

Ma looks after China's self-interest

Written by Jerome Keating
Friday, 01 November 2013 07:40

Begin with this basic premise: All countries operate out of self-interest.

There is nothing wrong with that; it is to be expected. Of course, it is possible for a nation to have more than one motive, but if self-interest is not a part of a country's modus operandi, then its leadership should be questioned.

When President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) begins touting the advantages of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), it would be natural for him to claim that it is in the nation's interest.

However, is this really true? With a little scrutiny, it soon becomes evident that Ma is asking Taiwanese to buy into the pact without knowing what is in it and the self-interest is his own and perhaps China's.

The nation has had about six years of Ma's bumbling incompetence.

He produced what has become a standing joke: the infamous "6-3-3" campaign promise.

His popularity has sagged; his approval ratings hit a low of 9.2 percent — an embarrassing figure especially after Ma suggested that then-president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) should step down at a time when his "poor" rating was higher than Ma's.

Then comes the smoke and mirrors.

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Throughout his presidency, Ma has touted the image of peace in the Taiwan Strait because of his benign “kowtowing” to China, but does peace really reign?

As the world constantly hears this peace mantra from Ma, skepticism fills the air.

China's 1,600-plus missiles aimed at Taiwan are still in place. China's rulers still block Taiwan and have upped the ante; they now say that the issue must be settled in this generation. Of course “settled” for them means unification under Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) definition of “one China.”

At the same time, prices continue to rise, salaries diminish and housing prices skyrocket.

Taiwanese are ironically told that they should be happy that their mid-sized country with a superior economy has gotten a crumb from China: assuming “guest status” at a recent international forum.

If things are so great, why do the people need to be told repeatedly that Ma has brought this new “peace in our time” and prosperity? Whose reputation is Ma trying to salvage?

Without any real examination by the Legislative Yuan or the public, Ma and the leaders of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) are saying that the ECFA should be passed quickly.

However, the crucial factor in this push is that while Ma touts its alleged advantages, he avoids the real question: What does China get out of it?

All countries put themselves first and a hegemonic China is certainly one that pursues its self-interest with a vengeance.

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Does China need the agreement to help it solve its slowing economy?

Is this economy crucial to the salvation of a country of 1.3 billion people?

Do China's farmers and its service industries really need outside help?

The only reason for Chinese farmers and service providers to bring their wares here, is to swamp, undercut and destroy the local markets for China's benefit.

Another factor that must be faced is China's repeated blocking of Taiwan from international forums and how Beijing makes no bones about considering the nation a rebellious province.

China's handling of "rebels" in Tibet, Xinjiang and Hong Kong is of no comfort.

Yet these warning signs seem to go in one of Ma's ears and out the other as he pushes for closer ties.

In his self-interest, the president talks out of both sides of his mouth.

In one breath, he says that the time is not right for political talks, but in the next he says that they may happen at upcoming events despite the absence of calls for political talks from Taiwan.

Ma says that he will seek a political consensus before any negotiations, but then he proceeds to negotiate without that consensus.

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From the fabricated "1992 consensus" on, all talks have been restricted to a party-to-party basis between the KMT and the CCP.

Taiwan is already a major investor in China; major industries have moved there.

Instead of putting more eggs in the China basket, the nation needs to develop a balanced international trade network.

If the KMT really has the nation's self-interest at heart, it should spend its efforts on that.

The crucial question remains: If the ECFA brings no real economic advantage to China, what does China get from it?

This is what has been at the heart of Ma's contrived attack on Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) who has pushed for further examination of the ECFA.

Taiwan is getting a raw deal and Ma is trying to salvage his reputation at the nation's expense.

And China? One does not have to worry about China; it is taking care of its own self-interest well enough.

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