



UNISCI Discussion Papers

CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES ACROSS THE TAIWAN STRAIT

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1. Introduction

The majority of Taiwan's people thought that the president Chen's inauguration speech², specifically, the section on cross-strait relationship had expressed goodwill to Mainland China. But Beijing parried newly inaugurated Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian's calls for peace talks on the 20th of May by accusing him of insincerity and warning that unification could not be postponed indefinitely³. On the 5th June, professor Jeng-chan, Pang, from the National Defenses University of the People's Republic of China (PRC), stated "Don't doubt that Beijing will decide to use force when there is no chance to unify Taiwan peacefully." Several days later, senior vice-president of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)- Dr. Kurt Campbell (ex-assistant Minister of Defense) expressed in a closed-door conference that a high level of uncertainty still surrounded the Taiwan Strait situation⁴.

After more than fifty years of political separation and thirteen years of economic and cultural exchange, why do both sides of the Taiwan Strait still have such hugely different ideas about arriving at peace? The relationship between the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan and the PRC has been marked by intense animosity since the ROC government's retreat to Taiwan and the establishment of the PRC on the mainland in 1949⁵.

Knowing the background of the ROC and the PRC can help us to understand the reasons for this conflict. In this way, we can take a more objective view and look for some Confidence

¹ Las opiniones expresadas en estos artículos son propias de sus autores. Estos artículos no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de UNISCI. The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors. These articles do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISCI

² The "five no's" policies: "...as long as the Chinese Communist Party regime has no intention to use military force against Taiwan. I pledge that during my term in office. I will not declare independence. I will not change the national title. I will not push forth the inclusion of the so-called "State-to-State" description in the Constitution and I will not promote a referendum to change the *status quo* in regards to the question of independence or unification."

Mainland Affairs Council, "Public Opinion Poll on the May 20 Presidential Inauguration Speech". Taipei, Taiwan, 2000, p.1.

³ "China accuses Taiwan's president of lacking sincerity and warns against delays" *China Post*. Taipei, Taiwan, May 21, 2000, p.1.

⁴ "Kurl Campbell: the future of Taiwan Strait is highly uncertain", *China Time*. June 14th, 2000, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, p.2.

⁵ "Humiliation for China as Taiwan votes in reformer", *The Sunday Times*, London, 19-3- 2000,p.24.



Building Measures⁶ (CBMs) which would be acceptable to Beijing and Taipei to resolve their differences.

2. Taiwan's Present Position

It is common knowledge that Taiwan has historically undergone several violent changes in national sovereignty. Before 1624, there had been a steady flow of immigrants arriving from Mainland China. At that time, they could live peacefully in Taiwan away from the struggles taking place in China. But in 1624, life in Taiwan changed.

1. From 1624-1662 Taiwan was under Dutch occupation.
2. Koxinga of the Ming Dynasty managed Taiwan (1662-83).
3. The Ching Manchus took Taiwan (1683-1895).
4. Taiwan became a colony of Japan (1895-1945) because the Ching Dynasty was defeated in the war with Japan.
5. The ROC began to govern Taiwan from Mainland China in 1945 when Japan surrendered unconditionally at the end of World War II⁷ and returned Taiwan to the ROC.
6. As a result of the four-year civil war against the Chinese Communists, the government of the ROC fled to Taiwan in 1949.

So many radical political ruptures in so short a period of time caused dozens of rebellions and several declarations of independence. The outcome was bloodshed. As a result, there developed many grievances on the part of the people of Taiwan. Therefore, Taiwan is opposed to intervention in the future from Mainland China.

3. China's Present Position

Anyone familiar with the history of China knows how torn apart China has been by constant violence, from the demise of the Ching Dynasty, to the very recent Tienanmen Incident in 1989. The following events will illustrate how Beijing came to have its current attitude:

1. The Opium War (1839-42), the Sino-France War (1884-85), the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) shocked and tore down the dignity of China.
2. The continual domestic warfare from 1917 to 1924, and on through 1928, when China was officially unified.
3. But soon after, on July 7, 1937, the Sino-Japanese War broke out; China was plunged into warfare and misery for eight long years.

⁶ The Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia Pacific (CSCAP) Confidence and Security Building Measures (CSBM) Working Group uses a definition as including *both formal and informal measures, whether unilateral, bilateral, or multilateral, that address, prevent, or resolve uncertainties among states, including both military and political elements*. Such measures contribute to a reduction of uncertainty, misperception, and suspicion and thus help to reduce the possibility of incidental or accidental war.

Ralph A. Cossa: "Cross Strait Confidence Building: Taking the Next Step" International Forum on Peace and Security in the Taiwan Strait, Taipei, Taiwan, 1999, p.2.

⁷ Wen-cheng Lin: "Taiwan's Strategy for its National Security" International Forum on Peace and Security in the Taiwan Strait, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, July 2000, pp.4-5.



4. The communists took over the mainland in 1949 after four years of civil war. However, they have failed to bring the mainland to peace and stability.
5. The mainland suffered again from waves of domestic violence, the Anti-Right Movement 1957-58, the Great Leap Forward 1958-60, the long turmoil of the Cultural Revolution 1966-76, and the tragic Tienanmen Incident June 4, 1989⁸.

The war-torn miseries of the mainland provoked, quite naturally, a nationalistic fervor. When the Beijing regime told the people that Taiwan was influenced by certain countries and would declare the official separation, the people's anti-foreign feelings were aroused. Consequently, they are opposed to the permanent separation of Taiwan.

4. Why Taiwan became Separated

The reasons are unique to Taiwan and also to Mainland China, as well as mutual historical factors for the separation of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

After the May Fourth Movement⁹ of 1919, China's intellectuals absorbed different Western political philosophies, theories and principles, and gradually formed into two opposing ideologies. One school of thought urged that China should follow the path to liberty, democracy and science, as in England and USA, which was similar to Confucianism¹⁰. The other school of thought wanted to learn from Russia, arguing that the communists' methods were more effective, more ideal, and could completely solve society's problems. The different ideologies developed into civil war between the two sides.

The tenant farmer structure in China and the anti- Japanese War gave the Chinese Communists an excellent chance. The communists took advantage of the anti-Japanese War and corruption in the Nationalist government to become strong. Then Mao Zedong won the support of the tenant farmers (who comprised more than 90% of the population) by promising to give them lands taken from their former landlords. He finally won the civil war in 1949¹¹, and forced the Nationalist government into exile in Taiwan. The triumph of the communist ideology was the decisive factor in Taiwan's separation from Mainland China.

5. From Conflict to Communication

Before January 1, 1979, the PRC on mainland declared the policy of liberating Taiwan by force to achieve its unification goal. The ROC on Taiwan responded by a policy of "recovering the mainland". From 1958, the conflict was reduced to the continued shelling of Quemoy. This is a small island of Taiwan close to Mainland China. This activity was intended to keep up the image that civil war existed between the two sides. In late 1978, the US

⁸ Bernice Lee, "The Security Implications of the New Taiwan", *Adelphi Paper 331*, New York, USA, Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 13-22.

⁹ The Incident of May 4, 1919 was provoked by the decision of the peacemakers at Versailles to leave in Japanese hands the former German concessions in Shandong province of China.

John King Fairbank (1992): *China: a new history*, Massachusetts, USA, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. p.267.

¹⁰ Kung Te-cheng (1996): *Confucius: His life, Thought, and Influence*. Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, Government Information Office, p.1.

¹¹ Ross Terrill, "Unification between Taiwan and the Mainland? – The Changed Context From 1949 to 1999" International Forum on Peace and Security in the Taiwan Strait, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, July 2000, p3.



government's formal recognition of the PRC and de-recognition of the ROC brought the armed confrontation to an end¹². This opened the door to communication.

During the 1980s, the PRC tried hard to compel the US to gradually reduce its arms sales to the ROC on the one hand and to bring the ROC to the negotiating table on the other. The ROC held firmly to the policy of rejecting official contacts, negotiations, or compromise. In September 1982 the PRC's paramount leader, Teng Hsiao-ping, advanced the concept of "one country, two systems" as a means of extending the PRC sovereignty over Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan, while permitting these areas to maintain political and economic systems different from those of the PRC. The ROC refused the PRC's overture because Mainland China regarded Taiwan as a local government. At this time, relations between the two sides entered a period of nonviolent confrontation. Then, in 1987, there was another development. The ROC's former president Chiang Ching-kuo relaxed rules to permit private-sector exchanges through third countries, specifically visits by the ROC citizens to their relatives on the mainland. Visits to relatives quickly expanded to commercial and other contacts¹³.

Beijing is urging the "three links"¹⁴ to be established more quickly, and especially wants to change Taipei's current policy of allowing only "indirect" contacts, to allowing "direct" links

In 2002, cross-Strait trade reached \$41.0 billion. The number of Taiwan firms investing in Mainland China already exceeds forty-nine thousand, and their contracted investments are worth more than \$49 billion¹⁵.

Taiwan's businessmen have also been asking the government to lift the "indirect link policy" because it hinders their competitiveness with other countries. These demands have put great pressure on the government¹⁶.

The government of Taiwan is reluctant to introduce "direct links" until Mainland China reduces hostility towards Taipei.

6.Obstacles and Positive Movement

The first obstacle to the CBMs across the Taiwan Strait is distrust. From Taipei's perspective, since the Northern Expedition to unify China in 1926 until the "Tienanmen Massacre" in 1989¹⁷, and various isolation against Taiwan have all made the government and the people of Taiwan distrustful of the Beijing regime. Meanwhile, China's effort to maintain its claims over Taiwan is reflected in its military activities as well. In an infamous show of force in the spring of 1996, before Taiwan's first direct presidential elections, China test-fired missiles and held

¹² Dennis Van Vranken Hickey (1994): *United States- Taiwan Security Ties: From Cold War to Beyond Containment* USA, Praeger Publishers, p.96.

¹³ Godwin Fu (1994): *From "One Divided China" to "One Country, Two Systems": The Inescapable Precondition for Unified China*. Washington, D.C., Center for Strategic and International Studies 1994, pp.3-4.

¹⁴ The "Three Links" are postal, transport and commercial links. Chas. W. Freeman, Jr., "Preventing War in the Taiwan Strait: Restraining Taiwan- and Beijing" *Foreign Affairs*, USA, July/August 1998, p.8.

¹⁵ *Statistics of Trade*, Bureau of Trade, Ministry of Economy, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, 2003, <http://www.mac.gov.tw/big5/twhkmc/report/k94/1.htm>

¹⁶ Hungdah Chiu, "Recent Cross- Strait Relations and the United States", *Issues & Studies* (Institute of International Relations, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC), P.46.

¹⁷ T.L.Tan (1994): *Taiwan' Security: Assessing the Current Situation and Prospects for Future Developments to 2020*, Washington D.C., Atlantic Council of the United States, p.20.



live-fire war-games exercises off Taiwan¹⁸. Those military exercises deeply damaged the relations between Taipei and Beijing.

From Beijing's perspective, Taiwan is trying to distance itself further from the mainland. From a nationalist point of view, Taiwan independence will neither be approved by Beijing nor by the overseas Chinese who otherwise detest the Chinese communist regime. As an anonymous student leader of the 1989 "June 4th Incident" in Tienanmen Square expressed:

We insist upon the overthrow of the current totalitarian regime and support a democratic government like that of Taiwan. However, since China's earliest days Taiwan has been a part of China. Therefore, if Taiwan becomes independent, then the Chinese of this generation will be unfilial to their ancestors and negligent toward their descendants. Once Taiwan declares independence; we support Beijing's use of force¹⁹.

The second major obstacle is the huge gap in the political system, economic structure, ideology and way of life between both sides²⁰. The third major obstacle is the weakness of Taiwan compared with Mainland China. It will be difficult for Taipei to get an equal position in the future negotiation²¹. Therefore Taiwan welcomes some countries or international organizations in the role of balancer, stabilizer, and crisis preventer in Taipei- Beijing military relations²².

Although there are several obstacles as outlined above, there is also a positive movement toward the establishment of CBMs. The framework for promoting such activities already exists. For the purpose of increasing the cross-Strait consensus and moving toward the goal of peaceful co-existence, the ROC government established a cabinet-level Mainland China Affairs Council in January 1991. The private-sector Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) was then formed to negotiate cross-Strait affairs with Beijing's Association for Relations across the Straits (ARATS). In March 1991, Taipei issued the "Guidelines for National Unification²³," which serve as the guiding principles for relations across the Taiwan Straits.

The cross Strait dialogue mechanism between SEF and ARATS provide an unofficial, yet quasi-governmental, venue for serious cross Strait dialogue and offer that both sides see the benefit in such talks and can avoid approaching them from a "win-lose" posture. The communications link established between the respective chairmen—the SEF's Koo Chen-fu

¹⁸ Solomon M. Karmel (2000): *China and the People's Army: Great Power or Struggling Developing State?*, London, Macmillan Press LTD, p.174.

¹⁹ T.L.Tan, *Taiwan' Security: Assessing the Current Situation and Prospects for Future Developments to 2020*, p.22.

²⁰ Lee Teng-hui: "Understanding Taiwan: Bridging the Perception Gap", *Foreign Affairs* November/December 1999, USA, p.113.

²¹ "Taiwan's military: Assessing strengths and weaknesses" *Strategic Comments*, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, May 2000, p.2.

²² Cheng-yi Lin: "The US Role in Taiwan- China Military Relations" International Conference on United States-Taiwan Relations: Twenty Years after the Taiwan Relations Act, Taiwan, ROC, April 1999, p.44.

²³ Huang Kun-huei: "Guidelines for National Unification and Mainland Policy", *Chinese Communist Studies Monthly*, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, October 1992, pp.16-17.



and ARATS' Wang Daohan—serves as an important vehicle for dialogue and thus represents a confidence building measure in itself.

7.CBMS- The Assumptions

Any discussion of cross Strait CBMs should start with some basic assumptions about the general situation. The following general assumptions are recommendations for both parts of the Taiwan Strait.

1. All involved and concerned parties, including the PRC, prefer a “peaceful resolution” of the cross Strait problem.
2. Any long-term solution must take into account both Taiwan domestic attitudes and conditions and the unyielding nature of Beijing's commitment to eventual reunification.
3. The PRC is unlikely to gain control over Taiwan in the foreseeable future or to unilaterally provoke a confrontation.
4. An assertion of *de jure* separation by Taiwan is unlikely but, if issued, would likely provoke a military response from the PRC.
5. The *status quo* remains generally acceptable to Taiwan but is becoming increasingly more difficult to sustain.
6. Peaceful resolution would pave the way for better relations and would remove the potential danger of a military conflict in the Strait.
7. The lack of mutual trust is a major stumbling block, making CBMs essential.
8. The Koo-Wang Talks remain the best vehicle for developing and implementing cross Strait CBMs. A breakdown of this process will make pursuit of CBMs exceedingly difficult, if not impossible²⁴.

8.CBM Recommendations

There are many traditional CBMs—military and non-military—that should be considered. Traditional military CBMs that could be pursued include direct military to military contacts, visits by military delegations, military personnel exchange programs, prior notification of military exercises, the opening of military exercises to international observers, greater openness regarding military budgets and defense planning and procurement, and the sharing of defense information. Expanded contacts at various levels and in diverse fields (cultural, academic, trade, economic, and scientific, as well as military) and a reduction in the military build-up in both Mainland China and Taiwan would also be beneficial to both sides.

Military CBMs, implemented step-by-step, could play an important role in increasing trust and understanding between Mainland China and Taiwan²⁵. More specific suggestions are as follows:

²⁴Ralph A. Cossa: *Cross Strait Confidence Building: Taking the Next Step*, pp.4-7.

²⁵Tai-hsing Tyson Fu: “A Preliminary Proposal for Military “Confidence-building Measures” Across the Taiwan Straits” *International Forum on Peace and Security in the Taiwan Strait*, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, July 1999, pp.8-9.



1. **Regular Military Exchange.** A program of regular military exchanges could be initiated, possibly beginning with visits of retired military officers and civilian national security experts.
2. **Communications Links.** The establishment of communications links between the two militaries, such as setting up military hotlines, would carry symbolic importance as well as substantively contribute to the avoidance of miscalculation in a crisis.
3. **Missile Restraint Regime.** Mutual restraint on missile procurement and missile defense programs could also be pursued.
4. **Operational Military Constraints.** The two sides could move toward agreeing on limits on the scale and location of military exercises, to include troops and naval vessels, and agreeing to refrain from flying combat aircraft within a specified area over the Taiwan Strait.
5. **Transparency Measures.** Transparency Measures could be observed by both sides, including direct pre-notification of military exercises and troop movements.
6. **Open Skies Proposal.** The possibility should be considered of offering some type of “open skies” agreement to permit mutual reconnaissance opportunities over one another’s territories.
7. **Non-Use of Force.** Defusing the ‘use of force’ issue could also help improve the atmosphere for cross Strait dialogue.
8. **WTO Accession.** Chinese and Taiwanese simultaneous accession to the WTO could smooth the way for increased trade and economic interaction and help promote more constructive dialogue on implementing the “three links”.
9. **Greater Personal Interaction.** Greater cross Strait personal interaction at various levels and in many spheres should be expanded among civilian as well as military personnel (including government officials and research scholars) in order to develop a greater sense of understanding and possibly of common community²⁶.
10. **Protecting Lives and Interests.** Taiwan has long urged the working out of an agreement on protecting the rights and interests of Taiwan investors on the Mainland.
11. **Unilateral Actions.** Unilateral steps could also be taken by both sides to enhance trust and confidence. If the PRC will not forswear the use of force against Taiwan, it could at least much frequently and convincingly stress its determination to pursue a peaceful solution and avoid use of force. Meanwhile, Taiwan could take unilateral steps to reduce Beijing’s fears that Taiwan is moving inexorably toward independence. This could include a decision to not hold a national plebiscite on independence for the island for a prolonged period.
12. **Outside Mediation.** The concept of outside mediation should not be rejected. Indonesia provided its good offices to help mediate an internal dispute between the Philippine central government and Muslim rebels in the Mindanao Province. The U.S. helped mediate between Northern Ireland’s warring Catholic and Protestant factions.

²⁶ “To establish Confidence Building Measures is still a long way off”, *China Post*, June 25, 2000, p.2.



9. Longer-Term Blueprint

In the past few years, numerous security analysts have put forward a variety of potential blueprints for achieving some form of long-term cross Strait reconciliation and resolution. These proposals all seek to harmonize the interests of Mainland China and Taiwan and reconcile their differences over sovereignty, identity, status, and global roles. These points could help stimulate further discussion:

1. An agreement to establish an interim arrangement to govern the cross Strait situation for a period of decades, at the end of which on a certain date, formal talks toward political integration of the Mainland China and Taiwan will begin.
2. During this interim period, Taiwan and the Mainland China continue to agree that there is one China and that both parts exist within the framework of one China, but that relations between them are not those between exclusive sovereign entities or between a central government and province. Rather, their relations are those between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.
3. Taiwan pledges it will not seek *de jure* permanent separation and will consider itself part of China.
4. The Mainland China agrees and openly declares that it will forswear the use of force against Taiwan, except in the event that Taiwan violates its pledge to not seek *de jure* permanent separation.
5. China and Taiwan agree to negotiate and end to hostilities in the Strait.
6. The two sides would agree on restrictions to their weapons deployments policies so that each side would feel confident that the other would not be able to alter the fragile arrangement through threat or use of force.
7. All agreements should be legally approved in the respective legislative bodies, possibly in the form of constitutional amendments. Monitoring arrangements should be worked out to ensure implementation of all agreements that could include bilateral committees²⁷.

10. CONCLUSION

Some of the recommendations of CBMs are partly in place. But the key suggestions are difficult to carry out because both parts of the Taiwan Strait have their postures, which are problematic for negotiations. The PRC's precondition for any dialogue is "one China" and Taiwan is one part of China. If Taiwan delays to start the negotiations, Beijing has threatened to complete the issue by force. This precondition for talks is unacceptable for Taiwan. The majority of the people would like to maintain the *Status quo* but don't want to decide the issue of unification at present²⁸. The government of Taipei thinks that the unification is not the only option and will start the negotiations without any preconditions. How can we overcome the deadlock?

Both Beijing and Taipei argue that they represent their people's best interests. Beijing claims that the unification with Taiwan would improve the strength of China, increase the

²⁷ Ralph A. Cosso: *Cross Strait Confidence Building: Taking the Next Step*, p.9-13.

²⁸ Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, "Public Opinion on Cross-Strait Relations in the Republic of China" Taipei, Taiwan, May 2000, p.1.



economic growth, etc. But Taipei are not prepared to become part of the Communist regime because the people are afraid of losing their freedom, wealth ...etc.

Politicians only consider the short-term benefits for their own government and people. The result would be a tragedy if Taipei and Beijing continue to uphold their posture. If cross-Strait CBMs are to be successful, Taipei and Beijing need realistically to take unilateral and incremental approaches first, such as declaratory measures to renounce the use of force against each other²⁹.

According to the authoritarian system of Beijing, it is difficult for Mainland China's leaders to modify the policy of Deng Hsiao-ping. Any changes could risk in a power struggle within the leadership of Beijing. If Taiwan can demonstrate more goodwill³⁰ actions in the foreseeable future, Beijing would soften their approach. This is the latest "wait and see policy" from Beijing³¹.

During 1950s to 70s, Taiwan's Mainland China policy was to recover the mainland. That means to save and help the people there. Why has Taiwan abandoned the original idea to recover the mainland? And could we do more to help the people of Mainland China?

Taipei could offers, specifically help in the education of primary school age children, reducing poverty, and promoting cultural exchange on Mainland China. At the same time, Taiwan's domestic policy should focus on continued economic growth, political reform, social improvement, and the strength of defense. Internationally, Taipei should concentrate on economic cooperation with developing countries and offer more international humanitarian aid³² to raise the profile of Taiwan and become a more significant member of the international community.

As an increasing number of people from Mainland China become aware of the goodwill from Taiwan, they will influence the decision-making of Beijing. Concurrently, the international community would be glad to urge the peaceful co-existence between Mainland China and Taiwan³³. When Beijing could treat Taipei as an equal and reciprocal entity, then CBMs would progress quickly.

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²⁹ Cheng-yi Lin, *The US Role in Taiwan- China Military Relations*, p.39.

³⁰ Michael Yahuda: "European Perspectives on Security Across the Taiwan Strait" *International Forum on Peace and Security in the Taiwan Strait*, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, July 2000, p.10.

³¹ "The gulf between the ideas across the Taiwan Straits- a crisis in hiding?" *China Post*, Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, June 26, 2000, p.2.

³² "World leaders will today promise to help the poor. Empty words again?" *The Guardian*, London, July 21, 2000, p.1; Liang Yung-Ling: "The Development of Cross Strait Relations: The EU Prospect", *The 10th Forum of Military Academies*, May 2003, Chinese Military Academy, Taiwan, ROC, P.20.

³³ "National Security and Defense Policy", *2000 National Defense Report*. Taipei, Taiwan, ROC, August 2000, Part 2.