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Taiwan's Democracy: A Historical Review

an address by

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PROCEEDINGS

RICHARD BUSH: Ladies and gentlemen, if I could have your attention, I think we should get started, because Ambassador Wu has to leave at 20 minutes to two. So that will give us an hour for his talk and for your questions and his answers.

In my view, I think these elections that are coming up are very important in Taiwan's political history. Any election in Taiwan is important, but I think these two are particularly important. They will, obviously, define which party controls the legislature, which party controls the executive branch, which candidate is the next president of Taiwan.

They will shape the course of cross-strait relations, U.S.-Taiwan relations. They will define whether the Taiwan political system is able to address some of the serious problems that Taiwan faces. And so it's serious business.

And that is why our three organizations—Brookings, the Freeman Chair at CSIS, and Georgetown—thought that it was important to sponsor this series on the elections. And that is why we thought it would be very useful to invite Ambassador Joseph Wu from TECRO to talk to us this lunchtime on Taiwan's democracy and historical review.

Ambassador Wu is a good friend to many or all of us. He's a scholar-official in the true sense of the term. He's a graduate of the number one football team in the United States.

(Laughter.)

And he had a prestigious career as a scholar in Taiwan before answering the call to public service, first as chairman of the Mainland Affairs Council, and now as Taiwan's representative in Washington, D.C.—not the easiest of jobs in the Taiwan government. It's our great honor to welcome him here today. And please join me in welcoming him.

(Applause.)

DR. WU: Well, thank you very much for the introduction, Richard. It is always a delight for me to meet with you to discuss issues related to Taiwan or China that you care a lot about.

I still remember in those three years when I was serving in the Mainland Affairs Council, I'd come to Washington, D.C. very regularly about Taiwan-U.S. relations. And after those three years, people tend to forget that I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation on Taiwan's democratization.

But I think it's wonderful for Richard to invite me over to talk a little bit about Taiwan's democracy, and the two upcoming elections in Taiwan.

And, indeed, these two elections in Taiwan are very important. And it highlights the fact that Taiwan is already a democracy. And I think it is very important for us to keep in mind that Taiwan has been running these regular elections, with a very open media

environment, with an environment that people have been competing intensely with each other. And I think this is the spirit that Taiwan, or the current Taiwan democracy is founded on.

And even though today's audience in Taiwan are not happy with what they see in Taiwan as some of the symptoms of democracy—you know, for example, we have many journalists here and we look up to them for information to be floated around in Taiwan. But in Taiwan itself, the media has a terrible image among the Taiwan public.

And if we ask Taiwan people in a public opinion survey, and ask them what are the number one and number two sources of political problems in Taiwan, many people would answer "media" as the number two problem. And if we check on media sensationalism, you know, Taiwan is certainly one place I would say, you know, where that word describes the phenomenon in Taiwan.

But some people, some friends in the United States reminded me that Taiwan is not the worst place. You know, you can see worse place in other places. But for those people in Taiwan, especially watching the television shows, what they see in the accidents, or suicides, or shoveling—just fill the news hours all the time. And I think people started to see, you know, whether there has to be some reform to this media.

And just a couple of years ago the Taiwan government established the National Communications Commission in order to oversee the activities of the media, especially the electronic media. And they tried to set the rules, and they tried to enforce the rules. But unfortunately this organization, which is supposed to be neutral and nonpolitical, is formed based upon party-proportional representation. And because of that, it guarantees the politicization of this organization.

And in the meeting held by the Council of Grand Justices, which is Taiwan's constitutional court, rendered the organization—the National Communications Commission—as unconstitutional. But that organization is still operating, and we don't know when the reform of that organization can be forthcoming.

So you can see now we're stuck with a media environment that people in Taiwan do not seem to be very happy about, but at the same time we are lacking an organization that is supposed to enforce some laws in order to have a better media environment.

But I think it's the media's obligation or responsibility to look at themselves to see how they can come up with better journalism. And we as ones in the government cannot put our hands in the journalism, otherwise it will be seen by the public, by the international community, as an intervention in free journalism, or freedom of media. So that is the environment that we've got stuck with in Taiwan right now.

But is it that bad? Probably not. Because when we try to compare those old days, where everything was controlled, you know, the current, little bit chaotic situation in Taiwan media environment is not only tolerable but also beautiful.

You know, for those who've been in Taiwan for the first time and who understand Chinese, one of the things they like very much is those programs that are already being hated by the Taiwan people: the evening talk shows. Yes, they would host politicians from different political parties and have those shouting matches on media every night. And people in Taiwan are turning away from those channels.

But for those first-time visitors to Taiwan, they enjoyed it, especially from those countries where they do not get to see these kinds of vibrant activities operating in a democracy.

So maybe Taiwan's democracy, especially its media environment, is not bad at all. And I think the government's attitude in Taiwan is that despite the fact that media has not been very friendly, overall speaking, has not been very friendly to the DPP government, we do not have any intention to roll back to the authoritarian era, because we like the information to be floating around freely.

And another thing that is taking place in Taiwan, or will take place in Taiwan for the first time, is the legislative election next January 12th. The reason why I say "first time" is because the Legislative Yuan adopted a constitutional amendment in May 2005. And that constitutional amendment performed one of the miracles that I have seen in the history of all democracies, that the Legislative Yuan decided to slash its seats into half, and therefore half of the legislators at least will lose their jobs in the January election. And especially for those people who have to face the Legislative Yuan interpellations all the time—those cabinet members, like when I was in the Mainland Affairs Council—I think they are delighted to see half of them gone out of their jobs.

And the reason why the Legislative Yuan would adopt that kind of constitutional reform to unseat half of its seats is because there is a lot of public pressure against the Legislative Yuan itself. The public media, or the public opinion survey, again, conducted by various news organizations continue to show that the public in Taiwan read the Legislative Yuan as the number one source of Taiwan's political problems.

So under that kind of heavy political pressure, the Legislative Yuan just needed to show something to the public in Taiwan that they are very serious about reform. And, of course, the simplest way to show that they are willing to engage in reform is to adopt a constitutional amendment to slash the seats into half.

And, of course, we're going to have a presidential election next March, March 22nd. And this is the fourth time that we are having a popular presidential election. And therefore you can see that Taiwan's election is moving on and on and on. And I think there's no way to stop these kinds of democracy from moving on.

And we have been looking forward to the presidential election and Legislative Yuan election because the periodical elections is the key definition to democracy. And it is the key activity in all democracies. And these are the important activities that Taiwan people will continue to spend a lot of their energy thinking about, talking about, and debating about.

And even though people are not happy with some of the performance of the elected officials in Taiwan, or the Legislative Yuan in Taiwan, or the media in Taiwan, I think one key feature in Taiwan—as you would all agree with me—is that those issues can be debated in Taiwan, can be debated publicly, without feeling the fear of being penalized. And that makes the greatest difference in between the nowadays Taiwan democracy and the past authoritarianism.

And I still remember what it was like in the Taiwan when it was under authoritarianism. And I said this before, but there were plenty of other incidences to show you that the people in those years were not enjoying the life where things were certain. There's always a Big Brother, there's always an authoritarian leader who tells the people: this is the only direction that you can go.

But not any more.

Under the current situation people are free to pursue their destiny. And I think that's what democracy is all about.

And if we flash back to Taiwan's experience of democracy we can see two things that might be quite unique, or at least stand out as aspects that not many other democracies have in their process of transition.

The first aspect is the peaceful evolution, or the peaceful transition: lack of large-scale violence. You know, if we see the South Korean democratization process, probably the picture in our mind is the student demonstrators roaming the streets all the time, battling the riot police all the time. But that's not the case in Taiwan. Taiwan's transition is rather peaceful.

In 1996 we had the first direct presidential election, and in 2000 we had the first non-KMT being elected into the presidency. So that was relatively peaceful transition. And, earlier than that, it was 1991's election of a new national assembly, and 1992 election of a new Legislative Yuan.

And prior to that there was student demonstration at the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial in Taipei City in late 1989 and early 1990. But those demonstrations were peaceful demonstrations. And if we look back at those years and see President Lee Teng-hui decided to summon the student leaders into his office and tell them that he's willing to listen to them, and he's willing to engage in some serious reforms, including calling for a National Affairs Conference, calling for a reorganization, or overall election of Taiwan's national assembly and Legislative Yuan, and calling for a direct election of the president. And that marked the beginning of Taiwan's transition process.

And if we look back at this process it certainly comes to my mind that if the elite level is willing to reform, and at the same time the mass level is willing to be patient, you know, I think that is going to create an environment that will pave the way for a more peaceful transition.

And I think my experience also tells me that the lack of the idea of reprisal by the leaders of the opposition after they gain power is also one phenomenon contributed to a peaceful process in the transition or after the transition. You know, one thing I'm really proud of in my service for the elected leaders in Taiwan, including President Chen and Vice President Annette Lu, and other premiers. One thing that is not in their mind is to take revenge against those people who put them in jail, or against those people who committed serious mistakes in earlier years of the white terror era.

And I think what we try to do right now is to uncover the process so people can understand how terrible it was to live under authoritarian rule, so that we can move on. And I think this is the spirit of Taiwan, and the spirit of Taiwan democracy today.

And a second phenomenon that is quite unique indeed is Taiwan's relations with China. And when Taiwan faces China, things seem to be all different. You know, we have a presidential election and we have a parliamentary election. And, of course, the president and the parliament are symbols of sovereignty in any country.

But whenever we talk about Taiwan being independent because of these kinds of elections, well China seems to be getting quite angry. And, of course, when we have a presidential election or parliamentary election, it doesn't mean that Taiwan's is a full and mature democracy already, or Taiwan democracy has been consolidated already. Because there are so many things that we can find problem with in Taiwan's political phenomena, or Taiwan's political institutions, and we need to engage in very serious reforms.

And what I can tell you is that based upon my training in Ohio State University: the political system in Taiwan, the overall constitution in Taiwan, is a terrible system. Even though many people in Taiwan are saying that it's based upon the thought of Sun Yat-sen, he's the national founder and a special spirit in it, and therefore we need to stick with the five-power constitution.

But what is five-power constitution? It's a separation of powers in between five branches of government, including the executive branch, the legislative branch, the examination branch, the control branch and the judicial branch.

And if you put in a graphic, the direction of their responsibilities at each other, or the direction of checks and balances against each other, you come to a very complicated web of picture. And for all this time the American friends have been complaining about the American presidentialism, because the checks and balances sometimes lead to stalemate in between the legislative branch and the executive branch.

And in Taiwan we have five branches of government! And let me tell you very frankly—it's not five branches, it's seven branches, except that one of them is not functioning, and one of them is on the brink of not functioning.

The National Assembly and the presidency were two additional branches of the government, but the national assembly was done away in April 2004. And I would say that's another miracle of Taiwan democracy, that a political institution voted itself out of history.

But if you put the president together in this picture you come to an even more complicated story. But let's set aside those branches of the government that usually we do not see in other democracies Examination Yuan and the Control Yuan.

The president can appoint the premier, but at the same time, according to the constitution, the premier is responsible to the Legislative Yuan. But at the same time, the Legislative Yuan cannot decide upon the candidates proposed by the president to become the premier. But the Legislative Yuan can have a vote of "no confidence" against the premier. And if the Legislative Yuan can have a vote of no confidence against the premier, the premier, if he's ousted, can ask the president to dissolve the parliament.

So it makes the current political system, as a result of the earlier constitutional reform, much more complicated than what Dr. Sun Yat-sen thought about his five-power constitution. And the more reforms done in the past, as I saw it, the more difficult for these government institutions, or these constitutional systems, to function in a way that we would like to see it.

Taiwan faces very strong challenges from China. And therefore what the public would expect from the Taiwan government is a very effective government. At the same time, the government is under oversight by the media and by the opposition, through institutional mechanisms or through periodical elections.

But today in Taiwan, the constitution system guarantees a stalemate. And in the future it's hard for me to imagine that we would have a single dominant political party in Taiwan's political landscape, and it's going to be very difficult under such kinds of circumstances to have political stability in Taiwan. And it's going to be very bad for Taiwan facing strong challenges from China.

And therefore you can see the constitutional reform in Taiwan is necessary. But whenever people in Taiwan are talking about constitutional reform, establishing new institutions, or trying to do something about some of the sovereign symbols in Taiwan, it's always China that is getting very nervous that Taiwan might be separating further away, or drifting further away.

But I think if you look at Taiwan from the perspective of democracy, and I'm sure you would agree with me that for further democratization, or further democratic consolidation in Taiwan, a constitution reform is going to be very necessary.

And, of course, in the process of constitutional reform it's going to be very difficult to tell the Taiwan people not to talk about those sovereignty symbols—you know, for example, the national title, the national flag, or the national anthem, or these kinds of things—even though the Chinese have threatened that if Taiwan touches upon those symbols, they will probably resort to the use of military force.

But I think if we set aside Taiwan's relations with China, by looking at those symbols of Taiwan democracy, or Taiwan today, you probably agree that we probably need to think

about how we can deal with this issue without provoking China.

One of the examples I always like to raise is the national anthem. Up until today we are still singing the national anthem that is the KMT anthem. It's exactly the same. And, of course, it's ridiculous to do that in any democracy, and especially the fact that the KMT is no longer the ruling party in Taiwan.

And the national flag is another issue. The emblem on Taiwan's national flag is actually very close to, or exactly identical to, the KMT emblem. And therefore you can see that that is another symbol of past authoritarianism. But we cannot do anything about it. But the flag issue is easier to deal with because people in Taiwan seem to have more consensus that at least this is something that we have right now, and we cannot come to a consensus on anything else.

But I think for some other remnants of past authoritarianism, when Taiwan is moving on the road of democratic consolidation, you know, we simply cannot prevent Taiwan people from thinking about these symbols of past authoritarianism.

And I think for other countries it might be very easy to deal with all these issues, but for Taiwan it gets very, very difficult, because of China. Because we want to think about how Taiwan and China can live more peacefully with each other.

But nevertheless, we are very proud that Taiwan can be a democracy today. We are very proud that Taiwan can be held by the Freedom House as the freest media environment in East Asia. And we are very proud that we can come this far.

And I always say this, and I'll say it again: that because of the U.S. help, Taiwan can become a democracy today. And we always appreciate that the United States has been supporting Taiwan to become a democracy. And I don't just say it, because it's embedded in the Taiwan Relations Act in Section 2.C that human rights, or the preservation and enhancement of human rights of the Taiwan people, is in the interest of the United States. And because of this American law, in trying to safeguard the human rights in Taiwan, many people in the United States—including those in the Administration and those on Capitol Hill—have been helping Taiwan's democratic movements, have been encouraging, or asking, or pressuring, or demanding the authoritarian leaders in the '70s and '80s to engage in serious reforms. And I still remember very clearly, after the murder of Henry Liu, the American government demanded Taiwan to do some serious reform, otherwise the United States would cut off arms sale to Taiwan. And, of course, Taiwan treasures relations with the United States, and that kind of threat does make a difference.

And as you can see, the authoritarian leader, in 1986, would agree to allow the opposition parties to be established in Taiwan, and to allow the newspapers to publish on a more active basis, and to allow martial law to be lifted. So you can see the American support and American effort is one of the most important factors in Taiwan's democratization.

And, of course, when Taiwan is becoming democratic, we would like to see if Taiwan can serve as a model for other countries to emulate. And I think we are very proud that

Taiwan is, indeed, one model other countries can learn from. And in the past few years we have very frequent contacts with the democrats in Hong Kong, even though many people in Taiwan are not very happy with the political system in Taiwan, are not very happy with the performance of the Legislative Yuan. But I think the vibrant activities of the opposition, and the engagement of the media environment in overseeing the government activities seems to be very attractive to the Hong Kong people. Where we see that the media in Hong Kong seems to be engaging in self-censorship, and therefore many people in Hong Kong are looking to Taiwan as an example that they can learn from, and they want to learn from Taiwan's campaign activities, or to learn from Taiwan's experience in running elections so that the democrats or other candidates can run more successfully in Hong Kong.

And we are very glad that the Mainland Affairs Council has been working with some academic institutions in Taiwan to allow the political parties in Hong Kong, no matter which political parties they are from, to learn from Taiwan's democratic experience, especially running election campaigns. They can learn it from the KMT, they can learn it from the DPP. In fact, what we try to do is to put them in the headquarters of different political parties and in the headquarters of key candidates so that they can observe themselves, they can have free exchanges themselves in learning about the campaign activities in Taiwan.

And I think something else can also be taken from the Taiwan experience of democracy. That's probably China. Even though if we start talking about Taiwan's actual experience to China, China might get very sensitive about any kind of experience that the Chinese people can learn from Taiwan. But I think there are plenty of Chinese who are eager to learn from Taiwan's experience—either Taiwan's experience of social transformation or political transformation.

There are environmentalists, there are NGOs who are willing to engage Taiwan's NGOs, environmentalists, things like that. And there are also plenty of political activists or democracy advocates in China who are willing to travel to Taiwan to learn from Taiwan's experience. And I think that's wonderful. Taiwan is not only being seen as a little reckless young democracy, but it's also being learned as a model that other countries can learn from.

And I think the recent events show that actually Taiwan and the United States can work together. We have been working on this issue for quite a while, even though we do it through the third channel. We do it through universities in Taiwan, we do it through the NGOs in Taiwan. And I think the experience is quite good.

And I think we, it means Taiwan and the United States, can work together in trying to see if Taiwan's experience of democracy, or Taiwan's experience of democratization, can be learned by other countries. The National Endowment for Democracy is very interested in this, and there are other institutions who are very interested in this as well. And the Taiwan government is always willing to share its experience with other countries, and it's always willing to work with other institutions in this regard so that Taiwan's experience, or broadly speaking, the democratization experiences throughout the world, can be learned by more people.

And I think this is what we have been seeing in Taiwan's democracy. And we are

very glad that different academic institutions and think tanks in Washington, D.C. are interested about Taiwan's democracy, especially interested in Taiwan's election as well.

And my knowledge of the previous practice is that whenever there's an important election in Taiwan, there's going to be a large-scale seminar in Washington, D.C. about those elections right away. And personally I hope that that is being the regular practice in Washington, D.C., so that people here can understand the nuances about Taiwan's democracy, or about Taiwan's election.

And I'm very delighted that the CSIS, Georgetown University, and Brookings are very interested in doing this. And there will be separate events discussing about Taiwan's legislative election and presidential election.

The first seminar is going to be held on December 10th. And I don't know who picked this date, but this day happens to be International Human Rights Day. And it's also the day of the Kaohsiung Incident. And it's going to be held at CSIS, and there will be a couple of Taiwan, respected Taiwan academics coming over to join the seminar.

And the second seminar is February 21st, and it's going to be mainly the post-legislative election and pre-presidential election.

And the third seminar is going to be in Brookings on March 26th. Of course it's going to be about the aftermath of the presidential election. And by that time you'll probably know whether I get to stay here in Washington, D.C. or not.

(Laughter.)

But I'm very glad, I'm very glad, that Washington, D.C., is finding interest in Taiwan's elections. Because for any democracy, elections, again, are the key activities. And we are very glad that Brookings, Georgetown University, and CSIS are going to do this whole series. And I hope that this series of discussions and seminars can be very helpful to our understandings of nowadays Taiwan democracy.

And I should probably stop at this moment to take your questions. Thank you.

(Applause.)

DR. BUSH: Thank you very much, Ambassador Wu, for a very rich presentation. You actually did more than a historical review. Thank you for that.

I will now open the floor up for questions. Please wait for the mike so that everybody can hear you. And identify yourself, as well. The hand back there, that was the first one I saw.

QUESTION: Thank you, Ambassador Wu. I'm Bill Baum from the Voice of America. You've gone through quite a description of U.S. policy to Taiwan in the past 40, 50 years. How do you see the current U.S. policy to China? Is it conducive to fostering

democracy? Or should we make adjustments to help peaceful evolution in China?

DR. WU: Well, even though that has not been a topic in my regular contacts with the administration officials, but from some of the conversations between me and the administration officials about the issue of human rights in their dealing with China, I learned that that has always been the topic of discussions in between the U.S. officials and the Chinese officials. And I'm very glad to learn about that, because human rights or democratization is something that we care a lot about.

If we count Congress as part of the American government, I would say that the Congress has been working very hard on this issue. And they are more vocal on this issue.

And my personal view is that maybe the two branches of the government in the United States are taking two approaches, and they might have different kinds of effectiveness in bringing about China's democratization or protection of human rights.

But I personally feel that this is probably a period of time where we can take a little bit more vocal actions against China in pressuring the Chinese government to engage in serious reforms. The reason is because the Olympics are coming up and the Chinese government has promised in 2000 that they would improve human rights. And that was one of the bases on which the Chinese government was able to have the rights to host the Olympics next year.

And therefore, this is the high time to tell the Chinese leaders that you need to engage serious reform as you said that you would. And I think the Congress has been taking a more active approach.

The recent even on Capitol Hill, hosting His Holiness Dalai Lama, is probably one of those kinds of events that I would say that will force the Chinese government to take a look at itself; that economic development is not the only thing to win respect around the world.

And we need to continue to tell the Chinese leaders that even though that you have said "democracy" for 61 times in the 17th Party Congress long speech, but you have been arresting more journalists, you have been arresting more academics, you have been arresting more religious leaders, and you have been arresting more human rights lawyers. And it's wrong.

And if we can take a more vocal approach right now, by my judgment of the Chinese leaders, who have a tendency of face-saving type of way out, they will probably do something in order to win more appreciation.

QUESTION: Dimon Liu, thank you. Martin Lee, Hong Kong's democratic leader, was here recently, and he made the following comments.

On one country, two systems, he said that Tibet wants it but can't have it. And Hong Kong has it, but wouldn't want it. And, you know, China wants Taiwan to have it, but Taiwan won't have it.

Now on the rule of law and democracy, he said that Hong Kong has the former, but not the latter. And Taiwan has the latter, not the former. And China has neither.

Will you please comment?

(Laughter.)

DR. WU: I think that's a very good way to make the distinction in between China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

But I think the prime difference, or the main difference in between Taiwan and Hong Kong is that the Taiwan people get to elect the whole chamber of our parliament. And we get to elect the leader of Taiwan. But in Hong Kong I'm sorry to say that I don't know when that will be realized.

Earlier on, the Hong Kong people has been pressing the Chinese leaders to agree to a general election in the year 2012, but the Chinese government did not promise it. And the way we see it is that democracy is about people freely to determine their own destiny, as specified by the National Endowment for Democracy.

But Hong Kong is still quite far away from it. So even though you have rule of law—you know, I don't know where that rule is being made, even though part of it is being made by the colonial rule, when Hong Kong was still under colonial rule, and part of it has been made when China has already taken over, by 1997.

But I think the feature that Taiwan is a full democracy and a feature that Hong Kong is still struggling to become a democracy tells the distinction between the two places.

And I think one country-two systems model is actually one very interesting phenomenon. You know, Hong Kong cannot resist it because the Chinese government, when it's negotiating with the British government for the return of Hong Kong in 1997, that's what the Hong Kong people has to accept. And the Hong Kong people just got stuck with it anyway.

And for Taiwan people, we have a choice. You know, we can say yes to the one country-two systems model, and we can say no to the one country-two systems model. And the important political institutions in Taiwan, or important public opinion survey organizations in Taiwan have been doing these questions all the time, asking people in Taiwan whether they want to accept the one country-two systems model.

And I think it's been very consistent that the people in Taiwan do not want to accept the one country-two systems model. Which leads the Chinese leaders to believe that one country-two systems model doesn't have any market in Taiwan, and therefore they do not want to talk about one country-two systems model anymore. You know, you don't find this term in the Chinese expression when they talk about Taiwan very often anymore. I think the last instance that I saw was sometime in 2005.

So you can see that the one country-two systems model is not a way for Taiwan to go in its future relations with China.

And I think one of the reasons why Taiwan people do not like one country-two systems model is when we look at the Hong Kong experience, originally very vibrant media environment suffered a serious setback. The Chinese capitalists are coming to Hong Kong media and taking over the media in Hong Kong. And the only free media, or independent media that I can see in Hong Kong is probably *Apple Daily* —

(Laughter.)

— and other news organizations are being infiltrated by the Chinese capital. And that's, you know, what I see.

And commentators, very welcomed and very well known commentators in Hong Kong, they do not comment anymore. They seal off their microphones. They don't want to come to the public scene anymore. And I think that's a very sad experience.

And I think people in Taiwan have been looking at this experience as a negative experience. And as a result, one country-two systems model is not what Taiwan people would like to learn from.

QUESTION: Thank you. Nike Ching with the Voice of America, again. The USCC, U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, is going to publish its annual report next week. It's believed that two of the items Taiwan would like to hear on the F-16 arms sale and the Free Trade Agreement between Taiwan and the U.S. are not endorsed by USCC.

Could you give us some update about is there any discussion on this between TECRO and USCC? And do you think the referendum on UN play any role on this?

DR. WU: Thank you very much for the question. I haven't seen the report yet and therefore, you know, I do not have to answer your question.

But I think the things I find on the USCC is that the USCC is an institution affiliated with the Congress to deal with China. And therefore to this organization Taiwan seems to be minor.

And I think in a report about China to mention about FTA with Taiwan, or to mention about specific items of military sale may not be appropriate. That's the way I see it.

But I haven't read the report, and I haven't spoken with any of the members. I haven't spoken with any of the members of this commission yet on this issue. but, you know, please come back to me when the report is out and when I read the report to see if there's any proper context for the two issues that you mentioned to be in that report. Is that okay?

QUESTION: What about the affect of the UN referendum?

DR. WU: Again, I did not see the report yet. But I doubt that Taiwan's referendum is going to do anything with either the FTA or F-16s.

But, again, I have to read the report in order to have the full context of their report in order to answer your very good question. And please come back to me on this issue later.

SPEAKER: Would you like to comment on Shih Ming-teh's democratic movements in Taiwan? And I think it's a misnomer. He calls it the "red movement."

DR. WU: I don't know whether I should describe it the way you put it, "the democratic movement."

Taiwan is already a democracy. And I think we have a constitution laws. And if you don't like the government performance, you can either vote the government out in regular elections, or you can go through the constitutional rules and norms to oust whoever is in their office.

And I think gathering a number of people on the street to demand the current government administration or national leader to be ousted, without following the constitutional rule, is probably not good. And if his action becomes successful, I would say that's a regression of Taiwan's democratization.

That would mean that anyone can go out of constitutional rules and norms to do something in Taiwan politics. And that's probably not good. In Taiwan's Legislative Yuan they can get rid of the premier if they don't like the premier. The rules are over there. And if they don't like the president they can impeach the president, or they can go through the recall process. They are all constitutional.

And I would say that if Shih Ming-teh is following these rules in calling for the president's resignation, following these rules and the result is in his favor, then I would say that's probably in line with Taiwan democracy. And that's probably democratic movement.

QUESTION: I'm Gerrit van der Wees of the Formosan Association.

Ambassador Wu, last Saturday former Congressman Lester Wolff gave a speech in Virginia. And he is, of course, one of the co-authors of the Taiwan Relations Act. And he said that in the TRA, in 1979, the U.S. decided to refer to Taiwan as "Taiwan." And he did criticize the present administration statement questioning why Taiwan is doing a referendum into the U.N.

And what is the way to get out of this Catch-22 situation?

DR. WU: You know, probably you won't be able to hear me criticizing the current administration. It's not right for me to do it that way.

But I think Lester is right that in the Taiwan Relations Act the only reference to Taiwan is “Taiwan.” And I think there’s also internal U.S. document with regard to how to deal with Taiwan. And I think that internal document is also describing Taiwan as “Taiwan.”

And I tried to see the exact wording—the best noun and adjective to describe the people, the authority, and the entity are “Taiwan.”

So you can see that there’s nothing wrong to call Taiwan “Taiwan.” And I remember that a senior official who made the very long remarks on Taiwan-U.S. relations in Annapolis also said that. And therefore there’s nothing wrong for the U.S. to call Taiwan “Taiwan.”

And the referendum is the issue that became the issue that makes a distinction between Taiwan position and the U.S. position. And I need to be very frank that we haven’t resolved this issue. The two countries are still debating over this issue.

But, of course, the referendum is going to be held in Taiwan together with the presidential election anyway. The newest announcement is that we already gathered more than 2.7 million signatures, and it’s already far surpassed the threshold for that to become on the ballot next March. And therefore there’s no way to stop it right now.

And, you know, in the United States, for Taiwan in the United States, the rule is that, you know, the United States can call Taiwan “Taiwan,” and we can also call Taiwan here in the United States, and we cannot call ourselves the “Republic of China.”

But we, at the same time, cannot make any reference that the title “Republic of China” is going to be changed.

And we have a national flag, and that has a KMT symbol on it. And even though we are not allowed any kind of opportunity to have the national flag flown in Washington, DC, openly, but at the same time we are not supposed to change that flag.

And sometimes we feel that it’s not a very good feeling inside.

DR. BUSH: Scott Harold, my colleague here at Brookings?

QUESTION: Ambassador Wu, thank you very much. In addition to being Richard’s colleague here at Brookings, I have the good fortune to teach over at Georgetown University a course on security in East Asia.

Last summer several of my students happened to be U.S. military officers serving in either the Air Force or the Navy, many of whom are deployed in the Pacific. One of the questions I asked my students to evaluate is: what’s the biggest source of instability in East Asia?

Many of these students are quite concerned by the fact that Taiwan does not seem to have been able to take any provision to enhance its security deterrence against the Mainland, and at the same time is undertaking activities, such as the UN referendum, that have no

practical hope of actually succeeding, while at the same time risking dragging the United States, Taiwan, and China into a war over symbolism and not substance.

And I wonder if you could tell me how would you best answer my students, who are worried that they may actually have to fight Chinese military forces for symbols and not substance?

DR. WU: Well, thank you very much for this question. You know, I hate doing propaganda, but that question happens to give me a perfect chance to do some propaganda over here.

On the security enhancement, you probably noticed in June that our Legislative Yuan has passed a substantial part of our military budget, which is an answer to the Administration's promise of delivery to Taiwan a robust package of defensive articles, including P-3C anti-submarine airplanes and the PAC-3 and eight diesel-powered submarines.

And part of the budget that we had after the June passage will be sufficient to procure 12 P-3Cs, and the upgrade of the PAC-2 Plus onto the same level as PAC-3s, even though the Legislative Yuan did not approve the procurement of PAC-3. And some study (inaudible) of the submarines. And therefore that's a substantial movement ahead, after the delay in the past three, four years.

And other than that, we have also passed a budget for the F-16s. And, again, it comes to a question that we view as a dilemma. You know, in the past few years the U.S. has promised to sell Taiwan some wonderful articles for defense purposes, and we couldn't come up with money. And after June we had the money for the F-16s, and the administration hasn't agreed to sell Taiwan the additional 66 F-16s.

And I think for the budget next year, what we tried to do is to make the budget 3 percent of our GDP. And it's already coming out, and it's already passed the first reading in the Legislative Yuan. And usually what happens in the Legislative Yuan is that in a second reading or the final reading of the budget, the floor or the joint committees do not touch upon the passage, or the part of the budget that has already passed in the first reading.

So we have a very good chance that the budget for next year is going to be somewhere around 3 percent of our GDP, and that will significantly enhance our self-defense capabilities.

And I think after the long process of debate, the opposition in Taiwan, even though it's been seen as the factor in delaying Taiwan's procurement of defensive articles, has come to terms with Taiwan for Taiwan's defense purposes.

And the second issue is the UN. You know, of course, there is no practical value to Taiwan in entering the UN by only holding a referendum and besides China has 140-some countries recognizing China in the UN. And therefore when it comes to the final vote Taiwan is certainly going to be defeated. And it's a sure defeat process for Taiwan. You

know, you can read it that way.

But for me, or for Taiwan foreign policy makers, you know, it is something that we must do. Because we face an entirely different phenomenon on the international stage, because the Chinese government has been suppressing Taiwan's international participation to such a degree that you won't believe it.

You know, I have a whole list of those international organizations where China is trying to change our title from "Taiwan" or the "Republic of China," into something else that we don't like; into "Taiwan, China," "Taipei, China," "Taiwan Province of China," and "The Taiwan Province of the People's Republic of China." And these not only happen in the major international organizations such as OIE or the WHO, the World Organization for Animal Health and the World Health Organization, it also happens in all kinds of non-governmental type of international organizations.

I'll real quickly mention some of those examples, that China has been doing terrible things to Taiwan.

(Pause.)

In the International Firefighters Games they want to change our title to "Taiwan, China." Our original title is "Taiwan." And the organizers of that activity just caved in to the Chinese pressure. But our firefighters just got fed up and they tried to change our name back to "Taiwan," but to no avail. And therefore our firefighters had to withdraw from the games altogether.

And these kinds of incidences just take place again and again and again.

You know, the Miss Universe beauty pageant contest -- what does it have to do with politics? Miss Taiwan, elected in Taiwan, is called "Miss Taiwan." But when she was about to board the stage, she was forced to wear another ribbon that's called "Miss Chinese Taipei." And she was in tears.

And this, another game held in Seattle just a few weeks ago, it's called "International Video Game Contest." What does it have to do with politics? You know, Taiwan athletes, or Taiwan participants in that event, you know, tried to follow the custom of—long years' custom—of wearing the flag in order to receive that award. And when our participants won the award and tried to receive the award while wearing a flag, the Chinese participants and coaches, and I'm sure there's political secretaries as well, they tried to grab the flag, and they tried to curse our participants.

And all these kinds of things continue to hit home.

And what China has been doing is to subject Taiwan to the "one China" principle, where Taiwan is part of the PRC. And it continues to come up. And if we don't try to do something to show to the international society that Taiwan is not under China's jurisdiction. No one else will.

And I think by applying for membership in the WHO, by applying for membership in the UN under the name Taiwan is the only visible way for Taiwan to go right now, that we can tell the international community that Taiwan is not under China's jurisdiction, and we don't want to be ruled by China, and we don't like to be called "Taiwan, China" or "Taipei, China" or "Taiwan Province of China."

DR. BUSH: Vincent?

QUESTION: Thank you, Mr. Ambassador, and Richard. Vincent Chang with the *United Daily News*. I'm from Taiwan. Mr. Ambassador, you just had a lot of criticisms on the Taiwanese media. Well —

DR. WU: No (inaudible) —

(Laughter.)

QUESTION: As a member of the Taiwanese media, I think you have misled the audience by assuming that the DPP government has not done anything terrible and mean to media -- especially what the DPP government regards as hostile media.

I would like to refer you to the annual human rights report issued by the State Department of the United States. In that report, the State Department mentioned that the Taiwan government was said to subsidize some media in various ways. And I don't think the DPP government is subsidizing hostile media.

Besides, the State Department report also mentioned a case which is the district court of Taipei was fining about US\$900 in three consecutive days on a reporter of my newspaper only because he refused to reveal his news sources.

And I can raise more example, which is when you need President Chen and the former Premier Hsieh often go to a specific TV talk show program of a specific TV company, and he can talk freely, you know, as long as three hours. You know, I think that's very common. I think President Bush, or any other leaders of any democratic countries would be jealous of that kind of extraordinary luxury.

How do you justify yourself by saying that the government, DPP government, has no hands on Taiwanese media?

DR. WU: Well, thank you very much for this question. He is actually a friend of mine.

(Laughter.)

For a Taiwan political leader to go to a specific media is not strange to the American audience here in the United States. U.S. decision makers, especially with regard to foreign policy making always go to Phoenix when they have something to say about the (inaudible)

relations.

And I think it's the same in Taiwan. If a political leader in Taiwan has a specific group of audience in mind that they want to have their message go through, you know, they would reach out to those programs. Not—they seem to be able to reach out to those targeted groups. So it's the same practice.

But I think your criticism of the current government's practices in some aspect is warranted. And that's the way I like about Taiwan democracy is that everything goes. You can criticize the Taiwan government, and we just have to accept it happily. And we know that Taiwan democracy is not mature, and it's not perfect. And I will recognize that. And there is always room to improve.

And the reason why I say the media in Taiwan is not up to the public expectation is because the public views the media as the number two—not number one, you have to work harder in order to become number one—the number two source of Taiwan's political problems in Taiwan.

And I think for the print media or for the electronic media there's really no offense from the Taiwan government. And I think when the Taiwan government, or Taiwan government officials feel that there are some stories that have been fabricated, that are not true, and then those stories just continue to go out, maybe this kind of vicious cycle, then brewing under that kind of media environment.

But I think one thing is for sure: the Freedom House is calling Taiwan the freest media environment in East Asia. And we are very proud of that. And I think you can criticize the government without the fear of being penalized. And I think that's probably a tremendous achievement.

And compared to when I went to college in the 1970s, that's very different. You know, we couldn't criticize the government at all. And there's only once voice in Taiwan politics at the time. And I think we've made a long way.

DR. BUSH: I think we'd better bring our program to a close so you can get back to work. Thank you very much. You've stimulated a very lively session and we appreciate it very much. Thanks.

(Applause.)

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