

Identifying infiltration by Chinese at all levels

Written by Chen Kuan-Fu 陳冠富

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In a March 29 Washington Post article, columnist Josh Rogin described how China's pervasive infiltration steers all of Taiwan's domestic issues. He quotes Mainland Affairs Council Deputy Minister Chen Ming-chi (陳明琪) as saying: "Next year's election might be the last meaningful election in Taiwan ... [and] the beginning of reunification."

Rogin's article should remind Taiwanese that a cold war has already begun, and that no one in Taiwan will remain unaffected. The nation's democracy could be headed for its deathbed; there is only a limited time in which to react.

Not long after Rogin's article, the Chinese-language service of Germany's Deutsche Welle produced a report titled "With Taiwan's free and unself-regulated media, can its government dispel the red shadow?" that focused on China's infiltration of Taiwan with fabricated news.

It reported that TVBS and CtiTV's news channels account for up to 78 percent of what is shown on TVs in coffee shops and restaurants, and that they carry a high proportion of rebroadcast news about certain political figures, showing them in a good light, so as to influence public perception and sway elections.

China's efforts to exert influence in favor of unification are not limited to buying up media and journalists. It aims to build a vast network for spreading information favorable to itself.

Employing language used by Reporters Without Borders, the Deutsche Welle report said that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has the financial and political resources it needs to accomplish these things, and that it has become a real Trojan horse.

On Sept. 6 last year, al-Jazeera broadcast an undercover investigative report titled "Taiwan: Spies, Lies and Cross-Strait Ties," which described how internal crises have popped up in Taiwan due to CCP infiltration at all levels of society, all the way down to villages, boroughs and local temples.

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Society only notices infiltration at the upper levels, such as in the news. Few people consider that “news” does not only include digital media, but also person-to-person interactions, the most direct type of communication.

People overlook that forest fires are often started by a scattering of sparks. In an open and democratic society, freedom is not impregnable.

In the run-up to the nine-in-one elections on Nov. 24 last year, newspapers such as the New York Times and Japan’s Sankei Shimbun and Asahi Shimbun observed how Taiwan was approaching the elections in an atmosphere of anxiety over Chinese intervention.

Some people only considered the election results as a defeat for the Democratic Progressive Party, rather than also being a victory for China’s efforts to influence Taiwan through its “united front” tactics.

Similarly, Ukraine underwent a bloodless invasion by Russia — by means of the media and the Internet — before its successful annexation of the Crimea.

China’s activities should be a rallying call for Taiwanese to unite. Behind the scenes, misinformation could stem from an all-out attack by China.

Will Taiwan’s democracy and rule of law survive? It will be an unprecedented challenge.

To safeguard this beloved land and their free and democratic way of life, Taiwanese must be vigilant and clearly distinguish between themselves and their enemies.

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Translated by Julian Clegg

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