

Strong chain to contain dictatorship

Written by Wilson Chen 陳維生

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To gain control over cross-strait relations, Taiwan must be aware of the advantages it holds over China. Currently, it does not have economic or military advantages; instead, it has the advantages of universal values and international alliances. These are the only means by which the nation can establish mutual trust with China, and self-confidence is necessary to do this.

After Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) assumed office, Chinese politics took a turn to the left, toward the era of former Chinese leader Mao Zedong (毛澤東). However, in Taiwan, democracy has moved forward in leaps and bounds.

Consider the social campaigns, like the anti-nuclear movement, that have caught on. They are all evidence that democracy is rising to a new level. While the struggle between President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平) may seem to have caused chaos, it has helped to enhance the rule of law.

Despite China's economic boom, the unprecedented explosion in its national strength and its expansion of military power, China is still a backward country culturally and in terms of the character of its people it is even more of a failure.

Taiwan's ruling and opposition parties have stressed the importance of handling cross-strait relations pragmatically. Since the issue of independence cannot be immediately solved, it would be better to place it aside.

Since the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has declared that anything can be negotiated as long as it is done under the premise of the "one China" principle, as a countermeasure, Taiwan should propose that anything can be negotiated as long as it is done under the premise of universal values.

Such an approach would put the ball back in Beijing's court. If the two nations enter equal negotiations based on the universal principles of democracy, freedom and human rights it would be beneficial to Taiwanese, as well as to Chinese. It would also benefit fundamental safety, help the healthy development of China and be a valuable contribution to world peace.

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Some people are worried that talk about democratization will anger China, but this is not certain. The CCP is not cast out of iron and the minority faction that promotes reform within it is awaiting external help. If the CCP does get angry, then even in the eyes of Chinese, it would lose its most basic moral standing.

Others are worried that in a democratized China, nationalistic sentiment would become even stronger. This argument does not stand up to scrutiny. Look at Hong Kong — it was still possible to protest against the Tiananmen Square massacre commemoration a few years ago. However, this year it was no longer possible because it was opposed by most Hong Kongers who believe in universal values. In Hong Kong, which is much freer than China, there is no market for nationalism.

Some politicians have been visiting China, where they have declared their intentions to restore “greater China” to its former glory. This is an outdated form of nationalism.

Over the past few years, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the CCP have been overly close and this has increased the risk for the nation, for Asia and even the world. Important political figures from the US have expressed concern and this is something that Taiwan cannot afford to overlook.

The CCP’s slogan is: “Stop Taiwanese independence and spur unification.” In recent years, the make-up of cross-strait relations has evolved, making it seem as if Beijing has effectively stopped independence efforts. Beijing will not quit and it will definitely take an even harder line on unification.

With the many incentives and threats the CCP has dished out, those in power have lost themselves and keep saying things indicating their loyalties are shifting to China.

Judging from the way things are going, independence can be forgotten; even the “status quo” will be difficult to maintain.

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Taiwan should learn from the lessons provided by Tibet and Hong Kong. Neither managed to negotiate a political agreement with China's authoritarian government, so how is Taiwan going to be able to pull this off? If it does manage to do it, what will the price be?

China has isolated Taiwan, but on a greater level, the US has isolated China. Although China is huge geographically, it is a desolate island amid the huge waves of the global trend of countries becoming increasingly civilized. It is the world's last bastion of dictatorship.

China has started to show its true hegemonic face. It has started to cause frequent trouble in the South China Sea, the East China Sea and on its borders with India. It is precisely for this reason that Asia-Pacific nations have tripped over themselves in affiliating with the US with its policy of returning to the region. They are now starting to form regional alliances, joining hands to resist the CCP.

Taiwanese need to think hard about their role and position in regional alliances. The nation is located at a major juncture on the first island chain in East Asia and if it fails to participate in regional alliances, a link in this chain will be broken.

Taiwan must not become a weak link in the international strategy to contain this last bastion of dictatorship.

If the nation is to have a future it must handle relations with China and take part in the strategic alliances of the civilized world.

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Translated by Drew Cameron

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