



Nixon assistant speaks on 'Shanghai'

Political commentator Bruce Herschensohn discusses what he sees as the four main factors threatening Taiwan's democracy at a May 22 forum in Taipei. (CNA)

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By Lisa Liang

Bruce Herschensohn, Pepperdine University professor and former deputy special assistant to U.S. President Richard Nixon, visited Taiwan last month where he participated in a forum on the state of U.S.-Taiwan relations and shared his experiences dating back to the Shanghai Communique of 1972. Taiwan

Journal staff writer Lisa Liang sat in.

Bruce Herschensohn, author of the recently published book "Taiwan: The Threatened Democracy," participated May 22 in "Diplomatic Corner," a forum held by the Taiwan Thinktank. Hosted monthly by the independent research institute, the event offers a platform for professionals and academics from around the world to engage their Taiwanese counterparts in discussion on local and international political changes.

Herschensohn, a former deputy special assistant to President Nixon and now professor of public policy at Pepperdine University, was accompanied by Pepperdine Vice Chancellor Michael Warder, who also participated in the forum. A discussion of the evolution of Taiwan's diplomatic ties with the United States and possible adjustments to this relationship in the future, the forum was titled "U.S.-Taiwan Relations: Retrospect and Prospect." It was co-hosted by the Formosa Foundation, an organization that aims to "foster better understanding and exchange of ideas between the United States and Taiwan through sustained educational and advocacy efforts," its Web site states.

Other panelists included Wu Li-pei, former senior advisor to the ROC president and founder of the [Formosa Foundation](#). Wu set the tone for the evening with his opening remarks, stating that "maintaining the status quo on both sides of the Taiwan Strait has become impossible to uphold." He added that "China, which still dreams about controlling Taiwan, has engaged in an all-out effort to intimidate and isolate the island nation."

Herschensohn concurred with Wu, saying he believed the PRC was the first among four major threats to Taiwan's democracy. He referred to China's more than 900 ballistic missiles aimed toward Taiwan, 375,000 troops stationed on the other side of the Taiwan Strait, 700 or so combat aircraft stationed in China's southeastern provinces, 11 "amphibious rehearsals" for an invasion of Taiwan in the past five years and, most unabashedly, the Anti-Secession Law passed by the National People's Congress in March 2005.

Herschensohn went on to describe the second major threat as "the international community, including the United States, regarding Taiwan and the use of the phrase 'one China.'"

"Of course there's one China, and I'm not opposed to saying the 'one-China' policy," remarked Herschensohn. "I believe there's one United Kingdom and one Australia, so I have no problems

saying there's one China. But it's important, it's very important, to always say, 'and one Taiwan.'"

The issue of the "one-China" policy was discussed at length during the forum, with Soochow University Assistant Professor of Political Science Wu Chih-chung stating, "What we should oppose is the 'one-China' principle, not the 'one-China' policy." More than 80 people died in Taiwan as a result of the SARS outbreak in East Asia during 2003, he said, when the World Health Organization refused to send aid "because of the 'one-China' principle."

"And now we have bird flu," he continued. "People need to really rethink this so-called 'one-China' policy, because this policy is killing people."

Wu Li-pei also commented that "the Taiwanese people want to be constructive members of the world community, but so far they have been unfairly excluded. They are capable of exporting their expertise in democratic politics, economic development, international commerce, social reforms, parliamentary perfection and health care to many corners of the world, but they are not allowed to do so."

The dilemma surrounding the "one-China" policy resulted from a 35-year history of ambiguity beginning Feb. 28, 1972, with the signing of the first of three communiques between the governments of the United States and the People's Republic of China, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Information Programs Web site explains. Known as the "Shanghai Communique," it states, "the United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China." "President Nixon was very careful," explained Herschensohn. "He intentionally didn't say 'people,' because he was referring to the Chinese who came over with Chiang Kai-shek. So everything about what he said was accurate for 1972: The Chinese on both sides of the Strait did indeed maintain there was only one China and Taiwan was part of it."

Wu elaborated by saying, "This policy was agreed to not by the people of Taiwan, or even the people of China, but by the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek and the Communist government of Mao Zedong."

Though the second communique, released Dec. 15, 1978, reiterated that "there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China," by the time the third communique was issued on Aug. 17, 1982, the United States government had subtly but significantly altered its policy, adding the rhetoric that "it has no intention of infringing on Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, or interfering in China's internal affairs, or pursuing a policy of 'two Chinas' or 'one China, one Taiwan.'"

"The three communiques were all written prior to the time that Taiwan was a democracy," Herschensohn remarked. "Now we're dealing with a different entity." Moreover, according to Wu, the outdated communiques had become "the biggest stumbling block to the full recognition of Taiwan" and were "completely out of step with American emphasis on global democratization." Herschensohn added, "It would be the worst irony in the world to ever let Taiwan fall to the jurisdiction of the Beijing leadership," making reference to American soldiers who were dying in Afghanistan and Iraq "trying to bring about democracies in those countries." How, therefore, could the United States oppose Taiwan, which simply wanted "to retain itself as a democracy?" he asked. "We cannot be opposed to it. It would be opposing all that the United States ever stood for."

Herschensohn suggested that, since Taiwan was unable to achieve the international recognition it desired--such as entry into the United Nations and its affiliated organizations--it should take the contrary route: establish October 25, the day Taiwan's seat in the United Nations was forfeited to the PRC in 1971, as Taiwan's "independence day."

"Being kicked out of the U.N. is a tremendous honor," he said. "I wish the U.S. would be kicked out of the U.N. and be done with the whole thing. Taiwan should feel that from that day forward, they didn't have to sit in a room with murderers, terrorists, rapists and hostage-takers anymore." "It wouldn't be this constant feeling of victimization every year when you go to apply for the U.N. to 'please' be recognized," Herschensohn continued. "You're not going to be recognized, and therefore take the opposite course: 'We're delighted that we're not in it.'"

Returning to his list of threats to Taiwan's democracy, Herschensohn described business people--"of the United States, of practically every country, and including Taiwan"--as posing a tremendous risk. "I think, in the United States' case, we are building a monster," he said, adding that Taiwanese businesses continuing to invest in China was equivalent to the nation "committing suicide."

"To do business with someone who is aiming those weapons at you, to me, is unthinkable," he said. "If someone is threatening you, threatening your lives, threatening your nation, you don't do business with them."

Lo Chih-cheng, a member of [Taiwan Thinktank](#)'s executive committee and moderator of the panel, agreed with Herschensohn, stating, "We should not underestimate the influence that China is using in the businesspeople of Taiwan."

The fourth and final threat on Herschensohn's list was the Kuomintang, which he said he believed posed a serious threat to Taiwan's democracy with their continued and willing collaboration with the PRC.

Lai I-chung, director of the Democratic Progressive Party's Chinese Affairs Department, commented on the KMT's counterproductive behavior: "They are saying that their policy toward China is conciliatory and their meetings with Chinese leaders are also helping to reduce cross-strait tensions to an extent," said Lai, "and this policy is encouraged by the United States."

Referring to American Institute in Taiwan Director Stephen Young's urgings for Taiwan "to negotiate with China" and "open the three links, especially direct flights, as soon as possible," Lai noted that "we already have 70 percent of investment to China, and 40 percent of our export is in China, so how much more open do you want us to be?"

Herschensohn agreed that current U.S. policy toward Taiwan was hypocritical and reiterated his stance that every country should withdraw investment in China and only conduct "free trade with free nations."

"Recognition of Taiwan is something that we all support, but for right now, what we actually want, what we really hope for, is a more constructive attitude toward Taiwan," said Lai. "Constructive engagement with Taiwan, I think, is the most important thing that we have to have."

"It is our policy that's wrong and we have to change it," Herschensohn acknowledged. "Fear should never be your policy because then you're doomed to disaster."

Write to Taiwan Journal at [mailto: tj@mail.gio.gov.tw](mailto:tj@mail.gio.gov.tw)