

Xi's memo is a wake-up call

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Wednesday, 22 May 2013 08:19

Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) and his comely wife, Peng Liyuan (彭丽媛), may be the most outwardly attractive first couple to lead China in several generations, but behind the smiles and the glamor lies a hardline streak that Taiwan should not — cannot — ignore.

For months before he became president and chairman of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), China watchers were divided on whether Xi would be a reformist in the same vein as former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev or the continuation of more conservative elements within the Chinese leadership.

That speculation came to a head last week, when sections of a secret memo to Chinese officials were briefly made public in Chinese media.

“Concerning the Situation in the Ideological Sphere,” issued by China’s Central Committee General Office, leaves no doubt now that Xi’s regime is both stringently nationalistic and altogether hostile to Western values and influence.

Coming on the heels of regulation issued to Chinese universities about the “seven evil subjects” — universal values, freedom of the press, civil society, civic rights, historical mistakes by the CCP, crony networks and judicial independence — the memo urged Chinese officials to be relentless in their opposition to the West. In rhetoric reminiscent of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong (毛泽东), it called on officials to adopt “battlefield tactics” against liberalism and internal dissent.

This call for mobilization, along with references to China as being “besieged” by Western plots and values, should put to sleep any notion that China under Xi will move in the direction of political reform.

While this bodes ill for the future of China’s relations with Western countries, these revelations should be especially alarming for countries like Taiwan, or Special Administrative Regions like Hong Kong, where Western values — notions such as freedom of the press, liberalism, right of assembly and so on — have taken root.

Xi's memo is a wake-up call

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Wednesday, 22 May 2013 08:19

For the CCP, there is nothing more dangerous and threatening than for those “pollutants” to be picked up, internalized and adapted by “Chinese” societies. While directives like the notorious memo and the “seven evil subjects” will be used to intensify crackdowns on Chinese dissidents, they will increasingly regulate how Beijing interacts with “dangerous” societies that have espoused the very values that threaten the CCP’s grip on power.

Such work has already begun in Hong Kong and Chinese pressure on Taiwan to cooperate in academia, culture and the media — efforts that are part of a united front strategy with close ties to the Chinese intelligence apparatus — are well under way. Those in Taiwan who hoped that exchanges and cooperation with Chinese would help foster change within China, or those who regard Taiwan as a means to an end, as an instrument by which to democratize China, are headed for a rude awakening.

Xi’s CCP will not allow Westernized “Chinese” societies to transform China and will do everything it can to turn the tables by undermining liberalism with those. It will seek to demonstrate that Western values are alien to “Chinese” societies and that they are but a transient phenomenon that cannot withstand the natural forces of Chinese exceptionalism.

The CCP has shown its cards. It is now up to Taiwan and Hong Kong, hopefully with help from other societies that have espoused similar values, to meet that challenge and to erect the appropriate defenses. The battle lines have changed; China, more sure of its ability, is on the counteroffensive and it is taking the war of ideas abroad, starting with the societies closest to it.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2013/05/22](#)