

Deal risking sovereignty unacceptable, Tsai says

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President Tsai Ing-wen talks to reporters at the Presidential Office Building in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Peter Lo, Taipei Times

President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) yesterday said that Taiwanese would not accept any political agreement that undermines the nation's sovereignty or democracy, amid controversy over the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) plan to ink a cross-strait peace treaty with Beijing if it returns to power next year.

Tsai made the remarks during a "hallway chat" with reporters at the Presidential Office Building after meeting with European Parliament-Taiwan Friendship Group chairman Werner Langen and a delegation of European lawmakers he led on a six-day visit to Taiwan.

During their meeting, the European Parliament members asked Tsai about her views on the signing of a peace agreement with Beijing, an issue that they noticed had been heatedly discussed during their stay in Taiwan, she said.

"I told them that Taiwanese society would not accept any political agreement that could destroy or hurt our national sovereignty, or put an end to Taiwan's democracy," Tsai said.

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“I also told them that we are a democratic country guided by a clear path, which is that we want freedom, democracy, security and prosperity,” she said, adding that Taiwan’s future should be decided by its own people.

China’s military ambitions and its refusal to renounce the use of force against Taiwan are what have been causing regional instability and threatening regional peace, the president said.

Given this situation and Beijing’s plan to force the “one country, two systems” framework upon Taiwan, there would be no equal negotiations, nor would there be real peace, Tsai said.

Taiwanese “will handle this matter discreetly,” she added.

The idea of signing a peace treaty with China was proposed by KMT Chairman Wu Den-yih (吳敦義) during an interview on Thursday last week.

It has triggered heated debate among the public and politicians, and has prompted several civic groups to call for tightened regulations governing cross-strait political negotiations and the signing of treaties with Beijing.

The government has also proposed amendments to the Act Governing Relations Between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (兩岸人民關係條例) to subject cross-strait political talks to a referendum.

Tsai also downplayed the significance of an opinion poll published by the Chinese-language newspaper *Apple Daily* yesterday, which showed that she could be defeated in most hypothetical scenarios when running for re-election next year.

“Opinion polls are inanimate, but people’s hearts are living,” she said.

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Tsai said that people told her the Democratic Progressive Party would not be able to get back on its feet for 20 years when she assumed its leadership in 2008, and when she ran for president in 2016, they also warned her that Taiwan was unlikely to see an economic growth rate of more than 1 percent.

“Nevertheless, we have overcome one barrier after another... There is never a shortage of oppression and we must overcome various challenges with a strong will,” she said.

As president, she is determined to bring Taiwan to the world and ensure that future generations of Taiwanese continue to be allowed to make their decisions freely, which is why she has decided to seek re-election, Tsai said.

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