

The Taiwan-US-Japan alliance

Written by Huang Tien-lin 黃天麟
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Pro-China academics and media have warned President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) about the rise of China and urged her to take a pragmatic approach to dealing with this issue to deepen cross-strait relations.

However, what is happening on the global stage is moving in exactly the opposite direction. For more than a year, the international political climate has undergone changes advantageous to Taiwan and conducive to an alliance between Taiwan, Japan and the US. This is true economically and militarily.

From an economic perspective, pro-China media outlets base their arguments for the “one China” policy on the view that China’s economic, military and technological sectors will soon surpass the US’. The US’ GDP was US\$17.9 trillion last year, while China’s was US\$10.9 trillion. Pro-Chinese media say that it is unavoidable that the US will decline and China will rise.

While it is true that China’s GDP soon will overtake the US’, it is precisely because of this trend that the US must adjust its China policy, which makes it necessary for the US to form an alliance with Japan and Taiwan.

China’s economy began to boom in the 1990s, and the US hoped that this would prompt China to reform and become more free and democratic.

However, reality has developed in the opposite direction: China has relied on state capitalism to grow stronger and it is rapidly developing its armed forces. As a totalitarian state, it is vowing to change the rules of the game on the international stage.

To safeguard the US’ national interest as China’s GDP approaches its own, Washington has no other choice but to team up with Japan — whose GDP ranks third in the world and whose economic development has the potential to rival China’s — and Taiwan — whose GDP ranks 17th — to be able to maintain its economic advantage.

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Taiwan is pushing the development of an Asian Silicon Valley project and its national defense industry, which would be two links in an alliance between the US, Japan and Taiwan. The production value of Taiwan's semiconductor industry was NT\$2.16 trillion (US\$68 billion) last year, making it the world's second-largest semiconductor hub.

From a military perspective, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte said that he would rather team up with Russia and China than with the US, and told US President Barack Obama to "go to hell," shocking the whole world.

Duterte is also taking action to back his statements. On Oct. 7, the Philippines informed the US that it would suspend joint patrols in the South China Sea and cancel the two nations' annual joint military exercises, while Duterte's planned visit to China was upgraded to a full state visit.

The Philippines and China seem to have reached an agreement to overturn the Permanent Court of Arbitration's ruling on a case between the two nations over a disputed island in the South China Sea, which was resolved in the Philippines' favor.

Duterte's change of heart is a major blow to the US' "first island chain" deployments.

However, in a "first island chain" without the Philippines, Taiwan's military role would become even more important. Taiwan would become more crucial than any other nation in East Asia, with the exception of Japan and Australia.

Following China's military expansion and the Philippines' change of mind, a military alliance between the US, Japan and Taiwan would become a necessity. East Asia is set to become a battleground between totalitarian capitalism — the Chinese model — and democratic capitalism.

The Philippines' change of mind is a gift, but such gifts also require human intervention. Democratic US presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton — who is likely to become the next US president — once warned Taiwan that dependence on China will only make Taiwan weaker.

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The government must direct its efforts toward thoroughly changing the policy of economic integration with China, which only serves to weaken Taiwan, and correct the mistaken view among economic officials that peaceful cross-strait development is beneficial to the nation.

The government must instead concentrate its efforts on domestic investment, while at the same time requesting that the US and Japan work to elevate Taiwan's sovereign status and international recognition.

This is Taiwan's way out; it is the only way out.

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