

Anti-China sentiment abroad an opportunity

Written by Michael Lin 林

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Over the past 20 years, the US has been hoping that the political and economic impact of globalization, together with the pursuit of a constructive relationship with China based on mutual political and economic interests, would help the Chinese economy take off and push Beijing toward democracy, diversity and more Western values — helping to promote cooperation.

Over the past 10 to 20 years, this strategy has turned US cross-strait policy toward a focus on Sino-US exchanges and cross-strait peace. This has been unfavorable to Taiwan's international participation and acceptance of a Taiwanese identity.

Since President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) took office, she has been restricted by the US' "one China" policy and its focus on cross-strait stability, while she had to consider history, and cross-strait business and cultural exchanges.

She adopted a policy of maintaining the "status quo" based on the Constitution and the support of a majority of voters, thus avoiding the mistakes of former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) and his bolder policy, which caused cross-strait and Taiwan-US relations to deteriorate.

However, the relationships between Taiwan, China and the US has radically changed over the past year or two. Since US President Donald Trump took office, the US and the West have realized that the global integration of the Chinese economy has fed stronger nationalism.

Following the coronation of Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) last year, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has moved further toward dictatorship. It does not respect the West's free market and fair trade principles, which hurts economic development in the US and other countries, while its military expansion hurts stability in the Asia-Pacific region. It also uses its "sharp power" to limit foreign governments' autonomy and influence their citizens' values.

As a result, the US and EU are changing their political and economic policies and have launched a trade war against China, taking a new "cold war" approach to restraining Beijing.

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Washington also passed the Taiwan Travel Act and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2019, elevating Taiwan-US relations and protecting Taiwan's democratic system.

Top officials from the two countries now engage in visits and government-level cooperation, and governments and media in the UK, Germany, Austria and other countries have expressed support for Taiwan as it struggles with Chinese pressure.

Global political-economic structures and policies have changed due to China's rise, and the US, Europe and Japan are cooperating against China and supporting Taiwan. This has caused Beijing to strengthen its push for its "one China" principle and annexation of Taiwan, using residency permit cards for Taiwanese in an attempt to portray Taiwan as a domestic issue.

Taiwan's pro-unification camp is playing along, echoing China's threats, "united front" tactics and international suppression, and raising China's five-star flag everywhere. It even uses Chinese-generated fake news to smear the government and push "one China political correctness," making government operations more difficult.

Some of these acts have become national security issues and infringe on legal free speech protection.

In response, the government should consider taking advantage of the anti-China, pro-Taiwan stance of the US and other countries through policy and legal changes addressing the precarious cross-strait and domestic situation to safeguard the cross-strait "status quo," as well as Taiwan's sovereignty and hard-won democracy.

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Translated by Eddy Chang

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