

TAIWAN -- LOST IN DIPLOMATIC BERMUDA TRIANGLE

By Don Feder

Taiwan is in danger of being lost in a diplomatic Bermuda triangle formed by the United Nations, Beijing and Washington.

In about a week, Taiwan's annual application for membership in the world body will be submitted – and summarily rejected – as it has every year since 1993.

This time, a new element has been added. Taiwan's President Chen Shui-bian has announced that next Spring the Taiwanese will vote by referendum on whether their nation should apply for UN membership as "Taiwan," rather than the Republic of China (its official name), as it has in the past.

This has the Chinese communists apoplectic. (What doesn't?) Sadly, Washington is going along with the absurdity that an advisory question submitted to the voters of a democratic state somehow constitutes a change in that nation's status which could destabilize the region.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) was a founding member of the United Nations. When the People's Republic of China – which bears no relationship to either a republican form of government or the people – was admitted in 1971 and presented with the ROC's seat on the Security Council, Taiwan voluntarily withdrew. (At the time, it was ruled by the Chiang Kai-shek regime.)

Since making the transition to democracy, Taiwan has been trying to rejoin the world body -- which includes every postage-stamp nation on earth (countries you would need a microscope to

locate on a map). For Taiwan to be excluded from the United Nations defies logic.

- Taiwan meets all four criteria of statehood set forth in the 1933 Montevideo Convention (of which the U.S is a signatory) – “(a) permanent population; (b) a defined territory; (c) a government; and (d) capacity to enter into relations with other states.”
- The ROC’s population of 23 million makes it larger than 60% of UN member-states.
- Taiwan has a land mass of 36,000 sq. km, approximately the size of the Netherlands.
- Due to bribes and bullying by China, only 24 countries have diplomatic ties with Taiwan. However, the nation is unofficially represented by offices (quasi-embassies, really) in 122 countries. Whatever their official position, most of them treat Taiwan as a sovereign state. America – which goes along with the One China charade – sells sophisticated military hardware to Taiwan. Name another *province* the U.S. supplies arms to.
- Taiwan has been self-governing for the past 57 years. Its ties to the mainland are tenuous at best. It was last ruled from China in the late 19th. century, before sovereignty was transferred to Japan, which relinquished its claim after World War II. Thankfully for its people, it has never been part of the so-called People’s Republic of China.
- Taiwan is a mature democracy. In its annual index of Freedom in the World, Freedom House consistently rates Taiwan one of the two most democratic nations in Asia.

All of the freedoms set forth in the UN's Universal Declaration of Rights are respected in Taiwan, as they are routinely violated in the People's Republic.

- Taiwan is an economic dynamo. It's the 10th. largest trading power, has the 16th. largest economy and is the 3rd. largest holder of foreign-exchange reserves. Taipei currently boasts the world's tallest skyscraper.
- The ROC has over 150 institutions of higher learning. In 1989, when Chinese tanks were pulverizing pro-democracy students in Tiananmen Square, Taiwan was laying the foundation for both its democratic miracle and the educational renaissance that has helped to make it a high-tech leader.
- The Taiwanese willingly assume international obligations. During the 2004 tsunami disaster, the nation was the eighth-highest donor of money and supplies.

If Taiwan was located anywhere else, it would be welcomed into the community of nations with open arms and much fanfare.

The only obstacle to Taiwan's UN membership is its location (across the Taiwan Strait from a megalomaniacal regime) and said regime's delusion (that Taiwan is part of its territory and the Taiwanese are its subjects).

China's communist rulers have mastered the art of winning through intimidation. In the international arena, raw power and a willingness to use massive force are everything. Justice is irrelevant. Hence, most nations – including the United States -- are willing to go along with the pretense that democratic Taiwan is part of One China – a China ruled by a thug-ocracy.

While it is obvious that Taiwan is independent, Beijing has decreed that if Taiwan ever states the obvious, it will attack. This is no idle threat. The PRC has over 1,000 short-range missiles targeting Taiwan, a force augmented every year.

It periodically intrudes on Taiwanese airspace and territorial waters. In 1996, the PRC test-fired missiles which landed less than 50 nautical miles from Taiwan's coast. Three years ago, it conducted war games simulating an amphibious invasion of the island.

In 2005, China passed its infamous Anti-Secession Law – a legal pretext for war if Taiwan ever takes unspecified steps toward “independence.”

Regarding the referendum, Beijing hasn't gone quite so far as to say, “The bombing will commence in three minutes,” but it's getting there.

At the APEC Summit earlier this month, China and the U.S. issued a joint communiqué warning that the plebiscite on whether Taipei should apply for U.N. membership as “Taiwan” was “provocative” and could result in a “possibly dangerous period.”

The referendum – one of the few avenues open to Taiwan to assert itself internationally -- is intended to show that the people of Taiwan are behind their government's attempts to rejoin the United Nations, and that they endorse the strategy of applying for membership under the name “Taiwan.”

The reaction from Beijing is predictable. The response from Washington is lamentable. The Foggy Bottom boys (cocktail-sipping surrender monkeys) are once again acting as shills for Red China.

Although the United States strongly supports Taiwan's democratic development, our diplomats insist, it opposes "any initiative that appears designed to change Taiwan's status unilaterally." In other words, while Washington supports Taiwan's democracy in principle, it opposes it in practice.

Interviewed on Hong Kong television in August, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte said the referendum would constitute a move "toward a declaration of independence of Taiwan." In a letter to the Secretary of State, U.S. Rep. Tom Tancredo complained, "If Mr. Negroponte's goal was to help validate a future Chinese attack on the island, he most certainly succeeded."

Tancredo noted the irony of Negroponte's contention that using the name "Taiwan" moves the nation toward independence, when the State Department itself refers to the ROC as "Taiwan."

The Congressman also observed that the strongest response our State Department could muster to the ominous Anti-Secession Law was weasel words like "unfortunate" and "unhelpful," while Taiwan is accused of moving toward "a unilateral alteration of the status quo" (Negroponte again) and de-stabilizing the entire region for having a non-binding referendum.

With few exceptions, American policy toward Taiwan seems to be based on keeping China happy at all costs.

It's not enough to go along with the fiction that Taiwan is part of China. It's insufficient to oppose Taiwan's membership in international organizations for which statehood is a prerequisite. It's not even enough to feed Beijing's ambitions by claiming that people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait long for "reunification" (as then-Secretary of State Colin Powell did in 2004).

The State Department – and, to a lesser extent, the White House – have taken to parroting the Chinese Communist Party line. Thus, whatever Beijing dislikes is provocative, destabilizing and will lead directly to Armageddon.

When it comes to Taiwan, U.S. foreign policy should be stamped “Made In China.”

Meanwhile, the People’s Republic continues its long march toward the abyss. If there was a Nobel War Prize, China would share it on a rotating basis with Iran and North Korea.

China has the largest population, the biggest army (did I mention that?) and a booming economy driving the type of rapid military expansion not seen since German rearmament in the 1930s.

Since the early 1990s, China’s military spending has grown annually by double digits. In March, the PRC announced this year’s increase would be 17.8%. That’s what it admits to. Because most spending is off-budget, it’s anyone’s guess how much of China’s record trade surpluses fuels its war machine.

According to the Heritage Foundation’s John Tkacik, Jr., the CIA estimates that the People’s Republic actually devotes 4.3% of GDP to its military, almost ten times the official figure.

China is acquiring the hardware to take Taiwan, project its influence far beyond the Taiwan Strait, and defeat America in 10 to 15 years. This arsenal includes advanced diesel-electric submarines, 400 new Russian-designed fighter-planes and a new main battle tank (the Type 98), which analysts believe can outclass weapons on the U.S. M-1A2 Abrams.

The Chinese are also making huge advances in satellite- and cyber-warfare. After the PRC's successful test against one of its own satellites, *The Washington Times*' Bill Gertz reported, "U.S. intelligence officials estimate that by 2010, China's ASAT missiles will be capable of delivering a knockout blow to many U.S. military satellites."

The People's Liberation Army is also training a cadre of hackers. *The London Times* reported that it was the Chinese who hacked in to the Pentagon's computer network in June, forcing the system to be shut down for a week. Gertz comments, "China's buildup also appears directed at deploying forces that can be used beyond a regional conflict over Taiwan, which in the past was thought by U.S. officials to be the main objective of China's military modernization."

Our response to the foregoing can best be described by a term popularized in the 1930's – appeasement. Much of our diplomatic effort in the region is devoted to browbeating the Taiwanese into sitting down, shutting up and playing dead.

In light of this, Taiwan's emphasis on the United Nations (and other international bodies like the World Health Organization) is understandable.

As long as Taiwan remains an outcast, an international nonentity, China will be tempted to turn rhetoric into reality in its treatment of the "rebel province."

Washington seems determined to abet this process, while periodically (and inconsistently) urging China to behave.

It's all well and good for our president to proclaim: "All who live in tyranny and hopelessness can know: the United States will

not ignore your oppression, or excuse your oppressors. When you stand for liberty, we will stand for you.”

Our policy toward Taiwan shows that brave declaration to be empty words.

The Taiwanese are oppressed and isolated by the totalitarian bully next-door. Far from standing for them, we undercut their attempts to assert themselves – a matter of national survival – by excusing their oppressors.