

Part Two: The Taiwan ‘Problem’

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Over the past 54 years, Taiwan, an island situated approximately 160 kilometres off mainland China and covering about 45,000 square kilometres, has been the focal point of several severe crises. The undetermined status of the island, representing an unresolved problem of the Chinese Civil War, is a source of constant tension across the Taiwan Strait. These tensions are particularly worrisome since two of the parties involved, namely the United States of America (USA) and the People’s Republic of China (PRC)¹ are nuclear powers.

In an attempt to analyse the Taiwan ‘problem’, this part of the paper will give an overview of the historical developments leading to the present status. The implications of China’s transformation during the last 50 years will be discussed as well as Taiwan’s progress towards a Western style democracy. Subsequently, factors and perceptions shaping the triangular US–Taiwan–China relationship will be addressed, namely the PRC’s insistence on reunification, the ROC’s strive for independence and America’s ambiguous stance on the issue. Finally, this paper will venture to give a preview into the near- to medium- term future, making the point that a solution satisfying all parties involved is nowhere on the horizon.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Pre-1949

Although early contacts between mainland Chinese and Taiwan go back to the 7th century, China did not display a major interest in Taiwan until the 16th century.² At that time, some larger Chinese settlements were built on the island but its development began in earnest with the Dutch colonisation in the 17th century.

After the expulsion of the Dutch in 1662, Taiwan became a military district and later a prefecture under the rule of the Ming Dynasty; the Qing Dynasty upgraded Taiwan to a province in 1885.³ This status lasted until China was defeated in the Sino–Japanese War in 1895 and was forced to cede the island to Japan. Japanese colonisation lasted until Japan’s defeat in World War II and in October 1945 sovereignty over Taiwan returned to China, as had been decided at the Allied Cairo Conference in December 1943.⁴

Meanwhile, the Chinese Civil War had resumed between Mao Zedong’s Communist Party (CCP) and Chiang Kai-shek’s Kuomintang (KMT). The war ended with a decisive communist victory on the mainland and Chiang Kai-shek’s retreat to Taiwan. On the mainland, the PRC was established on 1 October 1949.

The Taiwan conflict during China’s period of international isolation

Through the 1950s and 1960s, the cross-strait relationship between the ROC and the PRC stayed extremely hostile: both repeatedly expressed the intention to invade the other and threatened to change the status quo forcefully. But due to a lack of decisive military superiority, a serious invasion was never attempted by either side. Nevertheless, several crises, particularly over some off-shore islands close to the Chinese mainland (Quemoy, Ta Chen and Matsu), sparked military exchanges in

1953 and 1958. All official social, economic and cultural relations were frozen; however, in secret contacts Beijing and Taipei negotiated conditions for re-unification in an attempt to find a solution to the problem.⁵

America's role in the development of the China–Taiwan conflict was crucial: having backed the KMT against the communists during the civil war, it initially did not show a pronounced enthusiasm to support Chiang's regime on Taiwan. This changed drastically with the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950, which made Taiwan an 'important anchor in a US defensive chain stretching from the Aleutians to Australia'.⁶ America's strategic interest in the island was reflected in the considerable security guarantees it gave Taiwan, most significantly in the 1954 Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT); it also provided financial aid and bolstered Taiwan's defence by supplying modern weapons and other military equipment.⁷ The US, followed by most of its allies, recognised the Taipei regime as the legal government of China⁸—Taiwan occupied China's seat at the United Nations (UN), while the PRC went unrepresented.

Changes with Sino–American alignment

In the early 1970s, the US–China–Taiwan triangular relationship took a sharp turn: Sino–American rapprochement put Taipei on the backburner of US foreign policy. After President Nixon's visit to Beijing in 1972, China and the US embarked on a strategic relationship that aligned both countries vis-à-vis the USSR and lasted until the end of the Cold War. In this process, Taiwan posed a major obstacle that could not be removed entirely. In the 1972 Shanghai Communique⁹ issued at the end of Nixon's visit, the two countries essentially agreed to disagree over Taiwan and shelved the problem in the interest of more important strategic questions: China maintained that the Taiwan problem was an internal affair, Taiwan was a province of China and that US forces must be withdrawn from the island; any moves towards Taiwanese independence were strongly opposed. The US acknowledged the Chinese position that Taiwan was a part of China and that there was only one China.¹⁰ It also assured the PRC that it wanted a peaceful settlement of the question and outlined the prospect of a gradual reduction and the ultimate withdrawal of US forces from Taiwan.

Nixon also promised a switch of formal recognition from Taipei to Beijing, but this was postponed due to domestic developments in America such as the Watergate scandal.¹¹ After intense negotiations, the US and China agreed on formal relations in 1978 and issued a communique officially dated 1 January 1979¹² that fixed the terms of US recognition of China: diplomatic relations were established; the government of the PRC was recognised by the US as the sole legal government of China; only unofficial US–Taiwan relations were to be maintained in the future; and the US reconfirmed its 'One China' policy. Furthermore, the MDT with Taipei was terminated after one year's notice. However, essential questions relating to Taiwan were not resolved and ambiguities remained, leaving potential conflict points for the future.¹³

Washington's move signalled the beginning of Taiwan's international isolation: a majority of countries imitated the US policy change and recognised China, leaving Taiwan with the recognition of merely 20 countries by 1981.¹⁴ For the ROC, after already having lost its seat in the UN to the PRC in October 1971, this was a devastating blow catching the country 'hopelessly unprepared'.¹⁵ Initially displaying outright fury about the severance of relations,¹⁶ it took Taipei several years to develop a strategy to deal with the new circumstances.¹⁷

Reactions in Washington to China's recognition were not all positive: friends of Taiwan, particularly in Congress, saw the development as an abandonment of Taipei. Consequently, the

Carter administration's proposed bill on future relations with Taiwan was rejected by Congress and instead, the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) was adopted in April 1979.¹⁸ Under the Act, the US guaranteed Taiwan arms sales 'to maintain a sufficient self-defence capability'¹⁹ and gave 'Taiwan a degree of American protection it would not have otherwise obtained.'²⁰ China, of course, was deeply disappointed; it saw the TRA as a unilateral US withdrawal from agreed positions. So within a short period of time, America, with its ambiguous policy towards Taiwan, had infuriated both the PRC and the ROC and had damaged its credibility with both.

The problem of arms sales to Taiwan had to be resolved with the new Reagan administration. Long-lasting negotiations led to a third US–China communique dealing with the issue. In the core of the statement dated 17 August 1982 the US conceded that 'it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan'²¹ and promised a limit on quantity and quality of the supplies. Although in later years Washington and Beijing interpreted the agreement quite differently, it paved the way for a functioning Sino–American relationship in the 1980s.

Evidently, the new strategic situation after 1979 also had profound effects on cross-strait relations; these were amplified by domestic developments in both China and Taiwan beginning in the late 1970s. China commenced to pursue peaceful unification with vigour and embarked on a course of economic liberalisation. Following the major policy changes instigated by Deng Xiaoping in late 1978,²² Beijing launched several initiatives towards a non-violent solution to the problem²³ and the framework of its 'one country, two systems' policy was established.²⁴ However, parallel to the reconciliatory advances to Taipei, China tried to keep Taiwan internationally isolated.²⁵

On the other side of the strait, Taiwan saw itself in need of an essential adjustment of its strategic policy. Any hopes Taipei had nursed that it could regain the mainland with US help vanished with the normalisation of US–Chinese relations. This waking up to reality assisted already existing tendencies towards more democracy in the country,²⁶ which in turn provoked a fundamental change in its China policy in the 1990s, as will be discussed later. The initial reaction to the new situation, however, was to rebuff all Chinese attempts towards convergence leading to unification: in 1981, Taipei issued its 'three noes', declining all official contact, negotiations or any compromise with communism.²⁷ But over the years, this policy was watered down by several concessions leading to closer ties with the mainland.²⁸

Effects of the post-Cold War era

Again, a major change in the Taiwan situation came about with the American–Chinese estrangement in the late 1980s: with the Cold War coming to an end, the strategic alignment of the two countries towards the USSR became increasingly obsolete. This and the effects of the 1989 Tiananmen Square events on public opinion in the US instigated a rapid deterioration in Sino–American relations; Taiwan, in contrast, 'saw its star rising'.²⁹ The shift, further advanced by Taiwanese democratisation,³⁰ is portrayed in the first substantial US arms sale to Taiwan after 1982:³¹ in August 1992, President Bush approved the sale of 150 F-16 fighter aircraft to Taipei, 'effectively discarding the 17 August 1982 Joint Communique'.³² Moreover, high-level US–Taiwan contacts, which had been suspended after 1979, resumed and were further increased after President Clinton's Taiwan Policy Review in September 1994.³³

In the meantime, cross-strait relations appeared to improve: Taipei officially abandoned the strict 'three noes' policy in 1988; it announced the end of the civil war status with China in 1990; and several 'non-governmental' bodies were founded on both sides to facilitate negotiations.³⁴ However, beneath the surface things developed differently: on the island an independence movement, initially acting more

tacitly, but evolving increasingly as official policy, gained momentum. In 1995, it became evident that President Lee Teng-hui was at the leading edge of the development; this led to the serious crisis across the Taiwan Strait of 1995–1996.

Beijing, already frustrated about the upgrading of Taipei by the US in recent years³⁵ and suspicious about Taiwan taking incremental steps towards independence,³⁶ was alarmed by a visit of President Lee to the US in June 1995.³⁷ China perceived this as a gross provocation and as part of a developing trend towards Taiwanese independence that had to be checked. Its initial reaction was mainly aimed at the US: among the measures taken were a recall of its ambassador to the US, a formal protest and the cancellation of several official exchanges. Inconsistently though, Chinese official visits to Taiwan went ahead. However, when realisation hit that Lee was the driving force behind the event, the PRC directed its anger against Taiwan.³⁸ All official contacts were cancelled and extensive military exercises near Taiwan, including the testing of short-range ballistic missiles into the Strait, were scheduled between July 1995 and March 1996.³⁹

After the initial wave of exercises in July–August 1995, America tried to defuse the situation diplomatically.⁴⁰ But Beijing continued the military exercises on an even larger scale in November 1995, just two weeks prior to legislative elections in Taiwan.⁴¹ With this, the volatility of the situation escalated: the US aircraft carrier *Nimitz* passed through the Strait in December 1995, officially due to 'operational' reasons, but also indicating US resolve to honour its commitments according to the TRA. As tensions increased, China even mentioned the use of nuclear force.⁴² Further Chinese military activities off Taiwan in March 1996 provoked the deployment of two US carrier groups to waters off Taiwan. China's military demonstration ended on 25 March 1996, two days after the Taiwan presidential elections. However, it has maintained a significant military posture opposite Taiwan ever since.⁴³

At the end of the crisis, the underlying strategic problems were not solved, but the status-quo ante was quickly reinstated: China, with its 'carefully controlled explosion'⁴⁴ had reached its objectives of showing its strong objection to Taiwan's independence and its determination to use force as a last resort, while at the same time not seriously damaging Sino–American relations. America had clearly indicated its willingness to defend Taiwan against a military threat. On the basis of an improved mutual understanding regarding the Taiwan tangle, US–Chinese relations could get off to a fresh start.

For cross-strait relations it took longer to return to 'normal': while exchanges like trade (via Hong Kong or other transitional ports) and tourism between the island and the mainland continued,⁴⁵ the unification talks that were interrupted by the crisis did not resume until October 1998.⁴⁶ Since the crisis, Taiwan has continued its ambiguous mainland policy. Although expressing a general commitment to unification⁴⁷ and maintaining a pragmatic approach to cross-strait trade and investment, it effectively proceeded on a course of further separation. Taipei has considerably strengthened its military forces, continuously resisted China's urge to establish the 'three links', carried on its 'pragmatic diplomacy' and obstructed any substantial progress in the negotiations on unification by creating ever higher obstacles.⁴⁸ In July 1999, President Lee provoked a 'mini-crisis' by effectively terminating Taiwan's 'One China' policy. China responded to his remarks about 'special state to state relations' between China and Taiwan by again 'threatening military reprisal'⁴⁹ and 'a sharp military build-up with a clear focus on coercing Taiwan'.⁵⁰

But Taiwan's quest for independence has been missing a vital ingredient, namely US support. Following the 1995–96 crisis, America noticeably amended its China policy: it now aimed at building a 'constructive strategic partnership'⁵¹ with Beijing. As part of this process President Clinton officially

announced his 'Three Noes' regarding US policy towards Taipei in June 1998: the US 'would oppose' (later 'would not support') Taiwan independence: it would not support 'two Chinas'; and there would be no US support of Taiwan's readmittance to the UN.⁵² In line with this policy, America's reaction to Lee's declaration was 'to signal its displeasure with Lee, pressing him to back down'.⁵³

For China, the outcome of the 2000 elections in Taiwan and the US could hardly have been worse. In Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian became the first president of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)⁵⁴; and newly elected US President George W. Bush followed up his campaign rhetoric with a perceptible change of American policy towards Taiwan. Bush pledged to end America's policy of 'strategic ambiguity' and replace it with 'strategic clarity'.⁵⁵ On national television, he announced his intention to do 'whatever it takes' to defend Taiwan.⁵⁶ Furthermore, in April 2001 the US issued former President Lee a multiple-entry visa and allowed Chen a visit to the US on a 'transit' visa.⁵⁷ In the same month, the US approved the most significant US arms sale to Taiwan since 1992.⁵⁸ Most worrying for the PRC, influential parts of the Bush administration seem to openly support Taiwan's independence.⁵⁹

Although objecting vigorously to these steps, China, by now also under a new leadership, has refrained from escalating the dispute into a serious conflict; it has basically continued its patient Taiwan policy⁶⁰ of pursuing peaceful unification.⁶¹ The attacks of 9-11 played into Beijing's hand: America's pre-occupation with its 'War on Terror' leaves no room for a major confrontation with China; on the contrary, Chinese support in that war is highly welcomed by the US. However, when Beijing attempted to obtain concessions regarding Taiwan for its support, Washington did not yield.⁶² Only recently, after a meeting between Bush and China's new President Hu Jintao in June 2003, the US indicated a softening of its stance. Bush reaffirmed America's 'One China' policy and, most importantly, qualified his earlier comment about US security guarantees for Taiwan by putting them into the context of not supporting Taiwanese independence.⁶³

US-CHINA-TAIWAN TRIANGULAR RELATIONSHIP

Taiwan's domestic developments and changing China policy

When Chiang Kai-shek and his supporters were expelled from mainland China in 1949, they installed an authoritarian regime under KMT rule on Taiwan. Martial law was established and a policy of discrimination, even suppression, of indigenous Taiwanese was adopted.⁶⁴ The regime in Taipei saw itself as the legitimate government of China whose main goal it was to retake the mainland. Mainlander⁶⁵ domination of the KMT and in government continued under Chiang Kai-shek and his son and successor, Chiang Ching-kuo, until the mid 1980s. In 1984, the appointment of Lee Teng-hui (a native islander) as vice president signalled a change in Taiwan's domestic politics. During this period, integration of native Taiwanese into the KMT and their participation in government increased steadily.

When Lee succeeded Chiang Ching-kuo in 1988, he stepped up the pace of the democratisation process that had commenced in the final years of his predecessor. Martial law was lifted in 1987 and parties other than the KMT were allowed to compete in the political arena. Regular, internationally recognised elections have been held ever since Taiwan's first presidential elections in March 1996. Today, despite some flaws,⁶⁶ the ROC can be considered a normal, Western style democracy. This has also produced beneficial effects on its foreign relations, international sympathy for the island in general and, most vitally, US support has grown significantly.⁶⁷ Furthermore, due to the overwhelming

number of natives in the electorate,⁶⁸ the development of democratic structures was accompanied by a process of 'Taiwanisation'. Islanders became increasingly more involved in government, leading to a sidelining of mainlanders and a distinct change in Taiwan's China policy.

Under Chiang Kai-shek and his son, the ROC consistently maintained a 'One China' policy. Notions of Taiwanese independence were unimaginable, any such movement was brutally suppressed.⁶⁹ Coming into power in 1988, Lee initially did not openly change that policy. He improved cross-strait relations by establishing several councils dealing with that issue and by officially announcing the end of the Chinese civil war in December 1990.⁷⁰ However, when he had secured his leadership by purging the KMT of the old guard in favour of unification, he 'showed his true colours':⁷¹ after 1993, it became increasingly obvious that the ROC Government was on a course for independence.⁷² The changed policy, to which Taiwan basically has adhered until today, embraced several areas: internationally, Taipei employed its 'pragmatic diplomacy', seeking recognition and membership in international bodies, even in the UN. It also tried to exploit China's Human Rights deficits to gain support (particularly from the US) and spent huge sums of money on financial aid in attempts to break its isolation. Taiwan's policy has been reinforced by its increasing prosperity and economic growth.⁷³

Towards the PRC, Taipei has continued to express its openness for cross-strait talks, but has not allowed any significant advancement regarding unification.⁷⁴ In fact, it has 'categorically refused to accept ... China's "one country, two systems" formula for reunification.'⁷⁵ Moreover, Taiwanese politicians have frequently tried to test the limits by making controversial statements about Taiwan's status.⁷⁶ Taipei has also consistently resisted Beijing's efforts for closer cross-strait relations by complicating the expansion of the 'three direct links' and economic exchange with China. However, due to pressure from the Taiwan business community, these restrictions have been loosened. Over the years, indirect cross-strait trade and investment have risen enormously,⁷⁷ making Taiwan economically dependent on China⁷⁸ and posing a problem for Taipei's quest for independence.

In summary, the developments on the island since 1949 have 'changed the essential character of the divide';⁷⁹ parallel to the process of Taiwan's democratisation, the identification with the mainland has eroded⁸⁰ and 'the political/cultural identity of Taiwan's people has changed dramatically',⁸¹ creating a sense of nationhood.

China's view

For China, the Taiwan problem is vital and thus a compromise on this fundamental nationalist question is inconceivable.⁸² Mao expressed China's patience and resolve on the issue by saying that a resolution might take a hundred years, implying that the PRC would never give up.⁸³ Reasons for this rigid position are plenty: historical roots, Taiwan's geo-strategic significance, questions of the PRC's domestic stability and economic progress, these all play a part in China's perception of the Taiwan problem.

China maintains it has a strong legal claim of sovereignty over Taiwan. It sees 400 years of Chinese rule only interrupted by brief periods of Dutch and Japanese colonialism and also an internationally recognised return of the island following World War II.⁸⁴ Furthermore, Beijing points out that, during a long period following 1949, the ROC itself insisted that Taiwan was part of China.⁸⁵ Emotional reasons play a role, too: Taiwan's separation would be perceived as a continuation of China's 'century of humiliation' by Western powers.⁸⁶

Due to its geographic location on China's 'doorstep', Taiwan is of immense strategic importance to the mainland. If it ever came under the influence of a power hostile to the PRC, the island would potentially develop into China's Cuba. Further, it 'sits at the crossroads of the strategic and economic interests of Japan, China and the US',⁸⁷ augmenting its geo-strategic significance.

China also fears that a Taiwan declaration of independence would pose a serious threat to its territorial integrity by setting a dangerous precedent. Under these circumstances, China's existing minority problems are likely to intensify because secessionist movements, for example in Tibet and Xinjiang, would be further encouraged.⁸⁸ Moreover, Chinese leaders see the legitimacy of the CCP as the ruling body of the PRC endangered by an independent Taiwan. Nationalism, which plays an important role in China's domestic stability, would suffer a tremendous blow, potentially leading to a serious weakening of the communist rule.⁸⁹ Lastly, with official separation from the mainland, Taiwan's vast economic potential would be forever lost to the PRC.⁹⁰

As a result of these views, Beijing considers Taiwan as a Chinese province and has never stopped its efforts to unify the island with mainland China. Initially, Mao tried to achieve this by forceful means; but in 1978, Deng Xiaoping set out on a course of peaceful unification, a policy centred around the 'One China, Two systems' principle. China points out that this formula has been successfully tested with the retrogression of Hong Kong (1997) and Macao (1999) to China.⁹¹ Therefore, the development of these two areas can be seen as important test cases for Taiwan's reunification, even though Beijing seems to have moved away from a strict interpretation of the principle.⁹²

While Beijing concentrates on its economic development and military modernisation, it is content to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan question until the 'time is ripe for unification'.⁹³ Meanwhile, it is trying to improve cross-strait relations to promote an easy transition. However, it remains adamant about Taiwan's status as part of China, making every effort to further isolate Taipei in the international arena and deterring it from taking decisive steps towards independence by employing a strategy of intimidation and coercion. In fact, China has made it perfectly clear that it will not refrain from the use of force if certain situations arise.⁹⁴

Taiwan's security umbrella—US involvement

It is safe to assume that without US protection Taiwan would long since have fallen to China. America's security umbrella for the islands has several facets: firstly, with treaties such as the MDT or the TRA the US has given a promise to guarantee Taiwan's security that, as could be witnessed during the crisis of 1995–96, it is prepared to keep. Secondly, short of openly neglecting commitments made in the 1982 communique with China, Washington provides Taipei with weapons and military equipment. Up to now, this has assisted to keep a certain military balance between China and Taiwan.⁹⁵ Thirdly, the US underpins the security guarantee by keeping close military to military relations with Taiwan, leading to an increasing interoperability between the two military forces.⁹⁶

America's involvement in the Taiwan issue has historical, strategic, political and domestic dimensions. After more than 50 years of support for the island, the US is committed to defend Taiwan. Otherwise it would lose credibility with its allies particularly in the Asia–Pacific region, possibly resulting in drastic, from an American perspective detrimental, changes to the regional security structure. The geo-strategic importance of Taiwan has been discussed above; America, aspiring to maintain its predominance in the Asia–Pacific region,⁹⁷ has a profound interest in the status of the island and its utility in Sino–American relations. Politically, Taiwan's democratisation has further ensured US support: according to its new security strategy,⁹⁸ Washington will champion democracy

worldwide and is consequently obliged to defend a democratic Taiwan against a communist China. Taiwan's development into a democracy has also given it the edge over China in the US domestic debate. Furthermore, every administration has to pay tribute to an enormously powerful Taiwan lobby. Realising that the 'White House is an uncertain friend',⁹⁹ this lobby has successfully concentrated on gaining influence on Capitol Hill.¹⁰⁰

Until recently, US policy towards Taiwan was, in many ways, characterised by strategic ambiguity. Besides the ambiguous stance on Taiwan's defence discussed earlier, Washington has remained unclear in its position on China's claim of sovereignty over Taiwan by neither endorsing nor challenging it.¹⁰¹ As mentioned, President Bush, who initially promised 'strategic clarity' to replace 'strategic ambiguity', seems to have realised the inherent danger that comes with such clarity and has started to depart from it—an unconditional security guarantee could be perceived by Taipei as *carte blanche* to unilaterally declare independence, thus provoking another major crisis in the Strait.

Future outlook

Of the parties involved, China's future position and short- to medium-term course is probably the easiest to predict. As discussed in the first part of this paper, the PRC will continue on its course of economic progress and military renewal, trying to maintain peace and stability in the region as a basis of its increasing prosperity. That said, the Taiwan issue is the most probable, if not the only cause that could possibly force China to depart from that policy. Due to the rationale analysed above, it will not allow any substantial change of Taiwan's status without massive resistance. China's threat to use military force as an *ultima ratio* in the conflict is credible, given its historical willingness to do so even in a state of comparative weakness.¹⁰² China does not entertain great hope for fast unification; therefore, it will exercise its legendary patience by further pursuing its policy of *rapprochement* with the island and steadily bettering its position through economic and military advancement. At the same time, it will maintain a firm stance against Taiwan independence and fight any development that will preclude future unification.

Given its present preoccupation with the 'War on Terror' and the ensuing commitments, America is content to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan Strait for the time being, thus avoiding a serious conflict with China. The US will openly support neither an independent Taiwan nor its unification with the mainland. In the face of a potential armed conflict with China, the costs for the former are considered to be too high, while the latter is not in Washington's strategic interest: because Taiwan plays an important role in a possible encirclement or containment of China, the US would rather see its status undecided than the island fall under the sovereignty of the mainland. Under these circumstances, Washington seems to opt for a continuation of its policy of 'strategic ambiguity', a strategy that has worked reasonably well for 30 years in subduing tensions in the Strait. Certainly, the strong Taiwan lobby in the US will continue to ensure that America's security umbrella for the island will stay in place.

The most difficult factor to predict in the US–China–Taiwan triangle is the ROC. Clearly, its political leadership is embarked on a course of independence, restrained only by China's threat of military force and a lack of US backing. With the majority of Taiwan's population supporting this course, a reversal is highly unlikely. On the other hand, Taipei cannot afford to unilaterally declare independence. Considering Beijing's resolve and the American ambiguous security guarantee in this case, such a move would be far too dangerous for the island. Given the recent improvements in Sino–American relations, the prospects for a change of that situation in the coming decade appear slim.

Consequently, Taipei will not have many alternatives but to continue its policy of resistance against unification and hope for a change in the overall political situation.

Taking into account the aspects discussed in this paper, the Taiwan problem is not likely to disappear in the foreseeable future; there is no viable solution on the horizon to dissolve the existing stalemate. Therefore, the Taiwan Strait will stay a hotspot in the medium-term future and even the prevention of another serious crisis can be considered a success.

Endnotes

1. In this paper, for the period after 1949, the term 'Taiwan' stands for the Republic of China (ROC), whereas the term 'China' refers to the People's Republic of China (PRC).
2. Bernice Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1999, p. 14.
3. *ibid.*
4. *ibid.*, p. 16.
5. This attempt was terminated with the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in China which, at the time, deterred Taiwan from further pursuing unification. Sheng Lijun, *China's Dilemma – The Taiwan Issue*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2001, p. 91.
6. Gary Klintworth, 'China, Taiwan and the United States' *Pacifica Review* Vol. 13, No. 1, 2001, p. 41.
7. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.
8. James Mann, *About Face*, New York, USA: Alfred A Knopf Inc., 1999, p. 15.
9. *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*. US Department of State, 1972 [Internet, viewed 26-03-2003; available from www.usinfo.state.gov].
10. The implication of the US merely acknowledging versus recognising Beijing's position is discussed in Lijun, *China's Dilemma – The Taiwan Issue*, p. 12.
11. Mann, *About Face*, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–79.
12. *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*, US Department of State, 1979 [Internet, viewed 26-03-2003; available from www.usinfo.state.gov].
13. The most contentious question of American arms sales to Taiwan was omitted.
14. Immanuel CY Hsue, *The Rise of Modern China*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983, p. 762.
15. Mann, *About Face*, *op. cit.*, p. 94.
16. *ibid.*
17. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, *op. cit.*, p. 19.
18. Steven M Goldstein and Randall Schriver, 'An Uncertain Relationship: The United States, Taiwan and the Taiwan Relations Act', *The China Quarterly*, No. 165, 2001, p. 148.
19. *Taiwan Relations Act*, US Congress, 1979 [Internet, viewed 26-03-2003; available from www.usinfo.state.gov].
20. Mann, *About Face*, *op. cit.*, p. 95.
21. *Joint Communiqué of the United States of America and the People's Republic of China*, US Department of State, 1982 [Internet, viewed 26-03-2003; available from www.usinfo.state.gov].
22. Primary policy during the Mao Zedong era had been to engage in a forceful liberation of the island. Lijun, *China's Dilemma - The Taiwan Issue*, p. 15.
23. These initiatives include the 'Message to Compatriots on Taiwan' of January 1979 which calls for cross-straits talks, establishment of mail, transport and trade links ('three links') and 'four exchanges' (economic, cultural, technical and sporting). Further, a conciliatory nine-point proposal to solve the problem was delivered in September 1981. Andrew J Nathan and Robert S Ross, *The Great Wall And The Empty Fortress*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company Ltd., 1997, pp. 208–209.
24. Under this formula, Taiwan is offered the status of a special administrative region (SAR) and could practice a different political and socio-economic system than the rest of the country. The concept was used for the return of Hong Kong in 1997 and Macao in 1999. Byron SJ Weng, "'One Country, Two Systems'" From a Taiwan Perspective', *Orbis*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 2002, p. 716.
25. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
26. Mann, *About Face*, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

27. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., p. 21.
28. From 1987, personal visits on the mainland were allowed; exchange of mail via the Red Cross commenced; and, most importantly, from 1988 limited economic relations were approved. Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall And The Empty Fortress*, op. cit., p. 217.
29. Klintworth, 'China, Taiwan and the United States', op. cit., p. 43.
30. Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall And The Empty Fortress*, op. cit., p. 219.
31. After the 1982 communique, US arms sales to Taiwan had continued under the provisions of the TRA, however, on a decreased level. Kenneth W. Allen, 'Foreign Military Relations: Taiwan and China Look Abroad', *Issues & Studies* Vol. 38, No. 2, 2002, p. 180.
32. Klintworth, 'China, Taiwan and the United States', op. cit., p. 44.
33. Lijun, *China's Dilemma—The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., p. 64.
34. The two main bodies were Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), starting the so-called Koo-Wang talks in April 1993. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., pp. 21–22.
35. Edward Friedmann, 'Reflecting Mirrors across the Taiwan Strait: American Perspectives of a China Threat', in *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality*, ed. Herbert Yee and Ian Storey, London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 67.
36. In the framework of its 'Pragmatic Diplomacy', Taiwan increasingly sought international recognition, even membership in the UN. Also, Lee became more and more outspoken in his statements on Taiwan's status. Lijun, *China's Dilemma—The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., pp. 25 and 96–97.
37. Lee was issued a visa in May 1995 for a 'private visit' to the US to attend a reunion at his alma mater, Cornell University. This constituted a sharp reversal of previous US policy. Mann, *About Face*, op. cit., pp. 319–326.
38. Lee's provocative speech at Cornell University indicated his critical role in the event. Lijun, *China's Dilemma—The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., p. 27.
39. Klintworth, 'China, Taiwan and the United States', op. cit., p. 46.
40. The US played down the conflict in public, reaffirmed its 'one China' policy, granted some of Beijing's demands regarding further US visits by Taipei officials and seemed to restrain Taiwan from escalating tensions. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., pp. 45–47.
41. The timing of the exercises suggests that one of Beijing's objectives was to influence the Taiwan electorate in the two elections in November 1995 and March 1996. However, the outcome of both elections (Lee and the KMT won) indicated that this attempt was unsuccessful.
42. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., p. 48.
43. Kurt M Campbell and Derek J Mitchell, 'Crisis in the Taiwan Strait?', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 4, 2001, p. 17.
44. Klintworth, 'China, Taiwan and the United States', op. cit., p. 45.
45. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., p. 54.
46. *Milestones in US–Taiwan Relations*. Taiwan Studies Institute, 2001 [Internet, viewed 26-03-2003; available from www.taiwanstudies.org].
47. Lijun, *China's Dilemma—The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., p. 133.
48. *ibid.*, pp. 133ff.
49. *Milestones in US–Taiwan Relations*, Taiwan Studies Institute, 2001 [Internet, viewed 26-03-2003; available from www.taiwanstudies.org].
50. Thomas J Christensen, 'The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Deterring a Taiwan Conflict', *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 2002, p. 16.
51. *China–US Joint Statement*, China Online, 1997 [Internet, viewed 28-05-2003; available from www.chineseculture.about.co]

52. Mann, *About Face*, op. cit., p. 330.
53. *Milestones in US–Taiwan Relations*, Taiwan Studies Institute, 2001 [Internet, viewed 26-03-2003; available from www.taiwanstudies.org].
54. Traditionally, the DPP has been promoting Taiwan independence. Christensen, 'The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Deterring a Taiwan Conflict', op. cit., p. 16.
55. By never explicitly stating under what conditions it would come to aid Taiwan militarily, the US has kept Beijing guessing and has discouraged Taiwan from seeking independence with greater determination. The US has been committed to this 'policy of strategic ambiguity' towards Taiwan since 1972.
56. Robert Sutter, 'The Bush Administration and US China Policy Debate—Reasons for Optimism', *Issues & Studies* Vol. 38, No. 2, 2002, p. 4.
57. Seiichiro Takagi, 'The Impact of September 11 on China's Key Foreign Relationships', *Japan Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 2002, p. 11.
58. The package included 4 destroyers, 12 maritime patrol aircraft and a promise to facilitate the acquisition of 4 diesel electric submarines. Aaron L Friedberg, '11 September and the Future of Sino–American Relations', *Survival* Vol. 44, No. 1, 2002, p. 39.
59. Deputy Secretary of Defence Wolfowitz called Clinton's 'Three Noes' a 'sell-out' and promoted American support for Taiwan independence. Lanxin Xiang, 'Washington's Misguided China Policy', *Survival* Vol. 43, No. 3, 2001, p. 20.
60. This policy can be described as 'smiling diplomacy supplemented with a threat of force', Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall And The Empty Fortress*, op. cit., p. 209.
61. Zemin Jiang, 'Build a Well-off Society in an All-Route Way and Create a New Situation in Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics', Beijing: 16th CPC Congress, 2002.
62. Friedberg, '11 September and the Future of Sino-American Relations', op. cit., pp. 34–35.
63. *President Bush's Meeting with Chinese President 01 June 2003—Press Briefing*. The White House, [Internet, viewed 18-06-2003; available from www.whitehouse.gov].
64. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., p. 27.
65. The group having come with Chiang Kai-shek after the revolution.
66. Lijun, *China's Dilemma – The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., p. 4.
67. Shao-chuan Leng and Cheng-yi Lin, *Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?* ed. David Shambaugh, *Greater China—The Next Superpower?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 184.
68. Two thirds of the island's population are Taiwanese or Fujianese descent, while Hakka and mainlanders constitute the majority of the rest. Cal Clark, *Taiwan in the 1990s: Moving Ahead or Back to the Future?*, ed. William A Joseph, *China Briefing—The Contradictions of Change*, New York: M E Sharpe, 1997, p. 197.
69. Lijun, *China's Dilemma - The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., p. 89.
70. This was also a clever step towards separation from China: with the 'termination of the Period of National Mobilisation fore Suppression of Communist Rebellion', Taiwan also de facto recognised the CCP's control of the mainland. Leng and Lin, *Political Change on Taiwan: Transition to Democracy?*, p. 174.
71. Lijun, *China's Dilemma - The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., p. 96.
72. *ibid.*, pp. 93ff.
73. Taiwan's economic performance: see Clark, *Taiwan in the 1990s: Moving Ahead or Back to the Future?*, op. cit., pp. 197–206.
74. Taipei sees insurmountable obstacles for unification due to the difference between the PRC and the ROC in living standards, economic status, and particularly in the political systems. Lijun, *China's Dilemma—The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., p. 3.
75. *ibid.*, p. 101. Recent attempts of Beijing to 'mainlandise' Hong Kong (e.g. with the introduction of Article 23) have reinforced Taipei's view that the formula is a sham.

76. E.g., in November 1997 President Lee called Taiwan ‘an independent and sovereign country’, Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., p. 54.
77. Chong-pin Lin, *Beijing and Taipei: Dialectics in Post-Tiananmen Interactions*, ed. David Shambaugh, *Greater China – The Next Superpower?*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 128–129.
78. Friedmann, ‘Reflecting Mirrors across the Taiwan Strait: American Perspectives of a China Threat’, p. 78.
79. Campbell and Mitchell, ‘Crisis in the Taiwan Strait?’, op. cit., p. 15.
80. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., p. 68.
81. David M Lampton, *Same Bed, Different Dreams* (Berkeley, USA: University of California Press, 2001) p. 101.82. Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, op. cit., p. 11.
83. Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall And The Empty Fortress*, op. cit., p. 206.
84. *White Paper—The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue*. Taiwan Affairs Office, 21-2-2000 [Internet, viewed 18-07-2003; available from www.china-embassy.org].
85. *ibid.*
86. Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall And The Empty Fortress*, op. cit., p. 206.
87. Klintworth, ‘China, Taiwan and the United States’, op. cit., p. 44.
88. Robert S Ross, ‘Navigating the Taiwan Strait’ *International Security* Vol. 27, No. 2 (2002): p. 55.
89. Christensen, ‘The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Deterring a Taiwan Conflict’, op. cit., p. 12.
90. For China’s strategic economic planning see Lijun, *China’s Dilemma—The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., pp. 61–62.
91. *White Paper - The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue*. Taiwan Affairs Office, 21-2-2000 [Internet, viewed 18-07-2003; available from www.china-embassy.org].
92. Beijing now discusses a ‘One China, two political entities’ principle. Friedmann, ‘Reflecting Mirrors across the Taiwan Strait: American Perspectives of a China Threat’, p. 79.
93. Lijun, *China’s Dilemma—The Taiwan Issue*, op. cit., p. 1.
94. The 2000 White Paper lists conditions such as a foreign intervention or a Taiwan declaration of independence. Further, China indicated that it is not prepared to accept the status quo forever. *White Paper - The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue*. Taiwan Affairs Office, 21-2-2000 [Internet, viewed 18-07-2003; available from www.china-embassy.org].
95. A comparison of military China’s and Taiwan’s capabilities can be found in Lijun, *China’s Dilemma—The Taiwan Issue*, Chapter 6, op. cit.
96. Ross, ‘Navigating the Taiwan Strait’, op. cit., p. 48.
97. *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House, 17 September 2002 .
98. *ibid.*
99. Thomas W Robinson, ‘America in Taiwan’s Post-Cold War Foreign Relations’, *The China Quarterly* No. 148, 1996, p. 1343.
100. John J Tkacik, ‘The US–Taiwan Alliance: Who’s in Charge?’, *Issues & Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 2 , 2002, p. 207.
101. Nathan and Ross, *The Great Wall And The Empty Fortress*, op. cit., p. 205.
102. Christensen, ‘The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Deterring a Taiwan Conflict’, op. cit., p. 14. China’s credibility is enhanced by the fact that Taiwan’s military seems to lose its qualitative superiority. See David Shambaugh, ‘Sino-American Strategic Relations: From Partners to Competitors’ *Survival*, Vol. 42, No. 1, 2000, p. 103.

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