

From Romantic Triangle to Marriage? Washington-Beijing-Taipei Relations in Historical Comparison*

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This paper applies the "strategic triangle" approach to the relations among Washington, Beijing, and Taipei in the post-Cold War period. The main argument is that the strategic triangle among the three has been gradually shifting from a "romantic triangle" with the United States playing the role of an "unwilling pivot," to a "marriage" between the United States and Taiwan—although whether that status can be sustained remains to be seen. The cause of this shift is mainly structural: an unwilling pivot tends to tilt toward the weaker of the two wings, particularly when the stronger wing is emerging as a threat. In making this argument, the paper draws a historical analogy with the Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna triangle between 1870 and 1914. In that triangle, the unwilling pivot, Germany, first adopted an impartial attitude toward Russia and Austria-Hungary. As the duel between St. Petersburg and Vienna intensified over the Balkans, however, Germany was forced to take sides and bind its fate with the Hapsburg Empire. A comparison of the two triangles—including their modes of

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entry, operation, and exit—reveals a strong tendency in the Washington-Beijing-Taipei triangle to evolve following the historical pattern of the pre-WWI Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna triangle. Based on this comparison, we can conclude an unwilling pivot should find that the costs associated with pivot playing are likely too high, and entry into a partnership with one of the wings is deemed more favorable. It remains to be seen whether a formal marriage will come about between the United States and Taiwan, as it did between Germany and Austria-Hungary prior to WWI.

KEYWORDS: strategic triangle; cross-Strait relations; U.S. China policy; Bismarck; World War I.

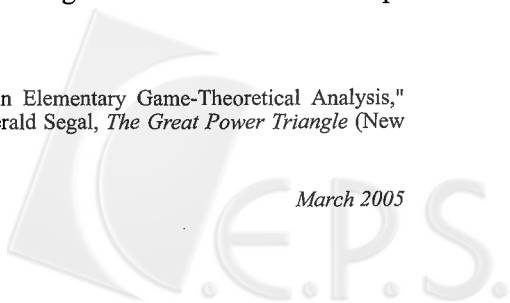
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Cross-Strait relations between Taiwan and mainland China have to be understood in a Washington-Beijing-Taipei triangular framework. The United States has acted as Taiwan's protector ever since the Nationalist government retreated to the island in 1949. Even though the relations between Washington and Beijing have been marked by great volatility, fluctuating between adversity and strategic partnership in the past half century, the United States has never abandoned its role as guarantor of Taiwan's security against the mainland's military threat. From time to time the United States demonstrates its intention to be a broker between the two rivals by putting forth such *modus vivendi* as "interim agreement" proposals, in the hope that such formulae could be accepted by the contending parties and the situation in the Taiwan Strait could be stabilized. Realizing the importance of the U.S. role in cross-Strait relations, both Taipei and Beijing have been courting America's favor in various subtle and not so subtle ways. The United States has clearly made itself a constituent player in the cross-Strait game, and a Washington-Beijing-Taipei strategic triangle has resulted.

The study of strategic triangles was in vogue when the United States was exploring the possibility of involving Beijing in the U.S.-Soviet superpower rivalry from the 1960s through the 1980s.¹ This concept

¹Lowell Dittmer, "The Strategic Triangle: An Elementary Game-Theoretical Analysis," *World Politics* 33, no. 4 (1981): 485-516; Gerald Segal, *The Great Power Triangle* (New



was then reapplied to the study of other triangular relations, such as the U.S.-China-Japan triangle,² the U.S.-South Korea-Japan triangle,³ and the Sino-Russian-American triangle.⁴ One strategic triangle that has attracted increasing attention is Washington-Beijing-Taipei relations. This is sometimes called the "mini-triangle" as distinct from the historical U.S.-Soviet-PRC "great triangle."⁵ Various works have sought to deepen our understanding of the logic of the mini-triangle as events unfolded that testify to the interconnectedness of the actions of the trio.⁶ The most recent interactions among the three players prior to and immediately after

York: St. Martin's, 1982); Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Collapsing Triangle: U.S. and Soviet Policies toward China, 1969-1980," *Contemporary Strategy* 4 (1983): 113-46; Ilpyong J. Kim, ed., *The Strategic Triangle: China, the United States, and the Soviet Union* (New York: Paragon House, 1987); and Joshua S. Goldstein and John R. Freeman, "U.S.-Soviet-Chinese Relations: Routine, Reciprocity, or Rational Expectations?" *American Political Science Review* 85, no. 1 (1991): 17-35.

²See, for example, Thomas L. Wilborn, *International Politics in Northeast Asia: The China-Japan-United States Strategic Triangle* (Carlisle, Penn.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1996); Ming Zhang and Ronald N. Montaperto, *A Triad of Another Kind: The United States, China, and Japan* (New York: Palgrave, 1999); and Go Ito, *Alliance in Anxiety: Détente and the Sino-American-Japanese Triangle* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

³See Victor D. Cha, *Alignment Despite Antagonism: The United States-Korea-Japan Security Triangle* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999).

⁴Gilbert Rozman, "A New Sino-Russian-American Triangle?" *Orbis* 44, no. 4 (2000): 541-56; and James C. Hsiung, "The Strategic Triangle: Dynamics Between China, Russia, and the United States," *Harvard International Review* 26, no. 1 (2004): 14-17.

⁵Lowell Dittmer, "The Chinese 'Mini-Triangle': An Analysis of United States Policy toward China and Taiwan" (Working paper, 1996).

⁶See, for instance: Wu Yu-Shan, *Kangheng huo hucong: liang'an guanxi xinquan* (Balancing or bandwagoning: cross-Strait relations revisited) (Taipei: Cheng-chung, 1997); Bao Tzong-Ho, "Zhanlue sanjiao jiaose zhuanbian yu leixing bianhua fenxi—yi Meiguo han Taihai liang'an sanjiao hudong weili" (An analysis of role transition and type change in a strategic triangle: the case of triangular interaction between the United States and the two sides of the Taiwan Strait), in *Zhengbian zhong de liang'an guanxi lilun* (Contending theories in the study of cross-Strait relations), ed. Bao Tzong-Ho and Wu Yu-Shan (Taipei: Wunan, 1999), 337-63; Alan M. Wachman, "America's Taiwan Quandary: How Much Does Chen's Election Matter?" in *Taiwan's Presidential Politics: Democratization and Cross-Strait Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001), 236-59; Alan D. Romberg, "Taiwan in U.S.-PRC Relations: A Strategic Perspective" (Paper presented at the conference on "U.S.-China Relations and the Bush Administration: A New Paradigm or Continuing Existing Modalities," Claremont McKenna College, Claremont, California, 2001); and David Shambaugh, "The Military-Political Dimension in the U.S.-China-Taiwan Triangle" (Paper presented at the conference on "Taiwan and U.S. Policy: Toward Stability or Crisis?" Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C., 2002).

Taiwan's March 20, 2004 presidential election are again a vivid example of how the triangular logic is at work.

Strategic triangles evolve in explainable ways. One particular type of strategic triangle, the "romantic triangle," easily transforms into a "marriage" when one relation turns from amity to enmity.⁷ One of the reasons behind such a shift is the existence of an "unwilling pivot" and its inability to hold fast to its role between the two "wings." The most famous historical case is the Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna triangle from 1871 to 1914, wherein a change of German attitude toward Russia transformed the romantic triangle into a marriage. For any theorist interested in strategic triangles, the study of the Bismarckian system and how it degenerated into a war-prone marriage between Germany and Austria-Hungary is a must. The striking similarities between that triangle and the mini-triangle in question are to be explored here.

This paper begins with an analysis of the various triangular roles that Washington, Beijing, and Taipei have been playing in the post-Cold War period up to this point. The first task is to determine the structure of the triangle and discern its transition. A comparison then is made with the Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna triangle, revealing both similarities and differences. The comparison is divided into three parts: entry into the romantic triangle, operation of the triangle, and evolution into marriage. The goal is to locate the opportunities and constraints facing an unwilling pivot and how that pivot is pressured to exit from its role. The hope is that through the application of theories and analogies with historical cases, we can gain deeper understanding of the triangular logic that is powerfully at work in Washington-Beijing-Taipei relations.

A Triangular Perspective

The first section begins with a general identification of the three state actors whose mutual relations are interdependent. The analysis is primarily

⁷For the roles in a strategic triangle, see Dittmer, "The Strategic Triangle."

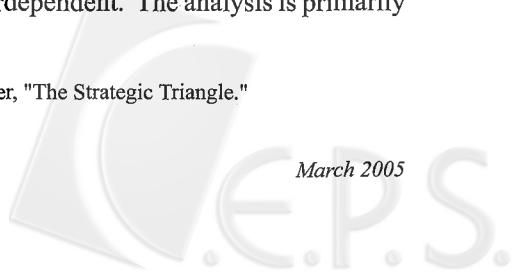
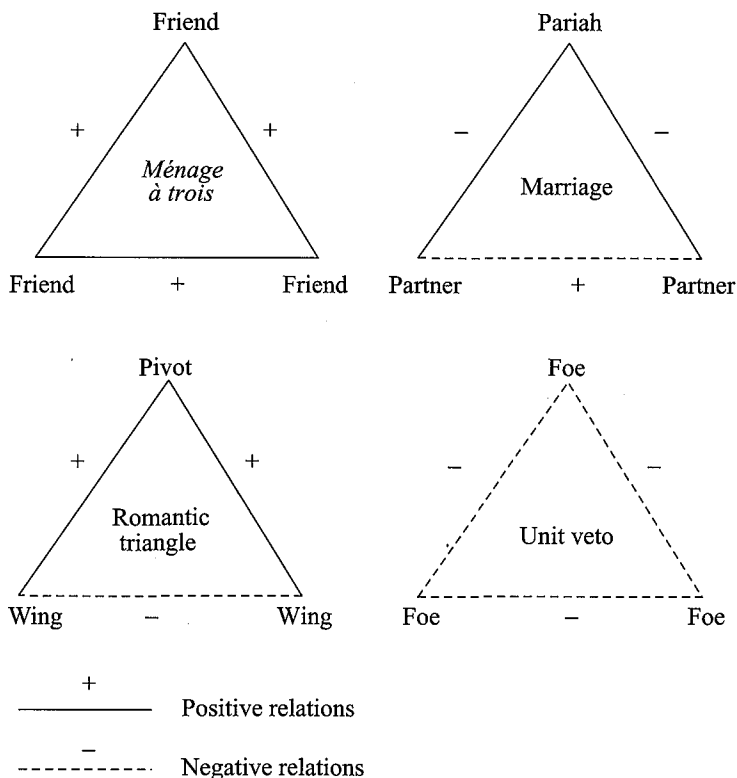


Figure 1
Strategic Triangles and Roles



concerned with national security: interstate relations in the triangle are characterized as either amity (+) or enmity (-). This typology offers four types of strategic triangles: those with three amity relations ("*ménage à trois*"), two amities and one enmity ("romantic triangle"), one amity and two enmities ("marriage"), and three enmities ("unit veto"). In *ménage à trois* all players are "friends." In a romantic triangle two "wings" court one "pivot." The wings are at each other's throat, while the pivot maintains good relations with both wings. In marriage the "married couple" are "partners," while the odd man out is a "pariah." In unit veto all the three triangular players are "foes" (see figure 1). Assuming amity with other



players is better than enmity (assumption **A**), and enmity between other players is better than if they are in amity (because one fears collusion by other players against oneself) (assumption **B**), and finally assuming **A** is more important than **B** in determining preference ordering among all the six roles, then we have: pivot (1), friend (2), partner (3), wing (4), foe (5), and pariah (6).⁸ A pariah would naturally want to "elevate" its role in the triangle to a better position. This elevating tendency, however, cannot be realized if a favorable environment is not available (e.g., if neither partner is interested in improving relations with the pariah, or if the relations between the partners remain congenial).

The pivot is arguably the most advantageous position any player can take in a strategic triangle. Playing pivot means one can gain concessions from both wings that are fighting between themselves. If such concessions are not forthcoming, then the pivot can "tilt" toward one wing so as to invoke jealousy on the part of the other wing, and thus induce concessionary moves. The rivalry of the wings excludes the possibility that they would collude against the pivot. It then makes sense for any country to strive for the pivot's position in a triangle, and hold on to that position and reap benefits therefrom. The discussions of the great strategic triangle in the late 1960s and 1970s precisely centered on Washington's desire to play the role of the pivot between Moscow and Beijing, pitting the two communist mammoths against each other.

The above having been said, one must bear in mind the possibility that a pivot may take its role not voluntarily, but unwillingly. Generally speaking, this possibility is not recognized in the literature on strategic triangles. Most observers emphasize the desirability of the role of the pivot, as well as the efforts by nations to capture this role. Henry Kissinger, the architect of America's grand strategy in the early 1970s and a strong advocate of pivot-seeking, exerted great impact in this respect. However, the pivot is constantly under cross-pressure from the two wings that com-

⁸If assumption **A** and assumption **B** are given the same weight, then the preference ordering of the triangular roles would change. For this alternative ordering, see Bao, "Zhanlue sanjiao jiaose zhuanbian yu leixing bianhua fenxi."

pete to win the pivot's favor. The "courting" of the wings may take various forms, not all of which are desirable from the pivot's perspective. A weak pivot may find itself squeezed between the two wings that apply not persuasion and concessions but bullying and coercion. Even a strong pivot may be troubled by its position in the triangle and find the benefits from that position not worthy of the cross-pressure it entails. In short, the pivot's role is a dream position for an active triangle manipulator, but may be loathed by an unwilling player.

In the Cold War great triangle, the United States—following the strategic design of Henry Kissinger—once succeeded in capturing the pivot role in the early 1970s. In the post-Cold War period, the United States has again found itself as a pivot in a triangular game, this time between mainland China and Taiwan. In the early 1970s, the United States strove for and attained the pivot's role, and took advantage of that role by balancing between the two communist giants.⁹ From the 1990s on, the United States has gotten itself into the role of an "unwilling pivot" between Beijing and Taipei, not of Washington's own volition, but rather by the acts of China and Taiwan (see table 1). The two pivot roles that Washington took are thus quite different. One cannot derive the behaviors of the mini-triangle pivot from the great triangle pivot of twenty years ago. In order to explore the opportunities and constraints facing an "unwilling pivot," we will delve into a historical romantic triangle: in pre-WWI Europe where an unwilling pivot first took pains to sustain its position, yet then succumbed to the pressure and temptation to tilt toward one wing, thus changing the triangular structure from a romantic triangle to a marriage.

The Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna Triangle

Between 1871 and 1890 Otto von Bismarck steered the foreign policy of the newly unified German Empire. The old helmsman carefully navi-

⁹Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), 165, 712.

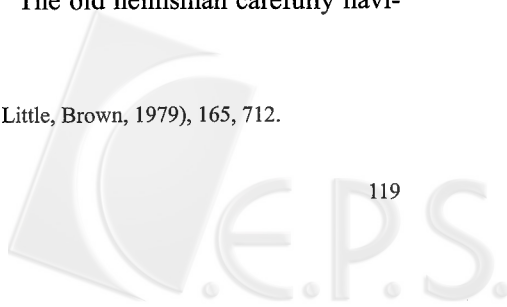


Table 1
Evolution of Great and Mini-Triangles

	<i>Great Triangle</i>		US	PRC	USSR	<i>Mini Triangle</i>		US	PRC	ROC
1950s	Marriage	Pariah	Pariah	Junior partner	Senior partner	Marriage	Marriage	Senior partner	Pariah	Junior partner
1960s	Unit-veto	Foe	Foe	Foe	Foe	Marriage	Marriage	Senior partner	Pariah	Junior partner
Early 1970s	Romantic	Pivot	Pivot	Wing	Wing	Marriage	Marriage	Senior partner	Junior partner	Pariah
Late 1970s	Marriage	Senior partner	Senior partner	Junior partner	Pariah	Marriage	Marriage	Senior partner	Junior partner	Pariah
Early 1980s	Romantic	Wing	Wing	Pivot	Wing	Marriage	Marriage	Senior partner	Junior partner	Pariah
Late 1980s	<i>Ménage à trois</i>	Friend	Friend	Friend	Friend	Marriage	Marriage	Senior partner	Junior partner	Pariah
Post-Cold War	Collapse	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Romantic	Romantic	Unwilling Pivot	Wing	Wing

Source: Yu-Shan Wu, "Does Chen's Election Make Any Difference? Domestic and International Constraints on Taipei, Washington, and Beijing," in *Taiwan's Presidential Politics: Democratization and Cross-Strait Relations in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Muthiah Alagappa (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 2001), 161.

gated Germany between Vienna and St. Petersburg, the two of which were at loggerheads over the Balkans. A typical romantic triangle thus emerged among Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Germany was playing the role of a pivot, courted by Russia and Austria-Hungary. Berlin was also under cross-pressure from Vienna and St. Petersburg, however, and did not enjoy being a pivot; Germany in this case was thus an "unwilling pivot." Only someone of the caliber of Bismarck could maintain the delicate balance and keep concurrent friendships with Austria-Hungary and Russia. When Wilhelm I died in 1888 and Wilhelm II succeeded to the throne (following the short interregnum of Frederick III's reign), Bismarck began losing power and was ultimately removed from chancellorship in March 1890. Under the new emperor, Berlin decided to tilt toward Vienna at the expense of its long-term friendship with Russia. A romantic triangle was transformed into a marriage. This move pushed Russia to the French, paving the way for the Balkan crisis and the ultimate outbreak of WWI.¹⁰

Whether Germany's shift from pivot to partner would result in war is not our primary concern here. The purpose here is to look into the Berlin-Vienna-St. Petersburg triangle and examine the constraints and opportunities that an unwilling pivot faces, and the way in which those constraints and opportunities were managed. The following case shows that the unwilling pivot can lack a firm commitment to its role, for instead of reaping the benefits of a willing pivot, it can instead end up paying a heavy price. Under the pressure from the two wings to make a commitment, we see that a pivot can shift to one of the wings, and change the structure of the game from romantic triangle to marriage.¹¹ This would lead to a role change from pivot to partner—two notches down on the previously-mentioned desira-

¹⁰For further discussion, see Stephen Van Evera, "The Cult of the Offensive and the Origins of the First World War," *International Security* 9, no. 1 (1984): 58-107.

¹¹One may imagine a similar interpersonal situation in which two gentlemen court a lady. This romantic triangle puts the lady in a position to extract concessions from the two gentlemen. If the lady is an unwilling pivot, however, she may not enjoy the pleasure and power inherent in her position, for her interest in manipulating the wings is limited. At the same time, the cross-pressure on a pivot is highly unpleasant. The desire to reduce pressure may lead the lady to go steady with one of the wings, thus changing the structure of the triangular game.

bility scale. However, since an unwilling pivot lacks either the ability or the intention to take advantage of its role, the loss in shifting to a partner is less than one would expect from a willing pivot.

If we trace the history of European power politics in the late nineteenth century closely, we find that the pivot was never Bismarck's favorite position for Germany. What Bismarck really wanted was *ménage à trois*, and for Berlin to play the role of friend therein. Bismarck considered the Second Reich of 1871 a sated power, and insisted that further additions to the country's territory were unnecessary and undesirable.¹² His greatest fear throughout the 1860s and 1870s was that France might avenge her defeat in 1871. Since France by itself constituted little threat to Germany, Bismarck's fear was really about the creation of an anti-German coalition engineered by France. Hence the top priority of Germany in the post-1871 period was to keep Paris in diplomatic isolation, and ally Berlin with major powers in Europe. The two tasks were intricately linked. If Berlin failed to keep all the major European powers in the Bismarckian system, then the one(s) left out would be courted by Paris and the diplomatic isolation imposed on France would be broken. However, to please everyone has always been difficult, let alone amidst conflicting national interests of great powers. Bismarck's statesmanship lied exactly in his ability to reconcile the irreconcilables—i.e., to befriend countries with conflicting strategic interests.

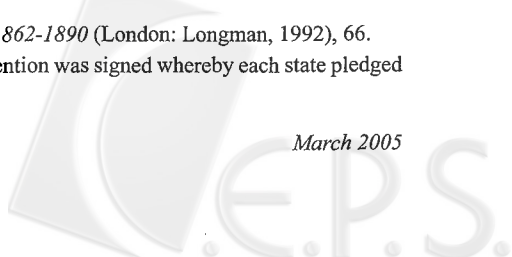
The most relevant case is the Berlin-Vienna-St. Petersburg triangle. From the very beginning, Bismarck realized the importance of keeping all the three relations in this triangle positive so that Germany did not have to take sides and alienate either Austria or Russia,¹³ and play into the hands of the French.¹⁴ To avoid such a turn of events, he proposed the Three Emperors' League (*Dreikaiserbund*) in 1873.¹⁵ The League was a vague

¹²Stephen J. Lee, *Aspects of European History: 1789-1980* (London: Routledge, 1982), 134.

¹³Rene Albrecht-Carrié, *A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 164.

¹⁴D. G. Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany: 1862-1890* (London: Longman, 1992), 66.

¹⁵In May 1873, a Russo-German military convention was signed whereby each state pledged



coalition among the German Kaiser, the Russian Tsar, and the Austrian Emperor against the spread of socialism and for peace in Europe. Its ostensible objective was to prevent the revolutions of 1848 and 1871. However, the main motive behind Bismarck's move was diplomatic: the League was an ideological coalition against republican France.¹⁶ For that reason, Bismarck even reprimanded Count Harry Arnim, the German ambassador in Paris, for his idea of restoring monarchy in France.¹⁷

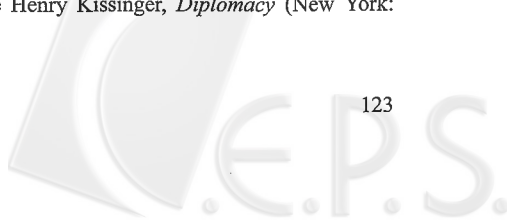
By putting together the three nations in a common framework, Bismarck intended to create a *ménage à trois*. It is interesting to note that one hundred years later another realist—Henry Kissinger, an astute student of nineteenth century European diplomacy and a great admirer of Bismarck—would attempt to put his country in a pivot position, the one Bismarck so strenuously avoided.¹⁸ This brings us to the different contexts in which Bismarck and Kissinger found themselves. In order to bring about German unification, Bismarck shocked Europe by his deliberate aggression. After his goal was accomplished, however, Bismarck changed from a revolutionary to an ultra-conservative in international politics. His primary concern had turned inwards toward managing class conflict and preserving monarchical power in Germany. For him, *ménage à trois* was the best arrangement, as it provided a peaceful and manageable international environment. A pivot, on the other hand, means great opportunities and great risks. This was not the role a sated Germany would want to assume. One hundred years later, Kissinger aspired to the pivot position in the great strategic triangle. He had such ambition because the United

to assist the other with an army of 200,000 men in the event of attack. This was followed by the Tsar's June visit to Vienna and the production of a political agreement to join in consultation in the event of difference. The underwriting of this agreement by Germany in October brought into existence the first *Dreikaiserbund*.

¹⁶Peter Pulzer, *Germany: 1870-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 41.

¹⁷Bismarck wrote to Wilhelm I in December 1872 that "Our chief danger in the future begins at the moment when France once more appears to the royal courts of Europe as a possible and appropriate ally, which is not true in its present uncertain and disunited situation and will be even less true under Gambetta or any regime inspired by him." Cited in Gordon A. Craig, *Germany 1866-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 105.

¹⁸For Kissinger's admiration of Bismarck, see Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 165.

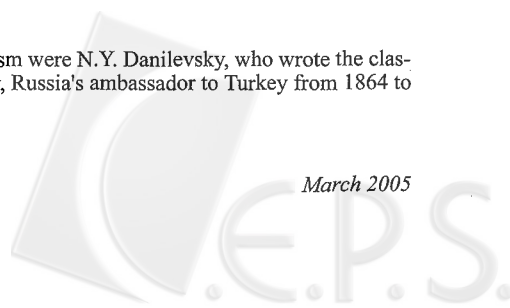


States at that time was not a sated power—being seriously bruised in the Vietnam War, Washington was anxious to halt the trend toward greater Soviet influence in the world. Kissinger did not want to see Beijing and Moscow reach rapprochement. He was clearly interested in pitting the two against each other, while maintaining good relations between Washington and the two dueling communist titans.

Whatever the intention of Bismarck, the *Dreikaiserbund* did not work. The Bosnian Serbs, the Montenegrins, and the Bulgarians all rose against their Turkish masters in 1875, plunging the Balkans into war. The Russians considered support of their Slav brethren and Orthodox co-religious a sacred duty, and aspired to expand their influence in the Balkans. This was the time of the spread of Pan-Slavism, which inspired the Tsar and his officials.¹⁹ Abhorred by the prospect of the Russian Empire expanding into the Balkans, and worried about the demonstration effect of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire on the similar multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire, Vienna actively intervened in Balkan affairs. The interests of Russia and Austria clashed, and Germany was put in a difficult position. Berlin began to take the role of an unwilling pivot, striving to keep good relations with both Vienna and St. Petersburg, while wearily watching the rapid deterioration of the Russo-Austrian relations.

From 1875 to 1890, the Berlin-Vienna-St. Petersburg triangle shifted from a *ménage à trois* to a romantic triangle. While in the original triangle, all three countries took the role of a "friend," now Berlin became a pivot, and Vienna and St. Petersburg each assumed the role of a wing. In July 1876, Austria and Russia made a final attempt to resolve their differences over the Balkan issue. Count Gyula Andrassy and Aleksandr Gorchakov met at Reichstadt and agreed on the partition of Turkish European holdings. However, events unfolded rapidly and the Reichstadt agreement was soon made obsolete. In April 1877 Russia declared war on Turkey and crushed in the following months whatever resistance the Turks were able to mount.

¹⁹The most prominent advocates of Pan-Slavism were N.Y. Danilevsky, who wrote the classic *Russia and Europe*, and Nikolai Ignatiev, Russia's ambassador to Turkey from 1864 to 1877.



Constantinople was endangered. In March 1878 Russia and Turkey signed the Treaty of San Stefano which was dictated by the Russian ambassador at Constantinople Count Ignatiev, an extreme Pan-Slavist. The treaty drastically reduced Turkish rule in Europe by granting independence to Serbia, Montenegro, and Rumania; created a large Bulgarian state with an outlet to the Aegean; and omitted any compensation for Austria.²⁰ Vienna was furious, and so was London. The tension ran so high that Bismarck was forced to intervene. He then acted as an "honest broker" at the Berlin Congress held in June and July of 1878. Russia was forced to give up a big chunk of the spoils it won at San Stefano: greater Bulgaria, the Russian satellite, was reduced in size and status; Austria was granted the administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina; and Britain acquired Cyprus. Russia was utterly dissatisfied. Germany was perceived as tilting toward Vienna at the expense of St. Petersburg.²¹

The Dual Alliance of 1879 between Germany and Austria seemed to substantiate Russia's fears. Even though the terms were defensive (and secret), it demonstrated that Germany's fate was in the final analysis more strongly tied to Austria. Bismarck did take a side. This was because he considered Austria a compliant junior partner, while Russia would demand equal status. Bismarck was anxious to place a barrier between Austria and the Western powers.²² Shared ethnic bonds also influenced Germany's tilt, as did geographical location.²³ Finally, the collapse of the Hapsburg monarchy reopened all those questions of Greater or Lesser Germany that Bismarck hoped had been settled once and for all in 1871.²⁴ Besides the

²⁰Pulzer, *Germany: 1870-1945*, 42.

²¹Fritz Stern, *Gold and Iron* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977), 316.

²²Otto Pflanze, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1963), 79.

²³Austria-Hungary was geographically and strategically more important to Germany than Russia. If war was to occur, Germany would therefore prefer Austria on its side against Russia, rather than having Russia's support against Austria, who would probably be allied with France and Britain. See Albrecht-Carrié, *A Diplomatic History of Europe, 177-78*.

²⁴Other explanations include Germany's desire to prevent Austria from seeking friends in the West against Russia, and to seal an alliance with Austria-Hungary before the departure of Vienna's pro-German Foreign Minister Count Andrassy. See Stern, *Gold and Iron*, 344.

Dual Alliance, Austria allied itself with Italy (1882), Serbia (1882), and Rumania (1883). "A clear defense alliance against Russia" was gradually taking form.²⁵

Germany's tilt toward Austria in the Dual Alliance was more apparent than real, however. Bismarck still intended to keep his options open and hoped to revive close connections with Russia²⁶ in order to prevent the growth of a counter-alliance based on France.²⁷ This explains why he was so eager to renew the *Dreikaiserbund* in 1881 and 1884,²⁸ and exercise Germany's financial muscle to provide incentives for St. Petersburg to join the alliance.²⁹ In 1887 when the Balkan crisis again plunged Russo-Austrian relations to a low and the *Dreikaiserbund* could not be renewed, Bismarck signed a secret Reinsurance Treaty with the Russians, promising not only full diplomatic support over Bulgaria to St. Petersburg but also benevolent neutrality if Austria launched an attack on Russia. The two sides further promised to stay neutral in a war with a third country unless Germany attacked France, or if Russia attacked Austria. Bismarck even revealed the terms of the secret Dual Alliance to the Russians, showing them that there was no conflict between the obligations that Germany undertook under the two treaties. The Reinsurance Treaty maintained

²⁵Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany*, 71.

²⁶Bismarck was hoping that once realizing its isolation in the Balkans, St. Petersburg would return to the bosom of the Three Emperors' League. In this way, the German tilt toward Austria-Hungary was a deliberate attempt to draw Russia back to a *ménage à trois*. However, even though this move by Bismarck did include an element of manipulating one of the wings, his goal was to mend the relationship between the wings—behavior which is clearly different from the typical strategy of a willing pivot. See Nicholas Der Bagdasarian, *The Austro-German Rapprochement, 1870-1879: From the Battle of Sedan to the Dual Alliance* (Cranbury, N.J.: Associated University Press, 1976), 301-2.

²⁷Lee, *Aspects of European History*, 137.

²⁸Article 1 of the 1881 *Dreikaiserbund* reads: "In case one of the High Contracting Parties should find itself at war with a fourth Great Power, the two others shall maintain toward it benevolent neutrality and shall devote their efforts to the localization of the conflict." This guarantees Russian neutrality when Germany is at war with France. See W. N. Medicott and Dorothy K. Coveney, eds., *Bismarck and Europe* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 126.

²⁹Bismarck used Russian dependence on German capital as an inducement to secure a more cooperative policy and he facilitated the renewal of the *Dreikaiserbund* in March 1884 by persuading Bleichroder and other German financiers to subscribe to Russian loans floated on the Berlin capital market. See Williamson, *Bismarck and Germany*, 72.

the link between St. Petersburg and Berlin. The document also reassured Russia that even though Germany would defend the integrity of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, it would not assist in any expansion of the empire at Russia's expense.³⁰ By doing so, Berlin kept its pivot position in the Berlin-Vienna-St. Petersburg triangle. The terms of the Reinsurance Treaty appealed to Russia so much that Moscow sought a renewal in 1890, but was flatly rejected by Germany under the new leadership of Wilhelm II.

The death of Wilhelm I in 1888 foretold the end to the Bismarckian age in Germany's diplomatic history. After a short interlude of Frederick III (1831-1888), the young Wilhelm II (1859-1941) succeeded to the throne. The young Kaiser was softer than the old Chancellor in domestic affairs, but more hawkish in external affairs. He clashed with Bismarck in policy and in power.³¹ The general election of February 1890 deprived Bismarck of the majority in the Reichstag. He was then forced to resign in March. The old helmsman's departure signaled a great change in German foreign policy. Bismarck's top priority was to sustain a *ménage à trois* in the Berlin-Vienna-St. Petersburg triangle. After the deepening of the Balkan crisis and the deterioration of Austro-Russian relations, Bismarck endeavored to sustain amicable relationships with both Russia and Austria. He was forced to play a pivot role, but he did his best to prevent the triangle from descending to that of a marriage in which Germany was locked in with one of the wings. Bismarck clearly viewed that all being friends in a *ménage à trois* was preferable to Germany being the unwilling pivot in a romantic triangle; he also preferred Germany as unwilling pivot to Germany as partner, even a senior one, in a marriage. The new German leadership,³² however, lacked Bismarck's sophistication and perseverance, and gave in to the pressure and attraction from Vienna. Germany then deci-

³⁰Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 164.

³¹For a discussion of Wilhelm II's policy and his personality, see Albrecht-Carrié, *A Diplomatic History of Europe*, 204-5.

³²The new leadership was composed of the new Kaiser Wilhelm II and his prime ministers: Count Leo Graf von Caprivi (1890-1894), Prince Chlodwig-Hohenlohe (1894-1900), Prince Bernhard von Bulow (1900-1909), and Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1909-1917).

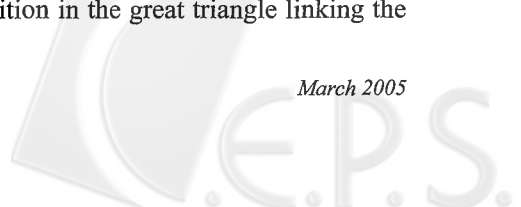
Table 2
Berlin-Vienna-St. Petersburg Triangle, 1871-1914

	1871-1875	1875-1890	1890-1914
Triangular structure	<i>Ménage à trois</i>	Romantic triangle	Marriage
Berlin's role	Friend	Unwilling pivot	Senior partner
Vienna's role	Friend	Wing	Junior partner
St. Petersburg's role	Friend	Wing	Pariah
Demarcating event	<i>Dreikaiserbund</i> (1872-73)	Balkan crises (1875-) Dual Alliance (1879) Triple Alliance (1882) <i>Dreikaiserbunds</i> (1881, 1884) Reinsurance Treaty (1887)	Bismarck's departure (1890) Franco-Russian Alliance (1894) Anglo-French Entente (1904) Anglo-Russian Convention (1907)

sively tilted toward Austria by refusing to renew the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia, which paved the way for the 1894 Franco-Russian Alliance. Wilhelm II's naval program also antagonized Britain and delivered France an unprecedented gift. Finally, the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 consolidated the anti-German coalition centered on France (see table 2), and realized Bismarck's worst fear. The following section turns to another unwilling pivot: the United States in the Washington-Taipei-Beijing triangle, and compares the Berlin- and Washington-pivot triangles in terms of their entry mode, operation, and exit.

The Washington-Beijing-Taipei Triangle: The Entry Phase

The mini-triangle of Washington-Beijing-Taipei relations evolved in the Cold War era according to the global strategic needs of the United States, i.e., according to the U.S. position in the great triangle linking the



United States, the People's Republic of China (PRC), and the Soviet Union. From the 1950s through the 1980s, the mini-triangle was shaped by the great triangle.³³ When Moscow and Beijing were staunch allies in the 1950s, Washington perceived the need to support the Kuomintang (KMT; or the Nationalist Party) regime against Communist China. In the mini-triangle one saw a marriage between the United States and the Republic of China (ROC), with the PRC playing the odd man out (see table 1). However, Nixon and Kissinger eventually moved Washington closer to mainland China in order to capture the pivot role between Moscow and Beijing in the great triangle. Taiwan's position in the mini-triangle suffered correspondingly, with Washington breaking off diplomatic relations in 1979, although *de facto* protection remained.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the great triangle dissolved, and the mini-triangle was no longer determined by external forces. Instead of viewing Beijing through the lenses of its strategic usefulness in the superpower rivalry, the United States began perceiving mainland China on its own terms.³⁴ For Washington, the PRC was a potential strategic challenger, a one-party dictatorship, and a huge market. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the strategic value of the PRC diminished dramatically, while its potential to challenge the U.S. hegemony rose rapidly. The image of the bloody suppression at Tiananmen (天安門) became engraved on the minds of the Americans. The rapid growth of the Chinese economy, however, excited even the most cautious businesspeople in the United States and promised unlimited opportunities. All these factors reflected prominently in Washington's policy toward China in the 1990s. One can easily detect a duality in U.S. policy considerations: on the one hand, the United States perceived China as a threat, both strategically and ideologically; on the other hand, economic exchanges between the two countries promised great benefits for American busi-

³³ Yu-Shan Wu, "Exploring Dual Triangles: The Development of Taipei-Washington-Beijing Relations," *Issues & Studies* 32, no. 10 (October 1996): 26-52.

³⁴ Yu-Shan Wu, "The Collapse of the Bipolar System and Mainland China's Foreign Policy," *ibid.* 29, no. 7 (July 1993): 1-25.

nesses.³⁵ This dual perception only strengthened over time.

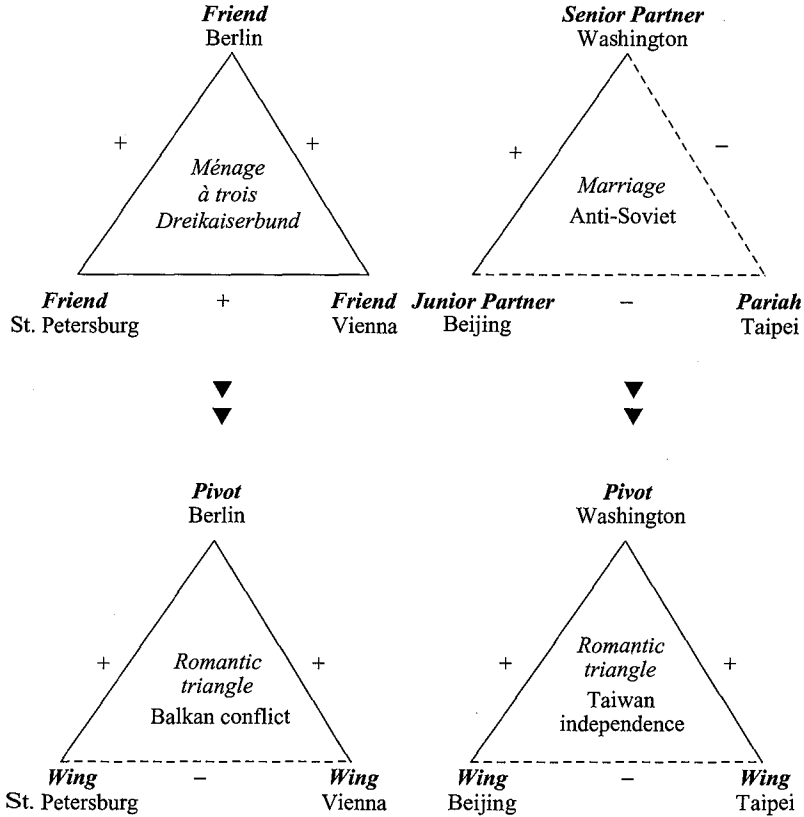
At a time when Washington was strategically distancing itself from Beijing, Taipei was growing ideologically more appealing to the Americans as the island democratized. There was no strategic conflict between the United States and the ROC, with the latter being totally dependent on America in terms of both political and military support. As one example, Taipei responded comparatively much more readily to Washington's demands regarding the protection of intellectual property rights.³⁶ The contrast with one-party rule on the Chinese mainland put Taiwan in a good light. Gradually, Washington thus began taking a more balanced position between Taipei and Beijing. The Cold War era marriage between the United States and the PRC was dissolving, evolving into a romantic triangle with Washington playing pivot and openly flirting with Taiwan. Beijing was no longer a junior partner, but a wing, and Taiwan rose from being a pariah in the 1980s to become the other wing. The demarcating event that marked the transition of the mini-triangle was the Tiananmen incident, followed by Bill Clinton's winning of the U.S. presidential election in 1992—a campaign that saw him openly bashing the "Tiananmen butchers."

With the creation of the romantic triangle, Washington found itself in an awkward position. Both Beijing and Taipei realized the importance of the role Washington had been playing in cross-Strait relations and endeavored to persuade America's policymakers to "tilt" to their own side. The United States was both courted and pressured. Different pressure points in the administration and in the Congress were targeted, with varying degrees of success, by Taiwan and PRC lobbyists. The United States did not enter this pivot position on its own volition: it did not seek to maintain

³⁵The economy, human rights, and security are the three main categories of discussion when U.S.-PRC relations are reviewed. See, for example, David M. Lampton and Alfred D. Wilhelm, "The United States and China Relations at a Crossroads," in *The United States and China Relations at a Crossroads*, ed. David M. Lampton and Alfred D. Wilhelm (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1995), 13-45.

³⁶Kerry B. Dumbaugh, "Taiwan: Recent Developments and U.S. Policy Choices," *CRS Issue Brief for Congress*, December 4, 2001, <http://www.fas.org/man/crs/IB98034.pdf> (accessed December 13, 2004)

Figure 2
Entering the Romantic Triangle



a delicate balance between mainland China and Taiwan in order to extract concessions from both sides, as a willing pivot would certainly do. Instead, the United States was simply predisposed to keep relations with both sides of the dyad amicable for its own sake. This—plus the sustained political rivalry between Taipei and Beijing—thus has constituted a romantic triangle, with Washington playing unwilling pivot, and Taipei and Beijing playing the wings.

One can compare the "entry mode" of the Berlin- and Washington-pivot triangles (see figure 2). Each evolved from different pre-stages. The



Berlin-pivot triangle came into being when Bismarck's *ménage à trois* attempt failed in 1875. The conflict of interest between Austria-Hungary and Russia over the Balkans ran too deep, and the mechanism of *Drei-kaiserbund* proved unable to contain their rivalry. Enmity gradually developed between St. Petersburg and Vienna, while both treasured their friendship with Berlin. In this case one finds a *ménage à trois* evolving into a romantic triangle. The Washington-pivot triangle made its debut when Beijing's strategic attraction for Washington dissipated with the collapse of the Soviet Union, while its ideological repugnance increased after Tiananmen. Taiwan benefited politically in this post-Cold War context, and rose from pariah to wing. Here one finds a marriage between Washington and Beijing evolving into a romantic triangle with Washington playing pivot. Although the entry mode and the pre-stage were different in the two cases, there was the same unwillingness in both Berlin and Washington to take the pivot's role. Both preferred a *ménage à trois* to a romantic triangle. Both failed in either sustaining (in the German case) or in creating (in the U.S. case) a *ménage à trois*.

Romantic Triangles Compared

Once in a romantic triangle, an unwilling pivot will suffer from cross-pressure from the two wings. The unwilling pivot will naturally swing back and forth between the wings—not to tilt and gain benefits (as would a willing pivot seek to do) but rather as a reflection of the contradictory forces that are bearing on the pivot. These forces are exerted by the wings with the help of their respective domestic support groups in the pivot country. The balance between these conflicting forces is oftentimes affected by the rhythm of domestic politics. A pivot may also oscillate between the wings in order to offset any offensive taken by one wing against the other, in an effort to stabilize the status quo and thwart a showdown that may engulf the pivot. In addition to oscillating, an unwilling pivot may often propose formulae that supposedly satisfy the basic needs of both the two wings. In short, oscillating between wings and proposing compromise

formulae are typical behaviors of an unwilling pivot. Finally, having no intention of capitalizing on the conflict between the wings, the unwilling pivot truly desires a peaceful solution to that conflict between the two wings so that the pivot would not be dragged into a war.

The Clinton years (1993-2000) are similar to the Bismarckian period (1875-1890) in that both were characterized by the unwilling pivot (the United States and Germany) engaging in such behavior as oscillating between the two wings (the PRC and ROC, Russia and Austria-Hungary); proposing compromise formulae (no war for no independence/interim agreement, Dual Alliance and Reinsurance Treaty); and emphasizing a peaceful solution to the conflict between the wings. As the conflicts in question were fundamental and unsolvable, the attempts made by the unwilling pivot proved ineffective in stabilizing the situation. The basic dilemma remained and the pivot was torn apart, preparing the background for the pivot's ultimate tilt to one of the wings at the next stage.

Oscillation was certainly a characteristic of President Bill Clinton's China policy. When campaigning against incumbent George Bush, Clinton harangued the administration for its close ties with Chinese senior leader Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) who ordered the bloody crackdown at Tiananmen. After being inaugurated, Clinton swiftly adapted to the reality of international politics and began to promote business relations with mainland China. Very soon thereafter, China's most-favored-nation (MFN) status was de-linked from human rights issues. However, as the presidential election of 1996 approached, Clinton made a slight attempt to appease his Congressional critics by approving the issuance of a visa to ROC President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝), who then paid a visit to his alma mater, Cornell University, to receive an award. That move was made in the context of overwhelming Congressional support for allowing President Lee to make such a private capacity trip. What happened then was totally unexpected from Washington's point of view: the PRC retaliated not only by both cutting military ties and suspending cooperation programs with the United States in many areas, but also sent missiles across the Taiwan Strait in a clear attempt to influence the ROC's first direct presidential election. The United States was forced to send in carrier combat groups to the Taiwan

Strait, and Washington-Beijing relations sank to an all-time low. Domestic political considerations and the need to offset Beijing's offensive in the Taiwan Strait led to Clinton's tough response to this missile crisis.

Clinton's oscillation continued. If the presidential election of 1996 provided the background for a slight American tilt toward Taiwan, then Clinton's winning of the election proved instrumental in his launching a major campaign to reestablish close ties with mainland China. The exchange of state visits by Clinton and Jiang Zemin (江泽民) in 1997 and 1998, the establishment of the "constructive strategic partnership,"³⁷ and Clinton's utterance of the "new three no's" all pointed to the direction of renewed amity between Washington and Beijing.³⁸ As the 2000 presidential election drew near, however, new tension arose in the United States between the presidential candidates, and Clinton's China policy fell under severe attack. It was like a replay of the 1995 events, when euphoria in the U.S.-PRC relations was followed by sudden shocks and then took a nose dive. In 1995, the catalyst was the issuance of a visa to Lee; in 1999, the Theater Missile Defense (TMD) and the NATO bombing of the PRC embassy in Belgrade were what touched off the vicious cycle. Anti-American feelings surged high in China, while the United States complained about such grievances as China's abuses of human rights, arrests of dissidents, stealing of nuclear technologies, illegal political contributions in the United States, and military threat to Taiwan. The American electoral cycle was clearly at work here.³⁹ Zhu Rongji's (朱鎔基) visit to the United States and the huge concessions he offered were bold counter-cyclical

³⁷For Beijing's perception on these developments, see Su Ge, "Shijimo guoji xingshi zhanwang: guoji geju yu Meiguo guojia anquan zhanlue" (Prospects for the international situation toward the end of the century: international structure and the national security strategy of the United States), *China Review* 14 (1999): 8-10.

³⁸For the implications that the "new three no's" has had for Taiwan, see Xiong Jie, "Ershiyi shiji Zhongguo tongyi qianjing yuce" (Predictions regarding the prospects for Chinese unification in the twenty-first century), *China Review* 14 (1999): 60-64.

³⁹Yu-Shan Wu, "Does Chen's Election Make Any Difference? Domestic and International Constraints on Taipei, Washington, and Beijing," in Alagappa, *Taiwan's Presidential Politics*, 155-92; and Edward Friedman, "Reflecting the Mirrors across the Taiwan Straits: American Perspectives on a China Threat," in *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths, and Reality*, ed. Herbert Yee and Ian Storey (London: Routledge/Curzon, 2002), 65-85.

moves, and yet they failed to reverse the tide.⁴⁰ Taiwan benefited from the deterioration of Washington-Beijing relations as the U.S. Congress became more concerned with Taiwan's security and—disregarding Beijing's fury—put bills on the legislative agenda with a clear aim to defend Taiwan. At this juncture, Lee Teng-hui pushed the envelope by announcing the controversial "*liangguo lun*" (兩國論, two-state theory). This move caused great concern in Beijing and Washington, as both were afraid of a confrontation à la 1995-96. Clinton swiftly sided with Beijing in demanding Taipei to backtrack, a crisis management geared to reducing tension in the Taiwan Strait. Clearly, Lee's aggressiveness backfired and caused yet another shift in Washington's policy. In short, throughout the Clinton years, U.S. China policy was almost in constant flux.

Such policy oscillations under the Clinton administration testify to the duality of the considerations in the minds of America's policymakers. Strategic interests, economic calculations, and human rights and ideological concerns pointed in different policy directions. "Engagement," "containment," and "conengagement" competed for prominence in Washington's China policy circles. President Clinton clearly lacked a well thought-through China policy during the entirety of his eight-year administration.

As the Taiwan issue was both the main source of U.S.-PRC friction and the most probable cause of any future military showdown between the world hegemon and the rising regional (and potential global) power, the vicissitudes of Washington's China policy directly bore on the mini-triangle and affected U.S.-ROC relations. Taiwan's position rose whenever Beijing was being bashed in Washington, yet fell whenever there was an urgent need for Washington to seek Beijing's cooperation. Whenever Beijing and Taipei were close to a direct conflict, Washington was drawn into the picture. The 1995-96 missile crisis/war scare in the Taiwan Strait was the first time when the United States faced a real possibility of fighting a

⁴⁰Zhu knew that, as an unwelcome visitor, he would meet with difficulties in his visit to the United States, but he was still willing to make the trip in order to enhance mutual understanding. See "An Interview with China's Zhu Rongji," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 6, 1999, A23.

major power after the end of the Cold War.⁴¹ This highlighted the need for a compromise formula to both stabilize the situation and prevent the unwilling pivot from being dragged into a war against its interests and its will.

This was how the "interim agreement" proposal came into being. From the 1950s through the 1980s, the stalemate in the Taiwan Strait was sustained as each side claimed itself to be the sole legitimate government of China. As the possibility of armed conflict gradually faded into the background, and as both sides began concentrating on domestic reform (i.e., economic reform on the mainland, and political reform on Taiwan), the United States became less worried about being dragged into a war against the PRC in defense of Taiwan. Democratization on the island in the late 1980s and 1990s, however, changed the picture by introducing a new element of uncertainty. With the rise of Taiwanese consciousness and the expansion of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP, 民主進步黨) power base through accumulative electoral victories at both the local and central levels, declaring independence for the first time became a genuine possibility for Taiwan. The cross-Strait conflict slowly but surely evolved from two governments fighting for the right to rule China, to two nation-states opposing each other. The rise of Taiwanese nationalism engulfed domestic politics and gave additional impetus to the surge of Chinese nationalism on the mainland.⁴² As the institutional gap between the two sides narrowed, the identity gap widened. A new source of cross-Strait contention emerged, one which proved even more war-prone than the old ideological rift.⁴³

⁴¹For an analysis of this possibility, see Robert S. Ross, "The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force," *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000): 87-123, and Suisheng Zhao, ed., *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995-1996 Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

⁴²Lowell Dittmer, "Taiwan as a Factor in China's Quest for National Identity" (Paper presented at the International Conference on Taiwan's Election and Democratization Study, National Chengchi University, Taipei, November 2, 2003).

⁴³Wang Feiling, "Zhonghua beiju: haixia liang'an jijiang lailin de minzu zhuyi da chongtu" (Tragedy of China: the incoming great conflict of nationalism across the Taiwan Strait), in *Minzu zhuyi yu liang'an guanxi* (Nationalism and cross-Strait relations), ed. Lin Chia-lung and Zheng Yongnian (Taipei: Third Nature Publishing, 2001), 409-32.



Through the 1990s, all of the three players in the mini-triangle became increasingly aware of the introduction of the new element of Taiwanese nationalism into the triangular game and the increasing prospect for Taiwan independence. The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis demonstrated how potentially destructive this new rift of rival nationalisms could be. The United States, as the unwilling pivot, felt the thwarting of this war of rival nationalisms to be in its national interest. The gravest danger to peace was the People's Liberation Army (PLA) attacking Taiwan and dragging the United States to Taiwan's defense; in turn, the most likely cause for such a PLA attack would be a declaration of independence by Taiwan.⁴⁴ The United States would thus want both sides to refrain from executing these worst-case scenarios.⁴⁵ This was the gist of the "interim agreement" proposal. Originating in academic circles, the proposal was promptly endorsed by government officials and intensively discussed in both academic and policy circles.⁴⁶ Although only semi-officially launched, the proposal was clearly a political balloon floated by Washington to test the responses of Beijing and Taipei. This multi-authored concept pointed to the need of having a stable framework in which Taiwan and mainland China could conduct interactions in a peaceful environment, pending a final solution to Taiwan's status vis-à-vis the mainland. The main reason this balloon was floated had to do with Washington's desire to thwart military conflict in

⁴⁴This creates a dual deterrence situation: U.S. deterrence of any use of force by mainland China against Taiwan designed to achieve unification, and Chinese deterrence against any move by Taiwan to declare independence. See Robert S. Ross, "Navigating the Taiwan Strait," *International Security* 27, no. 2 (2002): 48-85.

⁴⁵For a discussion of how these dual deterrence goals can be achieved, see Thomas J. Christensen, "The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Detering a Taiwan Conflict," *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 4 (2002): 7-21.

⁴⁶Kenneth Lieberthal raised the concept of "interim agreement" in February 1998, six months before he joined the government as a Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director for Asian Affairs at the National Security Council. His proposal was followed by similar discussions by Joseph Nye, Stanley Roth, and Harry Harding in March and April of that year. At the time Roth was Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the State Department. The common ground of all the formulae was for Taiwan to abstain from declaring independence in exchange for the PRC forsaking use of military force against Taiwan, and for Taiwan to accept the "one China" framework in exchange for Beijing allowing Taiwan to gain greater international space.

the Taiwan Strait and to prevent the American military from becoming involved. This was the sincere wish of the unwilling pivot. If the "interim agreement" proposal could be accepted by all the parties concerned, then one would have a *ménage à trois*, instead of a romantic triangle, and the United States could then be exempt from the cross-pressure inherent in the role of a pivot (since the wings would then be friends).

Under a similar structure, one finds the unwilling pivot of Bismarckian Germany oscillating between St. Petersburg and Vienna and coming up with compromise arrangements that could presumably thwart an Austro-Russian war over the Balkans in the late nineteenth century. In order to stabilize the Balkan situation, Bismarckian Germany first volunteered to be an "honest broker" at the Berlin Congress in 1878, mediating between Russia and Austria-Hungary. This move was actually a tilt toward Vienna, as many of the spoils that Russia managed to extract from the Turkish at the Treaty of San Stefano were taken away from the Tsar, and Austria-Hungary was able to lay its hands on Bosnia-Herzegovina for free. That move was indeed Bismarck's warning to St. Petersburg that Russia should not deem the Balkans as its exclusive sphere of influence. The 1879 Dual Alliance between Berlin and Vienna was a further step in that direction. However, those two tilts were then balanced by the second and third *Dreikaiserbund* of 1881 and 1884, which emphasized the solidarity of the three autocracies, and finally by the 1887 German-Russian Reinsurance Treaty. One finds Bismarck oscillating between Vienna and St. Petersburg, making tilts and counter-tilts, balancing and rebalancing. He was not trying to reap benefits from any intermediary role, but simply taking pains to maintain good relations with both Russia and Austria-Hungary as a means to keep the two rivals from going to war over the Balkans. In a similar vein, the United States in the 1990s oscillated between Beijing and Taipei, not looking to reap any benefits from its pivot role, but simply to maintain good relations with the rivals and thus prevent war in the Taiwan Strait. In both cases, one finds the unwilling pivot oscillating between the two wings.

The second characteristic of an unwilling pivot in a romantic triangle is that it proposes compromise agreements in order both to reconcile the conflicting interests of the rivaling wings and to make its commitments to

the two wings compatible. Bismarck made a secret Dual Alliance with Austria-Hungary in 1879, but then eight years later he secured a Reinsurance Treaty with Russia. The combination of the terms of the two treaties made Germany the guarantor of Austria's security, obligating Berlin to defend Vienna if and when the latter was attacked. Being a defensive alliance in nature, however, the Dual Alliance did not apply to Austria's active expansion into the Balkans or to any preemptive attack on Russia that Vienna might contemplate. That was the reason why Bismarck was able to promise benevolent neutrality to Alexander III in the event of any Austrian attack on Russia. In short, Germany was primarily supportive of Austria's security, but did not give Vienna a blank check. Russia was assured of the defensive nature of the German-Austrian alliance, and was pacified. Shifting forward to the 1990s, even though the U.S.-proposed "interim agreement" was not accepted by either Beijing or Taipei, America's intentions were made clear. Washington would endorse Taiwan's security in the case of a PRC assault across the Taiwan Strait. This "alliance" was "defensive" in nature, however, and would not apply if Taiwan provoked a war by declaring independence. In short, Taipei was given a conditional safety guarantee, but not a blank check. On the other hand, Beijing was given assurance that Washington would not support Taiwan independence, but was at the same time sternly warned that the United States would come to Taiwan's rescue if the PLA attacked the island without any preceding provocation from Taipei.

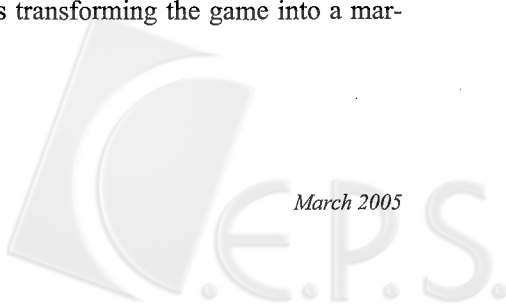
In both cases the pivot was not strictly neutral, having allied itself with the weak wing. If push were to come to shove, Germany knew it had to side with Austria. Berlin did not want to bring about that impression, however, which could inadvertently encourage Austrian expansion into the Balkans at the expense of Russia. The United States might also have to come to Taiwan's side if a war broke out, and yet Washington was afraid of giving Taipei the wrong impression that it would support Taiwan regardless of the circumstances, including a declaration of independence by the island. Though with basic sympathy cast toward Vienna, Bismarckian Germany took pains to assure Russia, through the Reinsurance Treaty and other instruments, that peace "will not be disturbed from

our side."⁴⁷ The United States also repeatedly assured Beijing of its good will, even by entering into a "strategic partnership" with the PRC. Clinton's reiteration of "three no's"—that the United States does not support independence for Taiwan, "one China, one Taiwan, or two Chinas," or Taiwan's membership in any international bodies whose members are sovereign states—is particularly telling in this respect. Even though basic sympathy was cast toward the weak wing, earnest efforts were made by both pivots to maintain good relations with the strong wing. In sum, Bismarck attempted to reconcile the interests that both Austria-Hungary and Russia had in the Balkans, and to make compatible Germany's obligations to the two competitors. Clinton and his strategists also attempted to reconcile the interests of mainland China and Taiwan, and to make compatible America's promises to the two competitors. The key issue in the Berlin-pivot romantic triangle in 1879-1890 was the Balkans, while the key issue in the U.S.-pivot romantic triangle in the 1990s was Taiwan independence. Both were explosive issues at the time, and the unwilling pivots in our two romantic triangles attempted to manage the crisis at hand by reconciling the various demands of the wings. The unwilling pivots made oscillating tilts and came up with compromise arrangements. However, the basic issues of contention remained—thus paving the way for the next stage.

From Romantic Triangle to Marriage?

An unwilling pivot does not have an intrinsic interest in the role. On the contrary, the cross-pressure inherent in such a role pushes the pivot to look for an exit. Two possibilities present themselves. One is for the wings to transform their relations from enmity to amity, thus turning the romantic triangle into a *ménage à trois*. The other is for the unwilling pivot to make a structural tilt toward one wing, thus transforming the game into a mar-

⁴⁷ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 165.



riage.⁴⁸ In the first case, all the three players would become "friends." In the second case, the pivot would become a partner, allying itself with a wing-turned-partner against the wing-turned-pariah. From the unwilling pivot's point of view, *ménage à trois* is superior to marriage. The conflict between the wings is, however, oftentimes beyond the control of the unwilling pivot. Barring the possibility of *ménage à trois*, it is more realistic to expect a turn to marriage, and indeed this was what occurred in the Berlin-pivot romantic triangle in 1890.

Germany's structural tilt toward Austria-Hungary came about due to both domestic and international factors. The difficulties inherent in maintaining a balanced position between vehement rivals mean playing pivot is a formidable task. The passing from the political scene of Bismarck in 1890 proved crucial in Germany's exit from the role of pivot. A sense of honor combined with a distaste for Bismarckian complexities prompted the young Kaiser, the 29-year-old Wilhelm II, to side with Austria-Hungary and thus change the structure of the Berlin-Vienna-St. Petersburg tripartite game from romantic triangle to marriage. Wilhelm II appointed Leo Graf von Caprivi as Chancellor to replace Bismarck in 1890, who in turn was replaced by Prince Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurst in 1894, and who was followed by Prince Bernhard von Bulow in 1900 and then Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg in 1909. All of these chancellors were senior civil servants and not politicians like Bismarck. Wilhelm II wanted to preclude the emergence of another Bismarck, and the young Kaiser took foreign policy firmly in his hands. There were other domestic factors agitating for Germany's switch. Ethnic affinity offered a powerful psychological bond between Germany and Austria-Hungary and motivated Wilhelm II to honor Germany's commitment to Austria's security. This bond also brought about great suspicion in Tsar Alexander III (reign 1881-1894) who, unlike his father Alexander II (reign 1855-1881), had little German sympathies.⁴⁹ In sum, a change of guard provided oppor-

⁴⁸We are here dealing with the change of only one relation, for this is much more likely than for two or three relations to change simultaneously.

⁴⁹Alexander II had strong German sympathies, often used the German language in his private

Table 3
Distribution of Wealth among European Powers (%)

	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900
Britain	70	68	64	59	50	37
France	12	14	13	13	13	11
Germany	4	10	16	20	25	34
Italy	0	0	0	1	1	1
Austria-Hungary	7	4	5	4	6	7
Russia	7	4	2	3	5	10

*Figures calculated by averaging share percentages of steel/iron production and energy consumption of major European powers.

Source: John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2001), 71.

tunities for Germany's policy switch, and the rise of nationalistic ideology forged an iron bond between the two German states.

In addition to elite politics and ideological factors, the state of the balance of power between the three agitated for Berlin's tilt toward Austria-Hungary. Germany itself was an emergent power, catching up with the then hegemon Britain at the turn of the century. In the Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna triangle, however, it was Russia that was on the rise, threatening Germany and dwarfing Austria-Hungary with its rapid industrialization drive. As shown in table 3, Russia's wealth was 15 percent that of Germany in 1880, 20 percent in 1890, and 29 percent in 1900; the corresponding figures for Austria-Hungary were 20 percent, 24 percent, and 21 percent, respectively. The trend was obviously in Russia's favor. In terms of manufacturing, Russia's world share was 8.8 percent in 1900, compared with Austria-Hungary's 4.7 percent. In regard to population and army size,

relations, occasionally ridiculed the exaggerations and eccentricities of the Slavophiles, and based his foreign policy on the Prussian alliance. In contrast, Alexander III was educated as tsarevich in Eastern Orthodoxy and Russian patriotism. He deprecated what he considered undue foreign influence in general, and German influence in particular, and he longed to see the adoption of genuine national principles in all spheres of official activity, with a view to realizing his ideal of a Russia homogeneous in language, administration, and religion.

Russia far exceeded all its rivals, Germany included. In warship tonnage, Russia was 1.34 times that of Germany, and 4.4 times that of Austria-Hungary in 1900. In all, Russia was by far the stronger of the two wings. St. Petersburg was more difficult to placate, and more threatening from Berlin's point of view. This balance of power meant the terms of exchange between Berlin and Vienna would be more favorable to Germany than the terms of exchange between Berlin and St. Petersburg. Berlin was too aware of the danger posed by Russia, particularly if allied with France against Germany. Austria-Hungary was too weak to pose such a threat. Germany felt that Russia was more of a threat to its security than was Austria-Hungary, leading Berlin to lean toward Vienna.

A change of guard, ideological affinity, and a favorable balance of power prompted Germany to abandon Russia and decisively tilt toward Austria-Hungary. During Emperor Francis Joseph's visit to Berlin in August 1889, the Kaiser promised that an Austrian mobilization, regardless of purpose, would be followed immediately by a German one. This went beyond the obligation that Bismarck undertook under the Dual Alliance. A defensive alliance had been turned into an offensive alliance. In 1890 Russia was denied the opportunity to renew the German-Russian Reinsurance Treaty, offering a resounding "*nyet*" to Russia's demand both for continuation of the romantic triangle and for Berlin's even-handed posturing between Vienna and St. Petersburg. Germany decisively tilted toward Austria-Hungary and transformed the structure of the triangle. Berlin became the senior partner, Austria-Hungary the junior partner, and Russia the pariah.

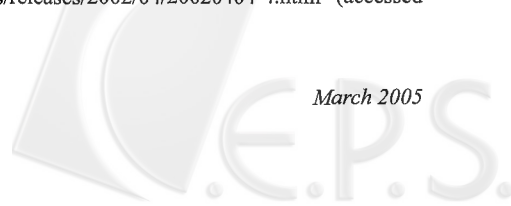
Germany's structural tilt in 1890 was clear. Whether a similar structural tilt has occurred in the Washington-pivot romantic triangle in 2000 remains to be seen, although evidence abounds in that direction. Here a change of guard, ideological mobilization, and balance of power all agitated for the United States to exit from the role of unwilling pivot and tilt decisively toward Taiwan. In February 2001, President George W. Bush was inaugurated. Surrounding him was a new group of security advisors who were markedly different from those who had the ear of his predecessor, President Bill Clinton. As Bush's China policy was taking

shape, a serious encounter occurred: a mid-air collision between an American reconnaissance aircraft and a Chinese fighter plane on April 1, 2001. After the spy plane crash-landed at a Chinese air base in Hainan (海南), the entire American crew was taken into Chinese custody. Tough negotiations went on that centered on how the U.S. government should express its regret over the collision that killed a PLA pilot. As encounters of this kind occurred in the past only between the United States and the Soviet Union, the April 2001 incident easily put the PRC in the same "enemy number one" category that was reserved for the Soviets during the Cold War era. Soon after the collision incident, President Bush uttered his unconditional support of Taiwan in the event of any PRC invasion of the island.⁵⁰ This "whatever it took" statement was an unprecedented pledge of defense for Taiwan, an articulation that contrasted sharply with Clinton's China policy.⁵¹ Even though there was some "clarification" after he made the statement, Bush's original pledge was followed by his approval of large arms sales transfers, improved military cooperation, greater leeway for Taiwan leaders visiting the United States, and repeated rhetorical support of Taiwan—all unprecedented moves by a U.S. president.⁵² The administration's Quadrennial Defense Review unmistakably saw the PRC as a

⁵⁰Asked in the ABC interview if Washington had an obligation to defend the Taiwanese in the event of attack by China, which considers the island a renegade province, Bush said: "Yes, we do ... and the Chinese must understand that. Yes, I would." When asked whether the United States would use "the full force of the American military," Bush responded, "Whatever it took to help Taiwan defend herself." <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/ALLPOLITICS/04/24/bush.taiwan.abc/> (accessed April 25, 2001).

⁵¹According to Kenneth Lieberthal, director of Asian affairs at the National Security Council during the Clinton administration, "This (*statement*) clearly does go beyond what any previous administration has indicated either orally or in writing." Lieberthal said that Bush's initial statement even went beyond a U.S.-Taiwan defense pact that was abrogated as one of the fundamental preconditions to establishing formal U.S. relations with Beijing in 1979. See *The Washington Post*, April 26, 2001, A01.

⁵²Bush also mentioned "the Republic of Taiwan" by name on April 4, 2002, when he called on the U.S. Senate to pass trade promotion authority. He stated: "... that's important to recognize and to welcome both countries, both the Republic of Taiwan, and of course China, into the World Trade Organization." One may interpret this as a slip of the tongue on Bush's part, and yet it is quite obvious that in his mind both Taiwan and China are independent countries, with equal status. See "President Calls on Senate to Pass Trade Promotion Authority," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2002/04/20020404-4.html> (accessed April 4, 2002).



potential threat in Asia; U.S. ballistic missile defense programs severely challenged China's nuclear deterrent and intimidation strategy against Taiwan; at the same time, rising U.S. influence and prolonged military deployments were at odds with previous Chinese strategy. The Bush administration publicly and repeatedly warned and sanctioned Chinese proliferators of weapons of mass destruction. Although showing good will in areas of common ground, the Bush administration has demonstrated very strong determination to defend U.S. security interests, most notably regarding Taiwan.⁵³ It is clear that the change of guard in Washington has brought about significant adjustments in U.S. China policy. U.S.-Taiwan relations have reached a height unprecedented since the break of diplomatic ties in 1979. Most important of all, this shift of policy was initiated by the United States under a new leader. Taiwan has simply played the role of a fortuitous recipient.

The September 11 incident and the resultant war on terrorism has not change the profile of Washington's new China policy. Washington has ardently sought Beijing's support in its global effort to fight terrorism, but has not used Taiwan as a bargaining chip. Taiwan has been defined as a vital U.S. security interest, as can be clearly seen from the first meeting between Bush and Jiang Zemin in February 2002 at which Bush was steadfast in declaring his commitment to the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). Bear in mind that this was only five months after September 11 and the United States was in great need of Chinese support in the war on terror and for the U.S. position on Iraq and North Korea. Bush was consistent in sending the same message to China during the second Bush-Jiang summit at the Crawford ranch in October. From 2001 through 2004, Washington has consistently "advised" Taiwan to buy more defensive weapons. Even though the United States has claimed that it was merely responding to the defense requests that Taiwan made in the 1990s, under the Bush administration there was a sea change in American attitude from reluctant and restricted approval to vigorous advocacy of arms sales to Taiwan. The

⁵³Robert Sutter, "Grading Bush's China Policy: A-," *PacNet Newsletter*, #10 (March 8, 2002), <http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac0210.htm> (accessed April 1, 2002).

United States clearly set as its goal the maintenance of the military balance in the Taiwan Strait in order to secure peace in the region. With the rapid growth of mainland China's military capabilities, keeping the military balance in the Taiwan Strait requires a massive buildup of Taiwan's defense capacity. In addition to arms sales, military cooperation in various forms (personnel training, intelligence sharing, professional advising, the setting up of a hot-line, etc.) intensified to the extent that Beijing now considers Taiwan a quasi-ally of Washington and an instrument of American domination in the region.⁵⁴ On the political front, President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) was given a high-level reception when he was allowed to stop by the United States in 2003 on his way to visit Taiwan's allies in Central America. American officials knew that allowing this stopover would boost Chen's domestic reputation in the island's cut-throat presidential electoral competition.⁵⁵ Therese Shaheen, the Washington-based chairwoman of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), revealed that President Bush was the "secret guardian angel" of Taiwan at a high-profile reception that AIT held for Chen in New York City during Chen's transit. Bush was even slow to respond to what some viewed as Chen's clear steps toward independence: proposing both a plan to rewrite the constitution and the holding of two referenda on the day of Taiwan's presidential election. When Bush's reaction finally came, his statement was carefully balanced between his disapproval of Chen's flirting with independence and his warning to China against any possible military moves by the PLA. In his famous statement made in the presence of PRC Premier Wen Jiabao (溫家寶) in December 2003, Bush said he was opposed to Taiwan's leader making unilateral decisions to change the status quo. That statement, however, was made in the context of an overall American policy that opposes "any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo."⁵⁶

⁵⁴See "U.S. Taiwan Acts Jeopardize Ties," *China Daily*, May 29, 2002, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/FR/33439.htm> (accessed September 28, 2004).

⁵⁵Chin Heng-wei, "Discerning Who Is a Friend and Who Is a Foe," *Taipei Times*, November 25, 2003, 8.

⁵⁶After a meeting at the White House with visiting Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Bush said

Shared political ideals are certainly important in persuading President Bush to lend staunch support for Taiwan. Bush enshrines his beliefs in democratic values in religious terms and understands the world via a Manichean dichotomy. Making no secret of his own religious conviction that the world is engaged in a moral battle between good and evil, Bush has peppered his speeches with biblical language and imagery.⁵⁷ As a democratic nation facing an overwhelming threat from a mammoth communist dictatorship, Taiwan has benefited from Bush's dichotomous perception of the world. America's consideration of ideals and values, fortified in religious righteousness, has served the same function as the blood bond between Germany and Austria during Berlin's decisive tilt toward Vienna at the end of the nineteenth century. In both cases, balancing and maneuvering in a triangular game were deemed too low for principled national leaders with a high purpose, and decisive support for the right side was considered a virtue. Strategic ambiguity was to be replaced by strategic clarity. In the past, Berlin and Washington approached St. Petersburg and Beijing out of necessity. Now they found their relations with Vienna and Taipei much more congenial (i.e., a blood bond with Austria, and shared democratic values with Taiwan).

More important than Bush's personal conviction, however, is the changing balance of power among the three players in the mini-triangle. As shown in table 4, although the 1990s were a decade of rapid growth for

in response to a question about the planned referendum: "We oppose any unilateral decision by either China or Taiwan to change the status quo. And the comments and actions made by the leader of Taiwan indicate that he may be willing to make decisions unilaterally, to change the status quo, which we oppose." See William Branigin, "U.S. Reaffirms 'One China' Policy: Bush Cautions Taiwan as He Receives Chinese Premier Wen at White House," *The Washington Post*, December 9, 2003. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A49366-2003Dec9.html> (accessed December 10, 2003). It is interesting to note that one cannot deduce from these statements that Bush has reneged on his "whatever it took" promise, i.e., there is no logical contradiction between Bush's previous defense promise to Taiwan and his opposition to Taiwan independence.

⁵⁷ Thus, for example, Bush said in his 2003 State of the Union address that "We Americans have faith in ourselves, but not in ourselves alone," and that "We do not know, we do not claim to know all the ways of Providence, yet we can trust in them, placing our confidence in the living God behind all life, all history. May He guide us now. And may God bless the United States of America." <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/01/20030128-19.html> (accessed December 13, 2004).

Table 4
Distribution of Power among the U.S., PRC, and ROC

Year	US DEX ¹	US GDP ²	US POP ³	US AVE ⁴	US DEX ⁵	PRC GDP ⁶	PRC POP ⁷	PRC AVE ⁸	ROC DEX ⁹	ROC GDP ¹⁰	ROC POP ¹¹	ROC AVE ¹²	US/PRC ¹³	PRC/ROC ¹⁴
1992	89.16	90.85	17.70	65.9	7.68	6.07	80.86	31.5	3.16	3.08	1.44	2.6	2.09	12.3
1993	87.53	90.94	17.71	65.4	8.69	5.96	80.86	31.8	3.79	3.10	1.43	2.8	2.05	11.5
1994	86.87	89.89	17.70	64.8	9.40	6.97	80.86	32.4	3.73	3.14	1.44	2.8	2.00	11.7
1995	85.32	88.38	17.77	63.8	10.51	8.43	80.80	33.2	4.17	3.19	1.43	2.9	1.92	11.3
1996	84.44	87.61	17.78	63.3	11.24	9.23	80.80	33.8	4.32	3.16	1.43	3.0	1.87	11.4
1997	83.34	87.42	17.85	62.9	11.42	9.51	80.72	33.9	4.24	3.07	1.42	2.9	1.86	11.6
1998	83.99	87.87	17.87	63.2	11.61	9.53	80.71	34.0	4.40	2.69	1.42	2.8	1.86	12.0
1999	84.28	87.80	17.89	63.3	11.40	9.45	80.69	33.8	4.33	2.75	1.42	2.8	1.87	11.9
2000	83.45	87.59	17.98	63.0	11.66	9.64	80.60	34.0	4.89	2.76	1.42	3.0	1.85	11.2

¹US DEX: US defense expenditure as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC defense expenditure

²US GDP: US GDP as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC GDP

³US POP: US population as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC population

⁴US AVE: average of US DEX, US GDP, and US POP

⁵PRC DEX: PRC defense expenditure as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC defense expenditure

⁶PRC GDP: PRC GDP as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC GDP

⁷PRC POP: PRC population as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC population

⁸PRC AVE: average of PRC DEX, PRC GDP, and PRC POP

⁹ROC DEX: ROC defense expenditure as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC defense expenditure

¹⁰ROC GDP: ROC GDP as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC GDP

¹¹ROC POP: ROC population as percentage of total US-PRC-ROC population

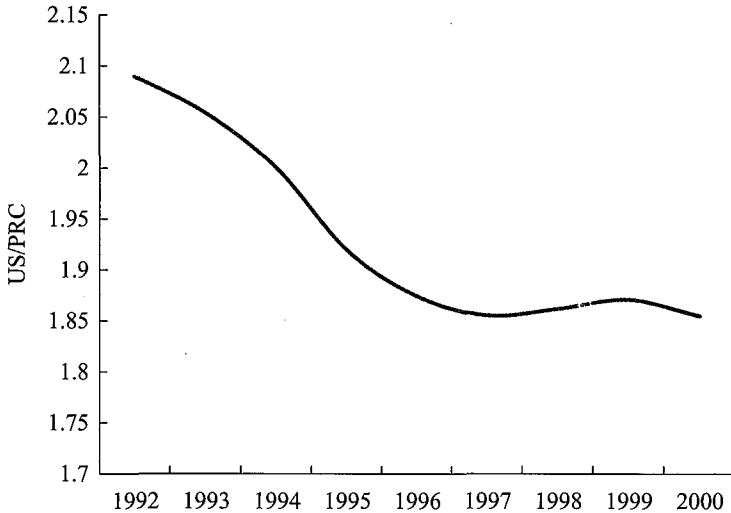
¹²ROC AVE: average of ROC DEX, ROC GDP, and ROC POP

¹³US/PRC: US AVE/PRC AVE

¹⁴PRC/ROC: PRC AVE/ROC AVE

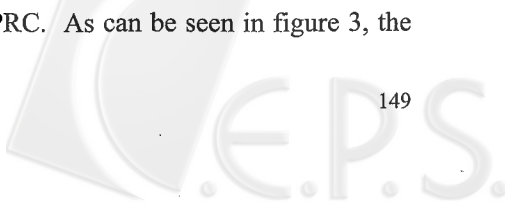
Sources: calculated from figures from *The Military Balance*, various years; *World Developmental Indicators*, various years; and *Taiwan Statistical Yearbook*, various years.

Figure 3
Overall Power Ratio between the U.S. and the PRC



Source: Derived from table 4, column "US-PRC."

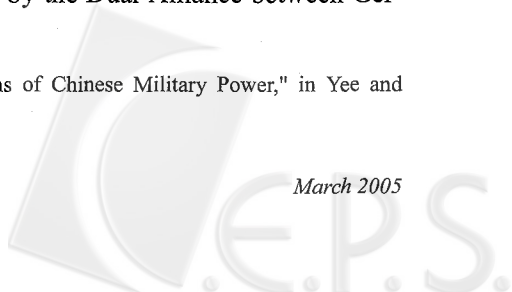
both the United States and the PRC, percentagewise China gained even greater stature in the triangle. From 1992 to 2000, the U.S. share of total GDP in the triangle dropped from 90.85 percent to 87.59 percent, while mainland China rose from 6.07 percent to 9.64 percent. The same trend is seen in defense expenditure share. In 1992 the United States accounted for 89.16 percent of total defense expenditure in the triangle, while that number dropped to 83.45 in 2000. During the same period of time, the PRC's share of defense expenditure rose from 7.68 percent to 11.66 percent. If we calculate the average share of defense expenditure, GDP, and population of the three countries in order to arrive at an overall power ranking, then the trend is also clear. In 1992 the United States accounted for 65.9 percent of overall power in the triangle, while the PRC was 31.5 percent. This means that the overall U.S. power was 2.09 times that of the PRC. Eight years later the U.S. share in overall power dropped to 63 percent, compared with the PRC's 34 percent; the United States was thus 1.85 times more powerful than the PRC. As can be seen in figure 3, the



relative overall power ratio between the two countries was turning in favor of the PRC. As for the weakest player, Taiwan/the ROC, one finds its GDP share dropping in those eight years from 3.08 percent to 2.76 percent, while its military expenditure rose from 3.16 percent to 4.89 percent. As a result, Taiwan's overall power position in the triangle rose slightly from 2.6 percent to 3 percent in the period concerned, and the power ratio of the PRC over the ROC dropped correspondingly from 12.3 to 11.2 times. This overall strategic picture points to a rising PRC that gradually threatens the dominance of the United States, and a Taiwan that depends increasingly on military spending to prop up its power position in the triangle, amidst a relative decline in its economic share.

The rise of the PRC in the triangle makes China not only more threatening to Taiwan, but also more challenging to the United States. In terms of population size and growth speed, no country or country group in the world could imaginably catch up with the United States in the first half of the twenty-first century except China.⁵⁸ The relations between the United States and the PRC have become one of status quo hegemon vs. rising power, a relationship that is inherently difficult to handle. It is fair to say that relations between Washington and Beijing will become more and more competitive, producing increasing pressure on the United States to abandon an even-handed policy toward both mainland China and Taiwan. This is the same logic that prompted Germany to tilt toward Austria-Hungary at the end of the nineteenth century. As Russia grew rapidly in both economic and military terms, Germany found it increasingly more difficult to sustain a Bismarckian balancing strategy between St. Petersburg and Vienna. Russia was becoming a threat to Germany, while Austria-Hungary could only play the role of a junior partner to the Kaiser. In the mini-triangle, the PRC is becoming a formidable force that clearly poses a future threat to the United States, while Taiwan is vulnerable and completely dependent on the United States. The real military cooperation is with the weak wing, as demonstrated by the Dual Alliance between Ger-

⁵⁸ Jonathan D. Pollack, "American Perceptions of Chinese Military Power," in Yee and Storey, *The China Threat*, 53.



many and Austria, and the weapon procurement issue and the TMD discussions currently under way between the United States and Taiwan.

In these two triangles, a change of guard provided opportunities for a policy switch, while ideological affinity and shifting balance of power prompted the unwilling pivot to make a decisive tilt toward the congenial and weak wing, thus transforming the triangle. The turning point in the Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna triangle was Wilhelm II's 1889 promise to Francis Joseph that an Austrian mobilization, regardless of reason, would be followed immediately by a German one. A similar promise was made when Bush stated in 2001 that Washington had an obligation to defend Taiwan with "whatever it took" in the event of a Chinese attack. Both promises went beyond the original commitments. In a sense, Wilhelm II and Bush removed the existing condition under which the pivot's protection would extend to the weak wing. Their support became "unconditional." Since 1889, Germany basically gave Austria a blank check and promised protection to Vienna, which was given even when the latter initiated a conflict with Russia. Similarly, up to this point Bush has not demanded that Taiwan forgo any attempt at independence in order for the U.S. protection to be honored. What is not clear is whether Bush will retract his "whatever it took" statement in his second term. Thus the title of this paper needs a question mark: "From Romantic Triangle to Marriage" (see figure 4).

Conclusion

This paper has taken a strategic triangle approach to Washington-Beijing-Taipei relations. The main assertion is that in the post-Cold War period this tripartite game has demonstrated features of a romantic triangle, with the United States playing the role of unwilling pivot while the PRC and the ROC have been playing wings. A famous historical case with a similar structure is the Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna triangle at the end of the nineteenth century. In that case the romantic triangle slipped into a marriage, owing much to the cross-pressure bearing on the unwilling pivot. This paper has thus sought to compare these two romantic triangles (the

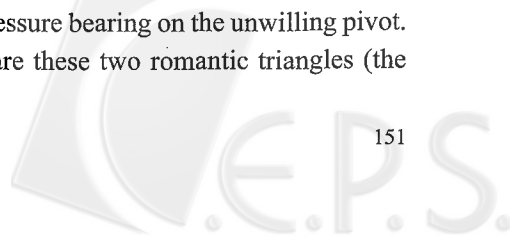
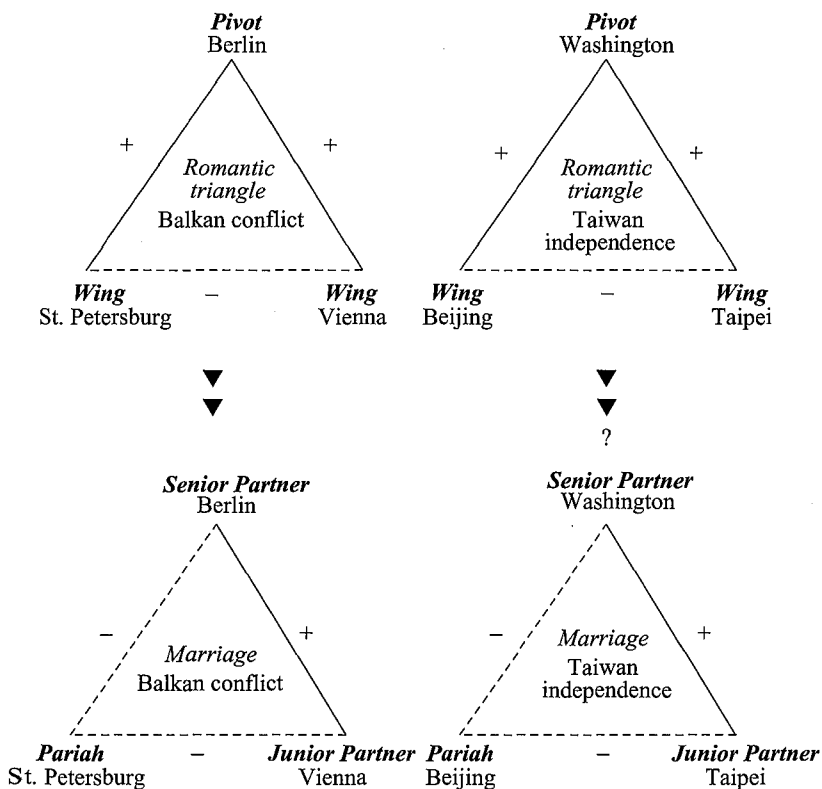


Figure 4
From Romantic Triangle to Marriage



contemporary and the historical) from three perspectives: entry, operation, and exit. Although our two cases had different pre-stages prior to entry into romantic triangle—i.e., *ménage à trois* for the Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna case and marriage for the Washington-Beijing-Taipei case, once they were in, the same logic applied. As an unwilling pivot, Berlin and Washington oscillated between the two wings, and came up with compromise arrangements (Dual Alliance and Reinsurance Treaty, and interim agreement proposal) that could presumably reconcile their obligations to the two wings. We then find similar structural pressure mounting on the unwilling pivot. Change of guard, ideological affinity, and shifting balance

of power accounted for the role shift of Berlin and Washington, both of which abandoned their pivot's role and tilted toward the congenial and weak wing, i.e., Austria-Hungary and Taiwan. Because Washington's China policy is still evolving and one cannot exclude the possibility of a backtrack on Bush's "whatever it took" promise, it remains to be seen whether Washington's tilt toward Taiwan has ended the romantic triangle of the 1990s and put the seal on the marriage between Washington and Taipei. From the behavior of Berlin and Washington, we can conclude that since the unwilling pivot lacks the commitment to its current position in the first place, it may find the cost of playing the pivot to be too high and likely switch to partnership (marriage).

The difference between a willing pivot and an unwilling pivot is great. A willing pivot is consciously playing a triangular game, intending to reap benefits from its position between the two wings, and making tilts to make sure that the wings continue to court the pivot. An unwilling pivot, on the other hand, happens to be sandwiched between two rivals, and seeks to maintain good relations with both; the pivot wishes to keep these two bilateral relations separate, does not desire the pivot's role, and in the end exits from that role voluntarily.

To argue that the Washington-Taipei-Beijing triangle is today a marriage between the former two against the third may raise objection from those who consider the current U.S.-PRC relations at its best. From a security standpoint, this observation is more apparent than real. The United States clearly treats the PRC as a potential enemy, and watches its rapid growth with great suspicion. On the other hand, the veneer of friendliness between Washington and Beijing is the result more of China's self-constraint than America's good will. The PRC has simply decided not to challenge the U.S. hegemony, at least while China needs a peaceful environment in which its huge growth potential can be exploited fully. Carrying out this policy requires a great deal of self-constraint—this did not occur in the 1990s when the rising PRC constantly challenged U.S. hegemony on many issues.

The 2004 ROC presidential election tested the new marriage. Aware that any warnings from the PRC could create a backlash in Taiwan politics,

the PRC leaders showed remarkable constraint during the entire campaign period—in dramatic contrast to Zhu Rongji's stern warning to Taiwan's voters only a few days before the 2000 election day. This time around, Beijing instead put pressure on Washington, expecting Taiwan's patron to keep the island in line. Washington was ultimately unable to prevent Chen from holding two highly controversial referenda on election day (although Chen did change the wording of the referenda in order to make them less provocative to Beijing), attesting to the limit of American power to influence domestic political competition in Taiwan. In the post-election period, Chen's plan to rewrite Taiwan's constitution has posed a much greater challenge to the status quo than have any previous actions by the DPP government. Beijing is keenly aware of the damage this move would do to China's Taiwan policy, and thus has escalated its warnings.⁵⁹ If Chen presses ahead with writing a new constitution, and mainland China continues escalating tension in the Taiwan Strait, the United States will be put in a very difficult position. Up to this point, the Bush administration has not retracted on its pledge to defend Taiwan against a possible PRC invasion, and has increasingly pushed forward military cooperation between the two countries, a clear sign of the strategic marriage in which Washington and Taipei find themselves. If Washington forces Taiwan to guarantee not to declare Taiwan independence as part of a larger protection package, then the tripartite game will revert to a romantic triangle.⁶⁰ Otherwise, America is

⁵⁹Beijing made seven promises to Taiwan on May 17 to lure it back to the "one-China principle." The seven promises are negotiation on equal footing, close contact and timely problem-solving, opening of the "three direct links," economic cooperation, cross-strait consensus building, peace and stability, and international space commensurate to Taiwan's status. Accompanying the seven promises are five "never's": never compromise on the "one-China principle," never give up striving for peaceful negotiation, never lack sincerity in cross-strait cooperation, never soften China's will to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and never tolerate "Taiwan independence." See *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times), May 17, 2004, A1.

⁶⁰Kenneth Lieberthal, an author of the 1998 "interim agreement" proposal, and David M. Lampton offered in a *Washington Post* article "Heading off the Next War" an updated version of the notion of "interim agreement." In brief, the new version would allow Taiwan to "assert during the decades-long period covered by the agreement" that it is an "independent, sovereign country," but would require Taipei to "abjure additional steps to turn this island-wide sensibility into a juridical fact." The proposed framework would allow Beijing to

still Taiwan's not-so-secret guardian angel, ready to support the island with "whatever it took."

Much remains to be seen, of course, after the U.S. presidential election, as a new China policy may be in the offing, even with Bush's reelection. Three possibilities present themselves at this juncture. The first one is the continuation of the status quo, in which the American military is preparing to fight for Taiwan when push comes to shove, and no condition is attached to the defense pledge. This would keep the marriage triangle, and is the most likely policy under Bush's second term. The second possibility is for the United States to enforce the terms of the proposed interim agreement of the late 1990s, i.e., it will come to Taiwan's defense if and only if mainland China attacks the island without Taiwan provoking it by declaring independence. The third possibility is that the United States will keep traditional strategic ambiguity, letting Beijing and Taipei guess whether it would intervene when conflict between the two rises, thus presumably deterring Beijing from attacking Taiwan and deterring Taiwan from declaring independence.⁶¹ The second and third possibilities are both a reversion to romantic triangle. If Washington's policymakers are informed of the historical Berlin-St. Petersburg-Vienna case, they may revert to romantic triangle, as marriage with the weak wing may lead to direct conflict with the strong wing. However, as this paper has demonstrated, unwilling pivot is an intrinsically difficult role to play in a romantic triangle. Even if there is a reversion, i.e., the U.S. recapturing pivot's position, the triangle can easily tilt back to marriage between the pivot and the weak wing. Whatever its future development, the Washington-Beijing-Taipei triangle is arguably one of the most important sets of international relations in the world. Indeed it deserves our utmost attention.

"assert that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of it, but it must give up its threat to use military force to change Taiwan's status." On this basis, the two sides would "agree on terms for expanded international space for Taiwan" and "must agree to engage in confidence-building measures" to reduce concerns about potential conflicts. See *The Washington Post*, April 12, 2004, A19.

⁶¹For a defense of strategic ambiguity, see Michael O'Hanlon, "Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan," *International Security* 25, no. 2 (2000): 51-86.

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