

Superficial peace is very harmful

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) often brags about how much cross-strait relations have improved since he took office in 2008, and how both Taiwan and China abide by the so-called “1992 consensus,” yet the way in which China has treated Taiwan and its envoy at the APEC meeting shows that Ma’s “achievements” are nothing but lies.

Attending the APEC meeting as Ma’s special envoy, former vice president Vincent Siew (宋楚瑜) was not treated as he should have been at all, and despite the APEC meeting being an international event, Taiwan has been treated as just a part of China.

The “domestic” treatment of Taiwan started with the delivery of the invitation.

In the past, APEC invitations were usually delivered by a special envoy sent by the host nation’s leader to the president of Taiwan in person. However, on this occasion, the invitation was delivered by China’s Taiwan Affairs Office Deputy Director Gong Qinggai (龔青剛) — who was not sent as an envoy, but rather just happened to be in the nation on a visit — to Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council Minister Wang Yu-chi (王郁琦) during a scheduled meeting between the two.

Rather than formally delivering an invitation to an international event on behalf of the host nation, the way in which Gong presented the invitation was more along the lines of “Oh, by the way, here’s an invitation to the APEC meeting, I happen to have it with me since I’m in Taiwan anyway.”

How was Ma addressed on the envelope? Of course the word “president” was not present; instead, the envelope read: “The Honorable Mr Ma Ying-jeou.”

Then came the meeting between Siew and Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) on Sunday.

Despite Siew attending as Ma’s envoy, Xi only addressed him as “Mr Vincent Siew” and greeted Wang with a mere “nihao.” The meeting was reported by Chinese state media outlet

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Xinhua as a meeting between Xi and the “honorable chairman of the Cross-Strait Common Market Foundation Vincent Siew.”

The manner in which China treated Taiwan’s special envoy to APEC is certainly frustrating, yet, even more frustrating is that the government not only failed to protest — as any other nation would do under such circumstances — but was eager to defend China.

Asked by the media in a news conference to comment on the way in which he was treated during his meeting with Xi, Siew said he did not feel the treatment was degrading. He said he felt that he was well respected and that Xi was very friendly, adding that how the Chinese state media choose to describe him is “not something I can control.”

Grilled by lawmakers, Wang said that he did not see anything wrong with the way the invitation was delivered or the title on the envelope, adding that everything was agreed upon by the two sides prior to the delivery.

It is a positive development that both sides of the Taiwan Strait are adopting peaceful relations, but it is equally important how this is achieved.

True, a nation might avoid war by surrendering immediately when threatened, but while surrender might lead to superficial peace, it also leads to serious exploitation and repression.

Taiwan would prefer peaceful cross-strait relations, but the government must speak up and protest when the nation’s interests are being harmed, as no peace is worth compromising national interests and sovereignty, especially if such a compromise only brings further harm.

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