

## Taiwan must beware of PRC missile scheme

Written by Taiwan News Editorial  
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Despite repeatedly declaring his intention to "put economics first and politics later" and deal with "easier issues first and harder issues later," President Ma Ying-jeou and his Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) government now face growing pressure from the People's Republic of China for political talks.

After representatives for the KMT and the PRC's ruling Chinese Communist Party signed the controversial "Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement" on June 29 in Chongqing, Beijing launched a new drive to step up the pace of dealing with "political issues" aimed at both the Ma government and President Barack Obama's Democratic administration in the U.S.

With regard to Washington, Beijing has continued its months-long challenge of the U.S. policy of selling defensive arms to Taiwan by stressing that there are no longer legitimate grounds for these arms sales since relations between both sides of the Taiwan Strait have improved, as symbolized by the signing of the ECFA.

Beijing's tactical objective is to block the Obama administration from announcing another major arms sales package to Taiwan during the remainder of his first term and, especially, to prevent the sale of advanced F-16 C/D Block jet fighters, which PRC officials have already warned Washington constitute "the red line."

With regard to Taipei, Beijing offered a new poison carrot with Friday's statement by PRC defense Ministry Spokesman Geng Yansheng that "under the one - China principle, China will be willing to discuss the issue" of withdrawing some of its estimated 1,300 missiles aimed at Taiwan by the People's Liberation Army Second Artillery.

Beijing's objectives are quite clear.

First and foremost, the CCP regime aims to impose its "one China principle," which defines Taiwan as part of the PRC, as the framework for cross-strait political talks and thus rule out any international involvement in this "domestic" affair, including U.S. security assistance to Taiwan.

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Another objective is to reinforce the international impression that, in the wake of economic integration under the ECFA, Taiwan will be willingly merged into the PRC's orbit in the near future.

If this framework is formally accepted by the KMT government and tacitly acknowledged by the international community, it would be difficult for even the Taiwan-centric opposition Democratic Progressive Party to break this "one China" cage should it return to government in 2012.

No less importantly, Beijing intends to link the ECFA and a partial withdrawal or redeployment of some of its ballistic missiles with progress in cross-strait relations and U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

Playing the ostrich

This latest development comes as no surprise to most Taiwan analysts, but has apparently, caught the KMT flatfooted.

While President Ma has yet to offer any official reaction, Premier Wu Den-yih reacted to Geng's unusual statement lamely by parroting that the KMT government's bottom line of the "Consensus of 1992" as the precondition for political talks.

It would be understandable for Ma to adopt a "wait and see" stance until after the critical November 27 municipal mayoral elections, but the question is whether it will be politically feasible for the Taiwan president to bury his head in the sand for nearly four months.

The answer is likely to be negative.

First, Ma and his KMT government should take into account recent strategic changes in the

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Asia Pacific region, notably the surfacing of friction between the U.S. and the PRC in the wake of Beijing's expanded definition of its "core interests" to comprise virtually all of the Yellow Sea, East China Sea and the South China Sea.

Despite its engagement policy with Beijing, the Obama administration has resorted to a strategy of "re-balancing" security and peace in its Asian policy, as shown by U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's insistence on respect for the interests of the U.S. and Southeast Asian states in the South China Sea during last month's ASEAN Regional Forum in Hanoi.

In this geo-strategic landscape, the effective merger of Taiwan into the PRC's sphere of influence would open the doors for Beijing's eastward projection of naval power into the Pacific Ocean and may even turn Taiwan into a base for a PRC "Eastern Advance" that would threaten the security interests of both Japan and the U.S..

Moreover, while Beijing's offer to redeploy some of its missiles would have little significance for cross-strait security, Ma's acceptance of talks under the "one China principle" precondition would constitute a self-negation of Taiwan's status as a democratic state and foreclose all options for Taiwan's 23 million people to determine their own future.

In this context, the adoption of the same naive, secretive and undemocratic negotiating pattern used in the ECFA in negotiating political issues such as missile withdrawal, military confidence building mechanisms or even a so-called peace agreement with Beijing could put the KMT administration at odds with both the Taiwan people and the U.S. and Japan.

Indeed, Ma will soon have to face the reality that there were strings attached to Beijing's superficial "yielding of benefits" in the ECFA talks and that payback time is fast approaching.

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