

“Mutual Historical Understanding”: The Basis for Taiwan-Mainland Relations in the Twenty-First Century

7:1 Introduction

Resolving the Taiwan-Mainland relationship is perhaps the most pressing issue in East Asia in new century. This issue makes people across the Taiwan Strait burn with anxiety and uncertainty. It threatens not only the future of Taiwan and China but also the peace and stability of East Asia as a whole for the foreseeable future. Below, we identify an indispensable basis for resolving the pressing issue of how to repair the relationship between Taiwan and the Mainland China in the most positive manner—the basis we identify lies in both parties in the relationship acquiring a heartfelt historical understanding of each side. Each party requires a better understanding of itself as well as of the other. The argument proceeds as follows.

Section One (7:2) presents our basic rationale for the indispensability of historical understanding for the parties in this relationship: genuine human relationships are established for the sake of, at the very least, not hurting either party involved; not hurting either party involved requires knowing each other well and knowing each other well consists in understanding each other's history. We conclude, therefore, that resolving the Taiwan-Mainland relationship will depend on the mutual historical understanding of both parties for its success.

Section Two (7:3) sketches Taiwan's history, in particular, the key factors, which created Taiwan's present situation, most importantly, its sad history of imperial oppression that spawned an acute yearning for independence. In light of this historical understanding

of Taiwan, we criticize quick-fix solution number one: a quick unification of Taiwan with the Mainland. This “solution” would hurt Taiwan (by overriding her hard-earned institutions and autonomy), and it would hurt the Mainland (by sowing seeds of disunity), too, because of China’s ignorance of the historical reasons for Taiwan being what it is—for example, Taiwan’s separation from the Mainland in political relations and in sentiment for 400 years, while always feeling nostalgia for an “ideal” cultural China, a yearning to “return home” and reunite with the cultural spring.

Section Three (7:4) presents historical factors and events in the Mainland, which shaped her present sentiment toward Taiwan: “Taiwan is part of one China.” In light of our historical grasp of Mainland China, we go on to criticize quick-fix solution number two: quick independence of Taiwan from Mainland. This “solution” ultimately would hurt Taiwan. Our neglect of the historical and attitudinal links of the Mainland to Taiwan would only rouse increasing the Mainlanders’ hostility, which could result in military action against Taiwan. This would be a violent backlash we in Taiwan could ill afford to face.

Section Four (7:5) sums up our basic claims: each side needs to cultivate a thorough understanding of the historical backgrounds of both parties involved—Taiwan and the Mainland—in order to establish a rational basis for resolving our problems sooner rather than later, and finding a way to create the conditions for harmony and mutual understanding. For each side to understand the history of both Taiwan and Mainland is the *sine qua non* for resolving the Taiwan-Mainland relation satisfactorily in the new century.

7:2 The Importance of Historical Understanding

The present section examines two questions: a) Why is the historical understanding of both Taiwan and Mainland China a *sine*

qua non for managing their relationship? b) In what respects do the two popular quick-fix proposals for managing this relationship lack this requisite historical understanding?

a) The Taiwan-Mainland relationship is perhaps the most pressing problem facing Taiwan today. Yet, no one comprehends how to resolve it satisfactorily. Considerable heat and dust have been kicked up over this burning emotional issue, yet heat and dust serve only to cloud our vision, so we cannot see the way to appropriate management of the problem. Two quick-fix proposals are currently in vogue in Taiwan: quick unification of Taiwan with the Mainland and quick independence of Taiwan from the Mainland. These proposals produce more heat and frustration than anything because they are impatient, naïve and lack depth of mutual historical understanding.

Before tackling the main issue, we must underscore the importance of our rationale, that is, that any negotiations regarding relationships between any social groups require, as their basis, some mutual historical understanding of all parties involved by all parties involved, in responding to one common objection that is understandable but misguided.

According to this objection, the situation of these two political groups across the Taiwan Strait is uneventful if not peaceful or amicable and this stable condition, in all probability, will persist into the indefinite future. Therefore, the issue taken up in this essay is just an insignificant side issue, for the stability of the *status quo* and its likelihood of continuation are secure and well established.

First, Ralph N. Clough, in his article “Taiwan-PRC Relations,” concluded that in the future, after the economic integration of Taiwan with the Mainland and Hong Kong, Taiwan’s economic position will continue to improve internationally, while the Tai-

wanese identity problem will remain unresolved.¹

Second, The Council of Mainland Affairs, Executive Yüan, ROC, issued on February 2002 a report of a research. The report concerns opinions of Taiwanese people about the relationship between the two political entities across the Taiwan Strait. It says that no less than 77 percent of the population prefers maintaining the status quo at present; only 1.9 percent wants quick unification with the Mainland, while another 5.5 percent want quick Taiwanese independence.²

Two important points must be raised against the above objection: one, concerning two dangers of blind complacency with the *status quo* and two, that the objection misses the basic point at issue altogether.

First, maintaining the present “stable” situation without tackling the issue could involve two risks: maintaining the present stable situation amounts to sitting on a time bomb and neglecting to deal with it altogether. This bomb is the crisis of Taiwan identity, which lies dormant but ready to explode and destroy Taiwan at any moment. An explosive does not need to be big to do damage; 3 percent of the people support radical unification while another 3 percent of the people support radical independence; that is already enough to destabilize the entire situation, now in an uneasy state of repose. If popular sentiments about Taiwanese identity are suppressed and finally killed, then Taiwan *qua* Taiwan is gone; there will be nothing more to be said about “peace” bought at the price of authentic existence itself.

Second, this objection misses the basic point raised in this

¹ Ralph N. Clough, “Taiwan-PRC Relations,” in Robert G. Sutter & William R. Johnson, eds., *Taiwan in World Affairs* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1994), p. 233.

² <http://www.mac.gov.tw/mlpolicy/pos/9101/9101.html>

essay: any negotiation regarding a human relationship must be conducted on the basis of mutual historical understanding of every party by all parties involved. This condition, *sine qua non*, has to be enforced on risk of death to the integrity of each party involved. Discussing the two extreme positions is an explication of this point; the relative stability of the situation at the present moment is not relevant to the discussion at hand.

Why is it necessary for each party to have a historical understanding of both parties involved in negotiation aiming at a balanced relationship between two parties? In brief, the rationale goes as follows. i) A human relationship should consist of and be consummated in a mutual thriving, in which no party is harmed; ii) in order not to hurt any side, each party must understand all parties involved in the relationship; iii) every human entity, no matter whether personal, political or cultural, bears a historical background and to know a person, an ethnic group, a nation, a culture, one must understand his/her/its history, which forms the distinctive integrity of that human entity. This is especially, urgently, true of the Chinese world; iv) Therefore, a good Taiwan-Mainland relationship will depend, critically, on both parties understanding the histories of both—Taiwan and the Mainland.

Point (iii) requires some elaboration. To understand a person, we must hear the life story of that person; human integrity consists of the human biography, verbalized or not, which a person always bears in his or her heart. This is especially true of China. Her political identity and cultural integrity consist in her history. In China, politics is cultural and the historical accumulation of her political-cultural experience constitutes her integrity.

Let's go slower. A person is a bundle of personal experience held together by memory through time. This is personal identity across time, one's story self-composed and remembered through time. But, such a holding together of memories of experiences

across time is, in effect, historical consciousness. Therefore, personal identity is rooted in one's sense of historical consciousness. Since a society is a collective person, a society's identity consists in its possession of historical consciousness.

This is especially true of China, as an ethnic group, a culture, a nation. The Chinese traditionally have upheld the ideal of ordering the world well in politics.³ This ideal has been a central core of nostalgia in Chinese culture since the time of Confucius and before. Therefore, in China, politics is cultural and culture is often political in tone. This ideal has been tried, failed and tried again and the records of the vicissitudes of these cultural-political experiments are what make up the history of China.⁴ No wonder China is a people, a culture, a land with such a strong historical consciousness. The Chinese are steeped in history as their background, source of norms of behavior and political management, and the final arbiter of their lives. History is that in and for which they live, move and hammer out their being.

Standing by a stream, Confucius (551–479 B.C.) sighed, "It passes on just like this, not ceasing day or night!"⁵ Chen Zi-ang 陳子昂 (662–702) of the Tang dynasty (618–907) also lamented, "Beholding no ancients,/Beholding no one's coming,/Vainly thinking how vast the skies and broad the earth,/Being alone, I lament, shed tears." Bearing historical sentiments of this sort, the

³ Cf. Robert P. Hymes & Conrad Schirokauer, eds., *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

⁴ It is lamentable that this interpenetration of culture and politics went more toward politicization of culture than toward an enculturation of politics. But, even here, we see the extent to which Chinese politics is close to culture and vice versa. For a recent treatment of this theme, see Frederick P. Brandauer & Chun-chieh Huang, eds., *Imperial Rulership and Cultural Change in Traditional China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994).

⁵ *The Analects*, 9:16.

Chinese, and especially their rulers, have been concerned with their legacy in history, whether in memories of their family and friends, or in the official annals of history. For instance, the emperors were all concerned with building their sepulchers, their “historic achievements” to be recorded by the imperial historians and their posthumous “temple names” (廟號, *miaohao*), such as “Wudi, 武帝” and “Wendi, 文帝” of the Han and so on.

In short, in China, the society, the people, the culture, the politics, all are history. To contact the Chinese and their culture is to contact their history. Their history constitutes their flavor, their atmosphere, in fact, the very existence of China. Chinese history is the very flesh and blood of China. Chinese people do not just live in history; they are their history. China (its people, its politics, its culture) is its history. China is the place where we see most clearly that the human being is *homo historiens* through and through.

Thus, both in a general sense and especially on the Chinese scene, historical consciousness and historical understanding are the *sine qua non* of important decisions in China and it would be unforgivable negligence on the part of those offering proposals for an amicable relationship between Taiwan and the Mainland, to fall short in mutual historical understanding of the two political groups across the Taiwan Strait.

Sadly, in Taiwan today we see two ahistorical quick-fix proposals for resolving the issue of cross strait relations: quick unification with the Mainland China and quick independence from the Mainland China. These two extremes meet, and share some regrettable traits.

Adherents of both proposals press for quick solutions from mutually opposed angles, raising the stakes and making the problem increasingly incendiary. Adherents on both sides are impatient about tackling this complex problem.

Adherents on both sides insist on a quick fix. Their increasing insistence in their either/or, all-or-nothing approach is potentially counterproductive; they both would entail destruction of the very purpose for which they proposed their dilemma—sanctity of the state as itself a promotion of the integrity and welfare of the people. Still, both sides are becoming so impatient and ahistorical as to exacerbate and complicate current tensions between Taiwan and Mainland China.

Therefore, instead of siding with either one of these proposals, unification or independence, this essay seeks to undercut the very dilemma and bring out the basis, the common historical universe of their discourse, on and through which Taiwan and Mainland China can come together to hammer out a fresh approach, in the interests of both. This essay offers the proposal that mutual historical understanding can provide a common basis for both parties to meet and hold meaningful deliberations.

Below, we first outline the relevant histories of Taiwan and Mainland China, then sketch out some risks of neglecting this mutual historical understanding, and finally offer a portrait of potential benefits of basing cross-strait talks and proposals on a historical understanding of both Taiwan and Mainland China.

7:3 Taiwan's Historicity: The Centripetal-Centrifugal Spirit

We are now in a position to look into what history is in China. Because Taiwanese are Chinese in appearance, yet differ in character and sentiment from Mainlanders, we must first consider the history of Taiwan. It is an exciting story, full of pathos and progress: a) outward tumultuous vicissitudes in every sense exhibit; b) an inner tension between yearning for the ideal China and political independence from Mainland which contributes to a youthful dynamism in Taiwan that is the gem, the pride, of modern China; c) the impatient proposal of Taiwan's unification with China, without

profound appreciation of this historical, youthful, cosmopolitan virility of Taiwan, would prove a fatal blow to modern China.

a. First, we look at the history of Taiwan as it unfolded from an outward angle. We see that Taiwan has gone through much pathos in tension, frustration, confusion, bloodshed, on the one hand, while making impressive progress in terms of her industrial-economic miracle, international market, cosmopolitan outlook, rapid pragmatic change, on the other. We look at: (i) many political upheavals in Taiwan then; (ii) the attendant cultural ones; (iii) both of which forged the distinctively Taiwanese spirit, the Taiwan historical consciousness in radical inner tension.

i. It is common knowledge that Taiwan has undergone several violent changes in national sovereignty, from being occupied by the Dutch (1624–1662), to Koxinga of Ming times (1661–1683), followed by the Qing Manchus (1683–1895), then the Japanese (1895–1945) and the Nationalists (1945–present).

So many radical political ruptures in so short a period of time could not help but serve as political-cultural baptisms of radically diverse kinds, one after another, usually attended with bloodshed, thereby implanting centrifugal internationalism, progressivism and independence within Taiwanese hearts and minds. At the same time, the frequent political displacements provoked historical forlornness and centripetal yearnings to return home to the cultural roots of the “ideal China.”

This oceanic-insular frame of mind, cultural and geographical, is anything but static; it is full of contrastive tensions. The basic tension that sets the stage for others—centripetal yearning after the ideal China, centrifugal flight from despotism, including that of Mainland, toward national independence—will be looked into in the next subsection (b).

ii. Another historical factor behind the centripetal-centrifugal tension typical of Taiwanese historical consciousness, the Taiwanese spirit, is the diverse cultural legacies in terms of the social, cultural and industrial “achievements” which the various political regimes bequeathed to Taiwan.

Two dramatic political changes helped to push Taiwan into international modernity. First, from 1895 the Japanese made impressive cultural contributions to Taiwan as they set about modernizing Taiwan. Japanese colonization provided the infrastructure of modernization, such as power companies, factories, railroads, an irrigation system and the Chianan Dam. At the same time, the Japanese helped to organize farm associations, institute household registration, and made primary school education compulsory.

The Nationalists arrived in 1945 and brought about four notable transformations: industrialization and urbanization, expansion of educational opportunity, social mobility and liberation of the female population. The latter three were accomplished in the urban society that resulted from rapid industrialization. The society became modern and people became more international-minded. The Land Reform Acts of the 1950s dramatically changed the economic outlook of the Taiwanese. Traditional soil sanctity and family-centeredness were replaced by mercantilism, individualism, industrialization and competition.⁶

iii. Political and cultural changes uprooted Taiwanese people from the traditional sanctity of their native soil, both agricultural and cultural. Again, this feeling of spiritual forlornness accompanied the mercantile spirit that invigorated and pushed Taiwan’s

⁶ For details of this dramatic modernization in postwar Taiwan, see my “Zhanhou Taiwan di shehui wenhua bianjian: Xianxiang yu jieshi,” in *Kaohsiung lishi yu wenhua lunji*, ed. Huang Chun-chieh (Kaohsiung: Chen Chung-ho & Weng Tsu-shan jijinhui, 1994), pp. 1–60.

economy into international modernity.

All those cultural achievements instigated both centripetal longing for historical roots, the ideal China, on the one hand, and centrifugal spurring on forward in brave independence in every sense, on the other. Years of political oppression and cultural discrimination led by various political regimes instilled in Taiwan a historical consciousness that is both centrifugal and centripetal, forever Janus-faced, always in the interim, on the go, dynamic, unstable.

b. The above description of Taiwanese history is incomplete as it stands; if the above description shows how outward political and cultural turbulence provoked a distinctive Taiwan historical consciousness, we need now to reverse the direction and ask what it is that sets the unique Taiwanese tone, style and sentiment on all these breathtaking waves of external changes.

The answer lies in Taiwanese historical consciousness. It lies in the Taiwanese historical spirit,⁷ which marks all the historical vicissitudes in Taiwan as typically and distinctively Taiwanese. And, having entertained this question, we now must consider what this Taiwanese historical consciousness means.

The Taiwanese historical consciousness is the spiritual⁸ tension between profound nostalgia for the Chinese culture as an ideal amidst the rapid social, industrial and cultural modernization of Taiwan, on the one hand and a vigorous persistent dream for independence, political, social, economic, industrial, from all extra-Taiwanese ties, including those to the Mainland, on the other. This tension has kept Taiwanese people on their toes, always

⁷ Cf. Note 11 below.

⁸ Namely, cognitive, conscious, social, politica, and cultural—not just emotional and psychological.

thrusting toward a future full of possibilities.

Dramatic expressions of this Taiwanese spirit, of this historical consciousness, as tension-filled, appear in the writings of pivotal figures from Taiwan's history up to today. The six following examples will serve to instantiate the centrifugal-centripetal tension felt in Taiwanese historical consciousness. We will then conclude with a recent proclamation of Taiwanese intelligentsia, which cannot be understood apart from this sort of Taiwanese historical consciousness.

i. The first and most straightforward example is Koxinga (國姓爺 Cheng Cheng-kung), the embattled officer and military general of the defeated Ming dynasty. He was forced to flee to Taiwan, where he planned and prepared to launch a military and political-cultural recovery of the Mainland then under the barbarian rule of the Manchurians (1644–1912). To compound the problem, his father capitulated to the Manchurians, and urged him to do likewise.

Consequently, his nostalgic loyalty to the Ming clashed with his filial love and duty. He refused to capitulate and his pain was unspeakable. Trapped on an island, his heart yearned for his homeland and the Ming regime; meanwhile, his love of this island grew, as it provided him a base for gathering his military strength. He felt the ideal and the love and he felt the hatred and independence; these sentiments clashed in his heart, on the island of Taiwan. Thus, Taiwanese historical consciousness as centrifugal-centripetal tension first emerged and crystallized in him.

His ideal was to restore the Ming on the Mainland; his antipathy was to the current barbarian Qing regime, in protest against which he stayed in Taiwan. That tension-filled historical consciousness was the first example recorded in Taiwan's history.

Interestingly, the Ming royalty called Koxinga the Yenping junwang, 延平郡王 (the local ruler who prolongs peace) [presumably of the Ming rule], as a beacon of hope for the Ming. Thus, Koxinga was a crystallization of centripetal force toward an ideal. Yet, at the same time, Chinese immigrants in Taiwan called Koxinga the “Kaishan shengwang”, 開山聖王 (the sagacious ruler who opened up the [virgin] mount [of Taiwan]); this name exhibits Koxinga as a crystallization of the centrifugal force of independence.⁹

ii. Our second example is Koxinga’s contemporary Shen Kuang-wen 沈光文 who arrived at Kinmen in 1649 from Zhejiang province. He wrote a poem full of nostalgic scenes of Zhejiang, displaying his yearnings without shame.¹⁰ Yet, his contemporary, Hsü Fu-yuan 徐孚遠 wrote a poem in praise of Taiwan as a precious abode, well-suited for evading the oppressive “Qin”, an unmistakable allusion to the current despotic regime.¹¹ Again, this

⁹ See Yang Ying, *Cong zhengshilu* (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1958), pp.39, 184–185; Chiang Jih-sheng, *Taiwan waiji* (Taipei: Shijie shu-ju, 1979), p. 191.

The theme of our present concerns—the Taiwan spirit as centripetal yearning after the ideal China combined with a centrifugal going after authenticity—is echoed by the historians’ continual debates over whether Cheng Cheng-kung “restored” the Chinese territory called Taiwan, or “opened up the new world of Taiwan” for immigrants from China. In my opinion, he did both. On these debates see, on the latter side, Yang Yun-ping, “Cheng Cheng-kung di lishi diwei kaichuang yu huifu,” in Huang Fu-san & Ts’ao Yung-ho, eds., *Taiwanshi luncong* (Taipei: Zhongwen tushu gongsi, 1980), pp. 99–104; on the former side, see Huang Tien-chuan, “Cheng Yen-ping Taiwan shiye,” *Op. Cit.*, pp. 105–24, and Sheng Ching-hsin, “Mingzheng di neizhi,” *Op. Cit.*, pp. 125–162. In July 1987, an “International Conference on Cheng Ch’eng-kung” was held at The Institute for Taiwan Studies, Amoy University. Cf. Matsuda Yoshiro, “Tei Sei-ko Kenkyu Kokusai Gakujutsu Kaigi ni sanko shite,” *Taiwanshih Kenkyu*, no. 7 (February 10, 1989), pp. 9–13.

¹⁰ Lien Heng, *Taiwan shisheng* (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1960), pp. 7–8.

¹¹ *Taiwan shisheng*, pp. 13–14. For the centripetal-centrifugal sentiment expressed in Taiwan literature during the Ming of Cheng’s period, see Chen Chao-ying, “Mingzheng shiqi Taiwan wenxue di minzu xing,” *Zhongwai wenxue*, 22:4, 1994, pp. 18–47.

exhibits the centripetal-centrifugal tension experienced among the Taiwanese.

iii. Our third example is Li Chun-sheng 李春生 (1838–1924), a grassroots intellectual, wealthy self-made businessman, successful politician with the Japanese government, a Christian and a Confucian, all rolled into one person. He was sympathetic with both the foreign regime of Japan and popular welfare of Taiwan, with both the foreign Christian faith and the native Confucian ideals and thus, exhibited both centrifugal outreach and centripetal nativism, in politics, in culture, and in religion.¹²

iv. Our fourth example is Yeh Jung-chung 葉榮鐘, a follower of the eminent landlord, Lin Hsien-tang 林獻堂. In his “Memoir” he recorded the following reflection on himself:¹³

Born in this occupied Taiwan, we have not been in our fatherland to touch its soil, to behold its rivers or its mountains. Without relatives or family there, we have no concretely experienced connection with the fatherland except in our minds, in our ideas, through written history, traditional culture. We feel a centripetal passion, perhaps to be called ‘*Volksgeist*.’ Composed as it is out of written history we have read, this image of the fatherland, the object of our passion, is powerfully provoked by the acts and behaviors of the Japanese [in Taiwan] toward us. Whenever we oppose the Japanese oppression, they tell us, ‘If you don’t want to be Japanese nationals, return home to China.’ Thus the bigger their oppression grows,

¹² Cf. Huang Chun-chieh and Ku Wei-ying, “Xinen yu jiuyi zhi jian: Li Chun-sheng di guojia centong zhi fenxi,” in Li Ming-hui, ed., *Li Ch’un-sheng di sixiang yu shidai* (Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1995).

¹³ Yeh Tsung-chung, *Dawu xiaoché jì* (Taichung: Zhongyang shuju, 1977), pp. 212–213.

the more fervent our Taiwanese yearnings for the fatherland become.

v. Our fifth example is that well-known writer, Wu Cho-liu 吳濁流 (1900–1978). Wu movingly depicted the fierce independence of the Taiwanese:¹⁴

After all, the Taiwanese were produced in the physical and historical environment of Taiwan and so have traits distinctive of Taiwan. We are of course originally of the Han race, who migrated south after being defeated in battles with other races. We came down south to Fujian and Guangdong provinces because we would never capitulate to them. Similarly, political oppression brought us over to Taiwan (and elsewhere) to be overseas Chinese and develop the brave new world of our own freedom. We belong to the elements in the Han that always refused to capitulate to other ethnic group; they fought bravely for their independence in the Mainland, then continued their heroic struggles in Taiwan. Later, having been reduced to being nationals under the Qing, they continued their numerous rebellions. Thus the Qing Manchus characterized Taiwan as a terrible place of ‘a small rebellion every three years, a great rebellion every five years.’

This passionate feeling for independence stems from an equally passionate love of the ideal China. Accordingly, he confessed poignantly:¹⁵

The love of our fatherland, being invisible, is of course a mere idea. But, amazingly, this love forever draws my

¹⁴ Wu Cho-liu, *Wuhuaguo* (Taipei: Qianwei chubanshe, 1988), p. 210.

¹⁵ Wu, *op. cit.*, p.40.

heart to it like a magnet. An orphan forever yearns for the parents he has never met, for what his parents are really like is not important to him at all. His heart just aches and pines after them, always thinking that as long as he is held safely in their bosoms he will live a life of warmth and comfort. Instinctively, we also long for our fatherland, pine after it. This is a feeling that only those who have it can understand. Except for those living under colonial foreign rule, there is perhaps no way to understand this feeling.

This “invisible fatherland” is the ideal China. He continued:¹⁶

Taiwanese have an ardent love of our homeland and our love of the fatherland is as intense. Everyone loves one’s own country. But, the Taiwanese love of fatherland is not any love of the Qing Dynasty, which is ruled by the Manchus, not the Chinese. . . . Taiwan may be temporarily under the rule of Japanese but it will surely be brought back home to our fatherland. We Chinese people will surely rise again to build up our own country. Even old folks are dreaming that one day our Chinese army will come and save our Taiwan. At the bottom of Taiwanese hearts exists that beautiful and great fatherland, our ‘China.’

Sadly, however, this image of a “beautiful great China” in Wu’s Taiwanese heart was broken into pieces during his visit to the Mainland and encounter with the hard actuality there:¹⁷

After landing there, I understood not a word of what

¹⁶ Wu, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

¹⁷ Wu, *op. cit.*, pp. 120–123.

people said. Although it was my fatherland to which I had returned, it felt completely alien and foreign to me. The train to Nanking was packed with people to an appalling degree. Passengers queued up a long snake-like line for tedious inspections. Carrying a Japanese passport, I went to another line; on waving my passport, I was perfunctorily released, without having my luggage inspected. Since Shanghai recently had been bombed, we saw only temporary barracks. The rails were all wide gauge, and the coach was wider on the inside than those in Taiwan. Passengers carried huge loads of luggage. All the train stations along the way were temporary ones, displaying recent damage from the bombardments. The scenes were all deserted, forlorn, quite a contrast to prosperous Shanghai, which is a veritable center of exploitation by foreign powers. Tall, luxurious buildings of banks and companies lined up to intimidate pedestrians. The foreigners there were so proud as to provoke indignation.

A visit of no more than three or four days to China convinced me of the miseries of being Chinese. Hoodlums boldly approached us like floods; beggars rushed in like rapid streams—these made wretched scenes of the struggle for survival. In contrast, foreigners were like despots, unspeakably haughty, behaving like they ruled over everything.

Wu was struck by the miserable actuality of China—the widespread devastation wrought by the Japanese invasion, the backwardness of Chinese society, the exploitation of foreign imperialism. This is the stark contrast of two Chinas, the ideal and the actual.

vi. Our final example is our contemporary, Peng Ming-min 彭

明敏。He holds a Ph.D. from France and taught at National Taiwan University until he was expelled from the post and exiled himself abroad. His vivid description of the impact his parents and he as a young boy received when they went together to Mainland China is well worth quoting:¹⁸

When I was about five, I was brought to China. I still remember how cold Shanghai was, how long and many were the steps leading up to the Zhongshan Tomb in Nanjing were. This trip gave my parents an opportunity to compare the living conditions of Mainlanders with those of the Taiwanese after several decades of Japanese occupation. They were of course impressed by vastness of China, and felt nostalgia for the soil of our forefathers. In areas of social development, industrialization, education and public sanitation, however, they felt that, compared with conditions in Taiwan, China had much room for improvement.

The last two quotations vividly illustrate the shock felt at the sheer contrast between two Chinas—the actual versus the ideal. The shock was so great that it instigated a centrifugal thrust away from China toward the independent development of Taiwan.

This was what P'eng said on the Taiwanese spirit of independence:¹⁹

During our fathers' generation, together with our own, thousands of educated Taiwanese have constantly sup-

¹⁸ Peng Ming-min, *Zhiyou di zhiwei* (Taipei: Qianwei chubanshe, 1988), pp. 28–29. For Peng's China experience, see Lai Tse-han, Ramon H. Myers, and Wei Wou, *A Tragic Beginning: The Taiwan Uprising of February 28, 1947* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 18–23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

ported the Taiwan self-government movement. At first, during the First World War they organized such a movement, encouraged as they were by the American President's call to the world to recognize the rights of the minority races in the world. In the 1920s Taiwanese leaders continuously demanded the Japanese government to let the Taiwanese participate in the government and legislature of Taiwan, until in 1935 Japan began to yield. From local elections to local town meetings, the right to vote gradually expanded. In the early part of 1945 the Japanese government finally announced that the Taiwanese were allowed to enjoy the same political rights as those enjoyed by the Japanese.

Peng was perhaps referring to the movement from 1921 to 1934 to petition the establishment of a Taiwan parliamentary system; this was in opposition to the Japanese policy of assimilation.²⁰ In the same vein, Hung Shih-chu 洪石柱, the founder of the Taiwan Culture Movement during the Japanese occupation, challenged the Nationalist government (in the early years of Retrocession) to set up a legal provincial system of government to replace the temporary and arbitrary military government at the time.²¹

c. (i) In light of above description of Taiwanese historical consciousness, we now understand the pathos and inner spiritual meaning of many struggles for political reforms in Taiwan, as crystallized in the recent epoch-making Declarations jointly issued by a group of young Taiwan intellectuals; ii) The unification proposal can ill afford to bypass this Taiwanese historical spirit to merely force its quick fix onto Taiwan. Doing so would destroy Mainland China as well as Taiwan.

²⁰ Cf. Chou Wan-yao, *Riju shidai yihui shezhi qingyuan yundong* (Taipei: Zhili baoxi wenhua chubanshu, 1988), p. 183.

²¹ See Chung Yih-jen, *Xinsuan liushinian*, p.364.

In December 1993, on the eve of a visit to Taiwan by the delegation of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait in Mainland China, a Declaration of Taiwanese intent was issued jointly by no less than twenty-three organizations including the powerful Taiwanese Professors' Association. The Declaration concludes with:²²

The Taiwanese have the right to decide on the future of Taiwan and choose their own respective styles of living. Whatever regime desires to win the support of the Taiwanese must recognize their identity and organize with them a 'community for the Taiwan destiny.

This was a declaration of Taiwanese dignity, identity and subjectivity that occurred for the first time in the history of Taiwan, attended with all historical depths described in the preceding.

This Declaration was not a simple, naive protest out of frustrated individualism against a despotic Leviathan of statism. Such a simple individual-state antagonism, where each side neither can nor cannot do without the other, is a typical picture in the West. But, it is not Taiwanese. Taiwan's centripetal pole in the tension in its historical consciousness—the origin and spirit of the Declaration—bespeaks clearly its yearning after the ideal China to which Taiwanese pine to be reunited. What the individual is to society in Taiwan is more like what the child is to the parents than like what the enemy is to another.

Wu Cho-liu eloquently expressed this sentiment in his suffering-consciousness, "orphan"-mentality, presented in his justly celebrated novel, *The Orphan of Asia*, written during the Japanese occupation, yet suffering from the discrimination of "compatriots"

²² *Zili Wanbao*, December 12, 1993, p. 14.

(同胞, *tongbao*) of Mainland China. Suffering from foreign oppression is understandable; but to suffer because of one's own compatriots is not so easily understood, and may be harder to take. Wu described the experience in this way:²³

I used to think that once I stepped out of Taiwan I would be free as a bird out of a cage. I found to my surprise that today's China has the same watchful eyes as the Japanese secret policemen sparkling at us from behind, just as they do in Taiwan. Our fellow Chinese, on their part, look suspiciously on us as Japanese spies dispatched from Taiwan. We dare not expose our identities under these circumstances; we merely say we are from Fujian or from Guangdong, and we use 'potatoes' as a secret password to identify ourselves with those from Taiwan.

Today's Taiwanese people are like orphans deprived of parents. No matter whether in Zhongjing or in the territory of Chiang shadow regime, we are viewed as 'elements differing from us.' They not only refuse to recognize us as Taiwanese, they regard us as spies!

We are here struck by how apt, and how justly renowned, Wu's image of the orphan's mind was in crystallizing the complex historical consciousness of the Taiwanese. Exiled, alone on the lonely island of Taiwan, continually oppressed by aliens, the Taiwanese people came to yearn after their parents in the fatherland of the Mainland. This centripetal yearning for one's historical roots was, however, brutally stymied by the actual China, both backward and as brutal, as aliens. And so, the orphan's quest for parents turned to questing for the ideal China and the orphan took off in a new direction, centrifugally away from the actual China. All this

²³ Wu Cho-liu, *Taiwan lianjiao* (Taipei: Qianwei chubanshe, 1988), pp. 104, 223.

was graphically depicted both above and in section *II.b.v*. Thus, the mind of the orphan neatly synthesizes the centripetal-centrifugal tension in Taiwan's historical consciousness.

This orphan in the Taiwanese hearts does grow up and as he grows up, his yearning grows and changes, too. The orphan-sentiment, yearning after the ideal parent of ideal China, was true of the pre-1945 times under foreign rule; now it has undergone a contemporary metamorphosis, following the postwar economic miracles and educational, political reforms. The ideal parent of Chinese culture has changed into the ideal integrity of the self, grown out of orphanhood. One of the energetic young intellectuals puts it this way:²⁴

The Orphan of Asia now knows that his autonomy, his standing on one's own feet means his 'wofen' consciousness, a resolute rising-up to struggle. The selfdignity of this Asia's Orphan consists not only in new developments in literature and philosophy, but in social, cultural, institutional achievements. And this Orphan's (wofen's) growth and accomplishments imply the establishment of a new China. This Orphan's standing up from childish crawling shall result also in the standing up of all peoples in the world.

The sentiment now has become less forlornly nostalgic and more aggressively assertive, or rather, more nostalgic of the authentic Taiwanese subjectivity and integrity than of the ideal China. The image of the ideal China has been deconstructed, though far from lost, in the form of protest for Taiwanese sovereignty and individual integrity. Its focus is no longer the ideal old China but Taiwan's own ideal subjectivity and integrity, although it still lacks

²⁴ Chiang Nien-feng, *Taiwanren yu xin Zhongguo: gei minjindang di yige xingdong zhexue* (Taichung: author's own publication, 1988), p. 9.

definition. This ignorance generates youthful Taiwan's eternal nostalgia, constituting a new centripetal force in Taiwan's transformed historical consciousness.

ii. The unification proposal, in light of above understanding of Taiwan *qua* Taiwan in its historical spirit, must be tempered with an appreciation of the modern, historical consciousness of its people, expressed elegantly in the recent Declaration for the silent majority. Otherwise, tragic destruction of Taiwan *qua* Taiwan would follow, and the destruction would bring irreparable damage to the Mainland.

Taiwan is anything but marginal to the Mainland, a negligible territory. Taiwan is a gem, the cutting edge of Chinese modernity, as international as Hong Kong and more historically Chinese than Hong Kong, a unique exhibition of Chinese strength to the contemporary world in democratic fervor, international marketing, industrial development, social dynamism and virile cosmopolitanism. In thousands of years of history, China has never been more progressive and prosperous, democratically and internationally self-aware, virile and forward-looking than Taiwan is today.²⁵

²⁵ All observers from Mainland China were overwhelmingly impressed by the tremendous prosperity of Taiwan. For Liang Chi-chao's praise of Taiwan in 1911, see Liang Chi-chao, "Yu Taiwan shudu diyi xin," in his *Yinpingshi wenji* (Taipei: Shijie shuju, n. d., juan 4), p. 14. When Chen Yi, the governor of Fujian Province, visited Taiwan in 1935, he was so impressed, especially by the infrastructure in Taiwan constructed by the Japanese, that he invited the Japanese engineers responsible for constructing the Chianan Dam to visit Fujian. See Hurugawa Shozo, *Taiwan o Aishita Nihonjin—Kanan Taishin no Chichi Hatta Yoichi no Shogai* (Matsuyama Shi: Aoyama Tosho, 1989), pp. 260-61.

After World War II, technocrats of the Sino-American Joint Commission on Rural Reconstruction (JCRR) came to Taiwan and praised the socioeconomic situation in rural areas. See *Zhongguo nongcun fuxing lianhe weiyuanhui gongzuo baogao* (Taipei: JCRR, 1950), p. 12. For a general discussion on postwar transformation in Taiwan, see chun-chieh Huang et. al. eds., *Postwar Taiwan Experience in Historical Perspective* (College Park: University Press of Maryland, 1998).

To crush this gem in blatant neglect of the Taiwanese spirit as the youthful vitality of China would be to crush the Chinese Treasure Island (*Baodao*), the envy of every Mainlander, the pride of China. If she were to crush the Taiwanese historical spirit, Mainland China would return to the impossible condition of pre-modern poverty in every respect—economically, politically, Industrially and internationally. The ease of destroying Taiwan—after all, it’s just a small island—redounds to the lethal gravity of liability to the Mainland. The Mainland could never crush Taiwan’s historical spirit without crushing its own forward-looking, modern, futuristic, international self.

7:4 Mainland’s Historicity: Zealous Nationalism

This section can be as brief as its theme is simple: (a) the Mainland has nationalistic fervor, provoked by foreign invasions and domestic warfare among warlords, to protect “our own” territories, including Taiwan; (b) without understanding this historical sentiment felt on Mainland, any Taiwanese independence proposal simply will ruin Taiwan.

a. (i) Mainland China in recent years has been an embattled territory, torn apart by internecine and international warfare; (ii) one of the results provoked by these threats to national unity is a strong sentiment of nationalism and: (iii) nationalistic fervor entails zeal to control territories the government claims as theirs; the following provides historical evidence for these points.

i. Anyone familiar with the history of China knows she has been torn apart by continuous violence, from the demise of Qing dynasty until the Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989.

We recall the Boxer Rebellion, the eight Western Powers attacking Peking and the subsequent infamous Hinchou Treaty (1900–1901), followed the Xinhai Revolution of 1911 that finally

ended Qing rule. But, from the moment of Sun Yat-sen's inauguration as president of the provisional government of the Republic of China, China was torn apart by endless violence, domestic and international. Yuan Shikai (1859–1916) proclaimed himself emperor and Japan proposed Twenty-One Demands with the intention of invading China (1915), followed by continual domestic warfare, especially from 1917 to 1924, until 1928 when China was officially unified.

But, on July 7, 1937 the Sino-Japanese War broke out, plunging China into misery for eight long years, intensified by additional domestic rivalries, ending in the retrocession of Taiwan from Japan to the Republic of China. The Communist takeover of the Mainland, however, failed to bring stability and concord to Mainland China. The Mainland suffered repeated waves of domestic violence, including the Anti-Right Movement of 1957–1958, the Great Leap Forward Movement of 1958–1960 and the long turmoil of Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976, all culminating in the tragic Tiananmen Square Incident of June 4, 1989. Such is a brief retelling of embattled miseries of Mainland China.

ii. Wartime miseries on the Mainland provoked nationalistic fervor. As early as January 1924, Sun Yat-sen (1886–1925) began his celebrated *Three Peoples' Principles* with a passionate nationalistic appeal:²⁶

The Three People's Principles are the Principles to save our nation. . . . These Principles promote the international prestige of our nation, so as to strengthen our economic and political position in the world, so that our nation can exist vigorously in the world. Therefore, I say,

²⁶ Guofu qianji, ed., *Zhongguo Kuomintang zhongyangdangshi shiliao biancuan weiyuanhui* (Taipei: Zhonghuaminguo gejie jinian Guofu bainian danchen choubi weiyuanhui, 1965), Vol. 1, p. 2.

our Three People's Principles are the Principles that will save our nation.

At the Ceremony of the Founding of the Peoples' Republic of China, on October 1, 1949, Mao Zedong (1893–1976) opened his speech with, “From today on, the people of China stand up.” Their political successes owed to this sort of manipulative incitement of seething nationalistic sentiment at the time.

Among Chinese intellectuals, Chang Chun-mai 張君勱 (Tung-sun, 1887–1969), the great architect of the Constitution of China, urged a Chinese translation of Fichte's (1762–1814) fervent *Speech to the German People—A Summary*. Chang often lectured on the spirit of nationalism, the reexamination of Chinese culture and its future, and related issues.²⁷ Thus, nationalism rose up out of the ashes of the war miseries felt on the Chinese mainland.

iii. Nationalism breeds protective zeal over territories the government regards as their own. As early as February 8, 1841, Qing Emperor Xüanzong 宣宗 (r. 1841–1850) issued an Edict of advice expressing worries over Taiwan:²⁸

[Many and varied violent incidents came up one after another in Taiwan.] I have dispatched officers with pay, both civil and military, to Taiwan to oversee, manage and pacify the region. It has been several months since then, and there are yet no reports on the outcome; we are much worried. Taiwan is our key strategic area in the Min Ocean region, traditionally much desired by many

²⁷ Cf. Hsueh Hua-yuan, *Minzhu xianzheng yu minzhuzhuyi di bianzheng fazhan* (Taipei: Daohe Publishers, 1993), p. 42.

²⁸ Yao Ying, “Cun zhi Fuzhou chuoyi Taiwan fuwuzhe,” (February 16, 1843), in Hu Chiu-yuan, ed., *Zhongguo dui xifang zhi liehqiand zenshi ziliao huibian* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1971), Vol. 1, Book I, p. 308.

barbarian nations. We do hope that our repulses of foreign vessels will ensure there won't be any more maritime invasions.

The governor of Fujian province in the latter half of the nineteenth century, Ting Jih-ch'ang 丁日昌 (?–1882), expressed the same sentiment over Taiwan in his official letter to the imperial court:²⁹

[Various nations hold various places in Asia and our country as their respective exclusive ports and enclaves.] Germany alone has no port to harbor its vessels. And so, Germany would desire to take over Taiwan more than other nations.

On skimming through a travelogue to Taiwan written by a friend, an intellectual of the time, Mei Wen-ting 梅文鼎 (Ting-chiu 定九, 1633–1721) lamented in a poem, “[Many foreign nations] already tarry, stoop over and peep at the Southern part of our Ocean; the formation is set ominously.”³⁰ All this shows that from the early days on, people in the Mainland, whether in the imperial court or among discerning commoners, have been concerned about the situation in Taiwan.

b. We must then understand Mainland's historicity—its nationalistic fervor and its protectionism. Protectionistic sensibility naturally breeds defensiveness over even slight indications of foreign influence, especially political or cultural, within their territories. And so those who propose Taiwan independence must be on

²⁹ Ting Jih-chang, “Minfu Ting Jih-chang chuo Xibanya kuishi Taiwan qingxing pien,” in *Qing ji waijiao shiliao xuanji* (Taipei: Taiwan yinhang jingji yanjiushi, 1964), pp. 16–17.

³⁰ Mei Wen-ting, *Jixuetang wenchao*, Woodblock edition collected in the Naikaku Bunko, Japan, n. d., Chuan 4, pp. 5b–7a.

the alert. Their quick fix idea of clean-cut independence from Mainland China, as soon as possible, would prove fatal. This fatality would be two-edged—military and cultural.

i. On the eve of its fulfillment, Taiwan would be destroyed, first, by Mainland's mighty military, due to Mainland China's antipathy toward subversion of its sovereignty, whether domestic or foreign. Taiwan would be crushed in no time upon its declaration of independence. After all, "Taiwan the gem" is but a tiny irritant to the vast Mainland, easy to crush and discard.

ii. More radically, there would be no true Taiwanese remnants, and so not even a trace of hope for its future. Taiwan would be destroyed upon its declaration of independence because it would have thrown out the baby of the ideal China with dirty water of the actual one. Bereft of Chinese cultural legacies, Taiwan would be impoverished at its root.³¹ Cut off from the base of its centripetal yearning, Taiwan would have no more subjectivity to treasure, fight for, enrich, develop and invigorate. It would simply drift away reactively, centrifugally, alone and rootless, destined to be lost in a centrifugal who-knows-what. Without deep appreciation of the historical roots of Mainland China, quick Taiwan declaration of independence would bring about the destruction of Taiwan without further ado.

7:5 Historical Understanding: The Hope of the Relationship

We have examined the necessity of mutual historical understanding of both parties in a relationship in order to achieve an amicable, interdependent and mutually thriving relationship.

³¹ For an elaboration of this point, see Chun-chieh Huang and Kuang-ming Wu, "Taiwan and Confucian Aspiration: Toward the Twenty-First Century," in Stevan Harrell & Chun-chieh Huang, eds., *Cultural Change in Postwar Taiwan* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1994), pp. 69–88.

We have shown that personal understanding in a true sense means historical understanding, by delving into what has made Taiwan what it is today and what has made Mainland what it is today—their respective historical experiences. And we have underscored the real risks of not going through this process of arriving at a historical understanding of both parties by both parties. Lack of mutual historical understanding would prove so disastrous as to endanger the existence of both sides.

And, the contrary is true, as well. Negotiators who are sensitive to each other's histories will reap complementarity, mutual satisfaction and thriving in an interdependent manner such that one party's prosperity will contribute to the prosperity of the other. But, how? To understand each other, both parties must communicate and that at a grassroots, people's level, not at an official, governmental level, to ensure a widespread, heart-to-heart understanding. Popular communication should include commercial dealings and negotiations, at both personal and institutional levels. Popular communication should also include cultural exchanges—scholarly, artistic, religious as well as popular. This is how one party can start to recognize the other in a deep personal manner. In short, understanding is needed in human relations and negotiations, history is involved in human understanding, and understanding in historical depth is facilitated by communication on a long-term personal basis. In the human world, patience in communication for historical understanding is the royal road, in fact, the only road, to a successful relationship. The Taiwan-Mainland relationship is no exception.