

China-Taiwan Weekly Update, September 29, 2023

Authors: Nils Peterson of the Institute for the Study of War

Editors: [Dan Blumenthal](#) and [Frederick W. Kagan](#) of the American Enterprise Institute

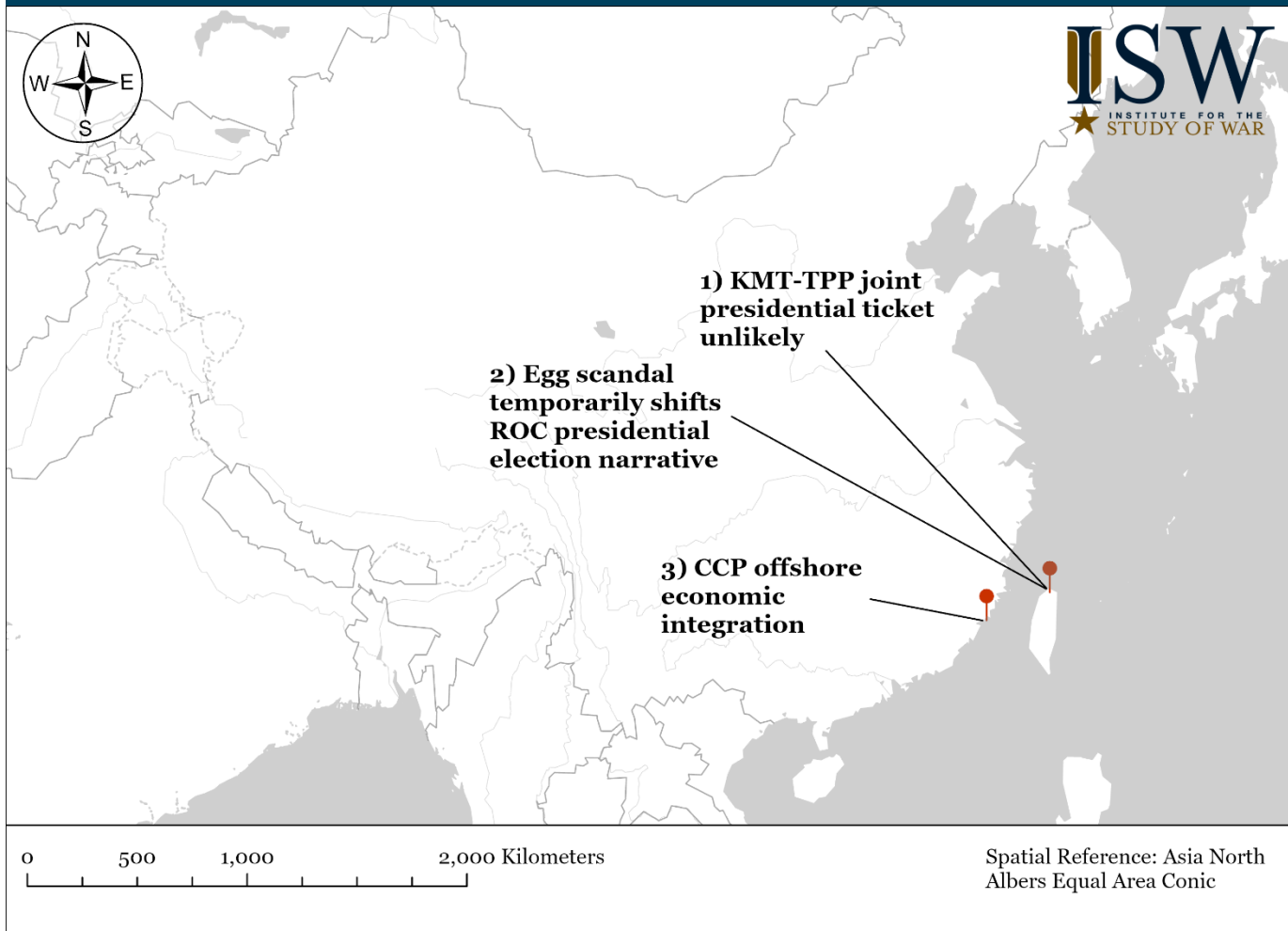
Data Cutoff: September 27 at 5pm

The China–Taiwan Weekly Update focuses on the Chinese Communist Party’s paths to controlling Taiwan and relevant cross–Taiwan Strait developments.

Key Takeaways

- 1. The Kuomintang (KMT) seeks to lead a joint presidential ballot with the Taiwan People’s Party (TPP) and is unlikely to obtain a compromise deal with the TPP in the coming two weeks.**
- 2. The imported egg scandal shifted the presidential electoral narrative away from cross-strait relations over the past two weeks, and the dominant narrative of the election as a choice between peace and war is likely to reemerge in the next two weeks.**
- 3. The CCP aims to economically integrate the ROC-controlled offshore island of Kinmen with the PRC province of Fujian, which could allow the CCP to exacerbate domestic ROC internal divisions over cross-strait engagement with the PRC.**

China-Taiwan Update Political-Military Events (September 20, 2023 - September 26, 2023)



Taiwanese Presidential Election

The Kuomintang (KMT) seeks to lead a joint presidential ballot with the Taiwan People's Party (TPP) and is unlikely to obtain a compromise deal with the TPP in the coming two weeks. The KMT aims to overcome its third place standing in the presidential race by partnering with the TPP to create a competitive challenge to the leading Democratic Progressive Party presidential candidate Lai Ching-te.[1] KMT leadership at the party and grassroots levels support cooperation between KMT presidential candidate Hou Yu-ih and TPP presidential candidate Ko Wen-je. This is consistent with ISW's September 15 assessment that hostility between KMT leadership and independent presidential candidate Terry Gou may prompt the KMT to reconsider cooperation with the TPP in the presidential election.[2] Ko has been open to cooperating with Hou since August but rejected a precondition articulated by KMT-leaning Broadcasting Corporation of China Chairman Jaw Shaw-kong in September that Hou automatically be presidential candidate.[3] The two parties have dissimilar views about the mechanisms, such as the 1992 Consensus, for engaging in dialogue with the Chinese Communist Party, which are hurdles to the two candidates running on a joint ticket.[4] Neither candidate has shown the willingness to drop out of the race to form a KMT-TPP joint ticket.

Either party expressing willingness to engage in dialogue without preconditions would prompt a reevaluation of this assessment.

- Several local district level KMT leaders called for cooperation between Hou and Ko on September 20.[5] The KMT-leaning Broadcasting Corporation of China Chairman Jaw Shau-kong met with former KMT presidential nominee Han Kuo-yu on September 26 and claimed to have “reached a consensus on promoting ‘opposition integration’” between the KMT and TPP, with negotiations alleged to begin in mid-October.[6]
- Ko stated in late September that cooperation cannot be “purely reduced to distribution of power” and that cooperation requires consensus and the combination of ideas.[7] Ko is polling ahead of Hou by 7.4 percentage points, according to a September 25 poll by the Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation.[8] Ko reportedly told an internal TPP meeting on an unspecified date in September that the KMT could “go to hell.”[9]
- The KMT interprets the 1992 Consensus to mean that there is one China, the ROC, and sees it as a means for engaging in dialogue with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).[10] Ko does not align with the 1992 Consensus because it has become politically contentious in Taiwan.[11] He does support dialogue with the CCP that avoids the domestic Taiwanese political polarization around using the term 1992 Consensus.
- The trend is for media coverage surrounding controversy in the election, such as Jaw’s comments, to not last substantially into a third week. The sexual assault and barbiturate scandals that occurred in May and June that affected the DPP and KMT lasted no more than three weeks.[12]

ISW assesses that the CCP holds the following leverage points over each of the Taiwanese presidential candidates:[13]

TAIWAN: PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE KEY POLICY VIEWS AND CCP LEVERAGE POINTS

This chart highlights the cross-strait and US-Taiwan policy positions for the candidates running in Taiwan's 2024 presidential election. This chart also lists the leverage points the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could exploit under the "war vs peace" election narrative.

Terminology: 1992 Consensus: a disputed cross-strait policy formulation supported in different formations by the CCP, KMT, and Terry Gou that acts as a precondition to cross-strait dialogue. The CCP views the term as meaning there is one China, the PRC, which includes Taiwan. The KMT views the term as meaning that there is one China, the ROC. The TPP does not align with the 1992 Consensus because it has been "smeared" in Taiwan. The DPP does not support the 1992 Consensus as it views the alleged agreement as a threat to ROC (Taiwan) sovereignty. The United States takes no official position on the 1992 Consensus.

Candidate (Party)	Cross-Strait Policy	US-Taiwan Policy
Lai Ching-te (Democratic Progressive Party - DPP) 民主進步黨 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centering campaign narrative on preserving Taiwanese democracy against CCP authoritarianism.¹⁴ Does not support the 1992 Consensus.¹⁵ <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framing Lai as responsible for cross-strait tension due to his refusal to engage in dialogue with the CCP based on the 1992 Consensus. 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> United States and Taiwan are democratic partners engaged in a larger struggle against China.¹⁶ <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framing ongoing US-Taiwan security and economic cooperation as provocative policies that endanger Taiwanese security.
Ko Wen-je (Taiwan People's Party - TPP) 台灣民眾黨 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes cross-strait dialogue but does not align with the 1992 Consensus because it has been "smeared" in Taiwan.¹⁷ <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Push Ko to accept the 1992 Consensus as necessary for cross-strait talks and peace. 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> US-Taiwan alignment should not be unnecessarily hostile to the CCP.¹⁸ Calling for the United States to help Taiwan enter regional economic organizations.¹⁹ <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frame deeper economic and security cooperation with the United States as "provoking" the CCP.
Hou Yu-ih (Kuomintang - KMT) 中國國民黨 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes cross-strait exchanges and dialogue with the CCP.²⁰ Supports 1992 consensus.²¹ <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framing cross-strait economic integration and political dialogue on the party's terms as necessary to the maintenance of peace. 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports an unspecified "very good alliance with the United States."²² <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pushing for avoiding unofficial US-Taiwan engagements, which would further isolate Taiwan internationally, as a means to achieve cross-strait peace.
Guo Taiming (Independent) 無黨籍 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes "cross-strait peace consultation" with the CCP.²³ Supports 1992 Consensus.²⁴ <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Push agreements degrading Taiwanese economic and security independence from the PRC through the "cross-strait peace consultation" office. 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand technology investment and partnerships with the United States.²⁵ Opposed buying "lots of" US weapons in 2019.²⁶ Present view on US-Taiwan relationship: "don't just talk politics and buy weapons."²⁷ Wary of "unhealthy dependency" on the United States.²⁸ <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pushing for the reduction of economic and security collaboration with the United States as necessary for cross-strait negotiations.

A joint Ko-Hou presidential ticket would have the following implications for the CCP leverage points over the Taiwanese presidential candidates:

TAIWAN: CCP LEVERAGE POINTS IN A POTENTIAL KMT-TPP JOINT PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

This chart highlights the cross-strait and US-Taiwan policy positions for the candidates running in Taiwan's 2024 presidential election in the unlikely event of a Ko-Hou unity ticket. The chart also lists the leverage points that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) could exploit under the "war vs peace" election narrative.

Terminology: 1992 Consensus: a disputed cross-strait policy formulation supported in different formations by the CCP, KMT, and Terry Gou that acts as a precondition to cross-strait dialogue. The CCP views the term as meaning there is one China, the PRC, which includes Taiwan. The KMT views the term as meaning that there is one China, the ROC. The KMT views the 1992 Consensus as recognizing that the CCP and KMT each hold different interpretations of one China. The TPP does not align with the 1992 Consensus because it has been "smeared" in Taiwan. The DPP does not support the 1992 Consensus as it views the alleged agreement as a threat to ROC (Taiwan) sovereignty. The United States takes no official position on the 1992 Consensus.

Candidate (Party)	Cross-Strait Policy	US-Taiwan Policy
<p>Lai Ching-te (Democratic Progressive Party - DPP) 民主進步黨</p> 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centering campaign narrative on preserving Taiwanese democracy against CCP authoritarianism. Does not support the 1992 Consensus. <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framing Lai as responsible for cross-strait tension due to his refusal to engage in dialogue with the CCP based on the 1992 Consensus. 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> United States and Taiwan are democratic partners engaged in a larger struggle against China. <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Framing ongoing US-Taiwan security and economic cooperation as provocative policies that endanger Taiwanese security.
<p>Ko Wen-je and Hou Yu-ih (Taiwan People's Party - TPP, Kuomintang - KMT) 台灣民眾黨 中國國民黨</p> 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote cross-strait dialogue with conceptual support for the 1992 Consensus. <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frame cross-strait economic integration and political dialogue on the party's terms as necessary to the maintenance of peace. 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for a productive alliance with the United States that avoids being "unnecessarily hostile" toward the CCP. <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frame economic and security cooperation with the United States as "provoking" the CCP and preventing cross-strait dialogue.
<p>Guo Taiming (Independent) 無黨籍</p> 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes "cross-strait peace consultation" with the CCP. Supports 1992 Consensus. <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Push agreements degrading Taiwanese economic and security independence from the PRC through the "cross-strait peace consultation" office. 	<p>Candidate's View:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand technology investment and partnerships with the United States. Opposed buying "lots of" US weapons in 2019. Present view on US-Taiwan relationship: "don't just talk politics and buy weapons." Wary of "unhealthy dependency" on the United States. <p>CCP Leverage Point:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pushing for the reduction of economic and security collaboration with the United States as necessary for cross-strait negotiations.

The imported egg scandal shifted the presidential electoral narrative away from cross-strait relations over the past two weeks, and the dominant narrative of the election as a choice between peace and war is likely to reemerge in the next two weeks. The Democratic Progressive Party-led government imported 145 million eggs over the summer to alleviate supply shortages. Several million of these eggs had mislabeled expiration dates, which gave rise to public concern over prior and future consumption of the imported eggs. Other scandals during this election cycle lasted no more than three weeks. The multi-year trend of cross-strait relations shaping Taiwanese presidential elections, along with the short-lived length of prior scandal coverage, suggests that the narrative of the election as a choice between peace and war will be the central issue of the 2024 presidential election.

- The DPP-led government imported the eggs between March to July to address shortages caused by the avian flu.[14] Egg processing plants mixed imported and domestic eggs to create liquid egg products and mislabeled the products as made in Taiwan.[15] The government destroyed 54 million eggs that had expired in storage facilities.[16] The agriculture minister resigned on September 17 and Premier Chen Chien-jen responded to the controversy before the Legislative Yuan on September 22.[17]
- The sexual assault and barbiturate scandals that occurred in May and June that affected the DPP and KMT lasted no more than three weeks.[18] The egg scandal is now entering its second week.[19]
- The framing of the election as a choice between peace and war has been ongoing since at least January 2023 and remains salient in Taiwanese and Chinese media outlets.[20] The last two Taiwanese presidential elections, which occurred in 2016 and 2020, centered around the candidates' differing views of cross-strait relations.[21] The 2024 presidential election coverage also focused on cross-strait relations with brief interludes of political scandal.

Chinese Communist Party Coercion toward Taiwan

The CCP aims to economically integrate the ROC-controlled offshore island of Kinmen with the PRC province of Fujian, which could allow the CCP to exacerbate domestic ROC internal divisions over cross-strait engagement with the PRC.[22] Economically integrating the island with China would provide an avenue for the CCP to exacerbate ROC internal divisions over cross-strait engagement with the PRC. The ROC opposition parties are willing to engage in expansive economic, cultural, and political engagement with the PRC whereas the DPP is not. Exacerbating internal ROC divisions benefits the CCP by portraying the ROC government as incompetent to the Taiwanese public. A consternated populace would be more receptive to CCP messaging promoting unification.

- The CCP put forth a plan on September 12 titled “Opinions on Supporting Fujian in Exploring a New Road for Cross-Strait Integrated Development and Building a Cross-Strait Integrated Development Demonstration Zone.”[23]
- This proposal comes amid proposals by KMT presidential candidate Hou Yu-ih since August to build a bridge between Kinmen and Xiamen.[24] TPP presidential candidate Ko Wen-je also supports the construction of the bridge.[25] The Chinese Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Zhu Fenglian voiced support for constructing the bridge on September 27.[26]
- An unnamed Taiwanese official stated on September 20 that building such a bridge would “accelerate the ‘Crimeaization’ of Kinmen, and it will eventually be annexed by China.”[27]

[1] <https://www.tpf.org/%e5%9c%96%e8%a1%a8%e5%88%86%e6%9e%90/%e9%80%b2%e5%8f%a3%e9%9b%9e%e8%9b%8b%e9%a2%a8%e6%9a%b4%e3%80%81%e6%94%bf%e9%bb%a8%e7%ab%b6%e7%88%ad%e8%88%872024%e7%b8%bd%e7%b5%b1%e5%a4%a7%e9%81%b8%ef%bc%882023%e5%b9%b49%e6%9c%8826%e6%97%a5%ef%bc%89/>

[2] <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgroundunder/china-taiwan-weekly-update...>

[3] <https://focustaiwan dot tw/politics/202309280019>

[4] <https://www.cna dot com.tw/news/aip/202309060223.aspx>
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[5] <https://www.chinatimes dot com/realtimenews/20230920003712-260407?chdtv>

[6] <https://www.cna dot com.tw/news/aip/202309260312.aspx>
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[7] <https://www.cna dot com.tw/news/aip/202309270095.aspx>

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[8] <https://www.tpf.org/%e5%9c%96%e8%a1%a8%e5%88%86%e6%9e%90/%e9%80%b2%e5%8f%a3%e9%9b%9e%e8%9b%8b%e9%a2%a8%e6%9a%b4%e3%80%81%e6%94%bf%e9%bb%a8%e7%ab%b6%e7%88%ad%e8%88%872024%e7%b8%bd%e7%b5%b1%e5%a4%a7%e9%81%b8%ef%bc%882023%e5%b9%b49%e6%9c%8826%e6%97%a5%ef%bc%89/>

[9] <https://focustaiwan dot tw/politics/202309280019>

[10] [https://focustaiwan dot tw/cross-strait/202307040017#:~:text=ELECTION%202024%2FKMT's%20Hou%20backs,that%20conforms%20with%20ROC%20Constitution'&text=Taipei%2C%20July%204%20\(CNA\),of%20China%20\(ROC\)%20Constitution](https://focustaiwan dot tw/cross-strait/202307040017#:~:text=ELECTION%202024%2FKMT's%20Hou%20backs,that%20conforms%20with%20ROC%20Constitution'&text=Taipei%2C%20July%204%20(CNA),of%20China%20(ROC)%20Constitution)

[11] <https://www.csis dot org/events/fireside-chat-dr-ko-wen-je-chairman-taiwan-peoples-party-and-former-mayor-taipei>

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[15] <https://focustaiwan dot tw/society/202309200015>

[16] <https://focustaiwan dot tw/society/202309200015>

[17] <https://www.taiwannews dot com.tw/ch/news/5005298>

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[21] <https://international dot thenewslens.com/feature/taiwan2020/129435>
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[23] https://www.gov dot cn/zhengce/202309/content_6903509.htm
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[24] <https://www.cna dot com.tw/news/aip/202308220212.aspx>
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[25] <https://www.taiwannews dot com.tw/en/news/4906300>
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