

Ma's deceit over nature of Republic of China

Written by James Wang
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As President Ma Ying-jeou prepares to reclaim the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) chairmanship, he has begun asserting that the Republic of China (ROC) has been an independent, sovereign state since 1912 and that no country in the world needs to declare independence twice. This may sound appealing, but it is nothing more than a deceitful trick that does not stand up to the facts.

It is indeed surprising that Ma is confused about the nature of the revolution launched by Sun Yat-sen.

Sun's revolution was not to gain independence and build a new country, in the way that the 13 American colonies became the original United States of America; it was simply to overthrow the imperial rule of the foreign Manchu Qing Dynasty and replace it with a republican system.

In other words, Sun merely established a new regime that replaced the Qing government of the national territory of the country known as "China." The new regime, the ROC, inherited all the territories — excluding Taiwan and the Pescadores — citizens, foreign treaties and debts of the Qing Dynasty.

Sun did not declare independence or establish a new country. The US declared its legal recognition of the ROC government on May 2, 1912; that is, the US recognized the ROC as the successor government to the Qing imperial government. The ROC did not become an "independent, sovereign state," because it inherited the unequal treaties that were signed by the Qing Dynasty with other countries and because the Western powers still enjoyed extraterritoriality in China, which meant that they were exempt from the jurisdiction of local law.

When the Chinese Communist Party took over China and established the People's Republic of China (PRC), the ROC became a government in exile. For the past 60 years, the KMT has offered different definitions of the ROC.

Dictator Chiang Kai-shek once said that the rule of the ROC over China had come to an end. Former president Lee Teng-hui was more pragmatic, talking about a "second republic" and placing the ROC in Taiwan, saying that the ROC was the national title of Taiwan — but that argument was severely criticized by hardline KMT members.

Ma has opposed both Chiang's view that the ROC's rule over China has come to an end and Lee's "second republic" discourse, ignoring the fact that China has been taken over by the People's Republic of China (PRC). He naively claims that the ROC has long been an independent, sovereign state, while at the same time accommodating the interests of the PRC.

How can he refute his assertions in this way and then claim that the ROC is an independent, sovereign state?

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