

Chapter 3

The Division of Labor and Strategy of CCP Authority toward Taiwan: Taking the Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as Examples

Shan-Son Kung*

I. Introduction

Since the end of Chinese Civil War, the authorities on two sides of the Taiwan Strait have been separated. For the further reunification of the motherland, the CCP government of mainland China finds it necessary to build the Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs directly under the CCP Central Committee. In 1954, Mao Zedong suggested to establish the Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs, which was further executed by Zhou Enlai. The group has gone through major historical events such as the cultural revolution and the Chinese economic reform. Its name was once changed to “The Central Group for Taiwan Affairs” under the ruling of Deng Xiaoping. After Jiang Zemin became the general secretary of the CCP Central Committee in 1993, the word “leading” was restored in the title. The group is led by Jiang Zemin and includes heads of five departments as regular members: the Taiwan Affairs Office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People’s Liberation Army, United Front Work Department and Ministry of State Security.¹ This basic formation of members has remained the same until now and is even

* Assistant Research Fellow, Division of Chinese Politics, Military and Warfighting Concepts, Institute for National Defense and Security Research.

¹ Kou, Chien-Wen, *The Organizational System and Personnel of Mainland China’s United Front Work with Taiwan*, Commissioned Research of Mainland Affairs Council, March 2019, pp. 39-48, <https://ws.mac.gov.tw/001/Upload/295/refile/7845/73953/dad82e36-96d1-43bc-a57e-47e3b777064b.pdf>.

expanded to include Ministry of State Security, Ministry of Commerce, and the Publicity Department into the group, with additions and deletions depending on the work requirements of the leaders in different times.

In this chapter, we choose the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Taiwan Affairs Office as research targets, both relating to The Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs (CLG). The two units share the common feature of presenting press releases on Taiwan-related issues. The Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) refers to the co-location of the Office of The Central Leading Group for Taiwan Affairs, the Office of Taiwan Affairs of the Central Taiwan Affairs Office, and the Office of Taiwan Affairs of the State Council, which is a typical “one set of staff with two titles of units” administration structure. The unit will thus be abbreviated as TAO in the following paragraphs. In terms of their duties, the official website of the MFA of China states its main responsibilities in Article 9, “To release information about important diplomatic activities, elaborate on foreign policies, conduct information-related work about important diplomatic activities, organize public diplomacy activities, and take charge of the affairs related to foreign journalists in China and resident foreign news agencies”, and in Article 13 “To handle, in accordance with law, diplomatic and consular affairs in Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions, and handle foreign affairs related to Taiwan.”² These two statements are the most relevant ones to the diplomatic discourse on Taiwan issues. The TAO, on the other hand, is responsible for handling “global and regional security, political, economic, human rights, social, refugee and other diplomatic affairs in the United Nations and other multilateral fora.”³ The difference of duties is that the MFA has less responsibility for Taiwan and is involved only in foreign affairs, while the major Taiwan-related events fall under the responsibility of the TAO.

The following framework of the chapter will introduce the discourses of the MFA and the TAO of China on specific events in Taiwan during 2021 with

² “Main Functions of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/wjb_673085/zyzz_673087/.

³ “Main Functions,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, <http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/jgsz/>.

summaries and comparisons. The purpose of this study is to understand the division of labor between the two units on Taiwan-related issues and whether there is significant difference of attitudes adopted on different issues or if they adopt a converging attack type of strategy. In this chapter, the scope of study would follow the format of this annual report, focusing on the important events that occurred during 2021, and further summarizes the patterns for future reference.

II. China's Discourse on Taiwan Issues for Major Events in 2021

Spokespersons from the MFA and the TAO of China would make statements at press conferences to state their positions for specific events, representing the official attitude of CCP on Taiwan-related issues. Their statements help U.S. understand the similarities and differences in the attitudes of the two departments toward the same or related events. Although the MFA runs a twitter account to publish its opinions, the TAO, on the other hand, only runs a Weibo account instead of twitter, and the contents are mostly just videos of press conferences, making it unavailable to make a clear contrast between the two. In the upcoming sections, we will continue to use the official press conference or press release as the target for discussion. The following analysis is organized by different major events.

1. The U.S.-Taiwan Official Contact

After the Trump administration lifted restrictions on U.S.-Taiwan relations in January 2021, Zhao Lijian, the spokesperson of MFA reiterated their position on the meeting of Assistant Secretary of State Clarke Cooper with Hsiao Bi-khim, the representative of the ROC (Taiwan) to the United States, “The one-China principle is the political foundation and fundamental precondition for the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the United States. ... It is the solemn pledge of the U.S. side not to have official interactions with the Taiwan region. It should honor its commitment and not misinterpret or deviate

from it under any pretext.”⁴ On March 29, Zhao Lijian, the spokesperson of the MFA, criticized the event of U.S. Ambassador of Palau visiting Taiwan with the President of Palau, “China firmly opposes any form of official interactions between the U.S. and Taiwan. This position is consistent and clear. We urge the U.S. side to fully recognize that the Taiwan question is highly sensitive, and that it should abide by the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués. It must stop any official interaction with Taiwan, refrain from sending any wrong signals to Taiwan independent forces, stop any attempt to cross the bottom line, and properly handle Taiwan-related issues with prudence, lest it should damage China-U.S. relations as well as peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”⁵ President Joe Biden sent a delegation to Taiwan for the first time since he takes office, which consists of former Senator Chris Dodd and former Deputy Secretaries of State Richard Armitage and James Steinberg. This, of course, drew oppositions from the MFA of China as well, whose Vice Minister, Le Yucheng, stated, “China firmly opposes any form of official engagement between the United States and Taiwan. Whether low-level or high-level, official engagement is what we firmly oppose. The United States should not play the ‘Taiwan card’. It is dangerous. The one-China principle is China’s red line. No one should try to cross it.”⁶ In September, the U.S. administration announced the possibility to change the name Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO) to the Taiwan Representative Office (TRO). In response to the possible renaming of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States (TECRO) to the Taiwan Representative Office, the spokesperson of MFA Zhao Lijian said, “The U.S. should abide by the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués, honor its commitments with concrete actions, stop all forms of official exchanges or elevating substantive relations with Taiwan, including not

⁴ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on January 12, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, January 29, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1845835.shtml.

⁵ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on March 29, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, March 29, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1865084.shtml.

⁶ “Le Yucheng, Vice Minister of Ministry of Foreign Affairs: China Firmly Opposes Any Form of Official Engagement between the United States and Taiwan,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, April 18, 2021, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjbxw_673019/t1869644.shtml.

renaming the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the U.S. the ‘Taiwan Representative Office’, and stop sending wrong signals to ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces. The U.S. side should handle the Taiwan question in a prudent manner, lest it should seriously undermine China-U.S. relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”⁷ We can thus conclude that on the issue of U.S.-Taiwan relations, the MFA of China mostly protested and appealed to the One-China Principle and the Three Joint Communiqués in their statements. They especially discourage the trend of U.S. administration propelling Taiwan away from China.

The TAO and the MFA of China share the same position on the issues of U.S.-Taiwan contact. For example, their spokesperson Zhu Fenglian made a warning on January 7, 2021, targeting a political-military dialogue between Taiwan and the United States, “The DPP authorities should immediately terminate any kind of official contacts and military ties with the U.S. They should not go further down to the wrong path of ‘Relying on the United States for Independence’. They should not push the people of Taiwan into disaster, or else they will be severely punished.”⁸ Then on January 21, Zhu Fenglian made another statement to Hsiao Bi-khim, the representative of ROC (Taiwan) in the United States, who attended the Inauguration of President Biden. Zhu stated that CCP “is firmly opposed to any form of official relations between the United States and Taiwan. The U.S. should abide by the one-China principle as well as the three China-U.S. joint communiqués while treating the Taiwan Question in an appropriate manner.” Zhu also appealed to the Taiwan authority that “the DPP authorities can never cover up its nature of ‘Taiwan independence’ with any tricks or excuses. The DPP authorities will have their own consequences if they go further on the path of Taiwan independence.”⁹

⁷ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on September 13, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, September 13, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhs1_673025/t1906645.shtml.

⁸ “Taiwan Affairs Offices: DPP Authorities Should Not go Further down to the Wrong Path of ‘Relying on the United States for Independence’,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, January 7, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202101/t20210107_12315774.htm.

⁹ “Response from Zhu Feng-Lian, Spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, January 21, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202101/t20210121_12326462.htm.

On March 26, Zhu Fenglian criticized the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) and the Taiwan Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) for signing the *Memorandum of Understanding on Establishing the Coast Guard Working Group, CGWG*, “We are firmly opposed to any form of official relations between the United States and China in Taiwan, or the signing of any agreement with sovereign implications. ... the DPP authorities will only drive Taiwan into disaster if they continue to rely on the United States for Independence and betraying national interests.”¹⁰ On April 13, Ma Xiaoguang, the spokesperson for the TAO, criticized on U.S.’ lifting restrictions for contacts with Taiwan in the *New Guidelines for U.S. Government Interactions with Taiwan Counterpart*, “We are firmly opposed to the development of any form of official relations between the United States and Taiwan. ... The U.S. should abide by the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués. It is a solemn commitment made by the U.S. government to the Chinese authority. We urge the U.S. government to abide by its commitments with practical actions, instead of sending wrong signals to forces of Taiwan independence, and to safeguard peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.” He added a rigid sentence in the last part, saying that “If the DPP authorities rely on the United States for Independence, they shall be doomed to fail.”¹¹ As for the discussion on changing the name of TECRO to “Taiwan Representative Office,” Zhu Fenglian, the spokesperson of TAO, said on September 13, “We are firmly opposed to the development of any form of official relations or the establishment of official institutions between Taiwan and countries with diplomatic relations with China. ... The DPP authorities are doomed to fail, no matter how they play their tricks to promote Taiwan independence.”¹² To sum up the statements of the TAO,

¹⁰ “Taiwan Affairs Office: We are Firmly Opposed to Any Agreement Signed with Sovereign Implications between the United States and China in Taiwan,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, March 26, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202103/t20210326_12341108.htm.

¹¹ “Taiwan Affairs Office: We are Firmly Opposed to Any Form of Official Relations between the United States and China in Taiwan,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, April 13, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202104/t20210413_12345104.htm.

¹² “Taiwan Affairs Office: We are Firmly Opposed to the Establishment of Official Institutions between Taiwan and Countries with Diplomatic Relations with China,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, September 13, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202109/t20210913_12378056.htm.

we could see that they are not only corresponding to the attitude of warning against U.S. with the MFA, but also criticizes the DPP government's strategic choice of relying on the U.S. to resist the pressure of Chinese unification.

2. U.S. Military Aircraft at Taiwan

In June 2021, the U.S. Congressmen arrived at Taiwan in U.S. Army Aircrafts, symbolizing a breakthrough of the cooperation of our country with U.S. military since the Biden administration took office. CCP, for sure, is not glad to see such development, which is why they strongly criticized the event yet was unable to break out of the pattern of their past criticism. On June 7, for instance, Wang Wenbin, the spokesperson for the MFA of China, showed his status on the event of U.S. Senate visiting Taiwan on a C-17 to meet President Tsai Ing-wen. As usual, they requested U.S. “to immediately discontinue all forms of official interactions with Taiwan and handle issues relating to Taiwan in a prudent manner. It should avoid sending any wrong signal to ‘Taiwan independence’ separatists and causing further damage to China-U.S. relations and peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.”¹³ Ma Xiaoguang, the spokesperson for the TAO, also requested that “U.S. should abide by the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués. They should also handle the Taiwan Question prudently and appropriately, while any forms of the official contacts and military ties between U.S. and Taiwan should be terminated.” Comparing to TAO, the MFA, however, went further and directly accused the Taiwan government of sentences like “the situation of pandemic on the island continues to get worse. The DPP authorities are ignoring the well-being of Taiwan compatriots by deliberately provoking cross-strait relations. DPP authorities’ once again showed their disregard for the lives of the people, their ignorance for the health and well-being of the Taiwanese people. Such political manipulation in pursuit of ‘independence’ is an ugly expression”.¹⁴

¹³ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin’s Regular Press Conference on June 7, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, June 7, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1881907.shtml.

¹⁴ “Taiwan Affairs Office Responding to Three U.S. Congressmen Visiting Taiwan,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, June 7, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202106/t20210607_12357590.htm.

From the statements of the MFA and the TAO on the U.S. military plane carrying the U.S. Congressman to Taiwan, we could see that while both units urged the United States to abide by the One-China Principle and the three communiqués, the latter focused more on criticizing the Taiwanese government and ruling party. It is customary for TAO to make inappropriate connections between U.S.-Taiwan affairs and Taiwan independence. For example, Zhu Fenglian, the spokesperson for TAO, indicated on July 15 when another U.S. military transport plane landed in Taiwan, “We are firmly opposed to any form of military ties between Taiwan and the United States to enhance the sovereign security. We encourage that the U.S. should abide by the one-China principle and the three China-U.S. joint communiqués. The DPP authorities should stop their provocation of seeking independence in any forms of connections with external forces. If they continue to refuse reunification, they may lead the people of Taiwan to disaster, and their plan is bound to fail”,¹⁵ which shows the evident verbal attack of TAO against the DPP government.

3. The Opening of the Taiwanese Representative Office in Lithuania

As for the event of our government establishing a representative office in Lithuania, Zhao Lijian, the spokesperson of MFA responded on July 20, 2021, “China firmly opposes any official exchanges and the mutual establishment of so-called ‘representative offices’ between Taiwan and countries with diplomatic relations with China. We urge the Lithuanian side to adhere to the one-China principle and honor its commitment made upon the establishment of diplomatic ties. Also a word of advice to the Taiwan authorities: ‘Taiwan independence’ leads to a dead end and any attempt to create ‘two Chinas’ or ‘one China, one Taiwan’ will not succeed.”¹⁶ Later on August 10, the CCP recalled its ambassadors due to their assumptions that Lithuania had stepped over their boundaries on Taiwan

¹⁵ “U.S. Military Transport Plane Landed in Taiwan, TAO: We are Firmly Opposed to Any Form of Military Ties between Taiwan and the United States,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, July 15, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202107/t20210715_12366076.htm.

¹⁶ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on July 20, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, July 10, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1893709.shtml.

issues. On the same day, the spokesperson of TAO, Zhu Fenglian, also stated their position, “We oppose the development of official relations between our diplomatic partners and Taiwan. We urge Lithuania to abide by the One-China Principle instead of sending wrong signals to the forces of Taiwan independence. The setting of the representative office is nothing but a farce set by the DPP authorities and the Taiwan independence forces with the aim of seeking ‘independence’.”¹⁷ Not only do the two Taiwan-related organizations share the same stance when speaking public statements, but they both attack the Taiwan government with harsh critiques.

With Lithuania’s change of diplomatic attitude as a starting point, the European External Action Service Ministry further stated that the establishment of “representative offices” between EU member states and Taiwan does not violate the One-China Policy. In response to this, the spokesperson of the MFA of China, Hua Chunying, requested EU on August 13, “Any country, when following the one-China policy, must strictly abide by the one-China principle, including severing all official ties with the Taiwan authorities. ...China urges the EU to uphold a correct position on Taiwan-related issues and refrain from sending wrong signals on issues concerning China’s core interests and creating new troubles for China-EU relations.”¹⁸ CCP is obviously worrying that the change of attitude on the One-China Policy in international communities might spread from Lithuania to the whole EU, urging them to react immediately. From the statements of these two Taiwan-related departments, we could see how CCP is trying to prevent the change of diplomatic attitude toward Taiwan from other countries, which could make the situation more and more unfavorable to China and even gradually shaking the EU’s long-standing One-China Principle.

¹⁷ “Taiwan Affairs Office: We Oppose the Development of Official Relations between Our Diplomatic Partners and Taiwan,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, July 20, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202107/t20210720_12367042.htm.

¹⁸ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying’s Remarks on the U.S. and EU’s Wanton Comments on China’s Recall of Its Ambassador to Lithuania,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, August 13, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/dhdw_673027/t1899285.shtml.

4. Vaccines Given to Taiwan by Various Countries

Although there have been many countries who donated vaccines to Taiwan since the outbreak of COVID-19 in May, China's political statements does not target to those countries, but focused primarily on the donations of the United States and Japan instead. Wang Wenbin, the spokesperson for the MFA of China, for instance, responded to Japan's announcement in May 2021 of donating vaccines to Taiwan, "We are firmly against those who exploit the pandemic to put on political shows or even meddle in China's internal affairs. ...the Japanese government's announcement of considering providing vaccines to China's Taiwan region has drawn doubts from media and the public including in Taiwan." Taking advantage of this incident, he also made an accusation that "the DPP authorities, proceeding from selfish political calculations, turned a blind eye to the goodwill of the mainland, and even resorted to malicious smears and various other means to thwart the shipment of vaccines from the mainland to the island. This is running roughshod over the life and health of our compatriots in Taiwan."¹⁹ The TAO has repeatedly criticized the DPP government's restrictions of vaccine donations from China to Taiwan.²⁰ They refuted the saying of China interfering with Japanese donations but has not made any direct accusations against Japan. On the other hand, when the 2.5 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines donated by the U.S. arrived in Taiwan on June 20; Zhao Lijian, the spokesperson of MFA only made a soft statement toward this event, "The mainland and Taiwan are one family. Our hearts are with our Taiwan compatriots who are faced with the grave situation. We have always made clear the readiness to do our utmost to help our compatriots in Taiwan overcome the difficulties at an early date." They also urged the U.S. side "not to use vaccine aid for political maneuver or interference in China's internal affairs" and accused the DPP authorities of "trying every means to obstruct the shipping of vaccines from the mainland to Taiwan, and even falsely claimed

¹⁹ "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Regular Press Conference on May 31, 2021," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, May 31, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhs1_673025/t1880107.shtml.

²⁰ "Taiwan Affairs Office: Lies Cannot Help DDP Escape the Guilt of Ignoring People's Lives and Health," *Taiwan Affairs Office*, June 7, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202106/t20210607_12357599.htm.

that the mainland was obstructing its vaccine procurement. For their own selfish political gains, the DPP authorities constantly seek political manipulation over anti-epidemic cooperation, showing disregard of the lives and health of Taiwan compatriots and violating the basic humanitarian spirit.”²¹

The statements and attitudes of the TAO toward vaccine issues are different from the focus of the MFA of China when seeing foreign countries helping Taiwan with vaccines. TAO has been denouncing the Taiwan government since early 2021, mainly by denying China’s obstruction of Taiwan’s vaccine procurement and criticizing Taiwan’s restrictions on Chinese vaccine imports to Taiwan. On the former issue, Ma Xiaoguang, the spokesperson of TAO, implied on Feb. 18, “The so-called ‘mainland factor hindering the procurement of BNT Pfizer vaccine to Taiwan’ is a complete fabricated and false statement, which, once again, revealed the immoral and uncontrollable political nature of DPP politicians.”²² On May 27, Zhu Fenglian, the spokesperson of TAO, re-emphasized that “The claim of Mainland China hindering the procurement of BNT vaccines to Taiwan is merely a rumor. These lies told by the leaders of the DPP authorities once again expose their consistent ways of political manipulation, such as blaming the mainland and shifting the focus to cover up the problem.”²³ On June 2, Ma Xiaoguang also claimed that “the DPP authorities set up their own obstacles and did not procure the BNT vaccine through normal agency channels. Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd. is the only agent for the German BNT vaccine in Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan. It is basic business logic that the purchase of the BNT vaccine should only be conducted through Shanghai Fosun Pharmaceutical Co. The DPP authorities know it too well, yet they still insisted on doing it in an opposite way

²¹ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on June 21, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, June 21, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1885422.shtml.

²² “Taiwan Affairs Office: The Claim of Mainland China Hindering the Sale of BNT Vaccines to Taiwan is Merely a Rumor,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, February 18, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202102/t20210218_12332879.htm.

²³ “Taiwan Affairs Office: The Claim of Mainland China Hindering the Sale of BNT Vaccines to Taiwan is Merely a Rumor,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, May 27, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202105/t20210527_12355405.htm.

instead of purchasing in the appropriate approach.”²⁴ From the comment, we could see that the TAO has been trying to pass the buck for hindering Taiwan’s vaccine procurement.

The restrictions on the import of CCP vaccines into Taiwan was also the focus of the TAO’s discourses. They supported this argument with the publicity of some Taiwanese examples who were willing to get CCP vaccines, such as CCP’s vaccine donations to Kinmen and Matsu, which had been rejected by Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council. Thus, on May 28, Zhu Fenglian, the spokesperson for the TAO, stated, “The Mainland Affairs Council’s statement is just an excuse to hinder Taiwan compatriots from using mainland vaccines that could help stop the spread of pandemic as soon as possible.”²⁵ Zhu Fenglian followed up with another criticism on May 31, “Some political parties, groups, individuals and counties on the island have repeatedly appealed to the DPP authorities to lift the political restrictions so that mainland vaccines could be imported to Taiwan as soon as possible. ... On the contrary, the DPP authorities have allowed their devilish political intentions to take over under such critical moment of pandemic prevention. The company has been ignoring the voices of the people of Taiwan, the lives and the health of the people. Their manipulation of constant political tricks shows their attempt to divert attention and blur the focus by blaming on the mainland for their own faults.”²⁶ On June 1, Ma Xiaoguang took over the discussion, “The DPP authorities should seriously listen to the calls for safe vaccines from people of the island, takithe safety of the lives and interests of Taiwan compatriots in the first place. They should change their approach of political manipulation on the vaccine issue as soon as possible by lifting the bans

²⁴ “Taiwan Authorities Falsely Claim that the Mainland Interfered with the Vaccine Procurement Process, TAO: a Trick out of Nowhere to Avoid Responsibilities,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, June 2, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202106/t20210602_12356578.htm.

²⁵ “Mainland Affairs Council Making up Excuses to Hinder Mainland Vaccines from Taiwan, TAO: A Cold-blooded Action,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, May 28, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202105/t20210528_12355644.htm.

²⁶ “TAO Appealing to DPP Authorities: It is Better to Cast away the Political Demons and Stop Harming the Well-being of People on the Island,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, May 31, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202105/t20210531_12356084.htm.

so that the Chinese vaccines can be imported to Taiwan as soon as possible”.²⁷ On June 15, Ma Xiaoguang further criticized, “The DPP authorities are still refusing to introduce vaccines from the Mainland to Taiwan. When it comes to importing vaccines into Taiwan in the name of non-governmental organizations, they have set up spontaneous barriers such as complicated procedures and demanding requirements”.²⁸ Judging from the statements of TAO, we could see that their approach is to keep blaming the Taiwanese government for the failure of the vaccine procurement in general and the importing of Chinese vaccines to Taiwan. They were trying to put more political pressure on Taiwan in order to create an image of ineffective pandemic prevention by ignoring the objective scientific evidence to twist the true reason of restrictions.

5. Japan Raising Awareness on Cross-Strait Security

In 2021, Japan has repeatedly expressed its concern about cross-strait security and has kept close cooperation with the U.S. On April 20, 2021, therefore, Ma Xiaoguang, spokesperson for the TAO, responded to the joint statement issued by the U.S. and Japan concerning the cross-strait situation, “We urge the United States and Japan to abide by the One-China Principle, to properly address the Taiwan Question, and to stop interfering in China’s domestic affairs. The DPP authorities, who rely much on the foreign powers to elevate themselves, are becoming the pawn of anti-China forces in the game, which will only put Taiwan in a more dangerous situation.”²⁹ Japanese Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Tarō Asō, made another clear statement afterwards, suggesting that “Japan would have to defend Taiwan with the United States.” Zhu Feng Lian, spokesperson

²⁷ “TAO: DPP Authorities should Lift the Bans so that the Chinese Vaccines can be Imported to Taiwan as soon as Possible.” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, June 1, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202106/t20210601_12356328.htm.

²⁸ “TAO Appealing to DPP Authorities: It is better to Lift the Bans so that the Chinese Vaccines can be Imported to Taiwan as soon as Possible for the Sake of Well-being for the People on the Island,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, June 16, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202106/t20210616_12359728.htm.

²⁹ “Taiwan Affairs Office: We Urge the United States and Japan to Abide by the One-China Principle and to Stop Interfering in China’s Domestic Affairs,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, April 20, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202104/t20210420_12346817.htm.

of TAO, commented on this on July 6, “Some Japanese politicians have made a series of misleading remarks on Taiwan-related issues. These words are the clear violation of Japan’s political commitments to China on the Taiwan Question. They disobeyed the spirit of the four political documents of China and Japan, the international law and the standards of international relations. We are firmly opposed to this kind of situations.”³⁰ On July 20, the administrative vice minister Mori Takeo, the MFA of Japan had a talk with the visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, in which they reiterated the importance of cross-strait peace and stability, while expressing serious concern about Uygur and Hong Kong issues. In response to this, Zhao Lijian, spokesperson of MFA, expressed strong dissatisfaction and resolute opposition, stressing that “issues relating to Taiwan, Hong Kong and Xinjiang are China’s internal affairs that allow no foreign interference. No one should underestimate the resolve, the will and the ability of the Chinese people to defend their national sovereignty and territorial integrity.”³¹ These joint statements presented by the U.S. and Japan on cross-strait security have put pressure on both MFA of China and the TAO to give their response. The two units could merely reiterate the One-China Principle to the public and restate that the Taiwan Question are part of the internal affairs of the CCP.

Aside from the U.S.-Japanese alliance, the Japanese government itself has also increased the weight of its speeches or policies on the cross-strait situations. For example, Japan has released the 2021 edition of the Defense White Paper on July 13, and for the first time, the importance of stability in Taiwan’s periphery was mentioned in the White Paper. Zhao Lijian, spokesperson of MFA made his accusations, “The Japanese side have been making issues out of China, grossly interfering in China’s internal affairs, making groundless accusation of China’s normal national defense and military activities...China deplores and rejects this...Taiwan is part of China and the Taiwan question is purely China’s internal

³⁰ “Taiwan Affairs Office: We Urge Japan to Stop all Wrong Deeds on Taiwan-related Issues,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, July 6, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202107/t20210706_12364135.htm.

³¹ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on July 22, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, July 22, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1894384.shtml.

affairs. China never allows interference in the Taiwan question in any form by any country.”³² Japan’s Deputy Minister of Defense Nakayama Yasuhide said on September 8, “The stability of Taiwan is important to Japanese security and linked to the peace and stability of the international community.” According to his speech, the MFA of China made serious representations to the Japanese authority. The spokesperson Zhao Lijian expressed his strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition on this issue and denounced that “Japan should stop interfering in China’s domestic affairs, avoid undermining China’s sovereignty in any form and refrain from sending wrong signals to ‘Taiwan independence’ forces in any form.”³³ Regarding Japan’s own position, it seems that the MFA has always been the one to stand out and comment on events, while TAO does not intervene much on Japanese issues.

The progress of Taiwan-Japan relations in 2021 has also evoked the anxiousness of MFA and TAO of China. Facing several statements of Japanese government officials repeatedly and openly calling Taiwan as a country, Ma Xiaoguang, spokesperson of TAO, stated on June 11, “We urge the Japanese authority to correct its mistake immediately and take practical action to abide by the One-China Principle as well as the spirit of the four political documents of China and Japan. They should be cautious on the Taiwan Question and stop sending any wrong signals to the Taiwan independence forces.” He also warned that “the DPP authorities and the ‘Taiwan independence’ separatist forces are trying to collude with foreign powers to create violating actions against the One-China Principle, which would not change the fact that Taiwan is part of China.”³⁴ On June 16, Ma Xiaoguang also commented on the Japanese Senate’s endorsement of Taiwan’s participation in the World Health Assembly (WHA), “The DPP authorities are held accountable for the failure of Taiwan attending WHA, since they deny the

³² “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on July 13, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, July 13, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1891716.shtml.

³³ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on September 9, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, September 9, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1905828.shtml.

³⁴ “Taiwan Affairs Office: We Urge Japan to Immediately Correct Its Mistake and be Cautious in Its Words on the Taiwan Question,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, June 11, 2021, http://www.gwytt.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202106/t20210611_12358830.htm.

1992 Consensus and refuse to accept the One-China Principle. What the Japanese authority should do is to treat and reflect on the dishonorable history of aggression in a correct way, and to abide by the One-China Principle as well as the spirit of the four political documents of China and Japan. They should stop pointing fingers and give judgements on the Taiwan Question.”³⁵ On August 27, 2021, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Japan and the DPP authority of Taiwan held an online “2+2 Dialogue” conference. In response to this, Zhao Lijian, spokesperson for the MFA, commented the same day, “Taiwan is an inalienable part of China’s territory. China firmly opposes all forms of official interactions between Taiwan and countries having diplomatic ties with China. The Chinese side has lodged solemn representation to the Japanese side. The Taiwan question concerns the political foundation of China-Japan relations... We seriously ask Japan to stop interfering in China’s domestic affairs, and refrain from sending wrong signals to ‘Taiwan independence’ forces.”³⁶ As summarized above, the CCP’s discourses and statements toward Japan are slightly different from their demands to the United States, standing at the moral high ground while using the historical feud between China and Japan as the material. They further highlighted the spirit of the four political documents between China and Japan, which includes not to interfere in the domestic affairs of the CCP, while the TAO will often give additional accusations on the Taiwan government.

III. The Division of Labor and Strategy toward Taiwan between the MFA and TAO

1. The MFA of China and TAO Sharing the Same Position, yet Each has Its Own Focus

From the summary of speeches of both the MFA and the TAO, we could figure

³⁵ “Taiwan Affairs Office: Japan should Stop Giving Judgements on the Taiwan Question,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, June 16, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202106/t20210616_12359723.htm.

³⁶ “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on August 27, 2021,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, August 27, 2021, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1902491.shtml.

out that when major events involving countries of international communities happened, MFA's criticism does not target directly to Taiwan but rather the third country who has involved in the event. Their intention is to accuse those countries' Taiwan-friendly policies and to put political pressure on them. The structure of discourse often began by condemning the third country for violating the One-China Principle or other political documents relating to CCP. The ending of the statement would often be concluded with appeals to stop sending the wrong signal about the issue of Taiwan independence. On the other hand, the Taiwan government has remained as the main target of TAO's speeches for major events. Although their discourses often resonate with the statements of MFA, the main content of their words would still focus on criticizing the DPP government of its actions or administration. They depreciated the progress Taiwan has made in major events and often end with a harsh warning about Taiwan independence at the end of their discussions.

To sum up, the MFA and the TAO together share an overlapping division of labor, while the former focusing on foreign affairs and the latter on statements toward Taiwan. The former prevents the world from interacting with the Taiwanese government, while the latter prevents the Taiwanese government from interacting with the world. There are also some details worth noting on the wording of the statements. The warning of TAO has been explicitly limited to the DPP government, actions of "Taiwanese independence" labeled by CCP, or even mere interactions with other countries. Such a division of opinion is effective to the implementation of its united front work against Taiwan, which means it does not overly expand the group of targets to those who can be won over through their assessment. Therefore, if we compare the objectives of the two separate units, there is clear evidence that TAO has been given a more diversified role in Taiwan-related issues than the MFA, which is still practicing the "wolf warrior diplomacy".

In Figure 3-1, the timeline is organized by the five major events mentioned above. We could see from the chart that before the rise of pandemic in Taiwan and the subsequent worries about the lack of vaccines in May 2021, the MFA and TAO each had different duties of publicity. The former targeted their focus on a third-

party country relating to the Taiwan diplomacy and the latter is directed at the Taiwan government. We cannot exclude possibilities of two units having a common target in individual cases. For example, when controversy appears over whether the procurement of BNT vaccine was hindered by CCP, the MFA also participated in the accusations to Taiwan's DPP government. In the case of establishing representative offices between Taiwan and Lithuania, the MFA of China also accused the DPP government of seeking "independence". The MFA and TAO of China, despite their legal separation of duties, both participated in discursive accusation directly to the DPP government in Taiwan. While the distinction of responsibilities between the two units remains, MFA has clearly begun to increase the frequency of giving aggressive statements and to change their role towards Taiwan. It will be an interesting issue to see whether the interests of the TAO's departmental role will be weakened in the future.

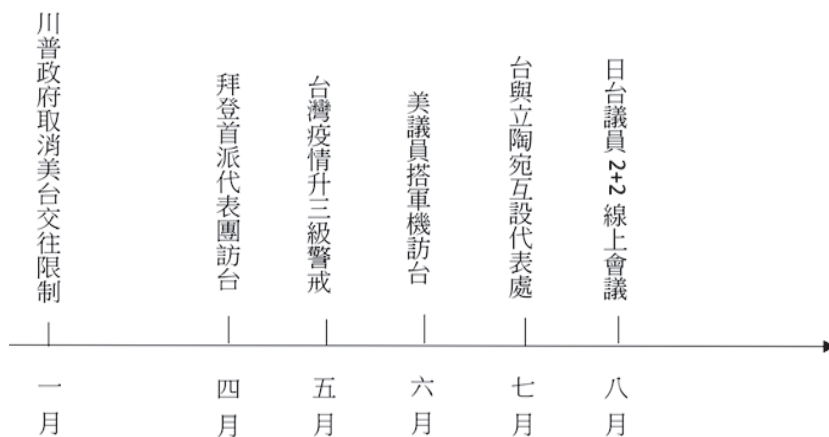


Figure 3-1 Timeline of Important Taiwan-related Events in 2021

Source: graph drawn by author.

2. TAO Serves as a Conciliatory Force of United Front Work to Taiwan

From the previous paragraphs, we could find evident proof that TAO has been taking the main responsibility of united front work with Taiwan, with the strategy of “promoting integration through communication, benefit, and affection” highlighted in 2021. In this research, we demonstrate a compilation of several important examples of publicity on Taiwan issues in 2021. Firstly, CCP has responded to the COVID-19 pandemic situation by welcoming Taiwan compatriots to China for vaccination. Ma Xiaoguang, spokesperson of TAO, deliberately released the following message on April 14 regarding Taiwan compatriots in mainland China who have access for vaccination, “According to the jus soli principle and policy of equal treatment, the same policies and regulations are applied as those for mainland residents in the region where they are located. That is, on the premise of informed consent and willingness, one can register for vaccination at their place of residence if they possess the Residence Permit for Taiwan or Certificate of Medical Insurance in Mainland China.” In June, Ma gave another announcement, “Taiwan compatriots coming to China on flights of Civil Air Transport may receive vaccinations in China under relevant regulations if they meet the requirements for vaccination, with voluntary and informed consent, and are willing to follow the relevant policies for vaccinations before boarding and after arrival.”³⁷ According to the statistics of TAO, more than 156,000 Taiwanese compatriots have been vaccinated in mainland China until August 31, receiving more than 290,000 doses of vaccines produced by China in total. In some places, the administration has begun to give vaccinations to Taiwanese students between the ages of 12 and 17 in mainland China as a part of such opening measures.³⁸ The

³⁷ “Taiwan Affairs Office: Same Policies and Regulations are Applied for Taiwan Compatriots as Those for Mainland Residents in the Region where They are Located,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, April 14, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202104/t20210414_12345447.htm; “Taiwan Affairs Office: Taiwan Compatriots Coming to China on Flights of Civil Air Transport may Receive Vaccinations in China under Relevant Regulations,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, June 11, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202106/t20210611_12358743.htm.

³⁸ “Taiwan Affairs Office: More than 156,000 Taiwanese Compatriots Have been Vaccinated in Mainland China,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, September 15, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwtd/xwfb/wyly/202109/t20210915_12378623.htm.

TAO's propaganda on the CCP vaccine focused on accusing the DPP government of lack of preparation on purchasing vaccines, in order to highlight the willingness and convenience of Taiwanese compatriots to get the vaccine in China. However, the appeal of CCP vaccine to the Taiwanese public is actually very little, making it difficult to achieve the effect of their propaganda.

Second, another important point of publicity is the launch of preferential policies for Taiwan in 2021 corresponding to the 14th Five-Year Plan. On March 17, for example, the "22 measures on agriculture and forestry" was announced. The measures urge Taiwan compatriots and Taiwan-invested enterprises to participate in the development of the agricultural and forestry involving the use of agricultural and forest land, financing facilities and capital support, investment and operation, research and innovation, development of domestic markets, integration of three stages in agricultural industries, participation in intelligent agriculture, organic fertilizers, etc.³⁹ The purpose of the 22 measures on agriculture and forestry is to attract Taiwanese people to live and work cross-strait, while contributing to the much-needed revitalization of their rural villages. On the same day when TAO announced the 22 measures on agriculture and forestry, they have also announced that the establishment of 15 cross-strait agricultural experiment zones and 28 Taiwan farmers' entrepreneurship parks had been approved.⁴⁰ In terms of quantity and job opportunities created in mainland China, the cross-strait agricultural experiment zone has already reached a certain scale. However, if these experiment zones cannot create the transfer of key agricultural technologies from Taiwan, the damage to Taiwan agricultural industries might still be limited.

Third, the TAO is committed to publicizing the effectiveness of the Cross Strait Exchange base. On February 24, TAO first publicized the effectiveness of Pingtan comprehensive experimental zone in Fujian, boasting its equal treatment for Taiwan compatriots and Taiwan-funded enterprises to create a cross-strait

³⁹ "Taiwan Affairs Office Introduces the '22 Measures on Agriculture and Forestry and Its Features'," *Taiwan Affairs Office*, March 17, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202103/t20210317_12339184.htm.

⁴⁰ "The 14th Five-Year Plan Brining New Opportunities for Participating Taiwan Compatriots and Taiwanese Companies," *Taiwan Affairs Office*, March 17, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202103/t20210317_12339178.htm.

“New Four-Link Transportation” for further integration.⁴¹ In reality, however, the conditions for Taiwanese businessmen to settle in are quite limited, with plenty of companies receiving official subsidies from CCP that are very likely to be shell cooperation.

Then on July 12, TAO announced the establishment of two new Cross Strait Exchange bases in Xiandu Neighborhood of Jinyun County, Lishui, Zhejiang and Leizu Park, Yanting County, Mianyang Sichuan.⁴² These constructions show China’s intention to rely on the culture of the Yellow Emperor and the culture of Leizu, trying to build a common traditional cultural identity between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in order to accomplish the united front work. They expected that such an approach may attract temples or religious organizations from Taiwan that share the same beliefs.

IV. Conclusion

From the overview of the speeches and actions of the MFA and TAO, we could see a clear division of labor between the two units, with MFA focusing on propaganda toward international community and TAO focusing on propaganda toward Taiwanese government and people. The MFA of China adopts a stiff stance in the spirit of “wolf warrior diplomacy” as their major tactics. They still, however, occasionally cross the line of division of labor, directly attacking Taiwan government on Taiwan-related issues. TAO, on the other hand, has applied both strong and soft attitudes of discourses considering their targets to be the Taiwanese government or non-governmental organizations. In terms of effectiveness however, the CCP authority should not be too optimistic. Though the “wolf warrior diplomacy” has been conducted for several years, the support and sympathy for

⁴¹ “Taiwan Affairs Office: Fujian Pingtan Comprehensive Experimental Zone Aims to Explore New Paths of Cross-strait Integrated Development, Building a Primary Home for Settling down on the Mainland for Taiwan Compatriots and Taiwanese Companies,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, February 24, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202102/t20210224_12334021.htm.

⁴² “New Cross-strait Exchange Bases Setting up in Lishui, Zhejiang and Mianyang,” *Taiwan Affairs Office*, July 12, 2021, http://www.gwytb.gov.cn/xwdt/xwfb/wyly/202107/t20210712_12365224.htm.

Taiwan from countries all over the world, on the other hand, is growing day by day. Countries gradually switch a more positive and friendly attitude towards Taiwan since 2021, who are not backed off by the strong speeches and warnings from China. This indicates that the international trend has changed and are turning to the direction that the CCP authority would not be glad to see. After Xi Jinping's speech at the 40th Anniversary of Message to Compatriots in Taiwan, TAO created a much clearer divergence of soft statements or hard critiques toward the Taiwanese government or the society. Yet despite the efforts of CCP in general, there have been several issues showing that the distance between Taiwan and CCP authorities, from the governmental level to the non-governmental level, have drifted apart. We could see this phenomenon from the public opinion during the pandemic, the growing awareness of Taiwan's sovereignty, or even the "blind patriots" from China reporting artists as supporting "Taiwan independence" from time to time. Such phenomenon turns out to be the exact opposite way of the integrated development based on national sentiment that the CCP has been trying to achieve. Furthermore, although the CCP authority has been manipulating with the concept of nationalism in a top-down approach mainly for the purpose of consolidating its sovereignty, the current development of public opinion on the Internet has created an opposite effect. The public opinion online has contributed much to "wolf warrior diplomacy" and other discourses that generate negative sentiments internationally. It is harmful not only to the CCP's international image, but also to the development of cross-strait relations, which, in other words, is offset against the conciliatory policy toward Taiwan.

Finally, responding to the strategy of CCP's departments toward Taiwan, the Taiwan government and the society should both react directly to the focus discourse of the MFA and the TAO. The government may consider strengthening the consensus of values while enhancing the basis of concrete cooperation from the perspectives of democratic values, mutual assistance in science and technology, and experience in pandemic prevention, under the growing atmosphere of international friendship with Taiwan. Such practices may transcend the long-term cooperation that could not be achieved in the past due to the opposition of the

CCP. Although it is expectable that any countries who developed any international cooperation with Taiwan will cause discomfort for the CCP authority, we could still accomplish breakthroughs in a non-targeted way that stands with universal values. The power of judgements and attacks from the Taiwan-related departments of CCP will thus remain merely at a shallow level of repetitive statements, making their unilateral, rigid narratives difficult to make an influence at a global scale. The people in Taiwan should adopt a scientific attitude in evaluating the efficacy of the CCP vaccine or the procurement of international vaccines. If we could develop a collective consensus with such attitude, our citizens could thus make objective judgments without being affected by political propaganda or false information from Taiwan-related departments of China. Moreover, when facing the attraction of the so-called preferential policy, the public has been able to make rational judgements on the China's intentions of unification and to face these intentions with an instrumental attitude. However, the hatred sentiment fostered by the cross-strait extremists in the online community could make it difficult to create a mutual understanding and transmission of goodwill. The extremists' bottom-up public opinion respectively will force the governments from both sides of the Strait to take tough measures, which may fall into a vicious cycle. Therefore, it is up to the insightful citizens and government counterparts on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to stop the vicious cycle and reflect on the trend of public opinion. We should also take the approach of demassification when treating the CCP authorities and the public opinions of people from China.

(Date of finalization: October 30, 2021.)

