

The 'One China Policy'

June Teufel Dreyer
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(The following is an excerpt of Dr. Dreyer's comments at the Formosa Foundation banquet held in Taipei on December 13, 2004.)

The concept of one China is a mantra, repeated over and over again, apparently in hopes that if one says it often enough, people will believe that it is true.

But it is not true, and when America, or any other country, constantly repeats that it acknowledges the position or agrees that there is only one China does not mean that there is truly only one China.

In fact, there have been two sovereign states, call them by whatever names you will, existing since October 1, 1949, when Mao Zedong proclaimed the existence of the People's Republic of China.

Interestingly, when I said this when I was a graduate student, people said I was very left-wing [since the one China then was Chiang Kai-shek's one China] and to say back then that there were two Chinas was taken to mean an acknowledgement that the communist state had a right to exist.

Twenty years later, when I said the same thing, people said I was very right-wing [since the one-China then implied that the state on Taiwan had a right to exist].

To me, it was as foolish to pretend after 1979 that a sovereign state didn't exist on Taiwan as it was to pretend before that a state didn't exist on the mainland from 1949 to 1979 (or perhaps 1972).

This is uncomfortably reminiscent of the story that most of us were told as children---of the emperor's new clothes: many people had noticed that the emperor had no clothes on, but only one little child dared to say so.

In 2000, I actually got one of the people who accompanied Henry Kissinger to Beijing in 1971 to admit---quietly and off the record, unfortunately---that there were two Chinas. Obviously, he didn't believe the mantra.

So what is the reason for this ridiculous situation, I've asked. The answer is---another mantra.

That the one-China policy has succeeded in keeping peace and stability in Asia.

This is as untrue as the mantra that there is one China.

Try asking any US official with any responsibility for foreign affairs where the world's flashpoints are located. He or she will immediately mention the Taiwan Strait, probably right along with the Korean issue and the problems between Israel and Palestine. If the one-China policy was really responsible for peace and stability in Asia, one would think that they wouldn't mention the Taiwan Strait as a flashpoint. My take on this is that what's

caused the relative degree of stability and peace in Asia is *not* the pretense that one state doesn't exist.

Rather, it's two other factors:

1. that the Chinese communist military, the PLA, wasn't, in the past, strong enough to project its power much outside its home territory
2. that the Chinese communist part and government were worried that, if China *did* try to take Taiwan, the US would intervene

Unfortunately, the first factor is becoming less and less true.

And the second may be in jeopardy, since people like US diplomats sometimes don't seem to understand the nature of the US one-China policy themselves: that the US merely *acknowledges* the PRC's claim that there's only one China of which Taiwan is a part.

Among the high-level gaffes (we hope, but are not sure, that they are really gaffes rather than subtle attempts to change US policy in favor of the PRC):

1. In September 1994, Mike McCurry, State Department spokesperson during the Clinton administration, was asked if he considered Taiwan a part of China. He replied "Absolutely. That's been a consistent feature of our one-China policy" There was an uproar. The statement was retracted and replaced with a statement that the US acknowledged the PRC's position that there was only one China.
2. In November 2004, Secretary of State Colin Powell said that Taiwan did not have sovereignty and spoke of the US desire for "re"unification. Again, there was an uproar. State Department officials then said Powell "misspoke."

So-called misstatements like this are extremely dangerous. They can be---and will be---used by the PRC, whose people omit the later retractions and constantly remind US representatives that "you *said* this. It is your *official position*."

I would argue strongly that the recognition agreement between the US and the PRC, that contained this one-China statement, has put Taiwan into a diplomatic limbo.

- the US has neither agreed that Taiwan is part of China nor acknowledged the obvious fact that Taiwan has sovereignty
- it is this that is the major contributor to friction and *instability* in Asia, and has created a dangerous situation.

US keeps repeating that it does not want a change in the status quo---yet tends to criticize Taiwan for making changes, saying little when the PRC does it

Edmund Burke: "A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation." *Reflections on the French Revolution and Other Essays*

To get back to our myth of the emperor's new clothes, we need to ask where is the child who will speak out?

Apparently in the modern-day world, one needs not just one child but many.

There are some hopeful straws in the wind:

- July 29 1999: A one-China, one-Taiwan was introduced in the House of Representatives. Inter alia, it was that the United States should recognize Taiwan's independence if the people of Taiwan opt for such status, and the US should adopt a "one-China, one-Taiwan" policy that reflects the current reality that Taiwan and China are two separate nations.
- The next day, New York Times op-ed columnist Abe Rosenthal wrote: *right now, the issue is the fight of a small nation to mention in the mildest terms a most obvious truth. Taiwan, self-made and free, does not demand independence but believes it deal with China as state to state. That sent the ever-terrified Beijing Politburo into froth-mouthed fury and the US government into an orgy of appeasement. This slavering endorsement of China's vendetta against Taiwan is simply one example of the peonage of American policy to China, and of the knowing hypocrisy of "engagement" and "partnership" with China. Recognition of Communist China as reality was overdue when Nixon-Kissinger "reopened" China. But Americans believed that reopening would include the Chinese people, and engagement would include open debate about the relative merits of Communism and freedom. Instead, the engagement has become between the Washington and Beijing bureaucracies. China's people? Beijing gave them order to continue keeping mouths closed. As the price of doing business with China, Beijing ordered American businessmen to do the same. Our two most recent presidents passed on the orders to their subordinates.*
- In 2000, Republican congressional leader Tom DeLay, in a speech at CSIS, called for a return to a principled foreign policy based on a rediscovery of America's core values and designed to protect our nation's vital interests through the triumph of democracy around the globe. He described the American government's reaction to Chinese treatment of Taiwan as "a level of appeasement that would have embarrassed Neville Chamberlain."
- In June 2004, the United States-China Economic and Security Commission's report to congress recommended that the congress and the administration conduct a fresh assessment of the one China policy, given the changing realities in China and Taiwan.

The policy's successes, failures, and continued viability:

- whether changes may be needed in the way the US government coordinates its defense assistance to Taiwan, including the need for an enhanced operating relationship between US and Taiwan defense officials and the establishment of a US-Taiwan hotline for dealing with crisis situations
- how US policy can better support Taiwan's breaking out of the international economic isolation that the PRC seeks to impose on it, and whether this issue should be higher on the agenda in US-China relations. Economic and trade policy measures that could help ameliorate Taiwan's marginalization in the Asian regional economy should also be reviewed. These should include enhanced US-Taiwan bilateral trade arrangements that would include protections for labor rights, the environment, and other important US interests

There have been expressions of reality from the Taiwan side as well.

- Then-president Lee Teng-hui described cross-strait ties as a “state to state relationship” or a “special state to state relationship” July 9 1999, during an interview with Deutsche Welle.
- On August 3 2002, President Chen Shui-bian referred to the situation across the strait as “yibian, yi guo”---one nation on each side.
- In a full-page ad he took out in both the Washington Post and the New York Times on October 5, 2004, presidential adviser Koo Kwang-ming wrote that the US Adherence to One China Policy Only Benefits Communist Dictators...he reminded us that the Declaration of Independence, written by Thomas Jefferson, says “When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connects them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s god entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.”

We’ve got to add our voices to these, and amplify the sound. Only then will reality and morality prevail, and we can hope for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

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