

## Examining the security situation

Written by Tu Ho-ting 涂浩庭

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With the increasing and monumental security threat from China, news media and experts like to compare the situations of foreign countries to that of Taiwan to predict the nation's future.

However, due to Taiwan's unique strategic location, history, and social and economic relations with its biggest threat, China, many analogies drawn between these countries and Taiwan are far-fetched or even erroneous.

Chang Ya-chung (張亞中), a professor of political science at National Taiwan University and an avid supporter of unification, suggested that Finland's dealing with Soviet Union during the Cold War sets a good example for Taiwan. In order not to irritate the Soviet Union, Finland wisely adopted a balanced policy by not joining NATO or even the European Economic Community.

"Neither did Finland trust the commitment from far-away Washington, nor did it trust Paris and London. That is why Finland could survive during the Cold War and even outlived the Soviet Union. So Taiwan should not unilaterally follow the US' global strategy and be its spearhead to counter China," he said.

Chang's argument is wildly off the mark and intentionally misleading.

First of all, the Soviet Union had not been hostilely claiming that Finland was part of its territory since the end of World War II, but rather signed a treaty with Finland to recognize its status of neutrality in 1948.

Furthermore, the Helsinki Accords, signed by then-US president Gerald Ford and then-Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in 1978, stipulated that the two powers would respect the 1945 borders demarcated for Europe by wartime leaders Franklin D. Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin and Winston Churchill in Yalta.

Rather than purely pragmatic realpolitik considerations behind Finnish policymaking, the security of Finland during the Cold War was a result of the balance of power. It would not have

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been possible without the two superpowers' strategic calculations and compromise.

After the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, Finland changed its policy accordingly. Not only did it join the EU in 1995, but it established close relations with NATO, becoming a member of its Partnership for Peace program in 1994.

Although Finland still declares itself a neutral country, it knows perfectly well that where its security interests truly lie.

Taiwan's situation is completely different from that of Finland. It would be a big gift for China if Taiwan decided to adopt Finland's approach.

The only reason that Taiwan still exists after 1979, when Taiwan and the US cut diplomatic relations, is its strong military capability and the US governments' strong support.

Regarding Taiwan as an integral part of its territory, China would not hesitate to invade this democratic island once it considers Taiwan is vulnerable to its attacks.

Noticeably, the threat China poses to Taiwan is dauntingly increasing.

Communist China has a notorious and long history of deception. Its political promises are worthless. The indelible images of China's bloody crackdown in Tibet in 1959 after it promised Tibetans a high degree of autonomy in 1951 and its ruthless breach of the "one country, two systems" principle in Hong Kong by seriously diminishing democratic rights and freedoms are vivid reminders.

The day Taiwan naively believes that it could secure peaceful cross-strait relations under China's deceptive conciliatory gestures and rejects US security support would be the day Taiwan pays dearly for its terrible mistakes.

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An editorial in the Chinese-language China Times, Taiwan's top pro-Beijing newspaper, whose owner has huge business interests in China, claimed that the chaotic situation in Venezuela teaches Taiwan an important lesson.

"For most people, to be fed well is the top priority. With good governance by a government, people would accept an authoritarian regime; otherwise, people would rise against it whatever form the government is," the editorial said.

There is a hidden agenda behind this editorial. As a flag-bearer to promote unification with China, the China Times and its sister TV stations, China Television and CtiTV, which are members of Want Want China Times Group, spare no effort to report political news in China's favor.

The editorial adroitly transformed Venezuela's economic distress into the media conglomerate's political cause. It implied that embracing the Chinese market is the only solution to Taiwan's economic problems and that Taiwan should strengthen economic ties with China to improve people's lives.

Readers could not receive any information from any news from the China Times about how China uses its financial leverage and predatory lending to control some developing countries, a debt trap which worsens their economic woes.

In 2017, more than 40 percent of Taiwanese exports went to China and Hong Kong. This heavy dependency bodes ill for Taiwan. Without firing a shot, Beijing could easily use this economic weapon to stifle and destabilize Taiwanese society.

Russia's invasion of Crimea in 2014 is a stern warning to Taiwan. Taking advantage of the majority of ethnic Russians in Crimea, in February 2014, pro-Russia demonstrators launched protests on the streets and armed men in unmarked uniforms wearing masks seized airports and government buildings around Crimea, and the rest is history.

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In his Jan. 2 speech to Taiwanese, Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) claimed that “Chinese should never fight Chinese,” and that the non-peaceful means only target the “extremely few and pro-Taiwan independence separatists.”

This sophistry was aimed to divide Taiwanese and terrify those who are afraid of a war with China. Like Russia did in Crimea, China hopes to form a fifth column, either physical or psychological, within Taiwan.

Besides strengthening military capability, the government should also examine and identify international situations in the right perspective to protect its democracy and freedoms.

*Tu Ho-ting is a senior journalist and international political analyst based in Taiwan.*

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2019/02/20](#)