

CAPS
PAPERS
No. 38

Editor: Richard H. Yang

**CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS:
AVOIDING WAR, MANAGING PEACE**

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**CHINESE COUNCIL OF ADVANCED POLICY STUDIES
TAIPEI, TAIWAN, REPUBLIC OF CHINA
November 2004**

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Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies

THE CHINESE COUNCIL OF ADVANCED POLICY STUDIES

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Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies, November 2004

ISBN 957-9014-02-7

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Published by the Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies, 4F, 259, Section 1, Dun-hua South Road, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China. Tel: 886-2-2702-0153~4; Fax: 886-2-2702-0157; Email: capsyang@ms2.hinet.net.

Cross-Strait Relations: Avoiding War, Managing Peace

Alan D. Romberg

INTRODUCTION

President Chen Shui-bian's May 20, 2004, inaugural address represented an important watershed. In it, he pulled back from his earlier proposal to write a completely new constitution to be approved by referendum. Instead, he said he would seek a significantly amended constitution to be approved through existing amendment procedures as specified in the constitution, itself. He also pledged that, in the process of amending the constitution, he would avoid touching on the most controversial issues: sovereignty, territorial boundaries and the linked questions of independence and unification. Moreover, he reaffirmed the so-called "five noes"¹ promises contained in his 2000 inaugural, including a pledge not to change the national title.

While the U.S. was pleased with this shift—as well it might have been, since Washington had encouraged it—so far the change has not been convincing to Beijing. There, it is assumed that the Taiwan president will seek in various ways to deepen Taiwanese identity at home and the promotion of Taiwan's status abroad. The question is whether he will go further, to promote formal "independence." Beijing fears this could well be the case. Even in Taiwan itself, including people beyond the opposition pan-Blue, there is less than universal trust that Mr. Chen will abide by his pledges.

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The mainland's cross-Strait policy is, of course, crucial to the maintenance of peace and stability. The May 17, 2004, "authorized statement" by the State Council and Communist Party Taiwan Affairs Offices is a key to understanding the current PRC approach and where it is heading. That statement made clear that, while Beijing's determination to block independence has not weakened, the PRC has moved away from the goal of promoting short-term reunification. Other more recent indicators have reinforced that position, but some analysts still believe Beijing will feel compelled by Taiwan's independence trend to use force sooner rather than later. Whether the PRC can live with Chen Shui-bian's future policies, and whether it can move beyond that to adopting a more positive attitude toward Taiwan, are critical questions.

Finally, there is the question of the U.S. approach and how—even whether—Washington will seek to reinforce its "one China policy," including its opposition to steps by either side that would upset the status quo as the United States defines that. It is important to understand what that policy is—and is not—and to examine whether there are any better alternatives available. It is also worth asking what role the United States can—and would be willing to—play to actively promote a stable cross-Strait political framework.

This paper seeks to address these issues.

THE PAST AS PROLOGUE

In May 2000, Beijing watched with suspicion and trepidation as Taiwan's new president, Chen Shui-bian, took office as the successful candidate of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which had a long history of advocating Taiwan Independence.² Beijing was aware that a DPP resolution in 1999 had reshaped the party's position, dropping the demand for creation of an independent Taiwan, claiming instead that Taiwan was already independent and insisting that any change in Taiwan's "independent status quo" would require the approval of the people.³ Beijing, however, did not believe this measure superseded the original charter provision on independence and, in any case, viewed this as a ploy designed to deceive and distract those who worried the DPP was pushing too far, too fast. On the eve of the March 2000 election, the normally low-key PRC Premier Zhu Rongji issued a not-so-veiled threat in his post-National People's Congress press conference, suggesting that if Chen won there could be dire consequences.⁴

Still, when Chen issued the "five noes" pledge in his May 20, 2000 inaugural,⁵ Beijing forbore taking any precipitate action, but instead issued the well-known

caution that it would listen to his words and watch his actions and make its judgments accordingly.

The history of the following four years of cross-Strait relations is written quite differently in Beijing and Taipei, each side claiming that it made numerous unanswered proposals to improve relations and ease tensions. But the clear fact is that both made proposals that were predictably unacceptable to the other side, and both failed to approach their relationship with sufficient flexibility to move things forward. It is not hard to understand why. Fundamental issues of principle were involved: for Beijing, adherence to the "one China principle" that insists there *is* "one China" of which Taiwan is a part;⁶ and for Taipei, rejection of the proposition that "one China" exists today (though acknowledging it might in the future) and insistence that no options be foreclosed so that the people of Taiwan would be free to determine their ultimate relationship with the mainland. Although the approaches of the two sides need not necessarily be incompatible if defined more flexibly, as they stand today they cannot be reconciled.⁷

Beijing calls on Taipei to accept that there is "one China" without addressing the definition of that China. The PRC also maintains that all issues about the future nature, shape and structure of "China" and of Taiwan's role in it can be discussed as long as that discussion takes place within the "one China" framework. While one could imagine definitions of the "one China" principle broad enough to be acceptable to most people in Taiwan, the PRC's dedication to its proposal for "one country/two systems" as its preferred model for implementing "one China" has had the effect of making the principle itself unacceptable in Taiwan.

The reality is that the "one China principle" and the "one country/two systems" proposal, while related, are quite different concepts in the PRC lexicon. But by linking them so closely, referring to "one country/two systems" almost every time that "one China" is discussed,⁸ Beijing has strengthened Chen Shui-bian's argument that they are two sides of the same coin and that acceptance of the "one China" principle would mean accepting "one country/two systems." Although Mr. Chen repeated this line of reasoning as recently as his mid-November interview with Time magazine,⁹ in fact there is no particular logic to this argument. Taipei could—as it did in 1992 and for many years both before and after that—accept "one China" while openly stating that this did not mean accepting the PRC's definition. Nonetheless, because the PRC has failed to distinguish these two points more clearly, and because, in a context of growing Taiwanese identity, "one country/two systems" is so unpopular in Taiwan, Chen has been able to rally support against agreement to any concept of "one China."

Having come to totally mistrust Chen Shui-bian over the past four years, Beijing now insists that it will base its judgments about Taiwan independence challenges only on his actions, not on his words. Thus, although President Chen has called for a “peace and stability framework” and has said that “whatever the people decide” is acceptable—including even unification,¹⁰ the mainland believes he is insincere and that this new “openness” is a cover for his real intention, which is not only to resist unity but to move toward separatism. Nothing in his National Day speech this year has changed their judgment in this regard.¹¹ The steady movement in recent years to change names and logos of government organizations in Taiwan, use a different romanization system, put “Taiwan” on the passport, include Chinese history as part of “world history,” and so forth, has deepened that view. The most important development, of course, was Chen’s articulation in August 2002 of “one country on each side” (*yi bian, yi guo*) after having already raised the prospect of formal independence several days earlier by warning that Taiwan would “walk its own path” if the PRC did not respond to Taipei’s “good will.”¹²

REFERENDA, AMENDMENTS, AND “CLARIFYING” THE NATIONAL TITLE

Many senior officials and well-connected experts in Beijing made clear before the March 20, 2004, election that the passage of two “defensive” referenda placed on the ballot by Chen—and his reelection—would put the situation into a “pre-crisis” mode. There would be a “reaction,” they said, and it would include “something” on the military side. The impression left was not that there would be an immediate attack, but rather that the PRC would begin a serious, focused military build-up designed to deter, but if necessary to push back, any move to independence.¹³

Of course, the two referenda failed because less than half of Taiwan’s voters picked up ballots for them. And this was noted in Beijing. But the very fact of having conducted the referenda heightened PRC anxiety that Chen intended to use that device in the future to promote independence, a concern sharply reinforced by his call in late September 2003 for a new constitution to be approved by referendum by 2006 for implementation in 2008. Moreover, while it claimed neutrality as between candidates—professing an interest only in what policies Taipei would adopt—it is clear that Beijing hoped for a pan-Blue victory, and indeed apparently expected that result as the campaign was drawing to a close. Thus, the PRC was upset and frustrated by Chen’s “razor-thin” victory in the wake of the still unexplained Tainan shooting on March 19. In addition, and of great importance, the leaders in Beijing were criticized by many in the

mainland—especially the politically active users of Internet “chat rooms”—for having failed to achieve any progress over the Taiwan issue, indeed for having facilitated a process of continual “salami slicing” toward separate status for the island and away from a “one China” framework, after many years of what was characterized by the critics as a “soft” policy.

Thus, it is not surprising that, in recent months since the election, we have heard tough rhetoric from the mainland about PRC determination to stop any move to independence and that we have seen signs of continuing military preparations.

In fact, this pessimistic perspective in Beijing is misplaced; their policy met with a great deal of success. First of all, the failure of the referenda to pass clearly had a lot to do with the understanding among the people in Taiwan that the main effect of passing these essentially motherhood-and-apple-pie propositions would be to stir up PRC hostility, and they declined to do that.¹⁴ So, in important measure, the PRC got its point across.

Second, three respected and generally neutral polls showed the pan-Blue team pulling away to a substantial and growing lead in the days immediately before the election, suggesting that the PRC’s low-key approach was working at least to the extent that it was not generating the political backlash created by mainland pressure in 1996 and 2000. So while it may be frustrating to Beijing that the shooting incident in Tainan the day before the election apparently had a decisive effect on the outcome, the result does not invalidate the appropriateness of the mainland having avoided a heavy-handed approach.

At the same time, that the shooting incident apparently had such a decisive effect on the outcome is arguably due in large part to the fact that significant numbers of people in Taiwan were ready to believe the rumors that rapidly spread on March 19 regarding possible mainland involvement. This, in turn, bespeaks the reality that, whatever the benefits from cross-Strait economic links, Beijing’s efforts over a long period of time to isolate Taiwan politically and intimidate it militarily have alienated people there, so they were all too ready to believe the worst of their giant neighbor—and to react against it.

Finally, and of critical importance, in his May 20, 2004, inauguration address, Chen moved decisively away from his earlier call for “giving birth” to an entirely new constitution to be passed by a referendum.¹⁵ That proposal had raised immediate concerns that it would be politically impossible to write a completely new document that maintained the theoretical links to the mainland existing in the

current constitution and whose elimination would be taken by Beijing as a move across a “red line” to “juridical independence.”

Instead, what the president did in his inaugural was to propose, first, to avoid touching on the sensitive topics of sovereignty, territory and unification/independence in any constitutional change. That this was presented as his “proposal” rather than some sort of promise has given rise to suspicions on the part of many that he is being deceptive and that he intends to reverse course and address these issues on the grounds that the “democratic public” forced his hand. Similar doubts have been raised with respect to his reaffirmation of the “five noes.”

These charges seem dubious. More credible is that this is Chen’s way of trying to manage a difficult issue where there are strong voices pushing him in various directions. Rather than paying the political cost of taking personal responsibility for saying “no,” he will allow the political process in Taiwan to work its democratic will, and the outcome is predictably going to be one of caution, supporting the course he proposes.

In addition, in “reengineering” the constitution, Chen Shui-bian promised that he would follow the existing, rather onerous constitutional amendment procedures, putting aside his original idea of amending the Referendum Law by majority vote in the Legislative Yuan or LY. He did say that he would seek an amendment to allow constitutional revision by referendum in the future, but what specific changes he might seek in that regard are unknown.

Although in August 2004 the LY passed a constitutional amendment bill calling for replacement of the National Assembly ratification process with a referendum, this particular amendment has changed very little in terms of the difficulty of passing future amendments. The National Assembly ratification requirement was, in practical terms, never a very high bar, while the new requirement for passing a referendum on a constitutional amendment is actually very rigorous—*half of all eligible voters* in Taiwan must cast valid affirmative ballots for any such amendment for it to pass.¹⁶

At least equally important, the LY-passed amendment keeps in place the existing requirements that any constitutional amendment process has to begin in the LY itself (not through some sort of public petition as is possible with other referenda), that 3/4 of the LY has to meet to consider any proposed amendment, and that 3/4 of those voting in the LY on an amendment must vote in favor. This represents no change in the difficulty of the legislative process from that which

has traditionally existed. As noted, whether Chen intends to further amend the constitution to ease that requirement in some way is not yet clear, but to do so he would have to pass through the existing barriers, and this seems very unlikely at each stage, be it in the LY or on a referendum ballot.

Others claim that Mr. Chen will simply renege on his promise and revert to his original plan to amend the Referendum Law to allow an amendment to be put on the ballot through public petition and be adopted by a lower margin, letting any challengers try to defeat this in the courts if they can. One cannot read his mind, but this seems highly unlikely, even if the pan-Green wins an LY majority in December. If for no other reason—beyond the predictable explosive reaction from Beijing—this is because such a step would without doubt arouse the ire of the United States, which would clearly redound to Taiwan’s, and President Chen’s, serious detriment. One must ask why Chen Shui-bian would recklessly step over what are obvious PRC “red lines” or knowingly alienate the United States. There is no doubt that, like most other people in Taiwan, he desires Taiwan independence. But there is no reason to assume he is going to purposely head over that precipice.

That being said, there is a question of where one calculates the PRC’s “red line” to be, a task complicated by the fact that, except for rather vague language about “juridical independence,” the definition of Beijing’s “red lines” has not been very clear.¹⁷ So, even setting the issue of intentions aside, the risk of miscalculation should not be dismissed.

Mr. Chen’s essential snub of President George W. Bush’s entreaties on the March 20 referenda¹⁸ was instructive, and, looking ahead, the U.S. cannot afford to take anything for granted. Especially given the pressure from some quarters in Taiwan to push the envelope, Washington should be consistent and vigorous in making its views known at each stage in the process. But as Chen and his senior aides have told visitors in recent months, the earlier problems arose during a hard-fought election campaign, and the need now is for a smooth relationship with the United States and to heal the existing rifts. That Chen has so dramatically backed off of the more provocative constitutional proposals he had previously made is an important indicator, and it is hard to see why he would throw away the benefits achieved by that step.

If the constitutional amendments focus, as advertised, only on “good governance” and democracy issues, the United States and others will certainly not raise objections.

Moreover, despite a predictable level of discomfort in the mainland, there should be no significant, adverse reaction from that quarter, either.

Still, since Mr. Chen has announced that he and his government will on various occasions now use “Taiwan” as the “short title” of the nation—merely, it is explained, for “clarification” purposes to avoid confusion of the ROC with the PRC in the minds of people abroad who do not know better—concern has grown that he will take this further. If “clarifying” titles such as “Taiwan” or “Republic of China (Taiwan)” were introduced into the constitution, even though this would be represented as reflecting “no change” in the formal title, we would be in dangerous territory.

On the one hand, there seems to be recognition in high places in the Taipei government that such action would have very significant consequences. In response to questioning, senior officials from Taiwan have recently reiterated in absolutist terms that in the constitutional amendment process Chen will abide by his pledge not to change the name or in any other way to touch on the “sensitive issues.”

But on the other hand, the use of such “clarifying” titles has extended to the point that, in the now uncertain joint communiqué announcing the establishment of diplomatic relations with Vanuatu, Taipei stated a historical fact that the communiqué had been executed in the “Ninety-Third year of the Republic of China (Taiwan).”¹⁹

One needs to be alert to potential dangers inherent in this issue.

RETHINKING A POSITIVE PRC AGENDA

Beijing has already taken a significant step back from what appeared to be a more belligerent posture in the immediate wake of the March 20 election. While stating in firm terms that the mainland would deal uncompromisingly with any movement to independence, the May 17 “authorized statement” and other indicators have signaled that ultimate unification will not be pressed for at least the next twenty years. No one believes—or should believe—that Beijing has abandoned reunification as a long-term goal. But it now appears that the mainland leadership accepts that reunification is not possible in the foreseeable future, and so their nearer-term, operational goal has become to avoid “juridical” solidification of separate status for Taiwan.

In late September, a PRC-controlled Hong Kong paper, *Ta Kung Pao*, carried a significant report on this subject based on statements made by an “authoritative person” at a September 24, 2004, Beijing meeting of officials handling Taiwan affairs. That meeting was called to study documents on Taiwan policy coming out of the Fourth Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party a few days earlier.²⁰

According to the authoritative person, following the party plenum at which he was elevated to Chairman of the Central Military Commission, Hu Jintao addressed a ceremony celebrating the 55th anniversary of the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). In that speech, the PRC President and Party General Secretary stated that China will adhere to the basic principles already laid down of “peaceful reunification and one country, two systems” as well as Jiang Zemin’s Eight-Point Proposal of January 1995.

But the authoritative person went on to explain to the officials dealing with Taiwan policy that there would be some adjustments in specific wording and implementation. From now on, the mainland will pursue an approach based on “striving for talks, preparing for war, and not fearing delay” (*zheng qu tan, zhun bei da, bu pa tuo*). Such slogans as “the Taiwan issue cannot be delayed indefinitely” and “indefinite delay is equivalent to Taiwan independence” will be set aside in the future, although this approach will be predicated on the presumption that Taiwan authorities will not seek “*de jure* independence.”

Defining this last point, the authoritative person said that if through “constitutional amendment” or “creation of a new constitution” Taiwan authorities were to announce that the “territory” of the Republic of China includes only Taiwan, Penghu, Jinmen (Kinmen) and Mazu (Matsu), “then in fact Taiwan [would have] declared ‘*de jure* Taiwan independence.’ ” And, “under these circumstances, the mainland will have no other choice but to use force to settle the issue.”

This is the most definitive description yet about what would constitute “juridical independence” in Beijing’s eyes. Still, one ought to be cautious in thinking that there are no other “red lines” whose violation could trigger a crisis and the possible use of force. In this connection, it was noteworthy that the authoritative person took some pains to point out that the Central Military Commission (CMC) is now made up of a high number of senior officers “rich in experience” in “defense against Taiwan.” In the overall context of the article,

and of the May 17 “authorized statement,” it is clear that what Beijing is saying is that use of force will be avoided if there is no move toward “juridical independence,” but that it will be used—and used effectively—if there is such a move.

Beyond this, Beijing appears to be signaling that, if Chen Shui-bian adheres to the spirit and letter of his inaugural pledges, the mainland will adopt a more forthcoming approach. For example, the authoritative person sought to reassure Taiwan businesspeople that, despite some signs a few months ago of political labeling, they were welcome on the mainland and would not be generally tagged—and discriminated against—as “pro-Green.”

It remains to be seen not only whether the mainland will live up to this, but whether it will, in fact, go beyond this “do no harm” stance to be resourceful and flexible in “creating all possibilities to continue cross-strait talks and doing a good job in wooing the Taiwan people,” as the authoritative official explained Beijing’s goal. Such a forthcoming approach will be necessary (as will a like response from Taipei) if there is to be any positive movement in cross-strait political relations rather than merely preserving an unpredictable stalemate.

A most helpful step to easing tensions and building trust would be if the military component of cross-strait relations were somehow reduced. However, absent an agreed political framework—not a final resolution, which is unrealistic, but a mutually acceptable framework for managing the issue for the indefinite future—this seems unlikely. That is because, without mutual trust, Beijing will feel the need to develop—and demonstrate—the capacity to respond forcefully to independence, and the U.S. and Taiwan will feel the need to counter that capability.

Nonetheless, there should still be ample opportunities for Beijing to reach out to the people in Taiwan to demonstrate in a credible way that, while not yielding on the sovereignty issue, the PRC respects the aspirations of the people in Taiwan to participate meaningfully in the international community and that Beijing will not obstruct, indeed will support, that goal. The WHO/WHA²¹ is the obvious place to start, where observership is not a matter of sovereignty and Beijing should stop acting as though it is.²²

The “three direct links”²³ are something that both sides of the Strait purport to want, and each blames the other for blocking progress. For “officially”-sponsored links, the PRC insists that Taiwan must first accept “one China.” But since Beijing knows that Taipei will not do that anytime soon, for

the past three years it has offered another, “informal,” model that would allow the arrangements to be negotiated by “private” interests. Taipei has laid the legal groundwork to permit that, and Chen Shui-bian once again proposed progress on this question in mid-November.²⁴ It must be noted, however, that it is Taiwan’s intention not only to have the government set the terms of any agreement but to have officials participate in the negotiating team, albeit without using titles and in their “individual” capacities. In the current mood of frustration and pique over the Taiwan presidential election and the mistrust of Chen, it is not clear if the PRC would go along with that arrangement today, but in the past Beijing has indicated it would.

In any event, there is also the problem of the “character” of the links. In years past, discussion of this issue was stalemated over Beijing’s insistence that they be “domestic” and Taipei’s that they be “international.”²⁵ Two years ago, then-PRC Vice Premier Qian Qichen sought to cut the Gordian knot by proposing that the links simply be called “cross-strait.”²⁶ However, it was clear even then that, from Beijing’s point of view, although they need not be labeled “domestic,” the links could not be conducted in a way that either made them, on their face, “international” (e.g., by including foreign carriers) or that was somehow inconsistent with “domestic” links. Some in Taipei, especially in the business community, were attracted by this approach, but others sought to push for both a more “official” way at least of starting the negotiation and for a more “international” character to the links themselves.

More recently, although senior officials in Beijing argue there has been no change in their position, their counterparts in Taipei charge that the PRC has reneged on Qian’s “cross-strait” idea and is once again insisting the links be called “domestic,” all at a time when Chen Shui-bian has embraced the “cross-strait” formula as his own idea.²⁷ Each side is quite adamant in its claim that the other is responsible for the deadlock. This is not the place to try to settle that argument. Suffice it to say that the political circumstances on both sides of the Strait do not currently favor progress on this issue. Thus, we will have to wait at least until after the LY elections and any subsequent reassessment of each side’s tactics before having a better picture of how this might progress—or not.

THE U.S. “ONE CHINA” POLICY

A central issue for the United States, and for both sides of the Strait, is the future of the U.S. “one China” policy. Beijing has long argued that many aspects of U.S. relations with Taiwan are inconsistent with that policy and with the three U.S.-PRC joint communiqués that express it. (Of course, the Taiwan Relations

Act is also an important part of the policy from the American perspective, but Beijing holds that law to be incompatible with the communiqués.) Actions that particularly bother the PRC include American arms sales and other security links to Taiwan, generous transit terms for Taiwan's leaders when passing through the United States, and exchanges of senior officials' visits between Taiwan and the United States.

Taipei, on the other hand, bristles from time to time that the U.S. "one China" policy unfairly constrains the island's burgeoning democracy from achieving its rightful status in the international community by kowtowing to Beijing's demands.²⁸ This was especially evident in the recent flurry of commentary following Secretary of State Colin Powell's statements that the United States does not regard the ROC as a "sovereign, independent state." While this is long-standing U.S. policy, Washington has generally tried to avoid commenting on this question. It seems fairly obvious that the Secretary's remarks reflected growing frustration at Taipei's continuing emphasis on its position regarding Taiwan's independent sovereignty, especially at a moment when Washington was trying to persuade Beijing to set aside the "one China" precondition for resumption of cross-Strait dialogue.²⁹

Although this issue will recede from the headlines over time, at least for now it seems to have gotten caught up in Taiwan politics. While President Chen has raised the decibel level in insisting that Taiwan is a "sovereign, independent state" and "no person and no country can deny this,"³⁰ KMT Chairman Lien Chan has criticized the DPP's emphasis on this position as unnecessarily threatening the safety of the people of Taiwan. Lien has revived his call for setting aside the dispute with Beijing over Taiwan's sovereignty³¹ and for basing cross-Strait policy on "one China, respective interpretations,"³² a theme that was largely muted during the presidential campaign.

Moreover, some in Taipei occasionally claim that, in limiting certain kinds of arms sales and other military relations, the U.S. "one China" policy also compromises Taiwan's security.³³

Some in the U.S. have questioned the continued viability of the "one China" policy. A few voices argue that the United States should press Taiwan to accept "one China" and at least create a framework, if not a path, for ultimate reunification. But most of the questions go in the other direction, revolving around the reality that, if the government in Taipei could be said to have supported "one China" at the time of the Shanghai Communiqué of February

1972, the U.S.-PRC normalization communiqué of December 1978, and even the arms sales communiqué of August 1982, that is a dubious proposition today. Thus, some ask if the policy is "fair," others whether it is realistic or sustainable. A small number goes beyond questioning the policy to argue for simply getting rid of it and recognizing Taiwan's independence.

As uncomfortable as the "one China" policy has always been for Americans in important respects, and as unsatisfactory as it is for either Taipei or Beijing, it is hard to imagine what could reasonably—or responsibly—replace it. Let's understand what the "one China" policy is and what it is not. First, what it is not.

It is not an endorsement of Beijing's "one China principle," i.e., the claim that there is "one China" of which Taiwan is a part. The U.S. policy "acknowledges" that claim, and it commits the United States to avoid taking positions inconsistent with it such as "one China, one Taiwan" or "two Chinas." But it does not "accept" it. Thus, while the United States recognizes the government of the People's Republic of China as the "sole legal government of China," this does not mean it accepts that the PRC government speaks for, or represents, the people of Taiwan in the international community as Beijing, itself, insists.

As noted earlier, it also is not an endorsement of Taipei's claim that the Republic of China (or Taiwan) is a sovereign, independent state. Since the U.S. broke diplomatic relations with Taipei in January 1979, the United States has maintained only unofficial relations with the people in Taiwan. So, while it is true that Washington and Taipei share a common desire to maintain peace, when Taipei asserts that we share the goal of maintaining the status quo, this is at best misleading. The United States does not support a "status quo" that is grounded in acceptance of Taipei's definition of the ROC (or Taiwan) as a "sovereign, independent state" or that implies the United States is committed to come to Taiwan's defense in support of that claim.

The "one China" policy leaves it to the two sides of the Strait eventually to work out all issues between them, including their political relationship. The U.S. neither supports nor opposes any particular final outcome (e.g., independence or reunification). Those are "their issues."³⁴ But it does oppose any unilateral steps by either side to try to force a particular result since that could upset peace and stability in the Strait, which would directly affect American strategic national interests—potentially drawing the United States into war—and is, therefore, very much "our issue."

MANAGING THE FUTURE

As does the United States, both sides of the Strait obviously wish to avoid conflict. Whatever threatening noises Beijing makes, whatever military preparations it undertakes, it is clearly against the PRC's interest to go to war, which would not only *not* resolve "the Taiwan question" (instead, setting off generations of turmoil), but which could well bring the PRC and U.S. into direct combat, a situation that, to understate the case, would benefit no one.³⁵

Some people, especially in the United States but also both in Taiwan and on the mainland, have advocated that the U.S. take a more "proactive" role in promoting cross-Strait dialogue. In March 1987, Secretary of State George P. Shultz first publicly articulated the U.S. goal of fostering an environment conducive to constructive cross-Strait developments.³⁶ To the extent that this can be done now, it should be. But the United States is not in a position either to force a dialogue on the parties or to play a direct, mediating role. This is not merely because of the so-called "six assurances," provided to Taipei at the time of the August 17, 1982 U.S.-PRC communiqué, that pledged to avoid doing either of those things.³⁷ It is also because the history of such efforts going all the way back to the 1940s, and the likely prospects for any future such efforts, are dim, indeed. That does not mean there are no useful steps the U.S. could take, only that any steps contemplated must be carefully calibrated for their net effect.

The American "one China" policy, as defined here—and as the United States has defined it for some twenty-five years—has served well not only American interests but also the fundamental interests of the PRC and Taiwan. That policy has fostered peace, prosperity and a general level of security that has benefited all three as well as many others.

Well understood, and effectively implemented, it should continue to make a positive contribution. But it will only be effective if those with primary responsibility, the leaders on both sides of the Strait, act creatively and responsibly.

NOTES

1. In Chinese, "four noes and one will not" (*si bu, yi meiyou*).

2. The original charter of November 1986 included the following provision for "Establishing of a Sovereign and Independent Republic of Taiwan": 1) In accordance with the reality of Taiwan's sovereignty, an independent country should be established and a new constitution drawn up in order to make the legal system conform to the social reality in Taiwan and in order to return to the international community according to the principles of international law. 2) In accordance with the reality of Taiwan's sovereignty, the scope of Taiwan's sovereignty over the land and the people should be redefined, with the double aim of creating a legal basis for dealings between the two sides of the Taiwan Straits in accordance with international law and of safeguarding the rights of people from both sides in their dealings with each other. (http://203.73.100.105/english/pub/LIT_1.asp?ctyp=LITERATURE&PCATID=1975&catid=2121).

3. The "Resolution Regarding Taiwan's Future" passed by the DPP National Party Congress on May 8, 1999, reads in part: "Proclamation: 1. Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country. Any change in the independent status quo must be decided by all the residents of Taiwan by means of plebiscite. 2. Taiwan is not a part of the People's Republic of China. China's unilateral advocacy of the 'One China' principle and 'One Country, Two Systems' is fundamentally inappropriate for Taiwan. 3. Taiwan should expand its role in the international community, seek international recognition, and pursue the goal of membership in the United Nations and other international organizations. 4. Taiwan should renounce the 'One China' position to avoid international confusion and to prevent China from using the principle as a pretext for forceful annexation." This language is described by the DPP as the "new foundation of the DPP's China policy." (For full text of the May 1999 resolution as well as the explanation regarding its status see *Critical Time: Striding Towards Reform*, Taipei: DPP Headquarters, November 2002.)

4. "Full Text of Premier Zhu's Press Conference," *People's Daily*, March 16, 2000, online at <http://www.fas.org/news/china/2000/eng20000316N107.htm>.

5. "I fully understand that as the popularly elected 10th-term President of the Republic of China, I must abide by the Constitution, maintain the sovereignty, dignity and security of our country, and ensure the well-being of all citizens. Therefore, as long as the CCP regime has no intention to use military force against Taiwan, I pledge that during my term in office, I will not declare independence, I will not change the national title, I will not push forth the inclusion of the so-called 'state-to-state' description in the Constitution, and I will not promote a referendum to change the status quo in regards to the question of independence or unification. Furthermore, the abolition of the National

Reunification Council or the National Reunification Guidelines will not be an issue.” (From Inaugural Speech, May 20, 2000, available at http://www.president.gov.tw/1_president/e_subject-06e.html.)

6. In mid-2000, PRC Vice Premier Qian Qichen put forth the “three new sentences”: there is only one China in the world, Taiwan and the mainland are both part of China, China’s territory and sovereignty are not divisible. (Cf. <http://gb.ettoday.com.tw/6060/2002/08/06/328-1336580.htm>.) These sentences were referred to in the Political Report to the 16th Party Congress in November 2002 and then picked up as official State doctrine at the 5th Meeting of the 9th National People’s Congress in March 2003 (For a report of the Party Congress see <http://www.chinanews.com.cn/2002-11-27/26/247704.html> and of the March 2003 NPC see http://big5.xinhuanet.com/gate/big5/news.xinhuanet.com/ziliao/2003-09/23/content_1094542.htm.) The middle sentence was in large measure designed to appeal to Taiwan, since it echoed language in Taipei’s 1991 National Unification Guidelines: “Both the mainland and Taiwan areas are parts of Chinese territory.” (<http://www.mac.gov.tw/english/english/macpolicy/gnueng.htm>).

7. In late June 2000, Chen briefly seemed to go along with an embrace of the so-called “1992 Consensus” with its acceptance of “one China,” but he quickly retreated from that position under criticism from within the DPP.

8. An interesting exception was the May 17, 2004, “authorized statement.” “One country, two systems” did not need to be addressed there, because reunification was not dealt with.

9. “Strait Talk,” *Time Asia*, November 15, 2004. (<http://www.time.com/time/asia/magazine/article/0,13673,501041115-750848,00.html>).

10. In his May 20, 2004, inaugural address he said: “If both sides are willing, on the basis of goodwill, to create an environment engendered upon ‘peaceful development and freedom of choice,’ then in the future, the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China—or Taiwan and China—can seek to establish relations in any form whatsoever. We would not exclude any possibility, so long as there is the consent of the 23 million people of Taiwan.” (<http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/showenews.php4>) He indirectly reaffirmed this position in a formal statement on November 10, 2004 (“President Chen Presides over a High-level National Security Meeting,” News Release, Office of the President, 2004-11-10, <http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/showenews.php4>).

11. Chen’s text is at <http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/docset/showenews.php4?section=5&rid=1784>. The PRC’s reaction, as expressed through the press conference of the Taiwan Affairs Office, is at http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwfbh/xwfbh0.asp?xwfbh_m_id=42.

12. Chen later sought to explain this away by saying: “What does ‘Taiwan to walk its own road’ mean? This is very simple, very clear, and easily understood: Taiwan’s own road is Taiwan’s road to democracy, Taiwan’s road to freedom,

Taiwan’s road to human rights, and Taiwan’s road to peace.” But since “walking on Taiwan’s own path” was originally raised as something that would happen *only if* the PRC did not respond appropriately, this hardly seems plausible. (The account of his original statement is in Stephanie Low, “‘Pan-Blue’ Camp Asks Chen to Clarify Remarks,” *Taipei Times*, July 23, 2002. The later explanation came in “President Chen’s Opening Address of the 29th Annual Meeting of the World Federation of Taiwanese Associations,” published: August 3, 2002, <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/4-oa/20020803/2002080301.html>.)

13. Based on personal interviews in the PRC in January 2004.

14. The issue of defense spending that was on the ballot is far from trivial, but there is no obvious reason why, in a representative democracy, this is an issue that must—or even should—be submitted to a referendum rather than being handled through the legislative process.

15. In his meeting with American academics on November 11, 2003, a little over a month after he first broached the idea, Chen put it this way: “Almost two-thirds of the articles of the ROC Constitution need to be amended, including the complete rewriting of nearly half of these articles. Such an undertaking is beyond the range of simply rewriting, it requires a complete construction of a new constitution.” (Chang Yun-Ping, “Chen drafts timetable on constitution,” *Taipei Times*, November 12, 2003 available at <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/front/archives/2003/11/12/2003075512>.)

16. This contrasts with the far more lenient standard for passage of a “regular” referendum—that over half of all eligible voters must cast ballots, and over half of the valid votes cast must be affirmative—meaning only slightly over 25 percent of the voters could theoretically pass such a referendum. The March 20 referenda did not meet even the first standard regarding the percentage of all voters casting ballots, so the enormously greater difficulty of the standard adopted by the LY for constitutional revision is quite clear.

17. Reasons for this vagueness probably include the difficulty of identifying the straw that would “really” break the camel’s back—keeping in mind all that has been tolerated so far—and the concern that, once a “red line” is specified, Taiwan might do everything up to and including touching that “red line,” which could itself trigger a “we must act” reaction short of the “red line” laid down. Thus, specifying a “red line” could prove dangerously misleading if it led to a series of moves short of it that, cumulatively, were seen as too provocative.

18. Although the originally proposed “defensive referendum” was broken into two, and the wording somewhat altered, the main U.S. objection was not to the wording but to the very fact of holding referenda on cross-Strait issues, which was bound to rile Beijing without a significant offsetting benefit.

19. “Statement: Foreign Minister Chen announces that the Republic of Vanuatu and the Republic of China (Taiwan) have already established full

diplomatic relations with effect from November 3, 2004,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs website (<http://www.mofa.gov.tw/webapp/ct?xItem=13670&ctNode=764>).

20. Che Zhiguo, “Beijing’s Authoritative Person Analyzes Fine-Tuning of Policy on Taiwan,” *Hong Kong Ta Kung Pao*, September 25, 2004, as translated by FBIS (CPP20040925000027).

21. The World Health Organization or WHO is generally the entity referred to in public discussion. But technically Taipei seeks observership in the executive body of the WHO, the World Health Assembly or WHA. One informed PRC expert commented that, if Taiwan were to apply for observership as a “health region”—somewhat analogous to its status in the WTO—rather than as a “health entity” with all of the attendant political implications, this might find resonance with some people in Beijing. (Interview)

22. I first made this argument publicly over a year and a half ago. And although the SARS problem has eased, the political logic has not changed. (Cf. <http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac0317c.htm>).

23. Direct trade, postal service and transportation. In essence, the first two already occur. But direct transport links—sea and air—are still at issue.

24. “President Chen Presides over a High-level National Security Meeting,” News Release, Office of the President, 2004-11-10 (<http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/showenews.php4>).

25. As a side note, it is useful to observe that the U.S. and others want their companies to be able to participate in direct transport links just as they do in Hong Kong-mainland routes, but Beijing currently insists that would make them “international” and would, therefore, not be acceptable.

26. See “Beijing’s Private Talks Offer on Cross-Strait Links Rejected,” *China Post*, November 1, 2002 (<http://www.taiwansecurity.org/News/2002/CP-110102.htm>).

27. Cf. Maubo Chang, “Two-Side Sea Lanes Between Taiwan, Mainland China Acceptable: Chen,” *Central News Agency*, Taipei, August 17, 2004.

28. There are some indications that Taipei has determined to mount an effort calling for review of the “one China” policy. It is hard to think of an undertaking that would be more counterproductive to good relations with the U.S. government. Cf. Chang Tsung-chih, “Mei guanyuan yihuei: guanggau neirong shifou daibiao bian lichang,” *Lien Ho-Pao*, October 6, 2004 (filed October 4, 2004).

29. Powell’s other controversial remarks regarding the goal of “reunification” (with CNN) or “peaceful reunification” (with Phoenix TV) were simple misstatements and did not represent a change of policy.

30. See President’s Remarks to the Taiwan Professors Association 14th Anniversary Meeting, November 7, 2004 (translated by FBIS at

CPP20041108000280; original Chinese text available at Taipei Office of the President website <http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/showenews.php4>).

31. Maubo Chang, “KMT Chief Calls for Maintaining Cross-Strait Status Quo,” *Central News Agency*, November 9, 2004.

32. Liu Chien-ju, “Lien Chan Meets Asia Foundation Delegation” *Chung-yang Jih-Pao*, October 30, 2004 (<http://www.wdcm.com.tw/daily/2004/10/30/text/931030a2.htm>), gisted by FBIS at CPP20041030000042).

33. This charge is not terribly credible, especially in light of Taipei’s steadily decreasing defense budgets over the past decade and the failure to purchase much of what was offered as recently as April 2001. Although a special budget is now being promoted for purchase of lower-tier anti-missile PAC-III systems, anti-submarine P3-C aircraft, and diesel submarines, an LY vote has recently been put off for at least several weeks. Even if the vote eventually takes place, it remains to be seen how much of that budget will pass and how much of the equipment will actually be purchased and—crucially—effectively integrated into Taiwan’s armed forces. (In fairness, the submarine issue is especially complicated and probably should be viewed through different lenses than the other systems under consideration.)

34. In truth, some Americans would be upset with reunification, especially as long as the PRC remains an undemocratic state. But for many decades U.S. policy has consistently avoided taking a stance on this issue, and, now that Taiwan is a democracy, it would hardly be sustainable for the U.S. to block an agreement reached voluntarily between the two sides. That being said, there is no realistic prospect of reunification—or independence—on the horizon in any foreseeable future. So debates about this issue fall very much into the realm of political theorizing.

35. There is a sharp difference of view among Americans about what action the U.S. should take if Taiwan is attacked. In a post-9/11, post-Iraq world it might be instructive to take note of a recently released poll. By a margin of 61 percent to 33 percent, the general American public opposes the use of U.S. troops if the PRC invades Taiwan. But “leaders” (in and out of government) would support the use of U.S. troops by 51 percent to 38 percent. (*Global Views 2004: American Public Opinion and Foreign Policy*, The Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, September 28, 2004, at <http://www.cfr.org/globalviews2004/>).

36. Full text of Shultz’s toast in Shanghai is in *U.S. Department of State Bulletin* (May 1987), p. 11.

37. See Alan D. Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and U.S.-PRC Relations* (Washington: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003), pp. 134-137.