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Taiwan's Presidential elections *Referendum versus China's missiles*

Presidential elections are coming up again in Taiwan on 20 March 2004. This will be only the third time in history that such elections are held on the island: Until the mid-1980s, Taiwan suffered under the harsh one-party rule of the Kuomintang. In 1992, the people on the island voted for the first time for a fully democratically-elected parliament, the Legislative Yuan, while the first presidential elections were held only in 1996.

In the second presidential elections, in March 2000, President Chen Shui-bian was elected as the first president from the Taiwanese democratic opposition of the DPP — in spite of strong threats and intimidation by China. Now he is up for reelection, and is running with vice-President Annette Lu against a combined ticket of the KMT's Lien Chan and the PFP's James Soong. In 2000, these two ran separately — a split which helped make it possible for Chen Shui-bian to get elected.

Photo: Taipei Times



**Pan-green Presidential and vice-Presidential incumbents
Chen Shui-bian and Annette Lu**

The present election campaign is enlivened by a heated international debate about Taiwan's

brand-new referendum law, passed by the Legislative Yuan on 27 November 2003, and signed into law by the President on 31 December. Article 17 of this law makes it possible for the president to call for a “defensive referendum”, and Mr. Chen has indicated he intends to do so: on 20 March 2004 he will ask the people in Taiwan if they agree that China should dismantle its missiles aimed at Taiwan and that it publicly renounce the use of force against Taiwan.

This is of course a very legitimate request from a country constantly under a barrage of threats and intimidation by China. However, somehow, Mr. Bush and quite a number of international observers put the blame on President Chen for “raising the tension in the Taiwan Strait.” On the following pages we have a number of commentaries on this issue, as well as a brief analysis of the election campaign.

Who is responsible for the tension?

Those who put blame on President Chen for the present tension are barking up the wrong tree, and are siding with a repressive, Communist China at the expense of the newly-democratic Taiwan. A careful analysis shows that it is clearly China that is responsible for the increasing tension: During the past three years, president Chen has bent over backwards to be conciliatory and holding out one olive branch after another – only to be rebuffed by China time and again.

In spite of repeated appeals by president Chen, China has continued to build up its arsenal of missiles aimed at Taiwan. According to the latest estimates, these now number around 500. A July 2003 Pentagon analysis

of the military power of the PRC reported that the missile deployment was advancing at a much higher rate than originally estimated by the US.

In addition, in November 2003 there were the increasingly shrill statements by Chinese leaders up and down the ladder that they would use force against Taiwan if it proceeded



**China waving a placard at Taiwan:
"Uncle Sam wants you to shut up."**

with the proposed referendum law. Maj. Gen. Wang Zaixi, deputy director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said in mid-November 2003 that "the use of force may become unavoidable."

It is still possible to resolve the matter peacefully, but China needs to realize that its threats and intimidation only have the opposite effect. And for international observers to put blame on President Chen for not buckling under China's threats is disingenuous, to say the least.

President Chen pulling ahead

During the past few months, President Chen has been slowly but surely gaining in the opinion polls in Taiwan. Up until the summer of 2003, he was generally viewed as trailing considerably behind his "pan-blue" rivals, the combined ticket of the KMT's Lien Chan and the PFP's James Soong.

Photo: Taipei Times



Mass rally in Taipei on 6 September 2003

It seems that the two events made the people on the island realize that the upcoming election is crucial for the island's future: increasingly they coalesced around the President, and moved away from the pan-blue Lien-Soong coalition, in spite of the strong hold the pan-blues still have over both the electronic and printed media.

Mr. Chen also became increasingly self-assured, speaking out about the need to complete the democratization process, and set up a mechanism to give the people on the island a voice in deciding important issues. The debate about a referendum law had been going on for some time: the DPP – and particularly legislator Chai Trong-rong – had been advocating such a law for almost a decade, but it wasn't until the Spring of 2003 that the Legislative Yuan started to discuss the passage of such a law in earnest.

For a long time the debate in the Legislative Yuan was bogged down, due to the fact that the pan-blue coalition still had a majority. However, by mid-November 2003, the movement towards more openness and democracy became unstoppable, and the pan-blue coalition decided that a referendum law was unavoidable.

Mr. Chen profited from this momentum, and by the beginning of December 2003, most opinion polls on the island showed him in an even race with his opponents. By the end of December 2003, most polls showed him drawing ahead, by the latest polls some 36% for the Chen-Annette Lu ticket, versus some 34% for Lien-Soong.

Lien and Soong on the defense

The past few months also showed Messrs. Lien and Soong increasingly on the defensive: they didn't seem to be able to present their own policy, and time and again were seen to be reacting only to the new initiative of the president.

While they earlier had been vociferous opponents of a referendum of any sort, in mid-November 2003, they suddenly embraced the idea, and even suggested that a referendum should be held regarding the Fourth Nuclear Power Plant – an issue that led to a major national crisis when President Chen suggested the same a couple of years ago.

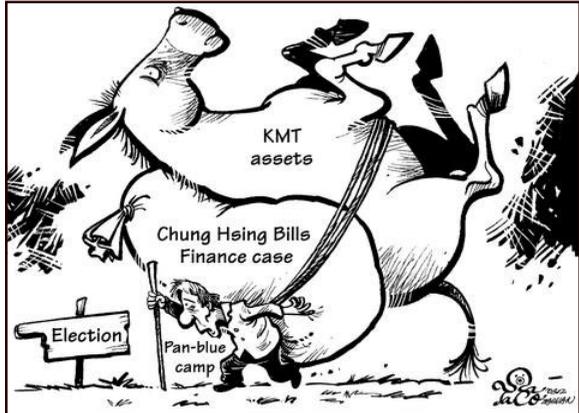
At around the same time, the pan-blue camp made a 180-degree U-turn on the issue of a new Constitution: until that time they were opposed to any change, but suddenly announced "ten principles on amending the Constitution." The process towards a new Constitution will thus be set in motion after the upcoming elections (see "Towards a new Constitution", on page 11).

Messrs. Lien and Soong have also had to put a stop to visits to Beijing by Kuomintang and PFP officials, eager to curry favors from Beijing. Such visits were highly common up until half a year ago, but the duo suddenly realized that this strengthened the perception that the KMT-PFP would sell Taiwan out to the Chinese Communists.

Another interesting turnaround was made in mid-December 2003, when Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng – who serves as campaign leader for the pan-blue – remarked that the KMT-PFP coalition did not rule out Taiwan independence as an option for Taiwan’s future. That is quite a remarkable 180-degree turn for a Party that only 10 years ago imprisoned its opponents for advocating Taiwan independence.

Copyright: Taipei Times

Still the most vulnerable aspect for the duo has to do with money: Mr. Lien Chan was questioned time and again about the Kuomintang’s huge wealth, obtained illegally during the many decades of single-party rule on the island – from the late 1940s through the second half of the 1990s.



The pan-blue camp’s full load of scandals

Mr. Soong has been even more tainted by reports of corruption. Both the Chung Hsing Bills Finance embezzlement scandal and the Lafayette scandal reportedly involved hundreds of millions of US dollars, which disappeared. Soong is the major suspect, but because of his political position he has been able to avoid punishment (see *James Soong: follow the money*, in *Taiwan Communiqué* issue no. 105, p. 10-11).

Kowtow to China

Mr. Bush opposes change of “status quo”

In a statement on 9 December 2003 during the visit of China’s premier Wen Jiabao to Washington – Mr. Bush leaned heavily on president Chen when he said: “*We oppose any unilateral decision, by either China or Taiwan, to change the status quo. And the comments and actions made by the leader of Taiwan indicate that he may be willing to make decisions unilaterally to change the status quo, which we oppose.*”

To many observers, this was a change in US policy. Of course there were the usual statements by “senior officials” to the contrary. Still, the statement was interpreted – not in the least by visiting Mr. Wen Jibao himself — as “opposing Taiwan independence,” an assertion not contradicted on the spot by Mr. Bush.

Mr. Bush’s “opposition to unilateral change of the *status quo*” was of course also aimed at China, telling it not to take any military action against Taiwan. However, he only made those comments behind closed-doors, not in the public session following the meeting. If Mr. Bush had been even-handed, he would have told Mr. Wen publicly that China should dismantle its missiles aimed at Taiwan.

What was US policy, again?

It needs to be emphasized that from the early 1970s through the mid-1990s it has been US policy to emphasize a peaceful **resolution** of the conflict between China and Taiwan. During those 25-some years the US **officially took no position on Taiwan’s future status**, neither opposing nor supporting independence or unification. The Reagan and Bush Administrations maintained a studious neutrality on the eventual outcome, but stressed that it needed to be a peaceful **process**.



Copyright: Taipei Times

US setting fire to Taiwan's peace dove

Of course, recent disclosures in the US National Security Archive point to the fact that Messrs. Nixon and Kissinger in their 1972 closed-door meetings with Chou En-lai stated that they didn’t support Taiwan independence. These statements were however never publicly discussed, or agreed to by Congress, and can therefore hardly qualify as “policy.” (see **Report from Washington**, on page 22).

In the mid-1990s, there was increasing Chinese pressure on the Clinton Administration to modify its position regarding Taiwan, eventually culminating in the infamous “three noes” of Mr. Clinton’s 1998 visit to China: no US support for “One Taiwan, One

China”, for an independent Taiwan, and for Taiwan membership in the UN. In the uproar following Mr. Clinton’s statement, the US Administration came up with a modified formula, stressing that the future of the island must be determined peacefully, “...and with the assent of the people of Taiwan.”

The early part of the Bush Administration were marked by two significant statements: one by Mr. Bush in April 2001, that he would do “whatever it takes” to help defend Taiwan, and a subsequent series of statements by high Administration officials emphasizing that US “no support” of Taiwan independence did not mean that it “opposes” independence. Mr. Bush recent statement has now upset this delicate apple cart yet again.

Taiwan Communiqué comment: *Instead of kowtowing to Beijing, the US should have an evenhanded policy which upholds the basic principles of democracy and human rights. It is indeed time for clarity instead of ambiguity, but Mr. Bush’s remarks on December 9th was more reminiscent of Neville Chamberlain telling the Czechs and Poles to remain quiet in the face of the upcoming Nazi German onslaught than those of a president willing to stand up for democracy around the world.*

It is interesting to note that China has always emphasized that Taiwan is an “internal affair”. However, now China itself is internationalizing the matter by putting pressure on Taiwan through the US, Europe, and Japan. And sadly, Mr. Bush is allowing himself to be used by China in this way.

There is still time to remedy the situation: Mr. Bush and his Administration should make it crystal clear to Beijing to back-off, dismantle the missiles aimed at Taiwan, and – if it truly believes in a peaceful resolution – to enter into talks with the democratically-elected government of Taiwan to come to a negotiated settlement.

What is the status quo?

The whole episode also raises the question: what *is* really the *status quo*? The answer is perhaps similar to the story of the glass half full vs. half empty.

Looking at it from a rosy positive side, one could say that the *status quo* means the present situation in which – although the large majority of the international community has only informal ties with Taiwan and recognizes Beijing as the government of China – the island lives in prosperity, and there is an absence of military hostilities.

In the view of many in the West, this situation should not be disturbed, lest it provokes China into action. Analysts who – rather naively — adhere to this view hope that somehow time will bring a magical solution, resolving the problem.

From the Taiwanese side, however, the matter generally looks quite different: to them, the *status quo* is a dead-end street, into which they have been maneuvered by the former Nationalist Chinese Kuomintang regime and by Communist China. They feel that – due to China’s bullying — they are now being prevented from playing a full and equal role as a recognized nation in the international community. They don’t understand why the international community seems to side with a repressive Communist regime in Beijing at the expense of the newly-blossoming democracy in Taiwan.

- * Under this *status quo*, China is continuing to increase the missile threat against Taiwan – with the international community looking the other way.
- * Under this *status quo*, China is unabashedly preventing Taiwan from joining international organizations – with the international community humming and hawing, but mainly dancing to China’s tune.
- * Under this *status quo*, China is continuing to threaten Taiwan with military attack, while defining any small step Taiwan takes towards democracy as a “provocation” – with the international community again humming and hawing, and dancing to China’s tune.

Taiwan Communiqué comment: *Many Taiwanese who worked so hard for democracy and human rights in Taiwan during the past decades perceive the stand-offish approach from so many Western governments as a betrayal of the basic principles of human rights and democracy. They feel that Taiwan can only break out of the isolation of the present status quo if the international community – including China — come to the realization that the present democratic Taiwan is not the same as the authoritarian “Republic of China” of 30 years ago, and recognize the democratically-elected government of the island.*

President Chen has emphasized time and again to China that he wants the two countries to live in peace and prosperity next to each other. However, the Chinese Communists – still stuck in the mentality of the Civil War against the Nationalists – are not willing to accept Taiwan as a friendly neighbor, and refuse to work towards normalization of relations between the two countries. What is the status quo we really want: the present continued hostility or normalized relations and peaceful coexistence as two friendly neighbors?

Below you find an additional authoritative view on the issue, by Professor Lin Tsung-kuang, professor of history at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa.

Wrong side blamed for upsetting status quo

By Professor Lin Tsung-kuang

This article first appeared in the Taipei Times on 22 December 2003

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China has 496 missiles pointed at Taiwan. It has threatened an “abyss of war” if Taiwan refuses to acknowledge Chinese sovereignty. China’s top military leaders have stated in no uncertain terms that force will be used if Taiwan declares independence — even if doing so could mean the cancellation of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, cause a slowdown in China’s economic development and lead to the deaths of many people.

Less publicized, but widely acknowledged by experts, is the information warfare that Beijing is waging against Taiwan.

China is known to have placed thousands of spies in all sectors of Taiwanese society. In its attempts to disrupt Taiwan’s communication and transportation networks, to instill fear and to induce an economic breakdown, China has resorted to such measures as hacking computers, spreading rumors and dispensing erroneous economic information.

It has gone so far as to provide financial or moral support to politicians and political parties that are deemed acceptable to Beijing.

Surely, these are not initiatives designed to preserve the *status quo* and yet, in the recent summit between US President George W. Bush and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, the US leader publicly rebuked the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration for trying to upset the *status quo* in the Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan is famous for its “economic miracle.” More remarkable has been its rapid transition toward full democracy in the past two dozen years.

Beijing has been doing everything in its power to thwart the development of democracy in Taiwan. It sided squarely with the Chiang regime at a time when the democracy movement in Taiwan was in full swing.

In 1996, when Taiwan was taking an unprecedented step toward full democracy by allowing its president to be popularly elected, China reacted by hurling missiles toward the island, which created an international diplomatic crisis. In the 2000 presidential election, Beijing openly warned the Taiwanese electorate that a victory for the DPP's Chen Shui-bian could cause a Chinese invasion, and it went on to provide aid to other candidates, most of them remnants of the old Chiang regime.

Recently the legislature, on the initiative of Chen, passed a resolution allowing the people of Taiwan to exercise their democratic right to voice their views on the missile build-up across the strait and the Chinese military threat in general.

This "defensive referendum," to take place next March, has since been labeled by Beijing as a provocation designed to upset the *status quo* in the region. Similarly, any talk in Taiwan of moving democracy forward by adopting a new constitution is seen in China as treacherous.

There is no doubt that it is China that is instigating fundamental change across the Taiwan Strait, and that it is the Chinese dictatorship that is trying to strangle Taiwan's democracy movement.

In this context, Bush's statement during the summit at the White House is both ironic and unfortunate. It is ironic because the US seems to object to the Taiwanese expressing their political views peacefully through a referendum at a time when the US is sending troops to distant lands to fight terror and promote democracy. It is unfortunate because the US seems to have sided with a country that is bent on annexing a neighbor that is seeking only peaceful, dignified coexistence with all nations.

To rebuke Taiwan for upsetting the *status quo* is really barking up the wrong tree.

Copyright: Taipei Times



**US to Taiwan, holed up in burning house:
"I oppose your comments and actions aimed at
changing the status quo."**

Towards a new Constitution

Turn the “five noes” into a “three yes” policy

In recent statements, President Chen Shui-bian has indicated that – in view of China’s continuing military threats and deployment of missiles against Taiwan – he would revoke the “five noes” of his May 2000 inauguration speech.

After his election on 20 March 2000, the situation was tense: not only did China threaten to attack Taiwan, but the Kuomintang-faithful in the military and security agencies didn’t quite appreciate the election of the pro-independence Chen either.

Chen and his confidantes thought it prudent to try to smooth matters over by making the statement that *“...as long as the CCP 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. Furthermore, the abolition of the National Reunification Council or the National Reunification Guidelines will not be an issue.”*

It does not need emphasis that the qualifier *“that China has no intention to use military force against Taiwan”* was all-important. However, Chen was lectured time and again by arrogant, defeated, KMT politicians and back-seat driving US think-tank figures alike, that he should stick to the “five noes” no-matter-what.

After three years of continuing military threats and a more than doubling of the number of missiles aimed at Taiwan, President Chen has now come to the conclusion that the “five noes” have reached the end of their useful life. That is to be applauded. The fact is that they were never popular among his core-followers. They saw the “five noes” as unnecessary roadblocks on the road to full democracy in Taiwan, and full acceptance of the island in the international community.

With the March 2004 presidential elections coming up, Mr. Chen is now emphasizing the right of the Taiwanese to hold a referendum and implying the demise of the “five noes”. He is achieving two purposes: he is rallying his supporters and at the same time making it clear to the world community that China is the real threat to the stability and peace across the Taiwan Straits.

There are some in the US Administration, thinks tanks and international media who perceive President Chen to be “provocative.” These people should look twice: China is continuing to threaten Taiwan, preventing its international relations from blossoming, and building up an awesome arsenal of missiles aimed at the island. During the

past three years, president Chen has bent over backwards to be conciliatory and holding out one olive branch after another – only to be rebuffed by China time and again.

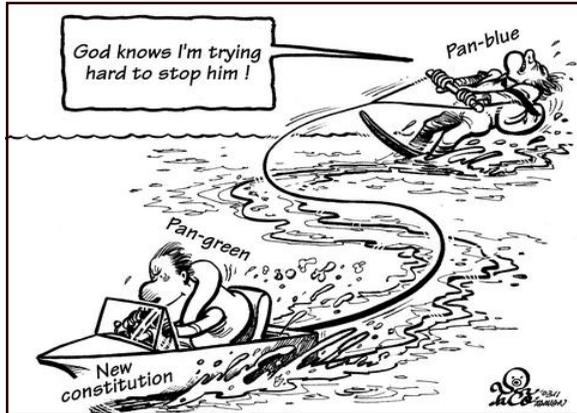
It is thus time for Taiwan to move towards a “three yes” policy:

- * Yes, to the right of the Taiwanese to determine their own future, free of outside interference from China,
- * Yes, to Taiwan’s right to be a full and equal member of the international community, including the UN, and
- * Yes, to the right of the Taiwanese to choose a name, flag, and anthem which really represent Taiwan

In the meantime, the US and other nations would also do well to rethink their policy towards Taiwan: it is not the same country as 30-40 years ago, when the present “One China” dictum came into existence. At that time, there was a repressive Kuomintang regime, which had lost the Chinese Civil War in 1949, and imposed itself on a defenseless Taiwanese population.

The KMT’s decades-long insistence on being the legitimate government of China was as laughable as it was outdated, but it dragged the Taiwanese people unwillingly into the unfinished business of the Chinese Civil War. The Taiwanese had no part in that Civil War, but their future is presently still being held hostage to it.

It is time for the international community to break out of those self-imposed chains and to accept Taiwan and its people as full-fledged members of the international family of nations.



Pan-blue waterskier: "God knows I'm trying hard to stop him!"

What does the present Constitution entail?

The plans of President Chen Shui-bian has drawn the expected flak from the usual quarters: China's repressive regime, and those in Taiwan still clinging to the long-lost remnants of the "Republic of China", the Republic established by the Chinese Nationalists in China in 1912.

As we have emphasized earlier, the Kuomintang regime which was in power in Taiwan until May 2000, attempted to perpetuate this "Republic of China" – first as the legitimate rulers of all of China. And when it lost that legitimacy in the 1970s, it continued to emphasize that their ROC and the PRC were still part of a hypothetical "One China."

Since 2000, President Chen and his government have on the one hand made use of this empty shell of the ROC, but on the other hand worked towards a Taiwanization of the system, and a gradual acceptance by the population of their own Taiwanese identity – no easy task after more than 40 years of indoctrination by the Nationalists that they were "Chinese."

One of the remaining tasks is to work towards a new Constitution, which really represents present-day Taiwan. The present "ROC" Constitution was adopted by China's National Assembly in Nanking on 25 December 1946, and promulgated by Chiang Kai-shek's regime on 1 January 1947. Some two-thirds of all articles are outdated and not relevant to the present-day situation in Taiwan.

Some examples of what it entails:

- * The flag of the "Republic of China" is based on the Kuomintang party flag, and was selected in China in the 1920s (article 6);
- * The territory of the "Republic of China" encompasses all of China, including Outer Mongolia and Tibet (article 26);
- * The national anthem is a 1928 Chinese Kuomintang party song, and doesn't have anything to do with Taiwan;

A timeline for a new Constitution

During a meeting on 11 November 2003 with visiting members of the Washington-based Brookings Institution, President Chen Shui-bian indicated that – if he is elected in March 2004 – he will put his government to work on a new Constitution, which

should be put before the public in a referendum on 10 December 2006, International Human Rights Day.

He said that if the new Constitution is approved in December 2006, it would be enacted on 20 May 2008, the inauguration day for the winner of that year's presidential election.

Taiwan deserves international support

In addition to the articles in the beginning of this issue of Taiwan Communiqué — which dealt with the referendum issue and the run-up towards the March 2004 presidential elections — we would like to highlight three additional, highly relevant, contributions to the debate from the **Taipei Times**:

1. an editorial by the Taipei Times itself, mainly focusing on relations with Japan,
2. an editorial by former AIT Chairman of the Board Nat Bellocchi, focusing on the United States, and
3. an editorial by Prof. Chen Lung-chu, focusing on Europe.

Allies need to show some spine

*This editorial first appeared in the Taipei Times on Thursday, 01 January 2004
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On Monday, 29 December 2003, Katsuhisa Uchida, the Taipei office chief of the Interchange Association — Japan's de facto embassy in Taiwan — conveyed a message to Presidential Office Secretary-General Chiou I-jen, saying Japan does not want to see Taiwan hold a defensive referendum. The EU has also sent a letter expressing concern. After announcing his plan for a defensive referendum, President Chen Shui-bian seems to have fallen into diplomatic isolation, with the US, Japan and the EU all expressing concern.

The Chinese government has applied pressure on Taiwan via those countries over the defensive referendum. But this does not mean that the US and Japanese governments agree that Beijing's demands are reasonable.

Referendums represent a major democratic change. Of course they will have an impact on Taiwan's politics. A defensive referendum is highly controversial, but there are

more domestic election factors than international considerations at play here. The referendum is set to be an expression of the public's will to stand up to aggression and will not involve the sovereignty issue. Given that the content of the referendum question has not yet been finalized, the US, Japan and the EU should not merely listen to China's one-sided opinions and rush to judgment, thereby suppressing the development of democracy in Taiwan.

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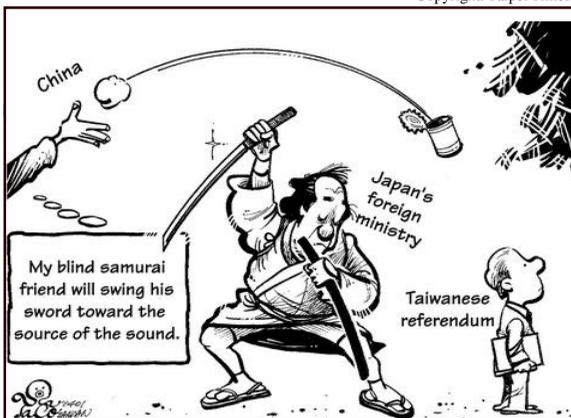
Chen Chien-jen, Taiwan's top representative in the US, said the US understood Taiwan's stance but would like to know more about the referendum plan. Taiwan's diplomatic corps should immediately start communicating with other countries to dispel any misunderstandings.

As for Japan, former prime minister Yoshiro Mori said during a recent meeting with Chen that he hoped Taiwan would give "discreet consid-

eration" to the referendum issue. More recently, Uchida told Chiou that Japan hopes Taiwan will be able to "discreetly handle" the tensions brought about by the referendum issue. Japan is on the side of "peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the region" and does not want to see Taiwan holding a referendum. In a way, Uchida was making a goodwill gesture to China.

US and Japanese pressure on Taiwan will affect the public's perceptions of the two countries, regardless of whether they are acting at Beijing's request. When the three Baltic states of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania were seeking independence in 1989, then US president George Bush ignored the Soviet Union's misgivings and suggested that the issue be resolved through referendums. Bush supported the right of these peoples to self-determination. Now his son, US President George W. Bush, wants to restrict the rights of the de facto independent Taiwanese.

George W. Bush has many times praised Taiwan's democratic achievements. We hope he will understand the truth about Taiwan's referendum issue and show some spine in



China, tossing a tin can at Taiwan: "My blind samurai friend will now swing his sword toward the source of the sound."

support of Taiwan's democracy in the same way as his father supported referendums in the Baltic countries.

As for Japan, a democratic Taiwan is even more important for its strategic interests in light of the close historic, trade and economic relations between the two countries. Japan should think twice about pressuring Taiwan on behalf of China. Such pressure may improve Sino-Japanese relations in the short term, but will be detrimental to Japan's long-term interests.

The defensive referendum planned for March 20 does not involve the sovereignty issue, nor is it aimed at changing the *status quo*. Rather, it is aimed at ensuring the *status quo* by way of direct democracy. The US, Japan and the EU have all been Taiwan's democratic allies and trading partners. How could they act like China's hired guns?

The pillars of US' Taiwan policy

By Nat Bellocchi, former chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan.

This article first appeared in the Taipei Times on Monday, 29 December 2003

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The present US administration says its policy on cross-strait relations is based on the three communiqués and the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). As a demonstration of how unbalanced US policy was in the past, the current inclusion of the TRA with the three communiqués is a step forward for those of us who suffered its omission for so many years. (The six assurances, one hopes, will one day also be included).

So much for greater clarity. Under that broad cover, the US insists on a peaceful resolution of the cross-strait issue, and encourages dialogue between the two sides of the Strait. It opposes provocations (mostly on the part of Taiwan, it's an easier target), and any movement toward independence (only by Taiwan, but otherwise it is opaque). Most importantly, the US now places greatest emphasis on maintaining the *status quo* and opposing any unilateral change to it.

Under that cover, clarity becomes somewhat diluted. An insistence on a peaceful resolution, for example, is clear and supported on all sides. That is if we are talking about a military attack. According to press reports, the US has made clear to China that any military attack or coercion will inevitably "involve" the US. Coercion, however, is a bit more complicated and not easily handled by the US.

Encouraging a dialogue between China and Taiwan is a good objective most would agree with. Unfortunately, China does not agree, unless of course results favorable to them are guaranteed. In any event, American efforts to interfere in Taiwan's moves toward a more distinct entity of its own, or in strengthening its democratic political system, even with no more a purpose than to lower tensions, undermines the pressure on China to talk.

Opposition to provocations is normally thought to include both sides of the Strait. Realistically, however, it falls mainly on Taiwan. China defines provocative actions by Taiwan very broadly. Now increasingly this includes domestic political changes in Taiwan that are fundamental to democratic principles. Taiwan just recently began to publicly evoke charges that China's missile deployments are provocative. While Washington sees this mostly as an election campaign gimmick, it also has a purpose in alerting the Taiwanese public to threats they have tended to ignore.

More recently, under pressure from China, the US has stated its opposition to any movements toward independence by Taiwan. This came at a time when Taiwan was legislating the use of referendums.

Aside from this position held by China, trying to judge what constitutes a "movement toward independence" is hardly clear. China, for example, will consider any referendum or changes to Taiwan's constitution as provocative. In principle, that should be unacceptable to the US. It appears to be a policy that could cause problems for the US, and Taiwan as well.

We have been told on several occasions that one of the pillars of US policy regarding the cross-strait issue is that there must be no unilateral change to the *status quo*.

Status quo, according to the dictionary, means "the existing state or condition" (Random House), or "the state in which anything is" (Webster). The state in which we find the broad issue of cross-strait relations is awesome. Here are some of the elements of today's *status quo* in the Taiwan Strait.

The sovereignty of Taiwan is claimed by China; that claim is accepted by many countries in the world at China's behest; Japan, which has a critical interest in the Taiwan Strait, avoids addressing the issue; the US is unable to accept China's claim as the Congress would not permit it; a few small countries recognize Taiwan's sovereignty; and many if not most in Taiwan believe Taiwan already has it.

Taiwan is a democracy that has elected leaders which gives them unqualified legitimacy; it is the 14th largest trader in the world; has a foreign exchange reserve that is one of the largest in the world; and has an economy that is internationalized but also one of the largest foreign investors in China. At the same time, China's continuing and vigorous effort to isolate Taiwan results in most international organizations, including financial ones, rejecting Taiwan's membership, even as an observer.

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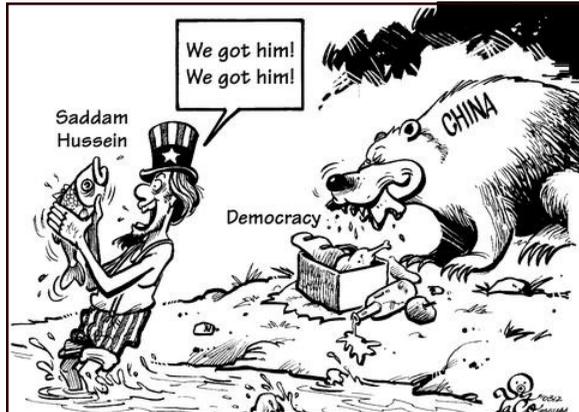
The state of affairs on Taiwan includes a gradual defining of its own identity. Politically, it has not only irreversibly become a democracy, but chosen a direct type of democracy that puts it even further removed from the political system in China.

Then there is the state of Taiwan's capability to defend itself. As China modernizes its military, putting top priority on a credible capability to defeat Taiwan before the US could inter-

vene, Taiwan (and the US to the extent it must implement the Taiwan Relations Act) seeks ways to offset that threat. China keeps open its threat to attack or coerce Taiwan, including among many other things, almost 500 missiles aimed at Taiwan.

So the main pillar of America's policy on cross-strait issues is maintaining the *status quo*. China supports this, as was demonstrated in Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to Washington. Indeed, China has good reason to support this position. Under the *status quo*, China can continue to expand its missile deployment opposite Taiwan, continue to block Taiwan's participation in international institutions and have its definition of what is provocative accepted.

Taiwan, on the other hand, while it gets critical help from the US in offsetting China's military threat, and some limited support in its effort to participate in the international community, must otherwise largely work alone to strengthen its ability to prevent a unification that the majority of the people do not want. What it can do on its own is to



US rejoicing at Saddam's capture, while China eats away at Taiwan's democracy.

demonstrate its democratic progress and expand its grassroots effort to establish a national identity. China-determined provocations try to undermine this.

America's purpose in maintaining the *status quo* is to block unilateral efforts to attain either unification or independence from erupting into war. It is seldom put this way, which is unfortunate as it would be better understood. It is the management of the many unresolved issues under that more clearly defined *status quo*, however, that will continue to be difficult for America, and favor China.

Taiwan and EU's shared interest in Strait peace

By Prof. Chen Lung-chu, chairman of the Taipei-based Taiwan New Century Foundation

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In 1989 the EU passed a resolution imposing a ban on arms sales to China to protest the forceful suppression of the Tiananmen democracy movement in the face of international public opinion, thereby imposing sanctions on China for its savage violence.

EU countries had recently discussed whether to abolish this ban, but on Dec. 18, the European Parliament decided against such action with a landslide vote — 373 votes against, 32 in favor and 29 abstentions. On Dec. 19, immediately following the EU resolution, the Dutch parliament also passed a resolution requiring the Dutch government to express its opposition to abolishing the ban.

The European and Dutch parliamentary resolutions in fact highlight the importance the EU places on the Taiwan Strait security issue. Taiwan is not alone in advocating the preservation of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. It is also advocated by advanced democratic countries, and coincides with the interests of EU countries.

To be able to maintain stability in the Taiwan Strait and dissolve the armed threat posed by China's missiles, Taiwan has to work through both military and non-military channels. Militarily speaking, Taiwan has to establish a complete defense system and a healthy public psychological defense to restrict Chinese attempts to invade the country.

From a non-military perspective, Taiwan should concentrate on a preventive referendum in its endeavor to win international understanding and support to ensure its national security.

In other words, Taiwan needs to make the international community understand that the preventive referendum to be held on March 20 next year is a peace referendum aiming at highlighting the seriousness of the Chinese dictatorship's armed threats against democratic Taiwan. The people of Taiwan will use their collective democratic will to demand that China remove its missiles aimed at Taiwan and give up its threats.

The Taiwanese people's quest for peace naturally coincides with the EU countries' interests in the Asian region. Continuing to allow China to freely raise the level of its threats will lead to a military imbalance in the region, and it will also have a negative impact on prospects for peace and stability.

A preventive referendum will demonstrate Taiwan's efforts to realize direct democracy and preserve peace. This coincides with the international community's mainstream values. The reason the relationship between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait has become more tense is not the result of Taiwan's initiating a preventive referendum. The real reason is China's constant threats against Taiwan.

The international community should support peaceful and democratic Taiwan and oppose a communist China endangering regional and international peace. Once China dismantles the missiles aimed at Taiwan and clearly declares that it gives up the option of launching an armed attack on Taiwan, there will no longer be a need to hold a preventive referendum.

A journey of remembrance and appreciation *International friends return to Taiwan*

An extraordinary meeting took place in Taiwan from December 6th through 12th 2003: a group of some 35 international friends from the US, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands and the UK returned to Taiwan at the invitation of the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy.

Through the past four decades, each of these people had played a role in Taiwan's transition towards democracy through their support for the democracy movement on the island. Many of the older participants came in the 1950s, 1960s, or 1970s as missionaries, and were primarily associated with the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan.

Virtually all of them were expelled by the Kuomintang authorities, and for many it was the first time back in Taiwan since that time. Several of them – including Rev. Don Wilson, Wendell Karsen, and Dr. David Gelzer — helped the Church draft three courageous public statements on Taiwan’s political status in the 1970s.

Since its establishment in the second half of the nineteenth century, the Presbyterian Church has played a crucial role in Taiwan: it was the only Church which had its base

Photo: Liberty Times

in the native Taiwanese population, and it was the only Church which stood fast in its support of human rights and democracy on the island. In the 1970s, it issued the following three statements: On our National Fate, 29 December 1971, Our Appeal, 18 November 1975, and On Human Rights, 16 August 1977. For the text of these statements, see http://www.taiwandocuments.org/doc_other.htm



Conference participants on stage with president Chen during Human Rights Day concert in Taipei

Other participants in the conference were instrumental in helping Professor Peng Ming-min escape from Taiwan in 1969-70. Professor Peng, a prominent political science professor in the early 1960s, was arrested in 1964 for issuing a “declaration of self-salvation.” He was imprisoned, but was released after strong international protests, and put under indefinite house arrest. By 1968-69, this house arrest was so suffocating, that he decided to escape Taiwan, which succeeded with the help of a network of international friends. Rev. Milo and Judith Thornberry and Rev. Mark and Virginia Thelin (who worked with the Presbyterian Church in Taipei at the time), and Munakata Takayuki (a Japan-based Taiwan supporter) gave presentations on how the escape had occurred.

Yet others at the conference, including Lynn Miles, Linda Arrigo, and *Taiwan Communiqué* editors Gerrit and Mei-chin van der Wees became involved through

human rights activities in the second half of the 1970s, culminating in the 1979 “Kaohsiung Incident”: the arrest of opposition leaders of the *tangwai* movement, which became a major turning point in Taiwan’s history, because it galvanized many Taiwanese on the island and overseas into political action, laying the foundation for Taiwan’s transition to democracy.

The conference involved a two-day seminar at which the participants each presented their story. The meeting gave a good historical perspective, and wove the interconnected individual stories into a colorful tapestry of Taiwan arduous but successful road towards democracy.

The group was welcomed by President Chen Shui-bian in the presidential palace, while vice-President Annette Lu – herself, like the president, a former political prisoner – treated the group to an appreciation dinner. On 9 December 2003, the group attended a Human Rights Night concert in Taipei’s Da-An Park, and were presented symbolic gifts of soil, water and seeds of Taiwan.

On 10 December 2003, the group travelled to Tainan for a meeting at the Presbyterian Theological College and Seminary, where they were welcome by Rev. Kao Chun-ming, the courageous Presbyterian minister who served a secretary-general of the Church through its most difficult period in the 1970s and 1980s.

The evening of 10 December 2003 was highlighted with a waterfront concert in Kaohsiung, offered by Kaohsiung mayor Frank Hsieh Chang-ting, who served as one of the defense counsels for the Kaohsiung Incident defendants in 1980. The group also visited the site when the December 1979 “Kaohsiung Incident” took place.

Report from Washington

The Nixon – Kissinger capers

On 11 December 2003, the Washington DC-based National Security Archives published newly declassified documents on its website (<http://www.nsarchive.org/NSAEBB/NSAEBB106/index.htm>), which gave a word-by-word account of the discussions between former President Nixon and NSA adviser Kissinger and Chinese premier

Chou En-lai during Mr. Nixon's February 1972 trip to Beijing. The documents posted were the last ones in the long-delayed declassification process of the Nixon trip materials.

The documents show that – contrary to Mr. Kissinger's claims in his memoirs that “very little time” was spent on Taiwan – it was a major issue during the discussions. It showed that Messrs. Nixon and Kissinger stated that “...the U.S. would not support, but could not suppress, the Taiwan independence movement.”

Interestingly, during the visit, Mr. Premier Zhou Enlai claimed that Washington had let pro-independence politician Peng Meng-min escape from Taiwan. Messrs. Nixon and Kissinger denied that Washington had given any help – probably one of the few truthful statements they ever made.

During Nixon's trip, Kissinger also gave the Chinese a top secret intelligence briefing on Soviet forces arrayed against China. Mr. Kissinger gave a detailed run-down of Soviet forces along China's borders, including ground forces, tactical aircraft and missiles, strategic air defenses, and strategic missiles, with special attention to nuclear weapons. In their detailed memoir accounts of the trip, neither Nixon or Kissinger mentioned this briefing, and even kept them secret from US intelligence agencies.

Taiwan Communiqué comment: *The secret machinations of Messrs. Kissinger and Nixon still have a lingering effect to this day: some say they form the “basis” of US policy towards Taiwan. Nothing could be further from the truth: As we wrote earlier (“What was US policy, again?” On page 6), from the early 1970s through the mid-1990s, the US only emphasized that it needed to be a peaceful **resolution**, and officially took no position on Taiwan independence (or unification for that matter) until Mr. Clinton's infamous “Three noes” of June 1998.*

If the US truly wants to be considered a leader of the free and democratic world, it should stick to its basic principles of democracy. These imply support for the right of the Taiwanese to determine their own future, free from outside interference by China. And if the people in Taiwan clearly show they want their country to be recognized as a free and democratic nation, the US – and Europe — should be the first to recognize it, and ensure its independence.

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Taiwan Communiqué supports a free, democratic, and independent Taiwan, and campaigns for full and equal membership of Taiwan in the international community, including a seat in the UN.

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