First off the Post: When Media Brokers Crossed the Taiwan Strait

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Abstract

Due to its historical and political complexities, cross-strait relations (the term refers to the interactions between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan across the Taiwan Strait) have been portrayed frequently as knotty, thorny and intractable by the media. For the past 20 years, however, the media has perceived itself to be increasingly involved in a continuum of historical cross-strait events, not only as the disseminator in the traditional sense but more remarkably as a media broker between the two political rivals. This extraordinary phenomenon was initially illustrated by a dramatic media event. In order to boost its prestige in the media market, The Independence Evening Post, the first private newspaper published in the Taiwan area, took the initiative of dispatching two journalists Lee Yung-teh and Hsu Lu to the Chinese mainland in September 1987 for a two-week long reporting mission. This initiative represented a lifting of a 38-year-old political taboo that began with the establishments of rival governments in Beijing and Taipei in 1949. The two journalists not only flouted the travel ban to the Chinese mainland imposed by the KMT (the Kuomintang or the Nationalist) government of Taiwan, but also played a vital role in guiding the two adversarial governments into interacting with each other. This historic visit provides an opportunity for an empirical case study of a situation in which journalists acted as media brokers between the two sides. Hence, treating as a case study the two Taiwanese journalists’ visit to the Chinese mainland in 1987, the paper attempts to explore the behaviour of both The Post and its journalists within the conceptual model of media-broker diplomacy originally formulated by Eytan Gilboa and defined as “international mediation conducted and initiated by media professionals”. Based on the conceptual analysis of media-broker diplomacy in cross-strait context, the paper sheds light on the dynamics between media brokers and cross-strait relations and renders three consequent implications.
Finally we made this difficult step.
Lee Yung-teh

Actually the journey is quite short, but it takes us almost 40 years to achieve.
Hsu Lu (Zhang and Wu, 1990:277)

Introduction
Due to its historical and political complexities, cross-strait relations (the term refers to the interactions between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan across the Taiwan Strait) have been portrayed frequently as knotty, thorny and intractable by the media. For the past 20 years, however, the media has perceived itself to be increasingly involved in a continuum of historical cross-strait events, not only as the disseminator in the traditional sense but more remarkably as a media broker between the two political rivals. This extraordinary phenomenon was initially illustrated by a dramatic media event. In order to boost its prestige in the media market, *The Independence Evening Post* (*Tzu Li Wan Pao*, referred to as “*The Post*” hereafter), the first private newspaper published in the Taiwan area (GIO, 1993:312), took the initiative of dispatching two journalists Lee Yung-teh and Hsu Lu to the Chinese mainland in September 1987 for a two-week long reporting mission. This initiative represented a lifting of a 38-year-old political taboo that began with the establishments of rival governments in Beijing and Taipei in 1949. The two journalists not only flouted the travel ban to the Chinese mainland imposed by the KMT (the Kuomintang or the Nationalist) government of Taiwan, but also played a vital role in guiding the two adversarial governments into interacting with each other. The long-frozen ice of cross-strait relations had finally begun to crack.

This historic visit to the Chinese mainland by Taiwanese journalists provides an opportunity for an empirical case study of a situation in which journalists acted as media brokers between the two sides. Nevertheless, this classic case remains under-analysed in the academic literature (cf. Clough, 1993:80; Long, 1991:207-208; Vanden Heuvel and Dennis, 1993:49; Yahuda, 1995:48). The interface between the journalist/media and cross-strait relations requires more in-depth research. Hence, this paper will examine the role of the journalist in cross-strait relations, treating as a case study the two Taiwanese journalists’ visit to the Chinese mainland in 1987. To achieve this aim, the paper attempts to explore the behaviour of both *The Post* and its journalists within the conceptual model of media-broker diplomacy.
originally formulated by Eytan Gilboa and defined as “international mediation conducted and initiated by media professionals” (2000:298).

With the theoretical groundwork laid, this paper is to consider four research questions: (1) Against what sociopolitical backdrop did media-broker diplomacy emerged in cross-strait relations? (2) In terms of initiation and motivation, awareness, action and consequences, how should one comprehend the two Taiwanese journalists’ ice-breaking travel to the Chinese mainland? (3) What are implications of media-broker diplomacy in cross-strait relations context? and more specifically (4) What are the role perceptions of the journalists? Based on the conceptual model of media-broker diplomacy, the paper sheds light on the dynamics between media brokers and cross-strait relations and renders three consequent implications.

Theoretical Considerations: From Diplomacy to Media-Broker Diplomacy

In modern English, the term *diplomacy* means several quite different things, some of which are apparently negative due to the involvement of intrigue and tact. In his classic study of diplomacy, Sir Harold Nicolson proposed to employ the definition given by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "[D]iplomacy is the management of international relations by negotiation; method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys; the business or art of the diplomatist." (Nicolson, 1963:4-5) The definition of this controversial term, mainly based upon a state-centric perspective, has not been attuned to the evolution of diplomacy in which “the types of actors and venues have expanded to include extra governmental and extra territorial forms” (Chitty, 2009). In this sense, the adaptability of the notion may be extended by Constantinou’s definition—diplomacy exists whenever “there are boundaries for identity and those boundaries of identity are crossed” (Constantinou, 1996:113, cited by Jönsson and Hall, 2003:196).

As the context of diplomacy evolves, the nature of diplomacy has also been transformed from private and closed-door negotiation to a sort of public and open communication within which the media, facilitated by the new communication technologies, play a remarkably expanding role. With the advent of the new diplomacy era, public diplomacy has emerged as a new genre of contemporary diplomacy. Capturing international attention, it has been dramatized by the aftermath of the 9/11 Incident. In 1993, Frederick described public diplomacy as “activities, directed abroad in the fields of information, education, and culture, whose objective is to influence a foreign government by influencing its citizens” (Frederick,
While examining the performance of journalists in the 2003 Iraqi War, Seib offered what he called “a baseline definition of public diplomacy” that “is to inform, engage, and influence foreign publics” (2004:126). Endowed with the intention to win the hearts and minds of people, public diplomacy has been intertwined with “the historical suspicion that public diplomacy is rebranded propaganda” (Chitty, 2009). Noting that public diplomacy has been used as a euphemism for “propaganda”, Gilboa accordingly narrowed public diplomacy down to something in which the sides are involved in a confrontation and their goal is propaganda (2000:290, 294). In their consistent effort of clarifying propaganda, Jowett and O’Donnell provided a widely cited definition of propaganda as “the deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist” (1999:6). Stressing the inequality of wealth and power, Herman and Chomsky initiated “a propaganda model” to expound how the media, in the way of “news filter”, allow the government and dominant private interests to get their messages across to the public (2002:2).

As Gilboa noted, public diplomacy uses several channels or techniques, only one of which is the mass media, particularly international broadcasting (2000:290). Amongst these channels or techniques, undoubtedly, the mass media appears to be the most dynamic actor in the diplomatic arena previously dominated by professional diplomats. Consequently, a variety of terms, such as “media diplomacy”, “newspaper diplomacy”, “television diplomacy”, “megaphone diplomacy” and “teleplomacy”, have been “coined” to capture the new role of the media in diplomacy. Gilboa proposed to employ “media-broker diplomacy” as a term to highlight the performance of journalists. In his innovative study of the media’s role in contemporary diplomacy, he initially defined media-broker diplomacy as “international mediation conducted and sometimes initiated by media professionals” (Gilboa, 2000:298) and further clarified six conceptual models into two groups on the basis of the media’s involvement: the first group includes three models—secret diplomacy, closed-door diplomacy and open diplomacy—dealing with the limitations which officials impose on media coverage; the second group consists of the other three models—public diplomacy, media diplomacy and media-broker diplomacy—dealing with extensive utilisation of the media by officials and sometimes by journalists to promote negotiations (Gilboa, 2000:275). It was Gilboa who for the first time comprehensively presented media-broker diplomacy in 2000 (2000:275). A review of current literature shows that he might also be the only scholar who has adopted this conceptual model so far. While analysing the media’s role of “squaring
the circle” in Northern Ireland conflict, Sparre argued that Gilboa’s use of the word diplomacy in its traditional meaning of the management of the relations between states obscures the fact that media’s involvement in diplomacy also can function at the sub-state level and in communal conflicts, such as the one in the Northern Ireland (2001:89). Instead Sparre used “megaphone diplomacy” to depict the media/journalist’s role as notice boards in peace negotiations. In 2005, media-broker diplomacy was found updated by Gilboa as something that “typically occurs when there is no contact between enemies and no third party to help them resolve their differences” (2005:99).

Regarding this, some authors also proffered alternative interpretations. With some nostalgia for traditional forms of diplomacy, Abba Eban, the former Israeli Foreign Minister remarked that “[p]ublic anxiety about the issues of peace and war has led private organizations and individuals to enter the diplomatic arena with offers of mediation” and consequently “[Q]uakers, church leaders, heads of peace research institutions, professors, members of parliaments and journalists have all attempted to solve or alleviate conflicts which have eluded the efforts of officially accredited emissaries” (Eban, 1983:386-387). From the perspective of a media researcher, Gurevitch viewed the new role of globalised television as “international political brokers” that sometimes “may launch reportorial initiatives that tend to blur the distinction between the roles of reporters and diplomats” (1991:187-188).

Into his six-concept model Gilboa also identified some distinctions among public diplomacy, media diplomacy and media-broker diplomacy, which are useful in gaining conceptual clarity:

[P]ublic diplomacy is conducted through multiple channels, but media diplomacy is exclusively conducted through mass media. Media-broker diplomacy is similar, but not identical, to media diplomacy in context, time, purposes and medium but is very different in initiators, method, sides and target (2000:303).

In media diplomacy, reporters pursue professional journalism work and follow moves initiated by policymakers. In media-broker diplomacy, journalists act more as diplomats, sometimes initiating and conducting critical diplomatic moves (2000:298-299).

Apart from public diplomacy and media diplomacy, media-broker diplomacy also overlaps track-two diplomacy, which refers to unofficial negotiators and informal forms of
negotiations (Gilboa, 2005:101). While discussing the unofficial interactions across the Taiwan Strait, Clough not only acknowledged that “in the absence of official negotiations, relations between the two contending parties are being molded by a process that has been called ‘track-two diplomacy’” but also used track-two diplomacy “in a wider sense to refer to a broad spectrum of people-to-people interactions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait” (1993:2). Nevertheless, the difference between these two concepts is manifest: track-two diplomacy functions mainly in comparison with track-one diplomacy, i.e. government-to-government interactions and negotiations, whereas media-broker diplomacy specifically focuses on the role of journalists as brokers or diplomats.

Before employing media-broker diplomacy in this paper, a brief introduction of Chitty’s matrix framework is useful for heuristic purposes in relation to cross-strait relations. During the historical period of 1980s on which this paper focuses, both the government of the Chinese mainland and that of Taiwan claimed legitimacy over China as a whole. Although all of the world major powers recognised Beijing as the legitimate government of “one China”, Taiwan’s politically separate status was salient—it not only maintained diplomatic relations with some dozens of tiny countries but also fostered substantive relations with the major powers. The ontographic terminology applied to describe the two cross-strait political entities is fraught with difficulty because of the political sensibilities of the two parties. The controversial and complicated circumstances may be approached with the ontography of Chitty’s matrix framework, which is not state-centric. Rather, within a global political-economic matrix or transaction venue (P-matrix) are seen regional matrices (R-matrices) and administrative matrices (A-matrices). A-matrices contain ethno-historical matrices (E-matrices) which in turn are composed of individuals (I-matrices) (2000:15). Large political organizations such as Europe, China, India, Indonesia and the United States may be viewed as R-matrices while smaller ones such as England, Florida, Guangdong, Macau, Hong Kong and Taiwan, may be viewed as A-matrices. Sovereignty may be exercised at different levels. Clearly, within the Chinese R-matrix there are different degrees of effective sovereignty and permissible external relations between A-matrices. Currently China has legal sovereignty over all its A-matrices but does not have effective sovereignty over Taiwan. China permits Hong Kong to have a diplomatic space, in its membership of WTO and APEC while Taiwan’s diplomatic activity is conducted without agreement from China. Many political leaders on the Chinese mainland and in Taiwan stem from the same majority Han E-matrix. However, the governments associated with the Chinese R-matrix and the Taiwanese A-matrix
have had adversarial relations. Accordingly, the model of media-broker diplomacy is to be applied to the relationship between the Chinese R-matrix and the Taiwanese A-matrix, within the single international system—the P-matrix.

**Historical Background: Cross-Strait Relations and the Media Environment**

For a better understanding of the media/journalist’s role in cross-strait relations, it is necessary to explore it against a broader historical and political background. Situated about 160 km off the southeast coast of the Chinese mainland, Taiwan experienced three major historical eras: local administration by imperial China until 1895, colonial rule by imperialist Japan from 1895-1945, and de facto independence under the Nationalist state since 1945 (Winckler and Greenhalgh, 1988:13). Cross-strait relations, as this paper examines them, commenced from Taiwan’s third era within which the competition between the Chinese R-matrix and the Taiwanese A-matrix gave birth to the so-called Taiwan issue.

As a legacy of the Chinese Civil War, the Taiwan issue dates back to 1949 when Chiang Kai-shek’s KMT forces were routed on the Chinese mainland by the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led by Mao Zedong. Being the loser of the Civil War, the KMT retreated to Taiwan and relocated in Taipei its Nationalist government of the original Republic of China (ROC), which had been set up in Nanjing in 1912. Following the KMT, some 2 million refugees also moved to Taiwan from every mainland province (Wang and Lo, 2000:660). On the mainland, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was founded by the CCP in Beijing on 1 October, 1949.

The emergence of the two Chinese governments led by two contending parties incurred not only serious military confrontation across the Taiwan Strait but fierce diplomatic competition in the international arena. During the period from 1950s to his death in 1975, Chiang Kai-shek never gave up his determination to “recover the mainland” while Mao’s government in Beijing asserted sovereignty over Taiwan and clamored to “liberate Taiwan”. Beneath the shadow of war looming across the Taiwan Strait, successive international events molded the matter of legitimacy since 1970s. Though driven from the mainland, the ROC on Taiwan held the China seat in the United Nations Security Council and was recognised by most UN members as being “China” (Fairbank and Goldman, 1998:340). The year of 1971, however, saw that the ROC was voted out of the UN with the China seat being taken over by the Beijing’s PRC. The great diplomatic loss on the KMT’s part was dramatically exacerbated by
the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the US and the PRC on 1 January, 1979.

The transformation of the diplomatic arena coincided with the generational transition of leadership of both the CCP and the KMT. After Mao’s death, Deng Xiaoping resumed his political dominance over the CCP. With pragmatic perception of the communist ideology, Deng manoeuvred the CCP to embrace reform and an open-door doctrine at the end of 1978. The need for a secure environment promoted the CCP’s supreme legislative institution—the National People’s Congress (NPC) to issue “A Message to Compatriots on Taiwan” on the New Year’s Day of 1979. Discarding the old policy of “liberation”, the message set the tone for the CCP’s new orthodoxy, which proposed a peaceful reunification with Taiwan through establishing the “Three Links” of direct mail, trade and transportation. The CCP’s peace campaign reached its climax at the reunification formula of “one country, two systems” initiated by Deng in the early 1980s (Deng, 1993:67, 388).

Simultaneously, the other rim of the Taiwan Strait was also experiencing a great transformation. Beginning with its relocation in Taipei, the ruling KMT built up Taiwan as a "bastion for national recovery" (Long, 1991:xvii) and “excised authoritarian rule over the island state”, symbolized by the enforcement of the martial law since 1949 (Tien, 1989:1, 110). After Chiang Kai-shek’s death, his son Chiang Ching-kuo, who was more politically flexible than his hard-line father, became the KMT’s party chairman in 1975 and the president of the ROC in 1978. In response to the ousting from the UN and derecognition by the US, the KMT was compelled to enhance its legitimacy and gain public support by means of industrialization and democratization (Tubilewicz, 2006:241). Recognition of Taiwan as one of the “four tigers” (economic tigers) of East Asia was followed by Chiang Ching-kuo’s moves to “set the reform ball rolling” (Long, 1991:182) for the democratization on Taiwan. One of the most significant moves taken by the KMT was to lift the 38-year-long martial law on 15 July, 1987. Thereafter, Taiwan moved rapidly towards becoming “a full-fledged democracy” (Wang and Lo, 2000:661), which inevitably invited the legalization of opposition parties, a discussion on Taiwanese identity and more relevant to this paper, the liberalisation of the media. Regarding the policy towards the CCP on the mainland, however, Chiang Ching-kuo staunchly defended the “Three Noes” Policy—no contact, no negotiation, and no compromise with the CCP. It was argued by the KMT that any contact with the “communist bandits” would imply some degree of recognition of its legitimacy and hence
undermine the basis of the KMT's own legitimacy (Long, 1991:203). Therefore, Taipei banned trade and travel across the Taiwan Strait and rejected Beijing’s overtures for talks (Clough, 1993:1).

Striking parallels exist between the evolution of cross-strait relations and the media’s involvement. Confronting each other since the 1950s, the two governments employed the media, especially radio broadcasting, as a propaganda tool, supposedly reaching the audiences across the Strait without depending on intermediaries. In this war of words, the two governments sought to paint conditions on the other side “in the blackest possible colours” (Clough, 1993:79). This employment of the media correlates with that of international radio broadcasting to conduct public diplomacy aiming at propaganda (Fortner, 1993:279; Gilboa, 2000:294). With antagonism across the Strait, until mid-1980s there was virtually no contact between journalists of the two sides (Hong, 1996:194).

Regarding media environment, interestingly, both the CCP and KMT maintained rigid control of the media during 1950s-1970s when military confrontation overshadowed the Strait. The simultaneous political transformation across the Strait, however, produced a considerable impact on the media environment of the two sides. The traditional CCP thinking defines the media as the mouthpiece, or the "throat and tongue" of the party and hence “the concept of total integration between the press and government” (Chaudhary and Chen, 1995:312) is followed on the mainland. As Hong argued, the mainland media, especially the Maoist type, are virtually the party’s organ and the state apparatus which “represent a typical communist authoritarian model” (1996:187). Characterised as the construction of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” in the post-Mao era, the economic reform manipulated by Deng Xiaoping resulted in a short period of media liberalisation on the mainland in which the media appeared to enjoy some sort of freedom of speech. Nevertheless, the media liberalisation tragically aborted after the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989.

Based on a Leninist party structure (Tien, 1989:1), the KMT effectively restricted freedom of the press through a press ban under the martial law regime. In 1951, claiming a newsprint shortage, the government froze applications for new newspaper licences and set a ceiling on the number of pages for each issue of existing newspapers (from 8 in 1957 to 12 after 1971) (Wang and Lo, 2000:663). In 1987, out of 31 daily newspapers 20 were privately owned while 11 were owned by the KMT government (Tien, 1989:197). Although the press market
was dominated by two family-owned daily giants: *China Times* and *United Daily News*, both of them were closely allied with the KMT because their owners also sat on the KMT's central standing committee. After the termination of the martial law in July 1987, Taiwan’s media began to advance towards what Hong termed as “a semi-authoritarian and semi-market model” (1996:187). Half a year later, press restrictions were finally lifted by the KMT government on January 1, 1988. Not only were the pre-existing newspapers eased through a lifting of the ceiling of 12 pages, but new and independent-minded newspapers sprang into existence.

As the forerunner of Taiwan’s independent newspapers, *The Post* was founded by Wu San-lien, a native Taiwanese on 10 October, 1947, even predating the KMT’s withdrawal to Taiwan. According to the ROC’s official yearbook, *The Post* was not only the first evening daily but the first private newspaper published in the Taiwan area (GIO, 1993:312). Furthermore, before the lifting of press restrictions, *The Post* was the only opposition newspaper on the island (Vanden Heuvel and Dennis, 1993:49; Wang and Lo, 2000:663). In its early stages, however, a localized *The Post* remained insignificant in comparison with the two daily giants. From 1981 to 1987 drastic changes occurred when Wu Feng-shan, the son of Wu San-lien, acted as the president of *The Post* (Independence Evening Post, 2003). Wu Feng-shan was considered to be “a man of pioneering spirit and resolute action” (Zhang and Wu, 1990:275). Stemming from Tainan and as a journalism graduate from National Chengchi University, Wu established his early journalistic reputation as “a social reformer” owing to his influential reportage published in *The Post*. In 1972, Wu was successfully elected at the age of 28 as the youngest member of the National Assembly with his non-party background. Being a rising star in Taiwan’s political firmament, Wu proceeded with his journalistic career within *The Post*’s hierarchy, rising from editor-in-chief to president in 1981. To fulfil his political ambition, Wu inaugurated a complete innovation at *The Post* through two meaningful measures: placing great emphasis on *The Post*’s motto—“No Party, No Faction, Independent Management”, and practising this journalistic doctrine by recruiting from among the island’s Taiwanese elites, among whom were Lee Yung-teh and Hsu Lu, who conducting the ice-breaking visit to the mainland in 1987. Born in 1955, Lee came from southern Taiwan and studied politics at National Chengchi University. His personal background was similar to that of Wu, despite the latter’s Hakka ethnic origins. Lee started his journalistic career at *The Post* in 1979 and was promoted to be the director of political news in 1980s. Three years younger than Lee, Hsu was born in Chilung near Taipei. Holding a degree in English from
Tamkang University, she joined The Post in 1984 for covering social news. Reportedly, the reason why Wu selected Lee and Hsu as the “ice-breakers” to the mainland was that Lee was a politically-minded journalist while Hsu possessed a good command of English (Huang et al., 2007). Fundamental to these three journalists is their standing as members of the island’s Taiwanese elite, being different to mainland elites who continued to dominate the KMT’s regime and its media agencies during Chiang’s era.

Perhaps due to the strong Taiwanese characteristics of its personnel and absence of links to any political party (literally the ruling KMT in the martial law era), The Post distinguished itself clearly from Taiwan’s mainstream newspapers. Nonetheless, benefitting from the Wu family’s friendly relations with Chiang Ching-kuo, The Post was able to assume a liberal approach in its news coverage with relative freedom from KMT interference (Tien, 1989:198). The journalistic innovation advocated by Wu happened to be matched by the 1980s democratization on Taiwan in which The Post began to serve the public as a watchdog, earning its journalistic credibility as Taiwan’s “bastion for free press and speech” (Fengyun Series, 1988:192). The Post’s increasing popularity on the island inspired Wu, an emerging and ambitious media dignitary in his early forties, to instigate the ice-breaking visit to the Chinese mainland in September 1987.

**Ice-breaking Visit: A Case of the Taiwanese Journalists**

Although massive political and social changes were occurring on both the Chinese mainland and Taiwan, no major breakthrough was achieved for the media exchange across the Taiwan Strait in the early 1980s. Despite the olive branch of the “Three Links” offered by the CCP, the access for the journalist to cross the Strait for a reporting mission was tightly blocked by the “Three Noes” policy of the KMT. Especially on Taiwan, after more than three decades of the martial law era, relations with the Chinese mainland were the great taboo topic for Taiwanese journalists (Vanden Heuvel and Dennis, 1993:53). Despite a freer media environment and greater latitude, no Taiwanese media institutions appeared to be bold enough to challenge the travel ban to the mainland. The long-standing impasse across the Strait was finally broken by two early birds from The Post in 1987 and consequently the media’s involvement in cross-strait relations was vitalised by media-broker diplomacy.

In veritable a blaze of publicity, Lee Yung-teh and Hsu Lu, two journalists of The Post, arrived at Beijing airport at midnight on 15 September 1987. The media personnel from the
two sides of the Taiwan Strait shook hands with each other even though their governments still had no official contacts. Chen Zuo’er, the representative of the mainland’s China News Agency, introduced into his greeting an exclamatory emotional touch—“Welcome! We have been waiting for 38 years!” (Zhang and Wu, 1990:277) These words were emblazoned by the media across front pages. This unprecedented media event was particularly sensational because it was the first time that Taiwanese journalists openly set foot on the mainland to cover news stories since the political separation between the two sides in 1949. During the two weeks of their ‘ice breaking’ visit (September 15-27), Lee and Hsu travelled to five mainland cities including Beijing, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Xiamen. According to Chen Zuo’er’s account, Lee and Hsu were permitted to suggest their own itinerary and interview such sensitive figures as Fang Lizhi, a well-known dissident astrophysicist and Wang His-chuen, who had defected to the mainland by skyjacking one of Taiwan’s China Airlines cargo aircraft to Guangzhou in 1986 (China Times, 2007).

Their news reports turned out to be influential across the Strait. Everyday the two journalists sent their dispatches back to The Post’s headquarters in Taipei. For the first time the Taiwan’s public could read the news stories about the mainland filed by their fellow journalists on the spot so as to open a window for them to learn what was happening on the other side of the Strait. Indeed The Post received dramatic stories that sold newspapers and boosted dramatically its journalistic prestige. Meanwhile, some of their news reports also appeared on the Reference News, the top circulation newspaper on the mainland. Originally the Reference News had been created by the official Xinhua News Agency as an “internal” organ, just to keep the CCP officials informed about overseas news. Later, in the post-Mao era, it was made available to almost anyone so that the mainland populace could also have access to Lee and Hsu’s reports (Chaudhary and Chen, 1995:287; Vanden Heuvel and Dennis, 1993:34). Inevitably, both Lee and Hsu earned immense publicity and praise across the Strait. As Simon Long, the veteran Asia Editor for The Economist, commented, the two journalists “wrote pieces typical of the type of coverage the mainland was to get on Taiwan when its wish to see reporters come was fulfilled” (1991:208). Clough noted that their reports "painted a bleak picture of poverty and political repression" in the PRC (1993:80). However, whether the two governments liked or not, the two journalists’ news reports served as an early bridge of communication between the people across the Strait.

Beneath the “explosive” publicity was concealed an undercurrent of government
involvements. As historical evidence revealed, shortly after Lee and Hsu’s departure from Taipei to Tokyo on 11 September 1987, Wu Feng-shan began his unofficial contacts with a high-ranking KMT official to inform Chiang Ching-kuo about The Post’s reporting mission on the mainland, with the possibility of probing the KMT’s reaction. Wu was told that Chiang seemed not to be enraged and was of the view that the issue should be handled properly, the implication being that politics should not be touched (Huang et al., 2007). In contrast with the high-level communication through a secret channel was the government’s public posture. The Government Information Office (GIO), the KMT’s regulatory body, threatened to punish The Post while Lee and Hsu’s reporting adventure was being dramatized throughout the island. Transferring in Tokyo, Lee and Hsu got their visas to the mainland “promptly” at the Chinese Embassy because their application surprisingly obtained direct approval from Deng Xiaoping. While Lee and Hsu were en route to the mainland, Chen Zuo’er, the director of the Hong Kong-Taiwan Department of China News Agency, shuttled among the mainland cities before the two Taiwanese journalists to inform the CCP’s local governmental and media institutions about how to deal with this unprecedented visit in accordance with the CCP’s policy towards Taiwan (China Times, 2007).

Ironically, despite considerable political clout, this unusual “landing” of the two Taiwanese journalists appeared to be no more than a non-government media exchange across the Strait. Although the CCP government assigned China News Agency to coordinate travelling arrangements for the two journalists, this particular mainland media institution was presented as a non-government news agency by the CCP, supposedly being different from its official Xinhua News Agency. On the other side, the appearance of the two Taiwanese journalists on the mainland apparently posed a bold challenge to the KMT government’s travel ban. But Lee Yung-teh argued that for their reporting travel on the mainland they also held their own “three noes” policy—no interference from officials, no interview of officials and no reception by officials (China Times, 2007; Reference News, 1987)—the “officials” in this context refer to those of the CCP government. Nevertheless, the nongovernmental travel in name only did not hinder the two journalists in their exertion of political influence as media brokers between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan.

Conceptual Analysis: Four Parameters of Media-Broker Diplomacy

To gain an insight into media-broker diplomacy, Gilboa proposed four parameters: initiation
and motivation, awareness, action and consequences (2000:301). While analysing journalists’ role in cross-strait relations context, this paper is to follow these four parameters by addressing four questions: Who initiated this first journalistic visit, The Post itself or either of the two governments and what were their motivations? Were The Post and its two journalists aware that they were actually the media brokers between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan? What action did they take in terms of mediation between the two sides? What consequences did they have on cross-strait relations?

1. Initiation and Motivation
Perhaps the most remarkable attribute of media-broker diplomacy is that journalists themselves initiate and conduct the critical diplomatic move. Gilboa exemplified this point with the case of “Cronkite Diplomacy” through which Walter Cronkite, a well-known US television journalist, helped to arrange the ice-breaking peace talks between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in his two significant interviews in 1977 (2000:299; 2005:4).

Ten years after Cronkite’s case, Lee Yung-teh and Hsu Lu, two Taiwanese journalists acted as media brokers in 1987 by initiating a journalistic visit to the Chinese mainland to break the deadlock of cross-strait relations. Much the same as Cronkite, they initiated the critical move by themselves rather than followed the policymakers of either the mainland or Taiwan. On the mainland’s part, although the CCP government was searching for the breakthrough in establishing the “Three Links” which the CCP had been trumpeting towards the KMT government for nearly a decade, it was adventurous of the CCP to resort to mediation through The Post, a private Taiwanese newspaper possibly linked to Taiwanese nationalism. As for Taiwan, the lifting of martial law in 1987 contributed to a shift in media culture, providing the climate for Wu Feng-shan to launch his scoop-generating gambit. The real motivation for The Post may be a more journalistic one rather than a political one. “The first fact of journalistic life is that reporters must have a story to tell. They are in the business of gathering and disseminating the daily news, and they define themselves more by their professionalism than by their partisanship” (Patterson, 1998:17). Patterson’s statement exactly matches with The Post’s case. Inspired by media liberalisation on Taiwan, The Post decided to take this initiative in order that the expected sensational effect would help to boost its prestige and newspaper sales. Actually, many Taiwanese media were considering visiting the mainland at that historical juncture. The Post was literally and figuratively first off the
post (Note: “First off the blocks” and “first past the post” are combined in this rendition.). It was timing that made the great difference—The Post grabbed the historical opportunity to mediate across the Taiwan Strait.

2. Awareness

“It was we who created the history” (Huang et al., 2007), Chen Kuo-hsiang the then editor-in-chief of The Post commented in a grandiloquent tone while reviewing this historic move in 1987. Indeed, the glory of making history always belongs to the journalist who gets the scoop or breaks new ground. The journalists of The Post were keenly aware that they were treading on political quicksand and that the visit would have enormous political significance. More specifically, this totally Taiwanese initiative would be labeled as pro-communist by both the CCP government and the KMT government. There was always the possibility of being penalised by the government in Taipei. Being conscious of the potential impact, Wu deliberately developed The Post’s version of ‘three noes” as the guidelines for the two journalists, explicitly rejecting any contacts with the CCP officials. Perhaps the most telling effect of these self-imposed constraints was that Lee and Hsu refused to interview Deng Xiaoping, the then paramount leader of the CCP (China Times, 2007). As Gilboa put it, “[L]ack of motivation or special plan to engage in diplomacy, however, does not mean that, the reporter was not performing a diplomatic role” (2000:299). Likewise, the role of media brokers played by the Taiwanese journalists became manifest despite their indifference of mediating between the two sides.

3. Action

Evidently the major action that The Post’s journalists took in 1987 was “jumping the gun”—initiating the journalistic visit to the Chinese mainland, whose implications could have been interpreted in two quite different ways—one perceived by the KMT government as a double-edged sword with one edge being the defiance of the travel ban and the other the KMT-dominated democratization on Taiwan. In the CCP interpretation, there was “an irresistible tide of pressure of compatriots seeking unity with the mainland” (Yahuda, 1995:48) The CCP’s perception of this unusual action bears directly on the role of media brokers. China Newsweek, a news magazine published by China News Agency, provided a detailed account 20 years later.

Confronted with this unexpected request from the two Taiwanese journalists who
intended to cover news on the mainland, the then policymakers of the CCP adopted a
certain attitude and welcomed them with outstretched arms. They rendered them
sufficient assistance out of concern that it would facilitate the exchange across the
Taiwan Strait and enhance the understanding between the two sides. The
policymakers gave out definite directives: “Let the Taiwanese journalists make their
reports without interference. Whoever and wherever they want to interview, all their
demands should be satisfied as much as possible.” (Huang et al., 2007)

Considering The Post’s status as a private Taiwanese newspaper, the CCP pointedly assigned
China News Agency, a nominally non-government media institution, as the mainland’s
receiving counterpart. Nevertheless, the CCP orchestrated the whole reception in a far more
than non-government way. Chen Zuo’er, the then representative of China News Agency,
acknowledged that his task—coordinating the travelling affairs for the two Taiwanese
journalists—was directly supervised by Yang Side and Le Meizhen, the Directors of the
Taiwan Affairs Office, the CCP regulatory organ in dealing with Taiwan affairs (Huang et al.,
2007). Therefore, the unexpected action of the Taiwanese journalists was handled by the CCP
as some sort of mediation.

4. Consequences
Although no genuine negotiations were achieved between the two governments through the
Taiwanese journalists, their ice-breaking visit of the Chinese mainland in 1987 produced
drastic impact on cross-strait relations which may be reviewed from the perspectives of both
the government and the public:

Impact on the government
By raising a significant question of how to respond to the public opinion for civil exchange
across the Taiwan Strait, the Taiwanese journalists expedited the two governments’
interaction with each other indirectly. One month after their visit, in October 1987 the
mainland’s All-China Journalists Association officially extended its welcome to Taiwanese
journalists to conduct news reporting on the mainland. In a parallel move, the first
administrative regulation on media exchange across the Strait was promulgated by the CCP
government (The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council of the PRC, 2006). On the other
side, though The Post’s journalists trod on Chiang Ching-kuo’s toes, finally they received no
punishment, perhaps because they refrained from interviewing Deng Xiaoping. In the
political climate of democratization, the KMT government did not resort to repressive action. Unexpectedly, the two journalists “painted conditions on the mainland in such drab colours [and this] emboldened the authorities to break the taboo on allowing visits to the mainland” (Yahuda, 1995:48). Long even argued that their reports “helped encourage the KMT that, far from needing to worry about the pernicious ideological influences to which visitors to the mainland would be exposed, there were actually significant propaganda benefits to Taipei to be derived from letting people see ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’ in action”(1991:208). The KMT government sped up opening its mainland policy by announcing the lifting of the ban on private travel to the Chinese mainland on 15 October 1987, exactly one month after the two journalists’ “landing” in Beijing.

*Impact on the public*

The two Taiwanese journalists’ visit to the mainland not only broke the deadlock of cross-strait relations, but opened the door for the civil exchange across the Strait. While the two journalists were still travelling in the mainland, “the mainland fever” spread like wildfire on Taiwan. After the revocation of the travel ban, “[J]ournalists, athletes, scholars, scientists, actors, singers, politicians, and tourists from Taiwan visited the mainland in large and increasing numbers” (Clough, 1993:1). According to Long’s account, the number of the Taiwanese visitors reached 330,000 in total in 1988 (1991:218). Since then, civil exchanges across the Strait have shown a drastic growth. The statistics from Taiwan’s GIO shows that over 18 years the number of visits made by Taiwan inhabitants to the mainland skyrocketed to 4.1 million in 2005 (GIO, 2008). The statistics from the mainland indicates that, up to the end of 2004, more than 10,000 Taiwanese journalists had visited the mainland whereas more than 500 mainland journalists had travelled to Taiwan (Muming, 2005). (In 1991, the first two mainland journalists obtained visas from the KMT government to conduct their news reporting in Taiwan.)

*Implications: Media Brokers in the Context of Cross-Strait Relations*

The examination of the four parameters of initiation and motivation, awareness, action and consequences helps to build up a detailed picture of media-broker diplomacy in cross-strait relations context within which three consequent implications may be developed.

Firstly, one needs to consider the involvement of the government. The matter of cross-strait relations is the matter of legitimacy. Due to the historical complexities, politics has always
been the decisive factor in all kinds of activities between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan. In the 1980s, what concerned the two governments most were how to project their own legitimacy and whether their policies on cross-strait relations would justify or jeopardise that legitimacy. Different perceptions of legitimacy, therefore, guided the governments into this unexpected media-broker diplomacy in various ways. When the Taiwanese media brokers crossed the Strait, they found themselves simultaneously fallen into a dual-framework within which they had to cope with a variety of government involvements from both sides. The CCP government, in the way of direct involvement, adopted a much more supportive attitude towards the media brokers. The CCP’s politically supportive attitude, however, was welded into its journalistic regulation of reporting travel through both China News Agency’s coordination within CCP’s top-down media system and the presumably rigid censorship of Lee and Hsu’s news reports to be published on the popular Reference News. Whereas the KMT government, in an indirect way, created a freer media environment, granted The Post some sort of tacit approval and assumed a liberalised approach afterwards by lifting the travel ban, believing that the Taiwanese visitors would project an image of free and affluent ROC in the mainland. Though indirect the KMT’s case may be, the censorship was obvious during this critical period. The GIO’s threat of penalty appeared to be “the sword of Damocles” for The Post in influencing its journalists’ reportage, not to mention that The Post, by committing itself to its own “three noes” policy, practised standard self-censorship. As Street asserted, “censorship can take a variety of forms, and it does not necessarily require direct intervention” (Street, 2001:105). Apart from the pervasiveness of censorship, interestingly, both of the two governments intended to score propaganda points for their own legitimacy through media-broker diplomacy. The CCP government perceived the media brokers’ visit as an expression of Taiwanese compatriots’ public opinion to reunite with the mainland while Taiwan intended to win the mainland by “being a ‘showcase’ for what an allegedly free market economy combined with political liberalisation can offer the Chinese people” (Long, 1991:223). The audiences of this media-induced legitimacy, supposedly, may include the people within the Chinese R-matrix and the Taiwanese A-matrix and overseas Chinese. Therefore, it is argued that the key to observing media-broker diplomacy in cross-strait relations is to see if it had the effect of easing tension or improving understanding between the two sides, and subsequently involving the two governments in interaction with each other (though driven by different political considerations of legitimacy)—even if formal negotiations have not been initiated.
Secondly, one needs to consider the age of media-broker diplomacy in cross-strait relations. In Chitty’s matrix framework, cross-strait relations may be depicted as the interactions between two adversarial matrices (an A-matrix and an R-matrix) that are constructed from the same large Han ethnohistorical matrix (E-matrix) (2000:15). This would be true of the KMT followers who migrated to Taiwan, even though indigenous Taiwanese would belong to another E-matrix. Global and local societies are shaped not by these matrices, but by the state of flux of their complex relationship (Chitty, 2000:16). From a holistic view, accordingly, the fluctuating cross-strait relations have always been a grievous threat to the stability of the international system, the P-matrix. In this sense, the significance of the two Taiwanese journalists’ visit to the Chinese mainland in 1987 is that it facilitated favourable transformation in the complex cross-strait relations. This unexpected media event brought illumination to the two contending matrices with an alternative and additional mediation channel in the absence of official relations. Four years later media-broker diplomacy developed a momentum from infancy to maturity. Discovering its great potential in easing tensions, the CCP government followed suit by commissioning two mainland journalists to Taiwan to mediate a fisheries dispute in 1991. The interactive utilisation of media-broker diplomacy, therefore, implied that it had been acknowledged by the government as an emerging policy trend across the Taiwan Strait.

Thirdly, the role of the journalist needs to be discussed. What are the role perceptions of the journalist? A set of roles may be used to describe what the Taiwanese journalists did, including disseminators, observers, profit-makers, initiators, catalyst, and more specifically, go-betweens and media brokers. In his pathbreaking study of media and foreign policy, Cohen clarified the duality of the reporter's work—one as a neutral reporter and the other as an active participant in the policy-making process (1963:19-20). Possibly the active participation of journalists is achieved at what Gurevitch called “the cost of sacrificing some traditional norms” (1991:187). In the light of media-government relations, one of the intractable challenges posed to journalists might be whether they can be free from being manipulated by the government for political purposes. Given its inherent attributes, media-broker diplomacy represents the most controversial interaction between officials and journalists. Cronkite was even criticised for overstepping the bounds of ethical journalism in the Sadat-Begin case (Frederick, 1993:219; Gilboa, 2000:299; Gilboa, 2005:102). Addressing the relationship between politics and television, Cronkite argued that “[I]t's a stand-off between an attempt to use the medium and the medium's determination not to be used”
(1998:60). Regarding the Taiwanese journalists, obviously they perceived themselves as independent journalists based on *The Post*’s precept of “Independent Management”. It was this very professional self-image that inspired them to risk the mission to the mainland. In this sense, they did fulfil their role as “the eyes and ears of the public” (Cohen, 1963:23) and set a pioneering example for the media on both Taiwan and the Chinese mainland by educating and informing the Chinese society with free press rights. But, such journalistic stardom raised a tricky question: were the journalists really independent? Eschewing the CCP officials, including their refusal of interviewing the paramount leader Deng, presumably ensured that the CCP government would not sway them. On the other hand, packing the “three noes” policy in their travel bags amounted to an unambiguous claim to be emotionally and ideologically compatible with the KMT government. Partisan bias occurred, though *The Post* was a private and independent newspaper. “They (the two journalists) offered little favourable comments to the mainland in their news reports. We can even say that they despised us” (*China Times*, 2007). Wang Jinxi, the then editor-in-chief of *China News Agency*, complained that their reportage leaned towards the KMT government. The two Taiwanese journalists’ case provides a testimony for what Mowlana called the major hypothesis in relations of the media to foreign policy which is “in international conflict, the media often sides with the perceived national interest of the system of which they are a part, making it difficult to maintain journalistic independence and neutrality in the face of patriotism and national loyalty” (1997:35). Within the model of media-broker diplomacy, therefore, it is likely that the role of the media broker brings journalists into a dilemma in which their political participation creates constraints and limits on their journalistic independence.

**Conclusion**

While examining communication in war and peace, Frederick noted “one unmistakable fact”—media and mediate have the same Latin root (1993:219). This articulation can easily find its echoes in cross-strait relations. With political and military confrontation across the Taiwan Strait, the media has turned out to be a useful means of mediation between the Chinese mainland and Taiwan in the absence of official contacts. Before the emergence of media-broker diplomacy in cross-strait relations, the two governments in the propaganda war had passively employed the media as a tool of public diplomacy. The unexpected twist of the two media brokers in 1987, however, enabled the media to play the role of mediators in an active sense. Stemming from the backdrop of transformation on both the Chinese mainland
and Taiwan, media-broker diplomacy also holds the seeds of transformation by itself which involved the two governments in interaction with each other based on different perceptions of their own legitimacy and consequently eased tensions and introduced an epoch of exchange to cross-strait relations. Starting from an unexpected media event, media-broker diplomacy was “upgraded” to an alternative and additional approach, which may be orchestrated by the two governments to their own ends. For the journalist, however, media-broker diplomacy poses a great challenge to journalistic independence. In the journey of media-broker diplomacy, independence, neutrality and objectivity seems to be excess baggage for the journalist because his perception of the professional task is basically swayed by the surrounding political and social system in which his media institution operates.

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