

US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Kin Moy is to become the new director of the American Institute in Taiwan's (AIT) Taipei office. At a time when Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Eric Chu (吳敦義) has just returned from meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Chairperson Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) is to visit Washington for her "political interview," some have said that the purpose of the AIT appointment is to ensure Taiwan maintains the cross-strait "status quo," so the US can realize its strategic shift of balance to Asia.

Maintaining the "status quo" was something Tsai proposed in her cross-strait policy not long ago, but her proposal was strongly questioned by the KMT, with President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) asking whether the public would prefer the "status quo" under the KMT or the "status quo" under the DPP of seven years ago. Ma is attempting to play the unification-independence card, but his ruse is not so clever.

Forget for a moment that last year's Sunflower movement was a vote of no confidence in Ma's cross-strait policy and that the KMT suffered a major defeat in the nine-in-one elections. As US academic Richard Fisher wrote in his book *China's Military Modernization: Building for Regional and Global Reach* — which the Ministry of National Defense uses as a reference for Taiwanese military officers — the pro-Taiwanese independence force so roundly condemned by China actually refers to Taiwanese democracy. Therefore, opposing Taiwanese independence is opposing democracy.

This is why Beijing canceled former Mainland Affairs Council deputy minister Tung Chen-yuan's (陳雲元) planned visit to China earlier this month. Although Tung has proposed freezing the DPP's pro-independence platform and forming a cross-strait peaceful development commission, he crossed Beijing's red line by proposing to take "democratic China" as the basis for cross-strait exchanges.

The US-based Center for Strategic and International Studies last year conducted a survey, called "Power and Order in Asia," with 402 non-governmental diplomatic experts from 11 countries. More than 70 percent of respondents believe China's push for unification with Taiwan would hurt their national interests. About 43 percent of Chinese academics surveyed even said that unification cannot enhance China's national interests.

Opposing China split is opposing democracy

Written by Lu I-ming 呂伊明

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Mainstream public opinion in Taiwan also favors de facto independence. An opinion poll on cross-strait relations conducted by the council in September last year showed that 6.2 percent of respondents supported immediate unification and 12 percent supported unification on the premise of maintaining the “status quo”. About 19.5 percent supported immediate independence and 27.3 percent supported independence on the premise of maintaining the “status quo”. The rest supported maintaining the “status quo” either for now or for good.

Meanwhile, a survey on unification conducted by the non-governmental Taiwan Indicators Survey Research in August last year showed that only 20 percent of respondents supported it, while 61.1 percent opposed it.

In the mind of the public, it is not a question of maintaining the “status quo” of seven years ago or now. It is a democratic awareness against unification.

The opinion polls demonstrate Fisher’s contention that opposing Taiwanese independence is opposing democracy is true.

Tsai has already constrained herself by proposing to maintain the “status quo”, and it would be unwise for the KMT and Chinese Communist Party to continue to tie her to the “one China” policy.

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Translated by Eddy Chang

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