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# Running Out of Time? The Evolution of Taiwan's Relations in Africa

Timothy S. RICH and Vasabjit BANERJEE

**Abstract**: This article highlights the precarious nature of Taiwan's diplomatic relations in Africa. Whereas Cold War rationales initially benefitted Taiwan, economic interests now appear to incentivize African countries to establish relations with China. Through qualitative and quantitative data covering much of the post-World War II era, this analysis argues that economic factors have trumped political rationales for Taiwanese–African relations. In addition, this article problematizes both conceptions of diplomatic recognition and Taiwan's enduring relations with Africa.

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**Keywords**: Taiwan, Africa, diplomatic relations, economy

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## Introduction

China's charm offensive throughout Africa has garnered significant attention. While once hesitant to play the role of an emerging superpower, China has joined peacekeeping missions throughout Africa, including Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), among others. Furthermore, China has tentatively supported United Nations reforms that would grant an African country a permanent seat on the Security Council (Meidan 2006). Meanwhile, less attention has been placed on the historic influence of Taiwan in the region, much less the implications of this historic influence on Africa today. Taiwan provided assistance and maintained diplomatic relations with much of Africa even as Western powers migrated towards China. Altogether 30 African countries have at one time or another maintained formal relations with Taiwan; currently, just three countries on the continent do so. This loss is largely attributable to China claiming to be the sole legitimate government of Taiwan. As such, a country could only have relations with either China or Taiwan. Taiwan's battle to maintain if not gain diplomatic allies has focused in no small part on Africa.

Despite no shifts in formal diplomatic relations since a 2008 diplomatic truce between Taiwan and China, important questions remain about Taiwan's relations across Africa. First, what factors encourage Taiwan's few African diplomatic allies to choose relations with Taibei over Beijing, especially under growing pressure to establish formal relations with China? Second, how have relations with Taibei both helped and hindered the political and economic stability of these African countries? Third, what leverage does Taiwan still have in Africa?

This article highlights the precarious nature of diplomatic relations in regards to Taiwan. Whereas battles over diplomatic recognition in decades past often focused on ideological disputes, economic factors appear to have supplanted these pressures. African relations first built upon Cold War rationales have evolved towards a convergence of economic interests that largely favour China over Taiwan. This does not, however, mean that Taiwan has no role to play in Africa as a rising China increasingly engages the continent. An analysis of African countries also highlights that comparatively weak countries are the main actors in this diplomatic battle, in stark contrast to most struggles over recognition.

We first address traditional theories and rationales behind diplomatic recognition. This is followed by an analysis of the history of Taiwanese and Chinese involvement in Africa. Through quantitative data covering much of the post-World War II era and supplemented by qualitative insights from written records, we highlight the structural factors that are influencing African relations with Taiwan; these factors potentially suggesting a reconceptualization of diplomatic recognition itself. Next, we show the ramifications of choosing to maintain relations with Taiwan over China. In conclusion, this article problematizes conceptions of diplomatic recognition and Taiwan's current relations with Africa.

## Understanding Diplomatic Recognition

Diplomatic recognition itself is a reflection of state sovereignty. All three major approaches to the study of international relations – realism, liberalism and constructivism – assume sovereign states are the primary actors (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001; Toje 2010) in the international system, either alongside international organizations and multinational corporations (Russet and Oneal 2001; Gartzke 2007; Doyle 2011; Mousseau 2013), or influenced by non-governmental organizations and transnational networks of activists (Wendt 1999; Keck and Sikkink 1998).

The concept of sovereignty, however, is Janus-faced, as it refers to having both domestically accepted control of a territory (internal sovereignty) and internationally accepted control of said territory (external sovereignty). Jackson (1993) terms the Weberian exercise of exclusive authority over a population within a defined territory as "positive sovereignty". In contrast, he classifies as "negative sovereignty" that which is contingent on the acceptance of such an exclusive right by other international actors.

Furthermore, Talmon (1998) demonstrates that such acceptance of sovereignty can be either de facto, when international actors choose to conduct relations with other actors, or de jure, when international actors officially recognize a state as the sovereign representative of a population in a defined territory. Nevertheless, it is only through the accordance of de jure recognition by international actors – symbolized by diplomatic recognition – that a state becomes a full member of the international system with its consequent privileges,

such as entering into formal treaties and membership in international and regional organizations (Barkin and Cronin 1994).

Most importantly perhaps, diplomatic recognition signifies the acceptance by international actors of a state's exclusive authority over a population in a defined territory along with the right to represent that population externally (James 1999). Thus, states unable to exercise their authority within a part or all of their territory, such as Russia over Chechnya or Somalia over Somaliland and Puntland, are nevertheless acknowledged by international actors as having the exclusive right to do so.

External recognition of Taiwan's sovereignty is where its claims are the weakest, testifying to the island's precarious position. Taiwan's government clearly has internal sovereignty, especially since democratization, with supermajorities of Taiwanese identifying it as a sovereign democracy. However, Taiwan lacks formal diplomatic relations with the majority of independent countries. The island's diplomatic allies today are all comparatively weak countries. To put this into perspective, the Japanese puppet government of Manchukuo (1932–1945) received greater formal diplomatic recognition among European powers than Taiwan currently receives.

Taiwan's status is further underscored if we follow the guidelines set out by the Montevideo Convention, which outline the requirements for statehood (Council of Foreign Relations 1933). The Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan has a permanent population, regardless of whether the government claims to represent all of China or solely Taiwan. The geographic territory of the Republic of China remains partially in dispute as the antiquated ROC constitution includes all of modern-day China as well as additional territories (for example, Mongolia), yet the territory controlled by Taiwan is not in dispute. Similarly, the government of the ROC, having largely relinquished its claims to rule territories controlled by the PRC, is considered in Taiwan a legitimate government and is able to carry out the same governmental functions of other states. Taiwan's status as a state appears murkier only in the context of the fourth criterion of the Montevideo Convention: the capacity to enter into relations with other states. While the ROC has the ability to negotiate with other states, and has done so to various degrees over the past century, this capacity is partially predicated on the acceptance of other countries, normally through diplomatic recognition. Newnham (2000) asserts

that diplomatic recognition is crucial to the very definition of state sovereignty. If this is true, Taiwan is clearly in a difficult position. Although Taiwan has managed to establish informal relations with most major powers, with offices functioning as unofficial embassies, the fact that Taiwan goes to these lengths for informal relations reinforces the importance that recognition plays for a sense of sovereignty.

This is not to suggest that Taiwan's diplomatic battles are inherently unique. While there is no universal standard applied to recognition, a contagion effect appears evident in that in many cases governments are quick to recognize the government of an independent country once major powers have already done so. Some countries, such as Mexico with the Estrada Doctrine, go as far as to treat recognition as separate from moral or political judgement. That said, there is no obligation to extend diplomatic relations, as demonstrated by the number of countries that (have) withheld recognition to the Soviet Union, Spain, Israel and others for 20 years or more (Peterson 1982, 1983; Gray 2003). Ideological rationales for withholding recognition have also been common since World War II, especially in the cases of divided nations where dual recognition was rejected (for instance, East and West Germany before 1973). However, with the end of the Cold War, purely ideological rationales have fallen out of favour.

Regardless of the stated rationale, the underlying goal of a state withholding recognition has been to coerce other states to act in a manner favourable to the denying state (Peterson 1997: 3); thus, it is not surprising that such withholding has been a common *modus operandi* of powerful states. Here, Taiwan's diplomatic battle for recognition differs from most other contemporary cases in that the island has not focused its efforts on establishing and maintaining recognition among world or regional powers. Rather, Taiwan's diplomatic competition with China has, at least since 1979, largely been relegated to the underdeveloped world – mostly Africa, the Caribbean and Central America. These countries provide little in terms of security or trade to Taiwan and in many cases barely meet the qualifications for statehood themselves. Thus, whereas debates surrounding diplomatic recognition commonly focus on powerful states offering or withholding recognition to weaker powers, the recognition of Taiwan evinces a very different framework.

## Taiwan's Relations in Africa

Taiwan's present relations in Africa are in part a legacy of the Cold War. Whereas the governments of Taiwan and China both previously asserted themselves the sole legitimate government of a unified China and used diplomatic allies in Africa to support their individual claims, gaining diplomatic recognition has evolved into a means for Taiwan to maintain de facto independence. Furthermore, few countries today maintain any ideological reasons to back either Taiwan or China, with the battle for recognition prior to the diplomatic truce (established in 2008) limited largely to weak states that barely meet the qualifications for sovereign entities. The diplomatic truce, under which both Taiwan and China agreed to not pursue formal relations with those recognizing the other, prevented poor countries from using the promise of diplomatic recognition as a means of extracting financial commitments from their new patron. While several countries have attempted to test the truce, notably the Gambia in 2013, no country has switched recognition since its enactment.

Several countries had no relations with either side directly after 1949, as they were presumably waiting for a final settlement (Hsiung 1972: 54–55). Meanwhile, Mao Zedong viewed newly independent countries in Africa as partners in the "struggle against imperialism" (Mao 1998). Taiwan benefitted greatly from American anti-communist efforts after the start of the Korean War, allowing the island to maintain important Western diplomatic allies. Taiwan fared particularly well in Africa, receiving recognition from 13 of 23 African countries from 1960 to 1963, compared to only five for China. Despite the competition, five countries recognized neither government in 1963: Central African Republic, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Niger and Sierra Leone (see Klein 1963: 49–50). By 1971, the year the United Nations replaced the ROC with the PRC, African countries were roughly evenly split between the two sides, with Taiwan having 20 allies and China 22. However, by 1979, the year the US switched recognition, only five of the 50 African countries recognized the ROC.

The end of the Cold War undermined the rationale for many countries to maintain relations with Taiwan. Coupled with the island's democracy, Taiwan made increased appeals for diplomatic relations based in part on democratic commonalities, while also floating the idea to third countries of dual recognition, which proved unsuccessful. To a certain extent, Taiwan's ability to attract African diplomatic

allies improved with democratization. Taiwan, which provided various forms of economic assistance to South Africa before the latter's democratization (Pickles and Woods 1989), was also able to maintain diplomatic relations with South Africa until 1998 in part due to its financial support of the African National Congress (ANC) during the 1994 elections and beyond (Davies 1998; Tseng 2008). Throughout much of the 1990s, Taiwan maintained seven to eight diplomatic allies on the continent, a figure that increased briefly to ten in 1997. Still, this boost was short-lived, declining to 1979 rates by the end of the Chen Shui-bian (Chen Shuibian) administration (2000–2008).

Taiwan's own desire for diplomatic relations, especially in Africa, has also evolved over time. While once framed in terms of maintaining a political status equal to that of China, by the late 1990s diplomatic relations served more practical purposes. Maintaining even a few diplomatic allies prevented further political isolation for Taiwan and, with the exception of the occasional scandal, enjoying diplomatic relations remained domestically popular on the island. Furthermore, China's slow re-engagement with African countries allowed Taiwan to export technical assistance (especially in the agricultural sector), build global goodwill and secure its roots in several African countries.

Despite changing political conditions and even Taiwan's own rationales for diplomatic relations, relations in Africa remained particularly unstable. Diplomatic relations both during and after the Cold War remained precarious, with countries often switching support between Taiwan and China without an explicit ideological or political rationale. This is particularly evident in Africa, with Senegal and the Central African Republic each switching five times since both originally forging diplomatic ties with Taiwan in 1962. Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad, the Gambia, Lesotho, Liberia and Niger all switched diplomatic recognition two or more times. Today, only three African countries maintain relations with Taiwan: Burkina Faso, São Tomé and Príncipe and Swaziland. The last to switch recognition in China's favour include Senegal (2005), Chad (2006) and Malawi (2008); the Gambia unilaterally broke relations with Taiwan in 2013, though China has not subsequently courted that country for recognition.

The final diplomatic clash occurred in 2006 when Zambia's opposition presidential candidate Michael "King Cobra" Sata declared that he would recognize Taiwan if elected president because of China's labour policies and its closeness to Zambia's ruling party. In

response, the Chinese ambassador called a press conference to state that the Chinese were withholding investments due to Sata's remarks and threatened to break off relations with Zambia if Sata were to be elected (Brautigam 2010: 150–151). The diplomatic truce between Taiwan and China in place since 2008 even endured after the independence of South Sudan in 2011: While both Taibei and Beijing recognized the independence of South Sudan on 9 July 2011, diplomatic relations were only established between Juba and Beijing. The Gambia's unilateral breaking of relations with Taiwan in 2013 also failed to rekindle the diplomatic competition, as China refused to initiate recognition.

We do not imply that recognition necessitates a deep commitment to relations; rather, it is often a minimalist action necessary for international relations. Technically speaking, diplomatic recognition requires little more than an announcement and a document. Perhaps the easiest means to identify whether relations are more than simply an exchange of pleasantries is to identify whether both parties have established embassies within each other's capital. Those with extensive relations necessitate in-country embassies, whereas those with less important relations or limited resources can manage with accredited diplomats covering several countries in a region. To put this into perspective, Rich (2009) reported that the average number of embassies within each of 194 countries was only 44, with 33 countries having less than 10 embassies on their soil. Among African countries, the average drops to 33 embassies per country. A simple regression of the number of embassies in African countries with one independent variable (log of area in square kilometers) leaves us with the unsurprising finding that area highly correlates with number of embassies ($p < .001$), with an adjusted $R^2$ of .3096 ($N=51$).

Even when ideological rationales do not underpin diplomatic relations, economic interests can provide insight. China–Africa relations historically fluctuated from engagement, largely along ideological lines, to indifference (Large 2008; Van Ness 1998). China's ideological support for African leaders was not limited just to its conflict with Taiwan, as China's assistance in efforts in both Mozambique and Angola to combat Soviet-backed organizations suggests (Yu 1988; Snow 1998).

However, after the end of the anti-colonial and postcolonial conflicts, China rededicated itself to relations with African countries to

counter its diplomatic isolation in the wake of the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989. The Chinese foreign minister visited approximately 14 African countries between 1989 and 1991 to reaffirm ties (Tull 2006: 460–461; Taylor 2004). China's rise as an economic superpower has given Beijing greater incentives for a more enduring and substantial involvement on the continent. Though evidence of economic rationales influencing diplomatic recognition exists elsewhere (Pfannestiel 2003; Kahler and Kastner 2006), it is most explicit in the Taiwan–China battle. Taiwan has long provided official development assistance (ODA) to developing nations, many of whom have suggested such aid influenced their decisions to keep up diplomatic relations with the island (Lynch 2003). Claims of "dollar diplomacy" or "checkbook diplomacy" often follow. In Africa alone, Taiwan granted Niger a 50 million USD loan in 1992 shortly before it was recognized there and 35 million USD in assistance to the Gambia in 1995, more than all other donors to the latter country combined that year. Niger switched back to recognizing the PRC in 1996. Beijing accused Taibei of offering São Tomé and Príncipe 30 million USD in aid in exchange for recognition in 1997, with Taibei making similar claims about Beijing's 100 million USD assistance package to Guinea-Bissau in 1998 (Rawnsley 2000: 32).

The evolution of China's interest in Africa problematizes Taiwan's efforts to deepen relations. Crucial to China's continued economic development is access to energy inputs, especially oil and metals. Since the early 1990s, the first trip made each year by the PRC's minister of foreign affairs has been to an African country, symbolizing the importance of China–Africa relations. China further strengthened its ties with the continent through the creation of the Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) in 2000 and the founding of the China–Africa Development Fund (CAD) in 2007. Within one year, the CAD granted over 90 million USD to projects in Africa and subsequently invested an additional 5 billion USD in the short term (China Development Bank 2009).

The PRC has also offered various assistance packages to African countries if the latter recognize the PRC, or at least ignore Taiwan's efforts to switch recognition, leaders in Beijing – before the diplomatic truce – having been increasingly confident that African holdouts would eventually come their way (Wang 2001: 732). In 2004 China presented the first major alternative to an International Monetary

Fund bailout, by offering cash-strapped Angola with a nearly identically sized aid package without restraints. By 2006 China had offered an additional 9 billion USD loan to the country. Similarly, a 2008 agreement provided 9 billion USD to the DRC for far-reaching investment in exchange for millions of tonnes of copper and cobalt. This "Chinese Marshall Plan" probably altered Sino-Africa relations to the effect that recognizing Taiwan became increasingly less attractive for African countries (Jiang 2009). Not surprisingly, African exports to China more than doubled from 2006 to 2008 alone, with 32 African countries clearly benefitting in terms of net gain in earnings from exports to China (George 2009: 97). While the actual amount of Chinese aid to Africa is often misreported (see Brautigam 2010), the increased economic ties are evident.

## The Decision to Recognize Taiwan

Though Cold War ideological frameworks have lost saliency, economic conditions may provide greater insight. Those states with few exports logically should be the most willing to recognize the ROC, as the appeal of access to China's market should be weaker. As economic relations do not occur in a vacuum, non-economic rationales require consideration. For example, a sense of democratic solidarity could lead to higher recognition for Taiwan in the post-Cold War era. Taiwan may be viewed as a political model to follow, cultivating an image as an "exporter of democracy". Even if Taiwan's democratic status does not directly influence other states, democracies may find breaking relations with Taiwan more difficult than authoritarian regimes might (Larus 2008). However, corrupt authoritarian governments also may view the recognition of Taiwan as an effective means to strengthen their position, especially if it is combined with economic assistance from the island. For example, while the absolute monarchy of King Mswati III in Swaziland has long left the country a pariah state in international politics, Swaziland maintains diplomatic relations with Taiwan, which donated 300,000 USD worth of computers as well as over half that amount in rice to that country in 2012 (*AllAfrica.com* 2012). A cursory view of the few Taiwan-recognizing countries worldwide suggests that size may be a factor, as smaller countries are less likely to lack the natural resources China desires. One would also assume that states comparatively geographically dis-

tant from the PRC would be more insulated from Beijing's push for recognition.

To analyse the potential factors influencing diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, we employ a Probit model with a dichotomous dependent variable (1=recognition of the ROC) using data from 1960 through 2007 (Table 1). While diplomatic recognition data is available as far back as 1950, economic data, unfortunately, is not. We rely on Rich (2009) for both the data and model specification, and focus our attention solely on Africa. This data provides the most comprehensive means for us to address the economic influences on diplomatic relations and to control for other potential influences consistent with ideological or historical claims. A time-series set covering much of the period of the diplomatic battle between the ROC and PRC further helps us avoid taking a myopic view of relations at a particular point in time and misattributing the foundation of such relations based on the statements made by representatives of the particular countries.

To capture level of democracy, we use Polity IV Scores, which range from -10 (most authoritarian) to 10 (most democratic). Unfortunately, Polity does not include any country with a population of less than 500,000, which, if smaller countries are more likely to recognize the ROC, may bias the statistical results – Cape Verde, Seychelles and São Tomé and Príncipe are thus excluded. In contrast, Freedom House scores every country, but is only available for the past four decades and would therefore not cover much of the early switching of diplomatic recognition. To identify whether a given country's similarities with Taiwan's politics influenced relations (for example, both being democracies), we also include the absolute difference between Taiwan's Polity IV score and that of the African country. In terms of economic variables, we include exports as a percentage of GDP, available from the World Bank. Three control variables are also included: the size of the country in square kilometers (in thousands, available from *The World Factbook* (CIA n.d.)), the distance between a country's capital and Beijing (in kilometers, available from Kristian Gleditsch's dataset on distances between capital cities) and a dummy variable for whether the year was during the Cold War (–1991).

Table 1: Probit Models of Diplomatic Recognition of Taiwan, 1960–2007

| | **Model 1** | | **Model 2** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Coeff** | **SE** | **Coeff** | **SE** |
| Polity Scores | | | 0.0087 | 0.0106 |
| Polity Difference | | | | |
| Area ($k^2$) | -0.0001 | 0.0004 | -0.0001 | 0.0004 |
| Cold War | 0.4849*** | 0.0921 | 0.5286*** | 0.1074 |
| Distance From Beijing | 0.0006*** | 0.0002 | 0.0006*** | 0.0002 |
| Exports as % GDP | -0.0108** | 0.0044 | -0.0109** | 0.0044 |
| Recognition (t-1) | | | | |
| Constant | -8.2928*** | 2.0986 | -8.3465*** | 2.1502 |
| N | 2040 | | 1984 | |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.1218 | | 0.1244 | |
| | **Model 3** | | **Model 4** | |
| | **Coeff** | **SE** | **Coeff** | **SE** |
| Polity Scores | 0.0089 | 0.0107 | -0.0074 | 0.0136 |
| Polity Difference | -0.0013 | 0.0105 | 0.0392** | 0.0152 |
| Area ($k^2$) | -0.0001 | 0.0004 | 0.000 | 0.0001 |
| Cold War | 0.5234*** | 0.1155 | 0.3388* | 0.1676 |
| Distance From Beijing | 0.0006*** | 0.0002 | 0.0002* | 0.0001 |
| Exports as % GDP | -0.011* | 0.0045 | -0.0054 | 0.0045 |
| Recognition (t-1) | | | 3.4446*** | 0.1433 |
| Constant | -8.3339*** | 2.154 | -4.6075*** | 0.9382 |
| N | 1984 | | 1954 | |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.1244 | | 0.6949 | |

Note: ***p<.05, **p<.01, *p<.001.

Source: Authors' own compilation.

Since Polity does not assign values to countries with populations under 500,000, Model 1 includes only exports and the control variables. Here, exports as a percentage of GDP negatively correlate with recognition of Taiwan, while geographic distance from Beijing as well as the dummy variable for the Cold War era positively correlate with recognition, all at .01 or stronger. Thus, even controlling for the Cold War era, which in some respects could be viewed as artificially inflating the number of Taiwan's diplomatic allies, the negative correlation between a country's exports and recognition of Taiwan is evident. Model 2 adds Polity scores for the African countries, while Model 3 also includes the absolute difference in Polity scores between Taiwan and the African country. Yet, these inclusions fail to change the core findings of the original model. In other words, the evidence does not support claims that Taiwan's relationships in Africa are based on democratic solidarity or similarities in regime type.

Finally, to capture the relative stability of relations from year to year (referring to the fact that a country that recognizes Taiwan in Year *t* is likely to have recognized them the year before, *t*-1), we included a lagged dependent variable in Model 4. While the Cold War and distance from Beijing still reach statistical significance, exports do not. These findings suggest that diplomatic recognition, even under conditions amenable to dollar diplomacy, remains fairly sticky as countries are unlikely to switch frequently within a short period of time. This suggests that economic factors are long-term trends and not simply the result of short-term changes in a country's exports. Of particular interest is that the absolute difference in Polity scores does reach statistical significance at .01, with a coefficient that appears counterintuitive: As the differences between Taiwan and African countries increase, recognition of the ROC is more likely. Additional tests show that this pattern is consistent during the Cold War and in both Taiwan's authoritarian and democratic eras, in stark contrast to claims that Taiwan's democratization allowed it to hold onto allies.

As a last measure, two additional controls were included: a dummy variable for Ethiopia and for Swaziland. Ethiopia never had relations with the ROC, while Swaziland never had relations with the PRC. Rerunning Models 1–4 with these additions produces largely consistent results (regressions omitted for brevity). In Models 1–3, no statistically significant change occurred. Unsurprisingly, the Swaziland variable was strongly correlated with recognition of the ROC (.001),

yet the Ethiopia variable failed to reach statistical significance. For Model 4, the inclusion of these two dummy variables reduced the statistical significance of the absolute difference in Polity scores to .03, while the Cold War variable was no longer significant at .05 (p=0.079). Overall, the findings here regarding relations between African countries and Taiwan largely mirror the broader patterns in Taiwan's diplomatic relations shown by Rich (2009).

Considering that Probit models are not linear and thus the coefficients cannot be interpreted similarly to OLS models, the findings in Table 1 require further elaboration. Predicted probabilities generated from Model 4 give greater insight. Holding the other variables at their mean and varying only the Cold War variable reaffirms expectations. The likelihood of an African country recognizing Taiwan during the Cold War was 7.89 per cent, compared to only 4.75 per cent post-Cold War. Varying the exports as a percentage of the GDP also highlights the distinction during and after the Cold War. With exports at 2 per cent of GDP (the minimum within Africa during the timeframe), countries were predicted to recognize Taiwan at a rate of 10.56 per cent during the Cold War, but only 5.6 per cent after. At the other extreme, exports at 136 per cent of GDP, African countries were predicted to recognize Taiwan at a measly 2.39 and 1.02 per cent, respectively. The findings here reaffirm that economic factors, even during an era of ideological appeals, appear to influence the recognition of Taiwan among African countries.

More enlightening is the distinction of the absolute difference in Polity scores between the two eras. At the mean Polity difference (6), the likelihood of recognizing Taiwan differed from 8.09 per cent during the Cold War to 4.88 per cent afterwards. The distinctions are similarly clear at the extremes: Where Taiwan and the African country had the same Polity score (and thus an absolute difference of zero), the predicted probability that the African country recognized Taiwan was only 5.7 per cent during the Cold War, dropping to 3.31 per cent after 1991. At the other extreme (a 19-point difference in Polity scores), the predicted probability of recognizing Taiwan reaches 15.74 per cent during the Cold War, but only 10.34 per cent later. These counter-intuitive findings suggest that Taiwan's ability to maintain allies had little to do with similarities in political systems.

Reducing the sample to just those who switched recognition from the previous year, while maintaining the same independent vari-

ables, the influence of the Cold War and Polity scores are again apparent (regressions omitted for space). Predicted probabilities holding all other independent variables at their mean show a 1.79 per cent likelihood of a country switching from China to Taiwan during the Cold War, a rate that drops to 0.09 per cent in the post-Cold War period. Again, Taiwan fared better when the other country was less similar to itself. Using the absolute difference in Polity scores, the probability of an African country switching recognition to Taiwan was only 1.17 per cent during the Cold War and .058 per cent post-Cold War for those with the same Polity score as Taiwan (absolute difference of zero), whereas at an absolute difference of 19, the probability of switching to Taiwan reached 4.54 per cent during the Cold War and 2.57 per cent post-Cold War.

Several implications emerge from these findings. First, if increased exports do in fact incentivize the recognition of the PRC, then Taiwan would seem to have little incentive to provide African countries assistance to promote export-oriented growth. Not only is this ironic based on Taiwan's own path to industrialization, but it would suggest an uncomfortable decision for Taibei: Provide aid which may not best serve African recipients, or provide assistance that promotes export growth, which may ultimately push the recipient towards Beijing. It is unlikely that Taiwanese officials or African recipients ever identified such an explicit link. Still, the statistical pattern suggests enduring relations with Taiwan may come at an economic cost.

Second, the empirical analysis is consistent with the growing influence of China, but says little about the substance of PRC–Africa relations. The increasing amounts of Chinese aid and investment are without dispute (Pehnelt 2007; McLaughlin 2005; Brautigam 2010). Debates endure regarding whether China's efforts to secure natural resources are a form of neocolonialism (Zweig and Bi 2005; Frynas and Paulo 2006; Melber 2007) whereby China is simply repeating the colonial-era exploitation of resource-rich areas of Africa, albeit without political control, and paying lip service (if that) to a deeper, mutually beneficial relationship. The results, however, contrast with views that Chinese interests are centred only around natural resources. While over three-quarters of African exports to China originate from oil-rich Angola, Equatorial Guinea, Nigeria, Congo-Brazzaville and Sudan (IMF 2005; Hanson 2008), Chinese companies

have expanded rapidly in 49 countries across the continent, numbering over 2,000 by 2012 (see Alden 2007: 14; Cheng 2012).

Furthermore, the diplomatic truce established in 2008 prevents countries from essentially offering diplomatic recognition to the highest bidder, a game which, as China's economy grows, Taiwan simply could not expect to compete in. The truce also ended a self-perpetuating cycle of diplomatic shifts. Previously, each diplomatic loss to "dollar diplomacy" simply freed up money to be spent attempting to lure away another country. Aid was often increased to Taiwan's loyal diplomatic allies after the latter "lost" a country to China. For example, aid intended for Malawi was given to Swaziland in 2008 after Malawi switched recognition months before the diplomatic truce (*AllAfrica.com* 2012). Yet, it remains unclear as to whether the truce or the so-called "Chinese Marshall Plan" has frozen in place existing Taiwan–Africa relations or simply created fewer avenues for Taiwanese influence on the continent.

Last, the findings conflict with arguments claiming that Taiwan's democratization has helped maintain diplomatic relations. Empirical evidence suggests that diplomatic recognition of Taiwan among African countries is more likely when the two political systems differ greatly. As such, Taiwan again is in a precarious position: To encourage democratic reforms in Africa appears to also encourage a switch in recognition to China. Again, this is not to suggest that Taiwanese officials intentionally discourage reforms, but that the recognizing African state is unlikely to have similar goals related to the recognition.

## Concluding Remarks

This paper provides a mixed-methods approach to viewing Taiwan–Africa relations. As with other areas of the developing world, much of Africa has been wooed by China's "charm offensive". While the diplomatic truce may have prevented Taiwan from losing its three remaining diplomatic allies on the continent, Taiwan is not necessarily destined to lose out to Chinese interests. Potential backlash to Chinese investment may still push an African country to unilaterally break diplomatic relations with Beijing, a possibility that would provide a serious challenge to maintaining the truce and give Taiwan the opportunity to develop greater informal, if not formal, relations with

the given country. Similarly, Taiwan may focus on specific aid niches that either complement Chinese strategies in Africa or at least fly under the radar of Beijing officials. Taiwan could also establish informal offices throughout more of Africa, much like the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Offices (TECRO). Currently, the only African nation with a TECRO office is South Africa. While expanding formal diplomatic relations is unlikely, one should be hesitant to assume that Taiwan is quickly becoming locked out of Africa. Simply put, economic diplomacy offers Taiwan options to expand its role in international relations where formal diplomatic recognition is unlikely.

Taiwan's historical relations with African countries further highlight theoretical blind spots in the literature on diplomatic recognition. Whereas much of the literature remains focused on major countries recognizing smaller ones, the Taiwan case emphasizes the role of smaller political powers and in the process presents a narrative where African countries have greater agency. This analysis suggests greater attention be placed on our conceptions and rationales for diplomatic relations, especially as globalization arguably erodes the importance of states as the main actors in international relations. The dual forces of economic globalization and the rise of the PRC as a political and economic powerhouse present clear challenges to Taiwan's diplomatic efforts. Yet, while these forces create greater incentives for African countries to pursue relations with China and even challenge the diplomatic truce, economic globalization also increases connections between Taiwan and China in areas where political diplomacy has largely failed. Ultimately, this analysis highlights the growing role of economic interests rather than ideological commitments in Taiwan's diplomacy.

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