

## **Beware of Beijing in 2012: forum**

IMPORTANT YEAR: Political science professor Lo Chih-cheng said the KMT was cooperating with China to exclude international intervention in the Taiwan Strait

By Ko Shu-ling, *Taipei Times*, Tuesday, Dec 30, 2008, Page 3

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Beijing is likely to expedite the process of unification with Taiwan and possibly try to achieve the goal by 2012, an expert attending a cross-strait forum said yesterday.

Lai I-chung (賴怡忠), an executive member of the pro-localization Taiwan Thinktank and former director of the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) International Affairs Department, said that 2012 is a year important to Taiwan's survival.

As Chinese President Hu Jintao (胡錦濤) and Premier Wen Jiabao (溫家寶) are scheduled to step down, they are likely to do something to leave a historic legacy and set the course for their successors, Lai said.

Also, President Ma Ying-jeou's (馬英九) four-year term will expire and Beijing is likely to make an effort to help Ma win the election. If Ma loses, Beijing would speed up its unification efforts, Lai said.

Washington is preoccupied with financial and other domestic problems, Japan is suffering from political instability and India has switched its concerns to internal problems, so the US is likely to pay little attention to the Taiwan Strait as long as it obtains Beijing's assurance that its interests in the region were not under threat, Lai added.

If Beijing's economy continues to deteriorate, its leaders are likely to adopt drastic measures to divert public attention, Lai said. Possible scenarios include creating conflict or even launching a military assault under the pretext of a crackdown on an uprising in the wake of Ma's election defeat.

Lai made the remarks during a forum organized by **the Institute for National Development** in Taipei yesterday morning. The forum was held to analyze the just concluded economic forum between the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Lai said Taiwan was facing an “immediate and present danger,” the prelude of a historic tragedy, such as the 1938 annexation of Austria into Greater Germany by the Nazis.

The impact of such a possibility in 2012 far outweighs the repercussion of the KMT-CCP forum, Lai said.

Soochow University political science professor Lo Chih-cheng (羅致政) said that Ma’s China policy had pushed the nation toward unprecedented peril and that Beijing’s Taiwan strategy was to lay the groundwork for de jure unification with Taiwan.

Among the problems Taiwan faces, Lo said, was Beijing and Taipei’s teaming up to “internalize” cross-strait relations. Second, the KMT-CCP economic forums are moving toward setting the agenda for cross-strait negotiations.

Taipei is cooperating with Beijing to exclude international intervention in the Taiwan Strait and make the Taiwan question China’s internal affair, Lo said. As the Ma administration thinks the shortcut to the international community is through Beijing, it has pinned all the nation’s hopes of participation in international organizations on Beijing’s goodwill.

“Taiwan must learn a lesson from Hong Kong,” Lo said. “If no one in Taiwan or the international community can rein in the Ma administration’s determination to unify with China, Taiwan will be doomed because we are entering a danger zone.”