

## Military songs do not reflect identity

Written by Hsu Hao 郝郝

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During a question-and-answer session at the Legislative Yuan on March 24, Taiwan Statebuilding Party Legislator Chen Po-wei (陳柏偉) suggested that Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) and Mainland Affairs Council Minister Chen Ming-tong (陳明通) consider inviting Hong Kongers to Taiwan to serve as recruits in the Republic of China (ROC) military because they “hate Chinese more than Taiwanese do.”

Hong Kong is under Chinese jurisdiction, and openly recruiting citizens of an enemy state to serve in Taiwan’s military is slightly provocative.

Chen Po-wei deserves credit for bringing up the issue of the military’s national identification at the legislature. The political warfare thinking in the armed forces is only weakly identified with Taiwan and there is confusion over who the enemy really is.

For instance, the military song *I Love Chunghwa* (我愛中華) that soldiers chant at night roll call does not differ at all from the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) Chinese nationalism, and it would not be out of place if sung by soldiers of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army.

The armed forces’ military songs have long abounded with a nationalism aiming toward a “Greater China,” an idea almost completely disconnected from today’s Taiwanese society.

It is understandable that the ROC military adopted an aggressive militarist stance under the Chinese Nationalist Party’s (KMT) past authoritarian regime, as its ultimate goal was to retake the Chinese territory it had lost.

Today, when the Taiwanese public’s only wish is to defend Taiwan, the military should abandon the idea of “restoring the glory of *Chunghwa* and reconquering the mainland,” and instead identify with Taiwan and safeguarding the homeland.

I performed my military service on one of the outlying islands in the Matsu archipelago in 2015, one year after the Sunflower movement. During my time of service, I did not understand why

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soldiers had to sing *I Love Chunghwa*, a song I could not relate to.

Singing *Good Night! Formosa!* (晚安台灣) — a song written by Taiwanese rock band Fire Ex that became widely known during the movement — would be a much better choice, as the lyrics are filled with a tender feeling toward the homeland and it more powerfully evokes among soldiers a willingness to safeguard Taiwan.

The military's main combat force is made up of people under 40, most of whom identify as Taiwanese.

In addition to the need for advanced weaponry and expertise in combat skills, the military must have strong psychological readiness, which comes from identification with one's country.

As the COVID-19 pandemic rages across China and causes an economic slump, Beijing has been trying to provoke conflict by flying its warplanes around the nation and its fishing boats ram Taiwanese coast guard ships in the nation's territorial waters.

If Taiwan fails to further raise its awareness of who the enemy is, the long-existing confusion regarding national identity within the military could become a point of leverage for China's psychological warfare.

The Ministry of National Defense should revise military songs and the general spirit of military propaganda and political warfare to keep up with the times.

Regardless of how the ministry plans to revise military songs — either by choosing other songs or commissioning new compositions — the most important task is to incorporate symbols of Taiwanese identity into the songs, thereby allowing the military to sing the same tune as Taiwanese society.

*Hsu Hao is a personal trainer.*

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