

Only days after Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) presidential candidate Eric Chu (吳敦義) announced his campaign logo, with the slogan “One Taiwan,” President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) embarked on the journey that he had long yearned for, with his reassurance of the “one China” principle as a gift for his Chinese counterpart.

In the press conference Ma held on Friday last week after his proposal to report to the legislature about the Nov. 7 meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) was snubbed by legislators, he made a self-endorsement — as the legislature refused to do it for him — of the “one China” principle by saying the nation’s Constitution is a “one China” constitution.

It might have been subtle, but one could hardly miss the shift of emphasis from the so-called “1992 consensus” to “one China” and from the nation’s constitutional framework to a “one-China” constitution.

In Ma’s final days as a second-term, outgoing president, “one China” is no longer the unspeakable curse that had straitjacketed him since he had his eyes set on the presidency.

Taking Ma’s meeting with Xi and his basing of the “1992 consensus” on the “one China” principle, rather than “one China, different interpretations,” as the culmination of his cross-strait policy, it could hardly be described as a surprising direction considering Ma’s past remarks and their timing.

In 2005, after Ma had secured the party chairmanship, he told The Associated Press in September that he would work hard to end the cross-strait separation that had lasted until then for 56 years. In December, he told Newsweek that the KMT’s goal is unification, although no timetable had been set.

Talk of unification met with criticism in Taiwan and KMT headquarters backtracked and issued a press release in mid-January 2006, stating that unification was an “option” when certain conditions were met and the KMT’s central tenet was to maintain the “status quo.”

## The KMT's two-faced strategy

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It was apparent that Ma and the KMT were still fumbling for a theory to counter then-president Chen Shui-bian's (陳水扁) Taiwan-centric governance that had made the KMT's "the Republic of China is China" framework seem out of touch.

That might be why in early 2006 — just months before the "red shirts" movement against Chen erupted, when anti-Chen sentiment was so high that there was no need to make further concessions on the KMT's cross-strait stance — Ma vacillated, telling Hong Kong's Singtao: "Taiwan's future is to be decided by both peoples on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait" before saying in an advert in the Chinese-language Liberty Times (the sister newspaper of the Taipei Times): "Taiwan's future is to be decided by the Taiwanese people, be it unification, independence or status quo."

Two categorizations could be discerned in the KMT's election campaign: foreign versus domestic and election-targeting versus non-election-targeting. The party has been Janus-faced when dealing with the Taiwanese electorate, knowing what to say and what not to say to retain power.

Even the "1992 consensus," much touted by Ma, was a cunning creation in the same vein.

Former Mainland Affairs Council chairman Su Chi (蘇起) admitted concocting the term in 2000, revealing that it was created to avoid mentioning "one China" explicitly.

Chu's "One Taiwan" had been preceded by "both sides belong to one China," which he touted in May when he visited China, and surely, just like Ma, one suspects that Chu would also put "Taiwan" to one side after the Jan. 16 elections — until the next election, the next interview with a foreign media outlet or the next meeting on foreign soil.

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