

So Who Needs a Reality Check on Clarity, Taiwan and China?

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.
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An important issue that Taiwanese voters will have to evaluate as the 2012 elections approach is not only what each party's cross-strait policy or "China policy" is, but also how realistic it is. In line with this, barely a week before the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) presented its policy, in an almost laughable essay a certain David Brown pontificating like a hired gun for Taiwan's ruling Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the rest of the world "demanded" that the DPP present its realistic case. "Taiwanese voters deserve a clear understanding of Tsai's policies." Ironically of course, at the very moment Brown was trying to pontificate for clarity, Tsai's team was putting the finishing touches on the party's policy. Regardless of that timing, what made Brown's essay so laughable was his implication that it was time for Tsai and not the rest of the world to do a reality check on their policies. This was more than the pot calling the kettle black; it was a stove blackened pot questioning the cleanliness of an untarnished kettle. Who does need a reality check here?

First, examine the USA. Brown states that the future direction of US-Taiwan relations "depends" on Tsai's clarity. Has Brown ever examined his own country's clarity and past treatment in its relations with Taiwan? If one ever wanted a sandy foundation to inspire insecurity it is there. In 1970 Kissinger and Nixon were willing to sacrifice Taiwan and let it fall from the United Nations in hopes of getting China as an ally against Russia. This worked to China's advantage but surprisingly Taiwan did not roll over and play dead. Then as 1979 dawned, Jimmy Carter used a surprise late night phone call to tell Taiwan he was switching the US embassy from Taipei to Beijing. There is nothing like last minute clarity by the US on what its real position is. And finally, today when pressed, the US admits that the clarity of its official position on Taiwan is "undetermined."

World War II ended in 1945; the 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty was blank on who gets Taiwan or even if Taiwan should rule itself. So if the USA after 65 years still cannot clearly make up and express its mind on Taiwan, what exactly drives people in the USA to feel compelled to state Tsai needs to be absolutely clear?

On the other hand of course the USA does have a "one China" policy; in that policy, it states that it believes that there is only one China, just like it believes there is only one Canada and only one Libya. Oh wait, just who does the USA recognize is in charge of Libya? Well that does not matter, it still believes there is only one Libya. But the US position on one China ends there; it says nothing about including Taiwan which is "undetermined." The USA also acknowledges China has its own one China policy, but despite the illusions of many, that does not mean that the USA accepts China's definition of what constitutes "one China" (i.e. it includes Taiwan) any more than it would accept a definition by China that one China includes the moon. Unfortunately most people in the USA and/or the rest of the world don't either know, realize or

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understand the nuance of that reality.

Let's go to Taiwan's current president whom Brown states voters have had a three year record by which to judge. How realistic and clear is his position? How does one judge smoke and mirrors and the claims of the emperor that he has clothes? First Ma insists on the bogus 1992 consensus. The consensus is an admitted Su Chi fabrication and Ma does not want to take ownership of anything beyond that. Is it Ma's conviction that if he tells a lie long enough, people will believe it? Is that clarity? So while Su Chi admits he invented the term in 2000, and Lee Teng-hui Taiwan's President in 1992 says there was no consensus, Ma still believes if he keeps repeating it, the gullible people of Taiwan and the world will believe it. Who really needs the reality check here?

Second of course there is Ma's definition of what constitutes "one China." Ma believes that the Republic of China (ROC) is the true one China. He acknowledges that the PRC does not accept that and has its own definition. Nonetheless he somehow still claims that this creates a mutual trust between them. Ma states that according to the ROC Constitution, the ROC is the true, real one China. Following this is the implied reality that the "other" China that the PRC leaders rule is the phony China. Involved in Ma's claim is his vision that he rightfully rules not only China, but also Tibet, Mongolia and Xinjiang. How this builds mutual trust on both sides and with the rest of the world challenges credibility unless the PRC leaders say to themselves, we can go along with this fool and just wait for the apple to fall into our hands. Does the rest of the world realize this?

Tsai's position on cross-strait relations deserves its own subsequent article. In brief, it holds that Taiwan is a maritime country and a young democracy. It denies the fabrication of the 1992 consensus and will not build its policies on such a fabrication. It has no ill will towards China and is willing to negotiate the "strategic stalemate" of their relationship and past history. It strongly supports regional peace. That is much closer to reality and a much healthier formula for all countries involved.

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