

The director of China's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), Wang Yi, has given Taiwan the jitters by suggesting the opening up of the Taiwan Strait median line. Such discussions had always been held behind closed doors and bringing it out into the open challenges the Chinese Nationalist Party's (KMT) policy of avoiding discussion of unification, independence or armed conflict.

The KMT has only itself to blame because it has taken satisfaction in its ability to maintain cross-strait peace since it returned to power last year and it feels it should receive full credit for the international acclaim over the detente across the Taiwan Strait.

However, has the cross-strait crisis ever been that serious? Is the contribution of the KMT to cross-strait relations so remarkable? Why has the government decided to adamantly defend the Taiwan Strait median line?

Beijing has suggested opening the Taiwan Strait median line, a symbol of cross-strait animosity, to air traffic. This move has exposed the true colors of the KMT's policy of avoiding armed conflict and prioritizing cross-strait economic exchanges. It seems the ruling and opposition parties have reached a consensus on defending the median line, and from their and the public's unanimous reaction, it is clear that very few people consider that absence of armed cross-strait conflict is the same as "true peace."

However, the idea that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) must be prevented from taking military action to avoid cross-strait military conflict is built on the premise that the PLA can wantonly engage in military aggression.

It is thus clear that the KMT's policy to avoid armed conflict is essentially a Cold War containment policy. But the Cold War has ended, and the PLA and the Chinese regime are evolving. If the KMT continues to insist on a containment policy, it will only contain Taiwan.

The Taiwanese independence extravaganza put on by high-level government officials to further their own interests under the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government never really jeopardized cross-strait peace. The reality is the PLA has never wanted to invade Taiwan, nor does Washington want to fight a proxy war between Taiwan and the PLA. The promotion of Taiwanese independence only provided Beijing with an opportunity to give Washington the impression of being a peacemaker while building its own power and creating the impression that it was cooperating with the US to manage the cross-strait situation.

When President Ma Ying-jeou was forced to define his position, his declaration was never aimed at Beijing and didn't even have anything to do with maintaining cross-strait peace. After all, cross-strait relations have never been under threat since the great powers started watching over the Strait, and the KMT itself can do nothing to change cross-strait peace. Ma's motive was thus simply to show independence supporters the KMT's determination not to abandon Taiwan. In addition, with the opposition spreading rumors about the National Security Council

KMT's policy leaves it flat-footed

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Friday, 10 July 2009 09:17

head abandoning arms procurement, the KMT had no choice but to make concessions on the median line issue.

If Taiwan were to declare independence, the median would be the national border. If the KMT had not declared its stance to defend the median line, it would have meant that the party denied the possibility of Taiwanese independence, which would have been tantamount to the KMT destroying its future.

Therefore, consolidating the impression of a war crisis is a KMT strategy to comfort independence advocates. In so doing, the KMT has been given the opportunity to proclaim that it is better qualified to maintain cross-strait peace than the opposition.

The PLA has given up its intention to cross the Taiwan Strait, the KMT has never wanted to provoke its Chinese counterpart, supporters of Taiwanese independence dare not declare war with China, and Washington is far from prepared to go to war.

This is a top national secret with the potential to destroy the government's legitimacy, and it has now been exposed by Wang's proposal to open up the median line.

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Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2009/07/10](#)