

## **Appendix 128 – President Chen's Speech to Council on Foreign Relations (2001)**

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Council on Foreign Relations

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Council on Foreign Relations for arranging this videoconference, which is the second we hold since last October. The eve of the anniversary of my inauguration is a great occasion to exchange views with you on US-China-Taiwan relations. I will first review developments over the past year from Taipei's perspective, and then also provide my humble opinion on the future direction of these relations.

### **i. US-China-Taiwan relations over the past year**

When the new administration was formed last year, the most important issue for us was to preserve stability. In order to reach this goal, I listed cross-strait relations, foreign policy and national security as our top priorities. Over the past year, my new administration has basically reached its goals of consolidating democracy, maintaining cross-strait stability, and improving US-Taiwan relations. During the presidential election last March, cross-strait relations reached an extremely high level of tension. PRC Premier Zhu Rongji's verbal attacks and military intimidation three days before the presidential election are still vividly remembered here. A year later, the threat of imminent military conflict across the Taiwan Strait no longer exist. Judging from this, cross-strait relations have not worsened, and in fact become somewhat more stable. This is one of the biggest achievements of our new administration.

Regarding US-Taiwan relations, the result of last March's presidential election caused the US to be rather concerned about Taiwan's political situation as well as about the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and my own position on cross-strait issues. However, since my inaugural address on May 20, 2000, I have repeatedly expressed my goodwill and sincerity to Beijing in order to base cross-strait cooperation on a spirit of good faith. My gestures of goodwill can not only help cross-strait relations move toward conciliation, but also increase mutual trust and strengthen the ties between Taipei and Washington.

### **ii. Implications for security in the Taiwan Strait**

I welcome the Bush administration's recent decision to sell defensive weapons to Taiwan in April. On behalf of our people and government, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to the US administration, the Congress, and to friends of all circles for your concern over the military balance between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait and the island's security. These arms sales will enhance security and stability in the Taiwan Strait. It will also help build Taiwan's confidence in its future dialogue with China. Fully guaranteeing the security of the 23 million people of Taiwan will eventually help us to actively promote constructive dialogue towards the normalization of relations between Taiwan and China. Of course, I fully understand that Taiwan's

security cannot solely depend on the purchase of military hardware. It is only by putting aside disagreements that both sides can start exchanges, dialogue and consultation needed to ensure peace and stability between the two.

The US arms sales to Taiwan are definitely not meant to encourage arms race between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Rather, it continues to ensure Taiwan's democratic achievements and economic prosperity. I sincerely hope that Beijing will renounce its policy of using force against Taiwan. If the PRC stops its missile deployment along Chinese mainland's southeast coast, it could then avoid further aggravating tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Both sides could then instead use the resources put into rebuilding military arsenal to improve the living standards of people, enhance social welfare, bolster public health and education, and invest in public infrastructure. It would also speed up trade between the two sides, which would help further develop both economies. I believe this is the common aspiration of the two peoples across the Taiwan Strait.

### iii. Prospects of cross-strait relations

In the past, Beijing held much prejudice against and misunderstood the DPP and myself. My new administration has thus tried to show our sincerity in promoting normalization of relations with the PRC, but so far Beijing has not responded and in fact tried to avoid any contact with my government. Instead, the PRC has relentlessly attempted to "use ordinary citizens to corner our government" and to "encircle and pressure our government through business people." This is indeed not conducive to the improvement of cross-strait relations. If the PRC wants to forge ahead cross-strait relations, it must enter into direct communication with our government and executive authorities in charge of policy making and policy implementation. There is no other alternative whatsoever.

Various opinion polls conducted in Taiwan show that the vast majority of residents in Taiwan do not accept the so-called "one country, two systems" formula applied to Hong Kong and Macao. Any solution to the Taiwan issue must especially respect the free will of Taiwan's 23 million people, and must not harm its interests. I welcome the US to play the role of "balancer", "stabilizer" and "facilitator" to help create an environment favorable to the resumption of cross-strait dialogue.

I also support the US's constructive engagement towards the PRC. However, even though the US and the PRC already have a long history of interaction and CBMs, they encountered serious difficulties in dealing with the aftermath of the mid-air plane collision in April. Both sides of the Taiwan Strait have not yet been able to establish such a mechanism, and if a similar accident should occur in the Taiwan Strait, the consequences would be unthinkable. Thus, other than learning lessons from the incident, my administration also realizes the urgency of building CBMs across the Taiwan Strait. I hope that the US will help both sides to build such a mechanism to reduce the chance of miscalculation and cross-strait armed conflict.

### iv. Conclusion

Since I took office, the Taiwan-US relations have continued to progress based on the

existing solid foundations. Our two countries not only share the same values of democracy, freedom and human rights, but also share the same expectations for peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Looking into the future, I deeply hope that the US government will continue to honor the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances made to us, and thus continue to provide us with sufficient defensive weapons. I also hope that the US will help us participate in international organizations, elevate the levels of our substantive relations, and further lift some obsolete restraints imposed on myself when I make another transit in the US three days from today. I am convinced that our bilateral relations will continue to be strengthened based on this solid foundation. Thank you!