

Policy

Analysis

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*Analytical Review on the U.S.
Department of Defense 2010 Annual
Report to Congress: “Military and
Security Developments Involving
People’s Republic of China”
-Chinese Military Expansion and Sino-
American Political Rival*

Background

The annual report to U.S. Congress on “Military and Security Developments Involving People’s Republic of China” released in August by the Department of Defense has amassed enormous attention against the backdrop of U.S.-Korea military exercise and Sino-American disputes over South China Sea. In addition to critiquing China’s opaque defense budget and unclear military ambitions, it reaffirms

Talking Points

- The annual report on “Military and Security Developments Involving People’s Republic of China” was published in August by the U.S. Department of Defense, exhibiting ambitions of the U.S. returning to Asia.
- As the report puts it, China’s military expansion serves as the primary factor leading to the change of East Asian military balance. The region now is afflicted with anxiety about China’s proactive modernization of armed forces and equipment. That China’s lack of military transparency will lead to misperceptions and thus miscalculations from other countries seems highly likely.
- Despite the thawing cross-Strait tensions in the first two years of Ma Administration, military deployment aimed at Taiwan never seems to ebb.
- Taiwan is advised to grow extra wary of mutual CBMs, for Beijing can simply use Taiwan as a convenient bargaining chip vis-à-vis the U.S.

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the importance of corroborating partnerships at the regional level. The 2010 report has taken its precedent issue a step further by highlighting the role of the U.S. of monitoring China's armed forces and escalation of deterrence and broadcasting the will and capabilities of the U.S. military deployment strategy in Asia to maintain peace and stability in Asia Pacific. It seems obvious, judging from such tendency, that the U.S. is shifting its strategic focus back to Asia, paving a way for a number of potential challenges facing the Sino-American relationships, in which Taiwan is profoundly engaged.

I. The Production of the Annual DoD Report to the Congress

The analysis on the "China threat" ever since the mid- 90s has been swinging like a pendulum suspended from the pivot of the U.S. Congress between two opposing extremes: the "red" demanding partnership and the "blue" containment. As directed by the "FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 1202)," the Secretary of Defense is required to submit a report addressing the current and probable future course of military-technological development on the People's Liberation Army and the tenets and probable development of Chinese grand strategy, security strategy, and military strategy, and of the military organizations and operational concepts, through the next 20 years. The report, previously known as "Military Power of the People's Republic of China," is now legally renamed as "Military and Security Developments Involving People's Republic of China," which shall cover mutual engagement and cooperation in terms of security issues of the two nations and address Sino-American military contact and potential security strategies of the U.S. vis-à-vis China. A significant part of the report was centered upon military confrontations across Taiwan Strait, for the issue has been used by PRC as a pretext of strengthening its military muscle and thus an important basis of analysis on cross-Strait security issues. The publication normally is released in March; however, it didn't come out until August this year. Many speculations point to bickering over relationships with China between the White House, National Security Council, and the Pentagon, though the real cause was never spoken.

II. Chinese Military Expansion is "the Primary Factor Leading to the Change of Military Balance in East Asia"

The Chinese military strategy, the report yields, has largely departed from the capabilities of defending national sovereignty and enlargement of self-defense for a farther destination of stretching out its economy prowess to the world. The Chinese military ambitions are projecting to Guam, Japan, and the Philippines in addition to Taiwan, Okinawa, and the South Sea. The latest report refers this to "the primary factor leading to the change of military balance in East Asia." Despite China has directed its armed forces to the operations of peacekeeping, disaster relief, and anti-terrorism, its military might can be a smart chip in its diplomatic games.

As Chinese economy skyrockets, the modernization of its destructive weaponry and equipment is, too, underway. We are witnessing a bulk of investment input, R & D works, and deployment of multiple reentry vehicles of intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs), cruise missiles, inter-continent ballistic missiles (ICBMs) as well as novel attach submarines, powerful long-range air defense system, and advanced fighter jets. While the U.S. accuses China's increasing expenditures on national defense every year and the lack of transparency of defense budget, China

seems to continue to be vague on its defense investment, despite the presence of its defense white paper. In response the U.S. is calling for more positive stance by asking China to reveal more transparency of its military development to avoid misjudgments of security issues by eliminating skepticism and insecurity coming out from the international community.

III. Number of China Missiles Aimed at Taiwan Still High, despite Cross-Strait Thaw under Ma

An era of increasing economic and cultural interconnections across the Taiwan Strait has seen the thaw of six decades of confrontation under the Ma Administration. Nevertheless, the warming relationships did not seem to cool down China's guided missiles deployment aimed at the island. It is estimated that China currently has about 1050-1150 short-range missiles deployed opposite of Taiwan. Although we have not observed a conspicuous amendment of missiles along Fujian coasts, we can hardly feel any military concessions from them given the increasingly advanced weaponry of better performance and upgraded destruction capabilities. The report of "Military Power of the People's Republic of China" has confirmed the steady military build-up for the past 7 years of publication, pointing out that "the balance of cross-Strait military forces continues to shift in the mainland's favor." The number of total targeted missiles aimed at Taiwan in 2004 was 500, 650-730 in 2005, 710-790 in 2006, 900 in 2007, 990-1070 in 2008, and up to 1050-1150 in 2009. The economic agreement between the two—also known as the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement, ECFA—is expected to stabilize the number of missiles, though not including that of the cruising ones. Taiwan national security officials, counting in all the cruising missiles, estimates a total of at least 1400 deployed vis-à-vis the nation. The Chinese military leverage over Taiwan becomes even more obvious when the scales of the two sides' armed forces and equipment are compared.

IV. Possible Red-line Scenarios and Strategies of China Waging War against Taiwan Illustrated in Report

In the 2010 publication, the U.S. listed 7 potential scenarios that may touch eventually bring Beijing to the verge of initiating offensive actions: Taiwanese independence and all other pro-independence sentiment and rhetoric that may lead to declaration of independence, domestic upheaval in Taiwan, foreign intervention in Taiwanese affairs, and development of nuclear weapons, etc. There are two concerns of the U.S. making such statement: making China acknowledged that its alleged claims of the "red lines" and the consistency are being closely monitored and warning other nations of interest including Taiwan to stay tuned to various factors in addition to Taiwanese independence to keep the Chinese belligerent factions from going to war.

In terms of strategic warfare categories, the U.S. argues China may take steps of incremental upgrade to earn more time in exerting the strategy of deterrence against Taiwan instead of strike an unexpected attack, unlike most Taiwanese speculating a decisive battle for quick victory from China. It seems from the traditional wisdom that fighting in the dark behind the enemy's back can lead to an easy conquest, but effect of deterrence would gain no credibility.

It is likely, the report deems, that China can effortlessly take the Paracel Islands, Itu Aba Island,

Kinmen, and Matsu, yet an amphibious battle in Taiwan is another story. It's worth noting that by amphibious battle it denotes a surprise amphibious landing and assault. However, if China gains the leverage of air and maritime control by building bridgeheads at major Taiwanese harbors or airports, striking massive military landings would be a no sweat stroll.

V. Chinese Response to the Report

In a press conference of the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the spokesman, Jiang Yu, officially made a statement, saying “the report was exaggerating the military capabilities of the People’s Republic of China, dispersing the theory of ‘China military threat,’ and leaving the quandary of the two sides [Taiwan and China] to Beijing and that China is firmly against such [statement] and has launched negotiations with Washington.” “The report is disregarding the objective facts,” said the Chinese Ministry of Defense, “and it is accusing [our] normal defense development and military infrastructure of the PRC by fuddling the ‘China military threat,’ to which Beijing utters serious objection.” The uncompromising hard-liner of Beijing after the joint military exercise by the U.S. and South Korea has again coated the seemingly warming Sino-American relations with ice, forecasting more potential conflicts of interests and clash of values.

Policy Recommendations

1. *Eye China's Military Ambitions Closely to Reduce Possibility of Miscalculations*

Despite the resounding rhetoric of peaceful rise, China has been stretching its sphere of influence by playing soft and hard cards in the international community to consolidate a stronger defense system and strengthen its military capabilities. Albeit China guarantees the determination of peaceful rising, angst of East Asian countries concerning the awakening dragon never vanishes. In the face of a greater China, expectations towards a reliable regional hegemon were somehow too high to be met, given the issues of undervalued Chinese RMB, Iran's nuclear weapons, and the Korean Peninsula conflict. It is by no means to gainsay the validity of the Chinese claim; however, China's rise remains an uncertain factor insofar as the regional security. If Ma cannot detach the link of consanguinity from China and engage it with more rationality, Taiwan is bound to be trapped in a myth over China. In reference to regional strategic thinking, it is perhaps only realism that can keep from the likelihood of regional development miscalculations.

2. *Quit the Quixotic Foreign Policy of "China Cures it All"*

It seems to Ma that better cross-Strait relations will simply solve all diplomatic issues for Taiwan with other countries such as the U.S. and Japan because Taiwan is not a "trouble maker." Two years into his reign, deployment of missiles aimed at Taiwan never seems to ebb. On top of that, China is sugar-coating its conspiracy with a pretext of defending Taiwan from other countries' threat. Security cooperation between the Washington and Taipei, in addition, did not see any symbolism of advancement due to the relief of cross-Strait tensions. What is even worse is that the U.S. policy making circle is, against the chaotic backdrop, advocating the option of abandoning the island that is becoming the next Finland. Such quixotic policy is an enormous mistake Taiwan cannot afford to make.

3. *Beware of Taiwan Becoming the Strategic Chip of China against the U.S.*

The recent series of Sino-American interactions reveals China's desperate desire of expanding its ocean access and armed forces, on which the U.S. bases its fundamental thought of returning to Asia and reuniting concerned states to downplay the China threat. In the post-ECFA era, Ma, in response to China pressing political negotiations, protrudes a chronological diplomatic tripartite: economy, military, and then politics, as a result of which he was asked to engage in cross-Strait cooperation of confidence building measures. This can be seen in a conference hosted by Xiamen University in July on military mutual trust and the theory of "mutual defense for the sovereignty of Chinese motherland" argued by the PLA major general Luo Yuan. The reluctance of Ma to initiate political negotiations until 2012 has been used as a strategic bargaining chip by China to counter the U.S. in terms of the issues with regard to South and East China Sea by demanding Taiwan to align with China. Given the Chinese plotted game of cross-Strait military confidence building, Taiwan would not be wise to be stuck in the quandary of Sino-American confrontation.

