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Taiwan and Changing Global Order: Perspectives from the 2012 Young Leaders Delegation

This special issue of the Asia Colloquia Papers examines some of the diverse issues that confront Taiwan in the context of changing global and Asia-Pacific regional order. The papers, written by senior students who participated in a May 2012 study trip to Taiwan, look at such topics as the role of education in indigenous peoples' self-determination in Taiwan and Canada; evolving China-Taiwan relations and their multiple implications; changing migration patterns in Taiwan in the context of contemporary globalization; and new developments in Taiwan's role as an aid donor in Africa. The students presented their papers to Taiwan audiences during a study tour as part of the Young Leaders Delegation programme sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Taiwan, the Republic of China. The Young Leaders Delegation programme aims to introduce senior university students from abroad to contemporary Taiwan and its complex challenges.

Indigenous Education in Taiwan and Canada: We Are All Related

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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For more on Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig, see www.shingwauku.ca.

Indigenous peoples of Taiwan have experienced centuries of colonialism that continue to resonate in the lived experiences of individuals, families and communities. The distinct and complex history of Taiwan shares common threads with Indigenous nations across the world, grounding social movements for legal recognition and community well-being. These movements are driven by goals of self-determination with particular emphasis on education. In September 2012 the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) gathered for their annual meeting and research conference at National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan. At this gathering Indigenous educators and researchers from across the world came together to share their struggles and successes, weaving worldviews and histories with respect for one another. Of particular interest at this gathering was the ratification of WINHEC accreditation for Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig, an Anishinabe culture-based university in Northern Ontario. I have had the honour of being a student, a helper and most recently a teacher-in-training at Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig while completing my Masters degree in Language, Culture and Teaching at York University.

When I came upon the announcement that York was sending students to participate in a Young Leaders Delegation to Taiwan, I knew I wanted to be there. I had been working with an amazing team at Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig to achieve accreditation with WINHEC. This accreditation is far more meaningful than Ontario or Canada's legislated procedures, as the WINHEC organization is a self-determining body comprised of representatives from Indigenous nations across the world. I knew that the upcoming meeting and conference would be in Taiwan. I knew that Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig would be there to reach an incredible landmark. I knew that the study trip would provide me with an opportunity to learn more about Taiwan and its history. It would create the space to share our story, to understand how it connects to the stories in Taiwan. In many ways it helped to prepare us at Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig for the September 2012 confer-

ence.

In the original paper written for the Young Leaders Delegation to Taiwan, I explored the history and present context of Indigenous education in Taiwan in the context of growing threats to the well-being of land and community in the name of “development”. I examined the recent history of Indigenous social movements in Taiwan as a means through which nations have achieved significant change to further their self-determination. It became clear to me that the Indigenous nations of Taiwan—made up of at least 20 groups based on linguistic differences (Pawa 2004: 26) and comprising approximately two percent of the overall population (Wu 2012: 3)—hold education as a high priority for the well-being of their people. The recent history of Indigenous education in Taiwan is very similar to what Indigenous peoples in Canada have faced. In contrast to the mainstream population, Indigenous people in Taiwan have generally low attainment (Lee et al. 2011: 62) and high drop-out rates (Chou and Yen 2007: 73). It is widely identified that most teachers in Taiwan are not Indigenous and lack cultural competency and sensitivity (ibid.: 76; Lee et al. 2011: 61; Tsou 2010: 65). Course content and teaching methods predominantly exclude Indigenous language and knowledge (Chou and Yen 2007: 86; Tsou 2010: 65; Wu 2012: 2) and further serve to perpetuate harmful stereotypes which set up Indigenous people as “stupid,” “savage,” “alcoholics” and so on (Chou and Yen 2007: 87). In Canada, the state of Indigenous education is very much the same. Schooling has served the purposes of colonizing and civilizing.

This recent history is understood and recognized by Indigenous people. It is through this recognition that change movements emerged in both Canada (in the late 1960s) and Taiwan (in the late 1970s). People organized, they articulated their needs and as nations put forward clear agendas for the well-being of their communities into the future. The promotion of Indigenous rights and legal recognition was intertwined with an education that supported the preservation and nurturing of Indigenous languages, histories and worldviews. The efforts of Indigenous social movements led to constitutional reforms, creation or adaptation of law (e.g., amendments to The Indian Act in Canada and the creation of the Indigenous

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For more on the College of Indigenous Studies at National Dong Hwa University, see www.cis.ndhu.edu.tw/files/11-1016-7834.php?Lang=zh-tw.

Education Act in Taiwan). It also led to the establishment of Indigenous controlled educational projects for all ages. It led to the development of Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig in Bawating (Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario) and to the College of Indigenous Studies at National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan. It led to the gathering that took place in September 2012; it brought Indigenous institutions and Indigenous nations together to share common experiences and to lift each other up in what they have achieved. We can feel the time that we are in, a time of change that was prophesied by our ancestors. The connections across nations are resurfacing. Our Creation Stories, our philosophies, our ways of living in the world remind us that we are all related.

While my visit to Taiwan was very short, I learned so much. I shared my brief paper on Indigenous education in Taiwan with university students and various people involved with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There was some discomfort in speaking about other peoples and nations, but I soon realized that many of these students and diplomats had not heard this history before. There was significant interest in my paper, but I found there was even greater interest in learning about my experience and more broadly about Indigenous people in Canada. I shared my experience openly and with pride. It is only through my experiences with culture-based education at Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig that I can speak clearly of my story and our story as Anishinabe people. As Indigenous education projects and institutions grow, there will be more of us who can stand up and speak. This will ensure our nations will be strong. This will ensure that we survive.

Taiwan and Africa's Development

The Republic of China on Taiwan's (ROC) unique position in the international community has required it to reach out for supporters throughout the world, including on the African continent. In the past, the ROC has been criticized for its use of "dollar diplomacy" to earn allies. The necessity of change was acknowledged by President Ma Ying-jeou in 2008 with his emphasis on "viable diplomacy". This model seeks to emphasize

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“dignity, autonomy, pragmatism, and flexibility” in foreign relations dealings in the effort to improve Taiwan’s international image (Office of the President, Republic of China 2012). However, the ROC’s policies, especially towards Africa, are notable for several reasons: their unique power balance with African states, the emphasis on localized and indigenous development policies, and the focus on poorer states. Firstly, the relationship between Taiwan and its African supporters should not be characterized as one of a patron and client. There is extensive literature that characterizes the aid-donor relationship with significant attention being paid to western donors such as the United States. R.D. McKinley, an influential scholar on bilateral aid policies, highlights that the relationship between the donor and recipient state can be characterized as asymmetrical. The donor can terminate aid with no or little cost to themselves, while the recipient remains dependent on foreign providers (McKinley 1979: 413).

The ROC’s relationship with its African aid recipients, however, does not fit in this model. For the ROC, political support is a matter of “political life and death”. It depends on African states for advocacy in the international sphere (ibid.: 382). In its search for international recognition, the ROC recognizes that Africa is not an insignificant region, as it represents one-third of the United Nations General Assembly. As a result, the donor-recipient relationship identified by McKinley becomes complicated; the so-called weaker recipient African nations have an important source of influence within international relations and they should not be viewed as “subjects” of Taiwan. Additionally, the unique power balance between the ROC and its African partners is evident in the tendency of states to use competition between the ROC and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) for their benefit (Baker and Edmonds 2004: 191). This competition allows African elites to play the competitors off against one another, thereby increasing the amount of financial and technical support they are provided (Taylor 2002: 130). It is the recipient, not the donor, who is in a position of relative power. Although various individuals with whom we interacted during the Young Leaders Delegation study trip expressed confidence in “viable diplomacy”, there is no significant research on the impact of this policy on these

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power relations.

Secondly, the aid relationship between Taiwan and Africa is marked by an increasing emphasis on local projects and overall effectiveness. In the 1960s and 1970s, Taipei's assistance plans were marked by temporary "green miracles", needing "short-term results more desperately" than other aid providers. In contrast, Taipei's contemporary policies focus on case-by-case solutions and more practical assistance (Liu 2009: 399). Taipei has built a reputation in Africa for offering appropriate technological support with few strings attached (Taylor 2002: 131). Furthermore, the *Taipei Times* reports that Taipei is turning its focus to a greater emphasis on projects that train and empower indigenous groups ("Strengthening Ties with Africa," *Taipei Times*, May 8, 2012). Although Taipei's political motivations are explicit, there remains a desire to be what President Ma highlights as "an international asset rather than a liability by contributing to international assistance programs" (Anonymous 2012: 19475b). The ROC's contemporary development projects are noteworthy because of their emphasis on development needs and long-term success.

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For example, the ROC has remained committed to providing assistance to The Gambia, particularly agricultural technical assistance. Its current projects there, including vegetable gardening programs near Banjul and a tidal rice irrigation scheme near Sapu, minimize the use of complex technology and rely on methods that can be maintained by local populations (Baker and Edmonds 2004: 192). Furthermore, the project seeks to engage marginalized groups such as local women, and, as a result, the excellent record of the Taiwanese government "is well acknowledged at every level of Gambian society" (ibid.: 207). Contemporary ROC development assistance focuses on long-term project goals and engages with people at a variety of levels of African society, thus providing empowerment.

Finally, Taipei's development assistance policies towards Africa can be characterized as targeting the poorest countries. Literature acknowledges this tendency in the ROC's foreign policy, agreeing that its influence is limited to states that will not be crippled by a loss of trade relations with the PRC (Taylor 2002: 130; Payne and Veney 2001: 447). The ROC

has the greatest political leverage in these states. However, scholarship tends to minimize the reality that many of these states have the highest need for assistance. For example, four of the states that recognize the ROC are São Tomé e Príncipe, Swaziland, The Gambia and Burkina Faso. Of the 187 countries on the United Nations Development Program's Human Development Index, these four are ranked noticeably low: São Tomé e Príncipe at 144, Swaziland at 140, The Gambia at 168, and Burkina Faso at 181 (United Nations Development Program 2012). All four of these states can be considered least developed countries. It is important to emphasize substantial needs in these states and the empowerment that has come through projects such as the previously mentioned agricultural ventures in The Gambia.

Moving forward, the ROC's international development schema will face, among others challenges, two in particular. Firstly, the ROC will likely face difficulties in practically applying its "viable diplomacy", as do other governments distributing a form of overseas development assistance. More research should be done, however, to examine the ways in which the ROC's nuanced relationship with Africa, as discussed previously, creates unique challenges. Secondly, greater attention is being given to Africa by the PRC, and these changing circumstances will likely affect Taiwan's aid policies. As Payne and Veney (2001: 441) note, "Whereas the West has decided to marginalize most African countries, China has increased its diplomatic and economic activities on the continent". It will be important to examine the impact of both the viable diplomacy policy and the increasing interest of the PRC in Africa on the ROC's international development policies in Africa.

Migration and Taiwan's Economic Development: Illuminating the Multiscalar Impacts of Globalization

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In response to migration specialist Doreen Massey's appeal for a contemporary migration theory for the post-industrial climate (de Haas, 2008: 48), renowned sociologist Stephen Castles describes migration as predominantly a "social transformation" indicating the "complexity, interconnectedness,

variability, contextuality, and multi-level mediations of global change” (2010: 1566). Hence, the rise of Taiwan as a global player in information technology subsequently cultivates a divergence in traditional Asian labour migration patterns. What does this mean for our understanding of the relationship between migration and economic globalization in Taiwan? From the mid-twentieth century onwards, the Taiwan government cultivated economic development in the Republic of China (ROC) through restrictive centralized planning initiatives. Internal economic incubation was consolidated by prohibitive immigration policies yielding immense economic gains. However, the disbanding of martial law in 1987 instigated massive migration policy reform, including opening Taiwan to temporary foreign workers in 1992 (Lin 2012). The impacts of this deregulation have been contested amongst scholars. Lin identifies this period as a “key era of migration transition” (ibid.: n.p.)—internally and internationally—wrought by the repercussions of Taiwan’s political liberalization. His analysis solidifies the causal relationship between economic development and migration policies. Pang’s (1993) model provides further evidence for the linking of economic development with migration transition in Taiwan (cited by Findlay, 1998: 645). Further, geographer Anand Segal and his coauthors (2010: 335) argue that the globalization and internationalization of the Taiwan economy influenced the decision by the government to respond with a more liberalized immigration policy. As Castles (2010) emphasizes, migration serves as a key indicator of Taiwan’s economic vitality. How have post-1987 migration patterns affected economic development and prescribed the ROC’s socioeconomic milieu, including its spatial and social variations?

Taiwan’s changing migration policies are a valuable lens to understand the unique ways it has both embraced and resisted the forces of globalization.

Taiwan’s changing migration policies are a valuable lens to understand the unique ways it has both embraced and resisted the forces of globalization. The diverse impacts of globalization are best encapsulated through three emergent trends occurring consequentially from changing migration policies on economic development locally, regionally and nationally.

Contrasting immigrant flows to Taipei with the rest of the ROC reveals the changing socioeconomic conditions there

and the increasing gulf between Taiwan's largest metropolis and the rest of the Republic—reinforced by an influx of foreign residents. The effects of globalization are most salient in Taipei. Tai Po-Fen (2006) considers Taipei a generative context for analyzing the interplay among the following factors: the interdependent relationship between economic and cultural globalization, the rise of Taiwan's high-tech industry and the migratory streams propelled by structural economic shifts. By 2001, 32 percent of all industrial, commercial and service firms were concentrated in Taipei, generating 43 percent of Taiwan's total productive value. Therefore, as Lin (2012) argues, business cycles directly affect immigration flows from Japan and the United States. The return migration of educated Taiwanese and the sizable flow of Japanese and American business people due to policies of "greater openness to professionals and highly skilled foreign workers" have successfully provided Taiwan with the necessary resources to "meet the challenges of a competitive world economy in the era of globalization" (Wongboosin 2003: 84).

Indeed, this assessment reveals the unique way in which Taipei's sophisticated economic structure embodies Saskia Sassen's definition of a "global city" (a command and control centre characterized by its transnational influences [Wang 2003]) and the subsequent ramifications of this new urban persona. Tai (2006) encapsulates this reality of Taipei as a "dual city", one characterized by bifurcated social classes—a cosmopolitan, international elite and a low-skilled, disposable urban underclass of predominantly foreign contract workers. Parallel with Taipei's doubling of skilled expatriates from 1990-1995 (Findlay 1998: 654) was the population increase of unskilled foreign labourers to 39,790 in 2003 from a level of 1,667 in 1992 (Tai 2006). Nationals are no longer willing to perform "3D" jobs—dirty, dangerous and demeaning, and South Asian labourers are recruited as insecure contract workers for these roles (Findlay 1998). Consequently, social polarization—a problem foreign to this city before 1990—has become increasingly pernicious; the precarious position of most foreign migrants in Taiwan affirms Tai's assertion that "immigrant workers generate new urban divisions" (2006: 1754).

Analyzing how these policies have changed traditional

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internal migration patterns will elucidate forces prescribing differential regional economic development. In describing the “migrant displacement” phenomena occurring in northern Taiwan, Lin (2012) notes the loss of low-skilled domestic work in certain areas and the negative effect of this for the socioeconomic well-being of the local population. One must assess the negative consequences of decreased remittances and returned revenues to rural areas rather than dismissing this trend as merely a “flight caused by increased immigration” (Lin 2012). Resources are concentrated in Taipei—compromising the traditional rural-to-urban migration cycle that ensured continual economic survival in rural communities. The economic success that Taiwan has incurred by migration obfuscates the negative impacts these trends and relevant policies have had on much of the population.

The liberalization of migrant controls, changing patterns in the country of origin of migrant workers, and demographic and economic disparity between Taipei and the rest of the ROC elucidate the unique trajectory Taiwan has pursued in integrating into the globalized economy. Deregulating migration controls has allowed the ROC to successfully preserve the central tenets of its centralized economic regime, thus retrofitting their centralized “Asian Tiger” paradigm to satisfy a globalized context. As Han Entizinger explains, “Taiwan’s decision to open up channels for labour migration must therefore be perceived as an attempt to defend economic nationalism in the face of a globalized economy” (2004: 106). Therefore, a paradox is revealed: to prevent the offshore relocation of Taiwan companies, the government relies on foreign labour to rectify the domestic labour shortage. This strategy accords maximum economic benefits to the ROC at minimal social costs (Entizinger 2004); temporary foreign workers do not require cultural, social or economic integration. Thus, Taiwan acts globally while ensuring a vibrant national economy and a relatively culturally homogenous national population. However, in the mid-2000s, the government announced plans to issue permanent resident permits to many of the 46,000 long-term resident aliens (Wongboosin 2003). This new trajectory complicates the formerly tidy arrangement of cheap, international, disposable labour bringing economic gain. It will have

inevitable consequences for socioeconomic conditions in the ROC.

Ultimately, Taiwan's contemporary migration policy shift affirms that "migration reflects a highly structured system of movement fundamentally linked to Taiwan's position in the global economy" (Findlay, 1998: 656). These patterns reveal Taiwan's economic globalization has preserved the government's interests and ensured enduring national economic control. Taiwan's dynamic economic and social transformations present an important case study that offers insights into the highly intricate and complex relationship between economic development and migration.

Cooperation over Conflict: Can Economic Integration Help Mitigate the Chances of Chinese and Taiwanese Conflict?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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What is perceived to be the real possibility of military conflict between China and Taiwan has threatened peace and stability in East Asia for decades. Taiwan is de facto an independent and sovereign state with its own government and military, yet its status as such remains unrecognized by all but 23 of the world's states and governments (Winkler 2011). It is presently refused membership in numerous international organizations, such as the United Nations (Tien and Tung 2011: 80). This is due in large part to Chinese government pressure for other states and intergovernmental organizations to withhold recognition of Taiwan as a prerequisite for maintaining relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC) (ibid.). In addition to this diplomatic pressure, since 1949, successive Chinese governments have insisted that Taiwan is an inalienable part of the Chinese state that must, at some point, be reunified with mainland China. Termed the "one-China principle", this stance that the Republic of China ([ROC], used interchangeably here with "Taiwan") is not a legitimate state, is bolstered by the position of the PRC government. It maintains that should Taiwan ever formally declare independence, the PRC government would invade (ibid.).¹

This paper will employ what international relations (IR) theory refers to as a liberal-pluralist framework, focusing spe-

1. The paper assumes that China constitutes a serious military threat to Taiwan. For more, see Tien and Tung (2011) and Brown (2010a; 2010b; 2010c; 2011).

cifically on interdependency theory and liberal institutionalism to support the arguments made (see Burchill 2009). Given this theoretical lens, the 2010 Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) and the associated economic China-Taiwan links it is fostering will be examined as an institutional mechanism to deter military conflict. Finally, the ability of increasing economic linkages and institutionalized interaction to resolve or more completely transform the current state of relations between China and Taiwan will be considered. Though it is admittedly early days for ECFA, this paper will argue that growing interdependence and institutionalized relations between China and Taiwan will serve to mitigate the possibility of military conflict between the two territories, assuming the government of Taiwan does not unilaterally declare full independence.

The trade and economic links fostered between China and Taiwan due to ECFA build a foundation for cooperation beyond the 1992 consensus. They also provide a means to reduce the possibility of armed conflict, in line with the predictions of interdependency and institutionalist theory. In 2008, when the Chinese and Taiwanese governments established official transport and economic linkages between their respective locales, it became evident that, increasingly, there were economic incentives for peace. The two territories then negotiated ECFA, which came into effect in 2010 and had helped cross-strait trade grow to US \$152 billion in the same year by eliminating tariffs on numerous goods (Brown 2011). Avenues have also opened for increased investment by Chinese people in the Taiwan economy and vice versa (Tien and Tung 2011: 81).

There are already some early indications that ECFA is contributing to a more peaceful relationship. Members of the Chinese and Taiwanese governments have noted how ECFA is expanding on the mutual trust created from the 1992 consensus (Wang 2012). Moreover, ECFA is facilitating increased “cross-strait exchange and collaboration in capital, work force, management style, technological innovation, and business culture,” all of which promote personal and professional linkages and discourage anything that would disrupt valuable trade relationships (Chan 2012). Additionally, this codified agreement serves as a framework for the development of further institutional arrangements and may, over time, serve to re-

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duce the advantages of pursuing military solutions to potential problems. However, developments of that nature will take significant time. Currently, ECFA is merely a beginning and too new for there to be data suggesting it is definitively reducing the possibility of conflict.

There are certainly limits to liberal institutionalist theory generally and to ECFA in particular. Although regimes and institutions such as ECFA may serve as a mechanism to lessen the possibility of armed conflict, this author would never suggest that economic agreements and institutions necessarily prevent it. If the Taiwanese government was to unilaterally declare independence, for example, an event that the Chinese government has previously claimed would result in conflict, then the ability of almost any institutionalized interaction to deter said attack would be negligible. However, this raises the question of whether such interactions might reduce or increase the likelihood of such a unilateral declaration by Taiwan or affect the Chinese policy that it would respond with military force. There is also some concern that as the Taiwanese economy becomes increasingly dependent on the Chinese export market, the Chinese government will be able to exert undue influence over Taiwanese politics and through common institutions. This is particularly worrying given China is less dependent on Taiwan imports than the reverse (Kastner 2006: 320). That is not to say that asymmetrical economic or political influence would cause military conflict, but it could undermine the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Taiwan, which is also what is at stake when China threatens military action.

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However, those caveats aside, should ECFA, as well as other institutional frameworks, continue to foster mutually beneficial ties for the Chinese and Taiwanese governments while military conflict is avoided, a strong case could be made for initiating similar processes to foster institutionalized economic ties and interdependence in other conflict zones throughout the world, if they are not underway already.

To conclude, expanding and growing economic links and institutionalized economic relations between China and Taiwan may be lessening the possibilities of armed conflict between the two entities, presuming that Taiwan does not

unilaterally declare independence. This paper examined the ECFA agreement through a liberal institutionalist lens, viewing it as an initial step towards achieving the institutional capacity to stabilize the relationship between the governments of China and Taiwan. Following the analysis of this specific agreement, the future implications of the liberal institutionalist perspective were considered as a way of permanently resolving the long-standing issues between the Chinese and Taiwanese governments, including difficult questions of sovereignty and international status related to the “one-China Principle”. Many questions remain, such as what indicators should be utilized to measure a change in the possibility of conflict and how domestic politics in China and Taiwan affect the evolution of ECFA and its capacity to help avert military conflict? Common institutions are certainly only beginning to relax tensions across the Taiwan Strait, but they appear to be slowly improving the prospects for peace in what had previously been considered a nearly intractable conflict.

Recognizing Two Chinas: The Puzzle around International Recognition of Taiwan

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The Taiwan impasse has problematized international diplomacy in East Asia since the 1940s. In the last century, significant transformations have occurred in the region: Taiwan, the politically ambiguous entity of 22 million, has democratized, while the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has gained increasing influence as a formidable political and economic global power. Relations between the PRC and the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROCOT) have been particularly unstable during this period, especially due to Taiwan’s evolution away from the “one-China principle” in response to local calls for self-determination and increased international recognition. This essay questions why states choose to offer varying levels of international recognition to Taiwan, and what these motives suggest regarding the effectiveness of Taiwan foreign policy decisions at the moment. I argue that states maintain official and non-official relations with Taiwan for a number of different reasons: economic incentives explain how Taiwan maintains official

recognition with a small number of states, while strategic and ideological imperatives are salient in the rationale for sustained non-official relationships with a larger number of states. As the economic and strategic importance of Taiwan evolves, especially in relation to China, the entity may find it more effective to change its international strategies and solely pursue para-diplomatic relations, while maintaining and promoting its unique status as a democratic and economically significant Asian entity.

I extend the traditional meaning of para-diplomatic relations to account for the unique nature of the ROCOT's international relationships. As used here, it refers not only to international relations conducted by subnational, regional, local or non-central governments on their own to promote their interests outside of traditional inter-state diplomatic mechanisms, but also cross-border political activities by the governments of polities whose international status is disputed or does not easily fit the standard international legal definition of a state. When states choose to pursue para-diplomatic relations with the ROCOT, they are not necessarily recognizing it as a state. The government of the ROCOT currently does make actual gains by building such unofficial economic and cultural ties with other governments at various levels. This paper argues that it would gain by increasing these types of international relationships.

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The act of international recognition is significant as it serves as an explicit indicator of external legitimacy (Rich 2009: 162). This is in contrast to internal claims to sovereignty, based on de facto statehood as defined in the Montevideo Convention of 1933. The Montevideo Convention, the most authoritative declaration on the factors relevant to de facto statehood, requires a permanent population, defined territory, effective and legitimate government and the ability to enter into relations with other states (Chen and Reisman 1972: 607; Yahuda 1996: 1323). The majority of international legal scholars agree that Taiwan meets the qualifications for statehood. As Lung-Chu Chen states, "judged by the international legal standard of statehood, Taiwan is a sovereign, independent state in every sense of the word" (quoted in Shen 2000: 1125; see also Yahuda 1996: 1319-1323). However, the extension

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of external legitimacy is subject to the calculations and interests of individual states (Swaine 2004: 47). Taiwan has been successful in achieving only limited international recognition; it has developed official diplomatic relations with 22 states, while developing over 160 para-diplomatic relationships (Yahuda 1996: 1323). Prior to the People's Republic of China's rapid economic and political rise in power, Taiwan was more widely recognized. In the period following World War II, the majority of states and great powers extended recognition to Taiwan by recognizing the ROC's leadership and sovereignty over all of China (Payne and Veney 2001: 438). Maintaining an international presence in the current global context, however, involves high-cost policies for Taiwan, outside of traditional state-to-state diplomatic channels (ibid.).

As explained previously, Taiwan only maintains official state relations with 22 states, all of which are small and the vast majority of which are in the developing world. Taylor (2002: 125), Yahuda (1996: 1331) and Shen (2000: 1121) describe the economic imperatives present in these relationships as "dollar diplomacy". These same authors note that it is the convergence of Taiwan's economic strength and the developing world's economic vulnerability that have engendered opportunities for Taiwan to gain diplomatic recognition. One official even suggested that "Taipei could purchase recognition from a Third World country for about US \$20 million" (Rich 2009: 172; see also Payne and Veney 2001: 438-443). However, recognition based on monetary imperatives is neither stable nor necessarily favourable for Taiwan. Taiwan's attempt to maintain allies through continued economic support has essentially allowed the entity to be blackmailed. China has also recently become willing to offer similar aid packages, leading states to bargain their recognition in order to attract more substantial economic support from each state (Rich 2009: 173, 179). Payne and Veney argue that as China's economy continues to grow, Taiwan's ability to use its economic might as leverage for international recognition will likely diminish (Payne and Veney 2001: 44).

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In regards to recognition from great power states, strategic and ideological imperatives are paramount (Rich 2009: 159). While support for the national Chinese leadership

that was eventually led by Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan pre-dates the Cold War, it was strengthened through Cold War alliances rooted in the global fight to contain the spread of communism (Chen and Reisman 1972: 615). However, with fears about the possibility of nuclear conflict over the island of Taiwan and the increased importance of China, many states reopened diplomatic relations with the PRC. The democratization and liberalization of Taiwan has resulted in a new rhetoric, while states nonetheless offer limited support for the entity (Bergsten et al. 2008). In fact, the George W. Bush administration claimed that the US was obligated to “defend democracy in Taiwan” (Kan 2011: 2), while leaders who support China have often been criticized for “appeasing a dictatorship at the expense of Taiwan’s democracy” (ibid.: 12; see also Rich 2009: 170). However, and especially since the end of the Cold War, ideological reasoning for maintaining ties with Taiwan have only held limited influence. In fact, Taiwan had the most support in the 1940s and 1950s (Tu 1996: 1122), while under the leadership of the nationalist Chinese reign that declared martial law and was responsible for the “brutal massacre ... of as many as 20,000 Formosan [Taiwanese] leaders”, a decidedly anti-liberal period (Chen and Reisman 1972: 612; Rich 2009: 178). Therefore, in many cases, strategic factors provide a better explanation for continued, if limited, international recognition of Taiwan. Swaine outlines two strategic reasons for continued support using the US as a case study: continued support is integral to the credibility and reputation of American commitments to its other allies (Swaine 2004: 43), while Taiwan’s economic achievements are also significant and tied to US trade and exports.² However, with the increased strategic importance of the PRC, global powers continue to emphasize the limits to international support for Taiwan, stating publicly and repeatedly that they do not support Taiwanese independence (Bergsten et al. 2008).

2. Taiwan is the ninth-largest trade partner of the US, with US \$65 billion in bilateral trade in 2007 (Bergsten et al. 2008).

Despite the costliness of Taiwan efforts to gain official international recognition, this continues to be a priority on its foreign policy agenda. Taiwan maintains its claims for recognition based on the fact that the state meets all qualifications for de facto statehood, its population’s right to self-determination (Tu 1996: 1117) as well as the strategic desire to overcome

negative consequences accrued from the entity's lack of international status. For example, unrecognized governments may have difficulty collecting on international debt obligations and regulating foreign investments, while Taiwan has also been barred from international organizations and from concluding treaties (Davis 1990: 146; Shen 2000: 1124; Yahuda 1996: 1328; Rich 2009: 171). However, China "vehemently opposes dual recognition" of both the ROCOT and PRC (Payne and Veney 2001: 446), since the Taiwan issue is perceived to be inextricably related to national respect and regime survival. Swaine argues that Beijing regards the eventual reunification of China and Taiwan as essential to China's "recovery from a century of national weakness, vulnerability, and humiliation, as well as to its emergence as a respected great power" (Swaine 2004: 40). Moreover, the independence of a single region has the potential to set a dangerous precedent in the PRC (Swaine 2004: 41). As economic strategies for official relations become controversially costly and unsustainable, the Taiwanese population should question whether it is strategic for their leadership to continue to seek official recognition. Instead, Taiwan could focus on strengthening its commitment to democracy and economic growth, thereby maintaining the factors that attract unofficial para-diplomatic international relationships. These relationships can be as fruitful as official relationships, but are less controversial for states also interested in a relationship with the PRC (see Yahuda 1996).

Taiwan's Political Future in the Post-Cold War Era

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Sitting at the intersection of a critical global conflict between the United States and the People's Republic of China, Taiwan today faces increasing challenges from Beijing's reunification pressures. With the end of the Cold War and the economic rise of a globally engaged China, the rationale for Taiwan's efforts to determine its own future has diminished, and, simultaneously, the international community's attitude towards "Taiwan's national autonomy" has undergone significant changes over the past two decades. Moreover, Taiwan's recent economic decline and China's rapid international expansion

have left the island “more susceptible to reunification being imposed by peaceful means than at any time since de-recognition” (Allen 2003: 25). At the same time, the danger of risking direct conflict with the rapidly militarizing China and the declining strategic importance of Taiwan in the post-Cold War era increasingly encourages Washington and its allies to consider backing away from their earlier commitments in Taiwan and to accommodate Beijing’s interests over the island instead. Simply put, in the newly emerging post-Cold War political and economic global order, Taiwan’s economic significance and political advocacy alone are no longer enough to justify defying Beijing’s resolute pursuit of its constitutionally enshrined goal of “reunification” (Rigger 2011: 189). The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to explore the political future of Taiwan in the context of the contemporary post-Cold War world order. In particular, it discusses several potential scenarios regarding the nature of Taiwan’s future political status.

There are three scenarios for Taiwan’s potential political status in the new world order: (1) moving toward formal independence from China; (2) seeking *de jure* reunification with China; and (3) maintaining the status quo via a two-track approach. This paper identifies the third scenario—the continuation of the status quo—as the most desirable and realistic option for Taiwan.

Under such a scenario, Taiwan would continue pursuing its current policy of maintaining the status quo, but would also newly adopt a two-track approach: on the one hand it would try to maintain stable relations with China via extensive cross-strait exchanges and ties, and, on the other hand, it would continue to pursue informal contacts with other countries in order to remain as a partially recognized actor in the international system—even if not an independent sovereign state in the foreseeable future. Domestically, Taiwan would largely refrain from deliberately promoting assertive nationalism, but it would not in any way constrain the continued emergence of a localized Taiwanese identity.

This scenario, despite its ambiguous nature, is the most desirable and realistic option for Taiwan for two reasons. First, it is in Taiwan’s best interest to avoid escalating tensions with Beijing. In fact, considering China’s rapid international expan-

... Taiwan should promote more extensive economic and social ties across the strait, largely as a means to reduce the likelihood of military conflict with China.

sion and the “marked decline of US support for the island’s freedom”, Taiwan should continue to follow the current policy of reassurance and flexibility on cross-strait relations that would put Beijing at ease (Sutter 2011: 4-14). In particular, Taiwan should promote more extensive economic and social ties across the strait, largely as a means to reduce the likelihood of military conflict with China. As Kastner notes, the growing economic ties and interdependence would, over time, have a “transformative effect” on the cross-strait relationship—that is, “citizens on either side of the Taiwan Strait may start to identify more with one another as contacts between the two societies continue to increase” (Kastner 2009: 126). This, in turn, would reduce the volatility of the highly nationalistic Chinese public and, thus, reduce the domestic pressure that Beijing faces with regards to its handling of the Taiwan issue. Consequently, Beijing’s stance on Taiwan would become more patient and flexible.

Second, it is also in Taiwan’s best interest to resist reunification pressures from China. Considering the highly centralized and authoritarian nature of China’s political system, in fact, it is highly unlikely that Taiwan would be able to remain as a truly autonomous administrative region if reunification occurred. Rather, similar to what some analysts argue is already the case for Hong Kong, the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party and the Central Military Commission would gradually become the de facto ruling authorities over the island, relegating the current Taiwanese government to a mere local government (Chung 2001: 237). At the same time, should Taipei seek de jure reunification with Beijing, Taiwan would have to sever its official diplomatic relations with the 23 countries with which it currently has official diplomatic relations, even though it may still be able to maintain informal political ties and contacts with the other countries. This would make Taiwan substantially more vulnerable to Beijing’s potential military intervention in the cases of anti-Beijing protests or pro-secession demonstrations. In fact, it would be much easier for Beijing to send in its military to an internationally isolated territory over which it now has de jure sovereignty. Such a possibility threatens the continuity of the relatively young democratic system in Taiwan and the protection of the

... Taiwan should continue exercising its informal diplomacy to maintain its economic strength and to minimize various barriers that the Chinese government imposes on its ability to participate in formal diplomatic relations ...

new Taiwanese identity. Simply put, in the event of de jure reunification with China, Taiwan would lose its current status as a partially recognized actor in the international system and, ultimately, its capacity for self-determination. Thus, Taiwan should continue exercising its informal diplomacy to maintain its economic strength and to minimize various barriers that the Chinese government imposes on its ability to participate in formal diplomatic relations—both of which are crucial for Taiwan’s continued survival as a de facto independent entity. In particular, Taiwan should continue pursuing its strategy of promoting democracy and human welfare to “attract international (western) recognition and support in circumventing Beijing’s growing influence in world affairs” (Chung 2001: 240). At the same time, Taiwan should also gradually promote its strengthened local Taiwanese identity as a means further to justify internationally its claim to a right to function autonomously in international affairs.

Cross-Strait Tourism: Moving People, Moving Money

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Taiwan opened its doors to our Young Leaders Delegation in May 2012, offering generous hospitality as we learned about its politics, economy and culture. We had discussions with politicians, business people and academics, and freely exchanged ideas with university students at National Chengchi University and diplomats-in-training at the Foreign Service Institute. In many ways, our trip was a microcosm of a larger trend. Since President Ma Ying-jeou’s victory in 2008, Taiwan has opened its doors to its giant neighbour, China; men and women from the mainland have eagerly visited this island. Though less formal and education-focused than our trip, the Chinese in Taiwan are engaging in cross-cultural dialogue that will hopefully lead to better understanding between the two countries, greater cross-strait cooperation and the peaceful resolution of decades-old problems. Facing heavy opposition from the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and the Taiwanese public, the Kuomintang (KMT) government claims that this initiative is primarily business-motivated—“economics first, politics later,” as the saying goes (Liu 2012). But the question

Like a good hostess, Taiwan welcomes you to her home, but does not smother you with affection.

remains whether economic gain can galvanize the two countries into engaging in a meaningful dialogue about some of their larger problems.

Taiwan has implemented a balanced foreign policy that reflects the preference of the vast majority of the Taiwanese for the status quo—neither immediate independence nor unification with China (*Want China Times*). Like a good hostess, Taiwan welcomes you to her home, but does not smother you with affection. It has taken over half a century for Taiwan to permit Chinese visitors. Between 2008 and 2011, the only way for Chinese to visit was in a tightly controlled tour group, limiting the interaction between Chinese and local Taiwanese. That changed in 2011. The KMT government decided to allow a limited number of Chinese tourists to come to the country unescorted (Foster 2011). While the conditions for travel are stringent, on any given day, 500 mainland tourists can descend on Taiwan, free to go anywhere and interact with anyone (ibid). From the onset, tourism has helped to change the dynamics between the Taiwanese and Chinese. Erika Guan, a Beijing resident, once thought that the Taiwanese were ram-bunctious, having seen politicians brawl in the legislature on television. But after visiting Taiwan, she now thinks that they are “really harmonious” (Mishkin 2012).

In many ways, President Ma is correct that economics is fueling this cross-strait exchange of people, ideas, experiences and values (Liu 2012). Despite some reservations, most Taiwanese support President Ma’s policies on China because they believe that Taiwan will gain economically. By 2013, mainland tourism will inject US \$330 billion into the Taiwanese economy yearly (Jacobs 2011). Just as the mainland Chinese have started to eclipse Japanese as the biggest source of tourism to Taiwan, China has also eclipsed Japan as Taiwan’s biggest trading partner (Foster 2011). With the signing of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) in 2010, which reduced tariffs and commercial barriers between China and Taiwan, this hardly comes as a surprise (ECFA 2010). Trade liberalization has already occurred in a number of industries as part of ECFA’s ‘Early Harvest’ period. For instance, machine tool exports to China skyrocketed by 62 percent and agricultural exports quadrupled in the first eight months of the

agreement (Kwong 2011). Though the 'Early Harvest' period concerns less privileged sectors (raw materials, downstream industrial products, etc.), ECFA certainly has the potential to grow.

Indeed, the future promises greater economic cooperation between Taiwan and mainland China, especially if the KMT stays in power. As ECFA expands, it will be applicable to more and more industries, such as banking (ECFA 2010). The late August 2012 announcement by China and Taiwan that they are creating a Yuan clearing mechanism attests to this (Liu and Poon 2012). With a new swap line for the Yuan and New Taiwan dollar and a new offshore Yuan spot rate for Taiwan, China has given Taiwan banks the same advantages as their Hong Kong and Macau counterparts (ibid). Greater access to the Chinese Yuan would facilitate trade, as currency settlements would no longer have to take place in Hong Kong (ibid).

... there remains a sense of wariness between the two countries not easily fixed by economic policy alone.

Although more money and more people are crossing Taiwanese and Chinese borders, there remains a sense of wariness between the two countries not easily fixed by economic policy alone. The Taiwanese media gleefully report incidents of mainland tourists behaving badly (Jacobs 2011). Complaining about how Chinese visitors throw cigarette butts in Taroko National Park, Kao Hui-ch'iao, a volunteer tour guide, concludes woefully: "They think they know better and just don't like following the rules... They just aren't very civilized" (ibid). The other side shares similar sentiments. "It's hard to compare any place to Beijing, the home of emperors," Li Guihong, a retired government employee, rather smugly on his inaugural trip to Taiwan, is reported as saying (ibid). Given the recent histories on both sides of the strait, this deeply entrenched sense of suspicion may take years to ameliorate.

A traditional Chinese fable may paint a picture of the future. There once lived two brothers. The elder brother ran off with riches, leaving his young brother impoverished and embittered. Decades later, after the bereft brother grew richer and his anger faded, their grandchildren were finally reunited. The grandchildren acknowledged their differences, but also their similarities, including an utter disinterest in keeping up the feud (ibid).

It may be that the Taiwanese and Chinese are at the

point where they can cooperate for economic gain, but they still struggle to put aside their cultural differences. It is easier for President Ma and future presidents to cite economic reasons for bringing Taiwan closer to China. No amount of trade, however, can fix relations completely at this moment. Nevertheless, the fable suggests that their grandchildren may play together one day. To make this a reality, China and Taiwan need to continue to encourage free and open cultural exchanges, namely moving people as well as moving money.

Taiwan: Establishing a Distinct Identity in Cross-Strait Relations

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Since the late twentieth century, Taiwan has made significant political and economic changes that have made it one of the most successful societies internationally. The shift from an underdeveloped state to a blossoming high-technology capital has warranted significant international attention. With transformative political shifts that propagated democratization, as well as economic strengths that enabled penetration into the world market, Taiwan has notably benefitted from the processes of globalization. Much of this growth stems from economic developments that have facilitated Taiwan's success throughout the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first century. These developments have not only brought economic and political growth, but have also contributed to the evolution of Taiwan's unique identity. Flourishing from a former colony to a democratized economic powerhouse, it is evident in Taiwan today that these developments have encouraged the island's growth and its recognition as an international actor. This paper suggests that economic and political developments made in Taiwan continue to contribute to the growth of its distinct identity, which steadily drives Taiwan towards sovereignty.

Although Taiwan is a former colony, its people have been able to make significant transformations throughout the twentieth century that redefined the island's identity and established its de facto political autonomy from mainland China. Further changes during a political wave of liberalization and democratization enabled citizens to vote, publicly

express themselves and hold local government accountable (Wu 2007: 984). While these changes have been beneficial for Taiwan, it is important to note that they have often instigated tensions with mainland China. Despite these tensions, Taiwan's revolutionary changes not only empowered citizens and strengthened their sense of having a distinct identity, it also distinguished Taiwan from the rest of Asia, which continues to be emphasized today. During this time, political parties such as the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) continued to transform the political agenda by pushing for greater democratization, social welfare and recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state (Democratic Progressive Party 2012). More recently, the Kuomintang (KMT) has attempted to stabilize Taiwan's relationship with China by establishing peaceful dialogue through initiatives such as the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, in order to strengthen cross-strait relations (Saunders and Kastner 2009: 87). While some Taiwanese worry this relationship could be detrimental to Taiwan's distinct identity and autonomy, local populations are increasingly recognizing themselves as Taiwanese instead of Chinese. This has become evident in the last decade, with an increase from 36 percent in 2000 to 52.7 percent in 2010 of individuals who identified themselves as Taiwanese (Election Study Center. National Chengchi University. 2011). Therefore, despite concerns regarding cross-strait relations with China, Taiwan's political autonomy and growing self identification suggests that cross-strait relations pose little threat to Taiwan's distinct identity. Thus, despite experiencing tension with mainland China, Taiwan's current relationship with mainland China is more amenable now than in previous decades as political change and democratization have opened discourse to pursue an advantageous relationship for both societies which has, at the same time, also strengthened Taiwan's distinctiveness.

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However, it was not solely political shifts, but also economic transformations that have contributed to the success and identification of Taiwan's identity. During this time of intense global interdependence and market competition, Taiwan was able to shift its economy from labour-intensive production to manufacturing while also being introduced to international opportunities (Tsai, Lee and Wang 2006: 284). The significance

of Taiwan's growth was witnessed in GNP per capita growth from US \$50 in 1950 to US \$13,325 in 2000 (Ku 2002: 59). The benefits of this success are significant amongst the Taiwanese population, which has experienced a rise in the standard of living along with increased education and literacy rates (Tsai, Lee, and Wang 2006: 277, 284). As well, it has brought greater rural economic integration and reduced unemployment rates by over half (Ku 2002: 59). It is these economic developments that played an integral part not only in the economic growth of Taiwan, but also in the social growth of the populace, which helped shape Taiwan's unique identity from the rest of Asia.

Yet, despite these developments, Taiwan's growth is becoming stagnant (see CIA 2012). In order to ensure continued growth and development, Taiwan has moved towards strengthening cross-strait relations, both political and economic, but especially the latter. While some in Taiwan, specifically businesses, regard this as an opportunity to negotiate political agreements and increase profitable business prospects, others worry this relationship may become hazardous by creating an overdependence on China's economy, or fail to provide the Taiwanese population with a favourable outcome. Many still regard China as a threatening neighbour. Still, an overwhelming 80 percent of Taiwanese people believe cross-strait relations must be maintained in order to uphold the economic status quo. The ideal here is to maintain political distance, while supporting economic cooperation and integration (Keng and Schubert 2010: 288). This suggests that many believe greater economic integration and political cooperation with China will not necessarily threaten Taiwan's survival as a distinct society. It suggests that in the minds of some Taiwanese people, greater integration could bring increased recognition of Taiwan's distinct identity by mainland China, which would be favourable in Chinese discussions pertaining to Taiwan's identity and sovereignty (Keng and Schubert 2010: 310). Therefore, Taiwan's means of providing continued economic security to the population, may also act as a means to eventually achieve national recognition.

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To conclude, Taiwan has successfully transformed politically and economically to create a unique identity in Asia. Its economic transformations and political shifts have provided

greater opportunity for political participation through democratic elections and a greater enjoyment of other rights and freedoms, as well as a growing consciousness amongst Taiwanese people that they have an identity distinct from that of China. Despite some contentious political changes and economic stagnation, Taiwan's move towards strengthening cross-strait relations may prove beneficial and contribute to the identification of Taiwan's collective identity both locally and internationally. These developments are recognizable today as Taiwan continues to flourish in the twenty-first century and progresses towards greater self-identification by the Taiwan population, as well as recognition by China and on a wider international scale.

Taiwan and the Cross-Straits Economic Co-operation Framework Agreement

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Taiwan uniquely experiences the major implications of a changing global political and economic order where the developing BRICS countries are gaining power. This is primarily due to Taiwan's complicated relationship with China (the People's Republic of China, hereafter PRC or China), which is among the most prominent of the BRICS countries. China claims Taiwan as part of its state. This claim has been reified in the adoption of a "one-China principle", where China asserts its sovereignty over Taiwan, which it sees as part of PRC territory (Taiwan Affairs Office. State Council, People's Republic of China 2000: 1-2).

Historically, the "one-China principle" has been pursued by China through the strategic isolation of Taiwan in official government relations within multinational organizations and in bilateral relations with other countries. For example, Taiwan has been prevented from becoming a full-fledged member in important organizations such as the United Nations and the International Monetary Fund due to China's attempts to isolate Taiwan diplomatically.

Nonetheless, in the period from 1983 to 2000, Taiwan tripled its membership in Inter-Governmental Organizations (IGOs), with a particular emphasis on economic and agricul-

tural organizations. Taiwan has been able to focus on organizations that are derived from other IGOs (e.g. attendance at the 2009 World Health Assembly, the annual World Health Organization meeting), as these organizations often allow for more flexibility in criteria for membership (Li 2006: 613).

One region where China's negative influence on Taiwan's bilateral relations can be seen is the Caribbean. The PRC developed and continues to develop economic and political relations with states such as the Bahamas, Trinidad and Tobago, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica and Grenada. This region has experienced a phenomenon of PRC economic "awards" granted in part simply for severing relations with Taiwan. For instance, the Chinese government recently built a US \$35 million stadium in Bahamas, which Bahamian government officials assert was largely a reward for breaking ties with Taiwan in 1997 and, instead, establishing ties with the mainland (Archibold 2012). In response, the Taiwanese government engaged in and continues to engage in strategic economic and political relations with specific Caribbean countries, including Belize, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Lucia (ibid.). These relations ensured that Taiwan maintains a presence—however small—in the Caribbean. Nonetheless, a new phase of relations between the PRC and Taiwan began in June 2010 with the signing of a bilateral free-trade agreement, the Economic Co-operation Framework Agreement (ECFA). A corollary of ECFA is that a de facto truce in the international diplomatic battle between the two political entities has been declared ("Ma's Second Stand", *Economist*, May 19, 2012).

The will of the Taiwanese population is to maintain the island's survival as a political entity that is independent and distinct from China while increasing bilateral economic relations.

The will of the Taiwanese population is to maintain the island's survival as a political entity that is independent and distinct from China while increasing bilateral economic relations. Two factors demonstrate this trend. First, in 1992 roughly a quarter of Taiwan's population identified as Chinese, while in 2011 less than five percent of the population identified as Chinese. A corresponding—although less steep—rise in the identification as Taiwanese has occurred ("Taiwan's Ordinary Election", *Wall Street Journal*, January 16, 2012). The Taiwan identity is markedly distinct from the Chinese identity. Secondly, in the economic sphere, Taipei and Beijing completed ECFA, which calls for a decrease in Chinese tariffs on Tai-

wanese products and greater access for Taiwanese companies to the Chinese market. ECFA is to be implemented in incremental stages over a period of years. As Shen Lyu-shu, ROC representative to the United Kingdom, has asserted, Taiwan is capitalizing upon this agreement to position itself on the global stage as “an invaluable base for accessing the mainland Chinese market” (Marchant 2012). As such, Taiwanese government agencies and businesses promote the country’s close proximity and purportedly “inside” access to the mainland. For instance, Taiwan has completed 16 major agreements with the PRC, dealing with the likes of aviation and shipping. There are up to 561 direct flights a week between Taiwan and 41 Chinese cities, and Taiwanese ships have access to 68 Chinese ports (including 16 on the Yangtze River). Taiwan’s increasingly close economic ties with China are being touted as a business advantage that other countries and companies can discover for their benefit (Marchant 2012). The desire to maintain political independence from China while strengthening economic relations must be delicately balanced.

Taiwan needs to exploit its economic and technological prowess to develop bilateral strategic trading relations which its trading partners deem as important for their own interests. Such a strategy ensures external support of Taiwan’s political autonomy while it charts untested territory by forging deeper economic ties with China. Taiwan is currently negotiating a free-trade agreement with Singapore—expected to be completed in 2013—and plans are underway to negotiate similar agreements with New Zealand and potentially India and Indonesia (“Ma’s Second Stand”, *Economist*, May 19, 2012). Taiwan’s economy emphasizes trading, as three-quarters of Taiwan’s GDP is due to exports of sophisticated electronic parts and products as well as petrochemicals (“Taiwan’s ordinary election”, *Wall Street Journal*, January 16, 2012). Taiwan needs to leverage its advanced industries in order to cultivate new potential allies who are powerful enough and find it in their strategic interests to facilitate Taiwan’s de facto independence. Taiwan’s ability to adapt and innovate in an era of changing global political and economic centers of power is important for maintaining the island’s autonomy.

Taiwan needs to leverage its advanced industries in order to cultivate new potential allies...

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The Young Leaders Delegation included upper-year undergraduate and masters students from York University, the University of Toronto, and Wilfrid Laurier University, led by Professor Susan Henders, Faculty Associate at the York Centre for Asian Research (YCAR) and Associate Professor of Political Science at York University. During the week-long trip, the students attended diverse briefings on political, economic and social affairs, and visited historical and cultural sites in northern and eastern parts of the island.

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