

**Chen Shui-bian's Administration and Transformation of Taiwan's Military Forces
Challenges and Opportunities**

Remarks prepared for the EATS Conference in Prague, April 2008

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With the recent Kuomintang's (KMT) sweeping victory in both the Legislative Yuan (LY) and the presidential election, the era of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) seems to be over. It is therefore appropriate to have a closer look at some of the DPP's policies and their evaluation. In the sphere of defense, the DPP can be credited for commencing and implementing a rather revolutionary transformation of Taiwan's military forces that touched not only upon the procurement of more modern weapons system, but also on the organization of the military forces, system of command and leadership, strategy, and defense policy. This paper evaluates the transformation of the ROC military forces during Chen Shui-bian's administration and assesses some of the challenges and problems of Taiwan's defense, some of which will most probably continue into the next KMT's administration, which will have to address them.

The paper is based on open-source materials and interviews with Taiwan's scholars and military personnel carried out in Taipei in summer 2007.

Basic Aspects of Taiwan's Strategic Environment

According to the 2006 National Defense Report¹, Taiwan faces several national security challenges, among which the People's Republic of China's (PRC) ever-growing

¹ 2006 National Defense Report, p. 30-32.

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military force represents the gravest threat.² Beijing continuously refuses to renounce the use of force against Taiwan, as it had demonstrated by the promulgation of the Anti-Secession Law in 2005.³ Taiwan closely watches the modernization of the PLA, which is acquiring new advanced weapons systems, primarily from Russia, many of which are then deployed in the Nanjing military region facing Taiwan. Given the PRC's double-digit military budget, many analysts warn that the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait has been shifting in Beijing's favor.⁴

The primary goal of the PRC's military buildup is to intimidate Taiwan and deter its representatives from moving towards independence. It includes about 1,400 ballistic missiles⁵ deployed on the coast of Fujian province targeting Taiwan, increasing naval and anti-access/area-denial capabilities (such as submarines), as well as acquisition of highly capable aircraft from Russia (Su-27, Su-30). To underline its resolve towards Taiwan, which the PRC perceives as a renegade province that must be reunified with the Motherland, the PLA regularly stages military exercises where drills for possible Taiwan contingency take place.⁶

With the swift military modernization, the PLA acquires more options against Taiwan. The emphasis on traditional land-attack army and quantity has already given way to high-tech capabilities and asymmetric measures. The PLA, focusing on Taiwan's vulnerabilities, puts emphasis on developing ability of fighting 'local wars under high-

² The National Defense Report also mentions regional conflicts and unconventional threats, such as terrorism.

³ In which *Article 8* explicitly states: „*In the event that the "Taiwan independence" secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.*” See Anti-Secession Law, March 14, 2005. Available at: <http://www.taiwandc.org/aslaw-text.htm> (21.1.2008).

⁴ Some China scholars even conclude that the balance has already shifted in Beijing's favor. See e.g. Dan Blumenthal and Randall Schriver in their report „A Twenty-First Century Agenda for the U.S.-Taiwan Partnership“. Blumenthal, D.; Schriver, R.: “A Twenty-First Century Agenda for the U.S.-Taiwan Partnership.” A Report of the Taiwan Policy Working Group. AEI & Armitage Project, February 2008, p. 6; 2006 National Defense Report, p. 19 and Eric McVadon: “Testimony Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission.” March 29, 2007. Available at:

http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2007hearings/written_testimonies/07_03_29_30wrts/07_03_29_30_mcvadon_statement.php (20.2.2008). McVadon describes the situation as „*Taiwan vs. China: Out-gunned, out-numbered, and out-sized*“.

⁵ M-11, M-9. Recent data (see Halloran, R.: “China's Strike May Be Coming Soon.” In: Taipei Times, March 29, 2008, p. 8). According to the latest Annual Report to Congress on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China, there are between 990-1070 missiles targeting Taiwan (See Annual Report to Congress on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2008, Office of the Secretary of Defense, p. 56.). Some regards these data as underestimated.

⁶ It is necessary to point out that PLA's modernization however goes beyond Taiwan's contingency. See 2008 Report to the Congress on the Military Power of the PRC, pp. 29-30.

tech conditions'. Thus, the PLA focuses on development of its air force, navy, joint operations, precision and mobile technologies, information and electronic warfare, and special operations. Such a multiplicity of options makes it more difficult and especially more costly for the Taiwanese to find adequate responses.

The threat emanating from the Mainland is however not only purely military, since Beijing has adopted a multi-faceted approach of carrots-and-sticks towards Taiwan, in which military force represents just one aspect. Besides military measures, such comprehensive strategy also includes a concept of so-called 'three warfares', which emphasizes psychological, legal, and public opinion (media) measures.⁷ Anti-secession law, diplomatic interference, political incentives (such as talks with the representatives of the KMT and PFP in 2005), various economic inducements, cultural exchanges, etc. aimed at influencing Taiwanese perception of the PRC, are a good example of the "three warfares".

Beijing is in fact preparing for both, unification and independence scenarios, taking into account possible engagement of the U.S.

The United States engagement with Taiwan and the PRC represents another important feature of Taiwan's security environment. Taiwan enjoys quite a close unofficial relationship with the U.S., particularly in defense matters. The U.S. is the main provider of modern arms to Taiwan, according to the Taiwan Relations Act.⁸ Dependency on the U.S. arms sales however gives Washington a powerful tool of influencing Taipei's behavior – the latest example being Washington's refusal to approve Taiwan's request for purchase of 66 F-16 C-Ds, which was generally regarded as motivated by President Chen's firm stance on U.N. referendum. The U.S. support therefore can be in many respects tricky – particularly since the support is informal, based on U.S. ambiguous and conditional approach towards Taiwan. The U.S. implements a policy of so-called strategic ambiguity towards Taiwan and the PRC. Its main goal is to deter both sides

⁷ 2008 Report to the Congress on the Military Power of the PRC, p. 19.

⁸ The Taiwan Relations Act stipulates that „it is the policy of the United States to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character“ and that „the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability“. See Taiwan Relations Act, Section 1, Article 5 and Section 3. Available at: http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive_Index/Taiwan_Relations_Act.html (25.3.2008).

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from changing the status quo, as the U.S. defines it. In result of this policy, Beijing must therefore take into account the possibility of U.S. support for Taiwan in the case of a conflict (or even U.S. engagement) while Taiwan can never be entirely sure whether Washington would come to its rescue.⁹

National Security Strategy

National security strategy of Taiwan represents a set of policies, which aim to maintain a favorable security environment and assure maintenance of open and democratic polity in Taiwan, ability of the government to protect Taiwan's physical security and development of political, diplomatic, economic cooperation with the international community. At the same time, it seeks to ensure Taiwan's ongoing access to overseas markets and resources to sustain Taiwan's growth. Last, but not least, national security strategy contains a military dimension, by which the government aims to retain military capability (with possible assistance of the U.S. and other countries) to deter Beijing from attacking Taiwan, or, if such deterrence fails, to prevent the PRC from taking over the island.¹⁰

The military aspect of the national security strategy has been changing since the mid-1990s. In the aftermath of the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, it became clear that an amphibious invasion of Taiwan by the PLA's forces, until then the central assumption of Taiwan's military strategy, was only one of the possible scenarios; that the PLA was waging other means of Taiwan's intimidation, such as blockade or aerial attack. Hence, following the crisis and particularly with the rise of the DPP to power, Taiwan's defense experienced an important shift in defense posture. The original Lee Teng-hui's strategy of "resolute defense, effective deterrence" gave way to "effective deterrence, strong defense", fully implemented under Chen Shui-bian.¹¹ With the former strategy, the military of the ROC put emphasis on Taiwan-centered defense, i.e. expecting the fighting

⁹ Even though recently, it seems that Beijing is increasingly doubting the U.S. commitment to Taiwan, while in Taiwan, many officials seem to be banking on the persuasion that Washington has stakes in protecting Taiwan

¹⁰ Michael D. Swaine, James C. Mulvenon: Taiwan's Foreign and Defense Policies. Center for Asia-Pacific Policy, RAND, 2001, p. 8.

¹¹ Even though it must be pointed out that the change towards „effective deterrence, active defense“ started at the end of Lee Teng-hui's presidency, as a result of general discontent about the defensive posture among military elites. Interviews in Taipei, summer 2007.

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in Taiwan. Chen Shui-bian's administration however fully employed a more active approach – introducing the concept of so-called “offensive defense”, which emphasized deterrence with some ability of force projection. Most importantly, the DPP administration shifted to a concept of “decisive offshore strategy”, hoping to divert any fighting away from Taiwan proper to minimize destruction and cost of lives. Hence, greater emphasis was dedicated to the forces that could project power away from Taiwan, to Taiwan Strait's waters or possibly inside the Mainland China. Chen Shui-bian's administration therefore focused on modernizing the means of power projection, i.e. the Air force and the Navy.

In response to increasing threat from the PLA, the DPP also strongly advocated procurement of some offensive articles in order to improve Taiwan's ability of deterrence and, in the case of a conflict, to achieve the capability of second-strike, which could destroy or paralyzing PLA's war-fighting capability,¹² with the aim of slowing down Beijing forces' progress and thus gaining time for other powers, primarily the U.S., to come to Taiwan's aid.

Defense Transformation

According to the 2006 National Defense Report, “defense transformation is the only solution to a breakthrough in the gradual military imbalance across the Strait”¹³. Such transformation includes emphasis on reorganizing the defense apparatus, professionalization of the defense forces, modernizing military education, doctrine, and training, and obviously procurement of modern high-tech weapons.

The National Defense Law and the National Defense Organization Law, enacted in 2002 and 2003 respectively, represent the important landmark in Taiwan's defense construction and orientation.

¹² Chase, Michael S.: “Defense Reform in Taiwan. Problems and Prospects.” In: Asian Survey, May/June 2005, Vol. 45, No. 3, p. 365.

¹³ 2006 National Defense Report, p. 19.

First, the new legislation put emphasis on force nationalization. Taiwan's military forces had evolved as the forces of the KMT. The National Defense Law stipulated that the armed forces of the ROC belong to the country.¹⁴

Second, the National Defense Organization Act brought about a major overhaul of the defense policy-making and command structure, putting civilian leadership in charge of the military forces, and imposing public oversight over the armed forces. The law augmented the role of the minister of national defense, putting him into the second spot in the chain of command, just below the commander-in-chief (the president). The law also stipulated that the minister must be a civilian.¹⁵ According to the law, the ministry of national defense gained broad responsibilities:

“The Ministry of National Defense is responsible for all matters related to national defense; it should develop professional capacity in military administration, command, and supply, put forth suggestions for national defense policy according to national defense needs, and set military strategy.”¹⁶

The General Staff, which was previously responsible for planning, defense policies, procurement, etc. lost its overwhelming influence by being subordinated to the minister. The law explicitly states: The duties of the General Staff headquarters include *“to serve as the command aides to the Minister and to coordinate joint command of the three services”¹⁷*. Chief of General Staff has the responsibility for the command tasks of directing the military forces by order of the Minister; he is not responsible directly to the president as before the reorganization.

Third, the defense laws introduced a concept of rationalization and streamlining of the defense bureaucracy. New departments responsible for strategic planning (Strategic Planning Department) and procurement (Bureau of Armaments and Acquisition) were created, thus concentrating strategy formulation and procurement at the ministry level, leading towards a more rational procurement policy, avoidance of corruption as well as contributing to the general effort of building joint forces.

¹⁴ Damon Bristow: “The Changing of the Guard.” In: Taiwan Review, January 10, 2003. Available at: <http://taiwanreview.nat.gov.tw/site/Tr/ct.asp?xItem=893&CtNode=119> (25.1.2008).

¹⁵ Article 12 of the National Defense Law.

¹⁶ Article 11 of the National Defense Law.

¹⁷ Article 13 of the National Defense Law.

Fourth, the defense laws established a goal of reducing the size of the armed forces with the vision of transforming the military from a conscript-based force into professional force. While the size of the military forces has been progressively reduced,¹⁸ no major progress was achieved on building professional forces.

Last, but not least, the LY was given the power of oversight over the military forces. Besides approving the military budget, the legislators can question the minister of national defense on various military issues as well as they can invite military experts to testify on important defense matters, thus increasing the responsiveness of the military apparatus to public scrutiny.

Problems and Challenges

Taiwanese military forces face numerous problems and challenges, which need to be overcome. The following list is not all-inclusive.

1. Taiwan's Status and Problems of Procurement

Since most of the countries in the world want to maintain friendly relationship with the PRC, only few recognize Taiwan as a sovereign state. Given the lack of official relations, it has therefore become increasingly difficult for Taiwan to purchase modern weapons from other countries. Currently, the U.S. is in fact the only supplier of weapons to the Taiwan's military. The U.S. and Taiwan senior representatives hold regular Monterey talks (strategic level) as well as annual Defense Review Talks (policy level) to discuss various issues, on basis of which future procurement of weapons may be debated.¹⁹ The U.S. and Taiwan have also developed intense military-to-military relationship, which leads to an assessment of Taiwan's capabilities and needs, upon which, again, future arms sales may be determined.

The inability to purchase weapons from other countries as well as the high cost of purchasing weapons from the U.S. has led Taiwan to emphasize indigenous production

¹⁸ ROCA underwent the largest force reduction due to shortening the length of the compulsory service to 12 months in 2008. Between 2005 and 2008, the size of the army of the ROC was decreased from 200,000 to 130,000. See Report to Congress on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China, Department of Defense, 2005 and 2008.

¹⁹ Alexander Chieg-Cheng Huang: „U.S.-Taiwan Security Relations in the New Century.“ Paper presented at the Conference on New Developments in Asia Pacific and the World. Tamkang University, May 9, 2006.

(or production under license). Starting in the 1980s, after termination of the U.S.-Taiwan mutual defense treaty, Taiwan started to produce its own Indigenous Defense Fighter (IDF). Currently, domestic research and development of various weapons systems, such as missiles²⁰ or frigates, receives special attention, because it is regarded as a cheaper and less cumbersome way of strengthening Taiwan's defense.

Taiwan is not only facing problems with lack of access to modern equipment. By not being able to participate in various multinational exercises and military-to-military exchanges with other countries, it has limited access to sharing knowledge about other forces' experience with RMA, transformation, modern warfare, doctrine-development, etc. This setback has been visible particularly in Taiwan's efforts to build inter-operable joint forces.²¹ Building an effective C4ISR system²² is imperative for Taipei, however, with Taiwan's lack of access to expertise and technology from other countries, it has been difficult.

2. Identity crisis of the military forces

Majority of the current Taiwan's officer corps was trained in the era of the KMT control over the armed forces. Many still feel loyal to the KMT, primarily due to receiving education in KMT-run military schools.²³ Consequently, high number of officers is distrustful of the DPP, especially due to its support of independence, perceiving the DPP's stance as too aggressive, possibly drawing Taiwan into a conflict. At the same time, some officers blame the DPP administration for decreasing the military budget, thus making Taiwan's military forces weaker. This has been a case of the ROC Army, which has suffered from the largest cuts both in troops and budget with the strategic shift to offshore operations, which favor the air force and navy.²⁴

²⁰ Such as Tien Kung and Hsiung Feng missiles, which were designed and produced by Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology, or Cheng Kung class frigate, built by China Shipbuilding Company.

²¹ Interviews in Taiwan, summer 2007.

²² C4ISR system, called Po Sheng, has been developed with U.S. assistance. Interviews in Taipei, summer 2007.

²³ Interviews in Taipei, summer 2007.

²⁴ Interviews in Taipei, summer 2007.

3. Defense Organization & Lack of Professionals

Since the defense apparatus reorganization, the civilian leadership of the MND still searches for its ways to get along with the military establishment. The Ministry suffers from a major problem of lack of professionals, as evidenced by the fact that the minister of defense is usually a retired military officer. Most importantly, there are few specialists in modern military needs, such as military planning, policy development, force integration – all of these are crucial skills necessary to craft a viable, capable, and effective national security strategy and defense policies. Lack of professionals subsequently leads to confusing procurement, overlapping or incoherency.²⁵

Under these circumstances, Taiwan has not been so far able to produce a coherent National Security Strategy, one that would be comparable to the National Security Strategy of the United States.²⁶ Lack of comprehensive strategy then has a negative impact on procurement, defense policy and strategy planning.

4. Service Quality

So far, the vision of professionalization of Taiwan's military forces has not been implemented. However, the force based on conscription where the length of the mandatory service keeps decreasing (to currently twelve months) has rather a negative impact on the quality of the force. First, twelve-month service is simply not enough to teach the conscripts to operate effectively the high-tech weapons, increasingly in demand by the Taiwanese forces. Second, as criticized by many²⁷, given the low pay the conscripts receive, they have no motivation to actually serve in the military. Many men therefore search for ways to avoid the service.

5. Impact of Democratization on the Military

The impact of Taiwan's democratization on military forces can be clearly demonstrated by the pulling and hauling around the Taiwan's defense budget, since the

²⁵ Interviews in Taipei, summer 2007.

²⁶ Interviews in Taipei, summer 2007.

²⁷ E.g. Wendell Minnick, Jane's Defense's correspondent on military forces in Asia. See Minnick, Wendell: "The year to fear for Taiwan: 2006." In: Asia Times, April 10, 2004. Available at: <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/FD10Ad02.html>. (23.3.2008).

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Legislative Yuan has increasingly become an important player in defense due to its oversight over the MND's budget.

On one hand, there were positive outcomes of LY involvement: the legislative oversight imposed greater control of the procurement process, thus increasing transparency and preventing, to some extent, corruption. However, on the other hand, partisanship often politicized military issues at the expense of national security.

Particularly since 2004, when Taiwan had to cope with divided government, every issue debated on the floor of the LY was perceived through the prism of tensions between the KMT and the DPP and even the decisions about national security were understood as zero-sum game between the two major parties. At the same time, the KMT legislators did not trust President Chen, who – as the president of the ROC - enjoyed unprecedented power over national security. Last but not least, legislators often lack expertise in defense matters and tend to base their decision on public opinion instead.

Political bickering and infighting had blocked the approval of President Bush's arms sales package offered to Taiwan in 2001. The opposition parties, the Kuomintang and the People's First Party (PFP) clearly voiced their unwillingness to approve the special budget requested by the MND and the DPP for the arms purchase. The pan-Blue camp's primary arguments were: the price of the arms package was too high, possibly exaggerated; Taiwan's purchase of the U.S. weapons would only accelerate the arms race^{28 29} across the Taiwan Strait while not helping to increase substantially Taiwan's capability of self-defense. There was a belief that even the purchase of the offered weapons would not help Taiwan's self-defense against the rising power of the PLA. At the same time, the opposition parties argued that Taiwan could not have afforded to

²⁸ Here, KMT pointed out to China's reaction to the U.S. arms sales offer – PRC ordered 8 new Kilo-class diesel submarines from Russia, which shall be delivered in the period of 2005 – 2007. At the same time, PRC produces its own Song-class diesel submarines and is expected to launch its on nuclear power attack submarines of the second generation.

²⁹ Some scholars dismiss the threat of arms race. Fu S. Mei, Director of U.S. based Taiwan Security Analysis Center, points out that the risks of arms race in the Taiwan Strait are minimal to the U.S. "*It is debatable whether Taiwan would be causing an arms race or is merely responding in a measured, sensible fashion to a rapidly broadening gap in military imbalance attributable to Beijing's aggressive military posture.*" See *Testimony of Fu S. Mei*, Director of U.S. based Taiwan Security Analysis Center, Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission on Taiwan Straits Issues and Chinese Military-Defense Budget. September 15, 2005. Available at: http://www.uscc.gov/hearings/2005hearings/written_testimonies/05_09_15wrts/mei_fu_wrts.htm. (31.12.2005)

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spend so much money on defense because the economic situation of Taiwan did not allow for such an extensive spending.

Resulting from the Legislative Yuan 2004 elections, the KMT and the PFP succeeded in obtaining majority of the seats in the Legislative Yuan, and thus could successfully obstruct the special budget, referred to the legislature in 2004, claiming that even the people of Taiwan were against the purchase.³⁰

The opposition of the pan-Blue camp forced the MND to gradually scale down the size of the special budget from \$18,5 billion to \$10,3 billion and choose only some of the offered systems. In 2007, the administration decided to include the weapons procurement budget in the regular budget. This finally led to some agreement, greatly facilitated by Ma Ying-jeou,³¹ in June 2007. After a long debate and infighting on the LY floor³² and after mounting criticism³³ by the U.S., the legislature finally approved large portion of the proposed purchase: P-3C ASW Aircraft and upgrade plan for Patriot PAC-2.³⁴ The budget also allocated resources for a feasibility study for submarine purchase and Patriot PAC-3,³⁵ while F-16 C-D budget was frozen after the U.S. did not approve the deal.³⁶

Subsequently, in December 2007, the LY approved the 2008 budget, which included other defense items – four packages of PAC-3 (from original 6 requested by MND), funds for mass production of Hsiung Feng II-E missiles (approval of two-thirds of the frozen budget of NT\$3,8 billion, thus sustaining stable technical development).

³⁰ Taiwanese public is divided over spending money on the military procurement: 43.1 % are against the idea of buying weapons from abroad, while 42.5 approve of the idea. See *Survey on Taiwanese Public Perception of Cross-strait Security*. Commissioned by Business Weekly, executed by the Election Study Center of NCCU.

³¹ See “Legislature Finally Passes U.S. Arms Budget.” In: Taipei Times, June 16, 2007, p. 1.

³² The LY voted on the budget measure more than 60 times.

³³ The U.S. criticized Taiwan for postponing the approval of the military budget and thus free-riding on U.S. defense commitments to Taiwan. See e.g. Cato Institute’s Ted Galen Carpenter: Taiwan’s Defense Budget: How Taipei’s Free Riding Risks War. Policy Analysis, Cato Institute, September 13, 2007. Concerns also came from official circles. In this respect, see e.g. Statement by Stephen Young, director of the AIT, during press conference on May 3, 2007. See: <http://www.ait.org.tw/en/news/officialtext/viewer.aspx?id=2007050301> (28.2.2008).

³⁴ “Legislature Finally Passes U.S. Arms Budget.” In: Taipei Times, June 16, 2007, p.1.

³⁵ Washington agreed to the two-stage plan consisting of initial design evaluation and construction. According to Washington, US\$360 million (NT\$11.7 billion) would be required for the three-year first stage; the LY approved only 1/6 of the plan. See Soong Hseik-wen and Wang Jyh-perng: “Legislature Makes One Small Step for Defense.” In: Taipei Times, December 25, 2007, p. 8.

³⁶ The purchase of submarines offered in Bush’s package is rather a complicated matter. The U.S. no longer produces such submarines and it is not therefore clear who would design and produce such submarines for Taiwan. Obviously, alienating China represents major concern of possible producers. Taipei even proposed that the submarines could be built in Taiwan. At the same time, Washington requests a down payment before actually asking possible manufacturers to come up with a design.

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The LY also approved additional resources for P-3C Orion.³⁷ This defense purchase finally reversed the decrease of Taiwan's defense expenses, very much criticized by conservative China scholars and politicians.

The size of the military budget itself represents one of the biggest challenges to the Taiwan's defense forces. Subject to LY approval, often object of political bickering as shown above, and constrained by the economic downturn in Taiwan – it has shown rather decreasing tendency, which has only been reversed in the last 2 years. Decreasing military budget has a negative impact on the procurement as well as on the force quality. Given the generally low pay, ROC's military forces have problems retaining qualified and trained personnel.³⁸ Decreasing budget also has an important impact on infighting between services, which compete among each other for resources from the budget. Both the DPP and the KMT acknowledge the budget problem and therefore have pledged to increase the military spending to 3% of the government's spending.

Major Weapons Procurement Under Chen Shui-bian

Taiwanese experts seem to regard precision strike by the PLA's Second Artillery and PLA's air force (PLAAF) as one of the most possible military campaign scenarios against Taiwan mulled over by Beijing.³⁹ Since the purchase of Su-27 and Su-30 from Russia, the PLAAF has acquired agile and high-performance fighters. The PLAAF, recently focusing on building a flexible force able to engage in an offshore fight, can use precision air strikes against Taiwan's command & control nodes, radar positions, early warning systems, airfields, hangars, strategic resources depots, etc. By these means, Beijing envisions that the ability of Taiwan's leadership to conduct military operations may be reduced or paralyzed, thus causing chaos and subsequent demise of Taiwan.

The PLA has also developed both ballistic as well as land-attack missile capability that can be used against Taiwan. There are more than 1000 M-9 (DongFeng-15) and M-

³⁷ Soong Hseik-wen and Wang Jyh-perng: "Legislature Makes One Small Step for Defense." In: Taipei Times, December 25, 2007, p. 8.

³⁸ Typical example being Air Force pilots who rather leave the military forces and work for commercial airliners. This phenomenon is heavily criticized as Taiwanese pilots receive high-quality training, often in Luke Air Force Base near Phoenix. Taiwanese military pilots are regarded as highly capable even by the U.S.

³⁹ Interviews in Taipei, summer 2007.

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11(DongFeng11) missiles deployed on the coast of the Fujian province, which can be launched in a rather short time and can reach Taiwan in about 10 minutes.⁴⁰ These missiles would most probably target strategic points in Taiwan, such as governmental offices, command & control nodes, etc., while trying to avoid causing major destruction of population and economic infrastructure.

Taiwan, pledging never to go nuclear, can hardly compete with the PRC's missile deployment. Still, Taipei has dedicated a particular attention to preventing the PLA from achieving a rapid defeat of Taiwan during first strike by hardening high-value targets, camouflage, installing decoys, increasing the survivability of the command and control system as well as of national and military information infrastructure, building early warning systems⁴¹ and anti-missile defense capability. In this respect, acquisition and upgrade of the Patriot PAC-2 and the installation of PAC-3 in the future (purchased in 2007) represents an important boost to Taiwan's defense.

With the emphasis on active deterrence, the DPP administration also put emphasis on development of a number of missiles, which could be used to punish the PLA in case of an attack. By in fact developing a second-strike capability, Taipei hopes to create a strong deterrent to Beijing. The controversial program, opposed primarily by the KMT, includes indigenous production of missiles, which could be used against targets on the Mainland.⁴² Taiwan has also indigenously developed surface-to-air missiles (Tien Kung) as well as anti-ship missiles (Hsiung Feng).

In an important step towards streamlining the chain of command and improving the rapid response, all Taiwan's missiles were moved under unified Missile Defense Command, which was created in January 2004.

Related to the possibility of strikes against targets in the PRC, Taiwan increases efforts of reconnaissance capabilities. Taiwan has expressed interest in placing own military satellite in space, which could provide valuable information for enhancing the air defense. At the same time, Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology dedicated

⁴⁰ According to war-game simulation carried out in Taiwan. Interviews in Taiwan, summer 2007.

⁴¹ E.g. deployment of 4 Northrop Grumman E-2T Hawkeye aircrafts in 1995. In 2005, two more Hawkeys were added.

⁴² Information about this program is scarce. However, it is speculated that Taiwan's Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology's Hsiung Feng program develops variants of the anti-ship missile with range between 300-500 km. Such missile could be used against land targets.

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effort to constructing an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) for reconnaissance, and possibly for attack purposes.⁴³

In 2005, the U.S. approved purchase of new early warning radar (EWR), which will be deployed in 2008 or 2009. The radar will greatly increase Taiwan's capability of detecting and tracking ballistic and cruise missiles as well as surface ships.⁴⁴ Some however raised doubts about the effectiveness of the early warning systems, pointing towards the short distance across the Taiwan Strait.⁴⁵

Taiwan has been working hard on building its own C4ISR system to improve its command, control, computers, communication, surveillance, reconnaissance system. The 'Po Sheng' system integrates the command, control, and communications systems of all the three services, thus increasing rapid response and at the same time hardening the security of the command system.

Taiwan has also set up Information and Electronic Warfare Command to counteract China's EW and IW. The duties include protection of Taiwan's networks, preventing enemy infiltration, sabotage, lockdowns, and espionage.⁴⁶

The PLA has also been increasingly focusing on strengthening its naval power. Attempts to build blue-water navy represent threat not only to Taiwan, but also to Taiwan's ally, the U.S. Blue-water navy capability would provide the PLA with important ability of area-denial and force projection. So far, Taiwan has been expecting the PLA's attack from one direction only; hence most of the Taiwan's defense installations are built along the Western and Northwestern coast of the island. With PLA acquiring advanced refueling capability or possibly an aircraft carrier, Taiwan would be under a grave threat of encirclement. Blockade thus represents another potential scenario of PLA's intimidation of Taiwan, one for which the ROC military forces are not well prepared.⁴⁷

⁴³ Chung Shyang II was revealed in 2005. See Taiwan wants to arm tactical UAV. Available at: <http://www.flightglobal.com/articles/2005/08/23/201115/taiwan-wants-to-arm-tactical-uav.html> (27.2.2008).

⁴⁴ „New Radar System Expected for 2008.“ In: Taipei Times, April 16, 2004, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Interviews in Taipei, summer 2007.

⁴⁶ 2006 National Defense Report, p. 117.

⁴⁷ Interviews in Taiwan, summer 2007.

In 2000-2001, the U.S. Department of Defense carried out a review of Taiwan's defensive capabilities and concluded that it was necessary to boost the islands capabilities in order to maintain the balance with the PLA. On the basis of DoD's recommendation, in 2001, President Bush approved the largest package of military arms sales offered to Taiwan since Reagan administration. The package was worth 18,6 billion U.S. dollars⁴⁸ and included mostly articles, which upgrade Taiwan's naval capabilities:

- 8 diesel submarines,⁴⁹
- 12 P3-C Orion anti-submarine warfare aircraft (ASW),
- 54 Mark-48 ASW torpedoes,
- 44 Harpoon submarine-launched anti-ship cruise missiles,
- 12 MH-53 minesweeping helicopters.
- 4 decommissioned Kidd-class destroyers capable of simultaneously conducting anti-air, anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare.^{50 51}

With the exception of Kidd-class destroyers, which were purchased without larger opposition and commissioned in 2005, other systems on the list were tensely contested in the Legislative Yuan. It has already been mentioned that LY moved on most of the weapons systems on the list in 2007.

KMT Government – Difference in Vision?

So far, the KMT did not put forward a substantially different vision of Taiwan's military force transformation and defense strategy from the DPP. The most distinct difference between the two parties involves the perception of deploying missiles with

⁴⁸ To be phased over the period of 10 years

⁴⁹ The submarines seem to be the most contested part of the package. Submarines would greatly enhance Taiwan's ability to attack China's ships anywhere in the South East Asia waters. Taiwan would thus be prepared to face challenge in the case PRC decided to launch a blockade of Taiwan. The problem with the submarines is that they are rather old – they are not produced anymore in the U.S., and thus they seem to be overpriced. Taiwan would be interested in more modern submarines, which however the U.S. refused to sell in compliance with the TRA's promise to sell weapons of defensive character only, while the new models of submarines would be offensive.

⁵⁰ Kan, Shirley A.: Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990. Congressional Research Service, May 27, 2005. Available at: <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/weapons/RL30957.pdf>, p. 6. (31.12.2005)

⁵¹ Taiwan also requested purchase of Aegis combat system, Apache attack helicopters, and Abrams battle tanks. Their sale to Taiwan was not approved by Bush administration.

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Remarks prepared for the EATS Conference, Prague, April 2008

offensive capability.⁵² While the DPP emphasizes the importance of missiles capable of striking targets in the Mainland China, the KMT is more reserved in this respect. Otherwise, Ma's 'Hard ROC' strategy focuses on strengthening Taiwan's defense in order to withstand Mainland's first strike and thus raise the price Beijing would have to pay for resorting to force. Emphasis is also put on winning the first battle, thus disrupting the tempo of PLA's operations to prevent Beijing from achieving rapid victory and in effect gaining more time for international intervention:

“We will harden up our defense to an extent that is unshakable with our high morale, undefeatable by blockade, unoccupiable under invasion, and uncrackable with our sustained resistance. When a war is unavoidable, we will effectively use our advantages in force, space, and timing. We will attempt to win the first stage of conflict through rapid employment of forces, disturbing the enemy's tempo of operations, and gain more time for international assistance.”⁵³

Similarly to the DPP, the KMT pledges to support the idea of all-volunteer forces, generally agrees with the need of acquiring advanced weapons from abroad as well as strengthening the research and development of weapons systems that could be produced domestically, as we could have seen in 2007 when the LY, controlled by the KMT, approved resources for arms purchases from the U.S. as well as for indigenous research and procurement. Just like the DPP, KMT supports raising the defense budget to at least 3%.

⁵² KMT: Ma/Siew White Paper on Defense Policy. A New Military for a Secure and Peaceful Taiwan. September 2, 2007. Available at: <http://www.kmtnews.net/client/eng/ReadFile.php?IDKey=u82mxg91> (27.2.2008).

⁵³ Michael S. Chase: The Kuomintang Security Policy and Taiwan's 2008 Legislative and Presidential elections. In: China Brief, Jamestown Foundation, Volume VII, Issue 23, December 13, 2007.

Conclusion

The DPP administration rose to power with a clear commitment of transforming the Taiwan's military forces. The results have been mixed. We must give credit to the DPP administration for successfully initiating and carrying out the organization reform of the military forces, including the nationalization, introducing civilian leadership and public (legislative) oversight, streamlining the chain of command, decreasing the size of the force and outlining the vision of future professionalization. At the same time, Taiwan's military forces have been able to uphold its position vis-à-vis the PLA due to procurement of modern state-of-the-art weapons systems. Most importantly, the DPP's concept of "effective deterrence, active defense", more active posture, and decisive offshore strategy suits much better the strategic situation of Taiwan at the beginning of the 21st century.

However, the vital reform has been facing serious challenges, as many visions have only been half-implemented, facing obstacles on the political scene as well as within the armed forces. Economic decline and subsequent need to trim down the budget, lack of experts and international networking presented a serious hindrance to the reform as much as the political infighting caused by the failure of the administration to reach a consensus on the national security strategy. These problems will continue to present a challenge for the next administration. However, the KMT, which was often opposing or blocking Chen's administration on military issues purely for political reasons, seems to be well aware of the need to continue the transformation of the military forces. After winning over the control of both the legislative and executive branch of the ROC's government, we may in fact expect the KMT to continue, with slight modifications, the trends established during the DPP administration. Hopefully, there will be less tensions resulting in successful crafting of a comprehensive national defense strategy, which will become the guiding principle of the entire transformation. The most important goal for any ROC's administration, whether it is the DPP or KMT, is to make clear that Taiwan is firmly committed to its defense, which will send a strong signal to the allies as well as adversaries.

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