Accommodation or Confrontation: Assessment of Future Cross-Taiwan-Strait Relations from the Perspective of Internal Politics in Taiwan*

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Following the resumption of talks between Ku Cheng-fu and Wang Daohan in October last year, relations between Taiwan and Mainland China have entered a new stage of renewed dialogue and negotiation. Serious differences, nevertheless, still exist between Taipei and Beijing which repeatedly led to heated debates and sometimes rather emotional outbursts as one witnessed in the exchanges between Shi Hwei-yow, Secretary General of the Strait Exchange Foundation on the Taiwan side and Tang Xubei, Secretary General of the Association for Relations Across Taiwan Strait (ARATS) on the Mainland side during the time of Ku-Wang talks in October last year.

As of this writing, both Taipei and Beijing are probing the bottom lines of the other side in regard to the preparation for Wang Daohan's forthcoming visit to Taiwan. Despite the fact that both sides claim the visit is still on, it is not clear as to what time Wang will come to Taiwan as well as to the pre-conditions which the PRC have set down for the ROC government to meet before a final date of Mr. Wang's visit to Taiwan is set. Given the fact that the ROC Government and the various political parties in Taiwan will soon be extremely busy over the preparation for presidential election next year and that the KMT most likely will decide its presidential nominee in the Party Congress to be held in August, Wang Daohan may have to take the trip to Taiwan before June this year if he decides to come.

In this short paper, I shall focus on the analysis of the impact of internal politics in Taiwan on ROC's external relations in general and on cross-Taiwan-Strait relations in particular. In the course of analysis, the interaction between Taiwan's internal politics and its Mainland China policies, the issue of national identity and international posture, and the psycho-cultural roots of ROC's external policies will be examined one after another. Finally, some concrete policy recommendations will be made to facilitate a smooth and peaceful resolution of cross-Strait relations.

1. National Identity and Mainland China Policy: Two Sides of One Coin

For those observers who are not familiar with the challenges which the people of Taiwan are facing in the area of national identity, they will have a hard time to comprehend the width and depth of debates and confrontation both between Taipei and Beijing and between the ruling party and other opposition parties in Taipei. To put in a nutshell, whether Taiwan is a part of China and whether the people in Taiwan are part of the Chinese population is not only the central theme of politics in Taiwan but also the determining element of almost all the policy debates over Mainland Chinese affairs in Taiwan. From New Party's unreserved attitude toward reunification of China to the position of State-Building Party (Chien-Kuo Tang) in establishing a totally separate new republic of Taiwan, one finds almost irreconcilable positions over policies toward Mainland China.

2. Democratization in Taiwan and Its Impact on Mainland China Policies

As Taiwan increasingly becomes a pluralistic democracy, two things have happened. First, the original pro-unification policy of the KMT started to change. Second, the pro-separation policies of the opposition parties, notably the DPP and State-Building party, are having increasing impact on the ROC's Mainland-Chinese policy. With the establishment of a new committee on Mainland China Affairs in the Legislative Yuan which will have the power to hold hearing on relevant subject matters and to review legislations on Mainland Chinese affairs, one must assume that more substantive debates will shifted from the executive branch to the legislative branch of the ROC's Government.

3. Economic Development in Taiwan and Trade as well as Investment in China: A Two-edge Sword

One of the most important factors in Taiwan's relation with Mainland China lies in Taiwan trade with the latter. Yet people in Taiwan have a love-and hate relation with Mainland in regards to cross-Taiwan-Strait trade and investment. While almost everybody in Taiwan realize that trade with Mainland has been a key factor in making Taiwan a trade-surplus country, many of the ROC's government officials and scholars are worrying about the changeable PRC trade laws and tax regulations which frequently cut into the profit of the Taiwan merchants doing business on the Mainland. Furthermore, facing PRC's increasing efforts in isolating the ROC in the international community, it is quite likely for Taipei to further curtail trade and investment to the Mainland both as an instrument to express displeasure over PRC's external policies and as a defensive mechanism to keep the root of science, technology, and industry in Taiwan.

4. Recent Developments on Taiwan and Their Impact on Cross-Strait Relations

Several occurrences in internal policies in Taiwan will definitely have an impact on cross-Taiwan-Strait relations. Foremost is the results of the December 1998 elections of the mayors and city councilmen of Taipei and Kaohsiung as well as the member of the Legislative Yuan. The victory of Ma Ying-jeou over Chen Shui-ban as the Mayor of Taipei was especially significant. Not only it prevented the continuing control of the city government of Taipei by the DPP, but also affected the prospect of Chen Shui-ban to use the office of the Mayor of Taipei to run for the President of the ROC. As a mainlander and a former vice-chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council, Ma may represent a more unification-oriented politician than Chen, which is a fact that may have more relevance in future political alignment in Taiwan.

Toward the last phase of Ma's campaign for the Mayor of Taipei, President Lee Teng-hui showed up in Ma's rally and had a pre-arranged dialogue with Ma. It was reported that before expressing support for Ma, President Lee asked Ma "What kind of person are you?" Ma replied, "I am a New Taiwanese, eating Taiwan rice and drinking Taiwan water." As a result, the term "New Taiwanese" was officially born. At first, the meaning of "New Taiwanese" was not so clearly. For a while, it seems that "New Taiwanese" means second or third generation mainlanders who identifies with Taiwan. But as time went by, "New Taiwanese" was expanded to include Taiwanese who have overcome their sense of sadness and frustration over the colonial past¹.

Recently, President Lee expressed the desire to promote the idea of "New Taiwanese" in the international front. Although there are criticism about this new concept both in Taiwan and from Mainland China, it seems that President Lee is determined to push this new concept in the international community. What impact this policy will have on cross-Strait relations and the international status of the ROC remains to be seen.

Other than the "New Taiwanese", another two related developments after the election have been the debate within the DPP whether the party should "revise" the "independence" clause in DPP's Party Charter and the call for "citizen's vote" (Kong-min Tou-piou), meaning either plebiscite or referendum. Most of the proponents for dropping the "independence" wording in DPP Charter actually do not oppose the idea per se, but simply to suggest that for tactic reason, the DPP should at least tone down the claim for independence so that the DPP can win back the votes for the DPP in future elections, particularly the presidential election in the year 2000^{2}

As for the demand for including a plebiscite system in Taiwan, it was primarily a move aiming at fundamentally change the nature of the ROC on Taiwan. For quite some time, the demand did not arouse much attention. It became a public concern only after Vice President Lien Chan openly indicated that ROC Government may study the implication of the "plebiscite" system so that some non-political but socially and economic nature can be resolved. Beijing naturally became quite concerned with the new development and repeatedly denounced the idea.

5. Community, Nation, and State: Three different Components of the Taiwan's identity and their Implications to Taiwan's relations with the Mainland

 ¹ For further discussion on the concept of "New Taiwanese," see Yung Wei. "The 'New Taiwanese' Should Walk out of the Shadow of Provincial Differences," <u>United Daily News</u> (Dec. 19, 1998), p. 15.
² For an intensive debates among different factions with DPP on the issue of "independence" clause, see Reports in Liberty Times (Jan. 9, 1999), p. 2.

For the PRC government and those who have been blaming the Taiwan authority in pursuing a policy for separating Taiwan for the Mainland, it may serve the need in really understanding the problem of national identity in Taiwan by looking into various facets of the assertiveness of the people of Taiwan in pursuing a social and political identity different from the Chinese Mainland. It also may help an outsider really understanding what the ruling elite in Taiwan is really struggling for, has not simply been the creation of New Taiwanese state, but also the building of a new nation, a new people and a new culture, just like what East Germany was doing toward the end of its existence.

Hence, a keen observer of Taiwan's Mainland-China policies should not have missed that the ROC Government and the KMT may be engaging in a multi-facet effort in creating a new culture and a new nation. Only by adopting this new perspective can one understand what President Lee was talking about when he talked about Moses and Exodus, about the Sadness and frustration of the Taiwanese people, and the need of "Hsing Ling Kai Ke (Spiritual Reform)." Likewise, one must have this new perspective in order to understand the meaning of such policies as the promulgation of new textbooks for the elementary and junior high school, the abolition of provincial origin in ID cards, and the issuing of new banknotes with new symbols and pictures.

The ill effects of these type of mentality and the resultant policies on cross-Strait relations do not need elaboration. In short, it is an effort to separate Taiwan from China down to the deepest end of the root. If it succeeded, Taiwan and Mainland China not only will be two states, but two societies, two cultures and two peoples.

Fortunately, for the KMT loyalists who still favor peaceful relations with mainland China and the eventual reunification of China under a democratic form of government, the above separatist policies thus far have not been too successful. Not only the majority of people in Taiwan still endorse a "one China" policy, they also identify themselves as "Chinese," or "Both Taiwanese and Chinese;" moreover, younger generation Taiwanese are more identified with being "Chinese," and "Taiwanese and Chinese;" they are also more identified with "national unification," and "status quo now and reunification later." (See Figure 1 and Table 2 and 3)

Yet we cannot ignore the influence of a shared memory, among many Taiwanese, of a somewhat benign and occasionally benevolent Japanese colonial rule followed by an unpleasant incident of February 28, 1947 handled by an inept new governor-general from Mainland China. The "sadness of the locale," an conceptualization conceived by President Lee and promoted by official media as well as party apparatus does induce some responses from certain circles among the population of Taiwan, though not as big as Lee had hoped for. A recent opinion survey conducted by the Vanguard Institute revealed that 27.3% of the people of Taipei shared President Lee's sense of sadness. Yet further contingency analysis demonstrated that "provincial difference and distance" actually was the element contributing to this sense of sadness and frustration. (Table 3, 4, 5)

In an effort to conceptualize the interaction between President Lee's personal frustration and that of the Taiwanese population, and the resultant impact on Taiwanese external policy, this author has coined new concepts, "therapeutic politics" and "advocacy policies," to illustrate the relationship between Taiwan's internal politics and external behavior.³ Using this theoretical construct, I was able to explain policies which have not been able to produce any concrete results but are nevertheless still pursued; for though they might not serve real policy needs, they did serve as a psychic cultural, therapeutic device to soothe the nerves of hurt egos. (Figure 2, Tables 6-10)

6. Lessons for Cross-Taiwan-Strait Relations

Two lessons have been gained from the foregoing analysis. First, domestic situation in Taiwan does have significant impact on ROC's external policies including those toward the Mainland . Second, sentimental appeal exploiting the feeling of frustration and sadness does hit cord of certain portion of the population in Taiwan. These lessons, in my opinion, have profound policy implications to all the parties

³ See Yung Wei, "The Waning of "Therapeutic" Politics: A Psycho-Cultural Analysis of Populist-Authoritarian Element in Taiwan's Democratization Process" paper presented at the 1998 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston, September 3-6, 1998.

involved.

For the government of the ROC, a serious effort should be made to review its current policy toward "One China" and "unification." In fact, the only and the most important gift which the ROC government can possibly give to Wang Daohan when comes to Taipei is ROC's reconfirmation of ROC's adherence to "One China" policy, although the meaning "one China" should be allowed to define separately.

Also, a shift of policy by the ROC Government must be made in the area of political socialization. More effort should be put to increase similarities and congruencies of the content of textbooks in the elementary and junior high schools of Taiwan and Mainland China so that a shared common memory of history, geography, and cultural can be achieved across the Taiwan Strait.

As for the Government of the PRC, it must take note of the existence of a sense of sadness and frustration among the people of Taiwan. Policy measures or statements when may add to Taiwanese feeling of being a suppressed people should by all means avoided. Unnecessary suppression of memberships and symbols of the ROC should be re-examined. Further isolation of the ROC in the international community and intensified effort to reduce ROC's limited diplomatic ties should be reassessed. That the reduction of diplomatic ties of the ROC has contributed to separatist sentiment in Taiwan is a fact which should be taken into account by Beijing in its future thinking and planning for cross-Strait relations.⁴

Finally, both Taipei and Beijing should encourage trade, investment, tourism, cultural exchanges, and scientific exchange across Taiwan Strait. Only by increasing interaction between the people by both sides can a common sense of community be promoted and a shared cultural memory be maintained. If the experience of European Union is any guide,

⁴ Both Jason Hu, Foreign Minister of the ROC and King-yu Chang, Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council pointed out the relationship between the Beijing's effort in isolating Taiwan and the development of Separatist sentiment on the Island. See Jason Hu, "The 'Big Country Diplomacy' of Mainland China and Our Responses," (Report to the Foreign Relations Committee, Legislative Yuan, Dec. 28, 1998); and King-yu Chang's Press Conference Report (Taipei: Mainland Affairs Council, Dec. 31, 1998).

gradual but persistent increment of all kind of common ties, from economic to social, and from social to political, are the only sure approach for peaceful integration of divided systems.

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Figure 1

Public Opinion on Cross-Strait Relations in the Republic of China

Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, June 1998



Survey conducted by: (a)Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, Taipei

(b)Burke Marketing Research, Ltd., Taipei

(c)China Credit Information Service, Ltd., Taipei

(d)Center for Public Opinion and Election Studies, National Sun Yat-Sen University, Kaohsiung

Respondents: Taiwanese adults aged 20-69 accessible to telephone interviewers

Cross-Generational Differences on "Reunification or Independence?" among Various Provincial Group

Provincial Origin	Reunification or Independence?										
Generation	Reunification right away	Status quo now reunification later	Status quo now decision later	Status quo indefinitely	Status quo now independence later	Independence right away	Don't know	Total(n)			
Taiwanese											
first (born before 1930)	1.6%	6.1%	5.7%	7.9%	2.5%	4.6%	71.6%	(947)			
second (1931-1957)	1.8	12.6	16.2	17.7	8.1	5.5	38.1	(4556)			
third (born after 1958)	2.0	21.3	34.0	15.8	11.9	3.4	11.7	(6804)			
Mainlander											
first (born before 1934)	12.1%	41.7%	8.1%	15.9%	1.5%	0.0%	20.7%	(492)			
second (1935-1957)	4.5	40.1	21.4	11.0	2.2	1.2	19.6	(607)			
third (born after 1958)	2.3	39.3	31.2	13.1	3.8	1.0	9.4	(1244)			
Total (n)	(349)	(3017)	(3664)	(2264)	(1268)	(545)	(3544)	(14650)			
%	2.4%	20.6%	25.0%	15.5%	8.7%	3.7%	24.2%	100.0%			

Data Source: Survey conducted by Election Study Center, National Chengchi University and sponsored by Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, August, 1995.

Cross-Generational Differences on National Identities among Various Provincial Groups

Provincial	Origin						
	Generation		Faiwanese	Both	Chinese	DK	Total(n)
Taiwanese							
	first		46.6%	32.8%	13.5%	7.1%	(947)
	second		36.7	38.7	19.0	5.6	(4544)
	third		20.7	57.3	18.6	3.5	(6783)
Mainlande	r						
	first		5.8%	23.5%	64.7%	6.1%	(487)
	second		8.5	36.4	51.2	3.9	(607)
	third		10.6	50.7	37.2	1.4	(1239)
Total (n)			(3723)	(6918)	(3337)	(628)	(14606)
%			25.5%	47.4%	22.8%	4.3%	100.0%
χ2=1792.64	4 df=15	p<.001					

Data Source: Survey conducted by Election Study Center , National Chengchi University and sponsored by Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, August, 1995.

Figure 2

Psycho-Cultural Analysis and Populist Authoritarianism: The Taiwan Case



Designed by Yung Wei, August 6, 1998.

Provincial Origin				Taiw	an History f	ull of Sadne	ess and Fru	stration		
	Totally agree	Agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree	Totally disagree	DK	Refuse	%	Total (N)
Min-nan	3.8%	9.7%	14.9%	14.9%	32.8%	12.7%	10.9%	.2%	100.0%	(442)
Hakka	3.0%	18.2%	9.1%	15.2%	27.3%	12.1%	15.2%		100.0%	(33)
Mainlander	1.8%	10.5%	9.6%	11.4%	38.6%	18.4%	9.6%		100.0%	(114)
Aborigines	33.3%	33.3%			33.3%				100.0%	(3)
Refuse		12.5%		12.5%	37.5%	25.0%		12.5%	100.0%	(8)
Total	3.5%	10.5%	13.3%	14.2%	33.7%	13.8%	10.7%	.3%	100.0%	(600)

 $x^2 = 60.71$ df = 28 p<0.0003

Party Identification			Та	uwan Histor	ry full of Sa	dness and Fi	rustration			<u> </u>
	Totally agree	Agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree	Totally disagree	DK	Refuse	%	Total (N)
KMT	2.1%	6.4%	10.6%	12.8%	38.3%	23.4%	6.4%		100.0%	(94)
New Party		9.5%	4.8%	14.3%	57.1%	9.5%	4.8%		100.0%	(21)
DPP	11.8%	11.8%	23.5%	7.4%	29.4%	8.8%	7.4%		100.0%	(68)
New State Alliance	100.0%									(1)
Independent	2.5%	11.6%	12.8%	15.5%	32.8%	12.6%	12.1%	.2%	100.0%	(406)
Refuse			10.0%	20.0%	10.0%	20.0%	30.0%	10.0%	100.0%	(10)
Total	3.5%	10.5%	13.3%	14.2%	33.7%	13.8%	10.7%	.3%	100.0%	(600)

 $x^2 = 107.73$ df=35 p<0.0000

Provincial Differences and Sense of Sadness and Frustration

Feeling of Provincial Differences		Taiwan History full of Sadness and Frustration										
and Distance	Totally agree	Agree	Agree somewhat	Disagree somewhat	Disagree	Totally disagree	DK	Refuse	%	Total (N)		
Serious	11.0%	15.1%	16.4%	5.5%	28.8%	12.3%	11.0%		100.0%	(73)		
Some	3.8%	11.3%	18.1%	16.6%	34.3%	10.2%	5.3%	.4%	100.0%	(265)		
Little	2.6%	10.3%	9.0%	17.9%	43.6%	6.4%	10.3%		100.0%	(78)		
None	.7%	6.4%	6.4%	13.5%	36.2%	27.7%	9.2%			(141)		
DK		7.3%	9.8%	9.8%	12.2%	7.3%	51.2%	2.4%	100.0%	(41)		
Refuse		100.0%							100.0%	(2)		
Total	3.5%	10.5%	13.3%	14.2%	33.7%	13.8%	10.7%	.3%	100.0%	(600)		
$x^2 = 168.23$ df	f=35 p<	<0.0000										

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Party Identity		Reasons for	Supporti	ng Preside	nt Lee's Po	licies	
	Because they vent our anger and preserve dignity	Because they bring about concrete results	Other	DK	Refuse	%	Ν
KMT	26.6%	51.1%	5.3%	14.9%	2.1%	100.0%	(94)
New Party	9.5%	85.7%	2.9%	4.8%		100.0%	(21)
DPP	25.0%	60.3%		11.8%		100.0%	(68)
New State Alliance		100.0%				100.0%	(1)
Independent	16.7%	58.6%	2.0%	20.2%	2.5%	100.0%	(406)
Refuse	20.0%	40.0%		30.0%	10.0%	100.0%	(10)
Total	19.0%	58.3%	2.5%	18.0%	2.2%	100.0%	(600)

 $x^2 = 26.21$ df = 20 p<0.1587

Provincial Origin and Reasons for Supporting Candidates for Legislative Yuan

Provincial Origin	Reasons for Supporting Candidates for Legislative Yuan											
	Adhere to ROC Position	Identity with Taiwan	Sympathetic to the underprivileged	Having good public Policies	Other	DK	Refuse	%	Ν			
Min-nan	16.3%	33.9%	6.8%	29.0%	.7%	12.9%	.5%	100.0%	(442)			
Hakka	27.3%	18.2%	9.1%	27.3%		15.2%	3.0%	100.0%	(33)			
Mainlander	32.5%	22.8%	7.0%	24.6%	2.6%	8.8%	1.8%	100.0%	(114)			
Aborigines		33.3%		33.3%		33.3%		100.0%	(3)			
Refuse	12.5%	50.0%		12.5%	25.0%			100.0%	(8)			
Total	19.8%	31.2%	6.8%	27.8%	1.3%	12.2%	.8%	100.0%	(600)			

 $x^2 = 66.86$ df = 24 p< 0.0000

Party Identification and Reasons for Supporting Candidates for Legislative Yuan

Party Identity	Reasons for Supporting Candidates for Legislative Yuan										
	Adhere to ROC Position	Identity with Taiwan	Sympathetic to the underprivileged	Having good public Policies	Other	DK	Refuse	%	Ν		
KMT	33.0%	25.5%	6.4%	23.4%	1.1%	10.6%		100.0%	(94)		
New Party	61.9%	4.8%		23.8%	4.8%	4.8%		100.0%	(21)		
DPP	2.9%	55.9%	8.8%	25.0%		7.4%		100.0%	(68)		
New State Alliance		100.0%						100.0%	(1)		
Independent	17.7%	29.8%	6.4%	30.0%	1.2%	13.8%	1.0%	100.0%	(406)		
Refuse	10.0%	20.0%	30.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%	(10)		
Total	19.8%	31.2%	6.8%	1.3%	1.3%	12.2%	.8%	100.0%	(600)		

 $x^2 = 96.14$ df = 30 p< 0.0000

If you were asked to rate President Lee's performance, how many points would you give him (60 points represent "passing", and 100 points represent "complete satisfaction")?

Rating Scores of President Lee		Provincial Origin							
	Total	Hakka	Min-nan	Mainlander	Aborigines				
0-50 points	15.9%	19.1%	12.9%	33.1%	-				
51-60 points	29.6	33.3	29.5	27.2	27.3				
61-70 points	19.5	18.1	20.5	14.0	27.3				
71-100 points	26.1	17.2	26.7	17.7	27.3				
Hard to Say	2.5	1.0	2.7	2.9	-				
DK	5.9	1.9	6.5	4.4	18.2				
Refuse	+		+	0.7	,				
Total Response Percentages	(1068) 100.0%	(105) 100.0	(816) 100.0	(136) 100.0	(11) 100.0				

Data Source: From Pre-Lee-Teng-hui Era to Post-Lee Era: Results of Public Opinion Poll (Taipei: The Rising People Foundation, May 1998), p. 5.

If you were asked to rate President Lee's performance, how many points would you give him (60 points represent "passing", and 100 points represent "complete satisfaction")?

Rating Scores of President Lee	Education							
	Total	Elementary and below	Junior high	Senior high	Junior college	University	Grad. school and above	Refuse
0-50 points	15.9%	8.7%	15.1%	13.7%	21.5%	21%	57.1%	-
51-60 points	29.6	20.3	33.3	32.4	27.7	37.0	14.3	44.4
61-70 points	19.5	13.4	15.9	21.8	25.4	18.8	23.8	-
71-100 points	26.1	32.3	25.4	26.4	24.9	21.7	4.8	22.2
Hard to Say	2.5	5.1	1.6	2.9	0.6	0.7	-	11.1
DK	5.9	18.9	7.1	2.6	-	0.7	-	22.2
Refuse	+	0.9	1.6	+	_	-		_
Total Response Percentages	(1068) 100.0%	(217) 100.0	(126) 100.0	(380) 100.0	(177) 100.0	(138) 100.0	(21) 100.0	(9) 100.0

Data Source: From Pre-Lee-Teng-hui Era to Post-Lee Era: Results of Public Opinion Poll (Taipei: The Rising People Foundation, May 1998), p. 7.