

The Six Chinas: Prospects for Peaceful Futures

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An Island in Search of a Discourse

How do we talk about Taiwan/China? As we talk, so we think and act. It matters. At least three major discourses, with less important sub-discourses, are in search of human carriers:

Discourse I: The Republic of China Discourse. The Republic of China is an independent country, internationally recognized from 1912, coming out of the ruins of the Ch'ing dynasty, with the beginning of the KMT dynasty. In 1949 a part of that country came under Communist rule and still is. But the Republic of China continued, smaller, under KMT rule, on the island of Taiwan, a province of the Republic from 1885. The initial idea from 1949, to recover the part under Communist rule, thereby unifying the country, is no longer actual policy. The provincial assembly, as if the island were a province, does not make sense and will have to be abolished. Nor does it make any sense to declare independence as the country has been independent from 1912 on.

What does make sense is to explain this reality to the rest of the world so that other countries recognize the Republic of China *de jure* like 27 countries (mainly in Africa and in Central America, numbers vary) have done, and to restore to the Republic of China a seat in the UN. The road to that goal goes via membership in NGOs and IGOs (intergovernmental organizations like World Health Organization); in the meantime remaining strong and prepared for an attack from the part of the country under Communist rule while at the same time working for more positive relations. Internal changes in "mainland China" towards a more democratic regime will open for new possibilities.

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Discourse II: The People's Republic of China Discourse. From the point of view of the People's Republic of China, here referred to as China, the matter is also clear-cut. The Republic of China was ridden by deep contradictions leading to a revolutionary war that in part coincided with a national war of liberation against the Japanese invaders from 1931 in Manchuria, from 1936 in China proper. The revolutionary forces won the revolutionary war, and the People's Republic was declared on 1 October 1949 introducing a new non-emperor China with a Communist dynasty. The nationalists escaped to one island province, Taiwan, and settled there.

Like for Discourse I the problem of successor state does not arise: PRC is China. The problem of independence for Taiwan does not arise either: Taiwan is a province of China. Sooner or later Taiwan will revert to China, there will be (re)unification.

However, the discourse contains two more elements, both of them highly significant.

First, "Chinese will never fight Chinese", indicating that unification will not be by violence; but more by Taiwan finding its natural place in the world, as a part of China, when time is ripe, which may be in the longer run, like in two hundred years.

Second, *i guo, liang zi*, "one country, two systems", indicating that unification does not exclude retaining capitalism or other systems different from continental China. In practice this very high level of internal autonomy opens for a diversity that rules out the unitary state built by the Ch'in and Han dynasties -221 to +220, and points in the direction of federation and/or federation. "Hong Kong, China" can be read as belongingness but can also be read as an address. Similarly one day for Taiwan, China-Tibet, China-Xinjiang, China-Inner Mongolia, China?

Discourse III: The Independent Republic of Taiwan Discourse. This discourse challenges any Chinese legitimacy to rule Taiwan. There was Chinese settlement from 1206, but mainly from Fukien and Kwangtung provinces, and mainly talking Hokkien and Hakka, not Mandarin. The Portuguese (1590) called it Formosa. China was not able to stave off the settlement by the Dutch (1623-1661) and the Spanish (1626-1642), and when the Manchus conquered Minh China in 1644 the island resisted longer than continental China, till 1683. The province status came 200 years later, in 1885; only ten years before the province was ceded to Japan (which had invaded in 1874, preparing for the annexation of the Ryukyu Kingdom in 1879, today Okinawa) as a part of the 1895 Shimonoseki

Treaty. The resistance to Japanese take-over came from the islanders; the continent had given the island away. The Japanese occupation lasted 50 years, bringing schools, health, police, urbanization etc. to the island.

After the defeat of Japan in 1945 KMT returned and ruled the island using Japanese occupation law and institutions. This led to the massive revolt of February 28, 1947 ("2-28"), repressed by KMT, the number of dead possibly being as high as 3,000. The 1.5 million escaping from most parts of the continent, soldiers, bureaucrats and some merchants, established themselves as the legitimate owners of the land, with 13% of the population ruling over 85% Taiwanese (descendants of Chinese families living on the island before 1945), legitimizing their rule by claiming they were representing all parts of the Republic of China.

In short, the mainlanders have no legitimate claim on Taiwan. And the Taiwanese have the right to exercise their self-determination and become independent as the Republic of Taiwan, being neither Communist nor Nationalist Chinese.

These three discourses, with some variations, pose two important questions:

- to what extent are the discourses compatible/incompatible?
- to what extent are the carriers of discourses changing?

We then look at the discourses as something existing independent of the people who carry them, finding new carriers as the old carriers fade away. New (peace?) discourses may also emerge.

Let us first note that the conflict is triangular, not bilateral China-Taiwan. The two discourses on the island are at least as different as they are from the discourse on the continent; it may even be argued that Discourse I and Discourse II are neighbors. They both rule out an independent Taiwan. They both see reunification as the goal, and agree that Taiwan is a province in that China. They both believe in One China, seeing "the other China" as illegitimate, a misunderstanding, and themselves as the direct continuation of pre-October 1 1949 China. They both reject the Taiwan distinction between Taiwanese and mainlanders. They both resist, or have resisted, the democracy of one-man-one-vote. They differ as to the premises for unification, and in the image they have of future China; both a normal stance in a political struggle. In short, very similar.

Discourse III is about equidistant from them by introducing the clear majority of the 21.6 million Taiwan population as an actor. With the advent of democracy in Taiwan from 1986 it stood to reason that Dis-

course III would be more openly articulated, as a potential majority discourse. As that process continues Discourse I may fade into oblivion; it has already been modified. What remains is essentially a classical struggle for independence (Taiwan) versus integration (China).

Approaching the Contradiction: The Confederation.

We now continue with Discourses II and III, assuming that Discourse I will fade out for lack of carriers. The party correlation with the islander/mainlander distinction is not perfect (vide President Lee), nor is the correlation between the parties and the discourses perfect. But this is the prediction.

No doubt there is a contradiction between unification and independence. The classical compromise, "autonomy in internal affairs", is ruled out by Discourse III; but possibly not by Discourse II. For one country to have two systems each system has to have a certain coherence. That principle of coherence would be quite close to the idea of autonomy. But it is still one country, meaning centralized power in one place, with the classical triple unity of common foreign policy (including one foreign service and UN seat), common security policy and common finance policy (including one central bank and one currency). The independence of Discourse III would negate all three, claiming independent foreign service and UN seat, independent security policy with or without an army (30 countries in the world today have no armies) and independent central bank and currency.

The best formula for overcoming that contradiction is the confederation, combining the three aspects of independence with inter-state cooperation coordinating/harmonizing policies with the right to exit from the cooperation if it is no longer in the interest of the country. As examples might serve the Nordic Community, the pre-Maastricht European Community and the ASEAN. However, the mind-sets of "independence vs. integration" makes "confederation" sound like independence to Discourse II ; and like integration to Discourse III.

Approaching the Contradiction: Broadening Conflict Formations

At this point it seems important to take note of a simple fact: Beijing has problems not only with Taiwan, but also with Hong Kong, Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. Hong Kong, like the less important Macao,

has already reverted to China under an I guo, liang zi (one country two systems) formula as an overdue part of the historical decolonization process, eliminating the last vestiges of one of the most shameful chapters in the history of Western civilization. The problem is that for the other four we may be talking about Chinese colonization - so the parallel is with English colonization of the British Isles. Nevertheless there may be something to learn from the Hong Kong experience; as a possible model for Chinese, even UK decolonization.

Beijing is the undisputed capital of han-China. Regardless of the merits of the historical relations, usually between Beijing and elites in the three areas, the basis for settling such disputes in the era of democracy is not who gets the upper hand in a violent struggle (and Beijing has a strong upper hand) but what the people decide, exercising their right to self-determination. That should not be confused with independence: the majority might decide something else, but then they have made the decision. And the right to self-determination is not consumed once and forever.

In Discourse I Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia are Chinese, an argument undermining exercise of self-determination for Taiwan. In Discourse II the problem cannot even be formulated, today. In Discourse III self-determination should be indivisible, which means supporting the three others should the claims arise, without fomenting them. Potentially this is very explosive, but sooner or later these issues will arise. How can they be softened?

Approaching the Contradiction: The Six Chinas Family

Imagine now that the three autonomy/independence struggles within classical China all add confederation to their discourse. The argument would run about as follows. "We are not han and we have a long tradition of not being ruled by Beijing. An exercise of our right to self-determination might lead to independence, not to unification, "integration" with the "motherland", han China, and we are not going to give up that option for independence. On the other hand, what we reject is being ruled by Beijing, not a very high level of cooperation with Beijing as members of one big family. We want more than autonomy. But we also want togetherness, as equals. In fact, what we want is neither one China, nor two Chinas, but six Chinas, in something stronger than a Commonwealth, yet weaker than a federation, say, in a con-federation."

How would this sound to Discourse II ears? As mentioned, as badly disguised demands for independence, totally incompatible with Ch'in-Han unitary state traditions. But that is today.

Some reflection in Beijing might also recognize the wisdom of old daoist ideas like "in weakness there is strength". Rather than ruling the recalcitrant with a hard hand and harvest countless revolts be subtle and supple, yield a little and gain much. Borders would be open with mobility of people and ideas, factors and products like in the European Community. Foreign, security and finance policies would be harmonized. Better friendly, equitable family relations, than the iron rule of a father tyrant.

China proclaimed *i guo, liang zi*. But monastic buddhism and nomadic Islam are also "systems"; not only capitalism. All six have systems, in internal and external dialectics: *i guo, luò zǐ*; one country, six systems. What a richness, what a blessing.

Approaching the Contradiction: Good Family Relations

Returning to Taiwan after having pointed out that Taiwan is not alone (moreover, of national struggles for independence there are very many examples in the world today, outside classical China), the problem arises: how does one behave as a good family member if the family is the overarching value? Some suggestions:

[1] Change the name of the "Mainland Affairs Council". To refer to another family member as "mainland" is cold. If "China" is unacceptable (because Discourse I stands in the way), then Coast-to-Coast is neutral and quite imaginative (like "cross-straits"), leading to 3C, the Coast-to-Coast Council. This is symmetric, no connotation of "we monitoring them". The word "affairs" is not so good either: it has a family connotation but as extra-marital sex. Would Taiwan appreciate an "Island/Province Affairs Council"?

[2] Eliminate military threat language and posture. The argument here is not necessarily against military preparedness but against flexing muscles verbally or physically. A son may be stronger than the father, but usually does not show off his muscles in a threatening way. It is well known that Taiwan/US is militarily strong. The same, of course, holds for China. The firing of missiles off the coast of Taiwan was not the policy of a good family member, but of a bully trying to impress the world (not only Taiwan), marking the Taiwan straits as a Chinese inland sea located between one province and the rest, and indulging in some risk-taking (all of

which does not add up to a landing exercise). For this type of behavior to stop both sides have to stop it; the stronger side is the one who is not afraid of appearing weak by being the first to stop that kind of behavior. Taiwan would be well served with more peace studies and less “security studies”.

[3] Example: The death of Deng Xiaoping. There is an important death in the family; condolences without reservations are called for. No head of a family has an impeccable record, the death is the unique occasion not to bring up negative points but to celebrate whatever was positive. The condolence should focus on the deceased, not on the virtues of those extending the condolences. Even if you are burning inside not only to see, but to dictate the testament, the condolence message is not the place to make such points. A comparison of the messages of the Dalai Lama, President Lee, and the US President Bill Clinton did not necessarily come out in favor of the President of Taiwan.

[4] Handing the family silver back to the family. The National Palace Museum in Taipei can only exhibit 30,000 of the 700,000 art objects from Chinese culture in their possession; the exhibits are changing every three months. The transportation of those objects over many years from Beijing to Taipei via Nanjing, Chungking, Shanghai was a remarkable feat. But the fact remains that the objects belong neither to Taipei, nor to Beijing, but to the Chinese people. The objects do not all have to be in one place. The population of Taiwan is less than 2% of the population of China, and much less of the total number of Chinese.

The suggestion is not to hand back 98%, but maybe 50-75%. And not in return for anything, more as an act of generosity, out of a good heart rather than in the highly counterproductive spirit of revenge and rancor of which there has been so much. There will be reciprocity and counter-generosity, even if some time will have to pass. The treasures are priceless; market behavior and bargaining is not the correct approach. Cooperation in conserving these treasures would also be a fine peace-building endeavor.

Approaching the Contradiction: Working for Reconciliation

We are beyond the 50th anniversary of 1949. The time to draw a line, saying “this is it, let us close the Book of the Past, forgiving, not forgetting, and open the Book of the Future” has come; many would say, it is overdue. What is glory for one side is trauma for the other, given the

high level of violence with which the struggle had been fought. The generation personally suffering that trauma is encountering biological, or at least social, retirement. After a trauma in the year T the year T+40 is often a good year for reconciliation: a new generation has come into power. In Spain 1936 (the Civil War)+40=1976, the year after Franco's timely death with a new Spain being born; in Germany 1949 (the division of the country)+40=1989, the year the Wall came down and the two Germanies met again. But 1950+40=1990 passed for Korea and nothing happened), nor for China-Taiwan 1949+40=1989. But if we add ten years for a Confucianism that keeps older people in power with filial piety if they are succeeded by their sons, then 1949+50=1999 might have proved interesting; like 1950+50=2000 did for Korea: 15 June. Maybe learn from the Kim Sunshine Policy?

Here is a list of ideas for reconciliation:

[1] The reparation/restitution approach. Some money might be found for damage inflicted, for totally unwarranted suffering.

[2] The apology/forgiveness approach. Both sides may consider finding something they wish they had left undone and apologize, the assumption being that the other side will accept the apology.

[3] The historical/truth commission approach. The two sides may cooperate in a joint history commission to establish facts, and see how both sides acted out of their perspectives, in order to share the responsibility rather than distribute blame and guilt.

[4] The joint sorrow/healing approach. Both sides may come together in acts of joint sorrow, deploring the violence.

Even if governments cannot do this, maybe some citizens can?

Non-provocative, Defensive Defense

There is no guarantee that policies like the ones suggested above will work; at any rate, they will take some time. People on one side have to be convinced that they might be worth trying, they in turn will have to convince the other side that it is also in their interest; this two-step process then has to work both ways.

In the meantime it would be foolhardy to give up defense. But that defense should not provoke China. The classical Chinese (not Taiwanese) self-image as *zhong guo*, Kingdom in the Middle, surrounded by North, East, South and West barbarians (*di, yi, man* and *rong*) is to a large extent confirmed in a world where China is surrounded by an often hostile Rus-

sia to the north, American bases in Japan, Okinawa, South Korea, and the 7th fleet and Taiwan to the east, Viet Nam and India to the south, and Muslim countries related to the Turkic speaking Uighurs to the West.

A defensive defense strategy would be based on:

Conventional, short-range military defense of the PGM type that cannot be used for attacks but are highly efficient as defense; the defense that has kept a Switzerland surrounded by four big European powers for centuries unoccupied (except for Napoleon);

Paramilitary defense, militias that can operate as guerrillas behind the lines of an invader; and nonmilitary defense, a civilian population trained in civil disobedience, non-cooperation and other strategies in case of a foreign occupation.

The sum total of these strategies should make potential invaders think twice. With no capitulation there will be no quick victory, but a continuation of the struggle. Such methods have proved highly effective in the second half of this century. And they cannot be used to invade China, Both Taiwan and China would have their own dialectic. Any struggle for true democracy in China will have to be their own achievement, e.g., by starting locally.

Moving Ahead, but with Care

It should be pointed out that status quo is not a lasting solution according to any one of the three discourses. Status quo is not so bad either, it is acceptable as indicated by the fact that there are no dramatic moves to upset it (like in the Koreas). But in the longer run this is no solution, and it is also wrought with a certain danger. The transcending approach would be to introduce discourses like the above, richer than discourses I, II and III and capable of accommodating all three provided the parties are willing to yield a little and embrace some new ideas, like a confederation, the six Chinas, good family relations, concrete steps toward reconciliation, and nonprovocative defense. Such ideas need time for gestation, maturation, adding and subtracting.

The ideas suggested do not come with any linear time order; Step I, Step II and so on. Much better would be to work on all of them at the same time, making many small advances, than to make one giant step in one direction that could distort carefully balanced equilibria and then become counter-productive.

The hurdles to be overcome are considerable. A major one is the han

mind-set as the undisputed rulers of the area between the Himalayas, the desert, the tundra and the sea. The model, since -221, has been a unitary state. A major task is to convince those rulers that a looser configuration would be in their interest. A second task is to accommodate strivings for autonomy/independence within the confederation formula. The third task is for the five together to ease Beijing toward a more multilateral approach. The fourth task is to make Tibetans feel at home in Tibet, Taiwanese in Taiwan and the non-han in Western China in their parts of the confederation. Much, but not that much, time is needed.

The Six Chinas: China-Taiwan-Hong Kong-Tibet-Xinjing-I. Mongolia

Diagnosis

That there are (at least) five autonomy movements in the world's most populous and at the same time oldest country (from -221) is not surprising. Those moves for autonomy are along the periphery because han China overstretched at some point in history (but not Hong Kong/Macao where others overstretched into a han majority.) Except for Taiwan autonomy, moves are built around non-han idioms, faiths and myths; and a sense of territory. Thus, classical conditions for secession, irredentism, and claims for independence, are all present.

Prognosis

The obvious prognosis is the continuation of the recent and distant past: the Chinese center controlling han and non-han peripheries, combining carrot (clientelism, use of privileges to attract local leaders), stick (repression, in Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia), and normative policies, China as a super-nation accommodating others with nationality policies, like the Soviet efforts. The power profile differs for the five cases, and over time. A war over Hong Kong with the UK was avoided, a war over Taiwan with the US may be avoided, but also may not. Military brutality in Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia may be stepped up, but Chinese military can also be brutal in han contexts. The more foreign, barbarian powers side with a movement, the more recalcitrant the Chinese. The location of the Tibetan exile government in an India with nuclear weapons, and the deepening linkage between Taiwan and the AMPO (US-Japan) security system, counteract "reasonable" outcomes. Vicious short

and long cycles of minor violencies are likely.

Therapy

One image of a “reasonable” outcome would be to give up the two extremist positions: a Chinese unitary state with the present borders + Taiwan (the “run-away province”), and secession from that unitary state. In-between are the classics, federations and the looser confederation; outcomes not found in the Chinese past but increasingly frequently in dialogues within the parties. Autonomy in domestic affairs would be guaranteed. In federations there would be joint foreign-security-finance policies; in confederations they would be autonomous/coordinated. One scenario might be first federation, second confederation; advancing together or separately. The underlying philosophy, worthy of China, would be daoist: in strength there is weakness, in weakness strength. Repression shows the weakness of a “strong” construction, “weaker” constructions can do without that.

The hurdles to be overcome are considerable. First, the han mind-set as the undisputed rulers between the Himalayas, the desert, the tundra and the sea. Will han Chinese be convinced that a looser configuration of “six Chinas” might also be in their interest? Second, will those who seek independence find that their goals may be better satisfied in a configuration that offers enormous economies of scale and a cultural common ground; yet (in a confederation) offers military-political independence? Third: will all parties agree that time has come to solve these old Chinese problems jointly, not separately? Fourth: how to protect han Chinese in the new republics? Separate assemblies?

Tibetans may have to admit that lamaism was brutal, and that China also has positive aspects. This is easier for Taiwan being itself Chinese. But Beijing and Taipei would have to give up ideas of being the center of China in favor of more equality, with Beijing somewhat more equal than the others. Some kowtow?

