

PRC's ally poaching helps Taiwan

Written by Fan Shih-ping 范世平

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The Straits Forum, the largest non-political platform between Taiwan and China, took place in China's Fujian Province on Sunday last week.

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference Chairman Wang Yang (汪洋) hosted the event, at which Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Eric Chu (朱立倫) gave a prerecorded video speech.

Days before the forum, on Thursday last week, Nicaragua announced that it had severed diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

Although many Taiwanese are unfamiliar with the Central American country, and even fewer have visited it, the breakup led to many feeling even more disgusted by China's sustained diplomatic pressure.

China was certainly the main initiator of the breakup.

Beijing has attempted to retaliate against not only Lithuania for allowing Taipei to set up a representative office bearing the name "Taiwan" in Vilnius, but also Slovakia for sending a large delegation led by Slovak Second State Secretary of the Ministry of Economy Karol Galek to Taiwan earlier this month.

Taiwan-friendly remarks by former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe last week and the announcement of a US-led diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics added fuel to the fire.

More importantly, Nicaragua cut diplomatic ties while Washington was hosting the two-day Summit for Democracy, to which Taiwan was invited, but China was not.

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Why is Nicaragua so important to China that it established diplomatic ties with Managua on the same day as the breakup with Taiwan? Why did Beijing do so three days before the Straits Forum?

Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi (王毅), who formerly headed China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), must have been aware that the establishment of ties with Nicaragua would anger Taiwan.

Would the move pose a dilemma for those Taiwanese who intended to participate in the forum, as they would even more certainly be vilified by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government as pro-China and anti-Taiwan?

With its chairman participating, should the KMT not have used the forum to protest the Taiwan-Nicaragua breakup?

Was the Chinese foreign minister's Nicaragua initiative causing trouble for the TAO, the forum's organizer?

Wang Yi might have done so on purpose — to humiliate TAO Minister Liu Jieyi (刘结一), who is a former Chinese ambassador to the UN.

KMT Vice Chairman Andrew Hsia (徐欣瑩) also participated in the forum. Despite him serving as Mainland Affairs Council minister in former president Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration, Hsia also failed to protest against the Taiwan-Nicaragua breakup, and allowed the Chinese delegates to virtually trample him.

How could he endure that?

The KMT campaigned for “yes” votes on all four of yesterday's referendum questions, especially on the initially popular item that urges a ban on pork imports containing ractopamine

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residue.

Being forced to sever ties with Nicaragua, Taiwanese might think that the nation has to rely on the US more strongly, and some might have reconsidered their stance on the item and voted against a ban.

Many commentators have expected that the DPP, which urged four “no” votes, would continue to take advantage of pro-US and anti-China sentiment, and opposition to the referendum item rose in the days before the vote.

No wonder people were calling China a “pig teammate” of the KMT. Chinese President Xi Jinping (习近平) has in the past few years inadvertently acted as President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) “little helper.”

Had Xi not declared that the so-called “1992 consensus” in his view equals “one country, two systems,” and cracked down on democracy and human rights in Hong Kong, would Tsai have been re-elected by a landslide last year?

China's move on Nicaragua resembles the actions Xi took ahead of last year's election.

Since Tsai took office in 2016, Taiwan had lost seven diplomatic allies before Nicaragua cut its ties, but her support ratings have increased rather than declined.

This shows that Taiwanese have become numb after being faced with one diplomatic breakup after the other, expressing greater support for Tsai's tough stance on Beijing trying to impose its brutal hegemonic designs.

Although China's move on Nicaragua was successful, it has made the international community more supportive of Taiwan.

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China's violent knee-jerk reaction is another point in case of Beijing's "wolf warrior" diplomacy.

While Tsai's ratings keep rising, Taiwan's international visibility is also increasing significantly. Although Xi's move tried to frustrate her momentum, it did not lead to its intended effect, just like it did not in seven previous cases.

Why did China attempt the same move an eighth time? It seems that there is something wrong with the Chinese communist system.

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Translated by Eddy Chang

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