

As China engages in a military, economic and diplomatic total war against Taiwan, the international community has not stayed on the sidelines, but has paid close attention to the spillover effects of the Chinese threat.

In connection to the upcoming World Health Assembly (WHA), the US, Japan, Germany and the EU have expressed their support for Taiwan's participation in the WHO. It is reported that even if Taiwan is not invited to the WHA this year, bilateral talks between the US and Taiwanese health ministers are still to take place on the event's sidelines.

For China, which claims that "Taiwan's exclusion from the WHA will not create a loophole in global epidemic prevention," the international community's increasing attention to and support for Taiwan must be unexpected. It is also a reflection of the growing distance between the two nations.

China's attack on the diplomatic battlefield is also enough for the international community to clearly see who the troublemaker is that is causing tension in the Taiwan Strait and pushing the "status quo" toward conflict.

Since US President Donald Trump took office, his "America first" policy has reframed geopolitics and begun to impede China's ascendancy. This change to the bigger picture is naturally reflected in the so-called "cross-strait" relationship.

Taiwan is bearing the brunt of China's rising hegemony and Chinese President Xi Jinping's (习近平) removal of presidential term limits. Whether things are going well for Xi or not, Taiwan could at any moment become a target as China vents its nationalism.

On the other hand, Taiwan is becoming an indispensable democratic role player in the containment of China and the formation of the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy.

Since Trump took office, several bills and actions have been aimed at strengthening

Taiwan-US relations. This is by no means random. With China's rising hegemony and the democratic containment strategy against Beijing, Taiwan is being pushed to the forefront of geopolitics.

At the same time, the changes in Taiwan's domestic situation have coincided with the external changes. Public support for maintaining independence is growing stronger as the pro-unification regime has been replaced by a Taiwan-centered government.

Whether this is because of mainstream opinion or the government, China continues to pressure Taiwan and the illusion of a peaceful cross-strait situation has been destroyed by Beijing.

Despite Beijing's intimidation and the China-friendly noises within Taiwan, public opinion still favors maintaining the independence "status quo."

The US has never exerted influence on Taiwan to submit to Beijing's "one China" principle.

In the past few months, Beijing has conducted stress tests against Taiwanese independence in the form of live-fire exercises, sending military aircraft to encircle the nation and the "united front" tactic of using 31 incentives to attract Taiwanese to China.

The strategic conflict and trade friction between the super powers bring both risk and opportunity for Taiwan.

At first, China's attempt to take over Taiwan was because of the civil war and Beijing wanting to avoid a counterattack by Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石). After that, it was to meet the need to expand beyond the first island chain and gain influence over the western Pacific.

Today, there is the added necessity of "Made in China 2025," China's strategic plan to comprehensively upgrade Chinese industry, and there are economic benefits to taking over Taiwan's technology industry and occupying Taiwan.

However, this also makes Taiwan a contestable place for the US, Japan and the free and open Indo-Pacific strategy.

China's rise is mainly due to economic, rather than military or diplomatic reasons. Therefore, in addition to maintaining the necessary military and diplomatic balance, containing China and dealing with its sharp power means focusing on the economy.

The US aimed straight at the core when it moved against China's ZTE and Huawei, because of its understanding that China's sharp power and its weakest link are two sides of the same coin.

This strategic attack is extremely enlightening for Taiwan: To ensure that Taiwan's scientific and technological industry secrets are not stolen by China, they must be treated as tools of war.

Taiwanese cannot throw around empty phrases, saying that the economy is for the economy's sake, lest Taiwan be seen by Trump as a nation where technology secrets are leaked, which would be particularly disadvantageous.

The economy is the most difficult issue for Taiwan when addressing the threat of China, which uses its various "incentive" policies to steal sensitive patents through mergers and acquisitions, and by poaching talent.

Taiwan's past policies, whether it was the active opening up policy or the policy to link economically with China, all made the mistake of detaching the economic policy from the macro strategy, which resulted in troubles for Taiwan, with the younger generation suffering.

The policy of maintaining the "status quo" and pragmatically pursuing Taiwanese independence must be quickly changed to maintain the nation's technological superiority — the lifeblood of its economy — so that Taiwan is not reduced to helping China increase its sharp power while

## Industry secrets are tools of war

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becoming its victim.

“Sensitive technology protection” is not a slogan, and it is not only a political issue — it also includes aspects like democracy, the rule of law and guarding Taiwan by adopting strict laws.

If Taiwan continues to leave industry, universities, research institutions and even military research institutions to their own devices, they will become havens of secrets for China to steal and Taiwan will surrender its core economic power.

If that happens, all other nations’ military and diplomatic efforts will be in vain.

Translated by Lin Lee-kai

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