

An interesting article appeared in the Diplomat on Monday. It was entitled “The White Wolf of Taiwan: Zhang Anle and his solution for the cross-strait dilemma” and was written by an assistant professor of Chinese history at a US university.

In Taiwan, the name “White Wolf” is romanized as Chang An-le (張安樂).

Chairman of the China Unification Promotion Party (CUPP), Chang is a former leader of the Bamboo Union gang who lived in China for many years while on Taiwan’s most-wanted list.

The CUPP promotes the idea of immediate cross-strait talks to unify under a “one country, two systems” framework.

The article, which reads like a hagiography of the man, is about sanitizing Chang’s image, while neatly tarring the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and other anti-unification or pro-independence political groups in Taiwan with the same criminal brush. It also introduces an implied threat against anyone who opposes the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) eventual unification agenda.

It wants to return the idea of unification within a positive framework to political discourse in Taiwan — given Beijing’s disillusionment with the Chinese Nationalist Party’s (KMT) utility in that regard — in time for next year’s municipal elections.

It also attempts to push back at the idea that China’s much-maligned use of the “one country, two systems” formula in Hong Kong should serve as a cautionary message for Taiwanese.

While much of what the article says about Chang may be true, what it does not say about him, and its mischaracterization of the political situation in Taiwan, sounds like CCP propaganda.

The article describes Chang as a man with a “humble smile, and eloquence on the stage [that] made him seem a college professor” giving the impression of a “perfect elderly gentleman, making way for others and treating women and children with particular courtesy” and whose “knowledge of Chinese history and politics would inspire awe among scholars.” It says he “could have retired as a ‘happy grandfather,’ but chose instead to come back to save Taiwan from pro-independence forces.”

This characterization might be lost on many Taiwanese who cannot get past his criminal career, or the Sunflower movement supporters who were told by this “perfect elderly gentleman” and “happy grandfather” that “you are all fucking offspring of China, but do not deserve to be Chinese.”

Although it does not deny his criminal past, the article also says his “vision and charisma” gave his former gang “a sense of political mission and a touch of romantic character that no similar organization possesses.”

Really.

When the article is not glossing over Chang’s violent and criminal past, it is attempting to characterize the DPP as a criminal organization, pointing to the alleged underworld connections of certain leading party figures.

It then turns to how Chang’s unique vision is the only thing that will repair social tensions and the frayed relations with Beijing since President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) came to power, calling the CUPP one of the only forces sending a positive signal back to “the mainlanders” that they can still work with their “Taiwanese compatriots” for a united China before Beijing “completely gives up on peaceful integration.”

Therein lies the implied threat: Back Chang’s vision or invite Beijing’s wrath.

Finally, the article talks of how Chang believes “voluntary acceptance” of the “one country, two systems” formula would place Taiwan in the most favorable bargaining position and that the

## **‘White Wolf’ as post-truth news**

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formula would, in his opinion, work better in Taiwan than it has worked in Hong Kong.

Thank heavens for that, as many Taiwanese watching the situation in Hong Kong are getting scared.

There are legitimate questions as to why this piece was published — why now? — and who the intended readership is.

We are not living in a “post-truth world,” we are living in a media environment where it is the new normal to read demonstrably skewed propaganda pieces in reputable publications.

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