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CHINA'S TAIWAN WHITE PAPER POWER PLAY

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China's recent rhetorical assault on Taiwan is a tutorial for the Clinton Administration on one important principle: You reap what you sow. Administration officials were shocked that, less than 24 hours after the State Department's latest peace mission to China, Beijing unleashed a lengthy White Paper that harshly criticizes Taiwan's democratic leaders, changes the terms under which Beijing will use military force against Taiwan, and uses President Clinton's own words to justify this coercion. But this latest provocation should come as no surprise. It is the inevitable result of the Administration's mistakes.

Beijing's diatribe should be recognized for what it is—a power play designed to disrupt Taiwan's March 18 presidential election, intimidate the U.S. Senate as it considers a bill to enhance Taiwan's security, and force Taipei into unification talks on Beijing's terms alone. To justify its assault on Taiwan's freedom and U.S. interests, China repeatedly cites the Clinton Administration's recognition of Beijing's "one-China" policy, its opposition to Taiwan's self-determination, and its lack of support for Taiwan's membership in international organizations. China senses weakness in Washington and will keep pushing as long as the President continues to play their game.

The Administration's "One-China" Mistake. The "one-China" concept perhaps had some utility over the years in helping China, Taiwan, and the United States to move forward on issues of common concern and interest. Progress was achieved since President Richard Nixon's historic visit to China

precisely because no side imposed a definition of "one-China" on the other. The moment one side imposes meaning on the "one-China" framework, it falls apart—hindering cross-Strait relations. China's 11,000 word White Paper is all about imposing its definition of "one-China" on Taiwan and the United States. For this reason alone, the United States should reject the terms of this paper.

Careful word choice matters because U.S. leaders have been duped into becoming Beijing's pawns in its war of words with Taiwan. A seemingly innocuous statement like "the United States has a one-China policy" is taken by Beijing as U.S. recognition of Beijing's claim that Taiwan is a part of the People's Republic of China. Beijing then uses the "one-China" policy to protest defensive arms sales to Taiwan and to isolate Taiwan internationally. Alone and overwhelmed, Taiwan is then expected to negotiate unification with China.

Regrettably, President Clinton has gone beyond using Beijing's "one-China" slogan to adopt significant elements of its "one-China" policy. On June 30, 1998, while in Shanghai, the President said, "we don't support independence for Taiwan, or two Chinas, or one Taiwan-one China. And we don't

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believe that Taiwan should be a member of any international organization for which statehood is a requirement." These "three no's" have always been Beijing's policy, but no U.S. President had ever publicly endorsed them, much less on Chinese soil. In the White Paper, China gleefully cites the President's concession as an implicit endorsement of its "one-China" policy. The Clinton Administration claimed that the President's statement in Shanghai was nothing new and no big deal. But it obviously mattered to Beijing.

Time to Undo Past Mistakes. Washington should realize that "one-China" is the goal of Beijing, but not of U.S. policy. Since President Nixon, U.S. policy has been to respect China's peaceful pursuit of its "one-China" goal. The United States did not recognize Taiwan as being a part of the People's Republic of China, did not endorse the use of force to make it so, and did not adopt "one-China" as a policy objective.

Intellectual laziness has led U.S. officials to speak of an American "one-China" policy. Because the United States recognizes only one legal government of China, many officials mistakenly adopt Beijing's jargon and reinforce its view that the United States considers Taiwan to be a part of the People's Republic of China. Beijing, in its White Paper and elsewhere, uses U.S. adherence to the "one-China policy" as justification for coercing Taiwan to the negotiating table, or worse. Before another Administration official again speaks of a "one-China" policy or principle, he should consider whether he really wants to be a party to this coercion.

Return to U.S. Interests. China's power play must not go unanswered. Instead of allowing Beijing to continue putting words in his mouth, the President must change the terms of debate on Taiwan issues. To restore focus on U.S. interests, Washington should:

- **Publicly reassure Taiwan.** The President must make up for his Shanghai "three no's" mistake by reassuring Taiwan publicly that America has not adopted Beijing's position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan, will not withhold needed defensive arms, and will not pressure Taipei to enter into negotiations with Beijing. President Ronald Reagan's "six assurances" to Taiwan in 1982 should be his guide.
- **Enhance Taiwan's Security.** The Senate should proceed with consideration of the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act to assure Taiwan's people that they can exercise their democratic franchise, confident that China's coercion is not going unnoticed or unchecked by the United States. This would also remind Beijing that the United States never agreed to compromise Taiwan's security in the course of developing diplomatic relations with China.
- **Stop using the "one-China" slogan.** U.S. officials should simply describe interests and U.S. policy, recognize Beijing as China's government, and acknowledge Beijing's goal of peaceful unification. Moreover, the United States should insist on peace.

After reading China's White Paper, the Clinton Administration should realize the folly of its loose use of Beijing's slogans and its endorsement of Beijing's policy on Chinese soil. The belligerence expressed in the White Paper is the fruit of President Clinton's casual rhetorical concessions. This should be a reminder to Washington that power is the motivation, means, and end of Beijing's policies. China's power play must not go unchecked. Washington must resolve to deter Beijing's aggression or be prepared for more of the same.

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