

Policy change needed: US expert

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A leading national security expert is calling for a major change in US policy toward Taiwan.

“It is time for US clarity on Taiwan — strategic ambiguity has run its course,” said Joseph Bosco, a former China desk specialist at the Pentagon.

In a Taiwan analysis printed by the Los Angeles Times, he added: “Neither Beijing nor Washington wants war, but as long as China believes the US will ultimately abandon democratic Taiwan to avoid it, the danger of conflict increases.”

Now working as a national security consultant, Bosco, who specialized in China-Taiwan-US relations at Georgetown’s School of Foreign Service, argued that current policies are “a formula for catastrophic mutual miscalculation.”

“Washington should declare that we would defend democratic Taiwan against any Chinese attack or coercion and that we also welcome Taiwan’s participation in international organizations,” he said.

And Bosco urged US President Barack Obama to invite President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) to Honolulu for the APEC summit in November next year.

“In return,” he said, “Taiwan must forgo formal independence for now, even though that result is ultimately consistent with American values.”

Bosco said that in exchange for China renouncing the use of force against Taiwan, Washington should pledge not to recognize formal Taiwan statehood and discourage others from doing so, while also insisting that if China does use force it will lead to instant -recognition of an independent Taiwan.

The analysis was written in response to the recently released Pentagon assessment of China’s continuing military buildup and its potential to enforce territorial claims on Taiwan and in the South China Sea.

According to Bosco, the anti-Western hostility and paranoia of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong’s (毛澤東) years have resurfaced in Beijing, but now, he says, the sense of grievance and resentment is “backed by the massive economic and military power the West helped China build.”

The Obama administration, Bosco said, worries that Beijing is defining its claims in the South China Sea as “core interests” on a par with Taiwan and Tibet, and if unchallenged could lead to “dangerous Chinese adventurism.”

“Yet on the Taiwan flashpoint, Obama’s team has unwisely perpetuated the policy of strategic

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ambiguity followed by every administration since [former US president] Richard Nixon's," Bosco added.

“Under that policy, Washington periodically sells Taipei weapons for minimal self-defense against an overwhelming Chinese attack. But Washington does not commit the United States to intervene, or not intervene. We rely on American unpredictability to stay Beijing's hand,” he said.

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