

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Eric Chu's (馬英九) visit to China has stirred endless controversy for days. His statement about both sides of the Taiwan Strait belonging to “one China” during his meeting on May 4 with Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) has attracted the most criticism.

Most Taiwanese anticipated that the New Taipei City mayor, who advocates the “one China, different interpretations” view, would at least mention the Republic of China (ROC) in his meeting with Xi, and declare that the ROC is different from China, or that it “seeks common ground, while respecting differences,” to prove that the so-called “1992 consensus” and “one China, different interpretations” are not a load of nonsense.

However, none of this materialized.

Chu did not dare acknowledge the ROC, and only narrated history and inconspicuously slipped the name of his country into his speech. No wonder The Associated Press reported that Beijing interprets Chu's 1992 consensus as a commitment toward eventual unification. Most foreign media outlets also interpreted it in the same way.

Chu's statement only reaffirmed two hard facts that have characterized the KMT-Chinese Communist Party (CCP) exchanges from the very start.

First, KMT officials never dare assert the ROC in front of China. This cowardly behavior afflicts all KMT officials as soon as they land in China, including former vice president Lien Chan (連戰) when he visited 10 years ago. In recent years, it has also begun to make itself felt when they meet Chinese officials in Taiwan. It is becoming a serious problem.

Second, the KMT claims that these exchanges will be used to change the people of China, but in reality, they have only changed the KMT and hurt Taiwan's dignity and interests. Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) members are no exception. Judging from the performance of the two sides during the meeting between Chu and Xi, apart from China's team of six delegates and former Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) vice president Kao Koong-lian (高崧廉) on the KMT side, it was easy to see that the others were outsiders.

Toughening up against ‘one China’

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Chu's behavior made it clear that the KMT has not learned its lesson from last year's Sunflower movement and nine-in-one elections. Regardless of those events, the KMT once again acted in a way that runs counter to public opinion and it will have to accept the consequences.

The most outrageous thing is President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) constant justification of the “1992 consensus” — as if it would become true if he repeats it often enough and forces it on the public.

Ma even claimed that former presidents Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) and Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), as well as DPP Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), had all previously accepted the “one China, different interpretations” concept, and said future presidents cannot reject it.

With his public support hovering at about 9 percent and one year of his term remaining, Ma can no longer make deceptive statements that are part factual and mostly out of context, spoiling his remaining credibility.

In the memoirs of former SEF chairman Koo Chen-fu (辜振甫), who led the Taiwanese delegation at the 1992 cross-strait talks in Hong Kong, he rejected the “1992 consensus” and emphasized that there were mutual understandings at best, as the two sides mostly talked past each other. Ma can spout improper political rhetoric about the two former presidents and Tsai, but he cannot reject Koo's first-hand account.

It is necessary to give a more accurate account of what actually took place at the time.

At the talks in Hong Kong, it was China that insisted on the problem and implication of “one China.” However, both sides swapped 13 versions of statements, resulting in only verbal exchanges without agreeing on a written consensus.

In other words, the two sides agreed that there was no agreement on the meaning of “one China” and that they each had the freedom to explain what the “consensus” meant.

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The result of the meeting was that Beijing initially respected and accepted the SEF's verbal interpretation of the implications of "one China," although it later only stressed that there is "one China." Yet at the time, 75 percent of the public was opposed to the "one China" principle.

The term "1992 consensus" was created by then-Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) chairman Su Chi (蘇起) in 2000. Five years later, Lien used it as the foundation for initiating cross-strait relations during his visit to China.

After Ma took office, the concept was used to push Taiwan increasingly in the direction of eventual reunification with China, and he declared that the "1992 consensus" was "proposed by us and accepted by China."

Ma also transplanted the National Unification Guidelines onto the Hong Kong talks. It is indeed like Taiwan Solidarity Union Chairman Huang Kun-huei (黃昆輝) later said: Ma, the MAC vice chairman at the time of the Hong Kong talks, "not only has amnesia, but is also delusional."

Most fundamentally, anybody who does not support the "one China, different interpretations" concept, but criticizes those who are opposed to it and forces others to accept it likely suffer from another mental problem: split personality disorder.

This kind of leader is precisely what China wants to see in Taiwan. Xi has made several statements to this effect, and in March, he said that the "1992 consensus" is the foundation for political exchanges between the two sides, adding that "without a solid foundation, the earth will shake and mountains will move."

Then in the meeting with Chu, Xi emphasized that without recognition of the "1992 consensus," there will be no prospect for peace and development. This is a matter of setting preconditions based on an imaginary foundation. Such verbal threats from China are equivalent to gangster's logic.

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“Gangster’s logic,” as defined by Chinese online encyclopedia Baidu Baike, is an incoherent and illogical mode of thinking. Call it rogue or thug logic. For gangsters, logic is another word for armed force. To reason with gangsters requires strength greater than theirs; otherwise, no matter how reasonable an argument, it will fail to defeat gangster logic.

In this regard, Taiwan needs to toughen up and start by opposing the politicians and political parties that force the “1992 consensus” upon the public. In recent years, young people have shown that they are wising up, saying: “If the KMT does not fall, Taiwan will.”

Translated by Zane Kheir

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