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The Taiwan Dilemma in Chinese Nationalism

Taiwan Studies in the People's Republic of China

ABSTRACT

Chinese Taiwan Studies faces a dilemma: By treating Taiwan as an autonomous research subject, Taiwan Studies indirectly questions the rationale for China's reunification. Yet, by emphasizing the commonalities between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, Taiwan Studies justifies the island's subversive role as an agent of democratization on the mainland.

KEYWORDS: China, Taiwan Studies, nationalism, legitimacy, political reform

INTRODUCTION

This article looks at the role of Taiwan in Chinese nationalism through the prism of academic Taiwan Studies in China. Taiwan Studies in China faces a dilemma. By treating Taiwan as an autonomous research subject with unique features, Taiwan Studies indirectly challenges the rationale for China's reunification. By emphasizing the commonalities between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland, Taiwan Studies justifies the island's subversive role as an agent of change on the mainland. This dilemma becomes evident in the growth of Taiwan Studies in Taiwan itself as well as throughout the world, where the island is treated as a unique case study for research on economic paradigms, democratization theories, and identity politics. Taiwan Studies as a field in many cases has its own position in social sciences rather than existing as a subcategory of Sinology or China Studies. Politically, the success of Taiwan's democratic change has challenged the alleged incompatibility of

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liberal democracy and Confucian values, thus posing a threat to the legitimacy of the Communist regime on the mainland.

Taiwan Studies has proven to be potentially subversive to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) leadership. As long as it was confined to the People's Republic of China (PRC), politicians could instrumentalize the emerging field to bolster their nationalist rhetoric about the island and draw public attention to the new peaceful reunification policy. However, in recent years Taiwan Studies has begun to threaten the party leadership's original goal, via four avenues: (1) the expansion of the field to the international sphere, (2) a new distinct Taiwanese identity on the island that has reformulated the content and aims of Taiwan Studies, (3) international support for Taiwan's economic and political transformation, and (4) an ongoing legitimacy crisis for the CCP in the PRC. The resort to nationalism as the means to maintain legitimacy and the emphasis on the reunification promise within the new nationalist politics may both have become tactical problems for the CCP leadership. This reality has become visible through the decline of Chinese Taiwan Studies, a field that the PRC pioneered in the early 1980s but within which it has not managed to assume a hegemonic position because the field has started to globalize and encompass multiple actors.

BACKGROUND

The PRC was the first country to set up Taiwan Studies centers after World War Two, but this did not happen quickly. The first center was established by the government in 1980, a Taiwan Studies Institute at Xiamen University in the southeastern province of Fujian, followed in 1984 by a second Taiwan Studies Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing.

The institutionalization of Taiwan Studies in China was a direct result of China's new policy approach toward Taiwan. Under Deng Xiaoping, the government shifted from a more confrontational approach characteristic of most of the Mao era toward the goal of peaceful reunification, as expressed by the "Message to the Compatriots in Taiwan" released by the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress on January 1, 1979, and Deng's official announcement of the "one country, two systems" formula in 1982. Academic research on Taiwan has clearly been made subordinate to the policy goal of future reunification.

Until today, the government in Beijing has strongly condemned any notion of Taiwanese autonomy that would impinge upon Beijing's sovereignty over Taiwan. It seems, therefore, counterintuitive that a distinct field of Taiwan Studies exists on the Chinese mainland. By producing specialized knowledge on the island and setting it apart from a wider Chinese context, Taiwan Studies in the PRC implicitly recognizes Taiwan as a distinct entity worthy of independent study. However, as noted, China was the first country to set up Taiwan Studies institutions: there was no risk of the term being misunderstood politically as long as the academic institutions of the mainland offered the only official and legitimized perspective on the island. Taiwan was treated as a subordinate aspect of a greater China and clearly limited in its autonomy. Since China was the only country engaging in "Taiwan Studies," it had a symbolic monopoly on defining the stakes of the game and formulating its notion of Taiwan as a subject of research.¹ Taiwan Studies in the PRC formed part of a larger discourse on China and was explicitly dedicated to the future goal of reunification. The official consensus on reunification as the final purpose of Taiwan Studies has remained intact until today.

However, beyond that consensus, Taiwan Studies is not monolithic; it reflects contradictions and varieties that exist within the PRC. While every academic has to maintain the government's stance on the One China principle and on Taiwan as a part of China, there exists room to maneuver beyond that basic official line. The most important reason for the heterogeneity within Taiwan Studies on the mainland lies in the way the field was constructed in the first place. There has been an inherent tension in the field as Taiwan Studies sought to strike a difficult balance. On the one hand, it had to highlight Taiwan's local distinctiveness in order to raise the public's awareness regarding the island while ensuring that the Taiwan issue occupied the central position in PRC policy that the post-Mao leadership intended for it. On the other hand, research on the island also had to demonstrate why Taiwan—in spite of its uniqueness—was part of China, and why its return to the motherland was so essential to China's national sovereignty.

1. The author would like to thank Mark Harrison for this idea. Also see Mark Harrison, *Legitimacy, Meaning, and Knowledge in the Making of Taiwanese Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

This built-in ambiguity has provided opportunities for different and sometimes conflicting strands of research to develop under the common label “Taiwan Studies.” Moreover, the shift of policy toward peaceful reunification raises questions that lead to different answers in China itself, where the formula “one country, two Systems” has not yet been clearly delineated for Taiwan. Still, within China, the government’s influence on Taiwan Studies has been strong enough to guarantee that no Chinese researcher publicly challenges the One China principle. Any acknowledgment of Taiwan’s peculiarity is always subordinated to the goal of reunification.

Outside the PRC, the evolution of Taiwan Studies has followed different patterns. Amid such diversity, countries outside the PRC have implicitly or explicitly challenged the premise that Taiwan forms part of China. Indeed, Taiwan research centers in Taiwan, the United States, and Europe have started to treat Taiwan Studies not as a subcategory of Sinology or China Studies but as a field in its own right. In Taiwan, Taiwan Studies began as a counter-discourse to the Chinese nationalism propagated by the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party, KMT) regime. Taiwan Studies in the U.S. and in Europe began with a disciplinary interest in Taiwan as a case study for research on economic paradigms, democratization theories, and identity politics. These approaches took their foundations from the social sciences rather than from cultural and historical studies on Taiwan in the wider context of China Studies or Sinology, thereby loosening the link.

The formation of a distinct global Taiwan Studies discourse since the late 1980s that includes PRC studies on Taiwan has gradually undermined the original rationale underlying Chinese Taiwan Studies. Unwittingly, Chinese Taiwan Studies has contributed to the production of a Taiwanese identity through academic discourse, which has operated in tension with the insistence on the One China principle. While Chinese Taiwan Studies has maintained a clear stance internationally (where scholars regularly quote Beijing’s guidelines on its Taiwan policy), the messages that Taiwan Studies sends to a domestic audience in China have become more complicated and diverse. This is important because from the very beginning, the real significance of PRC Taiwan Studies has been not so much its international impact as its domestic effect. The project of Taiwan Studies in the PRC was conceived initially in the late 1970s and 1980s as an essentially domestic enterprise that assigned Taiwan a specific place in the public’s perception in the context of reform-era China. Taiwan Studies plays out in domestic politics. The

discourse on Taiwan has simultaneously implied a discourse on the Chinese state.

To some extent, the construction and development of the academic field of Taiwan Studies mirror the process of redefining the Chinese state after Mao. The reforms initiated by the post-Mao government in many ways compromised the principles propagated by the previous party leadership. As market-oriented reforms undermined the credibility of communist ideology, the CCP turned to nationalism as a means to preserve regime legitimacy. The national narrative depicts a history of colonial humiliation by imperialist powers resulting in unequal treaties, invasion, and territorial division.² The CCP has fully embraced the notion of sovereignty to defend its territorial integrity and build up a modern nation-state. China's strength as a nation-state has become the ultimate base of legitimacy for the CCP.

The establishment of PRC Taiwan Studies should be seen in this context. Drawing attention to the Taiwan issue and stressing the new policy of peaceful reunification formed a vital part of the new nationalist agenda. Christopher Hughes argues that Deng Xiaoping, in his January 1980 speech to the Chinese leadership, "justified economic reform by making it the condition for successfully opposing 'international hegemony' and 'bringing about the unification of the motherland with Taiwan,' which created the link between economic growth and counter-hegemony."³ It also assigned Taiwan a prominent place in post-Mao Chinese nationalist rhetoric, and marked the emergence of a distinct PRC Taiwan discourse.

China's ideological narratives about Taiwan are linked to China's narrative of its own national unfolding. Taiwan is depicted as the last piece of China cut off by foreign imperialists that has not been returned.⁴ In the early 1950s, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) was preparing to "liberate" Taiwan, but the outbreak of the Korean War and subsequent U.S. military support for the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan prevented the Communists from taking it. Since then, Beijing has seen the possible intervention of foreign

2. Paul A. Cohen, *China Unbound: Evolving Perspectives on the Chinese Past* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 148.

3. Christopher R. Hughes, "Chinese Nationalism in the Global Era," *Open Democracy*, April 17, 2006, <http://www.opendemocracy.co.uk/democracy-china/nationalism_3456.jsp>, accessed January 18, 2009.

4. Melissa Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese? The Impact of Power, Culture, and Migration on Changing Identities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 244.

powers, especially the U.S. and Japan, as the biggest obstacle to gaining control over Taiwan through military force.⁵

Deng Xiaoping moved Taiwan into the center of Chinese policy when peaceful reunification with the island seemed possible. In the 1970s, the ROC had become increasingly diplomatically isolated in contrast to the PRC, as the latter established diplomatic ties with foreign powers and gained diplomatic recognition as the representative government of China. The ROC appeared weak enough to convince Beijing that the rival regime would not be able to resist for much longer, resulting in Taiwan's return to the Chinese motherland.⁶

The shift in Chinese policy toward Taiwan, however, did not foresee the challenge posed by political change on the island and a rising Taiwanese nationalism. This development has complicated the debate over the legitimate representation of a sovereign China on both sides of the Taiwan Strait by suggesting a third option of an independent Taiwanese nation. The CCP leadership may well become a victim of its own nationalist rhetoric, if it fails to deliver the promises it has given regarding the Taiwan issue. During the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, nationalists among the Chinese public largely responded favorably to official appeals accompanying the PRC's military maneuvers that preceded the Taiwanese presidential election. The strong positive reaction among the public to the government's rhetoric stands in contrast to the 1990 fortieth anniversary commemoration of the Korean War, when official proclamations of nationalism largely fell on deaf ears.⁷ The public reaction to the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis shows not only the salience of the Taiwan issue but also a public expectation that Beijing would take a tough stance on Taiwan.

The evolution of Taiwan Studies in the PRC reflects the wider political setting and developments in the China-Taiwan relationship in a concentrated form. Since, according to nationalist discourse in China, sovereignty over Taiwan is vital to China's own sovereignty, Taiwan Studies has become a highly sensitive field of research, as public perception of the island's status influences the perception of the Chinese nation state domestically.

5. Alan M. Wachman, *Why Taiwan? Geostrategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), p. 116.

6. C. L. Chiou, "Dilemmas in China's Reunification Policy toward Taiwan," *Asian Survey* 26:4 (April 1986), pp. 467–82, p. 468.

7. Peter Hays Gries, *China's New Nationalism: Pride, Politics, and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 58.

PROVIDING THE IDEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR CHINA'S NEW TAIWAN POLICY

The Establishment of the Xiamen Taiwan Studies Institute

The first Institute of Taiwan Studies was set up as a direct government initiative. The party leadership first proposed the plan for a special research center on Taiwan when it issued a "Message to the Compatriots in Taiwan" in 1979. In 1980, the government finally opted for the University of Xiamen, where more than a dozen historians and one economist were already specializing in Taiwan.⁸

Initial research at the Institute of Taiwan Studies did not focus much on the pragmatic issues of contemporary Taiwan that would become important in the concrete event of reunification. Instead, research in Xiamen began with the very foundations for the claim that Taiwan is a part of China, which hints at the constructed nature of the One China principle and the claim that Taiwan is an element of a unitary China.

Scholars have dealt extensively with the aspects of Qing Period (1644–1912) Taiwanese history that supported the historical argument about ancient cultural, administrative, and trade links between the mainland and the island.⁹ Extended to the issue of reunification, the historical debate on links between Taiwan and China became the major basis for Chinese claims of sovereignty over Taiwan, with the implicit assumption that such links become somehow political and binding on future generations.

Since its founding, the Institute of Taiwan Studies has clearly stated its political mission and its emphasis on history as the basis for its political goal. The mission statement of Xiamen University reads: "Understanding Taiwan historically, comprehensively and truthfully to improve the academic exchange across the Taiwan straits and serve the reunification course of China."¹⁰ There is also a very practical explanation for the Institute's initially mainly historical orientation. Throughout the early 1980s, academics at Xiamen lacked access to data and contacts with academics from

8. Interview by the author, Xiamen, June 5, 2008. [Names of individuals interviewed are excluded to protect anonymity.]

9. Interviews by the author, Xiamen, June 5 and 6, 2008.

10. Li Peng, ed., *Xiamen Daxue Taiwan Yanjiuyuan: 1980–2004* [The Taiwan Studies Institute at Xiamen University: 1980–2004] (Xiamen: Xiamen University Taiwan Studies Institute, April 2004), p. 4.

Taiwan. Instead, they relied on documents available in the PRC. The only information on current affairs in Taiwan came from illegally received Taiwanese radio programs.¹¹ Nearly all of the local academics in Xiamen who took positions in the newly founded Institute had previously worked as historians, which explains the continued emphasis on their original discipline during its early years.

But it would not be sufficient to only consider the practical aspects of available documents and specialists in explaining the historical foundation of Taiwan Studies at Xiamen University. The Institute in Xiamen has never had a monopoly on Taiwan related research. As the Chinese leadership in the late 1970s started to attach greater weight to institutional procedures in the making of policy and to rely more strongly on professional advice, it also started to build up a think tank system. Most of these were central government-sponsored research institutions directly associated with government organs.¹² In response to the emphasis placed on Taiwan by Deng Xiaoping, the Chinese government created major government organs to deal with China's policy toward Taiwan. In 1979, the Central Committee Taiwan Affairs Office (CCTAO) was established as a core party office to oversee implementation of Taiwan policy. One year later, in January 1980, the Taiwan Affairs Leading Small Group (TALSG) was set up as a key policy coordination and supervision mechanism between the senior party leadership and various organs of the Taiwan Affairs system.¹³

Given that Beijing had already set up major Taiwan research and analysis institutions, the *symbolic* significance of the new Taiwan Studies Institute at Xiamen seems to have outweighed its pragmatic function with regard to policy issues. This assertion becomes evident if one considers the choice of Xiamen as the location of the new institute. The city is located on the southeastern coast of China, far from the center of political power in Beijing, but just 137 miles (220 kilometers) away from the main island of Taiwan.

11. Interview by the author, Xiamen, June 3, 2008.

12. Xuanli Liao, *Chinese Foreign Policy Think Tanks and China's Policy towards Japan* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2006), p. 66.

13. Michael D. Swaine, "Chinese Decision-Making Regarding Taiwan," in *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978–2000*, ed. by David M. Lampton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp. 289–321, p. 301.

Pragmatic Policy Research in Beijing's Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Until the mid-1980s, the evolution of Taiwan Studies was very much in line with the development of Chinese policy toward Taiwan. The 1979 "Message to the Compatriots in Taiwan" had initiated the basic change of direction in Chinese policy toward Taiwan from military liberation to peaceful reunification. The new Taiwan Studies Institute in Xiamen formed part of the government's attempt to create popular support for its change of policy. In the early 1980s, the new Taiwan policy took clearer shape. A speech by top Chinese leader Ye Jianying in 1981 put forward a nine-point formula for peaceful reunification with Taiwan. It contained many aspects of the "one country, two systems" idea. Later, Deng Xiaoping proclaimed the "one country, two systems" formula as the model for peaceful reunification.¹⁴

Once Beijing had explicitly formulated its policy approach toward Taiwan, it turned more attention to the pragmatic side of unification. As a direct result of its more-concrete policy goals, in 1984 the central government set up a second Taiwan Studies Institute at the prestigious CASS in Beijing.¹⁵ The CASS institute introduced a more pragmatic approach that provided an alternative to the cultural-historical research characteristic of the Xiamen Taiwan Studies Institute. The Beijing institute broadened the field to include disciplines such as politics, economics, cross-Strait affairs, law, sociology, history, and literature in separate research centers. The choice of CASS as the host institution reveals how significant the Taiwan issue had become. On the one hand, the field gained prestige academically: CASS has a reputation as China's foremost research institution. On the other hand, academic Taiwan Studies also moved closer to the policy-making process. The CASS institute now functions as China's main organization for current intelligence on Taiwan. Officially, the institute belongs to CASS, but in terms of administration and budget it also falls under the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, the Taiwan Leading Group of the Central Committee, and the Ministry of State Security. In addition to its function as a think tank, the institute plays

14. Qimao Chen, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis: Causes, Scenarios, and Solutions," in *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995–1996 Crisis*, ed. by Suisheng Zhao (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 127–62, p. 132.

15. Jiang Dian-ming, "Baichi Gantou Zai Jinyibu: Xie zai Taiwan Yanjiusuo Jiansuo Shizhounian" [Even in difficulties striving to do better: Writing on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Taiwan Research Institute], *Taiwan Yanjiu* [Taiwan Research], no. 3 (1994), pp. 7–8.

an important role in formulating Taiwan policy. For instance, it did the lion's share of drafting the White Paper on Taiwan of 2000.¹⁶

As previously stated, the first institutions of Taiwan Studies were an outcome of changing government policy, and were created in a mood of optimism regarding future unification with Taiwan. The institute in Xiamen provided a historical cultural narrative for the long-standing links between the island and the Chinese motherland. The institute at CASS began to explore more pragmatic policy issues that would become relevant once the formula "one country, two systems" became effective.

EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION OF THE TAIWAN STUDIES FIELD SINCE THE LATE 1980S

The real boom in Taiwan Studies in the PRC, however, occurred when prospects of reunification in the near future became increasingly doubtful. Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, new Taiwan Studies centers have been set up all over China.¹⁷ Chinese academics have explained the sudden interest in Taiwan by citing the rapprochement of the two sides since the late 1980s. In 1987, the KMT lifted a ban on travel restrictions, allowing veterans of the Chinese Civil War to return to the mainland to visit relatives for the first time since the KMT's 1949 retreat to Taiwan. The director of the CASS Institute of Taiwan Studies, Yu Keli, described the situation on the mainland as a "Taiwan Fever" spreading across large parts of the Chinese population. This new "Taiwan Fever" inspired many smaller, less well-known universities to set up specialized Taiwan Studies institutes, while the Taiwanese responded with a series of new mainland China research institutions, similarly testifying to the new enthusiasm regarding unification.¹⁸

16. David Shambaugh, "China's International Relations Think Tanks: Evolving Structure and Process," *China Quarterly*, no. 171 (September 2002), pp. 575–96, p. 589.

17. Some examples are the Institute of Taiwan Economy at Nankai University in Tianjin (established in 1987), the Institute of Taiwan and Hong Kong Culture at Fudan University in Shanghai (established in 1989), the Institute of Taiwan Studies at Nanjing University (established in 1991), and the Institute of Taiwan Studies at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou (established in 1991).

18. Yu Ke-li, "Jiaqiang Taiwan Yanjiu Cuijin Heping Tongyi—Yi Taiwan Yanjiusuo Chengli Shi Zhounian Zhiji De Yidian Ganxiang" [Strengthening Taiwan Studies, promoting peaceful reunification—some thoughts at the time of the tenth anniversary of the Taiwan Studies Institute], *Taiwan Yanjiu*, no. 3 (1994), pp. 1–16, p. 16.

However, although the first direct contacts may have resulted in such initial enthusiasm, Taiwan Studies truly proliferated when prospects for unification became increasingly uncertain. Starting from the second half of the 1980s, Taiwan experienced rapid political transformation and the articulation of a distinct Taiwanese identity on the island that gradually began to associate “Taiwan” with ideas of nationhood.

The case of the Taiwan Studies Institute of Beijing Union University (Beijing Lianhe Daxue) exemplifies very well how a new center of Taiwan Studies grew in immediate response to developments in Taiwan that made unification less likely. Since its establishment in 1989, the Taiwan Studies Institute at this municipal university has focused on the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) as the political force associated with ideas of Taiwan independence. The Institute has steadily expanded over the years, from a small research facility in 1989 into a whole department in 2005. According to Professor Xu Bodong, director of the institute, the Taiwan Studies Center originally arose from a research interest in the DPP. Over the years, the institute significantly expanded in direct response to electoral victories of the DPP. As Xu put it,

[i]n the beginning, I was the only one interested in Taiwan and the DPP here. We only had a small room and one or two thousand yuan [US\$156–\$327] per year. But when the DPP became more successful in Taiwan, we suddenly received more support. After Chen Shui-bian became president in 2000, we could establish a whole Graduate Institute of Taiwan Studies (Taiwan Yanjiusuo). When he got reelected in 2004, the institute became even bigger. We got two entire floors of the university building and were upgraded to departmental level (Taiwan Yanjiuyuan) in 2005. [That year], we suddenly received four million yuan [approximately US\$654,000] from the Taiwan Affairs Office and the Beijing city government.¹⁹

The Institute in Beijing has become the second largest after Xiamen. Yet the message of the Taiwan Studies Institute at Beijing Union University may be perceived as differing sharply from that of its Fujian counterpart. A visitor to the Xiamen Institute will first see a display plate stressing the commitment to peaceful reunification. At Beijing Union’s Institute, the

19. Interview with Professor Xu Bodong, by the author, Beijing, May 22, 2008.

entrance area is decorated with the enlarged wording of the Anti-Secession Law.²⁰

It may be argued that from the Chinese perspective, the commitment to peaceful reunification and the Anti-Secession Law are just two sides of the same coin: the commitment to unification is a shared mission among all the Taiwan Studies Institutes in the PRC. There is, however, ambiguity on how to facilitate unification. To some extent, this results from the asymmetry between an authoritarian government on the one hand and the unstable and changing context of a young democracy on the other. Beijing's fundamental Taiwan policy was designed before the island started to democratize.²¹ It has been very difficult for the CCP to keep up with the changes on the island and maintain control of the Taiwan Studies discourse.

In this context, it is worth looking at the development of China's first national Taiwan Studies Institute as it captures the problems spawned for the leadership in Beijing by the Taiwan Studies discourse. The institute in Xiamen clearly began as a government project aimed at providing an ideological foundation for China's new emphasis on Taiwan policy. However, the institute, which has received the bulk of the support from the government, has also gained a reputation as being the most dissident among the Chinese Taiwan Studies institutions. While it began with historical and cultural studies on Taiwan, its research area has gradually expanded since the 1990s to politics, economics, and cross-Strait issues. With this focus, the Xiamen Institute of Taiwan Studies is now concentrating on the disciplines that have dominated the research activities at most Taiwan Studies centers in the PRC. But inside and outside China, the Xiamen Institute is sometimes seen as the most sympathetic toward Taiwan among the Chinese Taiwan Studies institutions.²²

In this context, one professor highlighted the role of personal networks and the shared Minnan (Hokkien) Chinese language used by Xiamen and

20. The Anti-Secession Law was passed by the National People's Congress in 2005. Article 5 enables the PRC government to use "non-peaceful means" if (a) Taiwan declares independence, (b) events that might lead to a secession of Taiwan have taken place, or (c) peaceful unification has become unlikely.

21. While the government generally maintains its commitment to peaceful reunification, it has increased pressure on Taiwan since the early 1990s, exemplified by the military maneuvers launched shortly before the 1996 presidential election in Taiwan.

22. Interviews by the author in China and Taiwan. Also see Swaine, "Chinese Decision-Making Regarding Taiwan," pp. 301–06.

Taiwan scholars. According to him, the Xiamen-based networks operated quite differently than did those existing between Beijing and Taiwan scholars and contacts. Academics in Beijing tended to communicate mainly with “*waishengren*,” that is, descendants of Chinese who immigrated from China to Taiwan after 1945 and who speak Mandarin as their primary language. Those in Xiamen, just across the Taiwan Strait, communicated more often with “*benshengren*” or “native” Taiwanese whose ancestors (or themselves) had long inhabited the island and certainly predated the postwar flight of the KMT from mainland China. “We can communicate using the Minnan dialect,” the professor said. “That breaks down many barriers. We can talk about all kinds of issues. Thus, we can often understand the psychology of the Taiwanese better than our colleagues in Beijing do. Therefore, from early on, our views began to diverge from those of people in Beijing.”²³

Another professor stressed that the Xiamen Institute was the only institution in China that had close contacts with the DPP and regularly received visits and publications from the party.²⁴ The Institute is also unusual in the Chinese context, in that it has engaged in academic exchange with a Taiwanese Taiwan Studies institution: in 2011, the institute signed an academic exchange accord with the Graduate Institute of Taiwan Studies at Chang Jung Christian University near Tainan in southern Taiwan.²⁵

In 2000, the Chinese government set up a Taiwan Research Center in Xiamen. Although there is some overlap with the Institute of Taiwan Studies, the Taiwan Research Center operates largely independently of the institute in terms of administration and budget. In contrast to the Institute, which exists as a physical institution, the Taiwan Research Center serves as a *virtual* platform for research on Taiwan. More than one-third of its researchers work at other academic institutions in China. Beijing’s Taiwan Affairs Office often suggests research projects to the Center, and their consultations are more frequent than those with the Institute.²⁶

Taiwan Studies in the PRC is sometimes characterized as “Northern Hawk and Southern Dove” (Beiying Nange). This phrase describes the tougher stance on Taiwan generally displayed by institutions such as the CASS

23. June 5, 2008, interview.

24. June 6, 2008, interview.

25. Chang Jung Christian University Recent News, <http://sites.cjcu.edu.tw/intl/spotlight_100110099.htm>, accessed May 12, 2013.

26. June 5, 2008, interview.

Institute of Taiwan Studies or the National Association of Taiwan Studies in Beijing, which place greater emphasis on the “One China” principle, and the more lenient approach in the south stressing the aspect of “two systems” within China’s reunification policy toward Taiwan.²⁷ Juxtapositions like the phrase “Northern Hawk and Southern Dove” indicate that Shanghai, in eastern China, is rarely perceived as having a distinct and influential position within the Chinese Taiwan Studies field. This is surprising given that Shanghai has a range of Taiwan-related research institutions.²⁸ However, their importance was largely linked to the fact that Shanghai served as the power base of the former CCP leader Jiang Zemin and his mentor Wang Daohan. Wang enjoyed a special status in Chinese foreign policy making. Having officially retired in the 1980s, he exercised his influence largely through informal channels and personal connections.²⁹ The former Shanghai mayor served as China’s main negotiator in cross-Straits affairs, and the Shanghai Institute of Taiwan Studies was established at his suggestion.³⁰ Accordingly, after Wang’s death in 2006, the influence of Shanghai Taiwan Studies quickly declined.

Taiwan Studies in Shanghai has received considerably less funding from the central government than its counterparts in Beijing and Xiamen. The lack of resources has strengthened the local network of Shanghai Taiwan scholars, who have tried to cope with the lack of resources by cooperation and mutual exchange.³¹ A member of the Shanghai Municipal Taiwan Research Association mentioned in 2008 that Taiwanese business people supported the association through donations.³² The perception of a distinct Shanghai circle

27. Fu Quan, “Liang’an Guancha” [Cross-Straits observations], <<http://www.waou.com.mo/detail.asp?id=3921>>, accessed January 19, 2009.

28. The most important think tank seems to be the Institute for Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao within the Shanghai Institute for International Studies (SISS). The Shanghai Institute for East Asian Studies also primarily concentrates on research related to Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. Furthermore, there is the Shanghai Institute of Taiwan Studies, which is affiliated with the Taiwan Affairs Office of the Shanghai Municipal Government. Jiaotong University has a Taiwan Studies Institute, and the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences hosts a specialized Center of Taiwan Studies. Apart from that, Taiwan Studies has become institutionalized in the Shanghai Municipal Taiwan Research Association and the Zhejiang Taiwan Research Association.

29. Zhiqun Zhu, “Regional Influence in China’s U.S. Policy Making: The Roles of Shanghai and Wang Daohan,” in *China’s Foreign Policy Making: Societal Force and Chinese American Policy*, ed. by Yufan Hao and Lin Su (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 208–27, p. 223.

30. Interview by the author, Shanghai, May 29, 2008.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

of Taiwan Studies was shared by researchers in Beijing and Xiamen, who characterized their colleagues in Shanghai as more interested in pragmatic economic policies across the strait that at times were at variance with the official policy line in Beijing.³³

CHINESE TAIWAN STUDIES IN THE GLOBAL ACADEMIC FIELD

The intertwined processes of identity formation and evolution of Taiwan Studies as an academic field in Taiwan, combined with the appeal of Taiwanese Taiwan Studies to an international audience, have put pressure on the future of Taiwan Studies in the PRC. This has led to divergent results. On the one hand, Taiwan Studies in the PRC has increasingly dealt with issues raised in Taiwan. Initially, Taiwan Studies on the mainland attempted to accommodate the emerging field of Taiwan Studies within the One China framework. Characteristically, Chinese Taiwan Studies has responded to new research directions stemming from Taiwan with a constant reframing of the research into a wider Chinese context. Several debates that dominated Taiwan Studies discussions on the island were subsequently taken up in the PRC. For instance, in the 1980s, Taiwanese historians heatedly debated the question of who modernized Taiwan, comparing Qing Dynasty official Liu Mingchuan's modernization program with the achievements of 20th century Japanese governor Goto Shinpei.³⁴ Indirectly, the debate reevaluated the Japanese colonial period and challenged a Chinese narrative of colonial exploitation by Japan. The *Taiwan Research Quarterly* published by Xiamen University responded with articles stressing Liu Mingchuan's key role in Taiwan's modernization process.³⁵ In the late 1980s, a special issue of the Taiwanese *China Tribune* on the so-called China complex (Zhongguojie) and Taiwan complex (Taiwanjie) triggered a public discussion on questions of

33. Interviews by the author, Beijing and Xiamen, May and June 2008.

34. Zhang Long-zhi, "Liu Mingchuan, Goto Shinpei yu Taiwan Jindaihua Lunzheng" [Liu Ming-chuan, Goto Shinpei, and the debate on Taiwan's modernization], in *Zhonghua Minguoshi Zhuanti Lunwenji* [Special collection on the history of the Republic of China] (Taipei: Academia Historica, 1998), pp. 2031–56.

35. See, for instance, Wu Zheng, "Liu Mingchuan zai Taiwan Jiansheng Hou de Caizheng Cuoshi" [Liu Mingchuan's financial measures in Taiwan after the establishment of the province], *Taiwan Yanjiu Jikan* [Taiwan Research Quarterly], no. 3 (1985), pp. 23–28; Shi Wei-qing, "Taiwan Xunfu: Liu Mingchuan de Ziqiang Sixiang Shuping" [Taiwan's provincial governor: Liu Mingchuan's self-strengthening ideology], *ibid.*, pp. 17–22.

Taiwanese consciousness versus Chinese consciousness. This led to a Taiwan Studies seminar series on the island where academics discussed the issues directly with the public.³⁶ Chinese Taiwan Studies quickly presented its own version of “Taiwanese consciousness” and incorporated a specific island consciousness into the wider Chinese framework.³⁷ Nevertheless, although it was subordinated to the concept of China, “Taiwan Consciousness” became a widely accepted term in Chinese Taiwan Studies.

As international Taiwan Studies has gained momentum and become institutionalized in Taiwan and other countries, China has slowly started to limit the expansion of the field and participation in global Taiwan Studies. There are few common platforms for international and Chinese Taiwan Studies experts. Instead, academic exchange and networking take place within the disciplines or departments of China Studies. The exchange agreement between Xiamen and Chang Jung Christian University is an exceptional case in this regard. In most cases, Chinese Taiwan Studies engages instead with social science or China Studies departments in Taiwan.

Within China, the term “Taiwan Studies” has become increasingly problematized. Experiments with the term “Taiwanology” (*Taiwanxue*) to designate a new epistemology relating to the emerging body of knowledge about the island caused little controversy in the early 1980s, but these efforts have nearly disappeared. According to Chen Kong-li, one of the scholars who introduced the concept of “Taiwanology” in the 1980s, Taiwan remains a hotly debated topic, but the idea of a distinct “Taiwan Studies” discipline has moved into what resembles a taboo zone. Chen’s 2004 work *Introduction to Taiwanology* was, in the end, not published in the PRC but in Taiwan.³⁸ Meanwhile, some new institutions have adopted the term “Cross-Strait Studies”: in 2008, Jinan University in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou established a Center for Cross-Strait Relations, and East China Normal University in Shanghai established an Institute of Cross-Strait Exchanges and Area Studies.³⁹

36. Huang Guang-guo, “Taiwanjie yu Zhongguojie Duikang yu Chulu” [The Taiwan complex and the China complex], in *Zhongguo Luntan* [China Tribune] 25:6 (1987), pp. 1–20.

37. Lin Cheng-huang, “Taiwan Wenxue yu Taiwan Yishi Chuyi” [My view on Taiwan literature and Taiwan consciousness], *Taiwan Yanjiu Jikan*, no. 4 (1989), pp. 69–73.

38. Chen Kong-li, *Taiwanxue Daolun* [Introduction to Taiwanology] (Taipei: Boyang Press, 2004), p. 40.

39. Kevin G. Cai, “The Evolution of the Institutional Structure of Beijing’s Taiwan Policy Making Since the Late 1970s,” in *Cross-Taiwan Straits Relations Since 1979: Policy Adjustment and*

TAIWAN AS A POTENTIAL MODEL FOR CHINA?

The first part of this article has mainly discussed how Taiwan's political and social development caused a challenge to peaceful reunification as a key policy of the post-Mao leadership. However, researchers in the PRC are not exclusively preoccupied with the success or failure of the unification policy. The transformations in Taiwan have not triggered solely a sense of alarm in China. There is another side to contemporary Taiwan Studies in China, where some researchers consider Taiwan as a case study or even as a potential model for China.

A senior professor at the Taiwan Studies Institute at Qinghua University in Beijing said that studies of Taiwan had begun long before the establishment of the institute in 2000. The most important reason was Taiwan's "economic miracle": "We wanted to understand how Taiwan had so successfully transformed its economic system. This attracted our attention."⁴⁰ Another professor at the same institute observed the following:

Since 1945, Taiwan has experienced a completely different development, quite independently of the mainland. Even before that, its history was different. It experienced the Japanese colonial regime. . . . In the realms of politics, economy, society, in all kinds of aspects, Taiwan has created its own system. . . . It has become a comparatively autonomous unit. . . . Nevertheless, before the 1980s, we did not treat Taiwan as a separate subject of research. It was the economic miracle that caught our attention. After that, we realized that also politically [Taiwan] was experiencing many reforms that we wanted to study.⁴¹

These comments show a curiosity in Taiwan as a model or case for further study. Rather than stressing the historical ties between the mainland and Taiwan or looking at the commonalities that may facilitate reunification in the future, Taiwan to some extent seems to be considered as an alternative model in its own right. The most radical view in this regard was expressed by a researcher in Shanghai. He argued: "Taiwan can serve as a model for a democratic China. We have to study Taiwan. We have to learn from the Taiwanese experience. Taiwan cannot become independent. It has to remain

Institutional Change Across the Straits, ed. by Kevin G. Cai (Singapore: World Scientific, 2011), pp. 219–46, p. 242.

40. Interview by the author, Beijing, May 21, 2008.

41. Interview by the author, Beijing, May 23, 2008.

part of China. Then a democratic China is possible.”⁴² In this scenario, Taiwan Studies clearly implies a challenge to the Beijing scenario. The researcher who made the remark on Taiwan’s function as a model for China did not want to be named. The government still exerts enough pressure to ensure views that implicitly challenge the regime cannot be expressed publicly. But the anonymous statement makes clear that in spite of all government rhetoric on Taiwan, Taiwan Studies has the potential for subversion, too.

A perspective on Taiwan that examines the island as a research subject in its own right with unique features is, as stated, a very sensitive stance politically as it indirectly questions the rationale for reunification. On the other hand, the emphasis on the commonalities between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland could create an even greater risk for the CCP leadership. If academics take cultural communality between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan for granted, they may regard the island as a point of comparison for the PRC.

In fact, party officials themselves have studied Taiwan as an important source of ideas, information, and practical knowledge about developing a *rechtsstaat* (a state of law). In the view of Chu Yun-han, “Taiwan’s law textbooks and legal scholars have been the most important source of overseas ideas during China’s recent efforts to overhaul its civic and criminal codes, litigation procedures, and regulatory framework for [the concept of a] legal person.”⁴³

Ironically, it is exactly this kind of official discourse on Taiwan as a part of China that allows Taiwan to appear as a possible alternative to the existing political conditions in the PRC. The more Taiwan is construed as a Han Chinese domain, the less powerful becomes the cultural argument according to which Asian values are incompatible with democratic procedures. Official discourse on Taiwan does, of course, also point to the weaknesses in Taiwan’s system. Research on political change in Taiwan initially dealt extensively with the issues of localization, separatism, and the impact of democratic change on cross-strait relations.⁴⁴ While the issues of sovereignty and cross-strait

42. May 29, 2008, interview.

43. Chu Yun-han, “Taiwan and China’s Democratic Future: Can the Tail Wag the Dog?” in *China’s Changing Political Landscape: Prospects for Democracy*, ed. by Cheng Li (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2008), pp. 302–23, p. 318.

44. Li Qiang, “*Taiwanhua*, *Bentubhua* Zhengce Wo Jian” [My view of *Taiwanization* and *nativization* policy], in *Taiwan Yanjiu Jikan*, no. 1 (1990), pp. 9–16; Lin Jin, “Minjindang Zhengzhi Zhuzhang de Zouxiang ji dui Haixia Liang’an Guanxi de Yingxiang” [The direction of the Democratic Progressive Party’s political advocacy and its impact on cross-strait relations], *ibid.*, no. 4

relations have remained the dominant topics in Chinese research on Taiwanese politics, increasingly researchers have pointed to the flaws in Taiwanese democracy such as corruption or factionalism.⁴⁵ They have thus directed their criticism to the political system itself, which indicates the need to discredit any political alternative to the CCP when addressing a Chinese audience.

In spite of all the negative government rhetoric on Taiwanese politics, dissenting views already exist in Chinese academia. In 2007, Zhang Boshu, then a scholar at the prestigious CASS Institute of Philosophy,⁴⁶ wrote a “Report on the Feasibility of Chinese Constitutional Reform” that included a chapter titled “Taiwan’s Democratization and Modernization and Its Inspiration for Constitutional Reform on the Mainland.” In that chapter, Zhang explicitly points out the similarities between Taiwan and the PRC that invite comparison. He draws parallels between authoritarian CCP rule in the PRC and the postwar KMT regime in Taiwan under martial law. He appraises the peaceful democratic transformation on the island as the first instance in Chinese history where a constitutional democracy with a multi-party system has evolved. He describes Taiwan as an experimental field (*shiyantian*) for Chinese democratization and modernization. In this context, using a classical saying, he makes clear that he regards Taiwan as a political entity of a small scale, but in its own right: “The sparrow is small, but it does have all five viscera” (*maque sui xiao, wu zang juquan*). According to Zhang, Taiwan, being a complete political entity, offers inspiration to the mainland not only in its successes but also in its flaws.⁴⁷

In this context, it is interesting to compare the roles of Singapore and Taiwan in official discourse. In official statements, Taiwan rarely features as a model or comparative case for China. Instead, it is usually Singapore that is

(1991), pp. 17–23; Zhang Feng-shan, “Dui Guomindang *Taiwanhua* de Touxu” [A thorough analysis of the Taiwanization of the Chinese Nationalist Party], *Taiwan Yanjiu*, no. 1 (1995), pp. 44–52.

45. Zhao Yin-xiang, Hu Shi-qing, and Quan Tu, “Taiwan Difang Paixi de Fenbu, Jiegou ji qi Zhengzhi Dongtai” [Division and structure of Taiwan’s local factions and their political dynamics], *ibid.*, no. 4 (1997), pp. 42–49; Kong Ping-ping, “Hei Shehui xiang Taiwan Zhengzhi Lingyu de Shentou” [The mafia’s infiltration of the political field in Taiwan], in *Xiandai Taiwan Yanjiu* [Modern Taiwan Studies], no. 2 (1998), pp. 75–81.

46. Zhang, who has written extensively about constitutionalism, government controls, civil rights, Tibet, and Xinjiang, was dismissed from his position at CASS in 2009.

47. Zhang Boshu, “Zhongguo Xianzheng Gaige Kexingxing Yanjiu Baogao (Quanben)” [Report on the feasibility of Chinese constitutional reform (complete work)], *Minzhu Zhongguo* [Democratic China], <<http://minzhuzhongguo.org/sz/report.pdf>>, accessed April 23, 2014.

widely cited in domestic discourse as being relevant to China.⁴⁸ Given its tiny geographical size, smaller share of ethnic Chinese persons, and longer experience of external colonial rule, it is not self-evident why Singapore should be more suitable for a comparison with the mainland than Taiwan. Nevertheless, the Chinese government has increasingly encouraged comparative research on Singapore. In 2008, Shenzhen University in Guangdong Province even set up a Center for Singapore Studies.⁴⁹

CONCLUSION

The very ambiguity of PRC Taiwan Studies, existing between the poles of local specificity and Chinese national unity, has proven risky for the Chinese leadership. Early on, “Taiwan” offered a term to talk about the island as a cultural and geographical unit. Taiwan-based Taiwan Studies, however, has attached a political-national meaning to “Taiwan” that coincided with a cultural definition of “China.” To some extent, the field has mirrored developments in the PRC, where a cultural Taiwan was constructed within the Chinese nation. The appropriation of the term “Taiwan Studies” has left Chinese academics with a dilemma, in which they either retreat from the field or constantly refute Taiwanese interpretations of the subject area.

Taiwan Studies in the PRC could convey the prospect that developments in Taiwan have made unification in the near future less likely than the Chinese leadership expected in the early 1980s, when it set up the first Taiwan Studies centers. The problem is how to reconcile the Chinese people to such a prospect without making the CCP appear to be accommodating continuing foreign interference and compromised national sovereignty in China. The risk of such perceived accommodation is that it could jeopardize Communist control of the PRC. As Peter Hays Gries has pointed out, “[N]ationalism is a grammar that potential challengers can use to contest the CCP’s right to rule.”⁵⁰ Here, the PRC government must confront the very rhetoric it has stirred

48. Bruce Gilley, “Comparing and Rethinking Political Change in China and Taiwan,” in *Political Change in China: Comparisons with Taiwan*, ed. by Bruce Gilley and Larry Diamond (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 2008), pp. 1–27, p. 14.

49. Leong Weng Kam, “The Dragon Eyes the Lion City,” *Asia One*, November 13, 2008, <<http://www.asiaone.com/News/Education/Story/AtStory20081113-99894.html>>, accessed January 19, 2009.

50. Peter Hays Gries, “Popular Nationalism and State Legitimation in China,” in *State and Society in 21st Century China: Crisis, Contention, and Legitimation*, ed. by Peter Hays Gries and Stanley Rosen (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 180–94, p. 181.

up. Visits by Chinese people to Taiwan may not necessarily guarantee that PRC citizens will experience the island as seriously different from China. There is enough cultural and ethnic variation within the PRC itself to let Taiwan appear as being well within the Chinese realm.⁵¹ If Taiwanese people claim a distinct identity for themselves that is different from a Chinese identity, Taiwan Studies could be a channel by which to convey this claim to a Chinese audience, and to gradually modify the official narrative of Taiwan.

But Chinese interest in Taiwan and Taiwan Studies does not only stem from a strong commitment to reunification. Chinese academics are also curious about Taiwan because it provides economic and political alternatives to the situation in China. Taiwan's potential as an agent of change on the mainland hinges on its perceived "Chineseness." As long as the island represents a culturally Chinese community, its democratic system can challenge the claim of the incompatibility of Confucian values and liberal democracy. Successful political transformation might thus serve as an incentive for political reform in the PRC. If Taiwan assumes such a function in public discourse, its effect on the CCP's control may be just as disruptive as causing the party leadership to fail to deliver on its unification promise.

To the CCP leadership, the legitimacy of Taiwan as a model or study focus also depends on the times. While under Chen Shui-bian it was clearly a problematic model, it may have become more acceptable under President Ma Ying-jeou's government. Yet, as a democracy, Taiwan's political context is volatile and rapidly changing. If PRC Taiwan Studies could respond to the changing situations in Taiwan and internationally, it might provide a new way to situate Taiwan within Chinese public opinion. However, the increasing isolation of PRC Taiwan Studies from the international field rather indicates the failure of Chinese Taiwan Studies to cope with and respond to external challenges.

From the Chinese government's perspective, a retreat from the field may be the most effective move to oppose the assertion of a distinct Taiwanese identity. Because it is no longer a given that the acknowledgment of Taiwanese distinctiveness can be contained within the greater China framework, a complete refusal to engage in the Taiwan discourse may be most consistent with the leadership's insistence on sovereignty over Taiwan. But although the government may be able to restrict the academic discourse within the PRC, the wider effects of Taiwan on the PRC may be harder to contain.

51. Brown, *Is Taiwan Chinese?* p. 247.