

## U.S.-Taiwan Deterrence and Defense - YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yu17NkKaiNw>

(00:05) so welcome Ralph uh so Ralph uh you are President Emeritus and WSD Honda chair in peace studies you've been at a Pacific forum for a very long time uh delighted to have you here to talk about Taiwan and US Taiwan relations and particularly the dialogue that you ran a couple years ago uh of which there were two iterations uh but before we start diving into uh the specifics of that of that dialogue um maybe can you begin by telling us a little bit about yourself as well as the work you've done over the years not just

(00:45) on Taiwan generally but on Taiwan specifically as well sure well thank you David I as you mentioned I've been at Pacific forum for a long time I've really only had two employers uh for the last 60 years or 58 years a US Air Force for 27 years and then since uh 1992 uh Pacific Forum first as executive director then as president and now of course as president Emeritus uh I certainly have a great deal of love for Pacific Forum I started with Admiral Joe Vasey our founder I work with Amos Jordan and and Jim Kelly and

(01:24) then uh my successor uh so it's been been a great great run um continuing the work uh sort of part-time primarily doing projects dealing with China China Taiwan and with North Korea uh but uh you know my work on China and Taiwan goes back many years uh I was part of the earlier National Committee on American foreign policy so-called shuttle diplomacy between Beijing and Taiwan back in the 90s with Don zagoria and Bob scalapino uh and and uh also ran uh what we call the Arlington process with Rich Armitage and Joan I and and others

(02:08) working on us Taiwan relations even did a US Taiwan Japan trilateral years ago trying to uh improve ties informally unofficially among those three countries and of course I've done a lot of work on on North Korea and I'm actually coming to you live from South Korea today I'll be keynote speak speaker at a conference tomorrow celebrating the Camp David Accords the first anniversary of the trilateral meeting which uh sort of something I've worked on for a long time with my book back in the 1990s on

(02:44) building a virtual Alliance among the three so I've spent a long time working on on Asia since essentially since 1969 uh and I'm thankful I can continue to do it well very good thank you I when I hear 1969 I you know I wasn't born there so so this is actually you know don't remind me no no no but but it shows how much experience you've got so this is this is great so delighted to have you to have you do this um uh this presentation uh so I'll be asking you just a few questions uh specifically on

(03:23) on on on Taiwan but if you want to get into a little you know go a little broader as well so long as it relates to Taiwan and US Taiwan relations please feel feel free um the first question I have is really on the dialogue that you set up in 2021 and uh basically ask you why you decided to to to launch that dialogue why did you feel that there was a need to launch that process uh why you focus on on deterrence uh and defense and then why specifically at the track two level why do you think that it it's important

(03:58) that we have that non-official level well great David great opening questions I think if we think back to 20121 which seems like a lifetime ago in the middle of of covid and everything else uh but this was when the Chinese the pla were just starting to increase their aggressive behavior around Taiwan starting to agree that uh to increase their capabilities uh to conduct kinetic action against

Taiwan uh and there was a big debate in the United States on whether or not Taiwan was prepared to defend itself and whether it

(04:33) was even willing to defend itself and how seriously Taiwan took the China threat so that was sort of the basis the incentive for us bringing a group of Taiwan Scholars and Taiwan officials and US Scholars and officials the latter in their private capacity at the track 2 level just because it was sensitive then as it is now to talk about a defense cooperation between us and Taiwan uh but I felt that it was really needed uh that we needed to have a better understanding of each other's concerns each other's

(05:08) capabilities uh and whether or not what we were doing made sense in the broader issue of defense and deterrence uh obviously uh deterrence is what we would prefer uh but we have to be ready to defend ourselves if deterrence fails good so so I guess the goals were you know trying strengthen deterrence and make sure that it works and if it doesn't be able to defend uh defend the island so the dialogue itself really primarily about this yeah and and one of the goals quite frankly was to raise awareness both in

(05:45) the United States and in Taiwan uh to a the Chinese threat B the need to do something about it and see how seriously both sides were looking at this or should be looking at it if they weren't right right well well that's that makes sense and so I guess you know how do you and and by extension most of the dialogue participants um what did you what did you learn or how did you assess uh not only the odds of the so-called China threat but also the odds specifically of uh what many many people have identified

(06:24) as the primary risk which is a a full full scale invasion of the island what did you where did you come out on that David I mean you mentioned that we did two iterations of the dialogue we had one in 2001 and one in 2002 uh 2021 and 22 uh a world of difference between the two dialogues and that difference could be spelled out in one word and that word was Ukraine uh during our first dialogue Americans were talking about the need for Homeland defense uh and Taiwanese sort of listen politely but uh I don't think they were quite

(07:03) there uh the the idea that uh China would really attack that you know this kind of warfare was still possible in the 21st century I think a lot of people on both sides sort of dismissed uh Ukraine was a real wakeup call in this regard and and during our second meeting uh there was a great deal more emphasis on homeland defense uh on developing the kind of capabilities uh to deal not only with an invasion but also with uh with the so-called grey Zone activities which were increasing and of course we saw with the Nancy Pelosi visit to

(07:44) Taiwan and then the major chinese exercise shooting missiles over the island uh that there was in fact a serious threat that we needed to be dealing with and and taking seriously and I I think that uh the combination of the p exercises and the Russian invasion of Ukraine were a real wakeup call I think for both sides that we needed to take things a little more seriously we needed to have a serious discussion uh and I think that's why the I would say the second meeting was probably more productive more down in depth more

(08:21) focused on actual needs and capabilities uh because uh the reality of of the threat was was much greater it's funny to to realize how much Ukraine uh has changed the way we see the world uh certainly in the the case of Taiwan but then throughout we've completely changed the way we approach international relations and and realize that yeah geopolitics really is back uh in in ways that maybe in the west we've forgotten and and Beyond the West have forgotten a little bit to our um to our displeasure

(09:01) um but um I wonder is after so after the 2021 iteration and 22 2022 iteration would you say that taiwan's defense choices and and priorities would you consider them fit for purpose and um in

um in sync with uh what the United States is doing uh to try and make sure that deterrence works or do you think that are there there are still gaps in the way the island and then the United States see the situation I mean first of all David there are always gaps you can never be 100% prepared and and certainly I would

(09:43) say we're we're much closer to that today than before uh you have you know the same thing in in both countries where militaries are fascinated with big ticket items so everyone wants to have the latest tank and the latest fighter aircraft and the latest ship uh but I think we tried to focus a lot on what was called large numbers of small things uh having the kind of anti-ship uh capabilities the anti-air capabilities the air to surface capabilities uh that could help defeat or or delay a Chinese Maritime assault on the island uh

(10:22) prepositioning of of supplies uh having Logistics trained and and and Set uh there are a lot of things you know that we have we have promised Taiwan uh as far as military hardware is concerned but you take a look and some of them are two three four five years in the in the pipeline uh and uh I think we also understand the vulnerabilities uh things that are on the island could very well uh be destroyed in the first first round of fighting so you need to have hardened facilities you need to have prepositioned supplies elsewhere uh you

(10:59) have you know a lot of a lot of things that that go into that uh also as you provide new weapon systems you've got to provide the kind of training uh with it we're seeing again this is a lesson in in Ukraine where the ukrainians want you know every every weapon known to man but many of them uh they wouldn't have a clue how to use so you've got to also after you make the decision to give them the weapon then you've got to make sure you have the training in place and and that's a long process are we there yet

(11:30) no are we closer now than we were three years ago yes Are we more aware of the need to get closer yet yes and that's I think the real the real important factor and I think one of the contributions of our of our series of conferences was that it raised the awareness it raised the sense of urgency if you will in both countries and helped to sort of stimulate the process of of getting prepared yeah it's funny because um that's my so that's my sense as well not just about this particular problem set

(12:05) but even throughout the Indo Pacific and Beyond we are much better off in terms of strengthening the terms today than we were a few years ago so progress has happened what I worry about is whether it's happened fast enough and it feels that it hasn't yet um I mean that's to me that's how I see the primary challenge uh in the Indo Pacific probably even more more than in other theaters because of course you've got an active war in Europe you got trouble you know act active trouble in the Middle

(12:37) East as well and so it feels like the indo-pacific is always last and so I worry even though we're making progress progress is not happening fast enough and I don't know is that would you say that this is the primary thing that is keeping you keep keeping you awake at night yeah well uh you know the the point is that if read the National Security strategy from uh certainly from this Administration but even from the the one before that uh it's clear that China is now the quote pacing challenge uh We've identified that the greatest

(13:12) threat to US National Security interests is coming from China not just against Taiwan also in the South China Sea and also quite frankly on the Korean Peninsula uh and uh certainly the Chinese have not done a very good job of keeping the North Koreans in check uh they've been much more aggressive and uh hostile and certainly developing their own capabilities uh which raises the the possibility of a two-front war in Asia uh in the future a great concern of mine what I probably do lose sleep over is are we prepared if there's an attack on

(13:50) the Korean Peninsula and China decides that this provides an opportunity to go against Taiwan or there's an attack against Taiwan and North Korea said oh this would be a good time to go south uh and you know are we prepared to deter and defeat uh in a in a two-front Asian War uh and I think that's that's something that we still need to look at in peace time you're never going to be totally prepared but you need at least be aware of the challenge I think we are I think we've raised awareness of

(14:22) the Dual threat here now uh and that's the first step toward you know taking taking the right steps to uh to address the challenge I mean to complicate it even further you could you could say that if something happens uh in Asia over with China North Korea then something else could happen even more in in Europe or in the Middle East so you could have like something Global not even just Regional so we are that's yeah many ways not not a good place the security environment regionally but even globally is really is really

(14:57) den and we are you know the world's only real Global power and we have responsibilities in Asia in the Middle East and in and in Europe uh so it it creates a challenge and that's why it's it's so important to uh to have Readiness to have preparations and to have the kind of interoperability have the you know type of familiarity with one another's military capabilities uh so that we can operate together if we need to right and so specifically on that point um I remember in the 2021 dialogue um

(15:34) Americans say you know you you're facing a big threats to to the Taiwanese and the Taiwanese saying well we are already under we feel we're already already being attacked and we worry more about gray zones and you guys seems to worry more about the sort of high level intensity war that yes we care about as well but really we are already at War and and and so you could tell that there was you know some almost discrepancy between the two the two views would you say that this is still uh not a problem but certainly a

(16:09) different ways of of of seeing the the problem set well I you know I think there's still sort of a debate more within the United States than in in Taiwan about you know whether we need to focus on gray zone or whether we need to focus on on on an invasion I mean from a military planner's perspective you always always focus on the worst case if you're prepared to deal with an invasion then that you're certainly better prepared to deal with lesser acts and and and gray zones but you can't ignore

(16:41) the gray zones and and this is you know where I think some some American analysts who say you know we need to really just focus on on the major war that may not occur uh you know the Chinese going back to sunza have said you know the the ideal is to win without fighting and so The gry Zone tactics aimed at demoralizing as well as at threatening are are part of that tactic so we need to be able to deal with that uh psychological warfare uh disinformation uh this is something that you know we're we're sort of attuned to

(17:16) right now as we're in the middle of a US election period and social media is going crazy you don't you know people are lying just know who's lying and what they're lying about uh so it you know it creates a great deal of challenge but Taiwan is under that constant barrage I mean one of the conclusions from both of our reports was Taiwan is already under attack uh we can't talk about the future attack we need to recognize that economically politically socially uh psychologically and even militarily

(17:51) through the gry Zone activities uh Taiwan is bombarded daily uh by the PRC actions that are aimed at demoralizing in at at weakening their resolve uh surprise surprise has had just the opposite effect uh and this is something I don't think the Chinese have quite understood you know I've I've written in the past about Xi Jinping being tactically clever but strategically foolish uh when he does

his you know missile launches over over Taiwan it may send a message to the Taiwanese that hey we can reach out and

(18:25) touch you but it also reminds Taiwan and it reminds the rest of the world that we need to be coming to taiwan's defense and improving those capabilities just as their actions against Taiwan have against Hong Kong have opened up a lot of eyes about you know just how good the Chinese are at the treaties and keeping their word and how irrelevant systems is to solving either Hong Kong or Taiwan right right so um Okay so that's that's their sort of grone aspect in terms of I guess the the next strengthening agenda for the United

(19:08) States and Taiwan um as you well know deterrence to really be effective has to be visible we have to see what we're doing um it's a little bit difficult at the gry Zone level to to counter coercion at the gray Zone level but also in the sort of high end scenario to to decide what it is that we will reveal to show that we strengthening the as opposed to what we want to keep in the wraps just because you can't reveal everything and so how do you see um a the balance what what would be the right balance what what what should we

(19:46) advertise which should we show and then what should we keep uh secret yeah well I it's a delicate it's a delicate question I mean first of all we have to realize that the Chinese are watching uh you don't have to tell the Chinese that we're transiting the Taiwan strait they see it they know it the message is there if you do it quietly then the Chinese get the message but they don't feel like they have to react if you start broadcasting it uh then they have to protest they have to say something (20:19) and then it just sort of you know spirals on down so uh there's it's more important that we demonstrate capabilities quietly then we talk about them uh and certainly uh We've for many years been what we call training the trainers bringing Taiwan military to the United States to learn how to use the various systems uh there's some talk now about us trainers on the ground in in Taiwan uh I hope that's true I hope they're there but I don't think we should be talking about it or broadcasting it the Chinese Know It uh

(20:55) so you know let's just let's just leave it at that I think it raises the the broader question David about strategic ambiguity uh and I always thought it was sort of a a silly debate uh the United States does not need to come out and say we will defend Taiwan at all costs uh if we were to say that then you start getting a debate in the Congress over whether the president can say that or whether the Congress has to say it and we end up shooting ourselves in the foot uh you then get other countries being

(21:28) asked how are you going to respond etc etc uh it creates a lot of problems the reality is no sane Chinese strategic planner today can Factor the us out uh when when they talk about conducting military operations against Taiwan they have to include they have to assume that the United States is going to be involved so the only question is how will the United States be involved what will the US be doing we I think coined a phrase in in our report in 2022 that we need strategic ambiguity but operational Clarity uh what do I

(22:12) mean by that I mean if the Chinese assume that the us is going to be involved then we need to convince them that we are capable of being involved in a way that can deter them and defeat them uh so we need to be holding military EX exercises we need to hold a big exercise on defending the island of Okinawa uh that's a big island with a lot of people oh by the way so is Taiwan uh we need to be conducting exercises as we're doing now uh joint combined exercises multinational exercises uh where aircraft are taking

(22:52) off and landing on highways in Taiwan or highways in the Philippines uh to demonstrate that even if bases are are destroyed uh there's a way to continue uh conducting air operations so this is what I mean by operational Clarity they need to understand that we know how to deal with

amphibious assault they need to understand that we know how to deal with airfields being put out of commission uh these type of things so that when they Factor Us in they Factor Us in in a way that is more uh emblematic of our capability

(23:29) and what they might face the more they understand that the more deterrence works yeah no very much agree I I you know to me strategic Clarity would in fact lock Us in in a situation you don't want to be I mean why would you make a choice even though you can demonstrate Clarity operationally so I you know very much agree I I guess the the the the follow on question to that is do you think that we will remain that that policy will remain that policy of strategic ambiguity will remain or do you foresee a change uh going forward well I think

(24:09) it'll remain uh now we we already know that on several occasions President Biden when asked would you defend Taiwan and said of course uh and then you know the state department says what the president meant to say is uh and certainly if Donald Trump were to become president again uh bets are off as far as what he might say in the middle of the night during a tweet uh but I think that uh in in any case there would then be the what the president meant to say uh Corrections uh anytime policy changes the first thing we do is

(24:44) try try to assure everyone that policy has not changed and I think we would we would see that so I don't I don't see the benefits and I see a lot of downsides uh to uh going away from strategic ambiguity and as I said you know the main thing is uh it's not ambiguous in the Chinese mind the Chinese have to assume that we are going to get involved and that we're going to get involved in a big way in fact they also have to assume that Japan will somehow or other be involved uh since it's a great threat to Japan if China

(25:22) were to take over over Taiwan as a study that you and I were involved in uh certainly demonstrated so uh you know we we don't have to remind them of that they already know and they're already factoring that in good um how about nuclear weapons so this is as you know a topic that at Pacific Forum we address quite a bit we've done a lot of work on nuclear weapons weapons of mass destruction but in the in that context how much do nuclear weapons matter and um how much do nuclear weapons matter to one

(25:59) specifically the US nuclear policy and posture and and of course this is also something we've discussed quite a bit China is in is is engaged in what many have have characterized a a crush nuclear buildup how is that changing the the the situation uh and essentially where are we going are nuclear weapons going to matter more in that in that uh in that context yeah it's a very sensitive question uh David and it's a very nuanced question as as you well know you know I don't think any any Taiwanese is hoping that

(26:40) it'll get to the point where the US needs to use nuclear weapons on Taiwan territory in order to deter the Chinese you know that's that's sort of a lose lose right there regardless of whether you win or lose and I I think that the the likelihood of nuclear weapons being used uh in over a Taiwan incident is probably fairly low I'm much more concerned on the Korean Peninsula and I'm much more concerned about Kim Jong-un seeing it as a last resort weapon if they if he starts something and then sees that he's losing badly uh

(27:15) so I I'm worry more about there but the real concern I think in the Taiwan context uh is whether or not we see nuclear blackmail uh the whether whether it's the right conclusion or not uh an awful lot of people have concluded that the reason why NATO is not more active in supporting Ukraine is because of Putin's nuclear saber rattling uh I think there are other reasons Beyond uh his nuclear saber rattling and I'm not sure how serious people actually take that but there is certainly a perception uh that

(27:56) uh nuclear saber rattling has kept uh the US from putting boots on the ground uh well if that's the case then maybe Chinese nuclear saber rattling or just the fact that China is a nuclear power could keep the US from uh from being directly involved uh in in a conflict on the Taiwan in the Taiwan so uh that I think is is the real concern and whether or not the people of Taiwan are concerned that the US won't come to their aid because we've demonstrated in Ukraine that uh we will not go to war against a country with with nuclear

(28:36) weapons so I I think that's that's where the real nuclear Nuance is if you will and why quite frankly I mean again to tie one thing to the other I think we ought to be giving Ukraine a hell of a lot more I think we ought to be calling Putin's Bluff uh in in Europe uh because uh where actually expand the war against NATO uh it would be all over for Russia in in a matter of days and and they certainly know it they they you know the Russian military can't even handle the Ukrainian military imagine if NATO were

(29:12) to put boots on the ground so I I think we we allow ourselves uh to be spooked uh by Putin and the the sort of trickle down effect of that uh is people in Taiwan and in Japan and in Korea and elsewhere uh worrying that maybe us extended deterrence uh won't uh be real uh if in fact it's a nuclear adversary that we're that we're dealing with yeah it it's interesting because at that particular dialogue what we heard is that the Taiwanese worry uh more about us in action than about the potential for nuclear escalation and so

(29:53) I think to exactly the point you made which is exactly perception is again I don't think that this is what we were doing but certainly this is how it was received by by Regional allies and so and it is a problem it's also very difficult to to manage because you don't want to sort of also risk nuclear escalation but you want to do enough so that extended deterrence remains credible in the eyes of of allies it's it's yeah know it's it's going to be probably even more difficult as the Chinese are

(30:24) building up they are some and and you know I I have to acknowledge I mean this is the this is the great thing about being in a think tank David is that we can we can make these bold statements about you know well we gotta call Putin's Bluff etc etc and one time in my military career I used to be a military planner uh you know when you made decisions then people's lives were at stake uh real lives really at stake uh so uh obviously when you're when you're making decisions that involve real lives and and you have

(30:57) the ability to affect those or put those at risk uh it's a lot it's a lot tougher than when you're sitting up in the think think tank Heaven you know just talking about it in theory although I I'm pretty sure that if um we get into a hot War Hawaii would be targeted and we sitting in Honolulu at Pacific Forum would suffer from it but I do take your point in terms of talking about these issues as opposed to actually making decisions that that that's why I have my fallback place up in the outer

(31:29) Mountain they they'll never find it up there I'm sure New York would be would be targeted as well but yeah um well good um how about I mean you mentioned Japan and Japan's interest in in uh doing more uh for Taiwan and uh in the dialogue I remember us talking about internationalizing the problem and I I was wondering if maybe you could speak to that a little bit what does that mean uh what is it that we can do moving forward and and you know maybe just an assessment of the progress that has been made so

(32:09) far well I think inter internationalization is an important aspect of deterrence uh if if the Chinese are convinced that uh going against Taiwan means they're going against the United States that provides deterrence if they're convinced it means also going against Japan and Australia and it also means that Europeans are going to take action against China not only militarily but economically and politically that also enhances deterrence so uh and and the more you raise awareness of of the the problem I think the more significant

(32:48) it is uh that you know what's happened in the last year or two should be a wakeup call to the Chinese again um you know again this tactically clever strategically foolish uh leader may not be picking up on these signals and I'm not sure uh there are a lot of Chinese analysts who are willing to go in and say hey boss you know you're really screwing up in in what you're doing you know that that could be uh career would not be career enhancing to to do those type of things but it's it's significant

(33:21) to know that uh if you go back two or three years ago and look at NATO's statement never saw a reference to China uh now you see references to China and you see references to the importance of stability across the Taiwan Strait you look at two plus two uh uh pronouncements from us and Japan Us in Korea Us in Australia Us in the Philippines elsewhere uh it's almost automatic now that there'll be a line in there that talks about the importance of stability across the Taiwan strait uh that's a remind to the Chinese that this

(34:00) this this isn't just between you and Taiwan and it's not just between you Taiwan and the US uh but the rest of the world is is watching uh and certainly uh Chinese support for you for Russia in Ukraine uh was a real wakeup call of the basic agreement on Hong Kong was a huge wakeup call not only in the UK but throughout Europe uh and certainly you know what they've been what they've been doing now elsewhere in Southeast Asia is a wakeup call not just to the Filipinos but to all the (34:37) southeast as and certainly anyone with a claim in the South China Sea yeah you know I I completely agree and um I will tell you I was in Europe uh twice this summer and uh every meeting people wanted to talk about China and and and Taiwan what it means what is it that we need to know what is it that we can do how should we go about it and so there's there's um it's still learning curve in Europe but it's certainly a very very omnipresent problem in their minds and just next month I'm um I'm going to be teaching a

(35:14) course on China for NATO requested by NATO allies so that they can actually figure out what the alliance can do because of that language being added you know I also say that um even if you don't have statements by some countries about Taiwan behind the scenes they also asking questions so what we see in the statements of those you know multiple countries in many ways that's the tip of the iceberg uh it's become very very much Global and so that's um certainly hopefully will help enhance deterrence

(35:50) yeah um so maybe just following on to to that the do you think would you say that in the United States the US public certainly knows more about Taiwan and China and but like where are we as a nation uh if we were to get into a situation where there's a very serious crisis and potentially a conflict how do you expect the US public to to to deal with this well again an important question David and you you'll recall uh when we first started this discussion I said one of the purposes of our dialogue was to

(36:32) raise awareness uh in the United States uh certainly and it's no no reflection of of just our work uh but but obviously uh China awareness of China awareness of the China threat uh has certainly grown in the US uh the the two political parties right now are falling over one another to say who who was tougher on China uh to the point of sometimes I think being foolish and counterproductive uh but certainly uh I think there there's an awareness and China heavy-handedness you know and the Chinese arrest Canadian diplomats and

(37:11) Canadian businessmen and all uh you know for essentially political hostage taking uh this this raises concerns when they when they fly reconnaissance balloons over the United States you know balloons that are too big to miss uh you know this is again raises awareness uh but I mean and if I can engage in a little shame the self promotion uh you and I wrote a report uh entitled when



Taiwan Falls uh which is not predicting that Taiwan will fall but says if it does here are the consequences and not just for the United

(37:53) States but for for Japan for Korea uh for India Europe uh elsewhere Australia and I think it's a very important study uh I I think the Taiwanese I'd probably be playing a Pacific for to go around with the different uh cities not only in the US but also in Japan and in Korea and elsewhere uh giving a briefing on that study uh because I think it really does uh raise people's awareness of of what the implications are you know so what how does it affect me well it will affect you a great deal it will affect

(38:35) you in the price of everything you pay for it'll affect you in The credibility of our alliances and being sucked into into conflicts elsewhere uh so you know I think uh there's a greater awareness now at the sort of the macro level uh of China as a threat uh but I think there's not a very nuance understanding of just what that threat constitutes and what we need to do to respond to it to deal with it and I think that's that's where our effort needs to lie today yeah in some ways that process (39:13) should continue or should resume because it's it's still again we' we've seen progress but we're not where we need to be yet so there's there's more work that needs to to happen um on that study that that you mentioned um you know my sense was that we've seen in the United States a lot of exercises and scenario as to whether if we get into a war who would win and how but no one had actually done a study on what happens if we lose regardless of how we lose if we lose those are the consequences and

(39:48) that's actually helpful to say to to for people to realize that well actually no things would be really really bad if if we lose and so that's why again deterrence matters as a result yeah David and that's I think a very important point that needs needs to be stressed I mean people spend too much time uh talking about and ringing their hands about the results of War games uh I've I've been in hundreds of War Games both in in uniform and and since then political military simulations uh you know the games are

(40:23) only as good as the assumptions uh and you don't build a game that guarantees that you're going to win uh if you if you win every time you do a war game it means you're not doing it right and you're not learning anything uh the old saying on on War Games is to lose is to learn and to learn is to win uh so uh you're you're better off losing in the war games because then you're identifying the weak spots uh and and addressing it so that when the real uh situation occurs you won't lose

(40:58) right so uh you know oh Taiwan you know China can take Taiwan in three days well that's nonsense uh it's only under certain scenarios and under certain assumptions that are built in that allows China to do that uh in the real world uh that doesn't happen and and it's not not likely to happen and we shouldn't spend so much time agonizing over the results of War games what we need to be doing is learning from them learning why we lost this or why we lost that or how how do we not lose the next

(41:32) time do you think would you say that we are learning that all these exercises that we're doing are bearing fruit yeah no I I I think we are now you know the part of the problem of course when we conduct these sophisticated Mill s simulations I'm sure the Chinese are watching them too and trying to to learn from them as well uh but you know we we we have uh a unique ability I think in in the US and and this is this is something that really came home to me when I was on active duty uh after every exercise we

(42:10) would have a hot wash uh and we would sit there and say okay what could we have done better this wasn't aimed at criticizing the commander it wasn't aimed at you know getting somebody fired it was aimed at the understanding that no matter how well you do you can always do things better there are always going to be you know blockades roadblocks that you need to deal with uh I

was at a very interesting uh conference uh us China conference that that Bill Perry former Secretary of Defense ran a number of years ago

(42:49) focused on the ep3 incident uh and he brought in people who were involved in the decision makers from from both sides uh and on the US side we could come up with a long list of things that the US could have done better and a long list of things China could have done better on the Chinese side they couldn't think of a single thing they could have done better uh because that would have been criticizing the leadership and you can't do that uh so I think one of our real strengths is quite frankly our ability

(43:23) to criticize uh our ability to do lessons learned uh to look at something and say here's what we did wrong uh but if you start out with the premise that the other guy did everything wrong and you did everything right then you're just deluding yourselves and you're not learning and you know I I hope there's more realistic uh assessments being done in China behind closed doors but certainly the ones that they do with us uh you it's it's rare to hear a Chinese say well you know we could have actually

(43:56) done a B and C and that that would have been would have been smarter and even Beyond exercises sometimes you hear um we sort of self- criticize say well the United States could have done better here what you're doing but the Chinese really very rarely say well yes we recognize that our actions are also triggering yeah those those consequences that's that's that's a I think yeah I mean the the default position China is it's America's fault all of this was caused by American bad behavior or American

(44:36) duplicity uh so you know to to say well XI jingping's policies were so stupid that they backfired on us uh is something you're not going to see written in in any Chinese journals right right um well so so how about how about the future I mean I I I know you have been uh um you have been skeptical about the the the the Chinese actually being able to take Taiwan you've always stressed in your writings and and presentations that this is actually something that's very difficult to do um so is it still your opinion right now

(45:16) and then are you are you worried as many people are that as we progress into uh the the 2020s that this will change and could change in ways that uh we don't want to uh that would not benefit the United States yeah uh do I worry yes uh what do I worry about I'm I'm more worried about an accident getting out of control uh then I am a deliberate uh decision to to start a war uh but you know we had a interesting discussion on on all of this at the Asia round table last year and I was asked is war inevitable

(46:00) between the US and China and my answer was no but it's no longer Unthinkable uh it's no longer so unlikely that it doesn't make any sense to talk about uh and the reason why is a because I think XI jingping has been very Reckless uh you know he's doing things against the US Ally in the Philippines that could force us uh to respond uh and as I tell my Chinese colleagues you know it's never wise to test a US president but it's particularly unwise to test him during an election year uh and

(46:40) uh and that's where we are right now so uh you know this it just doesn't make it doesn't make sense to be playing Russian roulette roulette out in the South China SE with with Philippine resupply missions because this is an accident waiting to happen and we won't be as lucky as we were during the ep3 incident where we were able to to walk it back despite it I think creating a lot of lasting animosity which uh we're still dealing with today so I I've also argued that XI jingping doesn't need to recapture

(47:21) Taiwan to become president for Life he's already got the job uh the only thing that could him to lose that job would be to try to take Taiwan and fail uh so you know is he willing to risk going down

in history as the Chinese leader that lost Taiwan permanently because that's that's the stakes that are involved if you try to take Taiwan permanently as you also could lose it permanently and the end result would be Taiwan as an independent country uh one China fig Leaf goes away uh and and uh the Chinese leader that

(47:59) brings that about uh Lives In Perpetual disgrace uh so uh that's something I think we need to continue writing about continue reminding our Chinese colleagues and reminding Xi Jinping uh that uh his legacy is at stake in a lot of different ways and and one of those is to start something against Taiwan that could end up resulting in Taiwan independence exactly what he doesn't want but could also result in the destruction of the Chinese economy and setting the Chinese Nation back a hundred years uh and that serves no

(48:37) one's interest and certainly not China's I mean and in addition to this China has a lot of worries Beyond Taiwan me we all know that economically it looks like China is not doing really well as well as as as before so there are other things that that beat in probably should focus on besides so yeah well very good um I mean I guess the the last question um would be do you see when we've talked a little bit about this in the context of strategic ambiguity and strategic uh Clarity but do you see a change uh in in

(49:19) in approach in US approach if we get a Harris Administration or a Trump trump 2 Administration do you do do you anticipate any changes well I I certainly don't anticipate a change under Harris uh I think foreign policy wise everything that I'm reading everything I'm seeing it's going to be uh essentially more of the same uh if you if you look at the National Security strategy written by the Trump Administration and look at the National Security strategy of both immediately before and immediately after when it

(49:57) comes to Northeast Asia policy it's almost exactly the same uh it's the importance of the alliances as a foundation uh it's you know Coop cooperate with China where we where we can uh and compete and confront where we must uh and I don't think that's that's going to change uh Mr Trump of course is a wild card uh and you know he may get up one morning at 3:00 in his pajamas and tweet something that uh creates a lot of anxiety, a lot of confusion a lot of misunderstanding uh but at the end of

(50:31) the day that's really not a change in US policy I mean I I tell people that the difference between Donald Trump and every president in my lifetime uh is that all other presidents have understood one simple fact uh a president of the United States is not entitled to a personal opinion uh anything a president says is going to be interpreted both at home and especially abroad as a declaration of US policy uh I think the four years of the Trump Administration demonstrated that that was not the case uh when it came to the

(51:11) president's tweets uh this was his negotiating strategy this was his style this was his desire to to rant and Rave or or or whatever else uh but it didn't always or even seldom uh result in a actual will change in in US policy so I I feel fairly confident uh that policy will remain consistent regardless of of who wins in November uh I think anxiety levels uh will raise uh if if Mr Trump comes back and ironically uh they'll raise the anxiety will be raised both in Taiwan and on the mainland since neither (51:54) one is particularly sure uh and both as well as most sane individuals uh prefer some sort of continuity and predictability when it comes to American foreign policy and that's what you know we hope for and strive for and hopefully will continue to have well very good uh well I on these hopeful words I guess hopeful continuity I think we can um call this to a close uh Ral thank you so much for your insights uh it has been uh I think very instructive and I'm sure everyone will enjoy listening to you uh and so we will

(52:35) end here thank you very much good David thank you and tell everyone to go to our website and and read the the studies the reports from the conferences and also our when Taiwan fall study since I think it's very Illuminating We'll add that on the link of the video so great thank you everyone