

Opening Statement
The Honorable Ami Bera
Chairman, Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation
House Committee on Foreign Affairs

“Taiwan and the United States: Enduring Bonds in the Face of Adversity”
Thursday, December 10, 2020
Conducted virtually at 10:00am, E.S.T.

I'd like to thank the Ranking Member, members of the subcommittee, our witnesses, and members of the public for joining this virtual hearing on the U.S. – Taiwan relationship.

This will be the last hearing before the Asia, Pacific, and Nonproliferation Subcommittee for 2020. I became chairman of this subcommittee about a year ago. Our first hearing was Congress' first on the coronavirus - which was not yet considered a pandemic - and did not even have the name “COVID-19”. So, it's been an eventful year to say the least. I appreciate our Members and their staff for bearing with us as we've navigated, often virtually, over the course of this trying year.

This hearing will also be the last of my friend and Ranking Member, Ted Yoho. Ted and I both arrived in Congress in 2013, and I've enjoyed getting to know him over the last 8 years. I've witnessed him become a leader and champion for U.S. engagement in Asia and for foreign assistance and global health. I have always appreciated your preparation and passion for these issues and willingness to work in a bipartisan manner to get to the bottom of issues, even when we may have to agree to disagree. I also applaud your staff, including Colin Timmerman, Bryan Burack, and Allison Turk.

This hearing is, in some ways, a fitting tribute to the Ranking Member, because of his dedication to Taiwan and its people. Nearly five years ago, under the leadership of Chairman Salmon, this subcommittee held a hearing on Taiwan. Two of the witnesses from that day, Ms. Bonnie Glaser and Professor Shelley Rigger, join us again. We also welcome independent Asia specialist and retired CRS analyst Shirley Kan.

I understand that the basis for our relations with Taiwan can seem a little complicated. What is not complicated, however, is the closeness between the people of the United States and Taiwan, our shared values, and our deep and enduring ties. Nor is the nature of Taiwan complicated: it is a vibrant democracy, economy, and society.

This was confirmed in Taiwan's response to COVID-19. Despite its proximity to mainland China, where the disease originated, Taiwan mobilized quickly and successfully. It incorporated lessons from the 2003 SARS outbreak and quickly suppressed the virus. To date, it has seen only about 700 cases and suffered just 7 deaths. Along with fellow Indo-Pacific democracies like South Korea, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, they have been considered the best at defeating COVID-19. It is clear that Taiwan has much to offer the world.

The United States has sought to partner with Taiwan through various mechanisms to help others. One such mechanism is the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, which Japan joined last year. The framework brings Taiwan's expertise to other countries on issues like health, law enforcement, disaster relief, and energy cooperation. The U.S. and Taiwan launched the Consultations on Democratic Governance in recent years to highlight Taiwan's strong democratic values to the rest of the world. I look forward to hearing from our panel how the United States, Taiwan, and our likeminded partners can deepen this cooperation and elevate Taiwan's expertise for the rest of the world.

Although the United States and Taiwan cooperate with other countries to enhance democratic, economic, and development outcomes, we cannot ignore Taiwan's most relevant relationship: that with the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is longstanding U.S. policy for the resolution of disputes between Taiwan and the PRC to be arrived at peacefully and with the assent of the people of Taiwan, as Taiwan is a democracy. This resolution process should take place between Taiwan and the PRC only; we should not entangle this dispute resolution with other issues we may have with the PRC.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses how the PRC's actions in Asia - particularly in Hong Kong - affect Taiwanese public opinion towards the PRC. I am sure recent military actions by the PRC have not helped tensions. In October, PRC aircraft entered Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone a reported 25 days. They have also conducted live fire exercises in recent months. These actions do not enhance relations between Taiwan and the PRC and actively undermine global opinions of the PRC. I'm an optimist though. I believe that Taiwan future is bright: its strengths lie in its people, its strong society, and its values. For that reason, I'm hopeful that there is a future for Taiwan that continues to be prosperous, peaceful, and secure.

I will conclude by returning to how I began: Taiwan and the United States remain closer than ever. That closeness has always been rooted in Taiwan's support from Congress and it has not varied by which party controls either chamber. It is from this foundation that American support for Taiwan is rooted. So, in the midst of geopolitical challenges like climate change and pandemics, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses how we can sustain this important relationship and the ties between our two peoples well into the 21st century. With that, I yield five minutes to my friend, Ranking Member Yoho, for the purposes of his opening statement.