

Institute of Chinese Studies

# WEDNESDAY SEMINAR

*Taiwan Presidential  
and Legislative Yuan  
Elections: Outcomes  
and Challenges Ahead*

## REPORT

Speakers :

**Arthur Ding  
Gunjan Singh  
Manoj Kumar Panigrahi**

14 February 2024

## REPORT

**Speakers:** Prof. Arthur Ding, Professor Emeritus, National Chengchi University, Taipei.

**Dr. Gunjan Singh**, Assistant Professor, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat.

**Dr. Manoj Kumar Panigrahi**, Assistant Professor, and Co-Director, Centre for Northeast Asia Studies, Jindal School of International Affairs, O.P. Jindal Global University, Sonipat.

**Chair:** Dr. Prashant Kumar Singh, Research Fellow and Centre Co-ordinator, East Asia Centre, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi

**Venue:** Zoom Webinar

The seminar commenced with opening remarks by the chair, Dr. Prashant Kumar Singh. He underscored the importance of Taiwan's January 2024 election, noting it as the first instance since 1996, of a political party securing a third consecutive presidential term, a milestone amplified by heightened cross-strait tensions, adding to its importance.

Dr. Manoj Kumar Panigrahi enumerated the key domestic parties contesting the elections: the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party), KMT (Kuomintang), and TPP (Taiwan People's Party). He offered insights into their respective foreign policy positions and highlighted the potential impact of a DPP victory on cross-strait relations, predicting a decline in Taiwan's diplomatic alliances. Notably, in 2016, Taiwan had 22 such alliances, but the number has since plummeted to 12. Dr. Panigrahi suggested that a DPP win might exacerbate this trend, and intensify "chequebook diplomacy" from China, potentially resulting in further derecognition of Taiwan.

While discussing India-Taiwan relations, Dr. Panigrahi pointed out the significance of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs' statement to Taiwan in 2024, which signalled India's keen interest in both domestic and international developments in Taiwan. He highlighted India's strong commitment to the nurturing of people-to-people ties shared between the two nations. He also observed a surge in non-political diplomacy between India and Taiwan, particularly in the spheres of economy and human exchanges. He pointed out that India was paying close attention to the growing trend of Taiwanese companies diversifying from investments in mainland China. The 'Make in India' policy posits India as an alternative base

for manufacturing potentially deepening economic ties between India and Taiwan. Nevertheless, he pointed out that challenges such as limited connectivity and mutual understanding between the two nations could hinder further progress.

Dr. Gunjan Singh's presentation centred on cross-strait relations, emphasising the ideological differences between Taiwan's DPP and KMT and their distinct approaches towards mainland China. This ideological difference became evident particularly in 2016 when the DPP came to power and President Tsai refused to acknowledge the 1992 consensus, which was primarily endorsed by the CPC and KMT. The DPP maintains that the 1992 consensus does not represent Taiwanese consensus, as democratic elections only commenced in 1996.

The speaker highlighted Chinese pressure and discontent with the Taiwanese electorate's continued support for the DPP. The decline in Taiwan's alliances from 22 to 12 reflects deteriorating relationship between Xi Jinping and Tsai Ing-wen. Dr. Gunjan Singh asserted that the January 2024 elections demonstrate increasing Taiwanisation of Taiwan. Despite China's objections, the re-election of the pro-independence DPP for a third term with overwhelming support indicates that the Taiwanese populace has shaped their political discourse and are willing to take independent political initiatives.

Prof. Ding, discussing Taiwan's Regional and International Security Perspectives, posited that analysing the Cross-Strait issue within the current context of US-China rivalry is essential. Under the Biden administration, the US response to the cross-strait crisis has been predictable. Biden, acknowledging the sensitivity of cross-strait relations, had increased Taiwan's defence capabilities to compete with China, causing concern in Beijing. During the presidential elections, the Biden administration initiated efforts to stabilise the crisis and engage in talks with Chinese counterparts. However, Prof. Ding suggested that this predictability in US government actions may shift under a new administration.

Furthermore, Prof. Ding noted that Taiwan has raised its defence budget to 3% of its GDP under pressure from the US to enhance its defence capabilities. He also emphasised that although the probability of war remains low, various forms of intimidation from China will persist. Prof. Ding identified two key challenges for the DPP following its victory in 2024:

managing potential interactions with a re-elected Trump administration and cooperating with the opposition party, KMT, particularly regarding national defence and cross-Straits relations.

The chair commended Prof. Ding's analysis and directed a question to him regarding the DPP's success in internationalising the Taiwan issue and challenging the narrative that the cross-Strait crisis is only confined to Beijing, Taipei, and Washington.. Prof. Ding responded by asserting that it's People's Republic of China (PRC) rather than the Republic of China (ROC) that has internationalised Taiwan. In support of the argument Prof. Ding underscored China's global influence and international consensus it has garnered through intimidating Taiwan.

The seminar was followed by a lively interactive session. A participant posed an intriguing question about the stance of Taiwanese business lobbies operating across Taiwan and mainland China. In response to the question the speakers acknowledged the interdependence of the two economies as a factor that discourages outright military confrontation. Dr. Panigrahi emphasised that the *Taishang*, Taiwanese business people based in mainland China, could play a pivotal role in advocating Taiwanese political concerns within the PRC.

**Disclaimer:** This is a report produced for purposes of dissemination and for generating wider discussion. All views expressed here should be understood to be those of the speakers and individual participants, and not necessarily of the Institute of Chinese Studies. Since this is a report, it cannot be used for citation without confirming with the speaker(s).