

Editorial Postscript and Commentary

**Shackled Hong Kong, Invaded Ukraine, Encroached Taiwan:
Stirrings across the Chinese Communist Frontiers in a World
Transformed by Russia's Invasion of Ukraine**

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Abstract

From Hong Kong's journey since the tumultuous struggle for democracy under the shadow of the tentacles of the authoritarian People's Republic of China overlord till the dark descent into outright suppression of dissent beneath the pall of a Beijing central State-imposed draconian "national security law", to the increasingly repressive authoritarian Russia's Putin regime launching an outright murderous irredentist military invasion of Ukraine and blatant annexation of Ukrainian territories, to the increasingly frequent and numerous mainland China warplane flybys crossing the median line in the Taiwan Strait, the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship's continued bullying military

harassment in the skies and waters off Taiwan's coast and threatening live-fire military exercises encircling the vibrantly liberal democratic Taiwan with Chinese missiles flying over the free island nation during the military drills, this article explores the current continuing assault on the liberal democratic world from repressive authoritarian powers.

Keywords: *Hong Kong, China, Ukraine, Taiwan, Russia*

This special focus issue, ***On China's Peripheries: Recent and Current Developments across the Frontiers***, represents the first issue of the ninth volume of *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal*. It features six articles including the first three on Hong Kong tracking her journey from the tumultuous struggle for democracy under the shadow of the tentacles of the authoritarian People's Republic of China overlord to the dark descent into outright suppression of dissent beneath the pall of a Beijing central State-imposed draconian "national security law" and within this context the development and changes of this formerly free-spirited city's unique relations with the vibrantly democratic long-*de facto*-independent island republic of Taiwan (officially the Republic of China). After these three articles – Joseph Yu-shek Cheng's "The Hong Kong Pro-democracy Movement: Challenges and Divisions in the Past Decade", Qian Qin's "Political Challenges in Hong Kong: Identity Politics, Legitimacy Crisis, and Cultural Clash" and Chi-yeung Chiu and Kam-yee Law's "The Myth of Institutionalizing Hong Kong–Taiwan Relations: 26 Years after the Handover" – a fourth paper, Marian Ehret, Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani and Mohammad Zaki Ahmad's "Chinese–German Relations and the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis", focuses, in the context of the bilateral relations between China and Germany, on the recent eruption of China–Taiwan crisis with the gargantuan Mainland dictatorship's

bullying military exercises encircling the vulnerable small democratic island state in 2022 in response to then U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan and meeting with Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen on 2nd-3rd August 2022 which Pelosi said representing the United States' "unwavering commitment to supporting Taiwan's vibrant democracy", and in 2023 in response to Taiwanese president Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with U.S. Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy (who replaced Pelosi in January 2023) at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California in early April 2023.

After the four papers on the semi-enclave of Hong Kong and the island republic of Taiwan, this focus issue moves to explore the diplomatic orientations of China's Southeast Asian frontier neighbours of the member states of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations), both the maritime members that have territorial disputes with China in the South China Sea and those mainly mainland members that do not, in terms of their varied responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine – in part influenced by their own respective relations with Russia, but also importantly by the varying degree of their alignment with the stance of Chinese Communist Party dictatorial regime in strong support of its authoritarian ally the Putin regime of Russia. After the fifth paper, Reymund B. Flores, Jose Emilio Luis T. Combair, John Patrick S. Palquiran, Earlsen C. Pinuela and Michael John B. Subigca's "Unveiling ASEAN's Diplomatic Equilibrium: Assessing Member Nation-States' Responses to Russia's Attack on Ukraine amidst the Rivalry between United States and China", this focus issue closes with the sixth article, Ramina Alipkyzy, Assel Utegenova, Klara Makasheva, Yermek Chukubayev and Bakyt Byuzheyeva's "Development of a Public Diplomacy Model for Kazakhstan through the Analysis of the International Political Activity of the USA and China", that takes us across China's northwestern frontier to explore how this largest and

most prominent among the post-Soviet Central Asian republics squeezed between the adjacent behemoths of Russia and China is finding her voice on the world arena.

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[In 1989 one and a half] million people took to the streets to support the demonstrating students in Tiananmen Square and condemn the bloody tyranny of the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship. When Regina Ip of the HKSAR government at that time advocated the passage of the national security legislation to implement Hong Kong Basic Law Article 23, 500,000 people took to the streets to protest against that evil law. To fight for true universal suffrage, two to three hundred thousand people sat on the road for 79 days until the government cleared the site. What did our struggle achieve in the end? No, we did not gain anything, but lost a lot; young students were persecuted and became political prisoners and were imprisoned; journalists stationed in Hong Kong were refused entry after business task trips, and intellectuals who criticized the CCP and those who supported Taiwan independence were also refused entry; the government violated the constitutional right of freedom of speech and illegally disqualified pan-democrat LegCo councilors; well, now it has even introduced the extradition law and revised the “Fugitive Offenders Ordinance” to open the gate to the rule of law in Hong Kong to allow Mainland China to shackle and bring at will Hong Kong citizens to the Mainland to “stand trial”, thus completely destroy Hong Kong’s judicial system, press freedom and the protection of personal safety of Hong Kong citizens, and gradually turn Hong Kong into a dark purgatory where the people cannot hold their heads up and breathe. Yes, our struggle has not gained us

anything; instead, we have lost a lot. But would we gain more if we did not fight but were left to their mercy as dying lambs? No, we have long since become a black jail like every city in Mainland China. There are 110 million electronic surveillance cameras across China monitoring you. Facial recognition systems are installed in all public places on the streets and alleys to monitor you and know where you are and what you are doing. Your online chat content is being monitored and eavesdropped on with AI, and you will be held criminally responsible if you say something wrong. The Chinese police learn every move on your mobile phone through the masking software. Even for minor traffic violations, your photograph can be publicized immediately, and your name, identity, etc. can also be made public online and publicly judged. The police can randomly check your mobile phone at bus and train stations, gas stations, etc., and if it is found that WhatsApp, Facebook, Google and other banned apps are installed on your mobile phone, you are likely to get into trouble, etc... Can you withstand these horrific surveillances? When that time comes, you will have to endure it even if you can't bear it! Just like our current compatriots in Mainland China. Are you going to be the dying lamb, or are you going to fight? Needless to say!¹

– Jimmy Lai (8th December 1947 –), Hong Kong's dissident, democracy advocate and prisoner of conscience

During British colonial era of rapid economic growth, the Hong Kong people seemed to have “a single-minded focus or obsession: making money and securing a decent standard of living [...] the general idea of popular elections for the territory's leaders was probably far from most people's minds and the details even further” (Bush, 2016). The Hong Kong people then happily left political governance to the British colonial masters and were happily making money in an “‘economic city’ with a

solely economic reason for existing”. Why has this hedonistic outlook undergone such a sea change once the prospect of “returning to the embrace of the Motherland” set in? “Hong Kong’s political history makes nonsense of the decolonizing process as it is usually imagined”, according to John Darwin, a specialist on British colonial history, as cited by Richard Bush (*ibid.*), as it had undergone no significant change and would “never travel the colonial cursus honorum from crown colony rule to representative and then responsible government”. So why has the Hong Kong people been fighting the Beijing government now to demand the right of complete freedom to elect the city’s top leader whereas this is something they never voiced during the British colonial era?

Far above the post-1997 threat of creeping “Mainlandisation”, it is the very nature and deeds of this brutal, ruthlessly dictatorial Leviathan that never fail to give the Hong Kong people the chill, the morbid fear of the future, fear for the fate of their next generation. While the Hong Kong people might just watch, though not without trepidations, as spectators from a safe distance the madness that descended on mainland China during Mao’s brutal political campaigns including the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution (无产阶级文化大革命), the atmosphere changed when the “return to the Motherland” became imminent. Whatever reassurance the Hong Kong people felt during the more liberal reform years of Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) and Zhao Ziyang (趙紫陽) was squandered when the Communist Party resorted to a massacre in Beijing on that fateful night of 3rd-4th June 1989 to settle the Tiananmen crisis and the subsequent large-scale arrests, imprisonment and even execution of dissidents. Whatever reassurance that had since returned with continued open-door policy and economic boom was squandered again with the mysterious death of Li Wangyang (李旺陽) towards the end of the Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao (胡锦涛-温家宝) administration, the intensification of political

repression under the subsequent Xi Jinping (习近平) administration, and finally the outrageous disappearance of the Causeway Bay Five that brought closer home for the Hong Kong people the dreaded future directly under the CCP dictatorship.

Although Lee Bo (李波) is not the most important among the five from Mighty Current/Causeway Bay Books (巨流傳媒有限公司 / 銅鑼灣書店) who mysteriously disappeared, his case has managed to turn the disappearances into a cause célèbre because he definitely did in fact go missing in Hong Kong which raised the dreaded spectre of the CCP regime having finally crossed the line drawn by the “one country, two systems” agreement and made cross-border arrests of Hong Kong-based dissidents. However, even more chilling is probably the fact that on 13th November 2015, Thailand’s military junta government put China’s exiled dissident cartoonist Jiang Yefei (姜野飛), dissident and human rights activist Dong Guangping (董廣平) together with Mighty Current co-owner and Causeway Bay Books shareholder Gui Minhai (桂民海) on a plane chartered by the Chinese government and deported them to China. For the vast Hong Kong people who are seeing the daily erosion of civil liberties and political freedoms after the Handover to the “motherland” in 1997, the Thai military junta government’s complicity with the Chinese authorities in kidnapping Gui Minhai to mainland China is particularly ominous. When Gui Minhai, the China-born Swedish national and co-owner of the Mighty Current publishing company and shareholder of the Causeway Bay Books (owned by Mighty Current since 2014), known for selling books critical of the Chinese government including those published by Mighty Current, failed to return from a holiday in Thailand’s beach resort town of Pattaya in October 2015, he was the fourth person linked to the company who had disappeared in that same month.

As for Hong Kong, since the time when the June 1989 Beijing massacre “shattered the illusions of Hong Kong residents that the [post-Mao] CCP was a humane regime, and called into question the widespread assumption that Beijing would take a benign approach to Hong Kong after reversion” (*ibid.*), the chilling examples of how PRC now continues to treat its dissidents and political prisoners, the unending stream of tragedies from Cao Shunli (曹順利) to Peng Ming (彭明), from Li Wangyang (李旺陽) to Liu Xiaobo (劉曉波), and a future prospect that they never had to considered when they were under British rule has been made more real when China again breached the “one country, two systems” agreement to snatch Lee Bo from Hong Kong soil, and when China could even with the complicity of a client government in Bangkok snatch Gui Minhai from streets of Pattaya.

Almost half a decade of desperation down the line from 2014, those Hong Kong kids of 2019 did know exactly what they were doing, callous their actions might sometimes seem, for they were just deciding to waive the prudence of 2014 to further test their rights, a dignified Hong Konger’s rights, a prudence where elsewhere in China most citizens are still too scared to wave, too scared of the prospect of disappearing into the Chinese gulag under the pocket charges of “inciting subversion of state power” and “picking quarrels and provoking troubles”, shackles finally imposed on Hong Kong through Beijing’s introducing the new “Hong Kong national security law” by mid-2020, gleefully welcomed and deployed by a SAR government and its leadership that had not hesitated in using it to disqualify “unpatriotic” legislators who had been elected by the people², before proceeding to use it to launch larger and larger waves of arrest of pro-democracy activists and politicians.

Such intensified creeping authoritarianism has meant one thing: Hong Kong citizens will no longer be so different from those in other cities in the vast Mainland in terms of matters of legality.³

The same adjustment to new legal reality should be pervading Hong Kong after the introduction of the new national security law for the territory, after seeing how a “lenient” judge in a trial of anti-extradition bill protesters could be condemned by Mainland China’s State media and local pro-Beijing forces and even replaced, and how Jimmy Lai (黎智英) was repeatedly denied bail, thus making him newly one of the prisoners of conscience oldest in age in the vast land under the boot of the CCP, and abhorrently brought to court in metal chains,⁴ in the twilight of this former British crown colony that was once upon a time rightly proud of its independent judiciary and incorruptible police force.⁵ The adjustment to this new reality is much more dreadful than the creeping authoritarianism the Hong Kongers have been feeling over the decades since the Handover, much more than seeing the blatant “interpretations” of the Basic Law (Hong Kong’s mini-Constitution) by the powers that be in Beijing, much more than seeing the extraterritorial crime committed by the Mainland CCP regime in the kidnapping of dissident Hong Kong booksellers and publishers.

As expected, thundering came large-scale crackdown on pro-democracy activism, following the advent of the new “Hong Kong national security law”. Among those arrested expectedly was Jimmy Lai, businessman and founder of *Apple Daily* and prominent critic of the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship, who was swiftly arrested and jailed since 2010 under various charges but “awaiting trial” under the new national security law.⁶ Many pan-democrats were arrested under different charges, some out on bail. Dissident university academics were fired, including Benny Tai.⁷ Apparently the whole purpose of the new law is to crack down on pro-democracy activism, instil fear and

White Terror among dissidents. It is a standard Chinese Communist Party policy approach, now newly applied to Hong Kong.

There is a Chinese proverb from the pre-Ch'in dynasty (先秦, before 221 BC) classic *Tso-chuan* (左傳, composed probably during the latter half of the 4th century BC, during the Warring States era / 戰國時代): *ch'un wang ch'ih han* (唇亡齒寒, literally “if there be no lips the teeth feel cold”, i.e. sharing a common fate; neither can survive without the other; one's demise is the premonition of the other's doom): “What happens in Hong Kong has implications not only for Hong Kong and the future of China but also for Taiwan and the United States” (Bush, 2016), and as for the U.S., her position on Hong Kong and the latter's pro-democracy struggles is contingent upon what America sees as the implication for the possible future political change in China and Sino-U.S. relations as well as the coming world order under the shadow of superpower relations (*ibid.*). Nevertheless, the fact that during Hong Kong's Occupation protests, “Washington probably took the strongest position of any foreign government, mainly through statements that boiled down to support for a truly competitive election” would actually serve to further raise “fears in the Chinese regime, which inferred from the sympathy felt by many in Hong Kong for the plight of the demonstrators and the assistance that some protest leaders received from the territory, that Hong Kong's political system might be used as a platform to subvert the Communist regime” (*ibid.*).

As for Taiwan, it was Beijing's original “hope that a successful transition in Hong Kong would create a positive demonstration effect for Taiwan and gradually reduce the latter's recalcitrance” (*ibid.*). That probably explains why Beijing is restrained or feeling the need to be restrained in its handling of Hong Kong – though the Hong Kong High Court's stripping four opposition lawmakers, “Long Hair” Leung Kwok-hung (「長毛」梁國雄), Nathan Law Kwun-chung (羅冠聰), Lau

Siu-lai (劉小麗) and Edward Yiu Chung-yim (姚松炎), of their seats in the legislature, for improper oath-taking, coincidentally a day following the death of Liu Xiaobo, did not help to improve Beijing's image in the eyes of the pro-democracy Hong Kong or Taiwan people.

It is interesting to note that Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement that came six months later did draw some inspiration and borrow some political tactics from Taiwan's Sunflower Movement (太陽花學運), in a "demonstration effect from Taiwan to Hong Kong" (*ibid.*) which Professor Sonny Shiu-hing Lo (盧兆興) of the Hong Kong Institute of Education⁸ calls the *Taiwanisation of Hong Kong politics*: "The "Taiwanisation" of Hong Kong politics can be seen in the way local pro-democracy campaigners are pushing for change. The Taiwanese have a strong sense of their own identity. In recent years, the SAR has also witnessed the growth of a very strong Hong Kong identity, in some extreme cases leading to calls for secession or even independence by a minority of vocal Hongkongers [...] Younger Hongkongers, like their counterparts in Taiwan, are increasingly distrustful of political parties. Taiwan's students demonstrated their political autonomy during the Sunflower movement. Similarly, the Hong Kong student movement spearheaded the Occupy protests." (Lo, 2015)

Besides that "Hong Kong's young activists have been taking inspiration from the Taiwanese democracy movement", with the Sunflower students' movement six months earlier helping to shape Hong Kong's Occupy campaign, Lo also points out that "Taiwan's rowdy electoral campaign styles, punctuated with violence, are emerging in Hong Kong", and finally concludes that while "Beijing may well seek to use the Hong Kong model of democratisation to appeal to Taiwan for political dialogue, Taiwanese-style politics has already penetrated Hong Kong, elevating the Taiwan factor in shaping Beijing's policy towards

Hong Kong and its political development, now and in the years to come.” (*ibid.*)

If we see the series of events and developments in Hong Kong since the June Fourth 1989 Beijing massacre in relations to China and Taiwan, despite the intensive work of the powerful and resourceful Beijing’s United Front Work (統戰) in Hong Kong through, as Wai-man Lam and Kay Chi-yan Lam (2013) describe, “the soft tactics of integration, cooptation and collaboration, as well as the hard tactics of containment and denunciation” that all seek to “ultimately consolidate China’s hegemony in the local society” (Lam and Lam, 2013: 306), it is difficult to see any success in China’s exercise of her so-called “soft power” (a “factor of growing significance in the competition in overall national strength” – as described by former president Hu Jintao in a 2007 speech to the national congress of the CCP in declaring an openly stated strategy to enhance culture as a part of soft power). On the contrary, Taiwan, through the “Taiwanisation” of Hong Kong politics, have made impressive soft-power inroads into Hong Kong based on its vibrant liberal democratic culture as a “best-case democracy” (Rigger, 2004) in the Greater China area. This is succinctly reflected in what popularly elected President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of Taiwan (Republic of China), who was included in the decision-makers category of U.S.-based *Foreign Policy* magazine’s 100 Leading Global Thinkers of 2016 for “for poking the bear”, i.e. for not kowtowing to the CCP dictatorship of Mainland China, and instead telling the latter to “face up to the reality that the Republic of China [i.e. Taiwan] exists and that the people of Taiwan have an unshakable faith in the democratic system”⁹, said in her condolences for Liu Xiaobo that she sent on Twitter in both Chinese and English right after Liu’s death, which ended with a reference to his 2010 Nobel Lecture in Absentia¹⁰: “We hope that the Chinese authorities can show confidence in engaging in political reform

so that the Chinese can enjoy the God-given rights of freedom and democracy. This will be a turning point in cross-strait relations. The Chinese dream is not supposed to be about military might. It should be about taking ideas like those from Liu Xiaobo into consideration. Only through democracy, in which every Chinese person has freedom and respect, can China truly become a proud and important country. If the Chinese Dream is democracy, then Taiwan will provide any assistance necessary to achieve this objective. I believe that this is what he would have wanted. Liu Xiaobo had no enemies, because democracy has no enemies.”¹¹

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*Nemtsov believed that only by attempting to stop the war could one display real patriotism. The war in Ukraine was a despicable and cynical crime for which our country was paying with the blood of our citizens, with an economic crisis and with international isolation. No one in Russia needed this war except for Putin and his entourage.*¹²

– Free Russia Foundation on *Putin. War: An independent expert report* (May 2015) – based on materials from Boris Nemtsov (9th October 1959 – 27th February 2015), Russian dissident and democracy advocate murdered near the Kremlin on 27th February 2015

As Russia (Россия)’s military invasion of Ukraine (Україна) is still going on since it was launched over a year ago, it is becoming clearer through the Vladimir Putin (Владі́мир Владі́мирович Пу́тин) administration’s rhetoric that the essential reason for its war against Ukraine is the fact that the increasingly repressive authoritarian Putin regime is finding irredentist nationalism with nostalgic claim on Soviet

lost lands, especially within the Kievan Rus' heartland, is impressively useful in rallying support from Russian voter-citizens, and the post-Orange Revolution Ukraine drifting away from Russian influence towards the liberal democratic Europe of the European Union (EU) is posing a grave threat to the authoritarian Putin regime's increasingly repressive stranglehold on Russian political power, in stark parallel to the East Asian scene where a vibrantly liberal democratic Taiwan has become an increasingly pain-in-the-neck contrast in the eyes of the brutal, repressive Chinese Communist Party (CCP)¹³ dictatorship of mainland China. Definitely becoming the mortal worries of the repressive Putin regime of post-Communist Russia and the brutal Communist Party dictatorship of mainland China is the fact that behind both Ukraine's Orange Revolution (which bears a striking similarity to the now legendary People's Power revolution of the Philippines that overthrew the Ferdinand Marcos regime) and the amazing transition to liberal democracy in Taiwan during the later part of the Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) administration (and looking north, South Korea's transition away from military dictatorship towards the end of the Chun Doo-hwan (전두환 / 全斗煥) presidency), the shadow of the United States of America and her European allies' influence and support were clearly evident – and as the CCP regime had observed, it was also clear the U.S. and her European allies were equally behind Hong Kong's civil disobedience from the Umbrella Movement to the anti-extradition-to-China protests where many protestors were receiving not only moral and material support but even tactical trainings from American and European civil rights groups. This is the main factor behind Communist China's current strong support for the Putin presidency. Clearly this is a mainly tactical alliance of two repressive regimes supporting each other's survival against the threat from the liberal democratic world, as the historical territorial grievances are supposed to have go against this

alliance if the CCP regime were to stay true to its relentless brainwashing of its subject people with ultra-nationalism anchored on the “Hundred Years of National Humiliation” (百年国耻).

Undoubtedly from the perspective of demography and ethnicity, there are a lot of grey areas in both the Russia-Ukraine and mainland China-Taiwan relations. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union – in 1991 with Ukraine and the other 13 republics gaining independence from the Russian-dominated Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) Communist Party empire (technically Russia herself also gained “independence” from her post-Tsarist Soviet Union empire), the political, cultural, and economic boundaries between Ukraine (and Belarus) and Russia was at first blurry, especially for the people living on frontiers both sides of the border, who live almost as a community. This was very similar to the China-Taiwan case, except for the state of war that technically still exists between the two sides across the Taiwan Strait, as the politically repressive Kuomintang (國民黨 , KMT) regime from 1949 to mid-1980s remained an exiled mainland China political force, and the exiled mainland population, hardly reaching one fifth of the island’s population, made the island only their temporary abode, while waiting for KMT to re-conquer the mainland. The majority of the local inhabitants (mainly with Hoklo/Minnan and Hakka ancestry) were brutally subjugated, ever since the 228 Massacre, and subjected to indoctrination to inculcate or strengthen their loyalty to China – albeit that was the “Republic of China” with Taiwan as a province under the Kuomintang state-of-war Marshall Law dictatorial rule.

In Ukraine, came 2004, under increasing anxiety with the repressive Putin regime’s cross-border manipulation of their national elections getting more and more blatant, the Ukrainians defended their sovereignty and freedom and protested against voting fraud. An Orange Revolution – the latest in the series of the so-called Colour Revolutions

that swept through the post-Soviet Communist states – broke out, resulting in the defeat of the existing regime’s candidate, Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovych (Віктор Федорович Янукович), in a presidential election claimed to be marred by massive corruption, voter intimidation and electoral fraud and rigged by the authorities in favour of the prime minister. Due to the nationwide protests, the questionable results of the original run-off were annulled, and a second run-off was conducted under intense scrutiny by domestic and international observers, resulting in a clear victory for the prime minister’s opponent Viktor Yushchenko (Віктор Андрійович Ющенко), thus beginning the irrevocable deterioration in Moscow-Kyiv relations. However, In the 2010 presidential election, Viktor Yanukovych managed to return to power but after a series of policies aiming at moving away from the EU for closer integration with Russia, and with his years in power characterized by democratic backsliding, the jailing of former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko (Юлія Володимирівна Тимошенко) whom he defeated in the 2010 presidential election, a decline in press freedom coupled with increase in cronyism and corruption, and was ousted from power in the Revolution of Dignity four years later following the February 2014 Euromaidan (Євромайдан, “Euro Square”) clashes in Kyiv (Київ)’s Maidan Nezalezhnosti (Майдан Незалежності, “Independence Square”) which resulted in more than 100 deaths in the government’s crackdown on protesters. This second revolution saw the ousting of President Viktor Yanukovych, who then fled into exile in Russia, and a return to the 2004 Constitution of Ukraine, but eventually it also led to the present Russian invasion of Ukraine.

As a parallel to this, mainland China-Taiwan relations also went abruptly into an irrevocable downward spiral with the KMT losing the majority electorate’s support after the local Taiwanese’s increasing anxiety over the KMT’s steering the island state closer and closer to the

CCP regime – that over-integration economically with the mainland might result in the repressive dictatorial giant, beyond notorious in human rights abuses. Such worries that over-integration economically across the Strait might lead to the notoriously human-rights-abusive mainland CCP dictatorship annexing the vibrantly liberal democratic, human rights-respecting, independent island state by stealth eventually triggered the tumultuous Sunflower Movement that paved the way for the Independence-minded localist-inclined Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) back to control of the presidency and the legislature. The consequential two-terms (8 years) of the strong-willed, global-oriented Tsai Ing-wen presidency rekindled the hope and zeal of the majority of the Taiwanese people for freedom and ethnic autonomy, and of the localists for an eventual breakthrough of a *de jure* independent state with an independent seat in the United Nations, whether she be simply Taiwan, or the Republic of Taiwan, or the Taiwan Republic of China, or the Chinese Republic of Taiwan.

This situation raised great alarm in mainland China's CCP dictatorship, whose international clout has already been long worsened by the decade's deterioration in China-U.S. and China-West European relations accentuated by strained trade relations, alleged CCP regime's technology theft, CCP regime's strong expansion of its international influence and its authoritarian ruling model into the developing countries, the inhumanity prevailed in the suppression of, not only democracy activism, unofficial trade unionism and civil rights lawyers in general, but also brutal suppression of Tibetans' and Uyghurs' struggle for freedom and ethnoterritorial autonomy, and in the case of the Uyghurs, with the creation of the almost unbelievable million-people strong brutal concentration camps of ideological indoctrination for assimilation bordering on cultural genocide. Increasingly leaving the island state of Taiwan in the hands of the independence-minded

government voted in by the majority of the Taiwanese people, both as a beacon and model of hope for freedom and prosperity in the eyes of the politically suppressed, civil rights-abused mainland people – at least those who are better educated, having a broader and more cosmopolitan worldview and upon whom the CCP State’s ultra-nationalistic brainwashing and censorship have not been successful – and as a conduit where the human rights-respecting liberal democratic ideals of the U.S. and Europe could influence and infiltrate the mainland (a scenario recently seen in Hong Kong, but which could be worse than Hong Kong if that involves the liberal democratic world’s armed support for Taiwan) is becoming a potential time bomb for the survival of the CCP dictatorship on the mainland, especially in the potential possibility of mainland China’s economy going into a decline.

On the other hand, annexing Taiwan by military force may look attractive and even rally support from the mainland China masses long brainwashed by extreme State censorship of information and by ultra-nationalist indoctrination, if a “peaceful” means of annexation by stealth – especially by influencing the democratic process and political change in Taiwan – (like in Ukraine before the 2004-2005 Orange Revolution and between the Orange Revolution and the 2014 Revolution of Dignity / Maidan Revolution) fails, assuming that the liberal democratic West has no stomach for a costly – in terms of lost in human life too – support to defend Taiwan.

An important question is of course how far Taiwan’s U.S. ally and the U.S.-led North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are willing to help defend Taiwan – risking high troop casualties on their part – against a military invasion from China which is a nuclear power. The stakes are high. Is the loss of American and European lives worth it? The so-far successful defence of Ukraine with arms but not U.S. or NATO troops might have pointed a way. But question remains about whether the

Taiwanese have the determination, like the Ukrainians are doing now with huge loss of lives, to defend the independent island state's freedom and democracy, given that many on the island are not adverse to the prospect of unification, especially among the part of population who find partial subjugation under a "One Country Two Systems" preferable to fighting and dying (though the belief in that has received a blow after the practical death of that promise in Hong Kong after Beijing imposed the National Security Law for Hong Kong on the former British crown colony), and those who still believe in the workability of the Consensus '92 that peace can be maintained (allowed by the giant CCP mainland regime) with the unspoken self-recognition of a separate China in the name of Republic of China.

On the other hand, the record of American and NATO military intervention around the world in recent history have been mixed. While the U.S.'s pivotal role in the creation of the NATO in 1949 has proven to be successful in checking the global expansion of repressive Communist Party dictatorships, many brutal or even genocidal, and in eventually bringing about the collapse of the Communist Party dictatorships in the Soviet Union – with the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev's political reform as a catalyst – and its satellite states from Eastern Europe to Mongolia, the untold misery and resentment of the people ruled by the brutal tin-pot dictators and military juntas supported by Washington around the world under the Kirkpatrick Doctrine (authoritarianism can be reformed, influenced to democratise later while totalitarianism, being more self-perpetuating and influential, cannot; stopping the Red Tide first, influencing democratic change later – for democratic change may bring about immediate take-over by the left-wing political forces by vote, whose Marxist ideology had such a charm over young idealist of that era who were so frustrated by the greed and corruption of the elite and

impoverishment of the farmers and workers brought about by Western colonialism and unfettered capitalist exploitation.

While the U.S. and her allies under the aegis of the United Nations Command managed to rescue South Korea from Communist North Korea's invasion (militarily supported by North Korea's totalitarian patrons China and USSR with troops and weapons respectively), with tremendous loss of lives on both sides, and eventually, four decades later, successfully steering South Korea's transition from repressive strongman dictatorships to full liberal democracy (in a way a late-coming vindication of the Kirkpatrick Doctrine as some may wish to interpret), the Vietnam War, also with heavy casualties on both sides, had turned out to be a disaster for the U.S. that was forced to support one after another autocratic, corrupt and inept administrations in South Vietnam deeply resented by the common people, just like the Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) regime on mainland China before the Communist takeover. Without enough years to steer these regimes towards eventual democratisation, the U.S. military might alone was not adequate to stop Communist Party totalitarian forces – which have popular support from the working class, the peasants, the young intellectuals and the larger society who were intoxicated with the ideals of an egalitarian society promised by Marxist socialism but unable to foresee the even more brutal totalitarian state it would in reality lead to, one ironically much more brutal and inhuman than the perceived corrupt capitalist structure they had set their minds on overthrowing – from taking over the whole of Vietnam and the rest of Indochina, with the resultant sea-borne massacre when over a million Vietnamese fled in rickety boats to escape political persecution and inhuman collectivisation among whom between 200,000 and 400,000 perished in the high sea, and the shocking genocidal “killing fields” of Cambodia where the Khmer Rouge took the lives of at least close to 2 million innocent civilians by execution,

starvation and hard labour in its efforts to create a new people for its Marxist Utopian vision of the new totalitarian “Democratic Kampuchea”.

While the U.S.’s 1980s military intervention in Grenada and Panama had managed to restore stable democracy, her 1990s Gulf War and support for the Arab Spring and 2000s War on Terror had only had debatable success, though U.S.-led NATO’s military intervention to stop the militant Serbs’ ethnic cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo has been critically successful in saving tens of thousands of lives from genocide. The dramatic overthrow of long-ruling brutal dictators across Arab lands and of the harsh misogynist religious obscurantist regime in Afghanistan, while so far not being successful to bring long-term stable democracy due variously to new corrupt local leaderships, lack of social cohesion in these divisive tribal societies and the strong militant religious obscurantist forces, murderously intolerant of both religious diversity and secularism, often with strong popular support, that had risen to the surface hijacking the revolutionary movements, had somehow sowed seeds of the liberal democratic tradition of human rights-protection in these post-dictatorship states, and the destruction of Al-Qaeda and then the Islamic State power – which at the regional level, had rescued thousands of people of the minorities including the Yazidis from massacres and religiously sanctioned subjugation and sexual enslavement – has so far given the world, from Africa to Southeast Asia, from Europe to North America, more than two decades of respite from large-scale devastation and human casualties being committed by religious fundamentalist terrorist forces since the 911 Terror Attack and the Bali bombing.

However, unlike those regions mentioned above where the U.S. and NATO has previously militarily involved themselves, Taiwan is a prosperous country, about the geographical size of the Netherlands and

population size of Australia, with one of world's most vibrant functioning liberal democracy whose economic strength is roughly equivalent to Sweden, per capita GDP to Germany, size of imports about the level of Switzerland and exports Spain, which is constantly under threat from a military invasion from mainland China's Communist Army (euphemistical still called "People's Liberation Army" even after slaughtering thousands of civilians in 1989 Beijing Massacre in serving to maintain the perpetual unchallenged rule of the Communist Party dictatorship) and annexation by mainland China's CCP regime, one the world's most brutal, repressive dictatorships. The liberal democratic world's resolve in defending this prosperous and vibrantly liberal democratic island state from the dictatorship across the Strait can be loud and unequivocal, as the people's political freedom and civil liberties, freedom of expression and free press, and freedom from the State's rule-by-law prosecution (instead of rule of law), have already become the global norm after the end of the Cold War and fall of the repressive Communist Party dictatorship from Eastern Europe to Russia to Mongolia, in an era where without the huge threat from behind the Iron Curtain policies twisted by the Kirkpatrick Doctrine are no longer pertinent, and most authoritarian states once ruled by military juntas or tin-pot dictators from Latin America to Africa, from Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia (including South Korea, Taiwan and the Philippines) had long transitioned from dictatorships to vibrant liberal democracies. Today's world is thus much less dubious than previously during the Cold War. Even the remaining major Communist Party dictatorship, China's CCP regime, has to constantly resort to repeated lame shop-worn Soviet-era tu quoque whataboutism, as well as cloak its *raison d'être* in heavy doses of the nomenklatura conspiracy, re-branding ("with Chinese characteristics") such terms like human rights and democracy with endless warped definitions – lame as it is, this

perversion of language has somehow been critically instrumental in the terrifying *saturnic* power (with a long-term toxicity far beyond the conventional terms of “soft”, “smart” or “sharp” power in international relations theoretical constructs) of a totalitarian ruling regime, the low poisoning of the mind, which is gradually, but effectively, after subjecting a whole generation to relentless, brutal brainwashing, enforced amnesia and stringent censorship, leading down the road of the tragic closing of the Chinese mind in serving a brazen regime’s perpetuating its political power monopoly through domestic repression and external propaganda.¹⁴

The major source of the dramatic change in Ukrainian-Russian relationship lies in Russia’s nonstop meddling in Ukrainian political affairs including the Kyiv central State relations with its highly Russified eastern regions (the Donbas). On the eve of the 2004 Ukrainian general election, Putin went to Kiev in person, confidently promoting his favourite Yanukovych (who was up against his opponent Yushchenko). Unsurprisingly, sovereignty- and independence-minded Ukrainians were outraged by Putin’s grandiose interference in their country’s elections. To Putin, Ukrainians’ aspiration for self-determination was tantamount to a betrayal of Mother Russia. Disregarding Ukraine’s post-Soviet Union status as a sovereign, independent nation, Putin accused the West Europeans and Americans of supporting Ukraine’s “colour revolution” (even though their support then for the “Orange Revolution” was just verbal – a moral support at best of Ukrainian’s determination to embrace freedom and democracy, and against the return to authoritarianism), and equated that support to an act of international aggression, a serious hostility to Russia, and an interference in Russia’s internal affairs, as Putin gradually gave up all restraints on pronouncing his view that denies Ukraine as an independent country.

But the tide of democracy and freedom can never be fully turned back. It may ebb and flow, but it moves on. Even if Russian influence and manipulation manages to return Yanukovych to power, the Ukrainian society has changed – similar to what the return of the formerly autocratic KMT rule in Taiwan under President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) has seen in Taiwan society that had already had a taste in freedom from oppression. The people's aspiration for freedom and autonomy has already strengthened, and the media has already shaken off its former yoke of subservience and government censorship. Like the CCP regime, the increasingly repressive Putin regime that has been subverting Russia's hard-won post-Soviet democratic structure is experiencing an "impending Colour Revolution" anxiety – "Colour Revolution" that both the Putin regime and CCP dictatorship have loudly accused, actually not too off the mark, the liberal democratic West of instigating. Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008, of Crimea in 2014, and of the whole Ukraine in 2022 are the natural manifestations of such an anxiety.

The Ukrainian people hope to embrace the type of liberal democracy, the hallmark of Western Europe post-WWII, that has already accepted by the East European ex-satellite states of the defunct Soviet Union, to join the EU for economic advancement and the NATO for military protection, to move further away from the corrupt and repressive legacy of the Soviet Union – not least fuelled by the painful memory of the Holodomor – the Soviet-Communist-State-induced Terror-Famine in 1932-33 that took the lives of 7 to 10 million Ukrainians which bordered on genocide, as well as the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown.

However, to the Putin regime, allowing the Ukrainian people to move further away from the Great Russian fraternity towards a liberal democratic Western Europe identity is disastrous for it shows the

Russian electorates that a non-strong-man liberal democratic political order is possible for the Slavonic people. If the human-rights-respecting liberal democratic system could thrive among the “Little Russians” (Ukrainians, and Belarussians), it could also work for the Great Russians. If the aftermath of the Orange Revolution is allowed to stabilise into paving the way to liberal democratic prosperity and a stronger pan-European Ukrainian identity away from the traditional Great Russian-Little Russian fraternity, it will irrevocably pose a mortal threat to the Putin regime’s reversion to corrupt autocratic rule in the post-Soviet Russia, and that will also discourage other East European countries from following the Putin road. The success of the Orange Revolution in propelling Ukraine towards a stable liberal democratic order would become a much needed boost to further proliferation of “colour revolutions” in those post-Communist states suffering from authoritarian reversion, and as the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship has repeatedly been warning Putin, the liberal democratic West will continue to utilise “colour revolution” to topple both authoritarian-reverted post-Soviet regimes and the CCP dictatorship and the authoritarian regimes of its client states and others propped up by the CCP regime in Southeast Asia and beyond. Such a “colour revolution” is scaring the CCP to death, and the vibrantly liberal democratic Taiwan nation across the Taiwan Strait facing its Fujian Province is now more and more like China’s own Ukraine both as the liberal democratic West’s unsinkable aircraft carrier just at its doorstep and a beacon of guidance to dissident forces on the mainland in their aspiration for a colour revolution to liberate the Chinese people from yoke of the Communist Party dictatorship. In this context, surrendering democratic Ukraine to an invasion from a repressive authoritarian Russian regime is a sacrilege – an acquiescent that a people choosing their own destiny to freedom and democracy have no rights to do so, that they have no rights

for self-determination, that they have no rights for arranging a democratic arrangement between ethnoregional areas in the country without being forced to give up those areas by an external invasion force.

However, the post-Soviet Russia now fuelled by the Putin regime's irredentist ultra-nationalist revisionist propaganda has never been able to accept that Ukraine, a captive nation of the former Soviet Union empire, determines to move towards liberal democracy and allied itself with the liberal democratic West signified by EU and NATO. Once becoming truly liberal democratic, coming hand in hand with it will be spirit of independence and self-determination, and the with more independence and self-determination, it will be more completely different from Russia's autocratic regression under Putin. The same applies to Taiwan. And Hong Kong too. The free world has lost Hong Kong. The liberal democratic world has betrayed Hong Kong. The liberal democratic world has largely turned a blind eye, with empty words and no action, to continuing atrocious human rights abuses in China, to crime against humanity in the Uyghur region. In a sense, Ukraine has become the sacrificial lamb that has opened the eyes of the world to the danger of an appeasement approach towards abusive authoritarian regimes. The Russian invasion has caused policy shift and mentality change globally among liberal democratic nations, especially in post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltic and Caucasus, and East and Southeast Asia.

It is interesting to note that Putin actually expressed interest in joining NATO when talking to George Robertson when the latter was secretary general of NATO in early 2000s but was unwilling to queue in an application process together with other countries which he considered inferior to Russia,¹⁵ and had told David Frost in a BBC interview shortly before he was first inaugurated as Russian president more than two

decades ago that he would not rule out joining NATO which was hard for him to visualise as an enemy, as he considered Russia part of the European culture and hence could not imagine Russia “in isolation from Europe and what we often call the civilised world.”¹⁶ Thus it has been with the deepening of authoritarianism increasingly characterizing the rule of a leader who was constantly worried about being swept away from power and privilege if the democratic process were to be respected to run its proper course in Russia. This is same worry that has plagued the mindset of China’s CCP regime ever since the Beijing Massacre of 1989 when the Communist Party army (“People’s Liberation Army”) killed thousands of unarmed protesters and other civilians supporting and protecting them).

Despite all of Communist China’s whataboutism rhetoric, all the regular attacks on the liberal democratic West from the New Left, the shortcomings in democratic credentials and all the social malaise in individual countries, the historical guilt of sins committed on the negative side of colonialism by the now disintegrated Western maritime colonialism (while Russian and Chinese land-based colonisation continues as “domestic affairs”), the human rights-respecting liberal democratic values that come with the global expansion of the system of North Atlantic liberal democracy cannot be denied, or simply dismissed as just episodes of great power rivalry. Losing Taiwan will be a great disaster, not just in terms of international *Realpolitik* wherein losing the defence of the first island chain will result in endangering the military supremacy of the American-led West in the Pacific, but most importantly in terms of a boost in the global influence of authoritarianism that has been on the alarming rise in recent years, with the notoriously repressive Chinese Communist Party dictatorship subjugating and annexing a vibrantly free and open society of human-rights-respecting liberal democratic Taiwan. If that happens, it will be an

unprecedented high-impact invasion by autocratic Beijing since the 1959 military invasion and colonisation of Tibet by the CCP regime, or further back in time, the ethnic genocidal 1756-58 invasion and obliteration of both state and people of Dzungaria by the China's Manchu imperial central State (after the successful military invasion of Outer Mongolia in 1723-24) with massacre of the majority of the Dzungar population and the enslavement or banishment of the remainder, which began the complete colonisation of largely what has today become the Xinjiang region of China. The same fate awaits the Taiwanese – as the boorish Chinese ambassador to France Lu Shaye (卢沙野) has pronounced: “The Taiwanese people will be re-educated after reunification”,¹⁷ thus bringing in the chilling undertone of an impending fate as those million Uyghur people have suffered, being dragged into the Xinjiang concentration camps in recently years under CCP general secretary and state chairman Xi Jinping's rule.

The ideological clash is similarly manifest in Eastern Europe. While Ukraine is moving further to more fully embrace liberal democracy, the more authoritarian Russia has become under Putin, who has imposed an increasingly ruthless, repressive and even murderous (assassination of exiled dissidents, a common practice during Soviet Communist rule, has seen a revival, like the coming back of psychiatric hospital detention of dissidents and re-education gulags that characterised today's atrociously repressive CCP regime in China). Such repressive rule is to ensure that the liberal democratic atmosphere outside Russia, especially in its next-door states including Ukraine will not spread into Russia. Sabotaging the liberal democratic transition in Russia's ex-Soviet “near abroad” on the European and Caucasus side – in particular Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia – by meddling in their internal political process, has become imperative for the survival of the increasingly repressive and autocratic Putin regime, and if that action fails, under the logic of “offence is the

best defence” the so-called “special military operation” became necessary, taking advantage of the intricate ethnoregional fabric of the Russophone regions of these post-Soviet nations. Heavily resorted to has been the active covert support for the pro-Russian faction in Ukrainian, Moldovan and Georgian political landscapes to sow seeds of social division and fan internal strife, aided by a deluge of anti-liberal-democratic-West disinformation (tactics long utilized by the former Soviet Union’s Communist Party regime, and today by the CCP dictatorship to disparage the liberal democratic West and promote the autocratic “China model”), and if all these fail, outright invasion becomes a final resort, before Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia become more fully liberal democratic and join the EU and NATO and come under the protective umbrella of the latter. If the Putin regime were to succeed in this invasion of Ukraine, his gameplan will become a perfect model playbook for the CCP regime towards Taiwan, as what has been laid out in the above exposition finds indeed an almost perfect East Asian parallel in Communist Party dictatorship-ruled China’s view of the “Taiwan threat” it is facing.

* * *

While the separation of Hong Kong and Taiwan from Mainland China during the decline of the Ch’ing Empire represented a product of the era of colonisation filled with humiliation by foreigners, within the overall progress of world civilisation, it also led to these two regions attaining freedom and prosperity [away from the repressive empire on the Mainland] bestowed by modern civilisation. In sharp contrast [...] the [Mainland] Chinese after being freed from the torment by colonial powers, instead of attaining liberation and freedom, have since been subjected to even more comprehensive and more brutal totalitarian

*subjugation [...] While the Chinese Communist Party's dictatorial government has undergone an unequivocal great leap in its hi-tech operation, its political system and mode of governance still remain in the medieval era, hitherto having not given up the medieval myth of a greater empire-building. Internally, towards minority nationalities, it denies them freedom of autonomy. Externally, towards Taiwan, it rejects making a promise of not using military force for unification; towards Hong Kong, it resorts to dictatorial coercive means of intervention in Hong Kong's "One Country, Two System" autonomous governance, resulting in insurmountable barriers to Hong Kong's political democratisation. One of the important principles underlying the post-WWII modern civilisation is the self-determination of a region's inhabitants. Under this principle, the achievement of any unification to resolve conflict is not determined by military coercion by a powerful party, but by the voluntary choice of the minority groups [...] If unification could imply coercion and subjugation, there might as well be no unification.*¹⁸

– Liu Xiaobo (28th December 1955 – 13th July 2017)¹⁹, 2010 Nobel Peace Prize laureate and China's prisoner of conscience, repeatedly jailed dissident and democracy advocate, granted medical parole on 26th June 2017 and sent into closely guarded hospitalisation only seventeen days before his death

According to the routine reports by Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense on incursions of its Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) by mainland Chinese military forces (the so-called "People's Liberation" Army, PLA), PLA aircraft, including nuclear-capable bombers, entered on nearly 250 days in the twelve months between September 2020 and September 2021, with a record number of 148 aircraft entering Taiwan's

ADIZ over the course of four days during mainland China's 2021 National Day celebrations,²⁰ prompting Taiwan's Ministry of Defense warning in a biennial report released in November 2021 that mainland China had obtained the capacity to surround and blockade the island nation's harbours, airports and outbound flight routes²¹. Then in 2022, in response to U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, China launched a series of military exercises that encircled Taiwan, initially lasting from 4th to 7th August 2022 and involving live-fire drills, air sorties, naval deployments, and ballistic missile launches, unprecedented in recent history and taking place in six zones that surrounded the island nation's busiest international waterways and aviation routes, followed by more military exercise around the island from 8th to 10th August 2022.

In the following year, in response to Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with U.S. Speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy and other prominent U.S. lawmakers at the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library on 5th April 2023, and just hours after the California meeting, a arrival of a congressional delegation consisting of Representative Michael McCaul, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, in Taipei to show the Americans "strong support of Taiwan" during which McCaul compared the CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping with Adolf Hitler, on 8th April 2023 the PLA announced the start of three days of "combat readiness patrols" encircling Taiwan, dispatching several warships and dozens of aircraft including fighter jets and bombers towards Taiwan, with approximately 71 Chinese military aircraft crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait, According to Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense. China's Shandong aircraft carrier was also deployed to participate in the military exercises, likely the source of four Chinese J-15 fighter jets that Taiwan tracked threatening the island nation. Escalating the threat, on 9th April 2023 Chinese fighter jets and

warships simulated strikes on Taiwan and an encirclement of the island nation. Taiwan responded to the encroachment by deploying her own warships, leading to a standoff between the two states' navies, and prompting the United States Navy to send a warship to the South China Sea on 10th April 2023, the day on which China announced the end of these initial drills, thus bringing the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis to a close, but stated China would continue combat training encircling Taiwan.

To understand these increasingly frequent and numerous mainland China warplane flybys crossing the median line in the Taiwan Strait and the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship's continued bullying military harassment in the skies and waters off Taiwan's coast, threatening live-fire military exercises encircling the vibrantly liberal democratic Taiwan with Chinese missiles flying over the free island nation during the military drills, and the background of long-running the political and military standoff and stalemate between the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship-ruled mainland China (officially "People's Republic of China") and vibrantly liberal democratic Taiwan (officially "Republic of China"), one needs to go back to the year 1949 at the end of the two-decade long Chinese Civil War that ravaged the vast mainland of the ancient land of China, when the defeated Kuomintang forces fled to the serene island of Taiwan, or *Ilha Formosa* ("beautiful island") as named by Portuguese explorers back in the 16th Century.

In 1949, Kuomintang²² leader Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek retreated with a significant amount of gold and approximately 2 million Nationalist refugees to the small island of Taiwan (臺灣) where he established a hard-line authoritarian regime, shortly following the 228 Massacre of 1947 (二二八大屠殺). The White Terror (白色恐怖) to which Taiwan was consigned after the massacre was one of the longest martial law periods in world history, as tens of thousands of Taiwanese

were imprisoned and executed under the grim eye of the Taiwan Garrison Command secret police body (Yeoh and Yeoh, 2013). Who in that era could have predicted the day would come when four decades later President Chiang Ching-kuo (son of Chiang Kai-shek) and Taiwan's subsequent leaders would successfully facilitate a bloodless and relatively peaceful democratic transition by imposition for their nation and turn the de facto independent island state into one of the most vibrant democracies in the world and a best-case paragon of civil liberties and political rights-respecting free society?

With the democracy of Taiwan, officially the Republic of China (ROC, 中華民國), continues to stand in intriguing, defiant contrast to the ruthlessly maintained political monopoly of the Chinese Communist Party in the “People's Republic” of China (PRC, 中华人民共和国) on the mainland, Taiwan tends to present itself as a perfect textbook validation of the modernization theory, for she has proven to be one of the most successful later industrializers in the history of the twentieth century as well as a “best-case” democracy (Rigger, 2004). When Chiang Ching-kuo came into power in the 1970s, he was taking command of a rapidly industrializing and urbanizing Taiwan whose increasingly educated and politically conscious people had begun to chafe under the repressive yoke of the hard-line authoritarian policies since Chiang Kai-shek's era. It is at this point that the predictions of the modernization theory begin to appear validated, as can be seen from the events which followed. Local elections were held in an effort to increase the political participation of the native Taiwanese. Four new members, all of whom were highly educated and had no significant connections to the military or the Chiang family, were elected to the KMT's top decision-making body, i.e. the Central Standing Committee in 1986 (Copper, 1987). Most importantly, the KMT convened with intellectuals and opposition leaders in discussions which eventually led to the end of

martial law and the formation of a major national opposition party, i.e. the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) whose establishment on 28th September 1986 in defiance of restrictions imposed by the authoritarian KMT regime truly represented a watershed in Taiwan's gradually moving from an authoritarian political structure towards today's full-fledged multiparty electoral democracy. In short, over those critical early years, many governmental reforms were launched which enabled the system to transition gradually away from hard-line authoritarianism to partial democratization²³, and these liberalizing measures not only involved the political realm, but fed back into the economic one as well. Taiwan's economic freedom has steadily increased since 1975, i.e. the year Chiang Ching-kuo fully came to power. This has paid off well, and thus in 1986 Taiwan was credited as a top nation by global standards in terms of economic performance (*ibid.*), and when Chiang Ching-kuo's successor, the native Taiwanese Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) came onto the scene in 1988, modernized Taiwan was ready for his efforts to facilitate her evolution into a full-fledged constitutional democracy. More than twenty years on, today Taiwan has matured into the most democratic free society in East Asia and indeed also one of the most vibrant democracies in the whole of Asia and even the world.

No country exists in a vacuum; the consequences of the smallest decisions or actions generated through global interactions can affect a country's trajectory dramatically. It is hence impossible to analyse the political trajectory of Taiwan without touching upon the critical role that the international environment has played not only today but also in impacting her history, especially in the wake of the Chinese Civil War. The defeat of the Nationalist army by the Communists in 1950 had been keenly felt as a blow to the anti-Communist portion of the international community. Critics howled that then U.S. President Harry Truman had failed to provide sufficient support to their Free China allies and as a

result, the United States was presumed responsible for “losing” China to “the Reds” (Yeoh and Yeoh, 2013). Such a proportioning of blame had the indirect effect of heightening international sympathy for the KMT regime. Thus, when the KMT fled to Taiwan in 1949-50, it did so with the consoling knowledge that it still possessed powerful allies which recognized the ROC as the true government of all China and opposed the dominance of the CCP over the mainland.

Many pessimistic predictions were made forecasting Taiwan’s eventual fall to the control of mainland China. Recognizing the high costs of directly engaging the CCP army in combat, the international community was reluctant to furnish Taiwan with offensive support or directly assist the KMT’s quest to recover the mainland (*ibid.*). Even so, “there were few spokesmen, even in neutralist countries, who [...] advocated turning Taiwan over to the Communists” and thus the international community willingly provided defensive support instead (Walker, 1959). The United States proved to be a particularly valuable ally in that it provided both military aid in the form of stationing the U.S. Navy’s Seventh Fleet in the Taiwan Strait and economic aid in the form of “Development Loans” to finance new economic projects which must be approved by the U.S. government, “Development Grants” to provide technical assistance against obstacles to economic development, and farm surplus commodities under “Public Law 480” (Chang, 1965). Simultaneously, the U.S. built up a bitter enmity with China, whose switch to Communism and involvement in the 1950 Korean War were regarded as personal affronts, while Washington “took a hard line by toughening the U.S. economic embargo against the PRC, [...] firming up support for the Nationalist government in Taiwan [and] blocking the PRC’s membership in the UN, and further isolating the PRC politically” (Xia, 2008). All this, alongside the problems of the deteriorating Sino-Soviet alliance as well as internal instability in China, served to weaken

China's strategic position against that of Taiwan's within the global arena for a time. In short, it would not be amiss to conclude that the KMT's survival in Taiwan subsequent to the Civil War was more an indicator of the tremendous sway Western and U.S. opinion and actions had over international politics than a testament to the KMT's own strength (Yeoh and Yeoh, 2013).

As the years passed, however, the international community inevitably realized the unlikelihood of the ROC ever returning to the mainland and re-assuming the status of a world power. Slowly but surely, pragmatism won over idealism, and the balance of power gradually tipped in favour of the PRC. A key character expediting the erosion of Taiwan's international standing was, in an ironic twist of fate, none other than then President of the U.S., Richard Nixon (*ibid.*). Prior to 1970, Nixon had been appreciated as one of Taipei's favourite American allies, given his past reputation as a formidable "red-baiter". This, however, changed when the Nixon administration enacted a grand plan to restructure the international order via initiating a strategy of triangular diplomacy to create a state of détente between China, the Soviet Union and the U.S. This strategy achieved its intended sub-goal of normalizing U.S. relations with the PRC, but simultaneously, it effectively sidelined the ROC government and served as a harbinger of the derecognition to come (*ibid.*). On 25th October 1971, the United Nations made the momentous decision to "expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nation" and accepted the PRC as the legitimate government of China (Appleton, 1972).

The significance of this decision cannot be understated. Not only did China gain all the international legitimacy which Taiwan lost, she also secured much more leverage and a better bargaining position than Taiwan could ever have hoped to hold. Owing to the disparities of size

and geography between China and Taiwan, the former has always played a more critical role in the annals of world history as compared to Taiwan and, regardless of the international environment, shown that she is a player not to be trifled with. International support for Taiwan involved less potential risk but also less potential reward than international support for China, as may be derived from current conditions – even if the global community had continued to support the former rather than the latter, it is difficult to imagine Taiwan becoming the economic powerhouse and regional leader that China is today (Yeoh and Yeoh, 2013).

Thus, with the fateful 1971 verdict, Taiwan was demoted to becoming a political entity in possession of virtually all the trappings of a country, save for the vital last ingredient – formal recognition from other countries. She could only be seen as an object of trade and tourism in the global mind, as “the People’s Republic of China (PRC) [...] made it clear that it [did] not object to European business activity in Taiwan if political overtones are excluded” (Drifte, 1985). This was a precariously vulnerable position for any country to have, and it was to Taiwan’s credit that her reaction “was not only controlled, but somewhat more receptive than usual to suggestions for internal reform”, as Sheldon L. Appleton noted, “Observers on Taiwan when the Nixon trip to Peking and the U.N. China vote were announced reported concern, but no depression, panic or major demonstrations” (Appleton, 1972). Something, however, clearly needed to be done if Taiwan intended to retain her governmental autonomy. Thus set the stage for the next four decades of diplomatic tussle, often turbulent, between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait – technically still at war to date – with the third player, the U.S., as a deeply involved interest party.

In this context, as observed earlier, Taiwan’s particular international circumstances (vis-à-vis China’s) were significant to her democratic

development. The successful democratization of Taiwan has been significantly attributed to the Republic of China's loss of her seat in the United Nations in 1971 – being replaced by the People's Republic of China – followed by her marginalization in the Senkaku/Tiaoyutai (尖閣諸島 / 釣魚台列嶼)²⁴ dispute, and adding insult to injury, the 1979 US derecognition (Yeoh and Yeoh, 2013). This sequence of humiliating events had served to trigger an unprecedented, major national crisis²⁵, though Chu (1992) also brought in the decline in military tension with China in the late 1970s as a factor given that the said decline has greatly reduced the “siege mentality” of the Taiwanese people and in turn the legitimacy of a continuing authoritarian polity. All these had irreparably weakened the KMT's moral stance in maintaining an authoritarian grip upon the island state. Similar circumstance has occurred in Argentina as result of losing the war with Great Britain over the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas). As a point in contrast, China has never been under such pressures to democratize. Although China has frequently come under severe Western criticism for her consistently violent stance against any form of political dissent within the country, the international repercussions which followed have not been as punishing to the Chinese government as they could have been²⁶, and certainly resulted in nothing as damaging as the precariously isolated position observed above that Taiwan had found herself in.

From the tumultuous period of cross-strait relations under the Democratic Progressive Party's Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) presidency to the present two-term DPP presidency of Tsai Ing-wen who rose to power after the electorates' sentiment swung back to the DPP following the student activists' storming of the Legislature during the Sunflower Student Movement (太陽花學運, the name in allusion to the Wild Lily Student Movement (野百合學運) of 1990 which set a milestone in the democratization of Taiwan) protesting the passing of the Cross-Strait

Service Trade Agreement (CSSTA) at the legislature without a clause-by-clause review – which the protesting students and civil groups perceived that would hurt Taiwan's economy and leave it vulnerable to political pressure from Beijing – by the then ruling Kuomintang under the Ma Ying-jeou presidency – the shadow of war has never left this one of the most dangerous flashpoints of East Asia, once seen as one of the world's three hottest potential war zones.

In addition to Kenneth N. Waltz's arguments in his book *Man, the state and war: A theoretical analysis* (2001) regarding the roles of human behavioural factor, internal national instability and lack of legal constraints in precipitating war that can throw light on the critical role of rising nationalism on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, mainland China's problem of maintaining domestic stability (e.g. that resulted in Deng Xiaoping (邓小平)'s launching of the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese war) and the conflict between mainland China's "core interest" and America's major interest concerning Taiwan in the rising cross-Strait tension, attention needs to be paid to the possibility of accidental triggering of crisis – two vivid historical precedents being the assassination of Austrian crown prince Franz Ferdinand in 1914 as pointed out by Joseph S. Nye, Jr. in his book *Understanding international conflicts: An introduction to theory and history* (1997) and the earlier-than-expected breaking-out of the Hsin-hai Revolution (辛亥革命) (Day, 2012: 15-18).

Regarding the interesting issue of the formation of a "Taiwanese identity", there is a school that traces the germination of "Taiwanese nationalism" back to the ceding of Taiwan to Japan in 1895 and its proper formation triggered by the 228 Massacre of 1947 and brutal repression by the Kuomintang – in other words, a Taiwanese identity was born directly as a counteraction to two "foreign" political administrations, namely the Japanese colonial rule and the Kuomintang

repression which shared similarity in combining political repression and cultural assimilation – while there is another school that traces the formation of this identity only back to the 1895 cession but not to the 228 Massacre (*ibid.*: 27-30). Such divergence is in fact rather political, as it all boils down to one's perspective on whether a so-called "Taiwanese identity" is part and parcel of a wider Chinese identity for in this context recognizing the 228 Massacre as a milestone is tantamount to saying that the Taiwanese had finally turned their back on the Han Chinese after the turning point of the 228 Massacre (*ibid.*). Across the Taiwan Strait, the rediscovery by the Chinese Communist Party of the usefulness of nationalism in strengthening citizens' loyalty to the ruling Party and the country in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War and the demise of communist party rule in most other parts of the world, leading to its embrace both by the intellectuals who have produced countless books and essays in rousing ovation for such nationalism and the wider masses who made books with titles like "China Can Say No"²⁷ instant best sellers in the country, accompanied by the inexplicable reemergence of Mao-latry (*ibid.*: 36-37) – the veneration, the hero worship of the one person in recent Chinese history who caused such unparalleled level of human misery through murderous purges, crime against humanity via mindless grassroots political persecution, man-made famine through whimsical economic policies that led even to widespread cannibalism.

In contrast to the rising Chinese nationalism in the early 20th Century whose main contents – like those reemerged in the Tiananmen student movement in 1989 – circled around the resentment against government corruption and the aspiration for a clean and able government, today's new government-promoted nationalism in mainland China is in support of and serving to strengthen the governing legitimacy of the present unelected ruling party and the authority of the present

political institution that outlaws any attempt in electoral challenge to the CCP, while abiding by CCP's rhetoric in emphasizing the importance of political stability rather than political change. In other words, with State and society in a way exist in separation, democracy followed the development of nationalism, leading to the establishment of Asia's first republic from the ruins of the Manchu monarchy in the early 20th Century. On the contrary, denying a separate existence of society from the political State run in monopoly by today's catch-all Communist Party, the present wave of State-promoted, mass-inciting nationalism has not only been contributing nothing to democratic reform, but instead has been intensifying bitter xenophobic behaviour in the realm of foreign affairs, especially in the form of hate-filled anti-Japanese and anti-American nationalistic sentiments (*ibid.*: 37). A textbook example is the aftermath of the (allegedly accidental) bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade by American bombers: the Japanese China expert Miyazaki Masahiro (宮崎正弘) commenting on the extreme anti-American actions by demonstrators in China that amidst such an atmosphere of incited fanatic nationalistic outburst that anyone who are trying to constrain or neutralize the situation would themselves become victims of attack by those around them (*ibid.*: 38). As Deng Xiaoping told visiting former US president Richard Nixon just after the June Fourth 1989 Beijing massacre while calls for sanction was brewing, "Please tell President Bush ... even if it takes a hundred years, the Chinese people will never beg to have the sanctions lifted. If China would not respect itself, China can't stand firm and there won't be national dignity. It's a very big issue, and any Chinese leader who commits error on this issue would definitely fall from power. The Chinese people will not forgive him. I'm telling the truth."²⁸ Here goes the war cry of the new nationalists: "Don't think that Chinese youths will thank America for imposing sanction on China. You can't separate the individual from the

nation. When you hurt the Chinese government, you hurt the Chinese people.”²⁹ In the befuddled realm of the CCP State = China = Chinese people cognition, questioning the CCP State’s policy actions is logically equated to insulting the Chinese people and hurting Chinese nationalistic feeling. Nationalism in such context represents a “single-edged venomous sword”, in the opinion of the presently incarcerated Nobel Peace Prize laureate Liu Xiaobo.

Especially in the post-colonial, post-Cold War era, the roar of nationalism tends to become the last refuge for authoritarian regimes against the global march of human rights-, political choice-respecting liberal democracy, a rediscovered ideological instrument to crush any challenge to the ruling party’s political monopoly (Liu, 2006). Increasingly adept in handling such nationalistic sentiments, the CCP State is able to summon them up whenever they should be useful for dealing with foreign relations while avoiding them from turning into a threat to the regime itself – as illustrated by the following examples, among others, of the incidents following respectively the mid-air collision between a United States Navy EP-3E ARIES II signals intelligence aircraft and a People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) J-8II interceptor fighter jet near the Chinese island province of Hainan in 2001, and the Chinese actress Zhao Wei (趙薇)’s photo shoot, also in 2001, for a fashion magazine wearing a dress featuring the Japanese “rising sun” military flag (Day, 2012: 39-41). It is within such context that there is increasing concern for a potential clash between mainland Chinese nationalism and the newer Taiwanese nationalism. While Taipei has been reformatting the unfinished Chinese Civil War into an international conflict in order to force Beijing’s hand to reach a certain form of compromise that would pave the way to Taiwan’s political independence and nation-state recognition, similarly the CCP regime will never tolerate Taiwan’s gaining her nation-state status not just

because of the righteous question of national sovereignty but more importantly for the regime's own political survival. While the masses on the mainland might not really care as much about the issue of Taiwan independence as about their own economic wellbeing, nationalism, probably just next to improving people's standard of living, is always the trump card in the CCP's quest to perpetuate its rule (*ibid.*: 47-48). Citing Susan Shirk (2007), Day (2012) points out that in the reasoning that CCP is presently the great torchbearer of Chinese nationalism, having proving itself to be the best hope of China to finally be a strong and unified nation, to eventually cleanse itself completely from the shame of the "Hundred Years of National Humiliation", the Taiwan issue is no longer simply an issue of territory, but of national pride and dignity. Juxtaposing such outlook among the mainlanders, who increasingly look ever ready to rally around the red flag of the CCP in the event of the outbreak of a cross-Straits war, with the empirical evidence from opinion polls that today's younger generation in the de facto independent island state is fast diminishing in their identification with China and probably there would be none so identifying themselves in the next generation, the shadow of a coming war is indeed grimly looming as a most probable outcome of the clash of two nationalisms (*ibid.*: 48-49).

On the premise of such eventual clash of two nationalisms, Day (2012)³⁰ discusses lessons learned from the wars of unification and wars of separation in Chinese history from those launched by the Ch'in state to take over the other six states during 236-221 B.C. to the failed attack launched by the then new "People's Republic of China" on Kinmen in 1949 that left a cross-Straits confrontation till the present,³¹ and from these lists of wars of unification and separation in Chinese history, Day (2012: 68-71) arrives at several deductions. First, both unification and separation require undergoing the trial of war. The way that PRC's

Anti-Secession Law (反分裂国家法)³² was written shows that, Day observes, it is difficult for the mainland to achieve unification with Taiwan without resorting to war. On the part of Taiwan, despite the continuous effort of part of the society to pull Taiwan out of China's historical framework, its possibility of success is never something that Taiwan can alone determine; instead, mainland China's stance on that is unfortunately of paramount importance and even decisive, unless Taiwan is really prepared to go to war with the mainland. Lastly, there is the human factor as a recurring element in the history of war of unification and separation – strong leaders who could hold dear to a principle to the end vs. those who would go for compromise and trade political sovereignty for economic gains. With this, the arguments have apparently crossed into the domain of Taiwan's long-running partisan political fault line. After all, with two thirds of China's past eras experiencing territorial political unity and one third in division, the pressure of nationalistic “historical responsibility” could be forcing the CCP dictatorship's hand to eventually launch an inevitable war of unification, for regime survival, to claim Taiwan.

Besides the clash of conventional mainland Chinese and emerging Taiwanese nationalism, the cross-Strait conflict can be placed in the wider context of the Sino-U.S. clash of interest – a favourite topic for writers of international relations and strategic studies on which innumerable papers have long been churned out year after year in recent decades. Of particular interest here is that amidst all the rhetoric of mainland political leaders and scholars emphasizing China's “peaceful rise” or “peaceful development”, the alarming, disproportionate growth in Chinese military expenditure, her self-justified aggressive assertion of sovereignty over almost all of South China Sea, her untiring reiteration of past national humiliation, her exploitation of the society's age-old hatred for Japan and her arrogant refusal to abrogate the possibility of

the use of force towards Taiwan to the extent of writing the non-peaceful solution into her Anti-Secession Law definitely do not help to placate her neighbours and the U.S. and dispel their worries of a “China threat”. The centrality of Taiwan in the Sino-U.S. rivalry for Asia-Pacific hegemony, given the undisputed geopolitical strategic importance of the island state for America, has made increasing Taiwanese economic dependence on China a real worry for America, according to Day (2012: 86), citing a Rand Corporation project for the U.S. Defense Department, “Chinese Economic Coercion against Taiwan: A Tricky Weapon to Use” (Tanner, 2007). The research pointed to the possibility that as the Taiwanese economy is getting increasingly dependent on China, there could be pressure on Taiwan at some point in time to make a reckless move to declare independence to avoid Chinese economic oppression getting out of control as time might not be on Taiwan’s side. Alternatively, being unable to effectively achieve her political objectives via economic means for too long, China might yet resort to military means to force unification with Taiwan, amidst a feeling of defeat from the failure of playing her economic trump card and the concomitant increasing anxiety over Taiwan’s eventually declaring independence – witness the sudden “Sunflower Movement” that was sweeping Taipei through March-April 2014, led by hundreds of thousands of student protesters enraged by then President Ma Ying-jeou’s “Politburo-esque maneuver”³³ to enact a trade pact with China to open up the island state’s service industries without fulfilling the promise to allow a clause-by-clause review before implementation. The ultimate source of the protest movement is the increasing wariness felt by Taiwan’s younger generation of, besides and more than the economic impacts of effective merging the two economies through the trade pact, the foreboding sense of China’s incremental political control over Taiwan and the Hongkongisation of Taiwan’s hard-won democracy.

On the other hand, there is a prevalent argument by mainland scholars that eventual unification is of paramount importance for China for the fact that territorial unity represents the road to prosperity while disunity tends to lead to disaster and agony. Such thinking is evidently the result of Chinese traditional mainstream thought of grand unity and sovereignty: while the worries for a possible domino effect affecting China's frontier regions may not be unfounded, the real disaster and agony stem not from separation – as in the “velvet divorce” of the Czech Republic and Slovakia – but from the unwillingness of the stronger side to let go of the weaker leading to the use of devastating military campaign to halt the latter's move towards independence, as in the case of Russia and Chechnya, or formerly Indonesia and Timor-Leste and Serbia and Kosovo, when the maintenance of social stability and welfare and protection of human rights as the fundamental value of national existence give way to vehement sovereign sentiment and ultra-nationalistic ideology (*ibid.*: 87-88). Anyway, it all boils down to a matter of policy priority. China's leaders, from Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin (江泽民), Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping have been vehemently against adopting Western liberal democracy for China, both for the fear that the Communist Party will lose its political dominance or China might disintegrate like the former Soviet Union.

The possibility of China's disintegration is indeed not just a figment of the nightmare of CCP's leaders, but a favourite prognostication among Western and Japanese scholars too. For instance, Ian Cook and Geoffrey Murray gave a scenario in which “the erosion of sovereignty via such combined pressures as globalization, new regionalism (based partly on newly emerging elite groups) and ethnic dissent, would lead to China fragmenting”³⁴, in a scenario wherein “[r]ich regions like Guangdong and Fujian might attempt to break away from the centre to form a South China state with Hong Kong and Taiwan in order to

maintain their economic prosperity, while poor regions would become poorer with the possibility of social unrest and even civil war.”³⁵

Cook and Murray added to this scenario the possible secession of Tibet and Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan), resulting in the China proper shrinking to a rump centred on the Huang He (黄河 , Yellow River) and Yangtze (揚子江 / 長江) deltas (Cook and Murray, 2001: 93).

Farfetched it might seem to be, such “China deconstructs” nightmare scenario does underline the long-term worries of China’s rulers over the impacts of decentralization since Dengist reforms began. The disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991 serves further as a premonition of the bad days to come. After all, China is the world’s only former empire that has not disintegrated as have, all in the 20th century, the Ottoman, Austro-Hungarian, the Western maritime empires, and the Russia empire (later, the Soviet Union). The only ethnic region that managed to break away from China is Outer Mongolia that formed the independent Mongolian People’s Republic in 1924, with Russian support, though not recognized by China until 1946.³⁶

Unity has been the greatest concern of the generation that holds dear to the conviction that China’s shameful defeat at the hands of Western and Japanese colonizers would never be allowed to be repeated, and that, though not often explicitly stated, high degree of regional autonomy especially in the non-Han regions like Tibet and Xinjiang could be the prelude to separatism and pave the way to China’s disintegration, as the cases of the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia have amply attested to. When the former Taiwanese (Republic of China) president Lee Teng-hui came up with his theory of “China in seven blocks” (中國七塊論), he was widely vilified not only in mainland China, but also among the Chinese community leaders overseas.

Lee’s idea was proposed in a book 《台灣的主張》 (“Taiwan’s viewpoint”)³⁷ he published in May 1999 towards the end of his

presidency. Lee wrote that the ideal situation is when China is finally able to throw off the yoke of Great Sinism (大中華主義) and allow comprehensive autonomy for regions with diverse cultures and differing degrees of development. Lee believed that competition among these seven regions for progress and prosperity would auger well for a more stable Asia. The proposed regions include Taiwan, Tibet, Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan), Mongolia (Inner Mongolia), the Northeast – as stated in Lee’s book – and two more regions understood to be Chiang-pei (江北, north of the Yangtze River) and Chiang-nan (江南, south of the Yangtze River).

Lee’s proposal instantly caused uproars both in China and among the overseas Chinese communities. His detractors wasted no time to show their disgust at his audacity to so explicitly propose the splitting up of China. He was crowned with the unenviable title of a stooge of the Western and Japanese anti-China forces. The fact that Lee said before twenty-two years old he had considered himself a Japanese and the media published his photograph wearing a kimono did not help, given the painful memory both in China and in the overseas Chinese communities of the unspeakable inhumanity the Japanese military committed against the Chinese populace during its 1937-1945 invasion and occupation of China and Southeast Asia. On the other hand, those who came to Lee’s defense stressed that Lee, as the first popularly elected president of the first human rights-respecting liberal democracy in the five millennia of Chinese history and the first native Taiwanese Chinese to become Taiwan’s head of state – “who successfully guided the Taiwanese people into full democracy through an election-led, gradual and peaceful process that some international observers have praised as a ‘quiet revolution’”³⁸ – was not proposing China’s disintegration, but administrative decentralization through conferring regional autonomy for economic development.

Lee's proposal might have had its origin in an earlier book 《和平七雄論》 (“A Theory of the Peaceful Seven Powers”) by Wang Wen-shan³⁹. Wang advocated breaking up China into seven parts – not seven regions, but seven independent countries. Wang's rationale is that a China with 1.3 billion people could never become a democratic country. The best way to avoid the resurrection of the ancient Chinese empire was to let China disintegrate into several smaller Chinas peacefully, voluntarily and rationally, stated Wang. It has been said that Lee was deeply impressed by Wang's book and recommended it to many people including his officials in charge of cross-Strait relations. He also showed the book to the Japanese writer Fukada Yusuke (深田佑介) during the latter's visit to Taiwan and suggested a Japanese translation. Fukada brought it back to Japan and got a Japanese version out in 1997 called, more provocatively, “Seven Chinas”, published by the 《文藝春秋》 (*Bungeishunjū*). This was not the first time the breaking up of China was suggested in Japan in recent years. Taking France as having the optimal country size, Japan's China expert Nakashima Mineo (中 (島) 嶺雄) had earlier suggested dismantling China into twelve blocks, viz. Tibet, Mongolia, Xinjiang, Manchuria, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, eastern China, southern China, western China, northern China and central China. Another Japanese China expert Miyazaki Masahiro as noted earlier with regard to Chinese citizens' anti-American nationalistic outburst, also asserted in 1995 that the post-Deng China would split into 16 small states forming a federal system.

The nightmarish scenario of China's disintegration and the most likely prospect of losing Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia, probably also Qinghai and Ningxia, and of course Taiwan, and having China shrunk by half alone is enough for the Communist Party leaders to convince many, not least among the overseas Chinese community leaders, to shun the idea of democratization and regional political autonomy. The death

of the Soviet Union hangs like the sword of Damocles to remind people that “[... when] Mikhail Gorbachev launched his radical political reform and initiated the process of political democratization in the former Soviet Union, scholars in the West argued that Gorbachev must be ‘right’ and China’s Deng Xiaoping must be ‘wrong.’ [...] However, when Gorbachev’s reforms eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet Union, Deng Xiaoping was proven ‘right.’” (Zheng and Lye, 2004) The prevalence of such views that have fed into the collective fear somehow serves well in justifying the stance of China’s current regime despite the value-loaded nature of judging right and wrong in this case. Soviet Union’s disintegration is definitely wrong in the context of the preference for stability and territorial unity, but this is highly judgmental. Firstly, as pointed out earlier, that a “nation” divided is destined to herald misery for the people might not be borne out by modern empirical evidence – the outstanding record of economic prosperity, political stability and human welfare of the many successor states of the former Austro-Hungarian empire, the Kalmar Union (the Danish empire) and, of course, the success of Taiwan. To be fair, to generalize such successes could be as empirically unsound as to be consumed by the combination of ethno-national pride and the morbid fear of losing territorial domination, but sometimes, as the proverb goes, the best things might just come in small parcels. E.F. Schumacher in his now classic *Small is beautiful* (1973) proposed the idea of “smallness within bigness” – a form of decentralization whereby for a large organization to work it must behave like a related group of small organizations: “Man is small, and, therefore, small is beautiful” (Schumacher, 1973/1975: 169). Schumacher might just have a point. Secondly, the aspiration for a unified nation under the Han Chinese domination from the point of view of the Han Chinese should be indisputable, but whether this is true from the perspective of other non-

Han Chinese people – “Chinese” as defined as “China’s citizens” – especially those who are ethnoterritorial should, to be fair, be properly seen from these ethnic minorities’ point of view, taking seriously into consideration their civil liberties and political rights as well as the right of ethnic self-determination.

Since during the recent decades of open-door policy and reform which brought mainland China astonishing economic achievements Taiwan was in fact not a part of the People’s Republic of China and her absence in the PRC did not affect in any way the rise of mainland China, as Day (2012) argues, there is absolutely no reason to believe that Taiwan’s continued absence in the PRC would constitute a hindrance in any way to the continuing rise of mainland China into a world power: so why is this inexorability of making Taiwan a part of the PRC? – a *sine qua non* for achieving a world superpower status? If Taiwan is simply a military-strategic pawn in Sino-U.S. rivalry, would the Finlandization of Taiwan, as suggested by Bruce Gilley (2010), following increasing cross-Straits economic and trade relations truly help, Day asks, to reduce Sino-U.S. tension? What would U.S.’s other allies in the Asia-Pacific think if U.S. were to so easily surrender Taiwan to the PRC?

However, the severe inadequacy of political trust causes difficulties in any meaningful progress in truly ending mutual enmity and building in turn military mutual trust, making the rather pragmatic calls of former CCP general secretary and state chairman Hu Jintao’s 31st December 2008 “告台湾同胞书” (“Letter to Our Compatriots in Taiwan”) hollow and futile. With no progress in sight in ending cross-Straits enmity and the state of war since 1949, with PRC’s eventual true or erroneous understanding that Taiwan is forever only willing to go for economic but never political integration with the mainland and with China’s ultimate objective of persuading Taiwan for unification forever remains in vain, one of the three alternative conditions for resorting to non-peaceful

means in the Anti-Secession Law, “a complete disappearance of the possibility of peaceful unification”, would assert itself (Day, 2012: 129-130). In such a situation, war is not just an alarmist talk whether from the perspective of international power rivalry, the mainland regime’s domestic pressures or the mainland leaders’ power contests and consolidation, even if the Taiwanese government were to hold dear to its present “three no’s” policy: “no unification; no independence; no use of force”⁴⁰. All in all, the fact is that: the first two on the part of Taiwan do not guarantee the third by the mainland regime, if the PRC eventually makes good on a jilted lover’s “marry me or I’ll kill you” pledge.

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Notes

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12. “The idea for the report belongs to Boris Nemtsov”, Free Russia Foundation on *Putin. War: An Independent Expert Report* (May 2015, edited by Ilya Yashin and Olga Shorina) <<https://www.4freerussia.org/putin.war/>>. Based on materials from Boris Yefimovich Nemtsov (Борис Ефимович Немцов), this report has been translated into English and published with the support of Free Russia Foundation: “Boris did not live to write the text of this report – On February 27, 2015, he was murdered on the Bolshoi Moskvoretsky Bridge, directly outside the Kremlin walls. His colleagues, friends and others who considered this work important joined together to complete Nemtsov’s project. The materials that Boris has prepared formed the basis for this report. The table of contents, hand-written notes, documentation – everything that he left behind was used in the preparation of this text.”
13. Or officially the “Communist Party of China” (CPC, 中国共产党)
14. Emile Kok-Kheng Yeoh (2020), “Postscript – From the Hong Kong Anti-Extradition Bill Protests to China’s Wuhan novel coronavirus pneumonia outbreak: Implications of two crises for the Chinese Communist Party’s governance model”, *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal* (CCPS), Vol. 6, No. 3, December 2020, pp. 1231-1442. (See §14, pp. 1250-1255; §26, pp. 1303-1306; §30, pp. 1316-1324; §33, pp. 1332-1334.) <[https://icaps.nsysu.edu.tw/static/file/131/1131/img/CCPS6\(3\)-yeoh-postscript0706.pdf](https://icaps.nsysu.edu.tw/static/file/131/1131/img/CCPS6(3)-yeoh-postscript0706.pdf)> <<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ue73c5u6iioj4u2/CCPS-V6N3-yeoh-postscript.pdf>>
15. “Ex-Nato head says Putin wanted to join alliance early on in his rule”, *The Guardian* (UK), 4th November 2021 <<https://www.theguardian.com/world>>

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16. *Ibid.*
17. “China would re-educate Taiwan in event of reunification, Ambassador says”, *Newsweek* (US), 5th August 2022 <<https://www.newsweek.com/china-reeducate-taiwan-reunification-ambassador-1731141>>; “Chinese envoy to France Lu Shaye doubles down on Taiwan ‘re-education’ aims”, *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), 8th August 2022 <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3188192/chinese-envoy-france-lu-shaye-doubles-down-taiwan-re-education>>.
18. Liu, 2005, see Liu, 2010, pp. 253-254 (my translation).
19. As a leading intellectual dissident activist from the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations and hunger strikes to *Charter 08* – for which he was sentenced to 11 years of imprisonment – Liu Xiaobo (劉曉波) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on 8th October 2010 but was unable to receive it as he was serving his 11-year sentence. He received his Ph.D. from the Beijing Normal University in 1988 with his thesis “審美與人的自由” [aesthetics and human freedom].
20. Shattuck (2021). See also Cole (2021): “For the whole of 2020, Taiwan reported a total of 380 Chinese incursions into its defence zone; that number has already exceeded 600 for 2021.” Details of China’s military manoeuvres against Taiwan as described in this paragraph and the next during the Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis were well reported in the international media.
21. “PLA able to cut Taiwan’s sea and air supply lines, island’s military reports”, *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), 9th November 2021. <<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3155428/pla-able-cut-taiwans-sea-and-air-supply-lines-islands-military>>

22. Or officially the “Kuomintang (commonly translated as “Nationalist Party”) of China” (KMT, 中國國民黨).
23. It must be noted that only partial, not full democratization had been attained and so overcoming the lingering limits to KMT tolerance of opposition was still a work-in-progress. The DPP, for example, was founded in 1986 and allowed to compete in elections, but remained technically illegal until the enactment of the Law on Civic Organizations in January 1989 (Copper, 1987).
24. The Pinnacle Islands – a group of uninhabited islands currently controlled by Japan who calls them the Senkaku Islands (尖閣諸島), a part of Okinawa prefecture (沖縄県), but claimed by both the governments of the Republic of China and the People’s Republic of China as the Taioyüt’ ai/Diaoyutai Islands (釣魚台列嶼 / 钓鱼台群島), part of the Taiwan province. The largest island of the group is the Uotsuri Jima (魚釣島) / Taioyü Tao / Diaoyu Dao (釣魚島).
25. J. Bruce Jacobs, “Taiwan 1972: Political season”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1973, pp. 102-112; Hung-Mao Tien, *The great transition: Political and social change in the Republic of China*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1989; Yun-han Chu, *Crafting democracy in Taiwan*, Taipei: Institute for National Policy Research., 1992; Linda Chao and Ramon H. Myers, *The first Chinese democracy: Political life in the Republic of China on Taiwan*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998; and Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A political history*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2003 (summarized in Ooi, 2009).
26. After the Beijing massacre of 1989, for example, many OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) nations expressed their disapproval of the CCP government’s violent actions via imposing economic sanctions which banned the transfer of high technology and governmental loans. These sanctions, however, lasted just

a paltry two years, and by the mid-1990s, most of these Western countries had warmed up to China once more.

27. Song Qiang (宋强) *et al.*, 《中国可以说不》 [China can say “No”], Beijing: 中华工商联合出版社, 1996.
28. Cited in Song (2010), p. 264, from 《邓小平文选》 [selected works of Deng Xiaoping], Volume 3, Beijing: 人民出版社, 1993, pp. 331-332.
29. Cited in Song (2010), p. 264, from Song Qiang (宋强) *et al.*, 《中国还是能说不》 [China can still say “No”], Beijing: 中国文联出版公司, 1996, p. 405.
30. Day (2012: 52, 61), Table 3-1, Table 3-2.
31. Recalling the wars of unification in Chinese history including that launched by the Ch'in (秦) state to take over the other six states during 236-221 B.C. which unified the Three Kingdoms under Chin (晋) during A.D. 263-280, the North and South Dynasties under Sui (隋) during 581-589, the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms under Sung (宋) during 962-979, by the Mongolian Yüan (元) Dynasty to take over Southern Sung (南宋) during 1235-1279, and that by the Manchurian Ch'ing (清) Dynasty to take over Southern Ming (南明) and Taiwan during 1645-1683, Day asks: Is there reason to predict a war, say around 2020, launched by China to conquer Taiwan? Similarly, recalling the wars of separation in Chinese history including the Battle of Ch'ih-pi (赤壁) in A.D. 207 that established the tripartite existence of the Three Kingdoms which lasted for 73 years, the failed Northern Expedition in 354 during the Eastern Chin (东晋) dynasty that ended up in the second Three Kingdom period that lasted 16 years, the Battle of Feishui (淝水) in 383 that resulted in the Eastern Chin and the Former Ch'in (前秦) standing in mutual north-south confrontation for 20 years, the unconcluded war of Former Sung (刘宋) against the Northern Wei (北魏) in 430 that resulted in a stalemate that lasted 49 years, the unconcluded Battle of Kao-p'ing (高平) between Later Chou (後周) and Northern Han (北汉) and war waged by

Northern Chou (北周) against Southern T'ang (南唐) during 954-957 that resulted in a division that lasted 22 years, the failure of the Manchurian Ch'ing's attack on Taiwan in 1664 that resulted in mutual confrontation between Koxinga (國姓爺, i.e. 鄭成功 (Cheng Ch'eng-kung))'s Ming remnant government on Taiwan and the Ch'ing court on the mainland for 19 years, and the failure of the attack launched by the new "People's Republic of China" on Kinmen (金門) in 1949 that left a cross-Strait confrontation till the present, Day asks: Is there reason to predict a failed war effort in the near future by the Communist Party-ruled mainland China against Taiwan resulting in a new round of cross-Strait confrontation?

32. Passed by the third conference of the 10th National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China and ratified on 14th March 2005.
33. "Ma seems to have forgotten he's running a democracy, not a Communist Party precinct", commented William Pesek in his *Bloomberg* column (Is China losing Taiwan?), 1st April 2014 (Opinion) <<https://www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2014-03-31/is-china-losing-taiwan>>.
34. Cook and Murray (2001) (quote from page 90).
35. Cook and Li (1996) (quote from page 213).
36. The Uyghurs in fact established, with Russian help, a short-lived East Turkestan Republic in 1944, but it collapsed after the 1949 Communist victory in China's civil war, and the region was reincorporated into China as the Xinjiang (新疆) Uyghur Zizhiqu (自治区, "autonomous" region) in 1955. Like the *de facto* independent Taiwan since 1949, with the collapse of the Ch'ing (清) Dynasty that led to the repatriation of the imperial troops from the region, Tibet (today China's Xizang (西藏) Zizhiqu) was in every respect virtually on her own from 1911 to 1950.
37. Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) (1999). 《台灣的主張》. Taipei: Yuan-Liou (遠流). Though usually translated as "Taiwan's Viewpoint", the title of the book literally means "Taiwan's Proposition".

38. Mashiro Wakabayashi, “Taiwan de zhuzhang (Taiwan’s Viewpoint), by Lee Teng-hui” (book review), *China Perspectives*, n°25, September-October 1999, pp. 91-92 (quote from page 91). <<https://www.cefc.com.hk/article/taiwan-de-zhuzhang-taiwans-viewpoint-by-lee-teng-hui/>> <http://www.cefc.com.hk/uk/pc/articles/art_ligne.php?num_art_ligne=2509>
39. “Wang Wen-shan” (王文山) was the pen-name of Wang Shih-jung (王世榕), a former associate professor at Taiwan’s Chinese Culture University (中國文化大學). The Chinese version of his book 《和平七雄論》 was published in December 1996.
40. President Ma Ying-jeou proclaimed the “three no’s” policy – no negotiations for unification; no pursuit of de jure independence; no use of force by either side of the Taiwan Strait – in outlining his planned approach to cross-Strait relations prior to the 22nd March 2008’s Taiwan presidential election, seemingly as antitheses to the PRC’s long-standing “three no’s” – no Taiwan independence; no “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan”; and no Taiwan membership in organizations where statehood is required.

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