

## The KMT is wrong to look to Biden

Written by Chin Heng-wei 陳恆偉

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Few would argue that the US is the world's most powerful country. Elections elsewhere, whether Cabinet reshuffles or presidential elections, do not command the scrutiny that US elections do. The fight for the US presidency not only has nations around the world watching, but has their citizens on the edge of their seats.

China has just completed the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee in Beijing but, despite that China aspires to replace the US in global importance, the proceedings drew little attention, short of a minor interest in whether the lifelong tenure of the party chairman was to be entered into the constitution.

Is the US president really all that important?

A decade ago, US political forecaster George Friedman, founder of the private intelligence publishing and consulting firm Stratfor, known to some as the “shadow CIA,” said that no matter how dumb the US president is or how culturally base, the US is assured a decisive status in the international community based on its importance in the international world order.

Friedman even said that the caliber of its leaders is not all that important for the US.

Many in Taiwan were of the opinion that a second term for US President Donald Trump was important for Taiwan, but US president-elect Joe Biden's victory is unlikely to have a huge effect in itself.

The point is that Taiwan and the US have shared interests. Naturally, Taiwan relies on the US, but one could equally say that the US needs Taiwan. When the US established diplomatic relations with China, it also promulgated the Taiwan Relations Act to make sure that Taiwan was not left out in the cold. Note that this is a domestic US law, not one between nations.

When China's decidedly non-peaceful rise started causing concern among the cohort of democratic nations, Taiwan's geopolitical importance was brought into starker relief and —

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together with the country's successes in democracy and progressive social justice — even outside of the context of a looming US-China cold war, it is difficult to see how the US could ignore Taiwan's importance for what it is.

In terms of which nation needs the other one more, Taiwan or the US, politics is not mathematics — it does not come down to a simple equation. Given the current situation, the US cannot maintain the first island chain without Taiwan and Taiwan needs the US to back it up against Chinese aggression.

As the pan-blue camp has been refused its dream of “one China,” it has attacked the administration of President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) for aligning too closely with Washington, with the strongest criticism coming from Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Johnny Chiang (江啟臣).

After Tsai convened a high-level national security meeting on Oct. 31, Chiang said that Taiwan ought to maintain an appropriate distance between itself and other countries. When Chiang said “other countries,” he was surely referring to China.

As for getting close to the US, what would the positions of former presidents Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) and Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) have been? Forgetting the two Chiangs, Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平), during a visit to Trump's Florida resort Mar-a-Lago on April 6, 2017, said: “We have a thousand reasons to get China-US relations right and not one reason to spoil the China-US relationship.”

Xi was essentially announcing that he wanted to cozy up to the US, just as former president Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) Presidential Office secretary-general Chiou I-jen (邱毅) intimated when he said: “Could we not do that, please?”

The KMT has been lambasting the Tsai administration for throwing in its lot with Trump, but it is the KMT that has thrown in its lot with Biden. If it wants to do that, it can — nobody will stop it — but it is embarking on an unrealistic mission if that is what it is attempting.

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The KMT wants a changing of the guard at the White House because it wishes to frustrate Tsai's drive to get Trump on Taiwan's side against Beijing. KMT caucus whip Lin Wei-chou (林錫山) has signaled support for Biden, because with Trump out, the KMT plans to propose rescinding the executive order regarding US pork imports.

Biden's win will not rescue the KMT. The most egregious example of this fallacy is a certain former Chungli mayor who told the Chinese media that, in the case of a Trump defeat, Beijing would teach the Democratic Progressive Party a lesson that it would not quickly forget. This is a strange thought, as it seems to assume that Biden would absent himself from the region.

CNN producer Brad Lendon hit the nail on the head when he wrote concerning the US' approach to China's rise: "The current state of play doesn't leave much room for either ... Biden or ... Trump to pull back from supporting Taiwan."

This is quite correct: It is the main thrust of US foreign policy.

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Translated by Paul Cooper

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