

A Taiwanese student was on Sunday identified as having joined Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lawmakers in throwing water balloons at Democratic Progressive Party lawmakers at the Legislative Yuan on Wednesday during a scuffle over the Cabinet's budget proposal for the Forward-looking Infrastructure Development Program.

Yesterday it was confirmed that the student, surnamed Han (韓), who is enrolled at the Communication University of China in Beijing and working as an intern at the Chinese-language daily China Times, was taken into the Legislative Yuan by one of KMT Legislator Hsu Chih-jung's (許昌俊) assistants.

Legislative Yuan Secretary-General Lin Chih-chia (林錫山) yesterday told a news conference that Han would be referred to the police for obstructing legislative proceedings.

While some people might dismiss the incident as trivial and consider it an isolated case, it should not be taken lightly — as long as the China element is involved. Beijing makes no secret of its ambition to annex Taiwan and has stepped up promotion of the policies it dubs the “three middles and the youth” (三 middle and the youth) — residents of central and southern Taiwan, middle and low-income families, small and medium-sized enterprises, and young people — and “one generation and one stratum” (一 generation and one stratum) — the younger generation and the grassroots stratum.

Particularly after the Sunflower movement in 2014, China has been putting greater emphasis on engaging younger Taiwanese and making them the target of its united front efforts.

Aside from trying to attract Taiwanese teenagers with summer camps and lower entrance scores for Chinese universities, Beijing has been employing economic tools, such as scholarships and job opportunities, in its attempts to lure younger Taiwanese to the other side of the Taiwan Strait.

Han is studying on a Chinese government scholarship and is the leader of a student club at his school. The maximum scholarship grant at the school is 4,000 yuan (US\$593) per semester, according to its Web site, which also states that Taiwanese students applying for scholarship must acknowledge that there is “one China.”

## China taints academic exchanges

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Needless to say, all student clubs at the university are sure to have ties to the Chinese Communist Party.

The latest figures from the Ministry of Education show that there are about 10,000 Taiwanese studying in China and about 9,000 Chinese studying in Taiwan.

This is not to say that cross-strait academic exchanges should be stopped, because such exchanges promote mutual understanding and help improve Taiwan's competitiveness in the international community. But as far as educational exchanges are concerned, they should be left at that — they should not be mixed with politics.

However, bearing in mind that Chinese exchange student Zhou Hongxu (周洪序) was in March detained on suspicion of espionage, Taiwan should stay vigilant and must not naively assume that Beijing would abide by academic principles.

The public should not view every Taiwanese studying in China in a negative light or view every Chinese student in Taiwan through a political lens.

However, the government needs to stay vigilant, because as long as Beijing holds to its ambition to annex Taiwan, it will never cease its clandestine tricks to politicize any cross-strait exchange otherwise deemed harmless.

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