

‘Normalization’ support at 90%

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Democratic Progressive Party Legislator Gao Jyh-peng, second left, Ketagalan Foundation chief executive Chen Chih-chung, right, and representatives of the Taiwan Brain Trust in Taipei yesterday discuss the results of an opinion poll conducted after Panama switched diplomatic recognition from Taiwan to China.

Photo: Chang Chia-ming, Taipei Times

Nearly 90 percent of the public wants the nation to be “normalized” following Panama’s switch of diplomatic ties from Taipei to Beijing, but there is a drop in Taiwanese identification as China steps up its aggressive tactics, a poll released yesterday showed.

Taiwan should move toward becoming a “normalized” nation, according to 88.2 percent of respondents, while only 4.4 percent were not in favor of the idea.

Seventy-five percent said that Taiwan and China are different nations and 14.2 percent said they are the same.

Panama’s move had a negative impact on cross-strait relations, according to 58.7 percent of the respondents, while 19.3 percent said it had a positive influence, the Taiwan Brain Trust survey showed.

President Tsai Ing-wen’s (蔡英文) condemnation of China for its “one China” principle and her refusal to engage in “pocketbook diplomacy” was approved by 46.6 percent of the respondents, while 39.5 percent disapproved.

There was concern that other diplomatic allies might cut diplomatic ties among 51.5 percent of

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respondents, while 41.9 percent said they were not worried.

China has disrupted the “status quo” and peaceful development of cross-strait relations, causing Taiwan to lose two diplomatic allies in just six months, 46.3 percent of respondents said, while 35.5 percent said the losses were due to Tsai’s refusal to acknowledge the so-called “1992 consensus.”

In terms of cross-strait relations, 55.7 percent of respondents opted to maintain the “status quo,” 23.3 percent supported independence and 11.1 percent backed unification with China.

It was a record low percentage of people supporting independence and a record high for unification in foundation surveys since June 2013.

Tsai should make adjustments to her policy of maintaining the “status quo” to handle cross-strait relations, 65.3 percent of the respondents said, while 19 percent said it was not necessary.

Assuming the “status quo” could not be maintained, 54.8 percent of respondents supported independence and 23.6 percent supported unification.

Ketagalan Foundation chief executive Chen Chih-chung (陳其南) said Tsai failed to define her policy of maintaining the “status quo,” so there have been calls for an adjustment to her China policy.

“The status quo is ‘one country on each side,’ [the recognition of which] is necessary for Taiwan to expand international participation,” Chen said.

In response to a question about their opinion of China, 36.2 percent of respondents said they are indifferent, 34.2 percent had a negative opinion and 20.9 percent had a positive impression.

Regarding identity, 57.5 percent considered themselves Taiwanese, 4.9 percent considered themselves Chinese and 35.2 percent said they were both.

Asked to identify themselves as either Taiwanese or Chinese, 80.1 percent said Taiwanese and 12.9 percent said Chinese — the lowest percentage of Taiwanese identification and highest percentage of Chinese identification in foundation surveys since January 2014.

“China’s strategy to isolate Taiwan from the international arena might discourage Taiwanese from campaigning for independence, but it actually makes them recognize that Taiwan does not belong to the ‘one China’ framework,” National Cheng Kung University Meng Chih-cheng (孟智成) said.

The drop in Taiwanese identification and the rise in Chinese identification were due to China’s sophisticated use of its economic power to court Taiwanese, while Beijing has ramped up its implementation of the “one China” principle, Meng said.

The government should recognize the People’s Republic of China by amending the Constitution, 38.3 percent said, while 39.1 percent disapproved of the suggestion.

A new Constitution and changing the nation’s official title was supported by 55.4 percent, while 30.7 percent disapproved.

Regarding UN membership, 75.8 percent of respondents said the nation should join the world body as “Taiwan,” while 14.7 percent disapproved of the idea.

The survey was conducted on Saturday and Sunday with 953 valid samples collected and a margin of error of 3.2 percentage points.

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The “1992 consensus” is a term former Mainland Affairs Council chairman Su Chi (蘇起) in 2006 admitted making up in 2000. It refers to a tacit understanding between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese government that both sides of the Strait acknowledge there is “one China,” with each side having its own interpretation of what “China” means.

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