

Name, 'consensus' make wall of lies

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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A quote often misattributed to Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels holds that “a lie repeated a thousand times becomes truth.” Sadly the preposterous nature of this appears to depict conditions in Taiwan today.

Two major lies enmesh the nation: One is the so-called “1992 consensus” and the other is the meaningless name “Chinese Taipei.” Recent events suggest just how extensive these lies have become in obfuscating public discourse.

The spurious “consensus” was touted by proponents as the backbone that helped propel Kaohsiung mayor-elect Han Kuo-yu (韓國瑜) and Taichung mayor-elect Lu Shiow-yen (盧秀燕) to electoral victories for the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), who campaigned on promises of economic gains.

The truth is that the political make-believe of the “consensus” has nothing to do with economic growth nor private investment, and yet it is being pushed as a legitimate representation of reality.

Since 2000, when then-National Security Council secretary-general Su Chi (蘇起) made up the term before the nation’s first democratic transfer of power when the KMT handed the Presidential Office to the Democratic Progressive Party, Taiwanese have been led on a path of deception as the KMT promoted the “consensus” as a supposed understanding reached in 1992 that both sides acknowledge there is “one China,” with each side having its own interpretation of what “China” means.

However, over the years, incidents and statements by Chinese officials have shown that Beijing’s understanding is different from what the KMT has been selling. Beijing’s incessant bullying of Taiwan suggests it could never tolerate the idea of “both sides having their own interpretation,” because agreeing to this would be tacit acceptance of “two Chinas.”

Even KMT Chairman Wu Den-yih (吳敦義) said that “the 1992 consensus is each side having its own interpretation, but you cannot say that to China’s face.”

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The other big lie is the name “Chinese Taipei,” which was a concession the KMT made in 1981 — during the party-state era — to the International Olympic Committee.

However, this ridiculous name has spilled over from the sports realm. National Central University associate professor of Earth sciences Lin Tien-shun (林添順) on Friday pointed out the absurdity of an academic institute in Australia unilaterally changing references to Taiwan to “Chinese Taipei” — and even changing Taiwan Strait to “Chinese Taipei Strait” — in a 2003 paper he wrote.

The fictional “consensus” was concocted to serve a political purpose, while the name issue was mounted out of fear, as shown by reactions to the name-change referendum on Nov. 24, which opponents said would jeopardize athletes’ eligibility for the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games. As a result, the referendum — which asked whether the national team should participate at international sporting events as “Taiwan” instead of “Chinese Taipei” — was defeated 55 percent to 45 percent.

These deceptions might be conjured by different means and under different circumstances, but they manipulated beliefs and shifted dispositions.

So politicians clamor to uphold a nonexistent “consensus,” while Taiwanese appear to be satisfied cheering for teams called “Chinese Taipei” without grasping how demeaning and insulting the name is to the nation’s standing and dignity.

“Falsehood flies and truth comes limping after it,” author Jonathan Swift wrote in his essay *The Art of Political Lying* in 1710.

When will the truth ever catch up and break Taiwanese free of the wall of lies that has encircled them for so long?

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