

**A MILESTONE IN CROSS-STRAIT TIES:
CHEN YUNLIN'S HISTORIC TRIP TO TAIWAN**

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Executive Summary

1. Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), President of the mainland's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), and his 60-member delegation's trip to Taiwan shows Beijing's ever strong desire to move forward in ties.
2. The trip signals further warming of ties between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) based on the principles of a communiqué signed in 2005 by former KMT Chairman Lien Chan (連戰) and Chinese President Hu Jintao (胡錦濤).
3. This communiqué centers on a united stance and mutual collaboration to roll back the excesses of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) rule and ideas of Taiwanese independence.
4. It also indicates Beijing's open mindedness and, in the face of fierce opposition, its willingness to tolerate differing views and disagreements with some sections of the Taiwanese public (a coterie of DPP politicians, supporting academics, popular TV talk show hosts, etc).
5. Chen also brought along China's goodwill for his Taiwanese hosts, the most important of which is that China does not oppose Taiwan's choice of former Vice President Lien Chan as the Presidential envoy for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).
6. Chen was careful to meet Taiwanese of all stripes, from former Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) advocate Lai Hsing-yuan to Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) chairman Chiang Pin-kung. Chen's meeting with Chiang was one of the most productive as they signed four agreements on direct shipping and flights, postal services and food safety.

7. It was unavoidable that Chen's visit was met with fierce opposition from the former ruling party, DPP. In fact, the opposition DPP launched a three-day sit-in at Jinan Road near the Legislative Yuan in downtown Taipei to greet his arrival.
8. Chen apologized for the contaminated toxic milk affair and like ARATS Vice Chairman Zhang Mingqing (張銘清), Chen teared emotionally in the sight of the domestic and international media. For the general Taiwanese public, Chen launched an emotional appeal for their affection.
9. Overall, Chen was unable to reach out to the Taiwanese public directly. The "Three-Links" agreements, once implemented, will bring the two sides closer and thus constrain the Taiwanese independence movement. The visit of Chen, while attracting much international media attention, is unlikely to improve the political standings of either Ma Ying Jeou or Chen Shui-bian. Ma's approval ratings fell to 25% before the visit while Chen Shui-bian languishes in detention.

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Reaching out to the ground

- 1.1 Chen Yunlin (陳雲林), President of the mainland's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS), and his 60-member delegation's trip to Taiwan shows Beijing's ever strong desire to move forward in ties with Taiwan against the backdrop of an already warming cross-strait tie stimulated by the ascension of Ma Ying Jeou to power.
- 1.2 The trip also demonstrated Beijing's open mindedness and, in the face of fierce opposition, its willingness to tolerate differing views and disagreements with some sections of the Taiwanese public (a coterie of DPP politicians, supporting academics, popular TV talk show hosts, etc).
- 1.3 Most importantly, for the Taiwanese hosts, China does not oppose Taiwan's choice of the Presidential envoy for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), former Vice President Lien Chan.
- 1.4 Taiwan's Presidential Office announced this decision on 29 October 2008 for the Economic Leaders' meeting to be held in Peru on 22 November 2008. Lien is widely seen as a Beijing-friendly candidate and he described Chen and his delegation as "old friends"¹, demonstrating the amount of trust between Lien and Chen.

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¹ Mo, Yan-chih, "CROSS-STRAIT TALKS: Lien lauds 'historic visit' amid pro-Taiwan fervor" dated 5 November 2008 in the Taipei Times website [downloaded on 7 November 2008], available at <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2008/05/20/2003427794>

- 1.5 The acceptance of Lien as Presidential envoy for APEC represents a major policy shift in China's past insistence of restricting APEC envoys to individuals with economic credentials rather than political connections. Because of this, Taiwan had to abandoned a number of candidates in the past, including Li Yuan-zu, former Vice President, Wang Chin-ping, president of the Legislative Yuan, and Tsai Ying-wen, former vice premier and mastermind of the "two-nation" theory proposed by former President Lee Teng-hui.
- 1.6 Consequently, Taiwan's former envoys included Perng Fai-nan, governor of the Central Bank of China, Lee Yuan-Tseh, former president of the Academia Sinica, Lin Hsin-yi, presidential advisor, Stan Shih, founder of Acer Group, and Morris Chang, chairman of Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co.
- 1.7 Other tangible gifts in Chen's trip included the panda pair, Tuan Tuan and Yuan Yuan, confirmed for release to the Taipei Mucha Zoo by Beijing. Their departure for Taiwan, first agreed upon in 2005, has already been delayed for three years. The giant pandas, which are already well-known worldwide as supreme national state gifts from Beijing, are made even more special as they originated from Sichuan's Wolong Nature Reserve that was seriously damaged in the 12 May 2008 earthquake.
- 1.8 Thus, they have taken on added significance as a symbol of gratitude by mainland compatriots in the quake areas towards their Taiwanese compatriots for their generous aid and quake relief. The Taiwan-based Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) chairperson Chiang Pin-kung has already accepted the gifts.
- 1.9 Beijing also presented Taiwan with 17 Nyssaceae seedlings, a rare flowering plant extracted by the Qiang minority group in Wenchuan, a county in Sichuan Province devastated by the 12 May 2008 earthquake.
- 1.10 The gifting process was bilateral. There were other equally significant wildlife gifts from Taiwan, including the rare Taiwanese indigenous goat *naemorhedus*

swinhoei and a Taiwanese spotted deer. These gifts were graciously accepted by Chen on behalf of Beijing.

- 1.11 All these gifts were a sign of greater ties and mutual trust between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and the Kuomintang (KMT). These interparty ties have been transformed into state relations (or more accurately state to territory) with the coming into power of the KMT. The same generosity may not have been presented to a DPP government, given its pro-independence stance and confrontational attitude.
- 1.12 The visit and its exchanges were also based on the principles of a communiqué signed in 2005 by former KMT Chairman Lien Chan and Chinese President Hu Jintao which centers on a united stance and mutual collaboration to roll back the excesses of the DPP rule and ideas of Taiwanese independence.

Meeting a spectrum of people from the economic sector

- 2.1 Chen was careful to meet Taiwanese of all stripes, from former DPP advocate Lai Hsing-yuan to Taiwan's SEF chairman Chiang Pin-kung.
- 2.2 Chen's meeting with Chiang was one of the most productive as they signed four agreements on direct shipping and flights, postal services and food safety. The signing of these agreements is expected to strengthen the foundation of mutual trust and promote a peaceful cross-strait relationship.
- 2.3 In the background, professionals and experts from both sides of the Strait also discussed financial and economic cooperation. In an attempt to strengthen his position amongst supporters and to defuse deep suspicions amongst undecided and/or the pro-independence camp, Taiwan's President Ma has taken the political tack of convincing his Taiwanese compatriots that increased and improved cross-strait relations are in the interest of Taiwan. In general, the Taiwanese business sector is supportive of increased exchanges.

- 2.4 SEF and ARATS have reached an agreement on a list of issues for the next round of talks — cooperation on law enforcement; financial cooperation, such as allowing banks to set up cross-strait branches; financial supervision of stocks, futures and banking; cooperation on investment; industrial partnership; cooperation on fishing matters; cultural and educational cooperation; and pursuing further exchanges between the two agencies.
- 2.5 Chiang and Chen followed up on the previous SEF-ARATS meeting to boost weekend charter flights and increase the quota of Chinese tourists visiting Taiwan to 3,000 per day. Specifically, ARATS proposed lowering the minimum number of people for Chinese tourist groups from 10 people to five and increasing the maximum length of stay from 10 days to 15 days.
- 2.6 The meeting was careful not to touch on contentious political issues. The overall flavor was a separation of economics from politics with an accent on the former. Even sensitive economic issues were avoided. For example, ARATS Vice Chairman Zhang Lizhong (鄭立中) refused to specify whether direct routes between China and Taiwan would be categorized as domestic or international and he elaborated only briefly China's opposition to Taiwan's attempts to join the World Health Organization (WHO).

Skilful diplomacy

- 3.1 When meeting a spectrum of the Taiwanese people, Chen was careful to use the honorific “you” or a less controversial Beijing-friendly title of the office holder to address his Taiwanese hosts in a delicate balance between an avoidance of protocol issues and Beijing's priorities. In this way, Beijing's envoy was very flexible in his diplomatic approach.
- 3.2 When Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Chairwoman Lai Hsing-yuan (賴幸媛) met with Chen Yunlin on 4 November 2008, she emphasized her official title of MAC Chairwoman in her address.

- 3.3 To circumvent potential protocol issues, Chen addressed her as “Head of China Affairs”². At other times, Chen used the phrase “the main person responsible for mainland affairs in Taiwan”³. Lai extended her courtesy back, skirting the politically touchy issue of diplomatic protocol and indicating that one’s status did not depend on how others address that individual.⁴
- 3.4 During the evening feast held by KMT honorary Chairman Lien Chan in Chen’s honor on 4 November 2008, Chen, a skilful diplomat, avoided official titles by using the term “older generation in Taiwan’s political circles” instead of “President Wang” to address Wang Jin-pyng (王金平), President of the Legislative Yuan.⁵ In one sweep, this term applied to all city mayors, county magistrates, and lawmakers present at the banquet.
- 3.5 The ultimate meeting between Chen and Taiwan’s top leader Ma Ying Jeou was carried out with equal political finesse. The painting of a galloping horse (symbolizing Ma’s surname) by a master artist from Beijing was presented to Ma who in turn presented a fine Taiwanese porcelain ornament to Chen. The exchange was quick and lasted only 5 minutes, a masterful political stroke to avoid unnecessary protocol issues and wild media speculations.

Appealing to the Taiwanese people

- 4.1 It was unavoidable that Chen’s visit would be met with fierce opposition from the DPP. In fact, the DPP launched a three-day sit-in at Jinan Road near the Legislative Yuan in downtown Taipei to greet his arrival on 3 November 2008.

² Taiwan News, “Chen Yunlin avoids official titles when meeting Taiwan’s politicians” dated 5 November 2008 in eTaiwannews website [downloaded on 6 November 2008], available at http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=780985

³ Ko, Shu-ling and Mo Yan-chih, “Chen and Chiang sign four agreements” dated 5 November 2008 in the Taipei Times website [downloaded on 7 November 2008], available at <http://www.taipetitimes.com/News/front/archives/2008/11/05/2003427809>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Taiwan News, “Chen Yunlin avoids official titles when meeting Taiwan’s politicians” dated 5 November 2008 in eTaiwannews website [downloaded on 6 November 2008], available at http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=780985

The protestors tied yellow ribbons reading “Taiwan Is My Country” on public streetside trees and on their foreheads or necks.

- 4.2 This protest was a follow-up of the 25 October 2008 meeting when 600,000 people turned up for a massive demonstration arguing for what they coined as the protection of Taiwan’s sovereignty. Other than pro-independence groups, anti-China groups also joined in the fray, for e.g. Falun Gong practitioners who held a silent sit-in demonstration at National Taiwan Democracy Memorial Hall plaza.
- 4.3 While Chen has met with Taiwan’s political and business elites, it will ultimately be the Taiwanese people that will decide the success of his trip. Despite all forms of opposition, Chen was able to reach out to various sections of the Taiwanese public directly through the media and through visits to religious institutions. For the religious, Chen Yunlin included the Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation in his itinerary to pay respect to founder Master Cheng Yen (證嚴法師) at the Tzu Chi Guandu Complex (關渡慈濟志業園區) in Taipei’s Beitou District.
- 4.4 The theme of the Sichuan quake was again rich in this visit as Chen showed his gratitude towards the Foundation for its volunteer work in the quake relief efforts. In May 2008, the Tzu Chi disaster relief team arrived in Sichuan and began disaster evaluation, relief planning and logistical management of relief material weighing 110 tons⁶, including blankets, comfort kits and other donated supplies delivered by charter flights to Chengdu Airport.
- 4.5 For the general Taiwanese public, Chen launched an emotional appeal for their affection. Chen apologized for the contaminated toxic milk affair and like ARATS Vice Chairman Zhang Mingqing, Chen teared emotionally in the sight of the domestic and international media. This was the public component of Beijing’s charm offensive. If the people’s links are deepened, the forces

⁶ Taiwan News, “China's top envoy Chen Yunlin to visit Taiwan's Master Cheng Yen in Taipei” dated 6 November 2008 in the etaiwannews website [downloaded on 7 November 2008], available at http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=782167

behind stronger cross-strait ties are irreversible. The visit of Chen Yunlin, while attracting much international media attention, is unlikely to improve the political standings of either Ma Ying Jeou or Chen Shui-bian. Ma's approval ratings fell to 25% before the visit while Chen Shui-bian languishes in detention.

APPENDIX A



MAC Chairwoman Lai Hsing-yuan (right) meets ARATS Chairman Chen Yunlin (left) on Nov. 4. Chen avoids using official title to address Lai throughout the meeting.

(Source: Taiwan News, “Chen Yunlin avoids official titles when meeting Taiwan’s politicians” dated 5 November 2008 in eTaiwannews website [downloaded on 6 November 2008], available at http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=780985)

APPENDIX B



KMT honorary Chairman Lien Chan (left) held a banquet in Chen Yunlin's honor on Nov. 4. The two supported each other when going down the stairs.

(Source: Taiwan News, “Chen Yunlin avoids official titles when meeting Taiwan’s politicians” dated 5 November 2008 in eTaiwannews website [downloaded on 6 November 2008], available at http://www.etaiwannews.com/etn/news_content.php?id=780985)

APPENDIX C



Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou (right) presenting a gift to Chinese negotiator Chen Yunlin at the Taipei Guest House.

(Source: Channelnewsasia, “Taiwan president in historic meeting with Chinese envoy” dated 6 November 2008 in the Channelnewsasia website [downloaded on 7 November 2008], available at http://www.channelnewsasia.com/stories/afp_asiapacific/view/388017/1/.html)

APPENDIX D



Chief of ARATS, Chen Yunlin (left) presenting a painting of a horse to Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou in Taipei.

(Source: Xinhua, “Taiwan leader Ma Ying-jeou meets ARATS chief” dated 6 November 2008 in the Xinhuanet [downloaded on 7 November 2008], available at http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-11/06/content_10316005.htm)