

Note: Congressman Edward Royce (R-CA) gave the opening remarks at the May 19 conference co-hosted by the Formosa Foundation and Sigur Center for Asian Studies. The theme of the conference was, The Future of US-Taiwan Relations.

## US congressman call for overhaul of Taiwan policy

### NAVAL VISITS: Republican Representative Ed Royce told a conference at George Washington University that engagement with Taiwan is very important

By William Lowther STAFF REPORTER IN WASHINGTON  
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A leading US congressman has told a Washington conference that the administration of US President Barack Obama should rethink US policies toward Taiwan.

Republican Representative Ed Royce, a member of the House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee and a senior member of the Asia subcommittee, made a string of recommendations, including allowing US Navy vessels to visit Taiwanese ports.

His address to a George Washington University conference on "The Future of US-Taiwan Relations" came amid growing pressure from the US Congress for a full Taiwan policy review.

Senior Washington sources have told the Taipei Times that the White House is seriously considering such a move.

Royce said Congress was concerned that despite the many moves by President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) to improve relations with China, there had been no military "drawdown" by Beijing.

"In 2001 there were 250 missiles [aimed at Taiwan], I remember the briefings. Last time I checked there were 1,400 missiles and other batteries were still coming on line. In terms of security, America's Asian partners fear that the US is an Asian power in decline," he said.

"How Washington treats Taiwan will signal how Washington sees its role in the Pacific. And that's another reason why I believe that engagement with Taiwan is very important. Taiwan faces one of the most complex and lethal military threats in the world," he said.

Royce said the US would gain from increased intelligence sharing with Taiwan and urged Obama to make greater use of Taiwan's linguistic and cultural advantages in the region.

He said the Asia-Pacific region had been marked by rapid trade liberalization, but that starting in the 1990s the People's Republic of China (PRC) had warned Asian countries not to sign free trade agreements (FTAs) with Taiwan.

"The numerous regional and global FTAs already in place ... are steadily undermining Taiwan's international competitiveness through trade and investment discrimination," he said.

"There have been dramatic developments in Taiwan. We need to think about setting objectives. US officials can tick off their priorities when it comes to the People's Republic of China, but when you ask them what are the priorities with respect to Taiwan, forget it. This is why we have to have a focus on rethinking our policy," Royce said.

Royce was the first congressman since Ma came to power to propose a specific list of priorities.

“First, keep Taiwan honest to its democratic legacy. There’s always the chance of slipping in terms to commitment to freedom of speech. In any country, there is a tendency to try to stifle debate and shut down political opponents. This is wrong. If the government strays from its principles, it’s our responsibility as Americans to help the Taiwanese to stand up for free speech,” he said.

“We should revisit the Taiwan guidelines. The US needs to find ways to more openly engage Taiwan’s democratic leaders. The Taiwan guidelines are arcane and inappropriate for the type of relationship we have with Taiwan. They are 30 years old and to my knowledge they have only been modified once. It would make sense to review and adapt our policies. It is time to do this. China and Taiwan are much different today than they were then. Detente notwithstanding, the Taiwan Strait is a flash point. It is essential that US policy makers be able to directly communicate with the leaders of Taiwan. Restrictions on US-Taiwan contact are counter-productive. Not just that but they can also be dangerous,” he said.

“In terms of international organizations, the US should push for efforts to get Taiwan membership — full membership — in the World Health Organization. This week [participation in the World Health Assembly] marks a big step, but we shouldn’t be complacent. Why not welcome Taiwan to join other UN organizations? That’s the role we should take now,” he said.

“We should send a Cabinet member on a visit to Taipei. Disappointingly, no Bush Cabinet members visited Taiwan,” he said.

“In terms of a free trade agreement, one of the concerns in the past was intellectual property rights. But there has been tremendous advances in Taiwan on that issue. Taiwan’s entry into the WTO provides a framework for a FTA so let’s put together a roadmap for this shared goal,” he said.

“Port visits. I think that allowing US naval port visits to Taiwan is in order. China denied a port call for a US naval ship to Hong Kong. A ship that was in distress. We should let Beijing know that we have somewhere else to go,” he said.

“Similarly, the PRC has not joined the Proliferation Security Initiative. Why not enlist Taiwan’s help in stopping the proliferation of missile and nuclear technology that we are concerned about coming out of North Korea?” he said.

“If we want cross-strait detente to succeed, President Ma must deal from a position of strength. The US should be prepared to proceed with appropriate arms sales to Taiwan. The arms sales incentivize China to pursue political, not military, means to reconcile its differences with Taiwan,” Royce said.