

Dissidents warn 'Beijing Model' could harm Taiwan

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Chinese dissidents yesterday expressed concern that a "Beijing Model" is being duplicated in Taiwan in which economic advance is being promoted at all costs.

"There is this new term, the 'China model' or 'Beijing model,' which is to promote economics regardless of the cost, and such a view is gradually being voiced in Taiwan," Chinese democracy activist Wang Dan (王丹) told a forum in Taipei hosted by the Taiwan Society yesterday.

Among the "costs" are a growing gap between rich and poor, pollution and "even crackdowns on people with military force" like the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

Wang expressed concern that Taiwan's democracy and human rights might be threatened by an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA).

Chinese-democracy-activist turned-economist Chen Pokong (陳伯通) told the forum that China entered the WTO in 2005 with US support. Before this, the US levied an average 42 percent tariff on Chinese goods, but after the US cut tariffs to 2.5 percent. Since then cheap Chinese products have been dumped on the US market causing an annual US\$200 billion trade deficit.

Chen warned Taiwan of a similar situation after the signing of an ECFA.

"Needless to say there is political purpose behind the economic pact, which is to use the economy to trap Taiwan before a political annexation," he said.

Taiwan Society secretary-general Lo Chih-cheng (羅智強) told Taiwanese to stay vigilant for a possible regression of democracy as "democracy and human rights are usually sought with loud bangs, but often ebb away silently."

Contemporary Monthly magazine editor-in-chief Chin Heng-wei (陳恒偉) was more optimistic.

Chin said although President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) is China-friendly, several surveys showed most of the public regard themselves as Taiwanese, not Chinese, and support Taiwanese independence. The numbers are higher than during the former Democratic Progressive Party government, he said.

In his weekly online journal posted yesterday, Ma said an ECFA "will help Taiwan businesses become stronger to compete globally."

Ma said signing an ECFA would be like putting on spikes allowing Taiwan to run like the wind amid fierce competition in the world market.

Critics warn the agreement would jeopardize Taiwan's sovereignty, making it economically dependent on China and leading to an influx of Chinese capital and goods.

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