

Title change is a shift in relationship with Japan

Written by James Wang 000

Wednesday, 24 May 2017 06:59

That the former Association of East Asian Relations has been renamed the Taiwan-Japan Relations Association indicates a subtle, yet important change in the relationship between the two nations.

The juxtaposition of Taiwan next to Japan in the organization's official name suggests that Taiwan is now finally being treated as an equal by Japan. Taiwanese welcomed the change, as it is a gesture of Japanese goodwill.

However, the progress is also due in large part to the hard work of the Democratic Progressive Party, which deserves applause from the general public.

The name change is especially significant when viewed in relation to the Treaty of San Francisco, which came into force 65 years ago, as it marks the first time Japan has established a meaningful relationship with the nation since it renounced sovereignty over Taiwan and the Penghu archipelago.

In this new relationship, Taiwan is no longer treated simply as part of a country or only included when "East Asia" is mentioned.

Following the name change, China expressed its dissatisfaction. However, it should be lodging its complaints with the Russians, who inadvertently helped confirm the terms in the San Francisco Treaty that made Japan renounce its sovereignty over Taiwan and Penghu, without conceding them to China, in a failed attempt to ensure that Beijing would take over them.

At the San Francisco conference, the Soviet Union proposed a different version of the treaty, which specified that Taiwan and Penghu, along with Manchuria, the Pratas Islands (Dongsha Islands, 东风群岛), Paracel Islands (Xisha Islands, 西沙群岛) and the Spratly Islands (Nansha Islands, 南沙群岛) would be ceded to China. However, the proposal was vetoed.

The treaty that was eventually passed was the original version, which simply states that Japan

Title change is a shift in relationship with Japan

Written by James Wang 王健

Wednesday, 24 May 2017 06:59

would renounce its sovereignty over the territories. The final version does not say the territories would be ceded to China and therefore does not acknowledge China's sovereignty over them.

Due to pressure from the US, Japan signed a bilateral agreement with the government of Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) based on the San Francisco Treaty. It then established diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China and claimed that it respects and understands Beijing's position on Taiwan.

However, it has continued to conduct exchanges with Taiwan in the name of improving cooperation across East Asia. Nevertheless, it was not until this time that Japan finally established a proper one-on-one relationship with Taiwan.

In recent years, several pro-unification parties and groups, influenced by China's anti-Japan policies, have been doing all they can to incite anti-Japan sentiment in Taiwan. Many of them have been trying to demonize Tokyo by exaggerating the risks of importing Japanese food products.

However, their tactics will not stand up to scientific scrutiny and the public will eventually see through them.

In addition to their shared democratic values and close trade relationship, Taiwan and Japan share the responsibilities of maintaining peace and security in East Asia.

Due to those reasons, the two have naturally developed a good rapport. The name change is the first step toward normalizing the relationship between the two nations.

Taiwan and Japan should continue to work on normalizing their relations, both legally as well as in a de facto sense.

James Wang is a media commentator.

Title change is a shift in relationship with Japan

Written by James Wang 王景

Wednesday, 24 May 2017 06:59

Translated by Tu Yu-an

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2017/05/24](#)