

None of the nine agreements signed in the three meetings between Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Chairman Chiang Pin-kung and Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) Chairman Chen Yunlin since June last year have been reviewed by the legislature. Instead, they automatically came into effect.

Legislative Speaker Wang Jin-pyng has repeatedly suggested a cross-strait affairs committee be established, but his efforts have not been recognized by President Ma Ying-jeou, who thinks there is no need to set up a new organization.

Ma was quoted as saying that "if the system isn't broken, we don't need to fix it, just keep it running." This is simply Ma paving the way for his dual role as president and Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) chairman.

The legislative system lacks checks and balances, while opposition parties and civic groups do not have watchdog powers, so the legislature will become a rubber stamp when Ma assumes the party chairmanship.

In fact, the legislature has less value than a rubber stamp.

Amid strong criticism by the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the government failed to amend tax legislation before a cross-strait tax exemptions agreement took effect. The KMT legislative caucus deliberately stayed away from the legislature so a quorum of 24 legislators could not be achieved, thus allowing the agreements signed at the SEF-ARATS meetings to come into effect automatically.

The Act Governing the Exercise of Legislative Power says that legislative committees must complete a review of an executive order within three months, and that if the period expires, the order will be considered to have been reviewed. With the KMT belittling itself by obeying the executive in this way, what powers of supervision are there to speak of?

Speaking to Singapore's Chinese-language newspaper Lianhe Zaobao on an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) with China, Ma was quoted as saying that "just because the opposition disagrees does not mean that no consensus has been reached ... if that were so, the nation's policies would be decided by a minority."

Ma's remarks betray the arrogance of power. In refusing to communicate with the DPP, the KMT must engage in dialogue with the public to seek "consensus." Yet the government has clearly failed to do this.

Susan Shirk, a former US deputy assistant secretary of state responsible for relations with China, said in a recent speech in Taiwan that China has taken advantage of the window of opportunity that the Ma administration provided to promote policies that seem beneficial to

ECFA follies put an end to oversight, consensus

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Taiwanese, thus helping Ma gain support ahead of the next presidential election.

Moreover, China wishes to make the current trend in cross-strait relations irreversible through preferential policies on Taiwan. In this way, even if the DPP regains power, it will be too late to turn the situation around.

Although Ma says the future of Taiwan will be determined by its people, signing an ECFA with China under the “one China” framework without their consent would make this trend virtually irreversible and have a longstanding impact on Taiwan’s political and economic development.

While Taiwan has yet to reach a consensus on an economic pact with China, the government’s haste to sell out Taiwan — and its blatant opposition to a referendum on this matter — displays a dictatorial streak that distorts the government’s mandate.

Shirk stressed China’s “internal fragility,” but it is Ma’s efforts to push cross-strait agreements without public consensus and appropriate legislative oversight that should be watched closely.

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TRANSLATED BY TED YANG

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