

## Forging Cross–Straits Forum 2.0

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Before Lee Shu-chuan, the former Secretary-General of Kuomintang (KMT), left office, he had submitted to Hung Hsiu-chu, Chairperson of the Party, a report on reform of party affairs – a summary of his visits to 21 cities and counties of Taiwan since the loss of election in January, claiming that in order to change KMT's pro-CPC image the Cross-Straits Forum should be canceled and replaced by some specific consultation on cross-strait issues. This argument has caused great controversy both inside and outside the party. We should keep a close eye on such changes so as to adjust related policies in time and appropriately respond to the shift of social climate in Taiwan. Basically we think that the Cross-Straits Forum (short for Cross-Straits Economic, Trade and Culture Forum) has accomplished its periodic task and should be upgraded into version 2.0 with adjusted contents and direction.

### ***I. Historical Course of Cross-Straits Forum (Version 1.0)***

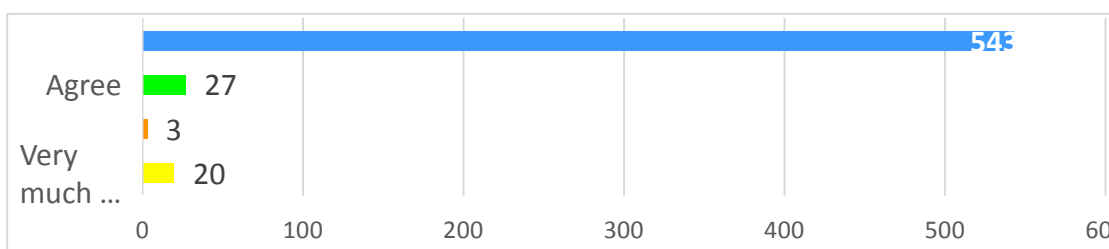
The Cross-Straits Forum at its initial stage, serving as a platform for contacts between the two sides, achieved quite a few fruitful results. In 2005 when Lien Chan, president of KMT then, had a historical meeting with Hu Jintao, president of CPC, the two leaders reached an agreement which was called Shared Visions for Cross-Straits Peaceful Development (or Five Shared Visions in short), among which one vision was to establish a KMT-CPC platform. In April 2006 the First Cross-Straits Forum (the official name is Forum for Economy, Trade and Culture of Cross-Straits) was held in Beijing, during which the two sides proposed policy recommendations on promoting exchange and cooperation in fields such as economy and commerce, direct flight and agriculture through co-advice. During Chen Shui-bian's presidency a series of policy recommendation was proposed in each year's forum. In 2008 when Ma Ying-jeou took office, with the pressure from Ma Lien Chan had to give out his predominance in the forum. After Ma was reelected in 2012, the mainland side began to shift focus on the political issues, urging the two sides to engage in political negotiation. In 2014 the Tenth Cross-Straits Forum was adjourned until May 2015. Eric Li-luan Chu led the delegation to attend the forum in 2015, but issues on the meeting did not cause much attention in the public. Both sides needed to reexamine the actual effect, content and form of the forum from then on.

*The Cross-Straits Forum was set to serve as a platform for cross-strait communication. The social changes in Taiwan should be concerned when building communication platforms between the two sides. We should upgrade the current forum and transform it into a problem-solving oriented one with new direction.*

## II. Necessity of Cross-Straits Forum

The Cross-Straits Forum at its establishment was to serve as a bridge for cross-strait communication, but as Tsai Ing-wen, the newly elected president, is going to take office, the DPP-led government would not tend to state clear of its stance on “1992 Consensus” and “One China, Respective Interpretations”. Therefore it is necessary to strengthen the contact between cross-strait parties through the forum. This opinion wins support from Chen Shei-Saint. He thinks that the future of cross-strait relations would stay in vague after May 20. If the relations worsened, the Cross-Straits Forum would be helpful to the development of cross-strait ties. Alex Tsai even says, “If KMT were to discard the Cross-Straits Forum between itself and CPC, DPP would be eager to set up a new one with the mainland. The situation is just the same as that of the Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement and the Cross-Strait Agreement Supervisory Act. When KMT supported the trade service agreement, DPP criticized it as a pro-CPC measure, but after KMT steps down, it will take up the agreement without hesitation. The same is with the supervisory act.” The poll conducted online by CTnews from April 4, 2016 to April 5, 2016 showed that 90% of the voters disagree to abolish the forum (see Chart one). After the former chairman of KMT Eric Li-luan Chu’s advocate for transformation of the forum and the former deputy chairman Hau Lung-bin’s proposition on keeping the forum going, Lin Te-fu – the party whip of KMT in Taiwan’s Legislative Yuan – also stated that the Cross-Straits Forum must be maintained if the scale of the meeting were to be reduced. Except the Secretary-General Lee Shu-chuan, other officials of KMT agreed on maintaining the forum. Hence, the newly appointed Chairperson Hung Hsiu-chu finally made it clearly that it is necessary to maintain the Cross-Straits Forum between the KMT and the CPC, but for the future direction of the forum, both sides can make adjustment. In general retaining the forum is necessary, for it fits with the mainstream expectations from people of Taiwan.

*Chart one online voting results on Alex Tsai’s “not to abolish the Cross-Straits Forum”, April 4, 2016-April 5, 2016, CTnews*



### ***III. Cross-Straits Forum 2.0, a More Practical One***

The Cross-Straits Forum was set to serve as a platform for cross-strait communication with the core pursuit of striving for the interests of Taiwan. However, as the pro-CPC image of KMT has stirred up the sentiment from the people and numerous cross-strait platforms sprouted during the presidency of Ma Ying-jeou, which has made the Cross-Straits Forum nothing but a nominal meeting, voices of discarding the forum thus come up inside KMT. Therefore, we should pay attention to the social changes in Taiwan when building communication platforms between the two sides. We should upgrade the current forum and transform it into a problem-solving oriented one with new direction. Firstly the focus of issues should be shifted onto those youth-related and grassroots-related ones. It is important to release the dividend for people of Taiwan to share through tackling the current problems and to deepen Taiwan's reliance on mainland's economy. Secondly it is necessary to reduce the forum size and shift onto civil issues. As KMT will be out of power in the near future, the forum can be changed into serving for civil communication and exchange with a smaller scale. Thirdly the forum can be combined with some new mechanisms or institutes, such as the Taiwanese Business Service Center proposed by KMT, so as to serve Taiwanese business circle in mainland better.

*Translator/ Wen Jieling*