

Independence beats 'status quo' in poll

Written by Taipei Times

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The majority of Taiwanese favor independence over unification and identify strongly with the name "Republic of China (ROC)," as well as with the national flag, but are less receptive to the national anthem, a recent public opinion poll conducted by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) showed.

Online news site Newtalk obtained and published the results of the survey — which were not released to the public — on Sunday.

The survey asked respondents about their feelings toward national symbols and their views on independence and unification.

Asked about the country's name, 67.5 percent of respondents said the ROC represents the nation appropriately, while 25.1 percent disagreed.

The poll also found that 55.1 percent of those surveyed would choose "Taiwan" over "the ROC," with 39.5 percent favoring the latter. Only respondents who said they were pan-blue favored "the ROC."

The national flag won the most support among the three national symbols in the survey, garnering the approval of 76.9 percent of respondents, including 65.1 percent of pan-green supporters.

At the other end of the spectrum was the national anthem, which, with only 53.1 percent of those polled deeming it appropriate, was the least approved of symbol.

Support for independence was strong at 60.2 percent, considerably higher than the support rate for unification (23.4 percent) and maintaining the "status quo" (8.7 percent), according to the poll.

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Questions about ethnic identity produced lopsided results, with 78.1 percent of those polled saying they are Taiwanese, 12.3 percent identifying themselves as Chinese and 6.1 percent saying they are both. Among pan-blue supporters, 65.2 percent labeled themselves Taiwanese, the results showed.

National Taipei Medical University professor Chang Kuo-cheng (張國成) said the results were influenced by China's attitude toward Taiwan.

"The public has seen Beijing disallow Taiwan's national flag from appearing at international events many times, which is why the support rate for the national flag was high in the poll. On the other hand, the national anthem is considered somewhat outdated," he said.

The DPP's New Taipei City (新北市) Chapter director Lo Chih-cheng (羅智成) said that the strong support for ROC national symbols reflected Taiwanese's "reluctant compromise to political reality."

"People may dislike the current ROC system, but they have to accept reality. I said it is a reluctant compromise because when people were given a choice, 55.1 percent of those polled preferred 'Taiwan' as the country's name," Lo said.

The respondents' weak sense of identification with the national anthem may have to do with the first verse: "The three principles of the people are the foundation of our party," Lo said, adding that many feel that referring to the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) in the anthem is unacceptable and inappropriate.

Lo said he was surprised that support for maintaining the "status quo" was low because past polls showed the opposite.

President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) cross-strait policy "may have increased the public's fear that unification is inevitable if his policies are sustained," Lo said.

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The DPP survey was conducted from Nov. 19 to Nov. 21 and had a margin of error of 3 percentage points, the Newtalk report said.

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