On Campus

Taiwanese President Speaks on Campus

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Photo: Diane Bondareff

The president of Taiwan, Tsai Ing-wen, visited Columbia this summer, meeting with students and faculty and participating in a wide-ranging conversation about global politics. Her visit was part of a two-day trip to New York City that occurred despite objections from China, which claims Taiwan, a self-governing island of twenty-four million people, as its own territory.

Addressing a packed crowd at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies, Tsai spoke firmly of the importance of democracy. “Each day that Taiwan chooses freedom of speech, human rights, and the rule of law is a day that we drift further from the influences of authoritarianism,” Tsai said. “Taiwan stands as a rare example of a country that has both experienced authoritarianism and championed democracy in the modern age.”

While a group of about fifty pro-Taiwan and pro-China demonstrators gathered outside, the audience in the Italian Academy was vocal but calm, asking Tsai a range of questions about Taiwan’s relations with the US and China.

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