

US experts pan House speaker's actions

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Political observers in the United States have criticized House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan as only serving to escalate the tensions in China-US relations and casting a cloud over the US' fading influence in East Asia.

Michael D. Swaine, director of the East Asia Program at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, a think tank in Washington, said on Tuesday that US officials can "talk until they're blue in the face" over not supporting "Taiwan independence".

In a series of comments posted on Twitter, Swaine said China believes that the actions of US officials contradict their words, and that the Pelosi trip is a "major betrayal of past limits". He said the trip is a signal of the US' desire to "normalize" a "one-China, one-Taiwan" policy.

Swaine wrote that he doubted that a majority of the US public would want to take risks "with a nuclear power over an island they can't identify on a map".

Nicholas Hope, director of the Stanford Center for International Development, said he had "fervently" hoped that Pelosi was wise enough to avoid going to Taiwan.

"Going there would exacerbate the already delicate state of China-US relations and, I believe, would be in the interests of neither country, nor those of Taiwan," Hope told China Daily.

"Taiwan will not be more secure or more prosperous as a result of this purely symbolic visit, and a lot of bad things could happen," wrote New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman on Monday. "These include a Chinese military response that could result in the US being plunged into indirect conflicts with a nuclear-armed Russia and a nuclear-armed China at the same time.

"It is a measure of our political dysfunction that a Democratic president cannot deter a Democratic House speaker from engaging in a diplomatic maneuver that his entire national security team — from the CIA director to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs — deemed unwise," he wrote.

In a piece titled, "Would You Go to War So Nancy Pelosi Can Visit Taiwan?", Peter Beinart wrote on online publishing platform Substack: "If her visit sparks a Chinese military response, and brings Washington and Beijing to the brink of war, will they (Washington politicians) enlist their kids to fight?"

"It's the kind of question foreign policy commentators rarely ask. It's too impolite. And when it comes to the China debate in Washington, it's this politeness — the failure to talk in blunt, human terms about the consequences of war — that terrifies me," wrote Beinart, who is editor-at-large at Jewish Currents, a CNN contributor and also a City University of New York journalism professor.

"Could a war over Taiwan blow up the entire world? Yes. There are few Americans who know China better than J. Stapleton Roy and Chas Freeman. Roy grew up there and later returned as US ambassador. Freeman served as interpreter when Richard Nixon visited China in 1972. Both have recently warned that a conflict over Taiwan could escalate into nuclear war," Beinart said.

"How many lives are worth risking so Nancy Pelosi can visit Taiwan? It's an impolite question — one that in the coming days the US media should ask again and again."

Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute, wrote on antiwar.com on Tuesday: "In many ways, Washington's determination to press ahead with greater support for Taiwan as part of an overall containment policy directed against China is reminiscent of the blunders US officials made with respect to NATO expansion, especially the campaign to incorporate Ukraine, and Washington's tone-deaf response to Moscow's escalating complaints.

"The administration must implement a quiet retreat regarding its growing political and military ties to Taipei and adopt a less confrontational approach to Beijing," Carpenter said.

"It has become increasingly obvious to PRC leaders that the United States is pursuing a full-blown anti-China containment policy, with Taiwan as the point of the spear, in a desperate effort to preserve Washington's fading strategic primacy in East Asia," he said.