From a Two-Chinas situation to a Taiwanese nation in the making. 
Realpolitik, national myths and the American factor in the evolution of Taiwan national politics

The current “national” opposition between Taiwan and Mainland China is often depicted as an “identity” question based on historical, cultural and linguistic differences. However, to be correctly assessed, it must also be perceived 1) through the original Two-Chinas situation from which it grew out, 2) in terms of democracy vs. autocracy, 3) as a result of American realpolitik and ideological influence.

This paper argues first, that the refusal by both ROC’s Chiang regime and the PRC to officially and internationally recognize the reality of a Two-Chinas situation laid the foundations of the emergence of Taiwan as a legitimate locus of political and national identification for the Taiwanese population;
Secondly, that in this context, the US were unintentionally a deciding factor in creating the political and intellectual conditions for the Taiwanese nation-building process to develop, through a series of US realpolitik decisions as well as the impact on Taiwanese nationalist movements of US’s own political discourse and national mythology centered on freedom and democracy.
Now, “Free China” has morphed into “Democratic Taiwan”, Taiwanese people do identify themselves with democratic values, and Taiwanese nationalists openly try to emulate the American Independence. But the success of US democratic discourse also places its One-China policy in an ideological and strategic bind.
Finally, a better alternative to keep playing on the ambiguity of this policy might therefore be for the US to slowly help reverse the denial of the Two-Chinas reality while holding the democratic principle as the cornerstone of any solution to the ROC/Taiwan – PRC/China political relation deadlock. In doing so, it would paradoxically assure both sides of the preservation of their respective priority – democracy / China theoretical unity - as well as US long term interests.

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