

No easy fix to bilateral relations seen after trip

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August 6th, 2022

Pelosi's provocative Taiwan visit has further strained relations, experts say

Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan has ratcheted up the tensions between the United States and China, and the resulting damage to bilateral relations will not be easily fixed, experts said as they weighed in on the trip's fallout.

Disregarding China's staunch opposition, the speaker of the US House of Representatives visited Taiwan on Tuesday night, a move that the Chinese Foreign Ministry said was "definitely not a defense and maintenance of democracy, but a provocation and violation of China's sovereignty and territorial integrity".

Relations between the top two economies are "teetering on a precipice" after the visit, which could further muddle Washington's already complicated relationship with Beijing, US sources reported on Thursday.

Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a think tank in Washington, said the administration of US President Joe Biden was already encountering "significant" challenges and obstacles to improving relations with China.

Those relations had become strained during Donald Trump's presidency, and they had not improved much after Biden became president, according to Carpenter.

"Pelosi's trip makes matters even worse," Carpenter told China Daily on Thursday.

He said the top US lawmaker's visit to Taiwan, especially her meeting with the island's leader Tsai Ing-wen, has "severely" exacerbated tensions, and the damage to US-China relations will not be easily repaired.

Given the current situation, there is far too great a danger of an accident or miscalculation, and the risk of war is greater than it has been in at least two decades, he said.

For Stephen Roach, a former economist at the US Federal Reserve, Pelosi's trip to Taiwan is like "pouring salt in an open wound for China".

Troubling trajectory

"We're on a trajectory of escalating conflict, and this will certainly make matters worse. It plays well to local politics in the United States and in Taiwan, but it does not play well to geostrategic forces that are pushing these two nations apart," Roach, a Yale University senior fellow, said in an interview with CNBC on Wednesday.

"This visit, if anything, pushes that point of coming back together again further apart, rather than bringing it closer together."

Douglas H. Paal, who served as the director of the American Institute in Taiwan from 2002 to 2006, said the consequences of Pelosi's visit will be damaging to the restoration of effective diplomacy, which is needed to prevent a calamitous conflict.

"The two sides have no choice but to engage in future dialogue, even though past reassurances from the US about its 'one-China policy' will be further eroded in Beijing's minds," Paal said in an email.

Jon Taylor, chair of the political science and geography department at the University of Texas-San Antonio, also said Pelosi's visit has chilled relations further.

"She might think that she's standing on principle by visiting Taiwan, but if China's reaction during the past day is any indication, her short trip will help to keep China-US relations in the freezer for the foreseeable future," Taylor told China Daily.

"Pelosi's trip was counterproductive, and China is right to be angry over the visit."

Taylor said it would go a long way if bilateral relations could be pursued in the spirit of respectful, diplomatic engagement. That would require that the US place people into areas of responsibility who possess a nuanced understanding of the relationship.

"Neither country can afford for the world's most important bilateral relationship to remain mired in animosity right now," he said.