the project all agreed to it. There is a huge demand for infrastructure in Asia and in the world, and OBOR can be combined with other countries' infrastructures plans.

Afternoon sessions: Panel 1

Grand strategies, Europe and Asia's stability

The first afternoon session focused on competing grand strategies in Asia and how France and Europe formulate diplomacy towards the region in a context of rising tensions, instability and a shifting regional balance of power.

Gudrun Wacker, Senior Fellow at the Asia Research Division of the German Institute of International and Security Affairs (SWP) talked about China's and America's grand strategies, and explained the EU's difficult position in Asia.

According to Dr. Wacker, it is not clear whether China and America have grand strategies of their own, but each is certainly convinced that the other does indeed have a grand strategy. Beijing is convinced that the West, and in particular America, is trying to slow China's political and military rise in the region. Beijing sees the American alliance system as a major obstacle to creating a new kind of security order in the Asia-Pacific region. On the other side, Washington seems to believe that China's grand strategy is to push America out of the region, or at least make its access to Asia more difficult.

There has been a problem of sequencing of American and Chinese strategies that have also caused disjointed responses on each side. When Obama made his first visit to China in 2009 he offered Beijing a broad cooperation on a whole range of issues – a sort of G2 as it was called – but many in Beijing read it as a trap to coax China into engaging on things it didn't want to be engaging on. Later, when China proposed a “new type of great power relations”, many in Washington saw it as a trap. These perceptions of trap-laying signal deep, mutual mistrust at the strategic level. Although China and America have very deep economic ties and are developing dialogue mechanisms at many levels, the strategic mistrust between them has not been reduced yet.

Up until now, Asia has managed its hotspots quite well, but there is no doubt that China's neighbors are worried about its rise. Still, they don't want to choose between China and America, and wish to continue to benefit economically from China while taking advantage of America's presence in the region for security matters. They don't want to see military escalation of any of the areas that could lead to conflict between Washington and Beijing, but also don't want to see a “grand bargain” between the two powers, leading to a sort of G2, weakening the minor powers of the region.

EU and member states' positions are a bit similar to the situation of these neighboring states. They don't want to express their standpoint too clearly, and although they are perhaps more on America's side in their declarations, these are not translated into concrete actions. 18 members of EU have joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as founding members, and they are well aware that China is creating institutions, and by joining some of Beijing's initiatives, they recognize their legitimacy. The EU's strategy can maybe be considered as a sort of non-alignment, non-engagement strategy.

Frédéric Laplanche, Counselor for Asia and the Americas to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development of France, analyzed France's growing interest in Asia and presented four areas where policy is developing at the moment.

Mr. Laplanche started by underlining that “grand strategies” is a vocabulary that belongs to the past, as it creates misunderstandings between countries. France doesn't have a grand strategy for Asia, but a growing ambition to match its increasing interest, and methods to deal with it without competing with others. Europe has been through an economic crisis, terrorism, refugee crisis, Brexit and the rise of populism, but instead of closing its borders, governments should continue to invest in a proactive and outward looking policy, including in Asia. After Brexit, France will be the only EU member state with a permanent seat on UN Security Council, and will continue to keep a very large diplomatic network. France has important historical relations with Asia, having territories in the

Indian and Pacific oceans, more than 1.5 million French citizens living in those areas, and around 300,000 – 400,000 French expats in Asia.

There are four areas that France is eager to develop in Asia. The first one is enhancing political and security cooperation in the region. France has been increasing its political visits, including to countries it did not have historical relations with, like The Philippines, while putting emphasis on region-to-region contacts. On the security level, France is the only European country to have a concrete presence on the ground and in sea in both the Indian and Pacific oceans. Paris is building partnerships with India, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, etc., and it doesn't concern only "military equipment cooperation" but also training and coordination.

The second area targets the growth of economic links. Imports from Asia total 17% of global imports, compared to 13% ten years ago, and exports to Asia grew from 9% in 2006 to 13% in 2016. Still, although French FDI in Asia is very high, Asian investment into France is only 5% of total investment, which is far below what can be achieved. The French government is also trying to work on innovation and technology; out of 22 French tech hubs, 7 are located in Asia. Paris is also very interested in continuing to negotiate FTAs with Asian partners. An FTA with South Korea was implemented in 2011 and although it is less visible than the TPP, it has given very good results up until now.

The third area is about promoting more people-to-people exchanges. France has become the third host country for foreign students, out of 300,000 studying here, 15,000 come from Asia. There are also many French students going to Asia, with 10,000 in China and 1,500 in Taiwan, which is more than the UK and Germany put together. The French government wants to keep encouraging cultural diplomacy exchanges, including ideas on human rights and democracy.

Finally, France wants to work on climate change and environment with Asian countries. France was the host of COP 21, which allowed many discussions with China, Japan, India, Singapore and also with minor powers such as Bangladesh or Pacific states. It is now time to implement COP 21 decisions and l'Agence Française de Développement (AFD) will contribute to developing a better environment.

Michael Reiterer, Principal Advisor at the Asia-Pacific Department of the European External Action Service, pointed out that EU's foreign policy requires consensus in order to avoid 28 different foreign policies.

A lot of talks on security and defense are conducted within the EU, and member states are now dealing with hard security elements. The EU is moving from soft power to smart power. As many as 17 military operations are being conducted, starting with the Atalanta operation in the Gulf of Aden, which is not only a project to bring peace, but also an opportunity to work on Somalia's development. There is a need for an integrated and comprehensive approach to build resilience of institutions and societies, with more access to resources, jobs, education and protection of human rights. Discussions must not only be focused on money but also be about solving issues.

Although the European relation with Iran was not comparable to the one with North Korea, lessons can still be drawn from the Iranian case, because it shows the importance of having flexible and dynamic formats to keep the process and discussion going.

The EU is deeply entangled with Asia, with a new China strategy adopted in July, policy papers published on Myanmar, summits with India, and communication with ASEAN. Furthermore, the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation gives the EU a right to talk about the South China Sea issue. Even if the EU cannot solve every problem, member states can make use of their engagement in trade and investments with Asia, which has long been more significant than trans-Atlantic trade. There is a close connection between Asia's stability and EU prosperity.

Discussion

Dr. Wacker agreed that EU's new China strategy adopted in July 2016 is good because it focuses on several important issues. The EU has agreed to a certain position and has set clear priorities, so it has to communicate them to the other members so they can stay on the same line. The 16+1 mechanism between China and 16 Central and Eastern European countries has already far-reaching implications for the unity of EU, as 5 members are not member states of the European Union. Some countries can water down the EU's statement on the South China Sea ruling because they believe they can gain economic benefits from China if they destroy the consensus on the original statement. The image of the EU as an institution has changed in Asia, and it is now considered that democracy can be dysfunctional. Mr. Reiterer underlined that despite facing many challenges, Europe is still a very attractive destination, and a lot of people would rather live in a broken democracy than in a dictatorship.

Professor De Castro underlined China's attempt to divide ASEAN, as well as the strategic alignment going on between China and Russia. Dr. Wacker answered that ASEAN has always been divided on a lot of matters, and member states have to manage their own issues and do their best to re united. For Mr. Laplanche, China and Russia have very different views and interests, and do not hold the same positions.

Afternoon Sessions: Panel 2

Taiwan after the elections Cross-strait and regional impacts

The second session addressed the issue of Taipei-Beijing's relations since President Tsai Ing-wen's coming to office in May 2016.

Alice Ekman, Research Fellow and Head of China Research at the Ifri Center for Asian Studies provided an outside perspective on Taiwan's situation after the most recent elections. According to her, tensions are still very high between Beijing and Taipei, and have been rising since Tsai Ing-wen's election up to her formal accession to presidency on May 20th. At her inaugural speech, President Tsai pointed out the importance of building a sustainable relationship with Beijing, but didn't mention the 1992 consensus. This prompted the Chinese government to react just five hours later to ask for an explanation, stating that she had taken a very ambiguous stance. Since May, the PRC has suspended diplomatic relations with Taipei to express its dissatisfaction with the new Taiwanese government.

In a speech in October, Tsai Ing-wen has called for talks and has insisted that Beijing should acknowledge that Taiwan is a democracy. The rise of tension also has an impact on bilateral economic relations. It has also played out on a multilateral level as well. This year has notably seen a resurgence of Taiwanese citizens being deported from Gambia, Kenya and Cambodia back to China instead of Taiwan, involving third countries in the dispute.

In the upcoming months, President Tsai will probably keep a certain level of ambiguity, drawing more dissatisfaction from Beijing. The PRC will thus probably continue to cut formal exchanges and regular contacts, tighten Taiwan's diplomatic isolation, push for stronger economic sanctions, and might keep on reforming regional and global governance, assuming *de facto* Taiwan's participation in those decisions. One of the upcoming challenges for Taiwan is therefore to sort out how to participate in regional and global debates, considering that Taipei is currently represented by Beijing in these fora. What has been particularly striking is the reduction of Taiwan's participation in

international gatherings, unlike China who has been very active. For Dr. Ekman, pressure from Beijing won't fade away, as Taiwan is a core issue for China.

Kao-Cheng Wang, Professor at the Graduate Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies, and Dean of the School of International Studies at Tamkang University in Taipei, reminded us that between 2008 and 2016, 23 agreements have been signed between Taipei and Beijing. He also underlined the importance of Chinese tourism in Taiwan.

Although there were issues going on between China and Japan in the East China Sea, and disputes between China and Southeast Asian countries in the South China Sea, cross-strait relations had remained stable. Yet, things have changed with President Tsai's election in May 2016. Taiwan has seen a reduction of Chinese tourists, its political participation has been considerably limited, and this has been caused by the change of policies and the lack of consensus between the new Taiwanese government and Beijing.

According to Professor Wang, there is no fundamental difference between former President Ma Ying-jeou and current Tsai Ing-wen, except in formally pronouncing the words "1992 consensus". Even though President Tsai didn't formally accept this consensus and doesn't want to yield to Beijing's pressure, she stated that she will respect the 1992 talks and maintains the *status quo*. The difference lies in Beijing's attitude. Tsai comes from a party which promoted independence, and China believes that she inherited this stance.

Still, Xi Jinping has his own internal challenges to overcome and may not want to engage in a fierce dispute with Taiwan. He is currently trying to promote political reforms in China, and also has to prepare for the Chinese Communist Party 19th Congress next year. Moreover, China is involved in the South China Sea issue, and may thus avoid having too many confrontational fronts at the same time.

Chih-chung Wu, Professor at the Department of Political Science in Taiwan Soochow University and Deputy Minister of Taiwan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointed out that Ma Ying-jeou's lack of popular support in Taiwan came from the fact that his government wanted to gain favor with Beijing. For Professor Wu, China's ambition to reunify Taiwan and China, but Taiwan cannot accept this. It comes down to a political problem. Less than 10% of the population in Taiwan feel Chinese. President Tsai was elected democratically, with a mandate of refusing the 1992 consensus.

Furthermore, what is happening between Taipei and Beijing impacts the whole region. Taiwan can be found in the middle of every conflict in the Asia-Pacific, and Taiwan's opinion on the South China Sea issue also weighs on US-China relations. Although the stability of Taiwan is considered very important, China opposes the new president. Professor Wu also stressed that the 1992 consensus is precisely about the "lack of consensus" between Taipei and Beijing, as former president Lee Teng-hui had stated. Former president Ma Ying-jeou reinterpreted this consensus in order to promote good relations with Beijing, but the international space it created for Taiwan is dependent on Beijing's "good graces", and therefore not fully functional.

President Tsai has been putting a lot of effort into easing tensions with China, despite several provocations from Chinese officials. She has been criticized for being an advocate of the independence movement, but Taiwan is actually a sovereign "state" in which independence doesn't need to be debated. The more China puts pressure on Taiwan, the more Taiwan will pull away. China needs to rethink its policy so Taiwan doesn't become like Hong-Kong. Taiwan wishes to cooperate with China, but doesn't want to become China.