

Unification via coercion harmful to region: survey

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A survey conducted by a US think tank that included a question on the effect of Taiwan being unified with China through coercion has found that almost every US and Japanese expert polled said that their nation's interests would be hurt by such an act.

The results, which were released on Thursday in a report compiled by the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), show that the respondents from the US and Japan — academics and experts in politics and diplomacy — expressed the most concern among all those polled.

Ninety-nine percent and 98 percent from the US and Japan respectively said that such a scenario would have a negative impact on their country's interests.

In answer to the same question, 89 percent of the experts surveyed in Taiwan had the same view, followed by 85 percent in Australia and 80 percent in South Korea.

Even a plurality of respondents in China felt that the impact would be negative for China rather than positive, by a margin of 43 percent to 40 percent, the survey indicates.

At a conference held to present the report, titled *Power and order in Asia: A Survey of Regional Expectations*, Bonnie Glaser, a senior CSIS adviser for Asia in the Freeman Chair in China Studies, said the figures reflect, at least among the strategic elite in China, that China needs peaceful strategies to win over hearts and minds in Taiwan because coercion would only have a negative impact on the country's own interests.

Glaser said that in the past, some countries in Asia might have seen China's use of coercion against Taiwan as a special case, which would not necessarily mean that Beijing would use the same tactics in Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines and Vietnam.

Now, she said, the situation has changed, and there is greater concern in the region that if the mainland does use coercive measures against Taiwan, it would be "a signal and evidence" that

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China could do the same to its other neighbors.

Meanwhile, Victor Cha, a former director for Asian affairs in the White House's National Security Council, said that if there is coercive unification and if the US were to intervene militarily, and if such a move failed, then it could lead to an issue concerning US credibility in the region.

The survey also shows that an average of 53 percent of the respondents believe China will exert the greatest power in East Asia in 10 years, followed by 43 percent who think the US will be the dominant force.

However, despite the expectations of China's rise, most experts continue to see ongoing US leadership in the region, even in the face of a relative decline in US power, the report said.

In addition, an average of 79 percent of the respondents expressed support for the strategic rebalance to Asia of US President Barack Obama's administration, with China the only country in which a majority of the respondents disapproved of the rebalance, by a margin of 77 percent to 23 percent, according to the poll.

The survey was conducted among 402 strategic elites in 11 Asia-Pacific economies between March 24 and April 22, with the support of the MacArthur Foundation and media outlets in the region, including the China Times Japan's Asahi Shimbun and South Korea's JoongAng Ilbo.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2014/06/09](#)