

China-Taiwan Weekly Update, October 13, 2023

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

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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 and Taiwan People’s Party are discussing a joint presidential ticket and may form one before the January 13 election.
2. The Chinese Communist Party blamed the United States and Europe of “biased” support for Israel, indicating that the party aims to delegitimize the United States as a responsible regional actor.



Taiwanese Presidential Election

The Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan People's Party (TPP) are discussing a joint presidential ticket and may form one before the January 13 election. The KMT aims to overcome its third place standing in the presidential race by partnering with the second place TPP to create a competitive challenge to the leading Democratic Progressive Party presidential candidate Lai Ching-te. The second place TPP also seeks a joint ticket to increase its competitiveness against Lai. KMT presidential candidate Hou Yu-ih and TPP presidential candidate Ko Wen-je have expressed openness to working together over the past two months but have not agreed on specific measures for cooperation. The KMT and TPP leadership began planning for pre-negotiation discussions during the past week and scheduled the first staff dialogue for October 14.¹ The parties taking tangible steps towards dialogue is consistent with ISW's October 5 assessment that the TPP could form a joint presidential ticket before the January election.²

- Ko has been open to cooperating with Hou to forge a winning electoral strategy since August but without working toward a joint ticket.³ KMT Chairman Eric Chu and Hou also have expressed a willingness to work with the TPP in late August.⁴ Several local district level KMT leaders called for cooperation between Hou and Ko on September 20.⁵
- Ko proposed on October 10 to hold three debates with Hou before a third-party poll that would determine the presidential candidate for a joint KMT-TPP ticket. He also nominated his campaign chief Huang Shan-shan and campaign office chair Chou Yu-hsiu for negotiations with the KMT on organizing the debates.⁶
- Ko leads Hou by 7.4 percentage points in the presidential election, according to the most recent poll by the Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation from September 25.⁷

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

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 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
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.

ISW assesses that 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.

Chinese Communist Party in the Middle East

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) blamed the United States and Europe for “biased” support for Israel, indicating that the party aims to delegitimize the United States as a responsible regional actor. The CCP condemned violence between Palestine and Israel but did not condemn Hamas.⁸ The party called for all involved parties to remain restrained and immediately implement a cease fire on October 8 and October 9. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) Spokesman Wang Wenbin expressed support for the October 11 resolution passed by the Arab League that called for an immediate cessation of Israeli military action in Gaza.⁹ CCP English-language propaganda outlets accused American and European countries of hindering the creation of a Palestinian state because of “biased” support for Israel.¹⁰ This narrative places the blame for the current instability in the Middle East on the West. This aligns with the CCP’s messaging during Russia’s ongoing invasion of Ukraine which blamed the United States and NATO expansion for instigating the crisis.¹¹

- The CCP’s October 8 statement called for an immediate ceasefire in order to protect civilians and prevent the situation from deteriorating.¹² PRC Foreign Ministry Spokeswoman Mao Ning stated on October 9 that the party’s top priority was for the war to end as soon as possible.¹³ She also declined to label Hamas’ actions as “acts of terrorism” and refused to state whether the PRC urged Iran to restrain Hamas.¹⁴ This statement came after Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer met with CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping on October 9 in Beijing. Schumer urged him to “stand with the Israeli people and condemn [Hamas’] cowardly and vicious attacks.”¹⁵
- The CCP-controlled English language *Global Times* claimed on October 10 and 11 that American and European “biased” support for Israel would worsen the situation and reveal the greed of the American military-industrial complex. The outlet also questioned the motives of Secretary of State Blinken’s Israel trip. It asked “But what is he supporting exactly? Is it a retaliatory mass killing?”¹⁶

The CCP is portraying itself as an ostensible neutral broker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The PRC MFA pushed for a two-state solution amid the war.¹⁷ The CCP also framed itself as a neutral broker in the Ukraine War.¹⁸ The similarities in CCP-propagated narratives between Ukraine and Israel indicate that the party will use the claim of neutrality to portray itself as a responsible power compared to the allegedly irresponsible West.

- The party began portraying itself as a neutral broker via Special Envoy on the Middle East Zhai Jun, who called the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on October 10 to offer PRC assistance to broker an “immediate ceasefire and cessation of violence, and to provide humanitarian support to the Palestinian people.”¹⁹ Egypt has not publicized its response.
- This framing of ostensible neutrality would allow the CCP to build off its March 2023 mediation of Saudi-Iran diplomatic normalization to enhance its political stature in the region.²⁰ This also advances the CCP narrative of a PRC-led world order as founded on principles of non-intervention and peace compared to the alleged militarism of the United States.²¹

- The English language CCP propaganda outlets *China Daily* and *Global Times* framed the United States' move to deploy the USS Gerald R. Ford near Israel as evidence that the American military-industrial complex perniciously exploits the conflict for profit.²² Such articles propagate the narrative that the United States is a destabilizing world power.

The Hamas-Israel War is the focus of international attention, and the CCP may exploit the situation to advance its coercion campaign targeting the Republic of China (Taiwan). The table below lists some of the CCP’s coercion efforts, their status, and how the party could advance them.

Objective	Status	Potential Advancement
Eliminate ROC (Taiwan) sovereignty	<p>Daily air defense identification zone violations by the PLA²³</p> <p>ROC retains full diplomatic relations with only 13 countries. Honduras most recently switched diplomatic recognition from the ROC to the PRC on March 26.²⁴</p>	<p>Increase the complexity of daily ROC air defense identification zone violation flight paths.</p> <p>Initiate diplomatic and economic inducements to persuade countries to switch diplomatic relations from the ROC to the PRC.</p>
Exacerbate leverage points over the next ROC president	<p>The CCP has the following leverage over each of the ROC presidential candidates.</p> <p>Lai Ching-te (DPP). Frame Lai as a provocateur and American pawn.</p> <p>Ko Wen-je (TPP). Frame cross-strait dialogue on CCP terms as necessary for peace.</p> <p>Hou Yu-ih (KMT). Frame cross-strait dialogue on CCP terms as necessary for peace.</p> <p>Guo Taiming (Independent). Push cross-strait agreements to degrade ROC sovereignty.</p>	<p>Spread the narrative in the Chinese language press in Taiwan that American political upheaval makes it an unreliable ally. Negotiations surrounding “unification” with the PRC are the only way to peace.</p> <p>Spread the narrative that security alliances with the United States lead to regional instability and war. Negotiations surrounding “unification” with the PRC are the only way to peace.</p> <p>Economic tariffs or import bans in response to fabricated ROC “provocation” to punish Lai.</p>

Undermine ROC confidence in US intent and capacity to defend Taiwan	Spread the narrative that the United States destabilizes regions like Eastern Europe and the Middle East.	Highlight any disruption of US military aid to Ukraine or Israel as evidence the United States would abandon Taiwan in a crisis.
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¹ <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aipl/202310120055.aspx>

² <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/china-taiwan-weekly-update-october-5-2023>

³ <https://focustaiwan.com.tw/politics/202308240025>

⁴ https://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20230826000034-260407?ctrack=pc_main_rtime_p06&chdtv
https://udn.com/news/story/123307/7391422?from=udn-catelistnews_ch2
<https://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20230824003455-260407?chdtv>
<https://news.ltn.com.tw/news/politics/breakingnews/4405996>

⁵ <https://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20230920003712-260407?chdtv>

⁶ <https://www.cna.com.tw/news/aipl/202310100159.aspx>
<https://www.taiwannews.com.tw/en/news/5017300>

⁷ [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](https://www.tpod.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)

⁸ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/dhdw_673027/202310/t20231008_11157292.shtml

⁹ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/202310/t20231012_11160029.shtml
<http://www.leagueofarabstates.net/ar/InFocus/Pages/InfocusDetails.aspx?RID=115>

¹⁰ <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1299692.shtml?id=12>

¹¹ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202202/t20220224_10645282.html
https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/202203/t20220304_10648111.html
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<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202204/1257463.shtml>
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202204/1257494.shtml>
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202204/1257562.shtml>

¹² https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/dhdw_673027/202310/t20231008_11157292.shtml

¹³ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/jzhsj_673025/202310/t20231009_11158229.shtml

¹⁴ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/jzhsj_673025/202310/t20231009_11158229.shtml

¹⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C6SGCjD2U_I

¹⁶ <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1299612.shtml>
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1299649.shtml>
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1299678.shtml>

¹⁷ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/fyrbt_673021/202310/t20231012_11160029.shtml

¹⁸ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/wjbzhd/202308/t20230807_11123381.shtml
<http://world.people.com.cn/n1/2023/0807/c1002-40052203.html>
http://www.news.cn/politics/leaders/2023-08/07/c_1129791516.htm

¹⁹ <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1299618.shtml#:~:text=Zhai%20said%20that%20the%20fundamental,support%20to%20the%20Palestinian%20people.>

²⁰ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt_665385/2649_665393/202303/t20230311_11039241.html

²¹ https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjbxw/202302/t20230203_11019281.html
<https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202302/1284771.shtml>
https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202303/t20230320_11045296.html

²² <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202310/1299678.shtml>
https://twitter.com/ChinaDailyWorld/status/1711574075632652738?s=20&utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

²³<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1qbfYF0VgDBJoFZN5elpZwNTiKZ4nvCUcs5a7oYwm52g/edit?pli=1#gid=0>

²⁴ <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/china-taiwan-weekly-update-august-31-2023>

<https://www.npr.org/2023/03/27/1166177955/honduras-establishes-ties-with-china-after-break-from-taiwan>