

Tsai's frustrating 'Post' interview

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Saturday, 23 July 2016 07:47

It was refreshing to read the Washington Post interview yesterday that President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) gave senior associate editor Lally Weymouth on Monday, although nothing earth-shattering was revealed and there were no “scoops.”

It was also frustrating.

In the interview, her first with an international media organization since taking office, Tsai reiterated that Taiwan did not accept the Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling last week on the South China Sea, rejected the idea that Beijing has set a deadline for her government to accept the so-called “1992 consensus” and discussed the economy.

Nothing Tsai said would come as a surprise to Taiwanese.

However, it was a refreshing interview in the sense that Weymouth, a member of the Graham family that owned the paper for 81 years and who worked as a diplomatic correspondent, first for Newsweek magazine and then for the Post, has a long track record of interviewing heads of state and asking relevant, if not always hard-hitting, questions that others might not ask — and because the interview gives the broader world a glimpse of Tsai that wire agency reports usually do not have space for, even those written during Tsai's campaign for president.

It was also refreshing to see the Post, in its introduction to the interview, use the phrase “so-called” before “1992 consensus,” instead of taking it as a given, as wire agencies have done in the years since former Mainland Affairs Council chairman Su Chi (蘇起) coined the term in 2000.

The intervening years of Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda, especially the eight years under former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九), have made it very difficult to erase the rest of the sentence that usually follows “1992 consensus”: “in which Taipei and Beijing agreed that they are part of ‘one China,’ but with different interpretations.”

Tsai's frustrating 'Post' interview

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Saturday, 23 July 2016 07:47

Perhaps if journalists began to substitute “then-KMT government” for “Taipei” in this phrase, it might make it easier for the rest of the world, if not Beijing, to understand that when there is a change of government, political positions and goals also shift.

If one accepts that the position of a Tory government in the UK might be very different from that of its Labor predecessor — say in regards to agreements made about being part of the EU — then one should accept that a Democratic Progressive Party administration will differ from a KMT administration.

The KMT ran Taiwan for decades, but it no longer speaks for this nation or most of its people.

Yet the interview was frustrating because there was an implicit bias in the questions — as is so often true in international coverage, and sometimes domestic as well — that it is Taipei that must make all the effort, all the concessions, in cross-strait relations.

Weymouth asked Tsai if she felt she was closing the gap between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China and how she planned to handle day-to-day relations with Beijing.

Yet it is not Tsai or the Taiwanese that do not want to communicate, it is Beijing that has slammed the telephone down.

It is Chinese President Xi Jinping's (习近平) government, like those of his predecessors, that only wants to hear its viewpoint regurgitated back at it. It is Beijing that cannot accept that negotiations and discussions do not require capitulation by one of the parties.

Tsai showed she has a far better grasp of reality than Xi in her answers to questions about the economy and trade ties with China. She recognizes that times have changed and new models and solutions must be found or developed.

One only wishes that her counterparts in Beijing could do the same.

Tsai's frustrating 'Post' interview

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Saturday, 23 July 2016 07:47

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2016/07/23](#)