

The dramatic changes in the tug-of-war between the US and China over the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) must have been a shock to the US government. The President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) administration's last-minute shady deal with China, which involved sending a letter of intent to China's Taiwan Affairs Office to join the bank, not only surprised the public, it left them in utter shock.

First, it is common knowledge among Taiwanese that China's rejection of Taiwan's bid to become a founding member of the AIIB was related to Taiwan's unrecognized statehood. Unless Taiwan wants to settle for being just another province of China, it is hard to imagine that Taiwan would be able to join this institution. Yet this common understanding was overturned in an instant by Ma.

Second, looking at Taiwan's weak voice and status on the international stage, anyone could tell you that joining the AIIB is a bad idea that would cause Taiwan to lose both face and money. Only someone who is truly incapable or who has been completely blinded by the "China ideology" would be foolish enough to fantasize that this could be a golden opportunity for Taiwan.

Looking at dealings with the Asian Development Bank, the economic benefits for Taiwan have been limited. Going from a Japan and US-led institution to a bank headquartered in Beijing with over 50 percent Chinese ownership, the possibility of business opportunities are slim to none, unless Taiwan wants to kowtow to China for handouts.

Third, without Japanese and US backup, Taiwan would have already been a province of China. In fact, Taiwan would have missed out on presidential elections, democracy and freedom. Furthermore, China has more than 2,000 missiles pointed at Taiwan day and night. Despite these circumstances, Taiwan still tried to make a deal with the devil and applied for the AIIB on the night of the application deadline.

To US President Barack Obama, this must have been like when Caesar said Et tu Brute (You too, Brutus?) — when he saw Brutus among the people who stabbed him to death. Dealing with the aftermath of this rift in US-Taiwan relations will require a lot of hard work.

Ma's banked credit denied by AIIB

Written by Huang Tien-lin 黃天麟

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Fourth, as the vast majority of rational Taiwanese predicted, Ma's dream of joining the AIIB as a founding member has been shattered. Mainland Affairs Council Minister Andrew Hsia (夏立言) even admitted that "China identifies Taiwan as a non-sovereign country." However, Ma still decided to go through with the application to be a founding member, which is tantamount to declaring to China and the world that Taiwan accepts the Chinese view that "Taiwan is a non-sovereign country." This absurd decision is no different from treason.

Does Taiwan really need to willingly identify as a "non-sovereign country" and struggle to become just a normal member? Hon Hai chairman Terry Gou (郭台銘) represented the business community and said: "If Taiwan does well and has more good tech companies, people will come and ask us to join the AIIB."

Taiwan must help itself before it can help others. The Ma administration wants to waste NT\$620 billion (US\$19.97 billion) — as the government is planning to pledge to increase the investment to that amount in an attempt to highlight Taiwan's real power — on an investment of little economic benefit that is destroying Taiwan's status as a nation.

Rather than doing that, Taiwanese should ask him to take that NT\$620 billion and instead spend it inside the country, perhaps setting up an innovation and entrepreneurship fund. This would encourage more innovation and entrepreneurship among young people in the technology sector, and would be beneficial to the nation. This would be 100 times more effective than joining the AIIB.

Since Taiwan has already been locked out of the bank, the government should give up — for the sake of economic efficiency and for the sake of the survival of the nation.

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