

# **CRISIS DETERRENCE IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT**

**Douglas McCready**

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## PREFACE

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In this paper, Chaplain (Colonel) Douglas McCready examines the most volatile issue of the complex relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China—Taiwan. He considers the situation in terms of deterrence theory and its application across cultures. Colonel McCready looks at the perceptions and misperceptions of the involved parties; and their interests, capabilities, and possible intentions. He concludes with courses of action and ways to increase the likelihood of successful U.S. deterrence in the Taiwan Strait.

STEVEN METZ  
Director of Research  
Strategic Studies Institute

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DOUGLAS MCCREADY, an Army Reserve colonel, is a chaplain currently assigned to the 104th Area Support Group in Germany. He received a direct commission in the Chaplain Corps in 1982. Chaplain McCready is a Special Forces veteran of Vietnam and has served as a chaplain from battalion to installation level. He was a Senior Service College Fellow at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Chaplain McCready has published articles in a number of scholarly and professional journals, including *Interdisciplinary Humanities* and the *Christian Scholar's Review*. His "Learning from Sun Tzu" was published in the May/June issue of *Military Review*. He is the author of *Jesus Christ for the Modern World*, published by Peter Lang, and has contributed to the *Dictionary of Historical Theology* and *Historians of the Christian Tradition*. Colonel McCready graduated from the University of Pennsylvania with degrees in Chinese studies and international relations. He holds an M.Div. from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, an M.A. and Ph.D. from Temple University, and studied at the University of Tübingen. He is a graduate of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.

## ABSTRACT

For more than 50 years, Taiwan's unresolved international status has been the cause of repeated crises in East Asia. While the parties involved could be willing to live with the status quo, the domestic political transformation of Taiwan has called the status quo into question. China, Taiwan, the United States, and Japan have national interests in how the conflict is resolved, and these interests will be difficult to reconcile. By conventional measures, China cannot gain Taiwan by force before the end of this decade. Chinese leaders believe that, by using asymmetrical means, they will be able to overcome the military advantage of the United States and Taiwan. While the United States will be able to delay Chinese action against Taiwan, it is unlikely to be successful at long-term deterrence. Deterrence, as used against the Soviet Union during the Cold War, will not be effective with China without significant modification. The cultural divide affects not only deterrence theory, but also how China and the United States understand and communicate with each other. Crisis deterrence in the Taiwan Strait is unlikely to succeed due to conflicting national interests and several crucial mutual misperceptions.



## CRISIS DETERRENCE IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT

Despite the recent warming of People's Republic of China (PRC)-American relations, the Taiwan Strait retains a great potential for direct U.S. military involvement. Although Taiwan is only one part of the complex relationship between the United States and the PRC,<sup>1</sup> it is the most volatile part. A December 2000 RAND study of foreign policy and national security issues concluded, "Critical differences between Mainland China and Taiwan about the future of their relations make the Taiwan issue the most intractable and dangerous East-Asian flashpoint—and the one with the greatest potential for bringing the United States and China into confrontation in the near future."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, an official of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs wrote in September 2001, "The issue of Taiwan is the most sensitive sore issue in Sino-American relations. And it is the only issue that could derail Sino-American relations in the foreseeable future."<sup>3</sup> These somber conclusions reflect the nearly unanimous view of American and Chinese specialists in Sino-American relations. The concern increases when we consider that China has both nuclear weapons and a primitive but improving intercontinental delivery system. More broadly, "the challenge presented by a rising China is the principal issue facing American policy."<sup>4</sup> Denny Roy puts this into regional perspective:

Taiwan's security problem is Asia's security problem: cross-Strait conflict would disrupt regional trade and force other Asian states to side with or against the People's Republic of China. Taiwan's security problem is also America's: one likely consequence of such a conflict would be unambiguous Chinese opposition to, and corresponding action against, the U.S. military presence in Asia.<sup>5</sup>

The question facing U.S. policymakers is whether they can deter the PRC from its declared willingness to use force to achieve political control over Taiwan. If so, how? If not, what alternative

does the United States have? The challenge facing the U.S. Government is to convince both the PRC and Taiwan to refrain from precipitous action toward unification and independence, respectively. This will be much less difficult with respect to Taiwan than the PRC.

For more than 50 years, the deliberate American policy of strategic ambiguity has successfully deterred both the PRC and Taiwan from major conflict. Domestic developments in both the PRC and Taiwan are requiring all three parties to reevaluate their policies and increasing the likelihood of the use of force by the PRC to gain control over Taiwan. The future success of American deterrence is questionable. The stated American policy that resolution of the conflict, whatever the result might be, must be by peaceful means appears increasingly unlikely and does not adequately address U.S. interest in the region. That the United States can delay Chinese actions is almost certain; that it can indefinitely deter Chinese action is unlikely.<sup>6</sup>

This paper considers the Taiwan situation in terms of deterrence theory and its application across cultures to see under what conditions the PRC might be convinced not to use force to resolve the Taiwan situation to its satisfaction. The author also examines the perceptions and misperceptions of each of the parties involved; their interests, capabilities, and possible intentions; and how the PRC intends to deter U.S. intervention in the Taiwan Strait. An examination of the options available to each party concludes by suggesting the most likely courses of action and ways to increase the likelihood of successful U.S. deterrence in the Taiwan Strait. There is no presumption here that China will soon become a peer competitor to the United States. Chinese decisionmaking and actions regarding Taiwan will be driven by what the PRC—but not necessarily other nations—views as its domestic concerns. Unable to defeat the United States in a direct military confrontation any time in the foreseeable future, China is likely to seek to

develop “niche weapons” and strategies that would make U.S. intervention too difficult or too costly.

The complexity of the Taiwan Strait situation suggests any future American attempt at crisis deterrence will be exceedingly difficult, and success is unlikely unless at least one party to the conflict makes enormous concessions to the others. The tangled relationship involves a combination of deterrence and coercive diplomacy. As the United States seeks to deter Chinese military action and Taiwanese provocation in the Strait, the PRC seeks to deter U.S. intervention and formal Taiwanese independence. China is also seeking to coerce Taiwan to reverse its tentative steps toward formal independence. A dangerous aspect of the relationship is the confrontation between an inconsistent U.S. policy regarding Taiwan and the PRC on one hand, and a PRC that exhibits simultaneous characteristics of paranoia, entitlement, victimization, and arrogance arising out of its history, on the other. This paranoia leads China to view all actions of potential adversaries as directed primarily against China. Its historical self-image as the paramount state in Asia causes China to view the behavior of regional rivals, the United States and Japan, as intended to weaken or marginalize China and deny it its rightful place in the international community.<sup>7</sup> The complexity of China’s self-image can be seen in its simultaneous expectation of being accorded the prestige and authority of permanent membership on the United Nations Security Council with the right to a decisive say on events in Asia, the claim to foreign aid from developed nations, the expectation of the preferential treatment given to developing nations, and opposition to any modification of the United Nations Charter to permit Japan a permanent Security Council seat because this would dilute Chinese primacy as the spokesman for Asian interests.

Both the United States and the PRC see themselves as occupying the moral high ground in their international dealings.<sup>8</sup> This makes compromise and communication difficult because each presumes it is in the right, while the other is acting wrongfully and must be brought around

to its way of thinking. This moral self-image is deeply ingrained in both Chinese and American culture.

The most desirable outcome would be for China to transform into a pluralistic, democratic society where Taiwan could be accommodated and feel comfortable but not necessarily required to integrate politically with the mainland. This is highly unlikely in the short term, so we need to plan now for alternatives. This paper explores a range of alternative courses of action based on the assumption that good crisis management will make a long-term peaceful solution possible.

That the Taiwan Strait is the locus of crisis, how there came to be a state on Taiwan separate from Mainland China, and U.S. involvement in the situation are all matters of recent history. Without a sense of the post-World War II history of the region, nothing else about its potential for crisis will make sense.

## HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

The conflict in the Taiwan Strait involving the United States, the PRC, and Taiwan dates from the early days of the Korean War in 1950. Jurisdictional claims to the island are shrouded in nationalistic myths of the PRC, Taiwan, and their respective international advocates, although China gained control of the island only in the 17th century. The relevant background to the conflict is that Taiwan was a Japanese colony during World War II and had been so since the Japanese victory over China in 1895. Chiang Kai-shek, the wartime leader of China, insisted that the restoration of Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan be included in the 1943 Cairo declaration of Allied leaders. Prior to this, Taiwan does not appear to have figured in the concerns of Mainland Chinese, Nationalist or Communist. Following Japan’s surrender, Nationalist Chinese soldiers occupied the island. Their initially brutal occupation of the island moderated only after American intercession.

As the forces under Mao Zedong successively defeated Nationalist armies during the Chinese Civil War, the Nationalists found themselves by 1950 limited to control of Taiwan, the Pescadores



Islands, and several groups of small islands just offshore of Mainland China. At this point, conquest of Taiwan became a major goal of the Chinese Communists as they sought to bring the civil war to a successful conclusion.<sup>9</sup> In late 1949, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff advised President Harry Truman that Taiwan was strategically important, but warned that the United States was too overextended militarily to defend it.<sup>10</sup> They expected the PRC to invade and conquer the island in late 1950 or early 1951. Some State Department officials, including George Kennan, proposed that the United States take direct control of Taiwan and ask the United Nations to hold a plebiscite on the island to decide its future.<sup>11</sup> They favored distancing the U.S. Government from Chiang Kai-shek and offering Taiwan's population the opportunity for independence or union with the Mainland. This would have required revoking the Taiwan portion of the Cairo Declaration.<sup>12</sup> Events developed too rapidly for this proposal to gain a hearing. Truman's interposition of the U.S. Seventh Fleet between Taiwan and the Mainland in response to the North Korean attack on June 25, 1950, frustrated both PRC invasion plans and alternatives to U.S. support for the Kuomintang on Taiwan. In late 1950, the PRC probably could have invaded Taiwan successfully.

Thus, since 1950, the Taiwan Strait has been a source of international tension. In 1954-55 and 1958, this tension involved military force and the potential for escalation. A 1962 crisis was less serious. Until the U.S. opening to China in 1972, the PRC harassed the offshore islands with artillery fire every other day. After the warming of U.S.-PRC relations, China appeared willing to live with the status quo for decades with relations between the PRC and Taiwan gradually becoming friendlier. The evolution of democracy on Taiwan since 1987, however, has transformed what had been a relatively stable environment once again into a source of regional tension. This time the reason was that Taiwan's move toward democratic government appeared to imply a move toward *formal* independence from the Mainland and a denial of the one-China policy that both the PRC and the Nationalist

government on Taiwan had affirmed since 1949. This led to military confrontation between the PRC and the United States in 1995-96 and periods of tension during the summer of 1999 and in early 2000. Several of these periods of tension had the potential to become large-scale wars, due as much to misperception and miscalculation by one party or another as to conflicting national interests.

This review reveals the stunning complexity of an issue formed from elements of history and geography; the experience of colonialism; a world war; the Cold War; domestic interests in four political entities (United States, PRC, Taiwan, and Japan); and the East Asia-Pacific strategic balance.

The experience of repeated conflict in the Taiwan Strait during the past half century has resulted in a variety of mutual perceptions and misperceptions on the part of each of the political entities involved as they have learned and mislearned the lessons of each conflict. China and Taiwan have sharply different views of Japan's proper international role as a result of their different colonial and World War II experiences. China and Taiwan each have an image of the other that does not fully reflect the history of its development or its aspirations. The PRC ignores the fact that Taiwan has had a separate history and developmental path for more than a century. Both the PRC and the United States view each other through the lens of their participation in the Korean War and handling of the Taiwan Strait crises since 1954. Japan's images of its American ally and Chinese neighbor are based on their words and deeds, particularly during the last 25 years. Some of these perceptions are well-grounded, but others lack substance. Both misunderstanding and lack of understanding can spark a new Taiwan Strait crisis as easily as can irreconcilable national interests. The author will argue that each of these conditions is characteristic of the U.S.-PRC-Taiwan relationship.

Chinese leaders believe that, had the United States not intervened in 1950, they would have successfully invaded Taiwan and concluded their civil war. There remains a residue of bitterness among Chinese leaders toward the United

States dating back to the earliest days of the PRC and even earlier, when the United States sided with the Chinese Nationalists during much of the 1945-49 civil war. This distrust prompted PRC intervention in Korea in late 1950. Despite American assurances to the contrary, PRC leaders viewed the attempted reunification of Korea under the Seoul regime as one part of a concerted American attack on the PRC's continued existence. Believing war between China and the United States was inevitable, PRC leaders decided their best hope lay in choosing the time and place for that war.<sup>13</sup>

## PERCEPTIONS AND MISPERCEPTIONS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Wars result most often from real conflicts of national interest. They may also, and too often do, arise from the misunderstandings and misperceptions between nations. John Stoessinger considers misperception the most important single precipitating factor in the outbreak of war.<sup>14</sup> In many cases, misunderstanding and misperception exacerbate the clash of national interests. The situation becomes more complicated when adversaries have different cultural backgrounds and different histories. During the past 60 years, the United States has been involved in three major Asian wars: with Japan, in Korea with the PRC, and in South Vietnam. In each case, misperceptions held by both sides played a major role. In the Korean case, better understanding and clearer communication between the PRC and the United States might even have averted war between them. Since 1950, China and the United States have confronted each other several times in the Taiwan Strait; misperceptions, misunderstandings, and miscommunication brought the two nations close to war on more than one of those occasions.<sup>15</sup>

This does not mean conflict of national interest is not involved. For China, the United States, Taiwan, and even Japan, the resolution of Taiwan's international status involves important, even vital, national interests. Probably the most dangerous misunderstanding in the entire

conflict scenario is the belief, prevalent in both the United States and China, that the United States has no significant national interest at stake. This mistake alone could cause the two nations to stumble into war in the Taiwan Strait. Therefore, it is imperative that U.S. political leaders define and explain, both to the American public and Chinese decisionmakers, what interests it has, why they are important, and to what extent the United States is prepared to defend them.

What could possibly be so important about Taiwan that U.S. leaders should speak and act as forcefully as they have on several occasions? The United States has a legal commitment under the Taiwan Relations Act to support Taiwan in defending itself against forcible integration into China; it also has a moral obligation going back more than a half century to provide for Taiwan's defense. This moral obligation has only become stronger in the 15 years since Taiwan has taken the path of democracy. American failure to keep its word regarding Taiwan would cause regional allies to doubt U.S. commitment to them. In Japan's case, this might lead to rearmament and even development of a nuclear capability backed up by a long-range missile delivery system. This is in no one's interest, least of all China's. Finally, abandonment of Taiwan would be followed by a decrease of U.S. influence in the Asia-Pacific region and an increase in China's ability to control the sea lines of communication Japan and South Korea need for their economic well-being and domestic stability. Some who do not see Taiwan's democratic society, the security of Japan, and the credibility of American commitments as vital interests, still view conflict in the Taiwan Strait as a danger to the peace and stability of the region. For them, regional peace constitutes a vital American interest.<sup>16</sup> In any case, what happens in the Taiwan Strait is a concern for the United States, which needs to understand and proclaim this interest. Not to do so would weaken whatever ability the United States has to deter China from using military force to gain political control over Taiwan.

In the Taiwan Strait case, the problem of misperception and misunderstanding includes a

difference of cultures and, for the United States, a lack of agreement on what constitutes the relevant Chinese culture. Alistair Iain Johnston has recently challenged the conventional wisdom about China by suggesting that modern Chinese strategic thinking is not simply a repetition of the ancient classics such as Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. Instead, China's strategic culture resembles much more the hard *realpolitik* of western international relations theory with a greater potential for flexibility.<sup>17</sup> Johnston also found the PRC has been much less reluctant to use force in strategic concerns involving territory than have other major powers.<sup>18</sup> This contrasts with the Chinese image (which is promoted by the PRC) of China as a gentle Confucian nation that must be sorely provoked before it will resort to force. Andrew Scobell has taken Johnson's construct a step further in suggesting that China has a dualistic strategic culture comprising Confucian-Mencian and *realpolitik* elements which he calls a "Cult of Defense."<sup>19</sup> In practice, this means that "Chinese elites believe strongly that their country's strategic tradition is pacifist, nonexpansionist, and purely defensive but at the same time able to justify virtually any use of force—including offensive and preemptive strikes—as defensive in nature."<sup>20</sup> Which of these interpretations is correct makes a difference in how the United States should approach the possibility of conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Chinese misperceptions of the world around it are affected by its history of xenophobia, a sense of having been humiliated by the West and Japan, a measure of paranoia, and a sense of cultural superiority (which is not unique to China). No matter which interpretation of Chinese strategic culture is correct, domestic concerns will always influence how it operates in specific situations (especially Taiwan).

Misperceptions come in several varieties. The one that comes most naturally to mind occurs when the other party incorrectly interprets what *we* have said or done. No less serious, although much more difficult for us to understand, is the misperception arising when we communicate with the other party in a way it cannot understand or finds unconvincing because we do not see that

party as it really is. This happens when we fail to understand the other party's culture and history, when our actions and words appear to conflict, or when our message seems unbelievable. The second kind of misperception frequently leads to the first kind. A third kind of misperception involves how each party sees itself. Few nations see themselves as others see them, but they are prone to believe everyone else does see them as they see themselves. Each of these forms of misperception has occurred more than once in the century-and-a-half relationship between China and the United States—the 1949 communist revolution in China only made it more acute.

Those unfamiliar with their adversary's culture often presume their adversary looks at the world and at the issues being contested in the same way they do.<sup>21</sup> They tend to project their own cultural values and historical experiences onto their adversary. In a conflict situation, this means each side misjudges the price its adversary is willing to pay, the suffering it is willing to endure, and what constitutes a compelling deterrent to that adversary. They have difficulty seeing how their actions will affect their adversary domestically, regionally, and internationally. They also believe their own actions are as transparent to their adversary as to themselves and do not understand why their adversary would look for a hidden agenda. They forget people see what they expect to see and interpret the unfamiliar in terms of the familiar. This means they interpret our actions in terms of their expectation, not our intention. People are also prone to see as intentional what in reality is accident, unintended consequence, or just plain muddling through.<sup>22</sup>

Neither the United States nor China has considered sufficiently how the other country views it in terms of their relationship over the past 150 years. Each country knows full well what the other has done to it, but it thinks much less about what it has done or what the other thinks it has done to the other country.<sup>23</sup> Each sees itself in terms of its intentions and interests—which it puts in the best light—not the other country's perceptions and experience of it. This does not mean we need to agree with the other country's

actions or beliefs, only that it is essential we try to understand the other country on its terms. Then we can predict better how it will interpret and respond to our words and actions and craft our messages in a way more likely to be understood by the Chinese in the way we intend them to be understood.

There are at least four areas of mutual misperception whose correction is necessary for peace in the Taiwan Strait. Although such correction will not remove the conflict of national interests involved, it will enable us to see that conflict more clearly. These areas are the nature of the national interest involved, the level of commitment to that interest, the governmental decisionmaking process, and the attitudes that drive each nation's international behavior. American China watchers and Chinese America watchers now have a good sense of the other nation in each of these areas, but they appear to have had limited success in communicating this to their national leadership. Due to the nature of the regime, the problem is greater on the part of Chinese leaders. What makes correcting these misperceptions and misunderstandings so difficult is that people tend to see what they want to see, especially when they have made an investment in that conclusion. One example is the apparent direct correlation between American estimates of Chinese strength and of Chinese intentions: those who see a strong China also see an aggressive China and argue for a policy of containment; those who see a weak China also see a relatively benign China and argue for a policy of engagement.

Chinese leaders appear to have a basic misunderstanding of how the U.S. Government is organized and how it makes policy. Senior Chinese leaders do not appear to understand the balance of power among the branches of government, particularly the limits to presidential authority. They have a hard time understanding American idealism and a political system so complex that even the president cannot ignore special interests.<sup>24</sup> Some of China's America watchers say they understand the process, but appear to have been unsuccessful in explaining

it to the decisionmakers. This means Chinese leaders do not understand that the Taiwan Relations Act directs American policy despite the various communiqués signed by American presidents and Chinese leaders. One Chinese analyst even complained that "many Chinese analysts don't understand the domestic political and bureaucratic motivations" underlying U.S. policy. They see it as a coherent, hostile, anti-China strategy, not a series of ad hoc decisions made in response to competing interests.<sup>25</sup> They may also misinterpret the open debate in the U.S. news media as expressions of U.S. Government policy, particularly the hostile portion. This misperception could lead China into precipitous action in response to what it sees as hostile U.S. intent. Additionally, Chinese leaders appear not to fully appreciate the influence of public opinion on American foreign policy.<sup>26</sup>

Possibly the most dangerous Chinese misperception is the oft-stated belief that the United States lacks the political will to fight despite its clear military superiority. This derives from U.S. interventions in Somalia and Haiti during the 1990s. China's perception is eerily reminiscent of that of some Japanese leaders in 1941, who believed a devastating surprise attack against U.S. forces would destroy the American will to fight without regard to American capacity to ultimately defeat Japan. This is, however, a flawed reading of American history and ignores the war that opened the 1990s, the Persian Gulf War, where the United States was prepared to sustain heavy casualties to evict Iraq from Kuwait. Richard Halloran here comments on this misperception: "A careful reading of U.S. history in the 20th century . . . shows that Americans will fight for causes they understand to be vital to their principles or national interest."<sup>27</sup> Richard Sobol, a Harvard scholar who studies the relationship between public opinion and foreign policy, agrees that the American public is willing to make sacrifices when their leaders make the cost and benefit of a policy clear to them.<sup>28</sup> Should China act on the basis of this misperception, it risks unleashing what some have called the American "crusade mentality," the response that

did occur after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. China also views Taiwan as a “soft” society of people who would sooner flee overseas than fight to defend their island.<sup>29</sup>

This misperception means China views the American will to fight as our weakest link. So it will threaten casualties in an effort to break that will early in any confrontation. One scenario would combine threats of massive casualties with exemplary demonstrations on a third party of the PRC’s ability and willingness to inflict such casualties. The most powerful threat would be one that placed the continental United States at risk.

A source of serious American misunderstanding of China involves the matter of “face.” The United States does not appreciate the impact of its behavior on China’s sense of public honor. Given the great disparity between the two nations’ military power, this can be a serious matter. In 1996, the United States was very slow in appreciating that the Chinese missile tests and coastal war games required some reaction from the United States. When that reaction came, it signaled clearly and overpoweringly that the United States still was supreme in Asian waters. One well-publicized deployment of a carrier battle group and a firm public diplomatic warning would have sufficed. The two carrier battle groups actually employed were overkill—a public humiliation administered to the PRC leadership. Chinese military leaders have vowed this will never happen again. Next time, they intend to have destroyers and naval cruise missiles in place to sink one of the carriers.

Another problem lies in the different ways the United States and China perceive their own and the other’s actions. For example, the United States tends to separate the military and political in such a way that it often ignores the political implications of its military actions. China, however, sees political implications behind every military decision (even when none is intended).<sup>30</sup> In part, this may result from the different relationship that exists between civilians and the military in American and Chinese society. Where the United States mandates for the military a clear

separation from and subordination to the civilian, China has emphasized a close interrelationship between the two.<sup>31</sup>

Chinese have described the most dangerous American misperception as our failure to understand the seriousness of their intent to regain Taiwan. This leads the United States to interpret Chinese warnings as “mere rhetoric,” to conclude China is bluffing, and to underestimate the price China is willing to pay to achieve its aim. It also leads American policymakers to conclude that because China has no reasonable hope of victory, it would not use force against Taiwan since “people don’t start wars they expect to lose.” Chinese leaders respond that, quite to the contrary, Taiwan is such a serious matter of regime legitimacy that any government would sooner fight a war it knows it would lose than allow Taiwan to go its own way unchallenged.<sup>32</sup> Chinese have stated repeatedly that no cost is too great if the issue is political control of Taiwan. In January 2001, a People’s Liberation Army (PLA) senior colonel told a group of visiting American academics that China is willing to suffer a 20- or 30-year setback to its economy in order to gain control of Taiwan.<sup>33</sup> The flip side of this American misperception is China’s failure to recognize that the United States may have interests related to the status of Taiwan no less vital than China’s.

Another crucial difference seems to lie in how the United States and China understand victory. For the United States, victory is measured in military terms. For China, the political and psychological (and moral) are at least as important. This is one of the lessons the United States should have learned from the Vietnam War.

China, with its fundamentally *realpolitik* approach to international relations, does not understand that American foreign policy is an often inconsistent blend of realism, idealism, naiveté, and ad hoc solutions. Instead, they see American behavior as carefully thought out, devious, and always directed toward some strategic interest. For this reason, it was incomprehensible to the Chinese that the United States could have bombed their embassy in

Belgrade by accident. Likewise, U.S. humanitarian intervention in Somalia and Haiti must have some motive beyond helping the sick and starving. China has described NATO intervention in Kosovo, with NATO always described as “U.S.-led,” as a warm-up for intervention in China’s domestic affairs. “The US bombing of Kosovo was upsetting to the Chinese from the beginning because it indicated that the United States was willing to bomb another country for the way it was treating its own people. . . . The Chinese worried that the action signaled that no underlying principle would prevent Americans from bombing China because of the way it was treating Taiwan or Tibet.”<sup>34</sup>

Likewise, the U.S. anti-terrorist campaign put the PRC in an awkward position. To remain on the sideline would hurt China’s international image, but to support the American campaign would mean acquiescing in U.S. involvement in China’s backyard and U.S. intervention in the activities of other sovereign states (the PRC may be the last major supporter of a pure Westphalian concept of the sovereignty of the nation-state). The second aspect of China’s *realpolitik* approach is its belief that the costs to the United States of challenging China in regard to Taiwan are so much greater than any possible gain as to make such a challenge unlikely.<sup>35</sup> Despite this, Chinese America watchers are beginning to believe the United States will intervene in any military confrontation between the PRC and Taiwan.

China’s fixation on a Japanese threat is the one great exception to its realist approach, but given the recent history between the two countries it is understandable and not unique to China among Asian nations. Nonetheless, China has an exaggerated picture of Japanese interest and involvement in the Taiwan area and invariably interprets Japanese actions alone and in conjunction with the United States as threats to Chinese interests and sovereignty. At the same time, it is unable to understand how Japan can interpret threatening Chinese behavior negatively. This reflects a pattern wherein China’s focus on bilateral relations prevents it from seeing how its actions appear to other nations. The 1996

missile firings in the vicinity of Taiwan’s ports are an example of this. China was shocked that countries around the world reacted unfavorably to China’s coercive diplomacy. It had expected that other countries would ignore its effort to punish Taiwan.<sup>36</sup>

Closely associated with this is what Johnston calls Chinese leaders’ failure to understand the security dilemma: “Where a defensive action taken by one status quo actor is interpreted as threatening by another, the second actor then takes what it believes are defensive counteractions that, in turn, are interpreted by the first actor [as threatening].”<sup>37</sup> Although the PRC is not normally considered a status quo actor,<sup>38</sup> Johnston’s point still applies to misperceptions about weaponry by all parties involved in the Taiwan problem, but especially the Chinese, who appear not to understand the unintended impact of their military actions on other parties and are prone to misinterpret those parties’ responses. This was clear in 1997, when Chinese leaders professed shock at Japan’s willingness to establish new security guidelines with the United States (which appear to have been a response to China’s actions against Taiwan) and described them as part of a new U.S.-Japan conspiracy to prevent Chinese control of Taiwan.

A final misperception is China’s failure to understand the history and perceptions of those living on Taiwan. Few Taiwanese have the World War II experience of Mainland Chinese or share their perception of Japan. In fact, many older Taiwanese speak Japanese and have a favorable view of Japan from their colonial experience. Because of the limited extent of cross-Strait dialogue, PRC leaders are predisposed to view apparently innocuous actions and statements by Taiwan’s leaders as covert moves toward independence. The result has been a Chinese loss of patience, setting of time and behavioral limits, and other coercive actions. For almost 40 years, the PRC had been able to deal with its Kuomintang adversaries over the heads of the people of Taiwan. This is no longer possible. Since the late 1980s, native-born Taiwanese have increasingly taken political control from the Mainlanders who

arrived after World War II. Taiwanese public opinion now constrains the options of the island's leaders, but China does not appear to understand or appreciate this new reality (just as it discounts sentiments of the American populace). Taiwanese public opinion is overwhelmingly opposed to union with Mainland China. The PRC has been attempting to work with the opposition parties on Taiwan in circumventing the elected leadership.

### **MISCUES DURING THE 1995-96 TAIWAN STRAIT CRISIS**

The 1995-96 crisis in the Taiwan Strait shows how cumulative misperceptions and miscommunication can create and then exacerbate a crisis. The underlying cause of the crisis was a new practice of Taiwan President Lee Tung-hui dubbed "vacation diplomacy." Lee and other Taiwanese leaders informally visited countries Taiwan lacked diplomatic relations with in order to present Taiwan's story and gain a public forum. Either ignoring or misunderstanding China's sensitivity to these trips, Lee and the nations involved dismissed Chinese objections. The last straw for China was Lee's visit to Cornell University, his alma mater, during which he delivered a speech lauding the achievements of democratic Taiwan. The State Department had assured China Lee would not receive a visa, but Congress saw China as trying to intimidate Taiwan and the United States. It passed overwhelmingly a resolution urging Lee be given a visa and threatened stronger action if the administration didn't comply. China responded by staging two series of missile tests in the sea off Taiwan's two main ports during July and August 1995. This was to show China's displeasure with U.S. actions and teach Taiwan a lesson, said Chinese spokespersons. The United States and other major states showed little response although the test areas were less than 100 miles from the ports and put commercial shipping at risk.

Both Taiwan and the United States failed to understand China's sensitivity about its sovereignty claims over Taiwan. China viewed

"vacation diplomacy" as an attempt by Taiwan's leaders to gain international standing and act as an independent nation. China's anger at American "duplicity" resulted from its inability to understand how the U.S. Government works, especially the relationship between the executive and legislature. U.S. failure to respond vigorously to China's missile diplomacy sent the message to Beijing that the United States wouldn't get involved. That, at least, was how China interpreted American inaction. This would come back to haunt both countries 6 months later.

With Taiwan's legislative elections scheduled for December 1995 and the first open presidential election the following March, China decided to use coercion to discourage Taiwanese voters from supporting pro-independence parties and candidates. The plan included more amphibious exercises in November followed in March by another series of missile tests and combined arms invasion exercises on a Chinese island similar to Taiwanese-held territory. The missile firings were close enough to Taiwan's major ports to affect ship traffic and cause panic in Taipei's financial markets. This time, the United States dispatched two carrier battle groups to the scene to ensure China didn't attack Taiwan. The Chinese were publicly outraged at what they saw as an American overreaction. China was threatening war in order to avoid the need to go to war and expected that the United States would understand this. They were also publicly humiliated because it was evident to all that they could do nothing about the presence of the carriers. The deployment did bolster Taiwan's confidence in U.S. support.

On Taiwan, advocates of independence were running for the legislature and the presidency. They made clear their support for independence without considering how China would respond to such sentiments regarding a subject that, until recently, it had been illegal to discuss on Taiwan. China considered coercion to be a matter solely between itself and Taiwan, somewhat like the relationship between the U.S. Government and Rhode Island. It misread the Clinton administration's inaction of the previous summer

as signaling a lack of interest. China believed the United States would understand the missile tests and invasion exercises posed no immediate threat to Taiwan. It also believed Japan and other regional states would not interpret China's actions as potentially threatening to themselves, even though many of them also had territorial disputes with the PRC. The United States waited too long after China announced its exercises to respond. Following the weak response to the first set of exercises, this delay signaled to Beijing American indifference. When the United States did finally respond, it overreacted by deploying two carrier battle groups. China probably has learned from this crisis that the United States will respond forcefully should China attempt to use overt military force against Taiwan, but if China opts for a less confrontational approach, such as a blockade, the United States will be unsure how and when to react.

If China had plans extending beyond intimidating Taiwan, it certainly got the message not to attempt to implement them. But the American overreaction highlighted China's relative military weakness in contrast to America's ability to operate in the area virtually unimpeded. How close the two nations came to war is debatable, but it is clear that, while the crisis is over, the consequences are not. A series of basic misperceptions, and the actions and communications based on them, led to a crisis that could have ended in war. Clearing away the misperceptions and miscommunications is no guarantee the crisis would not have occurred, but it makes the possibility of crisis less likely and less serious.

Andrew Scobell warns that PRC behavior during the crisis offers four reasons for concern. It reminds us that China is serious about using force to gain control of Taiwan should that become necessary. It warns that China finds the possibility of a preemptive strike against Taiwan attractive.<sup>39</sup> It shows China's preference for using missiles against Taiwan, emphasizing China's development and deployment of these weapons and Taiwan's impotence against them. It also demonstrates a "dangerous lack of clear

communications" between the United States and China. Although each side thought the signals it sent were clear, the other side misinterpreted them.<sup>40</sup>

## INTERESTS

Each of the parties involved—China, Taiwan, the United States, and even Japan—has important national interests at stake in the Taiwan Strait conflict. The situation is complicated because not every party recognizes the intensity or validity of the others' interests. China has stated its interests in terms of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the respect due a major state. In a White Paper issued just before Taiwan's March 2000 presidential election, the PRC listed a number of basic interests including: desire for settlement of the Taiwan issue and reunification of China, affirmation that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China, conviction that resolution of the Taiwan issue is an internal Chinese affair, desire for peaceful reunification, view that use of force is a last resort, position that no one must attempt to change Taiwan's status by referendum, and the U.S. obligation to deal with China and Taiwan on the basis of the Three Communiqués of 1972, 1979, and 1982.<sup>41</sup> China has unacknowledged interests that are no less important than the acknowledged ones. Chinese leaders fear that if they permit Taiwan to become independent, this will provide an incentive for separatist groups in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Mongolia. Taiwan also threatens the Chinese Communist regime because it offers a successful political and economic alternative to the Mainland in a Chinese cultural setting. To achieve what it views as its proper role as the paramount state in Asia, China needs to remove American power and presence from the region. It sees regaining Taiwan as essential to achieving this. China has recently backtracked on its contention that U.S. power is waning, but continues to believe the United States is a state in long-term decline. While China talks about the importance of a multipolar world, it appears to see itself as the preeminent Asian state in that world. China is more like the "Middle Kingdom"



of Chinese history than a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist state. One consequence of this is that having discarded their Marxist ideology, China's communist leaders are increasingly dependent on the theme of national unification to legitimize their rule.

Taiwan's interests seem obvious, but because of the hostile response their open expression would receive from the PRC, they remain muted. Very few residents of Taiwan can remember a time when the island was linked politically to the Mainland (1945-49), and few have familial links to the Mainland. So Taiwan has no real incentive to unite with the Mainland. Taiwan's goal is freedom to continue its development as a democratic society and economically successful state. Anything China might interpret as a move toward independence would jeopardize everything Taiwan has gained because of the likelihood of war, but union would inhibit Taiwan's development even though it would bring peace to the island. Taiwan desires a degree of international recognition and membership in international organizations commensurate with its democracy and economic power, but China opposes both and has been able to enforce this opposition through diplomatic and economic measures. Taiwan faces a conflict between its interests in promoting its status and its survival. Taiwan has the greatest stake in maintaining the status quo, but its slow drift away from China presents the greatest threat to that status quo—and the PRC appears to understand this better than anyone else.

The United States, consistent with its policy of strategic ambiguity, has been vague about the details of its interests in the PRC-Taiwan situation despite the blunt language of President George Bush in April 2001.<sup>42</sup> The December 2000 *National Security Strategy* said a key American security objective in the region is "enhancing stability in the Taiwan Strait by maintaining our 'one China' policy, promoting peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues, and encouraging dialogue between Beijing and Taipei."<sup>43</sup> The statement contains an ambiguity because the United States and PRC do not understand the term "one China" in the

same way. This same document defines vital, important, and humanitarian and other interests. The continued existence of Taiwan's democratic society could be associated with any of the three categories, depending upon how one interprets each level of interest. Few would describe Taiwan itself as a vital national interest, although it might be linked to vital interests. Taiwan's existence as a democratic society is the result of American encouragement, however, so for the United States to acquiesce in any solution to the Taiwan Strait situation that ignores or rejects the views of Taiwan's population would appear to be inconsistent with the stated American goal of promoting democracy around the world.

The 2000 *National Security Strategy* only briefly addressed U.S. commitments to other nations and the importance of maintaining the credibility of these commitments. This credibility is crucial for a successful U.S. foreign policy. As displeased as they are by it, PRC leaders appear convinced the United States is committed to Taiwan's security to the extent that a PRC attack on Taiwan would result in American military intervention. American failure to act would cause allies in the region who have treaty commitments with the United States to reconsider the worth of those treaties.

The recent 2002 *National Security Strategy* plays down the PRC's place in the American strategic outlook. It emphasizes the importance of China's developing into a democratic society, holding up Taiwan (along with South Korea) as an example of the same type of political and economic development the United States would like to see occur in the PRC. The document warns that China's attempt to develop advanced military capabilities is outdated and self-defeating. While the document praises economic/trade relationships and cooperation in fighting international terrorism, it highlights Taiwan as a subject of profound disagreement and reaffirms the U.S. commitment to Taiwan's self-defense.<sup>44</sup>

Soon after passage of the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), Senator Jacob Javits explained his understanding of how the TRA affects American interests and commitments to Taiwan:

I was particularly concerned with other dangers which in fact seemed more realistic than an outright invasion from across the Strait. The language finally adopted in the House-Senate Conference, therefore, referred to U.S. concern for activities which jeopardized not only the security, but also "the social and economic system, of the people on Taiwan."<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, Ralph Clough describes Taiwan as an important economic partner that "has been linked to the United States for many years by a diverse and growing web of interrelationships."<sup>46</sup>

The United States has at least three basic types of interest in how the Taiwan Strait situation is resolved. The United States has been a Pacific power for more than a century. For it to allow some other state to dominate the East Asia-Pacific region is contrary not only to current U.S. policy, but also to American grand strategy since the late 1800s.<sup>47</sup> The United States has security commitments to several key East Asian and Pacific states. It has had a legal and, many would argue, moral obligation to assist Taiwan in defending itself against forcible assimilation by the PRC. Regional states view the United States-Taiwan relationship as a significant commitment; the consequences of U.S. failure to support Taiwan would be more far-reaching than the defeat of South Vietnam in 1975.<sup>48</sup> This could mean that American allies in the region would rethink their relationship with the result that the United States would be marginalized in the region.

It is unclear that the United States would find acceptable even a peaceful assimilation of Taiwan by the PRC. This would provide China with the technology the United States has given Taiwan and that Taiwan has developed itself. It would also project PRC military power eastward into the Pacific through naval and air bases on Taiwan with the potential to control the sea lanes vital to the economies of Japan and South Korea. The United States also has a longstanding "soft" interest in encouraging and supporting the spread of democratic societies. Simply ignoring American idealism is not realistic.<sup>49</sup> Taiwan is an example of democratic transformation while the PRC is not.

Abandonment of Taiwan would contradict values enshrined in America's founding documents. The United States has a stated interest in the peaceful settlement of the conflict between Taiwan and the PRC, but this may not be reconcilable with other U.S. interests. For first-term presidents, the bottom line may be domestic: "Any US President hoping for a second term cannot stand by and let China seize Taiwan."<sup>50</sup>

Japan also has interests in the situation. It wants to retain its relationship with the United States without antagonizing China. Any obligation to provide basing or logistical support for U.S. assistance to Taiwan could result in military retaliation and certainly economic retaliation. Refusal to assist the United States, however, could be the end of the mutual security relationship. Japan also has an interest in China's not becoming so powerful that it could threaten Japanese security. This includes the ability to control the sea lanes east of Taiwan that are vital to the Japanese economy. Balancing these interests will require Japan to walk a fine line. This is especially the case because the Japanese body politic has a strong pacifist element. Moreover, the countries of East and Southeast Asia have unpleasant memories of the Japanese occupation during World War II.

There is a clear conflict among the interests of the parties involved. The danger inherent in this is that the parties do not fully recognize or acknowledge the interests of the others. China does not believe U.S. interests relating to Taiwan are sufficient to justify it in going to war. The United States is skeptical about China's territorial claim, may not fully appreciate its regime survival concern, and probably has concerns about how resolution of the Taiwan situation would enhance China's standing as a rising power.

## CAPABILITIES

Most studies of the Taiwan Strait situation focus on the relative military capabilities of the PRC and Taiwan (and sometimes the United States). This is a necessary task because intentions and capabilities are related, but by itself it is

misleading. The relationship between capabilities and intentions is mutual, with each influencing the other, but neither determining the other. Because different viewers evaluate capabilities differently, what we see as capabilities do not necessarily limit our adversary's intentions. In the Taiwan Strait case, this comparison usually leads to the evaluation of a conventional military confrontation. This is particularly true with respect to the PRC. But, as the United States learned to its chagrin in Vietnam, military capability is not always the key factor for engaging in or winning a war.

The PRC has stated its desire to complete the national reunification that would signal the end of China's civil war. China would prefer to settle the Taiwan conflict by negotiation, but failing that is willing to resort to force to gain its end. Chinese leaders have said repeatedly that they would go to war rather than allow China to be permanently divided. That they might not win such a war does not preclude their use of force.<sup>51</sup> For domestic reasons, China appears willing to use force even when defeat is certain. Most western analysts find this incomprehensible, but they shouldn't. In doing so, they impose their sense of rationality and sense of values on the Chinese leadership, which may have its own reasons for reaching a different conclusion. There are several precedents for this "irrational" course of action. In 1941, because every other option seemed worse than war, Japan initiated a war against the United States that it doubted it could win. Japan's leaders had concluded the nation's survival was at stake.<sup>52</sup> In 1973, the Arab states attacked Israel although they realized Israel was militarily more powerful than they were. Achieving surprise, they almost won, but they understood a military defeat could still be a political victory. China's perspective appears little different.

China intends to claim what it sees as its proper place in the region and the world. It has not yet explained what this would mean for China, other regional states, or the international community. It would appear to require that China both exercise sovereignty over Taiwan and seriously weaken or remove altogether American

influence in the East Asia-Pacific region.

The difficulty in planning for a Taiwan Strait crisis lies in the measure of disagreement among U.S. analysts about China's capabilities, intentions, goals, and strategy. Key areas of disagreement include the PRC's ultimate regional and international goals and where Taiwan fits into them, whether the PRC and the United States are on an inevitable collision course in East Asia, whether the PRC will be subtle or heavy-handed in its dealings with Taiwan, how much the PRC is willing to pay to gain control of Taiwan, and the PRC's willingness to use nuclear weapons to achieve its goals.

Comparisons of the military capability of the PRC and Taiwan usually begin with the major weapons systems each side has on hand or expects to receive from an arms supplier. They also cover topics the parties mention in their doctrine or public statements (e.g., information warfare, special operations). Only occasionally do the comparisons probe behind the numbers to ask if the military has integrated the various weapons systems into its force, if there are sufficiently trained personnel to maintain, operate, and support the systems, if all the various systems can be employed in the Taiwan area, and what other threats or responsibilities the military must be prepared to handle.<sup>53</sup> Questions about the ability of the military to engage in joint operations and concerns about command and control reflect unfavorably upon the military capability of both the PRC and Taiwan. The 2000 Department of Defense report to Congress on Taiwan and the PRC listed significant U.S. intelligence gaps regarding logistics, maintenance, and training of both PRC and Taiwan militaries.<sup>54</sup> In a study prepared for the 2002 Commission on the United States and China, Michael Pillsbury declared knowledge of PRC and Taiwanese training, logistics, command and control, doctrine, special operations, and mine warfare to be U.S. intelligence shortfalls.<sup>55</sup> Far more important than how these militaries function on a regular basis in peacetime is their capability to increase their tempo in a combat environment and maintain that operational tempo for the duration of a war.

Not only does capability affect intentions, but intentions influence capability. For example, analysts who look at the structure of the PRC military, Taiwan's west coast geography, and the likely Taiwanese air superiority over the Strait conclude that an invasion of Taiwan would be unsuccessful. It is likely that PRC leaders have reached the same conclusion and decided to develop their military accordingly. Thus, having decided not to pursue the cross-Strait amphibious invasion option, the PRC is not investing heavily in amphibious assault craft or associated weapons. Instead, China has chosen to concentrate resources on weapons that will permit it to intimidate Taiwan and deter U.S. intervention. This is a situation in which intentions help determine capability. Even so, a pessimistic 1999 Department of Defense report concluded, "The PLA likely would encounter great difficulty conducting such a sophisticated campaign [joint amphibious assault of Taiwan] by 2005 [, but] the campaign likely would succeed—barring third party intervention—if Beijing were willing to accept the almost certain political, economic, diplomatic, and military costs that such a course of action would produce."<sup>56</sup> Other analysts think the PRC could overcome Taiwan through a war of attrition without an invasion, but believe the PRC considers the cost far too high unless unification becomes a matter of desperation.<sup>57</sup>

The different cultures involved in the Taiwan Strait conflict make more difficult an accurate assessment of military capabilities because they have different attitudes toward public disclosure. American capabilities, apart from classified details of various weapons systems, are widely available in open source materials, as is the U.S. order of battle. As the sole remaining superpower, the United States is able to project military power to most regions of the world. The three main military areas of concern are how other potential conflicts would affect U.S. deployment in the event of military confrontation in the Taiwan Strait; the amount of support U.S. allies, especially Japan, would provide; and the size, configuration, and armament of U.S. forces 10 or 20 years from now. As Mark Stokes notes, the

United States tries to deter opponents by letting them know how powerful it is.<sup>58</sup> In contrast, the PRC attempts to deter potential adversaries by denying them knowledge of its military organization, doctrine, plans, and capabilities. This attitude toward information has long been a part of Chinese strategic culture. As to its effect on U.S. decisionmaking, Jason Ellis says, "Significant information gaps have intensified the effects of Chinese deception, internal debate, and lack of transparency, which have further hampered U.S. ability to discern the nature, purpose, and likely extent of Chinese plans in this area and to craft an appropriate policy response."<sup>59</sup>

It is one thing to have modern weapons. It is something quite different to be able to maintain these weapons and use them to their full potential. It is even more difficult to employ these weapons in a joint scenario where communications and coordination are essential. It is doubtful that the PRC has sufficient training or experience to mount such operations. The Secretary of Defense, in his June 2000 report to Congress on China's military, said, "While Beijing understands the theoretical aspects of integrating various weapons systems and strike assets, the PLA's principal obstacles lie in doctrinal and tactical deficiencies. . . . So-called joint exercises appear to be highly scripted, with little or no free play. . . . China is not expected to develop comprehensive joint power projection capabilities for at least the next two decades; as a result, its ability to control a multidimensional battlespace likely will remain limited."<sup>60</sup> Nothing has happened since to warrant a changed assessment.

An additional difficulty facing the PRC is that, although the United States has a reasonable idea of where it intends to focus its weapons development and acquisition, it is far from clear whether the PRC can move from development to production, integrate its various systems into a coherent warfighting force, implement its doctrine for joint operations, and sustain its forces in a combat environment. American analysts have a far better idea of Taiwan's general capabilities because PRC pressure on other potential arms suppliers has resulted in the United States

becoming Taiwan's only major source of arms. But such Chinese pressure also has resulted in some distancing between the U.S. and Taiwanese militaries, meaning that the United States no longer has the close military relationship with Taiwan that would enable it to evaluate Taiwan's military readiness, maintenance, command and control, and weapons survivability. The quality and quantity of Taiwan's domestic arms production is likewise unclear. Congressional pressure in November 2002 to increase the level of U.S.-Taiwan military cooperation was successfully resisted by the Bush administration, which feared this would unnecessarily provoke the PRC.

China's capabilities lie primarily in the future. The consensus is that the conventional military balance is shifting slowly in the PRC's favor. In addition, China is working on an Information Warfare (IW) capability to attack Taiwanese, Japanese, and American command and control centers, financial markets, and the many other key electronic facilities so essential to the functioning of modern society.<sup>61</sup> The PRC is suspected of testing its IW capability against U.S. Government computer networks.<sup>62</sup> In the aftermath of the EP-3P incident in April 2001, many commercial and private American websites claimed disruptions caused by computers located in the PRC. In assessing China's efforts toward employing asymmetrical warfare against Taiwan, Stokes says, "Emphasis on preemptive, long-range precision strikes, information dominance, command and control warfare, and integrated air defense could enable the PLA to defang Taiwan's ability to conduct military operations."<sup>63</sup> Carefully targeted, such an approach could also seriously degrade U.S. capability for military action in the region, especially the mobilization and deployment that would be required should the United States have to support the self-defense of Taiwan against attack. Yet, as James Mulvenon has pointed out, while we know the extent and direction of China's interest in IW because these are discussed in open source literature, we do not know Chinese capabilities in the field because that information is highly classified.<sup>64</sup>

China cannot mount a conventional invasion of Taiwan today. It lacks sufficient sealift capacity and would be unlikely to gain air superiority over the Taiwan Strait in less than a month. The western coast of Taiwan, consisting primarily of broad mud flats, is notoriously unsuited to amphibious operations – and the eastern coast is worse.<sup>65</sup> The PRC has shown no intention of improving its amphibious capability, but it is making major improvements in its air force, naval combatants, and missile forces. During the past 5 years, China has focused its development and acquisition programs on weapons whose greatest utility would be against Taiwan. The PRC recognizes it is unlikely to improve its conventional military forces to the point where it could successfully invade Taiwan in the face of U.S. intervention in the near to mid term. Thus, it is building on its strengths by improving the quality and accuracy of its ballistic and cruise missiles, exploring the potential of information warfare, and trying to develop other unconventional capabilities that can take advantage of what it sees as U.S. and Taiwan weaknesses.

China has a large inventory of ballistic missiles that can quickly reach neighboring states and a few primitive liquid-fuel missiles that can deliver nuclear weapons to the continental United States. More than once, Chinese officers have threatened to use nuclear weapons against American cities if the United States intervenes to defend Taiwan. Obviously, it remains unclear whether this was more than a bluff. In any case, China's current intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) force is susceptible to destruction before it could be readied for launch. With the solid fuel and mobile ICBMs under development, however, the PRC is attempting to move from a minimal deterrent to a second strike capability.

While Chinese ballistic missiles are limited in their accuracy, their number is sufficient to attack and damage all of Taiwan's major airfields, ports, and key infrastructure with the probability of degrading Taiwan's ability to launch its fighter aircraft and coordinate its air defense. China's goal is to develop within the decade guidance systems that will improve the accuracy of its

ballistic missiles to a circular error probable of 10 meters. If they are successful, this will create a threat to U.S. Navy ships deployed to the east side of Taiwan and will seriously affect Taiwan's ability to defend itself. The PRC is also working on accurate cruise missiles with an over-the-horizon capability that could fly under current and projected missile defense systems. As part of its recent purchase of two destroyers from Russia, the PRC is receiving SS-N-22 SUNBURN anti-ship cruise missiles, which the United States Navy is said to be unable to defend against.

China was shocked and impressed by U.S. technological warfare in the Persian Gulf and Kosovo. It decided it needed to develop at least some of these capabilities for its own military. As a result, China has shown great interest in the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) that has become such a popular discussion topic in Western military circles. Pillsbury says advocates of a Chinese RMA have been calling since 1993 for the PRC to attempt to leapfrog American technology by investing in exotic weapons systems, developing new doctrines, and deploying new organizations.<sup>66</sup> They also believe that the United States is particularly vulnerable to militaries possessing the same sort of technological prowess as its own. Because the United States military has built information technology into every aspect of warfighting, interference with that technology would have devastating consequences for American ability to use its military. Chinese military leaders believe if they focus their efforts on disabling these high-tech systems, they can keep the United States out of the fight or defeat it when it engages.<sup>67</sup> Interestingly, while China considers the United States vulnerable to RMA developments because of its dependence on technology, it believes it can exploit technology to deter or defeat the United States in a regional conflict without suffering from the same vulnerability. Chinese advocates of an RMA seem to understand the RMA in an instrumental sense without clearly understanding the organizational elements required and have a naïve expectation that the RMA can quickly and inexpensively transform China's offensive

military capability and enable a weaker nation to defeat a stronger one. Pillsbury says these ideas go by the name "Assassin's Mace" and "Inferior Defeats the Superior" in the Chinese military literature.<sup>68</sup>

Chinese military authors have written extensively on the potential role of IW in enabling a country like China to bypass several generations of technology to defeat a more powerful and advanced adversary. PLA leaders believe many aspects of IW can be found in embryonic form in the Chinese military classics. Drawing on these for inspiration, China is likely to develop innovative IW strategies that will look very different from American IW programs.<sup>69</sup> To the extent they are different and the United States fails to recognize the differences, they will be difficult for U.S. forces to counter.

The United States has the most powerful military in the world. This is not the same, however, as being able to deploy that power in support of Taiwan. As a world power, the United States must be prepared to deploy forces to many places around the world at the same time, limiting its effort in any one, whereas China as a regional power can focus its efforts in its immediate vicinity. For future Taiwan crises, the United States is likely to need to deploy more than carrier battle groups. American ability and willingness to support Taiwan militarily will depend on the magnitude of the crisis, whether other international situations require a U.S. presence, the willingness of allies, especially Japan, to allow the United States to use bases on their territory and even to provide some direct assistance, American public support, and the nature of Chinese deterrence. The answers to these questions cannot be known until a crisis occurs. A 2000 symposium at the U.S. National Defense University concluded that regional states do not want the United States to ask them to help in the event of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait; nevertheless, they expect the United States to intervene in support of Taiwan should it become necessary.<sup>70</sup> The most important factor for America's regional allies will be how China threatens to respond.

American support of Taiwan can range from political and diplomatic intervention, through provision of replacement and supplementary weapons systems and intelligence, to some form of direct military involvement with naval and air forces. Deployment of American ground forces to the island is unlikely. The United States stationed one carrier battle group in the region and has land-based aircraft in Japan. For anti-submarine warfare and minesweeping, the United States might need to call for Japanese assistance if the political climate permits.

Today, Taiwan can defend itself against direct attack by PRC conventional air, land, and surface naval forces, and will continue to be able to for much of this decade. Taiwan's anti-submarine warfare capability is limited as is its submarine force. It cannot defend itself against ballistic or cruise missile attack and likely would face difficulty in responding to a concerted special operations attack. Taiwan has virtually no self-defense capability against a preemptive attack of the sort China has been talking about.<sup>71</sup> It could defeat many of the individual thrusts, apart from ballistic missiles, but if the PRC were able to coordinate a multifaceted surprise attack, Taiwan could not protect itself. Taiwan's ability to defend against IW operations is unknown, but many aspects of its IW capability are at least equal to those of the PRC.

Taiwan's military needs to refocus its emphasis away from ground forces toward air and naval forces. The battle will be at least half lost if the PLA gains a foothold on Taiwan itself. Historically, the army has been the most powerful element of Taiwan's armed forces, and it remains skeptical that the air force and navy can prevent a successful PRC invasion. Therefore, it wants weapons such as tanks to be able to defeat the PLA on the beach. Anti-submarine ships and helicopters have not been high on Taiwan's list of desired purchases, and it has been unable to find anyone willing to sell it modern submarines. China has effectively used the threat of economic retaliation to deter countries other than the United States from selling weapons to Taiwan.

As important as acquiring new weapons are

assistance in integrating the systems Taiwan's armed forces already have, improved pilot and crew training, hardened airfield facilities, improved air defense command and control, and better interoperability with U.S. forces.<sup>72</sup> This type of military spending is less glamorous than some of the new weapons systems Taiwan would like, but it is no less essential to a successful defense of the island.

Because it cannot defend against the increasing number of ballistic missiles deployed across the Strait, Taiwan faces the possibility it will no longer be able to maintain the air superiority over the Taiwan Strait needed to defeat any PRC invasion attempt.<sup>73</sup> This risk would appear, however, to depend on China attaining sufficient precision with its missiles to render runways at least temporarily inoperable, slowing the Taiwan air force's sortie rate, decreasing the number of defensive aircraft that can be in the air at any one time, and destroying airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft on the ground. Taiwan is also concerned by the PRC's declared interest in developing an electromagnetic pulse weapon. Detonated high over Taiwan, such a weapon could destroy all unshielded electronics on the island without causing any casualties.

With its modern, technological economy and educated population, Taiwan's capacity for IW is at least as great as the PRC's.<sup>74</sup> This includes developing both defensive measures to protect against PRC IW attacks and offensive means that would target PRC military and civilian systems and the computers that support them. Because it is more technologically advanced, Taiwan is more vulnerable to IW, but it also has a stronger base from which to develop its own defensive and offensive programs. The same asymmetry argument the PRC makes regarding smaller and weaker states in relation to the United States applies to Taiwan and the PRC. A smaller, weaker Taiwan can focus its strengths against a larger, stronger PRC's weaknesses.

A disquieting note is that Taiwan's technological capability also includes the know-how to develop nuclear weapons and delivery systems. Taiwan put its nuclear program on

hold more than 30 years ago because of strong U.S. pressure. China has declared that Taiwan's development of nuclear weapons now would constitute grounds for war. Stokes notes, however, that if Taiwan should lose the sense of security it enjoys with the universal presumption of U.S. intervention, it might try again to develop nuclear weapons and the means to deliver them. Stokes adds that, absent a viable defense against Chinese missiles in Fujian province, Taiwan may plan for such counterforce operations as preemptive strikes.<sup>75</sup>

## INTENTIONS

The only party that has made its intentions clear is the PRC. It seeks the political integration of Taiwan with Mainland China, and is willing to use force if necessary to achieve this goal. In various white papers and public pronouncements, the PRC has stated conditions that would cause it to use force against Taiwan and nations aiding Taiwan and drawn a firm line on acceptable international and domestic behavior by Taiwan. Taiwan has refused to accept PRC conditions for continued discussion of its status because it believes the conditions would predetermine the outcome of those discussions, but has carefully avoided any public statements hinting at *formal* independence (although Lee Tung-hui came close in 1999). The United States has followed a policy of deliberate strategic ambiguity since 1954. Especially since 1979, the United States has sought to leave unclear to both Taiwan and the PRC its willingness to intervene in cross-Strait conflict, saying only that it expected a mutually agreeable, peaceful resolution of the differences between Taiwan and the PRC. In 1997, President Clinton tilted sharply in the PRC's direction, only to have President Bush tilt equally sharply in the other direction in 2001. It is likely that at least some portion of this strategy of ambiguity results from U.S. uncertainty about the action it would take in various contingencies. Japan is the fourth actor whose intentions must be considered. Despite PRC complaints, it is unclear how much support Japan would provide for U.S. military

assistance to Taiwan. The preference of all four parties involved appears to be a continuation of the status quo, but this consensus may not last.

The PRC says Taiwan is and always has been part of China. As the October 2000 PRC Defense White Paper says, "Settlement of the Taiwan issue and realization of the complete reunification of China embodies the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation. . . . Settlement of the Taiwan issue is entirely an internal affair of China."<sup>76</sup> In the PRC's view, Taiwan has become a matter of national sovereignty and national honor. Separatist tendencies in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia lead Chinese leaders to view incorporation of Taiwan as a matter of regime survival. They believe Taiwanese separatism encourages minority separatist groups on the Mainland. For the current generation of Chinese leaders, who are not part of the revolutionary generations of Mao and Deng and lack their legitimacy, the final unification of China that began with Hong Kong and Macao must include Taiwan. The PRC considers gaining political control over Taiwan to be a vital national interest. It is not clear that the United States recognizes the emotional and nationalist depth of Beijing's interest in Taiwan or the widespread support of the Chinese public for unification.

Because China considers Taiwan a "renegade province," it views U.S. support of Taiwan since 1950 as interference in its domestic affairs. China does not consider its dealings with Taiwan to be a matter of concern to other nations. Thus, the PRC reserves the right to treat Taiwan the same way it does the Mainland provinces. To many Americans, what China considers quelling domestic disturbance or concluding a civil war would appear as aggression and evidence of PRC belligerence. As a firm supporter of the Westphalian view of national sovereignty, the PRC has opposed international interventions in what it considers domestic matters (such as Kosovo). The primary reason for this position is its fear that a similar argument could be used to justify intervention by other nations in such Chinese domestic concerns as Taiwan, Tibet, or Xinjiang or government suppression of



“dissident” groups such as the *Falun Gong*.

Traditionally, China has seen itself as a nation that prefers to settle disputes peacefully. This is called the Confucian-Mencian strategic culture. Based on his reading of new evidence, Johnston has challenged this self-image. He says China’s dispute behavior in some cases has been “higher risk, more militarized, and less connected to specific limited political demands than was once believed.” He suggests China will be “more likely to resort to force—and relatively high levels of force—when disputes involve territory and occur in periods when the perceived gap between desired and ascribed status is growing or large.”<sup>77</sup> Taiwan is such a situation, and China believes this is such a time.

Considering Taiwan legally part of “one China,” the PRC views the U.S. sale of weapons to Taiwan, official and unofficial visits between U.S. and Taiwan government officials, congressional resolutions supporting Taiwan, and possible inclusion of Taiwan in an East Asian regional missile defense system as interference in domestic Chinese affairs. The Taiwan Security Enhancement Act (TSEA), arising from congressional concern about Clinton administration policy toward Taiwan and China, and proposing the inclusion of Taiwan in a regional missile defense program and official military-to-military contacts between Taiwan and the United States, are especially provocative. Since current U.S. law already offers adequate support for Taiwan, and the proposed Theater Missile Defense (TMD) could protect Taiwan against neither the current PRC ballistic missile threat nor future land-attack cruise missiles, both measures would be needlessly provocative. A threat to deploy TMD in the Taiwan area might be useful as a bargaining chip to induce China to decrease its ballistic missile force across the Strait from Taiwan, but it offers little of military value.

Many Chinese leaders believe Americans view a rising China as a threat to the United States that must be countered with political, economic, and military measures. This view affects their perception of U.S. actions with regard to Taiwan, other regional states (especially recent military

deployments to Central Asia), and deployment of any missile defense system. While China views the inclusion of Taiwan in any missile defense as a political statement because it would require some U.S.-Taiwan military cooperation, it sees the existence of any form of missile defense as intended to threaten what it considers legitimate Chinese action in the region and deny it a credible nuclear deterrent. Unless American leaders can convince China this is not the case, plans to deploy a missile defense will encourage China to speed its development and deployment of an ICBM force that will have a quick response time and be difficult to detect and destroy. This could enhance China’s ability to deter future American and allied intervention in support of Taiwan.

Taiwan can probably defend itself against PRC attack today and for at least the next 5 years. It may be able to do so without U.S. assistance for as long as a month. Taiwan almost certainly can repel an invasion and maintain air superiority over the Taiwan Strait and Taiwan. Its ability to control the sea east of Taiwan is doubtful because it lacks a blue water navy and the proper equipment to defend against PRC submarines or sweep mines from its ports and their sea approaches. Without air superiority over the Strait, however, the PRC could not achieve surface naval superiority either.

Since martial law ended in 1987, Taiwan has been moving rapidly toward full democracy, even to the point where the opposition party won the presidency in 2000. This has been accompanied by rapid economic growth that has improved the Taiwanese standard of living far beyond that of Mainland Chinese. As the relationship between the PRC and Taiwan improved during the 1990s, many Taiwanese visited the Mainland. The result has been a decreased interest in incorporation into the PRC. They are willing to construct factories and do business on the Mainland, but they do not want to become part of it. Replacement of the Nationalists who fled the Mainland in 1949 by native-born Taiwanese makes it far less likely the PRC will be able to cut a deal over the heads of the island’s residents, who show little support for the PRC’s “one China” claim. Extensive investment on

the Mainland has given Taiwanese businessmen an interest in peaceful and expanding cross-Strait relationships, and they are not shy about saying so.

### **CRISIS DETERRENCE AND COERCIVE DIPLOMACY**

Deterrence theory is a major part of western international relations theory. There is some question, however, about its application to non-western and cross-cultural settings. Apart from the Taiwan Strait, the United States has had limited success in deterring Asian adversaries. We hope that with a proper understanding of ourselves and our adversary and an openness to solving our disagreements we can achieve either a peaceful resolution or successful deterrence, but this is not always the case.<sup>78</sup>

Deterrence theory presumes that our adversary is rational, reasonable, and generally predictable. It also presumes that each side knows its own and the other side's interests. Only when we know our interests do we know what we are trying to deter, and only when we know the other side's interests do we know what deterrence is likely to cost. The problem is that adversaries frequently misunderstand one another and act in ways the other considers irrational, making it hard for us to know our adversary. What we often miss in all this is that our standard of rationality does not necessarily apply to our adversary's situation, especially in the interplay between domestic and international concerns.<sup>79</sup> The adversary we call irrational might be "crazy like a fox." When the adversary has a different culture and history, the gap only increases unless each party makes a serious effort to understand the other.

According to classic deterrence theory, successful deterrence of an adversary requires threatening to exact a cost greater than any potential gain the adversary might achieve or removing a benefit the adversary currently enjoys.<sup>80</sup> It can also mean reducing the expected benefit the adversary hopes to gain,<sup>81</sup> a course of action too rarely considered. Thus, successful deterrence requires knowing how the adversary

measures the value of gains and losses. It also means convincing the adversary that the deterrent threat is credible. Thus the threat should be relevant to the subject of the dispute, and should be proportional to the value of the gain sought.<sup>82</sup> The deterrent threat must be both understandable and believable to the adversary.

In 1950, China's threat to intervene militarily in North Korea was unconvincing to U.S. leaders for several reasons. According to Allen Whiting, the Indian ambassador chosen to deliver the message had a reputation for being unusually sympathetic to the PRC, the United States believed China was incapable of intervention to the extent required for success, and Chinese intervention in the face of overwhelming U.S. power appeared irrational.<sup>83</sup> All three American perceptions were wrong from a Chinese perspective. In making its threat, China failed to take into account the difference between American and Chinese perspectives. The result was a deterrence failure and nearly 3 years of war. American efforts to deter Chinese intervention were equally unsuccessful. Neither side understood the values that motivated the other, but thought it did. For the newly established PRC, intervention was a regime survival issue of paramount importance; nothing the United States said or did would convince the PRC that the UN intent to occupy North Korea and reunify the Korean peninsula was not directed against the PRC.

The problem is not merely that the United States and China have different cultures, but that the leaders of both nations have acted as if they do not. Moreover, according to Zhang, deterrents may not have the same meaning in Washington and Beijing.<sup>84</sup> Effective deterrence requires understanding our adversary's thought processes and preferred way of behaving. This information is both difficult to obtain and, once obtained, difficult to interpret and apply to specific situations.

Not every adversary can be deterred. Sometimes the adversary sees the value to be gained or maintained as greater than any threat we can credibly make. This would be true in the case of national and possibly regime survival. It would also be true if the adversary believes

it is possible to evade the conditions of the threat, considers any condition better than the status quo, or cannot evaluate the threat for cultural, domestic, or psychological reasons.<sup>85</sup> Potential aggressors do not always recognize credible deterrent threats. This is a real danger with regard to American resolve in defending Taiwan. The United States has not articulated its tangible interests as clearly as has the PRC, and its intangible interests do not impress China as commensurate with its own. Further, the formal position the United States has expressed regarding resolution of the Taiwan issue conveys no strategic American interest in the continued existence of a Taiwan independent of Mainland China—it merely says the United States expects both sides to settle the conflict peacefully. Rightly or wrongly, this signals a low level of intrinsic interest in the situation. Successful deterrence, however, requires a credible (to the intended audience) reason why the deterring power opposes the intended action.

Even when threats are clearly and deliberately communicated, the opponent may engage in wishful thinking, distort information about the deterrer, or ignore or twist the evidence it has in order to make that evidence fit what it desires. The opponent may be too occupied with domestic concerns to pay sufficient attention to the international environment.<sup>86</sup> In the post-Cold War environment, potential conflicts are likely to involve intrinsic interests for the regional state and nonintrinsic interests for the United States. This means the credibility of the U.S. commitment will be lessened.<sup>87</sup>

The most effective deterrent appears to be in denying potential aggressors credible grounds for believing they will be able to achieve a quick victory and will be able to maintain control of the situation.<sup>88</sup> China has said that if using force becomes necessary, it intends to defeat Taiwan before the United States can intervene effectively. The most effective deterrent threats are issued before one's adversary commits psychologically and physically to act. Even tentative decisions are difficult to reverse.<sup>89</sup> For many Asians, involuntarily halting an action would involve

loss of face.

Getting our adversary's attention may be difficult. States tend to focus on their own domestic political pressures and their strategic and domestic interests rather than on the interests and capabilities of those trying to deter them. The United States historically has sought to deter PRC action against Taiwan by deploying carrier battle groups to the area as a show of commitment. Rhoades suggests this ploy is usually unproductive despite American belief to the contrary.<sup>90</sup>

No matter how well thought out and appropriate to the situation, deterrence is always in the eye of the beholder, the adversary we are attempting to deter.<sup>91</sup> This means it is not our perception of the issues involved, relative strength, or potential gain or loss that matters, but our adversary's. At least as important as interests and capability is our adversary's perception of relative resolve: will we actually carry out the threat? When it comes to war over Taiwan, the PRC is skeptical of the depth of American commitment. Put another way, China believes it may be able to deter the United States from intervening militarily in support of Taiwan.

Conventional deterrence theory usually operates with the "one size fits all" model. Most theorists developed their ideas during the Cold War confrontation with the Soviet Union (USSR). Today, they tend to act as if the theory is universal in its application. We cannot apply Soviet deterrence theory to China without major modifications. Both the United States and the Soviet Union found that successful conventional deterrence of China required threatening very high levels of violence.<sup>92</sup> This was not normally the case between the United States and USSR during the Cold War. It is unclear that the United States can morally and credibly threaten China with the use of force sufficient to deter it from acting against Taiwan in every case. When China deploys the ICBMs it is now developing, the United States is unlikely to be willing to risk a Chinese nuclear response directed against the continental United States as the price for any action it might have to pay in the case of

deterrence failure. Or, as a Chinese general put it, would we sacrifice Los Angeles for Taiwan? Would U.S. leaders be willing to risk finding out whether that would be the true cost? By 2010, U.S. policymakers will have to answer such questions. Shulsky notes, "The historical record indicates that China's adversaries often misunderstand its motives and willingness to use force, which affects their ability to deter the Chinese use of force." He says China has been willing to use force because it can use the resulting tension to its own advantage. As long as China can control the tension level and escalation process, it believes the tension helps China and hurts its adversary.<sup>93</sup>

Possibly the greatest obstacle to successful crisis deterrence in the Taiwan Strait is that neither the United States nor the PRC sufficiently recognizes that the other side believes it has important national interests at stake. In part, this is because the basic PRC and U.S. interests involved are qualitatively different. China's interests are more obvious—they include national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and regime legitimacy. It is also a matter of national pride. For the United States, credibility of commitments and support for democratic governments are more central than traditional security interests, although these are not absent. Because of the consequences regarding Japan, the credibility of U.S. commitments to Asian allies may be more important to the PRC than its leaders realize. U.S. leaders have not clearly or convincingly articulated American interest in the resolution of Taiwan's status and doubt China is as committed as it claims to be.

If U.S. analysts and policymakers attempt to predict PRC actions using conventional deterrence theory without considering China's national self-image, they will seriously underestimate the cost China is willing to pay to gain Taiwan.<sup>94</sup> In part, this is because in expressing its concerns and threats China in the past has used bombastic rhetoric that significantly exceeded its capabilities and that adversaries can too easily dismiss.

An additional problem confronting the United States is that Chinese strategic thought emphasizes achieving surprise and inflicting

psychological shock on its adversary. This is especially important when facing a more powerful adversary such as the United States.<sup>95</sup> Should China conclude that resort to force is its only option, a surprise attack would be very difficult to deter. China has suggested that such a preemptive attack would include not only Taiwan, but also Japan and American bases in East Asia and the Pacific. It probably would include a combination of asymmetric and conventional attacks.

Closely linked with crisis deterrence in the Strait area is coercive diplomacy. This attempts to force a state to reverse an action it has taken and restore the status quo. Because it seeks to make a state undo a successful action instead of trying to convince that state not to attempt an action that may or may not be successful, coercive diplomacy is more difficult than deterrence. Since the early 1990s, however, the PRC has used coercive diplomacy successfully to force Taiwan to rein in its attempts to acquire international standing through informal diplomacy, such as Lee Teng-hui's 1995 visit to the United States. The PRC also has used coercive diplomacy to make the United States modify its Taiwan policy and its general policy toward China, including human rights, trade, and technology transfer. Despite the deployment of the two carrier battle groups in March 1996, U.S. actions since that time show PRC coercive diplomacy has been successful.<sup>96</sup> Should Taiwan take formal steps toward independence, the PRC likely would attempt coercive measures before resorting to military force. Should the PRC successfully conquer Taiwan before the United States could intervene militarily, the United States would face the prospect of attempting coercive diplomacy before having to decide on a military response. Domestic and allied support for the latter situation is unlikely.

What the United States is unable to deter, it may be able to delay. The difference between deterring and delaying is a function of China's willingness to pay the costs of military action. If faced with the choice between formal Taiwanese independence and using force, China will use force. In this case, the United States cannot make

a credible threat serious enough to deter China. But as long as there is the likelihood of settling the conflict peacefully, it is less costly for China to delay acting. The likelihood of American intervention, the fear of failure, domestic and international consequences of military action, increased economic leverage over Taiwan, and belief in an improvement in the relative military balance over time may encourage China to delay action against Taiwan. One long-term problem for Taiwan is the large number of Taiwanese businessmen residing and educating their children on the Mainland. This is more important than it first appears. A long-term delay, measured in decades rather than years, would allow for changes in both China and Taiwan that could lead to a peaceful resolution of the conflict in a way few may even be considering now. While long-term indicators, apart from Taiwanese public opinion, appear to favor the PRC, it is not clear that the PRC leadership sees things that way due to its fixation on "Taiwanese independence."

## OPTIONS

Crisis deterrence requires the United States to have an accurate idea of what action or actions it is trying to deter. In the Taiwan Strait situation, it also requires the United States to evaluate PRC efforts to deter U.S. intervention. The latter is by far the more difficult task due to the nature of the PRC's deterrent threats to date and the secretiveness of its decisionmaking process. It will become even more difficult as the PRC increases the quality, quantity, and survivability of its strategic nuclear deterrent.

Each party involved in the Taiwan Strait has a range of options. Which option each will or should choose depends on what that party hopes to accomplish. China has a wide range of options, and this creates a problem for U.S. policymakers because these options require different forms of deterrence. The cumulative impact of seeking to deter all the various possible Chinese options would be immensely costly in resources and time. Thus the first task is to evaluate the PRC's options in terms of likelihood. The key determinants are

Chinese capabilities and weaknesses and the risk to China involved in each course of action (China's interest in Taiwan is clear). The less spectacular and less blatant courses minimize the risk of international and domestic repercussions and can be attempted more than once. A failed invasion, whatever form it took, would harm the PRC economy (especially if the response included attacks on China's special economic zones), weaken the armed forces, probably delegitimize the Chinese Communist Party and topple the government, and irrevocably alienate the people of Taiwan from the Mainland. That would be a high price to pay for an action with little likelihood of near-term success.

The PRC's minimal goal is to prevent Taiwan from becoming an independent nation.<sup>97</sup> China has stated clearly and repeatedly the behaviors by Taiwan and its allies that would provoke a PRC military response. Most American analysts believe China is not bluffing about its readiness to back its claim with force.<sup>98</sup> They are skeptical, however, that China would use nuclear weapons to do so.

No Chinese government in the near term can hope to survive if it allows Taiwan to gain its independence without a fight. Even war with the United States would be a lesser evil. It is equally doubtful the people of Taiwan would agree freely to independence barring a drastic deterioration in the military balance or major improvements in political and economic conditions in the PRC. With the recent leadership transition, the prospect for the immediate future is for a less accommodating PRC.<sup>99</sup> China's new leaders must gain the support of the PLA, which sees itself responsible for successfully concluding China's civil war, unifying the country, and defending its proper borders. For the PLA, Taiwan is a non-negotiable issue.

Unfortunately, Taiwan, the United States, and Japan are less clear about their goals. For the moment, Taiwan's desire to remain separate from Mainland China does not include a plan for formal independence, but that could change. During the summer of 2002, Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party leadership made public

statements that reflected a desire to distance Taiwan further from the Mainland and were cautioned by the Bush administration. The stated American goal is that the PRC and Taiwan settle their differences peacefully. Not every form of that result would be consistent with American interests, however. The United States has goals beyond this, but they remain inchoate. Japan's goal or goals are even more unformed because of constitutional and attitudinal constraints within the country, residual fears on the part of its Asian neighbors, and domestic political and generational differences. Japan's basic desire is that it not be forced to choose between the United States and China. Japan is concerned, however, about Chinese aspirations to regional hegemony and claims to the Senkaku or Diaoyutai Islands.<sup>100</sup>

For every party involved, continuation of the status quo would be the best option. Although it is probably not anyone's ideal solution (least of all the PRC's), there does not appear to be any alternative acceptable to all parties. China, however, looks on the growth of democracy on Taiwan, the attendant development of a Taiwanese sense of identity, and the resulting change in political attitudes toward the PRC with concern. Re-election of Chen Shui-bian as Taiwan's president in 2004 would be a cause of great concern to the PRC, which fears that the status quo is shifting subtly but steadily in favor of Taiwanese separatism.<sup>101</sup> If so, coercive diplomacy or direct military action will be required to achieve the PRC's goal. Despite China's sovereignty claims, it is likely to prefer options that are least confrontational internationally and least likely to result in U.S. or Japanese intervention. Shulsky says history suggests any Chinese military action against Taiwan is likely to occur at the lower end of the scale in terms of force.<sup>102</sup> Whether that is accurate will depend on what it is that precipitates PRC military action, the window of opportunity prior to an American response, and the perceived likelihood of American action given the international situation at the time.

## China's Options.

China has two deterrence concerns. It is seeking to prevent Taiwan from taking steps toward formal independence and from deploying weapons that would make PRC actions against Taiwan more difficult or more costly. China also seeks to deter the United States from providing encouragement and military support, such as advanced weapons sales and formal military relations, to Taiwan and from intervening militarily in support of Taiwan should a crisis in the Strait lead to military conflict. In both cases, China has shown little reluctance to replace failed deterrence with coercive actions directed at both Taiwan and the United States, but it has also demonstrated a willingness to negotiate or compromise with regard to objectives.<sup>103</sup> Recently, the PRC suggested it might reduce missile deployment across the Strait from Taiwan if the United States would reduce weapons sales to Taiwan. China has also used sale of missile- and nuclear-related items to "rogue states" as a bargaining chip in respect to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan.

Economic relations between the PRC and Taiwan have been growing rapidly for over a decade. Most of this has been Taiwanese investment in the Mainland (Taiwan will not permit PRC investment on Taiwan). Some have suggested that this trend has created a symbiotic relationship in which Taiwan is being pulled increasingly into China's orbit and could ultimately be absorbed; China certainly hopes for this result. Taiwan's leaders have recognized this possibility and encouraged businesses to diversify their investment into other parts of Asia. This cross-Strait economic relationship would make conflict in the area extremely costly for both parties. Each stands to suffer tremendous economic loss from attacks on infrastructure if a military solution is attempted. With its much more highly developed economy, China is more vulnerable economically than during previous crises. The underlying difficulty with the absorption theory, however, lies in the prospect

for China's economy. Its rapid development during the 1980s and 1990s is no guarantee that growth will continue at this pace. American analysts have suggested China's rapid economic growth has masked serious weaknesses in its banking system, state-owned enterprises, and other parts of the economic infrastructure.<sup>104</sup> Chinese have actually expressed concern that Taiwan might see a Chinese economic crisis as an opportunity to declare independence in the expectation that China would be too distracted and disorganized to respond. Non-Chinese analysts have expressed concern the PRC might use military action against Taiwan to divert domestic attention from an internal political or economic crisis.

Some American China specialists have suggested that the Chinese decisionmaking system is one where good analysis and creative options are unlikely to survive the bureaucratic gauntlet so as to gain the attention of the actual decisionmakers.<sup>105</sup> If correct, this would mean success in easing tensions in the Taiwan Strait is unlikely to come from the Chinese side. Additionally, the PLA may desire to keep Taiwan a matter of concern for budgetary reasons, to maintain a sense of mission, and to reinforce its nationalist self-image.

Chinese "strategic culture" differs from the American "way of war" in significant ways—use of these two different terms is intended to demonstrate this, although they oversimplify matters somewhat. China's strategic concept is broader than the American, more multidimensional and integrated. Well before conflict begins, China begins an integrated psychological, political, diplomatic, economic, and military offensive intended to isolate and unsettle its potential adversary. Following Sun Tzu's famous (and widely misunderstood) adage,<sup>106</sup> it attempts to achieve victory without war, but, because this rarely happens, it also aims to shape the multidimensional battlefield before the adversary even realizes there is a battlefield. So Chinese goals are more complex than American policymakers recognize. As a result, Americans are often unsure what is at

stake and what counts for victory or defeat. An example is the 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam. The American military still (rightly) counts this as a great military victory, but rarely recognizes that this was beside the point. North Vietnam gained a greater psychological victory when and where it counted (with the American public), and for them that was enough. So, in any Taiwan Strait crisis, China probably will be engaged strategically before the United States realizes a crisis exists (as in 1995), hoping to outmaneuver the United States and foreclose options during any combat phase.

China's preferred course of action would be to deter Taiwan from taking any step toward a degree of independence greater than already exists. It can attempt this using military threats, psychological warfare, and economic pressures. Because of domestic changes on Taiwan, China does not appear to consider this a viable alternative for the long term, although its economic leverage and ability to influence domestic Taiwanese politics through its economic decisions continue to grow. China's concern should not prevent American and Taiwanese policymakers from seeking innovative ways of maintaining the current situation that would be acceptable to China. Although most of the long-term indicators favor the PRC over Taiwan, it remains an open question whether China's civilian and military leaders are temperamentally inclined to wait as long as might be required, despite repeated clichés concerning oriental "patience."

Deterrence for China includes both discouraging the United States and Taiwan from saying or doing things on a routine basis that enhance Taiwan's separateness from China and preventing American intervention in support of Taiwan should China decide it has to take direct action against the island and its government. These two different forms of deterrence require different strategies. In carrying out the first form of deterrence, China has provided weaponry and other support to rogue states challenging the United States in other parts of the world in order to demonstrate China's ability to complicate American foreign policy. The intent has been to

convince the United States to desist from selling weapons to Taiwan in exchange for China's not selling weapons to Iran and similar states.<sup>107</sup> Recently, a similar ploy was a reported PRC offer to reduce or eliminate missile deployment across the Strait from Taiwan in exchange for a U.S. reduction in arms sales to Taiwan.<sup>108</sup> It also directs U.S. political and combat power away from China toward other regions of the world, reducing American ability to concentrate forces in response to future Chinese action.<sup>109</sup> China has been using this strategy since the early 1990s. China also uses the lure of its potential market and trading relationship to discourage American support for Taiwan and even to induce major American manufacturers to lobby in its behalf. It has begun to do the same with Taiwanese business and industrial leaders. When this fails, China has not hesitated to use trade as a form of coercive diplomacy.

China has shown a pattern of provoking crises in order to test its adversaries' reactions and show them the political and possible military costs of pursuing policies antagonistic to China.<sup>110</sup> China could use a series of carefully orchestrated crises in an attempt to unsettle the United States and Taiwan populations, divide the two parties, and damage their will to fight. This is a low-risk strategy, but it is not risk-free. Just as in 1995-96, the possibility of miscommunication raises the risk of unintended escalation.

In seeking to deter the United States from responding militarily to Chinese initiatives to gain physical control of Taiwan, the PRC has a range of options. China's most likely courses of action, in terms of its strategic culture, are those that could be carried out successfully before the United States could mount a response or those that never rise to a level that would trigger a U.S. military response. The latter could be either a low-intensity, unconventional attack on Taiwan's economic infrastructure or a long-term attempt to interfere with Taiwan's sea lines of communication, disrupting the international trade that is the island's lifeblood and interfering with the flow of raw materials, especially oil, vital to Taiwan's industrial economy. So China's best options are a quick, intense surprise attack and a

slow, low-intensity strangulation campaign.

Because Taiwan is resource poor and has the world's second densest population, its survival depends on having a thriving export economy supplied by a steady flow of oil and other raw materials.<sup>111</sup> During the 1995-96 crisis, the PRC learned it can disrupt Taiwan economically and possibly destabilize it politically at an acceptable cost and without the need for direct confrontation.<sup>112</sup> It could accomplish these goals through a protracted, low-level crisis. This would both make it difficult for the United States to decide the best time to intervene, if at all, and enervate the United States as well as Taiwan. This is a situation where a dictatorship has the advantage over democracies in that the latter find it difficult to tolerate extended conflict unless national survival is clearly at stake or important national interests are successfully explained to the people.

Presenting the United States with a fait accompli would be the most advantageous direct military course for China, although it would have serious political and diplomatic consequences in the region—consequences China says it is willing to live with. It would also be very difficult to pull off, but if the PRC were successful, this would mean the United States would have to counter PRC action with its own invasion of the island to restore Taiwan's independence. To gain the support of U.S. public opinion for this task would be far more difficult than for assisting Taiwan in its own defense. Of course, if the PRC's quick strike included preemptive attacks on U.S. forces in East Asia that resulted in heavy casualties, something PRC military writers have discussed, mustering U.S. public support would be easier. Unfortunately, Chinese discussion has emphasized U.S. timidity in Somalia, Haiti, and Kosovo, and concluded that the United States has such an aversion to casualties it might be deterred from acting. American operations in Afghanistan, with their low casualties and use of local surrogates, are unlikely to have altered this Chinese perception. Chinese writers have ignored the lesson of Pearl Harbor and forgotten American willingness to suffer major casualties in



the Persian Gulf in 1991. The Chinese belief that the United States is casualty-averse could lead it to take provocative actions that would almost certainly result in war in the Taiwan Strait. Thus one crucial element for U.S. crisis deterrence must be to disabuse the PRC of this dangerous misperception about American casualties. The PRC leaders' view that Taiwan is much more important to them than to the United States joined with the (mis)perception that the United States is casualty-averse creates precisely the condition for unintended war between China and the United States.

A second difficulty for the United States in the face of a swift and successful PRC conquest of Taiwan would be the response of America's Asian allies. The United States would require, at a minimum, use of regional bases and local logistical support to mount a military response to the PRC. In the face of a *fait accompli*, regional allies would be far less likely to provide such support. This would be the result of limited domestic public support coupled with fear of PRC retaliation using its ballistic missile force and economic warfare. Japan, the only nation with first-hand experience of nuclear attack, would have to provide most of the land-based support for such an operation. A credible Chinese threat, coupled with doubt whether the United States would be willing to suffer a nuclear attack in Japan's defense, almost certainly would mean Japanese refusal to assist the United States in any way in supporting Taiwan.

One form of the *fait accompli* the Chinese have discussed is a surprise attack on Taiwan, Japan, and American military facilities in the East Asia-Pacific region. Some Chinese believe this would render all three parties unable to respond militarily against China before it could gain control of the island. Such a coup would impart such a psychological shock to the populations that they would not permit their governments to act. Classic Chinese military writers emphasize the use of surprise and shock to gain strategic advantage.<sup>113</sup> Few American analysts and decisionmakers take this possibility as seriously as Chinese military history would

seem to warrant.<sup>114</sup> Moreover, Taiwan itself is unprepared militarily or psychologically for such an eventuality.

Such a preemptive strike could be a conventional attack on Taiwanese, American, and Japanese military assets in the region coupled with one or more high altitude electromagnetic pulses delivered by nuclear weapons in the upper atmosphere. This would have the advantage of devastating high tech weaponry without the retaliatory consequences a direct nuclear attack would provoke. Other forms of IW could degrade command and control, logistics, and counterstrike assets.

The Chinese military was very much impressed by American technological warfare against Iraq in 1991 and Serbia in 1999. It wants to develop some of those capabilities as well as countermeasures against them, but realizes catching up to the United States is unlikely. China has concluded, however, that this American capability is vulnerable to counterattack in unexpected ways. According to some Chinese, a virus or hacker attack on U.S. military computer networks that would shut down command, control, communications, and intelligence (C<sup>3</sup>I), would render the United States military deaf, dumb, and blind. The PRC currently lacks the ability for such cyber-attacks.<sup>115</sup>

The least risky option for the PRC would be an IW operation directed against Taiwan's banking system, stock market, and communications system combined with sabotage of the electrical grid, transportation network, and early warning system. This would require the PRC to develop IW capabilities it does not currently possess while presupposing that Taiwan's IW defenses improved only marginally.<sup>116</sup> It would be a relatively long-term operation with no assurance of success. The PRC may already have sufficient special operations capability for the sabotage aspect of such an operation and has discussed openly developing an IW capability not only to damage Taiwan's economy and communications but also the American information and financial infrastructure, which it considers vulnerable. Given Taiwan's dependence on foreign raw

materials and international trade for viability, such serious disruption would devastate the economy and possibly panic the populace. If applied only to Taiwan, this course of action has the advantage that it is unlikely to rise to the level where the United States could muster domestic or allied support for intervention or determine an effective way to intervene. It might even be carried out covertly. An IW attack on this same scale on American government and civilian computer networks probably would result in a public outcry for retaliation. While such an operation might be deniable, detection would expose the PRC to a devastating response. The *threat*, however, to use IW is the one Chinese weapon that could affect the entire continental United States and place at risk essential infrastructure.

This option becomes increasingly attractive as Taiwan becomes more democratic due to the increasing openness of its society. The PRC is concerned about this democratic trend for four reasons: (1) it means the PRC cannot reach an agreement with Kuomintang leaders over the heads of the people of Taiwan (similar to what happened to Hong Kong and Macao); (2) the people of Taiwan find political union with the repressive and comparatively backward PRC increasingly less attractive; (3) a democratic Taiwan demonstrates that democracy and Chinese culture are not incompatible (a contribution to the Asian values debate); and (4) the continued existence of a democratic Taiwan is easier for western democracies to justify defending.<sup>117</sup>

A second course of action, currently beyond the PRC's capability, would be an attack by precision guided ballistic and cruise missiles against Taiwan's air force bases, radar installations, and command and control centers. The PRC then could quickly achieve air superiority over the Strait and Taiwan itself. This would allow the air drop of assault divisions, capture of Taiwan's ports, and the movement of large numbers of soldiers quickly across the Strait, followed by occupation of the island. This scenario assumes that the PRC can keep all of its attack preparations hidden from U.S. and Taiwan intelligence; that a missile attack followed by aircraft attacks would rapidly destroy Taiwan's

air force; that PRC troops delivered by aircraft could defeat Taiwan's army on the ground; that the PRC develops or acquires the accurate terminal guidance systems needed for its missiles; and that the PRC could synchronize such massive joint operations—all of this before the United States or the international community could react to block the PRC. Although PRC writers have mentioned this course of action, each assumption is to some degree questionable. That the PRC can develop precision missiles within a decade is probable; that the result of their use will be as described is less likely.<sup>118</sup> RAND analysts recently concluded that a missile attack, especially if China can argue it was directed exclusively against military targets, might not receive as serious an international response as would an invasion or an indiscriminate missile attack. They also offer several historical examples to show that such an attack might seriously affect Taiwanese morale.<sup>119</sup> In 1995, a Chinese officer told an American visitor that China could break Taiwan's will to resist by firing one missile a day for a month at the island.<sup>120</sup>

A third option that has often been suggested is some form of blockade. Nicholas Kristof says a 30-day blockade would make clear to Taiwan the regional power relationship.<sup>121</sup> The purpose of this would be to cripple Taiwan's economy and further isolate it diplomatically. Chinese leaders appear to believe this would be less provocative than missiles or an invasion, but it would tax China's naval forces to enforce a full blockade. Anything less than a full blockade would take so long to be effective that Taiwan and its friends could develop countermeasures. Michael O'Hanlon says, "Even a limited blockade effort conducted by China's modest modern submarine force could stand a reasonable chance of dragging down Taiwan's economy—and keeping it down for a prolonged period. U.S. military intervention might be needed to break the blockade quickly."<sup>122</sup> In any case, despite current and proposed improvements in China's naval forces, the U.S. Navy could readily break up any such formal blockade, barring countervailing political considerations, though possibly requiring Japan's

minesweeping capability.

A variation on this approach would involve using the PRC's most modern submarines (Kilos purchased from Russia) to lay minefields outside Taiwan's main harbors and even threatening to sink commercial vessels that entered an exclusion zone outside Taiwan's main ports. This could be part of a larger blockade or implemented on its own. The sinking of one merchant ship would virtually halt seaborne commerce and devastate Taiwan's economy. This is within the PRC's current capabilities, but might also lead to U.S. intervention. If this operation could be spread over a sufficiently long period, however, the United States might tire of involvement and Taiwan become too worn down to continue resistance. The result, again, would be disruption and collapse of Taiwan's economy with a probable capitulation by Taiwan.

The PRC's "one China" claim provides legal cover for this option. Blockades are acts of war under international law, but because it considers Taiwan a part of China, the PRC asserts that any blockade of the island is solely a domestic matter. When considered in conjunction with China's self-understanding as a moral actor, the domestic claim points in the direction of some form of blockade if the other relevant factors are conducive.

The least likely scenarios are those involving an amphibious assault across the Taiwan Strait and those involving a nuclear attack on Taiwan. The first is impossible without PRC air superiority over the Taiwan Strait, additional sealift capacity, and a combined arms capability the PLA has yet to demonstrate. In any case, it would be a formidable task, and the cost of failure would be high, including the almost certain *de jure* independence of Taiwan. This would be the last resort of a desperate Chinese government. The second course would produce a hollow victory with Taiwan's economy destroyed, its surviving population forever alienated, and the PRC an international pariah. Effective counterstrikes on the Mainland would cause severe economic damage. China has stated repeatedly that it will not use nuclear weapons against other

Chinese; the threat of their use appears directed at American and Japanese intervention. Even if the PRC were willing to pay the price for use of nuclear weapons, there are better ways to achieve its goal.<sup>123</sup>

Distinct from actual use of nuclear weapons would be the threat to use such weapons against the continental U.S. (currently not possible) or forward deployed U.S. forces in East and Southeast Asia. A U.S. president would have to consider carefully how the crisis appeared to a rational actor on the Chinese side before deciding whether the threat was serious or a bluff. There are no adequate historical analogies to help in making this decision. The threat to use nuclear weapons is the most powerful deterrent the PRC has to discourage American involvement in any Taiwan conflict, but actual use of such weapons would invite a massive retaliatory response. The PRC currently has more to lose to such retaliation than at any time in its history.

Although some have suggested PRC might capture one or more of the offshore islands as a means of intimidating Taiwan, this is not an option. Since the 1950s, the PRC has sought to keep Taiwan, the Pescadores, and the offshore islands united as a political entity. Separation of the offshore islands from the rest of the territory governed by Taiwan would weaken the link between Taiwan and the PRC and thus any claim by the PRC to rights over Taiwan. So the last thing the PRC wants is for Taiwan to evacuate the offshore islands. Further, while the PRC could successfully invade the offshore islands today, they remain well-defended. The result would be the waste of limited PRC military resources on what is, at best, a secondary target and a high diplomatic cost in terms of relations with the United States and other East and Southeast Asian nations.

Currently, the PRC believes it can achieve its goal without resorting to the direct use of military force. It is convinced that if it does use force, the United States will intervene on the side of Taiwan. China also recognizes that the United States is greatly superior to China militarily. If the day ever comes that China believes war is

inevitable, it will seek to choose the time, place (or places), and nature of the conflict so as to overcome the American material advantage through strategic and tactical surprise. The China Security Review Commission's 2002 report warns: "China's leaders believe that the United States, although technologically superior in almost every area of military power, can be *defeated*, most particularly in a fight over Taiwan in which China controls the timing."<sup>124</sup> China's targets will be those Taiwanese, American, and Japanese assets most able to respond to China militarily and those whose destruction will deliver the sharpest psychological blow to China's potential adversaries. Chinese suggestions that the most effective action would be a powerful surprise attack create an inherent instability in the situation. The Bush administration's recent advocacy of preemptive strikes under certain conditions increases the risk of unintended conflict should Chinese leaders come to see themselves as the proposed target of such an action.

### **Taiwan's Options.**

Taiwan has few viable options. Its best option appears to be to lay low and hope the PRC is distracted by other international or domestic concerns. This is a passive option, however, and leaves the initiative with China. Taiwan's leaders and people are unlikely to be comfortable with that, as recent remarks by Chen Shui-bian suggest.<sup>125</sup> What is clear is that the people of Taiwan do not want to become part of the PRC, and they now have a say in the matter. "Although Taiwanese welcome the profits of cross-Strait business and treasure the opportunity to visit family, many have concluded that China is too backward, repressive, and mired in arbitrary regulations to make unification appealing in the foreseeable future."<sup>126</sup>

The island's political development during the past decade precludes a simple unification with the Mainland. Recent developments in Hong Kong raise concerns about how the "one government-two systems" would work in practice. Taiwan's

best interest is served by seeking to maintain the status quo and offering the PRC no excuse to alter that status quo. Taiwan's safest path is to maintain a low profile internationally while highlighting its democratic political system and thriving economy, improve its defensive capability by buying the mundane weapons systems it needs instead of the flashy ones it wants, developing or improving informal, low-key relationships with the United States and other regional actors, and taking no actions and making no statements that the PRC could construe as steps toward *formal* independence. Taiwan needs to prepare its citizens for the domestic impact of PRC action and make critical improvements to its defenses against special operations and surprise attack, especially IW operations.

During the mid-1990s, Taiwan's highly visible "vacation diplomacy," which reached its peak with Lee Teng-hui's visit to Cornell in the summer of 1995, precipitated the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis. Lee's comments about state-to-state relations with the PRC created a mini-crisis in 1999. Chen Shui-bian, Lee's successor, has avoided Lee's language but has yet to overcome Beijing's concern about his membership in the Democratic Progressive Party, Taiwan's pro-independence party. Taiwan's best hope for continued independent and peaceful existence lies in maintaining such a low international profile that China occupies itself with its many other pressing concerns. Taiwanese leaders also should begin to develop unconventional options that can respond to PRC concerns and preserve PRC "face" while preserving a separate existence for the island and its population.

### **U.S. Options.**

The United States has a broad range of options, not all of which are equally beneficial to the U.S. national interest or equally viable. There are two levels of options regarding Taiwan. The first deals with U.S. actions on a day-to-day basis when the situation is relatively calm and their aim is to maintain that calm. The intent is that good decisionmaking and execution will prevent crises from developing. The second concerns what the

United States should do when a crisis occurs. The purpose is twofold: to prevent the crisis from becoming a shooting war, and to prevail should war break out. The former includes unofficial travel between the United States and Taiwan, types of weapons systems that will be sold to Taiwan, unofficial military exchanges and coordination with Taiwan, official military exchanges with the PRC, deployment of a national or theater missile defense system, and similar actions whose cumulative effect will influence U.S.-China-Taiwan relations. The second level of options involves trying to persuade both China and Taiwan not to choose a military solution to enforcing changes in the relationship or provoke the other party to do so. U.S. actions can take such forms as naval deployments, political and economic sanctions, breaking a blockade, and direct military intervention.

American policymakers have not tried seriously to use China's stated fear of a resurgent Japan to encourage China to moderate its international behavior. One benefit China gains from a strong U.S. presence in East Asia is a Japan whose military capability does not match its economic and political strength. Although China professes an inability to understand why Japan might have any reason to fear it, an American departure from East Asia or failure to keep its commitments is likely to cause Japan to consider rearming. If Japan were to apply its technological and industrial capability to military development, China would have grounds for concern. When China complains about a forward American presence in East Asia—including Taiwan—the United States can remind China's leaders that this is a cheap price to pay for not having to worry about a militarized Japan.

The United States remains obligated under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide Taiwan with adequate defensive weaponry to defend itself. The emphasis should be on low-profile, defensive weaponry that Taiwan needs for protection in areas of current and expected PRC advantage. The greatest needs are for anti-submarine and mine-clearing capabilities, a more flexible command and control system, and

missile defense (although nothing is yet available that can protect against China's current missile capability). China also needs to be aware it does not have veto power over U.S. weapons sales. American weapons sales to Taiwan must walk the fine line of providing those items Taiwan needs for its self-defense (under the provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act) without providing systems or quantities that embolden Taiwan or incite the PRC to aggressive acts that disturb the status quo.

Economic threats by the United States have often been suggested as a way to deter Chinese action. Actually, the only successful economic threats have been those China has made against the United States. Threatening sanctions has only turned China to alternate suppliers and led to vigorous lobbying by American businesses fearful of being shut out of the China market. Given the size of the U.S.-China trade imbalance (in China's favor), the only successful economic pressure would be to deny American markets and investment funds to China.

The crisis-related options include withdrawing from the situation, seeking to maintain the status quo, or abandoning the policy of strategic ambiguity and taking a clear position in support of the PRC or Taiwan.<sup>127</sup> Obviously, much more than for China, American intervention options must be evaluated in the context of domestic public opinion. A recent poll by the Foreign Policy Association questions the likelihood of popular support for American military intervention if the PRC invades Taiwan, the most blatant and provocative option Beijing has.<sup>128</sup> A second limit to U.S. freedom of action is that, as a superpower, it has many interests other than those in the Taiwan area. One or more of those may be claiming American attention and resources when a Taiwan crisis develops and may have a higher priority. Also, U.S. action in one area affects relations with nations in other areas just as U.S. actions in Kosovo have drawn a Chinese response about American hegemonism. China could use American international commitments to instigate a crisis in some other part of the world to draw American attention and resources

away as it prepared to attack Taiwan. This would fit neatly into the classic Chinese approach to warfare found in Sun Tzu and others.

The foundation of U.S. policy for the past half century has been the policy of “strategic ambiguity.” This has left both the PRC and Taiwan unsure of how the United States would respond to conflict in the Taiwan Strait—and that is how U.S. leaders have wanted it. Despite recent suggestions to the contrary, this policy should be retained. It may not be the best policy, but none of the alternatives is better.

The policy’s great advantage is that it gives the United States room to maneuver. It also encourages caution on the part of both China and Taiwan because neither can ever be quite sure how the United States will act in a particular situation. The policy reflects the reality that the United States cannot be sure how it will act in the event of a crisis until one actually occurs. Too much of a shift in either direction is liable to tempt the advantaged party to take destabilizing risks. The United States can always fill in some details quietly to each party within the overall policy. The policy does not prevent the United States from telling Taiwan and the PRC that it views particular actions by each to be out of bounds and automatically precluding or mandating American military intervention. In November 2002, the American ambassador to China exercised such latitude when he said in Beijing that “the United States does not support a unilateral declaration of independence by Taiwan. Also, the United States will not welcome provocation from either side of the Strait.” He added that the United States wants Taiwan to have the confidence needed to reach a peaceful resolution with the PRC.<sup>129</sup>

Probably the greatest advantage in an age of news media-driven foreign policy is that everyone knows the United States probably will act, but no one is quite sure how. The imprecision of strategic ambiguity provides U.S. leaders with flexibility and time to think in the event a crisis arises. The United States response can be tailored to the context of the particular crisis and not constrained by previous public commitments. If the United States does decide it must act to

prevent Chinese action against Taiwan, it should do so early and delicately enough to permit China a way out that doesn’t cause it to lose face—as happened in 1996.

Withdrawal from the area would have the same practical result as openly supporting the PRC’s claim to Taiwan. (China has said for half a century that if the United States had not intervened in June 1950, the PRC would have successfully invaded Taiwan within a year.) Both courses would have domestic U.S. and regional repercussions. Domestically, there would be a revival of the “Who lost China?” debate of the 1950s, exacerbated by the fact that Taiwan today is a democracy in a way Nationalist China never could even pretend to be. Regionally, the action would call into question the credibility of U.S. commitments to allies.<sup>130</sup> These allies likely would seek alternate security means or cut a deal with China. Here, it is Japan with its military and technological potential and regional history that becomes a matter of concern. According to Charles Freeman, “A U.S. failure to respond to a PRC attack on Taiwan would so devalue the United States-Japan relationship that Japanese would feel even more impelled to develop a military capable of independent action to defend their strategic interest.”<sup>131</sup>

Open U.S. support for Taiwan might not lead to a formal declaration of independence, but certainly would encourage Taiwan in that direction. That would require a clear American security commitment. This would be unacceptable to the PRC and certainly would result in its use of coercion against the United States and Taiwan. A declaration of independence or Taiwan’s obstinacy in the face of PRC coercion probably would result in military conflict. China has already threatened the use of force if Taiwan does not begin talks on the basis of the agreement that there is one China. Open U.S. support of Taiwan could mean U.S. facilities in the region would be targeted as well as the Taiwan military. The PRC military has threatened this, and, as the 2002 China Security Review Commission report notes, the missiles that can reach Japan and other U.S. allies are nuclear-tipped.<sup>132</sup> Chinese military

history demonstrates readiness to use preemptive strikes, especially against more powerful foes.<sup>133</sup> The December 2002 U.S. warning that enemies who use weapons of mass destruction (WMD) against the United States or U.S. forces face nuclear retaliation may not have been intended only for Iraqi ears.

During the crises of the 1950s and 1960s, the United States was able to plan how to deal with China without having to take into account a Chinese capability to harm American forces in Japan or the Philippines, much less the continental United States. For any future crisis involving the PRC, the United States must consider China's potential use of conventional, cyber, and nuclear weapons against U.S. forces in East and Southeast Asia and civilian targets in the continental United States. Many consider the notorious 1995 statement by a senior Chinese general to former Assistant Secretary of Defense Charles Freeman that the PRC could act militarily against Taiwan without fear of intervention by the United States because U.S. leaders "care more about Los Angeles than they do about Taiwan" to include a great deal of bluff. It would be foolish, however, to ignore such threats. It is not clear that the PRC leadership understands the seriousness of using nuclear weapons against another nuclear power, especially first use. In any case, all future U.S. planning regarding Taiwan must include the remote possibility that it could escalate into a nuclear war.

Current U.S. doctrine includes attacking the enemy's command and control system, strategic weapons, airfields, and communications and utilities infrastructure, but the United States has never been at war, even a regional war, with another nuclear power. American war planning for the Taiwan Strait should consider potential consequences of striking Mainland Chinese facilities—or allowing Taiwan to do so—and consider alternatives that do not risk escalation to nuclear war.<sup>134</sup>

Another possibility U.S. planners must consider is a protracted crisis. Democracies do not handle long-term conflicts well, and the United States has an international reputation for

its desire to get in, get done, and get out. The PRC would be at an advantage in an extended crisis situation where the United States would have to deploy resources to the region over an extended period, without the crisis ever rising to a level that would require military intervention. How the American public, Congress, and American allies would respond to the expense, stress, and impact on the United States to meet its responsibilities in other crisis areas is unclear, but history is not encouraging.

A possible U.S. option relates to China's self-image as a moral exemplar. This both places a limit on how the United States can deal with China and opens a door. The limit is that the United States should neither put China in a position where it is forced to see itself or allow others to see it as acting immorally nor use language that portrays China's behavior toward Taiwan as immoral. At the same time, it might be possible to portray to China what could constitute a settlement of the Taiwan situation that leaves Taiwan separate from China but puts China in a morally favorable light. This would have to be approached cautiously because of China's sovereignty concerns and fears of internal instability, but as a long-term process, it might offer the greatest prospect of enduring peace. One possible path might be to emphasize to China the differences between Taiwan and the Mainland regions that concern it (Tibet, Mongolia and Xinjiang), including democratic development, different economic system, and separate history. Taiwan would have to be encouraged at the same time to accept the status quo with its lack of "international space" for the foreseeable future in order to ease domestic pressure on Chinese leaders to act against the island. To be successful, a policy of this type would have to maintain the status quo for several generations in hope Chinese irredentism would moderate over time.

Deterrence theory suggests that effective deterrence requires understanding the motivation and degree of determination of our adversary. Christensen says the United States should "determine the pressure points to which Chinese leadership will respond."<sup>135</sup> Applying this to China's

expressed concern about national sovereignty and territorial integrity, the threat to encourage separatist movements within Mainland China would strike at a point of expressed Chinese interest and concern. It would also be relatively inexpensive and unlikely to result in a direct U.S.-PRC military confrontation. The downside of this option is that the potential deterrer needs to be able to turn off the threat as readily as he turns the threat on. This threat would require major preparation to implement and it could easily outpace the U.S. ability to control or halt it. This option would also be constrained by American law governing covert operations and domestic opinion when the operation became public knowledge.

A final possibility, one whose application in this case is unclear, would be to make a conquered Taiwan appear much less valuable to China than it now does. This seems to be difficult to implement because China's greatest perceived benefit is territorial control, not economic resources or strategic position. Given Taiwan's rugged interior and history of guerrilla activity against occupiers, well-publicized preparations for such operations and a discreet American expression of readiness to encourage and even assist them would warn China it could be entering into a situation that could slowly bleed its resources in the way Vietnam did the United States and Afghanistan did the Soviet Union. But would this threat deter China? Probably not.

## JAPAN'S ROLE

More than half a century after its defeat in World War II, Japan remains in an awkward position in East Asia. Despite its peace constitution, relatively small military, and weakened economy, Japan's neighbors have not forgotten its modern imperialist history and continue to fear the possibilities of a remilitarized Japan. Given the right circumstances, Japan has the strong scientific and economic foundation to quickly develop a powerful military. Japan has its own regional concerns, not the least of which is a potentially powerful China. Chinese success in the Taiwan Strait would only increase the PRC's

regional power and the danger to Japan.

For Japan, the best option is continuation of the status quo, both in the China-Taiwan relationship and in the Japanese-American relationship. While the mutual security treaty and more recent security guidelines generate obligations on Japan's part, they also protect Japan from the need to create a powerful military along with the regional reaction this would engender.

Conflict in the Taiwan Strait would be a nightmare for Japan. It would force Japan to choose between its U.S. alliance and the strategic benefit of a nonhostile relationship with China. Freeman believes this dilemma would lead many Japanese to advocate developing an independent defense force to pursue Japan's strategic interests.<sup>136</sup> Because of lingering anti-Japanese feelings in China, any direct Japanese involvement in a Taiwan crisis would likely exacerbate the crisis and even provoke escalation.<sup>137</sup>

Since the 1950s, Japan's leaders have conducted foreign policy in the shadow of World War II. The rising generation of Japanese leaders was born after the war, feels no guilt for it, and appears less inclined to be tolerant of China.<sup>138</sup> They resent China's policy of manipulating the guilt feelings of the Japanese people. They are also taking a close look at the United States-Japan security alliance. While the alliance is less costly and less threatening to Japan's neighbors than other options, it brings with it the domestic consequences of having 47,000 American military personnel stationed in Japan and is a source of contention on the southern island of Okinawa where most of the United States personnel are based.

The Japanese Self-Defense Force is a small but modern military. If Japan chose an independent course in foreign and security affairs, it could quickly become the peer of any regional power (other than in size). Japan's missile program could be militarized to provide long-range ballistic missiles, and Japan has the technology, although probably not the will, to develop nuclear weapons. This option is not in Japan's interest. A nuclear weapons program would meet with strong domestic resistance and considerably



increase tensions in the region.

## CONCLUSION

The Taiwan Strait has the potential to involve the United States in war with China within the decade. This is not only because the United States has interests in the East Asia-Pacific region that are contrary to those of China, but also because the current status of Taiwan focuses key American and Chinese interests in a way that demonstrates their incompatibility. The tension has existed for 50 years without war, but the past is no guarantee of the future. The leaders of the PRC appear to take the possibility of war more seriously than do American leaders and are preparing for that eventuality. There is the distinct possibility that the United States and Taiwan are preparing for a different type of military crisis than the PRC may be planning. The more this is true, the less successful will be deterrence efforts.

Part of the complexity the United States faces is its historical attachment to Taiwan, "a place that Americans ought to like."<sup>139</sup> In a part of the world populated by dictatorships and often failed democracies, Taiwan has progressed in less than 15 years from a reactionary dictatorship to a government where the opposition party won the most recent presidential election. It has a strong economy, vibrant society, and a range of freedoms. Taiwan offers a model for other Asian states, and that makes China uncomfortable.

Most parties would prefer the status quo to continue. This worked well through the late 1980s, but political and economic developments have upset it. As a result, China and Taiwan no longer understand the status quo in precisely the same way. The new dynamic threatens regional stability because China faces the possibility of Taiwan following a separate path. Acquiescing in this would be political suicide for China's leaders.

Most discussion of the Taiwan situation emphasizes the military elements. These are important, but not the most important. The military emphasis avoids the hard work of developing nonmilitary options acceptable to all

the parties involved. This will not be an easy job, but it is essential. Just as strategists attempt to "think outside the box" to develop better military solutions, so too will policymakers have to think unconventionally about Taiwan to find creative possibilities short of war.

The U.S. military has been planning and wargaming conflict in the Taiwan Strait. The question is whether it has been preparing for the right conflict. When deterrence breaks down, the courses of action the United States has been preparing for will not necessarily be the ones China chooses. China would prefer to gain control of Taiwan in a way that provides the United States no rationale for intervening and every incentive not to. American leaders should consider now how they might respond then, instead of waiting for a fait accompli. It is essential to convince Chinese decisionmakers to remember Pearl Harbor, not "Blackhawk Down," when they think about American willingness to fight. At the same time, U.S. and Taiwanese leaders should remember other, no less crucial lessons of Pearl Harbor.

China has many advantages when it comes to conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Geography is obvious, but probably even greater is timing. Unless Taiwan for some reason decides to take the initiative, China can decide when to act, how to act, and even where to act. The ideal time for China would be when the United States is distracted by conflict in some other part of the world (e.g., Israel, the Persian Gulf, the Balkans) and has deployed significant forces to deal with that conflict.

In a war over Taiwan, everyone will lose, but some will lose more than others. The military and economic cost will be high. Diplomatic and political repercussions are unclear, but they will be negative. The consequence of the PRC forcibly gaining control over Taiwan without an American response might be even more serious because of the regional military and political repercussions. China's stated interests are such that, barring an unexpected and imaginative resolution of the tension in the area, deterrence will almost certainly fail in the long run. The

United States will be able to delay Chinese action against Taiwan through much of this decade, but it will not be able to deter China indefinitely. This is because China does not believe American interests and commitment match those of China. The United States needs to clearly define and explain its national interests relating to Taiwan, both to the American public and to China's leaders.

The best situation for all parties would be an indefinite continuation of the status quo and of the American policy of strategic ambiguity. The former is unlikely, but the latter is possible. It will require close coordination between the American executive and legislative branches, careful consideration of the military and political consequences of developing and deploying a missile defense system to the region, continued visible American military presence in the region, and encouragement to the PRC and Taiwan to explore unconventional options for settling the future status of Taiwan. One such option would be to build on China's self-image as a moral exemplar state.

For the United States, gaining a better understanding of how China views itself and its place in the world is a necessary starting point. U.S. policymakers also need to consider how their words and actions appear to Chinese and Taiwanese leaders. What the Americans intend from their historical and cultural perspective is not necessarily what the Chinese see from theirs. At the same time, Americans should educate the Chinese on the extent of American interests in the region and the Taiwanese on the limits of those interests. No less important is recognizing the many Chinese misperceptions about the United States and seeking to correct them. Planners will need to take these misperceptions into account because they can increase political friction and lead to military conflict. The most serious misperception is that the United States is actively seeking to weaken China and subvert its government, and that every U.S. action in the region is directed toward this end.<sup>140</sup>

Assuming no Taiwanese misstep, the crucial variable regarding conflict in the Taiwan Strait

is the perception of Chinese leaders. Therefore, recognizing Chinese interests concerning Taiwan, U.S. leaders must make clear U.S. interests in the area and American willingness to go to war to defend them—without compromising the strategic ambiguity that has been central to U.S. policy in the region since 1950. This should be balanced by encouraging China to see the advantages, especially economic, that derive from the status quo. The greatest dangers are for Chinese political and military leaders to come to believe they have more control over the situation than they actually do, or for them to become convinced that they have run out of options. There will be some situations in which China believes the time is right for action and it has the advantage, but can be convinced otherwise. Under other conditions, however, the cost becomes irrelevant and nothing will deter China from taking military action against Taiwan.

## ENDNOTES

1. In this study, PRC or China designates that nation which the United States, the United Nations, and most of the world's countries recognize as China. The government of the Republic of China and the island it is primarily located on will be called Taiwan. While this study focuses on the U.S.-PRC-Taiwan relationship, it is important to remember that Taiwan is not the only point of disagreement between the PRC and the United States; neither is it the only point with the potential for military involvement.

2. Frank Carlucci, Robert Hunter, and Zalmay Khalilzad, "Taking Charge: A Bipartisan Report to the President Elect on Foreign Policy and National Security," Santa Monica: RAND, 2000, p. 22. See also Andrew Scobell, "Show of Force: Chinese Soldiers, Statesmen, and the 1995-1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis," *Political Science Quarterly*, No. 115, 2000, p. 228, for a report of a similar conclusion from PRC analysts.

3. Su Ge, "Sino-American Relations: Climbing High to See Afar," *Xiandai Guoji Guanxi*, September 2001, as found on the U.S.-China Commission website, <http://www.uscc.gov>, on November 6, 2002.

4. Richard K. Betts and Thomas J. Christensen, "China: Getting the Questions Right," *National Interest*, No. 62, Winter 2000/2001, p. 17.

5. Denny Roy, "Tensions in the Taiwan Strait," *Survival*, No. 42, 2000, p. 78.

6. I am indebted to Alan Wachman for the language to make this distinction between delaying and deterring clear.

7. See, for example, Gao Fuqiu, "The Real Purpose of the American March into Central Asia," *Liaowing*, May 10, 2002, as found on the U.S.-China Commission website, <http://www.uscc.gov>, on November 6, 2002. Su warns that the PRC will not permit Taiwan's status as part of China to change.

8. I am indebted to Andrew Scobell for emphasizing to me the PRC's self-image as an international moral leader.

9. Scobell agrees with this assessment that Taiwan became a Chinese irredentist concern only near the end of the civil war when it appeared Chiang Kai-shek would make his final stand there. See Andrew Scobell, "Taiwan as Macedonia? Strait Tension as a Syndrome," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, No. 21, 1998, p. 200.

10. Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Secretary of Defense, August 17, 1949, in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949*, Vol. IX: China, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974, pp. 376-378.

11. Memo by George Kennan, July 6, 1949, in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949*, Vol. IX: The Far East: China, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974, pp. 356-358.

12. Memorandum from W. W. Butterworth to Dean Rusk, dated June 9, 1949; memorandum by George Kennan, dated July 6, 1949; and a detailed action plan from Kennan's office, dated June 23, 1949, all in *Foreign Relations of the United States 1949*, Vol. IX: The Far East: China, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1974, pp. 347, 356-358, 359-364. By the following May, these proposals were making their way to Secretary of State Dean Acheson.

13. Hao Yufan and Zhai Zhihai, "China's Decision to Enter the Korean War: History Revisited," *China Quarterly*, No. 121, 1990, p. 115.

14. Cited in Jaw-ling Joanne Chang, "Lessons from the Taiwan Relations Act," *Orbis*, No. 44, 2000, p. 69.

15. While some analysts have viewed the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait crisis as much ado about nothing, others have pointed out that the Chinese actions of missile tests near Taiwan's major ports and wargames portraying an invasion and U.S. response of deploying two carrier battle groups could all too easily have resulted in hostilities.

16. Alan Wachman, *Challenges and Opportunities in the Taiwan Strait: Defining America's Role*, China Policy Series, No. 17, New York: National Committee on U.S.-China

Relations, 2001, p. 27.

17. Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995. Scobell has suggested both the Confucian-Mencian and *realpolitik* approaches are operative and interactive, combining dialectically. This could explain how China can display realism while at the same time claiming the moral high ground. Scobell made his suggestion at a conference on "The Rise of China: Security Implications" in Chapel Hill, NC, March 2-3, 2001.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 256-257.

19. Andrew Scobell, *China and Strategic Culture*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2002, p. 3.

20. *Ibid.*

21. In his *China Debates the Future Security Environment*, Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2000, pp. xv, 39, Michael Pillsbury applies this to the U.S.-PRC relationship and comments in particular that China seems to assume other nations share its view about the future use of military force. Interestingly, however, while the PRC sees itself as a peace-loving nation, it views the United States as guided by *realpolitik*. This makes it very difficult to take the expression of "soft" American interests regarding Taiwan seriously. It also means not only that China sees itself as peace-loving, but also expects other nations to see it this way despite any actions to the contrary.

22. Most of the insights in this paragraph come from Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

23. The EP-3E incident of early April 2001 is a perfect example of Chinese and Americans viewing an event solely in terms of what had been done to them with hardly a thought about how the other side saw things or why it did so.

24. Ezra F. Vogel, "Current U.S.-China Relations," *Harvard China Review*, No. 2, Spring/Summer 2000, pp. 21-22.

25. Phillip C. Saunders, "China's America Watchers: Changing Attitudes Towards the United States," *China Quarterly*, No. 161, 2000, pp. 50-51.

26. John W. Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997, pp. 150-151.

27. Richard Halloran, "Who's the Sleeping Tiger Now? US?" *Boston Globe*, September 10, 2000, p. F2. Halloran was

specifically addressing the U.S.-China-Taiwan relationship and challenging the widespread misperception that the United States is afraid to suffer casualties under any circumstance.

28. Richard Sobol at a discussion of his new book, *The Impact of Public Opinion on U.S. Foreign Policy Since Vietnam*, at the Harvard COOP Bookstore, March 12, 2001.

29. Statement of Zhu Xianlong in *Zhongguo Pinglun*, March 5, 1999, p. 88, quoted in Roy, "Tensions in the Taiwan Strait," p. 88. See also Andrew J. Nathan, "China's Goals in the Taiwan Strait," *China Journal*, No. 36, 1996, p. 90.

30. See Phillip C. Saunders, "Project Strait Talk: Security and Stability in the Taiwan Strait," Center for Nonproliferation Studies, Monterey: Monterey Institute of International Studies, July 2000, pp. 5, 6.

31. Desmond Ball, "Strategic Culture in the Asian-Pacific Region," *Security Studies*, No. 3, 1993, pp. 63-64.

32. Saunders, p. 9.

33. Interview with Alan Wachman at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, February 8, 2001. Dr. Wachman was one of the academics involved in the conversation.

34. Vogel, pp. 21-22.

35. Garver, p. 147.

36. *Ibid.*

37. Alastair Iain Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992: A First Cut at the Data," *China Quarterly*, No. 153, 1998, p. 2.

38. Although some regard the PRC as a status quo state and the United States as a revolutionary state with regard to Taiwan.

39. I will discuss scenarios for surprise attack and Chinese strategic culture in later sections.

40. Andrew Scobell, *Show of Force: The PLA and the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis, America's Alliances with Japan and Korea*, Stanford, CA: Asia-Pacific Center, Stanford University, 1999, p. 16.

41. Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the PRC State Council, "The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue," (issued February 21, 2000), *Asian Affairs*, No. 27, February 21, 2000, pp. 37-53.

42. During an interview by Charles Gibson on *Good*

*Morning, America*, President Bush said the United States would do whatever it takes to defend Taiwan against a Chinese attack. This was carefully qualified within hours, and the United States has since reaffirmed its support for a "One-China" policy on many occasions.

43. William J. Clinton, *A National Security Strategy for a Global Age*, Washington, DC: The White House, December 2000, p. 51.

44. George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Washington, DC: The White House, September 2002, pp. 3, 27, 28. The language of commitment to Taiwan's self-defense is vague and appears to be a retreat in the direction of strategic ambiguity from President Bush's April 2001 commitment to do "whatever it takes" to defend Taiwan.

45. Jacob K. Javits, "Congress and Foreign Relations: The Taiwan Relations Act," *Foreign Affairs*, No. 60, Fall 1981, p. 59.

46. Ralph N. Clough, *Reaching Across the Taiwan Strait: People-to-People Diplomacy*, Boulder: Westview, 1993, p. 187.

47. Aaron L. Friedberg, "The Struggle for Mastery in Asia," *Commentary*, No. 110, November 2000, p. 17. At the IFPA-Fletcher-USMC Security Conference on "Expeditionary Solutions for a Gordian World" on March 26, 2001, in Cambridge, MA, Ambassador Stephen Bosworth said if an East Asian state achieved regional hegemonic status, U.S. vital interests would be very much affected. William Perry, then Secretary of Defense, says that in March 1996, then National Security Advisor Anthony Lake told a delegation of senior Chinese officials that the United States has vital national security interests in the western Pacific and the ongoing Chinese missile firings threatened those interests. See Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, *Preventative Defense: A New Security Strategy for America*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institute, 1999, pp. 96-97.

48. Kurt Campbell, in a luncheon presentation at MIT's Security Studies Program, November 1, 2000.

49. Sandy Berger, National Security Adviser during the second Clinton administration, at Harvard's JFK School of Government, on March 12, 2001. Governments like that of the PRC often find it difficult to understand and respond to the American habit of making its national values part of its international relations—especially when these would appear to be detrimental to U.S. national interest narrowly defined. Yet given the right set of circumstances, the PRC would respond to Taiwan in a way other nations might consider irrational and contrary to its national interest.

50. Gary Klintworth, "China and Taiwan—From Flashpoint to Redefining China," Research Paper 15, 2000-

2001, *Foreign Affairs*, Defence and Trade Group, Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library, November 7, 2000, p. 19, downloaded from <http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/2000-01/01rp15>. Klintworth is skeptical of Chinese interest in and the possibility of war in the Taiwan Strait "in the foreseeable future" (p. 27).

51. Douglas Porch, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996: Strategic Implications for the United States Navy," *Naval War College Review*, No. 52, 1999, p. 29.

52. Ephraim Kam, *Surprise Attack: The Victim's Perspective*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988, p. 71.

53. Recent reports suggest that both the PRC and Taiwan have not completely integrated the weaponry they possess. In addition, the PRC pilots do not appear to be well-trained or to receive sufficient flying hours each year to maintain proficiency. Taiwan has been reported to suffer from a lack of pilots for its latest generation fighters because many pilots leave the air force to fly for the airlines.

54. Department of Defense, "Report to Congress Pursuant to Public Law 106-113," December 18, 2000, downloaded from *DefenseLink* at [http://www.defenselink.mil/twstrait\\_12182000.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/twstrait_12182000.html) on December 20, 2000.

55. Michael Pillsbury, "China's Military Strategy Toward the U.S.: A View from Open Sources," November 2, 2001, p. 4, as found on the U.S.-China Commission website, <http://www.uscc.gov>, on November 6, 2002.

56. Secretary of Defense, "The Security Situation in the Taiwan Strait: Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY99 Appropriations Bill," February 26, 1999, p. 20, downloaded from [Defenselink.mil/pubs/twstrait\\_02261999.html](http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/twstrait_02261999.html). Absence of third-party intervention is a very big if, but I am skeptical whether the PRC will be able to conduct a successful invasion as early as 2005.

57. Chong-pin Lin, "The Military Balance in the Taiwan Straits," *China Quarterly*, No. 146, 1996, p. 594.

58. Mark A. Stokes, *China's Strategic Modernization: Implications for the United States*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1999, p. 145.

59. Jason D. Ellis and Todd M. Koca, "China Rising: New Challenges to the U.S. Security Posture," Strategic Forum No. 175, Institute for National Security Studies, Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2000, p. 7.

60. Office of the Secretary of Defense, "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China," June 2000, p. 21, downloaded from <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/JUN2000/chin0622200> on

November 27, 2000.

61. For an excellent overview of China's Information Warfare program, see Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Information Warfare: A Phantom Menace or Emerging Threat?* Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2002.

62. Timothy L. Thomas, "Like Adding Wings to a Tiger: Chinese Information War Theory and Practice," Ft. Leavenworth, KS: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2001, p. 2, downloaded from <http://call.army.mil/call/fmso/fmsopubs/issues/China> on February 1, 2001.

63. Stokes, p. 137.

64. James Mulvenon, "The PLA and Information Warfare," p. 176, in James Mulvenon, ed., *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1999. Mulvenon also notes that PRC military planners tend to view IW as a preemptive weapon (p. 183) which would make it especially attractive in a Taiwan scenario.

65. See Yu Chuanxin, "A Few Issues Concerning Logistic Support for the Cross-strait Amphibious Landing Operation," *Journal of Military Economics Studies*, January 15, 2001, p. 1, as found in translation on the U.S.-China Commission website, <http://www.uscc.gov> on November 6, 2002.

66. Pillsbury, "China's Military Strategy Toward the U.S.," p. 4. As Pillsbury notes, it is unclear how much influence this group has on PRC military policymaking.

67. Pillsbury quotes a People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) officer as writing that instead of going head to head with U.S. Navy combatants, the PLAN should concentrate on attacking American naval command and control, information systems, and logistics because these are the minimally protected weak links in the system. See Pillsbury, "China's Military Strategy Toward the U.S.," pp. 10-11.

68. Pillsbury, "China's Military Strategy Toward the U.S.," pp. 9-10.

69. Timothy L. Thomas, "China's Technological Stratagems," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, No. 12, December 2000, p. 39.

70. Institute for National Security Studies, "Final Report of Pacific Symposium 2000: Asian Perspectives on the Challenges of China, March 7-8, 2000," Washington, DC: National Defense University, 2000, p. 3, downloaded from the NDU website on October 9, 2000.

71. Tom Donnelly, "Dire Strait," *Jane's Defense Weekly*, No. 35, March 14, 2001, p. 26.

72. David A. Shlapak, David T. Orlesky, and Barry A. Wilson, *Dire Strait? Aspects of the China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2000, pp. 51-54.

73. Thomas J. Christensen, "Theater Missile Defense and Taiwan's Security," *Orbis*, No. 44, 2000, p. 83.

74. Taiwan's battlefield information technology—i.e., its command, control, communications, computers, and intelligence (C4I)—is one of the most sophisticated in the world and certainly superior to anything likely to be possessed by China in the near or medium term." Gary Klintworth, "Chinese Defense Modernization and the Security of Taiwan," in Jonathan D. Pollock and Richard H. Yang, eds., *In China's Shadow: Regional Perspectives on Chinese Foreign Policy and Military Development*, Santa Monica: RAND, 1998, p. 160.

75. Mark A. Stokes, "China's Military Space and Conventional Theater Missile Development: Implications for Security in the Taiwan Strait," in Susan M. Puska, ed., *People's Liberation Army after Next*, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2000, p. 151. Along the same line, Gary Klintworth writes, "China's missile posturing thus far has only succeeded in pushing Taiwan towards acquiring missile defences either from within its own impressive technological resources or by enlisting support from the U.S.," p. 19.

76. "White Paper: China's National Defense in 2000," October 16, 2000, p. 10, downloaded from the China Internet Information Center at <http://www.china.org.cn/english/2791.htm> on October 17, 2000.

77. Johnston, "China's Militarized Interstate Dispute Behaviour 1949-1992: A First Cut at the Data," pp. 6-7, 28-29.

78. "'Reasonable' Western thinking finds it very difficult to accept that there are some conflicts which cannot be 'settled' other than by brute force." Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1979, p. 55.

79. Americans forget that other countries have the same problem in dealing with the United States, where domestic concerns often take priority over what would otherwise be pressing foreign policy matters and can lead to foreign policy decisions that make no sense if one does not know the domestic influences at work.

80. I have drawn much of what I say about deterrence theory from Edward Rhoades, "Conventional Deterrence," *Comparative Strategy* 19, 2000, p. 221-253; and Keith B. Payne, *Deterrence in the Second Nuclear Age*, Lexington, DC: University of Kentucky Press, 1996. For attempts to apply deterrence theory to China, I am indebted to Robert S. Ross,

Shu Guang Zhang, and Abram N. Shulsky, among others. The conclusions with respect to China, however, are my own.

81. Abram N. Shulsky, *Deterrence Theory and Chinese Behavior*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2000, p. 17.

82. This is not only a matter of applying moral standards to deterrence; I believe a grossly disproportional threat is likely to lack credibility. Such a threat therefore would be neither moral nor a deterrent. My assumption here is that we should apply Just War criteria to deterrence in the same way we do (or should do) to war itself. After all, when deterrence fails, war is usually the result. I recognize that for many this assumption creates a difficulty in regard to nuclear deterrence, but that is all the more reason to inject moral criteria at the beginning of the process instead of appending them as an afterthought.

83. Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960, pp. 109-110.

84. Shu Guang Zhang, *Deterrence and Strategic Culture: Chinese-American Confrontations, 1949-1958*, Ithaca: Cornell University, 1992, pp. 272, 274.

85. Rhoades, pp. 222, 228.

86. *Ibid.*, pp. 234-238.

87. Payne, p. 79.

88. Rhoades, p. 243.

89. Robert Jervis, quoted in Rhoades, p. 238.

90. Rhoades, p. 239.

91. "Because it is the challenger who ultimately chooses whether to be deterred but who cannot be controlled predictably, no deterrer, including the United States, can establish deterrence policies that it can be confident are 'ensured' or 'conclusive'." Payne, p. 121.

92. Shulsky, p. 36. Although Jiang Zemin no longer heads the Chinese Communist Party, he remains chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission and has packed the new Politburo Standing Committee with his supporters, limiting the flexibility of Hu Jintao.

93. Shulsky, pp. 35, 38-39.

94. Denny Roy, *China's Foreign Relations*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, p. 217.

95. See Zalmay Khalilzad, et al., *The United States and a*

*Rising China*, Santa Monica: RAND, 1999, p. 85; and Alistair Iain Johnston, "China's New 'Old Thinking'," *International Security*, No. 20, Winter 1995/96, p. 21.

96. Robert S. Ross, "The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation: Coercion, Credibility, and the Use of Force," *International Security*, No. 25, 2000, p. 104.

97. I agree with Betts and Christensen, p. 28, about this. China will use all available military, economic, and political options to achieve its goal.

98. See, for example, Roy, "Tensions in the Taiwan Strait," p. 78.

99. Although Jiang Zemin no longer heads the Chinese Communist Party, he remains chairman of the powerful Central Military Commission and has packed the new Politburo Standing Committee with his supporters, limiting the flexibility of Hu Jintao. As a matter of interest that may or may not be significant, Jiang Zimen is reported to admire the Qin Emperor Kangxi. Kangxi was an empire builder who expanded China's boundaries to its greatest extent and forcibly incorporated Taiwan into the empire. He "combined 'force' and 'enticement' to defeat the then independent regime of Taiwan." Alan P. L. Liu, "A Convenient Crisis: Looking behind Beijing's Threats Against Taiwan," *Issues & Studies*, No. 36, September/October 2000, pp. 118-119.

100. Eric A. McVadon, "The Chinese Military and the Peripheral States in the 21st Century: A Security Tour d'Horizon," in Larry M. Wortzel, ed., *The Chinese Armed Forces in the 21st Century*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 1999, p. 34.

101. "Taiwan's domestic political development is gradually pulling the island away from reunification with China. Leaders in Beijing remain uncertain as how to respond, but know their nationalist agenda gives them little scope for compromise," Bernice Lee, *The Security Implications of the New Taiwan*, Adelphi Paper 331, International Institute for Strategic Studies, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 53.

102. Shulsky, p. 46.

103. "Top Envoy Says China Willing to Disarm: Proposal Hinges on U.S. Reduction of Military Assistance," *Taiwan News*, November 22, 2002, downloaded from Taiwan Security Research website on November 30, 2002.

104. Roy, "Tensions in the Taiwan Strait," p. 90; and interview with Dr. Leif Rosenberger at CINCPAC headquarters, November 13, 2000.

105. Wachman, pp. 17-18.

106. "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill." Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Samuel B. Griffith, trans., New York: Oxford University Press, 1963, p. 77. Those who understand this as the essence of Sun Tzu's advice forget that it is surrounded by several hundred other sentences about how to fight wars, campaigns, and battles.

107. Robert G. Sutter, *Chinese Policy Priorities for the United States*, Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, pp. 197-198.

108. See note 103 above. Because the United States is Taiwan's sole supplier of major weapons systems, such a deal would not only harm Taiwan's ability to defend itself, but would also call into question the firmness of the U.S. commitment to support Taiwan's self-defense. It would also appear to violate the Taiwan Relations Act.

109. China observed that the 1991 Persian Gulf War required the United States to shift a significant portion of its combat and logistical resources from East Asia to the Gulf region. This seems to have convinced the Chinese that the United States cannot fight and win major regional conflicts in both areas at the same time.

110. Mark Burles and Abram N. Shulsky, *Patterns in China's Use of Force: Evidence from History and Doctrinal Writings*, Santa Monica: RAND, 1999, p. 17.

111. Maria Hsia Chang, "The Future of Taiwan-Mainland Relations," in Bih-jaw Lin and James T. Myers, eds., *Contemporary China and the Changing International Community*, Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994, p. 212. The 2002 China Security Review Commission report says Taiwan officials estimate the island could last only 120 days before it would require resupply of essential materials (chapter 8).

112. Robert S. Ross, "The 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis: Lessons for the United States, China, and Taiwan," *Security Dialogue*, No. 27, 1996, p. 468.

113. Jianxiang Bi, "Managing Taiwan Operations in the Twenty-first Century: Issues and Options," *Naval War College Review*, No. 52, 1999, p. 38.

114. The closest I can find to this position is Zalmay Khalilzad, "Congage China," RAND Issue Paper, Santa Monica: RAND, 1999, p. 3.

115. Eric Lichblau, "CIA Warns of Chinese Plans for Cyber-Attacks on U.S.," *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 2002, as downloaded from the Taiwan Security Research website on December 2, 2002.

116. But "Taiwan also has taken extensive measures to protect its most sensitive government and financial

information against intruders." James H. Anderson, "Tensions Across the Strait: China's Military Options Against Taiwan Short of War," Background Executive Summary, Washington, DC: Heritage Foundation, 1999, p. 5.

117. In *China's New Rulers*, however, Andrew Nathan quotes three members of the fourth generation of PRC leaders as believing growing economic and cultural ties will inevitably draw Taiwan to the Mainland, Chen Shui-bian and the Democratic Progressive Party are passing phenomena, and the language of Taiwanese independence is an American plot. See Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley, *China's New Rulers: The Secret Files*, New York: New York Review of Books, 2002, pp. 216 ff. In a September 2002 study, the Atlantic Council reached much the same conclusion. It said China's leaders now believe that the rapidly increasing investment in the Mainland by Taiwanese businessmen is the first step toward the eventual incorporation of Taiwan into China. See also Charles Snyder, "Beijing Now Thinks Time on its Side, Report Says," *Taipei Times*, September 6, 2002, as downloaded from the Taiwan Security Research website on December 2, 2002.

118. A recent Chinese analysis of the effect of a missile attack on Taiwan was very optimistic. This same analysis was negative about Taiwan's wartime logistics capability, the willingness of Taiwanese to fight to defend their island, and the reliability of the United States. While much of the published analysis may be for propaganda purposes (i.e., IW), some PRC leaders may really believe it. See Zhu Xianlong, "An Analysis of Taiwan's Actual Military Strength," *People's Daily*, August 16, 2002, as downloaded from the Taiwan Security Research website on December 2, 2002.

119. Shlapak, Orlesky, and Wilson, p. 60.

120. Garver, p. 97.

121. Interview of Nicholas Kristof at Harvard's John F. Kennedy School of Government on October 4, 2000.

122. Michael O'Hanlon, "Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan," *International Security*, No. 25, 2000, p. 83.

123. John Garver says, "China's nuclear signaling during 1995-96 was designed to tell Washington and the American populace that China was determined to proceed with its coercion of Taiwan and that U.S. intervention would result in a Sino-U.S. war that would be open-ended, very costly, and difficult to conclude." Garver, p. 133. An attendee at the March 2001 conference on "The Rise of China," fearful that China shows insufficient responsibility in the way it uses its nuclear status, commented that during the Cold War, no Soviet leader ever threatened nuclear attack on specific American cities if the United States intervened conventionally in a conflict the Soviet Union

was interested in.

124. China Security Review Commission, Report to the Congress of the United States, July 2002, Chapter 1, downloaded from <http://www.uscc.gov> on October 28, 2002.

125. Associated Press, "Taiwan Might 'Walk Down Our Own Taiwanese Road,'" July 23, 2002, downloaded from the Taiwan Security Research website on December 2, 2002; and Keith Bradsher, "Defying China, Taiwan's Leader Backs a Vote on Sovereignty," *New York Times*, August 4, 2002, downloaded from the New York Times website on August 5, 2002. The PRC responded sharply to Chen's comments while the United States warned Taiwan against violating the "one-China" understanding and the PRC against taking military action against Taiwan.

126. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, "China-Taiwan: U.S. Debates and Policy Choices," *Survival*, No. 40, Winter 1998-99, p. 160.

127. Both China and Taiwan recognize American intervention almost certainly would be in support of Taiwan, the only questions being the nature and extent of that intervention.

128. Central News Agency, Taipei, "Poll Shows Americans Would Oppose Using Troops to Defend Taiwan," February 14, 2001, downloaded from the Taiwan Security Research homepage on February 22, 2001. The poll found 51 percent opposed and 37 percent in favor, but the report did not provide the questions asked or explain clearly how the survey was conducted. From my reading of the story, the survey does not appear to have been a scientific random sampling. Other reports have suggested greater American support, especially if the PRC attack were unprovoked and the U.S. president offered a clear and compelling statement of American interest in the outcome.

129. Associated Press report dated November 26, 2002, as downloaded from the Taiwan Security Research website on December 7, 2002.

130. "Even without formal obligations, many in the region think of Washington as Taipei's friend and patron, and might question their own relations with the United States if it stood aside." Tucker, p. 153.

131. Charles W. Freeman, Jr., "Same Strait, Different Memories," in Gerret W. Gong, ed., *Remembering and Forgetting: The Legacy of War and Peace in East Asia*, Washington, DC: Center for Strategic & International Studies, 1996. p. 59.

132. China Security Review Commission, Report to the Congress of the United States, July 2002, chapter 8, downloaded from <http://www.uscc.gov> on October 28, 2002.



133. Burles and Shulsky, p. vii.
134. See Shlapak, Orlesky, and Wilson, p. xxi.
135. Ellis and Koca, p. 7.
136. Freeman, "Same Strait, Different Memories," p. 59.
137. Thomas J. Christensen, "China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia," *International Security*, No. 23, 1999, p. 67.
138. Qingxin Ken Wong, "Taiwan in Japan's Relations with China and the United States after the Cold War," *Pacific Affairs*, No. 73, 2000, p. 360.
139. Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro, *The Coming Conflict with China*, New York: Vintage, 1998, p. 149.
140. Michael Pillsbury, "Dangerous Chinese Misperceptions: The Implications for DOD," Washington, DC: Department of Defense Office of Net Assessment, 1998, pp. 2, 4.