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President Bush's chance *Remold Taiwan policy*

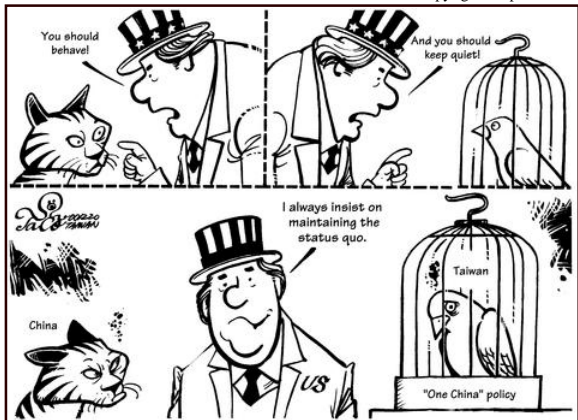
As he assumes the US Presidency, George W. Bush does have an excellent opportunity to remold policy towards Taiwan, redress the backward slide of the Clinton years, and set US policy firmly on a course that is consistent with the basic international principles of democracy and self-determination, as well as basic US values.

The first step should be to move away from Mr. Clinton's "strategic ambiguity" (whatever that meant) and confusing "One China" concepts towards **strategic clarity**: it needs to be made clear that **any** attempt by China to resolve its differences with Taiwan by force is not acceptable to the United States.

The second step is a **renewed emphasis** on freedom, democracy and self-determination: if the United States wants these principles to gain wider acceptance in East Asia, it needs to make crystal clear that the Taiwanese people have the right to determine their own future without any outside pressure or interference from China.

The third step is **normalization of relations** with Taiwan. As we have emphasized

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US to Taiwan, locked up in a "One China" bird cage:
"I always insist on maintaining the status quo"

earlier: a peaceful resolution of the Cross Strait conflict is only possible if the United States and the rest of the international community end the unfair and unjust isolation of the island, and accept that nation-state as a full member of the international community. As long as Taiwan is isolated, it is pushed with its back against the wall by China, and any negotiations would lack a level playing field.

A new US administration also needs to move away from the pervasive paranoia about Taiwan independence: the country is a *de facto* free and independent nation. The only question is how it should be recognized internationally: under the outdated and anachronistic “Republic of China” name, which evokes bitter memories of the Chinese Civil War between the Kuomintang and the Communists, or simply and straightforwardly as a new and democratic “Taiwan”, which lives in peace with all its neighbors, including China.

China’s “new flexibility”?

On 5 January 2001, the Washington Post published an interview of its Beijing reporter John Pomfret with Chinese deputy Prime Minister Qian Qichen. Mr. Qian reportedly indicated that China was willing to be “more flexible” on Taiwan, and also reported that Beijing was urging the incoming Bush Administration not to view Beijing as a “strategic competitor” (“*Beijing signals new flexibility*”, **Washington Post**, 5 January 2001).

The “new” stance appears more optical than any real shift in position, and seems designed try to prevent the new Bush Administration from moving closer to Taiwan, and in particular from deciding to sell the Aegis weapon system to Taiwan during the upcoming round of decisions in April 2001. China is thus displaying some mock flexibility.

In spite of what Mr. Qian stated, another Chinese official — ARATS vice chairman Sun Yafu — said at a briefing after the Qian meeting that any talks can only go ahead if Taiwan recognizes the Beijing-defined “One China” principle.

In the article, Mr. Pomfret also wrote that after Chen Shui-bian’s election as president of Taiwan, “... *China has launched a veritable charm offensive with Taiwan.*” This is a distortion of facts: the following headlines of recent news reports give some indication of China’s stance:

- January 4th 2001: *"China accuses Taiwan's Chen of playing politics over three links"*, **AFP**
- January 4th 2001: *"Links utterly inadequate, says China spokesman"*, **South China Morning Post**
- January 3rd 2001: *"Beijing slams Taiwan mini-links as inadequate"*, **AFP**
- Dec. 13th 2000: *"China tested long-range missile during Shelton visit"*, **Washington Post**

Taiwan Communiqué comment: *We cannot detect any "charm offensive" there. The fact of the matter is that during the past months, Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian has shown all the flexibility, and has bent over backwards to be friendly to China.*

However, China has continued to threaten and intimidate our free and democratic homeland Taiwan. We hope Mr. Bush will stand firm, tell China to keep its hands off Taiwan, and help bring about a normalization of relations between Taiwan and the United States.

To link or not to link?

The "three links" dilemma

During the past few months, the DPP authorities in Taipei have been agonizing over what to do on the issue of the "three links": whether to allow direct postal links, trade, and ship and air transportation between Taiwan and China. This against the background that China is still threatening Taiwan militarily, and has stated it is prepared to invade the island.

The pressure for the "three links" comes primarily from business interests which want to set up operations along the Chinese coast and make use of cheap Chinese labor there. During the past decade, labor costs in Taiwan have increased as the society became more well-off.

The trade and investment in China by Taiwanese businessmen took place in spite of the "Be patient, go slow" policy of the previous Lee Teng-hui administration. Mr. Lee himself is report to have stated during a recent interview with a Japanese publication that Taiwanese investment in China is "suicide."

Officially, China is also in favor of opening up the links with the island-nation, because this will enable it to gradually entangle the island nation in its web, making the task of absorbing it easier. However, it has maintained that any negotiations on the issue can only be held if the Taiwan government agrees to the so-called “One China principle.” Below, we expand on that issue.

For Taiwan, there are significant dangers in the links, because it risks become too reliant on its trade with China, giving Beijing the chance to keep Taiwan in an economic stranglehold, and blackmail the Taipei leaders if they don't give in to Beijing's demands.

A second danger is the reduced warning time in case of a military attack: under the guise of civilian sea or air transport, China could send in military planes or ships to attack the island.

Thirdly, increased economic contacts will enable China to send in more spies and conduct Fifth Column-type of activities on the island. Already, Taiwan's intelligence agencies are warning that China has several thousand spies in place on the island.

“Mini three links”

Well aware of the dangers inherent in opening up too much too China, the administration of newly-elected DPP President Chen Shui-bian has pushed for implementation of the “mini three links”, a relaxation of movement of people and goods between the two Taiwan-held islands Kinmen and Matsu and the adjacent Chinese province of Fukien.

Over the past decade, as the tension between Taiwan and China had subsided, local fishermen and inhabitants of the islands increasingly engaged in smuggling of various goods, such as fish and vegetables. Implementation of these “mini three links” – which went into effect on 1 January 2001 — effectively decriminalizes such activities.

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Taiwan's business hare in China's investment mine field

To the Taiwan authorities, the effort represents an attempt to try out on a small scale how to deal with the movement of good between China and Taiwan, and to develop procedures for visas and visiting permits, custom inspection, immigration etc.

For the time being, these “mini three links” are a unilateral policy from the Taiwan side: no negotiations took place, they apply only to Taiwan vessels from the two islands to China, and trade is restricted to people who have lived on the islands for at least six months. Also, no trans-shipment of the traded goods to Taiwan itself is permitted.

In fact, the Chinese authorities only grudgingly allowed the first visits – three ferries from the two islands – to take place, fearing that they would represent a publicity coup for the Chen Shui-bian Administration. They also denied several dozen Taiwanese reporters permission to come on the first trip. One high-level Beijing official downplayed the opening, saying “... *the mini three links have no substantial meaning, so China can't get excited about it.*”

A couple of days after the opening, another Chinese official termed it “utterly inadequate” and “discriminatory.” In general, however, most Chinese news media all but ignored the opening and didn't cover the arrival of the Taiwan ships in Xiamen's harbor. Presumably, they didn't know how to handle the fact that Taiwan had taken the initiative in the cross-Strait dialogue.

KMT and New Party “visit” Beijing in droves

In the beginning of January 2001, two more delegations from pro-unificationist groupings in Taiwan landed in China, where they were welcomed to a red-carpet treatment and were received by high Communist leaders. The first delegation was a 29-member Kuomintang group, led by KMT legislator Ho Chi-hui, and the second one a 17-member delegation from the pro-unificationist extremist New Party, led by legislator Fung Fu-hsiang (see “*Who is Elmer Fung*” in ***Taiwan Communiqué*** no. 92).

The visit of these two groups is part of a drove of visits by pro-unification groups in Taiwan, and are designed to undermine the strategy of the Chen Administration aimed at keeping Taiwan free, democratic and independent. The people who make up these groups used to constitute the conservative anti-Communist mainlander hard core of the old Kuomintang, which in the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s strenuously opposed democratization on the island and the increase of participation of the native Taiwanese in the political system.

During the transformation to a democratic political system and the gradual “Taiwanization” of the Kuomintang under former President Lee Teng-hui, the old hardliners were increasingly sidelined, with one group splitting off in 1994 to form the New Party, and another allying itself with James Soong, when he split off in 1998-99.

While the Kuomintang was still in power, these elements were held in check by the “Mainstream” within the KMT, which was controlled by President Lee’s “Taiwan First” forces. However, after the election of DPP president Chen Shui-bian the old anti-Communists have gone all out to thwart Chen’s policies, and have allied themselves with the rulers in Beijing, forming a *de facto* Fifth Column on the island.

The Criminal China connection

On 31 December 2000, the Washington Post reported on another element in the pro-unification cast: the criminal connection of the old triads. It described how Mr. Chang An-lo, the leader of the 15,000-strong Bamboo Union Gang, lives unfettered in Shenzhen on the Chinese coast. Mr. Chang is on the most-wanted list in Taiwan for his organized crime activities, and has served seven years in US jails for heroin trafficking.

In the mid-1980s, Mr. Chang was also implicated in the murder of Chinese-American writer Henry Liu, who had written an unflattering biography of then-President Chiang Ching-kuo. The murder was traced to the Bamboo Union and the Kuomintang's secret police.

In addition to his daily underworld activities, Mr. Chang is reportedly an active proponent of Taiwan's "reunification" with China. In the Washington Post article, he was shown with combined ROC/PRC flag on his desk ("*The China connection, once again crime and politics intersect*", **Washington Post**, 31 December 2000).

Kuomintang to split apart?

The resurgence of the old hard liners within the Kuomintang has dismayed many prominent supporters of former President Lee Teng-hui, who feel that under Lien Chan, the party is drifting away from its “Taiwan First” line, and back to bad old self of the period prior to democratization.

At the end of December 2000, the former head of finances of the KMT, Mr. Liu Tai-ying, was reportedly talking openly about establishing a new party, and mentioned

former Prime Minister Vincent Wan-chang Siew as its leader. Two other former high officials in the Kuomintang, Minister of Interior Huang Chu-wen and Cultural Works Director Huang Hui-chen also indicated they would let their KMT memberships lapse.

In the meantime, several of the old pro-unificationists, who left the Kuomintang in 1995-96 to run against president Lee Teng-hui in the March 1996 presidential elections, are now returning to the KMT-fold. Messrs. Chen Li-an, Lin Yang-kang and hardline former general/prime minister Hao Pei-tsun have recently announced they would rejoin the KMT "...to save Taiwan."



The KMT tossing overboard its "Lee Teng-hui engine"

In the 1996 elections, Mr. Lin Yang-kang ran with Mr. Hao as his vice-presidential running mate for the New Party. They received 14.9 percent of the vote. Mr. Chen Li-an ran on an independent ticket and received less than ten percent of the vote.

Should Lien Chan go to China ?

According to a press report in the **Washington Post** ("*Taiwan Nationalists hint at China trip*", 25 November 2000), KMT Vice Chairman Wu Poh-hsiung agreed during his recent trip to Beijing to establish formal ties between the think tanks of the Chinese Communist Party and the KMT. Since KMT Chairman Lien Chan also happens to be chairman of several of the KMT think tanks, this seems to suggest that Mr. Lien Chan might be laying the groundwork for a visit to China.

First, we need to assess Mr. Lien's status in Taiwan. We may recall that he ran in the March 2000 Presidential elections and came in a distant third, with only 23.1% of the vote. According to recent popularity ratings, only some 13% of the respondents approve of his views and actions, in particular after he initiated the recall campaign against President Chen Shui-bian.

Mr. Lien Chan is thus hardly in a position to initiate such a contact, particularly in view of the sensitivity of cross Strait relations. It is clear that the majority of the populace in Taiwan do not agree with the KMT and its policies. That was the reason Mr. Lien Chan was not elected in March and his party was booted out of office after its 55 years of monopoly on power.

Secondly, there is no consensus in Taiwan yet on how to approach China. In September 2000, President Chen instituted an Advisory Group on cross Strait relations, headed by Academia Sinica President and Nobel prize winner Professor Lee Yuan-tseh. However, Mr. Lien's Kuomintang as well as the pro-unification Peoples First Party and tiny New Party boycotted this initiative to come to a national consensus. It would be prudent and responsible of Mr. Lien Chan's KMT – and the other two parties as well — to (re)join the Advisory Group and participate in the debate on relations with China. Unilateral actions such as a visit to China would be reckless and irresponsible.

Thirdly, Mr. Lien Chan should realize that he will be used by China. History shows that Beijing is quite adept at manipulating others to its own advantage. Once Mr. Lien Chan has served the purposes of the Chinese Communist leaders, he will be discarded and dropped by the wayside.

Fourthly, Mr. Lien has a responsibility to the people of Taiwan. A trip to China under the present circumstances would undermine Taiwan's future as a free and democratic nation. Is this what he wants? We suggest that Mr. Lien focus on improving Taiwan's economy and international relations, instead of playing poker with our future.

During his visit to China, Mr. Wu Po-hsiung was also so presumptuous to tell his Chinese hosts that Taiwan independence "...does not enjoy popular support in Taiwan." The fact of the matter is that during the past years pro-independence has gained significantly, and is generally seen to have the support of 42 to 48 % of the respondents, with a slightly smaller percentage opting for the *status quo*.

Since most people on Taiwan consider the present *status quo* to be a form of independence (as "Republic of China on Taiwan"), one could even argue that in total more than 85% support some kind of independence. In contrast, Mr. Wu Po-hsiung's pro-unification sentiment is shared by only some 12-14% of the population.

It is thus clear that the large majority of the people of Taiwan want to be accepted by the international community as a full and equal member in the family of nations, and reject "unification" with a repressive Communist regime.

Towards international recognition

By Mei-chin Chen, editor, Taiwan Communiqué

Taiwan is at the crossroads, again. At stake is our future as a free and democratic nation. Two distinctly different views have emerged: one which continues to perceive Taiwan as an appendage of China, and is pushing for a linkage with the mainland.

This view is propagated by the three opposition parties, Kuomintang, People's First Party and New Party. They come from a background of the old Kuomintang, which came over from China in the 1940s and occupied Taiwan, leading to 38 years of martial law and lack of democracy in our island. For many years, they perpetuated the claim that they were the rightful rulers of all of China. This policy led Taiwan into the dead-end "One China" alley in which we now find ourselves.

The other view is the vision that Taiwan has a right to be a full and equal member of the international community. This view is based on the fact that we have our own Taiwanese identity, which finds its roots both in the aboriginal inhabitants as well as the waves of settlers who came over to Taiwan in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries to escape wars, famines and poverty in China.

This second view is based on the principles of freedom, human rights, democracy and self-determination, which are enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and which constitute the basis for the existence of the many nations of Asia and Africa, which gained their independence in the years following World War II.

Because of a fluke accident of history — the occupation of Taiwan by Chiang Kai-shek's armies fleeing from China — the Taiwanese people were not able to join the international family of nations as an independent nation right away.

Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang regime perpetuated its claim to represent China as the "Republic of China." That became untenable in the early 1970s, when the PRC was accepted as the legitimate representative of China, and the old Kuomintang was left with diplomatic recognition of only some 30 small states in the Caribbean and Africa.

It is important to emphasize that UN Resolution 2758 of 1971 did not say anything about Taiwan: it only recognized the representatives of the PRC Government as the legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations, and expelled "...forthwith

the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek.” The debate at the UN in 1971 was thus not about Taiwan’s status, but about who was the rightful representative of China.

While over the past four decades, the Taiwanese have, through hard work and ingenuity, achieved one of the most prosperous economies of East Asia, and also brought about a full-fledged democracy, the diplomatic isolation has remained.

This is the legacy inherited by Mr. Chen Shui-bian’s administration from its predecessor. How do we extract ourselves from this dilemma?

A new emphasis on our own identity

First, we need to rediscover our own identity. This needs to be an inclusive identity, open to new immigrants who feel an attachment to Taiwan, its existence and its future. But it needs to be a *Taiwanese* identity, rooted in this island, its history, geography and economy.

We also need to reemphasize our culture, literature, music, language and heritage. This can be rooted in the aborigine societies which are so rich in music and dance, but can also be rooted in the Ho’lo and Hakka-speaking societies, or even in the society of the immigrants who came after 1945.

The essence is that it needs to be focused on our existence here in Taiwan, and not dwell on past glory or harebrain future “unification” schemes, which would in all probability turn into nightmares.

Such an emphasis on our own identity needs to be translated into a new foreign and economic policy, which presses for Taiwan’s acceptance in the international community as a full and equal member.

International recognition will not come if we are unclear about our own identity. It will only come if we clearly and persistently stress that our existence as a free and democratic Taiwan is a fact.

As President Chen has already done, we need to emphasize that peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait will only come if China accepts us as a friendly neighbor.

This article first appeared in the Taipei Times, December 21st 2000. Reprinted with permission.

Back to which Constitution?

Three real realities and four recommendations

In order to attempt to come to a national consensus on Taiwan's relations with China, President Chen Shui-bian instituted a Task Force on cross-strait relations in September 2000, headed by Taiwanese Nobel Price winner Lee Yuan-tseh.

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The 25-member group – later renamed Presidential Advisory Group on Cross Strait Relations – was supposed to be joined by representatives from all political parties in Taiwan, but in their drive to undermine the president, the major opposition parties, PFP and KMT, boycotted the Group (see “*Cross-Strait Task Force vs. National Unification Council*” in *Taiwan Communiqué* no. 93, pp. 20-23).



DPP to Lee Yuan-tseh (on his half-horse):
"Come back you son of a ...!!!"

Still, the Group was filled with people from across the political spectrum, and went to work. At the end of November 2000, it came up with its conclusions.

Shrouded in a fuzzy concoction of “Three realities and Four recommendations” the Group basically advised president Chen should deal with the so-called “one China” issue “...in accordance with the ROC Constitution.”

Here follows the text of the recommendation:

Three Realities and Four Recommendations

The Supra-party Task Force maintains:

1. The current status of cross-strait relations is the result of developments in history.

2. Taiwan and the People's Republic of China neither represent one another nor belong to each other. As Taiwan has established a democratic system, any change in status quo must be approved by its citizens through democratic procedures.
3. The people are the core of a nation, and the purpose of a nation is to protect the security and welfare of its people. With geographic proximity as well as similar languages and cultures, the people on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should be able to enjoy long-term and common interests.

Based upon the aforementioned acknowledgments, the Supra-party Task Force recommends that the President:

1. Promote cross-strait relations, handle cross-strait disputes, and respond to Beijing's "one China" stance in accordance with the ROC Constitution.
2. Establish a new mechanism or adjust the existing system, in order to continue integrating the opinions of different parties and sectors on national development and cross-strait relations.
3. Call on the PRC government to respect Taiwan's dignity and right to survival in the international community, renounce the threat of force, and work toward a peace agreement, so that it can win the confidence of the Taiwan people and thereby create a win-win situation for both sides.
4. Make known to the world that the Taiwan government and people will contribute to the international community under the convictions of peace, democracy and prosperity, and that upon the same base, Taiwan wishes to construct a new cross-strait relationship with the greatest sincerity and patience.

Taiwan Communiqué comment: *Well, perhaps somebody should remind the group that according to that "ROC Constitution" the ROC is **the** "One China" and the mainland is part of that "One China" — a far cry from any present-day reality. The ROC Constitution is thus outdated and should be discarded (see below).*

*Instead of dodging the issue like it did, and — in the words of one prominent American commentator — "bringing forth a mouse", Mr. Lee's group should have arrived at the following **real** three realities and four recommendations:*

Three real realities

- 1. The Civil War between the Kuomintang and the CCP is over;*
- 2. Taiwan has never been under the sovereignty of the PRC;*
- 3. Taiwan is now a free and democratic nation, which deserves international recognition in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.*

Four recommendations

- a. Taiwan and China should accept each other as two friendly neighboring countries;*
- b. Taiwan and China should build mutual trust, and establish diplomatic relations;*
- c. Taiwan should normalize its relations with the United States and nations of Europe, Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Australian continent.*
- d. The international community should accept Taiwan as a full and equal member of the family of nations.*

The 1947 anachronism

The “Constitution” referred to in the above mentioned conclusion is the one adopted by the Kuomintang authorities when they were still in China, holed up in Nanking, desperately fighting off the Communists of Mao Tse-tung. It was adopted by the National Assembly in Nanking on 25 December 1946, and promulgated by Chiang Kai-shek’s regime on 1 January 1947.

From April 1948 through April 1991, the ruling Kuomintang authorities had a set of “Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of Communist Rebellion” in place, which severely restricted personal freedoms and human rights in Taiwan. It also provided for the perpetuation of the National Assembly and Legislative Yuan elected in China in 1947. By the end of the 1980s this led to preposterous scenes of old legislators in their 90s – many on an infuse and too senile to know what was going on — being wheeled or even carried into the legislative chambers.

The political reforms pushed through by then-President Lee Teng-hui in the early 1990s gradually dismantled this system, and provided for popular elections for all seats in the Legislative Yuan and National Assembly, and by 1996 for direct election of the President and Vice-President.

While in the second half of the 1990s, the National Assembly and the Taiwan Provincial government (also an anachronistic leftover from the ROC days) were

gradually phased out, the main “Republic of China” shell, the Constitution, name, flag and anthem were left in place.

Taiwan Communiqué comment: *If Taiwan wants to gain international recognition, it needs to discard these trappings of the old regime. They lack any relation to the present-day reality of Taiwan.*

They are, of course, being kept alive artificially by the Kuomintang and other mainland-dominated opposition parties that held power until last March 2000, when the DPP’s Chen Shui-bian was elected as Taiwan’s president.

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The terra cotta "ROC Constitution general"

Sure, there is one China...

....and one Britain and one France

As we have argued before, “one China” has become a confusing concept. After the establishment of the PRC in October 1949, the United States and most of the rest of the Western world clung to the idea that the defeated Kuomintang regime which had fled to Taiwan was the real “One China” and recognized it as the government representing China. From 1945 until 1971, the Nationalists even maintained a seat in the UN Security Council.

That position became untenable in the late 1960s, when an increasing number of newly independent nations in Africa and Asia started to support the PRC’s position, which eventually led to the 1971 switch of the UN seat from the “representatives of Chiang Kai-shek” to those of the Communist authorities in Beijing.

After the US established diplomatic ties with the PRC at the end of 1978, one of the key points – emphasized during the hearings and meetings between the Carter Administration and Congress regarding the Taiwan Relations Act – was that recognition of the

government in Beijing did **not** entail any recognition of sovereignty of Beijing over Taiwan. The key element of US policy was that it needed to be a peaceful process: the US did not take any position on the eventual outcome of that process.

There was the now well-known phrase of the 1972 Shanghai Communiqué that the US **acknowledged** the Chinese position which held that “*all Chinese on either sides of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China.*” As emphasized by many in- an outside the successive US administrations, this was simply and acknowledgement and not a recognition. Most importantly, it also did not take account of the position of the native Taiwanese themselves (85% of the island’s population).

The US position — of emphasis on the **peaceful process** and studious **neutrality on the eventual outcome** – was maintained well during the Reagan and Bush Administrations, but the Clinton Administration allowed itself into drifting much closer to the PRC position by reiterating time and again that it had a “One China” policy, without explaining how this differed from the position of the Communist regime in Beijing.

Taiwan Communiqué comment: *The Beijing authorities are now using the “One China” concept as a blunt tool to drive Taiwan with its back into a corner. It is time for the United States and the rest of the Western world to realize what a monstrous concoction “One China” has become.*

The US and the rest of the West must put new emphasis on the idea that recognition of the government in Beijing as the rightful government of China in no way implies recognition (or acknowledgement for that matter) of their claims to sovereignty over Taiwan.

Sure there is one China, and there is also one France, one Germany and one United Kingdom. But recognition of the government in Paris does not imply that Belgium is part of France, although part of Belgium is French-speaking and at various points in history France ruled over Belgium.

By the same token, recognition of one Germany doesn’t imply that the Netherlands is part of Germany, although Dutch history books start out with Germanic tribes coming down the Rhine River in dugout canoes, and in the darkest days of the 20th Century the German flag flew over the Low Countries.

Another cogent example: recognition of one Great Britain does not imply recognition of British sovereignty over Ireland, although for an extended period of time in the previous centuries the British ruled over Ireland.

Report from Washington

On 18 December 2000, the US Department of Defense issued a report on the military balance in the Taiwan Strait. The report was designed to update Congress on the implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, which stipulates that the US will provide Taiwan with defense articles and services needed to defend itself, and also that the US should maintain a capacity to respond to the use of force against Taiwan by China.

The report, titled “Implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act”, contained

- 1) A review of the operational planning and other preparations of the United States Department of Defense, including but not limited to the United States Pacific Command, to implement the relevant sections of the Taiwan Relations Act since its enactment in 1979; and
- 2) A review of evaluation of all gaps in relevant knowledge about the People’s Republic of China’s capabilities and intentions as they might affect the current and future military balance between Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China, including both classified United States intelligence information and Chinese open source writing. The report shall be submitted in classified form, with an unclassified summary.”

While the report concluded that there are significant gaps in US knowledge about China’s capabilities and intentions, it also stated – stronger than ever before – that US military assistance to Taiwan is in the US national interest, and promote peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Below we present an analysis by **Michael J. Fonte**, senior policy analyst for the Washington-based Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA).

US defense report marks a change

“The United States takes its obligation to assist Taiwan in maintaining a self-defense capability very seriously. This is not only because it is mandated by US law in the TRA (Taiwan Relations Act), but also because it is in our own national interest,” states the “Implementation of the Taiwan Relations Act” report to the US Congress from the Defense Department.

The addition of the phrase, “it is in our own interest” to an expression of US support for Taiwan’s maintenance of a self-defense capability is a shift possibly as significant as President Clinton’s adding the words “the assent of the people of Taiwan” to the usual US policy statement that the resolution of the “Taiwan Strait issue” must be peaceful.

Defense department shift is significant

“A qualitative change” is how one US policy analyst characterized the inclusion of this specific phrase. “I can’t imagine the State Department I know signing off on that statement.”

“This states explicitly what has always been implicit” said a policymaker close to the administration. “The Department of Defense (DOD) is pushing the envelope here. It is useful to state that self-defense capability is in the US national interest because one can read the TRA in a minimalist way, i.e., unlike the Mutual Defense Treaty it does not require us to do anything. The DOD has added another reason for why the US should defend Taiwan — it is in our own interest,” the policymaker added.

“To put it more positively,” the analyst concluded, “if the TRA didn’t exist, the US national interest would be enough of a reason to support Taiwan.”

The actual text of the TRA, Section 2(b), states: “It is the policy of the United States

- 1) to preserve and promote extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people on Taiwan, as well as the people on the China mainland and all other peoples of the Western Pacific area;
- 2) to declare that peace and stability in the area are in the political, security, and economic interests of the United States, and are matters of international concern;
- 3) to make clear that the United States’ decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China rests upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means;
- 4) to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States;

- 5) to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character, and to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan."

The text is clear about peace and stability in the Western Pacific being vital to the interests of the US, and views efforts to resolve the Taiwan Strait issue by "other than peaceful means" to be a threat to this peace and security. But it does not explicitly link the provision of defensive arms to Taiwan to US interests. The DOD text closes the loop neatly.

Regional stability

"As long as Taiwan has a capable defense, the environment will be more conducive to peaceful dialogue, and thus the whole region will be more stable," the report states. "We continually reevaluate Taiwan's defense posture to ensure that we make available to Taiwan such items as will provide a sufficient self-defense capability. Our arms sales policy aims to enable Taiwan to maintain a self-defense capability, while also reinforcing regional stability." The DOD authors continue to hammer away at the link between the two issues.

"The TRA obliges us to maintain the United States' capacity to resist any resort to force or coercion that would jeopardize the security of Taiwan.

This obligation is consistent with America's overall strategy in the region, our commitment to peace and stability, and our regional military posture." The report then clearly links the 100,000 US troops stationed in the region to the same peace and stability goals. Again, the authors seem to be pushing the envelope to state explicitly that these troops are guarantors of a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan Strait issue.

Finally, the report points to the US commitment to Taiwan as detailed in 1996. "We demonstrated our commitment to maintaining regional peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait by deploying two carrier battle groups to the region in response to provocative PRC missile exercises in 1996."

Change is in the air

Although the Clinton administration still has a few weeks' life left in it, this document already seems to be positioning the incoming Bush administration for a more explicit line in the water in the Taiwan Strait.

Former Clinton administration officials like Robert Suettinger have argued that “strategic ambiguity has not been the US policy for at least 5 years.” He has frequently told those discussing US policy to “look at our deeds not our words,” pointing to the 1996 deployment of two aircraft carrier groups in the Taiwan Strait during the Chinese missile firings. Strategic ambiguity is “not the policy now,” Suettinger concludes. “Our policy is: you on both sides have to resolve the issue, peacefully.”

In a Spring 2000 National Interest article, Paul Wolfowitz, one of the key policy advisers to George W. Bush during the presidential campaign and widely considered to be high on Bush’s list for a key policy position, argued: “While ambiguity on the definition of “one China” is desirable and on the subject of arms sales is probably necessary, there are two areas involving American intentions where ambiguity serves no purpose. The first concerns the US attitude toward the use of force to resolve the Taiwan issue, the second our attitude toward Taiwanese independence.

“While making it clear to Taiwan that the United States will not abandon it or force it to negotiate under pressure, we should also convey that we expect reasonable behavior in return — which would include avoiding a unilateral declaration of independence. We will not have peace in the Taiwan Strait if this promising democracy is made to disappear. We will only have peace when it is accepted as a fact of life. Only then will the friends of Taiwan be able to see why it is genuinely better for Taiwan to be joined with China, pointing the way to the kind of government that the great Chinese people deserve.”

Whether a Bush administration pushes for Wolfowitz’s stated position that it would be “genuinely better for Taiwan to be joined with China” or not, strategic clarity is in the air about the US position regarding its commitment to the defense capability of Taiwan.

The DOD report goes beyond even this position on Taiwan’s capability. It clearly links US support for any attack on Taiwan to the US’ regional goals.

“The overarching US goal is to avoid any use or threat of force to resolve differences in the Taiwan Strait. Thus, our goals include that the PRC be persuaded against or deterred from attacking or threatening attack, that if a threat is made it is unavailing, and that if an attack is made it is unsuccessful. In the latter case, our goal would be that Taiwan defend itself without outside assistance — or, as a fallback, that it defend itself long enough to permit outside assistance, and that the combination of Taiwan and US forces defeat a PLA attack on Taiwan, should the US decide to intervene.”

“Moreover,” the report continues, “we have goals associated with the outcome of any conflict, apart from the primary goal of defending Taiwan against unprovoked attack. We would want any US intervention to reassure other allies and friends and discourage other aggressions, strengthening or at least not weakening our future military relations in the region.”

The Bush policy team has made it clear that they view US alliance partners as a higher priority than relations with China. This DOD document runs the military side of that argument out in full.

This article first appeared in the Taipei Times, December 26th 2000. Reprinted with permission.

The “Confederation” fallacy

Every once in a while, an American think-tank figure pops up with a “new” idea on how to resolve the tension across the Taiwan Strait. In early 1998, it was Kennedy School of Government’s Joseph Nye who launched his infamous “Taiwan deal”, in which Taiwan was supposed to foreswear its independence in exchange for some kind of vague “higher international profile”. A year later, Kenneth Lieberthal, who recently stepped down as the prime East Asia person on Mr. Clinton’s National Security Council, launched his equally noxious and onerous “interim agreements” trial balloon.

This time, Mr. David Shambaugh, a pro-China academic at the George Washington University, writes in the January/February 2001 issue of **Foreign Affairs** that the concept of “confederation” offers the best hope for an ultimate solution as “... *it would bring the island back into the sovereign fold of China while guaranteeing substantial autonomy to Taiwan.*”

First we must point out that Mr. Shambaugh’s basic premise is wrong, since Taiwan was never in the sovereign fold of the PRC to begin with. Yes, the Kuomintang came from China, but they were driven out after losing the Civil War there, and they constitute only 15 percent of Taiwan’s population.

The large majority of the people of Taiwan are native Taiwanese, and come from a background of identifying with Taiwan itself, rejecting any claim by China of sovereignty over Taiwan. When Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists came over, the island had just been freed from Japanese colonialism, and was looking forward to joining the multitude of newly independent nations in Asia and Africa.

Instead, they were subjected to 38 years of Martial Law and oppression by the Chinese Nationalists, who for many years clung to the outdated notion that they — as the “Republic of China” — were the rightful rulers of all of China. While since the early 1990’s the Taipei government has dropped these claims, Taiwan’s future is still being held hostage by anachronistic counterclaims across the Taiwan Strait.

Isn’t it time for American scholars to stop perpetuating these outdated notions, and help bring about an acceptance of Taiwan (by China and the rest of the international community) as a full and equal member of the world family of nations? The most obvious — and only really fair and just — resolution is to normalize relations with Taiwan and accord full diplomatic ties to a deserving nation of 23 million people.

The US and other nations need to emphasize time and again that it is the right of the Taiwanese people to determine their own future, without interference, threats or intimidation from China. And if they, the people of Taiwan, want to be accepted as an independent nation named “Taiwan”, that choice should be respected and even applauded by the international community, not discouraged or frustrated.

World Taiwanese Congress established

In the beginning of December 2000, some 50 overseas Taiwanese organizations met in Alexandria, VA — just across the Potomac River from Washington DC — and laid the groundwork for the establishment of the World Taiwanese Congress (WTC). The Congress is the brainchild of lawyer Yao Chia-wen, a close advisor to President Chen Shui-bian, and is the umbrella grouping for overseas organizations that support Taiwan.

The new organization is designed to speak up on behalf of Taiwan and the overseas Taiwanese community, and will focus its activities primarily on the United States, Canada and Europe. It will promote the “Taiwanese Heritage Week”, which is held annually in May, and will also be a driving force for the annual UN membership campaign in August/September.

In early Spring 2001, a meeting will be held in Taiwan to formally establish the new organization. All major existing overseas Taiwanese organizations, such as the Taiwanese Association of America, the North American Taiwanese Women’s Association, and the Formosan Association for Public Affairs have agreed to join forces within the context of the new organization.

Notes

In Memoriam Chiang Peng-chien

On 15 December 2000, Mr. Chiang Peng-chien, the DPP's first chairman, passed away in Taipei of pancreatic cancer at the age of 60.

Photo: Taiwan Communiqué

Mr. Chiang was a tireless campaigner for human rights and democracy in Taiwan. In 1980, during peak of the Kuomintang's repression and martial law, he was (together with present President Chen Shui-bian) one of the courageous young lawyers, who stood up to defend the "Kaohsiung Eight", the major opposition leaders accused of "sedition" after the December 1979 "Kaohsiung Incident." He defended Mr. Lin Yi-hsiung, who later became Chairman of the DPP (1998-2000).



Mr. Chiang Peng-chien

In 1986, Mr. Chiang became the first chairman of the newly-established Democratic Progressive Party, and led it through its first difficult year of existence. He later served as a legislator and a member of the Control Yuan.

He was one of Taiwan's most respected politicians. He had a good sense of humor, was a good speaker, and was always a team player. We will dearly miss him.

Book Review: Island in the Stream

A quick case study of Taiwan's Complex History

Every once in a while, a new and refreshing publication comes around that shows new light on topics that have been discussed *ad infinitum* elsewhere. The 78-page study by American literature professor Jerome Keating and Taiwanese history professor April C.J. Lin is such a book.

In this very readable work, Keating and Lin have condensed Taiwan's complex history from the early 1500s until the present into four chapters (I The Era of Global Navigation, II the Ch'ing era, III The Japanese era, and IV The Republic of China era). Each chapter is concluded with a refreshing "Summary Thought" and a list of questions designed to make the reader think "out-of-the-box" and try to see matters from the perspective of the actors playing a role in the history of that period.

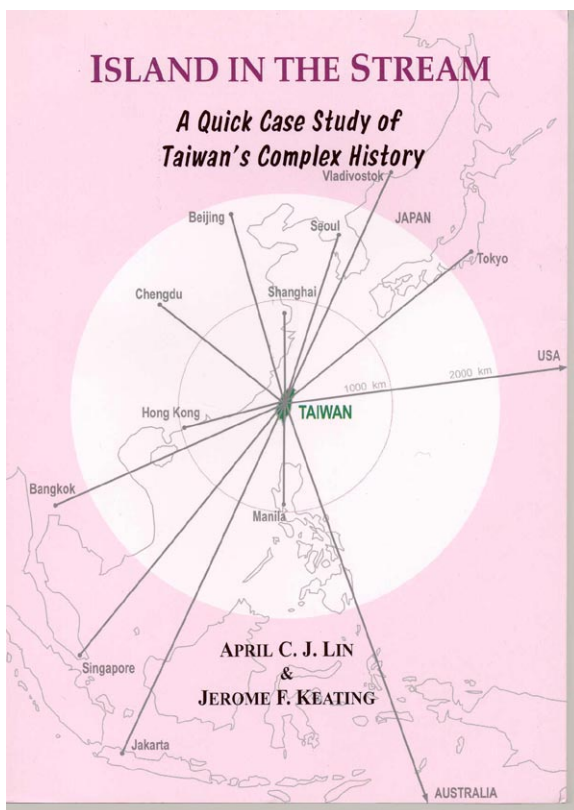
If there is any criticism of the book, it is the minimal discussion of the 1979 "Kaohsiung Incident", which galvanized the democratic opposition on the island and the overseas Taiwanese community into political action.

It was the turning point that laid the groundwork for the establishment of the DPP in 1986, the end of Martial Law in 1987, the subsequent transformation of Taiwan into a democracy, and the recent coming to power of the democratic opposition of the DPP.

Keating and Lin do refer to the event briefly, but only under the heading "*Developments and Stories to be written*".

The book costs NT\$ 200.— and can be ordered from

SMC Publishing in Taipei: tel. +886-2-2362-0190, Fax +886-2-2362-3834, website <http://www.smcbook.com.tw> and e-mail weitw@smcbook.com.tw



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