

Seeing past China's 'rogue-like' behavior

Written by Paul Lin 林

Friday, 22 December 2017 07:06

During his visit to Japan over the past weekend, former White House senior adviser Steve Bannon said that the US and its East Asian allies must unify to constrain China's "frightening, audacious and global ambitions."

The statement implies that Bannon has seen through China's innate rogue status. Western so-called "China experts" with their belief that propriety, justice, honesty and honor are part of Chinese culture have been manipulated into assisting China's rogue behavior.

Here are some of the recent examples of China's audacity.

The human rights situation in China is deplorable. Beijing's "low-end" inhabitants have over the past few months been driven out of their homes and forced to live rough in the cold weather.

Still, on Friday last week the Chinese State Council issued a white paper saying that Chinese enjoy ample economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, and the human rights situation is moving forward "like the spring breeze, full of vitality."

Not long before that, the council also claimed that China is the world's biggest democracy.

China's protectionism in its relationship with the US has resulted in an annual US trade deficit with China of almost US\$500 billion. Still China continues to steal US intellectual property and Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) shamelessly continues to blame the US for being protectionist while he pursues global leadership.

When US President Donald Trump visited China, China offered a "great gift" by relaxing restrictions on foreign investment in Chinese banks, but Chinese banks are being dragged down by domestic debt and will now drag foreign capital down with them.

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China is engaged in unrestricted military expansion: It issues belligerent statements, its navy passes between the Japanese islands through the Miyako Strait and the Tsushima Strait, and it has said that the Sea of Japan is not a Japanese sea.

This militarist expansion is forcing Japan to increase the strength of its self-defense forces, only to be criticized by China for reviving Japanese militarism.

When South Korean President Moon Jae-in visited China, he made a point of currying favor with Xi and accepted Xi's talk about the two countries being part of a "shared community."

A visiting South Korean photographer was being beaten up by Chinese police and less than 72 hours after Moon agreed to being part of a shared community, the People's Liberation Army Air Force entered South Korea's air defense identification zone to take advantage of "shared community airspace."

After the Cultural Revolution, China was on the brink of default. Taiwanese and Hong Kong businesspeople brought capital, technology and management know-how to China and were followed by other foreign investors, helping China's development.

Now China is treating Hong Kong and Taiwan as "low-end" regions.

China has also changed its attitude toward other investors: In addition to being provocative, it is now demanding that foreign businesses in China set up Chinese Communist Party (CCP) branches in their companies.

China has forgotten who helped it grow strong and is now acting like a bully.

Bannon is calling for leaders to avoid the Thucydides trap — when a rising power causes fear in an established power which escalates toward war.

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I am currently reading Herman Wouk's War and Remembrance, which uses the Thucydides trap to impart an important lesson: Democracy best meets our thirst for freedom, but a lack of discipline, as well as disorder, and the desire for ease and comfort often drive us toward autocracy.

This is a warning that no democracy, including Taiwan, must forget.

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Translated by Perry Svensson

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2017/12/22](#)