

The Taiwan Tangle

Alan D. Romberg

On 27 February 2006, Taiwan's president, Chen Shui-bian, announced that the National Unification Council created by Lee Teng-hui's Kuomintang (KMT) administration in 1991 would "cease to function" and that the National Unification Guidelines that the Council created would "cease to apply." This was the culmination of a series of steps taken in the wake of the humiliating defeat Chen's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) suffered in the 3 December 2005 local elections, steps he hoped would raise Taiwanese consciousness, thus reenergizing the party faithful and appealing to the broader Taiwan electorate.

Along with the "bottom-up, outside-in" approach to constitutional revision that he had been pushing with renewed vigor since autumn, this step once again heightened Washington's sense of mistrust of Chen, negating efforts since the March 2004 presidential election to rebuild mutual confidence. This mistrust led to a confrontation over Chen's proposed transit of the United States in May on his way to and from Latin America, which, in turn, created uncertainty regarding both Taiwan's cross-Strait policy over the next two years as well as the future course of U.S.-Taiwan relations.

At the end of May, in response to the political crisis arising from insider trading allegations against his son-in-law and rumors swirling about corruption on the part of his wife and close political associates, Chen "transferred power" to Premier Su Tseng-chang and said he would refrain from any party activities. The main effect seemed to be that Su would carry out the day-to-day business of government without direct intervention by the president, but Chen would continue to manage those issues he said were specifically given to him by the constitution. These include foreign and national security policy and cross-Strait relations. Chen also—after months of hesitation—reaffirmed his commitment to previous positions forswearing any steps that touched on sovereignty or could otherwise upset the cross-Strait status quo.

Although Beijing has avoided comment on the latest turn of events, it lost no opportunity to highlight Chen's lack of trustworthiness and to assign Washington the responsibility for reining him in lest he move to formal independence and force the PRC itself to act—a formula for disaster. At the same time, the PRC continued to exhibit great confidence about the constraints on Chen's ambitions for independence in the short term as well as its own ability to create a more favorable environment for eventual peaceful unification.

Finally, during PRC president Hu Jintao's late-April visit to Washington, the United States reaffirmed its "one China" policy, reassuring Beijing about the basics of the American approach to Taiwan though not going as far as the PRC would have preferred. Still, clearly targeting Taipei, President Bush did underscore—subtly during Hu's visit, and not so subtly on the occasion of the Chen transit—that Washington would not tolerate *either* side unilaterally seeking to change the status quo or otherwise hindering peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues.

This essay relates the events occurring in this triangle since October 2005, when they were last addressed in *CLM*.

Chen Shui-bian's Movement to the Edge

Throughout the almost eight months from October 2005 through May 2006, Chen Shui-bian continued to hammer on themes that further distanced Taiwan from the concept of "one China" and that were seen in Washington and Beijing as challenges to the cross-Strait status quo. In an interview in early October, in the face of Beijing's insistence that dialogue could only be resumed on the basis of Taiwan's accepting "one China," Chen shot back that he wanted to "strive for delays while not fearing talks," a play on Beijing's earlier call to strive for talks while not fearing delay.¹ A few days later, in his 10 October National Day address, Chen avoided direct reference to cross-Strait relations, but he called for a new political order, insisting that long-term political stability and democratic sustainability in Taiwan required "comprehensive reviews and revisions" of the constitution. He announced that, henceforth, revising the constitution would be a "bottom-up, outside-in" process, "that is, relevant proposals will be first initiated by the social groups before political parties are involved."²

In adopting this posture, Chen was setting the scene for what could well become a free-for-all in which radical, independence-oriented draft amendments or even full texts would likely be put forward from the grass roots or even in the legislature. Such measures could, if adopted, cross PRC "red lines" against "juridical independence," potentially drawing the United States into conflict with China.

In the fall, these issues did not draw particular attention from Washington because Chen's earlier pledges to avoid destabilizing steps were thought to be intact. But once those pledges were cast into doubt, Chen's approach to constitutional revision, along with his handling of the National Unification Council (NUC) and National Unification Guidelines (NUG), came back to haunt him and U.S.-Taiwan relations.

Bush to China, Reaffirms “One China” Policy, Praises Taiwan Democracy

Before President Bush visited China in late November, he met with the Asian press. On Taiwan issues he previewed the standard, neutral position he would present in Beijing: “I’ll confirm my one China, three communiqué policy, that not only says that we do not support independence, but as well, we will adhere to the Taiwan Relations Act. I think that’s important for the Chinese leadership and the people of China to hear.”³

The president voiced concern that “one party or the other” might do something unilaterally to change the status quo, but he expressed optimism about ultimate peaceful resolution, taking favorable note of ongoing dialogue (presumably meaning with the opposition KMT) and urging continued discussion to that end.

En route to Beijing, Mr. Bush gave a major speech in Kyoto, Japan, focusing on democracy and touting Taiwan’s achievements. Although official briefers claimed he was not holding up the island as a model for the PRC, the president seemed to speak in parallels. Having effusively praised Taiwan for “embracing freedom at all levels” and observing that it had moved from repression to democracy as it liberalized its economy, he then went on to say that, “[a]s the people of China grow in prosperity, their demands for political freedom will grow as well.”⁴

Taipei immediately seized on the speech as “quite significant” and voiced common cause with American calls for peace, democracy and dialogue.⁵ Taipei’s representative in Washington, adding a cautioning modifier that proved prescient, said the speech represented “the restoration of mutual trust and confidence *to some extent* between our leaders and also . . . better communication between our two governments.”⁶ Responding to the speech with language reminiscent of an earlier era, Beijing retorted that “Taiwan is a part of China, an inseparable part of China, and China does not brook any [outside] interference in its internal affairs.”⁷

In her briefing to the press following the president’s meetings on 20 November with Chinese leaders in Beijing, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice did not volunteer that Taiwan was one of the issues discussed, but in answer to questions she acknowledged it had been and described the president as simply presenting the basics of the “one China” policy, including urging cross-Strait exchanges and dialogue.⁸

In his own meeting with the press that day, President Hu Jintao reiterated China’s stance against Taiwan independence and went on to note that President Bush had stated on many occasions that the United States would stick to the “one China” policy, abide by the three U.S.-PRC joint communiqués, and “oppose Taiwan independence,” a position, Hu said, that he highly appreciated.⁹

As usual, Taipei was anxious about what might come out of the Beijing summit and, as usual, it breathed a sigh of relief when nothing new emerged affecting Taiwan’s

interests.¹⁰ However, the results of island-wide local elections two weeks later, on 3 December, touched off a train of events that has roiled the waters ever since.

Local Taiwan Elections Change the Dynamic

There were three different levels of local elections in December, and the KMT won handily in all. For example, of the 23 county magistrates and city mayors up for election, the KMT won 14 and its pan-Blue allies another three, a gain of five for the party and three for the pan-Blue alliance, while the DPP won only six, a drop of three. DPP party stalwarts later tried to argue that the overall 42 percent of the vote garnered in these elections was a mere 3 percent lower than obtained in the last local elections four years earlier, but this rang hollow in light of the fact that the KMT alone won 51 percent in these elections (up from 42 percent four years earlier) and the pan-Blue alliance obtained a total of 57 percent. In the county and city council and township chief elections, in which the independents got roughly 30 percent of the vote, Chen's DPP fared even more poorly in comparison with the KMT, getting 22 to 24 percent as against the KMT's 40 to 45 percent.¹¹

These results were generally ascribed both to poor performance of the DPP government and to a number of scandals that have plagued the administration, some of which involved close associates and even family members of the president. Although he was not implicated in any of the scandals, party chairman Su Tseng-chang resigned to take responsibility for the election debacle. He was then, however, appointed premier by Chen, replacing Frank Hsieh Chang-ting, a moderate who had been appointed a year earlier, in December 2004, at a time when the DPP sought to recover from the Legislative Yuan defeat. As of the moment, Su is undoubtedly the leading contender for the DPP presidential nomination for 2008, but Hsieh, who has agreed to stand as the DPP candidate for mayor of Taipei in December 2006, also remains in the running.

Still, this disaster for the DPP was not universally seen as an automatic boon for the KMT. As the normally pro-Blue *China Post* editorialized on 5 December:

As the people are ready to confront their post-election hardship, a dark tide of helplessness is descending on the nation. They know their government is heading in the wrong direction. They are pessimistic about their own individual futures, fully aware that the government will not do anything to help them. The government party is sinking fast, but the opposition does not rise to the occasion, despite the almost quixotic but highly creditable effort on the part of its leader Ma Ying-jeou. The best he did was to retain the allegiance of hardcore Kuomintang supporters. Problems on the one side do not lead to a resurgence of the other.

Ma, mayor of Taipei and the odds-on favorite for the KMT's presidential nomination (he was elected KMT chairman in July 2005), tried to seize the moment to press forward a proactive cross-Strait agenda. He characterized the realization of the "three links"—meaning primarily, by now, direct cross-Strait transportation links—as not

only “urgent” but “necessary.” And in a discerning casting of the issue that implicitly predicted the direction in which Chen would eventually move, business leaders on the island reportedly said trade should be normalized as quickly as possible, *not tightened up*.¹²

The PRC seemed generally satisfied that the election results would contain what they saw as Chen’s persistent independence tendencies. They publicly characterized the elections as reflecting the hope of Taiwan citizens to maintain social stability, economic development and peaceful and stable relations with the Mainland. But the State Council’s Taiwan Affairs Office also warned that Chen Shui-bian’s proposed second phase of constitutional reform was the “biggest threat to peace and stability” in the Taiwan Strait region.¹³

Chen Reemerges, Presses For Political Change

The election result was universally seen as a resounding defeat for President Chen, whose approval rating just after the election dropped to between 12.6 and 21 percent while disapproval rose to 62–70.2 percent.¹⁴ After a post-election period in which he maintained a very low, almost invisible, profile (he is said to have gone into seclusion for nine days), Chen reemerged in late December to say that he had been reflecting hard since the election, and that the result of his musings would be manifest in his 1 January address to the nation—a speech he described as more significant than either of his inaugural addresses.¹⁵

Chen used that speech to deliver a hard-hitting message focused on “Taiwanese consciousness” and democratization, arguing that “issues concerning national identity are an inescapable reality that must be confronted and addressed.”¹⁶ He bemoaned as “a heartbreaking and humiliating predicament” the fact that “circumstances forbid us from saying out loud consistently the name of our country . . . our country, Taiwan.”

Chen’s approach seemed to manifest his determination to win back the support of the DPP base that had deserted him over the accusations of poor governance and corruption, and it was not to be his last effort in this regard. Foreshadowing the controversial step he would take within a month with respect to the National Unification Council and National Unification Guidelines, Chen expressed “tolerance” for the statement by “a party chairman” (i.e., Ma) that “unification” was his party’s ultimate goal. But, he went on, “[w]hat cannot be tolerated is any attempt to deprive the people of their freedom to choose, as such deprivation violates the principle of ‘popular sovereignty.’” Linking Ma with Beijing, he said “no leeway” would be given for either the KMT or the Chinese Communist Party “to establish an undemocratic premise or impose a set of choices that precludes democratic freedom” or that contravenes the principles of sovereignty, democracy, peace, and parity.

Further laying the groundwork for his later move on the NUC/NUG front, Chen cited several steps Beijing had taken to strengthen its military threat to Taiwan, including

adoption of a three-stage plan encompassing “preparation for war against Taiwan” in order to “ensure victory in a decisive battle” by 2015. As became evident later on, Chen viewed these changes as representing an intention to use force against Taiwan, thereby invalidating the premise of his “five noes” inaugural pledge.¹⁷

Chen struck two other themes in the New Year’s address that would continue to resonate. First, he cited the growing risks of cross-Strait trade and investment “liberalization” for Taiwan’s sustained economic development. He announced a revision of the previous “proactive liberalization and effective management” approach, standing it on its head so that it was now “proactive management and effective liberalization.” The purpose was not to cut off cross-Strait economic flows entirely, an unachievable, self-defeating goal. However, fulfilling the fears of the business community, he clearly aimed to put a governor on them.

In addition, while identifying six priority areas for reform over the remaining two years of his presidency,¹⁸ Chen reaffirmed the special importance he placed on constitutional reform or “reengineering,” as he had come to call it. The result, which he dubbed “Taiwan’s New Constitution,” was to be “timely, relevant, and viable.” Although committing himself yet again to follow the very high-bar constitutional amendment procedures—which require a three-fourths affirmative vote in the legislature and approval by half of all eligible voters in a national referendum—Chen also reiterated his call for a grassroots approach. As he put it in a later interview: “Taiwan is a democratic and plural society. The freedom of speech is guaranteed. We must also respect dissenting opinions.”¹⁹ So far, so good. The problem came with the implications of his additional statement: “The government has an open mind.”

Chen had “explicitly proposed” in his second inaugural that sensitive issues related to sovereignty, territory, and unification/independence “be excluded” from the constitutional reengineering project.²⁰ Now, however, he took the position that no topic could be excluded from discussion in a democratic process that holds the constitution to be the “collective mandate” of the people. He also argued—accurately, in this observer’s view—that radical amendments have no prospect of passing, given the stringent ratification requirements, and he later reaffirmed that he would “absolutely abide by the promises and pledges I have made to the U.S. Government and the U.S. president.”²¹ But by setting up a process where such issues are likely to arise—indeed, where he seems to be inviting and even inciting them—he began to raise serious doubts about whether he would live up to that commitment.

In Taiwan, reactions to the New Year’s speech broke along predictable lines. On one side, opposition spokesmen called it “tremendously unintelligent” and “the wrong treatment for improving Taiwan’s woeful political situation.”²² On the other, a pro-Green newspaper editorialized that, through the speech, the administration had finally “attained a degree of strategic clarity about the role and goals of the DPP government and how to get the needed popular support to achieve at least some of its goals.”²³ Unsurprisingly, political analysts predicted an uneasy political year ahead.

In his own New Year's address, Hu Jintao talked of Taiwan policy at some length in standard terms.²⁴ And when the PRC reacted to Chen's speech several days later, it also did so in firm but still customary language, expressing a desire for peace, stability and more exchanges, while firmly rejecting any movement toward Taiwan independence.²⁵

This time, Chen's speech caught U.S. attention. In response, a State Department statement stressed the American expectation that Chen would keep his promises and take no steps in the constitutional amendment process that could be interpreted as crossing Beijing's "red lines" on independence, leading to confrontation.²⁶ Ironically (in light of later events), no particular attention was focused on the "fifth no": not to abolish the National Unification Council and Guidelines.

Senior Taiwan spokesmen spent time trying to assert that, while the State Department statement showed the United States was "concerned" about Chen's New Year's speech, Washington had not protested and its attitude remained "moderate and neutral."²⁷ They pointed the finger of responsibility for the confrontation at Beijing, citing the "Anti-Secession Law" of March 2005 and a series of other developments since that had shown the PRC was antagonistic and had no interest in dealing with the Chen administration. As Chiou I-jen, secretary-general of the National Security Council, put it: "We know that Beijing would like to continue ignoring the popularly elected government. Beijing may think that the strategy is quite successful, but their lack of respect promoted [sic] President Chen to urge the Taiwanese people to ditch their fantasies about China."²⁸

In mid-January, partially in response to a *Newsweek* interview in which KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou had affirmed the KMT's policy of seeking "ultimate" unification with the Mainland,²⁹ Chen Shui-bian said such a position "totally contravenes the democratic principle of honoring the people's right to sovereignty."³⁰ And he argued that the PRC had not only the intention and capability but an operational plan to defeat Taiwan militarily.³¹ As time wore on, he sought to imply that the United States shared his assessment as reflected in repeated U.S. statements of concern that Beijing was working to tilt the military balance in the Mainland's direction.³²

Building on this view, when he met with supporters on the Lunar New Year at the end of the month, Chen argued that the National Unification Council and Guidelines were not only moribund—as they failed to reflect the view of the vast majority of Taiwan's people—but that their very existence was "problematic," since they were aimed specifically at achieving a predetermined goal of unification and even accepted the intolerable "one China" principle. The president cited the "demand" of various people for their abrogation and said this "should be considered in earnest and handled properly in a suitable period."³³

This declaration clearly came as a shock to Washington, renewing concern and even anger that Chen was pulling surprises on potentially dangerous cross-Strait issues without considering U.S. equities, and that he was breaking pledges to the United States

in the process. The State Department issued a formulaic statement the next day,³⁴ but the message to both sides of the Strait was as much in its speed, formality, and coldness as in its exact wording. Moreover, as time went on, the United States intensified its efforts and broadened the focus of its criticism.

There were credible but unconfirmed reports that a senior NSC staff member and State Department official³⁵ went to Taipei in mid-February to try to persuade Chen not to abolish the Council and Guidelines. When it was evident this had failed, and as the eve of the decision approached—with preparations for PRC president Hu Jintao’s visit to Washington ramping up—a State Department spokesman identified the substantive nub of U.S. concern, which, he said, the United States was “strenuously” conveying to Taipei: “We do not support Taiwan independence *and we oppose steps by either side that raise tensions or alter the status quo as we define it.*”³⁶

Taipei scrambled to make the case that Chen’s announcement did not represent a change in the status quo, but was, as Foreign Minister James Huang Chih-fang put it, a “natural reaction” to the PRC’s “relentless suppression” of Taiwan.³⁷ Later on, officials in Taipei argued that, regarding the specific proposal to abolish the National Unification Council and Guidelines, the president was not only reflecting the will of the people on Taiwan not to be formally committed to unification, he was also complying with a resolution of the legislature calling for abolition of various “non-standard” presidential commissions that were operating without proper legislative mandate.³⁸

One of the purposes of Chen’s move seems to have been to put the putative 2008 KMT presidential candidate, Ma Ying-jeou, on the defensive, perhaps even forcing him to defend the KMT-imposed Council and Guidelines, which would not have stood him in good stead politically. But, in a rehearsal of a debate that is likely to last through the entire election campaign, while Ma continued to stand behind the KMT’s position in favor of ultimate unification, he made clear that the final choice would be up to the people of Taiwan and that, in any case, no resolution of cross-Strait relations—unification or other—would be feasible until many years down the road, when the PRC had democratized and become prosperous. Thus, Ma argued, Chen should stop taking steps that only antagonized the United States and alarmed Beijing, and should focus instead on the pressing economic and social needs of the people of Taiwan.³⁹

The PRC continued to castigate Chen for raising tensions and seeking to bring about *de jure* independence through constitutional revision by the time he leaves office in 2008, but, by and large, Beijing remained calm. As Yu Keli, director of the Institute of Taiwan Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, confidently put it: “Chen’s attempt to seek Taiwan ‘independence’ would never win support from the people on the island, nor would he succeed.”⁴⁰

This modulated response contrasted sharply with the excited reaction to Chen’s various proposals for constitutional change, referenda, and other “separatist” steps in the course of the 2004 presidential and legislative elections. This difference was due to far greater PRC confidence not only in its own gathering attraction (and clout) for people in

Taiwan but also, crucially, in the willingness and capability of the United States to keep Taipei on the straight and narrow.

As a showdown approached, President Chen came out publicly on 22 February for abolishing the Council, labeling it “an absurd product of an absurd era.”⁴¹ The proposed step generated turmoil all along the political spectrum in Taiwan. Some in Chen’s own party had already questioned the wisdom of stirring things up this way,⁴² and in the wake of his statement the opposition threatened to bring a motion of censure in the legislature,⁴³ a ploy that was, however, quickly abandoned.

Chen Acts On the National Unification and Guidelines

On 27 February 2006, Chen formally announced that the National Unification Council would “cease to function” and the Guidelines would “cease to apply.”⁴⁴ This fig-leaf phraseology was the product of intense negotiations with the United States, and seemed to satisfy Washington—or at least part of Washington—because it avoided the term “abolish.” Although the Chinese term used for “cease to function” and “cease to apply” carried the substantive meaning of “terminate,” the United States appeared to believe that, since the agreement was negotiated in English, the English terminology took precedence.

Reflecting the negotiated arrangement, U.S. spokesmen voiced support for the outcome, but they ducked on the question of whether this step changed the status quo, and expressed a degree of wariness about next steps: “[I]t’s our understanding that President Chen did not abolish it [the NUC] and he reaffirmed Taiwan’s commitment to the status quo. We attach great importance to that commitment and we’ll be following his follow-through carefully.”⁴⁵ An astute reporter asked whether Chen would pay a price for his insistence on playing with the wording rather than backing away altogether from taking action on the Council and Guidelines. The spokesman responded: “I don’t know what that [paying a price] means.” Later developments suggested what it meant.

China’s rhetorical reaction was harsh, but, citing the March 2005 “Anti-Secession Law,” Beijing tellingly reserved its most serious warnings for what it described as the rising “risk and danger” of pushing independence through “constitutional reform.”⁴⁶ PRC officials also made a point of cautioning the United States to “fully realize” the gravity and danger of Chen’s aims and to take “concrete actions” to oppose them, making “concerted efforts with China” to maintain sound Sino-American relations and peace and stability in the Strait.⁴⁷

Lest anyone in the broader international community mistake the seriousness of the issue, the PRC sent a letter to UN secretary-general Kofi Annan accusing Taiwan of advancing its independence agenda and challenging cross-Strait peace by its action on the Council and Guidelines.⁴⁸

At the same time, Beijing reiterated the central importance of Hu Jintao's "four points" as laid out on 5 March: one China, peaceful reunification, pinning hopes on the Taiwan people, and opposing Taiwan independence.⁴⁹ PRC premier Wen Jiabao also cited Beijing's consistent adherence to "peaceful reunification," "one country, two systems" and former president Jiang Zemin's eight-point proposal for developing cross-strait relations and promoting peaceful reunification.⁵⁰

Still, the most important reaction was that in Taiwan itself. As already noted, among the many assessments of why Chen took this step, one of the more credible was that, in addition to seeking to provoke a PRC reaction he could play against, he sought to box in KMT chairman Ma Ying-jeou, forcing Ma to endorse the KMT-created Council and Guidelines, thus risking his popularity with the Taiwan electorate. In fact, Ma dodged that bullet. Although his first reaction was reportedly to consider supporting a motion of "recall,"⁵¹ he soon dropped that, arguing, as he had before, that any resolution of cross-strait relations was a long way off, that the KMT favored ultimate unification only after China was democratic and prosperous, and that, in any case, the choice would be up to the people. At this point, he said once again, Chen should stop playing political games and attend to the urgent economic, health, education, and welfare issues facing Taiwan's people.⁵² Ma stressed these same themes throughout his nine-day visit to the United States in late March in an effort to win American support and understanding (as well as to disarm criticism of the KMT position on arms sales, discussed toward the end of this essay).

Pro-independence media predictably hailed Chen's action as having "historical significance for the people of Taiwan" and said "the cessation of the NUC and NUG marked the final termination of the most important remaining illegitimate relics of the era of authoritarian rule by the former ruling Kuomintang."⁵³ A former deputy director-general of Chen's National Security Council, however, suggested that, while Taiwan's "internal abstract space" might seem bigger, "external substantive space will only shrink." "The loss," he judged, "will outweigh the gain."⁵⁴

The spotlight quickly focused back on the U.S.-Taiwan dynamic, as it was reported that senior Taipei officials had said there was no difference between "abolishing" the National Unification Council and having it "cease to function." Although Taiwan later denied any such statements had been made,⁵⁵ the State Department, no doubt partially with an eye to Beijing's reaction, called for Taipei "publicly to correct the record and unambiguously affirm that the February 27 announcement did not abolish the National Unification Council and did not change the status quo, and that the assurances remain in effect." Having tried to avoid the question of whether abolishing the NUC and NUG would change the status quo, Washington finally came down on the issue: "Abrogating an assurance would be changing the status quo."⁵⁶

After several instances of U.S. officials repeating the call for Taipei to "unambiguously clarify its position," the issue eventually slipped from the front pages. However, Taipei never entirely cleared the air on this issue and Washington's anger and suspicion over Taiwan's word games did not fully dissipate. Senator John Warner (R-

VA), chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, went so far as to warn that, if conflict were precipitated “by just inappropriate and wrongful politics generated by the Taiwanese elected officials, I’m not entirely sure that this nation would come full force to their rescue if they created that problem,”⁵⁷ a statement that contrasted sharply with President Bush’s declaration five years earlier that the United States was ready “to do whatever it takes” to defend Taiwan.

President Chen pledged again that there would be no “accidents” or surprises: “There will be no change in the commitments that I’ve made to the U.S. government, to President (George) Bush,” he told the newly arrived U.S. representative, AIT Director Stephen M. Young.⁵⁸ He persisted in defending his action regarding the National Unification Council and Guidelines as aimed merely at bolstering Taiwan’s “freedom to choose our own destiny” and “consolidating and deepening Taiwan’s democracy, rather than at moving toward *de jure* independence.”⁵⁹ But he also continued to plug for a bottom-up, outside-in constitutional revision process and said “we should adopt an open attitude regarding these sensitive issues of whether to change the national moniker, national territory, or national flag.”⁶⁰ As noted earlier, this was in direct contradiction of his May 2004 inaugural pledge and it again raised red flags in Washington about Chen’s dedication to upholding previous commitments on sensitive issues affecting cross-Strait relations. A State Department spokesman responded: “The leadership of Taiwan has made public commitments with regard to its cross-straits policy. Those commitments are well known. We appreciate them and we take them seriously and we expect that they’ll be sustained . . . They’ve made those commitments—we hold them to them.”⁶¹

While it sought to contain Chen Shui-bian’s provocative actions, the Bush administration also continued to focus on the other side of the equation, raising questions about the size of the PRC’s military buildup. In an echo of controversial remarks by Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld in Singapore in June 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice termed China’s intentions “concerning” and said that the United States and others needed to “make sure that we’re looking at a Chinese military buildup that is not outsized for China’s regional ambitions and interests.”⁶² President Chen found some support in this for his argument that it was the PRC (not Taiwan) that was changing the status quo. He was also heartened by the remarks of a senior Pentagon official that “U.S. policy opposes unilateral changes in the Taiwan Strait status quo by either party. The PLA military build-up changes that status quo,” and cited them in a press interview.⁶³

Taiwan’s Domestic Politics and Cross-Strait Relations

These developments clearly energized the debate over Taiwan’s cross-Strait policy. It was also in this period that Ma Ying-jeou emerged as the KMT’s spokesman on national policies. In speeches during his trips to Europe and the United States in February and March, Ma began to give more substance to his long-standing position that cross-Strait relations must be grounded in the “1992 Consensus,” which he claimed he had created and which he said should be understood as “one China, respective interpretations.”⁶⁴ He even endorsed Chen’s “five noes” (which Chen, of course, had by now cast into

considerable doubt) but also went beyond them to put forth a positive agenda for cross-Strait relations, including negotiation of a long-term interim peace accord and reaching a *modus vivendi* over Taiwan's "international space."⁶⁵ All of this generated strong responses back and forth between Ma and Chen, including at their televised meeting on 3 April 2006. This set of issues will be the focus of later *CLM* analyses.

Meanwhile, the reasonably high-profile treatment accorded Ma by the U.S. government when he visited Washington in March was obviously meant to signal Chen that American patience was running out and, if he did not pay closer attention to U.S. interests, Washington had visible ways of indicating its displeasure.⁶⁶ As one perceptive PRC analyst put it, this treatment indicated American attitudes toward Chen rather than any wholehearted embrace of Ma or the KMT.⁶⁷

And although statements on China policy by Rice and Deputy Secretary of State Robert B. Zoellick over the next several weeks did not dwell on Taiwan, *per se*, the dramatic turn of events surrounding President Chen's proposed transit of the United States in early May showed that it had not disappeared from the American official consciousness. An intervening event that helped keep it there was the visit by PRC president Hu Jintao to Washington on April 20.

President Hu Comes to Washington

In his welcoming statement on the South Lawn,⁶⁸ President Bush recited pretty much the entire mantra of the U.S. "one China" policy. Beyond opposing unilateral steps by either side to change the status quo, he underscored that "we urge all parties to avoid confrontational or provocative acts."⁶⁹ President Hu responded, also in largely standard terms, noting that President Bush had stated "on various occasions that you . . . oppose Taiwan independence."⁷⁰

In their comments to the press in the Oval Office after their meeting, President Bush took the initiative to note, "We spent time talking about Taiwan, and I assured the President my position has not changed. I do not support independence for Taiwan."⁷¹ In response, President Hu again went through the PRC mantra on Taiwan, but then went on to reveal a bit more of what Bush had said: "President Bush gave us his understanding of the Chinese concerns. He reiterated the American positions and said that he does not hope that moves taken by the Taiwan authorities to change the status quo will upset the China-U.S. relationship."⁷²

Having exhibited considerable nervousness about what might transpire during the Hu visit that could affect Taiwan's interests, and having apparently worked hard to ensure that references to Taiwan independence were linked to "do not support" rather than "oppose," Taipei breathed a collective sigh of relief. President Chen even thanked President Bush for "not allow[ing] China to score on the Taiwan issue" and for having "made no comments that would take Taiwan by surprise."⁷³ Even KMT spokesmen thought the controversy over the National Unification Council and Guidelines was over.⁷⁴

But, although it is clear that Beijing was disappointed not to obtain a clearer public statement from Bush regarding his “opposition” to Taiwan independence, and perhaps even an endorsement of “peaceful reunification,” Taipei’s exultation seems to have reflected a bit of a wishful thinking.

By emphasizing in the welcoming ceremony his opposition to provocations, and by volunteering his attitude toward Taiwan independence in the Oval Office, Bush was expressing in very clear ways that he did not share Chen Shui-bian’s benign characterization of what the Taiwan president had been up to. This impression was deepened during the readout of the meetings by NSC officials, who stressed that the president had made “a very strong statement” about where he is on Taiwan, reiterating a “clear and consistent position,” which, they said, the Chinese president appreciated.⁷⁵ By way of contrast, it was evident that Bush said nothing about the PRC military buildup opposite Taiwan beyond the vague allusions to restraint by both sides in his South Lawn statement. The point was not that the United States didn’t care about the buildup, but that it was currently not nearly as problematic in the president’s view as what he saw coming out of Taiwan.

Because of various gaffes during the Hu visit, reports have emerged of smoldering Chinese anger in response to what Beijing is said to believe were calculated insults.⁷⁶ This characterization seems exaggerated. While the Hu party surely was upset, and the PRC embassy almost apoplectic, most especially over the presence of a disruptive Falun Gong protestor at the South Lawn ceremony, PRC briefings given in the wake of the trip, and private conversations with Hu and his senior aides, stand in stark contrast to that reporting.

Whatever the level of anger, China was determined to cast the results in very positive terms. In his speech at Yale, Hu said that he and Bush had agreed to “promote a constructive relationship of cooperation between our two countries in the 21st century.”⁷⁷ Hu’s foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, described the visit as “of milestone importance to bilateral relations.” As to their discussion of Taiwan, one has to assume some exaggeration in the Xinhua report of Li’s claim that China and the United States “agreed to take joint steps to safeguard peace and stability across the Taiwan Straits.”⁷⁸ “Collaboration” on Taiwan questions has been a long-term PRC goal, but one that the United States has steadfastly rejected. Nonetheless, the two governments do share the goal of avoiding any move by Taipei in the direction of formal independence.

In the meantime, in a 25 April *Wall Street Journal* interview (and again two days later with *Sankei Shimbun*⁷⁹), President Chen reasserted Taiwan’s “independent, sovereign status,” a position that had led to sharp criticism from the Bush administration in past years. He went on to say:

[F]or the past 50 years, it has been abundantly clear to the world that there is only one China. Indeed, there is only one China, a totalitarian China. But at the same time, there is also a democratic Taiwan. For the past half-century, the status quo in the Taiwan Strait has been that there is one democratic Taiwan and one

totalitarian China, and neither of these two has had effective jurisdiction over the other. Each has its own national moniker, national flag, constitution, government, armed forces, and judicial system. Indeed, they are two separate countries.⁸⁰

Chen's Proposed Transits of the United States

As these various strands were playing out, plans were being developed for Chen Shui-bian's trip to Paraguay and Costa Rica in May. He applied for transits of the United States each way, reportedly asking for overnight stops in San Francisco and New York. Instead, he was offered brief refueling stops in Honolulu and Anchorage.

While intense negotiations between Washington and Taipei ran on till the last minute (in fact, so late that they led to a delay in Chen's departure), Beijing made clear its predictable opposition. Its foreign minister, Li Zhaoxing, proclaimed: "We will . . . not allow Taiwan leaders to make use of so-called transit diplomacy to sabotage ties between China and other countries."⁸¹ Beijing apparently gave some muscle to this approach when, after Chen decided not to stop in the United States on his outward-bound leg, it blocked the Taiwan leader's preferred alternate stop in Beirut, forcing him to land in Abu Dhabi, instead, and then to take a lengthy detour via Amsterdam.

Despite accusations in Taipei that the ultimate U.S. decision to restrict Chen so severely was due to PRC pressure, this was not the case. It is true that U.S. relations with the PRC always provide important "background music" to dealings with Taiwan. After all, if it weren't for the requirement to have a "one China" policy in order to maintain constructive relations with Beijing, U.S. policy toward Taiwan would be quite different. But that is hardly a new factor, and within the context of unofficial American relations with Taiwan since 1979, and despite the broadening U.S. agenda with Beijing, Washington has been rather consistent in backing Taiwan in terms of security assistance and in other ways.

It is also possible that the sour notes struck during the Hu visit in the form of the multiple gaffes conditioned the White House's approach to not roiling U.S.-PRC waters further.

But the most salient factor was that Chen's policies were seen as potentially rocking the boat, endangering American interests. That perception came against the history of the previous six years, when at several points Taipei was seen to act on its own domestic political imperatives without sufficient attention to the vital interests of the United States. U.S. signals regarding its discomfort with Chen's steps since January and a desire for some reassurance about Taiwan's policy directions between now and 2008 seemed not to penetrate Taipei policy circles. Even the high-profile reception given to Ma Ying-jeou was explained away in Taipei.⁸² So there was a perceived need to send a stronger, more direct signal of U.S. concern, not just in response to the actions taken so far, but because of what they portended for the future.⁸³

As Deputy Secretary of State Zoellick put it in his testimony before the House International Relations Committee (HIRC) on 10 May 2006, “[What] one . . . has to be careful about is that, when some political figures who’ve got their own competitive politics, just like we have in this country, decide they want to either change their word, or go back from something, or push the edge of an envelope that could lead to conflict, well, then, yes, our government will respond.”⁸⁴

Washington had anticipated that President Chen might refuse to transit the United States when the full range of restrictions was revealed, but it was something of a surprise when, having announced he would transit Anchorage, he abruptly changed plans and ended up in a 37-hour detour via the United Arab Emirates and the Netherlands. He recouped some of his lost sense of dignity when he was able to stop in Libya and Indonesia on the way home, but his handling of the transit issue became a topic of heated debate in Taiwan along with questions about how to manage relations with the United States over the next two years.

Some people have already speculated that Chen will try to play these events as the victimization of Taiwan at the hands of both the United States and the PRC—which he has blamed for the U.S. decision—and hence adopt even more problematic positions. It is clear he will adopt such a stance with regard to the PRC, having already referred to Beijing’s “brutally and savagely” blocking Taiwan officials from both transits and overseas visits, and vowing, “We will not be defeated but will become bolder.”⁸⁵

Taking on the United States, as well, would have obvious appeal for some so-called dark Green supporters,⁸⁶ but it is far from certain that confronting the United States over these events would appeal to even the “light Green” supporters, much less to anyone in the pan-Blue camp.⁸⁷ In any event, so far Chen has stuck to his position that this series of events will have no harmful effect on U.S.-Taiwan relations, including on plans for arms purchases. And he recently reassured a former Bush administration official that he would “continue to steadfastly cooperate” with the United States “for the common interests of the two countries.”⁸⁸

Political Turmoil in Taiwan, Reembracing the United States

In late May, Taipei once again descended into political turmoil. The detention of Chen Shui-bian’s son-in-law on charges of insider trading, and accusations aired against Chen’s wife for accepting large sums of money, led the president to announce he was turning day-to-day management of government fully over to premier Su Tseng-chang and stepping back from any DPP party activities. Chen made clear, however, that he was holding on to those powers specifically granted to the president by the constitution, including with respect to foreign and national security policy and management of cross-strait relations, and he later described the moves as “some changes to the technical issues relating to the coordination of administrative and ruling party operations.”⁸⁹

These steps did not quell calls by the opposition pan-Blue forces for Chen to resign, nor did they bring comfort to many pan-Green partisans who now saw Chen as an albatross around their necks as they faced important elections between now and 2008.⁹⁰ The pan-Blues tabled a motion of recall against the president in mid-June. While most people saw this as unlikely to succeed—it needed support of two-thirds of the legislature, where the opposition had only a one-vote majority, and in a referendum it would need backing from over half of Taiwan’s eligible voters—many felt it would further undermine Chen’s political power and enhance opposition prospects in forthcoming elections.

In the meantime, plans were also mulled for a possible resolution of “no confidence” in the Su Tseng-chang government, which would need only a simple majority of the legislature to pass. This calculation was complicated, however, by uncertainty over how Chen would respond. He would have a choice of either appointing a new premier or dissolving the legislature and calling for new elections. New elections would seem appealing to the opposition in the abstract, since the pan-Greens are suffering badly in public opinion, but such elections would be conducted under new provisions adopted in 2005, under which half of the seats in the legislature are being abolished. Thus, not only pan-Green members would lose their offices, so would a substantial number of pan-Blue members.

KMT chairman Ma Ying-jeou at first resisted supporting the recall motion, and relied instead on pressing Chen to step down voluntarily, a step backed by almost half of Taiwan’s people, according to polls.⁹¹ Eventually, however, in an apparent effort to keep control of the party, Ma backed the motion despite its dim prospects of success. As of this writing in mid-June, the legislature was in the midst of the recall procedure with a vote scheduled for the end of the month, and next steps were yet to be determined. The one thing that did seem certain was that, if credible evidence developed to prove the as yet unsubstantiated allegations against the First Lady, pressure on Chen to resign would come from his own party as well as from the opposition.

On 8 June, Chen met with visiting AIT chairman Raymond F. Burghardt. Chen’s office issued an English-language statement after that meeting saying that his promises to President Bush and the United States, including the “four noes,” “have never been changed since his first inauguration in 2000, and will not be altered either in the next two years.” It also said Chen told Burghardt that Taiwan’s constitutional reform would “touch upon neither the sovereignty issue nor the alteration of national territory and title.”⁹²

The Chinese-language version of the report, however, which was much more complete,⁹³ made clear that the reiteration of the “four noes” also included a reiteration of the precondition that they applied only as long as the PRC had no intention to attack Taiwan. Since Chen has already declared that precondition null and void, in fact this represented no real advance on what he had said many times in the preceding months. Chen’s statement to Burghardt on exclusions from constitutional reform also differed from his inaugural statement, but it was close enough to take as a “reiteration” of the earlier position.⁹⁴

In any event, the United States chose to seize on these statements as a reaffirmation of the “four noes,” ignoring the issue of the precondition. The State Department issued a statement specifying the pledges Chen had “declared” or “reaffirmed” to Burghardt and seeking to nail them to the door: “The United States attaches profound importance to these pledges, which are a cornerstone of cross-Strait peace and stability.”⁹⁵

The statement called on Beijing to match this “important contribution to stability” by taking parallel steps “to fulfill its obligations for regional peace and stability, including by reaching out to Taiwan’s duly elected leaders.”

The PRC has responded to all of this with a few news reports about developments on the recall motion, but little more. In fact, there were reports that the Central Propaganda Department in Beijing on 9 June issued an order that PRC media not publish any commentary on Taiwan’s political situation.⁹⁶ Presumably this reflected the judgment not only that any outcome had costs as well as benefits for the Mainland, but also that any comment could be used by Chen and the DPP to rally opinion in their favor.

At the same time, the two sides announced progress on various chartered passenger and cargo flights, which was hailed as a “major step” toward the opening of regular cross-Strait flights.⁹⁷ Moreover, there were broad hints that agreement on opening up Taiwan to Mainland tourists was in the offing, and Taiwan’s vice premier, Tsai Ing-wen, suggested that further liberalization of overall cross-Strait trade policy was likely. A conference on policy options and initiatives for Taiwan’s sustainable economic growth, to be held 27–28 July, has been cited by many people as an occasion when further liberalization steps will be proposed,⁹⁸ and Premier Su Tseng-chang has promised to implement “with full vigor and urgency” any “consensus” coming out of that meeting.⁹⁹

All of this reinforces the notion that, although President Chen announced his new “proactive management, effective opening” policy early in the year, most signs so far have pointed to “business as usual” or even a certain level of liberalization of the rules for cross-Strait investment.¹⁰⁰ Even before Chen “turned over” certain powers to Su, some observers saw the cabinet seizing the initiative from the president, and believed that a more moderate approach would prevail. On the other hand, the details of the program for “effective opening” are yet to be announced, and they reportedly will include greater government scrutiny of large investments in the Mainland and of those that involve sensitive technology. While tourism from the Mainland as a whole may open up, limits on PRC visitors from certain areas could also be tightened. And there are reports that negotiations over “zero tariffs” for Taiwan agricultural exports to the Mainland have broken down over Taipei’s insistence on including particular officials in the Taiwan delegation.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, on the other side of the coin, Taipei reportedly plans to offer loans and other preferential treatment to attract investment back to Taiwan from the Mainland.¹⁰²

Whatever the end result, it appears significant that major responsibility for developing cross-Strait policy apparently has shifted from the National Security Council to the Executive Yuan.¹⁰³ This not only reflects the current political situation, but accords with earlier predictions that Deputy Premier Tsai Ing-wen, former chair of the Mainland Affairs Council, would become a principal architect of evolving cross-Strait policy, especially economic policy.

In any event, thus far the approach to cross-Strait economic relations remains politically charged, as demonstrated by the fierce political maneuvering—and even violence in the legislature—over the pan-Blue bill to amend the Statute Governing the Relations Between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area to allow direct transport links to be established without government regulation. Whether the new political realities in Taipei, and the late July conference, will change all of that, remains to be seen.

Other Issues

Two other issues merit at least brief mention.

Taiwan Arms Purchases

It is worth noting that the question of Taiwan's arms purchases from the United States, which was addressed in *CLM* 16 (fall 2005), has remained a political football in Taiwan.¹⁰⁴ Chen continued to hammer away at it in various interviews and articles aimed at U.S. (and Taiwan) audiences, putting full blame for delay on obstructionism by the KMT's legislative caucus. This was not without effect, and Ma Ying-jeou felt a need to respond to U.S. unhappiness both to neutralize any American complaints and to fireproof himself against domestic political charges of irresponsibility regarding Taiwan's security. Ma pointed the finger of blame for lower defense spending at Chen for playing politics with the issue, but he also worked to shape a KMT (and then pan-Blue) position on arms purchases and overall security policy that would embrace "reasonable defense" while rejecting wasteful or provocative approaches. The result was originally to be announced by the end of March, but agreement within the pan-Blue camp proved difficult as arguments raged over the appropriateness of different weapons systems and of different levels of defense spending. Later, Ma withheld an announcement on the grounds that he did not want to seem to endorse Chen's steps on the National Unification Council and Guidelines.¹⁰⁵ No announcement had been made by mid-June, and how this will play out remains uncertain, and will be a subject of future analysis.

It is worth noting that, perhaps due to the events connected with the National Unification Council and Guidelines and the constitution, which touched on more basic issues in U.S.-Taiwan relations, arms sales have not received the public prominence of earlier months. That said, there is no doubt that the United States remains concerned about the inadequacy of Taiwan's own defense efforts (focusing on such "mundane"

issues as promoting joint operations, hardening of command and control sites, and strengthening the NCO corps, rather than on advanced weapons purchases), as well as about a possible shift in emphasis in Taipei's own weapons program toward acquiring offensive capabilities.

As for Beijing's take on all of this, Minister of Defense Cao Gangchuan predictably took the occasion of a visit to China by Admiral Robert J. Fallon, U.S. Pacific Commander, to call once again for the total cessation of all U.S. military exchanges with Taiwan and all advanced arms sales.¹⁰⁶

Ongoing Cross-Strait Steps

Finally, while Chen and Ma were jousting over the "1992 Consensus" and who would better protect and promote Taiwan's interests, KMT honorary chairman Lien Chan paid another visit to the Mainland, commemorating his trip one year before and leading a delegation to a KMT-CCP economic and trade forum that Taipei had blocked from being held in Taiwan.

At the 14–15 April forum, Beijing announced 15 new "beneficial measures" for promoting cross-Strait economic and trade relations.¹⁰⁷ When Lien met with Hu Jintao on 16 April, Hu put forth a "four-point proposal for peaceful development of cross-Strait relations" that has now become part of the PRC's policy mix. The points were not new, but they put emphasis largely on the positive.¹⁰⁸ Unsurprisingly, Chen Shui-bian attacked all of this as "sugar-coated poison" that was part of Beijing's "political struggle" against the DPP. Chen repeated his oft-stated "hope" to engage in dialogue with the PRC, but only on a basis that did not deny the legitimacy of the government and sovereignty of Taiwan.¹⁰⁹

Lien apparently made no advance on his April 2005 understanding with Hu that discussion of Taiwan's participation in WHO activities could be promoted "on a priority basis" *after* cross-Strait consultations are resumed.¹¹⁰ That means on the basis of "one China," which means not any time soon, and the PRC once again blocked Taiwan's application for "observer" status in the World Health Assembly, the WHO's "supreme decision-making body," in late May. It remains to be seen whether Beijing will also block Taiwan's inclusion in the WHO Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network as well as in all WHO professional and technical seminars and other "meaningful participation," as Taipei is seeking.¹¹¹ Practical links between WHO and Taiwan have improved over the past year, so leaving Taiwan totally out in the cold as during the SARS epidemic of 2003 seems unlikely. But Beijing still limits the contact between Taiwan and the WHO, and still suffers from a bad image in Taiwan because of that.

Final Word

The past eight months have witnessed the beginning of the 2008 presidential campaign season in Taiwan. With almost two years to go, the broad outlines of the election contest are being drawn, not only on the island, but also in Beijing. Although at this point, Ma Ying-jeou is the odds-on favorite not only to win his party's nomination, but, according to polls, to win the election, two years is an eternity in politics. As we shall explore in future essays, Ma is already having problems managing competing factions within the KMT, not to mention managing the alliance with others in the pan-Blue camp. His handling of the ongoing political turmoil will clearly be a factor in assessing his leadership qualities.

Moreover, the contest for leadership in the DPP is just beginning. Chen Shui-bian's handling of domestic issues and recurring charges of scandal and corruption will be crucial to the party's fate. But whatever the outcome of the competition between likely candidates, the DPP candidate is not going to be seen as a clone of Chen, and no assumptions can prudently be made about the election outcome.¹¹²

What is certain is that competing visions regarding management of cross-Strait relations will play an important role in all of these contests; precisely how remains to be seen. As was evident in the period discussed here, Chen Shui-bian sought to portray Ma, Lien Chan and the entire pan-Blue leadership as Beijing toadies consorting with the PRC, while the fate of the people of Taiwan hangs in the balance. Ma, in turn, stressed the feckless nature of persisting in a separatist agenda to the neglect of burning issues within Taiwan itself.

Management of the U.S. relationship will also be a central issue. It seems likely that both sides in the Taiwan political competition will seek to identify with the United States, the DPP stressing democratization, the KMT stressing peace and stability.

While pragmatically prepared to cope with the hand it is dealt by Taiwan's voters, the Mainland plainly would like to see a change in the Taiwan leadership. Beijing's welcoming of Lien Chan has clearly been designed to demonstrate the benefits the PRC can give to those who support the "one China" principle, even those whose interpretation is different from that of the PRC. In pursuing this line, the Mainland will make efforts to underscore to Taiwan voters that its interest for now is in promoting cross-Strait relations and blocking independence, not pressing for near-term unification.

If—some would say “when”—challenges arise from the Chen administration over the coming two years, Beijing will look to Washington to keep things under control rather than having to play a heavy hand itself. In light of the May 2006 transit decision, which took Beijing by surprise, one can presume there is a fair amount of optimism in Zhongnanhai that this will work. Chen's apparent weakening in recent weeks will reinforce this upbeat assessment, but the PRC will remain wary of what tricks Chen might pull out of his hat.

Washington will thus have a delicate task in the months ahead. Based not only on the history of the past several years—most particularly President Bush’s public chastisement of Chen Shui-bian in December 2003—but also on more recent history, it would appear that, although the United States will not want to “collaborate” with the PRC on Taiwan policy, Washington does share Beijing’s desire to ensure there are no unilateral moves toward Taiwan independence. It will therefore be willing to take steps to ensure that the status quo of peace and stability is maintained.

There could well be some Sino-American differences or even tension over Taiwan policy. Arms sales come to mind. Even so, the likelihood is that, if their overall relationship remains positive, cross-Strait issues will not become overly neuralgic between the United States and the PRC.

The United States will, of course, work to smooth out some of the bumps in its relations with Taiwan. In his HIRC testimony, Deputy Secretary Zoellick noted that one of his colleagues¹¹³ had been in touch with Chen Shui-bian—even while he was still in Costa Rica smarting over the transit decision—“about how we can continue to have a strong and good relationship with Taiwan, which we seek to have within the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act and our ‘one China’ policy.” But how far this can go will depend on whether the Chen administration, and President Chen himself, can adjust to U.S. insistence that Taipei pay serious attention to U.S. interests—as Washington sees those interests—in the period ahead. Recent signs are encouraging, but few American officials are taking anything for granted.

In the 2004 presidential election, Chen Shui-bian’s perceived domestic political needs apparently overshadowed his consideration of U.S. preferences. His assumption seemed to be that relations could be repaired once the election was over. To a certain extent, that turned out to be the case. But whether that pattern will be repeated in current circumstances remains to be seen in the months ahead.

Notes

¹ “Editorial: Going slow is the right move,” *Taipei Times*, 9 October 2005, p. 8 (<http://www.taipetimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2005/10/09/2003275172>).

² “President Chen’s 2005 National Day Address” (<http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/4-0a/20051010/2005101001.html>). In his National Day Rally address the same day, Chen did speak of cross-Strait relations—accusing Beijing of suppressing Taiwan in the international community and threatening Taiwan’s security—and advocated attention to Taiwan’s defense requirements. (<http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/4-0a/20051010/2005101002.html>.)

³ “Interview of the President by Phoenix Television,” 8 November 2005 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051108-7.html>). See also “Roundtable Interview of the President with Foreign Print Media,” 8 November 2005 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051108-8.html>).

⁴ “President Discusses Freedom and Democracy in Kyoto, Japan,” White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 16 November 2005 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/11/20051116-6.html>).

⁵ Sofia Wu, “Bush’s Talk on Taiwan Democracy ‘Significant’: Presidential Office,” Central News Agency, 16 November 2005.

⁶ Charles Snyder, “US unsure what to make of local election outcome,” *Taipei Times*, 7 December 2005, p. 3 (<http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2005/12/07/2003283346>) (emphasis added).

⁷ “China rebuffs Bush over Taiwan,” Agence France-Presse, 16 November 2005.

⁸ “Press Briefing on the President’s Visit to China,” 20 November 2005 (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/57412.htm>).

⁹ “Cooperation mainstream of Sino-US ties: Hu,” Xinhua News Agency, 21 November 2005. The issue of whether the United States “opposes” or “does not support” Taiwan independence consumes many observers’ time and attention. The official U.S. policy is that it “does not support” Taiwan independence, and that is the formulation used in public. Apparently Mr. Bush has said in several private meetings with Chinese leaders that he is “against” Taiwan independence, and in an unusual departure from their long-standing practice of not highlighting statements by American leaders that stray from the official mantra, Chinese leaders and spokesmen have, to Taiwan’s distress, picked up on that wording.

¹⁰ Lawrence Chung, “Taiwan’s leaders breathe easy after Bush’s Beijing talks,” *South China Morning Post*, 21 November 2005, p. 7.

¹¹ These figures, from official sources, were published by the KMT (National Policy Foundation, “Taiwan Political and Economic Situation,” 2 January 2006, <http://www.npf.org.tw/Symposium/s95/950112-NS.htm>).

¹² “Taiwan Opposition Leader Says Cross-Strait Policy Should Be Gradually Relaxed,” Xinhua Domestic Service, 6 December 2005, reported by *BBC Monitoring*.

¹³ “Election Results Reflect Wish of Taiwan Compatriots,” Xinhua News Agency, 14 December 2005.

¹⁴ The more favorable ratings were obtained by United Daily News on 5 December, as reported in the KMT paper (see endnote 11), whereas the harsher verdicts were uncovered by ERA Survey Research Center. ERA showed these numbers recovered by early March to 22.6% vs. 57.5%, rather similar to the United Daily News December results. However, in that later poll, levels of intensity sharply differed. ERA showed that only 6.5% of the “satisfied” were “very satisfied,” whereas 35.1% of the “dissatisfied” were “very dissatisfied” (http://survey.era.com.tw/prog_pic/survey/438_1.pdf).

¹⁵ Deborah Kuo, “President Introspective Since Local Elections Setback,” Central News Agency, 28 December 2005.

¹⁶ Full text available at <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/4-0a/20060101/2006010101.html>.

¹⁷ In his inaugural address on 20 May 2000, President Chen stated: “I fully understand that as the popularly elected tenth-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.” (Emphasis added; full text at <http://www.taipei.org/chen/chen0520.htm>.) These became known as the “five noes.” Chen reaffirmed this pledge in his 20 May 2004 inaugural: “Today I would like to reaffirm the promises and principles set forth in my inaugural speech in 2000. Those commitments have been honored—they have not changed over the past four years, nor will they change in the next four years.” (Full text at <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/4-0a/20040520/2004052001.html>.)

¹⁸ Financial reform, tax reform, reform to change the preferential interest rates of 18%, media reform, investigation and reclamation of assets improperly acquired by political parties, and constitutional reform.

¹⁹ “Chen Shui-bian Interviewed on PRC Ties, Military Threat, Constitution, More: ‘Gist’ of interview with Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian by Kiichiro Wakayama on 3 March at the presidential office in Taipei,” *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 4 March 2006 (Open Source Center, JPP20060306026001, 6 March 2006).

²⁰ “I am fully aware that consensus has yet to be reached on issues related to national sovereignty, territory and the subject of unification/independence; therefore, let me explicitly propose that these particular issues be excluded from the present constitutional re-engineering project.” (Full text at <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-gp/pi2004/>.)

²¹ Office of the President (Taipei), “Full Text of Questions and Answers of Chen Shui-bian's Exclusive Interview With Japan's ‘Sankei Shimbun,’” 27 April 2006. (Open Source Center, CPP20060428046001) (Chinese text available at <http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/shownews.php4?Rid=11786>.)

²² Su Chueh-yu, “Chen Speech off Target, Say KMT, PFP,” *Taiwan News*, 3 January 2006.

²³ “Chen Finally Finds Strategic Clarity,” editorial, *Taiwan News*, 3 January 2006.

²⁴ He said: “In the coming year, we will persist in implementing the basic principle of ‘peaceful reunification; and one country, two systems’ and the eight-point proposal for developing cross-Strait relations and advancing the course of the motherland’s peaceful reunification at the current stage. We will absolutely not waver in the principle of one China and in the effort to strive for peaceful reunification; not change the principle of placing the hope on the people of Taiwan; and not compromise with ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist activities. We will go all out to expand cross-Strait personnel contacts and economic and cultural exchanges; protect Taiwan compatriots’ legitimate rights and interests; increase dialog and exchange with political parties in Taiwan, which oppose ‘Taiwan independence’ and advocate development of cross-Strait relations; and facilitate the resumption of cross-Strait dialog and negotiations based on the ‘92 Consensus’ to promote the development of cross-Strait relations and to safeguard peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait region. Realization of the motherland’s complete reunification is the aspiration of the people and the inevitability of history. I appeal once again to the sons and daughters of the Chinese nation at home and abroad to join hands in opposing ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces and their activities and promoting the great undertaking of the motherland’s peaceful reunification.” (“Speech by Hu Jintao at the CPPCC National Committee’s New Year Reception,” Xinhua Domestic Service, 1 January 2006) (Open Source Center, CPP20060101001006).

²⁵ “Mainland spokesman on Chen Shui-bian’s New Year talk,” Xinhuanet, 6 January 2006 (http://www.gwytb.gov.cn:8088/detail.asp?table=Conference&title=Spokesperson%27s+Remarks&m_id=202).

²⁶ In a statement distributed to reporters, and forwarded by one correspondent to this writer, the Department said in part: “The United States has no objection to the promotion of good governance on Taiwan through referenda or constitutional reforms. Chen Shui-bian has repeatedly pledged not to declare independence, not to change Taiwan's name, not to add the state-to-state theory into the constitution, and not to promote the referendum to change status quo on independence or unification. We expect that President Chen would adhere to his pledges, which we take very seriously, when undertaking any further constitutional reforms.”

²⁷ “Taipei Seeks Washington’s Understanding,” *China Post*, 12 January 2006. See also Y. F. Low, “U.S. Has Not Protested Over President’s Speech: MOFA,” Central News Agency, 10 January 2006.

²⁸ Chiu Yu-Tzu, “New policy aims to counter PRC strategy,” *Taipei Times*, 11 January 2006.

²⁹ “‘Conditions Aren’t Ripe,’” *Newsweek International*, Atlantic edition, 26 December 2005

(<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/10511672/site/newsweek/>).

³⁰ S. C. Chang, “President Chen Lambastes ‘Ultimate Unification’ Idea,” Central News Agency, 16 January 2006.

³¹ Jane Rickards, “President Pleads for International Support,” *China Post*, 10 February 2006. See also, Juichiro Wakayama and Toshihiko Ishii, “Chen resolves to write new constitution,” *Daily Yomiuri Online*, 4 March 2006 (<http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/dy/world/20060304TDY01004.htm>).

³² “President Attends Spring Festival Gathering of ‘Taipei Tainan County Association’” (Open Source Center, CPP20060207038001, 7 February 2006). (Chinese text at http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/shownews.php4?issueDate=&issueYY=95&issueMM=2&issueDD=7&title=&content=&_section=3&_pieceLen=50&_orderBy=issueDate%2Crid&_desc=1&_recNo=0).

³³ “Taiwan President Questions Use of NUC in New Year’s Day Address,” (Open Source Center, CPP20060203312001, 29 January 2006). (Chinese text at http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/shownews.php4?issueDate=&issueYY=95&issueMM=1&issueDD=29&title=&content=&_section=3&_pieceLen=50&_orderBy=issueDate%2Crid&_desc=1&_recNo=0).

³⁴ Headed “U.S.-Taiwan Policy” (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/60047.htm>), it read:

The United States’ unofficial relationship with Taiwan is governed by our one China policy, the Taiwan Relations Act and the three U.S.-China Joint Communiqués. We have made no changes in our longstanding policy aimed at promoting peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

The United States does not support Taiwan independence and opposes unilateral changes to the status quo by either Taiwan or Beijing. We support dialogue in the interest of achieving a peaceful

resolution of cross-Strait differences in a manner that is acceptable to the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The United States continues to urge both Beijing and Taipei to establish substantive cross-Strait dialogue to the mutual benefit of people on both sides of the Strait. We support expansion of transportation and communication links across the Strait aimed at increasing political, economic, social, and cultural exchanges with a view to increasing mutual understanding and diminishing the chances of miscommunication or misunderstanding.

³⁵ Identified in the reports as Acting NSC Senior Director for Asian Affairs, Dennis Wilder, and head of the State Department Taiwan office, Clifford Hart.

³⁶ Oliver Lin and Y. F. Low, "U.S. Continues To Urge Taiwan To Maintain Cross-Strait Status Quo," Central News Agency, 23 February 2006 (emphasis added).

³⁷ Sofia Wu, "Chen's Speech Has Nothing to Do with Status Quo Change: Minister," Central News Agency, 1 February 2006.

³⁸ Sofia Wu, "President Chen Has Never Wavered on Pledge: NSC Official," Central News Agency, 27 February 2006.

³⁹ See Edward Cody, "Taiwanese Hopeful Would Alter Course on China," *Washington Post*, 19 March 2006.

⁴⁰ Xun Feng, "Chen's Scrap Hint 'Goes Against People's Will,'" *China Daily*, 1 February 2006.

⁴¹ Lilian Wu, "National Unification Council Should be Formally Abolished: President," Central News Agency, 22 February 2006.

⁴² Chang Yun-ping, "Both Camps Unimpressed by Chen's Latest Remarks," *Taipei Times*, 1 February 2006.

⁴³ "Opposition to Propose Motion to Censure Chen Shui-bian," *China Post*, 23 February 2006.

⁴⁴ The full English text of Chen's statement is available at <http://www.mac.gov.tw/english/index1-e.htm>. The Mainland Affairs Council issued an extensive explanation and justification: *Position Paper on the National Unification Council Ceasing to Function and the Guidelines for National Unification Ceasing to Apply*, 1 March 2006 (Mainland Policy Documents, General Policy) (<http://www.mac.gov.tw/english/index1-e.htm>).

⁴⁵ State Department Daily Press Briefing, 27 February 2006, available at <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2006/62221.htm>. The White House press secretary made a similar statement (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/02/20060227-1.html>).

⁴⁶ Hu Jintao called it a "dangerous step" toward Taiwan independence ("Hu Jintao slashes 'Taiwan independence' attempt," Xinhua News Agency, 28 February 2006) and the Party/State Council Taiwan Affairs Office issued a formal statement charging that Chen dared not use "scrap" but nonetheless sought to deceive people with other words in a malicious attempt to speed up independence ("Statement by China's Taiwan Affairs Office on Taiwan Scrapping Unification Body," Xinhua News Agency, 28 February 2006).

⁴⁷ "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Liu Jianchao's Press Conference on 28 February 2006" (<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw/s2510/2511/t237697.htm>).

⁴⁸ Y. F. Low, "Taiwan FM Officials Rebut Wang Guangya's Accusation on NUC Cessation," Central News Agency, 5 May 2006.

⁴⁹ "Hu Jintao's remark cast far-reaching impacts on cross-straits relations—Taiwan Affairs Office," Xinhua News Agency, 2 March 2006, (http://www.gwytb.gov.cn:8088/detail.asp?table=headlines&title=Headlines&offset=50&m_id=531)

⁵⁰ "Obstructors of cross-Straits relations doomed to fail: Chinese Premier," Xinhuanet, 5 March 2006.

⁵¹ "KMT's Ma To Move To Recall President Chen, Spokeswoman Says," *China Post*, 28 February 2006.

⁵² Flor Wang, "Kmt Wants Chen To Stop Political Maneuvering," Central News Agency, 4 March 2006.

⁵³ "Taiwan Has Right To Define Own Status," *Taiwan News* editorial, 3 March 2006.

⁵⁴ Antonio Chiang, "The United States Can Eat Both Sides of the Strait," *Apple Daily*, 6 March 2006.

⁵⁵ Debby Wu, "Taiwan, U.S. Share Understanding Of NUC: MOFA," Central News Agency, 3 March 2006.

⁵⁶ By "assurances" the State Department presumably was referring to the "five noes." ("Taiwan—Senior Taiwan Officials' Comments on National Unification Council," Department of State Press Statement 2006/241, 2 March 2006) (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/62488.htm>).

⁵⁷ Senate Armed Services Committee, hearing on the Department of Defense FY 2007 Authorization Request, 7 March 2006.

⁵⁸ “Taiwanese president pledges to maintain status quo with China,” Associated Press, 21 March 2006.

⁵⁹ “President Chen Interviewed by Le Figaro (Transcript),” 18 April 2006 (under President Chen’s Remarks at <http://www.mac.gov.tw/english/index1-e.htm>).

⁶⁰ “President Chen Interviewed by Washington Post (Transcript),” *Washington Post*, 13 March 2006.

⁶¹ Daily Press Briefing, 14 March 2006 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2006/63120.htm>).

⁶² “China’s military buildup a concern, says Rice,” Associated Press, 10 March 2006. Although Rice made this statement in an interview on the eve of her trip to Australia for trilateral U.S.-Australia-Japan talks, the only reference to China made in the statement coming out of those talks was to “welcome” “China’s constructive engagement in the region.” (“Text of Trilateral Statement,” CNN, 17 March 2006, <http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/asiapcf/03/17/australia.japanus.text/>.) Concerns over China’s military modernization, including its relevance for Taiwan scenarios, were addressed in the Defense Department’s 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review Report, published in February (<http://www.comw.org/qdr/qdr2006.pdf>) and in its Military Power of the People’s Republic of China 2006: Annual Report to Congress (<http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/China%20Report%202006.pdf>).

⁶³ “China’s Military Modernization and Export Controls,” Remarks by Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Peter W. Rodman before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 16 March 2006 (http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2006hearings/transcripts/march16_17/rodman_prepared.pdf). Chen cited Rodman’s statement in an interview with the *Wall Street Journal* (Office of the President, News Releases, “President Chen Interviewed by Wall Street Journal, April 25, 2006 [Transcript posted April 26, 2006],” at <http://www.president.gov.tw/en/>). Although concerns about the PLA’s modernization program have been expressed by many American officials, I am aware of no other U.S. official statement charging that PRC actions have changed the status quo.

⁶⁴ “Ma claims that the 1992 Consensus was his idea,” *China Post*, 29 April 2006.

⁶⁵ Ma called these the “five dos.” They include: resume talks on the basis of the “1992 Consensus”; negotiate an interim peace accord of 30–50 years, including military confidence-building measures (CBMs); facilitate and accelerate economic and financial exchanges—including direct air links, allowing mainland tourists to come to Taiwan and allowing the Taiwan financial service industry to go to the mainland—leading to the formation of a cross-Strait common market; negotiating a modus vivendi on Taiwan’s participation in international activities; and accelerating cultural and educational exchange. (“Taiwan’s Role in Peace and Stability in East Asia: A Discussion with Dr. Ma Ying-jeou,” a Brookings-CSIS Briefing, 23 March 2006 (<http://www.brookings.edu/comm/events/20060323.pdf>).

⁶⁶ See Lawrence Chung, “US breakthrough for Ma Ying-jeou; KMT chairman meets senior officials—without a dissenting note from Beijing,” *South China Morning Post*, 24 March 2006.

⁶⁷ Huang Jiashu, “Passive US strategy could be upgraded,” *China Daily*, 12 May 2006 (http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2006-05/12/content_587990.htm).

⁶⁸ Administration officials assert the original intent of proposing that the meeting be held at the president’s ranch in Crawford, Texas (or at Camp David) was to maximize a genuine give-and-take, rather than an exchange of talking points. But this does not explain why, when Beijing refused the proposal, the White House denied Hu a State Visit. That decision seems more related to concerns, especially in terms of the original schedule for a visit last fall, of negative political fallout from according Hu such a formal reception at a time when a variety of China-related issues were being given prominent—and critical—attention in Congress. But it was clearly important to Hu to follow the precedent established with his predecessors of a State Visit for first trips to the United States by a Chinese president. The U.S. refusal to accommodate this need strikes one as churlish. And since the protocol ended up muddled, anyway, due to the other protocolary aspects of the visit—for example, the 21-gun salute on the White House South Lawn—it seemed extremely shortsighted and counterproductive.

⁶⁹ “President Bush and President Hu of People’s Republic of China Participate in Arrival Ceremony,” 20 April 2006 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/04/20060420.html>).

⁷⁰ Ibid. Despite the president’s penchant for saying he is “against” Taiwan independence (see endnote 9), according to the NSC briefer, every time he mentioned the subject during Hu’s 20 April visit, the president said he “does not support” Taiwan independence.

(<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/04/20060420-7.html>)

⁷¹ “President Bush Meets with President Hu of the People’s Republic of China,” 20 April 2006 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/04/20060420-1.html>)

⁷² Ibid. This last, rather convoluted English interpretation was later clarified: “The United States... does not want to see any unilateral action by the Taiwan authorities that will change the status quo across the Taiwan Strait and negatively affect Sino-US ties.” Reported by Xiong Zhengyan and Li Jiao, “Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman says: ‘The Fact—That China and the United States Clarify Their Principled Stances on Taiwan Issue—Is Conducive to Safeguarding Peace and Stability Across the Taiwan Strait,’” Xinhua Domestic Service, 25 April 2006 (Open Source Center, CPP20060425045008).

⁷³ *Wall Street Journal* interview, see endnote 63.

⁷⁴ Lilian Wu, “U.S.-PRC Meeting Marks End Of Dealing With NUC Issue: Legislator,” Central News Agency, 21 April 2006.

⁷⁵ “Press Briefing by Deputy National Security Advisor Faryar Shirzad and National Security Council Acting Senior Director Dennis Wilder on the President’s Meetings with President Hu of the People’s Republic of China,” 20 April 2006 (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/04/20060420-7.html>).

⁷⁶ See Joseph Kahn, “In Hu’s Visit to the U.S., Small Gaffes May Overshadow Small Gains,” *New York Times*, 22 April 2006, and Dana Milbank, “China and Its President Greeted by a Host of Indignities,” *Washington Post*, 21 April 2006 (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/20/AR2006042001946.html>).

⁷⁷ “‘Full text’ of Chinese President Hu Jintao’s speech at Yale University on 21 April,” Xinhua, 21 April 2006 (BBC Monitoring, 23 April 2006). This wording is eerily reminiscent of language in the joint press statement issued after the October 1997 Clinton–Jiang Zemin summit. That statement spoke of a “common responsibility to work for peace and prosperity in the 21st century” and said that both countries were “determined to build toward a constructive strategic partnership.” This language became the object of scorn by Republicans and was the inspiration for Bush’s brief flirtation with labeling China a “strategic competitor” as a way of highlighting his rejection of Clinton’s approach to China in his campaign for the 2000 Republican presidential nomination.

⁷⁸ “China, U.S. more than stakeholders but constructive partners: Chinese FM,” Xinhua, 22 April 2006.

⁷⁹ *Sankei* interview, see endnote 21. Chen continued to repeat this position, including in an interview with the European press in early May (“President Chen’s Interview by Julian Lopez Gomez, Euronews,” Office of the President, news release, 1 May 2006, <http://www.president.gov.tw/en/>).

⁸⁰ *Wall Street Journal* interview, see endnote 63.

⁸¹ Lawrence Chung, “Taiwan gets warning on ‘transit diplomacy,’” *South China Morning Post*, 26 April 2006.

⁸² Taipei was informed KMT chairman Ma would get the same reception from officials that DPP chairman Su Tseng-chang had received in July 2005. (See Jorge Liu and Lilian Wu, “Taiwan Envoy to US: Ma Ying-jeou To Be Treated Same as Premier Su During US Visit,” Central News Agency, 8 March 2006) In the event, his reception was at a much higher level.

⁸³ One also senses concern about what Chen had planned for a lengthier stop in the United States. This is seen, for example, in the comments of former NSC senior staff member Michael J. Green that “The administration must judge what kind of signals Taipei is sending *and how a transit might be used to send those signals on U.S. soil*, which could create a huge problem for the United States.” (Bradley Graham, “Taiwan’s Leader Cancels Stopover,” *Washington Post*, 4 May 2006; emphasis added.)

⁸⁴ Taken from webcast video at http://www.house.gov/international_relations/fullhear.htm.

⁸⁵ “Chen Turns Down US Stopover Offer,” *China Post*, 5 May 2006.

⁸⁶ The DPP has already charged “the US collaborated with China to suppress Chen’s visit.” (“Taiwan’s ruling party slams US for blocking president’s visit,” *Agence France-Presse*, 5 May 2006.)

⁸⁷ Except for a DPP poll that showed Chen’s approval rating rose from 18 percent in March to 33 percent in mid-May (“Overseas Trip Boosts Chen’s Approval Rating: DPP Poll,” *Taipei Times*, 13 May 2006, p. 3), polls have generally shown his ratings have dropped. An ERA poll showed him at 18.3 percent on May 3, as he was leaving via a non-U.S. route (ERA Survey Research Center at http://survey.era.com.tw/prog_pic/survey/060504-01.pdf). Following the trip, a TSU poll conducted 5–12 May showed the president’s approval rating dropping to 5.8 percent, and an overall dissatisfaction rating over his performance since 2000 at 88 percent (Y. F. Low, “President Chen’s Approval Rating Drops to a New Low of 5.8%: Poll,” Central News Agency, 16 May 2006). A Shih Hsin University poll showed his approval level at 16 percent, the lowest recorded in his presidency (Y. F. Low, “President’s Approval Rating Just 16%: Poll,” Central News Agency, 18 May 2006). And others showed approval between 20 and 28 percent. While large majorities tended to say people should support their president in these circumstances

and several polls showed strong disapproval of the U.S. handling of the transits, they generally revealed an almost even split between those who thought it would do Taiwan some good versus those who did not, and those approving versus disapproving of Chen's action in bypassing the United States. The ERA poll indicated that people broke about evenly as to reasons they thought the United States had taken its transit decision: 22 percent said the United States was punishing the Chen government, 28 percent said it was due to PRC efforts to constrain Taiwan's diplomacy, and 24 percent said it was due to the Chen government's poor management of foreign affairs.

⁸⁸ "President Chen Meets with Michael Green of US Center for Strategic and International Studies," Office of the President, news release, 15 May 2006 (<http://www.president.gov.tw/en/>).

⁸⁹ S. C. Chang, "Taiwan President Chen Says No Change to Presidential Power After Delegating," Central News Agency, 8 June 2006.

⁹⁰ The mayors of Taipei and Kaohsiung will be elected in December 2006, the Legislative Yuan in late 2007, and the president in March 2008.

⁹¹ See "Ceding power has left Chen a weaker lame duck," *China Post* (Editorial page), 8 June 2006 (<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/archive/detail.asp?cat=1&id=83694>).

⁹² "President Chen Meets with AIT Board Chairman Raymond F. Burghardt," 8 June 2006 (http://www.president.gov.tw/en/prog/news_release/print.php?id=1105499077).

⁹³ <http://www.president.gov.tw/php-bin/prez/shownews.php4?Rid=11910>.

⁹⁴ Recall that in his inaugural Chen proposed sovereignty-related issues be excluded from constitutional revision because of the lack of consensus (see endnote 20); on this occasion he linked their not being "touched on" to "current social conditions and tense political atmosphere."

⁹⁵ "Taiwan—Chen Shui-Bian's Statements on Cross-Strait Issues," Press Statement 2006/599, 8 June 2006 (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/67748.htm>).

⁹⁶ Chu Chien-ling, "Central Propaganda Department of CPC Bans Commenting on Taiwan Political Situation: Afraid to See President Chen Being Toppled?" *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 12 June 2006 (summary report in Open Source Center "Highlights: Cross-Strait News 12 Jun 2006," CPP20060612100001).

⁹⁷ "Cross-Strait Chartered Flights to Take Off," *Taiwan Economic News*, 15 June 2006 (Open Source Center CPP20060615968036).

⁹⁸ Lilian Wu, "Cross-Strait Trade Policy Could be Expanded: Vice Premier," Central News Agency, 16 June 2006.

⁹⁹ Su said that "majority opinions" at the conference would be referred to cabinet agencies for future reference. (Deborah Kuo, "Government to Enforce Consensus Reached in Conference: Premier," Central News Agency, 16 June 2006.)

¹⁰⁰ One example was the report that the Cabinet-level Financial Supervisory Commission was considering a recommendation to lift the ban on listed or over-the-counter companies from investing more than 40 percent of their net worth in the Mainland (Lilian Wu, "FSC Mulling Lifting Restrictions on Investment in China," Central News Agency, 8 May 2006). Another was the suggestion by Premier Su Tseng-chang, for which President Chen later took credit, that Taiwan might unilaterally take steps to launch cross-Strait charter flights, allow mainland tourists to visit Taiwan, and help local farmers to export their products to the Mainland if Beijing did not reach agreements on these steps within six months (Lawrence Chung, "Chen Takes Credit for Open-Minded Move," *South China Morning Post*, 25 April 2006). Some, but not all of this, was overtaken by the mid-June agreement on charters.

¹⁰¹ Chu Chien-ling, "China Rejects Taiwan's Official Representatives; Negotiation for Zero Tariff for Taiwan Agricultural Products Breaks Down," *Chung-kuo shih-pao*, 18 May 2006 (<http://news.yam.com/chinatimes/china/20060518690837.html>) (Open Source Center, CPP20060518100001).

¹⁰² See Lawrence Chung, "Ma Ying-jeou sees steady ties under a KMT president," *South China Morning Post*, 23 March 2006. See also Ch'en Hsiu-lan, "Government Vies for Return of Taiwan Businesses in China; Budget Increased for Preferential Lease Project," *Ching-chi jih-pao*, 6 May 2006 (Open Source Center CPP20060511100001).

¹⁰³ Li Shun-te and Ch'en Chih-p'ing, "National Security Council (NSC) To 'Let Go' Control Over Cross-Strait Policy," *Lien-ho pao* (on day of article at <http://udn.com/NEWS/WORLD/WOR1/3299871.shtml>) (Open Source Center, *Highlights: Cross-Strait News* 9 May 06, CPP20060509100001).

¹⁰⁴ Thomas J. Christensen, “Will China Become a ‘Responsible Stakeholder’? The Six-Party Talks, Taiwan Arms Sales, and Sino-Japanese Relations,” *China Leadership Monitor* 16 (fall 2005) (<http://www.chinaleadershipmonitor.org/16/tc.pdf>).

¹⁰⁵ See Charles Snyder, “DPP corrupt and inept, Ma Claims,” *Taipei Times*, 25 March 2006.

¹⁰⁶ “US Commander in China To Improve Military Ties,” *Agence France-Presse*, 10 May 2006. As usual, Admiral Fallon turned aside this presentation with reference to U.S. obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act.

¹⁰⁷ These included such measures as new tariff cuts on Taiwan fruits and fish, the licensing of Taiwan medical practitioners in China, expansion of the number of city governments authorized to issue permits for Taiwan citizens to enter the mainland, permission for Taiwan citizens to apply for jobs as PRC customs inspectors, and recognition of Taiwan university diplomas. “Joint proposals” coming out of the conference included asking Taiwan authorities to allow PRC financial institutions to set up branch offices in Taiwan, pushing forward direct transport links, and removing obstacles to establishing a cross-Strait common market. (“Cross-Strait forum ends with beneficial policy package, Joint Proposals,” *Xinhua*, 15 April 2006.) For a concise listing of recent PRC incentives offered to Taiwan, see Chong-Pin Lin, “Following the passage of the anti-secession law, Beijing will proactively launch soft offensives on Taiwan,” *Apple Daily* (Taipei), 15 March 2006, p.17 (Appendix 3).

¹⁰⁸ The official PRC government presentation of these points stressed adherence to the “1992 Consensus” (i.e., “the common belief that both the mainland and Taiwan belong to one China”); promoting the interests of people on both sides of the Strait (emphasizing Hu’s statement that “we will faithfully carry out all the commitments we have made to the Taiwan compatriots”); a “mutually complementary and beneficial relationship” to realize “peaceful development” across the Strait; and “equal consultation.” (“Hu makes 4 suggestions on cross-Straits ties,” 16 April 2006, http://english.gov.cn/2006-04/16/content_256973.htm.)

¹⁰⁹ Y. F. Low, “President Calls KMT-CPC Conclusions ‘Sugar-Coated Poison,’” *Central News Agency*, 24 April 2006.

¹¹⁰ “‘Full text’ of ‘Press Communique on Talks Between CPC General Secretary Hu Jintao and KMT Chairman Lien Chan on 29 April 2005,’” *Xinhua*, 29 April 2005 (Open Source Center CPP20050429000169).

¹¹¹ Debby Wu, “Taiwan Wants Meaningful Participation in WHO: Foreign Ministry,” *Central News Agency*, 6 April 2006.

¹¹² A poll conducted in late May/early June showed that, while public confidence in Chen Shui-bian had dropped to 24.3 percent, Su Tseng-chang fared much better, at 63.7 percent, less than 15 percentage points behind Ma’s 78.4 percent. Among the other likely contenders for the DPP nomination, Vice President Annette Lu Hsiu-lien garnered a 54.6 percent favorable rating, with Frank Hsieh Chang-ting and DPP chairman Yu Hsiyi-kun both at 45 percent. (ERA Survey Research Center at http://survey.era.com.com.tw/prog_pic/survey/060530-09.pdf).

¹¹³ Reportedly Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Christopher Hill.