

The route Tsai should go with the 'status quo'

Written by Paul Lin 林

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Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) statement that maintaining the "status quo" will be the foundation for how she handles cross-strait relations has drawn a variety of responses. Perhaps the responses from the pro-China camp can be ignored, but even the pro-localization camp is raising questions: What is the "status quo" and how will Taiwan develop?

There is no need to talk to China about this, because anything other than outright surrender on Taiwan's part would displease Beijing. It is the US that calls for maintaining the "status quo," and this is why Tsai must explain what she means to Washington and clearly define her ideas so that she can ask the US to help maintain it.

The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) often emphasizes that the "status quo" is "peace," which has remained for several decades. The KMT only stresses cross-strait peace to intimidate Taiwanese to accept its pro-China line.

The DPP should define the "status quo" as Taiwan being an independent and sovereign nation possessing three factors that make it so: its own territory, people and government. These things are why China does not dare launch an invasion of Taiwan. This is the "status quo" that needs to be maintained and is what the US-Japan security treaty wants to maintain. The American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) enjoys special status simply because Taiwan is an independent and sovereign state that does not belong to China.

If Tsai is to offer a definition of the cross-strait "status quo," it should be based on the 1999 "special state-to-state" dictum (特別關係).

First, many Taiwanese are Han Chinese and they have inherited Han culture. The situation in Taiwan is similar to that of Singapore. The two sides of the Taiwan Strait can coexist in harmony if China abandons its ambition to annex Taiwan by force. Unfortunately, Beijing has deployed more than 1,000 ballistic missiles targeting Taiwan in an attempt to threaten the nation and sow discord.

Second, Beijing wants to annex Taiwan, so Taiwan must deal with China differently from how it

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deals with other countries. For example, Taiwan’s free-market economy is still restricted by the Act Governing Relations Between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (兩岸關係人民關係條例), which stipulates various preventative measures against Chinese investments.

Former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) was elected in Taiwan’s first democratic presidential election in 1996. In July 1999, Lee defined cross-strait relations as “special state-to-state” relations. In May of that year, the DPP’s national congress passed the Resolution on Taiwan’s Future (台灣前途決議案), defining the nation as an independent and sovereign state. According to the resolution’s Article 2 and Article 4, which deal with cross-strait relations, Taiwan does not belong to China, and the two sides should seek mutual understanding and cooperation through dialogue. This was a reflection of the special relationship.

However, after the DPP came to power, then-KMT chairman Lien Chan (連戰) and then-Taipei mayor Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) forced Lee to resign his chairmanship of the party. As they betrayed the KMT’s original position and threw their bags in with the Chinese Communist Party, they caused serious damage to the “status quo.”

If the DPP regains power next year, it should take a strategic approach to mending the “status quo.” As for Taiwan’s future, the party’s resolution clearly states that it should be decided by all Taiwanese in a referendum. One can only hope that the US, Japan and other democracies will respect the will of Taiwanese.

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Translated by Eddy Chang

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