

On Feb. 19, two days before the legislative session started, Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator-at-large Wu Sz-huai (吳思懷) submitted a written question to the Executive Yuan for President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), whose interview with the BBC last month Wu said contained a provocative message to China.

Taking questions from reporters in the legislature the next day, Wu quoted a passage from Mencius (孟子), who advised King Xuan (宣王) of the state of Qi that, “it requires a perfectly virtuous prince to be able, with a great country, to serve a small one ... And it requires a wise prince to be able, with a small country, to serve a large one,” implying that Tsai should be more discreet.

Knowing that his statement would draw a backlash, Wu added: “After all, we are the weaker of the two.”

It is lamentable to see Wu look down on the nation’s armed forces, in which he once served as a lieutenant general.

Saying that Taiwan is the weaker nation was an oft-repeated phrase among commentators with a pessimistic, defeatist attitude toward cross-strait relations. It was to remind the public to stay smart and to admonish against taking sides in the competition between China and the US for world hegemony.

Yet is Taiwan really the weaker one? Over the past 70 years, Taiwan has survived China’s threat to “unify the motherland,” proving that Taiwan is by no means weak.

When Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) and his son, Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國), ruled Taiwan, they did not adopt Mencius’ advice that the prince of a small country should serve a larger neighbor.

Instead, Chiang Ching-kuo took a tough stance by implementing the “three noes” policy — no contact, no negotiation and no compromise — leaving Beijing at its wits’ end.

Military not sole measure of power

Written by Huang Tien-lin 黃天麟

Thursday, 19 March 2020 06:28

Taiwan might be small in size and population, but it is not weak. Neither is it small, thanks to its supporters, or Beijing would have launched a war to conquer Taiwan by force without having to push policies to attract young Taiwanese and Taiwanese businesspeople.

Small in size, but never weak in power, Taiwan in 2018 ranked 21st in terms of nominal GDP and 18th in terms of exports worldwide, making it a manufacturing and trade powerhouse.

The difference between strong and weak is not limited to military power. Culture, education, values, economy and politics all constitute a nation's power.

Taiwan's democracy and freedom are strong points, as evidenced by the latest edition of Freedom House's annual *Freedom in the World* report: Taiwan scored 93 out of 100 and ranked eighth among the world's freest countries.

This explains why Taiwan has been supported by the free world on many international occasions.

Taiwan also leads in information technology and semiconductors, and neither the US, Japan nor European countries would want to see these industries fall into the hands of totalitarian China. This is yet another reason Taiwan is not weak.

On Feb. 9 and 10, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted a joint-forces exercise simulating sea-air combat and sent warplanes to encircle Taiwan. On the second day of the drill, two PLA Shenyang J-11 jets crossed the Taiwan Strait median line, with one of them even locking on to a Taiwanese F-16 jet that intercepted them.

The US promptly responded by deploying air and marine forces to navigate the waters and airspace around Taiwan in the following days.

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The reason for this quick response and demonstration of its determination to safeguard Taiwan is simple: Taiwan plays an important role in the US' global strategy.

With Washington's support, surely Taiwan is not weak.

As the military standoff in the first island chain between China and the US becomes more apparent, Taiwan occupies an increasingly vital position in military geography, since defending the first island chain is a matter of war and peace for the US.

The technology war between China and the US is part of their competition for world hegemony. Media reports have said that the US government plans to restrict global chip sales to Huawei; Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co is one of the Chinese company's largest suppliers. The US would need Taiwan to cooperate with the sanctions.

If the US is asking for Taiwanese collaboration, surely Taiwan is not weak.

It is time that Wu wakes up. If the two Chiangs were still alive, they would shout and tell him to "remain calm, self-reliant and dignified in times of adversity," like a soldier.

Wu, now an elected representative of the public, should not belittle Taiwan. Taiwan should refrain from provoking China, but it should not bow down and kneel.

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2020/03/19](#)