

## Book Review

*Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the United States, 1945-1992: Uncertain Friendships.* By Nancy Bernkopf Tucker. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994. 337 pp.

Reflecting the developments in U.S. foreign policy that have influenced changes in Sino-American relations, this book is divided into four major periods: 1950-65, 1965-72, 1972-82, and 1982-92. But Professor Tucker has gone far beyond this chronological approach in examining the history of U.S.-Taiwan relations from various angles—political, military, economic, social, and cultural. The major part of this book focuses on Taipei's skillful efforts to rally Washington's support against Beijing and the impact of American aid on Taiwan's economy and society.

Any discussion of the Sino-American relationship will inevitably get entangled in the controversial issue of "two Chinas." Old China hands in the United States and elsewhere have long been convinced that the United States, as the major player in the Taipei-Beijing-Washington ménage à trois, has at different times courted each of the other two parties depending on its current definition of national interest in East Asia. As the author points out: "In the past, United States decisionmakers shaped policies to meet the requirements of bilateral relations, whether that meant arming the Chinese Nationalists against Beijing or recognizing the Communist Chinese and abandoning a Mutual Defense Treaty with Taipei" (p. 238). Undeniably, on several occasions over the past four decades, the United States has changed the course of its East Asian policy at the expense of its close allies. And, while the change in Washington's relationship with the "two Chinas" has been based to a large extent on considerations of *realpolitik*, it has embroiled U.S. decisionmakers in the "China question," particularly in the period prior to the normalization of Washington's relations with Beijing in 1979.

Relations between the Republic of China (ROC) and the United States soared to a peak during their wartime alliance against Japanese aggression. Nationalist China, too weak to defeat the Japanese alone, was eager to draw the Americans into the fight. U.S. support was forthcoming because Washington presumed that despite its present weakness, China was the only major power in East Asia capable of

maintaining regional stability in the new postwar world. During and since the Chinese civil war, the Nationalist Chinese have continued to depend on the United States for military, political, and economic support. Professor Tucker sums up this situation concisely: "The United States nurtured an allied military arm, a trading partner, an international relations pawn." For decisionmakers in Washington, "Taiwan became a symbol of victory in the Cold War" (p. 6). During the 1950s and 1960s, Taiwan was engaged in two main "battlefields" between the capitalist and communist camps: the military one in the Taiwan Strait and the political one in the United Nations. Taiwan owed its survival at that time to the anticommunist crusade in the United States.

Despite their strong ties, Taipei's goals have always been different from those of Washington. As the author notes, "Questions of Nationalist military budgets, personnel recruitment and political indoctrination, attacks on the mainland, troops in Burma, and martial law in Taiwan all produced lingering frictions between Taipei and Washington" (p. 68). Chiang Kai-shek never gave up hope of retaking the mainland by force, and while the United States was increasing its aid to Taiwan to build up the island's economic strength, Chiang was pumping most of Taiwan's resources into the military. In June 1950, immediately after the outbreak of the Korean War, President Harry Truman ordered the U.S. Seventh Fleet into the Taiwan Strait, supposedly to protect Taiwan from a communist assault. The real reason, however, was to prevent a head-on military clash between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the ROC while the United States was deeply involved in Korea. Washington was well aware that Chiang wanted to take advantage of the Korean conflict to make an armed attempt on the mainland. The U.S. action indicated that despite its rhetoric, Washington was not willing to help the Nationalists back to power in China. In the mid-1960s, Chiang once again sought to link U.S. engagement in military operations—this time in Vietnam—with the recovery of the mainland. But the Americans concluded from intelligence sources that "the Nationalists lacked the strength to carry off an effective attack and lacked the popularity to trigger an uprising" (p. 96). Chiang's hopes were dashed once more.

In order to prepare for an attack against the communists, Chiang had to exercise authoritarian rule over his countrymen. Although decisionmakers in Washington were sometimes irritated by their stubborn ally in Taipei, who was running an only nominally democratic society with an unacceptable human rights record, they carried on supporting

Chiang on account of his staunch anticommunism. The author argues that U.S. attempts to influence Taiwan's domestic politics met with little success against the Nationalists' high profile in Washington and the power of the "China lobby." Nevertheless, it would be interesting to look further into the various secret attempts Washington made to penetrate and bring down the Chiang regime. Along with American political support and economic aid, Taiwan was forced, rather reluctantly, to absorb American cultural influences, and, as Professor Tucker notes, this sometimes caused friction between the local population and U.S. expatriates in Taiwan. One example was the "Liu Tze-jan incident" of 1957, an outbreak of anti-American mob violence in protest at the acquittal by a U.S. military court of an American serviceman accused of murdering a Chinese civilian who, the soldier claimed, had spied on his wife in the bath. Fearing domination by the United States, the Nationalists overreacted and purged those who publicly advocated pro-American policies. The details of this incident remain unclear even today.

Since the early 1970s, the winds of change have blown through U.S. Asia policy. Responding to antiwar sentiments at home, President Richard Nixon decided to pull out of Vietnam, and the following two decades saw a readjustment of Washington's relationship with the "two Chinas." The Americans eventually deserted their long-time loyal, if not exactly devoted, partner, and had little compunction about rushing into a "marriage" with Beijing. After the event, however, Beijing was dissatisfied with the way that Washington failed to completely cut ties with Taipei. The legal framework that emerged—a series of joint communiqués with Beijing defining the limits of its relations with Taipei, and the Taiwan Relations Act, a U.S. domestic law which delineates unofficial ties with Taiwan—has made for a fairly stable relationship among the three parties since the late 1980s. The United States, which benefits most from this new setup, has been able to play the "Taiwan card" against the PRC and the "China card" against Taipei. In one example, Washington conceded a reduction in arms sales to Taipei while Taipei was compensated with a joint venture aircraft development and manufacturing project.

The end of diplomatic ties and a formal defense commitment has ushered in a new American relationship with Taiwan which rests upon economic interests. While the PRC continues its efforts to exclude Taiwan from the international community, the United States remains an important supporter of Taiwan's engagement in international affairs, both politically and economically, backing, for example,

Taipei's membership of the Asian Development Bank and its application to join the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)/World Trade Organization (WTO).

Since the late 1980s, the rapid increase in economic transactions among Taiwan, Hong Kong, and the PRC has transformed the patterns and dynamics of international relations in the Asia-Pacific region and seems to be encouraging the development of a "Greater China." Professor Tucker is quite right to suggest that the United States will have to change its outdated Asia policies in response to these changes. Washington can no longer shape its policies on the basis of bilateral relationships, but must come to terms with multi-lateral cooperation and regional economic integration with respect to international trade, industrial development, and technological cooperation. Furthermore, this growing economic integration is recognized by many scholars as having profound political implications, in that it provides the most promising solution to the "two Chinas" issue and perhaps the eventual reunification of China. Both the U.S. government and American business interests certainly have a large role to play in the development of Greater China, and perhaps even reunification.

This book's account of Sino-American relations over the past five decades provides students of modern Sino-American relations with a solid grounding from which they can move on to explore present and future developments. The author's insights into the social and cultural aspects of Sino-American ties are both impressive and persuasive. Professor Tucker has made an extremely valuable contribution to this subject.

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