

Removing the ROC to form a new Taiwan

Written by Koh Se-kai 何世楷

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On the eve of the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, the global media, including the media in Taiwan, were focused on Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's televised address, looking for how he would reflect on Japan's role in World War II, and the scope and depth of the apology he expressed.

However, from a Taiwanese perspective, there is another way to approach what Abe said in his speech. When he was talking about those he was to include in his reflections, he listed the peoples of Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and the Philippines, and of neighboring countries such as Taiwan, South Korea and China.

Could it be that Abe was shining a light on Taiwan's place within the international community? In fact, when he spoke to the US Congress in April, he mentioned how the US had helped with economic development in Asia, saying how after the 1980s, Taiwan, South Korea, ASEAN, and eventually China, all rose.

It is very unusual for the leader of a foreign country, especially in such a public forum, to speak of Taiwan in this way, within the context of international relations. What about Taiwanese? Even though the majority of the public think about the existence of Taiwan, many still tend to confuse it with the Republic of China (ROC).

Even people within the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) shy away from mentioning the ROC in dealings with China, fearful that by doing so they will anger Beijing. Like many Taiwanese, they would be quite happy to see the back of the ROC, albeit for different reasons.

In a recent article in the Taipei Times ("Nation's 70-year search for closure, a just peace," Aug. 19, page 8.), Lai I-chung (賴伊中), an executive committee member of the Taiwan Thinktank, wrote about how Taiwan had been dragged into the civil war between the Chinese Communist Party and the KMT.

In addition to Lai's arguments, it should be noted that the construct of the ROC on Taiwan, within the context of this civil war, was allowed to incubate within the wider context of the global Cold War, and within this Taiwan became tied by the ROC to the "one China" issue, thus

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preventing Taiwan from being able to establish itself as a purely autonomous sovereign nation as the ASEAN countries had done.

Taiwan has to divest itself of the ROC if it is to prevent itself from being annexed by China, and to count itself among the nations that, like the ASEAN countries, were reborn in the post-war period as new, independent countries.

If Taiwan is to go down this route, the safest and easiest way would be to apply for UN status as a new country under the name Taiwan.

Koh Se-kai is a former Taiwanese representative to Japan.

Translated by Paul Cooper

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