PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES:
THE GREATER IMPACT OF TAIWAN’S DEMOCRATIZATION ON CROSS-STRAIT AND SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS

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PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES:
THE GREATER IMPACT OF TAIWAN’S DEMOCRATIZATION ON
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The democratization of the Taiwan has greatly altered the framework for cross-strait relations and complicated the relations both sides have with the United States. To capture these changes in Taiwan, a new game theoretic model is proposed. Using the example of the 1995-96 missile crisis, one can see that neither China nor the United States have altered their strategy to properly address these changes. After this game theoretic analysis, each party is viewed in depth to highlight the factors leading to the continued tense relations between Taiwan and China, including the role that America’s policy of “strategic ambiguity” has played. In conclusion, it is argued that each party has several means to decrease the tension across the straits through small alterations of the present policies. Furthermore, the US can encourage constructive cross-strait dialogue by altering its strategy closer to that of “strategic certainty” while attempting to get assurances from both sides.
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Introduction

In March 2004, Taiwan’s incumbent president Chen Shui-bian narrowly defeated Lien Chan in Taiwan’s closest presidential election to date, receiving only a few thousand votes more than his opponent. Despite cries by Lien Chan supporters that the election was invalid\(^1\) and several days of protests, both camps ultimately accepted the results. This exemplified that although there remains several problems in Taiwanese politics, democratic principles have become firmly rooted in Taiwanese society. In less than twenty years, the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan has transformed itself from a one-party authoritarian regime to a vibrant multiparty democracy. Although Taiwanese generally see these changes as positive, the democratization of Taiwan has led to greater complexity in cross-strait relations and America’s ability to maintain peace in the region.

My thesis will focus on how democratization of Taiwan has altered cross-strait relations and the triangular relationship among the ROC, the PRC and the US. By looking at the island’s democratization from several aspects and methodologies, I will argue that, by creating electoral incentive for Taiwan to push its political boundaries in every way except declaring formal independence, these democratic changes have actually made the island less secure. In turn, these pushes for “breathing room” encourage the mainland to continue its militant form of Chinese nationalism which emphasizes a willingness to go to war to prevent Taiwanese independence. America’s hesitation to get further involved in cross-strait conflict has also left it with an ill-fitting strategy for deterrence in the contemporary setting.

\(^1\) Many supporters claimed that the assassination attempt on Chen the eve before the election tainted the results, some going as far as to claim that it was an orchestrated stunt intended to sway voters.
This thesis will be divided into two sections. The first chapter analyzes previous frameworks and models for analyzing US-ROC-PRC relations and argues that most of these fail to acknowledge Taiwan’s agency especially after democratization. Using a strategic interaction game theoretic model, I suggest that several factors in this triangular relationship have not been properly analyzed. Specifically, I assert that political appeals intended for Taiwanese consumption may be easily misconstrued by the mainland as a move towards creeping independence and thus lead to conflict. More importantly, I suggest that with the growth of Taiwanese nationalism, America’s traditional strategy of deterrence may be obsolete. To analyze this model, I use historical examples similar to the methods used in Analytic Narratives\(^2\), focusing specifically on the missile crisis of 1995-96 and supplementing this analysis with appropriate later cases.

The second section will attempt to explain how the changes in cross-strait relations and the triangular relationship depicted in the model came to be. Chapter Two will give a brief overview of the democratization of Taiwan and the growth of Taiwanese nationalism. With the legalization of opposition parties came more vocal demands for formal independence. Although those supporting immediate formal independence have remained a small minority, eventual reunification, once considered a goal by both sides of the strait, now is uncertain. As more people become comfortable with an ambiguous status quo, even the KMT, which for decades were the most vocal proponents of reunification, have had to temper such sentiment. Furthermore, domestic politics has often required politicians to assume a strong stance against the PRC in order to remain in office. Domestic pressures due to an increasing notion of a distinct Taiwanese identity

push politicians to endorse efforts to extend Taiwan’s international influence. These domestic factors, as will be shown, have increased distrust across the strait.

Chapter Three will analyze the role of a militant Chinese nationalism and its perceptions of the US and Taiwan in the post-reform era. The necessity of reunification has been imbedded in the dominant Chinese narrative since the CCP successfully pushed the Nationalists off the mainland. Taiwan’s democratization challenges this narrative and China’s view of its own legitimacy; however, China refuses to admit that the island’s reforms can have any impact on cross-strait dialogue or the island’s future. Besides the inherent conflict created by China’s framing of Taiwan’s status, Chinese nationalism also focuses on the US a culprit in China’s continued humiliation. America’s support for the ROC, especially since democratization, has led many leaders in Beijing to believe that war with the US over Taiwan is unavoidable. This has in part led to China focusing on improving its military capabilities and taking a more aggressive stance with both parties.

Chapter Four details the history of America’s inconsistent policy in the region starting with the end of World War II up through the current administration. America has attempted to balance supporting democratic reforms on Taiwan with further engagement with China, while doing little to directly address America’s vague Taiwan policy. Domestic factors in formulating US policy (i.e. public perceptions of China, partisan politics, etc.) are addressed along with how both sides of the strait attempt to frame American policy to suit their interests. Of particular importance is the evolution of America’s policy, from strategic certainty under the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) and political ambiguity regarding the status of Taiwan to strategic ambiguity under the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and political certainty (Taiwan is part of China). From here
it is argued that America should use its unique position as a hegemonic power to pull both parties into negotiations while it still has the ability and that a return to strategic certainty may help fulfill this goal.

In conclusion, I argue that Taiwan’s democratization requires a reassessment of American foreign policy in the region. The US has avoided playing a more official role as mediator in cross-strait dialogue, but in order to maintain their prestige in the region and meet the growing demands of both the ROC and PRC, a more active role is required. Methods to secure peace without jeopardizing relations with either side will be analyzed, with a focus placed on a more engaging US initiative in the region. In addition, ways that both the ROC and PRC can reduce tensions will be addressed with the implication that America can encourage such goodwill efforts.

The increased complexity in cross-strait relations due to Taiwan’s democratization has not been fully analyzed. Because of this, both China’s and America’s Taiwan policies fail to address the considerable leverage the island now has in charting its future course. This in turn causes increased strain on Sino-American relations. This thesis hopes to show the necessity for a reevaluation of strategies by all parties in the near future before another incident potentially draws the parties into greater conflict.
Chapter One: Cross-Strait Conflict: A Game Theoretic Approach

Many analysts have viewed Taiwan’s democratization as nothing short of a political miracle. In a relatively short period of time, the Republic of China (ROC) transformed itself from a single party authoritarian state to a vibrant multiparty democracy. This change however has not come without consequences, not only for the people of Taiwan but for mainland China and the US as well. Instead of creating a more peaceful and stable arena for cross-strait relations, democratization has actually made Taiwan less secure by increasing tensions with the mainland. China and America have both responded to Taiwan’s democratic changes in various ways, often in ways that make the region less secure. Thus a new model which takes into account these changes should greatly aid in seeing what challenges each party faces and what could possibly be done to decrease the tense political climate in the Taiwan Strait.

Previous models

Previous theoretical approaches to viewing US-ROC-PRC relations vary greatly, but as a group they all underestimate the role that Taiwan plays in the conflict. By assuming that Taiwan is solely a responder to actions taken by the other two or essentially a pawn in Sino-American relations, these frameworks seem to suggest that a solution to cross-strait conflict can be found by focusing on only the side US-PRC side of this triangular relationship.\(^3\) Such a focus, besides overestimating Beijing’s willingness

\(^3\) Jaw-ling Joanne Chang attempts to distinguish the conflict into two spheres, cross-strait and international. However, her argument relies overwhelmingly on American influence on China for a negotiated settlement.
to come to a negotiated settlement with Washington (China views the issue as solely a
domestic issue), denies the agency of the Taiwanese and the ROC government that would
likely complicate any such settlement if they felt there were being “sold out”.

Another group of scholarly work that focuses on cross-strait relations looks at it
without a significant American role. This approach generally gives more agency to the
ROC to handle the mainland’s coercive attempts and still pursue a stronger de facto
independence. However, many of these frameworks act as if cross-strait relations occur in
a vacuum and implicitly assume that the US will not respond if either side attempts to
change the status quo. Considering that the US has been intrinsically involved in the
Taiwan issue for five decades, the question is not whether they will get involved, but to
what degree. Therefore, for any framework to be useful in analyzing cross-strait conflict,
it must acknowledge the policies of all three powers.

Focusing solely on the foreign policies of each party however also will not
provide an adequate view of the crisis. Lieberthal stated that no country’s foreign policy
could be understood without looking at domestic issues. Several models and frameworks
overcome this problem in explaining the formation of Taiwan’s cross-strait policy by
looking at the interplay of domestic and cross-strait politics. Hsieh analyzed the various
power sources in Taiwan’s domestic politics which lead to its cross-strait policy. Steven

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Goldstein showed the symbiotic relationship of domestic and foreign policies, combining Putnam’s two level game framework and Gourevitch’s second image reversed framework. Both of these are good starts; however, these works do not show how Taiwan’s domestic politics affect the overall framework of the US-ROC-PRC triangle.

This thesis does not question the importance of the US-ROC-PRC triangle as a point of reference, but the power attributed to Taiwan within this framework. Garver stated that “Taiwan has long shown that a smaller power can affect, even manipulate, to its own advantage relations between great powers”. Taiwan’s ability in this fashion has not declined in the post-Cold War era. Furthermore, Taiwan’s democratization has unleashed a domestic element to this framework which is notably absent in previous work, an element which has serious ramifications for both China and the US. To capture the importance of Taiwan’s democratization and domestic politics, I suggest a game theoretic model which places Taiwan as the focus and takes into account some of the core changes made by all three parties within the past ten years. After looking at the example of the 1995-96 missile crisis and smaller incidents since then, this model suggests major problems in the traditional assumptions made in cross-strait conflict and America’s attempts to maintain peace in the region.

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10 The missile crisis is chosen as a starting point for several reasons, notably because it marked notable changes of behavior by both Taipei and Beijing and as Andrew Nathan stated, it “brought the biggest
Strategic Models and Cross-Strait Conflict

Game theoretic models by definition make broad assumptions and those focusing on cross-strait relations are no different. Although the general framework may remain valid, the particular assumptions of most cross-strait models detract from their application in the contemporary setting. Many only look at China and Taiwan, ignoring or significantly downplaying the role the United States plays in deterring the actions of both sides. In those which do include the United States, often it is the first player, with models suggesting that changes from the status quo are primarily based on American decision. This ignores the domestic factors on both sides of the strait, especially the interplay of public opinion and electoral politics in Taiwan. Additionally, in allowing misspecification of the situation some models assume there is a preference in Taiwan for independence over the status quo, which is not supported by survey data. Evidence may support that Taiwanese prefer independence over forced unification, but the overwhelming majority, although worried about mainland aggression, are comfortable with their present status. The primarily innovation in this model is the incorporation of Taiwan’s dominant ambivalence.

In the context of cross-strait relations, it is important to understand what these terms mean to the participants and not rely on an externally imposed definition.

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According to multiple surveys, the “status quo” is preferred by more Taiwanese than any other option. This is in part because presently many in Taiwan view the status quo as de facto independence and see the ROC as an independent country. In addition, supporters of the status quo comprise a diverse group, including those who would prefer a formal declaration of independence but see this as unrealizable (what Hsieh calls the “pseudo status quo”), those who desire eventual unification after mainland reforms, and those who prefer a vaguely defined relation between the mainland and the island. The status quo does not rule out unification or inherently mean independence, only that Taiwan does not choose reunification on Beijing’s terms.

Chas W. Freeman, Jr. states that the democratization has yet to create any consensus on what Taiwan’s long-term relationship with China should be. This partially explains why the major parties in 1996, 2000, and 2004 wanted to maintain a status quo/de facto independence with only factions pushing the extremes. In this context, the status quo should be broadly defined as to allow minor movements on both sides. Shelley Rigger defines the status quo from the Taiwanese perspective as “political autonomy without nationhood”. For this paper, the status quo will be defined similarly, any action

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14 Bau, Cross-Strait Relations.
17 Freeman Jr., Chas W. “Preventing War in the Taiwan Strait”. *Foreign Affairs*. July/August 1998: p.10.
which does not attempt to legally change the status of the country, while independence
will be defined as moves to formally push independence (i.e. a referendum for changing
the name of the government to the Republic of Taiwan). These definitions prevent one
from being drawn into viewing Taiwan’s choices as a unification-independence
dichotomy.

To study the issue of this triangular relationship between Taiwan, China, and the
US, I suggest a three-player model in which Taiwan makes the first move. (Figure 1)
Taiwan may choose to push towards formal independence or maintain the status quo.
China then can accept or reject, with rejection being a move towards war. If China
accepts Taiwan’s move, the game ends peacefully with either China accepting Taiwanese
independence or maintaining the status quo. If China rejects, the United States has the
choice of defending or not defending Taiwan. Following this, Taiwan chooses to either
push for independence (and thus war) or to back down. Backing down when China has
rejected independence would logically allow Taiwan to return to the status quo,

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21 This definition acknowledges Yang’s critique that Taiwan’s dissatisfaction with its international status
makes its want some change, while denying that it is a special type of non-status quo nation. Yang, Philip
Y.M. “The US East Asian Security Policy and Taiwan Security”. The United States and Cross-Strait
Relations: China, Taiwan, and the US Entering a New Century. Edited by Kenneth Klinker. University of

22 Viewing cross-strait relations as a dichotomous situation favors Beijing’s interests since any action taken
by Taiwan which does not move towards unification can thus be categorized as promoting independence.
Taiwan’s leaders, especially Chen Shui-bian, have tried to break this dichotomy, attempting to position the
status quo as a neutral option. Kuo, Julian Jengliang. “Taiwan’s New Policy Toward Mainland China”
Breaking the China-Taiwan Impasse. Edited by Donald S. Zagoria. Praeger Publishing. Westport, CT.

23 Unification is not given as an option since Taiwanese officials have made no serious attempts to push
Towards unification since democratization. With independence supporters outnumbering unification
supporters and the margin expected to increase in the next few years, pushing for unification in the absence
of a regime change on the mainland is highly unlikely and would be political suicide for most elected
officials on the island.
Figure 1: Three-Player Extended Game of Cross-Strait Interaction


although losing some face in the process.\textsuperscript{24} Backing down when China has rejected the status quo however suggests unification.\textsuperscript{25}

\textsuperscript{24} This could be viewed as an audience cost. For more on audience costs and signaling, see Fearon, James D. “Signaling Versus the Balance of Power and Interests: An Empirical Test of a Crisis Bargaining Model. The Journal of Conflict Resolution. June 1994. Vol. 38, No. 2: p.236-269.

\textsuperscript{25} Even if Taiwan attempted to avoid forced unification after backing down, international support would wane as backing down would likely be interpreted as acceptance of Beijing’s demands.
Based on poll data and government stances on cross-strait relations, in my model I assume that Taiwan is presently indifferent between independence and the status quo, but prefer both to unification at the moment (IIsqPu). China is assumed to prefer unification over the status quo and both over independence (uPsqPi).²⁶ Although some would argue that the US has an underlying preference for independence and others argue that it has a preference for unification, American policy has been that any decision agreed to by both sides peacefully would be accepted by the US.²⁷ Nevertheless, acknowledging however that independence or unification is likely to upset the relative peace in the region, America can be assumed to prefer the status quo over either option at the present (sqPiIu).

For simplicity, no predictions are made about the payoffs for each side if China rejects and Taiwan pushes for independence. China’s stance has been clear, that a move towards independence would lead to war. The magnitude of such war is difficult to predict, as American involvement, the preparation levels of both China and Taiwan, and the potential involvement of other countries in the region would have to be calculated. Whether or not Taiwan pursues nuclear weapons would also complicate matters. To avoid such conjectures, the only assumption made about war is that it would likely occur

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²⁶ China’s stance has been unequivocal since the Communist takeover of the mainland and was ultimately included in the preamble of the PRC’s constitution. Constitution of the People’s Republic of China. Available at www.chinaelections.com.
if Taiwan pushes for independence after a Chinese rejection—that is, if American
deterrence fails.

With complete information, one outcome is clearly preferred by all parties and
that is for Taiwan to maintain the status quo and for China to accept. Since with complete
information China could clearly tell that Taiwan was not moving towards independence,
there would be little need for China to refuse the prolonging of the status quo. This
decision also allows the United States to remain on the periphery of the issue and no
damage is done to Sino-American relations. A China which opts to reject the status quo
disrupts this balance and virtually ensures war. When faced with pushing for
independence or accepting forced unification, the decision by the US to defend or not
may become irrelevant: Taiwan will likely risk war than be swallowed by China on
unfavorable terms. As Andrew Nathan has stated, “the Taiwanese do not want war, but
they are determined not to surrender”. Under complete information then, Taiwan has
one choice. By choosing the status quo, China is likely to accept, since rejection will
presumably lead to war which would be costly to China even if it were to win. The
status quo also allows all parties involved to maintain hope that their preferred status
(unification for Beijing, independence for Taiwanese independence leaders, etc.) could be
realized in the future.

28 Nathan, What’s Wrong, 103.
29 If Taiwan believed there was a significant chance that China would accept independence, a strategy
could be to move towards independence in the first move and then back down if not supported by the US.
However, the probability of China accepting Taiwanese independence even with outside interference is
close to zero. Furthermore, if Taiwan bases its decision on US involvement and the US does not defend
(thus making Taiwan more likely to back down), Taiwan becomes more vulnerable. If this game were to be
replayed, China would likely take a harder stance, more convinced that the US will stay out and that
Taiwan will eventually cave in.
A greater problem arises under incomplete information, as the 1995-96 missile crisis illustrates. In this model China is unsure which strategy Taiwan has chosen. This is partly due to Taiwan’s democratic reforms which has increased the number of voices in the political debate within Taiwan. Following the end of martial law, the ROC no longer repressed support for a declaration of Taiwanese independence. Many of the most vocal supporters eventually were elected into office and although their numbers may be relatively small, democratization has granted them a forum to push for a formal change in the ROC’s unification policy. In addition, many politicians, including former President Lee Teng-hui and current President Chen Shui-bian, have taken a more aggressive stance with the mainland and appealed to a distinct Taiwanese identity because this seems to connect with voters. Although both have refrained from supporting a formal declaration of independence, their nuanced speeches imply that such a move could occur although the conditions remain unclear.

Taking into consideration America’s stated policy of “strategic ambiguity” regarding cross-strait relations, the model incorporates Taiwan’s uncertainty as to whether or not the US will defend. Continuously the US has stated that it would not support Taiwan if it provoked an attack from the mainland; however, the US has not clarified what, short of a formal declaration of independence, would be considered provocation. Similarly the US has argued that it could come to the aid of Taiwan if threatened militarily by the PRC, but has been reluctant to clarify the extent of their assistance since Taiwan may try to use a perceived guarantee to push for greater international presence.
If the US maintains its policy of “strategic ambiguity” and Taiwan appears to be pushing towards independence, China will most likely choose to reject Taiwan’s actions, thus placing the US firmly in the middle of cross-strait conflict. This puts the American policy of “strategic ambiguity” in a bind as it may not want to respond and thus encourage Taiwanese actions, yet cannot risk losing its credibility in the region as a main architect of East Asian security. Taiwan also must consider the possibility then of an America which does not defend after China refuses the continuation of the status quo, leaving Taiwan to essentially choose between forced unification and a move towards independence. Thus, if the game is completely played (that is, deterrence fails) under incomplete information and with the present perceptions of the other actors, the outcome is dire; either an asymmetric war if US refuses to defend or a major power war if the US backs Taiwan.

The Missle Crisis

The model suggested should not be viewed solely as a theoretical framework with no practical connection. Rather, it can be useful in interpreting the 1995-96 missile crisis, a flashpoint which was the closest that the three parties came to war in decades. Through this analysis, one notices that the policies of all three actors have remained relatively unchanged since then, doing little to decrease the probability of another such incident.

For all practical purposes, the origins of the 1995-96 missile crisis can be traced to Taiwan’s President, Lee Teng-hui, attempting to curry political favor on the island. After pushing for electoral reforms that would allow for Taiwan’s first direct presidential
election, Lee made every attempt to sway public opinion to ensure that he would be victorious. This included a renewed push for international recognition and an improvement in unofficial US-ROC relations. Perhaps most important for this analysis is his visit to his alma mater Cornell University in 1995. The granting of a visa and Lee’s subsequent visit was considered a major public relations coup and the biggest diplomatic success for Taiwan in 25 years.\(^\text{30}\) The PRC interpreted America granting Lee a visa as evidence of America’s implicit support for a separate Taiwan and initiated the deterioration of Sino-American relations to their lowest levels since Tiananmen.\(^\text{31}\) Exacerbating the situation was Lee’s virulent speech against China during his visit. Although with no direct reference to independence, it confirmed Beijing’s fears that Lee intended to move towards independence.\(^\text{32}\) Despite carefully avoiding the independence issue directly, Lee’s actions on this international stage set in motion a mainland response which brought the region dangerously close to war.

Although one cannot see inside Lee’s mind, his intentions in going to the US and in his speech were most likely targeted at Taiwanese more than China as an attempt to increase electoral support. Lee’s visit was front page news on the island and connoted that Taiwan’s position in international affairs was improving. This matched well with Taiwanese public opinion that desired a greater role for Taiwan, even among those who opposed independence. In contrast, coverage of the visit was scant in other countries,


suggesting that only parties involved in cross-strait affairs were truly interested in this event.

Many had warned that Taiwan’s new “flexible diplomacy”, if not handled with caution, could lead to increased conflict with the mainland. Lee’s previous trips to boost Taiwan’s international status had alarmed the PRC, but little response outside of the usual rhetoric had been taken. Lee’s Cornell visit was viewed differently however in that it connoted American support for Taiwan’s “flexible diplomacy”. The improvement of US-ROC relations which led to Lee ultimately receiving a visa made the PRC reevaluate their Taiwan strategy. Leaders feared that without a response, others would follow America’s lead and grant the ROC greater latitude in unofficial relations. Unsure whether or not Lee’s actions were part of a strategy leading to a declaration of formal independence, China assumed the worst.

Given that Beijing had interpreted many of Taiwan’s pushes for more international space as a stepping stone to independence and that these efforts appeared to be increasing, Beijing could not afford to ignore Lee’s visit. Even if China was not convinced that Taiwan’s move was more likely to be towards independence than just fine-tuning the status quo, China’s choice would still be to reject Taiwan’s actions. If China assumed that Taiwan was staying within the parameters of the accepted status quo,

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33 Officially or as “private trips”, Lee met leaders of Singapore, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Jordan, and several Central American countries from 1989 through 1995. Most did not have formal relations with the ROC. Zhao, Challenging, 117.
but Taiwan actually intended to move towards independence, China’s lack of response
would make the PRC look weak while greatly increasing the possibility of China’s least
desired outcome, Taiwan independence. Furthermore, China seems to believe, and many
analysts concur, that the only factor preventing a declaration of independence is the
mainland’s threat of force. By assuming that all of Taiwan’s moves are intended to move
the island towards formal independence, Beijing’s strategy becomes much simpler: reject
the move, which ensures that China’s most preferred outcome, unification, was still a
possibility. As expected, Beijing signaled that it rejected Lee’s actions and would prepare
for war to prevent independence.36

The fact that China responded negatively was not surprising in the least, but the
speed of the response caught both Taiwan and the US off guard. Just days after Congress
approved Lee’s visit, the PRC launched missile tests approximately a hundred miles off
of Taiwan’s Kaohsiung harbor, beginning the “most audacious war game” the mainland
ever conducted near Taiwan.37 These tests showed the weakness of Taiwan’s defenses as
early warning systems did not detect the tests. Later missile tests in the summer of 1995,
now with live artillery, intended to show China’s willingness and determination to
prevent independence.38 Jiang Zemin even personally observed later exercises in October
so that he could associate himself with China’s determination against Taiwanese

36 You Ji states that China viewed Lee’s trip as fully intended independence. Ji, You. “Changing
Leadership Consensus: The Domestic Context of War Games”. Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China,
37 Chao, Linda and Ramon H. Meyers. The Divided China Problem: Conflict Avoidance and Resolution.
38 Ross, Robert. “The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and Use of Force”. The
United States and Coercive Diplomacy. Edited by Robert J. Art and Patrick M. Cronin. United States
independence. By November, the PRC dropped any façade that these were just tests and openly declared they were aimed at deterring Taiwan. The timing of this was not coincidental as they were just weeks before Taiwan’s legislative elections and intended to sway the vote. The election results showed lower support for Lee’s KMT, thus convincing the Chinese that missile diplomacy was successful.

Beijing’s actions also suggested that they had reevaluated their pledge of pursuing peaceful reunification. Missile tests brought back the threat of force—the clearest of its kind in decades. China saw this as a necessary move to show determination against Taiwanese independence and a willingness to go to war if necessary. The intent was clear: to alter not only Taiwan’s behavior, but also deter American involvement on Taiwan’s behalf. China reasoned that if it signaled it would tolerate any cost to prevent the “loss” of Taiwan, neither party would challenge them.

China seemed to believe that the threat of invasion would be enough to sway Taiwan into compliance, ignoring that this could actually create more resistance. Many of the domestic effects on Taiwan ran counter to Beijing’s intent. Instead of decreasing support for Lee, it created a “rally around the leader” effect, leaving his approval rate at over eighty percent. Independence support may have decreased, probably out of fear more than anything, but support for unification also declined. More damaging was the missile tests and the fear of an impending war increased a sense of “common destiny” on

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39 Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait, 238.
40 Ji, Changing Leadership, 78.
41 Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait, 232.
42 Since 1995 when Beijing responded to Lee’s US visit with military threats, the percentage supporting independence has continually risen while reunification has diminished. Bau, “Cross-Strait Relations from the Perspective of the Republic of China”.
44 Cabestan, Taiwan’s Mainland Policy, 234.
the island, increasing the possibility of a rise in Taiwanese nationalism and creating a defining moment for such a movement.\textsuperscript{45} Taiwan responded to mainland military activities with exercises of their own close to mainland ships in clear defiance of China’s warnings and announced that a base on the Pescadore Islands would be operational ahead of schedule.\textsuperscript{46} Instead of truly deterring the island, Beijing’s threats seemed to make Taiwan determined to show its resiliency.

Taiwan’s willingness to maintain a bold approach towards China was likely influenced in some part by a belief that the US would come to its aid, despite American hesitation to act and declarations that America would not act if Taiwan pushed independence.\textsuperscript{47} After losing most of its formal recognition in the early 1970s, the ROC could not find an alternative to American security from a mainland attack.\textsuperscript{48} In the aftermath of democratization, officials have assumed that America has a duty to protect a fellow democracy. Despite America’s intent to maintain a policy of “strategic ambiguity”, Taiwan’s leaders seemed to believe this was simply rhetoric to appease Beijing.

Even if Taiwan was not confident in American protection, a continuation of a cautiously defiant policy after the missile tests would be prudent for the interests of the ROC. An immediate backtrack on their diplomatic efforts could have been interpreted as an implicit acceptance of its status as a renegade province of China and thus hurt unofficial relations as well as undermine their efforts to maintain what little formal

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\textsuperscript{46} Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait, 233.
\textsuperscript{47} Freeman Jr., 6.
\textsuperscript{48} Robinson argued that Taiwan never truly attempted to get other defensive partners and probably could not unless they proved themselves by first repelling an actual attack. Robinson, Thomas W. “America in Taiwan’s Post Cold-War Foreign Relations.” Contemporary Taiwan. Edited by David Shambaugh. Oxford Press. 1998: p. 296.
\end{flushright}
recognition the ROC does have. Similarly, a retreat would make it difficult to garner international support if China opted to go ahead with military action. Domestically, it would be political suicide for most elected officials to appear to be kowtowing to mainland demands, even if it prevented war, not only because it would go against public opinion, but also because it would be implicitly affirming that the ROC’s sovereignty was not absolute. To maintain the image of a sovereign state, Taiwan could not appear buckling under mainland pressures.

With this militant posturing from the mainland and Taiwan’s willingness to appear strong, America realized it could not afford to ignore the challenge. To do so would decrease America’s deterrence credibility and undermine efforts to maintain peace in the region. Yet America was also rightfully hesitant to come to the aid of Taiwan since this could be interpreted as unconditional support for the island. As Copper stated, the Taiwan Relations Act had never truly been tested and America’s commitment to Taiwan remained vague. American policy makers wished to retain this strategic ambiguity and seemed to hope that by not reacting China would simply blow off steam and the exercises would deter Taiwan. However, after the military exercises continued into late 1995 as a means to sway the island’s elections, they questioned whether China now intended to force the Taiwan issue.

On December 19, 1995, the USS Nimitz crossed into the Taiwan Straits unannounced. The move hoped to show American commitment to a peaceful resolution and intended to challenge Beijing’s willingness to jump into war. For a brief period of

time (a few weeks) tensions seemed to slightly decrease. America’s power play appeared to have worked as China refrained from further testing.

The deterrence was short-lived. Taiwan felt encouraged by America’s actions and showed no intentions of softening their position. China, upset that its military posturing did not have the desired effects on the US or Taiwan now believed the next round needed to show greater resolve. In January and February of 1996, China amassed over 100,000 troops across the Strait in Fujian province—certainly getting the attention of both of the other parties. China also announced that it would resume missile tests directly before the ROC’s presidential election. In early March, missile tests were conducted closer than ever before—roughly 20 miles off of Keeling in northern Taiwan. These were coupled with the largest scale maneuvers ever in the strait. Although China assured the US during these tests that it did not intend an invasion but only to influence the upcoming election, the US saw this as another challenge to their credibility in the region. This time American forces were not placed in the strait, but in the vicinity to observe Chinese behavior. Fearing that this would strengthen Taiwanese resolve and convince Lee he could move towards independence, the PRC continued its tests and military posturing up until the election.

The Election

Surprisingly, the election, which could have escalated tensions even more, seemed to have somewhat of a calming effect on cross-strait relations as neither side used

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51 Chen, Qimao, The Taiwan Straits Crisis, 131.
52 Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait, 242.
53 Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait, 243.
54 Shambaugh, Taiwan’s Security, 242.
55 Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait, 246.
the event to push their position. Despite Beijing’s military posturing and Lee’s aggressive mainland stance, Taiwan’s first presidential election ran rather smoothly. The crisis and the election brought mixed results however for all three parties. China’s efforts to dissuade Lee’s election backfired, resulting in Lee’s victory. China also determined that Lee, regardless of his comments, was set on moving Taiwan towards formal independence. China’s weakness when confronted by the US was apparent, but Beijing still viewed the military posturing as a success in that it deterred, at least in the short-term, any plans Taiwan may have had to push for more international space.

America maintained its credibility in the region, but in doing so on behalf of Taiwan, it cemented the view in Beijing that a war with Taiwan meant a war also with the US. The future of “strategic ambiguity” seemed to be in doubt also. The missile crisis increased the voice of pro-Taiwan members of Congress and many expressed interests in assisting the island military regardless of China’s rationale for attacking—even if Taiwan provoked it. To discourage such a change in policy, both Presidents Clinton and George W. Bush have made overtures to the PRC, although these assurances are quickly countered by Taiwanese accusations of America selling them out and a reassurance of American interests in the island. America thus has continued to try to pacify both sides but in an ad hoc manner.

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56 Not only was this more than double the percentage of his closest competitor, Peng Ming-min (21%), this remains the highest percentage for any presidential candidate.

Taiwan primarily saw the aftermath in positive terms. Lee had in essence stood up to the mainland, Taiwan’s beliefs that America would aid a fellow democracy were reinforced, and China’s threats strengthened a burgeoning Taiwanese nationalism that would push the island away from unification talks at least in the short-term. Taiwan also realized that China’s resolve could grow because of American interference in the crisis. Thus Lee took a much more cautious approach to “diplomatic flexibility” in the immediate aftermath. However, as tensions seemed to generally drop after the election, Lee determined that he could return to an aggressive mainland stance, as evident in his “state-to-state” comments in 1999.

**The Aftermath**

In the aftermath of the missile crisis, each side still seems to underestimate the political costs of their current policy. Taiwan remains overconfident that America will continue to defend them, regardless of the costs. In addition, almost half of Taiwanese did not believe there would be war with the mainland in the future, leading both Yan Xuetang and Andrew Nathan to comment on the simplistic view in Taiwan of the costs of independence and the possibility of mainland attack.58 This suggests that Taiwan may continue to take risks that could drag the United States further into cross-strait conflict.

China still sees maintaining a militant stance in their best interest. Rhetoric aside, China remains hesitant to push for war if unsure of victory since failure or even a

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prolonged war would legitimize Taiwan’s independence claims.\textsuperscript{59} This may explain in part Beijing’s decision not to push Taiwan further during the crisis and thus their emphasis on military buildup since. This emphasis however may convince Taiwan that time is against them and encourage them to make bolder independence-oriented moves while it still feels it effectively can.\textsuperscript{60} Even if technological advances will allow China to quickly overrun Taiwan, officials seem to ignore two likely outcomes. First, international intervention (and probably not just the US) will likely follow any large scale action against the island. Even in the absence of this, China would have to deal with quelling a Taiwanese population which would see itself more than ever distinct from mainland Chinese.

The US appears to believe that, despite changes on both sides of the strait, no change in cross-strait policy is needed for future deterrence. Briefly following the missile crisis, America considered ending “strategic ambiguity”, but ultimately considered the policy still effective.\textsuperscript{61} Although American deterrence prevailed in 1995-96, this is no guarantee of its effectiveness in the future, nor does it ensure regional stability.\textsuperscript{62} Efforts to deemphasize America’s quasi military commitments to Taiwan are just as ineffective today. Many have argued that selling more advanced weapons to Taiwan would be a less costly alternative while appealing to both Taiwanese officials and Taiwan supporters in the US.\textsuperscript{63} However this only exacerbates the problem by giving further evidence to China

\textsuperscript{61} Copper, Taiwan, 207.
\textsuperscript{62} Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait, 258.
\textsuperscript{63} Fearon, 260; Shambaugh, Taiwan’s Security, 242.
that America intends to keep Taiwan separate from the mainland while also continuing Taiwan’s dependence on American aid.

Much worse is that continued American military assistance may convince Taiwanese officials that it can continue to push the boundaries of cross-strait relations. Increased arms sales to the island in August of 1999 may have been the impetus for Lee Teng-hui’s “state to state” comment. This comment, although wildly popular on Taiwan, gave Chinese hardliners justification for a more aggressive Taiwan approach. Friedman goes as far as to say by the late 1990s, China had become convinced that even the status quo was becoming unacceptable. Although this should not be construed to mean China would push for war unprovoked, this does signal an increased willingness to use force to prevent a delay of unification.

Conclusion

The model suggested, especially after analyzing the missile crisis, gives several insights on cross-strait conflict and illustrates some of the weaknesses in previous views on the Taiwan issue. First, it shows that China has a dominant strategy to respond negatively to any action taken by Taiwan so as to not allow Taiwan to move slowly towards independence without a response. This in turn can lead to a more defiant

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64 Xuetang, Increasing Danger, 246.
Taiwanese stance. Although the model focuses on military conflict, this strategy is also evident in the political realm. For example, because of President Chen Shui-bian’s independence oriented stance, China rebuffs the leader every chance it gets. Even when Taiwan appears to be making overtures to the mainland the PRC rejects. This persuades Taiwanese leaders to respond with an aggressive stance. China has failed to understand (or simply fails to admit) that democratization has altered the constraints on the Taiwanese government which previously could preclude those in favor of eventual independence from positions of power and now must be accountable to an electorate that generally supports a greater role for the island in international politics. Thus China seems to assume that each independence-oriented comment will lead to similar government action and each attempt to maintain its de facto independence is intended to move the island towards formal independence.

Secondly, the weaknesses in America’s Taiwan policy become clearer. Despite continuing to hold onto the policy of “strategic ambiguity”, the model and example show that this is not enough to maintain a durable peace in the straits. Attempts to convince China that America’s military support of Taiwan was conditional, including Clinton’s declaration that America would not support an independent Taiwan, have little effect under present constraints. Since Taiwan would feel compelled to show its resolve against any military threat from the mainland, the absence of American protection cannot fully deter conflict. In addition, failing to respond to China’s show of force would undermine

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America’s other security interests in East Asia. The policy of “strategic ambiguity”
may also convince both sides that America is against them and thus indirectly encourage
risky behavior. Maintaining this policy thus seems at best disingenuous and at worst
extremely dangerous.

Most importantly, this model illustrates the underappreciated role of Taiwan in
cross-strait conflict. The lack of understanding Taiwan’s motives for pushing the
boundaries of the acceptable status quo leads to China’s increased hostility toward the
island. Actions taken by Taiwanese leaders to sway elections or maintain their precarious
standing in international politics in the face of China’s growing political power are
increasingly interpreted by Beijing as evidence of the ROC’s underlying intention to
creep towards independence. Complicating matters is that Taiwan’s precarious political
status makes it likely to respond to China’s threats of force with greater resolve.
Furthermore, this model shows how even if China and the US are generally supportive of
the status quo, they cannot control the effects Taiwan’s domestic politics generates in the
international realm. By making Taiwan the first actor, it also illustrates how, despite the
pressures from China and the US, the island has significant influence on the direction of
cross-strait relations.

Taiwan’s continued democratization since the missile crisis has placed greater
pressures on cross-strait relations. The need to preserve their tenuous hold on sovereignty
in the shadow of a strengthening mainland and the electoral gains possible by appealing
to a Taiwanese identity has increased the likelihood of another such crisis. Whether
Taiwan intends it or not, the international effect of its domestic politics has reshaped the
basic triangular relationship even if the other parties refuse to acknowledge this change.
For cross-strait peace and stability, all three parties must adapt their strategies.

Otherwise, Taiwan, China, and the US may find themselves again stumbling into an unintended conflict.
Chapter 2: Taiwan’s Path to Democracy

Since the end of World War II, the status of Taiwan has remained contentious. The People’s Republic of China (PRC) continuously has claimed sovereignty over the island, despite the mainland having no direct control over the island since 1895. The Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan maintains that it is a de facto sovereign nation although it has not gone as far as to declare itself independent of the mainland. For forty years both governments claimed to be the legitimate government of all of China. However, as Taiwan has gradually democratized over the past 20 years, the traditional structure for viewing cross-strait conflict has irreversibly changed. Democratic reforms which made politicians accountable solely to residents of the island gave the ROC the impetus to drop its claims to the mainland without undermining its legitimacy on the island. Dropping its mainland claims has also allowed the ROC to slowly move to assert itself as an independent entity in international relations. These continued moves by Taiwan may have international consequences as the PRC regards any move to declare de jure independence as an act of war. Although Taiwan’s democratization has increased the internal legitimacy of the ROC government, it has contributed significantly to increased tensions with the PRC.
History of Taiwan

Taiwan’s history can be viewed a continuous cycle of separating and reintegrating with mainland China. Since the 17th century, Taiwan has been under Chinese, Dutch, and Japanese rule, along with various levels of self-rule. Most of the population of the island immigrated from the mainland in three rather distinct periods, ultimately creating the ethnic divisions on the island. Most important for understanding the root of cross-strait conflict however is the end of Japanese rule. With the end of World War II, the Allied Powers intended for the island to return to China. However, the Chinese civil war complicated this handover. When Japan relinquished its claims to Taiwan, the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek, with American approval, quickly established control over the land. Soon after, the Chinese Communist Party pushed the remaining Nationalist forces off the mainland and onto the island. With the CCP declaring the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 after seizing total control of the mainland, two governments claimed to be the legitimate government of all of China: the PRC in Beijing, and the ROC in Taipei. Further complicating matters was that the peace treaty


71 The last and shortest lived of these eras of self-rule was in 1895. After the news of the Treaty of Shimonoseki ceding the island to Japan, a poorly organized group declared an independent Republic of Taiwan, lasting only ten days. Copper, John. *Taiwan: Nation-State or Province?* 4th Edition. Westview Press. Boulder, CO. 2003: p. 38

72 The Hakka people originated near Hong Kong and immigrated around the 11th century. The Fukien Taiwanese originated in Fujian province just across the strait from the island and immigrated primarily in the 14th through 16th centuries. In the mid to late 1940s, Mainlanders sympathetic to the Nationalist party fled to the island and imposed the use of Mandarin on the Taiwanese speaking Hakka and Fukien. Those born on the island but whose families migrated after the Communist takeover of the mainland are still viewed as Mainlanders. In addition, approximately two percent of the population are considered aborigines and are of Malay-Polynesian descent and originally immigrated before the 16th century.

between Japan and Taiwan only relinquishes Japan’s claims to the island, leaving its legal status uncertain.

Surprisingly, neither side seemed to see Taiwan as necessarily part of China until shortly before the Nationalists were forced to the island and the Communists had complete control of the mainland. Taiwan was not listed in the ROC constitutions of 1925, 1934, or 1936 and the 1947 Constitution refers only to the territorial integrity at the time of the founding of the Republic in 1911, at which time Taiwan was under Japanese rule. Chiang Kai-shek made no effort to claim Taiwan until near the end of World War II, focusing entirely on holding onto the mainland. Likewise, the CCP made no claims to the island, with Mao himself stating in the late 1930s that Taiwan was not part of China. Mao appeared to have placed Taiwan in the category of friendly peripheral territory, seeing little interest in the territory until 1949.

The change by both parties to view Taiwan as part of China appears to have grown more out of geopolitical factors than historical claims. Taiwan needed to be part of China to legitimize not only the ROC’s position in international relations, but for the Nationalists to have any real hopes for regaining the mainland. Perpetuating the view that Taiwan was part of China prevented the Nationalists from looking like a hopeless government in exile and continued the notion that the civil war was not over. Accepting this view also reinforced the image that the Communist revolution had not truly been successful. For the PRC’s own sense of legitimacy, Taiwan had to be seen as part of China that simply had not been “liberated” yet, following the Nationalists argument,

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74 Copper, Taiwan: p. 42.
76 Copper, Taiwan: p. 28.
otherwise it was just a rebellion with questionable legal status. Thus, Taiwan became important not necessarily because of its historical ties, but because of its symbolic significance at the time and as evidence that the war between the Communists and Nationalists was not over.77

To legitimize the ROC’s position on Taiwan and its claim to be the sole rightful government of China, the ROC pushed Chinese culture on native Taiwanese.78 Besides making Mandarin Chinese the official language, the ROC maintained the use of traditional Chinese characters after the PRC began a policy of character simplification to encourage literacy. Cultural artifacts taken from the mainland were consistently used to promote Taiwan’s “Chineseness”. The ROC also encouraged the study of ancient China, with virtually no attention to Taiwan’s history except to emphasize its historical ties to the mainland, in order to create a greater connection to China. These efforts were indirectly helped by the Cultural Revolution on the mainland which attempted to eradicate much of the influence of their country’s imperial past. By intentional design, the Nationalists attempted to position themselves as the only preservers of China’s history and thus support the ROC’s international position.

Despite espousing democratic principles, the Republic of China on Taiwan remained fiercely authoritarian for several reasons. From a security perspective, the island was seen as vulnerable to a mainland invasion. The KMT played upon these fears

77 Likewise, it could be argued that Mongolia could have just as easily been the flashpoint for ROC-PRC conflict as the Nationalists still viewed all of Mongolia as under their jurisdiction. The only factors preventing this was Soviet support of the Mongolian People’s Republic (MPR), the PRC’s acceptance of its independence and that the Nationalists made no physical attempt to reclaim the area.
to maintain martial law until 1987 and discredit or repress opposition.79 Structurally, the KMT followed the Leninist model of organization (democratic centralization), making the implementation of democratic reforms difficult and undesirable.80 More importantly, the KMT was comprised overwhelmingly of mainlanders which created resentment from native Taiwanese. This resentment led to protests in late 1946 and early 1947, culminating in the February 28 Incident in 1947 where thousands of native Taiwanese were massacred. In this context, democratic reforms would have certainly weakened the KMT’s hold on power. In addition, most of the mainlanders saw this move to Taiwan as temporary, only a transitional period before reclaiming the mainland, and therefore saw little need for reform.81 Thus the government was hesitant to move towards a true democracy when it lacked roots in Taiwanese society.

Under the authoritarian control of the KMT, politics on the island were rather predictable.82 The “One China” principle remained intact since there was no consensus within the KMT to allow for dual recognition.83 The ROC’s preference for the future of Taiwan also appeared quite clear as an independent Taiwan was not considered. Chiang Kai-shek and his supporters undoubtedly preferred unification under the Nationalist government over unification under the Communists, seeing the status quo as a temporary

79 Copper, Taiwan: p. 112.
80 Dickson notes that “Leninist parties were designed to change the societies they govern, not be responsive to the changing wants and needs of society”. Dickson, Bruce. Democratization in China and Taiwan: The Adaptability of Leninist Parties. Oxford University Press. New York. 1997: p. 2.
81 Chiang Kai-shek in 1950 believed he could retake the mainland within three to five years, which in the chaos of the early PRC was still a possibility. Yu, Peter Kien-Hong. “Lee Teng-hui (and His Successors?) Versus Jiang Zemin (and His Successor!): Dialectical Games”. Asian Affairs: An American Review. Spring 1996, Vol. 23, Issue 1: p.74; Copper, Taiwan: p. 15.
and acceptable condition until the Nationalists could return to the mainland. For their preferred outcome to occur, the maintenance of the “One China” myth was necessary.

This myth was further sustained by the ROC transplanting to the island a central and provincial government, in practice both governing the same territory, although the central government had “representatives” from each district on the mainland.\(^{84}\) Externally, although Chiang Kai-shek maintained that he would retake the mainland, no serious efforts to do so had been made.\(^{85}\) Internally, no serious challenge to the KMT’s monopoly on power emerged. This was in part due to the lack of elections on the national level. Since 1947 the National Assembly remained “frozen in time”, with many KMT members still representing mainland districts decades after fleeing to Taiwan.\(^{86}\) Thus the official party line hardly changed for over two decades.

**Reform and the Beginnings of Democratization**

For decades, several American supporters of Taiwan suggested that the ROC live up to its moniker as “Free China” by instituting some democratic reforms, but with the island’s perceived importance in Cold War politics, Chiang Kai-shek realized that America was unlikely to push the issue any further than democratic rhetoric as America had no alternative but to back Taipei over Beijing.\(^{87}\) Only when relations improved between Washington and Beijing did Taiwan truly have to consider democratization.

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\(^{85}\) According to varying sources, Chiang attempted four times to recover the mainland, seeing southwest China (Tibet) as a viable position to build support. However, every attempt was short-lived and saw no tangible results.

\(^{86}\) Copper, Taiwan: p. 118.

Western support for the ROC had always been based in part on “One China”. This growing relationship not only openly contradicted the ROC’s claims to be the legitimate government of all of China, but specifically challenged the legitimacy of the government to rule the island. To accept that it was not the rightful government of China would thus admit the KMT had no legal authority to govern the island. Although the ROC’s claims to all of China were “fast becoming a global joke”, the stability of the island’s government required the maintenance of this myth.\(^8^8\)

Domestic factors also pushed for reform. The KMT remained overwhelmingly comprised of Mainlanders, leaving Hakka and Fukien Taiwanese (who comprised the majority of the island’s inhabitants) with virtually no political voice. Resentment only grew as the ROC’s international recognition decreased in the 1970s. Dickson mentions three key events leading to a more aggressive reform movement.\(^8^9\) The Chengli demonstrations in 1977 were the first large-scale anti-KMT actions in thirty years. The KMT also cancelled elections in 1979 following America’s recognition of the PRC. Finally the Kaohsiung Incident of 1979 in which the KMT cracked down on a burgeoning democratic movement helped solidify government opposition and was seen as a turning point for the tangwai (literally, “outside the party”). What had been for years a scattered and disorganized opposition was quickly becoming a serious challenge to KMT rule.

To counteract these pressures, President Chiang Ching-kuo began reforms within the KMT to increase the perceived legitimacy of the party.\(^9^0\) The “Taiwanization” of the

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\(^8^8\) Rigger, Politics: p. 106.
\(^8^9\) Dickson, Democratization: p. 208-209.
\(^9^0\) Chiang had his legitimacy issues to deal with also. Coming to power shortly after the death of his father, Chiang had neither the political experience nor the power base to effectively rule. Recruiting new members
party, recruiting native Taiwanese into the KMT, was seen as crucial to the longevity of the party. Chiang went as far as to choose two native Taiwanese as vice presidents, Shieh Tung-min in 1978 and Lee Teng-hui in 1984.\(^{91}\) Not only would “Taiwanization” make the KMT appear more connected to non-Mainlanders, but reformers believed this would deter the politically motivated from joining the burgeoning yet still illegal opposition.\(^{92}\)

Before opposition parties could be allowed in the system, Chiang reasoned that the KMT needed roots within native Taiwanese society. Otherwise the lifting of martial law and the ban on opposition parties would encourage the formation of political parties on ethnic lines, virtually lock the party out of power since Mainlanders comprised less than a quarter of the island’s population. The KMT also believed that a more Taiwanese party would also have an increased electoral appeal and internal legitimacy.\(^{93}\)

Ironically, as burgeoning Sino-American relations created domestic political tension for the KMT on Taiwan (and thus part of the need for reform), this relationship also ushered in a more peaceful era in cross-strait relations which encouraged democratic change. With the establishment of formal relations with the US in 1979, the PRC ceased talk of “liberating Taiwan” and thus accepted that unification could occur peacefully. Dickson argues that only after the mainland’s threat of force had decreased did the KMT consider significant democratizing reforms.\(^{94}\) This decrease in tension across the strait allowed Taiwanese leaders to focus more on domestic reforms while both the PRC and

\(^{91}\) Copper, Taiwan: p. 121.
\(^{92}\) Dickson, Democratization: p. 16.
\(^{94}\) Dickson, Democratization: p. 30, 212.
ROC maintained a vague “One China” policy which would ultimately lead to
reunification.

Although the period of cross-strait relations following America’s recognition of
the PRC (1979-1986) was relatively peaceful, the growing political influence of the
mainland threatened to further isolate the ROC. Democratization was seen as a means to
maintain its position in international relations and perhaps the only means to prevent
absorption into the PRC. Even if formal relations were not increased, reformers argued
that democratic sympathy from the Western world would ensure aid for Taiwan in case of
attack. Furthermore, democratic reforms hoped to persuade China to take a more
conciliatory position, perhaps encouraging the mainland to make similar reforms that
would increase the possibility of reunification.

By 1980, Chiang Ching-kuo believed that if he could develop a “perfect”
democracy on the island, it could eventually be transferred to the mainland.95 His focus
however still remained on eventual reunification under a democratic ROC leadership and
thus Chinese nationalism maintained a critical element in his mainland policy.96 This is
evident in his agreeing in 1982 to cooperate with reunification, but only on the ROC’s
terms. Chiang’s refusal to consider dual recognition also suggests that he still partially
believed in some form of the “One China” principle.

To accomplish this “perfect” democracy, the ROC needed to move to a multiparty
system. Previous suppression of oppositional voices, especially since 1979, had created
an undercurrent in Taiwanese society which threatened stability. As Hsieh noted, had the

95 Myers, Ramon H. “How the Republic of china’s Democracy Can Ensure its Survival”. The ROC on the
Threshold of the 21st Century: A Paradigm Reexamined. Edited by Chien-min Chao and Cal Clark.
KMT continued this policy, the potential ensuing social turmoil may have enticed Beijing to invade under the guise of peacekeeping.\textsuperscript{97} America’s level of commitment to the island immediately following recognition of the PRC was also unclear even after the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), and ROC officials could not be certain on American support if the mainland were to intervene. Allowing for a multiparty system would also give opponents of the KMT a belief that they could eventually gain control of government and thus would maintain their willingness to “play the game”.\textsuperscript{98} Through accommodation, the ROC intended to bring about a relatively smooth transition to a multiparty system.

In 1986, Chiang accepted the formation of the first opposition party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), thus allowing for truly competitive elections for the first time on Taiwan.\textsuperscript{99} In part due to the success of the “Taiwanization” of the KMT and voter fears that a vote for a party determined for Taiwanese independence could elicit a mainland response, the KMT maintained an overwhelming majority of contested seats in the Legislative Yuan and smaller offices. Despite these electoral setbacks for the DPP, the legalization of opposition parties opened up political discourse on the island and effectively legitimized independence sentiment. As a consequence of Chiang’s “Taiwanization” efforts, party divisions were based on views of self identity (Chinese versus Taiwanese) instead of ethnic lines. Within three years over 50 parties registered


\textsuperscript{98} Rigger, Politics: p. 13-14.

\textsuperscript{99} Forming political parties were still technically illegal in 1986, but Chiang ordered that no action be taken to crack down on the DPP. The next year, political parties were formally legalized. Copper, Taiwan; p. 136.
for district or local races, but by 1993 most had disappeared.\textsuperscript{100} This was in part due to an inability to find another significant political cleavage other than the unification/independence issue.\textsuperscript{101} National identity remained the most salient issue in the wake of the 1995-1996 missile crisis,\textsuperscript{102} and continues to the present in part because of the evolution to a multiparty system.\textsuperscript{103}

Perhaps anticipating the effects that multiparty elections would have in stirring this national dialogue and as an attempt to deflect the growing support independence and hopefully encourage a return to unification sentiment, Chiang lifted the travel ban to the mainland in 1987.\textsuperscript{104} However, this seems to have backfired. Taiwanese who saw the conditions on the mainland and how it lagged behind Taiwan decreased support for unification.\textsuperscript{105} Contact also did not overcome the Cold War mentality on the island of Taiwan being “good China” compared to the PRC, again hampering support for unification.\textsuperscript{106} At best, increased interaction with the mainland encouraged more Taiwanese to see themselves as a “different Chinese” if not encouraging Taiwanese identity. Although increased economic ties may have diminished distrust between


\textsuperscript{105} Rigger, Politics: p. 107.

\textsuperscript{106} Garver, \textit{Face Off: China, the united States, and Taiwan’s Democratization}. University of Washington Press. Seattle. 1997: p. 16-17.
individual Taiwanese and those on the mainland, it has yet to diminish their perceived
difference from their mainland counterparts.

The Lee Era
Under the leadership of Lee Teng-hui, democratization would not only
consolidate its position within Taiwanese society, but the effects of these changes on
cross-strait relations became increasingly clear. Whereas Taiwan’s leadership had
previously been determined primarily by informal power sources (i.e. personal relations),
with Chiang Ching-kuo’s death little but a formal constitution was left to determine
leadership. 107 After some political wrangling, Lee’s succession to the presidency was
confirmed although his power remained tenuous at best. Moreover, Lee’s ability to
maintain the “One China” policy was virtually nil. At least in theory Chiang Ching-kuo
had a chance to recover the mainland because some in China still identified with his
father and/or himself and the KMT. Lee, being a native Taiwanese and virtually unknown
on the mainland until several years into office, did not have such a rapport. 108 Although
controversial, it seemed he had no choice but to acknowledge the legitimacy of the PRC’s
sovereignty over the mainland.

Lee took several steps to increase his legitimacy as President of the ROC and in
the process altered the nature of cross-strait conflict from primarily ideological in nature
to a battle of competing nationalisms. 109 Prior to Lee, cross-strait relations remained

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focused on competing ideologies, with the ROC maintaining a strong anti-Communist policy that prevented improvements in cross-strait dialogue after Sino-American rapprochement. The mainland’s gradual market reforms and Lee’s acknowledgement of the PRC’s sovereignty over the mainland made maintaining this distinction between the ROC and PRC on ideological grounds increasingly difficult. To move the debate towards competing nationalisms, Lee would institute two major changes that would set the stage for increased conflict with the mainland for the next decade.

First, he attempted to co-opt the core platform of the DPP (minus the call for formal independence) and transform the focus of the ROC from promoting Chinese nationalism to promoting a uniquely Taiwanese identity.\(^{110}\) He simply wanted to take advantage of a growing trend of among those on the island who by 1993 labeled saw themselves more and more as Taiwanese or both Taiwanese and Chinese than simply Chinese.\(^{111}\) Although this move cost Lee some support within the KMT (a small portion broke off to form the New Party in 1993 in part because of this stance), overall it was tremendously popular. The growth of Taiwanese nationalism seemed to grow upon itself. As Taiwanese identity increased, verbal warnings from Beijing also increased, which contributed to Taiwanese backlash and further support of Taiwanese nationalism.\(^{112}\)

Events on the mainland, especially the Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989, further

\(^{110}\) Lee’s expressions such as the “new Taiwanese” were met with apprehension from the DPP who saw this as removing one of the key distinctions between their party and the KMT. Chao, Chien-Min. “One Step Forward, One Step Backward: Chen Shui-bian’s Mainland Policy”. *Journal of Contemporary China*. 2003, Vol. 12, Issue 34: p. 135.

\(^{111}\) Of those polled that year, 31.4% self-identified as purely “Taiwanese”, compared to only 22.8% for purely “Chinese” and 40.1% stating they were both “ Taiwanese” and “Chinese”. Hsieh, John Fuh-sheng and Emerson M.S. Niou. “Salient Issues in Taiwan’s Electoral Politics”. Working Papers in Taiwan Studies No. 3.

\(^{112}\) Beijing’s attempts to threaten Taiwan may have contributed more to the rise than the original DPP push. Chu, Nationalism: p 316.
discouraged Chinese self-identification. Lee attempted to steer this sentiment towards support for his more aggressive mainland stance.

Secondly, Lee called for a constitutional amendment in 1994 that would allow for direct election. His decisive election victory in Taiwan’s first direct presidential election in 1996 (54% in a four-way race) and the rise of Taiwanese nationalism which grew out of the democratization process undermined the already shaky concept of Taiwanese identity emanating from Beijing which argued that the island’s population clearly saw themselves as Chinese. Lee’s win also encouraged a more aggressive stance towards the mainland and further electoral appeals. This included a greater embrace of Taiwanese nationalism and moves which many on both sides of the Strait viewed as creeping towards independence.

The most noted example was his 1999 reference to cross-strait relations as “state to state”. Beijing immediately balked that this proved Lee’s intention for formal independence. This comment however was most likely intended to appeal to Taiwanese voters, not a means solely to challenge Beijing. Lee surmised that Taiwanese, now fully democratic, would not accept any definition of cross-strait relations that classified Taiwan as unequal. Lee’s own words in the wake of the “state to state” comment suggest this motivation:

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114 Garver, Face Off; p. 23.
When any two states conduct a dialogue, they do so on an equal basis regardless of size or military prowess. There is no reason for the cross-strait dialogue to be any different. Only talks conducted on an equal basis can win popular support.\textsuperscript{115}

Lee’s comments, controversial as they were, only reflected the public’s sense of a unique Taiwanese identity and openness to eventual formal independence. Under Lee independence sentiment grew an average of two percent a year, from 6\% in 1989 to 26\% in 1999.\textsuperscript{116} This new Taiwanese identity had effectively reduced psychological and emotional dependence on the mainland.\textsuperscript{117} Thus maintaining Chiang Ching-kuo’s dream of unification under the ROC seemed to be rapidly becoming impossible (if it in fact had lived past Chiang) as few Taiwanese had any incentive for even a “political recovery” of the mainland.\textsuperscript{118}

Lee’s constitutional reforms allowing for direct presidential election showed that voters did not share the same preferences as the previous authoritarian regime. Whereas previously unification under the ROC was clearly the most preferred choice, now the continuation of the status quo appeared to be the most preferred. Furthermore, eventual independence, no more than a passing thought under authoritarian rule, was growing in acceptance. With his reforms and nurturing of Taiwanese nationalism, Lee opened dialogue in Taiwan about its future, making the question of eventual unification or independence one of the most salient issues in Taiwanese politics.

\textsuperscript{118} Yu, Lee Teng-hui: p.75.
Chen Shui-bian

When Lee Teng-hui announced that he would not run for re-election in 2000, many on Taiwan and the mainland believed the next president would likely tone down support of Taiwanese nationalism and take a more conciliatory approach to the mainland. What transpired, primarily because of a split within the KMT which led to the formation of the People’s First Party (PFP), was that the candidate with the most aggressive independence-oriented stance received the plurality of the vote. DPP candidate Chen Shui-bian, formerly a vocal supporter of Taiwanese independence and the creation of the Republic of Taiwan who had only recently tempered his support for independence, narrowly defeated PFP candidate James Soong, beating him by two percentage points.\footnote{The final results gave Chen 39\%, Soong 37\%, and KMT candidate and former Vice President Lien Chan only 23\%.}

Part of his unexpected victory was due to a backlash from mainland threats. Many scoffed at China’s attempts to influence the election and Premier Zhu Rongji’s threat that a vote for Chen would be a vote for war. Regardless of the cause of his victory, both sides of the strait quickly realized that this change would spike tensions.

Although making reassurances that he would not declare independence unless the mainland attack, Chen continued to encourage Taiwanese nationalism and moved in a direction which suggested creeping independence. He continued the traditional DPP push for UN membership.\footnote{Lee Teng-hui had co-opted the UN move in 1992 shortly after the DPP added it to their platform. Garver \textit{Face Off}: p. 30.} Educational reform under his administration encouraged the use of native languages and curriculum emphasized Taiwan’s history more, a clear attempt to
downplay the cultural and historical links to China. In promoting the ROC as a sovereign nation, Chen visited several Latin American countries that formally recognized Taipei, in the process having short stopovers in the US. Chen also pushed for constitutional reform and a law to permit Taiwan’s first referendum, both moves opposed by Beijing. As a result, the PRC refused to respond to any of Chen’s conciliatory acts, labeling him a splittist.

The 2004 election reinforced that a unique Taiwanese nationalism had continued to rise under the Chen administration. Down to a two party race (Lien Chan and James Soong ran as a ticket), Chen narrowly defeated his opponent by a margin of only 0.02%. For Chen to succeed, he clearly needed to attract more voters, but did not however moderate his stance to appeal to the Downsian median voter. His main stances—support for Taiwan’s first referendum (which was along with the Presidential election) and constitutional reform—were appeals to his core independence-leaning supporters. At the same time, his opponent Lien Chan moved towards the middle, refusing to endorse eventual reunification and instead supporting a continuation of the status quo. For Chen to have won with this strategy, his message had to resonate more with voters than the more moderate stance by the Lien-Soong ticket. Chen’s victory, although narrow and

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122 The current constitution states that the people of China are the source of the ROC’s sovereignty and any constitutional reform would likely limit this to just those on Taiwan. Even if conciliatory wording was used (i.e. “Chinese on Taiwan”), the PRC views this as an intention to declare formal independence. As the constitution stands, Beijing can claim that the ROC still acknowledges in effect a “One China” policy. Swaine, Michael. “Tough Love for Taiwan”. *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2004, p. 49.
not without controversy, affirmed that the percentage of the Taiwanese electorate leaning towards independence was increasing.

**Complicating Cross-Strait Relations**

Democratization radically altered the framework for Taiwan’s mainland policy, not only opening debate on the future of the island and its relationship with Beijing, but making this the primary political issue in Taiwanese politics.\(^{125}\) Before 1987, Taiwan’s mainland policy was straightforward: eventually both sides of the strait would unify under the ROC government. With the legalization of opposition parties, a variety of possibilities emerged, ranging from immediate reunification (the New Party) to declared independence (the original platform of the Democratic Progressive Party). Returning to one option for Taiwan’s future was impossible. As Chen Shui-bian stated, “If reunification (was) the only option, Taiwan would no longer be a democracy”.\(^{126}\)

As with any democracy, Taiwan’s democratization ended the era of a unified voice concerning both domestic and international issues. This is due not only to difference of opinion among Taiwanese voters, but the need for politicians to exploit these differences. This encourages government inconsistency as politicians make different remarks to different groups.\(^{127}\) Unlike most other democracies, this uncertainty

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\(^{125}\) Cabestan, Taiwan’s Mainland Policy: p. 229.


\(^{127}\) For example, during the 2000 campaign Chen Shui-bian referred to cross-strait relations as “one state on each side” to pro-independence audiences and the more subdued and “two Chinese states” to unification supporters and towards China. Shih, Cheng-Feng. “Taiwan’s Foreign Policy Toward China: An Assessment of the Chen Shui-bian Administration”. 2001. [http://mail.tku.edu.tw/cfshih/010810c.htm](http://mail.tku.edu.tw/cfshih/010810c.htm)
has greater international implications as it persuades both the PRC and the US to prepare for a worst case scenario.

Despite this uncertainty, a somewhat tenuous consensus in the middle has emerged. Since no consensus on what to do with China or what its ultimate relationship with China should be exists, most Taiwanese accept a prolonged status quo (de facto independence) until unification or independence becomes a more inviting option. Even most supporters for eventual reunification, such as James Soong, support a continuation of the status quo.\textsuperscript{128} The 2003 Taiwan National Security Survey showed that a significant majority (62.8\%) would support independence if China would not attack, whereas nearly half (47.9\%) would support reunification if both sides differed little politically and economically.\textsuperscript{129} More interesting is that 30.9\% responded positively to both possibilities. For years polls have consistently shown that maintaining the status quo is favored over independence or unification presently, confirming that it is seen as the safest option at the moment. This status quo however cannot be maintained permanently, but it does produce a relatively stable political atmosphere on the island by limiting hasty moves on either side.

Democratic reforms have also given Taiwanese a sense of accomplishment, producing an unwillingness to accept negotiations which could repeal these changes. In the pre-reform era, the possibility always existed that the ROC government would “sell out” Taiwan and agree to unification terms regardless of public opinion. Since elections

\textsuperscript{128} Soong’s 2000 presidential platform supported a continuation of Taiwan’s de facto independence, calling for a fifty year process of negotiations with Beijing towards ultimate reunification. Lin, Tse-min and Brian Roberts. “Markets and Politics: The 2000 Taiwanese Presidential Election”. Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Midwest Political Science Association. Chicago, April 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2001. p. 6.

\textsuperscript{129} Hsieh, March Surprise: p. 7-8.
have reinforced the public’s perception of the ROC as a sovereign state, any negotiations which place Taiwan on unequal footing with the mainland will be considered invalid. Lee acknowledged this stating that “no democratically elected government would enter into negotiations with the consent of its people—especially negotiations that might ultimately affect its domestic political accountability.” This also explains the DPP’s refusal to accept even the vague KMT/PRC “One China” concepts, fearing that Beijing could dominate the direction of negotiations under this principle and justify force if the ROC later objects. Post-reform leaders have narrowly avoided mainland aggression when dodging negotiations that were domestically unpopular, but as Pratt stated, eventually it will be impossible to meet both Taiwanese and mainland China’s demands.

Taiwan’s status as distinct from the mainland was also entrenched by the island’s democracy. Democracy undermined Beijing’s claims of sovereignty over the island and the notion that Taiwan was a renegade province. Furthermore, Beijing’s attempts to define Taiwanese identity were frustrated by the Taiwanese view with popular support on the island. Democratic reforms also increased unofficial diplomatic relations preventing further isolation of the island, which opposition forces worried would lead to

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130 Teng-hui, Understanding Taiwan: p. 13.
131 Accepting “One China” would also undermine the ROC’s international status because this would allow the mainland to argue that “One China” means under PRC control. Wang, T.Y. “Cross-Strait Relations After the 2000 Election in Taiwan: Changing Tactics in a New Reality”. Asian Survey, Vol. XLI, No. 5. September/October 2001: p. 720.
133 Garver, Face Off: p. 4-5.
134 Garver, Face Off: p. 23.
eventual absorption by the PRC.\textsuperscript{135} Taiwan’s increased recognition, albeit unofficial, was in part a result of democratization making the island’s government appear qualitatively different from that in Beijing. The ROC’s dropping of its claims to the mainland-in response to democratic reforms which made the government ultimately responsible to Taiwanese only—created a greater sense of legitimacy in the international world to their claims over Taiwan.\textsuperscript{136} Several countries without formal relations with the ROC praised the democratic transformation on the island and a few, including the United States, ultimately upgraded unofficial recognition of the government. Although legally, Taiwan’s status remains unchanged, its increased role in international relations makes its claim to sovereignty harder to ignore.

Respecting Taiwan’s democracy and the need to appeal to the public has pushed Taiwanese politicians to unilaterally alter the existing cross-strait framework in significant ways. Lee Teng-hui unilaterally announced in May of 1991 that the war with the mainland was over and thus acknowledged the legitimacy of the PRC to rule the mainland. Although still publicly supporting unification in the indefinite future, this was the greatest challenge to date of the “One China” policy.\textsuperscript{137} Ending the civil war at the same time as the Cold War’s demise should have made Taiwan safer, but without the perceived threat from the Soviet Union, China focused more so on the island.\textsuperscript{138} Lee’s “state to state” comment and Chen’s pledge that only Taiwanese have the right to change the SQ, although intended for domestic audiences, can easily be interpreted by outside

\textsuperscript{135} Copper, Taiwan: p. 52.
\textsuperscript{136} Moody, Politics of Presidentialism.
\textsuperscript{138} Copper, Taiwan: p. 185.
This perception that Taiwan may unilaterally move should not be misinterpreted
as necessarily a push for independence. ROC leaders primarily want to maintain the
position they currently have (de facto independence) and establish themselves as the
PRC’s equal. The ROC’s push to be viewed as a sovereign state does not negate the
possibility of unification, but does help ensure that any negotiations are done on equal
footing. Even the increased promotion of a Taiwanese identity can be seen in this light.
Taiwan, at the moment, intends to pursue political parity-like the divided Germany or
Korea cases—not necessarily formal independence. Taiwanese officials are quick to
point at the Germany case especially since dual recognition not only decreased tensions,
but did not prevent reunification. Pursuing Taiwanese identity is thus seen as aiding this
effort. 139

Security Concerns

Taiwanese leaders seemed to view democratic reforms as a means to increase the
island’s security. By democratizing, the ROC hoped to appeal to a Western sense of
“democratic solidarity” and thus deter China in the absence of a defense treaty. Doing so
also allowed the government to allocate a smaller percentage of the national budget to
military expenditures. In 1983, more than half of the national budget (57.2%) went to

139 “Carving out Taiwan’s identity seen needed to keep parity with China”. Central News Agency. October
military spending.\textsuperscript{140} By 1992, it had dropped by more than half (27.7\%) and to less than 17\% by 2001.\textsuperscript{141}

Despite these changes, Taiwan’s security appears to have changed little. The island still remains heavily reliant on the US, not only for military purchases since most countries refuse to risk economic relations with China to sell equipment to Taiwan, but also for direct defense in case of a perceived Chinese military threat. Washington has also pushed Taiwan to spend more on its own defense, including weapons development, in an attempt to decrease Taiwan’s reliance on American help, but Taiwan has made little changes. Taiwan remains one of the largest spenders on military equipment, spending nearly twice that of Israel, but public scrutiny has made maintaining these levels of expenditures difficult outside of a clear and present threat from the mainland. The hoped for “democratic solidarity” has not convinced the US to take a more definitive stance on defending the island. The democratization and the controversial election appeals which came with it have perhaps made the US more hesitant to defend Taiwan, believing that Taiwan’s officials now feel they can take an aggressive stance with America’s backing.

Taiwan’s security concerns with China have also not been decreased with democratization. If anything they have deteriorated since the island became a full-fledged democracy. China no longer sees Taiwan gradually moving towards unification and views the current status quo as just a temporary stop until formal independence. Although highly popular domestically, Taiwan’s displays of sovereignty (such as official visits and


the UN push) persuade the mainland that, in the absence of a more militant stance, Taiwan is slipping out of their hands. Under these beliefs, the Chinese missile tests in 1995-1996 not only should have been predicted, but should be seen as an indication of Beijing’s heightened frustration with Taiwan following their democratization.

**Conclusion**

The changes on Taiwan have made many of the previous means of analyzing cross-strait relations obsolete. The commonly used divided nations model used to explain the other two cases arising from World War II – Germany and Korea rests on the assumption that both sides want unification.\(^{142}\) Not only is unification not specifically desired by Taiwan at the moment, this model ignores China’s insistence that this case differs from the other two and China’s refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of the Taipei government. Attempts to use an asymmetrical conflict model runs into the problem of few cases which are similar to cross-straits relations. For example, East Timor, Eritrea, and Western Sahara all have been involved in some form of asymmetrical conflict in their quest for independence, but none of them had the economic or political power of Taiwan, much less the population. The changes brought about by Taiwan’s democratization make it difficult to use any comparative model, especially since these models fail to fully take into account the unusual relationship the US has in this situation.

Taiwan’s unique situation makes it unlike other democracies in that it is under the constant threat of invasion. This threat forces the ROC to present itself as a legitimate

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sovereign nation, otherwise eliciting help if and when China does invade will be virtually impossible. Even Israel is more secure, not only because of its military superiority compared to its neighbors, but because its neighbors have begrudgingly accepted (at least implicitly) Israel’s right as a state to exist. Taiwan’s exercising of its democracy also has greater international repercussions than any other country of its size because of its precarious relationship with two major powers. For a peaceful solution to be found which maintains Taiwan’s democracy, both of these major powers must not only reevaluate their own Taiwan policy but anticipate the changes made by the other power and Taiwan’s own initiatives.
Taiwan has played a prominent role in mainland Chinese politics since the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949. For decades, the mainland called for the “liberation” of the island, both as a means to increase its legitimacy internationally and to direct domestic malcontents towards an opponent other than the Chinese Communist Party. Even when Beijing had no means to invade the island, this rallying cry was commonly employed and united public opinion towards eventual reunification. When the US granted formal recognition to the PRC in 1979, the PRC felt it could finally drop this threat of invasion, assuming that without American support, Taiwan would quickly “come back home”. However, the Taiwan Relations Act which followed recognition boosted morale on the island and prevented any unification schemes hoped by Beijing. Since then, especially after the ROC fully democratized, the PRC has gradually moved back to a hardline approach towards Taiwan and, believing that the US supports Taiwan’s actions, has become increasingly willing to take an aggressive stance towards Washington. As China emerges as a major player in the region, this hardened stance and the need to appear strong may have dangerous results and lead all three parties into military conflict that none desire.

An argument can be made that Taiwan was unimportant to the PRC until the ROC was forced to the island, in part because of Mao’s earlier comments that Taiwan was

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outside the boundaries of China. Only in December of 1949, after Chiang declared Taipei the new capital of the ROC did Mao declare the need for eventual unification with Taiwan. The ROC presented a political challenge (as opposed to a true military challenge) to Beijing’s authority and thus reincorporating Taiwan into China was deemed necessary for political legitimacy. Mainland attempts at this would have likely been successful eventually if not for the US 17th fleet entering the Straits at the onset of the Korean War. Since then, China has been convinced that America, directly or by proxy through Taiwan, is determined to challenge the CCP’s legitimacy in an effort to keep China in a weakened state.

Because of this perception, the CCP has historically used force (or the threat of it) to test an opponent’s resolve. The first major test occurred over Matsu and Quemoy in 1954-55 which arguably backfired, resulting in greater American support for the ROC and a weak threat to use nuclear weapons to stop Chinese aggression. This show

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144 Other early documents from the CCP suggest the view that Taiwan was seen as a peripheral entity. The “Message to Compatriots on Resistance to Japan to Save the Nation” and the “Resolution of the CC on the Current Political Situation and the Party’s Tasks” in August and December of 1935 respectively both refer to the people of Taiwan similarly to those of Korea and Japan who should be united in an anti-Japanese alliance. In the “CCP Declaration on the War in the Pacific” in December of 1941, the CCP states their goal of encouraging anti-Japanese propaganda and agitation, again mentioning Taiwan in a similar fashion as Korea. The Constitution of the CCP in June of 1945 also makes no reference to the island. The Rise to Power of the Chinese Communist Party: Documents and Analysis. Edited by Tony Saich. M.E. Sharpe. Armonk, NY. 1996.

145 Mao’s decision may also have been partially based on economic concerns. Besides the outflow of capital to Hong Kong and Taiwan, by late 1949, almost all commercial ships had left for Taiwan. Guillermaz, 6.


147 What precipitated the PRC’s actions is unclear. Although Chiang Kai-shek maintained his resolve to retake the mainland since being pushed to Taiwan, all previous efforts were small in scope and complete failures. However, in 1954 America lifted its blockade of Taiwan, making it possible that a more ambitious attempt to reclaim the mainland would be made. Chiang amassed large numbers of troops on the offshore islands leading up to the crisis, which may have made the CCP believe an invasion was imminent. Others
however accomplished two things for the CCP. First it reinforced the view of American intent to contain them and made possible the symbolic use of Taiwan to drum up anti-American sentiment for China’s continued humiliation. Secondly, it encouraged the ROC to maintain the offshore islands. Chiang Kai-shek saw the islands as a symbolic link to the mainland and his claims to legitimately rule it.\textsuperscript{148} To relinquish them after this point would boost independence sentiment. As long as the ROC possessed Quemoy and Matsu, the PRC could argue that both sides still believed in the “One China” principle.\textsuperscript{149}

The mixed results of 1954-55 resulted in China’s Taiwan strategy altering significantly. In the aftermath China has primarily attempted to get Taiwan to effectively make the first strike so that the mainland can frame their overwhelming response as defensive in nature and to deprive the opposition of global sympathy.\textsuperscript{150} This is a departure from the traditional conception of the Maoist view of force and more consistent with the traditional Chinese defense-oriented strategy.\textsuperscript{151} This does not mean that Beijing attempts to goad Taiwan into moving towards independence so that the mainland can justify force, but it does show that the mainland has become more willing to take actions it knows will require the ROC to respond.\textsuperscript{152}

suggest that following the Korean War, the PRC’s primarily motive was to test the strength of America’s renewed commitments to the ROC. Kovachi, Noam. A Conflict Perpetuated : China Policy During the Kennedy Years. Praeger. Westport, CT. 2002: p. 7; Copper, Taiwan, 48.
\textsuperscript{148} Copper, Taiwan, 192.
\textsuperscript{149} The Taiwanese public overwhelmingly rejects relinquishing these islands, perhaps sensing that it would potentially increase tension with the PRC by implying that the islands were part of China and Taiwan was not. Copper, Taiwan, 4.
\textsuperscript{152} For example, during the 1995-1996 missile tests, PLA planes flew through the center of the Taiwan Straits. Both sides had implicitly accepted the middle of the strait as a dividing line to avoid issues of
China has also assumed that any cross-strait military conflict will include American involvement. Because of this perception, an analysis of China’s Taiwan policy must also address Sino-American relations. From the onset of the Cold War through the 1970s, the CCP implicitly desired Western formal recognition of their success in driving the Nationalists off the mainland and establishing the PRC. Despite constant references to the moral and political corruptness of American “imperialism”, Beijing’s realist mentality acknowledged that its security would be strengthened by an American acknowledgement of its legitimacy. This desire went so far that the PRC hinted in the 1950s that it would renounce claims to Taiwan in exchange for formal relations with the US.\textsuperscript{153} As Sino-Soviet relations soured in the late 1960s, the utility of establishing formal relations with the US greatly increased. The importance of relations with the US can also be seen in the shift in the CCP party line. Shortly after recognition, the PRC abandoned the slogan “liberation of Taiwan” in favor of peaceful recognition, suggesting Beijing’s confidence that without American support, such a policy could be successful. Beijing’s American policy also began to mollify once it appeared that the Taiwan issue had been concluded. China seemed to be signaling that the only obstruction in Sino-American relations was Taiwan and now that formal recognition had been established there would be few obstacles to improved relations.

Beijing however seems to have had much greater expectations out of improved Sino-American relations than Washington intended to fulfill. America dropping its sovereignty. By flying ever closer to this imaginary dividing line, Beijing appeared to be goading Taiwan to respond to violations of their air space, and thus justify a greater mainland response.\textsuperscript{153} Madsen, Robert A. “The Struggle for Sovereignty Between China and Taiwan”\textsuperscript{153}. \textit{Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities}. Edited by Stephen D. Krasner. Columbia University. New York: p. 159; Purifoy, p. xi.
opposition to seating the PRC, followed by the 1972 Communiqué (“The Shanghai Communiqué”) and the 1979 Communiqué establishing formal recognition gave Beijing officials the impression that Taiwan would soon be in their grasps, but American intent was likely more a policy of engagement and vague dialogue rather than full capitulation on Taiwan.\(^\text{154}\) In both communiqués, America acknowledged a “One China” policy, but remained vague as to what this entailed. The first simply “acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China”. Although the PRC reaffirmed that Taiwan “has long been returned to the motherland” and again proclaimed its sovereignty over the ROC-held territory, the US neither recognized nor acknowledged Beijing’s claims of sovereignty. The latter communiqué again acknowledges the Chinese position: opposition to a “one China, one Taiwan”, “two Chinas”, or an independent Taiwan. As Hickey stated, the term “acknowledge” was deliberately chosen to indicate “cognizance of, but not necessarily agreement with, the Chinese position”.\(^\text{155}\)

Two items appeared considerably more concrete. America affirmed in 1972 its objective to withdraw “all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan” and this

\(^\text{154}\) This could also be inferred by the broadness of the 1972 Communiqué, in that both sides mention the general need to reduce tensions and increase peace in Asia, discussing Korea, India-Pakistan conflict, and Indochina almost as much and in similar vague terms as the Taiwan issue. Guillermaz referred to this as both sides making a “tentative sketch of what East Asia could become”. Guillermaz, 549.


was completed by the time of recognition. In 1979, America stated that it recognized the PRC as the sole legal government of China, although America continued only to “acknowledge” the Chinese position that Taiwan was part of China. Despite President Carter’s assurance that the US was still committed to Taiwan, these actions understandably gave Beijing the impression that Taiwan would effectively be pushed towards reunification.\textsuperscript{156}

The Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) shattered these hopes and made American agreements with the PRC on both military support of Taiwan and recognition of a “One China” policy seem disingenuous. When recognition was granted, China erroneously assumed that America would also cut many of its unofficial diplomatic relations and security commitments with Taiwan. The TRA essentially left these relations intact, which the PRC took as a clear violation of their sovereignty.

To get Sino-American relations back on track Beijing pushed for another communiqué; however, the next (1982 Communiqué) differed substantively from previous agreements only on the issue of arms sales. America stated its intent to gradually reduce arms sales and that future sales would not exceed in quality or quantity those since diplomatic recognition had been granted to the PRC.\textsuperscript{157} At the same time as the Communiqué, President Reagan issued his “Six Assurances” to Taiwan, signaling that the US was not selling out the ROC. Four major points arose from this. Besides stating that the US would not set a timeline for terminating arms sales or play the role of

\textsuperscript{156} None of the Communiqués specifically mention a timeline or framework for unification, only America’s support for a peaceful resolution to the issue and their intent to create conditions for such a settlement.\textsuperscript{157} This provision would soon be stretched to allow for qualitatively better arms.
cross-strait mediator, Reagan stated that the US would “not formally recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan” nor alter the terms of the TRA.\textsuperscript{158}

With these seemingly contradictory positions and no significant progress made toward their quest for unification since 1979, Beijing surmised that Washington opposed a Beijing-led reunification. The only way to overcome this obstacle was to raise the costs for American intervention. America’s apparent backtracking played into the Beijing conspiracy theory that the US fully intended to keep China separate and that China’s sovereignty thus remained in jeopardy.\textsuperscript{159} To signal its resolve, the PRC added a reference to the necessity of Taiwan’s unification with the mainland in the preamble of their Constitution in 1982.\textsuperscript{160} Although Chinese rhetoric about the US did not return to pre-normalization levels, their unfulfilled expectations continue to taint Sino-American relations with a certain level of distrust which has only been exacerbated by America’s support of Taiwan’s democratic reforms. This section will argue that Chinese leaders emphasize America’s role in Taiwan and the continued separation as a means to drum up nationalist sentiment which deflects attention away from the lack of political reforms on the mainland.

\textbf{China’s Response to Democracy}

The maintenance of China’s stance on Taiwan has aided the PRC in deflecting criticism, namely the lack of democratic reforms on the mainland. Beijing traditionally

\textsuperscript{158} PRC officials continued to push for a commitment that the 1982 Communiqué trumped the TRA, but the US continuously refused, arguing that the latter was a policy whereas the TRA was law.


\textsuperscript{160} Taiwan had not been mentioned at all in the constitutions drafted in 1954, 1970, 1975, and 1978.
argued that Chinese were not suited for a Western-style democracy; however, Taiwan’s successful implementation of democratic procedures—elections in particular—has undermined this stance. Lee Teng-hui has used this to his political advantage, presenting Taiwan as a model of Chinese democracy and making potential reunification contingent on mainland democratization. Since then, the CCP leadership has altered its argument, stating that democracy brings chaos, and uses Russia’s fall from superpower status as supporting evidence. The Russian example shows the decentralization of political power in the country, with several local governments establishing direct political and economic links with foreign governments. This has corresponded with independence sentiment in many of these areas within the Russian Federation, a fact China cannot overlook.

Implicit in China’s democracy-brings-chaos theory is that the motive for such reforms is actually to keep the country weak by ousting the CCP. The events of 1989 show this mentality as Beijing viewed the Tiananmen protests as partially orchestrated by Taiwanese officials, drawing a direct correlation between the democracy on the island and a looming threat to their hold on government. Protestors were viewed as somewhat akin to outside agitators, making the use of force to disperse the crowds more acceptable.

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162 Shih, Chih-yu, 31.
166 Although Taiwan ideologically and emotionally supported the Tiananmen demonstrators, there is no evidence that the ROC supported protestors with money or material. Copper, Taiwan, p. 54-55, 210.
The fact that some of the student protestors had studied in the United States made this label easier to attach. China’s more militant policy towards Taiwan and the US post Tiananmen, especially when combined with the fall of the Soviet Union, reflects Beijing’s fear of a perceived US-supported democratic enclosure of the Chinese mainland. To avoid a similar fate as Russia, discrediting democratic reform as chaotic and detrimental to China’s growth became essential. 

Although Russia and several European states went through a chaotic transition and a few have still failed to transform into consolidated democracies, this ignores that Taiwan had a remarkably peaceful transition and created much of the hope that the mainland could do the same.  

Russia attempted to institute political and economic reform all at once, creating a severe shock to the system that leaders were not equipped to manage. Taiwan however gradually made political reforms over the course of two decades while making similar economic liberalizations. Most important for China is that the Taiwan example showed that an authoritarian party can make the transition to a multiparty democracy and retain a large share of power (if not the head of government). 

More than anything PRC leadership has attempted to dismiss any suggestion that democratization could effect the Beijing-constructed sovereignty over Taiwan argument. Beijing routinely states that Taiwan’s democratic process cannot change its status as a part of China. Otherwise an argument could be made not only that the ROC’s legitimacy was strengthened by democratic reforms, which Taiwanese officials often claim, but that

167 Obviously a strict comparison of Taiwan and the Eastern European states (much less Russia) is difficult, considering the clear differences in resources. For example, in terms of size Taiwan (35,980 km2) is most similar to Moldova (33,843 km2), but the latter has only 1/6th of the island’s population. A history of American assistance is also a factor for Taiwan. The point however is that democratic transformation need not be a tumultuous as critics claim. All data from World Factbook. CIA website. http://cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html.
in comparison China’s lack of democracy makes them appear weaker. Accepting that
Taiwan’s democracy had changed its status would require Beijing to admit that their
demands for party-to-party talks (instead of government-to-government) were
inappropriate. On a practical level, Beijing must treat democratization as a non-issue or
accept radical changes to the cross-strait dialogue which do nothing to help their own
goals.

By maintaining this stance, Beijing seems to invite conflict with Taiwan. The
ROC naturally resents the notion that its democratization is meaningless. The PRC’s
framework for talks, which places the ROC in a subordinate position, ensures that
Taiwan will not comply. It should not have been surprising then when Lee Teng-hui set
equally unacceptable conditions for unification talks (democratic reforms on the
mainland, renouncing the use of force, etc.). This veiled attempt to blame the CCP for
the continued separation hit a nerve as it was antithetical the mainland’s master narrative.
Beijing’s response, to label Lee a “lackey of America”, allowed for the maintenance of
the narrative by eliminating Lee as a person to take seriously. It also started a pattern of
discrediting Taiwan’s leaders as nothing more than independence-seekers. The
mainland’s attempts to cast ROC leaders off as insignificant leads them to take a more
aggressive mainland stance, further diminishing the chances of a peaceful resolution.
China’s unwillingness to see Taiwan’s democracy as fundamentally changing the
structure for cross-strait dialogue leads both sides to take actions which increase the
possibility of conflict.

169 Shambaugh, David. “Taiwan’s Security: Maintaining Deterrence Amid Political Accountability”.
Chinese Nationalism

New regimes often push nationalism to overcome what they view as historical wrongs their country was subjected to by other powers. This is especially true in many former colonies that find it politically necessary not only to find a cohesive theme to create a national consciousness but also must present a picture of a brighter future if nationalistic endeavors are pursued.\textsuperscript{170} Mondal described Indian nationalism similarly as ideologically a pole away from colonialism.\textsuperscript{171} Although only small parts of China were de facto colonized by Western powers (i.e. Hong Kong, Macao), China’s history with Western imperialism (and later Japanese imperialism) has had much the same influence on Chinese nationalism, leading some to state that anti-imperialism defines Chinese nationalism.\textsuperscript{172} Chinese nationalism gained momentum during World War II as primarily anti-Japanese in nature, but the success of the Chinese Communist Party transformed Chinese nationalism to include its Nationalist opposition and the US under the broad category of imperialism. Chiang Kai-shek’s willingness to fight the Communists instead of focusing on pushing Japanese forces off the mainland and America’s continued backing of the Nationalists only contributed to the CCP’s construction of Chinese nationalism.

\textsuperscript{170} Their views of historical oppression need not be entirely factual, only widely believed. Benedict Anderson uses the example of Sukarno’s consistently referring to the 250 years of Dutch colonial rule over Indonesia in all sincerity, apparently ignorant that Indonesia was a 20\textsuperscript{th} century concept or that the Dutch had conquered most of the area within the past hundred years of his statement. Anderson, Benedict. \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism}. Verso. London. 1983: p. 11.


Shih, Chih-yu, 84.
Consistently Mao and other leaders cloaked policies in nationalistic appeals and argued that a certain action was necessary (i.e. Great Leap Forward) to return China’s status as a great power and block the desires of Western imperialism. Talk of “liberating Taiwan” was no different. The master narrative created by the CCP focused on ridding the mainland of imperialist encroachment (save for Hong Kong and Macao) and the establishment of the PRC in 1949 was constructed as the defining historical turning point. Since the ROC was supported by the US and Chiang Kai-shek was already labeled an imperialist, the only means to complete the narrative was to maintain support for military force to reclaim the island.

The perseverance of this mindset in the post Cold War era is evident. Although talk of “liberating” Taiwan ceased with formal relations with the US, Beijing’s efforts to maintain public support for the use of force in order to prevent Taiwan’s permanent separation continues. Furthermore, many Taiwanese officials have been demonized to the point that many mainland Chinese view anyone willing to negotiate with Taiwan as a traitor. Even more conciliatory attempts by Beijing have been thwarted because of continued nationalist fervor. These efforts were in part undermined by the “victor’s mentality” of old cadres that were still in prominent positions through the mid 1980s which were adamantly opposed to any conciliatory effort which implied equality for

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173 Even among the younger generation in China, acceptance of Taiwanese independence is virtually non-existent. Talking to Chinese students in the US and in China, I have only found one that stated they could accept an independent Taiwan.

Despite a marked drop in revolutionary rhetoric out of Beijing, Taiwan’s position in the calculus of Chinese nationalism has remained constant.

This does not mean that the PRC has been inflexible in its Taiwan policy. Beijing seems willing to make overtures to Taiwan as long as it conforms to their master narrative of a CCP victorious in the protracted Chinese civil war and that such overtures cannot be easily twisted by Taiwanese officials. For example, in talks during the early 1980s, the PRC seemed willing to grant Taiwan some form of autonomy after reunification, allowing “One China” to be defined as historical and cultural rather than political. Once it became clear Taiwan did not wholeheartedly support imminent reunification (the status quo seemed more appealing), China ended such talk and insisted that “One China” had a clear political definition. Flexibility could be used if it would hasten China’s long-term goals, but if it prolonged the status quo, or even worse hampered China’s goals, Beijing’s Taiwan policy suddenly stiffened.

More important for present day relations is that Chinese nationalism continues the decades old utopian notion that once their stated goals are accomplished—that is Taiwan reunites with the mainland—that China will once again rise to the status of a world power and their era of weakness will be over. As Zong Hairen declared, “the Taiwan issue is a threshold China must step over if it is to go out into the world. If China fails to cross this threshold it cannot go into the world or genuinely become a world power; even less can it

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176 Similarly mainland propaganda attempts to solidify the view that the CCP is China. Any suggestion that the party was not to true voice of China would be incongruent with the master narrative. Shambaugh, David. “Civil-military relations in China : party-army or national army?” *Bringing the Party Back in: How China is Governed*. Edited by Kjeld Erik Brosgaard & Zheng Yongnian. National University of Singapore. 2004: p. 24.

177 Shih, Chih-yu, 52.
compete with the United States”. This is similar to Mao’s belief in 1958 that rapid industrialization not only would lead them onto the world stage, but that by century’s end, China could be an industrial power on par with Great Britain. Only with the failures of the Great Leap Forward and the subsequent Cultural Revolution was this nationalist goal quietly abandoned.

Although unification under the PRC would end any lingering questions of the PRC’s legitimacy (which after 1971 essentially became a non-issue in the minds of most), even a peaceful unification cannot live up to the “cure all” that Beijing officials have made it out to be. Since Taiwan has democratized and unification is more uncertain than ever, perpetuating this nationalistic dream places further pressures on mainland leaders to bring Taiwan back into the fold. Both Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin wanted unification on their watch so that their place in history would be secured, but neither was willing to take a markedly more conciliatory approach to Taiwan which would conflict with the implicit “liberation” narrative. With the return of Hong Kong and Macao under the “one country, two systems” formula, Jiang put added pressure on himself because his formula made it look inevitable that Taiwan would follow. To take a softer approach with Taiwan after this would be seen as a sign of weakness.

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179 The focus on surpassing Great Britain (and then the US) could be viewed as an effort to overcome the perceived historical injustices of Western imperialism on China; the focus especially on Great Britain due to the Chinese defeat in the Opium War and Britain’s de facto annexation of Hong Kong.

180 This was especially true for Jiang who felt pressured to make a memorable contribution to the PRC on the level of Mao and Deng. Yu, Peter Kien-hong. “PRC After 50: Would it Change Its National Title, Flag, and Anthem?” *Working Papers in Taiwan Studies*. No. 30. p 6.

The growing economic integration between both sides has also done little to curb this nationalist trend. Although these ties may have given greater incentives to both sides to maintain the status quo, little has been done to mollify the underlying political tensions. Furthermore, the growth in the PRC’s economy may actually strengthen the nationalist sentiment as it reinforces that China is on its way to economic and political superpower status. As Lam seems to suggest, the next generation of Chinese leaders, equipped with greater economic power, have little reason to decrease their nationalist tone. A PRC on the rise then may be more inclined to push the Taiwan issue. Economic integration thus should not be seen as a counterbalancing force, but a possible catalyst for strengthening Chinese nationalism.

By encouraging such nationalist sentiment and being unable to deliver on its main goal, Beijing officials have produced an unintended side effect. Nationalism by its very nature plays upon history, but if the nationalistic message is unattainable, these unfulfilled national desires impose higher pressures for the future. Mainland statements on the inevitability of reunification outright clash not only with the lack of progress in cross-strait dialogue, but with Taiwan’s actions to assert itself as a separate entity. Shih argues that if enough unfulfilled nationalism accumulates within a society, these grievances will lead to complete devotion to further nationalist causes.

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183 An aide to Jiang Zemin stated, “the Taiwan problem will automatically be solved once China is recognised around the world as on par with the US. Can you imagine any country daring to sell arms to Hawaii if there was an pro-independence movement on the island?” Lam, Willy Wo-Lap. “Jiang pulls out all the stops in foreign policy”. *South China Morning Post*. January 25, 1999. http://special.scmp.com/chinaat50/Article/FullText.asp?ArticleID=19990928210012708.html.

184 Shih, Chih-yu, 80.

185 Shih, Chih-yu, 81.
words, Beijing’s nationalist rhetoric has created a spiraling effect, encouraging greater support of the party line in regards to Taiwan policy, but also placing greater demands on the government to conform to this hardline approach when a more conciliatory policy may be more effective in achieving the mainland’s goals.

A heightened sense of nationalism in the post Cold War era also contributes to an increasingly popular view that the US is trying to contain China, a view unintentionally caused in part because of American policy. Although America has consistently reaffirmed a “One China” policy, arms sales to Taiwan undermine this pledge. In addition, Lee Teng-hui’s aggressive mainland policy and the resulting 1995-1996 missile crisis led the US to play the role of a wedge and thus perpetuate the image of Taiwan being distinct from China. These actions only reinforced Beijing’s beliefs of American intentions. Chinese leaders remain steadfast that the US wants China to remain weak and thus are skeptical of any move which may imply Chinese weakness. This may explain why China often takes a strong stance to prevent looking weak, even when they are noticeably vulnerable. Generals also argue that if China makes concessions or compromises with the US, China will succumb to a similar fate as the USSR. This strong nationalist stance thus hinders the possibility of mutual accommodation.

The continuation and growth of Chinese nationalism from the founding of the PRC to the present does not however adequately explain China’s foreign policy. Friedman stated that “Chinese nationalism is not a historical given. It has been politically

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186 Shih, Chih-yu, 32.
188 Garver, 55.
crafted". Since Chinese nationalism regarding Taiwan is a social construct, it could eventually change under favorable conditions (i.e. regime change, democratic reform). Taiwan’s importance to Beijing is also ultimately derived by the PRC’s own political desires and rhetoric and thus could logically subside if not promoted by mainland officials.

Viewing Chinese nationalism as a response to legitimate concerns over territorial integrity is also misleading. The PRC has continuously used the principle of preserving territorial integrity, an essential part of international law, in its argument over Taiwan. However, the CCP not only accepted the loss of land before “losing” Taiwan to the Nationalists (Outer Mongolia), they have also willingly relinquished other territorial claims in recent years. The traditional argument of preserving territorial integrity for the purposes of promoting state stability is also ill fitting when looking at China’s view of Taiwan. Since Taiwan was never under control of the CCP/PRC, it differs from the traditional view of a separatist movement. Beijing did not lose control of Taiwan; it never had it. Furthermore, Taiwan cannot be realistically seen as a threat to Chinese security unless backed heavily by the US and still this would only be in response to a mainland action. Beijing officials may push the view of Taiwan as an unsinkable battleship its

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189 Friedman, Taiwan’s Role, 15.
190 For example, democratic reforms could lead to an overall softer stance on Taiwan. This does not mean that the Taiwan issue would cease to exist, but that the possibility of a negotiated settlement (i.e. a loose confederation) would likely increase under these conditions.
191 As early as 1921 in the Aaland Islands Case, the League of Nations rejected that a geographically concentrated group of peoples have a right to secession under the notion of “self-determinism”, arguing that this would undermine the territorial integrity of the state. League of Nations Council Doc. B7. 32/68/106. April 16, 1921.
193 Since 1991, China has settled border conflicts with six nations and in most received half or less of the contested territory. In its agreement with Tajikistan, China conceded to only 1,000 of the 28,000 square miles of territory in dispute. Medeiros, Evan S. and M. Taylor Fravel. “China’s New Diplomacy”. Foreign Affairs. Nov/Dec 2003 Vol. 82. Issue 6.
opponents can use to attack the mainland, but this is because of the usefulness of this stance in preventing a more favorable global opinion of Taiwanese independence, not because of an inherent threat from a separated Taiwan.

Attempting to explain China’s Taiwan policy as primarily a function of nationalism also oversimplifies the situation. A common argument is that the mainland’s fear of looking weak on Taiwan prohibits any negotiations on the matter and that the CCP leadership would lose all credibility if weak on the Taiwan issue.\(^{194}\) However, several incidents have occurred which made the PRC’s stance look weak and yet the legitimacy of the leadership was not in question. The mainland’s backing down during the Quemoy and Matsu crisis 1954-55 (itself a response to the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1954), the enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act, and America’s increased military sales after the 1982 Communiqué all contradicted the notion that Chinese nationalism would require a hard line response. In each case, the mainland response was limited primarily to harsh criticism, suggesting that the PRC is maintaining the policy of being “firm on principles, flexible on tactics”.

A key difference does exist between these examples and the current situation. In all of the cases mentioned, Taiwan was not the party that made China look weak. Rather it was America’s actions. In the aftermath of Taiwan’s democratization, the ROC’s challenges to China’s view of Taiwan have increased and these challenges are arguably more detrimental to the PRC’s master narrative than previous incidents. This further shows that China’s Taiwan policy is considerably more nuanced than often assumed.

\(^{194}\) The core of this argument is that if Taiwan were to reject conciliatory offers from the mainland, the PRC would lose face. A mishandling of the issue could also strain the power coalition within the CCP, which was a concern during the Jiang-Zhu era. Wang, John and Zeng Yongnian. *The Waning of the Jiang-Zhu Coalition?* Singapore University Press. Singapore. 2000: p. 7.
If anything Beijing’s militant Taiwan policy is a consequence of a political elite that realizes its tenuous hold on power and sees Taiwan as a means to maintain their position. Economic improvements in the past fifteen years have created greater disparity of wealth and growing demands on a government unwilling to make reforms that would further decentralize political control. To deflect demands for reform, Beijing officials focus outward and the emotional baggage cultivated concerning Taiwan provides a convenient target. Jiang Zemin craftily held onto control of the Central Military Commission after stepping down as the country’s leader by arguing that Taiwan would require the “experienced hand of revolutionary veterans”. Leaders have also exaggerated the military threat that Taiwan presents to the mainland. Despite Taiwan showing no interest in a first or pre-emptive strike, many Chinese still suggest the Taiwanese military is a real threat to mainland security. The resulting support for a tough Taiwan policy thus is not a spontaneous or natural occurrence, but one carefully constructed over time.

Chinese nationalism should be viewed not as a fixed concept or a historical given, but rather as an ambiguous tool used for political purposes. This is similar to Anderson’s definition of official nationalism where leaders attempt to co-opt popular...
national movements for their own self-preservation. By doing so, official nationalism attempts to blur the separation between the nation and rulers.

In the absence of Communist (and more specifically Maoist) ideology, this tool has become the primary means to unify a diverse population into accepting if not approving of the direction of Chinese foreign policy. This tool also has no clear long-range objective and thus it cannot be easily predicted what role Chinese nationalism will play in the future. As Scalapino stated, as China becomes a greater political power this nationalism could manifest itself in either benign or militant form.

Like the uncertainty in the future of Chinese nationalism, Beijing’s ultimate objectives for Taiwan remain somewhat unclear. The PRC certainty wants unification, but, outside of the proposed “One China, Two Systems” formula, has been vague on the structure of this unified China. The mixed success of Hong Kong under this system has done little to entice Taiwan to move towards unification, suggesting that another formula may be more appropriate. However, the PRC calls other formulas clearly unacceptable, thus denying the possibility of a formula that allows for the basic continuation of Taiwan’s de facto independence while committing both sides to unification. Pushing for immediate unification however brings greater problems for Beijing. Any large scale

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199 A similar blurring of the lines is evident in the PRC’s official account of Taiwan’s post-war status, which states that the “Chinese people” recovered the lost territory of Taiwan in 1945. No distinction is acknowledged between land and people under Communist rule and that under the Nationalists. Anderson, 110; “History of Taiwan” Taiwan Information cite. www.china.org.cn.
201 For example, a federalist formula is unacceptable to the CCP which views such motions as “an ideology to divide China as a sovereign state”. Yongnian, Zheng. EAI Working Papers. No. 9. August 1, 1998: p. 27.
military action to retake Taiwan not only will be costly, but may encourage groups which see themselves as non-Chinese (Tibetans, Uighers, etc.) to revolt, believing that the PLA will be too bogged down in the Taiwan Strait to adequately crush such rebellions. Furthermore, it would conflict with the dominant narrative by suggesting that the Taiwanese public was not on the side of the PRC.\footnote{Even if the PLA can quickly overcome forces on the island and revolts on the mainland do not occur, reincorporating a defeated Taiwan into a greater China will be politically and economically exhaustive. The only clear objective thus is to maintain hope for unification by preventing formal independence.\footnote{The call to “liberate” Taiwan and references to Taiwanese compatriots always suggested that the majority of the island’s inhabitants were supportive of the PRC. The implication is that the ROC government and other “imperialist” or independence minded Taiwanese were the source of the conflict. Shih, Chih-yu, 65.}}

\section*{Framing History to Frame the Present: China in Comparison}

Chinese nationalism and the basis of the PRC’s Taiwan policy relies overwhelmingly on the premise that Taiwan was historically part of China. This is a common argument used by many countries to justify military action and was one of the reasons Iraq gave for invading Kuwait in 1991. The veracity of such claims is unimportant as historical accuracy has never prevented such military action (as in the Iraq/Kuwait case where Iraq’s claims had no historical support) and at best can only help an offending country deflect some of the international outcry after the fact.

Taiwan’s situation is a bit more complicated, not only because China’s historical claims to Taiwan are stronger than most comparative claims, but because of two other

factors: the island’s status as essentially a colony from 1898 to the end of World War II and the emergence of two competing governments in China which both argued a right to reversion. Traditionally when a colonial power relinquishes its claims to a territory and does not explicitly declare otherwise, it is assumed that this territory will become an independent country. In this manner Taiwan differs from Hong Kong and Macao where the colonial powers clearly stated the territory would revert back to China (and in both cases subsequent agreements stated it returned to the PRC).

In the Taiwan case, Japan simply renounced its claims over the territory, never explicitly stating what the new status of Taiwan would be. In Article 2 of the Treaty of Peace with Japan (San Francisco Peace Treaty) in 1951, Japan renounced their claim to the island, while Article 10 renounced all special rights and interests in China, leaving both the PRC and ROC to believe that this was de facto reversion. The subsequent Treaty of Peace (Taipei Treaty) of 1952 is less vague, renouncing all treaties between Japan and China before 1941 (hence seeming to revert Taiwan to China), while making the inhabitants of Taiwan ROC nationals. In both cases, which government Taiwan would supposedly revert to is unclear, in part because of the lack of consensus even among the major Western powers. The earlier Cairo and Potsdam Agreements are not much more helpful. The Cairo Agreement states that Taiwan, along with the Pescadores and Manchuria, would be restored to the ROC. The PRC argued that as a successor state, and one that later regained Manchuria, that the other territories also belonged to them—an argument it continues today. Potsdam mentions nothing about the territory except declaring that Japanese sovereignty will be limited only to the islands of Japan. Although

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204 Supporting this is the wording of Article 2 which states that Japan recognizes the independence of Korea, whereas claims to Taiwan (Formosa) are only renounced.
the Allied powers appeared to have at least originally intended to return Taiwan to
China and at the time saw the ROC as the government of China, once it became clear the
Communists were winning the civil war on the mainland, no effort was made to clarify
these earlier agreements.

China’s claims to Taiwan in the post-colonial era can be compared to other
instances where the colonial power simply left the territory without any clear transition of
power. The case perhaps most resembling China and Taiwan is Morocco’s claims to the
Western Sahara. Until 1975 the land directly south of Morocco remained a Spanish
colony. That year, due to domestic turmoil in Spain, the rise of independence groups in
the territory and international pressure to decolonize, Spain essentially relinquished its
claims to the land.²⁰⁵ Seizing the moment, Morocco’s King Hassan ordered 350,000
volunteers into the territory to reclaim lands in which he claimed were historically part of
Morocco. Within days of “The Green March”, Spain reaffirmed its intent to pull out of
the region and with the Madrid Agreement allowed for a sharing of the Western Sahara
between Morocco and Mauritania. Armed Sahwaris known as the Polisario Front finally
pushed Mauritania to relinquish their half of the territory, only to have Morocco quickly
overrun this section and claim the entire area. Despite UN condemnation and calls for a
referendum, Morocco’s de facto control of the Western Sahara has continued
uninterrupted for decades.

In both cases, the larger power not only claimed a historical right to the disputed
land, but that the inhabitants were ethnically the same as themselves. This ethnic claim is
somewhat misleading in both accounts, although the exodus of mainland Chinese to

²⁰⁵ Some Spanish officers remained in the country, but were withdrawn in early 1976. Spain officially
declared the end of their administration over the territory on February 26, 1976.
Taiwan at the end of the civil war and the Nationalists subsequent Sinocizing of the island has given this claim greater validity.\textsuperscript{206} This ethnic argument however is essential to both China’s and Morocco’s claims as historically both viewed sovereignty as determined more by ethnicity and nationality than territoriality.\textsuperscript{207} Accepting the historical argument (or what some would call indoctrination), public opinion in both countries greatly support the official claims. This has made Morocco’s ability to dilute Sahawri opposition by encouraging Moroccans to migrate to the territory much easier. This policy although not mirroring China and Taiwan, does resemble China’s Hanization of Tibet and Xinjiang. These migrations thus help reinforce the image of the territory belonging to the larger power.

Morocco and China differ greatly when it comes to internationalizing their claims. Both attempt to frame the issue as purely domestic, but Morocco unlike China has allowed for UN involvement in a potential settlement. This is in part because Morocco originally petitioned the UN in 1965 to settle the issue after Spain announced its intentions to pull out under the belief that they would validate Morocco’s claims of sovereignty over the territory. This does not mean that Morocco has complied with UN demands however. After agreeing to allow for a Saharan referendum, which if left to the Sahawris would clearly lead to independence, Morocco postponed the vote, demanding

\textsuperscript{206} The Sahawris claim to be descendants of nomads predating the Arab invasion of the territory in the seventh century. Spanish colonizers also made a clear distinction between Sahawris and Moroccans. The Moroccan government denies such a clear distinction. Since the founders of several Moroccan dynasties came from the Western Sahara tribes, they argue any difference is between the groups is inconsequential. Kingdom of Morocco website. \texttt{http://www.mincom.gov.ma/english/e\_page.html} Western Sahara Online. \texttt{http://www.wsahara.net}.

that large numbers of Moroccans be allowed to vote also. The intent is clear: appear to be cooperative to deflect international criticism, while working diligently to avoid any measure which would weaken their claims to the Western Sahara.

China refuses any international mediation, viewing the Taiwan issue as purely domestic. This unwillingness prevents China from projecting an image of a peaceful country—an image which would likely help its claims—and instead must deal with the “David and Goliath” framing that Taiwan has pushed. The irony of China’s refusal to internationalize the problem in a manner like Morocco is that the PRC uses the international sector constantly to promote its “One China” policy. 208 Besides demanding that countries must accept Beijing’s definition of “One China” for officials to occur, press releases continuously remind the world that the majority of countries recognize Taiwan as part of China. 209 In Beijing’s view, internationalizing Taiwan is acceptable only when it is done to limit the ROC.

Both China and Morocco have been remarkably effective in shaping world views on their claims. Simply looking at a map shows this. Most maps show at most a dotted line separating Morocco and Western Sahara as opposed to the solid line demarcating other state boundaries. China has equally been successful in eliminating any sense of a difference between itself and Taiwan, demanding that all maps show both areas in the same color. By denying the legitimacy of their opposition and taking extraordinary efforts to appear in complete control of the area, both hope to cement their preferred view

209 Some countries have attempted to sidestep accepting Beijing’s definition by simply acknowledging their claims. However, as China emerges as a world power, they will likely place greater demands for a firm commitment on this issue.
of the disputed territory into the international sector. China has even gone as far as to choose representatives for Taiwan in the National People’s Congress.\textsuperscript{210} By maintaining these positions, both Morocco and China try to legitimize the potential use of force on their opposition—or at least deter outside interference—by making such actions appear as a domestic issue.

Like Morocco, China realizes that allowing the inhabitants of the disputed territory to voice their opinion will undermine their decades of work to project an image of legitimate rule over the land. In an ever shrinking world where it has become increasingly difficult to block such opposition, the larger powers find it necessary to frame the opposition as opponents of the state.\textsuperscript{211} China further extends this by reinforcing the notion that cross-strait relations can only be viewed as a unification or independence dichotomy. A zero-sum mentality prevails, seeing the existence of the other as an indication that they themselves are weaker. Such framing not only reaffirms public opinion, but helps internally legitimize the use of force against such entities which are out to “divide” the country.

Through this comparison, one question quickly arises: what prevented China from pursuing a policy like that of Morocco? Obviously American military support of Taiwan prevented such an invasion in 1954. Morocco was also a member of the UN when they began their pursuit for Western Sahara which allowed them the option of framing their actions in compliance with international opinion—even if their actions were in direct

\textsuperscript{210} The absurdity of the latter, choosing thirteen delegates from the mainland to represent Taiwan, may have had an unintentional side effect. Many Taiwanese may have concluded that a similar policy will be used if unification became a reality, thus leaving Taiwan with no political voice. It should also be noted that the ROC would never allow its own people to go to such an event, knowing the potential political ramifications. “China’s Mystery Delegates a Puzzle to Most Taiwanese”. \textit{Taipei Times}. March 1, 2003.

\textsuperscript{211} Indonesia used a similar tactic to justify its invasion of East Timor in 1975, arguing that a growing Communist movement in the microstate threatened the overall stability of the much larger power.
contradiction to UN decrees. By not being a member of the UN until 1971, the PRC had no means to use such international bodies to shape the Taiwan debate immediately following the civil war. This did not prevent Beijing from trying such tactics once in the UN however. Shortly after being seated, Chief Chinese Representative to the UN Chiao Kuan-hua declared that “Taiwan was already returned to the motherland after World War II in accordance with the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Declaration, and our compatriots in Taiwan already returned to the embrace of their motherland”. Although reaffirming Beijing’s master narrative, such efforts did little to sway international opinion. By this point Taiwan already had the political resources to dispute the mainland’s claims and prevent Beijing from monopolizing the debate on Taiwan’s future.

More important is how Morocco was able to maintain its claims after invasion. Simply put, the Western Sahara was not deemed important by Western powers and Morocco’s position as a Western-friendly Islamic country made maintaining cordial relations a higher priority than protecting the rights of the Sahawris. Likewise, several other examples, most notably Indonesia’s 25 year occupation of East Timor, show that strategically important countries are given greater leeway when their aggression is towards expendable states. In contrast, Taiwan has remained important not only to the US, but to the security of Japan and the rest of East and Southeast Asia in general. In addition China’s military and political weakness prior to the 1990s made the costs of invasion and maintaining the island incredibly costly. As China’s power increases, the chances that others will get involved if China chooses to attack would likely decrease. China realizes that without American intervention, there is little doubt that the mainland could defeat

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Taiwan. Thus, Beijing officials believe that, barring any major change, time is on their side.

A major change has occurred however. Democratization (or the desire to democratize) generally brings Western sympathy, especially in the post Cold War era. Indonesia’s rationale for invading and occupying East Timor was partially based on its strategic importance to the US as an anti-Communist (and anti-Chinese) nation. President Ford had even implicitly complied with this action, knowing that weapons bought from the US would be used for this invasion. The end of the Cold War however impaired America’s rationale for implicitly accepting Indonesia’s occupation. Not only did Indonesia’s continued use of extreme force to hold onto East Timor become more difficult to ignore, East Timor’s desire to establish a democracy was slowly winning the microstate global sympathy. By 1999 Indonesia has gradually began to accept that the political climate had turned and in 2002, after the help of Western peacekeepers, East Timor was granted worldwide recognition as a sovereign state.

Likewise Taiwan’s democratization has won it greater sympathy for its efforts to distinguish itself from the mainland. In the twenty first century, it is harder for Western countries (especially the United States) to ignore the plight of a relatively young democracy while attempting to encourage other countries to make similar reforms. Countries may not be willing to forego the economic and political benefits of good relations with the PRC in order to support Taiwan’s democracy in a formal matter, but virtually all major powers have stated their clear approval of this change, as sign that the world generally sees Taiwan in a more favorable light now than twenty years ago. It

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would not be a stretch then to think that this vaguely defined improvement in status
would positively affect the general view on Taiwan’s legitimacy. Taiwan’s
democratization appears then to conflict with Beijing’s hope that a waiting game is in the
mainland’s favor.

The Inevitable Conflict?

As previously stated, in 1979 the PRC ended talk of the need to “liberate” Taiwan
in favor of allowing for peaceful reunification. However, China never gave up the
possibility of the use of force. As Taiwan’s democratization took hold, China’s
willingness to remind Taiwan that forceful reunification was still an option became more
common.

China’s use of threats have changed little in the post Taiwan democratization era,
but its capabilities to fulfill such threats have grown. The combination of Chinese
nationalism and a belief that war is inevitable leads Beijing to continue its hardline
approach. To increase its deterrence capabilities (both on Taiwan and the US), China
has spent an exorbitant amount on weaponry. A focus has been placed on improving
military capabilities and reducing if not eliminating any technological advantages
possessed by Taiwan. Recent acquisitions have led some PLA officials to believe that by
2010, the PRC will not only have military superiority over Taiwan, but will be able to
repel “foreign intervention” as well.\footnote{Van Kemenade, Willem. “Taiwan, Voting for Trouble?”.

\footnote{Van Kemenade, 143.}
These military improvements have created a chauvinistic mentality that China can act more unilaterally concerning Taiwan than before. Beijing believes that this will make the US less likely to support Taiwan, turning the ROC from “bold and aggressive” to “demoralized and cautious.” This arrogance leads many to assume the PRC is talking themselves into war. Although the PLA’s capabilities have increased considerably in recent years, the focus of military development remains rather limited. Much of the effort has been on missile development, not equipment needed for an invasion, which suggests that Beijing’s motive remains deterrence. This also shows the limitations of Chinese military threats to others in the region. The PRC may be looking for a rationale for war, but their military buildup heavily favors deterrence or short-term conflict, not a full invasion.

Even assuming that China’s military buildup is intended solely for deterrence purposes, this does nothing but increase tension in the region. China has never clearly defined what it would take for a military response and now with greater abilities to inflict damage on Taiwan, China may lower this threshold. For example, the recently passed Anti-Secession Law appears to label any move that may appear as directed towards independence or Taiwan’s unwillingness to unify as a potential cause for military action. Secondly, Taiwan feels inherently less secure because of this buildup and thus

216 Garver, 13.
219 Article 8 states that “In the event that the ‘Taiwan independence’ secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures
seeks more military procurements and greater protection from the US. More generally, China’s military buildup and the militant Chinese nationalism supporting it encourages the further development of Taiwanese nationalism. Several Taiwanese politicians use the perceived threat from the mainland to encourage Taiwanese nationalist sentiment in order to garner public support for a more aggressive mainland approach. This arguably creates a spiraling effect as Taiwan’s efforts to assert themselves increases the mainland’s belief that Taiwan is creeping towards independence. The mainland thus takes a harder stance and increases its missiles directed at Taiwan, further encouraging Taiwan to see itself as different from the mainland.

**Conclusion**

Certainly mainland China is not solely to blame for continued cross-straits conflict, but its militant stance and promotion of a nationalist narrative requiring unification precludes the possibility of a negotiated settlement—even one that ultimately leads to unification. Leaders feared that a friendly stance towards Lee or his successor Chen Shui-bian would encourage independence, but instead of remaining indifferent to ROC leaders, Beijing responded with negative rhetoric. This increased support for such leaders in a way that a cordial approach never could, by creating a clear “us and them” image Taiwanese politicians could play upon. The mainland’s decision to continue a hardline approach in 2000 likely lead to their least desired candidate being elected,
leaving Beijing officials confused at their lack of success.\textsuperscript{220} Despite this lack of progress, the PRC has not been willing to fundamentally alter its Taiwan policy.

Military threats do not make one feel more like the aggressor and China’s military buildup directed at Taiwan in no way makes the Taiwanese more resigned to accept reunification. If anything, the continuance of this strategy pushes Taiwan further away. The CCP’s maintenance of a militant Chinese nationalism rejects a more conciliatory approach and instead places greater pressure on the mainland to fulfill its perceived destiny. This approach also should alarm the US as China believes that ultimately it can deter America by simply raising the costs of war. This projected hostility however triggers American fears that China is a non status-quo state which wants to emerge as the replacement of the Soviet Union in a new bipolar or multipolar world. Under these conditions, Beijing’s assertion that Taiwan means more to them than the US may be proven false as America will see war as acceptable to maintain its security position in the region.

Beijing has been given ample opportunities to make overtures to the ROC short of acknowledging them as a legitimate government. Yet, as a consequence of their own perpetuation of the nationalist narrative, leaders have been unwilling to take this step. Despite the PRC’s belief that time is on their side, the dismissal of Taiwan’s democracy has actually made the mainland’s goals more difficult as it has allowed a counter nationalism to foster. China may believe that their increased economic and political power will propel them to superpower status and in the process Taiwan will be forced

back into the fold, but the interplay of Taiwan’s democratization and the counter
nationalism encouraged indirectly by Beijing’s own actions make this highly unlikely.
Chapter Four: On the Road to Nowhere: US Foreign Policy and Taiwan

America has been intrinsically tied to cross-strait conflict since the onset of the Korean War. Although many of the conditions have changed since then, America’s security interests in East Asia in large part remain focused on preventing the outbreak of war between China and Taiwan. Despite the rapid changes on both sides of the strait, American foreign policy in the region continues to be guided primarily by decades old principles. Increased economic interdependence, which America hoped would allow for the continuation of “strategic ambiguity”, has failed to significantly mollify tensions. Instead, both sides seem to see increased economic ties as aiding their political cause, and thus this does little to overcome cross-strait tensions.

For over twenty years—from rapprochement with the mainland to 1995—the US attempted to avoid the Taiwan question, hoping that increased interactions on both sides of the strait would settle the issue peacefully. After the missile crisis in 1995-1996 however, it became abundantly clear that this strategy would not serve American long-term interests. Through “strategic ambiguity”, America has deterred actions on both sides which could have led to war without American involvement, but, as Robert Ross

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221 For example, Cal Clark argued that economic interdependence could lead to cross-strait relations developing similar to European integration. This argument however ignores that before European integration, each government acknowledged the legitimacy of the others—an act virtually inconceivable in the cross-strait setting. Clark, Cal. “Does European Integration Provide a Model for Moderating Cross-Strait Relations?”. *Asian Affairs: An American Review*. Winter 2003, Vol. 29, Issue 4: 195-215.


pointed out, “deterrence is no guarantee of long-term stability”. Without a reevaluation of American foreign policy in the region, this outdated strategy is likely to fail. This paper intends to analyze the factors contributing to America’s inconsistent Taiwan policy and suggest how America can alter its strategy to better meet present demands.

History of US Involvement

Although the US provided various forms of assistance to the Nationalists throughout World War II and the resuming civil war, by 1949 America saw its support of Chiang Kai-shek’s army as a lost cause. Late that year, the US moved to an essentially non-interventionist policy in China and resigned to reevaluate their China-Taiwan policy after the civil war ended. In January 1950, just three months after the formal declaration of the People’s Republic of China, Secretary State Dean Acheson stated that the US would no longer offer the KMT military aid or advice. Thus it appeared that America begrudgingly accepted that the PRC would eventually take the island.

US foreign policy would drastically change five months later with the outbreak of the Korean War. Chinese involvement in the war was interpreted as evidence of the

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seriousness of the communist threat. Taiwan thus became viewed as a potential flashpoint for communist expansion, not only because of Beijing’s persistent claims to the island and their involvement in Korea\textsuperscript{227}, but also due to the mainland’s aggressive campaign to reincorporate Tibet under CCP rule.\textsuperscript{228} Mao, previously viewed as rather inconsequential to the American grand strategy, became viewed as Stalin’s “little brother”, and thus the mindset of Stalin—equating territory with power and being a non-status quo power—were applied also to Mao.\textsuperscript{229} Perceiving this threat, the US reversed its position and announced military support for Taiwan in July of 1950, thus preventing the island’s likely invasion from the mainland.\textsuperscript{230}

America’s realist strategy to protect its position in global politics by containing communism created a consistent Taiwan policy. Taiwan effectively became a “foreign policy protectorate”\textsuperscript{231}. In 1954, the US formalized its protection of Taiwan with the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT). Within the Cold War mentality, this treaty was primarily viewed as a deterrent to mainland aggression. However, it was also a subtle attempt to constrain Nationalist ambitions. Chiang Kai-shek had remained steadfast to his

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{227} Friedman states that “until Mao made war in Korea his priority, nothing blocked his conquest of Taiwan”. Friedman, Edward. “Preventing War Between China and Japan”. \textit{What if China Doesn’t Democratize? Implications for War and Peace}. Edited by Edward Friedman and Barrett L. McCormick. M.E. Sharpe. London. 2000: p.112.

\footnote{228} The PRC invaded Tibet in late 1949 and formally declared it reincorporated into China in 1951. The urgency placed on reincorporation may have been prompted by fears that Western powers would recognize an independent Tibet or that Tibet’s instability would allow for position for the ROC to reclaim the mainland.


\footnote{230} Despite the view of a unified Communist threat and the importance of Taiwan, Truman stated that the ROC could not use American protection to attack the mainland nor could it provide troops for the UN effort in Korea. Dickson, Bruce. \textit{Democratization in China and Taiwan: The Adaptability of Leninist Parties}. Oxford University Press. New York. 1997: p. 47.

\footnote{231} Robinson, America: p. 296.
\end{footnotes}
commitment to reclaim the mainland, despite several failed attempts.\textsuperscript{232} With this treaty, the US attempted to persuade Chiang to temporarily forego any military action against the mainland unless approved by the US.\textsuperscript{233} Knowing that such actions would likely be ineffective without American support, the KMT became more willing to accept a purely defensive strategy against the mainland. This prevented America from being pulled into an undesired war with the mainland because of Nationalist recklessness. Ultimately, the MDT strengthened American interests in the region by making Taiwan reliant on American support and China hesitant to enter direct military conflict. In spite of Cold War tensions, America’s policy of “strategic certainty” (defending the ROC from invasion but preventing their efforts to invade the mainland) created a surprising level of stability from the late 1950s through the 1960s.\textsuperscript{234}

In contrast to the “strategic certainty” in terms of what would lead to an American military response, the basic diplomatic stance of the US from 1950 to 1972 was that Taiwan’s status was “undetermined” (Table 1).\textsuperscript{235} This left the ROC with recognition while also implying it could be seen as independent at some time in the future. Meanwhile, American policy towards China remained a bizarre derivation of containment, similar to that used against the Soviet Union, and political isolation. Despite

\textsuperscript{232}One of the latter attempts was in July of 1949, where the KMT attempted to build a guerilla base in southwest China to meet this goal only to find no popular support. Chao, Linda and Ramon H. Meyers. The Divided China Problem: Conflict Avoidance and Resolution. Hoover Institute. Stanford. 2000: p. 8.
\textsuperscript{233} In 1962, President Kennedy opposed Chiang’s proposed attack on the mainland, leading the ROC leader to scrap such plans. The implied need for American approval became explicit in 1967 when the US State Department made it clear that the ROC would need prior approval before military assaults against the PRC. Harding, Fragile: p.29-32. Yu, Peter Kien-hong. A Strategic Model of Chinese Checkers: Power and Exchange in Beijing’s Interactions with Washington and Moscow. Peter Lang Publishing. New York. 1984: p. 68.
\textsuperscript{234} This is not to suggest that political tensions diminished, only that no serious attempts were made by either side to attack. America’s policy was also greatly aided by Beijing’s inward focus during the Cultural Revolution.
\textsuperscript{235} Lijun, China’s Dilemma: p.11.
the lack of unanimity among Western leaders for the policy (Great Britain and France recognized the PRC in 1949 and 1964 respectively), the US perpetuated the myth that the PRC was an illegitimate government whose voice should be minimized in the dialogue of international affairs. Taiwan’s primary value for the US thus was to challenge PRC authority and check Communist expansion and was not necessarily based on a deeper affinity for the ROC government.

Table 1. America’s Cross-Strait Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Military Policy</th>
<th>Diplomatic Policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-1972</td>
<td>Strategic Certainty</td>
<td>Diplomatic Ambiguity</td>
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<tr>
<td>1972-1979</td>
<td>Strategic Certainty</td>
<td>Diplomatic Certainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-present</td>
<td>Strategic Ambiguity</td>
<td>Diplomatic Certainty</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presidents Nixon and Carter would radically alter this policy of “strategic certainty” and “diplomatic ambiguity”. Realizing the potential benefits of exploiting the Sino-Soviet split, the Nixon administration opened dialogue with Beijing by adjusting their policy to compliment China’s “One China” stance. Although not wholeheartedly agreeing to Beijing’s view, the US announced that it retained a “One China” policy and that Taiwan was part of China, thus seeming to eliminate the possibility of an independent Taiwan with American support. Carter ended “strategic certainty” with his

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236 Diplomatic policy is defined as America’s stance on Taiwan’s status.
237 This should be viewed as a reassurance to Beijing more than anything as the US and virtually all countries maintained a “One China” policy, regardless of whether they formally recognized the PRC or the
sudden announcement in 1979 to formally recognize the PRC and in doing so, abrogating the MDT. Due to Republican pressure, the MDT was quickly replaced with the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) as an attempt to maintain Taiwan’s security and American interests in the region. The vagueness of the TRA gave the US more leeway in responding to China, as the Act gives the US the option to defend Taiwan, not a specific obligation like under the Mutual Defense Treaty.\footnote{Hickey, Dennis Van Vranken. “US-Taiwan Security Ties: Toward the Next Millennium”. The ROC on the Threshold of the 21st Century: A Paradigm Reexamined. Edited by Chien-min Chao and Cal Clark. Occasional Papers/Reprint Series in Contemporary Asian Studies. No. 5 Vol. 154. 1999: p. 154.} With Carter and the TRA, US policy would move to “strategic ambiguity” and “diplomatic certainty”.

The TRA appeared to be a successful solution at the time, but created further problems within the triangular relations. The unofficial relations with Taiwan that the TRA supported prevented the “confidence crisis” on the island that Beijing hoped would hasten reunification.\footnote{Lijun, China’s Dilemma: p.14.} America’s other security commitments in the region (notably Japan and South Korea) were also preserved. Sino-American relations began to falter however. The TRA hurt US credibility with Beijing officials who interpreted the act as reneging on much of the substantive agreements with the US since 1971.\footnote{Lijun, China’s Dilemma: p.13.} In China’s view, the TRA and later guarantees to Taiwan proved American intentions to maintain a de facto “two China” policy. Domestically, the abrogation of the MDT and the establishment of the TRA also exacerbated the rift between the executive and legislature, leading to increased inconsistency in American policy in the region over the next 20 years.

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ROC. The “One China” principle as stated then also did not conflict with the ROC’s interpretation since the US made no attempt to clarify which government was the legitimate authority of this “One China”.

The inconsistencies in American foreign policy became increasingly apparent following the 1982 Communiqué, a half-hearted attempt to get Sino-American relations back on track. 241 The Communiqué stated that America would decrease the quantity of military equipment sales to Taiwan and would not increase the quality of military items for sale to the island. In addition, the US pledged not to push Taiwan into negotiations or play the role of mediator. However, among criticism that the Reagan administration was selling out Taiwan, the ambiguity of the Communiqué was soon used to violate what Beijing would argue was the spirit of the agreement. 242 Technical advances in military technology on the mainland in the 1980s coupled with Congressional pressure post Tiananmen quickly made it difficult to follow even the vague interpretations of the Communiqué and still provide Taiwan sufficient arms for deterrence. In 1992, among criticism from Democratic challenger Bill Clinton, President Bush authorized the sale of F-16s to Taiwan, in clear violation of the main tenets of the 1982 Communiqué. 243 This only reinforced Beijing’s beliefs of American insincerity.

Inconsistency continued under the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations. Once in office, Clinton gradually moved to a more balanced approach to cross-strait conflict, ironically at a time when Congress was becoming more Taiwan friendly. Clinton reaffirmed the TRA in 1994 and, due to congressional pressure, approved the Foreign

241 Ronald Reagan initially supported increasing ties with Taiwan, stating during his 1980 campaign that he supported the establishment of an official liaison office. Amid Chinese backlash and a belief that burgeoning Sino-American relations were declining, he later dropped such an open pro-Taiwan stance and talk of a liaison office. Harding, Fragile: p.109.
242 This included leasing weaponry to Taiwan instead of offering such items for purchase and selling military technology that was outdated by American standards but far greater than what the PRC had available. The US later argued that the 1982 Communiqué applied only to arms sales, not the transfer of technology. Harding, Fragile: p.117.

Besides making an official visit to Beijing, President Clinton in 1998 made a substantial change in America’s Taiwan policy. Instead of reiterating that the US insisted on a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan issue, Clinton stated that the US backed peaceful unification and opposed Taiwanese independence. China had pushed for a more definitive American stance since Sino-American dialogue began in 1971 and this was seen as a major concession—whether or not Clinton intended it to be. The Clinton administration also originated a view which continues today, that Taiwan was the only party changing cross-strait behavior. The implication was clear: the US would not support unilateral Taiwanese measures which could incite a military response from Beijing. This change decreased Taiwan’s status by essentially eliminating some of Taiwan’s bargaining power with the mainland.

American policy under George W. Bush initially seemed to tilt back towards Taiwan, but this was short lived. On April 25, 2001 in an interview on Good Morning America, President George W. Bush stated that the US would use whatever means necessary to defend Taiwan against a military attack by China. That same month Bush

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244 Although at the time he was seen as considerably pro-Taiwan, Clinton opposed this upgrade, likely anticipating a response from Beijing, but realized a veto would be unpopular. Garver, John W. Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan’s Democratization. University of Washington Press. Seattle. 1997: p. 39.

245 Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait: p.249.

also approved a multi-billion dollar arms sale to the island. The suggestion that the US would not only increase arms sales but potentially be more willing to use military force certainly alarmed the PRC. Bush then seemed to backtrack and focus on improving relations with China. Only two years into office, Bush had met with PRC officials more often than any other President. Furthermore, during a visit by Premier Wen Jiabao on December 9, 2003, Bush issued a stern warning to Taiwan not to unilaterally change the island’s status.

These actions suggest that Bush is increasingly cautious about his preferred pro-Taiwan stance, while hesitant to commit to a strengthening of ties with Beijing that could be conferred as selling out Taiwan. This balancing act may not necessarily be that different from the Clinton administration, but his desire to move away from the US policy of “strategic ambiguity” is worth noting. The Bush administration seems determined to tilt towards meeting Taiwan’s interests over China’s and this undermines any mitigating efforts made towards China. It also appears that the administration has no hard plan except to show more attention to the island. This may in part be due to Bush’s rather black and white moralistic view of the world, thus making him more likely to accept the framing of cross-strait conflict in the democratic terms preferred by Taiwan officials. Bush’s underlying motivation to move to an era of “strategic certainty” may be beneficial for the US in terms of limiting both sides of the strait, but without a corresponding grand strategy this does little to secure American interests in the region.

248 For example, in an attempt to restart Sino-American talks, Secretary of State Colin Powell in October 2004 stated that Taiwan should not be regarded as an independent nation and that both sides sought reunification. Amid Taiwanese backlash (along with some Congressional opposition), the US clarified that this did not constitute a change in American policy days later, effectively undermining any goodwill the previous statement had made with the mainland.
**Domestic Pressures**

The lack of a clear cross-strait policy is in part due to domestic pressures in the United States. Public opinion factors into decision making in part because unpopular foreign policy initiatives can weaken reelection efforts. In addition, the two-party political system shapes policies as both parties not only jockey for a position that wins domestic support, but also attempt to negatively define the position of their opponent. By ignoring these forces, many analysts fail to appreciate how domestic factors have helped frame American foreign policy.

**Public Opinion**

American public opinion about China has shifted significantly since the US formally recognized the PRC. In 1967, over 90 percent of Americans viewed China unfavorably. The 1970s saw the PRC redefine their image into a Western-friendly nation and by 1979 almost two-thirds of Americans polled thought favorably of China (TABLE 2). This positive trend continued, albeit a slower pace, for most of the 1980s. The Tiananmen Square massacre however marked a clear shift in public opinion. With polls showing 70% of Americans polled having a positive view of China months beforehand, American views of China almost completely reversed in the wake of Tiananmen with positive views from only 31%. Even years later, Americans appeared to retain a more cautious view of the mainland. Although opinions of the mainland have improved, they have come nowhere near pre-Tiananmen levels.

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249 Harding, Fragile: p.3.
Tiananmen shaped American perceptions of cross-straits relations in a manner that greatly benefited Taiwan and which China has not been able to shake.\textsuperscript{250} Taiwan almost immediately became viewed more clearly as a “democracy” as opposed to the “authoritarian” China.\textsuperscript{251} The stark contrast in perceptions is especially important

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lcc}
\hline
Date & Very/Most Favorable & Very/Mostly Unfavorable \\
\hline
9/79 & 64 & 25 \\
5/87 & 65 & 28 \\
4/89 & 72 & 13 \\
8/89 & 31 & 58 \\
3/91 & 35 & 53 \\
11/93 & 41 & 51 \\
2/94 & 41 & 53 \\
3/96 & 39 & 51 \\
7/97 & 33 & 50 \\
6/98 & 39 & 51 \\
7/98 & 44 & 47 \\
2/99 & 39 & 50 \\
3/99 & 34 & 59 \\
5/99 & 38 & 54 \\
6/99 & 38 & 56 \\
1/00 & 33 & 51 \\
3/00 & 35 & 56 \\
5/00 & 35 & 56 \\
11/00 & 36 & 57 \\
2/01 & 45 & 48 \\
2/03 & 45 & 46 \\
2/04 & 41 & 54 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Gallup Polls Regarding American Opinion of China 1979-2004.\textsuperscript{252}}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{250} Harding referred to Tiananmen as the most severe crisis in Sino-American relations since rapprochement. Harding, Fragile: p.8.
\textsuperscript{251} American news coverage greatly aided in this perception as the Tiananmen protests and subsequent crackdown dominated American coverage of world events at the time. Lijun, \textit{China’s Dilemma}: p.126; Harding, Fragile: p.240.
\textsuperscript{252} In each Gallup poll, respondents were asked to describe their feelings as “very favorable”, “mostly favorable”, mostly unfavorable” or “very unfavorable”. Other options such as “Did Not Know” or “No Answer” have been excluded for simplicity.
considering that the democratization of the island was still in its infant steps and almost seven years away from their first direct presidential election. Providing protection to Taiwan’s burgeoning democracy coincided with the popular view that America should promote the spread of democracy, especially in the immediate post Cold War era.\textsuperscript{253} Thus, continuing America’s “quasi-alliance commitments” to Taiwan seemed justified.\textsuperscript{254}

Even with these changes, Americans have been hesitant to endorse a stronger military stance against China. Despite claims by some that America lacks focus without a clearly defined enemy, the US is cautious of creating an unnecessary “second Cold War” with China. Taiwan’s democratization may have won it sympathy among many circles in America, but leaders and the public in general have consistently been hesitant to support American military action in defense of the island since the 1950s.

It is also highly unlikely that the American public will push for a greater security commitment to Taiwan.\textsuperscript{255} This is in part due to the lack of importance the American public generally places on Taiwan. Only sporadically during the Cold War was Taiwan seen as a crucial element in America’s East Asian foreign policy. Moreover, with the emergence of China as a potential superpower and increasing Sino-American economic relations, Americans predictably focus on improving relations with the mainland and ignore Taiwan, even though the “Taiwan issue” is the main source of political conflict in Sino-American relations.

\textsuperscript{253} Garver, Face Off: p. 4.  
\textsuperscript{255} Robinson, America: p. 310.
The changing attitudes and composition of ethnic Chinese in America may also play a very small but potentially significant role in foreign policy formation. Most Chinese immigrants in the immediate aftermath of World War II were either from Taiwan or sympathetic to the Nationalists on Taiwan. To combat charges that they might be communist sympathizers, these Chinese communities often took a very pro-KMT stance. With Sino-American rapprochement in the late 1970s came an influx of immigrants from the mainland. This in turn transformed the politics of these communities, becoming more aligned with the mainland’s Taiwan stance and seeing Taiwan independence as less desirable. A 2004 poll of Chinese-Americans (including those which identified themselves as Taiwanese) found that 77% of respondents viewed Taiwan as part of China, with 62% opposing American involvement in the event that China invades the island. With the number of mainland immigrants to the US increasing, it seems doubtful that ethnic Chinese communities will push for a more Taiwan-friendly American policy.

Partisan Politics

US foreign policy regarding cross-strait relations has been intrinsically tied to domestic partisan politics since the origin of the Cold War. With the Communists successful in pushing the Nationalists off of the mainland, Congressional Republicans framed the Democrats, and in particular Harry Truman, as weak against the Communist

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threat. This was coupled with a growing symbiotic relationship between ROC officials and the Republican Party. ROC support for the GOP reinforced their image as a bulwark against Communism, while the continued Republican support for the ROC helped maintain the legitimacy of the Taipei government. This relationship would support the continuation of the Taiwan myth—that the ROC was the legitimate government of all of China—and thus making it political suicide for American leaders to accept political reality and deal directly with the PRC.

Since the mid 1980s however, the clear divide in partisan support for Taiwan has eroded. With the end of the Cold War a friendlier Taiwan policy was also possible as China’s strategic importance in blocking the USSR was no longer necessary. In addition, the democratic reforms on the island attracted bipartisan support. The Tiananmen Square incident furthered this trend, creating a favorable opinion of Taiwan as a “democracy worthy of self-determination”.²⁵⁸

The increasing bipartisan support for Taiwan can be seen in the composition of the Congressional and Senate Taiwan Caucus. The Congressional Taiwan Caucus, founded in April of 2002 and headed by two Democrats and two Republicans, originally had 85 members. By mid 2004, membership jumped to 146 members, nearly half being Democrats. The Senate Taiwan Caucus has a similar breakdown: 19 members, with 9 being Democrats. Although many of the Democrats supporting Taiwan may be considered on the more conservative end of the party (i.e. Joe Lieberman and Zell Miller), this does not explain all of the supporting Democrats. This divide illustrates that by appealing to democratic principles, Taiwan has broadened its appeal to American

²⁵⁸ Copper, Taiwan: p. 201; Harding, Fragile: p. 231-234.
politicians and removed the Republicans’ ability to claim themselves as the sole
defender of Taiwan.

The rise of bipartisan support for Taiwan should not be attributed solely to
democratic sympathies, as lobbying efforts have had a significant role in influencing
congressional support. Virtually non-existent in the 1950s and 1960s, the ROC’s
lobbying efforts in the US rapidly increased following the seating of the PRC in the UN
in 1971. To date huge sums have been spent on lobbying efforts to encourage a more
Taiwan-friendly American policy. It is believed the amount spent since 1971 could be in
excess of $1 billion dollars, matched only by Israel’s efforts. Lobbying efforts became
more bipartisan after the Reagan administration’s 1982 Joint Communiqué, perhaps in a
belief that the Republican Party would continue its shift towards a more friendly
mainland policy. Taiwan’s greatest lobbying success came in 1994. That year Taiwan
spent $4.5 million on lobbyists to get Lee Teng-hui a visa, using a lobbying firm with
many former aides to prominent Democrats. The bipartisan strategy worked as House
and Senate support for granting Lee Teng-hui a visa in April of 1994 was nearly
unanimous (396-0; 97-1). Although the resolution was not binding, it likely factored into
Clinton’s decision to grant Lee a visa. A return to focusing lobbying efforts on
Republicans emerged in 1996, presumably as a result to Clinton assurances to the
mainland. This seems to have been short lived however as several Democrats joined
the Senate and Congressional Taiwan Caucuses since then, indicating a return to a
bipartisan strategy.

259 Robinson, America: p. 299.
260 Lijun, China’s Dilemma: p.24-25.
261 Robinson, America: p. 310.
Another success of this strategy may be seen in the treatment of Taiwanese officials by the Bush administration. In 2003, a transit visa was approved for President Chen Shui-bian, who used the opportunity to meet with members of Congress—an event receiving tremendous media coverage in Taiwan.\textsuperscript{262} This act by the Bush administration is notable in that it was not preceded by a major lobbying effort, suggesting that previous efforts have already swayed American policy to the point that Taiwan no longer needs to lobby on such issues. This is despite the expected Chinese backlash, apparent not only in the case of the Lee visit, but also in Bush’s damage control activities weeks after the Chen visit, reassuring the PRC of America’s “One China” policy.

The growing bipartisan support for Taiwan has greater international consequences. Taiwanese officials view lobbying as a “back door” to influence American foreign policy on cross-strait relations when the executive branch is uncooperative. For example, Clinton had opposed granting Lee a visa, but congressional pressure made opposing the visa politically costly. Congressional pressure thus can lead to unsuspected positive outcomes for Taiwan, although such moves undermine a cohesive American strategy.\textsuperscript{263} Granting Lee’s visa flew in the face of thirty years of American policy and was viewed as a “serious mistake”.\textsuperscript{264} Although the Clinton administration learned from this example and tried to prevent a reoccurrence, the inherent structure of America’s political system allows for such influence.\textsuperscript{265}

\textsuperscript{262} Dumbaugh, China-U.S.: p.10.
\textsuperscript{264} Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait: p.225, 248.
\textsuperscript{265} This does not suggest that Taiwan’s efforts will continue to be as fortuitous. Taiwan’s lobbying efforts may not be as productive if media attention creates a domestic backlash, forcing members of Congress to temper their support of the island.
This also effects Chinese perceptions of American sincerity. Beijing officials were outraged by the US decision to grant Lee a visa, especially since just days prior Secretary of State Warren Christopher said this would not occur.\textsuperscript{266} China did not view this as an isolated incident, but as another example of pro-Taiwan measures taken since 1992 which intended to indirectly encourage Taiwanese independence.\textsuperscript{267} Furthermore, granting Lee a visa was interpreted by Chinese officials as a clear violation of the “One China”\textsuperscript{268}. The inconsistencies of American policy has lead many in Beijing to believe that the President and Congress are intentionally playing “good cop/bad cop” in order to get concessions from China.\textsuperscript{269} America’s apprehension in reinforcing China’s belief of American insincerity may explain why the White House reportedly pressured Congressional leaders to avoid any action which could impact the 2004 presidential election in Taiwan.\textsuperscript{270} Conflicting statements from the executive and legislative branches may help maintain ambiguity in American policy, but China views it as a convenient way to shirk agreements.

Congress should not become a blind supporter of executive policy, nor should the executive follow the whims of Congress. However, the ambiguous nature of the TRA and America’s Taiwan policy in general creates undue conflict between these branches as both attempt to respond to pressures from affected parties. Taiwan’s advantage remains in Congress appealing to democratic principles, whereas the need to improve Sino-

\textsuperscript{266} Lijun China’s Dilemma: p.65. 
\textsuperscript{267} Ross, 1995-96 Taiwan Strait: p.225-229. 
\textsuperscript{269} Lieberthal, New China Strategy. p. 42. 
American relations and the executive branch’s refusal to meet directly with ROC officials gives China a distinct advantage in this arena. By sticking to this ambiguous stance, both sides maintain incredible influence in American foreign policy making.

**Policy Critique**

America’s inconsistent policy in the region is largely due to its desire to avoid angering either side. However, this balancing act—hoping that time will simply make the problem disappear—does little to create peace in the region and actually allows problems to fester. America’s position of “strategic ambiguity” encourages this tension. Both sides increasingly believe that the US is leaning towards the other side and thus military action may be inevitable. In addition, the vagueness of this policy invites conflict between the executive and legislative branch, resulting not only in an inconsistent policy, but poorly planned responses to the offended party when something goes wrong. Ultimately, “strategic ambiguity” reinforces looking at America’s role in cross-strait conflict as two separate policies, one for Taiwan and one for China. For a durable peace, America must attempt to bring both sides into at least indirect negotiations; otherwise any attempts by America to improve relations with one can potentially trigger conflict as the other party sees its interests in jeopardy.

America’s influence regarding cross-strait conflict is quite unique and therefore gives them the exclusive ability to push both sides into constructive dialogue if they act soon. Although America has refused to play any role resembling mediator, the fact remains that the US is the only country with the ability to fill these shoes. Most countries simply refuse the role and any regional power (i.e. Japan) considering this challenge
would surely be considered unacceptable by China. Overcoming China’s objections to American involvement in what they see as a domestic matter and Taiwan’s fears that America is pushing them into unification will be difficult, but should not deter the US from encouraging initial talks. America must ensure both sides that the US has no outcome preference or vested interest but rather desires a peaceful resolution. Without outside intervention, increasing nationalism on both sides of the strait risks creating a greater conflict which threatens American security interests in the region and America’s position in East Asian affairs. America should use its influence to guide both into talks before another crisis eliminates such diplomatic avenues.

**Conclusion**

American policy regarding Taiwan has changed significantly in the past fifty years and continues to change as America attempts to balance its support of Taiwan’s democracy with improved relations with the PRC. Just as Taiwan’s democratization has complicated cross-strait and Sino-American relations, America’s democratic structures, such as the division between the executive and legislative branches, almost ensures a continuation of a complex and often contradictory American policy on Taiwan. Both sides of the strait seem to recognize this complexity, with the PRC viewing this as a means to undermine their rise as a superpower, while the ROC uses this to its advantage to maintain its de facto independence. At the heart of this problem is America’s commitment to “strategic ambiguity”, which by its nature is a reactive strategy. To
reduce further inconsistencies in America’s Taiwan policy, a reevaluation of the “strategic ambiguity” should be considered.
Chapter Five: Prospects for Cross-Strait Peace

This thesis has argued that Taiwan’s democratization has altered the framework for cross-strait and Sino-US relations making the polices of the other actors ill-fitting at best and dangerously deficient at worst. By focusing on Taiwan as the first actor in this strategic interaction, the effects of their democratization on the actions of the other parties become more evident. Unlike the common views of Taiwan as a pawn in Sino-American relations or as a defensive-play actor, this shows that Taiwan, and in particular its democratization, plays a significant role in shaping cross-strait relations and the island’s future.

One of the consequences of viewing cross-strait conflict in the manner described in the model in Chapter One is that Taiwan is likely to be blamed for any deviation from the tenuous status quo. America has opposed either party unilaterally deviating from the status quo and in the wake of the missile crisis labeled Taiwan as the sole party in violation of this directive. However, the nature of Taiwan’s democratic politics makes it accountable first to domestic pressures. These forces want, at least in the short run, to maintain Taiwan’s de facto independence.\footnote{As Wachman stated, “Taiwan’s population does not seek to become independent, it seeks to protect the independence it already enjoys”. Wachman, Alan M. “Taiwan: Parent, Province or Blackballed State?”. \textit{Journal of Asian and African Studies}. February 1, 2000: p. 195.} To maintain this de facto independence/status quo under growing pressure from the mainland encourages leaders to make aggressive moves that are often indistinguishable from a push for independence.

Despite its ability to effect the other actors, Taiwan obviously cannot maintain peace through their actions alone. Even if the ROC prepared to move towards immediate unification, the potential domestic turmoil caused by those opposed to this would likely
pull both China and the US into conflict. Likewise attempting to alter the actions of only one party cannot ensure greater stability in the region. Instead, both sides of the strait must be willing to make small policy changes and work to more clearly define their intentions so that a crisis like that of 1995-96 does not bring all three parties again on the brink of war. America, while not playing the role of mediator, can pave the way for this constructive dialogue by developing a more clearly defined strategy. The remainder of this thesis will suggest ways that each party can reduce tensions and work to create a more stable status quo.

**Taiwan**

Taiwan should acknowledge the limitations on its democratic activities and find creative ways to maintain itself as a distinct entity in international politics until a firm decision can be made about its future. As a disputed territory with only limited formal international recognition, the ROC should not use its democratization as a means to dismiss criticism of controversial actions as simply the will of the people. This does not suggest that the ROC should completely curtail its efforts to project its position in order to placate the PRC. To do so would not only potentially cost the ROC what little formal recognition it does have, but could created a crisis on the island with the electorate seeing the government as selling out to Beijing. Instead, a focus on strengthening unofficial relations may be a better long-term strategy for two reasons. First the PRC generally turns a blind eye to unofficial relations and thus such efforts rarely increase tension
between the two. More importantly, unofficial relations will likely become increasingly important for Taiwan’s security if another military conflict arises.

The ROC only has official recognition from a small percentage of countries (TABLE 3) and of these countries, none of them have any real means of helping Taiwan defend itself in the event of war. Official recognition has also appeared to have peaked, jumping slightly after Taiwan’s democratization and its acceptance of dual recognition. Even the PRC acknowledges this lack of recognition as the ROC’s Achilles’ heel that not only hinders the island’s claims to sovereignty, but also drives the government to spend lavishly to hold onto the few countries which do formally recognize them while attempting to sway poor countries away from the PRC. Taiwan’s “dollar diplomacy” invites conflict with Beijing and increases the scope of conflict as other countries intentionally start a bidding war. Furthermore, outside of its domestic appeal, maintaining formal diplomatic allies has done little to help Taiwan increase its position in international affairs. For example, although diplomatic allies have been the only ones to support United Nations resolutions to allow membership to the ROC, even this support is weak and comprises only about half of the number of the ROC’s total diplomatic allies (TABLE 4)—far below the number needed to reseat the government.

Whereas formal recognition has done little to secure Taiwan’s security, unofficial relations look promising. Since the democratization of Taiwan, virtually every major

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272 Virtually all of the countries recognizing the ROC are poor countries with relatively little political or economic power. In terms of this power and geo-strategic importance, Panama would likely be considered Taiwan’s strongest diplomatic asset.


power has established some form of unofficial liaison office in order to facilitate trade and cultural exchanges. In fact, the democratic changes on Taiwan in the past 20 years could be viewed as the primary factor leading most countries to just pay lip service to

Table 3. Countries with Formal Diplomatic Relations with the ROC by Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Countries Recognizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>70</td>
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<td>1971</td>
<td>68</td>
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<td>1986</td>
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<td>2001</td>
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<td>2002</td>
<td>28</td>
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<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs website

275 Because recognition of the ROC fluctuates often, the peak number for that year is used in determining the number of countries with formal relations.
Table 4. Countries that Supported the UN Petition to Seat the ROC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Countries Supporting UN Petition</th>
<th>Countries with Diplomatic Relations with the ROC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs website and United Nations website

Beijing’s “One China” model. This opens the opportunity for Taiwan to become less reliant on the US for its security. Obviously no country wants to assume the role of Taiwan’s protector, but increased economic ties with both China and Taiwan and a desire to maintain peace in the region may make many countries more willing to indirectly aid in Taiwan’s security concerns. For instance unofficial relations with members of the European Union may be useful for technology transfers if not weaponry. More importantly, increased economic interests along with these unofficial relations give several major powers a vested interest in seeing a peaceful resolution. Although difficult to calculate the extent of its effect, unofficial relations undermine the PRC’s hope to force Taiwan into unification through diplomatic isolation and raise the cost for the mainland if it does choose to attack.

Like unofficial relations, Taiwan’s economic strength gives it considerable leverage against mainland coercion that can be used in a manner which does not raise the

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ire of the PRC. As evident in the ROC’s “dollar diplomacy” efforts, the island has the financial resources to partially shape international opinion. For years government connected foundations (like the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation) have provided financial support for Americans studying about China and have encouraged a positive view of the ROC. As unofficial relations with major countries increase, such attempts to influence future policy makers will likely continue, helping ensure that the ROC’s view of Taiwan is not forgotten. In addition, investments from Taiwanese businesses on the mainland have played a significant role in the growth of the mainland’s economy, more so than any other state. Although the PRC says it would be willing to pay any cost to prevent the permanent separation of Taiwan, any military act would undoubtedly affect these investments. Continuing the mutually beneficial economic ties does not alleviate the conflict over Taiwan’s status, but may help prolong Taiwan’s status as de facto independent by increasing the costs for the PRC to push the issue in the short-term. As Taiwanese investments increase, so will the indirect influence on Beijing’s Taiwan policy. Ultimately through the use of creative diplomatic efforts and increased economic interdependence, the ROC can help maintain the status quo while increasing cross-strait confidence.

China

For peaceful reunification to remain a possibility, Chinese officials should realize the error in their present strategy. By rejecting any offer from the ROC, the PRC may thwart any attempt to make the ROC appear more legitimate by implicitly seeing them as
an equal entity, but it does nothing to make Taiwanese officials any less bold in their efforts. To maintain their claims to the island and not be seen as indirectly accepting Taiwanese nationalism, the PRC understandably cannot openly accept any formula which implicitly treats both governments as equals. However, continuing to view cross-strait relations as a zero-sum game does not help their cause either. Rather, such a strategy often allows Taiwanese leaders to capitalize on situations that otherwise would be of little concern. For example, Beijing’s outcry each time a microstate switches recognition to the ROC only makes Taiwanese officials want to continue the push for increased formal recognition. Likewise, refusing to send a representative to the funeral of Pope John Paul II because the Holy See recognizes the ROC allowed President Chen Shui-bian an unprecedented opportunity to meet with heads of state of countries that do not have formal relations with the island. Even if Chen was completely ignored at the funeral, his simple presence there played well domestically. China’s unwavering stance thus contributes to a growing Taiwanese identity opposed to eventual unification and provides opportunities for independence-oriented politicians to encourage Taiwanese nationalism.

The PRC should also reconsider its intermittent policy of implicitly supporting political parties in Taiwan that lean towards unification. Traditionally Beijing has shown its preference for KMT or pan-blue candidates over those of the DPP or pan-green camp. Besides potentially swaying Taiwanese voters towards the more independent-oriented candidates (which was evident in 2000), this policy in the long-term does little to secure a more favorable outcome for China on the question of Taiwan’s future. In 2004, the KMT appeared to move away from their traditional stance of eventual reunification and towards greater support of the de facto independence/status quo because the majority of
Taiwanese support this position. This trend is likely to continue. Beijing seems to hope that a KMT/pan-blue dominated ROC government will hasten the unification progress, but this opens up the possibility of not only disappointment but greater conflict if such Taiwanese leaders continue policies to maintain the status quo.

Without appearing weak on the Taiwan issue, China has several relatively non-controversial options. First, the PRC can encourage party-to-party talks as were proposed in the past. Although several ROC officials opposed such a structure as undemocratic and maintain that cross-strait negotiations should be more of a state-to-state structure, unofficial party-to-party talks may allow for the de-escalation of tensions similar to the immediate aftermath of the Wang-Koo talks. To have any chance of being successful, such talks would have to include pan-green party officials, but if structured in an unofficial manner (i.e. retired members of each party) the benefits should outweigh the domestic political costs for both sides.

Secondly, Beijing can take a more clearly defined stance on what would be considered a move by Taiwan towards independence. Unlike the recent anti-secession law which appears to give the PRC considerable leeway in determining when Taiwan is moving towards independence and thus the justification to use military force, Beijing could take a more legalistic view of independence, essentially allowing almost anything short of a formal declaration from Taipei. Since most countries recognize the PRC and

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277 Several controversial options are theoretically possible such as Hu Jintao making a visit to Taiwan or Beijing unilaterally moving missiles out of Fujian province, but the potential domestic and international costs of such a move are high enough to consider these remote possibilities.
278 As Lieberthal stated, under such a definition “Beijing has already won and Taiwan has already lost.” Lieberthal, Kenneth. “Preventing a War Over Taiwan”. *Foreign Affairs*. March/April 2005: p.58.
this is unlikely to change, such a stance would prevent greater international support for an independent Taiwan and constrain Taiwan from formally declaring independence.

Similarly, the PRC can continue its policy of internationalizing the Taiwan issue in a manner which supports the status quo. As mentioned in Chapter Three, Beijing repeatedly states its opposition to foreign intervention in the Taiwan issue, yet through its insistency of a “One China” commitment from other countries in fact internationalizes the debate in the mainland’s favor. In exchange for an updated commitment not to recognize an independent Taiwan from the majority of countries, China could declare that as long as the status quo is maintained by Taiwan, no date will be set for unification. Although this may be seen by some as backtracking on unification, it decreases the role of the PRC in inadvertently encouraging Taiwanese nationalism and thus maintains the possibility of a peaceful resolution in their favor.

One could argue that Beijing has considerably more leeway than Taipei in encouraging cross-strait dialogue because of their clear power advantage and secure status as a sovereign state. With this perceived advantage come expectations as Taiwan and many observers seem to insist that China make greater moves to court Taiwan into unification. Even following the argument associated with Chinese nationalism that China cannot emerge as a superpower without unification would lead one to wonder why Beijing does not make more conciliatory initiatives to hasten their rise. The costs of such an initiative remain prohibitively high, for if Taiwan rebukes the offer, the PRC loses face and is reminded of its inability to bring Taiwan “home” peacefully. In contrast, Taiwanese officials expect their overtures to be rejected and thus under present

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279 This opens the question of should China be opposed to foreign interference over Taiwan if it ultimately maintains hope for unification, a question outside the scope of this work.
conditions make suggestions that are domestically pleasing but are knowingly unacceptable to the mainland. To reduce the costs for Beijing and encourage Taipei to enter into a constructive cross-strait dialogue, American assistance is likely necessary.

**American Strategy for the Future**

This thesis illustrates many of the weaknesses in America’s current policy of “strategic ambiguity”, but it has not clearly identified how a different policy, such as a return to “strategic certainty”, would necessarily lessen cross-strait tension. Looking at the previous chapters a strong argument could be made however that a combination of a more nuanced “strategic certainty” policy along with efforts to promote at the very least indirect cross-strait negotiations would suit not only American interests more than the current ad hoc policy, but would likely be more conducive in building trust across the strait.

The US seems to think that by maintaining its present policy, time will lead both sides of the strait into a peaceful settlement. Besides being wishful thinking, this ignores several factors. First this ignores that a change on either side of the strait, even one which on the surface may appear beneficial to peace, may actually increase conflict. For example, some have suggested that if China democratizes that this would lead to a de-escalation of tension in the region and possibly make the Taiwan issue irrelevant. However, just as Taiwan’s democratization made cross-strait relations more complex, democratization of mainland China could also complicate matters. Democratization often goes hand in hand with increasing nationalism and a democratizing China would likely
be no different. Even if China does democratize, and few see this occurring in the immediate future, the government is unlikely to relinquish its claims to Taiwan or other disputed territories. Furthermore, the growth of a distinct Taiwanese identity and Taiwanese nationalism makes it uncertain that even a democratic mainland would be enough for the majority on the island to support unification. Waiting for regime change thus does not ensure a more peaceful scenario.

Time may also lead to greater Sino-American relations, but this too does little to ensure peace in the region. Following the model in Chapter 1, both China and the US may be generally supportive of the status quo, but actions taken by Taiwan and misperceptions of their intent can potentially trigger a spiraling effect which brings all three parties into conflict. Likewise, improved Sino-American relations without greater assurances to Taiwan may create a feeling that time is on China’s side, tempting Taiwan to make bolder independence-oriented moves while it still can. America’s implied belief that time will heal cross strait wounds ignores the fact that little has been done so far to encourage such conciliation.

Without a more proactive American strategy, time can be extremely detrimental. For example, Lieberthal’s proposal for a cross-strait agreement locking in the status quo

for fifty years, although ambitious, does little to ameliorate the underlying problems and seems to assume that growing nationalism on both sides will evaporate in that time frame.\textsuperscript{284} As has been seen in the past twenty years, time can allow nationalism to build on either side of the strait, adding greater vagueness to the policies of both governments and increasing the uncertainty each side has of the other’s intentions. The growth of nationalism on both sides and America’s unwillingness to take a more definitive stance leads both sides to push the envelope. This may be especially true leading up to 2008. As many have noted, the Olympics have been a focal point for Chinese nationalism. This looming event may however be the impetus for Taiwan to take a more aggressive mainland policy. Even Lee Teng-hui stated that Taiwan would have to declare independence before 2008 to not be overwhelmed by the rise in Chinese nationalism.\textsuperscript{285} The convergence of a ROC presidential election, the Olympics in Beijing, and America’s own presidential election in 2008 presents a high probability of another incident escalating cross-strait and Sino-American relations. Thus a reevaluation of America’s strategy in the region is of vital importance.

To better respond to cross-strait conflict, America should consider moving towards a carefully constructed policy of “strategic certainty”. The current policy leaves both sides fearing the worst and has done little to encourage cross-strait dialogue. America’s policy however should not be to contain an emerging China, but to deter actions which would upset the relative balance of power in the region. A containment policy, besides possibly encouraging a return to Cold War mentalities by both the US and

\textsuperscript{284} Lieberthal, Kenneth. “Preventing a War Over Taiwan”. \textit{Foreign Affairs}. March/April 2005.

Furthermore, it would likely strengthen the positions of those in Beijing supporting a more nationalistic and militant strategy.\footnote{Lieberthal, Kenneth. “A New China Strategy”. Foreign Affairs. November/December 1995, Vol. 74, Issue 6: p.38.} Instead, the US should focus on being a balancing power to offset China while increasing efforts to engage both sides of the strait.

A policy shift towards “strategic certainty” first must define when the US will act. America should continue its policy of defending Taiwan if attacked without provocation, but what constitutes provocation should be more clearly defined. For example, efforts to legally change the status of the island, including referendums aimed at self-determination, should be considered provocation, whereas most other actions intended for domestic consumption would not. Linked to this should not only be a restatement of America’s opposition to Taiwan’s independence at the present time, but, as Nye stated, a commitment to discourage others from recognizing such a declaration.\footnote{A criticism of Nye’s strategy is that constrains Taiwan without demanding China to renounce the use of force. Nye, Jr. Joseph. “A Taiwan Deal”. Washington Post. March 8, 1998. Yang, Philip. Y.M. “From Strategic Ambiguity to Three Noes: The Changing Nature of the U.S. Policy Toward Taiwan”. Conference Paper. “U.S. and Its Allies”. Tel Aviv, Israel. November 9-11, 1998. Available online at http://www.taiwansecurity.org/TS/TS-Yang-2.htm} Likewise, independence should be based on legal interpretation, which clearly favors the status quo. The definition of mainland military aggression should also be limited to avoid a military encounter over the ROC controlled offshore islands of Quemoy and Matsu. America has implied these limitations for years, but to continue to be effective and prevent either side from using the vagueness of American policy to provoke the other side, a more definitive stance is likely necessary.
Perhaps the most controversial aspect of America moving towards “strategic certainty” would be arms sales to Taiwan. The previously mentioned policy changes may unintentionally signal increased American support for Taiwan. To reduce this possibility, America should strongly consider a formula to reduce weapon sales to the island. The potential effects of such a move would be to make Taiwan in the short term more dependent on American defense and thus constrain controversial actions, but this would also push the ROC to either more fully develop their own defensive forces or find another country willing to sell arms or technology. Likewise, this policy should constrain China by making it clear that an unprovoked attack on Taiwan means war with the US. Sutter stated that China will only press the US on Taiwan when it senses American weakness.

Likewise, Taiwan only attempts to push the boundaries of America’s commitments when it believes the preferred outcome is highly probable. A policy closer to “strategic certainty” thus should make American commitments clearer to both sides of the strait while constraining efforts to test American resolve.

A move towards “strategic certainty” would likely be ineffective on its own and should be coupled with increased efforts to promote cross-strait dialogue. Clearly this would be no small task. America would need to avoid appearing to favor either side or a particular outcome for both sides of the strait to even consider American suggestions. As Harding has stated, it would not be wise for America to play the role of mediator or to

endorse any position taken, but rather should only provide general support for building a constructive dialogue.  

To prevent being sucked into a mediating role, America may want to consider a combination of bilateral agreements that reinforce the limits of “strategic certainty” and reduce the insecurities of both sides. America can offer incentives to China in an effort to get them to soften their Taiwan policy, which in turn should make Taiwanese citizens more receptive to mainland offers. Bullard proposed a Sino-American trade of sorts: the PRC agreeing to move missiles out of Fujian province in exchange for America leaving Taiwan out of a proposed Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) system. Although this may be more than China is willing to move, less ambitious exchanges may be possible. A carrot and stick approach with Taiwan may be more appropriate, combining the economic pressure Copper suggested with an increased assurances of technology transfers if the ROC commits to foregoing any formal moves towards independence. Such moves cannot ensure that cross-strait dialogue will prosper or that a durable peace can be reached, but American efforts can reduce the concerns of each party while increasing the pressure to enter constructive dialogue.

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Conclusion

Gary Rawnsley stated that “wars are started by intention, not misunderstanding, and usually by governments, not people”. While this may generally be true, the 1995-96 missile crisis and subsequent problems since Taiwan’s democratization shows how the actions of one party, even one person, may push others towards war. By focusing on Taiwan as the first actor in a strategic interaction game theoretic model, assumptions about the effectiveness of America’s Taiwan policy are exposed. Furthermore, China’s rationale for viewing Taiwan’s actions as potentially geared towards independence become clearer when viewed under the conditions of incomplete information incorporated into this model. Through this model, it is hard to ignore the effects of the island’s democratization. In part because of its contested status, Taiwan’s domestic politics since democratization have had greater international repercussions than would be expected for a entity of its size. The results of Taiwan’s democratization—legitimating the growing Taiwanese identity and opening the debate on the future of Taiwan—have made Taiwanese politics and thus its mainland policy considerably less stable and predictable than during the authoritarian era. It has now become not only the job of Taiwan, but the job of China and the US to redefine their strategies to accommodate this greater uncertainty.

Taiwan’s democratization has clearly changed the framework of cross-strait and Sino-American relations, but whether it has changed the obligations of each party is not as certain. The PRC should at least privately acknowledge the constraints the

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democratization has put on the ROC regarding the future of the island, even if this complicates their own strategy for eventual reunification. Expecting the PRC to acknowledge the ROC’s sovereignty over the island however would be akin to political suicide. Similarly, the US should support Taiwan’s democracy in general terms, but as Michael Swaine put it, this should not obligate the US to support independence or the ROC’s changing concept of sovereignty. As previously mentioned, acknowledgement differs from acceptance and for the three parties involved to maintain peace in the region, each should acknowledge that new conceptions for the future of cross-strait relations are necessary. Compromises to increase trust, even if enacted in an unofficial manner, will likely be the only way for both sides of the strait to be able to maintain the possibility of their preferred outcome without war. Thus, while it still has the ability to influence the actions of both sides of the strait, America should encourage the ROC and PRC to make goodwill gestures that decrease the uncertainty created by Taiwan’s democratization.

295 Swaine, Tough Love: p. 47.
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