

While voicing his support for constitutional change, Premier William Lai (賴清德) yesterday said that public consensus is critical to deciding whether the nation needs to redefine its territory.

“Society and the nation are progressing, and the Constitution should advance with the times,” Lai said in response to questions from Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Jason Hsu (許添榮) at the Legislative Yuan in Taipei.

Lai, who took office on Sept. 8, has sparked debate with his comments advocating Taiwanese independence, saying that his views would not change whatever office he holds.

“Taiwan is a sovereign state and its name is the Republic of China. The two sides [of the Taiwan Strait] have no links with each other,” he said.

Questioning the premier further on the issue, Hsu said that since the Republic of China (ROC) exists on Taiwan and Taiwan is the ROC, does the nation need to revise its Constitution to alter how its territory is defined?

Lai said that amending the Constitution to redefine the national territory would need a public consensus.

A proposal to amend the Constitution has to be decided via referendum, but prior to that, it has to be approved by lawmakers, with three-fourths of the legislature forming a quorum and at least three-fourths of participants approving the proposal, the premier said.

The ROC Constitution defines the nation’s territory as the “territory of the Republic of China according to its existing national boundaries.”

The Additional Articles of the Constitution describes the territory as having two distinct parts: a

Public to decide on territory: premier

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“free area” and a “mainland area.”

Any move to more clearly define Taiwan’s territory as limited to its current boundaries, completely separate from China, would be seen as a form of indirectly asserting independence, risking retaliation from Beijing.

Hsu asked Lai if he supports a proposal by Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Su Chiao-hui (蘇巧慧) to amend the Additional Articles of the Constitution by adding a clause that defines cross-strait relations as relations “between our country and the People’s Republic of China.”

Lai sidestepped the question, saying only the president has the power to decide the nation’s future direction or national policies and that it was “inconvenient” for him to express his opinions at this moment.

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