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**The Development of the Situation in Taiwan and Trends of the
Cross-Strait Relations**

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Historically there have been four factors which have major impacts on the relationship across the Taiwan Strait, namely the factors of the Chinese mainland, international politics and economy, domestic politics in Taiwan and the development of the cross-Strait relations. These four have been playing different roles in certain historic stages. From the late 1980's, the factor of domestic politics in Taiwan has gradually become more prominent. This paper is going to analyze (1) the role of Taiwan's domestic politics in the peaceful development across the Strait since the dramatic change of the political situation on the island at the beginning of 2008, (2) the interaction between the peaceful development across the Strait and the political situation in Taiwan, and (3) several scenarios of the future of the peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait.

- I. The significant change of the political situation in Taiwan is the immediate reason for the emergence of the peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait.

1, The main reason for the tense relationship between the two sides across the Taiwan Strait during the last eight years is that the Chen Shui-bian authorities refused to accept the "1992 consensus" after the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) took power in 2000. A series of radical activities aimed at "Taiwan independence", including the abolishment of "the National Unification Council" and "a referendum for UN membership" worsened the already tense relationship. As the Taiwan media commented, "Under the Chen Shui-bian authorities, the cross-Strait relationship has reached a critical point for both sides across the strait. Tactically [Chen Shui-bian] has exercised a 'scorched earth diplomacy', attempting to internationalize the Taiwan question with a series of manoeuvres — from 'one country on either side', 'defensive referendum', 'abolishing the National Unification Council', 'name rectification' to 'referendum for UN membership'."ⁱ The ideologicalization of "Taiwan Independence" of the Chen Shui-bian authorities had led the DPP to refuse to open economic cooperation between the two sides and close Taiwan off to interaction with the Chinese mainland, which ultimately marginalized Taiwan economically and weakened it socially. "After coming to power, the DPP has completely misunderstood the deep green constituency, who supported DPP not only for Taiwan identity, but also for the political reform, fairness and justice. However, the Taiwan identity has been hurt unprecedentedly under Chen's unsteady policy, while the ideals of reform have been trampled upon again and again due to the authorities' compromise with the consortiums and bureaucracies."ⁱⁱ To this end, Liu Yi-de from the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) publicly announced, "the DPP has transformed into the biggest obstacle for the progress of Taiwan."ⁱⁱⁱ

2, The failure of the “referendum for UN membership” pushed by Chen Shui-bian authorities and the significant changes of the political situation in Taiwan have directly led to the peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations. At the beginning of 2008, the process and results of the 7th “Legislative Yuan” election and the 12th “Presidential” election in Taiwan have not only influenced the course of the political situation on the island for the next few, even more than ten years, but also exerted significant impacts on the peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations. First of all, the landslide victory of the Kuomintang (KMT) in the “Legislative Yuan” election had demonstrated that the mainstream in Taiwan is for peace, stability and development, thus the will and confidence of the KMT to promote stability across the Taiwan Strait has been strengthened. Secondly, during the campaign for the election on March 22, Ma Ying-jeou actively promoted peace and stability across the Straits, while Chen Shui-bian authorities deliberately provoked tension between the two sides. The result of the election showed that the voters in Taiwan chose Ma Ying-jeou, who supports peace and stability across the Straits. Even *The Liberty Times* agreed that “the result of the election could be seen as a no-confidence vote for Chen Shui-bian’s eight-year ruling”,^{iv} and “the major factor that dragged down Frank Xie in the election was still the eight-year ruling of the Chen Shui-bian authorities.”^v The reason why the Taiwanese voters cast aside the DPP is that the policies adopted by the party, which were led by the ideologicalization of “the Taiwan independence”, emphasizing politics and “Taiwan independence” rather than the economy and the people’s livelihood, had been deviated from the right track. The excessive manipulation changed the demands of loving Taiwan into ethnic chauvinism and anti-China sentiments, which were narrow-minded and exclusive. Reflected in public policy, this kind of sentiments had led to the close-off economically and the de-Chinalization culturally. This kind of policies had triggered serious debates inside the Taiwanese society and finally had lost the support of the people. And the excessive manipulation of the Taiwan identity had even become the tool of attacking and excluding colleagues inside the party, which already had suffered of insufficiency of talents, and bad money had driven out good people repeatedly.^{vi} Thirdly, the Taiwanese people rejected the “referendum on UN membership” pushed by the Chen Shui-bian authorities by the election. They told the Chen Shui-bian authorities with their votes that cross-Strait relations should not be tools of the political figures on the island for seeking their own interests.

3, The political situation in Taiwan after Ma Ying-jeou came to power has been transforming in favour of the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. Since the DPP, which repeatedly provoked the cross-Strait relations, stepped down from the power; the “referendum on UN membership” and other

“Taiwan independence” secessionist activities, which tried to change the status quo that the two sides belong to one China, failed at last; and Ma Ying-jeou would like to keep his promises that “no matter which way the wind blows, if Ma wins the election, he will adopt the policy of three links.” Ma Ying-jeou needs peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations as a favourable environment, so he emphasized that he would like to be a “peace maker” instead of a “trouble maker”. After the election, Ma once said, “I hope my winning of this election would bring Taiwan into new times. It’s not because I am ambitious, but Taiwan needs new times in order to go forward.”^{vii} Ma Ying-jeou was very ambitious during the interview on the cross-Strait relations. He mentioned Metternich who created a hundred years’ peace in Europe and also Kissinger who opened up U.S. relations with China, and he hoped that he himself could be Metternich in the cross-Strait relations and create thirty years’ peace for Taiwan. He said, “thirty years’ peace is very good for Taiwan’s people and perhaps it is peace for one or two generations.”^{viii} After the inauguration on May 20th, both the domestic and foreign policies of the Ma Ying-jeou administration have shown that the political situation in Taiwan has moved into a direction in favour of the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. The editorial of the United Daily News commented, “The cost of the eight years is huge, however, the pay is also significant. First of all, it is finally proved that the policy of Taiwan independence and close off doesn’t work, which makes the policy of ‘keeping the status quo, open up and communication’ would never be framed as ‘sacrificing Taiwan’. This policy has also had its democratic legitimacy since Ma Ying-jeou and Vincent Siew have won the election. Secondly, the senior officials of the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) grasped this rare opportunity to communicate with each other, put themselves in other’s shoes and established a certain mutual confidence during the eight years. Thirdly, as the opposition, the KMT had frequent contacts with the CCP. When it turned into the ruling party, the contacts between the two parties have also been raised to a higher level, which could be called ‘seamless contacts’ between two ruling parties.” The editorial also mentioned, “Without the accumulation during the eight years, there would not be the current situation. The eight years of interaction between CCP and KMT as an opposition have accumulated precious capital for its future interaction with CCP. The failure of the DDP’s policy of Taiwan independence and closing off has virtually made the DPP the best supporter for the KMT’s creation of a new cross-Strait relationship in the future.”^{ix}

II. The development of the political situation in Taiwan and Chen Yun-lin's visit to Taiwan

Mr. Chen Yun-lin, Chairman of the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), visited Taiwan from Nov. 3 to 7, 2008 and met with Chiang Pin-kun, Chairman of the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF). During the second Chen/Chiang meeting, the two sides signed four agreements including on direct air transport and on food safety. With regard to the themes and schedule, it is just like what Chen Yun-lin said before the visit: the topics of the second Chen/Chiang meeting had nothing to do with either the cross-Strait politics, or the domestic politics in Taiwan. Due to the interaction of Taiwan domestic politics and cross-Strait relations, however, "The blue camp hoped that the consensus on certain topics during the Chiang/Chen meeting could become a milestone of the co-existence and co-prosperity of the two sides across the Strait; while the green camp tried hard to turn it into the proof that the Ma administration was 'leaning towards the CCP'."x Chen's visit also affected the political fight between the blue and the green in Taiwan.

1, The Ma Ying-jeou team hoped to get some substantial achievements from Chen Yun-lin's visit to Taiwan. First of all, Ma's team hoped that the four agreements signed with the mainland, the most dynamic economy in the world, during the second Chen/Chiang meeting could help the development of Taiwan's economy, so that Ma's ruling could be strengthened. The four agreements not only turn a historical page in the development of the cross-Strait economic relationship, but also provide momentum for the recovery of Taiwan's economy. Secondly, Ma's team hoped that Chen's historical visit could help raise Taiwan's international visibility. "The world is watching," but the focus of the international media was no longer on the negative side of "the referendum on UN membership" pushed by the DPP, but on the positive image of a win-win situation created by both sides across the Strait, which has been fulfilled after Ma came to power. Thirdly, Ma's team thought that the "political show" of the meeting between Ma Ying-jeou and Chen Yun-lin in fact showed that the CCP tolerates the "de facto existence of the Republic of China (ROC)". Since the Ma/Chen meeting became an international focus, the world actually knows about the existence of the ROC.

2, The DPP tried to reach several political goals through "be against Ma Ying-jeou and besiege Chen Yun-lin". First of all, the DPP tried to use this opportunity to integrate the forces inside the party and to build confidence for struggling with the KMT led by Ma Ying-jeou. The struggles among the different forces inside DPP had been serious after the DPP's failure in both elections at the very beginning of 2008. The DPP could not find a way to unite the people after Chen Shui-bian's case of overseas money-laundering had been exposed. Chen

Shui-bian even struggled for leadership of the DPP with Tsai Ing-wen. Thus, Chen Yun-lin's visit to Taiwan and the tainted milk incident have been used by the DPP as a very good opportunity to encourage the people to go to the street and to create "anti-Chinese and anti-CCP" sentiments. The DPP tried to use Chen's visit to divert people's attention from Chen's corruption case and to highlight again the morale of the green camp supporters. Secondly, the DPP used this visit to give Ma Ying-jeou a hard test as soon as he assumed office, by labelling Ma's cross-Strait policy as "Selling out Taiwan" and "Uniting with the CCP". The DPP called Chen's visit "ice breaking across the Strait, bankruptcy of the Taiwan people". Thirdly, the DPP as the representative of the forces supporting "Taiwan independence" used this visit to make propaganda for "Taiwan independence". As Taiwan became the focus of the international media, it was very lucrative for DPP to make this propaganda. Fourthly, the DPP tried to promote Tsai Ing-wen's leadership. Tsai Ing-wen, Chairwoman of the DPP, wrote to several newspapers, "Report to the Taiwan people: Why we don't welcome Chen Yun-lin?" and her reasons were that technically Chen Yun-lin didn't need to come to Taiwan at all and the goal of the KMT was to hide its poor performance in the polls by the ceremony of "reconciliation between the two sides".^{xi}

3, Chen Shui-bian tried to use the opposition to Chen's visit to create the antagonism between the blue and the green and to pull himself out of the corruption case. Facing a possible future in prison, Chen Shui-bian tried to get support from the deep green people by the highly political manoeuvres. He visited the middle and southern parts of Taiwan several times and tried to create an atmosphere of "the world is in chaos and the situation is excellent". Chen Shui-bian's move likes drag-racing with the DPP's actions of "opposing Chen's visit to Taiwan". So the Taiwan media commented that "Chen Yun-lin's visit to Taiwan has stirred the muddy water in the green camp".

4, It was a political struggle between "Taiwan independence" and anti-"Taiwan independence" with regard to Chen Yun-lin's visit to Taiwan. Chen's visit is historical and a new milestone in the cross-Strait relationship. Chen is the most senior official who has been authorized by the mainland government in the last 60 years to visit Taiwan. And this visit is a significant step forward in the cross-Strait relationship. So Chiang Pin-kun said that "Chen Yun-lin set foot on the land of Taiwan, the treasure island at 11:58am. At this moment, not only the Taiwan people are watching, the mainland people are watching, the whole world is also watching. It's a historical moment. We've been waiting for 60 years for this moment. The talks held in Taipei are historical in the history of both ARATS and SEF, and for peace and for an economic win-win situation between the two sides." The Hong Kong media reported that "In Beijing's political arrangement, as long as Chen Yun-lin goes to Taiwan, a milestone has been set up in the peaceful

development of the cross-Strait relationship.”^{xii} The editorial of the United Daily News said that “This is an event as significant as a milestone in 60 years cross-Strait relationship”.^{xiii} The four agreements “are not only the most important ones that have been signed between the two sides across the Strait in 60 years, but also the most fruitful results during the 16-year history of the consultation between ARATS and SEF”.^{xiv} Especially the historical meeting between Ma Ying-jeou and Chen Yun-lin is full of political implications. “From the perspectives of both realistic politics and historical process, this visit is a significant event during the 60-year of the cross-Strait communications.”^{xv} From the perspective of the cross-Strait relationship, actually there had been a political struggle between “Taiwan Independence” and anti-“Taiwan Independence” with regard to Chen’s visit. The forces which supported and promoted Chen’s visit hoped that this visit could promote the development of the cross-Strait relations and safeguard the opportunity of peaceful development. While the forces which were against the visit tried to obstruct the peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations.

III The Cross-Strait relationship has been an important external factor for the political situation in Taiwan

1, Cross-Strait relations have become an important external factor for Taiwan’s domestic political and social contradictions. On the one side, the tensions between the blue and the green, among the different ethnic groups and the antagonism originating in different native places have been eased since the reconciliation between the two sides across the Strait started. The capability of the political forces to provoke any conflicts among different ethnic groups and people coming from different native places has been reduced. On the other side, because of the incitation by some DPP figures, those who have strong provincial-ethnic consciousness are quite nervous about the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. Consequently, the cross-Strait economic issues have been politicized. With the position of supporting “Taiwan Independence”, the DPP is instinctively fearful and hostile towards the reconciliation between Taiwan and the mainland, which has been used by the DPP as a major topic in the political debates between the blue and the green. This kind of policy has directly intensified the antagonism between the blue and the green and the political turbulence. In order to gain some political achievements as soon as possible and stabilize its ruling basis, the KMT authorities urgently need to introduce the mainland’s economic “living water” to help the economic recovery on the island, and to adopt some detailed policies in a short period of time. Thus the KMT has to adopt an untied and open policy towards the mainland and make some achievements in the cross-Strait relations. However, these policies have become a focus of the bipartisan struggle.

2, The differences in Taiwan's policy towards the mainland have become the focus of the political struggle between the blue and the green in Taiwan. First of all, the DPP has been against the KMT's policy of opening up to the mainland in order to strengthen its social basis, lift the morale of the green camp and seek to rise again. It even frequently went to the street to assert pressure on the KMT to obstruct and hamper the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations. Shao Zonghai, the Taiwanese scholar said that "As the opposition, the DPP won't help the KMT pave the way for the development across the Strait. Moreover, they will have more fierce protests since the 'unity vs. independence consciousness' is still there."^{xvi} Secondly, in order to stop the KMT from getting new political resources from the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations, the DPP would inevitably use the pan-green people's fear of the exchanges between Taiwan and the mainland, and Ma Ying-jeou's status as "a new resident in Taiwan" to continuously provoke the debates of whether Ma's policy towards the mainland is "selling out Taiwan" or "loving Taiwan". Thirdly, since the debates between the blue and the green on the policy towards the mainland concern the two parties' general position of the future of Taiwan and also the future survival of them, it is very difficult for the two parties to reach consensus, and even to find compromise. Thus, the struggle between the two is very intense. And cross-Strait policy has been the focus on the island and the international community too.

3, The differences on the cross-Strait policy between the blue and the green have profound social roots. There are two kinds of collective "anxiety" in the current Taiwan society. One is that people feel anxiety about Taiwan being separated from East Asia and even the whole world. They hope that along with the break-through of the impasse across the Strait, the economic arrangement in Taiwan can be opened up. The representative of this group is Ma Ying-jeou's team and the KMT, who are the positive force in Taiwan, which supports promoting the integration of the economies on both sides across the Strait. And this is the mainstream. The other is that people feel anxiety about Taiwan's annexation by the mainland. They fear that because interaction and integration between the two sides are happening so fast the future of Taiwan will be controlled by the mainland. The representative of this group is the DPP and the TSU. They are not the mainstream in Taiwan. However, they are a very important political force there. "These two collective 'anxieties' are parallel lines in the current political antagonism in Taiwan."^{xvii}

IV. The trends of the DPP is the major variable in the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations

1, The peaceful development of the cross-Strait relationship has further limited the space for the development of “Taiwan Independence”. The historical opportunity of the peaceful development across the Strait appeared after Ma Ying-jeou’s inauguration. The time of closer communication and more dynamic development has come. Especially with the weekend charter flights and direct charter flights starting from July 4th and December 15th 2008 respectively, a “one day life cycle” has been established. With the closer exchanges between people on the two sides, the main theme across the Strait is “peace” rather than “contradiction between unity and independence”. The reason is that “The big three links will weaken the political basis of the green camp, and even will marginalize the green.”^{xviii}

2, The influence of the “Taiwan Independence” force including the DPP as the opposition in Taiwan should not be ignored. Since the DPP is out of power, it is impossible for the “Taiwan independence” force to promote the independence of Taiwan by executive power. The secessionist activities are no longer the main threat to peace and stability across the Strait, which means that the “Taiwan independence” is less dangerous now. And this is also why the opportunity of the peaceful development across the Strait appears. Meanwhile, it should be paid attention to the fact that the “Taiwan independence” force hasn’t disappeared after the DPP lost its power. Both the DPP and the “Taiwan independence” force are still very important parts of the Taiwan society and political structure. They will be there for a long period of time and continuously promote the “Taiwan independence” secessionist activities and thus become a major challenge for the peaceful development across the Strait. Their approaches will be to use a combination of street protests and “Obstruction in the Legislative Yuan”; “Taiwan independence” activities and social movements; “Taiwan independence” movements and pro-“Taiwan independence” media to sell the “Taiwan independence” ideology to the whole society.

3, Insisting on “Taiwan independence” is the way of the DPP to attract its basic supporters. In fact, when the DPP lost its power, it also lost the support of the swing voters. Thus to embrace its basic supporters, namely the “Taiwan independence” fundamentalists, is its way to strengthen basic support. In fact some radical words by Tsai Ing-wen after she became Chairwoman of the DPP were for the support of those fundamentalists. Actually her words and behaviour are under their heavy influence.

4, The accelerating integration between the two sides across the Strait on the economic, social and cultural level not only limit the space of “Taiwan

independence”, but also push the independence force to speed up its integration. The two demonstrations on August 30 and October 25, 2008 organized by “the Taiwan Society” were extremely violent towards Chen Yun-lin, who paid a visit to Taiwan, and it showed that the DPP would like to use the visit to make noises and start its campaign of “Taiwan independence”. Various “Taiwan independence” forces are now speeding up their integration on the organizational, behavioural and media level.

V. The future of a peaceful development across the Taiwan strait and policy recommendations

1, The trend of the political situation in Taiwan is in favour of the peaceful development across the Strait. The reasons are, firstly, though Ma Ying-jeou’s administration has been in difficult situation and will meet many challenges in the future, generally speaking, its status has been strengthened. Secondly, so far the DPP has not been able to forge meaningful challenges for Ma. Now that the DPP lost the election, it can only contain Ma, but not constrain him. Because the DPP cannot give up its magic card of “Taiwan independence” and can only blindly say no to the KMT’s policy towards the mainland, the cross-Strait policy has become Ma’s patent. The drag and hurt caused by the corruption case of Chen Shui-bian has become a pain for the DPP for a long period of time and will not disappear in a few years. Thirdly, the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations has been the main pursuit of the Taiwan people. Though they are not satisfied with the performance of Ma’s team, they are even more dissatisfied with the performance of the DPP led by Tsai Ing-wen. Though the Taiwan people are not satisfied with the result of Ma’s economic policy, they support his policy of opening the direct three links across the Strait and his initiative of signing the economic framework agreement with the mainland. A very small number of people are against the peaceful development across the Strait in Taiwan. Fourthly, though there are still lots of problems between the two sides, including serious political disputes, through the consultation and negotiation between ARATS and SEF and broad communication and cooperation between the two sides, the common interests of the two have been expanding, consensus has been building and mutual trust has been increasing.

2, The international situation is developing in a direction which is in favour of the structure of the peaceful development across the Strait. First of all, the international society including the U.S., Japan, Europe and Southeast Asian countries are glad to see and even support the peaceful development across the Strait. Peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is what the international community pursues. Secondly, in the context of the international financial and

economic crisis, the Chinese mainland, with its sound economic development, huge foreign reserves and responsible economic behaviour, is playing and will continue to play an important role in the hot issues on the global level. The growing influence on international affairs makes the Chinese mainland more capable of leading the cross-Strait relationship. Thirdly, the promotion of a peaceful development across the Strait by the Chinese mainland not only meets the needs of the people on both sides, but also is in line with the common political philosophy of the international society and meets the common strategic interests.

3, The situation on the island is still complicated and changeable. On the one side, the time of the internal stabilization and integration of the DPP after it lost power is shorter than the outside expected, which to some extent forms a kind of containment towards the cross-Strait policy of Ma's team. On the other side, the major problem Ma's team is facing is that the policy of opening up towards the mainland it adopts hasn't improved the economic situation in Taiwan immediately. Therefore, it failed to meet the expectation of the Taiwan people. Though the political relations between the two sides have been improved a lot after Ma Ying-jeou came to power, the economic situation in Taiwan has not improved along with the political relations due to the global economic crisis. In general the ordinary people in Taiwan are "utilitarian". Especially many DPP supporters are economically weak and prefer to believe the scenario supported by the DPP that the "big three links" will force Taiwan's economy to decline, so that the unemployment problem will become more serious. So it's natural that they have a strong sense of crisis with regard to the three links. Thus, Ma Ying-jeou needs to help the Taiwan people share the "dividend" of the peaceful development brought by his policy as soon as possible.

4, It's the responsibility of both sides across the Strait and the international community to protect, strengthen and develop the new structure of the peaceful development of the cross-Strait relations. This is in the interest of both sides and the international community. Thus, the recommendations are as follows.

The first is to strengthen the basis. The political basis of the "1992 consensus" insisted on by both sides across the Strait should be strengthened in order to prevent any setback to the peaceful development. The struggle against "Taiwan independence" should be continued. Though anti-"Taiwan independence" is not the major task now, it is still indispensable so as to prevent the possible return of the "Taiwan independence" force. The countries concerned and the international society should work together to protect and support the current situation of the peaceful development across the Strait and insist on the "one China" principle.

The second is to build a framework. A framework of the peaceful development should be built in order to make the development institutionalized and standardized. It should cover economic communication and cooperation, the

cultural and educational exchanges, and also confidence-building measures in the military.

The third is to enrich the substance. The political, economic, social and cultural substance of the peaceful development could be enriched by the promotion of the “Big three links”. The major goal of the economic cooperation agreement between the two sides is the normalization of the economic and trade relationship between the two.

The fourth is to expand the agreement. The agreements of the two sides across the Strait on the peaceful development and the common values should be expanded. The agreements among the international society on the peaceful development should also be expanded. To understand the peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait is in the interest of the international community, especially since the international environment is an important external factor for the peaceful development. The peaceful development across the Strait needs the understanding and support of the international society. The stable and friendly relationship between the Chinese mainland and the major countries, namely the U.S., Japan, Europe and Southeast Asian countries, should be continued and strengthened.

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