

DEAN P. CHEN

Liberal Internationalism, Jacksonian Nationalism, and the US One China Policy

ABSTRACT

This article examines how Wilsonian foreign policy tradition has shaped the postwar US One China policy, and how Jacksonianism, championed by the Donald Trump administration, challenges that vision. Embracing militant nationalism, commercial mercantilism, and unilateralist diplomacy, Trump's commitment to "One China" will more likely be conditional on Sino–American transactional interchanges.

KEYWORDS: US One China Policy, Jacksonianism, Wilsonianism, grand strategy, Donald Trump

THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT Donald J. Trump on January 20, 2017, suggests that US foreign policy is moving away from the Wilsonian tradition, which has guided foreign policymaking since the end of World War II, toward "America first" Jacksonianism.¹ This transformation in US foreign policy perspective may lead to alterations of wide-ranging American foreign policy interests, including Washington's decades-old One China policy.

MAIN ARGUMENTS

Trump's telephone call with Tsai Ing-wen, the president of Taiwan (Republic of China, ROC), on December 2, 2016, was a move unprecedented since 1979, when Washington formally recognized the People's Republic of China

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1. David E. Sanger, "With Echoes of the '30s, Trump Resurrects a Hard-Line Vision of 'America First,'" *The New York Times*, January 20, 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/20/us/politics/trump-resurrects-dark-definition-of-america-first-vision.html>>; see also Walter R. Mead, "The Jacksonian Revolt: American Populism and the Liberal Order," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2017, <<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2017-01-20/jacksonian-revolt>>.

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(PRC) as the sole legitimate Chinese government and severed diplomatic ties with Taipei's ROC government.² No American president or president-elect has ever talked directly with Taiwan's head of state, because Washington–Taipei interactions have been kept at unofficial levels to avoid destabilizing the overarching Sino–American relationship. The Chinese government considers Taiwan a renegade province that separated politically from the Mainland due to the Chinese Civil War of the late 1940s between Chiang Kai-shek's Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT) and Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Beijing believes Taiwan must be recovered eventually, through peaceful means—or not. The open and explicit description, in one of Trump's Twitter posts, of Tsai as the “president of Taiwan” also broke with tradition because that designation strongly suggested that America might recognize Taiwan as an independent nation, which goes against the One China policy.³

Trump was then only the president-elect, which weakened the “officialness” of the phone communication, but there is no doubt that the new American president shook up the foundations of US–China relations. The situation was further exacerbated by the fact that Tsai's Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) traditionally favors Taiwanese independence. Since Tsai's inauguration in May 2016, cross-strait interactions have been suspended by Beijing because the Tsai administration has refused to accept the “1992 consensus,” a tacit understanding reached between the KMT and CCP in Hong Kong in November 1992 that Taiwan and Mainland China belong to a single Chinese nation, although the meaning of “China” is subject to different interpretations. Under the KMT's Ma Ying-jeou, Tsai's predecessor, cross-strait political and economic ties became very close because of Ma's endorsement of the “1992 consensus.”⁴

The Trump team unapologetically defended the decision to receive Tsai Ing-wen's congratulatory call. From their perspective, she is the duly elected leader of a liberal democracy that has had close and enduring socioeconomic,

2. Anne Gearan, “Trump Speaks with Taiwanese President, A Major Break with Decades of US Policy on China,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/trump-spoke-with-taiwanese-president-a-major-break-with-decades-of-us-policy-on-china/2016/12/02/b98d3a22-b8ca-11e6-959c-172c82123976_story.html>.

3. Ibid.

4. Shirley Lin, *Taiwan's China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan's Cross-Strait Economic Policy* (Stanford, CA, Stanford University Press, 2016): 169–72.

political, and security ties with America since the Cold War years.⁵ In the transition period before his inauguration as America's 45th president, Trump continued to test Beijing's nerve by questioning whether the US should even adhere to the One China policy if the PRC persists in challenging US economic and security interests, for example by failing to rein in North Korea's nuclear ambitions and by constructing artificial islands and militarizing them in the South China Sea.⁶ The implication that Taiwan's status vis-à-vis Mainland China is ultimately "negotiable" (pending the PRC's concessions) was vehemently condemned by Beijing.⁷ However, on February 9, 2017, in his phone call with China's President Xi Jinping, Trump affirmed that his administration would continue to honor the US One China policy. While the potential for raising security and economic tensions remains for both countries, the president has pulled back, at least for the time being, from overturning the 45-year-old bedrock of US–China relations.⁸ Following his amicable meeting with Xi in Palm Beach, Florida, in April, Trump has projected a much more upbeat attitude about US–China relations, with the obvious hope of getting Beijing to step up its efforts to curtail North Korea's nuclear and missile threats.⁹ Trump then spurned Tsai Ing-wen's suggestion of another phone call: "Look, my problem is I have established a very good personal relationship with President Xi. I really feel that he's doing everything in his power to help us with a big situation [North Korea]. So I wouldn't want to be causing difficulty right now for him. I think he's doing an amazing job as a leader. . . . So I would certainly want to speak to him first."¹⁰

5. Ryan Struyk, "Vice President-Elect Pence Says Trump's Phone Call with Taiwan 'Just a Courtesy Call,'" *ABC News*, December 4, 2016, <<http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/vice-president-elect-pence-trumps-phone-call-taiwan/story?id=43952277>>.

6. Caren Bohan and David Brunnstrom, "Trump Says US Not Necessarily Bound by 'One China' Policy," *Reuters*, December 11, 2016, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-china-idUSKBN1400TY>>.

7. Phil Helsel, "Beijing Says One China Policy 'Non-Negotiable' after Trump Comments," *NBC News*, January 14, 2017, <<http://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/beijing-says-one-china-policy-non-negotiable-after-trump-comments-n707006>>.

8. Demetri Sevastopulo, "Trump Backs 'One China' Policy in First Presidential Call with Xi," *Financial Times*, February 10, 2017, <<https://www.ft.com/content/40825e36-e33f-11e6-930f-061b0e23655>>.

9. Chris Buckley, "A Spring Thaw? Trump Now Has 'Very Good' Words for China's Leader," *New York Times*, April 29, 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/29/world/asia/trump-xi-jinping-china.html>>.

10. Jeff Mason, Stephen J. Adler, and Steve Holland, "Trump Spurns Taiwan President's Suggestion for Another Phone Call," *Reuters*, April 28, 2017, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-taiwan-exclusive-idUSKBN17U05I>>.

Notwithstanding this reiteration of America's commitment to its long-standing One China stance, this article argues that since the Trump administration's strategic rationale—rooted in the Jacksonian tradition—is vastly different from the Wilsonian principles that have underpinned US foreign relations since 1945, its policy approach is likely to subject the Taiwan Strait to greater volatility.

Before further discussion, however, I want to clarify the characterization of Jacksonianism versus Wilsonianism in US foreign policy debates. First, American foreign policy traditions are never neatly divided into the conventional dichotomy of realism versus liberalism. Thus, it would be untenable to equate Jacksonianism with realism and Wilsonianism with liberalism. Rather, US foreign policy has always embodied these two theoretical perspectives, so that for the American grand strategist it is never a question of material national interests (realism) versus normative democratic ideals (liberalism) but one of how best to simultaneously achieve its interests and promote democracy. Wilsonians and Jacksonians, therefore, should be seen “less as polar opposites and more as allies in the effort to find a proper place for the United States on a global stage.”¹¹ The overarching position in the US is that there is no way to choose material interests over norms or vice versa, but that the “United States has to pursue both at the same time because its values and interests are inherently intertwined.” In fact, American leaders believe that the “advancement of US material interests inevitably promotes the spread of US values, and the spread of US values simultaneously advances US material interests.”¹² Walter McDougall's distinction between those viewing America as the “promised land” and those seeing it as the “crusading state” is pertinent here.¹³ The “promised landers” (Jacksonians) propose that the US can best protect its interests and advance its democratic ideals by not actively pushing those values onto others. In other words, they are less interested in cosmopolitan projects for world order and global governance than they are in the preservation of America's national sovereignty.¹⁴ The US should focus on

11. Christopher Hemmer, *American Pendulum: Recurring Debates in US Grand Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015), 19.

12. *Ibid.*, 10.

13. Walter McDougall, *Promised Land, Crusader State: The American Encounter with the World since 1776* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1998).

14. Colin Dueck, *The Obama Doctrine: American Grand Strategy Today* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 177.

“perfecting democracy at home, thus making it a model that others want to emulate.” On the other hand, adherents of the “crusader state” (Wilsonians) trust that only by actively striving to get others to adopt core US principles, either converting or defeating those rejecting liberal democracy, human rights, and the free market, will America attain lasting security and hegemony.¹⁵

Second, the Jacksonians are no less internationalist than the Wilsonians. Indeed, the debate between isolationism and internationalism is not particularly useful in describing the evolution of US foreign policy because internationalism has more or less dominated since the founding of the republic in the late eighteenth century, considering America’s fervent drives for continental expansion, international commerce, and maritime stretch toward the Pacific.¹⁶ Both Wilsonians and Jacksonians share the conviction that for the US, safety “comes from enlarging, rather than contracting, its sphere of responsibilities.”¹⁷ But they disagree over the appropriate means to strengthen US power and influence abroad: the former emphasize multilateralism, the latter unilateralism—freeing America from entangling alliances and expanding its autonomy in selective diplomatic and economic decision-making.¹⁸ Jacksonians, essentially, are not isolationists. According to Walter Mead, “Although they value allies and believe that the United States must honor its [international obligations], they do not believe in institutional constraints on the United States’ freedom to act, unilaterally if necessary, in self-defense.”¹⁹ Though concerned about advancing US commercial interests around the world, the Jacksonians “opposed involving the United States in alliances, wars, or revolutions unless such conflicts posed an ultimate threat to American security.”²⁰

15. Christopher Layne, *The Peace of Illusions: American Grand Strategy from 1940 to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 30–34; Michael Green, *By More than Providence: Grand Strategy and American Power in the Asia Pacific since 1783* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 9–10.

16. Green, *By More than Providence*, 17–18; Hemmer, *American Pendulum*, 7.

17. John Lewis Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 12–13.

18. *Ibid.*, 22–23.

19. Walter R. Mead, “The Tea Party, Populism, and the Domestic Culture of US Foreign Policy,” in James McCormick, ed., *The Domestic Sources of American Foreign Policy: Insights and Evidence* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 59.

20. John Belohlavek, *Let the Eagle Soar! The Foreign Policy of Andrew Jackson* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 18.

Third, Wilsonians are no more pacific than Jacksonians. Although Jacksonians are merciless toward America's foreign enemies and insist on their unconditional surrender, Wilsonians often endorse armed diplomacy and military interventions to foster regime change, nation-building, and political liberalization and democratization.²¹

Finally, the use of the terms Jacksonianism and Wilsonianism does not mean that these foreign policy traditions originated only from Presidents Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson. Many of these ideas had already been propagated and articulated before their respective ascendancies.²² Ironically, it was Jackson's predecessor and arch-rival, John Quincy Adams, who advocated unilateralism in foreign policy and stated that America "goes not abroad in search of monsters to destroy."²³ And long before Wilson, Presidents Thomas Jefferson, John Tyler, and James Polk had already proposed that commerce and American republicanism would transform international relations without resort to the wars and machinations of the Old World, although they were then primarily preoccupied with westward expansion on the American continent.²⁴ Theodore Roosevelt actually agreed with Wilson that "promoting self-governance abroad would help make the United States more secure by warding off threats that could come from ungoverned or poorly governed areas."²⁵ Nevertheless, the names for these schools were chosen not at random but because Presidents Jackson and Wilson were their key spokesmen during fundamental transformations in American politics and diplomacy. Andrew Jackson tapped populist energy in the 1830s to remake the United States' party system and introduce mass electoral politics into the country for good. Highly suspicious of economic elites and the political establishment, Jackson evinced strong nationalistic sentiments that tied US security and commercial interests closely to the betterment of average American citizens.²⁶ Wilson oversaw US foreign policy during World War I, an effort that spurred a dramatic departure from past practices. He envisioned

21. Henry Nau, *Conservative Internationalism: Armed Diplomacy under Jefferson, Polk, Truman, and Reagan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015).

22. Walter R. Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 134.

23. Samuel Flagg Bemis, *John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973).

24. Green, *By More than Providence*, 36.

25. Hemmer, *American Pendulum*, 24.

26. Mead, "Tea Party," 57–58; see also Belohlavek, *Let the Eagle Soar*, 9–10.

and enunciated a comprehensive program—the Fourteen Points—in which Washington’s leadership would be extended globally to ensure US security, democracy, and prosperity. Despite the initial failure of Wilsonianism in the interwar years, it was resurrected by Franklin Roosevelt with an eye to constructing the post–World War II international order.²⁷

The Trump administration, in following the Jacksonian tradition, is less encumbered by the Wilsonian ethos of respecting Chinese national unity and territorial integrity and of using constructive engagement to promote and deepen China’s economic opening and greater integration with the multilateral international system.²⁸ The hope, according to the Wilsonians, is that the Chinese Mainland will eventually become more pluralistic, law-based, and democratic. This vision has prompted Washington to “acknowledge” the Chinese claim of sovereignty over Taiwan and to eschew formal support of the latter. The consideration has been that a more obtrusive backing of Taiwan would radicalize Chinese nationalism, empower the ruling legitimacy of the CCP, and foster anti-Americanism. These would be detrimental to America’s interests in shaping the direction and choices of a rising China and encouraging it to become a “responsible stakeholder” in the liberal world order.²⁹ Thus, the US One China policy is enshrined in the three Sino–American joint communiqués of 1972, 1978, and 1982; the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979; and President Ronald Reagan’s Six Assurances to Taiwan in 1982.³⁰ This seemingly contradictory policy framework in fact has three unambiguous goals: (1) to sustain Taiwan’s freedom, democracy, and autonomy from the PRC’s military pressure; (2) to assure Beijing that the US would not condone Taiwan’s legal separation from China or Taiwan’s unilateral declaration of independence; and (3) to assert that the cross-Straits stalemate must be resolved peacefully and consensually.

27. Gaddis, *Surprise, Security, and the American Experience*, 41–42.

28. Susan Shirk, “Trump and China: Getting to Yes with Beijing,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2017, 20–27.

29. Thomas Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2015), 291. The term “responsible stakeholder” was used by Robert Zoellick, the US deputy secretary of state under President George W. Bush, in a 2005 speech before the National Committee on US–China Relations entitled “Whither China? Membership to Responsibility,” <<https://2001-2009.state.gov/s/d/former/zoellick/rem/53682.htm>>.

30. Nancy Tucker, “Strategic Ambiguity or Strategic Clarity?” in Nancy Tucker, ed., *Dangerous Strait: The US–Taiwan–China Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005): 186–212; Shelley Rigger, “Taiwan in US–China Relations,” in David Shambaugh, ed., *Tangled Titans: The United States and China* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013): 293–311.

This US policy aims to deter Beijing from using force to coerce unification with Taiwan, and the ambiguity of “One China” also seeks to prevent Taipei from initiating unilateral and reckless moves that unnecessarily provoke the PRC, endangering the island’s own security. An *Economist* report commented that although the One China policy may be a “fiction,” it is a “life-saving one,” because the “likeliest cause of war between China and America has always been a crisis involving Taiwan.”³¹ For instance, the George W. Bush administration did not wish its support for Taiwan to be construed as a “blank check” for irresponsible actions, as when President Chen Shui-bian attempted, in the late 2000s, to push for a referendum on creating a new Taiwanese constitution. To many, Chen’s initiative was tantamount to making the island a legal independent state, a change opposed by America. “Taiwan could not be abandoned,” posited Nancy Tucker, “but it could not be allowed to undermine relations with China or drag Washington into war.”³²

Under the Trump administration, both Beijing and Taipei have good reasons to feel apprehensive. Unfettered by the Wilsonian “crusader state” logic, the Trump presidency will likely upgrade relations with Taipei militarily, economically, and politically.³³ The White House will be less sensitive to both Beijing’s enduring national sovereignty position and America’s perennial objective of democratizing China.³⁴ The PRC has taken Washington’s constructive-engagement policy for granted, believing that the US has a soft spot for China and that, therefore, Taiwan will never be used against Chinese interests. That reassurance is now put in question by Trump’s unilateralist and capricious decision-making inclinations. This development, to be sure, has been a boon for Taiwan, as some in the Tsai administration have started to expect that Taiwan’s visibility will be raised and US–Taiwan relations become sturdier because both are “members of a democratic alliance.”³⁵ But

31. “US-China Relations: How to Read Donald Trump’s Call with Taiwan’s President,” *The Economist* Blogs, December 4, 2016, <<http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/2016/12/us-china-relations>>.

32. Nancy Tucker, *Strait Talk* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 271.

33. Ankit Panda, “After the Call: Does Taiwan Have a Plan for the Trump Years?” *The Diplomat*, December 5, 2016, <<http://thediplomat.com/2016/12/after-the-call-does-taiwan-have-a-plan-for-the-trump-years/>>.

34. Jennifer Lind, “Asia’s Other Revisionist Power: Why US Grand Strategy Unnerves China,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2017, 81–82.

35. Dave Clark, “Taiwan Envoy Hails US Ties after Trump Inauguration,” Yahoo News, January 20, 2017, <<https://www.yahoo.com/news/taiwan-envoy-hails-us-ties-trump-inauguration-014525629.html>>.

there are growing fears that the ROC may simply be championed by Trump more as strategic leverage than as a liberal democracy in its own right to counterbalance the PRC.³⁶ For the Jacksonians, the “world community Wilsonians want to build is a moral impossibility, even a moral monstrosity.” “America First” entails that “countries, like families, should take care of their own; if everybody did that, we would all be better off.”³⁷ US national interests and well-being become the sole criteria for the effectiveness of a policy stance. Also, misperceptions by both the PRC and Taiwan regarding the Trump administration could lead to bad decisions on either side of the Taiwan Strait, sparking heightened tension and even military confrontation.

The next section of the paper examines how Wilsonianism after World War II shaped America’s One China policy, in an effort to defend Taiwan’s autonomy and security while promoting, in the long run, an open and democratic China that would become a constructive force in the liberal world order. The third section analyzes how Jacksonianism, as embraced by the Trump administration, challenges the Wilsonian vision undergirding America’s Taiwan Strait policy. Deriving from a *mélange* of American folk culture, commercial protectionism, homeland security, unilateralism, and militant nationalism, the Jacksonian tradition is not necessarily going to result in rescission of the One China policy. The Trump White House’s commitment will more likely be contingent on the transactional interchanges between Washington and Beijing and the utility of Taiwan to US security. The final section of the paper concludes and briefly discusses the implications of Jacksonianism for the future of US–China–Taiwan relations.

POSTWAR WILSONIANISM AND THE US ONE CHINA POLICY

Since the end of World War II, US leaders have endeavored to spread and construct a liberal international order based on free trade regimes, multilateral institutions, and competitive democracy. This open-door principle envisions “an international system or world order made up of states that are open and subscribe to the United States’ liberal values and democratic institutions and

36. William Kazer, “Taiwan Fears Becoming a Pawn in Donald Trump’s Game,” *Wall Street Journal*, January 19, 2017, <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/taiwan-fears-becoming-a-pawn-in-donald-trumps-game-1484821803>>.

37. Mead, *Special Providence*, 245.

are open to America's economic penetration."³⁸ Ikenberry dubbed this system a US-led "liberal hegemonic order," under which America "organized and led an extended political system built around multilateral institutions, alliances, strategic partners, and client states. . . . The United States provided 'services' to other states through the provision of security and its commitment to stability, [democracy], and open markets."³⁹ Woodrow Wilson "is the author and lodestar of the liberal internationalist grand strategy," which, to a great degree, relies on the exercise of cooperation to foster the habit of cooperation among all nations. Cooperation—through international agreements, collective security, institutions, and free-trade interdependence—helps promote democracy as it "glues" authoritarian regimes to the idea, norms, and processes of democracies. "A consolidation of democratic authority at the international level then ushers in the democratic peace."⁴⁰

In a similar vein, Washington endeavors to remake China in America's image by transforming the mainland into an open and democratic polity.⁴¹ As a liberal democracy, the US has chartered its grand strategies to promote that system of ideas. In turn, the PRC elites have "suspected that the United States seeks to contain or constrain China's rise by strategically pushing for democratization in the mainland in order to instill political instability, roll-back communist rule, and make China internally divided and weak."⁴² To be sure, Beijing's mistrust of Washington is not entirely misplaced, considering China's victimization by foreign imperialistic intrusion and rampage during its "century of humiliation" in modern history. However, the Chinese government is mistaken in conflating American liberal idealism with European imperialism. Unlike imperial systems, which manifested in direct colonial rule and plunder, the American liberal hegemony is a "hierarchical order built around political bargains, diffuse reciprocity, provision of public goods, and mutually agreeable institutions and working relationships."⁴³ Consent-based logic, in other words, transcends the pure domination-subordination formula of empires. Predicating their legitimacy on the rule of law, the principle of

38. Layne, *Peace of Illusions*, 30.

39. G. John Ikenberry, *The Liberal Leviathan* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 2–3.

40. Nau, *Conservative Internationalism*, 49–50.

41. Dean Chen, "America's Liberal Culture, One China, and the Security of Taiwan," *American Journal of Chinese Studies* 22 (2015): 209–33.

42. *Ibid.*, 211.

43. Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan*, 25–26.

live and let live, and institutional constraints, liberal states naturally perceive each other in a more benign light than how democratic and authoritarian regimes see each other. The ideational intention of states, therefore, matters as much as their crude material or strategic capability.

In 1841, in debating the British aggression against China during the First Opium War, John Quincy Adams lamented the Qing Dynasty's "despotic character" and expressed his hope that Great Britain would "extend her liberating arm to the furthest bound of Asia, and at the close of the present contest insist upon concluding peace upon terms of perfect equality with the Chinese empire."⁴⁴ Writing about US–China relations in the twenty-first century, Aaron Friedberg contends that "the fact that one is a liberal democracy and the other remains under authoritarian rule is a significant additional impetus to [US–China] rivalry. . . . Ideology inclines the United States to be more suspicious and hostile toward China than it would be for strategic reasons alone."⁴⁵ Thomas Christensen put it well: "Contrary to a realpolitik or zero-sum view, the United States wishes China well. The United States views democracy as a foundation of national strength and stability, and the notion that it spreads democracy to weaken countries rather than to strengthen them is one of the more bizarre manifestations of Chinese post-colonial nationalism."⁴⁶ Broadly, the US interest in an open and democratic China has driven Washington's One China policy to maintain the strategic equilibrium between Mainland China and Taiwan.

Cross-Strait Division

The complex origins of today's Taiwan Strait division can be roughly traced to the Chinese Civil War between Chiang Kai-shek's KMT government, which ruled the Republic of China (1912–1949 in Mainland China), and Chairman Mao Zedong's CCP forces.⁴⁷ On April 12, 1927, in the midst of the Northern Expedition campaign to fight the warlords and unify China, Chiang's Nationalist troops took over Shanghai and ordered a bloody purge of the CCP that effectively began the civil strife of the next 22 years. There was a perfunctory KMT-CCP united front during the Chinese War of Resistance

44. Green, *By More than Providence*, 37.

45. Aaron Friedberg, *A Contest for Supremacy* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2012), 42–43.

46. Christensen, *China Challenge*, 291.

47. Rigger, "Taiwan in US-China Relations," 293.

against Imperial Japan between 1937 and 1945, but all-out civil war broke out almost immediately after Tokyo's surrender, in spite of US President Harry S. Truman's efforts to mediate. In 1949, the Nationalists were fully routed and the ROC government retreated to Taiwan while Mao's People's Republic of China was established. Taiwan's official name to this day is the Republic of China, and according to its constitution, it still has sovereignty over the entire mainland region. Shelley Rigger wrote that the "People's Republic of China was founded on the rubble of the previous Chinese state, the Republic of China (ROC). . . . From its inception, the PRC leadership has viewed Taiwan's separation from the mainland as unfinished business."⁴⁸

It's important to note that the United States' grand design for postwar China was to "shape China's evolution in directions that are politically, economically, culturally, intellectually, and strategically commensurate with liberal American traditions and interests [even though] China's stubborn resistance to 'conform' to American expectations has caused repeated disillusionment in the United States."⁴⁹ Washington, in a sense, treated China as a client state that should become a "strong, united, and democratic power" that would help America maintain peace and stability in the postwar Asia-Pacific.⁵⁰ Hence, as early as 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt outlined his idea of America, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China acting as "four policemen" after the war to enforce the postwar settlement. FDR expected that "after the war, China would fill the power vacuum in Asia relinquished by Japan and would follow Washington's leadership in world affairs."⁵¹ Dispatched by Truman, the Marshall Mission in 1946 aimed to ameliorate tensions between the KMT and CCP. The American blueprint was to create a democratically elected multiparty coalition government, in which the KMT "would give up its monopoly on power, a very big change for a country that had been ruled by all-powerful emperors for thousands of years."⁵² The Truman administration's prescription for Mainland China was what the US sought to promote in the postwar liberal international order,

48. Ibid.

49. David Shambaugh, "Tangled Titans: Conceptualizing the US-China Relationship," in *Tangled Titans*, 7.

50. Herbert Feis, *The China Tangle* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972).

51. Xiaoyuan Liu, *A Partnership for Disorder: China, the United States, and Their Policies for the Postwar Disposition of the Japanese Empire, 1941–1945* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 21.

52. Richard Bernstein, *China 1945* (New York: Vintage Books, 2014), 358.

namely a “system of freely competitive political parties bolstered by a free press and the rule of law, which meant in practice curbs on the power of the police.” No such proposals would have come from the Soviet Union, which dismissed the idea of freely competing political parties.⁵³ However, the KMT and CCP were irreconcilable; each was determined to annihilate the other, rendering the final showdown inevitable. Chiang and the KMT ultimately lost the civil war to the CCP and fled to Taiwan in 1949.

Until 1942, neither the KMT nor the CCP expressed much attachment to Taiwan, which was ceded to Japan by Qing China in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki. Legally, it was an island firmly ensconced in the Japanese Empire, a colony whose status the Chinese equated with Korea’s.⁵⁴ Throughout the 1930s, Chinese official statements often “referred to Taiwan as a bad precedent in Sino-Japanese relations that must not be repeated in the case of Manchuria.” But, though they mourned Taiwan’s loss, Chiang and Mao “did not publicly advocate the island’s return to China.”⁵⁵ Mao, in 1936, even talked about supporting Taiwan’s independence movement and its right to self-determination, although these were qualified as reflecting the CCP’s united-front strategy of “expediting anti-Japanese struggle, but not for permanent settlement of Taiwan’s status.”⁵⁶ Emboldened by America’s entrance into the Pacific War after Pearl Harbor in 1941, the KMT government, in 1942, formally and publicly included the recovery of Taiwan in its war aims. Planning for China’s postwar security in Asia, the KMT leader believed that Taiwan’s return would be pivotal in rejuvenating China’s national confidence and international status. Washington was also interested in helping the Nationalists control Taiwan, assuming they let the US maintain military bases on the island.⁵⁷

Despite their adversarial positions, Chiang and Mao agreed that postwar Taiwan was an integral and inalienable part of China. The ROC’s retreat to Taiwan after 1949 did not change that KMT-CCP consensus regarding Chinese national unification and territorial integrity. Nevertheless, there could only be one China, and the world community had to choose between

53. Ibid.

54. Alan Wachman, *Why Taiwan?* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2007), 21; Liu, *Partnership for Disorder*, 64.

55. Ibid., 65.

56. Ibid., 159–61.

57. Ibid., 66–75.

the ROC seated in Taipei and the PRC in Beijing. Chiang and Mao were then competing vigorously for legitimacy for their respective Chinese governments, as the KMT vowed to reconquer the mainland while Mao stressed liberating Taiwan. During the Cold War, the Soviet Union and its allies recognized Beijing, while the US and some of its key allies recognized Taipei.

Since the Korean War erupted in June 1950, the US has aimed to deter both sides from military action. Washington continued to recognize the ROC government as the sole legitimate Chinese central authority, providing it with military and economic aid. But the US was also circumspect, avoiding giving the impression that Washington would support Taiwan's independence from China. Well aware that unification was a desire deeply held by the Chinese, Washington avoided taking a straightforward stance on Taiwan's legal status. It did not want to do anything that would instigate anti-Americanism and push Beijing toward closer relations with the Soviet Union, as stipulated in the US National Security Council policy papers in 1949 and 1950, known as the NSC-34, 37, and 48 series.⁵⁸ Meanwhile, US leaders were also sympathetic to the Taiwanese people's aspirations for self-government and the antipathy of many toward the repressive KMT regime.⁵⁹ Short of backing Taiwanese independence, Washington endeavored for decades to make Taiwan an "anti-Communist bastion" and a "showcase of liberal democracy" for the Chinese mainland.⁶⁰

The Inception of the US One China Policy and Strategic Ambiguity

Nevertheless, the Korean War, and later the Vietnam War, did not prevent the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations from trying to reach out to Beijing or exploring new formulas that might create a working relationship between America and the PRC. "The Chinese Communist regime might have been viewed as repugnant, but US leaders recognized that they could not topple it—that it was thriving, unified, and would endure."⁶¹

58. Hsiao-ting Lin, *Accidental State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).

59. "Meeting in the President's Office with Senators Wherry and Bridges on China," April 28, 1949, Secretary of State Acheson's Memorandum March-May 1949/Box8/RG59/250/49/5/6-7, National Archives, College Park, MD; "Statement by the Secretary of State (Acheson) at the 35th Meeting of the National Security Council on The Formosan Problem," March 3, 1949, PSF/NSC Meeting # 35/Truman Papers/Box 220, Truman Library.

60. Warren Cohen, *America's Response to China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 187.

61. Tucker, "The Evolution of US-China Relations," in *Tangled Titans*, 33.

While supporting Taiwan, President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles were receptive to a more flexible policy toward Communist China.⁶² The US–PRC ambassadorial talks began in August 1955 in Geneva, in response to Zhou Enlai’s peaceful overture at the Bandung Conference.⁶³ In a similar vein, JFK and LBJ also tinkered with the possibility of “two Chinas”—that is, accepting representation of both ROC and PRC in the UN General Assembly—and strengthening unofficial ties with Beijing. Meanwhile, congressional hearings explored the idea of “containment without isolation.”⁶⁴ But the escalation of the Vietnam War and Mao’s Cultural Revolution prevented the Johnson administration from moving forward in 1966–67.

As discussed, Wilsonians are not oblivious to realist and pragmatic considerations. When President Richard Nixon took office, his administration grasped the urgent need to reconcile with Beijing not only because of the liberal imperative to integrate the Chinese mainland into the open global community but also to counterbalance the more threatening Moscow. That took place in 1972, during Nixon’s visit to China. In the Shanghai Communiqué of February 27, 1972, the US declared that it “acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves.”⁶⁵ That is the US One China policy, as we know it today, though stated in an ambiguous manner and accompanied by contradictory documents. The US would enter into two more joint communiqués with Beijing: in December 1978, when the two sides established formal diplomatic relations and America broke ties with Taipei, and in August 1982, when President Ronald Reagan pledged that America would not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taipei. Nevertheless, at the same time, the US government also passed the Taiwan Relations Act (1979), which essentially commits Washington to unofficial

62. Tucker, “John Foster Dulles and the Taiwan Roots of the ‘Two China’ Policy,” in Richard Immerman, ed., *John Foster Dulles and the Diplomacy of the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 238.

63. Chen Jian, *Mao’s China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 191–92.

64. Tucker, “Evolution of U.S.-China Relations,” 35.

65. “Joint Statement Following Discussions with Leaders of China,” US Department of State, February 27, 1972, <<https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v17/d203>>.

diplomatic, economic, and security relations with Taiwan, even to this day. Reagan's Six Assurances, given to Taipei in 1982, stated that Washington would not consult with Beijing on arms sales or set a date for ending arms sales to Taiwan. It promised that the US would not mediate between the two sides or pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations, and reiterated that America does not formally recognize China's sovereignty over Taiwan.⁶⁶

US strategic ambiguity has propelled Sino–American–Taiwanese relations. On the one hand, this approach seeks to deter Beijing's coercive and forceful threats to unify with Taiwan by providing the ROC with defensive capabilities and stating that Washington *may* intervene to protect the island's freedom, autonomy, and security. On the other hand, America strives to assure the PRC that its support of Taiwan is not meant to endorse its permanent and de jure separation from the Chinese nation. Thus, if Taiwan, unprovoked, takes unilateral and irresponsible actions to jeopardize cross-strait stability, the US may leave the island to its own fate.⁶⁷ Still, since the late 1990s, the US has also insisted that all cross-strait matters must be resolved "peacefully and with the assent of the people of Taiwan."⁶⁸

In sum, following Sino–American normalization in the 1970s, American administrations from Richard Nixon to Barack Obama have embraced a well-calibrated engagement approach to deepen cooperative ties with Mainland China while cautioning Beijing against aggressive and unruly behavior.⁶⁹ As the PRC becomes more deeply integrated into the liberal world order, the logic goes, its political and economic systems will also become more pluralistic, law-based, and inclusive. In the twenty-first century, as China was becoming more assertive in global political and economic affairs, the Obama administration responded with its "rebalancing to Asia." Nonetheless, the president affirmed that America did not "seek the containment of China, as was the case with the Soviet Union, both because of the inherent differences between those two nations and because of the hopelessness of pursuing such a policy toward a country that was much more profoundly integrated into the

66. Rigger, "Taiwan in US-China Relations," 296.

67. Christensen, *China Challenge*, 294.

68. Richard Bush, "An Open Letter to Donald Trump on the One-China Policy," Brookings, December 13, 2016, <<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/12/13/an-open-letter-to-donald-trump-on-the-one-china-policy/>>.

69. Oliver Turner, "The US and China: Obama's Cautious Engagement," in Michelle Bentley and Jack Holland, eds., *The Obama Doctrine* (New York: Routledge, 2017): 180–93.

global system.”⁷⁰ In the words of China expert Warren Cohen, US interests require a “peaceful, prosperous, open, responsible, and cooperative China.”⁷¹

These rationales also underpinned America’s long-standing One China policy. While defending Taiwan’s security, democracy, and autonomy, the US refrains from challenging Beijing’s quest for China’s national unity and territorial integrity, in which unification with Taiwan is an unyielding objective. “Taiwan formed part of a larger strategy that called for engaging China in the hopes of encouraging its peaceful rise and eventual domestic political reform.”⁷² America’s concern has been that a more explicit commitment to Taiwan could destabilize Sino–American relations and even empower the nationalistic/hawkish elements of the Beijing leadership, which, in turn, would be counterproductive to the goal of liberalizing China.⁷³ Thus, America’s respect or “acknowledgement” of the PRC’s sovereign claim over Taiwan, as noted in the Shanghai Communiqué, coupled with Washington’s unobtrusive support of the island, is meant to maintain the delicate peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. The George W. Bush administration emphasized, in 2007, that although Taiwan’s security required a strong military, it also “required Taipei to avoid unnecessary, frivolous, and dangerous provocations of nationalism in the PRC.”⁷⁴

Responding to Trump’s potential adjustment of the One China policy in December 2016, Obama, the outgoing president, asserted:

For China, the issue of Taiwan is as important as anything on their docket. The idea of one China is at the heart of their conception as a nation. And so if you are going to upend this understanding, you have to have thought through what the consequences are, because the Chinese will not treat that the way they’ll treat some other issues. They won’t even treat it the way they treat issues around the South China Sea, where we’ve had a lot of tensions. This goes to the core of how they see themselves. And their reaction on this issue could end up being very significant.⁷⁵

70. Jeffrey Bader, *Obama and China’s Rise* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2012), 69.

71. Cohen, *America’s Response to China*, 292.

72. Steven Phillips, “Why Taiwan?” in Peter Chow, ed., *The US Strategic Pivot to Asia and Cross-Strait Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 167.

73. Christensen, “The Contemporary Security Dilemma: Detering a Taiwan Conflict,” *Washington Quarterly* 25:4 (2002), 19.

74. Christensen, *China Challenge*, 214.

75. “Press Conference by President Barack Obama,” White House, Office of the Press Secretary, December 16, 2016, <<https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2016/12/16/press-conference-president>>.

JACKSONIANISM AND US FOREIGN POLICY

Named after Andrew Jackson, America's first populist president, the Jacksonian foreign policy perspective has been upheld by President Donald Trump, who stresses defending and protecting America's folk community (which includes blue-collar workers, farmers, small business entrepreneurs, gun enthusiasts, and religious nativists, mostly from the southern and western hinterlands of the United States) and their values as his top priority.⁷⁶ This "instinctively democratic and populist" notion is manifested in heartland America's suspicion of the elite establishment of the Eastern Seaboard, which espouses globalization, free trade, and opening America to excessive immigration and baleful foreign influences.⁷⁷ Jacksonians in the US West and South believe that "capitalists, financiers, and intellectuals in urban areas aim to exploit country workers economically and tarnish their authentic national (i.e., white and Christian) identities in the name of cosmopolitanism and multiculturalism."⁷⁸ While Jacksonians today are more receptive than in the past to non-white and non-Anglo cultures, they've maintained an exclusivist attitude toward "outsider" races, genders, and ethnic groups, blaming them for wasteful social-welfare spending and criminal activities that they believe ultimately contaminate the American system.⁷⁹

In contrast to Wilsonianism (Table 1), Jacksonian America promotes a more mercantilist relationship with America's trading partners; a unilateralist attitude to overseas alliances, treaties, and international institutions; and a "promised land" approach instead of "crusading" democratic promotion or nation-building abroad to strengthen US security interests. The Jacksonians, to be sure, are not isolationists, although they do staunchly believe that Washington should intervene and engage overseas only when that would benefit American interests, not for some highly moralistic mission to transform the world. This position does not mean that Jacksonians are unmotivated by America's liberal idealism. Like their Wilsonian counterparts, Jacksonians are also staunch defenders of democracy and other American institutions, and they certainly hope other nations will share these values. But, precisely because Jacksonians perceive America's democratic experience

76. Taesuh Cha, "The Return of Jacksonianism: The Implications of the Trump Phenomenon," *Washington Quarterly* 39:4 (2017): 83–97.

77. Mead, *Special Providence*, 238.

78. Cha, "Return of Jacksonianism," 85.

79. Nau, *Conservative Internationalism*, 42–43.

TABLE I. Wilsonianism and Jacksonianism, US Policy Positions, and Cross-Strait Relations

<i>American foreign policy traditions</i>	<i>International perspectives</i>	<i>Multilateral institutions</i>	<i>Promotion of democracy</i>	<i>Commerce and trade</i>	<i>Cross-Strait relations</i>
Wilsonianism (after President Woodrow Wilson)	Both liberalism and realism. Use of armed diplomacy and balance of power may be necessary to promote and sustain US security and normative interests.	Cooperation and interdependence. International institutions and alliance systems are crucial for peace, stability, and collective security. US interests and global interests are intertwined.	Democratic peace among liberal democracies. US democracy is unique and exceptional. Interest in spreading and promoting democratic values and institutions abroad, even fighting wars if necessary (“crusader state” role).	Free trade promotes prosperity. Complex interdependence further reduces conflicts.	One China policy based on the three US–PRC joint communiqués, Taiwan Relations Act, and Reagan’s Six Assurances. Supporting Taiwan’s democracy, freedom, and autonomy without challenging China’s national unity and integrity. Promoting China’s eventual democratization.
Jacksonianism (after President Andrew Jackson)	Both liberalism and realism. America-first nationalism; folk culture. Defending US liberal values and democracy. Balance of power; vigorous use of military force after attack.	Not isolationist, but supports unilateralism. Wary of alliances and international institutions that may overburden US interests. Selective participation if conducive to US interests.	US democracy is unique and exceptional, but may be inapplicable to other states. Democracy promotion and nation-building abroad are not in US interests; other states should emulate America on their own (“promised land” role).	Commercial relations should be enacted to fulfill US economic interests. Protection of domestic enterprises from unfair foreign competition.	One China policy, if it enhances US interests and power relative to the PRC. Chinese unity, democratization are less important. Taiwan may be a pawn to leverage Beijing.

SOURCE: By author.

as unique and exceptional, they allow that it may not be relevant or applicable to other nations. They intuitively accept a Westphalian view of state sovereignty, that is, what states do domestically may earn one's contempt, but a country should only react when it is attacked, or possibly when international obligations are violated.⁸⁰

Thus, in the 1850s, Presidents Franklin Pierce and James Buchanan, as Jacksonian Democrats, firmly rejected proposals from US diplomats in China that Washington either join with Great Britain and France to extract concessions from the decadent Qing Empire, or strongly support an independent and modern China that could withstand European encroachment. The presidents stood for an American foreign policy "empowered by virtuous commerce, using force only in self-defense and avoiding entrapments in European intrigues and imperialism."⁸¹ The world remains what it is, either benign or hostile, and "there is little that America can or should do abroad that can make the world a better place."⁸² In his 2017 inauguration speech, Trump said, "We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an example for everyone to follow."⁸³ Yet, though it sees securing the US homeland and nurturing its domestic interests as paramount, Jacksonian nationalism is also militant and relentless. When others are not threatening American security, the US should leave them alone. But if the US is attacked, Jacksonians would strike back fiercely until they achieve victory and destroy the enemy, as they did after Pearl Harbor and 9/11.⁸⁴

As the PRC has risen in the twenty-first century, its interests have frequently clashed with those of the US, including maritime contention over the East and South China Seas and Beijing's firm opposition to the US and South Korea's deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to deter North Korea's nuclear ambitions. President Trump seems to have little interest in continuing the Wilsonian policy of constructive engagement with China. As Cha puts it,

The long-cherished initiative to include China in the existing world economic multilateral architecture, such as the World Trade Organization, is hardly

80. Mead, "Tea Party," 58.

81. Green, *By More than Providence*, 47.

82. Nau, *Conservative Internationalism*, 44–45.

83. Sanger, "With Echoes of the '30s."

84. Mead, *Special Providence*, 254–56.

appreciated by Jacksonians. In their eyes, China is not an economic partner but the arch-enemy that manipulates currency, steals US jobs, and consequently destroys the backdrop of the US economy. Thus, Trump declared, “We can’t continue to allow China to rape our country.”⁸⁵

He promised, during his campaign, to impose a 45% punitive tariff on Chinese imports to America. Furthermore, if one of the original motives undergirding the US One China policy was to democratize Mainland China, in the opinion of the Jacksonians, it certainly hasn’t been successful. The Trump administration’s One China policy will be driven more by cold-hearted national-interest calculations than by the cosmopolitanism of previous presidents.

CONCLUSION: THE FUTURE OF THE US ONE CHINA POLICY

At the end of the day, the Trump administration may still not renege on the One China policy. On the basis of “America first,” maintaining “one China” may simply be a wise decision, given that stable US–China ties as well as peaceful cross-Straits relations remain important for America.⁸⁶ The president committed to “honor the US one-China policy” in his phone call to President Xi Jinping in February 2017. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson stated that “the three US-China joint communiqués, the Taiwan Relations Act, and the Six Assurances provide the foundation for US policy toward China and Taiwan. The United States should continue to uphold its One China policy and support a peaceful and mutually agreeable cross-Taiwan strait outcome.”⁸⁷ Nevertheless, as noted, fiery patriotism is at the core of the Jacksonian vision, which means that America will show less tolerance of those going against its interests. If Sino–American relations become more intense and adversarial over various strategic and economic differences, the Trump administration may choose to break away from “one China” (or, at least, to elevate Washington’s support for Taiwan) to hurt Beijing, even though Washington will be harmed too by any drastic deterioration of the Sino–American

85. Cha, “Return of Jacksonianism,” 91.

86. Shirk, “Trump and China,” 27.

87. “US Secretary of State Affirms Six Assurances to Taiwan,” *China Post*, February 9, 2017, <<http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2017/02/09/491187/US-secretary.htm>>.

relationship. Neither America nor China (not to mention the world) will benefit from such zero-sum confrontations.⁸⁸

President Trump's Taiwan Strait policy is even less predictable. As discussed earlier, although the US One China policy has been deliberately ambiguous, in order to deter both Beijing and Taipei from unilaterally destabilizing the cross-Strait status quo, the "ambiguity" refers to America's potential means or willingness to manage conflicts. Washington's vagueness in how exactly it would react to cross-Strait tension has served as a crucial brake on provocative behavior from both Beijing and Taipei.⁸⁹ Yet, the aim underlying this ambiguous One China framework has been clear-cut. "At bottom, there remained an obstinate truth—because the United States does not support Taiwan's most ambitious aims [independence], it is not fully committed to defending Taiwan against China."⁹⁰ The liberal normative and strategic logic behind "one China" has maintained cross-Strait equilibrium, in accordance with America's Wilsonian interests after World War II. "And that status quo," commented Obama, "although not completely satisfactory to any of the parties involved, has kept the peace and allowed the Taiwanese to be a pretty successful economy and a people who have a high degree of self-determination."⁹¹

If the Trump White House has attached a condition to recommitting to the One China policy, that transactional exchange may have involved North Korea. In late February 2017, Beijing announced that it would suspend importing coal from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) for the entire year. Though the PRC said that its decision was based on quotas imposed by the United Nations, the timing of the suspension (in the wake of the Trump–Xi telephone call) could be viewed as a concession to the Trump administration in light of the DPRK's continued ballistic missile and nuclear tests.⁹² Following the Trump–Xi summit meeting in April 2017, the White House has made more friendly gestures toward Beijing. Nevertheless, since Pyongyang's missile launches have continued unabated (it even successfully

88. Jane Perlez and Chris Buckley, "Trump Injects High Risks into Relations with China," *The New York Times*, January 24, 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/24/world/asia/trump-us-china-trade-trans-pacific-partnership.html>>.

89. Timothy Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 187–201.

90. *Ibid.*, 199.

91. "Press Conference by President Barack Obama."

92. Carrie Gracie, "Could China's Trump Tactics Actually be Working?" *BBC*, February 24, 2017, <<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-39061702>>.

test-fired twice in July, as of this writing, intercontinental ballistic missiles or ICBMs that, according to experts, were capable of hitting the US homeland),⁹³ Trump's patience with China has also started to wear thin.⁹⁴ This was demonstrated by Washington's recommencement of freedom-of-navigation operations in the South China Sea since late May (which had been suspended for several months following Obama's departure) and Secretary of Defense James Mattis's address at the 2017 Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore reassuring allies and partners that America's security commitments to Asia would remain unchanged.⁹⁵ Moreover, to the chagrin of Beijing, the Trump administration slapped sanctions on a Chinese bank and several business entities for their financial dealings with North Korea, labeled China one of the world's worst human traffickers, and approved an arms sale (for US\$ 1.42 billion) to Taiwan.⁹⁶ Calls for economic retaliatory measures against Chinese trade and business practices with the US, though muted for a while, have escalated.⁹⁷ These instances illustrate the transactional styles of the Trump presidency.

There are even more uncertainties. China's political transition will begin in late 2017 with the opening of the 19th Party Congress. Meanwhile, Beijing must confront various domestic problems and challenges, including managing an economic slowdown, curbing financial debt problems, fighting official corruption, reforming inefficient state-owned enterprises, and addressing social discontent and unrest, to name just a few.⁹⁸ Internal political uncertainties could prompt Beijing to take even harsher positions on external affairs and

93. David Sanger, Choe Sang-hun, and William Broad, "North Korea Tests a Ballistic Missile That Experts Say Could Hit California," *New York Times*, July 28, 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/28/world/asia/north-korea-ballistic-missile.html>>.

94. Mark Landler and Gardiner Harris, "China Falls Short on Curbing North Korea, Trump Says," *New York Times*, June 20, 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/20/world/asia/trump-china-north-korea.html>>.

95. Ivan Watson and Pamela Boykoff, "US Defense Chief: 'Americans Will Do the Right Thing' in Pacific," *CNN*, June 3, 2017, <<http://www.cnn.com/2017/06/03/asia/mattis-asia-pacific-security-conference/>>.

96. "Donald Trump and Xi Jinping Are Not So Friendly After All," *The Economist*, July 8, 2017, <<https://www.economist.com/news/china/21724821-was-it-wishful-thinking-suppose-they-would-be-donald-trump-and-xi-jinping-are-not-so-friendly>>.

97. Keith Bradsher, "Trump Administration Is Said to Open Broad Inquiry Into China's Trade Practices," *The New York Times*, August 1, 2017, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/01/business/trump-china-trade-intellectual-property-section-301.html>>.

98. Li Cheng, *Chinese Politics in the Xi Jinping Era* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016).

Taiwan.⁹⁹ Trump's suggestion that the One China policy may serve as a quid pro quo in dealing with Beijing has added greater vagaries to the already fragile cross-strait equilibrium. Taipei has welcomed the US president's supportive remarks. But an emboldened Taipei could embrace more anti-China policy stances if it believes that Washington would ultimately back up Taiwan's independence. Misperception and miscalculation due to such moral hazards could plunge the Taiwan Strait actors into a grave situation.¹⁰⁰

Making Taiwan a potential transactional ploy, to be sure, is not good news for Taipei. It is in contradiction to the Taiwan Relations Act and Reagan's Six Assurances. It implies that if Washington and Beijing want to strike a favorable deal on other major economic and security issues, Taiwan could be easily sacrificed. Still, Tillerson clarified on June 14, 2017, that America, while maintaining the One China policy, will "fulfill its [Taiwan Relations Act] commitments to Taiwan," reducing the concern that the ROC will be traded away for better Sino-American relations.¹⁰¹ The secretary's remarks were made after Panama, one of Taiwan's most prominent remaining diplomatic allies, broke ties with Taipei and switched to the PRC, giving some solace to the ROC.

Adding to the unpleasant mix could be Beijing's own interpretations of President Trump's China policy. His dangling of "one China" as a bargaining chip could undermine the PRC's confidence in Washington's role as a neutral arbiter in the Taiwan Strait impasse. Jeffrey Bader, a former senior advisor for Asia policy at the National Security Council during Obama's first term, noted, "Mixing [security and trade] with an issue seen by Beijing as involving sovereignty is likely to produce an angry Chinese backlash and worsen both issues."¹⁰² Moreover, if the CCP authority believes that Trump will eventually uproot the One China policy and that the window of opportunity for

99. Zhuang Pinghui, "Xi Jinping Warns Communist Party Would be 'Overthrown' If Taiwan's Independence Push Left Unchecked." *South China Morning Post*, November 4, 2016, <<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2042784/xi-jinping-warns-communist-party-would-be-overthrown-if>>.

100. "AIT Chairman Skeptical US Naval Vessels Will Visit Taiwan," *Focus Taiwan News*, July 12, 2017, <<http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aip/201707120010.asp>>.

101. Patricia Zengerle, "Tillerson: US Committed to 'One China' Policy, Also Taiwan," *Reuters*, June 14, 2017, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-china-tillerson-idUSKBN19529H>>.

102. Mark Landler, "Trump Suggests Using Bedrock China Policy as Bargaining Chip," *The New York Times*, December 11, 2016, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/11/us/politics/trump-taiwan-one-china.html>>.

unification is closing, military action could be initiated. Even if a Chinese offensive were ultimately to fail, assuming that the US has decided to fully mobilize and intervene timely to help Taiwan, enough damage would have been inflicted to harm Taiwan and destabilize regional peace and security.¹⁰³

The PRC has stepped up coercive diplomacy toward Taiwan. To name just a few examples, its military aircraft have flown over and circled the international airspace around Taiwan several times since December 2016; and China's aircraft carrier and a fleet of warships sailed past the island, prompting Taipei to deploy fighter jets to monitor the fleet. The Chinese government sternly warned the Trump White House against renegeing on the One China policy, threatening serious repercussions for Sino-American relations.¹⁰⁴ In May 2017, Beijing applied pressure to block Taiwan from participating in the annual World Health Assembly for its refusal to accept the "1992 consensus." As noted, China has been using its greater international clout to entice Taiwan's remaining diplomatic partners to switch allegiance to the PRC, with Sao Tomé and Príncipe, and Panama, being the two most recent cases.

Jacksonianism may be a relic of nineteenth-century America, and it may not serve US interests well in the current age. Since Trump's inauguration, Washington has already backed out of the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Paris climate change accord, illustrating the new administration's unilateralism. The president lashed out at America's long-standing NATO allies, censuring them for not shouldering enough responsibilities to sustain the security alliance. In contrast to past practices, moreover, Washington seems to hold its old-time rival, Russia, in a more intimate relationship than traditional friends such as Great Britain, Australia, France, Germany, Japan, and South Korea. The Jacksonian resurgence is real, and leaders in Beijing and Taipei must not dismiss this sea change in the American foreign policy framework.

103. Christensen, *China Challenge*, 96–97.

104. Brenda Goh and J. R. Wu, "Chinese State Tabloid Warns Trump, End One China Policy and China Will Take Revenge," *Reuters*, January 9, 2017, <<http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-usa-taiwan-idUSKBN14T02Q>>.