

Current Situation Across the Taiwan Strait and Taiwan's Policy Moving Forward

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at the CSIS Online Seminar on
“What’s Next for Cross-Strait Relations?
Trends, Drivers, and Challenges”
August 17, 2021*

Mr. Blanchette and online audience joining us today, good morning.

I am deeply honored to take part in this event hosted by the CSIS, and with the support of our TECRO in Washington.

I would like to thank Jude for this opportunity to share my thoughts on China, on Cross-Strait relations and on how Taiwan seeks to move forward in the face of intensified pressure from China.

Never before have we seen mentions of the importance of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait at events such as the latest QUAD Security Dialogue, U.S.-Japan, U.S.-EU and G7 Summit.

Why has peace in the Taiwan Strait become a concern for the Indo-Pacific region and international community? What was behind the shift in cross-Strait relations? How do we explain Beijing’s intensified pressure campaign against Taiwan?

To answer these questions, we first need to understand the true nature of the Chinese Communist Party, the CCP, and its regime.

Since the founding of the CCP, governance and development of China very much depend on the leader’s policy lines and ruling style. Xi Jinping builds his regime upon two unprecedented extremes.

The first is “extremely centralized leadership” to achieve concentration of power structure within the CCP. The second is “extremely frantic nationalism” used to consolidate the legitimacy of the CCP.

Over the years, Xi has won and consolidated his political authority through high centralization of power and monopolized decision-making based on autocracy and closed control. Shifting the 30 plus years of “collective leadership” to “centralized leadership”, even to “one-man rule” (定於一尊) .

The launch of expansive anti-corruption campaigns and political suppression, rooting out adversaries and opposition; practice of forced labor; restriction over religious freedom; as well as censorship over media and the Internet, were all carried out in the name of national security. Moreover, under China’s digital-totalitarianism, Beijing authorities use high-tech surveillance systems to monitor and spy on their own citizens.

With all these actions taken and skillful use of historical milestones to fuel patriotism and incite nationalism, Xi has made China into a true Orwellian State of the modern day.

As a combination of the two extremes, centralized leadership and frantic nationalism, today’s China is a regime of which we have never seen before in human history. Not even in the traditional totalitarian era of Mao Zedong. Not only because the concept of extreme nationalism did not exist back then, but also because China’s comprehensive power nowadays cannot be mentioned in the same breath as during Mao’s period.

From events surrounding the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of the CCP and public reactions, we see a new type of totalitarianism emerge out of China. To some extent it is a hybrid of neo-Nazism and neo-Stalinism. Such a dual-extreme neo-totalitarian system no doubt poses great threats to international order and development of liberal democracy.

There are three features that underpin Xi's neo-totalitarian regime.

First, decision-making under Xi and within his small inner circle tends to come with high risk and cost.

Extreme centralization of power and governance under Xi has led to serious misjudgment and missteps in decision-making, increasing the risk of internal and external uncertainty. In fact, several events have overshadowed Xi's seemingly strong leadership.

I would like to throw out a few examples here.

1. First, China's militarization of the South China Sea. This has caused strong reactions from both claimant states and interested parties such as the U.S, the UK, France, Japan and Australia.
2. Second, the internment camps in Xinjiang used for repression and mass surveillance of Uyghurs. This gave rise to great concern across international community about the increasing number of reports of serious human rights violations.
3. Third, the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law which destroyed the city's freedom and democracy, endangered its judicial independence, and put Hong Kong's status as one of the leading global financial hubs under threat.
4. Fourth, China seeks to expand its geo-political influence through the Belt Road Initiative which resulted in not only "debt-trap diplomacy" for hosting countries, but also over-expense of its own resources, impeding China's economic development prospects and affecting its people's wellbeing.
5. Last but not least, China has become increasingly comfortable in its efforts to export the so-called "China model" or "Chinese solution" globally.

The CCP's totalitarian aesthetics and mentality have led to Beijing's miscalculation of the resilience of the Western world to uphold rules-based international order.

This creates flashpoints due to China's false or biased responses and confrontational attitude towards international community's call to abide by existing international rules. And ends up developing a vicious cycle amongst China and major states.

The second feature is that Xi has reversed the diplomatic strategy and development track set by Deng Xiaoping to “hide your capability to bide your time” (韜光養晦) . He instead adopts a more assertive and aggressive approach driven by the CCP's global ambition, raising tension in this region and beyond.

China as a member of the international society should have ensured its development path integrates smoothly with the rest of the world in a civilized manner and is in line with universal values to seek peaceful coexistence. Unfortunately, under Xi's leadership, the CCP has turned to hegemonic thinking, military provocation, and wolf-warrior diplomacy.

Overly banking on the configuration of “the East is rising, and the West is declining” (東升西降) ; highly depending on patriotism and nationalism; and openly exposing its ambition to dominate world stage on an equal footing with the U.S, China seeks to become a global hegemon and change the existing international order through red China's infiltration, such as exporting the Belt Road Initiative along with other so-called “China model”.

In addition, the CCP is not averse to using coercive means to force other members of the international society to accept its behavior and assertions, compelling others to either come to heel or keep their silence.

For Beijing, all these moves serve for one ultimate end-goal. That is, to push the U.S. out of the Indo-Pacific region; to dominate East Asia and to annex Taiwan based on the CCP's own ambitions.

The third and last feature is that the CCP's adventurism for overturning history

and the lack of correcting mechanisms within the Party and State system bring about uncertainties and risks in Asia.

Under this dual-extreme neo-totalitarian system, Xi as the paramount leader holds unlimited and undisputable decision-making power. Moreover, no individual in China has the courage to speak against the leadership or defy the CCP.

Intellectuals who are supposed to speak and seek the truth end up having only one voice - the official line. This is because in China, if you dare to speak up or speak against the CCP, you risk facing the danger of cyberbullying, forced disappearance or illegal detention.

Xi's extreme roadmap for the country and restless ambition have turned China into a major power without clear succession plan and lacks oversight mechanisms.

With internal suppression and external aggression, the CCP regime has single-handedly created a disturbing, high-risk and rigid environment throughout the Asia-Pacific.

Faced with the threat of the CCP's dual-extreme neo-totalitarian system and its ambition to annex Taiwan, our only path for survival and development is to consolidate Taiwan's irreplaceable strategic importance and continue to bolster cooperation with like-minded countries.

In this second part of my talk, I would like to share with you three approaches Taiwan has set out to achieve our goal.

First, in terms of geopolitics, we want to ensure international community fully acknowledges the strategic importance of Taiwan in defending against the CCP's neo-totalitarianism and promoting freedom, openness, and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific.

Taiwan is at the midpoint, the center, of the first island chain. This gives us natural geostrategic importance. In the past, Taiwan was the first line of defense against Red China's expansion. Today, Taiwan is at the front line of confrontation between

democracy and the CCP's neo-totalitarianism and outward aggression.

Taiwan not only maintains the peaceful and stable status quo across the Taiwan Strait, but also plays a positive role to ensure the peace and stability in the Indo-pacific region. Through deepening cooperation under the Indo-Pacific regional framework in full scale, Taiwan had, has, and will be a strong partner to usher in a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific region.

Second, on the economic front, we will continue to strengthen Taiwan's position as the main provider of key technologies in global semiconductor supply chains. In addition, we want to show the world that Taiwan is the best and most reliable partner as global supply chains undergo fundamental restructure.

Taiwan's technologies, experience and talents in the semiconductor industry sit at the nexus of global chip development and management. Further enhancing our key position in global high-tech supply chains, especially those of semiconductor and ICT industries, allows Taiwan to be the crucial and indispensable partner for the U.S. and other democratic economies. This is especially important since the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated global supply chains' realignment across industries in order to build greater resilience.

Moreover, while Taiwan has been strengthening our own economic autonomy and resistance in this time of global economic uncertainty, we also understand the importance to stand together as a reliable partner for fellow democratic nations.

The third and last approach is to uphold Taiwan's success story of democracy, seeing that our democratic experience and practice can inspire the people of China and Hong Kong to pursue their own democracy and freedom.

Democracy can never be compatible with totalitarianism. The free world and China have entered a new era of long-term institutional and ideological competition. To safeguard the enduring success of Taiwan's model for democracy free from the CCP's encroachment is the most important indicator and contribution made to the development of democracy globally.

Taiwan will continue to deepen its democratic systems, and realize the universal values of democracy, freedoms, human rights, and rule of law. Taiwan's embrace of democracy and respect for universal values not only make us a role model for our Asian neighbors, but also show a better path for all the Chinese people.

While China uses nationalism and the self-proclaimed superiority of the so-called "China model" to block and undermine the possible influence of universal values and democratic systems of the West, it cannot play the same trick with Taiwan's democracy.

As a beacon of democracy, plus our geographic proximity to China, Taiwan's democratic experience and achievements can penetrate and inspire the people of China and Hong Kong to pursue their own democracy, freedom, and better life. Therefore, Taiwan holds an irreplaceable position in global democracy camp.

Driven by its one and only dual-extreme neo-totalitarian system, the CCP shows no respect for democracy or human rights as it strives to become a hegemon. This has seriously challenged the interests of the U.S. and neighboring countries in the Indo-Pacific region, not to mention Taiwan.

The CCP's hegemonic mentality and in denial of the existence of the ROC Taiwan mark the historical turning point of cross-Strait relations. Taiwan will and shall never accept Beijing's use of the "one China principle" and "one country, two systems model for Taiwan" which downgrade ROC Taiwan and undermine the cross-Strait status quo.

As a responsible stakeholder in this region, Taiwan has spared no effort in doing all we can to ensure stability across the Taiwan Strait based on the four guiding principles laid out by President Tsai, namely: peace, parity, democracy, and dialogue. Our government has more than once expressed our willingness to facilitate meaningful dialogue as long as the Beijing authorities are willing to resolve differences and improve cross-Strait relations.

Maintaining peace and stability of the Taiwan Strait is the joint responsibility of both sides. Taiwan has always taken our share of responsibility in doing so, knowing this is in the interests of, and in line with security concerns of all parties in this region. It is the CCP who needs to step up.

When geographic reality gives Taiwan no choice but to stand at the forefront of the CCP's intensified political suppression, economic inducement, diplomatic offensive, military provocation, and social infiltration, it is vital that the U.S. and international community continue to pay close attention to the development of cross-Strait situations.

To respect, recognize and support democratic Taiwan through deepening partnerships in various fields is a crucial way for world liberal democracies to jointly respond to and deter the CCP's challenges to regional peace. Only when we stand strong together can we effectively confront the CCP's dual-extreme neo-totalitarian system and fend off the threats the CCP poses to the existing international order.

With these few remarks, I hope we leave today's event knowing that it is time to review the appeasement and engagement policy with China. And with full knowledge that as like-minded countries we need to stand together to ensure the CCP is held accountable for its expansionism.

Thank you for joining us today. Thank you for your patience. Thank you so much.