

On Oct. 25, 1971, Albania's draft resolution A/L 630 and Add. 1 and 2 passed by a roll-call vote of the UN General Assembly 76 to 35, with 17 abstentions. This recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the sole legal China and was encoded as General Assembly Resolution 2758. Sensing that the Republic of China's (ROC) eviction from the UN was inevitable, Chiang Kai-shek (蔣經國) ordered his representatives to formally leave the UN in protest before the vote.

The geopolitical and psychological shock of that event still leaves an imprint on the identity and rights of Taiwanese today, 48 years later.

In 2007, then-president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) formally applied for the ROC to rejoin the UN using the name "Taiwan." This was immediately rejected by then-UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon under the pretext that the application contradicted Resolution 2758.

Despite this misreading of Resolution 2758, Ban was nevertheless in line with UN policy as stipulated in the Final Clauses of Multilateral Treaties handbook, published in 2003. This provided an example, which stated that: "Regarding the Taiwan Province of China, the Secretary-General follows the General Assembly's guidance incorporated in resolution 2758 (XXVI) of the General Assembly of 25 October 1971 on the restoration of the lawful rights of the People's Republic of China in the United Nations. The General Assembly decided to recognize the representatives of the Government of the People's Republic of China as the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations. Hence, instruments received from the Taiwan Province of China will not be accepted by the Secretary-General in his capacity as depositary."

How Taiwan came to be referred to as a "Province of China" in this handbook, or in any other UN literature despite no precedent of such a descriptor in Resolution 2758, remains unknown. What is commonly known is that China's influence over, and rotating leadership of, various UN and international bodies has seen Taiwan continually marginalized and humiliated on the international stage, with an increasingly petty vindictiveness.

The UN has been "captured" by the interests of the permanent members of the Security Council, who wield their economic and military weight as crude diplomatic tools. Russia and the US might have dominated during the Cold War, but China has been very much a major player

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Written by Ben Goren

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for the past two decades and has become skilled at working within the institution to protect its interests.

As the reality of Taiwan's obvious sovereignty rips at the seams of both the ROC's and PRC's colonial claims to the island archipelago and its indigenous people, the absurdity of the UN's position has become more apparent as it grapples with toeing an official line that will please Beijing while contradicting much that it claims to stand for.

Note for example the recent controversy regarding an image about same-sex marriage that listed Taiwan as "Taiwan, Province of China." This image, promoting gender equality and marriage rights, was first posted by the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women on Facebook on Aug. 4 and subsequently deleted, but then used in a tweet on the handle @UN_Women on Aug. 10. Not only did it disingenuously and insultingly list Taiwan as a province of China, it gave the false impression that China had legalized same-sex marriage.

The UN's error not only prompted a necessary and justified objection from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but, in yet another soft-power win for Taiwan, it raised global awareness of one of many differences between the two neighboring countries — China's lack of progress in marriage rights as contrasted with Taiwan's.

The UN's withdrawal of the posts and tweets following public backlash also indicates another development. If there is one clear distinction between the administration of President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) and her predecessors, it is that Tsai's government is much more social media savvy, with both the foreign ministry and the Ministry of Culture producing content that is smart, timely, targeted and impactful.

Much of that could owe itself to the Tsai administration hiring Minister Without Portfolio Audrey Tang (唐鳳), a self-taught computer programmer and high-school drop-out, and the Executive Yuan's first transgender official. The government might not have anywhere near the size of social media audience and reach in gross numbers, but in terms of dignity and veracity, just one of its tweets has the authority and credibility of 100 pieces of clunky revisionist propaganda by PRC government outlets such as the *Global Times*.

No wonder then that China has put a great deal of effort into either influencing and

monopolizing the framing of narratives on the social media landscape in Taiwan, or at least destroying users' trust in it, as part of an election strategy to ensure that Tsai is not re-elected.

The conundrum the UN faces is that it is regarded as the pre-eminent body for determining international law and membership is often falsely equated with legitimacy as a diplomatically recognizable nation-state. Membership comes with rules, responsibilities and significant benefits and rights. In the same way that Israel has expended huge energy to ensure that Palestine is not included or recognized as a full member state, so, too, China knows that UN recognition of Taiwan would render its plans to annex and subjugate the country into its brutalist state-sponsored capitalist authoritarian dystopia that much more obviously unpalatable to the rest of the world.

The UN is the largest international organization by state membership, but it is not the only global body of significance. Although the UN has 193 official members, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has 120 member states, 17 observers and is a member of 10 international organizations. It was established in 1961 and is based on the principles agreed at the Bandung Conference in 1955.

The founding ethos of the NAM, as enumerated by then-Cuban president Fidel Castro in the Havana Declaration of 1979, seems purposely fit for Taiwan: "to ensure the national independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and security of non-aligned countries" in their "struggle against imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and all forms of foreign aggression, occupation, domination, interference or hegemony as well as against great power and bloc politics."

The term "non-alignment" was first used to describe five principles of self-restraint to be used as a guide for Sino-Indian relations. It was these principles that would later serve as the basis of the NAM. The five principles were mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in domestic affairs, equality and mutual benefit and peaceful co-existence.

It is easy to be cynical about the idealism or legal irrelevance of the NAM, but in the Cold War world — with all nations being pressed into serving as a proxy for one side or the other — the NAM stood as an international "Switzerland," and in recent years it has acted as a representative of the Global South, which holds the majority of the world's population and is still reeling from the impacts of colonialism and Northern adventurism for resource and wealth

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extraction. It is now also bearing the largest brunt of contingent effects of climate change.

Taiwan might not wish to regard itself as part of the Global South, preferring to identify with the values and standards of the North, but it should also note that nine of its remaining 17 allies are members of the NAM and China only has observer status.

For as long as the now anachronistically named Chinese Communist Party runs the PRC, there is no possibility of Taiwan joining the UN. This does not mean it should stop trying or should not fiercely uphold its identity and self-respect on the international stage at all times and across all forums, but there are other international bodies, perhaps less well known and lacking as much legal clout, that Taiwan can and should try to participate in and the NAM is one of them — a potentially rewarding opportunity for direct diplomatic contact with 111 other nations in an organization where it would not need to abase itself with nonsense names such as “Chinese Taipei” to meet the terms of participation.

Tsai can approach the NAM in good faith and as a peaceful participant in accordance with the Havana Declaration.

Taiwan's participation, and the subsequent formal and informal economic arrangements that could develop as a result, might well help Tsai achieve her goals to boost Taiwan's global presence; help make Taiwan an Asian Tiger again; boost the tourism industry; strengthen its soft power; and expand cultural exchanges and international cooperation on medical technology in research and development. It is long past time for Taiwan to be a little more strategically smart in its public diplomacy and international relations, especially after the past four bruising years of relentless Chinese checkbook diplomacy against its diplomatic allies.

If Tsai can lead “Taiwan to China through the world,” then she can also lead Taiwan to the world through the NAM, weaning the nation a little from its taut tactical alignment with regional superpowers, who might yet reveal themselves as fair-weather allies, and stride with a little more confidence onto a big international stage where its soft power, humbleness and credibility could well enjoy a warm and productive welcome.

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