

TAO remark draws strong reply

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Democratic Progressive Party Taichung City councilors Yang Tien-chung, Lai Chia-wei, Chen Shu-hua and Ho Wen-hai, left to right, hold a sign saying: "Taiwan's future should be decided by the people of Taiwan" at the city council yesterday.

Photo: Tang Tsai-hsin, Taipei Times

A statement by China's Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson Fan Liqing (范麗青) that the future of Taiwan should be decided by "all Chinese people" sparked furious responses across the nation from activists, politicians and private citizens who say the future of Taiwan can only be decided by Taiwanese.

"The remarks made by the Chinese government are no different from masturbation," Sunflower movement leader Lin Fei-fan (林飛帆) said on his Facebook. "It's ironic that the Chinese Communist Party [CCP] says Taiwan's future should be decided by 'the Chinese people,' when 'the Chinese people' [in China] have been stripped of the right to choose their government."

He went on to say that he is not opposed to bilateral exchanges with China, but if the CCP does not learn to respect Taiwanese, then "there is no basis for cross-strait exchanges."

Fellow Sunflower student leader Chen Wei-ting (陳偉霆) responded to Fan's remarks with a succinct, four-word line: "None of your business."

When asked his view on the issue, physician and independent Taipei mayoral aspirant Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) said he would answer that question with another question addressed at China's leadership: "Is the Chinese government elected by its 1.3 billion citizens?"

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Fan made the statement when asked to comment on Tainan Mayor William Lai's (賴清德) declaration that the future of Taiwan should be decided by Taiwanese during a visit to China last week.

After initially declining to comment on the explosive incident, Presidential Office spokesperson Ma Wei-kuo (馬偉國) yesterday gave the government's official response, presumably due to rising public anger.

"President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) has never changed his stance when it comes to the future of the nation and of Taiwanese," Ma said. "The Republic of China is a sovereign, independent country, and its future should be determined by the 23 million people as per the Constitution of the Republic of China."

Vice President Wu Den-yih (吳登益) reaffirmed the government's stance, saying that "the future of Taiwan should of course be set by its 23 million people."

He added that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should set aside their differences and work to create mutual prosperity under the so-called "1992 consensus," and maintain ties without unification or independence bids, or armed conflicts.

In one example of the strong reaction provoked by Fan's comment, thousands of netizens uploaded photographs to Facebook of themselves bearing the slogan: "Taiwan's future is decided by Taiwanese," or "We Taiwanese will make the decisions about our future."

"To the Chinese on the other side [of the Strait]: please mind your own business — if you can't even take care of your own country, how will you be able to get your hands on my country?" Chen Yi-hsing (陳以信) said on Facebook.

"Independence may not solve all our problems, but it's a necessary step and it could make us more powerful," Hsinchu high-school student Huang Chien-hsuan (黃建勳) said. "We should be independent, we should stop being colonized by foreign regimes, we the Taiwanese should have our own country."

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Such messages came not only from Taiwanese, but also other nationals, such as a Facebook user surnamed Ng (李), who wrote: “I am from Hong Kong, I want to show my support to the Taiwanese. They should stay strong, don’t be afraid of revolutions like the people of Hong Kong.”

Zang Liusheng (臧否) of China said he has “no special view on Taiwanese independence,” adding that he respects “the choice of Taiwanese, and the future of Taiwan should be decided by them.”

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