

Poll highlights fears of ECFA with China

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A majority of respondents in a poll released by Taiwan Thinktank yesterday agreed that the government should slow the pace of signing an economic cooperation framework agreement (ECFA) with China and postpone next week's fourth round of high-level cross-strait talks before a higher degree of public consensus is reached.

The survey showed that 62.5 percent of respondents agreed that "the December [5] election results showed that many people in Taiwan still have doubts about an ECFA plan and thus the [President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九)] administration should put off signing the deal with China and rather seek consensus within the country."

Slightly more than 27 percent, meanwhile, disagreed with that statement.

On the question, among those who identified themselves as supporters of the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT)-led pan-blue camp, 46.3 percent agreed and 43.4 percent disagreed, while among those who said they have no party affiliation, 56.1 percent agreed and 26.8 percent disagreed.

An ECFA is expected to be signed at the fifth round of negotiations next spring, but related matters will be discussed during the meeting between Straits Exchange Foundation Chairman Chiang Pin-kung (蔣經國) and his Chinese counterpart Chen Yunlin (陳雲林) next week in Taichung.

On the question of "whether Chen Yunlin should defer his visit to Taiwan until there is a higher degree of consensus on an ECFA to avoid the occurrence of conflict" following the protests that accompanied his visit in November last year, 56 percent agreed while 36.7 percent disagreed.

Among respondents without party affiliation, 56.2 percent agreed and 30.5 percent disagreed.

"Even though there is majority support for the postponement of Chen's visit, we know for sure that this is not going to happen, which shows that the Ma administration will continue to cling obstinately to its course and go against public opinion," said Lo Chih-cheng (羅智強), a political science professor at Soochow University.

Lo said that there was only one way to explain why Ma would stay the course.

It's highly possible, Lo said, that the Chinese government knows it has to be quick to get some deals signed with the Ma government, otherwise it would face increasingly strong opposition from Taiwanese on the frameworks it has designed to restrain Taiwan, Lo said.

The poll showed that 58.2 percent considered the Dec. 5 local elections a "mid-term test" for Ma and that 58.7 percent said Ma had "flunked" the exam.

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About 30 percent of respondents said they were satisfied with the government's performance since Ma took office, while 65.6 percent said they were dissatisfied.

Ma's disapproval rating among non-party affiliated respondents was 66.9 percent, while his approval rating was 23.5 percent.

Among pro-pan blue camp supporters, his disapproval rating and approval rating were 44.6 percent and 54 percent respectively.

Asked whether they worried about the future of Taiwan under Ma's leadership, 50.2 percent of non-party affiliated respondents said "Yes," while 45.3 percent said "No."

The result was nearly identical for all respondents — with 51.8 percent saying "Yes" and 46 percent saying "No."

Lin Chia-lung (林錫山) of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) said the survey showed that "Ma's rule has united the DPP, divided the blue camp and driven swing voters away from the KMT."

"It's clear that Ma's pro-China policy has spilt the country and put him in a situation where he is not trusted," Lin said.

The division was "not merely a partisan issue," Lin said, calling on him to postpone the Chiang-Chen meeting.

"Some voters vote in a matter that reflects what they are told by local faction leaders, but most conscientious voters sent a message in last week's election that they don't trust Ma, which is a major crisis," Lin said.

"Ma should consider holding a roundtable meeting among all parties or a national affairs conference to express his sincerity to mend the rift," Lin said.

An analysis of the survey results also shows that Ma had lost the support of young and female voters, who were considered a major factor in his win last year.

The survey was conducted by Mater Survey & Research between Wednesday and Friday, and a total of 1,078 valid responses from people aged 20 and above were obtained.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/12/14](#)