

Taiwan determined to defend itself: Tsai

Written by Taipei Times

Wednesday, 06 October 2021 04:46 -



President Tsai Ing-wen, center, meets representatives of the Taiwan Dental Association at the Presidential Office on Monday to thank them for their hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Photo: CNA

Taiwan is committed to defending itself if its democracy is threatened, President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) said yesterday, warning of “catastrophic consequences” if it were to fall to China.

Framing cross-strait tensions as a contest between authoritarian and liberal regimes, Tsai wrote in an article in *Foreign Affairs* magazine that Taiwan “is a liberal democracy on the frontlines of a new clash of ideologies,” but remains committed to “democratic, progressive values.”

“A failure to defend Taiwan would not only be catastrophic for the Taiwanese; it would overturn a security architecture that has allowed for peace and extraordinary economic development in the region for seven decades,” she wrote.

Highlighting Taiwan’s geopolitical relevance, Tsai said a military force that has broken the first island chain would be in a position to disrupt international trade and destabilize the western Pacific region.

Beijing’s ambitious foreign policy in recent years is driven not solely by national interest, but also by ideology, Tsai said.

“Emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, authoritarian regimes are more convinced than ever that their model of governance is better adapted than democracy to the requirements of the 21st century,” she wrote.

“This has fueled a contest of ideologies, and Taiwan lies at the intersection of contending

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systems,” she added.

Vibrantly democratic and Western, yet influenced by a Chinese civilization and shaped by Asian traditions, Taiwan, by virtue of both its very existence and its continued prosperity, represents at once an affront to the narrative and an impediment to the regional ambitions of the Chinese Communist Party, she said.

“The great majority of us regard democracy as the best form of government for Taiwan and are willing to do what is necessary to defend it,” she wrote.

“Those beliefs are tested every day, but there is no doubt that the people would rise up should the very existence of Taiwan be under threat,” she added.

“A fundamental part of this embrace of democracy is a firm belief that the future of Taiwan is to be decided by the Taiwanese through democratic means,” she said.

Tsai reiterated that her administration welcomes dialogue with China as long as it is conducted in the spirit of equality and without preconditions.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2021/10/06](#)