

World Affairs Council of Philadelphia

2006 Model Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings

Topic 1: China and Taiwan: What is the best policy to pursue?

Subcommittee on East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Chairman: Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)

Members: Joseph Biden (D-DE)

Ranking Member: John Kerry (D-MA)

Russ Feingold (D-WI)

Barack Obama (D-IL)

Lamar Alexander (R-TN)

Chuck Hagel (R-NE)

Lincoln Chafee (R-RI)

George Allen (R-VA)

Richard Lugar (R-IN)

Background:

The conflict between China and Taiwan goes back to the civil war between Communists and Nationalists in Mainland China, which was won by the Communists in 1947. The Nationalists fled to Taiwan and established a rival government called the ROC, which stands for Republic of China; they established the city of Taipei as their capital. The Taipei government was considered the official government of China until the 1970's. During that decade many countries began to accept the One China Policy idea and shifted their formal recognition to Communist government in Beijing. (FYI: the One China Policy basically states that in foreign policy relations there is only one legitimate government of the Chinese people. Countries must choose to recognize the ROC or the PRC as the rightful government for all of China. Ultimately, this led to Communist China replacing the Nationalist country in the General Assembly and the Security Council of the United Nations. Communist China has repeatedly threatened Taiwan with invasion while the United States has supported the Taipei government based on its agreement to defend Taiwan if China ever invades it. In recent years the Beijing government has made enormous strides with its foreign and economic efforts to open itself up to the international scene. For example, the 2008 Summer Olympic Games will be held in Beijing. At this point the U.S. needs to review its past and present ties with both Taipei and Beijing governments and devise a foreign policy appropriate for our national interests and international goals.

History:

Before World War II, Taiwan, was fought over between China and Japan and was a Japanese Colony and was considered to be part of China. This all changed when Nationalists escaping from defeat at the hands of the Communists established a rival regime in Taiwan that was founded in 1947 by Cheng Kai-Shek leader of the nationalist party, which was defeated by the Communists in 1947 after fleeing to Taiwan he and his followers managed to establish control over the island, which was supported by the United States because of the Cold War. Kai-Shek set up a Dictatorship run by the KMT party. The United States protected this regime through a treaty that guaranteed security and set up bases in Taiwan. With Cheng Kai-Shek came two million immigrants who added to the six million natives. During this time the ROC was recognized as being the Government of China and was given a seat on the Security Council. This is all changed in the 1970's when Foreign States began to recognize the PRC. In the 1980's Martial Law was abolished and the view of Taiwanese independence was first started to be discussed. Up until Martial Law was lifted and multiparty elections allowed the talk of independence was considered to be taboo, because the Government of Taiwan considered itself to be the rightful government of Mainland China. Independence for Taiwan means that Taiwan considers itself to be a separate entity from Mainland China. This of course has angered the PRC, which considers it to be the representative of all of China and Taiwan to be a renegade Province. It has repeatedly threatened Taiwan with military action if it ever formally declares independence from China and the U.S. has an agreement to protect Taiwan in case that happens. What is currently accepted by many states is that of a Status Quo position. This means to accept Taiwan as a state but not to give it any formal support if it declares independence.

Taiwan's Political views on independence:

Taiwan has two major political camps. The Pro independence party called the Pan-Green Coalition, which is made up of the Democratic Progressive Party and the Taiwan Solidarity Movement. While the KMT, People First Party and New Party form the Pan-Blue Coalition. Supporters of the Pan-Green party believe that Taiwan is different from China and support the notion of Taiwan's independence. However many of these members have a more moderate take on this issue, claiming that Taiwan is already a sovereign, independent county that is the equal of China and have no need to declare independence. The Pan-Blue Coalition holds the opposite view. Some old members of this coalition hold the view of the One-China policy, which states that there is one China with two governments and that Taiwan is part of mainland China. However the mainstream position of the Pan-Blue Coalition is to maintain Taiwan's current position and being willing to negotiate down the road.

China's Position on Taiwan's independence:

China has stated that it finds more acceptable a Republic of China than an independent Taiwan. This is ironic because it views the ROC as being illegitimate. It has stated that if Taiwan relinquishes its rights over China or declares independence it would result in a forceful response. China's Premier Wen Jiabao sums up China's position as following:

“The position of the Chinese government on a question of Taiwan has always been consistent. That is, we always follow the principle of peaceful reunification and one country, two systems. And we have been doing a great deal. And we have been making our utmost effort and utmost sincerity to achieve this prospect. However, such efforts by our side have met with the challenges from the Taiwan authority and from the Taiwan separatist forces. We respect the desire of the Taiwan people to develop and pursue democracy. However, we firmly oppose the attempts by certain separatist forces in Taiwan to pursue Taiwan independence under the disguise of promoting democracy in an attempt to cut of Taiwan from the mainland. So we have expressed our firm determination and strength to safeguard state unity that is exactly designed to safeguard peace and stability in the Taiwan Straits. We also made it very clear that as long as the slightest hope for peace exists, we will exert our utmost to strive for the peaceful reunification of the motherland”. (Permanent mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations).

China has many arguments to back up its claims that Taiwan is part of China. Two of the most significant are as follows. The Cairo Conference and the Potsdam Declaration which dealt with the question of Taiwan were accepted by Japan in its surrender. Those documents state that Taiwan was to be returned to China at the end of the Second World War. The other significant argument is that many people in Taiwan are of Chinese Heritage and the people of Taiwan are being separated from the motherland.

America's position on Taiwan's independence:

America has a treaty to protect Taiwan if it is ever invaded by China. This treaty, which was signed in 1954, says that the U.S. must protect Taiwan in the case that it is invaded by China. The position of the United States for the last several years has been that sovereignty over the area is subject to future interpretation however it supports the One-China policy. The United States has made it clear that it would not recognize China's jurisdiction over Taiwan in the six assurances made in 1982. These six assurances are seen in the following.

1. The United States would not set a date for termination of arms sales to Taiwan.
2. The United States would not alter the terms of the Taiwan Relations Act
3. The United States would not consult with China in advance before making decisions about U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.
4. The United States would not mediate between Taiwan and China.
5. The United States would not alter its position about the sovereignty of Taiwan which was, that the question was one to be decided peacefully by the Chinese themselves, and would not pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China.
6. The United States would not formally recognize Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan.

These assurances are the backbone of United States Policy regarding Taiwan and assure Taiwan of United States support while allowing for China and Taiwan to decide these issues between themselves. It would most likely not be in the interests of the United States to go to war with China

Witnesses

Christopher R. Hill

Assistant Secretary: Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs at the U.S. State Department

He would talk about the United States Position and the six party talks.

Clark T. Randt Jr.

Ambassador: The United States to China

He would talk about China's position regarding the six party talks and what China is doing

Donald Rumsfeld

U.S:Defense Secretary

He could talk about the feasibility of defending Taiwan.

Michael Hayden

He believes that Taiwan has a right to defend herself.

Maureen Steinbruner

Distinguished Fellow: Center for National Policy

She believes that the United States needs to balance both sides

Jeffrey A. Bader

Senior Fellow: Foreign Policy Studies at the Brookings Institute

He also believes in the need of balance between both sides.

David Kang

Visiting Professor: Stanford University

He believes that we need balance between the two sides

John J. Tkacik

Senior Research Fellow: Asian Studies Center at the Cato Institute

He believes that we need to protect Taiwan.

Ezra Vogel

Henry Ford II Professor: Social Science Emeritus at Harvard University

He believes that Taiwan is caught between independence and closer economic ties with the main land.