

## It is about time for Taiwan to 'deROCize'

Written by Sebo Koh 謝世保

Tuesday, 29 May 2018 17:50

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Burkina Faso on Thursday announced that it was severing diplomatic ties with the Republic of China (ROC), and it on Saturday signed a joint communique with China to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The communique reads like a document from the 1950s, stating that there is only "one China" in the world, the PRC is the only legitimate government of the whole of China and Taiwan is part of China. It feels like China is still stuck in the Chinese Civil War.

However, the PRC is not the only one to blame. The ROC and the Constitution make it much easier to construct this kind of language, as they still claim that the ROC is the government of all of China, including Taiwan.

In the preamble of the last revision of the Constitution, it still says: "To meet the requisites of the nation prior to national unification."

It also designates Taiwan as the "free area" of the ROC.

The ROC is a straitjacket that keeps Taiwan from developing its full potential as a nation on its own. How can other countries recognize Taiwan as the ROC, with all that that implies, without getting into the discussion of which is the legitimate government of China?

It is about time to dispose of this straitjacket and make Taiwan a real nation, so that other countries in the world can recognize it without getting involved in the never-ending Chinese Civil War.

It will take great effort and time to dispose of the ROC's name and Constitution, and changing them abruptly might cause huge headaches to all concerned, but at least Taiwan should begin to "deROCize" by using the name "Taiwan" and not "ROC," by diminishing the symbols of the ROC and increasing the visibility of the symbols of Taiwan, and by stopping to say that Taiwan is the ROC and the ROC is Taiwan.

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Let people get used to Taiwan and let the ROC fade away, paving the way for a national referendum on a new Taiwanese Constitution.

The only country that can apply counterpressure against China's moves is the US. It is also an opportunity — and excuse — to increase pressure on China for other reasons, such as trade, North Korea or the South China Sea, by raising the level at which Taiwan-US relations are conducted.

The US could send high-level officials to open the American Institute in Taiwan's new office, invite Taiwan to participate in the US Navy's yearly Rim of the Pacific Exercise, go ahead with US port calls in Taiwan and even visit Itu Aba (Taiping Island, 太平島) for oceanic research, perhaps.

Taiwan by itself can do very little to overcome the diplomatic challenge as long as it keeps the ROC's name and Constitution, but as President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) has said, Taiwan must work harder to strengthen non-diplomatic relations with other countries.

Taiwan does not need to be diplomatically recognized as the ROC and I do not mourn the loss of recognition by these small countries.

Why is it important to have these countries diplomatically recognizing the ROC? I have not seen a good explanation from anyone yet, because no one can explain what the ROC is in the real world at this time.

*Sebo Koh is a former chairman of World United Formosans for Independence, USA and a former publisher of the US-based Taiwan Tribune.*

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2018/05/29](#)