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14. ABSTRACT How the United States approaches deterrence in the Taiwan Strait could determine if there is a war between the United States and the People' Republic of China over Taiwan. Embracing a Deterrence by Denial Strategy to deter war with the People's Republic of China over Taiwan is the best strategy that the United States can bring to bear in the Pacific to accomplish its objectives. For any Deterrence Strategy to work it is imperative that the United States understands the perspectives of the PRC and its Leadership. Only the Chinese Communist Party can decide if they are deterred. Through garnering an understanding of the PRC's perspective, the United States can execute a Deterrence by Denial Strategy that does not create a security dilemma with the PRC making war more likely. Through embracing a Deterrence by Denial Strategy that does not create the perception that the PRC is being contained will the allow the United States to retain freedom of maneuver both diplomatically and militarily. The Deterrence by Denial Strategy that United States should adopt consists of three parts: Active Denial, Working with Partners and Allies, and investing in a Porcupine Strategy with Taiwan. Embracing those components allows the United States to continue its One China Policy while giving the United States the latitude to defend Taiwan or disengage from the conflict based on strategic imperatives.					
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Deterrence By Denial in the Taiwan Strait:

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Deterrence by Denial and the Taiwan Strait

It is difficult to imagine a war between the United States (U.S.) and the People's Republic of China (PRC) not arising from a dispute over Taiwan. Just 180 kilometers separates 89,000 soldiers of the Taiwan Armed Forces from 1,040,000 soldiers of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) (see Figure 1).¹ The prospect for a peaceful resolution to cross-Strait relations seems unlikely as the PRC orchestrates genocide in Xinjiang, human rights abuses in Tibet, and the further weakening of autonomy in Hong Kong.² How the U.S. should approach deterrence in the Taiwan Strait could determine if there is a world war in the 21st century. If war does arise, it could escalate into a nuclear conflict to the detriment of all.³ To develop a coherent deterrent strategy, one must first examine the strategic context of the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific to garner a better understanding of why Taiwan matters.

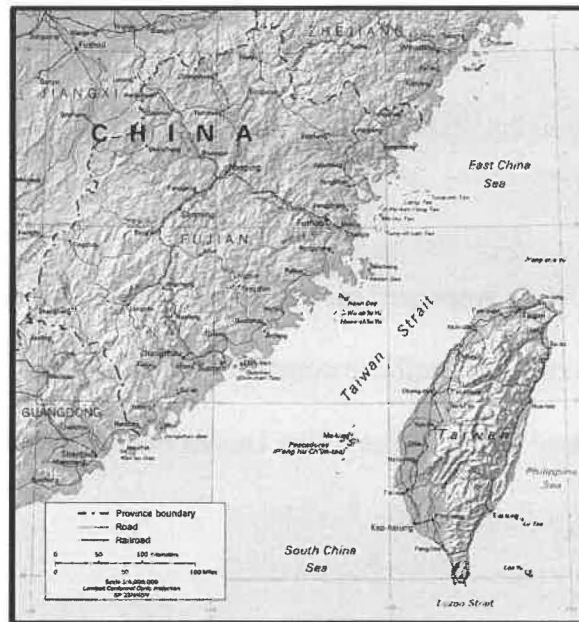


Figure 1. The Taiwan Strait⁴

¹ "Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China: A Report to Congress Pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000," Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China: A report to Congress pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000 § (2022), 165.

² "2022 National Security Strategy," 2022 National Security Strategy § (2022), 24.

³ Anand Toprani, Nicholas Murray, and Michael Dennis, "The Results of War Are Never Final?," *The RUSI Journal* 166, no. 5 (2021): pp. 32-43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03071847.2021.2022529>, 2.

⁴ U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, "University of Texas: Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection," Taiwan Maps, 1992, <https://maps.lib.utexas.edu/maps/taiwan.html>.

With the Global War on Terror officially ending on 31 December 2022, the U.S.’ strategic pivot to the Pacific, first announced by President Obama in November 2011, is coming to fruition under President Biden.⁵ The 2022 National Security Strategy (NSS) identifies the PRC as the main strategic competitor of the U.S.⁶ Further, the 2022 National Defense Strategy (NDS) affirms the PRC as a “pacing challenge” for the U.S. and “the most consequential competitor for the coming decades.”⁷ The U.S.’ policy towards Taiwan is stated in both documents and reflects the Department of State’s position: “The U.S. has a longstanding One-China Policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three U.S.-China Joint Communiques, and the Six Assurances. We oppose unilateral changes to the status quo from either side; we do not support Taiwan independence; and we expect cross-Strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means.”⁸ On the one hand, the U.S. does not support or oppose reunification so long as it is peaceful.⁹ On the other hand, the U.S. identifies providing Taiwan with a self-defense capability as a component of the Indo-Pacific Strategy.¹⁰ The aforementioned opaqueness of U.S. policy towards Taiwan (strategic ambiguity) has done well to deter war, but recent events threaten to upend the status quo.

Despite retraction, multiple comments made by President Biden in 2022 affirming that the U.S. would defend Taiwan if attacked and Congresswoman Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in

⁵ Patricia Kime, “Here’s Why the Pentagon Will Stop Issuing the National Defense Service Medal,” Military.com, September 7, 2022, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2022/09/07/heres-why-pentagon-will-stop-issuing-national-defense-service-medal.html>; Greg Myre, “Long Promised and Often Delayed, the ‘Pivot to Asia’ Takes Shape under Biden,” NPR (NPR, October 6, 2021), <https://www.npr.org/2021/10/06/1043329242/long-promised-and-often-delayed-the-pivot-to-asia-takes-shape-under-biden>.

⁶ “2022 National Security Strategy,” 2022 National Security Strategy § (2022), 23.

⁷ “2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, Including the 2022 Nuclear Posture Review and the 2022 Missile Defense Review,” 2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, including the 2022 Nuclear Posture review and the 2022 Missile Defense Review § (2022), III/1.

⁸ “U.S. Relations with Taiwan - United States Department of State,” U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, May 28, 2022), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-taiwan/#:~:text=As%20a%20leading%20democracy%20and,have%20a%20robust%20unofficial%20relationship>.

⁹ Antony J Blinken, “The Administration’s Approach to the People’s Republic of China - United States Department of State,” U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, August 19, 2022), <https://www.state.gov/the-administrations-approach-to-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>.

¹⁰ “2022 National Security Strategy,” 2022 National Security Strategy § (2022), 24.

August 2022 have heightened tensions between the PRC and the U.S.¹¹ In the wake of military drills and overt posturing by the PRC, some U.S. defense experts see an invasion of Taiwan coming as soon as 2024.¹² Others, such as General Milley, anticipate the PRC gaining the capability to invade by 2027.¹³ Highlighting the current debate, leading experts increasingly call for departing from strategic ambiguity to providing Taiwan with clear security guarantees.¹⁴ However, the best way to deter war is not to dramatically alter course but to develop a deterrence by denial strategy.

Deterrence by denial seeks to prevent an adversary from achieving its objectives by making it impossible for the adversary to succeed militarily. In this case, deterrence by denial would convince the PRC that they would fail if they chose to invade Taiwan. Deterrence by denial requires the military capability to defeat aggression. Additionally, deterrence by denial requires assurances. As China expert, Thomas J. Christensen states, “the United States must also restore credible assurances, making sure both Taipei and Beijing understand that the objective is not an independent Taiwan, but rather peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.”¹⁵ Further, unlike deterrence by punishment which requires threats to deter aggression, deterrence by denial only requires signals. Deterrence by punishment requires explicit demands that could be considered unacceptable to the adversary: compelling action not deterring it. Deterrence by denial requires capability to deter aggression. If that capability is defensive, the signal conveyed to the adversary affirms the status quo thereby preventing escalation.

¹¹ John Ruwitch, “Biden, Again, Says U.S. Would Help Taiwan If China Attacks,” NPR (NPR, September 19, 2022), <https://www.npr.org/2022/09/19/1123759127/biden-again-says-u-s-would-help-taiwan-if-china-attacks>.

¹² Edward Wong, David Sanger, and Amy Qin, “U.S. Officials Grow More Concerned about Potential Action by China on Taiwan,” The New York Times (The New York Times, July 25, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/07/25/us/politics/china-taiwan-biden-pelosi.html>.

¹³ Sam LaGrone, “Milley: China Wants Capability to Take Taiwan by 2027, Sees No near-Term Intent to Invade,” USNI News, June 23, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/06/23/milley-china-wants-capability-to-take-taiwan-by-2027-sees-no-near-term-intent-to-invade>.

¹⁴ Thomas J. Christensen et al., “Should the United States Pledge to Defend Taiwan?,” Foreign Affairs, November 15, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ask-the-experts/should-united-states-pledge-defend-taiwan>.

¹⁵ Thomas J. Christensen et al., “How to Avoid a War over Taiwan,” Foreign Affairs, October 13, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/how-avoid-war-over-taiwan>.

The U.S. should implement a deterrence by denial strategy to avert war with the PRC over Taiwan. First, a deterrence by denial strategy will deter PRC aggression while managing escalation and costs, giving the U.S. flexibility should war occur. Second, a deterrence by denial strategy provides the opportunity to combat PRC influence in the western Pacific through building enduring relationships with partners and ensuring burden sharing. Last, a deterrence by denial strategy can serve as a dual deterrent towards military adventurism on the part of the PRC and a declaration of independence by Taiwan.

In the Mind of the Adversary: Understanding the PRC and its interests towards Taiwan

Renowned political scientist, Glenn Snyder states that any deterrent strategy must take into account the calculus of the adversary to understand "his estimate of the probability of gaining the objective."¹⁶ An understanding of the PRC's interests and views needs to be understood for any deterrent strategy to work—only the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) can decide if they are deterred. The PRC identifies "opposing and containing 'Taiwan Independence'" as a core interest, and while the PRC supports "peaceful reunification," they do not renounce the use of force to bring Taiwan into the "one country, two systems" fold.¹⁷ Further, the CCP identifies the reunification of Taiwan as a crucial component to restore the PRC to prominence—only with reunification can the 5,000-year history of China be honored and past humiliations be overcome.¹⁸

The value that the PRC places on regaining Taiwan goes beyond material possession. The PRC values Taiwan for what it stands for. PRC President Xi Jinping has set the timeline for

¹⁶ Glenn H Snyder, "Deterrence and Defense: A Theoretical Introduction," *Princeton University Press*, 1961, pp. 1-51, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400877164-002>, 15.

¹⁷ The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *In Their Own Words: China's National Defense in the New Era* (Beijing, PRC: Foreign Languages Press, 2019), 6,7.

¹⁸ The State and Information Council, ed., "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era," Xinhua (The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and the State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, August 2022), <https://english.news.cn/20220810/df9d3b8702154b34bbf1d451b99bf64a/c.html>, III.

reunification to 2049, which he states will mark the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation.”¹⁹ Further, China experts, Bonny Lin and Michael Swaine, emphasize the importance that the PRC puts on the principle of “peaceful reunification” and note that only overt moves to change the status quo may galvanize the PRC to resort to force.²⁰ The PRC is highly sensitive to any change in the Indo-Pacific that could lead to a change in the status quo. With the release of the NSS, the pivot to the Indo-Pacific provoked the PRC Foreign Ministry to issue a statement denouncing what they amounted to as a return to “the Cold War zero-sum mentality and play up to geopolitical conflicts and major power competition.”²¹ Developing a deterrent towards the PRC over Taiwan needs to consider the importance of avoiding bold moves or perceptions of containment that could alter the calculus for the PRC to resort to force.²²

Force Posture: Retaining Flexibility while Managing Costs and Escalation

A deterrence by denial strategy incorporating active denial is the best chance to deter war while managing escalation, costs, and flexibility. *The Quincy Institute* defines active denial as “deploying resilient and primarily defensive U.S. and allied forces to blunt and disrupt attack, while preparing for focused counterattack later.”²³ Over the past thirty years, the PRC has invested heavily in anti-access, aerial denial (A2/AD), creating a security bubble that expands 300nm from mainland China.²⁴ The U.S. no longer has hegemony over the commons in the

¹⁹ Thomas J. Christensen et al., “How to Avoid a War over Taiwan,” *Foreign Affairs*, October 13, 2022, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/china/how-avoid-war-over-taiwan>.

²⁰ Bonny Lin, “Enabling ‘Patriots’ to Be Masters of the Island: Evolution of Xi’s Policy on Taiwan Since 2013,” *China Leadership*, 2022, <https://www.prclleader.org/lin-september-2022>; Michael D. Swaine, “Recent Chinese Views on the Taiwan Issue,” *China Leadership Monitor*, December 24, 2022, <https://www.prclleader.org/swaine-3>.

²¹ Mao Ning, “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning’s Regular Press Conference on October 13, 2022,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, October 13, 2022, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/202210/t20221013_10782991.html.

²² Zuo Xiying, “Adjustments in the United States’ Conventional Deterrence Strategy against China - Interpret: China,” CSIS: Interpret China, December 24, 2022, <https://interpret.csis.org/translations/adjustments-in-the-united-states-conventional-deterrence-strategy-against-china/>.

²³ “Active Denial: A Roadmap to a More Effective, Stabilizing, and Sustainable U.S. Defense Strategy in Asia,” Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, November 28, 2022, <https://quincyinst.wpengine.com/report/active-denial-a-roadmap-to-a-more-effective-stabilizing-and-sustainable-u-s-defense-strategy-in-asia/>.

²⁴ “Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China: A Report to Congress Pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000,” *Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China: A report to Congress pursuant to the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2000* § (2022), 82.

Western Pacific, and if the expansion of PRC A2/AD goes unchecked, either through the failure to garner aerial targeting solutions or the emplacement of A2/AD, the U.S. will have no way to project power to deter PRC aggression in the Strait.²⁵ The U.S. can accomplish this by incorporating elements of active denial into its overarching deterrence by denial strategy. This approach does not require substantial troop increases and decreases the reliance on expensive platforms, such as highly targetable aircraft carriers. A deterrence by denial strategy that relies heavily on troop increases or fleet operations could trigger hostile actions by the PRC. As a guiding principle, the U.S. should force posture A2/AD, long-range aerial weapon systems, and enhanced sensor capabilities throughout the Western Pacific. The less escalatory approach of active denial signals an increased commitment to the status quo so long as it is met with assurances that the U.S. has not departed from its One-China Policy.

An active denial approach deters through blunting a PRC attack on Taiwan by carefully emplacing A2/AD spread across the Western Pacific, hindering PRC freedom of maneuver in the Strait if need be. Aiming the Indirect-Fire-Protection-Capability-Increment-2, a more defensive system vis-à-vis alternatives, such as Patriot Missiles, only at the Taiwan Strait will control escalation.²⁶ Additionally, increasing the number of long-range aerial weapon systems, such as the B-2 and B-21, positioned outside the Western Pacific will alleviate perceptions of PRC encirclement while not sacrificing operational reach. Moreover, proliferating sensor capabilities, specifically the Army-Long-Range-Persistent-Surveillance system, will provide the U.S. with intelligence for procuring information on potential moves by the PRC: lowering the chances of

²⁵ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Anti Access/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," MIT Press (MIT Press, July 1, 2016), <https://direct.mit.edu/isec/article/41/1/7/12133/Future-Warfare-in-the-Western-Pacific-Chinese>, 43.

²⁶ Tim Bonds et al., *What Role Can Land-Based, Multi-Domain Anti-Access/Area Denial Forces Play in Deterring or Defeating Aggression?* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017), 132.

miscalculation and allowing the U.S. to observe the state of deterrence.²⁷ Additionally, the strategy lends itself to deterring at cost allowing the U.S. to retain flexibility. The U.S. saves on personnel costs from not seeking to match battlefield parity with the PRC as the strategy deters through capability match and requires only those personnel necessary to operate those capabilities. Further, should the PRC strike U.S. force posture in a prelude to an invasion, the U.S. retains the flexibility to counterattack if it so chooses, having only lost its deterrent capabilities and not the conventional forces necessary to defeat the PRC in a kinetic conflict.

Despite the cost savings that the strategy affords, the strategy does require costs that the U.S. need not overlook. INDOPACOM requested \$4.68 billion in FY 2022 with an additional \$22.69 billion from FY 2023 to FY 2027—a sizeable request that does not come close to matching capabilities (see Figure 2).²⁸ The DOD needs to reallocate resources to meet the strategic challenge in the Strait. Reallocating the budget from CENTCOM, decreasing the total number of active maneuver brigades from 71 to 45, and divesting the Air Force and Navy of legacy platforms while simultaneously reinvesting in long-range bombers for the former and smaller ships for the latter would be a good start.²⁹ The DOD can also better meet the challenge and save costs through reconfiguring doctrine, force structure, and training of maneuver elements, shifting them away from traditional approaches of land warfare to the unconventional fight which they will encounter should deterrence fail.³⁰ The U.S. is not in a new cold war, but the same shift in thinking that led to innovative solutions after World War II needs to occur, or

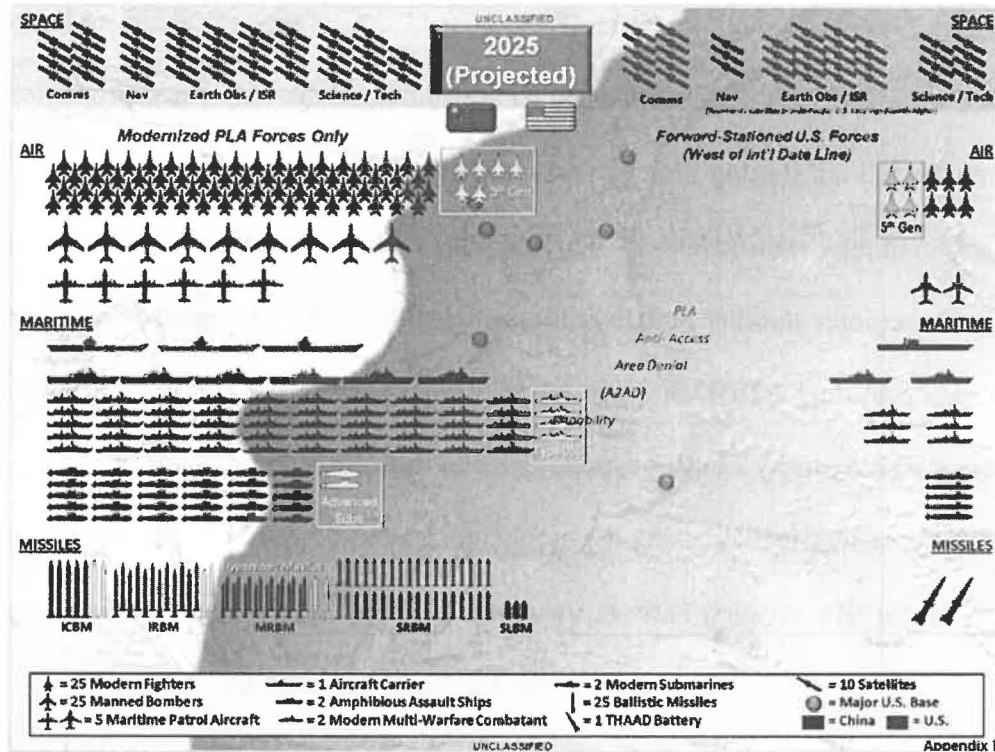
²⁷ Air Defense Command Control and Intelligence, “RDT&E Budget Item Justification,” RDT&E Budget Item Justification § (2019), pp. 1-32, 1.

²⁸ Mallory Shelbourne, “U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Wants \$4.68B for New Pacific Deterrence Initiative,” USNI News, March 5, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/03/02/u-s-indo-pacific-command-wants-4-68b-for-new-pacific-deterrence-initiative>.

²⁹ “Active Denial: A Roadmap to a More Effective, Stabilizing, and Sustainable U.S. Defense Strategy in Asia,” Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, November 28, 2022, <https://quincyinst.wpengine.com/report/active-denial-a-roadmap-to-a-more-effective-stabilizing-and-sustainable-u-s-defense-strategy-in-asia/>.

³⁰ Jacquelyn Schneider, “The Uncomfortable Reality of the U.S. Army’s Role in a War over Taiwan,” War on the Rocks, November 30, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/11/the-uncomfortable-reality-of-the-u-s-armys-role-in-a-war-over-taiwan/>.

else the U.S. will find itself in a hot war in which it is disadvantaged.



Building Partnerships: Combatting PRC Influence in the Western Pacific

Deterrence by denial requires military facilities to handle the matriculation of combat power should the U.S. decide to counterattack if deterrence fails. The U.S. needs to seek enduring relationships with Micronesian states that fall outside of U.S. SOFA agreements. The U.S. maintains 14 Status of Force Agreements (SOFA) in the region as well as agreements through the Compact of Free Association serving to give the U.S. freedom of maneuver in the Western Pacific.³² For instance, incorporating Nauru into the U.S. strategic architecture for force projection will allow the U.S. to gain additional logistical nodes making the U.S. harder to target and mitigating the 1,710 miles that separates the preponderance of U.S. forces in Joint Region

³¹ Mallory Shelbourne, "U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Wants \$4.68B for New Pacific Deterrence Initiative," USNI News, March 5, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/03/02/u-s-indo-pacific-command-wants-4-68b-for-new-pacific-deterrence-initiative>.

³² Kristen Gunness, *Anticipating Chinese Reactions to U.S. Posture Enhancements* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2022), 22,23.

Marianas from Taiwan.³³ The ancillary effect of building enduring relationships in Micronesia will allow the U.S. to check PRC “peripheral diplomacy,” which seeks to establish diplomatic and economic compacts with peripheral states which could restrain U.S. force projection.³⁴

Moreover, burden sharing with partners strengthens deterrence by increasing the gamble of military action in the Strait. Efforts by the U.S. must include partners and allies willing to participate in the region's stability and deter threats from the PRC.³⁵ Deterrence by denial requires forward posturing A2/AD and will not succeed unless U.S. allies are willing to burden share to prevent war. Security Studies expert, Eric Heginbotham states, “undermining confidence in a quick victory, as well as increasing the number and types of risk in military action, enhances deterrence.”³⁶ If the PRC invaded Taiwan, the attack probably would begin with a strike on a U.S. military site in the region.³⁷ The cost of war increases substantially for the PRC if a strike on a U.S. military site also strikes a U.S. ally, such as the Philippines. Through the Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) the Philippines hosts U.S. military assets on a rotational basis.³⁸ The U.S. should seek a political resolution to incorporate defensive A2/AD into the EDCA on a more permanent basis. A chance to reach political accommodation to expand the EDCA and increase burden sharing has presented itself with former Philippine President Duterte leaving office and President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. assuming the role. In September 2022, President Marcos Jr. stated the “extremely necessary” need to strengthen the U.S.-Philippine

³³ “U.S. Relations with Nauru - United States Department of State,” U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, April 15, 2021), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-nauru>; “Joint Region Marianas in-Depth Overview,” Military Installations, 2022, <https://installations.militaryonesource.mil/in-depth-overview/joint-region-marianas-naval-base-guam>.

³⁴ Aaron L. Friedberg, *Getting China Wrong* (Cambridge, MA: Polity Press, 2022), 142.

³⁵ Eldridge Colby and Walter Slocombe, “The State of (Deterrence by) Denial,” War on the Rocks, March 22, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/03/the-state-of-deterrence-by-denial/>.

³⁶ Eric Heginbotham and Jacob L. Heim, “Deterring without Dominance: Discouraging Chinese Adventurism under Austerity,” *The Washington Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (February 2015): pp. 185-199, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2015.1038189>, 196.

³⁷ Dexter Filkins, “A Dangerous Game over Taiwan,” *The New Yorker*, November 14, 2022, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/11/21/a-dangerous-game-over-taiwan>.

³⁸ “U.S. Security Cooperation with the Philippines - United States Department of State,” U.S. Department of State (U.S. Department of State, 2022), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-the-philippines/>.

alliance.³⁹ President Marcos Jr. is expected to pursue policies that strengthen U.S. ties and secure Philippine sovereignty in the South China Sea.⁴⁰ The U.S. has a difficult task in convincing President Marcos Jr. that A2/AD emplacement is in the Philippines national interest, but the opportunity to expand the EDCA and counter PRC influence has never been greater.

A Dual Deterrent: Dissuading Military Adventurism and a Declaration of Independence

The U.S. should encourage Taiwan to deter PRC aggression by establishing a porcupine defense that focuses on purely defensive weapon systems. A porcupine defense will turn Taiwan into a fortress that will make the island costly to conquer and will deter military adventurism on the part of the PRC by making the conquest of Taiwan a pyrrhic victory. The U.S. should limit military aid and procurement to only defensive weapons necessary to sustain Taiwan's porcupine security architecture. Most of Taiwan's expenditures should go towards “coastal defense cruise missiles, short-range mobile air defenses, naval mines, and drones” aimed to defeat an invasion force at the beachhead and in the 180-kilometer strait.⁴¹ The purpose of the porcupine defense is to give Taiwan ownership of its security and the appearance of impregnability. The aim is not to provide Taiwan with first-strike capabilities or with the ability to conduct strikes deep into PRC territory.

Further, the U.S. should not serve as Taiwan's defense force and base its military support on Taiwan congruent with Taiwanese consent to a porcupine strategy. Taiwan should not feel empowered to declare independence through the level of military and non-military support the U.S. gives Taiwan. In a recent *China Power Project* survey, 77% of experts believe that China

³⁹ Seth Robson, “Marcos Jr. Can't See Future for Philippines without a US Partnership,” Stars and Stripes, September 20, 2022, https://www.stripes.com/theaters/asia_pacific/2022-09-20/marcos-bongbong-philippines-alliance-military-7398931.html.

⁴⁰ Derek Grossman, “New Philippine President Marcos Is No Duterte on Foreign Policy,” Foreign Policy, May 10, 2022, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/05/10/marcos-bongbong-philippines-election-president-duterte-china-us-foreign-policy/>.

⁴¹ Michael A Hunzeker, “Taiwan's Defense Plans Are Going Off the Rails,” War on the Rocks, November 18, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/11/taiwans-defense-plans-are-going-off-the-rails/>.

will invade Taiwan if the island declares independence, and 100% of experts believe that the PRC thinks that the U.S. will defend Taiwan if the PRC invades.⁴² Both statistics demonstrate the importance of an open and visible deterrence by denial strategy—too much unguided support could work directly against deterrence by lending credence to Taiwan's independence. The U.S. needs to guard against joint training with Taiwan in the pursuit of aiding it in the development of a porcupine strategy. In doing so, the U.S. will avoid signaling to the PRC that the U.S. has spurned strategic ambiguity for strategic clarity, which would subvert deterrence by denial. Moreover, in the spirit of transparency, the U.S. should encourage Taiwan not to camouflage any of its porcupine defenses, so it is clear to the PRC that the weapon systems Taiwan has acquired are purely defensive. The survivability of those systems is of minimal concern as Taiwan would have significant lead time to prepare, as a great power war requires the highly visible movement of men, weapons, and equipment.⁴³

Dual deterrence expert, Timothy Crawford, states that dual deterrence “frustrates the ambitions of both sides, often in defiance of legitimate grievances that will go unmet.”⁴⁴ The porcupine strategy blunts the ambitions of both sides. Creating a hard target in Taiwan designed solely to deter aggression discourages ambitious Taiwanese foreign policy, such as a declaration of independence. Right-sizing weapons to defeat a conventional invasion discourages the PRC from departing from peaceful reunification. The dual deterrent established through deterrence by denial that incorporates a porcupine strategy for Taiwan lends itself to more peaceful cross-Strait relations.

⁴² Bonny Lin et al., “Surveying the Experts: China's Approach to Taiwan,” ChinaPower Project, September 19, 2022, <https://chinapower.csis.org/survey-experts-china-approach-to-taiwan/>.

⁴³ John Culver, “How We Would Know When China Is Preparing to Invade Taiwan,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 3, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/10/03/how-we-would-know-when-china-is-preparing-to-invade-taiwan-pub-88053>.

⁴⁴ Timothy G. Crawford, *Pivotal Deterrence: Third-Party Statecraft and the Pursuit of Peace* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 217.

The Other Deterrent: Deterrence by Punishment

Melanie Sisson of *Brookings Institution* argues that deterrence by punishment is a better approach to deterrence.⁴⁵ "Deterrence by Punishment grants [the adversary] the gain but deters by posing the prospect of war costs greater than the value of the gain."⁴⁶ Deterrence by punishment levies costs on the PRC after an invasion of Taiwan. A deterrence by punishment strategy that clearly states the cost imposition on the PRC may have a twofold effect: it may deter the PRC from invading, and if that fails, it may turn an occupation of Taiwan quixotic.⁴⁷ The U.S. could implement a naval blockade, destroy Taiwan's critical infrastructure (such as its semiconductor industry), and impose economic sanctions that could raise the cost of invading Taiwan to such a level that the PRC may choose not to resort to force to reunify Taiwan with the mainland.⁴⁸ Further, while the aforementioned approach may allow the PRC to attain its core interest of reunification, the PRC will jeopardize other core interests.⁴⁹ The PRC would turn into a pariah on the world stage, conceding hard-fought gains to attain clout parity with the other great powers. Moreover, the effect of the naval blockade and sanctions would dramatically slow economic growth and hurt the PRC's rapidly developing middle class, possibly leading to destabilization. The PRC would also gain little materially from an invasion of Taiwan if Taiwan's infrastructure were destroyed by the U.S. and Taiwan in the lead-up to an invasion. The conglomeration of these costs could reduce the PRC's GDP by 25-35% and would function prominently in the PRC's calculus to maintain a peaceful approach to reunification.⁵⁰

Further, proponents of deterrence by punishment may state that the U.S. should avoid a

⁴⁵ Melanie W Sisson, "Taiwan and the Dangerous Illogic of Deterrence by Denial" (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 2022), pp. 1-17, 1.

⁴⁶ Glenn Herald Snyder, *Deterrence and Power* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 2.

⁴⁷ Melanie W Sisson, "Taiwan and the Dangerous Illogic of Deterrence by Denial" (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 2022), pp. 1-17, 9.

⁴⁸ Jared M. McKinney and Peter Harris, "Broken Nest: Deterring China from Invading Taiwan," *The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters* 51, no. 4 (2021): pp. 23-36, <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.3089>, 30.

⁴⁹ Mckinney and Harris, 30.

⁵⁰ Jude Blanchette and Gerrard DiPippo, "'Reunification' with Taiwan through Force Would Be a Pyrrhic Victory for China," Center for Strategic and International Studies |, November 1, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/>.

deterrence by denial strategy as it is inherently costly and escalatory. Deterrence by denial may not deter war but could provoke it. The U.S. could instigate a security dilemma by trying to achieve battlefield parity with the PRC. As the U.S. increases the scope of its capability and presence, the PRC will do the same, seeking to match capability with capability to retain a decisive edge should a military contest occur. The aforementioned security dilemma will increase the chance of miscalculation and alter the PRC's calculus. If the PRC determines that it cannot compete militarily in the long term, that may provoke the PRC to invade Taiwan before the U.S. pivots to the Indo-Pacific.

Despite what some argue, Senator Hawley and other policymakers are correct to argue for deterrence by denial.⁵¹ First, a deterrence by punishment strategy in the context of cross-Strait relations is highly escalatory because it requires the U.S. to state aims, which represents a departure from strategic ambiguity. Suppose the U.S. states that a PRC invasion of Taiwan will have specific military and non-military consequences. In that case, that could galvanize the PRC to resort to force—especially if those aims come before the U.S. pivot to the Indo-Pacific. Second, a deterrence by denial strategy need not be inherently costly or escalatory as long as the approach does not involve trying to attain parity through matching man for man or rocket for rocket. Tempering costs and escalation remains plausible so long as it is leveraged by allies and defensive. Third, destroying Taiwan's infrastructure in a prelude to an invasion would have marginal impact on the PRC's calculus. The PRC wants Taiwan for it what it stands for, not for what it's materially worth. Last, if the U.S. decides not to defend Taiwan as a means to avert war with the PRC, deterrence by denial allows the U.S. to meet that strategic imperative at a

⁵¹ John Hawley, "Senator Hawley Releases Hold on Top Biden Pentagon Nominee, Leader of the next National Defense Strategy," Senator Josh Hawley, August 9, 2021, <https://www.hawley.senate.gov/senator-hawley-releases-hold-top-biden-pentagon-nominee-leader-next-national-defense-strategy>.

reasonable cost. If the U.S. opts for deterrence by punishment and does not follow through with the military consequences against the PRC, it may prove fatal to U.S. cooperative security agreements elsewhere. A deterrence by denial strategy signals through actions, not words, and allows the U.S. to retain flexibility should deterrence fail or politics change.

Deterrence by Denial: An Enduring Strategy

Implementing a deterrence by denial strategy gives the U.S. the best chance to avert war with the PRC in the Taiwan Strait. The U.S. can effectively deter without provoking the PRC and can do so at a reasonable cost while giving the U.S. the flexibility to manage escalation based on strategic imperatives. Deterrence by denial requires partnership and burden sharing with U.S. allies which increases the cost of war for the PRC as military action will affect multiple actors and lead to condemnation. A deterrence by denial strategy makes Taiwan challenging to conquer, deterring military adventurism by the PRC, but not so difficult as to lend credence to Taiwan independence. How the U.S. approaches deterrence in the Strait will determine the fate of the strategic competition in the Indo-Pacific. The strategy does not require the U.S. to shift from strategic ambiguity to strategic clarity, nor does it require the U.S. to abandon its longstanding One-China Policy. Under the strategy, the U.S. need not depart from its stated priorities. The cost-effective and consistent approach of deterrence by denial allows the U.S. to maintain the same steady approach to cross-Strait relations that has deterred war for over 70 years.

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