

Maintaining the Status Quo in the Taiwan Strait

by

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Abstract

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In order to ensure vital U.S. interests concerning security and economic freedom in the region, the status quo in the Taiwan Strait must be maintained by a comprehensive U.S. strategy involving all aspects of national power. Key to this strategy is the bolstering of international/regional support of Taiwan, Taiwanese military deterrence backed by strategically ambiguous U.S. assurances of security, intertwined economic ties between all parties, and a strong informational campaign aimed at lessening tensions and improving diplomatic relations between all parties involved. The strategy must maintain a delicate balance to ensure neither the PRC nor Taiwan sees a change in U.S. policy towards the sovereignty of Taiwan and therefore an opportunity to attempt unilateral resolution of the "One-China" issue. Any attempt by either the PRC or Taiwan to resolve the issue would force the U.S. to take one side or the other, either of which would damage U.S. vital national interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, it remains in the best interest of the U.S. to retain a policy of strategic ambiguity and keep the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

Maintaining the Status Quo in the Taiwan Strait

Though the United States (U.S.) does not diplomatically recognize Taiwan as an independent country separate from the People's Republic of China (PRC), the U.S. maintains long-standing unofficial ties with Taiwan. The relationship between Taiwan and the U.S. has been complicated over the past sixty years by the necessity for the U.S. to maintain positive diplomatic relations with the PRC, which views Taiwan as a part of China. Current U.S. policy regarding Taiwan seeks to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, support Taiwan's efforts to maintain democracy in Taiwan, and promote U.S. businesses in Taiwan.¹ However, there is significant tension between the PRC and Taiwan across the Taiwan Strait, requiring the United States to balance its relations with each country in view of those tensions. Currently, the growth of Chinese economic and naval power is a concern for the U.S., as the balance of power between PRC and Taiwan is tilting even more in favor of the PRC, perhaps allowing the PRC to force a favorable solution in the strait. It is imperative that the U.S. maintain the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait in order to ensure that the negotiations between PRC and Taiwan remain peaceful and non-coercive in nature. If the PRC were to perceive an inability of Taiwan to defend itself either unilaterally or with U.S./international assistance, or to determine that Taiwan no longer had international support for autonomy, the possibility arises for military action instead of the current diplomatic negotiations to resolve the "One-China" issue. In order to ensure vital U.S. interests concerning security and economic freedom in the area, the status quo in the Taiwan Strait must be maintained by a comprehensive U.S. strategy involving all aspects of national power.

Although the history of China spans back thousands of years, the background necessary to understand the conflict between PRC and Taiwan begins in 1921 with the onset of Civil War in China between the government of the Republic of China (ROC) led by Chiang Kai-Shek and the Communist Party of China (CPC) led by Mao Zedong. At the end of WWII in 1945, the ROC claimed the island of Taiwan as Chinese territory from the Japanese. A provincial government ruled Taiwan until 1949 when the government of Chiang Kai-Shek was forced to retreat by the CPC from mainland China to the island of Taiwan. The PRC was founded on mainland China, led by the CPC, and the ROC established its government on the island of Taiwan, essentially ending the armed conflict of the civil war in China. The United Nations and most western nations recognized Taiwan as China until 1970. In 1971 United Nations (UN) recognized the PRC as the sole and legitimate government of China and removed Chiang Kai-Shek and his government from the UN. In 1979 the U.S. followed suit and recognized Beijing as the capital of China and the CPC as China's ruling party.² In spite of not recognizing the government of Taiwan as China, the U.S. maintains unofficial diplomatic relations with Taiwan as guided by the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979.

In addition to the TRA there are four other official documents (of which the TRA is the only U.S law) that shape U.S. diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The other documents are the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, the Normalization Communiqué of 1979, the Six Assurances of 1982 and the August 17 Communiqué (on arms sales) of 1982. Each document describes U.S. policy regarding Taiwan and China. They call for maintaining a neutral stance regarding any resolution of issues between the two countries as long as the negotiations are conducted peacefully and bilaterally; while at

the same time, implying U.S. assistance to Taiwan and action in the face of Chinese aggression with enough ambiguity and flexibility to avoid provoking China while simultaneously offering assurances and support to Taiwan.³ One of the key sections of the TRA states that the U.S. will "consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States."⁴ The TRA also allows for the sale of defensive weapons to Taiwan in order for Taiwan to maintain its own self-defense. In 1982, President Reagan reaffirmed the TRA with "Six Assurances," stating that there was no date for ending arm sales to Taiwan and that the U.S. "had not altered its position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan."⁵ This last assurance remains purposefully ambiguous as the U.S. did not have a stance on what the outcome of the dispute over sovereignty should be other than that the issue must be resolved peacefully by both parties.⁶

The discussion of sovereignty is complex and both of the parties involved have a different opinion on what "One-China" means in terms of a policy for its country. The U.S. has yet a third interpretation and all parties' positions have shifted slightly over time. In 1972, as part of the Shanghai Communiqué, China stated that the PRC was the sole government of China and that Taiwan was a province of China. The PRC further went on to state that the affair was internal and no other nation had an interest or right to interfere.⁷ The U.S. acknowledged the Chinese view but neither validated it nor challenged it, stating only that a peaceful resolution of the settlement was in the interest of all parties. In 1978, President Chiang Ching-kuo of the ROC stated that the Republic of China was a sovereign nation and no declaration by outside countries, specifically the

PRC, would change that fact.⁸ Over the course of the next 35 years, the general position of each government has remained the same but the tone and stance have changed with each country's respective administration and leadership. Most of the shifts in policy have revolved around how forcefully each of the three parties pledged to support and defend its position. To this point, no military or coercive action has occurred to resolve the issue of "One-China" and the U.S. strives to maintain that balance in order to uphold U.S. interests in the region.

This paper makes three assumptions as a means to determine the best course for U.S. strategy and policy with regards to Taiwan and China. The first assumption is that China will continue its course of seeking the re-unification of Taiwan with the PRC and will not unilaterally drop the issue and cede Taiwan's claim of independence. The PRC's stance on what is sovereign Chinese soil is deeply rooted and the Chinese leadership has thus far been willing to take the long view on the restoration of China's territorial claims.⁹ The second assumption is that the people of Taiwan want to remain separate from the PRC and retain their ability to self-govern. In November of 2012, 84% of voting Taiwanese opted for maintaining the status quo either indefinitely or with a later decision on unification or independence.¹⁰ However, if at some point the people of Taiwan decided to merge their government with the PRC and made that decision peacefully, without forceful coercion or under duress, the U.S. policy and strategy presented in this paper would no longer be valid. The third assumption is that no nation involved in the dispute currently wants to use force to decide the issue of "One-China." This is not to say they will not resort to military action of varying degrees of intensity if their vital national interests are at stake but each country is currently attempting to avoid

outright military conflict. Although each country has a variety of voices within its government with varying opinions, the current official stance of each government is to continue diplomatic negotiations to resolve the issue.

Why is this issue important to each of the nations involved? The answer lies in a review of the links of the “One-China” issue to the national interests of all parties. The PRC considers it a vital national interest to reclaim the historical sovereignty of what they believe is China. Taiwan is not the only territory they believe is Chinese in the world; in fact, when looking at maps printed in PRC passports the territory shaded indicating national boundaries includes parts of India, islands in the South China Sea, and Taiwan.¹¹ China has a strong desire to demonstrate the cultural ascendancy of China and promote its regional standing in Asia. A strong and rising economy is a vital interest to China, as it is to most countries around the world. China also places a strong priority on maintaining internal order and keeping the ruling party and structure in power. The CPC achieves legitimacy based in part on its ability to preserve and restore China’s territorial integrity. China’s final national interest is access to natural resources, either through trade or territorial rights. In addition to a strong economy, the key to attaining China’s national interests is a strong military.¹² The issue of Taiwanese autonomy ties into many of the PRC’s national interests, making it a critical and sensitive topic. The PRC believes Taiwan is a part of China and the historical China cannot be completely restored without Taiwan.¹³ If Taiwan were incorporated back into Chinese control, it would be a huge economic and resource boon for the PRC. Finally, the reunification of Taiwan with China would demonstrate to the region and China the power of the PRC and enhance its internal stability and regional standing.

The U.S. national interests in the region are equally vital, despite the physical distance involved. According to the 2010 National Security Strategy, the U.S. has four enduring national interests:

- The security of the United States, its citizens, and U.S. allies and partners;
- A strong, innovative and growing U.S. economy in an open international economic system that promotes opportunity and prosperity;
- Respect for universal values at home and around the world; and
- An international order advanced by U.S. leadership that promotes peace, security, and opportunity through stronger cooperation to meet global challenges.¹⁴

Although Taiwan is not an ally by treaty, the U.S. has obligations by law under the TRA to consider any non-peaceful efforts to determine the future of Taiwan a threat to the peace and security of the region¹⁵. Maintaining the peace and security of this region is important for the U.S. economy as its most significant trade partners are here. Taiwan exports 10% of its goods to the U.S. and imports 11% of its goods from the U.S. In 2011, Taiwan was the 10th-largest U.S. trading partner and the 6th-largest market for U.S. agricultural exports.¹⁶ Additionally, the U.S. has huge economic ties to China as its number one import and number three export partner.¹⁷ Instability in the region, armed conflict, or diplomatic coercion (defined by the TRA as any efforts to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including boycotts or embargoes)¹⁸ would have dramatic negative effects on the economies of all three nations.

Taiwan's national interests include prosperity, security, a democratic way of life, and self-governance.¹⁹ It is fairly easy to see that the Taiwanese national interests

concerning democracy and self-governance conflict with the PRC's national interests considering the PRC's stance that Taiwan is rightfully part of China, that the CPC is not a democratic form of governance and that the autonomy of Taiwan is counter to China's vital interest of internal order. Neither Taiwan nor the PRC can achieve their current national interests without violating the interests of the other.

In addition to the U.S., PRC, and Taiwan, there are a number of other actors and interested parties involved in the issues of the Taiwan Strait. Other countries in the region are keeping a wary eye on China to see how it negotiates with Taiwan, perhaps to glean insight into how the PRC will attempt to resolve other regional territorial conflicts. Organizations such as Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are interested in collective and peaceful negotiations of disputes between nations.²⁰

Although not having a direct stake in the outcome of the "One-China" dispute, these actors are concerned by the prospect of China exerting diplomatic or military pressure to resolve other territorial disputes outside of the Taiwan Strait.²¹ Even though neither China nor Taiwan is a member of ASEAN, they both have territorial disputes with a number of ASEAN member states. There is a certain safety in collective bargaining and it is in the best interests of the smaller countries that have similar open disputes with China not to allow the PRC the ability to unilaterally or bilaterally decide the fate of these disputes. Disputes between China, Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Japan and Vietnam over the territorial rights over the Spratly, Senkaku, and Paracel Islands and the Scarborough Shoal revolve around both the historical claims of China to owning these territories as well as the natural resources (oil, gas, and fish) located within the territories' maritime areas.²² China, as the largest nation involved in the dispute, would

gain a distinct advantage if it had the ability to negotiate the resolution of each of these disputes unilaterally with much smaller countries.

Internal to the U.S. there are a variety of different interests and opinions on the “One-China” issue. Any change in either U.S. policy or the strategy enacted and the means used to bring about the change would face intense political debate. Politicians could use the potential change in policy, or lack thereof, as a means of political maneuvering for other agendas, or merely to discredit the opposition in general. Lobbyists for stronger U.S./Taiwan relations are also prevalent in Washington, DC. An example of the infighting that ensues even on small issues occurred in 2011 when Taiwan requested the purchase of F-16 C/D models to replace their current fleet of F-16 A/B aircraft. There was intense political infighting with Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), chairwoman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Senator John Cornyn (R-Texas), and Representative Kay Granger (R-Texas) leading support for the sale and the Obama Administration opposing to it.²³ The actual result of the F-16 sales was not as important as the political and economic tensions that resulted across the U.S. government over selling the F-16 C/D aircraft vs. the upgrade kits for Taiwan’s existing F-16 A/B jets that were sold instead. Any attempt at more notable changes in policy or strategy regarding the right of Taiwan to self-rule or gain independence would certainly bring even more and stronger debates on the issue.

After looking at the various national interests of those countries and entities involved, it is now time to look at the national policies and strategies each uses to achieve those national interests. First looking at the PRC, the Chinese leadership has made very clear that they believe the unification of Taiwan under China is inevitable and

will always be the policy of the PRC.²⁴ However, the Chinese take a typically long view of history, acknowledging that this may take a decade, a century, or a millennium.²⁵ The diplomatic effort so far has been peaceful and non-coercive. CPC General Secretary Xi Jinping drafted a message that called for strengthening political, economic, cultural, and social cross-strait ties to achieve eventual “peaceful reunification.”²⁶ There are a number of economic ties between the PRC and Taiwan that help ensure peaceful discussion, including China being the number one export partner and number two import partner of Taiwan.²⁷ However, China is growing both economically and militarily and its influence is expanding in Asia and the world. The rising power of China relative to other countries in the region allows the scope for expressions of minority opinions within the PRC that advocate more forceful and unilateral action by China to resolve issues within the Taiwan Strait. Just as the U.S. has differing opinions and agendas within the government, so too does the PRC. Despite the attempt of the CPC to maintain a firm and solid grip on all national actions both diplomatic and military, there are other power brokers within the PRC. Although not an official stance of the CPC or the People’s Liberation Army (PLA), a senior Academy of Military Science officer who visited Washington stated the reunification of Taiwan was more important than domestic economic growth and development and that China would make extreme sacrifices to maintain its national sovereignty.²⁸ Even more extreme views on Chinese intentions can be found in the book, “Unrestricted Warfare: China’s Master Plan to Destroy America” in which two senior PLA officers describe how nations like China can overcome a technologically-advanced nation with asymmetric measures.²⁹ The moderate and official PLA stance is one of developing Anti-Access, Area Denial

(A2/AD) weapon systems and doctrine to constrain the ability of the U.S. or any nation to intervene in the event of military conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Even if no military action is taken, the PRC's perceived ability to deny U.S. access to the Strait, isolating Taiwan from any source of assistance, gains the PRC leverage, in the form of military might, to force unification through coercive diplomacy.

Taiwan, for its part, is committed to retaining its self-governance without pressing the need for officially recognized separation from the PRC. In June of 2012, President Ma reiterated Taiwan's stance, "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" and "economic matters before political matters."³⁰ This is a fairly concise and simple proclamation of Taiwanese policy that leaves little room for interpretation. However, just because it is easy to state, it does not mean it is easy to achieve. Maintaining the status quo requires a delicate balance in the region. Taiwan cannot afford to let China become relatively over-powered in regard to Taiwan, or to isolate Taiwan from the rest of the international community either diplomatically or militarily. Taiwan is attempting to build its own version of A2/AD in an attempt to deter China. Although Taiwan will never be a match for the PRC militarily, it can hope to maintain a strong enough defense to ensure the PRC cannot take the island easily or quickly enough to prevent the U.S. or other nations to come to Taiwan's aid. Taiwan is also attempting to intertwine economically with China to discourage military action.

Current U.S. policy toward Taiwan is a bit harder to decipher or articulate. In general terms, the U.S. is attempting to balance between Taiwan and the PRC to prevent either side from being alienated or offended while at the same time maintaining the peace. U.S. national interests have already been discussed, and clearly peace and

stability are essential in the region to ensure the accomplishment of these interests. However, when the two countries involved have opposing national interests, unification for the PRC and self-governance for Taiwan, avoiding an instance where either country resorts to armed conflict is difficult. This is especially the case when looking at the third assumption of this paper, that no involved party wants to use military force but WILL if its national interests are threatened. Essentially, the U.S. must attempt to maintain the status quo, not forcing the hand of either involved party into military action. The current administration caused some initial concern for Taiwan and perhaps indicated to the PRC there was an opportunity for a bilateral conclusion of the “One-China” issue in 2011. Then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton published an article in *Foreign Policy* on U.S. ‘pivot’ to Asia but failed to mention Taiwan specifically.³¹ The article specifies, “Our treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand are the fulcrum for our strategic turn to the Asia-Pacific” but does not mention the TRA anywhere in the article.³² However, she clarified the U.S. position later that year by saying that Taiwan was a strong security and economic partner of the U.S.³³ The U.S. continues to support Taiwan with defensive weaponry to help Taiwan maintain a deterrent ability against the PRC, most recently by selling Taiwan the upgrades for their F16 A/B fighters as previously mentioned in this paper, as well as the sale of Apache Longbow helicopters to Taiwan in 2012.³⁴ And finally, the U.S. currently encourages diplomatically the continued peaceful negotiations and discussion between the PRC and Taiwan.

There is no recommended change to current U.S. policy with regards to Taiwan and the PRC. The U.S. current stance of neutrality as long as negotiations are peaceful

and non-coercive remains the best stance for the U.S. Any attempt to take sides between the PRC and Taiwan would only lead to the alienation of the other party and the breakdown of diplomatic relations with whichever side the U.S. opted not to support. If the U.S. supported Taiwan, the PRC might initiate more dramatic actions to reclaim Taiwan as a province. In the worst case, China would see this as an act of war and retaliate where possible against both Taiwan and the U.S., not necessarily with direct military actions but using combinations of the more extreme asymmetric actions the PLA officers espoused in their book *Unrestricted Warfare*.³⁵ If the U.S. was to side with the PRC and support its version of the “One-China” policy, Taiwan would see that as a breach of faith that the U.S. would provide for the self-determination of Taiwan. U.S. allied nations in the region such as the Philippines, Thailand, and Japan might also see this breach of faith as an indication that the U.S. would not support its treaty obligations to these nations in the event that China attempts to reclaim any of the disputed South or East China Sea islands by force. This would greatly damage U.S. standing and influence in the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to the change in perception U.S. allies have towards the U.S., this course of action might also embolden China to resolve its other territorial disputes in Asia, further solidifying its regional position and weakening U.S. influence in Asia. Given that the recommendation for overall U.S. policy remains the same, there are some adjustments across all instruments of national power, commonly referred to as Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic, or DIME, that could enhance the strategy for implementing the current policy of the U.S.

In the diplomatic arena, there are a number of ways for the U.S. to achieve its national objectives. The first is through continued diplomatic encouragement and

pressure on both parties to continue peaceful negotiations, accomplished through head of state, government and party interaction and engagement. Although the U.S. does not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign nation, the U.S. can continue to provide advocacy for Taiwan's participation in international bodies that do not require that its members be sovereign states, such as the World Health Organization.³⁶ The U.S. needs to maintain its stance in declaring its commitment to either peaceful resolution or upholding the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. A bit of strategic ambiguity in this area is actually advantageous to the U.S.; neither Taiwan nor the PRC should be so certain of U.S. intentions that either Taiwan or the PRC would be emboldened to initiate a unilateral solution. At the same time, the U.S. should strengthen diplomatic relations with the PRC and conduct negotiations on a number of issues, including trade, security cooperation, nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and human rights. Transparency in U.S. dealings with the PRC is vital as is the U.S. desire for the Chinese leadership to work transparently in return. Cabinet level and head of state visits to Taiwan should be even more carefully regulated than in the past. Too many visits at too high a level would signify official diplomatic recognition that the U.S. cannot afford to show to Taiwan.

In the information category there are two main areas to consider, public diplomacy and Information Operations (IO). Public policy statements across the government will have to be coordinated to ensure that all such statements are in accordance with U.S. policy. Walking the line between Taiwan and the PRC to maintain the status quo will take balance and the U.S. cannot afford to have differing U.S. government public policy statements. Constant reinforcement of all peaceful

negotiations of the two parties will be required and any non-peaceful or coercive acts met with diplomatic demarches in conjunction with other actions from the other instruments of national power. Additional efforts would need to be made to lessen PRC anxiety by toning down the rhetoric of U.S. heads of state and cabinet heads. China cannot be led to perceive that the U.S. believes war is inevitable between the two nations. In the IO realm, the U.S. must encourage Taiwan and support its ability to conduct defensive computer network operations. The PRC and PLA have been implicated in computer network attacks worldwide³⁷ and it will be important for Taiwan to be able to defend its national infrastructure and industry from PRC cyber-attack.

In terms of military actions, there are a number of actions short of war that the U.S. should incorporate into strategy. The first is to deter PRC military aggression by a strong regionally positioned force that is capable of preventing a military takeover of Taiwan. In order to do this, the U.S. must study carefully the weapons and tactics the PRC has developed and will continue to develop over the next decade and have the ability to overcome the PRC A2/AD efforts. The U.S. current development of the Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC) is the U.S. answer to emerging A2/AD security challenges.³⁸ Although not explicitly intended to be solely a counter to PRC military developments, JOAC certainly addresses them. Continued development of the concept, refinement of the tactics and exercising with U.S. allies and partners in the region will be essential to ensuring deterrence of the PRC. Although some might say the PRC Navy would never be able to withstand the brunt of a U.S. Navy attack in the Taiwan Strait, we cannot ignore the lessons of history. Thucydides tells the story of an equally confident Athenian navy that believed there was no way any city-state on Sicily

could launch a navy to stand in open waters against the Athenian navy. Although they were correct, this was irrelevant because all Syracuse had to do was build a specialized trireme that was capable of defeating the Athenian navy in the Syracuse home port, which they did.³⁹ The Syracuse navy was quickly and specifically designed to fight a close-in naval fight with no room to maneuver within their home port, giving them the ability to defeat the technically more powerful Athenian navy that was built for engagements in the open sea. The potential for the PRC to do the exact same thing within the close confines of the Taiwan Strait, despite their inability to match the U.S. Navy in open seas or in a worldwide conflict, remains a viable threat.

Continuing in the military realm, the U.S. will need to continue sales of defensive weapons to Taiwan to help bolster Taiwanese self-sufficiency in deterring PRC military aggression. Although each sale must be carefully weighed against PRC reaction, the U.S. cannot afford to let Taiwan fall too far behind in its ability to provide its own self-defense. The U.S. would also encourage Taiwan to participate more in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) actions within the region. Taiwan currently only dedicates 0.1% of its GDP to HA/DR while the regional average is 0.5%.⁴⁰ A more active Taiwanese participation in HA/DR in the region would have two positive effects in attempting to maintain the status quo. The first is that it would bolster good will amongst other nations in the region who would potentially come to the aid, or at least diplomatic support, of Taiwan in face of PRC aggression. The second benefit is more recognition as a valuable, independent participant in regional affairs, even if not recognized as a sovereign country. Taiwan could establish additional regional goodwill by participating in the policing of two areas of the global commons, maritime and

cyberspace.⁴¹ Piracy is of great concern to Taiwan as well as the rest of Asia, including the PRC. By unilaterally or multilaterally participating in anti-piracy actions in the East and South China Seas, Taiwan would again bolster international good will and acceptance. Taiwanese unilateral efforts to police cyberspace of malicious attacks and other cybercrimes might be met with some suspicion from foreign nations, questioning Taiwanese philanthropy, but when seen and proven to be altruistic this could again build international support and acceptance for Taiwan.

In the economic realm, continued support for economic growth between all three entities is essential to maintaining the delicate balance in the Taiwan Strait. The more intertwined the economic ties, the less likely military action between those nations is likely to occur.

There are a number of risks involved with the proposed strategy of maintaining the status quo. The first is that U.S. actions will be perceived as meddling in internal affairs by the PRC and hurt U.S. diplomatic relations with the PRC. On the opposite side of this is the risk that U.S. actions will appear not strong enough in support of peaceful resolution to the “One-China” issue and the PRC will see this as implicit permission to decide the issue on Chinese terms, with coercion. To mitigate these risks, a careful and cyclical analysis using all sources of intelligence must be used to continually gauge the impacts of U.S. policy on the PRC, Taiwan, and the region as a whole. The U.S. must be adaptable enough to adjust its actions quickly enough in order to maintain the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. Another risk would be to create a military imbalance between the PRC and Taiwan that would actually incite a military solution as opposed to maintaining the status quo the U.S. desires. Taiwan cannot be

perceived as too easy or isolated a target by the PRC; this might precipitate an invasion of Taiwan. However, the opposite is also true. Sales of weapons and assurances of U.S. military support cannot be so strong as to embolden Taiwan to declare independence due to their perceived assured safety from China. As previously discussed, the PRC would be forced to react militarily if Taiwan tried to force sovereignty and true independence from China; and the U.S. would then be forced to respond or risk significant damage to its own interests.

In spite of those risks, the proposed strategy is feasible, acceptable, and suitable for the U.S. There are no major increases to resource expenditures that would prevent the U.S. from implementing the recommended ways with available means. The strategy is also acceptable to the U.S. in that neither the U.S. nor Taiwan takes any controversial or provocative actions with regards to the PRC and avoids inadvertently provoking military action in the Strait. The U.S. will see the strategy as suitable in that it promotes regional stability and therefore economic freedom by maintaining the status quo.

In order to ensure vital U.S. interests concerning security and economic freedom in the region, the status quo in the Taiwan Strait must be maintained by a comprehensive U.S. strategy involving all aspects of national power. Key to this strategy is the bolstering of international/regional support of Taiwan, Taiwanese military deterrence backed by strategically ambiguous U.S. assurances of security, intertwined economic ties between all parties, and a strong informational campaign aimed at lessening tensions and improving diplomatic relations between all parties involved. The strategy must maintain a delicate balance to ensure neither the PRC nor Taiwan sees a change in U.S. policy towards the sovereignty of Taiwan and therefore an opportunity to

attempt unilateral resolution of the “One-China” issue. Any attempt by either the PRC or Taiwan to resolve the issue would force the U.S. to take one side or the other, either of which would damage U.S. vital national interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, it remains in the best interest of the U.S. to retain a policy of strategic ambiguity and keep the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

Endnotes

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