

The right to the Taiwanese Dream

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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We teach our children that if they want to dream, then dream big, not only because they have the right to dream, but if they work hard and opportunity allows, one day that dream might just come true.

For most people a dream is an aspiration to achieve something they desire. They work toward that dream, hoping to fulfill it someday.

While the American Dream embodies the possibility that anything can happen with enough hard work and the right attitude, and the Chinese Dream — a phrase popularized by Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) — paints the bold picture of the rise of the Middle Kingdom, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairman Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) raised the topic of a “Taiwanese Dream” in a recent speech.

For Su, four elements make up the Taiwanese Dream: sovereignty, human rights, security and the economy. Whether Su’s observation matches the wishes of the Taiwanese people is debatable, but one thing is sure: For the past 400 years, all that most Taiwanese ever wanted was to be left alone and free from foreign control so that they could make the island prosper by themselves.

In the past century, under the Japanese colonial government and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) regime, Taiwanese wanted to be their own master and decide their own future, whatever that may be.

This humble wish was not granted. The first opportunity that did not allow it was when World War II ended and the KMT government and troops took over. The second was in October 1971, when Resolution 2758 of the UN General Assembly recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as the sole representative of the whole of China. Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) turned down a US-led proposal of dual representatives.

The KMT regime’s loss of the Chinese Civil War in 1949 and the General Order No. 1 by US General Douglas MacArthur brought an influx of more than 2 million troops and refugees into Taiwan.

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Also introduced for the first time was the Republic of China (ROC) system, including the government and the Constitution, as well as the “one China” ideology that presumably recognizes Taiwan as part of a China awaiting eventual unification.

Since then, the ROC system and the “one China” principle have been two chains tying Taiwanese hands, preventing them from chasing their dream.

Former KMT chairman Wu Poh-hsiung’s (吳伯雄) reaffirmation of the “one China” framework in his recent meeting with Xi along with President Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) reiteration that cross-strait relations are not state-to-state relations, both suggest that unification or a certain degree of political integration is the only way to go.

The gravity of these statements should be seen in the light of Su’s Taiwanese Dream.

No one else described Taiwanese aspiration better than the late World United Formosans for Independence chairman Ng Chiau-tong (鄭智雄), who said that “The ROC is like a cap on the top of our head. If it’s rainy, we’ll have to wear it for now, but we are waiting for a sunny day to take it off.”

The fate of the Taiwanese people has once again been decided by others, with their options narrowed down and swiped away. They are drifting further away from their dream.

Parents do not tell their children that they should only dream of being engineers or computer programmers and not artists or writers. Likewise, the Taiwanese people should be entitled to pursue their dreams as Americans and Chinese do, even if the political aspiration is to amend the Constitution or change the name of the country.

With the KMT government’s current designs, Taiwanese may be losing their third opportunity to work to achieve their dream. There might never be a fourth.

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