

April 14th 2023

SVG – ROC (TAIWAN) RELATIONS

ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS

On August 15, 1981, St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) established formal diplomatic relations with the Republic of China – ROC - (Taiwan). This initiative was led and consummated, by the SVG Labour Party government, headed by the Right Honourable Robert Milton Cato, Prime Minister.

Since then, successive administrations of the two major political parties in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have maintained and strengthened these relations. Over the past 22 years, thus far, of the Unity Labour Party (ULP) administration, the SVG-Taiwan relations have been deepened, broadened, and strengthened immeasurably, in the mutual interest of both countries, and in pursuance of global peace, prosperity, and security for all. Overwhelmingly, the consensus in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is for the continuance and fortifying of these relations.

NDP’S POST-2016 SHIFT

In 2016 the leadership of the opposition New Democratic Party (NDP) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines announced a major shift in its policy stance. It declared that if it were to be elected to government again, it would ditch Taiwan and establish formal diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Since then, that NDP stance has been reiterated frequently. Indeed, it has repeatedly referenced Taiwan as a “province” of “mainland China”. The NDP has publicly embraced the “One China Policy” as proclaimed by the PRC.

NDP’S CONFUSION

Last week, on Tuesday April 4, 2023, in a parliamentary debate in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a member of the Opposition NDP, the Honourable Fitz Bramble, parliamentary representative for East Kingstown, in a casual and off-hand manner, opined that the NDP has always supported relations with Taiwan — a complete falsehood — and that it does not intend to sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan — an apparent shift of the NDP’s position. Mr. Bramble also falsely claimed that it was the NDP government which established diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

FURTHER NDP CONFUSION

At no time during the parliamentary debate did the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. The Honourable Godwin Friday, intervene to proffer any position contrary to that expressed by Mr. Bramble. Subsequently, in The Searchlight newspaper of Thursday April 6, 2023, Dr. Friday was reported as saying that there is no change in the NDP's "One China Policy" and that if there was any such change the announcement would come from him as President of the NDP. In Dr. Friday's comments however, he referred to Taiwan as "a country" and not as "a province".

So, the NDP formal stance on China-Taiwan remains the same "One China — PRC") but there is nevertheless division and confusion internally in its leadership ranks on this vital matter of foreign policy. The dissonance within the Parliamentary Opposition is driven not by principle or policy but by political opportunism. On the one hand, the NDP itself benefits from the largesse of entities resident in, or associated with, the PRC; on the other hand, the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines do NOT want any alteration in diplomatic relations with Taiwan. Thus, the NDP's confusion amidst its failure to resolve the contradiction between money in their Party's coffers from sources in mainland China and the public support for ROC (Taiwan) in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

ULP STANCE

Meanwhile, the ULP government under the Prime Minister, Dr. The Honourable Ralph E. Gonsalves, has yet again reiterated its continued support for maintaining and strengthening SVG-ROC (Taiwan) relations.

ULP'S PRAXIS

The ULP government's principled position as outlined in Parliament and elsewhere contains the following central elements:

1. Our government asserts that there is "One Chinese Civilisation" from which have developed or evolved at least two legitimate, authoritative, political expressions organised as states with demarcated territorial boundaries. Two such formal state expressions of the Chinese civilisation are the PRC and ROC (Taiwan).
 2. The Chinese civilisation has been politically fractured since 1949, a short period in that civilisation's 6,000-year history. The healing of that fracture or any rapprochement between the two distinctly organised state
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expressions is a matter principally for the Chinese civilisation, the PRC, and the ROC (Taiwan).

3. SVG's central interest in PRC-ROC (Taiwan) relations focusses on peace across the Taiwan Straits.
 4. SVG's relations with ROC (Taiwan) are grounded in the principles and precepts of the Charter of the United Nations, inclusive of the right to self-determination.
 5. SVG's foreign policy in relation to ROC (Taiwan) is not transactional. We do not have a "For Sale" sign in a metaphoric show window at our Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
 6. St. Vincent and the Grenadines does not, and cannot, accept that the PRC has a sovereign right to put a pre-condition on any possible diplomatic relations with the PRC. St. Vincent and the Grenadines does not have diplomatic relations with the PRC because the latter insists that a pre-condition of such relations is for SVG to sever diplomatic ties with ROC (Taiwan); this ULP government in SVG will not do.
 7. SVG engages with the PRC in practical ways in institutions to which both countries belong. This engagement takes place, for example, in the Caribbean Development Bank (SVG is a Borrowing Member"; the PRC is a "Non-Borrowing Member"); the United Nations and its various agencies; the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund; and so forth.
 8. SVG under the ULP government does not interfere with, or comment on, in anyway, the internal affairs of the PRC.
 9. The ULP government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines notes the following: (i) The PRC and Taiwan (as a territory) belong to the World Trade Organisation — political and other dissonances may exist but the PRC and Taiwan trade with each other; (ii) Mainland China receives in excess of 40 percent of Taiwan's foreign direct investment; (iii) State and non-state institutions in both the PRC and Taiwan cooperate on matters of mutual interest.
 10. To the extent that there are contradictions between St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the PRC on diplomatic relations and other engagements, these contradictions are non-antagonistic. (Mao Tse Tung's philosophical
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essay “On Contradictions” and his distinction between antagonistic and non-antagonistic contradictions are useful for our reflections here.)

11. SVG admires deeply the Chinese civilisation and its differing formal, institutional expressions. It holds in especial high regard the resilience, creativity, material and scientific advances, and commitment to democratic values of the government and people of ROC (Taiwan).
 12. SVG considers it an absurdity for the PRC to affirm that Taiwan is “a province” to be re-incorporated into “One China” under the PRC when Taiwan and its people have been governing themselves for 74 years, thus far, in peace and prosperity. Further, the people of Taiwan do not wish to be governed or ruled by the PRC.
 13. Neither the political economy of imperialism or of hegemony justifies the subjugation of an independent, free, and democratic Taiwan against its people’s wishes or interests.
 14. Overall, our government in St. Vincent and the Grenadines has as its operational mantra: “Friends of all; we strive for a better world.”
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