

Ma's policies deepen Taiwan's predicament

Written by Taiwan News Editorial
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President Ma Ying-jeou declared upon his return from a six-day visit to Honduras, the Dominican Republic and the United States that the successful completion of his "missions" had shown the correctness of his strategy of a "diplomatic truce" with the authoritarian People's Republic of China and rebuilding "trust" with Washington through adoption of a low-profile posture.

Ma, who is also chairman of the rightist ruling Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), also confirmed the decision by U.S. President Barack Obama to notify Congress of a US\$6.4 billion package of defensive weapons procurements for Taiwan.

Besides bolstering Taiwan's self-defense capability, the president said the new defense systems would permit greater confidence among Taiwan's people in engaging the authoritarian People's Republic of China, which has deployed over 1,500 missiles and other offensive forces on the other side of the Taiwan Strait.

Unfortunately, the nature of the arms package and the furious reaction by the Chinese Communist Party-ruled PRC has torn the fig leaf away from such pollyannaish notions.

First, it should be noted that the "new" package, which includes 60 Black Hawk helicopters, two Osprey - class minesweepers, Patriot Advanced Capability (PAC-3) anti-missile missiles, a few Harpoon missiles and advanced software for "C4ISR" command and intelligence systems, only satisfies part of an US\$11 billion arms package originally pledged to Taiwan by Republican ex-president George W. Bush in 2001.

However, the procurement package does not include systems Taiwan urgently needs to balance the PRC's rapidly expanding and upgrading military prowess, notably advanced F-16 C/D Block jet fighters, AEGIS frigates or conventional submarines.

Ironically, Washington's selection of defensive weapon systems may have been influenced by Ma's change of Taiwan's strategic concepts from preparing for "decisive battle outside of the territory" forward defense based on local air and naval superiority to "determined defense and effective deterrence," which envisions an army-based defense on Taiwan's soil.

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Combined with Ma's tacit acceptance of Beijing's "one China principle," the latter concept indicates to international society that the KMT government believes Taiwan's eventual annexation by a "rising China" is inevitable and may have discouraged Washington from providing more sophisticated weaponry.

Moreover, Beijing's overreaction to Obama's decision, including the rupture of Sino-American military exchanges and threats to impose sanctions on U.S. companies, may very well be calculated to draw a red line to block Washington from selling F-16 C/D jets, AEGIS frigates or conventional submarines to Taiwan in the future.

The PRC's fierce condemnation of the sale of this inadequate package of defensive weaponry also exploded the myths behind Ma's touted "reconciliation" policy toward Beijing and demonstrated that the CCP regime has not modified in the slightest its insistence that Taiwan is part of the PRC and that the "final solution" of the "Taiwan question" is a matter of PRC "domestic politics" that brooks no "international interference."

Ma's consistent policy of satisfying the demands of our bullying neighbor has purchased only contempt in the PRC while misleading the the international community to believe that Taiwan's elected government and people can accept that Taiwan is indeed part of "China" or even the PRC, as shown by the spreading identification of "Taiwan (China)" on the web pages of even humanitarian non-governmental organizations such as Relief International.

Moreover, Ma's timidity is already being echoed by editorial calls by local media for Taiwan to adopt an even more "cautious" or timid stance "to avoid becoming a direct target" of Beijing's ire and to make more concessions in talks on the controversial "cross-strait economic cooperation agreement" instead of standing up for our rights as a democratic and independent state.

In sum, Ma's refusal to stand on the foundations laid by both Lee and Chen of Taiwan's actually - existing and legal status as an independent and democratic constitutional state and his tacit acceptance of Beijing's "great China nationalism" has disarmed Taiwan's defenses against PRC annexation and undermined the credibility of Taiwan's status as a distinct democratic member of the world community.

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As Taiwan's democratically elected president, Ma has the obligation to put top priority on ensuring the national security and the national interests of the 23 million citizens of Taiwan and has no mandate to resuscitate his party's "great China" dreams or deny the right of democratic self-determination of our 23 million people by arbitrarily deciding that Taiwan's future is a matter for "the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to decide."

The pursuit of normalized relations with China cannot be twisted into a justification to surrender Taiwan's hard-won democracy and prosperity.

Instead, Ma should remind the world community that Taiwan is part of the global democratic alliance against any authoritarian state, is resolved to seek peace with, and not at the expense of, democracy and dignity, and intensify efforts to persuade Washington and other capitals that Taiwan is committed to defending our democratic way of life and needs advanced self-defense capability to dissuade the PRC from any adventurism.

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