

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) in her inaugural address on May 20 firmly said: “We will not accept the Beijing authorities’ use of ‘one country, two systems’ to downgrade Taiwan and undermine the cross-strait status quo.”

The Chinese government was not too happy, and later that day, an opinion piece on the Web site of China’s state broadcaster China Central Television said: “While Tsai’s first inaugural address four years ago was read by Beijing as an ‘unfinished answer sheet,’ the one she presented this time was even more below-par.”

Speaking to the China Review News Agency, Shanghai Institutes for International Studies vice president Yan Anlin (顏安林), who also heads the Shanghai Association of Taiwan Studies, said: “Throughout Tsai’s address, the key to the realization of cross-strait peace and stability was nowhere to be found.”

On May 21, the Study Times, the official mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) Central Party School, on its official WeChat account posted a long article on a tiring old topic titled “How the Qing Dynasty unified Taiwan.”

Meanwhile, prominent Chinese military monthly magazine Naval and Merchant Ships released 11 minutes of footage on its Sina Weibo page, outlining a potential attack by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army on Taiwan and saying that China’s military forces could “liberate” Taiwan in 24 hours.

How should the saber rattling coming out of Beijing be interpreted? The best answer is that Beijing’s mouthpieces, the CCP media outlets and overseas agencies are striking out at the US and Taiwan in full force and playing the old “mobilization through nationalism” card in a bid to “protect the emperor”— Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平).

Such protection is particularly essential during the annual meetings of China’s top political, legislative and consultative bodies, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference and the National People’s Congress — sometimes referred to as the “two sessions” — which had been postponed due to the “Wuhan pneumonia” outbreak.

The CCP went so far as to accuse Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung (陳時中) who heads the nation’s Central Epidemic Command Center, of being an “expert” in concealing pandemic information, not to mention other unfounded remarks.

As the CCP’s one-party authoritarian rule has hijacked China, citizen journalists, human rights lawyers and public intellectuals have all been silenced.

Now that major countries are pushing for an investigation into the COVID-19 outbreak in China, Xi is adopting the so-called “grand external propaganda strategy” to defend himself by going on the attack using WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The real purpose is to maintain internal political stability.

The ongoing pandemic, Xi dealing with the two sessions and the increasingly intense China-US conflict constituted the backdrop for Tsai’s inaugural address for her second term.

In the address, Tsai proposed amending the Constitution to allow the constitutional system to “progress with the times and align with the values of Taiwanese society.”

The proposal drew criticism from former National Security Council secretary-general Su Chi (蘇起), who called it “the culmination of the ‘state-to-state’ model.”

Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Minister Chen Ming-tong (陳明通) responded by urging Su to stop living in the past, because “a page in history has already been turned.”

History shows that when then-president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) proposed that Taiwan-China relations were a matter of “special state-to-state relations,” it was Su who served as MAC chairman from February 1999 to May 2000, and who rushed to proclaim that Taiwan was to

abandon the “one China” policy, in effect putting out the fire with gasoline.

Twenty years ago, Su coined the so-called “1992 consensus,” a tacit understanding between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese government that both sides acknowledge there is “one China,” with each side having its own interpretation of what “China” means.

This ensnared the KMT in a trap of its own making, and its impact lingers on to the present day, as Taiwan’s “China team” is drifting further from mainstream society.

In factual and legal terms, Taiwan and China are two states, one on each side of the Taiwan Strait, but this fundamental fact has been buried under a multitude of discourses.

Beijing’s tripartite “one China” principle, which stipulates that there is only one China in the world, Taiwan is part of China and the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China, is merely a complacent monologue.

Many phrases in Taiwan — such as “one China, with each side having its own interpretation,” “prior to national unification,” “the free area” and “the Mainland area” — are part of an unrealistic mindset.

As a bystander with fresh eyes, the US is more practical, as evidenced by the development from the “Sino-American Mutual Defense Treaty” and the “Taiwan Relations Act” to “the President of Taiwan” and the “Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initiative (TAIPEI) Act of 2019,” along with arms sales to Taiwan.

The US’ approach repeatedly underscores the most surreal aspects of the official statements coming out of Beijing and Taipei.

Today, Taiwan’s normalization as a state has achieved a new milestone.

In contrast to then-US president Richard Nixon, who took the lead to acknowledge Beijing as the global representative of China in 1971, Trump is taking the lead in recognizing the fact that Taiwan is an independent country.

Another force of support comes from Xi, an aggressive leader dreaming of building a great power, endangering regional peace and international security by his increasingly heavy-handed approach to Taiwan.

As his bullying backfires, he is proving over and over again to the world that while Taiwan and China may be geographically close, they are worlds apart in mind.

As free, autonomous and independent Taiwan is isolated by China through its manipulation of the WHO, the nation's 23 million people have jointly created a miracle of disease prevention to the praises of the international public, serving as a role model and effectively discrediting Beijing's "one China" policy.

On May 20, the Czech Republic's Senate passed a resolution with an overwhelming majority in favor of supporting a possible visit by the senate president to Taiwan, perhaps a ripple effect caused by the pandemic.

In response to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo congratulating Tsai on the commencement of her second presidential term, Beijing through its mouthpiece the Global Times threatened to reduce Taiwan's diplomatic allies to zero and send warplanes and vessels closer to the nation.

Beijing's attempt to bring the number of Taiwan's diplomatic allies down to zero might be a blessing in disguise, as it could show the international public more clearly the fictitiousness of the "one China" concept.

Taiwan's democratic government represents 23 million people, and this shared community of destiny, having gone through trials and tribulations, is a sovereign state unrelated to China.

However, it should be noted that Beijing's "one China" policy is only an excuse for its military threat against Taiwan, because breaking through the first and second island chains is fundamental to its dream of a "Chinese empire." Therefore, Taiwan and other democratic nations must prepare for Chinese military provocation bordering on conflict.

As ancient Chinese military strategist Sun Tzu (孫子) said: "The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy's not coming, but on our own readiness to receive him."

The "China Dream" and the "Taiwan Dream" are contending with each other.

Lee's 1999 statement on "special state-to-state relations" between China and Taiwan blew a hole in the framework built around the idea of what should be done "prior to national unification" during his presidency.

After stepping down, Lee continued to follow a path leading toward Taiwan's normalization, but the attitude of the international public did not change while reliance on Chinese supply chains increased.

Lee's effort was followed by Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) stumbling attempts at drafting rectification policies, which eventually paved the way for Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and his pro-China stance.

On the other side of the Taiwan Strait, Xi has abandoned Deng Xiaoping's (鄧小平) reform and opening-up policy and his "hide your strength, bide your time" approach, aiming at global hegemony.

Yet China's concealment of the COVID-19 outbreak, which has caused great harm to the world, fulfills the so-called "China threat" theory.

This is yet another opportunity for Tsai, in addition to having won two consecutive presidential elections.

Unprecedented challenges and unparalleled opportunities often come hand in hand.

When pursuing the “Taiwan dream” in the face of the Chinese threat, it is necessary to make the best preparation for the most extreme conditions.

Looking forward, Tsai is to focus on building a community based on shared values domestically and in foreign affairs.

“Over the next four years,” Tsai said in her inauguration address, Taiwan would continue to “bolster ties with the US, Japan, Europe and other like-minded countries.”

This statement concretely elucidates what Taiwan should work on in the process of deepening its democracy.

Tsai also said that “the coronavirus has profoundly affected our world. It has changed the global political and economic order, accelerated and expanded the reorganization of global supply chains, restructured the global economy, and changed the way we live and shop. It has even changed the way the international community views Taiwan and developments in the surrounding region.”

This passage essentially points to the opportunity for Taiwan to cast off China’s “economic birdcage,” engage in independent innovation and upgrading, reposition itself in the supply chains of democratic countries, enhance the economy and narrow the living-standard gap.

Tsai has seen Taiwan’s opportunity, and all the nation must do is wait and see how she will go about taking action.

## **'Taiwan Dream' vs 'China Dream'**

Written by Liberty Times Editorial  
Monday, 01 June 2020 07:13

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2020/06/01](#)