

Voters reject KMT fear-mongering

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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There has been no shortage of threats of a turbulent Taiwan Strait in the presidential campaign over the past few months, with several Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) heavyweights and Chinese officials resorting to intimidation to try to browbeat Democratic Progressive Party presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) into following their rules on cross-strait relations.

On several occasions, KMT presidential candidate Eric Chu (朱立倫) has taken issue with Tsai's policy of maintaining the "status quo," asking her to give an unequivocal answer as to whether she accepts the so-called "1992 consensus."

He said her reluctance to acknowledge the consensus constitutes a provocation to China.

President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) has also taken every chance to warn Tsai against what he deems as the potential repercussions of dismissing the consensus.

"There is no way one can maintain the status quo within the constitutional framework on one hand, while refusing to accept the '1992 consensus' that conforms to the Constitution on the other hand," Ma said.

Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) said in March last year that undermining the "1992 consensus" could jeopardize mutual cross-strait trust, and have an "earth-moving and mountain-shaking" impact.

Retired People's Liberation Army lieutenant general Wang Hongguang (王洪光) also made similar threats in an opinion piece published on Tuesday, saying there is a myriad of "military tactics and tools" China could employ to "liberate" Taiwan and that he would refrain from going into too much detail to avoid "scaring Taiwanese."

Wang urged Tsai and other pro-independence forces not to take any chances.

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“I do not think Taiwanese will come to their senses unless they feel what ‘earth-moving and mountain-shaking’ is like,” he wrote.

The Chinese Communist Party believes these threats can scare Taiwanese voters into choosing the presidential candidate of a party branded as an emblem of “peace and stability,” since they have succeeded in doing so in the past.

Yet in almost every poll, Chu has been lagging far behind Tsai, who, despite her softened stance toward China, is still perceived as a champion of Taiwanese independence, or at least economic independence.

Having lived under the consistent threat of thousands of missiles pointed at their nation, it is without doubt that every Taiwanese is well aware of the possible consequences of angering China — economic sanctions, further-diminished international space and even a military invasion. However, instead of running to the arms of the KMT for the sake of seeking stability at the expense of the nation’s sovereignty, voters said “No” to the ruling party and China in the 2014 nine-in-one elections.

The ensuing emergence of several online movements, such as the “Republic of Taiwan” passport sticker campaign and the boycott of Taiwanese singer Huang An (黃安) — who gained notoriety for reporting pro-independence Taiwanese in show business to the Chinese authorities — also indicates a rising sense of national identity.

Amid growing anti-China sentiment, maybe it is not Tsai who should rethink her cross-strait policies, but rather the KMT and the Chinese leadership.

Tomorrow’s elections will set the tone for cross-strait relations and show a “new public opinion” toward the issue of independence.

By electing Tsai as president, voters would be sending an unequivocal message to China and the KMT — that their old ways of doing things no longer work and it is time for Taiwanese to take back control and decide the course of their own nation.

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