



Australian Citizens Party

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MEDIA RELEASE

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An independent Australia would oppose US provocations in the Asia Pacific

The Australian government is sending the wrong message to the Asia-Pacific region by selectively criticising China's live-fire military exercises around Taiwan, while saying nothing about US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan that provoked China's response.

The message the government is sending is that Australia's subservience to US strategic objectives trumps its declared interest in having, in the words of Foreign Minister Penny Wong in a 5 August media release, "a region at peace and not in conflict".

Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan was an intentional provocation of China, as even the Biden White House and the Pentagon acknowledged beforehand by advising her not to go.

China does not accept Biden was genuine in his opposition to the trip, however, as Pelosi's provocation was consistent with US policy that China sees as saying one thing but doing another: on the one hand affirming the One China policy, while on the other hand elevating US-Taiwan relations, arming Taiwan, and supporting Taiwan's independence movement.

If the Australian government were genuine about maintaining peace in the region, and believed Biden was genuine, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Foreign Minister Wong should have issued a statement in support of Biden's opposition to the visit, emphasising Australia's preference that Pelosi not go to Taiwan.

As the USA's most loyal ally, such a statement by Australia would have carried serious weight in the US Congress and been very hard for Pelosi to ignore, and could have helped to avert this current escalation of tensions.

Instead, both PM Albanese and Senator Wong refused to comment on Pelosi's trip.

"I make no comment about the US Speaker's decision to visit there", Albanese said on 5 August. "That really is a matter for them."

Senator Wong used the same formulation on ABC Radio on 3 August: "Obviously the level of US engagement with their Taiwanese counterparts is a matter for them."

By contrast, Senator Wong was quick to criticise the live-fire exercises that China instigated in response to Pelosi's visit.

She stated in a 5 August media release: "Australia is deeply concerned about the launch of ballistic missiles by China into waters around Taiwan's coastline. *These exercises are disproportionate and destabilising.*" (Emphasis added.)

Albanese, Wong must act in Australia's national interest

The Albanese government took office with the stated intention of stabilising Australia's relationship with China, because it is in Australia's national interests.

Australia enjoys enormous economic benefits from its relationship with China, with an annual trade balance that is currently \$120 billion in Australia's favour, up from \$68 billion in 2019.

However, as the government knows, the entire foundation of the relationship is Australia's adherence to the One China policy, as expressed 50 years ago in the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations, known as the Paris Agreement, signed on 21 December 1972.

The communiqué states: "[T]he Australian Government recognises the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China, *acknowledges the position of the Chinese Government that Taiwan is a Province of the People's Republic of China* and has decided to remove its official representation from Taiwan before January 1973". (Emphasis added.)

The United States, and almost every country in the world, similarly recognises the One China policy; however, while China has never shifted from insisting on this principle as the cornerstone of its

international relations, US politicians, now including Pelosi, have increasingly undermined it.

This undermining has serious consequences, namely the danger of war, as Singapore's former Foreign Minister George Yeo, and former Ambassador to the United Nations Kishore Mahbubani, tried to explain to Americans (and Australians) in a prescient and instructive 19 June 2021 "Asia Peace Talks" podcast titled "[Perceptions of China within the US body politic: Facts and Misconceptions](#)".

Kishore Mahbubani posed the following question: "One reason why there has been relative stability between the USA and China on the Taiwan issue is that since the days of Kissinger and Nixon, and especially since the days of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1979, the understanding was that Washington, DC would deal officially with Beijing and unofficially with Taiwan. And that held the peace for a long time. The Trump administration tried to change that; Pompeo wanted to send officials from the Trump administration to Taiwan, and some people in the Biden administration may also be tempted to do that. So on the question of Taiwan, how do you explain—again, to an American audience—that it is actually a very dangerous issue, and that the United States should be very careful about shifting away from an understanding that has held the peace on Taiwan for so long?"

George Yeo answered: "Kissinger has repeatedly recounted his conversations with [Chinese Premier] Zhou Enlai on US-China relations, and how whenever they explored other areas, Zhou Enlai came back to Taiwan. And there was agreement only because the USA accepted that there was 'one China'. *So that is bedrock. It is not a card. If you play the bedrock as if it is a card, then the structure upon which an edifice is built can rapidly collapse.* Now, it may be that subsequent administrations have forgotten, or have changed their minds. So, from China's perspective, there must be no ambiguity. *They have made it very clear that even if it means war, so be it.*" (Emphasis added.)

China's live fire exercises are a non-lethal reminder of the seriousness of its resolve, as George Yeo described; an Honourary Officer of the Order of Australia (AO), George Yeo is a friend of Australia whose warning the Albanese government must take seriously.

To protect Australia's national and economic security, the Albanese government must act independently in Australia's national interest to avert war.

To that end, the government should, publicly:

- refuse to side with US efforts to undermine the One China policy;
- unambiguously reaffirm Australia's commitment to the One China policy as expressed in the 1972 Paris Agreement.