



CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

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Chairman, House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific
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Opening Statement

for the
CECC Hearing on

**“Law in Political Transitions, Lessons from East Asia
and the Path Ahead for China”**

Tuesday, July 26, 2005

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to join you and the Members of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China this afternoon for this important hearing on a topic of great interest to all of us who pay attention to China. I look forward to hearing our witnesses today on whether we may derive some insight into China’s future political development by looking at the recent historical experience of South Korea and Taiwan.

I believe that the modern economic and democratic development of South Korea is a profound achievement for which the Korean people deserve great credit. The people of South Korea are deservedly proud of the Republic of Korea’s arrival as a global actor – economically, militarily, and culturally. The United States not only welcomes those changes without reservation but we celebrate them together with the Korean people. I also believe that Americans can take some satisfaction in knowing that the United States has made an essential contribution to these developments.

Our two vibrant democracies remain tightly bound through a deep and long-standing security relationship, ongoing political and cultural affinities, extensive economic bonds, and extraordinary people-to-people ties, cemented in many instances by a common educational experience and led by the million-and-a-half strong Korean-American community here in the United States. It should be

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underscored that the United States is extraordinarily proud of its Korean population, which is the largest in the world outside of the Peninsula.

Perhaps uniquely in the world today, the United States is committed to a strong, independent, reunified Korea. America has sacrificed blood and treasure in defense of freedom for the people of South Korea, and we understand that freedom necessarily implies independence of judgment. From a Congressional perspective, America's commitment to South Korea has to be steadfast and our alliance unquestioned as the unpredictable unification process with the North proceeds. The North must not be allowed to drive a wedge between the U.S. and South Korea. The United States must take the long view, and the tone of our public and private diplomacy must give voice to our inner conviction that, as a vibrant democracy committed to economic and personal freedoms, the Republic of Korea is a nation the dignity of which deserves our deepest respect.

Mr. Chairman, with respect to Taiwan, we marked in 2004 the 25th anniversary of the enactment of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). I am proud to have been among the proponents and supporters of the Act, and I am also proud of a small provision I authored relating to human rights and democratization. It is with the greatest respect that I observed the courage and sacrifices of those who challenged the Kuomintang government to open up to democracy. We recall that, while it supported the free market and was anti-communist, the party of Chiang Kai-shek on Taiwan had certain organizational attributes similar to the Communist Party on the mainland. All Americans strongly identify with Taiwan's democratic journey and we join in celebrating the fact that the people of Taiwan now enjoy such a full measure of human freedom.

The robust multi-party system and opportunity-oriented economy that has developed over the past 25 years on Taiwan is a prototype for the world of progressive political and economic change. Indeed, economics and politics have conjoined on Taiwan to allow more progressive strides to take place there than in any place on earth over the past generation. The miracle of Taiwan's peaceful democratic transition is of great significance not only to its 23 million citizens but also to the 1.3 billion residents of the Chinese mainland. These Chinese now have the chance to examine another model of governance and social organization made successful by a people with a similar cultural heritage.

Mr. Chairman, as our engagement with China deepens, and we mutually identify those issues in which the United States and China have a commonality of interest, it is my hope that Americans can play a role similar to that which we played in South Korea and Taiwan – supporting a peaceful transition to multiparty democracy and even greater economic freedom.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this afternoon.

Thank you.