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**A Tentative Analysis of the Basic Features and Future Direction of  
Current Developments in the Political Situation in Taiwan**

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# A Tentative Analysis of the Basic Features and Future Direction of Current Developments in the Political Situation in Taiwan

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## I. Analysis of factors influencing the development of the political situation in Taiwan

For a long time, factors influencing the development of the political situation in Taiwan have been in three aspects without exception. The first is the development of the political ecology in the island; the second is the development of cross-strait relations, and the third is external factors.

### *(I) Within Taiwan Island*

The development of the political ecology in Taiwan Island is undoubtedly one of the most important factors influencing the political development in the island.

At present, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is in the absolute dominant position in the political ecology in Taiwan. From central to local organs and from administration to legislation, the DPP has taken absolute political dominance and has full political control. Therefore, the DPP has become a political party with dominating and advantageous position in the island. Its influencing power on the politics of Taiwan will undoubtedly last for a period of time in the future.

However, the political ecology in Taiwan has always been developing dynamically, and cannot be fixed without change. Especially with regard to the factors influencing the political ecology in Taiwan, there has been the historical tradition of blue-green rivalry, the struggle between reunification and independence forces, and contest by political parties in the island. Notably, the factor of the economy is the most important variable influencing the development of the political ecology. The return to power of the KMT in 2008 and the dingy stepping down in 2016 is, to a great extent, directly related to the poor performance of the Ma Ying-jeou administration in pushing Taiwan's economy out of difficulties. The indifference of the public to the Ma administration is primarily embodied at the economic level. Therefore, although the DPP administration now has the full ruling advantage in Taiwan, if the Tsai Ing-wen administration is unable to effectively get Taiwan out of the difficult economic situation and to effectively respond to the requests of the people of Taiwan concerning economic development, there is a very high possibility that it will follow the footsteps of Ma Ying-jeou. In fact, after 100 days in office, the results of major polling data in Taiwan showed that the satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Tsai Ing-wen were quite close, almost half-half, in a deadlock. To compare the 100-day ruling performance of her two predecessors Chen Shui-bian and Ma

Ying-jeou, the satisfaction rate with Tsai Ing-wen was even slightly lower than the 41% of Ma Ying-jeou and lower than the 59% of Chen Shui-bian after three months in office. The change from Tsai Ing-wen's powerful taking power to her weak performance took place in a period of only three months. If the Tsai Ing-wen administration cannot improve the situation of continual downturn of public polling in the future, it will certainly have a great impact on the political ecology in the island.

(II) *Cross-Strait relations*

The cross-Strait relationship is always an important variable influencing the development of the political situation in the island. The two sides across the Strait, with the factors of historical entanglement and realistic interests, have remained a primary factor influencing major issues in the politics, economy and security of Taiwan. Especially, cross-Strait relations will directly affect the security and stability of the Taiwan Strait, if not properly handled. This is what the mainstream public opinion of Taiwan cares most about.

The issue of Taiwan is an internal affair of China. Whether the Taiwan administration can share the fundamental common view on the one-China principle with the mainland is always an important indicator in observing the development of the cross-Strait relations. If the Taiwan administration refuses to give up the political ideology of secessionism and refuses to accept the 1992 Consensus with the implication of one China, the possibility that the cross-Strait relations become turbulent cannot be avoided. Conversely, as long as the Taiwan side is ready to come back to the basic recognition that the two sides across the Strait belong to one country, it is certainly not difficult to start a new chapter in the peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations. Especially in the China mainland is rising constantly and the gap of strength across the Strait is enlarging, the desire of the mainland to pursue peaceful reunification is becoming more intense by the day, and cross-Strait relations will surely have more influencing power on the political situation of Taiwan.

(III) *External factors*

Among the external factors, the United States remains of the two sides across the Strait. For a long time, the inability to realize political reunification of two sides across the Strait should be mainly attributed to the interference and intervention by the United States and other external forces in the question of Taiwan. The external interference in the question of Taiwan not only helps the adventurous behavior of the secessionist forces in the island, but also hurts the feeling of the Chinese people. This is certainly the biggest hidden peril in the peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations. Especially in the current dead lock situation cross the

Strait, if external forces release wrong signals to the DPP and its ruling administration, it may increase the attempt of the pro-independence political forces in the Taiwan Island, and will certainly do quite serious harm to the stability of the cross-Strait relations and peace in the Taiwan Strait. Especially against the background that the comprehensive strength of the mainland is rapidly rising, the desire of the people on the mainland is daily increasing for the final reunification of the country. In this situation, the interference by foreign forces in the question of Taiwan will inevitably encounter increasing resistance and opposition from the government and people of the mainland.

## II. Basic features in the current development of political situation in Taiwan

### *(I) The DPP has very prominent advantage as the only big party*

The DPP is in full ruling position. It has the political advantage from the central to local organs, and from the administration to legislation. In a short period of time, no other political force can challenge its advantage.

The position of absolute advantages of the DPP in the present political ecology of Taiwan is mainly demonstrated by the fact that, with the dominating position of the DPP, many acts can be smoothly adopted in the Legislation Yuan. In the meantime, to maintain its position as the only big party, the DPP continues to give heavy blows to its main political opponent, the KMT, to prevent it from rising again in the future, and further enhance the political superiority of the DPP in the political ecology of Taiwan.

### *(II) The situation of hard struggle between the blue and green has further intensified*

After the DPP has taken power, the situation of hard struggle between the blue and green in the island has been intensifying instead of improving. Especially, the DPP, in the name of transitional justice, has speeded up the political liquidation of the KMT with the excuse of liquidating the party properties of the KMT. This action is not good to the reconciliation of the blue and green camps in the island, instead, it has intensified the atmosphere of hard struggle between the blue and green parties. This will have a great influence on the development of the political situation in the island in the future.

*(III) The KMT has not completely gotten out of its dilemma*

There are certainly many causes why the KMT fell from the ruling position into the chasm of being out of power. At present, the KMT has not gotten out of its dilemma, mainly because the cohesive power in the party is not powerful with many factions, its internal rivalry has not ended, and the supporters are lacking confidence. All these are important obstacles preventing the KMT from rising again. Especially, the election of party chairman of the KMT in 2017 will be an important factor to its rising again.

*(IV) The mental state of expanding political forces for independence has further increased*

In the situation of full ruling by the DPP, the political ambition of the pro-independence camp has further increased. It hopes, in the favorable time of full ruling by the green camp, to speed up actions to promote and expand localization and to increase the secessionist awareness in the political, economic, social and cultural fields of Taiwan. This will greatly affect the development of the political ecology in the island, and also produce very serious hidden perils in the cross-Strait relations.

*(V) The ruling Tsai Ing-wen administration has fallen into ruling crisis*

For more than three months in office, the support for Tsai Ing-wen kept declining according to polling, and the polling data in Taiwan showed that the satisfaction and dissatisfaction with Tsai Ing-wen after 100 days in office were quite close, almost half to half, in a deadlock. Of the public opinion on various policies, the dissatisfaction rate with cross-Strait policy was the highest, also close to fifty percent. To compare with the 100-day ruling performance of her two predecessors Chen Shui-bian and Ma Ying-jeou, the satisfaction rate with Tsai Ing-wen at 100-day in office was slightly lower than the 41% of Ma Ying-jeou at 100-day in office and lower than the 59% of Chen Shui-bian after three months in office. The ruling crisis of Tsai Ing-wen has begun to emerge.

### III. Future directions in the development of political situation in Taiwan

In Taiwan, the development of political situation has always shown a dynamic character, especially, changes can take place along with change in the election situation in the island and the performance of the ruling party.

(I) *The “nine-in-one election” in 2018 will be an important observation variable of the development trend of the political situation in Taiwan*

Taiwan is an election society, and the outcome of elections will directly influence the change of political power and the re-distribution of political interests. Therefore, all major political parties in Taiwan take election into their highest consideration. Presently in Taiwan, a major election is held every two years. The Nine-in-one election in Taiwan in 2018 will be the first important election faced by the green camp after its return to the power. The outcome of this election will not only involve the re-distribution of political and economic resources of all political parties in the counties and cities of Taiwan, but also be an important outpost observation war for the election of a leader of the Taiwan region in 2020.

If the DPP can maintain its advantageous position in the Nine-in-one election in 2018, it will certainly be helpful to the DPP in consolidating its dominating power in the political ecology of Taiwan and it will greatly help it to hold a relatively advantageous position in the election of a leader of the Taiwan region in 2020. Especially, it will be quite important for maintaining its confidence of ruling. If the DPP suffers some loss in this election, it will certainly give a heavy blow to the confidence of the DPP and its ruling team. Similarly, if the KMT can make some breakthroughs in the nine-in-one election, not only holding its territory in New Taipei City, but also gaining ruling power in other counties and cities, it will certainly produce a great positive effect on the KMT to help it rise again, consolidate its basic territory and condense the confidence of its supporters, and even produce considerable a supporting effect in the overall contest between the KMT and the DPP in 2020. On the contrary, if the KMT performs poorly in the nine-in-one election, and even loses its territory in New Taipei City, it will certainly produce serious harm and impact to the KMT, and might even cause its split and affect its survival.

(II) *The ruling crisis of the Tsai Ing-wen administration will continuously intensify*

After the Tsai Ing-wen administration took power, its support in public opinion has decreased rapidly. Unless the DPP can demonstrate bright achievements in its administration, it will feel increasing pressure and fall deeper in a crisis of its rule.

The current subjective and objective environments inside and outside Taiwan Island indicate that the ruling prospects of the Tsai Ing-wen administration are not optimistic. Its ruling crisis will possibly intensify continually.

First, the economic performance in Taiwan remains weak, which is one of the main causes of the continual intensifying ruling crisis of the Tsai Ing-wen administration. On one hand, the Taiwan economy has long been trapped in a structural dilemma, which cannot be improved in a short period of time. In fact,

early in the Lee Teng-hui period, the Taiwan economy was facing the major challenge of transition. However, as the political figures of the green camp, Lee Teng-hui and then Chen Shui-bian, put ideology in command, the Taiwan economy was trapped in a serious dilemma instead of improving. On the other hand, the biggest hinterland and market for the economic development of Taiwan is the mainland. However, since the Tsai Ing-wen administration refuses to accept the basic criteria for the interaction of cross-Strait relations such as the 1992 Consensus, cross-Strait relations have come to a deadlock, which will surely have a negative effect on the economic and trade interaction between the two sides across the Strait, and naturally result in a lack of motivating power and atmosphere for Taiwan's economy to get out of the dilemma.

Second, the ruling administration of Tsai Ing-wen also faces pressure and challenges inside the green camp. Traditionally, the DPP is a political party with separate factions. At present, the factions in the DPP are dissatisfied with the personnel policy of the Tsai Ing-wen administration, and even make fun of the personnel principle of Tsai Ing-wen by calling it "old, blue and male", expressing their strong dissatisfaction. At present, they have not opposed Tsai Ing-wen openly mainly because she still has high prestige, and especially since she has the power to distribute administrative resources in her hands at her command. In the future, if the prestige of Tsai Ing-wen plunges, it cannot be excluded that the opposing voices inside the DPP will come to the fore and even push Tsai Ing-wen into a serious crisis of crippled politics early.

*(III) The possibility of the pro-independence political force to make a desperate move in the island cannot be excluded.*

The independence faction in the green camp in Taiwan Island has insisted on "Independence of Taiwan". After the DPP has come to power again, this faction naturally believes that the time has come to push Taiwan more quickly to complete independence. Therefore they eagerly hope that the Tsai Ing-wen administration can accelerate on the road towards Taiwan's independence. However, Tsai Ing-wen declared that cross-strait policy would maintain the status quo after coming to office, which undoubtedly triggered general dissatisfaction in the independence faction in the island.

At present, the independence faction of green camp has not started to openly oppose Tsai Ing-wen's policy to maintain the status quo mainly because of the powerful ruling by Tsai in the current phase, and no major election activity going on, so the influencing power of the independence faction on the Tsai Ing-wen administration is relatively limited. In the future, with the nine-in-one election in 2018 approaching, the continual declining public polling and intensifying ruling crisis of Tsai Ing-wen, the independence faction will naturally rebound intensively. First, the independence faction will hope to make use of the domain of

the nine-in-one election in 2018 to exert more pressure on the Tsai Ing-wen administration. Especially, the DPP takes election as its primary consideration, and the independence faction is the basic force of the DPP. The independence faction has grasped the mental state of the DPP, which does not dare to openly turn against it, and it hopes to continue to dominate and control the right of speech and of presenting cross-Strait policy in the DPP, so it will certainly put pressure on the DPP continually. Secondly, the independence faction has ever increasing worries in promoting the Taiwan independence line in the island, and it fears especially that, with the decrease of public support to Tsai Ing-wen and the intensifying ruling crisis, the DPP will face increasing resistance and difficulties to promote the Taiwan independence policy. All this will certainly result in great frustration for the Taiwan independence dream of the independence faction. In this situation, the independence faction may possibly take some desperate actions, to take the ruling DPP administration hostage. The DPP, based on the realistic consideration of interests in elections, is highly likely to be taken hostage by the independence faction. Third, if in the future, Tsai Ing-wen's policy to maintain the status quo cannot benefit the DPP administration in cross-Strait relations, strong opposition will surely arise internally. So it cannot be excluded that the DPP ruling administration will give up the basic tone of maintaining the status quo and turn to the independence faction to consolidate its political interests. Therefore in the future, the possibility of substantial promotion by the DPP administration cannot be excluded on some major issues such as Taiwan joining the UN or amending the constitution.

(IV) *The contradictions and conflicts between the blue and green camps will become more intensified*

The performance of Tsai Ing-wen after taking power shows that there has been no improvement in the tradition of blue-green confrontation and conflict in the island- instead, it is in the process of intensifying.

First, after its return to power, the DPP put emphasis on the political liquidation of the KMT. This is one important source leading to the blue-green confrontation in the island. Especially after taking power the DPP administration adopted the "Regulation of treatment of improper party properties", pointing the spearhead directly to the KMT now not in power, in an attempt to prevent the KMT from rising again by liquidating its properties. This practice of the DPP administration is undoubtedly endangering the survival of the KMT, and the KMT will surely fight back with full power, thus leading to the new round of political offense and defense of the blue and green parties.

Second, along with the continual falling of the public polling and intensifying ruling crisis of Tsai Ing-wen, the offense by the blue camp may get enhanced. The sharp falling of the public polling of Tsai Ing-wen after taking office is not only

totally unexpected to all parties, but it also gives a chance for the blue camp to fight back.