Academics yesterday lashed out at the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) government for what they called "a lack of concrete direction" in its policy on cross-strait relations.

At a conference held jointly by the Taiwan Competitiveness Forum think tank and the Chinese Integration Association, a pro-unificaton civic group, association chairman Chang Ya-chung (□□□) said the government had failed to make clear where the nation is headed under its leadership.

"Taiwan has entered an era when the national leader is failing to fill the role of pilot," Chang said.

Nan Fang Shuo (□□□), a political commentator, said that the government was simply relying on China to improve the nation's economic fortunes and had no clue how to improve the nation's economy itself.

He blamed President Ma Ying-jeou (□□□) for allowing the cross-strait issue to remain "unresolved."

"There is great uncertainty haunting [the government's plan to sign an] ECFA [economic cooperation framework agreement], while Taiwan enjoys less and less international space," Nan Fang Shuo said. "Yet the leader of Taiwan is still building a castle in the air and thinking that everything is all right."

Wu Tung-yeh (□□□), a research fellow at National Chengchi University's Institute of International Relations, criticized the government's international track record under Ma's "diplomatic truce," saying that Beijing had never responded to Ma's calls for equality and dignity in cross-strait relations.

Wu urged the government to recognize that China would never relax its "one China" principle when dealing with Taiwan's role in the international arena.

The KMT administration should think about how to renegotiate the definition of China's principle, Wu said.

"The biggest problem here is that the Ma administration does not have any vision for Taiwan's participation in international [organizations] and cross-strait politics," Wu said.

"The Ma administration hopes China will extend goodwill [to Taiwan], but the administration is unwilling to challenge the 'one-China' issue," Wu said.

The academics challenged the KMT and the DPP to hold a debate on the issue of de jure independence or unification.

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