



Project
MUSE[®]

Today's Research. Tomorrow's Inspiration.

Czeslaw Tubilewicz. *Taiwan and Post-Communist Europe: Shopping for Allies*. Routledge Contemporary Asia Series. London and New York: Routledge, 2007. xiv, 242 pp. Hardcover \$170.00, ISBN 978-0-415-42252-9; E-book £90.00 ISBN 978-0-203-94697-8.

By 1979 the number of countries extending full diplomatic recognition to Taiwan had fallen to twenty-two. After the televised events of spring 1989 in China, the downward trend leveled off. And by 1 May 2007, Taiwan enjoyed diplomatic recognition from twenty-five governments. Conflicting inferences emerge from those developments. For example, the tiny fraction of almost two hundred independent states recognizing Taiwan was not much more favorable in 2007. On the other hand, Taiwan began actively resisting the global trend toward increased diplomatic recognition of the People's Republic of China, reversing the downward slide. Through a variety of institutions and contractual instruments, Taiwan has trade and cultural agreements—unofficial but effective—with at least 150 countries. Czeslaw Tubilewicz's *Taiwan and Post-Communist Europe: Shopping for Allies* summarizes an important part of this story.

Tubilewicz does not define foreign policy, preferring to focus on “diplomacy” and especially “economic diplomacy” (pp. 14–20). But his notion of foreign policy consists of “explicit or inferred public and private executive preferences for anticipating, shaping, controlling, managing or responding to an anticipated future state of affairs beyond a country's national borders.”¹ To set the stage for Tubilewicz's argument, one also should consider that, while self-governing Taiwan's sovereignty is divisible, it would have greater transnational and global leeway if it were receiving full diplomatic recognition from a larger number of powerful partners, regardless of whether or not they currently trade with Taipei—instead of having its sovereignty routinely challenged by China.

Tubilewicz discerns five models of Taiwanese relations with post-Communist European countries: Hungarian (“substantive”), Latvian (“consular”), Czech (“ideological”), Russian (“geostrategic”), and Macedonian (“diplomatic”) (pp. 177–179). The political, historical, and diplomatic variation here is obvious. More important, Taiwan's diplomatic objectives generally trumped economic ones in all five models for interacting with state and society in post-Communist Europe.

Despite setbacks on other issues, Taiwan successfully established “substantive” trade links with Belarus and the Ukraine. Although a temporary consular agreement with Latvia ended in 1994, “Belarus, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Russia, and Slovakia agreed to exchange representative offices with Taiwan, all of which performed consular functions. Of these states, all except Latvia and Belarus established de facto consulates in Taiwan” (p. 176). Despite some tem-

porary illusions, initiating and sustaining full diplomatic relations was probably always beyond reach in post-Communist Europe. And while post-Communist European statutes that were as supportive of Taiwan as the 1979 U.S. Taiwan Relations Act probably were never seriously attainable, devoting attention to creating institutions for substantive economic and cultural relations generated quasi-official, para-diplomatic space for Taiwan. Aside from trade fairs, this also included cultural exchanges and scholarships for students to earn academic degrees in Taiwanese universities. On 27 January 1999, Macedonia and Taiwan recognized one another. Civil war in Macedonia led to well-founded fears that the PRC would veto a UN proposal for peacekeeping troops. Those considerations resulted in Skopje's derecognition of Taipei on 18 June 2001. On the surface, Macedonia's about-face suggests total failure on the part of Taiwan's economic diplomacy in post-Communist Europe.

Tubilewicz provides a more nuanced counter-interpretation to this setback and others experienced by Taipei. Aside from avoidable errors by Taiwanese diplomats, he argues that severe imbalances of power limited potential inroads by Taiwan. Yet during the administration of President Lee Teng-hui (1988–2000) and well into the second term of his successor Chen Shui-bian (2000–2008), Taiwan was surprisingly successful in initiating substantive engagement at the level of unofficial trade and cultural agreements, as well as in arousing interest and sympathy among individuals and organizations in post-Communist civil society. The role of Taiwanese businesspersons conducting diplomatic communication where Ministry of Foreign Affairs personnel might be shunned is noted by Tubilewicz.²

Since the late 1980s, Taiwan has interacted with national and subnational post-communist governments, as well as with nongovernmental organizations, in Central and Eastern Europe. These countries include Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Rumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia (succeeded by the Czech Republic and Slovakia on 1 January 1993), Serbia, Bosnia, Croatia, Albania, Bulgaria, the Russian Federation, Belarus, and the Ukraine. For each country targeted by Taiwan, Tubilewicz's chapter on Taiwan's economical diplomacy (pp. 173–189) distinguishes between primary and secondary foreign policy "objectives." Building on that distinction, he further differentiates among Taiwan's "immediate," "medium-range," and "long-range" objectives, as well as "expected by-products" that Taipei hoped to derive from achieving those objectives (pp. 174–175, table 9.1). On balance, Taiwan's diplomatic shopping in Europe was "economical" (pp. 173–189), even though more than one agreement fell through when excessive expectations of largesse (for example, grants-in-aid) were not met. And while lack of transparency posed obstacles to research, reportedly neither Taiwan nor China expended unusual amounts of capital in their European competition. If this finding comes as a surprise, perhaps scandals associated with Taiwan's "dollar diplomacy" in Papua New Guinea and Pacific Island countries have led some to conclude that this behavior is typical elsewhere. (Conversely, perhaps the lessons

of Taiwan's post-Communist European diplomacy were not applied elsewhere!) "In retrospect, China's avoidance of economic one-upmanship was shrewd, as Taipei appeared to balk at following through with its grand investment and economic cooperation projects in the absence of diplomatic ties with any Central European nation" (p. 75). The short-term trade benefits are mixed. For example, Taiwan's total trade exchange with eight Balkan states fell with four cases and increased in four others during 1988–1998 (p. 126, table 6.1). On the other hand, Taiwan's total trade with both Belarus and the Ukraine was five times higher in 2005 than in 1992 (p. 168, table 8.).

Post-Communist governments, media, and civil society groups criticized Deng Xiaoping's crackdown on protestors in China in 1989. This gave Taiwan opportunities to go "shopping for allies." The timing was fortuitous: Events in China preceded the fall of the Berlin Wall later that year and the break up of much of the Soviet empire during the next biennium. Still, China held most of the cards. In December 1991, the PRC quickly recognized the post-Soviet states (p. 171). And as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, China could veto any UN resolution intended to send peacekeepers to the war-torn, post-Communist Balkans (pp. 138–139). The prospect of a Chinese veto of admission to the UN General Assembly (p. 42) and, to a lesser extent, over serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council also reminded emerging post-Communist European states not to engage Taiwan too closely.

Tubilewicz's summary of "The Russian Offensive" (pp. 95–123) is fascinating. Under Boris Yeltsin (1991–1999) and Vladimir Putin (1999–2007), the Russian Federation (successor to the former Soviet Union) has engaged in short-term business deals with Taiwan. Although Taiwanese entrepreneurs view Russia as an outlet for exports, importing Russian oil is even more important for Taiwan's economy. Too many Taiwanese diplomats lacked Russian-language fluency and proficiency. Yet "Taiwan successfully built the institutional foundations for quasi-official relations with the Kremlin" (p. 121). While Russia sells arms to China and defends a "one-China" policy (p. 107), their relationship is not trouble-free. Despite Russia's involvement with China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Moscow and Beijing may experience deeper tensions in the long run (p. 105). A resolution of cross-strait tensions "is not necessarily in Russia's interest" (p. 122).

A little more attention might have been given to how Taiwanese candidates, news media, and other organizations during contentious presidential and Legislative Yuan elections after the mid-1990s handled "shopping for allies." And the reader might have been told how much pivotal events like the following enhanced or limited Taiwanese diplomatic forays in Central Europe: the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis; the 2000 presidential election, which removed the Guomintang from power; elections to the Legislative Yuan in Taiwan after that event; and the "extraordinary"³ linked accession of China and Taiwan to World Trade Organization membership on 11 December 2001, and 1 January 2002, respectively.

Additional questions will occur to readers of *Taiwan and Post-Communist Europe*. For example, among the countries listed in Tubilewicz's "Sino-Taiwanese Competition for Allies since 1989" (p. 11, table 1.1), the striking heterogeneity of post-Communist states in Central and Eastern Europe led me to ask if Taiwan's diplomatic shopping in post-Communist Europe was more productive than in Africa, Latin America, and the Pacific.⁴

Taiwan temporarily benefited from the salience of human rights with political parties coming to power in Central and Eastern Europe during the 1980s and the early 1990s. Czeslaw Tubilewicz comments on Taiwanese ignorance of the cultures of Eastern Europe. But despite the long-term presence of Roman Catholic and other Christian denominations in Taiwan, one wonders how sensitive Taiwanese cultural diplomacy (under the Guomindang or the Democratic Progressive Party) was to the potential resource in the religiosity of people's lives in post-Communist countries in Central Europe. And, more specifically, did Taiwanese diplomats see Taipei's diplomatic ties with the Holy See ("the Vatican") as an understated but meaningful advantage in dealing with Catholic Poland or not? For example, as an inspiration to the Polish workers' movement in the 1980s, Karol Józef Wojtyła, who led the Roman Catholic Church as Pope John Paul II (1978–2005) during virtually the entire period studied by Tubilewicz, was far more influential in Poland than Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan.

Readers with knowledge of modern and contemporary Taiwanese social, political, and international history will appreciate *Taiwan and Post-Communist Europe: Shopping for Allies*, although persevering novices will also benefit. The author guides the reader through richly detailed accounts, clarifying the limits and the effectiveness of Taiwanese diplomacy in a new and unanticipated arena. Utilizing newspapers, government documents, and scholarly books and articles, Tubilewicz supplements his research with twenty-four interviews conducted with Taiwanese, Polish, Hungarian, Czech, Slovak, and Russian government officials during 1999–2006. (Half of the interviews are attributed anonymously.) Tubilewicz's published sources are in Chinese, English, and several Eastern European languages. Nine figures and twelve tables conveniently illustrate or summarize major points in the thematic narratives and inferences.

Vincent Kelly Pollard

Vincent Pollard is affiliated with the University of Hawai'i at Manoa. He recently edited a symposium in critical sociology (July 2008) on state capitalism in the former USSR., the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China.

NOTES

1. Vincent Kelly Pollard, *Globalization, Democratization and Asian Leadership: Power Sharing, Foreign Policy and Society in the Philippines and Japan* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), p. 3.

2. For other examples, cf. Gilles Guiheux, *Les Grands entrepreneurs privés a Taiwan: La main visible de la prospérité* [Taiwan's Big Business Persons: Prosperity's Visible Hand], *Asie Orientale* [East Asia] series (Christian Henriot, editor) (Paris: Brochage Imprimerie Chirat for CNRS Éditions, 2002), pp. 104–110; and Chen Jie, *Foreign Policy of the New Taiwan: Pragmatic Diplomacy in Southeast Asia* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 2002), pp. 123–130.

3. “Although Taiwan and the mainland shared memberships in non-governmental organizations and in regional governmental organizations such as the Asian Development Bank, their common membership in the WTO... was an extraordinary event” (Julian Chang and Steven M. Goldstein, “Introduction: The WTO and Cross-Strait Economic Relations,” in Julian Chang and Steven M. Goldstein, eds., *Economic Reform and Cross-Strait Relations: Taiwan and China in the WTO*, Series on Contemporary China 9 [Singapore: World Scientific, 2007], p. 2).

4. Taiwan's efforts toward the Philippines deserve inclusion in a comparative study. The Philippines' “disjointed response” to Taipei's “elastic diplomacy” raised questions about the “integrity” of its “one-China policy.” As a result, “the so-called ‘one-and-a-half’ China policy continue[d]” in the early 1990s, according to Segundo E. Romero, Jr., “Another Look at the Philippines' ‘One-China’ Policy,” in Theresa C. Cariño and Bernardita R. Churchill, eds., *Perspectives on Philippine Policy Towards China* (Quezon City: Philippine Association for Chinese Studies, 1993), pp. 41 and 43. Reportedly, the second-largest chapter of the Guomindang was in the Philippines during the mid-1990s.