

Ko playing into Beijing's hands

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) has caused a stir with comments he made in Shanghai.

In a speech at the Taipei-Shanghai Forum opening ceremony on Monday, Ko said: “The two sides of the [Taiwan] Strait are one family” and should establish “a community of common destiny.”

The dispute between Taiwan and China is like a “quarrel between a married couple,” he said.

China's Taiwan Affairs Office Minister Zhang Zhijun (張志軍) echoed Ko in a meeting with the mayor on the sidelines of the forum, saying: “We always think of the two sides of the Strait as one family, a community with a shared destiny.”

At a glance, word choices such as “family” and “community” make it seem as if the relationship between Taiwan and China has been smooth sailing — but has it?

Would one sabotage a family member by stealing their friends, as Beijing did last month when it seduced Panama into switching diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China?

Would one claim goodwill and at the same aim hundreds of missiles at someone they call “family?”

The relationship between Taiwan and China is one of enemies. Beijing makes no secret of its ambition to annex Taiwan and remove the Republic of China from the map. Until China renounces the use of force against Taiwan to achieve unification, no matter what rosy pictures Beijing paints and beautiful words pour from the mouths of Chinese officials, it is just sugar-coating for its drive for unification.

While the flowery phrases might have confused some as to whether China is a friend or foe,

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an increasing number of Taiwanese are beginning to see through Beijing's hypocrisy with its moves to push Taiwan out of the international arena.

Whether Ko is among the increasing number of officials breaking away because of naivety remains to be seen.

Ko might have simply wished to extend goodwill and show that he harbors no hatred toward China. Attending forums that aim to promote peaceful cross-strait relations is to be encouraged if they expand Chinese appreciation of Taiwan's democracy.

However, it is a different story when one party fails to show mutual respect and sincerity, but instead maintains a hidden political agenda.

By choosing to share a stage with Chinese officials when Taiwan's sovereignty has been oppressed on the international stage, Ko is playing into the hands of Beijing's "united front" propaganda and has become an actor in Beijing's "one China" game, rationalizing its actions and giving the impression that Taiwan is part of China.

If Ko needed to touch upon cross-strait affairs, he could have seized the opportunity to ask about the whereabouts and well being of detained human rights campaigner Lee Ming-che (李明哲) and lodge a protest about Beijing's latest bullying of Taiwan at the World Health Assembly.

His failure to do so was disappointing.

"Conducting united front tactics is their [Chinese officials'] duty and carrying out anti-united front tactics is our [Taiwanese officials'] duty," Ko said yesterday.

If only Ko was as wise and vigilant as those words suggest.

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