

Taiwanese have final say about 'one China'

Written by Chen Fang-ming 陳芳明

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The so-called “1992 consensus” has set off an internecine battle in the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), the focus of which is whether there is such a thing as “one China, with each side having its own interpretation” of what that “China” means. The “1992 consensus” was made up out of thin air and its only purpose has been to deceive Taiwanese. Throughout his eight years in office, former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) used it in his dealings with Beijing, which was happy to play along and use the empty slogan to promote its version of “one China.”

After eight years of deceit, the KMT was completely cast aside by Taiwanese. Beijing stresses “one China” and the KMT talks about “one China, different interpretations,” with each using what it deemed necessary to uphold a brief third period of cooperation between the KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After having been kicked out of office by voters, the KMT finally has to face conflicting interests inside the party. To bolster her own position in the party, KMT Chairwoman Hung Hsiu-chu (洪秀柱) is to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) and she seems to think of herself as Ma's equal.

The leadership in Beijing has never recognized the existence of “one China, different interpretations.” As long as the KMT continues to play the “one China” game with Beijing, it will be playing according to Beijing's rules, regardless of what the party does to convince itself otherwise. At least Beijing has done nothing to challenge “one China, different interpretations,” which has allowed the KMT to continue to deceive Taiwanese from within the “one China” framework.

However, this situation might soon change. Ma is concerned about his place in history, so why should Hung not be, too? After she took over as chairwoman, Beijing has used the “1992 consensus” as bait in an attempt to set up a meeting between Hung and Xi. One of the conditions for such a meeting is that Beijing does not want to hear any talk about “different interpretations.” As expected, Hung insists on the “1992 consensus.”

She clearly stands on Beijing's side and is even more willing to play than Ma. Recent leaders in the pan-blue camp have always been eager to obtain a meeting with the Chinese leader and Hung is no different. So far, no one seems to be able to stop her continuing her adventure. When Ma invited leading party members to a banquet, he was unable to control the situation and was forced to let Hung air her ideas as she pleased. This is yet another sign that the KMT is about to splinter yet again, and once Hung and Xi have met, the “1992 consensus” will follow the party down the drain.

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Taiwan cannot afford to play the “one China” game. Once caught up in it, the nation is doomed. And now Beijing is playing a new game: It is warning the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) not to treat cross-strait ties as part of a state-to-state relationship or challenge the “one China” bottom line. The DPP has always treated this issue with the greatest apprehension. After all, the DPP must respect the will of Taiwanese.

The KMT has never cared about the will of the people and it has always done as it pleases. However, it has self-destructed and it will never be able to control things by itself again.

Is it really that important that Hung and Xi meet? Is the “one China” concept really that important? Just look at the meeting between Ma and Xi, following which the KMT finds itself never again able to obtain the trust of voters. Where are all the leaders from the pan-blue camp who have met with a leader from Beijing? The final arbitrator is not Beijing; it is the people of Taiwan who have the power to decide.

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Translated by Perry Svensson

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