

Ma Ying-jeou's reality bubble

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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Former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) this week came under fire over his speech at a Rotary Club meeting in Taipei on Monday, when he said that Beijing's military strategy toward Taiwan was "to let the first battle be the last." If China started a cross-strait war, it would end quickly, without time for other nations to react, he said in his "Cross-Strait Relations and Taiwan Security" address, criticizing President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) for saying that she hoped other nations would come to Taiwan's aid in Beijing's first wave of attacks.

A president should prevent war from happening, not talk about how many days a nation could last, Ma said.

Taiwan Republic Office members and other independence advocates on Wednesday protested in front of the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) headquarters in Taipei, accusing Ma of contravening national security laws, undermining the military's confidence and selling out Taiwan. They also called on the KMT to expel him. The protest was a nice piece of political theater, but was there anything new in what Ma said — or the remote possibility that the KMT would consider giving him the boot?

Ma and the KMT have long been out of touch with mainstream Taiwanese opinion. He says a president should prevent war from happening, but Taiwanese repudiated his — and his party's — willingness to sell this nation out without a fight, in his eagerness to wrap the nation's economy so tightly in China's tentacles that it would have eventually been smothered.

The spectacular backfiring of the KMT's efforts to ram Ma's Cross-Strait Service Trade Agreement with Beijing through the legislature in 2014 triggered the Sunflower movement and paved the way for the party's massive losses in the 2016 elections.

The problem is twofold: One, Ma and the KMT are unable to accept reality or that time and history have passed them by, and two, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) cannot accept a disparity of viewpoints, not to mention its allergy to democracy in even a limited form.

Ma, the KMT and the CCP have been trying to brainwash Taiwanese and the world about the meetings and talks they held in the 1990s and ever since, from the spurious so-called "1992

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consensus” to all those cross-strait negotiations under Ma’s administration, as well as his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) in Singapore on Nov. 7, 2015.

The KMT and the CCP continue to blindly parrot the myths of unification and of a great “one China,” despite the rising numbers of people killed or imprisoned by Beijing for seeking to uphold the rights to freedom of religion, language and culture guaranteed under the Chinese constitution, and Beijing running roughshod over Hong Kong.

Ma hoped that his Singapore meeting with Xi, the first between the heads of the KMT and the CCP since the end of the Chinese Civil War, would be enough to win him a place in history, but he is doomed to remain a footnote, unlike former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) or Tsai.

On Oct. 5 last year, Ma was scathing in his critique of Tsai’s first term in office, accusing her of relying too much on the US, pointing to the lack of high-level US official visits and the loss of seven diplomatic allies. He alluded to his oft-heard complaint that she is turning Taiwan into a bargaining chip between the US and China.

The truth — however unpalatable it might be to Ma and the KMT — is that Taiwan has been a bargaining chip since 1949, if not the end of World War II. The loss of diplomatic allies is part of Beijing’s long-running campaign to destroy Taiwan, regardless of who is president. Washington’s willingness to send Cabinet officials for a visit, or sell arms and equipment, has more to do with US domestic politics and foreign policy considerations than Taiwanese politics.

Ma should have his eyesight and hearing checked.

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