Editor's Column

Signpost for 2024: Poll on Satisfaction Ratings for Taiwan’s National Political Figures
By: Russell Hsiao
Taiwan will hold local elections in late November this year. The “nine-in-one” elections—which will see voters elect mayors and city councilors in the special municipalities, as well as local officials in the other counties, county-level cities, and other localities—could be a bellwether of public sentiments ahead of the presidential election that will follow in 2024. The incumbent president, Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), is currently serving her second and last four-year term in office, and the field of candidates for the major political parties is wide open for the 2024 race. While the presidential election is still two years away, the race is already underway, even though no one is officially running yet. Indeed, the period between now and early 2023—the spring/summer of the year preceding an election is when the presidential primaries of the two parties are generally held—could determine which political figures are in the best shape to become their parties’ presidential candidates for 2024.

TSMC: Taiwan’s Silicon Dagger
By: Eric Chan
A recent article in the US Army War College’s quarterly journal, Parameters, has garnered significant attention for proposing a new method of Taiwanese deterrence against the People’s Republic of China (PRC). In “Broken Nest: Deterring China from Invading Taiwan,” authors Jared McKinney and Peter Harris discuss how Taiwan could threaten to destroy Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (台灣積體電路製造股份有限公司) facilities as part of a scorched earth strategy to deter an invasion. They argue that by threatening to self-destroy the TSMC plants, by targeting PRC semiconductor plants, and by holding out the prospect of a drawn-out insurgency, Taiwan could make itself a “broken nest” that the PRC would not want.

What Is the CCP’s “Comprehensive Plan for Resolving the Taiwan Problem”?
By: John Dotson
In early January, an official report from Taiwan’s cabinet to the Legislative Yuan (立法院) reportedly assessed that the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) would take steps to both diversify and intensify its pro-unification propaganda in 2022, including the sustained employment of online disinformation. This prediction is in keeping with an observable trend: in recent months, even as it has ramped up psychological pressure on Taiwan in the military and diplomatic realms, Beijing has attempted to present a friendlier image in terms of its pro-unification propaganda. Events such as the “13th Straits Forum” in December 2021—an event that saw participation by senior members of Taiwan’s main opposition party, the Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨)—stressed the idea of “people-to-people” exchanges (民間交流) and expanding opportunities in China for young adults and businesspeople. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 共產黨) Central Committee Taiwan Affairs Work Conference (中央對台工作會
The CCP’s 2022 Taiwan Affairs Work Conference Signals Continuity in Taiwan Policy
By: Norah M. Huang

Researchers working on China and Taiwan issues have traditionally looked at the annual Taiwan Work Conference (對台工作會議) to determine the direction of China’s approach toward Taiwan in the year ahead. Convened by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee at the beginning of each year, the CCP held the 2022 Work Conference on January 25. Wang Yang (汪洋), who serves as the chairman of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC, 中國人民政治協商會議)—as well as deputy director of the Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group (TALSG, 中央對台工作領導小組), the party’s inter-agency policy-coordinating body—delivered the opening remarks laying out the central leadership’s guidance on Taiwan work.

In the Taiwan Strait, Semiconductors are Secondary
By: Michael Mazza

“Tech is at the center of the global strategic competition, and no tech is more essential to this competition than semiconductors.” So declare Becca Wasser, Martijn Rasser, and Hannah Kelley in a new report from the Center for a New American Security (CNAS). In describing and drawing conclusions from an original global semiconductor competition strategy game, the authors effectively highlight Taiwan’s importance in the worldwide semiconductor supply chain and the challenges and opportunities that centrality poses for Taiwan, the United States, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The report, however, gives short shrift to historical context in the Taiwan Strait, and thus overstates tech’s determinative role there.

Should Taiwan be Concerned about Inflation?
By: Riley Walters

Inflation has become a concern in major economies like the United States and across the Eurozone. There are growing fears that the costs of goods and services are increasing at an alarming rate, and that these price increases could stretch household incomes to a breaking point. Central bank leaders, like US Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, have tried to assuage these concerns by saying that the increase in prices is “transitory,” or only short-term. However, even central bankers will admit they are not exactly sure when inflationary effects—like supply chain disruptions—will end. As a result, the US Federal Reserve is considering raising interest rates to help curb inflation.

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