

It is time to rid Taiwan of the ROC

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Tuesday, 29 May 2018 06:19

Taiwan's loss of two diplomatic allies in less than a month has sparked concern among the public and government officials over the nation's future, its dire diplomatic situation and China's intensifying efforts to squeeze Taiwan's international space.

However, as former US president John F. Kennedy once said: "In the Chinese language, the word 'crisis' (危機) is composed of two characters, one representing danger and the other, opportunity," and things are not as hopeless as they seem.

There is a silver lining to the series of diplomatic setbacks Taiwan has faced: Beijing has given Taiwan the opportunity to internationalize its situation and tell the world that the cross-strait dispute is not a matter of China's "internal affairs."

Thanks to Beijing's poaching of Taiwan's diplomatic allies and blocking it from taking part in international events, such as the World Health Assembly (WHA), more nations have become publicly involved and more active in matters concerning Taiwan.

Case in point one: For the first time ever, Canada and New Zealand voiced their support for Taiwan to be granted observer status at this year's WHA. Representatives from Germany, Honduras and Japan made open calls during their speeches for Taiwan's participation at the WHA, while the EU also voiced its support for Taiwan.

Case in point two: The US Congress has introduced bills aimed at enhancing bilateral exchanges with Taiwan, the latest of which — the "Taiwan defense assessment commission act" introduced by US Representative Donald Bacon — proposes strengthening the US' commitment to boost Taiwan's self-defense capability.

Beijing might not care whether the Taiwan issue is being internationalized, but given that more nations are openly supporting Taiwan's international participation, Taipei should seize the opportunity to make its situation known internationally.

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As President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) has said, to which the US Department of State concurred, China is changing the cross-strait “status quo” by poaching Burkina Faso.

In an impromptu news conference called on Thursday evening after Burkina Faso announced that it was cutting diplomatic ties with Taiwan, Tsai departed from her practice of calling China “mainland China” and called it only “China.”

She also referred to Taiwan as “Taiwan” numerous times, rather than calling it the “Republic of China” (ROC).

That is a good start in Taiwan’s response to Beijing changing the cross-strait “status quo.”

To break through China’s obstruction and the title of the “ROC,” which has jeopardized Taiwan’s sovereign status and international standing, the government needs to be more proactive.

For example, it should do away with the Mainland Affairs Council and put it under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

It is time for the government to consider writing a new Constitution to rid Taiwan of the remnants of the ROC, which have caused confusion in the international community.

The ROC legacy, which includes Beijing’s “one China” principle, is a leftover from the Cold War era and from the bad blood between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists.

Taiwan’s status is still “undecided” according to the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty, which only states that “Japan renounces all right, title and claim to Formosa and the Pescadores.”

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Now that China has changed the cross-strait “status quo,” Taiwan should seek ways to “normalize” the nation’s sovereign status and rid itself of the remnants of the ROC.

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