

If the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office (TECRO) in the US could be renamed to include “Taiwan,” the change would support Lithuania’s difficult decision to host a “Taiwanese Representative Office” and prompt other allies to follow suit.

The *Financial Times* on Friday reported that US President Joe Biden’s administration is “seriously considering a request from Taiwan” to change TECRO’s name to the “Taiwan Representative Office,” and that US National Security Council Coordinator for the Indo-Pacific Kurt Campbell has backed the change.

Renaming TECRO is one objective that Taiwanese diplomats have been striving for over many years, and it has garnered support from US lawmakers.

In December last year, 78 members of the US House of Representatives wrote to then-US secretary of state Mike Pompeo to request that TECRO change its name, new guidelines for governing the interactions of US and Taiwanese officials and a bilateral trade agreement.

The Ensuring American Global Leadership and Engagement Act, passed by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs in July, and the Taiwan Diplomatic Review Act, introduced by some US lawmakers in May, also advocated for TECRO’s name change.

The Biden administration in April lifted certain restrictions governing US officials’ interactions with their Taiwanese counterparts, marking a leap in improving bilateral ties. By comparison, renaming TECRO without changing its status would be less troublesome.

Some Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) members said renaming TECRO would not advance Taiwan-US relations in any concrete way, and warned the Democratic Progressive Party government to brace for any backlash from Beijing if TECRO’s name is changed.

Compared with negotiating a trade agreement, renaming TECRO might be a small, symbolic step, but the change could consolidate Washington’s leadership among democratic allies.

Beijing is applying political and economic tricks to pressure Lithuania into reversing its decision to host a Taiwanese representative office. If such an office is opened in Vilnius, it would be only the second representative office in Europe, following the Vatican, to have “Taiwan” in its name.

There has been speculation as to whether Lithuania might flinch under Beijing’s pressure, as Guyana did in February as it retracted its decision to open a “Taiwan Office,” despite US officials having lauded the deal.

While US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman have supported Lithuania in developing ties with Taiwan, their verbal support would be more powerful if a Taiwanese representative office could sit in Washington.

If Washington worries that renaming TECRO might provoke Beijing with little gain, it could engage other allies to join its effort and make “Taiwan” offices “a new normal” across the world.

The European Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs on Sept. 1 approved proposals that urge the EU to bolster political ties with Taiwan and rename its European Economic and Trade Office the “EU Office in Taiwan.”

Likewise, the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), the US’ de facto embassy in Taiwan, deserves a new name that better reflects its status and importance.

As the Coordination Council for North American Affairs was renamed the Taiwan Council for US Affairs in 2019, it is curious why the council’s parallel, AIT, could not be renamed in a similar way.

At a juncture when many countries are pushing back on China’s “wolf warrior diplomacy” and developing warmer ties with Taiwan, there is no better time — for Taiwan as well as for other

## Time for TECRO to change name

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countries — to rename the representative offices that embody their foreign policies.

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