

Taiwanese will not sell out to China that easily

Written by Lee Min-yung 李敏勇

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China never stops menacing Taiwan through propaganda and military threats, and its “united front” strategy is all-pervasive. The so-called “incentives” announced by China’s Taiwan Affairs Office last week are just another tactic aimed at buying off Taiwan.

Taiwanese are businesspeople. Business is conducted based on an economic rationale and sometimes even in compliance with strict economic rationalism.

Water flows downstream, so it is only logical to get one’s water downstream. Businesspeople act the same way, ignoring anyone upstream who might also need water.

This attitude can be traced back to the early period, when Chinese immigrants established themselves in Taiwan, and to the long history of colonial rule. It is based in an interest-oriented logic, rather than in ideology.

When Taiwan began democratizing in the early 1990s, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) was posing a challenge to the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), while China could offer Deng Xiaoping’s (鄧小平) reform and opening up, which many Taiwanese found enticing.

DPP candidates in general elections at the time compared Taiwan’s national income with China’s as a way to oppose China’s “united front” strategy. It was a short-sighted approach based solely on economic considerations and a lack of understanding of fluctuations in the economy.

If Taiwanese want to pursue a country that is not restricted by the KMT’s Republic of China (ROC) that continues to struggle under an empty remnant of another China, they will have to look to higher values, such as democracy, freedom, universal values and a welfare state; they cannot look to money alone.

One of the DPP’s problems is the illusion that everyone in China is joining the nouveau riche following China’s move toward capitalism — but how can the desire for money be the only

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measure of a state's success?

As it refuses to abandon its attempts to “liberate” Taiwan, China continues with its propaganda and military threats.

In the past, during the cross-strait military standoff of the long Martial Law era, which it justified with its opposition to Communist China, the KMT also conducted a propaganda war against China.

To the KMT, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was a bandit regime, while in the eyes of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), the ROC government led by Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) and his henchmen had already been overturned, although it still had not been ultimately eradicated.

As long as this issue remained unresolved, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait were unable to develop a peaceful friendship in this new country-to-country relationship, and the deceit and backstabbing continued.

Today, China is getting richer and it is instead trying to buy off Taiwan, and offering incentives and economic benefits is its new magic weapon, as it has seen through the “merchant personality” that appears to pervade contemporary Taiwanese society. Unfortunately, this “merchant personality” is different from the principled approach of a true businessperson.

In addition to the threat posed by its growing military capabilities, China also wants to buy off Taiwan, as that is more cost-effective.

However, buying off Taiwan requires that there is someone ready to sell out. The KMT is often accused of “selling out Taiwan,” because it is unhappy with having lost control of the government and therefore is ready to resort to any trick.

Yet will it be possible to sell out Taiwan? If not, Chinese attempts to buy off Taiwan will be

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nothing but wild dreams. Taiwanese are not that backward. Regardless of whether China wants to buy or bargain, Taiwan is not a piece of merchandise.

Lee Min-yung is a poet.

Translated by Chang Ho-ming

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