

The Taiwan Defensive Referenda and US on Taiwan Policy Adjustments

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Abstract

High-ranking officers of the China Military Science Academy listed the prices China was ready to pay to stop the Taiwan independence referendum, including boycotts of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, decreasing foreign investment, worsening foreign relations, economic recession, destruction of infrastructure, and casualties among the People's Liberation Army. The Bush administration cautioned the PRC not to respond coercively to Taiwan's referendum, and dissuaded Taipei from conducting the defensive referenda and expressing its dislike of the Chinese missile threat.

Officials in Washington did not see a compelling need for Taiwan to hold a referendum, yet some members in the US Congress argued that President Bush overreacted to Taiwan's referendum. President Bush did not declare his opposition to Taiwan independence, but the US was prompt to state its limited support of President Chen's constitutional revision. While President Clinton once insisted that any cross-strait agreement must have the assent of the Taiwanese people, President Bush repeatedly stated that the US has an interest in "a peaceful resolution of cross-strait differences in a manner that is acceptable to the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait," implying that Taiwan itself cannot assume that it alone will have the final say in the future status of the island.

Key Words: PRC, Taiwan independence, defensive referendum, Chen Shui-bian, George W. Bush