

## The reality of Taiwan is evident

Written by Chin Heng-wei 陳恆偉  
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Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Chairman Johnny Chiang (蔣經國) must be coming close to the end of his tether.

He hopes that he has reined in KMT Legislator Wu Sz-huai (吳斯懷), but whether he has remains to be seen.

Meanwhile, KMT Legislator Chen Yu-jen (陳玉珍) touched on the party's most sensitive nerve during a question-and-answer session in the Legislative Yuan, saying, rather provocatively, that "the Republic of China [ROC] is a country, Taiwan is not."

This is quite at odds with mainstream public opinion in Taiwan, as we know from two recent surveys.

The first was published on Feb. 24 by the Taiwanese Public Opinion Foundation, and asked about cross-strait relations in the context of the COVID-19 outbreak that originated in Wuhan, China. In this poll, 83.2 percent of respondents said they identified with being Taiwanese, the highest percentage polled in 30 years.

The second survey, which was also about how Taiwan is addressing the outbreak, was conducted by a think tank for the New Power Party and published on March 29. It found that almost 75 percent of respondents supported changing the nation's English name on passports to Taiwan.

With this amount of support among the public for these issues, it is no wonder that Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) felt emboldened enough to blast Chen over her statement, saying that she was not qualified to be a legislator.

Taiwan is in a state of suspension in terms of constitutional government and its legal identity. Perhaps the most effective metaphor would be the idea of virtual reality, if only because the ROC exists in the virtual realm, compared with Taiwan, which is the reality.

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In 1949 the People's Republic of China (PRC) defeated the ROC and inherited its status as the representative of China. This circumstance was gradually recognized by nations the world over, as well as the UN, in line with international law.

The point being, Taiwan actually exists, and is both sovereign and independent.

Chen was referring to the “virtual” ROC, while the Taiwan of Su and those who see the situation as he does is actual fact.

This being the case, what exactly is the “one China” principle? Perhaps we could look to official Chinese documents for the answer.

On March 18, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a statement to the effect that several US journalists working for the New York Times, the Washington Post and the Wall Street Journal would need to notify it within four days and “hand back their press cards within 10 calendar days” as they would no longer be allowed to work as journalists in the PRC and — and here comes my point — its special administrative zones, including Hong Kong and Macau.

Where in that statement is there any evidence that Taiwan falls under the jurisdiction of the PRC? In what way does China's power or influence extend to Taiwan?

Chinese officials have proven the point themselves: The “one China” principle, then, is nothing but hot air.

Interestingly, when Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳國鼎) invited those three newspapers to station journalists in Taiwan, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman Hua Chunying (華春瑩) responded that “Taiwan is not a country.”

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Clearly, in Taiwan's reality, China has no idea what it is talking about. That is the truth.

China has consistently used the idea of "one China" to bash Taiwan.

However, the corollary of this insistence is that if countries in the international community are required not to use the name ROC, then they have little alternative but to use the name Taiwan when referring to this nation.

It is no wonder that the WHO, which Japanese Deputy Prime Minister Taro Aso has said should be renamed the Chinese Health Organization, has finally, after a string of prevarications about what to call us, eventually had to settle on "Taiwan."

In addition, the power to decide whether to allow Taiwan into the WHO lies not in the WHO itself, but with its member states.

The name "Taiwan" has become the consensus within Taiwan and within the international community. Given this context, it does seem that changing the name on the nation's passports is unavoidable.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Lo Chih-cheng (羅智強) has said that it would be sufficient to simply remove the ROC and retain Taiwan.

If the name is to be changed, it should be done properly, as it needs to be done only once.

So long as it does not impinge upon the level of the Constitution, the greatest likelihood is that the change could be made to the maximum extent possible. This should be the basic principle.

DPP Legislator Wang Ting-yu (王廷瑜) got it right when he said that the best policy would be just

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to use the name “Taiwan,” which would at the very least get around the problem of the “virtual” and transform it into reality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has magnified Taiwan’s status, just as it has diminished China’s, domestically and within the international community, and the reality of Taiwan has put pressure on Beijing’s delusion.

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Translated by Paul Cooper

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