

The youth can decide their future

Written by Huang Yu-zhe 黃宇哲

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President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) successfully secured a second term with a landslide win. Young Taiwanese have drawn the most attention by sending a clear message in this election: Taiwan's future is determined by the younger generation, not the older generation as it was previously.

The evidence is the youth voting rate. Taiwan, as a young democracy, has shown that young people cherish and value their way of life: democracy, freedom and respect for human rights.

As a young Taiwanese and undergraduate student of political science, I would argue that the election results are intriguing and unprecedented, but concerning.

On the one hand, we should give three cheers for young people, as they exercised their duty as a citizen in a nation governed by the rule of law. On the other hand, we should face the nation: A Taiwan divided against itself cannot stand. What is concerning is that the elections seemed to turn into a battle between the young and the old. The former is in favor of Tsai standing firm against China, while the latter supported the so-called "commoner president," Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜), the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) candidate.

There are three factors that have encouraged young people to vote for their own destiny:

First, the Hong Kong streets flooded by anti-extradition bill protesters. In the eyes of young Taiwanese, the scene in neighboring Hong Kong is the most powerful image reflecting the imagined communities of a possible future.

Hong Kongers, in particular those who made huge sacrifices and put themselves at jeopardy, tell young Taiwanese: In three decades, Hong Kong will come under Beijing's direct control. The foundations of its way of life, as Beijing promised and negotiated with the UK, have been eroding day by day.

If Hong Kongers, especially the youth, do not stand up now and put their lives at risk to fight for

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their destiny as much as they can, then they would never be allowed to speak a word on matters of democracy, freedom, fair elections and basic rights, let alone an assembly.

Young Taiwanese have said a loud and a clear “no” to China. Nobody but Taiwanese can decide Taiwan’s future and way of life.

Taiwanese have very different shared and cherished values from those in China: democracy versus tyranny, freedom versus suppression, and human rights versus ethnic cleansing.

Second, in the minds of Taiwanese youth, national security is at risk, while the KMT is opening a can of worms. The KMT’s list of legislator-at-large nominees was appalling: retired general Wu Sz-huai (吳石), placed No. 4, was not only unacceptable, but also generated resentment. On what grounds can a retired general participating in the 150th anniversary event of Sun Yat-sen’s (孫中山) birthday and standing for the Chinese national anthem in Beijing represent Taiwanese in the Legislative Yuan, which is the last line of defense for the foundation of the nation’s democracy: participation, discussion and open debate. General Wu and KMT Chairman Wu Den-yih (吳敦義) should be ashamed of themselves.

Last and certainly not least, in the ears of Taiwanese youth, it was irritating and offensive to hear a candidate only criticize others, but lack specific and feasible national policies for this great nation.

During the three televised platform presentations and the presidential debate, Han imitated US President Donald Trump when Trump was the Republican presidential nominee and locked in a fierce battle with his rival, former US secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton. Trump attacked his opponents from every aspect without concrete evidence and deliberation. It is a terrible precedent for a constitutional democracy.

While US citizens unfortunately tolerated such behavior, Taiwanese could not embrace it. This is a lesson for any presidential candidate: The eyes of voters are bright, and Taiwanese, particularly the youth, have sent this message strongly.

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However, Tsai must be aware of one thing: A nation divided against itself cannot stand against China's threat of infiltration. Regardless of whether the elections were indeed a battle between the young and old, Taiwan's democracy is still at its most vulnerable.

What is more worrying is that many Taiwanese are divided against each other over political attitudes, while they fail to understand one thing: When two major political parties are busy fighting internally, an evil regime can easily attack and erode the nation's sometimes vulnerable foundation of democracy by means of intervention aided by wealth, political bribes and industrial espionage.

Just two days before the elections, an inconceivable development occurred in the case of self-confessed Chinese spy William Wang Liqiang (王立強).

Australian police reportedly confirmed with the Ministry of Justice that KMT Deputy Secretary-General Alex Tsai (蔡啟芳) sent directives to Wang to fabricate a statement accusing the Democratic Progressive Party of being involved on behalf of top Chinese officials.

This is proof that China is influencing and intervening in Taiwan's democratic elections. Yet, most Taiwanese dismissed the importance of this case. The government must take this situation seriously and the public should not take it lightly when they have the best case against Chinese infiltration.

To sum up, it is time to stay united and stand shoulder to shoulder, so evil can not influence the Taiwanese way of life and divide them. The elections have shown this will, and the will of Taiwanese, must be even stronger in the future.

Finally, I would like to quote former US president Abraham Lincoln to tell all the candidates: "If elected, I shall be thankful; if not, it will be all the same."

Yet, I further tell the youth: It was not all the same anymore in the elections, we have made our voices heard. Now, let us give three cheers for democracy.

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