

# *Ma's Cross-strait and Foreign Policies Cozying up to China, Alienating the U.S. and Japan*

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The cross-strait and foreign policies that the Government of President Ma Ying-jeou has pursued since taking power three years ago worry many people in Taiwan and have triggered severe controversies many times. This article examines various aspects of Ma Government's cross-strait and foreign policies to understand wherein the problems lay during the past three years. Otherwise it won't be possible to make an objective overall assessment.

## I. Taiwan's Structural Cross-strait Disadvantages on the Rise

Within the overall structure of cross-strait ties, certain unfavorable factors for Taiwan have further deteriorated. At the same time, Taiwan's capabilities and tools to deal with these factors are diminishing correspondingly. China continues to increase its military deployments targeting on Taiwan, and keeps strengthening its area denial and anti access, anti satellite, and network warfare capabilities. In contrast, the Ma Government takes very little counter action to the extent that the defense budget for the current fiscal year even remains far below the promised 3 percent of GDP.

The International Food Safety Authorities Network (INFOSAN) under the World Health Organization (WHO) still ignores Taiwan, so that Taiwan can only obtain information via China. The reason for this is that Taiwan has already signed a food safety agreement with China. Regarding how Taiwan managed to gain observer status in the World Health Assembly, the content of negotiations with China in 2009 has not yet been

made public. So far the Ma Government has not explained whether Taiwan promised to accept to be treated as a part of China.

## II. Taiwanese Sovereignty Subsumed in one China

During the presidential campaign Ma repeatedly declared to the outside world that Taiwan is a sovereign State and that its future must be decided by the people of Taiwan. But after taking power, Ma accepted the fictitious "1992 Consensus" and the "one China principle," declaring that Taiwan and China had a "special non-state-to-state relationship," that Taiwan is an area and that the territory of the Republic of China includes the Chinese mainland. And whenever China boldly declares that the territory and sovereignty of Taiwan and China are inseparable and that Taiwan pertains to China's core interests (including in the U.S.-China Joint Statement of 2009), the Ma Government always refrains from refuting such claims. It's only natural that the Government's negotiations and agreements with China make many Taiwanese citizens think that Taiwan is at risk of losing its sovereignty.

The Ma Government has always claimed that, under the 1992 Consensus, each side has its own interpretation of what constitutes one China. But on Dec. 1, 2010, Ma formally accepted China's definition, which states that back in 1992 "each side had verbally expressed that both sides of the Taiwan Strait adhere to the one China principle." While Taiwan had ever since steadfastly refused to accept China's version of the 1992 Consensus,

Ma gave up this stance just like that, so that now “there is only one China, without different interpretations.”

### III. Unclear Directions, Chaotic Decision-making

Since the Ma Government took power, the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party, Taiwan’s Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and China’s Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), and all cabinet agencies have their own two-way communication channels so that everyone does their own thing. The Mainland Affairs Council has lost its function as a coordinator and mastermind of cross-strait affairs. When the Financial Supervisory Commission signed a financial agreement with China, the Mainland Affairs Council was even entirely left in the dark. The various Government agencies are racing against each other in negotiating deals with China and opening up the domestic market to curry favor with the China-oriented Ma. Border control, police and immigration agencies, which originally were supposed to safeguard Taiwan’s security, have begun to exert self-restraint. The most blatant examples of such restraint were when they did not dare to expel Chinese fishing boats (from Taiwanese waters) or take in Chinese nationals for questioning who had illegally gathered military intelligence.

As cross-strait relations are complicated, they require a rigorous and prudent evaluation process. But since assuming the presidency Ma

has developed the habit of randomly handing out directions such as when opening up investment by Taiwanese companies in 12-inch LCD panel and 12-inch wafer manufacturing in China, or when changing the name of the planned Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with China to Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA). Within the Government, no one dares to go against the president’s will. But if the executive agencies do not produce impact assessment reports as basis for policy implementation, one can well imagine the resulting risks for the nation.

### IV. President Ma Versus Presidential Candidate Ma

When Ma won election in 2008, he declared before the world that he would take a humble attitude in governing the country. But after his inauguration, he did not only turn a deaf ear to public concerns and dissenting views regarding all sorts of issues, and cross-strait relations and foreign policy in particular, but skirted responsibility by criticizing the previous Government. On top of that his antidemocratic moves of using the judiciary to persecute officials who served in the previous Government worsened the rift within Taiwanese society caused by the presidential election. After winning the election, Ma failed to switch from electioneering mode into the role of a leader who looks after the collective interests of the nation. After taking over the KMT chairman post, he started to prepare for his reelection campaign, a role that is not compatible with the role as national

leader. Taiwan finds itself amid an adverse external environment. If Taiwan is to demonstrate national power, it needs to unite, but Ma has severely neglected his duties in this regard.

## V. A Perverted National Security Strategy

China has clear strategic objectives regarding Taiwan and has never given up in its (military) ambitions. Yet Taiwan's strategic options are very clear: The original strategy of "seeking close ties with the United States and Japan and maintaining a distance from China," became "seeking close ties with China and pulling away from the United States and Japan" after Ma took power. With regard to relations with the United States, the decisions on U.S. beef (imports) caused uproar in Taiwan. Then Taiwan-U.S. relations took another big step backward as Taiwan amended food security regulations, causing many Taiwan-friendly U.S. Congress members to withdraw their support for Taiwan, disrupting negotiations under the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), leading to the cancellation of planned visits to Taiwan by high-ranking U.S. officials and the stagnation of bilateral talks on visa-free entry to the United States for Taiwanese citizens, an extradition agreement, as well as weapons procurement. The Ma Government doesn't seem to think that these are important affairs. Even as the U.S. side put aside dissonance over the beef issue, expressing hopes that TIFA talks could be resumed in February this year, the Ma Government again stirred up the sensitive beef issue so that

TIFA negotiations could not be resumed. The Ma Government has shown in its handling of foreign relations, be it the rejection of foreign assistance during the Typhoon Morakot disaster (in 2009), Ma's statement in a CNN interview that Taiwan will never ask the United States to fight for the island, or the still ruptured TIFA talks, that in its eyes only China counts, whereas other countries are dispensable.

## VI. Strong Reliance on China's Uncertain Goodwill

Since taking power, the Ma Government has relied on China to solve any problem including Taiwan's international participation, the education system, economic development, crime, food safety, and currently even nuclear safety. But China's goodwill does not exist. As a result of relying on China's assistance, Taiwan is now at the mercy of Beijing.

- Regarding Taiwan's participation in international affairs, the friends of Taiwan think that given that Taiwan already has China as a friend, it won't need them anymore.
- China trumpets the huge business opportunities that its procurement delegations bring to Taiwan, but once the delegations are here, the events are turned into investment promotion conferences.
- Taiwanese airlines were only able to serve red eye slots when additional direct cross-strait flights were scheduled during the Lunar New Year.

- Despite the signing of a food safety agreement, Taiwanese victims (of Chinese food scandals) have not yet received any compensation.
- As tours for Chinese tourists are marketed as all in one packages, there are virtually no profits to make for the Taiwanese travel agencies, which also face severe payment delays on the part of their Chinese counterparts.
- While the Ma Government is proud of ECFA, China did not grant (early harvest list treatment) to the most important industries such as displays, machine tools, and petrochemical products, forcing these Taiwanese manufacturers to relocate to China.
- The upper and lower echelons in the Ma Government pursue a feel good policy toward China. They don't dare to voice any criticism toward Beijing, be it human rights in China, Chinese diplomatic pressure, the Philippines repatriating Taiwanese nationals to China, or secret WHO documents treating Taiwan as a part of China.

## VII. Antidemocratic Conduct

Over the years, Taiwanese opinion polls have shown that the majority of the Taiwanese do not want unification with China. But while continuously reiterating his opposition to Taiwanese independence, Ma also says that “no unification” does not rule out unification. He has not refuted calls made by Chinese President Hu

Jin-tao in his six-point proposal (for cross-strait ties in December 2008) for the “termination of hostile relations and signing of a peace agreement.” Ma is promoting educational and cultural exchanges with China, promotes Han Chinese culture, obviously accommodating Hu's six points to pave the way for complete unification between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait in the future and to thwart possible other options for the people of Taiwan.

## VIII. Conclusion

In his past three years as president Ma failed to insist on standpoints in cross-strait and foreign policy that he should have insisted on, failed to carry out assessments that should have been made, failed to gain what should have been gained, treated China as a good friend, while treating the United States and Japan as dispensable counterparts. His rule has been simply disastrous. Ma has often been warned about these problems, but due to his arrogant attitude he does not heed dissenting opinions. The presidential election is drawing closer. Because of the election, Ma is intensifying social confrontation right now, which clashes with his role as head of state. As a result Ma might become the first incumbent president in the history of Taiwanese democracy who fails to win reelection. **BT**