

Rebuilding Taiwan's national identity

Written by Chen Chi-yuan 陳其南

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At no time since COVID-19 first broke out have Taiwanese or the government made a fuss about how great they are. Rather, they have all been humbly and carefully playing their allotted roles.

Many nations have repeatedly praised Taiwan for its success in keeping the disease under control. Taiwan's achievements and the recognition it has won make people proud to be Taiwanese.

In contrast, China has been busy with its "grand external propaganda," boasting about how well it has done in suppressing the epidemic. Part of its strategy has been to shower money on the WHO, where Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has been waving the flag for China while it goes around telling barefaced lies.

Still, real achievements speak for themselves, and everyone can see which ones coming out of Taiwan and China are the real deal.

No amount of bragging by Beijing and the WHO can keep China's shortcomings out of sight. One after another, Spain, the Czech Republic, Turkey and the Philippines have rejected COVID-19 test kits supplied by China, while the Netherlands rejected Chinese masks.

China's "grand external propaganda" is falling flat. Meanwhile, Taiwan is receiving praise for its mask donations and disease-control measures, as well as its development of antigen tests, new medicines and more.

Notably, Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中), in his role as head of the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC), holds daily news conferences in which he and his team tell the public exactly what is going on with the epidemic and what the government is doing about it.

The government's transparency and responsible attitude, along with its achievements in

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controlling the epidemic, have done much to build Taiwan's image as a safe and accountable nation.

Taiwan's democracy is an advantage that China cannot match. In addition, it is demonstrating its values of responsibility and public safety in concrete and tangible ways for all to see.

COVID-19 is breaking asunder the chains of global production. Manufacturers everywhere are thinking about how they will redeploy in the post-pandemic era.

Taiwan, with its values of democracy, responsibility and safety, is sure to play a pivotal role in revived global chains of production, and its economy will be revitalized by fresh sources of income.

Although Taiwan's new values shine a ray of light, there is no way of knowing when this pandemic will end. There is no cause for celebration. Taiwan must continue to carefully follow the CECC's guidance. Those who are staying at home in quarantine must be extra careful and exercise self-restraint. No one can afford to push their luck.

Spare a thought for all the doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers, and for those who do the grassroots work in every neighborhood and village. Their steadfastness is building new Taiwanese values.

What the rest must and can do is simple: Do not add to their troubles. By working together, Taiwanese can safeguard the new values that will form the nation's identity in the international community.

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Translated by Julian Clegg

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