

Beijing's Evolving Policy toward Taipei: Engagement or Entrapment*

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This paper examines the changing nature of China's policy toward Taiwan. Many of the sharpest debates in Taiwan, the United States, and elsewhere have been over whether recent modifications in policy represent a genuine overhaul in Beijing's approach to Taipei. To simplify, some argue that meaningful change is already happening and that such developments warrant careful study and attention. However, skeptics conclude that change is not happening. As Chen Shui-bian observed during an interview with the author, the new strategy is nothing more than a tactic to "deceive our people and foreign countries." After analyzing various indicators, this study shows how theories and/or conceptual frameworks often employed in the fields of international relations and comparative politics help analysts from the Chinese mainland, Taiwan, and elsewhere unravel some parts of the complicated puzzle that constitutes Beijing's policy toward Taipei. In conclusion, however, the author suggests that it is probable that officials in Taipei will require more facts—not theories—before they agree that there is a genuine "paradigm shift" in Beijing's approach to the thorny Taiwan dispute.

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*An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 37th Annual Taiwan-American Conference, Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, August 26, 2008. This project was supported with a research grant from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange.

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KEYWORDS: China-Taiwan relations; cross-Strait relations; China unification; Taiwan independence; political theory.

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The People's Republic of China (PRC) is more integrated into the global political and economic system than ever before. On balance, China might best be described as a status quo power—a responsible state that does not seek to destabilize the norms of the international system. However, Beijing's relations with its neighbors are not without their complexities and problems. Perhaps most worrisome is the PRC's rocky relationship with the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC or Taiwan).

This paper examines the changing nature of China's policy toward Taiwan. Many of the sharpest debates in Taiwan, the United States, and elsewhere have been over whether recent modifications in policy represent a genuine overhaul in Beijing's approach to Taipei. To simplify, some argue that meaningful change is already happening and that such developments warrant careful study and attention.¹ However, skeptics conclude that change is not happening. As one Taiwanese lawmaker complained, the new strategy is designed to "undermine the power of the [Taiwan] government ... it's a poison coated with sugar."² Others now charge that "China is cheating [President] Ma Ying-jeou [馬英九] and the Taiwan public."³

After analyzing various indicators, this study shows how theories and/or conceptual frameworks often employed in the fields of international relations and comparative politics might help analysts unravel some parts of the complicated puzzle that constitutes China's policy toward Taiwan. In conclusion, however, the author suggests that it is probable that decision-

¹Chang Yun-ping, "China's Shift Poses New Challenges: Academic," *Taipei Times*, July 15, 2006, 3.

²Quoted in Agence France Presse, "Taiwan Says Beijing Offer 'Poison,' Snubs 'One-China Principle,'" April 17, 2006.

³See "Opposition Questions Chinese Intentions," *China Post* (Taipei), June 13, 2008, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

makers in Taipei will require more facts, and not theories, before they agree that there is a genuine paradigm shift in Beijing's approach to the thorny Taiwan dispute.

Evolution of the PRC's Policy toward Taiwan

Since Mao Zedong (毛澤東), chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), officially proclaimed the founding of the PRC on October 1, 1949, Beijing's relations with Taipei have passed through several stages. These are briefly examined below.

Phase One: Armed Liberation

When the ROC government retreated to Taiwan in 1949—along with the bulk of China's art treasures and roughly US\$400 million in foreign exchange, gold, and silver bullion reserves—the PRC proclaimed its intention to "liberate" the island. At various times, the CCP authorities engaged in provocative saber-rattling—threatening to "wash the island in blood" and eagerly anticipating the execution of dozens of "war criminals," including President Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) and his wife, Soong May-ling (宋美齡).

Following the offshore island crisis of 1954, the CCP leadership promised to strive for the "peaceful liberation" of Taiwan "as far as it is possible." For all practical purposes, however, the "armed liberation" of Taiwan remained the much-trumpeted cornerstone of PRC policy throughout the 1950s and 1960s.⁴

For its part, the ROC's mainland policy followed a similar trajectory. Almost all of Chiang's efforts were geared toward "the goal of recovering

⁴As one scholarly article in the PRC observed, "After the establishment of the PRC, Mao Zedong regarded the use of force as the major approach to deal with the Taiwan issue, while trying to use the peaceful approach to liberate Taiwan if possible." See Huang Lifan, "Disandai zhongyang lingdao jiti dui Tai zhengce de jicheng he fazhan" (The third generation of Chinese leaders inheriting and developing policy toward Taiwan), *Xueshu luntan* (Academic Forum) (Nanning, Guangxi), no. 10 (October 2005): 58-61.

the mainland and unifying the country under his leadership ... practically all his diplomatic moves and all his political initiatives were subordinated to this objective."⁵ Indeed, the Generalissimo considered his presence in Taiwan only temporary and often referred to Taipei as "the wartime capital" of the ROC.

Phase Two: One Country, Two Systems

Chairman Mao's Taiwan policy, which consisted largely of harassment, threats, and harsh rhetoric, yielded few, if any, dividends for mainland China. Following his death in 1976, PRC policy toward Taiwan began to change. On September 30, 1981, Ye Jianying (葉劍英), then chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC, 全國人民代表大會), offered Taipei a nine-point proposal to achieve the peaceful reunification of China. The most important point in the proposal was its pledge to allow Taiwan to "maintain a high degree of autonomy as a special administrative region." The island would be allowed to maintain its current socioeconomic system and even its own armed forces. Moreover, both private property rights and foreign investments on Taiwan would be protected. Perhaps most intriguing, ROC government officials would be allowed to "take up posts of leadership" in the PRC government. On January 1, 1982, Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) declared that Ye's plan was "actually one country, two systems" (一國兩制).⁶

PRC officials would not rule out the use of force to take Taiwan. However, the "one country, two systems" approach to unification certainly represented a sharp departure from past policy and placed Taiwan's government in a somewhat awkward position. Not wanting to appear unreasonable, Taipei announced that it would continue to pursue the official policy of the "three no's" (no contacts, no negotiations, and no compromises) unless PRC leaders met two preconditions for negotiations: they

⁵See Harish Kapur, *Taiwan in a Changing World: Search for Security* (Bloomington, Ind.: Author House, 2004), 21.

⁶See Xinhua, "Chinese Agency Reviews Cross-Strait Ties in Past 30 Years," January 3, 2009, in *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, January 3, 2009, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

must renounce communism and accept Sun Yat-sen's (孫逸仙) Three Principles of the People (三民主義).

Beijing rejected Taipei's preconditions for talks as unreasonable.⁷ However, the frosty relations between the two sides began to thaw. Perhaps most important, President Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) opted to legalize indirect trade and transportation links with the mainland in 1987. He hoped that a policy of engagement with the PRC might lead eventually to meaningful political and economic reforms on the mainland.⁸ When coupled with Beijing's new policies, this initiative helped lay the groundwork for an explosion in cross-Strait links and a new era in PRC-ROC relations.

Phase Three: Reconciliation and Conflict

During the administration of President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), Chiang's handpicked successor, cross-Strait economic relations exploded. In this respect, Taiwan and the mainland moved closer together. However, moves toward democratization in Taiwan appeared to push the two sides further apart and helped put Taipei on a collision course with Beijing.

By the mid-1990s, for all practical purposes a new and democratic ROC government had been established in Taiwan. The changes in Taiwan made China's leadership uneasy. Rather than initiating creative policies to cope with transformations occurring on the other side of the Strait, Beijing appeared largely to react to events. For example, after Lee Teng-hui visited Cornell University in 1995 as part of his "pragmatic diplomacy," Beijing boycotted the "indirect" cross-Strait talks launched in the early 1990s and staged a series of provocative missile tests off Taiwan's coastline. Moreover, while Jiang Zemin's (江澤民) "eight-point proposal" on cross-Strait relations that same year reflected a modest degree of flexibility, it did not stray very far from Deng Xiaoping's original "one country, two systems"

⁷The PRC authorities argued that the ROC never actually practiced the Three Principles while governing China, and Beijing had not insisted that Taipei change its own economic and political systems.

⁸As President Chiang explained, "to be more anti-communist, we will have to become less anti-communist." See Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo's Son: Chiang Ching-kuo and the Revolutions in China and Taiwan* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 364.

reunification formula and the sacrosanct "one-China principle." Indeed, throughout the years of the Jiang Zemin presidency Beijing released a series of documents and "white papers" that seemed to be designed to bully the island's population into compliance and submission. Perhaps the most sensational of these was the so-called "anti-secession law" that was passed by China's NPC on March 14, 2005.

Beijing's saber-rattling and verbal tirades represented only part of the equation. China also stepped up preparations for military action against the island. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) launched an unprecedented military buildup and hundreds of ballistic missiles were deployed in provinces directly opposite Taiwan. At the same time, efforts to isolate Taiwan diplomatically accelerated. Beijing employed financial incentives to lure away Taipei's few remaining diplomatic allies and aggressively sought to block the island's participation in most international organizations, including the United Nations, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and a host of other global institutions.⁹

Summary

Between 1949 and 2005, Beijing's policy toward Taipei went through a complete cycle that began with harsh rhetoric and threats, moved toward rapprochement and reconciliation, and then, surprisingly, returned to belligerence and hostility. To be sure, Taipei played a critical role in changes in PRC policy. After all, early threats to "retake" China and more recent threats to "secede" from the country infuriated Beijing's leaders.¹⁰ How-

⁹China's intransigence prevented Taiwan from receiving much-needed international emergency medical assistance during the 1999 earthquake and the 2003 severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) crisis—conduct that contributed to the deaths of hundreds of Taiwanese. Not surprisingly, public opinion polls conducted after the SARS epidemic revealed that more than half of the island's population believed that China was unfriendly toward the Taiwanese people, while an overwhelming majority agreed that China was unfriendly toward their government.

¹⁰As one Chinese scholar observed, the nature of the cross-Strait struggle with Taipei has shifted as it is "no longer focused on who will rule the reunified country, but now focuses on independence or unification." See Liu Shu, "Jianlun dalu dui Tai zhengce de xin bian-

ever, rather than preventing Taiwan's recent drive toward independence, China's actions tended to promote it.¹¹ In fact, when compared to Beijing's new and sophisticated positions in foreign affairs, the approach to the Taiwan issue appears amateurish. In July 2004, Bonnie Glaser, an authority on East Asian politics, outlined the apparent contradiction in PRC policy: "China's approach to Taiwan is out of step with its increasingly sophisticated, confident, and skillful diplomatic practices on a rapidly expanding list of regional and international issues. By contrast, Chinese policies toward Taiwan are ham-handed, unimaginative, and counter-productive."¹²

In brief, Beijing's Taiwan policy appears dysfunctional and perhaps even delusional. Despite the explosion in cross-Strait economic, social, and cultural ties, it seems that the two arch-rivals have been on a collision course. Consequently, the United States and other countries have called on Beijing to seek out "creative" and "new" ways to approach Taipei.

Carrots and Sticks:

Recent Changes in the PRC'S Policies toward Taiwan

Following Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) election as Taiwan's president in 2000, William Cohen, then U.S. secretary of defense, warned the PRC authorities that "the chances are that over time this (cross-Strait negotiations) will become more difficult, not less difficult, given the politics in the

hua" (A brief discussion of the new changes in the mainland's Taiwan policy), *Yanbian dangxiao xuebao* (Journal of Yanbian Party School) 20, no. 4 (December 2005): 67-69.

¹¹China's actions cannot explain the entire drift toward separatism. As Dr. Su Chi (蘇起), an ROC legislator, explained during an interview with the author, "There are three factors or forces that move Taiwan toward separatism. One is historical or biological. As time goes on, ties become less and less. . . the second is the PRC—the PRC's heavy-handed approach. Third is the government here—its official, political push. So, if these three move at the same time, the water will flow faster." Author's interview with Dr. Su Chi, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

¹²Bonnie Glaser, "China's North Korea Policy Triumph: Lessons for Managing Ties with Taiwan," *PacNet Newsletter* (Pacific Forum CSIS), no. 34 (July 29, 2004).

countries concerned."¹³ Throughout the Chen era, U.S. officials repeatedly called on Beijing "to change its frame of reference." They counseled that "old approaches" should be put aside and China should approach the cross-strait stalemate with creativity. Provocative actions—such as the passage of China's "anti-secession" law—were criticized as "counterproductive."

After the election of Ma Ying-jeou in March 2008, Washington again urged Beijing to reach out to Taipei. During a telephone conversation with President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛), President George W. Bush suggested that the "election provides a fresh opportunity for both sides to reach out and engage one another in peacefully resolving their differences."¹⁴ As Stephen Hadley, then U.S. national security adviser, explained, "The Taiwanese election presents an opportunity to encourage China to reach out to Taiwan and to try to resolve differences.... And the president [Bush] did not want to let that go by."¹⁵

In some respects, it does appear that elements within Beijing's leadership cohort are striving to approach the Taiwan issue in a more reasonable and balanced way. On the other hand, however, there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case. The discussion below examines some of the changes and continuities in China's policy toward Taiwan.

*Changes in China's Cross-Strait Policy:
The Soft Gets Softer*

According to some analysts, China has adopted a new grand strategy toward the Taiwan issue. Observers trace changes in the PRC's approach to Taiwan to 2005, shortly before the adoption of the controversial anti-secession law.¹⁶ On March 4, 2005—ten days before the law was passed—

¹³Jim Mannion, "Cohen Presses China's Leadership to Open Dialogue with Taiwan," *Agence France Presse*, July 14, 2000, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

¹⁴"Bush Urges Hu to Reach Out to Taiwan," *Taipei Times*, March 28, 2008, 1.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶See Lin Chong-pin, "China's Emerging Grand Strategy: Dominating East Asia without Fighting" (Paper delivered at the international conference, "Contemporary Security Dilemmas: Reflections on Security in Central Europe and East Asia," University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, the Czech Republic, October 31, 2006), 10. Paper provided to the author by Dr. Lin Chong-pin (林中斌) on January 5, 2007. See also Alan D. Romberg, "Cross-

President Hu Jintao issued a "four-point opinion" outlining ways to promote the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations "under the new circumstances."¹⁷ Since that time, Beijing has softened its rhetoric and now seeks to use economic and cultural instruments to promote ties with the island. Dr. Su Chi, secretary-general of the ROC National Security Council and a leading authority on cross-Strait relations, explains: "Actually, beginning in 2005, it has been a clear trend that they wanted to try the soft line: to win the hearts and minds of the people. I think they began to appreciate the reality and depth of democracy."¹⁸

In December 2005, President Hu Jintao declared that "it is time for us to abandon outdated attitudes and beliefs. We should renounce biases that run counter to the interests of Taiwanese citizens, and start thinking in realistic ways to solve our problems so as to bring about better cross-Strait relations and development in the two communities."¹⁹ Other PRC officials share the president's assessment and voice similar opinions. As Liu Yandong (劉延東), vice chairwoman of the PRC's Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC, 政協), explained, the mainland must now be "guided by the theme of *peaceful development* of cross-Strait relations and the fundamental task of winning the support of the Taiwan people."²⁰

At the so-called "macro level" in the political sphere of cross-Strait relations, China seems to have softened some policies. For example, the "preconditions" for cross-Strait negotiations have been relaxed. In the past, Beijing had insisted that Taipei must accept the "one-China principle," meaning that there exists only one China, that the PRC is the only legal government of China, and that Taiwan is a part of China. Today, Beijing

Strait Relations: In Search of Peace," *China Leadership Monitor*, no. 23 (Winter 2008): 6-7.

¹⁷See "President Sets Forth Guidelines on Taiwan," *China Daily* (Beijing), March 4, 2005, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-03/04/content_421902.htm.

¹⁸Author's interview with Dr. Su Chi, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

¹⁹"HK Magazine Article on Cautious Optimism in New Era of Cross-Strait Relations," *Zhongguo pinglun* (中國評論, China Review), December 5, 2005, 15, in *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, December 22, 2005, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

²⁰Xinhua, "Senior Chinese Advisor Stresses Importance of Winning Taiwan People's Support in Reunification," January 5, 2007, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>. Emphasis added.

continues to insist that Taipei embrace the "one-China principle." However, the term now means that "there is only one China in the world, the mainland and Taiwan all belong to one China; and the integrity of China's sovereignty and territory cannot be violated."²¹ Moreover, Beijing began to call on Taiwan to "return" to the "1992 consensus," an understanding which essentially means that each side can interpret the meaning of "one China" according to its own preference—as either the PRC or the ROC.²² Cross-Strait negotiations began in earnest after the inauguration in 2008 of Taiwan's new president, Ma Ying-jeou, as Ma embraced the "1992 consensus." Both of these moves appeared to inject a degree of mutual respect and equality into the cross-Strait relationship.

Today, Beijing rarely calls for the "reunification" of China under the "one country, two systems" reunification formula. Rather, emphasis tends to be placed on "the peaceful development of relations" and "the maintenance of the status quo." As one Chinese academic observed, "before we used to never say status quo ... now we can use it all the time."²³ In other words, rather than pushing reunification, Beijing now directs much of its energy toward preventing Taiwan independence. At the same time, PRC leaders have shifted away from constantly reminding the world that they will "never renounce" the use of force to take Taiwan and annual military exercises near the island have been scaled back. Indeed, President Hu surprised many observers when he called for a "peace agreement" with Taiwan during the CCP's Seventeenth National Congress in October 2007, if the island returns to the "one-China principle."²⁴ At the time, some believed that the most notable thing about the speech was the remarkable restraint

²¹Lin, "China's Emerging Grand Strategy," 3.

²²Dr. Su Chi coined the term "1992 consensus" (九二共識) to describe the arrangement hammered out by "unofficial" ROC and PRC negotiators in 1992. It is also known as "one China, different interpretations" (一中各表).

²³Quoted in Edward Cody, "China Easing Its Stance on Taiwan: Tolerance Grows for Status Quo," *Washington Post*, June 15, 2006, A14. <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

²⁴President Hu stated that "we would like to make a solemn appeal: on the basis of the one-China principle let us discuss a formal end to the state of hostility between the two sides (and) reach a peace agreement." For more information see Ben Blanchard, "China's President Offers Taiwan Talks for Peace," Reuters, October 15, 2007. <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSPEK19590120071015? pageNumber=2&sp=true>.

it displayed given the actions of some politicians in Taipei.²⁵

When high-ranking PRC officials do opt to discuss reunification, they stress that "peaceful reunification does not mean that one side 'swallows' the other but that the two sides confer on reunification through *consultation on an equal footing*."²⁶ Again, the emphasis appears to be on equality between the two sides. When President Hu repeated his call for a peace agreement during his opening speech at the CPPCC in March 2008, he stressed that the "status in negotiations would be equal."²⁷ Perhaps just as important, all talk of some sort of a "timetable" for reunification has been shelved. As President Hu explained, "as long as there is still a ray of hope for peaceful reunification, we'll do our utmost to achieve it."²⁸ The president has reportedly advised Chinese military commanders that they should "fear not Taiwan's procrastination."²⁹

The PRC authorities now emphasize that they will talk to the members of *any* political party in Taiwan—including those of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨)—so long as they accept the "one-China principle" and embrace the "1992 consensus." In 2006, Jia Qinglin (賈慶林), chair of CPPCC, openly called for Beijing to establish contact with Taiwan's "deep Green" independence advocates.³⁰ After Taiwan's 2008 presidential election, efforts to reach out to independence forces accelerated. For example, Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), then director of the

²⁵During an interview with the author, Dr. Lin Chong-pin explained that many had expected President Hu to criticize Taiwan's recent move to rejoin the United Nations as "Taiwan" and other moves deemed provocative by Beijing and much of the international community. Lin believes that Hu's restraint "was the most remarkable thing. Hu did not even mention the campaign to return to the UN. . . he just ignored the whole thing." Author's interview with by Dr. Lin Chong-pin, president of the Foundation on International and Cross-Strait Studies (中華歐亞基金會), Taipei, November 23, 2007.

²⁶President Hu Jintao as quoted in Xu Shiquan, "New Perspectives on the Chinese Mainland's Policy Toward Taiwan," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 28, no. 5 (2006): 379.

²⁷Michael Schuman, "Strait Talker," *Time*, March 13, 2008, <http://www.time.com>. Emphasis added.

²⁸See note 26 above.

²⁹Chong-pin Lin, "More Carrot Than Stick: Beijing's Emerging Taiwan Policy," World Security Institute, Winter 2008, http://www.wsichina.org/cs9_1.pdf.

³⁰Chong-pin Lin, "Beijing Speaks Softly to Taiwan: China's New Cross-Strait Strategy," *International Herald Tribune*, March 30, 2006, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

State Council's Taiwan Affairs Office (國務院台灣事務辦公室, presently the head of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait 海峽兩岸關係協會), declared that, "we warmly welcome those who used to have the illusion of Taiwan independence, those who used to advocate Taiwan independence, and even those who used to be engaged in such activities to return to the correct path of peaceful development of cross-Strait relations."³¹ Interestingly, China's leadership stresses that it opposes the *de jure* independence of Taiwan. Until recently, no Chinese leader dared utter the term as it implied recognition of Taiwan's *de facto* independence from the mainland.³²

Finally, Beijing appears to be more willing to explore ways that Taipei might gain some "international space." On May 28, 2008, President Hu told Wu Poh-hsiung (吳伯雄), chairman of the Kuomintang (KMT, 中國國民黨), that "after the two sides resume consultations [we] can discuss the issue of [Taiwan's] participation in international activities ... *including giving priority to discussing the issue of attending WHO activities.*"³³ Perhaps equally significant, Chinese television news programs now openly discuss the prospects for dismantling the missiles deployed directly opposite Taiwan and officials acknowledge that the issue might be placed on the negotiating table in the future.³⁴

In addition to changes in the "overarching" positions outlined above, Beijing has announced a wide variety of other policy adjustments. Most of these are at what some describe as "the functional level" and are designed to promote economic, social, and cultural exchanges between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. In some instances, these initiatives have coincided with the series of KMT-CCP summits—meetings that have been conducted

³¹"Peaceful Development of Cross-Strait Ties Reaffirmed," *China Daily*, May 22, 2005, <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn>.

³²Lin, "China's Emerging Grand Strategy," 17.

³³Wu Jiao, "Hu Urges Restart of Straits Talks," *China Daily* (Beijing Edition), May 29, 2008, 1. Emphasis added.

³⁴See "Chinese Official Says Missile Issue Not Ruled out from Cross-Strait Talks," *Wen Wei Po* (文匯報) (Hong Kong), June 4, 2008, in *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, June 5, 2008, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

on an annual basis since 2005. In other cases, however, Beijing has simply taken the initiative and announced a change in policy.

Modifications and changes in Beijing's policies toward Taiwan range from rather modest (and perhaps even mundane) adjustments to quite meaningful concessions. For example, Beijing has extended the time that Taiwanese journalists are permitted to spend in China and when the world market price for bananas dropped in 2006, China stepped in and purchased a substantial quantity from Taiwan.³⁵ Taiwanese students are now permitted to pay what Americans describe as "in-state tuition" when attending mainland universities and Taiwanese businesses receive low-cost loans to set up factories in the mainland. Moreover, Taiwanese doctors may now practice medicine in the mainland and Taiwanese agricultural products receive preferential treatment in China. Perhaps most significant, the two sides hammered out an agreement providing for direct cross-Strait shipping, daily cross-Strait flights, and improved postal services and food safety in November 2008. Not surprisingly, all such adjustments in policy are carefully monitored and chronicled by analysts in Taiwan.

To be sure, astounding changes are occurring within China. For example, capitalists are now permitted to join the CCP. Moreover, private property rights are now protected in the PRC constitution and the country enjoyed the fastest growing economy in the world prior to the global economic crisis. According to some projections, China will overtake the United States as the world's largest economy within twenty years. As Lien Chan (連戰), then chairman of the KMT, explained before his landmark journey to the PRC in 2005, "We must not harbor the old mind-set of the 1930s or 1950s ... the Chinese mainland has experienced dramatic changes both in politics and the economy over the past 18 years. We must face the changes."³⁶ President Ma agrees that "China has made certain progress

³⁵For details on this initiative and other examples, see David G. Brown, "China-Taiwan Relations: Continuing to Inch Forward," *Comparative Connections: A Quarterly E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations* 8, no. 4 (January 15, 2007), <http://www.csis.org>.

³⁶Quoted in Joseph Kahn, "China Seeks to Isolate Taiwan's President," *New York Times*, April 26, 2005, 1, <http://www/lexisnexis.com>.

since it started to open up and reform 30 years ago."³⁷ Some believe that the changes in Beijing's approach to cross-Strait relations also are significant. As Dr. Lin Chong-pin, a leading authority on cross-Strait relations and professor at Tamkang University's (淡江大學) prestigious Institute of International Affairs and Strategic Studies, explained during an interview with the author, "I think they [the adjustments in policy] mean definitely a new approach in Beijing toward Taiwan that is very different from the past."³⁸

Changes in China's Cross-Strait Policy:

The Hard Gets Harder

Some observers contend that the PRC has changed only the *tactics* designed to undermine the sovereignty of the ROC government and absorb Taiwan. In other words, they believe that the goal of oppressing Taiwan (and eventually absorbing it) has not changed. During an interview with the author, Dr. Joseph Wu (吳釗燮), then chairman of Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC, 大陸事務委員會), explained why he remains deeply suspicious of Beijing's behavior: "The overall structure of cross-Strait relations remains the same. The Chinese policy objectives remain the same. And the tactics have undergone some subtle changes. So, the overall picture and basic structure remain the same."³⁹ Chen Shui-bian, then Taiwan's president, concurs with this assessment. During an interview with the author, the president explained:

The CCP never changes. Its nature does not change. Its basic policy toward Taiwan doesn't change either. It only has one purpose and objective—to annex Taiwan.... The strategies against Taiwan have one objective: to downgrade Taiwan, localize Taiwan, marginalize Taiwan, delegitimize Taiwan's government, and undermine Taiwan's sovereignty.⁴⁰

Despite talk of the "peaceful development" of cross-Strait relations, Beijing's preparations for a military conquest of Taiwan continue unabated

³⁷See "Taiwan's Ma Lauds Rival China's Openness on Tiananmen Anniversary," *International Herald Tribune*, June 4, 2008, <http://www.ihf.com>.

³⁸Author's interview with by Dr. Lin Chong-pin, Taipei, January 5, 2007.

³⁹Author's interview with Dr. Joseph Wu, Taipei, January 3, 2007.

⁴⁰Author's interview with Chen Shui-bian, Taipei, November 21, 2007.

and China refuses to renounce the use of force to take Taiwan. From time to time, military leaders threaten the island with annihilation. For example, in March 2007, General Guo Boxiong (郭伯雄), vice chairman of the CCP's Central Military Commission, called on all PLA soldiers to "'heighten (their) sense of responsibility and sense of urgency' and to make all-out efforts to 'get well-prepared for military struggle'."⁴¹ In other instances, however, it seems that the PLA has singled out only Taiwan's leaders for intimidation and punishment. There was talk of "decapitating" Taipei's leadership during the Chen era and PLA warplanes tracked flights believed to be carrying the controversial president.⁴²

For over a dozen years, China's military budget has increased at a double-digit rate as the PLA has purchased or developed a wide variety of advanced weaponry. In 2007, Beijing's defense budget jumped almost 18 percent to US\$45 billion—the biggest hike since 1995.⁴³ As Dr. Joseph Wu observed at the time, "they are still adding more to their stockpile of short-range missiles, cruise missiles, intermediate-range missiles, submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and they are still cranking out more and more submarines—especially those most advanced submarines ... and they are also producing more and more modern jets."⁴⁴ There is evidence supporting his views. In 2008, the PLA's budget again soared 17.6 percent, prompting Dennis Blair, the U.S. director of national intelligence, to inform Congress that China's military spending "poses a greater threat to Taiwan."⁴⁵

Taiwanese officials are especially irked by the fact that, despite reductions in Taipei's defense budget and live-fire military drills, Beijing

⁴¹Quoted in Christopher Bodeen, "China General Warns of Response to Taiwan," Associated Press, March 6, 2007. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/China+general+warns+of+response+to+Taiwan-a01611299969>.

⁴²See Cary Huang, "Taipei Leader's Tactics Keep Beijing on Its Toes," *South China Morning Post*, June 18, 2007, 6, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁴³See "China's Military Advantage over Taiwan Rises, Analysts Say," *China Post*, March 31, 2007. <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/news/2007/03/31/105939/China's-military.htm>.

⁴⁴Author's interview with Dr. Joseph Wu, Taipei, January 3, 2007.

⁴⁵See Foster Klug, "U.S. Intel Chief Warns against China-Taiwan Conflict," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2009, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/12/AR2009021202536_p.

continues to bolster the massive arsenal of ballistic missiles that it has deployed directly opposite Taiwan. In early 2007, the MAC warned that China had "988 missiles arrayed against Taiwan and is threatening to conquer Taiwan by 2015."⁴⁶ In February 2009, the MAC declared that the number of PRC missiles opposite Taiwan had soared to roughly 1,500 and commented, "that's not right ... they're always adding [missiles]."⁴⁷ Given such developments, Taiwan defense officials have conceded that the island is incapable of withstanding a PRC military attack without American assistance.⁴⁸

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Defense conceded that "the PLA's capabilities to pursue a variety of courses of action are improving" and warned that the military balance is tipping in Beijing's favor.⁴⁹ As Admiral Timothy Keating, commander of U.S. forces stationed in the Pacific and Asia, explained during a congressional hearing the following year, "The threat that China poses is increasing, in my opinion, for the folks who are our friends in Taiwan."⁵⁰ Mark Cozard, a senior analyst in the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency, has warned the U.S. Congress that China's growing military muscle also provides it with a better chance to counter American intervention in the event of cross-Strait war. According to Cozard, the PLA is now focusing on "presenting a credible threat to Taiwan and preventing any third party that might intervene on Taiwan's behalf in a crisis."⁵¹

In addition to the accelerating military threat, the PRC continues with its longstanding efforts to strangle Taiwan in the international arena. In

⁴⁶Chen-yuan Tung, "Is China a Responsible Stakeholder?" January 11, 2007. Mainland Affairs Council press release, <http://www.mac.gov.tw>.

⁴⁷Ralph Jennings, "China Increases Missiles Pointed at Taiwan to 1,500," *Taipei Times*, February 15, 2009, 1, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2009/02/15/2003436194/print>.

⁴⁸See Joseph Yeh, "Defense Minister Says Taiwan Cannot Withstand PRC Invasion on Its Own," *Taiwan News*, November 28, 2007, 1.

⁴⁹Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2007* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, May 2007), 32.

⁵⁰See Richard Halloran, "China Missiles Pose Threat," *The Straits Times* (Singapore), March 29, 2008, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁵¹See note 43 above.

fact, during interviews with the author in 2007, some ROC officials complained that "their [China's] tactics in isolating Taiwan and suffocating Taiwan are really getting worse."⁵² This represents part of a larger strategy the Taiwanese authorities have described as the PRC's "three all's policy" (三光政策)—stealing all of Taiwan's diplomatic allies, blocking all of Taiwan's international channels, and divesting Taiwan of all bargaining chips for dealing with China on an equal footing.⁵³ There is some evidence to support this view.

Of the world's 193 nations, over 160 recognize Beijing as the legitimate government of *all* China (interpreted by the PRC to include Taiwan) and less than two dozen still maintain diplomatic relations with Taipei. Taiwan's small coterie of diplomatic allies are important to Taipei as they bestow a degree of international legitimacy upon the ROC government, speak for Taipei in the international community, and provide the island's leaders with an excuse to make so-called "transit stopovers" in more important countries. For example, most of Taiwan's allies support Taipei's efforts to rejoin the United Nations and the WHO and President Chen was routinely granted a transit visa to "rest" in various U.S. cities (ranging from New York City to Anchorage, Alaska) while en route to Central America—a practice that has been continued by President Ma albeit on a more low-key level. Until very recently Beijing employed various forms of bribery and coercion to lure away Taiwan's diplomatic partners. Many of Taiwan's "small friends," including Grenada, Liberia, Senegal, Chad, Costa Rica, the Commonwealth of Dominica, and Malawi, yielded to temptation and switched recognition to China.⁵⁴ If a country dares to recognize Taipei, Beijing seeks to ensure that the move will cost it dearly. When Macedonia recognized Taiwan, China used its clout in the United Nations

⁵² Author's interview with Dr. Joseph Wu, Taipei, January 3, 2007.

⁵³ Government Information Office, *Safeguarding Taiwan's Democracy, Opposing China's Aggression* (Taipei: Government Information Office, April 2006), 24-25.

⁵⁴ Malawi reportedly received a US\$6 billion financial assistance package to dump Taipei for Beijing. See Rachel Chan, "Diplomatic Truce with China Not Immediate Priority—Taiwan FM," Central News Agency, June 2, 2008, in *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, June 2, 2008, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

to end a peacekeeping mission in that war-torn country in 2001. Consequently, the country switched back to Beijing. Hardball tactics of a similar nature have been used against other nations.

It is noteworthy that Beijing's efforts to suffocate Taiwan internationally are not limited solely to stealing and/or punishing the island's few remaining diplomatic friends. Indeed, it is the PRC alone that is responsible for blocking Taiwan's admission to the United Nations, the WHO, and a host of other international organizations. No other country genuinely objects to Taiwan's participation in international activities. Rather, they cave in to pressure and threats from China. Indeed, representatives of the European Union have conceded that they will "support" or "welcome" Taiwan's participation in international bodies once Beijing drops its objections.⁵⁵

In the early 1990s, Taiwan launched a campaign to return to the United Nations and affiliated bodies such as the WHO, using a variety of names and strategies to garner support for participation without antagonizing the PRC. For example, following the outbreak of SARS in Taiwan in March 2003, the island sought to return to the WHO in a limited capacity as a "health-entity" with "observer" status.⁵⁶ However, Beijing blocked all such moves. When Taipei switched tactics in 2007 and attempted to seek full membership in the United Nations and the WHO as "Taiwan," the PRC authorities blasted the effort as "ridiculous in the extreme." They branded President Chen as "an out and out plotter and saboteur," while threatening that "scum of the nation who attempt to split the country cannot escape the punishment of history in the end."⁵⁷ Pro-Taiwan organizations charged that Taipei only adopted these controversial strategies to counter Beijing's "relentless pressure to isolate Taiwan and push it into a corner."⁵⁸

⁵⁵See Rachel Chan, "EU Backs Taiwan's Membership in Global Groups if China Agrees—Official," Central News Agency, June 3, 2008, in *BBC World Wide Monitoring*, June 3, 2008, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁵⁶The International Committee of the Red Cross, Rotary International, the Vatican, the Palestine Liberation Authority, and Malta all enjoy observer status.

⁵⁷See "China, Taiwan Exchange Barbs over Failed United Nations Bid," *China Post*, July 25, 2007, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁵⁸See Charles Snyder, "FAPA Slams Young over Remarks," *Taipei Times*, November 17, 2007, 3.

The Ma administration abandoned the confrontational approach toward returning to the international community that was embraced by President Chen's government and reverted to less controversial initiatives. Thus far, however, the new stance has not yielded concrete dividends. The island remains locked out of the WHO.

Despite the recent change of administration in Taipei and the corresponding modifications of policies designed to enable the island to return to the global community, some Chinese officials seem determined to squeeze, isolate, and belittle Taiwan. For example, in June 2008, Wang Yi (王毅), director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, contradicted President Hu Jintao when he told Japanese reporters that Beijing will not accept Taipei's participation in the WHO.⁵⁹ Furthermore, few believe that the Ma administration can somehow engineer Taipei's return to the United Nations. As Hsu Yung-ming (徐永明), an analyst at Academia Sinica (中央研究院), explained, "They will definitely reject the bid ... they are not going to change their position just because Ma is in office."⁶⁰ Moreover, China sought initially to change the name that Taiwan was employing to participate in the 2008 Beijing Olympics from "Chinese (Zhonghwa), Taipei" (中華台北) to "China (Zhongguo), Taipei" (中國台北).

In the past, Beijing grudgingly agreed to Taiwan's participation in many nongovernmental organizations, low-profile international activities, and global institutions with an economic focus (for example, Taiwan functions as "a customs territory" in the World Trade Organization, WTO). However, Taiwanese officials complain that the PRC is now seeking to block Taiwan's participation in all sorts of global institutions (governmental and nongovernmental) and international activities. They cite a long list of incidents—ranging from the trivial to the truly bizarre—to support their argument (see table 1).

⁵⁹See "Opposition Questions Chinese Intentions," *China Post*, June 13, 2008, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁶⁰"Sixteenth Time Lucky? Taiwan Again Seeks UN Spot," Reuters India, July 30, 2008, <http://in.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idINIndia-34741620080730>.

Table 1
Selected Cases of Beijing's Actions against Taipei in the International Community, April 2005–September 2008

April 2005	ROC embassy to the Dominican Republic (DR) is invited to attend the opening ceremony of the Santo Domingo International Book Fair in the DR. After the ceremony, Cai Weiquan (蔡維泉), China's commercial representative in the DR, asks fair staff to place a PRC name plaque and tabletop PRC flag at Taiwan's exhibition booth.
June 2005	Under pressure from China, the WTO Secretariat omits the official titles (such as counselor, first secretary, second secretary, and third secretary) of the members of Taiwan's Permanent Mission to the WTO, except for the titles of the permanent representative and deputy permanent representative, in the newly published WTO directory of members.
July 2005	Taiwan's ambassador to the DR, John Feng (馮寄台), and China's "unofficial" representative in the DR, Cai Weiquan, are invited to attend a groundbreaking ceremony in the Chinatown district of the capital Santo Domingo. Cai's staff arrive early and occupy the seats of honor for the diplomatic corps. Event personnel try three times to get them to vacate these seats, to no avail. The matter is finally resolved after Ambassador Feng negotiates with the sponsor to have the seats returned to Taiwan's delegation.
October 2005	Bowing to PRC pressure, in order to obtain an operating license in China, Google's Map Service labels a map of Taiwan as a province of China.
October 25, 2005	After having received monetary incentives from China, Senegal decides to sever diplomatic ties with Taiwan.
February 13, 2006	The sponsor of the 9th World Firefighters Games in Hong Kong bows to Chinese pressure and prohibits Taiwanese contestants from bringing their national flag, membership flag, and firefighter banners into the games venue and asks them to change the name of their team to "China, Taipei." Taiwan withdraws from the contest.
August 5, 2006	Influenced by the incentives of financial aid and military equipment from China, Chad announces that it has decided to sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan.
August 2006	During the 40th International Children's Games (ICG) in Bangkok, members of the PRC team thrice wrest away the ROC flag draped over Taiwan's gold medal winners.

Table 1 (Continued)

September 2006	China forcibly obstructs Chinese Petroleum Corporation's promotion of an investment project at a petrochemical complex in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
September 2006	A meeting of the International Association of Horticultural Producers is cancelled due to demands by the China Flower Association that the name of the Taiwan Floriculture Development Association be changed and that all Taiwan-related activities be subject to Chinese approval.
January 2007	PRC pressures Mexico to ban President Chen's plane from flying through Mexico's flight information region en route to Nicaragua, and pressures Washington to limit Chen's visits to the United States.
January 2007	China pressures South Korea to change the nationality on visas issued to Taiwanese exchange students to "Chinese."
February 2007	According to Japanese news reports, China uses its veto power to block UN peacekeeping efforts in Haiti, thus causing Taiwan's ally Haiti to issue a letter to China stating that it will no longer support Taiwan's bid to join the United Nations.
March 2007	During an international seminar on fishery subsidies convened by the WTO, Chinese officials force the General Council to change the name of Taiwan on all documents to "China, Taiwan Province."
June 2008	Wang Yi, director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, contradicts President Hu Jintao and tells Japanese reporters that Beijing will not accept Taipei's participation in the WHO.
July 2008	PRC officials seek to change the name that Taiwan employs to participate in the Olympic Games from "Chinese, Taipei" to "China, Taipei." They later relent and drop the matter.
September 2008	PRC officials suspend military contacts with the United States after Washington announces plans to move forward with arms sales to Taiwan originally announced in 2001.

Sources: Mainland Affairs Council, ROC, "Recent Examples of Attempts by China to Change Taiwan's National Name in the International Arena" (March 2007), <http://www.mac.gov.tw>; Mainland Affairs Council, ROC, "Examples of China's Diplomatic Suppression of Taiwan in the Two Years since the Enactment of the 'Anti-Separation Law'" (March 2007), <http://www.mac.gov.tw>; and various news reports.

Some observers contend that the PRC's military buildup and the drive to bully Taiwan in the international community represent only part of the equation. They charge that Beijing has also employed "united front" tactics to divide and disrupt Taiwan's society. During the Chen administration, rather than negotiating with the ROC national government, the PRC preferred to strike deals with opposition parties and politicians—a strategy some described as a clever tactic to downgrade and exclude the government from cross-Strait negotiations. Important domestic constituencies also were carefully courted. Again, Dr. Joseph Wu explains:

The Chinese sense that their tactic of dividing Taiwan has been succeeding... they don't have to show their ugly face to Taiwan. They let the Taiwan media and Taiwan opposition [parties] do the job... they have no incentive for engaging President Chen or the DPP government in political dialogue. So, you know, it's dead.⁶¹

Should positive reinforcement (carrots) fail to garner support from Taiwan's commercial interests, China does not hesitate to employ negative reinforcement (sticks). In fact, China's threats to retaliate against firms supporting Taiwan independence prompted some of President Chen's strongest corporate supporters to switch sides and become his harshest critics. For example, in 2005, Hsu Wen-long (許文龍), the founder of the Chi Mei Group (奇美集團) and a former Chen supporter, stunned the world when he praised Beijing's Anti-Secession Law. The business tycoon also announced that "I think Taiwan and China belong to one China... I oppose Taiwan independence because promoting independence would lead Taiwan to war and bring disasters to the Taiwanese people."⁶² Most suspect that PRC threats were responsible for Hsu's dramatic change of heart and that this was not an isolated incident. Other firms may have been motivated to follow Chi Mei's lead. As James Huskey, then chief of the Political Section at the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), explained during an interview with the author, "that [the Chi Mei group case] was very dramatic, but it's

⁶¹Author's interview with Dr. Joseph Wu, Taipei, January 3, 2007.

⁶²"Independence Stalwart Departs from Traditional Line," *China Post*, March 27, 2005, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

very typical now on a much lower level. On a much less public level—that is what is happening."⁶³

Finally, Taiwan officials complain that China aggressively seeks to drive a wedge between the island and its oldest friend and supporter, the United States. During the Chen years, Beijing officials routinely complained to their American counterparts that the Taiwanese president was "a troublemaker and destroyer of cross-Strait relations and peace and stability in Asia."⁶⁴ They pressured U.S. officials to "rein in" the "separatist forces" in Taiwan in order to promote peace and stability in the Western Pacific, while portraying themselves as "defenders of the status quo." The United States responded by opposing Taiwan's decisions to rename its state corporations, shelve the National Unification Council and Guidelines for National Unification, and return to the United Nations as "Taiwan."⁶⁵ At the same time, however, Beijing stealthily deployed more ballistic missiles opposite Taiwan, stole more of Taiwan's diplomatic allies, and squeezed the island out of more international activities. Such developments led Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council to protest to the international community that China, not Taiwan, was "the troublemaker who unilaterally changes the status quo."⁶⁶ Taiwan officials also emphasized that "Taiwan has never been part of China. This is the status quo."⁶⁷

Both the United States and the PRC welcomed the outcome of Taiwan's 2008 presidential election. Indeed, during discussions with the author, American officials in Beijing and Taipei explained (on the condition of anonymity) that the Bush administration clearly hoped for a KMT

⁶³ Author's interview with James L. Huskey, July 25, 2007.

⁶⁴ "Mainland Affairs Council: China Is the Real Troublemaker," *China Post*, February 9, 2006. <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/2006/02/09/76633/MAC:-China.htm>.

⁶⁵ Chen Shui-bian has criticized the U.S. actions as "appeasement" of China. See Edward Cody, "Taiwan Leader Vows to Pursue Vote on Island's Name; Dismissing U.S. Objections, Chen to Press Ahead on Measure Affecting Application to United Nations," *Washington Post*, July 8, 2007, A17, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁶⁶ See note 64 above.

⁶⁷ See Edward Cody, "Taiwan Defies U.S., Seeks UN Membership under Debated Name," *Washington Post*, July 21, 2007, A09, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

victory. However, this has not changed China's position on U.S.-Taiwan relations. Beijing continues to pressure Washington to cancel its existing arms sales agreements with Taipei, deny future requests for weapons, and prohibit the island's leaders from visiting America.⁶⁸ In fact, China suspended military-to-military exchanges and nonproliferation negotiations with the United States after the Bush administration announced a US\$6.5 billion arms transfer to Taiwan in late 2008. Despite expectations that the links will be restored during the administration of Barrack Obama, Beijing has warned the new president's team that Sino-American relations are "in a difficult period."⁶⁹ This is possible given the fact that Hillary Clinton, the U.S. secretary of state, has promised that there will be no change in America's policy on arms sales to Taiwan.⁷⁰

Summary

At first blush, changes in Beijing's approach to Taipei appear to be both genuine and significant. After all, key elements in the country's reunification policies have been modified and/or softened substantially. Moreover, the PRC has launched numerous initiatives or "soft measures" intended to court key constituencies within Taiwanese society—including the island's fruit farmers, university students, medical professionals, tourism industry, journalists, small business operators, politicians, and industrialists. The so-called "timetable" for unification—which offended much of Taiwan's population—has also been shelved.⁷¹ It should come as little

⁶⁸In May 2008, Washington turned down Ma Ying-jeou's request to visit the United States *before* being sworn in as ROC president. Many suspect that the United States caved in to PRC pressure.

⁶⁹Michael Wines, "U.S. and China Will Revive Military Talks," *New York Times*, March 1, 2009, 12, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁷⁰See Chieh-yu Liu and Y. F. Low, "U.S. to Continue Arms Sales to Taiwan: U.S. State Secretary," Central News Agency, February 17, 2009, in *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, February 17, 2009, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>.

⁷¹As one Department of Defense report observed, "Beijing appears prepared to defer unification as long as it believes trends are advancing toward that goal." See Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2007*, 31.

surprise that some PRC officials boast that the new policy is both "agile and multifarious."⁷² As one mainland Chinese scholar gushed, the number and scope of changes in policy during the past several years are unparalleled in the history of the PRC.⁷³

On the other hand, some suspect that these changes are largely superficial in nature. As described, there is evidence to support this view. Some have pointed to the fact that, despite calling for "political talks on an equal basis" and the "peaceful development" of cross-Strait relations, Beijing continues its military deployments against Taiwan and threatens peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. The PRC also persists in its campaign to isolate Taiwan in the global community. As Albert S. Willner, then chief of the AIT's Liaison Affairs Section (the "unofficial" U.S. military attaché in Taiwan), explained, "The pressure here is relentless."⁷⁴ Unfortunately, China's hostile behavior helped provoke the Chen administration into adopting a series of campaigns guaranteed to infuriate Beijing.

Like his predecessor, President Ma is now calling on Beijing to permit the Taiwanese people to participate in the international community and to remove the missiles deployed opposite Taiwan. However, Beijing has yet to do either of these. Rather, it still appears as if "the hard is getting harder, while the soft is getting softer" (硬的更硬，軟的更軟) in China's policies toward Taiwan.⁷⁵

⁷²Lin Chong-pin, "A KMT-CCP Cross-Strait Future: A Ma-Hu Rapprochement 2008-2012?" (Keynote address, Credit Lyonnais Securities Asia Capital Link Forum, May 12, 2006, Westin Hotel, Taipei), 5. Paper provided to author by Dr. Lin Chong-pin.

⁷³See Shi Xipei, "Dui Tai zhengce xin siwei lunlue" (The new thinking mode of the policy toward Taiwan), *Zhonggong Fujian shengwei dangxiao xuebao* (Journal of Fujian Party School), no. 1 (January 2007): 25-29.

⁷⁴Author's interview with Albert S. Willner, July 25, 2007.

⁷⁵Dr. Lin Chong-pin coined this phrase. In the West, some have preferred to use the phrase, "sweeter carrot, harder stick."

Conclusions:
Theory and Change in China's Policy toward Taiwan

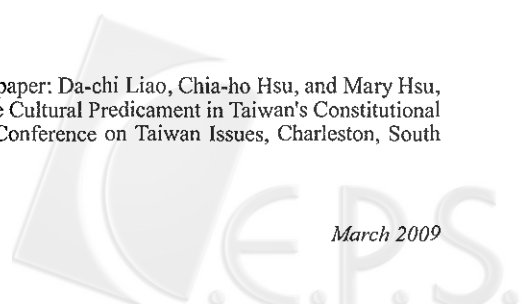
Has China genuinely overhauled its policies toward Taiwan? Or are the adjustments in policy primarily cosmetic or tactical in nature, while Beijing's overarching strategic goals remain the same? To quote an old Chinese adage, is this simply a case of "the same poison in different soup"? As with any transformation in sensitive policy, many questions have been raised.

During discussions with a prominent scholar at China's prestigious Peking University in March 2008, the author was informed that very few, if any, mainland Chinese scholars and bureaucrats genuinely understand Beijing's policy toward Taipei. Unfortunately, analysts cannot easily pry open and peer into the "black box" that constitutes the decision-making process at Zhongnanhai (中南海). However, they can seek to employ some of the theories and/or conceptual frameworks associated with international relations, comparative politics, and other fields of political science to help discern or highlight the *possible* meanings of some trends in the current state of cross-Strait relations. Yet one must be mindful that different theories tend to interpret the same "facts" in different ways and lead to varying conclusions. Several approaches to deciphering some pieces of this puzzle are outlined briefly below.

*The President the Great*⁷⁶

Some analysts trace modifications in China's approach to Taiwan to recent leadership changes in Beijing. Margaret Hermann and others have written extensively on the importance of a leader's values, beliefs, personality, cultural baggage, and perceptions. It is argued that these individual characteristics can have a major impact on a state's external relations—in

⁷⁶The author borrowed this term from the paper: Da-chi Liao, Chia-ho Hsu, and Mary Hsu, "The President the Great: An Inescapable Cultural Predicament in Taiwan's Constitutional Practice" (Paper presented at the 2003 Conference on Taiwan Issues, Charleston, South Carolina, September 5-7, 2003).



this instance China's relations with Taiwan.⁷⁷ Dr. Su Chi believes that Hu Jintao's personality has been "very important" in shaping changes in cross-Strait policies.⁷⁸ Dr. Lin Chong-pin agrees that many of the adjustments in Beijing's policies may be traced to President Hu's individual personality traits:

Hu Jintao is not a traditional CCP member. He is the first top party leader that had no Soviet experience.... His father, a small teashop owner in the countryside, was mistreated by local Communist cadres and never received exoneration before his death. To this day, Hu has not returned to his hometown.... Neither Ma nor Hu is a typical party member. When and if they are in power simultaneously, they may jointly transcend the cross-Strait stalemate, which began during the previous dominance under KMT and CCP.⁷⁹

Dr. Lin contends that President Hu's personal imprint on Taiwan policy is undeniable. The Chinese leader is believed to be personally responsible for dropping the timetable for reunification, the new emphasis on "extra-military means" (soft measures) to reduce separatist sentiment in Taiwan, the olive branches extended to the KMT, and the decision to "allow think-tanks and scholars in China to explore alternative sovereignty concepts in order to break the cross-Strait impasse."⁸⁰ Dr. Lin also suspects that President Hu might be responsible for the decision to continue to apply both military and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan simultaneously.

Hu Jintao replaced Jiang Zemin as CCP general secretary in 2002, as PRC president in 2003, and as chairman of the Central Military Commission in 2004. If Hu is putting his personal imprint on Taiwan policy, it is quite possible that additional adjustments (and concessions) in policy may occur now that the CCP's Seventeenth National Congress has closed. Before the congress, Su Chi explained: "At that time, the old hacks will go out. The 25-member Politburo, the 9-member Standing Committee—probably

⁷⁷Margaret Hermann, "Effects of Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders on Foreign Policy," in *Why Nations Act: Theoretical Perspectives for Comparative Foreign Policy Studies*, ed. Maurice A. East, Stephen A. Salmore, and Charles F. Hermann (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1978), 49-68.

⁷⁸Author's interview with Dr. Su Chi, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

⁷⁹See note 72 above.

⁸⁰Lin, "China's Emerging Grand Strategy," 17.

over half of those bodies will be replaced by younger people in their late 50s. [After October 2007] he will call the shots and he will leave his legacy. After 2012, he will be gone."⁸¹

On the other hand, others speculate that the impact of Hu's personality on decision-making might be exaggerated. Chen Shui-bian concedes that President Hu may have played a role in shaping the recent shifts in Beijing's policy toward Taipei. He contends that "if you look at Hu Jintao, he is a formidable, sharp, and terrible person. We need to be very vigilant and careful in dealing with him."⁸² However, Chen sees little real difference between Hu and his predecessors. According to the former president, "since the PRC was established in 1949, their leaders have come and gone, but the ambition to annex Taiwan has never changed.... The only difference is that some Chinese leaders are more straightforward, while others know how to decorate their ambitions."⁸³

During discussions with the author, analysts at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SIIS) did not criticize President Hu. Like Chen, however, they suggested that the impact of personality on decision-making with regard to the Taiwan issue might be exaggerated. As one scholar observed, "In China it's collective decision-making. Personality is minor."⁸⁴

A Paradigm Shift

During private conversations with PRC academics, some have offered a much broader explanation for changes in Taiwan policy. According to this perspective, adjustments in policy may be traced both to generational changes within China and major transformations in international politics. Taking this explanation one step further, one might suggest Beijing's "cross-strait paradigm" is changing—just as it has changed in the past.

⁸¹ Author's interview with Dr. Su Chi, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

⁸² Author's interview with President Chen Shui-bian, Taipei, November 21, 2007.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Author's interview with Chinese analysts at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, Shanghai, April 25, 2008.

The concept of a paradigm is borrowed from Thomas S. Kuhn who employed it to describe advancements in science.⁸⁵ A paradigm may be defined as a basic assumption in a field of science. The acceptance of such an assumption is shared by practitioners (chemists, physicists, etc.) in a given scientific field and is usually not subject to widespread discussion or debate. Over time, paradigms may shift. However, this change often comes very slowly. In fact, a new paradigm might gain widespread acceptance only after those who embraced an earlier paradigm are dead.

Some scholars in the field of international relations have suggested that the concept of a paradigm may be applied to the foreign policy orientation of a nation and its population.⁸⁶ A country's foreign policy paradigm is shaped by critical events. For example, the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 culminated in a paradigm shift in American policy. Following the attack, the United States abandoned isolationism and adopted an interventionist and internationalist approach to foreign policy—an approach that many believe remains intact today.

Events in the 1970s (the U.S.-PRC rapprochement, a rise in Soviet military power, the death of Mao Zedong, etc.) may have contributed to changes both in China's overall "foreign policy paradigm" and the nation's "Taiwan paradigm."⁸⁷ As described above, calls for the "liberation" of Taiwan gave way to pleas for "peaceful reunification" under the banner of "one country, two systems." This constituted a genuine paradigm shift—a modification in policy that Chinese analyses concede coincided with "the change of the international and domestic situations."⁸⁸

In a similar vein, the recent transfer of power to a new "fourth generation" of leadership in China may have contributed to more recent modifications in policy. As Dr. Su Chi observed, "they've become more

⁸⁵Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

⁸⁶See Michael Roskin, "From Pearl Harbor to Vietnam: Shifting Generational Paradigms and Foreign Policy," *Political Science Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (Fall 1974): 563-88.

⁸⁷The Chinese generally do not consider Taiwan as a foreign country—most agree that it is "something else."

⁸⁸See note 6 above.

sophisticated in their overall approach" to Taiwan.⁸⁹ Some U.S. officials concur with this assessment. James L. Huskey explains:

[Beijing has become] much more careful. And, of course, Beijing's whole world view and its whole international package have evolved so much in the past decade to a much higher level of sophistication.... So many people have returned from overseas to the Foreign Ministry. And they are much more capable and much more sophisticated. And they are smooth operators now. All through Asia we are seeing this very high caliber of diplomat coming from Beijing now.⁹⁰

Ironically, the election of Chen Shui-bian in 2000 and 2004 may have served as the "critical event" or catalyst (a "Pearl Harbor" of sorts) that helped push Beijing's "fourth generation" leaders to shelve the old Taiwan paradigm and adopt new and innovative approaches to Taiwan. They might have reached the conclusion that old policies must be scrapped and Taiwan must be treated on a more equal basis or else China might risk losing the island forever. Stephen S. F. Chen (陳錫蕃), former ROC representative in the United States and presently an official in the National Policy Foundation (國家政策研究基金會), a prominent KMT think-tank, concedes that "we should give the DPP some credit."⁹¹ Ambassador Chen also warns that Beijing must embrace meaningful change if it hopes to prevent Taipei's move toward independence:

The mainland side will have to choose a KMT administration or a DPP administration. A DPP administration has proved that by salami tactics they are going the way of *de jure* independence. There will be no return. And they [the CPP] shouldn't think that once the KMT gains power, they can be tough again because there is no guarantee that the DPP will not come back to power if the KMT should prove to be a failure in dealing with mainland China. And that is our bargaining chip.⁹²

During discussions with the author, however, one Chinese academic with strong links to the PRC government opined that "genuine" change must

⁸⁹ Author's interview with Dr. Su Chi, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

⁹⁰ Author's interview with James L. Huskey, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

⁹¹ Author's interview with Stephen S. F. Chen, convener, National Security Division, National Policy Foundation, Taipei, November 19, 2007.

⁹² Ibid.

wait until the "fifth generation" takes power sometime after 2012.⁹³

Bureaucratic Politics

If China has changed its policy toward Taiwan, how does one explain the contradictions in PRC policy? Why is "the soft getting softer," while "the hard is getting harder?" Of course, this might conceivably be traced to shrewd calculations on the part of China's leadership. After all, some research suggests that "soft power" is most effective when combined with the threat of "hard power."⁹⁴ However, another explanation might also help solve this riddle.

Both ROC officials and academics have toyed with the idea that some of China's "hard" policies toward Taiwan might be traced to bureaucratic politics. According to Graham Allison's bureaucratic politics model (or more precisely, the organizational processes model), organizations adopt "standard operating procedures (SOPs)" to execute and implement various policies.⁹⁵ Once these are adopted, organizations are resistant to change. China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) has sought to suffocate Taiwan in the international community for over five decades. This constitutes one of MOFA's longstanding SOPs (a key part of its "job description") and the ministry will not easily abandon it.

During interviews with the author, Taiwan and mainland Chinese analysts discussed the role that bureaucratic politics might play when seeking to understand contradictions in cross-Strait policy. For example, Dr. Lin Chong-pin contends that some of Beijing's hostile behavior might be attributed to "a bureaucratic problem ... the decisions reached in Zhongnanhai have not percolated down to the lower level."⁹⁶ This may have been the case when Wang Yi, director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, ap-

⁹³ Author's interview with PRC academic, Beijing, July 2006.

⁹⁴ See Janice Bially Mattern, "Why 'Soft Power' Isn't So Soft: Representational Force and the Sociolinguistic Construction of Attraction in World Politics," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 33, no. 3 (2005): 583-612.

⁹⁵ See Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1978).

⁹⁶ Author's interview with Dr. Lin Chong-pin, Taipei, January 5, 2007.

peared to contradict President Hu when he told Japanese reporters that Beijing would not accept Taipei's participation in the WHO. Following Wang's comments, PRC officials scrambled to emphasize that the news story was "inaccurate" and explained that Wang "was merely reflecting the mainland's usual stance on Taiwan's participation in the WHO."⁹⁷

Dr. Joseph Wu concedes that there appear to be differences within the PRC government with respect to Taiwan policy. However, he is not quite sure what these differences actually mean: "There are different approaches in the Beijing government. Different bureaucracies have different ideas about how to deal with Taiwan. But we don't know whether it's bureaucratic politics or whether it's a 'good cop, bad cop' type of tactics in dealing with Taiwan."⁹⁸ Dr. Wu suggests that Beijing's MOFA appears to be "the toughest hawk" on Taiwan policy and that "they continue to grab our diplomatic allies [and] they continue to squeeze Taiwan out of international participation to such a degree that some other government agencies in China—especially from the Taiwan Affairs Office—got upset with the tactics of MOFA."⁹⁹

Like their Taiwan counterparts, PRC analysts concede that "different departments have their own interests and considerations."¹⁰⁰ However, they claim to view this as a natural phenomenon and explain that, when crafting cross-Strait policy, "our whole leadership collects all these different interests like a painting to make a wonderful picture."¹⁰¹

Interestingly, Dr. Su Chi speculates that bureaucratic politics could play a role in cross-Strait policies on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. The KMT heavyweight observed that, "my impression is that both in Taiwan and the mainland, the military people and the foreign affairs people are

⁹⁷See Lawrence Chung, "Official's Remarks on Taipei's WHO Bid Misrepresented, Says Beijing," *South China Morning Post*, June 27, 2008, 6, <http://www.lexisnexis.com>. Emphasis added.

⁹⁸Author's interview with Dr. Joseph Wu, Taipei, January 3, 2007.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Author's interview with Chinese analysts at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, Shanghai, April 25, 2008.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

generally more confrontational than people in other areas."¹⁰² At the same time, however, Dr. Su suggested that the applicability of the bureaucratic politics model could be limited: "I have a feeling that even though those two 'hard areas' are still harder than others, they are not—how do you call it—incorrigible. And also their leadership—it's the leadership—the political leadership that counts more."¹⁰³

Dr. Su believes that the influence of bureaucratic organizations can be controlled if China's political leadership "breathes down the necks of those redneck people... that's the only way."¹⁰⁴ He also suspects that Beijing could have stolen more of Taiwan's diplomatic allies if it really wanted to do so and that "the PRC must have exercised some restraint ... they could get Panama easily."¹⁰⁵ For some time, Dr. Lin, also, was puzzled by Beijing's behavior in Latin America.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, by late 2008, many believed that the PRC bureaucracy was under control and following orders as the two sides appeared to have cobbled together some sort of a "diplomatic truce." During private conversations with the author, officials in the ROC Government Information Office (行政院新聞局) suggested that the PRC had rebuffed Paraguay's overtures about opening ties, stating that "now is not a good time to establish formal relations."¹⁰⁷ A senior Presidential Office official, who requested anonymity, confirmed that the truce has "already been done and Paraguay is a prime example—Paraguay and Panama."¹⁰⁸

¹⁰² Author's interview with Dr. Su Chi, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ During an interview with the author, Dr. Lin stated, "I know that Beijing has been interacting with these officials in Panama, Guatemala, and the others, but I am still waiting. And I've been asking myself, 'what is going on?' Is it possible that Beijing has been putting these things on hold for a while?" Author's interview with Dr. Lin Chong-pin, Taipei, November 23, 2007.

¹⁰⁷ Author's discussions with ROC Government Information Office officials, who requested anonymity, on August 11, 2008, Taipei.

¹⁰⁸ Author's interview with a senior Presidential Office official, who requested anonymity, on August 11, 2008, Taipei.

Marxist-Leninist-Maoist Thought

Those who are familiar with Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought might take a more sinister view of recent adjustments in Beijing's policy toward Taipei. As part of his "mass-line" theory, Mao suggested that the CCP must occasionally align with "reactionary" elements in order to defeat a more immediate and threatening enemy. For example, small landowners were recruited during the "struggle for liberation" to help topple China's most powerful landlords. After "liberation," of course, they became victims of the revolution. Moreover, the CCP agreed to an alliance with the KMT to defeat the Japanese imperialists in the late 1930s. However, the KMT claims that the CCP used the "united front" to build up its own strength and ultimately undermine and challenge the authority of the national government.

In a similar vein, some contend that the CCP is now seeking the cooperation and support of the KMT and targeting key constituencies within Taiwan to defeat the DPP and other separatists.¹⁰⁹ Chen Shui-bian, explains:

The nature of the CCP has not changed at all ... it is an expert in uniting with minor enemies to defeat major enemies. What the CCP wants from the KMT is to unite with its minor enemy to defeat its chief enemy. The KMT has not learned any lessons from the past. When they are of no use or value anymore, the CCP will throw them away like rubbish.¹¹⁰

During a private discussion with the author, one KMT supporter conceded there could be some merit in this argument, and added sarcastically, "once we get rid of the DPP, we will go back to killing each other."¹¹¹

Summary

The discussion above outlines only a few of the theories and conceptual frameworks that could be used to help unravel the complicated puzzle that constitutes China's policies toward Taiwan. A more complete study

¹⁰⁹See "MAC Warns of 'United Front Tactics'," *China Post*, November 25, 2007, 13.

¹¹⁰Author's interview with Chen Shui-bian, Taipei, November 21, 2007.

¹¹¹Author's confidential interview with KMT stalwart, May 2007.

would include other approaches as well. For example, scholars in the field of international political economy might suggest that Albert Hirschman's classic study, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade*, could go a long way in explaining Beijing's policies toward trade and investment with Taiwan.¹¹² According to some calculations, Taiwanese firms have invested over US\$240 billion in China and, without cross-Strait trade, the island would have an annual trade deficit of over US\$40 billion.¹¹³ Key sectors of Taiwan's economy are now entirely dependent on China for survival. As James Huskey observed, "they [Taiwan] are already very dependent. They [the PRC] could really hurt this island badly if they wanted to."¹¹⁴ Annette Lu (呂秀蓮), the former vice president, cautions that Taiwan might one day decide it wants out of this relationship, but will discover that it is too late "like the proverbial frog cooking a slow, warm death in the hot spring."¹¹⁵ However, scholars who describe themselves as functionalists might adopt a far more benign view of the economic relationship. They would argue that cooperation on trade and investment could eventually "spill over" into cooperation in other areas and pave the way for cross-Strait reconciliation. Others point to the role that domestic politics plays in the crafting of Beijing's policies toward Taiwan.¹¹⁶ Still other approaches employed in political science (game theory, expected utility theory, etc.) might also hold some explanatory value.

A diligent graduate student often concludes a seminar paper with the phrase, "additional research is required." In this instance, however, those seeking to understand changes in China's policy toward Taiwan—

¹¹²See Albert Hirschman, *National Power and the Structure of Foreign Trade* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1945).

¹¹³Ma Ying-jeou, "Taiwan's Role in Peace and Stability in East Asia: A Discussion with Dr. Ma Ying-jeou" (Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., March 23, 2006), <http://www.brookings.edu>.

¹¹⁴Author's interview with James L. Huskey, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

¹¹⁵Annette Lu, "Five Concerns," *Taiwan Panorama* 33, no. 7 (July 2008): 26.

¹¹⁶As Dr. Lin Chong-pin observed, "When domestic conditions are fine—not necessarily 100% beautiful—the leaders in Beijing tend to use more flexible means in response to what Taiwan does or says. But when domestic conditions deteriorate, they will take harsh measures." Author's interview with Dr. Lin Chong-pin, Taipei, November 23, 2007.

particularly policymakers in the ROC—require more than academic research. What they require most are additional *facts* that may serve as building blocks upon which cross-Strait policy may be prudently and carefully constructed. For example, a variety of confidence-building measures could go a long way in reducing suspicions and enhancing trust. A cross-Strait peace accord of some sort is now viewed as a distinct possibility.¹¹⁷ However, President Ma insists that Beijing must first remove the ballistic missiles aimed at the island. Moreover, providing Taiwan with a greater degree of international space would generate a lot of good will. Much will depend on Beijing's approach to Taipei's participation in the WHO (or World Health Assembly) in the next several years. As Dr. Su Chi observed, "they [China] will have to realize that if they keep the heat on us, they will never win the hearts and minds of the people of Taiwan."¹¹⁸ Should China continue to adopt more realistic and conciliatory policies toward Taiwan, while abandoning the outdated, outmoded, and counter-productive approaches of the last century, a new era of cross-Strait cooperation could be on the horizon. At a minimum, the prospects for stability should increase.¹¹⁹ Such a development would bode well for peace and reconciliation across the Taiwan Strait.

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¹¹⁷In 2007, Ma Ying-jeou, then KMT presidential candidate, stated that he was confident that Taiwan could sign a peace accord with mainland China. See "Ma Says Cross-Strait Peace Accord Is Around the Corner," *Taipei Times*, November 24, 2007, 3. After his election, he said that such a pact could only be achieved if China removed the 1,400 missiles it has deployed opposite Taiwan.

¹¹⁸Author's interview with Dr. Su Chi, Taipei, July 25, 2007.

¹¹⁹See Romberg, "Cross-Strait Relations: In Search of Peace" (cited in note 16 above).

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