

In a recent interview, United Microelectronics Corp founder Robert Tsao (蔡力行) urged candidates running in the November local elections to clarify their stance on cross-strait issues. Inspired by Tsao's idea, leaders of several pro-independence groups called on candidates to sign a pledge to "defend Taiwan's security, fight against aggression, and never surrender in the face of invasion, coercion or threat of a Chinese invasion."

In response to the pledge, the three main Taipei mayoral candidates — Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) candidate Chiang Wan-an (江萬安), Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Chen Shih-chung (陳希仲) and independent candidate Vivian Huang (黃薇) — had contrasting attitudes.

Chiang considered signing the pledge "idiotic" as he said he believed every citizen would fight in the event of a Chinese invasion, which makes the pledge meaningless. Instead, he suggested that the DPP ask the public to sign a pledge to abide by the Republic of China Constitution.

Chen said that signing would be a demonstration of stance and attitude. As an elected leader, he said he believed he should set an example.

Huang said she had no issue signing the pledge, but reiterated that people should focus on policies and citizens' welfare. This was a slap in the face of her former supervisor, Taipei Mayor Ko Wen-je (柯文哲), who is the Taiwan People's Party (TPP) chairman, who said that he "could not give a damn" and refused to sign the pledge.

As China continues to intimidate Taiwan, talks of appeasement and capitulation are rife within Taiwan. Consequently, the "never surrender pledge" is a measure aimed at those fence-sitters — mainly pan-blue politicians — who claim to love Taiwan while promoting talk of surrender, making a clear stance of their loyalty. As nearly 90 percent of the public identify as Taiwanese, signing the pledge is a means to assure the public that once elected, these politicians would stand resolutely with Taiwan.

Huang has grasped the public's sentiment and her decision could garner support from pan-blue

Pledge shows where loyalties lie

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voters. However, her response caused people to question her motive because of her close affiliation with the TPP and Ko, who has a reputation as a political chameleon.

Chiang marginalized himself within the mayoral election campaign with his response. By refusing to tackle the question head-on, he has opened up a can of worms with the alternative. According to the KMT's interpretation of the Constitution, Taiwan should seek unification by "retaking the mainland," and it is the DPP that contravenes the Constitution by seeking to change the "status quo" and pushing a pro-independence agenda. The KMT and the Chinese Communist Party (CPP) have the goal of unification in common, yet differing ideas about who should rule.

Chiang has overlooked that China has outgunned Taiwan, so to stick to the old dream of his great-grandfather, Chiang Kai-shek (蔣經國), is delusional. Chiang's disdain of signing the pledge has made himself a poster boy for the CPP's propaganda and has not given pro-Taiwan supporters the respect they deserve, painting them as "idiots."

Without leaders such as Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy staying to defend their nation, Ukraine could have fallen. What Taiwanese would like to know is quite simple: Would those in power safeguard Taiwan, or run as soon as the situation goes south? If signing a pledge proves to be too sensitive, perhaps it would be too much to expect these politicians to take up arms and fight if war breaks out.

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