

Democracy and Peace: The Key Words for Developing Cross-Strait Relations

Opening Remarks by

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Vice President Wagner of the Heritage Foundation, Director Lohman of the Asian Studies Center, President Lai of the Prospect Foundation, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning!

It is my great honor to be here today. I would like to thank the Heritage Foundation for holding this conference on the future development of cross-Strait relations at this time, when authoritarian regimes are challenging democratic systems around the world. Today, I will talk about the current situation in the Taiwan Strait and the cross-Strait policy of the government of the Republic of China (ROC).

1. Maintaining cross-Strait peace is Taiwan's commitment and insistence

Cross-Strait relations have experienced ups and downs. In recent years, as overall strength of the two sides and the international situation have changed, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has stepped up its pressure against Taiwan more aggressively and widely. It has not only expanded military and diplomatic intimidation, but also used the freedom and openness of Taiwan's democratic society to advance its united front work and increase its infiltration through sharp power. It has also engaged in influence operations to steer Taiwanese society in a direction more favorable to mainland China. Beijing's negative actions have not only hindered healthy cross-Strait interaction, but also challenged Taiwan's deeply-rooted democratic system and core values.

Facing a complex regional situation and threats from the other side, President Tsai Ing-wen's determination on maintaining cross-Strait peace remains unchanged. The ROC government has acted to strengthen the legal system and management mechanisms to defend democracy and to counter the CCP's strengthening offensive. It also has promised the

public that it will firmly safeguard national sovereignty and Taiwan's independent democratic system, improve human rights protections and the rule of law, and play a stabilizing role for peace and prosperity across the Taiwan Strait.

2. The CCP's "one country, two systems" is intended to eliminate the ROC

Early this year, the Mainland leader laid out "Xi's five points" as guidelines in its Taiwan policy. The CCP, a party which lacks of democratic ideals, has proposed what it calls "democratic consultations" to explore a "one country, two systems model for Taiwan." It has started the unification process with Taiwan but has not renounced the use of force against Taiwan. It is an official declaration by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to annex the Republic of China (ROC). The ROC is a sovereign state, and Taiwan has never been a part of the PRC, neither historically nor under international law. We will never accept "one country, two systems." This has become a "Taiwan consensus," particularly when Taiwan sees the current situation in Hong Kong, Xinjiang, and Tibet.

The CCP has sought to impose its narrow political views of the "one-China principle" and has ill-intentioned legislation aimed at "internalizing" Taiwan. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) planes and ships frequently conduct exercises near Taiwan. The Mainland continues to poach Taiwan's diplomatic allies and press for "denationalization" of the ROC. In addition, it has introduced unilateral measures and equal treatment as inducements to "nationalize" the Taiwanese people. Beijing's long-term encroachment on Taiwan is part of the communist regime's strategy for external expansion. Taiwan is at the frontline against the CCP's hegemony. So the CCP's external expansion poses a huge and direct challenge to global democracy and security.

3. Deepening Taiwan-US relations provides solid backing for cross-Strait peace

Recent changes in US-China relations have affected the international political and economic structure. The trade war between the US and China has led to a fundamental adjustment of global industrial supply chains. The US is more concerned than ever about China's internal and external governance and expansion. It is also starting to really see the different nature of centralized authoritarianism. This has highlighted the fact of Taiwan's long solo battle and attempts to sound the alarm. The US Executive branch and Congress have voiced support for Taiwan and substantively backed Taiwan through arms sales and passage of Taiwan-friendly bills to deter Beijing's diplomatic isolation and military intimidation of Taiwan.

This is a forceful backing to deepen Taiwan-US cooperation, promote cross-Strait peace and counter Beijing's aggression.

US Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have repeatedly praised Taiwan as a democratic success story in East Asia. The friendship between Taiwan and the US is based on shared values of democracy, freedom, human rights, and common interests in regional security. Taiwan occupies a key position in the first island chain of the Asia Pacific. It has long been a bastion of defense for democracy and security. Taiwan is willing to make more contributions in the Indo-Pacific region as a reliable partner in defense of democracy, freedom, and openness.

4. Democracy and peace are the keys to international order and cross-Strait relations

On the direction of future work, we offer some views and appeals:

(1) Maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is in the interest of all parties. Taiwan's policy of "maintaining peace and stability" is consistent with the interests of all sides. The most important of these interests is to defend the sovereignty of the ROC and the greatest well-being of the people of Taiwan. This is our bottom line rather than a provocation. President Tsai recently said that we "refuse to buckle under pressure, but also don't engage in rash behavior when we have support." Beijing should maintain the demeanor of a great power. It should not take more radical action against Taiwan due to misjudgment.

(2) Replacing narrow political frameworks with cross-Strait communication and dialogue. Cross-Strait relations have come to a difficult crossroads. The Chinese authorities have brought this about by unilaterally setting political preconditions on cross-Strait interactions. This also explains why the Mainland continues to seriously misjudge the situation. Beijing attempts to follow a recipe to resolve cross-Strait problems with "a model" in which it "has the final say." This is a fool's errand. Only by giving up the political framework of "one country, two systems" designed unilaterally for Taiwan and resuming communication and dialogue can we reduce the risk of misjudging the situation in the Taiwan Strait.

(3) The CCP must follow a path of reform to democracy. Seventy years ago, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait chose different development paths. However, the key to cross-Strait peace lies in China's democratization. Momentum is growing among the people in mainland

China and Hong Kong to demand basic human rights and to protest monitoring and censorship. International opposition to CCP hegemony has also become a trend. We are willing to share Taiwan's experience in reform and transformation with mainland China. The CCP needs to embrace political reform, freedom, democracy, and respect for human rights. Only then can its contradictions be resolved and a solution to peaceful co-existence found.

Looking forward to the future, Taiwan will not waver in its commitment to "seek co-existence rather than confrontation, and reconciliation rather than conflict." We call on Beijing to conduct cross-Strait relations pragmatically and with the people's well-being truly in mind. I also hope that we can benefit from the wise advice from the experts and scholars gathered here today.

I wish the conference the greatest success. Thank you!