

The U.S.-Japan Alliance and Taiwan's Security: The Changing Nature of U.S. "Strategic Ambiguity"

Professor of International Relations, Meiji University Go ITO

Introduction

U.S.-China relations have fallen relatively silent since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, with no major disruptions. Even after Hu Jintao's inauguration in power in 2002, there have been no major transformations in Chinese diplomacy. The potential for a U.S.-China clash spoken of at the inauguration of the Bush administration is now nowhere to be seen. To the extent that China-related issues are involved, the focus of discussions of international relations in East Asia is on the six-party talks concerning the Korean Peninsula rather than on U.S.-China relations or China themselves. Of course, one could sound an alarm over the long-term potential for Chinese expansion after the Beijing Olympics and Shanghai Expo. But holding forth at the top of one's lungs about such uncertainties will not pass for meaningful diplomatic policy analysis.

Despite the lack of major disturbance, U.S.-China relations do appear to have undergone major changes since 9/11. Having called China a "strategic competitor" before the attacks, the Bush administration began seeking "constructive relations" between the United States and China after 9/11. The Chinese government, for its part, has announced similarly appeasing diplomatic initiatives such as a "New Security Concept" and "New Thinking on the Relationship with Japan." Meanwhile, as both the U.S. and Chinese governments have greatly altered their foreign policies in pursuit of a more cooperative relationship, ambiguous areas remain, making it difficult to assess true intentions.

The Chinese government still shows no inkling toward concessions regarding Taiwan's political status. Even in the case of dealing with an infectious disease like

SARS, the Chinese government warned against allowing a World Health Organization (WHO) research team to enter Taiwan. The incident reminded us of the difficulties involved in China-Taiwan relations. Taiwan has undergone a political realignment since the 2000 presidential election. Lee Teng-hui, who emphasized a Taiwanese identity, has left the Nationalist Party to back the Democratic Progressive Party, while the Nationalist Party is deepening its dialogue with China's Communist Party to chart a course toward unification. As a result of Taiwanese economic stagnation under the Chen Shui-bian administration, about 800,000 Taiwanese residents have moved to mainland China, and the economic interdependency between China and Taiwan has grown stronger than ever. But even these economic factors work to the advantage of the Nationalist Party. China-Taiwan relations have thus been developing in close association with the political situation on either side.

These aspects of U.S.-China relations and China-Taiwan relations are greatly affected by economic issues that at first glance seem unrelated to security. To the United States, the economic growth in China's coastal regions is something that should be put to effective use now and in the future. And in order for Taiwan to maintain its own economic policy, it must maintain its mutual dependence with China. Naturally, the deeper the mutual dependence becomes, the more prominent the trade deficit with China becomes. For their own economies to grow, the United States and Japan need better exchange rates to be set with respect to trade with China. This brings up the issue of revaluing the Chinese currency. Up to now, the issue of setting exchange rates for the yuan has been put to rest with strong expressions of distaste by the Chinese government. In this short essay, I would like to make some suggestions regarding the potential political uses of the currency and the effects that could result.

Working on these assumptions, I will make observations on three points: how

U.S.-China relations have changed since 9/11, ways in which U.S.-China relations are interconnected with China-Taiwan relations, and what kind of influences China's economic growth has on U.S.-China and China-Taiwan relations. The following section will discuss U.S.-China relations since the emergence of the Bush administration, while probing how the 9/11 attacks affected the U.S.-China relationship. At the same time, I will clarify the changes that have taken place in the strategic ambiguity maintained by the U.S. government. The next section will take up the subject of Taiwan, where the 2000 presidential election brought on a change in the government. I will discuss how Taiwan's domestic politics have interacted with U.S.-China relations. The third section will analyze discussions of the revaluation of the Chinese currency, which will remain relevant as China's rise continues. I will also touch on the possibility that Japanese and U.S. pressure toward Chinese currency revaluation will affect China-Taiwan relations.

I. Japan's New Defense Strategy

The September 11, 2001 terror marked the beginning of a new century for security issues. Those who watch Japanese politics have seen the decisiveness with which Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi acted to lend Japanese support to the U.S. war on terrorism. While Japan's response to the 1991 Gulf War was condemned as "too little, too late," the Bush administration since 2001 praised for Japan's swift cooperation including the dispatch of SDF personnel.

Regarding the defense capabilities, the year 2004 may be marked as important for decisive changes. Premier Koizumi started a new council on Japan's security defense capabilities in April, 2004, and the Council issued a report on their future vision.

The "Integrated Security Strategy" is the key term in this vision, and has two goals. The first is to prevent a direct threat from reaching Japan to minimize the damage, while

the second focuses more on creating the stable international environment, saying the importance of “reduce[ing] the chances of threats arising in various parts of the world...affecting the interests of Japanese expatriates and corporations overseas.” The strategy can be attained by three efforts: Japan’s own efforts, cooperation with an alliance partner, and cooperation with the international community. The two goals and three efforts implied the “integration” of Japan’s security strategy, and the report argues a need for the government to apply the “integrated decision-making mechanism.” It also emphasizes the roles of the Security Council, which is supposed to mix the six constituents of the strategy.

Along with the overreaching plan, the report also says the role of defense forces to support the new security strategy, naming it as “multi-functional flexible defense force.” The pivotal requirement of it is the ability to collect and analyze information. Overarching its defense roles from (1)response to emergency situation, (2)strengthening intelligence capabilities, (3) reforming the defense industrial and technological base, (4) emphasizing its international peacekeeping roles, the report envisioned Japan’s more “global” roles in international security issues.¹

In response to the above council, Japan’s Defense Agency issued a new outline of the defense program that foresees the upcoming decade. It assumed that the primary goal was to address “new threats” like international terrorism or weapons of mass destruction, seeking to create the stable international environment. Given that, it paid more attention to the international dispatch of Japan’s self-defense force along with the increase in its transportation capabilities. Compared with the 1970’s conception of the “Basic Defense

¹ The report also touched upon the need to reexamine Japan’s constitution in the future. It says about a need to discuss the exercise of the right of collective self-defense rights with an eye to clarifying what Japan should and can do for the international roles outlined in the report.

Force" that stemmed from the international environment of growing détente, the new outline indicated Japan's readiness to prepare for more positive roles in international security. The outline also writes about Japan's concern about North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and China's rise of military capabilities, the clear indication of which appeared for the first time since the Japanese government issued the defense program outline in 1976.

The outline assumed Japan's more global role, reaching from East Asia toward the Middle East. That is, the role of the SDF is not limited to domestic defense issues within the Japanese territory, but rather focused on its international aspect. The internationalized role corresponds to the collaborative work with the U.S. military, and the outline emphasized the importance of Japan's alliance with the U.S. government, while at the same time seeking to enlarge both allies' security tasks reaching the wider geography.

While the budgetary amount of the new program seeks to be restrained under the banner of the "administrative reform," the substantial functions and transportation capabilities of the SDF should be advanced more. The Defense Agency outlined a plan of reducing the number of SDF officials, although the current shortage of the personnel will result in the maintenance of the number of uniformed people in the near future.

The outline also indicated a need to reexamine the principle of banning the export of arms at least to the United States. In the current joint technological research on ballistic missile defense by Japan and the United States, it assumes it necessary to uphold the philosophy of the ban, and instead to pursue the enhancement of procurement and R&D in the defense capabilities.

II. The Redefinition of Japan's Security Roles

Along with the above mentioned tendency in the Koizumi cabinet to expand

Japan's role in international security, the September 11, 2005 election in Japan produced the more than two-thirds majority of the ruling coalition within the House of Representatives, which will technically enable to pass varieties of new legislations if the LDP-Komei coalition has the willingness to do it.

Then, after the victory of the LDP-Komei coalition, Diet members began to think of possible revisions in the Japanese Constitution. The possible revision of Article 9 will be part of the larger process of redefining Japan's role in international security. One step during the 1990's was the making of U.S.-Japan security guidelines. After the end of the Cold War, the decline of a global threat, combined with an existing regional threat of strife in East Asia, was given as one of the reasons for the formulation of the new guidelines. The parties to the deliberations on the future of U.S.-Japan alliance were concerned with the lingering potential for strife in the region while at the same time trying to develop a structure well suited to the less hostile post-Cold War global environment.

With the April 1996 U.S.-Japan Joint Declaration on Security, both governments started to seek for new roles of the alliance. The new U.S.-Japan security guidelines, announced in September 1997, tried to apply the joint declaration to post-Cold War East Asia in two ways.

First, an item on "Various Types of Security Cooperation" notes that the "bilateral [Japan-U.S.] cooperation to promote regional and global activities in the field of security contributes to the creation of a more stable international security environment." In other words, it is the new global role of the alliance and its complex functions within the region that are being given a particular importance. These functions include UN peacekeeping, international humanitarian relief operations, and emergency relief activities in major disasters. They also include encouraging security dialogue, defense exchange, regional

confidence building, as well as arms control and reduction -- alternatives to focusing on the containment of an adversary.

Second, the U.S.-Japan security guidelines expanded the geographical breadth and reach of the alliance. The guidelines sought to incorporate neighboring areas under U.S.-Japan political and economic cooperative relationships. Under Article 6 of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, U.S. forces are granted the use of facilities and areas in Japan for the purpose of contributing to not only Japan's security but also the Far East region. Given the article, the guidelines sought to announce a need for U.S.-Japan joint cooperation for the areas surrounding the Japanese territory. For the Japanese government, this implies the enlargement of the areas in which Japanese SDF members should conduct military operations with U.S. personnel. That is, if a military conflict happens in the areas surrounding Japan, it is lawful that the Japanese government dispatches SDF personnel for joint military actions led by the U.S. military, although Japan's support should be limited to support-oriented logistics.

Ironically, however, one of the greatest sources of anxiety regarding the enlargement of joint defense areas was the fear that it could dilute the alliance's ability to ensure security for Japan. According to Douglas Stuart and William Tow, the following issues were of concern when alliance is modified to enlarge its functions.²

(1) How the responsibility for rear-area support and frontline battles, as well as burdens associated with military action, are to be distributed between the member countries?

(2) To what extent a threat can be recognized jointly by the alliance members?

(3) Whether collective multilateral action will lose the autonomy of a member

² Stuart, Douglas, and William Tow, 1990, *The Limits of Alliance: NATO Out-of-Area Problems since 1949* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press), pp. 3-20.

country's foreign policies?

Then, there is a critical conceptual question. It is related to the extent to which the “areas surrounding Japan” were defined and what were included and not included. Since the late 1960's, it has been agreed in the Diet that the areas north of the Philippines belonged to what was called the “Far East.” With the inclusion of wording “areas surrounding Japan” in the guidelines, it is now possible for Japan to dispatch to more distant “neighboring areas” for the purpose of supporting U.S. military operations. However, because the Cabinet Legislative Bureau has prohibited the use of collective self-defense rights, it is questionable that the new guidelines could operate within the Article 9 of the Constitution.³

Given the above modifications in the interpretations of Article 9, it is already possible for the Japanese to conduct logistical operations regarding the security of the Taiwan Straits. The only difference after the revision of Article 9 will be the extent of the geographical reach by Japan's SDF, that is, how far the Japanese government can dispatch the SDF from the Japanese territories, but the issue is already beyond the security of the Taiwan Straits. Therefore, it can be said that, with the revision of Article 9, what the Japanese government will do for the security of the East Asia-Pacific region will be mostly similar to what Japan has been doing under the current Article 9.

III. Assumptions behind U.S. policy toward China— changes in strategic ambiguity

First of all, from the normalization of U.S.-China diplomacy in 1972 to the present,

³Sase, Masamori, 2001, *Shudanteki Jieiken: Ronso no Tameni (Collective Self-defense Rights)* (Tokyo: PHP), chap. 4.

the United States has never completely ruled out possible future Chinese use of military force. It has been supposed that any strife would occur between China and Taiwan rather than between the United States and China. And the context for the debate has been the question of the extent to which the United States is involved in the security of China and Taiwan has a divided nation.

Simultaneously with the normalization of U.S.-China ties, the U.S. Congress made it possible under the Taiwan Relations Act to make commitments to both China and Taiwan. Article 3 of the Taiwan Relations Act obligates the U.S. administration to maintain U.S. capability to support Taiwan's ability to "maintain a sufficient self-defense capability" against any non-peaceful measures by China, and it is stipulated that the president will cooperate with Congress in taking "appropriate action" to support Taiwan. This action could include the full range of measures from diplomatic negotiations to the use of military force, and it is this all-inclusive commitment that later gave rise to U.S. strategic ambiguity.

By deliberately rendering ambiguous the degree to which the United States would intervene in any outbreak of hostility between China and Taiwan, the strategic ambiguity was intended to encourage both China and Taiwan to exercise self control through diplomacy. But a crisis occurred in March 1996, when differences between U.S. and Chinese expectations for that self-control led to a crisis as China carried out military exercises in the Straits on the occasion of the Taiwanese general election. The effect was to invite unambiguous U.S. intervention (i.e., a display of its willingness to uphold its defense commitment). However, since an excessive U.S. defense commitment toward Taiwan, as well as the Taiwanese tendency toward autonomy, arouse a hawkish attitude in a China eager to suppress these trends, they must be consistently kept within certain limits. The following three assumptions were necessary in order for this delicate balance

to function.

First, the governments of China and Taiwan were divided over the justness of the one-China concept, and thus there was no middle ground between “Chinese unification” and “Taiwanese independence.” That is, Taiwan and the mainland were locked in a zero-sum game in which the identity of “China” was tantamount to the chair in a two-man game of musical chairs. Since the United States normalized diplomatic relations with Beijing in 1978, it was forced to sacrifice its treaties with Taiwan, while at the same time establishing a domestic legal commitment to ensure militarily that Taiwan would not be taken over by China.

Second, if China were to take over Taiwan, it would most likely be done by force. Since China and Taiwan are both administered under separate sources of political authority, there is no way to overturn the status quo except by military force. Any “dialogue” unaccompanied by the use of military force would serve to confirm the current state of division, and only contribute to the further calcification of the status quo. Therefore it would not be decisive in determining whether the future holds “unification” or “independence” for China and Taiwan.

Third was the assumption that the United States and China are building their bilateral relationship based on strategic opposition amid anticipation of future Chinese military intimidation. To the governments of both China and Taiwan, relations with the United States are a zero sum game, and the expectation, despite U.S. ambiguity, that it could follow through on its military commitment to Taiwan in an emergency is lent credence precisely because a strategic discrepancy exists between the United States and China.

By the time that Chen Shui-bian came to power in 2000, however, these three assumptions had already begun to crumble. The emergence of economic codependency,

for instance, has worked against the premise of the zero-sum-game, making it difficult for either side to adopt an entirely self-contained cross-straits policy. Since the Democratic Progressive Party dominated the 2000 general election, forces centering on the Nationalist Party have tried to reconcile with the mainland Communist Party in order to contain the Democratic Progressive Party. China, for its part, continues to refuse to acknowledge Taiwanese independence, but has at the same time indicated a number of potential modes of "unification," such as the concept of one country, two systems, including a middle way that amounts to neither complete unification nor independence.

Redeeming Taiwan militarily, as per the second assumption mentioned above, would invite U.S. intervention. And if that were to happen, there is virtually no chance that China could win a military clash with the United States, which makes it an unwise choice. Above all, the unilateralism of the Bush administration is motivating a U.S. effort to produce a peaceful outcome through unilateral hegemony (or so it is believed), which makes it difficult to envision U.S.-Chinese stability based on strategic balance.

While the potential conflict implied in the third assumption regarding U.S.-Chinese military antagonism has not disappeared, China's confrontational and combative attitude has done so amid its indications of a "New Security Concept" and "New Thinking." And one could say that the incentive and foundation for the United States to conduct a policy of strategic opposition to China is flagging.

In the final analysis, "strategic ambiguity" was not meant to indicate ambiguity across the board. Rather, it worked effectively precisely because the United States from time to time evinced an unambiguous defense commitment to Taiwan. In that sense, the ambiguity was made possible by the assumption that the United States would occasionally exercise its defense commitment to Taiwan. Next, we will take an overview of China-Taiwan relations to see in just what circumstances that assumption is melting

away.

IV.U.S.-China-Taiwan Relations and Identity Politics in Taiwan

In principal, the debate over “one China” is comparable to the game of musical chairs mentioned above, with Beijing and Taiwan competing for the sole status as its legitimate government. The only logical solution to this problem is for both sides to agree on either “unification” or “division” (i.e., Taiwanese independence) with mutually acknowledged nationhood.

In the year 2000, the president was elected from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party. The Chen Shui-bian administration raised concern among East Asian neighbors about Taiwanese independence. But what actually happened was a “non-independence” statement by the new president. In his May 20th inaugural address, the new president began by saying, “as long as the Chinese government has no intention of using military force ...,” but then went on to issue a statement that Taiwan would neither declare independence, change the name of the country, amend the constitution with the two-nation concept, conduct a referendum over independence, change the policy regarding national unification, nor disband the National Unification Council.

The result was an increase in forces encouraging the maintenance of the non-independence/non-unity status quo. Although he made this “non-independence” declaration, Chen Shui-bian did not intend to acknowledge “one China.” Rather, he established maintenance of the status quo as a foundation for an effort to seek out political dialogue with China. The current situation is that this has not yet succeeded. On the other hand, while survey data indicates that 80% of Taiwanese seek to preserve the status quo, it also shows a long-term trend toward reduction in the numbers of those who prefer unification. The phenomenon of what might be called “Taiwanization,” therefore,

is proceeding apace.

What stance has the United States taken from around the time of the establishment of the Chen Shui-bian administration to the present?

As earlier mentioned, the strategic ambiguity of the United States took root under the Taiwan Relations Act. The significance of this had been guaranteed by the U.S. security commitment toward Taiwan against imminent injustices. Because U.S. containment of the Soviet Union was strategically paramount during the Cold War, the Taiwan issue necessarily took a back seat to the "China card,"⁴ but this changed during the 1990s. In addition, the following two factors gave rise to Taiwan's increasing significance.

The first factor is the democratization of Taiwan. After the death of Jiang Jingguo, Lee Teng-hui became president, whereupon Taiwan began making gradual progress toward democratization, beginning with the resignation of long-time national legislators and a series of conventions of prominent figures from politics, business and academia to discuss broad national policy. And the United States has been seeking from China a peaceful resolution of the China-Taiwan relationship based on the Taiwan Relations act. But at the same time it has clearly stated its concern over the human rights of the residents of Taiwan. In that sense, Taiwanese democratization is a residual issue that the United States has left behind. Taiwan has handled the process skillfully, and even enhanced its reputation with the United States as a result.

The second point has to do with the fact that domestic Chinese politics have affected U.S. policy toward Taiwan. At precisely the time that Lee Teng-hui was

⁴Go Ito, "Taiwan no Minshu-ka to Beikoku no Taiwan Seisaku (Taiwan's Democratization and U.S. Policy toward Taiwan)," *The House of Councilors (Japan), Rippo to Chosa (Legislation and Research)* (Tokyo, House of Councilors, 2001), pp. 49-51.

conducting a policy of democratization, the incident at Tiananmen Square occurred, bringing down on the Chinese government more international criticism than it had anticipated. This led to an announcement by the U.S. government that it would support the accession of Taiwan and Hong Kong to APEC and sell F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan. Thus, the 1990s began with an ongoing hard-line U.S. stance toward China, which resulted in the conclusion of accords and agreements responsive to numerous serious demands, such as the elimination of non-tariff trade barriers, respect of intellectual property rights and the non-proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons.⁵

The three characteristics that exacerbated the Taiwan problem have changed as follows. First of all, throughout the 1990's, the United States, deprived of the "China card," has found itself in strategic opposition to China while at the same time involving itself economically because of the new factor of Chinese economic growth. In addition to this economic involvement, the 9/11 attacks provided another opportunity for U.S.-Chinese cooperation. From a domestic standpoint, China, with its problems in Xinjiang Uighur province and Tibet, has its own need to contain criminal activity it regards as terrorism. In that sense, the 9/11 attacks provided a new mold for U.S.-Chinese cooperation in the security field.

Second, the democratization stipulated in the Taiwan Relations Act, after the 2000 change of government was accomplished without military force, is diminishing as an issue for the United States. In the first place, maintaining the status of human rights in Taiwan under the Taiwan Relations Act and China's refraining from a military attack were like two sides of the same coin. As long as Taiwan's political destiny could be determined by its people in peace, it would be meaningless to the United States to

⁵ Martin L. Lasater, *The Taiwan Conundrum in U.S. China Policy* (Boulder: Westview, 2000), pp. 148-149.

intervene in China-Taiwan relations.

The third factor relates to the potential use of military force against Taiwan accompanying democratization within China itself. Whatever the underlying motivation may be, the diplomatic behavior of the Chinese government, with an accommodating style characterized by its "New Security Concept" and "New Thinking on the Relationship with Japan," has created a climate in which it is becoming difficult for the United States to criticize China. One could even say that the "New Security Concept" and "New Thinking" presented a situation which made it more difficult for the U.S. and Japanese governments to strategically oppose China.

Combining these factors, a situation has now arisen in which the United States has no choice but to alter the presupposed conditions in the Taiwan Relations Act stipulated as a means of stabilizing the China-Taiwan relationship. And these alterations will have their origin in Chinese diplomacy toward the United States and the development of codependency between China and Taiwan more than in any change in U.S. policy. To put it another way, the China-Taiwan problem has moved beyond U.S. control.

Conclusion — The Implications for Japan

In this essay, I have examined the nature of the links that exist among post-9/11 U.S.-China relations, China-Taiwan relations in the post-2000 situation, and the issue of yuan revaluation considered against the backdrop of continual Chinese economic growth since 1992. The Taiwan Relations Act forms the bedrock of U.S. government policy toward China and Taiwan. Unlike the 1970s, however, in which the "one China" definition made for a zero-sum game between China and Taiwan, today's relations between China and Taiwan have become complexly intertwined with domestic affairs on both sides as mutual interpenetration continues with respect to political identity and

mutual economic codependence.

This has the potential to fundamentally transform the U.S. strategy toward China and Taiwan that has existed since the 1970s. Strategic ambiguity has made it possible to deftly handle the causes of conflict in East Asia, while helping to maintain U.S. superiority by avoiding excessive U.S. intervention. But while China has come up with a “one China, two systems” non-military approach to unification, the Chen Shui-bian administration’s tendency toward a non-independent path to appeal to the wishes of many Taiwanese for maintaining the status quo has resulted in deeper bilateral interaction. The Taiwan Relations Act of 1978 stipulates Chinese pursuit of a Taiwan policy oriented toward a non-military solution. And for Taiwan, it stipulates a China policy that gives due consideration to popular opinion and human rights. A way toward mutual political and economic cross-penetration for both Taiwan and China had thus already been set out in the act. One could surmise, therefore, that the United States has intended to work to stabilize China-Taiwan relations based upon strategic ambiguity until the conditions set out in the Taiwan Relations Act are realized.

In this sense, it could be said that until the emergence of the Chen Shui-bian administration in May 2000, China-Taiwan relations had followed the path set out in the U.S. approach to the Taiwan Relations Act. But what that approach failed to anticipate was that China would carry through with economic recovery during the 1990s, and that in Taiwan a party other than the Nationalist Party would come to power— and an independence-minded one moving ahead with “Taiwanization” at that. Since the 2000 presidential election, the Nationalist Party has pursued a policy oriented toward integration with China in order to contain the Democratic Progressive Party. President Jiang Zemin has also leveraged his country’s economic expansion to actively pursue economic exchange, but has not responded with political dialogue. As long as China does

not threaten Taiwan with military force, and the Nationalist and People's First Parties continue to try to regain power in Taiwan, it is difficult to see any pretext for U.S. intervention in China-Taiwan relations. Given the Iraq War and the North Korean problem, about all the Bush administration can do at this point is warn that any change in the status quo could bring about a shift in China-Taiwan relations.

Finally, I would like to point out the implications for Japanese foreign policy before closing. In 1996, the Japanese government adopted the Joint Security Declaration with the United States in response to the Taiwan Straits crisis, expanding the scope of Japan-U.S. relations and diversifying their functions. The 1990s were a period in which U.S. strategic ambiguity continued to work as effectively as before, and the renovation of alliances was significant in that it strengthened U.S. East Asian strategy.

But with maintenance of the status quo in China-Taiwan relations having come to the fore in recent years, the possibility of military intimidation by China can't be said to be very great, at least for the present. As initiatives that were not provided for in the Taiwan Relations Act have been implemented in both China and Taiwan, it appears that there has been a gradual narrowing of leeway for U.S. intervention. Although Japan and the United States may have no objection to China and Taiwan determining the state of their bilateral relationship, the form that their dialogue is to take, and whether it will produce results, will become clear after the presidential election in 2008. As that happens, Japan will have a crucial role to play in providing support ranging from political to economic in order to ensure that both China and Taiwan participate on an equal footing, and that the field of choices for determining their mutual political status is not diminished.