

Every time there is a major political shift in Hong Kong, the number of Hong Kongers emigrating to Taiwan rises sharply, according to a report by Voice of America.

As of December 2016, more than 70,000 Hong Kong and Macau residents had emigrated to Taiwan. Experts have suggested that the trend of Hong Kongers emigrating to Taiwan will continue, as many have grown disillusioned with the territory.

There have been three major peaks of Hong Kong residents emigrating to Taiwan: In 1983, when then-British prime minister Margaret Thatcher failed to renegotiate the lease for Hong Kong; in 1989 shortly after the Tiananmen Square massacre; and in 1997 after Britain's sovereignty over Hong Kong was transferred back to the Chinese government.

However, when it comes to the influx into Hong Kong, more people from the Chinese mainland have immigrated there after it was returned to China. The more Chinese move to Hong Kong, the easier it becomes for Beijing to gain complete control of the territory. Nevertheless, the forceful administrative measures imposed by Beijing are gradually and steadily wearing down Hong Kongers' identification with China.

China deploys various political and economic strategies toward Hong Kong, depriving the "Pearl of the Orient" of its shining luster and aiming ultimately at the complete integration of Hong Kong into China to stop the spread of universal values in the mainland. This way, the "one country, two systems" formula will never have an effect on China's one-party authoritarian rule.

Hong Kongers did not have a say when China signed the Sino-British Joint Declaration or when its mini-constitution, the Basic Law, was drafted and put into effect in 1997. They are, metaphorically speaking, destined to be a piece of meat on China's chopping block.

Moreover, the declaration is regarded by Beijing as no more than a "historical document," and the pledges made in the declaration are not worth the paper they were written on.

Beijing trying to buy Taiwanese

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The “double general elections” — of the Hong Kong chief executive and the Legislative Council — are now just a historical irony, as directly elected lawmakers were disqualified from entering the legislature by Hong Kong courts on account of small “technical” issues, as they “failed to sincerely take the oath of office.”

Former Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping’s (鄧小平) quip that “horse races will go on and night clubs will stay open” for the next 50 years was also intended to serve China’s “united front” tactics toward Taiwan.

Despite the breakdown of the “one country, two systems” framework in Hong Kong, Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) continues to tell Taiwan that the same system will be used there, regardless of Hong Kongers’ indignation having spread across Taiwan.

While Xi’s call is ineffectual, Taiwanese should read carefully between the lines to understand its hidden implications: Beijing does not care about the will of 23 million Taiwanese, as its wants to impose its will over Taiwan and forcefully incorporate it into China, making it serve China’s big power dreams.

After all, Taiwan is China’s gateway to the Pacific Ocean, and the Taiwan Strait is the corridor that controls international flight and maritime routes.

Behind the struggle of wills between Taipei and Beijing, there is a competition between big powers. Establishing closer ties with other democratic allies to counter authoritarian China would be in Taiwan’s best interest.

However, some Taiwanese enjoy the benefits of Taiwan’s democratic countermeasures against authoritarian China, while at the same time taking advantage of Taiwan’s democracy to serve China’s invasion plans.

From “one China, different interpretations” and “one China, same interpretation” to the promotion of unification instead of opposition to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), these people repeatedly blow the trumpet for China’s prosperity while spreading defeatism in Taiwan,

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to the extent that they are working for China's united front tactics and its spy network.

Seeing the rise of the Taiwanese will since 2016, China has begun to accentuate its military threat toward Taiwan by sending military aircraft and naval vessels to circumnavigate Taiwan. Economically, China is changing its policy to "buy off Taiwanese" and "wear down the Taiwanese economy" in an attempt to cultivate pro-unification economic groups in compensation for the decline of pro-unification political groups.

Regardless of Beijing's economic unification strategy and Taiwan's abandoning opposition to the CCP for promoting unification, the very real example of Hong Kong cannot be ignored. Hong Kong's unification with China is complete, it has accomplished the "one China" dream of the pro-unification camp.

The regression of democracy, liberty and human rights in Hong Kong clearly shows Taiwan's 23 million people what they will get once Taiwan is reduced to another piece of "the Chinese dream."

The example held up by Beijing for Taiwan is emerging on the cross-strait political stage: Kaohsiung-born academic Lu Li-an (呂麗安), who served as a delegate to the CCP's 19th National Congress last year, and those of her ilk can be juxtaposed with the likes of Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam (林鄭月娥), and once the nightmare of authoritarian China interfering with democratic Taiwan becomes a reality, every aspect of Taiwanese life — from everyday life to Taiwan's strategic role — will irretrievably deteriorate.

Whether Taiwanese are capable of standing up and tackling the challenges of China's "sharp power" is an issue that they all must face.

Officials from China's Taiwan Affairs Office recently paid visits to Taiwanese businesses, schools, communities and families in 12 Chinese provinces.

During the visits, the officials said that the Chinese government is gradually making plans to provide Taiwanese with equal educational, business, employment and living conditions as

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Chinese.

They claim that Beijing will keep pushing many more profitable and powerful policies for Taiwanese in China. These policies are in effect no more than an attempt to sugarcoat China's military threat. Once Taiwan surrenders to China, Taiwanese will not need any "Taiwan model," either. The policies intended to favor Taiwanese are no different from Hong Kong's Basic Law, which only served to mollify Hong Kongers and ensured that the transfer of power was executed smoothly. Now that China has achieved its goal, the Basic Law is no more important than a piece of wastepaper to be thrown away.

Missiles and monetary silver bullets are directed at Taiwan. As Taiwan is shielded internationally, whether a Chinese invasion would succeed depends on the will of Taiwanese.

"'One country, two systems' will take proper care of Taiwanese people's interests," Xi has said.

The rewards distributed by Beijing to people promoting unification through political or economic means are the 30 pieces of silver paid for the lives of a majority of Taiwanese.

Translated by Chang Ho-ming

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