

Taiwanese must band together to face China

Written by Paul Lin 林保

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The day after President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) returned from her most recent overseas state visit, El Salvador severed diplomatic ties with Taiwan and switched allegiance to China. The timing was clearly carefully chosen by Beijing as part of its ongoing psychological war against Taiwan.

This shows that Beijing was nervous about Tsai's overseas visit and fears an improving US-Taiwan relationship. It also exposes China's lack of mental toughness. Conversely, the Taiwanese public has grown up under China's threat and is used to Beijing's games, so after the news broke, the stock market continued its rally and even closed at the day's high.

Beijing's suppression of Taiwan has reached previously unseen levels, which shows that China is under increasing domestic and international pressure. This is why Beijing is so fidgety and eager to divert the Chinese public's attention and create a sense of unity. The source of Beijing's troubles is a trade war with the US, which is shaking the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to its core and even makes Chinese President Xi Jinping's (习近平) position uncertain.

The party's upper echelons have split into two groups. In the first group are the officials running the economy who must address the trade war and China's domestic financial crisis in a pragmatic fashion — they want an end to boastful rhetoric and an eye-for-an-eye approach in dealing with US tariffs.

The second faction consists of officials who are not involved in economic matters, but are pumping out revolutionary slogans. They are working hard to uphold Xi as the “core of the party” and primarily belong to the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Taiwan Affairs Office, the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office and the liaison office in Hong Kong. They are boot-licking Xi sycophants promoting extreme-leftist policies.

However, they fail to understand that foreign policy is a continuation of domestic policy. How could a hardline, expansionist foreign policy not step on the US' toes? How could their crude Taiwan policy not rile its main backer, the US? Did they really expect Washington to roll over if they poached Taiwan's diplomatic allies in the US' backyard?

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Taiwan has remained unmoved by China's suppression. Tsai has been careful to sound reasonable and tap into the international community to expose China's expansionist designs. The government's strategy is not just to quietly thwart the enemy, but to slowly drive China mad.

Taipei's firmness, tenacity, rationality and refusal to engage in a war of words with Beijing have given China's leaders an opportunity to incite violence against Taiwan. This is pushing Chinese nationalist groups into a frenzy, becoming increasingly irrational and betraying China's weaknesses. Their near hysteria proves the adage that the those whom the gods would destroy, they first drive mad.

However, do not mistake the government's calmness for inaction. The Executive Yuan has been working on improving the economy by addressing the "five shortages" (land, water, power, talent and workers), attracting investment in order to break free of the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) and CCP's "greater China economic circle" and addressing low salaries and unaffordable housing for young people. The government has also begun to eliminate the security threat posed by Chinese espionage.

Although there is still much work to be done, progress is continuous. This is how Tsai wants to strengthen Taiwan's internal momentum within her grand strategy of maintaining the "status quo." Faced with humiliation and threatened annexation by China, self-respecting Taiwanese from all walks of life should work together to protect Taiwan.

Paul Lin is a media commentator.

Translated by Edward Jones

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