

Domestic Politics of Foreign Policy: Explaining the Formulation of Taiwan's "Participate in the U.N." Policy

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In April 1993, President Lee Teng-hui of Taiwan announced his bid to join the United Nations, the "participate in the U.N." policy. In this paper I explain why Lee launched this policy and how it was formulated. Contrary to the structural realists' claim that state actions are steered by the structure of the international system, I argue that the momentum of the "participate in the U.N." policy lay in Taiwanese domestic politics. More specifically, the policy was mainly a product of Taiwan's party politics, while its formulation was closely associated with the internal politics of the ruling Kuomintang (KMT).

KEYWORDS: Taiwan; foreign policy; United Nations; participate in the U.N. policy; pragmatic diplomacy.

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On April 9, 1993, President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) of Taiwan announced in a speech to the National Assembly (國民大會) that Taiwan would make a bid to join the United Nations. Since

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then, the U.N. bid, known officially in Taiwan as the "participate in the U.N." policy (參與聯合國政策), has been the centerpiece of Taiwan's foreign policy. The policy is particularly significant because Taiwan had made the decision to leave the world's most important inter-governmental organization in October 1971.¹ And more importantly, this policy also highlights the radical change that took place in Taiwan's "one China" policy around the beginning of the 1990s.²

Why did Lee Teng-hui launch the "participate in the U.N." policy? What was this policy's origin and how was it formulated? Structural realism argues that state behavior is driven by the structure of the international system. However, as I will claim below, the driving force behind the "participate in the U.N." policy lay in Taiwanese domestic politics. In other words, it was an internally-driven policy.³

The following analysis begins with a description of the international environment in which the policy was engendered, followed by a discussion of its context in domestic party politics. In the section that follows I will examine the internal politics of the Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨), the party that formulated the policy.

¹On October 25, 1971, the KMT government quit the United Nations shortly before the General Assembly passed Resolution 2758 recognizing the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole legitimate government of China in the United Nations.

²This change can be seen from the following two statements. In a speech of July 1975, Premier Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) said, "Why did we withdraw from the United Nations? We withdrew from the United Nations because we did not want, nor did we admit, the existence of the so-called 'two Chinas'. Why did we withdraw from the United Nations? It was because of the principles." In contrast, in a June 1995 written statement, Lee Teng-hui said, "Since 1949 China has been in a state of division and governed by the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China respectively. . . . Before China is reunified, the ROC's twenty-one million people cannot be deprived of their rights in international society; they also deserve a representative of their own in the United Nations. . . . As the cases of North and South Korea and pre-unification East and West Germany show, divided nations' participation in the United Nations will never hinder their future unification." Chiang's speech is cited from Chiang Ching-kuo, *Shinian fengmu* (Ten years' winds and woods) (Taipei: Ministry of National Defense, 1975), 14; for Lee's statement, see *Lianhe bao* (United Daily News), June 27, 1995, 4.

³For the debate on whether state behavior is externally or internally driven, see Harald Müller and Thomas Risse-Kappen, "From the Outside In and from the Inside Out: International Relations, Domestic Politics, and Foreign Policy," in *The Limits of State Autonomy: Societal Groups and Foreign Policy Formulation*, ed. David Skidmore and Valerie M. Hudson (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993), 25-48.

The Role of the International System

The "participate in the U.N." policy was not a direct result of the structure of the international system. Nonetheless, in some ways, it has its origins in a change in the international structure that took place in the early 1970s.

The End of the Cold War

Kenneth Waltz, the founding father of structural realism, argues that it is the structure of the international system, rather than any state-level factor, that drives states' actions.⁴ However, this is not quite true in the case of Taiwan's U.N. bid.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the structure of the international system went through a huge transformation at the beginning of the 1990s. However, this transformation did not have any significant effect on the change in Taiwan's international status. To a substantial extent, Taiwan's international status was determined by the United States. Thanks to U.S. aid and defense assistance after the outbreak of the Korean War, the government of Taiwan was able to avoid an attack by the People's Republic of China (PRC), develop its economy, and maintain its status as the only internationally recognized government of China. However, after Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger adopted a new Cold War grand strategy that sought to ally with China in order to balance the Soviet Union,⁵ Taiwan entered an era of international isolation. Nixon's grand strategy contributed to two events that seriously damaged Taiwan's

⁴Waltz defines the structure of the international system first by the principle under which the system is ordered or organized, then by the differentiation and specification of the system's units, and finally by the distribution of capabilities across units. See Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), chap. 5. In this paper the structure of the international system mainly refers to the distribution of power between great powers; the distribution of power is shaped either by these great powers' rises and falls or the alliance-formation among them.

⁵Nixon's grand strategy actually rearranged the distribution of power between the three great powers, which also contributed to the emergence of a new structure of the international system.

foreign relations in the 1970s: in October 1971, Taiwan lost its U.N. membership; then on January 1, 1979, the United States cut its official ties with Taipei and established diplomatic relations with Beijing. Both of these events generated a chain reaction in which many other countries broke off official relations with Taipei and recognized the PRC.⁶

The collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s brought no substantial change to the U.S.-China relationship. This is because Beijing had been a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council since 1971, and had been a growing power since the 1980s. The fact that the United States still needed Chinese cooperation to maintain the new world order helped to keep their alliance relationship intact.

Because of the need to sustain the U.S.-China alliance in the 1990s, the United States did not have much room to improve its relations with Taiwan. Without any huge change in U.S. policy toward Taiwan, the constraints on Taiwan's foreign relations continued. Consequently, the transformation of the international system had hardly any impact on Taiwan's international status.⁷

These international constraints meant that the end of the Cold War essentially did not provide any incentive or opportunity for Taiwan to initiate a new foreign policy; nor did it generate any substantial "external shock"⁸ that would have forced Taiwan to respond with a new foreign policy. In

⁶In 1970, Taiwan had diplomatic relations with 67 countries, while China had relations with 54. In 1971, the numbers were 56 and 74, respectively. By 1979, only 23 countries maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and 127 countries had established official ties with China. See Wei Min, *Zhonghua minguo de shuangbian waijiao* (The ROC's bilateral diplomacy) (Taipei: National Policy Research Center, 1991), 2-3.

⁷Some changes did occur in both U.S.-China and U.S.-Taiwan relations in the early 1990s after the Cold War system collapsed. For example, it was common for the United States and China to quarrel over issues such as bilateral trade and China's human rights. On the other hand, the United States agreed to sell F-16 fighters to Taiwan in 1992, and in 1994 Washington allowed the CCNAA (Coordination Council for North American Affairs), Taiwan's *de facto* embassy in the United States, to change its title to TECRO (Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office), and permitted visits by officials on both sides. However these changes were still not enough to overturn the structures of U.S.-China or U.S.-Taiwan relations that had been shaped by Nixon's grand strategy.

⁸Charles F. Hermann, "Changing Course: When Governments Choose to Redirect Foreign Policy," *International Studies Quarterly* 34, no. 1 (March 1990): 12.

this sense, it is not appropriate to attribute the origin of the "participate in the U.N." policy to the change in the international system.

The Second Image Reversed

Peter Gourevitch asserts that international factors can exercise an impact on domestic politics,⁹ and this was exactly what occurred in Taiwan in the 1970s. The change in the structure of the international system of that time had a profound effect on the development of Taiwan's domestic politics, which in turn produced some of the conditions that contributed to the "participate in the U.N." policy.

Domestically, the setbacks in foreign relations had the effect of weakening the KMT's legitimacy. In response to this legitimacy crisis, Chiang Ching-kuo initiated a policy of "Taiwanization" when he became premier in 1972. The policy was aimed at broadening the KMT's domestic support with two measures. First, supplementary elections were held for the two national representative bodies, the Legislative Yuan (立法院) and the National Assembly, the first time such elections had been held since 1948. Second, Chiang began to recruit native Taiwanese into the KMT regime at both national and local levels. At the national level, members of the Taiwanese elite were appointed as party or government officials, and at the local level, they were encouraged to run for election to local executive and legislative bodies.

From a path-dependent perspective, these two measures had a profound impact on subsequent political development in Taiwan. The elections offered a good opportunity for the political opposition to mobilize popular support, develop their organization, and strengthen their position. The opposition had always been weak in comparison to the KMT's authoritarian regime, but through the elections, it was able to develop rapidly and in 1986 the first opposition party in Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民主進步黨), was established. As I will point out below, the DPP turned out to be a major promoter of the campaign to rejoin the United

⁹Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32, no. 4 (Autumn 1978): 881-912.

Nations that eventually became the government's "participate in the U.N." policy.

The recruitment of the Taiwanese elite, on the other hand, initiated a process of "Taiwanization" within the KMT regime itself which culminated in Lee Teng-hui becoming the first native Taiwanese president in 1988.¹⁰ First, the power previously enjoyed by the mainlanders who had dominated the KMT regime since the party moved to Taiwan in 1949 was significantly curtailed. This in turn created a sense of crisis among the mainlanders and thus a power struggle between them and the Taiwanese. Second, differences in experience and background between Taiwanese and mainlanders also led to diverging views on Taiwan's foreign policy. While the mainlanders were still faithfully following the "one China" principle, Taiwanese KMT members became adherents of Lee Teng-hui's flexible foreign policy.

After Chiang Ching-kuo died in January 1988, competition between mainlanders and Taiwanese was exacerbated. The power struggle manifested itself in both the race for the party leadership and debates on issues such as constitutional reform, the future of Taiwan, and, as I will discuss later, foreign policy, including the "participate in the U.N." policy. In conclusion, changes in the international system did not directly lead to the "participate in the U.N." policy, although they did contribute to some of the conditions that created the policy in the end.

Inter-Party Politics

Generally speaking, it was Taiwanese party politics that propelled the emergence of the "participate in the U.N." policy. The policy was actually

¹⁰The "Taiwanization" in the KMT regime can be seen from the following figures. The percentage of Taiwanese members of the KMT increased from 39 percent in 1969 to 66.9 percent in 1988. The corresponding percentages for the KMT Central Standing Committee were 9.5 percent and 51.6 percent, and for the Executive Yuan (cabinet) 12.5 percent and 54.5 percent. See Lin Chia-lung, "Paths to Democracy: Taiwan in Comparative Perspectives" (Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Political Science, Yale University, 1998), 271.

a response from the KMT government to the DPP's campaign to rejoin the United Nations.

*Political Opposition and the Issue of Rejoining the U.N.:
Before the 1990s*

Members of Taiwan's opposition, both those at home and those in exile overseas, had advocated rejoining the United Nations since the 1970s, so it is not surprising that the DPP took up the campaign for U.N. membership. For the opposition, there were two implications to U.N. membership. First, it would mean that Taiwan was an independent and sovereign country, which was the opposition's ultimate goal, and second, it would strengthen Taiwan's international status and security.

The idea of returning to the United Nations was first suggested by the overseas opposition movement based in the United States. In the late 1960s, when Taipei and Beijing began to struggle over the right to represent China in the United Nations, the overseas opposition contended that each should have its own seat since Taiwan and China were two separate states. Overall, the U.N. issue during this period of time was just one tactic used by the overseas opposition to achieve its goal of Taiwan independence.¹¹ Then when Taiwan lost its U.N. membership and suffered a series of diplomatic crises in the 1970s, the overseas opposition began to argue that rejoining the United Nations would be the best way for Taiwan to regain its international status and ensure its safety. It was with this in mind that the Formosan Association for Public Affairs (FAPA, 台灣人公共事務協會), a major opposition organization in the United States, set up a "return to the U.N." (重返聯合國) committee in the 1980s to study strategies for rejoining the United Nations and to campaign for the issue.¹²

The domestic opposition also advocated rejoining the United Nations. In the late 1970s, particularly after the United States broke off formal rela-

¹¹ The history of the overseas opposition's connection with the U.N. issue can be found in Chen Ming-cheng, *Haiwai Taidu yundong sishi nian* (Forty years of the overseas Taiwan independence movement) (Taipei: Zili wanbao, 1992).

¹² Author's interviews with Maysing Huang (楊黃美幸), Taipei, June 21, 1995; and with Chang Fu-mei (張富美), Taipei, September 18, 1995.

tions with Taiwan, some opposition leaders began to argue for Taiwan's return to the United Nations. For example, Annette Lu (呂秀蓮), a leading DPP campaigner for rejoining the United Nations, advocated U.N. membership as a way of ending the diplomatic crisis caused by the loss of official relations with the United States.¹³ In the opposition's thinking, independence was the only way for Taiwan to break out of its international isolation, and joining the United Nations would demonstrate that independence. Recalling the genesis of the campaign, Frank Hsieh (謝長廷), another leading DPP advocate of U.N. membership, said that the opposition believed the only way to extract Taiwan from its international predicament was to treat it as an independent sovereign state and get more countries to officially recognize it as such.¹⁴ Like the overseas opposition, domestic opposition leaders saw U.N. membership as a way of reinforcing Taiwan's international relations and achieving their eventual goal of Taiwan independence.

The Political Opposition and the Issue of Rejoining the U.N.:

After 1990

Prior to the 1990s, the idea of rejoining the United Nations was hardly more than a slogan for the opposition. However, as Taiwan developed politically, the DPP was able to convert that slogan into a powerful campaign.

First, as the process of Taiwan's democratic transition unfolded, the DPP steadily consolidated itself as the opposition party. The DPP's popular support increased substantially within only a few years of its establishment in 1986. In the 1986 national legislative election, the party won 22.22 percent of the votes. Three years later in 1989, its share was 28.2 percent. Meanwhile, the KMT's share of the vote dropped from 69.06 percent in 1986 to 60.6 percent in 1989.¹⁵ The DPP's vote share reached 31.03 percent in the 1992 legislative election, while the KMT's shrank to 53.02

¹³ Author's interview with Lu, Taipei, July 14, 1995.

¹⁴ Author's interview with Hsieh, Taipei, July 11, 1995.

¹⁵ Yun-han Chu, *Crafting Democracy in Taiwan* (Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research, 1992), 55.

percent.¹⁶ Without a doubt, as the DPP continued to win more support from the Taiwan people, it also became more influential in setting Taiwan's political agenda.

Second, once Taiwan's political reforms were in place in the early 1990s, the DPP shifted the focus of its agenda from democratization to Taiwan independence. Taiwan's democratization and independence were the two major goals pursued by oppositionists at home and overseas, but immediately after its establishment, the DPP concentrated mainly on democratization; that is, urging the KMT government to conduct political reforms such as ending martial law and holding elections for a new Legislative Yuan and National Assembly. When the KMT responded by initiating these political reforms, particularly after the June 1990 National Affairs Conference (國是會議), the DPP began to switch its focus to issues associated with Taiwan's sovereignty. For example, on October 7, 1990, the DPP passed a resolution claiming that the Taipei government's *de facto* sovereignty did not cover the Chinese mainland and Outer Mongolia. On December 25 of the same year, the DPP mobilized thousands of its supporters to join a pro-independence demonstration. Given that in the mind of the opposition, joining the United Nations would mean that Taiwan was an independent and sovereign country, it was therefore a good issue for the DPP to pick up at a time when the party's focus had moved to Taiwan independence.

Third, the overseas opposition leaders had begun to return to Taiwan in the late 1980s, in defiance of the KMT's authoritarian regime. Encouraged by the founding of the DPP in 1986, some overseas opposition leaders smuggled themselves back to Taiwan by plane or ship despite knowing that they would be arrested. After the "blacklist" of banned oppositionists was all but repealed in 1992, many others came back to Taiwan.

The homecoming of the overseas opposition leaders had two effects. First, it connected the DPP to the overseas opposition networks built up to

¹⁶Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, <http://vote.nccu.edu.tw/cec/B1992005.PDF>.

campaign for Taiwan's democratization and independence. This provided the opposition party with plenty of channels and resources for international propaganda. Second, the overseas opposition leaders were able to contribute to setting the agenda of domestic politics after coming back to Taiwan. One example was Chai Trong-Rong (蔡同榮), the former chairman of the World United Formosans for Independence (台灣獨立建國聯盟). Chai had been campaigning for a referendum to determine Taiwan's future since the mid-1980s when he was still in the United States. After his return to Taiwan, he proposed that a referendum be held on U.N. membership.

Fourth, there was much more freedom of speech than before. As political liberalization in Taiwan advanced, people were able to enjoy considerable freedom to express their thoughts without worrying about being purged by the government. Channels for expressing these opinions also became more diverse, and parades, demonstrations, and strikes—all banned under martial law—became quite common around the beginning of the 1990s. The media were prospering, and new newspapers and radio and TV stations were set up. Different opinions were expressed, and debates on political issues took place as the government eased its regulation and censorship. In addition, technological developments also accelerated the transmission of opinions. These factors contributed not just to the rapid emergence of many issues but also to the increasing importance of public opinion in the policymaking process.

The conditions mentioned above all helped create an environment in which the issue of rejoining the United Nations could surface. However, what triggered this issue's emergence was an international event. On May 28, 1991, North Korea announced its decision to apply for U.N. membership, shortly after a similar announcement by South Korea. The two Koreas were expected to enter the United Nations at the same time.¹⁷ At first glance this event had nothing to do with Taiwan at all. However, the

¹⁷The United States had proposed that, in order to stabilize the Korean Peninsula, the two Koreas should recognize each other after the United States and Japan formally recognized North Korea, and the Soviet Union and China recognized South Korea. To make this proposal feasible, the great powers supported the two Koreas' bid to join the United Nations at the same time. See *Zhongguo shibao* (China Times), June 11, 1991, 2.

fact that South and North Korea were regarded by some people as two parts of a "divided nation" had a demonstrable effect on Taiwan. Interestingly, this affected not only the DPP but also some people in the KMT.

The applications by the two Koreas for U.N. membership soon attracted the attention of a KMT legislator, Huang Chu-wen (黃主文). Huang, a Taiwanese and a loyal protégé of President Lee Teng-hui, regarded the Korean case as a good model for Taiwan since in some sense Taiwan was also part of a divided nation.¹⁸ Just three days after North Korea announced its U.N. membership application, Huang sent a statement to the Executive Yuan (行政院) suggesting that the government face the fact that China was in a state of division, and that Taiwan should join the United Nations as a political entity regardless of China's opposition. Then in June 1991, he proposed a bill that was also supported by the DPP and was soon passed by the Legislative Yuan. The bill officially proposed that the Executive Yuan should apply, at an appropriate time, for U.N. membership under the title of the "Republic of China."¹⁹

Huang's suggestion was significant in two ways. First, it challenged the "one China" policy that viewed the KMT government in Taipei as the only legitimate government of the whole of China. It was because of this policy that the KMT government left the United Nations in 1971 and tended to break off relations with countries that established formal relations with China. In addition, since the idea of rejoining the United Nations had originally been advocated by the opposition, and the KMT had always considered it a guise for Taiwan independence, the fact that a KMT member was proposing that Taiwan should apply to rejoin the United Nations greatly stunned the KMT government. The original draft of Huang's

¹⁸Interviews with Huang, *Lianhe bao*, June 11, 1991, 2; and *Zhongguo shibao*, June 11, 1991, 2.

¹⁹Huang has said that another reason why he put forward this proposal was to help President Lee remove the conservatives' resistance to "pragmatic diplomacy" (務實外交), the guideline of Lee's new foreign policy. See *Lianhe bao*, June 11, 1991, 2. As I will discuss in the next section, Huang's ideas and actions actually revealed the deepening divergence between mainlanders and Taiwanese in the KMT on the "one China" principle and foreign policy.

bill "asked" the government to submit the U.N. membership application "right away," but that was opposed at a meeting attended by such high-level KMT officials as Premier Hao Pei-tsun (郝柏村) and Secretary-General James Soong (宋楚瑜). One reason for the officials' objection was that they were worried the bill would challenge the "one China" policy and encourage the Taiwan independence movement.²⁰ It was only after negotiation between the Executive Yuan and some legislators, including Huang, that Huang's bill was passed by the Legislative Yuan. The wording was revised to "'suggest' that the Executive Yuan apply for U.N. membership 'at an appropriate time' under the title of the Republic of China."²¹

Second, Huang's action helped to publicize the issue of rejoining the United Nations. The novelty of a KMT member suggesting that Taiwan apply to join the United Nations caught the media's attention. The issue was widely reported and debated by scholars and officials in the press and on TV in the following weeks. The opposition had advocated the idea for a long time but had never received much attention, but thanks to Huang's bill, the idea of rejoining the United Nations was now planted in the minds of the Taiwan people, and this created a supportive environment for the DPP to launch its "rejoin the U.N." campaign.

To some extent, Huang unintentionally formed a coalition with the DPP on the issue of rejoining the United Nations. After Huang's suggestion had caused the issue to be extensively discussed in Taiwan, the DPP took it over and turned it into an overwhelming campaign.

This campaign consisted of a series of events in which DPP members were deeply involved. First, in September and October 1991, one year after his return to Taiwan from the United States, Chai Trong-Rong organized two demonstrations demanding a referendum on the U.N. issue in Taipei (台北市) and Kaohsiung (高雄市) that were joined by thousands of

²⁰The officials also worried that the bill would destabilize cross-Straits relations. In addition, they thought the attempt would be futile because of China's veto in the U.N. Security Council. See *Zili zaobao* (Independence Morning Post), June 11, 1991, 2; and *Zhongguo shibao*, June 11, 1991, 2.

²¹*Lifayuan gongbao* (The Legislative Yuan Bulletin) 80, no. 49 (June 19, 1991): 26.

people.²² There had been countless demonstrations all over Taiwan since the mid-1980s, but these were the first ones about a foreign policy issue. The demonstration in Kaohsiung was the largest to date in Taiwan, attracting more than thirty thousand people.²³ It was impossible for the KMT government to ignore demonstrations on this scale. Immediately after the Taipei demonstration, President Lee asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to take charge of this issue, and requested the Executive Yuan and MOFA to examine other related problems as well.²⁴

Then, in September 1991 Annette Lu, also inspired by what was taking place in Korea, organized a DPP propaganda team to lobby the U.N. General Assembly in New York. Joined by Taiwanese living in the United States, the propaganda team distributed brochures urging the United Nations to open its doors to Taiwan among representatives of U.N. members at the U.N. plaza. They also placed an advertisement in the *New York Times* arguing that the Taiwanese people had a right and a duty to participate in the United Nations and in other international affairs. This was the first time the DPP had successfully brought an issue onto the international stage. More significantly, Lu's action put considerable pressure on the KMT government, because her action made it appear that it was the opposition party, rather than the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that was conducting the country's diplomacy.

The third episode in the campaign was the live TV debate between the DPP Legislator Frank Hsieh and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs John Chang (章孝嚴) on September 30, 1991. The debate focused on what title Taiwan should use to join the United Nations. Not surprisingly, Hsieh advocated using "Taiwan" while Chang argued for the "Republic of China."²⁵ This was the first time a high-level government official had debated a controversial issue with an opposition legislator in front of a

²²According to Chai, demonstrations were the best way of bringing the U.N. issue to people's attention in Taiwan. Author's interview with Chai, Taipei, July 18 and 21, 1995.

²³*Zhongshi wanbao* (China Times Evening News), October 26, 1991, 3.

²⁴*Ziyou shibao* (Liberty Times), September 10, 1991, 2.

²⁵See *Lianhe bao*, October 1, 1991, 3.



nationwide TV audience. It was reported to have been watched by 54 percent of the population.²⁶

The above three events were just the beginning of the DPP's "rejoin the U.N." campaign. For example, in the 1991 National Assembly election and the 1992 legislative election, almost all the DPP candidates listed "joining the U.N." (加入聯合國) among their campaign issues. In addition, thanks to the networks previously established by the overseas opposition groups, the DPP was able to promote the issue internationally as well. For instance, in March 1992, a DPP delegation visited the New York offices of U.N. members to seek their support. Then in July the DPP held an event entitled the "Night of the U.N." in New York to demonstrate Taiwan's desire to join the United Nations. In September, they again lobbied U.N. members, and in October they called on the secretary-general of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party and the speaker of Japan's upper house. They also lobbied U.S. congressmen. Generally speaking, their efforts in this regard were not in vain. For example, on September 26, 1991, U.S. Representative Dennis Hertel (D-Michigan) expressed his support for Taiwan's admission to the United Nations and other international organizations by introducing a resolution to the House of Representatives.²⁷ On September 16, 1992, U.S. Senator Joseph Lieberman (D-Connecticut) followed Representative Hertel's resolution by submitting Senate Concurrent Resolution 136.²⁸

The DPP's aggressive campaign to rejoin the United Nations did indeed obtain substantial support from the Taiwan people. In a poll conducted by the *United Daily News* on September 18 and 19, 1991, 60.8 percent of all respondents and 65.8 percent of respondents who were KMT supporters agreed that Taiwan should rejoin the United Nations.²⁹ With the DPP's campaign attracting such strong support, it was not surprising that the KMT government was forced to respond.

²⁶ *Minsheng bao* (People's Livelihood Daily), October 1, 1991, 10.

²⁷ See the U.S. Congressional record on the Library of Congress website, <http://thomas.loc.gov/home/r102query.html>.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ The data were provided by the Office of Survey Research, Academia Sinica (中央研究院), Taipei. The results came from the author's analysis of the data.

Intra-KMT Politics

Ikenberry, Lake, and Mastanduno point out that, regardless of whether it is weak or strong, the state still has a critical role vis-à-vis society in the process of foreign policymaking.³⁰ This is the case in the formulation of Taiwan's "participate in the U.N." policy. Even though it was the opposition DPP which led the campaign to rejoin the United Nations, the state—i.e., the KMT government—still controlled the eventual form of the policy.

Twists and Turns

For the DPP, the issue of joining the United Nations was a good one on which to challenge the KMT government. On the one hand, by making people aware of Taiwan's isolation in the international community, this move attacked the KMT's legitimacy at its weakest point, that is, Taiwan's international relations. On the other hand, if Taiwan could join the United Nations as an independent country, that would achieve the DPP's goal of Taiwan independence. For the KMT government, however, it was exactly these two implications of the campaign to rejoin the United Nations that presented it with a dilemma: it would certainly like to respond to the DPP's promotion of a foreign policy issue, but it hesitated to adopt the DPP's suggestion as it could lead to Taiwan independence, a status that the KMT had always opposed. Because of these two conflicting considerations, from June 1991 to March 1993 the KMT government experienced a number of twists and turns in its views on the various aspects of the issue.

When the issue emerged in June 1991, the KMT government's response was negative because it did not think the time was right for applying for U.N. membership. This conclusion was based on four reasons. First, China could use its veto power in the U.N. Security Council to halt Taiwan's bid; second, Taiwan did not have enough allies in the United Nations

³⁰G. John Ikenberry, David A. Lake, and Michael Mastanduno, "Introduction: Approaches to Explaining American Foreign Economic Policy," *International Organization* 42, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 1-14.

to support its action; third, joining the United Nations would violate the "one China" policy; and fourth, this move would deepen China's hostility toward Taiwan. As for the title under which Taiwan should apply for U.N. membership, the KMT insisted that it should be "Republic of China."³¹

As the DPP's campaign gained momentum in September 1991, the KMT government still kept to the same position. KMT officials continued to argue against the idea of returning to the United Nations since they believed China would regard Taiwan's attempt as a provocation. They thought the best time to apply for U.N. membership would be when Taiwan had enough support among other countries to override China's veto. They still insisted on using the title "Republic of China," and they did not exclude the option of replacing Beijing, a reversal of what occurred in 1971.³²

This said, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs still took some measures that were targeted on the U.N. issue. For example, it increased the staff and budget of its New York office, and put the First Section of its Department of International Organizations in charge of U.N.-related work. In addition, it also began to canvass international opinion on Taiwan's admission to the United Nations.

The KMT government revised its stance slightly a year later when the U.N. General Assembly met in New York in September 1992. Its general attitude was that the time was still not right for Taiwan to submit an application for U.N. membership, but the government was trying its best to prepare for it. On the timing problem, officials insisted that it should depend on how much support Taiwan could get from other countries. As for the title, they advocated "Republic of China" or "Republic of China on Taiwan." Regarding the relationship with China in the United Nations, some officials contended that Taiwan should leave China to decide whether it could coexist with Taiwan or not.³³ However, in terms of substantial action, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took a giant step at this time, probably due to the pressure caused by the DPP's diplomacy. The Ministry asked

³¹Various newspapers, June 1991.

³²Various newspapers, September 1991.

³³Various newspapers, September 1992.



the state leaders or foreign ministers of its nine allies to highlight in their speeches to the General Assembly the fact that Taiwan was absent from the United Nations.³⁴

In March 1993, shortly before President Lee Teng-hui officially announced his U.N. bid, the KMT government adopted a very different tone. The "participate in the U.N." policy had almost taken shape at this point in time. Officials were still claiming that the application for U.N. membership would not be submitted until the issue had attracted widespread attention around the world. However, the government decided to ignore the title problem for the time being and retain some flexibility. Regarding China, they began to argue that the coexistence of Taiwan and China in the United Nations would contribute to future unification and regional peace and stability.³⁵ Meanwhile, a "tactical team" was set up in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to study every possible strategy for joining the United Nations. The Executive Yuan also established a cross-ministerial "decision-making group" to coordinate work for the nascent "participate in the U.N." policy.

It is fair to say that the KMT government's change of position from June 1991 to March 1993 was caused by the DPP's U.N. campaign. The reason why it took the KMT so long to respond is, I will argue below, associated with the composition of the KMT government's top foreign policymakers, or its "ultimate decision unit."³⁶

The Ultimate Decision Unit

The key to understanding the twists and turns in the KMT government's position on joining the United Nations is the composition of the government's foreign policymaking "ultimate decision unit," in particular the thinking of each member within the unit and the power struggle

³⁴These nine countries are Nicaragua, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Belize, Latvia, and Guinea-Bissau.

³⁵Various newspapers, March, 1993.

³⁶The term "ultimate decision unit" comes from Margaret G. Hermann, Charles F. Hermann, and Joe D. Hagan, "How Decision Units Shape Foreign Policy Behavior," in *New Directions in the Study of Foreign Policy*, ed. Charles F. Hermann, Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and James N. Rosenau (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 311-12.

between the members. After the issue of rejoining the United Nations emerged, the differences between the members on foreign policy thinking were exacerbated by the power struggle, which in turn emerged as the split of opinions on the issue of joining the United Nations. It was only when the power struggle had been settled that the "participate in the U.N." policy was officially announced.

When the campaign to rejoin the United Nations began in June 1991, the KMT government's "ultimate decision unit" consisted of two powerful men, President Lee Teng-hui and Premier Hao Pei-tsun. Because of their totally different personal backgrounds, personalities, and ways of thinking, these two leaders also had divergent opinions on foreign policy.

The core of Hao Pei-tsun's political beliefs was the "one China" policy and anti-Taiwan independence, two sides of the same coin. Hao is a mainlander who before becoming premier in May 1990 had served as a general in the ROC army for several decades. He was a battleground commander during the 1958 Taiwan Strait crisis and was appointed by Chiang Ching-kuo as the Chief of the General Staff in 1981. As a loyal follower of both Chiang Ching-kuo and his father Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石), Hao regarded defense of the "one China" policy as his lifetime mission. During his premiership he always took a tough stance against any actions by the DPP that suggested Taiwan independence, such as the October 7 Resolution of 1990 which claimed Taiwan's *de facto* sovereignty did not extend to the Chinese mainland and Outer Mongolia, and the DPP's Platform of Taiwan Independence of October 1991 that advocated the establishment of an independent "Republic of Taiwan." In Hao's thinking, in order to stabilize cross-Straits relations and to ensure Taiwan's security, Taipei had to strictly follow the "one China" principle in its foreign policy.³⁷ To a great extent, Hao's adherence to this principle was a continuation of the policies of Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo.

³⁷For example, Hao said, "We can never let mainland China or other countries suspect or misunderstand us as giving up the 'one China' principle, or as advocating 'two Chinas' or 'one China, one Taiwan'." See Wang Li-hsing, *Wukui: Hao Bocun de zhengzhi zhilu* (No shame: Hao Pei-tsun's political journey) (Taipei: Commonwealth, 1994), 253.

Lee Teng-hui's thinking was different from that of Hao. Lee is a Taiwanese who was educated in Japan and the United States. He was recruited by Chiang Ching-kuo into the KMT government in the early 1970s. For Lee, a breakthrough in Taiwan's foreign relations was the most important goal in addition to domestic political reforms, despite the fact that it might cause tension between Taiwan and China. He believed that being flexible and pragmatic was a necessary condition to achieve this goal.³⁸ Moreover, Lee shifted away from the traditional "one China" policy by admitting that the People's Republic of China was a political entity that had legitimately ruled the Chinese mainland since 1949.

Lee's new foreign policy thinking, which was termed "pragmatic diplomacy," was manifested in a number of ways. For example, Taiwan's official title as a member of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) had been changed by the ADB from "Republic of China" to "Taipei, China" when China joined the ADB in 1986. To protest this change, Taiwan boycotted the ADB's annual meeting for two years. In April 1988, however, Lee decided to send a delegation to the meeting in Manila, even though China was also in attendance. Then on May 1, 1989, Lee sent a high-level delegation to Beijing to attend another annual meeting of the ADB. This was the first time since 1949 that high-level officials from Taipei had visited China. On July 20 that year, Taiwan established official ties with Grenada despite the fact that Grenada still maintained diplomatic relations with China and recognized Beijing as the sole government of China. In January 1990, Taiwan submitted its application for membership of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) under the title of "Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen, and Matsu" (台澎金馬關稅區). Later, on April 30, 1991, Lee declared the termination of the "Period of Mobili-

³⁸ Lee's flexibility can be seen from some of his statements on Taiwan's diplomacy. For example, on his return from a trip to Singapore in March 1989, Lee mentioned that what the KMT government cared about was a breakthrough in Taiwan's diplomatic relations rather than the title problem, and that he would like to visit any country, even those having official ties with China. See Chou Yu-kou, *Li Denghui de yiqian tian: 1988-1992* (Lee Teng-hui's one thousand days: 1988-1992) (Taipei: Maitian chubanshe, 1993), 87; and Chang Hui-ying, *Chaoji waijiaoguan: Li Denghui han tade wushi waijiao* (The super diplomat: Lee Teng-hui and his pragmatic diplomacy) (Taipei: Shibao wenhua, 1996), 37.

zation for the Suppression of Communist Rebellion" (動員戡亂時期), an action that recognized the legitimacy of the PRC government in mainland China. All these events signaled that Taiwan's foreign policy was changing direction under Lee's new thinking.

There is also the issue of "regime fragmentation." In his study of the relationship between political opposition and foreign policy, Joe Hagan argues that opposition can exist not only outside a regime but also within it.³⁹ According to Hagan, when an opposition exists within a regime, it can split the regime or cause "regime fragmentation."⁴⁰ This was exactly what occurred to the KMT regime around the beginning of the 1990s, particularly after Hao Pei-tsun was nominated as premier in 1990.

Since Lee Teng-hui had come to power, his new foreign policy thinking had drawn intense criticism from senior mainlanders within the KMT government. In their eyes, Lee's actions not only violated the KMT's long-standing "one China" policy but also created "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan."⁴¹ Annoyed by Lee's disloyalty to the KMT's principles, these officials joined those who challenged Lee to form the so-called "non-mainstream" (非主流) faction of the KMT, as opposed to the "mainstream" (主流) faction that supported Lee. The struggle between these two factions intensified after Hao Pei-tsun became premier in 1990, because Hao was also a major leader of the "non-mainstream" faction.⁴² Thus Hao's policy disputes with Lee, which in most cases were caused by their differences of thinking, tended to turn into clashes between the two factions.

Hao was able to be a veto player against Lee's policy mainly for institutional reasons. The ROC Constitution granted the premier, the head of the Executive Yuan, substantial policymaking powers. For example,

³⁹Joe D. Hagan, *Political Opposition and Foreign Policy in Comparative Perspective* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1993).

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 68.

⁴¹For example, when Lee sent a delegation to the 1989 ADB meeting in Beijing, some people accused him of promoting Taiwan independence. See Chou, *Li Denghui de yiqian tian*, 93.

⁴²Lee nominated Hao as premier in an attempt to appease or even split the "non-mainstream" faction. See Chen Ming-tong, *Paixi zhengzhi yu Taiwan zhengzhi bianqian* (Factional politics and political changes in Taiwan) (Taipei: Yuedan, 1995), 208.

Article 53 of the ROC Constitution states that the Executive Yuan is the highest administrative organ of the country. Article 57 says the Executive Yuan has the duty to present to the Legislative Yuan a statement of its administrative policies and a report on its administration, while members of the Legislative Yuan have the right to question the premier and the ministers. Both of these articles indicate that the Executive Yuan has the highest administrative power, which implies that the premier has significant policymaking power.

However, the premier's actual decision-making power was very limited under presidents Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo. This is because, traditionally, the president was head of both the party and the state and thus the ultimate leader of the KMT's authoritarian regime; his personal will was government policy. Since Lee Teng-hui was only a junior member of the KMT and a Taiwanese,⁴³ however, he was not regarded as the equal of his two predecessors in terms of charisma or experience by senior mainlanders, or even by some senior Taiwanese within the KMT. In these circumstances, Hao could feel free to show his disagreement with Lee and use his constitutional powers to block Lee's policies.⁴⁴

One notable example is the Hao-Lee divergence over "Outer Mongolia." The KMT government used to claim sovereignty over Outer Mongolia despite the fact that Mongolia had been an independent country for decades. On April 30, 1991, when he announced the end of the "Period of Mobilization for the Suppression of Communist Rebellion," Lee also asked the Executive Yuan to adjust its old policy toward Mongolia. Premier Hao, however, made no response.⁴⁵

⁴³Lee Teng-hui did not join the KMT until 1971, one year before he was recruited into Chiang Ching-kuo's cabinet. See Zou Jing-wen, *Li Denghui zhizheng gaobai shilu* (The truth-telling records of Lee Teng-hui's rule) (Taipei: INK, 2001), 52.

⁴⁴For examples of senior KMT members' (including Hao's) lack of respect toward Lee Teng-hui just after Lee came to power, see Chang Hui-ying, *Li Denghui: 1988-2000 zhizheng shier nian* (Lee Teng-hui: twelve years' rule, 1988-2000) (Taipei: Commonwealth, 2000), 43, 49. In 1996, when Hao was talking about how he had come under fire during the 1958 Strait crisis, he said "I wonder where Lee Teng-hui was at the time." This exposed the fact that Hao despised Lee's junior status. See *Lianhe bao*, January 27, 1996, 2.

⁴⁵*Xinxiwen* (The Journalist), May 20-26, 1991, 64.

To some extent, this event was connected to the emergence of the U.N. issue. Hao's indifference to Lee's request was another factor that prompted Huang Chu-wen to suggest that Taiwan should apply for U.N. membership. Huang, who was also a member of Lee's mainstream faction, complained that no consensus on "pragmatic diplomacy" had ever existed within the government because Lee's foreign policy initiatives were more or less checked by Hao. In order to defend Lee's foreign policy, he decided to propose the idea of joining the United Nations.⁴⁶

Needless to say, Lee and Hao also disagreed with each other on the issue of rejoining the United Nations. When the issue was brought up in the summer of 1991, Lee Teng-hui was initially cautious in his response. In his mind, the application for U.N. membership was a major issue that should be dealt with without creating any trouble for Taiwan itself. In addition, he thought Taiwan should not submit an application until its relationship with China was resolved.⁴⁷ At this point in time, his reaction was quite similar to Hao's in that he took the Taiwan-China relationship into account. However, as his advocacy of "pragmatic diplomacy" showed, he was still prepared to be flexible. For example, as mentioned above, Lee responded to the demonstrations launched by the DPP's Chai Trong-Rong by asking the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to take charge of the issue and the Executive Yuan and the Ministry to examine other related issues. Later, when interviewed by Japan's *Sankei News*, he made it clear that using the country's official title or not in international organizations, including the United Nations, was not the point; instead, actual participation should be the most important thing of all.⁴⁸ In other words, Lee did not reject the idea of rejoining the United Nations.

By contrast, Hao Pei-tsun consistently opposed the idea of joining the United Nations. In his eyes, it was just a DPP conspiracy to realize the party's goal of Taiwan independence. He argued that Taiwan could join

⁴⁶*Lianhe bao*, June 11, 1991, 2.

⁴⁷Lee made these points in a speech on August 8, 1991. See *Zhongguo shibao*, September 14, 1991, 2.

⁴⁸*Lianhe bao*, September 19, 1991, 1, 4.

the United Nations only when it could take China's seat under the title of "Republic of China." Anything else would run counter to the "one China" policy. In addition, given that China had threatened to use force against Taiwan if the island pursued independence, Hao worried that an attempt to join the United Nations would increase tension between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait since China would regard this move as a quest for Taiwan independence.⁴⁹

Hao never changed his position and remained indifferent to the growing campaign to rejoin the United Nations throughout his years in the Executive Yuan. This is a key reason why the KMT government did not make an immediate and substantial response to the DPP's campaign. This conclusion is supported by the fact that when the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked nine of Taiwan's allies to bring up Taiwan's case in the U.N. General Assembly in 1992, the Ministry officials did not notify Premier Hao at all in advance since they knew Hao would be unhappy about the plan.⁵⁰

Lee Teng-hui was able to secure absolute decision-making power when Hao Pei-tsun stepped down at the end of January 1993. Shortly after Hao's resignation, a tremendous change occurred to the KMT government's position on the U.N. issue. On April 9, Lee launched his "participate in the U.N." policy.

Conclusion

Structural realists contend that state actions are guided by the structure of the international system, and that the behavior of states can only be understood through the structure that is imposed on them, rather than on the dynamics of their domestic politics. In other words, states are assumed

⁴⁹Hao mentioned these points in September 1995, two and a half years after he quit the premiership. See *Zhongguo shibao*, October 2, 1995, 6; and *Lianhe bao*, September 30, 1995, 4.

⁵⁰*Ziyou shibao*, June 13, 1993, 4; and July 26, 1993, 6.

to be unitary actors. In this paper, I join with those who disagree with structural realism and in doing so I reclaim the role of domestic politics in driving a state's behavior, using Taiwan as an example.

Foreign policy does not come out of nowhere. I argue that in the case of Taiwan's "participate in the U.N." policy the structure of the international system did not directly lead to the emergence of the policy. Instead, domestic politics played the role of the policy's driving force. This policy originated primarily from the growing party politics in Taiwan in the early 1990s. Stimulated by Taiwan's political transition, the opposition DPP was able to launch a campaign to rejoin the United Nations and the ruling KMT could not ignore this development. The formulation of the policy was also closely linked to the internal politics of the KMT government itself. Regime fragmentation that was caused by the split between President Lee Teng-hui and Premier Hao Pei-tsun, as well as the power struggle between the mainstream and non-mainstream factions, prevented the KMT government from responding immediately to the DPP with a policy of its own. It was only after Lee gained complete decision-making power that the government could launch its U.N. bid.

The origins of Taiwan's "participate in the U.N." policy had some implications for China too. Beijing was furious when Taipei officially implemented this policy. On August 31, 1993, shortly before that year's meeting of the U.N. General Assembly, Beijing released a white paper entitled "The Taiwan Question and Unification of China," arguing that Taiwan's bid to return to the United Nations was an act aimed at splitting China's sovereignty.⁵¹ In other words, China regarded the U.N. bid as being aimed at independence. However, as this paper has shown, this policy was essentially the result of competition between two political parties in a democracy. As party politics took shape in Taiwan's young democracy, it was common to see the KMT and the DPP compete for popular support on many issues. And in many cases the KMT would seek to co-opt an issue introduced by the DPP, particularly if that issue was popular. The issue of

⁵¹ *Lianhe bao*, September 1, 1993, 9.

rejoining the United Nations is just one such example.⁵² Beijing may not be able to understand this democratic approach to policymaking in the case of the "participate in the U.N." policy. It is questionable whether they will ever be able to understand the dynamics of Taiwan politics while political conditions on the mainland remain as they are.

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⁵²Other examples include the direct election of the Taiwan provincial governor and the mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung, as well as the direct election of the president. See Chang, *Li Denghui*, 65-66.

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