

Recent Cross-Strait Relations and the United States*

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This paper first analyzes Taiwan-mainland China relations in the context of PRC President Jiang Zemin's eight-point proposal on the unification issue and ROC President Lee Teng-hui's six-point response in early 1995. Next, the paper discusses Lee's visit to the United States in June 1995 and the PRC's violent reaction to the visit, which resulted in the PRC's military exercises in the Taiwan Strait, its public denunciation of Lee, and the suspension of the talks between the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF-ROC) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS-PRC). Since Lee's landslide presidential election victory in Taiwan, he has repeatedly called on the PRC to resume talks, but the PRC has refused to respond positively to the calls, and Taiwan-mainland China relations remain uncertain and volatile.

Keywords: Lee Teng-hui; Jiang Zemin; Taiwan-mainland China relations; Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF); Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS)

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Since the relaxation of tensions in the early 1980s, Taiwan and the mainland have moved rapidly toward closer relations in cultural, social, trade, and investment areas. On April 27-29, 1993, Chairman Koo Chen-fu of the nominally unofficial Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) from Taiwan and Chairman Wang Daohan of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) from China met in Singapore. The talks resulted in the conclusion of four "unofficial" agreements.¹ One of the agreements provides for a system of regular

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¹For the English translation of the four agreements, see Hungdah Chiu, "The Koo-Wang Talks and the Prospect of Building Constructive and Stable Relations Across the Taiwan Straits," *Issues & Studies* 29, no. 8 (August 1993): 28-34.

contacts between the chairmen, vice chairmen, and secretaries-general of the SEF and ARATS. Koo and Wang also agreed to negotiations to resolve issues growing out of increased contact between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. After the Koo-Wang talks, tensions in the Taiwan Strait were reduced dramatically. Taiwan's investment in the mainland has continued to increase and annual trade between Taiwan and the mainland has also increased rapidly, to the point where the Chinese mainland is now Taiwan's largest trading partner.

On January 30, 1995, President Jiang Zemin of the People's Republic of China (PRC) delivered an eight-point speech on the Chinese unification issue.² The tone was basically conciliatory. He urged the Taiwan side to engage in negotiations for peaceful unification; specifically, as a first step toward unification, he urged Taiwan to negotiate a formal cessation of hostilities under the principle of "one China." Jiang said:

It has been our consistent stand to hold negotiations with the Taiwan authorities on the peaceful reunification of the motherland. Representatives from the various political parties and mass organizations on both sides of the Taiwan Straits can be invited to participate in such talks. I said in my report at the Fourteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China held in October 1992, "On the premise that there is only one China, we are prepared to talk with the Taiwan authorities about any matter, including the form that official negotiations should take, a form that would be acceptable to both sides." By "on the premise that there is only one China, we are prepared to talk with the Taiwan authorities about any matter," we mean naturally that all matters of concern to the Taiwan authorities are included. We have proposed time and again that negotiations should be held on officially ending the state of hostility between the two sides and accomplishing peaceful reunification step by step. Here again I solemnly propose that such negotiations be held. I suggest that, as the first step, negotiations should be held and an agreement reached on officially ending the state of hostility between the two sides in accordance with the principle that there is only one China. On this basis, the two sides should undertake jointly to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and map out plans for the future development of their relations. As regards the name, place and form of these political talks, a solution acceptable to both sides can certainly be found so long as consultations on an equal footing can be held at an early date.³

Moreover, Jiang held that political differences should not affect or interfere with economic cooperation between the two sides. He

²"Coverage on Jiang Zemin's 'Reunification' Speech," Foreign Broadcast Information Service, *Daily Report: China* [hereinafter referred to as *FBIS-CHI*]-95-019 (January 30, 1995): 84-86. Also in Embassy of the People's Republic of China, *Press Release*, January 30, 1995, no. 1.

³"Coverage on Jiang Zemin's 'Reunification' Speech," 85; *Press Release*, 3.

also appealed to the Chinese cultural tradition shared by the Chinese people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait by stating:

The splendid culture of 5,000 years created by the sons and daughters of all ethnic groups of China has become the tie keeping the entire Chinese people close at heart and constitutes an important basis for the peaceful reunification of the motherland. People on both sides of the Taiwan Straits should inherit and carry forward the fine traditions of Chinese culture.⁴

On April 8, 1995, President Lee Teng-hui of the Republic of China (ROC) responded to Jiang's speech in a six-point proposal.⁵ Lee first noted that to resolve the unification problem, one must be pragmatic, respect history, and seek a feasible way for national unification based on the fact that the two shores are separately governed. He then noted that in 1991 Taiwan formally renounced its use of force against the mainland in the expectation that all Chinese people would be relieved from the suffering that resulted from civil war. By the same token, in order to pave the way for peace talks which would end the state of hostility, he hoped that the mainland authorities would publicly forego any intention of attacking Taiwan by force. He said:

The descendants of Emperors Yan and Huang should first show sincerity to each other and no longer engage in fratricide. We do not want the Chinese people to go down the path of civil war once again, and hope that hostility will be turned into friendship. In 1991 the ROC announced the end of the Period of Mobilization for the Suppression of the Communist Rebellion, acknowledged that the two sides were separated, and announced that it would no longer use force against the mainland. It is regrettable that over the last four years, the Chinese Communist authorities have not announced its [sic] renunciation of the use of force against Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, causing the continuation of the situation of hostile confrontation up to this day. We hold that the mainland authorities should show their goodwill by renouncing the use of force against Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, and that they should refrain from any military actions that could cause suspicions, thereby laying the foundation for ending the situation of hostile confrontation through formal cross-Strait talks. I must emphasize that using the so-called "Taiwan independence forces" or "foreign interference" as a pretext for refusing to make the commitment to not use force against Taiwan is disregarding and distorting the founding spirit and policy of the ROC, which will only deepen suspicions between the two sides and hinder mutual trust. The

⁴"Coverage on Jiang Zemin's 'Reunification' Speech," 86; *Press Release*, 4.

⁵See "Text of President's Speech," *FBIS-CHI-95-068* (April 10, 1995): 77-80; summarized in Christie Su, "Lee Maps 6-Point Policy for Taiwan-Mainland Relations," *The Free China Journal* 12, no. 13 (April 14, 1995): 1.

degree of maturity for ending the situation of hostile confrontation through formal cross-Strait talks requires sincere fostering by both sides. At present, we will have our relevant government departments carry out research and formulate plans concerning the termination of hostile confrontation. When the CPC [Communist Party of China] officially announces its renunciation of the use of force against Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu, a preliminary consultation on how to end the state of hostile confrontation between the two sides will be held at a most appropriate time and opportunity.⁶

Moreover, Lee called for both sides to join international organizations. Thus, leaders of the two sides could naturally meet each other on equal footing on certain occasions. Lee said:

I have repeated many times that natural meetings of leaders from the two sides on international occasions will ease political confrontation between the two sides and foster an atmosphere of harmonious contacts and meetings. Now, the two sides have joined several important international economic and sports organizations. If leaders from both sides meet each other naturally while attending meetings of such organizations, it will surely help eliminate hostility between the two sides, build up mutual trust, and lay a foundation for future consultation and cooperation. We believe that the more international organizations the two sides join on an equal footing, the more it will be conducive to developing bilateral relations and promoting the process of peaceful reunification. This will also show the world that the Chinese people on the two sides, despite political differences, can still join hands to make contributions to the international community and create a new age for the Chinese nation to stand proud in the world.⁷

Furthermore, Lee believed that trade and economic ties between Taiwan and the mainland should be enhanced and developed into mutually beneficial and complementary relations. He also pointed out that the profound cultural similarities inherited by all Chinese should be a basis for both sides to foster brotherhood and enhance cooperative exchanges in technology and information science, as well as in academic studies and sports activities. In addition, he suggested that, faced with the trend of expending great effort to develop their economies, Chinese on both sides should complement and benefit each other as well as share experiences with each other.

The PRC's response to Lee's six points was not entirely negative. A Beijing Central People's Radio commentary, however, stated that Lee's response to Jiang's eight-point proposal lacked "sincerity."⁸

⁶"Text of President's Speech," 79.

⁷Ibid.

⁸"[Lee] Teng-hui's Response 'Lacks Sincerity,'" *FBIS-CHI-95-076* (April 20, 1995): 88-89.

The commentary added that the principal issue for both sides of the Taiwan Strait was whether or not the nation and its territory would be split up. The commentary said:

However, in his six-point statement, [Lee Teng-hui] stressed at the very beginning the need for separate rules. He asked the mainland to recognize the Taiwan authorities' sovereignty over Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen [Kinmen], and Mazu [Matsu]. This is actually asking the mainland to recognize two Chinas first and then discuss the issue of the reunification of one China.

At the same time, [Lee Teng-hui] deliberately reversed the order of cross-Strait negotiations and the ending of the state of hostility between the two sides. He said: When the CPC officially announces its renunciation of the use of force against Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen and Mazu, a preliminary consultation on how to end the state of hostile confrontation between the two sides will be held. Public opinion pointed out that [Lee Teng-hui's] demand on Beijing to unilaterally issue a statement committing itself to [the] non-use of force in the Taiwan Strait is a political hoax. Before the Taiwan authorities give an effective guarantee that they will not promote Taiwan's independence under any circumstances and that they will not allow foreign intervention, Beijing will never fall into that trap.

[Lee Teng-hui's] statement that the two sides join international organizations on an equal footing and leaders of the two sides will naturally meet each other on such occasions is an apparent attempt to create two entities of equal status and two Chinas. In his Spring Festival speech, Jiang Zemin specifically maintained that the affairs of the Chinese people should be handled by themselves, something that does not take an international occasion to accomplish, and that leaders from the two sides may visit the other side in their appropriate capacities. [Lee Teng-hui] himself realized that his proposal for leaders of the two sides to naturally meet with each other is in conflict with the principle of one China and that the mainland will never agree.⁹

The commentary also acknowledges that there are some merits in Lee's six points:

Of course, [Lee Teng-hui's] six-point response is not devoid of merit. On the question of promoting cross-Strait ties, he proposed stepping up cross-Strait exchanges, increasing economic exchange and trade, and developing mutual benefits on the basis of Chinese culture. These proposals are the main aspects of current cross-Strait exchanges, which have been achieved by the general public on both sides of the Strait after overcoming layers upon layers of restrictions imposed by the Taiwan authorities. However, because of the deep differences between the two sides on the issue of the country's peaceful reunification and on major political principles, all-round economic and cultural as well as other exchanges [have been] difficult to carry out smoothly.¹⁰

An unnamed high official of the ARATS also commented on Lee's proposals, saying that he welcomed President Lee's calls for

⁹Ibid., 88.

¹⁰Ibid., 89

increased cross-Strait exchanges based on traditional Chinese cultural ties and for expanded trade and economic cooperation on a reciprocal basis. He further said he had taken notice of Lee's statement that the first Koo-Wang meeting and follow-up working-level talks between SEF and ARATS had ushered in a new era of negotiations in cross-Strait relations. The ARATS official further made four suggestions: a second Koo-Wang meeting should be held as soon as possible for the two sides to conduct high-level policy talks; SEF and ARATS should intensify work to promote cross-Strait commercial, technological, and agricultural exchanges and jointly organize a nongovernmental economic cooperation meeting; the two intermediary bodies should jointly work out ways to reinvigorate Chinese culture; and the two bodies should avoid sensitive political issues in working-level talks on nonpolitical administrative issues in a pragmatic manner.¹¹

In late May 1995, the SEF and the ARATS held the first preparatory consultations for the second Koo-Wang Talks to be held in Beijing. They planned the second preparatory consultations for the period between June 27 and July 1, and intended to hold the talks around July 20, 1995. It was expected that during the second Koo-Wang Talks, both chairmen could privately discuss certain sensitive issues, such as how to begin negotiations for the cessation of hostilities and Taiwan's participation in certain international organizations or conferences. There was no sign of tension in Taiwan-mainland relations at the time.

In the meantime, President Lee Teng-hui was invited by Cornell University, his alma mater, to deliver a speech at the Olin Lecture. On June 1, 1995, the United States Department of State granted Lee an entry visa for his private visit to Cornell from June 7-12, 1995. Before Lee left Taipei for the United States, the mass media on the Chinese mainland suddenly launched a series of attacks against Lee, accusing him of, among other things, promoting Taiwan independence or "two Chinas," attempting to internationalize the Taiwan question, and departing from the "one China" policy.¹² In his Cornell lecture entitled "Always in My Heart," Lee described Taiwan's successful

¹¹"SEF Welcomes Response to [Lee's] Statement," *FBIS-CHI-95-083* (May 1, 1995): 90.

¹²E.g., see "Xinhua Commentaries View [Lee Teng-hui]," *FBIS-CHI-95-109* (June 7, 1995): 84-85; "[Lee's] Visit Viewed," *ibid.*, 85-86; and "[Lee's] 'Political Scheme'," *ibid.*, 86-88.

democratic reform, relying on public opinion as a basis of formulating government policy, and the sense of sovereignty that belongs to the people in Taiwan and others.¹³ With respect to the Chinese unification issue, he said:

I have repeatedly called on the mainland authorities to end ideological confrontation and to open up a new era of peaceful competition across the Taiwan Strait and reunification. Only by following a "win-win" strategy will the best interests of all the Chinese people be served. We believe that mutual respect will gradually lead to the peaceful reunification of China under a system of democracy, freedom and equitable distribution of wealth.

To demonstrate our sincerity and goodwill, I have already indicated on other occasions that I would welcome an opportunity for leaders from the mainland to meet their counterparts from Taiwan during the occasion of some international event, and I would not even rule out the possibility of a meeting between Mr. Jiang Zemin and myself.¹⁴

Lee's speech drew sharp criticism from the Chinese Communist media, which claimed, among other things, that Taiwan was a local government with no sovereignty and that Lee's view promoted "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan," thereby exploiting "public opinion" to oppose the reunification of the motherland.¹⁵ The Chinese Communist media also severely criticized the United States for promoting "two Chinas" and "Taiwan independence."¹⁶ In fact, U.S. federal officials neither received Lee nor granted him the honor of a visiting foreign head of state. During this period, the exchange of visits between the SEF and the ARATS continued. However, on June 16, 1995, the ARATS wrote to the SEF, stating that: "In view of a series of actions taken recently by Taiwan which have damaged cross-Strait relations and which have seriously affected the convocation of the second Wang-[Koo] meeting and the atmosphere of the preparatory consultations, the meeting will have to be postponed."¹⁷

After this decision, the PRC mass media published a series of

¹³Lee Teng-hui, *Always in My Heart* (Taipei: Government Information Office, 1995), 11-12.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵E.g., see "Commentary Criticizes [Lee's] Recent Speeches," *FBIS-CHI-95-134* (July 13, 1995): 66 and "[Lee's] Cornell Speech 'a Self-Vindication of Advocacy for Splitting the Motherland': Commentary," *FBIS-CHI-95-141* (July 24, 1995): 93-94.

¹⁶E.g., see "U.S. 'Playing with Fire'," *FBIS-CHI-95-113* (June 13, 1995): 7-9; "Spokesman Cites 'Grave' Impact," *ibid.*, 9; and "'Dual-Track' Policy Condemned," *ibid.*, 9-10.

¹⁷See "Xinhua Says Wang-[Koo] Meeting 'Postponed'," *FBIS-CHI-95-117* (June 19, 1995): 86. The quoted part of the letter from ARATS is from "Commentary Blames Taiwan for Delaying Talks," *FBIS-CHI-95-128* (July 5, 1995): 78.

articles attacking President Lee Teng-hui personally, alleging that he was attempting to split China, seek independent sovereign status for Taiwan, and resist reunification under the Chinese Communist “one country, two systems” formula. These accusations were followed by a Chinese Communist military exercise dubbed “East Sea No. 5” held off China’s Zhejiang province, north of Taiwan.¹⁸ China then announced that it would conduct surface-to-surface missile tests in the East China Sea between July 21 and 28, 1995 over a circular area of 10 square nautical miles, with the central point less than 100 miles northeast of Taiwan.¹⁹

Amid the missile tests, the authoritative *People’s Daily* published a commentary entitled “Lee Teng-hui Is Guilty of Damaging Relations between the Two Sides of the Taiwan Strait” on the front page of its July 27, 1995 issue. The article said:

In March of last year [1994] when he [Lee] talked with the Japanese writer Shiba Ryotaro,²⁰ he said: “China is an ambiguous word,” “sovereignty is a dangerous word,” and it is a “strange dream” that Taiwan is a province of the People’s Republic of China. He even said that he would lead the Taiwan populace to build a “country of the Taiwan people.” He asserted repeatedly: “Of the two sides of the Strait now, one is water and the other is oil, and water and oil won’t mix with each other” [and] “We should forget to the best of our ability such words as one China, two Chinas.” In talking thus, he is challenging the state sovereignty, and is setting himself against the 1.2 billion Chinese people including Taiwan compatriots. . . .

After President Jiang Zemin put forward the proposal “on the premise that there is only one China, negotiation can be held on officially ending the state of hostility,”²¹ Lee Teng-hui went so far as to reject it publicly. . . .²² Relations between the two sides of the Strait are now at a crucial point. Facts have shown that expecting a person such as Lee Teng-hui who “doesn’t know what China is” to improve and develop cross-Strait relations is nothing less than climbing a tree to catch fish. All Chinese should definitely not cherish any illusions about Lee Teng-hui.²³

Why did the PRC suddenly change its conciliatory attitude

¹⁸See “China to Practice Launching Missiles in Sea Near Taiwan,” *The Washington Times*, July 19, 1995, A17.

¹⁹Ibid. See also “Missile Exercise ‘Regular,’” *FBIS-CHI-95-140* (July 21, 1995): 1; and “Mainland Begins Naval Military Exercises,” *FBIS-CHI-95-157* (August 15, 1995): 86.

²⁰Shiba Ryotaro, “The Sorrow of Being Born as Taiwanese,” *Zili zaobao* (Independence Morning Post) (Taipei), April 30, 1995, 2, 3 and May 2, 1995, 3.

²¹See note 3 above and accompanying text.

²²See note 6 above and accompanying text. In fact, Lee did not reject this proposal, but wished to have the Chinese Communists renounce the use of force against Taiwan in order to create an atmosphere to pave the way for peace talks. Apparently, the Chinese Communist side considers this “precondition” as equivalent to rejection.

²³English translation from Xinhua, July 26, 1995. Dateline: Beijing, July 26, 1995, Item no. 0726124.

toward Taiwan? It is possible that the PRC “misinterpreted” the events leading to U.S. approval of President Lee’s private visit to Cornell University as equivalent to shifting the U.S. “one China” policy to “two Chinas” policy. On May 2, the U.S. House of Representatives, by a vote of 396 to zero, adopted a nonbinding resolution requesting President Bill Clinton to express his welcome to President Lee to visit Cornell. The Department of State issued a statement on May 3 stating that the United States formally recognized the PRC as the only legal government of China. Therefore, allowing President Lee, who has the title of ROC president, to visit the United States endangered bases of official relations with the PRC.²⁴ On May 4, a PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that the House resolution was intended to create “one China, one Taiwan.” The PRC strongly opposed and urged the United States not to allow Lee’s visit under any name, title, and formality, so as not to endanger Sino-American relations, claiming that such a visit was impossible.²⁵ On May 9, the United States Senate adopted a resolution similar to the House of Representatives on Lee’s visit by a vote of 97 to 1, and the State Department made similar comments. On May 11, the spokesman of the PRC Foreign Ministry condemned the Senate resolution as a violent interference in China’s internal affairs which the PRC resolutely opposed.²⁶ On May 22, under strong congressional pressure, a U.S. Department of State spokesman announced that President Clinton had agreed to allow President Lee to come to the United States in his private capacity to attend Cornell University’s alumni meeting.

On May 24, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the PRC National People’s Congress (NPC) issued a statement lodging a strong protest against the United States, stating:

We would like to sternly warn the U.S. Government and Congress: Your decision to permit [Lee Teng-hui] to visit the United States has seriously hurt the national feelings of 1.2 billion Chinese people. You would be well advised not to stray further; otherwise, you will begin with injuring others and end up ruining yourselves.

The Chinese NPC Foreign Affairs Committee firmly supports the Chinese Government’s solemn and just stand, and strongly urges the U.S. Government to immediately revoke its erroneous decision to permit [Lee Teng-hui] to visit the United States. If the U.S. Government is bent on

²⁴*People’s Daily*; May 6, 1995, 1.

²⁵*Gong dang wenti yanjiu* (Studies in Communism) (Taipei) 21, no. 7 (July 15, 1995): 81.

²⁶“Opposed to [Lee] Teng-hui Visit,” *FBIS-CHI-95-091* (May 11, 1995): 1.

having its own way, it will be entirely responsible for all consequences arising from this.²⁷

The PRC's military exercises continued until March 21, 1996, two days before Taiwan held its first popular presidential election on March 23, 1996, as indicated in map 1.

In order to warn the PRC not to miscalculate the situation and thus accidentally begin an armed conflict, President Clinton sent two aircraft carriers to international waters near Taiwan.²⁸ This was done in accordance with Section 2 of the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979,²⁹ particularly Section 2 (b) (6):

Sec. 2.(a) The President having terminated governmental relations between the United States and the governing authorities on Taiwan recognized by the United States as the Republic of China prior to January 1, 1979, the Congress finds that the enactment of this Act is necessary—

(1) to help maintain peace, security, and stability in the Western Pacific; and

(2) to promote the foreign policy of the United States by authorizing the continuation of commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people on Taiwan.

(b) 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

(6) 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.

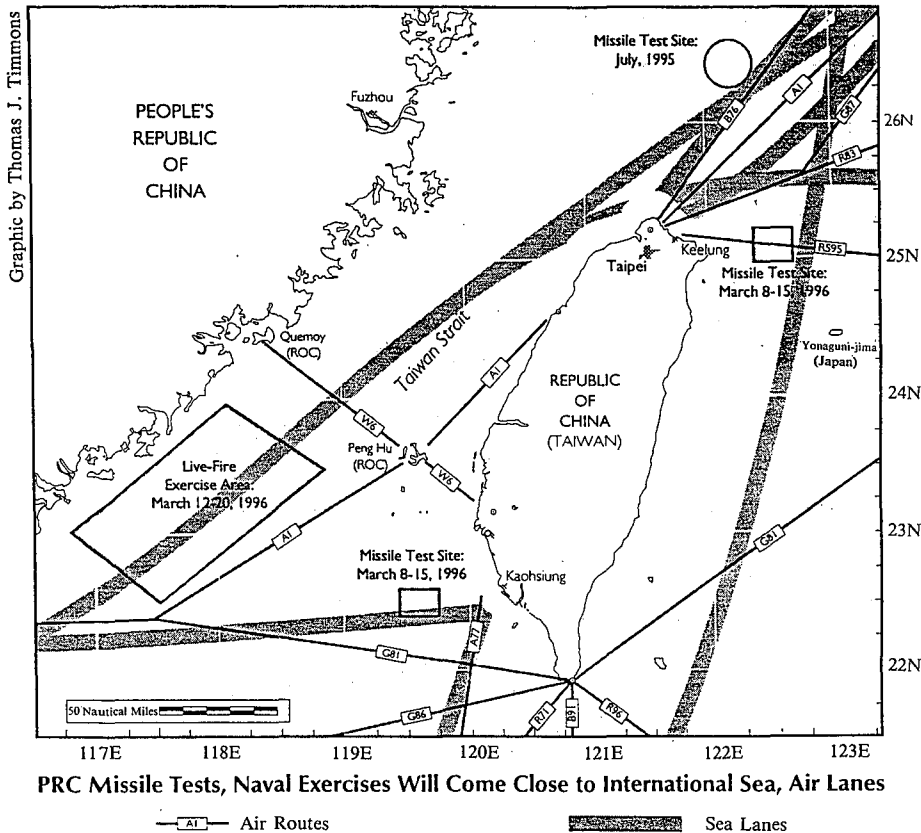
Despite the PRC's military threats and exercises, the presidential

²⁷“Beijing ‘Indignant’ Over Visit,” *FBIS-CHI-95-100* (May 24, 1995): 7.

²⁸See Steven Matson, “China Sends Bellicose Signal Across Taiwan Strait,” *The Washington Post*, January 29, 1996, A24; and Dana Priest and Judith Havemann, “Second Group of U.S. Ships Sent to Taiwan,” *ibid.*, March 11, 1996, A1, A3.

²⁹Public Law 96-8; 93 STAT. 14 (April 10, 1979), 22 USC § 3301-3316.

Map 1



Note: Air route information may not be current. Shipping routes are approximate.

Sources: Defense Mapping Agency, *Jet Navigation Chart 38*; *FBIS-CHI-95-140* (July 21, 1995); and news reports. Reprinted from Heritage Foundation, *Backgrounder*, no. 269 (March 12, 1996): 2.

election was successfully held in Taiwan on March 23, 1996. Among the four candidates, President Lee won 54 percent of the popular votes, with a turnout of 76.04 percent.³⁰ Although the PRC criticized President Lee prior to the election, its reaction to Lee's victory has been quite interesting. In a Xinhua News Agency commentary released

³⁰Virginia Sheng, "Lee Sweeps to Victory in Presidential Poll," *The Free China Journal* 13, no. 12 (March 28, 1996): 1; and Patrick E. Tyler, "Taiwan's Leader Wins Its Election and a Mandate," *The New York Times*, March 24, 1996, 1, 16.

on April 27, 1996 from Beijing, it emphasized the decisive defeat of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Peng Ming-min, who received only 21.14 percent popular votes, as an indication of the Taiwan people's rejection of Taiwan independence.³¹

On May 20, 1996, President Lee Teng-hui was sworn in as the ninth president of the Republic of China. In his inaugural speech, he was quite conciliatory on Taiwan-mainland relations:

The ROC has always been a sovereign state. Disputes across the Strait center around system and lifestyle; they have nothing to do with ethnic or cultural identity. Here in this country it is totally unnecessary or impossible to adopt the so-called course of Taiwan independence. For over 40 years, the two sides of the Strait have been two separate jurisdictions due to various historical factors, but it is also true that both sides pursue eventual national unification. Only when both sides face up to the facts and engage in dialogue with profound sincerity and patience to seek common ground while striving to resolve differences will they be able to find the solution to the unification question and work for the common welfare of the Chinese people.

Today, I will especially seriously call upon the two sides of the Strait to deal straightforwardly with the momentous question of how to terminate the state of hostility between them, which will then make a crucial contribution to the historic task of unification. In the future, at the call of my country and with the support of its people, I would like to embark upon a journey of peace to mainland China taking with me the consensus and will of the 21.3 million people. I am also ready to meet with the top leadership of the Chinese Communists for a direct exchange of views in order to open up a new era of communication and cooperation between the two sides and ensure peace, stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.³²

Both President Lee and Premier Lien Chan (he is now also vice president) have repeatedly requested the PRC's ARATS to resume negotiations, which were suspended on June 16, 1995.³³ However, at the time of this writing, the PRC has not formally responded to this call. Without a positive response from the PRC, it is difficult for President Lee to start negotiations for the termination of hostilities.³⁴

³¹See *People's Daily* (Overseas edition), April 29, 1996, 5. See also Wang Yu, "What Does the Result of Taiwan's Election Explain?" *Liaowang xinwen zhoukan* (Outlook News Weekly), April 1, 1996, no. 14:7, which reaches the same conclusion.

³²"Taiwan: Text of President [Lee] Teng-hui's Inaugural Speech," *FBIS-CHI-96-098* (May 20, 1996): 53-54.

³³See note 13 above.

³⁴In his inaugural speech, Lee quietly dropped his condition for the PRC to renounce the use of force against Taiwan before beginning negotiations for termination of hostilities. Also, he dropped his condition of meeting PRC leaders in an international forum.

Therefore, relations between Taiwan and the mainland remain uncertain and volatile.³⁵

³⁵President Clinton's "mishandling" of Lee's visit to the United States, which appears to have caused the present impasse in Taiwan-mainland relations, was criticized by Senator John McCain as follows:

Much has been made of the president's inclination to seek solutions to problems that merely postpone their worst consequences. Much has also been made of the causal relationship between presidential rhetoric and action. The disaster that has been President Clinton's China policy shows the severity of both problems.

Candidate Clinton attacked President Bush for coddling the "butchers of Beijing" and promised to make support for human rights the centerpiece of his China policy. As president, he attempted various ruses to delay fulfilling that promise, first renewing most-favored-nation (MFN) trading status to China and then issuing an executive order that conditioned the next year's renewal on human rights progress. The Chinese, however, refused to cooperate. One year later, when his allies in Congress began their annual attempt to deny renewal of MFN status, and after his secretary of state was publicly humiliated in Beijing, the president ignored his previous executive order and reversed himself by delinking human rights and MFN. The president arrived at the right policy, but the route he took did incalculable harm to American credibility, broadcasting from Pyongyang to Port-au-Prince his weakness as a foreign policy leader.

The president has used the diplomacy he employed to such poor effect in the MFN dispute as the model for his subsequent dealings with Beijing. Rather than privately informing the Chinese that Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui would be allowed to come to the United States and assuring them of the political insignificance and private nature of the visit, President Clinton told the Chinese that the visit would not occur. Beijing was left to learn of the president's change of heart on television.

China's subsequent show of force in the Taiwan Strait and the alarm this act of aggression set off throughout Asia was a direct consequence of the administration's mishandling of the Lee visit. In response to China's belligerence, President Clinton appropriately ordered two U.S. aircraft carrier groups to approach the Strait. When China warned the United States not to allow its carriers to enter the Strait, the president demurred, leaving unchallenged an objection to a principle—freedom of navigation—that has been a vitally important American interest since the day George Washington took the oath of office.

John McCain, "Imagery or Purpose? The Choice in November," *Foreign Policy*, no. 103 (Summer 1996): 30-31.