

## Joining the UN nothing more than a pipe dream

Written by Peng Ming-min 彭明敏

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While aware that this article will offend some people, these words have been a long time coming and can wait no longer. For those friends who are hurt in any way by what is written here, let me preface the following with this: Although I love my friends, I love Taiwan more.

Many Taiwanese want the nation to join the UN. Indeed, many have worked to this end for many years. However, they are mistaken in both their thinking and their actions, which not only fail to move the nation closer to the goal, but actually make it more difficult to obtain.

Taiwan cannot join the UN, because China opposes it and Taiwan has made its own bed. Beijing has archaic and outdated ideologies about sovereignty issues and are aggressive in territorial expansion to the point of being unreasonable. Other nations are intimidated by its power: They dare not speak against China and can only wait for the international political climate to change. On the other hand, Taiwan has allowed its bizarre political status to persist and this has opened the door for the unfair treatment it has received internationally.

For many years, people committed to the cause have told Taiwanese of the necessity of UN membership and how it will benefit the nation. They made badges, souvenirs, gave speeches, conducted workshops and sent out pamphlets. However, they are preaching to the choir. It would make more sense to make their case to the international community.

Last month, many Taiwanese made the trip to New York, often paying for the flight from their own pockets, to demonstrate in front of the UN headquarters. They sang, waved flags, gave speeches, prayed, demonstrated and distributed pamphlets. They looked, to a certain extent, similar to some kind of religious cult.

Demonstrations in front of the UN are hardly rare. People come with all sorts of demands. Passers-by are so used to seeing these demonstrations that they no longer give them a second glance. It is questionable how such actions will help Taiwan obtain UN membership. It is a pity that the innocent enthusiasm of Taiwanese were used this way, although I would certainly not go as far as to suggest they were being taken advantage of.

Whether Taiwan should join the UN is a foreign-policy issue for all nations involved. It is not a

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decision that representatives in New York can make. Campaigning in front of the UN building makes no sense at all.

For starters, Taiwanese need to ask which nation they are campaigning for to join the UN. Is it the Republic of China (ROC)? The ROC was kicked out by the UN a long time ago and the outcome cannot be undone. Perhaps they are campaigning for “Taiwan.” Unfortunately, “Taiwan,” as a nation, does not exist yet. There is nothing the international community can do about that. Or perhaps they are campaigning for the ROC’s UN membership, but in the name of “Taiwan.” Unfortunately, these tricks do not work at the UN.

Taiwan has to keep communicating with the international community, highlighting the injustice of the exclusion of its 23 million people from the UN and how this is in breach of the global body’s Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Domestically, Taiwan has to determine for itself its name and draw up a new Constitution, which will pragmatically define its real territory. Forget the notion of “one nation, different interpretations.”

These steps will make Taiwan a normalized nation. They are arduous, long-term undertakings, but for Taiwan’s own sake, they must be done in tandem. Those who want to continue doing things the old-fashioned way are only fooling themselves.

Peng Ming-min is a former presidential adviser.

*Translated by Ethan Zhan*

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