

After years of blasting the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) for “creating trouble” in the Taiwan Strait by seeking admission into the UN — at one point under the name “Taiwan” — the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) under President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) vowed to engage in “pragmatic” diplomacy to better ensure the interests of the nation.

One important aspect of this strategy was to seek admission into “specialized” branches of the UN rather than join the world body as a whole, efforts that, under former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), always irked Beijing and, some said, caused unnecessary tension, given Beijing’s assured vetoing of any such initiative. The UN’s inflexible “one China” policy, meanwhile, also made this objective unattainable.

Ma’s efforts initially appeared to bear fruit when, in May, Taiwan was invited to attend the World Health Assembly meeting under the name “Chinese Taipei.” A month later, however, the UN rejected Ma’s endorsement of two human rights covenants — the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights — which he signed earlier this year to coincide with his first year in office.

At the time, Ma said that Taiwan’s democracy had reached “adulthood.”

Maybe it has, but the Ma administration’s quietness about the UN snub and its failure to provide any criticism of the decision, raises doubts about its own belief in the viability of its “pragmatic” policies. It can well argue that, despite the UN’s refusal to accept the ratified documents because Taiwan is not a member state, Taipei will nevertheless implement their contents to bring the country in line with international standards. Yet, once again, Taiwan’s international space has been denigrated. This time, past brazenness cannot be blamed, as “pragmatism” equally failed.

This turn of events also tells us many things about the UN, which recognizes Beijing’s ratification of similar covenants despite its continued infractions against its own people, but denies a country of 23 million the right to add its own voice to those ideals. It shows us that the UN under Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon lacks the imagination to reward Taiwan’s “pragmatism.” Ultimately, what this tells us is that no matter what Taiwan does — forge ahead as it did under Chen, or maintain a low profile under Ma — Beijing will use its influence in the world body to deny Taiwanese any semblance of international space.

The implications of this as the Ma administration signs one agreement after another with Beijing is that in the end, “mature” democracy and “determination” to uphold the UN covenants notwithstanding, Taiwan has made no gain whatsoever in its efforts to protect itself against China’s authoritarian encroachment. As Beijing does not respect the spirit of those covenants within its borders, we can expect that it would show equal, if not more, disregard for them in Taiwan.

Ma's 'pragmatism' is a sham

Written by Taipei Times

Tuesday, 24 November 2009 08:13

The UN's decision is a terrible blow to Ma's "pragmatic" diplomacy and different approach to cross-strait engagement. The government's muted reaction to this defeat tells us that it either feels powerless in the face of Chinese intransigence or else never really believed in its chances of success and was using the covenants purely for the public-relations value.

At least under Chen, Taiwan's defeats at the UN were dignified.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2009/11/24](#)