

Taiwan responsible for its isolation

Written by Chang Kuo-tsai 張國才

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In early April, Taiwan donated batches of masks to several Western countries to help them in their fight to keep the COVID-19 pandemic under control. The first batches consisted of a total of 10 million masks.

China Airlines was charged with transporting the donated masks and, of course, had the name China Airlines emblazoned on the fuselage of its aircraft, leading to people overseas unfamiliar with the situation mistakenly believing that the delivery came from China, not Taiwan, leading to frustration and resentment at home.

China Airlines listened to these concerns and, on Tuesday last week, came out with a new livery for its freight carriers, with the words China Airlines moved to the tail of the aircraft.

Unfortunately, there was still no “Taiwan” to be found, in English or Chinese characters. It is enough to make one think that there is something offensive about the word.

The US representative office in Taiwan is known as the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT). The “T” there stands for Taiwan, not the Republic of China (ROC). It raises the question of why is the office named the AIT, and not the “American Institute in China” or the “American Institute in the ROC.”

In the US, there is the Congressional Taiwan Caucus. It is not called the “Congressional ROC Caucus” or the “Congressional Taiwan, ROC Caucus,” and there is a good reason for that.

On Thursday last week, 78 lawmakers from the US House of Representatives sent a joint letter to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, calling for the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in Washington to be renamed the “Taiwan Representative Office.”

Why did they not ask for it to be changed to the “ROC Representative Office” or the “ROC, Taiwan Representative Office”?

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By the same principle, why is it that Taiwan-friendly US legislation, such as the Taiwan Relations Act, the Taiwan Travel Act and the Taiwan Envoy Act, all use the word “Taiwan” in referring to the nation, rather than calling it the ROC or ROC, Taiwan?

The ROC ceased to exist in 1949, as former president Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石) conceded on March 13, 1950, to KMT cadres during a meeting on Yangmingshan in Taipei. Why is it that Taiwanese continue to cling to the existence of the ROC, when they clearly refer to their own country as Taiwan, especially when the international community has long known that the ROC is a thing of history, and there is consensus in this country that its people are Taiwanese, not Chinese.

If Taiwanese find it difficult to establish diplomatic ties with other countries, or engage with the international community or gain entrance in international organizations, do they really have anyone else to blame but themselves?

It is strange, but it is true: It is not the US, Japan, Australia or the EU that is preventing Taiwan from walking onto the stage of international politics using the name Taiwan, it is Taiwan itself. Talk about being hoist by one's own petard.

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Translated by Paul Cooper

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