

Shutting down Chinese propaganda

Written by Liberty Times Editorial
Friday, 30 October 2020 01:40

On July 23, in a speech at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in California, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo criticized China, saying: “We opened our arms to Chinese citizens, only to see the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] exploit our free and open society. China sent propagandists into our press conferences, our research centers, our high schools, our colleges, and even into our PTA [parent-teacher association] meetings.”

On Oct. 14, Pompeo and US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos sent a joint letter to state commissioners of education, saying that Confucius Classrooms — a subset of China’s Confucius Institutes — are a government influence operation masquerading as a cultural and language organization, and that they should not be allowed in the US’ educational system.

Pompeo said that the goal of US President Donald Trump’s administration is that all Confucius Institutes should be closed by the end of the year.

Criticism of Confucius and praise of the first Chinese emperor Qin Shi Huang (秦始皇) are part and parcel of the CCP’s political theology. Confucius Institutes are not intended to promote Confucianism, but are a brainwashing program to promote the expansion of one-party dictatorship and tyranny in the West under the guise of promoting culture, to lure in Western academics and media outlets into unwittingly cooperating with Beijing to influence society and government decisionmaking in democratic states.

The institutes are a typical example of how well the CCP deftly uses the freedom and openness of democratic societies to promote values that are hostile to those ideals.

One example is the CCP’s strong support of the freedom of its associates in Taiwan to oppose independence and promote unification. However, there is no way it would allow democratic states to set up Democracy Institutes and similar organizations in China, or challenges to the party’s ultimate leadership.

The CCP can come to Taiwan to overturn the democratic order, but it would never allow Taiwanese to go to China and tell it what to do.

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This month's so-called spy revelations in China have nothing to do with national security. They were simply a way for Beijing to warn Taiwanese in China that the only option is to praise the one-party dictatorship, oppose Taiwanese independence and promote cross-strait unification.

The stark differences between totalitarian China and democratic states, and between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, show that these so-called "exchanges" only serve to open the door to Chinese attacks. Engaging in exchanges with China for the sake of engagement, and allowing the CCP the right to overturn the government are nothing less than digging our own grave.

For many years now, Chinese have been coming to Taiwan to explore and investigate, and even take pictures of sensitive institutions where military secrets are kept. The way Chinese spies are able to freely move around makes it seem as if Taiwan lacks leadership. In contrast, Taiwanese visiting China have no choice but to suffer Orwellian supervision.

The asymmetrical cross-strait relationship is a miniature reflection of the relationship between totalitarian China and the democratic world. People from democratic nations cannot move about freely in autocratic China, and Beijing authorities might even abruptly decide that their activities are a matter of national security. However, citizens of the one-party dictatorship can visit democratic states and use their cherished values against them to oppose democracy and be protected while doing so. It is ridiculous to say the least.

People from Taiwan, Canada, Australia and other countries who have been arrested without cause in China do not even enjoy the most basic legal protections. Compare this with the treatment of Huawei Technologies Co chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou (孟晚舟), who, after being arrested in Canada, has since been released on bail and allowed to live in her luxurious home, enjoying her rights while battling the US and Canada in court.

Democratic states that get used to allowing Chinese to demand freedom when visiting their country, while foreigners in China have to abide by its despotic system are digging their own grave.

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Some liberals agree with Beijing's view and think that the decision to close the Confucius Institutes is the product of a "cold war" mindset because they are unable to see the unfair, asymmetric relationship between the US and China. Some even try to justify this view by pointing to what they call China's uniqueness.

These views have so often been repeated that they have become the perceived truth — that Chinese in the US are entitled to their freedom, but Americans in China can only bow to Beijing's autocratic rule. The same twisted relationship applies to cross-strait relations.

The "most favored nation" status bestowed by Washington on China is a good example of how Beijing controls democratic countries. Last month, a letter by then-US ambassador to China Terry Branstad was rejected by the People's Daily, and when he published it on Sina Weibo, it was deleted. If this is how a US ambassador is treated, it is not very difficult to imagine how common people are treated.

The NBA, Hollywood and many others support the Black Lives Matter movement, but when it comes to China, Beijing's combination of a business carrot with a political stick results in self-censorship and silence. Democracies' habitual application of different standards domestically and internationally is destroying universal values.

Pompeo said no to the Confucius Institutes, but in Taiwan — the subject of Chinese attacks, threats and espionage — some people still ask if President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) administration is trying to outdo the Martial Law era and Hong Kong when it comes to suppressing freedom of expression.

Some say that not even allowing one media outlet that disagrees with the government is the hallmark of a dictatorship, while others ask how Taiwan can claim to embrace freedom of expression if there is no tolerance for dissenting views.

Protecting China's freedom to promote a war of unification in Taiwan would be tantamount to agreeing to a violent annexation of Taiwan by the CCP. Oddly, the people who do that have never demanded that Beijing guarantee the freedom of Taiwanese in China. Perhaps they think the cross-strait inequality is just natural. This is why after nearly 30 years of touting its "one China, with each side having its own interpretation" policy, the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT)

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is left with nothing but the “one China” part. If it does not wake up, it will be too late.

It is often said that in the end, democracy would win in the competition with autocracy. Judging from the end of the Cold War, these are not empty words. However, the question of how democracy protects itself is crucial to this outcome.

The unequal “exchanges” between the West and China has helped Beijing develop its sharp power by stealing intellectual property. The West, on the other hand, has lost itself in the myth about China’s “uniqueness” and watched as 40 years of political reform have gone nowhere, and have only given rise to a digital totalitarian state.

In the past three years, the Trump administration has led the world in breaking the “exchanges” spell, gradually opening the West’s eyes to how unrealistic this illusion is. Pompeo has pointed out the necessity of insisting on equality and not allowing China to determine the rules of engagement. As he has said, unless the world changes China, China will change the world.

He is right. This is an issue that all democratic states must address together, and an issue that Taiwan must urgently address.

Translated by Perry Svensson

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2020/10/30](#)