

Economic Analysis of Law Review

A Culturalist Perspective on Trilateral : Taipei – Beijing - Washington Relations

Uma perspectiva culturalista Trilateral de relações: Taipei - Pequim - Washington

Dean Karalekas ¹
National Chengchi University

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta os analistas ocidentais e os decisores políticos com uma breve análise da importância do trilateral Washington- Taipei - Relação de Pequim, e defende uma reconceitualização do que a relação de levar em consideração a polarização da identidade cultural nessas três nações e como isso se expressa na política externa sobre a questão através do estreito, entre outras áreas. O intenção é fazer um caso para a adoção de uma abordagem multi-teórica que injeta uma interpretação culturalista dos fundamentos presentes em cada sociedade que influenciam suas respectivas visões de mundo e as relações com outras potências.

Palavras-chave: China; Taiwan; Relações; Culturalista; Identidade

JEL: K0

ABSTRACT

This paper presents Western analysts and policy makers with a brief analysis of the importance of the trilateral Washington-Taipei-Beijing relationship, and argues for a reconceptualization of that relationship to factor in the polarization of cultural identity in those three nations and how this finds expression in foreign policy on the cross-strait issue, among other areas. The intent herein is to make a case for the adoption of a multi-theoretical approach that injects a culturalist interpretation of the fundamental schisms present in each society that influence their respective worldviews and relations to other powers.

Keywords: China; Taiwan; Relations; Culturalist; Identity

R: 06/09/16 **A:** 13/10/16 **P:** 30/06/16

¹ E-mail: dkaralekas@hotmail.com
316

1. Introduction

In many Western nations, official policy on the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan often seems to be conducted on an *ad hoc* basis, and would benefit from a proactive footing derived from a more accurate understanding of the forces in play in that nation and, more importantly, the motivations that drive its foreign policy, especially with regard to Western powers.

The most important relationship, through which all policy making in Taipei is filtered, is the trilateral relationship between Taipei, Beijing and Washington. The People's Republic of China (PRC) hovers ever-present over Taiwan in deliberations of legislation, trade and foreign policy in no less palpable a way than it does on the map. The only counterpoint to this enormous influence is the relationship Taipei has enjoyed with Washington, which up to the present time has helped to balance the Chinese influence and, through its policy of strategic ambiguity, provides the basis for the current tenuous status quo that defines the cross-strait situation. In Taipei, all foreign policy issues are examined through the prism of its relationship with these two giants, and as a result there can be no bilateral negotiations with other parties that don't factor in their effect on the trilateral relationship.

The relationship that exists today can best be encapsulated by using the strategic triangle conception for describing relations between three moderately equal powers, which offers significant advantages over the more conventional dyadic model (Woo, 2003). Although Taipei is currently the minor player among the three, the paradigm was adopted at a time when the ROC and the PRC were much closer in terms of economic and military strength. Today, Beijing's diplomatic blockade and the United States' role as the sole global superpower, as well as its stated commitment to providing for Taiwan's defense through the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), have created conditions whereby all of Taipei's interactions with the outside world are conducted in such a way that their effect on these two key relationships are factored into the decision-making process. "How will America respond?" "Will this upset Beijing?" These are the questions that policy makers in Taipei ask before taking almost any step. It is therefore imperative that Western analysts develop an accurate understanding of this relationship if the nation is to effectively navigate its interactions with this economically important country. To do this, a culturalist paradigm must be employed by analysts and policy makers with a Taiwan portfolio.

The culturalist approach is not an easy or clean one for analysts to adopt, any more than it is for the theoreticians and scientists engaged in the study of comparative politics. What is required is an intersubjective cultural approach (Ross, 2009), one defined by shared meanings and identities. Geertz's conception of culture famously focuses on symbols and symbolism to transmit meaning, with culture as a medium for shared meaning and meaning-making. As will be seen, such symbols are hugely important in the way Asian states communicate with their polities, and with each other.

In the following sections, this paper will describe the competing cultural forces at each point of the triangle (Taipei, Beijing, and Washington) and analyze how policy is formed in each, not as a single unitary perspective, but as an equipoise between polar viewpoints, which at times shifts back and forth along the continuum, making the task of analyzing the trilateral relationship far more complex than how it is currently conceived. The first section examines some commonalities between the cultural factors at play in Taiwan and China. The following three sections will define each country's cultural poles; provide examples of influential policy makers and advisors who best represent the viewpoint of each pole; briefly describe the cultural roots and prevailing worldview of each; and describe how the tension between each country's poles affects its policy making. The final section offers an argument for how the trilateral relationship can be better understood through this method of analysis.

2. Commonalities

In both China and Taiwan, politics and the structural approach to how governance is conducted are informed by a Confucian worldview, an appreciation of which helps to understand phenomena such as the unique form of the Taiwanese semi-presidential democracy, which varies greatly from other, structurally similar semi-presidential systems around the world (such as those in France, for example, and around Africa).

The Confucian worldview is far from uniform across East Asia, but in broad strokes, it emphasizes the hierarchical makeup of the public administrative sphere (as this reflects the hierarchical makeup of the realm of heaven) and even extends to the family. Of the many spheres of human interaction that are moderated through the Confucian worldview, it is the Confucianism of the family, rather than political Confucianism, that has formative power (Bell, 1995). Indeed, familization is a familiar technique, often employed in Taiwan and China, as a means of understanding and establishing relationships in group dynamics. The idea that members of a collective are akin to a family is a subtle, psychological form of control in which those in charge are viewed as the father-figure, and are thus entitled to obedience in exchange for protection of the community.

This is exacerbated by the lower but equally level-oriented roles of big brother, big sister, younger brother, younger sister, and so forth, which are transmitted primarily, though not exclusively, through the Chinese language. In contrast, in America, the leader is seen (most often inaccurately) as the antithesis of an elite, but rather a peer: one of many. Even compared to the European practice of democracy, America's is far more individualistic and bottom-up. As a result, public governance structures and operations reflect these divergent worldviews, with Western structures moving toward a networked model and in Taiwan one that is still very hierarchical. In the words of Marc Ross (2009), "culture frames the context in which politics occurs."

The assertion that culture provides a framework for interpreting the actions and motivations of others (Ross, 2009) is an enlightening extension of this theme, at least insofar as helping to explain some of the problems with Western policy making vis-à-vis other nations, especially China and Taiwan. In the traditional Western analysis of Chinese actions and sta-

tements, there appears to be the assumption that the PRC government is employing a rational-choice framework, and yet this framework has led to dangerous misapprehensions. It is imperative for Western governments to develop a better understanding of Chinese culture, its fear of chaos, and its tendency to employ hierarchical structures and worldviews, in order to assess signals from Beijing and Taipei more accurately, especially in terms of motivations.

On the all-important issue of Taiwan's democracy, popular religious expression provides an ideal blueprint for the development of an informal political organization (Cohen, 1969). It has been noted by keen observers of Taiwanese culture that the celebratory patterns in place for centuries used in temple celebrations find expression in the exercise of democracy, to the extent that a political rally looks no different from a religious event: Both have beating drums, machine-gun firecrackers, chanting and cheering, sounding brass and clanging cymbals. It is perhaps no surprise that in a young democracy like Taiwan, people should lean on existing, comfortable patterns of communal interaction—those learned from the sphere of religion—when developing new patterns for new social output, such as what democratic expression was in the 1980s and 1990s. The result of this juxtaposition of forms and rituals is the unconscious conflation of democracy itself into an institution with the power and sacredness of a religion.

3. Yams And Taros

In Taiwan, the dichotomy of worldviews is perhaps the most pronounced among the three. Due to cultural and historical forces, each of the two distinct populations has its own perception of national identity and aspirations for the future of Taiwan. The first, let us call them the Yams, are traditionally those Han Chinese citizens whose ancestors settled the island beginning in the 17th century and who have lived under one colonizing power or another almost consistently ever since. During the Japanese Colonial Period (1895-1945) they developed a sense of Taiwanese identity as distinct from being Chinese, and continue to identify as such today, especially as they see themselves as having been, in effect, colonized by the second group on the island, the Taros. These are the mainlanders who have been living in Taiwan since their forebears were expelled from China by the Communists in 1949 and who sought refuge in Taiwan just long enough to mount a counterstrike to retake the mainland, which of course never happened.

The recent presidential election that took place in Taiwan provides an excellent opportunity to observe how these two groups interact and differ. The Taro viewpoint is represented by the former president, Ma Ying-jeou, whose stated goal is eventual unification with China. The reason for this ambition is not so much one of political expediency but deterministic ideology: he was head of the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, or KMT) which became the successor to the Qing Dynasty when it was overthrown in 1912. As such, the KMT holds the Mandate of Heaven, which is a traditional precept of Chinese political philosophy that lays out the foundations of political authority over the Middle Kingdom (Wu, 1959). The signals pointing to this phenomenon are plentiful, with perhaps the most obvious being repeated references to himself in speeches as a descendant of the Yellow Emperor. The symbols of the

Mandate of Heaven and the Yellow Emperor are powerful ones in Chinese consciousness, and they speak to his culturally predisposed view that he, as well as all of Taiwan, is Chinese.

In contrast, a Taiwanese identity pervades the worldview of most members of the party that was successful in the recent election, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), whose candidate Tsai Ing-wen represents the Yam perspective of Taiwan and the Taiwanese people as distinct and separate from China and the Chinese people, in much the same way that Canada is distinct and separate from the United Kingdom despite our surface commonalities. From this perspective, the KMT is a foreign power representing China and thus excluding by definition those with a self-identification as Taiwanese (Indeed, the DPP grew out of the Tangwai, or “outside the party” movement that began during the 38-year long martial law period). Thus, they see themselves as being outside the alien concept of the Mandate of Heaven, and Taiwan as being outside of China. This is expressed in DPP policy as an acceptance of the need for economic engagement with the PRC, but a resistance to talk of political unification.

The different worldviews of these two groups are derived in large part from their cultural roots and differing notions of identity arising from a complex historical narrative of which many casual observers in the West are not aware. When the ROC took control of Taiwan in 1945, the first mainlanders to arrive were poorly educated, war-weary troops who had spent years fighting the Japanese aggression. Due to events little appreciated or understood in the West, such as the Rape of Nanking, these individuals perceived of the Japanese much the way Europeans perceived of the Nazis once the full extent of the Holocaust was revealed, and yet they arrived on an island ostensibly populated by their fellow Chinese only to find them speaking Japanese, dressing like the Japanese and living much the same way they do in Japan.

This created an immediate animosity among the two groups, which was exacerbated by the dashed hopes of the Taiwanese who, finally rid of their Japanese colonial masters, looked forward to being reunited with their fellow Chinese, whom they assumed would be as educated, refined and civilized as they themselves had become under the highly cultured Japanese. Instead, they were confronted with uneducated, thuggish soldiers and incompetent administrators who systematically looted everything of value on the island for the war effort against the Communists on the mainland.

Any hope that these two groups would eventually mix were dashed by the policies of the ROC government that placed their fellow Taro refugees in positions of societal advantage and authority: they were given the civil service jobs, were made teachers, and staffed the police forces—all the better to control a subject population, through administration, education and force. The Taros felt victimized by the Communists and resented having to live on a remote island with a Japanified subject population, separated from their families on the mainland, and far away from the Middle Kingdom that the refugee ROC government nominally controlled. For their part, the Yams likewise resented being subjugated by their fellow Chinese. Over the decades of Martial Law and the White Terror period, the gulf of identity between the two groups grew, and it continues to define domestic relations to this day.

Although these populations are now defined more along ideological rather than ethnographic lines, the two groups each have their own aspirations for the long-term future of Taiwan, with the Taros seeking unification with China and the Yams desiring a wholesale acknowledgment of their de facto independent Taiwanese state as separate and unique from that of China.

4. Dragons And Pandas

This polar dynamic is mirrored in China. Indeed, conceptualizing a polarity in the political forces operating within the People's republic is a time-honoured method of analysis employed by China Hands in the West, with only the names being assigned to the two groups (radicals vs. moderates, conservatives vs. reformers, and so forth) having changed. (Bachman, 1988) While this simplification is in many ways misleading, given the Byzantine and ambiguous processes in play in the halls of power at Zhongnanhai, it is worth revisiting insofar as it best encapsulates the two major worldviews that are emergent concomitant with China's rise. In sum, aspirations for the nation's future are split between those who perceive that the time is fast approaching when China will once again resume its historically dominant role in the region, and those who are more enthusiastic about China's ascension to the community of modern states.

The former, let us call them the Dragons, are acutely aware of the historical cycle that, for thousands of years, has seen the Middle Kingdom experiencing cyclical reversals of fortune marked by roughly 300 years of absolute and uncontested regional dominance followed by 300 years of fecklessness. They perceive the previous period of weakness from which they are emerging, referred to as the "century of humiliation" at the hands of Western powers, as coming to an end and paving the way for the inevitable period of dominance that this deterministic view of history promises will follow.

From either a constructivist or neorealist perspective, this conception would hardly factor in, however a culturalist perspective provides an understanding of the importance of such nebulous concepts as faith in destiny, even in formulation of foreign relations policy at the strategic level, and analysts utilizing this framework would thus perceive its existence and give it more credence.

In contrast to the Dragons are the Pandas, who are the forces within the PRC pushing for, if not full-fledged democratization, then at least for China to ascend to some position of respect and leadership in the community of nations. Former paramount leader Hu Jintao can be seen as representing aspects of this category, having overseen the promulgation of political slogans—so important in the practice of Chinese leadership—as "scientific development," making China a "harmonious society," and of course the much analyzed "peaceful rise." Hu's goal was for the economic growth of China and its presence on the world stage to be effected largely through soft-power methods, such as the Confucius Institutes. Hu is widely regarded as having been a weak leader, and officials in the Panda category at lower levels of the hierarchy often have their voices swiftly silenced, but there is a sizeable silent mass that sees

China approaching the West in terms of economic development and conceives of the next stage as an embrace of modernity and the values that go with it.

The worldview and aspirations of the Pandas can be perceived (not unmediated by the influence of the Dragon forces) in such events as the Beijing Olympics and various other international events and fora, for which the largely inexperienced Chinese participants are gradually coming to understand—and thus through the mechanisms described by constructivism, could come to internalize—the norms and operating practices of the liberal democratic community of nations.

Another leader who famously espoused the Panda view was Hu Yaobang, a former party general secretary as well as chairman who championed a number of political and economic reform measures and who was known for his liberalism. For example, on the Tibetan issue, his policies had the aim of reviving Tibetan culture after it had been seriously degraded by Chinese rule. In addition to making a public apology in Lhasa for the way the Communist Party had been administering Tibet up to that point, castigating the cadres for their ethnic Han Chinese chauvinism, perpetuating the Cultural Revolution in the territory, and demonising the Dalai Lama, (Garnaut, 2010) Hu sought means of allowing the Tibetan people a greater hand in managing their own affairs. To that end, he ordered thousands of Han Chinese out of Tibet and insisted that those remaining in the region must learn the Tibetan language (Bass, 1998).

In contrast, the Dragon position is visible in the character of Xi Jinping. Still looking at the Tibet issue, Xi also gave a speech in Lhasa, to mark the 60th anniversary of the Communist takeover of the country, in which he advocated a fight “against separatist activities by the Dalai clique by firmly relying on all ethnic groups... and completely smash any plot to destroy stability in Tibet and jeopardize national unity.” (“Xi Jinping: China will 'smash' Tibet separatism,” BBC News Asia-Pacific, 19 July 2011.) Indeed, Xi’s actions as paramount leader, from the anti-corruption campaign that essentially served as a purge of his predecessor’s loyalists (many of whom were themselves Pandas) to his brinksmanship in the South and East China seas, are a testament to his inclusion in the Dragon category.

Since the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989, Pandas have not only been a largely disenfranchised minority in China’s leadership elite, but their forms and language are often co-opted by those influences with a Dragon bent, mostly because they understand that it has a certain resonance in the West. It has been argued that Beijing uses neoliberal endeavours on a regional level to advance an agenda formed by a realist worldview. Moreover, a comingling of domestic and foreign policy can be seen in the very underpinnings of the current regime’s justification for rule. Having necessarily jettisoned socialism as its axiological underpinnings to legitimize its rule, the Communist regime in Beijing has turned to a powerful yet inherently dangerous policy of employing a race-based official nationalism to hold the vast Chinese nation together.

There are several reasons for this, illuminated by a culturalist analysis. For one, the concept of Chinese nationalism is a relatively new phenomenon: it developed rather late in world-historical time, at or around the time of the boxer rebellion, and was predicated on a racial (anti-foreigner and anti-Manchu) basis (Anderson, 2001). Today, the prefabricated nati-

onalism employed by the Chinese Communist Party is founded primarily upon a racial hatred of the Japanese: America's strongest regional ally and, by some estimations, its security proxy in the Asia-Pacific. This dynamic all but rules out any possible praxis for the Panda worldview and essentially concretizes the trend toward regional polarization within the Chinese national identity.

In order to develop an appreciation for the ways in which the Dragon perspective drives China's Taiwan policy, and in broader terms, its entire foreign policy, Western analysts must understand that its adherents have a cyclical view of history, not a linear one as is prominent in the West. Dragons see a parallel between today's world and the fragmented pre-Qin Dynasty era of Chinese history (Yan, 2011). They draw on the lessons learned from that period of warlordism and anarchy, which ended only when the Qin people from western China conquered their rival states of Han, Zhao, Wei, Yan, Chu and Qi, after which they declared an empire in 221 B.C. and put all of China under a single yoke. China today, like that ancient tribe of Qin people, is looking at consolidation as a means of eliminating chaos and maintaining regional harmony, and the question remains exactly how other states in the Asia-Pacific region will react to this threat of a rising hegemon.

If we rely too strongly on the Western conception of the dynamics of structural realism, analysts will expect states to engage in balancing, rather than a bandwagoning behaviour, in order to ensure their security and survival (Waltz, 1979). In this scenario, we might expect to see a regional bloc form to counter the seemingly inexorable rise of China and counter its influence in the region. Clearly, this is the expectation behind the US attempt to establish the framework for a Trans-Pacific Partnership, which is designed to facilitate the creation of such a coalition.

The theoretical foundations driving this policy might prove to be in error, however, as they fail to take into account the cultural—in this case specifically Asian—conception of realism. If we step outside the box defined by a Western view of realism, we can see how nations in the region might opt for a strategy of avoidance of responsibility; preferring instead to allow the power struggle to proceed and a victor emerge before bandwagoning with the potential hegemon (Wei, 2006).

In terms of viable competitors to Western-style liberal democratic systems, there are four: fascism, political Islam, neo-Bolshevism, and Asian paternalistic authoritarianism (Fukuyama, 1995). Of those, only the latter has been able to master the modern technological world and embrace viable forms of capitalism where the others have failed. Moreover, this political trend has been able to force the West to examine weaknesses of its own systems.

In sum, Western prognostications about China have been largely inaccurate, predicated as they are on a lack of appreciation for that government's motivations and desired outcomes. These misunderstandings are often engendered by simply imposing Western values and aspirations on Chinese words and actions. A closer analysis of China's limited embrace of multilateralism demonstrates three things: 1) that the forces of history play an indispensable role in framing the foreign-policy goals and aspirations of leaders in Beijing; 2) that ef-

forts by Western powers to adopt China policies designed to entice political liberalization have not worked; and 3) that Beijing employs a realist framework when setting regional plans and priorities, but is adept at using techniques predicated on a neoliberal viewpoint in order to achieve these goals.

5. Hawks And Doves

It might be tempting for analysts and policy makers in European capitals to dismiss the importance of factoring US Asia policy into their calculus on the Taiwan question, however it must be remembered that Taipei's view of all foreign relations is refracted through the prism of the trilateral relationship, and therefore an understanding of the dynamics of that relationship are of primary importance in conducting Taiwan policy.

Just as the discussion of both Taiwan and China has revealed the influence of a dichotomy of opposing paradigms operating in each of these two countries, a similar dichotomy is at play in the United States, and it has no less of an impact on how Washington deals with the cross-strait issue. The first group is made up of those whose analysis leads them to conclude that China is a rising power which, through engagement and induction into the international system, will adopt Western values and can thus, in the long run, be entrusted to gradually assume more responsibility for peace and security in the Asia-Pacific region. They are often referred to as Doves.

The other group, who are Hawks on the China question, subscribe to an analysis which leads them to believe that China is engaged in a neocolonial form of empire-building and will, in the long run, lead that country into a position where confrontation with America over influence in the region is inevitable. US policy can best be understood not as a single point of perspective but as a continuum, along which tensions between the two poles determine the perception through which policy is formulated.

China specialist and Princeton University Professor Aaron Friedberg is well known as a Hawk on the China question. At the time of his appointment in 2003 as deputy national security adviser and director of policy planning, his writings had characterized China as a Strategic Competitor to the United States—in contrast with the Bill Clinton-era narrative of China as a Strategic Partner—and predicted even then that Beijing would mount a challenge to Washington's political and military dominance of the Asia-Pacific (Lobe, 2003).

The viewpoint of the Doves meanwhile is well represented by such individuals as Brent Scowcroft, a foreign-policy adviser to President Barack Obama and a student of Henry Kissinger, himself a notoriously realist China Dove. The highly credentialed Scowcroft is considered an international relations guru who holds that relations with powers such as China are to be managed. Traditionally, the Democratic Party tends to adopt a pro-China stance, which is why other Asian nations such as Taiwan and Japan to whom China poses a threat are generally wary about a Democratic White House. Indeed, Obama's foreign policy team on Northeast Asia is composed almost entirely of pro-China realists in the Kissinger mould (Jang, 2008).

The Hawk/Dove dichotomy is not merely contingent upon political party, however, and should not be conceived of as a temporal oscillation depending on who is in power in Washington. There are US government agencies, such as the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency, that are consistently strong Doves on the cross-strait issue, while other arms of the government such as the US Navy, which in many ways administers US policy in the Asia-Pacific with a high degree of independence, are more Hawkish.

From Taipei's standpoint, Hawks are preferable to Doves because they generally inject a values-based component into their foreign policy calculations, and the functioning democracy in Taiwan that shares to a degree the same values of respect for human rights and freedom of speech, assembly, and religion as enunciated in the US Bill of Rights, represents an ideological as well as strategic ally in the region. Taipei fears US Doves because of their perceived willingness to eschew such values-based identification as they pursue a strategy based on realpolitik and the need to manage China at all costs, including through recent talk of a reassessment of the TRA and the US security guarantee that has helped Taiwan maintain its fragile *de facto* independence.

While the Hawk/Dove nomenclature is widely employed to refer to the policy standpoints of two broad groups, its roots go much deeper into the cultural makeup of American society. The United States is currently in a period of self-reflection and on the cusp of identity change where the very question of what are America's most fundamental values is being put to the test.

The popular expression of this identity crisis is nowhere no more apparent than the runaway success of two candidates in the current election cycle: Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump. Both represent the population's fatigue for politics as usual in Washington, and the sort of poll-tested communications exhibited by the nation's governing elite, and yet the two could not be more different. Both are a product of the political and ideological polarization of American society, each side with its own conception of what the American government's role in the world, as well as at home, ought to be. Thus, from this long-term aspirational perspective, competing influences on foreign policy can be seen, even though they are not enunciated as such.

Indeed, to those who would argue that a culturalist approach is ill-suited to foreign relations, and that simple zero-sum-game of realpolitik yields the greatest results, the leadership ranks of democratic nations have to answer to the electorate—especially in the modern world of technology-enabled instant communication and 24-hour news networks thanks to which very little can be made opaque—a principled foreign policy that reflects that nation's mores and values is imperative.

In terms of domestic roles, the state is more than simply a government: It is more about the Weberian perspective of the state being an administrative, legal and bureaucratic entity that structures the relationship between civil society and public authority, as well relationships within civil society (Evans, 1985). The state's role is not limited to the domestic realm, but influences foreign policy, especially in the modern, globalized world that is, every

year, defined less by a traditional Westphalian preoccupation with borders and more by common perceptions of living on a shared planet. As a result, a less homogeneous policy regime has taken root in modern states that defy simple attempts at categorization and instead are shaped by a multitude of influences.

6. Multidisciplinary Approach

Clearly, a multidisciplinary approach is needed to best capture the nuances of such systems in policy making, as it has been in academia. An eclecticism is replacing the traditional adherence to a single doctrinal conception, be it nationalist, culturalist, or structuralist, and as a result, academic research into these phenomena is becoming more layered and rich (Migdal, 2009). Likewise, policy making must be similarly attentive to these phenomena, even more so given the high stakes that are involved in today's international interactions.

Those steering policy in Taiwan would likewise benefit from a more proactive and less reflexive foreign policy, which today is based as much on wishful thinking as it is on perception of manifest destiny.

For all its faults, China's foreign policy is perhaps the most consistent and coherent of the three, due in large part to the suppression of the Panda's agenda and the dominance of the Dragons in steering relations. This is a luxury that is unavailable to democratic nations, and while it is seen as a strength in China, it is not without its drawbacks. This is not to say that democratisation would solve all of the region's problems: In many ways, liberal democratic theory can compound rather than alleviate the governance problems faced by East Asians (Ling, 2000). Nevertheless, the inherent lack of transparency in a system like that in China today could lead to worst-case readings of the intentions of neighbours. The dynamics of the security dilemma as well as the secrecy and suspicion that underlie policy making in Beijing threaten to produce policy imperatives to act against powerful neighbours like the United States and Japan simply because they are deemed capable of, and presumed willing to, do evil against it (Friedman, 2000).

7. Conclusion

What the Chinese leadership hopes to attain is not empire, as it is conceptualized in the West, or even the sort of "informal empire" that defines the role of the United States during the Cold War (Mann, 2004), but hegemony. This is defined by a leadership of sovereign states in such a way that it is acknowledged by them to be normal or legitimate. This word is often employed by the leadership in Beijing to denounce the role of the United States in Asia not because it best reflects reality, but because it represents the status to which Beijing aspires, and one on which it is fixated. The reason for this is that it is essentially the modern-day equivalent of the tributary system enjoyed by the Han Dynasty at the height of Chinese political dominance of the region.

Western nations must therefore develop a policymaking paradigm that incorporates a culturalist perspective in its calculus and takes these tension-attenuated continua into account. In doing so, policy makers would be better prepared to deal with and more likely to anticipate

the developments largely seen as unexpected, but which are in fact not surprising to those familiar with the cultural dynamics in Taiwan, China and the United States, and how these play out in the all-important trilateral relationship.

8. References

BENEDICT, Anderson. Western nationalism and Eastern nationalism: Is there a difference that matters, *New Left Review*, n. 9, May/Jun 2001, pp.31-42.

BACHMAN, David, "Varieties of Chinese conservatism and the fall of Hu Yaobang," *East Asia*, Vol. 7, No. 1, pp 22-46.

BASS, Catriona. *Education in Tibet: policy and practice since 1950*. London: Zed Books, 1998.

BELL, Daniel A. and Jayasuriya, Kanishka, 1995, 'Understanding illiberal democracy: a framework', in Daniel Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Martin Jones (eds.), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Asia Pacific* (London: MacMillan).

COHEN, Abner: *Custom and politics in urban Africa: a study of Hausa migrants in Yoruba towns*, 252 pp. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969. 36s.

EVANS, Peter B., Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol. *Bringing The State Back In*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Print.

FRIEDMAN, Edward, Immanuel Kant's relevance to an enduring Asia-Pacific peace, in E. Friedman and B. L. McCormick (eds.), *What if China Doesn't Democratize? 2000*, (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe).

FUKUYAMA, Francis, 'The primacy of culture', *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 6, Number 1, January 1995, pp. 7-14 (Article)

GARNAUT, John, Decades after call for reform, Tibet remains in Crisis. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 4, 2010.

JANG, Jungsoo, "Obama's Team of Pro-China Realists," *The Hankyoreh*, December 15, 2008.

LING, L.H.M., 2000, "The limit of democratization for women in east Asia," in Rose J. Lee and Cal Clark (eds.), *Democracy & the Status of Women in East Asia* (London: Lynne Reinner)

LOBE, Jim, "China Hawk Settles in Neocons' Nest," *Foreign Policy in Focus*, May 12, 2003.

MANN, Michael, 2004, 'Taiwan in the Web of Empire: Wars, Capitalism and Empires', paper prepared for the Conference "Taiwan at the Edge of Empire", Center for Contemporary China, National Tsing Hua University, Taipei, December 18-19, 2004.

MIGDAL, Joel, "Researching the State," in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics: Rationality, Culture, and Structure*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 162-92 (Ch. 7).

ROSS, Marc, "Culture in Comparative Political Analysis," in Mark Lichbach and Alan Zuckerman, eds., *Comparative Politics 2nd ed.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 134-61 (Ch. 6).

WALTZ, Kenneth, 1979. *Theory of International Politics*, Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

WEI, Zongyou, "In the Shadow of Hegemony: Strategic Choices," *Chinese Journal of International Politics* (2006) 1 (2): 195-229.

WOO, Seongji, "Triangle Research and Understanding Northeast Asian Politics," *Asian Perspective*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 2003, pp. 33-63.

WU, John C. H., "Chinese Legal and Political Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* Vol. 9, No. 1/2, Preliminary Report on the Third East-West Philosophers' Conference (Apr. - Jul., 1959), pp. 77-79.

YAN, Xuotong, "How China Can Defeat America," *The New York Times*, November 21, 2011.