

# When your “One-#China policy” is challenged

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***It is no news that China bullies Taiwan. But China’s recent coercion of foreign companies is news, and should be a wake up call for countries to think about whether their own “One-China policy” has been infringed – writes Harry Ho-Jen TSENG, Taiwan Representative to the EU and Belgium***

While most countries in the world have adopted a “One-China policy”, there is no consensus on what it means, except that it forbids official relations with Taiwan. Indeed, the scope for differing interpretations has allowed countries, including China itself, to maintain unofficial relations. Now, after decades of such practices, China is waging a worldwide campaign to impose its own definition of “One-China policy” by coercing countries, as well as foreign companies, to restrict even unofficial ties with Taiwan. China is unilaterally changing the status quo, and is a major cause of instability and potential conflict in Asia, if not beyond.

The PRC government recently set its sights on content referring to Taiwan on the websites of multinational companies. In January 2018, for example, China blocked access to the website of a US hospitality company, Marriott International, for referring to Taiwan as a country. The blockage was lifted only after Marriott’s chief executive issued a public apology. In April, the Civil Aviation Administration of China demanded 36 international airlines cease referring to Taiwan as a country on websites, apps, and other promotional materials, and instead refer to “Taiwan, China” or “Taiwan Region, China”. Those who failed to comply would face punitive measures.

The US State Department has publicly opposed China’s threat towards US companies and expressed strong concern to the PRC. A White House statement described China’s actions as “Orwellian nonsense,” going on to state that, “China’s efforts to export its censorship and political correctness to Americans and the rest of the world will be resisted.” An EU spokesperson voiced the criticism that, “Outside China, it is for private companies and individuals to manage their online content within the law...China’s attempts to regulate such online content aims at curtailing the freedoms that foreign businesses must continue to enjoy.”

China's coercion and heavy-handed behavior should be seen as an attempt to directly impose its administrative jurisdiction on the companies and citizens of other countries. If they do not resist, these countries risk being seen as willing to tolerate an attack on the integrity of their sovereignty, and on the legal rights and interests of their companies and citizens.

The PRC government's forcing of censorship and its own political ideology on private companies should be stopped and condemned. In essence, such actions encroach on judicial sovereignty and violate provisions regarding commercial freedom as set out by the World Trade Organization. We call on all concerned parties in your country to confront China's provocations. We urge your government to take all actions necessary to uphold your version of "One-China policy," by not giving in to the pressure from Beijing to curtail and minimize your unofficial relations with Taiwan.

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