

PREFACE



This book is a collection of selected news reports, analyses and commentaries I wrote in the last two years (1998–2000) on Taiwan when The Straits Times posted me there. It is divided into four sections:

Section A traces the development of cross-strait relations since the March 18, 2000 presidential elections that returned a pro-independence candidate. That marked a turning point in Taiwanese politics as well as in bilateral relations across the strait;

Section B gives a factual account of the election process at different points in time, as well as my interpretation of the result itself;

Section C covers news and analyses on cross-strait relations, especially the unification-independence dispute and the deterioration of cross-strait relations after Taiwanese ex-president Lee Tenghui formulated his ‘two-states’ theory;

Section D sets cross-strait relations in the broader perspective of the trilateral relationship between Beijing, Taipei and Washington, the latter being a key player in this uneasy co-existence.

No Chinese can be entirely neutral or impartial when faced with the Taiwan issue and neither do I pretend to be so. Readers may notice that I use the term “separatism” instead of “independence” to characterize the breakaway movement. This choice of words indicates my own stance on this issue.

Other than that I try to give an account that is as factual as possible of what happened in the last two critical years and offer my explanations for the developments that led eventually to the change in the political landscape of the island.