

Premier Lin Chuan (林政則) said not long ago: “I believe that the title ‘Chinese Taipei’ means the Republic of China [ROC] ... The meaning behind that title is the ROC.”

Lin’s claim reminds me of “Ah Q” (阿 Q), a popular character created by Chinese writer Lu Xun (魯迅) in his 1921 book *The True Story of Ah Q* (阿 Q 正傳).

When Ah Q lost a fight and was beaten up, he simply told himself: “This was like a son beating up his own father, completely unreasonable,” in an attempt to comfort himself and convince himself that he had won a moral victory.

Asked about the WHA meeting last month, Minister of Foreign Affairs David Lee (吳敦義) said that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had delivered a letter to the WHO to “register our concern” over the mention of the “one China” principle in the WHA’s invitation letter. Lee said this phrase means to file a “protest.”

That was yet another expression of the Ah Q spirit. A concern is a concern; a protest is a protest. Registering a concern definitely does not mean making a protest.

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) even praised Minister of Health and Welfare Lin Tzou-yien’s (林錫山) performance at the WHA, saying the national title of Taiwan had not been belittled during the meeting.

It is evident that such Ah Q-style self-comforting is the unanimous view and reaction of the Presidential Office, the Cabinet and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In response to the use of the title “Chinese Taipei” for Taiwan, the government could have used dozens of ways to show its concern or protest in public or in private, such as:

□ It could have expressed that the title “Chinese Taipei” is “unsatisfactory and unacceptable,” and then issued public written and verbal protests, held up a protest placard at the WHA and referred to itself as “Taiwan.”

□ It could have issued public written and verbal protests at the WHA and referred to itself as “Taiwan,” or issued written and verbal protests in private and referred to itself as “Taiwan.”

□ It could have expressed that the title is “unsatisfactory, but reluctantly acceptable” and referred to itself as “Taiwan” instead of “Chinese Taipei,” or it could have referred to itself neither as “Taiwan” nor “Chinese Taipei,” or both as “Taiwan” and “Chinese Taipei.”

□ It could have expressed that the title is “unsatisfactory, but acceptable,” and referred to itself as “Taiwan” instead of “Chinese Taipei,” or it could have referred to itself neither as “Taiwan” nor “Chinese Taipei,” or both as “Taiwan” and “Chinese Taipei.”

□ Finally, and the worst of these options, it could have expressed that the title is “unsatisfactory, but acceptable” and referred to itself as “Chinese Taipei” instead of “Taiwan.”

If the Tsai administration had used the first of these alternatives, it would probably have met the humble expectations of a majority of Taiwanese.

Among these options, the preceding Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) administration used to choose to say that the title “Chinese Taipei” is “unsatisfactory, but reluctantly acceptable,” and referred to itself both as “Taiwan” and “Chinese Taipei.”

Unexpectedly, the Tsai administration adopted the last and worst expression, with the premier saying at the Legislative Yuan that the title “Chinese Taipei” is “unsatisfactory, but acceptable.”

It was deplorable to see the Tsai administration performing even worse than the former KMT government.

Furthermore, in the past, the term “Chinese Taipei” was only used as the title of the Taiwanese delegation at the WHA, but the minister of health and welfare urged the WHO to “support the 23 million citizens of Chinese Taipei” during his speech at the WHA, thus using the term to refer to all Taiwanese.

Taiwanese are strongly opposed to Taiwan calling itself Chinese Taipei. If Taiwan and China had really reached a prior agreement that the delegation should use “Chinese Taipei” to refer to Taiwan at the WHA, and that “the earth would move and mountains would shake” if it did not, then the Tsai administration needs to explain this to the Taiwanese public.

However, if it was possible for Taiwan to have avoided using the title “Chinese Taipei,” then it was the Tsai administration’s fault, and it should apologize to all Taiwanese.

It must stop acting like Ah Q. It may be able to deceive itself, but it will not be able to deceive the public and it may end up losing the public’s trust.

*Lin Kien-tsu is a former director of Tamkang University’s Department of International Business.*

Translated by Eddy Chang

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