

# China's Brilliant Diplomacy to End Civil War

## | Dr. Joanna Lei

While the US is busy fighting illegal wars of aggression around the globe, Taiwan is quietly mending ties with China to avoid being "Ukrainized" by the lunatic warmongers in Washington. The recent meeting between Taiwan's opposition party leader, the KMT Chair Woman, Cheng Li-wun, and Xi Jinping. To put this into proper perspective, I speak with Dr. Joanna Lei, a Taiwanese businesswoman, media executive, and former KMT lawmaker. Links: Neutrality Studies substack: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com> (Opt in for Academic Section from your profile settings: <https://pascallottaz.substack.com/s/academic>) Merch: <https://neutralitystudies-shop.fourthwall.com> Donation: <https://neutralitystudies.com/donate> Timestamps: 00:00:00 Introduction 00:00:32 Xi and KMT breakthrough 00:07:42 Party channel and guardrails 00:13:34 Beijing's 10 measures 00:17:54 KMT platform and local elections 00:21:03 DPP reaction and US pressure 00:30:06 2027 fears and war risk 00:34:53 Peace models and pilot programs 00:47:02 Taiwan reaction and closing

### #Pascal

Welcome back, everybody, to Neutrality Studies. My name is Pascal Lottaz, and I'm joined today again by Dr. Joanna Lei, a Taiwanese businesswoman, media executive, and former lawmaker for the KMT party. Joanna, welcome back.

### #Joana Lei

Thank you, Pascal. Thank you for having me, and thank you for giving me an opportunity to talk to your audience.

### #Pascal

Yeah, and well, thank you for taking the time. It's quite late in the evening, but you're still doing this. And, you know, this is one of the moments when I'm actually happy to have such a discussion because we saw very good news last week. Let me just show it here for a second in my browser that, you know, the chairwoman of the Kuomintang, the KMT party of Taiwan, which is currently in the opposition but used to be the leading party of the island, of course. She met last week with Xi Jinping. So her name is Cheng Li-wen, if I got that right. And she is not the president of Taiwan, nothing. She is just the leader of the opposition party.

But she's, of course, the person who, if the KMT wins the elections in 2028, would stand to maybe become the next president of the Republic of China, which is the name of the government of Taiwan. So, to my knowledge, this is only the third time that a KMT leader has met with a leader of

the Communist Party of China — the first time having been during the war, actually, between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong, then the second time between Mr. Xi and the former leader of your party, Ma Ying-jeou, and now the third time with her out of power. Can you maybe talk to us about how this came about? It came to me as quite a big surprise — how to interpret this and how you see this as the direction of Taiwan and China going forward.

## **#Joana Lei**

Let me make a couple of small corrections. The Civil War was the thing that determined the cross-strait situation. Of course, you know very well that's 1949. After that, the first real meeting between the KMT leader and CCP leader was in 2005 between Lien Chan and Hu Jintao. So Hu Jintao met with Lien Chan in 2005. During that time, the KMT was also the opposition party, not the ruling party. So when Lien Chan went in 2005, it actually opened the door for direct party-to-party discussion, dialogue, and negotiation for the ensuing years of the Ma Ying-jeou era. The second major meeting was in 2016, right before Ma Ying-jeou left office.

And that was the second time between Ma Ying-jeou and Xi Jinping — that was in Singapore. That's president to president and not just party chairman to party chairman. The third time and fourth time are the other chairmen, for example, Hung Hsiu-chu, and so on and so forth. But the most important one following 2016 is certainly this one, this year. The other one is 2015, because our election is at the beginning of 2016. So this year, this time, is Cheng Li-wen winning her chairmanship of the KMT, running on the platform that we should have a renewed relationship between the KMT and Mainland China. In other words, when the DPP kept accusing the KMT of not being loyal to Taiwan, quote unquote, Cheng Li-wen didn't shy away from that issue.

Cheng Li-wen actually ran on the platform that we should regain our momentum with the discussion between the KMT and CCP. And she ran on that platform and won the chairmanship of the KMT. So it's very important that this time she regenerated core supporters around her before she even took office. But after she took office, she has managed to bring all the different factions together to have a strong coalition. She has asked for a visit to Mainland China and a visit to the United States. And in her many, many, many statements, she said, I should go to Mainland China first before I go to the United States. So now it seems that she will be in the United States in June. So you can see that a lot of things have happened since she took office. This is the first major meeting since Lien Chan's 2005 meeting.

And the coincidence is that both times, the KMT was not the ruling party. It was the opposition party, but with significant seats, quite a strong showing in the Legislative Yuan. So after the 2005 meeting, when I was part of the delegation and I was also at the time serving in the Legislative Yuan, we were able to open up direct flights and visitor visas from Mainland China to Taiwan. So even before Ma Ying-jeou took office in 2008, we were able to formally open communication and

free travel between people on the two sides of the Strait. And that, I think, is something worth noting because some people are saying, oh, you know, she's just the opposition leader, she's not the president, she can't do much. But we weren't the ruling party at that time.

We were able to open direct flights by changing something we had in terms of the Cross-Strait Relations Act. And we actually changed how the airplanes could be approved to go across the Taiwan Strait with direct flights, not going through a third area such as Hong Kong or Japan. And that's really, really significant because it was the same situation — Taiwan was not in a good economic situation. So with the direct flights and visitor visas, lots of people came to Taiwan. At the height, over 10 million people traveled across the Taiwan Strait — over 4 million from mainland China to Taiwan, travelers and tourists, and over 5 million from Taiwan to mainland China. So you can see that was the spring of cross-strait relations.

Now we are also in a similar situation. While TSMC is doing really, really well, our stock market is soaring, but everyday people who are not in the tech sector, not in the AI world, are suffering because we don't have a lot of business locally. With Zheng Liwen going to mainland China and mainland China announcing 10 different measures to help the local economy right after her return from Beijing, it's yet again showing very strong support from mainland China to the local Taiwanese, just as in 2005. So it's really, really significant. And we are very happy that a new channel of communication is established, some kind of guardrail is being put in place so that we're not always traveling down the war and confrontation route.

## **#Pascal**

Hey, very brief intermission because I was recently banned from YouTube. And although I'm back, this can happen anytime again. So please consider subscribing not only here, but to my mailing list on Substack. That's [pascallottaz.substack.com](https://pascallottaz.substack.com). The link's going to be in the description below. And now, back to the video. Yeah, I mean, the KMT is basically running a second diplomatic channel with the mainland, aren't they? That is separate from what the DPP government is doing. And we've seen that before. I mean, Ma Ying-jeou, although he's out of office, he was traveling also to the mainland over the last couple of years. He was mainly then meeting local provincial government officials and so on, especially right across the strait.

But is this... how should we interpret this? Is this a form of, well, again, second-channel diplomacy? And, you know, it is very surprising to me that she managed to meet Xi Jinping. I mean, he's the president of China, and he said yes to a meeting with her — the chairwoman of the opposition party, I mean, nobody who's in power. So this is also like he's exposing himself quite a bit, also showing that China obviously has a, let's say, a preferred party that it would like to work with. What do you think this tells us about the Chinese side, the mainland China side, of how they are now approaching Taiwan?

## **#Joana Lei**

Well, I think it's really, really clear that since 2016, all the agreements signed between the Ma Ying-jeou administration and mainland China — the 23 agreements — almost all ceased to operate or have gone into hiatus. So with the really cold shoulders across the Taiwan Strait and almost no communication between the official channels of communication, it is now in a very dangerous situation because we are now in the Western narrative that Taiwan is really dangerous. And you probably remember on the front page, they said it's the most dangerous place in the world. And they kept saying that before 2027, mainland China will take Taiwan militarily. And they also said we should arm ourselves like a porcupine or we'll have the Taiwan Strait on fire, meaning that you will have a lot of mines and it will be a sea of fire.

So all of this is the backdrop of why this happened and why it is so important. Because during 2005, it was the first time the DPP took the office of the presidency. And that was also the time that Chen Shui-bian started taking away from our old guardrails and started really promoting Taiwan independence. So it is also at that kind of really critical juncture, Lien Chan took us to mainland China when we established not a back channel — it's a formal party-to-party forum. Two different fora were agreed on. One was executed. So if you use the traditional sense, we had in the past the third rail, which is think tank academics. And we had the second rail, which is the government-designated areas and staff, which are the foundations across the Taiwan Strait. And that's the second rail. At the time when Lien Chan went in 2005, we established a 2.5 rail — that is, party to party.

And that gradually eased into, during the Ma Ying-jeou era, the first rail — that is, government, administration, agency to agency. So we have gone through a progression from a third rail, civilian societies, to the second rail, which is government-designated foundations, to the 2.5 — that's party to party — and then gradually became the first rail, the first track of direct negotiation. So it is important to remember that history because the direct negotiation resulted in 23 agreements, including the most important economic framework agreement. Everybody terms it as ECFA. You probably remember, ECFA is the most important framework agreement across the Taiwan Strait. It gave Taiwanese businessmen a lot of opportunities in mainland China.

So this is the time when you have no third rail, because the DPP doesn't now give entry visas to mainland Chinese scholars. And in fact, and I say it responsibly, they do not encourage people who teach in major universities to even visit mainland China for think tanks or forums. So the third rail is pretty dead. And the second rail, ARATS and SEF, the two foundations, are in no communication. So we, of course, the first rail, government to government, is non-existent. So we're in a very dangerous situation when the world doesn't think that we're going to go into war, but the old communication channels and old dialogue, old goodwill, are all diminishing.

So Zheng Liwen's visit this time, I think, is just as important as the 2005 one, maybe even slightly more significant than Ma Ying-jeou's recent travels to mainland China to reopen the visits of young students and people exchanges. Zheng Liwen went on a party-to-party request, and she was

received with great importance by Xi Jinping as a party leader. And the way she conducted herself and the way Xi Jinping treated her gave her a special position to speak to the people in Taiwan, because people would say, you know, you're just the opposition, you have no mandate. But when she came back, she came back with the promise that she's bringing back a potential, a window for peace. And that is really, really important.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, that's a very big one, actually. I mean, the sheer goodwill that both sides here showed. And I wasn't aware of that. But of course, this is a great opportunity that the KMT can have a direct link to the CPC. So it's party to party, not country to country. Now, you said that China, actually the mainland, gave 10 framework agreements, basically. So since this is party to party, this has nothing to do with the government of the ROC of Taiwan, right? So are these just unilateral—are these 10 unilateral acts that mainland China just says, like, fine, here you have it, you can take this from now on from us, we don't ask for anything in return from your government, right?

## **#Joana Lei**

Yeah, they gave 10 measures. They're all fantastic measures. Like, for example, the first one is to resume the direct flight routes. Because you probably remember during COVID, a lot of the routes were not operational anymore. So if I wanted to go to some of the cities, it would be very difficult. I had to go to Shanghai and then take high-speed rail and da, da, da, da. So the first one was to have governments across the Taiwan Strait talk about resuming the direct flight routes. And there is another one that is to allow visitors from Shanghai and Fujian Province to come to Taiwan. I'll just take these two, for example. These will take a lot of government measures, right? You need to give them entry visas. You need to approve the flight routes and so on and so forth. When the DPP talked to the people, they kept saying that mainland China is just using this sugar-coated bait for us.

But on the other hand, we still have about 5 million people, 4 million plus people from Taiwan going to China every year. So people are experiencing hardship, difficulties in getting to the cities they want to go to. So these two measures, just for instance, were announced by mainland China, and then they officially submitted a request to their counterpart in Taiwan, the government, the DPP-run government, to say, will you accept, will you take these offers and work with us on how we resume the direct flight routes, how we facilitate visitors from Shanghai and Fujian Province to Taiwan. So this is how they do it. They make an announcement saying, on a goodwill basis, we'd like to do this. And then they send an official request to the current DPP government to say, hey, would you like to take these as our proposal and see how we can work together?

## **#Pascal**

Do we have any information yet on whether the DPP government is actually taking up China on these offers?

## **#Joana Lei**

DPP is still thinking this is sugar-coated poison. So they have been warning people using different channels of communication, such as their social media KOLs or their legislators at this time.

## **#Pascal**

Okay, and then the other eight measures, is there something else that you think is really noteworthy and is going to make life for people on the island and the mainland better?

## **#Joana Lei**

Almost everything will benefit Taiwan tremendously. For example, they will reopen the agricultural and aquaculture markets to China. And then, for example, they also mentioned Kinmen, which is a little island outside of Xiamen that has served for a while. They say, well, we can talk about the direct linkage in terms of supplying water, electricity, and even potentially a bridge connecting the two. So they have sent a lot of really great proposals, working, of course, under the assumption that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are going to move towards each other and not toward a Taiwan separatist movement. So these are the two foundations that Cheng Li-wen has reiterated. That is, the 1992 Consensus, one China, and then the KMT has a strong position against Taiwan independence. These two are the political foundations of all these ten measures.

## **#Pascal**

Can we go there, please? So the thing that the KMT committed to is basically to say the 1992 Consensus stance. We are behind the one China framework, and Taiwan is part of that, but we are not going to define who is the actual government. And the other thing then being, what did you say was the other thing?

## **#Joana Lei**

Against the Taiwan independence movement.

## **#Pascal**

Against the independence movement. So they will not—the KMT will stand against the independence movement, and the KMT is committing to basically running on those two principles for their 2028 election campaign.

## **#Joana Lei**

And the one that's coming up is 2026. So you do have some little turmoil because some of the candidates running in the 2026 local elections feel that they do not want to run their campaign on the basis of a very highly politically sensitive platform. They would rather talk about, you know, how you can improve the local economy, give people better chances, good education, milk for school children. I mean, those are the local election issues.

## **#Pascal**

This year is going to be local elections. So it's not—I mean, these are mayors and governors, etc., right, who are up for re-election. So they want to talk about local issues, but the KMT now kind of pins everybody onto that agenda, doesn't it?

## **#Joana Lei**

Correct. The local election is November 28th. So some of the local candidates are getting a little frigid in terms of this overall party platform, because, of course, you run on a party platform, you run on issues, and then you run on candidates. These are the three layers of a campaign. And they felt that if you make it very ideologically contested, then the DPP will have a chance to mobilize their strong supporters. The strong green supporters tend to be easily mobilized by these kinds of ideological issues. So they do not want to run on this. However, if you look at the past local mayoral and governor elections, you can see that the KMT actually won in most of these elections, year after year.

And also, they continue to hold a very strong percentage. For example, in the most recent 2022 election, the KMT, the Pan-Blue camp, won 14 elections. If you add the White, that's 15. And the DPP only won five. So there is a huge, huge difference between the DPP and the KMT's strength in the local elections. But those constituencies, for example, Kaohsiung and the other places, the five that the DPP won, candidates in those five constituencies felt that they would lose, or at least lose some of their opportunities or their edge, if a heavily contested ideological campaign was waged.

## **#Pascal**

Okay, so there's still a tightrope to tread here for this year and also all the way until 2028. But have you heard from your colleagues in the DPP? Because on the one hand, yes, KMT and DPP often present each other as polar opposites. But having visited Taiwan several times, especially meeting lawmakers, I mean, they eat together, they drink together. It's not as poisoned as the political scene might look. And I know from my own Taiwanese friends who are very close to the DPP that they would not support what the KMT does, but behind the scenes they will say, look, it's kind of good that they're fostering a good relationship with the mainland because it kind of balances things out. So have you heard from DPP colleagues how they are portraying this and if there are some positive views also about the KMT approach toward the mainland?

## **#Joana Lei**

Well, the positive view will be silent. The ones you hear, the most vocal ones, would be the ideological confrontation ones, because we are now debating the military procurement from the United States. So if we were to buy \$400 billion of U.S. weapons, then of course it is based on a huge threat from mainland China. If you open up direct dialogue and have opportunities to talk to each other, then how can you continue to portray that, hey, we're in dire danger and we really have to spend or commit this amount of money, even without knowing specifically what the United States will sell us? So while they are contesting the Military Procurement Act, they are not talking about the positive side. Even the ones who believe that more communication, greater dialogue is good for cross-strait stability will not be vocalizing it at this point.

## **#Pascal**

But isn't the DPP, like, slowly but steadily getting very, very suspicious of the United States? I mean, first of all, the U.S. kind of forced Taiwan to give up TSMC, right? And to basically have a plant in Japan and have plants in the United States — you know, that doesn't really bode very well. On the other hand, the Iran war — doesn't that thing just show that the United States is willing to throw any and every ally under the bus and has no ability to defend them? I mean, we are now in month number two of that war. How did that impact kind of the strategic calculus of the people around you? Doesn't it come as kind of a shock to Taiwan that the U.S. is not able to defend the Gulf states?

## **#Joana Lei**

Well, I think Lai Ching-te is not willing to admit it. So there is no way out. The DPP is deeply committed to the narrative that if we were in any kind of danger, the United States will come and defend us. All we have to do is increase our military spending and give ourselves an appearance of a greater alliance with the United States, when in fact there is no military alliance with the United States. And with Takayoshi on your side, certainly that's another narrative that the DPP is not selling to the people in Taiwan. That is, not only will the United States come to our aid, they will also come to our aid through Japan. So if you recall, the most important thing since last year is whether Japan will be a part of the potential confrontation across the Taiwan Strait.

So this is the new DPP narrative, and I think they feel that they have no way out. What you said was exactly true. TSMC was forced to go to the United States, including making a huge commitment in dollar amount to invest in the United States. And our dollar commitment is higher than Japan's. Taiwan is now forced to not only take intestines of pigs but also even potatoes, which could be potentially dangerous for the health of the people. Now they are forcing us to accept those potatoes that have sprouted during the time of shipment. And the DPP is coming out to tell us that, hey, if we

just chop off the side with the little sprouts, it's still edible. You can imagine how incredibly difficult it is that people are now saying, why are we budging and why are we accepting, acquiescing to every single request by the United States?

## **#Pascal**

Was that a concession you had to make in order not to be tarified by the United States?

## **#Joana Lei**

Yeah, it is still being discussed, and they keep adding new terms, new conditions. And the potato issue is the most recent one that happened just last week.

## **#Pascal**

It's pretty insane at the moment, but the DPP government and so on are still actually saying, no, no, this is good for us. Like rotten potatoes are good for us. Taking away our semiconductor manufacturing is good for us. And making us into a future Ukraine for the United States to wage its proxy war with China is good for us. The best thing of all is we will go down with Japan. It's...

## **#Joana Lei**

Is that the narrative? We'll go closer to Japan with all these measures. That is exactly why your first question was poignant. That is, when the DPP refused to even budge or revise its positions in any of these really incredible measures, you need to have another channel. You need to have a back channel. You need to have direct communication outside of the DPP government. Otherwise, we're just having our fate in the hands of all these others who are not real stakeholders. Iran, for example — the US is fighting a distant war. For them, there's no pain, no blood, no bombshells, no destroyed cities, because they are fighting from afar. And for the United States and Japan right now, the potential confrontation is very far from them. If something were to happen, they would not be the ones to take the consequences.

## **#Pascal**

And again, maybe just to ask you about Iran, how is the Iran war being portrayed in Taiwan at the moment in mass media and so on, like what you see? How are people perceiving this? Because in Japan, I can see a very, very strong—not ambivalence—but like much, much less ideological tint than what we see in Europe or in the United States, for instance. I mean, the Japanese media portrays what's happening, and then they leave it at that, and they actually even try to explain the history and so on of the conflict—something that we don't usually see in the West. How is it in Taiwan?

## **#Joana Lei**

Well, this is something that I would give Taiwan media credit for, because since the war broke out, most of the Taiwan media would portray it as an aggression toward Iran by the United States and Israel. They do go play by play, act by act, in terms of what happens, so people may know better about what's happening to Iran. Of course, most of the media still have an ideological tint. They continue—sometimes, some of them continue—to portray Iran as the evil empire, and they continue to buy the Israeli narrative that since October 7th, Israel is in danger and needs to defend itself. So even the actions in southern Lebanon and the incredible destruction toward Iran were being put in a self-defense kind of mode. So the Taiwanese media do portray a lot of the actions of the war.

They do take—sometimes they took—the Israeli side, but some others do take the Iranian side because Iranians didn't ask for the war. It is a war of choice. I think the U.S. media is increasingly clear that there is no imminent danger for the United States to participate in this—not in Article 2 of the U.N. Charter, not in Article 51 of the U.N. Charter. And even the current issue of the home restraint, it doesn't fall into any of the rules or regulations that we understand, even from the UNCLOS. So currently, the discussion in Taiwan is more balanced, but it's still distant. Nobody is talking about when the U.S. decided to do things unilaterally like this, what it presents to the rest of the world. And that part was not really criticized or analyzed.

## **#Pascal**

Right. Okay. So it just adds again, probably to the suspicions that we ought to have about the intentions of the United States when it comes to warfare. And, you know, sadly enough, people in Washington have been talking about a third war for the longest time. And the expectation is, of course, that it will be in Taiwan and over Taiwan with China. And this deadline, this completely artificial deadline of 2027 that has been talked about—how is that one going down currently? I mean, in your environment, in the security circles and so on? Is there, from your view, any kind of danger emanating from China toward the island for the next year?

## **#Joana Lei**

Well, that is exactly why Zhang Liwen needs to go at this time. That is exactly why we need to have guardrails. We need to have back channels. We need to have channels of communication because the Western narrative and the playbook are putting us in a really dangerous war zone in 2027. And now it's 2026. We cannot treat this as, you know, business as usual. We need to do everything we can. And the government is trying to tell us that they are doing everything they can to increase the resilience of Taiwan. But you know, Taiwan is an extremely small island. We have 23 million people, but the land area is very, very small. Our infrastructure is also quite fragile. Just talk about energy, LNGs, and all these other related issues.

We are very vulnerable if there are huge warfare issues from China to Taiwan. But the government is trying to tell the people we're building resilience and we need to build the all-people defense. People need to come to the forefront to defend our islands and so on and so forth. So while there is a narrative going on saying Taiwan needs to prepare itself for warfare, we have not received any signal from mainland China that they would voluntarily overtake Taiwan using military force. Just like when Israel accused Iran of trying to destroy Israel, there was no real evidence that Iran was planning to destroy Israel unless or until Israel decided to destroy Iran, right?

So in Taiwan, we have no real evidence or intelligence that China wants to take us militarily, but the government seems to be pushing everyone in that direction. And we need to be very, very mindful that if there were a real declaration of Taiwan independence, or direct foreign intervention into the cross-strait situation, then that would fall under the anti-secession law's conditions for using military force against Taiwan. So we really, really need to be extremely careful, not only in terms of the measures but also in the messaging. You know, what are we sending to mainland China as a message? Is Taiwan trying to preserve peace, or are we trying to provoke war? And that's very critical.

## **#Pascal**

Yeah, no, absolutely. And, you know, it must just be repeated that even now, even after six, seven weeks of war, Iran is not demanding the destruction of Israel as one of the war goals. It doesn't demand the dismantlement of Israel. It doesn't recognize it. It calls it the Zionist entity, but it does not demand that it be dissolved and Palestine be created or whatnot. That's not part of the demands. Just as for China, part of the demand is not that Taiwan be absorbed and everything. The demand actually is that there's some form of reunification, right? And what reunification means, that's what's up for debate.

So my question then is, do we have a new concept or something that's in the room now after this visit? Because for the longest time, China kept saying to Taiwan, one country, two systems. And then Taiwan kept saying, look at Hong Kong, that didn't work out very well, so no thank you, maybe not that one. But Taiwan has been kind of playing difficult with this 1992 consensus, not truly committing to it, but never really abandoning it or saying no to it. Do we have a new framework around that could kind of square the circle? Because at the end of the day, in my view, what the mainland wants is just a political integration that allows for the future of the Chinese state to be prosperous.

## **#Joana Lei**

So if we wanted to avoid traveling down the path of war, we must have an alternative on the path to peace. So if you look at the current sort of linguistics, mainland China doesn't use terms like military unification or peaceful unification lightly. But on the other hand, the DPP is now currently using

maintenance of the status quo as a way to say we want to be separate from China permanently, where in fact the original concept of maintenance of the status quo, at least in the public opinion poll from the 1980s to 90s, was that we maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. And that was the status quo, right? Right now, the DPP is transforming the meaning of maintenance of the status quo to mean that we will stay separate forever as the status quo.

But if you look at the history, across the Taiwan Strait is an unfinished civil war. 1949 was the civil war, and we started having a really hot war in Jinmen. Some 400,000 bombs dropped on that tiny little island. But for the longest time, since 1958, we have not had direct military confrontation. So it is a very unique situation of prolonged non-confrontation for a very long period of time without a resolution of the civil war. So nowadays I've been using a term called political non-finality, meaning that both sides claim that there will be a final state of unification. That's according to both of our constitutions. But right now, we are in the period of non-finality. It's not there yet.

So we can explore actually different opportunities and different models. Right now in Taiwan, in the political arena, when people talk about one country, two systems, they say, okay, it's the Hong Kong model. But Hong Kong is entirely different. Hong Kong was a colony, ceded to England and returned to China. So that's an entirely different situation. It is a colony returning back to China. So the China model doesn't necessarily define what the Taiwan model will be. The Taiwan model can be entirely different from Hong Kong. And if you look at the most recent Hainan Freeport, which is another one country, two systems example, Hainan Freeport has a lot of the systems and structures being written, codified into law.

So it has its unique laws defining how that Freeport will operate with the outside world. So now we at least have three different models of one country, two systems, not to speak about the internal autonomous regions of the minority Chinese. So without talking about the minority Chinese within China, even Hong Kong, Macau, and Hainan are all one country, two systems examples. So Taiwan can actually draw from all these one-country, two-systems models with various degrees and try to experiment. At least if you don't want to do a real sandbox, we can do AI, we can do modeling, we can try to see how this one-country, two-systems model could be designed and applied to Taiwan.

I think we need to really give peaceful resolution a chance. And to do that, we actually need to have models and at least pathways to say, OK, maybe we can try this. And if that doesn't work, we're in the sandbox area. We can always roll it back and redo something. And if after we've exhausted everything and nothing works, then there will be a forced unification. But before that point, the forced unification would definitely involve military action, and that would involve casualties and collateral damage. So until that point, we can actually try other models, other pathways to see if there are opportunities for peace.

**#Pascal**

And they're being used. They're being tried out at the moment, right? I keep thinking, you know, you don't necessarily need something that both sides can say yes to, just something that both sides wouldn't say no to, right? Something that both cannot reject. And then you have a framework that can potentially work. So what we saw now is that a party-to-party framework can yield results in terms of negotiations, discussions, and in terms of real political impact, right? So, yeah, is there anything there?

## **#Joana Lei**

For instance, in Jinmen, which is that little island, when Jinmen first proposed to have a direct link, they called it the Small Three Links, meaning that people could travel from Jinmen to Xiamen using the ferry boats. That was before we could go directly from Songshan Jichang to Shanghai Airport. They did an experimental small link project. That's what they called a small link as a pilot program. In that pilot program, you needed to resolve all the administrative hurdles. You needed to make sure that people recognized each other's travel documents. You needed to have all kinds of agreements applied to a local area. So when Jinmen did that, that was the first breakthrough.

And then later on, when Jinmen had a serious issue with drought, because it's an offshore island in the middle of the ocean, it had a pipeline from mainland China to Jinmen, providing water to Jinmen. That's another direct link. It's a direct water supply. Those are things that can be tested out in a pilot program in a small area. And once we finish testing these out, and without any quote-unquote national security danger, then you can roll it out, expanding it to a broader area for application. So I think it is important for us to start all these discussions and pilot programs, even though the current DPP will not do that.

When Jinmen did the first ferry boat travel, that was during the time of the DPP government, and they didn't like it, but they still allowed it to happen. Right now, Lai Ching-te doesn't like it, and he wouldn't allow this to happen. And I certainly hope with the ten measures mainland China announced, that they would like to benefit the Taiwanese, their government will feel that if you look at the welfare of the people, perhaps they can open up a little bit, try a little bit. If you don't try, then we will go down the path of war. And that's what the DPP is selling to the people in Taiwan. That couldn't possibly be good.

## **#Pascal**

No, it can't. And, you know, I visited Kinmen in 2019, and I remember how people were talking about the water pipeline and that it is important and significant. And, you know, it's only three miles or five kilometers from Xiamen. You can literally see the Chinese mainland from there. And the point is, the Chinese mainland leaves Kinmen alone. It recognizes that, okay, fine, this is part of where we stop. This is how we deal with each other.

And isn't it, in the context of China, mainland China, isn't it also a benefit that, you know, there is a possibility to deal with local governments, that Kinmen can try to deal with Xiamen without dealing with Beijing? Because I noticed about China that also within China, the provinces and the local capitals are actually quite proud of themselves. I mean, Shanghai people look down on everybody else in the mainland, right? And there's like this kind of... this way in which the local capitals are also quite proud of their autonomy and what they can do. So is this also a way forward, like city-to-city or province-to-province kind of links?

## **#Joana Lei**

Yeah, this is by design. Because both Kinmen and Mazu—Mazu is directly opposite Fuzhou, also outside of Fujian province—it is by design because you don't want to say the ROC is at the same level as the PRC. But if you don't recognize the ROC as being unique, then mainland China doesn't negotiate with their local governments. So why are you negotiating with people in Taiwan? So they always downgrade that to local governments—local government to local government, Shanghai to Taipei, Fujian province to Kinmen or Xiamen—so that you avoid all the complicated claims of sovereignty, which is the nation, the sovereignty, the constitution are still no-no in mainland China.

And I think that's a really important hurdle for mainland Chinese to negotiate with Taiwan, because they refused to recognize Taiwan for a long, long, long time, refused to recognize the existence of the ROC. So a lot of people in China actually believe that the Republic of China died in 1949 when the PRC was established. It's good and well if you're talking about that internally. But now, if you want to look at an eventual resolution of the cross-strait situation, you need to have counterparties coming to the table. And just like I said, Beijing will not negotiate with Guangdong, will not negotiate with Henan. It will negotiate with Taiwan, because you need to recognize that we have two different jurisdictions and different administrations. So in some way, mainland China has to recognize Taiwan and the Republic of China's government in order to make this an internal issue for resolution. It's an internal resolution for a civil war—an unfinished resolution.

## **#Pascal**

That's why I was wondering, you know, about Xi Jinping being willing to meet your chairwoman. Of course, if it's party to party, that's a different framework. But it's interesting because it is kind of a big concession, isn't it? It's again this concession that, fine, fine, I'm going to recognize that you are important. You're important to me, and you have a right to stand here with me and shake hands. So isn't this kind of a big thing for the mainland, isn't it?

## **#Joana Lei**

I think he's very artful in sending this message. You know, Chu Li-lun's posture and the way she's treated is different from any other local, quote-unquote. So if they say, okay, there's only one China, Taiwan is part of China, end of story, then Chu Li-lun wouldn't be treated this way. Chu Li-lun is

treated this way because there is a recognition that we have an unresolved civil war. And if everything can be put back into that context, then there is no room for international intervention. It is up to the leaders of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait to resolve an unfinished business, to finish the non-finality stage. So I think Xi Jinping is also very, very artful in sending this really, really subtle message that I'm recognizing you as a potential counterpart to our future. And our future is a collective future for the greater Chinese nation.

## **#Pascal**

Very last question. The feedback that you've heard so far from people around you in the KMT and outside the KMT—was it positive, was it negative, was it mixed inside Taiwan about this visit? Was it overall a success?

## **#Joana Lei**

Well, I think it's a lot more positive than before she went. Before she went, there was a lot of finger-pointing, saying, OK, you're going out there to kowtow to Xi Jinping and you're selling out Taiwan, and there's nothing good that could come out of it. So there were a lot of accusations. But after she returned, and specifically after China also announced those 10 measures, there are a lot of sober minds thinking about, you know, maybe we have a different way of resolving our differences. Maybe we do not have to travel down the path of war. Maybe war can be avoided. Maybe we shouldn't buy all this military procurement, which is a no-no at this point, because they sent a lot of lobbyists to Taiwan to actually force a quick decision on Taiwan committing to a huge arms procurement from the United States. So we are still in the jaws of war, while Chu Li-lun is trying to swim as fast as possible to a potential path of peace.

## **#Pascal**

Path of peace and bridges of peace are what we need, not more implements of war. These are very encouraging signals. Let's hope that they continue. We will certainly talk about this again. Joanna, people want to follow you. Is there a place where you publish sometimes, where people can look you up?

## **#Joana Lei**

I have someone doing a YouTube channel using my name. I have no idea who does it, but it's mostly really my statements on TV and so on and so forth. YouTube has a Dr. Joanna Lei channel.

## **#Pascal**

So you don't oppose that one, actually. You encourage people?

## **#Joana Lei**

I have no idea who's doing that, but I check the content. It's pretty much me. It's not AI, it's not fake news.

## **#Pascal**

All right. Then you can follow that, Joanna Lei. Otherwise, we will have the real deal, the real Joanna Lei, on this show again soon. Joanna, thank you for your time today.

## **#Joana Lei**

Thank you, Pascal. And thank you to all the people who care about Taiwan.