

Taiwan: A Vital Bastion in the Defense of Democracy

Opening Remarks by

Chen Ming-tong

Minister

Mainland Affairs Council of the Republic of China

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Director Rafiq Dossani of the RAND Center for Asia Pacific Policy; Dr. Lin, CEO of the Institute for National Defense and Security Research; Ambassador Chu, TECO-LA; Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon!

The RAND Corporation has an outstanding record of achievements in the field of military and security research, not to mention its in-depth analyses on the situation in the Taiwan Strait. It is an honor to have the opportunity to speak here today at RAND headquarters. In my talk today, I will share some of Taiwan's observations on strategic security in the development of cross-Strait relations.

1. The CCP's institutional expansion and its impact on security in the Taiwan Strait and the region

Since the launch of the reform and opening-up policy in the 1990s, mainland China has seen steadily improved economic growth, and has risen rapidly in the new century to become a political and economic world power. At the 19th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), mainland Chinese leader Xi Jinping declared that socialism with Chinese characteristics had "blazed a new trail for other developing countries to achieve modernization," and that it "offered Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems facing mankind." He also outlined the objectives and

timelines for advancing China's political, economic, and social development, and for building a strong military to achieve the so-called "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." The CCP has long been working to spread its authoritarian governance model in the hopes of establishing a new international order. And the regime's rising power has indeed changed the global strategic balance. This rise presents a growing threat to democracy and strikes the world order and civilized values. This is an urgent issue that the countries of the world must now face together.

In its campaign, the CCP has upgraded the "three magic weapons" it used to seize power during the revolution period, namely, united front work, armed struggle, and party-building. Internally, the Mainland regime has increased pressure and tightened controls of its own people. Externally, it has been engaged in a global influence campaign, with Taiwan on the frontline of this "red infiltration". The CCP has built its "sharp power" on the economic gains brought by China's huge domestic market and labor force. For years, it has extended its reach without firing a shot by recruiting and cultivating agents, expanding its military, conducting cyber attacks, spreading disinformation, stealing scientific and technological information, meddling in elections, and undermining democracies and the normal function of societies and economies worldwide. It has also sought to use its status in international agencies and organizations to maintain its dictatorship and smother the values of freedom. This has gravely damaged security in the Taiwan Strait and the greater region.

2. Taiwan is establishing defenses for security to safeguard its sovereignty and democracy

Because of Taiwan's history and strategic location, the CCP has never renounced its ambitions of bringing about "unification" by force. At the beginning of this year, Xi Jinping proposed the "five points" to accelerate the process of ultimate unification. Under a new two-

pronged strategy, the Mainland has said it hopes to hold “democratic consultations” and further explore the “one country, two systems model for Taiwan.” At the same time, it has sought to further infiltrate and divide Taiwan, while continuing to erode the sovereignty of the ROC. Its intentions in all of these are to unilaterally change the status quo. The CCP plans to become a great power with a strong military by the middle of this century. Over the past years, Mainland military aircraft and ships have expanded and normalized long-distance training in the airspaces and waters around Taiwan and across the Western Pacific. Through these actions, the Mainland has announced its rising power to intimidate neighboring countries, and has signaled its intent to crush Taiwan’s determination to resist annexation. We expect economic and military developments in China will profoundly impact the foundations of the future security framework in the Taiwan Strait and the greater region.

Whether from a historical or international law perspective, Taiwan has never been a part of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). The ROC and the 23 million people of Taiwan will never accept the CCP’s “one country, two systems,” and we will never yield to threats of this hegemonic power. In the face of Beijing’s extreme pressure, provocation, and intimidation, which aim to force Taiwan to accept its political views, President Tsai Ing-wen has moved to establish a “security network for democracy” for cross-Strait interaction. This network aims to counter the CCP’s united front and military offensives through democracy, rule of law, as well as economic, defense, and security measures. Taiwan has also taken a series of actions to safeguard its national security, ameliorate legislation and its management, promote a strategy of diversified foreign economic development, strengthen its self-defense capabilities, and heighten crisis awareness among Taiwanese people. These actions together seek to ensure the integrity of our sovereignty, our free and democratic system, and to protect the welfare and interests of our

people. They also constitute an important force for promoting regional peace and stability.

3. Consolidating democratic alliances and acknowledging Taiwan's important frontline defense position

Seventy years ago, US General Douglas MacArthur described Taiwan as “an unsinkable aircraft carrier.” Today, Taiwan still stands at the center of the first line of defense for democracy in the Indo-Pacific. As an anchor of freedom for maintaining strategic balance in the region, Taiwan has stood alone in its resistance to communist hegemony and its struggle against non-peaceful forces. Now, 70 years later, Taiwan watches the world's increasing demand for those who seek to change institutional values to comply with the international order and rules. At the same time, we also witness a consolidation of the international strategic security framework and the alliance of those with shared democratic values.

A security network for democracy can only be established through our joint efforts. And any comprehensive regional strategy requires all nations to link their political, economic and security policies together. The international community needs to understand the CCP. And Taiwan's understanding of the CCP is unique in the world. For years, Taiwan has been a responsible stakeholder in the Indo-Pacific region. Not only are we dedicated to healthy interactions across the Taiwan Strait, we have also contributed to democracy, freedom, human rights, the rule of law, and good socio-economic governance across the world. Taiwan is a trustworthy partner and a force for good for regional peace and shared interests. Yet, for years, the ROC international status has been downgraded and sidelined, limiting Taiwan's development. This is the fact that is hard for the people of Taiwan to accept. Therefore, we call on friendly countries to be fully aware of the CCP's downgrading of Taiwan's due status as a sovereign state, and to stand with us on “Taiwan's defense line.”

Everyone here today is an expert on political and military developments in China and regional affairs. I believe that you all have been closely watching the recent developments in mainland China. I hope our discussions today can shed light on the course ahead and wish this forum all success. Thank you!