

China-based businesses lack loyalty to Taiwan

Written by James Wang 王健
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During the Communist revolution in China, one of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) slogans was that "workers have no motherland." Nowadays, capitalists advocate globalization based on the view that businesspeople have no motherland. Both are wrong, because both workers and businesspeople have a motherland. The only exceptions are the businesspeople of Taiwan: They exist in limbo, somewhere between having and not having a motherland.

Taiwanese businesspeople who have invested in China are affectionately called "compatriots" by Chinese officials, who welcome them back to "the motherland." However, according to the People's Republic of China's (PRC) Constitution they are not citizens of that motherland and so their treatment, for good or for bad, differs from that accorded to their "motherland compatriots."

Since these businesspeople are not referred to as "Taiwanese businesspeople," there should be nothing controversial about their identifying with Taiwan and seeing it as their motherland. The government of President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), however, follows a strange policy aimed at creating "one China" and "eventual unification" that treats China as the motherland and rejects the view that Taiwan is our country.

Ma says that through economic and trade relations, Taiwan can influence China and he claims that Taiwanese businesspeople already have done so. Who are these bedside stories for? If they were true, then the huge investments, the job opportunities created and the tax contributions made by Taiwanese businesspeople to the Chinese state should give them some leverage to influence China. Even if they were not trying to promote the interests of the Taiwanese government, they should at least be able to demand that their own interests were given some protection, but under the authoritarian Chinese one-party state, they are not even able to do that.

Taiwanese businesspeople in China can also take the humanitarian route by offering higher salaries, better benefits and a better work environment to give Chinese workers some dignity and respect for their Taiwanese bosses and maybe give them a reason to feel good about Taiwan. This, however, seems to be even more difficult, as their greed leads them to seek cheap labor and low costs — they are certainly not in business to engage in charity.

Because the existence of their companies rely on special privileges, they must do what Chinese officials tell them to do and they have no chance to influence Chinese policy. And because working wages are low and working conditions harsh, they cannot influence their workers either. On the contrary, they are trying to please the Chinese government and are thus trying to use their importance to Taiwan's economy to influence Taiwanese politics, thus helping authoritarian China to put pressure on democratic Taiwan.

The previous Democratic Progressive Party administration viewed Taiwan as a country to call its own and it managed to care for the interests of all members of the public by rejecting

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Taiwanese businesspeople's improper demands. To the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government, however, Taiwan is not its country and it is only too happy to agree to the demands that Taiwanese businesspeople make on behalf of Beijing. Ma is wrong when he says China-based Taiwanese businesspeople can influence China. Taiwanese businesspeople who do not see Taiwan as their country are restricting the future possibilities of all Taiwanese.

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