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**New Trends of Mainland China's Taiwan Policy:
Growing Inclusiveness, Pragmatism and Flexibility**

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New Trends of Mainland China's Taiwan Policy: Growing Inclusiveness, Pragmatism and Flexibility

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The year 2012 witnessed the 18th CCP Congress held in Beijing and the leadership transition. In March 2013, the two national conventions (NPC and CPPCC) further established the Xi Jinping-Li Keqiang leadership corps. This year, the guideline of Mainland China's Taiwan policy can be described as "to steadily promote cross-Strait relations and enhance comprehensive development of all fields," a principle that features growing inclusiveness, pragmatism and flexibility.

I. Inclusiveness: from "one-China principle" to "one-China framework"

It has been Mainland China's unwavering position to stick to the "one-China principle" and to oppose "Taiwan independence," "two-state discourse" and the "one-country-on-each-side" rhetoric. Seeing that the cross-Strait relationship has entered the phase of peaceful development over the past five years, Mainland China is adopting a more inclusive approach while maintaining its position. The meeting between President Xi Jinping and KMT Honorary Chairman Wu Po-hsiung on June 13, 2013 marks another important moment in cross-Strait relations, not only because it is the first top-level meeting between the CCP and the KMT since Xi Jinping took office, but also because Wu had authorization from Ma Ying-jeou to make KMT policy statements. During their meeting Xi Jinping pointed out that "both the CCP and KMT should hold on to the one-China position and jointly maintain the one-China framework."¹ Indeed, the "one-China framework" is more inclusive than the "one-China policy" as it encompasses a full range of one-China discourse in Mainland China, on both the official and public levels in Taiwan, and among overseas Chinese and the international community. Wu Po-hsiung said that, despite their different legal and political systems, both the Mainland and Taiwan adopt the one-China principle and position cross-Strait relations under the one-China framework, instead of a "state-to-state" relationship. Recently, KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou reiterated that he would not push forward "two Chinas," "one China, one Taiwan" or "Taiwan independence," indicating the KMT's maintenance of its lasting stance. Such statements have enriched and further enhanced the one-China discourse, helping to consolidate the basis of the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations.

¹ *People's Daily*, June 14, 2013.

During his meeting with Wu, Xi Jinping stressed the need for both sides across the Strait to heal the historical trauma while jointly seeking to achieve the great revival of the Chinese nation, and to push forward the notion that “both sides are one family.” Although a consensus on identity is still lacking among the Taiwan people, yet various opinion polls all point to the fact that the majority of Taiwan people identify themselves as “a member of the Chinese nation.” For example, a recent poll by the Taiwan Competitiveness Forum indicates that as many as 84.8% of the Taiwan people share such a view. Wu Po-hsiung also said that the people across the Taiwan Strait are all sons and daughters of the Chinese nation, and that both the KMT and the CCP should establish a sense of destiny in reviving the Chinese nation. In this respect, the notion of “the great revival of the Chinese nation” is a most inclusive one in uniting the people across the Strait; once the “Taiwan Dream” and the “China Dream” come together, tension and anxiety on cross-Strait relations will naturally decrease.

II. Pragmatism: from “economy first, politics next” to “comprehensive development”

The CCP report on the 18th Party Congress emphasizes that “the peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait must be guaranteed in order to achieve peaceful reunification” and that only by consolidating and deepening “the political, economic, cultural and social foundations” can we “create more favorable conditions for peaceful reunification.” That implies that the Mainland leaders have realized that the conditions and the foundation for peaceful reunification are not solid enough yet; at present, concrete and practical measures must be taken to further promote the comprehensive development of cross-Strait relations.

Deepening economic cooperation remains the priority in cross-Strait relations. The Mainland’s policy is to enhance the normalization, liberalization and institutionalization of their economic relations. An agreement on service trade was signed in June 2013 besides the existing ECFA and other 18 agreements between both sides. After 60 rounds of negotiations over the past two years, Taiwan is now able to benefit more economically. For instance, an extra 30% of preferential items are given to Taiwan beyond Mainland China’s commitment in the WTO while Taiwan’s preferential items for the Mainland are reduced by 30% by WTO standards . So this means a total of 60% preferential gains for Taiwan. In addition, negotiations on such issues as trade in goods and dispute resolution are expected to be completed this year, and ARATS and SEF are expected to establish offices on the other side to deal with cross-Strait cultural, educational, economic and disaster relief affairs, among other issues, so as to better serve the need of the people across the Strait. Both sides have affirmed that cross-Strait relations are not state-

to-state relations and that the offices set up on the other side are not diplomatic or consular agencies. In short, only institutionalized exchanges can ensure lasting development of cross-Strait relations.

The fundamental approach of Mainland China's Taiwan policy is to enhance people-to-people exchange and foster a compatriot mentality. So far, cross-Strait exchanges have become increasingly popular and closer to the grassroots in nature, function and style. Mainland delegations tend to pay more visits to the southern parts of Taiwan and the local levels of the society in order to have a more accurate and comprehensive understanding of Taiwan. Last year alone, over 8 million trips were made across the Strait. Miscellaneous institutions have been set up to facilitate exchange and cooperation between both sides on all walks of life, such as the grassroots-oriented Straits Forum, the Business CEO's Zi Jin Shan Forum and the Business CEO Summit, etc. Furthermore, Mainland China has initiated a number of preferential measures to facilitate the exchange and social integration between both sides.

The key to Mainland's Taiwan policy is to expand cultural exchange and promote a common national identity. Currently, there are many cultural, art and educational exchanges across the Strait. Yet the Mainland has been refraining from pushing forward the signing of a cultural ECFA due to the divergence among the Taiwan people. It has acknowledged Ma Ying-jeou's efforts to revise the Act on Relations between Peoples across the Taiwan Strait, to delete those outdated and biased clauses and to largely relax the restrictions for Mainland students to study in Taiwan. In the meantime, it conducts *ad hoc* talks with Taiwan on specific matters in educational, technical and cultural exchanges; such talks on cooperation on seismic surveillance, environmental protection and the protection of historical relics are likely to result in more agreements in the coming months.

The Mainland's Taiwan policy is also more pragmatic on political issues. The deepening cross-Strait relations encounter more and more sensitive political issues, calling for both sides to find suitable resolutions with even more wisdom and patience. Therefore, the report on the 18th CCP Congress emphasizes the importance of "taking reasonable measures to address political issues under the special situation before national reunification." It also touches on such matters as establishing cross-Strait CBMs and signing a peace agreement. Nonetheless, the Mainland fully understands that it is extremely difficult for Ma Ying-jeou to agree on such breakthroughs during his tenure, thus the Mainland has become increasingly pragmatic on the issue. While in the past the Mainland tended to say "easy affairs first, and difficult affairs next" and "economy first, politics next," it is now advocating "easy affairs first, difficult affairs next" and "comprehensive development." My interpretation is that more measures will be taken to tackle specific political issues in specific cases, and that the settlement of such "smaller" political issues will lead to more and more political mutual trust. Besides, seeing

the difficulty to start official political dialogue, the Mainland has begun to encourage dialogues between think tanks and the public across the Strait. Such a move not only provides more wisdom and advice for future official dialogues, but it also helps enhance social consensus and reduce people's worry in Taiwan.

III. Pragmatism: from “red-blue” dialogue to “red-blue” plus “red-green” dialogue

After many years of dialogue between think tanks and the public across the Strait, their dialogue has been given new implications. As stated at the Conference on Taiwan-related Work held in Beijing, “more dialogue between the academia on both sides is to be encouraged to discuss the future resolution of political issues from non-official perspectives.”² This means that such non-official dialogue has become an integral part of the Mainland's Taiwan policy. With their knowledge, experience and professional understanding of cross-Strait political issues, the academic circle of both sides are very likely to produce better results while minimizing the apprehension of the Taiwan public.

In the past, such dialogue was held mainly between Mainland and “pro-blue” scholars, yet today, more and more dialogue is conducted among the “red, blue and green.” For example, “Taipei Talks: Identity and Mutual Trust” were held in December 2012, with the Chinese Integration Association headed by Zhang Yazhong as the host and Institute of Taiwan Studies at CASS and many other organizations as co-sponsors. Among the dozens of Mainland scholars was Mr. Sun Yafu, Vice Minister of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, who attended the talks under the title of Director of Center for Taiwan-Strait Studies. Their counterparts were noted scholars of the “green camp”—Chen Ming-tong, You Ying-lung, Shih Cheng-feng and Tung Chen-yuan, among others. Many interesting views were exchanged during the heated debate. Half a year later, on June 20 and 21, 2013, the first dialogue of this kind was held in Beijing with the theme of “Strengthening Common Identity and Mutual Trust and Exploring Political Arrangements.” DPP sages like Hsu Hsin-liang, Hung Chi-kun and Wang Kun-yi attended the talks. As Prof. Chang Ya-Chung commented, this marks the beginning of political talks across the Strait—starting from the public by a bottom-top approach. Gathering consensus through discussion, such talks will greatly help foster favorable atmosphere in Taiwan and consolidate mutual trust on both sides.

Despite the lack of formal relations between the CCP and DPP, the report on the 18th CCP Congress declares that “To any political party in Taiwan, as long as it does not advocate ‘Taiwan independence’ and acknowledges one China, we will be open for contact, dialogue and cooperation with it.” In 2012, the DPP guru

² *People's Daily*, Feb. 20, 2013.

Hsieh Chang-ting visited the Mainland as Director of the Taiwan Reform Foundation. In Hong Kong from June 29 and 30, 2013, the Foundation co-hosted the conference on Development and Innovation in Cross-Strait Relations with the Institute of Taiwan Studies at CASS. Hsieh attended the conference with several legislative members including Chao Tien-lin, Yao Wen-chi and Kuan Bi-ling as well as such scholars as Hsieh Min-chieh, Julian Kuo, Tung Chen-yuan and Chang Wu-ueh; Vice Minister Sun Yafu also attended with 25 Mainland scholars. After the conference, Mr. Zhang Zhijun, the new Minister of Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, met with Hsieh Chang-ting in Shenzhen.

In conclusion, the Mainland has adopted a very flexible stance to differentiate the DPP from its individual members, to distinguish advocates of “Taiwan-independence” from pragmatists, and to separate CCP-DPP relations from people-to-people dialogue. Such changes not only expand the Mainland’s knowledge and understanding of the DPP and the “pan-green” camp, but also help promote the Mainland’s thoughts and policy, thus exerting more and more social influence.