

## Is this how China policy is made in Washington?

by Lydia Cherry

The Institute of Sino-Soviet Studies of George Washington University hosted a conference Sept. 15-16 entitled "Mainland China and Taiwan: Comparisons and Interactions." Participating were various academics, many of whom have a pipeline into policymaking, including through Gaston Sigur, director of the Institute and former National Security Council staff member and Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern and Pacific Affairs.

The conference was organized to exchange ideas on how the People's Republic of China and the Republic of China (Taiwan) might improve their bilateral relations, and how Washington might encourage such a development. In reality, the conference's main accomplishment was to offer yet another demonstration of why the subject of "political science" should be banned from the nation's universities and replaced with the study of universal history as defined by Friedrich Schiller and the classics.

The method, presumptions, and conclusions of the conference were nonsensical.

The most informative of the conference presentations was that of June Teufel Dreyer of the University of Miami, an unofficial consultant of Sigur's who presented a short history of the military relations between Taiwan and the P.R.C. However, even Dreyer's presentation was rife with "poli sci"-like definitions. She opened by "theorizing" that "strategic interaction can be either cooperative or hostile in nature, and both cooperation and hostility may occur in either active or passive forms." This is evidently the yardstick with which we will now view military hostilities between the R.O.C. and the P.R.C.

Shortly thereafter, she states the basic assumption of the conference: "*The most important source of discord*" between R.O.C. and P.R.C. "*is each government's claim to be the only legitimate government of one China, and to have administrative jurisdiction over each other's territory.*" In other words, *obstinacy* is the chief reason for the hostilities between the R.O.C. and the P.R.C. If only both sides would cease being so stubborn, then the "discord" could be eventually dissolved.

With this assumption, the entire history of 20th-century China, the absolute irreconcilability of the ideas of Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong, and the brutal criminality of the Beijing regime are simply swept off the table as so many irrelevancies.

The assumption that there is an identity between Taiwan

and the P.R.C. was carried further by Suzanne Ogden, an Associate in Research at the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University. The way to gauge the degree to which Taiwan and the mainland might reduce their hostilities is to see the degree to which they are both evolving into the same type of entity. Ogden opened her presentation by asking: "Key Question: Can we see similarities in Taiwan and P.R.C. in the evolution of political institutions and ideology from a Leninist, democratic-centralized, revolutionary and authoritarian party to a more democratic system?" Both the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communist Party were "rigidly hierarchical, authoritarian, dogmatic, and elitist," she asserted.

To be sure, Ogden indicated, the evolution into more democratic forms has been more successful in the R.O.C., which at least combines "Leninism" with an economic system that "promotes the values of liberal democracy in socio-political life." This is an exercise in Western "convergence theory," which the Beijing regime has been raving against ever since the June 4 Tiananmen massacre.

The implication is that since the R.O.C. has been moving faster toward political liberalization, it will become more accommodating toward Beijing, which is positive. This was underlined by Arthur Hummel, a former U.S. ambassador to Beijing, who asserts that "Taiwan no longer believes it can re-capture the mainland" and "Taiwan no longer thinks the P.R.C. will collapse." There were other references by conference participants to the fact that a "neanderthal" faction in Taiwan that continues to believe the government of the R.O.C. is the lawful government of the mainland, is receding.

The wishful thinking that ran as the unifying streak throughout the conference was taken to the hilt by Chien Min-Mao, from the Taiwan Institute of International Relations and now a resident at the Heritage Foundation. Hoping for a breakthrough in relations, he stated:

"The R.O.C. has been dependent on the P.R.C.'s blunders and irrationalities for breathing space. Future competition is based on both nations' efforts in rationalizing their political and economic systems to be smoothly incorporated into the world system, also, on Peking's avoidance of incidents like the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, the Peking Spring, Anti-Spiritual Pollution, and the Tiananmen Square Massacre. The rigid zero-sum game, however, might be gone forever."

To assess the reality of such hopes, we need only listen to the Beijing leaders themselves. In defending the Tiananmen Square "incident" against attacks from the West, Beijing spokesman Yuan Mu stated Sept. 6: "The various principles and policies we are pursuing and the various measures we have adopted, including putting down the counterrevolutionary rebellion in our country, are matters within the limits of our country's sovereignty. Countries with different social systems have different concepts of value. This is an objective fact."

Exactly.