

## U.S. needs balanced policy toward Taiwan

Written by Taiwan News  
Monday, 26 October 2009 09:02

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In his first meeting with the Taiwan news media last week, newly arrived American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) Taipei representative William A. Stanton focussed on reemphasizing that there will be no change in Washington's policy toward Taiwan under the new Democratic administration of President Barack Obama in line with the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA).

Even though Stanton delivered a reassuring message that "there is no reason to be concerned about Taiwan in particular" with regard to President Obama's slated visit to the People's Republic of China, we urge Washington to take more seriously the exacerbating imbalance in cross-strait relations and the potential negative impacts on both Taiwan and American strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Such a recommendation is not based narrowly on Taiwan's interests but also includes consideration of Washington's overall strategic positioning in the region.

First of all, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio has sent a mixed message to its long-time American allies to the effect that Tokyo may no longer necessarily pursue an entirely pro-U.S. foreign policy and the recent dispute over the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Futenma has exposed the potential crisis in U.S.-Japanese relations.

Whether Washington and Tokyo can forge a path to rebuild their alliance in the face of Washington's aggressive engagement with the PRC remains to be seen, but the essential question raised by this development is the possibility of a weakening in U.S. security alliances in Asia.

=We do not object to Washington's engagement with Beijing as we also hope that such a policy can lead to the incorporation of the authoritarian PRC government into global institutions and security networks as a truly "responsible" stakeholder.

However, the way that the Obama has chosen to forge its relationship with the Chinese Communist Party - ruled PRC by refusing to challenge the Beijing regime's pervasive violations of human rights and rapid and non-transparent expansion of military power has triggered considerable anxiety in the region.

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In his discussion with local media, Stanton stated that one of the most critical topics for the upcoming meeting between Obama and PRC State Chairman and CCP General Secretary Hu Jintao will be on climate change as Obama hopes to build momentum for closer collaboration among the world's two top emitters of greenhouse gases in the run-up to the Global Conference on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December.

In the light of this agenda, the question of Taiwan will be sidelined.

Even if Hu brings it up as usual, Obama is expected to respond with vague diplomatic language.

However, such a response would mark an unfortunate failure by the new Nobel Peace Prize laureate to use his momentum to urge Beijing to renounce its military threats against Taiwan and respect the democratic decision of the 23 million would convey a dangerous message that Washington is happy about the current direction in which cross-strait relations are developing.

Contrary to surface appearances, the policy of the restored Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) administration of President Ma Ying-jeou of KMT-CCP "reconciliation" and his clear tilt toward Beijing is engendering new and potentially dangerous uncertainties.

Ma has gravely downplayed China's continued and intensifying military threat to Taiwan, is rashly pushing the rapid signing of an "Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement" with Beijing and has bypassed legislative oversight and opposition checks and balance to pursue a China-centric policy.

Ma's tacit acceptance of Beijing's "one China principle" to promote the KMT-CCP "reconciliation" and cross-strait transportation and economic "deregulation" threatens to lock Taiwan into Beijing's orbit politically as well as economically and hollow out Taiwan's hard-won democracy.

Beijing's sugar-coated displays of "goodwill" to Taiwan are by no means a reaction to

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Washington's pressure for dialogue, but reflect its own agenda for substantive unification.

In order to secure Washington's continued support for his China-centric agenda and boost flagging approval ratings, Ma is now doing whatever he can to please the U.S., such as deciding to reopen imports of U.S. beef.

Ma hopes to secure agreement from Obama for items such as a visa-waiver program, visits by senior U.S. officials and the resumption of the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) dialogue and distract attention from the inability to secure advanced F-16 C/D type jet fighters and other systems that can help redress the yawning military imbalance across the Taiwan Strait and the weakening of Taiwan's sovereignty and bargaining position with Beijing.

We also urge the Obama administration to avoid harboring a naive mentality when dealing with Beijing, as reflected in the assumption that, after a climate control accord is reached, the PRC will permit the U.S. president to meet with the Dalai Lama or announce new arms sales to Taiwan.

Beijing will gain and will make use of an advantageous leverage unless Obama is able to develop a risk "hedging" strategy and reorient Washington's East Asian policy toward a more balanced direction that takes into account the new imbalances in the Taiwan Strait.

Source: [Taiwan News - Editorial 2009/10/26](#)