

Explaining Taiwan's Revisionist Diplomacy

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Taiwan is a revisionist power. Its independence movement challenges a vital status-quo interest of mainland China's opposition to a de jure Taiwan declaration of independence and maintaining, however ambiguously, Taiwan's commitment to the 'one-China' formulation. Why is it that a small and vulnerable island off the coast of a great power has continued to challenge the vital interest of that great power and risk war? Adopting a 'levels of analysis' approach to Taiwan's mainland policy, this paper addresses this question by examining four prevalent explanations for Taiwan's revisionist diplomacy: (1) the mainland deterrent is ineffective, reflecting Taiwan doubts about either mainland capabilities or mainland resolve to wage a retaliatory war; (2) in an example of the security dilemma in alliance politics, US commitment to Taiwan, although aimed at deterring PRC use of force, encourages Taiwan to challenge the status quo because the Taiwan leadership is confident of US intervention and US ability to defend Taiwan; (3) because of the development of a 'Taiwan identity' and of corresponding domestic political pressures, the Democratic Progressive Party has been compelled to adopt a pro-independence policy; (4) Chen Shui-bian has a personal commitment to Taiwan independence and has been willing to challenge the mainland's interest in one-China, despite risk of heightened conflict and regardless of domestic political considerations.

Over the past five years, the Taiwan independence movement has seemingly continued to gain momentum. Taiwan has not declared *de jure* independence nor revised the Taiwan constitution to amend the key articles establishing the international legal status of the Republic of China as the government of all of China and Taiwan as part of Chinese sovereignty. These are the 'red lines' that the mainland has warned would be acts of war. Nonetheless, Taiwan has taken incremental steps that signal its intention to declare independence. It has disavowed the 'one-China principle' and it has developed such pro-independence initiatives as a 'defensive referendum', proposals for development of a new Taiwan constitution, and the replacement of 'Republic of China' with 'Taiwan' on the names of Taiwan

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state-owned corporations and on Taiwan passports. Meanwhile, Chen Shui-bian has continued to issue statements signaling his determination to move Taiwan increasingly closer to formal independence, including his *yibian yiguo* statement (one country on each side of the Taiwan Strait) and his assertion in his 10 October 2004, speech that ‘the sovereignty of the Republic of China is vested with the 23 million people of Taiwan’ and his reassertion of this claim in his 1 January 2006 speech.¹ These steps have elicited heightened cross-Strait tension as the mainland has signaled its readiness for war by increasing military deployments across from Taiwan, conducting increasingly high-profile and threatening military exercises, and issuing warnings that its tolerance of Taiwan’s diplomacy was reaching its limits.²

Taiwan is a revisionist power. Its independence movement challenges a vital status-quo interest of mainland China—opposition to a *de jure* Taiwan declaration of independence and maintaining, however ambiguously, Taiwan’s commitment to the ‘one-China’ formulation. Thus, this trend in Taiwan’s mainland policy presents a puzzle for both specialists in cross-Strait relations and in international politics. Simply put, why is it that a small and vulnerable island off the coast of a great power has continued to challenge the vital interest of that great power and risk war? This paper addresses this question by examining four prevalent explanations for Taiwan’s revisionist diplomacy: (1) the mainland deterrent of the Taiwan independence movement is ineffective, reflecting Taiwan doubts about either the mainland’s retaliatory capabilities or the mainland’s resolve to wage a retaliatory war; (2) in an example of the security dilemma in alliance politics, US defense commitment to Taiwan, although aimed at deterring PRC use of force for unification, encourages Taiwan to challenge the status quo because the Taiwan leadership is confident of US intervention and of US ability to defend Taiwan; (3) because of the combination of the development of a ‘Taiwan identity’ and of corresponding domestic political pressures, the leadership of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has been compelled to adopt a pro-independence policy, despite the risk of conflict with the mainland; (4) Taiwan leaders, in particular President Chen Shui-bian, have developed a personal commitment to Taiwan independence and for this reason they have been willing to challenge the mainland’s interest in one-China, despite risk of heightened conflict and regardless of domestic political considerations.

Analysis of the importance of each of these possible factors in Taiwan’s policy making has implications not only for understanding the contemporary Taiwan independence movement and Taiwan’s policy toward the mainland, but also for understanding the possible trends in the Taiwan independence movement over the next decade, the prospects for maintaining stability across the Taiwan Strait, and the prospect for the resolution of the ‘Taiwan issue’.

This paper’s conclusions can also contribute more generally to an understanding of the sources of small power revisionist challenges to great power interests in the status quo. The four possible explanations of Taiwan’s independence policy conform to

1. The text of the 2004 speech is available at: <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/4-0a/20041010/2004101002.html>; the text of the 2006 speech is available at: <http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/4-0a/20060101/2006010101.html>.

2. For a discussion of increasing tension on the Taiwan Strait, see Chas. W. Freeman, Jr, ‘Preventing war in the Taiwan Strait: restraining Taiwan—and Beijing’, *Foreign Affairs* 77(4), (July/August 1998).

various international politics theories addressed in the three levels considered in the 'levels of analysis' approach frequently used to explain state behavior.³ This article considers two related international-level explanations—the effectiveness of the mainland's deterrent posture and the importance of the US defense commitment to Taiwan on Taiwan's risk-taking. This article considers the domestic level of analysis in its analysis of the importance of domestic politics in Taiwan decision making. Finally, this article considers the role of the individual in international politics, in this case the contribution of Chen Shui-bian to Taiwan's revisionist diplomacy.

China as paper tiger: the failure of deterrence and revisionist diplomacy

Despite the mainland's repeated threats to use force should Taiwan declare *de jure* independence, it may well be that Taiwan is simply not persuaded that the mainland will follow through on its threats to use force with costly retaliation. Taiwan's movement toward a declaration of independence could reflect two possible weaknesses in the mainland's deterrent posture. Taiwan may believe that the mainland may simply lack the capabilities and/or credibility necessary to inflict on Taiwan prohibitive costs for challenging PRC interests. Alternatively, an otherwise effective mainland deterrent may be neutralized by Taiwan's confidence in the US defense commitment to Taiwan and the prospect of US intervention on behalf of Taiwan in a mainland–Taiwan war.

Capabilities and credibility in China deterrent posture

Taiwan's leaders may believe that the mainland lacks the capability to inflict costly retaliation against a Taiwan declaration of independence or they may believe that the mainland lacks the resolve to go to war.⁴ However, neither of these possibilities can explain Taiwan revisionism. Taiwan respects mainland capabilities and resolve.

Taiwan's respect for mainland capabilities is reflected in the Taiwan leadership's consistent assessment of the trends in the cross-Strait military balance. Taiwan military and civilian leaders routinely portray the nearly 800 PRC short-range M-9 and M-11 ballistic missiles deployed in Fujian province and its advanced Su-27 and Su-30 military aircraft purchased from Russia as an effective force that can inflict serious damage on Taiwan's civilian and military assets.⁵ These same leaders also

3. The classic statements of the level of analysis approach are David J. Singer, 'The level of analysis problem in international relations', in David J. Singer, Klaus Knorr and Sidney Verba, eds, *The International System: Theoretical Essays* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959).

4. Important works on the sources of effective deterrence include William W. Kaufmann, 'The requirements of deterrence', in William W. Kaufmann, ed., *Military Policy and National Security* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1956); Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1961); Alexander L. George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Patrick M. Morgan, *Deterrence Now* (New York: Cambridge University Press 2003).

5. See, for example, *China Post*, (10 March 2004); 'Highlights: Taiwan military and battlefield intelligence', FBIS (Foreign Broadcast Information Service), CPP20041225000021; AFP, (20 April 2004), FBIS, CPP20040420000080; 'Highlights: Taiwan Ministry of National Defense Report 1 Sep 04', FBIS, CPP20040901000095; Defensenews.com, (9 March 2005).

acknowledge, however reluctantly, that there is no defense against these capabilities. Missile defense systems are ineffective against missiles launched from such short range, such as across the Taiwan Strait. Moreover, the cost of a missile defense system far exceeds the cost of ballistic missiles, so that Taiwan cannot maintain financially a long-term commitment to deploy an effective missile defense system; Taiwan would lose an arms race with the mainland.⁶ Thus, the Taiwan leadership's primary justification for its effort to purchase a missile defense system from the United States has been the potential psychological contribution of missile defense to the confidence of the population. Acquisition of US missile defense systems would reassure the population that the government is developing a response to the mainland threat.⁷

Taiwan leaders are also acutely aware of Taiwan's vulnerability to mainland economic retaliatory capabilities. Since the 1990s Taiwan leaders, fearful of the effect that economic dependence on the mainland economy would have on Taiwan security, have tried to encourage Taiwan businesses to invest in Southeast Asia rather than on the mainland.⁸ But the mainland has nonetheless become Taiwan's most important international market. By the end of 2005 Taiwan was sending nearly 40% of its exports to the mainland.⁹ Moreover, by 2002 the mainland had become the leading production center of overseas Taiwan investors. Approximately 60% of Taiwan overseas investment is now located on the mainland and Taiwan's largest and most advanced industries, including high-technology semiconductor manufacturers, are moving production to the mainland. By 2004 Taiwan firms had invested up to \$160 billion in nearly more than 70,000 investment projects. More than 30,000 Taiwan companies have manufacturing facilities on the mainland.¹⁰

Taiwan respect for Chinese economic warfare is reflected in the Taiwan leadership's justification for purchasing submarines from the United States. The leadership understands that Taiwan cannot defend itself against mainland economic warfare.¹¹

6. For Taiwan's discussion of the ineffectiveness of missile defense, see, for example, *Taipei Times*, (23 October 2004), FBIS, CPP20041025000170; *Taipei Times*, (21 June 2004), FBIS, CPOP20040621000166; CAN, (28 June 2004), FBIS, CPP20040628000146; *Taipei Times*, (13 March 2005), available at: <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2005/03/13/2003246041>; for an analytical discussion of the weaknesses of the PAC-3 system for Taiwan, see James M. Lindsay and Michael E. O'Hanlon, *Defending America: The Case for Limited National Missile Defense* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2001), pp. 123–130.

7. Interviews with Taiwan military and civilian officials, January 2004 and January 2005; 'Highlights: Taiwan Ministry of National Defense Report 24 Aug 04', FBIS, CPP20040824000163; 'Highlights, Taiwan daily papers Internet versions 20 October 04', FBIS, CPP20041020000101; 'Highlights: Taiwan Ministry of National Defense Report 07 Sept 04', FBIS, CPP20040907000078.

8. T. Y. Wang, 'Lifting the "no haste, be patient" policy: implications for cross-strait relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 15(1), (2002), pp. 131–139; Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan: Cross-Strait Relations under Chen Shui-bian* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Relations, 2002). For a Taiwan government discussion of the growing danger of dependence, see, for example, Central News Agency (CNA), (13 January 2004), FBIS, CPP20040112000209.

9. Central News Agency, (10 January 2006), FBIS, 200601101477.1_b8900019543e0768.

10. 'Editorial', *Taipei Times*, (13 June 2004), available at: <http://taipetimes.com/News/edit/archives/2004/06/13/2003174891>; CNA, (7 August 2002), FBIS, CPP20020807000167; Central News Agency, (21 October 2002), FBIS, CPP20021022000004; *Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, (3 January 2004), FBIS, CPP20040103000056; 'Government approves TSMC's wafer project', *China Post*, (1 May 2004); *Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, (18 February 2004), FBIS, CPP20040228000102; *Renmin Ribao*, (26 December 2004), FBIS, CPP20031226000049; *Taipei Times*, (6 January 2004), FBIS, CPP20040106000145.

11. CNA, (8 October 2004), FBIS, CPP20041008000185; 'Highlights: Taiwan Legislative Yuan', (19 October 2004), FBIS, CPP20041019000208; *Taipei Times*, (6 March 2005), available at: <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2005/03/06/2003225665>.

It has reluctantly acknowledged that a counter-blockade strategy is pointless when Taiwan is not dependent on trade with third countries that could be interrupted by mainland interdiction of shipping, but rather is dependent on direct trade with its adversary, so that an effective mainland economic blockade simply requires Beijing to impose bilateral sanctions to prohibit mainland trade with Taiwan and to nationalize Taiwan industries on the mainland. Thus, the mainland's primary interest in purchasing submarines from Russia is to enable it to carry out access-denial missions against American aircraft carriers, not to blockade shipping to Taiwan. Similarly, the Taiwan leadership's frequent justification for acquiring US submarines is not to develop a counter-blockade strategy, but rather to threaten the mainland with a blockade of Shanghai harbor or to interdict Chinese oil tankers headed toward Chinese coastal waters.¹²

Taiwan acceptance of PRC military superiority is reflected in its defense program. Taiwan's annual defense budget has declined by over 50% since the mid-1990s. Although this decline reflects budgetary constraints during a period of economic slowdown and recession and growing demands on the budget for social programs, it also reflects Taiwan's assessment that given PRC defense modernization Taiwan can only make a nominal contribution to its own defense, regardless of its effort. Moreover, Taiwan has still not allocated funds for a special budget to purchase from the United States significant weapons systems, including diesel submarines, anti-submarine warfare aircraft, and Patriot 3 missile defense systems, despite persistent US urging. Taiwan authorities simply do not believe that such advanced weapons can contribute to the defense of Taiwan. The Taiwan public concurs. A recent poll reported that a large majority of the population believes that US weapons cannot be an effective response to the PRC threat. In this context, opposition politicians have been able to block funding for US weapons, confident that they have the support of the Taiwan voters.¹³

The Taiwan leadership's respect for the mainland's retaliatory capabilities is clear. But perhaps the mainland threat is not credible because the Taiwan leadership believes that Chinese leaders lack the resolve to risk war. Taiwan's leaders may believe that the mainland would not dare go to war against Taiwan because Chinese leaders are preoccupied with rising unemployment and mounting social problems and that they must ensure ongoing economic development to maintain domestic stability and the power of the Chinese Communist Party. Taiwan's leadership might therefore be moving toward independence because it believes that although Beijing might bluster and saber-rattle, ultimately it will not militarily retaliate against a Taiwan declaration of independence for fear of the domestic destabilizing affect of a cross-Strait war.

But just as Taiwan's leaders respect the mainland's capabilities, they also respect the mainland's resolve to use force. Leaders in Taiwan's military and intelligence

12. See, for example, 'Highlights: Taiwan Ministry of National Defense Report 19 Oct 04', FBIS, CPP20041019000097; *Taipei Times*, (3 March 2004), available at: <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2005/03/03/2003225283>; *Taipei Times*, (25 March 2005), available at: <http://taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2005/03/25/2003247677>.

13. 'FBIS report', (26 September 2004), FBIS, CPP20040926000026; Lilian Wu, '63% favor cross-Strait peace agreement', CNA, (22 July 2004), retrieved from *Lexis-Nexis* at: http://web.lexis-nexis.com.ezp2.harvard.edu/universe/document?_m=c1bc872511b58baa4015b41d5eed9d00&_docnum=1&wchp=dGLbVtz-zSkVA&_md5=41bd41e5c8a65b7d2c1d44d4d774b76.

organizations consistently report that Taiwan must take seriously the mainland threat to use force in retaliation against a declaration of independence and that they have communicated their conclusions to the civilian leadership. Various Taiwan party leaders and senior decision makers similarly acknowledge that a declaration of independence could lead to war and suggest that Taiwan must be cautious in developing its mainland policy.¹⁴ These officials believe, as do many analysts in the United States, that the foremost objective of the Chinese leadership is to maintain control over China by the Chinese Communist Party and that the party's legitimacy increasingly depends on its nationalist credentials.¹⁵ In this situation, Taiwan's leaders recognize, Chinese leaders believe that should they fail to forcefully resist a Taiwan declaration of independence, they would suffer significant loss of legitimacy and that they would jeopardize party rule.

The combined effect of Taiwan's respect for the mainland's retaliatory capabilities and for the mainland's resolve to use force suggests that Taiwan's assessment of the 'calculated risk' of war from a declaration of *de jure* independence is very high.¹⁶ This further suggests that the momentum of the Taiwan independence movement does not reflect weaknesses in the mainland's deterrence posture; Taiwan is not at all confident that the mainland is a 'paper tiger'.

Alliance politics and Taiwan revisionism

Small powers can derive the confidence necessary to challenge a more powerful adversary from the military support of a great power. There are numerous examples of this, including the contribution of German support for Austria to Austria's challenge to Russian interests in the Balkans in 1913 and the affect of Soviet and Chinese support on North Korea's 1950 decision to invade southern Korea and risk war with the United States. One variation of this dynamic reflects the impact of the security dilemma in alliance politics. A status-quo great power's defense commitment to a secondary power may give the latter the confidence necessary to challenge the status quo, thus leading to the small power's 'entrapment' of the great power in a revisionist conflict.¹⁷ This can reflect two distinct dynamics: (1) the great power's commitment can heighten the small power's confidence that its adversary

14. Frequent annual interviews with Taiwan civilian and military officials conducted since 2000; interview, senior Taiwan military intelligence officer, December 2005.

15. For a discussion of the role of popular nationalism in China's Taiwan policy, see Zhao Suisheng, *A Nation-State by Construction: Dynamics of Modern Chinese Nationalism* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); Joseph Fewsmith and Stanley Rosen, 'The domestic context of Chinese foreign policy: does public opinion matter?', in David M. Lampton, ed., *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978–2000* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

16. For a discussion of the concept of calculated risk and related concepts, see Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense*, p. 29; and George and Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy*, pp. 60, 525–526. See also Robert Jervis, 'Deterrence and perception', in Steven E. Miller, ed., *Strategy and Nuclear Deterrence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1981); Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), pp. 46–47.

17. The best statement of this remains Glenn Snyder, 'The security dilemma in alliance politics', *World Politics* 36(4), (July 1984). For a full development of this concept regarding the Taiwan Strait, see Thomas J. Christensen, 'The contemporary security dilemma: deterring a Taiwan conflict', *Washington Quarterly* 25(4), (Autumn 2002).

will be deterred from use of force; (2) the great power's commitment to intervene in a war can heighten the small power's confidence that it can endure the cost of the war, thus making war an acceptable option. In both situations, stability depends on the great power's ability to constrain its small-power ally. These dynamics may well be present in the Taiwan Strait, so that the momentum in the Taiwan independence movement and cross-Strait instability may reflect Taiwan's confidence in the US commitment to Taiwan. This would suggest that cross-Strait stability depends on Washington's ability simultaneously to deter mainland use of force and constrain Taiwan's independence movement.¹⁸

The United States is a status-quo power in the Taiwan Strait. It has opposed the Chinese use of force for unification of Taiwan with the mainland since 1950; but it also has no interest in Taiwan independence and has frequently declared that it does not support Taiwan independence. Declaratory US policy supports 'peaceful resolution' of the mainland-Taiwan conflict.¹⁹ Focusing on the deterrence of mainland use of force against Taiwan, since the mid-1990s the United States has increased arms sales to Taiwan, enhanced US-Taiwan defense cooperation, and consolidated the US military presence in the vicinity of the Taiwan theater. But in so doing, not only has Washington signaled Beijing of its commitment to defend Taiwan, but it has necessarily also signaled the Taiwan leadership of its commitment to defend Taiwan. Moreover, in the context of the 'rise of China' and heightened US-China regional competition, Taiwan leaders also believe that the combination of the US national interest in defending Taiwan, including US interest in maintaining the credibility of its commitments elsewhere in Asia and the alleged strategic importance of Taiwan in the context of the 'rise of China', together with US domestic politics will compel US intervention on behalf of Taiwan.²⁰ The possible result of this assessment is Taiwan over-confidence in US support and thus a willingness to pursue a revisionist foreign policy.

But the instability associated with the security dilemma in alliance politics is not present in the deterrence dynamics in the Taiwan Strait. This reflects the robustness of both mainland credibility and capability. Regarding credibility, despite the Taiwan leadership's confidence in US intervention, it does not believe that the high probability of US intervention in a mainland-Taiwan war will deter the mainland from using force in retaliation against a Taiwan declaration of independence. As noted above, the credibility of the mainland threat is very high, regardless of the promise of US intervention, because the Chinese leadership possesses a compelling interest in the survival of the Chinese Communist Party. The Taiwan leadership is persuaded that the mainland is non-deterrable should Taiwan declare independence, that it is even willing to risk war with the United States rather than face the wrath of its people.²¹

Alternatively, the Taiwan leadership may believe that US intervention can reduce the cost of war for Taiwan by protecting Taiwan from mainland retaliatory

18. On the US pursuit of 'pivotal deterrence' in the Taiwan Strait, see Timothy W. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 187.

19. The best discussion of the nuances of US policy is Alan Romberg, *Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy toward Taiwan and US-PRC Relations* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003).

20. Frequent annual interviews with Taiwan civilian and military officials and with independent scholars and opposition politicians conducted since 2000.

21. Frequent annual interviews with Taiwan civilian and military officials conducted since 2000.

capabilities, thus creating an acceptable price for a declaration of independence. This, too, is not evident. Rather, it is clear that the US military, regardless of the extent of its military intervention, cannot defend Taiwan from mainland attacks. In this respect, the mainland possesses an 'assured destruction' capability. US forces cannot prevent PRC short-range ballistic missiles from penetrating Taiwan airspace. Similarly, at least in the early stages of the war before the United States is fully engaged, Chinese military aircraft will also reach Taiwan, regardless of the superiority of US aircraft.

US inability to defend Taiwan from PLA missile and air strikes is reflected in the current preoccupation in Washington and Taipei with the danger of a PRC 'decapitation' strategy.²² Current US–Taiwan defense planners believe that should Chinese leaders believe that war is necessary, the PLA may attempt a surprise attack with its missiles and air force to carry out a three-day blitz of Taiwan. In the brief period before US intervention, this aerial blitz could lead to political, economic, and social instability on Taiwan and, with the deployment of PRC special forces, possibly the collapse of the Taiwan government. The PRC may or may not have confidence in such a strategy, but the important point is that the preoccupation of US and Taiwan defense officials with such PRC capabilities indicates that they believe that the mainland retaliatory capabilities can inflict a devastating cost on Taiwan in just the first few days of a war. It is therefore clear that the Taiwan leadership does not believe that US intervention on behalf of Taiwan can adequately defend Taiwan from the cost of war with mainland forces.

Equally important, the United States defense commitment to Taiwan cannot protect Taiwan from PRC economic retaliation. The US Navy's counter-blockade capability will be ineffective against PRC bilateral trade and investment sanctions against Taiwan. Moreover, Taiwan's other trading partners, such as European countries, other East Asian countries, and most private US companies, will likely suspend trade with Taiwan for as long as the hostilities continue, even should the US Navy offer to escort commercial vessels into Taiwan's ports. In addition to the danger of sending ships through a war zone, just the potential for retaliation by the PRC to these companies' more lucrative commercial interests on the mainland will likely deter them from trading with Taiwan.

More generally, Taiwan's situation regarding China is similar to that of West Germany's posture toward East Germany during the Cold War and of South Korea's current posture toward North Korea. West Germany was deterred from using force to unify with East Germany by the Soviet Union's massive ground force retaliatory capabilities in Eastern Europe, regardless of the unshakeable and unquestioned NATO commitment to defend West Germany. Similarly, South Korea has been deterred from using force to unify with North Korea by North Korea's overwhelming retaliatory capability, based on the large quantity of its forward-based artillery and

22. 'Highlights: Taiwan Legislative Yuan 19 May 2004', FBIS, CPP20040519000278; 'Highlights: Taiwan Ministry of National Defense Report 6 May 05', FBIS, CPP20040506000074; 'Highlights: Taiwan Ministry of National Defense Report 25 June 04', FBIS, CPP20040625000065; 'Highlights: Taiwan Legislative Yuan 19 May 2004', FBIS, CPP20040519000278. The US concern is reflected in Office of the Secretary of Defense, US Department of Defense, *The Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2005* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, 2005), available at: <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jul2005/d20050719china.pdf>.

more recently by its reputed WMD capability, regardless of Seoul's confidence in the US commitment to the defense of South Korea. In both these cases, the US defense commitment could not affect the small power's confidence to challenge the status quo. Similarly, in the Taiwan case, the mainland's credible threats and its overwhelming and assured retaliatory capability, based on its missiles, aircraft, and economic leverage over Taiwan, renders marginal the US commitment to Taiwan on Taiwan's assessment of the risk of declaring independence. More generally, these three cases all suggest that the security dilemma does not exist in alliance politics when the great power ally cannot offset the costs of a challenge to the status quo posed by the adversary's assured and credible retaliatory capabilities.

The inability of the United States to undermine mainland capabilities and credibility underscores the limited role the United States plays in determining the direction of the Taiwan independence movement. On the one hand, United States political and military support for Taiwan does not reduce the risk to Taiwan of a challenge to mainland interests regarding Taiwan sovereignty. On the other hand, a reduction of US support for Taiwan would not appreciably increase the danger to Taiwan of Chinese retaliation against a declaration of *de jure* independence, given high mainland credibility and capabilities. Thus, calls on the United States to restrain Taiwan by making clear its opposition to Taiwan independence and the corresponding limits to the US defense commitment to Taiwan do not address the sources of Taiwan's revisionist mainland policy. Similarly, criticism of US reticence to criticize Taiwan's mainland policy or of US–Taiwan defense ties as the source of Taiwan revisionism are also misdirected. Given the robustness of the mainland's deterrence posture, as assessed by the Taiwan leadership and its population, the direction of the US–Taiwan strategic relationship cannot significantly affect either Taiwan's confidence or its reluctance to move toward a formal declaration of sovereignty.

Identity, domestic politics, and revisionist diplomacy

Taiwan's assessment of its international circumstances, either of the mainland threat or of the US–Taiwan defense relationship, cannot explain its willingness to challenge the mainland's vital interest in maintaining Taiwan's commitment to one-China. Thus, an alternative explanation might be found in Taiwan domestic politics, in the convergence of a developing 'Taiwanese identity' with the highly competitive partisan politics in Taiwan's flourishing democracy. In this context, it may be that political parties in Taiwan have faced irresistible competitive political pressures to promote Taiwan independence.

Taiwan's lengthy political separation from the mainland since the late nineteenth century has combined with the population's negative experience with rule by mainlanders within the KMT from the late 1940s through the 1970s, continued authoritarian rule on the mainland, and Taiwan's positive experience of its developing its own advanced economy and stable democracy to create a 'Taiwanese identity', distinct from the 'Chinese identity' that had formerly characterized the vast majority of the Taiwan population. Survey research has shown that since the early 1990s there has been a significant increase in the number of people who define

themselves as Taiwanese.²³ These trends have affected attitudes toward the desirability of Taiwan reunification with the mainland. Survey research has also shown that since the early 1990s a declining percentage of the population supports unification with the mainland, either now or at some indefinite point in the future.²⁴

The changing identity of the Taiwan population has had a significant impact on Taiwan politics. Taiwan politicians born on the mainland must overcome voter suspicion of their allegiance to Taiwan in order to win votes from the approximately 80% of the population that were born on Taiwan. Chen Shui-bian owes his presidency in great part to his ability to rely on his status as a 'Taiwanese' to win votes away from 'mainland' KMT politicians. Nonetheless, trends in Taiwanese identity do not necessarily translate into voter support for a pro-independence foreign policy and a corresponding political imperative for the Taiwan politicians to lead Taiwan to risk war with the mainland. Small powers have long found ways to get along with great powers, despite intense identity-based antagonisms. Recently, Vietnam has come to terms with China, despite on-going well-entrenched Vietnamese popular hostility toward China. Over the past 100 years, most South American countries, despite intense 'anti-Yankee' identity sentiments among voters, have managed to develop cooperative relationships with the United States.

Similarly, it is far from clear that identity politics on Taiwan creates significant pressures for a pro-independence policy. First, there is considerable uncertainty that Taiwanese identity is now the dominant trend among the Taiwan-born population. The dual 'Taiwan–China' identity is increasingly gaining popularity on Taiwan, reflecting developments on Taiwan and in cross-Strait relations.²⁵ As the number of Taiwanese who have experienced violent mainland repression on Taiwan dwindle, the proportion of the population that possess intense anti-mainland sentiments has also dwindled. In its place is a growing proportion of people who have had positive experiences in dealings with the mainland. Cross-Strait economic relations have led to a significant number of Taiwanese who either live on the mainland or who have friends or relatives that live on the mainland. Mainland universities are increasingly popular among Taiwanese students. Younger Taiwanese increasingly find work and eventual career success on the mainland, so that their economic future is positively associated with the mainland. Taiwanese are also finding spouses on the mainland. By 2004 cross-Strait marriages constituted approximately 20% of new marriages every year.²⁶ In this social-economic context, the percentage of the Taiwan population that identifies itself as Taiwanese–Chinese has been growing.

23. See, for example, Rich Chang, 'Taiwan "identity" growing', *Taipei Times*, (12 March 2006), available at: <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2006/03/12/2003296948>.

24. See the data from public opinion polls compiled by the Mainland Affairs Commission of the Government of Taiwan.

25. This and other aspects of the changing identity of the Taiwan population are assessed in Chu Yun-han, 'Taiwanese nationalism and its implications: testing the worst-case scenario', *Asian Survey* 44(4), (July/August 2004); G. Andy Chang and T. Y. Wang, 'Taiwan or Chinese? Independence or unification? An analysis of generational differences in Taiwan', *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 40(1&2), (2005).

26. See, for example, *Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, (3 January 2004), FBIS, CPP20040103000056; interview with official from Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, January 2004; Mark Magnier, 'Unions across a divide', *Los Angeles Times*, (22 November 2004), p. 1; *Xinhua*, (9 February 2004), FBIS, CPP20040209000131; *Zhongguo Xinwenshe*, (28 February 2004), FBIS, CPP20040228000102; *Xinhua*, (28 February 2004), FBIS, CPP2003022800083.

Second, Taiwanese identity and a corresponding preference for an independent Taiwan has not encouraged strong voter interest in a declaration of Taiwan independence. Whereas an estimated 80% of the Taiwan population was born on Taiwan, since the late 1990s support for an immediate declaration of *de jure* independence has rarely exceeded 10% of the voters.²⁷ It thus seems that the vast majority of Taiwan voters, regardless of identity, is deterred from challenging the status quo by mainland retaliatory threats. These findings further suggest that pragmatic Taiwan politicians seeking to maximize voter support would not promote a revisionist foreign policy.

Indeed, Taiwan voters have routinely signaled their opposition to pro-independence politicians. Since Taiwan's first competitive presidential election in 1996, on all but one occasion the pro-independence party has not won a majority of the votes in either presidential, legislative, or local elections. The sole exception was the 2004 presidential election, in which Chen Shui-bian won 50.02% for the vote in an election outcome heavily influenced by an alleged assassination attempt on Chen Shui-bian the day before the election. Prior to the alleged assassination attempt, almost all public opinion polls predicted defeat for Chen.²⁸ Moreover, in this same election, as well as in prior elections, at least 40% of the voters born on Taiwan voted for the KMT and the People's First Party (PFP), both heavily identified as 'mainland' parties, underscoring the strong dissatisfaction among even Taiwanese with Chen Shui-bian's determined pursuit of Taiwan independence.

If electoral pressures drive Taiwan politician's mainland policy preferences, all political parties would seem to have a political interest in avoiding the independence issue and promoting a pro-status-quo mainland policy. This is established not only by the electoral successes of the more pragmatic KMT, but also by significant popular support for KMT Chairman Lien Chan's visit to Beijing and his meeting with Chinese Communist Party leader Hu Jintao in April 2005. According to various public opinion polls, over 50% of the population approved of his visit. Following the visit, polls indicated that 46% believed that the KMT was the party most capable of handling cross-Straits relations. Only 9.4% believed that the DPP was most capable.²⁹ Since then, KMT leaders have made repeated visits to Beijing, where they have secured commitments to liberalize cross-Straits agricultural trade and mainland cooperation in advancing the economic interests of Taiwan companies on the mainland.³⁰ Moreover, in the aftermath of the April 2005 Lien Chan visit to the mainland, Chen Shui-bian's popularity rating plummeted.³¹ Then, in December 2006

27. See the Taiwan Mainland Affairs Council's line graph of public opinion trends regarding Taiwan-mainland relations at http://www.mac.gov.tw/english/english/pos/9211/9211e_1.gif.

28. Associated Press, (15 December 2003); 'FBIS report', (16 January 2004), FBIS, CPP20040116000193; Agence France Presse, (18 January 2004), FBIS, CPP20040118000010; 'FBIS report', (2 February 2004), FBIS, CPP20040202000013; 'FBIS report', (10 February 2004), FBIS, CPP20040217000222.

29. See the report of Taiwan poll results in FBIS, 200505021477.1_ac640369a159feb7.

30. Interviews with KMT leaders, December 2005; *Xinhua*, (8 July 2005), FBIS, 200507081477.1_d0e600a3150297bc.

31. 'Highlights: Taiwan daily papers Internet versions 30 April, 1 May 05', FBIS, CPP20050502000081; TVBS, available at: http://www.tvbs.com.tw/FILE_DB/DL_DB/rickliu/200505/rickliu-20050505142339.pdf; Peter S. Goodman, 'Taiwan nationalist cites "consensus" with Chinese on ending hostilities', *Washington Post*, (Wednesday 4 May 2005), p. 1. On Chen's poll figures, see Agence France Presse, (19 May 2005), FBIS, CPP20050519000044.

the DPP suffered a major defeat in local elections, securing only six of the 23 open seats. Following the election, Chen's approval rating dropped to 10%. On the other hand, the new KMT Chairman, Ma Ying-jeou, received an 80% approval rating, despite his outspoken opposition to Taiwan independence, his acceptance of the so-called '1992 consensus' and Taiwan's acceptance of 'one China, each with its own interpretation', and his promotion of closer cross-Strait economic and political cooperation.³²

Voter unhappiness with Chen Shui-bian's mainland policy and its contribution to the electoral defeats for the DPP have created deep divisions among the leadership of the Democratic Progressive Party. Many DPP leaders have advocated a more moderate mainland policy and in March 2006 many DPP members actively opposed Chen Shui-bian's effort to revise the Taiwan constitution.³³ Cooperation with the mainland is not a political liability on Taiwan, but rather a political asset, and the source of Taiwan's revisionist foreign policy is not democratic politics.

An alternative electoral explanation for the DPP's pro-independence policy could be the political imperative during election campaigns for the DPP to appeal to its base—the small but committed party members who seek Taiwan independence. There are two flaws with the explanation. First, as the government's surveys of Taiwan public opinion on cross-Strait relations indicate, the Taiwan electorate is not polarized over the independence issue. The proportion of the electorate that supports immediate *de jure* independence is a small minority of the total electorate and is thus insufficient to carry a pro-independence politician to victory. Thus, in contrast to rational political behavior in polarized political systems, in which appeals to the base can yield victory at the polls, rational political behavior in Taiwan should encourage politicians to move to the center by promoting cross-Strait stability rather than Taiwan independence.³⁴ Second, Taiwan politicians have pursued a pro-independence policy both during political campaigns and during the periods between campaigns. If Taiwan foreign policy pragmatism were undermined by campaign imperatives, the pattern should be that pragmatism should be the norm except during a campaign season, when revisionist initiatives would be used to appeal to the base prior to elections. But this has not been the case. Taiwan's independence diplomacy has persisted uninterrupted, without any apparent correlation with campaign politics.

Personality, risk acceptance, and revisionist diplomacy

Neither international factors nor Taiwan domestic politics can explain Taiwan's repeated challenges to the mainland's vital interest in continued Taiwan acceptance of

32. Agence France Presse, (16 December 2005), FBIS, 200512161477.1_a1b800258848edb1.

33. *Taipei Times* (Internet Version), (12 May 2004), FBIS, CPP20040512000167; Central News Agency, (12 May 2004), FBIS, CPP20040512000186; *Taipei Times*, (26 May 2004), p. 3, available at: <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2004/05/26/2003156987>; *Taipei Times*, (7 May 2005), p. 1, available at: <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2005/05/07/2003253504>; Jewel Huang, 'DPP lawmakers plan to boycott China policy debate', *Taipei Times*, (24 March 2006), FBIS, 200603241477.1_2cb0006312b95eba.

34. This is the case. See Dafydd Fell, 'Measuring and explaining party change in Taiwan: 1991–2004', *Journal of East Asian Studies* 5(1), (January–April 2005).

the one-China principle. The remaining level of analysis is the individual. Although personality as an explanatory variable of foreign policy behavior is inherently dissatisfying to a discipline which seeks parsimonious explanations for state behavior across time and space, there are cases where otherwise inexplicable behavior is best explained as the result of personality characteristics. A powerful personality variable affecting state behavior is the degree of risk-acceptance of a state's chief decision maker.³⁵ Risk-acceptant leaders may seek the same foreign policy goals as other political actors, but they are more willing than most leaders to expose their countries to the risk of high cost. President George Bush's 2003 decision to invade Iraq may have reflected such risk-acceptance behavior. At other times, risk-acceptance behavior may reflect a leader's commitment to ambitious political objectives. In recent Chinese history, Mao Zedong was such a risk-acceptant leader. Both his domestic and foreign policy records are comprised of a long list of high-risk initiatives. In particular, during the 1960s, at the height of the Cultural Revolution, he pursued a reckless policy toward the Soviet Union to promote domestic social transformation.³⁶

Chen Shui-bian portrays all the characteristics of a risk-acceptant leader. Despite wide-spread recognition on Taiwan of the danger of challenging the mainland's interest in the one-China principle, regardless of the strength of US–Taiwan cooperation, despite the caution of the Taiwan electorate, and despite the political cost of independence initiatives to politicians' electoral popularity and to the political fortunes of political parties, and the corresponding opposition of DPP political advisors to such initiatives, Chen has persistently pursued a provocative mainland policy that has moved Taiwan increasingly closer to establishing *de jure* independence.³⁷ He has prioritized his objectives for Taiwan society over a secure international environment. In so doing, Chen has come to personify the Taiwan independence movement as he became Taiwan's most outspoken proponent of Taiwan sovereignty.

Similar to many Taiwanese hostile to mainland leaders, Chen Shui-bian wants Taiwan to maintain its distinct identity and to be an independent sovereign country. But in contrast to the vast majority of Taiwanese, he is willing to expose Taiwan to significant security risk to achieve these objectives and he has the political power to pursue this objective. The role of Chen's personality on Taiwan's mainland policy is reflected in the role of US policy in Taiwan's mainland policy. US efforts through diplomatic channels to inject caution into Chen's mainland policy have routinely failed because Chen is not personally susceptible to diplomatic pressure. Only when the United States has publicly criticized Chen's independence initiatives, created controversy in Taiwan politics, and undermined Chen's and the DPP's electoral objectives, has Chen become more cautious.³⁸ But after initial compromises and

35. For a discussion of the role of risk propensity in decision making, see Bueno de Mesquita, *The War Trap*.

36. On Mao's policy making style, see Michel Oksenberg, 'Mao's policy commitments, 1921–1976', *Problems of Communism* 25, (November–December 1979).

37. For a discussion of Chen's 'dictatorial decision-making', including his total disregard for his foreign policy advisors within the DPP government, see Chen Mumin, 'From five no's to referendum: making of national security policy in Taiwan, 2000–2004', paper prepared for the 19th Annual Conference of the Association of Chinese Political Studies, Louisville, Kentucky (31 March–2 April 2006).

38. See former Assistant Secretary of State James A. Kelly's assessment of Taiwan's resistance to private diplomacy in James A. Kelly, 'US East Asia policy', *PacNet* no. 9, (7 March 2005), available at: <http://www.csis.org/pacfor/pac0509.pdf>.

cautious statements designed to assuage the United States, he has returned to his pro-independence policy with provocative statements, only to once again incur US opposition. Chen's interest in maintaining US–Taiwan cooperation has not reflected his concern for Taiwan's security vis-à-vis the mainland, but rather his concern to maintain sufficient domestic popularity to enable the electoral victories necessary to pursue his revisionist diplomacy.

But after Chen won re-election as president in March 2004, he became unsusceptible to US influence. Because he could not run for re-election and serve a third term as president, domestic political considerations were no longer of any consequence to him, so that Washington's impact on his mainland policy became negligible. In February 2006 Chen terminated Taiwan's National Unification Council (NUC), despite US insistence that he merely suspend the operation of the NUC. He then rejected persistent US public pressure to reconsider his decision, despite receiving only 20% domestic approval of his decision.³⁹

Conclusion: the sources of Taiwan revisionism and the prospects for cross-Strait stability

A consideration of the levels of analysis problem in Taiwan's mainland policy indicates that the level of the individual is the most persuasive explanation for Taiwan revisionism. This conclusion conforms with explanations of other small power revisionism and belligerent diplomacy. Cambodia's provocative Vietnam policy from 1975 to 1978 is best explained by Pol Pot's affect on Cambodian policy making. Iraq's war against Kuwait and its subsequent conflict with the United States reflects Sadaam Hussein's dominant role in Iraqi politics. Cuba's long Cold War conflict with the United States reflected Fidel Castro's ideological commitment to challenge US interests in the Caribbean. And the escalation of Sino–Soviet conflict from 1958 through the end of the 1960s reflected Mao Zedong's personal commitment to nationalist and ideological goals for China. In each of these cases, the leader exposed his country to considerable risk of war or actual war with a far more powerful adversary in pursuit of his domestic ideological and/or nationalist objectives. And in each case it is clear that the adversary's commitment and capability to defend the status quo was strong. Moreover, in each case the revisionist leader's priorities were not shared by the population.

What makes the Taiwan case very different from these other examples of high-risk small-power revisionism is not only the obvious differences between Chen Shui-bian and the aforementioned extremist totalitarian leaders but, even more important, that Taiwan is a democracy and that voters and political institutions can affect Taiwan's mainland policy. In contrast to the role of high-risk leaders in authoritarian systems, high-risk leaders in a democracy are subject to the constraints of the voters. This has been Chen Shui-bian's experience in Taiwan. His ability to challenge the mainland's

39. Charles Snyder, 'US observers say fallout from NUC can be managed', *Taipei Times*, (3 March 2006), FBIS, CPP20060303968014; *China Times*, (28 February 2006), FBIS, 200602281477.1_650a007f190ec67e; *China Post*, (7 April 2006), available at: <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/archive/detail.asp?cat=1&id=77876>. Note that Taiwan's Chinese language statement regarding the NUC used the Chinese-language term *zhongzhi*, which means 'to cancel'.

interest in maintaining Taiwan's ambiguous adherence to the one-China principle has been undermined by voter caution, electoral setbacks, and resulting institutional opposition to a change in Taiwan's diplomatic status. Thus, the inability of Chen's Democratic Progressive Party to win a majority of seats in the Legislative Yuan in the December 2004 election denied Chen the political authority to revise the Taiwan constitution to affect such issues as the delimitation of the sovereign territory of Taiwan as encompassing both Taiwan and the mainland and the *de jure* name of Taiwan as the Republic of China. Voter dissatisfaction with Chen's mainland policy was a primary cause of the DPP's defeat in this election.⁴⁰

In the aftermath of the December 2004 DPP defeat in the legislative elections, the KMT leadership seized the opportunity to develop a status-quo mainland policy predicated on negotiating with mainland leaders to reduce cross-Strait tensions and enhance stability and economic cooperation. The continued popularity of KMT policy through the December 2005 local elections, especially of its succession of leadership visits to Beijing, adds a further constraint on Chen's ability to move Taiwan closer to *de jure* independence, a constraint derived from the power of the Taiwan people in a democracy.

Another difference between authoritarian and democratic systems is that in democratic systems there are periodic institutionalized successions, so that high-risk leaders can be replaced by 'normal', less risk-acceptant leaders. This will soon be the case in Taiwan. President Chen is in his final four-year term. In 2008 Taiwan will choose a new leader, one who will presumably be less risk-acceptant than Chen, regardless of party affiliation. Given the personality sources of Taiwan's contemporary revisionist diplomacy, the Taiwan leadership succession, more than anything else, will contribute to enhanced stability in cross-Strait relations.

In addition to leadership changes in Taiwan, cross-Strait dynamics will continue to change. First, over the next few years the military and economic forces that have encouraged caution on the part of the Taiwan electorate will become even more salient, as mainland economic and military modernization continues and the deterrent force of its economic and military retaliatory capabilities become even more effective. Second, as the record of violent repression by mainland Chinese against the Taiwanese recedes further into history and the number of Taiwanese who have positive educational, societal, and economic experiences on the mainland increases, Taiwanese animosity toward the mainland will decline, so that the momentum of Taiwan identity will slow and the proportion of Taiwanese who consider themselves both Taiwanese and Chinese will grow. These two trends will also encourage Taiwan moderation.

We may now be witnessing the onset of the determined demise of the Taiwan independence movement.⁴¹ Growing Taiwan interest in returning to some form of the 'one-China' formula will quiet much of the recent cross-Strait turmoil and will reduce a major source of tension in US-China relations.⁴² Nonetheless, the 'Taiwan

40. Interviews with DPP party and government officials, January 2005.

41. For a fuller development of this argument, see Robert S. Ross, 'Taiwan's fading independence movement', *Foreign Affairs* 85(1), (March-April 2006).

42. An April 2006 poll reported that only 13% of respondents disproved of the 'one-China, different interpretations' formula supported by the KMT; 50% supported the formula. See *China Post*, (6 April 2006), available at: <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/backissue/taiwan/detail.asp?ID=79898&GRP=B>.

issue' will remain a contentious issue for both the mainland and Taiwan and for US–China relations. Even should Taiwan moderate its mainland policy, Chinese leaders will remain intent on achieving unification of Taiwan with the People's Republic of China. And even under the best of circumstances, it will take some time for cross-Strait circumstances to return to the pre-1995 period, when there was mutual trust that each side agreed that there was one-China and, in this context, the Taiwan Strait was de-militarized. Until this situation is achieved, Chinese deployments will inevitably be perceived as a coercive instrument and as enabling use of force for unification. Such threatening Chinese capabilities will continue to contribute to both Taiwan insecurity and US–China differences. Nonetheless, moderation in Taiwan's revisionist independence policy is the prerequisite for demilitarization to occur. And once Taiwan moderation occurs, the burden will be on the mainland to establish its peaceful intent and its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue.