

Taiwan's precarious position on global stage

Written by Chen Chien-fu 陳建夫
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Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Department of Women's Development director Lin Ching-yi (林靜儀) was recently invited to the UN to attend a meeting organized by the UN Commission on the Status of Women. Despite providing her invitation and non-governmental organization (NGO) accreditation, security refused Lin entry, saying: "A Taiwanese passport is not valid; it is policy."

Lin's passport was returned and she was unable to enter the venue as the representative of a Taiwanese NGO.

Taiwan is not a UN member nation. Its performance on women's rights might be outstanding, but holding a Republic of China (ROC) passport, its representative is unable to set foot through the main door.

When this writer took part in the 2012 Asia electoral commission and electoral monitor summit, since the UN's Asia-Pacific headquarters in Bangkok was chosen as the location for the meeting, it was only after a period of protracted negotiation that a consensus was reached. On the day of the meeting, passports were not checked, but we had to conceal any visible UN logos and symbols.

During this year's elections in Sri Lanka, the Sri Lankan Department of Elections invited Taiwanese monitors to attend. However, following submission of documentation to the Sri Lankan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Defense, due to China's "one China" policy, the Taiwanese monitoring team's permit was canceled.

Whether at the UN, the APEC forum or other intergovernmental scenarios, Taiwan is accustomed to being suppressed; but now the nation is being fully suppressed at international meetings of NGOs, too, as well as at sporting events. The organizing committees usually request that the letters "PRC" (People's Republic of China) are added after Taiwan's name, or ask that Taiwan calls itself "Chinese Taipei," or even "the separate customs territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu."

It is because of these degrading names and actions that younger people in Taiwan feel

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resentful toward China.

After next year's elections, interaction between Taiwan and China will undoubtedly be put on hold while each side becomes accustomed to the other. Even if the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) retains power, it will need to differentiate itself from President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) administration by seeking to allay the public's fears concerning Taiwan's overly close relationship with China.

If, on the other hand, the DPP gains power, it must tackle the problems of "one China" and the so-called "1992 consensus." It is also probable that discussions on trade and economic cooperation will need to be started afresh. Therefore, the potential for future conflict lies not in governmental matters, politics or discussions on trade and economic cooperation. Instead, the threat of conflict lies in skirmishes between international NGOs, which have the potential to flare up at any time.

From next year, the use of "Taiwan" when participating in international NGO events or when acting as an international observer will be the tipping point that will cause relations between the two sides to reach an impasse.

If Beijing allowed Taiwanese organizations and civic groups more space to breathe internationally, perhaps it would help reduce the public's level of animosity toward China, especially in the case of the younger generation.

On the other hand, if China continues to restrict Taiwan's space on the international stage, it will without doubt be throwing more oil onto the fire and result only in the two sides drifting further apart.

Chen Chien-fu is chairman of the Taiwan Network for Free Elections.

Translated by Edward Jones

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