

# Lee Teng-hui's "Two-State" Theory: Perceptions and Policy Change

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This paper argues that President Lee Teng-hui's intention to enhance the legal status of Taiwan in mid-1998 is the major reason behind his launching of the "two-state" theory in July 1999. By dividing the policymaking process of the "two-state" theory into two parts - (a) the reasons for Lee's preparation of the policy change in 1998 and (b) his announcement of the policy change in 1999 - this article provides an insight into why the Lee administration moved away from its original China policy and instead promoted the "two-state" theory. The application of Lee's motives for the policy change in mid-1998

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to the research into the “two-state” theory leads to the introduction of two new contributing factors to the literature dealing with this policy shift; first, the influence of domestic politics needs be downplayed, if not excluded, and, secondly, external factors, hitherto under-acknowledged or ignored, are identified.

**Key words:** “two-state” theory, perception approach, interim agreements

## I. Introduction

In 1999, President Lee Teng-hui announced that Taiwan and China should engage in special state-to-state relations (the "two-state" theory). The Beijing government responded to the announcement with the cancellation of the second Koo-Wang talks,<sup>1</sup> scheduled in Taipei in October 1999, and indefinitely postponed all dialogue channels with Taiwan until the return to power of the Kuomintang (KMT) in 2008. In an interview, Lee surprisingly stated that his attempt to amend Taiwan's China policy actually started in mid-1998 (鄒景雯, 2001 : 222) .<sup>2</sup> Without taking Lee's initial motives for the policy change into account and tracing the connections between that and the public announcement of 1999, there can be no adequate or complete explanation for why Lee adopted the "two-state" theory policy.

By focusing on an analysis of the key political actors of the Lee administration, this study attempts to investigate the factors shaping

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1. Koo Chen-fu was Chair of the Strait Exchange Foundation (SEF), representing the Taipei government in "unofficial" dialogue with China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS). Wang Daohan was chair of ARATS. The SEF and ARATS began their talks in 1992. Koo and Wang had their first talks in Singapore in 1993.

2. President Lee asked the then National Security Bureau Director-General, Yen Tsung-wun to enhance the legal status of Taiwan in mid-1998. Soon after, Yen founded "The Team of Enhancement of the ROC's Sovereignty and National Status" in August 1998 with Tsai Ying-wen (an expert on international law) put in charge of it. By the time Yen delivered the new policy proposal to President Lee in May 1999, he had become the National Security Council Secretary-General.

Taiwan's "two-state" theory." To reveal the most likely reasons for this policy change is not an easy task. Academic researchers have had virtually no opportunity to make use of relevant official archival material. Even after accessing those archives, they will find that either some crucial information has either not been recorded or, if written down, the documents have not been lodged with the country's official archives. In the case of the "two-state" theory policy, former President Chen Shui-bian complained that he had no access to the official documents regarding the policy change when he took office in 2000. However, there is plenty of alternative material which is related to Lee's policy changes, such as Taiwan's official publications, documents from the main policymakers, policy statements, interviews, publications of the ruling party, and academic writings.

In order to judge the accuracy of the perceptions of Taiwan's main policymakers, I have carefully collected, read through, and analyzed almost all of their publications, policy statements, and interviews from 1990 to 2002. In addition, the research has inferred some of the decision-makers' perceptions from academic evidence that is generally agreed upon by scholars in the field. In this paper, for the translation of non-English materials, I will use the Tongyong Pinyin system (the official system of Taiwan for English transliteration since 2000) for the material written in Taiwan's official language and the Hanyu Pinyin system for the materials written in China's official language.

## II. Challenges to the existing literature

When the claim that Lee's decision for the "two-state" theory was germinated in 1998 is introduced to this study, the question arises of what impacts it produces on the explanations for the policy shift? The answers to this question will reveal the contributions of this article, which are (a) that domestic politics should be excluded from explanations, and (b) the identification of external factors before and after mid-1998 resulting in the "two-state" theory. In addition, the perception approach is neglected in the field of cross-strait studies, and it has never been applied to the study of Lee's "two-state" theory. In the study of international politics, the perception approach has been applied to the 1914 crisis research, the study of Bolshevism, and to the analysis of the behaviour of U.S Senators (Holsti, 1966, Zinnes, 1968, Rosenau, 1968, and Leites, 1953). However, no-one has discussed Taiwanese policymakers' perceptions of the milieu. All the analysis frameworks of previous approaches to the cross-strait relations are defined by investigators on the basis of which dimension (external, internal, or both) they think is more important, including Shih Chih-yu's personality investigation of President Lee and his successor, Chen.

This study fills the gap and reveals how the main policymakers perceived the operational environment, and argues that the external environment is the dominant driving force for the "two-state" theory in

July 1999. External variables provided by Zinnes, Holsti, Northe, and Brody – China’s policy change towards Taiwan and the U.S. foreign policy towards China and Taiwan – will be integrated into the analysis framework.

### (1) Dividing the policymaking process into two parts

The timing of Lee’s initial plans for the “two-state” theory, which was in mid-1998, has been long overlooked in the study of this policy shift. All the following researches into the “two-state” theory did not bring the time point into their analysis: 施正鋒 ( 2001 ) , Sheng (2002),<sup>3</sup> 丁怡銘 ( 2003 ) , and Fell (2005). As will become clear, the neglect of the timing for Lee’s policy change in their works resulted in two major inadequacies in the explanations of that policy, with some commentators either overemphasizing the internal factors, or failing to take into account relevant external factors existing before and after Lee’s decision for the policy change in mid-1998.

According to Chou’s interview with Lee, the “two-state” theory was a “long-prepared” policy change, which has been proved the case and accepted in Taiwan’s domestic politics. Lee was preparing to promote the international status of Taiwan in mid-1998 and, thus, “The Team of Enhancement of the ROC’s Sovereignty and National Status”

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3. The scholar is Chinese. Therefore, his name is written as Sheng Lijun instead of Sheng Li-jun (the form the name would take in English if he were Taiwanese).

was founded in August 1998 by Yen Tsung-wun, the National Security Council Director-General( 鄒景雯 , 2001 : 222 ). In May 1999, the new policy proposal, called the "two-state" theory, was delivered to President Lee( 鄒景雯 , 2001 : 226 ). On the assumption that the policy change began in mid-1998, there must be a significant connection between Lee's intention for policy change in 1998 and his adoption of the policy change in 1999. In other words, those aforementioned studies on the "two-state" theory are limited by their failure to take sufficiently into account Lee's initial motives for the policy change in 1998.

## (2) The exclusion of domestic politics

Some commentators have stressed the impact of the internal environment on Lee's launching of his "two-state" theory (施正鋒 , 2001 : 122 ; Sheng, 2002: 18 ; 丁怡銘 , 2003 : 141 ; Fell, 2005: 106). In particular, they all put emphasis on the Taiwan presidential election in March 2000. In considering the parties' vote-maximizing strategies, Shih, Ding, and Fell point out that Lee's "two-state" theory competed with the policies of the opposition parties and the independent presidential candidate, James Soong. For example, Fell points out that "Whereas the DPP [the Democratic Progressive Party] was attempting to move towards the centre, Lee Teng-hui tried to drag his party [the KMT] to the centre left" (Fell, 2005: 106). Did President Lee have to move to the centre left and launch the "two-state" theory in order to compete with the DPP and to maximize votes?

Attacking the DPP independence position often brought the KMT electoral benefits, called the “Taiwan independence terror card” by Fell (Fell, 2005: 123). This position (and, relatedly, electoral failures) explains why the DPP moved towards the status quo position (in between centre left and centre). However, by Lee moving the KMT to the centre left, the party was in danger of losing its strategic position (in between the status quo and the centre right). However, it does not seem easy to explain why the governing party (the KMT) moved to the centre left in July 1999. Apparently, Lee prepared to change Taiwan’s China policy in mid-1998 before the parties and James Soong moved to the *status quo* position for the presidential election in 2000. In this case, it is not convincing that electoral consideration led to the “two-state” theory in 1999.

Although Sheng, Shih, Ding, and Fell all believe that domestic politics resulted in Lee’s policy change towards China, Sheng’s argument is entirely different from the others’. Sheng argues that President Lee “wanted to influence the forthcoming presidential election [March 2000] ...” (Sheng, 2002: 18), planning to force the KMT presidential candidate (Lien Chan) to accept the “two-state” theory, and Lien, in order to win the election and to get Lee’s support, would have to accept Lee’s new policy suggestion (Sheng, 2002: 18). However, the discovery of Lee’s intention to change Taiwan’s policy towards China in May 1998 shows that Sheng’s electoral benefit goes little way towards explaining Lee’s “two-state” theory.

The policymakers of Taiwan perceived both the Chinese push for



political talks and an American policy change before mid-1998. If these two independent variables are the external factors which influenced Lee's perception of Taipei's "one China" policy in 1998, we can argue that the factors, which occurred between mid-1998 and July 1999, relevant to the two explained variables can reasonably be included in the explanations for the "two-state" theory. All interpretations unrelated to Lee's motives for the policy shift in mid-1998 can logically be excluded from the reasons behind the "two-state" theory. That is because the "two-state" theory was a long-prepared policy change, starting in mid-1998, not in July 1999.

The book based on Chou's interview with President Lee was released in May 2001, three months before Shih published his book. In this case, Shih was definitely not in a good position to find that Lee's "two-state" theory could be traced back to mid-1998. I do not know for sure if Sheng, Ding, and Fell had noticed Lee's decision in mid-1998. However, I am certain they did not mention this crucial point in their histories of the policy change. As a result, it is reasonable for Shih, Sheng, Ding, and Fell to reach their conclusions by overlooking the fact that Lee's "two-state" theory began in mid-1998 and instead only focus on the date when Lee launched the policy change, 9 July 1999.

### (3) Identification of external factors

With different arguments, Shih, Sheng, and Ding all point out that the "two-state" theory played a part in contributing to Taiwan's external influence. Shih refers, over two pages, to American influence

as the key external variable of the “two-state” theory although he places the key emphasis on domestic politics in explaining the policy shift ( 施正鋒 , 2001 : 119-121 ). Shih’s analysis of external factors is unconvincing however. First, his explanation does not exactly identify which of the American policy changes towards China and Taiwan determined Lee’s “two-state” theory. He mentions the following American policy attitudes: the comprehensive engagement towards China, the “new three noes” policy promised to Chinese authorities during President Clinton’s visit to China, the Clinton administration’s pushing of Taiwan for cross-strait talks, the “interim agreement,” the security commitment and military support to Taiwan, and a new interpretation of the three communiqués with China in favour of the Beijing government ( 施正鋒 , 2001 : 120-121 ) .<sup>4</sup> His explanation involves too many sub-variables, meaning that it is neither focused nor substantial in content, and ultimately rather vague. Secondly, Shih’s explanation does not include the Chinese policy change towards Taiwan, which is identified as one of the determinants of the “two-state” theory in this article.

With Sino-U.S. relations increasingly hostile at that time, Sheng believes Lee attempted to manipulate and benefit from the confrontation between China and the U.S. By doing so, “Taiwan would become another Kosovo or South Korea, in the sense of a guaranteed U.S. military commitment. Taiwan’s status as a full-fledged

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4. Shanghai Communiqué in 1972; joint Communiqué on the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1979; and the second Shanghai Communiqué in 1982.

independent sovereign state would likely be secured" (Sheng, 2002: 20). This study however is not convinced by Sheng's argument that the aforementioned external factor is a relevant contributing factor to Lee's policy change in May 1998.

According to Sino-U.S.-Taiwan diplomatic history, the Washington government has always, if necessary, been prepared to sacrifice Taiwan's interests to develop its diplomatic relations with China. An example is the three Communiqués between China and the United States. In 1998, President Clinton again improved the Sino-U.S. relation at Taiwan's expense (the "new three noes" policy). Both academic and domestic commentators have focused on U.S. betrayal of Taiwan when Sino-U.S. relations deteriorate. Contrary to Sheng's claim, I argue that it is most unlikely that Lee would have manipulated the worsening Sino-U.S. relationship to obtain any national gains for Taiwan through a policy like the "two-state" theory, which was strongly and clearly opposed by the Washington government before July 1999.

In addition to the domestic politics in Taiwan (an intervening variable), Ding's work identifies three independent variables, all related to the external milieu of the "two-state" theory (丁怡銘, 2003: 148). They are (1) the U.S. strategic partnership policy towards China, (2) arms sales to Taiwan by the Clinton administration and its pushing Taiwan into negotiations with China on the base on the three Sino-U.S. Communiqués, and (3) the security commitment and diplomatic support to Taiwan by the American Congress (丁怡銘,

2003 : 140 ; 147-148 ) . As Ding's intervening variable (electoral consideration) is rejected in this paper, the association between his three external variables (explanatory variables) and the "two-state" theory (response variable) becomes spurious. In addition, Ding excludes China's influence on the "two-state" theory ( 丁怡銘 , 2003 : 148 ) . However, this study contends that Beijing's policy change towards Taiwan in the second half of the 1990s is a crucial factor in Lee's decision to modify Taipei's "one China" policy.

#### (4) The perception approach

Shih Chih-yu argues that it is unrealistic to put all the emphasis on objective knowledge while ignoring an investigation of the minds of policymakers ( 石之瑜 , 1999a : 323 ) . Shih published three articles based on the political-psychology school relating to the issue of the cross-strait relations ( 石之瑜 , 1999a : 267-336 ; 1999b : 1-16 ; 2001 : 107-125 ) . In the first article, Shih points out that psychological analysis in the study of cross-strait relations was rare and had even not been recognized as a method by Wu Yu-shan ( 石之瑜 , 1999a : 288 ) .<sup>5</sup> The paper focuses on a literature review of the political-psychology school and identified five fundamental concepts of the school: identity, attitude, personality, emotion, and perception ( 石之瑜 , 1999a : 267-292 ) . Shih takes Chinese leaders as an example and briefly

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5. Wu Yu-shan, in his book published in 1997, did not include the political-psychology school in the literature review chapter. However, he did recognize this school in 1999 book, co-authored with Bao Tzong-ho, and also in his journal paper, published in 2000.

explains how each of these five variables affect China's Taiwan policy (石之瑜, 1999a : 293-313) .

Shih's second article argues that the way in which Taiwan, China, and the U.S. understand the others' decisions and express their policy attitudes varies; variations can be defined as differences of discursive style. Shih identifies two discursive styles, relational and realistic. "The former is concerned with attitude, norm, and policy promotion and is spatiotemporally specific, while the latter is related to analysis, theory and behavioural prediction and is universal" (石之瑜, 1999b : 1) . In the triangulating relationship among Taiwan, China, and the U.S., China is attributed the relational style, Washington's is seen as a realistic style, and Taiwan's a combination of the two (石之瑜, 1999b : 7-8 ; 10-13) .

Shih concludes that "differences between discursive style may cause more anxiety than disputes within the same style" (石之瑜, 1999b : 1) . For example, as long as the Beijing government retains its relational style, if Taipei explains or makes a policy statement towards China in the realistic style, the discursive differences between Taiwan and China will anger China more than if Taipei stays in the same style as Beijing's. This difference increases the initial fragile relations of the two sides of the Strait. There is a key aspect missing in Shih's argument. He needs to explain the occasions when the Taipei government switches its discursive style, from relational to realistic or from realistic to relational, and why it does so. Do, for example, international stimuli matter, or does perhaps the domestic dimension

matter, or are there some other factors playing a decisive role in the change? For Shih, both domestic and international dimensions are less important than the personalities of the political leaders.

In his third article, Shih stresses that Lee's personality was a determining factor in Taiwan's policy change towards China. Shih believes one aspect of Lee's personality, the "denying self" decided Taiwan's China policy during his presidency. Lee had been aware since his teenage years that his extremely strong sense of "self" could harm his friendships, relationships with his family, and even himself ever since being a teenager. Lee, therefore, has tried hard to control his "self" since then. This management of the "self" has, Shih believes, produced an anxiety in Lee's unconscious (because of the conflict between the Id and the Ego of Sigmund Freud's structural theory). The anxiety became a strong drive, embedded in Lee's personality, leading Lee to seek for a greater "self", such as "the ROC in Taiwan," "Taiwan identity," and "Taiwan independence" when he was in power. With this greater "self", focusing on national goals, Lee temporarily found a way out of his anxiety. All of Lee's China policies, Shih maintains, stemmed from this need to release his anxiety (石之瑜, 2001: 111).

Shih, in his analysis of the personality basis of Lee's China policy, argues that "seeking an independent status beyond Japan and China is not simply an international strategic option, but a psychological need" (石之瑜, 2001: 110). Shih's personality analysis however has a difficulty in demonstrating a causal relationship between Lee's anxiety and his aims for the nation (such as the policy changes discussed in

this paper). Why should Lee's anxiety necessarily produce, or lead to the revelation of, a greater "self"? And why should Lee's greater "self" be defined as seeking for "Taiwan identity" and "Taiwan independence"?

Castano, Sacchi, and Gries and Holsti, North, and Brody, among others, do not concern themselves with the five concepts of the political-psychology school, focusing only on the importance of studying a particular policymaker's perceptions in terms of foreign policy behaviour (Castano et al., 2003: 449; Holsti et al., 1968: 128; Snyder and Paige, 1963: 212; Boulding, 1959: 120-121). They argue that an understanding of a political elite's images of the situation is more important than discovering the "reality" itself. They point out that "in any case, the essential point is that the actor's response will be shaped by *his perception* of the stimulus and not necessarily by qualities objectively inherent in it" (Holsti et al., 1968: 129).

"Operational environment" in the study of the perception approach includes all factors except policymakers themselves. Sprout and Sprout use "milieu", "physical environment" and "non-human environment" as alternatives to the term "operational environment" (Sprout and Sprout, 1957: 311), but Boulding prefers the term "situation" (Boulding, 1959: 120-21). Based on the territorial boundaries of states, the operational environment is divided into two sub-environments, the external and the internal (Brecher et al., 1969: 82). There are some other substitute terms for the external environment such as international factors/environment and external factors, while

the alternative term for the internal environment is domestic factors/environment. The term “psychological environment” refers to the policymaker’s perception of the operational environment. Hyam Gold points out that the operational environment is the explanatory variable, policymakers perceptions are the intervening variable, and national decisions are the dependent variables (Gold, 1978: 571-572).

Why do both China and the U.S, matter when explaining the “two-state” theory? In the perception approach, the variable in the external environment is defined by Dian Zinnes as the enemy’s hostile attitudes toward the perceiver country (Zinnes, 1968). Holsti, North, and Brody focus on the adversarial country’s “policy” towards the perceiver country (Holsti et al., 1968). It is the latter statement that brings China into this paper’s explanation of Lee’s “two-state” theory. Although research on policymakers’ perception of the enemy’s attitude and policy identifies the perceived country as the key variable in the external environment, it does not necessarily conclude that other countries are irrelevant. For example, Holsti, in his case study of Sino-Soviet relations, introduces the role of the United States. The U.S is important because Holsti assumes that without a common external pressure, the number of differences and tensions in Sino-Soviet relations tend to increase (Holsti, 1966: 346). In the case of cross-strait relations, the United States has played a significant role since the outbreak of the Korean War. Most importantly, as will become clear, Chou’s interview with Lee clearly proves the impact of the roles of both the U.S. and China on Lee’s “two-state” theory. The



role of the United States in the "two-state" theory policy therefore cannot be ignored.

It is of note that all case studies used in perception research involve the issue of whose imaginations should be investigated and who the policymakers are. Wish selected "29 political elites from 17 nations who were heads of state or top foreign policy makers between 1959 and 1968." Holsti, North, and Brody, in their case study of the 1914 crisis, selected the heads of state, heads of government, foreign ministers, and some other participants who played a significant role in the events from Austria-Hungary, Germany, England, France, and Russia.<sup>6</sup> In this paper, the policymakers related to Taiwan's China policy are the President, the Vice President, the Premier, and the Chair and Vice Chair of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) of Taiwan. However, Snyder's suggestion that after identifying the main policymaking agencies we should not treat all these agencies equally will be followed (Snyder et al , 1963: 92-93).

The President of Taiwan is always highly involved in Taiwan's China policy and in fact has the final word regarding any policy change. The President is, therefore, the main focus; others play secondary roles. Both the heads of National Security Bureau and National Security Council are also important policymakers in the Taipei government, but they are excluded from the investigation. It is very difficult for researchers to discover their perceptions of the situation of Taiwan security. They very rarely make public statements

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6. Serbia was excluded(Holsti et al., 1968: 134-135).

or hold press conferences, and are almost never interviewed. As the minister of Foreign Affairs is authorized to undertake Taiwan's international relations, he cannot be ignored; furthermore, the minister often provides the information and situation analysis to the President and participates in meetings concerned with national security.

Regarding the collection of data in past studies, Leites relied on the entire "recorded" verbal output of Lenin and Stalin, together with an enormous of printed material, to discover their perceptions of the world (Leites, 1953). In Zinnes' research on the 1914 crisis, the sources were the internal and international communications written by the key decision makers of the six countries (Zinnes, 1968: 87). Wish identified the main policymakers in her case study, then collected transcripts of their interviews and speeches, as well as articles which they had written, collected from books and reference volumes (Wish, 1980: 533). Holsti, in his case study, relied on the policymakers' publications and public pronouncements, such as congressional testimony, press conferences, and addresses (Holsti, 1962: 246). K. J. Holsti adopted a similar strategy for collecting materials covering a long term in 1970 (Holsti, 1970).

### III. Towards the "two-state" theory

Before I finish my term as president, I intend to consult specialists in international law from many nations to determine a clearer definition of our sovereignty (李登輝, 1999a : 240) .

The above quotation is taken from Lee's book, *The Road to Democracy*, published in May 1999. Later on, in an interview, Lee stated that his attempt to amend Taiwan's China policy started in 1998 (鄒景雯, 2001 : 222) . As Lee's "two-state" theory began in 1998, there must be a significant connection between Lee's intention for policy change in 1998 and his adoption of the policy change in 1999. Without taking Lee's initial motives for the policy change into account, there can be no adequate explanation for why Lee adopted the "two-state" theory policy. The following section will focus on Lee's motives for amending Taiwan's China policy in 1998.

#### (1) Chinese push for unification talks

##### **1. Hong Kong and Macau first, then Taiwan**

The President of China, Jiang Zemin, made a speech on the eve of the lunar New Year in 1995. At the end of the statement, he surprisingly revealed an attempt to achieve unification with Taiwan sooner rather than later, saying that "indefinitely postponing the unification is not what all compatriots want to see" (江澤民, 1997a :

259). Later on in 1995, the Deputy Prime Minister of China stated that “after Hong Kong’s and Macau’s return, the mission of resolving the Taiwan problem and achieving motherland’s unification becomes more urgent” (錢其琛, 1998a : 373). Chen’s statement was therefore more specific about the timing for the solution of the Taiwan issue.

In December of the same year, the Chinese Prime Minister pointed out that “following the restoration of Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macau, the resolution of the Taiwan problem will be more prominently placed in front of all the Chinese”(李鵬, 1997 : 269). On the same day in December 1995, Jiang suggested that “the people of China do not wish the separation of the Strait to continue for long... To make the unification come true, of course, we need a procedure, but we will strive to shorten such a process”(江澤民, 1998a : 424). The message clearly shows that China expected to reach a final solution with Taiwan more quickly, in particular after Hong Kong’s and Macau’s return.

The Mainland Affairs Institution of the KMT (MAI) reported to the KMT’s Central Standard Committee (CSC) (on 26 July and 1 November 1995 and 14 February 1996) that, unlike Deng and Mao, the third generation of Chinese leaders, Jiang Zemin and Li Peng, showed great eagerness for a faster final solution of the Taiwan issue (中國國民黨中央大陸工作會, 1996 : 15 ; 52 ; 76). The MAI is an important source for understanding the KMT government’s China policy because it is in charge of their policy and provides analytical commentary on China to the CSC every week. As the chairman of the KMT (and,

hence, the CSC meetings), President Lee listened each week to these analyses.

From 1995, the Chinese leadership believed that if the "one country, two systems" applied to Hong Kong, it increased their chances of convincing the world that it would be an acceptable model for Taiwan as well (Ravich, 1999; 陳雲林, 1998 : 253). Chen Yunlin, Director of Taiwan Affairs Office of State Council of the People's Republic of China (PRC), pointed out that "One country, two systems' will suit Hong Kong and it should fit well with the Taiwan problem" (陳雲林, 1998 : 253) .

After Hong Kong's takeover, the Chinese leadership continued to put pressure on the Taipei government by highlighting the gradual restitution of Chinese territories and stressing the success of the "one country, two systems" policy. In January 1998, Jiang stressed that "Macau will be handed over to the motherland in 1999. At this moment, we miss more than ever our compatriots of Taiwan" (江澤民, 1999: 177) . Taiwan was one of China's three targets in the 1990s, according to the vice chairman of the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), an organization set up by the Chinese government (唐樹備, 1998 : 93) . By 1998, the Beijing government had completed the first of three steps in its unification strategy. Chinese restoration of Hong Kong gave the Chinese authorities great encouragement. As Ravich suggested, "the year 1997 began with preparations for the return of Hong Kong, the first jewel in what Beijing hoped would be a triple crown (Hong Kong, Macao, and

Taiwan)” (Ravich, 1999).

The foreign minister of China did not hide his confidence, claiming that “the restitution of Hong Kong’s sovereignty indicates a huge success in the scheme of ‘one Country, two systems’ and thus creates new possibilities for resolving the Taiwan problem” (錢其琛, 1999 : 185) . He proceeded to say that “Hong Kong’s smooth return is one great step towards China’s peaceful unification. Macau will be going back to the motherland in two years. At this moment, all the Chinese people are focused on the perspective of resolving the Taiwan problem”(錢其琛, 1999: 185). In the face of this scheme to implement China’s unification policy, Taiwan’s position was increasingly under pressure because, as Harding suggested, “China’s target on Taiwan comes after Macau’s hand over” (Harding, 2000: 7).

Unlike both Hong Kong and Macau, Taiwan was recognized diplomatically by 29 other countries, all of which were members of the United Nations, and had possessed its status in international law for more than half a century already (Feldman, 2001). Eventually, the Beijing leadership would need to pursue political talks directly with the government of Taiwan if China really wanted to reach its goal peacefully. Therefore, they sent a clear message to the Taipei government that China would not leave the issue of Taiwan unresolved indefinitely, using the successful takeovers of both Hong Kong and Macau to add pressure on Taiwan.

In fact, the Taipei government certainly perceived the message the Beijing government had intended and it hence feared that the

international society might accept "one country, two systems" as the method to apply to the sovereignty dispute between Taiwan and China. The chairman of the Taiwanese MAC, in a report entitled "Post-Deng Cross-strait Relations and Our Reactions," pointed out that the PRC had ensured the unification order of Hong Kong and Macau first then Taiwan with respect to its Taiwan policy (Chang, 1998a: 95). President Lee also voiced the same worry in 1999 (鄒景雯, 2001 : 237) .

## **2. From functional to political talks**

In 1992, both China and Taiwan sent delegations to Singapore: China's ARATS and Taiwan's SEF. These were the first talks ever held publicly and formally between the two sides since 1949. Eight meetings were held before the Chinese authorities indefinitely suspended the SEF-ARATS talks in 1995. Despite China unilaterally suspending the SEF-ARATS dialogue, Taiwan kept urging Beijing to resume the talks between 1995 and 1998.<sup>7</sup> Beijing's reluctance to respond Taipei's suggestion mainly stemmed from the fact that it wanted to resolve the issue of Taiwan as soon as possible. The 1992-1995 negotiations with Taipei had focused on non-unification issues. In 1995, the Beijing government changed its negotiation strategy and started to press Taiwan for more overtly political talks.

In January 1995, six months prior to the onset of the crisis of 1995-96, Jiang expressed China's willingness to abandon its hostility to Taipei via political talks and, thus, suggested that a political agenda

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7. For instance, both the MAC and SEF expressed hope that the cross-strait talks would resume on 17 June 1995, 19 April and 3 July 1996, (Mainland Affairs Council, 1999: 3, 39, 43, 45).

could be added to the Sino-Taiwan dialogues. In fact, Taiwan had already officially recognized the PRC's legitimacy through abolishing the "Period of Mobilization for the Suppression of Communist Rebellion" in 1991. If China was truly ready to give up the use of military means, Beijing would not have to ask Taiwan for political talks. The real motive for political talks was the unification negotiation with Taipei.

Lee's April 1995 response to Jiang's call for "political talks" in included three main points: (1) seeking China's unification on the basis of the reality of the cross-strait separation; (2) participating in international organizations on an equal basis: both sides' leaders meeting naturally at international occasions, and; (3) insisting on the two sides seeking peaceful means to resolve any disputes (李登輝, 1996b : 5-6) .<sup>8</sup> However, these three key points did not feature in any way in Jiang's intentions. First, China's insistence on its "one China" principle, that is, not to recognize Taipei's legitimacy, was incompatible with Lee's perception of the cross-strait separation. Secondly, the "one China" principle also denied Taiwan's right to return to international organizations. Thirdly, for China, the precondition of abandoning military means to deal with the issue of Taiwan was Taipei's acceptance of Beijing's "one China" principle. Therefore, Lee's statement, in a way, was refusing Jiang's call for political talks on the basis of Beijing's "one China" principle.

After Lee's return from the United States in July 1995, the

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8. The statement is known as Lee's six points.



spokesman of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council of the PRC blamed Lee's visit for causing the failure of the second Koo-Wang talks (中共國務院台辦發言人, 1996: 177). In addition to these talks, the ongoing SEF-ARATS dialogue was therefore postponed by China, too. After the 1995-96 crisis, in response to the U.S.'s appeal for the resumption of the cross-strait dialogue, Jiang Zemin, via two interviews in June and September 1996, expressed China's willingness to open up a channel for "political talks" with Taiwan (江澤民 1997b: 135; 江澤民, 1997c: 145).

Jiang's statements referring to political talks with Taipei revealed Beijing's intentions. First, the Sino-U.S. strategic partnership was in the process of being constructed. Jiang wanted to demonstrate China's cooperative attitude to the Clinton administration, but the Chinese leadership also asked the U.S. to compromise on the issue of Taiwan in return. For example, they sought support for the policy of the "new three noes". Secondly, Jiang had already set the agenda for the negotiations. It was not only about "political" issues, but also about those related to unification. If the Taipei government still insisted on "functional talks," China would be reluctant to reopen the dialogue with Taipei. In that case, Taiwan should take the entire blame for the failure of the talks.

When the Beijing government adjusted its negotiation strategy towards Taiwan from "functional talks" to "political talks," it continued, on the one hand, to send the cooperative message to the Taipei government while, on the other hand, asking the Clinton

administration to use its influence on Taipei. During the period between early 1997 and mid-1998, the statements of the Chinese government were based on three key points. They were the “one China” principle, the termination of the cross-strait hostility, and “political talks.” This strategy was intended to reach Beijing’s unification target quickly via political talks with Taipei. Any “functional talks” which the KMT government hoped for were completely ignored and excluded (錢其琛, 1998b: 476; 錢其琛, 1999, 188-89; 李鵬, 1998: 481; 李鵬, 1999: 194; 江澤民, 1998b: 249; 江澤民, 1998c: 506) .

China also sent a similar message through its second-track diplomacy. In the Shanghai-San Francisco Assemblies, Chinese participants suggested that “once the cross-strait dialogue resumes, it should not only address purely functional issues, but also should move quickly to a political dialogue.” In addition to the demand for political negotiation, the Chinese participants also expressed the wish “that one aim of the political dialogue should be to agree on a termination of hostilities across the Taiwan Strait on the basis of the one-China principle.”<sup>9</sup>

In November 1996, according to a report adopted at the MAC Council Meeting, the Beijing government agreed to the resumption of cross-strait talks on the condition of acceptance of a “one China” (Mainland Affairs Council, 1998a: 28). Actually, “one China” had been

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9. China-U.S. Relations in the Twenty-First Century: Shanghai and San Francisco Assemblies, American Assembly, held in Shanghai, 16-18 February, 1999.

a consistent policy for Lee's administration, although it had been defined somewhat differently.<sup>10</sup> Why did the Beijing government insist on the "one China" principle as a precondition for the resumption of the cross-strait dialogue at that moment? The MAC meeting concluded that "Mainland China established an immediate goal to force us to accept its principle of 'one China' ... attempting to force us to accept its interpretation of "one China" and to make political concessions" (Mainland Affairs Council, 1998a: 28-29). The MAC further pointed out that "if we are forced to accept the term 'one China' without distinguishing its content, Mainland China would naturally forge a *fait accompli* in the world that the People's Republic of China represents the whole of China" (Mainland Affairs Council, 1998a: 28-29). The Prime Minister of Taiwan shared the MAC's perception, suspecting that "Beijing's one China policy is a trap" (蕭萬長, 1998: 94).

Throughout 1997, President Lee focused on urging China to renounce a military solution to the issue of Taiwan (李登輝, 1998: 29; Lee, 1999: 12). Lee's statements demonstrated that the Taipei government not only understood and disliked Beijing's negotiation strategy; they also revealed Taiwan's reluctance to proceed with unification talks on the basis of Beijing's "one China" principle. However, the American efforts for breaking the deadlock of the cross-strait dialogue were being stepped up by both the Clinton administration and its second-track diplomacy. Both China and the

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10. Taipei asserted that "one China" meant the Republic of China, but for Beijing, the People's Republic of China represented the sole China.

U.S., two of the most powerful nations in the world, were therefore working together to bring Taipei to the table for political talks with China. It was during this year that Clinton's policy towards Taiwan began to change, and it finally led to a dramatic change of Taiwan's China policy.

## (2) American policy change

### 1. Encouragement to resume cross-strait dialogue

The Taiwanese authorities perceived the attitude change adopted by the Clinton administration, noting its apparent repudiation of the fifth of the "Six assurances" given by the Reagan administration in 1982.<sup>11</sup> Ross concluded that "the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait confrontation was the closest the United States and China had come to a crisis since the early 1960s" and that it led to a change in the strategic objectives between the United States and China (Ross, 2000: 87-88). Indeed, some officials of the Clinton administration, such as the Secretary of Defense William J. Perry, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Stanley Roth, and Assistant Secretary of Defense

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11. 1. The United States would not set a date for termination of arms sales to Taiwan. 2. The United States would not alter the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act. 3. The United States would not consult with China in advance before making decisions about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. 4. The United States would not mediate between Taiwan and China. 5. The United States would not alter its position about the sovereignty of Taiwan which was, that the question was one to be decided peacefully by the Chinese themselves, and would not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China. 6. The United States would not formally recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan (Wortzel, 2000).

for International Security Affairs Joseph S. Nye, Jr., were concerned that the American army would be likely to be involved in a war between China and Taiwan if the American government failed to reduce the Taiwan Strait hostility (Carter and Perry, 1999: 112).

On 13 September 1997, Stanley Roth expressed the Clinton administration's concerns about the delay of the cross-strait dialogues by stating that "as long as the situation in the Strait of Taiwan is unresolved, the potential always exists for problems. That is why the United States has really been urging both sides – both parties on either side of the Strait – to resume meaningful cross-strait dialogue" (Roth, 1997). The now ex-Secretary of Defense William Perry also contributed to the resumption of the cross-strait talks. The National Committee on U.S.-China Relations led by Perry started the second-track diplomacy between the U.S., China and Taiwan in January 1997 (Perry, 2000).

The National Committee on U.S.-China Relations was not simply seen by Taipei as a purely unofficial organization, but instead acknowledged as a think tank that had an important influence on the Clinton administration. The Chair of Taiwan's MAC, Chang King-yuh, responded to Perry's diplomacy by assuring that "despite the standstill in bilateral negotiations due to Peking's unilateral boycott, we remain fully prepared for the resumption of such talks" (Chang, 1998b: 39). In order to show Washington Taiwan's goodwill, Chang even conceded that Taipei would not exclude "political dialogues" (Chang, 1998b: 39). It seems that American pressure had worked insofar that Lee's

administration now shifted its policy of dialogue with Beijing from functional talks to “not excluding” political negotiation (Sheu, 1999a: 13-14).

In early 1998, Perry once again visited China, then immediately afterwards, Taiwan. During the visit to Taiwan, he sent a message to the Taipei government that “Mainland China is willing to resume talks at the point where they broke off without any preconditions” (Chang, 1999a: 29-30). After the meeting with Perry, the Taiwanese SEF sent a letter to the Chinese ARATS on 19 January 1998, suggesting again that the SEF Chairman Koo Chen-fu lead a delegation of the SEF board members and supervisors to visit China. In March 1998, another two former high-ranking U.S. officials visited Taipei: Joseph Nye and Anthony Lake, U.S. White House National Security Adviser. Wortzel suspects that their visit was instrumental in pushing Taipei towards negotiations with Beijing (Wortzel, 2000).

Beijing’s demand for resumption of talks on the basis of political issues stood in direct contrast with Taiwan’s desire for “functional talks.” However, both the Vice President and the Prime Minister of Taiwan expressed Taipei’s goodwill to Washington by saying that political issues could be brought into the reopened cross-strait talks( 連戰, 1999 : 50 ; 蕭萬長, 1999 : 74 ). On 24 February 1998, the ARATS revealed its willingness to enter consultations in order to arrange for exchanges between the SEF and the ARATS (Sheu, 1999b: 54). However, the SEF did not return any message to China until 5 March, after Anthony Lake had finished his visit to high-ranking Taiwanese

officials (Lin, 1999: 50). On the same day, President Lee indicated that “the agenda for the to-be-resumed cross-strait negotiations has been finalized” (Lin, 1999: 51).

After the successful track-two diplomacy, the testimony of Susan Shirk, U.S. East Asian and Pacific Bureau Deputy Assistant Secretary, to the House International Relations Committee proved that Washington had indeed persuaded Taipei to resume the talks with Beijing.<sup>12</sup> The U.S. suggested not to force but to “encourage” the two sides’ talks so that U.S. policy was not contradictory to the “Six assurances” (see fn 12) announced by the Reagan administration in 1982, in which it had promised that the U.S. would not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China.

In fact, Shirk’s explanation differed from Lee’s perception. As Nathan points out, Taipei was facing pressure from the Clinton administration regarding political talks with Beijing which would inevitably be biased in favour of Beijing’s “one China” principle (Nathan, 2000: 93, 96-97). In this situation, Lee perceived American “encouragement” for talks as genuine political pressure. President Lee, on 31 July 1998, expressed Taipei’s concerns about the negotiations being re-opened on the basis of Beijing’s “one China” principle ( 李登輝 , 1999b : 24 ) . In an article in *Foreign Affairs*, he outlined in very clear terms his grounds for redefining Taiwan’s “one China” policy:

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12 “... the Administration has encouraged Taipei and Beijing to reopen a dialogue. We have delivered the same message to both sides...” Testimony by Susan L. Shirk, East Asian and Pacific Bureau Deputy Assistant Secretary, before the House International Relations Committee, Text: DAS Susan Shirk on U.S.-Taiwan Relations, May 20, 1998.

... before commencing any negotiations, Taipei must clearly define cross-strait relations. To engage in meaningful dialogue with the other side and protect the dignity of our country and the interests of its people, the ROC government must reach out to the other side on the basis of reality. When any two states conduct a dialogue, they do on an equal basis regardless of size or military prowess. There is no reason for the cross-strait dialogue to be any different (Lee, 1999: 11-12).

Based on the fifth of the “Six Assurances” previous U.S. administrations had not pushed Taipei even when Taiwan had stuck to the so-called “three noes” policy towards the Beijing government (no communication, no compromise, and no negotiation). As Beijing was losing its patience over the previous functional negotiations and decided to resume talks with Taipei on the basis of unification dialogues, encouragement for resumption of talks from the Clinton administration was, of course, regarded as political pressure by the Taiwanese government. However, Washington did not realize that its demands for talks with Beijing had become one of the main factors shaping President Lee’s motivation to change Taiwan’s “one China” policy.

## **2. The interim agreements**

It is of note that Taipei suspected that “interim agreements” were supported by top-level officials from the Clinton administration. However, President Chen later claimed that there had been a significant misunderstanding between the Lee and Clinton administrations before Taipei launched the “two-state” theory which



resulted in another cross-strait crisis in 1999.<sup>13</sup>

After the 1995/96 cross-strait crisis, some former American officials and influential scholars began to deal with the question of how to reach a temporary resolution that was acceptable for both China and Taiwan (Manning and Montaperto, 1997; Manning, 1997; Nye, 1998; Lieberthal, 2000; Roth, 1999; Harding, 2000).<sup>14</sup> The idea of "interim arrangements" was gradually formed. Robert Manning and Ronald Montaperto first brought up the idea of "no force, no independence" in their joint article, published in February 1997, and then republished in October 1997.

They suggested that "to avoid renewed PRC-Taiwan tension and facilitate U.S.-China relations, it is necessary and possible to craft a new cross-strait bargain reflecting new political realities. An initial *quid pro quo* would be China's renouncing the use of force in return for Taiwan's renouncing independence." Manning, in a separate paper, suggested "no force, no independence" approach. In addition, he also

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13. Clinton visited Taiwan in 2005 and met the President of Taiwan, Chen Shui-bian. President Chen asked Clinton what Washington's stance on "interim agreements" between Taiwan and China entailed. Surprisingly, Clinton said that "it is not in the interests of Taiwan because China is absolutely not reliable; the 30-to-50-year peace agreement, no one is able to guarantee it." Chen continued that "thus, he suggested to me to let Taiwan be Taiwan and not to accept an agreement that may prove to be harmful to Taiwan." President Chen publicly stated this in the Taiwanese media, in a live radio programme, Jhongyang Guangbo Diantai (Radio Taiwan International), on 3 April 2006. Of course it is possible that Clinton was, in 2005, expressing his personal opinion, an opinion which he may not necessarily have held in 1999, especially when constrained by his position as his country's chief policy maker.

14. Robert A. Manning is a former consultant to the U.S. State Department.

recommended: (1) Not to conclude a final resolution until 15-20 years after Hong Kong's reversion; (2) Taiwan's agreement on a "one China" principle, flexibly applied; (3) Beijing's approval of Taiwan's participation in international organizations including the UN, like both Germanys, both Yemens, and two Koreas' membership in the UN and (4) Taiwan's abandonment of its "pragmatic diplomacy" (Manning and Montaperto, 1997: 4-6; Manning, 1997).

Manning's advice, such as diplomatic space for Taiwan and Beijing's assurance not to use force against Taiwan, was consistent with Lee's main foreign policy goals since his arrival in office. In particular, dual recognition by the UN (with the two Germanys and Koreas as models) would most likely be acceptable to the KMT government. Following Manning's suggestion of "no force, no independence," Kenneth Lieberthal, Joseph Nye, and Harry Harding then developed their own resolutions regarding the cross-strait relations.

In February 1998, Kenneth Lieberthal presented a paper at a seminar held in Taipei. He suggested that China and Taiwan should work out an "interim agreement", but mentioned neither Taiwan's international political role nor Taiwan's membership of the UN. In addition, the agreement recommended that the two sides should change their national titles: "China" for Beijing, "Taiwan, China" for Taipei. Finally, after fifty years under the "interim agreement," the two parties should conduct a unification negotiation (Lieberthal, 2000: 188-190). Lieberthal's interim agreement was biased in Beijing's favour. It

excluded the possibility of Taiwanese independence and made "unification" the only long-term option for the people of Taiwan. In particular, the agreement did not guarantee Taiwan's participation in international organizations.

Nye went even further in an article "A Taiwan Deal" (published in March 1998), concluding with the following three main points: (1) After Taipei's abandonment of independence, Beijing would renounce the use of force in return; (2) Beijing's promise to provide "one-country, three-systems" should be broadened from the Hong Kong model and include international political space for Taiwan in exchange for Taipei's renunciation of independence and (3) Taipei's agreement not to move further toward independence, but to pursue the cross-strait talks and to loosen Taiwan's bans on its economic exchange with China (Nye, 1998). Nye's "deal" would have hurt Taiwan's interests most severely. Moreover, his position as a former important official in Clinton's administration made the Taipei government more suspicious of Washington's intention to accept "interim agreements." No doubt, Lee's administration could by no means accept an arrangement that downgraded Taiwan to a local government within China.

As the U.S. had never formally recognized Beijing's sovereignty over Taiwan, the "interim agreements" proposed by both Nye and Lieberthal suggested that Taiwan would one day "return" to China and ignored the possibility that the majority of the Taiwanese people may not wish such a reunification. The proposals of Lieberthal and Nye can

be read as denying the people of Taiwan their right to decide on Taiwan's future status. As long as Beijing insists that Taiwan is the core issue in the Sino-U.S. relationship, and American officials and scholars mostly believe it (ignoring other disputes between China and the U.S.), it is likely that U.S. proposals will serve the interests of China at the expense of the Taiwanese. In May 1998, the deputy chair of Taiwan's MAC commented that Washington's engagement policy with Beijing might undermine the interests of Taiwan (Sheu, 1999c: 87). The following month, President Lee stated that not only should Washington improve its relations with Beijing, but also that Taiwan-U.S. relations should be enhanced (李登輝, 2000 : 350) .

The America concept of "interim arrangements" shocked high-level officials in Taiwan. At the end of March 1998, a cross-ministry meeting held between the Secretary-General to the President and the National Security Council Secretary-General clearly identified a recent and growing tendency in the statements of Nye, Perry, Lake, and Lieberthal in favour of Beijing's interpretation of the preferred relationship between Taiwan and China (鄒景雯, 2001 : 299) . Concerns were raised in the meeting, and commentators predicted that Clinton's advisers may attempt to improve Sino-U.S. relations at Taiwan's expense when President Clinton visited China in June 1998. The meeting suggested an immediate response to the situation (鄒景雯, 2001 : 299) . The proposal of the interim agreements was clearly perceived as a threat to Taiwan's international status and, consequently, prompted Lee to change Taiwan's policy towards China.

### **3. Skewed towards the "one China" policy of Beijing**

The U.S. policy towards Taiwan is mainly based on the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and the three communiqués between the U.S. and the PRC. The TRA guarantees Taiwan security support from the U.S. However, the three communiqués reveal Sino-U.S. compromises over the issue of Taiwan. First, the U.S. "acknowledges" instead of "recognizes" that they only see "Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait," and maintain that there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of it. Secondly, the U.S. reaffirms its interest in a "peaceful settlement" of the issue by the Chinese themselves. Thirdly, the U.S. states that it has no intention of pursuing a policy of "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" (Cohen and Teng, 1990: 192, 194). The Beijing government in return promised Washington a "peaceful unification" policy instead of "peaceful settlement," as the U.S. requested. Though the U.S. guaranteed not to challenge the "one China" policy, defined by Washington itself as above, what would happen if the Taipei government no longer endorsed a "one China" policy, but preferred either a "two Chinas" or even a "one China, one Taiwan" policy? The answer to this remained uncertain until President Clinton's second term.

In 1994, the Clinton administration scaled down official relations with Taipei after reviewing its Taiwan policy. The policy review also sent a message to Taiwan that the U.S. did not support Taiwan's membership in organizations where statehood was required (Lord, 1994: 706). In 1995, Kent Wiedemann, the Deputy Assistant Secretary

for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, explained to the House International Relations Committee that supporting Taiwan's membership in the UN was not consistent with American interests. In order to justify Clinton's policy, Wiedemann even emphasized that "Taiwan continues to have a 'one China' policy" (Lord, 1994: 706).

During the Sino-U.S. summit in October 1997, State Department spokesman James Rubin stressed that "the United States (1) does not support a one-China, one-Taiwan policy or a two-China policy, (2) does not support Taiwan's independence, and (3) does not support Taiwanese membership in organizations that require members to be states" (Sharp, 1998). These three assurances to China were used by Clinton's administration to pave the way towards the U.S.-China strategic partnership. As Mann points out, one of these promises, that "the United States would oppose Taiwan's independence, seemed to go beyond what had been said in the past" (Mann, 1999: 330). However, Beijing was not satisfied with the promises and continued to press the U.S. administration. On 30 April 1998, China gained the same reaffirmation, but from a higher-level official, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (Albright, 1998).

Albright was not the highest-ranking official of the Clinton administration to give China such assurances. They were also provided by President Clinton himself. On Clinton's visit to Beijing in 1998, he stressed the "new three noes" policy, "new" to distinguish it from Taiwan's own "three noes" policy referred to on page 17: "we don't support independence for Taiwan, or two Chinas, or one Taiwan, one

China. And we don't believe that Taiwan should be a member of any organization for which statehood is a requirement" (White House Office of the Press Secretary, 1998). Clinton's "new three noes" statement was the first time that an American President had publicly made such a promise to China.<sup>15</sup> As Harvey Feldman points out, Clinton's "new three noes" policy "echoed the Chinese position" (Feldman, 2001).

For Lee, there was no contradiction between Taipei recognition by the U.S. and the pledge of unification with China. He noted that "President Clinton's China policy is a tilt towards China" (李登輝、中嶋領雄, 2000: 64). In an interview published in *The New York Times*, he said: "I will tell him [Bill Clinton] I agree with the United States' engagement policy with China, but anyone should not use such a détente to harm us" (李登輝, 1996a: 32).

Since 1991, Taipei's adherence to "one China" had no longer referred to the "present," but to the "future" because Taiwan had, in that year, "officially recognized the ROC's lack of authority on the mainland" (Campbell and Mitchell, 2001: 15). However, Beijing perceived "one China" as a "current" situation and insisted that Taiwan was a renegade province of China. Significantly, the "one China" policy of the Clinton administration also implied that this was the "present" situation. For instance, Susan Shirk, East Asia and

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15. In fact, Clinton already gave Jiang Zemin "three secret" pledges in August 1995, written in a letter and handed to the Chinese foreign minister Qian Qichen by Secretary of State, Warren Christopher (Mann, 1999: 330).

Pacific Bureau Deputy Assistant Secretary, stressed in testimony before the House International Relations Committee in 1998 that “we will continue to pursue a ‘one China’ policy. Consistent with this policy, we do not support two Chinas or one China, one Taiwan, Taiwan independence, or Taiwan’s membership in the UN” (Shirk, 1998). Taipei thus concluded that Clinton’s “one China” policy was tilted towards China’s “one China” policy (鄒景雯, 2001 : 300-301 ; 304) . Lee explained his understanding of the U.S. policy in the following terms:

The “one China” policy, proposed by Henry Kissinger in 1972 and signed in the Shanghai Communiqué, had been gradually changed by the U.S. In particular, since Bill Clinton came to power, commercial affairs have become the main concern of both US politics and diplomacy... The core issue of “one China” also deviated from its initial meaning. Nowadays, “one China” conveys that Taiwan is a province of China and, thus, the PRC is the central government, but Taiwan is a local government of China. If we still keep silent on this matter, Taiwan will be forced into a dead space and unable to survive (李登輝、中嶋領雄, 2000 : 45) .

What if “one China” refers to Taiwan’s exclusion from international society in terms of participating in international organizations and being recognized by other countries? That was exactly what the authority of Taipei saw in Clinton’s “one China” policy. In that case, should the Lee administration’s own “one China” policy have remained unchanged? Apparently, President Lee chose to answer “no” to this question and therefore launched a plan to rethink Taiwan’s legal status. Prior to Lee making the “two-state” theory statement, he warned: “We hope the U.S. can understand and identify



our "one China" policy, rather than be lured into the framework of China's "one China" policy... Otherwise, it will result in serious problems" (李登輝, 1999a : 156-157) .

## IV. The adaptation of the "two-state" theory

"...The 1991 Constitutional Amendments have framed cross-strait relations as a normal state-to-state relationship or at least a special state-to-state relationship, rather than an internal relationship between a legitimate government and a renegade group, or between a central government and a local government..." (Su, 1999: 1)

The President of Taiwan chose an interview to announce the change in Taiwan's China policy in July 1999. Taiwan for the first time publicly stated that the cross-strait relation is a state-to-state relationship. In this section, the primary aim is to explain why President Lee launched the "two-state" theory. The reason for Lee's policy change is that he wanted to construct a negotiating framework that would be in Taipei's favour and be supportive of the principle of parity.

### (1) Functional talks based on the principle of parity

Since the early 1990s, Lee's China policy had always focused on the principle of an "equal footing" (Shi, 1998: 28). In the National Unification Guidelines (NUGs), passed by the Executive Yuan in 1991, Taipei officially proposed the term "equal basis" for the talks between

Taiwan and China. The Guidelines set a precondition of non-political dialogue for cross-strait contacts until China accepted the principle of parity (Mainland Affairs Council, 1998b: 214-215). This document clearly reveals how important equal basis with Beijing was for the KMT government. The principle of parity did not necessarily mean that China and Taiwan were two separate countries. It could refer to two governments or even two entities, but, importantly, Taiwan could not be downgraded to a province of the PRC by the Chinese authorities. On 30 April 1991, Lee pointed out that Taipei would no longer see Beijing as a rebel organization, but as a political entity consistent with the principle of the NUGs (李登輝, 1992: 19).

Taiwan's Prime Minister explained the meaning of the "equal footing" principle in 1991. First, parity meant that, in future dialogues with Beijing, the two sides' representatives must be given equal status and that China's intention to downgrade Taiwan to the status of China's local governments must be denied. Secondly, neither Taiwan nor China had the right to force the other side to accept what either insisted; instead, all relative affairs between Taiwan and China must be agreed to by the two sides (郝柏村, 1992: 53).

In August 1993, China's leadership issued a white paper on its policy towards Taiwan, in which they declared that they were not convinced by Lee's "parity" policy (Henckaerts, 1996a: 273, 275-276). Taipei officially responded to it with a white paper of their own in July 1994. Two of the significant points made in the Taiwanese document were: first, Taipei defined the current cross-strait relations by stating

that "China has been a temporarily divided country under two separate governments on either side of the Taiwan Strait" since 1949 (Henckaerts, 1996b: 280). And only if the Chinese leaders accepted the concept of "equal footing" could a secure basis for interaction between the two sides be established (Henckaerts, 1996b: 284-287). Secondly, the white paper suggested that both Taiwan and China "should coexist as two legal entities in the international arena" (Henckaerts, 1996b: 298). In other words, the parity principle, for the Lee administration, not only applied to cross-strait affairs, but also to international affairs. While both sides were willing to have functional dialogue (the SEF-ARATS talks continued in February and August 1994), the differences in their policies were left aside ( 焦仁和、唐樹備 , 1995a : 67 ; 焦仁和、唐樹備 , 1995b : 79 ) .

In the early 1990s, Chinese leaders neither denied nor accepted, at least explicitly, Taipei's principle of "equal footing." Beijing's ambiguous attitude however changed after the 1995-96 missile crisis. From that time China's negotiation strategy towards Taiwan could no longer be covered up. Since Lee had accepted China's call for dialogue, the authorities of Beijing had always claimed that they completely respected Taipei's "equal footing" policy. However, Beijing's military action made clear the fact that Chinese leaders did not perceive Taiwan as an equal political entity, but as a part of their own territory. Over the next few years, both Taiwan and China tested each other's bottom line of negotiation through public statements and at the same time told the international community, in particular the U.S.

government, that they welcomed the resumption of talks.

## (2) Struggling for the principle of parity

Given a good possibility of resumption of the SEF-ARATS dialogue, the chair of the Taiwanese SEF (Koo Chen-fu) visited the U.S. in May 1998. His main mission was to convince the Clinton administration of the importance of the “equal footing” principle before Taipei could have any political talks with Beijing. Koo stressed the difficulty for Taipei to conduct political talks with Beijing at that moment and pointed out that if the two sides started political talks, it might raise cross-strait tension (Koo, 1998: 6-8). Koo’s statement revealed that Taipei was reluctant to conduct “political talks” without being recognized as an “equal” political entity with China.

In particular, after Clinton’s “new three noes” statement at the end of June 1998, Lee felt more pressure to engage in political talks from both Beijing and Washington. Thus, he strongly defended Taipei’s “equal footing” principle on several occasions. On 22 July, he urged that, based on the principles of parity and mutual respect, the two sides of the Strait should adequately communicate and proceed with political talks on the *de facto* basis of “China” being a separate entity. In that statement, Lee used the “political entities” policy to describe the cross-strait relations (李登輝, 1999c : 10). However, a few days later, he preferred a stronger expression – sovereign state – to describe Taiwan’s status.

In a speech on 27 July, Lee admitted that “the cross-strait

relations [resumption of the talks] and the international situation [America's 'new three noes'] have given rise to new developments in the last six months. Regardless ... the fact that the ROC is a 'sovereign state' cannot be denied"( 李登輝 , 1999d : 17 ). Based on the *status quo* of the Strait, Lee on the one hand claimed that Taiwan had a right to participate in international affairs and, on the other hand, pointed out that "we believe that the resumption of negotiations can normalise the cross-strait relations ... Only when China gives up its irrational political framework and incorporates parity and reason into its policy towards Taiwan could the obstacles between the two sides be sorted out" ( 李登輝 , 1999d : 17 ) .

Lee stressed that "China has never abandoned the idea of "Beijing as central government, Taipei as local government" ( 李登輝 , 1999d : 20-21 ) . He continued: "this difference makes the cross-strait confrontation unsettled; and our long-standing stance is that the ROC is a sovereign state"( 李登輝 , 1999d : 20-21 ). Lee's statements reveal his frustration with China's continued refusal to accept Taipei's "equal footing" principle.

With the intention of demonstrating to the international community Taipei's bottom-line principle when Taiwan conducted any political dialogue with Beijing, Lee published an article in *Asian Wall Street*. In this article, Lee pointed out that prior to a united "democratic China," the two sides of the Strait must recognize the *status quo* of the *de facto* situation: a divided China, as had existed in Germany and Vietnam and still existed in Korea. It seemed, for Lee, as

if the principle of parity between Taiwan and China was still significant, but that he decided to give it a new interpretation: from two “political entities” to two “countries.” Lee firmly stood by the “equal footing” principle, emphasizing that “we are more than welcome to have a dialogue, but it is impossible for the people of Taiwan to accept that their government proceed with any negotiations with Beijing on an unequal basis” ( 李登輝 , 1999b : 24 ) . Under American pressure, the Taipei government was not in a strong position to refuse political talks with Beijing. However, what Lee’s administration could do in this difficult negotiation framework was to explain that Taiwan had the same legal status as Beijing and that Taiwan was not a part of China.

On 14 October 1998, the chair of the SEF, Koo Chen-fu, led a delegation to Shanghai and Beijing, a visit lasting six days. The resumption of the SEF-ARATS talks caught the attention of the international community because the talks had been suspended by Beijing since 1995. On the day prior to Koo’s departure, the chair of the Taiwanese MAC clarified Taiwan’s fundamental stance about the forthcoming meeting, saying that “this would be an opportunity for the mainland leaders to further understand the Taiwanese people’s viewpoint and the ROC government’s fundamental position; that is, respect the reality that the two sides are “equal entities” with separate jurisdictions ...” (Chang, 1999b: 202). He reminded the Chinese authorities of Taipei’s “equal footing” principle by stressing that “only when the reality that the two sides belong to two separate jurisdictions

is respected could cross-strait relations achieve a breakthrough and develop in a feasible way" (Chang, 1999b: 202).

Koo stuck resolutely to the principle of parity throughout his visit, including at meetings with the Chinese President and the chair of ARATS, arguing that "Chinese leaders should face the fact that the ROC government existed: a strict adherence to the principle of parity and opposition to the Chinese idea that Taiwan was part of China" (Fen, 1998: 9).

At the conclusion of the visit, the MAC immediately released a briefing to tell the international community about Taipei's "equal footing" stance. The MAC reiterated Taipei's hope that "the mainland side will take concrete actions demonstrating its intention to face the reality that the two sides belong to separate jurisdictions, and respect this reality ..." (Mainland Affairs Council, 1999: 216). The Taiwanese government was worried that Beijing's political strategy was gradually conveying a misconception to the international community: that there was no need for Taiwan to return to international organizations, as outlined in Clinton's "new three nos" statement. The "equal footing" principle towards both China and the international community was fading away and this process resulted in Lee's "two-state" theory.

### (3) Adherence to the principle of parity for the talks

Both China and the U.S. increased the pressure on Taipei for political talks after the chair of ARATS agreed, in October 1998, to

visit Taiwan. In particular, the ARATS chair would come to Taiwan, for the first time, to carry on the SEF-ARATS talks some time in fall 1999. The whole situation, including political negotiations under China's "one China" principle, was contradicting Taipei's "equal footing" principle.

The Lee administration tried again to convince the Chinese leadership of the "two political entities" policy, reminding them that Taipei might amend its current policy if Beijing continued to rush towards unification negotiations on the premise that Taiwan was a province of China (Chang, 2000: 3). At the end of December, Taiwan's Minister of Foreign Affairs warned that the country might have to find a way out of the "one China" framework if Beijing continued to treat Taiwan as a part of China (Chang, 2000: 3). In addition, the MAC vice chair also made a similar remark at this time, saying that if Chinese leaders kept the policy unchanged, Taipei would be more likely to choose a new policy (Chang, 2000: 4). Apparently, the Taipei government was very disappointed by the failure of the "equal footing" principle and felt it was trapped in a dilemma.

In the first half of 1999, the pressure for political negotiations under Beijing's "one China" principle continued to be exerted by both China and the U.S. The former U.S. Secretary of Defence visited Lee to conduct American "second-track diplomacy" in March 1999. The U.S. Assistant Secretary of State on East Asian and Pacific Affairs, the chair and managing director of the AIT, and director of the AIT suggested that the two sides could negotiate interim agreements (Roth,



1999). In addition, Chinese leaders also put pressure on Taipei through the more-than-once delayed trip by the chair of ARATS, from spring 1999 to fall 1999. By the end of June, Beijing had still refused to give a precise date for Wang's visit to Taiwan (Mainland Affairs Council, 2000: 237).

Lee believed that the reason China postponed Wang's visit was that Chinese leaders were engaged in a strategy of manipulation (鄒景雯, 2001: 237). First, following with international focus on the celebration of China's golden national anniversary (1<sup>st</sup> October), the Beijing government would use the forthcoming meeting with Taipei, scheduled some time in the fall, to convince the international community of Beijing's unification proposal. Secondly, Lee stressed that, according to his intelligence, the Chinese authorities would attempt to force political talks on the Taipei government under the "one country, two systems" proposal when China's delegation finally came to Taiwan (李登輝、中嶋領雄, 2000: 44、256-257).

The general situation, as interpreted by President Lee, was harmful to Taipei's long-standing principle of parity. Prior to Wang's visit, the Lee administration thus had to redirect a new negotiation framework in favour of Taipei's long-standing policy of parity; in short, towards the "two-state" theory. Lee argued that Taipei had already treated both China and Taiwan as two different political entities since 1991, but this seemed insufficient to protect Taiwan's status and therefore the Taipei government needed a new idea (李登輝、中嶋領雄, 2000: 256). Chou observes that President Lee defended

Taipei's parity principle, reasoning that "in order to conduct the cross-strait dialogue on an equal basis and to avoid falling into the situation in which China was the central government and Taiwan the local, he had to show his moral bravery and tell the truth" (鄒景雯, 2001 : 237) .

Facing the approaching meeting with China's delegation, Lee firmly stood by Taipei's long-standing principle of parity and decided to adopt his think tank's policy suggestion. On 9 July 1999, Lee adjusted the "two political entities" policy in an interview with Deutsche Welle radio. No doubt, Lee's statement displeased Chinese leaders and the Chinese authorities asked Taipei to withdraw the statement. However, the chair of the SEF and the chair and vice chair of the MAC firmly reiterated Taipei's stance.

At a press conference held on 12 July, Su Chi, the chair of the MAC, explained that Lee's statement implied considering cross-strait relations on the basis of political and legal equality for the forthcoming Koo-Wang meeting and for future interactions with China (Su, 1999: 12). Su stressed that "we can discuss many issues [with China] as soon as we are on an equal footing" and complained about Beijing's unequal policy towards Taiwan: "Mainland China has set a precondition for the high-level political negotiations that 'you are part of my area', 'you are my local government' and 'you should agree with my [stance] in such a capacity'" (Su, 1999: 15). Su also told the media that Taipei's fundamental stance about political negotiation with Beijing was that "we are willing to, and do not fear to, enter into

negotiations, but we are not willing to talk from an unequal position. Once equal, we are willing to talk about anything" (Su, 1999: 15).

At the weekly meeting of the KMT's CSC on 14 July, Su took a similar stance and told the members of the Committee that "equality is the cornerstone for interaction between the two sides ... as soon as the state-to-state relationship between the two sides is established, we are ready to adopt an open attitude, and discuss any subject with the Chinese mainland" (Su, 1999: 24). Su's reply in the press conference and report to KMT's CSC specifically demonstrated Taipei's reluctance to conduct political dialogue with Beijing when China did not treating Taiwan as an equal.

Prime Minister Siew of Taiwan also defended Taipei's bottom-line principle of parity. Siew pointed out that "on the basis of parity, the talks between Koo and Wan, scheduled for this fall [1999], will be an opportunity for in-depth dialogue, covering all possible issues, including highly political ones" (Siew, 1999: 26). On 30 July, the chair of the SEF stressed that "President Lee's remarks emphasize the fact that the two sides of the Strait are ruled separately on an equal and separate basis," and also "lays a foundation of parity between the two sides for elevating the level of dialogue ..." (Koo, 1999: 11-12). The Chinese authorities were angered by Koo's explanation because it seemed as if Lee's administration already called the tune with regard to the new policy. An illustration of this displeasure is that ARATS returned the SEF chair's letter of explanation by fax.

On the same day, the chair and the vice chair of the MAC hosted a

press conference. Vice chair Sheu Ke-sheng took issue with Beijing's "one China" principle, under which Beijing was the central government and Taipei a local government (Sheu, 2000: 122). Furthermore, Sheu justified Lee's "two-state" theory, saying that "what we did was simply to clarify the obscure positioning in order to prepare for the upcoming dialogues and negotiations in the future" (Sheu, 2000: 122). Chair Shu also explained: "Our position is clear and simple. We must have a pragmatic and clearly defined status in order to prepare for the new era of political negotiations" (Su, 1999: 39). He continued that "if they [China] are a nation, then we [Taiwan] are a nation; if they are a political entity, then we are a political entity" (Su, 1999: 41).

According to Beijing's "one China" principle, Taiwan was merely a renegade province. Under this negotiation framework (on an unequal basis), Chinese leaders would benefit most from political negotiations, and Taiwan's sovereignty would become a prime target. Lee published an article in *Foreign Affairs*, arguing that "should the ROC government conduct negotiations with the Chinese communists while claiming that we are only a vague "political entity," we would place ourselves in an unequal position that fails to accord with reality" (Lee, 1999: 12). More clearly, he continued to clarify his grounds for the "two-state" theory, saying that "to engage in meaningful dialogue with the other side and protect the dignity of our country and the interests of its people, the ROC government must reach out to the other side on the basis of reality ... There is no reason for the cross-strait dialogue

to be any different" (Lee, 1999: 11-12).

## V. Conclusion

This study is the first to apply Lee's initial motives for the "two-state" theory in mid-1998 to research into the "two-state" theory. It leads to both the exclusion of domestic politics and the identification of external factors in explaining the policy shift. When taking Lee's decision for enhancing Taiwan's legal status in 1998 into account, it is reasonable to conclude that any explanations for this policy change have to be connected to Lee's motives for the "two-state" theory that same year. The electoral considerations, argued by Shih, Sheng, Ding, and Fell, are irrelevant to the operational milieu when Lee determined to change Taiwan's China policy in mid-1998. Thus, their explanations are not convincing.

The Chinese authorities believed that their "one China" principle would help to integrate Taiwan into China. By contrast, the more Taiwan felt the pressure for unification, the further Taipei moved away from its previous "one China" policy. After the 1995-96 missile crisis, China was no longer interested in "functional" negotiations so that both the SEF-ARATS discussions and the Koo-Wang talks continued to be indefinitely postponed. China's cancellations of these meetings was a strategy used to press both Taiwan and the U.S. into accepting political talks. Lee thought that the Clinton administration was influenced by Beijing's strategy and, thus, was leaning towards an acceptance of

Beijing's definition of "one China". These two reasons resulted in Lee's determination to amend Taiwan's China policy in 1998.

The external explanations in Shih's, Sheng's, and Ding's works are either completely or partly unrelated to Lee's motives for the policy change in mid-1998. Logically, as long as Lee, between mid-1998 and July 1999, continued to "perceive" both China and the U.S. continuing to push Taiwan for political talks, his worry about the legal status of Taiwan could not subside. The "two-state" theory would have to be adopted at any time after "The Team of Enhancement of the ROC's Sovereignty and National Status" delivered the new policy proposal to President Lee in May 1999. As analyzed above, this is exactly what happened prior to Lee's policy change towards the "two-state" theory on 9 July 1999. Therefore, the most likely reason for Lee to launch the "two-state" theory in July 1999 was to defend Taipei's long-standing bottom-line principle of parity. While the previous "two political entities" policy had failed and left Taipei stranded with Beijing's "one China" principle, Lee's launch of the "two-state" theory in July 1999 set a negotiating framework that favoured Taipei in the forthcoming political talks with China, scheduled some time in autumn 1999.

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# 李登輝的兩國論:認知與政策轉變

林能山\*

本文主張前總統李登輝於 1998 年中，決定強化台灣主權論述的動機是解釋 1999 年兩國論此一政策改變的主要因素。將兩國論決策過程的分析分成兩部分：(1) 為什麼 1998 年李總統決定強化台灣主權論述？(2) 為什麼兩國論最後選擇在 1999 年發動？此舉將提供較完整的解釋——為什麼台北政府放棄“一中政策”轉而主張兩岸是特殊的國與國關係？將李前總統的兩國論開始於 1998 年中的發現納入兩國論的分析，產生兩個不同於現有文獻的研究結果——(1) 國內因素的排除以及(2)外部因素的確認。

**關鍵詞：**兩國論、認知研究、中程協議、政治心理學

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