

Tsai shows signs of Stockholm syndrome

Written by Yen Li-chen 葉立晨
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Does the government have Stockholm syndrome? A little more than two years have passed since President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) took office. As well as repeatedly calling for maintaining the “status quo” in cross-strait relations, her administration has recently been promoting the idea of a meeting between Tsai and Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平).

The government’s words and deeds in this respect give the impression that its strategy has gone badly off course and it is starting to sink.

Tsai on June 25 sat down for an interview with a reporter from Agence France-Presse, in which she called upon the international community to “work together to ... constrain China and also minimize the expansion of their hegemonic influence.”

These remarks immediately drew a sarcastic response from China’s Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman Ma Xiaoguang (馬曉光), who accused Tsai of “courting foreign support” and “overestimating her influence.”

This slap in the face was quite a shock for the government, which needed some time to think it over.

Eventually it responded to Ma’s remarks by saying that he was “throwing his weight about.”

Such a response can only boost China’s self-confidence, while weakening Taiwan’s morale.

Tsai would have done better to say that Ma was “incurable.”

Following the government’s remark about China “throwing its weight around,” all Ma would need to say is: “Yes, we are bigger and stronger than you are — just bear that in mind.”

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Ma's remarks are just what you would expect from China's totalitarian regime. Has Tsai really forgotten the scene that took place following the 2003 World Health Assembly, when China's then-permanent representative to the UN Sha Zukang (沙祖康) responded to a Taiwanese reporter's question by pulling an ugly face and snapping: "Who cares about your opinion?"

"Who cares about your opinion?" "Overestimating your influence." Such remarks pretty much sum up China's rude, unreasonable and domineering attitude toward Taiwan.

For Tsai and her government to call for a meeting between Tsai and Xi under such circumstances really does look like a case of Stockholm syndrome. Any such call is a big waste of time and heading in completely the wrong direction.

Since Tsai took office, the US and Japan have kept showing her goodwill. They keep passing the ball to her, but she does not want to run with it. Her unwillingness to respond positively is worrying and frustrating.

From the passage of the US' Taiwan Travel Act to US Representative Dana Rohrabacher's unprecedented draft resolution calling for Washington to resume normal diplomatic relations with Taiwan, Tsai has dropped the ball each time.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, too, has been making moves to get closer to Taiwan, while Japanese civic groups are enthusiastically supporting the call for Taiwan's athletes to take part in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics under the proper title of "Taiwan" instead of "Chinese Taipei."

However, the Tsai administration apparently prefers to dodge any such initiatives. Why is anyone's guess.

Over the past few weeks, FIFA World Cup fever has been in full swing. It would be great if Taiwanese had a nation to cheer for, to shed tears for and to be proud of. Hopefully that day

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will come.

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