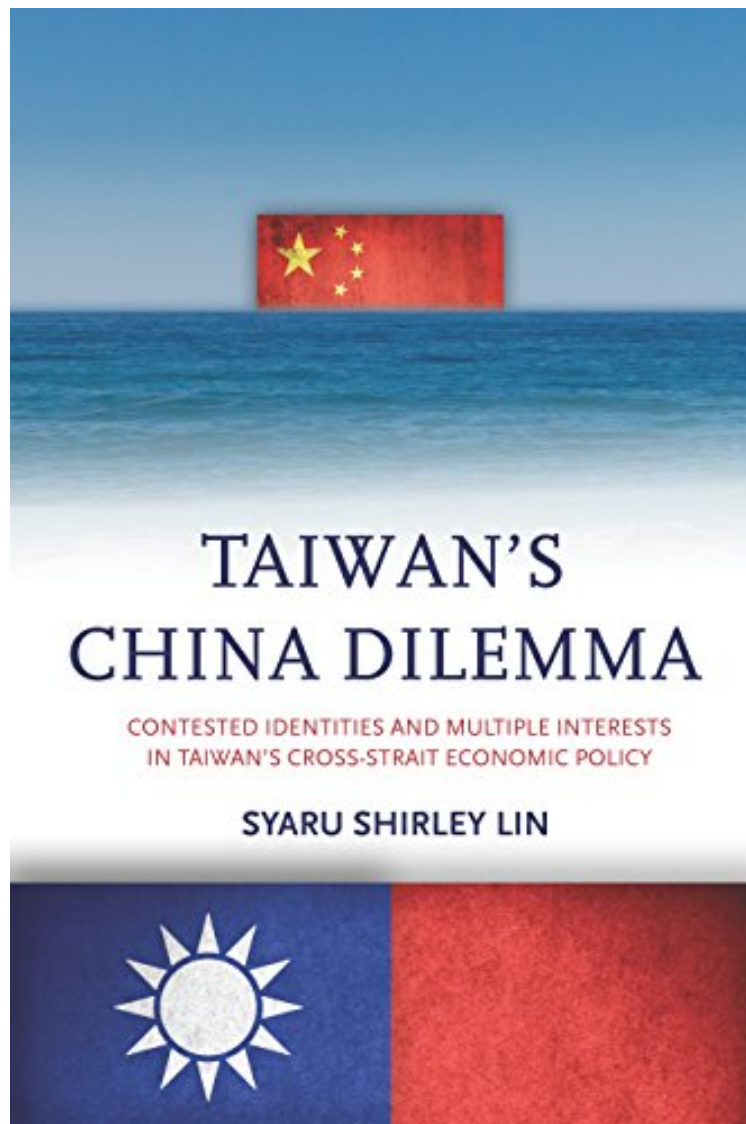


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# Taiwan's China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan's Cross-Strait Economic Policy

*Syaru Shirley Lin*

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**Syaru Shirley Lin : Taiwan's China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan's Cross-Strait Economic Policy** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Taiwan's China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan's Cross-Strait Economic Policy:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Best Taiwan Book On Identity Politics and Comparative Politics

with China

By Jin Ming Pan "Taiwan's China Dilemma: Contested Identities and Multiple Interests in Taiwan's Cross-Strait Economic Policy"

Identity politics are one of the toughest issues to resolve. They are formed of intangibles, that are often times constructed, potentially distorted, and contested. Thus, when two countries are more are caught in a historical struggle, the right and wrong are hard to separate. Making the issue more too complex to explicate. Invariably, even when one side is right, while the other side is wrong, facts don't necessarily make an issue any easier to overcome.

Take Taiwan's view of Chinese history, for example. Beijing often insists that One China is a must. As a political principle this may yet be valid. But, historically, even by China's own account, the "actual" history of China is based on the ebbs and flows of various dynasties-----often several dynasties co-existing together at the same stage.

This is has been the "norm" which scholars and Sinologists in Taiwan have adopted. During the Warring period, various dynasties would fight and gnaw at each other's influence, forming fluid and flexible alliances, around a central area called "Zhong Guo," or Middle Kingdom. As anyone taking a course with Professor Peter Bol in China X would attest, this argument has strong historical, archaeological and scientific basis. But the prevalence of such historical epochs----what Sir Paul Collier at University of Oxford called "re-productive scales of violence," all with the single aim to neutralize the other, in order to form an ever larger state, unitary or otherwise----is normal. So normal in fact that the actual oddity is "one China," not several Chinas; never mind the belief that Qin Dynasty had reunified China since 200 B.C. This is where Shirley Lin's excellent book on Taiwan and China comes into sharp relief: It tells a story in the contemporary parlance, but with all the facts that showcase the fluid nature of Taiwanese identity politics; which increasingly are pro Taiwan. Backed by facts, in addition to nascent nationalism, more than half of the population in Taiwan, according to Shirley Lin, had across the last 30 years, become more and more "Taiwanese," or "Taiwanese Chinese." Such numbers continue to trend ever higher since 1992, the year when these polls were first recorded. Indeed, the number of people identifying themselves as (mainland) "Chinese" is declining, and dropping precipitously. And, this will remain the case, as Taiwanese feel more connected to the social political system of their own construction; rather than something across the Taiwan Strait, which seems more and more removed----even if Taiwanese businessmen do prefer to trade with China, and have actually increased the trade volume. But, even as the economic interdependence of Taiwan and China continues to grow, political discussion of the future of China and Taiwan remain far and few between, especially after the "Koo-Wang Dialogue" hosted by Singapore in 1999, of which the author Shirley was a translator, thus, a direct observer. This is where her book is both powerful, and objective, as she was right there in the whole process. But "Taiwan's China Dilemma" is impressive in three other ways too. First, the graphs and info-graphics, which show the 'feedback loop' of the identity politics, were extremely complete, and well laid out, through out the book. This helps the students understand the "co-evolutionary narrative," where the independent and dependent variable is understood, not in a uni-dimensional manner, which can defeat the entire purpose of the book if one is not careful. Second, Shirley Lin has interviewed a huge number of policy makers on both sides, especially Taiwan, which is her forte. The views of Morris Chang, a major industrialist who is well respected in Taiwan and Hong Kong, not excluding China, helped to complement the opinions of other politicians in both sides of the aisle. The book is replete with the views of such high flyers, which makes the narrative even more compelling, since the "identity politics" of China and Taiwan are tied like a Gordian knot. Unless the influential leaders and decision makers take a crack at it first, no one can touch it with the proverbial ten feet pole. Third, the book is a primer that is useful not merely to Taiwan and China, but the United States too. US is currently managing its relations with China based on the Shanghai Communique in 1972, the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979, and The third and final communique; also known as August 17 communique; in 1982, reaffirms the desire of both sides to further strengthen economic, cultural, educational, scientific, and technological ties. Both sides also reaffirmed the statements made about the Taiwan issue in the previous communique;. Although no definitive conclusions were reached on the issue of arms sale to Taiwan, the United States did declare its intent to gradually decrease its sale of arms to Taiwan; something which the US has been hard put to do, as close to 1700-2000 Chinese missiles are still aimed at Taiwan as of the end of 2016. Due to the "strategic ambiguity" that exists in Sino-US relations----given neither side's willingness to address the issues face on----there is room for mis-judgement, if there is a lack of appreciation of Taiwan's growing identity assertion. Indeed, this assertiveness can only grow, not relent, with time. All sides, including ASEAN Regional Forum, have to keep pace with the issues at work. In 1996, the Cross Straits issue suddenly blew into the open, when President Jiang Ze Ming, in an attempt to challenge the Taiwanese credentials of President Lee Teng Hui, started lobbing missiles into the north end of Taiwan, in a display of sheer power. This move back fired, as it made he surrounding neighbors of China even more afraid---rather than accommodating----with its rise. Shirley Lin's book helps to unpack all the real and fictive nationalist and hyper nationalist emotions that have gone into the Sino Taiwan issues over the last thirty years at least. It deserves to sit on the book shelf of all top politics thinkers. Barring the attempt to learn from this book, the relations of Taiwan and China will resemble a cockerel fight.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. One of the best books about Taiwanese identity. By Kong Tzu An excellent and very informational book about contemporary Taiwanese identity and and how it connects to economic Cross-Strait policy. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By ctTahnk you!

China and Taiwan share one of the world's most complex international relationships. Although similar cultures and economic interests promoted an explosion of economic ties between them since the late 1980s, these ties have not led to an improved political relationship, let alone progress toward the unification that both governments once claimed to seek. In addition, Taiwan's recent Sunflower Movement succeeded in obstructing deeper economic ties with China. Why has Taiwan's policy toward China been so inconsistent? Taiwan's China Dilemma explains the divergence between the development of economic and political relations across the Taiwan Strait through the interplay of national identity and economic interests. Using primary sources, opinion surveys, and interviews with Taiwanese opinion leaders, Syaru Shirley Lin paints a vivid picture of one of the most unsettled and dangerous relationships in the contemporary world, and illustrates the growing backlash against economic liberalization and regional economic integration around the world.

"Shirley Lin brings an exceptional skill set to this detailed, sophisticated and insightful study of relations across the Taiwan Strait. In great detail she traces two contradictory trends: the consolidation of a national identity in Taiwan and the contention among different players over the best approach to managing unavoidably deepening economic ties across the Strait. At its heart this is a study of the constraints that shape the process of rule-making in international relations." (Thomas B. Gold, University of California Berkeley)"On first glance, Taiwan's economic policies toward China look very confusing. An economic logic alone does not explain the range of policy choices. But once one looks through the lens of Taiwan's political identity, as Shirley Lin does in her Taiwan's China Dilemma, all becomes clear. This is an important book." (Richard Bush Brookings Institution)"Lin uses innovative theoretical constructs to show how national identity defined as a dynamic, multidimensional social construct shapes Taiwan's evolving economic policy toward mainland China. Borrowing from an eclectic range of approaches, Lin sidesteps static binaries and moves the study of cross-Strait economic relations onto new, more fruitful ground." (Shelley Rigger Davidson College)"This important book offers an interesting new perspective on the politics of Taiwan's evolving economic policy toward mainland China. The combination of a fresh theoretical approach focusing on the role of national identity and strong empirical analysis make Taiwan's China Dilemma a must-read for anyone interested in the dynamic cross-Strait relationship." (Scott L. Kastner, University of Maryland College Park)About the Author Syaru Shirley Lin is a founding faculty member of the graduate program in Global Political Economy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She received her A.B. from Harvard College and her Ph.D. from the University of Hong Kong. She was previously a partner at Goldman Sachs, where she was responsible for private equity and venture capital investments in Asia.