

# COMMENT

## Editorials

### Tsai and DPP courting disaster with their deluded adventurism

After the New Year's Day speech by Taiwan leader Tsai Ing-wen, Zhu Fenglian, spokesperson for the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, cautioned that any pursuit of independence will only throw Taiwan into a "deep chasm" and result in a "profound catastrophe".

She said that Beijing was willing to strive for the prospect of peaceful reunification, but warned that if separatist forces on the island "continue to provoke and coerce", or cross Beijing's redline, Beijing would be left with no choice but "to take decisive measures".

That is an unequivocal statement that exposes the duplicity in Tsai's words.

In her speech Tsai said that "We must remind the Beijing authorities to not misjudge the situation and to prevent the internal expansion of military adventurism", declaring that use of military force was not an option for solving cross-Straits disagreements.

But as her speech showed, it is she and her pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party that are in danger of miscalculating the situation with their adventurism.

Beijing has long made it clear that it seeks peaceful reunification of the island with the motherland. It is the constant provocations of the secessionist-minded DPP authorities on the island and their colluding with foreign forces that necessitate Beijing keeping the military option on the table.

It is the Tsai authorities' refusal to uphold the 1992 Consensus on one China and their reckless

bid to assert a distinct status for the island that is the cause of the current frictions, which are exacerbated by their attempts to ride on the US-led Western powers' efforts to contain China.

In May, the DPP's attempt to get the island admitted as a distinct member of the World Health Assembly was rejected, marking the fifth consecutive year that such a politically-motivated attempt to gain de facto recognition for the island as a "UN member" in its own right was defeated.

On Friday, the day before Tsai's speech, China opened its embassy in Nicaragua, which is the latest country to recognize Beijing's sovereignty over the island, joining the other 180 countries that uphold the one-China principle.

The one-China principle has long been an international norm and a consensus of the global community and the attempts by Tsai and the DPP to create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" have and will gain no traction.

Instead of cozying up to the Western powers in a bid to take advantage of their efforts to suppress China's development, Tsai and the DPP should heed her own words and work with Beijing to ease tensions in the region, "calm the hearts of the people" and take care of people's livelihoods.

There is but one China in the world and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. Any attempt by the DPP to split Taiwan from the motherland to play into the hands of the West's anti-China "competition" will only court disaster.

### World must unite to make third year the charm

Xi'an is still fighting its COVID-19 outbreak. As of Saturday, the city in Northwest China had reported a total of 1,573 locally transmitted COVID-19 infections, with the inflection point still to be reached, according to experts.

The origin of the outbreak and how long it has been circulating around the city are still unknown. And medical authorities in Xi'an said at a news conference on Sunday that the city's outbreak is still at an "intensive" stage. Other regions in China are being urged to enhance their prevention and control measures as the Spring Festival holiday approaches.

2022 marks the third year in which the world is battling with the novel coronavirus, and there seems no light at the end of the tunnel. Although the outbreak in Xi'an is the Delta variant of the virus, it is now the highly transmissible Omicron variant that is causing the most concern as infections spike around the world.

Daily new infections are hitting record highs worldwide, with an average of more than 1 million cases detected each day between Dec 24 and 30. Europe, the pandemic's epicenter in recent months, crossed 100 million known cases on Saturday, with governments there deeply concerned about the possibility of healthcare systems being overwhelmed by an increasing number of patients.

In the United States, a "vertical increase" of new cases — now averaging 400,000 cases a day — has gone "well beyond anything we've seen before",

according to the country's top infectious diseases expert Anthony Fauci. The World Health Organization has warned of "a tsunami of cases" in the days to come.

Yet despite the dire situation, "narrow nationalism and vaccine hoarding" continue to hinder efforts to bring the virus under control, creating ideal conditions for the virus to continue mutating. "The longer inequity persists, the greater the chance of the virus changing in ways we can't predict," said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

Having said that, it is not all doom and gloom, the extended vaccination drive in many countries, in addition to the experience accumulated in the handling of COVID-19 such as in testing and treatment, means that the world is now in a much stronger position than it was at the end of 2020. The fact that the Omicron variant, though more contagious, appears to be far less lethal compared with other variants, could win scientists more time as they try to find ways to finally beat the coronavirus.

Nonetheless, the world still faces an onerous challenge in terms of containing the spread of the virus while keeping economic and social life as normal as possible. Countries, rather than politicizing the health crisis and pointing accusing fingers at one another, must work together to address this common threat to life, health and liberty. The Omicron variant has reinforced the lesson, which the world urgently needs to heed, that "no one is safe until we are all safe".

### Western firms self-harming politicizing business

The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection of the Communist Party of China, in a post published on Friday on its website, urged Walmart to show sincerity if it wishes to get a firm foothold in the Chinese market, its second-largest overseas market, accusing the US retail giant Walmart Inc and its Sam's Club of "stupidity and shortsightedness".

Walmart has maintained a studied silence in the face of the backlash by Chinese consumers against its Sam's Club after it removed Xinjiang-sourced products from its online and offline shelves last week.

Walmart's move came after US President Joe Biden signed a ban on imports from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region into law on Dec 23, which effectively means that US companies have been kidnapped by Washington's claims to be sanctioning "forced labor".

Highlighting the dilemma they find themselves in, Intel, which had earlier called for its suppliers not to source products or labor from Xinjiang, issued a statement the same day stressing the importance of the Chinese market and saying its rejection of Xinjiang-sourced products and services was purely out of the need to comply with US laws, rather than reflecting its own stance on the issue.

After operating in China for about 25 years, Wal-

mart should be familiar with the sensitivity of the Xinjiang issue.

Intel's I-am-not-the-party-to-blame statement, in which it apologized for "the trouble caused to our respected Chinese customers, partners and the public", has helped the information technology giant quickly douse the fire of public anger, while Walmart's protracted silence has fanned the ire of Chinese consumers.

It seems that unlike Intel, Walmart is willingly politicizing its business operations.

Walmart's after-sales service staff have tried to claim that the absence of Xinjiang-sourced products is due to them being out of stock. But all other short-of-stock goods, apart from those from Xinjiang, bear a date indicating when they will be available on the company's e-commerce platform.

China is a huge market for Walmart, which brings in a reported \$11.43 billion in sales from 423 retail outlets, including 36 Sam's Club stores.

In its statement the CCDI said that Western companies such as Walmart that are collaborating with anti-China forces to destabilize Xinjiang by suppressing and boycotting products from the region, after having boasted that they are free from political interference, "have slapped themselves in the face with their own actions".

That is a typical example of what the Chinese call "smashing the cooking pot from which one scoops rice".



## Opinion Line

### RCEP will boost regional trade, hasten global economy recovery

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the largest free trade agreement in the world which came into force on Saturday, will play an important role in boosting trade, augmenting the regional economy and hastening the global economic recovery amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the headwinds of protectionism, and continue to bring prosperity to the global economy in the post-pandemic period.

Thanks to the RCEP, more than 90 percent of the trade in goods among the member states will eventually become tariff-free, further improving the connectivity of industrial and supply chains and promoting the development of free trade in the region. This is conducive to maintaining an open and inclusive multilateral trading system and supporting global economic recovery.

In recent years, unilateralism and protectionism have been hindering

global free trade and thus the global economic recovery. The RCEP will effectively offset the impact of protectionism and unilateralism on global trade by allowing the member states to conduct free trade and enhance multilateral cooperation. The RCEP members have shown to the world that win-win cooperation is the common pursuit of mankind. In the face of the decoupling efforts and beggar-thy-neighbor policies of some Western economies, the speedy ratification of the RCEP reflects the member states' commitment to promoting a fair and open multilateral trading system for the benefit of the region and the world.

For a long time, economic globalization led by Western powers has been plagued by development gaps, North-South divide and a biased global governance system. The RCEP, with its remarkable openness and inclusiveness, will bring new vitality and set a new bench-

mark for globalization.

The RCEP members include both developed and developing countries and the agreement covers a wide range of areas including tariff reduction, trade facilitation and opening up of services and investment. As such, the RCEP will accelerate the upgrading of globalization and build an open world economy.

The RCEP was signed in November 2020, and China ratified it in March 2021 becoming the first country to do so. In November 2021, it announced that it has made preparations for tariff concessions, implementation of rules of origin and binding obligations under the RCEP agreement.

There is every reason to believe that the RCEP will boost regional economic integration and help the world economy navigate the rocky road and reach newer heights of inclusiveness, openness and win-win outcomes for all.

— BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

### Outer space is not the US' backyard

After close encounters between China's international space station and two of the 1,600 Starlink satellites launched by Elon Musk's company SpaceX, Musk responded saying there is enough space around the Earth's orbit to accommodate "tens of billions" of satellites.

However, he said nothing of the high risks of satellite collisions in space. According to a United Kingdom-based research team, 90 percent of close encounters are likely to involve Starlink after it launches its planned 12,000 satellites. Besides, the brightness of the Starlink satellites in the night sky could affect the working of observatories on Earth.

The US administration is not doing any better than the Musk

company. In 2014, the United States Air Force launched the first of four satellites of the Geosynchronous Space Situational Awareness Program to monitor other countries' satellites in geosynchronous equatorial orbit.

Satellites in geosynchronous equatorial orbit can stay relatively static in relation to Earth. That makes them ideal to send communication and data to relay satellites, which receive uplink signals and retransmit them, often on different frequencies, to destination locations. The US' GSSAP satellites carry large amounts of fuel and can easily approach other countries' satellites in geosynchronous equatorial orbit to monitor them or do something worse.

According to "Global Counter-

space Capabilities: An Open Source Assessment" released by the World Security Foundation in April 2021, the GSSAP satellites have been involved in at least eight close encounters with Chinese and Russian satellites since being launched — once even coming within 10 kilometers. In mid-2020, a GSSAP satellite (USA 271) was just 20 km away from a Chinese satellite, upsetting the latter's normal functioning.

Outer space is open to all, but it seems the US administration and private companies want to treat it as their own backyard. Therefore, it's absurd that US politicians are blaming China for "militarizing space". Space should be used in a peaceful, orderly way.

— SHI HAO, A SPACE RESEARCHER AND SPACE AFFAIRS OBSERVER

## What They Say

### Pain for gains that'll make growth more sustainable

The Chinese economy faces more challenges and uncertainties in 2022. For instance, the US Federal Reserve has announced that it will raise interest rates in 2022 to fight inflation. As the inflation in the United States will not recede in the short term, China should prepare for not only direct financial impacts but also a drop in exports.

Despite this, the growth of investment in emerging industries and new and high-tech industries has remained robust, and new drivers of growth, represented by new industries, new forms of business and new models, are also growing.

Fiscal expansion, accompanied by matching monetary policies, will act as a major economic stabilizer, as China will increase the intensity of government spending, speed up the pace of spending, and moderately advance infrastructure investment this year.

The biggest challenge facing the country is demand contraction. There are many reasons for the contraction of demand. Among them, the shift in China's economic growth model and the structural adjustment of the Chinese economy combine to form a major source of downward pressure, which is the cost that must be paid for high-quality development.

In the short term, the slowdown in growth and structural adjustment, combined with other uncertainties at home and abroad, are likely to affect expectations, such as companies preparing for layoffs and consumers cutting back on spending. Both the long-term trend of contraction and the weakening of current expectations are likely to affect employment, thus constraining consumption growth and hindering the forming of a new development pattern.

But China should not give up eating for fear of choking, and it needs to continue to push forward structural adjustment, avoiding attributing the slowdown of growth to the pursuit of high-quality development.

China should unswervingly support the development of advanced manufacturing, modern agriculture, new energy and industries related to carbon emissions reduction, and promote the development of new technologies, new business forms and new growth models.

The government must continue to strengthen its support and assistance to micro, small and medium-sized businesses, prioritize job creation, and maintain the normal functioning of the social security network.

Any gain on the quality front in development is making the growth more sustainable in the long run.

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