

VIEWS

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US should stop interfering in Taiwan question

During a recent House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing on the US' policy toward Taiwan, a senior US State Department official in charge of Sino-US relations trumpeted the role of the "Taiwan Relations Act" while detailing the "achievements" of the relationship between the US and Taiwan island during the Joe Biden administration, including the "official exchanges" between the US administration and Taiwan authorities, US arms sale to Taiwan, Washington-Taipei "military ties", and the US' efforts to help Taiwan expand its so-called international space.

According to the US Congress's Rules of Procedure, government officials must "speak the truth" at Congress hearings, or face "contempt of Congress" charges. Assuming, therefore, that the State Department official spoke the truth, it is worth analyzing what he said, especially because his statements highlight the US' wrongdoings which have seriously violated not only the one-China principle and the three Sino-US joint communiqués, but also international law and basic norms of international relations. And all the US' actions have been aimed at undermining China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The US official's testimony can also be seen as a "confession" of US interference in the Taiwan question, which is purely an internal affair of China. The official claimed that the relationship between the United States and Taiwan "is stronger than ever" because the "Taiwan Relations Act" has "given us (the) tools that we need to pursue our overall objective of maintaining peace and stability".

The fact is, the so-called Taiwan Relations Act was hastily concocted by pro-Taiwan and anti-Beijing US lawmakers soon after the establishment of Sino-US diplomatic relations in 1979 — the act was drafted, deliberated and passed in a record 41 days. And right from the very beginning, Beijing has been opposing the

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act, saying it is illegal and invalid.

In particular, the act is aimed at hollowing out the one-China principle that the US government had just days ago promised to abide by in the Shanghai Communiqué and the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between China and the US.

On April 19, 1979, when late leader Deng Xiaoping met with the first US congressional delegation to Beijing after the establishment of Sino-US diplomatic ties, he emphasized that Beijing was not happy with the US Congress for passing the "Taiwan Relations Act". The fundamental problem with the act is that it does not recognize that there is only one China.

The US, however, implemented the "Taiwan Relations Act" using the excuse of "separation of powers" embedded in its political system, thus over-riding international law and the basic norms of international relations.

The US government made a commitment in the August 17 Communiqué (one of three Sino-US joint communiqués) that it "does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United

States and China", and that it intends to gradually "reduce its sale of arms to Taiwan, leading, over a period of time, to a final resolution".

More than 40 years later, the US has not only failed to honor its promise to stop selling arms to Taiwan, and that too in larger volumes and higher value (cumulatively worth \$70 billion). Worse, the US has been selling not only defensive weapons and equipment to the Chinese island but also advanced and sophisticated weapons including F-16 fighter jets, Abrams main battle tanks, land-based Harpoon launchers and MQ-9 reapers.

The State Department official also admitted that the Biden administration has notified Congress of more than \$6.2 billion worth of arms sales to Taiwan. Breaking its own promises, saying one thing while doing the exact opposite, and instead of feeling ashamed, projecting it as a big achievement is not how a superpower should behave. The US official's testimony makes it clear that the US is out to challenge the postwar world order and expand Taiwan's "international space".

The Cairo Declaration of 1943 and the Potsdam Declaration of 1945 clearly stipulate that the island of Taiwan is part of China that was occupied by Japan. Furthermore, UN General Assembly Resolution 2758 in 1971 resolved once and for all the questions relating to representation of China, Taiwan province included, in the UN.

But the US has turned a blind eye to these cold facts and, instead, has been trying to facilitate Taiwan's "meaningful participation in international organizations and multilateral forums", which is a blatant violation of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758.

The US has also deliberately blurred the boundaries of the "unofficial relations" between the US and Taiwan, thus shaking the political foundation of the Sino-US relationship. In the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplo-

matic Relations between China and the US, the US recognizes that the government of the PRC is the sole legal government of China, and the people of the US will maintain cultural, commercial and other unofficial relations with Taiwan residents within this context.

In January 2021, the US State Department lifted the restrictions on US-Taiwan interactions, which forbid representatives of the "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office" from entering State Department facilities, and prohibited the raising of Taiwan "flag" at Twin Oaks (property of "Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office") and on US government property.

This year marks the 45th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Beijing and Washington based on three China-US joint communiqués. Although the landmark occasion has not been commemorated by US Congress, Congress has held multiple commemorative events to mark the 45th anniversary of the passing of the "Taiwan Relations Act". This indicates separatist forces on Taiwan island are being encouraged by the US to intensify their anti-mainland and anti-reunification activities.

Forty-five years ago, the key to establishing Sino-US diplomatic ties was the proper handling of the Taiwan question by both sides, and the US government's explicit recognition that "the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legitimate government of China" and that "there is only one China, and that Taiwan is a part of China". Forty-five years later, the importance of the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués remains unchanged, so has the importance of the Taiwan question as the first redline in Sino-US relations that should not be crossed.

The author is an international affairs observer. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Francisco José Leandro

Let peaceful coexistence be guiding force of world order

The debate on the architecture of the international order should be shifted to the responsibilities vested in those states that are ascending to the highest power status: the global powers. Indeed, global powers are defined not only by the nature and reach of their interests, but also by their attitude toward global cooperation based on principles and common responsibilities arising from their deeds.

China is an emerging global power that has been pursuing its goal of building a global community with a shared future with restraint, responsibility and regard for common good.

The then premier Zhou Enlai put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence during a diplomatic engagement with the Indian government in 1953. A year later, in 1954, China issued two joint statements respectively with India and Myanmar, confirming their commitment to these Five Principles in conducting their mutual relations and their respective relations with other countries in Asia and the world.

In 1955, during the Bandung Conference, a set of 10 principles to promote peace and cooperation were adopted, including the original five of 1953. And in 1970, the United Nations General Assembly adopted Resolution 2625, which included the content of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, thus making them widely acceptable to the international community.

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The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and their global evolution have had a huge impact on the development of diplomatic relations between China and a number of countries, namely those new sovereign states that gained independence from colonial rule in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. The five principles are still regarded as a pillar of diplomatic relations between China and the nine Portuguese-speaking countries. Yet new connotations need to be incorporated in the context of contemporary international relations to make the principles more effective.

Six decades later, capitalizing on the global significance of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, countries have been pursuing development, unity, coexistence and win-win cooperation. In this vein, win-win cooperation is preferred to the zero-sum games, and represents a commitment to collective action with collective gains and shared values and principles.

The concept of a global community with a shared future for mankind promoted by President Xi Jinping is becoming a hallmark of China, as it reflects the extended common interests of all societies and sets a vision for all major areas associated with global governance to follow. "To meet our common challenges and create a better future for all, we look to culture and civilization to play their role, which is as important as the role of economy, science and technology".

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These communities embrace and embody the spirit of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence and the extended vision of a community with a shared future for mankind, as shown in their practices, participation in global initiatives, and trade and cultural exchanges. Bearing in mind Macao's role as a platform that can help bring China and the Portuguese-speaking countries closer, it is possible to build a new community with a shared future with all the nine Portuguese-speaking countries.

The creation of such a platform will not only be a practical inspiration for building a closer and stronger relationship between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries, but more importantly will send a message to the rest of the world that it is possible to establish informal "spatial oasis" of principled sovereign relations even when there is no contiguity of land borders, therefore fostering a new type of international relations.

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Chi Fulin

Building RCEP region into a big market

In the two years since the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement came into effect, a new regional cooperation architecture featuring shared dividends and common development has taken preliminary shape. Building the RCEP trade area into a big and high-level regional market will not only help boost regional and global economic growth but also stabilize the global economy which faces increasing uncertainties.

The past two years have seen significant growth in trade and investment among the RCEP member countries, which has helped further integrate the industry and supply chains, thus accelerating overall regional economic integration.

By boosting regional trade, promoting intra-regional investment and further integrating the regional industry and supply chains, the RCEP has unleashed significant trade and investment dividends and bolstered regional economic growth. The RCEP, in fact, has the potential to greatly boost trade and investment growth in the future.

By focusing on helping less-developed economies to participate more conveniently in the regional market so they can enhance their economic competitiveness, the RCEP has been vitalizing the regional market. For example, in 2022, Laos and Myanmar increased their intra-region trade volume by 28.13 percent and 13.68 percent year-on-year respectively, which contributed to 2.7 percent and 3.8 percent of their respective GDP growth.

Besides, the rapid growth of trade and investment between China and ASEAN member states is the biggest highlight of trade and economic exchanges under the framework of the RCEP. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations has been the leading player in the RCEP, with China being the most important promoter of the regional free trade agreement. The trade volume between China and ASEAN in 2023 increased by 4.9 percent compared with that in 2021 — the year before the RCEP came into effect. It can be hoped therefore that the continuous release of RCEP dividends will help further integrate China-ASEAN industry and supply chains and expedite the regional economic integration process.

Objectively speaking, since some member states are yet to implement all the RCEP rules, there is a need to ensure they do so, in order to further enhance the vitality of RCEP's large regional market. There is also a need to improve the imple-



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mentation of rules of origin, so as to unleash more RCEP dividends.

The next five to 10 years will be a period of rapid economic growth for ASEAN and an important period for the structural transformation and upgrading of the Chinese economy. To fully unleash their growth potential, it is necessary that China and ASEAN work together to eliminate non-tariff barriers and ensure their enterprises implement the RCEP rules.

The huge market size of the RCEP region, combined with its institutional arrangements for trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, will contin-

ue to unleash tremendous economic growth momentum. In fact, the International Monetary Fund has predicted that the RCEP region's GDP could grow by \$10.9 trillion from 2023 to 2029, about 1.4 times and 2.6 times the GDP growth of the United States and the European Union during the same period.

Focusing on the future and surpassing traditional free trade agreements, the RCEP could build its trade area into the largest regional market by helping further integrate the member states' industry, supply and value chains, aligning the rules and standards with those of the member states and increasing people-to-people exchanges. This in turn will accelerate regional economic integration and build the world's largest high-level free trade area.

Jointly building a region with the most dynamic growth in the world requires the sincere implementation — as well as upgrading — of RCEP rules. For instance, RCEP rules of origin should be upgraded from "partial accumulation" to "full accumulation", and "national tariff reduction" to "unified tariff reduction".

Since the RCEP agreement emphasizes the need to be "open for accession by any country or any separate customs territory", the accession of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region to the free trade agreement can play a unique role in expanding and benefiting the RCEP regional market. And following the principle of openness, research and communication issues that India had raised should be improved, and renewed efforts made to persuade India to rejoin the RCEP.

Furthermore, China is advancing its high-level opening-up, injecting new impetus into the regional economy and boosting the RCEP's large market. Despite facing challenges including some Western economies' sanctions and their efforts to "decouple" from the Chinese economy, China has continued to integrate in the global industry and supply chains, and make great efforts to maintain free trade. In the next 10 to 15 years, China's transformation will create a huge market space, which will inject new vitality into the regional economy, promoting regional growth and strengthening the RCEP market.

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