

## When It Comes to National Identity, Taiwanese Can Be Their Own Worst Enemy

Written by Jerome F. Keating Ph.D.  
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Most visitors to Taiwan leave with good impressions. They say Taiwanese are friendly, helpful, kind etc. In business Taiwanese have proven themselves to be hard-working, adaptive and entrepreneurial. So why then do these same congenial people have trouble working together for one nation in politics? Why can't they develop, expand and solidify the freedom and democracy that they and their ancestors took so long to win and sacrificed so much to achieve? Why do Taiwanese, particularly in their nation's identity and sovereignty become their own worst enemy?

Their own worst enemy? Yes, in the twenty some years that I have been in Taiwan, I have watched a nation come of age and begin to find its identity. I have watched it finally break free (1987) of the decades of Martial Law that had been imposed, sanctioned and perpetuated by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT). Taiwanese were later finally able to freely elect their own president (1996). Nevertheless, of all the colonial powers that visited Taiwan, if there ever was one who fit the role of the beggar who came to take over the temple of Taiwan it was the KMT.

I have watched this nation finally break free from the iron rice bowl and privilege that so many of that beggar's children had kept in Taiwan from 1947 on. I speak directly of the seats in the Legislative Yuan and National Assembly but also include all the numerous administrative and support positions that went with them from 1947 on; all given to the beggar's children.

In achieving democracy, the Taiwanese never finished the job. They never got rid of all the beggar's children, those who still had longings for China instead of Taiwan. The fact that people like the denigrating Kuo Kuan-ying to this very year had held and others still hold prominent positions in the government service is ample proof that the beggar's children are still around. The fact that people like Diane Lee, a favorite of the beggar's children could illegally keep a seat in the Legislative Yuan and yet be ready to escape to the United States if trouble ever came shows the loyalty of the beggar's children to Taiwan. I am surprised that Lee did not also have a passport for the People's Republic of China (PRC). In any other country what Kuo and Lee did could almost be considered treasonous and guilty of high crimes, yet Kuo and Lee still walk the streets, free as birds enjoying their profits. Why? They do so because many of the beggar's children still control the Legislative Yuan and presidency.

No, one fault of the Taiwanese is that they never finished the job. In addition to having short memories, their kindness has prevented them from recognizing charlatans. Now under Ma Ying-jeou, the nation once again begins to teeter on the verge of losing all the people had fought and died for. Taiwanese are distracted and fight over the wrong things. They remind me

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of people whose house is on fire. As they enter their home to put out the fire and save it, one looks at the clock on the wall and notices it is not the same as the time as on his watch. He calls to the others, "Wait, we need to change the hands of the clock on the wall, the time is not correct." Another disagrees, "It's fast, but that is OK because it helps us get going earlier." A third counters, "We should make it be exact." A fourth disagrees, "It is correct, it is your watches that are wrong." And so they argue while the house burns down. Taiwanese are their own worst enemy.

To be sure, Taiwan faces many immediate practical matters to solve, but Taiwan's major overriding problem and priority should be to establish a national identity, an identity based on Taiwanese consciousness, an identity that will defend the island nation. They are distracted by seeming fraudulent obfuscations of Ma Ying-jeou who said, "We declared our sovereignty and independence in 1911; therefore we don't need to declare it again." Independence and sovereignty, in 1911? In 1911, China was beginning a continuous Civil War that would end when the new-comer Chinese Communist Party (CCP) finally sent the KMT beggar packing (1949) to become the beggar in Taiwan's temple. In 1911, all of Taiwan was for the first time in its history united under one nation--but that union was under a different nation, Japan. Only a charlatan of the first order would try to fabricate a link between the identity of present day Taiwan and make it dependent on and begin with what happened in China in 1911.

To establish a national identity, Taiwanese must get rid of the Constitution of the Republic of China. Anomalies abound in that Constitution, and it has nothing to do with Taiwan; it was brought here by the beggar's children. It didn't exist in China in 1911, and it only made a brief appearance there from 1947 to 1949 before the CCP sent the KMT beggar packing, yet Ma wants to keep it imposed on Taiwan and use it as a norm. This Constitution claims that Mongolia and Tibet belong to the Republic of China. If Ma wants to make such grandiose claims and perpetuate such illusions let him, but don't involve Taiwan in these fabrications. This only reinforces how Ma lives in a dream world of yesteryear, but it has nothing to do with Taiwanese identity.

Some Taiwanese still suffer from the Stockholm Syndrome, and seek to make excuses for their colonizers and their behavior. They believe the beggar's children when they tell them that they are better suited to handle Taiwan's affairs and economy instead of the Taiwanese. They believe the beggar's children when they say they can best determine Taiwan's identity. They even want to rename Democracy Hall as Chiang Kai-shek Hall after the anti-democracy man who led the beggar's children to Taiwan.

Don't be sold a bill of goods. Again Ma Ying-jeou claims that Taiwan will be left out in the cold if

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he is not given carte blanche in establishing his non-transparent ECFA with China. Left in the cold? Taiwan is already one of the biggest investors in China. Taiwan's economy is already deeply linked to that of China. What is at stake is not being left in the cold but Taiwan's identity. A bigger beggar of 1.3 billion people sits outside Taiwan's temple door. Taiwanese had had little choice after World War II when the first beggar came into their land; yet now that they have finally won democracy from that first beggar, that beggar says they should invite his 1.3 billion relatives into their home?

I do not by any means mean to say that all KMT are beggar's children. Some have found a new home and are loyal to Taiwan. They have jettisoned their past and have taken on a Taiwanese identity. They are for Taiwan. But Taiwanese still have plenty of examples of people like Kuo and Lee above. They need to examine closely anyone whose main identity and profit is with links outside Taiwan. They must insist on a bedrock agreement of Taiwan first, and Taiwan for Taiwanese. This must be in actions and not just words.

When Cato the Elder ended his speeches in the Roman Senate, no matter what his topic, he always closed with "Carthago delenda est." Carthage (the main enemy of Rome) must be destroyed. Taiwanese should always end their speeches with a similar phrase. "The beggar's children must be sent packing. Let Taiwan be Taiwan."

Source: [Jerome F. Keating's writings](#)