

Sovereignty belongs to Taiwanese

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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It was heartening to see high-ranking officials from the US and the UK publicly countering Beijing's military threats against Taiwan after Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) early this month said that China reserved the right to use force to bring Taiwan into its fold.

Still, the foreign officials, however friendly they might be, missed one crucial point, which the Democratic Progressive Party government unfortunately failed to act on and assert Taiwan's sovereignty in the international arena.

US National Security Council spokesman Garrett Marquis on Jan. 6 tweeted: "The US rejects threats or the use of force to compel the people of Taiwan. Any resolution of Cross-Strait differences must be peaceful and based on the will of the ppl on both sides."

Separately, British Minister of State for the Commonwealth and UN Tariq Ahmad on Jan. 14 said: "In line with our long-standing position on Taiwan, we encourage Taiwan and China to engage in constructive dialogue to resolve this issue, taking into account the views of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait."

The Presidential Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs promptly expressed their gratitude to the officials, adding that Taiwan would continue to work with like-minded nations to ensure peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

While the government's response represented Taiwanese's peace-loving nature and the nation's willingness to work for regional peace and prosperity, it failed to clarify Taiwanese's right to self-determination.

The problem with the foreign officials' remarks is: Why does Taiwan's future have to be "based on the will of the people on both sides" of the Strait?

Article 2 of the Republic of China (ROC) Constitution states that "the sovereignty of the Republic of China shall reside in the whole body of citizens," who are described in Article 3 as

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“persons possessing the nationality of the Republic of China.”

Therefore, only people who hold ROC citizenship can decide the nation’s future, not the citizens of the People’s Republic of China.

By staying mum on remarks that suggest that the nation’s future should be determined jointly by Taiwanese and Chinese, the government has unwittingly allowed the international community to disregard Taiwan’s existence as a sovereign state.

Would Singapore’s future be based on the will of Malaysians? Should Burmese decisionmakers take into account the views of people in Thailand? The answer is obviously no, as each of those countries is a sovereign state that is neither dependent on nor subjected to another country.

Taiwan is a sovereign and independent nation, and the suggestion that Taiwan take into account the views of 1.42 billion Chinese is ludicrous — not to mention unconstitutional and grossly negligent of Taiwanese public opinion.

A survey conducted by National Chengchi University’s Election Study Center in April last year showed 85.6 percent of respondents saying that the future of Taiwan and cross-strait relations should be collectively decided by the 23 million Taiwanese.

As citizens of a sovereign state, Taiwanese have the right to determine their own future. This power must not be usurped and the government must make sure that no country ever dreams of seizing Taiwanese’s hard-won rights and freedoms.

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