

## Slovenia on the Global Stage: A Role in the Taiwan Strait Conflict?\*

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*After seventeen years of independence and successful integration into the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Slovenia is gradually establishing its role in the international community and proving its ability to act on the world stage. Recently, Slovenia successfully completed a term as president of the EU, the first of the 2004-2007 entrants to hold the presidency, thus proving that it is well-integrated into the workings of Brussels. Slovenia is an enthusiastic participant in a thriving European regionalism which has increased the EU's desire to become a more effective global actor in international security. The EU's emerging interaction with Asia has provided Slovenia with an opportunity to get involved in Asian affairs and take part in the enhancement of the EU's political and security role in the Asian region. The Taiwan Strait is a dangerous flash point that might trigger a war in Asia and have dramatic repercussions on the EU and its member-states. The EU has gradually awakened to the need to develop its own security perspective on China and to form its own approach toward the contentious cross-Strait issue. EU accession and Europeanization have given Slovenia increased weight and enhanced its ability to contribute to world peace.*

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\*For the purpose of this paper "China" is the People's Republic of China (PRC) and "Taiwan" is the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan.

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After Slovenia became independent, one of the key strategic orientations of its foreign policy was the acquisition of full membership of the European Union (EU), which it successfully accomplished on May 1, 2004. Since then, Slovenia has harmonized its legislation with the EU *acquis* and pursued the same objectives and fundamental principles as the EU.<sup>1</sup> It upholds the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the EU and complies with EU principles and decisions in conducting its foreign policy. China is considered as a priority in the EU's CFSP. This is apparent in the EU's main policy documents concerning China.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the EU's strategic involvement in Asia is still meager, and this explains its rather passive attitude toward the Taiwan issue. The EU's growing role in global affairs entails enhanced global responsibility, and public calls for more proactive engagement in global affairs have become more apparent. More especially, many analysts have become increasingly critical of the EU's lack of depth and expertise in Asian, and more specifically Chinese, affairs. They have raised concerns about the EU's limited attention to the Taiwan Strait.<sup>3</sup> Integration into Europe has enhanced Slovenia's profile and its presence in the international community, as well as its ability to participate in the processes taking place within it. In other words, it has extended the scope of influence of Slovenia's foreign policy and allowed this small country to play a global

<sup>1</sup>The functioning of Slovenia in the EU is regulated by Article 3a of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia. See *The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia* (2003), <http://www.dz-rs.si>.

<sup>2</sup>See European Commission, *The EU's Relations with China* (2008), [http://europa.eu.int/comm/external\\_relations/china/intro/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/china/intro/index.htm).

<sup>3</sup>See, among others, Marcin Zaborowski, "Developing a European Security Perspective on China" (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, March 3, 2006), <http://www.iss-eu.org/activ/content/rep06-06.pdf>; and Günter Schucher, "Old Hat, New Rhetoric: The EU's Policy toward Taiwan after the Fifth Enlargement," *Issues & Studies* 43, no. 3 (September 2007): 1-51.

role. Reinforced EU-China cooperation has manifold implications for Slovenia's own policy toward China. In light of the EU's increasing attentiveness toward the Taiwan issue, Slovenia has also been encouraged to engage in this remote security issue.

Little research has been done regarding Slovenia's relations with the East Asian<sup>4</sup> countries, let alone its relations with Taiwan. The main objective of this article is to fill the gap in our knowledge of Slovenia's foreign policy toward Taiwan, and assess Slovenia's foreign policy approach toward one of the top security problems in the Asian region, the Taiwan Strait. The paper examines recent trends in Slovenia-Taiwan relations and the mechanics of the making of Slovenia's foreign policy toward East Asia in light of its accession to the EU. Official documents of the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs do not reveal much about Slovenia-Taiwan relations.<sup>5</sup> The Slovenian Democratic Party (Slovenska Demokratska Stranka, SDS, in government from 2004 to 2008) was most explicit regarding its policy toward Taiwan in its Program of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs.<sup>6</sup> However, for fear of Chinese interference, little official information has been disclosed and this constitutes a major obstacle to detailed research. There has long been a need to highlight the Taiwan issue from a Slovenian perspective and this paper will hopefully contribute to bilateral research and generate further academic interest.

The article is divided into four sections. The introduction will be followed by a brief discussion of the concepts on which the study will be

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<sup>4</sup>Here, East Asia refers to the thirteen member-countries of ASEAN Plus Three (Brunei, Cambodia, China, Japan, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam).

<sup>5</sup>There is no specific website outlining Slovenia's relations with Taiwan. Political relations with China are outlined in brief summaries within the annual reports of the Foreign Ministry and in a recently initiated webpage of the Slovenian embassy in Beijing. See Slovenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia 2006*, and *Annual Report of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia 2007*, <http://www.mzz.gov.si>; and Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia in Beijing (2008), <http://peking.veleposlanistvo.si>.

<sup>6</sup>SDS, "Program odbora za mandatno obdobje 2004-2008" (Program of the Committee on Foreign and European Affairs 2004-2008), August 11, 2004, <http://www.strokovnisvet.sds.si>.

based: the concept of small states, Europeanization, and interregionalism. This section will outline the peculiarities of the foreign policy of small states and briefly examine Slovenia's attitudes and adaptation to the process of institution-building at the European level. Next, the paper will examine the implications of the EU's CFSP and EU-Asia interregional cooperation for Slovenian foreign policy and highlight Slovenia's convergence within the China policy area. The paper will then outline Slovenia-Taiwan relations and indicate some possible ways in which Slovenia could contribute positively to the EU's endeavors to maintain stability in the Taiwan Strait. The conclusion will collate the findings and ponder on Slovenia's role and weight as a small EU member and its potential for contributing to peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

### Slovenia on the Global Stage: The Concept of Small States

In general, an assessment of Slovenia's role in the international arena is most commonly advanced by the recognition of its smallness.<sup>7</sup> On the whole, small countries strive to avoid conflicts and any big risks and pursue a peaceful foreign policy—a manner generally referred to as a "low-profile approach." This implies that small countries do not want to get overexposed or be the center of attention, but would rather follow the behavior of the majority and play the role of honest middleman or a neutral coordinator.<sup>8</sup> This is due to their dependence on the external environment which makes them both sensitive and vulnerable to changes in that environment. Furthermore, small countries are generally focused on their immediate

<sup>7</sup>See, for example: Ernest Petrič, "Zunanja politika majhnih držav" (Foreign policy of small states), *Teorija in praksa* (Theory and Practice) 33, no. 6 (1996): 876-97; Vlado Benko, *Znanost o mednarodnih odnosih* (Science of international relations) (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, 1997); Milan Jazbec, *The Diplomacies of New Small States: The Case of Slovenia with Some Comparison from the Baltics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); and Dominic Salvatore, Marjan Svetličič, and Jože P. Damijan, eds., *Small Countries in a Global Economy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>8</sup>Sasha Baillie, "A Theory of Small State Influence in the European Union," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 1, no. 3/4 (1998): 210-11.

international environment and if they do get involved in global problems they deal with them from the narrow perspective of their own region.<sup>9</sup> This kind of foreign policy orientation of small countries arises from the realities of their limited resources (financial, natural, human). Due to such limitations, small states have a limited capacity to influence or modify the conduct of others and lack the power to prevent others from influencing their own behavior.<sup>10</sup> It goes without saying that all these circumstances have major implications in terms of a country's competence to act internationally. There is no commonly accepted definition of what constitutes a small state. However, it is not the author's aim to theorize on "small states,"<sup>11</sup> but to provide a starting point for the study of the characteristics of a small state within the EU and the world and its role and weight in international security issues.

The notion that Slovenia is a small and vulnerable country is deeply rooted in its society and widely shared by its political leaders. Slovenia was motivated to seek integration into multilateral structures and membership of the EU partly because of its smallness, and that smallness is now playing a very significant role in conditioning Slovenia's interests, behavior, and influence in the EU. This is clearly reflected in Slovenia's strong support for European integration not only in the fields of agriculture and the economy but also in the field of foreign and security policy. Slovenia has been an eager participant in European regionalism, perceiving that the multitude of the EU's activities will provide it with more opportunities to find new sources of power that do not depend on its size, area, or population. In order to cope with the problem of being small, Slovenia has concentrated its attention on issues where it has a specific interest at stake. On the regional level, Slovenia has gradually managed to achieve a positive image and a crucial role within the EU in dealing with the issues

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<sup>9</sup>Benko, *Znanost o mednarodnih odnosih*, 7.

<sup>10</sup>Miriam Fendius Elman, "The Foreign Policies of Small States: Challenging Neorealism in Its Own Backyard," *British Journal of Political Science* 25, no. 2 (1995): 171.

<sup>11</sup>For a recent instructive conceptualization of the notion of size of states see Baldur Thorhallsson, "The Size of States in the European Union: Theoretical and Conceptual Perspectives," *European Integration* 28, no. 1 (March 2006): 7-31.



involving its neighbors in the Western Balkans.<sup>12</sup> Slovenia is now perceived as an important actor in solving the region's conflicts as it provides ideas and initiatives, and can, in addition, act as a mediator. Most recently, after some struggle, the Slovenian presidency of the EU Council managed to achieve unity on the issue of Kosovo's declaration of independence, which is clear evidence of Slovenia's ability to act as a bridge between the EU and the Western Balkans.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, on the global level, Slovenia's foreign policy falls short of possessing a distinct strategy. Although Slovenia recognizes the importance of being engaged globally, as witnessed by its foreign policy priority tasks which include pledges for developing an active approach to more important global affairs, its main foreign policy documents<sup>14</sup> clearly project its regional mind-set and deficient strategy for operating on the global level. The lack of a wider political framework which would direct foreign policy has been perceived as the main reason for Slovenia's rather vague long-term foreign policy strategy.<sup>15</sup>

### **The Effect of Europeanization and Interregionalism on Slovenian Foreign Policy**

#### *Conceptualizing Europeanization and Interregionalism*

Much has been written in the last couple of years on "Europeanization," a highly disputed concept which is used to depict a variety of

<sup>12</sup>The Western Balkans consists of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia.

<sup>13</sup>Sabina Kajnič, "The Slovenian Presidency of the EU Council: How the 16th Member State Performed," ARI 105/2008, Real Instituto Elcano, September 16, 2008, <http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org>.

<sup>14</sup>These documents include the foreign policy strategy of 1991 (*Temelji strategije zunanje politike RS*), the declaration on foreign policy of 1999 (*Deklaracija o zunanji politiki RS*), and the basic elements of Slovenian foreign policy and its integration with the Euro-Atlantic alliances of 2002 (*Primerna zunanja politika—Temeljne prvine zunanje politike RS ob vključevanju v evroatlantske povezave*).

<sup>15</sup>Bojko Bučar, "Stroka in politika ob deseti obletnici slovenske zunanje politike" (Profession and politics on the tenth anniversary of Slovenian foreign policy), *Teorija in praksa* 38, no. 1 (2001): 149.

phenomena and processes of change concerning the transformation and adaptation of the EU member-states' politics and policies. In general, Europeanization is described as a two-way process whereby national actors not only adapt to, but also seek to shape, the trend of European integration in general and EU policies and processes in particular.<sup>16</sup> As Michael Keating argues, "European policies penetrate national space, bringing regions into contact with each other and the Commission, so that state territories are simultaneously Europeanized and regionalized."<sup>17</sup> Europeanization has gradually oriented the member-states' politics and policies toward the EU, coercing the European policymaking elites toward more coordinated reflexes on foreign policy. Embraced as the leading theory in Slovenia's transition to democracy, Europeanization has both constrained and enabled politics in Slovenia.<sup>18</sup> Slovenia has successfully resorted to European regionalism for sovereignty and resource pooling, empowering itself with additional resources to exert influence and become a more visible actor in world affairs. The EU has exerted significant influence on Slovenian foreign policy with changes observed both at the organizational level (as witnessed by the reorganization of the Foreign Ministry) and at the conceptual level (as observed in official documents and speeches).<sup>19</sup> The CFSP, for example, has had a great impact on the Slovenian foreign policy agenda, widening the range of issues it has to consider. The influence can be observed not merely from adaptation pressures from the EU level to the national level, but also from the indirect pressure exerted through exchanges with other member-states and through Slovenia's socialization

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<sup>16</sup>See Kevin Featherstone and Claudio M. Radaelli, eds., *The Politics of Europeanization* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Trine Flockhart, "Europeanization," *Public Policy Research* 13, no. 2 (2006): 86-91.

<sup>17</sup>Michael Keating, "Territorial Politics and the New Regionalism," in *Development in West European Politics 2*, ed. Paul M. Heywood, Erik Jones, and Martin Rhodes (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave, 2002), 215.

<sup>18</sup>Danica Fink-Hafner and Damjan Lajh, *Managing Europe from Home: The Europeanization of the Slovenian Core Executive* (Ljubljana: Faculty of Social Sciences, 2003).

<sup>19</sup>For more detailed analysis and examples see Sabina Kajnč, "Changes in Slovenian Foreign Policy Following Accession to the European Union," *FORNET-CFSP Forum* 3, no. 3 (2005), <http://www.fornet.info/CFSPforum.html>.

and learning processes.<sup>20</sup>

Apart from regionalism, interregionalism has likewise offered an additional diplomatic channel for interacting in the world system. The concept of interregionalism helps to explain the impetus for both cooperation between Asia and Europe (interregional) and cooperation within the two regions (intra-regional). Interregionalism is commonly divided into bilateral interregional and trans-regional relationships. Bilateral interregionalism refers to group-to-group relationships between two distinct and separate regions whereas trans-regionalism implies more dispersed membership patterns between and across regions among interacting constituent agents (e.g., individuals, communities, organizations).<sup>21</sup> Interregionalism has significantly promoted the EU's foreign policies and external relations. The Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)<sup>22</sup> is the main vehicle for EU-Asia interregional cooperation and it is not only consolidating the EU's position as an actor on the global stage but also encouraging region and community-building within East Asia itself.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, new avenues for region-to-region interaction provide more ways to deal with security issues.<sup>24</sup> From the normative side, ASEM is providing the EU with a powerful mechanism for promoting democratic values and the pursuit of human rights as well as for balancing geostrategic interests and thus promoting regional stability. Through ASEM, the EU can engage with China both bilaterally and multilaterally and thereby project its soft power, subtly affecting China's thinking by prompting the norms of peaceful con-

<sup>20</sup>Ibid.

<sup>21</sup>For further conceptualization see Christopher M. Dent, "From Inter-Regionalism to Trans-Regionalism? Future Challenges for ASEM," *Asia Europe Journal* 1, no. 2 (May 2003): 224.

<sup>22</sup>The ASEM is the highest-level dialogue and interregional forum between Europe and East Asia, bringing together forty-five members (twenty-seven EU members, the European Commission, sixteen Asian countries, and the ASEAN Secretariat), covering political, economic, and cultural sectors of cooperation.

<sup>23</sup>See, for example, Michael Reiterer, "Interregionalism as a New Diplomatic Tool: The EU and East Asia," *European Foreign Affairs Review* 11, no. 2 (June 2006): 223-43.

<sup>24</sup>Fredrik Söderbaum, Patrik Stålgren, and Luk Van Langenhove, "The EU as a Global Actor and the Dynamics of Interregionalism: A Comparative Analysis," *European Integration* 27, no. 3 (September 2005): 365-80.





duct and a more open community-building.<sup>25</sup> The EU model of regional integration presents a powerful stimulus for community-building in East Asia. By catalyzing such open regionalism within East Asia, the EU contributes to broadening Taiwan's international space. Accordingly, the EU's properly directed soft-power projection could facilitate the integration of Taiwan into the East Asian economic and political set-up.<sup>26</sup> Accession to the EU provided Slovenia with an opportunity to multilateralize relations with individual Asian countries and offer both practical and normative input within the ASEM regime. Although it has so far not launched any comprehensive strategy, it has gradually developed a more proactive foreign policy toward Asia and has been increasingly engaged in the region.

#### *The Evolving CFSP and Its Implications for Slovenia*

The EU's formulation of a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)<sup>27</sup> and its desire for a more prominent role in global security are leading it to develop military and civilian capabilities for effective conflict prevention and crisis management not only in the EU's immediate neighborhood but also in regions far beyond.<sup>28</sup> The creation of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and the European Rapid Reaction

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<sup>25</sup>The term "soft power" refers to the ability to achieve desired outcomes through attraction rather than coercion. Means of exercising soft power include culture, political values, and foreign policies. See Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004). Nevertheless, Chinese susceptibility to European soft power is questionable and difficult to assess.

<sup>26</sup>For further explanation see Sebastian Bersick, "The Role of Taiwan in the EU's East Asia Strategy" (Paper presented at the International Conference on EU Relations with Taiwan and China, hosted in Taipei by the Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica, Taipei, December 1-2, 2006).

<sup>27</sup>The CFSP provides the central framework for the EU's foreign and security affairs. See European Commission, *External Relations: Common Foreign and Security Policy* (2008), [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/cfsp/intro/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/cfsp/intro/index.htm).

<sup>28</sup>Conflict prevention and crisis management tasks (the "Petersberg tasks") are defined in the Treaty on European Union (Article 17) and the EU's first-ever security strategy (ESS) adopted in December 2003, and they cover the following: humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping, crisis management and peacemaking, joint disarmament operations, support for third countries combating terrorism, and security sector reform. See Western European Union, *Petersberg Declaration* (1992), <http://www.weu.int/documents/920619peten.pdf>.

Force (ERRF)<sup>29</sup> within the overall framework of the CFSP has empowered the Union with a military capability to assist in restoring security and establishing stability when its traditional soft-power instruments for conflict prevention prove ineffective.<sup>30</sup>

The Slovenian government fully supports the CFSP and ESDP and the development of the EU's crisis management capabilities, continually stressing the importance of cooperation with other international institutions, especially the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).<sup>31</sup> The current European security environment with its numerous institutions dealing with security guarantees has been viewed as very favorably disposed toward small states. Slovenia has been a strong supporter of the new EU Constitution,<sup>32</sup> the CFSP, and the ESDP, and this is reflected in the attitudes of the political elite and the results of public opinion polls.<sup>33</sup> It has been generally perceived that a stronger CFSP with a European foreign minister and its own diplomatic service would give small member-states more influence over the way Europe acts on the world stage than they could wield as separate actors.<sup>34</sup> Slovenia's EU member-

<sup>29</sup>Battlegroups for deployment to international hotspots.

<sup>30</sup>See note 27 above.

<sup>31</sup>Slovenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Zunanja politika" (Foreign policy), 2008, <http://www.mzz.gov.si>.

<sup>32</sup>Slovenia swiftly ratified the EU Constitution without a referendum in early 2005. However, due to problems with ratification in some other EU member-states, European leaders in June 2007 reached a compromise agreement on a "Reform Treaty" rather than a constitution (The Lisbon Treaty), which was formally adopted on December 13, 2007, and now needs to be ratified by all twenty-seven member-states. While the Constitution replaced all earlier EU treaties, the Reform Treaty amends them. See European Commission, *Europa: A Constitution for Europe* (2008), [http://europa.eu/constitution/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/constitution/index_en.htm).

<sup>33</sup>Prior to Slovenia's accession to the EU, both the political elite and the political parties (with the exception of the Slovenian National Party and the New Party) emphasized the need for EU membership. Public opinion was also very supportive—in the EU accession referendum almost 90 percent of Slovenian voters supported EU membership. This support has continued since accession, with a great majority of Slovenians supporting the EU's Constitution, the CFSP, and the ESDP in particular. See European Commission, *Eurobarometer 69, Public Opinion in the European Union*, (2008), [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69\\_si\\_exe.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_si_exe.pdf).

<sup>34</sup>See David Král, "Enlarging EU Foreign Policy: The Role of New EU Member States

ship is vital in bolstering confidence in its foreign policy. Slovenia has been intensifying its participation in the external activities of the Union at all levels. Although Slovenia's priority is the stabilization of countries in its immediate vicinity, in consideration of its interests, international obligations, and capabilities, Slovenia has also pledged to train forces and constructively cooperate in joint operations to contribute to peace and stability in other world crisis hotspots.<sup>35</sup> Hence, the cooperation of Slovenia's military in international crisis-response operations has become an integral part of Slovenia's foreign policy. Slovenian troops have already been tested in various peace support operations and new measures have been taken to increase the international deployment of its armed forces.<sup>36</sup> The EU member-states and candidate-states can all cooperate in crisis management operations, carrying various roles in different operational phases and possessing equal rights in the decision-making processes. Thus, making a contribution to the EU's military capabilities gives Slovenia an opportunity to take part in European security policy decision-making and thereby reinforce its role and position in the international community.

#### *EU-Asia Interregionalism and Slovenia*

The intensifying relationship between the EU and Asia is becoming more influential in defining and shaping international politics. As implied above, interregionalism has nourished a common identity and coherence among EU member-states, structurally affected the EU members' foreign policies, and increased their interest in East Asia. It has enhanced the EU's ability to act collectively in pursuit of its agreed foreign policy goals within the framework of the CFSP.<sup>37</sup> Consequently, interregionalism has bolstered

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and Candidate Countries," EUROPEUM Institute for European Policy, 2005, [http://www.socialistgroup.org/gpes/media/documents/22727\\_22727\\_kral\\_david\\_european\\_policy\\_en.pdf](http://www.socialistgroup.org/gpes/media/documents/22727_22727_kral_david_european_policy_en.pdf).

<sup>35</sup>Slovenia Ministry of Defense: "Srednjeročni obrambni program 2005-2010" (Mid-term defense plan for 2005-2010), 2005, <http://www.mors.si>, and "Obrambni sistem Republike Slovenije" (Defense system of the Republic of Slovenia), 2006, <http://www.mors.si>.

<sup>36</sup>See Slovenia Ministry of Defense, <http://www.mors.si>.

<sup>37</sup>The EU's first ESDP crisis management mission in Asia (the Aceh Monitoring Mission

the EU's international influence and enhanced its responsibility for dealing with security issues in East Asia and preserving stability in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>38</sup>

Reinforcement of the strategic partnership between the EU and Asia has two implications for Slovenia. On the one hand, Slovenia is obliged to abide by the multitude of guidelines and agreements settled between the EU and Asia, and on the other, it can directly join the programs of cooperation of the two partners. EU accession has given new opportunities to Slovenia to develop and intensify its relations with East Asian countries, both bilaterally and under the framework of the EU. By pledging to contribute to the EU's endeavors toward the development of dialogue and cooperation with Asia within the framework of ASEM, Slovenia became closely involved in the comprehensive process of EU-Asia interregional cooperation. Slovenia has shown great interest in accessing the ASEM forum as it can help the country foster stronger political, economic, cultural, and educational links with Asian countries.<sup>39</sup> ASEM has increased Slovenia's interest in Asia and encouraged the upgrading of relations with the majority of Asian nations. Despite the distance and the unfamiliar business environment for Slovenia (compared to the EU and Russian markets), trade and economic relations between Slovenia and Asia have witnessed remarkable growth. Slovenia's total trade with East Asia increased by 38.3 percent in 2004 compared to 2003 (from €303.3 million to €419.56 million), the highest annual rise since the beginning of cooperation. In 2007, the total value of trade reached a remarkable €1,149.52 million and it is ex-

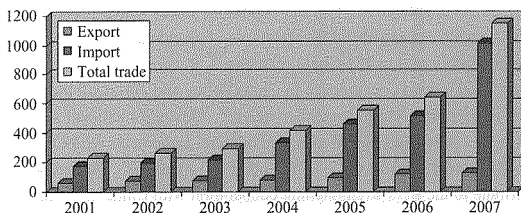
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in Aceh province, Indonesia) provided the EU with new confidence in its ESDP's abilities and created a precedent for future civilian or military deployments. The EU's crisis management involvement began in December 2002 and ended in December 2006. See International Crisis Group, "Indonesia: How GAM Won in Aceh," *Update Briefing*, Asia Briefing 61, Jakarta/Brussels (March 22, 2007).

<sup>38</sup>It has been suggested that ideationally based processes might play an important role in the Taiwan-China relationship. See, for instance, Zaborowski, "Developing a European Security Perspective on China"; and Masako Ikegami, "Risk of the Cross-Strait Conflict and the EU's Role for Conflict Prevention" (Paper presented at the International Conference on EU Relations with Taiwan and China, hosted by the Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica, Taipei, December 1-2, 2006).

<sup>39</sup>See Slovenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Annual Report 2006*.

**Figure 1**  
**Slovenia's Trade Volume with East Asia (2001-2007, € million)**



**Source:** Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS), *External Trade* (2008), <http://www.stat.si/index.asp>.

pected to continue to rise in the future (see figure 1).

Slovenia has acknowledged the importance of being engaged in Asia bilaterally, through the EU, and through multilateral bodies, and it willingly and actively participates in ASEM events. It successfully and professionally hosted two ASEM Senior Officials' Meetings and took part in coordination and preparation for the seventh Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM 7), recently held in China.<sup>40</sup> It has devoted special attention to cultural and intellectual dialogue aimed at advancing relations between the two regions within the ASEM regime. In its declaration on activities in the EU ahead of and during its presidency in the first half of 2008, Slovenia pledged to concentrate its attention in Asia toward the regional hotspots and to enhance cooperation with the EU's strategic partners in the region (ASEAN, China, Japan, India, and Russia).<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Office of the President of the Republic of Slovenia Dr. Danilo Turk, "Participation of the President of the Republic of Slovenia at the 7th Asia-Europe Summit (ASEM 7)" (October 25, 2008), <http://www.up-rs.si>.

<sup>41</sup>Uradni list Republike Slovenije (The Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia), "Declaration on activities of the Republic of Slovenia in the institutions of the European Union in the period January 2007 — June 2008", (DeUDIEU0708), Uradni list RS 31/2007.

China is central to the EU's policy in Asia. The EU's China policy has steadily extended and now involves a broadening range of policy fields. Since Slovenia entered the EU, the conditions under which it cooperates with China have changed and the resolution of open bilateral questions has become closely tied to EU-China relations.<sup>42</sup> Recently, there has been a strong trend toward convergence in China policy and policy on the cross-Strait issue among the EU member-states.<sup>43</sup> Slovenia's national strategy papers, key statements by officials, and bilateral agreements with China all embody similar aims to those of the other EU members. Determined to contribute to the EU's strengthening cooperation with China, Slovenia has been very enthusiastic about enhancing its relations with China. Relations have visibly deepened and areas of cooperation have broadened.<sup>44</sup> In line with expectations, the Slovenian EU presidency carefully followed the already established orientation of the EU-China comprehensive strategic partnership and worked closely with the European Commission and other member-states.<sup>45</sup>

To sum up, by joining the EU, Slovenia has extended the scope of its foreign policy and can now actively participate in discussions and initiatives that seek to promote international stability. With the adoption of the CFSP and the EU's increased involvement in Asia, Slovenia has expanded and deepened its knowledge of the region and has been given an opportunity to become more engaged in matters of Asian security. Although it has not formulated any specific foreign policy objectives or regional strategies toward Asia, by joining ASEM, Slovenia has incorporated an Asian perspective into its foreign policy that will gradually encourage closer attention to important security issues in the region. Similarly, the

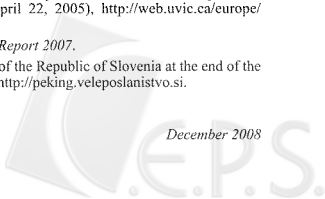
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<sup>42</sup>For instance, the mechanism offered by sectoral dialogue, which now covers twenty-four different areas, provides Slovenia with a new channel for resolving any open questions with China. See European Commission, *External Relations: The EU's Relations with China*.

<sup>43</sup>Reuben Wong, "Towards a Common European Policy on China? Economic, Diplomatic and Human Rights Trends since 1985" (April 22, 2005), <http://web.uvic.ca/europe/ipsa-rc3/rwong.pdf>.

<sup>44</sup>Slovenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Annual Report 2007*.

<sup>45</sup>Marjan Cencen, "Address of the Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia at the end of the Slovenian EU Presidency in the PRC," 2008, <http://peking.veleposlanistvo.si>.



growing importance of East Asia to the EU will affect its members' perceptions of the Taiwan security problem. Indeed, the Taiwan issue has received more frequent mention in the EU's policy statements, and the EU has pledged to contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>46</sup> Any escalation of the conflict across the Taiwan Strait would have an impact on European security, and Slovenia would not be immune from this. During its EU presidency, Slovenia for the first time found itself in a position that required it to devote closer attention to events in the Taiwan Strait. On the EU's behalf, the Slovenian presidency issued three declarations on cross-Strait relations, all of which reflected the EU's interest in maintaining peace and stability between Taiwan and China.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, responding to the resumption of dialogue between Taiwan and China on June 12, 2008, following President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) inauguration, the Slovenian presidency welcomed improved cross-Strait ties and expressed the hope that dialogue would promote the long-term peaceful political and economic development of the region.<sup>48</sup> Undeniably, Slovenia has become more aware of the cross-Strait issue and has been encouraged to address the realities related to developments in the region.

## **Relations between Slovenia and Taiwan**

### *Overview*

In line with the EU as a whole, Slovenia has never deviated from the "one China" policy. Nevertheless, there is a subtle nuance which distin-

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<sup>46</sup>European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament EU-China: Closer Partners, Growing Responsibilities (2006), [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external\\_relations/china/docs/06-10-24\\_final\\_com.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/china/docs/06-10-24_final_com.pdf).

<sup>47</sup>See European Council, Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Cross-Straits Relations, PESC/08/31 (March 4, 2008); *ibid*, PESC/08/39 (March 22, 2008); and *ibid*, PESC/08/68 (May 26, 2008).

<sup>48</sup>European Presidency, EU Presidency Statement on re-establishment of dialogue between authorized non-governmental organizations engaged in talks on issues related to exchanges across the Taiwan Strait (June 13, 2008), [http://www.eu2008.si/en/News\\_and\\_Documents/CFSP\\_Statements/June/0613MZZtaiwan.html](http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/CFSP_Statements/June/0613MZZtaiwan.html).



guishes the Slovenian "one China" policy as defined in its joint communiqué from that adopted by the majority of the EU member-states. Whereas the joint communiqués signed by the majority of EU countries state that they "recognize there is only one China and that the Government of the PRC [People's Republic of China] is the sole legal government of China (and its people)," and do not apply the strong word "recognize" regarding the Chinese position on Taiwan's status, Slovenia in its joint communiqué on establishing diplomatic relations with China of May 1992, "recognizes" that the government of the PRC is the sole legal government of China as well as that "*Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory.*"<sup>49</sup> Notably, the EU is committed to ambiguity surrounding the "one China" issue and consciously notes the difference between the EU's "one China policy" and the orthodox "one China principle" imposed by China which implies that Taiwan is a province of China and an inseparable part of its territory. Slovenia, notwithstanding the anti-communist euphoria in the country after the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the early 1990s, was well aware that China's vote in the UN Security Council would be decisive in gaining recognition of Slovenia as an independent country. Although Slovenia has been interested in developing relations with Taiwan ever since independence, even forging trade deals with Taiwan was believed to be politically risky and to jeopardize Slovenia's entry into the UN.<sup>50</sup> China's clout in international affairs has always been an important consideration in the formulation of Ljubljana's foreign policy. In addition to considerations surrounding Slovenia's security and its place in the international community,

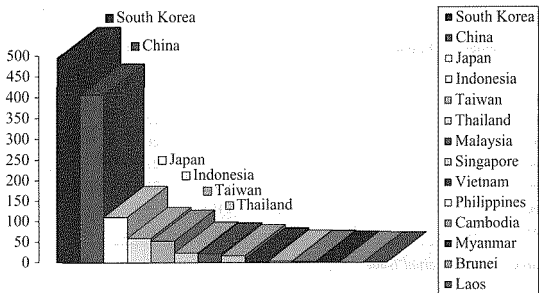
<sup>49</sup>See PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Slovenia" (1992), <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng> (emphasis added by author). See also Winston Dang, "Few Countries Support 'One China'," *Taipei Times*, May 3, 2007, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2007/05/03/2003359292>.

<sup>50</sup>The following articles display the fierce debate among Slovenian diplomats on the issue of promoting ties with Taiwan in early 1991: Peter Millonig, "Dr. Peter Millonig piše dr. Dimitriju Ruplu" (Dr. Peter Millonig writes to Dr. Dimitrij Rupel), *Delo*, no. 96 (April 24, 1991): 9; Dimitrij Rupel, "Zadeva Millonig v skupščini" (The Millonig issue in the Assembly), *ibid.*, no. 97 (April 25, 1991): 3; and Vinko Trček, "O gospodarskem sodelovanju s Tajvanom" (On economic cooperation with Taiwan), *ibid.*, no. 126 (June 1, 1991): 30-31. Slovenia was admitted to the United Nations on May 22, 1992.





**Figure 2**  
**Volume of Slovenia-Taiwan Trade Compared to Slovenia's Trade with Other East Asian Countries, 2007 (€ million)**



Source: SURS, *External Trade*.

friendship with Beijing has also been perceived as critical for Slovenia's economic development. At present, neither Slovenia nor any other European government wants to risk damaging its relationship with Beijing, since all agree that their greater economic interests, at least in the long term, are on the Chinese mainland, and for this reason they do not treat Taiwan as a political entity but as a separate economic and commercial entity.<sup>51</sup> There are no treaties between Slovenia and Taiwan. Like most other EU countries, their links are confined to semi-governmental channels and largely limited to the economic, scientific, educational, and cultural sectors. Among these, economic exchange is the most fruitful. China tolerates all forms of trade between Slovenia and Taiwan as long as it does not interfere with politics and official government issues. In 2007, with a bilateral trade volume of €52.737 million (€7.763 million of Slovenian exports to

<sup>51</sup>At present, due to its unique status, the Holy See (Vatican) is the only state in Europe which maintains diplomatic links with Taiwan.

**Table 1**  
**Slovenia's Trade with Taiwan/China, Total Trade Amount (€ million), and Change in Trade (%) over Previous Year (2001-2007)**

| Year | Taiwan |        |             |      | China  |        |             |      |
|------|--------|--------|-------------|------|--------|--------|-------------|------|
|      | Import | Export | Total trade | %    | Import | Export | Total trade | %    |
| 2001 | 20.1   | 13.3   | 33.4        | -    | 52.7   | 12.6   | 65.3        | -    |
| 2002 | 28.2   | 14.9   | 43.1        | 29.0 | 70.1   | 22.9   | 93.0        | 42.4 |
| 2003 | 27.6   | 15.5   | 43.1        | 0.17 | 89.1   | 26.5   | 115.5       | 24.2 |
| 2004 | 40.8   | 12.2   | 53.0        | 22.8 | 150.0  | 27.9   | 177.9       | 53.9 |
| 2005 | 35.1   | 12.7   | 47.8        | -9.8 | 196.8  | 36.2   | 233.0       | 31.0 |
| 2006 | 38.7   | 19.2   | 48.8        | 2.2  | 245.8  | 53.6   | 299.4       | 28.5 |
| 2007 | 45.0   | 7.8    | 52.7        | 8.0  | 345.9  | 60.6   | 406.5       | 35.8 |

Source: SURS, *External Trade*.

Taiwan and €44.974 million of Taiwanese exports to Slovenia), Taiwan was Slovenia's fifth largest trading partner in East Asia (see figure 2).

Although this trade volume is by no means small, it cannot compete with Slovenia's continuously increasing trade with China (see table 1).<sup>52</sup> In 2007, trade between Slovenia and China was worth €406.52 million (€60.571 million of Slovenian exports to China and €345.95 million of Chinese exports to Slovenia).<sup>53</sup>

The major barrier to more intensive cooperation between Slovenia and Taiwan is the lack of any form of representative office in either of the two countries. This hampers the flow of information on doing business in the two countries and is a serious hindrance to potential investors. Just like the embassy in Beijing, which has helped many Slovenian companies break into the Chinese market and strengthen their relations with China, a

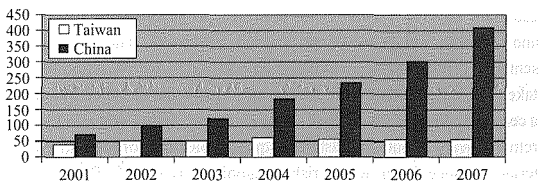
<sup>52</sup>However, it is important to note that since Taiwanese-owned companies in mainland China are major exporters, a substantial proportion of Chinese exports to Slovenia can be attributed to Taiwanese investors. See Taipei Representative Office in the EU and Belgium, "Relations between Taiwan and the EU" (February 2007), <http://www.roc-taiwan.org/public/Attachment/731918481171.pdf>.

<sup>53</sup>SURS, *External Trade*.



**Figure 3**

**Comparison of Trade between Slovenia and Taiwan/China, Total Trade Amount (€ million, 2001-2007)**



Source: SURS, *External Trade*.

Slovenian representative office in Taiwan or a Taiwan office in Slovenia would undoubtedly optimize the benefits of nonofficial ties and stimulate closer economic relations between the two sides.<sup>54</sup> Although most countries remain unwilling to modify their stance on formal political and diplomatic ties, they have responded to Taiwan's diplomatic efforts by gradually allowing political extensions to commercial ties by, for instance, upgrading Taiwan's unofficial trade offices, permitting ministerial-level visits, opening air links, and supporting Taiwan's membership of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other international organizations.<sup>55</sup> Currently sixteen of the twenty-seven EU members have trade offices in Taiwan and Taiwan has nineteen representative offices<sup>56</sup> in EU countries. Slovenia, together with five (Estonia, Lithuania, Malta, Bulgaria, and Romania) of the twelve members that

<sup>54</sup>Slovenska demokratska stranka (SDS), "Predsednik SDS Janez Janša na uradnem obisku na Tajvanu" (President of the SDS Janez Janša on the official visit to Taiwan) (2005), [http://www.sds.si/index.php?section=news&news=novice\\_baza/020405\\_094156.txt&m=11&y=2005](http://www.sds.si/index.php?section=news&news=novice_baza/020405_094156.txt&m=11&y=2005).

<sup>55</sup>Sun-Chen Tan, "Joining the Global Village: Taiwan's Participation in the International Community," *Harvard International Review* 27, no. 2 (2005): 24-27.

<sup>56</sup>Representative offices perform most of the functions of embassies, but remain informal. Most of them are called the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Office" (TECO).

have joined the EU since 2004, has no representative office in Taiwan.<sup>57</sup> Although the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is striving to intensify relations with countries which could become important for political or economic reasons, Taiwan seems to be seen as lacking sufficient political and economic weight and of carrying too great a risk. The need for representative offices has been admitted on both sides, but no action has been taken.<sup>58</sup> Understandably, the Taiwan side insists that its office should have a certain diplomatic, rather than solely economic, status, whereas Ljubljana remains wary about establishing a quasi-diplomatic office under ministerial guidance which would risk antagonizing Beijing.<sup>59</sup> Representative offices play a significant role in promoting bilateral relations and help to project Taiwan's image as a sovereign entity as they maximize the official substance of its semi-official relations. The promotion of economic, cultural, and other relations between Slovenia and Taiwan is currently the responsibility of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Vienna. The Taiwanese representative office in Budapest, the Taiwan Trade Center, which was initially in charge of Slovenian-Taiwanese cooperation, likewise still helps in coordinating their economic exchanges. While Slovenia can now ask any EU member which has a diplomatic mission in a particular country to protect Slovenian nationals,<sup>60</sup> those diplomatic missions cannot perform other functions, such as trade and investment promotion or the

<sup>57</sup>See Bureau of Consular Affairs, ROC (Taiwan) Embassies, 2008, <http://www.boca.gov.tw>.

<sup>58</sup>Marko Osolnik, "Pogovor s tajvanskim diplomatom" (Discussion with a Taiwanese diplomat), *Delo*, no. 5 (January 8, 1998): 6; Andrej Brstovšek, "Nemčija na Daljnem vzhodu" (Germany in the Far East), *Dnevnik*, no. 101 (April 14, 1998): 7; and Barbara Medved, "Le modre odločitve zagotavljajo uspeh" (Only wise decisions bring success), *Demokracija*, no. 24 (June 18, 1998): 18.

<sup>59</sup>In October 2003, the Slovenian member of the European Parliament, Mihael Brejč, addressed a question on the possibility of opening a Taiwanese economic representative office in Slovenia to the foreign minister Dimitrij Rupel. From the minister's answer it is clear that the government did not intend to depart from the Slovenian legislation which provides no legal basis for conferring immunities or privileges on a non-diplomatic representative office of a state. See Državni zbor Republike Slovenije (RS) (National Assembly of the RS), "Poslansko vprašanje" (Parliamentary question), no. 310-08/91-0009/069 (November 21, 2003).

<sup>60</sup>*A Constitution for Europe* (2004), Fundamental Rights and Citizenship of the Union: Article 46.

assertion of Slovenia's positions and its interests. Therefore, a representative office would provide the foundation for more substantive ties.

Slovenia-Taiwan relations were particularly dynamic in the 1990s, with frequent exchanges of visits and enhanced cooperation.<sup>61</sup> In November 1992, the first Slovenian trade delegation to visit Taiwan, from the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (now the Chamber of Economy), signed a trade cooperation agreement with the China External Trade Development Council (CETRA, now known as the Taiwan External Trade Development Council, TAITRA, 對外貿易發展協會).<sup>62</sup> In July 1993, the two sides reached an agreement on avoidance of double taxation which enhanced their business cooperation. In September 1994, Taiwan was the only Asian country invited by the Slovenian Ministry of Economy to participate in a European conference on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to be held in Slovenia which offered Taiwanese companies assistance in breaking into the Slovenian market.<sup>63</sup> One bilateral cooperation project which has not been widely publicized was the Slovenian plan to construct light armored vehicles for Taiwan in 1993. As the project offered a good business deal, the Slovenian government was quick in permitting the local ironworks to buy the license for the construction of the vehicles. However, as soon as news of the plan reached Beijing, the Chinese issued an instant warning to the Slovenian Foreign Ministry and the project was abandoned.<sup>64</sup> This example clearly shows the constraints imposed by the China factor. Reasonably, for a small and young country, the cost of alienating China was judged to outweigh the assumed benefits to be derived from supporting Taiwan.

The right-leaning Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) has endeavored to nurture ties with the Taiwanese representatives located in neighboring

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<sup>61</sup>Government Information Office (GIO), Republic of China (Taiwan), *The Republic of China Yearbook 1997* (中華民國八十六年外交年鑑) (Taipei: GIO, 1997).

<sup>62</sup>GIO, *Taiwan Yearbook 2006* (2006 台灣年鑑) (Taipei: GIO, 2006).

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup>Aleksandar Mičić, "Razprodaja valukov: Revizija darila," *Mladina*, no. 49 (December 8, 2003): 23-24.

countries. The Slovenia-Taiwan Friendship Association, established in October 1997 at the initiative of the SDS leader Janez Janša (who was until recently the premier), is seen as the main pro-Taiwan lobbying group in Slovenia. Its functions include the promotion of economic, scientific, educational, cultural, sporting, and other nonpolitical cooperation and it has about sixty members.<sup>65</sup> When it was still in opposition, the SDS frequently questioned the Slovenian government's affection for Beijing and the domestic media have occasionally criticized the government's China policy.<sup>66</sup> In May 1998, an SDS member of parliament inquired about the possibility of establishing diplomatic relations with Taiwan in a letter to the foreign minister.<sup>67</sup> On October 10, 1998, the Republic of China's national day, the Taiwanese representative office in Budapest in collaboration with the Slovenia-Taiwan Friendship Association organized a party in Ljubljana which was attended by a number of Slovenian parliamentarians and scholars. Then, when Taiwan made a diplomatic breakthrough with Macedonia in early 1999, there were even rumors that Slovenia was interested in establishing diplomatic relations with Taiwan, with newspapers reporting that Slovenia had expressed an interest in improving ties with Taiwan.<sup>68</sup> There were also reports in the press that Taiwan had attempted to exercise its economic diplomacy on Slovenia not merely through trade

<sup>65</sup>Interview with the secretary of the Slovenia-Taiwan Friendship Association (Ljubljana, November 19, 2007).

<sup>66</sup>Trček, "O gospodarskem sodelovanju s Tajvanom"; Edo Pajk, "Slovensko-kitajska ljubezen" (Slovene-Chinese love), *Mladina*, no. 43 (October 22, 1996): 28; and Viktor Luskovec, "Državni svet po svetu gre" (National Council goes abroad), *Nedelo*, no. 50 (December 12, 2004): 2.

<sup>67</sup>The foreign minister's response quoted the 1992 Sino-Slovenian communiqué in which Slovenia affirmed that it would not establish official relations with Taiwan. However, the minister added a paragraph to explain that this did not preclude the already developed cooperation with Taiwan in economic and other areas that is common practice among a majority of other countries. See Ivo Hvalica, "Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs" (National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, May 6, 1998); and Boris Frlec, "Answer of the Minister of Foreign Affairs" (National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, May 8, 1998).

<sup>68</sup>"Taiwan Looks to Balkans, Region Emerges as Next Stage in Cross-Strait Tussle," *China News*, February 15, 1999; and Zorana Baković, "Tajvan nadaljuje diplomatsko ofenzivo" (Taiwan's diplomatic offensive continues), *Delo*, no. 38 (February 17, 1999): 8.

but also through offers of economic assistance and investment.<sup>69</sup> Interestingly, in next to no time, the Slovenian Foreign Ministry was put under pressure to publicly reassert its loyalty to the PRC and pledge not to establish diplomatic relations with Taiwan.<sup>70</sup> The Chinese ambassador in Slovenia was quick to remind the government of the "one China" policy and to warn against Taiwanese diplomatic stratagems.<sup>71</sup>

Notwithstanding these limits on political ties, Slovenia was unyielding in its nurturing of valuable economic cooperation with Taiwan. Taiwanese trade delegations to Europe continued to include Slovenia on their itineraries.<sup>72</sup> In 1999, an additional cooperative agreement was signed between the Slovenian Chamber of Economy and the ROC National Association of Industry and Commerce (CNAIC, 中華民國工商協進會), which further boosted business and industrial cooperation. In the same year, the Slovenian Chamber of Economy, with support from the Taiwan Representative Office in Budapest, joined with the Imports-Exports Association of Taipei to organize a Slovenia-Taiwan business seminar which was attended by over forty Slovenian companies and seventeen Taiwanese representatives. In addition, over one hundred individual meetings between Slovenian and Taiwanese companies were organized alongside the seminar, indicating considerable interest in more intimate cooperation.<sup>73</sup> When Li Peng (李鵬), chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress, refused to meet with the Slovenian premier and foreign minister during his unfortunate visit to Slovenia in June 2000, Sino-Slovenian relations reached their lowest level since 1992.<sup>74</sup> Accord-

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<sup>69</sup>Mihael Brejc in Jože Biščak, "Tajvanska naveza" (Taiwanese ties), *Finance*, no. 18 (March 5, 1999): 16.

<sup>70</sup>Slovenska Tiskovna Agencija, "Slovenia: No Diplomatic Relations with Taiwan," February 16, 1999.

<sup>71</sup>Tomaz Šaunik, "Predčasni odhod" (Precipitated departure), *Mladina*, no. 25 (June 19, 2000): 35.

<sup>72</sup>Central News Agency (CNA), "Taiwan Trade Mission Tours Europe," June 30, 1998; and CNA, "CETRA to Seek Business Opportunities in the Balkans," August 9, 1999.

<sup>73</sup>Slovenska Tiskovna Agencija, "Taiwan, Slovenia Strengthen Cooperation," December 3, 1999.

<sup>74</sup>"Li Peng odšel nezadovoljen" (Li Peng left unsatisfied), *Dnevnik*, no. 162 (June 16, 2000): 8.

ing to rumors, one factor which prompted Li to cancel the official meeting was his dissatisfaction with manifest advocacy of Taiwan by SDS members.<sup>75</sup> Although SDS supporters of Taiwan were vocal when in opposition, after the party won the 2004 general election they adopted a more pragmatic approach to relations with China and Taiwan. Moreover, the initial genuine desire for deepened cooperation with Taiwan (albeit in the context of the "one China" policy) seems to have faded out. The Slovenia-Taiwan Friendship Association is now rather inactive.

Nevertheless, despite the reduced intensity of cooperation compared to the 1990s, it is clear that Slovenia-Taiwan relations have reached a higher level of collaboration. Political exchanges, albeit informal ones, have increased and are conducted on a regular basis. The most recent high-level meeting, which was kept low-profile, took place in Taipei in August 2007, when President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) met with the SDS vice president and member of the European Parliament, Mihael Brejc, and the minister of public administration, Gregor Virant.<sup>76</sup> It is understandable that such an extremely sensitive relationship requires unconventional channels of communication and the utmost caution to avoid Beijing's antagonism. The avoidance of the Taiwan issue in written public statements does not preclude quiet communication in behind-the-scenes dialogue; however, the vibrancy of the latter remains concealed.

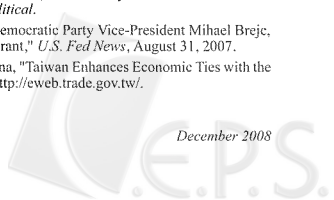
On an economic level, Taiwanese representatives from offices in neighboring countries continue to meet regularly with Slovenian economic officials endeavoring to enhance bilateral economic ties.<sup>77</sup> The Slovenian

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<sup>75</sup>Li Peng cancelled an official meeting with Prime Minister Andrej Bajuk and Foreign Minister Lojze Peterle. His visit was marked by demonstrations in support of Tibet and against China's human rights violations, in which some SDS members participated, and this presumably offended the Chinese side. The defense minister's friendliness with Taiwan also contributed to Chinese irritation. See "Taiwan an Issue in China's Li Peng Cutting Short Slovenia Visit" (Text of report by Tomaž Gerden, including statement by the Slovenian defense minister Janez Janša in Ljubljana on June 15, broadcast by Slovene radio, June 16, 2000), in *BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific - Political*.

<sup>76</sup>Taiwan: President Chen Meets Slovenian Democratic Party Vice-President Mihael Brejc, Minister of Public Administration Gregor Virant," *U.S. Fed News*, August 31, 2007.

<sup>77</sup>Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Vienna, "Taiwan Enhances Economic Ties with the Republic of Slovenia," February 25, 2008, <http://eweb.trade.gov.tw/>.





Chamber of Economy organizes regular trade seminars, supported by the Taiwan representative office in Budapest, introducing business opportunities in Taiwan and thereby providing an important channel of communication between the two sides. The latest seminar, entitled "The Taiwan Trade Center's Support to Slovenian Enterprises in Business with Taiwan," took place in April 2008.<sup>78</sup> Since 2005, Taiwanese businessmen, accompanied by representatives of TAITRA and the Board of Foreign Trade (BOFT, 國際貿易局), have participated in the annual international trade fair in Celje, the largest trade fair in Slovenia, displaying "Made in Taiwan" products to a wide circle of visitors.<sup>79</sup>

Slovenia-Taiwan ties are not limited to economic and trade exchanges. Cultural and academic exchanges in particular have been quite fruitful. The most important initiator of people-to-people ties between Slovenia and Taiwan is the renowned Slovenian missionary and doctor, Janez Janež, who worked in Taiwan from 1952 to 1990. Today, a newly built hospital in the town of Lotung (羅東) carries his name (羅東聖母醫院范鳳龍紀念大樓). The doctor's legacy provides an important cultural and spiritual bond between Slovenia and Taiwan.<sup>80</sup> The University of Ljubljana's Department of Asian Studies was opened in 1995 and Taiwan history and politics are included in its general curriculum, as is the study of traditional Chinese characters which are used in Taiwan. Slovenian students are awarded scholarships from Taiwan's Ministry of Education to study in Taiwan as well as grants from individual Taiwanese universities.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup>Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije (Slovenian Economic Chamber), "Podpora Tajvanskega trgovinskega centra pri poslovanju slovenskih podjetij s Tajvanom," March 26, 2008, <http://www.gzs.si>.

<sup>79</sup>Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Vienna: "Taiwan Participates in Slovenian Trade Fair" (August 31, 2005), <http://eweb.trade.gov.tw/>; and "Slovenian Ministers Visit Taiwan Pavilion at the 40th International Trade Fair (MOS) in Celje, Slovenia," September 19, 2007, <http://eweb.trade.gov.tw/>.

<sup>80</sup>Andrej Saje, "Poročilo z obiska Jamnika na Tajvanu" (Report on the Jamnik's visit), Conference of Catholic Bishops, July 20, 2007, <http://aktualno.rkc.si/?id=8046>.

<sup>81</sup>In 2008, Slovenian students were granted two one-year language scholarships, two Taiwan Program scholarships, one short-term research grant, and seven subsidies for the summer language program (information obtained from email correspondence with Ms. Vera Humer, Culture Division, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Vienna, September 2008).

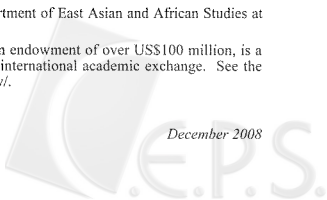
It is hoped that when these students return home they will help build up support for Taiwan and contribute to Slovenia-Taiwan ties. China has frequently expressed its displeasure over the extent of Slovenian academic cooperation with Taiwan, but it has not attempted to interfere in it.<sup>82</sup> Taiwan's Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (蔣經國國際學術交流基金會)<sup>83</sup> has its European headquarters in Prague and since the mid-1990s it has provided grants to scholars and academic institutions for Chinese and Taiwan studies. Slovenian students and professors are regularly granted financial assistance for their academic research. The Foundation has also financed the creation of university chairs in Taiwan studies in Europe and boosted academic research on Taiwan as witnessed by the establishment of the European Association for Taiwanese Studies (EATS, 歐洲臺灣研究學會) in London in 2004, which is at the moment endeavoring to build a network of institutions and academics involved in Taiwan studies throughout Eastern and Central Europe (including Slovenia) in order to accelerate Taiwan-Europe academic exchange and improve awareness of Taiwan.

Taiwanese cultural activities in Europe in general have visibly expanded since the early 1990s. Under the administration of President Chen Shui-bian in particular, Taiwan representative offices have given priority to promoting cultural events that are supposedly typically Taiwanese. The film industry, for example, has provided Taiwan with a channel for cultural exchange with Slovenia and has produced some important cultural exports. Taiwanese movies are frequently shown at the Ljubljana International Film Festival. There is, however, still room for more people-to-people exchanges through cultural affairs, youth programs, medical and public health work, religion, education, and scholarship. Tourism, though hampered by the cumbersome visa application procedure, also provides an ad-

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<sup>82</sup>From interviews with professors in the Department of East Asian and African Studies at the University of Ljubljana, November 2007.

<sup>83</sup>The Foundation, inaugurated in 1989 with an endowment of over US\$100 million, is a non-profit organization aimed at promoting international academic exchange. See the Foundation's website, <http://www.cckf.org.tw/>.



ditional area for cooperation.<sup>84</sup>

*A Role in the Taiwan Strait Conflict?*

The cross-Strait issue has in the last few years made a profound impact on internal debates within the EU. Seminars and workshops on cross-Taiwan Strait relations and the role the EU can play have increasingly begun to appear on the agendas of major European think-tanks.<sup>85</sup> Slovenia does not have much expertise in the Asia-Pacific region since that region is far down the list of Slovenia's priorities, despite the flourishing trade relations. Likewise, Slovenia's familiarity with the Taiwan issue is limited, and it lacks analytical capacity. Workshops on Asian security matters could bring together academic experts and policymakers and provide new ideas and quality analysis which would nurture a better understanding of the complexity of the cross-Strait conflict and its context. Such activities could serve as a mechanism for exchanges of views, providing information and facilitating networking. The increasing of understanding is certainly a mutually beneficial area where Slovenia, China, and Taiwan could be more active. Slovenia should not overlook the significant role Taiwan plays in maintaining stability in East Asia. Assisting with this should be in Slovenia's interest. Even a small country like Slovenia could, in its own modest way, contribute to promoting peace in the Taiwan Strait. For example, it could provide China and Taiwan with some of the valuable knowledge it has gained from the process of economic and political integration of the EU.<sup>86</sup> Endeavors such as promoting dialogue and supporting

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<sup>84</sup>The cumbersome and inflexible visa and work permit application procedures are certainly a big factor hindering the smooth development of Slovenia-Taiwan relations. Although Slovenia's recent entry into the Schengen Convention has substantially improved the visa regime for Taiwanese tourists, Slovenian citizens still have to make an inconvenient trip to Austria to apply for a visa.

<sup>85</sup>See Saša Istenič, "The EU's Endeavors to Achieve a Discernible Political and Security Role in Asia in the Framework of ASEM: The Taiwan Issue," *Issues & Studies* 43, no. 3 (September 2007): 76-79.

<sup>86</sup>See, for example: Dong-ching Day and Alvin Yuan-ming Yao, "EU Model and Cross-Strait Integration," *East Asia* 21, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 3-24; and Michael G. Plummer and Erik Jones, "EU and Asia: Links and Lessons," *Journal of Asian Economics* 14, no. 6 (January 2004): 829-42.

the initiation of new political integration concepts would not be likely to undermine China's confidence. Through its engagement with China in political, economic, cultural, and other spheres, Slovenia has the capability to facilitate the EU's capacity to project its soft power. In addition to its soft-power input, Slovenia, as an EU member, also plays a role in endorsing Taiwan's practical and meaningful participation in specialized multilateral forums in which statehood is not a requirement. Slovenia expressed support for this kind of thing in its EU presidency statement.<sup>87</sup> The WHO, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) are among the sixteen UN specialized bodies that Taiwan cited in its latest bid for meaningful participation (not full membership) in UN activities.<sup>88</sup> Slovenian support would count for something when Taiwan's bid is considered by the UN General Assembly.

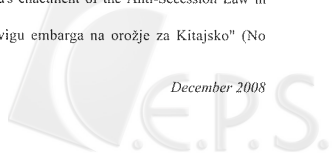
Lastly, the EU's role in maintaining the arms embargo<sup>89</sup> on China is viewed by most analysts as being of vital importance to cross-Strait stability. Since lifting the embargo would require a unanimous decision by all the EU member-states, Slovenia also plays an important part in this issue. Slovenia has expressed its support for the continuation of EU-China dialogue and believes that the arms embargo should only be lifted under certain conditions. As the foreign minister at that time, Dimitrij Rupel, stated, China must continue the dialogue on human rights, ratify the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, abolish the death penalty, release political prisoners, and improve relations with its neighboring countries, particularly Taiwan, before the embargo can be removed.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>87</sup>Declaration by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Cross-Straits Relations, PESC/08/39.

<sup>88</sup>Despite the Taiwan government's pragmatic approach in its latest bids in August and September 2008, Beijing's opposition has remained unchanged.

<sup>89</sup>The EU imposed an embargo on arms exports to China to signal its disapproval of Chinese actions in the June 1989 Tiananmen Incident (天安門事件). In 2003, the EU declared its intention to lift the embargo. The embargo remains in place, however, due to a combination of strong pressure from both inside and outside the EU, especially from the United States and various human rights groups, and China's enactment of the Anti-Secession Law in March 2005.

<sup>90</sup>Maja Kocijančič, "EU brez konsenza o dvigu embarga na orožje za Kitajsko" (No



Without doubt, any escalation of the crisis in the Taiwan Strait would present the EU with a major dilemma concerning its position in the conflict and its responsibility for crisis management or conflict resolution.<sup>91</sup> Although the European security strategy is still at the development stage, some analysts believe that the EU's conflict prevention and crisis management instruments could play a positive role in managing conflict in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>92</sup> As a strong supporter of the EU's CFSP and by assuming an active role in international political and military organizations, Slovenia has an opportunity to participate constructively in security initiatives and encourage pragmatic solutions and confidence-building measures, thus contributing to the resolution of the Taiwan Strait conflict. Slovenia's basic strategic outlook is in line with the mainstream European attitude, but its readiness for action in crisis and peace-keeping situations will depend on whether it has the necessary means. Certainly, as a small country with quite limited capabilities, Slovenia can contribute much more to the civilian side of crisis management than it can to the military side. Slovenia's experience of peace-building in the Western Balkans is its most valuable asset.

### **Conclusion**

China's remarkable economic growth and its newfound international influence are increasing pressure on Europeans to exercise restraint in their dealings with Taiwan. As the overview of relations between Slovenia and Taiwan has revealed, the all-powerful China factor is the major consideration in Ljubljana's approach to Taiwan. Strengthening relations

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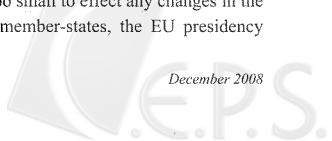
consensus within the EU to end the arms embargo on China), *Dnevnik*, April 15, 2005, [www.dnevnik.si/novice/svet/121553](http://www.dnevnik.si/novice/svet/121553).

<sup>91</sup>See, for example, Bruno Coppieters, "The European Strategic Culture on Secession and the Cross-Strait Relations" (Paper presented at the International Conference on EU Relations with Taiwan and China, hosted in Taipei by the Institute of European and American Studies, Academia Sinica, Taipei, December 1-2, 2006).

<sup>92</sup>See Ikegami, "Risk of the Cross-Strait Conflict and the EU's Role for Conflict Prevention"; and Jean-Pierre Cabestan, "Cross-Strait Relations: What Role for the European Union?" *ECAN Policy Brief*, no. 4 (May 2006).

with China is perceived as essential to Slovenia's national interests. The most important consideration is China's growing market economy and Slovenia's desire to develop strong economic relations. Admittedly, the foreign policies of small states are generally oriented toward economic growth, as small states are extremely susceptible to developments in the international community and exposed to the pressures of international economic flows, to which they must adjust. Consequently, Slovenia's initial sympathy with Taiwan has been markedly toned down. Since there are no clear-cut rules governing Taiwan's informal relations with Slovenia, as long as they keep within the boundaries of what Beijing will tolerate, their extent is subject to political and circumstantial considerations. Whether Slovenia responds to Beijing's pressure to limit its relationship with Taipei is a political decision which depends on how it values its relations with China and Taiwan at a particular time, and whether the benefit of embracing Taipei outweighs the cost likely to be inflicted by Beijing. The Slovenian government has cautiously maintained as low a profile as possible in order to avoid any complications with its economically and politically more important partner, China. The costs of upsetting Beijing have so far outweighed the benefits of relations with Taiwan. However, commercial considerations should not override the imperative for stability and a secure environment in East Asia.

Understandably, small countries seldom play an important role in international relations. Nevertheless, Slovenia now shares responsibility for the situation in the international community and is for the first time in a position to act on the global, regional, and sub-regional levels. There can be little remaining doubt that the EU has a role to play in many areas of world politics and its dynamic developments represent a challenge to the foreign policy structures and policies of the individual member-states. The CFSP has had a great impact on the Slovenian foreign policy agenda, widening the range of issues Slovenia has to consider. Although Slovenia has in general kept a low profile on most foreign policy issues discussed in the European Council since its accession and is reluctant to choose a strategy of its own as it is perceived to be too small to effect any changes in the overall approach of the EU and its member-states, the EU presidency

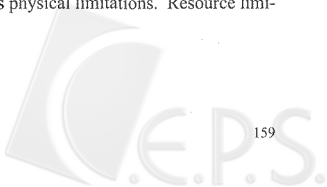


provided Slovenia with a unique opportunity to co-shape and co-create EU decisions on world peace and security. The Slovenian presidency was judged to be significant for several reasons: for example, it concluded the first trio presidency and Slovenia was the first of the new 2004/07 EU accession states, the first post-communist, and the smallest (with the exception of Luxembourg) member-state ever to hold the presidency. Its symbolic significance lay in the way it demonstrated the ability of a small new member-state to engage actively in EU-level politics. Although Slovenia is constrained in terms of financial and human resources, institutional history, and knowledge, the limitations imposed by its smallness have also provided Slovenia with certain advantages, especially where negotiation and mediation are concerned. As Kajnič points out, "Being small often means lacking strong interests in a broad range of issues, which can be an advantage in seeking compromises."<sup>93</sup>

Slovenia has been extremely active and successful in bringing to the EU the concerns of its people regarding the stabilization process in the neighboring Western Balkans, since this is crucial for regional stability and development. The geographically remote cross-Strait conflict is not an issue of direct concern to Slovenia, so its policies in this area are less likely to be led by national interest and more likely to conform to the mainstream attitude of the EU, although that is difficult to predict. Admittedly, whereas the EU is coherent as regards the fundamental importance of preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, individual members' views on Taiwan's independence might significantly diverge in the event of a crisis, and this would hinder the EU's involvement in the conflict and put the credibility of its CFSP in question. As outlined above, the peace and stability of East Asia are of concern to the EU, and preventing any escalation of armed conflict in East Asia—which would have enormous global repercussions—should be the job of any responsible member of the global community. Building peace requires proactive efforts. With an ambitious foreign policy, a small country can exceed its physical limitations. Resource limi-

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<sup>93</sup>See note 13 above.



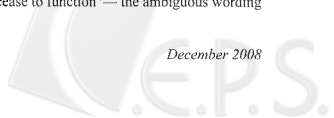
tations are a concern for the Slovenian government, but the extent of Slovenia's influence in European external and security policy depends on non-material as well as material components, for example, the promotion of initiatives regarding the resolution of security issues. Slovenia's contribution will not be seen as merely symbolic if its government takes the initiative and proposes ways to solve conflicts not merely in its own vicinity but also in more distant parts of the world, like the Taiwan Strait. In its desire to be a more responsible global actor, Slovenia could consider developing a more comprehensive strategic policy framework toward China and contribute more to the peaceful settlement of the cross-Strait issue. Although the "one China" policy is the main structural constraint on Taiwan-Slovenia relations, Slovenia should closely adhere to its main foreign policy document which forthrightly states that it supports the peaceful resolution of disputes and rejects the use of force, and that it respects and upholds the right of nations to self-determination.<sup>94</sup> Slovenia should demonstrate that it is a mature and responsible member of the global community by actively participating in and contributing to issues of international concern.

So far, the Slovenian government has kept a low profile. It issued no public statements about China's enactment of the Anti-Secession Law (ASL)<sup>95</sup> which provides the legal foundation for a future Chinese military invasion of Taiwan. The only concerns have been raised by the president of the Taiwan Friendship Association and member of the European Parliament, Mihael Brejc, who remains the most vocal critic of Slovenia's Taiwan policy. Likewise, the Slovenian government did not voice any criticism of President Chen Shui-bian's decision to scrap the Guidelines for National Unification and abolish the National Unification Council (NUC) in early 2006, which provoked Beijing and jeopardized cross-Strait stability.<sup>96</sup> It

<sup>94</sup>See "Declaration on Foreign Policy of the Republic of Slovenia."

<sup>95</sup>The ASL was adopted at the Third Session of the Tenth National People's Congress on March 14, 2005. See "Anti-Secession Law," *People's Daily Online*, March 14, 2005.

<sup>96</sup>Chen Shui-bian declared that the provisions of the Guidelines for National Unification would "cease to apply" and the NUC would "cease to function"—the ambiguous wording





was after Slovenia assumed the EU presidency that it became more assertive concerning Taiwan, as was apparent from its statements on issues related to cross-Strait relations. The Slovenian presidency regularly monitored and responded to events in Taiwan and China and took part in the EU's constructive role in the development of relations across the Taiwan Strait and kept them on the EU agenda.<sup>97</sup>

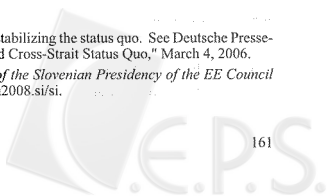
Needless to say, the international ambitions of states reflect the ambitions, or lack of ambitions, of their politicians. The political elite can choose to be merely reactive or to play an active role in the international system. Its members' responses to international events are influenced by domestic characteristics and the international system. To be sure, the main impetus for any initiatives regarding the Taiwan question would have to be derived from Slovenian national interests. The crucial question is whether it is in Slovenia's interest to be involved in the resolution of the cross-Strait conflict, and whether Taiwan's democracy is of any importance to Slovenia. There are many similarities between the development of democracy in Taiwan and Slovenia. Presumably, Slovenia's historical and political background should make it more inclined to support the values to which it once desperately aspired. Moreover, Taiwan, which is a significant factor in Asian regional security, cannot be ignored in the strategic calculus of the EU and its member-states. Slovenia has expressed its willingness to be a more responsible global actor and has been encouraged to engage in Asian security issues through the mechanisms offered by the EU. Although the EU enjoys the opportunities offered by U.S. regional engagement in Asia, it does not want to be strategically excluded from the region, as it is in its interests to strengthen a multilateral international system.

To sum up, since its integration into the EU, Slovenia has been able to participate actively in the EU decision-making process and even to lead

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was intended to ease U.S. concerns about destabilizing the status quo. See Deutsche Presse-Agentur, "Taiwan Insists It Has Not Changed Cross-Strait Status Quo," March 4, 2006.

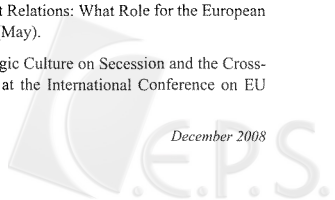
<sup>97</sup>Slovenian Presidency of the EU, *Program of the Slovenian Presidency of the EE Council — What We Achieved* (2008), <http://www.eu2008.si/si>.



bodies involved in the preparation of decisions on world peace and security. It has become more capable of contributing to global well-being and has regularly expressed a desire to do so. Whereas the Slovenian government had paid little attention to security matters in the Taiwan Strait, failing to voice opinions at crucial junctures in cross-Strait relations and keeping as low a profile as possible, the EU's China policy framework has prompted Ljubljana to devote more attention to the Taiwan question, and this has influenced its perception of the Taiwan security problem. The findings of this analysis indicate that EU-level developments have had far-reaching consequences for the scope and content of Slovenia's China policy. Regional and interregional processes have opened up a channel through which Slovenia can now play a more responsible role in maintaining stability in the Taiwan Strait and demonstrate that small states can also exert an important influence on matters of international concern and contribute to global peace and security.

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