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The Case of the KMT-CCP Forum**

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The Transnationalization of Cross-Strait Relations: The Case of the KMT-CCP Forum

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ABSTRACT: The recent rapprochement between China and Taiwan cannot be understood if our conceptual apparatus is unable to cope with the distinctive new quality of Cross-Strait relations. A critical framework provides a transnational account of Cross-Strait dynamics. It is argued that a transnationalization of authority has taken place under conditions of mutual political denial between China and Taiwan, favoring the emergence of a transnational political form. This facilitated the subsequent construction of a hegemonic project against Taiwan independence. A case study of the KMT-CCP Forum sheds light on its strategies, mechanisms, practices and instruments to assess its structural power within the transnational field of Cross-Strait relations. While this mode of governance has broadened the KMT's strategic options, it stands in contradiction to Taiwanese democracy.

KEYWORDS: Cross-Strait relations; Cross-Strait integration; KMT-CCP Forum; Transnational; Gramsci; Critical theory;

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Work in Progress! Comments are welcome!

1. Introduction: The 'New' Cross-Strait relations and processes of Transnationalization

The past decade has seen tremendous change in social and economic relations between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and Taiwan (ROC). Even more puzzling is the reversal of the political interactions across the Strait: a relation that until recently has been characterized by a state of "political alienation cum economic integration" (Wu 2000: 407) has produced a series of substantial agreements in a variety of sectors. Moreover, this transformation has materialized with a swiftness, which only a few years ago seemed not only unlikely, but also implausible. While the state of affairs is still far from a situation of 'normal' day-to-day politics between governments, a feasible and productive working relationship has developed between both sides that has reached a remarkable momentum on its own. The most striking element of this development, however, is the *form* these inter-actions have taken: rather than eroding the condition of political non-recognition, both sides have devised an array of channels and practices that circumvent the persisting ideological obstacles that have complicated Cross-Strait relations ever since the end of the Chinese Civil War in 1949. What at first glance seems like a potpourri of improvised, scattered and sporadic encounters, has developed into a more orchestrated and authoritative network that not only has emerged in close relation with civil society exchanges across the Strait, but also mirrors some of their characteristics and practices. The fact that the recent political cooperation across the Strait rests on the shoulders of party-to-party contacts, academic connections and business resources rather than more conventional formal and institutionalized intergovernmental channels has manifold consequences. How can we describe and explain this specific political form, and how can we assess the particular consequences that follow from this transnational quality?

Cross-Strait integration and the shortcomings of policy-centered perspectives

In the scholarly assessment of the recent dynamic, two common features stand out. First, the debate has privileged the quasi-official channel that exists between the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF; 海峽交流基金會, *haixia jiaoliu jijin hui*) on the Taiwanese side and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS; 海峽兩岸關係協會, *haixia liang'an guanxi xiehui*) on the Chinese side (e.g., Chen 2011). This is due not only to the substantive output, including the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), that has seemingly resulted from this channel since 2008, but also to both sides continuing to *insist* that it actually *is* the most substantive and only (semi-)official one. Second, the turning point for Cross-Strait relations is typically set in the year 2008, with

Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) victory in the presidential elections lending itself to a seemingly natural watershed event (e.g., Schucher 2008, Hughes 2009, Hu 2010).¹

However, both assumptions are misleading and may potentially distort our insights or even lead to the oversight of underlying correlations. The focus on the SEF-ARATS channel is understandable, given the conventional conceptions of international politics that see states and their agencies as the defining driving force of cross-border relations. But such an atomistic perspective that detaches and isolates these interactions from their social environment is not justifiable, as it ultimately overlooks their grounding in more profound social processes. This uprooting makes the SEF-ARATS summits appear as a self-sufficient channel, rather than being analyzed against the background of their environment. A more inclusive and socially grounded approach results in a comprehension of Cross-Strait relations that is more than a simple aggregation of the different channels, and ultimately provides a clearer understanding of how they work in conjunction. Furthermore, the emphasis on SEF-ARATS relations comes with a judgment that is unwarranted by empirical evidence, namely that those channels that claim to be the most official one actually are. Concentrating the empirical work on the (semi-)official relations means to accept the agents' assertion that it truly *is* the most important channel even before this claim has been examined.

The same applies to the time frame over which the new Cross-Strait relations have evolved. Without doubt the government change in 2008 represents an important contribution to the thawing of the China-Taiwan conflict. It is also in the government's interest to bring to the fore its role in reducing tensions. But it would be wrong to attribute the rapprochement as such to the election in a *post hoc ergo propter hoc* logic, as there are persuasive arguments to enlarge the period of examination. As will be argued below, the process of constructing the Cross-Strait platform was stimulated by the elections of 2000 and 2004, each of which served as a catalyst.² Their respective outcomes led to the founding of the National Policy Foundation (NPF; 國政基金會, *guozheng jijin hui*) and initiated the party-to-party channel, two major platforms that coordinated and promoted the transformation of Cross-Strait relations. These events not only occurred chronologically prior to Ma Ying-jeou's 2008 election; they were also an important factor

¹ It has to be noted that the literature has also stressed the role of Hu Jintao in the recent rapprochement (Chang/Chao 2009). However, this has to be seen against the background of the potential to divide Taiwanese politics by shunning the DPP government and at the same time reaching out to Taiwan's opposition after the 2004 elections.

² Another important catalyst was the quasi-simultaneous accession of China and Taiwan to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001/2002, which provided a boost for the transnationalization of economic relations. A treatment of how this relates to political demands, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

in making the government change possible and portraying it as desirable in the first place, contributing to the election outcome by structuring the political debate. Such a comprehensive perspective moves away from policy-centric assumptions and sees the election victory as the point of culmination rather than the point of departure of the 'new' Cross-Strait relations.

The paper will argue that new tools are necessary to help us grasp the complexity of the new political form that has evolved across the Strait. In order to do so we have to employ tools that are adequate to the nature of the political relations. Transnationalization describes a process during which social agents, social structures, social practices and social resources are decoupled from their previous point of reference, the nation state. The transnationalization across the Taiwan Strait is mainly driven by the interests of the business sector (Dent 2003). In the context of economic and social transnationalization, a new phenomenon demands further study: under the condition of absence of formal intergovernmental decision-making structures, authority has been functionally and spatially displaced to a certain degree to structures that lie outside of both states. With the new quality of social and economic relations also came new political forms. The past decade has seen the emergence (KMT-CCP Forum, Boao Forum for Asia, provincial visits) and revitalization (SEF-ARATS) of political and transnational channels, which escape conventional analytic tools of politics between governments.

As part of a larger research project, this paper concentrates on one channel. The KMT-CCP Forum (國共論壇, *guo gong luntan*), also referred to as the Cross-Strait Economic, Trade and Culture Forum (兩岸經貿文化論壇, *liang'an jingmao wenhua luntan*) or simply Cross-Strait Forum, is the most central and the most consequential of these new political channels. It is more than a simple consultation channel between the Kuomintang (KMT; 中國國民黨, *zhongguo guomindang*) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP; 中国共产党, *zhongguo gongchandang*). Indicators for its importance are its institutional originality, its relative longevity, the size and diversity of the participating delegations, and its subtle, yet steady, institutionalization – characteristics that will be looked at in more detail. What are the Forum's functions? How does it relate to the other channels? How does it fit into the broader picture of Cross-Strait relations? And, finally, is it part of a *hegemonic project*?

Towards a critical approach to Cross-Strait integration

This paper will argue that the KMT-CCP Forum is not to be understood as a pure party-to-party channel, but rather as a central pillar of a transnational political form and a hegemonic project. It is part of a larger network of transnational civil society, with imbalances in the power relations that structure the field and radiate into Taiwan's

domestic politics. By looking at this bigger picture, we will realize that a transfer of authority and the associated legitimating practices into the transnational field has taken place. This paper will focus on the Cross-Strait Forum to analyze its aims, its means, its actual practices and how it enables or restrains other agents.

To this end it will adopt a specifically transnational perspective. Gill (1993: 42) reminds us that in the transnationalizing world "social forces which operate within th[e global] system are not territorially bound or determined." This decoupling of social forces from nation states opens up a range of options for agents. While obviously the CCP and the KMT themselves are bound by their respective polities, they have developed a network that transcends conventional international political forms. Neither is a simple political party, but grounded in social forces.³ Especially in the Taiwan case, some of these economic forces have an interest to normalize economic relations. This is why this study is not interested in the emergence of this transnational space *per se*, which in the China-Taiwan case is largely supported by Taiwanese businessmen residing on the Mainland (Keng/Schubert 2010). Rather, it aims to shed light on the subsequent *politicization* of this space. This consists of a movement of political agents into the transnational space. More importantly, it also concerns the *transfer of authority* into this space. As Hall/Biersteker (2002: 4) note, these transnational agents

perform the role of authorship over some important issue or domain. They claim to be, perform as, and are recognized as legitimate by some larger public (that often includes states themselves) as authors of policies, of practices, of rules, and of norms. They set agendas, they establish boundaries or limits for action.

Two concepts will help to analytically embrace this theoretical perspective. First, a *field* is a social space of struggle, which is structured by the distribution of economic, political and symbolic capital. The agents are grouped around a common stake, struggling to impose their vision of the social world as the only legitimate version. What binds these agents together is their belief in the importance of the stakes. The configuration of social agents that results from the distribution of the different sorts of capital also generates possible practices that are accepted as legitimate within the field. Rather than being caught in a "China vs. Taiwan", "domestic vs. international" or "state vs. market" straightjacket, this concept helps to see the transnational field across the Taiwan Strait as a social space *sui generis*. In a field there is no hierarchy of "tracks", as provincial governments can be

³ Chu (2001: 95) actually employs Gramsci's term of historical bloc to describe the KMT's reach into civil society during the authoritarian era. Despite steps taken to separate the KMT from its assets in media, finance, economy and other sectors, the term "KMT Inc." is still applicable (see Fields 2002; also Far Eastern Economic Review, 2000/03/09: 42-5). This justifies the characterization of the KMT as a focal point of social forces, rather than a pure political party.

related to entrepreneurs, think tanks or central governments, all of which may participate within the same field. And yet, the different sorts of capital represent their different sources of power. This helps us to single out the field's defining struggles, the conditions under which different kinds of agents can enter the field as well as the resulting material and symbolic power relations. The concept of the field also encourages to go beyond what Strange (1988) has referred to as *relational* power, that is, "the power of A to get B to do something they would not otherwise do" (p.24), by drawing our attention to *structural* power, which Strange (p.25) defines in the following manner:

Structural power, in short, confers the power to decide how things shall be done, the power to shape frameworks within which states relate to each other, relate to people, or relate to corporate enterprises. The relative power of each party in a relationship is more, or less, if one party is also determining the surrounding structure of the relationship.

The crucial feature of the Cross-Strait Forum lies in its power to influence how civil society agents, economic agents, etc. relate to each other. The Forum has a huge impact on defining the legitimate forms of interactions across the Taiwan Strait, by "chang[ing] the range of choices open to others, without apparently putting pressure directly on them to take one decision or to make one choice rather than others" (p.31), in other words, by shaping the rules of the game, which in Bourdieu's field theory are referred to as *doxa*, denoting the tacit assumptions that go unquestioned and yet are always present (Bourdieu 1977, Villumsen 2011).

The second analytical tool employed to elaborate the specific configuration of Cross-Strait relations is *historical bloc*, or "the configuration of economic and socio-political structures that maintain[s] and reproduce[s] the social" to create a state of hegemony, where power does not rest "on the control of the coercive apparatus of the state, but [is] diffused and situated in the myriad of institutions and relationships in civil society" (Overbeek 2004: 125). In contrast to the conventional understanding in International Relations theory, neo-Gramscian theory uses hegemony to describe and analyze social relations beyond coercion. What lies at the center of attention is the process in which consent is constructed. In contrast to the concept of transnational class, which implies a coherence of social forces or even unitary agency, the idea of the historical bloc stresses the permanent effort that is necessary to form an alliance by the means of co-optation, compromise and through the exertion of power (Gill 1991: 48). The focus on the struggle that aims to create a common ground makes it complementary to Bourdieu's field, which itself is always structured by struggle. In order to stress this spatial restatement of historical bloc, this paper will also refer to this concept as a *hegemonic constellation* as proposed by Winter (2011), which lends itself to emphasize the analytical focus on the configuration of

social forces within a field of struggle. A field can thus attain a hegemonic constellation, if a coalition of social forces obtains a position from which it can portray its vision of the world as being in the *general interest* and universalize it in the form of generally accepted ideas, norms, rules and institutions (Bieling 2011: 13). The combination of the complementary concepts of field and historical bloc draws our attention to the *strategies and mechanisms that are employed by social agents to forge such a coalition*. Our specific interest lies in the assessment of the possibility that forces across the Strait have constructed such a coalition against Taiwan independence, and to ask whether the complexity of political relations in this field and the forms they take can gain from such an understanding.

Methodologically the project roughly follows Guzzini (2006), who has sketched out a Bourdieusian analysis of transnational elite formation, which will be referred to as a nodal field analysis: the analysis starts with a focal point of social relations within a given field, such as the KMT-CCP-Forum, the Boao Forum or SEF-ARATS talks. The next step comprises an analysis the inner workings of this node, of the relations that hold it together. KMT-CCP Forum itself is not a monolithic actor, but a sub-field of struggle made up of political parties, business representatives, academics, etc. Even the parties itself are further subfields on their own. To reduce the case study's complexity, we will treat the KMT-CCP Forum as a node, or in other words, as a focal point of diverse social relations involving different social agents from politics, business, knowledge production, etc. In a further step, we can link this node to the field and see how it structures its surroundings and is itself structured by the struggles within the field. At each step of the analysis, we will keep in mind that the Forum is both part of a larger field while being a field on its own.

The contribution of this study is threefold. First, it aims to systematize and deepen our empirical knowledge about the Cross-Strait Forum. This concerns both its inner workings as well as its role within the transnational political relations between China and Taiwan. The second contribution concerns the current debate on how to conceptualize Cross-Strait integration. Recent considerations (Schubert 2010) have demonstrated the awareness that we are facing a new phenomenon that demands a conceptual apparatus that can improve our understanding of the social and political developments. Arguing that the crucial specificity of contemporary Cross-Strait relations lies in their transnational character, this paper presents a set of tools particularly suited to this environment. While the need for a critical approach to Cross-Strait relations has been demonstrated recently (Cheung 2010), such an approach would benefit from being expressed in a less idiosyncratic vocabulary in order to benefit from debates in neighboring fields.

Third, the paper seeks to contribute to broader debates on the relation of transnational and international relations by proving the value-added of the conceptual apparatus applied here. International Relations theory (IR) has struggled to accommodate the rising importance of non-state agents in world politics (Risse-Kappen 1995, Faist 2010). The conceptual framework can only gain by putting it to a test in the highly complex proving ground that the Taiwan Strait represents with its configuration of state, non-state, sub-state and quasi-state actors. Not only despite, but probably due to the absence of formal intergovernmental relations and Taiwan's lack of diplomatic recognition, the transnational relations and its subsequent appropriation by political agents is unique and represents a hard case for any such framework. The disciplines of IR, International Political Sociology (IPS) and International Political Economy (IPE) will benefit from the rich empirical field that Cross-Strait dynamics represent.

2. The KMT-CCP Forum as a case study

In order to substantiate the hypothesis about a politicization of the transnational space, and to shed light on its implications, this paper will exemplify its conceptual added value through an analysis of the node that represents the KMT-CCP Forum in this process. It aims to interrogate its role in transforming the character of Cross-Strait relations, the social practices this entails, its mechanisms, before finally assessing the possibility of a hegemonic constellation, that is, the possibility to universalize the bloc's own goals. This section is divided into six sub-sections. Two brief parts will cover the historical overview and insights into the organization of the Forum, before three parts analyze the Forum's internal and external field relations as well as the instruments at its disposal to interact with the field. A final segment will evaluate the possibility of a hegemonic constellation across the Taiwan Strait.

What is so particular about Cross-Strait relations, and therefore demands our attention, is that integration took place under conditions of mutual non-recognition. Several channels make up a specific mode of governance: in addition to the KMT-CCP Forum, the major channels are the SEF-ARATS summits (with regular meetings since 2008), the Boao Forum for Asia (attended by a Taiwanese delegation since 2002), as well as provincial visits (since 2009). Table 1 shows the KMT-CCP Forum in the context of other selected Cross-Strait channels. For reasons of space, this study concentrates on the KMT-CCP Forum. It also focuses on the Taiwanese side, as this is the more dynamic variable.

Table 1: Selected Cross-Strait Channels

Year	Preliminary, etc.	Boao Forum	KMT-CCP	SEF-ARATS
2005	Chiang–Jia meeting Lien–Hu meeting			
2006			1. Beijing 2. Hainan	
2007			3. Beijing	
2008	Lien–Hu (APEC) Wu Ph–Hu meeting	Siew–Hu	4. Shanghai	I. Beijing II. Taipei
2009	Wu Ph–Hu meeting		5. Changsha	III. Nanjing IV. Taichung
2010	Lien–Hu, Wu Ph–Hu (Shanghai Expo)		6. Guangzhou	V. Chongqing VI. Taipei
2011	Lien–Hu (APEC) Wu Ph–Hu		7. Chengdu	VII. Tianjin
2012	Wu Ph–Hu meeting	Wu Dy–Li Keqiang	8. Harbin	VIII. Taipei

Source: Author’s compilation. Wu Ph refers to Wu Poh-hsiung; Wu Dy refers to Wu Den-yiy.

Genesis of the KMT-CCP Forum

The origin of the process that resulted in the initiation of the Cross-Strait Forum lies in the aftermath of the two presidential elections in 2000 and 2004, in which the KMT was defeated. Lien Chan (連戰), who had lost the March 2000 election as presidential candidate, reorganized the Lien Chen-tung Cultural and Education Foundation, which was named after his father, and transformed it into the National Policy Foundation, the KMT’s party think tank, within three months of the election. This structure allowed him to group a number of former and future influential figures from Cross-Strait relations around him, such as former Mainland Affairs Council (MAC; 大陸委員會) chairman Su Chi (蘇起) as well as Chiang Ping-kun (江丙坤), who became chief executive of the NPF.

After Chen Shui-bian’s (陳水扁) election victory in 2004, two tendencies converged. On the one hand the PRC leadership realized that it was impossible to achieve unification by military means, and that a declaration of independence under by Chen was a real threat. It therefore seized the historical opportunity of an isolated DPP and a defeated KMT to drive a wedge between the Taiwanese political camps. On the other hand, the KMT’s hopes to quickly regain power in Taiwan were shattered, and out of the defeat the party leadership was open to new strategies. Under these constraints, and with the common ground of both parties’ interests being threatened by the DPP’s government’s steps towards independence, Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) took the initiative to invite Lien, who accepted the invitation to what has been called a “journey of peace” (interview with a member of Lien Chan’s delegation).

This visit was the result of a process that had already begun in January 2001, when NPF Fellow and current SEF vice-chairman Kao Koong-liang (高孔廉) travelled to China with a group of legislators to probe the CCP's view on the Three Links (*Taipei Times* 2001/01/14). In March 2005 Chiang traveled to China in the capacity of KMT vice chairman to meet Jia Qinglin (贾庆林), a trip that can be classified as a dress rehearsal for Lien's visit, that was culmination of these party-to-party consultations only weeks after Chiang's trip. Jia Qinglin also participated in the Hu-Lien meetings as a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CCP (中国共产党中央政治局常务委员会, *zhongguo gongchandang zhongyang zhengzhi ju changwu weiyuanhui*) and has since then been a leading figure in the PRC delegation at the Forum.

The Lien-Hu meeting not only initiated the KMT-CCP Forum as a platform; the resulting "Five Point Vision" (五点愿景, *wu dian yuan jing*) also set the tone and basic agenda of every Forum meeting since then. The first point called for a resumption of Cross-Strait negotiations on the basis of the 1992 consensus and was realized with the reopening of the SEF-ARATS channel in 2008. Point two referred to a peace agreement, and while this has not been negotiated yet, it may become an issue during the later stages of Ma Ying-jeou's second term. The third item on the list concerned the institutionalization of economic exchanges between the two sides, and has essentially been implemented with the signing of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA; 兩岸經濟合作架構協議, *liang'an jingji hezuo jiagou xieyi*) in 2010. Point four raised the possibility for Taiwan to participate in international activities, an issue that has not substantially progressed, but which has been addressed by Taiwan's invitation to observer status in the World Health Assembly (WHA). The fifth and final point called for the establishment of a party-to-party platform between the CCP and the KMT. Originally, this platform was to comprise two forums. In addition to the eventually implemented Cross-Strait Economic, Trade and Cultural Forum, both sides had intended to hold an annual Cross-Strait Peace Forum with a more political content. Both forums were to alternate every six months. The first Peace Forum was to be held in Taiwan, but since the Taiwanese authorities rejected the NPF's application to invite a Chinese delegation, the idea was dropped and only the Economic, Trade and Cultural Forum was retained (interview with an organizer of the Forum at the NPF).

Institutional and organizational background

Ever since the Lien-Hu meeting, the preparation and organization of the Taiwanese delegation to the Cross-Strait Forum rests with the NPF, while the Research Center for Relations across the Taiwan Strait of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council (TAO;

国务院台湾事务办公室, *guowuyuan taiwan shiwu bangongshi*) is in charge of the arrangements for the Chinese delegation.⁴ Once high-level contacts across the Strait have agreed on staging a Forum, usually one event per year, the party contacts the Foundation. The agenda is set primarily by the party and – since 2008 – by the government, while the details are negotiated during preliminary meetings between the TAO and the NPF. Before 2008 the location of the Forum was set by Beijing, since then Chinese provinces apply for the right to host the prestigious event. In contrast to the SEF-ARATS talks, which alternate between venues in China and Taiwan, all eight meetings that have been held since 2006 have taken place in China. In 2005 and 2007 the CCP suggested holding the Forum in Taiwan, but as was the case with the Peace Forum, the DPP government rejected the application by the NPF to organize the event.

On the Taiwanese side, a group of about 10 people is directly involved in the planning, although specific tasks, such as the preparation of position papers, may be delegated to other research fellows at the Foundation or to external academics. The arrangements for a Forum take between two and three months. The members of each delegation, usually between 200 and 300 persons, are chosen by the NPF and the TAO respectively, and are partly composed by experts who are selected with regard to the issues that are to be discussed, such as nuclear safety or food security. Therefore, the composition of the delegations allows the tracking of the priorities of party-to-party negotiations. The main purpose of composing a delegation made up by a large variety of social actors lies in creating the impression of a broad social base for all the decisions taken during the Forum.

The government change in Taiwan had surprisingly little influence on the organization of the Forum. In the words of an organizer, “the issues change, but the way they are organized does not” (interview at the NPF). The shift towards cultural issues in 2009 was partly made possible by delegating some of the issues to the SEF-ARATS channel, after the talks had resumed. However, the government has a considerable influence in the agenda-setting process, where it also voices concerns on behalf of the Mainland Affairs Council as well as the Straits Exchange Foundation (interview with a former National Security Council member). Since there are no substantial conflicts as far as the course is concerned, these shifts in power have not yet had any consequences. Moreover, it is difficult to attribute specific strategy calls and pinpoint their origin, given that central figures often have multiple memberships between the NPF, the KMT and government agencies. To a large degree all major architects of the party-to-party platform have remained in the field

⁴ This subsection is based on data obtained during an interview with one of the organizers and participants of the Cross-Strait Forum at the National Policy Foundation, Taipei, unless otherwise noted.

of Cross-Strait relations even after the election of Ma Ying-jeou. While Lien Chan has stepped into the background and passed the baton of delegation leadership on to Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄) for the fourth Forum, he still is a respected figure in China and therefore remains an asset in the party's strategic portfolio. This position is manifested both in his chairmanship of the NPF as well as in his function of Honorary Chairman of the KMT. In practice it is expressed in his activity regarding the invitation of procurement missions from China. He also represents Taiwan at the APEC summit since 2008, where he met Hu again last year. Chiang and Kao lead the SEF, where Su Chi has joined them in 2012 after a stint at the influential National Security Council. Rather than being superseded by the government, the KMT's Cross-Strait platform was successful in broadening its strategic options by extending its influence to other Cross-Strait channels.

Table 2 provides an overview of the eight Cross-Strait Forums to date, their central issues and the major results.

Table 2: Conventions of the KMT-CCP Forum (2006-2012)

No.	Date	Location	Major Issues	Recommendations
1	April 2006	Beijing	Economic cooperation; transportation links; agricultural and financial exchanges.	7 joint recommendations 15 unilateral policies by the PRC
2	October 2006	Hainan	Agricultural cooperation	7 point joint proposal 30 policies
3	April 2007	Beijing	Transportation	Joint proposal 13 policies
4	December 2008	Shanghai	Finance, investments, services	9 recommendations 10 measures of economic cooperation in relation with the global financial crisis;
5	July 2009	Changsha	Cultural exchanges and educational cooperation	6 joint recommendations focusing on media and culture industries
6	July 2010	Guangzhou	Industrial cooperation and competitiveness	22 recommendations
7	May 2011	Chengdu	Nuclear safety	19 joint recommendations
8	July 2012	Harbin	Deepening of Cross-Strait ties through institutionalization and civil society contacts	17 joint recommendations

Compiled from various sources: interviews with organizers and participants of the Forum at the National Policy Foundation; additional sources: www.gov.cn; www.gwytb.gov.cn; npf.tw.org; www.xinhuanet.com; www.taipeitimes.com; www.chinapost.com.tw; www.chinanews.com.

Field Configurations: The KMT-CCP Forum in relation to other nodes

As has been argued above, there is little use in examining a single node in any given field without considering its relations. To assess the Forum's power and functions, we also have to take into account its relative position to other nodes in the transnational field across the Strait, before we can understand how the Forum acts on the field.

As discussed above, Chiang Ping-kun and Kao Koong-liang link the *SEF-ARATS channel* to the KMT-CCP Forum through the NPF, while on the Chinese side Chen Yunlin (陈云林) participated in the third Forum before being appointed ARATS chairman (*Liberty Times*, 2007/04/27). Chen has also participated in the eighth Forum (*Xinhua*, 2012/07/29). The major decisions of the early SEF-ARATS summits had been extensively prepared by the preceding Forums, (interview with a former member of the NSC). The major one is the ECFA, the idea of which had already been part of the Five Point Vision and was repeatedly addressed in the Forum sessions. The fourth Forum in December 2008 laid the groundwork for the agreement, before it was passed on to the SEF-ARATS channel to be negotiated in detail and signed. Even after the signing, the Cross-Strait Forum issued additional joint recommendations that called for the implementation of further amendments, showing that Forum still is part of the ECFA process even years after the issue has been passed on to another channel. Table 3 (see below) displays the interlock between both channels and shows that it was strong at the two Forums that encircle the election victory of Ma Ying-jeou. This highlights the characteristics of the transitional phase, where central tasks of the Forum were delegated to other channels, which include provincial visits and direct contacts between ministries on the vice-ministerial level in addition to SEF-ARATS (interview with a former member of the NSC).

After the KMT regained the power in Taiwan, it proceeded with a deepening of interlock with the *state apparatus*. Starting with the fourth Forum cabinet-level officials began to participate in the event, although in a private capacity: San Gee (單驥), vice-chairman of the Council for Economic Planning and Development; Chang Ming-daw (張明道), director-general of the Financial Supervisory Commission; Lee Long-wen (李龍文), director-general of the Civil Aeronautics Administration; Janice Lai (賴瑟珍), director-general of the Tourism Bureau; and Berton Chiu (邱柏青), director-general of the Ministry of Economic Affairs' investment department (*Taipei Times*, 2008/12/20). They represented government branches with a high and urgent demand for Cross-Strait regulation, such as direct flights, Taiwan-bound tourism from China, Cross-Strait investment and the institutionalization of Cross-Strait economic cooperation, which were the top priorities after Ma's election. This development marks the beginning of an officialization of the Cross-Strait Forum. Although the cabinet-level members travelled to China in their private

capacity, their presence can only be considered to have deepened the negotiation potential within the Forum. In addition to creating a synergy between party-to-party channel and the government, and the addition of expertise that their inclusion entails, the Forum could also broaden its legitimacy by extending its delegation sources to the government, which in turn is democratically legitimized.

Similarly, the KMT achieved an interlock with the *Legislative Yuan*, with around 20 legislators participating in the Cross-Strait Forum, a measure that is expected to facilitate the process of passing Cross-Strait related laws in the Legislative Yuan (interview with the organizer at the NPF). These developments also demonstrate that the KMT-CCP Forum's importance did not decline after the KMT became the government party and the semi-official channels resumed. On the contrary, it was revitalized by being recognized as the central platform to co-ordinate Cross-Strait integration and by incorporating unofficial ministry-to-ministry channels within its structures.

The *Boao Forum for Asia* (BFA) is probably the least substantive of the major Cross-Strait channels. Conceived by the PRC as the Asian version of the World Economic Forum, it became associated with Cross-Strait relations since the Taiwanese delegation joined in 2002. The Taiwanese delegation is organized by the Cross-Straits Common Market Foundation (CMF; 兩岸共同市場基金會, *liang'an gongtong shichang jijin hui*), which in turn is headed by Vincent Siew (蕭萬長). Siew was Lien Chan's running mate in the 2000 elections, and similarly to the NPF, the CMF was conceived in the aftermath of the electoral defeat to promote the normalization of (mainly economic) Cross-Strait relations. As early as 2001 Siew led a CMF-delegation on an eight day China-tour, before meeting Vice-Premier Qian Qichen (钱其琛) in Beijing (*Taipei Times*, 2001/05/09, 2001/05/12). The group was made up of more than 10 business leaders, including Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. (台灣積體電路製造股份有限公司, *Taiwan ji ti dianlu zhizao gufen youxian gongsi*) CEO Morris Chang (張忠謀). Due to this connection Taiwan's economy, the Boao delegations are mostly made up of business representatives. The CMF relates to the government by its delegation leaders, who participate in the capacity of "advisors" to the CMF. In April 2008, Siew went to Boao as Vice-President elect and met Hu Jintao. In April this year, Wu Den-yih (吳敦義), who as Siew before him just had been elected Vice-President without having been sworn into office yet, headed the Taiwanese delegation and met Vice-Premier Li Keqiang (李克強) and Wang Yi, who as head of the TAO is involved in the organization of the KMT-CCP Forum. As such, the BFA mainly presents an occasion for future leaders to familiarize and exchange views, although this year's forum saw a substantial agreement that will enlarge the individual tourist arrangement from China to Taiwan (*Xinhua*, 2012/04/01). The relation to the KMT-CCP Forum is rather

indirect, both being a stage to regularly insist that current Cross-Strait relations are based on the 1992 consensus and the opposition to Taiwan independence, and in their similar transnational strategy (such as the sponsorship of transnational forums) to reach this goal.

The Forum also maintains intensive relations with *civil society* representatives, with KMT members only representing half of the Taiwanese delegation. As mentioned before, the NPF delegates preparatory tasks to academics outside of the Foundation and invites them to the Forum. Furthermore, the delegations include prominent business representatives. In April 2007, for example, Lien Chan was accompanied, among others, by Hon Hai Precision chairman Terry Gou (郭台銘), Landis Hotel and Resort president Stanley C. Yen (嚴長壽), Uni-President Group CEO Jason Lin (林蒼生), Taiwan Cement Corp. chairman Leslie Koo (辜成允), and representatives from the Evergreen Group and Farglory Group. This represents a remarkable sample of Taiwan's business elite, which only underlines the attractiveness of the party-to-party channel. In addition to being part of the delegation, the business sector is in regular contact through seminars hosted by the NPF.

Field Mechanisms: Instruments of the KMT-CCP Forum

In order to publicize the result of its negotiations, the KMT-CCP Forum disposes of two major instruments, the so-called joint recommendations (or joint proposals) and unilateral measures (or unilateral policies). Provincial visits will also be considered as an extension of the Forum. These specific sets of practices derive from the historical and socio-political circumstances under which the Forum emerged and can be attributed to transnational character of the arrangement.

Joint recommendations (共同建議, *gongtong jianyi*) are the principal resolutions that the delegations have agreed upon over the course of the meeting. At the end of each Forum, they are announced by the delegation leaders during each Forum's official closing ceremony. They are primarily addressed at policy-makers on both sides, and their implementation is evaluated during the subsequent Forum conventions. As the surrogate for a formal treaty mechanism, the public commitment generated by this exposure makes the recommendations stand out from less prominent channels and secret back-room deals, which always leave the possibility of one side retracting from the agreement. Announcing the declarations during a plenary session furthermore gives them the force of an overarching consensus of all participants, which not only include party members, but also government personnel, legislators, think tank fellows, academics, business representatives and experts from other fields. The resolutions appear to be supported by

a broad social coalition that reaches far beyond the actual party circles. Accordingly, the KMT's transnational activities are legitimized in a circular and self-referential manner, representing itself as an agent acting on behalf of all Taiwan, as a mere mouthpiece of Taiwanese society. A second aspect of the media coverage of these events is their function as a means to disseminate the Forum's founding narrative, which closely links the economic well-being of the Taiwanese people to close relations with China on the basis of the 1992 consensus, a discursive construct that is persistently reiterated like a mantra in all declarations and press statements before, during and after the event.

Table 3: Joint Recommendations by the KMT-CCP Forum per sector

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
Economy	2			2		2	6	1
Transport	1		7	1				
Agriculture¹	1	7		1			1	
Finance²	1			1			3	1
Service	1			1		1		
People-to-People³	1		2			2	1	2
Investment		1	2					1
Science⁴		1				2	1	
Education/Culture			2		2	5	2	3
Industry				1		3	1	2
Media					1	1		2
Energy⁵					1	4	1	1
Intellectual Property						2	1	1
Institutional							2	3

¹ Includes fishery; ² Includes insurance; ³ Includes tourism, youth and sports exchanges; ⁴ Includes environmental issues; ⁵ Includes technology and R&D cooperation.

Some recommendations may appear in several categories at once due to their scope.

Shaded boxes denote sectors that were a focus in the subsequent round of SEF-ARATS talks.

Table 3 provides an overview of recommendations passed per sector. The data documents two processes. First, a broadening and *qualitative expansion into additional policy fields*: While early events focused on pressing issues in a relative abstract fashion, creating guidelines and broad agendas for Cross-Strait relations that aimed first and foremost at consolidating the party-to-party platform itself, later conventions grew more confident in addressing more specific and long-term projects. The second process of a *quantitative increase* of the number of recommendations *within each sector* can be attributed to the decisions becoming closer meshed: rather than being bold declarations of intent, they represent substantial and detailed preparatory work for the SEF-ARATS talks and even for contacts on the vice-ministerial level. For instance, the turn towards the cultural sector

during the fifth Forum has endured, with each following event passing several precise recommendations to improve cooperation in education and adjacent fields.

Furthermore, the government change in 2008 put the KMT in a position that enabled it to actually implement the agreements that were reached at the Forum, making the instrument of joint recommendations more attractive. Conversely, this also accounts for the decline in significance of the unilateral measures.

Unilateral measures (措施, *cuoshi*) constitute the second instrument at the disposal of the KMT-CCP Forum. Similar to the joint recommendations they are announced publicly during the closing ceremony or in the immediate aftermath of the Forum, usually by the leader of the Chinese delegation. The difference lies in their asymmetry, with Taiwan being the beneficiary of the measures and China unilaterally committing itself to implement a series of policies. Furthermore, especially during the early Forums, the joint recommendations were relatively abstract, while the unilateral measures were specific policy measures addressing functional issues ranging from the recognition of diplomas to defining conditions regarding the setting up of airline joint-ventures. The instrument's practical significance stems from the circumstance that the KMT, being an opposition party, was unable to implement policies. Accordingly, the unilateral measures have lost their importance since 2008. During the early stage, however, the value of this instrument cannot be overstated: through the party-to-party platform the opposition party KMT was able to negotiate substantial concessions from the PRC. Not only did it permit the KMT to present itself as a party of action and embarrass the government, it also resulted in immediate and practical improvements for Taiwanese businessmen, their families, students, and other Taiwanese citizens living in or visiting China, by increasing their standard of life, reducing the bureaucratic intricateness or creating tangible job and education opportunities. Lastly, it allowed KMT leaders to showcase their qualities and competence in dealing with Cross-Strait issues, setting into practice their claims that a KMT government would be able to successfully negotiate with China and thereby reduce economic uncertainty and the security threat at the same time. Similar to the outsourcing of issues to the SEF-ARATS channel, the policy packages been announced in the month preceding the eighth Forum during the Straits Forum (海峡论坛, *haixia luntan*) in Xiamen in 2012 (TAO, 2012/06/17).

A third and more indirect instrument that can be partly attributed to the KMT-CCP Forum is that of *provincial procurement visits*. These consist of relatively large delegations of several hundred members, made up of political figures and representatives from private as well as state owned enterprises, and are often led by a governor or CCP party secretary. While the actual trips may be organized by a wide range of organizations, including the

Chinese National Federation of Industries (CNFI; 中華民國全國工業總會, *zhonghua minguo quanguo gongye zong hui*), the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA; 中華民國對外貿易發展協會, *zhonghua minguo duiwai maoyi fazhan xiehui*) and the NPF (Chien/Hsieh 2010: 18), their origin and political intent can be traced back to the KMT-CCP Forum. On the Chinese side, the TAO has to approve each delegation and can therefore exercises a direct control over the missions (2010: 3). Their main purpose is the attempt to co-opt social forces that have traditionally supported the DPP, such as the farmers of central and southern Taiwan. It is also the Forum's main instrument to directly support industry sectors that suffer from the global economic crisis, and consolidate their support and integrate them into China's domestic market at the same time.

The procurement missions started visiting Taiwan in May 2009, after the PRC had pledged to purchase flat panel displays from Taiwan for US\$2 billion as one of the 10 measures announced during the fourth Forum. One of the measures announced during the first Forum also encouraged procurement missions to Taiwan, albeit with the purpose to relieve Taiwan farmers from excess fruits during peak seasons of harvest. In the months around the 2012 presidential elections, both sides refrained from organizing provincial visits due to the sensitivity of the issue. They only resumed at the end of March with the delegation led by Su Shulin (苏树林), who is governor of Fujian Province (*Taipei Times*, 2012/03/25). As high-profile provincial visits regularly attract media attention, they serve the secondary function of further diffusing discursive elements of the KMT-CCP Forum's principles (e.g., 'win-win situation').

One respondent attributed the provincial visits to a vulgar-Marxist belief held by the CCP decision-makers, that considers the buying missions part of a conscious strategy to change the material base of Taiwan's society in order to promote a pro-China superstructure (interview with a former MAC senior official). But although the delegations sign contracts in the range of up to several billion US\$ per visit (netting more than US\$14 billion in 2009, an amount equal to 7.6% of Taiwan's exports), the actual impact is hard to account for (Liou 2010: 171-2). While the missions target primarily regions considered to be DPP strongholds, they do not seem to have influenced the outcome of recent elections in these constituencies (interview at the New Frontier Foundation). The fact that so many organizations participate on both sides in organizing the visits makes it even harder to assess their impact. At the same time it demonstrates how well synchronized these channels are, especially on the Chinese side under the direction of the TAO.

Field Effects: Structuring outcomes and consequences of the transnational political form

Through its extensive activities the KMT-CCP Forum has structured the politicization of the transnational field across the Taiwan Strait. This includes an *orchestration* of, the creation of a synergy among, and delegation of certain tasks to other channels (such as the recent announcement of unilateral measures during the Straits Forum). Together with the Boao Forum, the party-to-party platform provides a setting for *elite familiarization*. This is the more important as the PRC will soon begin its leadership transition. Preliminary meetings, such as the one between Wu Den-yih and Li Keqiang assure a continuity among all party members on both sides. The provincial visits provide the environment for similar meetings on lower levels of the party ranks.

During the KMT's opposition time, the Forum successfully *constrained the range of possible options of the DPP-government*. According to a senior official at the MAC during Chen Shui-bian's second term, the government was frustrated by the fact that the opposition party entered into negotiations with the CCP, while the government could not. (interview with a former senior official at the MAC). The DPP also lost the support for its policies due to the party-to-party channel's attractiveness for the Taiwanese business people. Furthermore, the Forum tried to erode the government's election success by co-opting its electoral base.

The Forum's practices proved also to be successful in the *dissemination of its ideological narrative*. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to include the discursive dimension of the KMT-CCP cooperation, it has to be pointed out that the KMT-CCP Forum gives the narrative of the '1992 consensus' a social manifestation and foundation. As the Forum is based on the One-China Principle, every meeting and every enacted decision ratifies the 1992 consensus in discourse and consolidates it through practice, starting with the Lien-Hu declaration.

One of the most consequential effects of the KMT-CCP platform is the *subordination of Taiwan's international relations under Cross-Strait relations*. Lien Chan and Hu Jintao discussed Taiwan's limited participation in international activities, but as the whole party-to-party platform is built on the foundation of the 1992 consensus, the Ma government can be shut off a large part of the international scene should Beijing withhold its consent. International politics is an important element of any government's prestige, and as such a source of political capital and legitimacy. The fact that the KMT government's access key to the international scene lies in the hands of Beijing shows the asymmetric relation that exists between the CCP and the KMT.

The Forum has furthermore developed instruments to *secure the consent of subaltern social forces*. Especially the early conventions dedicated time to agricultural issues. Farmers are generally considered to be supporters of the DPP, which is why the KMT-CCP Forum developed a wide range of tools to address these social groups. In addition to the provincial visits, agricultural products were parts of the Early Harvest list of ECFA, while limiting agricultural exports from China to Taiwan. Some Taiwanese agro-products also enjoyed tariff exemption even before ECFA. Furthermore the PRC has set up agricultural trade centers in Shanghai, Xiamen, Xiapu, Dongshan, Zhazhou, Quanzhou to consolidate demand (*People's Daily*, 2010/07/15).

By far the most far-reaching outcome of the KMT-CCP cooperation was the original idea behind it: *the marginalization of integration-skeptic forces* through a systematic limitation of their options. As far as transnational relations across the Strait are concerned, the DPP has to choose between lesser of two evils: Either stand back and exclude the party from substantial transnational relations across the Taiwan Strait, or agree to a subordinate position in the field. With the 1992 consensus being the non-negotiable foundation of the politicized transnational field across the Strait, the second choice would risk the alienation of its followers. How this instrument can be effectively used to put the DPP under pressure was demonstrated when two members of the DPP accepted the Forum's invitation to participate in 2009. Former minister of agriculture Fan Chen-tsung (范振宗) and former legislator Hsu Jung-shu (許榮淑) had travelled to Changsha, prompting a discussion about the DPP's Cross-Strait course. Initially, the party decided to suspend both temporarily, before expelling them from the party. This episode shows how the Forum actively sets the agenda even within the opposition party due to its structural power.

Debates to change the party's course, however, continue. Already before the party's candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) lost the 2012 presidential election, the DPP's National Security Strategy white paper from August 2011 takes a distinctively transnational stance: "[A] visible world with traditional state boundaries will co-exist with an invisible societal network connected by mega-cities through information, capital, trade, technology, services, and migration" (p.1). The term 'transnational' is used five times, the word 'globalization' eleven times in the 9-page white paper, which calls for the construction of a "framework for peaceful and stable interaction between Taiwan and China" (p.6) as well as "multifaceted social and cultural exchanges between Chinese and Taiwanese civil society" (p.7).

These are signs for the awareness of the challenge that the marginalization in the transnational field represents. However, these points did not become essential parts of Tsai Ing-wen's election campaign, not least because the PRC insists on the acceptance of

the 1992 consensus, the opposition to which was a central pillar of Tsai's election platform. Further evidence of the structural power of the KMT-CCP Forum's 1992 *consensus*, is that Tsai's counter-project, the "Taiwan *Consensus*" echoed the term. After the lost election of 2012 it seems that the party feels constrained to a new course. The election of Su Tseng-chang as party chairman can be considered a move towards a more reconciliatory approach to China. Two of his first actions were the restoration of the party's Department of China Affairs as well as considering a new China Affairs Committee. A comment by Tuan Yi-kang (*United Daily News*, 2012/05/29) concerning the loss of information that resulted from closing down the China Affairs Department suggests that the DPP is aware of the practical knowledge that is needed to transnationalize the party: while the KMT and its NPF have accumulated practical knowledge and expertise in orchestrating a large network of summits, meetings, seminars, academic conferences, visits, cooperation with the business sector, hosting of think tank symposia, interacting with students and youth groups as well as synchronizing these activities with government agencies, the DPP's restraint on entering the transnational field means that it has acquired a deficit in a very *practical* sense. By the time the DPP will have decided to open itself to transnational relations, by no means a self-evident outcome, it will most likely have accrued one decade of backlog. The lack of this practical knowledge, the fact that the KMT and the CPP have monopolized the transnational field, as well as the fact that entering the field will most likely mean to subscribe to one form or the other of the 1992 consensus, shows the structural power the CPP-KMT alliance holds over the pan-green camp. Although it seems unlikely that the pan-green camp will be able to build a transnational channel comparable to the KMT-CCP Forum anytime soon, these developments are clear signs that the Forum puts pressure on the DPP to rethink its position. The fact that entering the transnational field will most likely come at the price of accepting some form of 1992 consensus shows to which degree the KMT-CCP platform was able to constrain the DPP's options by exerting power through the transnational field.

Is the KMT-CCP Forum part of a hegemonic constellation?

Given extensive portfolio of strategies and instruments that were engendered by the Forum, it becomes clear that it has tremendously enlarged the pan blue camp's strategic options against the independence movement. But is this enough to talk of a hegemonic constellation?

The introduction defined several conditions that have to be met so that we can speak of a hegemonic constellation emerging from the transnational field. The first condition

concerning the transfer of authority into the transnational field ('politicization') according to Hall/Biersteker is met, given the range of policies that originated from the party-to-party platform. The Forum's instruments to constrain other agent's options indicate that the second condition of Strange's structural power is met as well. But is the transnational field in a stable *hegemonic constellation*?

All tendencies point towards a consolidation of the current configuration: the increasing officialization, the deepening of institutional interlock and the enlargement of the Forum's legitimacy basis show that the Forum is in a strong position. With the procurement missions it has a vital instrument at hand that can channel billions of dollars to create further support for the KMT's policies. By actively encouraging Cross-Strait cooperation and civil society exchanges, an increasing number of sectors (from banks and insurances to students) will have stakes in Cross-Strait relations, which means that the social balance of power is slowly favoring the 1992 consensus. While it is too early to assess the impact of the Forum's efforts to forge a One-China identity through cooperation in education, the cultural sector and media industries, the initiation of these measures shows that the CCP and the KMT are confident in investing in long term projects.

The CCP, the KMT and the business sector share the mid-term goal of stable political and economic relations. Cross-Strait integration is not a natural outcome, but achieved through a long process of structuring the transnational field in such a way, that its dynamics work in favor of the KMT-CCP bloc and unfold remarkable effects of structural power on Taiwan's domestic social, economic and political configuration. This justifies the conclusion that the Forum is part of a *hegemonic project* (Bieling/Steinhilber 2002): It has been shown that the *apparent pluralization* of Cross-Strait politics is conditioned by the emergence of the party-to-party platform, which is in the position to coordinate their cooperation. The Forum has made a successful transition from the asymmetric state while the KMT was still an opposition party to working in an integrated manner with the government after 2008. Furthermore, the transnational platform has developed a strong momentum on its own: the KMT cannot withdraw from its cooperation with the CCP without risking complete isolation. Whether the project will result in a stabilized historical bloc across the Taiwan Strait is contingent on many factors. The ideological difference between the KMT and the CCP concerning the One China principle should not be underestimated, especially if the CCP should push for a peace accord, which might risk putting Ma in difficulties in the domestic arena. And while the CCP, the KMT as well as the business sector share the same mid-term interests of guaranteeing a stable investment environment through the prevention of Taiwan independence, their long-term goals differ to a large degree. While the CCP overtly seeks unification, the KMT entered the hegemonic

project first and foremost to gain a strategic advantage over pro-independence forces in Taiwan. The business sector in turn seeks to facilitate Cross-Strait production, but depends on territorial fragmentation (van Apeldoorn 2004: 165) and builds its power on combining the comparative advantages of the Chinese and Taiwanese economies. These discrepancies might result in tensions within the bloc.

Furthermore, the liberalization of Cross-Strait markets is bound to create discontents in Taiwan (Wong 2010). Unemployment rates have risen to 4.25 per cent in February, while young people under the age of 24 are hit particularly hard with an unemployment rate of 12.07 per cent (*Taipei Times*, 2012/03/23). It is not foreseeable how the CCP, the KMT and the DPP will deal with the possible emergence of discontent forces. In any case, the Forum is likely to take a central role in future Cross-Strait relations.

3. Conclusion: The KMT-CCP Forum and a Critical Approach to Cross-Strait integration

In order to substantiate the hypothesis about a politicization of the transnational space, this paper has argued that the KMT-CCP Forum not only represents a case of a transfer of authority into a transnational field, but that it also has enough structural power to drive forward a hegemonic project that has marginalized integration-skeptic forces. The critical framework provided a new account of Cross Strait relations that embeds political relations in civil society processes to counter the tendency of conventional approaches to overlook or understate political processes beyond intergovernmental relations. This new perspective does not address the question whether "China has power over Taiwan", which reflects the statist approach. Rather, it shifts the attention to networks that lie transversal to states.

The application of this framework to the case study of the KMT-CCP Forum allows the following conclusions:

First, as a tool to broaden the strategic options of the pan-blue camp, the KMT-CCP Forum has certainly succeeded. It is a perfect example of how social forces can reclaim strategic room to maneuver through creative practices and coalitions with civil society actors (business, think tanks, etc.). The sidestepping into the transnational space and the appropriation of its dynamic network of social processes made possible new forms of authority, new connections, new resources, and signifies in sum a breakthrough in the institutional lock of Cross-Strait relations since 1949. However, this comes at the price of being a 'junior partner' to the CCP and the structural subordination of Taiwan's international relations to Cross-Strait relations.

Second, as a mode of governance, the configuration of the KMT-CCP Forum demonstrates a subtle displacement of authority. The 'new' Cross-Strait relations exhibit a high degree of transnational elements in the process of producing binding decisions. To a large extent, it does not depend on the coercive power of the Taiwanese state, and its foundation in civil society means that it can continue to operate even without a pan-blue government. At the same time it clearly reveals the moments of reservation about this political form, namely the inherent lack of democratic legitimacy. This is why the KMT is trying to broaden the Forum's base of legitimacy on the one hand, and to obscure its substantial structural power by delegating functions to secondary channels on the other. Furthermore it continues to be a party-to-party channel, meaning that a possible future DPP government will not only have to work *without* such a broad network, but probably *against* the Forum as it was the case until 2008.

Third, this paper has demonstrated the value-added of a critical approach to Cross-Strait integration. Breaking with conventional dichotomies, such as "state vs. society" and "domestic vs. international" in favor of the field, has allowed examining a variety of actors in conjunction and reveal their complementary aspects. The concept of the historical bloc has shifted the attention towards how coalitions are formed and consent is created in the transnational space. Future studies should take the complementarity of the channels seriously. In addition to looking at single actors, future empirical analyses could examine how a specific policy issue is negotiated in parallel or in succession in different channels of different levels, and how the transnational form of political authority conditions the outcome.

The politicization of the transnational Cross-Strait space in general and the KMT-CCP Forum in particular are not simply reactions to quasi-natural economic and social processes. It is a conscious strategy. Transnational politics across the Strait represent a political form which both results from, and which ultimately aims to resolve the political standstill across the Strait. But the fact that the transnational political channels are limited to the pan blue camp risks distorting Taiwan's democracy in the long run.

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Interview Data

The interview data that has been used in this paper has been obtained by the author on the following occasions (in chronological order):

Member of the Lien Chan delegation during Lien's trip to China in April and May 2005: Conducted in Taipei, Taiwan (2012/02/17).

Research Fellow at the New Frontier Foundation: Conducted at the New Frontier Foundation in Taipei, Taiwan (2012/03/06).

Former senior official at the Mainland Affairs Council during the second term of Chen Shui-bian: Conducted in Taipei, Taiwan (2012/03/12).

Organizer and delegation member of the KMT-CCP Forum: Conducted at the National Policy Foundation in Taipei, Taiwan (2012/03/28).

Former member of the National Security Council during the first term of Ma Ying-jeou: Conducted in Taipei, Taiwan (2012/04/02).