



Spring Conference 2025

Liberals conversations on China

Harrogate Convention Centre, Queen's Suite: Meeting Room 4
Saturday, 22 March, 19:45-21:00

Background:

Liberal Democrats joined major parties at Westminster and unanimously passed a motion on UN Resolution 2758. We reject China's distortion of international law regarding Taiwan's international status. The House also confirmed that the UN resolution is silent on Taiwan's participation in UN bodies.



"The Liberal Democrats stand with the people of Taiwan. Any Chinese aggression or threat to their free speech and human rights is unacceptable."

... Fundamentally, what is at stake in Taiwan is a question of moral obligation, one that we have always had to confront and that liberals have always been clear in answering."

- Luke Taylor MP, Hansard 28 November 2024

At Conference, we'll discuss:

Lessons from UN Resolution 2758 - How liberals must protect World Institutions



Gray Sergeant

PhD candidate with a research focus on Anglo-American relations towards China at the LSE | (Indo-Pacific Geopolitics) at the Council on Geostrategy



Neal Robbins

Journalism in Hong Kong, Taiwan, India and London. Neil recently completed an award-winning documentary, "Taiwan Undaunted".



Phil Bennion

Liberal Democrats

Vice President at Liberal International & Former MEP



Discussion facilitated by:

Nicholas Chan

Vice Chair at LD Friends of Hong Kong

◆ Understanding the facts in UN2758

◆ Underlining that the UK's 'One China policy' is not the same as Beijing's "One China" principle.

◆ How do we answer Paddy Ashdown's golden question: ***"What is the purpose of the Liberal Democrats"*** by putting our words into action and support Taiwanese institutions on the world stage?

www.libdemshk.org.uk or social handle @LibDemsHK





Gray Sergeant

Gray gave written evidence to the House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (FAC) on Taiwan, Hong Kong and China.

The FAC report, *Tilting horizons: the Integrated Review and the Indo-Pacific in the 2022-23 parliament*. The report identified trade challenges and opportunities in that region. Written evidence submitted by Gray considered points on managing Cross-Strait tensions, how the UK should make credible commitments and ensures Beijing does not distort the wordings in international treaties and documents like UN Resolution 2758.

Part of the report focused on Taiwan and attracted the usual condemnation from the Chinese Communist Party. First, a chapter on the report conducted a simulation of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait. Also, its assertion that 'Taiwan is effectively an independent country'.

We then take a look at UN resolution 2758 - admitting the PRC as a permanent member of the Security Council in the United Nations in the place of the ROC. There is the factual text as written in UN2758. Yet the PRC has embarked on a sustained pressure campaign on diplomatic and civil societies with a pattern of misinterpretation and ignores the limits to UN's powers to make international law. If Beijing wins acceptance of its distorted position, it shall use this as a more credible claim to use force to achieve its grand plan to bring Taiwan into PRC's fold.



Phil Bennion

Discussion relating to Taiwan has the tenancy of low salience. Britain also brought itself problems from Brexit, marginalised on the world stage and the lack of political capacity from a slow-growth economy.

However, as seen from the FAC report, Britain retains its expertise on Indo-Pacific affairs. Also, if we are to grow our economy, surely, it will involve leveraging the challenges and opportunities in the area.

The UK's strategy should be one of soft power. We should push on the government to facilitate the building of resilient networks from supply chains to diplomatic power with free and open states. International Development funds returning to 0.7% of Britain's GDP is a key component. Only then will less states be pressured by Beijing's incentives such as the Belt & Road, which will drag societies further into authoritarianism.

Taiwan has become a model liberal democracy. The Liberal Democrats GE2024 manifesto commits to 'Building new diplomatic, economic and security partnerships with democratic countries threatened by China, including Taiwan', not least, our commitments on F31 Hong Kong's Future the motion submitted by LibDemsHK.

Neil Robbins

Neal E Robbins has recently completed an award-winning documentary, "Taiwan Undaunted". In the 1990s he was a professor of journalism at the NTU Graduate Institute of Journalism, and he has been a foreign correspondent in Hong Kong, Taiwan, India and London. He also has a degree from the SOAS Taiwan Studies department.



The documentary explores Taiwan's identity. It's multifaceted cultures projects beyond what may commonly perceived the presence of a *dominant religion* or a *dominant language*. Through interviews with Taiwanese from all walks of life, the documentary examines the values and beliefs, common geopolitical and environmental that shape the Taiwan Identity.

The documentary ends with a subtle view that Taiwan's fate is connected to US-China tensions. How do Taiwanese address their belief to build their society?

How can Liberals enhance the resilience among liberal democracy?

When liberals speak of such support, what are the connections to conflict resolution?

