

There is only one name: Taiwan

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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What's in a name? It is a label that sets one person apart from another, and helps foster a sense of identity and self.

Just as someone's name says a lot about a person, when it comes to a nation's appellation, it is something through which its citizens showcase their identity and find their place in the world.

However, in the case of Taiwan, as a result of being occupied in 1949 by the retreating Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Republic of China (ROC) government in exile, it has since been trapped in a modern political fable like *The Emperor's New Clothes*.

Add in decades of brainwashing that Taiwanese were subjected to under the former KMT regime, and many still suffer from a nationality identity crisis, with no clear concept of their identity in the struggle between Taiwan and the ROC.

While Taiwanese continue to live in this absurd reality, the People's Republic of China (PRC), on the other hand, is having a field day, benefiting from Taiwan clinging to the empty shell of the exiled ROC. As long as Taiwan does that, Beijing can continue with its deceitful claim that it has "inherited" sovereignty over Taiwan by citing the UN General Assembly's Resolution 2758 of Oct. 25, 1971, which recognizes the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China, replacing the ROC.

However, Beijing's complacency has been broken — by a name rectification campaign initiated by a civic organization. The Taiwan 2020 Campaign Council is seeking to hold a referendum on having Taiwan seek participation in international sports events, including the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, under the name "Taiwan" instead of "Chinese Taipei."

Beijing was so concerned that it admitted on Wednesday last week that it had a hand in the East Asian Olympic Committee's decision to revoke Taichung's right to host the East Asian Youth Games in August next year, pointing to the name-change referendum as the reason.

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International sports events are a powerful setting for forging a sense of national pride and patriotism as people cheer fervently for their country. One can just imagine how dreadful that image would be for Beijing: a crowd collectively chanting “Taiwan” and cheering for “Taiwan” at international competitions, because it knows how that could easily arouse a sense of national identity that is different from the ROC government’s ideology.

And a reinforced sense of “Taiwan is Taiwan and not the ROC” is certainly the last thing Beijing wants.

As Taiwan 2020 Campaign Council director Hideki Nagayama has said, the campaign has made Beijing anxious due to its reach and it is concerned about the extent of the campaign’s effects internationally.

Knowing how scared Beijing is of the name “Taiwan,” Taiwanese should use it to their utmost advantage to deter Beijing’s incessant suppression of Taiwan internationally.

The campaign for a referendum to have Taiwan compete in international sports events under the name “Taiwan” is a golden opportunity for all Taiwanese to make China — and the whole world — know what they like their country to be called.

All that stands in the way now is not Beijing, but whether Taiwanese have the will and mind-set to present a united voice to make the world know what they want.

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