

Recognize Taiwan as the country it truly is

Written by Ted Yoho

Tuesday, 11 December 2018 06:44

A high-ranking member of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) visited my office for a friendly discussion about the numerous difficulties in US-China relations. We talked about a number of issues — some of them very difficult — but even in that informal setting, Taiwan was a non-negotiable “core interest” of the party, with no place in the discussion.

The US should no longer accept these terms when talking to China. If we accept the false narrative that Taiwan is somehow “off-limits,” we are implicitly accepting the party’s lie that Taiwan’s status is a domestic matter, and we are contributing to Taiwan’s marginalization.

It is time that the US, China and the rest of the world treat Taiwan as Taiwan deserves to be treated.

Taiwan exists today as a sovereign state, a status it has earned through the mandate of its people, its democratic institutions and its stewardship of personal freedoms and human rights.

Taiwan is a state and treating this fact as if it is off-limits in international affairs is simply a refusal to acknowledge reality.

The facts are self-evident: China’s authoritarian government, dominated by the CCP, has never ruled Taiwan.

Today, Taiwan is a flourishing democracy with its own economy, education system, military, sovereign borders, political parties, national anthem and flag.

Taiwan is one of the US’ largest trading partners, a leader in high-tech manufacturing and a model contributor to the international community, with an especially distinguished record in public health crises.

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With overwhelming bipartisan consensus, the US Congress passed the veto-proof Taiwan Relations Act to defend Taiwan from invasion and to protect its de facto sovereignty — creating a 40-year alliance relationship in all but name.

The CCP tries to obscure this reality, because Taiwan's existence is a threat to the party's hold on power. The party stokes grievances against former colonial powers to shore up its legitimacy.

Admitting the independent success of a place once ruled by Imperial Japan would undercut the party's false version of modern Chinese history, in which the party saved China from colonial abuse.

Taiwan is living proof that freedom and prosperity are not mutually exclusive — putting the lie to the false choice that the party imposes on the 1.3 billion people of China.

The CCP is afraid of free-thinking people with the freedom of expression, freedom of thought, freedom to choose their leaders and freedom to succeed.

Because of this fear, China has bullied the world into believing that Taiwan is not a country but some other undefined thing.

However, the truth is right in front of our eyes and it is time the world began treating Taiwan as it deserves.

I told the visiting CCP official that, as an American citizen, I view Taiwan as an independent country and believe that most US citizens and members of our government feel the same way.

The US Congress will stand firm with Taiwan. We will honor our defensive military supply commitment and will work toward achieving full diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

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Next year marks the 40th anniversary of the Taiwan Relations Act. In the ensuing decades, Taiwan has risen from a backwater controlled by an authoritarian, exiled military regime to become a model democracy.

After 40 years, it is time we updated our policy — making it consistent with present-day reality would be a good place to start.

Taiwan is a nation, and it is time to embrace and recognize this fact.

Ted Yoho is the US Representative for Florida's Third Congressional District. He serves on the House Agriculture Committee as well as the House Foreign Affairs Committee, where he is also chairman of the Asia and Pacific Subcommittee.

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