

## KMT puts Beijing's interests first

Written by Susie Su 苏珊珊

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Taiwan has had a packed agenda for the past few months. From recall elections and the four referendums to the upcoming legislative by-election for Taichung's second electoral district, Taiwanese have been pouring time and energy into politics, which has been laborious.

The voter turnout rate for the Dec. 18 referendum was 41.09 percent, far lower than the about 75 percent for last year's presidential election. Since the referendum questions were about policymaking, not candidates, it was hardly surprising that it did not garner as much attention and interest.

The referendum questions were proposed by pro-China elements within the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). Many Taiwanese initially assumed they were about food safety, environmental protection and other complex issues, but after some research and analysis, the public realized that they were nothing but a political charade to undermine the government.

If the KMT had succeeded with its scheme, the biggest benefactor would not have been the public, but the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). In other words, Taiwan would have been inflicting self-harm and benefiting the CCP in approving the questions.

The proposals were designed to disrupt the policies of the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). Unless there were grave malpractices, abuses of power or severe corruption in the governing party, it is inconsequential to try to contest ongoing policies.

However, the KMT mobilized the whole party into engaging the referendums, and to mold them in a way to "teach the DPP a lesson" and as a symbol of "civil disobedience" against the government, with the underlying motive of causing political strife.

Fortunately, the DPP mobilized all of its resources to host 2,000 referendum forums nationwide, and in the end protected its progressive policies with voters rejecting the referendums.

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In the past few years, from the persecution of Uighurs to the crackdown on Hong Kong's democracy movement, the CCP has pushed against the tide of democracy, thereby losing the support of Taiwanese. The pro-China supporters have shrunk to less than 10 percent.

If the KMT had faced the DPP head-on over national sovereignty, they would not stand a chance and might even draw accusations of "selling out Taiwan." So the smart move was to avoid the issue of national sovereignty altogether, and divert the public's attention from the CCP to domestic issues such as food safety, environmental protection, recall elections and referendums.

Former Taiwan Statebuilding Party legislator Chen Po-wei (陳博偉) was a member of the Legislative Yuan's Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee alongside independent Legislator Freddy Lim (林錫山), both of whom are committed to an anti-CCP stance. If the KMT could have them both recalled, then the DPP would be on equal footing with the KMT in the committee, as the pan-green camp would lose its edge in reviews of the foreign and national defense budget.

That is why KMT Chairman Eric Chu (朱立倫) has said: "We will recall whoever endorses the position of 'oppose the CCP, safeguard Taiwan.'" The KMT has also lambasted the DPP for stirring up "a sense of national doom," so as to deflect public concerns over Beijing's "one China" agenda and "red infiltration."

Opposition parties in other countries put their nations' interests first, followed by party competition. In the face of large-scale infiltration by the CCP, the KMT chose to collude with Beijing, and make the denunciation of the governing party its top priority over the public's interests.

In a fluctuating international situation, democratic countries have been forming alliances to oppose Beijing. With the CCP's repeated military incursions into Taiwan's air defense identification zone, extensive "red infiltration" efforts in Taiwan and blocking the nation's integration into the international community, the opposition of the CCP has always been Taiwan's biggest challenge.

The KMT's consecutive maneuvers of enacting recall elections and referendums have forced

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the nation to put out fires while setting aside national security. Stopping the KMT from stamping out voices calling to “oppose the CCP, safeguard Taiwan” might yet be Taiwan’s greatest challenge.

*Susie Su is a Taiwanese living in Australia.*

Translated by Rita Wang

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