

## Ma's passivity boosts PRC threat to Taiwan

Written by Taiwan News Editorial  
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The policy of promoting "cross-strait reconciliation" adopted by President Ma Ying-jeou and his rightist Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) administration has not led to any lessening of China's military threat to Taiwan.

In an annual report on "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China" released Aug. 17, the U.S. Department of defense shattered the myth peddled by the Ma administration that its policies of appeasement will bring genuine peace and security in the Taiwan Strait.

Despite the touted "reconciliation" between the KMT and the PRC's ruling Chinese Communist Party since Ma took office May 2008, the Pentagon report states that "China's military build-up opposite the island continued unabated" and warns that "the People's Liberation Army is developing the capability to deter Taiwan independence or influence Taiwan to settle the dispute on Beijing's terms while simultaneously attempting to deter, delay, or deny any possible U.S. support for the island in case of conflict."

The significance of the DOD's conclusion that the PRC's drive to rapidly shift the cross-strait military imbalance in its favor has continued unabated since the previous "trouble-making" Democratic Progressive Party administration of ex-president Chen Shui-bian was replaced by Ma's China-centric KMT government in May 2008 cannot be swept under the nearest political carpet.

After all, in addition to 12 previous pacts with Beijing, the Ma government negotiated and signed the landmark "Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement" with Beijing on June 29 and used its overwhelming legislative majority to overpower the opposition Taiwan-centric Democratic Progressive Party to receive the Legislative Yuan's rubber stamp on the ECFA last week.

No 'peace dividend'

Nevertheless, the DOD report clearly indicates that the PLA's most urgent concerns remain developing the capacity to deal effectively with the possibility of a military conflict with Taiwan

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and the likelihood of U.S. military intervention.

Moreover, the DOD report shows how Beijing leaders are putting abundant resources in service to their goal of a broad-based upgrading of the PLA's air, sea, undersea, space and counter-space and information warfare systems in order to build a military force with capacities of "area denial" to any military interventions in the Western Pacific by the U.S. and Japan and to attain its own regional and even global objectives.

The PRC's military buildup and its ambitious objectives documented by the Pentagon demonstrate both Beijing's political ambition to annex Taiwan through economic means and to develop a military capability to break through both the so-called "first island chain" formed by Japan, Taiwan and the Philippines to beyond Taiwan through the "second island chain" in the Pacific.

Increasingly disarmed politically and militarily by the "China-first" and increasingly "China only" policies of the Ma administration, Taiwan is swiftly becoming a stepping-stone for Beijing's expansionary ambitions.

Indeed, the cross-strait military imbalance is probably worsening faster than the DOD relates as its report failed to notice that KMT government has failed to maintain the long-term target of sustaining defense expenditures at least 3 percent of Taiwan's gross domestic product.

Indeed, the share of national defense in the central government budget has contracted progressively since Ma took office from 17.7 percent for 2009 to 16.6 percent this year and 16 percent or NT\$287.2 billion in the KMT government's provisional budget for 2011.

Moreover, Beijing's open definition to Washington as the sale of F-16 C/D fighters to Taiwan as an action that would cross the "red line" makes it very unlikely that the Obama administration will agree to this procurement, which is essential for Taiwan's maintaining an effective air defense, during his first term, which ends in January 2013.

Appeasement boosts war risks

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Moreover, the cross-strait political balance has also shifted markedly in the PRC's favor under Ma's "China-centric" policies.

Just as Beijing was "yielding benefits" economically to secure the ECFA, it has intensified pressure on the KMT government for political talks.

In response, Ma appears to have adopted a "wait and see" stance, as reflected by the president's public reaffirmation of the U.S.-Japan security alliance and his appeal for the Obama administration to sell advanced F-16 C/D jet fighters to Taiwan.

However, these public relations actions cannot disguise the fact that it was the KMT's own use of its legislative majority to boycott the procurement of advanced defensive weaponry from Washington under the previous DPP government and Ma's naivete regarding Beijing's intentions that have put Taiwan in this disadvantageous position.

The Ma administration's passivity, combined combined with the delays in Taiwan's defense force upgrading caused by years of KMT legislative boycotts, has cost Taiwan the initiative in strategic deterrence, is exacerbating Taiwan's vulnerability to the PRC's use of its military clout to influence our domestic politics and is actually heightening the outbreak of conflict in the Taiwan Strait by drastically lowering the degree of uncertainty of success in a PLA adventure to secure a "final solution" to the "Taiwan problem."

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