

Taiwan people must reject ECFA scam

Written by Taiwan News Editorial
Wednesday, 17 March 2010 07:59

People's Republic of China Premier Wen Jiabao made global headlines Saturday in Beijing when he expressed optimism on the early signing of a "cross-strait economic cooperation framework agreement" with Taiwan because while "negotiations are complex, differences between brothers cannot sever blood ties and problems can always be solved."

Combined with Wen's promise in late February the PRC would "grant benefits" to Taiwan to cement the pact, the premier's statements sparked another round of media excitement, opposition criticism and defensive reaction by spokespersons for the insistent drive by President Ma Ying-jeou's rightist Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) government to sign the pact this summer.

Actually, Wen's discourse contained little refreshing content as he has repeatedly touted the racist notion that the people of Taiwan and of the PRC as "blood brothers" in order to redefine out of existence the fact that the 23 million people of Taiwan are citizens of a multiethnic, multicultural and multilingual democratic state.

Indeed, the only novel wrinkle was offered by new presidential spokesman Lo Chih-chiang attempted to refute critics by calling on citizens to have faith in the KMT government's chosen "experts."

Besides manifesting the common and authoritarian logical fallacy of the "appeal to authority," Lo did not mention the identity of the "experts" in which we should have faith nor their presumed areas of expertise.

Dial the '165' hotline

This omission allows us to make a positive suggestion to President Ma, namely dial "165." Almost everyone in Taiwan has seen obliquitous public service advertisements on television and in movie theatres warning citizens not to fall prey to persons who offer attractive benefits, cash or jobs and "only" ask in return that you give them your national identification number or bank account number.

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These advertisements urge any potential victim of a fraud to dial "165" to report scams to the national anti-fraud hotline operated by the National Police Administration (<http://165.gov.tw>), whose web page opens appropriately with a trickster's growing nose. We believe that these advertisements have obvious application to Taiwan's relations with the Beijing authorities.

Specifically, Wen has publically promised "early harvest" benefits and other "concessions" and a favored role for the Taiwan people in "reviving the great Chinese race - nation" as "blood brothers" in exchange "only" for surrendering our international identification card as a "state" and even the "Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu Separate Customs Territory" identity we possess under the multilateral World Trade Organization.

Instead of rejecting this scam, Ma and other senior KMT officials have accepted the logic of Wen's fraud by agreeing to the use of term "cross-strait economic cooperation framework agreement" and have even presented their action as a sign of pragmatism in "setting aside disputes over sovereignty" and as evidence that the ECFA "will not touch on sovereignty or other sensitive political issues."

But the reality is precisely the opposite.

After all, a cursory review of trade agreements between Beijing and other countries indicates that the PRC is meticulous in ensuring proper "protocol" and insisting on the use of formal titles. The innumerable examples include the "Framework Agreement on Comprehensive Economic Co-Operation Between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the People's Republic of China" signed on November 4, 2002.

The only exceptions appear to be pacts between Beijing and the subordinate "special administrative regions" of the former British colony of Hong Kong and the former Portugese colony of Macau.

In both of the "closer economic partnership agreements" (CEPA) signed with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) and the Macao SAR on June 29, 2003 and October 18, 2003, respectively, Beijing refrained from using its formal status and instead used the term

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"Mainland" (literally "neidi" or "inside territory" instead of the usual "dalu") and the geographical phrases "Hong Kong" and "Macau."

Through footnotes, the preambles of both CEPA pacts also explicitly define "the Mainland" as referring to "the entire People's Republic of China," which includes the two SARs.

The "cross-strait economic cooperation framework agreement" title apparently agreed upon by the KMT and the PRC's ruling Chinese Communist Party departs from international protocol and is also by no means "ambiguous." Instead, its use constitutes direct evidence of acceptance of a "domestic" status within the PRC parallel to that of the Hong Kong and Macau "special administrative regions."

Hence, the refusal of the Ma government to insist, at the very least, that the formal WTO titles of both parties be used in the title and body of the ECFA constitutes a profoundly "political" concession of our international legal status as a state or "economic legal entity" and has troubling implications for Taiwan's sovereignty and economic autonomy and horizons.

The impact has already been manifested Monday when KMT lawmakers begged government officials to make sure that Taiwan's "benefits" under the ECFA were "no less than CEPA."

Unwilling or willing, Ma and his KMT colleagues are accomplices in a fraud that will trade our national persona and democracy for illusionary "benefits" that we cannot afford.

Source: [Taiwan News Online - Editorial 2010/03/17](#)