**The Taiwan Media Landscape:**

**From Governmental and Political Monopoly to International Struggle for Influence**

**Eduard Voytenko**

**Abstract**

Throughout its history, Taiwan has been a territory of confrontation between major regional powers. Today it is in fact an independent state not recognized by most countries of the world. For instance, China considers Taiwan to belong to its territory. The USA and other western states do not recognize Taiwan as part of China, but also do not recognize the island’s sovereignty. At the end of the 20th century, Taiwan went through a period of rapid democratic transformation. Political freedoms emerged, the society got involved into the development of national and ethnic identity. At the same time, the media in Taiwan and around the world got a new impetus for technology development. Geopolitical struggle and rapid development of the media accompanied the progress in Taiwan’s domestic politics. Today, Taiwan’s media is a significant factor in public and political life playing the key role in forming the public opinion. Internal and external political forces are fighting for control over the media. In recent years, this struggle moved to social networks, which are having an increasing impact on the Taiwanese. Various types of media are part of media holdings with large audiences, including social networks. Media holdings owners do not remain aloof from politics, which affects both the geopolitical future of Taiwan and its domestic state policy, as well as cultural and civilizational choice.

**Keywords**: Taiwan, media, China, democracy, elections, identity

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**Introduction**

On January 11, 2020, the general elections were held in Taiwan to elect the 15th President and Vice President of ROC, and all 113 members of the 10th Legislative Yuan. The acting President and Chairwoman of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Tsai Ing-Wen won the election, defeating Kaohsiung mayor Han Kuo-yu of the Kuomintang (KMT). According to the results of the legislative elections, the DPP retained a majority of 61 seats in the Legislative Yuan. The Kuomintang retained the second place winning 38 seats. The pre-election period was marked by strong opposition of the parties in public space and mass-media. ROC is valued as a developed democracy, and political competition here is a very open which is affected by serious dramas during every election campaign. Taiwan is considered free by Freedom House[[1]](#footnote-1). In 2019 is territory retained its 42nd global ranking of in the World Press Freedom Index released by Reporters Without Borders[[2]](#footnote-2). The democratization process started in Taiwan more than 30 years ago, but even today mass media, opinion leaders, key political bloggers and other actors are still strongly associated with groups of interest and foreign involvement, mostly Chinese.

The aim of this article is to show the process of democratization of the Taiwanese media, and the key role of the media in the political processes on the island. A supplementary idea is to describe the rising role of social media and other new media in political competition in Taiwan.

A number of studies on media development in Taiwan is huge, and the interest in this area has not declined. However, Taiwan media are inseparable from the island’s political life, and consideration of issues related to media development is inevitably associated with Taiwan’s key foreign and domestic political trends. Most important of them is the struggle between the two, and, since the mid-2010s, three political centers. They are the Kuomintang, the Democratic Progressive Party, as well as those who came to politics after the protests of 2012-2014.

In the first decade after the beginning of democratic reforms, it was the Kuomintang and the Democratic Progressive Party that determined the processes in the media market. Later, starting from the mid-2000s, China starts to play a significant and decisive role. The loss of power by the Kuomintang at the end of the 20th century also meant loss of its dominant control over the media.

Today, when the media landscape has changed significantly, it is the influence of China that helps Kuomintang to increase its popularity in the media and social networks. These findings have repeatedly come from the content analysis in media resources associated with China. Today, there is evidence based on statistics from social networks and information received from a former employee of the Chinese intelligence services.

An equally significant trend determining the development of Taiwan’ politics and media is the reflections about Taiwanese identity. Taiwan has many ethnic groups, and the mainland Chinese, who for a long time formed the basis of the political elite and determined politics and ideology, make up only 14 percent of the population. The diversity of ethnic groups created the prerequisite for constructing the ideology of a separate Taiwanese nation, consisting of many peoples. The same concept formed the idea of Taiwan’s sovereignty. Taiwan media have been heating public and political discussion on this tropic and they still remain like that. The attitude of the media to identity and state sovereignty issues repeatedly changed the balance of power in the media market.

**Democratization of Taiwan: a new era of fighting for media and society**

During the martial law period (1949-1987) the political sphere of Taiwan was under Kuomintang control. On July 15, 1987, the President of Taiwan ordered to lift the “Declaration of Martial Law in Taiwan Province” (Longqing Wang, 2011: 144). In the years to follow, the Legislative Yuan canceled numerous repressive measures against the press and other media. This process took several years for Kuomintang’s fear of the rapid loss of power. The law banning the registration of new newspapers was abolished in 1988, resulting an explosive growth of printed media (Huang, 2009).

The removal of restrictions on the press was driven by the spread of illegal oppositional journals and newspapers that supported the political principles of the DPP. About a decade before the abolition of laws restricting the freedom of the press in Taiwan, the country developed a separate public communication community that was kind of “non-public” due to being illegal. It included oppositional newspapers, magazines, and cable television. This media community helped the second force of Taiwanese politics, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), to gain a foothold in the political landscape (Kuldip, 2007: 104).

However, in 1987-1988 no similar steps were taken with respect to television and broadcasting, due to the approaching legislative elections of 1989. At that time Taiwanese government was still united under the Kuomintang party, and the control of broadcasting media provided non-equal conditions during general elections (Ibid). It was essential to maintain the parliamentary majority. Out of the 101 directly elected delegates, 72 belonged to the Kuomintang, only 21 to the Democratic Progressive Party and 8 were independent candidates.

The last 1980s and early 1990s have become an era of media liberalization. When the 1989 political confrontation cooled down, the DPP proceeded with the creation of public channels for the purposes of permanent propaganda. Since TV and radio stations were still inaccessible to the opposition, the DPP made use of cable television that was widespread in Taiwan and operated semi-legally. In February of 1990, a group of opposition politicians set up the first cable TV station of the so-called “Democratic Television”. In one year, the number of such stations increased to 24, and all of them were members of the League of Taiwan Democratic Cable Television. The organization was unofficially named Channel 4 as a reference to the three existing Government-owned channels: CTV, CTS and TTV (Chen, 2002: 43).

Only after a long process of debates and consensus achievement, the Legislative Yuan adopted the ROC’s first Cable Television Act in August of 1993. The Act provided for the two-stage legalization of numerous cable television channels in all Taiwan regions (Huang C.-L., 2009). Under the social and political pressure, radio broadcasting was also liberalized in 1993. Just like in case of cable television, Taiwan’s opposition forces established several illegal radio stations. In 1993, the Taiwan Government decided to make radio frequency bands available for free commercial broadcasting (Executive Yuan, R.O.C., 2012).

**Taiwan identity: changing publicity of media and politics**

The emergence of new newspapers, TV stations, cable TV and then internet media caused intensive search of methods to achieve maximum coverage of the potential voters’ audience. Since the end of martial law, the main topic in Taiwanese political discourse was Taiwan’s sovereignty and national identity (Lee, 2000: 129). The media covered the issues on a large scale, but they are still unsolved. Another side of the domestic political view on Taiwan issue is the relationship with PRC. These topics are accumulating the basis of disagreement between two main political parties and their voters thus heating up discussions in the media, especially during electoral campaigns. The “green” coalition (DPP) stands for Taiwan’s independence and separate (from mainland China) Taiwanese identity. The “blue” coalition (Kuomintang) stands for saving Taiwan’s territorial claims to PRC, challenging China’s foreign political status and for this reason – for saving the status-quo in the Taiwan issue.

The rapid development of discourse on the Taiwanese identity and the identity of Taiwan’s ethnic groups, continuous dialogue on the status of the Republic of China, blending of nationalist discourses with all other aspects of the political discourse on the island, and development of the media and other communication channels resulted in ambiguous self-identification of the people of Taiwan (Chien-Jung, 2014). Surveys show, on the one hand, an increasing number of the islanders that refer themselves to the “Taiwanese”, and, on the other hand, people are tired of the “Taiwanese identity” issue (Ru-Shou Robert Chen, 1993: 105). The inhabitants of the island are rather looking for a local identity. The opposing forces at all levels perceive social identity, when raised to the ethnic and national perspective, as a “political tool” being fiddled with.

As we mentioned earlier, after the cancellation of martial law, the topic of Taiwanese self- and national identification has become the most important issue within the domestic political discourse of Taiwan. In time of the Kuomintang, political and media’s monopoly for this issue was forbidden to discuss. That is why the popularity of new pro-Taiwanese political forces (DPP) and the associated media, who raised a question of the own Taiwanese way, increased rapidly in these years (Shale & Tan, 2007). The process of quick and wide distribution of society interest for identification issues resulted in the emerged term “taiwanization”.

Taiwanization as a new ideological platform became the platform for a new identity search that would fit into a new nationalistic project to correspond to Taiwan’s ambitions on the international arena to become a full-fledged state. Taiwanization has become the main trend of super-popular political talk shows on cable TV. This concerns the top-rated talk show “2100 Quanmin Kaijiang”. This platform was the basis for the most important statements of the leading political forces of Taiwan. Soon it became the central place for public discussion about the issues of the islanders’ national self-identification (Wei-chin Lee, 2011: 53). At the same time, according to the corresponding content analysis of the talk shows, the presenters oriented to the Taiwanization resorted to the practice of a “constructive dialog” which led the studio discussion towards support of the new Taiwan identity (Chu, 2003: 32).

By the end of the last decade of the 20th century, such collective concept got the term “new Taiwanese” which was actively used in the political discourse by the mainstream media (Chan & Holt, 2009: 261). The phrase “new Taiwanese” or “new Taiwan” drifted to the media from the official documents and speeches of political and state leaders. For the first time, this identity characteristic appeared on the pages of the United Daily News in 1987. Initially, the interest of the state and the society towards it was small: from the time of its appearance until 1998, the “new Taiwanese” appeared only in 222 published articles. However, during 2000 we encounter this term in 2016 articles.

The increase of Taiwan national idea is related not only to the political discourse. The critical role in mass distribution of “Taiwan first” principle happened due to the proliferation of Taiwanese television series targeted at a wide audience. In particular, there was a pressure on the TV companies to popularize Taiwanese films and prioritize their broadcasting. This pressure seems to have come from an earlier understanding of the specifics of the Taiwanese society for which cinematography acted as a “driving force for the identity manifestation” (Ru-Shou, 1993).

The art helped achieve the audience with the ideological content. According to the researcher of discourse of popular Taiwan serials and films Robert Chen Ru-Shou, the image of the capital of the Republic of China – Taipei – took a special place. Taipei has always presented itself as the center of emergence of a new Taiwan identity; all the efforts were directed to give this city the properties of a place that symbolize Taiwan “today” in contrast to former Taiwan (under martial law and the Chinese nationalism ideas). Taiwan’s urban dramas of the 1990s underlined the trend towards the Chinese nationalist narratives’ destruction. Throughout the time after cancellation of the martial law, Taiwanese films and TV series developed a view at Taiwan as a subject of politics, and not as an object, colony, or territory (Ru-Shou, 1993). This created an entirely new context for the mass perception of Taiwan’s statehood and national identity and became an essential part of the strategy for regionalizing the national ambitions of the islanders. The new era of mass culture has built a wide political basis for DPP and its media for successfully providing the pro-independence political line.

**DPP and KMT: struggling for the media control**

The decade after the cancellation of martial law has become a period of competition between Kuomintang and the DPP for influence and their control over the media. In 1987, one year before the start of the democratization process, three state TV stations (TTV, CTV and CTS) and two newspapers (China Times and United Daily News) covered more than 90% of Taiwan’s media market (Huang, 2009). The growth of cable TV led to reduction of the traditional TV stations role on Taiwanese advertising market to 30% or less in 2003 (Rawnsley & Rawnsley, 2006). The percentage of cable TV reached in the same year 72% of the advertising market (Kao, 2005). Cable TV, which popularity in 1990s – 2000s in Taiwan was phenomenal, mostly supported the DPP’s ideological standpoint. Identical processes took place on the printed media, broadcasting and new media market. Kuomintang’s dominance on the public political discourse was lost. To the period of 2000s general election the ideological background of Taiwanese media looked disproportionate: up to 70% of political media were associated with the DPP, and those loyal to the Kuomintang comprised no more than 30% (Anlin, 2012).

The process in which the Kuomintang and the state were shifting away from direct control of the media is clearly seen on the example of the TV industry. In 1997, the share owned by the state banks in TTV was as much as 48.95%; and by 2002 the government’s share was reduced to 26%, while almost 35% shares in TTV belonged to private banks. The same trend can be traced with CTV: In 1997, more than 68% of its shares were still under control of the Kuomintang entities, and in 2002, the Kuomintang owned 41%, while more than one third of the shares were owned by private investors. The situation with CTS followed the same pattern: the Kuomintang’s stake decreased (almost 30% in 1997 vs. 26.4% in 2002), and the private participation increased (from 13.5% in 1997 to 25% in 2002) (Rawnsley & Rawnsley, 2006).

In 2005, CTV was completely privatized. The Kuomintang disposed of its large holdings in CTV by selling them, along with its controlling stake in the Broadcasting Corporation of China and Central Motion Pictures Corp (CMPC), to China Times Group (Taipei Times, 2005).

The redistribution of influence of the authorities and political parties on the Taiwanese television was particularly evident during the elections of 2004, when in the political confrontation between the KMT and the DPP, the TV channels that remained in the hands of the state but lost connections with the Kuomintang party found themselves on the other side of the debate. Government-owned CTV and CTS started supporting DPP’s positions (Huang, 2009).

However, the final separation between the ruling political forces and the media took place after 2006. In 2006, the Government of Taiwan headed by President Chen Shui-bian and the Democratic Progressive Party carried out a “local” media reform. After a long debate, the Legislative Yuan passed a legislative act that required political parties and the government to dispose of their media assets[[3]](#footnote-3).

Additionally, the “mouthpiece” of DPP has been (and still is) Formosa TV (FTV), the most popular private Taiwanese channel established in 1997. Immediately after its establishment, Formosa took the top position among Taiwan’s TV channels and its news programs currently rank 6th and cover 37% of the weekly television audience[[4]](#footnote-4).

Generally, in 2000s the situation in Taiwan media sphere favored the DPP. The DPP-friendly discourse ruled the editorial policy in most popular media, primarily on TV. The idea of Taiwan’s independence and national identification dominated in online media, numerous ethnic-oriented media, and on cable TV. The period of mass exhaustion from the long and not clear political way to this “Taiwan dream” didn’t come true by that time. Kuomintang meets the issue of losing voters popularity and media influence. From the 2010s Taiwan’s society rooted suspicions about the hidden KMT – PRC coalition.

**The “Chinese factor” and the risk of media monopolization**

In the 2010s influential media players and investors, primarily from the PRC, emerged in the country. Besides, the PRC became of greater interest for the Taiwanese media organizations as a market. Chinese intervention in Taiwanese media was not only an artificial turn of PRC foreign policy, but part of the big stream of mutual China-Taiwan business and economic integration. But, specifically, the growth of the “China factor” in media since the 2000s caused concern in Taiwanese establishment, because the soft power politics had become the official PRC strategy on Taiwanese direction (Huang J.-N., 2017). In 2004 Hu Jintao, former PRC President announced a new principle: “Entering the Island, Entering the Household, and Entering the Mind” (rudao, ruhu, ruxin). This principle looks like a dogma of Chinese policy, in process of gradual unification of the “big China” under PRC’s political and governmental control (Nian Huang, 2020). Taiwan media have become the main target of this process.

The first big deal, which has significant a massive Chinese involvement in Taiwanese media sphere was the acquisition of China Times newspaper in 2008 by PRC-based Want-Want group. In 2009 Taiwanese media widely spread the information on frequent meetings of the Taiwan’s part of Want Want Holdings’ head Tsai Eng-meng and the head of the Taiwan Affairs Commission of China Wang Yi, who further became the PRC minister of Foreign Affairs[[5]](#footnote-5). The official position of the Want Want activities was to “harmonize” relations between the two straits. But by 2011, Want Want Holdings acquired significant amount of mass media and controlled 19.15% of the satellite TV market, 23.56% of the cable TV market, 24.72% of the TV broadcasting market in Taiwan as well as over 10% of the printed information media and magazines market[[6]](#footnote-6). The media, owned and influenced by business from Mainland China or CCP, got the informal title “red media”.

The National Communication Commission showed a slow progress in the dialogue with the public and tried to protract the development of legislative measures against monopolization of the media. Although the protests began in 2012, the solutions were not expected until 2014. But the huge pressure from the public, including persisting street protests, accelerated the development of a legislative solution to the problem. On February 20, 2013, the National Communication Commission published the draft Prevention of Broadcasting and Television Monopoly and the Maintenance of Diversity. In turn, a Chinese holding Want Want, accused the authorities of the attempt to forcefully redistribute influence on the media market. The media outlets controlled by the holding published materials stating that the proposed statute was aimed solely against Want Want’s business (Rawnsley & Feng, 2014). The bill has quickly passed two public hearings (on March 18 and 21, 2013)[[7]](#footnote-7). In April 2013, it was approved by the Executive Yuan and then got stuck in the Legislative Yuan. The leading political forces of Taiwan responded to the initiative of the National Communication Commission by offering their own drafts of similar acts and amendments to the proposed bill. Their own versions were presented by the DPP fraction of the Legislative Yuan, the Center for Public Policy and Law at the National Taiwan University, a group of 22 Kuomintang lawmakers, and the social movements driving street student protests. Despite the heated public and political debates, the implementation of this essential initiative has stalled. To this date, no decision regarding this statute has been made, even though its consideration was accompanied by vocal student protests[[8]](#footnote-8).

The expectations regarding this act were indeed inflated, because it offered efficient solutions that would affect the opportunities of Chinese business in consolidating Taiwanese media assets. It was supposed that the law would make it possible to regulate the ownership of the media based on the activities of the owner companies on both sides of the strait. Besides, it would introduce measures to protect professional freedom of journalists, such as protection of editorial boards against pressure from the owners, media self-regulation mechanisms, establishment of trade unions, etc. It would impose restrictions on the cable TV market. A separate section was devoted to the development of public television (PTS). There was an interesting mechanism for imposing restrictions on the right to own TV channels, where the right to buy a channel depended on its rating. This could prevent the purchase of the second and further channels if their aggregate rating exceeded the five percent threshold[[9]](#footnote-9). Naturally, the proposed measures were vigorously opposed by the industry which had its monopolists and all controversial regulatory issues were made use of in order to prevent this bill from passing into a law. The implementation of the measures provided by the Prevention of Broadcasting and Television Monopoly Act could have drastically reshaped the media landscape in Taiwan.

The attempt of media monopolization became the basis for student strikes in 2012-2013[[10]](#footnote-10), which outgrow to “Sunflower Movement” – series of protests in 2014 in opposition to the “Chinа factor” in Taiwanese politics, economics and media. In 2015, the leaders of the “Sunflower movement” established the New Power Party (NPP). Next year the NPP won five seats in Legislative Yuan[[11]](#footnote-11) and immediately presented a draft bill against media monopolization[[12]](#footnote-12). However, this document has never been given the status of a law and the threat of PRC expansion on the Taiwanese media market is still of current interest.

**Electoral waves, modernization of communication instruments and influence methods**

The pre-election period gives a very clear idea of the political overtone of various media and their impact on mass consciousness and about the power of various types of media. For example, in 2000 the main way of communication for politicians was cable TV, in particular, the political talk shows. During the 2000 general elections the role of traditional printed media decreases, the Internet media were underdeveloped, and by 2003, the coverage of cable television in Taiwan reached 84.3%. At the same time, the number of cable TV channels by this time exceeded 100 individual TV channels among which there was many round-the-clock news broadcasts[[13]](#footnote-13).

During the 2000 pre-election period, the largest newspapers in Taiwan, *The* *United Daily News* and *China Times*, reacted neutrally both to the representative of the Democratic Progressive Party and to the candidate from Kuomintang. Strong support to each candidate was provided only by the party (in the case of the KMT) or by an emphatically liberal press (in the case of the DPP) (Batto, 2004). The media outreach for a decisive advantage was clearly insufficient. The political analysts explain the subsequent failure of Lian Zhan, the candidate from the Kuomintang party (23% according to the election results) with his personal qualities that prevented him from presenting himself in a favorable way at the political talk shows, while his rival, Chen Shui-bian (who became the President of Taiwan) showed a pronounced charisma that allowed him to gain respect from a large audience of cable television (the main channel that broadcasted political talk shows). The Kuomintang party slogan “A person who speaks well does not always work that way. A person who copes well with the tasks cannot constantly speak” did not help the candidate.

In the last decade, the media landscape has changed. Every general election campaign brings new efficient communication that subsequently becomes a mainstream. The role of the social media in political competition rises, but today the significance of traditional media such as newspapers and TV still critical, because today they exist not only as print media, but also as powerful online media and social media accounts.

By 2010s, political disinformation and propaganda battles moved to a more flexible and outreaching information space, social media and messengers. Disinformation efforts of the opposing parties are most evident in the popular Taiwanese messenger LINE, where what we recently started to refer to as “fake news” has become a common practice[[14]](#footnote-14). In Taiwan, the most popular social network is Facebook, and the most popular messenger is LINE. According to estimates by the Taiwan Network Information Center, in 2012, more than 17.5 million Taiwanese (about 75% of the island’s population) discussed the presidential election on Facebook. All the Taiwanese political forces are actively promoting their agendas in social media.

Dapeng Wang and Chunying Yue from Peking University conducted a case study in 2016 (the general elections year). The research shows, that both main political parties (DPP and KMT) in Taiwan were active involved in the fight for the attention of netizen voters. DPP began to use online communications for electoral campaigns earlier and more effectively than the KMT. Using social media, the DPP contacts voter groups, that traditional media could not embrace. The KMT formed the Internet Department only in 2009 for political and informational management of Kuomintang Youth League. The DPP and the KMT realized two different SMM-campaigns, based on short videos. Kuomintang distributed microfilms of idol drama style: “Flag Girls” and “Love Visa”. The DPP has made more successful content: short movies “Go Back Home to Vote” and “Mother’s Day”. These materials had more intersections with real life than with propaganda, which made them more successful among voters. During the last years, the activity of KMT in social media has increased. The public and expert opinion associates this with support from mainland China[[15]](#footnote-15).

**The rise of “China factor”: influence on all types of actual media**

The Chinese factor manifested itself in social media as well as the media- market. Exploring Taiwanese political and social media campaigns, some experts found a link between PRC and Kuomintang. For example, in 2016 during the electoral campaign the Facebook page of DPP-candidate Tsai Ing-wen full of comments from the netizens from mainland China. Identical comments in simplified Chinese and pro-PRC key messages were markers of a special campaign. The page of the KMT candidate Eric Chu remained in normal condition. Maybe this attack was launched by real Chinese nationalists and not by paid trolls, but anyway it was the clear example of Chinese influence on Taiwanese electoral competition.

The version about Chinese influence on Taiwanese 2020 general elections was supplemented by the large spy scandal. In November 2019, when the election campaign was going to the finish line, Australian news site “The Age” has published a long read, telling a story about a Chinese spy Wang “William” Liqiang, who has asked for asylum in Australia[[16]](#footnote-16). In his interview to Australian media Wang Liqiang reported, that he conducted political interference operations in Hong Kong, Taiwan and Australia. In Hong Kong the target was rising the influence on student communities, found out information about pro-independence activists and publish their personal data.

In Taiwan Wang Liqiang for two years coordinated the involvement into electoral processes “similar to Russia’s cyber interference operations in the US elections”. In China he received a fake Korean passport from his PRC intelligence handlers, documents helped him to enter Taiwan and to work there illegally. He said he had coordinated actions of Chinese “cyber army” and ruled the attacks of paid trolls in internet, and thanks to his actions, the results of 2018 municipal elections in Taiwan were successful for PRC’s political goals in the region. As the main achievement, he marked the victory of Han Kuo-yu (Kuomintang) in competition for the position of Kaoshing Mayor. Wang Liqiang also reported, that in 2019 his operation in Taiwan was contact with Taiwanese media executives for meddling the electoral campaign and toppling Tsai Ing-Wen (DPP) and support Han Kuo-yu. From his word, this operation has developed under Chinese military intelligence control.

For Mr. Han Kuo-yu that grows into a sensitive blow in the end of his presidential campaign. Responding to the accusations, he declared, that if evidence of his accept even NT$1 from China during the present campaign will be found, he would immediately abandon his presidential election bid. The same stand he took on the issue of the Kaohsiung mayoral election: Han Kuo-yu says, that he is ready to give up his position as mayor if he had accepted NT$1 during elections in Kaohsiung[[17]](#footnote-17).

Yet, for Han Kuo-yu’s online campaign this publication was like a crushing blow. After the news about the probable relations of KMT candidate with Chinese intelligence the Stanford Internet Observatory – Cyber Policy Center published a research about activity and reaction of pro-KMT pages in social media. In their publication on December 12th, Stanford media analysts have clearly showed that actions (posts, comments) of Han Kuo-yu support pages were coordinated and the spreadable content with high probability was generated in the same “think tank” and in the same time.

The search for Wang's name and the analysis of references from the pro-KMT pages and accounts lead to the simple classification of content types of public pages and users’ reaction on Han Kuo-yu accusations. They have focused on defending Han Kuo-yu against Wang’s corruption allegations, claiming that the DPP is using Wang’s story for changing elections results, dismissing Wang as someone not high up enough in the ranks to listen to. After the publication of the results presented by Stanford Internet Observatory the Facebook administration banned 118 fan pages, 99 groups, and 51 accounts for coordinated activity and rules violations and among them was the largest pro-Han Kuo-Yu group and other KMT-supporting pages[[18]](#footnote-18).

**Conclusion**

Today, it is not solely the old media, but also social networks that influence the public opinion in Taiwan media. The media continues to play an important role, but their credibility is significantly undermined. This is due to the long and very noticeable influence of parties and China on editorial policy. However, social media communications are also in danger of a crisis of confidence. Electoral technologies for managing comments and publications negate the benefits of social networking communication with voters without barriers.

The public sentiment of the Taiwanese society is such that it is impossible to predict their development towards rapprochement with China or towards independence of Taiwan. Not a single political force achieves its strategic goal. The media is and remains a means of politics, but often it is the control over the media being the goal in the short-term struggle.

In the recent years, the Taiwan media have taken very high rate of editorial policy flexibility on many key issues. This is connected with intensification of the struggle between the Kuomintang and DPP and now also the “third power” – new political figures from the “Sunflower Movement”, as well as with the PRC intervention into political, economic, and media spheres, final prioritization of market mechanisms of the media development in disadvantage of the journalistic ethics.

One of the main results of perennial struggle for political dominance, media owning and ruling and of ideology clash is the exhaustion of most Taiwanese people of politics, identity questions and the Taiwan status issue. The idea of “big China” cannot become popular and ensure the legitimacy of unification with PRC. Also, the independence of Taiwan stays as non-reachable political goal of the “green” coalition for а long time.

Currently, the PRC, which vector of foreign policy aspirations for rapprochement with Taiwan and its assimilation in the future is seen very clearly, is actively trying to gain good feelings of the Taiwanese society: it is necessary for a full-fledged political dialog and, for China, it is not enough to negotiate only with the Taiwan’s elite. The businessmen associated with the PRC actively buy out media holdings in Taiwan, reform the well-known mass media significantly interfering into the editorial policy of leading publications.

The Taiwan media provides the researcher of political processes a complete picture of the island’s complicated foreign policy relations with the leading regional states, as well as reflects the palette of mass public sympathies and antipathies towards the partners of Taiwan.

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