

DPP must change its China policy

Written by Huang Tien-lin 黃天麟
Friday, 25 January 2019 04:40 -

There are many reasons for the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) losses in the local elections on Nov. 24 last year. To sum up, today's government and civic society only see the trees — pensions, support for the LGBT community, the five-day workweek and so on — but the more crucial “China factor” is not a priority.

There are two aspects to the China factor: infiltration and discourse. Despite this, the government's response to China, in particular when it comes to the economy, is lacking and out of touch with reality.

This state of affairs was confirmed by the Mainland Affairs Council on Jan. 2, when council Minister Chen Ming-tong (陳明通) responded to Chinese President Xi Jinping's (習近平) “Message to Compatriots in Taiwan” by saying that when he returned to the council in March last year, he had hoped to straighten out the cross-strait relationship so that people could live in peace, enjoy their jobs and get rich, but things had taken a turn that he could not have imagined.

If that report in the Chinese-language United Daily News is correct, Chen's analysis was poor. Was the council really founded to straighten out the cross-strait relationship and make it possible for people to live in peace, enjoy their jobs and get rich?

The statement implies that if cross-strait relations are not straightened out, the economy would not improve and Taiwanese would not be able to live in peace, enjoy their jobs and get rich.

It is precisely because Taiwan is lead by officials like Chen that people believe misleading statements such as Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu's (韓國瑜) idea that by exporting products and boosting tourism, the city would prosper. That chain of events set off a dangerous wave of support for Han.

However, more than a few government officials have the same ideas as Chen — straighten out the cross-strait relationship and the economy would improve and Taiwanese would prosper. They are actually in the majority — this economic policy is the mainstream view within the government.

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This is not difficult to prove. Consider the past two years and try to find an official who during a question-and-answer session said that the attraction to China is the cause of Taiwan's economic problems. How many? Anyone? Next to none.

Pro-blue camp media have been slandering and smearing the Sunflower movement, but have any government officials supported those brave protesters or given them the respect they deserve? Very few, if any.

The government's only response to the pan-blue camp's demands to improve cross-strait relations and the economy has been a series of non-committal statements. This has allowed people to forget how then-president Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) policy of integration with China led to a depressed economy and starting salaries of NT\$22,000, and how the Sunflower movement saved the economy.

By this, they turn truth into sophistry and sophistry into truth.

Over the past year, the public has come to firmly believe that it is the DPP's inability to improve cross-strait relations that is turning Taiwan into an aged and poor country.

Any reform is likely to offend some people, but that does not mean that a nation can go on without reform.

When the Japanese government raised its consumption tax, it offended the whole electorate. The Japanese government also taxes every Japanese traveling abroad. Is Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe afraid of being criticized? No. However, Taiwanese politicians are. Why?

Chen's statement that he hoped to straighten out the cross-strait relationship so that people could prosper explains everything.

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The DPP has not split, nor is it seriously afflicted by corruption. What the party lacks is a correct economic discourse, and if it is not quick to improve this state of affairs and change the misguided policy of economic integration, it will be overtaken by China's policy to promote unification through economic means.

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Translated by Perry Svensson

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