

Forum praises Tsai on China stance

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Academics at a forum held by a pro-independence organization yesterday lauded President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) refusal to recognize the so-called "1992 consensus," but took issue with the president's seeming inability to break the shackles of the Republic of China's (ROC) constitutional system.

The World United Formosans for Independence invited a dozen of academics to examine Tsai's policies in the first three months of her presidency and share their thoughts on her government's performance in terms of national status, transitional justice, cross-strait ties and other areas.

Tsai's refusal to recognize the "1992 consensus" constitutes a major breakthrough, as it consolidated the foundation for Taiwanese independence, World United Formosans for Independence chairman Chen Nan-tien (陳南天) said.

The "1992 consensus" refers to a supposed understanding between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese government that both sides of the Taiwan Strait acknowledge there is "one China," with each side having its own interpretation of what "China" means.

"However, the new government has yet to make any progress in breaking the ROC's constitutional system," Chen said. "It has not raised any objection to the use of 'Chinese Taipei' as the title under which Taiwan participated in this year's World Health Assembly and the Rio de Janeiro Olympics."

Legislative Speaker Su Jia-chyuan (蘇嘉元) told reporters on the sidelines of his meeting with Washington-based National Endowment for Democracy president Carl Gershman on Thursday that it requires a national consensus to decide under which appellation the country should join international organizations, Chen said.

"Does the national consensus support the title 'Chinese Taipei?'" Chen asked.

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Despite mounting pressure from China, Tsai has only recognized that a cross-strait meeting took place in 1992, rather than a so-called “1992 consensus,” prompting Beijing to suspend cross-strait communication mechanisms.

Taiwan National Security Institute president Lo Fu-chen (羅福生) also praised Tsai’s reluctance to accept the “1992 consensus” as her greatest achievement yet.

However, Lo criticized Tsai’s ambiguous stance on the South China Sea dispute and the WHO’s citation of the “one China” principle in its invitation to Taiwan for this year’s World Health Assembly, saying they have undermined the nation’s dignity and sent a confusing message to the international community.

He said the problem might be attributed to having a relatively weak governing team, because it is still the early stage of Tsai’s presidency, “forcing her to place KMT-affiliated experts in important posts such as foreign affairs and national defense. The views of such officials may collide with those of the Tsai administration.”

Economic Democracy Union convener Lai Chung-chiang (賴中強) urged the Tsai administration to prepare itself for two potential threats from China.

“The first one is likely to occur in 2018, when Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation and China’s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits are expected to resume communications,” Lai said, adding that Beijing is expected to use a proposed cross-strait trade in goods agreement as a leverage to pressure Tsai into accepting the “1992 consensus.”

Lai said the second threat is expected to happen in 2021, the centennial anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party’s founding, when he believes Beijing will push for political negotiations with Taipei and the signing of a peace accord.

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