

Xi knows unification is futile now: Ma

CHINA POLICY: The president said that over the past eight years, a ‘status quo’ for the cross-strait relationship has been created, winning ‘the support of the majority’

Staff writer, with CNA

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President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) said in an interview released yesterday that both he and Chinese President Xi Jinping (習近平) are well aware that the conditions for the unification of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are lacking at present.

In an interview with CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour, Ma said that China certainly desires unification and has never given up on the idea, according to a Chinese-language transcript released by the Presidential Office.

However, China is willing to develop relations with Taiwan peacefully on the basis of the so-called “1992 consensus” of “one China, different interpretations” because it knows that pushing for immediate unification would not achieve good results and would even have serious consequences, Ma said.

Former Mainland Affairs Council chairman Su Chi (蘇起) admitted making up the term “1992 consensus” in 2000.

During his meeting with Xi in Singapore in November last year, he told Xi that the “one China, different interpretations” model adhered to by the Republic of China (ROC) will not be interpreted as “two Chinas,” “one China, one Taiwan,” or “Taiwanese independence,” Ma said.

“Our interpretation is of course based on our Constitution, which can only be ‘the Republic of China,’” he said, adding that the model has provided an appropriate and mutually acceptable basis for cross-strait relations over the past eight years.

When asked to reflect on why the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) lost the Jan. 16 elections and whether he read the election results as a backlash against his China policy and cross-strait trade pacts, Ma said that while there are people in Taiwan opposed to his China policy, they only account for a small proportion, not a majority.

“We all understand that over the past eight years of my presidency, we have created a status quo, and this status quo has won the support of the majority,” he said.

When asked how Xi interpreted the election results and how he views president-elect Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), who “potentially has a slightly different view when it comes to relations with China,” Ma said Xi over the past year stressed on several occasions that “the 1992 consensus is the key.”

“Of course we hope that my successor will think carefully about supporting the 1992 consensus, allowing cross-strait ties to move ahead smoothly, so when Taiwan tries to develop its international relations, we can face a more friendly environment,” Ma said.

“I believe that the people of Taiwan support a free and democratic political system, and hope that the ROC will continue to become more free and democratic,” Ma said when asked about the younger generation in Taiwan, who might feel more nationalistic, preferring a full-blown democracy.”

“However, when we develop relations with China, we have to establish a mutually accepted consensus so that this relationship will move ahead peacefully and smoothly,” Ma said.

When asked about Itu Aba Island (Taiping Island, 太平島), Ma said the ROC recovered the island in 1946 and at the time, Vietnam and the Philippines did not express any opinion.

In 1956, Taiwan began stationing troops there, and has done so till now, he said, adding: “We have been in control of Taiping Island for 60 years.”

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