

## US faces turning point over Taiwan

Written by Ted Yoho

Saturday, 12 September 2020 05:52

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Over the past year, the world has observed what many of us in the US Congress have warned about for years: The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is an unreliable partner intent on chasing its ambitions to be the world's superpower at the expense of its people, its partners and the international community at large.

In December last year, the CCP had evidence that a new strain of the coronavirus was infecting and killing Chinese citizens at an alarming rate. Their response was to censor medical professionals and lie to their own people out of fear of tarnishing China's global image, and then to allow millions to travel outside Hubei Province to the rest of China and throughout the world.

The resulting COVID-19 pandemic has decimated the economies of nations worldwide, infected millions and so far killed more than half-a-million people.

In the late spring, the CCP announced its intentions to impose national security legislation on Hong Kong, a then-autonomous territory of China that was guaranteed control over its domestic security and judicial matters until 2047.

Despite an international backlash and a tanking domestic economy, the CCP pushed forward in consolidating control over Hong Kong, brutally suppressing peaceful protests through violent police crackdowns and contravening binding international agreements.

Evidence has surfaced that the CCP subjected Uighur and East Turkic minorities in the Xinjiang region to forced sterilizations and population control, in addition to imprisonment in mass concentration camps, where inmates were subject to brainwashing, rape and torture. This is an ongoing genocidal campaign implemented on a national scale and yet the CCP regime acts with impunity.

Clearly, the People's Republic of China (PRC) values its nationalistic objectives and consolidation of power more than its global image or its international partnerships. How then should the state of play between the PRC and Taiwan be viewed?

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Over the past six months, the PRC has used the destruction wrought by COVID-19 as a cover to stage increasingly provocative military maneuvers and live-fire drills in and around the Taiwan Strait. This has been accompanied by a rapid buildup of People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces along the Chinese side of the Taiwan Strait, situated in a way that seems strategically positioned to take by force some of Taiwan's outlying islands.

The US has an obligation to ensure that the future of Taiwan — a vibrant, Mandarin-speaking democracy that has made immeasurable contributions to global health and the international community — is decided by peaceful means, not by intimidation or military force. For these reasons, I introduced the Taiwan Invasion Prevention Act, which would strengthen the defense commitment of the US to Taiwan and bolster overall US-Taiwan ties.

Since the late 1970s, the US' approach to Taiwan's defense has been defined by a policy of strategic ambiguity, whereby Washington has maintained the stance that the future of the relationship between Taiwan and China should be determined by peaceful means, but not by committing US forces to defend Taiwan in the event of an armed attack.

This legislation ends that ambiguity by giving the US president limited authorization to use military force in the event of an armed attack on Taiwan, by demanding that the PRC renounce the use or threat of force in attempting to unify with Taiwan, and by strengthening the US' defense coordination with Taiwan's armed forces.

These actions are consistent with US obligations as established under the Taiwan Relations Act of 1979 and do not contravene any red lines of conferring official diplomatic recognition on Taiwan.

In this balancing act of deterrence between the US and China over Taiwan, the US cannot afford to remain content with half measures and ineffective rhetoric. Deterrence through an aggressive and forward-projecting military posture might be the only effective measure that the US and its allies have left in containing the territorial ambitions of the communist regime led by Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平).

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If the US loses the battle of deterrence over Taiwan, then it has lost the war. Therefore, the US' response must be immediate, strong and overwhelming.

The ideals of the US require it to defend a strong democracy like Taiwan against outside communist antagonism. If the CCP's campaign of aggression is to be stopped, then it must be stopped here.

The time has come for the US to pick a side. I urge Congress and the administration to recognize the crossroads we are at and to choose wisely.

*Ted Yoho is the US representative for Florida's Third Congressional District and is the ranking Republican member of the US House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific and Nonproliferation.*

Source: [Taipei Times - 2020/09/12](#)