This new dynamic could neutralize Taiwan nationalism and restart negotiations.

The recent political-ideological changes identified above reflect that a titanic struggle for the hearts and minds of the Taiwan people is underway in the first Chinese democracy. It is a struggle that cannot be understood in terms of wealth distribution, class structure, or social status. It is a struggle over ideas and passions that is dividing the Taiwan people and even splitting families. The real test for this young democracy’s survival is whether tolerance and understanding of the different aspirations of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait can prevail and provide a settlement of the divided China problem.

Can enough of Taiwan’s democrats insist that different visions of Taiwan’s future coexist while engaging with mainland China under the one-China principle? That means having a dialogue between the Taiwan and mainland authorities to forge a new political partnership. That arrangement should preserve Taiwan’s democracy and its current autonomy and assure Beijing’s leaders and elite that Taiwan is still part of China, while both strive to develop a cooperative framework.¹⁵

Such a political partnership only can be established with the mutual affirmation of an equitable one-China principle in which both parties have equivalence and commit to the principle of equality under the sovereignty of a one China. The mainland authorities already have agreed to this interpretation of the one-China principle. The Taiwan authorities should now agree to negotiate under the same principle.

Notes


2. For the significance of this important election in Taiwan’s democratization and the bitter campaign of fall 1991 over Taiwan’s destiny—either to accommodate mainland China or to pursue an independent path—see Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, The First Chinese Democracy: Political
Implications of the Turnover of Political Power in Taiwan


3. Renmin ribao (People's daily), January 6, 1991, p. 1. For the most thorough study confirming the agreement by the two sides to adopt different interpretations of one China in which Taiwan was part of China, see Xu Shiquan, “The 1991 Consensus: A Review and Assessment of Consultations between the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait and the Straits Exchange Foundation,” American Foreign Policy Interests 23, no. 3 (June 2001): 121–40.


12. Renmin Ribao, January 6, 1991, p. 1. Another poll, taken by United Daily News of the Taiwan area during June 25–27, 2001, reported that 33 percent accepted the “one country, two systems” formula (it was higher if “China,” signifying one country, was the ROC. A similar poll in 2000 reported only 18 percent accepted the “one country, two systems” formula. See World Journal, July 1, 2001, p. A1.

15. Two of the authors have previously described how this cooperative framework could be established between the two sides. See Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, *The Divided China Problem: Conflict Avoidance and Resolution*, Hoover Institution Essays in Public Policy no. 101, 2000. pp. 1–59.