

The DPP faces historic challenge

Written by Annette Lu 呂秀蓮

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Back in the days of Formosa Magazine (自由時報) and the Kaohsiung Incident, we members of the dangwai (黨外, “outside the party”) opposition movement put ourselves and our families at risk to oppose martial law and the Chinese Nationalist Party’s (KMT) one-party rule. We were often in a state of fear and exhaustion. I often jokingly say that it was a good thing that the KMT was anti-communist, because it allowed us to devote our energy to confronting the KMT while it handled the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

However, following the rise of democratic and Taiwan-centric forces, the anti-communists of yesteryear have become more and more communist-friendly, and those who were on the far right have flipped over to the far left.

After Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) became president, the KMT adopted opposition to independence and the promotion of unification as its basic national policy. The meeting between KMT Chairwoman Hung Hsiu-chu (洪秀柱) and CCP Chairman Xi Jinping (習近平) was a blatant display of the cozy relations that prevail between the two parties. However, the sight of short and puny Hung shaking hands with tall and burly Xi conjured up an image of a hawk grabbing hold of a little chick.

On Sept. 4, two months before Hung’s trip to Beijing, the KMT passed its “cross-strait peace party platform,” declaring that the party would deepen the so-called “1992 consensus” on the basis of the Republic of China (ROC) Constitution, actively explore the possibility of signing a peace agreement as a way of resolving cross-strait animosity and play the role of promoting the institutionalization of cross-strait peace to safeguard the well-being of Taiwanese.

The KMT also declared that it would use the “cross-strait peace party platform” to counter the Democratic Progressive Party’s (DPP) Taiwanese independence platform.

However, just like previous KMT chairpersons who have visited China, Hung did not clearly utter the name “the Republic of China” while she was there. Only when she was paying homage at the mausoleum of ROC founder Sun Yat-sen (孫中山) in Nanjing did she offer a cryptic allusion to the public’s expectations by presenting a couplet that read: “The splendor of China; the glory of the republic.”

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As to the exhortations of senior KMT figures — Ma and former vice president Wu Den-yih (吳登益) — before Hung went to China, that she should repeat the “1992 consensus” and “one China, different interpretations” as often as possible during her trip, she responded to them with a word game by embedding these terms in her slogan of “seeking agreement on the one China principle while shelving different interpretations of ‘one China.’”

Xi, for his part, used the meeting to solemnly announce six policies toward Taiwan that emphasize the willingness of the KMT and the CCP to cooperate.

The six policies are as follows:

First, on the basis of the “one China” principle, to discuss resolving cross-strait animosity and reaching a peace agreement. Second, to improve communication, jointly bearing the responsibility of opposing Taiwanese independence and maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Third, to actively leverage channels of communication to promote and expand trade, commerce and business cooperation between the two sides. Fourth, to promote cross-strait cultural exchanges to reinforce the spiritual bond between compatriots on the two sides. Fifth, to foster the well-being of compatriots on both sides and uphold the Chinese nation’s overall interests. Sixth, to preserve cross-strait peace and foster a revival of the Chinese nation.

Xi went further by departing from the script and saying that opposition to Taiwanese independence was based on the Chinese nation’s standpoint and that China’s 1.3 billion people could not accept independence for Taiwan.

“We have the determination, the ability and the preparedness to deal with Taiwanese independence, and if we do not deal with it, we will be overthrown,” he said.

Right after the meeting, representatives from the two parties held a “cross-strait forum on peaceful development,” during which they discussed politics, economics, culture, society and young people, and reached numerous conclusions, such as a cross-strait mechanism of mutual trust in military affairs, opening China’s stock markets to Taiwanese companies, using a Chinese view of history to promote peaceful development and improving services for young Taiwanese.

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Immediately after the forum, China announced “41 key cross-strait exchange items for 2017,” which almost entirely focus on interactions between young people from the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The proposals include expanding programs for Taiwanese students to do internships in China, offering high salaries to attract 260 university professors from Taiwan, attracting visiting academics, recruiting 1,000 Taiwanese entrepreneurs, setting up a NT\$48.75 million (US\$1.53 million) joint fund for cross-strait cooperation in science and technology, inviting 100 young Taiwanese to take part in a cross-strait youth micro movie competition, and holding baseball and soccer games. Clearly these activities are intended to launch an all-out united-front campaign aimed at young Taiwanese, who are said to be under the influence of “natural independence.”

No wonder Hung said that having set out with a warm heart, she felt even more enthusiastic when she came back. After returning to Taiwan, she announced that she was bringing benefits for the eight counties and municipalities administered by the KMT, including commercial activities such as visits to China before the end of this year to hold business and travel exhibitions.

Meanwhile, Zhou Zhihui (周志懷), head of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences’ Institute of Taiwan Studies, said that “the cancer cells of Taiwanese independence must be thoroughly rooted out,” adding that the door for the DPP has not completely closed, but is slightly ajar.

This was the first time since President Tsai Ing-wen’s (蔡英文) inauguration on May 20 that Xi has publicly stated his policies on Taiwan. They might sound like the same old story, but they also express Beijing’s consistent attitude, which Xi is pursuing with great determination.

Some people said that although Xi was shaking Hung’s hand, his words were directed at Tsai.

Xi’s meeting with Hung clearly expressed Xi’s strategy, which is that the CCP should join hands with the KMT to split Taiwan and bring about Chinese unification.

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Tsai has not formally responded, except through her spokesman, who said: “With deepening democracy as our foundation, we will take forward-looking and proactive measures to promote constructive exchanges and dialog across the Taiwan Strait to build an enduring, peaceful and stable cross-strait relationship. Beijing authorities should face up to the reality that the ROC exists and recognize that Taiwanese have an unshakable faith in democracy. The leaders and governments of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should jointly display wisdom and flexibility and work together to push the existing cross-strait divide toward a win-win situation.”

However, what do “forward-looking and proactive measures” and “an enduring peaceful and stable cross-strait relationship” really mean? How are the two sides going to “display wisdom and flexibility” and how will they overcome divisions and create a win-win situation?

Faced with the joint efforts of the KMT and the CCP to split Taiwan and their determined attacks to promote unification, a couple of sentences are by no means an effective way to safeguard Taiwan’s sovereignty and the lives of its 23 million people.

Now that it is in government, the DPP needs to confront this question seriously and respond to this historic challenge conscientiously.

Annette Lu is a former vice president of Taiwan.

Translated by Julian Clegg

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