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**Where Minds Meet:  
The “Professionalization” of  
Cross-Strait Academic Exchange**

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## **Where Minds Meet: The “Professionalization” of Cross-Strait Academic Exchange**

### **Abstract**

In international relations, transnational academic exchange or, more generally, cultural exchange is usually seen as a function of the quality of bilateral relations. As a variety of public diplomacy intended to win the “hearts and minds” of intellectuals in another country, the development of educational exchanges depends on the twists in foreign policy. Academic exchange across the Taiwan Strait commenced in the late 1980s, directly after the lifting of the travel ban, and had gathered momentum by the mid-1990s. It even accelerated further after the inauguration of the pro-independence Chen-government in Taiwan in 2000, creating the “paradox” of the expansion of social contacts in times of frosty political relations. One possible explanation for this is that due to the rather unique situation in the Taiwan Strait people-to-people exchanges between Taiwan and mainland China have been officially promoted as a substitute for official contacts. What is often neglected by analysts of cross-Strait relations, however, is the fact that academic exchange is also a response to the global pressure to internationalize higher education. Within this two-dimensional framework (international relations and the internationalization of higher education), cross-Strait academic exchange has been developing its own dynamic. The outcome has been an increasing amount of nonofficial communication and the growing “professionalization” (in the sense of the academic profession) of academic exchange.

Keywords: Taiwan, People’s Republic of China, academic exchange, international relations, public diplomacy, internationalization of higher education, cross-Strait relations

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## **Zusammenfassung**

### **Wissenschaft zwischen Diplomatie und Exzellenz:**

#### **Die „Akademisierung“ des taiwanisch-chinesischen Wissenschaftlertauschs**

In den internationalen Beziehungen wird der akademische Austausch zwischen zwei Ländern gewöhnlich in Abhängigkeit von der Entwicklung der bilateralen Beziehungen gesehen. Als Teilbereich des Kulturaustauschs und als eine Form von *public diplomacy* dient er u.a. dazu, die „Herzen und Köpfe“ der Partner auf der anderen Seite zu gewinnen. Der Austausch über die Taiwanstraße hinweg begann Ende der 1980er Jahre nach der Aufhebung des Reiseverbots und nahm selbst dann noch zu, als sich mit dem Amtsantritt Präsident Chens im Jahre 2000 die Beziehungen verschlechterten. Das heißt, auch im Falle der wissenschaftlichen Beziehungen ist das Paradoxon zu beobachten, dass sich die sozialen Kontakte trotz frostiger politischer Beziehungen stetig ausweiteten. Eine Erklärung dafür bietet die spezifische Situation in der Taiwanstraße, wo soziale Kontakte die fehlenden offiziellen Kontakte ersetzen. Aber es darf auch nicht vernachlässigt werden, dass die Ausweitung des akademischen Austauschs eine Folge des globalen Drucks auf die Wissenschaften ist, exzellent zu sein. Beide Dimensionen – die internationalen Beziehungen und die Internationalisierung von Wissenschaft – verleihen der Entwicklung des taiwanisch-chinesischen wissenschaftlichen Austauschs eine eigene Dynamik. Sie führt zu einer Zunahme nicht offizieller Kommunikation und zu einer „Akademisierung“ des Austauschs. Dies kann am Beispiel der politischen Wissenschaften illustriert werden, die an der Schnittstelle von Diplomatie und Wissenschaft tätig sind.

# Where Minds Meet: The “Professionalization” of Cross-Strait Academic Exchange<sup>1</sup>

Günter Schucher

## Article Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 A Two-dimensional Framework for Cross-Strait Academic Exchange
- 3 Cross-Strait Academic Exchange
- 4 Final Remarks

*As the largest continent in the world, Asia is home to the most populous democracy as well as the most populous authoritarian regime. It is home to some of the most vibrant democracies as well as four out of the five remaining Communist countries. Asia is thus the front line in the ideological battle for the hearts and minds of the people.*

(Taiwan’s former vice president Hsiu-lien Annette Lu)<sup>2</sup>

*Economic cooperation and cultural exchange are two pillars underpinning state-to-state relations. Economic cooperation aims at promoting mutual benefit and win-win progress, and cultural exchange opens hearts and minds of peoples.*

(China’s Premier Wen Jiabao)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This research was supported by a grant from the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD); I am especially grateful for the support of TFD staff members Kiel Downey and Bo Tedards. Moreover, I would like to thank the Institute of International Relations at National Chengchi University and its director, Dr. Tuan Y. Cheng, for their hospitality and help. I would also like to acknowledge Tang Shaocheng, Chen Chih-jou, Patrick Köllner and Martin Beck for their very helpful comments, and all the other people who shared their views with me. This paper was presented at the TFD’s seminar on April 14, 2008, and at the Sixth Conference of the European Association of Taiwan Studies in Madrid on April 17, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Remarks at the Community of Democracies’ Taipei Roundtable on Democracy in Asia, 23.01.2007, [www.president.gov.tw/en/prog/newsrelease/documentcontent.php?id=1105498658&preid=&gcategorynumber=&categorynumber2=0&layer=on&subcategory=145](http://www.president.gov.tw/en/prog/newsrelease/documentcontent.php?id=1105498658&preid=&gcategorynumber=&categorynumber2=0&layer=on&subcategory=145) (retrieved 31.02.2008).

## 1 Introduction

In 1987, when China opened its gates to "Taiwanese compatriots" and the Taiwanese government lifted its ban on crossing the Strait, academics were among the first groups of visitors, even though travels were initially restricted to visits to relatives. Since then none of the politicians on either side of the Taiwan Strait has omitted the notion of expanding cultural and academic exchange when talking about the development of cross-Strait relations. The argument, rarely expressed explicitly, is that educational exchange can play an important role in public diplomacy because face-to-face contact, especially between opinion leaders and multipliers, helps to improve mutual understanding.

In international relations, transnational academic exchange is understood as a form of scientific, educational, and cultural transnational contact between the intellectual communities of two countries and is usually seen as a function of the quality of bilateral relations. Like culture in general, it is seen as a tool of diplomacy aimed at winning the "hearts and minds" of intellectuals in another country. And as a kind of public diplomacy, the development of educational exchange not only follows the twists and turns of foreign policy, but its specific use is also shaped by the intent of foreign policy. Whether it is used to one-sidedly influence the counterpart, to build trust through the exchange of ideas, or to achieve a common goal through joint projects depends to a large extent on high politics.

In the Taiwan Strait, educational exchanges gathered momentum in 1996, when presidents of universities on both sides of the Strait held their first meeting to discuss higher education and arranged academic exchanges. They accelerated further after 2000, when the rule of the so-far dominant KMT (Guomintang, National Party) party ended and President Chen Shui-bian took over in the name of the pro-independence DPP (Democratic Progressive Party, Minzhu Jinbu Dang). The expansion of academic exchange after 2000 seems to contradict established knowledge: while it has continued to increase, the official relationship between Taiwan and China has changed for the worse in the course of an increasingly Taiwanese-identity-oriented policy on the part of the DPP government.

This seemingly paradox situation results from the "special" kind of relationship that exists between Taiwan and mainland China.<sup>4</sup> The unresolved questions of sovereignty and security complicate cross-Strait exchange: while China views such exchange as cooperation within one country, Taiwan stresses its international character. But despite the lack of any official diplomatic relations, commercial and social relations have developed steadily, almost untainted by the ups and downs of the political climate. Even before taking over power, the

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<sup>3</sup> Speech by Premier Wen Jiabao at the Japanese Diet, Tokyo, 12.04.2007, <http://wcm.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zxxx/t311107.htm> (retrieved 31.02.2008).

<sup>4</sup> Referring to exchange between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, I will speak of "cross-Strait exchange" considering the special character of cross-Strait relations. This corresponds to the term "transnational exchange," which is commonly used to differentiate relations between nonstate actors from "international" contacts at state level. Furthermore, I will speak of Taiwan and mainland China (or simply China) instead of the Republic of China or the People's Republic of China since this article is not meant to clarify the status of both entities in international law. Although the use of Taiwan instead of ROC has recently been heavily contested within Taiwan.

DPP's leaders acknowledged that it is in Taiwan's interest to maintain friendly rather than confrontational relations with China. Thus the party, while pursuing Taiwan's independence, has adopted a strategy of "separating political relations from economic interaction" (*zhengjin fenli*). In cross-Strait relations public diplomacy is less a complementary tool than it is a substitute for official diplomacy.

But academic exchange is not just a policy instrument. It is carried out by academic institutions and individual academics, according to their own agendas. Although mentioned by several authors, this "academic" part of the picture is widely neglected in their analyses. Over the last two to three decades transnational academic exchange has increased worldwide because of efforts to promote academic excellence in times of globalization. Thus reforms of higher education in China and Taiwan—characterized by massification, deregulation and marketization—have created additional incentives to expand exchange programs between research and teaching institutions across the Strait, be it through mutual visits, exchanges of students and staff, joint course delivery, research collaboration, etc. While China still restricts outward movement to some extent, the democratization of Taiwan's political system as well as the freedom of travel and the privatization of education has stripped the Taiwanese government of their resources for controlling this exchange.

This research analyzes the development of cross-Strait academic exchange using the two-dimensional framework of bilateral relations and the internationalization of higher education. I enquire about the actors—state and nonstate—involved in this kind of exchange and the dynamics of academic exchange within this framework. Why is the development of cross-Strait academic exchange not congruent with the development of political relations? Is the internationalization of higher education subordinate to political relations or does it follow its own dynamic and possibly even mitigate the impact of politics on academic exchange?

I will argue that the logic of cross-Strait policy has been compromised by the globalization of education. Blurring the intent that they act as public diplomats, researchers from both sides of the Strait have turned informational exercises into dialogical fora and have started to engage in joint research projects. Increasingly fatigued with "talking politics," they have "professionalized" (in the sense of the academic profession) and "depoliticized" (actually "de-diplomatized") cross-Strait academic exchanges over the last decade.

The following discussion, which will illustrate the above transformation, is organized into three sections. In the first section I discuss the two-dimensional framework (international relations and the internationalization of higher education) as well as the development of cross-Strait relations and reforms of higher education in China and Taiwan since the middle of the 1990s. Based on this, I provide a model of cross-Strait linkages. Then, in Section 2, I discuss the development of academic exchange, using the experiences of National Chengchi University and, in particular, political science and international relations as examples.

This article is based upon documentary research and fieldwork. Semistructured interviews were carried out by the author in Taipei in March and April 2008 and—as a kind of follow-up—in November 2008. Taking political science and international relations as a test case, the author took advantage of his stay at the Institute of International Relations (IIR) at National

Chengchi University to talk to researchers in the different divisions there. Further interviewees were selected from other colleges and departments of same the university (politics, international law, foreign languages, education, commerce), from other universities (National Taiwan University, Tamkang University), from government institutions, and from foundations. Interviews with faculty members at the NTU Hospital served as a kind of "corrective" to the social science bias.

Given the field research undertaken, my focus will be on the Taiwanese side and on Taiwanese researchers going to China. Though student exchange is the main quantitative component of academic exchange, I will note it rather in the margin since students are not the organizers of exchanges and therefore not actors in the sense intended in this research.

## 2 A Two-dimensional Framework for Cross-Strait Academic Exchange

Academic exchange as understood in this article includes all kinds of cross-border academic mobility, that is, physical movements of either the consumer or the provider of education as well as researchers. Traditional types of mobility have been supplemented by new types of transnational higher education, which have become an integral part of the internationalization of higher education (Huang 2007). These various types, however, cannot be clearly to differentiated and comprise forms such as cross-border supply, consumption abroad (traditional student mobility), commercial presence (e.g., the establishment of facilities in another country), and the provision of educational services (Altbach and Knight 2007:291 f.). Researchers mainly travel for more traditional reasons; their activities range from short-term trips to make contacts and gather information, participation in transnational conferences, and lecture tours to fieldwork and joint research projects. But they are also attracted by the growing international market for academic personnel.

### 2.1 International Relations

Academic exchange is generally defined as a major component of foreign cultural politics. Thus the German government, for example, sees cultural relations as one of three foreign policy pillars, the other two being political and economic relations. As an instrument to protect national interests, foreign cultural politics aims at winning partners in other countries and creating the cultural foundations for stable international relations (Auswärtiges Amt 2007). For Depkat, "culture is a tool of diplomacy, which can be instrumentalised to achieve a state's goals in the foreign policy process" (acc. to Scott-Smith 2008:174).

Culture can be the glue that binds civil societies, and cultural division can tear societies apart (Feigenbaum 2001). Exchanges allow people from different countries to get to know each other. Cultural or public diplomacy is "the promotion of communication between peoples as opposed to governments" and is designed to "build agreement based on common values."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> F. Ninkovich: *U.S. information policy and cultural diplomacy* (Headline Series, No. 308 ed.) (New York, 1996):3, cited after Wyszomirski et al. 2003:1.

Ideally, it is a two-way communication process encouraged by the government. It not only projects a nation's image to other countries and peoples, but also receives information from other countries and peoples. Because it involves nonstate actors such as nongovernmental organizations and private institutions—in this case universities and research institutes—it helps to create a global civil society.

Foreign cultural politics can be viewed as a form of "soft power" and as an increasingly important component of a country's international affairs toolbox. Thus in most countries it is primarily foreign ministries or departments which are responsible for international cultural relations (Wyszomirski, et al. 2003:10 f.). Joseph S. Nye has called soft power "the second face of power," which "co-opts people rather than coerces them" and "rests on the ability to shape the preferences of others" (Nye 2004:5). This makes it attractive to Western countries in "selling" their democracy (Aspden 2004). As a "low key confidence-building measure" it may (but will not necessarily) provide an eventual payoff by changing people's mindset. With its instruments, foreign cultural policy aims to realize overarching values and goals, such as peace building, conflict prevention and human rights. Therefore, it should work hand in hand with foreign economic and development policy. But whether foreign cultural politics should be conceived of as a "security policy by different means" is still contested (Overhaus 2003).

Like cultural exchange in general, academic communication can be seen as a kind of confidence-building measure, even more so in Asia where the process is often just as important as the outcome (Swanström and Ledberg 2006). Countries seek to project a positive image and "presume that cultural capital can be used to generate social capital, and thus, foster international trust, cooperation, and collaboration" (Wyszomirski, et al. 2003). Academic communication is a key component of the exchange of persons and ideas, and academics as well as academic managers are perfectly qualified to project national images. Although in this case Taiwan and the mainland both stem from the same cultural heritage (and language training is not necessary to publicize culture abroad), the national cultures have developed within different frameworks, which has led to different perceptions of national identity. In cross-Strait relations trust is totally lacking. A dialogue-based academic exchange could increase mutual understanding and further the building of trust through long-term relationships.

In contrast to these rather optimistic assumptions, a more pessimistic or cautious view points to the necessary balance that has to be struck between the openness of academic communication and national security concerns (Vest 2006). On the one hand, access to sensitive materials and information has to be restricted; on the other hand, excessive controls on foreign students and researchers may also have unintended negative consequences on a nation's scientific establishment. But it is not just a question of the illicit passing of information or technological knowledge; in general there is no guarantee that academic exchange will have a positive influence on intergovernmental relations, especially when it comes to relations between countries involved in a sharp mutual conflict (Scott-Smith 2008).

Despite the academic results, communication between scholars does not deliver any immediate or measurable outcome in international relations. Academic exchange "consists to a considerable degree of less visible day-to-day activities among a plurality of actors" (Overhaus 2003).

Moreover, there is almost no measurement standard to assess the effectiveness of public diplomacy.<sup>6</sup> This may be a reason why systematic studies and in-depth analyses into the impacts of these contacts are lacking and spillover effects are widely disputed, at least in cross-Strait relations (Schucher 2005). Keng traces this lack back to the dominance of the "dyadic model," that is, the focus on the interaction of two sovereign stakeholders and the inattention to sub-state-level contacts. Responding to these limitations, other scholars have referred to integration theory and European experiences, but have argued from either a society-centered or a state-centered perspective without linking "social interests" and "policy outputs" (Keng 2007).

Actually, in contrast to the ideal concepts, cultural diplomacy is often viewed by diplomats as a state-centered tool. Implemented by foreign ministries, it constantly carries the risk of being viewed as a way to exert political pressure or propaganda. This strips public diplomacy of its strength to influence the environment in which opinions are formed in the long run (Gonesh and Melissen 2005:3 f.). Conveying information and selling a positive image of a country is part of its public diplomacy, but good public diplomacy has to go beyond propaganda and has to build long-term relationships with key individuals over many years through scholarships, exchanges, training, seminars, conferences, and access to media channels (Nye Jr. 2008:101 f.).

In focusing on relationship building, public diplomacy has to be separated from propaganda and lobbying. Numerous scholars and practitioners have endorsed the need to move from a monologue- to a dialogue-based public diplomacy. Cowan and Arsenault (2008) have pointed to an additional third layer of engagement: collaboration, which means "initiatives in which participants from different nations participate in a project together" (ibid.: 21). Since each of these modes has particular advantages for particular situations, context is critical. They should be used according to time and place, either by themselves or in combination. Nevertheless, we can record a range of exchange activities from rather monologue-based information transfer through dialogue-based forms to collaborative endeavors.

The United States' cultural diplomacy towards the democratizing Germany after World War II or towards the Eastern European autocratic countries during the Cold War could serve as well-researched examples (Lima Jr. 2007). Although the outlook of the State Department on the purpose of exchanges has been relatively consistent over the past 50 years (Scott-Smith 2008), recent research on US-Cuba educational exchange shows that the tool of academic exchange has been used in different ways (Alzugaray 2006, Lutjens 2006, Marino 2006, Martínez 2006). While president Clinton, for example, put his faith in people-to-people exchange as a means to bring change to Cuba, George W. Bush, expressing a hard-line ideological position, especially after 9/11, strictly limited travels to the Caribbean island by students and academics in order to eliminate what the US government identified as "abuses of educational travel." The overestimation of the effectiveness of academic exchange has made its development dependent on the particular political relationship. Thus, the development of this exchange "on a more or less regular basis has coincided with periods of less tension in bilateral relations" (Alzugaray 2006).

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<sup>6</sup> "The effectiveness of public diplomacy is measured by minds changed (as shown in interviews or polls)" (Nye Jr. 2008:101).

With regard to people-to-people relations between Taiwan and mainland China, it is often argued that the increase in cultural exchange and social communication is well-suited to easing tensions in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>7</sup> This, however, is probably not the chief motive of the Taiwanese or the Chinese governments in supporting the expansion of people-to-people contacts. Presumably, a stronger reason is the hope of being able to influence opinion leaders and multipliers and to win the hearts and minds of the people. Both China and Taiwan have taken a policy-oriented approach to the concept of soft power and are trying to change other's preferences through persuasion. Culture features prominently in each country's discourse (Wang and Lu 2008, Wang 2008, Goldstein 2008).

On November 2, 1987, the first "mainlander" (*waishengren*) allowed to cross the Strait to visit his hometown in China left Taiwan. In the very same year, responding to the increasing number of cross-Strait exchanges, the Taiwanese government had lifted the ban on mainland visits. In 1989, China established two investment zones for Taiwanese firms and later passed legislation to protect Taiwanese investments on the mainland. These developments marked a kind of "honeymoon period" in cross-Strait relations that lasted until the middle of the 1990s. Among other confidence-building measures, such as the unilateral declaration by Taiwan in 1991 of an end to hostilities across the Strait, the establishment of Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) as new communication channels had a particularly stabilizing impact. The SEF, in Taiwan, and the ARATS, on the mainland, were established as semiofficial institutions to handle inter-country relations. They agreed on the formula of "one China—different interpretations" (*yizhong gebiao*) as the basis of talks.

This consensus, however, was suspended after a series of Chinese military exercises in the Taiwan Strait in 1995 and 1996, intended to intimidate Taiwanese voters from supporting the pro-independence forces in the upcoming elections, and finally by President Lee Teng-hui's "two states" remark (*liangguolun*) in July 1999. The election and inauguration of the DPP's candidate Chen Shui-bian as president in 2000 together with new menacing gestures from Beijing heralded a period of rather frosty relations between the two governments. An infamous highlight of this political downturn was certainly the adoption of the Anti-Secession Law by the mainland's National People's Congress in March 2005; however, the various small steps of the Chen administration towards independence, such as the de facto abolition of the National Unification Council in February 2006 or the referenda in 2003 and 2008, might also be given as examples.

Despite deteriorating political relations accompanied by a growing advocacy of Taiwanese nationalism<sup>8</sup> and policies to distract Taiwanese investors from boosting the mainland's economy, cross-Strait relations in the business sector and other fields improved further after

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<sup>7</sup> There are myriad good publications about the development of cross-Strait relations. A very recent one covering the end of this period is Schubert and Braig 2007.

<sup>8</sup> This is, admittedly, a simplification of the development, since there were a couple of conciliatory mainland policy pronouncements by President Chen during his first term in office, starting with the "Five Noes" in his inaugural speech on May 20, 2000. See Schubert and Braig 2007.

the mid-1990s. In 2000, for example, travel restrictions were relaxed for mainlanders visiting Taiwan. In January 2001 the establishment of the "mini three links" allowed people to travel directly across the Taiwan Strait via the frontline islands, and in 2003 the first "direct" charter flight was launched in conjunction with the Chinese New Year. As of September 2005, Taiwanese commercial planes were allowed to fly through the mainland's airspace.

These and other measures were implemented as a reaction to growing pressure from the Taiwanese business community and display a kind of discrepancy between political and economic or cultural relations that inspired a great deal of research on "Strait paradoxes."<sup>9</sup> Whether these two opposite trends, an accommodating one and a contentious one, are somehow interrelated—or more precisely, whether commercial and social interests actually drive political integration—is so far an unresolved question.

There is, however, no question that the Taiwanese government has been promoting people-to-people exchange for "selling democracy" and regards the development of "people's diplomacy" as an appropriate tool for broadening Taiwan's "international space" (Rawnsley 2003). Based on the experience gained in the years following its defeat in the civil war, the KMT developed a vast machinery of public diplomacy in the period after 1971, when Kissinger visited mainland China. In its efforts to exploit the elements of the island's soft power, the government virtually fought a "battle for world public opinion," but its main target was the United States—and China (Goldstein 2008:33, 39, 42). The DPP administration has not only inherited this rich legacy of experience but has also doubled its efforts to include public diplomacy initiatives in its foreign policy (Wang and Lu 2008:444).

The expansion of academic exchange and the internationalization of higher education are major components of these initiatives. While academic excellence, cross-country research and the creation of "world class universities" are believed to enhance Taiwan's "soft power" (and that of the mainland as well<sup>10</sup>), exchange is also regarded as an important tool for increasing the international competitiveness of Taiwan's higher education sector.

## 2.2 The Internationalization of Higher Education

The above-mentioned example of US-Cuba educational exchange demonstrates the interdependence of exchange programs and foreign policy strategies. The use of "transformational diplomacy" by the Bush administration, for example, curtailed academic travels and collaboration to a large extent. Nevertheless, "key moments in that exchange" are also closely linked to the emergence and development of Cuban studies in the US (Martínez 2006). Thus, even following the beginning of Bush's hostile policy "Cuban and U.S. academics have managed to create and maintain collaborative and respectful exchange opportunities" (Marino 2006:24).

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<sup>9</sup> See, for example, Bolt 2001, Clark 2003, Schucher 2005, or Kastner 2006.

<sup>10</sup> In the mainland's academic debate about improving China's cultural attractiveness indicators such as the average years of enrollment or the number of publications have been factored in by many scholars. I would like to thank my colleague Karsten Giese for this information.

Transnational cooperation in higher education is not a new phenomenon in Asia. As far back in time as their medieval European origins, institutions of higher education have attracted students and faculty from other countries and cooperated across national borders for various reasons, intellectual as well as economical or political (Altbach and Knight 2007:302 f.). In their endeavors to establish modern higher education systems in the latter part of the nineteenth century, Asian countries sent students and faculty members abroad for studies and research. Notably, Western models of higher education have served as blueprints in China and Japan (Huang 2007:422).

A rather new phenomenon is the extent of these internationalization activities. Globalization coupled with the massification and marketization of higher education has accelerated the pace of these activities and has led to a more strategic and systematic approach towards cross-border cooperation (Chan 2004; Mok 2007). Recent developments have been increasingly driven by economic factors in a more competitive global environment, that is, by the transition from personal mobility and the transplantation of models to joint programs, dual degrees, offshore campuses, and related quality assurance at a global level. Once again, Asian universities are following the lead of those in Europe and North America, though with adaptations according to their specific needs (Yang 2001; Mok 2007; Mohrman 2008).

Globalization is not restricted to the breakdown of national borders in international trade and production chains or international governance structures; it has also led—coupled with the rapid development of information technology—to the transformation of knowledge creation by bridging time and space. Internationalization as a response to globalization recognizes national boundaries and distinctiveness while trying to transcend their limitations by enhancing international understanding and cooperation. Jane Knight describes it as “the process of integrating an international dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of an institution of higher education” (Knight 1993, as cited in Knight and Wit 1995:15). This means that the international cooperation of universities, research institutions and researchers is an integral part of internationalization, conducted to increase international academic visibility and expand the means of knowledge creation and dissemination.

However, there are more than just academic goals: reaching out to the international community is also intended to increase the capacity to compete in the national and global educational market. Both cooperation and competition are responses to the pressures of globalization (Luitjen-Lub et al. 2005). The massification of higher education, the decentralization of governance, and commercialization have contributed to this trend to a large extent. The expansion of higher education, which had already begun in the 1960s, is the logical consequence of the belief that knowledge has become the primary resource of economic progress. Moreover, international higher education is seen as a commodity to be freely traded.

The proportion of young people demanding access to higher education has expanded dramatically worldwide. The growing number of educational institutions have to offer their growing student bodies, now customers of their services, new types of courses that meet the demands of a globalized job market—among other things, international experience. International education services supplement inadequate domestic capacities. Governments have

opened up the education sector to private investments, and global as well as local capital is now being invested in knowledge industries worldwide. Even though conventional higher education institutions still predominate in the international education landscape, they "face formidable increases in volume, innovation, and impact from commercial providers and from corporate universities" (Altbach and Knight 2007:295).

The change in governance ideology has altered the way in which universities are managed. The reduction of public funding, the increase in autonomy coupled with higher expectations regarding research productivity and excellence, as increased evaluations of the quality of research and teaching have induced a shift towards at least partial dependence on market sources, identified by Slaughter and Leslie as "academic capitalism" (cited after Yang 2004: 475). Scholars must "face the market" to develop research projects, raise funds, and promote their departments.

Public funding, as well as additional funding from other institutions, has become closely tied to the quality of performance. Alongside global publication indices, international cooperation has become an important performance indicator. Therefore, cooperation in all forms constitutes an indispensable part of the marketing and external relations strategies of all research and teaching institutions. Ever more dependent on the forces of the global and mass higher education market, these institutions build up international alliances, arrange joint courses, organize academic exchanges, or agree on joint research projects.

Evaluations of programs in various countries show that cooperation can be located on a continuum from "loose models" to close collaboration. Sometimes it simply offers an opportunity to exchange views. Much seems to depend on individuals (Chan 2004:37ff.). Case studies, however, also show a kind of strategic shift that has been taking place since the 1990s, a shift from the provision of opportunities to enrich academic experiences to closer and more genuine academic cooperation (Chan 2004:44f.). This holds especially true for traditional nonprofit universities. Their main motivation to enter the international market is the wish to enhance research and knowledge capacity and to increase cultural understanding. In the for-profit sector a key motive for internationalization is earning money (Altbach and Knight 2007).

The fact that they are worldwide phenomena notwithstanding, the pace of these trends of internationalization and commercialization depends to a certain degree on national policies (cost calculations, visa requirements) and political realities, including national security. For example, fear of terrorism keeps governments on alert and affects transnational academic exchange, as has been alluded to above in relation to US-Cuba relations. Cross-Strait relations are likewise not free from security concerns, but restrictions are prompted less by a possible violent conflict than by the fear of infiltration, brain washing, or—in Taiwan—the flooding of universities and the job market by abundant mainland students.

Taiwan and mainland China have both undergone higher education reforms in the last two decades. In response to national needs to promote economic and social development, these reforms have pursued the general trends of globalization: the massification of higher education, the decentralization of governance and new forms of supervision by state organs, a growing role for private institutions, cutbacks in government funding, the transformation of

relationships with business, and internationalization. In both countries education has been revalued as a key factor in creating and maintaining national competitiveness in a global economy. Though there are different sociopolitical contexts in China and Taiwan,<sup>11</sup> the development of the higher education sector in both countries reveals some striking similarities (for the following see Mok 2000, Yang 2001, Wang 2003, Huang 2003, Lo and Chan 2006, Huang 2007, Pan 2007, Deem, et al. 2008; Mohrman 2008, Chou 2008, Mok and Chan 2008).

In Taiwan, which had already cherished education as an instrument for economic development for some time, reforms commenced in the late 1980s, when the democratization of its political system had begun and a sense of educational crisis emerged. In China, paramount leader Deng Xiaoping termed education to be one of the four ingredients of modernization at the beginning of his reforms, but the government's endeavors to enhance the quality of higher education and research didn't gain momentum until the 1990s.

A quite obvious change in higher education has been the rapid increase in the number of students. Governments of both countries have responded to the increasing need for human capital as well as the demands of families (Wang 2003; Bai 2006). Taiwan's higher education sector has expanded very rapidly since 1986: the number of students grew from 428,576 in 1985 to 1.3 million in 2007. The Chinese government has been boosting the number of enrollments dramatically since 1999: the number of students in regular institutions of higher learning<sup>12</sup> increased from 4.1 million in 1999 to 17.4 million in 2006. When private institutions and institutions for continued and distance learning are included, there were 23 million students on the mainland in 2006. This formidable expansion has been accompanied by a growing number of higher education institutions in Taiwan and China (Table 1).

**Table 1: Number of Higher Education Institutions and Students (1978–2007)**

	1978	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2006	2007
<b>Taiwan</b>									
<b>No. of schools<sup>1)</sup></b>	101	104	105	121	134	150	162	163	164
<b>No. of students</b>	317,188	342,528	428,576	576,623	751,347	1,092,102	1,296,558	1,313,993	1,326,029
<b>China<sup>2)</sup></b>									
<b>No. of schools</b>	598	675	1,016	1,075	1,054	1,041	1,792	1,867	1,908
<b>No. of students<sup>3)</sup></b>	856,000	1,144,000	1,703,000	2,063,000	2,906,000	5,561,000	15,618,000	17,388,000	18,849,000

Notes: 1) Universities, colleges, junior colleges;  
 2) regular institutions of higher learning;  
 3) undergraduate and college students.

Sources: MOE (TW) 2007; MOE (TW) 2008; ZTN 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Mok (2000) convincingly stresses that local factors (democratization, governance philosophy, massification) are the driving forces for restructuring but agrees that the Taiwanese government has "skillfully shaped the political agendas under the policy framework of globalization." Instead of a solely responding to globalization it has "orchestrated" reforms (ibid.: 656).

<sup>12</sup> "Regular institutions of higher learning refer to educational establishments set up according to the government evaluation and approval procedures" (ZTN 2008). They include predominantly public but also private institutions.

In order to improve university standards, the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (MOE) and the National Science Council (NSC) have launched some new programs since the 1990s, such as the Program for Promoting Academic Excellence of Universities, launched in 1998, and the Program for Improving University Fundamental Education, launched in 2001. These programs aim to improve infrastructure and facilitate research in various research fields, among them humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and natural sciences.

China took a somewhat different line in the beginning. While slightly expanding enrollment in tertiary education, it, on the one hand, reduced the number of universities through mergers in order to raise their efficiency and effectiveness and, on the other hand, concentrated its resources on developing and improving some selected universities. Related programs are "project 211" and "project 985" (launched in 1995 and 1998). They aim to upgrade the quality of teaching and research activities at key institutions and in key disciplines, not least through worldwide recruitment and international cooperation.<sup>13</sup> Only since 1999 has the number of universities increased dramatically.

In 1985, in order to cope with rising demand and to diversify educational services, China began allowing and encouraging the nonstate sector to establish educational institutions. In Taiwan, the number of private higher education institutions increased tremendously after the late 1980s, when the government abandoned limitations on opening new private establishments. The Chinese Statistical Yearbook counted 1,203 private institutions of higher learning in 2007 (297 regular and 906 others) (ZTN 2008). In Taiwan the number of private universities has been constantly growing since 1995—for instance, from 8 in that year to 58 in 2007. During the same period the number of public universities rose from 16 to 42 (MOE (TW) 2008).

China and Taiwan also shifted from the traditional ways of financing higher education by cutting the central government's expenditure, shifting parts of the financial burden to local governments and the no-state sector, and adopting a "user-pay" principle. China imposed tuition fees in the late 1980s; Taiwan diversified financing channels from 1994 on. Thus student choice became a factor in the development of educational institutions and sharpened competition between them while universities gained more autonomy in finance.

In Taiwan, the MOE has assigned itself a new role as "facilitator, regulator and auditor" instead of "provider." Universities have been categorized into research, teaching, or other institutions and are funded in accordance with their respective roles. This enables the Taiwanese government to steer the higher education system towards a research orientation. Cross-university cooperation is encouraged; mergers, however, are not widely accepted. Private institutions have been granted total autonomy, particularly in school management.

National universities have been turned into independent judicial entities and enjoy a high degree of flexibility and autonomy in their operations. The cutbacks in public financing and a new budget system provide incentives to diversify income sources and apply for research grants. Universities have to assume responsibility for some 20 to 30 percent of their annual

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<sup>13</sup> Among the top universities that were selected to profit from intensive funding are Beijing University and Qinghua University.

budget. The autonomy of public institutions, however, is not universal. The MOE still has the final say in installing presidents and deans (Mok 2000:650 f.). Moreover, there remain restrictions when it comes to cross-Strait relations.

Following the worldwide trend in its reforms, the Chinese government likewise shifted from control to supervision and transferred the leadership of numerous universities from central ministries to provincial and local governments. Decentralization made education to a large extent dependent on local resources and induced rising inequality, which was deliberately amplified by the programs to promote the excellence of some selected universities. In order to increase income, Chinese universities established enterprises, not always related to their educational mission, and looked for additional revenue by initiating outreach activities. In general, the autonomy of universities with regard to academic issues has increased, but issues such as enrollment quotas and faculty size or the appointment of leading personnel are still determined by the MOE, though with negotiation (Mohrman 2008:32 f.).

In both countries, peer-evaluation systems are playing an ever more important role. Universities' success is measured with indicators such as international agreements or the hosting of international conferences. Individual researchers face a great deal of pressure to participate in international conferences and to publish in SSCI or SCI journals. In addition, Taiwan has established the Taiwan SSCI to encompass local publications, but the credit granted is considerably lower (3 instead of 5 points at Chengchi University).

In its desire to foster internationally competitive universities, China has expanded its participation in international collaboration and exchange since the 1990s. This has led to an increase in overseas studies and study tours by academics, as well as administrators from universities and the state bureaucracy, and to the opening up of China's education sector to foreign scholars, curricular models, and institutions.<sup>14</sup> Faced with limited resources and massive brain drain, China's goal is to provide Chinese students and scholars with facilities of an international standard—to have "overseas studies within the country" (*bu chuguo liuxue*). For 2002, one year before a regulation on Sino-foreign cooperation in the joint operation of educational establishments became effective in September 2003, the Chinese MOE lists 712 joint projects, 225 of them in the formal higher education sector. Apart from language training, which reigns supreme in bilateral cooperation, most of these projects fall within the areas of business and administration (36 percent), electronic information (13 percent) and economics (10 percent); 31 programs are jointly run with Taiwan (which ranks in eighth place among the cooperation partners) (MOE (CH) 2003).

In Taiwan, the expansion of academic exchange is regarded as an important tool in raising the international competitiveness of the country's higher education sector. Other tools include—according to an MOE plan of August 2002—sending students for international exchanges, encouraging them to learn foreign languages, and adopting English as a medium of instruction. The mainland's internationalization activities seem to be a strong incentive to grow academic exchange (see, e.g., Gaojiao jianxun 2005; Chen and Lai 2007).

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<sup>14</sup> See the case study on internationalization at the South China University of Technology (Yang 2004).

Aware of the importance of international positioning, China and Taiwan have attached considerable weight to university rankings, both national and international. In 2004, Taiwan's Executive Yuan set the target of developing at least one local university to become one of the top 100 universities within the next decade.

There are also critics of internationalization, some of whom deprecate the "mimicry" of Western models as a new form of imperialism in education (Mok 2007). Pleas for localization were encouraged in Taiwan through the government's policy of De-Sinicization (Yang 2001). Both Taiwan and China have, however, already left the stage of the "Import-Oriented Type" in transnational higher education and are making great efforts to export their own services (Huang 2007).

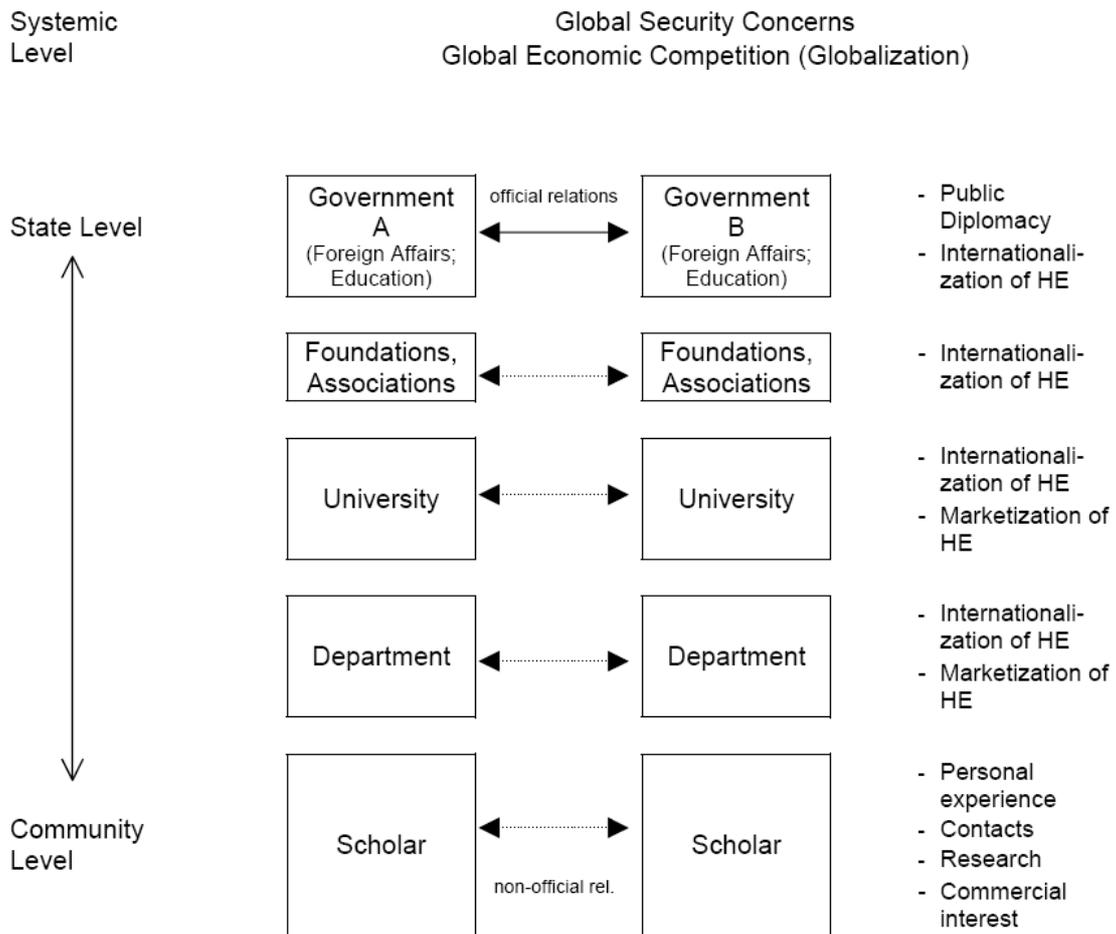
### 2.3 Actors in Transnational Academic Exchange

Public diplomacy and the internationalization of higher education are the two dimensions that frame academic exchange. While public diplomacy consists of the three layers of monologue, dialogue and collaboration, internationalization activities range from loose contacts and the rather one-sided presentation of views through dialogic forms such as discussion fora to closer and more genuine academic cooperation. In addition to different state agencies, actors can be found throughout the whole of academia, from institutions (foundations, universities and colleges) to individual researchers (Figure 1). Their motives in carrying out transnational academic exchange relate to international relations, the internationalization of higher education, and commercial interests.

Referring to Keng (2007) and Yung Wei's concept of "linkage communities" (Wei 1997), I differentiate between the systemic, which means the global level, the state level, and the community level. The notion of "community" is here related rather to "scientific communities" in general, but it also resembles Haas' "epistemic communities,"—that is, networks of professionals "with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain" or "a concrete collection of individuals who share the same worldview (or *episteme*)" (Haas 1992:3, 27). As a type of "opinion leader," academics are also targets for a politically motivated, policy-orientated exchange program as they are actors in transnational exchange following their own academic interests (Scott-Smith 2008:186 f.).

Speaking of actors, however, and not of "variables" like Keng, I see both levels, state and community, as being linked to each other. Thus there is no clear-cut separation between "official relations" at the state level and "nonofficial relations" at the community level, but rather a kind of continuum ranging from the state to the community level. Official relations are by no means restricted to the state level, since universities, departments, and not least individual researchers establish official relations with their counterparts—within the framework of the internationalization of higher education, that is, under the auspices of state institutions. Nevertheless, nonofficial relations are more likely to be found at the "lower" range of the community level, where researchers are the least exposed to state-level intervention. Official as well as nonofficial relations take place within the international context.

**Figure 1: Actors and Agendas in Transnational Academic Exchange**



Note: HE = higher education.

Source: Author's compilation.

### 3 Cross-Strait Academic Exchange

Cross-Strait academic exchange is an important component of cross-Strait public diplomacy. Political leaders on both sides have reiterated their intention to promote this kind of exchange time and again, but only since the inauguration of the new KMT government under President Ma have both sides included the expansion of cultural and academic exchange in their expectations of better relations in future.

Academic exchange with China is, however, different from that between Taiwan and other countries. The "special" conditions of political relations also shape the conditions of exchange and lead to political interference and bureaucratic restrictions. Different systems and different politics on both sides result in a formidable imbalance in mutual visits, with Taiwanese institutions and people being much more active. On the other hand, the cultural proximity and the common language facilitate the making of contacts as compared to exchanges with other countries. Thus in some cases contacts with China are the first choice, although relations with academic institutions in foreign countries might have a higher value added.

### 3.1 The Policy of Cross-Strait Academic Exchange

The popularity of public diplomacy is a result of the growing awareness among state actors that foreign relations can no longer be left to diplomats alone. This also holds true for China and Taiwan. "People-to-people diplomacy" and "soft power" approaches are seen to be effective ways of influencing people on the opposite side of the Strait. The Taiwanese government welcomes the fact that

the range of cross-strait exchange activities has been extended gradually from academics to art, culture, science, technology, sports, and the mass media. The depth of these exchanges has also expanded from visits and seminars to the exchange of publications, cooperative research, learning opportunities, and teaching and training. Visitors from the Chinese mainland now include professionals and officials from cultural and educational fields, members of the mass media, and those in religious circles. Experts in the fields of science and technology are allowed to visit for research, and those engaged in Chinese art and folk art are permitted to teach.

Consequently, the government

encourages people-to-people exchanges between the two sides, and various cultural and educational institutions have subsidized private groups for such activities. In addition, the Mainland Affairs Council, in January 1994, established the only institute that subsidizes cross-strait exchanges, the Chinese Development Fund, which provides financial aid from the interest the fund generates. Support has also been provided for visits by outstanding individuals, research by graduate students, lectures or research by scholars, and for publishing works by mainland scholars.<sup>15</sup>

Chinese politicians judge advances in cross-Strait exchange and cooperation as a new "win-win" situation. Relations with Taiwan have

entered a new stage that can bring tremendous benefits to the people across the Straits. Currently, cross-Strait exchanges and contacts are being carried out in an all-round way from culture to economy, cross-Strait industrial and business circles are hand-in-hand facing the international market, on the basis of ties by blood, ancestor and culture, the Chinese across the Straits are jointly facing the new challenge brought about by the new economy.<sup>16</sup>

Not only in Taiwan but also in China an increasing number of individuals and groups have begun to participate in transnational networks. The general understanding of public diplomacy, however, is still characterized by the state-centered approach, although political leaders on both sides stress the importance of civic associations.

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<sup>15</sup> Government Information Office. Online: [www.gio.gov.tw/info/taiwan-story/culture/edown/3-4.htm](http://www.gio.gov.tw/info/taiwan-story/culture/edown/3-4.htm) [retrieved 20.02.2007].

<sup>16</sup> "Commentary: Cultural Ties Hard to Sever, Frequent Cross-Strait Visits Encouraged." *People's Daily Online*, 01.04.2002.

From the very start of cross-Strait personal contacts in 1987 until the present, both sides have consistently expressed their willingness to promote people-to-people exchange, including visits by academics.<sup>17</sup> On January 30, 1989, Ding Guangen, director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the Chinese State Council, discussing Taiwanese affairs in a meeting with journalists, said Taiwanese affairs would be promoted in the following three ways: (1) focusing on economy and trade with Taiwan; (2) improving arrangements for receiving compatriots from Taiwan; and (3) promoting academic, cultural, sports, and technological exchanges between the two sides of the Strait. In Taiwan, newly appointed President Lee Teng-hui stressed the following in his inaugural speech of May 20, 1990:

If mainland authorities can adopt democracy and a free market system, renounce the use of force in the Taiwan Strait, and not interfere in our pursuit of foreign relations under the one-China premise, we will be willing to establish communication channels on equal footing to fully open up economic, academic, cultural, scientific, technological and other exchanges.

Ever since, all Chinese as well as Taiwanese leaders have echoed these views. While incumbent Chinese state president Hu Jintao still refers to the "eight points" —submitted by his predecessor Jiang Zemin on January 30, 1995 in a speech titled "Continue to promote the reunification of the motherland" (Jiang 1995) and serving as the foundation of reunification policy since then—Taiwan's former president Chen Shui-bian put forward several different ideas on the relations between the two sides. Nevertheless, in line with the DPP's functional separation of political relations and economic and social interactions (Wang 2000), the promotion of cross-Strait cultural and academic relations never ceased to be an inherent part of his China policy.<sup>18</sup> "Soon after taking office, the DPP instituted a wide-ranging programme under the rubric of 'people's diplomacy' (*quan renmin waijiao*)" (Goldstein 2008:43).

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) has adopted a gradual approach to the implementation of people-to-people exchanges. By 2007, more than 140 measures to expand exchanges had been passed, covering the entire range of activities, and each measure represents another step forward in cross-Strait relations. Figures on personal contacts, trade, investment, posts, and telecommunications indicate how people-to-people exchanges between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have outpaced ties with other countries around the world (MAC 2007).

The document "Principles for Implementing Cross-strait Cultural Exchanges at the Current Stage," adopted by the MAC on January 31, 1994, states that the organization will "encourage scholars in various academic fields and professionals in scientific and technological fields to exchange visits, attend seminars, do research, and give lectures to improve the academic levels of the two sides. Those whose specialties may help social modernization, disaster prevention, environmental protection, and other subject matters related to people's livelihood shall be given priority" (MAC 1994).

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<sup>17</sup> Unless indicated otherwise, source of information is MAC 2008.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Chen's inaugural address from 2004: "Paving the Way for a Sustainable Taiwan." [www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-pg/pi2004/](http://www.gio.gov.tw/taiwan-website/5-pg/pi2004/). See also the DPP's "White Paper on Foreign Policy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" ([www.taiwandc.org/dpp-pol3.htm](http://www.taiwandc.org/dpp-pol3.htm)), issued during the presidential election of 1999/2000, and Vice President Lu's book *Soft Power: Vision for a New Era*, Taipei 2006.

While these "principles" insinuate that genuine academic research has been taken into account by decision makers, most of the statements of both sides reveal the disregard for academic communication and the preponderance of political intentions. China wants to "work hard with Taiwan compatriots" in order to "deter 'Taiwan independence' secessionist activities" and to promote "peaceful unification." Taiwanese politicians consider cultural and academic links to be a "practical issue" to start with on the multistage path towards a "final settlement" of the political differences between the two sides. Precisely because of the absence of official relations, both sides encourage personal contacts—even more so when the political situation turns sour.

Thus in the Anti-Secession Law of March 2005, which threatens to incorporate Taiwan into China by military force, article six deals with cross-Strait relations. It states that in order to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and to foster cross-Strait relations, the State should (1) encourage people-to-people contact to foster closer relations and understanding, (2) encourage cross-Strait economic exchange, (3) encourage scientific and cultural exchanges, (4) encourage joint efforts to fight crime, and (5) encourage efforts to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait (NPC 2005).

Shortly after the law was passed, in a kind of answer, the MAC commented on its "policy for cross-strait exchanges." MAC deplored the fact that "frequent cross-strait interaction in economic, trade, social, cultural, and educational areas has often been offset by political and military standoffs." It also stated that since "China uses cross-strait exchanges for its own political gain, Taiwan feels compelled to evaluate the rate and scale of bilateral exchanges in order to safeguard social stability and national security." Nevertheless, it stated that "cultural and educational exchanges come foremost in cross-strait relations" (MAC 2005).

Since both sides are well informed about the intentions of the other side, the outcome is a justified mutual mistrust. Taiwan accuses China of utilizing youth exchanges—in pursuing united front tactics—for "political contamination" and to send Chinese officials disguised as specialists. China itself fears that its own students will also be "polluted" once sent to Taiwanese universities. Mistrust leads to policy interference and bureaucratic restrictions, be it on the joint publication of books, student exchanges, the duration of research stays, or the visits of scholars-turned-officials. Especially contentious—and even an issue in the presidential election campaign in March 2008—are restrictions on Chinese students studying in Taiwan<sup>19</sup> and the non-recognition of educational credentials from Chinese universities,<sup>20</sup> not least because these could negatively affect efforts to internationalize the Taiwanese higher education sector.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, political leaders on both sides have had high expectations of cultural and academic exchange. In December 2004, for example, then MAC chairman Joseph Wu proposed an academic confidence building mechanism: Both governments would appoint an out-

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<sup>19</sup> Tso (2007) elaborates that restrictions on Chinese students are also contended within the DPP-government.

<sup>20</sup> The number of Taiwanese students enrolled in universities in China reached 339 in 2006. Since September 2005 they have enjoyed the same treatment as Chinese students. In total, more than 7,000 Taiwanese students had studied on the mainland as of August 2006 (Xinhua News Agency, 05.08.2006).

<sup>21</sup> Chang, of the Bureau of International Cultural, Educational Relations, does not even mention China in his article on internationalization (Chang 2006).

standing scholar of law and politics or international relations to be stationed on a long-term basis on the other side. After notifying the other side through the existing channels, the appointed scholars would engage in an in-depth investigation and study, as well as write a report which could be confidentially transmitted back to their own government to serve as a reference regarding the other government's administration. The scholars appointed by each government could, with authorization, act as a bridge for the exchange of information between both governments.

Once again, this proposal reveals the state-centered approach toward public diplomacy in general and academic exchange in particular. Academic exchange is meant to substitute diplomatic relations and to produce and gather information, not to organize a two-directional professional dialogue. Academic visitor groups have often served as a cover for academics-turned-diplomats to visit the other side outside the nonexistent official diplomatic channels. This has meant, at least during the Chen Presidency, that public diplomacy has been reduced to state-centered and rather hierarchical forms, to a diplomacy *of* publics not *by* publics (for the two forms, hierarchical vs. network, see Hocking 2005). Taiwanese academics do not complain that Chen restricted contacts, but rather that he did not care about academic expertise in public diplomacy (personal interviews). Only after the inauguration of President Ma has academic exchange been officially promoted as a means of discussing the whole range of bilateral issues.

### 3.2 State-centered Public Diplomacy and Actors in Academic Exchange

While the official view on public diplomacy and the role of academics reveal a high degree of state-centrism, nonstate institutions and private citizens are the main actors in cross-Strait communication. Institutional arrangements are, however, somewhat blurred because of the "special" conditions of cross-Strait relations. This holds true not only for China, which officially views Taiwan as a Chinese province and therefore believes that relations should be placed within the domestic institutional framework, but also for Taiwan, the political elite of which still struggles with the exact definition of a possible "statehood." Chengchi University, for example, has transferred its relations with China to the *China Study Centre* instead of keeping them with the Centre of *International Education and Exchange* [author's italics]. At the government level, dealing with cross-Strait affairs seems to be a minor problem for functional ministries, such as the Ministry of Education, but is a real head-scratcher when it comes to defining their place in the foreign affairs realm.<sup>22</sup> Chinese public diplomacy activities are generally reserved for the Office of Foreign Propaganda of the CCP and the State Council Information Office. A third player is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although nonstate actors are growing in number and room for nonstate exchange including academic ex-

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<sup>22</sup> This may be one reason that hard facts on academic exchange are quite scarce, at least in the public domain. The Chinese MOE, for example, normally lists relations with Taiwan under a separate headline: "Cooperation and Exchange with SAR Hong Kong and Macao and Taiwan area". In 2003, however, it referred to Taiwan in a contribution on "Sino-Foreign Cooperation and Exchange."

change is expanding, these actors are not fully independent (d'Hooghe 2007). In Taiwan, public diplomacy is strongly promoted by the presidential office and pursued by the Government Information Office (GIO) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA).<sup>23</sup>

In order to handle China affairs, the Taiwanese government established the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) under the auspices of the Executive Yuan, its Chinese counterpart being the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council (TAO). The MAC's tasks are, among others, planning and researching policies towards China, enacting laws and regulations governing cross-Strait relations, promoting cultural and educational exchange, and informing the public about cross-Strait policy.

In order to encourage cross-Strait civilian exchanges, the MAC established the Chinese Development Fund (CDF) as a nonprofit fund in January 1994. The CDF plans and promotes exchanges in accordance with the following three major policy objectives: to increase cross-Strait cultural and educational exchanges and cooperation, to help mainland professionals better understand Taiwan, and to improve cross-Strait information dissemination. Projects include sponsoring professionals and graduate students from Taiwan and the mainland to teach or do research on the other side, organizing forums and workshops for young scholars and students from both sides of the Strait, assisting mainland nationals to publish their academic works in Taiwan, and offering financial assistance for Taiwanese academic works published on the mainland (CDF 2007).

The National Science Council (NSC) of the Executive Yuan was established in 1959. Led by a minister, the council is presently the highest government agency responsible for promoting the development of science and technology. In order to encourage scientific interchange between sci-tech personnel on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the NSC has taken the following steps: funding key researchers from the mainland for short-term visits to Taiwan, recruiting mainland Chinese scientists to conduct research in Taiwan, providing funding for Taiwanese scholars and specialists to visit the mainland for short-term scientific research, and sponsoring sci-tech conferences for participants from both sides of the Taiwan Strait (<http://web.nsc.gov.tw>).

In view of the necessity of relying on nonofficial relations, the Taiwanese government has developed a broad range of (public) diplomatic methods (see Larus 2006:45-48). "Interparliamentary diplomacy" plays an important role in relations with other democratic countries, as do nongovernmental organizations such as the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD) (see Wang and Lu 2008, Goldstein 2008). In the eyes of government institutions, foundations also seem to be a proper way to develop cross-Strait relations. Two quite active foundations are the Foundation on International and Cross-Strait Studies (FICS) and the Cross-Strait Interflow Prospect Foundation (Box 1).

Both foundations maintain close links to government institutions such as the National Security Bureau. To accomplish their above-mentioned objectives, the foundations (co)sponsor conferences; invite scholars and other guests to visit Taiwan; and assist Taiwanese scholars

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<sup>23</sup> The latter convened, for example, a Forum on Taiwan's public diplomacy on Dec. 24, 2007 (Hsu 2008).

and experts to visit universities, research centers and think tanks on the mainland.<sup>24</sup> According to a survey among China study specialists performed by Chen and Chen, the funding sources for exchange activities are, in order of importance, CDF (81 percent of respondents), NSC (32 percent), nonprofit organizations (24 percent), MOE (17 percent), and universities (10 percent). The importance of private funding is said to be increasing (Chen and Chen 2005:67 f.). Chen Chih-jou's analysis confirms the prominent role of foundations: they rank second after universities in inviting mainland scholars (Chen 2008:6 f.)<sup>25</sup>.

### Box 1: Foundations

Founded in 1994, the **Foundation on International and Cross-Strait Studies** (formerly the Chinese Eurasian Foundation) is a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan research institution dedicated to public policy analysis and impact. Initiated by elites in public and nonpublic sectors, business executives, and academics, the foundation is committed to being a leading think tank in the R.O.C. (Taiwan). Its primary missions are

- to raise public awareness of national security interests;
- to provide policy options for government and private sectors;
- to enhance studies in the areas of Europe, the Americas, and Asia-Pacific;
- to promote understanding across the Taiwan Strait;
- and to sponsor international exchanges and collaborations.

The **Cross-Strait Interflow Prospect Foundation**, a private, nonprofit research organization, was founded on the March 3, 1997 in the R.O.C. (Taiwan). Strictly nonpartisan, the foundation enjoys academic and administrative independence.

The foundation is dedicated to providing its clients—government agencies, private enterprises, and academic institutes—with pragmatic and comprehensive policy analyses on critical current issues in the areas of cross-Strait relations, foreign policy, national security, international relations, strategic studies, and international business. The foundation aims to serve as a research center linking government agencies, private enterprises, and academic institutions in terms of information integration and policy analysis.

Source: [www.fics.org.tw/](http://www.fics.org.tw/); [www.pf.org.tw/](http://www.pf.org.tw/).

The state-centered approach of both Taiwan and China has caused the two governments to mistakenly turn public diplomacy, theoretically conceived of as a two-way communication process, into a propaganda tool. In China, public diplomacy, initially designed with the help of PR consultants, is still understood as a means of boosting the legitimacy of the Communist Party and redressing negative images (d'Hooghe 2007). It is mainly designed as a one-directional influence on target groups in other countries, though increasingly by involving social groups. A growing awareness of the negative connotation of the notion of "propaganda" (*xuanchuan*) has prompted China to change its terminology and use the term "information" (*xinxi*) instead.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> The FICS, however, was banned by the mainland from organizing cross-Strait activities after Ching Cheong (Chéng Xiáng), a senior journalist with The Straits Times, was detained by the People's Republic of China for alleged espionage and accused of providing state secrets to Taiwan in April 2005. FICS was accused of financing him.

<sup>25</sup> I would like to thank Dr. Chen for giving me a copy of his article, which was published in a book by the Mainland Affairs Council.

<sup>26</sup> I would like to thank my colleague Karsten Giese for this information.

The mainland's conception of public diplomacy is reflected in the Taiwanese fear of Chinese "united front activities" towards Taiwanese students and scholars. A paper about these activities on the website of the Foundation on International and Cross-Strait Studies lists summer and winter camps; sightseeing trips; the establishment of friendly relationships; and academic exchanges involving not only scholars but also more and more graduate and postgraduate students in workshops, visits, and study trips. Workshops mostly deal with cross-Strait relations in the fields of culture, education, or arts; the academic quality of study trips, however, is said to be low and political propaganda prevalent (Huang 2007).

The Taiwanese government seems to be focused on "selling democracy" by making use of mainly government-sponsored foundations.<sup>27</sup> This approach narrows academic exchange to group visits and conferences, which are certainly useful for academics in many ways, but are only one step in the direction of substantial academic cooperation. Moreover, this approach causes political decision makers to neglect academic communication below the state level. Referring to Figure 1 above, I will therefore differentiate between government-sponsored nonofficial relations and non-government-sponsored nonofficial relations.

Encouraged by the government, foundations and professional associations organize conferences and visits in order to promote academic exchange. Conferences seem to be the main activity in cross-Strait academic exchange.<sup>28</sup> Sometimes organized simply for the purpose of having a conference, this institution is prone to being a formal exercise. Nevertheless, communication and contacts between academics and the building of social capital might be the (un)intended consequence.

Even in China, there is a growing engagement of "unofficial" players, a development that—though promoted by the government—is partially a bottom-up process. The government realizes that it needs the knowledge and expertise of other groups in society (d'Hooghe 2007: 11 f.). By making room for these new forms of diplomacy, the Chinese and Taiwanese governments open up active and multilayered channels between themselves and epistemic communities. Types of policy mechanisms include closed-door consultations with policy makers, internal reports, policy papers, conferences, public policy debates, and the like.

With the relaxation in the Taiwan Strait under President Ma and the sidelining of the problem of sovereignty, both sides are showing increasing interest in the resolution of concrete issues, the most pressing being the question of financial tradeoffs due to the global economic crisis (Ko 2008). In order for this to be successful, technical knowledge is needed, and academics have been drawn on in many ways: as providers of expertise, as participants in workshops and seminars, etc. At least for the time being, academic exchange has largely been assigned greater value.

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<sup>27</sup> "President-elect Ma Ying-jeou said in an interview that he does not advocate 'directly exporting democracy' to China, adding that by increasing cross-strait interaction, the merits of democracy would 'naturally' lead to positive changes in China" (Taipei Times, 07.04.2008).

<sup>28</sup> Mainland statistics show that 35 percent of all projects coming to China in 2006 were "international conferences," 31 percent "field trips," and only 9 percent "cooperative research." [www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/qtsj/zgkjtjn/2006/t20071204402449363.htm](http://www.stats.gov.cn/tjsj/qtsj/zgkjtjn/2006/t20071204402449363.htm) (retrieved 15.03.2008).

Reforms of higher education, however, could encroach upon this interaction. Paying close attention to international academic ranking systems, university and college administrations strongly encourage researchers to publish in peer-reviewed journals, present papers at academic conferences with good reputations, and seek funded research projects—if possible in collaboration with colleagues abroad. To enforce the achievement of these objectives, regular evaluations by peer groups are conducted to check on research plans, projects, and results. Depending on the discipline, Taiwanese researchers can use their contacts and trips to the mainland to raise their standing in evaluations. Without any language problems, any Taiwanese researcher is able to document his "internationalization" through his participation in international conferences, terms as visiting scholars, field trips, and the like. Cross-Strait and China studies are particularly able to cash in on their extended relations with the mainland. With no alternative other than to cave in to the pressure to be excellent, even policy-oriented institutes such as the IIR have had to set specifications for their staff that include a certain quota of peer-reviewed articles (three within two years at the IIR) and the attraction of research grants. In following these excellence-oriented incentives, however, staff members are less inclined to fulfill their policy-oriented tasks, as the IIR director complained. Thus, even an institution such as the IIR, which has been highly renowned for its policy-orientation for decades, provides an example of the academic "professionalization" of cross-Strait academic exchange (see 3.5).

### 3.3 Obstacles: Nation Branding and Security Issues

Public diplomacy requires a common image and value platform within a country in order to enable the coordination of state and nonstate actors' activities. This image has to be created using modes of domestic communication and network building. It is not possible in a democratic country to steer societal actors at home, at least not on the basis of orders. Improving the nation's image is closely related to nation branding and to identity building. "The idea behind a nation-brand is to create a distinguishing name and/or symbol that is intended to differentiate one country from another" (Gonesh and Melissen 2005:17 f.).

Nation branding, however, represents a tremendous stumbling block in cross-Strait relations. While the Taiwanese government, especially during the eight years of the Chen Shui-bian presidency, has been trying to establish a new national identity and culture distinctive from that of mainland China, the mainland's government has stressed the unity and the common culture of a China that includes Taiwan. Chen's identity policy has been perceived as a threat to national unity by the mainland. The mainland scholars Wang and Liu, for example, argue that Taiwan's people-to-people-diplomacy will only be successful in opening space for exchange when it accepts the "one-China" principle (Wang and Liu 2003). Reciprocally, China's stance of advocating commonalities with Taiwanese "compatriots" has been perceived by the island's scholars as a threat to Taiwanese sovereignty.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> According to Tsang, expanding exchanges between Taiwan and China have helped to forge a common identity among the people of Taiwan, one that is in contrast to the citizens of China (Tsang 2007:186).

Yet regardless of ideological preferences, when Taiwan's former president Chen used soft power too transparently as a means of achieving his goal of independence, the influence of Taiwan's soft power was clearly reduced (Goldstein 2008: 49 f.). His drive for de-Sinicization was also reflected in his attempts to change the term R.O.C. into Taiwan (in textbooks, documents, and the names of national institutions). Despite this rather recent development—which has since been reversed by the KMT government—"names" have been a problem in cross-Strait relations from the very start. On the occasion of Beijing University's one hundredth anniversary, for example, the president of the Taiwanese Academia Sinica was named as "*laizi Taiwansheng de daxue xiaozhang*" (university president coming from Taiwan province). The journalist reporting rightly asked if it is not a contradiction to speak of "academic exchange" on the one hand but of "*guonei guanxi*" (internal relations) and "Zhongguo.Taipei" (China.Taipei) on the other hand (Zhongguo Shibao, 04.05.1998).

Many institutions in Taiwan have kept or adopted the names of the mainland organizations from which they claim have their roots, for instance, the Academia Sinica or Tsinghua University. Other public universities bear the word "*guoli*" (national) in their names, a red rag to Beijing. This presents very practical problems for agreements, joint projects, or joint publications. For legitimate reasons universities and colleges are obliged to insist on proper names and to use the "right" characters (*zhengtizi*) when signing contracts or agreements with mainland counterparts.

Somewhat more complicated is the question of the nonrecognition of mainland universities' degrees and diplomas. Arguments against recognition range from the quality of education, logistics, laws, and regulations to ramifications for the labor market. The main concerns seem to be market related, for instance, the allocation of educational resources and possible consequences for Taiwanese vocational high schools, which could face the threat of closure with more and more students heading to the mainland. There are also considerations regarding national security, as former president Chen declared on various occasions (Taipei Times, 22.07.2007).

Legal problems such as the nonrecognition of degrees in combination with political interference have created an atmosphere that places practical obstacles in the way of increasing academic exchange. The duration of stays for mainland scientists in Taiwan is limited by the mainland (permits are often only granted for one year) as well as Taiwanese regulations (three years since 2003); the hiring of mainland scholars by Taiwanese universities is forbidden; and the mainland's visiting scholars are not issued with passports, which prevents them from attending conferences outside Taiwan (nature 2000; nature 2001; China.com 2003). The mainland also denies consent for the participation of mainlanders in *international* conferences in Taiwan, but does not object to the joint participation of mainland and Taiwanese scholars in conferences in China or abroad.

Moreover, as mentioned above, in "sensitive times," such as during elections in Taiwan, travel permits are temporarily withheld or even not granted at all by mainland authorities. "Sensitive" persons such as dissidents on the mainland, high-ranking politicians on both sides, or Taiwanese academics noted for their unvarnished political sympathies for reunification are of-

ten refused travel permits by their respective governments. Nevertheless, utilizing academic exchange as a second track is a common way of making contacts. Thus, politicians from both sides—often academics themselves—participate in delegations (called "white gloves" [*baishou-tao*] in Taiwan). Whether restrictions are imposed or not depends to a large degree, however, on the actual political situation.<sup>30</sup>

With the expansion of cross-Strait exchange, brain drain has become a problem for Taiwan. According to Sung Kuo-cheng, the "worst part of the brain drain is the flight of top-level researchers in biochemistry, medicine, computer science, DNA engineering and aviation materials." The relaxation of a ban to allow Taiwanese to practice medicine in China on short-term contracts has further encouraged people to cross the Strait (Strait Times, 07.01.2008). To a minor extent, specialists in law or commercial studies are also welcomed. China.com estimates that most of the trips of Taiwanese scholars to the mainland are for "visits," conferences, and scientific fairs, while authentic joint research only accounts for approximately 10 percent of trips. There are, however, an increasing number of Taiwanese specialists working for Taiwanese and mainland companies in China, not least because of the worsening economic situation in Taiwan (China.com 2003).

### 3.4 Cross-Strait Academic Exchange and the Development of Political Relations

Assessing the quantitative development of cross-Strait academic exchange is as tricky as determining the reasons for it. These could have rather contradictory effects: if the development of academic exchange coincides with the development of bilateral relations it would have declined during the Chen presidency, but if it depends on the global pressure to internationalize higher education it would have increased. If academic exchange is conceived of as a tool of propaganda, it would be cultivated even when official relations deteriorate, but if it is judged to be a gateway for hostile influence, it would be reduced.

Unfortunately, we do not have enough information about the quantitative development of academic exchange.<sup>31</sup> Figures on Taiwanese scholars going to China are scarce. The reason is not only the peculiarities of cross-Strait exchange, but also, and mainly, the relaxation of travel regulations. It is not possible to count the trips made by academics without government sponsorship, be they tourism or professional trips.<sup>32</sup> Thus we only have scattered information from the Chinese MOE, which refers to the government-sponsored nonofficial contacts, as well as information on visits by Taiwanese citizens in general (see Table 2). Overall, the visits are largely asymmetrical since there are many more visits by Taiwanese people to the mainland than vice versa. The main reason is certainly the different extent of restrictions on each side.

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<sup>30</sup> In 2005, for example, the application of the TAO's then director Chen Yunlin to visit Taiwan as a civic scholar was heavily contested and finally rejected (MAC 2008).

<sup>31</sup> This is also bewailed by Taiwanese authors, see Chen n.d.

<sup>32</sup> Institutes, colleges, and universities might have more detailed information, since researchers are bound to notify their superiors in order to get permission for their "business" trips and to enjoy insurance protection. But not everybody gives notice of his or her trips, especially of short trips (personal interviews).

**Table 2: Visits and Academic Exchange, Taiwan to China, 1992–2007**

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
<b>Visits (billion)</b>	1.3	1.5	1.4	1.5	1.7	2.1	2.2	2.6	3.1	3.4	3.7	2.7	3.9	4.1	4.4	4.6
<b>Annual increase (mio)</b>		0.2	-0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.1	0.4	0.5	0.3	0.2	-0.9	1.0	0.4	0.3	0.2
<b>Annual increase rate (%)</b>		15.9	-9.0	10.2	13.2	22.1	2.7	18.9	20.3	10.6	6.4	-25.4	34.9	11.5	7.4	4.7
<b>Exchange activities</b>									45	68	32	30	40	45		
<b>Taiwanese persons</b>									1,200	2,100						
<b>Academics, students, school administration</b>											1,052	1,000	2,000	2,200		8,000
<b>Taiwanese students</b>									816	1,054	768	905	955	1,199	2,307	2,200
<b>Exchange agreements between schools</b>												10	20			100

Sources: MOE (CH) 2001 ff.; TAO 2008.

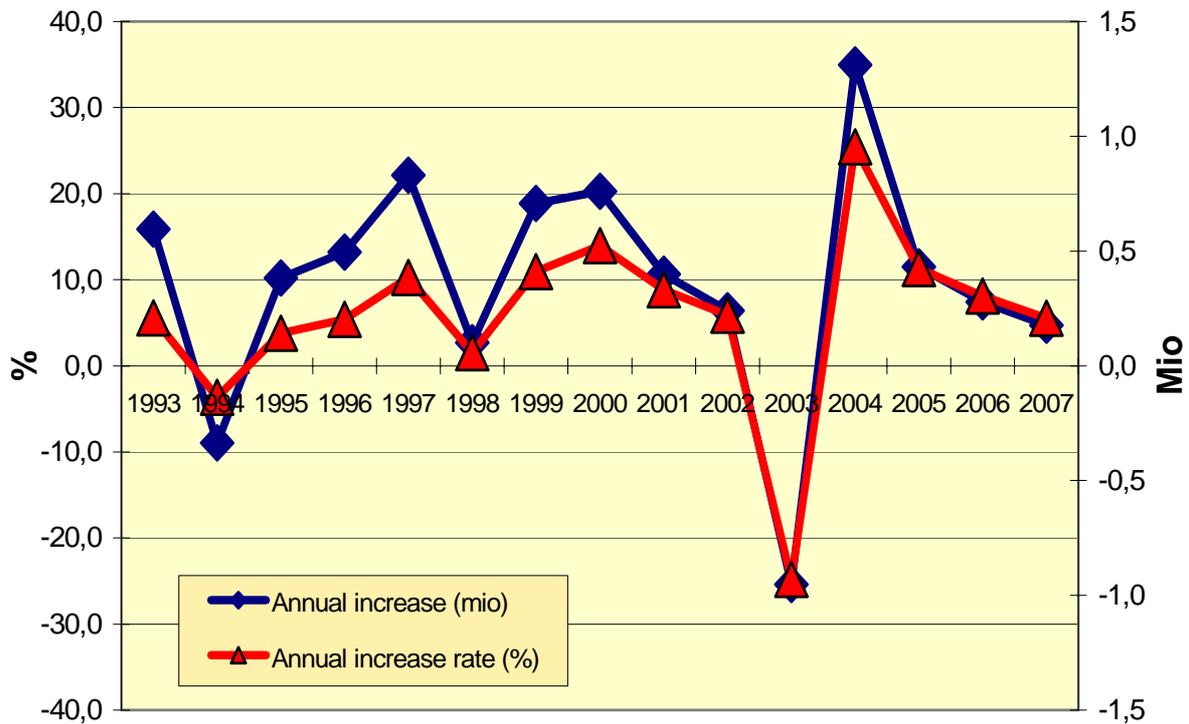
Information about visits from Taiwan to China shows a constant increase with the exception of two years: 1994 and 2003. In 1994, Taiwanese tourists were killed in the Chinese province of Zhejiang, and 2003 was the year of the severe respiratory illness SARS. The constant increase has been praised by both sides as a sign of successful public diplomacy and could be interpreted as a validation of the "higher education–internationalization hypothesis" rather than the "international relations hypothesis."

A closer look at the margins of increase, however, reveals that this conclusion might be too rash (Figure 2). Again we can see the steep decrease in 1994 and 2003, with absolute numbers and increase ratios following the same trend. But we can also see a decrease in 1998<sup>33</sup> and—with the exception of 2004—lower increase rates after the inauguration of the Chen administration in the year 2000.

Based on these numbers we could assume that political relations do have an impact on people-to-people exchange. But I am hesitant to do this. Firstly, we do not know the composition of visits and the development for different groups such as tourists, business people or academics. Tourists' visits in particular might vary or even decline when the initial excitement has dwindled and/or tourism demand has been met. Secondly, there might be economic reasons, like economic slowdown in Taiwan, that caused people to cut travel budgets.<sup>34</sup> And thirdly, we cannot clearly separate the tourism, political and academic interests of academics.

<sup>33</sup> The reason for this is not clear; it could be a consequence of the Asian crises. In 1998 no new tensions existed in cross-Strait relations, and talks were resumed. President Lee Teng-hui redefined the relationship as a "special state-to-state" one (*tesu de guo yu guo guanxi*) only on July 9, 1999.

<sup>34</sup> This argument could also work in the opposite way: Greene argues that with the standard of living continuously improving, young peoples incentives to study abroad have diminished (Greene 2007:146).

**Figure 2: Visits from Taiwan to China, Annual Comparison, 1992–2007**

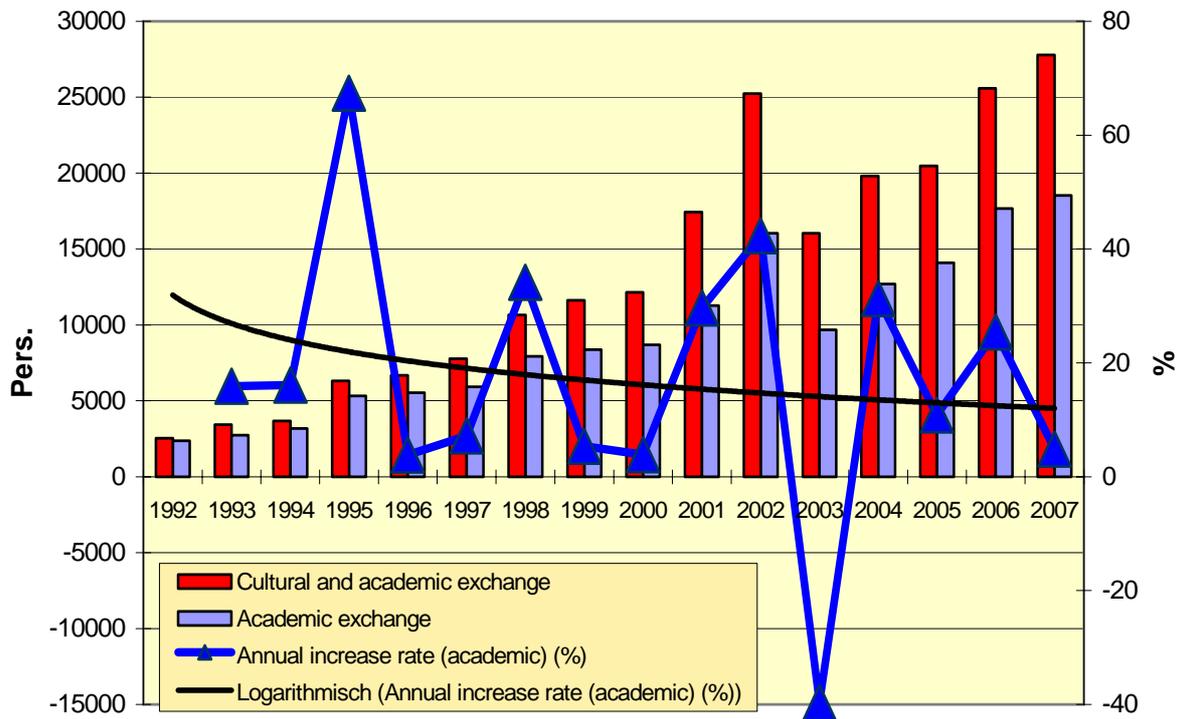
Source: See Table 2.

In order to check the possible impact of economic development, we can examine the numbers regarding the visits of mainland academics to Taiwan (Figure 3). Budget considerations should not play a role for them since China has experienced double-digit growth for some years.<sup>35</sup> These figures also show downturns in 1994 and 2003, as well as recovery in the following year. Furthermore, they show a decline in 1996 and 1997, when China switched to “missile diplomacy” to menace Taiwanese voters in the first free presidential election, and again in 1999 and 2000. The reasons for the latter two declines could have been President Lee’s policy switch to “special state-to-state” relations in July 1999 and/or the presidential elections in 2000. The next presidential elections in 2004, however, did not affect the recovery after the SARS crisis. Nevertheless, growth rates in subsequent years never came close to those of 2001 and 2002.

Budgetary problems may also derive from cutbacks in funding. Indeed, for the years since 2001 the CDF yearbooks show lower levels of funds—and accordingly less applications accepted—compared to 1999 and 2000, although not in comparison to 1998. But funding has remained more or less at the same level from 2001 to 2005; only in 2006 did figures decline steeply (Figure 4). Differing from that pattern, cross-Strait exchange funded by NSC was lower in the years 2003/04, but in 2005 reached the level of 2002 again (Guokehui 2007:107 f.). Again we may assume that political relations affect academic exchange.

<sup>35</sup> Chen Chih-jou, research fellow at Academia Sinica, has analyzed these figures in detail (Chen 2008).

Figure 3: Academic Visits from China to Taiwan, 1992–2007

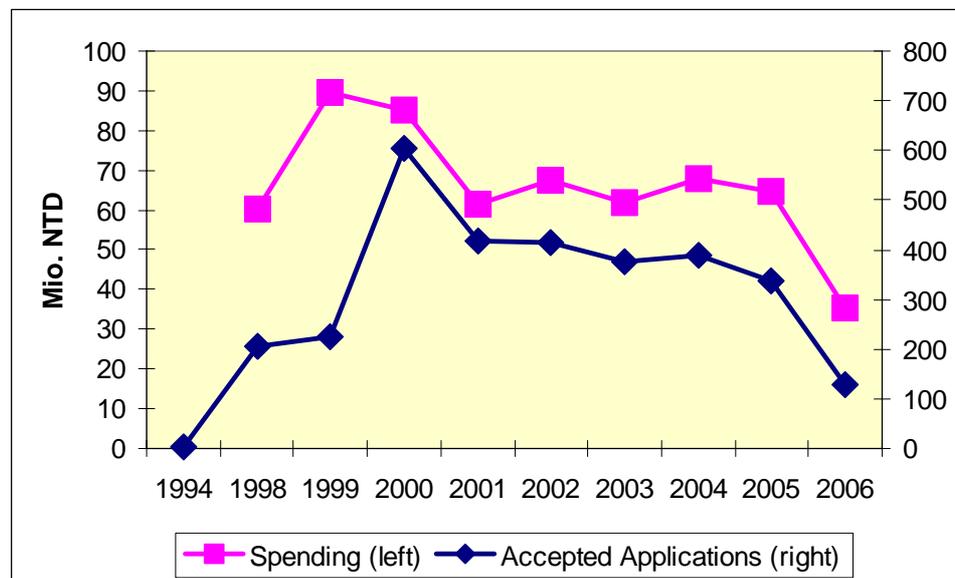


Notes: Figures counting visits refer to "activities" (*huodong*), not to the status of persons (*renshi*). In contrast Chen (2008), I use these figures for all years from 1992 to 2007. "Cultural and academic exchange" refers to all types of exchange listed under this heading, whereas "academic exchange" adds up "academic activities" (*wenjiao huodong*), "scientific activities" (*xueshu keji huodong*), and "scientific research activities" (*xueshu keji yanjiu huodong*).

Source: MAC 2008.

But even if academic exchange has been affected by political relations, which political action actually caused the change has to be investigated. Declines in the years of presidential elections in Taiwan can be traced to interference by the Chinese authorities, who restrict travels in politically sensitive times. According to MAC, this also holds true for the time between the Legislative Yuan election in January 2008 and the presidential election in March of the same year (personal interview).

Statistics about applied for, approved and realized trips to Taiwan by mainland academics can help to get an idea of the magnitude of the number of trips refused. Chen explains in detail the procedures Chinese academics have to go through to obtain a travel permit. Comparing the number of applications approved by Taiwan and the lower quantity of real trips for the years from 2001 to 2007, he concludes that many academics have been prevented from traveling by Chinese authorities (Chen 2008:6 and Table 3). But this is only one part of the picture. By comparing applications and approvals we can see that even more trips have been refused by the Taiwanese authorities (particularly in the year of SARS, 2003) and that the amount of refusals increased during the second term of the Chen administration after 2004 (Table 3).

**Figure 4: China Development Fund: Spending and Accepted Applications, 1994–2006**

Note: For spending in 2000, the sum is estimated, since yearbooks only list the accumulated amount for the second half of 1999 and 2000.

Source: DF 2000 ff.

**Table 3: Rejected Applications Made by Mainland Academics, 2001–2007**

Difference between ...	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Application and Approval (TW)	3,062	3,319	12,100	4,104	4,117	4,500	31,202
Approved Trips and Real Trips (CH)	3,691	4,424	8,972	3,829	3,517	4,036	28,469
TW Refusals Compared to CH rejections	-0,629	-1,105	3,128	0,275	0,6	0,464	2,733

Source: MAC, according to Chen 2008; author's own calculations.

As I said above, we cannot rule out the possibility that the rates of increase have been declining because of tourist demand now being met after several years of intensive traveling. Indeed, all my interviews with academics support this view. They no longer accept any invitation without considering its academic value added.

Thus I would like to draw the following conclusion from this discussion: (1) Declining rates of increase for mutual visits might support the assumption that political relations affect people-to-people exchange in cross-Strait relations, but it is not clear whether this also holds true for academic exchange. (2) The claim of both governments that their public diplomacy strategy has proved to be a success refers to the state-sponsored activities of foundations. This state-centered approach narrows exchange to second-track organizations and neglects the mainly nonsponsored nonofficial exchange of individual researchers. Many of them consequently complained, or better, stated resignedly, in my interviews that the government has no interest in that kind of exchange. (3) Declining nonacademic interest in cross-Strait academic exchange supports the trend of a normalization and professionalization of this special kind of academic communication.

### 3.5 The Professionalization of Cross-Strait Academic Exchange

In all of the interviews respondents either talked about increasing professionalization in cross-Strait academic exchange or about future plans for professionalization. This holds true for colleges, individual researchers and foundations, in the medical sciences as well as the social sciences.

Professionalization as used here refers to the academic "profession" and denotes an increasing interest in

- (1) talking to or establishing contacts with persons in academic think tanks,
- (2) improving the academic quality of study trips or conferences,
- (3) going to China for the purpose of teaching or fieldwork,
- (4) organizing joint study programs or joint research with mainland partners.

In addition to individual study tours, most activities still take place at the college level and mainly in the form of workshops or conferences. Chen and Chen report that 84 percent of their survey respondents took part in "visits," 79 percent attended in conferences, 20 percent pursued fieldwork, 16 percent gave lectures, and no one stayed for an extended period as a visiting fellow (Chen and Chen 2005:55). Their results also show that the quality of academic exchange still has to be improved (*ibid.*: 70).<sup>36</sup> In my own small sample of interviewees there were at least two who had been visiting lecturers on the mainland for one term, and reports from the faculty of the College of Commerce at Chengchi University indicate that some staff members have been transferred to Chinese universities for longer periods.

Nevertheless, the pressure of internationalization as well as the marketization of higher education—practically spoken: to produce more results that lead to positive evaluations—exert clear incentives to raise the professional quality of exchange. As mentioned above, the IIR has served as a second-track academic institution in cross-Strait relations and began organizing study trips shortly after they were made possible. At that time it seemed to be necessary to gain information about opinions and debates in China that were not brought forward in official communication. Although the IIR is still the number one address for delegations from the mainland, IIR fellows today concentrate on exchange with academic value added and the institute aims for joint research (Box 2).

While it was downgraded during Chen's presidency, the IIR's expertise has gained prestige again since the KMT government took over in May 2008. Former and current researchers from the IIR have been given jobs in government agencies, and the institute's cross-Strait networks are used to organize closed- and open-door discussions between experts from the mainland and Taiwan (personal interview). This, however, has not spared the institute from being evaluated according to "international" standards of academic excellence.

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<sup>36</sup> As a reminder, Chen and Chen surveyed specialists in China studies.

## Box 2: The Institute of International Relations, Chengchi University

The Institute of International Relations (IIR) is Taiwan's largest research institution dedicated to the understanding of international issues. It was established on April 1, 1953 as a government think-tank to provide analysis to high-level government departments. IIR became officially affiliated with NCCU in July 1975, and is now under NCCU's organizational umbrella.

The director of the Institute oversees research staff divided into four main divisions. The First Division conducts research on the international political and economic relations of North and South America, Europe, and Africa. The second Division covers similar topics in Asia, Oceania, and the Pacific Rim. The Third and Fourth Divisions focus on the affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It has 37 researchers (14 permanent, 12 associate and 11 assistant).

IIR established relations with institution on the Mainland: China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, School of International Studies (SIS) of Peking University, Taiwan Study Centre at Beijing University. It concluded an cooperation agreement with Institute of Taiwan Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in order to promote mutual visits, exchange publication and material and to carry out research activities.

From May 2006 to April 17, 2007 28 groups or individual researchers visited the IIR (laifang xuezhe), among them 8 groups/researchers from all parts of mainland China (Nanjing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Fujian, Xiamen, Guangdong, Beijing) and one from Hong Kong. Without giving dates, the webpage lists 14 exchange scholars, among them seven from the mainland and two from Hong Kong.

Source: <http://iir.nccu.edu.tw/>.

Institutions as well as individual researchers (on both sides!) have found several ways to circumvent political interference or bureaucratic obstacles:

- They do not use contested "names" and speak, for example, of "Zhongguo.Taipei" and "Zhongguo.Beijing".
- They find titles for conferences that can pass through bureaucratic barriers on both sides.
- Mainland scholars offer courses under the name of a Taiwanese professor.
- They avoid formal agreements in favor of informal and oral agreements.<sup>37</sup>
- They go to the other country for short-term visits as tourists (mainlander via Hong Kong).
- Both sides avoid raising sensitive issues.

Consistent with this trend towards professionalization is the declining interest in "sightseeing"-trips, as well as a growth of commercial activities. Interviewees in the medical field responded either that they have no interest in going to China because of the inadequate level of medical science there or that they would go to "sell" their expertise, for example, if they were paid by foreign companies to teach medical techniques.<sup>38</sup> Other professions, such as international law, are also welcomed by Chinese universities.<sup>39</sup> The College of Commerce at Chengchi University, together with other institutions in Taipei including Academia Sinica, has organized a joint graduate teaching program at Xian Jiaotong Daxue as well as a joint EMBA course for Taiwanese businessmen in cooperation with Fudan University in Shang-

<sup>37</sup> According to TAO information, nearly 100 mainland universities have established exchange programs with Taiwanese counterparts ([www.gwytb.gov.cn](http://www.gwytb.gov.cn)).

<sup>38</sup> Zhou states that, as has also been the case worldwide, the marketization of universities has been taking place in Taiwan since the middle of the 1980s (Zhou 2000). For cooperation in the natural sciences see Chen 2002.

<sup>39</sup> Wang indicates the interest on the part of mainland scholars to renew ties with Taiwanese historians (Edward Q. Wang 2008).

hai. It can thus combine experience on the mainland with degrees issued in Taiwan. Both activities (and some others as well) are based on informal agreements.

The interests of academics in professionalization thus range from genuine research to the marketization of their knowledge. The room for research on the mainland and for joint academic projects is constantly expanding since China's political and economic systems, and particularly the latter, are in transition. Mainland scholars enjoy better education and increasing personal freedom, something which is reflected in more openness and growing self-confidence.<sup>40</sup> The predominant form of exchange is still conferences, but this may also be true of academic exchange in general and worldwide since conferences bring together the largest groups of academics. Contacts and communication at the level of individual researchers are, however, increasing in number. Since this type of exchange is mainly nonofficial, there is no valid information available on it. However, all of my interviewees reported on this kind of exchange and presented examples of it as proof of their academic activities.

In the future, the professionalization of exchange in the context of the internationalization of higher education might lead to further changes and also to a possible decline in cross-Strait communication, since fellows and institutions in China and Taiwan prefer to establish ties with top-notch colleges in the USA or elsewhere. So far, the common (Chinese) language still favors cross-Strait exchanges, but English language skills are also on the upswing in China.

To summarize, I would like to visualize my findings by modifying Figure 1 as well as by using a diagram that relates the three layers of public diplomacy to types of academic exchange. Figure 5 shows the levels and actors of exchange as in the model presented above, due to asymmetrical information, however, less detailed for the Chinese side. Furthermore, it shows the decreasing intensity of political interference and bureaucratic restrictions from the state down to the community level. State sponsorship is concentrated on foundations, but professional associations, colleges and individual scholars are also able to benefit from these foundations' activities. There is less exchange at the university level because of the restrictions explained above, but more exchange at the level of foundations, colleges and scholars, whereby the latter seem to have more nonofficial than official contacts. Whereas endeavors to internationalize higher education can be found at all levels and the pressure to make things happen is also exerted in a bottom-up manner, public diplomacy is predominantly a top-down business. The former, however, has social consequences—intended or not. Even without official approval, social actors serve as "public diplomats."<sup>41</sup>

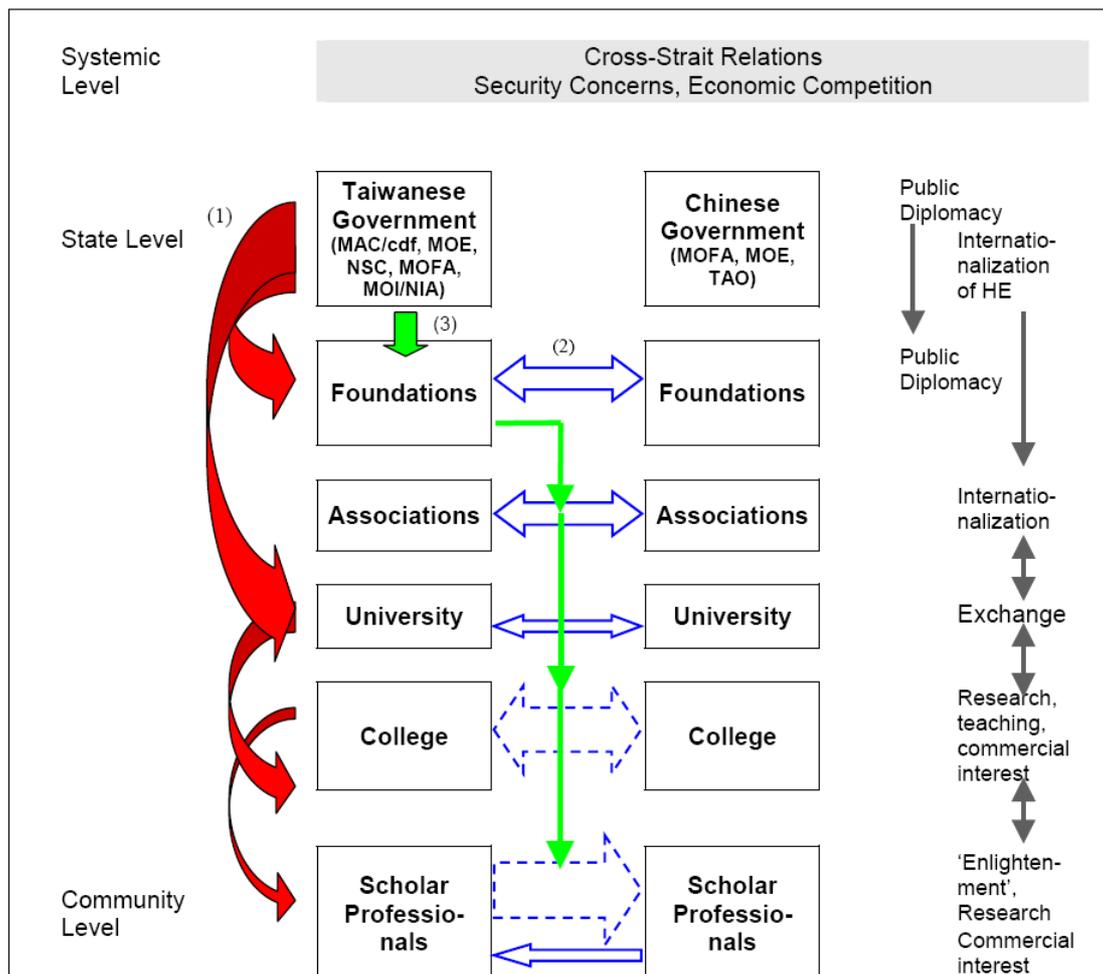
In Figure 6, I place cross-Strait academic exchange in a diagram using my two-dimensional framework. As I explained in Section 2.1, three layers can be distinguished in public diplomacy (see Cowan and Arsenault 2008): monologue, dialogue and collaboration. Additionally, in Section 2.2 I explained that educational exchange programs can be found on a con-

<sup>40</sup> "These changes have enabled 'non-state' actors to play a—still limited but increasing—role in diplomacy", observed d'Hooghe (2007:10).

<sup>41</sup> Admittedly, these findings are partial and incomplete. The interviews were overwhelmingly conducted with political scientists from national universities in the north of Taiwan. The trend of professionalization as drawn as conclusion, however, might be even more prevalent in private universities being less restricted than the public ones.

tinuum from "loose models" such as visits through dialogue forms such as conferences to close collaboration in joint projects. Taking these two dimensions together, academic exchange as configured at the outset of cross-Strait exchanges can be placed in the square of loose monologue-based contacts. While official exchange programs have shifted slightly towards more dialogue-based forms, nonsponsored nonofficial exchange has been moving even further towards collaborative projects.

**Figure 5: Cross-Strait Academic Exchange: Political Influence and the Level of Exchange**

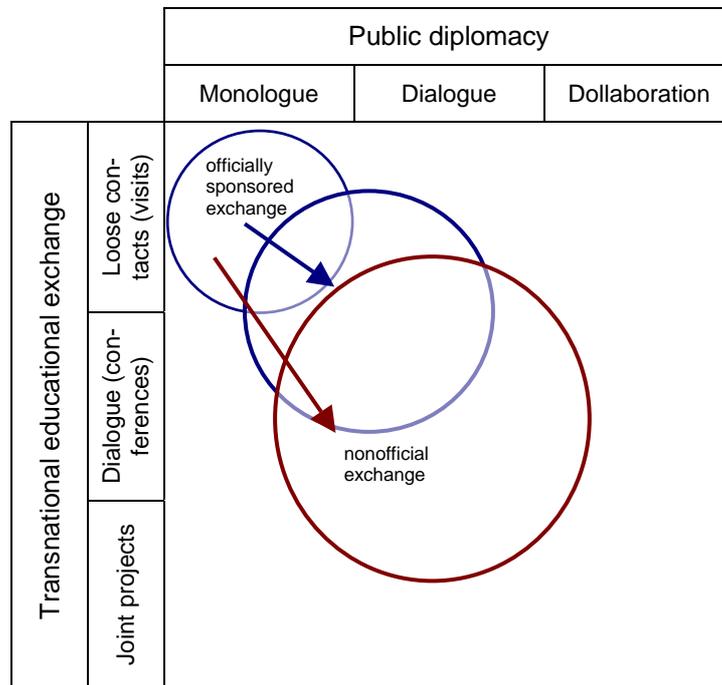


- Notes: CDF = China Development Fund  
 HE = higher education  
 MAC = Mainland Affairs Council  
 MOE = Ministry of Education  
 MOFA = Ministry of Foreign Affairs  
 MOI = Ministry of the Interior  
 NIA = National Immigration Agency  
 NSC = National Science Council  
 TAO = Taiwan Affairs Office

- (1) red = political influence/restrictions (width = intensity)
- (2) blue = exchange (width = intensity; continuous line = official exchange; dashed line = official and non-official exchange)
- (3) green = sponsorship

Source: Author's compilation.

**Figure 6: Cross-Strait Academic Exchange in the Two-dimensional Framework of Public Diplomacy and Transnational Educational Contacts**



Source: Author's compilation.

#### 4 Final Remarks

In my view, any researcher trying to determine the real power of "soft power" in international relations is confronted with a problem. Soft power is a resource at anyone's command; it works for any country and in any direction. China, for example, wants to exert it by sending and absorbing students and academics, by teaching Chinese and learning English, by organizing conferences and sending academics on study trips. Taiwan wants the same. What, however, does this mean for a Chinese or Taiwanese academic visiting or working in the other country? Is he or she an actor or a target of soft power?

Speaking about the demand to recognize educational credentials from Chinese universities, former president Chen declared, "Once this door is opened, even if only slightly, we will have to relax an increasing number of policies and it will become impossible for us to close the door in future" (Taipei Times, 22.07.2007). In contrast, President Ma Ying-jeou, inaugurated in May 2008, explained in an exclusive interview with China News Agency that his support for Taiwanese recognition of diplomas issued by Chinese universities would help Taiwan to utilize its "soft strengths." Recognizing Chinese degrees would lead to a greater number of Chinese students studying in Taiwan: "'When these young people ... return home, they will become some of Taiwan's best friends,' he said. 'Allowing more young Chinese to understand that Taiwan is a model worth learning from instead of a place that should be attacked is probably a better way of ensuring Taiwan's security than boosting the nation's defense spending,'" (CNA, 05.04.2008).

Joseph Nye has advised against seeing public diplomacy simply in adversarial terms: "Sometimes there is a competition of 'my information versus your information,' but often there can be gains for both sides" (Nye Jr. 2008:106). The answer to the question of how a government should exert soft power, that is, how it should design its public diplomacy, is—as we can see—not that easy. However, one important aspect is certainly the degree of trust a government has in the persuasive power of its own system and in its own people. This means that the Taiwanese government would be ill-advised to rely on state-sponsored academic exchange only. The strength of public diplomacy becomes apparent only in the long run. Gradually it will influence the public environment, in which opinions are formed, in other societies.

Public diplomacy is primarily the interaction between nongovernmental individuals and/or organizations, with private views presented in addition to government views. "Government communications are only a small fraction of the total communications among societies" (Nye Jr. 2008:104). The most effective form of public diplomacy is exchanges, since they involve listening as well as talking and help to build lasting relationships (*ibid.*). Moreover, the professionalization of cross-Strait academic exchange will not weaken but will rather strengthen the "soft power" of Taiwan's higher education system and its constituents by broadening its international horizons and improving its quality.

Former president Chen disregarded the role of academics in his public diplomacy strategy. Academics therefore "retreated" into their own profession and expanded academic exchange through different channels: formal-institutional, informal-private, and commercial. The presidential elections in Taiwan in March 2008 opened up a new chapter in cross-Strait academic exchange. President Ma Ying-jeou has clearly stated his aim of promoting cross-Strait exchange. In the first year of his presidency, visas for Chinese students coming to Taiwan for short-term research or study have been extended from four months to one year. Three other goals for the expansion of cross-Strait academic exchanges are the extended enrollment of Chinese students at Taiwanese universities, the recognition of diplomas from Chinese universities, and the authorization for local universities to offer continuing education and degree programs in China (Taipei Times, 22.10.2008, 17.12.2008). The Taiwanese deputy minister of education described these measures as "a segment of greater communication across the Taiwan Strait" (China Post, 24.09.2008).

President Ma has announced a shift in emphasis from "high politics" to "low politics" as part of a new direction for his administration's "flexible diplomacy" (China Post, 06.02.2009). He has begun to "re-diplomatize" academic exchange. It remains to be seen whether he will actually tap the full potential of already established bottom-up cross-Strait contacts and include societal actors in his soft-power and public-diplomacy strategy. The "professionalization" of cross-Strait academic exchange has to some extent resulted from the disregard of genuine academic communication by the Chen administration, but it is not contradictory to public diplomacy. On the contrary, intensified academic exchange can be a building block in the gradual improvement of cross-Strait relations.

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