

US-China Relations and Regional Security

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There are three options of expression for cross-strait relations: the Taiwan problem, the Taiwan issue and the Taiwan question. "Problem" sounds troublesome and hard to tackle; "issue" means something talkable and negotiable; "question" refers to something which calls for interpretation or solution. I favour "the Taiwan issue" at this moment.

My basic observation is: The Taiwan issue is important, but difficult; it is troublesome, but manageable.

1. The cross-strait relations have gone through a course of vicissitudes in the past decades. Great improvements have been achieved despite ups and downs.
 - Cross-strait trade: 40 billion USD in 2002.
 - Taiwan's enterprises on the Mainland: 55,000 as of 2002.
 - Mutual flow of visiting people: over 3 million /per year.
 - Taiwan's investment on the Mainland: 100 billion up to 2002.
 - According to a recent figure, one million Taiwan people work, study and live on the Mainland, with about 0.5 million in the big Shanghai area. About 80,000 Taiwan people have purchased houses in Shanghai.
 - A recent Taiwan poll shows that 70% students in Taiwan would like to study on the Mainland, and a lot of them would like to get jobs there after graduation.
 - The "three links" have made big advances and become the order of the day. An example in case: the charter flights between Taiwan and Shanghai during the 2003 Spring Festival.
2. The Taiwan issue is now relatively quiet. The "9 • 11" event provided a unique opportunity for the improvement of US-China relations. Both China and the USA are more aware that a candid, constructive and cooperative relationship is in conformity of their common interests. The USA has come to recognize the value of China's cooperation on a number of issues (anti-terrorism, South Asia, Iraq and the Korean Peninsula) and high-level contacts and visits have accelerated the improvement. It has greatly helped serve to stabilize cross-strait relations.
3. The situation of cross-strait relations is still grave. The political contact is far behind

the economic interflow. From Lee Teng-hui's "theory of two states" to Chen Shui-bian's "theory of two states on either sides", the Taiwan authority still lacks sincerity in one-China principle. The 1992 consensus has been ignored and the force for Taiwan independence remains unchecked. The resumption of cross-strait dialogues is in stalemate, and sometimes seems to be driven to the dead end. Chen Shui-bian has made two assessment mistakes: overestimating the US determination to defend Taiwan and underestimating the Mainland's determination to oppose Taiwan independence.

4. Are the three joint communiqués between China and the USA outdated? No. Their basic principles are still valid: one-China; peaceful coexistence; seek commonalities while retaining differences; opposition to regional hegemony. The political foundations for Sino-U.S. relations based on the three joint communiqués should be maintained.
5. Is another new joint communiqué (the Fourth one) necessary? In the line of keeping pace with the times, it is necessary. Favourable conditions need to be created. The year of 2005 is highly hopeful.
6. The CBM should be taken and strengthened. Priority should be given to reduce the mistrust between China and the USA. The CBM can begin by dealing with two cases:
 - Positive response from the USA to President Jiang Zemin's proposal during the Crawford Summit: If the USA reduces its arms sales to Taiwan, China will in return withdraw its missiles deployed in Fujian.
 - Cooperative efforts from both sides to prevent Chen Shui-bian's planned visit to the USA. The recent statement of two co-chairs of the Taiwan Caucus (Dana Rohrbacher and Bob Wexler) that 2003 is not a good year for Chen's visit to the USA is quite meaningful.
7. Even on the Taiwan issue, China and the USA share some significant commonalities:
 - One-China policy.
 - Peaceful solution.
 - Opposition to Taiwan independence.
 - Security and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

Can this consensus be a new start-point for the further improvement of cross-strait relations? Definitely yes.

8. The recent meeting with Mr. Vincent Siew in Bangkok at the 31st Williamsberg Conference and his suggestions: the resumption of cross-strait dialogues, a Panda as a gift to the Taiwan people and Taiwan joining in the 2008 Olympics.
9. New position and new initiative on the Mainland side:
 - The "three-sentence" interpretation of the one-China principle has been written into the political report of the 16th National Congress. That is: "There is but one China in the world; both the Mainland and Taiwan belong to one China; China's sovereignty and territorial integrity brook no division."

- The principle that all issues can be discussed on the premise of the one-China principle has been reaffirmed with special focus on the termination of cross-strait hostility, Taiwan's political status and international space.
10. The new top leadership headed by Wu Jintao has been attaching great importance to the Taiwan issue. Wu's recent four points of opinion which touch upon the nitty and gritty of cross-strait relations are particularly significant and will have far-reaching impact on cross-strait relations.
- Adhere to one-China policy.
 - Place hopes on the Taiwan people.
 - Promote cross-strait economic/trade relations and people-to-people exchanges.
 - Strengthen cross-strait cooperation and expedite the process of reunification.