

Unification through a change of identity

Written by Christian Fan Jiang 0000

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All China's strategies to invade Taiwan are directed at what Beijing perceives to be the fundamental problem preventing unification: Taiwanese identity.

Interference in Taiwan's education has always been considered key to resolving the nation's identity problem. In 2008 then-Chinese president Hu Jintao (胡锦涛) made six Taiwan policy proposals, known as "Hu's six points." The first of these points stresses the "one China" doctrine and the second stresses a "one China" market. They are followed by the foundation of a national identity that comes as a result of closer political and economic integration: Promoting Chinese culture and tightening spiritual bonds.

Then-Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) deputy chairman John Kuan (关), while attending a Taiwan Week activity in Hubei Province, summed up the KMT's intentions by saying that President Ma Ying-jeou (马英九) had a "very heavy responsibility" during his first term to change the previous administration's promotion of desinicization and Taiwanese independence. The focus of Kuan's statement was that: "This requires the mainland's [sic] assistance."

From the beginning, the KMT has asked the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for help in making Taiwanese education more China-centric. The KMT and CCP have launched long-term talks, likely to involve ideology, which means the KMT is unlikely to act audaciously. The results have not been very smooth.

On Aug. 6, 2012, the international edition of the People's Daily reported that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait were discussing the signing of a cross-strait cultural and educational exchange and cooperation agreement, which some people have called a cultural and educational version of the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, in an attempt to institutionalize cultural and educational collaboration.

When Ma took office, his government blocked what they defined as the "desinicization course guideline" that was introduced by the previous administration and formed a special task force to adjust the curriculum. After four years, the 2012 course guidelines were released. No one could have imagined that only two years later, as much as 60 percent of the Taiwanese history curriculum would be changed through what the government termed "minor corrections" due to "errors" and the need for "corrections" and "constitutional compliance."

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Why suddenly make such major changes? In analyzing events, it should be remembered that last year the student-led Sunflower movement broke out. Since Ma's re-election two years ago, he has behaved more irrationally, but the seeds for change were planted long ago. China was naturally aware of this and anxiously prepared for the worst: A change in government power.

China previously entered into an "alliance" with the KMT as a means of implementing its unification strategies. However, now that the KMT has lost support, Beijing has not used its influence and network in Taiwan to manage things on its own. This is important when trying to understand the reason for the changes to the finalized course guidelines.

Recently the Taiwan Solidarity Union put forward concrete evidence — a list of all the members on the course guideline task force — and accused the Ministry of Education of being China's "unification education ministry." This is evidence that the CCP no longer trusts the KMT and is directly managing education-related affairs, rather than relying on the KMT as the go-between.

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Translated by Zane Kheir

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