

Taiwan, Sifting Through the Past and Present for the Truth

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.
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How does one know a lie is a lie? Byron's Don Juan indicates that lies too often masquerade as truths. Thus, if Taiwanese are really interested in the truth of why their democratic struggle has never been on a level playing field and why one party still controls so many stolen state assets while the other parties have none, they must sort through the many lies that masquerade as truths from the past. Part of that even entails sorting through and overcoming the brainwashing by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and seeing the true history of Taiwan's past century from Taiwanese and not Chinese eyes.

What all does the brainwashing involve? Skip how Taiwan was never part of China's Civil War; skip past how KMT "carpetbaggers" who came to exploit Taiwan became diaspora in exile when they lost their continental Civil War in 1949. Go past how they made a "heaven of their hell in exile" by imposing one-party state rule, White Terror and martial law on innocent Taiwanese for forty years. Even skip past how Taiwan's democracy was won by persistence in protest and overcoming torture and imprisonment. Come to the present.

How do masquerading lies continue in the present? Some are humorous and some are not. Few remember that KMT Lien Chan vowed to get rid of ill-gotten state assets before the 2000 elections; few remember that Ma Ying-jeou repeated that same pseudo KMT promise in 2005. In 2012, all one needs to realize is that the KMT still clings to those assets and those assets are both a major source for vote-buying and a major source of preventing the playing field of Taiwan's democracy from ever being level.

Are there still other "lies"? Paul Simon wrote a well known song "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover." Taiwanese might consider writing a song "50 Ways to Tell a Lie." Start with the humorous masquerade of the "bhagwa lie" based on incorrect information. A decade ago, the KMT claimed that former President Lee Teng-hui's wife ran off to the United States with suitcases full of state asset money. Today, the KMT via Premier Wu Den-yih's wife resurrected that "lie" by saying now that Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen also ran off with a bundle of money. Challenged Wu's wife stated that she had received "incorrect information." How much of the past KMT brainwashing was based on "incorrect information?"

Then there is the "how did that money get in my bank account lie." This is a variation of "the dog ate my homework lie" prevalent among school boys, but it is much more serious. In it a hypocritical state official who profits from the corrupt practices that his party established tries to defend his innocence by proclaiming ignorance. How many KMT bankbooks are lined with such

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money and would so explain the legitimacy of their gains?

A different lie is the "dirty laundry lie." In this a shooting takes place like that of Sean Lien. The police have the shooter, the weapon, the dead body and witnesses but cannot seem to find a motive. Though the shooting was initially exploited in an election, to press for the truth is not advisable since it would expose the reality of a certain party's dirty laundry.

Of course there are always the puzzling "campaign manager lies." Did not King Pu-tsung or King the Knife state that the KMT will campaign on policies and not slogans. "6-3-3" and then the "Golden Decade," these are not slogans they are uhh . . . No, this campaign will strictly be "about the greatly improving economy," uh let's forget that the latest GDP forecasts have dipped to 3.7 to 3.8 per cent. . . Certainly at least the KMT will not get involved with smear campaigning. Council for Economic Planning and Development Minister Christina Liu and forged and altered documents anyone?

Of course there is the "we can't embarrass the Chinese Emperor and tell him that he has no clothes lie." This involves someone like KMT's Su Chi admitting he made up the term "1992 consensus" and Lee Teng-hui, president at that time stating emphatically that the country never made any 1992 consensus and China never confirming such. In this scenario there is still someone like a KMT president grasping for straws for re-election who not only insists that the consensus took place but he has the gall to ask his DPP opponent why she does not admit to the lie. This has related variations like the "I respect our nation's flag unless low ranking officials or even sports participants from that one country on the other side of the Taiwan Strait are present, lie."

However, most recently and much more serious, there appears to be a new lie, the "how did those spy reports get on my desk lie." This resembles the "how did that money get in my bank account lie." In it, a high ranking official like the president orders the Ministry of Justice Investigation Bureau (MJIB) to spy on, monitor and report on opposing presidential candidates. These reports will supposedly help the president be re-elected and castigate any who help his opposition. That is a clear abuse of power in any democracy. So as the document shredders whirr on apparently shredding any evidence, the president and any involved are also denying anything like that ever happened. Did it?

Are there 50 ways to tell a lie? Do any of these qualify? Are those that say they are not corrupt, the real corrupt ones? Lies or at least exaggerations can be expected in any political campaign.

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But in this campaign, the stakes are much higher than normal and the accusations more serious. Taiwan's democracy is still fragile. Taiwanese cannot afford to reward incompetence and/or mendacity. It is time to start sifting in order to level the playing field of Taiwan's democracy.

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