

TOP NEWS

US

WORLD

BY STATE

BY TOPIC

OPINION

Rep. Steve Chabot: Why keeping Taiwan free matters for the U.S.

[PDF](#) | [Email](#)

 Rep. Steve Chabot, The Examiner
 Jun 30, 2006 7:00 AM (4 hrs ago)

POLITICS

SPORTS

ENTERTAINMENT

BUSINESS

TECHNOLOGY

SCIENCE

HEALTH

STRANGE

SEARCH

PHOTOS

CLASSIFIEDS

AUTOS

JOBS

REAL ESTATE

WASHINGTON - The prospects for a free and democratic Taiwan are under attack. Over the next five years, keeping Taiwan's current status separate from China will be severely tested. The united assault, mounted by China against Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian, is aided by the actions of some who seek to take power and forge a political accommodation with Beijing.

Unfortunately, there is a lot more at stake for the U.S. than who controls power in Taipei. Should Taiwan decide to move in the direction of accommodation with the PRC, U.S. interests in Asia would steadily be eroded. A "Hong Kong Plus" type settlement agreed to between Taiwan and China would press Japan, Korea, and even Australia to recalibrate their relations with Beijing and Washington: a notch closer to Beijing and a notch farther way from Washington. Small adjustments toward Beijing would likely continue over time, and soon enough, U.S. control of vital sea-lanes would be in jeopardy and other vital American interests would suffer.

Fortunately, as long as a majority in Taiwan prefers the status quo to a closer accommodation with China, pro-freedom Taiwanese can count on Washington resisting even considerable increased Chinese pressures. While China's militarization poses an increasing threat to the U.S. military, I see no evidence that Washington is any more willing to bend in the face of a Chinese ultimatum, or even an unprovoked attack, than it has been in the past. Indeed, the more overt Beijing's pressures, the greater resistance the Chinese face in Washington. Conversely, China's current softer approach complicates Taiwan's relationship with the U.S., and makes Washington less tolerant of Taiwan's efforts to acquire international support.

If China's softer approach was a sincere effort to ease tensions across the strait it would deal with Taiwan's elected government, and reduce its enormous missile forces aimed at Taiwan.

It is China's enormous and ever-growing militarization program, not President Chen that is responsible for seriously changing the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan's delay in acquiring much-needed military enhancements is troubling, but the real troublemaking is coming from Beijing. Recent Pentagon reports indicate that there are now almost 800 Chinese missiles pointed at Taiwan. And China's new "anti-secession" law threatens the use of force against Taiwan. Meanwhile, the U.S. is distracted with more immediate concerns elsewhere in the world. This is a volatile mix.

HEADLINE

Dan Riel
 Fourth E
 *Rep. St
 keeping
 for the U
 Jonah G
 newspap
 Robert C
 deserve
 open let
 Jay Amb
 is showi
 Sally Ste
 and brig
 region
 Is negat
 'art'?
 Malcolm
 skills are
 Sen. Bill
 intercept
 for defer
 Eve Fairl
 state of

These trends can't continue. A policy that limits America's ability to appropriately balance our interests in Asia undermines our foreign policy objectives. Some of us in Congress have offered alternatives to help re-establish some of the balance needed across the Strait, including calling for increased discourse between senior political and military leaders of Taiwan and the United States. At present, there are no high-level exchanges taking place. That makes no sense.

It's time for a fresh review of America's interests in Asia — and America's interests in Taiwan in particular — and it's time to develop new policies to secure those interests. More than a week ago, the administration welcomed President Chen's reaffirmation of his pledge to the United States on cross-strait issues. We should build upon that small positive gesture to focus America's attention on keeping Taiwan free. It is in our security interests to do so.

*Rep. Steve Chabot, R-Ohio, is a senior Member of the House International Relations Committee and its Asia subcommittee and a founding Member and Co-Chairman of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus.
Examiner*

[Add News to Your Website](#) | [RSS](#) | [News by Topic](#) | [Advertise](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Copyright](#) | [T](#)