

THE HARBUS



IS HBS
REALLY
DIVERSE?

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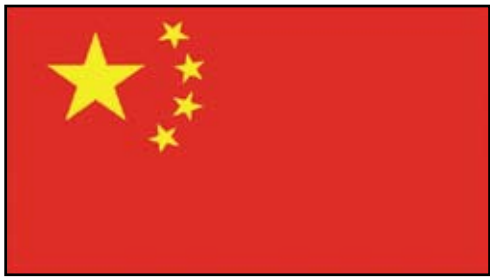
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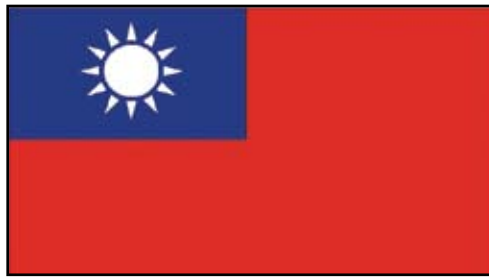
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China



Taiwan



Tibet

FLAG RAISING CONFLICT



SCOTT DAUBIN (NE)
Harbus Rep

■ We all benefit everyday from the

rich cultural, ethnic, and national diversity present in our sections; for many students, myself included, the section is the most internationally diverse setting in which we have immersed ourselves. By its very nature, however, the same diversity that enriches our classroom learning can just as easily lead to divisive disagreements over values, perspectives, and opinions.

Over the past few months, several sections have been wrestling with this dual aspect of diversity in the context of the flag-raising ceremonies in their

Aldrich classrooms. These nationalistic celebrations in some cases have highlighted heated personal disagreements between sectionmates that have been challenging to resolve.

HBS regulates class decorations with a clearly stated policy found in the Academic Policies section on the HBS Community website:

Flags that are recognized by the International Olympic Committee and are allowed to be flown at the Olympic Games' ceremonies may be hung in classrooms. Other flags may not be displayed.

The IOC website lists 205 National Olympic Committees, including countries, independent territories, commonwealths, protectorates, and geographic areas each with a unique flag. These committees include nations as familiar as the USA, Canada and Mexico and as unfamiliar as San Marino, the Comoros, and Djibouti. As a comparison, there are 192 members of the United Nations. The difference of thirteen represents entities like Puerto Rico, Palestine, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, who compete in the Games but are not members of the UN.

Overview

Much of the current controversy about this year's flag-raising ceremony stems from the relationship between China and Taiwan. This relationship is a contentious one, dating back to the Chinese Civil War fought from 1927 through 1950; after the collapse of the imperial Qing Dynasty in 1911, two main political factions, the Chinese National Party (later the Republic of China or ROC) and the Chinese Communist Party (later the People's Republic of China or PRC), vied for control of mainland China over a three decade period. Fast-forwarding fifty years past a World and a Cold War, the PRC maintains control over the mainland, while the island of Taiwan maintains an ambiguous quasi-independent status, the exact nature of which seems to be deliberately ambiguous in the international community to preserve the status quo.

As if the political situation is not confusing enough, here are a few facts about Taiwan's participation in the Olympic Games, relevant because the HBS policy cites the International Olympic Committee as justification for its own policy.

From 1950 through 1976, Taiwan competed in a number of Olympic Games as the ROC, carrying the traditional red and blue ROC flag. The ROC withdrew from the 1976 Summer Games in Montreal to protest competing under the name 'Taiwan.' In 1980, the PRC competed in the Olympics as the official China, and has continued that status through to-

day, carrying the commonly-known red and yellow flag.

Athletes from Taiwan competed in the 1984 Summer Games under the name 'Chinese Taipei,' and continue to compete as such today, carrying a white flag emblazoned with a blue and red flower and the Olympic seal.

As an aside, Hong Kong, another entity with a unique relationship with the PRC, has competed at the Olympics consistently since 1952, and has carried its traditional red and white flag to the Games since its transfer from British sovereignty in 1997.

So what does all this mean and why is it relevant? First off, so-called 'Cross-Straight Relations' are a heated issue about which our Chinese and Taiwanese colleagues both hold passionate feelings; personally, I had practically no knowledge of the issue as of last semester. If the two sides can agree on one item, it's probably that increased familiarity and discussion of these issues among Western (read: American) students is a good thing.

Second, this debate is an important metaphor for greater questions that affect us all here at Harvard Business School. What role should our institution play in proactively pushing progressive agendas versus deliberately reacting to the external environment? How can we learn to simultaneously respect and vehemently disagree with a colleague's point of view? When do we voice our disagreement? When do we refrain from criticism? How do we manage and utilize diversity as leaders in a global marketplace?

Hopefully the following perspectives and opinions will contribute to your own thinking on these and other pertinent questions. ■



Note from the Editor

A letter from the Taiwanese students was initially part of this issue of the Harbus. However, in the last minute, Taiwanese students decided to retract their letter so as not to cause any additional political tensions with the Chinese. The Taiwanese students reserve the right to publish their perspective in the future, if necessary.