

UNDERSTANDING THE TAIWAN STRAIT ISSUE

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During an interview with Deutsche Welle (Voice of Germany) radio station on July 9, 1999, then President Lee Tenghui of the Republic of China (ROC) made some statements that exacerbated the already existing tense relations between his country (now increasingly known internationally as Taiwan) and China. In the interview, former President Lee gave the following views on the ROC and on its “special” relations with China:¹

1. “The 1991 constitutional amendments have placed cross-strait relations as a state-to-state relationship or at least a special state-to-state relationship, rather than an external relationship between a legitimate government and a renegade group, or between a central government and a local government. Thus, the Beijing authorities’ characterization of ROC as a ‘renegade province’ is historically and legally untrue.”
2. “... the Republic of China has been a sovereign state since it was founded in 1912. Moreover, in 1991, amendments to the Constitution placed cross-strait relations as a special state-to-state relationship. Consequently, there is no need to declare independence.”
3. “... ROC is neither Hongkong nor Macau. Hongkong and Macau are colonies, but the ROC is a sovereign, independent state.”

At first glance, these statements and the subsequent clarifications made by key ROC officials, like Chi Su, Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC)² and Koo Chen-fu, Chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF),³ are outright

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negations of Beijing's long-held view that "Taiwan is part of China and the Chinese government has indisputable sovereignty over Taiwan."⁴ The angry and spirited response of China to President Lee's statement was, therefore, highly anticipated. (Up to now, the mainland Chinese authorities refer to it as Taiwan and not ROC, since the latter is incompatible with their interpretation of the one-China policy.)

The ensuing "word war" (and the reported flexing of military muscle) between China and the ROC has caused undue alarm to their neighboring countries in Northeast Asia, as well as to the US and the ASEAN nations. Since last year, the Taiwan Strait issue has increasingly emerged as one of the more serious flashpoints in the Asia-Pacific because it tends to put a regional power (China) and the sole superpower (the US, the perceived patron-state of the ROC) in a collision course. This explains why there is a great interest, region-wide and worldwide, in the unfolding developments in the Taiwan Strait.

A new leadership under President Chen Shui-bian assumed office in the ROC last 20 May 2000. Has the tense relationship between China and the ROC simmered down (or worsened) as a result of this leadership change? How do the new ROC leaders perceive the one-China policy of China, especially after 20 May? Is there a possibility that China and the ROC will be able to resolve their dispute peacefully and relax their seemingly rigid position during the term of President Chen? These are among the questions addressed by this study.

Data for this study are derived from relevant studies, official publications and interviews of key informants, especially from Taiwan.

The Taiwan Strait issue is one of the major external security concerns of the Philippines because the involved parties are its neighbors and trade partners (the US, China and Taiwan), its overseas labor market (Taiwan and China through Hongkong) and its security ally (US). Decidedly, Philippine national interests will be served (and the collective security posture of the Asia-Pacific will be enhanced) if China and the ROC go out of their way to forge confidence-building initiatives and the US (or the ASEAN Regional Forum) succeeds in moderating the conflict between the two. The Philippines stands to suffer should the tense relationship between China and the ROC degenerate into an armed confrontation. This apprehension has its basis. Up to this day, China has not renounced the use of force in attaining its long-stated goal of national reunification because of its belief that: "It is entirely China's internal affairs to decide the means through which the Taiwan issue is to be resolved. Every sovereign country has the right to use whatever means it regards as necessary, including the use of military force, to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity. When it comes to ways to handle its internal affairs, the Chinese have no obligation to promise anything to any foreign country or forces that attempt to split China."⁵

Conflicting Historical Perspectives

One of the fundamental causes of the reigning tension between China and Taiwan may be traced to their opposing historical perspectives on their birth as modern states.

The Chinese government asserts that: “The establishment of the People’s Republic of China on October 1, 1949 marked the overthrow of the rule of the Kuomintang government by the Chinese people. From then on, the government of the People’s Republic of China has been the sole legal government representing the entire Chinese nation. The escape to Taiwan of a number of military and administrative personnel of the Kuomintang regime and support given them by foreign forces have led to a temporary separation of Taiwan from the motherland. But this has not changed the fact that Taiwan is a part of China and that the Chinese government has indisputable sovereignty over Taiwan. At present, majority of countries in the world recognize that there is only one China in the world, that Taiwan is part of China and that the government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the entire Chinese nation.”⁶

The above view runs counter to the “historical reality” espoused by the ROC which is as follows: “...the Republic of China was established in 1912. When the Japanese surrendered to allied forces in 1945 following their defeat in World War II, they returned Taiwan to the ROC (the island was ceded by the Ching Dynasty to Japan in the wake of the former’s victory over China in the 1895 Sino-Japanese war); however, the ROC was soon caught up by a civil war...⁷ In 1949, the central government of the Republic of China relocated to Taiwan when the Chinese mainland fell into the hands of the communists. Since then, China has been divided into two parts, the Chinese mainland and the Taiwan area...⁸ The ROC government and the people of Taiwan earnestly hope for the peaceful reunification of China. Taipei’s fundamental policy towards Peking can be summed up as ‘one China, two political entities,’ with each entity representing the territory over which it has jurisdiction.”⁹

The official position of China and the ROC on their beginnings as modern states are conflicting. This is expected. China regards Taiwan as a Chinese territory (a “renegade province”) that was forcibly occupied by the ROC (Kuomintang) forces led by General Chiang Kai-shek that escaped from the mainland following the victory of the communist forces led by Mao Ze Dong in 1949, and that managed to maintain itself as a *de facto* state only through the Cold War policies of the US and its foreign allies. On the other hand, the ROC considers its independent political personality as unaltered by the victory of the communist forces of Chairman Mao and that the only thing that changed was its loss of control of the mainland. This explains why there are ROC

personalities like Mr. John C. Deng, Vice Chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council, who asserts that “the Republic of China is an independent sovereign state since its founding.”¹⁰ Deng echoes former President Lee Teng-hui’s claim that “The ROC has remained a sovereign state since 1912, although its jurisdiction now extends solely to the territories of Taiwan, the Pescadores, Quemoy and Matsu. In the fifty years since the PRC was founded, both sides of the Taiwan Strait have been separately ruled, with neither subordinate to the other. This situation has not changed in any substantive way since 1949.”¹¹

The present head of the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in the Philippines, Mr. Benjamin Jyh-Yuan Lo (the unofficial or *de facto* Taiwanese ambassador to the Philippines), reiterated this perspective when he said that “Taiwan and China are two governments exercising separate jurisdiction over two parts of geographic China since 1949” and that “Taiwan has never been under the rule of China even for one second since 1949.”¹²

The Issue of Reunification

Available documents show that both sides favor peaceful reunification. They differ, however, on the principles that will define how the reunification will take place.

China’s reunification policy, which is based on Jiang Zemin’s formula of “one China, two systems,” is anchored on his so-called eight-point proposal, the highlights of which are as follows:¹³

1. Adherence to the principle of one China is the basis and premise for peaceful reunification. . . We must firmly oppose any words or actions aimed at creating the ‘independence of Taiwan’ and propositions that run counter to the principle of one China such as ‘two split sides with separate administrations,’ ‘two Chinas over a period of time’ and so on;
2. We do not challenge development of nongovernmental economic and cultural ties by Taiwan with other countries. . . However, we oppose Taiwan’s activities in ‘expanding’ its ‘international living space’ which aim to create ‘two Chinas’ or ‘one China, one Taiwan’;
3. On the premise that there is only one China, we are prepared to talk with the Taiwan authorities about any matter;
4. We should strive for a peaceful reunification of the motherland since Chinese should not fight Chinese. Our not undertaking to give up the use of force is not directed against our compatriots in Taiwan,

- but against the schemes of foreign forces to interfere with China's reunification and to bring about the independence of Taiwan;
5. Great efforts should be made to expand economic exchanges and cooperation between the two sides... We maintain that political differences should not affect or interfere with economic cooperation between two sides;
 6. The splendid culture of 5,000 years created by the sons and daughters of all ethnic groups of China has become the tie that keeps the entire Chinese people close at heart. It constitutes an important basis for a peaceful reunification of the motherland;
 7. The 21 million compatriots in Taiwan, whether born there or from other provinces, are all Chinese... We should fully respect their lifestyle and their wish to be the masters of their own destiny and protect all their legitimate rights and interests; and
 8. Leaders of the Taiwan authorities are welcome to visit the mainland. We are also ready to accept invitations to visit Taiwan. The affairs of the Chinese people should be handled by the Chinese themselves. The Taiwan Strait is narrow and people on both sides eagerly look forward to meeting each other.

The above eight-point proposal rest on four principles: (1) the one-China policy (Taiwan is an integral part of China), (2) the coexistence of two systems (socialist system for China, capitalist system for Taiwan), (3) a high degree of autonomy for Taiwan once it is reunified with the mainland (it will become a special administrative region authorized to manage its own political, economic, military, financial and party affairs), and (4) reunification through negotiations.

As mentioned earlier, the ROC pursues a reunification policy which is opposed to the one held by Beijing. Its policy is anchored on the formula of "one China, two political entities." This is operationalized in the Guidelines for National Unification which it adopted in 1991. This document declares that "... both Taiwan and the Chinese mainland are constituent parts of a single China; ... that Taiwan and the Chinese mainland are two distinct areas under the jurisdiction of two separate political entities; ... and that China's unification should only be achieved by peaceful means, ... should promote Chinese culture while safeguarding human dignity, and should guarantee fundamental human rights, democracy and the rule of law."¹⁴

Under the 1991 Guidelines, the ROC envisions the unification of China to proceed in three phases with no specific timetables: "... a short-term phase of exchanges and reciprocity; a medium-term phase of mutual trust and cooperation; and a long term phase of consultations and unification."¹⁵

One possible reason for the slow pace of the unification process is the ROC's definition of what should be accomplished during the short-term phase: "... that both sides should recognize the other's existence as legitimate political entities, ... push for active economic and political reform on the mainland and resolve differences through peaceful means. Unfortunately, the Chinese communists have not renounced the use of force against the Taiwan area and until this and other objectives of the first phase have been achieved, the second phase cannot begin."¹⁶

For Taiwan, the second phase means attaining the following goals: "the establishment of direct postal, commercial and transportation links across the Taiwan Strait as well as exchange of visits by high-ranking officials from both sides."¹⁷ In the third and final phase, Taiwan envisions the establishment of a bilateral consultative body that will "jointly discuss the overall political and economic structure of a unified China, in accordance with the wishes of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait."¹⁸

Given China's rigid definition of the one-China policy, there is no possibility for the ROC to operationalize its 1991 Guidelines on National Unification in the short-term. The ROC cannot expect the PRC mainland authorities to recognize the ROC as a legitimate political entity. The PRC will not undertake political and economic reforms in order to be a democracy just to satisfy the ROC. Thus, it will not be easy for the two entities to find a way out of this political gridlock. Taiwan admits that "relations between the two sides are in the short-term phase, although exchanges in many areas have already moved into the second stage."¹⁹

To Mr. Lo, the present head of TECO in the Philippines, the chances of reunification will be remote if the mainland would insist on the principle of "one China, two systems" and on preconditions that will jeopardize the freedom and economic growth of Taiwan and its people. According to him, the widening economic gap between Taiwan and the mainland is one of the issues that makes reunification quite difficult in the short term. He believes, however, that the increasing trade relations and people-to-people contacts between China and Taiwan are expected to enhance and boost their bilateral relations. He admits that a number of Taiwanese companies are doing business in China due to its cheap labor and ample supply of natural resources.²⁰

The March 2000 Presidential Election in Taiwan

In March 1996, the ROC conducted the direct election of its President for the first time. China became an active participant in the historic event by criticizing presidential candidates who were perceived to be opposed to its one-China policy and sympathetic to ROC independence. Among those who elicited the most critical comments from mainland officials were Lee Teng-hui of the Kuomintang Party (KMT) and Peng Ming-min of the Democratic People's Party (DPP). Prior to the 1996 presidential election, China staged several live-fire missile exercises off the coast of Taiwan—its way of conveying the message to voters not to support candidates who favor independence and thereby avoid provoking an armed response from the mainland. Those missile exercises understandably heightened the tense situation in the Taiwan Strait, prompting the US to send two aircraft carrier battle groups in the area as a gesture of support to the ROC. The missile exercises conducted by China appeared to have accomplished the opposite effect: Lee won the presidency (he garnered 54 percent of the votes) while Peng ended up in second place (21.1 percent of the votes). This tends to confirm the observation of Dr. Kuo Hsiung-lee, a political science professor and Deputy Director of the Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, "that every time China threatens the ROC, support for independence among the Taiwanese increases (according to him by 3 percent to 5 percent)."²¹

In March 2000, the ROC held its second direct presidential election. There were three major candidates: Chen Shui-bian of the DPP, Lien Chan of the ruling KMT and James Soong, an independent candidate who was expelled from the KMT when he decided to challenge the party's official bet. China was once more a critical participant in the electoral exercise. It criticized the positions articulated by the three candidates on the issue of cross-strait relations.

Mainland officials were most critical of Chen Shui-Bian and the Democratic Progressive Party. This was understandable. As an opposition leader, Chen has been known for a long time as pro-Taiwan independence, while his party was generally perceived as pro-Taiwan Republic. Chen and his party moderated their position on the issue of Taiwan independence after losing the Taipei mayoralty election in 1998 and the legislative election during the same year in, order to win the support of voters who were opposed to any armed confrontation with China. In 1999, the DPP approved a resolution which recognized the Republic of China as the name of the country (in lieu of Taiwan Republic) and declared that any act to change the status quo in Taiwan should be decided by the people through a national referendum.²² This party resolution, which was aimed at winning the support of Taiwanese who did not want any armed confrontation with China, disappointed its hardcore members who traditionally favored

independence, prompting some of them to leave the DPP. Despite these “middle-of-the-road” changes, China continued its bitter condemnation of the DPP and its leaders.

During the electoral campaign, Mr. Chen of the DPP proposed “... an institutionalized relationship with mainland China based on five principles... First, Taiwan and the mainland should talk on all issues, including political ones. Second, we must establish effective channels of communication with mainland China as soon as possible to ease tensions and boost mutual trust. Next, confidence-building mechanisms must be introduced, to promote a reasonable degree of transparency with regard to the exchange of military data. Fourth, subject to the requirements of national security, Taiwan will consider, under certain conditions, establishing three cross-strait direct links (communications, trade and transportation). Lastly, Taiwan will agree to an ‘interim basic law’ with the mainland that enshrines the principles of respect for cross-strait parity, the peaceful resolution of conflicts in accordance with the UN Charter, and open-mindedness.”²³

Mr. Lien Chan of the ruling KMT and the former ROC Vice President, on the other hand, elaborated on what he called the policies of “Three Noes” and “Three Wants.” According to him, “Three Noes mean No Taiwan Independence, No Reunification and No Confrontation. The Republic of China is a sovereign country in the first place, so we do not have to declare independence again. We should not rush to unite with China until it becomes a democracy. To avoid creating an atmosphere of confrontation and tension, both sides of the Taiwan Strait should avoid deliberately provoking the other. “Three Wants mean: We want peace, we want exchanges, we want a win-win situation.”²⁴

For his part, Mr. James Soong declared that “Our mainland policy should be based on the principle of maintaining cross-strait peace... We cannot accept mainland China’s attempt to downgrade Taiwan to the status of a local government, but nor will we undertake unnecessarily provocative actions that would put our country and people at a disadvantage. I hope to initiate peace talks with the mainland on the basis of a ‘special relationship,’ one not involving subordination of either side.”²⁵

It may be noted that the three candidates, while professing their desire to have peaceful relations with China, were unanimous in saying that Taiwan-China relations should be based on parity, not subordination of either side. This view was not acceptable to the mainland authorities.

On February 21, 2000 (or less than a month before the March 18 presidential election in Taiwan), the PRC State Council and its Taiwan Affairs Office released a paper entitled “The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue.” The paper later became known as the “White Paper on Taiwan-China Relations.” It was described as a paper missile “fired by mainland authorities warning Taiwan voters not to support an

independence-minded candidate.”²⁶ According to Harvey Sicherman, President of the US-based Foreign Policy Research Institute, the White Paper is a warning to “... Taiwan voters and the three main candidates that the Lee (Teng-hui) line is a risky one. Equally risky would be the democracy line, the opposition Democratic Progressive Party’s idea for a referendum on independence.”²⁷

The main points raised by the White Paper are as follows:²⁸

1. Taiwan is an inalienable part of the territory of China;
2. The Chinese government regained sovereignty over Taiwan and Penghu in 1949;
3. The central government of the PRC was established on October 1, 1949, replacing the ROC as the sole legitimate government of China and representative of China in the international community. Thereupon, the historical status of the ROC was terminated in the eyes of international law;
4. Unification is to be achieved through peaceful negotiations and, on the premise of the one-China principle, any matter can be negotiated;
5. After unification, the policy of one country, two systems will be practiced, with the main body of China (the mainland) continuing with its socialist system and Taiwan maintaining its capitalist system for a long period of time. After unification, Taiwan will enjoy a high degree of autonomy, and the central government will not send troops or administrative personnel to be stationed in Taiwan;
6. Resolution of the Taiwan issue is an internal affair of China, which should be achieved by the Chinese themselves, and there is no call for aid by foreign forces. However, the PRC will be forced to adopt all drastic measures possible to safeguard its sovereignty if the “three ifs” happen: if Taiwan is separated from China in any name; if Taiwan is invaded or occupied by foreign countries; or if the Taiwan authorities refuse *sine die* the peaceful settlement of cross-strait unification through negotiations.

The White Paper stressed that Taiwan cannot hold a referendum to change the island’s legal status as part of the territory of China. It offered three reasons. First, Taiwan’s legal status as a part of Chinese territory is unequivocal and there can be no premise for using referendum to decide any matter of self-determination. Second, the sovereignty over Taiwan belongs to all Chinese people, including Taiwan compatriots,

and not to some of the people in Taiwan. And third, at no time in history was Taiwan a state in its own right and since 1945, it has not been a foreign colony nor under foreign occupation. Thus, the issue of national self-determination, which is the object of referendum, does not exist.²⁹

As expected, Taiwan rejected the arguments contained in the White Paper for being incorrect and irrational. For example, Hungdah Chiu, a member of the ROC National Unification Council, advanced the following views:³⁰

1. The succession of the ROC by the Chinese communists has never been fully recognized;
2. Only a handful of Third World countries recognize PRC sovereignty over Taiwan. Even the US merely acknowledges but not recognizes the sovereignty of China over Taiwan;
3. Taipei believes one-China refers to the ROC founded in 1912, whose sovereignty covers all of China but whose present jurisdiction encompasses only the territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu. Taiwan and the mainland are both parts of China.

Some US officials sided with Taiwan, saying that the White Paper is unacceptable and very alarming. Strong defense by mainland officials of the White Paper and intense criticisms of it by Taiwanese officials and candidates made the election season quite volatile and highly charged.

The Victory of President Chen and Cross-Strait Relations

Chen Shui Bian, the candidate of the DPP and the principal nemesis of China because of his perceived support for Taiwan's right of self-determination, won the 2000 presidential election.

President Chen, upon his victory, offered an olive branch to China to mute the rising anxiety in the Taiwan Strait caused by his assumption to office. Later, he invited China's President Jiang Zemin to a summit without preconditions so that the two leaders can share a "historic handshake." He has not changed his position, however, saying that cross-strait talks should be based on equality and existing foundations. He did not agree with China's view that there was a consensus reached on the one-China principle in 1992 when the Strait Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) met. The agreement, according to him, if there was one, was an agreement to disagree.

According to Tsai Ing-Wen, Chairperson of the Taiwan-based Mainland Affairs Council, Taiwan (1) will seek a structured and constructive cross-strait relationship in a regular and institutionalized manner; (2) will not accept preconditions for the resumption of cross-strait talks nor demand any pre-set agenda; (3) will continue to take concrete measures to carry out the good intentions of President Chen; (4) will exercise restraint to avoid being perceived as provocative by the mainland; and (5) will take a proactive approach in promoting socioeconomic exchanges across the Taiwan Strait. Consistent with these principles, Taiwan will resume cross-strait dialogue; liberalize two-way trade, taking into account the forthcoming WTO membership of Taiwan and China; progressively open the mini-three links (*i.e.* direct trade, transportation and postal links between the offshore islands of Kinmen and Matsu and the Chinese mainland province of Fujian) and three links (*i.e.* direct trade, transportation and postal links between the main island of Taiwan and the Chinese mainland); adjust its policies on outward investments to and inward investments from China to make these less restrictive and to allow greater flexibility; and review existing rules and policies to facilitate cultural and social exchanges between Taiwan and the mainland.³¹

The Foreign Policy Orientation of the Chen Administration

Judging from the statements of President Chen and his officials, as well as the assessments made by some Taiwanese scholars, it is forecasted that the foreign policy preferences of the Chen administration will be as follows:³²

1. Preserve and maintain intact the ROC's existing cooperation programs and agreements with friendly nations;
2. Increase Taiwan's participation in international nongovernmental organization;
3. Intensify its efforts to gain representation in the United Nations;
4. Acquire membership in peripheral organizations of the United Nations;
5. Pursue "track two" negotiations (people-to-people diplomacy) with countries that have formal diplomatic links with mainland China;
6. Have the following as the focal points of its pragmatic or flexible diplomacy: US, European Union, Russia, mainland China and Japan;

If Taiwan pursues the above thrusts, it is likely that it will again be in a collision course with China. The latter is of the view that since Taiwan is not a state, it cannot be

a member of the UN nor have political and security cooperation programs with the international community.

Presently, the ROC has diplomatic relations with 29 countries and maintains 98 representative offices (euphemistically called Taipei Economic and Cultural Office or Taipei Representative Office, so that the host countries will not provoke the ire of mainland China) all over the world. These offices render some of the services usually provided by embassies and consulates general. Presently, Taiwan has representative offices in seven of the ten ASEAN states.³³

Observations and Forecasts

It is possible that the cross-strait issue will remain unresolved, at least during the term of President Chen, since it is not likely that China and Taiwan will abandon their conflicting current interpretations of the one-China principle. Stanley Roth, US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs during the Clinton administration, said that cross-strait relations is a cause for worry because "... neither side fundamentally understands the other. The PRC does not appear to recognize the window of opportunity that opened with the coming to power of a different political party in Taiwan. It has insisted on a one-China principle and has essentially embarked upon a very clumsy united front strategy, seeking to bring over elements of the opposition parties and key business leaders to the mainland side and ignore the government currently in power. If there's going to be progress in cross-strait relations, the government of the PRC has no choice but to deal with the current authorities in Taiwan and to undertake any initiatives directly with them, not around them."³⁴ Roth thinks that, like the PRC, Taiwan also does not understand "...the sensitivities of the cross-strait issues on the mainland side" in view of its "tendency to believe that economic issues can outweigh political issues."³⁵

It is imperative for the international community, particularly the US, Japan, the European Union and the ASEAN to create avenues that will encourage both China and Taiwan to engage each other in international organizations for purposes of confidence-building. The US plays a key role in defusing the tension in the strait. It must not provide Taiwan with weapons and defense capability that will cause its leaders with pro-independence sentiments to harbor a belligerent attitude towards mainland China. Besides, this act will be regarded as extremely provocative by mainland authorities. As Roth said, it would do well for the Bush administration to maintain the three pillars of policy that the Clinton administration has followed as regards the Taiwan Strait issue: "adherence to a one-China policy, insistence of peaceful resolution of the

dispute, and an emphasis on the resumption of cross-strait dialogue between the two parties.”³⁶

It is not in the interest of the world to have an armed confrontation in the Taiwan Strait. While confidence-building and conflict resolution are the primary responsibility of China and Taiwan, the major powers should adopt policies that will reward both if they commit to resolve their cross-strait differences through the ways of peace. Any war in the Taiwan Strait is likely to destabilize the world, since the US and Japan may be pressured to side with Taiwan, while Russia may support China for strategic reasons. It is, therefore, imperative for all involved parties to be sober and responsible enough in handling cross-strait issues. This is the prerequisite to stable peace, not only in Northeast Asia but in the Asia-Pacific as well. Any war involving the major powers will be prejudicial to the interest of the Philippines and the rest of its ASEAN partners. Fortunately for the ASEAN countries, while present strategic developments reveal that the reigning tension in the Taiwan Strait will not be resolved in the near term, there are no indications that this tension will degenerate into a shooting war between China and Taiwan and their proxy allies. It appears that while the Bush administration no longer considers China as a strategic partner but as a strategic competitor, the US still recognizes that having good relations with China is not only in its national interest, but also essential to the progress and stability of its allies in the Asia-Pacific region. The Chinese leaders, on the other hand, while they continue to be suspicious of US intentions towards China, tend to agree on one thing: that it is beneficial to have good relations with the US because of its global strategic influence.

Because of these more or less similar mind sets, there is reason to believe that the cross-strait problem between China and Taiwan will not deteriorate into a major security flashpoint, at least in the short term. This does not mean, however, that the issue should be ignored because of its adverse political and economic implications to the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific if it is allowed to deteriorate any further.

Notes

1. See “Taipei Speaks Up: Special State to State Relationship,” ROC Policy Documents, Mainland Affairs Council, August 1999, pp. 2-3.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-24.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

4. Jiang Zemin and Li Peng, *On Taiwan Question*, p. 46.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 49.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
7. *Questions and Answers about the Republic of China*, p. 9.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
10. Interview dated 24 June 2000, held in his office in Taipei and conducted personally by the author.
11. "Understanding Taiwan: Bridging the Perception Gap" by Lee Teng Hui, November 1999, p. 10.
12. Disclosed in a dialogue with Mr. Benjamin Jyh-Yan Lo, Head of the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in the Philippines, at his Makati office, 28 February 2001.
13. See Jiang Zemin and Li Peng, *On Taiwan*, pp. 7-13.
14. *The Republic of China*, pp. 46-47.
15. *Questions and Answers about the Republic of China*, p. 22.
16. See *A Brief Introduction to the Republic of China*, p. 47.
17. *The Republic of China Yearbook 2000*, p. 115.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. Dialogue with the head of the TECO in the Philippines, 28 February 2001.
21. Interview dated 20 June 2000 in Taipei and conducted by the author himself.
22. *Taipei Journal*, 5 March 2000, Special Section, p. 3.
23. *Free China Review*, March 2000, p. 38.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
26. *Taipei Journal*, 4 March 2000, p. 2.
27. *Taipei Journal*, 17 March 2000, p. 7.
28. *Taipei Journal*, 24 March 2000, p. 8.
29. *Taipei Journal*, 21 April 2000, p. 7.
30. *Taipei Journal*, 24 March 2000, p. 8.
31. “Current Cross-Strait Relationship,” speech before the Taiwanese Chamber of Commerce, San Francisco Bay Area, San Francisco, USA, by Tsai Ing-Wen, 21 January 2000, p. 2.
32. See *Taipei Journal*, 2 June 2000, p. 1 and *Taipei Journal*, 12 May 2000, p. 7.
33. *The Republic of China Yearbook 2000*, p. 139. See also Appendix IV of the *ROC Yearbook for Directory of ROC Representative Offices Abroad*.
34. “US Policy Toward Asia: Where We’ve Been, Where We Need to Go,” speech before the Asian Society, Washington Center by Stanley Roth, 11 January 2001, pp. 9-10.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
36. *Ibid.*

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Interview with Dr. Kuo Hsiung -Lee, Professor of Political Science and Deputy Director of the Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, Taiwan, 20 June 2000.

Dialogue with Mr. Benjamin Jyh-Yuan Lo, head of the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in the Philippines, Makati Office, 28 February 2001.