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Defending Taiwan
U.S. Pacific Command's Deterrent and Engagement Options

By

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract of

Defending Taiwan: U.S. Pacific Command's Deterrent and Engagement Options

China's military modernization, especially of its missile forces, will soon require the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) to seek proactive alternatives to carrier battle groups in order to continue to deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan. China's asymmetric niche in missile forces requires a determined effort to ensure the balance of power is not tipped to one side.

Due to the military, social, and political change ongoing in the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC), the next crisis across the Taiwan Strait may be less stable than the last one in 1996. As long as the PRC is in a transitional state toward democracy, the propensity for conflict is greater than if the government was stable. This must be closely watched.

USPACOM must lead the way in calling for missile defense systems for U.S. forces and for our allies. In the interim, the objective of deterrence must be achieved through credibility, communication, and coercion when it is necessary. This can only be accomplished by increasing the current level of Sino-U.S. military engagement. A sustained program of more bilateral exercises, military-to-military contacts at decreasing levels of seniority, and service school educational opportunities can be a positive approach to shaping the future of Sino-U.S. relations. By proving to the PRC that the United States is not a paper tiger, U.S. strength would serve as a credible deterrent to Chinese aggression across the Taiwan Strait.

In this case, time is on the side of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States must be ready and able to provide that time.

When the word of a crisis breaks out in Washington, it's no accident that the first question that comes to everyone's lips is: 'Where's the nearest carrier?'
- President Bill Clinton¹

President Clinton has twice adhered to his own words during Taiwan Strait crises. In May 1995, Lee Teng-hui, President of the Republic of China (ROC), was allowed to 'unofficially visit' Cornell University as the graduation speaker. Subsequently, China conducted live-fire missile exercises in the air and sea lines of communication between Japan and Taiwan in July-August 1995. The U.S. response of transiting U.S.S. Nimitz (CVN-68) through the Taiwan Strait did not occur until mid-December. This delay allowed China to expand its military coercion prior to the Taiwanese presidential election.² In March 1996, the Peoples' Liberation Army (PLA) launched a large-scale missile exercise followed by two waves of amphibious exercises simulating an assault on Taiwan. This spurred the United States to action. It was felt that one carrier battle group would be only a symbolic gesture, but two would provide a real capability to deter further Chinese action. To that end, the U.S.S. Independence (CV-62) and the U.S.S. Nimitz Battle Groups were sent to the area, but remained out of the Taiwan Strait. While both sides used restraint to avoid escalation, China demonstrated it was not overly intimidated by the U.S. forces and continued the exercise until weather forced an end.³ In the first instance, the United States response was too little and too late. In the second case, immediate response on a scale not seen in Asia since the Vietnam War only resulted in partial deterrence and showed that the United States could not easily prevent China from closing the Taiwan Strait and possibly damaging Taiwan's economy.⁴ In both cases, the United States was reacting to Chinese actions.

One of the U.S. national security objectives is "peaceful resolution of cross-Strait issues and encouraging dialogue between Beijing and Taipei."⁵ Therefore, it is imperative

that the United States Pacific Command (USPACOM) develop and maintain a regional strategy of credible deterrence to match the administration's policy. As China attempts to become a larger factor on the world scene and emerges from its self-styled 'century of humiliation,' the United States has a unique opportunity to shape the future. "By helping to sustain a peaceful environment in the Taiwan Strait, the United States gives the various parties time to interact and work through their differences. Through this gradual process peace can perhaps be made permanent."⁶ However, the 'gunboat diplomacy' of sending the carriers as a response to crises may not be sufficient to meet the increasingly rigorous demands of the 21st century. China's military modernization, especially of its missile forces, will soon require USPACOM to seek proactive alternatives to carrier battle groups in order to continue to deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan.

This essay will briefly discuss the background of the 'Taiwan issue' since its complexities require at least a rudimentary knowledge of historical and political context. Then it will provide a scenario-based assessment of the balance of power between the three parties involved and, finally, it will discuss deterrent and engagement alternatives for USPACOM to explore. It will show that a combination of communication, credibility, and subtle coercion are necessary elements of a strategy to maintain deterrence in the Taiwan Strait and allow time for a peaceful resolution of the issues.

The 'Taiwan Issue'

Although Taiwan was incorporated into the Qing dynasty in 1683, the mainland did not establish a provincial government on the island until 1885.⁷ In 1895, at the end of the Sino-Japanese War, Taiwan was ceded to Japan until it was returned in 1945, following World War II. During the Chinese Civil War, Chiang Kai-shek and his forces fled to the

island and established a provisional national government there in 1949. At this point Mao Zedong and the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) controlled the mainland and claimed the island of Taiwan as a province of China. For his part, Chiang claimed the ROC was the legitimate government of all of China, including the mainland, even though he controlled only Taiwan and a few small islands in the Strait. From that point, both the ROC and the PRC required any country that officially recognized them as the legitimate government of China to not recognize the other as a viable state government because there was only 'one China.'⁸ The United Nations officially recognized the PRC in October 1971 and in 1972 President Nixon signed the first Sino-U.S. Joint Communiqué acknowledging the Chinese position that there is 'one China and Taiwan is a part of China.' However, the United States waited until December 1978 to establish diplomatic relations with the PRC and de-recognize the ROC. In 1991, Taiwan unilaterally dropped the requirement for sole recognition and any claim to government of the mainland in an effort to become a more active member of the world community.⁹ From the above chronology one can tell that there have been two separate governments for over 50 years, the mainland and the island have been united for only 4 of the last 100 years (1945-1949), and the PRC has never actually exercised governmental control over Taiwan. Having made that point, however, both sides claim to desire the reunification of China.

The real challenge lies in differences of the definition of 'one China' and in the perception of how to achieve it. For Beijing, 'one China' means Taiwan is simply a subordinate province of the PRC government that will have a special status upon reunification. They say there is "only one China and Taiwan is one part of China."¹⁰ Taiwan says 'one China' should be a unified China under the principles of freedom, democracy and

common prosperity. Although the Taiwanese agree with part of the PRC definition, they stress that the "mainland is also [only] one part of China."¹¹

In a recent White Paper, China indicated it was willing to have 'one country, two systems' to allow Taiwan to keep its democratic government after a peaceful reunification, but did not rule out the use of force to achieve its ends. In fact, the PRC reiterated it would use force if Taiwan declared independence in any way, if Taiwan was invaded or occupied by a third party, or if the Taiwanese refused to negotiate for a peaceful reunification.¹² Although Mao Zedong took the long view and said reunification might take 100 years, it appears the current Chinese President, Jiang Zemin, may not be as patient. While the White Paper says resolution of the situation cannot be postponed indefinitely, a number of China watchers believe a deadline for reunification is approaching between 2007 and 2010.¹³ Regardless of any impending deadline, it is unlikely that a PRC government could remain in power if Taiwan were to succeed in achieving independence.¹⁴ The main dilemma for China is keeping Taiwan from declaring independence without creating a crisis with the United States or undermining its international support.¹⁵

Currently China is in the midst of profound political, economic and social changes that are causing internal strains, which may erode the country's stability.¹⁶ The PLA top military leadership has experienced an almost wholesale turnover since 1995. For the most part, the new leaders are not well traveled, have strong nationalistic tendencies, and either do not understand or do not trust the West.¹⁷ Some scholars are optimistic about the direction China is headed, but the transition period is an extremely challenging time. Formerly autocratic states in the process of becoming more democratic are two-thirds more war prone than either stable autocracies or mature democracies.¹⁸ Leaders who are insecure about their

popular legitimacy tend to mask internal problems by using external conflict to shore up their support at home. Increased tension across the Taiwan Strait could have serious consequences for China and for the Asian region.

Taiwan has a number of legitimate concerns regarding reunification. Taiwan is an economically prosperous, democratic entity with a better quality of life than the mainland. There is a significant danger of Taiwan's economy becoming subsumed by the sheer mass of China and a risk of their democracy being replaced by socialism.¹⁹ The majority of Taiwan residents are opposed to reunification for these reasons, but also do not believe Taiwan would survive PRC retaliation following a declaration of independence.²⁰ Taiwan would like for the PRC to stop threatening to use force, but the PRC feels that removing the threat would result in Taiwan's separation from China. Taiwan claims it wants to unify with the mainland, but not until after the mainland becomes a democracy. The recent election of Chen Shui-bian as Taiwan's next president has increased the rhetoric flowing across the Strait because he is the leader of the Democratic Progressive Party, which has had independence from the mainland as one of its party platforms. Although Chen has had his party remove independence from its platform, his Vice President-elect, Annette Lu, is known to be more liberal and has been more outspoken in the international press.²¹ Chen's speech at his inauguration on May 20, 2000 will set the tone for the immediate future.

From the outset, the United States has been intimately involved in the relationship between the ROC and the PRC. Initially, the United States recognized the ROC as the legitimate government of China and signed a mutual defense treaty to deter the PRC from attacking the island. During the Korean War, the United States directed the Seventh Fleet to protect Taiwan against Communist China as part of the containment policy. Although in

1972 the United States acknowledged the 'one China' position, it was December 1978 before diplomatic relations were established with the PRC. Since this forced the United States to abrogate the mutual defense treaty with the ROC and cut off official recognition of Taiwan as a government, the U.S. Congress subsequently passed the Taiwan Relations Act. This Act essentially says that if an armed attack against Taiwan were to occur, there should be a prompt response from the United States. It also allows for the sale of defensive weapons to Taiwan and recognizes Taiwan as a country for the purposes of U.S. *domestic* law, but not for international law.²² Although there have been a total of three Sino-U.S. Joint Communiqués²³ and six assurances to Taiwan,²⁴ the United States has purposely maintained ambiguity in its position regarding appropriate response to attack on Taiwan. In the words of former U.S. Ambassador to China, Winston Lord, "If we are overly explicit about not using force, Beijing would be tempted to attack Taiwan. If we are overly explicit about using force... Taiwan would be tempted to declare independence."²⁵

Current events are serving to muddy the water even further. President Clinton de-linked human rights issues from talks about China's Most Favored Nation status. Congress is waiting until after the Taiwan Presidential inauguration to vote on Permanent Normal Trading Status, but it appears likely to pass. Simultaneously, the Senate has a hold on the Taiwan Security Enhancement Act that has passed the House. This Act, which is strongly opposed by the PRC, would "eliminate ambiguity and convey with clarity continued United States support for Taiwan."²⁶ It would require a number of military training and engagement issues with Taiwan that the PRC feels would be in violation of the agreements in the three Communiqués. Although the administration has announced it will not sell Arleigh Burke destroyers to Taiwan, the 1999 Defense Authorization Act requires development of a Theater

Missile Defense (TMD) system capable of protecting "key regional allies" in the Asia-Pacific region. This language implies that Taiwan could be under the TMD umbrella.²⁷

"Beijing considers that the heart of the 'Taiwan problem' is not Taiwan's separation from the mainland, but the American role in perpetuating it."²⁸ Since it is difficult for China to understand the issues of a democratic society²⁹ they feel establishment of a democracy on Taiwan is "part of a plot [by the United States] to split China's territory"³⁰ because Taiwan would not want to be democratic left to its own choices. This is a large political disconnect that U.S. leaders must not exacerbate through lack of sensitivity to the problems inconsistent policies can create. Due to the political rhetoric in the United States during an election year, it is possible that USPACOM will be required to provide the burden of continuity for U.S. policy regarding China. The status of Taiwan is quite simply the largest challenge in Sino-U.S. relations. Strategically, the United States is treading a fine line in order to maintain ambiguity on this issue. As long as deterrence works, ambiguity can be maintained; but if there is an escalation to open hostilities there will be little time for choosing sides.

Now that the stage is set, the next step toward recommended actions for USPACOM is a scenario-based assessment of the relative strengths of this tri-partite relationship.

Know the enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered.
- Sun Tzu³¹

China is rightfully proud of its history. The Chinese people revere ancient military philosophers and study their works closely. In large measure, Chinese leaders can be expected to adhere to the principles espoused by ancient masters like Sun Tzu. For that reason, his philosophy can provide a framework of expectations for this assessment. First, "To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."³² The PRC has been attempting

to follow this advice for over 50 years with regard to Taiwan.³³ Time will tell whether they continue to heed it. Second, "Generally in war it is best to take the state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this."³⁴ The PRC wants to keep Taiwan as a province of China and needs Taiwan's prosperity to continue for its own economic well-being. Even in the event of hostilities, China can be expected to limit physical destruction on the island and the use of Weapons of Mass Destruction is highly unlikely. Third, "When he concentrates prepare against him; where he is strong avoid him."³⁵ As long as Taiwan and the United States present a credibly strong and internationally visible position to the PRC, deterrence should succeed. As the current modernization program attests, while China waits for an opportunity, they will strengthen their position militarily and politically. Last, "All warfare is based on deception."³⁶ China's strategic tradition stresses the psychological impact of military action. Demoralization or 'black' propaganda might be enough to cause the Taiwanese to desire reunification. China will look for asymmetric ways to avoid U.S. and Taiwanese strengths and can be expected to employ subterfuge whenever possible. This list is certainly not inclusive of Master Sun's work, nor should it be taken as the only principles the PRC will follow, but it does provide a common ground for the remainder of this assessment.

The military courses of action China could choose to force reunification are actually quite limited. The PRC could attempt to invade Taiwan, blockade the island, or use missile and air strikes to gain capitulation. Although beyond the scope of this essay, China could also use a number of non-military options like creating incidents with fishing vessels, sending a flood of refugees to Taiwan to clog its infrastructure, or making a run on the Taiwan economy through international markets.³⁷

Could China invade Taiwan?

In 1996, the PRC conducted a large-scale amphibious exercise simulating an assault on Taiwan. Of note, in the exercise the PLA Air Force planned to lose five aircraft for every Taiwanese aircraft they destroyed.³⁸ It is obvious that the PRC recognizes its qualitative weaknesses and will attempt to use a quantitative advantage to overcome Taiwan's local air superiority. Although China's sealift capability is very limited, they could be expected to saturate the Taiwan Strait with noncombatant merchant or fishing vessels to confuse and overwhelm Taiwanese surveillance and targeting. In fact, they would probably use some of those vessels to move their armed forces. Although there would be plenty of advance warning from troop buildups, without third party intervention China would stand some chance of success with an amphibious assault.³⁹ Actual invasion of the island is another matter entirely. Due to the geography of the island, a World War II estimate held that the United States expected to need 300,000 troops to dislodge only 32,000 entrenched Japanese soldiers.⁴⁰ This almost 10:1 force ratio would require the PRC to land about 3 million troops against Taiwan's force of about 300,000.⁴¹ China's entire army is 2.2 million strong and they could never project that much power across the 175 kilometers of the Taiwan Strait because they must still defend their other borders. Although this force ratio leads to an exaggerated conclusion, it is clear that Taiwan's well-trained, well-equipped armed forces are currently a credible deterrent to Chinese invasion of the island. A direct clash of this nature would at best be costly to China and at worst would be humiliating. Even if successful, they would occupy a country with a hostile populace and probably a devastated economy--which is not what the PRC desires. If they lost, their goal of reunification would be lost forever. In either case, PRC credibility with the United States and their Asian neighbors would be severely

diminished.⁴² Without even addressing the likelihood of United States military intervention in an invasion of Taiwan, it is apparent that this scenario is a very remote possibility.

Could China blockade Taiwan?

To enforce a blockade of Taiwanese ports, the PLA Navy would have to maintain pickets offshore of the main ports on the north, south and west sides of the island. They would also probably mine the harbors and put submarines in the Taiwan Strait. Although this option would probably be used as coercion short of hostilities, PRC brinkmanship could lead to escalation. While Taiwan's Navy is too small to actually break a blockade, they do have four submarines and sufficient anti-submarine capability to pose a threat to the blockade vessels. In addition, the Taiwanese Air Force maintains local air superiority, so the PLA Air Force would have difficulty protecting their ships from aerial attack. More importantly, a blockade would directly impact the international community by disrupting trade with Taiwan including U.S. allies in Japan and South Korea, so third party intervention is a probability.⁴³ Currently this does not appear to be a viable option, but China's maritime modernization has potential to change this balance in the future. By 2005, the PLA Navy may have acquired enough Russian-built Kilo class submarines to control the sea-lanes of Taiwan and covertly deliver mines. Taiwan is actively pursuing new submarine technology to offset this threat.⁴⁴ If the PRC achieves a power imbalance in this area, the United States will have to provide the deterrent force for this scenario or reconsider submarine sales to Taiwan.

Could a missile attack against Taiwan prove successful?

PLA missile capability is currently the largest area of concern for Taiwan and for the United States. It also appears to be Beijing's number one planning option. This is China's

asymmetric niche to allow it to overcome deficiencies in other modernization areas. The surprise and shock values are in keeping with Sun Tzu's theory. With precision guided missiles, the PRC can efficiently attack selected targets without causing severe collateral damage. Although Taiwan has the Modified Air Defense System (MADS)--an improved Patriot missile system, the numbers of available short and medium range missiles that can be fielded by the PRC would overwhelm Taiwan's ability to respond.⁴⁵ The new Shared Early Warning system could be exported to Taiwan, but it is only a warning system without a response capability. Unless the United States had the right ship(s) in place at exactly the right moment, there would be no way to provide assistance because the PRC is capable of subduing Taiwan and achieving air superiority by destruction of the Taiwanese airfields within 45 minutes of the first strike.⁴⁶ The psychological impact of almost instantaneous attack with almost no warning that results in devastation of military facilities and quite possibly decapitates the government could be the blow that the PRC needs to convince Taiwan that reunification under Beijing's direction is its best option. The United States would be presented with a *fait accompli* that would present significant strategic challenges. It would be too late to defend Taiwan, but retaliation against the PRC also seems to be an untenable option. The challenges the PRC faces in this option are damage to its international standing and significant capital flight since much of Taiwan's wealth is electronic and offshore. The PRC needs Taiwan to remain a fiscal resource--to "take the state intact"--because China's domestic economy is tied significantly to Taiwan's and would sustain severe damage if the Taiwanese were poised to push the electronic banking button as a response to the PRC pushing the missile fire button.

How does the United States affect the balance of power?

Both sides of the Taiwan Strait agree that the prospect of American military intervention has long played a key role in deterring PRC aggression.⁴⁷ The swift, decisive, low casualty U.S. victory over Iraq in 1991 made a deep impression on China's military leaders.⁴⁸ It is imperative that the United States build on that impression and maintain a strong stance in Asia to continue to earn the trust of our allies. However, the ambiguous political position of the U.S. government causes our military presence in the area to be smaller than USPACOM might wish. Not only does this mean the U.S. military might not be able to respond in time to a crisis in the Strait, but it also puts American forces at risk. The asymmetry created by Chinese missiles has the potential to swing the balance to their side. U.S. war games have projected the possibility of heavy damage to a Carrier Battle Group from Chinese forces using cruise missiles and satellite reconnaissance and surveillance.⁴⁹ The United States needs to develop a low cost, effective counter to supersonic cruise missiles for force protection and, within the guidelines of the Taiwan Relations Act, the defensive portions of that capability should be offered for sale to Taiwan.⁵⁰ Missile defense was deemed important enough to be included in the FY 99 Defense Authorization Act, but is not mentioned in Admiral Blair's FY 2001 Posture Statement to the House Armed Services Committee. USPACOM needs to make acquisition of some missile defense system a high priority budget item or risk losing the credibility to deter the PRC from attacking Taiwan.

Deterrent and Engagement Options

The largest immediate threat to the security of the Taiwan Strait is the PRC missile force. In the other scenarios, American or Taiwanese forces provide an appropriate, credible counterbalance to China's strengths, but neither is in a near-term position of countering the

missile threat. Although Taiwan is acquiring some outstanding radar technology⁵¹ and has fielded MADS, the indigenous Taiwanese defenses could be overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of available PRC missiles. Until a TMD is fielded, USPACOM must look to other alternatives to provide deterrence against the PRC. Even then political issues may preclude TMD coverage of Taiwan because of Chinese objections.

The tangible alternatives for USPACOM's Theater Engagement Strategy are limited. Since placing a cruiser on station near Taiwan is not a feasible political or operational alternative, the closest approximation to that course of action would be to routinely transit cruisers through the Taiwan Strait. If this were a routine occurrence, it would be less provocative than sending vessels there in response to PRC actions, but would still send a visible signal of American concern for stability of the region to the PRC and to our allies.

The intangible list of deterrent options is greater. These options revolve around confidence building measures and increased transparency. The best way to avoid conflict is to convert your enemies into allies by gaining their trust. Increased transparency would enhance communication so each side is able to understand the other better and would allow the U.S. military to visibly display its strengths to the PRC and thereby increase the level of deterrence by subtle coercion. Then, following Sun Tzu's philosophy, the United States would be able to subdue the enemy without fighting.

USPACOM already has a robust exercise schedule with many nations. The United States has conducted bilateral search and rescue exercises with the PRC and Chinese officers have observed U.S.-led multilateral exercises in the Pacific. Future exercises with PRC units need to have very high priority even if that requires adjusting the current exercise schedule. Recognizing that additional tasking is actually a zero sum game because there is no more

room in the current exercise schedule, I would recommend either lengthening the periodicity of some of the existing major exercises or combining a number of bilateral exercises into multilateral ones. This would open room in the schedule to more fully engage the PLA. Certainly these exercises would have to be rudimentary initially, but having several small exercises would expose more members of the PLA to U.S. forces and would increase the opportunities for transparency on both sides. Once coordination and communication issues become more suited to increased complexity, the level of exercises could be adjusted accordingly. The types of exercises could run the gamut from the current level to USMC amphibious assault demonstrations or joint operations combined with MSC logistics and USAF airlift specifically designed to drive home the immense costs of conflict with the United States. This measure would provide the perfect opportunity for the PRC to be shown U.S. military strengths in both equipment and personnel. This subtle coercion would provide for better deterrence through mutual understanding of U.S. strengths without provoking an adverse reaction from the PRC. The challenge for USPACOM in any coercion of the PRC is not to push so far that Taiwan is emboldened to seek independence or the PRC is driven to confrontation.

USPACOM should take advantage of every opportunity to increase military-to-military contact between the PRC and the United States. In addition to high-level talks, this contact should also be driven down to lower officer ranks in order to have an immediate impact on the operator-level that will continue to yield long-term benefits as these officers continue their careers. This contact can take the form of exercises, conferences, port calls, or visits. The contact is as important as the substance. Since there are currently significant

language barriers, this course of action would serve to focus a need on Chinese language proficiency on our part and English proficiency for them.

Additionally, both parties could pursue educational opportunities available in the other country. USPACOM should lobby to include the PRC in the International Military Education Program at U.S. Service Schools.⁵² This would provide another avenue for confidence building, transparency, and reciprocity as well as creating an opportunity for language training. This would, again, allow interaction between more junior officers and could possibly provide a forum for PLA and Taiwanese officers to interact.⁵³

These measures of credibility, communication, and subtle coercion combined with others, like White Papers and data exchanges, have the potential to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding that would serve the greater political ends as well. Generally, increased transparency would reduce the risk of miscalculation that might lead to conflict. Specifically, increased PRC transparency would help the United States to better assess the level of preparedness--or lack thereof--of the PLA. Since the United States is fairly transparent already, these measures would serve to verify U.S. strength to the PRC. There is a tremendous difference between reading about U.S. capabilities and actually seeing the professionalism and expertise involved in things like flight deck operations or the Combat Direction Center of a ship during an exercise. This is part of a productive--and proactive--script for successfully seizing the opportunity to shape the military and political aspects of the Asia-Pacific region for the 21st century.

A counter-argument: Is China just a paper dragon?

Due to the current lack of transparency in China's political leadership and armed forces, there is potential for any of these 'worst case' scenarios to actually be beyond the

PRC's ability. The recent White Paper may have just been a way to justify higher military spending to the Chinese people. The lack of transparency may not be an effort to hide Chinese strengths and gains due to their modernization programs, but may actually screen from view the embarrassment caused by a lack of research and development expertise that will keep the PRC from achieving its modernization objectives. After all, specialists on the Chinese military have described the PLA as "the world's largest military museum" and their new generation fighter aircraft as "the most highly perfected obsolete aircraft in the world."⁵⁴

Even with its modernization program underway, most scholars feel that the PLA Navy is currently incapable of extending its reach beyond the littoral. While it could achieve local, temporary sea denial of areas like the Taiwan Strait, it will be at least 10 years before the force is actually more than a nuisance to the U.S. Navy. In 1996, the two U.S. carrier battle groups that deployed to the region had the ability to destroy almost the entire Chinese navy swiftly and with virtual impunity. The PRC continued to conduct the exercise, but was careful to avoid escalation into a conflict that China might have lost.⁵⁵ To remain a major player in Asia, the PRC cannot afford the probable risk of humiliation at the hands of a more modern, well-equipped military in a limited, high technology conflict.⁵⁶ So, perhaps 'gunboat diplomacy' is still enough of a deterrent to a potential crisis in the Taiwan Strait.

Unfortunately, when laying plans concerning our national security, we cannot rely on 'best case' scenarios. As long as security of Taiwan and stability in the Asia-Pacific region continue to be part of our National Security Strategy and until the 'Taiwan issue' is resolved, USPACOM must deter aggression across the Taiwan Strait or prepare to engage a dragon that may not be made of paper.

Conclusion

Currently, "Taiwan is a legal anomaly that can neither be abandoned or protected."⁵⁷ As China continues its military modernization and enlarges its missile forces, USPACOM must seek proactive alternatives to carrier battle groups in order to continue to credibly deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan. The United States must maintain a strong forward presence to ensure stability of the region. China's asymmetric niche in missiles requires a determined effort to ensure the balance of power is not tipped to one side.

Due to the military, social, and political change occurring in the PRC, the next crisis may be less stable than the last one. The next time Beijing decides to coerce Taiwan into some action, the PRC will have to go further than in 1996 because that level of intimidation did not influence the Taiwanese voters or the PRC population to the extent they had hoped.⁵⁸ As long as China is in a transitional state from autocracy toward greater democracy, the propensity for conflict must be closely watched.

USPACOM must lead the way in calling for missile defense systems for U.S. forces and for our allies. In the interim, the objective of deterrence must be achieved through credibility, communication, and coercion when it is necessary. As this essay has shown, this can be accomplished only by significantly increasing the current level of Sino-U.S. military engagement. A sustained program of bilateral exercises, military-to-military contacts at decreasing levels of seniority, and service school educational opportunities can be a positive approach to shaping the future of Sino-U.S. relations. Proving to the PRC that the United States is not a paper tiger will serve as a credible deterrent to future Chinese aggression across the Taiwan Strait. In this case, time is on the side of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States must be ready and able to provide that time.

NOTES

- ¹ March 12, 1993 speaking to the crew of the U.S.S. Theodore Roosevelt (CVN-71).
- ² John W. Garver, Face Off, (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press 1997), 72-76. This book is an excellent reference for the complexities of the relationship between China, Taiwan, and the United States.
- ³ Garver, 100-110.
Also, Andrew J. Nathan and Robert S. Ross, The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress, (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997), 74.
- ⁴ Nathan and Ross, 221.
- ⁵ "A National Security Strategy for a New Century." The White House, December 1999, 36.
- ⁶ Martin L. Lasater, The Changing of the Guard: President Clinton and the Security of Taiwan, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 12.
- ⁷ Garver, 18.
- ⁸ Muthiah Alagappa, ed., Asian Security Practice: Material and Ideational Influences (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 288-290. This is from an article by Roger Cliff entitled "Taiwan: In the Dragon's Shadow."
- ⁹ Garver, 27.
- ¹⁰ Alexander Chieh-Cheng, Chinese Maritime Modernization and Its Security Implications. (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms International, 1996), 353-354.
- ¹¹ Ibid. This issue is further complicated by the burgeoning democracy in Taiwan. There are substantially divided opinions amongst the political parties and the populace on the proper course(s) of action to take regarding reunification with the mainland.
- ¹² The Taiwan Affairs Office and The Information Office of the State Council, White Paper--The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue, (February 21, 2000), 7.
- ¹³ Hua Di, "China's Security Dilemma to the Year 2010," (Center for International Security and Arms Control, October 1997), 1. He quotes the Taiwan Affairs Council director, Wang Zhaoguo, during a CCP Central Committee Session on October 6, 1994, as saying "We will definitely not tolerate the confrontational situation by the two sides after 2010." Also, Robert Kagan, "How China Will Take Taiwan," The Washington Post, 12 March 2000, B07. He references China watcher Willy Wo-lap Lam's interpretation of Jiang Zemin saying he intends to make reunification of the motherland his legacy to mean that resolution of the

Taiwan issue must occur by the 17th Communist Party Congress in 2007 when Jiang will be 81.

¹⁴ Hua Di, 4. Deng Xiaoping said in 1994, "Whoever lost Taiwan must step down and stand condemned through the ages."

Also, Alagappa, 131. From an article by Wu Xinbo entitled "China: Security Practice of a Modernizing and Ascending Power."

¹⁵ Nathan and Ross, 211.

¹⁶ Jane's Information Group, Limited, Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment: China and Northeast Asia: December 1999-May 2000, (Surrey, England, 1999), 3. This publication contains a complete political, military, and social assessment of China and Taiwan.

¹⁷ James R. Lilley and David Shambaugh, ed, China's Military Faces The Future, (Washington, D.C.: East Gate, 1999), 4-22.

¹⁸ Garver, 11. This data is from a study by Edward Mansfield and Jack Snyder entitled "Democratization and the Danger of War."

¹⁹ Paul Tai, ed., United States, China, and Taiwan: Bridges for a New Millennium. (Carbondale, IL: Public Policy Institute, Southern Illinois University, 1999), 29

²⁰ Nathan and Ross, 206.

²¹ "Exclusive Interview with Taiwan VP Lu to Air in Washington." China Times Inter@active, 27 April 2000. Former U.S. Congressman Lester L. Wolff interviewed Annette Lu for a television program called "Ask Congress" which aired in Washington D.C. on April 30, 2000. Ms. Lu reportedly was restrained in her comments regarding the relationship between Taiwan and the PRC. Her previous comments denying that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China resulted in her vilification in the Chinese press.

²² Lester L. Wolff and David L. Simon, ed., Legislative History of the Taiwan Relations Act. (Jamaica, NY: American Association for Chinese Studies, 1982), 13, 17, 289. From page 13: "The U.S. takes no position regarding Taiwan as a country under international law, but does regard Taiwan as a country for the purposes of U.S. *domestic* law." From page 17: "If...an armed attack or use of force against Taiwan were to occur,... there should be a prompt response by the United States." From page 289: "The President and Congress shall determine, in accordance with constitutional processes, appropriate action by the United States in response to any such danger."

²³ The "Shanghai" Communiqué was signed by President Nixon on February 27, 1972. It recognized 'one China' and that Taiwan was part of China. It also said the United States would ultimately withdraw all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. The Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between the United States of America and the Peoples' Republic of China was signed by President Carter on January 1,

1979. The United States - Peoples' Republic of China Communiqué of August 7, 1982 was signed by President Reagan. It said that the United States did not seek to carry out long term arms sales to Taiwan and that future sales would not exceed qualitatively or quantitatively the level of previous years.

²⁴ Tai, 260. The following six assurances are paraphrased from the text: 1) The U.S. won't set a date for termination of arms sales to Taiwan. 2) The U.S. won't alter the Taiwan Relations Act. 3) The U.S. won't consult with the PRC before making decisions to sell arms to Taiwan. 4) The U.S. won't mediate between Taiwan and the PRC. 5) The U.S. won't alter its position regarding the sovereignty of Taiwan. 6) The U.S. won't formally recognize PRC sovereignty over Taiwan.

²⁵ Tai, 146.

²⁶ Congress, House, Taiwan Security Enhancement Act (H.R. 1838), 106th Congress, 2nd Sess, 01 February 2000.

²⁷ Tai, 134.

²⁸ Tai, 205.

²⁹ Douglas Porch, "The Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1996: Strategic Implications for the United States Navy." Naval War College Review, Summer 1999, Vol. LII, No. 3, 29. "Even if it could be explained to them, the subtle relationship between Congress and the president, especially as it influences Washington's Taiwan policy, would seem a ludicrous fiction to men indoctrinated in a political culture where losing a political argument means hard labor on a pig farm in Yenan province."

³⁰ Garver, 5.

³¹ Sun Tzu, The Art of War, Translated by Samuel B. Griffith, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 129.

³² Ibid, 77.

³³ With the notable exceptions of crises in the Taiwan Strait in 1954-55, 1958, and the two mentioned in the text during 1995 and 1996.

³⁴ Sun Tzu, 77.

³⁵ Ibid, 67.

³⁶ Ibid, 66.

³⁷ Nathan and Ross, 222-223.

³⁸ Garver, 100.

³⁹ "The Security Situation in the Taiwan Strait," U.S. Department of Defense Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY99 Appropriations Bill, 26 February 1999, 17. This document is a comprehensive comparison of the strengths and weaknesses of China and Taiwan.

⁴⁰ Lasater, 158.

⁴¹ Jane's Information Group, Limited, 4.

⁴² Nathan and Ross, 222.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ "The Security Situation in the Taiwan Strait," 7.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁶ Kagan, B07.

⁴⁷ Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, United States-Taiwan Security Ties, (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 107.

⁴⁸ Garver, 62.

⁴⁹ Thomas G. Mahnken, "Deny U.S. Access?" (U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings, September 1998), 38. The article also quotes retired USAF Chief of Staff, General Fogleman as saying, "Saturation ballistic missile attack against littoral forces, ports, airfields, storage facilities, and staging areas could make it extremely costly to project U.S. forces into a disputed theater, much less carry out operations to defeat a well armed aggressor."

⁵⁰ Lilley and Shambaugh, 117. From an article by Richard D. Fisher, Jr. entitled "Foreign Arms Acquisition and PLA Modernization." He recommends hypersonic Tomahawk missiles. The challenge of weapons sales to Taiwan is to sell them enough defensive weapons to deter the PRC, but not enough to provide them an offensive capability so they believe they are capable of declaring independence or the PRC believes their window of opportunity for peaceful reunification is closing.

⁵¹ Ibid, 545. Taiwan is slated to begin acquisition of a Raytheon phased array radar system that will give up to a 10 minute warning for incoming missiles with between 600 and 900 km range (obviously dependent on time of flight and altitude).

⁵² Gerard J. Labadie, "China's Military Modernization: Progress and Prospects," (Unpublished Research Paper, U.S. Naval War College, Newport, RI: 1998), 16.

⁵³ Currently ROC officers are eligible for IMET and Taiwan is authorized to nominate candidates to the U.S. Service Academies.

⁵⁴ Nathan and Ross, 146.

⁵⁵ Garver, 117.

⁵⁶ Alagappa, 135. Article by Wu Xinbo.

⁵⁷ Nathan and Ross, 213.

⁵⁸ Garver, 162.

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