

US needs to normalize ties with Taiwan: ex-US official

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The US should normalize relations with Taiwan “as much as possible,” a former senior congressional official said.

Gary Schmitt, a former staff director of the US Senate Select Committee on Intelligence who is now an academic at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI), said Washington should overturn the self-imposed strictures on relations that are required neither by domestic nor international law.

“Bringing democratic Taiwan in from the cold is as important as Washington’s opening to Cuba — arguably far more so,” he wrote in a commentary published by the *Wall Street Journal*.

Taiwan has been denied recognition as a sovereign state by the US “based on the diplomatic hocus pocus that there is only one China,” he said, adding that upholding the “one China” policy is a “charade.”

Schmitt said that Taiwan’s presidential election is to be a test of whether Beijing is truly a rising power of the modern, benign sort — as it claims — or more akin to the rising, not-so-benign powers of the 19th century.

“Allowing China to bully democratic Taiwan into global isolation, or giving the leadership in Beijing the sense that it has leverage over US policies toward the island, would create more instability, not less,” he said.

Schmitt said that the US can reverse this dynamic by inviting Taiwan’s military to participate in joint and multilateral exercises, by expanding the transfer of weapons and by allowing more frequent and substantive visits by Cabinet members.

He also called for a more substantial role for Taiwan in international bodies and endorsing Taiwan’s bid to become a signatory to the Trans-Pacific Partnership once the trade pact is up and running.

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The commentary followed an article published by the AEI last week calling on the US to rethink its approach to Taiwan.

“Imposing artificial restrictions on interactions with Taiwan, as much as they might please Beijing, do not contribute to stability in the Taiwan Strait,” the article by AEI defense policy analyst Michael Mazza said.

“Preparing for the worst — by talking to, training with and operating alongside Taiwan’s military — is the best way to ensure that the worst does not come about,” Mazza said.

US-Taiwan Business Council president Rupert Hammond-Chambers also had a piece published in the *Wall Street Journal* this week, in which he said the ouster of Deputy Legislative Speaker Hung Hsiu-chu from the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) presidential ticket had “broad significance for the future of cross-strait relations.”

The KMT has repudiated Hung’s pro-China policy, he said.

“This signals to Beijing where the political boundaries for closer ties lie, suggesting limits to China’s economic and cultural engagement policies as a path to unification,” Hammond-Chambers said.

“This intraparty putsch is thus likely to fuel concerns that China will take a hard line with a Democratic Progressive Party government, raising cross-strait tensions and also straining ties with the US ... Taiwan’s principal partner,” he said. “Seven years of cross-strait quiet are coming to an end fast.”

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