

SUPPORTING TAIWAN'S FOURTH DIRECT AND DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN MARCH 2008

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 278) supporting Taiwan's fourth direct and democratic presidential elections in March 2008, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 278

Whereas the United States and Taiwan share common ideals and a clear vision for the 21st century, where freedom and democracy are the foundations for peace, prosperity, and progress;

Whereas Taiwan has dramatically improved its record on human rights and routinely holds free and fair elections in a multiparty system, as evidenced by Taiwan's first democratic presidential election in 1996, second in 2000, and third in 2004;

Whereas the democratic and open presidential elections in 2000 mark the first transfer of power from one party to another in Taiwan's history;

Whereas Taiwan has demonstrated its unequivocal support for human rights and a commitment to the democratic ideals of freedom of speech, freedom of the press, rule of law, and free and fair elections routinely held in a multiparty system;

Whereas Taiwan is one of the strongest democratic allies of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region;

Whereas it is United States policy to support and strengthen democracy around the world;

Whereas, with its stable democratic system and impressive economic prowess, Taiwan stands apart from many equally young democracies whose freedom and liberty have been severely challenged; and

Whereas the United States Congress has organized congressional delegations to witness the electoral process in thriving democracies, including elections in Taiwan: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That it is the sense of the Congress that—

(1) the United States Government should reaffirm its unwavering commitment to Taiwan's democracy and security; and

(2) international delegations should be encouraged to visit Taiwan for the purpose of witnessing the presidential elections in March 2008.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the concurrent resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and yield myself 5 minutes.

I would like first to thank the ranking member of the full committee, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for introducing this important resolution.

The United States' relationship with Taiwan speaks to the great importance of democracy in our foreign policy. Over the past 60 years, the U.S.-Taiwan relationship has undergone dramatic changes, but it is Taiwan's development of democracy that underpins the strong U.S.-Taiwan friendship we enjoy today.

Initially our relations were defined by a shared strategic purpose of containing the spread of communism in Asia. This Cold War imperative served our strategic goals, but compelled us to cooperate with an authoritarian dictatorship in Taipei that failed to respect basic human rights. With the normalization of relations with Beijing in 1973, the Cold War's strategic landscape changed, and, over time, could have threatened to diminish the importance of the U.S.-Taiwan partnership. But Taiwan's commitment to democracy prevented such a split.

As the PRC liberalized and opened up to the world economically, Taiwan's political system evolved from authoritarianism to one of the strongest democratic systems in Asia, and in the process the U.S.-Taiwan relationship transformed from one based solely on shared interest to one based on shared values.

Today Taiwan is a flourishing, multiparty democracy that respects human rights, upholds the rule of law and holds competitive elections, including presidential elections in 1996, 2000, and 2004. This remarkable political evolution proves beyond any doubt that the notion of "Asian values," which was used to justify one man or one party rule, is a complete fallacy. Democracy, freedom and human rights are universal values to which all human beings aspire.

This resolution recognizes Taiwan's strong democratic system by supporting Taiwan's fourth democratic presidential election, which will take place in March of this year, and by encouraging delegations from around the world to visit Taiwan to witness the election process.

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It is important to note, however, that this resolution should not be construed as taking a position on the referendum regarding Taiwan's membership in the United Nations under the name Taiwan, which is also being held in conjunction with the presidential election. The purpose of this resolution is to honor the U.S.-Taiwan friendship by celebrating Taiwan's democracy. I strongly support this resolution and encourage my colleagues to do the same.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I would also like to thank Ranking Member ROS-LEHTINEN for authoring

this great piece of legislation, the resolution.

I would like to take this opportunity also to offer our varied Asian American communities, Taiwanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean, and Singaporean, belated wishes for good fortune in the lunar new year which began last month. I wish all these communities health, long life, and prosperity as they welcome the Year of the Rat, a year which brings hard work, activity, and renewal. We also expect hard work and much activity in the months ahead in what promises to be a dynamic 2008.

Taiwan faces a very competitive campaign in the next 2 weeks before the March 22 presidential election. No one is able to predict the final outcome. That in itself is an indication of a thriving democracy.

Those skeptics who once said that democratic values would never thrive in a Chinese cultural context need to look no further than Taiwan. Free and fair elections in Taiwan bear a significance which reaches far beyond the shores of one island.

Taiwan, through its maturing democratic institutions, stands as a shining example for other Asian states struggling with the introduction of representative forms of government and the rule of law. Taiwan's free elections, however, have the greatest impact on those who are still yearning to breathe free in the vast Chinese mainland just across the narrow Taiwan Strait.

Taiwan's young democracy faces constant military threat and intimidation from neighboring China. Yet in spite of these belligerent threats and the constant saber-rattling by Beijing, Taipei has continued to stand tall for freedom. Taiwan's evolving and dynamic democracy serves as a beacon of hope for those still suffering under oppression in the Communist Chinese mainland.

Taiwan's democracy is a torch which shines ever brighter, far outshining the Olympic torch of the Chinese regime which hopes this year to use sports to achieve propaganda victory. Freedom shines brighter than any medal, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in giving their strong, enthusiastic support to this resolution which welcomes Taiwan's fourth direct and democratic elections as part of our ongoing efforts to promote democracy around the world and in the Asian region in particular. I wish the people of Taiwan continued peace, prosperity, and liberty in this Year of the Rat, and in the years and decades ahead.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield to my friend from American Samoa, the chairman of the Asian Subcommittee, Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA, 5 minutes.

(Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. FALEOMAVAEGA. Mr. Speaker, last month the House Foreign Affairs

Committee marked up House Concurrent Resolution 278, and I would like to thank the distinguished chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. BERMAN, and also our senior ranking member, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, for agreeing to removal of certain language suggesting that the People's Republic of China is currently threatening or intimidating Taiwan as it seeks to hold democratic elections.

Mr. Speaker, I visited Taiwan twice in the past year, and most recently in November I met with their President and Premier and even their presidential candidates. I can assure my colleagues that elections are in full swing in Taiwan with no intimidation from the People's Republic of China. In fact, quite the opposite. Taiwan's current administration has hung signs and posters on government buildings, including the presidential palace, urging Taiwan's accession to the United Nations, a policy which the United States does not support and which this administration also opposes.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate Chairman BERMAN's comments before the House Foreign Affairs Committee in marking up this resolution, and I quote, "Passage of this bill should not be construed as taking a position on the referendum regarding Taiwan's membership in the United Nations, which the Government of Taiwan plans to hold in conjunction with the election."

I would like to associate myself with Chairman BERMAN's position and remarks as, again, this administration has made it clear that it does not support a vote on the referendum being held in conjunction with the election.

Mr. Speaker, Taiwan has come a long way. It was only until 1996 that they had their first elected President of the people of Taiwan. Taiwan ranks among the top 10 of our trading partners of the world and, ironically, Taiwan currently holds a \$100 billion trade relationship with the People's Republic of China. Many people don't realize this.

Given the nature of this debate, Mr. Speaker, it is my intent to be in Taiwan this month to monitor or to observe the upcoming elections. I think it is important for Members to observe firsthand the process and meet the leaders in Taiwan and Beijing before being so quick to condemn the People's Republic of China.

Mr. Speaker, while Hong Kong is a different case, we should not forget that it was China, not Britain, that wrote into the Basic Law of Hong Kong provisions for Hong Kong to hold democratic elections ultimately based on universal suffrage.

I support Taiwan's right to hold democratic elections which started, as I said earlier, about 10 years ago; but I do not believe it will be in the best interest of our country to support the position of Taiwan's current administration which has attempted to push for independence, which is contrary to the U.S. position on one China, two systems. Whatever political relationship

Taiwan and China want to work out peacefully, I believe that this is what we should also be supporting. Therefore, in no way should passage of this resolution be construed to be anything than what it is. This is a resolution to congratulate Taiwan's efforts to build a greater foundation for democracy and its upcoming presidential elections. It is my understanding that the U.S. does not and should not take a position on which candidate the people of Taiwan should elect. It is up to the people of Taiwan to determine who will best represent their interests, and we will support the will of the people.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), the ranking member of the Committee on Small Business and a longstanding friend of Taiwan.

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I rise as one of the founding members of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus, and I also want to thank the gentlelady from Nevada, SHELLEY BERKLEY, for her leadership in that capacity as well, as well as our colleagues ROBERT WEXLER and DANA ROHR-ABACHER who are the other founding members.

I most recently traveled to Taiwan this last January, the week prior to the Legislative Yuan Elections, and I rise in support of House Resolution 278, a resolution recognizing Taiwan's fourth direct democratic presidential election to be conducted later this month. This resolution sends the right message at the right time.

As one of the very few democracies in Asia, Taiwan should be recognized for its courage and commitment to allow its citizens to choose its future. It is a democracy that maintains a multiparty political system, and one that recognizes and respects individual liberty and human rights.

Just across the Taiwan Strait is the People's Republic of China. It most certainly is not a democracy. It maintains an abysmal human rights record. It does not recognize the rule of law. It practices religious persecution. It warehouses political prisoners. It carries out a coercive abortion policy. And it has more than 800 missiles pointed directly at Taiwan. It is against this backdrop that Taiwan forges on with its elections.

I am disappointed that the stronger language contained in the introduced version of the bill, which referenced the acts of intimidation and pressure by China, were eliminated. It is better to speak the truth rather than to worry about offending China's sensitivities. Intimidation, pressure, and outright bullying will not go away by ignoring it or by being silent about it. Notwithstanding this concern, I am supportive of the resolution, and I would urge its passage today.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentlelady from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY).

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the chairman for obtaining

this position. I know he is going to do a remarkable job.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution and in support of a United States ally and a fellow democracy.

For over 50 years, Taiwan and the United States have enjoyed a strong political and economic partnership. In the last two decades, we have watched Taiwan blossom into one of the world's leading democracies, holding a number of open, fair, and internationally approved elections. Its constitution guarantees fundamental freedoms and civil liberties, and ensures all citizens have a voice in local and national affairs.

Mr. Speaker, in an age of terrorism and political violence, it is absolutely imperative that the United States stand up for and stand with peaceful and free countries around the globe. We must make certain that our fellow democracies can determine their own destinies at the ballot box without fear of attack or violence.

This resolution calls on our government to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to Taiwan's democracy and security. One way for us to do this is to support this election and avoid being seen as taking sides. Only by standing firmly with a democratic Taiwan can we uphold the principles, our principles, of promoting peace and democracy worldwide. I urge support for this resolution.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, today the House considers a timely resolution supporting Taiwan's fourth direct and democratic presidential elections which will take place in just a few weeks. I am pleased to be a cosponsor of this resolution.

In 1979, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which caused our Government to consider Taiwan in nearly all respects a sovereign partner. President Ronald Reagan reinforced this stance in 1982 when he publicly reiterated the US position regarding Taiwan's sovereignty. Since that time, the United States and Taiwan have enjoyed increasingly close relations, and our two countries maintain a strong strategic alliance. Today Taiwan remains one of the strongest democratic allies of the United States in the Asia-Pacific region.

The United States and Taiwan share a common vision of freedom and democracy. Since Taiwan's first democratic presidential election in 1998, Taiwan has successfully held routine, free, and fair elections in a multiparty system. As a beacon of democracy in the Asia-Pacific region, Taiwan deserves recognition and support from the United States.

I am pleased to rise in strong support of Taiwan's continued commitment to democratic elections. Now is the time for the United States to reaffirm its unwavering commitment to Taiwan's democracy and security. For an ally that shares our values of freedom, security and prosperity, we can do nothing less.

And that's just the way it is.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) that the House suspend the

rules and agree to the concurrent resolution, H. Con. Res. 278, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

CONDEMNING THE ONGOING PALESTINIAN ROCKET ATTACKS ON ISRAELI CIVILIANS

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 951) condemning the ongoing Palestinian rocket attacks on Israeli civilians, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 951

Whereas more than 4,000 rockets and mortar shells have been fired at Israel from the Gaza Strip by Hamas and other terrorist organizations since Israeli forces withdrew from there in 2005;

Whereas, since January 1, 2008, terrorists have fired nearly a thousand rockets and mortar shells into Israel;

Whereas the near-daily rocket fire has been targeted primarily and intentionally at civilian communities in Israel, such as Sderot and Ashkelon, making life in such areas agonizing;

Whereas the terrorist rockets have hit homes, schools, buildings, roads, power lines, and other such infrastructure in Israel;

Whereas these unprovoked rocket and mortar attacks have murdered over a dozen Israelis, inflicted hundreds of casualties, produced thousands of cases of shock and post-traumatic stress, especially among children, and caused severe disruption of daily life;

Whereas these deliberate cross-border rocket and mortar attacks on civilian populations constitute a blatant violation of human rights and international law;

Whereas those responsible for launching rocket attacks against Israel routinely embed their production facilities and launch sites amongst the Palestinian civilian population, utilizing them as human shields;

Whereas intentionally targeting civilian populations and the use of human shields violates international humanitarian and human rights law;

Whereas numerous reports have cited the copious amounts of sophisticated weapons, small arms, and weapons manufacturing materials that have been smuggled into Gaza through Egypt;

Whereas public reports have cited the role of Iran and Syria in providing material support and training to those carrying out rocket and other terrorist attacks from Gaza;

Whereas public reports have referenced the increased flow of ammunition, explosives, and higher-grade weapons into the Gaza Strip as a result of Hamas' breach of the 12-kilometer security fence separating Gaza from Egyptian Sinai on January 23, 2008;

Whereas it was reported that after the breach of the Egyptian-Gaza border, many Palestinian terrorists who had trained in Syria and Iran returned to Gaza;

Whereas the fielding and use of longer-range rockets by Hamas and other terrorist organizations to reach larger Israeli cities represents a dangerous expansion of the organizations' offensive capabilities and an escalation of the terrorist attacks on Israel;

Whereas the Government of Israel's military operations in Gaza only target Hamas and other terrorist organizations;

Whereas the inadvertent inflicting of civilian casualties as a result of defensive military operations aimed at military targets, while deeply regrettable, is not at all morally equivalent to the deliberate targeting of civilian populations as practiced by Hamas and other Gaza-based terrorist groups; and

Whereas the situation in the Gaza Strip remains a threat to international security and regional stability: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) strongly condemns—

(A) Hamas, which controls Gaza, and other Palestinian terrorist organizations for the ongoing rocket attacks on Israeli civilians and continued human rights violations;

(B) state sponsors of terror, such as Iran and Syria, for enabling Palestinian terrorist organizations to carry out attacks against innocent Israeli civilians; and

(C) the use of innocent Palestinian civilians as human shields by those who carry out rocket and other attacks;

(2) expresses condolences to the families of the innocent victims on both sides of the conflict;

(3) supports the sovereign right of the Government of Israel to defend its territory against attacks;

(4) expresses sympathy and support for innocent Palestinian civilians who reject all forms of terrorism and desire to live in peace with their Israeli neighbors but who continue to be utilized as human shields by terrorist organizations;

(5) considers rocket attacks against Israel and the fostering of terrorism in the Palestinian territories as direct and serious impediments to the achievement of Israeli-Palestinian peace;

(6) calls on the President to—

(A) direct the United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations to introduce a resolution within the United Nations Security Council condemning Palestinian rocket and other attacks against innocent Israeli civilians; and

(B) direct the Secretary of State to raise this issue in all applicable bilateral and international fora;

(7) calls on responsible countries and United States allies in the Middle East to officially and publicly condemn Palestinian rocket attacks and other terrorist actions against Israel; and

(8) reaffirms the strong and unyielding friendship between the Governments and the people of Israel and the United States.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. BERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution and I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, when this resolution came before the Foreign Affairs Committee last week, the situation in Gaza was deteriorating, and that deterioration continued apace. We have since amended this measure to reflect the latest facts, but the fundamental realities remain the same: Israel has a right to exist free from terror. Terrorist Hamas, which controls Gaza, does not accept this right. The United States will now and always stand firmly by Israel's side, committed to its survival; and we oppose all forms of terrorism and incitement meant to undermine the quest for peace.

Nearly every day, shrapnel-filled rockets launched from Gaza rain down on Israeli communities, shocking the residents with their explosive power and expanded range. Israel has answered the deadly downpour by placing pressure on the Hamas leadership and their henchmen who launch these missiles. But because these thugs cravenly place the men, women, and children in Gaza in harm's way by using civilian communities as a base, counterstrikes have lamentably caused civilian injuries and deaths, along with the deaths of the terrorists.

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The casualties are far too numerous, since even one innocent life lost is one too many.

And so, as we show our support with this resolution for the people of Israel, we also express our sympathy with the overwhelming majority of Gazans who only want a decent life but whose terrorist leaders have contemptuously sentenced them to mayhem.

In August 2005, the Israeli Government removed all Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip and evicted Israeli families from their homes in hopes of injecting life into a moribund peace process. Israel's hope, and the hope of all who wish for peace in the region, was that Gaza would prove to be the fertile ground from which Palestinian statehood would emerge.

But since that time, Hamas has seized control of Gaza. It responded to good-faith efforts at peace not with reciprocal concessions or conciliatory gestures but with a relentless terrorist offensive.

In more than 2 years of rocket attacks, Israel has suffered countless casualties, including more than a dozen deaths, and serious damage to property and infrastructure. But perhaps worst of all has been the untold psychological trauma and interruption of all aspects of daily life. Reportedly, 90 percent of the children in the community of Sderot have suffered from post-traumatic stress syndrome. The beachside city of Ashkelon, until recently out of range for the simple rockets that Hamas could muster, has now been