

Worrying about Taiwan's future

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Thursday, 19 August 2010 07:57

A look at the headlines of most newspapers yesterday was enough to make one break into a cold sweat over Taiwan's prospects.

One headline said a US Department of Defense report concluded that China's military expansion is continuing and that "The balance of cross-strait military forces continues to shift in [China's] favor" while Taiwan's defense capabilities remain disappointing.

The report also said China has raised the goal for its military expansion past Taiwan and is now aiming to match the US. In other words, should the People's Liberation Army take action, not only would Taiwan be unable to resist, but it would be difficult for the US to assist Taiwan.

Another headline announced the legislature had passed the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), despite the doubts of the public. Although the ECFA is only an economic agreement, it is symbolic of the qualitative change in cross-strait relations. With the signing of the ECFA, Taiwan will come to depend ever more heavily on China, and will have less power to make independent decisions. Taiwan has taken the first steps down the road of no return.

Given these two stories, it is very difficult to see how these developments indicate the success of the government's cross-strait policies. President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and his administration have pushed their pro-China policies to increase cross-strait exchanges in an attempt to lower Beijing's hostility toward Taiwan and maintain cross-strait peace and stability. The signing of the ECFA has improved commercial relations, but China's military threat continues to grow. The Pentagon report underlines the security threat against Taiwan, and we can only hope Ma keeps the military imbalance in mind as he reads his own national security reports.

A look at Chinese President Hu Jintao's (胡錦濤) policy of ratcheting up China's soft and hard power approaches to Taiwan shows that he has been very successful. The ECFA has been signed, and Chinese tour groups and purchasing delegations are flooding Taiwan. Taiwan has taken the bait, and will now have difficulty regaining the initiative. China's soft approach has been successful.

If Taiwan refuses unification, China has its "Anti-Secession" law, which authorizes it to take military action. It has well over 1,500 missiles aimed at Taiwan, and it has the military power to seal off the region and block intervention. If Taiwan tries to get off the hook, it will be difficult to break through the Chinese military net. China's hard power approach has also been successful.

While Ma continues to bask in the international glory of improved cross-strait relations, it is all too clear that Taiwan is facing a superior enemy. A peace built on a defenseless Taiwan is an illusion. China could change its approach at any time and for any reason, be it economic, political or military. Taiwan, however, is lowering its guard, and this is a crisis built into the

Worrying about Taiwan's future

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
Thursday, 19 August 2010 07:57

ECFA.

The Ma administration's biggest problem is its short-term approach and one-dimensional thinking — in pushing for the ECFA, it focused stubbornly on the pact's advantages and refused to discuss or prepare for any negative impact. Through its pro-China policies, the government has made the livelihoods of all Taiwanese dependent on Beijing's goodwill, and it has done so without a backup plan. It is very difficult to trust such a government with major responsibilities.

The legislature has been deprived of its ability to act as a control on the ECFA, and we must now hope that the public will be able to wake the government from its reveries.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2010/08/19](#)