1992 Consensus
The Key to Cross-Strait Peace and Prosperity

In a November 3, 1992, telephone call and again in an official telegram on November 16, the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS) said that it “fully respects and accepts” the SEF proposal that “each side release an oral statement setting out its own interpretation,” meaning that the SEF and the ARATS could have different understandings of the meaning of “one China” and that the two sides could each orally express their different positions. Although the correspondences between the SEF and the ARATS did not constitute an agreement signed simultaneously by the two sides, the Mainland stated in official documents that it “fully respects and accepts” Taiwan’s suggestion. This of course is a “consensus.”

The above-mentioned process makes clear that the “1992 Consensus” was not proposed by the Mainland and forced onto Taiwan. Rather it was proposed by Taiwan and accepted by the Mainland. This is a factual fact that cannot be denied.

The 1992 Consensus is an Undeniable Objective Fact

On July 15, 1987, the government of the Republic of China (ROC) announced the lifting of martial law in the Taiwan and Penghu areas. On November 28 that year, it was announced that Taiwan residents would be allowed to visit relatives in mainland China. These initiatives represented an active and pragmatic approach to promoting cross-strait non-governmental exchanges and reduced cross-strait relations into a new era. On May 1, 1991, the government lifted martial law and abolished the Temporary Provisions Effective During the Period of National Mobilization for Suppression of the Communist Rebellion. The Chinese Communist regime was an end. The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) was formally established on January 28, 1991, to address problems arising from the development of cross-strait relations. On March 9 of that year, the Taiwan side suggested that the two sides release oral statements of respective interpretation. The specific content of the oral statement was based on The “Meaning of One China” resolution (i.e., both sides of the Taiwan Strait insist that there is only one China. However, the two sides of the Strait have different opinions as to the meaning of “One China”) adopted by the National Unification Council (NUC) presided by President Lee Teng-hui on August 1, 1991. The content of the statement expressed to the Mainland was that: “both sides will adhere to the one China principle but they differ from each other on the meaning of one China.”

In October 1990, the SEF began negotiations with the Mainland side in Hong Kong on matters such as cross-strait document certification. The Mainland raised the political issue of “one China,” which prevented the two sides from achieving concrete results at the time. Therefore, on November 3, 1992, the Taiwan side suggested that the two sides release oral statements of respective interpretation. The specific content of the oral statement was based on “The Meaning of One China” resolution (i.e., both sides of the Taiwan Strait insist that there is only one China. However, the two sides of the Strait have different opinions as to the meaning of “One China”) adopted by the National Unification Council (NUC) presided by President Lee Teng-hui on August 1, 1991. The content of the statement expressed to the Mainland was that: “both sides will adhere to the one China principle but they differ from each other on the meaning of one China.”

Taiwan did not agree with the Mainland’s “one China” principle; rather it suggested “one China with respective interpretations.”

In the process of the cross-strait effort to seek national reunification, both sides will refer to the one China principle, however they may differ from each other on the interpretation of the meaning of one China.”

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On April 26, 2000, former MAC Minister Su Chi Condensed the Meaning of “One China with respective interpretations” as the “1992 Consensus.”

On April 26, 2000, former MAC Minister Su Chi Condensed the Meaning of “One China with respective interpretations” as the “1992 Consensus.” This is the origin of the term “1992 Consensus,” which was first adopted by the Mainland and formally included in documents of the Chinese Communist Party. It was clearly stated at the 4th session of the 5th National People’s Congress. Consequently, although the term “1992 Consensus” was propounded in 2000, the concept of the “1992 Consensus” had existed as early as November 1992.

DPP Recognized the “1992 Consensus”

Initially, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) administration also recognized and accepted the essence of the “1992 Consensus” of “one China with respective interpretations.” On June 20, 2000, President Chen Shih-chuan stated during a meeting with President and CEO of the US-based Asia Foundation William F. Porter that “the DPP administration is willing to accept the consensus reached by the SEF and the ARATS prior to the talks, which is one China with respective interpretations.” The next day, Taiwan’s then minister of the MAC, stated that “the two sides are willing to add one more phrase of ‘one China with respective interpretations’ to make oral interpretations and statements, which becomes the actual process of reaching the cross-strait consensus.” The so-called “1992 Consensus” was developed and recognized by the two sides.

Impact of the “1992 Consensus” on the Development of Cross-Strait Relations

In April 1993, after the second talks held in Hong Kong, the two sides held the “Koo-Wang Talks” in Singapore, opening a new era of cross-strait negotiations. However, cross-strait relations subsequently deteriorated following the Qandong Lake Kille in 1994 and former President Lee Teng-hui’s visit to the United States in 1995. The Mainland began conducting military maneuvers along the coast and cross-strait tensions gradually increased. During the 1996 presidential elections in Taiwan, the Mainland launched missile drills towards the north off Taiwan, sparking the Taiwan Strait Crisis. The US sent two aircraft carrier battle groups to Taiwan to prevent a potential crisis. Cross-strait relations turned to an uneasy state.

Since 2008, cross-strait negotiations have been conducted based on the “1992 Consensus” basis of “one China with respective interpretations.” Since 2008, of cross-strait negotiations and exchanges on the “1992 Consensus” basis of “one China with respective interpretations,” whereby one China means the ROC. As for the future direction of cross-strait relations, 75.2% of the public believe the policy of maintaining the status quo. Since 2008, the government policy of maintaining the status quo has been greatly strengthened and the cross-strait relations are currently in the best state.

Public views on unification, independence or maintaining the status quo?

Since 2008, the government has steadily promoted cross-strait exchanges and cooperation, and is determined to maintain the status quo. Since 2008, of cross-strait negotiations and exchanges on the “1992 Consensus” basis of “one China with respective interpretations,” whereby one China means the ROC.