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“One China“ or “One China, one Taiwan“? The KMT and DPP’s Mainland Policy Approaches between Unification and Sovereignty

We are willing to shelve the issue of identity, and we hope China can do the same. We could let the succeeding generations deal with the issue, but let’s go ahead with more urgent issues.¹
(Ma Yingjiu)

The point I want to make is that, under the so-called “one-China principle“, it is impossible to have negotiations or discussions on direct links. This being the case, direct links cannot be realized under the “one-China principle“.²
(Chen Shuibian)

1 Introduction

Since the inauguration of the first DPP-administration in May 2000, cross-strait relations have not seen much deterioration, though they have not relaxed neither. The new government of Chen Shuibian started rather cautiously vis-à-vis Beijing and evoked the impression of genuinely being interested in achieving a Sino-Taiwanese rapprochement. However, as the presidency went on, it became clear that neither Chen nor his party would compromise on the ‘one China’-principle which was finally rejected as a basic consensus to be shared by both sides of the Taiwan strait. In August 2002, Chen implicitly confirmed Li Denghui’s 1999-formula of “special state-to-state“ relations when he declared that Taiwan and the mainland are “two countries on each side“ (*yibian yiguo*).³ It seems unlikely that Chen will step back from this wording if he wins the upcoming presidential elections in March

2004. Such a possibility is even more remote should he lose. The KMT criticizes the DPP’s mainland policy since long for putting Taiwan’s freedom and security in jeopardy. The longtime ruling party may be able to regain the presidency, as it has formed an electoral alliance with the People First Party (PFP) of former KMT heavyweight James Song (Song Chuyu) in early 2003. Contrary to the DPP, the KMT adheres to the ‘one China’-principle and advocates immediate negotiations with the Beijing authorities on direct trade and transportation links over the Taiwan strait. It also sticks to unification as a longterm objective of the KMT’s mainland policy. Chen Shuibian, however, has put ever more distance between his early remarks of unification being an issue open to discussion or even an option⁴ and his tackling of the issue since then. Today there can be hardly a doubt that neither Chen nor the DPP are eager of touching upon the possibility of future unification between Taiwan and the mainland, as they are much more preoccupied with safeguarding and enlarging Taiwan’s *de facto*-sovereignty against the Chinese claim to rule the island. Hence, Taiwan’s two biggest political parties remain to be at loggerheads. Still, one must ask how much the KMT can and actually does deviate from the DPP’s mainland approach when the protection of Taiwanese sovereignty in both conceptual and practical terms is the issue.

Facing the 2004 presidential elections, it seems worthwhile making an assessment of what has repeatedly been called in the past a rising convergence between the two big parties with respect to their mainland policy approaches.⁵ It is held in this paper that Taiwan’s quest for sovereignty in fact belittles the ideological differences between the ‘pan-blue’ and ‘pan-green’ camps exposed by the current presidential campaign. Consequently, even if a new KMT/PFP government is inaugurated next year, cross-strait relations will not substantially change. They may deteriorate, though, as the Chinese government might start to push more actively for a political solution of the conflict as it could expect more inclination to compromise from a Lian/Song administration than from any DPP government confirmed by the electorate. In such a situation, the KMT will quickly find itself in a very uncomfortable position, facing a tougher time than the DPP to explain to Beijing why unification must not be pursued to the detriment of Taiwanese sovereignty. However, this hypothesis has to be measured against the possibility of a more lenient Taiwan policy on the part of Beijing should the Chen government be voted out.

⁴Wang, T.Y., “Cross-Strait Relations after the 2000 Election in Taiwan“, in: *Asian Survey*, Vol.41, No.5, 2001, pp.797-821 (720).

⁵Sun Tung-Wen/Cha Chung-Chuan, *Minjindang dalu zhengce yanbian de zhengzhi jingji fenxi* (A Political-Economical Analysis of the Evolution of the DPP’s Mainland Policy), Occasional Paper No.112, Hong Kong: Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, September 2000; Wang, T.Y., “‘One China, One Taiwan’: An Analysis of the Democratic Progressive Party’s China Policy“, in: *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, Vol.35, No.1, 2000, pp.159-182.

¹“KMT Plots a Return to Power“, in: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 30 October 2003, p.24.

²“Political Pugilist“, in: *Far Eastern Economic Review* (online-edition), 31 July 2003.

³“Chen raises pitch of anti-China“, in: *Taipei Times*, 4 August 2002.

2 The DPP's mainland policy during the Chen administration: From pragmatism to ideology?

It has been stated frequently in the literature on Taiwan's domestic politics in recent years that the DPP has gone through a process of substituting ideology for pragmatism during the 1990s which finally enabled it to become the ruling party in 2000.⁶ Labeled Taiwan's independence party since the inclusion of a referendum clause in its charter back in 1991,⁷ the DPP seemed to have moderated its stance considerably thereafter. In 1995, the then DPP chairman Shih Ming-teh publicly announced that the party would not declare *de jure*-independence in case it took over the government nor put the question of independence to a referendum. According to Shih, Taiwan had already been independent "for half a century" and supporting the status quo was equal to supporting independence.⁸ This position triggered off a lively internal debate between those favouring a more matter-of-fact approach to the *tongdu*⁹-issue and those clinging to the DPP's "fundamentals" stemming from the early days of the *tangwai*¹⁰-movement. Finally, a compromise was sealed in 1999 when the DPP passed a resolution which underlined its commitment to pursue *de jure*-independence, but at the same time spoke out a formal recognition of the "Republic of China" as Taiwan's official name.¹¹ This move was widely interpreted as a softening, if not a modification of the party's independence platform as it was now supporting the status quo in the Taiwan strait and not supposed anymore to actively change this status after taking over the government of the island republic.

After the March 2000 presidential elections and the astonishing victory of Chen Shuibian, the DPP became the ruling party for the first time in its history. It was now responsible for stabilize cross-strait relations in order to secure Taiwan's safety and prosperity. The new administration walked a tightrope from the very beginning: Chen, who was known as an ardent supporter of independence, had to put some distance between himself and the DPP's party platform. He was now obliged to represent the peo-

ple of Taiwan as a whole and forced to prove to the Beijing authorities and the international community that he was qualified to stabilize cross-strait relations.¹² However, he also heavily relied on his party's support and discipline as he spearheaded only a minority government in the Legislative Yuan. This fact made the Chen administration's China policy – especially during the first half of its tenure – appear to be rather erratic in terms of language and conceptual thinking. On the one hand, Chen repeatedly evoked the impression of a more compromising stance on the 'one China'-principle and expressed his readiness to negotiate on its context. On the other hand, this impression was almost eradicated by public statements of himself and other DPP leaders, in which the idea of 'one China' or the possibility of ultimate unification were openly challenged.

For example, in June 2000, Chen told a visiting delegation of the U.S. based Asia Foundation that his government would accept the so-called '1992 consensus'. He stated that each side of the Taiwan strait can adhere to its own interpretation of the meaning of 'one China', thereby indicating that his administration would accept a 'one China' approach in future cross-strait negotiations.¹³ However, as his party rose in rebellion, Chen had to step back from this position very soon, causing a bitter reaction in the mainland Chinese press.¹⁴ In his 2001 New Year's Eve speech, the president summoned the PRC leadership to cooperate constructively with the Taiwan government to "handle commonly the problem of a future 'one China'". He also declared that according to the ROC constitution, "'one China' was *originally* not a problem". Both sides should engage in economic, commercial and cultural integration, gradually build up mutual trust and strive for a new mechanism of political integration (*zhengzhi tonghe*).¹⁵ Even if the usage of the word "originally" suggested that the 'one China'-principle had *meanwhile* become a problem, Chen's language was cautious, opening quite some space for a 'one China' solution at least at the rhetorical level.¹⁶

⁶Ferhat-Dana, Samia, "The Democratic Progressive Party and Independence. An Issue on the Back Burner", in: *China Perspectives*, No.19, September/October 1998, pp.37-44; Kuo Cheng-liang, *Minjindang zhuanxing zhi tong* (The DPP's Ordeal of Transformation), Taipei: Tianxia yuanjian, 2002.

⁷According to this stipulation, which is still valid, an independent and sovereign Taiwan Republic should be established and a new constitution be enacted by means of a public referendum among the whole people of Taiwan. See <http://www.dpp.org.tw>.

⁸Wang, T.Y., "One China, One Taiwan", l.c., p.164.

⁹*Tongdu*: *tongyi* (unification) and *duli* (independence).

¹⁰*Tangwai*: out of the party, i.e. the KMT.

¹¹See "*Taiwan qiangtu jueyiwen*" (Resolution on Taiwan's Future), <http://www.dpp.org.tw>. The resolution was later integrated into the party charter. It unmistakably states in its first article that Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country and that any change to the current status of independence has to be decided by a public referendum among all the people of Taiwan. Later on in the text, it is acknowledged that Taiwan's official name is "Republic of China" according to the current constitution. It is also said in the resolution that Taiwan should renounce the 'one China'-principle to avoid international confusion about the political status of the island republic and to impede its abuse by the PRC as a pretext to annex Taiwan.

¹²For this reason, Chen launched a policy of "Five Nos" (*sige bu, yige meiyou*) in his inaugural speech in May 2000, declaring that as long as the CCP does not use military force against Taiwan, he would not declare independence, not change the country's national title (Republic of China), not write (Li Denghui's) 'state-to-state' formula into the constitution, not initiate an independence referendum and not abolish the Guidelines of National Unification and the National Unification Council. For an English translation see Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan. Cross-Strait Relations under Chen Shuibian*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2002, app.4.

¹³In July 2000, DPP moderates led by Chen Chao-nan launched an initiative to modify the "independence clause" in the party charter to cancel the implicit obligation of carrying out a national referendum in order to establish a sovereign Republic of Taiwan. This move, however, failed against intra-party resistance, especially from the New Tide faction. See Hughes, Christopher R., "Challenges and Opportunities for Unification after Taiwan's 2000 Presidential Elections", in: Preston, P.W./Jürgen Haacke (eds.), *Contemporary China. The Dynamics of Change at the Start of the New Millennium*, New York: Routledge, 2003, pp.170-171.

¹⁴See e.g. "1992 Consensus': Ironclad Evidence", in: *People's Daily* (English online-version), 8 December 2000.

¹⁵"*Zongtong fabiao kua shiji tanhua*" (The president issues a statement at the turn of the millennium), in: *Zhengfu dalu zhengce zhongyao wenjian* (Important Documents on the Government's Mainland Policy), Taipei: Mainland Affairs Council, July 2002, p.24.

¹⁶This impression was strengthened by a foregoing passage in the cited text, in which the president spoke of the common genealogical,

The term "integration" seemed to contribute something more substantial to the debate in conceptual terms, too. However, the president never elaborated on this proposal, while some leading DPP politicians and government members were quick to point out that integration was not unification and that cross-strait rapprochement could only be a process the final result of which was uncertain.¹⁷ Finally, Chen himself stepped back from the integration concept, emphasizing that "the phrase doesn't necessarily mean that we are going to be unified by the other side".¹⁸ Very soon thereafter no more hints on integration, a "future one China" or "unification as an option" could be found in public statements made by the president or members of his administration, and even less so by leading DPP politicians. Looking back at it, the president has indeed never made an unequivocal statement in favour of the 'one China'-principle during his first two years in office, even if he "improvised" on the theme. It may be unjust to accuse him too quickly of tactics or even outright hypocrisy and deception, as the steady mistrust of the Beijing authorities in Chen had given him enough reason to finally give up on the attempt to operate cross-strait relations within a 'one China' framework. However, developments since then suggest that, as his presidency matured, Chen Shuibian and the DPP came out with what they always had on their mind.

In July 2002 Chen Shih-meng, secretary-general to the president, openly rejected the 'one China'-principle and even stated that "China is a hopeless country, and I don't want this kind of country to represent me in the future".¹⁹ Soon afterwards, the president himself pointed out at two different occasions in late July and early August 2002 that Taiwan "should walk its own way" which he said to be the way of democracy, freedom, human rights and peace. In the second statement, made on August 3 during a telecast to attendees of the World Federation of Taiwanese Associations held in Japan, he briefly summarized his mainland policy approach by pointing out that "Taiwan is not anybody's local government, anybody's province, it cannot turn into a second Hong Kong or Macao, because Taiwan is a sovereign and independent country; briefly spoken, Taiwan and the mainland are one country on each side (*yibian yiguo*) and must be clearly distinguished". He also asked his audience to "consider carefully the importance and urgency of a public referendum" to decide about Taiwan's political future.²⁰ This was a rather obvious reconnection of the *tongdu*-issue to the 1991 referendum clause in the DPP party charter which Chen himself had resisted to be crossed out in an intra-party debate just two years earlier. After that, he pushed hard for a controversial referendum law which was finally passed by the Legislative

cultural and historical bonds between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan; however, he bracketed this statement by filling in the word "originally" here, too.

¹⁷See Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan*, l.c., p.58.

¹⁸*Renmin Ribao*, 21 February 2001, quoted in Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan*, l.c., p.59.

¹⁹*Taipei Times*, 19 July 2002.

²⁰Chinese text delivered to the author as a press release by the Government Information Office, 15 August 2003. For domestic and international reactions to Chen's remarks see "Cross-strait policy unchanged: MAC", in: *Taiwan News*, 6 August 2002; "Chen's remarks draw international scrutiny", in: *Taipei Journal*, 9 August 2002, p.2.

Yuan in late November 2003.²¹ It was quickly used by Chen as a tool to initiate a so-called 'defensive referendum' to be held on the day of the presidential elections in March 2004.²² Although this move caused fierce resistance from the opposition and was also rejected by the U.S. government,²³ Chen went ahead with his referendum plan and managed to bring the majority of the Taiwanese behind him. This was supposed to be a major political victory for him as the Taiwanese *demos* will now for the first time express itself directly vis-à-vis China.

The 'one China'-principle suffered a final blow in an interview that Chen Shuibian gave to the *Far Eastern Economic Review* in July 2003 when he stated straightforwardly "that those groups in Taiwanese politics who advocated acceptance of 'one China', they are now nearly scared silent. And those who insist on Taiwan's sovereign independence, those people and groups who are for Taiwan first, can assert themselves more forcefully, and to say more loudly that what we want is Taiwan and China, one country on each side. We do not want Taiwan to be a second Hong Kong. We reject 'one country, two systems'. And we oppose 'one China'".²⁴ At some later point in the interview, he underlined that "under the so-called 'one China' principle, it is impossible to have negotiations or discussions on direct links. This being the case, direct links cannot be realized under the 'one China' principle".²⁵ Consequently, the Chen administration now rules out even to negotiate on the meaning of 'one China' as it suggested to be ready to do at the beginning of the presidential term. According to the DPP government, cross-strait relations have to be discussed on the basis of absolute parity between two sovereign states without any preconditions concerning the future outcome of those discussions. Unification is neither the rationale of such talks nor an explicit option. As a matter of fact, the DPP government has gone beyond the *tongdu*-issue – or at least claims to have done so – which is considered of no more relevance to present-day Taiwan. What remains is a DPP cross-strait policy that focuses on pragmatic efforts to establish direct links between Taiwan and the mainland and trade them for security and the recognition of Taiwanese sovereignty, both *de facto* and *de jure*.²⁶ Unification has

²¹See "Taking a Risk", in: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 December 2003.

²²Although strictly limited in terms of who can initiate a referendum, the opposition majority of KMT and PFP allowed the president of the ROC by the new law to call a vote on matters of national security if the country is subjected to external threats that might change its sovereignty. Soon after the law had been passed, Chen Shuibian declared that he would consider the missile threat posed by the PRC as a matter of national security and let the people oppose it via referendum. See "Vote to push for status quo, Chen says", in: *Taipei Times*, 5 December 2003; "President reaffirms referendum proposal", in: *Taiwan News*, 8 December 2003.

²³See "Taiwan defends missile referendum", in: *Taiwan News*, 10 December 2003.

²⁴See "Political Pugilist", in: *Far Eastern Economic Review* (online-edition), accessed 24 July 2003. An abridged version of the interview was published in the FEER's hardcover edition, 31 July 2003, pp.16-17.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶The latest proposal concerning the three (trade, aviation and shipping) links over the Taiwan strait was pushed forward by the president in August 2003, when he declared that such links would be possible before the end of 2004 in case he was re-elected in March of that year. He said that this objective would be promoted in three

no more a role to play here.

If it was ever right to describe the DPP's development in the years since its foundation in 1986 – especially after the lost 1991 National Assembly election – as evolving from ideology to pragmatism, it is equally correct to speak of a re-direction towards ideology materializing in the course of Chen Shuibian's presidency, i.e. a turn to advocating again Taiwan's *de jure*-independence. With a new presidential election upcoming, one might assume that the rejection of the 'one China'-principle and the promotion of a referendum law is "all that campaign stuff" to be relinquished or tuned down once the ballot has taken place. However, it is rather improbable that Chen and the DPP leadership will ever again be conciliatory or even inclined to compromise in situating Taiwan within the 'one China' orbit, as some observers interpreted Chen's gestures after his inauguration back in 2000. Such a pre-condition of future cross-strait talks is a non-starter, if a DPP government is in charge. If Chen is re-elected, the Beijing government will have to swallow this. However, the DPP's sincerity in establishing direct links and to bring about – albeit cautiously – more economic integration between Taiwan and the mainland should not all at once be doubted. If those voices on the mainland have an important say who point at the significance of economic integration for future unification, the PRC leadership should be encouraged to work constructively with another DPP administration. The limits of such co-operation, however, are crystal-clear: Their determining parameter is the protection of Taiwanese sovereignty which the DPP would defend uncompromisingly.²⁷

3 Unification versus sovereignty: the KMT's self-deceptive mainland policy

Turning to the biggest opposition party's mainland policy approach, no easy assessment can be made. Certainly enough, the KMT still claims to strictly adhere to the 'one China'-principle and future unification of the two sides of the Taiwan strait. However, it unmistakably rejects Beijing's model of 'one country, two systems' and has meanwhile taken a 'Taiwan first' stance, insisting on Taiwanese sovereignty as strongly as the DPP does. As a matter of fact, the conditions for ultimate unification have been set so high that it is a legitimate question to ask about the scope of difference that actually exists be-

stages, namely a transitional phase of preparations for consultations, a period of negotiations with Beijing starting shortly after the March 2004 poll, and a phase of implementation scheduled for the above-mentioned date of late 2004. See "Direct links could begin before 2005: Chen", in: *Taiwan News*, 14 August 2003; "Direct links by the end of 2004: Chen", in: *Taipei Times*, 14 August 2003.

²⁷Chen Mingtong, Vice-Chairman of the ROC's Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), explained to this author: "We have to assure our sovereignty before any agreement with Beijing can be reached. It is not important that the international community recognizes us diplomatically and I also do not want this to happen for obvious reasons. But we have to be firm on the issue of sovereignty when talking to the Taiwanese people in order to bring about a domestic consensus that makes Beijing understand that sovereignty can't be compromised" (personal conversation, 12 December 2003).

tween the KMT and the ruling DPP today. The answer can only be given by closely looking at the conceptual relationship of the KMT's position on Taiwanese sovereignty vis-à-vis the idea of 'one China' that the party still holds. Unfortunately, this is not easy, as the KMT intentionally circumvents the sovereignty issue and is ambiguous concerning its understanding of who the Republic of China represents.

The painful cut between the KMT and its charismatic chairman Li Denghui in September 2001, when Li's party membership was revoked, has not yet healed. After Li had formulated his "two states theory" in mid-1999, trying to force his party into an explicit two China policy after almost a decade of sponsoring it both verbally and practically himself, intra-party resistance had finally become too strong. His successor at the top of the KMT, defeated presidential candidate Lian Zhan, based his mainland policy again on the '1992 consensus' of 'one China, two interpretations'. After a failed attempt to inject new momentum into cross-strait relations by bringing in the idea of a confederation,²⁸ he receded to the 1991 Guidelines of National Unification (*guojia tongyi gangling*), implying that the Sino-Taiwanese relationship is best described as 'one country, two political entities'.²⁹ Since then, the KMT has mainly pointed at the Chen administration's failure to bring cross-strait negotiations back on track and restricted itself to demanding the establishment of the 'three links' and further liberalization of Taiwan's investment and trade policies towards the mainland. Obviously, the KMT wants to set aside the dispute over sovereignty for the time being, and improve cross-strait relations by focussing on practical issues of economic and political co-operation.³⁰

After the KMT had formed an alliance with Song Chuyu's People First Party in February 2003, both parties agreed to work out a 'pan-blue' mainland policy platform yet to be announced to the public.³¹ Whatever the

²⁸This idea was launched by Lian in early 2001 and hotly discussed prior to the 16th KMT National Congress in late July of this year. It was worked out by Su Qi, former MAC director, and destined for inclusion into the party platform. However, as this author was told by Su Qi himself around the time, intra-party consensus was difficult to achieve as the proposal sounded too abstract to many party members. Beijing's negative reaction to the concept was also an issue, as many within the KMT leadership were wary to avoid any PRC estrangement. However, the confederation model was seen by its authors in accordance with the Guidelines of National Unification's mid- to long-term mainland policy objectives and as a transitional stage to full unification. See e.g. "Cross-strait confederation idea stirs debate", in: *Taipei Journal*, 13 July 2001, p.2.

²⁹The KMT's mainland policy is explained in a more recent document called *Guojia xin lantu, Taiwan xin dongli* (A New National Blueprint for the Country. A New Taiwanese Force), <http://www.kmt.org.tw>. Besides the above-mentioned conceptual pillars, the document stresses a 'Taiwan first' approach, illustrating the KMT's endeavour to reconcile its unification stance with the quest for sovereignty, the latter forming another backbone of its mainland policy since the early 1990s. The 'one country, two political entities' formula, though, does not belong anymore to the KMT's "Strait Speak".

³⁰See "Lien promises loyalty to Republic of China", in: *Taipei Times*, 24 October 2003.

³¹See "KMT, PFP discuss cross-strait policy platform", in: *Lian-hebao* (United Daily News), 11 June 2003. To this date (late February 2003), however, no corresponding document has been published by neither of the two parties.

outcome of this undertaking is going to be, it will give testimony of the ideological tightrope that the KMT is walking ever since it distanced itself from Li Denghui's 'two states theory': neither does the party want to abandon the 'one China'-principle, nor can it give up on Taiwanese sovereignty (or *de facto*-independence) in order to keep its 'one China' promise. Judging from the present state of affairs, the KMT has opted for a difficult "third way" between the DPP and Beijing's Taiwan policy, i.e. accepting the 'one China'-principle while rejecting the Hong Kong formula of 'one country, two systems' and postponing unification to some undetermined day in the future; insisting on the current degree of Taiwanese (ROC) sovereignty while striving for more international leeway for the island republic; and suggesting to be silent on the issue of sovereignty for the time being while concentrating on cross-strait practical co-operation and economic integration.³²

4 The PRC's policy towards Taiwan during the Chen presidency: continuity

When the Chen administration took over from the KMT in May 2000, the PRC leadership – after a short interval of apparent confusion – announced to "listen what Chen says and watch out for what he does".³³ Since then, it has followed a two-pronged strategy towards this island republic.³⁴ On the "soft" side, it has used familiar "united front" tactics to attack the DPP government and to split Taiwan's political class. Leading figures of the opposition 'pan-blue' camp have been invited to the mainland at various occasions during the last years to exchange views on cross-strait relations, while the same opportunity was constantly denied to the DPP and members of the Chen administration. Beijing authorized local governments on the mainland to establish city-to-city partnerships with their counterparts in Taiwan, playing its local official's strong interest in such arrangements against the DPP government's cautious approach to direct cross-strait contacts. Taiwanese entrepreneurs known (or allegedly known) for their support to Chen Shuibian were harassed with sudden tax audits and inspections, and summoned to back away from the DPP in order not to endanger their mainland operations. While usually not assailing Chen Shuibian directly, the PRC state-controlled media singled out his closest advisors – especially vice-president Annette Lu (Lu Xiulian) – for sharp criticism.

³²As a matter of fact, the KMT's position on Taiwan's sovereignty is flexible. This has been explained very well by Su Qi, who is now working for the National Policy Foundation, a KMT think tank: "Our concept of ROC sovereignty is certainly ambiguous. ROC can mean the whole of China or just the territory of Taiwan. If the Beijing government is behaving constructively, we talk about the whole of China. If Beijing gives us pressure, ROC sovereignty is restricted to Taiwan. In terms of international law, this approach may be problematic. But it is a pragmatic stance and fits the specific political circumstances that we face" (personal conversation, 12 December 2003).

³³"Opposition wins Taiwan election", in: *Associated Press*, 18 March 2000.

³⁴Wang, T.Y., "Cross-Strait Relations after the 2000 Election in Taiwan", l.c., pp.726-734.

The most significant soft-pronged measure, however, was a calculated backtracking of the Beijing government from its definition of 'one China'. Soon after Chen Shuibian's inauguration, it was widely reported that leading figures in the PRC government were taking the position that "there is only one China in the world and both Taiwan and the mainland are a part of China".³⁵ This unexpected move was praised a lot by the KMT, as it suggested that the PRC was now taking over the former ruling party's position on the 'one China'-principle pronounced in the early 1990s. The Chinese government seemed to have opened a window of opportunity for new cross-strait initiatives and Sino-Taiwanese parity. However, the new wording was not followed-up by any kind of fresh conceptual thinking on bilateral relations neither on the mainland nor in Taiwan, where the DPP government did not believe – and may be did not want to believe – that it faced a truly modified Beijing approach to the island.³⁶

Concerning the "hard" tactics of Beijing's two-pronged strategy, nothing spectacular has changed after the transition of government in Taiwan. The PRC continues to isolate the island republic internationally by pressing or luring Taipei's diplomatic allies into its own camp. It is also doing its best to impede Taiwan's membership in any international organizations. Most importantly, Beijing still amasses a huge arsenal of short-range ballistic missiles off the Taiwan coast in Fujian province that is – according to U.S. Pentagon figures – supposed to stand at more than 350 and to rise each year by a number of 50.³⁷ The PRC has acquired new fighter jets, battle ships, precision-guided weaponry and electronic warfare equipment over the last years for strengthening the PLA's operative capacity to launch a military attack against Taiwan and for deterring a U.S. intervention at the same time – both long-term goals in the PRC's strategic thinking that would have been pursued as intensively if Taiwan had been ruled by a KMT government after 2000. The choice for war still is Beijing's ultimate resort to solve the "Taiwan question", and given the ostensible success of its two-pronged strategy so far, has posed no more and no less a danger to Taiwan during the Chen presidency as before.

³⁵See e.g. "Tang urges Beijing to restart talks", in: *Taipei Times*, 14 July 2000. However, Beijing's February 2000 White Paper on Taiwan had stated before that there was only one China in the world, that Taiwan was a part of China, and that China's sovereignty and territorial integrity was not to be separated. See *Renmin Ribao*, 21 February 2000.

³⁶The DPP's scepticism was later confirmed by a proposal of Wang Zaixi, an official of the PRC government's Taiwan Affairs Office, made in mid-July 2003. Following the massive street demonstrations in Hong Kong on July 1st against a controversial anti-subversion bill specifying Art. 23 of the Basic Law, Wang promised that Beijing would not copy in Taiwan the same model prescribed to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region but would grant the island even more autonomy. However, this was a message already sent down to Taiwan by Deng Xiaoping in the 1980s and, most importantly, proved that Beijing still stucked to the 'one country, two systems' formula which is broadly rejected in Taiwan – not at least by the 'pan-blue' camp itself. See "China vows no troops in Taiwan after unification", in: *Reuters*, 18 July 2003.

³⁷International Crisis Group (ICG), *Taiwan Strait II: The Risk of War*, Asia Report No.54, Beijing/Taipei/Washington/Brussels, June 2003, p.54. See also "U.S. Ties Taiwan Arms to China Missile Drive", in: *International Herald Tribune*, 16 March 2001.

When the U.S. re-approached the PRC in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, for support to fight international terrorism, stabilize Irak and force North Korea to abandon its nuclear programme, the PRC seemed to become more relaxed on the Taiwan issue. Ironically, the same was true for the DPP government which has been repeatedly assured by the U.S. that co-operation with Beijing on issues of international security does not compromise Washington's partnership with Taiwan.³⁸ At the same time, the DPP could to some extent rely on the PRC's more confident attitude that the U.S. government would not alter its 'one China' stance since Beijing's support for the "war against terror" had become crucial for Washington. Consequently, the triangular relations between the U.S., Taiwan and the PRC were stable throughout most of the Chen presidency. It was always clear, however, that this constellation could change quickly if the Chen administration tested the ground for more offensive steps to make a point for Taiwanese sovereignty and independent statehood. This seemed exactly to happen when Chen Shuibian announced his intention to hold a 'defensive' referendum in late 2003, forcing U.S. president George W. Bush to speak out open warnings to Taiwan during a state visit of China's premier Wen Jiabao in December 2003.³⁹ Chen's move was interpreted in Washington as an attempt to change the status quo by free-riding on U.S. security guarantees to Taiwan – a suspicion that is certainly not groundless.⁴⁰ In the aftermath of the Wen visit in Washington, Chen was pressed hard to take back his referendum plans. However, he remained firm and was only willed to choose a final wording of the referendum questions that was considered less provocative as it could have been.⁴¹ All in all, present U.S.-China relations promise to be healthy enough and both country's leverage over Taiwan strong enough to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan strait after the 2004 presidential poll whatever the outcome of these elections will be.

5 Why a 'blue-camp' government is good for the PRC – and could be risky for Taiwan

There is a widespread belief in the international community and very probably within the Beijing leadership that the election of a 'blue-camp' president and a KMT-PFP government would be good for peaceful cross-strait relations and a promising new start for talks on the 'one China'-principle. The main argument made by a typical KMT supporter who predicts that Taiwan's state of security will change for the better under a 'pan-blue' presidency is based on two pillars: trust and political credibility. His/her reasoning could go as follows: While the Beijing government despises Chen Shuibian and the DPP as traitors of the 'one China'-principle and of national unification, it trusts the KMT which has a long history of supporting 'one China' and advocating unification. As Chen and his party reject the 'one China'-principle as a precondition of cross-strait negotiations and will not compromise on this issue, only the KMT enjoys enough credibility in Beijing to be able to repair Sino-Taiwanese relations and to avoid a war in the Taiwan strait. Also, as the state of Taiwan's economy depends heavily on its access to the mainland, voting for a DPP president wrecks havoc on Taiwan's future, while a KMT-led government guarantees a flourishing economy by promoting and realizing direct links and a politics of systematic economic integration between Taiwan and the mainland. On the contrary, a second Chen presidency would aggravate Beijing's mistrust in Taiwan's people and political leadership. The PRC might come to the conclusion that Taiwan is irreversibly "going its own way", provoking a PLA attack. Such a strike could be justified by Beijing's February 2000 White Paper on Taiwan allowing for the use of force "if the Taiwan authorities refuse, *sine die*, the peaceful settlement of cross-Straits reunification through negotiations".⁴²

How far does this argument take us? It was already indicated above that the PRC's approach to Taiwan is rather longterm, characterized by a steady check on the international community's recognition of Beijing's 'one China' policy while continuing a military build-up in southern China in order to be ready for the worst, i.e. a formal declaration of Taiwan independence and a U.S. intervention in the Taiwan strait in the case of a war. Therefore, it could be argued that a second Chen presidency will not alter the current state-of-affairs in the Taiwan strait too much. Their might be new and more pertinacious attempts on the part of the DPP to erase the 'one China'-principle completely from the political discourse on the island, but this would neither change the general setting of Taiwan's weak international standing nor the domestic stand-off between the 'pan-blue' and 'pan-green' camps on unification. Moreover, a second DPP administration could hardly ignore the fact that its efforts to establish a Taiwanese nation-state in the minds of the people are still

³⁸For an account of U.S.-Taiwan relations during the first presidency of Chen Shuibian see Grinter, Lawrence E., "Handling the Taiwan Issue: Bush Administration Policy toward Beijing and Taipei", in: *Asian Affairs*, Vol.29, No.1, Spring 2002, pp.3-13.

³⁹See "Chen reaffirms referendum plans despite U.S. opposition", in: *Taipei Times*, 11 December 2003.

⁴⁰The possibility of Taiwan forcing the U.S. into a conflict with the PRC was recently discussed in a special edition of *Issues & Studies* (Vol.38, No.1, March 2002) which focused on the "The 'Taiwan Threat' Hypothesis".

⁴¹According to a Taiwan government statement of January 16, the first of the two referendum questions is posed as following: "The people of Taiwan demand that the Taiwan Strait issue be resolved through peaceful means. Should mainland China refuse to withdraw the missiles it has targeted at Taiwan and to openly renounce the use of force against us, would you agree that the government should acquire more advanced anti-missile weapons to strengthen Taiwan's self-defence capabilities?" The second question asks voters to endorse a government proposal to open bilateral talks on a framework for "peace and stability" across the Taiwan Strait. See "Chen Launches His Missile vote", in: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 29 January 2004, pp.24-27 (24).

⁴²See "The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue", Statement issued by the Taiwan Affairs Council and the Information Office of the State Council, Beijing, 21 February 2001, quoted in Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan*, l.c., Appendix 2, pp.127-143.

very much limited by a majority of Taiwanese who do not want to endanger the island's security and prosperity by advocating radical solutions of the *tongdu*-issue.

A KMT-led government, for its part, could have to deal with a different problem. Having insisted on the 'one China'-principle as the conceptual framework for cross-strait talks and on unification as the future path of Taiwan for so long, the KMT might soon be pressed by the Beijing government to present concrete proposals to implement the Guidelines of National Unification to which the party has declared strict loyalty after the final abandonment of Li Denghui's "two states theory" in 1999. Although the KMT strongly rejects the 'one country, two system' formula and defends the ROC's quest for sovereignty, being in charge of government would make it quite difficult for the party to explain to the PRC and to the outside world at what point exactly sovereignty has to step back in favor of unification. The KMT would and could be pushed to implement the Guidelines it has formulated more than ten years ago and be held responsible by Beijing for any further delay in cross-strait rapprochement. Besides this, it would be rather difficult for the party to stick to the '1992 consensus' as the basis for a new round of cross-strait talks. While such a stance would probably be taken as a positive sign by the Chinese government if it was announced by a DPP government, Beijing might be rather unconvinced in the case of the KMT. On the contrary, it would be quite reasonable for Beijing to push for a quick narrowing of the "interpretive difference" between the PRC and Taiwan concerning 'one China' once the KMT is in charge. One cannot ignore the fact here that Beijing has constantly denied that there ever was a so-called '1992 consensus' allowing for a different understanding of 'one China'. This question would only be excluded from talks on practical matters.⁴³

If the KMT resisted to this kind of pressure and tried to balance Taiwan's quest for sovereignty against Beijing's claim to reunification, it would soon be accused by the PRC government of the same "crime" as was Li Denghui throughout the 1990s, i.e. to go for independence in disguise. In that case, Beijing might have second thoughts on its current Taiwan policy approach which is not at least based on its perception of a strong pro-unification opposition on the island. If it came to judge the KMT to break its word and delay the 'three links' and other steps of political integration between the two sides, the PRC leadership might swing back to more offensive policies. While any military assaults as during the 1995/96 missile crisis would probably not materialize because of U.S. military intervention, cross-strait relations could still deteriorate considerably, enhancing the risk of conflict. There-

fore, the KMT's position is a delicate one. If it pursued a straightforward unification policy (which is rather improbable given the strength of the 'pan-green' camp and the KMT's own reserve on this issue), it would alienate the majority of Taiwan's status quo supporters and deepen the *tongdu*-fault line in Taiwanese society. However, if it opts for a cautious 'Taiwan first' approach and defends Taiwanese sovereignty against any "premature" step towards unification, it would quite certainly alienate the Chinese government and cause a more bellicose atmosphere on the mainland.

The reason for this dilemma is obvious: The KMT lacks a convincing concept to reconcile – in both theoretical and practical terms – Taiwanese sovereignty with its long-term goal of unification. It was close to such a concept in 2001 when the idea of a Chinese confederation was briefly debated as an adequate model that should be written into the party platform. This would have made clear to the PRC leadership and to the Taiwanese people the KMT's factual stance on guaranteeing Taiwanese sovereignty *before* any possible step towards unification could be made. However, the KMT has finally refrained from such a move because of resistance in Beijing and because it does believe that sovereignty must remain a flexible term referring to both Taiwan and the whole of China at the same time. Such flexibility is supposed to signal to the Beijing government that any overstretching of its unification demand can push the KMT to oppose unification by limiting its claim to sovereignty to Taiwan only. Clearly, this is a highly ambivalent and risky strategy. At the other side, the DPP advocates a quite stringent 'one China, one Taiwan' approach which the mainland may not like, but which it cannot counter easily by giving pressure to the ruling party. Consequently, and contrary to what has been assumed at the early stage of the Chen presidency, Sino-Taiwanese relations are supposed to be more calculable and hence more stable if a DPP government is in charge while they could be in rough waters – at least in the long run – with a KMT-led 'pan-blue' government. Certainly, this prediction is based on the assumption that the DPP will not test the limits of Beijing's tolerance after a successful presidential bid by turning to a full-scale independence policy.

6 Conclusion: Negotiating the 'one China'-principle

Certainly, the assumption that a takeover of the so-called 'unificationist camp' after the upcoming presidential elections might aggravate cross-strait tensions is debatable. A typical KMT supporter would counter such an argument by pointing at the effect of trust-building through negotiations and by stressing his/her strong belief in the KMT's abilities to convince the mainland that reunification must not be premature. Also, he/she might rightfully claim that the Beijing government would be much more patient with a KMT-PFP administration than with a second DPP presidency. But at the end of the day, how can the KMT deal with the difficult relationship between Taiwanese sovereignty and unification that has already tormented the party when it was responsible for conducting

⁴³As a matter of fact, there was just a verbal consensus on two different formulations at the end of the November 1992 Hong Kong talks between the representatives of the two semi-official organizations responsible for cross-strait negotiations. The Chinese ARATS stated that "both sides of the Taiwan Strait adhere to the one China-principle, seeking national unification. But the political content of the one China will not be involved in their talks on practical matters." Taiwan's SEF declared that "in the process of both sides of the strait making common efforts to seek national unification, although both sides adhere to the one China principle, they have a different understanding of what is this one China". See Sheng Lijun, *China and Taiwan*, l.c., p.55.

cross-strait negotiations in the 1990s? What has actually changed that makes the KMT so confident that now it would be more successful than it has been at the time? What is the party's strategy to provide for stable cross-strait relations if the mainland gets sour on the protracted process of bilateral talks that is expectable and unevitable given Beijing's rigid focus on the 'one China'-principle? Does it suffice to count on the PRC's ideological flexibility and reasonableness not to give pressure to the KMT once the latter sits down with its mainland counterpart to talk on direct links and subsequent steps to clear the way for unification? And as important: How would the KMT convince those people in Taiwan of its superior China policy who want the conservation of the status quo – which actually means freezing the current degree of sovereignty that Taiwan enjoys. To put it differently, how would the KMT confront the necessity to build an island-wide consensus on its mainland policy if it wanted to avoid a new rise of Taiwanese nationalism spurred by an infuriated opposition?

As a matter of fact, the KMT has declared that it can do the impossible: ensuring Taiwanese (ROC) sovereignty (not only autonomy à la Hong Kong) while providing the foundations for unification at some distant day. The basic problem with this approach is that the KMT shies away from any innovative interpretation of the 'one China'-principle. It is simply not enough to tell the domestic audience that one's own concept of 'one China' differs from the PRC's, if the concept itself remains in the dark and is substituted by some "procedural thinking" or "talk and see" approach with the net effect of circumventing the main issue: How to secure Taiwanese sovereignty vis-à-vis the PRC? To be ambivalent on this issue could be wise for a certain period of time, but given the DPP's straightforwardness on the 'one China, one Taiwan' formula, being ambivalent too long might kill the cat. If the KMT does not spell out clearly its concept of Taiwanese sovereignty, it will not do any better in the cross-strait theater than the DPP. Chinese and domestic Taiwanese pressure will sandwich the KMT and deprive it of the necessary space to discuss on equal terms with Beijing.

Therefore, if re-elected to power the KMT must start to negotiate the 'one China'-principle and not just take it for granted. Only when the process of unification which the party is aiming at is grounded on a concept or model that explains clearly to the domestic audience where ROC sovereignty goes, can the KMT convince the Taiwanese people that it is a viable alternative to the DPP. The idea of a Chinese confederation might be such a model; the Korean or former German approach of divided national sovereignty could also be considered, no matter if this option is excluded by the Chinese government for the time being. European integration, on the contrary, cannot serve as a model for cross-strait relations *before* the issue of sovereignty is not resolved. Only those political entities can integrate successfully who do so as sovereign partners deciding voluntarily on integration – and may be unification one day – each for itself. Given the DPP's strength and rootedness in Taiwanese society, the KMT cannot but partake in the struggle for the island's sovereignty by using *unambiguous* language. It is this simple fact that already makes the DPP and the KMT converge in much of

their respective mainland policy approaches.⁴⁴ While the DPP advocates 'one China, one Taiwan', it has clearly retaken a position of Taiwan *de jure*-independence. The KMT, for its part, may or may not have a market for promoting unification as an alternative, but to stand a chance of governing Taiwan successfully in the future requires definitely more than just stressing the dubious advantage of enjoying more trust and credibility in Beijing.

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⁴⁴KMT presidential candidate Lian Zhan stunned the public in late December 2003 when he stated that Chen Shuibian's formula of 'one country on each side' (*yibian yiguo*) "should be no problem". Just some days later, legislative speaker and KMT heavy-weight Wang Jinping even said that the 'pan-blue' camp will adjust its strategy to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan strait, and that it would not rule out Taiwanese independence (!). Even if these statements point much more to 'campaign talk' than profound changes of the KMT mainland approach, they also show how much the former ruling party is dragged along the path of Chen Shuibian and his DPP. See "Chen adds Mongolia to strait debate", *Taipei Times*, 22 December 2003; "Bian: Zhonghua minguo shi Taiwan, Taiwan shi Zhonghua minguo" (Chen Shuibian: The Republic of China is Taiwan, Taiwan is the Republic of China), in: *Zhongguo Shibao* (online-version), 22 December 2003.