

## **For Whom the Bell May Toll?**

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As the Chinese New Year starts with full vigor and bright expectation, we are witnessing some worrisome aspects of the Taiwan Strait situation.

Lately the struggle across the Taiwan Strait has been burgeoning again due to President Chen Shui-bian's persistent and provocative Taiwan independence advocacy. Alarmed by a foreseeable cross-strait military showdown in 2008, the U.S. Government must promptly and resolutely act to rein in Chen's dangerous "fire playing." Here is a quick review of his recent provocations:

**Fire Playing:** 1) On January 1, 2007, Chen's New Year message proclaimed that "Taiwan is a part of the world, not China." This seriously violated the One-China Principle recognized by the world community. China slammed his remarks and warned the U.S. that 2007 would be the most dangerous year for keeping the cross-strait peace and stability. We regret that after Chen's declaration, the U.S. still granted him a transit stay in San Francisco and Los Angeles in January en route to Nicaragua.

2) On February 2, 2007, Chen said that Taiwan should "act now" to draw up a new constitution, otherwise it "cannot be called a normal, complete and progressive new democracy." U.S. State Department's No 2 official John Negroponte said that there is a "distinct possibility" that such a proposed new charter would be at "cross purposes" with America's one-China policy.

3) On February 8, 2007, Chen waged a new wave of "de-sinicizing" moves for all state-run firms on Taiwan by replacing China by Taiwan in their titles. While 55% of the Taiwanese people did not support this move, only 21% showed approval; 64% thought it would incur huge social cost. On February 9, 2007, U.S. State Department spokesman Sean McCormack rebuked Chen's move saying that Chen's act was "unhelpful," and "the United States does not, for instance, support changes in terminology for entities administered by Taiwan authorities," or any administrative measure to unilaterally change Taiwan's status quo towards Taiwan independence. But he avoided answering the question whether Chen's action altered the status quo unilaterally. The low-keyed U.S. response encouraged the Chen entourage to take it as a "red light" turning into a "blinking yellow light," meaning "do not support, but give tacit approval," similar to the U.S. past stance on Taiwan independence of "do not support, but this does not mean 'oppose.'"

4) On March 4, 2007, Chen made a new pledge of “Four Wants and One Without,” to participants at the Formosan Association for Public Affairs’ (FAPA) 25th anniversary dinner, which broke the “Four Noes and One Without” promise in his inaugural speech on May 20, 2000. Taiwan’s stock market dropped precipitously the next day. His pledge infringed upon America’s national interest, as pointed out by a series of politicians and scholars like J. Warner (Rep, Vir), Jeffrey A. Bader (Brookings Institution) and Bonnie Glaser (Center for Strategic and International Studies). Earlier on February 28, 2006, Chen already announced that the National Unification Council (NUC) “ceased to function” and the National Unification Guidelines (NUG) “ceased to apply,” as a symbol of abolishing the aim of reunification with the mainland of China.

<b>Then: Four Noes and One Without</b>	<b>Now: Four Wants and One Without</b>
1. Taiwan will not declare independence	1. Taiwan wants independence
2. Taiwan will not hold referendums on Taiwan’s nationhood	2. Taiwan wants a new constitution
3. Taiwan will not change its national title	3. Taiwan wants to rectify its title
4. Taiwan will not enshrine “state-to-state” relations with China in the Constitution	4. Taiwan wants development
5. Taiwan will not abolish the NUC and the NUG	5. There is no left-right political axis in Taiwan, just the question of independence or unification

**A Man with No Integrity and No Political Merit:** Taiwan’s recent TVBS survey showed that more than 50% of the Taiwanese people did not support Taiwan independence and 56% worried about the cross-strait tension. Also, with Chen Shui-bian’s reputation as *Time Magazine*’s Man of the Year for his corrupt government and a “trouble maker generally acknowledged by the international community,” only 16% were satisfied with his performance. Taiwan’s opposition Kuomintang (KMT) warned that Chen’s move is a step-by-step *de jure* independence. If he succeeds in stirring a military clash with China and drags America into war, he could call off the 2008 presidential election and declare himself to be the first President of the Republic of Taiwan. But what will be the fate of the Taiwanese people? Will his son and daughter be willing to fight for the war of Taiwan’s independence?

**Will the Fire Be Put Off?** In terms of curtailing Taiwan independence, the U.S. Government so far only made a few mild verbal rebukes to Chen. We are also disturbed and disappointed by the proposed legislation H.Cong Res 73 by Rep. Thomas Tancredo and others, “[e]xpressing the sense of Congress that the United States should resume normal diplomatic relations with Taiwan (the Republic of China), and for other purposes.”

The U.S. Government recently approved a US\$421 million sale of Advanced Medium Range Air-to-Air missiles and Maverick missiles to Taiwan to back Chen’s

government. These weapons will enable Taiwan to launch attacks reaching as far as China's Yangtze River Three Gorges Dam. The U.S. is also making active war preparations by shifting major military force to the Asia-Pacific region. Meanwhile, Beijing's sudden willingness to showcase its sophisticated weaponry may be a belief that only a credible military threat can deter Taiwan's independence movement.

**For Whom the Bell May Toll?** Ernest Hemingway published in 1941 *For Whom The Bell Tolls*, a best seller, in which he described his experiences in the Spanish Civil War, into which many other European countries were also dragged by taking sides. Will a similar military conflict take place between Taiwan and China, which would include the active participation of the U.S. and surrounding nations for the discredited Chen Shui-bian? If it were to happen, Taiwan would naturally suffer the first and heaviest blow and the Chinese and the Americans could become enemies for generations to come. So, if the U.S. Government does not resolutely stop Taiwan independence now, but waits until more silver-haired American parents greet their sons and daughters' cold bodies inside flown-back coffins, we would be regretful and shameful to see American dreams broken and the American national interest diminished.