

Beijing has repeatedly appealed to the emotions of Taiwanese, seeking to convince them that by speaking a similar language, sharing folklore festivities and having common kinship, people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are all “descendants of the legendary emperors Yan and Huang” (軒轅黃帝) and must therefore be bonded together in a “great motherland” called China.

If it only knew how its actions have undermined its popularity with Taiwanese, as it has managed only to enforce the belief that the two sides of the Strait are worlds apart.

After China in July last year blocked all images of Winnie the Pooh online as a result of memes comparing the fictional bear to Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平), the latest subjects to fall victim to the Chinese Communist Party’s censorship are Chinese-produced historical TV dramas.

From The Empress of China (中國皇后) and The Empresses in the Palace (宮中秘史) to Ruyi’s Royal Love in the Palace (如意) and Story of Yanxi Palace (延禧宮略), Chinese historical TV drama series have garnered huge ratings in both China and Taiwan, captivating viewers with fascinating story lines based on true historical characters that are full of intriguing plots combined with elaborate costumes and fantastic scenery.

Screenings of Story of Yanxi Palace were abruptly pulled earlier this month after the Beijing Daily on its Sina Weibo microblog listed five “charges” against the historical drama, ranging from an emphasis on the dark side of human nature to an indulgence in luxury that runs counter to “the broadcasting of core communist values.”

Beijing has also cracked down on dyed hair, tattoos and pierced ears in an attempt to force people to conform to its “social values.” Male actors sporting dyed hair, tattoos and pierced ears on TV are shown with the offending features pixelated.

The latest on Beijing’s list is the so-called Foxi (佛系) phenomenon — an Internet slang term referring to Buddha-like passivity and indifference toward a goal.

Taiwanese can see through China

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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In an article published in last month's edition of the People's Tribune magazine, professor Tung Zhenhua (鄧振華) of the Central Party School of the Communist Party of China argued that the Foxi phenomenon would lead to youngsters lacking zeal and proactivity, and would in the long term make the objective of "reinvigorating the Zhonghua minzu (中華民族) and the Chinese dream hard to achieve."

Meanwhile, despite Beijing's denials, there have been reports that China is holding as many as 1 million Uighurs against their will in re-education camps in Xinjiang, and that it is persecuting them and other Muslims.

While this censorship, the imposition of "Chinese" values and the restriction of freedoms of movement and religious belief might appear completely natural to those in authoritarian Beijing, these actions have appalled Taiwanese, as they have crushed the values and democratic freedoms that they hold so dear.

Beijing can engage in all the flowery words and economic enticements it wants in a bid to woo Taiwanese, but its actions have convinced Taiwanese that there is no way they want to be part of a China that would doubtless deny them their hard-won freedoms and democracy.

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