



Trump Latest President to Slight Taiwan, Favor Communist China

President Donald Trump's statement last week that he will check with Chinese President Xi Jinping first before he even takes a phone call from Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen, must seem like "déjà vu all over again" to the non-communist Chinese people on the island of Formosa (Taiwan), off the coast of "mainland" Communist China. It was not the first time that an American president has given those on Formosa the figurative back of the hand since even before the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek relocated to the island in 1949, after he lost the civil war to the Soviet-backed communists of Mao Tse-tung.



Trump caused consternation in establishment diplomatic circles when he took a phone call in December of last year from Tsai, then proudly tweeted about her calling him to offer congratulations on his victory in the American presidential election. One would think that simply taking a phone call from someone would not be that big a deal, but many in Communist China and in the United States took it as a possible signal that the United States under a President Trump was going to take a tougher line against the Communist regime in Beijing, while increasing friendly ties with the non-Communist democratically-elected government on Taiwan.

As usual, political commentator Pat Buchanan was on point in summing up the Trump reversal:

After discovering 'great chemistry' with Chinese President Xi Jinping jumping over the "most beautiful piece of chocolate cake" at Mar-a-Lago, Trump had confided, "I explained ... that a trade deal with the United States will be far better for them if they solve the North Korean problem!"

"America First" thus takes a back seat to big-power diplomacy with Beijing. One wonders: How much will Xi end up bilking us for his squeezing of Kim Jong Un [the dictator in North Korea]?

A president for whom Buchanan worked, Richard Nixon, began the American tilt away from support for Taiwan over what was then regularly referred to as "Red China." (While not politically correct today, "Red" China is still a good description for the Communist Party oligarchy that ruthlessly rules the most populated nation in the world.) Nixon visited China in 1972, toasted the mass-murderer Mao, and said little when tiny Taiwan was quickly ousted from the United Nations and its seat on the Security Council given to the communist regime on the mainland.

President Jimmy Carter terminated the "mutual defense treaty" with Taiwan in 1979, and broke diplomatic relations with them, moving our embassy in Taipei to Beijing. He then closed Taiwan's embassy in D.C. After announcing that he was switching American support away from the Republic of China on Taiwan to the "People's" Republic of China in Beijing, Carter told his aides that he expected



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his speech and his actions would be greeted with “massive applause all over the country.”

Perhaps, but American disloyalty to our Chinese allies following World War II did not begin with Carter. Under the Truman administration, the United States began to undermine the non-Communist government of Chiang Kai-shek shortly after World War II. (Some might argue that this began even earlier, under President Roosevelt.) When this policy led to the loss of the world’s most populous nation to communism in 1949, the Truman administration was subjected to a cacophony of well-deserved criticism.

After the outbreak of the Korean War, however, America maintained its diplomatic ties with Chiang’s government, and not the government of Mao, which we were engaging militarily in Korea. In 1959, the U.S. State Department asserted that its official position was “That the provisional capital of the Republic of China has been at Taipei, Taiwan (Formosa) since December 1949; that the Government of the Republic of China exercises authority over the island; that the sovereignty of Formosa has not been transferred to China; and that Formosa is not a part of China as a country, at least not yet, and not until and unless appropriate treaties are hereafter entered into. Formosa may be said to be a territory or an area occupied and administered by the Government of the Republic of China, but is not officially recognized as being a part of the Republic of China.”

Since 1979, the U.S. has conducted relations with Taiwan unofficially through the American Institute in Taiwan, a private nonprofit corporation. It issues visas and provides assistance to U.S. citizens in Taiwan. While giving lip service to the “one China” policy, American administrations have attempted to more or less “thread a needle” in their dealings with the thorny issue of the “two Chinas.” For example, in 1982, the Reagan administration gave Taiwan assurances that the U.S. government did not accept Red China’s claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. In 2001, President George W. Bush said that U.S. would defend Taiwan if it were attacked by China, and added, “the Chinese must understand that.”

Candidate Trump regularly castigated China on the campaign trail, accusing the Chinese of being “currency manipulators,” and promising the American people he would not allow them to push America around anymore. Now, however, President Trump is taking a different approach from Candidate Trump. He stated,

Look, my problem is I have established a very good personal relationship with President Xi. I really feel that he is doing everything in his power to help us with a big situation. So I wouldn’t want to be causing difficulty right now for him. I think he’s doing an amazing job as a leader, and I wouldn’t want to do anything that comes in the way of that. So I would certainly want to speak to him first [before speaking with Taiwan’s president].

Trump was responding to a question about a statement made by Taiwan’s President Tsai Ing-wen last week, in which she said that she might be talking with President Trump on the phone again.

William Stanton, the unofficial ambassador to Taiwan from 2009-2012 who now leads the Center for Asia Policy at Taiwan’s National Tsing Hua University, expressed strong disappointment at Trump’s reversal of policy. “Trump’s latest retreat in foreign policy — stating that he would want to consult with Xi Jinping before again speaking to Tsai In-wen — is a clear disappointment to those who hoped Trump’s policy toward Taiwan would demonstrate a new flexibility.”

The regime ruling mainland China, however, was elated that Taiwan has once again been slighted by the United States. The *Global Times*, a tabloid under the control of the Chinese Communist Party, chortled that Taiwan’s president was a “naughty child” who could expect to get a “stern reprimand” if



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she acted up again. Wu Xinbo, a professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said that Trump had “learned his lesson.” Wu added that he did not think Trump would “provoke China again.”

“Trump will not sacrifice cooperation with China for Taiwan,” stated Wu, “especially now that there is such positive momentum after the meetings between the two leaders. He wouldn’t be so foolish to accept Tsai Ing-wen’s phone call now.”

Stanton, however, expressed hope that Trump’s “romance” with Xi will “not last,” but would be more like “so many of his policy pronouncements.”

“Trump was first willing to trade the continuance of the U.S. one-China policy for a trade deal with China, then willing to trade bilateral trade issues with China for help with North Korea, and now seems ready to sell improved relations with Taiwan for his imagined friendship with China’s leader.”

Even Shen Dingli, deputy director of the Institute for International Studies at Fudan, warned that Trump is unpredictable. “If China does not help him, then the momentum will change. If Taiwan will help him, he will pick up the phone again.”

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