

Maybe it is because President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) first political dealings were as a negotiator for Taiwan's membership in a number of international organizations, such as the WTO, that she has always portrayed a calm personality. However, in testing times, as she has faced since taking over as president, perhaps she should demonstrate decisiveness.

In Ing's Clique: The Last Mile to Light Up Taiwan (蔡英文的圈子), which was published during last year's presidential campaign, Tsai said that she had heard people describe her as expressionless, cold or appearing indifferent. She said that such an appearance is important as a negotiator to prevent others from discovering what she is thinking or feeling.

Other people who have worked closely with Tsai, and were interviewed for her book, said that she always remains calm and does not make a decision until she has thoroughly considered all possible options and consequences.

That is certainly the type of character that a nation facing challenges needs — someone who does not make rash decisions, but responds to situations in a rational manner.

However, being a head of state is not just about being able to make rational decisions. A nation's leader must also have charisma — a trait that makes a leader different from a policy adviser.

Taiwan is certainly in a troubled time, after eight years under former president Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration, which brought Taiwan further under the territorial ambitions of China, widened the gap between wealthy people and those who are economically disadvantaged, and left a welfare system on the brink of collapse and an unbalanced housing market, among other problems.

Since Tsai was sworn in as president on May 20, some issues have surfaced repeatedly, including a labor dispute at the state-owned China Airlines and controversial reforms to the Labor Standards Act (勞基法). More recent issues have also been widely discussed, such as animal abuse at a marine base and the alleged accidental firing of an anti-ship missile that destroyed a fishing boat, killing its captain and injuring three crew members.

Time for leader to show leadership

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Sunday, 03 July 2016 06:36

Take the missile mishap as an example: The government's handling was satisfactory. Upon learning about the incident, Premier Lin Chuan (林昌), who was at a legislative meeting, immediately asked Vice Premier Lin Hsi-yao (林錫耀) to go to Kaohsiung, where the navy base and the victim's family are. The vice premier apologized, ordered an investigation and promised that the government would take full responsibility for the incident.

Tsai, who was on a state visit to Taiwan's Latin American allies, was briefed, but she did not make a statement — she attended pre-scheduled events and acted as if nothing had happened.

Tsai waited until she arrived in Taiwan before commenting on the missile blunder, perhaps because “when the mission of the state visit ends, it is the time for other missions to begin,” as she said at a news conference at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport.

Her handling was adequate in a practical sense, but politically weak.

The public expects the president to comment on significant incidents immediately, even if she is abroad, and she should have canceled some events to attend meetings in response to the incident.

The crisis could have been an opportunity for Tsai to show the public her leadership and decisiveness, but unfortunately, she missed it.

Although the government's handling was satisfactory, the president's actions were not decisive enough.

Similar situations have occurred since Tsai's administration has come to office, making some people feel that the government is somewhat lost or chaotic.

Time for leader to show leadership

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Sunday, 03 July 2016 06:36

It is time for Tsai to get out of her “negotiator” mode and show some strong leadership.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2016/07/03](#)