

Veteran entertainer Lisa Cheng (鄭麗文) was once more thrust into the public eye on Friday last week when she threw red paint on a portrait of former president Lee Teng-hui (李登輝) at the memorial set up for him at the Taipei Guest House. Last year, Cheng caused a scene when she slapped Minister of Culture Cheng Li-chiun (鄭麗君) in the face.

When asked why she threw paint at Lee's portrait, Cheng said, conversationally: "I hate the 'Godfather of Taiwanese independence.'"

Given her previous statements, her avid support of former Kaohsiung mayor Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) and the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), and her presence at Chinese Unification Promotion Party events, it is not too difficult to see on which part of the political ideological spectrum Cheng resides.

There have been many examples of individuals defacing or beheading statues as a way to express their opinion. One could interpret this kind of action as "symbolic speech," conforming to freedom of expression as guaranteed by the Constitution.

However, some brazen forms of protest can go too far, and should be subject to some degree of legal sanction, either through the Social Order Maintenance Act (社會秩序維護法) or the Criminal Code.

The motivation behind Cheng's actions goes beyond her personal political leanings: It suggests a kind of psychological tethering to an education received under the party-state system.

For people like Cheng, Taiwan in the post-democratization era has given rise to grievances and grudges against the KMT's "tripartite enemy" — the Chinese communists, domestic dissidents and the Taiwanese independence movement — that, within Taiwan, are naturally represented by independence advocates and the old *dangwai* (黨外, "outside the party") movement.

Through the nation's democratization process, prior enemies of the state have evolved, taking

on an entirely different aspect, an updated definition. Following three transitions of political power, Taiwan's independence from China has become a majority position and the *dangwai* group has long become a party of government.

Even though the supposed war has ended, Cheng and her ilk continue to believe that they have a duty to safeguard Chinese nationalism and the party-state system.

Her crowd in the media and academic circles remain silent on China's continued oppression of Taiwan, while echoing former president Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) capitulationist comments in newspaper articles and on TV shows, thereby jeopardizing national security.

The aggressive criticism over issues such as the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the "national team" of mask makers and the historic visit by US Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar shows how superficial the "Team Lisa Cheng" objections are.

Even something as simple as a photograph of Financial Supervisory Commission Chairman Wellington Koo (辜振甫), Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義) and Vice President William Lai (賴清德) wearing different-colored masks to promote the work of the "national team" was ridiculed, and people who think like Cheng derided a memorandum of agreement for US-Taiwan exchanges on public health, suggesting that Azar's trip was a waste of time if he came without a vaccine.

People like Cheng support unification with China, failing to see the good in Taiwan, but receive just treatment in a free Taiwan, allowed to vote in the same way as advocates of rectifying the name of Taiwan and writing a new constitution — even though these advocates are forwarding reasonable proposals while Team Lisa Cheng continuously seeks to sow division.

The Lisa Chengs of Taiwan are always talking the nation down. If, in this process, they harm national interests or overstep a legal red line — be it throwing paint on the portrait of a statesman at his memorial, or colluding with a hostile state and cooperating with the Chinese communists — they can always hide behind freedom of expression guarantees. How very convenient.

Misusing freedom to back China

Written by Chen Kuan-fu 陳冠富

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Chen Kuan-fu is a graduate law student at National Taipei University.

Translated by Paul Cooper

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