

The American Factor Across the Taiwan Strait

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The American Factor in Post-ECFA Cross-Strait Relations

“For the Chinese in Beijing, arms sales have been a recurring symbolic reminder that the United States stands against their ruling on Taiwan. For the Chinese in Taipei, the arms have been symbols of moral support. To the United States, providing arms to Taiwan has been symbolic of our fiat that the Chinese must settle Taiwan’s status peacefully.”¹

With the recent signing of an economic cooperation pact between Taiwan and China, cross-strait relations have entered a new era that could eventually make rapprochement a peaceful process.

The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), which is a free trade agreement in substance if not in name, is initially aimed at normalizing cross-strait economic relations, though it could further raise the issue of a possible freeze on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. After all, if Taipei and Beijing are actively working on burying the hatchet, should the United States change its long-standing policy of providing weapons to Taiwan?

Recall that the U.S. government’s decision to sell more than US\$6 billion worth of military equipment to Taiwan earlier this year set off furious reprisals from Chinese authorities who summoned the U.S. ambassador and defense attaché in China and threatened to punish U.S. companies that make and sell weapons to Taiwan.²

¹ Charles T. Cross, *Born a Foreigner: A Memoir of the American Presence in Asia* (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), p. 263.

² Peter Hsiao, “Wanted: A true statesman for Taiwan,” *The China Post* (2010/2/4). [Accessed Online] <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/commentary/letters/2010/02/04/243608/Wanted-A.htm/>

Even though the proposed arms deal included nothing more than two Osprey mine-hunting ships, 60 Black Hawk helicopters, night vision gear, missiles, machine guns and ammunition, radar equipment and information technology, Beijing had no hesitation in saying that Washington is attempting to keep China divided to promote U.S. strategic interests.³

So, why does the United States sell arms to Taiwan in the first place?

From the outset of the Second World War, Washington acted as a buffer between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and entered in an alliance with General Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) in fighting against the Japanese Imperial Army.

Following the outbreak of the Korean War, on June 25, 1950, U.S. President Harry S. Truman ordered the Seventh Fleet to take position in the Taiwan Strait to prevent an assault on the island by the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

In the midst of the Cold War, Washington still opposed operations that might lead to a major war involving the United States and would divert too much of ROC's strength away from the defense of Taiwan. Beginning in 1954, Chiang pressed Washington for a defense treaty, which U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed on December 10, 1954 (中美協防條約), to replace the executive order for the Seventh Fleet protection.

America's support for the KMT regime, nonetheless, eroded in about 25 years with the signature of the Shanghai Communiqué (上海公報) in February 1972 and the Sino-American normalization of January 1, 1979, which had serious impacts on Taiwan's security.

In order to soften the blow of the normalization, the U.S. Congress passed the Taiwan Relation's Act (與台灣關係法, TRA) on January 26, 1979 and prepared the way for America's continuous support, in terms of future arms sales and nongovernmental ties with Taiwan.

The TRA further pushed through the signature of the August, 17 1982 Joint Communiqué on arms sales to Taiwan (中[共]美八一七公報) that provided for an open-ended American commitment based solely on Taiwan's defensive needs.

³ Cara Anna, "China: Taiwan Arms Sales Harm National Interest," *Abc News International & AP* (2010/1/31). [Accessed Online] <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory?id=9709332>

Today, if Taiwan authorities don't want to buy large amounts of offensive weapons anymore, the United States cannot force anyone to purchase them. In fact, the Bush administration and now the Obama administration have welcomed the changes that President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) approach has brought to cross-strait relations over the last two years. The stabilization of Beijing-Taipei relations is especially benefiting Washington: It has one less problem to worry about and does not need to engage in dual deterrence anymore.

Well, if we examine the impact of the recent developments in the Taiwan Strait from a military perspective, should the U.S. cede political and economic influence in the Asia Pacific region to China without careful consideration?

The Chinese military has long said that the PLA would accelerate the buildup of its conventional and nuclear arsenal to form a credible deterrent and develop a credible missile force corresponding to the needs of winning a war.⁴

Such military buildup in the Asian Pacific region should matter to the United States which has long made weapons available to Taiwan's leaders so that they have confidence to go to the negotiating table with China from a position of strength.

President Ma also stressed last April that China has to remove or actually dismantle its more than 1,500 missiles targeting Taiwan as a prerequisite for further talks on a cross-strait peace accord.⁵

According to Randy Shriver, however, the Obama administration appears to be "on the verge of altering an approach to Taiwan and to the Asia-Pacific region as a whole" that has served the United States' interests well.⁶

In an article published in the Washington Times on July 9, 2010 the former U.S. assistant secretary of state for East Asia lamented that the Obama administration has gone to great lengths "to deny that a Taiwan arms-sales freeze is in place" and continue "a fiction that Taiwan has not formerly requested more F-16 fighters."

⁴ Kyodo News Network staff writer, "China Accelerates Planning for Space Command," *Global Security Newswire* (2010/6/10). [Accessed Online] http://gsn.nti.org/gsn/nw_20100616_6561.php

⁵ Ralph Jennings, "Taiwan says China has 1,500 missiles aimed at island," *Reuters* (2009/2/13). [Accessed Online] <http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-37994220090213>

⁶ Randy Shriver, "Taiwan faces two Chinas," *The Washington Times* (2010/7/9). [Accessed Online] <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2010/jul/9/taiwan-faces-two-chinas/>

Without a doubt, U.S. commitment to Taiwan's defense is still a core element of Washington's policy of strategic ambiguity through which the U.S. has neither explicitly committed itself to protect Taiwan, nor explicitly rejected such commitment for more than sixty years. The TRA is equally ambiguous on whether the U.S. would come to Taiwan's aid and, in this eventuality, under what conditions it would do.

As Sino-American scholar Pan Zhongqi puts it, strategic ambiguity was rather designed to introduce uncertainty into Taipei and Beijing's decision making "to prevent them from changing the status quo across the Taiwan Strait."⁷

1. Research Topic

As economic integration is likely to further affect the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, if Taipei has a sense of self confidence in its relationship with China, Washington should carefully take into consideration the impact of various amounts of strategic ambiguity it pumps into its relationship with Taiwan and China in the post-ECFA era.

The island is on its way to become a business operation hub in the Asia-Pacific region and President Ma is actively seeking free trade agreements (FTAs) with member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United States in particular. The planned FTAs could help the long-term growth of Taiwan's export-reliant US\$390 billion economy.⁸

The Obama administration is at a crossroads in redefining its relationships with Taiwan and China. As President Ma further aims to liberalize the island's economic relations with China, should the United States be involved in the cross-strait issue in a more proactive fashion?

Contrary to the recent comments of the deputy assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, David Shear, should Washington enhance its economic relationships with Taiwan?

⁷ Pan Zhongqi, *The Dilemma of Deterrence: US Strategic Ambiguity Policy and its Implications for the Taiwan Strait* (Washington: The Henry L. Stimson Center, February-April 2001), p. 7.
[Accessed Online] <http://www.stimson.org/china/pdf/dilemmadeterrence.pdf>

⁸ The China Post news staff, "Taiwan, U.S. must work together towards an FTA," *The China Post* (Taipei, 2010/7/11).
[Accessed Online] <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/editorial/taiwan-issues/2010/07/11/264129/Taiwan-US.htm>

The latter expressed on July 7 his disappointment by the lack of progress the United States and Taiwan have made on trade issues in recent years, and in particular, on bilateral negotiations over beef imports.⁹ He also suggested that the Obama administration waits before resuming bilateral talks under the Trade Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) — often a precursor to a full-fledged FTA — that have been dormant since 2007. But, should Washington hold those talks hostage to market access to small amounts of American beef? Should Washington consider Taiwan's improving relations with China as an inexorable movement through economic integration, political reconsideration and eventual unification?

In fact, neither Beijing nor Taipei sees it that way. According to U.S. scholar Richard C. Bush III, the Chinese leadership agrees that Taiwan's eventual unification is "a protracted and complex process." What is important in the short- and medium-term, however, is that "nothing happens to negate the possibility that the PRC goal will be achieved."¹⁰

The scholar argues that the Taiwan public could be more likely to further support economic integration across the Taiwan Strait if it has a sense of self confidence, which requires self-strengthening in a few key areas. The island needs to enhance its economic competitiveness through interdependence with mainland China and the United States, in particular. According to the World Competitiveness Yearbook compiled by the Switzerland-based IMD Business School, Taiwan's rating surged from No. 23 to No. 8, the best the island has received so far.

The island also needs to strengthen itself military in order to raise the cost of coercion and ensure some degree of deterrence vis-à-vis China's PLA. In a speech delivered at a seminar on Asian security at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Singapore last June, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates reaffirmed that the United States policy on selling defensive weapons to Taiwan remains unchanged despite China's opposition.

China has already 1,500 short-range ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan¹¹ and is also developing advanced weaponry ranging from anti satellite weaponry and cyber-attack capabilities to more conventional fighter jets and long-range missiles.

⁹ AFP staff writer, "US rules out Taiwan FTA," *The Straits Times* (2010/7/8).

[Accessed Online] http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/Asia/Story/STIStory_550896.html/

¹⁰ Richard C. Bush III, "China-Taiwan: Recent Economic, Political, and Military Developments Across the Strait, and Implications for the United States," *The Brookings Institution* (2010/3/18).

[Accessed Online] http://www.brookings.edu/testimony/2010/0318_china_economy_bush.aspx

¹¹ Bloomberg and CNA staff writers, "Taiwan near Patriot contract: Raytheon," *Taipei Times* (2010/7/22), p. 1.

Finally, Taiwan needs to strengthen its democratic system so that the legislature and mass media serve the public better and avoid the continuous polarization of Taiwan's society. The growing pragmatism in public opinion regarding the recurrent clashes between the ruling and opposition parties' lawmakers suggest that Taiwan public would welcome more constructive politics and closer relationship with the United States.

2. The Argument

Taiwan clearly needs to enhance its economic competitiveness and strengthen itself military in order to raise the cost of coercion, ensure some degree of deterrence vis-à-vis China's PLA and negotiate from a position of strength. But, with the current rapprochement between Taiwan and China, what role should U.S. play towards the cross-strait relationship? In other words, should Washington's longstanding policy of strategic ambiguity be challenged by the new political, diplomatic and military implications resulting from the recent signing of the ECFA? Obviously, yes!

According to Taiwanese scholar Philip Yang, "Washington's commitment to Taiwan's security is predicated on the premise that Taiwan does not provoke Beijing with independence."¹² In this respect, "U.S. arms sales policies have constituted a strategic deterrent strategy aimed at maintaining Taiwan's defensive capabilities and the balance of military power between Taiwan and China."¹³

Such strategic ambiguity policy, however, has become a defective strategy since the gradual end of the deterrence dilemma and the resulting arms race. It is also counterproductive to U.S. primary goal, that is, "preventing the development of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait in which the United States would be compelled to choose between allowing Taiwan to be subjugated by military force or intervening with U.S. forces to prevent it."¹⁴ While Washington has maintained deterrence toward the two sides in balance for over 60 years, the continuous warming of cross-strait relations indicates that Washington has to find new ways to address the cross-strait stalemate.

¹² Philip Yang, "Doubly Dualistic Dilemma: US Strategies towards China and Taiwan," *International Relations of the Asia Pacific*, Volume 6 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 212.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

¹⁴ Ralph N. Clough, *Cooperation or Conflict in the Taiwan Strait* (New York: Rowman & Littlefields Publishers, Inc., 1999), p. 114.

So far, the crises and subsequent developments across the Taiwan Strait have demonstrated how the United States could be drawn into a dilemma of deterrence and why that was inevitable. Today, the strategic ambiguity policy of dual deterrence is not only vulnerable, but also counterproductive in terms of maintaining cross-strait peace and stability, given that the two archenemies have already succeeded in improving their relationships.

If American dual deterrence strategy is phased out, maintaining the military balance through constant arms sales to Taiwan is also becoming more questionable. Following the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis, for instance, Taiwan and China increased their military budgets in a major way. The resulting arms race and weapons proliferation had something to do with American's strategic ambiguity policy toward the cross-strait issue.

The U.S. is now facing a new reality with the current rapprochement between China and Taipei, which requires that Washington keeps pace with a new pressing goal: maintaining its political and economic influence in Asia in view of China's accession to the superpower status.

3. The Assumptions, Primary Goals and Strategies

The following discussion of the U.S. policy in the cross-strait issue is based on four assumptions.

To begin with, China's military and economic power will continue to grow in the years ahead, causing in the same way a growing concern about the emergence of China as a world power. Within a decade, perhaps much sooner, experts believe that China will be America's only global competitors for military and strategic influence. Even if the country is committed to taking a path of peaceful development through the adoption of a defensive military posture, "Beijing is poised for true global status as a military superpower," argues U.S. scholar John J. Tkacik.¹⁵

Meanwhile, the PRC will not abandon its determination to unify with Taiwan, though Beijing claims that a peaceful reunification is obviously a long-term goal. "The more pertinent task for the medium term — the timeframe that is relevant to policymaking in all three capitals — is how to avoid crises and promote positive relations," stresses U.S. scholar Alan D. Romberg.¹⁶

¹⁵ John J. Tkacik, "Web Memo: A Chinese military superpower?" *The Heritage Foundation*, No. 1389 (Washington, 2007/3/8), p. 1.

¹⁶ Alan D. Romberg, "Richard C. Bush, At Cross Purposes: U.S.-Taiwan Relations Since 1942 China Perspectives," *China Perspectives* (2005), p. 60. [Accessed Online] <http://chinapersonpectives.revues.org/506/>

Still, the Taiwanese will keep trying to increase their freedom of action and status in the international community. Thanks to President Ma's pledge for a diplomatic truce, Taiwan's top health official and his counterpart from China successfully met on the sidelines of the opening of the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva last May to discuss possibilities for future cooperation.

There is no doubt that the complementarity of the economies of China and Taiwan will continue to exist and the economic links will continue to grow. According to U.S. scholars Daniel H. Rosen and Zhi Wang of the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington, "the net effect of ECFA for Taiwan would be some 5.3 percent improvement in GDP by 2020."¹⁷

Against this backdrop, the U.S. has a variety of goals with the respect of the PRC and Taiwan in the pursuance of its interests in the Asia Pacific region, though, Washington's previous goal of preventing the development of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait in which it would be involved has been directly questioned by the recent signing of the ECFA.

Even if Beijing says its military buildup is no threat to regional peace and stability, Peter Brookes, senior fellow at The Heritage Foundation's National Security Affairs committee, cited the then-U.S. Director of National Intelligence, Dennis Blair, as saying that Beijing's international behavior is driven by, among other things, a "longstanding ambition to see China play a role of a great power in East Asia and globally."¹⁸ The current rapprochement between China and Taipei could therefore require that Washington keeps pace with a new pressing goal: maintaining its political and economic influence in Asia in view of China's accession to the superpower status.

4. Conceptual Framework

In order to explain why a sequence of events actually occurred — such as U.S. policies in the cross-strait stalemate, a simple description of surrounding contexts may not be sufficient to foresee all the related issues.

¹⁷ Daniel H. Rosen and Zhi Wang, "Deepening China-Taiwan Relations through the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement," Policy brief (Washington: Peterson Institute for International Economics, June 2010), p. 2. [Accessed Online] <http://www.iie.com/publications/pb/pb10-16.pdf>

¹⁸ Peter Brookes, "Why China Worries the Pentagon," Commentary on the National Security and Defense (Washington: The Heritage Foundation, 2009/10/7). [Accessed Online] <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Commentary/2009/10/Why-China-Worries-the-Pentagon>

Political scientists usually develop theories in order to understand the causes of events that occur under a specific international environment. A theory, that is “a set of propositions and concepts that seek to explain a phenomenon by specifying the relationships among concepts,” is therefore the ultimate goal to predict states behavior under a given international system.¹⁹

4.1 Theoretical constraints of the international system

To American scholar John Mearsheimer, there are five main assumptions about the international system. None of these assumptions alone says that states should attempt to gain power at each other expenses. Nonetheless, Mearsheimer claims that when these assumptions are combined together, they depict a world of ceaseless security competition.²⁰

First, great powers are the main actors in the anarchic system represented by world politics. At the opposite of saying that the system is characterized by chaos. Anarchy is the ordering principle, which basically means that there is no central authority or ultimate arbiter that stands above the States. Second, all states possess some offensive military capability, even though that capacity varies among them. Third, states can never be certain about the intentions of other states. While some states are determined to use force to alter the balance of power, other states are satisfied enough with it and therefore do not have any interest in using force. Fourth, the main goal of all states is survival. States seek to maintain their territorial integrity and the authority of their domestic political leaders. Fifth, states are rational actors. In other words, they are capable of coming up with sound strategies that maximize the prospects for survival.

In short, Mearsheimer claims that great powers are trapped into an iron cage because of the anarchic structure of the international system, which pushes each state to increase its power in order to protect itself in the event of an attack.

4.2 Taiwan’s position in the international immunity

Following Mearsheimer classification, it is clear that the United States and China are considered as the main “actors” in the cross-strait issue. Taipei has never been considered an equal player in the game, even if it has some defense and offense capabilities on its own.

¹⁹ Karen Mingst, *Essentials on International Relations* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1999), p. 63.

²⁰ John J. Mearsheimer, “Structural Realism,” *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, Tim Dunne, Milja Kurki and Steve Smith, Eds. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 71-88.

Moreover, it is worth noticing that after 1971, Taipei was not a member of the United Nations or any affiliated international organizations anymore. In other words, we argue that Taipei has been on its own in a complete anarchic system since the 1970s.

Besides, it is obvious that whatever the state of Taipei's relationship with Washington or Beijing, it has never been certain about their respective intentions or interests in using force. On the whole, the cross-Strait issue is therefore a question of security and territorial integrity between rational actors.²¹

5. Literature Review

To Kenneth Waltz, the architecture of the international system forces states to pursue power. In this context, anarchy seems to play the most important role.

5.1 Structural Realism, Anarchy and the International System

According to Charles L. Glaser, structural realism is in fact based on three main assumptions: first, states can be viewed as essentially rational actors; second, states give priority to insuring their security; and, third, states confront an international environment that is characterized most importantly by anarchy.²²

Why is anarchy so important? Hierarchy and anarchy are the two main political ordering principles of the international system. Anarchy suggests a lack of an international authority capable of enforcing agreements, while hierarchy entails relations of super- and subordination among system's parts.²³

As Robert Jervis further puts it, there are no institutions or authorities that can make and enforce international laws, the policies of cooperation that will bring mutual rewards if others cooperate may bring disaster if they do not. In other words:

“[...] States are aware [of this;] anarchy encourages behavior that leaves all concerned worse off than they could be, even in the extreme case in which all states would like to freeze the status quo.”²⁴

²¹ Richard C. Bush, *Untying the Knot: Making peace in the Taiwan Strait* (The Brookings Institution, 2005), p. 81.

²² Charles L. Glaser, “Realists as Optimists: Cooperation as Self-help” in *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (Cambridge: Harvard University, December 1994), p. 50.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Robert Jervis, *Op. Cit.*, p. 167.

5.2 Kenneth Walt and the Study of International Relations

Kenneth N. Waltz has made several important contributions to the study of anarchy in the international system. First, Waltz denies that human nature and the characteristic of domestic regimes best explain states' foreign policy. Compare with Hans Morgenthau, Waltz argues that the structure of the international system actually forces states to pursue power.

Second, in his best known work, "Theory of International Politics" (1979), Waltz also underlines that bipolar systems are more stable than multipolar ones, because they were not highly economically dependent. His main contention is that economic stability increases as oligopolistic sectors narrow. In this logic, a market dominated by a few large firms is to be preferred to one in which many small firms compete because stability is inversely related to efficiency. The reason why two great powers is the optimum number is strategic, not economic

Third, Kenneth Waltz conducts his study according to respective level of analysis. In short, Waltz stresses that political scientist should avoid assembling factors from all levels in an ad hoc and untestable manner. On the contrary, they should assume that the variables that are being examined are the most important ones. He also criticizes parallel arguments on the importance of the nature of the states by showing that states with widely divergent domestic characteristics often behave similarly.

Fourth, Waltz places greatest emphasis on the international system. In "Theory of International Politics," he carefully develops what he began in "Man, the State, and war" (1954): one should start with the structure of the system, which has three elements: First, the ordering principle of the system: if there is a government or authority among "powers," then the system is hierarchical. Otherwise, the system is anarchic. Second, the differentiation principle among the 'units' composing the system: states cannot afford extensive division of labor lest they become dangerously dependent on one another. Third, the power concentration principle: if the power is concentrated in only two states (bipolarity), the system is much more stable than if there are more than two dominant actors.

But, what are the implications of Kenneth Waltz's approach? To begin with, Waltz reconceptualizes the crucial notion of balance of power by clarifying and extending the concept. To the American scholar, it is a mistake to equate effects with intentions.

A “balance of power” in the sense of a system, which is not yet dominated by any state, results in other states or ‘units’ to band together against the state that is making progress towards domination. The implications of this behavior on the conditions under which it occurs have been explored by two of his students, Stephen Walt and Barry Posen.

Stephen Walt stresses that states balance against threats, not against power alone. Although the distribution of power is an extremely important factor, the level of threats is also affected by geographic proximity, offensive capabilities and perceived intentions, and aggressiveness. Barry Posen analyzes the conditions leading states to engage in ‘buck passing,’ that is pushing onto other states the costs of containing the state that threatens their security.

Moreover, Waltz proceeds to a reconceptualization of the notions bipolarity and multipolarity. According to classical theory of international politics, bipolar systems represent those in which actors were divided into two antagonistic camps. As a result, bipolar systems were quite unstable because of the danger that the two camps could be pulled into a war by aggressive or foolish behavior of any of their members.

Waltz structural approach rather defines systems as bipolar when power is concentrated in only two actors. As a result, in a world that is structurally bipolar, the defection of an ally matters less as each superpower knows that the other is its main adversary. This line of argument implies not only that a bipolar world is stable but that collective goods are more likely to be procured when power is concentrated.

6. Methodology: Sources and Process

A historical approach is used to conduct this case study on how the American factor is going to be affected in the post-ECFA cross-strait relations. This also study applies an empirical inquiry on contemporary issues with its real-life context, in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

6.1 Sources classification

Basically, three kinds of sources have been used during the elaboration of this research. First, theoretical works from major authors on ‘realism’ and ‘structural realism’ constitute the author’s primary sources of reference.

The main contributors to the theoretical analysis are Kenneth Waltz, Hans Morgenthau, Glenn Snyder, Jack Snyder, Scott Sagan, Robert Jervis, Thomas Christensen, Aaron Friedberg, David Lampton, Harry Harding, Allen Whiting, Charles Glaser, John Mearsheimer, Robert Keohane, Joseph Nye, Richard C. Bush and Stephen Walt. Both periodicals and non-periodicals were used during the analysis. For reference, the author used periodicals such like *International Security*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Asian survey*, *Orbis* etc. during the conduct of this research. English was the medium used in all those documents.

Second, the author also used secondary sources in order to support the case study analysis. On the one hand, the author gathered Congressional Reports and record transcripts of House Committee Hearings from the United States, and conference reports and case study analyses available on the internet. On the other hand, the author used other non-periodicals sources in both the English and Chinese Languages to complete this study. The main contributors are James Mann, Patrick Tyler, David Lampton, Richard C. Bush, Steve Chan, and Allen Whiting. Through the use of the internet, the author accessed documents from the *Brooking Institution*, the *Heritage Foundation*, the *Rand Corporation*, the *National Policy foundation* and the *Democracy Foundation*.

Third, the author's tertiary sources are composed of interviews and newswire reports. *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *China Times* (中國時報), *Taipei Times*, *United Daily News* (聯合報), *Liberty Times* (自由時報), *Yazhou Zhoukan* (亞洲週刊), *New Taiwan* (新台灣) and *China Post* news reports were accessed directly through the internet. Interviews were also conducted directly in Taipei between December 2005 and June 2007 by the author with former Minister of Foreign Affairs John Jiang (章孝嚴), former Chairman of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Shih Min-teh (施明德), Legislator Ding Shou-zhong (丁守中), and, former Ambassador to United States and the European Union, Chen Chien-jen (陳建仁), among others. These interviews were conducted in English or Chinese.

6.2 Methodological Barriers

Despite these strengths, we have encountered a number of potential methodological problems during the writing of this research. Although several can only partially be alleviated, none presents an insurmountable barrier.

A first potential difficulty is that U.S. policy toward Taiwan has been a controversial issue for American policy for the last 60 years. The Taipei-Washington relationship is however difficult to define and measure with precision without engaging in lengthy historical descriptions. Besides, as Joseph Nye argues, theorists of international relations usually suffer from being in the middle of events, rather than seeing them from the distance. Consequently, it is not surprising in international relations that theories have always been strongly affected by political concerns.²⁵

A second potential difficulty arises from our focus on the cross-Strait issue. It might be argued that adequate understanding of Taipei and Beijing relations requires specialized training and knowledge of unique cultural factors that foreigners usually cannot claim.

Although these considerations are not without merit, they do not present an overwhelming barrier. To compensate for these problems, we have tried to document events and arguments as extensively as possible, relying on the multiple sources mentioned above, which constitute the most widely accepted historical accounts in both English and Chinese languages.

For reference, we will proceed as follows in our demonstration of the development of the American factor in post-ECFA cross-strait relations. In Chapter two, we will develop the notions of anarchy, alliances and balance-of-power according to realist and structural realist theories. In Chapter three, we will begin the task of comparing assumptions and evidence, while in Chapter four; we will proceed to a contradictory analysis of the research results presented in the previous chapter. Finally, our conclusion will be presented in the last chapter of this research. ➡

²⁵ Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Review: Neorealism and Neoliberalism," *World Politics*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (January 1988), p. 235.

Chapter 2: Conceptual framework

Anarchy, Alliances and the Balance of Power in Neorealism

“It is hard to say that there is any longer a particular core to the field [of international relations]... Our field should be basically concerned with the relations between states, and relations between societies and non-state actors to the extent that those relations impinge upon and affect the relations between states. When we go far beyond these domains, we get into areas of sociology, anthropology, and social psychology that are best dealt with by people in those disciplines.”¹

Why political scientists develop theories of international relations? According to Karen Mingst, political scientists develop theories in order to understand the causes of events that occur every day. A simple description of surrounding contexts may not explain why a sequence of events actually occurred. A theory, that is “a set of propositions or concepts that seeks to explain an event, by specifying the relationships among the concepts,”² should be the ultimate tool to describe and predict a phenomenon.

For reference, international relations theories come in a variety of forms but good theories generate groups of testable hypotheses, which are specific statements positioning a particular relationship between two or more variables. In the context of cross-strait relations, we believe that the role of the American factor is best explained once the structure of the system is taken into account. The theory of choice in this respect is structural realism.

¹ A. Jones, “Interview with Kal Holsti” in *Review of International Studies*, 28/3 (London: British International Studies Association) p. 621.

² Karen Mingst, *Op. Cit.*, p. 63.

But, what is structural realism? Where does it come from? Structural realism indicates a partial continuation with the so-called “classical realism,” which has its intellectual roots in the oldest political philosophy of the West: the Greek antiquity. In short, they both recognize the central role of power in politics of all kinds, but also the limitations of power and the ways in which it can readily be made self-defeating.

In this chapter, we introduce the theoretical perspectives of realism and structural realism, since we argue that the latter is a continuation of the former. To begin with, we will describe the essential assumptions of realism, which are found in classical realist thinkers such as Thucydides, St. Augustine, Niccolò Machiavelli or Thomas Hobbes.

Then, we will introduce Morgenthau’s contribution to the study of realism in his major work of international politics, “Politics among Nations.” We will also clarify the distinction between realism and neorealism through Waltz’s work, “Theory of international Politics,” another major work of the twenty century.

Finally, we will assess the work of two former students of Kenneth Waltz. Stephen Walt’s study entitled “The Origins of Alliances” explains how states engage in balancing or bandwagoning behaviors as a result of a threat, while Barry Posen, in his book “The Sources of Military Doctrine,” describes how states react when faced by an external threat.

1. Classical Realist Thinkers

In this first section we are going to underline the basic tenets of realism, which didn’t come out at once. They are the product of a long historical and philosophical tradition that started in the fifth century B.C. when the Athenians began to expand their empire.

1.1 Thucydides’ Account of the Peloponnesian War

Greek tragedians like Thucydides, Aristotle or Plato tend to regard history as cyclical, in the sense that “efforts to build order and escape from fear-ridden worlds, while they may succeed for a considerable period of time, ultimately succumb to the destabilizing effects of actors who believe they are too powerful to be constrained by law and custom.”³

³ Tim Dunne et al., *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 53.

Even though Thucydides (460-390 B.C.) constructed no theories in the modern sense of the term, he is considered as the first theorists of international relations.⁴ On the whole, four essential assumptions of realism are found in Thucydides' work.

First, for Thucydides, the state is the principal actor in war and politics in general. While other actors may participate, they are not important.

“I affirm, then, that you leave many enemies behind you here to go yonder and bring more back with you. You imagine, perhaps, that the treaty which you have made can be trusted; a treaty that will continue to exist nominally, as long as you keep quiet- for nominal it has become, owing to the practices of certain men here and at Sparta- but which in the event of a serious reverse in any quarter would not delay our enemies a moment in attacking us; first, because the convention was forced upon them by disaster and was less honorable to them than to us; and secondly, because in this very convention there are many points that are still disputed. Again, some of the most powerful states have never yet accepted the arrangement at all.”⁵

Second, the state is assumed to be a unitary actor. To Thucydides, once a decision is made to go to war or capitulate, the state speaks and acts with one voice.

“In the face of this great danger, the command of the confederate Hellenes was assumed by the Lacedaemonians in virtue of their superior power; and the Athenians, having made up their minds to abandon their city, broke up their homes, threw themselves into their ships, and became a naval people.”⁶

Third, the decision makers, acting in the name of the state, are assumed to be rational actors. Thucydides stresses that actors make decisions by weighing the strength and weaknesses of various options against the goal to be achieved. Nonetheless, the decision making process leads always to the pursuit of the national interest.

“Make your decision therefore at once, either to submit before you are harmed, or if we are to go to war, as I for one think we ought, to do so without caring whether the ostensible cause be great or small, resolved against making concessions or consenting to a precarious tenure of our possessions.”⁷

Fourth, Thucydides is also concerned with security issues such like protecting the state from enemies both foreign and domestic. A state improves its security by increasing its domestic capacities, building up its economic, and forming alliances with other states.

⁴ Karen Mingst, Op. Cit., p. 70.

⁵ Thucydides (translated by Richard Crawley), *The History of the Peloponnesian War*, p. 213. [Access Online] <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/plpwr10.txt> .

⁶ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷ Ibid., p. 34.

“We must believe that the tyrant city that has been established in Hellas has been established against all alike, with a program of universal empire, part fulfilled, part in contemplation; let us then attack and reduce it, and win future security for ourselves and freedom for the Hellenes who are now enslaved.”⁸

1.2 St. Augustine and Human’s Nature

As mentioned earlier, Thucydides only identified the first four tenets of classical realism. For future reference, six centuries after the end of the Peloponnesian War, a Christian bishop and philosopher, St. Augustine (345-430 A.D.) added another fundamental assumption, claiming that “man is flawed, egoistic, and selfish, although not predetermined to be so.”⁹

“ [217] I acknowledged a perfect man to be in Christ – not the body of a man only, nor, in the body, an animal soul without a rational one as well, but a true man. And this man I held to be superior to all others, not only because he was a form of the Truth, but also because of the great excellence and perfection of his human nature, due to his participation in wisdom.”¹⁰

“ [581] the first man did not fall by his lawless presumption and just sentence; but human nature was in his person vitiated and altered to such an extent, that he suffered in his members the warring of disobedient lust, and became subject to the necessity of dying. And what he himself had become by sin and punishment, such he generated those whom he begot; that is to say, subject to sin and death.”¹¹

1.3 Niccolo Machiavelli and the Role of the Leadership

Drawing from the same implications of man’s flawed nature; Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) argues in *The Prince* that a leader needs to be mindful of threats to his personal security and the security of the state. He further contends that “[because] men, when they receive good from him of whom they were expecting evil, are bound more closely to their benefactor; thus the people quickly become more devoted to him than if he had been raised to the principality by their favors; and the prince can win their affections in many ways, but as these vary according to the circumstances one cannot give fixed rules, so I omit them; but, I repeat, it is necessary for a prince to have the people friendly, otherwise he has no security in adversity.”¹²

⁸ Ibid., p. 29.

⁹ Karen Mingst, Op. Cit., p. 75.

¹⁰ St. Augustine (translated and edited by Albert C. Outler), *Confessions*, p. 76. [Access Online] <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/confessions-bod.html>

¹¹ St. Augustine (Translated by Philip Schaff), *City of God and Christian Doctrine*, p. 214. [Access Online] <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf102.txt>

¹² Niccolo Machiavelli (Translated by W. K. Marriott), *The Prince*, p. 11. [Access Online] <http://www.constitution.org/mac/prince.txt>

Moreover, Machiavelli promotes the use of alliances and various offensive and defensive strategies to protect the state.¹³

“I say that the duke, finding himself now sufficiently powerful and partly secured from immediate dangers by having armed himself in his own way, and having in a great measure crushed those forces in his vicinity that could injure him if he wished to proceed with his conquest, had next to consider France, for he knew that the king, who too late was aware of his mistake, would not support him. And from this time he began to seek new alliances and to temporize with France in the expedition which she was making towards the kingdom of Naples against the Spaniards who were besieging Gaeta. It was his intention to secure himself against them [...].”¹⁴

1.4 Thomas Hobbes and Anarchy

Finally, the central tenet of realism, introduced by Thomas Hobbes (1588-1677) and accepted by almost all realist theorists, is that states exist in an anarchic international system. Hobbes argues that just as individuals in the state of nature have the responsibility and the right to preserve themselves, so too does each state in the international system.

“And because the condition of man is a condition of war of every one against every one, in which case every one is governed by his own reason, and there is nothing he can make use of that may not be a help unto him in preserving his life against his enemies; it followed that in such a condition every man has a right to every thing, even to one another's body. And therefore, as long as this natural right of every man to every thing endured, there can be no security to any man, how strong or wise so ever he be, of living out the time which nature ordinarily allowed men to live.”¹⁵

2. Hans Morgenthau and the Balance of Power

Comparatively Hans Morgenthau (1904-1980) does limit his analysis of international affairs to the search of single paradigms. To him, the task of a theory of international politics is to determine and classify the historical patterns of human activity resulting from the struggle for power between states. Morgenthau argues that the fact such patterns exists, and can be discovered beneath the contingent elements of historical practice, makes a theory, as opposed to a narrative history, possible. In other words, Morgenthau claims that the difference between theory and history is simply one of form rather than substance. The possibility of empirical theory thus presupposes the existence of some historical continuity in international politics.

¹³ Karen Mingst, Op. Cit., p.75.

¹⁴ Niccolo Machiavelli, Op. Cit., p. 11.

¹⁵ Tomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p. 49. [Access Online]
http://www.infidels.org/library/historical/thomas_hobbes/leviathan.html

“International politics embraces more than recent history and current events. The observer is surrounded by the contemporary scene with its ever shifting emphasis and changing perspectives. He cannot find solid ground on which to stand, or objective standards of evaluation, without getting down to fundamentals that are revealed only by the correlation of recent events with the more distant past and the perennial qualities of human nature under lying both.”¹⁶

2.1 Relations Between Individuals and Relations Among Nations

In Morgenthau’s view, relations between nations are not, essentially different from the relations between individuals. They are only relations between individuals on a wider scale.¹⁷ Consequently, to understand the behavior of states, it is necessary to begin with individual behaviors as an explanation.

“[...] Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. In order to improve society it is first necessary to understand the laws by which society lives. The operation of these laws being impervious to our preferences, men will challenge them only at the risk of failure.”¹⁸

But, if domestic and international contexts of social and institutional “relations” are subordinate determinants of state behavior, on what basis can one justify a particular characterization of “human nature” as good or evil?

To Hans Morgenthau, the importance to understand human nature is a precondition to analyze relations among and within states. First, Morgenthau believes that all politics is a struggle for power because the political man is by nature a selfish creature with an insatiable urge for power. Like St. Augustine previously asserted, man is utterly evil. Second, Morgenthau justifies the previous assumption, both in revealing the intellectual poverty of the nineteenth-century liberal belief in progress, based on an optimistic view of man, and in providing the basis for a full-blown grand theory of international politics.

“The nineteenth century was led to the depreciation of power politics by its domestic experience. The distinctive characteristic of this experience was the domination of the middle classes by the aristocracy. By identifying this domination with political domination of any kind, the political philosophy of the nineteenth century came to identify the opposition to aristocratic politics with hostility to any kind of politics.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985 [6th Edition]), p. 19.

¹⁷ Martin Griffiths, *Realism, Idealism and International Politics: A Reinterpretation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 37.

¹⁸ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Op. Cit.*, p. 4.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 41.

Given these constraints, Morgenthau asserts that at the domestic level, his ideal state enjoys a legitimate monopoly of violence. The latent but ever-present threat of punishment backed up by law and a network of societal norms, provides a basis for domestic order and stability. At the international level, however, similar constraints on the use of force are much weaker. In this context, Morgenthau points out that morality and reason must be differentiated.

2.2 Autonomy of the Politics, Morality and Power

It is worth noting that Morgenthau considers “politics” as an autonomous sphere of social life in which success is ultimately dependent on the use of power to dominate others. Accordingly, morality and reason should be subordinate instruments in the international arenas.

“Politics is a struggle for power over men, and whatever its ultimate aim may be, power is its immediate goal of acquiring, maintaining and demonstrating it.”²⁰

“Intellectually, the political realist maintains the autonomy of the political sphere, as the economist, the lawyer, the moralist maintain theirs.”²¹

Political autonomy thus arises from man’s inevitable failure to reconcile ‘the rules of the political art’ with ethics and morality. In other words, political autonomy denies men’s human will because although men can recognize their own sinfulness, they can never, as political actors, avoid it.²² Yet, if politics is an autonomous sphere of social life, does it mean that reason and morality are merely instruments for attaining power? Clearly, Morgenthau distinguishes between a transcendent morality and a culturally specific set of ethical rules. Because international politics is a realm of perpetual conflict, in which my gain is your loss, there is an absolute contradiction between the ‘laws’ of politics and ethical norms.

“Realism maintains that universal moral principles cannot be applied to the actions of states in their abstract universal formulation, but that they must be filtered through the concrete circumstances of time and place. The individual may say for himself: “*Fiat justitia, pereat mundus*’ (Let justice be done even if the world perish), but the state has no right to say so in the name of those who are in its care.”²³

On the other hand, the concept of power, which establishes the autonomy of all politics, is accentuated by the structural context of action between states.

²⁰ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man versus Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1946), p. 196.

²¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Op. Cit., p. 13.

²² Martin Griffiths, Op. Cit., p. 41.

²³ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Op. Cit., p. 12.

Power provides the springboard of action, whilst reason determines both the proximate goals for which states compete, as well as the means to achieve these goals. The function of reason is thus to guide the use and purpose of power in a prudent selection and pursuit of interests define in terms of power. In short, Morgenthau asserts that power is an end in itself, since it is the sole determinant of state behavior: “International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim.”²⁴

2.3 International Politics and the Balance of Power

Finally, although a theory of international politics is equally applicable to all states, it is only directly concerned with the behavior of the most powerful ones in generating propositions about the international system. This is simply because not all states have enough power to affect the functioning of the system, but because only the most powerful states determine the character of international politics at any time.

“[...] it is no exaggeration to say that the very structure of international relations [...] has tended to become a variance with, and in large measure irrelevant to, the reality of international politics. While the former assumes the ‘sovereign equality’ of all nations, the latter is dominated by an extreme inequality of nations, two of which are called superpowers because they hold in their hands the unprecedented power of total destruction, and many of which are called ministates because their power is minuscule even compared with that of the traditional nation states.”²⁵

Therefore, power is not merely a key to distinguish between politics and other modes of human interaction, but also to distinguish between various kinds of states and the activity they engage in internationally. Power is a policy tool.

In this respect, Morgenthau argues that all states seek to maximize their power. He further claims: “We assume that statesmen think and act in terms of interest defined as power, and the evidence of history bears that assumption out.”²⁶ As a result, all foreign policies tend to conform to and reflect one of these three main patterns of activity: First, defending the status quo and maintaining an overall distribution of power; second, trying to change the status quo through imperialist strategies; or third, trying to impress other nations with the extent of one’s power and achieve some prestige.²⁷

²⁴ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Op. Cit., p. 8.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Martin Griffiths, Op. Cit., p. 47.

The outcome of this perpetual struggle for power, among states at the international level is thus called a 'balance of power' In other words; it is "an actual state of affairs in which power is distributed among several nations with approximate equality."²⁸ Such outcome is nonetheless inevitable when each state strives to maximize its power in a context of structural anarchy.

"Two assumptions are at the foundation of all such equilibriums: First, that the elements to be balanced are necessary for society or are entitled to exist and, second, that without a state of equilibrium among them one element will gain ascendancy over the others, encroach upon their interests and rights. [...] Since the goal is stability plus the preservation of all the elements of the system, the equilibrium must aim at preventing any element from gaining ascendancy over the others."²⁹

Ergo, Morgenthau argues that the balance of power and policies aiming at its preservation are not only inevitable but are an essential stabilizing factor in a society of sovereign nations and that the instability of the international balance of power is due not to the faultiness of the principle but to the particular conditions under which the principle must operate in a society of sovereign nations.

However, even though it is inevitable, Morgenthau still stresses that the stability of the system in a balance of power situation depends on the ability and willingness of statesmen to recognize and work with constraints that it imposes on their freedom of action. For instance Hans Morgenthau claims that containment was a good example of balancing behavior. During the cold war, containment was achieved by balancing American power against the Soviet Union. During the 1970s, Henry Kissinger encouraged the classic realist balance of power by supporting weaker powers like China to exert leverage over the Soviets.

3. Kenneth Waltz: Structural Aspects of the Balance of Power

In 1979, Kenneth N. Waltz (1924-) published his "Theory of International Politics," which shows a partial continuation with the so-called "classical realism" of Hans Morgenthau. Like his predecessor, Waltz presents international politics as a realm of necessity and power politics.

"The state among states, it is often said, conducts its affairs in the brooding shadow of violence. Because some states may at any time use force, all states must be prepared to do so — or live at the mercy of their militarily more vigorous neighbors."³⁰

²⁸ Ibid., p. 49.

²⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Op. Cit., p. 189.

³⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Berkeley: University of California, 1979), p. 102.

Yet, Kenneth Waltz claims to deduce the nature of international politics exclusively from certain structural properties of the anarchical environment within which states coexists, rather than from any assumptions about man, or power-maximization premises about states. In short, Waltz claims that insufficient attention was and is paid to the external context of state action as an autonomous determinant of state behavior, since “the prominent characteristic of international politics, however, seems to be the lack of order and of organization.”³¹

3.1 A scientific theory of international relations

Compare with Morgenthau, Waltz claims that theory is purely an instrumental tool. In this respect, he carefully distinguishes between laws and theories as qualitatively distinct kinds of knowledge. On the one hand, laws are observable propositions which establish relations between variables. Waltz thus points out that a law is “based not simply on a relation that has been found, but one that has been found repeatedly.”³²

Conversely, if laws describe relations between phenomena, theories explain those relations. Laws and correlations do not describe anything, and their inductive accumulation cannot, by themselves, result in theory.

“[...] facts do not speak for themselves, because associations never contain or conclusively suggest their own explanation, the question must be faced.”³³

A theory therefore explains laws and provides an indispensable link between facts and propositions expressing probabilistic relations between these facts. Waltz further argues that “a theory is a picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity. A theory is a depiction of the organization of a domain and of the connections among its parts.”³⁴

On the other hand, unlike Morgenthau, Kenneth Waltz maintains that theories do not describe reality or make truth-claims. Instead, they simplify reality by artificially isolating certain factors and forces from a multitude of innumerable possible factors that may be relevant to account for a specific range of behavior, and by aggregating disparate elements, according to specified theoretical criteria.³⁵

³¹ Ibid., p. 89.

³² Ibid., p. 1.

³³ Ibid., p. 4.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁵ Martin Griffiths, *Op. Cit.*, p. 43.

The ultimate aim is therefore “to find the central tendency among a confusion of tendencies, to seek the propelling principle [and] to seek the essential factors.”³⁶

Nevertheless, what are the criteria for evaluating competing theories? According to Kenneth Waltz, the criteria for evaluating competing theories are not in terms of truth or falsity, but according to their explanatory utility. For reference, since theories are different from the reality they seek to explain, one cannot distinguish between true and false theories.

“ If truth is the question, then we are in the realm of law, not of theory.”³⁷

Obviously, theories should specify the empirical referents for the concepts contained in their deductive hypotheses, and they should also specify how variables are associated within these hypotheses. Theories themselves cannot be tested directly, but only indirectly through the hypotheses they generate.

“ Rigorous testing of vague theory is an exercise in the use of methods rather than a useful effort to test theory.”³⁸

In this context, what is the validity of a theory? What are the theoretical limits? According to Kenneth Waltz, the validity of a theory depends on its ability to explain and predict a broad range of behavioral patterns but not policy-making processes.

First, regarding the validity of theories, the assumptions made by Waltz about the interests, survival motives and unitary nature of states do not themselves have to be accurate. Waltz recognizes on the contrary that states are not unitary actors at all. However, he argues that these assumptions are the only necessary ones in a systemic theory that tries to explain behaviors as a result of structural conditions rather than state’s foreign policies.³⁹

From a theoretical point of view, as long as most states, including the most powerful, conform to the dictates of anarchy and engage in power-balancing behavior, the assumptions are valid ones.

Second, Waltz also points out that given his strict distinction between levels of analysis, his theory only explains the expected impact of structure on systemic behavior, not policy-making processes.

³⁶ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Op. Cit., p. 10.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 9.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁹ Martin Griffiths, Op. Cit., p. 84.

In other words, Waltz's theory does not explain how specific states will respond to structural conditions in particular historical circumstances. Structure constraints and incentives may sometimes be outweighed by unit-level incentives and constraints because the theory explains similarity of behaviors, not differences.

“The theory leads to many expectations about behaviors and outcomes. From the theory, one predicts that states will engage in balancing behavior, whether or not balanced power is the end of their acts. From the theory, one predicts a strong tendency toward balance in the system. The expectation is not that a balance, once achieved, will be maintained, but that a balance, once disrupted, will be restored in one way or another.”⁴⁰

Finally, how do we test a theory? Once again, Waltz denounces Morgenthau. He rejects the strategy of “successive confirmation of hypotheses” derived from theories. Waltz argues that these do not prove a theory's validity, since there may be historical or future exceptions which may confound it. Waltz also rejects strict falsification criteria, since a theory only gives rise to expectations, which are some what general and indeterminate. So, what does Kenneth Waltz recommend to do?

First, Waltz stresses that tests may be carried on by examining structurally comparable, although not necessarily identical realms.

“Structural theories, moreover, gain plausibility if similarities of behavior are observed across realms that are different in substance but similar in structure, and if differences of behavior are observed where realms are similar in substance but different in structure.”⁴¹

In other words, “reasoning by analogy is permissible where different domains are structurally similar.”⁴²

Second, Waltz also claims that “hard confirmatory tests” should be applied given the problematic nature of behavior which can be inferred from the theory, and therefore the inapplicability of strict falsification.

Unlike Morgenthau, who illustrates his so-called universal laws of the balance of power, Waltz rejects the nineteenth-century period because of the absence of deep ideological cleavages.⁴³

⁴⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Op. Cit., p. 128.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 123.

⁴² Ibid., p. 89.

⁴³ Martin Griffiths, Op. Cit., p. 85.

3.2 Structure, Domestic and International Politics and Anarchy

According to Waltz, the international political system is composed of two related but distinct component parts: a political structure and a set of interacting units — or states. For reference, Waltz assumes that states generate the structure, which is formed through their mutual interaction. Once formed, the structure then influences the behavior of states and therefore outcomes, by constraining states from undertaking certain policies and disposing them towards others.⁴⁴

But, why does the definition of the structure must omit the attributes and relations between units? Waltz argues that this is a precondition set in order to distinguish between changes of structure from changes that take place within it. What Waltz is trying to explain is the kind of behavior which is encouraged by the structure and how much of that behavior is accounted for by the structure and how much is accounted for by unit-level phenomena.

Waltz then defines the international political structure by three formal and positional criteria, which specify how states are arranged within the system.

“Everything else is omitted. Concern for tradition and culture, analysis of the character and personality of political actors, consideration of the conflictive and accommodative processes of politics, description of the making and execution of Policy all such matters are left aside. Their omission does not imply their unimportance. They are omitted because we want to figure out the expected effects Of structure on process and of process on structure. That can be done only if structure and process are distinctly defined.”⁴⁵

Next, Kenneth Waltz provides three criteria to distinguish between domestic and international structures. The first criterion is the principle of “arrangement,” by which the system’s parts relate to one another. Domestic systems are hierarchical but the international system is anarchical. An anarchical system is described as a self-help world.

“None is entitled to command; none is required to obey. [...] Authority quickly reduces to a particular expression of capability.”⁴⁶

The second criterion is the principle of “functional differentiation” between units of the system, which denotes how the subordinate parts within a structure relate to one another in terms of tasks they must perform.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 80.

⁴⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Op. Cit., p. 82.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 88.

Now, given the differences between domestic and international politics arising from the hierarchy of authority relations within states and its absence between them, therefore domestic politics is characterized by specialization, integration and, an extensive division of labor. International politics on the other hand is characterized by its obverse.

The third criterion is the principle of ‘distribution of capabilities’ among its component parts. Waltz claims that “states are alike in the tasks they face, though not in their abilities to perform them.”⁴⁷

Yet, Waltz argues that this threefold definition of political structure is reduced to two in international politics. In other words, the second component is constant over time and because its implications can be inferred from the first criterion (anarchy), it drops out as an independent variable at the international level.

3.3 Structures as Independent Determinants of Behavior

To Kenneth Waltz, the above mentioned structures constrain and dispose behaviors of units for two main reasons: First, the structure is not the agent. Only states are agents in the system. In this respect, structures are merely “a set of constraining conditions,” which select behaviors rather than participate as a concrete actor. After all, the structure cannot be seen, examined or observed directly. Waltz therefore asserts that structures work through indirect effects.

For instance, the author uses the analogy of Adam Smith’s freely formed economic market, which shapes the behavior of firms by rewarding certain patterns of behavior and punishing actors, “through socialization of the actors and through competition among them.”⁴⁸ In other words, Waltz asserts that structures determine behaviors independently of “the characteristics of units, their behavior, and their interactions.”⁴⁹

Second, Waltz also argues that each component part of the structure shapes state behavior and outcomes in international politics. Furthermore, anarchy explains the continuity of state behavior despite procedural unit-level changes.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 96.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 89.

“The enduring anarchic character of international politics accounts for the striking sameness in the quality of international life through the millennia, a statement that will meet with wide assent.”⁵⁰

Within a system whose distribution of capabilities is stable, anarchy is a constant condition that explains continuity, not change. Waltz merely means “to say why patterns of behavior recur, why events repeat themselves, including events that none or few of the actors may like.”⁵¹

The expected effects of anarchy are both economic and political.

3.4 Economic and Political Effects of Anarchy

From an economic perspective, anarchy limits the division of labor between states, and explains the absence of international integration.

“What one might want to do in the absence of structural constraints is different from what one is encouraged to do in their presence. States do not willingly place themselves in situations of increased dependence. In a self-help system, considerations of security subordinate economic gain to political interest.”⁵²

As a result, mutual gains to states that would arise, if the law of cooperative advantage operated across borders, are not achieved.

Moreover, each state also worries about the distribution of possible gains arising out of greater specialization. In short, dependence and vulnerability go hand in hand in a self-help system because “a state also worries lest it become dependent others through cooperative endeavors and exchanges.”⁵³

In practice however, some cooperation does take place between states, and there is of course something of an international division of labor among states but Waltz further claims this distinction is not meant to be descriptively accurate but theoretically useful.

Even though Waltz admits that all societies are already mixed, the nature of these exchanges and the extent of cooperation within them are both limited by the condition of anarchy, and the concomitant need for each state to protect its security, autonomy and control.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 66.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 69.

⁵² Ibid, p. 107.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 106.

“Hierarchic elements within international structures limit and restrain the exercise of sovereignty but only in ways strongly conditioned by the anarchy of the larger system. The anarchy of that order strongly affects the likelihood of cooperation, the extent of arms agreements, and the jurisdiction of international organizations.”⁵⁴

From a military and strategic perspective, ‘balance of power’ is the main effect of anarchy on military and strategic matters as described by Kenneth Waltz, who claims that “If there is any distinctive political theory of international politics, balance-of-power theory is it.”⁵⁵ For reference, Morgenthau claims that the struggle for power is a given in international politics because the goal of each state is to maximize its power, either as an end in itself or as a means to an end.⁵⁶ This is also called the ‘power maximization’ assumption: “International politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power. Whatever the ultimate aims of international politics, power is always the immediate aim.”⁵⁷

Conversely, Kenneth Waltz argues that states seek their own preservation at a minimum and at a maximum, drive for universal domination in a condition where two or more states co-exist. Balance of power politics thus prevail whenever two requirements are met: “that the order is anarchic and that it be populated by units wishing to survive.”⁵⁸ Waltz’s balance of power theory derives from the structure of anarchy, as the author assumes that states wish to survive as autonomous entities, rather than maximize their power. Waltz does not appeal to internationally accepted rules of the game, state rationality, or elite farsightedness. Kenneth Waltz argues furthermore that the attribution of behavioral patterns to motives and domestic or economic systems is unnecessary and irrelevant. To justify this, he invokes the analogy of freely formed economic markets.

“In a purely competitive economy, everyone’s striving to make a profit drives the profit rate downward. Let the competition continue long enough under static conditions, and everyone’s profit will be zero. To infer from that result that everyone, or anyone, is seeking to minimize profit, and that the competitors must adopt that goal as a rule in order for the system to work, would be absurd.”⁵⁹

In Waltz’s view, the process of power balancing is an intended consequence arising from the constraints of the system’s structure.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 115-116.

⁵⁵ Ibid., pp. 117.

⁵⁶ Martin Griffiths, *Op. Cit.*, p. 60.

⁵⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 31.

⁵⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, *Op. Cit.*, p. 121.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 120.

Its operation requires only two rival states, which maintain equilibrium through enhancing their own domestic capabilities. With three or more state dominating the system, the balancing process becomes more complex. External means, such as alliances, are thus added to compensate for internal strengthening.

3.5 Anarchy and Change

If anarchy explains the continuity of behaviors such like the balance of power, what happens if there is unit-level change along the process?

Because anarchy is constant over time, which makes sense given the recurring behavior patterns of states, Waltz needs to explain the variations at the unit level in the system. In this respect, Waltz asserts that the ‘distribution of capabilities’ is the second structural component of international politics.⁶⁰

“Anarchic systems are transformed only by changes in organizing principle and by consequential changes in the number of their principal parties.”⁶¹

For the record, Waltz does not intend to explain why the number of states varies—i.e. the rise and fall of great powers over time, he is only interested in the consequences of these variations on the stability of system. Stability is therefore defined as follow.

“To say that an international-political system is stable means two things: first, that it remains anarchic; second, that no consequential variation takes place in the number of principal parties that constitute the system. ‘Consequential’ variations in number are changes of number that lead to different expectations about the effect of structure on units.”⁶²

Now, for the sake of stability or peace, should we prefer should we prefer a world of two great powers or a world of several or more? To answer this question Waltz proceeds in two steps.

First, and once again by analogy, Waltz compares the stability of different oligopolistic markets. His main contention is that “economic stability increases as oligopolistic sectors narrow.”⁶³ In this context, stability does not mean peace but merely structural continuity in the number of principle firms.

⁶⁰ Martin Griffiths, *Realism, Idealism and International Politics*, Op. Cit., p. 87.

⁶¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Op. Cit., p. 161.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 161-162.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 134.

In other words, a market dominated by a few large firms is to be preferred to one in which many small firms compete. What benefit firms does not necessarily benefit consumers. Stability is often inversely related to efficiency, product quality and low prices, but it all benefit for the firms: “International-political systems are judged more by the fate of the units than by the quantity and quality of their products.”⁶⁴ Second, Walt tries to be more precise in specifying the optimum number of dominant states in the system. The reason why two great powers is the optimum number is strategic, not economic. Stability is defined as peace, or the absence of war among great powers. In complete contrast to Morgenthau, who believes that contemporary bipolarity is the most unstable balance of power, Waltz claims the opposite. What does it mean? Waltz’s claim rests upon his argument that the balance of power operates differently in multipolar than bipolar systems. In a multipolar system, states rely on alliances to maintain their security. However, such a system is inherently unstable.

“In multipolar systems there are too many powers to permit any of them to draw clear and fixed lines between allies and adversaries and too few to keep the effects of defection low. With three or more powers flexibility of alliances keeps relations of friendship and enmity fluid and makes everyone’s estimate of the present and future relation of forces uncertain. So long as the system is one of fairly small numbers, the actions of any of them may threaten the security of others.”⁶⁵

Consequently, there is always a danger of miscalculation and defection between alliance partners but during the cold war for example, the United States and the Soviet Union did not depend on anyone else to protect themselves.

“Internal balancing is more reliable and precise than external balancing. States are less likely to misjudge their relative strengths than they are to misjudge the strength and reliability of opposing coalitions. Rather than making states properly cautious and forwarding the chances of peace uncertainty and miscalculations cause war. In a bipolar world uncertainty lessens and calculations are easier to make.”⁶⁶

4. Stephen Walt: Alliance Politics and the Balance-of-Threat

Regarding the formation of alliances in a balance-of-power configuration, Hans Morgenthau claims that given the power maximization assumption, whether or not a nation shall pursue a policy of alliances is a matter of expediency, not principle.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 137.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 168.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Op. Cit., p. 201.

Morgenthau thus believes that if a state is strong enough to hold on its own unaided or that the burden of the commitments resulting from the alliance is likely to outweigh the advantages expected, it will shun alliances.

Conversely, Kenneth Waltz argues that a balance-of-power theory should be exclusively based on a distribution of capabilities principle. In Waltz's words, "Secondary states, if they are free to choose, flock to the weaker side; for it is the stronger side that threatens them. On the weaker side, they are both more appreciated and safer, provided, of course, that the coalition they join achieves enough defensive or deterrent strength to dissuade adversaries from attacking."⁶⁸

Yet, Stephen Walt underlines that states form alliances to balance against threats and not power only.⁶⁹ Although power is an important part of the equation, it is not the only one. Walt therefore asserts that states tend to ally with or against the foreign power that poses the greatest threat. Stephen Waltz calls it the 'balance-of-threat' theory.

4.1 States' Behavior in a Balance-of-Threats Theory

Stephen Walt suggests that states ally to balance against threats rather than against power alone. Although the distribution of power is an important factor, Walt argues that the level of threat is also affected by geographic proximity, offensive and aggregate capabilities, and perceived intentions.

When confronted by a significant external threat, Stephen Walt therefore stresses that states may either balance or bandwagon. Walt describes balancing as allying with others against the prevailing threat, while bandwagoning refers to alignment with the source of danger. In other words, balancing or bandwagoning are accurately viewed as a response to threats.

When do states choose to balance or bandwagon?

According to the balance-of-threat theory, states form alliances in order to prevent stronger states powers from dominating them. In other words, states join alliances to protect themselves from states or coalitions whose superior resources could pose a threat.

⁶⁸ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Op. Cit., p. 127.

⁶⁹ Stephen M. Walt, *The origins of Alliances* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1987), p. 17.

Obviously, states would place their survival at risk if they failed to curb a potential hegemon before it becomes too strong. Consequently, to ally with the dominant power or bandwagon means placing one's trust in its continued benevolence.

To the contrary, states would increase their influence within a new alliance if they chose to join the weaker side or balance. In this respect, balancing increases one's influence because of the other party need for assistance.

4.2 Factors Influencing the Level of Threat

Stephen Walt identifies four factors affecting the level of threat: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and aggressive intentions.

First, aggregate power refers to a state's resources. The greater these resources, a potential threat it can pose to others. The total power states can wield is thus an important component of the threat they pose to others.⁷⁰

Although power can pose a threat, it can also be prized. States with great power have the capacity to either punish enemies or reward friends. By itself, a state's aggregate power may provide a motive for balancing or bandwagoning.

Second, offensive power describes the ability to threaten other states. Although it is closely related to aggregate power, it is not identical. Stephen Walt argues that states with large offensive capabilities are more likely to provoke an alliance than those that are incapable of attacking because of geography, or military posture.⁷¹

Specifically, offensive power is the ability to threaten to sovereign or territorial integrity of another state at an acceptable cost. Yet, the effects of offensive power may vary. The immediate threat that offensive capabilities pose may create a strong incentive for others to balance.

Third, geographic proximity concerns the ability of a state to project its military. States that are nearby pose a greater threat than those that are far away.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 24.

Other things being equal, states are more likely to make their alliance choices in response to nearby powers than in response to those that are distant.⁷² As the aggregate power, proximate threats can lead to balancing or bandwagoning. When proximate threats trigger a balancing response, alliances are likely to occur. Conversely, when a threat from a proximate power leads to bandwagoning, the sphere of influence of this state is likely to increase.

Fourth, aggressive intentions refers to the perceive intentions of an aggressive state. According to Walt, states that are viewed as aggressive are likely to provoke others to balance against them. In this respect, intention not power is crucial.

Indeed, even states with rather modest capabilities may prompt others to balance if they are perceived as especially aggressive. Perceptions of intent are likely to play a crucial role in alliance politics. Thud, the more aggressive or expansionist a state appears to be, the more likely it is to trigger an opposing coalition.

5. Barry Posen and the Buck-Passing Strategy

What should a state do when a particular state does appear especially dangerous? If a vulnerable state may see little hope in resisting against a more powerful state, balancing may seem unwise because one's allies may not be able to provide assistance quick enough. This may be the reason that spheres of influence emerge.

According to balance-of-threat theory, states too close from a country with large offensive capabilities may be forced to bandwagon because balancing alliances are simply not available.

But if the system shapes the behavior of the units composing the system, what are the origins of international confrontations?

Barry Posen indicates that it is anarchy which allows inter-units disputes to arise in international politics. These disputes frequently can be settled only by war. In other words, violence is a constant and omnipresent possibility among states because of anarchy within the international system. Nonetheless, Barry Posen also argues that these violent disputes are influenced by two factors: capacity and will.

⁷² Ibid., p. 23.

5.1 The Origins of War

To Posen, capacity and will are the final arbiters of war in the context of anarchy.⁷³ On the one hand, wars are often won by those states that have the capacity to disarm their adversaries by dint of their superior coalitions, stronger economies, or more efficient military organizations. On the other hand, wars are also won by “superior willingness to pay the money or blood price of waging them.”⁷⁴

Therefore, war measures the relative capability and will of the parties to a dispute, when one side or the other is either completely defeated or signals a willingness to quit. But states do not go to war for its own sake. If an understanding can be achieved in another way, there is no need for each side to measure the power and will of other relative to its own through the medium of war. To Barry Posen, states are mindful of the costs of war, they thus attempt through diplomacy to achieve a mutual understanding of one another’s power and will. If this process fails to produce an agreement on relative power and will, then the task of achieving this ‘measurement’ must fall to war.

5.2 The Number of Great Powers and Buck-Passing Behaviors

Posen argues that states balance in two general ways: through coalition formation and international mobilization. Coalition formation includes alliances of a number of states, while international mobilization refers to the way states try to increase their power on their own.

In this context, the number of great powers in a given system is taken to be an important variable because it affects the measurement of capabilities in a system. According to Barry Posen, the more great powers there are in a political system, the more opportunities to increase the size of a state.⁷⁵ Consequently, Posen stresses that multipolar systems encourage ‘buck passing’ behaviors. In bipolar systems the reverse is the case.

When a particular state does appear especially dangerous, the optimal response is to get some other state to bear the costs of containing it. Thus buck-passing is the preferred response to most threats.

⁷³ Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1984), p. 60.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.


Where there is nobody to pass the buck to, however, most powers prefer to balance against the most threatening state(s) rather than choosing to bandwagon with it. Bandwagoning is risky because allying with a threatening state requires trust in its continued benevolence. Because intentions can change, strong states usually choose to form defensive coalitions to contain most threatening powers, rather than trying to deflect the threat by joining forces with it. ➡





Chapter 3: Ambiguous Ambiguity

Sixty years of Washington-Beijing-Taipei Relations



“[...] the current president has called the relationship with China a strategic partnership. I believe our relationship needs to be redefined as one as competitor. Competitors can find areas of agreement, but we must make it clear to the Chinese that we don’t appreciate any attempt to spread weapons of mass destruction around the world, that we don’t appreciate any threats to our friends and allies in the Far East. This president is one who went to China and ignored our fiends and allies in Tokyo and Seoul. He sent a chilling signal about the definition of friendship.”¹

The governments in Beijing and Taipei both agree that Washington has played an important role in their evolving relationship since the 1940s, though they disagree on the role the United States should play in the cross-strait stalemate.

While China has long warned that the United States has been interfering in China’s internal affairs and encouraging Taiwan’s split from the mainland, Taiwan has expressed a continuing interest for “supply of arms, firm opposition to any use of force in the Taiwan Strait, and avoidance of pressure to negotiate on PRC terms.”²

¹ Governor George W. Bush, Presidential candidate, CNN Transcript, Larry King Live: South Carolina Republican Debate (February 15, 2000), [Accessed Online] <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0002/15/lkl.00.html/>

² Ralph N. Clough, Op. Cit., p. 113.

The question that U.S. policymakers have long been facing is “whether [Washington] can deter China from its declared willingness to use force to achieve political control over Taiwan”³ or deter the self-ruled island to declare independence from the mainland.

1. Strategic Ambiguity in Historical Perspective

For more than 60 years, the U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity has successfully made sure that Washington won't be drawn into a major conflict with Beijing, even though, as result of the same ambiguity, things haven't turned out as well as it might have been expected during bilateral negotiations across the Taiwan Strait since the 1980s.

1.1 The Second World War

From the outset of the Second World War, Washington acted as a buffer between the Chinese nationalist party, the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Communist Party of China (CPC), and entered in an alliance with General Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) in fighting against the Japanese Imperial Army. Serious disagreements over the conduct of the war, however, strained the allies' relationship. Chiang Kai-shek complained that he hardly got everything he wanted from the Americans as he hoped that the U.S. would send troops to fight the Japanese army in China. Conversely, Washington expected Chiang could contribute on his own to the defeat of the Japanese given that the KMT already enjoyed large amounts of American military and financial support.

The U.S. further questioned the KMT's military decision-making, which remained highly political, that is, it took into account regional and personal loyalties to Chiang's leadership, instead of taking the advice of American advisors sent by Washington.

By 1949, Washington eventually decided to distance itself from Taipei. Secretary of State Dean Acheson's White Paper on Washington's relations with China marked the beginning of deterioration of U.S. President Harry S. Truman's relationship with Chiang. Accordingly, Washington's continuous military assistance to the KMT regime would waste American money and erode American prestige. Also, Acheson underlined that corruption and incompetence had gravely weakened Chiang's government.

³ Douglas McCready, *Crisis Deterrence in the Taiwan Strait* (Pennsylvania: The Strategic Studies Institute, November 2003), p. 7. [Accessed Online] <http://www.comw.org/rma/fulltext/0311mccready.pdf>

On January 5, 1950, President Truman announced that the U.S. government would not provide military aid or advice to Chinese nationalist forces on Taiwan any further. With no sign of dramatic change in the U.S. position, Washington expected the island would be overrun by a communist invasion in the summer or fall 1950.

“The United States Government will not pursue a course which will lead to involvement in the civil conflict in China. Similarly, the United States government will not provide military aid or advice to Chinese forces in Formosa.”⁴

1.2 Mutual Defense Treaty with Taipei

Six months later, the outbreak of the Korean War, on June 25, 1950, unexpectedly spared the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan from conquest by the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Two days later, Truman ordered the Seventh Fleet to take position in the Taiwan Strait that prevented an assault on the island by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA).

Still, Truman indicated that his support for the KMT regime was limited; he also made clear that Taipei needed to cease attacks against mainland China and that the “future status of Formosa” was not yet settled — a sharp blow to two of the KMT’s core principles.

“[...] I have ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa. As a corollary of this action, I am calling upon the Chinese Government on Formosa to cease all air and sea operations against the mainland. The Seventh Fleet will see that this is done. The determination of the future status of Formosa must await the restoration of security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration by the United Nations.”⁵

Meanwhile, Washington rejected the participation of the ROC military in the United Nations (UN) allied forces in Korea. Even the single mention that Chiang was closely connected with the American defense in Korea was purposely denigrated.

A joint resolution of both houses of the American Congress requested in January 1951 that the United Nations brand the Chinese communists as co-aggressors in the Korean War, as the latter entered the conflict under the slogan “Resist America, Aid Korea” (抗美援朝).

⁴ President Truman’s Statement on U.S. Policy Respecting the Status of Formosa [Taiwan], (January 5, 1950). *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, Basic Documents, II* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), pp. 2448-2449.

⁵ *American Foreign Policy, 1950-1955, Basic Documents, II. President Truman’s Statement on the Mission of the U.S. Seventh Fleet in the Formosa Area* (June 27, 1950), (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1957), p. 2468.

At this point, it became evident that the U.S. had begun to rebuild ties of friendship with the ROC. On February 1, 1953, U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower declared that the Seventh Fleet would not prevent the KMT forces from attacking China anymore. Two months later, on April 2, 1953, Eisenhower reestablished normal diplomatic relations with Taipei.

In the midst of the Cold War, Washington turned a blind eye to Taipei's small-scale military activities against the mainland that would harass the communist regime and "make it appear incapable of policing its own territory."⁶ But, Washington opposed operations that might lead to a major war involving the United States and would divert too much of ROC's strength away from the defense of Taiwan. Beginning in 1954, Chiang started to press Washington for a defense treaty to replace the executive order for the Seventh Fleet protection.

As early as July, Chinese President Mao Zedong (毛澤東) had realized the situation and announced: "We should destroy the chances of the United States concluding a treaty with Taiwan. [...] Our objective is to put pressure on the United States so that [it] will not conclude a treaty."⁷

In August 1954, the Chinese Central Military Commission (中央軍事委員會, CMC) in Beijing instructed the Fujian People's Liberation Army commander that "since the American imperialist government and Chiang's gang are hatching a plot of making a mutual security treaty, you shall resort to a punishing bombardment of the Kuomintang forces on Jinmen [Kinmen] Island (金門)."⁸

But, China's efforts were counterproductive. President Eisenhower reversed his previous opposition to a defense treaty with Taipei, which he signed on December 10, 1954 (中美協防條約). PLA activity continued nevertheless — after a two-year break period, and bombardments restarted on August 23, 1958.

Eisenhower further asked for and received a congressional resolution authorizing U.S. action if offshore islands were attacked in preparation for an invasion of Taiwan and the Penghu Islands (澎湖群島), an archipelago in the Taiwan Strait consisting of 90 small islands.

⁶ Denny Roy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 114.

⁷ Robert S. Ross, *Reexamining the cold war: U.S. China Policy, 1954-1973* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁸ Allen S. Whiting, "China's Use of Force and Taiwan: 1950-1996," *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 103-131.

Taipei-Washington relations were still strained by a major restriction imposed by the U.S.: “The Eisenhower administration had no intentions of overthrowing the CPC regime by force”⁹.

Washington did not want to participate in a counterattack against the mainland along with the KMT forces. For reference, between May 1953 and January 1967, Chiang Kai-shek requested six times for American support in potential ROC military campaigns to retake the mainland, but in each case, Washington refused.¹⁰ In fact, a subtle change of American’s policy toward China had been in the air all along the 1960s. During the presidential terms of U.S. President John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) and Lyndon B. Johnson (1963-1969), the United States did seek an improvement of relations with China.

Compare with his predecessors, Kennedy was more willing to accommodate with the “fact” of the Chinese communist “existence” since the 1950s. Historians point out that one week before he was assassinated in November 1963 President Kennedy expressed hopes that the U.S. would not stick stubbornly to a policy hostile towards mainland China. Two weeks later, on December 12, 1963, the U.S. secretary of state for Far Eastern Affairs probed in a speech an “open door policy” towards China. It was the first official statement on the possibility to reach a rapprochement between Washington and Beijing.¹¹

1.3 Normalization of Sino-American relations

Once elected to the Presidency in November 1968, Richard Nixon also brought forward the slogan of “negotiation instead of confrontation” with communist China.

In Guam in July 1969, he announced three important propositions for American disengagement from Asia: First, Asian nations should be responsible for the future peace and security of Asia. Second, the U.S. would not send again combat personnel and get involved in Asian disputes. And, third, in regard to the Vietnam War, Washington would implement a policy of “*Vietnamization*.”¹²

To reach this goal, President Nixon needed to improve relations with mainland China.

⁹ John C. Kuan, *A Review of U.S.-R.O.C. Relations 1949-1978* (Taipei: The Democracy Foundation, 1992), p. 13.

¹⁰ Denny Roy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 114.

¹¹ New York Times (December 14, 1963) cited in John C. Kuan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 28.

¹² John C. Kuan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 39.

Three years later, the signature of the Shanghai Communiqué (上海公報) in February 1972 had a serious impact on Washington's relations with Taipei.¹³ President Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) was frustrated that superpowers were determining ROC's fate, but he strived for maintaining the flow of military equipment that Taiwan was receiving from the United States.¹⁴

The Shanghai Communiqué, however, impacted the ROC's international recognition and the PRC's strategy towards Taipei. Compare with 1968, when Taipei had diplomatic ties with at least 64 countries, by mid-1975, the number of countries recognizing Taipei had dropped to 26, while the PRC had normalized relations with 112 states. Among others, eight months after the signature of the first Communiqué, Japan established diplomatic relations with the PRC in September 1972, simultaneously breaking all official ties with the ROC.¹⁵

Besides, until 1973, China had continuously declared that since the beginning of the armed rebellion (武裝鬥爭), the CPC should not compromise nor make any concessions to the enemy.

But on February 28, 1973, the CPC unexpectedly launched a new strategy against its longtime adversary, the Kuomintang, which this time was aimed at the overseas Taiwanese opposing the Nationalist regime in Taiwan, and designed for gathering their support around the tragic incident of February 28, 1947. For the occasion, the Chinese leadership organized a memorial ceremony where almost half of 138 guests were from Taiwan.¹⁶

Presidents Nixon and Ford also suggested at one point in their respective negotiations with Beijing that they would strive for the Japanese formula for normalization.¹⁷ However, the difficulty of extracting concessions from Beijing slowed U.S. President Jimmy Carter's progress toward normalization. Eventually, Carter announced Sino-American normalization and the establishment of formal diplomatic relations as of January 1, 1979.

With respect to the island's future, U.S. policy remained deliberately ambiguous. Strategic ambiguity was again aimed at making American policy more flexible and less predictable.

¹³ John H. Holdridge, *Crossing the divide: An Insider's Account of Normalization of U.S.-China Relations* (Boston: Rowman & Little Field, 1997), p. 100.

¹⁴ John H. Holdridge, *Op. Cit.*, p. 99.

¹⁵ Denny Roy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 132.

¹⁶ Yang Pi-chuan [楊碧川]. *Negotiations between the KMT and the CPC [國共談判]* (Taipei: Yichao Publishing Company [一橋出版社], 1998), p. 148.

¹⁷ James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Vintage, 2000), p. 83.

1.4 Taiwan Relations Act

In order to soften the blow of the normalization, Taipei hoped Washington would at least make three concessions: The United States would make a strong commitment to the security of Taiwan, Sino-American normalization would be accompanied by a Beijing's promise not to use force against Taiwan, and Washington would continue U.S. arms sales to Taiwan in the future.

In fact, Taipei only got the third assurance through the Congress's help. On January 26, 1979, the Taiwan Relations Act (與台灣關係法, TRA) prepared the way for America's continuous support, in terms of future arms sales and nongovernmental ties, with Taiwan.

The TRA committed the U.S. to "provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character" and "to make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain sufficient self-defense capability."

The TRA, however, did not provide a definition of the so-called "defensive character" nor the conditions through which the U.S. would respond to a military conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

According to Taiwanese scholar David Lee Da-wei, the Sino-American normalization not only impacted cross-strait relations, but it was in line with Washington's primary goal to prevent war in the Taiwan Strait.

Beijing also hoped to quickly bring Taiwan back into the fold by using the same normalization process, as it was almost entirely carried out by the leadership of the two countries.¹⁸

On the same day China and the U.S. established diplomatic relations on January 1, 1979, the People's Congress chose to address to the leaders of Taiwan in particular (告台灣同胞書) and lectured them about the thirty-year old separation of Taiwan from the mainland, which to PRC standards was regarded as artificial because it went against the desire and the interest of the Chinese population. At this crucial point, we could observe China's official opening for an up-front drive "peaceful unification" (和平統一祖國), as opposed to the previous "liberation of Taiwan" (解放台灣) policy.¹⁹

¹⁸ David Lee Da-wei, *The Making of the Taiwan Relations Act* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 1.

¹⁹ Zhang Ya-chung [張亞中] and Lee Ying-ming [李英明], *Mainland China and Relations across the Taiwan Strait* [中國大陸與兩岸關係概論] (Taipei: Sheng-Chih Books [生智], 2000), p. 210.

As expected, this united front for unification didn't pass unnoticed in Taiwan, but to Chiang Ching-kuo, "roping in the enemies" was nothing but another military tactic in the struggle between the PRC and the ROC. Chiang thus decided to stick to his previous "three noes" policy (三不政策) of no contact, no compromise and no dialogue for the time being.

The issue of the arms sales to Taiwan also resurfaced in the early 1980s as Reagan's election gave new hopes to Taipei that Washington would provide advanced fighter aircrafts to replace the aging, short-range F-5Es.

As expected, Beijing strongly opposed such decision and eventually pushed through the signature of the August, 17 1982 Joint Communiqué on arms sales to Taiwan (中[共]美八一七公報). In this third Communiqué, the U.S. departed from the TRA and provided for an open-ended American commitment based solely on Taiwan's defensive needs.

Washington tried to ease the shock of the Communiqué on Taiwan by alleviating Taipei's fears that it was being "sold out," this time, through the so-called Six Assurances (六點保證) announced in July 1982, one month before the last communiqué.

Chiang Ching-kuo, however, complained bitterly to the apparent promise to phase out arms sales to Taiwan in exchange for an improvement of Sino-American relations. As a result, Chiang was given more forcefully secret assurances that the United States would provide Taiwan with sufficient arms to enable the ROC to maintain an appropriate self-defense capacity against the PRC.²⁰

At the same time, Beijing continued its offensive for peaceful reunification.

On January 11, 1982, Deng Xiaoping (鄧小平) mentioned publicly and for the first time, the concept of "one country, two systems" (一個國家，兩種制度) as a way to settle the issues of Hong-Kong, Macau and Taiwan, without neither destroying China's system, nor changing theirs. Chiang Ching-kuo still remained unmoved by the proposal as it would have sounded like Taipei was unconditionally surrendering to Beijing if the ROC was to accept such an unequal negotiation framework.

²⁰ Alan D. Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and U.S.-PRC Relations* (Washington, D.C.: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003), p. 139.

One and a half years later, Deng enunciated six more principles to add to the “one country, two systems” blueprint for solving the Taiwan question, which further reinforced Taipei perception that Beijing was summoning the ROC to yield the control of Taiwan to the PRC.²¹

Then, on July 24, 1982, Beijing took another policy initiative and tried to contact directly with Chiang Ching-kuo through the intermediary of Liao Chengzhi (廖承志), as both were former classmates in Moscow in the 1930s.²² The letter, entitled “Sending a message to Chiang Ching-kuo” (致蔣經國信) stressed that with the years passing by, one becomes more and more nostalgic, and suggested that Chiang Ching-kuo leaved his mark in the annals of history and renewed the contact with mainland China.

In both cases, Chiang couldn't overcome his tortuous feelings regarding the communists and decided to indefinitely keep with the “three noes” policy of no contact, no compromise and no dialogue, but at the same time, he turned a blind eye to the growing cross-strait trade, which in 1984 already amounted to US\$550 million.²³

Given these previous constraints, China's offensive for a peaceful unification gradually expanded beyond Chiang Ching-kuo. In January 1984, Deng Yingchao (鄧穎超), the widow of Zhou Enlai (周恩來), called this time on both the KMT leadership and the Dang Wai (黨外) leaders — the initiators of Taiwan's future main opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to strive for unification with the mainland. In September 1984, after China and England reached their agreement regarding Hong Kong, Zhao Ziyang (趙紫陽) and Deng Yingchao appealed to all the Taiwanese compatriots to avoid the catastrophe of an armed conflict.

After President Chiang Ching-kuo passed away, on January 13, 1988, it was one more time the China side, which tried to establish contact with Taipei. On February 5, Nan Huaijin (南懷瑾)²⁴ contacted directly President Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) and expressed his hope that he could help with the cross-strait stalemate — Nan and Lee eventually met two years later in Taipei.

²¹ Deng Xiaoping's Six Conceptions for the Peaceful Reunification were first stated during a meeting with an American scholar, professor Yang Liyu from Seton Hall University on June 26, 1983, see for reference Xinhua net: <http://www.chinataiwan.org/web/webportal/W5096185/Uadmin/A5113228.html>

²² Member of the Politburo and Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (1908-1983)

²³ Yang Pi-chuan, Op. Cit., p. 152.

²⁴ Nan Huaijin, a national literature master with profound and original understanding to Buddhism theory.

Actually, when Lee Teng-hui assumed office of chairman of the KMT in July 1988, the new president immediately knew that he would have to rely on his personal initiatives to consolidate his authority. From the outset, he played the same old tune of the “three principles of the people and the unification of China” (三民主義統一中國) and restated that he opposed the independence of Taiwan, but at the same time, he also started to push for the Kuomintang to readjust its China policy.

Given the previous fiasco of publicly inviting Chiang Ching-kuo to accept the “one country, two systems” framework, which was considered in Taipei like an open summon to surrender, Beijing and Taipei conjointly opted this time for the development of a secret channel of communication in order to evade the general animosity and reinforce mutual trust.

Between December 1990 and August 1992, nine secret meetings in Hong Kong between cross-strait emissaries — organized through the intermediary of Nan Huaijin — played a major role in bringing Taipei and Beijing back to the negotiation table.²⁵

During these various encounters, both parties touched upon far flung issues ranging from the cooperation against the cross-strait mafias to the new name for Taiwan’s participation in the WTO.

The most important aspect of these discussions was in fact their deep political nature. According to the former secretary-general of Taiwan’s National Security Council (國家安全會議), Su Chi (蘇起), Taiwan representative Su Zhicheng (蘇志誠) explained to its Chinese counterpart each and every of President Lee’s policy initiatives during these meetings.

Topics ranged from Lee’s position regarding the Taiwan independence movement, the suppression of the “mobilization period to stop the rebellion in China” (動員勘亂時期), the framework governing the National Unification Guidelines, the National Unification Council (國統綱領與國統會), the Mainland Affairs Office (陸委會) and the Straits Exchange Foundation (海基會), or the proposition for the signature of a peaceful agreement between the ROC and the PRC.²⁶

²⁵ These meetings were brought up to light in a special report of *Business Weekly* in July 2000: Wei Chengzhi [魏承思], “The Lee Teng-hui Era: The Real Story about of the Nine Secret Meetings” [李登輝時代：兩岸九度密談實錄], *Business Weekly*, No 661 [商業周刊—第 661 期] (July 24, 2000), pp. 60-94.

²⁶ Su Qi [蘇起], *The Danger Becomes Green: From the Two States Theory to One Country on Each Side* [危險邊緣：從兩國論到一邊一國] (Taipei: 天下文化 [Tianxia Culture], 2003), p. 14.

In return, the Chinese envoy suggested that both parties signed a “three stops” agreement (三停止) that would prevent military, commercial or political confrontations, and hold direct negotiations on the unification question.

1.5 F-16 Arms sales and Taiwan Strait crisis

U.S. President George H. W. Bush’s decision of selling 150 advanced aircrafts (F-16) to Taiwan in September 1992 had serious consequences to cross-strait relations, as well as Sino-American relations throughout the 1990s.

The decision itself lied in the President uphill battle for re-election in 1992 and the importance of the State of Texas, where General Dynamics produced the advanced F-16 fighters that Taiwan had been seeking to buy for a decade.²⁷

According to Alan D. Romberg, however, the decision itself was highly political as it changed ten years of American policy towards Taiwan. “The political dimension of the sale was clearly manifest in the decision to build new planes over a period of several years, rather than immediately supply existing aircrafts, even as a temporary measure, to fill any alleged fighter gap.”²⁸

The consequences were as follow. Following the F-16 sale, Washington and Beijing both lost a measure of confidence in the commitments previously made. The Chinese saw the U.S. treating the August 17 strictures as disdain – since whatever American commitment to China, Washington could carry on with a sale anyway – while Washington felt that it could “get away with” such behavior – since China “had little choice.”²⁹

The F-16 sale had also an important consequence on Taiwan’s mainland China policy as it bolstered Lee Teng-hui’s position in any future negotiations with China.³⁰ Although Lee’s successful secret diplomacy strategy led to the important “unofficial” meetings between the PRC and ROC senior public figures, Wang Daohan (汪道涵) and Koo Chen-fu (辜振甫) in Singapore in April 1993, the very foundations of Taiwan-China relationship were also shaken.³¹

²⁷ James Mann, *Op. Cit.*, p. 254.

²⁸ Alan D. Romberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 151.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

³⁰ James Mann, *Op. Cit.*, p. 254.

³¹ For a discussion on the Koo-Wang meeting of April 1992, see Huang Tian-cai [黃天才], “Longing for the river to clear and create a win-win situation” [期盼雙贏俟河之清] in *Plum Flower Overcome Winter Cold: Koo Zhen-nan Memoirs* [勁寒梅香：辜振南人生紀實] (Taipei: 聯經 [Linking Group], 2005), pp. 270-283.

Beijing's response to the F-16 arm sales came without delay in August 1993, with the PRC's first Taiwan White paper. The document was directly related to the American decision to sell the warplanes to Taiwan. It also aimed at Taipei's "pragmatic diplomacy" campaign to increase its international space both in bilateral relations with other countries and in broader international community.³²

Also, Clinton's China policy review of September 1994, designed to fine tune the ground rules governing day-to-day dealings with Taiwan, was another milestone on the impact of Washington's strategic ambiguity on the cross-strait stalemate. The review further suggested to increase dialogue between Taipei and Washington as the U.S. aimed to work "more actively" to support Taiwan's participation in international organizations — the United States would still withhold support for Taiwan's membership in organizations such the United Nations (UN), which admits only states.

The review also made clear that the arms sales to Taiwan, based on requirements of the TRA and on adherence to the 1982 Communiqué were to continue, while Taiwan's top leaders — that is the president, vice-president, premier and vice-premier were allowed "normal transits" in the United States. But, no public activities were allowed to the top leadership during their transit.³³

According to Alan D. Romberg, "Clinton administration [still] strongly opposed attempts by the Congress to legislate visits by top leaders of the Republic of China to the United States."³⁴ The scholar quotes Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord as saying that "such legislation would remove one of the most important commitments at the highest levels of the U.S. government over many administrations."³⁵

But it was already too late. Lee Teng-hui was determined to overturn the U.S. administration's position. He then orchestrated a broad-based, well-financed campaign not only in Congress but also throughout the United States to allow him to visit his Alma matter University in 1995. Through the help of the Washington Lobby firm Cassidy and Associates, Lee was awarded a visa, which President Clinton endorsed on May 22, 1995, just eight months after the release of the Taiwan policy review.

³² Denny Roy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 212.

³³ Alan D. Romberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 158.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Following President Lee Teng-hui's Cornell visit in June 1995, Beijing undertook various actions which all displayed its strong disagreement with Washington. China also recalled its ambassador in Washington and conducted significant military exercises involving missiles launches and live-fire tests in August 1995 and March 1996.

1.6 'Three noes' policy vs. 'State-to-state' theory

In the round-up to the Clinton-Jiang October 1997 meeting, where Washington and Beijing tried to mend their differences following Lee Teng-hui's visit to Cornell University. Beijing successfully pressed for a comprehensive statement of U.S. policy toward Taiwan.

Washington then announced publicly, officially, and for the first time that it did not support Taiwan independence.³⁶ At the same time, Washington also emphasized that it is important for the U.S. that the issue between China and Taiwan be resolved peacefully.

Later, in Shanghai in June 1998, Clinton reaffirmed the past principles of U.S. policy and asserted that the United States does not support "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan," it does not support Taiwan independence, and, it does not support Taiwan's membership in international organizations for which statehood is a prerequisite.³⁷

Even though the two sides of the Taiwan Strait were able to move forward with an informal round of Koo-Wang talks in October 1998, in Shanghai, Lee Teng-hui made an important statement regarding the ROC-PRC relationship in July 1999. He stated that since the amendments of the ROC constitution in 1991, the ROC-PRC relationship was of a "state-to-state" nature, which set off another hail of recriminations in China.³⁸

"If peace and stability are to be maintained in the Taiwan Strait area, the perceptions underpinning policies involving Taipei and Beijing must be more firmly grounded in reality than in ideological wishful thinking. Only then can the international community faithfully take into account the full significance of democracy on Taiwan."³⁹

³⁶ Wang Ming-yi [王銘義], *Dialogue and Confrontation: Taiwan and China Political Bickering* [對話與對抗：台灣與中國的政治較量] (Taipei: Tian Xia Culture [天下文化], 2005), p. 210.

³⁷ Richard C. Bush, *Untying the Knot: Making peace in the Taiwan Strait* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2005), p. 247.

³⁸ Alan D. Romberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 187.

³⁹ Lee Teng-hui, *Understanding Taiwan: Bridging the Perception Gap. Foreign Affairs* (November/December 1999).

1.7 Washington-Beijing-Taipei relations in the 21st century

The first one and half year in office of U.S. President George W. Bush marked another tilt towards less ambiguity in the cross-strait stalemate. Compare with President Clinton, which described China as a “strategic partner,” President Bush stressed from the outset of his presidency that China should be considered a “strategic competitor.”

On April 23, 2001, President George W. Bush then offered Taiwan the largest arms package since the 1992 sale of F-16 fighters. Even though the Aleigh Burk-class destroyers and the Patriot-3 anti-missile systems were temporary denied to the island, Bush approved several other weapons systems that China strongly protested against: eight submarines, twelve P-3C Orion anti-submarine patrol aircrafts and four second Kidd-class missile destroyers, submarine and surface-launched Harpoon anti-ship missiles, as well as new torpedoes in order to help Taiwan against China’s anti-access and naval blockade strategies.⁴⁰

Moreover, on June 13, 2001, the Bush administration made for the first time, three propositions in order to initiate a dialogue across the Taiwan Strait and suggested that the two sides of the Strait should resume direct dialogue, address economic issues in priorities and increase understanding in order to enhance military trust.

These policy initiatives were noteworthy for the cross-strait issue for various reasons.

On the one hand, the April sale (estimated US\$7 billions) was another clear violation of the Sino-U.S. Communiqué of 1982 that requested the United States to gradually reduce its arms sales to Taiwan from 1979 level in both quantitative and qualitative terms. Besides, it was the first time that offensive weapons were included. Previous administrations deemed submarines offensive rather than defensive weapons, which would constitute the source of the understanding with Beijing.⁴¹

On the other hand, the June 2001 political initiatives were also a clear rejection of Beijing request that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have political negotiation or dialogue under the one-China principle.

⁴⁰ Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan: Cross-Strait Relations under Chen Shui-bian* (Singapore: Institute of South-east Asian Studies, 2002), p. 98.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

During his March 2001 visit, Chinese Vice-Premier Qian Qichen (錢其琛) told the White House once again that President Jiang Zemin (江澤民) had invited President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) to visit China but under the one-China principle.⁴²

On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, however, President Chen quickly perceived President George W. Bush's new stance on China, which rather marked a clear balance with the Clinton's administration's allegedly pro-China stance. In the mean time, Chen undertook convergent policy initiatives with the interests of the United States.⁴³

First he discarded several of the troublesome tactics previously employed by President Lee Teng-hui. He tried to establish good communication channels with the Bush administration by consulting before hand with the American Institute in Taiwan (美國在台協會, AIT) or the State Department regarding the content of key public statements.

Upon assuming office on May 20, 2000, President Chen also signaled that he would exercise moderation and restraint and not provoke a crisis with Beijing by pressing for formal independence. That was the nature of the "Five No's" policy (四不一沒有政策) of his inaugural address.

The president also courted the Bush administration by exercising considerable restraint on several contentious issues, such as the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act (TSEA) promoted by some members of Congress. At the same time, he intentionally kept a low profile during his first "transit stop" visit to the United States in August 2000 even though President George W. Bush was also determined to restore "dignity" in the U.S. treatment of Taiwan leaders. In comparison, his May-June transit of 2001, enjoyed a much higher profile and was of longer duration.

Yet, starting in 2002, President Chen began to overestimate his ability to generate increased domestic political support by pressing forward with efforts to "consolidate" Taiwan's independent status. For example, in April 2002, Chen's government repeatedly called for the establishment of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the United States, Japan and South Asian Countries and at the same time attempted to reduce Taiwan's growing economic dependence on the mainland.

⁴² Ibid., p. 97.

⁴³ Michael D. Swaine, "Taiwan's Management of Relations with the United States during the first Chen Shui-bian administration," *Harvard-SOAS Conference* (May 5, 2005), p. 11.

Then, while preparing for his reelection bid, President Chen also appealed to the more radical elements of his pro-independence political base. He then tried to take advantage of what he regarded as an unprecedented level of U.S. support for Taiwan by undertaking actions apparently intended to consolidate Taiwan's sovereign and independent status.

Chen first started to push more energetically for legislation in support of a national referendum on several domestic issues and promoted the notion of using a referendum to approve a new constitution that would more accurately reflect Taiwan's status as a sovereign state. On the other hand, he continuously downplayed AIT director's comments as somehow unrepresentative of President George W. Bush's position.

According to Taiwan scholar Philip Yang, strategic ambiguity was formerly regarded as the major security policy in dealing with the defense of Taiwan because "weapons sales and military coordination are crucial to enhancing Taiwan's self-defense capability and important in balancing the PLA's threat or use of force."⁴⁴

To the Bush administration, however, arms sales to Taiwan were clearly intended to "*enhance Taiwan's self defense capability, increase U.S.-Taiwan military linkage and demonstrate a credible deterrence*"⁴⁵ against possible actions from the PLA. When Beijing complained about the shift in policy, the Bush administration stood firm on its decision.

With the Sino-American relationship entering a new era of cooperation after 9/11, the previous shift to single deterrence ended in favor of a cooperation on the international, East Asian and bilateral levels. At the regional level, Beijing authorities were also thanked for helping Washington in dealing with North Korea.

2. The U.S. objectives in the Cross-Strait Stalemate

With the quickly improving cross-strait relations and the disappearance of the dilemma of deterrence, the core element of strategic ambiguity, preventing a conflict across the Taiwan Strait, has been gradually changing. The new outcome could now require the United States to reevaluate its policies given China's planned accession to the superpower status.

⁴⁴ Philip Yang, Op. Cit., p. 210.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

2.1 Commitment to Taiwan Defense

Since normalization, American commitment to Taiwan's security has been predicated on encouraging the expansion of mutually beneficial cross-strait cooperation and avoiding actions that could compel Washington's to choose between allowing Taiwan to be subjugated by military force or intervening to prevent it. As long as peace and stability could be preserved in the Taiwan Strait, Brett V. Benson and Emerson M. S. Niou of Duke University remark that strategic ambiguity is "*the long-standing U.S. dual deterrence policy toward the security issue in the Taiwan Strait.*"⁴⁶

"At its most basic level, strategic ambiguity aims "at avoiding giving either China or Taiwan a blank check" in their attempt to resolve their ongoing dispute over the official status of Taiwan. The conflict between the PRC and the ROC consists in a fundamental disagreement about the form that a "one-China" policy should take."⁴⁷

According to the two scholars, Washington plays a crucial role in the cross-strait stalemate because "*if China senses that U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan is weak, then a determined PRC government can unite Taiwan and China under PRC rule.*"

On the other hand, if the U.S. guarantees the island's defense under any condition, then any attempt to declare or creep toward independence might embroil Washington in an undesirable military confrontation with the PRC.

2.2 Commitment to the 'Status Quo'

Over the last sixty years, Washington, Beijing and Taipei have expressed their commitment to maintaining the "status quo" across the Taiwan Strait. The problem is that they all three have different interpretations and perceptions of the status quo.

Through the One China principle, Beijing authorities have cut off "any possibilities for change in the cross-strait status quo by grouping all cross-strait issues together and limiting opportunities for Taiwan to participate in international affairs."⁴⁸ The One China principle is articulated with the triplet: "there is only one China; Taiwan is part of China; and China's sovereignty and territorial integrity are indivisible."

⁴⁶ Brett V. Benson and Emerson M. S. Niou, *Comprehending Strategic Ambiguity: U.S. Policy toward Taiwan security* (April 2000). [Accessed Online] <http://www.taiwansecurity.org/IS/IS-Niou-0400.htm>

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Philip Yang, Op. Cit., p. 216.

The status quo China wants is thus aimed at a containment strategy for a future unification between Taiwan and the mainland. In other words, Beijing wants that “Taiwan remains as it is now” and moves as soon as possible towards reunification.⁴⁹ In order to deter Taiwan to alter the status quo, Beijing authorities have often resorted to “coercive diplomacy” as “nothing is more important and more sacred than safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of their country.”⁵⁰

For the current KMT administration, however, Taiwan is part of China, but it is only part of the historical, geographical and cultural China, not part of the legal and political China, a.k.a. the PRC. Based on the One China principle, KMT Honorary Chairman Lien Chan (連戰) stresses that Taiwan and the mainland are part of China on an equal basis.⁵¹ Conversely, the DPP’s position on the One China principle is a flat “No.” As such, the opposition party and the Chinese authorities are bound to clash head-on.

“The United States wants to maintain a peaceful status quo;”⁵² it has long warned against any unilateral action that might alter the status quo. Such principle is also included in Washington One China policy through which it insists that “differences between the sides of the [Taiwan] Strait should be worked out peacefully.”⁵³

As Pan Zhongqi puts it, “With respect to Taiwan’s future status, the US has no specific priority. The US committed itself not to interfere in China’s internal affairs. Rather, the Chinese themselves should settle the Taiwan question. The US would neither press for negotiation nor “undertake mediation” between Taiwan and China. Despite ambiguity with regard to Taiwan’s future, on two points US policy is very unambiguous.”⁵⁴

But, if U.S. strategic interests are well served when the status quo is maintained ad infinitum, what should Washington do in the eventuality of further economic integration in the post-ECFA era? In this eventuality, should Washington’s longstanding policy of strategic ambiguity be challenged by the new political, diplomatic and military implications resulting from current warming of cross-strait relations?

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 217.

⁵¹ Dimitri Bruyas, “Taiwan to raise WHA admission with China,” *The China Post* (2008/11/14), p. 20.

⁵² Philip Yang, *Op. Cit.*, p. 216.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Pan Zhongqi, *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.

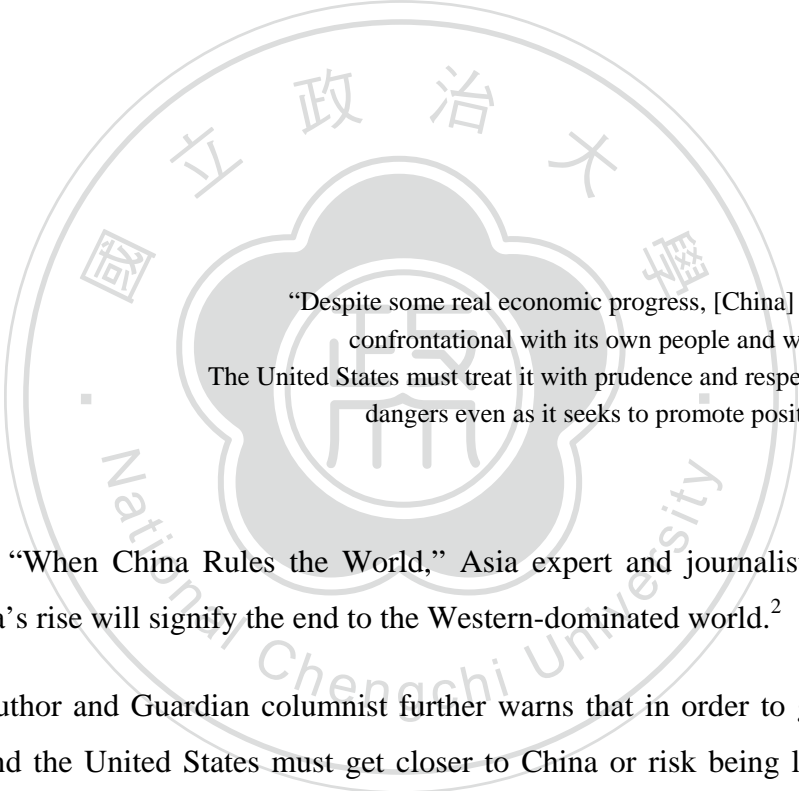
To better answer this question, we should have a closer look at the recent developments across the Taiwan Straits since President Ma Ying-jeou took office in May 2008. ➡





Chapter 4: China's Rise to Superpower Status

Implications for the United States in the Post-ECFA Era



“Despite some real economic progress, [China] still often becomes confrontational with its own people and with other countries. The United States must treat it with prudence and respect, hedging against dangers even as it seeks to promote positive development.”¹

In his last book “When China Rules the World,” Asia expert and journalist Martin Jacques claims that China’s rise will signify the end to the Western-dominated world.²

The renowned author and Guardian columnist further warns that in order to grasp this opportunity Taiwan and the United States must get closer to China or risk being left behind in the region.³ “Based on Western hubris [that believes] the world would always be Western, with China’s rise, many think it’s only economic. ... One’s society is not just product of technology, but history and culture. I think it’s just an illusion to think China will end up as a western society,” Jacques said during his visit to Taiwan in October 2010.

¹ Andrew Scobell and Larry M. Wortzel (Eds.), *China's Growing Military Power: Perspectives Security, Ballistic Missiles and Conventional Capabilities* (Washington: The Strategic Studies Institute, September 2002), p. 6.

² Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World The Rise of the Middle Kingdom and the End of the Western World* (London, Allen Lane Publishing).

³ Interview with Martin Jacques in Taipei (2009/10/2), Hilton Hip (& Dimitri Bruyas), “Understanding the impact of China’s rise,” *The China Post* (2009/10/4). [Accessed Online] <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/art/2009/10/04/227273/Understanding-the.htm>

Given China's rich history, Jacques believes that China will be a superpower that will incorporate some of the characteristics of Western systems, such as electoral democracy, but retain elements of its own culture.

"I think the global financial crisis was a catalyst for bringing into perspective the rise of China and decline of the U.S., the rise of the developing world and decline of the developed world G-20 vs. G-7. And the underlying problem of American indebtedness was suddenly revealed to the world as serious weakness. China's strengths became much more [noticeable]."

Among other strengths, Jacques points out that "China will become the most powerful nation by virtue of its huge population not because it's got the most sophisticated economy."

The British author thus encourages Taiwan to get closer to China, noting that the island cannot stand outside the transformation in the region. "Taiwan has to be part of this, [it] cannot be a spectator, [it] can't look for its salvation to the U.S."

Yet, Jacques' optimistic views about China are not shared by all scholars, who would rather express skepticism about China's rise to superpower status on the short- and medium-term. Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. is still the world's sole superpower, with unmatched military might as well as political clout.⁴

According to Robert Kaplan, senior fellow at the U.S. Center for a New American Security (CNAS), the end of the Cold War certainly led to a less stable world.⁵

"I think that there is more danger of a nuclear explosion in the atmosphere that is not a test now than there was during the Cold War," Kaplan said in early October 2009.

The period of time following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Gulf War demonstrates that the U.S. dominance of the conventional portion of the spectrum of conflict has drawn adversaries to two extreme poles: the nuclear pole and the counter insurgent's pole, pointed out Nathaniel C. Fick, chief executive officer at the CNAS.

"So in many ways, the Cold War now looks like stable golden years," he said.

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs*, "The Lonely Superpower," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (March/April 1999), p. 35.

⁵ Interview with U.S. scholars Robert Kaplan, Nathaniel C. Fick and Abraham M. Denmark in Taipei (2009/11/12). Dimitri Bruyas, "A more unstable world," *The China Post* (Taipei, 2010/11/15), p. 18.

Abraham M. Denmark, also a fellow at the CNAS, added: “I would say that the end of the Cold War significantly reduced the changes of cataclysmic nuclear war — in the way we contemplated it during the Cold War — I think that the changes for that have declined.”

“But nuclear proliferation and emerging multipolarity is certainly leading to an international system that is less stable,” he remarked, while hinting at several emerging economies, such as India and Brazil as equally potential candidates to the superpower status.

Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, recall that U.S. scholar Kenneth N. Waltz was amongst the first to underline how the structure of the international system could force states, such as the United States, Russia and China, to create alliances in order to pursue power.

1. Neorealism and the Sino-American Normalization

In his best known work, “Theory of International Politics” (1979), Waltz argues that bipolar systems are more stable than multipolar ones because they are not highly economically dependent — an important factor that former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Alfred Kissinger understood from the outset of the Sino-American normalization process.

1.1 The Korean War and the Sino-Soviet Threat

For Kissinger, the causes of the Korean War unveiled a double misunderstanding in Washington-Moscow relations since the end of the Second World War.⁶

Even though Washington possessed the atomic monopoly, and the Soviet Union had no known capability for long-range air power, Kissinger explains that American leaders had defined only two likely causes of war with the Soviet Union in the 1950s: A surprise attack on the U.S. or an invasion of Western Europe by the Red Army.⁷

The former U.S. Secretary of State believes that the Korean War exposed this major flaw in Washington's policy: The aggressor, North Korea, and the victim, South Korea, were both located about as far as Europe, the focal point of American strategy.

⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), p. 475.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 474.

To Kissinger, this flaw caused American leaders to act on the basis of two erroneous premises: First, Washington assumed that challenges to the U.S. would be as unambiguous as they had been during the Second World War; and second, Washington considered that the communists would wait passively for the disintegration of their own rule.

Accordingly, nothing in America's behavior would have led policymakers in Moscow or Pyongyang to expect more than a diplomatic protest when North Korean troops crossed the 38th Parallel on June 25, 1950.

While the communists did not find plausible that Washington would resist because of their analysis of the region in terms of American interests; the U.S. perceived the challenge in terms of principle, and therefore was less concerned with Korea's geopolitical significance, than with the symbolism of permitting communists aggression to go unopposed.⁸

Still, from the perspective of the U.S. national interest, why did Washington decide to go to war against North Korea? Kissinger stresses that President Truman's decision to resist North Korean aggression was to some extent courageous because it was in contradiction to what American leaders had proclaimed only a year before. Well, this decision had a solid foundation in traditional concepts of national interests.⁹

On the one hand, communism was spreading and had gained a foothold in Eastern Europe as a byproduct of occupation by the Red Army. If communist armies could now march across internationally recognized border lines, the world would have returned to the conditions of the pre-war period. On the other hand, a successful invasion of South Korea would have had a disastrous impact on Japan, which had always considered Korea as the strategic key to Northeast Asia. Unopposed communist control would have introduced the specter of a looming Asian Communist monolith and undermined Japan's pro-Western orientation.

Then, after the decision to go to war was made, Truman had to justify his decision to oppose North Korean aggression to the American people. Kissinger thus remarks that Truman combined the above mentioned geopolitical arguments in favor of an intervention in Korea with an appeal to American people's core values.

⁸ Ibid., p. 475.

⁹ Ibid., p. 477.

The U.S. president then announced that American intervention in Korea was to defend a universal principle, opposing a looming threat, rather than American interests only.

“A return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far-reaching effects. The United States will continue to uphold the rule of law.”¹⁰

For reference, in March 1949, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur, commander of America's Pacific forces, had placed Korea squarely outside the American defense perimeter, and withdrawn all American forces from Korea. Secretary of State Dean Acheson had gone even further. He not only consigned Korea as being outside the American defense perimeter, but specifically abjured any intentions of guaranteeing areas located on the mainland of Asia.

So, how did Washington defined its practical war aims? According to Henry Kissinger, in a general war, which was what American strategic doctrine had contemplated, the quest was for total victory and for the unconditional surrender of the adversary, as it had been in World War II. Conversely, in the case of a limited war, the simplest and most comprehensible war aim would have been a literal application of the Security Council resolutions to push North Korean forces back to their starting point along the 38th Parallel.

However, if potential aggressors came to understand that they would never do worse than the *status quo ante*, containment might turn into an endless progression of limited wars. In other words, if there was to be no penalty for aggression how could any future aggressions be discouraged? Moreover, what sort of penalty was compatible with a commitment to a limited war?

Inherent in the strategy of limited wars involving the superpowers, is the ability of either side to raise stakes: that is what defines them as superpowers.¹¹ In this context, and given the multilateral approach via the United Nations, America needed to convince those countries with a capacity to escalate, especially the Soviet Union and China, that American objectives were indeed limited.

Unfortunately, the containment theory, in the name of which America had engaged itself, produced precisely the opposite temptation. It induced Truman to expand the political battlefield as key members of his administration believed in a global communist design and treated Korean aggression as the first move in a coordinated Sino-Soviet strategy.

¹⁰ Statement by President Truman issued on June 27, 1950, quoted in Henry Kissinger, *Op. Cit.*, p. 477.

¹¹ Henry Kissinger, *Op. Cit.*, p. 478.

In order to convey America's determination to resist communist aggression throughout the Pacific area, Truman coupled the announcement of the dispatch of troops with an order to the Seventh Fleet to protect Taiwan against communist China.

According to Mao Zedong, however, America's fear of a communist conspiracy was the mirror image of China's fear of an American attempt to reverse the communists' victory in the Chinese Civil War.¹²

In protecting Taiwan, Truman was supporting what America still recognized as the legitimate Chinese government. Mao had reason to conclude that, if he did not stop America in Korea, he might have to fight America on Chinese territory.

“On this Sunday Mao turned the pages of a “Reference News” idly until his eye caught an item from Pyongyang. Korean radio reported an encounter on the 38th Parallel, very heavy fighting. South Koreans were, it was said, attacking the north all along the perimeter. Mao paused. There was constant tension on the Korean border, an incident nearly every day. This sounded serious. The Korean frontier was close to China, and Mao had not overcome his worries about the United States. He had warned his colleagues well before June 1950 that the United States might intervene in Korea. This could be it.”¹³

Washington was convinced that the Kremlin would not accept defeat anyway. Based on such assessment, the U.S. believed it was facing a centrally controlled communist conspiracy to take over the world.

Yet, the reality was quite different. Stalin had gone along with the North Korean attack only after Kim Il-Sung had assured him that it would involve little risk of war. The real fanatics, Kissinger contents, were in fact Pyongyang and Beijing. The Korean War was not a Kremlin plot to draw America into Asia so that it could then attack Europe. While Beijing had been kept in the dark during the war preparation process,¹⁴ Moscow-Beijing cooperation after November 26, 1950 was also limited since Stalin's aid was grudging, and he demanded cash payment for it.

From Kenneth Waltz's perspective, the structure constrains and disposes behaviors of units. In a context of structural anarchy, Waltz argues that the balance of power is exclusively based on the distribution of capabilities.

¹² Henry Kissinger, Op. Cit., p. 479.

¹³ Harrison S. Salisbury, *The New Emperors: China in the Era of Mao and Deng* (New York: Avon Books, 1992), p. 105.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

Stephen Walt adds that states form alliances to balance against threats and not power only. The level of threat is therefore affected by geographic proximity, offensive and aggregate capabilities, and perceived intentions.

In this respect, we can underline the relevance of the February 1950 treaty between China and the Soviet Union, and December 1954 defense treaty between Washington and Taipei, on both Kenneth Waltz and Stephen Waltz' arguments.

Mao's statement in 1949, that China would lean to one side toward the Soviet camp, automatically increased pressure on President Truman to resume aid to the ROC.

1.2 The Jinmen Crises and the Rise of the Beijing Threat

On February 1, 1953, President Eisenhower declared that the Seventh Fleet would not prevent the KMT forces from attacking China anymore and reestablished normal diplomatic relations with the ROC on April 2. It was nonetheless a tactical maneuver.

The relation between the ROC and the U.S. were still strained by one major restriction imposed by Washington: "the Eisenhower Administration had no intentions of overthrowing the Chinese communist regime by force."¹⁵ In other words, the U.S. would not support a counterattack against the mainland by Taipei.

Eventually, Eisenhower fulfilled his campaign promise with the signature of the armistice agreement of the Korean War on July 27, 1953. But, with the signature of the Geneva Convention on April 26, 1954, which brought a ceasefire in Vietnam, Beijing pressed Washington to solve the Taiwan question; otherwise they would liberate Taiwan by force. On September 3, 1954, Beijing thus began to bombard Jinmen. Their purpose was to show the entire world that if the Taiwan issue was not resolved, there would be no peace.

This determination was concretely expressed by the signing on December 2, 1954 of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the ROC. This treaty, according to Stephen Walt model, officially joined the two nations as allies based on the same consideration of a threat.

¹⁵ John C. Kuan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 13.

Eventually, the PLA stopped shelling Jinmen and Matsu islands in March 1955 amidst U.S. threats of escalation.¹⁶

“ Article 2: In order more effectively to achieve the objective of this Treaty, the parties separately and jointly by self-help and mutual aid will maintain and develop their individual and collective capacity to resist armed attack and communist subversive activities directed from without against their territorial integrity and political stability.”¹⁷

“ Article 6: For the purposes of Articles 2 and 5, the terms “territorial” and, territories shall mean in respect of the Republic of China, Taiwan and the Pescadores, and in respect of the United States of America, the island territories in the West Pacific under its jurisdiction [...].”¹⁸

Three years later, on August 23, 1958, Beijing launched another fierce attack against Jinmen. The PLA actually planned to seize Jinmen and Matsu islands through bombardments and this time organized a blockade before the United States had time to intervene. In less than two hours, the island of Jinmen reportedly absorbed forty-two thousand shells within two hours.

However, according to the text of the mutual defense treaty, Jinmen and Matsu were not within the scope of defense. For reference, while Washington passed the treaty with Taipei, the U.S. Senate added a special note to the document specifying that “the United States would take no military action in areas other than Taiwan, and the Pescadores except through special revision of the treaty.”¹⁹ Nonetheless, by virtue of the “Congressional Taiwan Revision Bill,” Washington showed its determination to defend Jinmen and Matsu.

During the 1958 crisis, Washington strengthened its nuclear forces in the Far East to threaten the Chinese Communists with nuclear war. This time, the Eisenhower Administration acquiesced that the fall of Jinmen would seriously compromise Taiwan's security. Ergo, a large U.S. Navy task force, including six aircraft carriers steamed into the Taiwan Strait.

On September 7, U.S. Navy warships escorted a convoy of ROC supply vessels to within three miles (the recognized limit of Chinese territorial waters) of Jinmen to break the blockade.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁷ Text of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the US and ROC (Signed on December 2, 1954), p. 2. [Accessed Online] <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/mutual01.htm>

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁹ John Foster Dulles, Exchange of Notes Constituting an Agreement between the United States of America and the Republic of China Relating to the Mutual Defense Treaty of December 2, 1954, p. 1. [Accessed Online] <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/mutual02.htm>

The Chinese still refrained from firing at the convoy. Then, on October 25, with no sign that the U.S. determination was weakening, the Chinese unilaterally announced an “even-day cease fire.”

Toward the end of the 1950s, the United States then continued to play the role of Taiwan's diplomatic partner while the grand schism between China and the PRC surfaced following the Camp David talks between Khrushchev and Eisenhower in September 1959

1.3 The Sino-Soviet Split and the Expansion of the Soviet Threat

Starting with U.S. President Kennedy, however, Washington began to accept the “fact” of Chinese communist “existence” in the international system. For reference, following the first Jinmen Crisis, Eisenhower expressed hopes that the United Nations would intervene in a ceasefire in the Taiwan Straits, while also asserting that a “two-china” policy was one of the possible approaches being considered by Washington.

For instance, on April 16, 1964, U.S. Secretary of State Dean Rush voiced publicly that the U.S. did not object to Chinese communist participation in the UN as long as Taipei was not expelled.

Four years later, with the election of U.S. President Nixon to the Presidency in November 1968, Washington brought up the slogan of “negotiation instead of confrontation,” which also became the basis of the “Nixon Doctrine” for American disengagement from Asia.

This new policy, enunciated in Guam in July 1964, highlighted Nixon's three important principles. First, the U.S. president believed that Asian nations should be responsible for the future peace and security of Asia. Second, the U.S. would observe its treaty obligations, but would not again send combat personnel to become involved in Asian disputes. And, third, in regard to the Vietnam War, the United States would implement a policy of ‘Vietnamization.’²⁰

Later on, Nixon promoted his doctrine in order to disengage the United States from the Vietnam War. In this respect, however, President Nixon needed to improve Sino-American relations. Concomitantly, with the violence at Damansky Island, which erupted in March 1969, Nixon came to believe that the Sino-Soviet split was real and perhaps irreparable.²¹

²⁰ John C. Kuan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 39.

²¹ Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China* (New York: A Century Foundation Book, 1999), p. 55.

The opportunity for America to enhance its position by playing along in this triangular relationship was unmistakable. Washington believed that the Moscow-Beijing rift would send both adversaries running to America's doorstep, and therein laid an opportunity for the U.S.

Nixon then made various proposals in order to improve Washington-Beijing relations.

For example, on July, 1969, American citizens were suddenly allowed to buy articles made on the Chinese mainland while at the same time the White House lifted restrictions against travel to the China by American citizens.

In the logic of our demonstration, we can argue that Washington did balance Soviet power by attempting a rapprochement with Beijing according to Kenneth Waltz's theory, but at the same time, we can also argue that regarding the Vietnam question, Washington was also trying to use the Chinese in order to get out of Vietnam. Nixon was "not willing to let the Soviets to 'smash' China"²² because the Soviet threat would have just increased as a result.

Also, Margaret Macmillan argues that Henry Kissinger's secret visit to Beijing from July 9 to 11, 1971, and Nixon's subsequent overtures to the Chinese leaders demonstrate that President's Nixon was willing to sacrifice Taiwan to achieve his purpose in Beijing.²³

At the conclusion of Nixon's visit in 1972, the carefully worded communiqué declared that the United States "acknowledged" that "all" Chinese on the mainland and on Taiwan agreed that there was but one China, and that Taiwan is part of it. It obviously ignored that many Taiwanese also wanted to be independent.

Once again, Stephen Walt's analysis on the level of threat helps us to better understand Washington-Taipei relationship in the light of the Sino-American rapprochement.

While the Shanghai Communiqué indicated that Washington dropped the two-china position dating from the Truman's statement of June 27, 1950;²⁴ Washington was also reducing the risk of confrontation with Beijing over Taiwan.

²² Ibid., p. 66.

²³ Margaret Macmillan, *Nixon and Mao: The Week That Changed the World* (New York: Random House, 2007), p. 43.

²⁴ John H. Holdridge, *Crossing the Divide: An Insider's Account of Normalization of U.S.-China Relations* (Boston: Rowman & Little Field, 1997), p. 100.

1.4 Sino-American Normalization and the Balance of Power

Prior to Sino-American normalization, Beijing imposed three pre-conditions to Washington.²⁵ First, Beijing demanded that Washington would scrap its Mutual Defense Treaty with Taipei. Second, Beijing demanded the withdrawal of all U.S. forces from Taiwan. And third, the Chinese government wanted Washington to sever its diplomatic relations with Taipei. This formulation was also called the “Japanese formula.”²⁶

In the meantime, Washington imposed two conditions to Beijing. Namely, the U.S. government wanted the Chinese to agree to continued arms sales to Taiwan and to pledge not to use force against the island. In retrospect, between 1974 and 1976, domestic distractions in the U.S. and China slowed the negotiations. In Washington, the 1974 Watergate scandal weakened Nixon and similarly his successor G. Ford, who could not afford to lose the support of conservative, pro-ROC politicians. In Beijing, politicians were also preoccupied by the succession crisis created after Mao's death.

President Jimmy Carter was also trying to win Senate approval to return the Panama Canal to Panama. With the Panama Canal treaty still pending, the White House deliberately gave China its “maximum position” in the negotiations, expecting correctly, that China would reject the American's first offer.²⁷

In spring 1978, the politics in Washington was shifting. The Senate was in the process of ratifying the Panama Canal Treaty and Carter wanted to proceed with SALT II treaties. Sino-American normalization was therefore a cause that appealed to the anti-Soviet sentiments of some conservative Senators. In other words, China was seen in anti-Soviet terms.

Yet, U.S. President Jimmy Carter was more willing than anybody to accept the preconditions to Sino-American normalization, the difficulty of extracting concessions from Beijing slowed Carter's progress toward normalization. Contrary to all expectations, Beijing would still refuse to promise not to use force against Taipei, while at the same time, they were not willing to let continued arms U.S. arms sales to Taiwan to stand in the way of normalization.

²⁵ Denny Roy, *Op. Cit.*, p. 138.

²⁶ James Mann, *Op. Cit.*, p. 82.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Thus, when Carter's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski arrived in Beijing in May 1978, he first informed Chinese officials that Washington would allow China to obtain American technology that could not be sold to the Soviet Union. In other words, Washington was proposing to aid China's armed forces, but secretly and without direct American involvement. Brzezinski asked Western Europe countries to sell the weapons themselves.

On December 15, 1978, the United States announced the establishment of full diplomatic relations with the PRC, to become effective on January 1, 1979. This move came as a devastating blow to Taiwan. The ROC-U.S. defense treaty was abrogated and formal diplomatic relations terminated, turning Taiwan into a diplomatic outcast. Eventually, Washington did agree to maintain "unofficial" or "substantive" relations with Taipei.

In fact, Stephen Walt's definition of balancing, that is, allying with other states against the prevailing threat describes well the Sino-American normalization process. Namely, Washington and Beijing formed an alliance in order to prevent a stronger state — the Soviet Union from dominating them. As previously argued by Kenneth Waltz, however, Sino-American normalization was a result of the bipolar world rather than of a "power maximization" principle.

In order to soften the blow of the normalization, on January 26, 1979, the TRA prepared the way for America's continuous support, in terms of future arms sales and nongovernmental ties with Taiwan.

1.5 Arms sales to Taiwan

Given Reagan's strong history of advocating arms sales to Taiwan, his election gave hope to Taipei that the new American President would provide advanced fighter aircrafts to replace the aging short-range F-5Es on which Taiwan primarily depended. On the other hand, Beijing also harbored both anger and suspicion over the U.S. intentions toward continuing arms sales to Taiwan.²⁸ The situation rapidly became fused.

In signing the 1982 Communiqué, Washington made a major concession to Beijing on the general issue of arms sales to Taiwan. In this third Communiqué, the U.S. provided for an open-ended American commitment based solely on Taiwan's defensive needs.

²⁸ Alan Romberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 118.

Accordingly, the U.S. pledged, first to reduce gradually its arms sales to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution. Second Washington promised to Beijing that its arms sales to Taiwan would not exceed, either in qualitative or quantitative terms, the levels of those supplied since the establishment of Sino-American relations.²⁹

Taipei complained bitterly following the announcement of the 1982 Communiqué, that this apparent promise to phase out arms sales to Taiwan stemmed from a desire to improve Sino-American relations, not from an assessment of Taiwan defenses.

Only three weeks earlier President Reagan had said: “We are not going to abandon our long-time friends and allies on Taiwan. And, I’m going to carry out the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act.”³⁰

As negotiations with Beijing on the 1982 Communiqué moved toward conclusion, Washington tried to ease the shock of the Communiqué on Taiwan; alleviating Taipei’s feeling that it was being sold out.³¹

President Reagan reportedly transmitted to Taipei in mid-July 1982, only weeks before the issuance of the August 17 Communiqué, the so-called “six assurances.”

Washington thus informed, Foreign Minister Frederick Chien (錢復) that he could make public the following version of the six assurances:

- “ [1] The United States would not set a date for termination of Arms sales to Taiwan.
- [2] The United States would not alter the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act.
- [3] The United States would not consult with China in advance before making decisions about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.
- [4] The United States would not mediate between Taiwan and China.
- [5] The United States would not alter its position about the sovereignty of Taiwan which was, that the question was one to be decided peacefully by the Chinese themselves, and would not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China.
- [6] The United States would not formally recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.”³²

²⁹ Denny Roy, Op. Cit., p. 142.

³⁰ President Reagan quoted in Harvey J. Feldman et al. (Eds.), *Taiwan in a Time of Transition* (New York: Pregon House, 1988), p. 159.

³¹ Alan Romberg, Op. Cit., p. 134.

³² According to Ambassador John Holdridge, the United States agreed to these points, conveyed this assent to Taiwan, and, in late July 1982, informed Congress of this agreement, p. 1. [Accessed Online] <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/assurances.htm>

But, why was Taipei's reaction to the August 17 Communiqué relatively mute? According to the former U.S. ambassador to China, James Lilley, Taipei's overall reaction was mute. To him, this was partly due to the "Six Assurances." On the other hand, Chiang Ching-kuo was also given other, more forceful assurances that were not publicized and that probably affected his response.³³

First, President Reagan stressed that the United States would provide Taiwan with sufficient arms to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. Second, Reagan also asserted that Washington's approach to the new arms sales guidelines set forth in the 1982 Communiqué will be gradual and evolutionary. Third, this new policy would guide Washington's decision on arms sales to Taiwan as long as Beijing continues its current peaceful attitude towards Taiwan.

Besides, U.S. journalist and scholar James Mann unveiled that President Reagan wrote a special "codicil" to the August 17 Communiqué in which he spelled out his interpretation of what he meant. In short, the American President expressed that "the U.S. willingness to reduce arms sales to Taiwan is conditioned absolutely upon the continued commitment of China to the peaceful solution of the Taiwan-PRC differences."³⁴

2. The American Factor in post-ECFA Cross-Strait Relations

As President Ma Ying-jeou further aims to liberalize the island's economic relations with China, commentators have been questioning whether the United States should be involved in the cross-strait issue in a more proactive fashion.

According to the deputy assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, David Shear, however, the Obama administration should wait before resuming bilateral talks under the Trade Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) — often a precursor to a full-fledged FTA — that have been dormant since 2007.

But, should Washington hold those talks with Taipei, at the risk of displeasing China and challenging its long-established strategic ambiguity?

³³ Alan Romberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 139.

³⁴ James Mann, *Op. Cit.*, p. 127.

2.1 The Fall of the Berlin Wall and the Rise of a Unipolar World

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been the world's sole superpower, with unmatched military might as well as political clout. To U.S. scholar Kenneth N. Waltz, realism is still not obsolete over it all: changing conditions would require revised theories only if "the conditions that a theory contemplated have changed."³⁵

Waltz opposes changes of the system and changes in the system to argue that "as democracy extends its way, as interdependence tightens its grip and as institutions smooth the way to peace," realist theory retains its explanatory power after the Cold War.

Because "changes in the structure of the system" are distinct from "changes at the unit level," he further argues that changes in polarity would affect how states provide for their security.

In this respect, "the absence of serious threats to American security gives the United States wide attitude in making foreign policy choices," he remarks.³⁶ As a result, the scholar believes that American policy is not generated anymore by external security interests but by internal political pressure and national ambition.

A good example of this could be President George H. W. Bush's decision of selling 150 F-16 advanced aircraft fighters to Taiwan in the early 1990s, which further raised doubts on the U.S. strategic ambiguity policy and the motives behind its dual deterrent strategy.

To U.S. scholar Alan Romberg, President George H. Bush's decision had a clear political dimension since that during the Presidential election in 1992, Bush faced an uphill battle for reelection in the State of Texas, where General Dynamics produced the advanced F-16 fighter that Taiwan had been seeking to buy for over a decade.³⁷

The political dimension of the arms sales was also manifest in the decision to build new planes over a period of several years rather than to immediately supply existing aircrafts, even as a temporary measure, to fill any alleged "fighter gap."

³⁵ Kenneth N. Waltz, "Structural Realism after the Cold War in America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power – Edited by G. John Ikenberry" (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 29.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 150.

Now, how did the United States justify the sale publicly and privately? On the one hand, Washington justified the sale privately and publicly through the TRA. The U.S. insisted that the arms sale advanced the central goal of the 1982 China Communiqué on arms sales to Taiwan, promoting cross-strait peace and stability.

On the other hand, President George H. Bush pointed to the defense nature of the F-16s, basically saying that the models approved for sale to Taiwan were lower-capacity models, the so-called “As” and “Bs” rather than the more advanced “Cs” and “Ds.”³⁸

The Chinese, however, saw the U.S. treating the August 17 Communiqué as disdain since whatever American commitment to China, Washington could proceed with a sale anyway. On the other hand, Washington felt that it could “get away” with such behavior, since China “had little choice.”

Also, the F-16 sale had an important consequence on Taiwan's mainland China policy: it bolstered former President Lee Teng-hui's (李登輝) position in any future negotiations with China.

Even though Lee's successful secret diplomacy strategy led to the important “unofficial” meetings between Chinese and Taiwanese senior public figures, Wang Daohan (王道涵) and Koo Chen-fu (辜振甫), in Singapore in April 1993, the very foundations of the Taiwan-China relationship were also shaken.

In the round-up to the meeting between U.S. President Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin (江泽民) in October 1997, where Washington and Beijing tried to mend their differences following Lee Teng-hui's visit to Cornell University, Beijing successfully pressed for a comprehensive statement of the U.S. policy toward Taiwan. Washington also announced publicly, officially and for the first time that it does not support Taiwan independence.

Later, in Shanghai in June 1998, Clinton reaffirmed the past principles of U.S. policy and asserted that the United States does not support “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan;” it does not support Taiwan independence; and, it does not support Taiwan's membership in international organizations for which statehood is a prerequisite.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 152.

2.2 Balancing the United States

Since the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a “unipolar world,” experts have been warning against great-power coalitions that would balance the United States. That the “greatest superpower ever” has not provoked such a balancing coalition is widely regarded as a puzzle for balance of power theory.³⁹ Despite the unprecedented concentration of U.S. power, G. John Ikenberry asks why “other great powers have not yet responded in a way anticipated by balance of power theory?”⁴⁰ To explain the absence of balancing against the United States, some argue that it is just a matter of time before such a coalition arises, while others believe that such a coalition will not arise because the United States is too strong and balancing is too risky.⁴¹

Is this just a matter of time? Kenneth Waltz first predicted that balancing against the United States will occur and content that that it is just a matter of time before it happens.⁴² To support his prediction, Waltz refers to the unprecedented power of the United States, its aggressive behavior and the logic of the balance of power theory.

“The expectation that following victory in a great war a new balance of power will form is firmly grounded in both history and theory. [...] Theory enables one to say that a new balance of power will form but not to say how long it will take. National and international conditions determine that. Those who refer to the unipolar moment are right. In our perspective, the balance is emerging slowly; in historical perspective, it will come in the blink of an eye.”⁴³

2.3 The signing of the ECFA

One week after Chinese President Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) and Taiwan's ruling party chief Wu Pu-Hsiung (吳伯雄) agreed in Beijing to discuss the proposed trade deal in June 2009, the American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei (AmCham) released its annual White Paper, urging Taiwan authorities to sign a broad trade agreement with Beijing to avoid falling behind other overseas markets.⁴⁴

³⁹ Paul Kennedy, “The Greatest Superpower Ever,” *New Perspectives Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (Spring 2002), pp. 8-18.

⁴⁰ G. John Ikenberry, “Introduction,” in Ikenberry, ed., *America Unrivaled: The Future of the Balance of Power* (Ithaca, N. Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 3.

⁴¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *Op. Cit.*, p. 37.

⁴² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 5-41.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁴⁴ Dimitri Bruyas, “Get ready for recovery: US business group,” *The China Post* (2010/6/3), p. 20. [Accessed Online] <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/t-business/2009/06/03/210640/Get-ready.htm>

The U.S. business group stressed at that time that the “Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement,” a.k.a. ECFA, would cut tariffs and lay the groundwork for more specific trade pacts between the two sides of the strait.⁴⁵

“Taiwan-made products may lose their market competitiveness in China because of the emerging ASEAN plus One, Two or Three trade blocs,” AmCham Chairman Alan T. Eusden said during the event held for the release of the chamber’s 2009 Taiwan White Paper.

“We therefore appreciate the importance of Taiwan’s negotiating a trade agreement with the mainland such as the ECFA now being discussed. We believe that this is an economic matter that should not be overly politicized,” he added.

With ASEAN, China, Japan and Korea preparing to dismantle trade barriers with one another, the chamber’s annual White Paper points out that without an agreement, important Taiwanese export industries such as petrochemicals and textiles stand to be priced out of the China market by tariff differentials.

Despite several breakthrough achievements in 2009, including the start of regular direct flights between Taiwan and China, Taiwan’s accession to the Government Procurement Agreement (GPA) under the WTO and the Legislative passage of the Internet Service Provider (ISP) bill, Eusden also remarked that “it is crucial that Taiwan take the right steps now to strengthen itself, so that when the recession lifts, this economy can move ahead with renewed vitality.”

According to Foreign Minister Timothy Chin-tien Yang (楊進添), the ECFA between Taiwan and China will definitively help Taiwan become part of the Asian economic integration and avoid marginalization in the region, while creating a win-win-win situation that eventually boosts Taiwan’s international image. During an interview on May 21, 2010, Yang remarked that the reason why Taiwan is negotiating an Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) with China is because the country has strong economic relations with the mainland.⁴⁶

“It has become our number one trading partner; we have so many people doing business and investing in mainland China, so we have to normalize those economic trade relations,” he said.

⁴⁵ Established in 1951, AmCham, which consists of more than 900 individuals representing more than 500 companies, is one of the oldest and largest foreign business organizations in Taiwan.

⁴⁶ Interview with Timothy Chin-tien Yang (2010/5/23). Dimitri Bruyas, “ECFA could help with trade deals, Taiwan int’l image: MOFA head,” Discover Taiwan (2010/7/1), p. 8.

With other countries growing interest in what is going on between Taipei and Beijing, Yang added that after the ECFA is in place, Taiwan will be able to start negotiating similar agreements with other major trading partners. "If we don't join this economic regional integration process Taiwan will be further marginalized," he pointed out.

Although the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and other organizations promoting Taiwan independence have been pointing to the possible misgivings and negative impacts on Taiwan from the ECFA, Yang declined to put too much political consideration on the cross-strait negotiation process.

"Certainly, Taiwan's international image will be further boosted. And our overall national interest will also benefit from those trade arrangements," he said. If Taiwan signs an ECFA with mainland China, and the United States has a similar agreement with Taiwan, then a "win-win-win situation" will follow, the foreign minister noted. "Taiwan wins, the United States wins and mainland China wins."

Thanks to Taiwan's "flexible diplomacy" with China, Yang remarked that both sides of the Taiwan Strait have also stopped their "tug-of-war" to win over diplomatic allies. "We have already seen the bitter fighting in winning diplomatic allies," he said.

"If these countries have economic interests to pursue in mainland China ... as long as our diplomatic relations remain unchanged, they can conduct business with mainland China without changing their diplomatic ties with Taiwan," he added.

President Ma Ying-jeou has insisted in his two years in office that a "flexible diplomatic" strategy could help Taiwan break free from the stigma of checkbook diplomacy and project a new image and status in the international community.

According to Minister Yang, the fundamental principles of Ma Ying-jeou's diplomacy are pragmatism and dignity. "You have to put yourself in other countries positions and look at the issues we have been looking at." He went on. "We have been using Chinese Taipei at a number of international organizations, such as the Olympic Games, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Health Assembly (WHA) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the main question is whether we are treated equally as other members."

Regarding Taiwan's recent participation in the WHA, the foreign minister stressed that Taiwan authorities received their invitation at the same time as other observers. "Our treatment at the WHA was the same as other observers received. Our delegates, including the minister of health, could speak at the plenary session of the WHA as well as other important meetings. We also obtained without any difficulties all the necessary documents and information given by the WHO and WHA," he remarked.

Asked whether such participation is conditional to further improvements in cross-strait relations, he explained that Taiwan was invited as an observer last year and this year, and "all observers get an annual invitation."

"Our participation in the WHA comes from a number of facts: First, our own efforts and determination – this policy is supported by our own people, in other words we have strong determination and have great interests and efforts to achieve this goal. Second, we gathered strong international support from the United States, Japan, from the European Union and many other countries as well as professional organizations. Third, we understand that the improvements of relations across the Taiwan Strait are also helpful in the whole situation."

In this respect, Minister Yang believes that these efforts benefit Taiwanese people, such as the visa free treatment Taiwanese passport holders can now enjoy in the several countries. "Better relations in the Taiwan Strait also benefit our foreign relations," he said. "When our participation in international organizations improves, and we improve our diplomatic status in the community of nations, this also benefits our cross-strait relations because our people will be more willing to improve our relations with China. This part I would call a 'Virtuous Cycle,'" he added.

Richard C. Bush, former AIT chairman and director of the Brookings Institution's Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, also acknowledge that the ECFA will further help Taiwan become part of the Asian economic integration and avoid marginalization in the region.⁴⁷ The U.S. scholar anticipates that "increasing power in China could affect Taiwan's economic development;" he noted that "seeking to join international economic and trade organizations could be a feasible approach for Taiwan to maintain its economic momentum."

⁴⁷ CNA staff writer, "ECFA could help with trade deals: ex-AIT chair," *The China Post* (2010/5/31), p. 20. [Accessed Online] <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2010/05/31/258738/ECFA-could.htm>

Since China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) established a regional free trade area in January this year, Bush remarked that Taiwan has been at risk of marginalization if it fails to sign free trade agreements (FTAs) with key trading partners. Although the ECFA could bring possible benefits and disadvantages for Taiwan, Bush stressed that “it cannot be ignored that the pact would enable Taiwan to join regional economic integration.”

Also attending the aforesaid seminar in company of Richard C. Bush, Su Chi (蘇起), former secretary-general of Taiwan's National Security Council (國家安全會議), cited various opinion polls to support his argument that most Taiwanese people do not support Taiwan independence or unification with China. Instead he noted that most people want to maintain the status quo and hope that pragmatic engagement with China will create more benefits for Taiwan.

2.4 Washington views of the ECFA signing

Rapidly growing ties between Taiwan and China do not undercut the American strategic interests in the western Pacific, according to the top U.S official dealing with Taipei. The comments by Chairman Raymond Burghardt of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) first came in March 2009 amid reports that the rapid improvement in relations between Taipei and Beijing could undercut Taiwan's usefulness as part of an anti-China defensive perimeter that also includes mainland Japan and Okinawa.⁴⁸

“We sometimes read editorials [...] in the Taiwan press which speculate that the U.S. must be unhappy because of American strategic interests are somehow being undermined by President Ma Ying-jeou's policy toward the mainland,” he said. “I ensure you that all these analyses and theories somehow have misunderstood the U.S. position. We really and truly are enthusiastic about the kind of stability we know see,” he added, during his first official visit to Taiwan since President Barack Obama was sworn in last January.

Dismissing the existence of “a geo-strategic character” to American policy toward Taiwan, Burghardt, a veteran U.S. diplomat who has also served as ambassador to Vietnam, stressed that interpretation had no role in American policy: “You often hear almost identical analyses from Beijing and Taipei, and it is something they seem to agree on, but it isn't real,” he continued.

⁴⁸ Interview with Raymond Burghardt (2009/3/17). Dimitri Bruyas, “US welcomes stable cross-strait ties: AIT head,” *The China Post* (2009/3/18), p. 1.

Burghardt's visit to Taiwan — his sixth since taking over the AIT chairmanship — came as President Ma moved forward with his cornerstone platform of improving relations with China. Cross-strait relations were exceptionally tense during the previous administration of Chen Shui-bian, who favored a more Taiwan-centric approach of foreign policy.

Burghardt said the U.S. was very heartened by the new atmospherics across the Taiwan Strait, calling it something that made Washington “comfortable.”

“This era of cross-strait stability is very favorable to U.S. interests,” he said, while acknowledging that the recent opening of direct links with the mainland was also the result of negotiations started by the previous administration. Yet Burghardt also renewed Washington's commitment to supply sufficient weapons to Taiwan so that the island can defend itself and have more confidence in negotiating with Beijing authorities.

Citing the TRA, he restated Washington's policy of “dual deterrence,” which he described as aimed at deterring “each side to be too foolish.”

Speaking to Burghardt at the Presidential Office last month, Ma said cross-strait relations have been easing increasingly since he assumed office in May 2008, a development that has not just defused tensions across the strait but also has initiated far greater cooperation opportunities for the people of both sides.

Touting the opportunities provided by the eased cross-strait relations, the president added that this development is conducive to securing cross-strait peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, as well as creating a silver lining for Taiwan in terms of its ability to create more space for itself in the international community.

“I hope these positive developments will continue and that they will eventually benefit Taiwan, China and the United States,” the president told the official Central News Agency.

Regarding the recent ECFA signing, Chairman Raymond F. Burghardt added that “it's up to Taiwan to decide” on seeking a trade pact with China. He also expressed hopes that the suspended talks on a trade and investment framework agreement (TIFA) between the U.S. and Taiwan could be revived this year.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Dimitri Bruyas, “U.S. envoy says ECFA decision is up to Taiwan,” *The China Post* (2010/6/4), p. 20.

During his visit to Taiwan, Burghardt also paid a visit to Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) and Vice President Vincent Siew, who reportedly noted that Taiwan will have a new economic strategic position after the signing of the ECFA while foreign investments in Taiwan will increase. This will enable Taiwan to play a more important economic role in the region, Siew said.

During the meeting, the vice president explained to Burghardt the major elements of the ECFA, including customs tariff concession, protection of the intellectual property rights and the protection of investments. Siew stressed that the products to be placed on an "early harvest list" will include mainly preferential tariff rates for selected Taiwan products. More importantly, Siew said, there will be no further opening of Taiwan markets to more agricultural products from China and Chinese laborers will not be allowed into the island.

Meanwhile, President Ma Ying-jeou made another call urging China not to obstruct Taiwan's efforts to secure free trade agreements (FTAs) with its trade partners. At a meeting with representatives of Taiwan investors operating in China, Ma said Taiwan simply cannot afford to ignore the huge market at its doorsteps as China has now emerged as the world's second-largest economic entity and when Taiwan suppliers ship more than 40 percent of their products to the markets in China and Hong Kong.

3. Ma Ying-jeou's pragmatic diplomacy

The improved cross-strait relations and diplomatic efforts advanced by civilians and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have successfully raised Taiwan's visibility, according to Tseng Yung-chuan (曾永權), president of the World League of Freedom and Democracy (WLF), Republic of China Chapter (世界自由民主聯盟中華民國總會).⁵⁰

Speaking with The China Post on Jan. 20, Tseng, who is also the deputy speaker of the Legislative Yuan, stressed that NGOs and Taiwanese expatriates could further engage in "civilian diplomacy" in countries with which Taiwan has no diplomatic ties, as whilst Taiwan has only 23 diplomatic allies, Taiwanese authorities have established trade offices in 112 countries.

⁵⁰ Interview with Deputy speaker of the Legislative Yuan Tseng Yung-chuan (2010/1/22). Jamie Wang and Dimitri Bruyas, "WLF fosters 'civilian diplomacy,'" The China Post (2010/1/23), p. 18.

According to the WLFD's president, Yao Eng-chi (饒穎奇), the organization has been working closely with Taiwanese businessmen and expats, and utilizing their connections with influential Chinese officials.

Besides the WLFD and Taiwanese expats' efforts, Tseng has been advocating the concept of "parliamentarian diplomacy," which, he says, has already eased tensions built up during decades of confrontation between both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and "brought countless foreign guests to Taiwan." Tseng described relations between Taiwan and mainland China as "historically complex and entangled," but emphasized the need for both sides to deal with them "sincerely, favorably and wisely."

Since KMT Honorary Chairman Lien Chan's breakthrough visit to China in 2005, the deputy speaker has led legislative delegations to Beijing 12 times and helped rapidly resume talks with China when President Ma Ying-jeou took office in May 2008.

Tseng summarized his principles of diplomacy as "people-to-people, peace and prosperity," and his tactics towards the improvement of cross-strait relations as "open, postpone, exchange and cooperate," – emphasizing the importance of "postpone," by which he means to "drop emphasis on differences and reach a common ground in negotiations."

Commenting on the theme of this year's WLFD convention, "Economic Development & the Promotion of Freedom and Democracy," Tseng remarked that "it is a very suitable topic for the current situation," stressing that China's economic strength could act as the basis for democratic development and such development could advance further economic growth.

He quoted former U.S. President George W. Bush, who remarked in his congratulatory letter to President Ma last year that "Taiwan is a beacon of democracy to Asia and the world." Tseng also believes that Ma Ying-jeou's current rapprochement with China could help project Taiwan's image on the international stage.

In November 2007, then-opposition Kuomintang (KMT) 2008 presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou first called for "flexible diplomacy" in defending sovereignty and expanding bilateral relations, while he blamed the "scorched earth diplomacy" of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) for utterly isolating Taiwan from the international community.

“Taiwan now has fewer and fewer international friends, wins less and less sympathy, and has become more and more marginalized ... under the DPP’s impetuous, rash and confrontational diplomatic strategies,” said Ma during the release of his foreign policy white paper for the presidential election.⁵¹

“The DPP regime is pursuing ‘de jure independence’ (for Taiwan). It has brought no improvement whatsoever in Taiwan’s international standing,” he went on, before noting that mainland China’s tactics in obstructing the ROC diplomacy have been in place for decades. “We must rebuild trust between Taipei and Washington,” he added.

The DPP government at that time drew criticism from the U.S. and China with a planned referendum on seeking United Nations membership under the name “Taiwan” instead of its formal name, “the Republic of China.” US Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte said in August 2007 that Washington opposed any such referendum because it would be a step to declaring full independence – a highly sensitive issue, with China insisting Taiwan is part of its territory.

“Our future diplomatic policy will be a pragmatic policy based on the 1992 consensus on One China,” Ma said, referring to the consensus both Beijing and Taipei allegedly reached in 1992, which means both parties agree that there is one China, even though both parties have their own interpretations of the meaning of China – PRC in China, ROC in Taiwan.

Ma added that he would hold peace talks with China provided that both Taipei and Beijing recognize each other’s existence, in search of a mutually beneficial equilibrium, or *modus vivendi*, pending a permanent settlement. “On the premise of dignity and common interest ... we can begin pragmatic negotiations with the other side of the Taiwan Strait ... (Taiwan’s) efforts expanding foreign relations and joining international organizations do not have to worsen confrontation with China,” Ma continued. “We are convinced we can create a win-win win situation in which both sides of the Taiwan Strait and the world community can coexist and prosper.”

Since Ma took office in May 2009, former Vice President Annette Lu (呂秀蓮) argues that more and more people have been disappointed in the government.⁵²

⁵¹ Interview with Ma Ying-jeou (2007/11/19). Dimitri Bruyas, “Ma unveils foreign policy paper, departs for Japan,” *The China Post* (2007/11/20), p. 1.

⁵² Interview with Annette Lu (2009/2/15). Dimitri Bruyas, “Formosa Post is everybody’s newspaper: Ex-VP Annette Lu,” *The China Post* (2009/2/17), pp. 19-20.

At the same time, she expressed worries that authorities in Washington could further “misjudge the situation in Taiwan,” if local media eventually fail to give voice to “the growing opposition to closer ties with China.”

During former President Chen Shui-bian's tenure in office, she remarked that the DPP tried its best to enhance human rights in Taiwan. Yet the visit of China's top envoy in November 2008 and the series of judicial proceedings launched against several former elected DPP officials have marked an “incredible retreat of the human rights situation,” she noted.

Aside from human rights, the outspoken supporter of Taiwan independence argued that “the sovereignty of Taiwan has been step by step weakened under the Ma administration.”

Despite the president's repeated gestures of goodwill, “Beijing authorities have never given up [their] insistence over the sovereignty of Taiwan,” she said.

“So internationally, whenever possible, they try to prevent Taiwan from entering the international community,” she added. “China will never give up its insistence on the ‘one China Policy,’ no matter how goodwill Ma tries to demonstrate toward China.” On the other hand, she further questioned the government's ability to face the countries' growing economic woes in spite of the worsening international financial crisis.

With the ruling Kuomintang in control of the executive and legislative branches of power, she warned that public protests have become the last resort of DPP supporters for venting their “frustration.”

“I certainly don't want to see that happening,” she indicated, urging the government to take into account the opposition's reservations about closer ties with China. “Only when the due process is done, there is true justice,” said the former political activist, who was arrested, interrogated and sentenced to 12 years of prison for sedition in 1979, after speaking at the rally that precipitated the Kaohsiung Incident. “I certainly, do not support any corruption, but if there is corruption, there is a system to take care of it,” she continued.

In the mean time, Lu noted at that time that several members of the U.S. Congress, scholars and policy experts are also concerned with recent developments in Taiwan, ranging from the government's China policy to the corruption allegations against Chen Shui-bian.

During her trip to Washington for the inauguration of U.S. President Barack H. Obama, she recalled her “impression that the voice of the Taiwanese in general is not clearly heard.”

“Many people in Washington D.C. got the impression that since Mr. Ma was elected by the Taiwanese people, his policies must be supported by the majority of the people here,” she said. “Therefore in accordance with the TRA, the United States should not play any role in the Taiwan issue,” she added.

Yet, she contended that the voice of the people is not clearly heard in the U.S. at the moment, and vowed to include daily English briefs on Taiwan politics, economy and social affairs in the “Formosa Post” to make the voice of the Taiwanese people heard “clearly enough to the world.”

“The more Taiwan tilts toward China, the more potential problems and even crises can arise,” she forecast, before drawing a comparison between Taiwan and other democratic states in Central America. “In the past decade, it was Taiwan, who helped maintain democracy and liberty in Central America. With the exception of Mexico, all other countries located in Central America chose Taiwan to make friends instead of China,” she said.

“In that way, Taiwan helped prevent communism from spreading in that area,” she concluded.

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Chapter 5: Conclusion

The constraints of the structure on human nature

“[...] the current president has called the relationship with China a strategic partnership. I believe our relationship needs to be redefined as one as competitor. Competitors can find areas of agreement, but we must make it clear to the Chinese that we don’t appreciate any attempt to spread weapons of mass destruction around the world, that we don’t appreciate any threats to our friends and allies in the Far East. This president is one who went to China and ignored our fiends and allies in Tokyo and Seoul. He sent a chilling signal about the definition of friendship.”¹

Although the governments in Taipei and Beijing disagree on the role Washington should play in the cross-strait stalemate, we have demonstrated that the United States has played an important role in their evolving relationship since the 1950s.

Taiwan has expressed a continuing interest for supply of arms, firm opposition to any use of force in the Taiwan Strait, and avoidance of pressure to negotiate on PRC terms, While China has long warned that the United States has been interfering in China’s internal affairs or encouraging the island’s split from the mainland.

For more than 60 years, the U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity has successfully made sure that Washington can deter China from its declared willingness to use force to achieve political control over Taiwan or deter the self-ruled island to declare independence from the mainland.

¹ Governor George W. Bush, Presidential candidate, CNN Transcript, Larry King Live: South Carolina Republican Debate, accessed on line at: <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0002/15/kl.00.html>, February 15, 2000.

Earlier this month, ruling Kuomintang Legislator Lin Yu-fang (林郁方) received yet another “ambiguous message” from Washington, regarding Taiwan’s request to purchase either diesel-electric submarines or F-16 C/D aircraft.

Even if the U.S. has not openly rejected the aircraft sale, Washington has not yet decided on Taiwan’s requests and is offering the same old alternatives, such as helping Taiwan upgrade its aging F-16 A/B aircraft.

Whatever the Taiwanese legislator told the U.S. officials that the recently signed economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) between Taiwan and China is aimed at improving relations between the two sides and creating a stable, peaceful and prosperous situation across the Taiwan Strait.

The U.S. officials’ reactions to the agreement were nothing but polite. They expressed hopes that it would offer benefits to other countries in East Asia and the United States; they expressed support for Taiwan’s efforts in seeking international recognition, particularly its bid to join the International Civil Aviation Organization.

But, as long as peace and stability can be preserved in the Taiwan Strait, should strategic ambiguity be the only U.S. dual deterrence policy toward the security issue in the Taiwan Strait?

With countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), China, Japan and Korea preparing to dismantle trade barriers with one another, why should Taipei shy away from cutting a trade deal with Beijing?

Thanks to Taiwan’s “flexible diplomacy” with China, Foreign Minister Timothy Chin-tien Yang (楊進添) recently remarked that both sides of the Taiwan Strait have also stopped their “tug-of-war” to win over diplomatic allies.

The Bush Administration and now the Obama Administration have also welcomed the stabilization of Beijing-Taipei relations. Recall that the continuing comments by Chairman Raymond Burghardt of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) have suggested that the rapidly growing ties between Taiwan and China do not undercut the American strategic interests in the western Pacific.

In March 2009, for instance, Burghardt said that the U.S. was very heartened by the new atmospheres across the Taiwan Strait, calling it something that made Washington “comfortable.”

According to Richard C. Bush, former AIT chairman and director of the Brookings Institution’s Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies, the ECFA will further help Taiwan become part of the Asian economic integration and avoid marginalization in the region.

Most experts also anticipate that China’s rise to the superpower status could affect the United States and Taiwan’s economic development. In this eventuality, seeking to join international economic and trade organizations is a feasible approach for Taiwan to maintain its economic momentum.

If U.S. policy towards Taiwan and China is deliberately ambiguous, in order to give Washington more flexibility in responding to any dangerous situation in the Taiwan Strait, there are at least two points on which the U.S. policy is unambiguous: Taiwan’s unilateral declaration of independence and China’s use of force to resolve the cross-strait issue.

On the long run, however, the recent warming of Taipei-Beijing relations demonstrates that the situation in the Taiwan Strait is not determined by American policy, even if it plays some role.

Whether the two parties engage in dialogue or confrontation does not lie with the U.S. dual deterrence strategy, but with the two former archenemies’ confidence with respect to the negotiation process.

In this respect, U.S. President George H. W. Bush’s decision of selling 150 advanced aircrafts (F-16 A/B) to Taiwan in September 1992 had serious consequences for the Taipei and Beijing sides as they both lost a measure of confidence in the commitments previously made.

Contrary to all expectations, the controversial decision bolstered President Lee Teng-hui’s (李登輝) position in negotiations with China throughout the 1990s. It also torpedoed the Kuomintang administration’s first secret negotiations with the communist regime, which led to the important “unofficial” meetings between the PRC and ROC senior public figures, Wang Daohan (王道涵) and Koo Chen-fu (辜振甫) in Singapore in April 1993. Without notice, the very foundations of Taiwan-China relationship were shaken.

Now, if Washington is still hesitant in authorizing the sale of F-16Cs and F-16Ds, it is fine. But Taipei, Beijing and Washington should further commit to improve the international trade environment in order to create a deeply-rooted community of interests.

In this respect, an important factor that has influenced the cross-strait stalemate since the end of World War II is human nature. U.S. Scholar James Mann demonstrates in his book “About Face” the limited role actors eventually play in the cross-strait issue. U.S. Presidents Carter, Reagan, H. Bush, Clinton and W. Bush all came to the White House determined to change the direction or style of American policy towards China. None of them were actually able to maintain the status quo.

Just as Kissinger conducted intensely personalized and secret diplomacy with Beijing, so did Carter’s national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski. Just as the Nixon Administration had allowed China policy to be plagued by nasty competition between the U.S. National Security Council and the State Department, so did Carter Administration.

James Mann further shows that all these problems resulted from the longevity of the Kissingerian approach to China. While Kissinger left office in 1976, he is still considered to have exerted a powerful hold over American policy toward China well into the 1990s.

In this respect, Alan Romberg claims that President George H. Bush was an opportunist.² In a letter to Deng Xiaoping dated of September 30, 1981, Bush underlined the principle of one-China with Beijing, while two years earlier he was speaking of reestablishing official relations with Taiwan.

Besides, we stressed in our research how the structure of the system made it difficult for the leaders in China, the United States or Taiwan to evade the inherent structural constraints of a bipolar or unipolar system.

First, we demonstrated that Washington balanced the threat to a peaceful resolution of the cross-strait stalemate, not for fun but because of structural concerns. In a bipolar system, each great power aligns with other powers in order to balance the threat and power. For reference, the bipolar system is considered the most stable because both great powers strive to maintain it.

² Alan Romberg, *Op. Cit.*, p. 132.

When Reagan restated the strong U.S. interest in a peaceful resolution of cross-strait issues and made clear the connection to Taiwan arms sales, the U.S. president obviously meant to focus on a peaceful process, though Taipei's reaction was that Washington had sold out Taiwan.

Second, we have also explained that as Taiwan evolves into a new business operation hub in the Asia-Pacific region after signing the economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) with China, the government should actively seek FTAs with member nations of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the United States in particular. Without a doubt, Taiwan needs to enhance its economic competitiveness through interdependence with mainland China and the United States, among others.

In the meantime, the island still needs to strengthen itself military in order to raise the cost of coercion and ensure some degree of deterrence vis-à-vis China's PLA.

Finally, Taiwan also needs to strengthen its democratic system so that the legislature and mass media serve the public better and avoid the continuous polarization of Taiwan's society. The growing pragmatism in public opinion regarding the recurrent clashes between the ruling and opposition parties' lawmakers suggest that Taiwan public would welcome more constructive politics and closer relationship with the United States. ■

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