

Politics News

U.S. public divided on intervening in cross-strait conflict: survey

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Washington, Dec. 10 (CNA) Americans are divided on the question of whether the United States should intervene in the event of a cross-Taiwan Strait military conflict triggered by a declaration of independence by Taiwan, according to the results of a survey released Monday.

The survey, coordinated by the national non-partisan, non-profit Committee of 100, found that 49 percent of U.S. Congressional staffers agree that the U.S. should intervene in such a conflict, while only 32 percent of ordinary U.S. citizens, 31 percent of opinion leaders, and 23 percent of business leaders agree that it should.

The survey, titled "Hope and Fear: American and Chinese Attitudes Toward Each Other, " was conducted between mid August and mid September in the United States and China and covered a wide range of issues, including bilateral trade and economic relations, product safety, climate change, the rise of China, and the Taiwan issue, to name a few. Those surveyed included members of the general public in both countries, as well as business and opinion leaders, and U.S. Congressional staffers.

On the question of whether the United States should play a more active role in cross-strait relations, 64 percent of Congressional staffers said they agree that it should, while 57 percent of U.S. opinion leaders, 54 percent of business leaders and 46 percent of ordinary citizens said that it should. All the figures marked increases over those in a similar survey conducted in 2005, with the ratio of Congressional staffers supporting a more active U.S. role registering the steepest rise at over five percentage points.

As to whether the United States should intervene in a cross-strait military conflict triggered by a Taiwan declaration of independence, the percentages of business leaders and opinion leaders supporting the notion both marked sharp drops of over 20 percentage points from the level in the 2005 survey, while the ratio of Congressional staffers and ordinary citizens supporting the concept remained roughly the same in the two surveys.

Analyzing the results, Li Cheng, a senior researcher at the Brookings Institution who supervised the survey, told CNA that he believes the sharp drop in the percentage of business leaders and opinion leaders supporting U.S. military intervention is related to U.S. and Chinese economic interests as well as to recent provocative moves by Taiwan's government.

He also attributed the high level of support for Taiwan among Congressional staffers to the successful efforts of pro-Taiwan lobby groups in Washington, D.C.

Meanwhile, among Chinese citizens surveyed, 53 percent of business leaders and ordinary citizens said they believe the Taiwan issue is currently moving toward a peaceful resolution, while 32 percent of opinion leaders in the country said they feel the Taiwan issue reaches a deadlock.

Asked how China should work to solve the Taiwan issue, a majority of Chinese, including 66 percent of opinion leaders, 57 percent of business leaders and 52 percent of ordinary citizens, said expanding exchanges with Taiwan is the most appropriate way to reach the aim of eventual unity.

The survey in the United States, which was conducted via telephone interviews with 1,200 American adults nationwide, has a margin of error of plus or minus 2.9 percentage points, while the survey in China, which was carried out through face-to-face interviews with 4,104 Chinese adults around the country, has a margin of error of plus or minus 1.6 percentage points. (By Michelle Tsai & Steve Bercic)