

The World after Taiwan's Fall - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSpzq0CbOMw>

(00:05) hi David can you tell us a little bit about yourself and a little bit about your work and your focus yes absolutely well so my name is David Santoro I am president and CEO of Pacific For Pacific for is a foreign policy Think Tank based in the beautiful island of Oahu part of Hawaii and we focus on indopacific security and strategic issues and so I've been working at Pacific for for the past nearly 13 years now I'm a PhD international relations so I've been

(00:49) working on those issues for quite a long time I grew up in Europe and so I I grew up in France I'm a dual National now but I initially growing up in Europe and working on those questions in Europe I was essentially working on Europe and the Euro Atlantic but then I moved to Australia for part of my graduate work ended up focusing a lot more on the indopacific and of course at the time we called it the Asia Pacific but I was I focused my work on those on this region and and I was working

(01:31) primarily on nonproliferation nuclear security you know essentially hard security issues and over the past I want to say 10 15 years I've moved to more to to to questions of like strategic questions strategic stability questions nuclear weapons nuclear deterrence and also grand strategy question so a lot of work that I do is focused on the Indo Pacific although I remain interested in Europe but it's focused on the indopacific and looking at ma major power R relations so a lot of it

(02:14) is about China Russia U India as well us allies and partners and more generally Regional security and and strategic Dynamics so that's you know essentially who I am and the work that I that I do thank you so much so you wrote a study can you tell us more about this study the goals and the rationale behind it and in other words what did you try to achieve to achieve with it sure so we so I I did a study it was not just my study by the way it's a study that our president emeritus and I coed Ralph Cossa and I and

(03:00) essentially we decided to look at what the world would look like if Taiwan were to be taken over by by Beijing and the goal well first of all we decided to do this because obviously one of the key findings of a separate process that Ralph Cossa has been running a dialogue track 2 Us Taiwan Dialogue on deterrence and defense issues one of the key findings of that dialogue is that obviously Taiwan has been under a lot of pressure from Beijing politically economically militarily and that they that there

(03:45) is frankly still is was and still is a a really urgent need to strengthen deterrence and defense and so we decided to in ber one do that dialogue to try and assess how much deterrence how much defense we needed to strengthen to try and avoid that that scenario where you have mainland China taking over Taiwan but beyond that what we quickly realized as we were going through that dialogue is that the the United States and others over the past few years have been focusing on what happens if there is a war between

(04:33) the United States and China over over Taiwan and the focus was well if there's a war this is the United States could win China could win and this is what we should expect but no one actually very few people asked themselves what would happen if you have a a a scenario in which China actually wins and takes over Taiwan you know what would the world look like if

that actually happens and so we thought that this was intellectually interesting to do this and then B there was a very practical

(05:14) reason as well attached to that which is that we have been worried that in the United States even in Taiwan and frankly elsewhere in the world that people were not paying sufficient attention to that problem set and so one way that we could at our level contribute to raising awareness of the problem was to try and think about what the world would look like if China were to actually take over Taiwan and so by fleshing out what that world would look like then it would help people realize oh my God you know we really

(05:55) need to realize what that world would look like and therefore take proper measures to make sure that we prevent that outcome and so again intellectually stimulating and practical if you will where our sense was that there was really and still is a need to actually raise awareness of that problem and so that's why we decided to do the study and instead of having just another exercise or or paper on what would happen if the war breaks out thank you so much so you just

(06:39) explained the purpose of the study can you now tell us more about the methodology that you've embraced and how did you decide to proceed to accomplish your goals sure so you know first of all the dialogue that I mentioned earlier that Ralph Cossa was at the track two level which means at The Unofficial level and this is important because obviously you can have a much more candid discussion and engage in topics that are sensitive and that are difficult to discuss at the track one the official level and

(07:17) similarly that study is In The Same Spirit obviously those are difficult issues to to discuss but you know as a think tank you can do you can do it you can do it without without a problem and so what we decided to do from a methodology the how if you will of the study is to just instead of you know us telling people this is what we think would happen we actually commissioned papers asking Scholars from a number of countries to tell us what from their perspective or their country's

(08:02) perspective that world would look like if China if China were to take over Taiwan and so we commissioned someone from the United States someone from Australia someone from India someone from Japan someone from the Republic of Korea and then someone from Europe so six papers total to give essentially a national perspective on the implication that such a development the Takeover of Taiwan by China would actually mean from the perspective of their country what it would also mean in the relationship that that country

(08:45) would have with the United States and the implications for not just Regional security but also Global Security and and and St and stability so we really sort of in in a way this was an investigative process where we reached out to people so that we could have a better and wider and more diverse set of perspectives on those issues the other thing I guess from a methodology methodological standpoint that I thought I mentioned is that obviously a lot would depend

(09:31) on how the Takeover of Taiwan would happen so there's two Alternatives that we thought would flesh out one is a situation in which you have a takeover without an intervention from the United States and and and its allies essentially China proceeds takes over Taiwan and that's it and so that's that's the first scenario and the second scenario

is a situation in which you have a Chinese takeover of Taiwan but you have a US and Allied intervention to try and prevent it and so we thought

(10:17) that when we asked the scholars to reflect on the implications of a Chinese takeover of Taiwan we would ask them to think about how this differs what if the implications are any different in a situation in which there is resistance from the United States and allies and others and in so that's that's scenario number one and scenario number two when you have a situation in which there is no resistance so that's from that's how we we we I guess reflected on those

(10:59) on those implications we asked the scholars to think about what that means or whether that how that situation would change based on whether or not there is resistance to a Chinese takeover thank you that's really interesting can you tell us about your key findings plainly what have you discovered and learned with that study sure so I'm guessing we'll get into more specifics but from the outset what I would say is that the primary finding of the study is that Taiwan's

(11:42) fall would basically have devastating consequences for the United States and many countries in the region and frankly even beyond the Indo Pacific so that's that's that's the primary key finding and you see that throughout the six papers that we've commissioned every single scholar agrees that if that happens it would be a bad outcome and so the logical consequence of that is that the United States its allies and many others need to take action major action to

(12:21) prevent such development and that's why we've been talking so much about strengthening deterrence and defense in the US Taiwan relationship and frankly also encouraging others from the region to join in strengthening the turns to make sure that that situation that outcome does not pan out so that's the primary finding another important finding as well is that it does not matter too much how it happens whether or not you have us and an Allied intervention

(13:03) to try and prevent China from taking over Taiwan it's certainly worse if you have no or very little intervention but in the end Taiwan's fall to the PRC would be Earth shattering regardless of whether or not you have an intervention from the US and others the consequences would essentially be that US power and influence would be eclipsed by the PRC the US would lose major influence in the region this could even lead to a domination of China certainly of

(13:55) the region perhaps even Beyond and it could even lead many Beyond just Beijing to pursue their interest much more aggressively certainly in the region but also Beyond I guess we'll talk about this a little later but nuclear proliferation could also take place in several parts of Asia and Beyond and so what follows from those findings again is that what really we've discovered and when you think about policy recommendations is that they should be a very strong effort

(14:35) to considerably strengthen Collective deterrence and defense in the Indo Pacific and this is frankly something that has become even more critical in the aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine because what is happening in Europe many people in Asia now realizing well you know if it happened somewhere it could happen anywhere and certainly also in the Indo Pacific so in terms of key findings or at least primary findings this is what I would identify as again the main things that we've

(15:12) discovered thank you so much so what do Regional countries think Washington's next move is going to be after taiwan's fall and what are the implications for the United States well I mean there is what I would say is that the United States especially these days and and as U as you know we are in an election year there is a lot of uncertainty about Washington's next move you know when it comes to to its its foreign policy generally but if after Taiwan Falls well let me

(16:05) rephrase that after taiwan's fall the six authors made clear that it would be very uncertain to predict what what US policy would be one author said that he was very confident that if the the United States essentially loses then it could actually lead to a so-called Fortress America approach because he the United States would be badly badly damaged by by the the outcome of of essentially losing losing Taiwan some though argued that turning and running is really not what the United States does and that

(16:57) it's very deep in America America's DNA is the willingness to turn around and fight and stay involved even if Taiwan were to fall the United States essentially would not give up so that's that's that was the view of of several authors others also said that it would be situational it would be situational it would really depend on what happens even though that the the the the the belief is that the United States should try and restore The credibility of its alliances and essentially continue to

(17:34) confront the PRC many of them many of of authors as well talked about the need to build so many people will say an Asian NATO now I don't like that terminology U because NATO as you know means the North Atlantic Treaty Organization so it can be Asian by by definition but many authors talked about building an an Asian equivalent to Nato if I can use those term those terms essentially as a as a reaction to what would have happened and and the the the goal of that of that organization would be to actually

(18:19) prevent further PRC adventurism and ultimately down the line possibly retake retake Taiwan the other thing that I guess I I'll mention is that one of the recommendations was that the United States should not lose sight of the fight of the fact that its allies partners and Friends expect a lot from Washington especially leadership when it when when times are very difficult and that therefore retreating to Fortress America as one author said was was a possibility would be actually very bad and essentially if Taiwan were

(19:03) to fall then many allies would expect the United States to have to to show leadership to have a leadership role to try and restore The credibility of its alliances and then possibly build new organizations like an Asian equivalent to Nato to to prevent adventurism and ultimately retake Taiwan so that's that's essentially what what most of the authors concluded in all the recommendations and the the the the papers you do see a lot of uncertainty however on what Washington's next move

(19:45) would thank you very much so can you tell us what is China likely to do if it were successful in taking over Taiwan and what as a result should the United States do yes so all the authors in our in our study concurred that the PRC would become more aggressive towards its neighbors if it were successful in taking over Taiwan so no one actually concluded that having recovered Taiwan Beijing would then sit back and set on it slow roles and and essentially that's it we shouldn't expect anything else from

(20:36) from from China all of our authors said that there would be an increased Risk by China so a Japanese author for instance feared that Japan would be next especially if it

participated in an attempt to defend Taiwan others saw the South China Sea as a likely area for increased PRC assertiveness the Indian author talked about a possible flare up of conflict on the PRC Indian border and our Australian author talked about a massive expansion of PRC influence in the South Pacific so wherever you're

(21:29) looking wherever you are in the world essentially our authors authors were talking about we likely to see major major major PRC influence and grow growing confidence in being able to push the envelope and and and do more so you know as a result one of the recommendations was that the United States should try and rally the region and the world to prevent the PRC from taking Taiwan essentially by showing that such a development would have a very direct impact on many countries and that even though you know from from (22:16) at the outset if you're sitting in Australia some people might think well if Taiwan is taken over how does that impact me the reality is that maybe the first move would not directly impact you but the second move would definitely be have a direct impact in addition to indirect impact and therefore it is incumbent of the United States to try and raise awareness Way Beyond the the immediate region that this is this is a scenario that we should absolutely avoid hence the need to strengthen deterrence and defense and

(22:55) and frankly make it a lot more Collective in in in in operation so that we prevent that outcome thank you so I guess following that my next question would be what is Taiwan's strategic significance and what then does and should that mean for the United States and the region I mean I think it's fair to say that Taiwan is in a very strategic location in in the Indo Pacific and and we've known that for for very very long time it is military it has military and intelligence capacity and you know its location

(23:41) can help Japan and others in in east asia to avoid the threats of PRC expansionism and so if Taiwan were to fall to the PRC what it what it would mean is that the PRC would gain very unique access to military bases and intelligence facilities that would give it direct access very very deep into the Pacific so that's that's one thing but in addition to to getting a a critical intelligence gathering Hub from the United States and its allies and having all the impacts that we've

(24:26) talked about B would also be able to hold us forces in Okinawa and Guam at direct risk and and and also be able to invade vast territories of Japan and the Philippines while also strengthening its dominance in the South China Sea and Southeast Asia so you know bottom line is that the the the the net result of a of a of a Chinese takeover of of of of Taiwan would essentially give China much more strategic access all across East Asia and maybe further and therefore what we discussed a little bit earlier that it

(25:11) could lead to more PRC assertiveness and aggressiveness it makes sense because it would by by by virtue of what Taiwan is it would just give China a lot more access a lot more capability and therefore a lot more flexibility to do what it wants against against against the region and again so the the recommendation on on what what should be done as a result is that need to Rally the region around the danger of a PRC takeover of Taiwan and so why we need to emphasize the military dangers that would come next which you know as I

(25:57) mentioned would be greater PRC dominance of the region it would mean more than that because it would also mean the establishment of a PRC sphere of influence that would be tightly controlled by by Beijing so again back to what I was mentioning earlier the need to strengthen deterrence yeah so what are other authoritarian countries likely to do if Beijing

successfully to cover Taiwan and what should be done as a result so that's another finding that was consistent across the different papers that we commissioned all the author

(26:38) the authors agreed that we likely to see more aggression by other actors as a result of a a successful PRC takeover of Taiwan so you know the the the Korean author talked about North Korea being being encouraged if you will to be more aggressive if if China were to win Iran as well was mentioned as a possibility some particularly our European author talked about Moscow being a lot more aggressive as a result and essentially the the the key finding on that particular topic is that we would move into a world where

(27:28) you will see more aggression not less and so in terms of recommendation the authors essentially reminded that it was important for leaders in public statements and in private discussions with its allies and partners us leaders should again point out that the the Advent of a free for all regional and in national order would have disastrous consequences for everyone and and that you know if the goal is maintain as we like to say maintain international order we can't let that happen because

(28:13) it would lead to more dis order not more order that makes a lot of sense now I would like to tap into something that you completely and definitely master what would be the implication of taiwan's fall on nuclear proliferation and what does that suggest for the US Extended deterrence yeah so that's that's actually another key findings that was consistent across across the the six papers and that is that nuclear proliferation would very likely follow the the fall of Taiwan not only in

(28:55) Asia but even possibly beyond beyond Asia so you know you had some authors talking about Japan South Korea and Australia that would consider going nuclear I think only the Indian author expressed doubt that nuclear proliferation would definitely happen and that is because it would be still difficult for a n ber of of countries to do so but all the what what I thought was very interesting is that all the the authors perhaps again with the exception of the Indian author the US the Japanese the Australian and the South Korean authors

(29:41) authors all regarded proliferation by others as absolutely inevitable while they were a lot more nuanced when it comes to proliferation by their country and so you know if you if you if you are the Japanese Japanese author for instance the assessment is you know South Korea will definitely go nuclear as a result of that but then the Japanese author also explained that when it comes to Japan well it would not be automatic that Japan goes nuclear and then if you sitting in Soul the the South Korean author said that Japan was

(30:24) very likely to get to go nuclear and so would would Soul as well but he also explained that going nuclear for S was also not a given so overall the the assessment when it comes to nuclear proliferation is very negative there's a very strong belief that nuclear proliferation would happen but it's a little bit more nuanced than than just saying it would definitely happen especially when you're not when when you're looking at your own country if you will and then in terms of I think you the

(31:01) second part of your question was extended deterrence well all I say about this is that right now there are very good reasons to strengthen us extended deterrence because the Indo Pacific security environment is deteriorating because you see problems emerging also in Europe and and Beyond if Taiwan were to fall to to China my guess and frankly the the assessment of the six authors was that strengthening us extended insance would become even more essential because we would be in an even more dangerous

(31:44) system and as a result it is critical it would be even more critical to strengthen it despite the fact that obviously the The credibility of it will have been damaged and so what would be the implications of taiwan's fall on us alliances and new Partnerships and what should the United States then do now given that so across throughout the study and across the the the the papers the the feeling was that some us alliances could break as a result result and that at a minim the the fall of Taiwan was would considerably

(32:36) reshaped strategic relations in the indo-pacific so one author for instance assessed that the Philippines and Thailand would likely break their alliances with the United States because those Alli alliances I'm sorry are already fragile and the assessment was made that they would simply surrender to PRC, now I'm not saying I agree with this but this is the assessment by by one author others talked about the the possible bandwagoning of many states towards the P the PRC as the new center of power that essentially they

(33:18) would they would probably not break their alliances with their alliance with the United States but certainly shift towards China a lot in in in much more direct ways and and essentially what would emerge would be an axis of authoritarian States as a result and so here the recommendation was that you need to strengthen alliances and the US nuclear brella on on current US allies but frankly the United States should consider deploying its its nuclear brella over other countries and starting with more clearer commitments

(34:07) Visa the Philippines to to again well strengthen the alliance and strengthen extended deterrence thank you so much so what does this study find when it comes to establishing nuclear sharing Arrangements in Indo Pacific and what should the United States do in this regard so this is actually something that we did not expect a discussion on nuclear sharing a discussion specifically on a region wise nuclear sharing Arrangement similar to the one that we have that the United States has with its NATO members

(34:49) so some authors mentioned it some said that this is something that would be beneficial others completely ruled out the option saying that this is not something that we likely to see but some did say that this is it would be a possibility that this is something that the United States could consider doing to essentially enhance the credibility of us extended Insurance could become part of a an Asian equivalent to Nato and that yes it may very well look different from what it looks like in NATO but that the

(35:34) United States would try and and do more nuclear planning with its its indopacific allies so overall the the discussion about nuclear sharing came up as something that could happen but we saw very you know very strong disagreements about what what would happen now right now as we speak I'm actually preparing a monograph with a couple colleagues on the benefits the costs and the risks of establishing nuclear sharing Arrangements in the Indo Pacific and I don't want to reveal too much but even

(36:18) though we are learning that there is interest in allies essentially learning more about us nuclear weapons their role how nuclear planning Works we tend to think that nuclear sharing as it exists in in in Europe would be very difficult if not impossible to to establish in the indo-pacific but certainly I think what it reveals when it comes to thinking about nuclear sharing Arrangements in the aftermath of the fall of Taiwan is the fact that the the the the need to strengthen extended insurance would be so so

(37:05) high that many voices would be would be strong in in pushing for more involvement of us allies when it comes to nuclear planning and I think this is where this is why we we saw a

number of authors talk about the need for nuclear sharing so at a minimum what it means means is that again you need to strengthen alliances you need to strengthen extended deterrence and yes you need to actually involve our allies in the making of extended US extended nuclear deterrent to involve them in some of US some of the planning that is

(37:45) being done so that they feel that they have a say in how this is done and and it's important now it would be even even more important if Taiwan were to fall yeah that makes a lot of sense what does this study suggest when it comes to deterrence and defense in Indo Pacific and what do you think should happen now well I mean you know I think it what it says is that we need to continue the efforts that we have started several years back now which is the situation is is is not good it's not improving

(38:31) it's getting worse and we need to strengthen Collective deterrence and defense and we are doing it already we are making progress but what's not clear to me is that the progress we are all making collectively bilaterally trilaterally and so on it's not clear to me that that progress is sufficiently fast to meet the the rising Threat Level level and so what we should do is Double Down well from a US perspective what the United States should do from my standpoint is that we should Double Down on our defense

(39:11) arrangements and security assistance to strength to to to allies and and and and partners that feel threatened and and we should do that in with with Taiwan as well we should also encourage allies and partners to do a lot more to manage their own defense because there's certainly a lot that the United States can and should do but there's a lot that our all Partners also should do they are after all on the front line of of of the problem and so we need to do more but they also need to do more and

(39:46) we need to do more collectively so are we better off than a few years ago yes is that sufficient I don't think it is can it be sufficient I don't know but I worry that we are sometimes satisfied by seeing progress but not clear to me that the threat is being met and so we need to do more and we need to do more faster thank you I have one more question for you what does the study say about our overall policy Vis A Taiwan and what happened in the short to medium term so I think what it says I'll mention

(40:33) one thing about this as as you know the US policy Visa Taiwan has been one of strategic ambiguity we will not say whether or not we would come to Taiwan's defense and we would not spell out the the circumstances in which we would do something or not that's been the the the standard policy that said and and people have been calling for some people have been calling for a shift in policy which many have labeled strategic Clarity which is a policy that would say we would definitely act if there is

(41:16) aggression against Taiwan a I don't think it will happen and B I don't think it should happen the reality is US the United States and and I would argue Taiwan and others benefit from the US policy of strategic ambiguity it's it's because you put you put China on the back foot by by doing this now having said that and this is one of the conclusions of our study and also it came up in the dialogue that Ral Costa ran simultaneously as we conducting that study is that even

(41:59) though we should stick with the policy of strategic ambiguity we should also do everything we can to enhance deterrence and be able to defeat a Chinese Chinese aggression over the island and so even though you you you keep the policy the the the the you would keep the policy of strategic ambiguity we should also do a lot more to be operationally

ready to respond if if the if there is a Chinese aggression so the recommendation if if you will
what what I think should happen is more at the operational level
(42:41) but no change at the policy level thank you so much that was very very interesting thank
you David thank you Shanna my pleasure