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PEACE, REUNIFICATION, DEMOCRACY AND CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

Zhaohui HONG and Yi SUN

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Zhaohui HONG and Yi SUN*

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to dissect the prevailing myth that "democratization in mainland China will lead to peace across the Taiwan Strait," this article, with the use of relevant political science theories, historical case studies and comparisons, argues that there is no inherent connection between the two; in fact, it goes so far as to suggest that democratization in the mainland in the short term may trigger Taipei's drastic move to quicken the process of its independence, thus giving rise to an all-out war between China and Taiwan. Examining the different perspectives on democracy, reunification and peace in China, the United States and Taiwan, this article maintains that the common denominator that underscores the interests of all three is an institutionally guaranteed peace. Concurrently, the article also points out the fallacy of the argument that adopting a confederate system is tantamount to acknowledging the existence of two separate countries. By analyzing the initial American confederate system and its inherent unifying function, the article asserts that the establishment of such a system will serve the interests of both mainland China and Taiwan; it can also be a transitional stage leading to the eventual realization of reunification and democracy while maintaining peace. In the process, mutual tolerance and sincerity are essential for reaching this ultimate goal.

1. INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive examination of the cross-strait relations during the past twenty-five years reveals that peace, reunification and democracy are three main themes that have impacted the vacillations of the triangular relationship between Beijing, Taipei and Washington. It is true that different leaders have emphasized one theme or the other during different time periods, but each side has also demonstrated impressive consistency in its policy.

For mainland China, reunification is the priority since it is closely tied in with the legitimacy of the government's political authority and the country's social stability. Consequently, the Beijing government is willing to do anything for reunification at the expense of peace and democracy or even economic development. For the United States, peace across the Taiwan Strait is the most important goal. Neither the level of democratization in China nor the reunification between the mainland and Taiwan is of fundamental concern to the U.S.; instead, the peaceful status quo in the Taiwan Strait fits into the best strategic equation as far as Washington is concerned. At the same time, Taiwan, sandwiched between two ma-
Cross-strait Relations

jor powers, desires peace, but it also hopes to raise the banner of democracy in order to appeal to mainstream Americans’ belief system and therefore retain their sympathetic support while justifying Taipei’s refusal to engage in reunification negotiations with the mainland on the pretext that mainland China has not achieved sufficient political democratization. Inherent in this approach is the strategy of trading time for space, for the process of democratization in the mainland is ridden with obstacles, which renders the prospect of reunification a remote one at best.

Over a long period of time, these incompatible and yet intertwining expectations and policy considerations on all three sides regarding peace, reunification and democratization have created a strategic labyrinth, conceptual myths and communicative problems, thereby hindering the prospect of innovating and promoting a farsighted and effective system that would meet the needs of all three sides. None of the designs such as “one country, two systems,” one country and two capitals, a federal system, a confederacy or something that resembles the European Union will result in a win-win situation for all. In light of this existing dilemma, this article is intended to analyze the conceptual errors resulting from the different priorities and prospects of peace, reunification and democracy, to identify the most useful common denominator for mainland China, Taiwan and the United States, and to advance the theory that a confederate system may indeed be the most viable option reconciling the differing expectations and strategies and one that would extract the cross-strait relations out of the current predicament.

II. MAINLAND DEMOCRACY AND PEACE ACROSS THE TAIWAN STRAIT

Presently a myth persists among those concerned with cross-strait relations that democracy in the mainland will automatically ensure peace and stability, guarantee the security of Taiwan, thus leading to possible reunification between the two. During his October 1998 visit to the mainland, KOO Chen-fu, chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), played the “democracy” card by declaring that mainland democracy as the prerequisite to reunification, assuming that democracy would naturally lead to Taiwan’s long term security and a peaceful solution to all the thorny issues. In fact, both LEE Teng-hui who is a relentless advocate for Taiwan’s independence, and MA Ying-jeou, a mayor of Taipei who favors reunification, share the belief that mainland democracy will guarantee peace for the people of Taiwan. One famous American
scholar also believes that the war between mainland and Taiwan could be avoidable if mainland becomes a democratic country.¹

The theory on “democracy and peace” made its first appearance in the west during the 1970s and, by the 1990s, it had gained a great deal of currency. The basic assumption inherent in this theory is that a democratic government has to be a rational one, a rational government has to be responsible and peace-loving; unilateral and reckless polices are the monopolies of an authoritarian dictatorship.² However, this “peace and democracy” theory has been proven to be a fallacy by many examples in and outside of China throughout history; it is even less applicable to mainland-Taiwan relations because the level of democracy in the former has no intrinsic connection to the degree of peace cross the Strait.

Looking at historical development, as a matter of fact, democratic countries cannot avoid wars and authoritarian nations might keep long-term peace and unification. The key factors affecting peace or war mainly depended on the different powers between unification and separation and not the direct connection with democracy or dictatorship of a nation. Before the outbreak of the American Civil War (1861-1865), for instance, the U.S. government was no doubt a democratic one, and Abraham Lincoln was an elected president. However, one has to recognize the fact that after the War of 1812, American nationalism had replaced nativism and separatism as the mainstream ideological and political force.³ Consequently, when the seven southern states declared the founding of the independent Southern Confederacy, the Lincoln administration did not choose peace and tolerance; instead, it opted for a massive civil war. Clearly nationalism with violence prevailed over democracy with peace.⁴ This example demonstrates that, confronted with a monumental crisis such as a secession movement, a government often has limited options when it comes to defending its authority and legitimacy, regardless of the nature of its political governance. Conversely, when Mikhail Gorbachev was presented with the seces-

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1. FU Jianzhong, “Taiwan’s 911 Worries American Conservatives,” Zhongguo Shibao (China Times), April 18, 2004, p. 3.


sion crisis in the former Soviet Union, he ended up succumbing to the forces of independence upon realizing that the voices for secession far outweighed those for unity. It appears ironic that Gorbachev’s centralized communist government chose to pursue a policy of peace in order to avoid a full-scale civil war. In contrast, the popularly elected president Boris Yeltsin dealt with the Chechnya independence movement by sending Russian troops on December 11, 1994. Obviously a democratic political entity was not enough to guarantee peace in Russia.

In the face of a separatist movement, democracy and peace are not necessarily positively related. In other words, one cannot argue that the more democratic a political system, the more peaceful the society is, since political democracy does not automatically engender peace. Both Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin, who became presidents of Russia as a result of free elections, adopted measures of forceful suppression against the Chechnya, whereas Gorbachev, who was not democratically elected, took a peaceful approach. It is also worth noting that people in the democratized Russia today have more freedom, but not necessarily more peace and security. By the same token, a government that uses military means and opts for a war is not necessarily an irrational government. Lincoln made the decision for the Civil War after a great deal of careful and agonizing considerations, a decision that was based on the realistic assessment that pro-union forces were far stronger than the secessionists. On the other hand, Gorbachev chose peace largely because of his rational realization that he could not mobilize enough military forces to prevent the collapse and disunion of the former Soviet Union.

The examples cited above can shed some light on the current mainland-Taiwan relations and their future development. Democratization in the mainland is a matter of time, but the independence of Taiwan is not necessarily inevitable. Suppose that mainland China would achieve a Taiwan-style democracy overnight, would peace across the strait and security for Taiwan immediately and in-

evitably follow? This article argues that, in the short term, mainland democracy may even jeopardize the prospect of a peaceful relationship with Taiwan by expediting the latter's pro-independence movement, which would in turn quicken Beijing's decision for forceful reunification.

First of all, if the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leaves the political stage in the mainland, nationalism is very likely to fill the ideological vacuum during a post-communism era. To a great extent, given the fact that nationalism has replaced communism, the direction of mainland-Taiwan relations is not decided by the nature of the central government; rather, it is heavily influenced by the strong sense of nationalism that is ingrained in the mainland populace. Since the Opium War in the mid-19th century, China has undergone many changes in its political system and governing mechanisms, yet the unity-oriented Chinese nationalism, which is deeply rooted in the Chinese culture and value system, has remained steadfast. It may not come as a surprise that demise of communism in the mainland will stimulate and reinforce the strong currents of Chinese nationalism. This replacement of communism with nationalism was already evident in Russian history during the 1990s, as the Russian president Vladimir Putin was a highly nationalist political leader. If radical, emotion-laden nationalism becomes the major ideological force in a democratic China, then any rhetoric or action in favor of Taiwan's independence may easily trigger military reactions from the mainland.

Second, leaders in a democratic Chinese society will do anything to win public support if they ignore Taiwan independence because the legitimacy of their position will depend upon the number of votes that they receive. At the same time, however, democracy would not dilute nationalism and make the public more receptive to the idea of an independent Taiwan. Democratically elected leaders, compared with their communist predecessors, will find themselves

more willing to cater to public demands. Political calculations may
tempt them to take a page from CHEN Shui-bien's book by adopt-
ing an inflexible or even belligerent policy in dealing with any pro-
independence moves in Taiwan; in fact, they may even go to the
extreme length in initiating a possible preemptive strike, a "scared
war" against Taiwan for the sake of expediting the process of
reunification.\textsuperscript{12}

Third, once China adopts a Taiwan-style democracy, the power
of the central government would be drastically weakened, resulting
in highly likely social instability at least in the short term. This kind
of development could have dual effect on the mainland's relation-
ship with Taiwan. On the one hand, it may encourage the pro-inden-
pendence forces in Taiwan to take advantage of the chaos in
mainland and declare independence as soon as possible. On the
other hand, it may also push a weakened central government in the
mainland to find a convenient outlet for its domestic crisis by invok-
ing the popular sentiment of nationalism and calling upon the pub-
clic to fight for China's reunification. Doing so would kill two birds
with one stone — solving a long-standing historical problem of dis-
unification across the Strait while strengthening the new govern-
ment's credibility and authority. It is possible that a war for China's
reunification can be a highly effective vehicle for a democratic lead-
ership in the mainland for the purpose of stabilizing the society and
strengthening its authority. A case in point is that both presidents
Yeltsin and Putin shored up their political capital by applying force
against the Chechnyans.\textsuperscript{13} Ironically, Taiwan's agitation for inde-
pendence may indeed provide the much needed pretext for some in
the mainland to push for imminent reunification, since they would
welcome any escalation of the crisis in order to justify their argu-
ment for a military solution. In many ways, both the eager advolv-
cates for independence and those for reunification desire for some
dramatic events to tilt the current scale and upset the tenuous peace
across the Taiwan Straits.

Fourth, mainland democratization may result in the weakening
of the central government as a whole, yet it may also magnify the
power of newly elected individual leaders. If China held an open
presidential election today, the person most likely to get elected
may be neither a communist nor a pro-democracy leader; rather, he

\textsuperscript{12} ZHANG Yiyao, "Chen Shui-bien Clamors for a 'Sacred War'" \textit{Huanqiu Shibao}
(Global Times), December 31, 2003, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{13} Anatol Lievan, \textit{Chechnya: Tombstone of Russian Power}, New Haven, CT: Yale
is in all likelihood a charismatic strong man who is well versed in the rhetoric of nationalism, one who resembles Yeltsin or Putin after the dissolution of the former Soviet Union. When faced with the threat of Taiwan’s independence, such a leader will be more obliged to meet such a challenge with the use of force. One has to realize that even though democracy in the mainland will accord power to a collective leadership and the new decision-making mechanism, China’s cultural tradition, embedded in Confucianism, has historically produced many great strong men. The Confucian philosophical, social and cultural functions are highly conducive to creating sophisticated, competent but not necessarily democratic-minded leaders, who tend to command the respect of a generally receptive populace. Mainland democracy is not necessarily able to eradicate the cultural legacy that has lent itself to breeding strong men, whose very existence does not bode well for the prospect of Taiwan’s struggle for independence.\textsuperscript{14}

Fifth, in the case of a democratized China declaring war on Taiwan, international forces (especially the United States) would find it difficult to come up with reasons for military intervention, for the war would be one purely for national reunification, not one that can be interpreted as an attack of authoritarianism against democracy. Some in Taiwan can argue that a democratic Taiwan should not be subjugated by an authoritarian mainland government. Once Beijing achieves democracy, the pro-independence forces in Taiwan would be dealt a fatal blow. As in the case of the American Civil War, not one foreign country, including Great Britain, deemed it wise to recognize the Confederate States of America in the South for fear of international pressure.\textsuperscript{15} Furthermore, a democratized mainland would be able to call all the shots at the negotiation table, for it would no longer have to pledge to the “one country, two systems” ruling structure as applied to Hong Kong and Macao.

It seems that some decision-makers in Taiwan suffer from the “Lord Ye’s Love of Dragons” [Yegong Hao Long] syndrome. They eagerly await the arrival of “the dragon of mainland democracy,” but once that “dragon” descends, they would find it much more unsettling and disruptive than what they have imagined. The one-party rule in mainland China during the last twenty-five years has

\textsuperscript{14} Zhaohui HONG “The Subordinate Men and Social Stability in Twentieth-Century China,” \textit{Asian Thought and Society}, Vol. 60 (Fall 1996), pp. 20-35.

not led to a war with Taiwan, nor has it prevented the latter from becoming one of the four economic “mini-dragons” in Asia. However, in a likely war scenario, the island may very well find itself difficult to survive, let alone develop.

III. THE COMMON INTERESTS FOR THE MAINLAND CHINA, TAIWAN AND THE UNITED STATES

If mainland democracy does not automatically ensure Taiwan’s peace and security, then the focal point of Taipei’s policy should not center on whether the mainland achieves democracy; instead, it should concentrate on how to prolong peace across the straits, however fragile it may be. Rather than extracting a promise of democratization from Beijing, it needs to obtain a guarantee of peace. Unfortunately, Taipei’s current policy, evident in CHEN Shui-bien’s insistence on a “free referendum” on Taiwan’s future, has independence as its ultimate goal while using the rhetoric of peace and democracy only as a means or pretext. Similarly, the mainland sees reunification as the end of its policy while chanting democracy and peace as expedient measures that can be abandoned at will. In reality, the present status quo of peace is also Beijing’s second best option, if not the best. Previously a common assumption was that the mainland could not afford to wait for reunification because the longer Taiwan’s separation from the mainland, the more independence-minded people there would be, hence a more remote prospect for reunification. However, with the dramatic development of China’s economy and its consequential closer economic ties with Taiwan, both time and space are on the side of the mainland. Maintaining the status quo will win the maximum amount of time for the mainland to strengthen its national power, thus increasing its economic and military clout for a possible showdown with Taiwan. This realization is what has precisely led forces in Taiwan to push for permanent separation from the mainland during the early years of the twenty-first century in the hope of making independence a reality before their economic and political advantages diminish. As stated previously, this move is likely to backfire, for it may compel the mainland to rush for a war for reunification. Both sides have to admit that peace is in their best interests, not democracy or reunification.

In addition, an analysis of the American interest in this triangular equation can help to identify a common interest for all three parties – the U.S., the mainland and Taiwan. There is no denying that the U.S. has played an instrumental role in shaping the main-
land-Taiwan relations. Since the 1970s, various American administrations have not regarded reunification or mainland democracy important issues that impact their policies, and have therefore made significant compromises on both matters. To put it another way, Washington does not really care if China becomes democratic, for it still can be a tacit ally under the one-party rule. After all, twenty-five years ago the U.S. decisively adopted the "one-China" policy and severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

However, the U.S. has never made concessions to China on the precondition of a "peaceful" solution to the Taiwan problem. Though not overly concerned with Taiwan's insistence on mainland democracy or the latter's insistence on the eventual reunification, the United States supports a peaceful approach on either side. As a result, Washington has opposed both Taiwan's pro-independence attempts and the mainland's threats of force, or any other change that would jeopardize the fragile peace in the Taiwan Straits. Putting American self-interests and motives aside, the U.S. insistence on peace is in accordance with widely accepted international principles. Even though both Taiwan and mainland leaders deny American influence in their respective policy-making, both historical experiences and current power politics contradict their assertions. Without the dramatic reorientation of U.S. policy in the 1970s, Sino-American relations would not have achieved any breakthrough. However, before China promises to give up the use of force as a means to reclaim Taiwan, Washington will not stop its arms sales to the island. Continued American military support to Taiwan has no doubt stalled the reunification process and further entangled the web of PRC-Taiwan relations. Interestingly, when faced with CHEN Shui-bien's challenge in calling for a free-referendum on the future of Taiwan in 2004, leaders in Beijing have openly and directly encouraged the U.S. to "interfere" in China's internal affairs by dissuading Chen's government from making such a move. On the other side, Chen has also tolerated American interference while strongly condemning the French president for opposing the referendum. It is well known that China's 1996 missile exercise in the Taiwan Straits and Premier ZHU Rongji's strongly-worded warning against Taipei's pro-independence campaign in 2000 backfired, for instead of slowing down its momentum, they

ironically contributed to the victories of LEE Teng-hui and CHEN Shui-bien, both of whom are strong advocates for Taiwan's independence. During the most recent encounter, the mainland leadership seems to have benefited from the change in its strategy from belligerency to diplomacy by encouraging the Bush administration to put pressure on Chen’s government. Needless to say, from the Taiwan Straits crises during the days of the cold war to the recent involvement, the “American factor” has been crucial in impacting the development of PRC-Taiwan relations.

It is therefore in the interests of both the mainland and Taiwan to make the best of the American influence, acknowledge “peace” to be their common interests and seek a positive solution to their current dilemma. After all, leaders in Taiwan hoped for a referendum of peace while their counterparts across the straits have also reiterated JIANG Zemin’s assertion that “Chinese should not fight against Chinese.” Obviously, the desire for peace can serve as an intersecting point of their mutual interest. Though their views on reunification and democracy cannot be further apart, people on neither side of the straits want war. After all, the ultimate goal for both reunification and democratization should be people’s happiness and national harmony. If the mainland’s means of reunification and Taiwan’s obsession with the mainland’s democratization may give rise to war, widespread suffering and economic disasters, then the terms laid down by either side do not serve the interest of the Chinese people at all. Without peace and the consequences of growth and prosperity stemming from it, any democratic political entity or a unified country will be by and large meaningless.

IV. CONTEMPLATIONS AND DESIGNS FOR FUTURE MAINLAND-TAIWAN RELATIONS

With the recognition that the maintenance of peace should serve as the guiding principle for cross-strait relations, it is also critical to contemplate and design the most viable legal and institutional infrastructure. A confederation appears to be the best and most flexible option for both sides. Presently the primary resistance to establishing such a system comes from the mainland, where the prevailing misconception is that a confederation is a loose alliance of independent countries, and that it would therefore be simply a revised version of Taiwan’s independence.

In reality, the history of the United States demonstrates that a confederation is compatible with the “one-China” principle. From 1781 to 1788, the American confederation was in place. After un-
dergoings adaptations and growing pains, the original thirteen states completed the transition from the time of independence to the creation of a federation, leaving behind a rich historical and constitutional legacy.

The Articles of Confederation is a constitutional document which established the very legitimacy of the American system. In June 1776, before the promulgation of the Declaration of Independence, Richard Henry Lee proposed that the Continental Congress formulate a plan for the confederation. Drafted by John Dickinson, the Articles of Confederation made its first appearance in December 1776, and was ratified at the November 1777 Continental Congress, and came into effect on March 1, 1781. Until the passage of the United States Constitution on November 21, 1788, the confederate system was in practice for seven years.18 Such a system had several inherent characteristics of a unified country.

First of all, the American confederation had a unified governing structure. Even though in theory a confederation was an alliance of a number of political entities, in reality members of such a confederation were not completely independent or irrelevant to one another. For instance, upon the passage of the Articles of Confederation, the Continental Congress, the original governing body, was renamed the United States in Congress Assembled. The first article in this historical document stipulated that the alliance of the various states was to be named the United States of America. Needless to say, the states were not allowed to pronounce themselves as republics (hence there was no Republic of New York or Republic of Maryland).19 As a matter of fact, the word “confederation” says it all — it connotes the alliance of states, not countries. The term “the united states” is a more accurate reflection of the nature of such an alliance. Under such a system there is only one capital, not multiple control centers.

Furthermore, the Articles, though acknowledging state authorities, nonetheless made it clear that the independence from Great Britain was not accomplished by individual states, but by concerted efforts of all thirteen colonies, without which there would be no independence and freedom for any individual state. State leaders


were made aware of the fact that the legitimacy of their authority was rooted in the very existence of the confederation as a whole. 20

The Confederation accorded power to the Congress that was not available to the states. For example, Congress had the power to declare war against a foreign nation, ratify treaties, and make currency. It was also authorized to settle issues that cross state borders, such as American Indian affairs. Without congressional approval, no state was allowed to establish diplomatic relations or engage in a war with a foreign country. Congress also had the right to implement the law. 21 Although congressional members came from the states, one state could have only one vote. In the end, all the states gave up their separate rights to the land in the west and turned them to Congress. Land rights in the west were perhaps the most symbolic of a unified national government. 22 The Articles also stipulated that, with the agreement of two-thirds of the states, Congress could organize a Navy, draft soldiers from the states and solve interstate conflicts. 23

The American confederate system was inherently transitional in nature. It was founded during the War of Independence and left room for change and perfection. This system was closely linked to the unique historical circumstances. The American confederate system was necessary in America’s struggle to free themselves from British control, it also assured them that their government would not be a highly centralized political entity with absolute governing power. As time went on, however, it became clear that by refusing to have a more central authority, the Americans seemed to have “thrown away the baby with the bath water,” for the government was unable to protect people during the western movement, ensure free trade or stabilize the currency. 24 In addition, once the new country entered the period of development, the confederation faced tremendous challenge, for it could not have its independent military or collect taxes from the states, rendering it ineffective to deal with the native Indian rebellion, the British harassment on the

sea or the large scale farmers uprising. In the end, it became imperative that a federal system with strengthened central authority and a constitution be established. However, the historical value of the early American confederation must not be overlooked.

A close look at the historical transition of the United States from a confederation to a federation can offer valuable insights for the current predicament of mainland-Taiwan relations. A confederate system is not incompatible with the “one China” principle. The country will have only one name while Taiwan cannot call itself a “republic,” just like Shanghai cannot be referred to as a “republic” either. In other words, there can be only one country with a number of states, governed by one constitution, and represented by one capital, one national flag and one national anthem.

Besides, under a confederate system the central and state governments will have a well-defined division of power. On the one hand, the central government has the right to declare war, make peace and enter diplomatic relations with foreign nations. On the other hand, Taiwan needs to receive sufficient compensation in exchange for becoming a member of the confederation. Other incentives may consist of the rights for Taiwan to set up consulates in countries that have diplomatic relations with the PRC, to join international organizations, including the United Nations, in the same way that the former Soviet Union allowed Ukraine to be a member of the U.N. People in Taiwan should also be entitled to the same rights of investment as their mainland counterparts in China.

Another advantage of adopting a confederate system is that it will go beyond the “one country, two systems” pattern. The slogan of “one country, two systems” has been chanted for over twenty years and the policy has been implanted successfully to Hong Kong and Macao since the late 1990s. However, their success does not mean that the system would be equally applicable to the Taiwan situation due to the vastly different historical circumstances. China had lost its administrative rights, but not the ultimate territorial rights over Hong Kong, which was ceded to England on a ninety-nine year lease. Taiwan, however, was annexed by Japan in 1895 and remained under Japanese control until 1945. When Japan surrendered at the end of WWII, it gave back both the territorial and administrative rights to the Republic of China. The most critical difference is that people in Hong Kong were objects of bargaining and

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negotiations between China and England, whereas people in Taiwan are active participants in the negotiations over their own future. A “one country, two systems” solution will treat Taiwan as only a province under the control of the mainland central government, whereas a confederation will position Taiwan as a political entity equal to the mainland. Such a system will both satisfy Taiwan’s long standing quest for an equal status and put to practice the mainland’s proclaimed principle of “negotiation as equals.”

More importantly, creating a confederation will provide the necessary time and means for a meaningful transition by laying the foundation for a constitutional federation. History has demonstrated that a confederate system tends to be a temporary and transitional system. For example, both the German Confederation from 1815 to 1866 and the Swiss Confederation from 1815 to 1848 evolved into federations. A confederate system would allow both Taiwan and the mainland to break through their current impasse and provide a solid and workable institution for eventual transition. A mistake on the part of those strong advocates for reunification is that they are concerned with only the ultimate end while neglecting the practical and necessary transitional process and means. Historians, on the other hand, pay more attention to the historical process and development. A confederate system may indeed be the necessary transitional stage that would lead to a federal system, or even one that would allow maximum local authority within one unified republic. Drastic attempts at creating a “one country, two systems” structure or achieving complete reunification may have the effect of “more haste, less speed” and be entirely counterproductive.

The framework of a confederation offers the best medium that reconciles the two incompatible views on the future of mainland China and Taiwan. On the broad policy spectrum, the design of “one country, two systems” stands at the very left while the total independence of Taiwan is positioned at the very right, with contemplations for a federation and a structure similar to the European Union placed somewhere in between. A confederate system, however, can be situated right in the middle and represents a necessary compromise. In fact, the name of a new political entity is not in itself crucial, for a confederate system also makes room for different kinds of relations between the central government and state (or local) authorities. The most important thing is for both the main-

land and Taiwan to, in the spirit of sincerity and honesty, agree on a system that accommodates the historical factors and current realities on both sides.

V. CONCLUSION

The key to solving the "Taiwan problem" is to recognize the mutual desire for peace as a point of convergence between Beijing’s commitment to reunification and Taipei’s insistence on mainland’s democratization. Centering on the theme of peace, both sides can develop necessary mutual understanding and tolerance. Through negotiations in good faith as well as the establishment of institutional and legal frameworks, it is entirely possible for the world to have a democratic, unified and, most of all, peaceful China in the 21st century.
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