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FRAMING TAIWAN'S INDEPENDENCE IN THE COVERAGE OF TAIWAN'S  
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 1996 TO 2004: AN ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. PRESS

by

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## ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

### FRAMING TAIWAN'S INDEPENDENCE IN THE COVERAGE OF TAIWAN'S PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, 1996 TO 2004: AN ANALYSIS OF THE U.S. PRESS

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This dissertation examines how the U.S. mainstream press covered the issue of Taiwan's independence from 1996 to 2004. The stories this study examined focus on the three Taiwan's presidential elections (1996, 2000, and 2004) as well as the Taiwan Strait crises. This study employs framing theory as its major theoretical framework and uses qualitative frame analysis and the "signature matrix" method as its research methods. The selected press includes four newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*) and two news magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*). This dissertation argues that the issue of Taiwan's independence not only provides a platform for the international diplomatic struggle among Taiwan, China, and the United States, but also into the value debate regarding the U.S. national interest.

In 1996, the movement of Taiwan independence is considered as part of the development of Taiwan's democracy. In 2000, the framing has shifted from pro-democracy to pro-"one-China" policy. In 2004, the framing has changed from preserving "one-China" policy to promoting the status quo. First, for nearly a decade, the U.S.

framing of Taiwan's independence has shifted from promoting democracy/self-determination/liberty to the "one-China" policy/peace/stability. It suggests the room for the movement of Taiwan's independence is slimmer and slimmer. Second, regarding the question of how the press constructed the identity frames and national interests of the United States, the role of the U.S. and the content of the national interest may vary depending upon the international diplomacy and domestic politics of America. Third, as to the question of how the news frames interpreted the policies and the public opinion of the United States, the framing of the U.S. press can be seen as an indicator of U.S. policy or public opinion.

Finally, the signature matrices provide a useful tool to reveal the structures of the framing. If we look at both the signature matrices and the central organizing ideas, a coherent picture can be composed regarding the framing of Taiwan's independence.

## DEDICATION

For my mother, Mei-Nu Chan, and in loving memory of my father, Wei Fu

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

“Whose side are you on?” It was a good question because it was an awkward one and an inescapable one. The question presents itself these days, awkwardly and inescapably as always, in the matter of Taiwan and China. Whose side are we on? (Kelly, 1999, p. A23)

On March 14, 2005, China passed an anti-secession law which provided a legal basis for China to use “non-peaceful means” to halt any possibility of Taiwan’s formal declaration of independence. In response to the law, one of the largest demonstrations in Taiwan’s history took place in Taipei on March 26, 2005, to protest against China. This event attracted international attention, including coverage from the U.S. media. For instance, *The Washington Post* noted on March 27, 2005:

Hundreds of thousands of Taiwanese marched through Taipei on Saturday to voice their opposition to an anti-secession law recently passed by China that authorizes the use of force against the island if it moves toward formal independence (Culpan, p. A19).

The Taiwanese people’s response was a symbol of opposing the “one-China policy.” But more significantly, China’s law challenged the principle of America’s policy over the Taiwan issue: a peaceful resolution. This demonstration is also a miniature of the reality--China’s sovereignty claim on Taiwan as well as Taiwan’s right to self-determination. To explain this complicated issue in simple terms, the cross-strait relationship is this: China claims that Taiwan is part of China and threatens to attack Taiwan if Taiwan declares independence, but Taiwan maintains its sovereignty. The reason the international media are concerned about this issue is that China’s anti-secession law has triggered anxiety of possible warfare in the Pacific Rim.

The U.S. especially plays an important role of balancer: on the one hand, it must try to calm China and include it as a “strategic partner.” On the other hand, it also must

try to support Taiwan's democracy and make it part of the East Asia network against communism. America's finesse of playing the balancer between Taiwan and China sometimes is good, and sometimes is not so good. The following part will provide a brief historical review of the cross-strait relationship. We could see it as an unfinished civil war between China and Taiwan, or could view it as a long power struggle between Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-Shek.

### Historical background

If we review the cross-strait history, the threat of possible warfare is a reasonable assumption. After the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT) was defeated by the Chinese Communists Party (CCP) and fled to Taiwan in 1949, there have occurred four major Taiwan Strait crises. The first two crises (1954 and 1958) involved heavy artillery attacks on Quemoy and Matsu, small islands of Taiwan. The last two crises (1995 and 1999) revolved around military exercises, missiles tests and psychological warfare. The resolutions of these four crises, without exception, all relied on U.S. intervention. For instance, during the second Taiwan Strait crisis (1958), the U.S. provided Taiwan with missiles and fighters and even threatened to use nuclear strikes on mainland China.

According to a report, the U.S. was determined to defend Taiwan:

Senior American officials, including President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, publicly affirmed the US commitment to defend Taiwan and to counter naval threats in the Taiwan Straits. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles declared that the U.S. would take "timely and effective action to defend Taiwan" ("Second Taiwan Strait," n.d.).

Surprised by the America's forceful response, China offered a peaceful settlement with Taiwan and this crisis was over by the end of 1958.

As mentioned above, the first two crises involved massive bombardment on both sides. However, the two opposing leaders, Chiang Kai-Shek and Mao Zedong, had one thing in common—they both believed in the “one-China policy.” On the one hand, Mao tried to “liberate” Taiwan; on the other hand, Chiang wanted to turn defeat into victory.

But with the development of Taiwan’s democracy, the growth of the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the “one-China policy” is no longer the only option for the Taiwanese people. In this sense, the last two crises can be considered as the results of China’s anxiety about Taiwan’s pursuit of formal and permanent independence.

On June 7, 1995, Taiwan’s President Lee Teng-hui departed for the U.S. and attended a Cornell University reunion. This private trip had different implications. From Taiwan’s perspective, it was a symbolic breakthrough out of a long-term official international isolation; from China’s viewpoint, it was a provocative move and a challenge to the “one-China policy.” Following President Lee’s trip, China launched missiles tests aimed at Taiwan’s offshore areas (average 30 miles from Taiwan’s coast) three times and conducted four rounds of military exercises. This also was known as the third Taiwan Strait crisis. This crisis was also significant because of China’s attempt to influence the result of Taiwan’s presidential election—the first Taiwanese (and Chinese) direct presidential election in history.

However, China’s intimidation proved to be a failure. President Lee was the first directly elected President in Taiwan and won with 54 percent of the vote. During the crisis, the U.S. Seventh Fleet monitored all of the military exercises. While Chinese Premier Li Peng warned the U.S. not to send its Navy to the Taiwan Strait, according to a report, Secretary of Defense William Perry said the Chinese: “are a great military power,

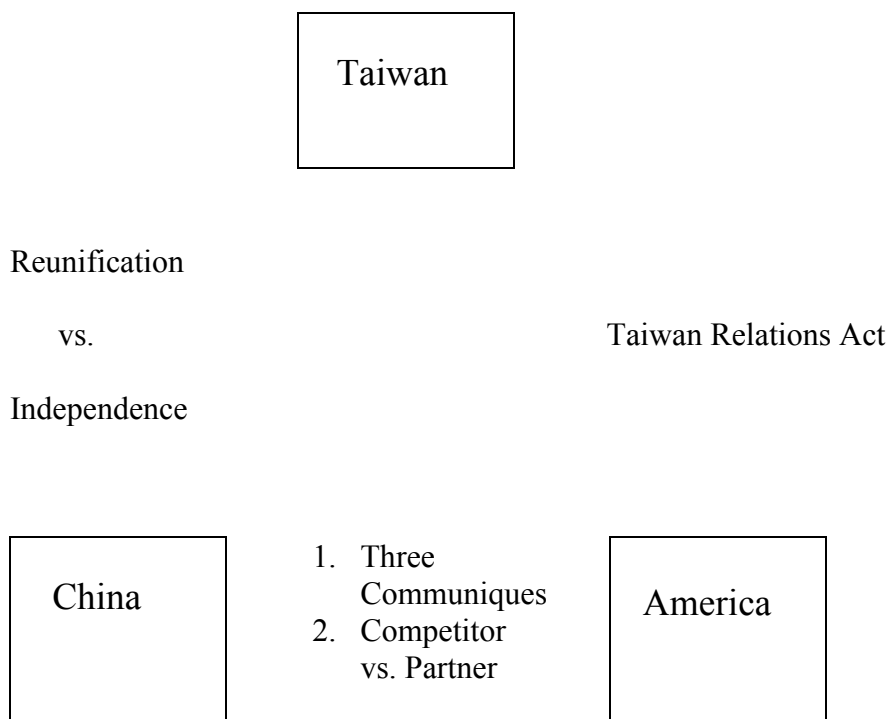
the premier-the strongest-military power in the Western Pacific is the United States” (“Taiwan Strait,” n.d.). Tensions between Taiwan and China and between the U.S. and China eased while interactions between China and the U.S. escalated. Chinese President Jiang Zemin’s visit to the U.S. in 1997 and President Clinton’s visit to China in 1998 are two examples of both sides’ (China and the U.S.) efforts to increase interactions.

The issue of Taiwan’s independence involves a triangular relationship amongst China, America, and Taiwan. First, between China and Taiwan, to support reunification or to promote independence is the most crucial issue. Besides independence and reunion with China, there seems no other option. Second, issues need to be resolved between China and America, including nuclear proliferation, trade, human rights, and relations with Taiwan. Regarding relations with Taiwan, the guiding principles for China and America are three communiqués issued in 1972, 1979, and 1982. Third, as to the relations between Taiwan and America, based on Taiwan Relations Act, America “acknowledges” China’s “one-China policy” and the Taiwan question only can be resolved by a peaceful solution. According to the Taiwan Relations Act:

to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States (“Taiwan Relations,” n.d.).

America’s “grave concern” of Taiwan’s security is the major struggle among the three major actors’ (Taiwan, China and America) national interests. This triangular relationship can be demonstrated by the following figure (see figure 1):

Figure1. The triangular relationship among Taiwan, China, and the U.S.



This brief review of the history of the Taiwan Strait crises not only shows the struggle between China and Taiwan, but also demonstrates the choice between the “one-China policy” and “Taiwan’s independence” for the Taiwanese people. Wrapped up in the issue of Taiwan’s independence are historical and political conflicts, international relations with China, Taiwan, and the U.S., and--for this research--the framing of the news media. Through an examination of the news coverage regarding the issue of Taiwan’s independence, this study attempts to reveal the news frames, the framing process, and the frames shifting of the U.S. mainstream press.

Why the issue of Taiwan’s independence?

As discussed above, the issue of Taiwan’s independence is a mutual concern of the U.S., China, and Taiwan—although each has its own unique agenda. Regarding the future of Taiwan, there are at least three possible scenarios: maintaining the status quo,



declaring its independence, or uniting with China. The following part will discuss the three possibilities and try to reveal the rationale of the project.

*Scenario One: Taiwan maintains the status quo.* On the surface, it looks like an ideal situation for everyone. The U.S. “acknowledges” the “one-China policy” and insists that the Taiwan question can only be resolved by peaceful means. In this case, America can do business with both China and Taiwan. Taiwan and China can shelve the debate about sovereignty and enjoy the common benefits of trades. However, it is too good to be true. On February 21, 2000, a Chinese government’s report warned that if Taiwan continues to delay the negotiations of peaceful reunion, “then the Chinese government will only be forced to adopt all drastic measures possible, including the use of force, to safeguard China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity”(Eckholm, 2000, p. A1). After this report, to build Taiwan’s future on maintaining the status quo would be like building a house on sand—it may be beautiful, but it would not last very long.

*Scenario Two: Taiwan declares its independence.* It looks like the worst case scenario on many levels. First, one thing for certain is that China will definitely attack Taiwan. The consequences of a war between China and Taiwan are beyond imagination. Friedman (1999) said: “Taiwan and China are now so intertwined that neither can shoot the other without shooting itself. They have mutual assured economic destruction”(p. A21). Second, a bigger question is: Will the U.S. help defend Taiwan? If yes, to what degree will the U.S. get involved? In 1996, the Clinton administration sent two aircraft carriers to the Taiwan Strait and ended that crisis. But if Taiwan declares independence, the complication among China, Taiwan and the U.S. is even worse. However, for many

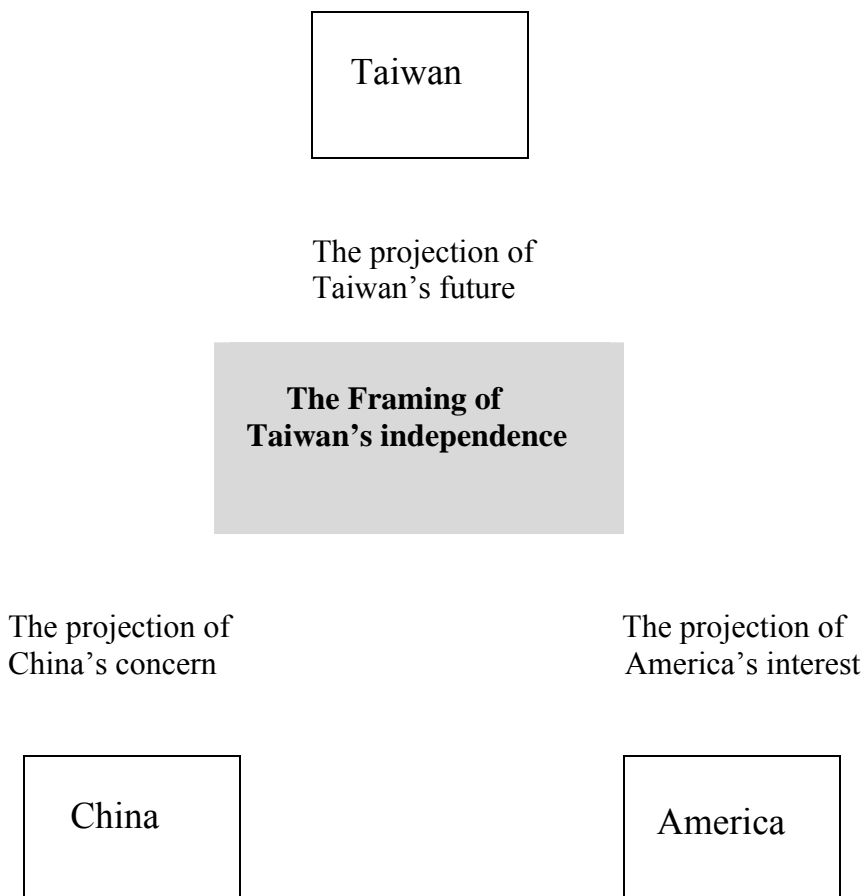
Taiwanese people, the declaration of Taiwan's independence is a life-long dream. In this case, Taiwan's independence would have met many people's goal.

*Scenario Three: Taiwan and China are united.* In this scenario, Taiwan will lose its identity and China will be the winner. But the role of the U.S is ambiguous. On the one hand, it matches with America's "one-China policy." On the other hand, it sacrifices Taiwan's democracy and freedom—it is one of the important allies in the East Asia region. The question here is: Does it best serve America's interest?

As we can see, Scenario One is only a temporal situation and Scenarios Two and Three are more likely to be Taiwan's future. The issue of Taiwan's independence not only concerns Taiwan but also involves China and America. Both scenarios (independence or reunion) will lead to complicated consequences. The issue of Taiwan's independence will influence Taiwan, China and the U.S. in different ways. For Taiwan, it is a struggle about political identity and democracy. For China, it is a concern of national pride and sovereignty integrity. For America, it is an ideology struggle between democracy and communism, a debate on its national interest. The rich characteristics of this issue are the primary reason that this topic is attractive to explore. In other words, these complicated power struggles and strategic concerns were all projected into the framing of Taiwan's independence (see figure 2). This study focuses on the coverage of Taiwan's presidential elections from 1996 to 2004. During the presidential campaigns, the issue of Taiwan independence was the most decisive factor determining which candidate would win the election. Along with China's reactions and America's comments, the news stories of Taiwan's presidential elections are the best data to investigate the framing of Taiwan's independence. Especially, two presidential campaigns overlapped

with two Taiwan Strait crises—the news coverage about the issue of Taiwan’s independence was destined to be more than plentiful.

Figure2. The projections of the framing of Taiwan’s independence



Another thing that needs to be noted is the growing trade and investment among Taiwan, China and the United States. In 1996, Taiwan has invested \$25 billion in China (Faison, 1996, p. A1). In the same year, China and the United States were doing “\$50 billion worth of business with each other” (Prager et al., 1996). Through 2004, Taiwanese businessmen had invested \$100 billion in mainland China (Pan and Hoffman, 2004, p. A1). In 1999, Taiwan has become “China’s biggest capital supplier” (Friedman, 1999, p.

A21). Friedman said Taiwan and China are like “Siamese twins” based on this economic reality in the Taiwan Strait.

### Theoretical framework

This research employed framing theory and the theoretical lens of national interest to analyze the framing process of the news media. Framing theory has been developed by many scholars. The employment of the concept of frames can be traced back to Goffman (1974). In order to construct fractured personal experience or data, Goffman pointed out that frames are required:

I assume that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events--at least social ones--and our subjective involvement in them; frame is the word I use to refer to such of these basic elements as I am able to identify. This is my definition of frame. My phrase “frame analysis” is a slogan to refer to the examination in these terms of the organization of experience (pp. 10-11).

Based on this definition, Goffman’s frame analysis is more about psychological schemas or cognitive structures. Scholars such as Tuchman (1978), Gitlin (1979), Gamson (1989), and Entman (1993) all made their contributions on building framing theory. Basically, frames function either to enable us to make sense of the world (Goffman, 1974; Gamson, 1989) or work to limit (or promote) certain viewpoints (Iyengar, 1991; Entman, 1993). The former approach is related to the study of cognition and the latter one is about the practice of journalism. Among these scholars, Entman suggested framing theory could be a valuable “fractured paradigm” in social science. According to Entman, the process of framing takes place through “selection and salience.” Entman pointed out the process:

Frames highlight some bits of information about an item that is the subject of a communication, thereby elevating them in salience. The word salience itself needs to be defined: It means making a piece of information more noticeable,

meaningful, or memorable to audiences. (p. 53)

In other words, framing makes certain parts of information more important. Although framing is necessary in news coverage, the process of framing inevitably promotes certain viewpoints and neglects others. In Entman's (2004) recent research, he proposed a new model, *the cascade model*. This model puts news frames into a bigger framework of different social forces (e.g., the White House, elites, media, and public opinion) which makes the whole picture much more clear.

Framing theory has been applied to many fields, such as management and organizational studies, social movement studies, and media studies (Thomas Konig, n.d.). This study focuses on the field of media studies.

Second, the theoretical lens of national interest plays an important role in the process of news framing, especially international news. Nye (1999) defined national interest as:

The national interest is simply the set of shared priorities regarding relations with the rest of the world. ... It can include values such as human rights and democracy, if the public feels that those values are so important to its identity that it is willing to pay a price to promote them. ... A democratic definition of the national interest does not accept the distinction between a morality-based and interest-based foreign policy. Moral values are simply intangible interests (pp. 23-24).

According to this definition, national interest includes "interest-based" and "morality-based" values. This theoretical lens can provide a means of understanding why different media (especially different countries' media) covered the same events differently.

By comparing how the U.S. and the Chinese media covering the Kosovo crisis, Yang's (2003) study provided an example of the role of national interest and its influence on the use of news frames. Yang suggested: "While the Chinese newspapers framed the

air strikes as an intervention of Yugoslavia's sovereignty and territory, the US newspapers framed the air strikes as a humanistic aid to Albanians to stop the ethnic cleansing initiated by Serbians. The general corresponding reflections of government attitudes toward the air strikes in the newspapers indicate a considerable influence of national interest on media frames in newspapers” (see abstract). In this sense, we can view the media frames as an answer to national interest.

This study uses both framing theory and the theoretical lens of national interest to examine the news coverage about the issue of Taiwan’s independence.

#### Research questions and research methods

This study examines news coverage of the framing of Taiwan’s independence.

The research questions are:

1. How were news frames regarding Taiwan independence formed over time (from 1996 to 2004)?
2. How did the press construct the identity frames and national interests of the U.S.?
3. How did the news frames interpret the policies and the public opinion of the U.S.?

In other words, the core of the study is to reveal the framing structure and strategy of Taiwan’s independence as well as to examine how U.S. public opinion and policy changed over time.

This study employs frame analysis as the primary research method. Many studies have conducted research through frame analysis; however, it is not easy to give this process a simple definition. Maher (2003) noted: “Framing is so broad a concept that it

lacks the focus, predictive value, and testability of a more focused midrange theory” (p. 90). Some studies have tried to make frames measurable by counting key terms in communication texts. But Reese (2003) criticized this approach: “Quantification’s precise measurement makes it preferred by many scholars, but the most important frame may not be most frequent” (p. 8).

In fact, Reese’s comment on the characteristics of frames echoes Goffman’s notion that frames are “the organization of experience” (p. 10), Gitlin’s (1979) idea that frames are “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation” (p. 12), and Gamson’s (1989) notion that “A frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue” (p. 157). In this sense, the purpose of frame analysis is to find the “central organizing idea” in which constructing the world, events, and news coverage.

If the “central organizing idea” or frame is not necessarily the most frequent term, then what other approaches can help to reveal frames? In our everyday lives, the use of language constructs our ways of thinking. The use of identity frames is one of them. Koing said: “One of the most revealing ways, in which identity frames are implicitly constructed, is a collectivization through the use of deictics, particularly in form of the usage of the first, and to a lesser extent third, persons plural ... all instances ‘we’ or ‘us’ or their equivalents in other language may give strong hints at the most important actors in the narrative.” In other words, the distinction between “we” and “they” or between “we” and “others” is an indicator of certain values or frames that are being promoted.

When the news coverage is about subjects (e.g., religion, culture) with which the reporter is not familiar, the usage of “we” and “they” is obvious. Said (1997) observed

the usage of “Islam” conveys too much ideological or negative meaning in Western news media: “‘Islam’ seems to engulf all aspects of the diverse Muslim world, reducing them all to a special malevolent and unthinking essence. Instead of analysis and understanding as a result, there can be for the most part only the crudest form of us-versus-them” (pp. 8-9). If the coverage is about warfare, then the difference between “our” war and “their” war is inevitable. Liebes (1992) analyzed CNN’s treatment of the Gulf War as “American television treatment of the Gulf War follows the our war principle: It personalizes only our side. ... Our side was not only the central presence; it was the only side personalized and thus humanized” (p. 52).

To illustrate identity frames in texts can contribute to the further analysis of the issues regarding national interest and therefore display the construction of framing. Besides identity frames, this study also will indicate the major news frames (or the “central organizing idea”), which are news themes, including beliefs, value judgments, or “taken-for-granted” propositions. In order to identify the news frames, Gamson & Lasch’s (1983) “signature matrix” method is adopted. To understand the “signature matrix” method, it is best first to review the concept of “media package.” The “media package” approach was developed by Gamson & Modigliani (1989). They suggest that: “media discourse can be conceived as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue” (p. 3). For them, media packages and media frames are interchangeable. As a matter of fact, a frame “implies a range of positions” and a package “offers a number of different condensing symbols” (p. 3). The “media package” approach suggests a broad sense of the structure of media discourses, and the “signature matrix” method provides a way to unfold the structure. The “signature matrix” method provides five framing devices



(metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions and visual images) and three reasoning devices (roots, consequences and appeals to principles) to display how news frames are formed and constructed.

This study examines America's mainstream press (four newspapers and two magazines), namely *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*. As Entman (2004) put it, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* are "two leading newspapers" and *Time* and *Newsweek* are "two elite newsmagazines." Entman said: "these outlets sometimes differ in their reporting and commentary on foreign events and issues, more striking is their broad similarity" (p. 11). Since this project seeks to reveal the framing of Taiwan's independence (foreign issue) and the frames changing over time; these mainstream press entities (broad similarity) provide a solid basis to indicate the interrelationships of news frames, policies and public opinion of the United States in general.

#### Goals of the study

Studies show that frame analysis can help with the understanding of an issue (Fisher, 1997), the formation of public opinion (Entman, 2004), the process of policy-making (Triandafyllidou & Fotiou, 1998), and social movements (Snow et al., 1986; Gamson, 1995). The purpose of this study is to examine how the U.S. press portrayed the issue of Taiwan's independence and to have a better understanding of the frames changing over time.

More specifically, the first goal of this study is to reveal the U.S. media's news frames about the issue of Taiwan's independence (understand the issue). Furthermore, this research attempts to uncover the interrelationships between the news frames and the

audiences' frames (the formation of public opinion). Last, the study examines the framing of Taiwan's independence through the perspective of national interests or foreign policies of the U.S. (the process of policy-making).

#### Importance of the study

As discussed above, in order to understand the issue of Taiwan's independence, analysis of news frames, public opinion, and policy-making of the U.S. provided a means of approaching this issue. However, there is little research on how the U.S. media portrayed the issue of Taiwan's independence. This study attempts to make a contribution to fill this knowledge gap.

Based on the review of the Taiwan Strait crises, the warfare between Taiwan and China that happened before may happen again. According to the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, if any threat to the peace of Taiwan occurs, the U.S. is obligated to defend Taiwan. In this sense, a war between Taiwan and China would impact the U.S. eventually, either directly or indirectly. The purpose of this research is to increase understanding of the issue of Taiwan's independence, and hence, to prevent misunderstanding from happening. The public opinion or the policy of the U.S. (through the analysis of news frames) is important for Taiwan (and China) to form proper policies regarding the cross-strait relations.

This study is important primarily because it attempts to fill the knowledge gap of how the U.S. media portrayed the issue of Taiwan's independence. Second, it tries to provide a better understanding of this issue in order to benefit Taiwan and China as well as the U.S.

This dissertation is composed of seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the historical background of the issue and the purpose of the study. Chapter 2 provides a literature review of framing theory and the theoretical lens of national interest. In addition to the theoretical frameworks, studies in regard to cross-strait relations are described. Chapter 3 deals with research questions and methodology, namely identifying the central ideas, identity frames, and the “signature matrix” method. In addition, data collection and the procedures of identifying news frames are discussed. Chapter 4 presents the frame analysis of Taiwan’s independence and a signature matrix in 1996. Chapter 5 discusses the frame analysis of Taiwan’s independence, signature matrices and the frame change in 2000. Chapter 6 presents the frame analysis of Taiwan’s independence, a signature matrix and the frame change in 2004. Chapter 7 presents comparison and discussion. In addition, it indicates the limitations of the research and suggests directions for future study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter will introduce the literature review of framing theory. In addition, it will compare the framing paradigm with the objectivity and bias paradigm. The purpose is to show the characteristics of framing theory.

### The objectivity and bias paradigm

The concept of objectivity has been regarded as a great principle of American journalism research and practice. It also has dominated the studies of journalism and media effects for decades. Scholars used “emblem” and “keystone” to describe the significance of objectivity (Schudson, 1978, p. 9; Doll & Bradley, 1974, p. 256).

Followed by objectivity, the concept of bias emerged. Bias means the lack of objectivity. Both the research and practice of journalism should avoid bias and pursue objectivity. For instance, MacLean (1981) said: “When a story does not distinguish clearly between its author’s interpretation and the facts being reported, it is a biased or slanted report” (p. 56).

Tuchman (1971/72) suggested that journalists’ employment of objectivity (e.g., the skills of “balanced” report) is part of their professional “strategic rituals” to protect themselves. To present conflicting views or claims can protect journalists and editors from possible libel suits. More importantly, “balanced” reports are less likely to anger commercial sponsors. McQuail (2000) put it this way: “The media themselves find that objectivity gives their own news product a higher and wider market value” (p. 173).

However, in practice, to apply objectivity to news reporting is not an easy task. For instance, two things can be considered as a lack of objectivity--unbalanced reporting and distortion of reality. Unbalanced reporting does not provide conflicting viewpoints at the same time; distortion of reality refers to not truthfully reflecting the reality. But these

two principles are somehow contradictory. For example, in a political campaign, one candidate may have nine public appearances in a day and the other may have zero (or one). On the one hand, in order to “balance” the report, a journalist would inevitably “distort” the reality. On the other hand, to reflect the reality would miss the other side of the story.

Furthermore, the philosophical assumption of reality from the objectivity and bias approach has been challenged. Hackett (1984) noted the assumption is, “The media can and ought accurately to reflect the real world, in a fair and balanced way ... journalists can stand apart from the real-world events whose truth or meaning they transfer to the news audience by means of neutral language and competent reporting techniques” (p. 254). The assumption is twofold: first, there is a pure reality outside and researchers can grab it; second, journalists can “objectively” transfer or report the reality to the news audience. Here we will focus on the second part of the assumption. Regardless of whether there is a reality out there, the second proposition asserts that journalists can reflect reality as it is through language if employed properly. There are two major criticisms regarding this claim. First, as Hackett said: “the news media *unavoidably* structure their representation of social and political events in ways which are not pre-given in the events themselves” (p. 256). For instance, budgetary limitations or news formats could shape the characteristics of news coverage but they do not necessarily “reflect” reality.

Second, the use of language, labeling, or framing has already suggested certain value judgments. Morley (1976) concluded: “evaluations are already implicit in the concepts, the language in terms of which one observes and records” (pp. 246-246). In

other words, different viewpoints of reality and language have changed the course of media studies, namely, the framing paradigm.

### The framing paradigm

The framing paradigm came into play in the field of media studies later and provided a different view to deal with issues in mass communication research. As mentioned above, the framing paradigm primarily came from a different philosophical assumption of reality. Unlike the assumption of positivism, the framing paradigm's assumption can be called the Kantian approach. Hall (1982) noted:

A Kantian or neo-Kantian position would say that, therefore, nothing exists except that which exists in and for language or discourse. Another reading is that, although the world does exist outside language, we can only make sense of it through its appropriation in discourse (pp. 70-71).

In other words, the question is not about reality itself (what exists and what does not) but rather how it was experienced or covered through the use of language. Fiske and Hartley (1978) also agreed with this viewpoint: "Whether the reality in question is the brute force of nature, or men's relations with other men, it is always experienced through the mediating structures of language. And this mediation is not a distortion or even a reflection of the real, it is rather the active social process through which the real is made" (p. 161). When the focus is about language or signs, then the concern should be meaning-making or significations. Based on the study of semiotics, we know that the relationships between signifiers and the signified (or concepts) are not fixed. On the contrary, the meanings of signs (or language) could be changed by providing different contexts. As Hartley (1982) suggested: "signs do not have a fixed internal 'meaning,' but only meaning-potentials, which are actualized in use" (p. 22).

Tankard (2001) mentioned that the framing paradigm is important because it provides a new approach besides the objectivity and bias paradigm. Compared with the objectivity and bias paradigm, the framing paradigm is more “sophisticated” and “subtle.” Also, it “recognizes the ability of a text—or a media presentation—to define a situation, to define the issues, and to set the terms of a debate” (p. 96). This characteristic also makes framing very powerful: “Much of the power of framing comes from its ability to define the terms of a debate without the audience realizing it is taking place” (p. 97). Entman (1993) explained the power of frames this way: “The text contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments” (p. 52).

In sum, the framing paradigm treats the news text not by examining its objectivity, but by analyzing the news frames or the use of language. The two paradigms have different assumptions of reality and different concerns of media content. Both paradigms have their strengths and limitations. The framing paradigm may be more “subtle,” however the measurement of frames could be a problem. The assumptions of the objectivity and bias paradigm may be problematic, but it remains the guideline for news practitioners.

This study adopts the framing paradigm as the major research approach. The following sections contain discussions regarding this paradigm.

#### Studies on international news before the framing paradigm

Before the framing paradigm, scholars have tried to investigate international news or foreign countries via different perspectives or methodologies (Markham, 1967; Lent,

1974; Gans, 1979). This section provides a brief review of their contributions.

For instance, Markham (1967) tried to examine Communist mass communication systems, namely the Soviet Union and Communist Chinese models. As Markham mentioned: “No mass communication system exists in a cultural vacuum ... it develops in relation to the other institutions of the society; it shapes and is shaped by the cultural heritage, the values, the ideals, the mind and the experience of a people bound together by a common tie of national existence and survival as a political entity” (p. x). In other words, Markham’s research approach is to investigate the mass communication systems through the lens of cultural or social structures of certain societies. In addition, his efforts were designed to make sense to the Western world. The examination of foreign mass communication systems provides a basis to understand foreign countries and cultures.

By the same token, Lent et al. (1971) tried to provide “a historical treatment” (p. xv) to introduce the newspaper presses of 15 Asian countries. Lent argued: “analyses of the newspaper press in specific countries are meaningless at best and confusing or misleading at worst unless the reader has some idea of how that particular press arrived at its contemporary state” (p. xv). By providing the background of the Asian presses, the reader can make better sense of foreign cultures. Later on, Lent (1974) made his contribution by providing all researchers a thorough bibliography regarding Asian mass communications. These infrastructures make further explorations of foreign countries and cultures more likely.

Lastly, Gans (1979) investigated the U.S. media to reveal the values in the news and in the practice of journalism. Besides domestic news, Gans also explored the reporting of international news. He divided the international news that appeared in the



U.S. media into seven categories: 1. American activities in a foreign country. 2. Foreign activities that affect Americans and American policy. 3. Communist-bloc country activities. 4. Elections and other peaceful changes in government personnel. 5. Political conflict and protest. 6. Disasters. 7. The excesses of dictatorship (pp. 32-37). The news coverage this dissertation examined matches with categories 3, 4, and 5. Gans also pointed out value judgments are part of news stories: “reality judgments are never altogether divorced from values. ... The values in the news are rarely explicit and must be found between the lines—in what actors and activities are reported or ignored, and in how they are described” (pp. 39-40). Gans maybe did not employ the framing paradigm; however, his concerns are similar to those who employed framing theory later on. “Values between the lines” and “activities reported or ignored” definitely provided the basis for frame analysis in the study of international news coverage.

In sum, before the employment of the framing paradigm, some scholars have contributed to the study of foreign cultures and international news coverage. Markham investigated the Communist mass communication systems in Russia and China. Lent et al. provided the introduction and the bibliography of the Asian presses. As to Gans, he may not use the framing theory, but his concern of value judgments in the news echoed those studies employing the framing paradigm.

#### The origins of frames

Where do news frames come from? How are they fixed into the appearance of the stable, the natural, the taken-for-granted? And how, despite this, are the prevailing frames disputed and changed? (Gitlin, 1980, p. 249)

First, we can examine frames through the approach of cognitive science. In fact, Goffman’s (1974) “the organization of experience,” Gitlin’s (1979) “persistent patterns

of cognition, interpretation, and presentation,” and Gamson’s “central organizing idea” all refer to psychological schemas or cognitive structures. Lakoff (2004) provided a clear definition of a frame: “Frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world ... you can’t see or hear frames. They are part of what cognitive scientists call the ‘cognitive unconscious’—structures in our brains that we cannot consciously access, but know by their consequences: the way we reason and what counts as common sense” (p. xv). In other words, frames are invisible mental structures only existing in our brains, which organize experience and make sense of the world.

The second way to think of the origins of frames is through ideology. The discussion of ideology at least can be traced back to Marx (Marx and Engels, 1970). According to Gramsci, ideology serves as a means to control the people for the ruling class (Gramsci, 1971). Hall (2003) indicated three characteristics of ideology (pp. 89-90). He contended that: “ideologies ‘work’ by constructing for their subjects (individual and collective) positions of identification and knowledge which allow them to ‘utter’ ideological truths as if they were their authentic authors” (p. 90). The reason ideologies work, Hall says, is because they appear to be common sense. We think we are the “authors” of these ideologies. Hall (1982) also referred to ideologies as “taken-for-granted propositions”: “a statement like ‘the strike of Leyland tool-makers today further weakened Britain’s economic position’ was premised on a whole set of taken-for-granted propositions about how the economy worked, what the national interest was, and so on. For it to win credibility, the whole logic of capitalist production had to be assumed to be true” (p. 74). If we regard frames as ideologies, then frames are not just mental structures

but propositions that convey certain beliefs and value judgments appearing as common sense.

The third way to discuss the origins of frames is through the use of language or labels (Said, 1997, pp. 9-11). The first two approaches, cognitive science and ideology, both pointed out that frames (either mental structures or common sense) must be examined through the form of language. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) referred to frames as metaphors which help individuals to understand “one kind of thing in terms of another” (p. 5). One of the examples they provided is “argument is war”:

It is important to see that we don't just talk about arguments in terms of war. We can actually win or lose arguments. We see the person we arguing with as an opponent. We attack his positions and we defend our own (p. 4).

In other words, the way to examine the origins of frames is to examine the metaphors or labels used in the communication texts.

In sum, the origins of frames can be regarded as mental structures, ideologies, or the use of language/labeling. However, no matter what kind of approach has been adopted, the common ground is to examine frames through language (e.g., metaphors, labels).

#### The origins of news frames

To answer the question of “Where do news frames come from?” one of the arguments is that news frames come from the practice of journalism. To discuss the practice of journalism, in a sense is to examine media routines. When we ask “What is news?” to a journalist or editor, he/she may say that, if something is important or interesting, then it could be news. However, the reality is, “Anything could be news,” according to Gitlin (1980), “for news is what news-gatherers working in news-processing

organizations say is news” (p. 268). As a matter of fact, the media routines, the budget limit, the reliance on official sources, and certain formats or norms all account for the making of news. The reason certain news frames prevail is the practical matter of news producing. Gitlin concluded that: “Frames are in effect negotiated among sources, editors, and reporters; how they will emerge in practice is not preordained” (p. 274).

Among these factors, the heavy reliance on official sources is one of the major reasons that certain news frames were adopted. Dickson (1994) confirmed the strong connection between the media and government: “The reliance on government sources and themes lends credence to the notion that a subtle ideological bias pervades the mainstream press and that the press often ‘serves to sustain’ the U.S. government line in foreign policy crisis” (p. 817).

As Entman (1989) indicated: “The least expensive way to satisfy mass audience demands is to rely upon legitimate political elites for most information”(p. 18). In fact, the relationship between the media and the nation (or official sources) is symbiotic. On the one hand, the government needs the media to promote certain political agenda. On the other hand, the media rely on the official sources to get “legitimate” and “least expensive” information. As a result, the media lose their autonomy in digging up the truth or setting their own agenda. It is “unavoidable” (McQuail, 2000, p. 343) that certain news frames (e.g., pro-government frames) win out.

#### The process of news framing

As discussed above, the fact that certain news frames are adopted by the media is due to the process of negotiation among different social forces. This negotiation process is essentially a power struggle. Bateson (1972) is the one who set the basis of framing

theory. He described the framing process as a reminder to the receiver: “these messages are mutually relevant and the messages outside the frame may be ignored” (p. 188). In other words, framing means the suggestion or implication of a preferred reading. Iyengar (1991) indicated: “the concept of framing refers to subtle alterations in the statement or presentation of judgment and choice problems” (p. 11). The term “alteration” may imply a certain degree of message distortion. However, in Bateson’s description, framing refers to making some pieces of information “relevant” and some “ignored.” In this sense, Entman’s (1993) definition seems to be closer to Bateson’s: “Framing essentially involves selection and salience. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 52).

We can say that the framing process is the negotiation between the text and the reader (audience) or the struggle among multiple social forces (e.g., news organizations, official sources, and media practitioners).

First, we can examine framing process from the perspective of the encoding/decoding model. As mentioned above, the framing process means promoting certain pieces of information and ignoring others. In Kahneman and Tversky’s (1984) experiments, they found that different wording (or use of language) of the same thing did influence people’s perceptions and choices. In Hall’s (1980) terms, “dominant or preferred meanings” do exist. However, the decoding moment does not necessarily correspond to the encoding moment. Hall indicated three “hypothetical positions”

(dominant-hegemonic, negotiated, and oppositional) which potential receivers could adopt to decode messages.

We may argue that dominant-hegemonic and oppositional positions are both extreme cases. The negotiated position of decoding seems more likely to be our daily practice. If we use Scheufele's (1999) terms, on the one hand we have media frames, and on the other hand we also have audience frames. Both of them could be either dependent (an effect) or independent (a cause). In other words, the framing effects are not just one-way transmissions but rather two-way interactions.

We also can look at the framing process from the viewpoint of power struggle. In this sense, the media are the locus of power struggle. In a capitalistic society, journalism is also a business. Certain formats are employed because they can reach the maximum audience (which, then, can translate to maximum profit). Also, the media are the means of spreading the agenda of the powerful. It does not mean the media can only reflect the interests of the sponsors or the powerful but rather provide a site for power struggle.

#### The acceptance of news frames

After the negotiation of meanings between the text and the reader, and the power struggle of the media, then some news frames are accepted and some are rejected. This process also relates to an essential cultural element, namely frame resonance (Snow et al., 1986). While answering why some frames succeeded but some did not, Snow et al noted: "We propose that one of the key determinants of the differential success of framing efforts is variation in the degree of frame resonance, such that the higher the degree of frames resonance, the greater the probability that the framing effort will be relatively successful" (p. 477). Other scholars have noticed this cultural element as well, Gamson's

(1989) “cultural resonances,” and Entman’s (1993) “culture” both tried to stress the importance of the cultural element regarding the acceptance of certain news frames. Later on, Entman (2004) proposed a new term, “cultural congruence,” to refer to this cultural element. He said: “The more congruent the frame is with schemas that dominate the political culture, the more success it will enjoy” (p. 14). On the other hand, if some frames are culturally incongruent, then “Such ideas are blocked from spreading, typically due to their dissonance with dominant schemas” (p. 15). Entman provided an example: In the events of September 11, if one story framed the hijackers as not evil terrorists but heroes, then this frame would be unacceptable for most Americans, including journalists. This example indicates that “cultural resonances” or “cultural congruence” plays a decisive role in terms of the acceptance of news frames.

#### Media packages and news frames

This study refers to the examination of news discourse as frame analysis. But for Gamson and Modigliani (1989), the terminology is “media package”:

Media discourse can be conceived of as a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue. A package has an internal structure. As its core is a central organizing idea, or frame, for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue (p. 3).

For Gamson and Modigliani, a frame “implies a range of positions” and a package “offers a number of different condensing symbols.” Therefore, media packages and news frames share a similar structure. In Gamson and Modigliani’s study, they tried to reveal how the nuclear power packages changed over time through the examination of news coverage. They suggested five framing devices (metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images) and three reasoning devices (roots, consequences, and appeals to principle) to unfold a media package. They noted: “A package can be

summarized in a signature matrix that states the frame, the range of positions, and the eight different types of signature elements that suggest this core in a condensed manner” (p. 4).

They employed the “signature matrix” method to explore the media discourses regarding nuclear power. Three media packages have been revealed, they are: the progress package, the runaway package, and the soft paths package.

Three factors determine which media package will win out. They are cultural resonances, sponsor activities, and whether it fits with media practices. Their study provided the theory and method of analyzing media packages (or news frames). This study adopts their approach to unfold the framing of Taiwan’s independence.

#### A “counterframe” and an “expanded frame”

Framing theory suggests that news frames and facts are combined as a package. This is the reason why news frames sometimes are difficult to detect. Especially when reading or viewing international news reports, readers are less capable of forming an oppositional or negotiated position by themselves. In other words when a preferred reading has been encoded in the production side in the hope that the audience will perform an active role on the decoding side, this is too much to expect. However, scholars have suggested useful devices for journalism practices to help the reader have better understanding of news stories. In other words, news frames still exist, but a comprehensive understanding is a reasonable goal. For instance, if a counterframe is provided in the text, then it is more likely the reader could have a better understanding of news events. Entman (2004) proposed: “It is not enough for media to present information in ill-digested and scattered morsels. Rather, what citizens need is a conterframe



constructed of culturally resonant words and images, one that attains sufficient magnitude to gain wide understanding as a sensible alternative to the White House's interpretation" (p. 17).

If a counterframe has been provided in the production side, readers do have a better chance to construct their own opinions. Although it may sound a little ideal, it is not impossible to achieve—depending on both sides' (encoding/decoding) efforts.

Second, with the development of new media storytelling tools, the traditional framing process may have a chance to be improved. For instance, Pavlik (2003) indicated three new means of viewing news stories or events, they are: hypermedia, omnidirectional imaging, and object-oriented multimedia. These tools have one thing in common: they can all expand the traditional news frames and provide broader, contextualized reports. Pavlik said: "these new tools present the opportunity for storytellers, such as journalists, to create much more engaging, navigable, contextualized reports that tell the day's events more accurately, fully and dynamically. In the end, these tools create the possibility to create news reports that are less bound by typical one-dimensional, episodic-frame storytelling used in most contemporary U.S. news reporting" (p. 312).

One thing that needs to be noted is that these new tools still could not get rid of news frames. However, they can provide an "expanded frame," which leaves more room for readers to make their own judgments. For example, the so-called omnidirectional imaging means 360-degree view imaging cameras, which allow viewers to view any angle they want. In this sense, it could reduce the influence of the traditional news camera operator's particular angle or frame.

In sum, by providing a counterframe (a better encoded text) or an expanded frame (a room for the viewer to navigate), we could improve the traditional one-dimensional news framing process. A better understanding of news events, then, is an achievable goal for the audience.

#### Studies on Taiwan Strait crises

Before discussing studies about Taiwan Strait crises, one thing that needs to be noted is that the news framing about the Taiwan Strait issues represents “high-threshold issues” (Lang and Lang, 1981). Lippmann (1922) noted: “The world that we have to deal with politically is out of reach, out of sight, out of mind” (p. 29). In fact, most of the time, we are facing a world which we don’t have direct experience. The media help us understand the world which is inevitably constructed by certain news frames. Especially, we heavily rely on the media to gain our knowledge about international events and foreign countries. Lang and Lang (1981) have distinguished two kinds of issues, “low-threshold issues” and “high-threshold issues.” The former refers to issues with which we have direct or personal experience; and therefore we can make our own judgments based on our experience. The latter means issues that we have no direct experience with; so we form our opinions through the media. For most people, international events or foreign countries (cultures) definitely belong to the category of “high-threshold issues.” This can also explain why framing theory is appropriate for this study.

The issue of Taiwan’s independence is also an issue of national identity. Hall (1992) identified five elements (pp. 293-295) of constructing national identity. He suggested the way of forming the construction is: “We are here to listen to the story about our nation, to link the memory of the past and the present, and the images based on the

memories” (p. 293). In other words, we can say the media provide a linkage between stories and national identity.

Fletcher (1998) examined the political identity in Canada and Quebec regarding the issue of media system and globalization. Fletcher suggests that different media systems (Canada and Quebec) will respond to the influence of globalization differently. This study also proposes that we need proper policies to create a public sphere in responding to the challenge of globalization. This approach suggests that news frames could influence viewers’ attitudes toward certain issues and eventually could shape viewers’ national identity.

The relationship between Canada and Quebec, in a sense, is similar to the relationship between China and Taiwan. On the one hand, Taiwan and Quebec are seeking to declare independence; on the other hand, China and Canada are trying to prevent it from happening. The difference is that China threatens to attack Taiwan, but Canada does not threaten to attack Quebec.

Some Taiwanese scholars have tried to explore the issue of Taiwanese national identity via different aspects. We can treat this issue as a means of rediscovery of Taiwanese culture (Chang, 1993, p. 257), a result of the ethnic tensions between Mainlanders and Taiwanese (Chang, 1993, p. 239), an issue of Taiwanese people’s voting behaviors (Yu, 1996), or a political choice due to the development of democracy, localization, and international isolation (Chen, 2001, p. 22).

For instance, Chen (2001) examined the role of Taiwan’s mass media in the process of reinforcing different national identities. Chen’s study found that different national identities have different preferences for media use. Besides the democratization

of Taiwan, ethnic origins played an important role in terms of constructing different national identities (i.e., Chinese vs. Taiwanese). Chen pointed out: “the heated debate about the issue of Taiwan independence versus unification with China has created tension among the Taiwanese people of different ethnic origins” (p. 1). In fact, the issue of Taiwan’s independence and the construction of Taiwan’s national identity are like the two sides of a coin. Chen concluded: “Taiwanese mass media in 1995 made a moderate impact on the Taiwanese people’s attitudes toward national identity” (see Abstract). The interaction between the media coverage and the formation of national identity provides an aspect to examine media frames. Chung’s (2002) study also tried to unfold the formation of Taiwanese identity but focused on the discussions in cyberspace.

Zhong’s (1999) study is about how different media covered the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996. Zhong examined three TV networks of three countries: the U.S. (CNN), Taiwan (TTV), and China (CCTV). His study found that every network framed the same event differently based on its own national interest and foreign policy. But all three had one thing in common: they all relied heavily on official sources.

Chen as well as Chung’s studies examined the relationship between the media and the formation of Taiwan’s national identities. As a matter of fact, the framing of Taiwan’s independence can be considered part of the struggle for Taiwan’s national identity. Zong’s research indicated how the media depicted the same Taiwan Strait crisis differently. Zong’s study can be seen as an evidence of the existence of framing strategy or media packages. However, this dissertation examines the issue of Taiwan’s independence in the U.S. press alone. Therefore, the issue of Taiwan’s identity is not directly related to this study. Second and more specifically, it analyzes the frames

changing over time, through Taiwan's presidential elections, 1996 to 2004. Fisher (1997) suggested that frame analysis is: "to study how people understand an issue, and to track the way in which this understanding changes over time." Through comparing the framing of three Taiwan's presidential elections, this study tries to provide a better understanding of the issue of Taiwan's independence.

In summation, there are two major research paradigms in the field of media studies: the objectivity and bias paradigm and the framing paradigm. This study adopts the latter one as its research paradigm.

Before the framing paradigm, scholars have tried to study foreign countries and international news via different perspectives. On the one hand, Markham and Lent provided the infrastructures for further study on Russia and Asian mass communication systems. On the other hand, Gans investigated the importance of value judgments in the news, which echoed the studies employing framing theory.

When discussing the origins of frames, three approaches were discussed: cognitive science, ideology, and the use of language. However, the common ground of the three approaches is to examine frames through language (e.g., metaphors, labels).

Where do news frames come from? One of the major sources is from the practice of journalism. News frames are from the negotiation of sources, practitioners, sponsors, and other social forces as well.

The processes of news framing are twofold: one is the meaning negotiation between the text and the reader; the other one is the power struggle among multiple social forces.

Besides news frames, audience frames, and the power struggle of social forces, cultural resonance sometimes is the key element determining which news frame will win out or survive.

Gamson and Modigliani's study provided the theory and method to discuss media discourses, namely, the "media package" approach and the "signature matrix" method. This study adopts their theory and methodology to analyze the framing of Taiwan's independence.

Framing theory indicates that news frames and facts are combined as a package. That is the major reason sometimes news frames are difficult to detect. Entman proposed a "counterframe" and Pavlik suggested an "expanded frame" for journalism practices to help the reader reach better understanding of news coverage.

Some studies have discussed the national identity of Taiwan and how media covered the Taiwan Strait crisis differently. Few studies are directly related to the issue of Taiwan's independence. This dissertation attempts to reveal the news frames regarding the issue of Taiwan's independence by examining the coverage of the U.S mainstream press.

## Chapter 3 Research Questions and Methodology

Scholars have suggested that the making of news is a process of social construction (Tuchman, 1978; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). It is, at a minimum, related to the interrelationships of the media production, media content (values or frames), and the audience. According to framing theory, the process of framing is not only about the meaning negotiation between the text and the reader, but also a power struggle among multiple and sometimes conflicting social forces.

This dissertation focuses on the framing of Taiwan's independence by examining U.S. press coverage. Besides the framing process of the U.S. press, this issue is an international event (high-threshold issues) and therefore, the national interest of the U.S. plays an important role in terms of news coverage.

### Research questions

As discussed above, previous studies have focused on the identity issue of Taiwan or the framing of the Taiwan Strait crisis. But very few studies directly addressed the framing of Taiwan's independence by the U.S. press. To fill the knowledge gap and to present a better understanding of this issue, the research questions of this dissertation are threefold:

1. As Fisher (1997) suggested, frame analysis serves to "understand an issue" and "understanding changes over time." This dissertation tracks the way in which the U.S. press depicted Taiwan's independence through nearly a decade (1996 to 2004, news coverage of three Taiwan's presidential elections). By identifying news frames (or central organizing ideas), this study seeks to develop a better understanding of this issue and the frame shifting over time.

The first question is: How have the news frames regarding Taiwan independence been formed and constructed over time (from 1996 to 2004)?

2. Besides news frames, this study identifies identity frames and also analyzes the framing of Taiwan's independence through the lens of the national interest of the United States. The second question is: How did the reporting construct the identity frames and national interests of the U.S.?
3. Finally, As Entman (2004) noted, public opinion is "subject to framed interpretations" (p. 21). This study discusses the interrelationships between the media frames and audience frames. This dissertation tries to make sense of news frames, foreign policies and the public opinion of the United States. Therefore the third question is: How did the news frames interpret the policies and the public opinion of the U.S.?

In other words, this study's task is to examine the framing of Taiwan's independence, the framing of the public opinion of the States, and the framing of America's national interest.

#### Methodology: frame analysis

This study examines how the U.S. press portrayed the issue of Taiwan's independence from the viewpoint of framing theory and the lens of national interest. As discussed in the literature review, the process of framing works through "selection and salience" and news frames appear as "taken-for-granted propositions."

This study employs frame analysis to examine news frames in the U.S. press. There are two approaches to conduct frame analysis: one is to count key terms appearing in the texts; the other one is to identify identity frames or news frames (central ideas) in



the texts. The former one (the quantitative approach) makes frames measurable, the latter one (the qualitative) tries to capture the preferred reading of the text. Both approaches have their merits and limitations. Based on the nature of this study, the latter approach is adopted.

In fact, if we trace back the origins of frame analysis, Goffman's "the organization of experience," Gitlin's (1979) "persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation" (p. 12), and Gamson's (1989) "A frame is a central organizing idea for making sense of relevant events and suggesting what is at issue" (p. 157), all of them refer to frames as the central idea of the text rather than the most frequent term. Reese's (2001) comment echoed this tradition: "we can easily measure what is visible and available, and from there we take the 'highlighted,' 'noticeable,' and most 'salient' features. We shouldn't oversell this aspect, however, just because it is most manifest. Framing should remind us that content is only the tip of a very big iceberg. ... A frame may be distributed across a number of stories in its symbolic terrain" (pp. 16-17).

The most frequent term does not necessarily refer to the central idea. Furthermore, what is not said or ignored in the news stories could be part of the central organizing idea. Holstein (2002) put it this way: "a framing analysis is more likely to open up means of identifying what is unsaid (the non-agenda)" (p. 142). Gans (1980) provided an example to display that the "unsaid" could be part of the framing strategy. For instance, when introducing Black Panther Huey Newton, the depictions are he "portrayed himself to be an intelligent academician" (p. 41). As a matter of fact, he earned his Ph.D. in 1980 from the University of California at Santa Cruz. The interesting part here is that when a common term (Ph.D.) is available but is ignored, the "unsaid" part screams.

### The signature matrix method

To lay out the core news frames, Gamson and his collaborators' methodology, the "signature matrix" method is introduced. The "signature matrix" approach provides five framing devices (metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions and visual images) and three reasoning devices (roots, consequences and appeals to principles) to reveal how news frames were formed and constructed. The "signature matrix" means that every media package or news frame has its signature (core position or central idea). Gamson and Lasch (1983) said: "Every package has a signature—a set of elements that suggest its core frame and position in a shorthand fashion. ... These signature elements of a package are the condensing symbols by which it is displayed" (p. 399). This approach provides a systematic way to sort out or locate news frames into categories. In Gamson and Lasch's system, the five framing devices were applied to their study like this:

1. **Metaphors.** Political cartoons.
2. **Exemplars.** The Korean War.
3. **Catchphrases.** "If we don't stop them in Vietnam, we'll be fighting them on the beaches of Malibu."
4. **Depictions.** Lyndon Johnson described the critics of his Vietnam policy as "nervous nellies."
5. **Visual images.** The American flag.

In addition, the three reasoning devices were recommended:

6. **Roots (or causal analysis).** The causal analysis of the Vietnam War.
7. **Consequences.** "The negative effects on American national security of a communist takeover of South Vietnam."

8. **Appeals to principle.** “The defense of the weak and innocent against unprovoked aggression.”

By using the “signature matrix” method, the structure of the news frames (or media packages) can be illustrated out of news coverage. According to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), the reason to distinguish framing devices from reasoning devices is: “framing devices that suggest how to think about the issue and reasoning devices that justify what should be done about it”(p. 3). As discussed above, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) have referred to frames as metaphors. In Gamson and Modigliani’s system, “metaphors” are the first framing devices which help individuals to understand one thing by another.

The “signature matrix” method has been employed by scholars to uncover news frames. Holstein (2002) said the “signature matrix” approach is “the most promising methodology to extend to news content analysis” (p. 162). In Holstein’s study, the researcher used the “signature matrix” method to locate the structure of the Cold War frame. This approach has also been adopted by organizational research. In Creed, Langstraat and Scully’s (2002) study, they employed the “signature matrix” method to identify diverse symbols in the discussion of socially responsible investing (SRI) movement. For them, this approach is “the most basic and highly accessible ways of approaching frame analysis” (p. 39).

In fact, when reviewing Entman’s definition about framing, namely “problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described,” it is similar with the “signature matrix” method. “Problem definition

can be regarded as the framing devices and “interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” can be seen as the reasoning devices.

One may argue that a news story could have more than one news frame. Therefore, how can we decide which one is the signature or core frame? According to Entman (2004), a news story can have more than one frame (e.g., a counterframe). Besides, the practice of journalism requires “balanced” reporting that almost guarantees there will be more than one frame in a news story. However, for Gamson, the signature or core frame is composed of a set of symbolic devices—it is not only just one frame. More specifically, a core frame is demonstrated by diverse elements. By employing the “signature matrix” method, we can say that a core frame is presented in an integrated or holistic way.

As discussed above, this study employs qualitative frame analysis, namely, the “signature matrix” as the major method. One of the characteristics of the qualitative approach is it acknowledges that the researcher’s subjective interpretations are part of the research process. It is acknowledged that the researcher of this study is Taiwanese. This study is inevitably shaped by the identity of the researcher. In fact, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) pointed out that all research is socially constructed by the researcher. They said that all research is “filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are not objective observations, only observations socially suited in the worlds of the observer and the observed” (p. 12).

Grounded theory is one of the qualitative methods. Strauss and Corbin (1994) described this method as the “constant comparative method” (p. 273). They argued that this approach is grounded in the “interplay with data and developed through the course of

actual research” (p. 278). Similarly, this study’s method, “signature matrix,” needs to be grounded in its interplay with the news coverage and “the course of actual research.” In order to reveal the frame change over time, this study employed the “constant comparative method” as a technique to unfold the framing of Taiwan independence.

Finally, Iyengar (1991) distinguished “episodic” news frames from “thematic”:  
 “The episodic news frames takes the form of a case study or event-oriented report and depicts public issues in terms of concrete instances. ... The thematic frames, by contrast, places public issues in some more general or abstract context and take the form of a ‘takeout,’ or ‘backgrounder,’ report directed at general outcomes or conditions” (p. 14).  
 For Iyengar, stories such as teenage drug use and an attempted murder are episodic framing. In contrast, government welfare expenditures and the backlog in the criminal justice are thematic news. The difference between them is that: “episodic framing depicts concrete events that illustrate issues, while thematic framing presents collective or general evidence” (p. 14). If we compare two frame analysis approaches with two kinds of framing, counting key terms is suitable for episodic framing and identifying news frames is more suitable for thematic framing.

Within this study, the framing of Taiwan’s independence, is not event-oriented but “in some more general or abstract context,” and therefore is more suitable for using identifying news frames or central ideas as the research method.

#### Identity frame

The study also identifies identity frames in order to examine the role of national interest plays in news framing. Scholars have suggested that the distinction between “we”

and “they” is an important element in terms of covering different countries and cultures (Said, 1997; Liebes, 1992).

By introducing the theory of “self categorization,” Billing (1995) made a connection between “I,” the first person singular, and “we,” the first person plural: “There is a case for saying that nationalism is, above all, an ideology of the first person plural. The crucial question relating to national identity is how the national ‘we’ is constructed and what is meant by such construction. The nation has to be conceived as an entity with its own identity ... only if the nation is imagined to have an identity, can ‘we’ claim ‘ourselves’ to have a national identity” (p. 70).

Lakoff (2004) also mentioned: “It is called rational actor metaphor. It is the basis of most international relations theory, and in turn it assumes another metaphor: that every nation is a person. Therefore there are ‘rogue states,’ there are ‘friendly nations,’ and so on. And there is a national interest” (p. 10).

Based on Billing and Lakoff’s arguments, the usage of “us vs. them” is not only related to linguistics but also to how core values (national interest) are conveyed in terms of news frames. In this sense, by examining identity frames, analysis can uncover the core values of news coverage.

Tankard (2001) distinguished three approaches to identify news frames: the “media package” approach (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989), regarding framing as “a multidimensional concept,” and the “list of frames” approach. This study did not provide the “list of frames,” but examined “media package” (or central ideas) and provided a multidimensional analysis (e.g., identity frames).

In conclusion, this study uses a qualitative frame analysis approach. Two major tools of conducting frame analysis are:

1. Identifying news frames or the “central organizing ideas” through qualitative frame analysis and the “signature matrix” method.
2. Identifying identity frames of the news coverage, such as “we” and “they” and the role of national interest.

#### Data collection

This dissertation examines three of Taiwan’s presidential elections’ (1996, 2000, and 2004) news coverage in the U.S. mainstream press. Each election’s timeframe is delineated by the election campaigns and other relevant events:

1. The 1996 election was not only the first direct presidential election in Taiwan, but also took place in the period of the third Taiwan Strait crisis. Therefore, the collection of news coverage began on July 21, 1995 (China proceeded with the first missile shooting near Taiwan waters), and ended in President Lee Teng-hui’s inaugural speech on May 20, 1996.
2. The 2000 presidential election was also involved in the fourth Taiwan Strait crisis. This crisis began on July 9, 1999 (President Lee stated that China and Taiwan are “special state-to-state relations rather than under “one-China policy”), and ended with President Chen Shui-bian’s inaugural speech on May 20, 2000. The news collection follows the period of the fourth Taiwan Strait crisis.
3. The 2004 presidential election was involved with the first practice of referendum in Taiwan history. On November 28, 2003, the legislation of a

referendum bill authorized Taiwan's president to hold a referendum of Taiwan's independence under certain circumstances. March 20, 2004, was both the date for Taiwan's first practice of referendum and the third direct presidential election. The news coverage collection started on November 28, 2003, and ended with the President Chen Shui-bian's inaugural speech on May 20, 2004.

To find stories regarding the issue of Taiwan's independence, the research used Lexis-Nexis database program, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, and Factiva. The purpose is to find news stories as completely as possible. The search used key terms such as "Taiwan's independence," "Taiwan's presidential election," and "Taiwan" to retrieve the relevant news coverage. *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times* are four of the major newspapers that were examined. *Time* and *Newsweek* are two of the major magazines that this study investigated.

#### The rationale of the selected press

The first reason these newspapers and newsmagazines were selected is their wide circulation and national reputation in terms of their ability of setting agenda. Second, the number of American foreign correspondents of the selected press outnumbers the major U.S. television networks (Hachten and Scotton, 2007, p. 135). Entman (2004) called *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* "the two leading newspapers" (p. 11). *The New York Times* is especially influential in setting the news agenda. McCombs (1994) said: "*The New York Times*, who on occasion can set the agenda as firmly as any president or dictator" (p. 13). Dinsmore (1969) used to point out the significance of *The New York Times*: "As *The Times* goes, so goes a large part of the nation's press. *The*



*Times* strongly influences and often actually serves many newspapers and periodicals in the United States as well as some in Latin America, Europe, Asia and Australia” (p. 20). According to Bernay’s poll, the top three newspapers in the United States were *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and *Los Angeles Times* (Kurian, 1982, p. 958). Compared with *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times* has a more conservative tradition. Based on a report of the Audit Bureau Circulation, among the four newspapers, *The Wall Street Journal* has the largest circulation (“Top 100 newspapers,” n.d.). In addition, it is also the only newspaper to reflect an economic perspective. In fact, the second, third, fourth, and fifth largest circulation went to *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, and *Los Angeles Times*, *The Washington Post* respectively. Although *USA Today* is the number one newspaper in the United States, it was not selected due to its lack of international news coverage and lesser influence in setting agenda. These four newspapers also represent three major areas’ (New York, Washington, D.C., and Los Angeles) viewpoints of the United States.

Besides newspapers, this study also used two newsmagazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*, to conduct the investigation. Compared with newspapers, newsmagazines have more time to decide their agenda and to write their stories. As Holestein put it, “They are by their nature a framing medium”(p. 168). Griffin & Lee (1995) described newsmagazines as “a kind of news digest—compressing, recapitulating, elaborating upon, and even critiquing the television and newspaper reports of a previous week” (p. 814). Entman (2004) said *Time* and *Newsweek* are “the two elite newsmagazines” (p. 11). In terms of circulation, *Time* and *Newsweek* are also the top two newsmagazines in the United States (“The State,” n.d.). These two newsmagazines’ wide circulation and ability

of setting agenda are the reasons this research would like to explore their structure of news frames. It is worth mentioning that *Newsweek* is owned by the Washington Post Company and *Time* is part of the AOL Time Warner Corporation.

In the government/press relationship, both newsmagazines (*Time* and *Newsweek*) and three of the newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*) are considered to be part of the “inner ring” (Hess, 1984, p. 99). If we consider what newspapers or newsmagazines are read most often by the U.S. journalists, then the importance of the four newspapers and two newsmagazines is distinctive. *The New York Times* is read by journalists most often (26.1 %), followed by *The Wall Street Journal* (23.4 %), *The Washington Post* (11.1 %), *Los Angeles Times* (5.4 %). As to the newsmagazines, the top two are *Newsweek* (32.2 %) and *Time* (28.5 %) respectively (Weaver & Wilhoit, 1996, pp. 22-23).

This dissertation employs framing theory and the “signature matrix” method to unfold the framing structure of the framing of Taiwan’s independence. This study uses news frames regarding the issue of Taiwan’s independence in the U.S mainstream press as its unit of analysis. Due to the historical and political context of the Taiwan Strait crisis, certain news frames (e.g., “Taiwan’s independence is provocative,” “The U.S. should defend Taiwan’s democracy and safety.”) and value judgments recurred. This study examines these news frames and identity frames to unfold the framing strategy or structure of Taiwan’s independence.

In summation, the research questions of this dissertation are threefold: 1. How have the news frames regarding Taiwan independence been formed and constructed over time (from 1996 to 2004)? 2. How did the press construct the identity frames and national

interests of the U.S.? 3. How did the news frames interpret the policies and the public opinion of the U.S.?

In short, the framing of Taiwan's independence, the framing of the public opinion of the States, and the framing of America's national interest were investigated.

This study employs a qualitative frame analysis approach to examine news frames in the U.S. press. Besides the analysis of the central organizing idea, Gamson and his collaborators' methodology, the "signature matrix" method was adopted. The "signature matrix" approach provides five framing devices (metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions and visual images) and three reasoning devices (roots, consequences and appeals to principles) to reveal how news frames are formed and constructed.

The study also identifies identity frames to examine the role that national interest plays in news framing. Through the construction of certain identify frames, we can see why certain national interests were adopted.

This dissertation examines three of Taiwan's presidential elections' (1996, 2000, and 2004) news coverage in the U.S. mainstream press.

As noted earlier, to find stories regarding the issue of Taiwan's independence, the research used Lexis-Nexis database program, ProQuest Historical Newspapers, and Factiva. Four mainstream newspapers--*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and *Los Angeles Times*—and two newsmagazines—*Time* and *Newsweek* were investigated. These media's wide circulation and ability of setting agenda are the reasons they were selected.

Based on framing theory, frame analysis, and the “signature matrix” method, this study explored the core frame changing over time regarding the issue of Taiwan’s independence as well as the public opinion and policies of the United States.

The following chapters will provide the frame analysis of the three Taiwan Presidential elections’ news coverage. They include a general frame analysis, identity frame analysis, and the demonstration of the eight symbolic devices based on the “signature matrix” method.

## Chapter 4: The Framing of Taiwan's Independence: 1996

This chapter analyzes coverage in four U. S. newspapers and two news magazines of Taiwan's presidential election in 1996. The analysis primarily tries to reveal the major organizing idea that dominated the debate over Taiwan's independence. The signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 1996 will be demonstrated to uncover the strategy of the framing. The use of identity frames will be analyzed as well. Finally, the interrelationships of news frames, policies, and public opinion will be discussed.

### Frame analysis of the 1996 presidential election coverage

News stories were collected during the period starting July 21, 1995, and ending May 20, 1996. News coverage began with China's strong reactions (e.g., missile shooting near Taiwan waters) after Taiwan's President Lee Tung-hui's visit to United States in June 1995 and ended with the newly elected President Lee Tung-hui's inaugural speech on May 20, 1996. The number of retrieved stories and editorials/opinions was 317. Some of them were news briefs and summaries. This study does not investigate them due to their lack of elaboration (usually only one sentence or one paragraph). After deleting news briefs and news summaries (112), 205 stories were examined (see Table 1).

At the first half of this period, the American mainstream press' commentary and framing are cautious. As one editorial in *The New York Times* put it, Taiwan is "an affluent democracy" and China "remains a largely impoverished dictatorship" ("China: kind words," 1995, p. A12). However, Washington has accepted the one-China policy, which "puts America in an awkward predicament." One of *The Washington Post's* stories had a similar concern:

Increasingly, calls for independence are part of public discourse on Taiwan and are forcing U.S. policymakers to choose between the important political relationship with Beijing—which is enhanced by China’s growing economic strength—and ties to Taiwan, a genuine democracy (Weymouth, 1995, p. A21).

Table 1. The number of retrieved stories & the number of examined stories, 1995 to 1996

News Media	Number of retrieved stories	Number of deleted stories (e.g. briefs)	Number of examined stories
<b>NY Times</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>66</b>
<b>Washington Post</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Wall Street Journal</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>LA Times</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Newsweek</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>205</b>

For America it is a tough choice between Taiwan and China. On the one hand, the U.S. recognizes that there is only “one China.” On the other hand, under the Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S. keeps close and strong ties with Taiwan. More importantly, both China and Taiwan are America’s important trading partners. According to *Newsweek* (Will, 1996, p. 74), China is America’s sixth-largest trading partner and Taiwan is the seventh. Excluding either one of them would damage America’s economy. Under the circumstances, the policy of “strategic ambiguity,” adopted by the U.S. government for decades, is probably a better choice for America. According to the Taiwan Relations Act, it is a “grave concern to the United States” if there is “a threat to the peace and security of

the Western Pacific area.” “Grave concern” is the foundation of “strategic ambiguity.”

The rationale of keeping ambiguity is that it would serve America’s interest best. First, it rules out any non-peaceful means for China to resolve the Taiwan question. Second, “grave concern” does not indicate what kind of action the U.S would take if China attacked Taiwan. In this case, there would be no blank check for the movement of Taiwanese independence. In theory, both sides (Taiwan and China) would not push the envelope (declare independence or invade Taiwan) under the policy of “strategic ambiguity.” However, the third Taiwan Strait crisis forced the U.S. to have a showdown with China.

Little did the Clinton Administration know that President Lee Teng-hui’s visit to America would trigger China’s provocative missile tests aimed at the Taiwan Strait. With China’s more aggressive actions toward Taiwan, the reporting during the second half of this period became more critical of China and more sympathetic to Taiwan’s situation. After nine months of military maneuvers, in March 1996, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said: “We believe that the plans for these missile tests are irresponsible, and we have informed the Chinese Government that there will be consequences should these tests go wrong” (Tyler, 1996, p. A10). The House Republican Policy Committee also issued a statement that said the U.S. should commit itself “to the defense of Taiwan” (Tyler, 1996, p. A10) and reject the Clinton Administration’s ambiguity policy.

According to Gargan (1996), the State Department had an even stronger statement calling the missile tests “unnecessarily provocative” and “reckless” (p. A10). Finally, the Clinton Administration responded and broke the ambiguity policy. Two aircraft carriers, the *Independence* and the *Nimitz*, had been sent to international waters near Taiwan to

monitor the missile tests. On March 23, 1996, the Taiwanese people chose their own leader, Lee Teng-hui, whom China resented. The following week, China's missile tests came to an end and the U.S. carriers were sent away. The Taiwan Strait seemed to find its peace eventually. However, the impact upon the triangular relationships among Taiwan, China, and the U.S. was enormous. For the States, "strategic ambiguity" had been forced to change. Meanwhile China and Taiwan learned where to draw the red line, namely no non-peaceful means against Taiwan and no pursuit of independence.

The following section analyzes the major news frames (the central idea and identity frame) based on the news coverage from July 21, 1995, to May 20, 1996.

#### The central idea of covering Taiwan's independence in 1996

The more democratic Taiwan becomes, the more difficult it becomes to envision reunion with China. Simply by holding a peaceful, fair election, the Taiwanese demonstrate how distinct they have become (Richburg, 1995, p. A4).

During this period of reporting, the central idea about Taiwan's independence was that the movement of Taiwan independence is part of the development of Taiwan's democracy; it has to depend on the Taiwanese people's choice. Therefore, China's provocations should be condemned, and the U.S. government should commit to defend Taiwan.

First, the organizing idea here is to put the issue of Taiwan independence under the framework of democracy. This "democracy frame" obviously dominated the debate of the mainstream press (Erlanger, 1996; Sigur, 1996; Tyler, 1996; Richburg, 1996; Hoagland, 1996; Farley, 1996; Mann, 1996; Dallek, 1996; Munro, 1996; Spaeth et al., 1996; Liu & Seibert, 1996; Lilley, 1996; Richburg, 1995; Rosenthal, 1995; Hickey, 1995). Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi put it this way in 1996: "It was one thing to normalize



with China when both Beijing and Taiwan had authoritarian regimes. The fact is, Taiwan is now a democracy, and that makes all the difference in the world” (Erlanger, 1996, p. A6). Democracy has made the difference. Sigur (1996) suggested that Taiwan’s democracy, not its pursuit for independence, scared China: “China’s main concern is not any movement toward independence but rather the effects of Taiwanese democracy on the island’s foreign policy” (p. A23). Democracy implies a certain degree of uncertainty; that is what China reluctantly had to deal with. Hoagland’s (1996) report echoed this point of view: “The real fear of the Chinese rulers is not independence but democracy, as it is practiced in the West, and now on Taiwan” (p. C7).

*The Wall Street Journal* described Taiwan’s democratizing process as “metamorphosis” (Hickey, 1995, P. A20); *Time* said democracy is Taiwan’s “second miracle” after its “economic miracle” (Hornik et al., 1996) and *The Washington Post* called the achievements of Taiwan’s democracy a “Quiet Revolution”: “Little noticed was the quiet but equally dramatic evolution occurring on Taiwan—a move to democracy not forced by a popular uprising but by the steady stirrings of one of the region’s most prosperous, best-educated, middle-class populations, and by a regime that early on recognized it could not long contain the island’s volatile mix of affluence and ethnic identity” (Richburg, 1996, p. A1). While the Taiwanese people and the U.S. press celebrated the glory of democracy, Taiwan’s independence seemed to earn its legitimacy. Comparing Taiwan’s independence with America’s, Dallek (1996) argued: “There is, of course, a real case for supporting Taiwan’s independence from mainland control. Self-determination for peoples everywhere has been a central proposition of the American ethos since the Declaration of Independence and the war for freedom from British rule”(p.

M3). Except for China and England, no nation--neither Taiwan nor the U.S.--can disagree with this reasoning.

Second, part of the organizing idea is to condemn China's aggressions (Sanger & Erlanger, 1996; Tyler, 1996; Gargan, 1996; Faison, 1996; Sciolino, 1996; Smith, 1996; Shinn, 1996; Iritani, 1996; Risen, 1996; Tempest, 1996; Mann, 1996; Spaeth et al., 1996). American officers' characterizations of China's military maneuvers were cited repeatedly. They called the action "irresponsible," (Tyler, 1996, p. A10) "provocative," and "reckless" (Gargan, 1996, p. A10; Smith, 1996, p. A24). After these comments, the Clinton administration took actions. A China Defense Minister's visit was canceled and export financing was frozen to show the Clinton Administration's "displeasure" (Sciolino, 1996, p. A5). *The Washington Post* said that China is the one that should be blamed most in this crisis: "A greater blame must be placed on Chinese Communist brutishness and sheer bloody-mindedness, for the coin of the realm in Chinese politics is corruption and intrigue" (Shinn, 1996, p. C1).

Another reason for the U.S. displeasure was the tensions that had threatened the U.S. business in this region (Iritani, 1996, p. D1, D4). For those U.S. firms that do business on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the impact is especially huge. On the one hand, the decline of the Taiwanese economy would slow U.S. exports; on the other hand, the U.S. firms could face possible retaliation by China.

Third, the notion that the U.S. should commit to defend Taiwan is also part of the central idea regarding the framing of Taiwan independence in several stories (O'Neil, 1996; Sigur, 1996; Brauchli, 1996; Mead, 1996; Pine, 1996; Risen, 1996; Barry et al., 1996; Lilley, 1996; Post et al., 1996). After Taiwan's presidential election, the next day's

editorial of *The New York Times* said: “The United States was right to send warships to stand by Taiwan’s coast to counter the Chinese threats” (“Taiwan’s democratic election,” 1996, p. E14). An editorial in *The Washington Post* also argued that to defend Taiwan was the right thing to do: “As China backed off, Washington withdrew the two aircraft carrier groups it had sent into international waters off Taiwan. This was gunboat diplomacy coming out as well as going in. The Clinton Administration, after some initial confusion, played its cards well” (“Quiet in the Taiwan Strait,” 1996, p. A20). An editorial in *The Wall Street Journal* had already suggested “Putting some real force just over the horizon would be to invite the PLA’s staff planners to remember how they match up against real opposition” (“Where’s the Seventh Fleet,” 1995, p. A20). However, editorials in *Los Angeles Times* had a more cautious tone regarding the issue of whether U.S. should defend Taiwan. For instance, when two U.S. carriers were sent to the Taiwan Strait, one editorial in *Los Angeles Times* said “How far Washington will go to do that is, probably wisely for now, calculatedly ambiguous” (“A judicious,” 1996, p. B4). Some reporting or opinions also echoed this viewpoint (Tyler, 1996; Shambaugh, 1996; Weymouth, 1995; Munro, 1996).

Another way to look at this issue is if the U.S. did not defend Taiwan, its Asian allies would lose their confidence in America’s promise of maintaining the security of this region. The possible consequences would make the U.S. choose to defend Taiwan (Barry et al., 1996; Lilley, 1996; Post et al., 1996). As Barry et al. (1996) put it: “American officials say that if other Asian nations ever get the idea that the United States will not defend Taiwan, the result could be an all-out arms race in the region, with Japan and South Korea quickly going nuclear” (p. 40).

As a result, under China's intimidation, 54 percent of the Taiwanese who cast ballots voted for Lee Teng-hui, whom China considers a "separatist." The other three candidates, pro-independence candidate Peng Ming-min (Democratic Progressive Party), Lin Yang-kang (New Party), and Chen Li-an (Independent), polled 21 percent, 15 percent and 10 percent of the vote, respectively (see table 2).

Table 2. The results of the 1996 Taiwan presidential election

Candidate	Major Platform	Percent of the Vote
<b>Lee Teng-hui</b> (Nationalist Party)	Against "one-China policy"	<b>54%</b>
<b>Peng Ming-min</b> (Democratic Progressive Party)	Pro-independence	<b>21%</b>
<b>Lin Yang-kang</b> (New Party)	Pro-unification	<b>15%</b>
<b>Chen Li-an</b> (Independent)	Pro-unification	<b>10%</b>

In summation, the organizing idea of framing Taiwan's independence is through the perspectives of democracy, condemnation of China's aggressions, and supporting the U.S. defense of Taiwan. Nevertheless, some coverage adopted a more cautious approach about the issue of defending Taiwan or not.

#### The identity frame and national interest

The leading presidential candidate in the election this week is pushing for international recognition of the island as national entity. That's his right, but what does it have to do with us? (Scheer, 1996, p. B7)

The identity frame refers to the use of "we" or "us" in terms of suggesting the U.S. position regarding the debate over Taiwan's independence. More specifically, what would be best for America's national interest is the major concern.

Without exception, the arguments of the four newspapers' editorials are based on what could best serve the national interest of the States. As discussed above, national interest can be "interest-based" or "morality-based" (Nye, 1999, p. 24) values. In other words, national interest can be economic values or democracy in different contexts. No matter what kinds of definition were taken, those editorials argued that a particular policy or position (e.g., defend Taiwan or compromise with China) would serve America's interest best. An editorial in *The New York Times* described America's position as "an awkward predicament" ("China: kind words, little effect," 1995, p. A12). A commentary in *The Wall Street Journal* said, "Washington's key role as a counterbalance to China" (Brauchli, 1996, p. A14). Kissinger (1996) suggested the role of America: "A wise U.S. policy will try to benefit from our biggest asset: we have fewer real quarrels with Asian nations than they have with each other, enabling us to act as balancer of the Asian equilibrium" (p. M2). "An awkward predicament," "a counterbalance," or a "balancer" can all be seen as indications of the identity frames.

In many commentaries, the importance of America's national interest is the presupposition of the arguments. One commentary in *The New York Times* argued that China's missile tests not only were aimed at Taiwan, but also the States: "America understandably does not want war with the largest nation on earth, but it is time to lay down markers and protect American national interests" (Shambaugh, 1996, p. E15). Mead (1996) pointed out that America is a "global trading nation" (p. M6). To block the free shipping in the Taiwan Strait is the least thing that America could tolerate. By providing historic evidence, Mead argued: "Freedom of the seas has been a vital national interest since the beginning of U.S. history. ... For 200 years, interfering with the freedom

of the seas was the best and quickest way to start a war with the United States” (p. M6). Here, America’s national interest is defined by the value of free trading, peaceful shipping in the seas.

On the other hand, the huge amount of U.S commerce with China provided a basis for arguing that a compromise with China would be better for America’s interests. Prager et al. (1996) said: “Washington has a wider range of interests at stake where China is concerned. Foremost is trade. The U.S. and China, a huge and largely untapped market of 1.2 billion people, now do \$50 billion worth of business with each other.” Even as arguments are taking the same definition (trading interests) of national interest, the policy debate (defend Taiwan or compromise with China) remains an open-ended discussion.

National interest also could be defined in terms of regional security or democracy. Oksenberg (1996) suggested: “what kind of China does America want? America needs China to contribute to regional stability in such trouble spots such as North Korea, The East and, South China seas and South Asia” (p. 53). For Lilley (1996), America’s “fundamental principles” are democracy and free market:

the United States must ensure that its own fundamental principles are respected. Democracy cannot be threatened by force, and free-market prosperity cannot be disrupted in Taiwan (p. 33).

In sum, the identity frame was clearly employed in commentaries on the issue of Taiwan’s independence. The identity frame also suggested the positions of how to best serve America’s national interest. Two definitions of national interest were adopted, namely democracy (“morality-based”) and free market (“interest-based”).

### News frames, policies, and public opinion

News frames could have emerged because of heavy reliance on official sources (Dickson, 1994). That is the reason news frames and policies are likely to correspond with each other. The editorials in *Los Angeles Times* demonstrated the close relationships. For instance, at the first half of this period, when the Clinton Administration showed its cautious attitude toward the Taiwan crisis; an editorial echoed this position: “The Taiwan situation is in many respects more troubling than U.S. sparring with Beijing over trade and human rights. China’s threat of using force, according to Jonathan Pollack, a China specialist at Rand Corp., requires sustained attention at high levels of the Clinton Administration” (“More intimidating,” 1996, p. M4). In fact, “sustained attention at high levels” is similar to “strategic ambiguity.” “Attention at high levels” does not mention what are the exact actions that America should take. The flexibility of this statement echoed the policy of “strategic ambiguity.” Later on, while the Clinton Administration took a tougher approach towards China, another editorial matched the change as well: “Would China actually attack Taiwan? A responsible and reasonable Beijing would not. But the Clinton administration, like others before it, has not ruled out the possibility that the United States might intervene militarily to help Taiwan in any attack” (“Hard words,” 1996, p. B8). From “attention at high levels” to “intervene militarily to help Taiwan in any attack,” the organizing idea definitely varied according to different official lines.

Entman (2004) suggested: “public opinion is usually a product of selective interpretation of framing” (p. 130). In other words, public opinion can find its roots in news frames, but may not necessarily correspond with them. For instance, we can compare the Clinton Administration’s policy with the poll and see the difference. While

two carriers had been sent to an area near Taiwan Strait, only 26 percent of American people supported the action. If China were to attack Taiwan, 29 percent of American people said they would support the use of American troops (Shinn, 1996, p. C1). As discussed above, the gap between public opinion and the policy is probably because the American people have not reached agreement on whether to defend Taiwan.

This section introduces the central idea of the framing of Taiwan's independence, which is through the aspects of stressing the importance of democracy, condemning China's aggressions, and committing to the defense of Taiwan. However, the defense of Taiwan remains an open-ended discussion. The identity frame and national interest are deeply connected. The identity frame suggests what kind of role or position America should adopt in order to best serve the national interest. National interest can be defined either as "morality-based" (e.g., democracy) or "interest-based" (e.g., free market). The interrelationships among news frames, policies, and public opinion are intertwined. News frames and policies are more likely to correspond with each other, but policies and public opinion are not necessarily alike depending upon the nature of the issue.

#### Besides the central organizing idea

Besides the central idea of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 1996, some alternative or counterframes did appear. For instance, Kissinger was one of major advocates of the "one-China" policy. Ever since his secret visit to China in 1971, he believed that the "one-China" policy would best serve America's interest. Kissinger (1996) wrote in *Los Angeles Times*: "The most immediate issue is Taiwan. The real challenge is to vindicate the U.S. interest in a peaceful solution without adopting a two-China policy. Every U.S. president has affirmed a one-China policy and every president



has stated his concern for a peaceful solution of the Taiwan question” (p. M6). Kissinger also reminded Taiwan that the U.S. may not necessarily defend Taiwan if China were to invade the island: “Taiwan must understand that U.S. concern for a peaceful outcome does not extend to re-entering the Chinese civil war. And it should realize that America’s support may prove evanescent if a prolonged Sino-American conflict can be blamed on Taiwanese machinations” (p. M6).

A couple of articles suggested a similar concern: the U.S. respects Taiwan’s achievements in democracy, but this does not mean it will go to war to defend Taiwan (Weymouth, 1995; Scheer, 1996). For instance, Weymouth said: “Taiwan should not misunderstand the existing realities: American respect for its accomplishments doesn’t translate into a willingness to go to war.” Unlike the core frame during this period of time, some counterframes appeared to define the issue through different concerns.

A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan’s independence in 1996

Based on the “signature matrix” method, the following section will provide a demonstration of the framing structure and strategy of this issue.

### **Framing devices**

#### *1. Metaphors:*

- China’s new muscle: military or monetary?
- Chinese fireworks (refers to missile tests in the Taiwan Strait)
- Saber rattling (refers to missile tests in the Taiwan Strait)
- Storm warnings (refers to the relationship between China and the U.S.)

2. *Exemplars:*

- Taiwan independence is a threat of Chinese territory

Lesson: The colonial era's humiliation

- Support a Taiwan seat in the U.N. would be consistent with the "one-China" policy

Lesson: 1945, the Soviet Union was given seats for itself and Ukraine and Belorussia

- China and the U.S. should keep talking

Lesson: To develop a post-cold-war partnership

- The Taiwan Strait crisis could lead to war

Lesson: During Cold War time, more than 100 wars happened

3. *Catchphrases:*

- China's missiles are aimed at the U.S. too
- Democracy, not independence is the threat
- Democratic evolution
- The spiritual power of democracy
- Taiwan: reunification rejected
- "Our first-made-in-Taiwan President"
- Taiwan's second miracle (refers to democracy)

4. *Depictions:*

- Suspended civil war (refers to China and Taiwan's situation)

- Taiwan votes for President and celebrates democracy
- White House snubs China over military maneuvers
- Taiwan's democratic win is China's vexing problem
- "Quiet revolution" (refers to Taiwan's democratic transformation)
- Beijing's enemy is democracy on Chinese soil
- China's missiles tests are "unnecessarily provocative" and "reckless"

5. *Visual images:*

- Riding the tiger (tiger refers to China)
- China as a dragon
- China as a giant barbaric soldier (in a cartoon)

**Reasoning devices**

6. *Roots (causal analysis):*

- Only an independent country elects its own legislature and its own President
- To show they are really serious about Taiwan's independence, they would use force if Taiwan actually went for independence
- China must adopt a more mature approach toward Taiwan. After all, this vibrant democracy is not going to agree to unification under China's present terms

7. *Consequences:*

- The more democratic Taiwan becomes, the more difficult it becomes to envision reunion with China

- Democracy is China's fear—not only in Taiwan and Hong Kong, but on the mainland as well
- If China were to attack Taiwan and the U.S. didn't respond, U.S. leadership in the region would be damaged
- Nixon (GOP) committed to the one-China policy—now the devil has come calling (refers to China's war games in the Taiwan Strait)

8. *Appeals to principle:*

- The United States would have to intervene to defend Taiwan (The issue is U.S. credibility around the world)
- The United States must ensure that its own fundamental principles are respected (Democracy cannot be threatened by force, and free-market prosperity cannot be disrupted in Taiwan)
- To support Taiwan's independence from China—self-determination for peoples everywhere has been a central proposition of the American ethos since the Declaration of Independence from British rule

In order to have a clear review of the framing devices and reasoning devices, a table of this signature matrix is provided (see Table 3). First, through the demonstration of the signature matrix, Taiwan's democracy was the core of the "depictions" and "catchphrases." One of the "depictions" said "Beijing's enemy is democracy on Chinese soil." This assertion basically defined the debate over the issue of Taiwan's independence. Second, China's hostility toward Taiwan appeared in "metaphors" and "visual images." In "metaphors," China's military and economic power was presented as "China's new

muscle.” China’s missile tests were “saber rattling.” In “visual images,” all of them (tiger, dragon, or barbaric soldier) depicted China as an untamed animal or irrational soldier. Third, the three reasoning devices and “exemplars” restated the achievements of Taiwan’s democracy and condemned China’s provocations. For instance, one of the “roots” says: “China must adopt a more mature approach toward Taiwan, this democracy will not agree to unification under China’s present terms.” One of the “consequences” suggests: “Democracy is China’s fear—not only in Taiwan and Hong Kong, but on the mainland as well.” These arguments are basically promoting the value of democracy and suggesting the U.S. should defend Taiwan. Otherwise, as another “consequence” argues: “If China were to attack Taiwan and the U.S. didn’t respond, U.S. leadership in the region would be damaged.” Furthermore, to support Taiwan and to condemn China is part of America’s fundamental principles, namely, democracy and free-market. However, worry of possible warfare in the Taiwan Strait was stressed as well. For instance, one of the “exemplars” suggests that “The Taiwan Strait crisis could lead to war” and the best policy for the U.S. is to “keep talking” with China.

This matrix promoted a glorious image of Taiwan’s democracy and denounced China’s radical provocations. One of the “catchphrases” described Taiwan’s achievements as “The spiritual power of democracy.” The “unsaid” part is that the fundamental struggle between China and Taiwan remains. As for the role of America, the question of will, or should, the U.S. continue to defend Taiwan needs to be explored.

In sum, the eight symbolic devices consistently demonstrated the achievements of Taiwan’s democracy, China’s provocations, and the U.S. principles. In fact, China’s missile tests blocked the free shipping in the Taiwan Strait. In this regard, to defend

Taiwan can best serve the U.S. national interest in terms of maintaining the freedom of the seas.

Table 3. A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence: 1996

<b>Metaphors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China's new muscle: military or monetary?</li> <li>● Chinese fireworks (refers to missile tests in the Taiwan Strait)</li> <li>● Saber rattling (refers to missile tests in the Taiwan Strait)</li> <li>● Storm warnings (refers to the relationship between China &amp; U.S.)</li> </ul>
<b>Exemplars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taiwan independence is a threat of Chinese territory Lesson: The colonial era's humiliation</li> <li>● Support a Taiwan seat in the U.N. would be consistent with the "one-China" policy Lesson: 1945, the Soviet Union was given seats for itself and Ukraine and Belorussia</li> <li>● China and the U.S. should keep talking Lesson: To develop a post-cold-war partnership</li> <li>● The Taiwan Strait crisis could lead to war Lesson: During cold war time, more than 100 wars happened</li> </ul>
<b>Catchphrases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China's missiles are aimed at the U.S. too</li> <li>● Democracy, not independence is the threat</li> <li>● Democratic evolution</li> <li>● The spiritual power of democracy</li> <li>● Taiwan: reunification rejected</li> <li>● "Our first-made-in-Taiwan President"</li> <li>● Taiwan's second miracle (refers to democracy)</li> </ul>
<b>Depictions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Suspended civil war (refers to China and Taiwan's situation)</li> <li>● Taiwan votes for President and celebrates democracy</li> <li>● White House snubs China over military maneuvers</li> <li>● Taiwan's democratic win is China's vexing problem</li> <li>● "Quiet revolution" (refers to Taiwan's democratic transformation)</li> <li>● Beijing's enemy is democracy on Chinese soil</li> <li>● China's missiles tests are "unnecessarily provocative" and "reckless"</li> </ul>
<b>Visual images</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Riding the tiger (tiger refers to China)</li> <li>● China as a dragon</li> <li>● China as a giant barbaric soldier (in a cartoon)</li> </ul>

<b>Roots (causal analysis)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Only an independent country elects its own legislature and its own President</li> <li>● To show they are really serious about Taiwan's independence, they would use force if Taiwan actually went for independence</li> <li>● China must adopt a more mature approach toward Taiwan, this democracy will not agree to unification under China's present terms</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The more democratic Taiwan becomes, the more difficult it becomes to envision reunion with China</li> <li>● Democracy is China's fear—not only in Taiwan and Hong Kong, but on the mainland as well</li> <li>● If China were to attack Taiwan and the U.S. didn't respond, U.S. leadership in the region would be damaged</li> <li>● Nixon (GOP) committed to the one-China policy—now the devil has come calling (refers to China's war games in the Taiwan Strait)</li> </ul>
<b>Appeals to principle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The United States would have to intervene to defend Taiwan (The issue is U.S. credibility around the world)</li> <li>● The United States must ensure that its own fundamental principles are respected (Democracy cannot be threatened by force, and free-market prosperity cannot be disrupted in Taiwan)</li> <li>● To support Taiwan's independence from China—self-determination for peoples everywhere has been a central proposition of the American ethos since the Declaration of Independence from British rule</li> </ul>

If we look at the signature matrix and the frame analysis, we find that they are consistent and supplementary to each other. The frame analysis provided a more general overview of the framing structure and the signature matrix pointed out the details of the framing strategy.

In summation, the core frame in the coverage of Taiwan's Presidential election in 1996 was: The movement of Taiwan independence is part of the development of Taiwan's democracy; it has to depend on the Taiwanese people's choice. Therefore, China's provocations should be condemned and the U.S. government should commit to defend Taiwan.

The identity frame was employed in commentaries on the issue of Taiwan's independence. The identity frame suggested the positions of how to best serve America's national interest. Two definitions of national interest were adopted, namely, democracy ("morality-based") and free market ("interest-based").

The interrelationships among news frames, policies, and public opinion are intertwined. News frames and policies are more likely to correspond with each other, but policies and public opinion are not necessarily alike.

Except for the central idea of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 1996, some counterframes (i.e., stress the importance of "one-China" policy) did appear.

A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 1996 is provided. This matrix suggested a glorious image of Taiwan's democracy and condemned China's provocations. The "unsaid" part is that the struggle between China and Taiwan remains and America's role in the future needs to be discovered. The frame analysis provided a broad overview of the framing structure and the signature matrix indicated the details of the framing strategy. If we look at the signature matrix and the frame analysis, we can see these two approaches are consistent and supplementary to each other.



## Chapter 5: The Framing of Taiwan's Independence: 2000

This chapter provides the frame analysis of Taiwan's 2000 presidential election coverage. Besides the discussion of the core frame and identity frames, the frame change will be analyzed. A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 2000 as well as a signature matrix of the "one-China" policy from the 2000 presidential election coverage will be provided. In addition, the interrelationships among news frames, policies, and public opinion will be discussed. The following section will discuss the general frame analysis regarding the 2000 presidential election coverage.

### Frame analysis of the 2000 presidential election coverage

News stories were collected during the period starting July 9, 1999, and ending May 20, 2000. News coverage began with China's warning of possible use of force against Taiwan after Taiwan's President Lee Teng-hui's remarks in July 1999 that China and Taiwan's relations should be on a "special state-to-state" basis. The stories ended with the newly elected President Chen Shui-bian's inaugural speech on May 20, 2000. The number of retrieved stories and editorials/opinions was 448. After deleting news briefs and news summaries (220), 228 stories were examined (see Table 4).

At the first half of this period, the American mainstream press' commentary and framing shared a common scapegoat—President Lee Teng-hui. On July 9, 1999, during an interview with a German reporter, when asked to comment on China's reference to Taiwan as a breakaway province, President Lee Teng-hui said:

Ever since the constitutional revisions of 1991, cross-Strait relations have been classified as country-to-country, or at least a special state-to-state relationship, as oppose to an internal 'one China' relationship between a legal government and renegade group, or a central government and a regional government (Yates, 1999, p. B7).

Even though President Lee Teng-hui merely stated the reality, the U.S. mainstream press regarded his remarks as “provoked” (Faison, 1999, p. A1), and “a surprise move” and “rhetorical bombshell” (Chu, 1999, p. A8). Not surprisingly, Beijing warned about the possible use of force to prevent Taiwan from pursuing independence, and Washington suggested that Taipei should take a step back to the “one-China” formula. For instance, an editorial in *The New York Times* suggested: “Beijing should not make the same mistake of resorting to military threats. That bullying turned Taiwanese opinion sharply against the mainland and unification. Mr. Lee, for his part, should abandon talk of separate states and instead reaffirm Taiwan’s desire for eventual peaceful reunification on terms consistent with its current freedoms” (“The volatile issue,” 1999, p. A22).

Table 4. The number of retrieved stories & the number of examined stories, 1999 to 2000

News Media	Number of retrieved stories	Number of deleted stories (e.g. briefs)	Number of examined stories
<b>NY Times</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Washington Post</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Wall Street Journal</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>LA Times</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Newsweek</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>228</b>

During this time period, Taiwan was considered as the one which provoked China. One significant difference in the 2000 presidential election coverage compared with the framing of 1996 election was more discussion about the “one-China” policy. The following section will provide the analysis of framing of the “one-China” policy as well.

Beijing learned its lesson this time—continuing its verbal threats against Taiwan without actually conducting military exercises or missile tests. However, when Beijing’s threats became its formal policy, then it was a different story. This time, the second half of this period, China was the one which went too far. On February 21, 2000, Beijing issued an official white paper which stated that China would attack Taiwan if Taiwan delayed the negotiations of unification. The paper said: “If the Taiwan authorities refuse ... the peaceful settlement of cross-straits reunification through negotiations, then the Chinese government will only be forced to adopt all drastic measures possible, including use of force (Pomfret, 2000, p. A1).

The Clinton administration’s response was prompt and clear. The next day, according to *The New York Times*, America rejected China’s statement: “The Clinton administration and Congress today sharply criticized a threat by China to forcibly reunify Taiwan with the Mainland if Beijing determines that negotiations between the two are dragging on too long” (Schmitt, 2000, p. A10). One story in *The Washington Post* (Mufson and Dewar, 2000) reported that China would face “incalculable consequences” (p. A16) if it followed through on threats to attack Taiwan. An editorial in *Los Angeles Times* criticized China: “Beijing must learn again that words, like actions, have consequences. Its bellicose warning to Taiwan shows a misreading of political realities there as well as those in the United States” (“China: big mouth,” 2000, p. B8). Beijing’s

“white paper” was depicted as “paper missiles” (Larmer and Meyer, 2000, p. 30) and “paper war games” (Meyer et al., 2000, p. 36).

Both President Lee Teng-hui’s remarks and China’s “white paper” can be seen as efforts to influence the 2000 Taiwan presidential election. Ironically, they both backfired.

The following section analyzes the major news frames (the central idea and identity frame) based on the news coverage from July 9, 1999, to May 20, 2000.

#### The central idea of covering Taiwan’s independence in 2000

“One China” may sound like diplomatic fuzz, but it was a brilliant conceptual notion that let Taiwan, China and the U.S. pursue their separate interests without coming into conflict over who owned the island (McGeary, et al., 1999).

During this period of reporting, the central idea about Taiwan’s independence was:

The movement of Taiwan independence is not necessarily part of the development of Taiwan’s democracy; unilateral changes (force against Taiwan or declaration of independence) are not accepted by Washington. The “one-China” policy is a political fiction; however, it provides a peaceful framework for Taiwan, China and America.

First, unlike the 1996 framing, the movement of Taiwanese independence is no longer considered as part of the development of democracy—at least a large amount of stories and comments/editorials suggested that. The split of the issue of independence and democracy is one of the major framing strategies of the mainstream press (Christensen, 2000; Meisner, 2000; Plate, 2000; Shaw, 2000; Shambaugh, 1999; Spaeth et al., 1999).

For instance, in the framing of 1996 election, Taiwan’s independence is considered as part of the democratization process. But according to Christensen (2000), the connection is not there: “Taiwan’s democracy and Taiwan’s independence are logically and morally separate issues. The United States should support the former by

committing to Taiwan's defense against unprovoked attack but should distance itself from the latter"(p. A17). In fact, Christensen's remarks are difficult to understand. For example, if the Taiwanese people chose a President who supports Taiwan's independence, how can the United States separate the two issues? However, if the concern is about the security and peace in the Taiwan Strait, then it makes more sense. An article in *Time* provided its analysis: "Taipei, for its part, must learn to live with the reality that independence is unlikely. The government should avoid provoking an excitable, if slightly neurotic, Beijing leadership that see danger and conspiracy at every turn. Nor should Taiwan try to maneuver America into harm's way, in the Taiwan Strait. War is not inevitable"(Shaw, 2000). China has long warned that it will attack Taiwan if Taiwan declared independence, therefore the analysis is reasonable. Another article in *Time* echoed this viewpoint: "However admirable the right of self-determination, the fact is that the U.S. will not defend or support Taiwan militarily if it proclaims independence, nor would other nations likely recognize a sovereign state" (Shambaugh, 1999). The rationale, again, is based on China's constant threats of attacking Taiwan if Taiwan declares independence. In order to avoid the invasion of Taiwan from happening, the best strategy for both Taipei and Washington is to cut off any possibility of causing Taiwan independence.

Another perspective regarding this issue is the reality of international law. Meisner (2000) pointed out that: "An argument for an independent Taiwan cannot be made on the basis of international law, which favors Beijing's claim that Taiwan is an integral part of the Chinese nation in virtually all respects" (p. M6).

In other words, the organizing idea is that Taiwan's independence is not necessarily part of its development of democracy. More specifically, the concerns of the security and peace in the Taiwan Strait as well as the reality of international law suggest that avoiding Taiwan independence is a wise policy. The assumption of this idea is that the reality (China's threats and international law) cannot be altered—even by a democratic means.

Second, part of the central idea is “no unilateral change” in both sides of the Taiwan Strait. According to Manning (2000), the U.S. should be very clear about this stand: “For the United States, any arrangement that the two sides arrive at without coercion should be acceptable. The one principle the U.S. must not budge from is: no unilateral change in the status quo” (p. M6). The so-called “unilateral change” includes Taiwan's declaration of independence and China's invasion or threats against Taiwan. An editorial in *Los Angeles Times* contained a reminder that Taiwan should not pursue formal independence: “President Clinton should now remind Chen that the United States will not support—and we believe it must oppose—any overt moves toward Taiwanese independence” (“Uncertain era,” 2000, p. B4). When Taiwan was facing China's threat, another editorial in *Los Angeles Times* noted: “Taiwan needs strong support from Washington as its voters prepare to go to the polls to decide a closely contested presidential race. Beijing, with a barely disguised intent to meddle in the electoral process, has threatened Taiwan with a military attack if it drags its feet on negotiating unification. ... To back Taiwan, Clinton has to do more than repeat Washington's opposition to the use of force” (“Clinton's Chinese puzzle,” 2000, p. B6).

The “no unilateral change” frame can be seen as a “fair” policy because it restrains both Taiwan and China. Even though Taiwan’s possible declaration of independence is based on its democracy and self-determination, China’s threats of use of force against Taiwan are based on its “unilateral” sovereign claim.

Third, the repetition of the “one-China” policy is an important organizing idea during this period of time—either favorable for it or critical of it (Meyer et al., 2000; Shawcross, 2000; Shambaugh, 2000; Mufson, 2000; Plate, 2000; Shambaugh, 1999; Friedman, 1999; Kelly, 1999; McGeary et al., 1999; Yates, 1999; Clarke, 1999). After Chen Shui-bian won the presidential election; an editorial in *The New York Times* reiterated the importance of the “one-China policy”: “Preserving the one-China formula remains the surest basis for maintaining peace across the Taiwan Strait, and with it Taiwan’s democratic and capitalist way of life. Beijing should recognize that its goal of reunifying China should be pursued exclusively by peaceful means” (“Political earthquake,” 2000, p. A22). The rationale of Taiwan should preserve the policy is because it can maintain “Taiwan’s democracy and capitalist way of life.” Friedman (1999) shared the same viewpoint: “By pretending that one day it might reunite with China, Taiwan has kept China at bay, insured continued U.S. military support and bought itself time to build up an economy so dynamic—the 12th-largest in the world—that it now has critical leverage over China” (p. A19).

The “one-China” formula may be a “fiction” (Friedman, 1999, p. A19), “diplomatic fiction” (Mufson, 2000, p. A29), “political fiction” (McGeary et al., 1999), “myth” (Shawcross, 2000, p. B7), “woefully out of date” (Mastel, 1999, p. M6), or “universally accepted” (Shambaugh, 1999). However, this fiction has provided so many

merits in the Taiwan Strait for decades that no one (Taiwan, China and U.S.) should abandon it. In fact, this argument makes great sense—except for one small flaw, it is not based on reality.

Realizing this reality, many commentaries have begged to differ from the “one-China” policy. For instance, Kelly (1999) wrote: “For two decades, the United States has supported a deliberately ambiguous policy, which says that there should be ‘one China,’ but carefully does not say who should rule that China. Ambiguity worked pretty well for a long time, but it is a Cold War relic whose logic has expired, and its days are running out” (p. A23). The rationale of the “one-China” policy “has expired.” In other words, the U.S. should come up with a new perspective to treat the cross-straits relationships. An editorial in *The Washington Post* pointed out that the Taiwanese people have the right to “determine their own future” (“Chinese threats,” 1999, p. A 22). The Taiwanese people’s self-determination seems to be a basic right that the U.S. should support.

Shawcross’s (2000) remarks have recognized this reality: “A sense of a New Taiwan with its own civic consciousness is emerging. The shibboleth of ‘one China’ seems ever more archaic. In short, the external threat to Taiwan is growing as its internal system becomes more mature. That is why the Taiwan Strait remains one of the most dangerous places in Asia” (p. 4). Yates (1999) also emphasized the significance of reality: “As uncomfortable as Lee’s remarks may be for some, they reflect truth. And truth is a stable foundation on which to build a common future. Officials on all sides of this problem need to face the reality that a country that is not divided does not need to unify” (p. B7). By embracing the new reality, Taiwan can determine its own future—however the cost may be too high. This is the dilemma that Taiwan has to encounter: to ignore the



reality and enjoy its “democracy and capitalist way of life” or to unveil the reality and face possible disasters.

As a result, under China’s “paper war games,” 39 percent of the Taiwanese who cast ballots voted for Chen Shui-bian, whom China threatened Taiwanese people not to vote for. The other two candidates, pro-unification candidate James Soong (Independent) and Lien Chan (Nationalist Party), polled 37 percent, 23 percent of the vote, respectively (see table 5).

In summation, the organizing idea of this period of time was disconnecting the issue of Taiwan’s independence and democracy, asserting “no unilateral change” in the Taiwan Strait, and reiterating the importance of preserving “one China” formula. However, some stories and comments did indicate the pretense of this policy.

Table 5. The results of the 2000 Taiwan presidential election

Candidate	Major Platform	Percent of the Vote
<b>Chen Shui-bian</b> (Democratic Progressive Party)	Pro-independence	<b>39%</b>
<b>James Soong</b> (Independent)	Pro-unification	<b>37%</b>
<b>Lien Chan</b> (Nationalist Party)	Pro-unification	<b>23%</b>

#### The identity frame and national interest

But for two belligerents, each bent on prevailing, and for a U.S. government caught in the middle, Lee’s words had the potential of sparking a diplomatic crisis—or worse. Nor is it now merely an academic exercise for Americans to ask, would we go to war for Taiwan? (McGeary et al., 1999)

In this period of time, the identity frame is still an important factor to make arguments regarding the issue of Taiwan’s independence. Besides “we” or “us,” a

“facilitator” (Pomfret, 2000) also indicates the role of the United States. If China invades Taiwan, would the U.S. defend Taiwan? This critical question can reveal the United States’ struggle over its own national interest. As an answer to this question, Mastel (1999) said: “If fighting against oppression and being on the side of human rights and democracy is the U.S. interests in Kosovo, Kuwait, and Rwanda, why it not the case in Taiwan, a far truer democracy?” (p. M6) Clarke (1999) also backed this viewpoint: “The trend of events is that, if forced to choose between China and Taiwan, this and future administrations will choose democratic Taiwan over communist China. ... Taiwan reflects American moral and political values, and thus can count on U.S. protection—up to and including war” (p. B7). Shaw (1999) affirmed this stance as well: “American blood has been shed for idealistic reasons that few other countries would be willing to fight for. ... Washington may not officially recognize Taipei, but their societies share many basic values. It would be a rude awakening for China to find out, should it start a war with Taiwan, that America would come to Taipei’s defense even at the price of discarding nascent strategic relations with Beijing.” Should the United States fight for Taiwan? It is really a critical question for the United States to consider.

But for many people the value of peace is more important than democracy. For instance, if Taiwan unilaterally abolishes the “one-China” policy and China attacks, Scowcroft (1999) warned that the United States may not support Taiwan: “while we retain great affection and respect for Taiwan and its people, they cannot expect our support in dealing with the possible consequences of a unilateral abrogation of the ‘one China’ policy which has been the basis of U.S. policy and of stability in the Taiwan Strait region for 27 years” (p. B7). An editorial in *Los Angeles Times* concluded: “The message

Washington must make emphatically clear to Taiwan is that it is standing by its policy not because it wishes to please China but as a matter of national interest and that it won't let itself be drawn into a confrontation in the Taiwan Strait" ("One China'," 1999, p. B6).

So whose side will the United States be on? Even though its position is based on America's national interest, it is still not clear. The struggle over different national interests ("morality-based" vs. "interest-based") or different values (peace vs. democracy) remains. It is still an open question that depends on different framing strategies of the U.S. press.

#### News frames, policies, and public opinion

As discussed in previous chapter, news frames and policies are likely to correspond with each other, but policies and public opinion are not necessarily alike. For instance, When President Lee Teng-hui stated that the relationship between China and Taiwan should be on a "special state-to-state" basis in 1999, most news frames were against his remarks. Interestingly, a poll showed that 73.3 percent of the surveyed Taiwanese people supported President Lee's new statement (Pomfret, 1999). More interestingly, another poll in 2000 showed 85 percent of the Taiwanese people preferred the status quo (Manning, 2000). First, the framing of the U.S. press is not necessarily reflecting the public opinion of the Taiwanese people. Second, supporting Lee's statement could not be translated into supporting Taiwan's formal independence.

One survey (Chu, 2000) regarding the identity issue in Taiwan indicated a growing sense of Taiwanese identity is emerging. In 1994, 26 percent of young people (under age 40) claimed they were Taiwanese and 23 percent of people identified themselves as Chinese. But in 1998, 36 percent of young people identified themselves as

Taiwanese and only 10 percent claimed they were Chinese. This could be considered as the basis for President Lee's remarks.

According to the official *China Daily*, a poll (see Chu, 2000) showed that nearly 90 percent of Chinese said unification "should not be delayed and that a deadline should be imposed" (p. A9). This survey can be regarded as the foundation of China's "white paper."

#### The frame change: a comparison with the 1996 framing

In the 1996 reporting, the issue of Taiwan's independence is covered under the framework of democracy. Self-determination of the Taiwanese people is the issue that should be focused on. China's military exercises and missiles tests should be condemned and the United States should support and defend Taiwan if the island is attacked.

But in the 2000 coverage, the framing strategies have changed. First, the discussion of Taiwan's independence is not under the framework of democracy but rather the "one-China" formula. Taiwan's democracy is admirable but the question is: does it match with the "one-China" policy? The "one-China" principle may be a political fiction, but it can preserve peace and security in the Taiwan Strait. Therefore, it is a useful framework regarding the cross-straits relationships. Some commentaries did challenge the policy by recognizing the reality—there are two states across the Taiwan Strait that need to negotiate a possible solution (i.e., reunification or separation).

Second, the debate over the national interest of the United States has changed as well. In the 1996 reporting, the choices are between "morality-based" and "interest-based" values. But in the 2000 framing, the struggle is between "morality-based" values, namely democracy and peace. If weighing democracy against peace, then the framing is

more likely to criticize the “one-China” policy and support Taiwan’s independence. On the contrary, if weighing peace against democracy, then it is more likely to support the “one-China” formula and criticize the possibility of Taiwan’s independence.

The split of the issue of democracy and Taiwan’s independence and the struggle over the national interest of the United States are the major differences between the two framing strategies.

In summation, the central idea is disconnecting the issue of Taiwan’s independence and democracy, asserting “no unilateral change” in the Taiwan Strait, and suggesting the importance of preserving the “one China” formula. However some commentaries did challenge this policy.

For the United States, the struggle over different national interests (“morality-based” vs. “interest-based”) or different values (peace vs. democracy) remains.

The interrelationships among news frames, public opinion and policies remain a useful perspective to examine the framing process.

Finally, compared with the 1996 framing, the issue of Taiwan’s independence is not necessarily related to democracy in the 2000 coverage. The debate over the national interest (democracy vs. peace) of the United States is a major framing struggle.

A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan’s independence in 2000

Applying the “signature matrix” method to the 2000 presidential election coverage, the following section will provide the details of the framing structure and strategy of this issue.

## **Framing devices**

### *1. Metaphors:*

- The China cloud (China asserted of owning neutron bombs)
- Political earthquake in Taiwan (refers to the pro-independence candidate Chen's election)
- Excitable neurotic (refers to China's reactions about the Taiwan question)
- Paper war games (refers to China's "white paper")

### *2. Exemplars:*

- This crisis (the statement of "special state-to-state" relationship) came out of the blue, the White House has appeared more ambivalent in its support of President Lee.

Lesson: The Clinton Administration has learned from the 1996 crisis

- History demonstrates that U.S. gives Taiwan strong support, cross-strait talks happened

Lesson: U.S. should support Taiwan this time

### *3. Catchphrases:*

- The volatile issue of Taiwan
- A victory of democracy (refers to Taiwan's presidential election)
- Taiwan's triumph
- No, Taiwan isn't going back

4. *Depictions:*

- China says Taiwan cannot continue delaying reunion
- U.S. rejects China's Taiwan view
- Attitudes towards Taiwan's independence remain the fundamental cleavage in the electorate

5. *Visual images:*

- The dragon slayer (dragon is China, the pro-independence President-elect as the slayer)
- America's "unsinkable carrier" (refers to Taiwan)

**Reasoning devices**

6. *Roots (causal analysis):*

- China's threats to attack Taiwan are impractical (China lacks a transport fleet large enough to ferry a major invasion force across the Taiwan Strait)
- If the pro-independence Chen is elected, tensions in the Taiwan Strait will increase (because of China's concerns and America's commitment to defend Taiwan)

7. *Consequences:*

- Chen's unexpected victory makes China revise its failed strategy
- The more Beijing threatens, the more Taiwan asserts its autonomy and, deep-down, its desire of independence

8. *Appeals to principle:*

- America should choose Taiwan over China (If promoting democracy and human rights are America's values)

In order to have a clear review of the framing devices and reasoning devices, a table of this signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 2000 is provided (see Table 6).



Table 6. A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence: 2000

<b>Metaphors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The China cloud (China asserted of owning neutron bombs)</li> <li>• Political earthquake in Taiwan (refers to the pro-independence candidate Chen's election)</li> <li>• Excitable neurotic (refers to China)</li> <li>• Paper war games (refers to China's "white paper")</li> </ul>
<b>Exemplars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This crisis (the statement of "special state-to-state" relationship) came out of the blue, the White House has appeared more ambivalent in its support of President Lee.</li> </ul> <p>Lesson: The Clinton Administration has learned from the 1996 crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• History demonstrates that U.S. gives Taiwan strong support, cross-strait talks happened</li> </ul> <p>Lesson: U.S. should support Taiwan this time</p>
<b>Catchphrases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The volatile issue of Taiwan</li> <li>• A victory of democracy (refers to Taiwan's presidential election)</li> <li>• Taiwan's triumph</li> <li>• No, Taiwan isn't going back</li> </ul>
<b>Depictions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China says Taiwan cannot continue delaying reunion</li> <li>• U.S. rejects China's Taiwan view</li> <li>• Attitudes towards Taiwan's independence remain the fundamental cleavage in the electorate</li> </ul>
<b>Visual images</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The dragon slayer (dragon is China, the pro-independence President-elect as the slayer)</li> <li>• America's "unsinkable carrier" (refers to Taiwan)</li> </ul>
<b>Roots (causal analysis)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• China's threats to attack Taiwan are impractical (China lacks a transport fleet large enough to ferry a major invasion force across the Taiwan Strait)</li> <li>• If the pro-independence Chen is elected, tensions in the Taiwan Strait will increase (because of China's concerns and America's commitment to defend Taiwan)</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chen's unexpected victory makes China revise its failed strategy</li> <li>• The more Beijing threatens, the more Taiwan asserts its autonomy and, deep-down, its desire of independence</li> </ul>
<b>Appeals to principle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• America should choose Taiwan over China (If promoting democracy and human rights are America's values)</li> </ul>

A signature matrix of the framing of the “one-China” policy in 2000

In this period of time, an important organizing idea regarding Taiwan’s future is the “one-China” formula. Based on the “signature matrix” method, the following section will provide the details of the framing structure and strategy of this issue.

### **Framing devices**

#### *1. Metaphors:*

- Brother fighting brother (if there is war, this happens in the Taiwan Strait)
- Walking a tightrope (refers to Taiwan’s independence movement)
- The Taiwan tinderbox

#### *2. Exemplars:*

- China is far calmer this time regarding President Lee’s remarks

Lesson: Chinese have been studying Taiwan politics closely

- American blood has been shed for idealistic reasons

Lesson: China should be careful before attacking Taiwan

#### *3. Catchphrases:*

- China-Taiwan: love, hate, profit
- “One-China”: best hope for peace
- Democracy upsets one-China policy

4. *Depictions:*

- “One-China” policy is universally accepted
- “One-China” policy is out of date
- “One-China” policy is a political fiction which can preserve peace

5. *Visual images:*

- Siamese Twins (refer to Taiwan and China)
- The 800-pound gorilla (refers to China)

**Reasoning devices**

6. *Roots (causal analysis):*

- Taiwan and China are so intertwined that neither can shoot the other without shooting itself (They have mutually assured economic destruction)
- No declaration of independence is needed because Taiwan is already sovereign

7. *Consequences:*

- For the past five years, since China first fired missiles near Taiwan, the cross-strait relation has been frozen
- The new government on Taiwan should embrace the “one-China” principle; otherwise, there is no chance for progress with either Beijing or Washington

8. *Appeals to principle:*

- Taiwan will never be allowed to be independent (if you know China’s history:

Chinese people will use “all their blood” to defend the unity of China)

Table 7. A signature matrix of the framing of the “one-China” policy: 2000

<b>Metaphors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Brother fighting brother (if there is war, this happens)</li> <li>● Walking a tightrope (refers to Taiwan’s independence movement)</li> <li>● The Taiwan tinderbox</li> </ul>
<b>Exemplars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China is far calmer this time regarding President Lee’s remarks</li> </ul> <p>Lesson: Chinese have been studying Taiwan politics closely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● American blood has been shed for idealistic reasons</li> </ul> <p>Lesson: China should be careful before attacking Taiwan</p>
<b>Catchphrases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China-Taiwan: love, hate, profit</li> <li>● “One-China”: best hope for peace</li> <li>● Democracy upsets one-China policy</li> </ul>
<b>Depictions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● “One-China” policy is universally accepted</li> <li>● “One-China” policy is out of date</li> <li>● “One-China” policy is a political fiction which can preserve peace</li> </ul>
<b>Visual images</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Siamese Twins (refer to Taiwan and China)</li> <li>● The 800-pound gorilla (refers to China)</li> </ul>
<b>Roots (causal analysis)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taiwan and China are so intertwined that neither can shoot the other without shooting itself (They have mutual assured economic destruction)</li> <li>● No declaration of independence is needed because Taiwan is already sovereign</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● For the past five years, since China first fired missiles near Taiwan, the cross-strait relation has been frozen</li> <li>● The new government on Taiwan should embrace the “one-China” principle; otherwise, there is no chance for progress with either Beijing or Washington</li> </ul>
<b>Appeals to principle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taiwan will never be allowed to be independent (if you know China’s history: Chinese people will use “all their blood” to defend the unity of China)</li> </ul>

In order to have a clear review of the framing devices and reasoning devices, a table of this signature matrix of the framing of the “one-China” policy in 2000 is provided (see Table 7).

The two matrices of the framing of Taiwan’s independence and the “one-China” policy provide a complete picture of the cross-strait relationship. They also indicate that the same Taiwan issue can be framed very differently. In the matrix of the framing Taiwan’s independence, similar to the framing of 1996, Taiwan’s democracy and China’s provocations were emphasized. In principle, it stated that the U.S. should support Taiwan because it is part of American values. However, it also suggested that the tensions in the Taiwan Strait will increase if the pro-independence Chen is elected. As to the matrix of the framing of the “one-China policy,” a totally different vision regarding Taiwan’s future was proposed. The advantages of accepting the “one-China policy” was elaborated. Even though it acknowledged that the “one-China policy” is a political fiction, still embracing it seemed to be more beneficial to Taiwan, China, and America as well.

First, the “visual images” of dragon vs. dragon slayer have depicted the tensions in a comic way. From the perspective of the framing of Taiwan’s independence, Taiwan’s independence is part of the pursuit of democracy and the “one-China” policy is an out of date fiction. On the other hand, the framing of the “one-China” principle suggests a peaceful framework to preserve peace and democracy and the declaration of Taiwan independence will ruin everything. This is the tough issue that Taiwan, China and the United States have to address.

Second, the contrast between the two matrices is like the two sides of a coin. For instance, in “catchphrases,” the difference between “A victory of democracy” and “One-

China': best hope for peace" is obvious. As to "depictions," "U.S. rejects China's Taiwan view" and the "One-China' policy is universally accepted" definitely contradict each other. Finally, regarding "appeals to principle," "America should choose Taiwan over China (promoting democracy and human rights are America's values)" and "Taiwan will never be allowed to be independent (if you know China's history: Chinese people will use "all their blood" to defend the unity of China)" demonstrate a dilemma in the Taiwan Strait. On the one hand, the United States should promote democracy and human rights-- therefore "choose Taiwan over China." On the other hand, the United States should also take China's threats seriously and prevent any wars from happening. As a matter of fact, the struggle over different value systems is the essence of different framing strategies.

The two matrices indicate the turning point of the framing of Taiwan's independence. The struggle between pro-independence and pro-unification (or pro-"one-China" policy) has reached its peak. Two opposite proposals regarding Taiwan's future have been laid out. The framing strategy seems to stand at the crossroads. The framing strategy or structure of 2004 will provide an answer to this question: Which framing strategy or value system will be adopted regarding the issue of Taiwan's independence?

In summation, the central idea about Taiwan's independence in the 2000 coverage was: Taiwan independence is not necessarily part of the development of Taiwan's democracy; unilateral change (force against Taiwan or declaration of independence) is not accepted by Washington. The "one-China" policy may be a political fiction; however, it provides a peaceful framework for the cross-strait relations. However some commentaries challenged this policy.

For Washington, the struggle over different national interests (“morality-based” vs. “interest-based”) or different values (peace vs. democracy) remains.

The interrelationships among news frames, public opinion and policies provide a means to examine the framing process.

The two matrices of the framing of Taiwan’s independence and the “one-China” policy are provided. These two matrices provide a complete picture regarding the cross-strait relations. These two matrices showed different ways of framing but both portrayed China in negative visual images.

In the 1996 reporting, the issue of Taiwan’s independence is covered under the framework of democracy. But in the 2000 coverage, the framing strategies have changed from democracy to the “one-China” principle. The issue of Taiwan’s independence and democracy are not necessarily related to each other.

In addition, in the 1996 reporting, the choices for the U.S. are between “morality-based” and “interest-based” values. But in 2000, the struggle is within “morality-based” values, namely democracy and peace. Since democracy and peace are both important, it really depends on how the arguments were presented. If weighing democracy against peace, then the framing is more likely to criticize the “one-China” policy and support Taiwan’s independence. On the other hand, if weighing peace against democracy, then it is more likely to support the “one-China” formula and criticize the pursuit of Taiwan’s independence. The two matrices indicate the turning point of the framing of Taiwan’s independence. The framing strategy stands at the crossroads. The framing strategy of 2004 will reveal which value system (e.g., pro-independence or pro-“one-China” policy) will be adopted.

## Chapter 6: The Framing of Taiwan's Independence: 2004

This chapter provides the frame analysis of Taiwan's 2004 presidential elections coverage. It will include the news frames and identity frames, as well as a comparison with previous two periods. A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 2004 will also be demonstrated. In addition, the interrelationships of news frames, policies, and public opinion will be discussed.

### Frame analysis of the 2004 presidential election coverage

News stories were collected during the period starting November 28, 2003, and ending May 20, 2004. News coverage began with the legislation of a referendum bill authorizing Taiwan's President to hold a referendum on Taiwan's independence under certain circumstances on November 28, 2003, and ended with then President Chen Shui-bian's inaugural speech on May 20, 2004. The number of retrieved stories and commentaries was 126. After deleting news briefs and news summaries (40), 86 stories were investigated (see Table 8).

The number of news stories is fewer because the timeframe is shorter and there were no actual threats (i.e. held military exercises or released white paper) from China, only diplomatic disputes. This time, President Chen Shui-bian, who insisted on holding a referendum, is overwhelmingly considered as the provocative side in the Taiwan Strait. An editorial in *The New York Times* said: "Mr. Chen has announced plans for a vote, coinciding with the presidential election, to demand that China remove missiles targeted at Taiwan and renounce using force against the island. Putting these issues to a vote would be gratuitously provocative" ("Unneeded quarrel," 2003, p. A14). When China's Premier Wen Jiabao visited the White House, President Bush "urged Taiwan's president,



Chen Shui-bian, to refrain from making any unilateral moves toward independence, a statement that China had been lobbying for as tensions had increased recently between Beijing and Taipei. Bush said he opposed any change of the status quo by either China or Taiwan” (Chen, 2003, p. A12).

Table 8. The number of retrieved stories & the number of examined stories, 2003 to 2004

News Media	Number of retrieved stories	Number of deleted stories (e.g. briefs)	Number of examined stories
<b>NY Times</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Washington Post</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Wall Street Journal</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>LA Times</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Newsweek</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>86</b>

On the surface, Bush’s remarks seem to be “fair” to both sides. But if we track back Bush’s stance, we can find out that Bush has changed his policy regarding the cross-strait relations. When Bush came to office in 2001, in an interview he said he will do “whatever it takes” (Marshall and Tsai, 2004, p. A4) to defend Taiwan. However a few years later, he asked Taiwan to “refrain from making any unilateral moves toward independence.” In this specific context, the unilateral move means Taiwan’s plan of holding a referendum.

Why did Bush change his policy regarding the cross-strait relations? Some commentaries argued that it is a “realistic” choice for the Bush administration to adopt. An editorial in *Los Angeles Times* noted: “It’s a realistic understanding that, with U.S. troops spread thin in Iraq and Afghanistan, Washington does not need another military expedition. What the U.S. does need now is China’s continued help in trying to woo North Korea away from nuclear weapons. Beijing also can help in pushing Pakistan to keep improving relations with India” (“The value,” 2004, p. B14). It seems obvious that the U.S. has no choice but to stand on China’s side this time.

Under China and especially America’s pressure, President Chen Shui-bian refused to give up the referendum, but did change the wording of the referendum questions. President Chen’s original proposed question is: “Should Taiwan demand that China remove 500 missiles that it has aimed at Taiwan?” After Beijing’s warning and Washington’s opposition, President Chen Shui-bian decided to ask: “Should Taiwan buy more advanced weapons from U.S. if China refused to remove its missiles? And should Taiwan try to open talks with China?” As mentioned above, labeling or wording is part of the framing strategy. After the wording changed, the Bush administration seemed glad to see that the referendum questions were less “provocative.” A story in *The Washington Post* said: “Secretary of State Colin L. Powell said Friday that Chen had shown flexibility with the new questions, and a White House spokesman said the United States neither supported nor opposed the new ballot issue” (Pan, 2004, p. A13). White House spokesman, Scott McClellan also commented: “We understand, however, that there would be no relationship between the outcome of the proposed referendum and Taiwan’s commitment to the status quo” (Culpan and Pan, 2004, p. A17). From “gratuitously

provocative” to “commitment to the status quo,” the issue of Taiwan’s independence is back to the beginning.

On March 19, 2004, the eve of the presidential election and the referendum, an assassination attempt targeting President Chen occurred. President Chen Shui-bian survived, and the election, as well as the referendum, was held as planned.

The following section analyzes the major news frames (the central idea and identity frame) based on the news coverage from November 28, 2003, to May 20, 2004.

#### The central idea of covering Taiwan’s independence in 2004

During this period of reporting, the central idea about Taiwan’s independence was: Maintaining the status quo is the first priority of the U.S. policy regarding the cross-strait relations. Any unilateral moves (i.e., Taiwan’s independence or China’s use of force) to change the status quo are opposed by Washington. Taiwan’s referendum provides a possible means to pursue formal independence, therefore it is provocative.

First, the U.S. policy regarding the cross-strait relations has shifted from “strategic ambiguity,” the “one-China” policy, to “status quo.” The reason the U.S. changed its policy was because of the critical situations that U.S. has to encounter. While America’s troops “spread thin in Iraq and Afghanistan,” the Bush administration “isn’t shopping around for another international crisis” (Sanger, 2003, p. A18). In addition, the United States also needs China’s help to stop North Korea’s development of nuclear weapons. In this regard, there is no room for the U.S. to take another Taiwan Strait crisis like 1996.

It can be considered as a trade-off between U.S. and China. Many experts noted this policy shifting is a reward to China: “Conservatives within the administration and

outside experts interpreted the remarks as a significant change, designed to reward China for its assistance in the nuclear crisis and amounting to a recognition of its growing status on the world political stage” (Kessler and Allen, 2003, p. A1).

Another viewpoint sees this as an effort of “preventive diplomacy” and best serves the three parties’ interests. As an editorial in *Los Angeles Times* concluded: “For now, the status quo best serves the interests of China, Taiwan and the U.S. ... Tampering with relations would be dangerous for both sides, and both need to do a better job of talking with each other without resorting to military bravado” (“The value,” 2004, p. B14).

The shifting of the U.S. policy did raise a debate about the struggle between U.S. values and U.S. interest. However, Swaine and Pei (2003) believed that the new policy could serve both the U.S. values and interests: “President Bush will be criticized in Taiwan and at home if he undertakes this preventive diplomacy. Many will accuse him of losing his ‘moral clarity.’ This would be unfair, because the president’s action—by maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and encouraging moderation in a vibrant, young democracy—would promote both American values and interest” (p. B2).

Second, the policy of no unilateral changes being allowed is once again emphasized. In this period, the target audience is Taipei not Beijing. Taiwan passed a referendum bill and President Chen Shui-bian insisted to hold a referendum. According to some coverage, this proposition declared by President Bush seems contradictory. Sanger (2003) suggested: “His recent calls for support of democracies around the world, especially the Middle East, leave him in a poor position to condemn freely held voting on Taiwan, a place where authoritarianism has given way to a burgeoning democracy” (p.

A18). Indeed, how can we “support democracies around the world” but oppose people’s right to hold a referendum?

On the other hand, the Bush administration did reiterate that the Taiwan issue can only be resolved by peaceful means. Thornton (2004) analyzed the U.S. policy regarding the cross-strait relations: “we also insisted on two conditions: that Beijing commit to a policy of peaceful settlement of the issue and also agree to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan to maintain its independence. ... Our true purpose is to ensure Beijing never gain control of the island” (p. A17). In this sense, the policy of “no unilateral changes” restrains both Taiwan and China.

Third, part of the central idea is that Taiwan’s referendum is provocative. Since maintaining the status quo is the highest value of this proposition, a referendum provides a possible means to alter the status quo--therefore it is “gratuitously provocative,” “a provocative action” (Pan, 2004, p. A13). Only by passing a referendum bill or holding a referendum, Taiwan is moving toward an “abyss of war” (Kahn, 2003, p. A7), near “the brink of danger” (Pan, 2004, p. A13), “pushing the envelope” (Sanger, 2003, p. A18), or “Taiwan is the provoker” (Milbank and Kessler, 2003, p. A1).

The Bush administration believed that “Bush’s opposition to a referendum in Taiwan is consistent with his overall support for democracy” (Milbank and Kessler, 2003, p. A1). Again, the struggle between democracy and stability in the Taiwan Strait seems to have a clear answer this time—peace and stability are the values that need to be pursued.

As a result, President Chen Shui-bian won 50.1 percent of the vote and Lien Chan, the Chairman of the Nationalist Party, won 49.9 percent of vote (see table 9). The slim margin of victory along with an assassination attempt targeting Chen on the eve of the

Table 9. The results of the 2004 Taiwan presidential election

Candidate	Major Platform	Percent of the Vote
<b>Chen Shui-bian</b> (Democratic Progressive Party)	Pro-independence	<b>50.1%</b>
<b>Lien Chan</b> (Nationalist Party)	Pro-unification	<b>49.9%</b>

election date, the results of this election appear as dramatic as possible. However, only 45 percent of eligible voters cast ballots in the “provocative” referendum, therefore it is nullified.

In summation, the organizing idea of this period of time is: maintaining the status quo is the highest value. Any unilateral moves are opposed by Washington. Taiwan’s referendum bill and referendum provide a means to alter the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, therefore it is provocative.

#### The identity frame and national interest

It seems hypocritical for Washington to call for democracy around the world while assisting a one-party regime in frustrating a new democracy’s desire for self-determination. As William Kristol and Gary Schmitt wrote on the Weekly Standard’s Web site last week, “Taiwan is a thriving democracy. The Beijing government remains a tyranny. Will the Bush administration stifle democracy in Taiwan—actually demanding that it not hold popular votes—to curry favor with the dictatorship?” (Swaine and Pei, 2003, p. B2)

The year 2003 is a very busy one for the Bush administration: troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, war on terrorism, and North Korea crisis. That is the reason that Bush “isn’t shopping around for another international crisis.” However, in the triangular relations, America always plays an important role to maintain the “delicate peace” (Kahn, 2003, p. A6) in the Taiwan Strait. Sanger (2003) depicted this relation as “a delicate dance” (p.

A1). He said: “All three parties—China, Taiwan and the United States—are engaged in a delicate dance that involves a potent mix of international diplomacy and domestic politics.” For America, to maintain the “delicate peace” in the Taiwan Strait is its top priority. For China, to prevent Taiwan from pursuing formal independence is its major concern. As for Taiwan, to deepen its development of democracy and fight with China for its international space are the island nation’s missions.

The mainstream press is conscious of America’s delicate position regarding the cross-strait relations. Besides “we” or “us,” during this period of time, the identity frame is presented as “intermediary” (Kahn, 2004, p. A10) or “a constructive role” (Pan, 2004, p. A14). Similarly, the debate over the national interest of the United States determines the direction of U.S. policy regarding the cross-strait relations. However, this time the U.S. press as well as the Bush administration seems sided with China. In the argument of “balance the advancement of core American values with U.S. national interest,” Swaine and Pei (2003) argued that the latter one is more important: “as a matter of principle and practice, the United States has not always supported the notion that democracy equals self-determination, whether in Quebec, Kosovo, Kurdistan, the Basque region or Somaliland (the northern part of Somalia). If Taiwan’s behavior exposes the United States, and Asia, to military confrontation, the United States deserves a voice in that behavior”(p. B2). Some commentaries did question why China couldn’t transform itself to a democracy. For instance, Crane (2004) argued: “The more important point is that Taiwan is demonstrating its ability to conduct peaceful and honest election. ... Increasingly, the Chinese people are likely to ask: If actual democracy can work in some

Chinese locales, why not in China itself?” (p. M2) However, basically in the battle between liberty and stability, stability won out this time.

#### News frames, policies, and public opinion

In this period of time, news frames and the Bush administration’s policy closely corresponded. President Bush’s top priority was to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan Strait and the reporting emphasized the value of stability as well. In this sense, Taiwan just passed a referendum bill which provides a possible means to change the status quo—therefore this referendum bill is provocative. Furthermore, when President Chen insisted on holding a referendum, Taiwan is definitely the “provoker” and “pushing the envelope.”

When discussing the issue of Taiwan’s independence, one thing that needs to be noted is the public opinion of the Taiwanese people. Since 1992, scholars have tracked how Taiwanese people identify themselves (Wehrfritz and Dobson, 2003). Over the past decade, the number of those who identify themselves “Taiwanese” has grown from 17.3 percent to 41.5 percent. On the other hand, people who perceive themselves “Chinese” has declined from 26.2 to 9.9 percent. This can be seen as the background in which President Chen insisted on holding a referendum. Wehrfritz and Dobson (2003) observed: “In less than a decade, the consensus has shifted 180 degrees from one that favored eventual unification to the view that Taiwan must remain independent. That fact will remain no matter if the presidential office stays green or turns blue in the next election. And it will continue to frustrate both Taiwan’s allies in the United States and a China bent on someday making the island its own” (p. 42). This reality is ignored by the U.S. mainstream press in terms of its framing strategy.



As mentioned above, for the United States the most important reality is that China can provide its help in the North Korea crisis while U.S. troops “spread thin in Iraq and Afghanistan.” The “status quo frame” best serves the national interest of the United States at this moment.

The frame change: a comparison with the 1996 and 2000 framing

Between 1996 and 2004, the framing of Taiwan’s independence evolved from supporting Taiwan/democracy into favoring China/stability. In 1996, the central idea of framing considered that Taiwan’s independence was part of the development of democracy. China should be condemned and the United States should defend Taiwan if China were to attack the island. In 2000, the organizing idea was that Taiwan’s independence was not regarded as part of the development of democracy. Unilateral changes are not allowed by Washington. Even though the “one-China” policy is a political fiction, it provides a peaceful framework for Taiwan, China and the United States. As in 2004, the central idea has shifted. Maintaining the status quo in the Taiwan Strait was considered as the highest value. Any unilateral moves are opposed by Washington. Taiwan’s referendum provides a means to change the status quo and therefore Taiwan is the provoker this time.

If we look at the framing of Taiwan’s independence, it evolved from “part of democracy” to “no longer part of democracy” to “no unilateral moves.” The room for Taiwan’s independence seems thinner and thinner. The same issue can have different interpretation packages or strategies depending upon the three parties’ international diplomacy and domestic politics. In the 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, China’s military exercises and missile tests were provocative. The Clinton administration sent two carries

to the Taiwan Strait and supported Taiwan. In 2000, at first, President Lee's "special state-to-state relation" remarks were seen as provocative. Later on, China issued its "white paper" which said it will attack Taiwan if the island refuses to negotiate about reunification. At this moment, China was the provoker. In 2004, Taiwan was considered as provocative due to its insistence of holding a referendum.

Second, we can regard the "one-China" policy in all the three framing ideas in different ways. In 1996, peaceful means to resolve the Taiwan issue were the implication of the central idea. In 2000, the framing promoted the "one-China" policy directly. In 2004, by emphasizing status quo and no unilateral moves, the "one-China" policy was the basis of the central idea once again.

In other words, with different international diplomacy and domestic politics of the three parties, the framing of Taiwan's independence evolved. It has shifted from promoting the value of democracy/liberty to favoring the value of peace/stability. As a matter of fact, both Taiwan and China could be the provoker in terms of changing the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

We may also regard the changing of the framing strategies as a struggle over different value systems. The same issue in different time may have different framing packages.

A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 2004

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the following section will also illustrate the structure and strategy of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 2004.

### **Framing devices**

#### *1. Metaphors:*

- Taiwan is near “abyss of war”
- The triangular relations of Taiwan, China and U.S. are “a delicate dance”
- War of words
- Bush is Taiwan’s “secret guardian angel”

2. *Exemplars:*

- Bush opposed Taiwan’s referendum

Lesson: Bush isn’t shopping around for another international crisis

- Chinese premier toned down the rhetoric rather than threats toward Taiwan

Lesson: Because past threats have backfired

3. *Catchphrases:*

- Taiwan is the provoker
- Taiwan’s strategic miscalculation
- Unneeded quarrel over Taiwan
- The value of status quo

4. *Depictions:*

- China is a global trade power
- U.S. asks Taiwan to avoid a vote provoking China, but request is rejected
- Taiwan alters arms referendum language
- Chen’s legacy in Taiwan will outlive outcome of presidential poll

5. *Visual images:*

- Chen seeks to “rattle Beijing’s cage”

**Reasoning devices**

6. *Roots (causal analysis):*

- Chen Shui-bian has changed Taiwan forever--he has set the stage of regular use of referendums)
- Why U.S. sided with China this time? Because it needs China’s help in counterterrorism and North Korea crisis
- Bush’s calls for support of democracies around the world place him in a poor position to condemn Taiwan’s democracy

7. *Consequences:*

- President Chen’s first-term actions frustrated the Bush administration. Now they want to prevent cross-strait tensions from happening
- U.S. opposition to Taiwan’s referendum can be seen as a reward to China—China has helped U.S. in many issues

8. *Appeals to principle:*

- U.S. opposition to Taiwan’s referendum is based on the values of peace and stability
- If some Chinese locales (i.e., Taiwan and Hong Kong) can have democracy, why not in China itself?

Table 10. A signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence: 2004

<b>Metaphors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taiwan is near “abyss of war”</li> <li>● The triangular relations of Taiwan, China and U.S. are “a delicate dance”</li> <li>● War of words</li> <li>● Bush is Taiwan’s “secret guardian angel”</li> </ul>
<b>Exemplars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bush opposed Taiwan’s referendum</li> </ul> <p>Lesson: Bush isn’t shopping around for another international crisis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chinese premier toned down the rhetoric rather than threats toward Taiwan</li> </ul> <p>Lesson: Because past threats have backfired</p>
<b>Catchphrases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taiwan is the provoker</li> <li>● Taiwan’s strategic miscalculation</li> <li>● Unneeded quarrel over Taiwan</li> <li>● The value of status quo</li> </ul>
<b>Depictions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China is a global trade power</li> <li>● U.S. asks Taiwan to avoid a vote provoking China, but request is rejected</li> <li>● Taiwan alters arms referendum language</li> <li>● Chen’s legacy in Taiwan will outlive outcome of presidential poll</li> </ul>
<b>Visual images</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chen seeks to “rattle Beijing’s cage”</li> </ul>
<b>Roots (causal analysis)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chen Shui-bian has changed Taiwan forever--he has set the stage of regular use of referendums)</li> <li>● Why U.S. sided with China this time? Because it needs China’s help in counterterrorism and North Korea crisis</li> <li>● Bush’s calls for support of democracies around the world place him in a poor position to condemn Taiwan’s democracy</li> </ul>
<b>Consequences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● President Chen’s first-term actions frustrated the Bush administration. Now they want to prevent cross-strait tensions from happening</li> <li>● U.S. opposition to Taiwan’s referendum can be seen as a reward to China—China has helped U.S. in many issues</li> </ul>
<b>Appeals to principle</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● U.S. opposition to Taiwan’s referendum is based on the values of peace and stability</li> <li>● If some Chinese locales (i.e., Taiwan and Hong Kong) can have democracy, why not in China itself?</li> </ul>

In order to have a clear review of the framing devices and reasoning devices, a table of this signature matrix of the framing of Taiwan's independence in 2004 is provided (see Table 10).

The central idea and this signature matrix regarding the framing of Taiwan's independence in 2004 correspond closely. To maintain the status quo is the most important value in the Taiwan Strait. Unilateral moves will be opposed and Taiwan's referendum is provocative and unnecessary. However, the visual images—Chen rattles Beijing's cage—did provide a vivid sense that China is the irrational side. Therefore, the rationale behind the thinking is: China's threats are real, both Taiwan and the United States should take them seriously. For Taiwan, it should not provoke China by holding a referendum. As to the United States, its mission is to maintain the status quo.

Except for the “visual images,” this matrix's framing and reasoning both sided with China. For instance, “Taiwan is near ‘abyss of war’” (metaphors), “Taiwan is the provoker” (catchphrases), “Why U.S. sided with China this time? Because it needs China's help in counterterrorism and North Korea crisis” (consequences), and “U.S. opposed Taiwan's referendum is based on the values of peace and stability” (appeals to principle) all showed the rationale of oppressing Taiwan's democracy/referendum. However, the “unsaid” part (China's communism/dictatorship, Taiwan's democracy/self-determination) is obvious as well. This matrix illustrates how the framing has been produced and made sense of.

The framing strategies and structures evolved between 1996 and 2004. In 1996, Taiwan's independence was considered part of the movement of democracy and China regarded as the provoker because of its military exercises and missile tests. In 2000, the

“one-China” policy was introduced and Taiwan’s independence was no longer seen as part of democracy. In 2004, Taiwan definitely lost its platform for independence. The highest value in the Taiwan Strait is status quo and the United States is against any unilateral moves by Beijing and Taipei.

If we look at the consistency of the framing strategies, the “one-China” policy is always the major idea. However, the perspectives being emphasized may shift due to different international diplomatic environments. For instance, in 1996 China’s military exercises caused a change in the status quo in the Taiwan Strait; therefore it was the one to blame. In 2000, the “one-China” policy was well discussed. The focus was “no unilateral changes” regarding the cross-strait relations. In 2004, it moved one step further by emphasizing the status quo. In this regard, a democratic referendum was demonized as a provocative move.

Lastly, the debate over the national interest of the United States was an important issue as well. In 1996, democracy seemed to top other values therefore Taiwan’s independence found its place in the discussion. In 2000, the struggle between peace and democracy was divided. In 2004, stability suppressed liberty and the status quo was the answer to the Taiwan question. Regarding the future of Taiwan, two proposals (pro-independence and pro-“one-China” policy) have been laid out in 2000. The value of democracy/self-determination has been glorified in 1996 and has been ignored in 2004. After 2004, what kinds of value systems will be adopted regarding cross-strait relations remains an open question.

In summation, the central idea of the 2004 reporting was: Statue quo is the first priority regarding the cross-strait relations. Any unilateral changes (i.e., Taiwan’s

independence or China's use of force) quo are opposed by Washington. Taiwan's referendum provides a possible means to change the status quo, therefore it is provocative.

Besides "we" or "us" during this period of time, the identity frame is presented as "intermediary" or "a constructive role." The debate over the national interest of the United States determines the direction of U.S. policy regarding the cross-strait relations. In the battle between liberty and stability, the latter one won out this time.

In 2004, news frames and the Bush administration's policy closely corresponded. The "status quo frame" best served the national interest of the United States at this moment.

From 1996 to 2004, the framing of the Taiwan's independence evolved. In short, it has shifted from promoting the value of democracy/liberty/Taiwan (1996) to favoring the value of peace/stability/China (2004). The framing in 2000 showed the struggle over different value systems. However, in 2004, by promoting the advantages of peace/stability and ignoring the disadvantages of China's communism/dictatorship, the framing of the Taiwan's independence in 2004 has definitely shifted. Regarding the framing of Taiwan's future, it remains an open question.

The last chapter presents this study's conclusion as well as discussion and comparison.



## Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter will provide summations, comparison, discussion and conclusion of the study. In addition, it will indicate the limitations of the research and suggest directions for future study. Lastly, the future of Taiwan is discussed.

### A review of this study

This dissertation focuses on how the U.S. mainstream press covered the issue of Taiwan's independence, from 1996 to 2004. The stories this study collected revolve around the three Taiwan's presidential elections (1996, 2000, and 2004) as well as the Taiwan Strait crises. This study employs framing theory as its major theoretical framework. Framing theory indicates that the nature of news coverage is to promote certain information and ignore something else. This study uses qualitative frame analysis and the "signature matrix" method as its basic methodology. In other words, to find out the central idea and the framing structure of the presidential elections coverage are this study's concerns. This study also tries to identify the identity frame as well as discusses the theoretical lens of national interest to unfold the framing strategy.

The selected press includes four newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Los Angeles Times*) and two news magazines (*Time*, *Newsweek*). The rationale of the selected newspapers and magazines is based on their circulation and their ability to set the agenda. During the three presidential elections coverage, 891 stories were retrieved. After deleting the news briefs or summaries (372), the total number of examined stories is 519 (see Table 11). More than half of the examined stories are from *Los Angeles Times* (155) and *The New York Times* (120). *The Wall Street Journal* has the least stories (40).

Table 11. The total number of retrieved stories &amp; examined stories, 1995 to 2004

News Media	Number of retrieved stories	Number of deleted stories (e.g. briefs)	Number of examined stories
<b>NY Times</b>	<b>158</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>Washington Post</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>Wall Street Journal</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>LA Times</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>155</b>
<b>Time</b>	<b>242</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Newsweek</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>97</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>891</b>	<b>372</b>	<b>519</b>

The Taiwan presidential election in 1996 is the first direct democratic election in Taiwan and China's history. Along with the presidential campaigns, China conducted military exercises and missiles tests to intimidate Taiwanese voters. However, while the U.S. was sending two carriers near the Taiwan Strait and China was backing off, the Taiwanese people voted for the pro-independence President Lee Teng-hui. In 2000, one month before the presidential election, China issued a "white paper" which said it will attack Taiwan if the island refuses to negotiate unification. Again, Taiwanese voters chose the pro-independence candidate Chen Shui-bian to be their president. In 2004, President Chen insisted on holding a referendum, which caused concerns for both the United States and China. Under the U.S. pressure and China's warning, the Taiwanese people still decided to re-elect pro-independence President Chen Shui-bian (see Table 12).

If we look at the three presidential elections, two things do not change: one is China's provocations; the other is Taiwan's determinations.

Table 12. China's threats and Taiwan's presidential elections results, 1996 to 2004

<b>China's threats</b>	<b>Taiwan's elections results</b>
<b>1996</b> , China conducted military exercises and missile tests to intimidate Taiwanese voters	The pro-independence President Lee Teng-hui was elected
<b>2000</b> , China issued a "white paper," which said it will attack Taiwan if the island refuses to negotiate unification	The pro-independence candidate Chen Shui-bian was elected
<b>2004</b> , China said Taiwan's referendum is near "abyss of war"	The pro-independence President Chen Shui-bian was reelected

#### Answers to the three research questions

The first research question of this study is: how had the news frames regarding Taiwan independence been formed and constructed over time (from 1996 to 2004)? In 1996, the central idea was: The movement of Taiwan independence is part of the development of Taiwan's democracy; it has to depend on the Taiwan people's choice. Therefore, China's provocations should be condemned and the U.S. government should commit to defend Taiwan. We may consider this period of time as one in which the framing is pro-Taiwan, pro-democracy, and pro-independence. China's military exercises and missile tests were seen as provocative.

In 2000, the organizing idea was: The movement of Taiwan independence is not necessarily part of the development of Taiwan's democracy; unilateral changes (force against Taiwan or declaration of independence) are not accepted by Washington. The "one China" policy is a political fiction; however, it provides a peaceful framework for

Taiwan, China and America. The framing has shifted pro-democracy to pro-“one-China” policy. The mainstream press acknowledged that the “one-China” policy is a political fiction; however, its function to set up a peaceful framework in the Taiwan Strait makes it worth to preserve.

Table 13. The evolution of the framing of Taiwan’s independence, 1996 to 2004

<b>The framing of different presidential coverage</b>	<b>The central organizing idea</b>
The central idea of covering Taiwan’s independence in <b>1996</b>	The movement of Taiwan independence is part of the development of Taiwan’s democracy; it has to depend on the Taiwan people’s choice. Therefore, China’s provocations should be condemned and the U.S. government should commit to defend Taiwan.
The central idea of covering Taiwan’s independence in <b>2000</b>	The movement of Taiwan independence is not necessarily part of the development of Taiwan’s democracy; unilateral changes (force against Taiwan or declaration of independence) are not accepted by Washington. “One China” policy is a political fiction; however, it provides a peaceful framework for Taiwan, China and America.
The central idea of covering Taiwan’s independence in <b>2004</b>	Maintaining status quo is the first priority of the U.S. policy regarding the cross-strait relations. Any unilateral moves to change the status quo are opposed by Washington. Taiwan’s referendum provides a possible means to pursue formal independence, therefore it is provocative.

In 2004, the idea became: Maintaining the status quo is the first priority of U.S. policy regarding the cross-strait relations. Any unilateral moves to change the status quo are opposed by Washington. Taiwan’s referendum provides a possible means to pursue formal independence, therefore it is provocative. This time the frame has changed from preserving the “one-China” policy to promoting the status quo. On the surface, no unilateral moves are accepted by Washington. However, Taiwan’s referendum was

regarded as provocative this time. Therefore, both the United States and China's warnings were targeted at Taiwan (see Table 13).

To answer the first research question, the frame changed from supporting democracy and self-determination to the "one-China" policy, and then shifted from the "one-China" policy to promoting the status quo. In other words, it has shifted from pro-Taiwan to pro-"one-China" policy, and then to pro-China. Even though the Taiwanese people have shown their determinations by voting the pro-independence presidents, the U.S. press framing seemed to beg to differ. The frames changing over nearly a decade, from 1996 to 2004, suggest that the room for the movement of Taiwan's independence is slimmer and slimmer.

The second research question is: How did the press construct the identity frames and national interests of the U.S.? As Billing (1995) pointed out the connection between "I," the first person singular, and "we," the first person plural: "There is a case for saying that nationalism is, above all, an ideology of the first person plural. The crucial question relating to national identity is how the national 'we' is constructed and what is meant by such construction." The identity frame is an indicator of the national identity. Therefore through the construction of the identity frame, it can claim its national interest (morality-based vs. interest-based) or argue what can best serve the national interest of the United States. Besides "we" and "us," there are different labels for the U.S. identity frame.

In 1996, the identity frame appeared to be "An awkward predicament," "a counterbalance," a "balancer." In general, it showed the Clinton administration's attitude towards the cross-strait relations—the less involved the better. However, due to China's

aggressions, the United States was forced to send carriers to the Taiwan Strait—its deepest involvement since the Korean War.

In 2000, the identity frame of the United States was a “facilitator.” During this period of time, the “one-China” policy was promoted by the U.S. government and the framing of the press. The U.S. press acknowledged that the “one-China” policy is a political fiction but provides a peaceful framework regarding the cross-strait relations. In this regard, we can make sense of a “facilitator.” As a “facilitator,” the U.S. can provide the “one-China” policy as its peaceful facility to improve the cross-strait relations.

In 2004, the identity frame of the United States has changed to an “intermediary,” or “a constructive role.” In this time period, U.S. troops “spread thin in Iraq and Afghanistan.” The Bush administration “isn’t shopping around for another international crisis.” Therefore, maintaining status quo in the Taiwan Strait became the first priority of the U.S. policy. The so-called “a constructive role” in fact means preserving the status quo. More specifically, it means stopping Taiwan’s holding of a referendum (see Table 14).

No matter what kinds of labels were adopted, it is argued that it can best serve the national interest of the United States. The role of the U.S. may vary, but its goal to serve the national interest of the United States is the same. However, the content of the national interest has shifted from democracy/self-determination to peace/stability.

To answer the second research question, the role of the U.S. and the content of the national interest may vary depending upon the international diplomacy and domestic politics of the United States. However, it all argued that certain roles or certain interests can best serve the United States during certain period of time.

Table 14. The identity frame of the United States, 1996 to 2004

The different period of time	The identity frames of the U.S.
The <b>1996</b> coverage	“An awkward predicament,” “a counterbalance,” a “balancer”
The <b>2000</b> coverage	A “facilitator”
The <b>2004</b> coverage	An “intermediary,” “a constructive role”

The third research question of this study is: How did the news frames interpret the policies and the public opinion of the U.S.? On the one hand, as Entman suggested, public opinion is “subject to framed interpretations.” On the other hand, U.S. policies usually correspond with the press framing. In this sense, the analysis of the news frames can be seen as an indicator of the policies and the public opinion.

In 1996, the U.S. policy was based on the formula of “strategic ambiguity.” The rationale of this policy is it can prevent any unilateral moves from happening. However, China’s military exercises broke the balance in the Taiwan Strait. As a result, America was forced to respond forcefully—sending two carriers to the Taiwan Strait. The framing suggested that the U.S. should support Taiwan’s democracy/self-determination and defend Taiwan.

In 2000, at first, President’s Lee’s remarks (China and Taiwan are special “state-to-state” relations) were considered provocative. But when China issued its “white paper” which said it would use force against Taiwan if the island refuses to negotiate about reunification, it had gone too far. Besides its fictitiousness, the framing promoted the positive sides of the “one-China” policy.

In 2004, President Chen’s insistence of holding a referendum was seen as provocative. Both the U.S. policy and the framing of the press suggested maintaining the status quo is the highest value in the Taiwan Strait. The rationale of this policy was based on the reality—U.S. troops were in the Middle East. The framing of the press backed this policy without question (see Table 15).

To answer the third research question, the framing of the U.S. press can be seen as an indicator of U.S. policy or public opinion. Usually, U.S. policies and the framing of the press closely correspond. As to public opinion, it is mostly “subject to framed interpretations” and dose not necessarily correspond with the framing strategy.

Table 15. The policies of the U.S. and the framing of the U.S. press, 1996-2004

The U.S. policies	The framing of the U.S. press
<b>1996</b> , following the traditional formula of “strategic ambiguity”	China’s intimidations were provocative. The framing of the U.S. press supported Taiwan’s democracy and independence movement
<b>2000</b> , the emphasis of “one-China” policy	President’s Lee’s remarks (China and Taiwan are “state-to-state” relations) were provocative. The “one-China” policy is a political fiction but it can provide a peaceful framework
<b>2004</b> , shifting to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan Strait	President Chen’s referendum was provocative. Maintaining status quo is the highest value in the Taiwan Strait. The value of peace suppressed democracy and self-determination

#### An analysis of the signature matrices

This study provides four signature matrices: three of them are regarding the framing of Taiwan’s independence and one is the framing of the “one-China” policy.



This section will discuss some of these framing devices and reasoning devices to illustrate how the framing structures have changed over time.

In the discussion of “metaphors,” “China’s new muscle: military or monetary?” (1996), “Paper war games” (2000), and “Taiwan is near ‘abyss of war’” (2004) showed the growing power of China and Taiwan’s struggle for democracy and self-determination. China’s “muscle” can be a serious threat to Taiwan and the U.S. as well.

Regarding “exemplars,” at first, “Support a Taiwan seat in the U.N. would be consistent with ‘one-China’ policy. Lesson: 1945, the Soviet Union was given seats for itself and Ukraine and Belorussia” (1996), “This crisis (the statement of “special state-to-state” relationship) came out of the blue, the White House has appeared more ambivalent in its support of President Lee. Lesson: The Clinton Administration has learned from the 1996 crisis” (2000), and to “Bush opposed Taiwan’s referendum. Lesson: Bush isn’t shopping around for another international crisis” (2004) suggested the U.S. policy has shifted from supporting Taiwan to be more cautious regarding cross-strait relations.

“Catchphrases” can reveal the framing strategy in a simple sentence. For instance, “Democracy, not independence is the threat” (1996), “A victory of democracy” (2000), and “Taiwan is the provoker” (2004) can clearly indicate the framing strategy has moved from democracy to stability.

“Depictions” can be considered as providing facts only. However, in news reporting, providing some facts also means ignoring others. For example, “Taiwan’s democratic win is China’s vexing problem” (1996), “U.S. rejects China’s Taiwan view” (2000), “U.S. asks Taiwan to avoid a vote provoking China, but request is rejected” (2004) provided an interesting picture. In 1996 and 2000, the United States sided on

Taiwan's democracy but in 2004 things changed—the United States asked Taiwan not to hold a referendum.

“Visual images” are another useful device to describe the framing strategy in a direct and vivid fashion. For instance, “China as a dragon” (1996), “The dragon slayer” (2000), “Chen seeks to ‘rattle Beijing’s cage’” (2004) depicted China as an untamed animal (dragon) without exception. China as an animal can either be killed or be separated. In 2000, President Chen was portrayed as a “dragon slayer” but in 2004 he was like an immature person who tried to “rattle Beijing’s cage.”

As to the reasoning devices, “roots” provide a causal analysis. For example, “Only an independent country elects its own legislature, and elects its own President” (1996), “China’s threats to attack Taiwan are impractical--China lacks a transport fleet large enough to ferry a major invasion force across the Taiwan Strait” (2000), “Why U.S. sided with China this time? Because it needs China’s help in counterterrorism and North Korea crisis” (2004) demonstrated why the U.S. policies have shifted. In 2004, the U.S. needed China’s help and in exchange, it was to suppress Taiwan’s referendum only.

Regarding “consequences,” for instance, “The more democratic Taiwan becomes, the more difficult it becomes to envision reunion with China” (1996), “The more Beijing threatens, the more Taiwan asserts its autonomy and, deep-down, its desire of independence” (2000), “President Chen’s first-term actions frustrated the Bush administration. Now they want to prevent cross-strait tensions from happening” (2004) provided the rationale of the arguments. It was a struggle and calculation between different value systems, namely democracy/liberty and peace/stability.

“Appeals to principle” is the last reasoning device. For instance, “To support Taiwan’s independence from China—self-determination for peoples everywhere has been a central proposition of the American ethos since the Declaration of Independence from British rule” (1996), “America should choose Taiwan over China--If promoting democracy and human rights are America’s values” (2000), “U.S. opposed Taiwan’s referendum is based on the values of peace and stability” (2004) showed the struggle over various values. Which value would win out depended on the U.S. international diplomacy and domestic politics.

In general, the signature matrices provide a useful tool to illustrate the structures and strategies of the framing. If we look at both the signature matrices and the central organizing ideas, then a coherent picture can be composed regarding the framing of Taiwan’s independence.

In addition to the signature matrices of the framing of Taiwan’s independence, this study provides a signature matrix of the framing of the “one-China” policy. In 2000, the “one-China” policy was both promoted by the U.S. government and the U.S. press. In this matrix, some of the wording was “Brother fighting brother” (metaphors), ““One-China’: best hope for peace” (catchphrases), ““One-China’ policy is a political fiction which can preserve peace” (depictions), and “No declaration of independence is needed because Taiwan is already sovereign” (roots) all tried to make a case for promoting “one-China” policy. Interestingly, in the device of “visual images,” China was portrayed as “the 800-pound gorilla.” From “dragon”, “the 800-pound gorilla” to “rattle Beijing’s cage”, these visual images reflected the U.S. mainstream press’s sentiments toward China—the growing power in Asia.

## Conclusion and discussion

This study's primary concern is the framing of Taiwan's independence via the U.S. mainstream press. The issue of Taiwan's independence not only provides a platform for the international diplomatic struggle among Taiwan, China, and the United States, but also for the value debate regarding the U.S. national interest.

For nearly a decade, the U.S. framing of Taiwan's independence has shifted from promoting democracy/self-determination/liberty to the "one-China" policy/peace/stability. For Taiwan, the room for the movement of Taiwan's independence seems slimmer and slimmer. For China, its growing economic and political power has been recognized by the United States. As to America, the values it promoted may vary, but all argued that certain values can best serve the national interest of the United States.

The employment of different identity frames can provide the press' positions regarding the making of its arguments. As a "balancer," "facilitator" or "intermediary," it can definitely play a different role regarding the cross-strait relations.

Among the three Taiwan's presidential elections coverage, the U.S. policy closely corresponded with the U.S. press's framing. If we view the public opinion as "subject to framed interpretations," then the framing provided an indicator of the government's thinking and not necessarily about the public opinion per se.

The signature matrices provide an effective tool to unfold the framing structures and strategies. With the help of these framing devices and reasoning devices, the core frame can be illustrated vividly and directly. The "signature matrix" and the analysis of the central idea are complementary to each other. As a matter of fact, they are like the two sides of a coin. One thing that needs to be noted is the images of China. With China's

growing power, however its visual images were still portrayed negatively. From “dragon” to “the 800-pound gorilla,” they reflected the U.S. press’s attitudes towards China—the mysterious untamed creature has grown stronger and wilder. That is the rationale of the framing in 2004 suggested Taiwan should not “rattle Beijing’s cage.”

These signature matrices also suggested different value systems regarding Taiwan’s future and the U.S. national interest. In the framing of 2000, two opposite proposals (pro-Taiwan’s independence/democracy and pro-“one-China” policy/stability) were laid out. The framing of 1996 promoted democracy and ignored the fundamental struggle between Taiwan and China. However, the framing of 2004 promoted safety and stability and ignored Taiwan’s democracy/China’s dictatorship.

Finally, how are we going to answer Kelly’s “awkward and inescapable” question: in the matter of Taiwan and China. Whose side are we on? After the explorations of this study, an appropriate answer will be: the United States will not side either with Taiwan or China; it will side on its national interest. Since the national interest of the United States may change, it could side with Taiwan or China depending on different international diplomacies. In 1996, the U.S. sided with Taiwan (democracy/self-determination) by sending two carriers to the Taiwan Strait to protect the free-shipping in the seas. In this period of time, the national interest was defined as protecting democracy and free-market prosperity. Under this situation, the U.S. sided with Taiwan. Second, the case of the framing of 2000 is a different kind. This time the U.S. government and the U.S. press promoted the “one-China” policy. The advantage of this framework is it can avoid the confrontations between Taiwan and China and allow both sides of the Taiwan Strait to pursue their own goals (i.e., Taiwan’s democracy and China’s economy). In this regard,

the United States did not take a side on the Taiwan Strait. The rationale of this policy is it can provide a coexisting environment without any party's cost. Costless peace is the definition of the U.S. national interest. However, in 2004, things have changed. With U.S. troops "spread thin in Iraq and Afghanistan," Bush "isn't shopping around for another international crisis." China can provide its help both in counterterrorism and the North Korea crisis—it obviously matches with the national interest of the United States. All the U.S. needs to do is to oppress Taiwan's referendum as an exchange for China's help. In this sense, the United States sided with China (communism/dictatorship). Therefore, the answers to Kelly's question may vary depending upon the definitions of the U.S. national interest during certain time period.

#### Limitations of the study

The first limitation of this study is its emphasis on the U.S. press alone. Neither Taiwan nor China's framing structures are discussed. However, through the shifting of U.S. news frames, we can still see the evolution of the framing over time.

The second limitation is its focus on the mainstream press only. Therefore it lacks the voice of the alternative media. The alternative media are more likely to provide oppositional messages rather than dominant meanings. In this sense, the framing of Taiwan's independence may suggest different directions compared with the mainstream press.

Third, as mentioned above, media frames and audience frames are two different perspectives of investigating news frames. Ideally, a study should examine both sides. This study focuses on media frames and excludes audience frames.

Fourth, this study does not examine the ownership of the media and other social forces. Rather, it focuses on news framing. The examination of the media ownership may indicate that certain ideologies were both adopted by the framing strategies and the media's own traditions.

Finally, methodologically, this study employs a qualitative approach to examine news frames. Therefore, it does not provide quantitative data regarding certain frames. Instead it relies upon the analysis of eight symbolic devices and the researcher's interpretations.

#### Suggestions for future study

Future study could continue the analysis of the framing of Taiwan's independence in the coverage of Taiwan's presidential elections in the years ahead. The framing of Taiwan's independence after 2004 can provide more framing strategies and frames shift for further research.

Second, it can include Taiwan and China's news reporting of this issue. By comparing it with the United States' framing structures, a more comprehensive understanding about this issue can be achieved.

Third, future research could also examine the viewpoints of the alternative media among Taiwan, China, and the United States. The comparisons between the mainstream media and the alternative media can provide more viewpoints regarding this complicated question.

Last, the investigation of audience frames, the ownership of the media, and different methodologies could be considered. If so, it is obvious that more findings would be provided.

## The future of Taiwan

Basically, the future of Taiwan is determined by the three parties: Taiwan, China, and the United States. The holding of Taiwan's first referendum in 2004 has demonstrated one possible resolution regarding Taiwan's future—let the Taiwanese people decide by a referendum. However, in 2005, China passed an anti-secession law which authorized China to use “non-peaceful means” to halt any possibility of Taiwan's formal declaration of independence. The second possible resolution was provided by China: reunification or face invasion. As to the role of the United States, three communiqués with China and the Taiwan Relations Act form two major guiding principles. Under these principles, the United States “acknowledges” China's “one-China policy” and that the Taiwan issue can only be resolved by a peaceful means. The third resolution suggests a vague framework which can only be conducted through negotiations and maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait.

In chapter one, three scenarios regarding Taiwan's future have been proposed: Taiwan maintains the status quo, Taiwan declares its independence, Taiwan and China are united. According to a “white paper” issued in 2000, China warned it would attack Taiwan if Taiwan continued to delay the negotiations of peaceful reunion. In this regard, Scenario One can not be a real resolution. Scenarios Two and Three are two real resolutions. However, they contradict each other. Taiwan's independence is opposed by China, and reunification is against most Taiwanese people's will. Besides the three scenarios, there is the fourth possibility which could be the best scenario for Taiwan's future—China becomes a democracy. If this scenario comes true, then the Taiwan issue



is more likely to be resolved in a peaceful means. If we follow Crane's (2004) argument about China's transformations, we seem to envision a brighter future for Taiwan. He said:

There is no good reason for China to avoid moving toward a more genuine democracy, as Taiwan has already done and Hong Kong is trying to do. Even Chinese leaders have tacitly recognized this....In light of the stunning economic and social changes that have swept over China in the last decade, the start of a transition to democracy is more possible now than ever before. It is only the ruling elite's fear that holds the country back (p. M2).

No matter how many different proposals have been suggested, Taiwan's future lies in the power struggle and the international diplomacies among Taiwan, China, and the United States. For Taiwan, it can only deepen its development of democracy and form a proper policy which can be accepted by China, America, and itself. For China, as Crane suggested, a democratic China is not impossible. Therefore, a new possibility regarding Taiwan's future can be imagined. As for the United States, if we only consider the framing of the U.S. mainstream press, the room for the movement of Taiwan's independence is thinner and thinner. However, the content of the U.S. national interest is not a fixed dogma. The debate over what can best serve the national interest of America is a constant struggle. For instance, from 1996 to 2004, the framing of Taiwan's independence shifted from supporting democracy/self-determination/liberty to "one-China" policy/peace/stability. In this regard, if the debate over the U.S. national interest changes again, the framing strategy regarding Taiwan's future will change accordingly.

In search of Taiwan's future, the three parties' domestic politics and interactions provide some pieces of the puzzle. By analyzing the news frames of the U.S. press, this study contributes toward opening up a window on this issue, namely a qualitative frame analysis of the U.S. press, an interrelationship of the U.S. national interest and

international diplomacy. However, additional examinations still need to be done regarding this volatile issue.

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