

Yesterday marked the 70th anniversary of Japan's surrender in World War II, but it was surprisingly quiet in the former Japanese colony of Taiwan — which might have been the result of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government's failed attempt to connect Taiwan to China through the nation's colonial past.

Seventy years ago, when then-Japanese emperor Showa, also known as Hirohito, announced Japan's surrender to Allied forces via a radio broadcast, many Taiwanese had emotional reactions. However, yesterday, most Taiwanese were indifferent, while people in many neighboring countries had heated discussions over Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's speech to commemorate the end of the war.

It is ironic to see how the KMT government has been organizing commemorative events to remind people of the Republic of China's (ROC) war against Japan — military exercises; honoring descendants of German businessman John Rabe and US missionary Minnie Vautrin, who saved hundreds of thousands of Chinese during the Rape of Nanjing; as well as inviting descendants of former Soviet Union wartime pilots who helped the ROC as volunteers. Yet, these events do not seem to have stirred up interest for the anniversary of Japan's surrender. A key reason might be that the government is too eager to connect Taiwan to China, and has thus distanced itself from the public.

Taiwanese were certainly fierce in their resistance against Japanese rule. Upon learning that Japan was to take over Taiwan in 1895, the founding of a Taiwan Republic was declared, with militias formed by locals almost everywhere, forcing the governments of Japan and China's Qing Dynasty to hold the handover ceremony on a ship off the coast of northern Taiwan.

Battles between Taiwanese and Japanese were fought fiercely across the nation, and when the armed resistance quieted through the 1910s, peaceful resistance, including the farmers' movement, the labor movement, the socialist movement, the campaign for local autonomy, the nationalist movement, as well as the new literature movement, with a strong emphasis on anti-colonialism, unfolded in Taiwan, with battlefields extending to Japan and China.

However, all these seem to be nothing in the eyes of KMT officials.

## War memory off-kilter for KMT

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They only showed concern over how foreigners helped the ROC in its war against Japan, how bravely the ROC armed forces fought the Japanese invaders and how horribly China suffered in the Japanese invasion.

It is true that China suffered greatly and it was not easy for it to resist the invasion, but the majority of Taiwanese do not feel emotionally attached to those events.

Moreover, many Taiwanese who lived through the war still remember how hard life was, often having to dodge air raids by the Allied forces, which included the ROC Air Force.

It is ironic that the ROC government held commemorative events to “celebrate” the ROC’s air raids over Taiwan. It is also ironic that the ROC government celebrates its victory over Japan in Taiwan, but in fact, as many as 200,000 Taiwanese men were drafted into the Japanese imperial forces, with many of them losing their lives.

Wars are tragic events, and there is nothing to “celebrate” about them. The US does not “celebrate” its air raids of Japanese cities or the bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima with atomic weapons.

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