

The 2017 Universiade opens tomorrow. An opinion poll released last weekend showed that 70 percent of Taipei residents did not know the opening date, and 62 percent had not felt any particular atmosphere or excitement in the lead-up to the event.

Winning the right to host the Games offered Taipei a great opportunity to raise Taiwan's international visibility.

Nevertheless, it seems as if the host's approach has turned it into a local Taipei event — or even a "Chinese Taipei City" event — instead of an international one, and failed to incite any enthusiasm among Taiwanese.

The result is that it is proving difficult to sell tickets to residents of Taipei as well as the rest of Taiwan.

International sports events are not purely about sports, but also include a certain amount of political mobilization. Most governments strongly support their national teams.

In the past, during the great era of Taiwanese baseball, the national team always enjoyed strong and enthusiastic support, and families would gather in front of the TV no matter what time of night a game was on.

The fundamental reason was not only that the teams were outstanding, but also that they inspired nationalistic fervor. Of course, the authoritarian government at the time never failed to convert this into public support for the government.

However, this kind of political manipulation does not work in a democracy.

International sports events are always a focus of attention, and nationalism continues to be a

psychological response.

In recent years, many Taiwanese athletes have won great honors at international competitions — including professional events — always arousing celebrations in Taiwan when they do, in particular at Olympic awards ceremonies.

In a nation that can only raise the Olympic flag instead of the national flag and play the Olympic anthem instead of the national anthem, it is not difficult to detect a psychological backlash against this repression.

This is why medal-winning athletes who say or do things connected to a national symbol are welcomed as heroes.

From this perspective, it is easy to see the difficulties surrounding the Universiade.

Many are hoping that Taiwanese athletes will benefit from home turf advantage, and perhaps this could give more room for expressions of national identification and infuse nationalism with a more concrete meaning.

Unfortunately, the hosts think differently, and the main preparatory effort has been directed toward winning China's support, or at least avoiding a Chinese boycott of the Games.

To this end, the host organization has seen it as natural to use the expression "Chinese Taipei." This is no different from highlighting China's bullying and domineering attitude, and it has broken the enthusiasm among Taiwanese, who had been hoping for a grand national event.

As a result, the Universiade has become Taipei's Universiade and perhaps even "Chinese Taipei City's" Universiade, an event that does not have much to do with the nationalistic enthusiasm that most Taiwanese had been hoping for.

Despite this, Uganda seemed to threaten to prohibit its athletes from participating in the Games as part of its “one China” policy, although the team is coming.

Perhaps most Taipei residents and Taiwanese do not have any direct thoughts about “Chinese Taipei” coming to Taiwan, but it is unlikely that this grand event will bring associations about “bringing honor and glory to the nation.”

How can anyone expect Taipei residents or Taiwanese in general to spend money on tickets to go cheer on the “Chinese Taipei” team — a result of Chinese bullying — in their own nation?

The so-called “Chinese Taipei” is the Olympic model that China created through its manipulations, and it was later expanded into the political realm as a way to slowly nibble away at Taiwan’s sovereignty.

China first allowed politics to interfere with sports and then it insisted that the politicized model was purely sports-related.

Following this bravado, it now dares to claim that sports and politics should be kept separate and that any attempt to depoliticize this charade is a matter of “political meddling.”

Taipei has failed to spot the trap set by China and is playing along, inviting the wolves into the city and denigrating our capital by referring to it as “Chinese Taipei City,” as if it were administered by China, and relegating “Taiwan” to a mere geographical designation.

The true miracle in this instance would be if the hosts won the enthusiastic participation of Taipei residents and a wide response among all Taiwanese.

The Olympic model has been damaging. It has spread from sports to politics and there is no

## Resist 'Chinese Taipei City' agenda

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end to the consequences.

This example makes it very clear that politicians must not work for short-term gains and voluntarily wear the leash handed to them by China, because in the future, Beijing might pull the leash a bit harder.

The same thing applies to the so-called "1992 consensus": It appeared to be loose, but Beijing has continued to tighten it, until today we are left with "one China, one interpretation."

Looking at these examples, and at how we have gone from "maintaining the Republic of China [ROC] status quo" to "Chinese Taipei City," one can only wonder if we will be able to resist when Beijing next pulls the leash.

With time, a policy might be successful, but it can also fail. Refusing in the past to maintain a UN seat under the name Taiwan, but agreeing to the expression "Chinese Taipei" to compete in the Olympic Games is an example of the latter.

Even politicians who work for themselves must consider the general public and future generations.

Translated by Perry Svensson

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