

THE ONGOING INJUSTICE OF TAIWAN'S EXCLUSION FROM THE UNITED NATIONS

By Don Feder

As it has 13 times before, on Tuesday, September 12, Taiwan will again try to join the United Nations. Its friends will propose that a committee be established to study the question of representation for Taiwan.

The People's Republic of China – and those nations it's bribed or bullied into line – will insist that Taiwan is part of China and deserves no more standing at the UN than Maine or Massachusetts. International politics being what it is, Beijing will likely prevail.

Why does the Republic of China on Taiwan persist in this seemingly futile exercise, year after year?

It does so to highlight the ongoing injustice of the exclusion of its 23 million people from the international organization, as well as to emphasize the threat this poses to world peace.

Every other state with a significant population, and many in the league of Lilliputians, is now represented at the UN. Only Taiwan -- which is more populous than 60% of UN member states – is not.

How can the UN ignore a nation with the world's 17th. largest economy, 16th greatest volume of trade and 3rd. largest foreign-exchange reserves?

But Taiwan is more than an economic dynamo. In the course of less than 20 years, the island has evolved from repressive military rule into one of the most democratic nations in the region.

What America is fighting for in Iraq already exists in Taiwan – popular sovereignty, freedom of speech, a free press and the regular transfer of power through fair and open elections.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations in 1948, calls for nations to guarantee the right to property, freedom of “thought, conscience and religion” and the right to a fair trial. While the 1.1 billion people of mainland China are denied these basic human rights, all are scrupulously respected on Taiwan.

Taiwan has diplomatic ties with only 24 nations, but it has a diplomatic presence (quasi embassies) in over 100 countries. There’s hardly a spot on earth not penetrated by goods manufactured on Taiwan.

China’s preposterous claim to exercise sovereignty over the people of Taiwan has no basis in reality.

Since its founding in 1949, the People’s Republic has never controlled Taiwan – not for a single day. For almost 60 years, Taiwan has had a political existence entirely separate and apart from the Mainland. As the Montevideo Convention acknowledges, “The political existence of the state is independent of recognition by other states.”

Taiwan’s ongoing exclusion from a body supposedly dedicated to the peaceful resolution of international conflicts is more than a grave injustice – it’s also a threat to world peace and regional stability.

China’s obsession with Taiwan is a problem the international community can’t simply ignore. Any day, it could be upgraded from simmering dispute to full-blown crisis.

Beijing currently has over 800 short-range ballistic missiles targeting Taiwan – an arsenal that grows at a rate of almost 100 a year.

A 2006 DOD assessment reports: “The threat against Taiwan (*by the People’s Republic*) is further reinforced by the deployment of the most advanced systems and military capabilities in the region directly opposite Taiwan.”

Threatened by Taiwan’s democratic experiment (the first direct election of a president), in 1995-96, China test-fired missiles toward Taiwan to intimidate its people.

Last year, China’s National People’s Congress passed its notorious Anti-Secession Law – which provides a rationale for aggression (possibly even invasion) whenever the Taiwanese take unspecified steps toward “independence.”

Taiwan’s exclusion from the United Nations encourages China’s delusions – by seeming to validate the dogma that the resolution of the conflict is an “internal matter,” and that aggression against Taiwan would be no more than China asserting its sovereign rights.

Besides defending the rights of its citizens, Taiwan is doing the free world a favor by gently, but persistently, tapping at the door of the General Assembly.

The worst thing that could possibly happen for Taiwan’s 23 million people, as well as for those of us who adhere to the rule of law and hope for a world in which reason rather than force prevails, would be for Taiwan to wait quietly and unobtrusively to be absorbed by its totalitarian neighbor.

By keeping the question of its national existence before the world forum, Taiwan is calling on the United Nations to return to its founding principles.