

Our National Defense Vision— Safeguarding National Security, Maintaining Cross-strait Peace.

China has always harbored strong political ambitions toward Taiwan and tried hard to create a political and economic environment for gaining control over Taiwan without even waging a war. But while creating an international climate that works to the disadvantage of Taiwan, China has also strengthened its military deployments targeted at Taiwan to prepare that, in case it needs to attack the island. China's rise allows Beijing to continue to increase its military investment and constitutes an incentive for the major countries to intensify economic cooperation with China. Indirectly, this leads to a decline in international support for Taiwan, which makes Taiwan's national defense environment increasingly difficult.

Taiwan has gone through the menace of Chinese missile tests in 1995 and 1996. But after democratization, particularly after the first power transition, Taiwan became caught in internal divisions and infighting among its political parties. National defense issues, which should not be politicized, also triggered severe confrontation at home. When then U.S. President George W. Bush promised to sell a batch of high performance defensive weapons to Taiwan, the government's budget bill failed to pass the legislature due to a boycott by the then opposition Kuomintang (KMT). As a result Taiwan was unable to procure and introduce into its military the advanced weapons that it needs for enhanced defense. Presently Chinese military deployments against Taiwan, including missiles, naval and air forces, by far exceed actual defense needs toward Taiwan, or what would be needed to counter an international intervention. Because of these developments Taiwan faces an increasingly severe military challenge.

Amid the strategic standoff in the Taiwan Strait the danger of military confrontation has always been there. In order to protect Taiwan's national security we therefore need to boost the actual strength of Taiwan's national defense and strengthen our troops' combat capability. We need to ponder national defense policy in its entirety, build a sound national defense and military system, enhance our combat capability plan and establish a complete civil defense system. We also need to implement plans for an autonomous national defense industry, joint regional defense and other policies to build a robust national defense force to counter a possible blockade, three-way (sea, air, land) landings or other military offensives by China to maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait.

What deserves attention is if Taiwan does not effectively counter China's military strategy (such as exercises, ambushes, blockades etc.), this amounts to encouraging China to take such measures to reach its goal of speeding up unification. Here we need to carefully consider the conditions and goals that influence China's direction based on its current situation. Projections of our own scenarios and ideological stance should not replace understanding the other side's true intentions and reference conditions. Much less war can be decided solely based on who has more or superior weapons, or in a simple comparison of military might. China's internal leadership structure, its economic development, Taiwan's domestic economic development and popular support, the international situation and other external factors could all influence the possibility of a Chinese military attack on Taiwan and its outcome.

Taiwan depends on a powerful national defense

to guarantee its survival. But more importantly Taiwan needs to understand itself. Unlike the authoritarian regimes of the past, a democratic Taiwan can no longer demand from its people whatever it wants. Faced with various restrictions, Taiwan needs to use its limited resources to make the most effective military investments. It must also do its best reforming the entire national defense structure, implementing the two national defense laws (the National Defense Act and the Organization Act of the Ministry of National Defense), realizing a civilian-led military, and reforming the military retirement system so that our national defense system builds on a lean combat force that befits Taiwan. We will only have the ability to safeguard our national sovereignty if we have a robust defense force. We can maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait only if we avoid creating incentives for the enemy to attack. **BT**