

Ma no fan of democracy

Written by Michael Scanlon
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In his June 4 op-ed piece, "Bullets over Beijing," in the New York Times, Nicholas Kristof recounts how 20 years earlier he stood at the northwest corner of Tiananmen Square and watched as Chinese troops opened fire and slaughtered hundreds of unarmed students.

In Kristof's account, everyone was terrified and no one dared to help the injured, who writhed in pain in the 100m space that separated the crowd from the soldiers.

At the end of his article, Kristof writes this paragraph: "In Taiwan in 1986, an ambitious young official named Ma Ying-jeou used to tell me that robust Western-style democracy might not be fully suited for the people of Taiwan. He revised his view and now is the island's democratically elected president."

That Ma has always been ambitious is incontrovertible. In fact, he now seems to have his sights set on holding the post of Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) chairman while simultaneously serving as president.

In addition, Ma was indeed democratically elected to the presidency, winning by a substantial margin.

But Kristof is wrong when he purports that Ma has "revised" his stance on democracy. There is absolutely nothing in Ma's political record to indicate that he has revised his view even slightly.

There is no evidence that Ma has had a change of heart in regard to the suitability of democracy for Taiwanese.

On the contrary, his actions would seem to indicate that he has hardened his heart and even developed a hostility toward democracy and human rights.

MICHAEL SCANLON
East Hartford, Connecticut

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