

Prospects & Perspectives



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Picture source: The Select Committee on the CCP, February 23, 2023, *The Select Committee on the CCP*, <https://selectcommitteeontheccp.house.gov/media/press-releases/chairman-gallagher-s-statement-his-recent-trip-taiwan>.

Gallagher's Committee on China: What Can We Expect?

By Gerrit van der Wees

New committee with a long name

On January 10, 2023, the U.S. House of Representative established a new



committee, which received the lengthy name “House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the U.S. and the Chinese Communist Party,” or “Select Committee on CCP” for short.

The new committee represents an intense new focus by the United States on the strategic competition with China, and is headed by Congressman Mike Gallagher (R-WI), an outspoken supporter of Taiwan’s defense and security.

The Committee has a total of 24 members, 13 Republicans and 11 Democrats. The ranking Democrat is Representative Raja Krishnamoorti (D-IL), one of the members of Congress who accompanied Speaker Nancy Pelosi during her eventful visit to Taiwan in August 2022.

While broader themes such as semi-conductor supply chain security, economic dependency on China and intellectual property theft will be a main part of the discussions in the committee, strengthening U.S.-Taiwan relations and defense and security of Taiwan will be an important focus.

Gallagher himself has a keen interest in Taiwan: more than a year ago, he published an article in *Foreign Affairs*, titled “Taiwan can’t wait” (*Foreign Affairs*, February 2022) in which he outlined in detail what the United States must do to prevent a successful Chinese invasion.

U.S. backlog of arms deliveries

And one of the first steps Gallagher took after being named chairperson of the Committee was to plan a working visit to Taiwan to get a direct personal assessment of the situation. In mid-February 2023 he travelled to the country, meeting with top government officials including President Tsai Ing-wen and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu.

Gallagher came back with praise for the steps taken by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government to strengthen Taiwan’s defense, such as increasing defense spending to 2.5% of GDP and bringing the military conscription up to one year. But he criticized the U.S. backlog in deliveries of military equipment to Taiwan, to the tune of some US\$19 billion, in particular the delays in deliveries of Harpoon anti-ship missiles and F-16 fighter jets. In some cases these were orders placed years ago. Gallagher urged the Pentagon



to speed up and streamline the procurement process.

Gallagher also said that “Almost every Taiwanese official I met with mentioned the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a wake-up call.” He indicated that the war in Ukraine has impressed on Taiwan’s leaders the need to acquire and stockpile more weapons — “... a lesson that has become increasingly urgent in recent months as China’s provocations accelerate.”

Almost at the same time as Gallagher’s visit, two of the Democratic members of the Committee also visited Taiwan as part of a four-member bipartisan delegation: Representative Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Jake Auchincloss (D-MA) made a brief visit to Taiwan, accompanied by Jonathan Jackson (D-IL) and Republican Tony Gonzales (R-TX). Jackson is the son of the well-known civil rights activist Jesse Jackson, while Gonzales is a key representative of the Latino community.

Congressman Khanna also highlighted the backlog issue, and urged for a continuation of the type of congressional visits. “The more that our colleagues visit, see Taiwan, the more they will understand the issues,” he said, pushing back against the PRC narrative that such visits are “provocative.” “To say it is provocative is to accept the CCP narrative, and I just don’t think it’s true,” he said.

Important first hearing

The Committee got off to a flying start with its first hearing on February 28, 2023. The meeting covered a broad range of topics, from the disappearance of American jobs during the past 20 years, to cyber security, China’s man-made islands in the South China Sea, repression of the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang, to the defense of Taiwan.

Expert testimony was provided by former national security adviser H.R. McMaster and former deputy national security adviser Matthew Pottinger. The panel also heard from Tong Yi, a Chinese human rights advocate who was an assistant to one of China’s best-known political dissidents, and Scott Paul, the president of the Alliance for American Manufacturing.

Chairman Gallagher summed up the situation by stating that “...this is not



a polite tennis match. This is an existential struggle over what life will look like in the 21st century -- and the most fundamental freedoms are at stake.”

Ranking member Raja Krishnamoorthi (D-IL) said in his opening statement: “Over the last three decades, both Democrats and Republicans underestimated the CCP, and assumed that trade and investment would inevitably lead to democracy and greater security in the Indo-Pacific... Instead the opposite happened.”

Both Gallagher and Krishnamoorthi made it clear that the committee is targeting the Chinese communist government — not the people of China who have been victimized by the regime’s oppressive tactics. “We must practice bipartisanship and avoid anti-Chinese or Asian stereotyping at all costs. We must recognize the CCP wants us to be fractious, partisan and prejudiced. In fact, the CCP hopes for it,” Krishnamoorthi said.

What to expect regarding Taiwan

Given chairman Gallagher’s keen interest in defense and security of Taiwan, we can expect a strong focus on measures the US can take to help defend Taiwan – primarily through expediting weapon sales, and a focus on the right type of weaponry Taiwan needs, both to counter an outright invasion as well as many of the grey-zone activities China is employing to threaten and intimidate Taiwan.

Gallagher is also expected to focus on enhancing the U.S.’ own capabilities to deter Chinese aggression, both in military terms, as well as in the economic, financial and diplomatic field. In this regard, Article 1.(b).6 of the Taiwan Relations Act will become more prominent: it states that “It is the policy of the United States ... to maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan.”

This will include measures like greater coordination between the U.S. National Guard and Taiwan’s military, help in expanding Taiwan’s Reserves to a level where it is a viable fighting force, deployment strategies for the U.S. Marine Corps in the Pacific, and other defense and security-related measures.



The lessons learned from the Russian invasion into Ukraine will also play an important role. “How do we prevent Taiwan's future from becoming Ukraine's present? I think it’s going to be a theme of what we do on this committee,” Gallagher said in an interview in February.

Gallagher himself served in the US Marine Corps for seven years. Also important is the fact that several of the Democratic members have a military background: Seth Moulton (D-MA) was in the Marine Corps from 2001-2008 and served four tours in Iraq. Andy Kim (D-NJ) served in Afghanistan as a civilian adviser to General Petraeus. Mikie Sherrill (D-NJ) served in the U.S. Navy for nine years, was helicopter pilot and a Russia specialist, while Jake Auchincloss (D-MA) served as a U.S. Marine in Afghanistan.

The Select Committee itself will not deal with legislation: that is the prerogative of the House Foreign Relations Committee and the House Armed Services Committee. But Gallagher’s committee will provide a laser-sharp focus on issues that are relevant to Taiwan’s security, and therefore mean that from the side of the US Congress there will be ample support for Taiwan in the years to come.

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