

there is only one category of votes. But in Legislative Yuan elections the electoral authorities would have to set up separate ballot boxes for voters who vote outside their place of household registration or beforehand print ballot papers from other electoral districts for distribution. It is doubtful whether electoral authorities would be able to shoulder such a gigantic task.

## **2. Conditional Yes to the Establishment of Special Polling Stations**

Special polling stations are usually established for the convenience of nursing home inmates and mobility impaired people or to enable soldiers and police on duty as well as prison inmates to exercise their voting rights. Based on Taiwan's current situation we agree in principle to the establishment of special polling stations, but on the technical side there is still room for further discussions. Since freedom awareness is rapidly increasing among the Taiwanese collective election fraud is less of a concern, and even if there was any, it would likely be exposed and investigated within a very short time. Crucial is that no undue pressure is exerted on the free individual will of voters and that voting secrecy is ensured.

## **3. No to Postal Voting at Home and Abroad**

In advanced nations like the United States, Japan and Britain voting by mail enjoys quite high public trust. But due to Taiwan's international isolation and its difficult relations with China many technical problems regarding the voting rights of Taiwanese investors in China can presently still not be overcome. Candidates for public office can, for instance, not visit China to canvass votes or present their political platforms to Taiwanese businesspeople and students. As official Taiwanese government documents ballot papers that are sent to China are bound to cause problems. China would need to cooperate on measures for voting by postal delivery such as meeting requirements for the confidentiality

of the delivery process. But China's entire postal system is closely monitored by the Chinese government so that there is no impartiality or confidentiality at all to speak of. Taiwanese business people, managers or students would probably voluntarily (or upon request) keep a copy (of their ballot paper) to demonstrate their political leaning to the Chinese government. Regarding the voting rights of overseas Taiwanese living in other places than China we will take as example the United States which maintains the best foreign relations with Taiwan. Assuming voter registration and voting for a presidential election would take place at Taiwan's representative offices in the United States (which are organs of public authority), then this would involve highly sensitive and public political activities. The likeliness that the United States would hold such events despite Chinese pressure is close to zero, not to speak of Japan, Europe or other countries.

Regarding postal voting in Taiwan we need to remember that Taiwan differs greatly from other advanced nations in that the island is rife with vote buying. If voting by mail were adopted, it would probably become a tool for certain political groups for fostering vote buying, even if the postal system would be able to remain completely nonpartisan and confidential. The vote buyer could take advantage of postal mailing to demand that the bribed seller photocopy his ballot sheet to prove that he fulfilled his obligation under the vote-buying pact. Opinion polls presently conducted by academic and political party organizations show that Taiwanese society has comparatively little trust in a postal voting system, which is why the rash promotion of such a system is not advisable.

## **Recent Developments in US-China Relations and Its Impact on Taiwan**

**T**he US-China relations seemed to have been steady in the first year of the Barack Obama administration.

However, recent events – negotiating bluster in the Copenhagen climate-change talks, Chinese hack attacks on Google, the Obama government’s announcement of selling an arms package to Taiwan, China’s manipulation of its currency the renminbi, Beijing’s reluctance to support new sanctions on Iran, and President Obama’s meeting with the Dalai Lama – have brought fundamental differences between both sides to the fore.

## Events That Triggered Diplomatic Down-turns in US-China Relations

Several issues have strained the stable ties that Washington and Beijing had maintained in the first year of the Obama administration:

1. Prior to and during his trip to Beijing last November, President Obama willingly

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conveyed a conciliatory tone toward China and gave the Chinese leaders a show of face in hopes of achieving a successful visit and earning the nation’s cooperation in various global issues. What China did in return, however, were muddling talks, rejecting international monitoring of its CO<sub>2</sub> output, and even using diplomatic maneuverings to insult US at the Copenhagen climate summit in December. The last straw was Beijing’s noncommittal and uncooperative response to the US-led push for new sanctions on Iran in January.

2. Differences have emerged in Beijing and Washington’s respective understanding of the phrase “respect for each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” in the US-China Joint Statement that President Obama signed during his visit to China. Beijing assumed that this phrase covers the Taiwan issue, but Washington maintained that the statement refers only to Xinjiang and Tibet. Beijing used this statement to legitimize its boisterous protest against

the Obama administration’s announcement of new arms sales to Taiwan. But the fact is that US has not only publicly explained its position on this phrase, but has also sent Raymond Burghardt, Chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan, to clarify this issue to President Ma Ying-jeou’s government and the opposition Democratic Progressive Party in Taipei.

3. Strategic misperception arises between US and China. Bearing in mind that relations between US and China were severely strained in the early days of both the Bill Clinton and the George W. Bush administrations, President Obama’s foreign policy advisers have believed that, as long as the Obama government can avoid similar mistakes, it can secure a favorable ground to induce China to engage

in international norms and rules, or even turn Beijing’s leverage into support for the US’ handling

of thorny international issues. Meanwhile, leaders in Beijing have made misjudgments in assuming that Beijing can ask for whatever it wants from Washington, imagining that the international and domestic challenges President Obama faces have left his administration no option but to depend on China’s cooperation. A deeper level of reading this mindset of Beijing will reveal that, because China has perceived its own rise and growth as unstoppable trends, such self-perception has constantly driven it to overreact to any criticism from the outside world.

## Differences over China Policy Have Emerged within the Obama Administration

Beijing has taken advantage of the recent subtle changes in US-China relations to further its end regarding its relationship with Taiwan. China’s leaders have suspended US-China military exchanges in retaliation for the Obama administration’s announcement of arms sales to Taiwan,

but later allowed US Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg and National Security Council Senior Director for Asian Affairs Jeff Bader to visit China in early March. After Steinberg and Bader wrapped up their visit to Asia and returned to Washington DC, insiders revealed that the two had undergone no less than a “humiliating” trip, as Beijing had set almost the entire agenda for their meetings with Chinese officials.

Steinberg and Bader intended to discuss with high-ranking Beijing officials urgent issues such as Iran, North Korea, and the second round of the US-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED). They attended six meetings in two days; however, rhetoric on US’ selling an arms package to Taiwan dominated 90 percent of the time they spent in the meetings. During the American officials’ meetings with Chinese State Councilor Dai Bingguo, who is responsible for foreign affairs, and Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi, the Chinese officials were particularly severe in reprimanding the Obama government’s arms sales to Taiwan, claiming that the arms deal has violated the three US-China Joint Communiqués and the US-China Joint Statement signed by President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao during Obama’s visit to Beijing last November.

For now, political wrestling over the direction of US’ China policy has deeply occupied Obama’s inner circle. Proponents of diplomatic approaches (led mostly by Steinberg and Bader) insisted that US continue its low-key efforts to warm up ties with China and seek the country’s cooperation in international affairs. But Obama’s presidential campaign staff members (including White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel and core “Chicagoan” political advisers Valerie Jarrett and David Axelrod), who have considered US’ China policy along with concerns about domestic politics, argued that the “China fervor” seen in the first year of the administration should be cooled down. The White House’s recent handling of issues regarding Taiwan and the Dalai Lama is a clear indication that the influence of

the latter camp’s argument has been increasing.

## Impact on Taiwan

By all accounts, Beijing has successfully used the phrase “China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity” inserted in the US-China Joint Statement, an official document, in international propaganda for its own purposes. Although US has repeatedly explained to Beijing that the phrase referred to Tibet and Xinjiang rather than to Taiwan, Beijing has turned a deaf ear to US position. Continuing to use the phrase for diplomatic manipulations, Beijing has created an impression in the international community that US and China “respect each other’s sovereignty and territorial integrity and each side is free to interpret what ‘sovereignty and territorial integrity’ means.” Whenever Beijing touches on the Taiwan issue, it mentions the three US-China Joint Communiqués and the US-China Joint Statement. The joint statement is not “the Fourth Communiqué,” but the way Beijing manages the document has made it as effective as “the Fourth Communiqué.” Backed by the joint statement, Beijing has exerted more pressure on Washington. Its gestures have at least resulted in discussions on whether US should “downsize or even cancel its arms sales” to Taiwan and have consequently made a negative and long-term impact on US policy on arms sales to Taiwan.

Washington has made explanations and assurances to Taiwan’s government and opposition regarding its statement of “respect for China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.” But Taiwan still needs to voice its concerns about China’s manipulation of the phrase in international propaganda and to solemnly request that higher-ranking American officials—preferably President Obama or Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—publicly clarify the US’ position. Personal remarks by President Obama or Secretary of State Clinton will be most effective in foiling Beijing’s dishonest attempt to use the joint statement as “the Fourth Communiqué.”