

Campaign to scrap 'two areas' starts

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To remove legal obstacles for the nation's "normalization," a coalition has launched a campaign to scrap the "Taiwan Province" designation and a law defining China as the "Mainland area" of the Republic of China (ROC).

During an academic forum in Taipei yesterday, the first event of the campaign, a coalition of groups and academics called for the termination of the Taiwan Provincial Government and the Taiwan Provincial Consultative Council and for the removal of the Act Governing Relations Between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (兩岸人民關係條例).

In the same spirit of the Additional Articles of the Constitution of the ROC, the act stipulates a unification agenda and defines both the "Taiwan area" and the "Mainland area" as part of ROC territory.

Economic Democracy Union convenor Lai Chung-chiang (賴昌江) urged the government to phase out the two nonfunctional provincial bodies and scrap the act in a bid to end a "misplaced national identity" by changing the "one country, two areas" system.

The act was passed in 1992 by the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT)-dominated legislature, and the "one country, two areas" system has remained unchanged despite a decades-long democratization process spanning eight legislative elections, Lai said.

Special laws have to be made to institutionalize exchanges between Taiwan and China in an international context, Lai said.

"Chinese should be redefined from 'special citizens' to 'special foreign nationals,' and China should be redefined as a special foreign country that harbors aggression toward Taiwan," Lai said.

The proposals "exercise the democratic rights of a 'Taiwan Republic'" by challenging the constitutional framework, he said.

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Similar forums are to be held in 10 cities and counties to promote the coalition’s cause, and on the 25th anniversary of the promulgation of the act on Sept. 16, a rally is to be held in front of the Straits Exchange Foundation in Taipei, he said.

The campaign aims to create momentum for complete constitutional reform, abolish provincial establishments by 2020 and lobby parties to endorse elimination of the “one country, two areas” framework ahead that year’s general elections, he said.

China and its Taiwanese allies could use the ROC constitutional framework to overturn the nation’s *de facto* independence and public opinion, Academia Sinica historian Wu Rwei-ren (吳偉仁) said.

The restraining effect of the ROC legal framework was evident during former president Ma Ying-jeou’s (馬英九) administration, which — despite growing public support for localization and independence — was able to lock Taiwan to China while claiming its policies were legally grounded, Wu said.

“While it is politically understandable that the Democratic Progressive Party has shelved the issue [of the ROC framework], it cannot be shelved indefinitely, because safety obtained by compromise is dangerous,” Wu said.

The China-centrism of the Constitution and the “one country, two areas” concept have prevented the full realization of Taiwan’s democracy, Chung Yuan Christian University law professor Hsu Wei-chun (許維俊) said.

While the constitutional reform movement has failed due to the lack of widespread public involvement and President Tsai Ing-wen’s (蔡英文) pledge to maintain the “status quo” in cross-strait relations, the campaign is an equally legitimate and more attainable way to challenge the constitutional framework, Hsu said.

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