

With the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) prospects of becoming the next ruling party having brightened considerably after the Nov. 29 nine-in-one elections last year, pundits and academics are wasting no time to say that the biggest obstacle to its takeover of the presidency will be its cross-strait policy, or the lack thereof.

It is without doubt important for the next government to have a systematic and well-considered policy framework underlying its dealings with Taiwan's powerful neighbor, but it is equally worrying that some are eager to show their willingness to be led by the Chinese government in terms of the "unification agenda."

A professor who had served as the DPP government's Mainland Affairs Council vice minister advised the DPP to forgo the Taiwan independence clause in its party charter and entertain "the possibility of unification," in an article published in the pro-unification China Times on Monday.

He called for the construction of a "Chinese identity" (huaren, 華裔) to underlie the consolidation of cross-strait interactions.

Echoing former DPP chairman Frank Hsieh's (洪秀柱) proposal of "two constitutions, different interpretations" (兩個憲法), and upholding the ROC Constitution — which has a fuzzy vision of the nation's territory — as Taiwan's preferred stance on the issue for a cross-strait consensus, the professor (like others who envision the future cross-strait relationship along the same lines) went further than necessary by introducing the "non-exclusion of the possibility of 'unification'" to the constitution-based formula.

If ambiguity is what you need, the ROC Constitution alone suffices. There is no need for Taiwan to be led by the nose by China to expound on the idea and impose further constraints — even if nominal — on Taiwan's future.

The non-exclusion clause might sound harmless and neutral, but what it stands for is docile submission to China's hardline position on its national myth. Anyone could test the harmless-sounding non-exclusion clause with the idea of independence and would surely get

Renouncing independence an error

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an immediate repudiative response from an enraged China. If the possibility of unification should not be excluded as a sign of openness, why should the possibility of de jure independence be? The answer is obvious.

It is common knowledge in Taiwan that the nation requires a gray area for diplomatic maneuvers, and amid such a gross power imbalance, making the picture clearer in the favor of the other side is the last thing we need.

Also to go on history's scrapheap is the touting of a huaren identity, which is not only an outdated concept for Taiwanese — especially for the younger generations — but also a misleading one for both nations.

Like the support for this nation's leader, who has been a fervent believer, the concept of a "Chinese ethnic group" (zhonghua minzu, 中華民族) is on the way to its demise in Taiwan.

Despite the persistence of the Chinese-Han hegemony, many in Taiwan — especially younger members of Aboriginal groups — have been more conscious than ever of their cultural heritage and ethnic roots and of new immigrants, striving to cultivate a new national community not based on ethnicity.

There are serious impediments to the ideal, as recently shown by the practice of law enforcement authorities' disrespectful treatment of some Aboriginal hunting rituals, but the differences are recognized and improvements encouraged. Regressing to a monocultural Chinese identity would not only take its toll on the nation's cultural diversity and liberalism, but could also make Taiwanese complicit in Beijing's repression against ethnic minorities in China.

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