

The hoggish KMT should stop playing filthy games

Written by James Wang 王健

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The lawmaking bodies of Taiwan, China and the US can be divided into just two types; yet each looks and feels completely different. At China's National People's Congress, politicians seated in rows, and with the look of death in their eyes, applaud mechanically on cue. They cannot reject any bill put to the house by the politburo and they certainly cannot boycott any of Chinese President Xi Jinping's (习近平) stern lectures.

Over in Washington at the US Congress, a majority of politicians are shrewd and experienced operators, but they politely welcome their president to the house when he delivers the State of the Union address. They may applaud their president — or not, as they so please. Once the president has finished speaking, a spokesman from the opposition party provides a formal response. Each representative is free to say what they like and transparent voting reveals their true position on any given issue.

In Taiwan's Legislative Yuan, legislators engage in free-for-all bouts or interrupt proceedings by unfurling banners and shouting slogans. They might also carry a large model pig into the chamber, place it in front of the lectern and perform a human pig show to prevent the legislative speaker from addressing the house.

The Beijing model lacks humanity. Their “parliamentarians” are rubber-stamping robots with no democratic mandate from the Chinese public. They must follow the will of the dictator at all times.

The scene in Washington is rather different. Each lawmaker has a defined role to perform; those who have to deliver a report do so, while those who want to voice their opposition are permitted to do so. Whichever party can carry the will of the people is rewarded by the public at election time. This is the normal process of competition in a democracy.

By comparison, Taiwan's legislature feels like a childish game. While the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) pioneered Asia's first republic, it does not appear to understand the meaning of the word. For the first time since the implementation of the Republic of China Constitution, the KMT has been reduced to a minority party in the legislature, and is blindly engaging in a repeat performance of the “uncivilized” opposition it accused the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) of adopting in the past to deprive the premier of his right to address the legislature.

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Out of the KMT's remaining 35 legislators, 34 are willing to play along with the party's childish games. Only one, former legislative speaker Wang Jin-pyng (王金平), now in his 70s, understands the importance of upholding the dignity of the legislature and refused to take part in his party's boorish antics.

Taiwan's democratic system must progress to the next level. Politicians must distinguish between what is right and what is wrong, because the nation cannot afford to become trapped in another vicious cycle of reprisals. Legislators are bestowed with a legal duty to rationally debate the issues of the day, pass laws and supervise the government. That duty does not include holding a street demonstration in the legislature.

Linking the interests of Taiwanese pig farmers with the highly emotive issue of food safety, the KMT has created an entirely fictitious problem over US pork imports as an excuse to boycott and disrupt a statement to the legislature: It is nothing more than a game set up to mislead the public.

Japan has accepted the international standards on the leanness-enhancing food additive ractopamine, which is found in US pork. The average life expectancy in Japan is seven years higher than that in Taiwan. Now there is some food for thought.

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Translated by Edward Jones

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