

Status for Sale: Taiwan and the Competition for Diplomatic Recognition

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Diplomatic recognition is generally seen as fundamental to the modern state system. The traditional views of recognition however focus almost exclusively on political or ideological rationales, ignoring other foundations on which other countries base establishing diplomatic recognition. Focusing on the Republic of China (Taiwan) suggests a more complicated view where economic self-interest on one side and national pride on the other may undermine traditional conceptions of recognition.

Using the ROC-PRC diplomatic battle as a case study, this paper hopes to shed light on two questions: why, despite the PRC's rise as a global power, a country would continue to formally recognize the ROC and secondly what does the ROC receive in exchange for such high-cost endeavors to maintain recognition. In this case mutual ideological rationales have greatly diminished while I contend that economic factors have predominantly maintained this diplomatic battle. In addition, previous research often focuses on major world powers granting or withholding formal recognition to smaller states. In this situation, poor countries with typically little political influence are the major players, suggesting different rationales behind recognition. Methodologically, this paper blends qualitative and quantitative analysis to uncover factors affecting recogni-

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tion. The existing literature is almost entirely qualitative, focusing only on relations between two countries or within a particular region. Furthermore, most studies only cover a short time span, usually no more than a decade. This paper intends to analyze most of the post-civil war period, identifying broad trends which may be overlooked in previous research.

KEYWORDS: diplomatic recognition, Taiwan, China, dollar diplomacy, sovereignty.

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State sovereignty remains a core element of international relations, with states seeking reaffirmation of such claims through formal diplomatic recognition. Traditional views of recognition, however, presume political or ideological foundations, ignoring other rationales which may underpin these relations. Focusing on the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan suggests a more nuanced view where economic self-interest on one side and national pride on the other may undermine traditional conceptions of recognition. Despite a cross-Strait diplomatic truce since 2008, the context of diplomatic recognition in this case may still create conflict between the two sides due to the incentives of other countries.

For most of the period following World War II, the ROC on Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) both claimed to be the sole legitimate government of China. Accordingly, a country could not successfully maintain diplomatic relations with both governments.¹ Diplomatic recognition based on Cold War ideologies began to unravel after the Sino-American rapprochement and the seating of the PRC in the United Nations. Having once been recognized by the majority of nations, the ROC now has formal relations with only 23, compared to 169 that recognize the PRC, leaving the former more diplomatically isolated than many previous pariah states such as apartheid-era South Africa.² Although the ROC dropped its

¹France attempted dual recognition in 1964, until the PRC objected and France cut ties with the ROC. In 2003, the PRC maintained its diplomatic mission in Kiribati for three weeks after the island nation recognized the ROC, hoping to entice it to switch back.

²Only Bhutan has no formal relations with either side. Despite India controlling much of its

claim to the mainland and has been open to dual recognition since 1991, the PRC's position remains unchanged and this has prevented the island from making any significant progress in increasing formal recognition.

This article proposes that while diplomatic recognition is normally stable, it may break down when each side has fundamentally different rationales for granting recognition. Using the ROC-PRC diplomatic battle as a case study, this article highlights often ignored rationales behind recognition. In doing so, it is hoped to also shed light on two questions: why, despite the PRC's rise as a global power, a third country would continue to formally recognize the ROC, and secondly what does the ROC receive in exchange for such high-cost endeavors to maintain recognition? Diplomatic recognition is rarely controversial, but when controversies have arisen they have usually been based on conflicting ideologies or the desire to shape another state's behavior. In this case, however, I contend that ideological rationales have greatly diminished this diplomatic battle while economic factors have predominantly maintained it.

In addition, previous research often focuses on major world powers granting or withholding formal recognition to smaller states. In the present case, poor countries with typically little political influence are the major players, suggesting different rationales behind recognition. Looking at the ramifications of diplomatic recognition in this case may allow some insight into future points of conflict between the ROC and the PRC while potentially suggesting a reconceptualization of diplomatic recognition itself.

In addition to addressing diverging motives for diplomatic recognition, this article's major contribution is the blending of qualitative and quantitative analysis to uncover patterns affecting recognition. The literature on the subject is to the best of my knowledge entirely qualitative, often focusing only on relations between two countries or on a particular region.³ Furthermore, most studies only cover a short time span, usually no

external relations, Bhutan has been in negotiations with the PRC since 1984 regarding their shared border and has consistently supported Beijing's position on Taiwan.

³Bih-jaw Lin, "The Republic of China and Africa: A Case of Positive Adaptation," in *Foreign Policy of the Republic of China on Taiwan: An Unorthodox Approach*, ed. Yu San Wang

more than a decade. This article analyzes most of the post-civil war period, identifying broad trends which may have been overlooked in previous research.

The first part of this article will consist of an examination of traditional theories and rationales behind diplomatic recognition. This is followed by a case study analysis of the historical progression of the diplomatic recognition battles between the ROC and PRC. Next is a quantitative analysis of diplomatic recognition, illuminating the underlying motivations as well as structural conditions which may perpetuate this battle. In conclusion, this article hopes to show an alternative and more nuanced conception of recognition which contrasts with political rationales.

Recognition

Regardless of whether diplomatic recognition is a legal or political act,⁴ the act of recognition itself is a reflection of state sovereignty and thus the "golden ring that political leaders hope to grasp."⁵ "Internal sovereignty can be defined as a government having exclusive de facto control over a specific area and its citizens generally accepting this rule (Montevideo Convention). Clearly the ROC, since democratization at least, as well as other disputed territories (e.g., Somaliland and Abkhazia), meet these minimalist requirements. However, international recognition is rarely based solely on internal sovereignty, especially when other states lay

(New York: Praeger, 1990); Phillip Liu, "Cross-Strait Scramble for Africa: A Hidden Agenda in China-Africa Cooperation Forum," *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2001): 1-9; and Richard. J. Payne and Cassandra. R. Venev, "Taiwan and Africa: Taipei's Continuing Search for International Recognition," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 36, no. 4 (2001): 437-50.

⁴Edwin Borhard, "Recognition and Non-Recognition," *American Journal of International Law* 3, no. 1 (1942): 108-11; and Hans Kelsen, "Recognition in International Law: Theoretical Observations," *American Journal of International Law* 35, no. 4 (1941): 605-17.

⁵Stephen D. Krasner, "Who Gets a State, and Why?" *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 2 (2009): <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/64872/stephen-d-krasner/who-gets-a-state-and-why> (accessed May 1, 2009).

claim to the territory.⁶

External legitimacy is considerably more complex. Hedley Bull states that a political community that claims sovereignty, even if judged by outsiders as legitimate, cannot be called a state if in practice it cannot assert this right.⁷ To strengthen sovereignty claims, many entities attempt the perception of statehood by mirroring the actions of recognized states. For example, many disputed states (including Taiwan) declare their consent to international agreements of which they were not signatories as a means of propping up claims to statehood. Although there may be degrees of external sovereignty,⁸ a more explicit indicator is diplomatic recognition. Newnham asserts that diplomatic recognition is crucial to the very definition of state sovereignty.⁹ Simply put, sovereignty is partially determined by other states and the greater number of states extending diplomatic recognition to a country, a greater sense of external legitimacy that country exhibits. Here the ROC is on shaky ground, with less than a quarter of nations explicitly recognizing its claims to sovereignty. This lack of external legitimacy leaves the ROC insecure as few are willing to openly challenge Beijing's claim that the island is a renegade province.

The near universal recognition of foreign governments can be viewed as an international norm, with sovereign equality an underlying principle of international relations.¹⁰ In the past century, sovereign equality as a normative concept may have "attained an almost ontological status in the structure of the international legal system."¹¹ "Once a state's independent

⁶Pal Kolsto, "The Sustainability and Future of Unrecognized Quasi-States," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 6 (2006): 725-40.

⁷Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 8.

⁸Christopher Clapham, "Degrees of Sovereignty," *Review of International Studies* 24, no. 2 (1998): 143-57.

⁹Randall E. Newnham, "Embassies for Sale: The Purchase of Diplomatic Recognition by West Germany, Taiwan, and South Korea," *International Politics* 37 (2000): 260.

¹⁰Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: Random House, 1979), 88.

¹¹Thompson argues, however, that only with the United Nations did states rhetorically accept the notion of equality among states. See Helen Thompson, "The Case for External Sovereignty," *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no. 2 (2006): 256.

status has been informally acknowledged, most governments quickly formalize this status through recognition.¹² Timor-Leste, for instance, received diplomatic recognition from the United States, China, and Portugal within days of declaring independence and both the United States and the Soviet Union recognized the state of Israel within hours of its formation. Some states have even made this process virtually automatic, such as Mexico with its long-standing Estrada Doctrine which condemned the notion of recognition tied to moral judgments as undermining state sovereignty. Once granted, recognition traditionally has been very stable, revoked only rarely, such as when a new government is believed to have gained control of the state through illegitimate means (however defined) and often after an initial suspension of relations.

Although recognition is commonplace, there is no obligation to extend recognition to a new government once it effectively rules a state, and after 1917 non-recognition lasting more than twenty years seemed commonplace.¹³ Many Western and non-aligned countries even avoided recognizing the Soviet Union until the 1970s,¹⁴ while Spain and Yugoslavia were similarly denied recognition until the mid-1970s. When recognition has been withheld or revoked, this has usually been based on only a few factors. Since the nineteenth century, most of these cases have been based on the method by which a government came to power (such as coups and revolutions, as in Cuba and Iran), the level of foreign influence on the new government that brings into question its de facto independence (e.g., Northern Cyprus, the Baltic states during the Cold War, and the Bantustans in apartheid-era South Africa), or beliefs that the other government is

¹²How a country reaches this level is contentious and beyond the scope of this paper. See Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-states: Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Third World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Benedict Kingsbury, "Sovereignty and Inequality," *European Journal of International Law* 9, no. 4 (1998): 599-625.

¹³M. J. Peterson, "Political Use of Recognition: The Influence of the International System," *World Politics* 34, no. 3 (1982): 325, 47.

¹⁴M. J. Peterson, "Recognition of Governments Should Not Be Abolished," *American Journal of International Law* 77, no. 1 (1983): 32; William G. Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 3.

illegitimately occupying part or all of the land under its control. For example, in 1907 five Central American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua) refused to recognize governments that came to power without democratic support, a stipulation the United States has also occasionally followed.¹⁵ Most Middle Eastern countries do not recognize Israel based on territories occupied since 1967. Even the means by which colonies became independent could be grounds for withholding recognition, as in the case of Rhodesia.¹⁶ In the ROC-PRC case, early non-recognition of the PRC was largely tied to hesitation in acknowledging the Nationalists' *de facto* loss of control, even after their retreat to Taiwan. In virtually all cases, diplomatic recognition was based on claims of legitimate rule over a specific territory and revoked or withheld based on domestic actions altering this vaguely defined status quo. What sets Taiwan apart is not the long-term breaking off and/or withholding of recognition from a large number of geographically diverse countries.

Ideological rationales for withholding recognition were broadly used after World War II.¹⁷ Ideological conflict has been an excellent predictor of the number of expressions of opinion on diplomatic recognition decisions. Throughout the Cold War, opposing sides routinely withheld recognition, especially in the cases of divided nations where the option of dual recognition was rejected. By the 1960s recognition was viewed as a sign of approval of a regime. Today, with few exceptions (i.e., the United States' non-recognition of Cuba), purely ideological rationales have fallen out of favor.

Regardless of the stated rationale, the underlying goal of withholding recognition has been to coerce states to act in a manner favorable to another state. Peterson stated that as long as regimes seek recognition, other gov-

¹⁵Peterson, "Recognition of Governments," 38.

¹⁶The European minority Rhodesian Front government declared independence in 1965, ignoring Great Britain's policy of no independence for African colonies without African majority rule. No country extended recognition to the state (now Zimbabwe) until elections in 1980.

¹⁷Peterson, "Political Use of Recognition," 347.

ernments can exploit this need.¹⁸ Since coercion requires power, withholding recognition has generally been a tool used by powerful states against weaker states. For example, the United States withheld recognition from several Caribbean nations as a means to extract concessions, and most Western powers did the same (in order to maintain extraterritoriality) before recognizing the ROC in 1911. In divided states, the intent was explicit: to coerce the non-recognized party to consent to unification under its counterpart's control. In general, recognition flowed from stable powerful countries to states whose status, if not in dispute, was still comparatively weak.

Recognition, however, should not be conflated with substantive relations. Diplomatic recognition itself is a low cost activity, consisting of little more than public announcements, while deeper connections are more costly, requiring at least the stationing of diplomats. Great Britain, for example, did not follow diplomatic recognition of Albania or China with exchanges of ambassadors for over twenty years.¹⁹ A simple concrete measure of the depth of bilateral relations is the establishment of embassies. Extensive relations necessitate in-country embassies, whereas less important relations or limited resources can manage with accredited diplomats covering several countries in a region.²⁰ Although recognition implies sovereign equality, the number of embassies per country belies this. Out of 194 countries, the average number of embassies per country is only 44, with only 17 countries having 100 or more embassies in country and 33 less than 10.

¹⁸M. J. Peterson, *Recognition of Governments: Legal Doctrine and State Practice, 1815-1995* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), 3.

¹⁹Eberhard Sandschneider, "China's Diplomatic Relations with the States of Europe," in *China and Europe since 1978: A European Perspective*, ed. Richard Louis Edmonds (New York: Cambridge University, 2002), 35.

²⁰For instance, Andorra often has one diplomatic mission covering multiple countries, such as its mission to Brussels that covers Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Germany, and Poland. Others allow for proxy ambassadors, such as Liechtenstein which allows Switzerland to represent its interests in countries where it does not have a diplomatic mission. Likewise the diplomatic missions to the Holy See and Tuvalu all reside in another country (Italy and Fiji, respectively).

The Two Chinas

The present situation between the PRC and the ROC provides a unique case where the rationale for granting recognition has evolved over time. Where once both sides claimed to be the legitimate government of all of China and recognition was often based to a large extent on Cold War ideological rationales, the situation has evolved into a carefully crafted debate on Taiwan's status (independent state versus renegade province), in which recognizing states have few if any ideological imperatives.²¹ The battle for recognition has now been limited to relatively powerless countries, some of which barely qualify as sovereign states.²² Many of these states cannot afford or simply chose not to establish consulates once recognition is granted.²³

Whereas the average number of embassies per country is forty-four, among the ROC-recognizing countries, the average is only thirteen.²⁴ While the ROC has an embassy in every country but Tuvalu, Tuvalu and three other countries have yet to establish embassies in Taiwan (see table 1).

Several countries had no relations with either side directly after 1949, presumably waiting for a final settlement.²⁵ As many as sixteen countries

²¹Technically, no country recognizes Taiwan as an independent nation, but rather recognizes the ROC as the legitimate government of China, even if direct references to such claims have largely ceased.

²²Two of the ROC's diplomatic allies, the Marshall Islands and Palau, were both UN trust territories administered by the United States until 1994. Under the Compact of Free Association the United States remains in control of the security and defense of the islands. This does not ensure long-term recognition for Taipei, however. The Cook Islands, which have a similar "free association" relationship with New Zealand, chose in 1997 to switch recognition to the PRC.

²³Most consulates in Taipei are paid for by the ROC. See Jie Chen, *Foreign Policy of the New Taiwan: Pragmatic Diplomacy in Southeast Asia* (Northampton: Edward Elgar, 2002), 29.

²⁴This increases to sixteen if the missions to the Holy See based in Rome (seventy-two) are included.

²⁵James C. Hsiung, "China's Recognition Practice and Its Implications in International Law," in *China's Practice in International Law*, ed. Jerome Allen Cohen (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 54-55.

Table 1
Countries Recognizing the ROC and Number of Embassies in-Country, 2008

Country	Embassies	Country	Embassies
Belize	12	Nicaragua	32
Burkina Faso	22	Palau	4
Dominican Republic	32	Panama	36
El Salvador	27	Paraguay	23
Gambia	8	Saint Kitts and Nevis	3
Guatemala	35	<i>Saint Lucia</i>	5
Haiti	17	<i>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines</i>	3
Holy See (Vatican City)	0	Sao Tome and Principe	7
Honduras	24	Solomon Islands	6
<i>Kiribati</i>	3	Swaziland	4
Muarshall Islands	3	<i>Tuvalu</i>	0
Nauru	1		

Italics denotes country does not have an embassy in Taiwan

Source: Embassypages.com

immediately recognized the PRC, including the United Kingdom, in part due to concerns over Hong Kong. Meanwhile, only thirty-seven countries formally recognized the ROC, and of those, only seven had permanent missions in Taiwan, while many diplomats remained in Beijing despite their country not formally recognizing the PRC.²⁶ However, with the start of the Korean War, anti-communist policies and renewed U.S. support for the ROC allowed the ROC to maintain and even gain some diplomatic representation post-1949. Anti-communist sentiment increased recognition, which in turn helped the ROC maintain its seat in the UN. From mid-1950 to mid-1955, the PRC received no additional recognitions. In the 1960s only one Latin American country, Cuba, recognized the PRC. Similarly, the ROC fared well in Africa, receiving recognition from thirteen out of twenty-three African countries from 1960 to 1963, compared to only five

²⁶Donald Klein, "Formosa's Diplomatic World," *The China Quarterly*, no. 15 (1963): 45-50.

for the PRC and five which recognized neither.²⁷

Even as international support for seating the PRC in the UN increased, the ROC resisted changing its "one China" policy. Between 1971 (the year the PRC was seated in the UN Security Council) and 1979 the ROC unilaterally cut ties with 44 countries that recognized the PRC—without significant pressure from Beijing. This is not unusual, however, among divided states; West Germany revoked recognition of seven countries that increased ties with its counterpart following the proclamation of the Hallstein Doctrine.²⁹ After the United States formally recognized the PRC in 1979, most other holdouts followed suit, leaving only a few countries retaining official relations with the ROC.

Ironically Beijing's own Taiwan policy shift at the time may have indirectly propped up recognition of the ROC. With Sino-American rapprochement, the PRC ended references to the "liberation" of Taiwan and thus suggested the possibility of a peaceful resolution of the dispute. This subtle policy shift could be viewed as signaling a continuation of the status quo, thus encouraging the ROC to continue efforts to maintain recognition under a "one China" framework—which the PRC grudgingly accepted—rather than pursue recognition through a formal declaration of independence.

While Cold War tensions strengthened many of the ROC's relations, the end of the Cold War removed much of the ideological motivation to maintain them. Indonesia reinstated diplomatic relations with Beijing in 1990 after a twenty-five-year hiatus. Saudi Arabia switched recognition in 1992. Singapore, traditionally hesitant about recognizing the PRC because of its own large Chinese population, and South Korea, perhaps the most

²⁷Despite the competition ten countries in the UN recognized neither government in 1963: Austria, Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Iceland, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Malaya, Niger, Sierra Leone, and Tunisia. See *ibid.*, 49-50.

²⁸Francoise Mengin, "The Foreign Policy of the ROC on Taiwan since 1971: An Overview," in *The Republic of China on Taiwan in International Politics*, ed. Marie-Louise Nat (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1998), 21-22.

²⁹Lawrence L. Whetten, *Germany East and West* (New York: New York University Press, 1980), 43, 190.

anti-communist state in Asia, recognized the PRC in 1990 and 1992, respectively. Today only the Holy See seems to base its recognition of the ROC on explicit ideological grounds.

With anti-communist appeals evaporating, the ROC shifted its diplomatic strategy. One crucial step was acknowledging the legitimacy of the PRC on the mainland and thus opening up the possibility of dual recognition. Although impractical due to Beijing's continued opposition, this prevented a self-imposed isolation. Furthermore, with democratization, Taiwan attempted to define recognition in terms of democratic principles, a definition reiterated by some current diplomatic allies. This achieved some success as the number of diplomatic allies increased under Lee Teng-hui's (李登輝) presidency (1988-2000) from twenty-two to twenty-eight; however, the number of independent countries also increased during the same time frame. Taiwan thus altered the stated rationale for recognition while only slightly changing the recognition playing field.

Whereas recognition usually confers legitimacy and is only revoked under severe conditions, recognition of the ROC is often granted and withdrawn without a clear political motive. This instability is apparent from the number of countries that have switched recognition more than once. The most extreme examples, Senegal and the Central African Republic, have switched five times since both originally forged diplomatic ties with the ROC in 1962. Ten other countries—Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia, Lesotho, Liberia, Nauru, Nicaragua, Niger, and St. Lucia—switched diplomatic recognition more than once, eight of them at least once in the last fifteen years. Two others recognized the ROC for only days before switching back. ROC-Vanuatu relations lasted ten days in 2002 and Papua New Guinea's recognition lasted sixteen days in 1999, culminating in a scandal over a reported US\$2.5 billion loan which ultimately led to the resignation of Papua New Guinea's prime minister.³⁰ Ideological rationales may have stabilized diplomatic relations previously, but without a Cold War framework, Taiwan's remaining diplomatic ties appear unstable.

³⁰"A Cargo from Taiwan," *The Economist*, July 10, 1999.

One also sees evidence of thin diplomatic relations in terms of the establishment of embassies. Although currently the ROC has embassies in most of the countries that recognize it, this has not always been the case. Nine years elapsed between recognition and the establishment of an embassy in Haiti and more than six elapsed in the cases of Guatemala, Nicaragua, and Uruguay. Similarly the PRC waited seven years after recognition of Vanuatu to establish an embassy there in 1989. This could be a wait-and-see response, hoping to avoid closing an embassy shortly after its establishment due to the host country switching recognition, as happened with the ROC in Mali (1960) and Laos (1962) within four months of recognition.

Checkbook Diplomacy

Economic interests have traditionally played some role in recognition in that recognition encourages interaction and decreases the informational costs of trade. The economic cost of non-recognition can be high as foreign firms are wary of investment where international conventions are not binding. Enticing others to also forego recognition can be just as costly, as seen in U.S. subsidies to Japan in part to compensate for the loss of potential trade with the PRC.³¹ Such rationales are not unique to capitalist countries. Shortly following the Bolshevik Revolution, Lenin desired diplomatic recognition from the United States for the economic benefits it could bring.³² In the late 1980s, South Korea promised aid packages and increased trade if the Soviet Union extended recognition, supported the former's entry into the United Nations, and no longer sold weapons to North Korea.³³ Within one year of recognition, trade tripled between the

³¹Edgar Snow and Shao-Chang Hsu, "Recognition of the People's Republic of China," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 324 (1959): 79.

³²Todd Pfannestiel, "The Soviet Bureau: A Bolshevik Strategy to Secure U.S. Diplomatic Recognition through Economic Trade," *Diplomatic History* 27, no. 2 (2003): 171-92.

³³Miles Kahler and Scott .L. Kastner, "Strategic Uses of Economic Interdependence: Engagement Policies on the Korean Peninsula and Across the Taiwan Strait," *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 5 (2006): 523-41.

two countries while in 1991, South Korea provided a US\$3 billion aid package, the largest in the country's history.

In the ROC-PRC case, however, the role of economics appears more explicit. Since 1961, the ROC has implicitly or explicitly connected aid packages to recognition, much like South Korea and West Germany before dual recognition.³⁴ According to Taiwan's 2009 White Paper on Foreign Aid Policy, official development assistance (ODA) exceeded US\$430 million in 2008. Development assistance has been particularly important to island microstates whose economic viability may otherwise be in question. Taiwan remains the largest single donor to Haiti, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and was Dominica's greatest benefactor before it switched recognition.³⁵ With aid packages equaling a fifth of the Haitian government's annual budget, it should have come as no surprise when a Haitian cabinet minister stated that Taiwan does not "give us any reason to look after continental China."³⁶ Conversely, one official in the Foreign Ministry even suggested that the ROC could purchase recognition from a Third World country for about US\$20 million.³⁷ However, unlike the Korean and German cases, both the ROC and PRC are now willing to tie large assistance packages to recognition.

Although both sides regularly condemn checkbook diplomacy, their track record in the past fifteen years belies this. Beijing offered large investment and aid packages to the Bahamas, St. Lucia, and Dominica shortly after each switched recognition to the PRC.³⁸ Taipei granted Niger a US\$50 million loan in 1992 shortly before recognition and US\$35 million

³⁴Robert A. Madsen, "The Struggle for Sovereignty Between China and Taiwan," in *Problematic Sovereignty: Contested Rules and Political Possibilities*, ed. Stephen D. Krasner (New York: Columbia University, 2001); and Gray, *Germany's Cold War*.

³⁵Maria Lynch, "Taiwan Lavishes Aid to Secure Solid Caribbean Basin Allies," *Miami Herald*, December 7, 2003.

³⁶VOA News Report, "Haiti and Taiwan" (May 27, 2003), <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/taiwan/2003/taiwan-030527-2ad06368.htm> (accessed November 10, 2008).

³⁷Wei qun Gu, *Conflicts of Divided Nations: The Cases of China and Korea* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1995), 128.

³⁸See note 35 above (Lynch, "Taiwan Lavishes Aid").

in assistance to Gambia in 1995, more than all other donors to the country combined that year.³⁹ Taipei offered Costa Rica nearly US\$50 million in assistance in 2003-2004, only to see the country switch recognition in 2007.⁴⁰ Taipei responded with increased assistance to Nicaragua to prevent another loss in the region.⁴¹ Beijing accused Taipei of offering Sao Tome and Principe US\$30 million in aid in exchange for recognition in 1997, with Taipei making similar claims about Beijing's US\$100 million assistance package to Guinea-Bissau in 1998.⁴² Taiwan denied Dominica's request for US\$65 million in 2004, only to have the Caribbean country switch recognition for double that amount of aid. The PRC offered Nauru, with less than fourteen thousand citizens, over US\$100 million in aid for recognition in 2003, only to have the island switch again in 2005.⁴³ The convergence of interests, which Payne and Veney argue is behind many of Taiwan's ties, breaks down once the PRC is willing to offer similar aid packages.⁴⁴

China's investment strategy has also evolved, and Beijing has adopted a more regional approach to economic enticements despite preferring bilateral agreements rather than working through organizations like the African Union. Crucial to China's continued economic development is access to energy inputs, especially oil and metals. Access to these resources has pushed the PRC to develop relations which previously amounted to little more than small development projects under checkbook diplomacy. Specifically China appears to be mirroring Taiwan's regional success in main-

³⁹Niger switched back to recognizing the PRC in 1996.

⁴⁰See note 35 above (Lynch, "Taiwan Lavishes Aid").

⁴¹Iris Liu, "The Big China and Taiwan Tussle: Dollar Diplomacy Returns to Latin America," *The Panama News* 14, no. 18 (September 22, 2008). http://www.thepanamanews.com/pn/v_14/issue_18/opinion_10.html (accessed January 20, 2010).

⁴²Gary D. Rawnsley, *Taiwan's Informal Diplomacy and Propaganda* (New York: St. Martin's, 2000), 32.

⁴³See Shelley Rigger, "Taiwan in 2002: Another Year of Political Droughts and Typhoons," *Asian Survey* 43, no. 1 (2003): 45; Elizabeth Freund Larus, "Taiwan's Quest for International Recognition," *Issues & Studies* 42, no. 2 (2006): 49.

⁴⁴Payne and Veney, "Taiwan and Africa," 443.

taining diplomatic relations in Central America by implementing an integrated regional policy in Africa. Since the early 1990s, the first trip made by the PRC's minister of foreign affairs each year has been to an African country, symbolizing the importance of China-Africa relations. This was followed by the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000, China's first attempt at a collective African dialogue. In 2007 the PRC established the China-Africa Development Fund (CAD), administered through the China Development Bank and under the direct jurisdiction of the State Council. Within one year, the CAD granted over US\$90 million to projects in Africa and expected to invest an additional US\$5 billion in the short term.⁴⁵

The PRC has also offered various assistance packages to African countries in return for recognition, and leaders in Beijing are increasingly confident that African holdouts will eventually come their way.⁴⁶ In 2004 China offered Angola an aid package nearly matching an assistance package from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) but with no constraints and followed this with a US\$9 billion loan in 2006. Similarly a 2008 agreement provided US\$9 billion to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for far-reaching investment in exchange for millions of tons of copper and cobalt. This "Chinese Marshall Plan" is potentially reconfiguring the diplomatic battlefield in Africa by fostering both long-term mutually beneficial programs and raising the potential costs of switching recognition.⁴⁷

While both the PRC and ROC maintain ideological reasons for extending recognition in what Hsieh refers to as "competing nationalisms," absent a Cold War framework few other countries share these concerns.⁴⁸

⁴⁵China Development Bank. 2009. <http://www.cdb.com.cn/english/Column.asp?ColumnId=176> (accessed March 3, 2009).

⁴⁶T. Y. Wang, "Cross-Strait Relations After the 2000 Election in Taiwan: Changing Tactics in a New Reality," *Asian Survey* 41, no. 5 (2001): 732.

⁴⁷Wenran Jiang, "A Chinese 'Marshall Plan' or Business?" *Asiatimes.com* (accessed March 10, 2009).

⁴⁸John Hsieh, "The Prospect of Cross-Relations: A Game-Theoretic Analysis," *EAI Working Paper*, no. 94 (2002): 4.

If Cold War ideological frameworks have lost their saliency, economic conditions may provide greater insight. Countries with comparatively weak economies arguably would be more willing to recognize the ROC in exchange for aid packages. Microstates in particular constantly struggle to remain viable in a global economy and have little to bargain for international assistance, save their UN vote and ability to confer diplomatic recognition. Those states with few exports logically should be the most willing to recognize the ROC as the appeal of access to China's market should be weaker. A cursory review of the ROC's diplomatic allies supports this. According to the 2005 CIA Factbook, the Chinese market is only a significant factor to two of the ROC's current diplomatic allies, Burkina Faso and the Solomon Islands, with 39.8 percent and 41.6 percent of their respective exports going to the mainland, while China is the destination of only a little over 4 percent of the exports of both Paraguay and the Marshall Islands.⁴⁹ Conversely, Taiwan's exports to and imports from its diplomatic allies are minimal. Current allies only accounted for approximately .004 percent of both exports and imports from 1989 to mid-2009 and less than .003 percent of exports in 2008.⁵⁰

Non-economic factors have also been suggested. A sense of democratic solidarity could lead to higher levels of recognition. Taiwan may be viewed as a political model to follow, cultivating an image as an "exporter of democracy."⁵¹ Accordingly, among Taiwan's allies at any given time, democracies may be more likely to remain with Taiwan.⁵² However, corrupt authoritarian governments also may view recognition as an effective means to strengthen their position, especially if recognition is combined

⁴⁹This does not include exports to Hong Kong. CIA Factbook, 2005.

⁵⁰Bureau of Foreign Trade, Republic of China, <http://cus93.trade.gov.tw/bftweb/english/FSCSE> (accessed September 7, 2009).

⁵¹For example, in 2005 Taiwan founded the Democratic Pacific Union (DPU) to foster democratic values as well as economic interactions. See Annette Hsiu-lien Lu (呂秀蓮), "Address to the Opening Ceremony of the Democratic Pacific Assembly Preparatory Meeting (Taipei)," December 14, 2002. <http://www.president.gov.tw>.

⁵²Elizabeth Freund Larus, "Soft Power versus Hard Cash: Retaining Democratic Allies," in *Taiwan and the International Community*, ed. Steve Tsang (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2008), 153-88.

with economic assistance. A brief review of recognizing countries suggests that size may be a factor as many are island microstates. In correspondence with the author, diplomatic missions to Taiwan also refer to their countries' commonalities as small nations.⁵³ One would also assume that states comparatively distant geographically from the PRC would be more insulated from Beijing's push for recognition.

To analyze the factors potentially influencing diplomatic recognition of the ROC, I employ a Probit model⁵⁴ with a dichotomous dependent variable (1=recognition of the ROC) using data from 1960-2007.⁵⁵ To capture level of democracy, I use Polity Scores.⁵⁶ Unfortunately Polity does not include any country with a population of less than five hundred thousand, which, if smaller countries are more likely to recognize the ROC, may bias the statistical results.⁵⁷ A second measure is also tested to capture the potential dyadic effects associated with democracy, as countries with similar levels of democracy to Taiwan may be more likely to extend recognition. This is measured as the absolute difference between the Polity scores of Taiwan and the other country. In addition I include one economic variable, exports as a percentage of GDP, available from the World Bank.⁵⁸ Furthermore, I include three control variables: the size of country in square kilo-

⁵³In personal correspondence with diplomatic representatives from several of Taiwan's island allies, geographical similarities were consistently referenced.

⁵⁴A probit model is a nonlinear maximum likelihood estimation regression model applicable when the outcome of interest is not a continuous variable. While graphing predicted probabilities may provide additional insight beyond the regression output alone, for the sake of brevity these have been excluded.

⁵⁵Dates of recognition were supplied by the ROC's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and checked against secondary sources. Because economic data is only available for most countries from 1960 to the present, I am unable to model the entire period of interest. The data set includes all countries except the Holy See (Vatican City).

⁵⁶The Polity IV Project produces an authoritarian-democracy score which ranges from -10 (most authoritarian) to 10 (most democratic). Scores are available from 1800 to the present.

⁵⁷Using Freedom House scores would relieve this problem, but they are only available for the past thirty years and only consistently measured in the same manner since 1984.

⁵⁸World Bank website, "WDI, GDF & ADI Online Databases," <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/DATASTATISTICS/0,,contentMDK:20398986~menuPK:64133163~pagePK:64133150~piPK:64133175~theSitePK:239419,00.html> (Date accessed: March 5, 2009).

Table 2
Probit Regression of Diplomatic Recognition

(Dependent variable: 1 = recognition of Taiwan)

	Model 1		Model 2		
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE	
Polity Scores			-0.00144	0.007774	
Area (sq. km)	-0.00014	0.000141	-0.00012	0.000147	
Cold War	0.739041	***	0.067065	0.856999	***
Distance from Beijing	0.310712	***	0.055971	0.315091	***
Exports (GDP)	-0.01639	***	0.002932	-0.0227	***
Constant	-5.74446	***	0.516621	-5.88205	***
/lnsig2u	2.044372		0.176303	2.119594	
sigma_u	2.779263		0.244996	2.885785	
Rho	0.885378		0.017892	0.892793	
N	6201		5570		

***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

meters (in thousands, available from the CIA Factbook⁵⁹) and the distance between a country's capital and Beijing (in kilometers available at Kristian Gleditsch's dataset on distance from capital cities⁶⁰), along with a dummy variable for whether the year was during the Cold War (-1991).

Since Polity does not assign values to countries with populations under five hundred thousand, Model 1 only includes exports and the control variables. While size of the country was not statistically significant, exports were significant at the .01 level and in the expected direction as were the other control variables. Little changes when Polity scores are included (Model 2): exports, distance from Beijing, and Cold War years remain statistically significant at the .01 level, while neither area nor level of democracy reaches significance.

⁵⁹"CIA-The World Factbook," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/> (Date accessed: March 3, 2009).

⁶⁰"Distance Between Capital Cities," <http://privatewww.essex.ac.uk/~ksg/data-5.html> (Date accessed: March 1, 2009).

Table 3
Probit Regression of Diplomatic Recognition

(Dependent variable: 1 = recognition of Taiwan)

	Model 3		Model 4	
	Coef.	SE	Coef.	SE
Polity Scores			-0.00799	0.008246
Polity Difference	0.014169	**	0.0064	0.016243
Area (sq. km)	-0.00013		0.0001	-0.00012
Cold War	0.875517	***	0.0756	0.842872
Distance from Beijing	0.316071	***	0.0593	0.316563
Exports (GDP)	-0.02073	***	0.0035	-0.02037
Constant	-6.05174	***	0.5556	-6.05713
/lnsig2u	2.110975		0.1887	2.110514
sigma_u	2.873376		0.2711	2.872714
Rho	0.891965		0.0182	0.891921
N	5570			5570

***p<.01, **p<.05, *p<.10

Replacing the Polity score variable with a dyadic absolute value produces largely similar results (see table 3, Model 3). This new variable reaches statistical significance at the .05 level, but counter to the hypothesized direction. That is, as the difference between Polity scores for Taiwan and another country increases, that country is more likely to recognize Taiwan. Exports as well as distance from Beijing and the Cold War dummy variable remained statistically significant at the .01 level. Finally Model 4 includes both the original Polity score and the dyadic variable. Again, the only variables statistically significant were the dyadic variable, exports, distance from Beijing, and the dummy variable for the Cold War period. Although admittedly crude models, these suggest that references to recognition based on democratic ideas are unsubstantiated while underlying variables such as economic factors may provide a better explanation.

The connection between aid and recognition in the ROC-PRC case has two important implications. First, the increased costs of maintaining recognition of a few states limits where assistance can be employed. While the PRC only needs to offer financial incentives to a limited number of

recognizing countries, the ROC must provide incentives to nearly all of its allies. Countries originally sympathetic to the ROC may be swayed by the growing economic and political clout of the PRC. For example, the costs to Taiwan of maintaining diplomatic relations with its Latin American allies simply meant less money available for attracting or maintaining allies in Southeast Asia, all which have now switched to the PRC. Attempting to maintain every ally also allows the ROC to be essentially blackmailed by countries hiking up their demands in the knowledge that the ROC is likely to respond favorably.⁶¹

Secondly, the economic rationale underpinning recognition also perpetuates unstable recognition. Whenever a recognized party is unwilling to beat their adversary's offer and thus loses recognition from one state, this simply frees up money and resources to be utilized in wooing another state while raising the costs for the adversary to maintain their recognition. This is evident in the pattern of recognition switching where one or two losses from one side are quickly countered with a gain.⁶² Because of the importance both sides have placed on recognition, when either side makes gains, the other feels compelled to quickly respond with diplomatic successes of their own, reinforcing perpetual instability.⁶³ Recognition tied to economic assistance thus creates structural incentives perpetuating diplomatic battles.

These pathologies partially explain why both the PRC and ROC have attempted a diplomatic truce since 2008. Under the Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) administration, relations between the two governments have noticeably thawed and no country has switched recognition recently, giving some

⁶¹A similar pattern was seen with West Germany before it rescinded the Hallstein Doctrine, where Indonesia and Algeria both threatened to switch recognition if larger aid packages were not granted. See Newnham, *Embassies for Sale*, 264.

⁶²For example, Lee Teng-hui's advances in Africa and Central America were "immediately met with vigorous countermoves" from the PRC. See Hung-mao Tien and Yun-han Chu, "Building Democracy in Taiwan," *The China Quarterly*, no. 148 (December 1996): 1169.

⁶³This cycle is not limited to official diplomatic relations. Months after Dominica switched to the PRC, the ROC enticed three Caribbean governments to announce their support for Taiwan's recognition in international bodies. See Bert Wilkinson, "China Buys Influence in the Caribbean," *New York Amsterdam News*, August 19, 2004.

hope that the vicious cycle of checkbook diplomacy may be broken.

Why Taiwan Plays the Game

One may question why the ROC would spend such exorbitant amounts considering how little it seems to get in return. Diplomatic recognition is domestically popular in Taiwan and thus electorally advantageous for Taiwanese politicians, despite the fact that most Taiwanese are unlikely to be able to name one country recognizing the ROC. Equally significant is the importance Taipei has placed on recognition within the cross-Straits conflict. Recognition is crucial to Taiwan's national security, not only to prevent further isolation but to deny the PRC the ability to swallow Taiwan without international objection,⁶⁴ while making forced unification more difficult. At best, Taipei's efforts can be seen as preventing an even greater shift toward Beijing.

Furthermore, one should not overlook the UN psyche which pervades Taiwanese politics. Membership in the UN is a clear mark of external legitimacy. In 1971 General Assembly Resolution 2758 revoked the ROC's credentials as the sole representative of China, transferring them to the PRC, thus threatening Taiwan's external sovereignty by motivating others to switch diplomatic recognition. Nor can Taiwan easily return to the UN as the Security Council must approve all accessions.⁶⁵ Although some suggest that seating both the ROC and PRC would still have been possible after 1971,⁶⁶ the ROC's decision to walk out instead of being

⁶⁴Chen, *Foreign Policy of the New Taiwan*, 10.

⁶⁵Technically, since the PRC is the interested party, it should not be able to use its veto in the Security Council to block Taiwan's admission. See Michael Yahuda, "The International Standing of the Republic of China on Taiwan," in *Contemporary Taiwan*, ed. David Shambaugh (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 294.

⁶⁶One could argue that the KMT's strict adherence to the "one China" policy prevented the possibility of dual recognition in the UN. From 1971 to 1979, the KMT-led ROC severed relations with forty-four countries recognizing the PRC without the PRC forcing the issue. See Mengin, *Foreign Policy of the ROC*, 21-22.

Table 4
Countries That Supported the UN Petition to Seat the ROC

Year	Countries Supporting UN Petition	ROC's Diplomatic Allies*
2001	10	29
2002	12	28
2003	16	27
2004	15	27
2005	11	26
2006	16	25
2007	15	24

Source: Ministry of Foreign Affairs (ROC) website and United Nations website.

*Denotes peak number of countries recognizing the ROC in that year.

seated as a separate country prevented accommodation like that in the German and Korean cases.⁶⁷

Diplomatic recognition also assists Taiwan in maintaining an international presence in formal institutions. From 1993 to 2008 the ROC used its few allies to annually support re-entry into the UN, seen as its only hope after the 1995 offer of one billion dollars to the United Nations in exchange for membership was rejected. In addition to attempting to enter under various names ("Republic of China on Taiwan," "Republic of China (Taiwan)," and most recently simply "Taiwan"), the ROC has also attempted entry as a "non-member entity" similar to Palestine, all to no avail. Countries may be sympathetic to Taiwan; however, none with relations with the PRC has supported this measure (see table 4). In fact, only about half of the countries recognizing the ROC have supported the yearly proposal, while more non-recognizing countries have often spoken in opposition.⁶⁸ Taiwan also

⁶⁷The ROC-PRC case also differs in that UN membership for both divided Germany and Korea was contingent on both sides simultaneously entering.

⁶⁸Admittedly, Taiwan does not expect every ally to back the UN petition, but it does expect other activities in Taiwan's interest. Personal interview with Ministry of Foreign Affairs official, Lillian Wu, 1997. "ROC's UN Bid is Long-Term Goal: Acting Foreign Minister," Central News Agency, September 18, 1997; and Rawnsley, *Taiwan's Informal Diplomacy*, 32.

used its allies to propose a UN working group on Taiwan's status in 2000 and a debate on Taiwan in 2005,⁶⁹ signifying that the Taiwan issue is not resolved.⁷⁰ While it is not impossible that a deal may be brokered to allow Taiwan into the UN,⁷¹ these actions allow Taiwan to prevent further erosion of its diplomatic space.

While the ROC maintains the competition over claims of sovereignty, the PRC views each move with caution. The legitimacy of the PRC is not in question as the vast majority of countries not only recognize it, but acknowledge its claims to Taiwan as well.⁷² The PRC, however, sees any push for Taiwan's external legitimacy as an incremental step toward formal independence. In this view even losing a country like Kiribati only strengthens Taiwan's ability to avoid unification. This in turn justifies the PRC adopting a more aggressive stance against Taiwan out of fear that the ROC is unilaterally deviating from the "one China" policy.

A formal move toward independence, however, may not benefit Taiwan's quest for diplomatic recognition. Although some argue that Western democracies would be hard pressed to ignore the plight of a fellow democracy, the potential backlash from China might not only discourage de jure recognition of Taiwan, but also persuade the last holdouts to switch either out of fear of political retribution (e.g., blocking assistance through the UN⁷³) or realization that heightened cross-Strait tension may hamper Tai-

⁶⁹"Minister Regretful as UN Bid Fails," *Taiwan News*, September 15, 2005. <http://www.gov.tw/TaiwanHeadlines>.

⁷⁰As one diplomat stated, the door to the UN may be "closed but not locked." Personal interview.

⁷¹"U.S. Expert Suggests Taiwan-China Joint Membership in UN," *The China Post* (Taipei), July 23, 2009. <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/china-taiwan-relations/2009/07/23/217382/U.S.-expert.htm>.

⁷²Charles W. Freeman, Jr., "Preventing War in the Taiwan Strait: Restraining Taiwan—and Beijing," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 4 (July-August 1998): 6-11.

⁷³The PRC has only used its Security Council veto power six times, yet it has twice used it to block the deployment of peacekeepers (to Macedonia and Guatemala), ostensibly because both of these countries recognized the ROC. PRC officials did not explicitly link the UN vote to support for Taiwan, instead arguing in the Macedonian case that conditions had "apparently stabilized in the last few years." Such moves could be interpreted as attempts to deter grander displays of support for Taiwan. See Paul Lewis, "China Votes a U.N. Force Out of Balkans," *New York Times*, February 16, 1999, 11.

wan's commitment to checkbook diplomacy. Whereas the ROC's present lack of universal diplomatic recognition makes it a non-status quo power in some respects, responding with a formal declaration of independence may provide little diplomatic benefit. The present diplomatic truce appears to be in both parties' interests as it undermines bidding wars and encourages assistance targeting the infrastructure needs of underdeveloped countries. In the absence of larger offers of assistance, no country has switched recognition. However, if a country were to unilaterally drop recognition, it is unclear whether the other party would forgo pursuing relations, a move which could reignite diplomatic competition.

Conclusion

The diplomatic battle between the ROC and the PRC highlights several aspects of recognition that have not been adequately addressed in the literature. As evident from the number of countries switching recognition, recognition may not always include a normative element or a deeper commitment. Aid packages also have limited diplomatic value in these situations where recipient countries can always make greater demands while offering the same incentive to whoever is willing to pay for recognition. The analysis of the ROC-PRC case reaffirms that "in diplomacy, you can't buy friends, you can only rent them."⁷⁴ The instability of recognition from small powers draws these nations into the Taiwan debate, a conflict which most of these countries have little interest in seeing resolved as it would potentially decrease their access to aid. Although the diplomatic truce is promising, the PRC still may return to checkbook diplomacy in order to further diplomatically isolate the ROC. Similarly the ROC may continue assistance packages out of fear of Chinese diplomatic appeal. Even in late 2009, critics pointed to donations of aircraft to Panama as a

⁷⁴"Relations Recast: In Diplomatic Competition with Beijing, Economic Clout Keeps Taipei a Strong Player," *Free China Review*, March 1998.

return to checkbook diplomacy on Taiwan's part.⁷⁵ Taipei thus must find creative ways to expand its international position. While the ROC has made substantive progress in upgrading unofficial relations, which will be far more crucial for the island's long-term security, the continued focus on costly low economic return official relations may in some cases be counter-productive.

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⁷⁵Shu-ling Ko and Shih Hsiu-chuan, "Government Denies 'Dollar Diplomacy'," *Taipei Times*, December 29, 2009, 1.

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