

## VISION FOR TAIWAN: MEDIA REFORM

### *Establishing an Independent and an Objective Public Weapon of People*

Various sectors of our society have solicited opinions from all quarters in order to draw on collective wisdom and provide advice on how to reform Taiwan's media. However, to this day, the endeavor to reform the media has yielded little results and has proved to be an arduous and tortuous process—a concrete example of the failure to realize transitional justice. Since the end of the World War II, people in Taiwan had for decades been subjected to long-term party-state rule as well as a feudal culture and education dominated by the Greater China ideology imposed by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). This, as a careful investigation would reveal, is the major reason why Taiwan's media practitioners have been unable to fulfill duties required by professional media ethics and have abused “the fourth estate.” What makes this situation worse is that Taiwan is still not a normal country and that there are divergent domestic opinions about Taiwan's identity. When dealing with Communist China, its principles of “one country, two systems” and of “annexation and unification” remain unchanged; many in Taiwan have the serious problem of “not knowing for whom they are fighting or why they are fighting.” It is a problem rarely seen in normal countries.

Despite Taiwan's democratization over the past two more decades, the KMT, whether as an opposition party or a ruling party, has often deviated from the mechanism and practices of democratic

politics. Besides, in the face of the various incidents of human rights abuses China has committed, such as the oppression in Xinjiang and Tibet and the persecution of Falun Gong, the KMT has remained silent, slackened its vigilance to be prepared for danger while living in peace, and even violated the fundamental belief in human rights protection by assisting in the blockade of the New Tang Dynasty Asia Pacific Television run by Falun Gong. What's even more pernicious is that the KMT does not care a bit about safeguarding Taiwan's sovereignty when handling cross-strait relations. A conspicuous example is Taiwan's being denigrated as “Taiwan Province of China” by the World Health Organization. The constant occurrences of instances of loss of sovereignty like this often reduce not only our people's consciousness of the distinction between our enemies and us but also their awareness of potential dangers. Consequently, the media has also forgotten to uphold their position on Taiwan's centrality. In numerous cases of news editing or commentary writing, the media has shown themselves consciously or unconsciously degenerating into mouthpieces for Beijing's “united front tactics.”

The reform of Taiwan's media involves a multitude of multifaceted problems as well as a complicated web of knotty issues. Only when a number of avenues are implemented simultaneously to launch all-dimensional media reform, establish

the centrality of Taiwan as the media's core interest, and eradicate the manipulating force left by the remaining power of the KMT's party-state rule can the media be induced to return to professional ethics. Then the so-called "fourth estate" will no longer have any license to act unscrupulously and will aim at attaching equal importance to press freedom and social responsibility—this will lead to the achievement of addressing both the temporal and the fundamental problems of the media. The media has been governed by law, self-regulated, and external regulation (supervised by the market and civil organizations). It is hoped that these mechanisms would enhance the quality of journalism. If further measures can be taken to realize media reform, ensure the survival and development of the media, take care of the rights and benefits of media workers, and rightly deal with the present irregularities; Taiwan's media can attain a global reputation and earn the respect of the international community.

Meanwhile, there are basically three major strategies to reform the media with help from the outside; they are "government intervention through policies," "referring related civil and criminal cases to judicial arbitration," and "returning to market mechanisms for solutions." The three methods of government intervention include "media structure regulation," "media content regulation," and the new emerging trend of "co-regulation of the media" (by the government, the legislature, the media industry, and civil organizations). The two procedures employed in judicial

arbitration are "civil liability regulations" and "criminal penalties." The three practices within market mechanisms are "private negotiations initiated by market participants," "empowering the audience through media literacy education and enabling them to conduct fair trade with other market participants in the media," and "media supervision organizations." The government should make law to prevent businessmen or Chinese investors from jointly monopolizing the media market, encourage good entrepreneurs to invest in the media with a nonprofit mentality so as to set an example, and adopt diverse methods to safeguard public interests (but the government should make law to effectively regulate the opening up of the media market to Chinese investors, Hong Kong investors, and those who enter this market via a third place).

We only have one Taiwan. In the face of media reform in this new century, we need to seek breakthroughs, make progress, broaden perspectives, seriously think about the height, width, depth, and strength of the direction and vision of media reform and development so that this undertaking may conform to the international trend, meet the needs of our country, society, and people, transform all aspects of the media environment, and actively cultivate the excellence of Taiwan's media. In the meantime, these reforms have to be carried out in order of priority and with the utmost patience, perseverance, and determination so as to achieve intended objectives. 