



Photo by Theerasak Saksrinavee



President Tsai calls for positive interaction across the strait

President Tsai Ing-wen at her year-end press conference on December 31 urged the two sides of the Taiwan Strait to maintain peaceful relations, vowing that the Republic of China (Taiwan) will continue to commit to having positive exchanges with China and extending goodwill but will not succumb to pressure and threats.



Tsai said that since her inauguration, her administration has endeavored to maintain peaceful and stable relations across the Taiwan Strait in accordance with the people's will and consensus in Taiwan. "Beijing is going back to the old path of dividing, coercing, and even threatening and intimidating Taiwan," the president said. "We hope this does not reflect a policy choice by Beijing."

Such conduct has hurt the feelings of the Taiwan people and destabilized cross-strait relations, she said. "Whether cross-strait ties can take a turn for the better in the coming year will depend on our patience and resolve. But it will also depend on how Beijing sees the future of cross-strait relations, and whether it is willing to assume its share of the responsibility for building new models for cross-strait interactions," she stated. Tsai said the government

remains committed to the concept of steadfast diplomacy through mutual assistance for mutual benefits. "By expanding cooperation at all levels we will strengthen Taiwan's substantive relationships with other countries," the president stressed.

Tsai said her administration will also continue its on-going dialogue with important trading nations and regions including the United States, Japan, and the European Union to strengthen bilateral and multilateral economic cooperation.

Asked by reporters how her administration interprets the international view of the "One China" policy, which was the subject of heated debate after being discussed by US President-elect Donald Trump, Tsai said there is no need to overreact to other people's opinion. Tsai said she made clear in her inauguration speech that "the Republic of China is a sovereign country and this has not changed." There may be numerous ideas about handling cross-strait relations, which Tsai admits remains a challenge for the Taiwanese people, but she reminded everyone to "remember the shared consensus that we are a sovereign nation."

Source: Taiwan Today, Focus Taiwan, Office of the President

(For full text, please visit the [Office of the President website](#).)



Diplomacy not zero-sum game: presidential office

The Office of the President on December 26, 2016 expressed deep regret and discontent after mainland China and São Tomé and Príncipe announced their resumption of diplomatic relations earlier that day, saying that "diplomacy is not a zero-sum game."



Mainland China and São Tomé and Príncipe signed a communiqué to resume diplomatic relations in Beijing earlier that day.

Presidential Office spokesman Alex Huang said that "diplomacy is not a zero-sum game," noting that participation in the international community by both sides of the Taiwan Strait has positive significance and the two sides need not clash with each other. "Any move to restrain or interfere with Taiwan's participation in the international community will be a loss to the international community, and will also not be beneficial to the healthy development of cross-strait relations," Huang said.

"We deeply regret and are dissatisfied with" China's manipulation of "checkbox diplomacy" and its "one China principle" to interfere with Taiwan's participation in the international community, Huang said. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also expressed "deep disappointment and regret." The ministry said that São Tomé and Príncipe, lured by mainland China's dollar diplomacy, has turned away from Taiwan despite the major contributions it has made to the improvement

of the health and wellbeing of the São Tomé and Príncipe people over the years.

The ministry noted that the West African country has big financial needs and that mainland China, in its manipulation of the "one China" principle, had demanded that São Tomé and Príncipe not maintain any official ties with the Republic of China (Taiwan) as a precondition for providing "full support and assistance" to the country's social and economic development, as well as the needs of its people. The ministry said the ROC, as a sovereign, independent country, is by no means negated unilaterally by the "one China" principle in Beijing's communiqué. The government, as a responsible international cooperation partner, will continue to deepen and solidify close cooperation with its allies, it said.

In an earlier statement, the ministry pointed out that a team of ROC malaria prevention advisors stationed in São Tomé and Príncipe helped reduce the incidence of malaria in São Tomé and Príncipe from 50 percent in 2003 to 1.01 percent in 2015. The World Health Organization announced in 2013 that São Tomé and Príncipe had reached the pre-elimination stage for malaria, a widely recognized achievement. China first established diplomatic ties with São Tomé and Príncipe, a former Portuguese colony, after it declared independence in 1975. The ties were severed in 1997 when the African country established ties with Taiwan.

After the severance of ties between Taiwan and São Tomé and Príncipe on December 21, Taiwan now has 21 diplomatic allies. In Africa, only Burkina Faso and Swaziland maintain formal ties with Taiwan.



A Stitch through Time

Taiwan Review

By Jim Hwang

Photos by Chen Mei-ling

In an era of mass-produced goods and cheap imports, the craft of handmade religious embroidery is hanging on by a thread.



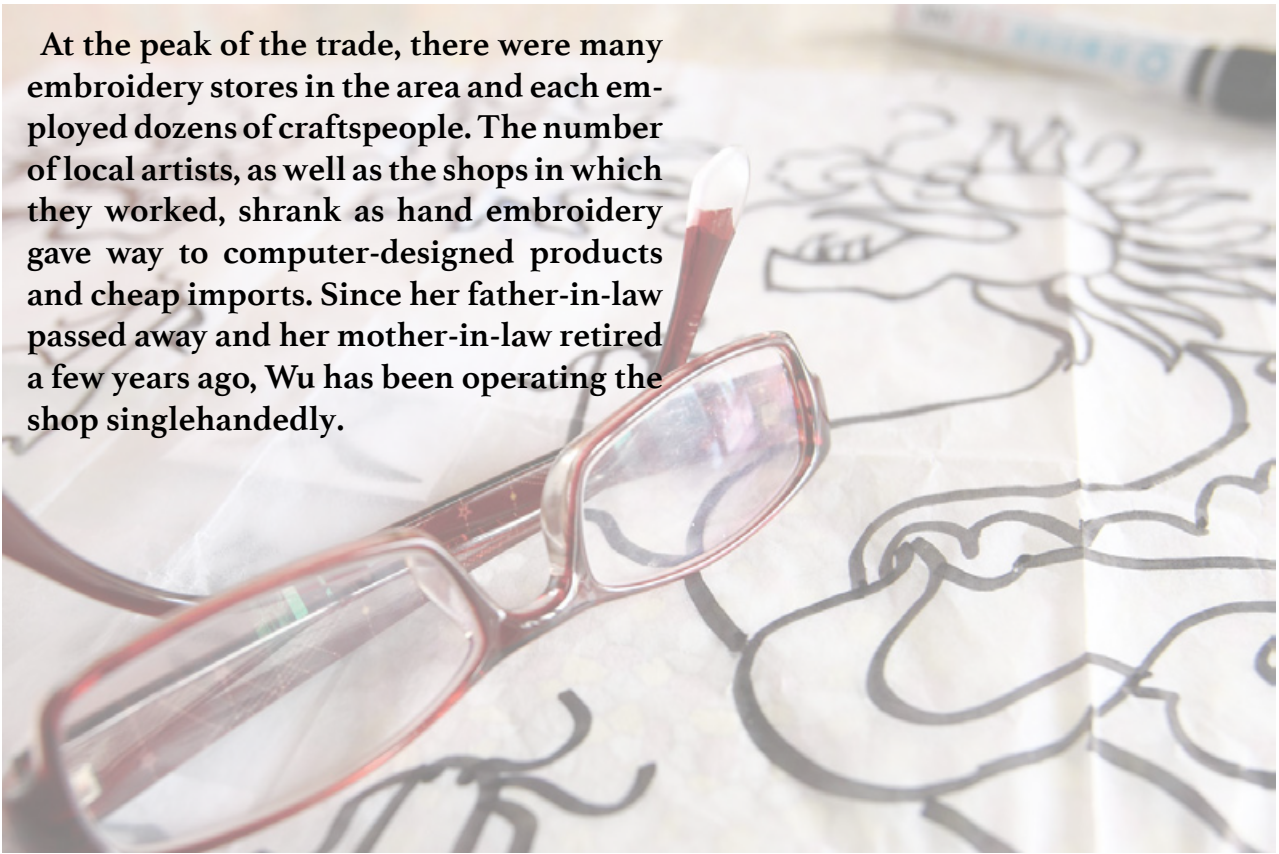
Wu Shu-mei's hand-embroidered works often feature dragon and phoenix patterns.

The area around Lungshan Temple in Taipei's Wanhua District is filled with stores selling all kinds of Buddhist and Taoist items, from statues of gods to incense burners. There is, however, only one shop, Nansin Embroidery, that offers hand-embroidered items for temples, such as flags and robes for deities. The shop was established by Lin Rong-guan more than 70 years ago and is now run by his daughter-in-law Wu Shu-mei, who has been in the trade since she married into the family in 1977.

Wu said embroidering religious pieces is different from creating artistic ones, in that the latter is based on individual creativity while the former requires adherence to strict rules. For example, dragon patterns only adorn robes for male deities while female gods wear phoenix patterns; the God of War is dressed in green and the Goddess of the Sea orange. Both religious and artistic embroidery, however, require substantial patience as it can take months to complete a piece.



At the peak of the trade, there were many embroidery stores in the area and each employed dozens of craftspeople. The number of local artists, as well as the shops in which they worked, shrank as hand embroidery gave way to computer-designed products and cheap imports. Since her father-in-law passed away and her mother-in-law retired a few years ago, Wu has been operating the shop singlehandedly.



Outlines of patterns created by Nanshin Embroidery founder Lin Rong-guan.



The store's seasoned embroidery frame is still going strong, but the craft is fading.

In an attempt to preserve the craft, Wu has taken on a few apprentices over the years. However, all of them quit after a few months of endless stitching. She taught em-

broidery at community colleges for a period of time, only to realize that a few hours of instruction a week might improve the technique of hobby embroiderers but is not enough to turn anyone into a professional. So at Nanhsin, Wu sits alone with her latest project. As her needle speedily pierces the fabric, a dragon slowly forms.



Hand embroidery requires patience as it can take months to complete a single piece.





US president signs bill backing military exchanges with Taiwan

US President Barack Obama signed into law a defense bill December 23, 2016 that includes a section on high-level military exchanges between Taiwan and the United States.



The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2017 was approved by the US House of Representatives in a 375-34 vote December 2, before clearing the Senate with a 92-7 vote December 8.

Section 1284 of the NDAA concerning the sense of the US Congress on military exchanges with Taiwan states that the “Secretary of Defense should carry out a program of exchanges of senior military officers and senior officials between the United States and Taiwan designed to improve military to military relations between the United States and Taiwan.” Exchanges are defined as “an activity, exercise, event, or observation opportunity between members of the Armed Forces and officials of the Department of Defense, on the one hand, and armed forces personnel and officials of Taiwan, on the other hand.”

The Republic of China (Taiwan) Ministry of National Defense expressed thanks in a statement December 24, adding that the measure demonstrates the support and concern of the United States for the ROC’s national defense and security. “We hope both sides build on the strong existing foundations for cooperation by further deepening substantive exchanges with the common goal of promoting regional peace and stability,” the ministry stated.

Taiwan and the United States enjoy robust ties in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and the Six Assurances. Signed into law in 1979 after the United States switched recognition from Taipei to Beijing, the TRA authorizes the continuation of substantive relations between the people of the U.S. and the people of Taiwan.

In 1982, then US President Ronald Reagan issued the Six Assurances, stipulating the United States would not set a date for ending arms sales to Taiwan; revise the TRA; consult with mainland China on arms sales to Taiwan; mediate between Taiwan and mainland China; alter its position on the sovereignty of Taiwan or exert pressure on Taiwan to enter into talks with mainland China; or formally recognize mainland Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.

Source: Taiwan Today. Photo: Ministry of National Defense Facebook