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## **U.S. Taiwan Relations: Advancing Security in the Indo-Pacific Region**

「台美關係：強化印太區域安全」

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Thank you very much for that kind introduction. It's really an honour and pleasure to be back in Taiwan.

As was noted in the introduction, this is my first overseas trip since leaving the Pentagon and there is no better place, no more appropriate place for me than returning to Taiwan – a place I've spent a lot of time visiting in the past, but, as was said in the introduction, a place that is special in my heart and mind, and important to the United States.

So again, no more appropriate place for me to visit than here, and I'm very delighted to be here at the Institute for National Defense and Security Research.

The institute here is still a young institute, but I think it is fast becoming one of the premier institutes of its kind in the region. It is a thought leader, will help, not only give good advice to the government here in Taiwan, but produce excellent research, excellent ideas and thoughts for all who care about security in the Indo-Pacific and promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific.

So, it is really an honour to be here, to be part of that distinguished group that has been able to be behind this podium as you [INDSR CEO Dr Lin] mentioned but also to be an advocate for this institute going forward, given its very important work.

It was about a year ago, early 2019, January 2019 when Xi Jinping gave a speech which I think was well covered here and well understood here, given the message. He talked about the need for Taiwan to embrace “One Country, Two Systems.” He talked about the fact that he wanted to solve the “Taiwan problem” on his watch. He wouldn't pass it on to the next-generation. He talked about the fact that the PRC would not rule out the use of force, although they would not use force against Chinese compatriots. They wouldn't rule out the use of force should Taiwan go into another direction.

The speech, of course, made an impact here. People were not really delighted to hear the return of “One Country, Two Systems,” as something that would be prominent, and would be pronounced, the threatening nature of the comments of not ruling out the use of force.

So, one wonders what the objectives were. But in fact, it did seem at the time that it was an expression of some confidence. That Xi Jinping and the CCP felt as though they had some positive momentum, that perhaps it related to their feeling about their power vis-à-vis the United States in the region. Whatever it may have been, it seemed like an expression of confidence at the time, no matter how it was received here in Taiwan.



Well, 2019 the Year of the Pig was probably not a very happy year for the CCP and Chairman Xi Jinping. The [Chinese] economy surely continued to slow. That's partly a result of general restructuring and slowing of the economy, but surely the impact of US tariffs were starting to be felt and now, of course, the impact of the coronavirus on the economy. The ill-fated decision to try to push for an extradition law in Hong Kong which then resulted in massive protests that keep on going and going and going. There was greater exposure for what was happening in western China, in Xinjiang, in the detention camps, the concentration camps where one to three million Uyghurs and other minorities are being held. Now of course, the spread of virus from Wuhan which is affecting the whole region, if not the world, but surely having a major impact on China and its economy.

So, probably not a happy Year of the Pig for China.

On the other hand, for the United States, for Taiwan, for our relationship, I think it was a very good year. Our relationship enjoyed, I think, another year of improvement. There's some things that are very visible and well-known, the release for example, of the major weapon systems, the F-16s, the Abrams tanks. Some things that we talk about only in a general nature, not a lot of specificities, like the cooperation on cyber in the lead-up to the Taiwan election and through the Taiwan election.

And of course, some things we keep low key intentionally. Many of the things we do in our defense dialogue, in our military exchanges, which continue to mature and develop and really contribute to a richer, more substantive type of relationship. We continue to increase the level of visitors and representation very much in line with what the US Congress envisioned with the *Taiwan Travel Act*. So, I think it was quite a positive year for US-Taiwan relations and probably not a very happy year for the CCP.

Here we are again, in February 2020. Once again, we have some provocations from the PRC on February 9th and 10th. We saw the very provocative air activities: circling the entire island with a range of fighters and bombers and making threatening maneuvers.

So, whether the PRC is acting from a place of confidence, whether they are acting from a place of insecurity and uncertainty, it appears they have very little imagination and very little interest in changing their playbook or altering the tool kit in what, I think, have been failed policies. "Failed" not by my definition, but by their own definition of trying to gain affinity or attraction to the idea of what they call "reunification", "One Country, Two Systems." So, I think we are going to see more of the same from the PRC, whether they're confident or whether they're insecure.

And this is one of the defining qualities of our relationship going forward. In fact, one of the defining qualities for the US in the entire Indo-Pacific Strategy going forward is this kind of aggressive posture toward Taiwan and toward other parts of the region.

So, let me talk a little bit about US strategy in the Indo-Pacific, how Taiwan fits in and this relationship fits in, and then conclude with a few thoughts on how the United States and Taiwan can continue to really enhance our partnership in ways that promote Taiwan security, but also the regional shared vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

So, with our *National Security Strategy* and our *National Defense Strategy* in the United States, we do talk about promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific. But we also are very clear in identifying the primary challenge. And that is, the



return of great power competition and our view that China has emerged as a strategic competitor. This is not just words when you look at how the *National Defense Strategy* is actually being implemented. The nature of our competition with China is the organizing principle for our department and our defense enterprise.

It defines our future acquisition strategy.

It defines our future posture in the Indo-Pacific.

It defines how we train.

It defines how we think about allies and partners.

It really is a very important change in mindset, away from the kinds of wars and conflict we were involved in for the last couple of decades, primarily in the Middle East, to something that is of a strategic nature and something that is of vital importance to the future of our country and the stability of the Indo-Pacific.

So, we are in an era of strategic competition with China and sometimes we are asked, “What does that actually mean?” “How do you define competition?” “What are you competing for?” even. I think at the most fundamental level, we are competing in order to maintain an advantage and an edge so that we can continue to promote the qualities and characteristics of a free and open Indo-Pacific.

So, our competition is not for geography. It’s not for territory or water or for control. In fact, the United States has no ambition in the Indo-Pacific commons other than to ensure that they remain free and open. Competition is really to promote what we see as enduring values and principles that are near universal. I said “near universal” because our friends in Beijing don’t always act in ways that are promoting those same principles.

But the qualities of a free and open Indo-Pacific, we talk about protection of sovereignty, no matter a country’s size. We talk about the importance of supporting international law and international norms. We talk about peaceful dispute resolution. We talk about the promotion of free, fair and reciprocal trade.

There are the things that we seek to promote in our strategy and why we think we need an edge and to maintain the advantage. Because China and the CCP seem to have ambitions to erode those things and create a regional, if not global, security architecture that is more accommodating to their authoritarian model of governance and like-minded countries who, themselves, are seeking to benefit and learn from China’s authoritarian model.

This is important. It is critically important because should China become ascendant and their model become a model that is more and more emulated, then we could see it an erosion of all those free and open qualities that we cherish.

We could see an erosion of sovereignty.

We could see regional organizations such as ASEAN diminished in their importance.

We could see a resort to intimidation and coercion to resolve disputes and deal with conflict, rather than diplomacy and peaceful approaches.

We could see an erosion of international law and norms such as what we find in the *UN Convention on the Law of the Sea [UNCLOS]*.

So, we think this competition is meaningful because it really relates to the future quality of the Indo-Pacific region and



how particularly the global and regional commons will be going forward.

At the Department of Defense, when we talked about having a defense posture, we talked about three lines of effort. And here's where again I'll talk about our important relationship with Taiwan. We talked about three lines of effort being the "3Ps": preparedness; partners and allies; and promoting a networked region.

"Preparedness." We're talking about increasing the lethality of the joint force in the United States. That's increasing the lethality of the joint force for purpose. Not to have the best weapon systems, not to have most capable military for the sake of having a capable military, but to maintain that edge vis-à-vis our great power competitors – so China, first and foremost, among those.

So, when we talk about "preparedness," China is the pacing element for us.

We have to have a good understanding of China's military modernization. We have to have an understanding broadly how they themselves face competition and think about competition with the United States, and our like-minded friends and partners. And we have to make the investments, create the posture, create the strategy that's appropriate for that competition. One of the ways we can observe this, and practice how are we making this shift of mindset into reality, it has to do with where we're investing in the future, so areas such as space, cyber and hypersonics and artificial intelligence. All these things which we're not necessarily at the fore of our acquisition strategy when we were thinking about counter-terrorism, when we were thinking about regional conflict in the Middle East. This now is very much part of our future planning, so we have a joint force that's capable and prepared for the great power competition.

Taiwan is a key element of this. We have a close intelligence relationship with Taiwan. I think nobody in the world understands the PRC and the PLA the way our friends in Taiwan understand. Right here at this institute there's a tremendous amount of expertise and knowledge about developments within the PLA. For us to accurately use the PLA and the PRC as a pacing element, we have to have that deep understanding and that expertise. We rely on our cooperation and our discussions with Taiwan to do that, as well as to understand Taiwan's own approaches and how Taiwan thinks about the threat and accommodates the growing military modernization across the Taiwan Strait. So, "preparedness" for us, involves cooperation with Taiwan very directly.

The second "P" – partners and allies.

You know the United States, if you pull out the map, we are a Pacific nation. Maybe that's easy for me, born in Hawaii, raised in Oregon on the West Coast and I have a daughter from the Marshall Islands. But for some Americans, they have to pull out the map and they have to look. But they will see when they do that the Aleutian Island chain runs very deep into the Pacific from our very great state of Alaska. Hawaii, of course, is in the central part of the Pacific and is a gateway to the western Pacific. Our great territories of Guam and American Samoa, territories that contribute more members of US military per capita than any single US state, is deep into the western part of the Indo-Pacific. Yet all that said, we are not fully resident in the Asia part of the Asia-Pacific and certainly not the Indo part of Indo-Pacific.

So we're heavily reliant on friends and allies and partners.

We're reliant on them for basing opportunities.

We're reliant on them for access.



We're also very reliant on our partners to bring their own capabilities to bear to effect security in the Indo-Pacific region.

And Taiwan is really at the focal point and the center of that. Taiwan's ability to protect itself, to protect its sovereignty, to deal with the emerging challenges of China is really the linchpin to security throughout the Indo-Pacific. So, our partnership with Taiwan is very focused on helping Taiwan implement its own strategy.

I'm honored that Admiral Lee [Hsi-min] is here with us. He was one of the thought leaders in developing the "Overall Defense Concept." We think it is a very good strategy for Taiwan. The United States wants to be a partner to help Taiwan fully implement that. And what I mean by "fully implement that," that involves acquisition on the Taiwan side, investing in the right kinds of capabilities. Some refer to them as asymmetric capabilities. It involves the right kind of training and exercising. So, it's one thing to have a strategy, but it's another thing to train to it and prepare for it. And it has to do with fully resourcing and staffing on the personnel side and making sure that the individuals are trained for their systems but also themselves understanding how they're integrated into the defense strategy such as your "Overall Defense Concept."

So, the United States wants to be a partner on that because Taiwan with a strong deterrent capability and a strong capability to defend itself is part of keeping the Indo-Pacific free and open and is part of keeping the PLA at least uncertain about its ability to affect security through the use of force and to affect the security environment and the dynamics in the Indo-Pacific through the use of force. So, Taiwan is a partner, is very key.

The third "P" I've mentioned is "promoting a networked region."

There's a recognition that our security challenges in the Indo-Pacific are increasingly multi-lateral in nature. Whether that'd be maritime domain awareness which informs of maritime security; whether that be counter illegal illicit activities with human trafficking, counter-narcotics; whether that be issues associated with climate change and the security aspects of climate change. These are things all multi-lateral inherently, as I said. Taiwan can be a part of the solution to all those challenges or at least help us be optimally positioned to deal with those various challenges.

So for us, when we are talking about "promoting a networked region," we're very interested in expanding our cooperation with Taiwan that we have, not just intelligence exchange, not just information exchange, but real-time intelligence cooperation so that common operation pictures can be shared and understood, so that we can both effectively respond in a timely manner should we need to.

Ultimately that networking should go beyond a bilateral US-Taiwan, and I'll talk about that in a little bit. Because again for the security challenges that China presents and others, it's really important that countries not only see and sense themselves, but ultimately to share and contribute to these collective security requirements.

So, the "3Ps" – preparedness; partners and allies; and promoting a networked region – and the US-Taiwan relationship are really key to all those areas from the United States' perspective. And that's why in our own *Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* that was released at the last Shangri-La Dialogue last year, our partnership with Taiwan was highlighted and our expression of confidence that Taiwan was a partner promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific is right there in our official documents.



I should say a little about our direct engagement with China.

We do say competitor.

We don't say adversary.

We don't say enemy.

And there's a reason for that. We are still open to finding areas of cooperation with China. And we still interact with China a great deal and the PLA a great deal. We spend a lot of our time engaging China in efforts to improve the security environment, particularly the safety of the operating environment, through initiatives such as Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA). We still seek to make sure that our interactions on the high seas and in the regional commons are safe. They don't lead to an accident, an incident or any other unintended type of event that could lead to a crisis or, even worse, a conflict. So, we maintain an engagement with the PRC.

We also keep that in mind, for cooperation where our interests may align. We spent a lot of time talking to the PRC and the PLA, for example, about the situation on the Korean Peninsula. Taiwan has been a tremendous partner to the United States in helping keep pressure on the government in Pyongyang, so they understand that the only option for them to achieve their strategic goals is through dialogue and diplomacy. We believe keep pressuring on them is the best way to do that and Taiwan has been a partner, and helping us to deal with illegal ship-to-ship transfers, money laundering and the like. I can't think of a partner that's been more responsive in the Indo-Pacific than Taiwan anytime we've come forward with an issue or questions or request of any kind on North Korea.

We talked to the PRC and the PLA about that. We said, "Look, we're happy to work with you to the extent you are comfortable working with us." It could be just passing contacts and data about illegal ship transfers. It could be something more robust and cooperative if China's open to that. Unfortunately, the record has not been very good. Much of the illegal illicit ships-to-ship transfers have moved into Chinese territorial waters where they find safe haven. The Chinese vessels are spending more time shadowing us and harassing us, as we try to enforce the sanctions, rather than enforce the sanctions themselves.

But I think it is an important point that we keep the door open and we keep the offer of cooperation on the table. As recently as my last visit to China in October 2019 before I left office, this was a major point of emphasis. We think this is the tone for the rest of the region, too.

I know many in Taiwan would like to have a very different relationship with the PRC and the PLA in fact. As I looked at the activities around Taiwan that the PLA is engaged in, these are highly dangerous and highly provocative activities. I know people in Taiwan want a safe operating environment. I know right now we are counting on the professionalism and the capability of the Taiwan Air Force and other services to be the responsible party, to be the one that is avoiding the potential conflict and miscalculation through better training, through better practices.

But ultimately, we would like there to be an environment where the two sides could talk about confidence building. I think that's probably way off, because the PRC seems more intent on degrading confidence, rather than trying to build it and create it. But we do want to set an example through our own interactions with the PLA for other countries to be able to have the confidence to do the same kind of thing.



So again, Taiwan remains really at the core of our *Indo-Pacific Strategy* and Taiwan is a believer in the same principles, I understand and we feel. Taiwan is, in its own way, building out its own relationships with other countries which share its same vision, beyond the United States.

So the United States, I think, can also be the bridge helping Taiwan strengthen its relations with other key actors in the region, such as Japan, such as Australia, ultimately perhaps even other countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia, because the challenges that the PLA and the PRC present, are really challenges going against anyone who supports international law, norms and freedom.

So as I close here, I just want to offer few thoughts on US-Taiwan cooperation going forward because, again as I said, confident or not confident, it seems that the tool kit is the same and the PRC and PLA pressure will continue. It will continue directed not only to Taiwan, but through other areas. We face it in the South China Sea, we face in the East China Sea, we face it increasingly in the Indian Ocean region.

So we need to think about, not just staying in place, but also continuing to moving forward. My old boss, Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, used to say: Relationships don't stay in one place. It either gets better or they get worse.

We want our relationships to get better.

So, these are just few things I want to comment on as I close my opening comments here. Look, there's a number of things outside the defense space that I think the US and Taiwan should consider.

#1) First of all, we need to take a step to strengthen our trade relationship.

I am personally an advocate of starting our TIFA talks. I think whether or not we are in a position of bandwidth and capacity in our USTR to have those talks right away, continuing that work, continuing the strength and trade. Taiwan is the top 10 or 15 trading partner for us depending on the year, which is a remarkable thing for a country of 23 million people to swing at that level. But we can strengthen that area even further. We can do so through high quality trade talks, perhaps even positioning ourselves ultimately for a bilateral trade deal.

It may seem funny that a defense person, is leading with trade, but I think this is a strategic issue between the United States. I think it's a security issue and I think it's really at the top of the agenda even for people who are of military background and of security interests.

#2) We need to do more to help Taiwan with international space and the challenges Taiwan faces.

No reminder was probably necessary at all, but certainly the recent experiences with the WHO and ICAO should be reminder enough that Taiwan is being squeezed. And we all suffer and we all are diminished as a result of that kind of pressure and that kind of exclusion. My own institute had some Twitter comments blocked because we were saying some positive things about Taiwan's inclusion in ICAO. So even at the small Project 2049 Institute we felt the heavy hand of China in that regard. But imagine the irony that we're dealing with this tragedy. We're trying, all of us, to get our hands around the nature of the virus, the challenge it presents, and the PRC is spending time trying to block Taiwan's participation in the WHO and trying to put obstacles in the way of Taiwan making meaningful contributions and helping



respond effectively to this.

There are certain organizations that the PRC has a great deal of influence. It's going to be difficult, we know, to wedge Taiwan in to where it should rightfully belong. But that shouldn't stop us from continuing to make the case on the merits and trying to think creatively and innovatively about creating international space in different ways: creating new organizations, creating new groupings, finding ways to work around the existing institutions if they don't actually fully accommodate Taiwan's meaningful participation. So, we have platforms, such as the GCTF that can be expanded and built out on, in ways that help Taiwan have a voice in the international community. And again, that's not in any way a favor to the people of Taiwan and the government of Taiwan. It's to the benefit of everyone to have Taiwan's meaningful contribution on these really vexing international problems.

#3) On the defense area, I would say few things. We need to continue our faithful implementation and work on the "Overall Defense Concept."

As I said, the stage we're at now is one of the implementation, and so there needs to be vigilant attention to helping Taiwan with a smart acquisition strategy, the right kind of training, the right kind of personnel development. So, I think that's a recommendation that I would also include at the very top.

#4) We need to think about creative ways to enhance US-Taiwan training opportunities.

This does, not only a service to our friends in Taiwan, and helping them become more capable in their force of strengthening the deterrence of the Taiwan military vis-à-vis China, but frankly will also help the United States. We have a lot of what I might call "latent inter-operability," because we operate common platforms, we train the fundamental level and basic level in the same way. But finding ways to enhance our training that would give us more assurance that we would be fully inter-operable in the time of a conflict, so that we understand the division of labour. We understand how we would actually perform if there were to be a combat situation is something that is very critical at this point as the PRC continues to ratchet up the pressure.

Again, perhaps this is helpful to Taiwan and having a more capable, better trained force, but it really is in the US interest as we think about how our own planning for a Taiwan contingency and how we are best going to be positioned, optimally positioned, to deal with that. So, thinking about training and more complex environments, training at unit levels and trying to develop a better understanding of one another.

#5) Thinking about, again, strengthening our intelligence, exchanges and information exchanges in ways that are more real-time and create common operating pictures in a way that will help us respond more effectively, in a more timely manner. This is part of "the networked region", but it's something that I think that US and Taiwan are surprisingly lagging a bit behind on, and we can do better on. So I would really encourage real-time operational cooperation on intelligence and information sharing.

#6) I think we need to think about the United States. In particular, how we can be a bridge to help Taiwan, with other countries and other militaries in the Indo-Pacific who share the view of wanting to promote a free and open Indo-Pacific.

So, strengthening US-Japan-Taiwan cooperation would have to be at the top of my list in that category. Japan sees a



very direct link to the future of Taiwan and its own security, but I think even more broadly than that, when you look at that the regional commons, when you look at that international water space, there are ways the Japanese want to work more closely with Taiwan. Perhaps we are the bridge to be able to make that happen in a more forthright manner than might otherwise be possible. So, finding ways to strengthen trilateral cooperation with Japan, Taiwan, the US – and potentially other countries down the road.

So, that's my shortlist, to-do list.

I'm happily out of government, so that is left to others to implement, but I will certainly continue to be a voice and an advocate for these type of initiatives and others to keep US-Taiwan relations strong, help us promote our shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.

Thank you.