

**THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION**  
**CENTER FOR NORTHEAST ASIAN POLICY STUDIES**

**TAIWAN'S ELECTIONS AND WHAT THEY MEAN**

**SESSION ONE: OPENING REMARKS**

Thursday, March 27, 2008  
The Brookings Institution, Falk Auditorium  
Washington, D.C.

Transcript prepared from an audio recording.

ANDERSON COURT REPORTING  
706 Duke Street, Suite 100  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

### **Session One: Opening Remarks**

**RICHARD C. BUSH III**

Director, [Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies](#)

**CHARLES FREEMAN**

Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

**THE HONORABLE FRANK MURKOWSKI**

Former Senator and Governor of Alaska

**NANCY BERNKOPF TUCKER**

Professor of History, Georgetown University

### **Session Two: What The Elections Say about Taiwan Politics**

**CHARLES FREEMAN**

Freeman Chair in China Studies, CSIS

**EMERSON NIOU**

Professor of Political Science, Duke University

**CHING-LUNG HUANG**

Visiting Fellow, [Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies](#)

**ALEXANDER HUANG**

Professor of Strategy and Director of American Studies, Tamkang University

### **Session Three: Lunch Remarks**

**RICHARD C. BUSH III**

Director, [Center for Northeast Asian Policy Studies](#)

**MICHAEL FONTE**

Washington Liaison, Democratic Progressive Party

**HO SZU-YIN**

Director, Department of Overseas Affairs, Central Committee of the KMT

**Session Four: Implications for Cross-Strait and U.S.-Taiwan Relations**

NANCY BERNKOPF TUCKER  
Professor of History, Georgetown University

ALAN ROMBERG  
Distinguished Fellow and Director, East Asia Program, The Henry L. Stimson Center

RANDY SCHRIVER  
Partner, Armitage International LLC

YUAN PENG  
Director, Institute of American Studies, China Institutes for Contemporary International Relations

\* \* \* \* \*

## PROCEEDINGS

RICHARD BUSH: Ladies and gentlemen, why don't we go ahead and get started. Thank you all for coming, thank you for coming in out of the rain.

This is the third in a series of symposia on the Taiwan elections that Brookings has done in close collaboration with CSIS and Georgetown University. We actually kicked the whole project off with a luncheon talk by Ambassador Joseph Wu here at Brookings back in November, but then there was a scene-setting symposium at CSIS back in December, and then last month there was a very well attended session at Georgetown, and I'd like to thank Charles Freeman and Nancy Bernkopf Tucker for their outstanding contributions to the whole effort.

I think we've assembled an outstanding program today. I'd like to thank all of the presenters in advance. I'd particularly like to thank Governor Murkowski for his willingness to provide some opening remarks.

I'd like to thank my good friend Dr. Ho Szu-yin for coming all the way from Taiwan to be one of our luncheon speakers.

I'd also like to thank my outstanding staff for their hard efforts in putting this all together. Right now I'd like to first ask Nancy to make a few remarks, and then Charles will serve as Chair through the first panel. Nancy?

NANCY BERNKOPF TUCKER: Thank you, Richard. We had a great meeting at Georgetown, I think, and reviewing what was upcoming in the election we speculated a lot on what the results might be, whether there would be last-minute surprises. We were assured that the only thing that's always true in Taiwan elections is that there are last-minute surprises. This process went very smoothly, and probably the biggest surprise was the size of the gap between winners and losers.

I wanted to take just a second to say that I had the opportunity to be in Taiwan for the election, and it was a great experience, and I wanted to underline one major concern that I have. I think the process we have just seen is a great testament to democracy in Taiwan, that the process has been smooth and orderly. Going to polling stations was very exciting. I wish here in the United States our process would go as smoothly. They do it manually instead of electronically, and it was an impressive thing to watch.

The size of the victory, though, does create some concerns about the future of competitive politics in Taiwan, and I think that future concern about and support for the DPP is important on the part of the Kuomintang as it sets up its new government and celebrates its victory but also on the part of Americans to stay concerned and connected to both parties. The concept of a loyal opposition is one that's very important here in the United States and I think one that we want to encourage strongly. The DPP took quite a

beating in two elections, and there seems to be factionalization and concern on the ground in Taiwan. I think that's something we want to pay a lot of attention to.

And the second thing I did want to point out, and I'm sure we'll hear a lot about it today, is the reaction from China to this election. I've spent a lot of time talking to friends from China, and it is, I think, a great opportunity to improve relations across the Strait, and I hope very much that China is going to take up that opportunity with enthusiasm and not stand back and wait to see what the new president of Taiwan will do, that that has been tried before and it didn't work terribly well, and I hope regardless of what the United States does that China will see it in its own interest to be forthcoming and active in improving relations across the Strait. I think these are some of the issues that we're going to talk about today. We have a terrific set of speakers.

This has been a wonderful series, and the size of the audience suggests that Taiwan continues to be an issue of great interest here in Washington. I hope that will go on now that the election season is over and that various institutions in town will continue to have programs beyond this week, when everybody is having a program. There's at least one a day, sometimes two. So, I hope you're going to find this a challenging and interesting day and learn a lot and participate a lot in the discussions. Thanks.

(Applause)

CHARLES FREEMAN: Thanks, Nancy. I want to thank Richard Bush and Nancy Tucker, who've been my partners in this series for the last six months or so starting at CSIS and then on to Georgetown and to what I'm sure is going to be an equally successful program here today.

It's great to see so many old friends and such a collective gathering of wisdom on these issues here in the room. I think all of us, if we all sat down, could learn a lot from each other. I know I learn from all of you every day.

It has been a fascinating election process and a season to watch, and I do want to underscore something that Nancy did just say. I mean, to the extent that the United States has a role to play here and has an interest here, it is in demonstrating its support for the democratic process on an ongoing basis in Taiwan. Many of us are not surprised at the result of the election, but we should continue to support the ongoing vibrant democratic process in Taiwan notwithstanding what has been clearly a mandate for the now-ruling KMT party.

I want to introduce Governor Murkowski to say a few words to open our session and then introduce the new panel. Many of you know Governor Murkowski from his days in the United States Senate. He was elected four times as Senator of Alaska and had a very successful career here in Washington. Very strong interest in East Asia, as many of you know, and a particular respect and relationship with the people of Taiwan. So his interest in these issues goes way back. On a personal basis, he's been a great

friend and mentor to me since early in my days here in Washington, so I want to thank him personally for taking time out of his perhaps less-busy schedule these days but still very full days on the west coast to come here, east, to be with us here today.

Ladies and gentlemen, Governor Frank Murkowski.

(Applause)

FRANK MURKOWSKI: Thanks very much, Charles. I appreciate the introduction, and a good morning to you all. Nancy, I enjoyed your opening remarks. And some of you might wonder what a former Alaska governor and a former United States Senator is doing in the current realm of our international activities in Asia, and I'm often reminded when I go to Taiwan, by MOFA, how many times I've been there over the last 25 years, and I think it's about 22 or 23 times. They keep track quite accurately.

But my first association really began through personal friendships with a Taiwanese banker, a fellow by the name of Li-Pei Wu in Taiwan, and when I came to Washington, why, I sat on the Foreign Relations Committee, became chairman of the East Asian Affairs subcommittee and as a consequence was very moved by the efforts by the people of Taiwan to achieve democracy. It's a unique type of democracy, and I think my colleagues would agree with me—Charles Freeman, Nancy, and the others that were on this mission to observe the election, incidentally sponsored by CSIS, which I was very pleased to be a party to—because it gave us a perspective I think that is one where we in the United States take the democratic process and freedom pretty much for granted.

And we look at our neighbors in Taiwan with kind of the same broad brush, but they have something more associated with democracy, and that's identity. And I was very impressed in a number of presentations we had of the importance of identity along with democracy, and, you know, I don't have to go into any detail here to differentiate between a majority of Taiwanese residents that feel very strongly about that identity as it affects their relationship with the PRC.

So, I think that as we looked at the process where they elected their fourth president, a process that was quite orderly in spite of predictions, an opportunity to participate directly in the rallies of both the KMT and DPP, DPP seemed to be much noisier. The KMT was more subdued, but they had the huge street area blocked off so they weren't as crowded. And then going to the polling places, observing the manner in which each ballot was taken out of the box, held up and read, and tallied the votes, a process that you'd assume would take forever but, really, within a couple of hours in the two polling places that we were in attendance, it was done remarkably efficiently. I think we had results in two and a half or three hours.

I had an opportunity as a United States Senator many years ago to go to the Philippines and observe the election process with Mrs. Aquino, and that was a little different so you may recall. The ballot boxes were brought down under candlelight. They were saying the rosary as they took them to Election Central, and there were no

rosaries inside Election Central. And obviously there was an ongoing dispute, but the point I want to make is it was just an extraordinary contrast, if you will, and the advancement of democracy is one that really has a lasting impression on the level of intensity of their dedication to what they have structured.

We were participants in issues that were timely during the election process. One was Ma's green card and whether the green card had expired or whether it had not expired. There was a lot of conversation, and AIT indicated that they weren't going to get involved in an expiration date necessarily, and I still don't know whether there was one and I suspect there isn't, but it was timely.

The Tibetan issue was highly and intensely discussed, as to what impact that might have on the election process.

There were a couple of other issues that evidently some of the Legislative Yuan and members of the KMT decided to make a little Watergate-type visit on the DPP headquarters, and for some reason or another they were caught between the elevator and the hallway, and that brought out a good deal of discussion relative to the process.

But the underlying thing that I think had an impact on the elections was that, during the Chen Shui-bian presidency there were constant themes about corruption, and that I think was kind of an underlying tidal movement in questioning the role of his administration.

The bottom line, though, was a feeling that the economy of Taiwan was in decline, and you get into discussions about whether—how bad are things really. Well, they're in transition. Obviously, more high-tech activities in Taiwan, so it creates a certain surplus of labor in certain areas, but I think that was a major factor in the consideration of the people of Taiwan who wanted change.

On the other hand, when you consider that the KMT has been in for nearly 50 years in power and the DPP did achieve 42 percent of the vote, there is clearly a sound minority of the voters who don't see things the way that KMT sees things. I think that's very healthy for Taiwan, and the question is, you know, who will take over the leadership of the DPP and what role they will continue to play.

The referendum was another issue that was talked about in great detail, and this referendum is rather interesting to reflect on, because it did cause anxiety in both Washington and Beijing, but it turned out that the referendum really was a non-issue, because both parties had a ballot in reference to the referendum and you could take both ballots, or you could take one ballot, or you could take no ballot. But they set a very high threshold, and as a consequence they didn't get the majority that they needed and it turned out to be moot.

The role of the United States in the election was much discussed, and I think that it's fair to say that the consensus among our group was that the referendum in

itself, and the position the United States took, did have an impact on the success—or I should say the failure—of the referendum because, as you know, U.S. policy was contrary to the purpose of the referendum.

On the other hand, in retrospect, I might say that my impression was that the referendum issue caused a breakdown between the Chen Shui-bian administration and Washington, and perhaps that was unfortunate and if we had an opportunity to do it again, we would try and finesse a little more, because as I understand the back-and-forth negotiations concerning the referendum, we made the assumption that really the bottom line was an expression of sovereignty. And there were certainly those in the Taiwanese community who were very supportive of that, but a majority and the more stable realists recognized that that wouldn't be appropriate and, as a consequence, preferred to address an advancement, if you will, of Taiwan in the world community short of anything that would reference sovereignty. But I think in the dialogue back and forth, the U.S. side took it to mean sovereignty, and the Taiwanese side took it to see how far they could go towards moving Taiwan forward in the world community. As a consequence, both sides became somewhat polarized. I think it deteriorated the relationship between the United States, the White House, and Taiwan as well, but, nevertheless, when those things happen you can blame poor communications, you can blame personal distrust, and as a consequence what you have what you had, which was a bottom line, a deterioration of our relationship with Taiwan. And that was unfortunate.

Some perhaps would express satisfaction that Chen Shui-bian passes from the scene, but I think his contribution is significant. He held the status quo. There were extremes, there were crises from time to time, but the advancement of democracy under very difficult circumstances continued under his reign of eight years, and they had the establishment of a solid second party, which is crucial, in my opinion, to the advancement of democracy. This is really a genuine democracy in a Confucian culture. I borrowed that liberally from Charles Freeman, so you can take a bow.

Many said that such an arrangement was impossible and wouldn't work, and I think the Chen Shui-bian administration has proved them wrong and history will make that determination. There's no question the relationship between the United States and Taiwan is unique. We share a core set of values, and I think we need to cherish that set and nurture that and that's one of the valuable contributions that you folks here, because of your intense interest, can, I believe, play. I think it's important that we as Americans continue to preserve and strengthen the relationship, and some might say that the number of other people that admire America is dwindling—we should not squander the goodwill we still have on Taiwan. I think that's a mistake.

One of the observations we made—I think my colleagues would agree that there's a perception out there in Asia that we have taken for granted our relationship, to some extent, with our Asian neighbors. We've not been as active in the Asian Economic Council with a top-level diplomatic presence, and I think that's a dangerous position for the United States, because these countries can find if we ignore them that they can get along without us, and that is not in the best interest of our relationship or our national



security.

A very interesting opportunity for those of us who observe the process will be how the administration handles the request by President-elect Ma to visit the United States, and each request that has come in for a visit has resulted in a lot of cross-Strait dialogue. The Chinese have obviously indicated their dissatisfaction or, if they haven't, they will.

On the other hand, we have made some progress in that over a period of time—and I've had the opportunity to use Alaska as somewhat of an excuse for the State Department to overlook the fact that Alaska is part of the United States but if you structured it someplace way out there, why, it might be convenient—so we've had President Chen Shui-bian visit Alaska on two occasions overnight, two nights. Took him on the train and so forth. We had President Lee there as well, and, as a former governor, why, we can always extend an invitation, if we have to, to President-elect Ma. But I'm being a little facetious now, but clearly the impression in Taiwan, as a consequence of the mandate which Ma received, is a message to the U.S. that Taiwan wants a closer relationship. They want to more or less bury the differences. They want a new start and a new change, so the first response is going to be very important from the standpoint of the interpretation of the people of Taiwan as to whether or not a visit is granted to President-elect Ma.

So, that will be, I think, the next thing to watch, and, again, I think it was a remarkable process that we had the pleasure and opportunity to observe, and when you think about, you know, our own historical presidential process and here Taiwan has survived their fourth presidential election in a peaceful, harmonious manner, and I think we'd all agree that the transfer of power is going to be very orderly. It's already underway. And the people of Taiwan, as well as the relationship with the United States, certainly will benefit from that process. We'll all be interested in watching the response from the PRC, and I think that while President-elect Ma in his request presents a challenge to our administration, the response of the PRC to the elections and whether they are, to what extent, willing to recognize that Taiwan has come more than half way in the relationship of change, the olive branch is out there for better relations across strait as well, and I think that is a great contribution, if you will, if the diplomats can handle the challenge in such a way as to make sure everybody wins maybe a little bit.

So, with that, again I appreciate the opportunity to be with you for a few hours this morning and wish you all well, and thank you, Charles.

(Applause)

(Recess)