

Origins of the Strategic Ambiguity Policy: The Wilsonian Open Door and Truman's China-Taiwan Policy¹

The Problem of the Taiwan Strait Conflict

The Taiwan Strait is probably one of the “most dangerous” flashpoints in world politics today because the Taiwan issue could realistically trigger an all-out war between two nuclear-armed great powers, the United States and People's Republic of China (PRC).² Since 1949, cross-strait tensions, rooted in the Chinese civil war between Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist Party (KMT) and Mao Zedong's Communist Party (CCP), have been contentious and, at times, highly militarized. As analyzed by many scholars, the Taiwan Strait crises in 1954, 1958, 1995-96, and 2003-06 brought the PRC, Taiwan, and the United States closely to the brink of war.³ In each of these episodes, however, rational restraint prevailed due to America's superior power influence to prevent both sides from upsetting the tenuous cross-strait status quo.

Indeed, having an abiding interest in a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Strait conflict, Washington has always assumed a pivotal role in deterring both Taipei and Beijing from aggressions and reckless behaviors. U.S. leaders seek to do this through the maintenance of a delicate balance: acknowledging the one-China principle, preserving the necessary ties to defend Taiwan's freedom and security while insisting that all resolutions must be peaceful and consensual.⁴ The Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, and Ronald Reagan administrations formalized these commitments in the three U.S.-China

¹ This paper is an abridged and modified version of the author's recent book: Dean P. Chen, *U.S. Taiwan Strait Policy: The Origins of Strategic Ambiguity* (Boulder, CO: First Forum Press of the Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2012).

² Nancy B. Tucker, *Strait Talk* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 277. See also Alan D. Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice* (Washington DC: The Henry Stimson Center, 2003), p. 14.

³ Ibid. See also Alexander George and Richard Smoke, *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974); Gordon Chang, “To the Nuclear Brink: Eisenhower, Dulles, and the Quemoy-Matsu Crisis,” *International Security* 12, no. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 96-123; Robert Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment: United States Policy toward Taiwan, 1950-1955* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 1996); Chen Jian, *Mao's China & the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Zhao Suisheng ed., *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995-96 Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1999), and Robert Ross, “The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontations: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force,” *International Security* 25, no. 2 (Fall 2000), pp. 87-123; and Thomas Christensen, “Shaping the Choices of a Rising China: Recent Lessons for the Obama Administration,” *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 3 (July 2009), pp. 89-104.

⁴ Michael Swaine, *America's Challenge: Engaging a Rising China in the Twenty-First Century* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), pp. 85-86.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

Joint Communiqués of 1972, 1979, and 1982, the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, and the Six Assurances of 1982.⁵ In February 2000, President Bill Clinton, referring to Taiwan's democracy, insisted that cross-strait differences must also be resolved with the assent of the Taiwanese people.⁶ Yet, Beijing and Taipei each perceives Washington's ambivalent stance as opportunistic and calculating. While China sees America as implicitly encouraging Taiwanese independence to keep China divided and weak,⁷ Taiwan feels insecure that the United States will sacrifice the island's democratic and political interests to appease China.⁸ After all, Taipei remembers vividly how America severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1979 in order to reconcile with Beijing to counterbalance the Soviet Union.

Nonetheless, following his inauguration as Taiwan's new president in May 2008, Ma Ying-jeou of the KMT has pledged to reverse his predecessors' hardline mainland policy and to reengage Beijing under the rubric of the "1992 consensus," also known as "one China, respective interpretations."⁹ The PRC president Hu Jintao responded favorably to Ma's overture. As a result, cross-strait confrontations have greatly subsided,

⁵ Dennis V. Hickey, "America's Two-Point Policy and the Future of Taiwan," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 28, No. 8 (August 1988), pp. 881-896; Alan D. Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice*; and Richard C. Bush, *At Cross Purposes* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004).

⁶ Richard Bush, *Untying the Knot* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution Press, 2005), p. 261.

⁷ Alan Wachman, *Why Taiwan?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp. 114-115; Dennis V. Hickey, "Rapprochement between Taiwan and the Chinese Mainland: Implications for American Foreign Policy," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 20, no. 69 (March 2011), p. 235.

⁸ Nancy Tucker, *Strait Talk*, pp. 5-6.

⁹The so-called "1992 consensus" is a political formula, which is said to have been derived from the Oct-Nov 1992 meeting in Hong Kong between China and Taiwan. The consensus refers to that both Beijing and Taipei have implicitly agreed to "disagree" about the meaning of one China, hence, the notion of "one China, respective interpretations." While Beijing insists that Taiwan is part of the PRC, Taipei defines it as both Taiwan and mainland belonging to the Republic of China (ROC) founded by Dr. Sun Yat-sen in October 1911. The Hong Kong meeting aimed to facilitate a meeting between Wang Daohan, head of the PRC's newly created semi-official Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) and Koo Chen-fu, chairman of Taiwan's Strait Exchange Foundation (SEF). The "1992 consensus" has remained controversial. Although the KMT and CCP have in general supported it, Taiwan's opposition, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and former presidents Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian, both proponents of Taiwan independence, denied its validity completely. On the background of the "1992 consensus," see Su Chi and Cheng An-guo eds., *Yige Zhongguo Gezi Biaoshu Gongshi De Shishi [One China, Respective Interpretations: A Historical Account of the Consensus]* (Taipei: National Policy Foundation, 2003); Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) eds., *Jiuer Gongshi Lishi Cunzheng [The Historical Documentations of the 1992 Consensus]* (Beijing: Jiuzhou Press, 2005); and Su Chi, *Taiwan's Relations with Mainland China: A Tail Wagging Two Dogs* (New York: Routledge, 2009), especially Chapter 1. On President Ma Ying-jeou's new mainland policy, see Baohui Zhang, "Taiwan's New Grand Strategy," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 69 (March 2011), pp. 269-285.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

and the two sides reached various economic and technological accords.¹⁰ In June 2010, Taipei and Beijing signed the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) to deepen bilateral economic integration and cultural exchanges.¹¹ Welcoming these peaceful developments, President Barack Obama, in a joint statement with Hu Jintao, remarked:

We also applauded the steps that the People's Republic of China and Taiwan have already taken to relax tensions and build ties across the Taiwan Strait. Our own policy, based on the three U.S.-China Communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act, supports the further development of these ties—ties that are in the interest of both sides, as well as the broader region and the United States.¹²

In January 2012, President Ma's and the KMT's successful reelections have allowed the continuation of cross-strait peace and talks.¹³ Notwithstanding these positive trajectories, the current peaceful trends do not eliminate the deep-seated antagonism between China and Taiwan and their mutual lack of trust toward the United States.

In essence, despite Hu's "peaceful development" approach toward Taiwan,¹⁴ China has never renounced the use of force to reunify with the island. In fact, buttressed by the 2005 Anti-Secession Law, Beijing's military preparations and missile deployments

¹⁰ Qian Xin, "Beyond Power Politics: Institution-Building and Mainland China's Taiwan Policy Transition," *Journal of Contemporary China* 19, no. 65 (June 2010), pp. 525-539.

¹¹ For in-depth discussions of ECFA and its security implications for the United States, see Chapter 2 of this book. For good background information, see Scott Kastner, *Political Conflict and Economic Interdependence across the Taiwan Strait and Beyond* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), and Daniel Rosen & Zhi Wang, *The Implications of China-Taiwan Economic Liberalization* (Washington DC: Peterson Institute for International Economics, 2011).

¹² "Joint Press Statement by President Obama and President Hu of China," White House Press Release, November 17, 2009, Beijing, available from: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/joint-press-statement-president-obama-and-president-hu-china>.

¹³ In response to Ma's reelection, Wang Yi, chairman of China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), asserted that Hu Jintao's cross-strait peaceful development policy was on the right track. Throughout the spring of 2012, further progress were made between China and Taiwan on the commodity and trade talks under the ECFA, exchange of trade organization offices, negotiation of a Yuan Settlement Agreement, negotiation of the Investment Protection Agreement, and the preparation of the Eighth SEF-ARATS Talks in August. See David Brown, "Post-Election Continuity," *Comparative Connections* (April 2012), pp. 1-2.

¹⁴ Unlike his predecessors, Hu Jintao muted China's past insistence on reunification with Taiwan under the "one country, two systems" formula. He and his officials, have, instead, focused more on preventing Taiwan's independence and promised various cross-strait economic, cultural, educational, and other benefits for the Taiwan people. See Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations: Power and Policy since the Cold War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), pp. 159-160.

targeting at Taiwan have continued unabated.¹⁵ In addition to satisfying nationalistic interest and enhancing the CCP's ruling legitimacy,¹⁶ the PRC also has a strong geostrategic rationale in recovering Taiwan. As a "gateway to the Pacific," Taiwan, if under Chinese possession, would enhance Beijing's control over surrounding coastal waters such as the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, and South China Sea and strengthen her maritime and naval-force projection capabilities to diminish American (and Japanese) influence in East Asia.¹⁷ On the other hand, Taiwan, a vibrant democracy, has increasingly emphasized its separate political identity from Mainland China, expressing a strong desire for greater political autonomy and international space.¹⁸ Public opinion polls in Taiwan consistently show that an overwhelming majority of the Taiwanese people, roughly 80 percent, is in favor of maintaining the status-quo, that is, neither reunification nor independence. But, 14 percent supports independence while only less than 6 percent of Taiwanese backs reunification with China.¹⁹ It is important to note that the proportion of those supporting independence has grown tremendously over the last 10 years.²⁰ Knowing that unification is highly unpopular in Taiwan, Ma has eschewed the possibility of near-term political reunification, putting it off to an indefinite future and under the stringent conditions that include both a democratic China and democratic approval from Taiwan's people. The president reaffirmed in his victory speech on the

¹⁵ Dennis V. Hickey, *Foreign Policy Making in Taiwan* (New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 42; Michael Swaine, *America's Challenge*, p. 89. See also Robert Sutter, "Taiwan's Future: Narrowing Straits," *The National Bureau of Asian Research* (May 2011), p. 16; and Richard C. Bush, "Taiwan and East Asian Security," *Orbis* (Spring 2011), p. 277.

¹⁶ Edward Friedman, "The Prospects of a Larger War: Chinese Nationalism and the Taiwan Strait Conflict," in Suisheng Zhao ed., *Across the Taiwan Strait*, pp. 243-275; and Chien-Kai Chen, "Comparing Jiang Zemin's Impatience with Hu Jintao's Patience Regarding the Taiwan Issue, 1989-2012," *Journal of Contemporary China* (2012), pp. 6-8.

¹⁷ Alan Wachman, *Why Taiwan*, pp. 138-142.

¹⁸ Daniel Lynch, "Taiwan's Self-Conscious Nation-Building Project," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 44, No.4 (August, 2004), pp. 513-533; see also T.Y. Wang et al., "Taiwan's Expansion of International Space: Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of Contemporary China* 20, no. 69 (March 2011), pp. 249-267.

¹⁹ See the survey data gathered and compiled by the Republic of China's Mainland Affairs Council, from 2002 to 2010. The website is: <http://www.mac.gov.tw/ct.asp?xItem=93358&ctNode=6921&mp=3>.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, See also Phillip Saunders & Scott Kastner, "Bridging over Troubled Water?" *International Security*, Vol. 33, No.4 (Spring 2009), pp. 88-89.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

night of January 14, 2012 that “there is no rush to open up political dialogue [with China].... It’s not a looming issue.”²¹

More importantly, Taiwan’s and China’s lack of confidence toward the United States could lead either actor to misinterpret Washington as siding with its opponent. In September 2011, for instance, Beijing, always vexed by America’s arms sales to Taiwan, protested against the Obama administration’s pending decision to either upgrade Taiwan’s existing F-16 A/B aircrafts or to sell 66 more advanced F-16 C/D fighter jets to the island. At the same time, Taipei charged that Washington has been intentionally delaying the sales of F-16 C/D jets to avoid alienating China and complicating other U.S. priorities requiring Beijing’s cooperation.²² Mistrust could fuel suspicion, misperception, and misjudgment, and these could “at any moment plunge Taiwan, China, and the United States into a conflict all want to avoid.”²³ The presumption that Washington would eventually abandon Taiwan could compel Taipei to take policy actions that are detrimental to regional stability and U.S. interests, such as a declaration of independence or simply succumbing to Beijing. Similarly, since the CCP elites have viewed Washington as the primary impediment to its reunification with Taiwan (and such anxiety may be accelerating in light of the Obama administration’s recent announcement of a “pivot” or a “rebalancing” strategy in the Asian Pacific),²⁴ Beijing may initiate military preemption to take over Taiwan and to deter and delay any American interventions in the region.²⁵

²¹ Andrew Jacobs, “President of Taiwan is Re-elected,” *The New York Times*, January 14, 2012. See also “Ma Shengxuan Tan Liangan, Bu Ji Yu Zhengzhi Xieshang [President Ma Talks about the Cross-Strait Relations after His Election Victory: No Rush on Political Negotiations],” *The China Times*, January 15, 2012; and Andrew Higgins, “Taiwan Unlikely to Move to Reunify with China, Despite Ma Ying-jeou’s Reelection,” *The Washington Post*, January 15, 2012.

²² Robert Sutter, “Taiwan’s Future: Narrowing Straits,” pp. 15-16; “Delicate Dance: America Balances Old Commitments with New Priorities,” *Economist*. September 24, 2011. Available from <http://www.economist.com/node/21530162>.

²³ Nancy Tucker, *Strait Talk*, p. 277.

²⁴ Michael Swaine, “Chinese Leadership and Elite Responses to the U.S. Pacific Pivot,” *China Leadership Monitor* no. 38 (Summer 2012), pp. 1-26. For an official explanation of the Obama administration’s Asian Pacific policy, see Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, (November 2011); accessible at: http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/10/11/americas_pacific_century?page=full.

²⁵ Thomas Christensen, “The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Deterring a Taiwan Conflict,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No.4 (Autumn 2002), pp. 17-18. See also Thomas Christensen, “Posing Problems without Catching Up: China’s Rise and Challenges for U.S. Security Policy,” *International Security* 25, no. 4 (Spring 2001), pp. 5-40.

The Main Argument

This paper, therefore, purports to explain the origins of the United States' Taiwan Strait policy, known as strategic ambiguity. This policy rests on the notion that Washington aims to deter Beijing from militarily coercing reunification with Taiwan by suggesting it might intervene while preventing Taipei from unilaterally declaring independence by revealing it might not support such a move. Because cross-strait war may result out of China's and Taiwan's misinterpretations of the United States' intention, it is necessary to examine the origins of strategic ambiguity policy to understand the ideas and interests behind its inception.

I wish to raise two objections to the prevailing arguments on the subject. First, in contrast to the mainstream position that strategic ambiguity started with the Nixon and Carter administrations in the 1970s,²⁶ I posit that policy actually began with the Truman administration at the height of China's civil war in late 1949 and early 1950.²⁷ Second, while power politics and the logic of deterrence form a strong basis behind strategic ambiguity, one must not dismiss the liberal normative commitment—the Wilsonian Open Door internationalism—underpinning the inception of that policy. To ignore it would

²⁶ For origins of strategic ambiguity, which scholars have set its policy inception in 1972 when President Richard Nixon signed the Shanghai Communiqué with China, see Dennis V. Hickey, "America's Two-Point Policy and the Future of Taiwan"; Robert Sutter, *The China Quandary* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1983); Jonathan Pollack, "China's Taiwan Strategy: A Point of No Return?" *The China Journal*, no. 36 (July, 1996), pp. 111-116; Robert Sutter, *U.S. Policy Toward China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998); Martin Lasater, *The Taiwan Conundrum in U.S. China Policy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000); Andrew Nathan, "What's Wrong with American Taiwan Policy," *Washington Quarterly* 23, no. 2 (Spring, 2000), pp. 93-106; Philip Yang, "From Strategic Ambiguity to 'Three Nos': The Changing Nature of U.S. policy toward Taiwan," in Barry Rubin and Thomas Keane, eds., *U.S. Allies in a Changing World* (Portland: Frank Cass Publishers, 2001); Steven Goldstein and Randall Schriver, "An Uncertain Relationship: the United States, Taiwan, and the Taiwan Relations Act," *The China Quarterly* 165 (2001), pp. 147-172; Ramon Myers, Michel Oksenberg, and David Shambaugh, eds., *Making China Policy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001); Andrew Wedeman, "Strategic Ambiguity and Partisan Politics: American Domestic Politics and Stability in the Taiwan Strait," *Cambridge Review of International Relations* 14, no.2 (2001), pp. 222-238; Pan Zhongqi, "U.S. Taiwan Policy of Strategic Ambiguity," *Journal of Contemporary China* 12, no. 35 (May, 2003), pp. 387-407; Richard Bush, *At Cross Purposes*; Lowell Dittmer, "Bush, China, Taiwan: A Triangular Analysis," *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 10, no. 2 (Fall, 2005), pp. 21-42; Richard Bush, *Untying the Knot*.

²⁷ Nancy Tucker, however, dated the origins of strategic ambiguity to the Eisenhower administration in the mid-1950s. Specifically, she wrote that "it is clear that the 1954-55 Taiwan Strait crisis had three fundamental, long-term effects on U.S.-Taiwan-China interaction... Washington's difficulties controlling its ally and deterring its adversary produced the enduring if sometimes reviled, policy of strategic ambiguity." See Nancy Tucker, *Strait Talk*, p. 14.

risk attributing America's motivation to mere materialistic consideration, which would be a gross misrepresentation of Washington's interest toward China and Taiwan.

Hence, the central question here is: why did President Harry S. Truman and his advisers (Dean Acheson, Livingston Merchant, John Foster Dulles, and Dean Rusk) reject the option, in 1949-50, of recognizing the People's Republic of China and abandoning Taiwan, and, instead, choose to maintain an ambiguous stance between Beijing and Taipei? On October 3, 1949, two days after Mao Zedong's founding of New China, President Truman remarked that "we should be in no hurry whatever to recognize this regime."²⁸ According to David McLean, the United States followed a course of policy "clearly at odds with the preferred policies of most other Western and Asian states."²⁹ In fact, between December 1949 and January 1950, Beijing received diplomatic recognition from the following nations: Britain, Soviet Union, India, Burma, Norway, Israel, Finland, Sweden, Switzerland, Pakistan, Ceylon, and Afghanistan. France, Italy, Australia, Canada, and Japan expressed high desire to follow suit but chose to postpone their decisions pending on Washington's actions.³⁰

Nevertheless, the Truman administration had, by early 1950, opted for a strategic ambiguity framework predicated on a series of inconsistent formulas: (1) promoting a PRC-Soviet split; (2) denying Taiwan to Communist control; (3) acknowledging Taiwan as part of Nationalist China without foreclosing the idea that the island's international status remained undetermined; and (4) recognizing the Nationalist regime as the legitimate Chinese government while opposing Chiang Kai-shek's initiative to retake the mainland. Thus, in contrast to the view that the United States had abandoned Taiwan in January 1950 and reversed its course only after the outbreak of the Korean War on June 25, 1950,³¹ this study agrees with the earlier findings of John Lewis Gaddis, June Grasso, David Finkelstein, and Robert Accinelli that the Truman administration never gave up on

²⁸ "Meeting with President: Recognition of Chinese Communist Government," October 3, 1949, Memorandum of Conversations with the President, 1949-1952/1949/Box1/RG59/250/46/3/4, National Archives, College Park, MD.

²⁹ David McLean, "American Nationalism, the China Myth, and the Truman Doctrine: The Question of Accommodation with Peking, 1949-1950," *Diplomatic History* 10, no.4 (January 1986), p. 26.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

³¹ Nancy B. Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), p. 187; Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), pp. 128-133; Oystein Tunsjo, *U.S. Taiwan Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 29-30.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

saving the island from a Communist takeover, although the means to that end must be unobtrusive to avoid compromising Washington's overarching China policy.³² Gaddis wrote, "[At] no point during 1949 and 1950 was Washington prepared to acquiesce in control of the island by forces hostile to the United States.... The problem was to achieve this objective without getting further involved in the Chinese civil war."³³ Though President Truman and Secretary Acheson were more inclined to defend Taiwan through nonmilitary options, archival evidence suggests that they were seriously considering the more proactive interventionist proposals put forward by Rusk and Dulles in early June 1950. The White House's lack of an affirmative decision on the eve of the Korean War should not be construed as "writing off" Taiwan.

Why Strategic Ambiguity?

From a realist state-centric perspective,³⁴ however, recognizing Beijing and severing ties with Taipei would also have, or perhaps better, served Washington's long-term strategic interests. Nancy B. Tucker stresses that an early accommodation or recognition of the People's Republic of China would bring America strategic gains and benefits, including expediting the Sino-Soviet split, forging a united front with Great Britain, speeding Japan's economic recovery, and ameliorating the fervor of Asian nationalism that Moscow was so eager to exploit against the Western powers.³⁵ Although American recognition of the People's Republic and cutting off relations with Chiang Kai-shek would not drastically modify Mao's radical worldview and inherent mistrust of the U.S.,

³² John L. Gaddis, "The Strategic Perspective: The Rise and Fall of the Defensive Perimeter Concept, 1947-1951," in Dorothy Borg & Waldo Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 61-118; June Grasso, *Truman's Two China Policy* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1987), p. 128; David Finkelstein, *Washington's Taiwan Dilemma, 1949-1950* (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1994), pp. 315-317; Robert Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 17-27. In addition, biographies and memoir of Dean Rusk are also useful sources to support that the Truman administration was actively searching for a satisfactory solution to defend Taiwan against PRC invasion. See Warren Cohen, *Dean Rusk*, p. 46; Thomas Schoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1989), pp. 208-209; and Dean Rusk, *As I saw It* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1990), p. 284.

³³ John L. Gaddis, "The Strategic Perspective," p. 93.

³⁴ The realist school of international politics sees national security interest defined in terms of power and that states, in an international system of anarchy, are only concerned with either the maximization of power or survival through the balance of power. See Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1948/2005), and Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: The McGraw-Hill, 1979).

³⁵ Nancy B. Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust*, pp. 38-39.

it would, according to Thomas Christensen, “have prevented the escalation of the Korean War in fall 1950.”³⁶ Despite its antagonistic feeling toward the Nationalists on Taiwan, Washington remained faithful to the regime until 1979. And, even after recognizing the PRC, the United States has kept unofficial relations with the island, remained committed to its defense, and supported its economic liberalization and political democratization.³⁷

This trend prevails in today’s U.S.-China-Taiwan relations as well. In the post-Cold War era, China’s rise as an international military and economic heavyweight led the Clinton administration, in spite of its initial protests against China’s human rights abuses, to opt for an engagement policy by constructing a “strategic partnership” with Beijing to further “closer Chinese integration with the world economic and political order.”³⁸ In a similar vein, Robert Zoellick, the deputy secretary of state under the George W. Bush administration, urged Beijing to assume the role of a “responsible stakeholder” in the international system.³⁹ Despite differences with China over its human rights repression, authoritarian governance, military buildups, under-devalued currency, and trade imbalances, Washington needs the PRC’s assistance in curtailing North Korea’s and Iran’s nuclear ambitions, controlling global warming, fighting the war on terrorism, and restoring international economic stability following the 2008 global financial crisis. Since taking office in January 2009, the Obama White House has also given high priority to the deepening of bilateral dialogues and cultivation of “positive, constructive, and comprehensive” relations with China.⁴⁰ President Obama welcomes “a strong,

³⁶ Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, p. 140.

³⁷ Alan Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice*, p. 12.

³⁸ Robert Sutter, *U.S.-Chinese Relations: Perilous Past, Pragmatic Present* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), p. 108. On the engagement policy toward China, see also David Shambaugh, “Containment or Engagement of China? Calculating Beijing’s Responses,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 1996), p. 185; Kenneth Lieberthal, “A New China Strategy,” *Foreign Affairs* 74, no. 6 (Nov/Dec 1995), p. 47; Randall L. Schweller, “Managing the Rise of Great Powers: History and Theory,” in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999), p. 14. See also, in the same volume, Robert Ross, “Engagement in U.S. China Policy,” p. 185; Jean Garrison, *Making China Policy: From Nixon to G.W. Bush* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), Ch. 7; and Suisheng Zhao, “China Rising: Geostrategic Thrust and Diplomatic Engagement,” in Suisheng Zhao, ed., *China-U.S. Relations Transformed: Perspectives and Strategic Interactions* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 20-42.

³⁹ Warren Cohen, *America’s Response to China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 274; Michael Swaine, *America’s Challenge*, pp. 57-59.

⁴⁰ Jeffrey Bader, *Obama and China’s Rise: An Insider’s Account of America’s Asia Strategy* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), p. 23.

prosperous, and successful China that would play a stronger leadership role on global issues,” stating clearly that the United States has no intention to contain China, as was the case with the Soviet Union, both “because of the inherent differences between those two nations and because of the hopelessness of pursuing such a policy toward a country that was much more profoundly integrated into the global system.”⁴¹

Nonetheless, Taiwan has remained to be a major stumbling block to a smoother Sino-American relationship.⁴² Besides strategic ambiguity, the United States has other policy choices to deal with the Taiwan Strait conflict, including staying out, pressing Taiwan to come to terms with Beijing, and supporting Taiwan’s independence.⁴³ Supporting reunification would be a viable option for Washington to consolidate its relations with Beijing. Certainly, giving up on Taiwan may erode America’s security commitments in East Asia and may also appear appealing to an authoritarian power.⁴⁴ But, if international politics, according to Kenneth Waltz, is about interactions of the great power states, then the costs of sacrificing a smaller state may be less than the benefits of maintaining stable relations between the major powers.⁴⁵ “The eradication of this flashpoint [Taiwan],” said Tucker “would instantly and overwhelmingly reduce friction and the risk of accidental clashes between Washington and Beijing. Unification would unquestionably affect some U.S. interests adversely, but not nearly as much as would war between China and the United States.”⁴⁶ Consequently, in both the 1949-50 and contemporary eras, national security interests as conceived by realists cannot adequately account for Washington’s strategic ambiguity policy.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 69. For their part, however, Chinese officials obviously are repugnant about this engagement concept. Shambaugh stresses, “That the implicit goal of engagement is to transform China’s international and domestic behavior based on rules and norms largely set by Western nations and organizations is not lost on the Chinese. The Chinese leadership, Foreign Ministry, military, and international relations institutes strongly suspect that engagement is merely a ‘soft containment’ or ‘peaceful evolution.’” As a result, American officials have tried to make clear, from time to time, that the U.S. wants to engage China, not to contain or rollback China. See David Shambaugh, “Containment or Engagement of China,” p. 206.

⁴² Alan Wachman, *Why Taiwan?* p.114.

⁴³ Nancy B. Tucker, “China-Taiwan: U.S. Debates and Policy Choices,” *Survival*, Vol. 40, No. 4 (Winter 1998-99), pp. 150-167; Richard Bush, *Untying the Knot*, pp. 258-264.

⁴⁴ Nancy B. Tucker and Bonnie Glaser, “Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?” *The Washington Quarterly* 34, no. 4 (Fall 2011), pp. 32-33.

⁴⁵ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, pp. 130-131.

⁴⁶ Nancy B. Tucker, “If Taiwan Chooses Unification, Should the United States Care?” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Summer 2002), p. 24.

Domestic congressional pressure and interest group politics do play important roles. But, according to this author's case studies,⁴⁷ they are only secondary. Foreign policymaking, especially in the realm of security affairs, remains the prerogative of the president and his top executive branch officials.⁴⁸ Specifically, America's liberal ideas assume the important role in shaping the Truman administration's decision-making toward the Taiwan Strait

In essence, I argue that strategic ambiguity was chosen and implemented not simply because it helped to deter Taiwan and China from war but also because it resonated with the ideas and norms of Wilsonian Open Door internationalism.⁴⁹ This Wilsonian view envisions a united, liberal, and democratic China cooperating with the United States and other allies in maintaining a free liberal international order. Strategic ambiguity, on the one hand, allows Washington to safeguard Taiwan's freedom and political autonomy from Communist authoritarian control. An autonomous, though not de-jure independent, Taiwan, free from Chinese Communist control, where Taiwanese self-determination and liberal democracy could eventually take roots could act as the "beacon of hope" for China's democratization.⁵⁰ Bruce Gilley noted, "The revival of

⁴⁷ See Dean P. Chen, *U.S. Taiwan Strait Policy*, Chapters. 3-5.

⁴⁸ Presidential power in foreign affairs, especially after World War II, has increased tremendously, prompting Aaron Wildavsky (1966) to coin term "the two presidencies," that is a constrained president on domestic issues and a president who reins supreme in foreign affairs. In the landmark case of *United States v. Curtiss-Wright Export Corporation* (1936), Justice George Sutherland wrote that foreign policy should be considered the "very delicate, plenary, and exclusive power of the president as the sole organ of the federal government in the field of international relations." For references on Wildavsky and Justice Sutherland's opinion, see Steven Hook, *U.S. Foreign Policy* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2008), p. 98; pp. 115-116.

⁴⁹ Oystein Tunsjo has noted that America's identity entails a "discursive representation" of the Taiwan Strait problem through the "determined," "undetermined," and "red menace" discourses. The "determined discourse" enabled Washington to treat seriously PRC's claims to sovereignty over Taiwan whereas the "undetermined discourse" rested on the United States' commitment as the leader of the free world to defend the island from Communist aggression. Tunsjo's work is important for this study, but he does not make the connection that these elements actually constitute the strategic ambiguity policy. Moreover, by focusing primarily on the production and reproduction of U.S. identity, inter-subjective understanding, and discursive representations of the Taiwan Strait problem, he has dismissed the consistent and long-term liberal objectives underpinning Washington's China-Taiwan policy. See Oystein Tunsjo, *U.S. Taiwan Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁵⁰ Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), pp. 189-191. For in-depth discussions of political comparisons between Taiwan and China and how the former's democratic experience could bring about political changes in the mainland, see Bruce Gilley, "Taiwan's Democratic Transition: A Model for China?" in Bruce Gilley and Larry Diamond, eds., *Political Change in China: Comparisons with Taiwan*, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), pp. 215-242. See also Bruce

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

KMT electoral fortunes in Taiwan after the second presidential term of DPP president Chen Shui-bian [in 2008] could further emphasize the attractions of the Taiwan [democratic] transition for actors in China.”⁵¹ The lessons for Beijing would be that the Communist Party, like its Kuomintang counterpart, could one day rule again through constitutional electoral processes.⁵² Moreover, Taiwan’s dynamic and pluralistic civil society could also be a useful template for China to contemplate as it becomes more integrated into the international liberal economic order.

On the other hand, strategic ambiguity deters Taiwan from challenging China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Table 1 illustrates that America’s Open Door objectives cannot be attained by either permitting the PRC’s forceful reunification with Taiwan, or supporting Taiwan’s counteroffensive against the mainland (as in the era of Chiang Kai-shek) or an unilateral declaration of independence (as in the era of the late 1990s-2000s) that could rally Chinese nationalist sentiment and strengthen the legitimacy of the Communist regime.

Dickson, *Democratization in China and Taiwan*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), and Daniel Lynch, *Rising China and Asian Democratization*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006).

⁵¹ Bruce Gilley, “Taiwan’s Democratic Transition,” p. 240.

⁵² Bruce Gilley, “Not So Dire Straits,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 1 (January/February 2010), p. 53.

U.S. Liberal Objectives in the Taiwan Strait	U.S. Policy Options in the Taiwan Strait			
	Staying out	Pressing Reunification with the PRC	Supporting Taiwan's Offensive or Independence	Strategic Ambiguity
Taiwan's Freedom and Autonomy	No	No	Yes	Yes
China's Democratization	No	Yes/No	No	Yes/No

Table 1

The logic goes as follows: should Beijing coerce Taipei into political union, in light of America's acquiescence, then any signs of liberty and democracy would likely be extinguished on the island, hence strengthening the prestige and authoritarian dominance of the CCP and reducing the hope of democratizing China.

Conversely, if Taipei seeks to attack China or unilaterally declares independence, Beijing would be compelled to tighten its political grip and rally domestic nationalist sentiments in order to keep China's territorial integrity intact. With Washington's blessing, Taiwan may attain, at the minimum, its security, independence, and bring enormous damages to the mainland. But, Taiwan's moves would unlikely result in the total collapse or disintegration of the PRC. Rather, it would push the CCP regime into an extremist position and undermine America's long-term liberal interests in opening and transforming China.

Indeed, more than a half century ago, Harold Isaacs provided a trenchant and illuminating analysis about America's perceptions of China:

Thus, advancing or receding but somewhere always in view, our concepts of China have included both a sense of almost timeless stability and almost unlimited chaos. Our notions of Chinese traits have included sage wisdom and superstitious ignorance, great strength and contemptible weakness, immovable conservatism and unpredictable extremism, philosophic calm and explosive violence. Our emotions about the Chinese have ranged between sympathy and rejection, parental benevolence and parental exasperation, affection and hostility, love and a fear close to hate.⁵³

Notwithstanding the changing times and circumstances in Sino-U.S. relations, these “scratches” have been deeply ingrained in the cognitive mindsets or psyche of U.S. policymakers.⁵⁴ The underlying theme that connects these mixed “love-hate” feelings toward China is America's perpetual hope and failure to transform it into a modern democracy.⁵⁵ Thus, in the turbulent twentieth century, Washington sought, though unsuccessfully, to remake Chiang Kai-shek's China into a strong, united, and democratic power. During Mao's radicalism between 1949 and 1972, America's liberal dream for China vanished altogether and was replaced by a sense of frustration and antagonism against a “red menace.”⁵⁶ Yet, the U.S. found solace in their support and protection of the “free China” on Taiwan which later becomes a liberal democracy. The 1970s and 80s witnessed the thawing of hostility between Washington and Beijing. Deng Xiaoping's market liberalization reform resurrected the old optimism toward China's Open Door. However, negative images resumed soon after Beijing's brutal crackdown of the

⁵³ Harold Isaacs, *Scratches on Our Minds: American Images of China and India* (New York: The John Day Company, 1958), p. 64.

⁵⁴ Warren Cohen, “American Perceptions of China, 1789-1911,” in Carola McGiffert, ed., *China in the American Political Imagination* (Washington DC: The CSIS Press, 2003), pp. 25-30. See also Michael Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987).

⁵⁵ Nancy Tucker, “America First,” in Carola McGiffert, ed., *China in the American Political Imagination*, pp. 18-19.

⁵⁶ Terrill E. Lautz, “Hopes and Fears of 60 Years: American Images of China, 1911-1972,” in Carola McGiffert, ed., *China in the American Political Imagination* (Washington DC: The CSIS Press, 2003), pp. 31-37. For a good explanation on the image of “red menace,” see Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961-1974* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 17-45.

Tiananmen Square demonstrations on June 3-4, 1989, raising attention to the PRC's suppression of human rights and intransigence against democratization.⁵⁷

In sum, the United States, Thomas Christensen contended, has “long-term security and moral interests in the political liberalization of the mainland and that Taiwan’s status as a Chinese democracy—holding out the prospect of unification with the mainland under the right set of conditions—can be a powerful force for liberalization on the mainland.”⁵⁸ If Taiwan rushes into formal independence, however, it would “retard the hope for political reform on the mainland because democracy would be associated with the breakup of the nation, and political reforms would seem like dupes or even agents of the United States and the Taiwan traitors who declared independence.”⁵⁹ Based on these premises, the United States must carefully walk a fine line. Washington cannot abandon or pressure Taiwan to succumb to the PRC’s reunification scheme; it supports neither Taiwan’s endeavors to re-conquer the mainland in the 1950s and 1960s nor its initiative to declare de-jure independence in the 1990s and 2000s.

Strategic ambiguity is ambiguous in its *means*, not in its *ends*. The conditions and parameters of American involvement in a cross-strait crisis are necessarily uncertain.⁶⁰ The United States could dispatch its troops to defend Taiwan, withdraw its support from the island, or simply sit out of the conflict and wait for the dust to settle. Under that policy, Washington, as the “pivot” in the triangular relations with Beijing and Taipei, engages in dual deterrence. This involves deterring the PRC from coercing reunification with Taiwan by raising the possibility that America will intervene while constraining Taipei from provoking Beijing⁶¹ by suggesting that Washington may forsake Taiwan. The assumption is that since both Taipei and Beijing rely on Washington’s blessing (or,

⁵⁷ James Mann, “Left, Right, Mainstream, and Goldlocks: America’s Perceptions of China after 1972,” in Carola McGiffert, ed., *China in the American Political Imagination* (Washington DC: The CSIS Press, 2003), pp. 38-44.

⁵⁸ Thomas J. Christensen, “The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Deterring a Taiwan Conflict,” p. 19.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Nancy Tucker, “China-Taiwan: U.S. Debates and Policy Choices,” p. 162.

⁶¹ Taiwan’s “provocation” has two different meanings. First, from early 1950s to late 1980s, when Taiwan was under the high authoritarian control of the Nationalists, Taipei claimed itself as the legitimate government of all China and boasted to re-conquer Mainland China from the Communists. But, from 1990s onward, with the emergence of democratization and rising sentiment for Taiwanese independence, Taiwan’s threat to Beijing has become a permanent separation from China and the creation of an independent Taiwan Republic.

at least, tacit support) for their actions, the ambiguity with respect to the United States' response in a Taiwan Strait confrontation could complicate their calculations and forestall imprudent behaviors.⁶²

Nevertheless, America's ultimate objective is clear—a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan Strait conflict in the long and, perhaps, indefinite, future. Either reunification or independence is acceptable for Washington as long as it is derived from mutual, peaceful, and non-coercive process by both parties.⁶³ If the PRC were to offer a unification plan that would preserve the island's autonomy and democratic system and that Taiwan, through its democratic process, accepts it, the United States would find this arrangement favorable to its interest.⁶⁴ Strategic ambiguity is, in short, not just a deterrence strategy providing security and stability. It seeks also to realize the Wilsonian Open Door vision of transforming China into a liberal democratic state.

Signaling American Interests to Both China and Taiwan

Exploring the origins of and rationale of strategic ambiguity from the Wilsonian liberal traditions is significant because, as mentioned earlier, war between Taiwan and China could still erupt out of either side's misperception of Washington's intentions. Yet, reflecting America's fundamental liberal values, Wilsonian Open Door internationalism would assume an important "signaling function" to both China and Taiwan. James Fearon noted that while wars are costly and risky, they occur because states tend to misrepresent their genuine resolve to gain a better deal from their opponents. So, in the absence of clear signaling, states, ever uncertain of each others' true intentions, can go to

⁶² This definition of strategic ambiguity is paraphrased from Richard C. Bush, *Untying the Knot*, pp. 255-256. On the notion of "dual deterrence," see Brett V. Benson and Emerson M.S. Niou, "Comprehending Strategic Ambiguity: U.S. Security Commitment to Taiwan,"

<http://www.duke.edu/~niou/teaching/strategic%20ambiguity.pdf>; and also see Andrew Nathan, "What's Wrong with American Taiwan Policy"; Pan Zhongqi, "U.S. Taiwan Policy of Strategic Ambiguity." On "pivotal deterrence," see Timothy Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

⁶³ Nancy Tucker, "China-Taiwan: U.S. Debates and Policy Choices," p. 160; Alan Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice*, p. 7; Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters*, pp. 193-194.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194; Nancy B. Tucker, "If Taiwan Chooses Unification, Should the United States Care?" pp. 25-26. On America's interest in a peaceful resolution of the cross-strait impasse, see also Richard Bush, *At Cross Purposes*; Andrew Nathan, "What's Wrong with American Taiwan Policy"; and Dennis V. Hickey, "Rapprochement between Taiwan and Chinese Mainland."

war inadvertently.⁶⁵ He also argued that states with strong domestic audiences, such as democracies, which may penalize leaders electorally for bluffing and mishandling foreign policies, would allow them to express their underlying resolve more credibly.⁶⁶ Thus, Fearon concluded that a democracy's stronger domestic signal helps to deter other states during crises and to ameliorate tensions short of war.

By the same token, Wilsonianism should signal clearly to both Beijing and Taipei that Washington strives for a peaceful resolution of the cross-Strait conflict, and that neither forceful reunification nor unilateral independence corresponds to its Open Door principles. Therefore, if it is in America's genuine interest to maintain the status quo until both sides can reach a peaceful and mutually acceptable final solution then neither Beijing nor Taipei should behave belligerently toward each other or second guess United States' motivation. The next section will discuss the recognition controversy over the PRC regime in the Truman administration, followed by an examination of the connection between Wilson's vision for an Open China and Harry Truman's Taiwan Strait policy. This paper concludes by examining whether the United States today should replace strategic ambiguity with strategic clarity in dealing with a rising China.

The Truman Administration and the Recognition Debate of 1949-50

The U.S. objective with respect to Communist China, as postulated in NSC-34 series⁶⁷ and NSC-41,⁶⁸ was to promote Chinese Titoism by severing ties between Mao's CCP and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, in light of the fact that the Communist Party had, in fall 1949, captured the mainland and become China's official central government, wouldn't America's policy of generating a Sino-Soviet wedge be better served by according formal recognition to Beijing?

⁶⁵ James Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, 49, no. 3 (Summer 1995), pp. 379-414.

⁶⁶ James Fearon, "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands Versus Sinking Costs," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 41, no. 1 (February 1997), pp. 68-90.

⁶⁷ "NSC 34/1: United States Policy toward China," (prepared January 11, 1949), PSF/MNSC/NSC Meeting #33/Truman Papers/Box176, HST Library. "Minutes of the 33rd Meeting of the National Security Council," February 3, 1949; "Records of Actions by the NSC at the 33rd Meeting," February 3, 1949; "Memorandum for the President of the 33rd Meeting of the National Security Council (2/3/1949)," February 4, 1949, PSF/NSC Meeting File/Meeting Discussions/1949/Truman Papers/Box 186, HST Library.

⁶⁸ "NSC-41: United States Policy Regarding Trade with China," February 28, 1949, PSF/MNSC/NSC Meeting # 35/Truman Papers/Box205, HST Library.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

After all, as Livingston T. Merchant, the deputy assistant secretary of state for Far Eastern Affairs from 1949-51, said, “By standard international practice, recognition does not imply approval. Recognition is merely the establishment of formal and traditional channels of communication.”⁶⁹ In establishing a “basis for official communication and thereby enabling presence of our official representatives,” Merchant believed, Communist China and the United States could more easily square their differences.⁷⁰ Formal diplomatic relations between America and the PRC, however, was only established thirty years later, on January 1, 1979. So, what happened in 1949-1950?

The China Lobby

Starting in the 1970s, based on the recently declassified materials from the Truman administration, scholars of Sino-American relations began to assert that Washington had missed a “golden opportunity” to reconcile with the Chinese Communists and normalize relations in the period of 1949-50. One of the explanations for this missed opportunity of rapprochement between the U.S. and PRC is domestic politics, that is, the fierce opposition waged from the China Lobby, or “friends of Chiang Kai-shek.”

According to Ross Koen, the China lobby, dating from the beginning of the Second World War, “ranged from missionaries expelled from China by the Communists, to businessmen who had large financial stakes in China’s future, military leaders disappointed by the inability of the United States to control events in China after WWII, and members of Congress who found in the China problem a lucrative source of ‘issues’ with which to challenge the [Truman] administration.”⁷¹ These affiliates tended to be politically conservative, fervently anti-Communist, and highly supportive of Chiang Kai-shek and his “mission” of mainland recovery.

⁶⁹ “Draft speech by L.T. Merchant, on Recognition, to the Institute of World Organization,” January 12, 1950, Papers of Livingston Merchant (LTM)/Re: Speeches, Statements, and Testimony, 1950/Box 17, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ross Y. Koen, *The China Lobby in American Politics*, (New York: Octagon Books, 1974), p. 212. It is interesting to note that Koen’s book, originally published in 1960, was banned from distribution due to political pressures exerted by the Nationalists and China Lobby. Koen’s book was very critical about the Kuomintang government and its relations with the China Lobby in the U.S. Using its political influence and connection to the China Lobby, the Nationalist government was able to prevent the book from reaching wider audience. It is estimated that approximately over 4,000 copies were destroyed by the publisher and less than 800 actually circulated. Many of these were stolen from libraries by the right wing groups or simply locked up in rare book rooms in university libraries in the United States.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

Notable individuals in the lobby included publisher Henry Luce, businessmen Alfred Kohlberg and Frederick McKee, Congressman Walter Judd (R-Minnesota), and Senators Robert Taft (R-Ohio), Styles Bridges (R-New Hampshire), Kenneth Wherry (R-Nebraska), Pat McCarran (D-Nevada), William Knowland (R-California),⁷² Alexander Smith (R-New Jersey), and Joseph McCarthy (R-Wisconsin). During the 1940s and 1950s, they initiated a series of malicious accusations against academic scholars like Owen Lattimore, and high ranking officials within the State Department, including Foreign Service officers John P. Davies and John S. Service and even Secretaries George Marshall and Dean Acheson, charging them as Communist conspirators for losing China to the CCP.⁷³

Despite the earnest desire of President Truman, Secretary Acheson, and Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-Michigan) to forge a bipartisan foreign policy, these conservative elites and congressional members, motivated partly by politics and partly by anti-Communist and pro-Kuomintang sentiments, threatened to upset the administration's European Recovery Policy, or the Marshall Plan, arguing that "if Europe, why not China?"⁷⁴ Thus, to mobilize domestic support for its containment policy in Europe, the Truman administration ultimately stepped up American assistance to the Nationalists and rejected any working relationships with Beijing. The Communist China, in other words, was a "useful adversary" for Truman to quell domestic oppositions to his foreign policy program.⁷⁵ The China Lobby, in sum, was "credited with forcing a reluctant Truman administration to continue aid to Chiang during the Chinese civil war, preventing recognition of the People's Republic of China and barring it from the United Nations."⁷⁶

⁷² Senator Knowland was so supportive of the Nationalist regime that he was often described as the senator from "Formosa."

⁷³ See Koen, *The China Lobby*, Chapters 2-3; See also Dean Acheson, *Present at Creation* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1969), pp. 364-365; Warren I. Cohen, "The China Lobby" in Alexander DeConde, Richard Burns, and Fredrik Logevall, eds., *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy Volume 1* (Charles Scribner's Son, 2002), pp. 185-191.

⁷⁴ Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, Chapters 3 and 4; Lewis Purifoy, *Harry Truman's China Policy* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1976), pp. 63-64. See also Thomas G. Paterson, "If Europe, Why Not China? The Containment Doctrine, 1947-49," *Prologue* (Spring 1981), pp. 19-38.

⁷⁵ Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, pp. 75-77.

⁷⁶ Warren Cohen, "The China Lobby," p. 185.

The influence of the China Lobby on the Truman administration, however, has been overrated. To be sure, domestic politics matters, but not to the extent that national security interests will be sacrificed at the expense of placating domestic critics. Even though America has a “strong society and a weak state,” Stephan Krasner contended, foreign security policymaking is usually adopted and implemented by the executive branch, which is relatively insulated from external societal pressures.⁷⁷ Indeed, Robert Sutter noted that given the Cold War security structure, China-Taiwan policymaking was largely confined within the executive branch, and it wasn’t until the post-Cold War era that we started to witness a “shift away from the elitism of the past and toward much greater pluralism.”⁷⁸

President Truman, in fact, was a staunch believer in a strong executive on foreign affairs. “I never allowed myself to forget that the final responsibility [of foreign policymaking] was mine,” he wrote in his memoir. Furthermore, the president emphasized that “under the [U.S.] Constitution, the president is required to assume all responsibility for the conduct of foreign affairs. The president cannot abdicate that responsibility and he cannot turn it over to anyone else.”⁷⁹ Rebutting the Republicans’ allegation that Acheson was a Communist sympathizer and their demand for his resignation, Truman put up a strong defense: “If Communism were to prevail in the world today, as it shall not prevail, Dean Acheson would be one of the first to be shot by the enemies of liberty and Christianity.”⁸⁰ Most importantly, despite the “Red Scare” witch hunt of McCarthyism, the Truman White House remained steadfast in its opposition to Chiang Kai-shek’s counteroffensive campaign and in its willingness to deal with the PRC on a de-facto basis.

In addition, the Truman administration never abandoned the Nationalist regime. Its decision to continue aiding Chiang, through the China Aid Act (1948), resulted neither

⁷⁷ Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), pp. 74-75. Moreover, Jeff Frieden posited that crisis situations tend to “precipitate changes in political interests and in policymakers’ room to maneuver,” by “removing many of the institutional and ideological ties that had bound policymakers.” See Jeff Frieden, “Sectoral Conflict and Foreign Economic Policy, 1914-1940,” *International Organization*, Vol. 42, No. 1, (Winter 1998), p. 89.

⁷⁸ Robert Sutter, *U.S. Policy toward China*, pp. 10-11.

⁷⁹ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Vol. I: Year of Decisions* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1955), pp. 546-547.

⁸⁰ This quote is taken from Dean Acheson, *Present at Creation*, p. 366.

from the domestic political pressure nor any emotional attachment to the Nationalists. Rather, it was based on the farsighted assessment that the KMT's survival was the only viable remedy to safeguard Taiwan's freedom and autonomy from the Communists. Similarly, whether Washington would extend diplomatic recognition to Beijing ultimately depended on the president and his top officials within the State Department, Defense Department, and the National Security Council (NSC). Twentieth century presidents, especially in the period of "post-WWII consensus," are very skillful and charismatic in shaping public opinion to their advantage.⁸¹ The chief executive's power and influence over the public and Congress on the China issue is vividly portrayed by Nancy Tucker:

The [Truman] administration retained considerable flexibility in formulating and securing approval for its China policy. Should it decide to remain allied to Chiang Kai-shek and abandon effort to reach an accommodation with the mainland regime, emphasizing the fearsome Communist nature of the Chinese government could heighten popular anxiety to the point that Americans would welcome isolation from China. But, if Washington chose to recognize the Chinese Communists, it could capitalize on a widespread willingness to accept relations with the CCP, [utilizing] the academic, business, religious, and journalistic communities to explain to a confused and generally indifferent citizenry and Congress why dealing with the Communist Chinese would serve America's best interests.⁸²

As a result, I contend that in defining the Taiwan Strait policy, the China Lobby's role was epiphenomenal. The source of the policy of strategic ambiguity must be traced to the executive branch, namely the decision-making process of the president and his top advisers.

The Truman Administration's Anti-Communist Stance

Another perspective contends that it was the Truman administration's inherent anti-CCP and pro-KMT position that alienated Mao's new regime, forcing the latter to treat

⁸¹ The post-WWII consensus (also known as the Almond-Lippmann consensus) describes the notion that public opinion is in general volatile, incoherent, and irrelevant to foreign policymaking. Under the rubric of bipartisanship and Cold War security threats, the Congress was also compliant to the president's objective in foreign affairs and agreed that politics should stop at the "water's edge." For in depth discussion, see Ole R. Holsti, *Public Opinion and American Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), Chapter 2.

⁸² Nancy Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust*, p. 172.

America as an adversary and foreclose all opportunities for a rapprochement.⁸³ This version of the “lost chance” argument increasingly gained salience in the 1980s, as its proponents lamented that had diplomatic relations been established in 1949-50, hostility and confrontation between Beijing and Washington for the next 30 years could be avoided.

Michael Hunt posited that Mao, recognizing Stalin’s ambitions in China, was never wholeheartedly committed to Moscow. Rather, the chairman “moved relatively slowly and half-heartedly toward meeting Soviet desires.” Moderates within the CCP “recognized the likely limits of Soviet aid, the attractive possibility of American credits, and the importance of unimpeded trade with Japan and the United States.”⁸⁴ Moreover, Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai even approached American officials in May 1949 to tinker with the idea of recognition, but to no avail. The Truman administration’s “cold shoulder” aggravated Mao, who then decided to “lean” to the Soviet side.

A more specific explanation, described by Robert McMahon as the “Cohen-Tucker thesis,”⁸⁵ attributed the loss of opportunity to the sudden eruption of the Korean War in June 1950 which rendered Acheson’s plan of accommodation impossible. Warren Cohen discussed how the secretary of state, despite opposition from the congressional China bloc and even his subordinates in the State Department, was determined to improve relations between China and the United States. He argued that Acheson’s goal “was to reach an accommodation with the People’s Republic.... [And] he hoped to encourage the [Beijing] regime to distance itself from the Soviet Union and to recognize the importance of its historic ties to the West.”⁸⁶ Throughout 1949 and the first half of 1950, the secretary tried assiduously to restrain the president and his colleagues from

⁸³ Several prominent of “lost-chance” scholarships include: Joseph Esherick, ed., *Lost Chance in China*, (New York: Random House, 1974); Warren Tozer, “Last Bridge to China: The Shanghai Power Company, the Truman Administration and the Chinese Communists,” *Diplomatic History* 1, no.1 (Winter 1977), pp. 64-78; Harold Hinton, *China’s Turbulent Quest*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); Franz Schurmann, *The Logic of World Power*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974); Robert Sutter, *China Watch* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); Warren Cohen, “Acheson, His Advisors, and China, 1949-1950,” pp. 13-52; and Michael Hunt, “Mao-Tse-tung and the Issue of Accommodation with the United States, 1948-1950, in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, pp. 185-233.

⁸⁴ Michael Hunt, “Mao-Tse-tung and the Issue of Accommodation with the United States.” pp. 207, 210.

⁸⁵ Robert J. McMahon, “The Cold War in Asia: Toward a New Synthesis,” *Diplomatic History* 12, no. 3, (July, 1987), p. 313.

⁸⁶ Warren Cohen, “Acheson, His Advisors, and China, 1949-1950,” p. 49.

taking more belligerent actions toward the CCP. Yet, Acheson's efforts eventually foundered with North Korea's invasion of the South on June 25, 1950.

Nonetheless, Cohen noted that in spite of the Korean conflict, President Truman's distaste for the Chinese Communists also played an important role in undermining Acheson's plan. "Truman," he wrote, "delayed the termination of aid to the Kuomintang and prevented steps that might have led to an early normalization of relations with the Communists."⁸⁷ Hence, if Truman had been more supportive, normalization might have occurred well before June 1950.

By the same token, Tucker, in *Pattern in the Dust*, praised Acheson for his perspicacious and pragmatic view about America's China policy. She wrote, "Acheson believed that America's responsibility no longer rested in supporting a discredited [Nationalists] regime, but rather in finding ways to reconcile United States interests with those of the incoming government of China."⁸⁸ According to the secretary, the United States would "increasingly appear obstinate in refusing to adopt a policy [of normalization] which its allies favored." Moreover, U.S. efforts to oppose the CCP would risk isolating itself from other Asian countries which, in an era of anti-colonial struggles, felt pride in the success of a resurgent China standing up against foreign powers.⁸⁹ Though acknowledging that Truman was not entirely repugnant to the idea of recognition, Tucker shared Cohen's observation that Truman's "hesitancy" prompted Acheson to slow down and "delay substantive approaches to Beijing."⁹⁰ The president's reluctance, in addition to the Korean War, obliterated the secretary's hope for an early normalization.

In contrast to this "America's lost chance" view, a revisionist contention posits that given the deep-seated ideological animosity between the United States and Communist China, there never existed any golden opportunity for the CCP and the U.S. to reach an accommodation. Chen Jian, in fact, called the lost chance thesis merely a "myth." Though there were disputes and disagreements between China and the Soviet

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 51.

⁸⁸ Nancy B. Tucker, *Patterns in the Dust*, p. 188.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 178.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 192.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

Union, cooperation remained the dominant aspect of CCP-Soviet relations in 1949. “The CCP’s confrontation with the United States,” Chen suggested, “originated in the party’s need to enhance the inner dynamics of the Chinese revolution after its nationwide victory.”⁹¹ For Mao and his comrades, the ultimate goal of the Communist revolution was not just the total transformation of the old Chinese state and society but also to restore China’s central position and national power in the international community. Hence, Chen reasoned:

Mao’s approach toward China’s external relations in general and his policy toward the United States in particular became heavily influenced by this primary concern. Throughout 1949-50, the Maoist discourse challenged the values and codes of behavior attached to “U.S. imperialism,” pointing out that they belonged to the “old world” that the CCP was determined to destroy.⁹²

Because the United States was politically and ideologically hostile to the CCP, Mao argued that improving relations with Washington would allow it to sabotage the Chinese revolution and their objective for national liberation.⁹³

Michael Sheng’s research also attested to the fact that Mao’s anti-American policy resulted from “the fundamental incompatibility between the U.S. and the CCP in terms of both China’s polity and foreign relations.”⁹⁴ Hence, he wrote, “there was no chance for the U.S. in either 1944-45 or 1948-49 to win over the CCP as a counterweight vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.”⁹⁵ Likewise, Steven Goldstein said it is not fair to blame the “lost chance” on the United States alone. “The [Communist] Party,” he noted, “had certainly had its problems with Stalin and was not prepared to accept his directions uncritically. But, the central fact remained that in the Communist world there was a powerful tradition of support for the Soviet Union.”⁹⁶ Like the United States, Beijing

⁹¹ Chen Jian, “The Myth of America’s Lost Chance in China: A Chinese Perspective in Light of New Evidence,” *Diplomatic History* 21, no. 1 (Winter 1997), pp. 77-86.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 85.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁹⁴ Michael Sheng, “Chinese Communist Policy toward the United States and the Myth of the ‘Lost Chance’ 1948-1950,” *Modern Asian Studies*, 28, no. 3 (1994), p. 501. See also Michael Sheng, *Battling Western Imperialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

⁹⁵ Michael Sheng, “America’s Lost Chance in China? A Reappraisal of Chinese Communist Policy toward the United States before 1945,” *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, no. 29 (January, 1993), p. 137.

⁹⁶ Steven M. Goldstein, “Chinese Communist Policy toward the United States: Opportunities and Constraints, 1944-1950,” in Dorothy Borg and Waldo Heinrichs, eds., *Uncertain Years*, p. 272.

was also constrained in what it could do by the “weight of past policies and perceptions, and more immediately, the pressures of domestic public opinion and international commitments.”⁹⁷ Consequently, even without America’s antipathy to the Chinese Communists, these authors believed that Mao would still reject diplomatic relations with Washington.

Thomas Christensen offered a different argument. Agreeing with Chen, Sheng, and Goldstein, he saw conciliatory moves would not have “changed Mao’s beliefs about America’s opposition to his revolution” for, consistent with his ideology, Mao perceived the United States as the center of imperialism.⁹⁸ As a result, there was no “lost chance” with respect to any genuine improvement of Sino-U.S. relations in the context of 1949-1950. However, he acknowledged that Mao’s hostility toward Washington still came from the latter’s continued political, economic, and military support of the Kuomintang. Shortly after seizing Nanjing, the capital city of Nationalist China, the CCP chairman stated, “We think that if the United States and Britain can cut off their relations with the KMT, we can consider the question of establishing diplomatic relations with them.”⁹⁹

Thus, had the U.S. broken its relations with Taiwan, Mao “would have accepted recognition [from the United States], albeit with suspicion and on China’s terms.”¹⁰⁰ Recognition would not foster immediate friendship and amity between the PRC and United States but it would, at least, help avoiding the “the disastrous escalation of the Korean War that occurred when China crossed the Yalu in the fall of 1950.”¹⁰¹ The failure of preventing that bloody encounter between the United States and Communist China is, for Christensen, the “real lost chance.”

Liberal Ideas and U.S. Foreign Policymaking in the Taiwan Strait

The reality always lies somewhere in between. Neither the United States nor the Chinese Communists was entirely accountable for the failure to normalize relations in 1949-1950. What Hunt, Chen, Sheng, Goldstein, Christensen, Cohen, and Tucker have failed to capture in their analyses was that there was the mutual, vicious cycle that began with the

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 278.

⁹⁸ Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, p. 142.

⁹⁹ Mao’s quote from April 28, 1949 is taken from Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, p. 143.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 144-145.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, p. 138.

Truman administration's inherent disdain for the Chinese Communists, which generated a hostile mentality in dealing with the CCP. The Chinese Communists, in turn, construed all American actions as nothing but willful and imperialistic, hence resorting to antagonistic actions interpreted by Washington as even more aggressive and loathsome.

Essentially, the Truman administration's unyielding attitude toward the CCP was more than just anti-Communism or a clash of material interests. Simei Qing argued that between 1945 and 1960 the origins of and evolution of U.S.-CCP antagonism was not the "direct result of two sides' or even one side's determination to engage in confrontation."¹⁰² Instead, Sino-American conflicts in those years may be attributed to "fatal misjudgments of each other's domestic conditions and foreign policy objectives." She posited, "Cultural visions of modernity and identity in each nation played a critical role in evaluating the other's intentions and in defining interests and principles in their interactions."¹⁰³ National interest, in other words, is seldom easily defined. Frequently, decision makers interpret and decide upon foreign policy and grand strategies through the prism of a state's strategic culture, norms, and identity. My argument, therefore, rests upon the position that Washington's incompatible stance with Beijing stems from its liberal ideational and normative framework that guide foreign policymaking.¹⁰⁴

As discussed earlier, America has a long-term liberal mission in transforming and democratizing Mainland China. David McLean correctly pointed out the importance of the deeply held "American myths" about China. The major tenet of the myths is embodied in the ideas of the Open Door policy, in which "Americans believed that they were destined to guide the Chinese toward liberal democracy and modernization and to protect them from the predatory ambitions of other powers."¹⁰⁵ President Truman once commented in a private memo that "I know very little about Chinese politics. The one thing I am interested in is to see a strong China with a democratic form of government

¹⁰² Simei Qing, *From Allies to Enemies* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), pp. 297-298.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

¹⁰⁴ For works on how America's liberal strategic culture and identity have shaped foreign policy and grand strategic decisions, see Jutta Weldes, *Constructing National Interests* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); John Owens, *Liberal Peace, Liberal War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997); Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ David McLean, "American Nationalism, the China Myth, and the Truman Doctrine," p. 26.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

friendly to us. It is our only salvation for a peaceful Pacific policy.”¹⁰⁶ He, thus, dreaded about a monolithic world of Communist menace and saw Mao’s Chinese Communists as simply non-liberal elements, or clients of Moscow.¹⁰⁷ The president and Secretary of State Acheson both held the view that the United States was China’s only and true friend, for it “has sought to preserve the integrity and independence of [that country], has opposed the seeking of special rights and privileges and has taken the lead in renouncing extraterritorial privilege.”¹⁰⁸ Based on this Open Door conception, the Truman administration saw the “immense reservoir of friendly feeling all over China toward the U.S.”¹⁰⁹ This China myth is reinforced in Acheson’s Letter of Transmittal in the *China White Paper* of August 1949,¹¹⁰ in which he stressed that the CCP would only be an aberration in China’s political development, born merely from the Chinese people’s antipathy toward the Nationalist regime. Communism is, in short, at odds with Chinese “democratic individualism,” and Mao’s government would soon be overthrown by the Chinese people.¹¹¹

Hence, in contrast to the Cohen-Tucker thesis, I would argue that Acheson was just as opposed to an early recognition of the PRC as Truman. The president’s aversion toward the CCP might have mattered little had Acheson been prepared to “pull the president in the direction of accommodation with Beijing,” yet the secretary’s support for recognition was halfhearted at best.¹¹² Acheson, in fact, cautioned Great Britain and India against impulsive recognition, suggesting instead that establishing relations should be conditional on Beijing’s moderation of policy and its political zeal.¹¹³ A policy of hasty

¹⁰⁶ “Memorandum for Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, from President Truman,” January 25, 1946, PSF/China 1946/Truman Papers/Box151, Harry S. Truman Presidential Library (Hereafter HST Library).

¹⁰⁷ “President Truman’s Press and Radio Conference # 139,” March 11, 1948, PSF/March 1948/Truman Papers/Box189, HST Library.

¹⁰⁸ David McLean, “American Nationalism, the China Myth, and the Truman Doctrine,” p. 34.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ For details on the *China White Paper*, released on August 5, 1949, see Chapter 3.

¹¹¹ McLean, p. 38.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 40.

¹¹³ “Memorandum of Conversations, Dean Acheson with Mme. Vijaya Pandit (Ambassador of India): Recognition of Chinese Communist Regime,” Dec 6, 1949, Memorandum of Conversations/DGA/Box 64, HST Library; “Memorandum of Conversations, Acheson with Sir Oliver Franks (British Ambassador) on the Far East,” Dec 8, 1949, Memorandum of Conversations/DGA/Box 64, HST Library; “Meeting with the President, “UK Recognition of China,” October 17, 1949, Memorandum of Conversations/Oct-Nov

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

accommodation went against the China myths or the “American grain.” To preserve the goodwill of the Chinese people and avoid rallying nationalist support for the Chinese Communists and hatred against the United States, Acheson and Truman agreed that aiding and defending the Nationalists on Taiwan must be done cautiously and covertly. Taiwan’s freedom and autonomy should be safeguarded without directly impinging upon China’s sovereign claim over the island.¹¹⁴

The NSC-37 series explicitly advocated denying Taiwan (Formosa) to the Chinese Communists through “diplomatic and economic means,” because “the employment of U.S. [military] forces on Formosa would enable the Chinese Communists to rally support to themselves as defenders of China’s territorial integrity and handicap [America’s] efforts to exploit Chinese irredentist sentiments with respect to Soviet actions in Manchuria, Mongolia and Xinjiang.”¹¹⁵ The ambiguity, then, was necessary in order to drive a wedge between Beijing and Moscow and, hence, promoting the open door policy of making China free from the Soviet influence.

President Woodrow Wilson and the Open Door Policy to China

The Truman administration’s liberal interests toward China and Taiwan were rooted in a normative commitment to Woodrow Wilson’s Open Door internationalism. Before discussing Wilson’s conception, nonetheless, it is important to provide here a background sketch of the Open Door policy, originally enunciated during the William McKinley administration in 1899-1900.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, China, under the reign of the declining and enervated Qing (Manchu) Dynasty, suffered repeatedly from humiliating defeats in wars with the European powers and, most recently, with Japan in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. The imperialist powers, including Japan, Great Britain, Belgium, Netherlands, Russia, Germany, and France, took advantage of China’s weakness by extracting from her unequal treaties demanding reparations, treaty ports,

1949/DGA/Box 66; “Meeting with the President, Item 5: U.S. Policy Toward the Far East,” December 20, 1949, Memorandum of Conversations/DGA/Box 64, HST Library.

¹¹⁴ “Statement by the Secretary of State (Acheson) at the 35th Meeting of the National Security Council,” March 3, 1949, PSF/NSC Meeting # 35/Truman Papers/Box 220/HST Library.

¹¹⁵ “NSC 37/8: A Report to the NSC by the Acting Secretary of State on the Position of the US with Respect to Formosa,” October 6, 1949, PSF/MNSC/NSC Meeting # 47/Truman Papers/Box206, Harry S. Truman Library (Hereafter HST Library).

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

railroad concessions, territories, extraterritoriality, administrative rights, and investment privileges, essentially turning the Asian continent into “spheres of influence.”¹¹⁶ George Kennan recounted:

At the end of 1897 and the beginning of 1898 there was a real and justifiable fear that China would be partitioned. It was in those months that the Russians made evident their determination to have a special position in Manchuria, including a naval base at Port Arthur and a commercial port at the present Dairen, both to be connected by railway with the new Trans-Siberian; that the Germans consolidated their control over the port of Jiaozhou and their influence in the Shandong peninsula; and that the French, coming up from the south, from the present Indochina, successfully negotiated with the Chinese government for the lease of a port, for railroad concessions, for the appointment of a French citizen as head of the Chinese postal services, and for other favors.¹¹⁷

Ironically, Great Britain, which saw the powers’ insatiable scrambling for spheres and economic concessions as detrimental to her commercial interests in China, approached Washington and tried to persuade the McKinley administration to dispatch the Open Door notes.

Preoccupied by the war with Spain, President McKinley was only lukewarm to the idea, but Secretary of State John Hay gave the proposition a much more serious thought. “[Hay] knew little if anything about China; he had never been there,” wrote Kennan, “But, he thought that we were unwise not to be sympathetic to the British in a situation where we might help them and perhaps thereby build up a sort of diplomatic credit on which we could draw later.”¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the missionaries, business community, and the diplomatic bureaucrats in the State Department also lobbied incessantly for America’s greater involvement in China, lest that Oriental state would be carved up entirely by the avaricious imperial powers.¹¹⁹

By the end of summer in 1899, the British Foreign Office was no longer interested in the Open Door policy, apparently as a result of gaining new railway

¹¹⁶ Warren Cohen, *America’s Response to China*, chapters 2-3. See also George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy, 1900-1950* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), Chapter 2.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 27.

¹¹⁹ Michael Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), Chapter 1. Hunt discussed about the “Open Door constituencies.” See also Warren Cohen, *America’s Response to China*, pp. 39-41.

concessions from the Chinese government. Nonetheless, Hay remained enthusiastic, and, with the help of W.W. Rockhill, a State Department expert on the Far East, and Alfred Hippisley, an Englishman working in China's Maritime Customs Service, he sent out the first Open Door note on September 6, 1899, urging the great powers to respect "equal commercial opportunities" and nondiscrimination against trade of other countries within their spheres of influence.¹²⁰ It is important to note that John Hay, in the first note, acquiesced to the spheres of influence policy pursued by the imperialists. "His objectives were limited," argued Raymond Esthus, "for [the secretary] had no illusions about the inability of the United States to prevent the erection of spheres of influence."¹²¹

Although the responses to the first note from the various governments were "tepid," at best, Hay was pleased and quickly announced that he had received "satisfactory assurances from all the powers and that he regarded them as 'final and definitive.'"¹²² China's problem, however, was exacerbated in 1900, as the Boxer Rebellion, a violent and fanatical anti-foreigner movement inspired by the Qing government, led to much destruction of foreign properties and lives. The incident not only gave the great powers excuse to wage a joint military expedition against Beijing but also allowed them to demand further and harsher concessions and compensations for their loss. Seeing China in deep disarray and anarchy, its political independence in jeopardy, and territory on the edge of total dismemberment, Hay issued the second Open Door note on July 3, 1900, calling the powers for restraint and declaring that the policy of the United States is to "preserve Chinese territorial and administrative entity."¹²³

In actuality, Kennan stressed, neither the Open Door notes of 1899 nor 1900 had much "practical effect" on the foreign governments. "There was little reason to expect that things would be otherwise," he said.¹²⁴ America's international power at the turn of the twentieth century, while growing, was, still relatively weaker than Great Britain, and, at the very most, at parity with other emerging states such as Germany, Russia, and

¹²⁰ Warren Cohen, *America's Response to China*, pp. 43-44; George Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, pp. 27-29.

¹²¹ Raymond A. Esthus, "The Changing Concept of the Open Door, 1899-1910," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 46, no. 3 (1959), p. 436.

¹²² George Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, p. 32.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 35; Raymond Esthus, "The Changing Concept of the Open Door," p. 436.

¹²⁴ George Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, p. 36.

Japan. As a result, the Open Door policy lacked sufficient force of backing, although its “moral” underpinning could not be overtly rejected by any of the imperialist states. In addition, the Chinese government’s own blunder for agitating the Boxer Rebellion was “bound to lead to a net increase, rather than decrease, in the authority exerted by foreign governments in China.” As the indemnities demanded reached astronomical levels, Beijing was forced to increase borrowing from the great powers, thereby placing its political independence as collateral for financial solvency.

To Hipsley and Rockhill, then, the Boxer Rebellion meant the “breakup of China” or the “end of the Open Door.”¹²⁵ Even Hay eventually backed away from supporting China’s territorial and administrative integrity. In November 1900, the McKinley administration was aiming to obtain a naval base on the coast of Fujian province. “The matter was soon dropped,” wrote Esthus, “but not before Hay suffered the embarrassment of being reminded by Japan of the recent American statement in support of China integrity.”¹²⁶

Although the subsequent administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft adhered to the Open Door policy, it was clear that China’s interests were expendable. To foster a satisfactory conclusion of peace between Russia and Japan in 1905, President Roosevelt suggested that Manchuria be carved into two spheres, one for Japan and one for Russia. While Manchuria was nominally restored to China, the Russians and Japanese held such extensive rights there that Chinese sovereignty in the area remained seriously impaired.¹²⁷ Believing in realpolitik, Roosevelt personally had great respect for Japan’s “paramount interest” in Manchuria, seeing the new Asian power in more favorable terms than the primitive Chinese empire. Both the president and his secretary of state, Elihu Root, shared the view that “every effort should be made to make advocacy of the Open Door and integrity of China compatible with friendship with Japan.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 36.

¹²⁶ Raymond Esthus, “The Open Door and the Integrity of China, 1899-1922: Hazy Principles for Changing Policy,” in Thomas H. Etzold, ed., *Aspects of Sino-American Relations Since 1784* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1978), p. 50.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p 53.

If they had felt compelled to choose between Japan's friendship and China's interests, there is little doubt that they would have opted for Japan."¹²⁸

Though harboring a more anti-Japanese stance than its predecessor, the Taft administration was unable to make much progress in helping China. Through its "dollar diplomacy," Taft and Secretary of State Philander Knox sought to increase American financial and investment activities in China to counterbalance the other powers. However, Knox's "neutralization" plan of 1909-10 to place all the railways of Manchuria under international control faced rock-solid opposition from Japan, Great Britain, and Russia.¹²⁹ The Taft administration, according to Warren Cohen, soon realized that "if [the United States] hoped to increase their economic stake in China, if [it] hoped to assist in the modernization of China, if it hoped in any way to check Japanese exploitation of China, it would have to be through cooperation with Japan."¹³⁰ Consequently, Washington decided to participate in the six-power financial consortium (including Great Britain, Japan, Russia, Germany, and France) to cooperate with the "imperialists" in providing administrative and railroad construction loans to China's newly established republic in 1912. By working in tandem with other imperialist powers, nonetheless, the Taft administration was effectively "co-opted" into the "league of predators." In the wake of China's 1911 revolution in overthrowing the Qing Dynasty, the Chinese were appalled to discover the Taft White House was "committed to withholding recognition from the nascent republic until its consortium partners were ready to act."¹³¹ Taft's offensive had, accordingly, given in to "concerted" action with the great powers.

The inauguration of the Wilson administration in March 1913 marked a clear departure from the previous McKinley, Roosevelt, and Taft administrations. President Woodrow Wilson's unwavering defense of the Open Door in China derived from his unilateral withdrawal from the financial consortium, immediate recognition of the Chinese Republic, and challenging Japan at every turn possible to get her assurance of

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 57.

¹²⁹ Raymond Esthus, "The Changing Concept of the Open Door," p. 452.

¹³⁰ Warren Cohen, *America's Response to China*, p. 74.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 75.

maintaining China's political and territorial integrity.¹³² Welcoming the birth of the Republic of China, founded in 1912, Wilson felt, as he wrote to Sun Yat-sen, "the strongest sympathy with every movement which looks towards giving the people...of China the liberty for which they have so long been yearning and preparing themselves."¹³³ "I feel so keenly the desire to help China," said the president, "that I prefer to err in the line of helping that country than otherwise."¹³⁴ Wilson's commitment to progressivism both at home and abroad, in the words of Jerry Israel, "did manage to carve out...a unique Far Eastern personality."¹³⁵

Unlike Hay, McKinley, Roosevelt, Root, Taft, and Knox, the president and his minister to China, Paul Reinsch, shared the perception that "America would build a permanent Open Door by remaking China in its own image, using forms and designs successful at home."¹³⁶ Like Wilson, Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan celebrated the creation of the Republic of China, as he sent an encyclopedia on Thomas Jefferson to Yuan Shikai, the Republican China's first president, greeting him with the "hope that this 'awakening' might produce a 'United States of China.'"¹³⁷

Woodrow Wilson was setting an "independent" course of action on China by upholding her territorial and political integrity and by spreading liberal democratic values

¹³² In withdrawing from the financial consortium and wrestling with Japan over Tokyo's "Twenty-One Demands," President Wilson and Secretary Bryan, had in many of their press releases, notes, and correspondence, discussed the urgency to preserve China's Open Door. See "President Wilson's Statement on the Pending Chinese Loans," March 18, 1913, Papers of Woodrow Wilson Project/1913 March 16-18/Box105, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University. "Letter from Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan to President Woodrow Wilson," January 23, 1915, Miscellaneous Correspondence and Memo of the Secretary of State: Correspondence of Secretary Bryan with President Wilson, 1913-1915/Box2/RG59/250/46/35/3, National Archives, College Park, MD; "Letter from President Wilson to Secretary Bryan," January 27, 1915, Miscellaneous Correspondence and Memo of the Secretary of State: Correspondence of Secretary Bryan with President Wilson, 1913-1915/Box2/RG59/250/46/35/3, National Archives, College Park, MD.

¹³² "Letter from President Wilson to Secretary of State Bryan on China, with Enclosures from E. T. Williams and Paul Reinsch," March 12, 1915, Papers of Woodrow Wilson Project/March 12, 1915/Box189, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

¹³³ The quote of Wilson is taken from Michael Hunt, *The Making of a Special Relationship*, p. 218

¹³⁴ The quote is taken from Roy W. Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy, 1913-1921* (New York: Bookman Associates, 1957), p. 24.

¹³⁵ Jerry Israel, *Progressivism and the Open Door* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1971), p. 114. See also Jerry Israel, "For God, For China and For Yale: The Open Door in Action," *The American Historical Review*, 75, no. 3 (1970), pp. 796-807.

¹³⁶ Jerry Israel, *Progressivism and the Open Door*, p. 200.

¹³⁷ Jerry Israel, "For God, For China, and For Yale," p. 806.

to awaken that ancient civilization.¹³⁸ In other words, his “crusading” liberal vision for the world in general and China in particular revitalized the petrified Open Door policy of the Roosevelt and Taft administrations. This study does not claim that the Wilson administration had no “material” incentives in helping China. Daniel Crane and Thomas Breslin accurately pointed out that Wilson’s unilateral withdrawal from the consortium, recognition of the Chinese Republic, and support for the authoritarian Yuan Shikai regime were also due to the president’s hope in gaining political and economic advantage for the United States in China.¹³⁹ Foreign policymaking can never be divorced from crude power calculations. Yet, there is no doubt that America’s liberal tradition and culture have had a profound and even “exceptional” effect on its external behavior.¹⁴⁰ In fact, realists have condemned Wilsonianism for giving American foreign policy an overly crusading character which, often times, undermines U.S. national interest.¹⁴¹

Warren Cohen described the contrast between the Wilson administration and its predecessors:

[President] Wilson’s handling of American policy toward China indicated less concern for power politics than Roosevelt had shown and less concern for Wall Street than Taft had shown. From missionary sources, he had learned of China’s surge toward modernization and he was determined to offer the Chinese the disinterested assistance of the United States. He was aware of the role played by European and Japanese imperialism in China, and if he could not reform those imperialists, he could disassociate the United States from their policies.¹⁴²

While Wilson, in the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, had to bow to the reality of international politics by yielding to Japan on her interest in Shandong province, the president believed that without the participation of Japan or any of the other major powers, the League of Nations “would be [nothing] but a rump organization.” Based on his principle of collective security, Wilson thought that the injustices done to China

¹³⁸ Roy Curry, *Woodrow Wilson and Far Eastern Policy*, p. 24. See also Tien-yi Li, *Woodrow Wilson’s China Policy, 1913-1917* (New York: University of Kansas City Press, 1952).

¹³⁹ Daniel Crane and Thomas Breslin, *An Ordinary Relationship* (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1986), Chapters 6-7.

¹⁴⁰ Colin Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, pp. 2-3.

¹⁴¹ Hans Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, pp. 39-41; See also E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years’ Crisis, 1919-1939* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1946).

¹⁴² Warren Cohen, *America’s Response to China*, pp. 77-78.

would be rectified in the League of Nations. On September 23, 1919, in a speech delivered at Salt Lake City, Wilson said:

I am not going to stop my fellow citizens, to discuss the Shandong provision in all its aspects, but what I want to call your attention to is that just so soon as this covenant [for the League of Nations] is ratified, every nation in the world will have the right to speak out for China.... This is the only way to serve and redeem China.... [By] being parties to that arrangement [the League], we can insist upon the promise of Japan—the promise which the other governments have not matched—that she will return to China immediately all sovereign rights within the province of Shandong.¹⁴³

In sum, for Woodrow Wilson, U.S. liberalism and the League of Nations are means to maintain the Open Door in China. Though the president lost his League fight to the Senate Republicans and isolationists, his ideas and normative commitment to China's modernization, independence, and democratization became institutionalized, affecting the thinking and perception of future administrations' China policy.

Robert Keohane and Judith Goldstein posited that ideas matter for foreign policy, serving as world views, principled beliefs, and causal beliefs. Together, they affect policymakers' conception and understanding of national interests.¹⁴⁴ "Whatever the reason for the enactment of a policy idea," they wrote, "the choice itself has long-lasting implications and once ideas become embedded in rules and norms, they constrain public policy."¹⁴⁵ Once a strategic or policy choice is selected by politicians, it has long-term ramifications. Being legitimated and institutionalized, policy ideas leave vestiges, as they constrain the options for future politicians. Wilson's liberal objectives in a strong, united, and democratic China, accordingly, have been "institutionalized" into America's policy stance. Even after his departure, the isolationist Republican administrations in the 1920s remained committed to the Wilsonian Open Door internationalism. In the Washington Conference of 1921-22, the Harding administration did hold the great powers legally

¹⁴³ This excerpt of President Woodrow Wilson's speech at Salt Lake City, Utah, September 23, 1919 is quoted from Dennis Merrill and Thomas G. Paterson, eds., *Major Problems in American Foreign Relations Volume I*, (Boston: Wadworth, 2010), p. 440.

¹⁴⁴ Robert Keohane & Judith Goldstein, eds., *Ideas & Foreign Policy*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

committed, under the Nine Power Treaty, to China's Open Door.¹⁴⁶ Between 1925 and 1929, President Calvin Coolidge and Secretary of State Frank Kellogg actively pushed for treaty revisions to restore China's tariff autonomy and to abolish extraterritorial rights. They urged other powers to conform. In July 1928, as Chiang Kai-shek's army nominally unified China, Washington recognized his Nationalist regime in Nanjing as the legal Chinese government, trusting the new KMT leader would bring order and stability.¹⁴⁷ When Japan invaded Manchuria in late 1931, the Hoover administration responded with the Stimson Doctrine, refusing to recognize the legitimacy of Japan's claim over Manchuria and any future conquests in China.¹⁴⁸ FDR was also sympathetic to China's plights and struggle against the Japanese aggression.¹⁴⁹ Truman's China-Taiwan policy followed the same line as Woodrow Wilson had set out three decades earlier.

Wilsonian Open Door Internationalism and the Recognition Issue, 1949-50

Consequently, Wilson's vision for an Open China precluded Washington from recognizing the People's Republic of China. In 1949-50, a seemingly radical regime openly swearing allegiance to Leninist-Marxism and advocating for a worldwide revolutionary struggle against Western nations was not acceptable in that system of ideas. While the Truman administration supported the promotion of Chinese Titoism and a Sino-Soviet split, evidence indicated that President Truman opposed giving full and prompt recognition to the PRC, insisting that the Chinese Communists must first tone down their radical political orientations. Truman's acceptance to an engagement policy of China (NSC-34/1, NSC-34/2 and NSC-41) was, therefore, the best he could agree to.

¹⁴⁶ Raymond Esthus, "The Open Door and Integrity of China," pp. 68-70; Warren Cohen, *America's Response to China*, p. 87.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 110-111; See also Dorothy Borg, *American Policy and the Chinese Revolution, 1925-1928* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947).

¹⁴⁸ Michael Shaller, *The U.S. Crusade in China*, pp. 5-6.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, p.14. It is important to note that despite American goodwill toward China, Washington, at least until 1941, refrained from taking more active approach in resisting Japan. The United States was sympathetic but saw China as less strategically important than Europe. However, the fact that American government repeatedly protested against foreign and Japanese encroachments in China should give weight to Washington's liberal normative commitment to China's Open Door. For a good coverage of America's wartime relations with China and beyond, see Herbert Feis, *The China Tangle: The American Effort in China from Pearl Harbor to the Marshall Mission* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953), and Tsou Tang, *America's Failure in China, 1941-50* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

Similarly, though Dean Acheson wanted to reconcile with the CCP, he was by no means eager to recognize Beijing. The secretary wanted to approach the Chinese Communist regime in a gradualist manner. Writing to Edmund Clubb, the consul general of Beijing, Acheson warned that the basis for establishing relations depended on the Communist regime's "respect for treaty [and international] obligations."¹⁵⁰ Hence, by the end of 1949, the Truman administration already ruled out recognition as a viable policy, insisting that eventually Mao's regime would either be overthrown or forced to mollify its ideological radicalism.

Wilson's Open Door and Strategic Ambiguity in the Taiwan Strait

On the other side of the recognition controversy is the Taiwan issue. As reflected in the views of Merchant, Dulles, and Rusk, Washington had a "moral obligation" to protect the interests, freedom, and autonomy of the Formosans from Beijing's tyrannical threats.¹⁵¹ To this end, President Truman and Secretary Acheson both concurred. On April 28, 1949, Truman met with Senators Kenneth Wherry (R-Nebraska) and Styles Bridges (R-New Hampshire), along with Acheson, at the White House to discuss China's situation. When Wherry inquired about Taiwan, Acheson explained about the KMT's blunders on the island and the dangers that Formosa could encounter from a further influx of Mainlander Chinese and the possible Communist penetration. The secretary remarked that "the best hope would grow from doing everything possible to keep carpetbaggers and refugees out of Formosa and giving the Formosans a chance to express their own desires for their own future."¹⁵² However, to preserve China's territorial unity and integrity, in line with the Open Door principle, they would not endorse formal Taiwan independence or explicit U.S. intervention to save the island.

Instead, they would press the KMT government, through diplomatic and economic assistance, to reform its administration and to strengthen Taiwan's defense. A free Taiwan, as John Foster Dulles posited on April 21, 1950, would serve "a concrete

¹⁵⁰ "The Secretary of State (Acheson) to the Consul General at Beijing (Clubb)," Feb 3, 1949, *FRUS*, Vol. 9, (1949), p. 11.

¹⁵¹ Dean P. Chen, *U.S. Taiwan Strait Policy*, Chapters 4-5.

¹⁵² "Meeting in the President's Office with Senators Wherry and Bridges on China," April 28, 1949, Secretary of State Acheson's Memorandum March-May 1949/Box 8/RG 59/250/49/5/6-7, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

example [to Mainland China] of a better way to economic improvement and national and individual freedom than through Communism.”¹⁵³ Strategic ambiguity is, therefore, based on this Open Door notion that until Communism is fully discarded in China, America must continue its efforts to draw her closer toward democratic values. Taiwan, short of de-jure independence, must be preserved against the CCP’s invasion in order to maintain its freedom and political autonomy. In a memorandum to the Deputy Undersecretary of State Dean Rusk, Merchant insightfully described the notion of strategic ambiguity:

The injunction under which we operate, to deny Formosa to the Communists and to continue recognition to the Nationalists, obviously requires that we give the Nationalists diplomatic support in the UN and elsewhere; that we provide economic aid to Formosa; and that in other ways, such as permitting them to buy weapons and munitions, we support them in their war against the mainland with the blockade and bombs. On the other hand, the secretary has set our basic policy to be the avoidance of actions which will deflect on ourselves the righteous wrath of the Chinese people which if un-observed so surely will be concentrated on the Russians.¹⁵⁴

He essentially pointed out the delicacy of keeping this balance in check. “It is out of the question that we should pursue one or the other policy to its logical extremity,” Merchant wrote, “since in the first case this would lead us to de-recognizing the Nationalists, writing Formosa off and at the earliest possible moment recognizing Beijing; whereas the logical extremity of the other would be to reverse ourselves and give all-out military support to the Nationalists regardless of the risk of direct involvement.”¹⁵⁵

Saving Taiwan Well Before the Korean War

Thus, it is important to note that the Truman administration never wrote-off Taiwan and only reversed its course when the Korean War broke out. The only question was whether to defend Taiwan through interventionist or non-interventionist means. As a matter of fact, throughout the spring of 1950, Truman, Acheson, Dulles, Merchant, and Rusk were discussing about ways to save Taiwan without jeopardizing the administration’s overall

¹⁵³ “Memorandum on Formosa,” April 21, 1950, John F. Dulles Papers, 1860-1988/China, People’s Republic of, 1950/Box47, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

¹⁵⁴ “Memos from Merchant to Rusk,” Feb 17, 1950, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs, 1949-1965/U.S. Policy toward China, 1950/Box25/RG59/250/49/7/3, National Archives, College Park, MD.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Titoist policy toward China. When Dulles presented his arguments to step up measures to defend the island, Truman responded that he generally “agreed with [this] analysis and that in talking yesterday with Secretary Acheson he had expressed much the same point of view.”¹⁵⁶ In late May, Rusk, now the assistant secretary of state for the Far Eastern Affairs, was working on a formal paper on Formosa. On May 30, he arranged a small meeting on Taiwan with Paul Nitze, Dulles, Philip Jessup, Merchant, and Philip Sproule. The participants agreed that more active approaches should be implemented to safeguard the island. Yet, the best way to do this was not by supporting the KMT, given the regime’s prior “misgovernment” record, but to engineer a UN trusteeship over Formosa. In the meantime, the U.S. Seventh Fleet should be dispatched to the Taiwan Strait to neutralize the island from either KMT’s counteroffensive against the mainland or the CCP invasion of Taiwan.¹⁵⁷ Later on the same day, Rusk submitted his paper, “U.S. Policy toward Formosa,” to Secretary Acheson, who would be meeting the assistant secretary the next day, on May 31.

Initially, Dean Rusk, a staunch proponent of the Open Door policy,¹⁵⁸ refrained from endorsing a more proactive approach toward Taiwan in 1949 even though he was sympathetic to the Formosans. Emboldened by Dulles’ anti-Communist stance, however, he became more forthright to advocate for a Taiwan regime “independent of mainland

¹⁵⁶ “Memorandum of Conversation with President Truman,” April 28, 1950, John F. Dulles Papers, 1860-1988/Re; Japan and the Japanese Peace Treaty (1950)/Box48, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

¹⁵⁷ “Memorandum of Conversation, from Howe (Deputy Special Assistant for Intelligence) to W. Park Armstrong (Special Assistant to the Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research) on the May 30th Formosa Meeting,” May 31, 1950, *FRUS*, Vol. 6, (1950), pp. 347-351.

¹⁵⁸ Feeling regret over the CCP ascendancy in China, Rusk said in his memoir, “Beginning with my own boyhood, I can remember a warm and benevolent attitude on the part of the American people toward the Chinese...China was very much in our thoughts, and Americans in general were interested in that part of the world. We took some satisfaction that the United States had somehow opposed the attempts by wicked colonial powers to carve up China into spheres of influence...[We] had friendly attitude toward China. As a result, our reaction to the fall of China in 1949 was that of a jilted lover. ‘The Chinese people have turned against us,’ we told ourselves. ‘They’ve become bitter and are now our enemies. How could this have happened?’” Rusk also believed that Chiang Kai-shek was solely responsible for KMT’s failure in China. Rusk posited, “I do not see what the United States could have done to prevent the Chinese Communists from taking control of the mainland. For years, the Truman administration sent substantial military and economic aid to the Nationalists, but to no avail...If anything, Chiang Kai-shek’s inability to govern and the impact of Japanese aggression, not American inaction, ‘lost China’....Personally, I held no brook with those Americans who thought that the United States lost China; China was never ours to win or lose, but rather, Chiang Kai-shek’s.” See Dean Rusk, *As I saw It*, pp. 157-158.

control, without the pretension to being the government of China.”¹⁵⁹ Rusk also wished to foster an autonomous Taiwan as a “showcase of liberal democracy.”¹⁶⁰ Therefore, the assistant secretary wrote that the “increasing difficulties encountered by the Communists and the dissatisfaction with Communist rule by increasing numbers of Chinese on the mainland offer at least the possibility of the emergence of opposition on the mainland which an anti-Communist pool of Chinese on Formosa might support.” An anti-Communist Taiwan may serve as a base for “covert and psychological operations against the mainland.... Defending Taiwan would keep alive as a rallying point any symbol for anti-Communist Chinese a non-Communist Chinese area which would give them hope for the future and could serve as a model in contrast to the situation on the mainland.”¹⁶¹ While applauding the Nationalists’ progress on the island since early 1950, he believed that this “improvement does not go very deep and that it is not permanent.” Certainly, the resort to either UN or U.S. military options would infuriate both the Communist and anti-Communist Chinese.

Yet, in light of the growing aggressiveness of the Soviet Union and Communist China, especially after their signing of the Alliance Treaty in February 1950, Rusk contended that “it should be clear that the immediate U.S. objective with respect to Formosa is the denial of the island to the Chinese Communists and that the only means of ensuring the realization of that objective is through U.S. occupation or defense of the island.” Moreover, as Dulles had emphasized, from an international legal standpoint, Formosa, prior to a conclusive peace treaty with Japan, remains a “non-self-governing” territory, and, thus, America and other United Nations have certain moral obligations to

¹⁵⁹ Warrant Cohen, *Dean Rusk* (New Jersey: Cooper Square Publishers, 1980), p. 46.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46. On China-Formosa policy, Rusk acted quite indecisively, at least in 1949 and early 1950. “In Asia, the choices were less clear and the situation vastly more complicated. Rusk’s associates complained that he had trouble making up his mind, that he ‘played his cards inside his shirt.’” See Thomas Shoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988), p. 206. However, Rusk admitted good relations with John Foster Dulles and “strongly recommended” the latter’s appointment in the State Department in April 1950. Hence, it seems very logical that Rusk and Dulles worked closely to formulate the Formosa policy. See Dean Rusk, *As I Saw It*, pp. 160-161.

¹⁶¹ “Memo: U.S. Policy Toward Formosa, from Dean Rusk to Dean Acheson,” May 30, 1950, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs, Top Secret Subject File, 1945-1950/Formosa and Hainan Island 1950/RG59/Box18/250/46/4/3-4, National Archives, College Park, MD.

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

the welfare of the native Taiwanese inhabitants.¹⁶² Hence, Rusk advised that Washington could support a coup by General Sun Li-jen to take over the Nationalist administration¹⁶³ or having Chiang Kai-shek petitioning the UN to discuss a trusteeship over the island. In the interim, “The U.S. Fleet [should] put itself in control of Formosan Waters. It is assumed that the Fleet would include carrier-based aircraft which might be needed in an emergency.”¹⁶⁴ Rusk’s advocacy eventually earned him the “enmity of Chiang Kai-shek.”¹⁶⁵

Unfortunately, there are no memos or records of the conversations between Rusk and Acheson on their May 31st meeting, although the secretary’s appointment file did indicate that the two had met at 430PM on that day.¹⁶⁶ Nonetheless, on June 9, Rusk sent another memorandum on Formosa to Acheson, once again discussing America’s moral obligations, before reaching a settlement in the Japanese Peace Treaty, to “avoid the forcible seizure of Formosa and its Chinese and Formosan inhabitants by Communist forces.”¹⁶⁷ Rusk raised the UN option as well as greater U.S. military and economic assistance to neutralize the island. He urged the secretary to “discuss the broad lines of action with the president and [to obtain his approval].”¹⁶⁸

While Truman and Acheson were pondering over Dulles-Rusk’s proposition, taking considerations from the strategic, political, legal, and moralistic angles, on June 25, 1950, war on the Korean Peninsula abruptly broke out, as North Koreans, with the

¹⁶² “Dulles’ Memorandum Regarding Defending Formosa,” May 18, 1950, John F. Dulles Papers, 1860-1988/China, People’s Republic of, 1950/Box47, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton University.

¹⁶³ When, in early June 1950, Rusk learned about General Sun Li-jen’s plan to throw a coup d’état to oust Chiang, he was supportive and referred the matter to Acheson. Rusk had known Sun when they fought in the China-Burma-India campaign during WWII and they even ate shark’s fin soup together in the bush. Rusk wrote, “Sun, if he had assumed power, would have moved to end government corruption and would also have shown more flexibility than Chiang in dealing with the Communists.” To prevent any possible leaks and to protect Sun, Rusk burned this secret “coup” message. See Thomas Shoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War*, p. 209.

¹⁶⁴ “Memo: U.S. Policy Toward Formosa, from Dean Rusk to Dean Acheson,” May 30, 1950, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs, Top Secret Subject File, 1945-1950/Formosa and Hainan Island 1950/RG59/Box18/250/46/4/3-4, National Archives, College Park, MD.

¹⁶⁵ Thomas Shoenbaum, *Waging Peace and War*, p. 204.

¹⁶⁶ “Secretary Dean Acheson’s Appointment Files, Jan-Jun 1950,” May 31, 1950, DGA/Box46, HST Library.

¹⁶⁷ “Memorandum from Dean Rusk to Dean Acheson: Bipartisan Policy on China-Formosa Problems,” June 9, 1950, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs/Top Secret Subject File, 1945-50/Box17/US Policy toward China/1950/RG59/250/46/4/3-4, National Archives, College Park, MD.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

encouragement of Stalin, invaded South Korea. Immediately, President Truman issued a statement, saying “the attack upon Korea makes it plain beyond all doubt that Communism has passed beyond the use of subversion to conquer independent nations and will now use armed invasion and war. It has defied the orders of the Security Council of the United Nations issued to preserve international peace and security.” In these circumstances, Truman said:

The occupation of Formosa by Communist forces would be a direct threat to the security of the Pacific area and the United States forces performing their lawful and necessary functions in that area. Accordingly, I have ordered the Seventh Fleet to prevent any attack on Formosa. As a corollary of this action, I am calling upon the Chinese government on Formosa to cease all air and sea operations against the mainland. The Seventh Fleet will see that this is done. The determination of the future status of Formosa must await the restoration of security in the Pacific, a peace settlement with Japan, or consideration by the United Nations.¹⁶⁹

Although Truman and Acheson might have reservations about providing explicit support to Taiwan,¹⁷⁰ the president’s immediate response to the Korean War corresponded almost exactly with the plans drawn up by Dulles and Rusk that sought to neutralize Formosa backed up by the U.S. Seventh Fleet. The war might have been the final trigger point, as the moral and legal justifications of Dulles’ and Rusk’s May 30th and June 6th memoranda paved the way for the administration’s June 27th policy statement.

¹⁶⁹ “Statement by the President,” June 27, 1950, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs/Top Secret Subject File, 1945-50/Box17/US Policy toward China/1950/RG59/250/46/4/3-4, National Archives, College Park, MD.

¹⁷⁰ Dean Acheson, as a matter of fact, announced on June 23, 1950 that America’s Formosa policy remained, as stated by President Truman in January 5, “not altered,” and “that policy ruled out direct military assistance to the Chinese Nationalists in defense of the island.” See “U.S. Defense Chiefs Back from Orient,” *New York Times*, June 24, 1950, p. 18. However, it is difficult to infer from Acheson’s statement that the UN trusteeship plan and the imposition of Seventh Fleet, as proposed by Dulles and Rusk, were rejected as possible options. While Thomas Christensen provided evidence to show that the Truman administration was unlikely to reverse its course of action on Taiwan, he did not conclusively reject that possibility. He wrote, “Acheson’s reply or replies to Rusk’s memoranda are not available, so we cannot be certain of their impact on the secretary.” Acheson might be more interested in the UN protection of Taiwan than the more aggressive U.S. military neutralization plan. See Thomas Christensen, *Useful Adversaries*, p. 130. One thing is certain at least: the Truman administration did not want to lose Taiwan and was pondering whether to increase interventions in Taiwan. See Robert Accinelli, *Crisis and Commitment*, p. 27. The lack of a final and affirmative decision should not be construed simply as abandoning Taiwan.

Nonetheless, in light of the Open Door policy, Secretary Acheson, at Truman's request, also reaffirmed that the U.S. had no predatory design on Formosa, that is, the current military action was to "meet the exigent military requirements of the situation which resulted from that military aggression against the government of Korea." "With the disappearance of the threat to peace deriving from that aggression, or pertinent action by the UN, or a peace settlement with Japan," the secretary announced, "the existing provisions respecting Formosa will, of course, be adjusted accordingly."¹⁷¹ Indeed, John L. Gaddis commented that the Truman administration did not consider its action as renegading on the pledge of noninterference in China's internal affairs. Neutralizing the Taiwan Strait was merely to forestall the seizure of Taiwan by hostile forces, and American officials "repeatedly emphasized the even-handedness of their action: the dispatch of the Seventh Fleet had been aimed as much at containing Chiang's aspirations to return to the mainland as those of the Communists to seize Taiwan."¹⁷²

While America refrained from any explicit commitments to the island's future status, it also did not repudiate China's sovereign claim over Taiwan. The framework of strategic ambiguity was, accordingly, institutionalized in June 1950.¹⁷³ Even the Korean War did not terminate America's hope in promoting a Sino-Soviet split and China's Open Door. Despite their deep-seated hostility, semi-official contacts persisted, though intermittently, between Washington and Beijing during the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations. The frameworks of strategic ambiguity might have been altered after Nixon, but the substantive logics—promoting China's democratization while defending Taiwan's de-facto autonomy and freedom—remain steadfast.

Conclusion: Should the United States Abandon Strategic Ambiguity?

As China rises in capabilities and assumes larger influence in global affairs, some scholars have begun to advocate for greater clarity on Washington's Taiwan Strait

¹⁷¹ "Draft Statement to Press, by Secretary Acheson," June 27, 1950, Records of the Office of Chinese Affairs/Top Secret Subject File, 1945-50/Box 17/U.S. Policy toward China/1950/RG59/250/46/4/3-4, National Archives, College Park, MD.

¹⁷² John Gaddis, "The Strategic Perspective," p. 90.

¹⁷³ June Grasso made very similar assessments that the Truman administration wanted to "push the Nationalists into a strong, independent posture and to keep the lines of communication open with the new Communist administration [in China]." See June Grasso, *Truman's Two-China Policy*, p. 128 and pp. 140-141.

policy.¹⁷⁴ Charles Glaser, in a *Foreign Affairs* article, has urged that Washington, in order to accommodate Beijing, should consider withdrawing from its commitment to Taiwan because the island is an “insignificant” national security interest.¹⁷⁵ Abandoning Taiwan may strengthen the relations between the United States and China. However, accommodating Beijing, as some critics have pointed out, may also be construed as America’s power decline and losing its resolve in East Asia. Appeasement, in other words, may not be necessarily peace-inducing and could even enlarge Beijing’s ambition. Thus, some proponents of clarity actually argue for stepping up American support for Taiwan’s defense and political independence.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ See Pan Zhongqi, “U.S. Taiwan Policy of Strategic Ambiguity”; and Joseph Nye, “A Taiwan Deal,” *Washington Post*, March 8, 1998. Both Pan and Nye advocated that America should signal clearly its firm opposition to Taiwan independence. Bruce Gilley also attracted controversy when proposing the “Finlandization” of Taiwan, that is, the island, like what Finland proposed to the Soviet Union in 1948, could seek an agreement with Beijing to pledge not to side with any great powers to challenge China’s interests. And, in return, the PRC should grant Taiwan greater political independence. This plan essentially called Taiwan to reposition itself as a “neutral state” rather than a U.S. strategic ally. See Bruce Gilley, “Not So Dire Straits,” *Foreign Affairs*, (January/February, 2010), pp. 48-50.

¹⁷⁵ Charles Glaser, “Will China’s Rise Lead to War?” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no. 2, (March/April, 2011), pp. 80-91. See also Shyu-Tu Lee, Douglas Paal, and Charles Glaser, “Disengaging from Taiwan: Should Washington Continue Its Alliance with Taipei?” *Foreign Affairs* 90, no.4, (May/June, 2011), pp. 179-182.

¹⁷⁶ Congressional members and Republican politicians, who have traditionally been the staunchest supporters of Taiwan, took the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis as a propitious opportunity to attack the Clinton administration and America’s long-standing strategic ambiguity policy in the Taiwan Strait. Senator Jesse Helms (R-North Carolina), for instance, claimed that “it was this vacillation on the part of the Clinton administration that led China to believe that it could get away with bullying Taiwan.” Senator Bob Dole, the 1996 Republican presidential candidate, also suggested that “our policy should be unmistakably resolute. If force is used against Taiwan, America will respond.” Both quotes are taken from Dennis V.V. Hickey, “The Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996,” p. 409. Supporters of Taiwan also stressed the need to strengthen America’s security commitment to Taiwan’s autonomy and liberal democratic system against a rising, militarily and economically threatening PRC. In spring 1999, for instance, Senator Helms, then the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, supported the House-introduced Taiwan Security Enhancement Act (TSEA), which, if passed and signed, would have authorized the Clinton administration to provide a series of more advanced weapons system to Taiwan, such as theater-missile defense equipment, AMRAAM air-to-air missiles, diesel submarines, airborne warning and control systems (AWACS), antisubmarine systems, and Aegis destroyers. Other provisions included strengthening the Taiwan Relations Act through the tightening of U.S.-Taiwan military cooperation, and, most importantly, establishing “clarity” and eliminating “ambiguity” concerning America’s commitment to the defense of Taiwan. “These provisions,” wrote James Mann, “would have suggested that the United States would come to Taiwan’s defense under any circumstances, even a declaration of formal independence from China.” See James Mann, “Congress and Taiwan: Understanding the Bond,” in Ramon Myers, Michel Oksenberg, and David Shambaugh, eds., *Making China Policy*, p. 214. Though the act failed passage due to staunch opposition from the Clinton White House, the initiative showed that supporters of Taiwan were zealously seeking to modify strategic ambiguity in favor of the island. Richard Bush, *At Cross Purposes*, p. 235. While supports for TSEA died down after Clinton’s veto in 2000, there has been a revival in recent years. Congressional “Taiwan caucus” has demanded the Obama administration to step up its support for Taiwan’s security as the island is one of America’s strongest allies in Asia. Representative Lleana Ros-

Proponents of strategic clarity, nonetheless, have failed to appreciate America's Wilsonian or liberal interests in maintaining the strategic ambiguity policy. Indeed, Scott Kastner observed that jettisoning strategic ambiguity would require Washington to transform its objectives in the Taiwan Strait. Essentially, the United States must renounce the desire of either preserving Taiwan's autonomy or maintaining a constructive relationship with Beijing.¹⁷⁷ Nancy Tucker also held the view that "strategic clarity is not the solution to U.S. policy problems in the Taiwan Strait. Even though it appears to be the direction in which many analysts currently wish to travel, it fails to remedy existing problems and could make them worse." Moreover, strategic ambiguity "has been about peaceful resolution, [and] as policymakers push to [clarify] what they would do under specific circumstances, they edge ever closer not just to abandoning ambiguity, but also to taking sides in the standoff in the strait."¹⁷⁸ In a similar vein, Andrew Nathan posited that the United States "has no vested interest in the outcome of the Taiwan issue so long as the resolution is arrived at peacefully. It is not bad for American interests if Taiwan becomes reunified with the mainland..."¹⁷⁹ He essentially refuted China's accusation that Washington wanted to block reunification, by claiming that a Taiwan unified with China poses no serious or detrimental security and economic threats to America. "Any form of peaceful reunification," Nathan noted, "would result in a diminution of tensions in the region and greater integration between the Taiwanese and mainland economies, both of which should be good for American businesses on both sides of the strait. Political risks would diminish and war risks all but disappear."¹⁸⁰

Should Taiwan decide to pursue unification with China, the U.S. has few viable options to prevent it.¹⁸¹ "Contrary to Beijing's assumptions," Tucker contended, "neither [Taiwanese] democratization nor arms sales would be effective tools to stop peaceful

Lehtinen (R-FL), the chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, promised in June 2011 to introduce new legislation to enhance the TRA and revive elements in the TSEA. See Nancy Tucker & Bonnie Glaser, "Should the United States Abandon Taiwan?" p. 29.

¹⁷⁷ Scott Kastner, "Ambiguity, Economic Interdependence, and the U.S. Strategic Dilemma in the Taiwan Strait," *Journal of Contemporary China*, 15, no. 49, (2007), p. 663.

¹⁷⁸ Nancy Tucker, "Strategic Ambiguity or Strategic Clarity?" p. 210.

¹⁷⁹ Andrew Nathan, "What's Wrong with American Taiwan Policy?" p. 99.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁸¹ Nancy B. Tucker, "If Taiwan Chooses Unification, Should the United States Care?" p. 24.

unification.”¹⁸² In fact, Taiwan’s need for American arms sales results precisely from China’s threat of attack and coercive diplomacy. Thus, if Taipei seeks unification voluntarily and trusts the PRC to honor a mutually beneficial agreement, then it would reduce its demand for arms purchases and the United States would have no leverage on that decision. Furthermore, if Taiwan’s public opinion and voters prefer unification and their democratically-elected officials declare that time has come for the reunion Washington would be “in no position to contradict them. Doing so would only risk the enmity of the island’s people and threaten to undermine the very [liberal democratic] institutions [America] seeks to defend.”¹⁸³ The same can be said of Taiwanese independence. If such an option reflects the assent of the Taiwan people and is agreed upon by both China and Taiwan through peaceful means, then the United States certainly would not object it as well.

Nevertheless, at present, reunification does not seem to appeal to the great majority of the Taiwanese people, who have, by far, indicated their predilection to maintain only some form of “status-quo” into the indefinite future. In the words of Chas Freeman Jr., former assistant secretary of defense for International Security Affairs during the first Clinton administration, “Taiwan’s democratic politics have produced no consensus on what sort of long-term relationship, if any, Taiwan should have with the rest of China.”¹⁸⁴ Despite the increasing and deeper economic interdependence between China and Taiwan, most people on the island, including supporters of the Nationalists, believe that Taiwan has little to gain but much to lose by unifying with an authoritarian China. At the very least, talk of reunification is ripe only when China becomes more politically liberalized and starts to push for democratization. In the foreseeable future, however, the Chinese Communist Party is highly unlikely to give up its monopoly of power, whereas the Taiwanese people have become less receptive to the “one-China” concept. In any event, until a peaceful solution can be attained, “no reunification, no unilateral independence, and no use of force” appears to be the best interim position.

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 25.

¹⁸⁴ Chas W. Freeman Jr., “Preventing War in the Taiwan Strait: Restraining Taiwan and Beijing,” *Foreign Affairs* (July/August, 1998), p. 10.

Kurt Campbell and Derek Mitchell emphasized that “the best option for the United States is to help create incentives that will encourage both Taipei and Beijing to maintain the undefined status quo—a middle ground between reunification and independence. Each side dislikes the current situation for its own reasons, but for both it is the best choice among unhappy alternatives.”¹⁸⁵ Insisting on a peaceful resolution may be tantamount to defending Taiwan’s de-facto autonomy in the indefinite future with a good likelihood that during this time Taiwanese national identity may solidify and Taiwan’s bargaining position may improve. Yet, Nathan correctly pointed out, “At least, the United States is not seeking the permanent independence of Taiwan as an end in itself, or to contain China, or prevent China’s rise to major power status.”¹⁸⁶

In short, strategic ambiguity helps to keep the cross-strait status quo until a mutually acceptable outcome could be hashed out by both Taipei and Beijing. This can be a long and arduous process, but the policy is, in fact, most conducive to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.¹⁸⁷ Following Wilson’s Open Door and Truman’s logics, the Obama administration has remained committed to strategic ambiguity. As discussed, a paramount interest in America’s China policy, since the Wilson administration, has clearly been to encourage “China’s evolution toward a more politically tolerant, open, and diverse society, primarily via expanded contacts with Western democracies and steady movement toward economic liberalization.” Democracy promotion is cited by many observers, including senior U.S. officials, as a “primary or important goal underlying efforts at cooperative engagement with China since at least the early 1990s.”¹⁸⁸

Strategic ambiguity, consequently, has allowed America’s postwar administrations to engage China to “influence the domestic evolution of Chinese society in a more liberal and open direction,”¹⁸⁹ while “hedging” against its potentially

¹⁸⁵ Kurt M. Campbell and Derek J. Mitchell, “Crisis in the Taiwan Strait?” *Foreign Affairs*, (July/August, 2001), p. 24.

¹⁸⁶ Andrew Nathan, “What’s Wrong with American Taiwan Policy?” p. 105.

¹⁸⁷ Scott Kastner, “Ambiguity, Economic Interdependence, and the U.S. Strategic Dilemma in the Taiwan Strait,” pp. 668-669.

¹⁸⁸ Michael Swaine, *America’s Challenge*, p. 29, p. 282.

¹⁸⁹ David Shambaugh, “Containment or Engagement of China?” p. 184. Robert Sutter compares engagement to a “Gulliver Strategy” which is “designed to tie down aggressive, assertive, or other negative

Dean P. Chen
American Association for Chinese Studies Annual Conference
October 12-14, 2012

aggressive impulses toward Taiwan.¹⁹⁰ To some extent, President Ma Ying-jeou's "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" stance is in tune with Washington's strategic ambiguity approach. Therefore, encouraging the recent cross-strait economic cooperation and committing arms sales and defense preparations to Taiwan is, for the Obama administration, the most pragmatic "means to sustain a healthy balance in the Taiwan Strait."¹⁹¹

policy tendencies of the other power through webs of interdependence in bilateral and multilateral relationships." See Robert Sutter, *Chinese Foreign Relations*, p. 32. Thomas Christensen also wrote, "The United States wishes China well, but believes that for China to do well, it will need to adjust its domestic and foreign policies in ways that will foster long-term stability and growth at home, and will bolster stability in international economic and political relations." Thomas Christensen, "Shaping the Choices of a Rising China," p. 91.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Sutter, "China's Rise and Durability of U.S. Leadership in Asia," in Suisheng Zhao, ed., *China and the United States: Cooperation and Competition in Northeast Asia* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 53; and Michael Swaine, *America's Challenge*, p. 8. For a timely treatment of Obama's hedging policy, see also Suisheng Zhao, "Shaping the Regional Context of China's Rise: How the Obama Administration Brought Back Hedging in Its Engagement with China," *Journal of Contemporary China* 21, no. 75 (May 2012), pp. 369-389.

¹⁹¹ Robert Sutter, "Taiwan's Future: Narrowing Straits," p. 15.