

Setting sail from KMT's reactionary practices

Written by Lee Min-yung 李敏勇

Sunday, 13 September 2015 02:14

Could any opener better summarize Taiwan's current situation than the immortal words with which Charles Dickens started his novel *A Tale of Two Cities*: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"?

The Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and all who sail with it still insist on looking backward, whereas more progressive people are trying to look forward.

Taiwan is emerging from a tragedy to welcome the dawn of a new political era. The KMT, the architect of Taiwan's tragedy, still believes itself to be the party that could save the nation amid the current political crisis.

If Taiwan was a normal, democratic country, should not the principle of political parties taking turns to hold the reins of power actually facilitate the country's development along the road of democratization and normalization?

Is that not how things should be?

However, from the first transition of political power after the 2000 presidential election, the KMT has been blatantly against this principle, showing that it has never really abandoned the mindset that it is entitled to govern the country.

This mindset is a result of the party-state nature of the KMT regime. It has meant that the People's Republic of China wrestling control of China away from the Republic of China (ROC) government was a zero-sum game, where the winner took it all. The reason for China not being able to develop a normal transition of power between parties on different ends of the political spectrum — as it is done in Europe — is that Beijing, too, is haunted by this rather outdated concept.

Between 2000 and 2008, the KMT did its best to use its power to frustrate the Democratic Progressive Party administration. The tension and fighting between the government and the

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opposition came from the KMT's belief that the ROC belonged to the party and that the ancestral concept of the ROC had primacy over the actual country.

The transition of power in 2000 gave the KMT an opportunity to reinvent itself, an opportunity to shake off the party-state mindset and turn itself into a democratic political party. Evidently, it had no intentions of doing such a thing. The KMT presidential candidate at the time, former vice president Lien Chan (連戰), in his capacity as party chairman, joined forces with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) — which had previously overthrown and ousted the KMT and is still trying to annex Taiwan as part of its own territory — in the misguided and pernicious hope that he could harness the CCP's power to deal with his political rivals at home.

Then came President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), who brought the party back to power, but did not make use of this new opportunity either. After gaining power, he rather disingenuously embarked on a policy of getting even closer to China, and the political, economic and cultural difficulties he has brought on Taiwanese due to the excessive links with Beijing have brought his own party close to collapse.

The cries that are being heard in Taiwan — saying that all will be lost unless the KMT folds — demonstrate that the colonial party-state system of the KMT is, indeed, falling apart.

Taiwan has at last reached a crossover between the fortunes of party-state domination and the country working to rebuild itself. This is the “golden cross” moment where Taiwan stands up to the KMT.

It is time Taiwanese set sail and left the KMT and its reactionary ways behind. This is a historical imperative.

Lee Min-yung is a poet.

Translated by Paul Cooper

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2015/09/13](#)