

Scrutinizing the Ma Government's Cross-Strait Policy

| Joseph Wu

The Chinese military threat and diplomatic blockade vis-à-vis Taiwan keeps getting more serious, but the international community needs to face the fact that given China's rising power its ability to assist Taiwan is on the wane. Against this backdrop, Taiwan needs to pool the wisdom of the entire nation to establish an overall strategy. Yet the government of President Ma Ying-jeou has not clearly told the people what Taiwan's overall strategy is and what its objectives are. Instead, he unreservedly leans toward China, failing to balance different opinions at home and failing to strike a balance between different considerations regarding cross-strait opening and national security, as well as between Taiwan's relations with China and the United States.

Presidential Brilliance

Since the era of former President Lee Teng-hui, the government has been aware that the different cabinet agencies are beholden to different institutional thinking when it comes to cross-strait policy. In order to avoid that each agency does its own thing and rushes headlong into disaster, the Mainland Affairs Council was given the task to coordinate the opinions and policies of the various cabinet agencies. Even statements on cross-strait policy require the Council's prior approval. But since

Ma took power, the Mainland Affairs Council is no longer playing its roles of policymaker, gatekeeper and coordinator, as the individual cabinet agencies act as they please.

Ma himself does not even trust the judgment of the civil service system, taking the liberty of announcing major policy decisions without prior consultation. The Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) and the decisions (to relax restrictions on Taiwanese) large size (LCD) panel and 12-inch semiconductor wafer fabs in China are all masterpieces of "presidential brilliance." Since the president had already given orders to liberalize these sectors, the "assessments" that relevant cabinet agencies should have done beforehand, turned into a process of rubberstamping the president's decisions after the fact. Seeing the president lean completely toward China, the cabinet agencies also scramble to carry out liberalization and assume a China-centric attitude. Instead of taking the necessary stances and actions vis-à-vis China, they make efforts to please the president. That's the most fundamental problem with the cross-strait policy of the Ma administration.

Sovereignty Rendered Invisible

The goal of China's offensive against Taiwan in the international arena is to wipe out Taiwan's

sovereignty and make countries around the globe accept that Taiwan is a part of China. In this situation the Taiwanese government must not only make efforts to increase its visibility, but also rebut Chinese statements or acts that claim to represent Taiwan, or else other countries won't be able to understand Taiwan's stance. However, since taking office the Ma government has never rebutted or condemned any moves that China made to damage Taiwan's sovereignty.

Again and again Chinese acts have triggered indignation among the Taiwanese, such as Chinese officials declaring that Taiwan does not have the right to participate in United Nations-related organizations, or exerting pressure on the Tokyo International Film Festival, a Chinese judge harassing a Taiwanese athlete in a teakwondo competition during the Asian Games, and the Philippine government deporting Taiwanese criminals to China on Beijing's request. But the Ma government has not voiced any criticism toward China.

A joint statement signed by the U.S. and China on November 17, 2009, states "China emphasized that the Taiwan issue concerns China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and expressed the hope that the United States will honor its relevant commitments and appreciate and support the Chinese side's position on this issue ... The two sides agreed that respecting each other's core interests is extremely important to ensure steady progress in U.S.-

China relations." This does great harm to Taiwanese sovereignty. But the Ma government did not make any requests or give any feedback to Washington before the statement was signed, and afterwards it stated that Taiwan-U.S. relations were at their best in sixty years.

Due to the joint statement of 2009 the Chinese side kept demanding in following bilateral high-level talks that Washington honor its 2009 commitments and continuously emphasized that the Taiwan sovereignty issue is China's core interest. When Chinese President Hu Jintao during his visit to Washington in January 2011 continued to close in on Taiwan, the only thing Taiwan Premier Wu Den-yih had to say was that he was very grateful.

Agreements Not Implementable

The Ma government has rushed into negotiations with China and has signed agreements, but many matters pertaining to the vital interests of the Taiwanese cannot be implemented. For instance the date and time have been set for the signing of a cross-strait food security agreement which was spawned by the toxic milk scandal in China, but Taiwanese companies, which imported and sold the contaminated milk powder, cannot apply for compensation anywhere.

Although Taiwan and China have signed an Agreement on Joint Cross-Strait Crime-fighting and Mutual Judicial Assistance, more than 200

vicious Taiwanese economic criminals still freely roam China. Moreover, when additional cross-strait flights were scheduled for the Lunar New Year holiday period this year Taiwanese airlines could only get red eye flights. China said no and meant it when Taiwan wanted the fifth freedom of the air or when demanding zero tariffs for the petrochemical and machine tools industries during the ECFA negotiation process, but the Ma government virtually just grinned and bore it.

Giving up Management

Since the Chinese military threat is becoming more serious and the Chinese government's hostility toward Taiwan has not waned, the government must make efforts amid the opening process to prevent that "exchanges" harm Taiwan. It's for that reason that former presidents Lee and Chen Shui-bian kept emphasizing "managing" cross-strait relations. But it appears that the Ma government has already abandoned management.

The Taiwanese government does not take any action, no matter whether the Chinese government uses covert propaganda or illegal advertisements in Taiwanese media, Chinese fishing boats massively intrude into Taiwanese waters, Chinese illegal immigrants work in Taiwan, the China Travel Service acts like a monopolist in Taiwan, swallowing the profits from cross-strait tourism or whether the Chinese government directly teams up with local

gangsters and faction leaders and buys off small political parties to directly influence Taiwanese politics.

Taking the China Road

What needs to be mentioned in closing is that China's roadmap for solving the Taiwan issue builds on Hu's six-point proposition. Paved with traps and landmines it begins with the one China principle and ends with the complete reunification of the motherland. During a visit to Taiwan in August 2010 Li Yafei, vice chairman of China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), brought up China's stance on the "one China principle." He said there was "a consensus expressed in spoken form by each side that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait both adhere to the one China principle." His statement only referred to adhering to the one China principle and did not leave any room for each side having its own interpretation of it. Yet on December 1, 2010, Ma suddenly completely accepted China's one China principle and even demanded that the opposition parties accept it too. Be it wittingly or unwittingly, Ma has already helped China pave the way for solving the Taiwan issue. **BT**