



Debatetrack



Taiwan Military Support
November 2024 Public Forum Topic

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Notes on Evidence

- **Purpose:** This brief is intended to be:
 1. **A starting point:** Please continue researching interesting & fruitful areas as you make cases.
 2. **A toolbox:** Not all of the cards in this brief will be useful to you—use them at your discretion.
- **Tags:** Cards are written with summaries (also called tags) to make understanding and presenting the material easier. However, many coaches and some high-quality briefs simply omit them, preferring to have students work more directly with the material to help with understanding and avoid power-tagging (ie, giving an inaccurate summary of the material).

To avoid accusations of power-tagging and increase your ability to actually use the cards, please read and understand each card before using it.

- **Quality:** Evidence quality will vary. While we prefer to use high-quality sources from thinktanks, journals and seasoned experts, this won't cover all major topic angles. To provide more helpful evidence, we also mix in legitimate but less-vetted sources, like news articles. Please be cognizant of this variation in quality.
- **Navigation:** please use the Navigation Panel to view this brief (View → Navigation Pane in Word)
- **Mistakes:** please let me know if you find any mistakes! Especially glaring ones. I'm happy to correct and re-release the brief as an updated version.
- **Blocks:** Blocks, ATs are rebuttals are grouped interchangeably here. The difference between a block and a rebuttal is how you use it!
- For questions, comments or suggestions on evidence, please reach out to **Joel:** joel@debatetrack.com

Research Assistants

Elene Tsertsvadze is currently pursuing her master's degree in International Human Rights and Development at London South Bank University. She is originally from Tbilisi, Georgia, where she completed her undergraduate studies in Law with a minor in International Relations. Elene has passed the Bar Qualification Exam of Georgia and the Qualification Examination of the Prosecutor's Office. Prior to her master's studies, Elene gained valuable experience working at the Department of Legal Provision and Research in the Constitutional Court of Georgia.

Thank you for subscribing!

Your subscription fee keeps this project going and keeps PF lectures free and accessible to everyone who needs them. You're helping to power debate. Thank you.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

V2 Changes

Changed:

- A number of tags
- Organization of several cards

Added:

- **Background:**
 - **Kavanagh 23** – Arms Backlog
 - **AP 5/24** – Sales
 - **Swejis & van Hooft 24** – War
- **Aff:**
 - **Washington Post 23** – China Relations – Status Quo Untenable
 - **Dorsey, Grieco & Kavanagh 3/24** – Prefer Self-Defense
 - **Savitz 5/24** – Prefer Self-Defense
 - **Glaser 15** – Prefer Grand Bargain
 - **McKinney & Harris 2/24** – AT: US Support Unique
 - **Jasper 24** – AT: Chips
 - **Sisson 5/22** – AT: Deterrence by Denial
 - **Roy 4/24** – AT: Invasion
- **Neg:**
 - **Shivakumar & Wessner 22, Barth 22**—Chips
 - **Halem & Freymann 22** – Increase Military Support – Air Defense
 - **Kaufman 2/23** – AT: China Nuke Fear

Moved:

- **Brands 11/23** from Neg Blocks to Aff arguments

Removed:

- **Neg:**
 - **Rahman 01** – Japan-US Alliance

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Background

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Arms Backlog

\$20 Billion: Taiwan currently has a backlog of over \$20 billion in purchased arms that have not been delivered—although delivery of some of the larger systems have recently begun. An order of anti-ship Harpoon missiles won't be delivered until 2026—if the delivery stays on schedule. Other equipment slated for Taiwan has been water-damaged, found to be moldy, and improperly packaged – a worrying sign for the quality of equipment promised to Taiwan.

Gomez & Giltner 10/24— [“Taiwan Arms Backlog, September 2024 Update: New Maintenance Sale and Details of Troubled PDA Transfer.” 2024. Cato Institute. October 3. <https://www.cato.org/blog/taiwan-arms-backlog-september-2024-update-new-maintenance-sale-details-troubled-pda-transfer>.] Joel.

[Eric Gomez is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on the U.S. military budget and force posture, as well as arms control and nuclear stability issues in East Asia.

Benjamin Giltner is a Research Associate at the Cato Institute's Defense and Foreign Policy Department. In 2023, he graduated from The Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, where he completed a Master in International Affairs with concentrations in US Defense Policy and Military Affairs, and International Politics and Grand Strategy.]

There were multiple developments in US security assistance to Taiwan in September 2024, but the size of the arms sale backlog did not change from the previous month. **The topline figure for the Taiwan arms sale backlog remains \$20.5 billion.** New information that came to light in September about several of the largest arms sale cases in the backlog is good news for Taiwan, but **none of the arms sale cases completed delivery.**

Figures 1 and 2 show how the backlog is divided between munitions, asymmetric capabilities, and traditional capabilities. Table 1 shows an itemized list of backlogged capabilities.

New Maintenance Sale

One new arms sale to Taiwan was notified to Congress in September 2024, but this sale is not included in our dataset because it is for maintenance.

On September 16, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency notified Congress of a \$228 million sale of aircraft spare parts. We do not consider this new sale part of the arms sale backlog because, unlike the sales that are part of our dataset, Taiwan already possesses the weapons that the spare parts support and could use them to defend itself.

This most recent sale brings the Biden administration's total maintenance sales to Taiwan to \$2.45 billion over 12 sales, compared to the Trump administration's \$1.85 billion over 4 sales. **Generally, the Biden administration has focused on selling new asymmetric weapons and munitions to Taiwan while maintaining Taiwan's traditional capabilities.** The Trump administration sold more traditional capabilities like F-16s and Abrams tanks, but these are more vulnerable to China's armed forces.

Initial Deliveries of Large Arms Sales

In good news for the backlog, press reports from Taiwan indicate that deliveries of the three largest arms sale packages—F-16 aircraft (\$8 billion), the Harpoon Coastal Defense System (\$2.37 billion), and Abrams tanks (\$2 billion)—have either started or will begin in the very near future.

The first of 66 newly built F-16 aircraft, a sale notified to Congress in 2019, should arrive before the end of 2024, though the precise timing and number of aircraft that will arrive this year are unclear. The F-16s were supposed to begin arriving earlier this year, but the delivery was shifted due to production delays.

The *Liberty Times* reported that equipment for ground-based Harpoon anti-ship missiles arrived in Taiwan. A first batch of 32 launchers (out of 100) and 128 missiles (out of 400) is expected in 2026. It is

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

unclear if the equipment mentioned by *Liberty Times* refers to early delivery of this initial tranche or the delivery of supporting equipment with the launchers and missiles arriving later, though it is likely the latter.

Finally, a report by Taiwan's Central News Agency on the army's plans to train soldiers on Abrams tanks says that the first batch of 38 tanks (out of 108) should arrive in December 2024. Similar to the F-16s, the tanks were originally supposed to arrive earlier in the year but were delayed.

Our monthly updates to the backlog dataset will make note of these deliveries as they advance. For many of the larger arms sale cases, Taiwan does not receive all the equipment at once. Instead, deliveries are spread out over a few years. Our dataset only removes items from the backlog once delivery is fully completed, but we will find ways to note which deliveries are in progress in future updates.

Presidential Drawdown

The final development in US security assistance to Taiwan is new information about equipment sent via Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA). Weapons sent through the PDA are drawn from existing US stockpiles and can be sent more rapidly than typical arms sales.

In July 2023, the United States announced a PDA package for Taiwan worth \$345 million. In September 2024, the United States announced a second drawdown for Taiwan, valued at \$567 million. Unlike PDA notices for weapons sent to Ukraine, neither of the two Taiwan PDA notices has gone into detail on the equipment being transferred.

A September 2024 report by the Department of Defense Office for the Inspector General (IG) reveals worrying information about the July 2023 drawdown. **According to the IG report, “more than 340** of 504 total **pallets** of [Presidential Drawdown] items (about 67 percent) sustained water damage” as they waited for over three months at a US military base for airlift to Taiwan. **Other problems mentioned in the IG report include moldy body armor, 40-year-old ammunition that was improperly packaged, and machine guns shipped in a cardboard box without any wrapping or cushioning.**

While a second, larger PDA package is good news for quickly getting equipment into Taiwan's hands, **the sorry state of the first package is concerning and belies a lack of US prioritization despite repeatedly naming China as the “pacing threat.”**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Production Shortcomings: The arms backlog originates from a lack of capability in the US military-industrial complex

Kavanagh 23—[Kavanagh, Jennifer. 2023. “The Real Reasons for Taiwan’s Arms Backlog — and How to Help Fill It - War on the Rocks.” War on the Rocks. January 13. <https://warontherocks.com/2023/01/the-real-reasons-for-taiwans-arms-backlog-and-how-to-help-fill-it/>.] Joel.

[Jennifer Kavanagh was a senior fellow in the American Statecraft Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. A political scientist by training, she has spent her career studying national security threats and their consequences for U.S. foreign policy and defense strategy. Kavanagh received an AB in government from Harvard University and a PhD in political science and public policy from the University of Michigan. She is also a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations and an adjunct professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University.]

A closer look at arms received by Ukraine and ordered by Taiwan confirms that while there is overlap between the two, it is considerably smaller than often assumed. Capabilities where overlap exists include Javelin and Stinger missiles, Tube-launched, Optically tracked, and Wire-guided anti-tank missiles, High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, Army Tactical Missile Systems, Harpoon missiles, howitzers, and high-speed anti-radiation missiles. Orders of these weapons make up only about one-third of Taiwan’s \$21 billion in arms purchases since 2015, albeit partly because of Taiwan’s desire to buy large conventional weapons platforms instead of embracing asymmetric strategies. The other \$14 billion in purchases include capabilities not in demand in Ukraine and systems that Washington has refused to send to Kyiv such as Abrams tanks and Reaper drones.

Arguments that identify U.S. aid to Ukraine as a cause of Taiwan’s arms backlog also divert attention from the greatest sources of existing delays: limitations of the U.S. defense industrial base and inefficiencies in the sales-to-delivery process.

Taiwan’s backlog in arms deliveries did not originate with Russia’s 2022 invasion. Instead, by the end of 2021, the balance of overdue arms transfers from the United States to Taiwan stood at about \$14 billion, already over three quarters of the \$19 billion shortfall that existed in December 2022. The majority of delayed systems were purchased between 2015 and 2019, including F-16 aircraft, Javelin and Stinger missiles, High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, Army Tactical Missile Systems, and anti-ship missiles. That most of the backlog pre-dates the war in Ukraine suggests a long-running problem with deeper roots.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute trade register data reveal that delays of anywhere from two to five years between sale and delivery are the norm for transfers of U.S. weapons systems. Across U.S. arms deliveries to all clients completed between 2012 and 2021, the average time between sale and delivery was about four years for air defense systems, 3.5 years for aircraft, and 2.5 years for missiles. Sometimes these delays stretch up to almost 10 years. Taiwan’s delays are in line with these figures. Notably, while clients of major U.S. adversaries like Russia and China often receive faster arms deliveries in general, they face similarly lengthy backlogs when it comes to more high-end systems.

These delays in weapons transfers have many causes. **One major constraint is the capacity of the U.S. defense industrial base to meet increasing demands from U.S. partners and the Defense Department itself. In addition, consolidation across the defense sector has left fewer suppliers and production lines to meet this growing demand.** Efforts to expand the number of suppliers have only just begun. A second driver of delay results from complex production processes and long supply chains that are themselves subject to disruption due to weather and economic or geopolitical shocks. Third, an uncertain budget environment and frequent continuing resolutions that delay contract authorizations have resulted in a “just-in-time” approach while discouraging long-term investment by defense contractors. Finally, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened existing problems by triggering work stoppages and additional supply chain disruptions that take time to reverse.

Inefficiencies in the sale-to-delivery part of the foreign military sales process are another source of delay. The sheer volume of U.S. global arms sales each year slows down the arms delivery process by creating more work for the State and Defense Departments and more strain on an already stretched defense industrial base. In such an environment, large clients like Saudi Arabia and big ticket items like aircraft may

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

take priority over smaller buyers and systems, affecting the asymmetric capabilities that countries like Taiwan need most. The Department of Defense’s antiquated Programming, Planning, Budgeting, and Execution process, which is responsible for allocating funds to support the management of the foreign military sales program, creates a further drag on weapons delivery timelines when there are administrative delays or issues with resource execution. **Many of these process-related delays affect not only new sales but also transfers under the presidential drawdown authority.**

Finally, **export controls can add more obstacles even after an arms sale agreement has been signed and approved.** First, **complicated legal requirements can cause technical delays.** Second, **in the event of any concerns from congressional committees, an informal hold period that lasts indefinitely until the administration has resolved the relevant issues can further slow the process,** though this has yet to be the case for Taiwan.

Filling the Backlog

Taiwan’s arms backlog is undesirable, but not unexpected. It would almost certainly exist even without the war in Ukraine. Now, however, new authorities that allow Taiwan to compete for excess defense articles, increased funding for Taiwan’s arms transfers, and Ukraine’s extensive short- and long-term needs will gradually intensify the direct competition between these two U.S. partners and force greater prioritization across the two theaters. But prioritization alone is only a part of the puzzle, and slowing military aid to Ukraine will not solve Taiwan’s weapons backlog.

Arming Taiwan to support its self-defense will require investments in the U.S. defense industrial base, improvements in the foreign military sales process — including revisions to export controls on relevant technology to facilitate greater co-production — and careful prioritization of the capabilities that Taiwan needs most.

The Biden administration and Congress are both taking steps to address existing defense industrial base constraints. These include large investments to increase capacity and restart supply lines made over the course of 2022 and continued outlays included in the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act to support supply chain resilience, workforce development, and modernization of defense industrial base infrastructure. Other provisions included in the bill, like the ability to sign multi-year contracts for a larger set of capabilities, can facilitate longer term investments across the defense industry, but need to be carefully managed to avoid overcharging. Any benefits from these changes will take time to emerge, however. In some cases, private sector off-the-shelf technologies could be used to temporarily fill capability gaps. More engagement with small private sector firms could also build longer-term relationships that begin to address defense sector concentration.

Changes to the arms transfer process can also help Taiwan to reduce its current backlog. Some are already underway. The Department of Defense has established a “Tiger Team” focused on addressing procedural issues, including long review processes and restrictive rules on technology sharing that complicate sales. Modifications to existing export controls on relevant systems would be valuable in facilitating joint production between the United States and Taiwan or other partners in the region. Such joint production of systems could reduce strain on the U.S. defense industrial base while building the capacity of regional partners for indigenous weapons production.

These updates, along with a clear prioritization of Taiwan over partners with questionable human rights records, would signal that Washington and Taipei are serious about ensuring that Taiwan has the capabilities it needs on a reasonable timeline. The invasion of Ukraine has demonstrated the importance of being able to rapidly deliver weapons when necessary. If Washington seizes the opportunity to make far-reaching reforms today, it can ensure that Taiwan benefits from Ukraine’s experience rather than competing with Kyiv.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Deterrence

5 Pillars: Successfully deterrence of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would rest on 5 pillars: Taiwan armaments, ship-sinking capabilities, allies, global economic punishment, and a credible nuclear deterrent

Brands 11/23— [Brands, Hal. 2023. “U.S. Deterrence in Taiwan Is Failing.” Foreign Policy. September 8. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/08/us-military-deterrence-china-taiwan-war-east-asia/>.] Joel.

[Hal Brands is the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He is also a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion. He is the author or editor of several books, including, most recently, *The Twilight Struggle: What the Cold War Teaches Us About Great-Power Rivalry*, *Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China*, co-authored with Michael Beckley, and *The New Makers of Modern Strategy: From the Ancient World to the Digital Age*.]

China’s fundamental advantages are proximity and the mass of forces it can muster in a war off its coast. The U.S. advantage is that control is harder than denial, especially when control requires crossing large contested bodies of water. An invasion of Taiwan, with its oceanic moat and rugged terrain, would be one of history’s most daunting military operations, comparable to the Allied invasion of Normandy in 1944. Options short of invasion, such as blockade or bombardment, offer no guarantee of forcing Taiwan to submit. **Given the risk that a failed war could pose to Xi’s regime and perhaps his life, the Chinese leader will probably want a high chance of success if he attacks. So the United States and other countries should be able to inject enough doubt into this calculus that even a more risk-acceptant Xi decides rolling the iron dice is a bad idea.**

This will require two mutually reinforcing types of deterrence. “Deterrence by denial” convinces an enemy not to attack by persuading him that the effort will fail. The ability to deter invasion, in this sense, is synonymous with the ability to defeat it. “Deterrence by punishment” convinces an enemy not to attack by persuading him that the effort—even if successful—will incur an exorbitant price. The strongest deterrents blend denial and punishment. They confront an aggressor with sky-high costs and a low likelihood of success. The U.S. task in the Western Pacific, then, is to show that Taiwan can survive a Chinese attack—and that any such war will leave China far poorer, weaker, and less politically stable than before.

In practice, **this approach would rest on five pillars: first, a Taiwan that can deny China a quick or easy victory because it is bristling with arms and ready to resist to the end; second, a U.S. military that can sink a Chinese invasion fleet, decimate a blockade squadron, and otherwise turn back hostile forces trying to take Taiwan; third, a coalition of allies that can bolster this denial defense while raising the strategic price China pays by forcing it to fight a sprawling, regionwide war; fourth, a global punishment campaign that batters China’s economy—and perhaps its political system—regardless of whether Beijing wins or loses in the Taiwan Strait; and fifth, a credible ability to fight a nuclear war in the Western Pacific—if only to convince China that it cannot use its own growing arsenal to deter the United States from defending Taiwan.**

If this sounds like a tall order, it is. Deterring determined revisionists is never easy. If these steps sound awful to contemplate, they are. **Deterrence involves preparing for the unthinkable to lessen the likelihood it occurs. The United States and its friends are making real, even historic progress in all these areas. Alas, they are still struggling to get ahead of the threat.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Sales

Taiwan now sells more to the US than to China, as it shifts away from China and towards the US

AP 5/24— [TANG, DIDI. 2024. “Taiwan Is Selling More to the US than China in Major Shift Away from Beijing.” AP News. May 17. <https://apnews.com/article/china-taiwan-us-exports-investment-308c4efe8e54bef3b65f68db565437f3>.] Joel.

Whether it's tapioca balls or computer chips, **Taiwan is stretching toward the United States and away from China** — the world's No. 2 economy that threatens to take the democratically ruled island by force if necessary.

That has translated to the world's biggest maker of computer chips — which power everything from medical equipment to cellphones — announcing bigger investments in the U.S. last month after a boost from the Biden administration. Soon afterward, a Taiwanese semiconductor company said it was ending its two-decade-long run in mainland China amid a global race to gain the edge in the high-tech industry.

These changes at a time of an intensifying China-U.S. rivalry **reflect Taiwan's efforts to reduce its reliance on Beijing and insulate itself from Chinese pressure while forging closer economic and trade ties with the United States, its strongest ally.** The shift also is taking place as China's economic growth has been weak and global businesses are looking to diversify following supply chain disruptions during the pandemic.

In a stark illustration of the shift, **the U.S. displaced mainland China as the top destination for Taiwan's exports** in the first quarter of the year for the first time since the start of 2016, when comparable data became available. **The island exported \$24.6 billion worth of goods to the U.S. in the first three months, compared with \$22.4 billion to mainland China,** according to Taiwan's official data.

Meanwhile, the island's investments in mainland China have fallen to the lowest level in more than 20 years, dropping nearly 40% to \$3 billion last year from a year earlier, according to Taiwan's Ministry of Economic Affairs. **Yet, Taiwan's investments in the U.S. surged ninefold to \$9.6 billion in 2023.**

Washington and Taipei signed a trade agreement last year, and they're now negotiating the next phase. U.S. lawmakers also have introduced a bill to end double taxes for Taiwanese businesses and workers in the U.S.

“Everything is motivated by ... a desire to build Taiwan's deterrent capability and their resilience, all in support of maintaining the status quo and deterring China from being tempted to take ... action against Taiwan,” Assistant Secretary of State Daniel Kritenbrink said.

The world's biggest computer chip maker, TSMC, announced last month that it would expand its U.S. investments to \$65 billion. That came after the Biden administration pledged up to \$6.6 billion in incentives that would put the company's facilities in Arizona on track to produce about one-fifth of the world's most advanced chips by 2030.

Apart from its U.S. investments, TSMC is putting money into Japan, a staunch U.S. supporter in the region. Foxconn, a Taiwanese conglomerate known for being Apple's main contractor, is building manufacturing capacity in India, while Pegatron, another Taiwan business that makes parts of iPhones and computers, is investing in Vietnam.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Ukraine Parallels

There may be few parallels to draw between Ukraine's surprising self-defense and how Taiwan would fare in an invasion situation—Taiwan is not Ukraine, and China is not Russia

Spirtas 22— [Spirtas, Michael. 2022. "Ukraine's Dream Could Be Taiwan's Nightmare - War on the Rocks." War on the Rocks. October 28. <https://warontherocks.com/2022/10/ukraines-dream-could-be-taiwans-nightmare/>.] Joel.

[Mike Spirtas is the Director, Research Programs at IDA, a role he assumed in 2023. Mike brings a wealth of knowledge and experience in program management of federally funded research and development centers (FFRDCs), including engagement with government sponsors, Contracting Officer's Representatives and Washington Headquarters Services. He is responsible for managing the FFRDC research program and overseeing day-to-day relationships with sponsors. Prior to joining RAND, Mike was a senior fellow at the Center for National Policy, where he ran projects on Cuba, North Korea, China-Taiwan relations, and international trade. Before that, he was a fellow at the U.S. Center for Research and Education on Strategy and Technology. He also served as an adjunct professor at George Washington University and American University. Mike holds two master's degrees and a doctorate in political science from Columbia University.]

Russia's poor performance in Ukraine has bolstered the hopes of those who seek to deter Chinese aggression against Taiwan, but there is reason to expect that Taiwan would be more difficult to defend than Ukraine. Defenders of territorial sovereignty and a peaceful world order may be cheered by Ukraine's success, but there is danger that success could decrease the urgency of efforts to strengthen Taiwan. China is investing in its military and will seek to learn from the problems Russia has had in Ukraine. Will the United States and other supporters of Taiwan do the same?

This isn't to say that China would have it easy if it chooses to intervene in Taiwan. Amphibious invasions are notoriously complex and difficult, and the People's Liberation Army hasn't engaged in a large-scale operation recently. Prominent defense figures have called for the U.S. military to take significant steps to bolster its, Taiwan's, and other allies' capabilities to counter Chinese aggression, and the Biden administration has made progress in building capabilities that would help deny Chinese military war aims.

The current conflict in Ukraine offers a wide range of lessons. Some relate to strategy, some relate to the use of information, some relate to logistics, and some relate to the tactical fight. Not all of these lessons will help to prepare for Chinese aggression in Taiwan. Taiwan's defense problems differ greatly from Ukraine's, stemming from the fact that Taiwan is a small island country that does not share borders with U.S. allies. It would be a mistake to underestimate the difficulty of defending Taiwan.

The United States can go beyond its current course to better prepare to defend Taiwan. The National Security Strategy and the National Defense Strategy both highlight the need to compete with China, but **the Department of Defense needs to adopt a generational approach to China similar to the one that it followed with respect to the Soviet Union. The United States was able to support Ukraine off the cuff, but wouldn't have the same opportunity with Taiwan.** Instead, the Department of Defense and Congress should plan now, with urgency, and devote significant resources and organizational focus to the problem. Discussion of great power competition and integrated deterrence have created confusion in the defense world, and both concepts broaden the focus of U.S. strategy beyond defense. It is not wrong to harness a range of tools of national power, but to develop the concepts of operation and capabilities necessary to deny Chinese aggression against Taiwan, the United States also needs a clear, focused, and appropriately resourced approach.

Many have drawn different types of lessons for a potential Taiwan conflict from the war in Ukraine. Some have noted that **Taiwan might be less likely to receive support from the United States and Europe than Ukraine.** Others have noted that **China's position in the international economy could make it more difficult to isolate than Russia** and that **the concentration of advanced microchip production in Taiwan puts the American and global economies at risk.** Diplomatic and economic factors may loom large in defending Taiwan, but it would also be wise to consider the military problem as well.

Nocember 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Supporting Taiwan's defense could require tremendous investment well prior to a conflict there. The scale of U.S. military aid pledged to Ukraine is quite large. Estimates range from \$17 billion to \$25 billion since the Russian invasion. This is much more security assistance than the United States government is even contemplating for Taiwan. For example, the United States has proposed selling \$1.1 billion worth of arms to Taiwan, and at present the Senate's version of the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act calls for \$10 billion of assistance over five years. To be sure, wartime military aid to Ukraine is different than peacetime weapons sales to Taiwan. Not having to engage in active fighting gives Taiwan, the United States, and others more time to develop and deploy defenses.

Part of the problem is that China can intervene when it chooses, so it is impossible for policymakers to know exactly when conflict might occur. Timing is key. The bulk of U.S. and allied assistance to Ukraine has come after the Russian invasion in February. The many land routes of supply across Europe have allowed the United States and its allies to transport arms, humanitarian aid, and other assistance during the conflict. Taiwan, of course, is an island, and it would be much more difficult to send in the same level of supplies during a conflict. China could contest both sea and air access to Taiwan. The United States and other supporters of Taiwan may need to employ military and merchant shipping to provide humanitarian and military aid. U.S. commanders have expressed confidence that they could break a Chinese blockade, but **air and sea resupply of Taiwan during a conflict could be a challenge.** It would be much better to stockpile supplies in Taiwan prior to a conflict, **but the United States is not known for acting with urgency in the absence of a crisis.**

Now is the time to sell arms, develop and deploy forces, and plan with Taiwan and other allies and partners. To successfully deter Chinese aggression will likely require an effort on the scale not seen since Cold War-era preparations to deter Soviet aggression in Western Europe. Eisenhower's reorientation of the U.S. military to adopt an approach of massive retaliation comes to mind, but that initiative was accompanied by a reduction in defense spending. There is little talk of reductions in the U.S. defense budget at present, but it is unlikely that Congress or the American people have much appetite for increased investment in defense at this point. Instead, the Department of Defense will need to be much more efficient in its operations and apply the profits of efficiency to the problem of Taiwan.

Taiwan is working to make itself and its leadership a more difficult target for Chinese intervention. Analysts and others have called for Taiwan to invest in relatively simple platforms and large quantities of munitions to deny a Chinese military assault — or at least to delay one while the United States and others mobilize and deploy their forces. Taiwan began to prepare itself through its Overall Defense Concept, which set out a program to make itself a harder target and to use mobility, camouflage, concealment, and deception to raise the costs of a Chinese military intervention. There are questions about whether the concept will prove viable, but the example of Ukraine has helped inspire Taiwan to take steps to prepare its people to engage in civilian resistance by providing courses to its people on medical rescue, self-defense combat, and rescue and evacuation.

Taiwan's military budget is more than double Ukraine's, which bodes well for the island nation. However, Ukraine has had eight years of fighting its adversary, which has helped it to build a capable military force. In contrast, Taiwan is much less prepared for the type of challenges that the People's Liberation Army could pose. There are questions about the adequacy of the training it provides to its reserve forces, and there is criticism that it has bungled its transition from a conscription-based force to a professional one, creating a range of problems with its personnel.

Another problem is that there are a variety of ways that China might act. China could engage in an amphibious assault of Taiwan and on its offshore islands, likely combined with air assault and bombardment from the land, air, and sea. It could also engage in a coercive campaign that combines economic and diplomatic pressure along with limited missile strikes using its growing arsenal of ballistic and cruise missiles. China might also seek to blockade, or quarantine, Taiwan. Coercion, quarantine, and attack are different enough that they could require

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Taiwan and its supporters to do more to prepare than if they could concentrate on a single course of action from China.

The war in Ukraine has followed a specific and, it turns out, fairly fortuitous course. It isn't advisable that we prepare for Beijing to act as thoughtlessly, to prepare as little, or to make the as many errors in Taiwan as Russia has in Ukraine. China will no doubt face obstacles if it acts against Taiwan. China needs to upgrade its helicopters and other elements of its amphibious fleet. Even if it lands forces in Taiwan, the Chinese military might have to engage in urban warfare and counterinsurgency. The point here is that **there is danger in finding too much comfort in the known events of Ukraine as we prepare for the unknown in Taiwan.**

It also is not clear which military lessons we draw from Ukraine will be applicable to Taiwan. Russia has failed to obtain air superiority over Ukraine, but Russian aircraft are different than those operated by the People's Liberation Air Force, and Taiwan's air defense systems are very different from those employed by Ukraine. The Russian military's reluctance to delegate authority has put its general officers in jeopardy, but **there are some indications that emerging Chinese military concepts might seek to delegate some decisions to lower levels.** China is working to upgrade its military capabilities, and like us, Taiwanese policymakers will learn from the Ukraine war — but it is not clear whether any of us will learn the right lessons.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

War

Motivations: China has strong strategic & ideological motivations to capture Taiwan

Bandow 4/23—[Bandow, Doug. “Are You Willing to Die for Taiwan?” 2023. Cato Institute. April 23. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/are-you-willing-die-taiwan>.] Joel.

[Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan and editor of the political magazine *Inquiry*. He writes regularly for leading publications such as *Fortune* magazine, *National Interest*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Times*.]

The outcome of a Sino-American war is difficult to predict. However, most every study and game predict enormous human and materiel losses. The PRC has several advantages, such as geography. China likely would enjoy air superiority, an unsettling factor for the US, which for the last century has expected to rule the skies. Without Japan’s willingness to turn its territory into a missile pin cushion the US would have difficulty deploying sufficient forces nearby. China need only concentrate on East Asia, while Washington, convinced that it must continue to defend the entire world, dissipates its military force.

Finally, **Beijing’s interest is much greater than America’s. Washington’s claims are largely derivative and modest, that, for instance, if China defeated Taiwan, the former would be better positioned if it chose to attack more of its neighbors.** In contrast, **the Chinese people have two direct, compelling reasons to care about the island. First is nationalism, the belief that Taiwan has been wrongly stripped from Chinese control. Second is strategic. The PRC no more wants American or allied bases on Taiwan than the US wanted Soviet bases in Cuba.** That doesn’t mean it is impossible to deter China, but it would be very difficult to do so in this case.

Ultimately, the US government, and particularly the American people, need to decide what is worth “sticking up for” with military means. Nearly half of Americans believe China-Taiwan tensions are a serious problem for the US and would back Washington’s involvement. However, most have little to no idea what a Sino-American conflict would entail. Debating whether America’s interests warrant war is far more important than, say, discussing the propriety of “strategic ambiguity,” by which Washington refuses to publicly admit that it has decided to go to war if the PRC invades.

Preparations: Xi Jinping has readied China’s military, economy, leadership, and people to fight

Studeman 4/24—[Studeman, Mike. 2024. “China Is Battening down for the Gathering Storm over Taiwan - War on the Rocks.” War on the Rocks. April 17. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/04/china-is-battening-down-for-the-gathering-storm-over-taiwan/>.] Joel

[Mike Studeman, the former Commander of the Office of Naval Intelligence and a retired rear admiral, is one of our nation’s leading national security professionals, with extensive global experience in intelligence, foreign policy, and defense matters. He is an internationally recognized expert on Asian affairs, with deep expertise on China.]

The simple fact is that peace in the Indo-Pacific and even the wider world will be held hostage to one man with totalitarian control, messianic ambition, strategic impatience, and implacable resolve. **Xi has made unification with Taiwan the signature issue of his tenure. He now calls it the essence of national rejuvenation. For years, his domestic speeches have been grooming officials, the military, and the public for a “great struggle” and “major test” that will require extraordinary sacrifice. At every turn, he dares them to fight and be good at fighting.** At a meeting with Biden in late 2023, Xi stated, “Look, peace is ... all well and good, but at some point we need to move towards resolution.”

Xi’s most critical choices reflect a march to war. **Leadership changes at the 20th Party Congress in late 2022, for example, turned the Politburo into a body more akin to a war cabinet. Fifteen of its 24 members now have Taiwan-related experience.** Included in this cadre is the most recent former eastern theater

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

commander — the general responsible for executing a Taiwan fight — who was leapfrogged to the Politburo without being a prior member of the Central Committee.

As disturbing, **the war machine of the People's Liberation Army continues to modernize at a sprint in every area.** China's hyper-militarization represents the greatest build-up of arms since the end of the Cold War. In 2020, Xi accelerated significant military milestones from 2035 to 2027 because he wanted China's military to modernize faster and give him Taiwan options earlier. **The People's Liberation Army has since built vast underground complexes, a modernized and proliferated space layer, thick aircraft and air defenses, and the world's largest navy.** China also created a Strategic Support Force, which integrates space, electronic warfare, and cyber capabilities. And it boasts the most active and sophisticated ballistic missile force in the world.

China is concurrently building up its nuclear triad at a gallop. China aims to neutralize any possible American nuclear advantage in a crisis in order to devolve a fight to conventional forces where China thinks it might have the edge. The former commander of U.S. Strategic Command, Adm. Charles Richard, repeatedly called China's nuclear force advances "breathtaking," "explosive," and a "strategic breakout." Their nuclear missile, warhead expansion, launch-on-warning, silo construction, and orbital bombardment developments are all part of Xi's broader push through the 2020s to get ready for a potential major power confrontation.

On top of this, Xi has been deploying more military forces nearer to Taiwan to reduce Taipei's warning time, practice in anticipated wartime areas, demonstrate supposed Chinese military superiority, and slowly exhaust and demoralize the Taiwan military. In U.S. parlance, these acts are akin to warm-start efforts at "softening the battlespace" for follow-on action. Employing a boiling frog tactic, **China aims to condition Taiwan to an ever-increasing number of forces surrounding the island.** Additional patrol patterns east of Taiwan are a form of psychological warfare attempting to highlight China's power to cut off resupply lifelines. Meanwhile, the Chinese military has also been intensifying the scope and scale of exercises practicing simulated assaults on Taiwan, which last many months on China's eastern coast each year.

At the strategic level, China dropped "peaceful reunification" as its longstanding official approach to resolving the Taiwan issue. Xi has passed new laws allowing the nationalization of foreign assets in wartime and stronger measures for nationwide civilian mobilization, including more societal drills, to improve support of the People's Liberation Army in wartime. **Efforts to boost food and energy security are well under way, and China is building overland pipelines and coal-fired plants with renewed fervor in anticipation of limiting the impact of expected foreign maritime interdiction of oil and gas during any conflict.** **China has been building its strategic petroleum reserves for years** in above- and below-ground facilities well beyond nominal nation-state peacetime buffers. At the same time, Beijing has deepened its alliances to secure flows from global energy providers, notably Russia, Gulf Cooperation Council states, Iran, Iraq, Angola, Brazil, and others.

Xi's absolute prioritization of security over the economy is perhaps the most telling of all war preparation indicators. **In the last 18 months alone, Xi has undertaken massive efforts to insulate the Chinese economy from potential external vulnerabilities, stressing self-reliance at the expense of growth.** This strategic shift is not just related to trade wars, perceived supply chain vulnerabilities, or de-risking dynamics. **Xi seems to have studied the sanctions playbook the West used against Russia over Ukraine and subsequently initiated long-lead protective measures to batten down the hatches of China's economy to resist similar pressure.** In contrast to the milquetoast pushback from the other leading powers after China put Hong Kong under its boot, **Xi likely knows attempting to assimilate Taiwan would lead to much fiercer global resistance and harsher whole-of-society repercussions that would likely last years. And he intends to ready China to endure them.**

In addition to the extraordinary measures Xi has already undertaken to protect Chinese supply chains, cyber security, and critical infrastructure, China may be quietly reducing exposure of its foreign exchange reserves. Steady declines in Chinese holdings of U.S. Treasury bonds since 2018 (from \$1.2 trillion to less than \$800 billion) roughly parallel year-on-year increases held by Belgium and Luxembourg, suggesting **China may**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

be shifting the financial custodianship of its American bonds. If true, this would presumably serve as a layer of protection against Washington directly capturing China's reserves in wartime. It remains unclear if China's shift to U.S. agency bonds (held by government-sponsored enterprises instead of the U.S. Treasury) may also be a protective measure. These moves would make sense considering **Xi's order to Chinese banks in May 2022 to reevaluate risk and insulate against possible "severe U.S. sanctions."** Guidance like this might also explain other curiosities such as why **China, as the world's largest producer of gold, has been buying gold on global markets for 16 straight months.** Economists who tend to attribute these financial moves solely to diversification, de-dollarization, or increasing the yuan's value may be missing the forest for the trees. **These measures would also help shock-proof China from cyclopedic sanctions stemming from a Taiwan conflict.**

All strategic war preparation indicators are brightly lit, but the most telling is Xi's willingness to breach the Chinese Communist Party's covenant with the Chinese people established 45 years ago to allow China the freedom to get rich. Xi has deliberately switched the party's mandate from enabling China's economic vitality and building up comprehensive national power in a stable ecosystem to the securitization of everything and tightening down in anticipation of "reunifying the motherland" and preparing to recover Taiwan at the expense of that power. **Xi's charm offensive with the White House and attempts to curry favor with U.S. corporate leaders reflect less a re-prioritization of economic imperatives to the top billing than an experiential insight that many profit-myopic Americans can still be played to China's advantage and induced into business-as-usual complacency during Xi's crucial combat preparation years.** China would classically call this approach wielding "a hidden knife behind a smile" and ultimately "killing with a borrowed sword."

Xi's elevation of geopolitics and security over China's economic well-being might make sense in an era of strategic competition where paranoias about encirclement and containment abound. But the choices he is making today leading to domestic wealth destruction portend his willingness to countenance even greater wealth destruction on a global scale. **Although estimates suggest a war over Taiwan would wreck China's economy, cost 10 percent of global gross domestic product, and devastate worldwide supply networks for years to come, Xi may not care overly much given the inescapable backsliding of his economy even in the absence of any war.** In the coming years, he may conclude he has everything to gain and nothing to lose by waiting any longer.

In fact, **a strong case could be made that Xi might need a nationalistic "wag the dog" issue to restore the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party.** A rechanneling of public passions could prove essential as criticisms surge over a self-induced economic downturn created by greater state interference in private industry, dulled investor confidence, demographic graying stemming from the party's one-child policy, after-effects of harsh pandemic lockdown policies and "long COVID" impacts, youth unemployment, a high debt-to-gross domestic product ratio, poor domestic consumption rates, and de-risking by enlightened foreign companies that see both greater geopolitical and financial risk in China's future.

Even in a so-called "war of choice," where Beijing can carefully select when to move against Taiwan free of any domestic pressures, Xi's age (70) matters. He only has ten reliable years of vitality to conduct a major operation and then lead China through the inevitable multi-year recovery from anticipated international retribution. Based on how Xi appears to be interweaving his legacy with assimilating Taiwan, **it seems unlikely he would leave it up to a successor to absorb the forever glory of overseeing a long-sought unification and subsequently re-stabilizing China's place in the world,** a feat that could put Xi on par with Mao Zedong.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Davidson Window: 2027 is an often-cited year for a Chinese invasion, although many believe it could come sooner. China is increasingly prepared for success in a Taiwan invasion, while the US lags far behind in preparing for it – yet, if the US were to come to Taiwan’s aid, it would result in the largest war since World War 2 and pose real risk of nuclear escalation

Brands 11/23— [Brands, Hal. 2023. “U.S. Deterrence in Taiwan Is Failing.” Foreign Policy. September 8. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/08/us-military-deterrence-china-taiwan-war-east-asia/>.] Joel.

[Hal Brands is the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He is also a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion. He is the author or editor of several books, including, most recently, *The Twilight Struggle: What the Cold War Teaches Us About Great-Power Rivalry*, *Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China*, co-authored with Michael Beckley, and *The New Makers of Modern Strategy: From the Ancient World to the Digital Age*.]

“My gut tells me we will fight in 2025,” U.S. Air Force Gen. Mike Minihan wrote in a January memo to officers in the Air Mobility Command. The memo, which promptly leaked to reporters, warned that the United States and China were barreling toward a conflict over Taiwan. The U.S. Defense Department quickly distanced itself from Minihan’s blunt assessment. Yet **the general wasn’t saying anything in private that military and civilian officials weren’t already saying in public.**

In August 2022, a visit to Taiwan by U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi had set off the worst cross-strait crisis in a quarter century. China’s aircraft barreled across the center line of the Taiwan Strait; its ships prowled the waters around the island; its ballistic missiles splashed down in vital shipping lanes. **Months after Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine had reminded everyone that major war is not an anachronism, the Taiwan crisis made visceral the prospect that a Chinese attack on that island could trigger conflict between the world’s two top powers.**

Washington certainly took note. A year earlier, the outgoing chief of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, **Adm. Philip Davidson**, had **predicted that a war in the Taiwan Strait could come by 2027.** After the August crisis, this “Davidson window” became something like conventional wisdom, with Minihan, Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and other U.S. officials predicting that trouble might start even sooner. If the United States and China do clash over Taiwan, it will be the war everyone saw coming—which would make the failure to deter it all the more painful.

To be sure, U.S. President Joe Biden has made deterring that conflict a priority. Despite the long-standing policy of “strategic ambiguity,” Biden has publicly affirmed, four times, that the United States would come to Taiwan’s aid if it were attacked. Yet **deterrence is about more than declaratory policy: It requires assembling a larger structure of constraints that preserve the peace by instilling fear of the outcome and consequences of war.** **More than a year after the August crisis and nearly three years into the Davidson window, the United States and its friends are struggling to build that structure in the limited time they may have left.**

Taiwan is important in many ways—as a critical node in technology supply chains, as a democracy menaced by an aggressive autocracy, as an unresolved legacy of China’s civil war. Yet Taiwan has become the world’s most perilous flash point mostly for strategic reasons.

Taiwan is a “lock around the neck of a great dragon,” as Chinese military analyst Zhu Tingchang has written. It anchors the first island chain, the string of U.S. allies and partners that block China from the open Pacific. If China were to take Taiwan, it would rupture this defense perimeter, opening the way to greater influence—and coercion—throughout the region and beyond.

In 1972, Chinese leader Mao Zedong told U.S. President Richard Nixon that Beijing could wait 100 years to reclaim Taiwan. China’s current leader, Xi Jinping, is not so patient. He has said the island’s awkward status cannot be passed from generation to generation; he has reportedly ordered the People’s Liberation Army to be

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

ready for action by 2027. Militaries constantly prepare for missions they never execute, of course. But the risk of war is rising as China’s capabilities—and urgency—grow.

A great-power war over Taiwan would be cataclysmic. It would feature combat more vicious than anything the United States has experienced in generations.

Beijing is reaping the rewards of a multidecade buildup focused on the ships, planes, and other platforms needed to project power into the Western Pacific; the “counter-intervention” capabilities, such as anti-ship missiles and sophisticated air defenses, needed to keep U.S. forces at bay; and now the nuclear capabilities needed to enhance China’s options for deterrence and coercion alike. The scale and scope of these programs are remarkable. Adm. John Aquilino, Davidson’s successor at Indo-Pacific Command, said in April that **China has embarked on “the largest, fastest, most comprehensive military buildup since World War II.”** As a result, the balance is changing fast. By the late 2020s, several recent assessments indicate, **Washington might find it extremely hard to save Taiwan from a determined assault.**

Xi would surely prefer to take Taiwan without a fight. He currently aims to coerce unification through military, economic, and psychological pressure short of war. Yet this strategy isn’t working. Having witnessed Xi’s brutal crackdown in Hong Kong, the Taiwanese populace has little interest in unification. Since 2016, the more hawkish, pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) has thumped the more Beijing-friendly Kuomintang in presidential elections. If the DPP wins the next presidential race in January 2024—its candidate, Lai Ching-te, currently leads the polls—Xi might conclude that coercion has failed and consider more violent options.

Biden knows the threat is rising—he recently called China a “ticking time bomb”—which is why he has repeatedly said Washington won’t stand aside if Beijing strikes. But make no mistake: A great-power war over Taiwan would be cataclysmic. It would feature combat more vicious than anything the United States has experienced in generations. It would fragment the global economy and pose real risks of nuclear escalation. So the crucial question is whether Washington can deter a conflict it hopes never to fight.

North Korea: North Korea will likely be drawn into any war over Taiwan

Karlauskas & Kroenig 8/24— [Garlauskas, Markus, and Matthew Kroenig. 2024. “The U.S. Must Prepare to Fight China and North Korea at the Same Time.” *Foreign Policy*. August 6. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/08/06/war-north-korea-china-taiwan-kim-xi-prepare-pentagon-defense/>.] Joel.

[Markus Garlauskas is the director of the Indo-Pacific Security Initiative of the Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security. He leads this initiative’s efforts focused on conflict and nuclear deterrence, United States strategy, and building cooperation with allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific region. He led projects focused on deterrence and defense issues in East Asia as a nonresident senior fellow from August 2020 until assuming his duties as director in January 2023. Garlauskas holds a BA in History from Kent State University. He earned a Master’s Degree from Georgetown University’s Security Studies graduate program, where he is now an adjunct professor.

Matthew Kroenig is a Professor in the Department of Government and the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. A 2019 study in *Perspectives on Politics* ranked him as one of the top 25 most-cited political scientists of his generation. Dr. Kroenig is the author or editor of eight books, including *The Return of Great Power Rivalry: Democracy versus Autocracy from the Ancient World to the US and China* (Oxford University Press, 2020), which was Amazon’s #1 New Release in International Relations. He is a life member of the Council on Foreign Relations and holds an MA and PhD in political science from the University of California at Berkeley.]

Last month, the U.S. Commission on the National Defense Strategy released a report proposing that the Pentagon develop a “Multiple Theater Force Construct” sized to tackle simultaneous threats in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East. This will be necessary to address the growing risk of war with both China and Russia in overlapping timeframes, as one of us has previously written in these pages. Less obvious, but also important, however, is the need to address the threat of a simultaneous war with both China and North Korea.

There is a real and growing risk of conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan, and the Pentagon already considers war with China as its most important “pacing” threat for prioritizing future military capabilities and resources. Contrary to conventional assumptions, however, it is unlikely that such a conflict would be contained to the Taiwan Strait.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Rather, a U.S.-China conflict over Taiwan would almost certainly become a region-wide war, engulfing the Korean Peninsula, and pulling in both North Korea and South Korea. This is because China would have a strong incentive to strike U.S. bases in South Korea and to urge North Korea to provoke and tie down U.S. forces there. Similarly, North Korea could choose to join the fight to preempt a feared U.S. attack, take advantage of a distracted United States to settle old scores with its rival in Seoul, or influence the outcome of a war that would have profound implications for its own security.

Further, a lack of preparedness for this two-front war scenario gives Beijing and Pyongyang an additional incentive to attack precisely to exploit this U.S. and allied vulnerability. The United States and its allies must, therefore, update their defense strategies and postures to prepare to deter, and if necessary, win, a simultaneous war against both China and North Korea.

As part of a two-year series of studies and tabletop exercises sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense, we analyzed the risk of a simultaneous U.S. conflict with both China and North Korea. We concluded that **a war with China would also likely become a war with North Korea, and conversely, a war with North Korea could lead China to intervene.** While the second scenario has already received some attention, we believe that the most likely and dangerous path to a two-front U.S. war with both China and North Korea actually starts with a U.S.-China conflict over Taiwan.

If China were to attack Taiwan, Washington would likely employ military forces operating from bases in the region against China's attacking forces. In retaliation, or to preempt this possibility, Beijing would have a strong incentive to strike regional U.S. bases, including those in Japan and South Korea.

Even if Beijing were only to strike bases in Japan, Chinese aircraft and missiles would need to fly over or past the Korean Peninsula, threatening U.S. and South Korean forces there, while also risking being shot down by U.S. and South Korean air and missile defenses. In addition, or alternatively, **China might also actively encourage North Korea to provoke or attack South Korea and Japan, in order to tie down and distract U.S. forces from the ongoing fight around Taiwan.**

Furthermore, **North Korea might have compelling reasons of its own to join the conflict.** Seeing Washington distracted in Taiwan, Pyongyang may engage in opportunistic aggression against what North Korean leader Kim Jong Un now calls its "principal enemy," South Korea. In addition, as the U.S. military mobilizes large-scale reinforcements to the region, Pyongyang may assess this buildup will enable a "regime change" attack on North Korea either while or after the United States defeats China. North Korea has repeatedly declared that its doctrine is to strike first if it sees a threat to its regime "on the horizon."

Ultimately, **North Korea is unlikely to stand by as its most powerful patron battles its most powerful enemy in a war that would determine the fate of the region,** with profound implications for Pyongyang's security. A Chinese defeat would likely leave North Korea dangerously isolated, whereas a U.S. defeat could drive U.S. forces from the region and dramatically improve North Korea's military position.

Even if Korea does not become a second front, the possibility would still impinge on U.S. efforts to defend Taiwan. The need to deter and, if necessary, defeat a North Korean attack would tie down some portion of U.S. forces, attention, and resources. Seoul might even seek constraints on whether and how Washington could operate its forces within and from South Korea in a war over Taiwan, to avoid provoking China or tempting North Korean opportunism.

Many analysts wrongly assume that Washington and Beijing have a shared interest in maintaining stability on the Korean Peninsula, particularly to avoid North Korean nuclear escalation, and that they would tacitly agree that North and South Korea are out of bounds in a war over Taiwan.

This is a flawed premise. It applies peacetime logic to wartime and was born out of the optimism of a more cooperative era in China-U.S. relations. If China starts a war with Taiwan, that is evidence that its leaders have decided that regional stability is no longer a top priority. Even if Beijing moves cautiously at the outset of a conflict by, for

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

example, foregoing strikes on U.S. bases and encouraging North Korean restraint, such caution would quickly evaporate as the war continues, especially if Beijing fears that it might be losing. Moreover, while Beijing may hope to control Pyongyang, past evidence shows that Kim often marches to the beat of his own drum.

At the same time, it is likely that China would intervene in any war that starts in Korea. Like in the 1950s, China would not stand by as the United States and South Korea decisively defeat, and threaten to potentially end the regime in, North Korea. While it is unlikely that Beijing would seek to engineer a war on the Korean Peninsula, it could benefit from such a conflict by bogging down and exhausting the military resources of the United States, South Korea, and other allies.

China would have many options to hamstring a U.S. and allied campaign, including supplying Pyongyang's war effort, establishing "buffer zones" to preclude operations near China's borders, and intervening directly with military force. Then, when the time is right, Beijing could also take advantage of the expenditures and commitment of U.S. and allied military resources to attempt military action against Taiwan or elsewhere in the region, like in the South China Sea, before U.S. and allied militaries can fully recover. This logic holds even if Beijing and Pyongyang do not coordinate in advance, and even if Beijing is unhappy that Pyongyang's recklessness provoked the initial conflict.

Unfortunately, the United States and its allies are largely unprepared for such scenarios. U.S. and allied capabilities, command-and-control arrangements, and posture (including forces, bases, and agreements with allies) are not well suited for simultaneous conflict with China and North Korea. Rather, all of these considerations are designed primarily for one fight or the other. This gap is reinforced by organizational biases, stovepipes, and various misalignments between allies and U.S. military warfighting headquarters.

Europe: Even if it's offered, European military support is unlikely to be helpful—their naval capabilities are too weak and the distance between them and the Taiwan theatre is too far – in addition, a European military commitment to Taiwan would create a power vacuum in Europe that Russia might be happy to exploit

Swejis & van Hooft 24—[Swejis, Tim. 2024. "Two-Theater Tragedy: A Reluctant Europe Cannot Easily Escape a Sino-American War over Taiwan - War on the Rocks." War on the Rocks. April 10. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/04/two-theater-tragedy-a-reluctant-europe-cannot-easily-escape-a-sino-american-war-over-taiwan/>.] Joel

[Paul van Hooft is a research leader at RAND Europe. He previously headed the Strategic Stability, Europe in the Indo-Pacific, and the Future of Transatlantic Relations programs at the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies. Van Hooft attained his Ph.D. in political science/international relations from the University of Amsterdam. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the Security Studies Program of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), including as a Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow, and a Max Weber Fellow at the European University Institute (EUI).

Dr. Tim Swejis is the Director of Research at The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies (HCSS) and a Senior Research Fellow at the Netherlands' War Studies Research Centre of the Netherlands Defence Academy. He is the Scientific Advisor to the Secretariat of the Global Commission on Responsible Artificial Intelligence in the Military Domain, an initiative of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs.]

Should war over Taiwan break out, Europe can do very little in the maritime realm militarily speaking simply because European naval capabilities are in dire straits. As noted, a conflict between the United States and China over Taiwan could take various forms, be it of very short or longer duration with varying levels of intensity, ranging from a successful fait accompli, to a prevented fait accompli, to a failed fait accompli, which can then turn into a prolonged conflict and/or a slow strangle. We consider it likely that **the military-technological nature of the conflict leads to perceptions of first-mover advantages that would push both superpowers to rapidly escalate,** but our assessment applies to all these different scenarios.

In a paper published earlier this year, we showed that **even the largest European naval powers, France and the United Kingdom, will be hard-pressed to make any real contribution for a sustained period of time in a scenario of high-intensity conflict.** This does not hinge on a lack of strategic or operational skills or on qualitative shortcomings in the platforms of ships, though these are relatively weak on offensive and defensive capabilities, but on basic ship numbers and logistics. During peacetime, approximately three ships are in maintenance or repair, while their crews are training or resting. Assuming a ratio of one to four, in terms of surface vessels, France can only deploy one-quarter of an aircraft carrier at any time and three quarters of a

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

destroyer, and the United Kingdom can only deploy one-half of a carrier and one and a half destroyers. While articulating the capabilities of Europe's two premier military powers in fractions might seem silly, it serves to underline the extremely limited capacity and limited sustainability of a European military role in the western Pacific. Small numbers are amplified by serious distances. Given the limited European naval port infrastructure in the region and the vast distances between the Atlantic and the Indo-Pacific, with travel time measured in weeks rather than in days, their contribution will be extremely limited.

European surface ships and submarines will have some limited access to partner bases and depots for munitions, repairs, and supplies, but these are likely to be both under attack by China and in high demand by the United States and regional allies during a war over Taiwan. This will not resemble the military operations that were part of the so-called war on terror where all the major logistical nodes were largely safe from attack. Western military and civilian leaders have not yet come to terms with the theater-wide ferocity of a peer-to-peer great power conflict. Crucially, European surface ships do not have the means to survive a serious onslaught in an age of denial.

There are European assets that are useful in such a confrontation, however, and that have highly offensive capabilities and mobility, and are fungible. Very specific denial and land attack capabilities provided by the nuclear-powered attack submarines possessed by France (five in service currently with a sixth soon) and the United Kingdom (six in service currently) may be an exception, as well as fifth-generation fighter jets possessed by NATO allies, particularly the F-35s. Beside taking part in the underwater fight during a war over Taiwan, French and British attack submarines could be armed with cruise missiles to target land-based Chinese anti-access/air denial capabilities. However, French and British submarines would also be expected to play a critical role in ensuring NATO conventional deterrence in the Euro-Atlantic, where they would be involved in anti-submarine warfare activities against Russian attack submarines (18 in service), as well as provide protection for the British and French nuclear deterrents. During a western Pacific contingency, we expect a simultaneous heightened threat from Russia to take advantage of the situation as a result of which these limited French and British assets would be in high demand. Splitting capabilities between opposites of the planet would leave Europe even more underdefended.

Equally, NATO Europe's fifth-generation air assets would be needed in any European scenario; airpower is both NATO's clearest conventional advantage over Russia as well as a U.S. capability that is likely to be entirely absorbed by a war in the western Pacific, thereby further drawing away capabilities from Europe. This will undermine NATO's deterrence posture vis-à-vis Russia back in Europe. Moreover, **China's own submarine fleet is growing, while its anti-submarine capabilities are improving.**

End: Ending a War between the US and China would be as difficult as fighting it

French 22—[French, Howard W. 2022. "Don't Ask Who Would Win in a U.S.-China War over Taiwan—Ask How to Prevent One." *Foreign Policy*. August 19. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/08/19/us-china-taiwan-wargames-deterrence-prevention/>.] Joel

[Howard W. French is a columnist at *Foreign Policy*, a professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, and a longtime foreign correspondent. His latest book is *Born in Blackness: Africa, Africans and the Making of the Modern World, 1471 to the Second World War*]

No one knows, of course, who in reality might prevail in a war over Taiwan, nor even how or when such a war might begin and unfold. A proper reading of the details of this and other credible simulations of conflict with China should offer a chilling correction to anyone who clings to conventional definitions of victory, which would go out the window in case of a conflict between the world's two most powerful nations. Just for starters, the United States could easily lose two aircraft carriers, with 5,000 people aboard each; as many as 500 aircraft, many with their pilots; and, together with its allies, including Taiwan itself, suffer a horrendous rain of Chinese ballistic missiles.

China, too, would suffer extraordinary losses, as U.S. submarines and other vessels sink the armadas Beijing could deploy as a screen off the island's east coast, and sink many (perhaps most) of the troop transport vessels it could deploy to support an

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

invasion across the Taiwan Strait. Both countries would emerge tremendously weakened, both militarily and economically, but that isn't even the worst of it. The global economy would be devastated, making collateral damage out of people everywhere. **Many analysts also believe that for a war like this to end, one side would have to emerge so markedly superior in residual strength that the other would effectively capitulate and accept inferiority in the global pecking order. But the difficulty of imagining either one of them reconciling itself to such an outcome means that ending the conflict could be as hard as fighting it.**

This has all prompted me to believe that we are mostly still asking the wrong questions about the future of geopolitics in this part of the world, and of the possibility of war with China. The first priority should be in preventing a war over Taiwan in the first place. But how to accomplish that?

It seems clear that Taiwan cannot ward off China by itself, and yet the surest first step to avoiding a bid to take it over by force would be for Taiwan to work much harder to improve its deterrence capacity. I have written on this before, as have many others, so it is hardly a new idea. In the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, though, many people drew the wrong conclusion about implications for Taiwan, focusing on how much more difficult armed takeovers like these seem to be in today's world.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Aff

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

China Relations

Status Quo Untenable: Xi Jinping is no longer satisfied with the Status Quo – change is coming

Washington Post 23 – [Rogin, Josh. 2023. “Xi Jinping Is Sending Ominous Signals on Taiwan.” Washington Post. The Washington Post. November 21. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/11/21/xi-biden-china-taiwan-tension-growing/>.] – Joel.

Many in Washington are pointing to last week’s meeting between President Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping as a sign that the two great powers are growing closer. But **on the most important issue in the relationship — Taiwan — Washington and Beijing are moving further apart. Xi’s rhetoric indicates he’s getting impatient with the status quo — and his actions are even more worrisome.**

During the two leaders’ private meeting in the San Francisco Bay Area, Xi struck some ominous notes on Taiwan. Regarding Beijing’s long-standing desire to bring the island under its control, Xi said his “preference was for peaceful reunification,” a senior U.S. official told reporters — but then **Xi outlined several scenarios under which he might use force. Biden reiterated to Xi that the United States supports the status quo and is determined to maintain peace.**

But **Xi’s reaction to Biden’s simple restatement of existing U.S. policy was to tell the U.S. president that China would not be satisfied with the status quo forever.**

“Xi responded, **‘Look, peace is all well and good, but at some point we need to move toward resolution more generally,’**” according to the official.

Some current and former officials highlighted this quote as evidence Xi is getting increasingly impatient, suggesting that he intends to ramp up efforts to coerce Taiwan into unifying with the People’s Republic. Matthew Pottinger, deputy national security adviser to President Donald Trump, noted that the Chinese Foreign Ministry’s readout of the meeting said Xi told Biden that the United States should actually “support China’s peaceful reunification” — a particularly bad sign, Pottinger said.

“This is a significant moving of the goal posts, because **[Beijing] is now saying that the relationship with China is predicated on the U.S. supporting the Chinese takeover of Taiwan,**” said Pottinger. **“Xi is saying, ‘I’m not going to stand for the Taiwan status quo much longer, and you, America, are in our way.’”**

Not everybody agrees on how to read the tea leaves. Two other senior administration officials I spoke with after the summit said they saw Xi’s comments on reunification as consistent with past statements from Beijing. But they did believe Xi had become more assertive on two other aspects of the Taiwan issue. **Xi aggressively warned Biden against arming Taiwan** and also urged him not to support Taiwanese Vice President Lai Ching-te in his presidential bid ahead of elections in January, they said.

Beijing sees Lai and his Democratic Progressive Party as “pro-independence.” Lai and President Tsai Ing-wen have repeatedly explained that they do not seek formal independence for Taiwan, but they’re under attack by Beijing nonetheless. Tsai has refused to affirm what’s called the 1992 Consensus, which essentially asserts that Taiwan is a part of China. And Beijing sees the opposition Nationalist Party as more friendly.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

China Criticism: China criticizes the new U.S. military aid to Taiwan and claims that it won't improve Taiwan's security and will raise tensions and the chance of conflict in the Taiwan Strait.

Deutsche Welle 24 – [Deutsche Welle. "US Aid for Taiwan 'Will Only Increase Tensions,' China Says." Dw.com. Deutsche Welle. April 24, 2024. <https://www.dw.com/en/us-aid-for-taiwan-will-only-increase-tensions-china-says/a-68905536>.] – Elene.

China on Wednesday decried a fresh package of US military aid for Taiwan, which is intended to boost the island's defenses in the case of a possible Chinese invasion.

The US Senate passed the \$8 billion (€7.48 billion) military aid package late Tuesday, as part of larger legislation that includes fresh assistance for Israel and Ukraine. Having already passed the House, US President Joe Biden later on Wednesday signed the package into law.

"I'd like to emphasize that the United States and Taiwan strengthening military ties will not bring about security for Taiwan," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said. He said the assistance "will only increase tensions and the risk of conflict across the Taiwan Strait."

A Chinese spokesperson for the mainland's Taiwan Affairs Office, Zhu Fenglian, said **the aid violates US commitments to China and "sends a wrong signal to the Taiwan independence separatist forces."**

China does not view Taiwan as a separate country, but rather as a breakaway province. The Chinese Civil War ended in 1949, with the communists taking control of the Chinese mainland and the nationalist Kuomintang retreating to Taiwan.

Taiwanese incumbent President Tsai Ing-Wen, meanwhile, was pleased with the aid package.

"We are also very happy that the Senate has just passed these bills," Tsai said during a meeting with a US congressional delegation in Taipei. Tsai belongs to the center-left Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which emphasizes Taiwan's separate identity from the mainland.

A day earlier, Taiwan's incoming president, Lai Ching-te, said the US assistance would "strengthen the deterrence against authoritarianism in the West Pacific ally chain" and "help ensure peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and also boost confidence in the region." Lai is also a member of the DPP.

The US aid package will help modernize Taiwan's forces as China frequently conducts military maneuvers near the island.

Western leaders such as Biden have expressed concerns that China may take control of Taiwan by force in the coming years.

A Chinese invasion would not only cost human lives, but it could be a massive blow to the global economy — the island is a major producer of semiconductor chips which are used in everything from cellphones to automobiles.

Military Support = Independence: from China's point of view, continued US military support to Taiwan support's Taiwan's continued separation—whatever the rhetoric from the US

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Kanopathy 4/24— [Kanopathy, Ivan. 2024. “Should the United States Change Its Policies toward Taiwan?” Brookings. April 16. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/should-the-united-states-change-its-policies-toward-taiwan/>. Conveners: Kimball, Emilie, Patricia M Kim, Ryan Hass] Joel.

[Prior to joining BGS, Mr. Kanopathy was a career military officer and foreign affairs practitioner focused on the Indo-Pacific region. From March 2018 to July 2021, Mr. Kanopathy served on the White House’s National Security Council staff as Deputy Senior Director for Asian Affairs and Director for China, Taiwan, and Mongolia. In this capacity, he advised the President and National Security Advisor and led US government interagency policy development and implementation on US relations with China and Taiwan, covering diplomatic, military, cyber, health, technology, investment, and other related issues. As a military attaché at the American Institute in Taiwan from 2014 to 2017, Mr. Kanopathy represented US interests and advised top US and Taiwanese officials on cross-Strait military and security issues.]

U.S. officials should not gratuitously articulate non-support for Taiwanese independence. This statement should only be used when Taipei takes provocative actions—exceedingly rare since 2008. Officials could instead use the neutral formulation of opposing unilateral changes to the status quo. Consider the likely effects of the former statement on three audiences: China, Taiwan, and allies and partners.

China. **Attempts to reassure China regarding U.S. intentions are misguided and fruitless. From Beijing’s view, U.S. weapons and training cannot but support Taiwan’s continued separation.** Furthermore, Washington openly opposes the governance methods deployed in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong—presumptive models for a “unified” Taiwan. **In the minds of PRC leaders, the United States remains the duplicitous “black hand” stirring anti-China dissent and the “strong enemy” the PLA must prepare to defeat. By its nature, the PRC government cannot meaningfully separate U.S. support for Taiwan’s democracy from perceived U.S. support for Taiwanese independence.**

Taiwan. The effects in Taiwan are likely counterproductive. Stating non-support for independence signals to Taiwanese that Washington has made a deal with Beijing that presupposes a resolution for cross-Strait differences. The statement inadvertently supports PRC-promoted “U.S. skepticism” narratives in Taiwan that question American intent and reliability. These in turn weaken U.S. efforts to bolster deterrence on the island. A senior U.S. representative’s January public remarks delivered in Taiwan to this effect were thus likely detrimental to U.S. security objectives.

Hubris: The US needs to back off from its hawkish policy towards China, and its overly-friendly relations with Taiwan – China’s warnings on Taiwan are reminiscent of Russia’s warnings on Ukraine, but American hubris in charging forward remains the same

Carpenter 22— [Carpenter, Ted. 2024. Cato.org. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/washington-making-same-blunder-regarding-taiwan-it-did-ukraine>.] Joel.

[Ted Galen Carpenter was a senior fellow for defense and foreign policy studies at the Cato Institute. Carpenter served as Cato’s director of foreign policy studies from 1986 to 1995 and as vice president for defense and foreign policy studies from 1995 to 2011.]

Tensions between the United States and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) are rising sharply over the Taiwan issue. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s stated intention to include a stop in Taipei to meet with Taiwanese officials during her forthcoming trip to East Asia is the latest source of trouble. Pelosi apparently escalated that provocation further by inviting other prominent members of Congress to join her in that stop. Her actions have caused even the staunchly pro-Taiwan Biden administration to quietly press her to change her plans. Conversely, congressional hawks are urging Pelosi not to back down.

The reason for the administration’s caution are readily apparent. Beijing has reacted with unusually intense anger to the prospective visit, with President Xi Jinping warning the United States not to “play with fire” on the Taiwan issue. Pelosi’s visit is the latest – and most serious – in a series of U.S. actions over the past several years that have infuriated PRC leaders. The Biden administration needs to exercise even greater wariness about Pelosi’s venture than it already has. Indeed, **Washington needs to back away from its overall hardline policy toward the PRC.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

For 4 decades after Washington shifted diplomatic relations from Taipei to Beijing in 1979 and passed the Taiwan Relations Act to govern reduced, informal relations with Taiwan, US administrations were careful to limit visits to the island to low-level officials. That restraint diminished dramatically during Donald Trump's presidency, when Congress authorized and the administration approved meetings by National Security Advisor John Bolton and other Cabinet-level officials with their Taiwanese counterparts. Those trips were part of a new policy of much stronger US diplomatic and military support for Taiwan – a course of action that the Biden administration has continued, despite insisting that the United States still adheres to a “one-China” policy.

Beijing's complaints about Washington's actions have steadily intensified, and they have now reached openly confrontational levels with respect to the Pelosi visit. The Biden administration needs to take the PRC's warnings more seriously. In many ways, Washington's determination to press ahead with greater support for Taiwan as part of an overall containment policy directed against China is reminiscent of the blunders US officials made with respect to NATO expansion, especially the campaign to incorporate Ukraine, and Washington's tone-deaf response to Moscow's escalating complaints.

Biden administration policymakers dismissed the Kremlin's repeated warnings that trying to make Ukraine a NATO military asset would cross a red line with respect to Russia's security interests. They discovered belatedly that Russian President Vladimir Putin was not about to cower and accept US diktats simply because the United States insisted that Ukraine had a “right” to join NATO. Nor did he accept Washington's accelerating campaign to make Ukraine a de facto US military and intelligence ally perched on Russia's border.

The outcome of Washington's approach has been horrifyingly bloody and tragic for the people of Ukraine. Even more worrisome, the administration's policies have led to an extremely dangerous confrontation between NATO and a nuclear-armed Russia, with the United States and NATO cynically using Ukraine as a pawn in a proxy war against Moscow.

Washington risks making a comparable blunder in its dealings with China. The administration must implement a quiet retreat regarding its growing political and military ties to Taipei and adopt a less confrontational approach to Beijing. Moreover, that change needs to go well beyond merely discouraging Pelosi's provocative visit to Taipei. **It has become increasingly obvious to PRC leaders that the United States is pursuing a full-blown anti-China containment policy, with Taiwan as the point of the spear, in a desperate effort to preserve Washington's fading strategic primacy in East Asia. It is highly unlikely that Beijing will passively accept such an intrusive US presence in China's core security sphere over the long term.** As the PRC's economic and military power continues to grow, Beijing's resistance to Washington's hegemonic efforts will escalate.

US arrogance and inflexibility helped lead to the current tragedy in Ukraine. Policymakers blew through red warning light after red warning light from the Kremlin. A similar approach seems to be taking place in Washington's relations with Beijing, and it threatens to produce a similar ugly outcome in East Asia over the Taiwan issue.

Return to Normalcy: The United States should reduce military support in Taiwan to maintain the longstanding status quo that has ensured peace and prioritize diplomatic efforts.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Larison 23 - [Larison, Daniel. 2023. "Why Sending More US Military Troops to Taiwan Is so Risky - Responsible Statecraft." Responsiblestatecraft.org. February 28, 2023. <https://responsiblestatecraft.org/2023/02/28/more-overt-us-support-for-taiwan-is-fraught-with-risk/>.] Elene.

[Daniel Larison is a journalist and foreign policy analyst who writes for various publications, including Antiwar.com, Responsible Statecraft, and GlobalResearch. He is a Ph.D. graduate from the University of Chicago, where he recently completed his dissertation on the sixth ecumenical council and the monothelote controversy.]

The United States is reportedly planning to increase its military presence in Taiwan from nearly 40 to between 100 and 200 military personnel.

According to the first report by The Wall Street Journal last week, the additional troops will arrive in the coming months. The small number of U.S. forces in Taiwan has been growing steadily in recent years from less than two dozen at the start of 2021 to what could be nearly ten times as many by the middle of this year. News of the larger troop presence came on the heels of a high-level meeting between U.S. and Taiwanese officials in Washington last Tuesday. There are also separate reports that 500 Taiwanese troops will be sent to the United States for combat training.

While the total numbers involved are still small, these moves represent significant increases in cooperation between the two governments and could portend larger deployments in the future. As the Journal article states, the planned increase would be "the largest deployment of forces in decades by the U.S. on Taiwan." **The United States and Taiwan have had some military cooperation and unofficial ties despite the lack of formal relations between the two, but the difference now is that these ties are becoming stronger** and more visible at the same time and therefore harder for the Chinese government to ignore.

The article suggested that the administration had been trying to keep the larger troop presence out of the public eye. According to the report, the training program is one that "the Pentagon has taken pains not to publicize," but the public also has a right to know about decisions that the government is making that increase the direct U.S. commitment to Taiwan. If the Washington is going to deploy more troops to Taiwan than it has in decades, the public should be aware of it and Congress should be asking pointed questions about the potential implications of these decisions.

The increased troop presence is consistent with the Biden administration's more overt signals of support for Taiwan over the last two years. The president himself has repeatedly said that U.S. troops would be sent to fight for Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack, and in so doing he has made a commitment that goes far beyond what the Washington is obligated to do. While administration officials have stuck to the line that there have been no changes to U.S. policy with respect to China and Taiwan, both their words and actions have been saying otherwise.

For its part, the Taiwanese government seems nervous enough about the reporting of the increase that it made a point of clarifying that U.S. troops are not permanently stationed there. It's true that U.S. troops have been rotated in and out, but this distinction may be lost on the Chinese government when they see more American troops involved in training their Taiwanese counterparts. There needs to be greater clarity about the administration's plans.

As the United States intensifies its efforts to support Taiwan, it risks further damaging the relationship with China and hamstringing its ability to advance U.S. interests on a wide range of other issues from arms control to climate change. There is also the danger that an increased U.S. military presence in Taiwan could trigger Chinese responses in the form of increased economic warfare and military exercises that would create additional headaches and costs for Taiwan.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Combined with Speaker McCarthy's expected visit to Taiwan in the spring, these moves may lead to another unnecessary confrontation. Insofar as they are perceived as further eroding U.S. commitments to a One China policy, these actions could make the overall situation less stable rather than more.

All of this is happening against a backdrop of generally heightened tensions and a U.S.-led military buildup in the region, including the expansion of the U.S. military presence in the Philippines. Despite brief hopes of a thaw in the relationship after the breakdown resulting from then-Speaker Pelosi's visit to Taipei last summer, every attempt to repair ties has stalled before it could even begin. As we saw with the overreaction to the incident with the Chinese surveillance balloon and the decision to cancel Secretary Blinken's visit to Beijing, accidents and mistakes that will sometimes happen with other major powers have become occasions for panic and alarmism rather than the manageable problems that they are.

Under these circumstances, there is a danger that previously routine activities that did not disrupt the bilateral relationship in the past will now be perceived as provocations and lead to strong responses from the other government. **To the extent that every incident is treated as a "test" of resolve rather than an irritant to be smoothed over, it becomes practically impossible to stabilize, much less repair, what many would consider to be the most significant bilateral relationship in the world.** The balloon incident showed how inadequate our governments' preparations for crisis management are, and the instinct to cancel diplomatic meetings in response to an incident does not inspire confidence that a more serious clash could be safely navigated.

U.S.-Chinese relations are as bad as they have been since at least the early 1990s, and they are arguably worse than at any time since our governments normalized relations in 1979. During the long period of U.S.-China détente, there would be tensions and sharp disagreements between our governments as there always will be, but the desire on both sides to maintain a stable and productive relationship prevailed to make sure that these were only temporary setbacks. Today, détente has been replaced by a policy of actively pursuing rivalry and containment, which means that every incident will cause an already poor relationship to deteriorate further.

The latest source of tension is the U.S. charge that the Chinese government is considering providing lethal aid to Russia's war in Ukraine, which Beijing has angrily denied. Washington and Beijing can't move past the last breakdown in relations before the next problem crops up. The "great power competition" framing of the relationship means that the emphasis is always on point-scoring and one-upping the other side rather than de-escalation.

In general, the United States needs to work on reducing tensions with China, and that definitely means avoiding provocative actions in connection with Taiwan. Jessica Chen Weiss recently made the case for calming things down in an op-ed for The Washington Post: **"In the current atmosphere of intense distrust, verbal assurances have to be accompanied by coordinated, reciprocal actions to reduce the risk of a catastrophic crisis."**

It is not enough simply to say that the United States doesn't seek conflict or a new cold war. The **United States has to back up those statements by exercising restraint in what it does and how it talks about the relationship with China. To prevent tensions over Taiwan from getting worse, Washington needs to worry less about building up its military strength in the region and instead focus on reassuring the Chinese government that it does not want to abandon the status quo that has kept the peace for more than 40 years.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Cost

Strategic Risk: Reducing U.S. military support for Taiwan could significantly lower defense costs for the US.

Gomez 16 - [Gomez, Eric. "A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship." Cato Institute. September 28, 2016. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/costly-commitment-options-future-us-taiwan-defense-relationship>.] Elene.

[Eric Gomez is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on the U.S. military budget and force posture, as well as arms control and nuclear stability issues in East Asia. In 2020, Gomez was a member of the Project on Nuclear Issues Nuclear Scholars Initiative program, where he conducted research on the impacts of U.S. intermediate-range missiles on U.S.-China strategic stability.]

America's security commitment to Taiwan faces a significant test. China's growing power presents a challenge to U.S. military superiority, while Taiwan's investment in its own defense has languished. Adding to the challenge of keeping peace in the Taiwan Strait is the shifting political situation in Taiwan, exemplified by the January 2016 elections in which voters rejected the cross-strait rapprochement policies of the Kuomintang (KMT) and turned over control of the presidency and legislature to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). The China-Taiwan relationship has remained relatively calm, but changes in the U.S.-China balance of power could make the Taiwan Strait a dangerous place once more if the implicit U.S. defense commitment to Taiwan loses credibility.

This paper outlines three broad policy options for the United States: shoring up the defense commitment by restoring military superiority over China; sustaining a minimum level of military advantage over China; or stepping down from the commitment to use military force to maintain Taiwan's de facto independence. It concludes that the **United States should step down from the defense commitment eventually, ideally through an incremental and reciprocal process with China that would draw concessions from Beijing. In the long term, the U.S. security commitment to Taiwan is neither beneficial nor advantageous for the United States. Taiwan will have to take responsibility for its own defense.**

Stepping down from the implicit commitment to come to Taiwan's rescue with military force carries risks, but other options leave the United States worse off in the long term. The likely damage to U.S.-Chinese relations caused by pushing for military superiority in the region outweighs the benefits. Sustaining a minimum level of military advantage is possible, but absent a long-term economic slowdown and/or political changes in China—both of which are beyond U.S. control—maintaining such an advantage in perpetuity will be difficult. Stepping down from the commitment through a long-term process would give Taiwan the time it needs to make necessary changes in its defense technology and military strategy. Peace in the Taiwan Strait is an important American interest, but it must be weighed against the difficulty of maintaining credibility and the growing costs of deterrence failure.

Introduction

The U.S. defense relationship with Taiwan is a risky and costly commitment that has become increasingly difficult to sustain. Barry Posen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology put it best when he wrote, **"The U.S. commitment to Taiwan is simultaneously the most perilous and least strategically necessary commitment that the United States has today."** The United States can and should strive for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan dispute, but through means other than an implicit commitment to use military force to defend the island.

Washington's approach to keeping the peace in the Taiwan Strait during the latter years of Taiwan's Lee Teng-hui (1988–2000) and most of the Chen Shui-bian (2000–2008) administrations was known as "dual deterrence." Under dual deterrence the United States issued a combination of warnings and reassurances to both China and Taiwan to prevent either from unilaterally changing the status quo. America's overwhelming military advantage over the People's Liberation Army (PLA) deterred China from using military force, while Taiwan moderated its behavior lest U.S. forces not come to its rescue. However, the dual deterrence concept is ill-suited to the current military environment in the Taiwan Strait.

Dual deterrence is no longer viable because the modernization of the PLA has improved Beijing's ability to inflict high costs on U.S. military forces that would come to Taiwan's aid in the event of a Chinese invasion attempt. The deployment of two U.S. Navy aircraft carriers to the waters around Taiwan during the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis was a major embarrassment for the PLA, and it has played an important role in driving China's military modernization. Improvements in China's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities have significantly complicated the ability of the United States to defend Taiwan by making it difficult for the U.S. Navy and Air Force to operate in and around the Taiwan Strait. According to a recent RAND Corporation

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

study, “a Taiwan [conflict] scenario will be extremely competitive by 2017, with China able to challenge U.S. capabilities in a wide range of areas.” This shifting balance of power strains the credibility of the U.S. defense commitment to Taiwan by increasing the costs the United States would have to pay in an armed conflict.

Two additional developments will challenge the cross-strait peace. First, the period of rapprochement that has characterized cross-strait relations since 2008 has ended. The former Taiwanese president, Ma Ying-jeou (2008–2016), championed cross-strait cooperation and economic linkages that brought a welcome sense of calm after the tumultuous administrations of Lee and Chen. However, the January 2016 landslide victory of the DPP in both presidential and legislative elections revealed popular dissatisfaction with Ma’s policies and a weakening economy. President Tsai Ing-wen pledged to maintain peace. But her unwillingness to declare support for the “1992 Consensus” (simply stated as “one China, different interpretations”) caused Beijing to suspend communication between the Taiwan Affairs Office and Taipei’s equivalent, the Mainland Affairs Council. It is too early to tell how Tsai’s administration and a DPP-controlled legislature will affect cross-strait relations, but the relatively high level of cooperation the Ma administration promoted is likely over. Second, China’s slowing economy adds uncertainty to cross-strait relations. China’s GDP growth rate was 6.9 percent during the first nine months of 2015, well below the double-digit GDP growth rates of the last couple of decades. Sliding growth and the resulting social instability could encourage China’s leaders to behave more aggressively toward Taiwan to bolster domestic legitimacy and ensure regime survival. However, a slowing economy could also restrict military spending and encourage Chinese policymakers to avoid big conflicts as they focus on shoring up the economy. At the very least, China’s economic situation is a source of uncertainty that was not present when the United States relied on dual deterrence.

What approach should the United States take in this shifting environment? Generally speaking, there are three options for the United States: it could do more to shore up the defense relationship with Taiwan and restore its military superiority over China; sustain a minimum level of military advantage over China; or step down from the implicit commitment to use military force in defense of Taiwan. This paper explores each of these and concludes that stepping down from the commitment is the best of the three options. The success of dual deterrence should be praised, but American policymakers must begin adjusting to a new state of affairs in the Taiwan Strait.

The U.S. security commitment to Taiwan consists of two pillars established in the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979: arms sales and an implicit promise to defend Taiwan with military force should it be attacked. Both are set forth in Section 3 of the TRA, which states, in part, that **the United States is permitted to sell Taiwan “defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.”** Comparatively, the implicit commitment to use force to defend Taiwan is less clear. Section 3, part 3, authorizes the president and Congress to “determine, in accordance with constitutional processes, appropriate action by the United States” in response to “any threat to the security or the social or economic system of the people on Taiwan and any danger to the interests of the United States arising therefrom.” Military force is not explicitly mentioned, but it falls within the category of appropriate action that the United States could take.

The imprecise wording of the TRA has served the United States well by creating “strategic ambiguity,” the underpinning of dual deterrence. Strategic ambiguity, the open question of whether or not the U.S. military would intervene in a cross-strait conflict, had two important effects. First, it gave the United States greater freedom of action in trilateral relations. By not binding itself to one particular position, the United States could better adapt to unpredictable events. Second, strategic ambiguity restricted China and Taiwan’s freedom of action. Upsetting the status quo carried high costs for both sides. The United States could warn Taiwan that no cavalry would come to the rescue if Taiwan provoked China by making moves toward de jure independence. Likewise, the high costs that would be inflicted on the PLA by a U.S. intervention prevented Beijing from initiating a conflict.

China’s growing military power has diminished the value of strategic ambiguity by improving Beijing’s ability to inflict high costs on an intervening American force. The mere possibility of American intervention may no longer be enough to deter China if the PLA is better prepared to mitigate the effects. Further complicating the U.S.-Taiwan defense relationship is the slow but steady erosion of U.S. credibility over the last two decades. This analysis uses the “Current Calculus” theory set forth by Dartmouth professor Daryl G. Press as the basis for assessing U.S. credibility. Press states, “Decisionmakers assess the credibility of their adversaries’ threats by evaluating the balance of power and interests ... Future commitments will be credible if—and only if—they are backed up by sufficient strength and connected to weighty interests.” From Beijing’s perspective, the U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan is credible if American military power can pose a threat to Chinese forces and the United States has a strong interest in defending Taiwan.

On the subject of interests, Taiwan carries much more importance for China than it does for the United States. Charles Glaser of George Washington University writes “China considers Taiwan a core interest—an essential part of its homeland that it is determined to bring under full sovereign control.” Beijing does not appear eager to reunite Taiwan with the mainland by force in the near future, but China’s president Xi Jinping has warned that “political disagreements that exist between the two sides ... cannot be passed on from generation to generation.” Maintaining Taiwan’s de facto independence may be important for the U.S. position in East Asia, but it does not carry the same significance that China places on reunification.

Since China enjoys an advantage in the balance of interests, the credibility of the U.S. commitment rests on American military power. According to Press’s model, if the United States can carry out its threat to intervene with relatively low costs, then the threat is credible. When the TRA was passed in 1979, the United States enjoyed a clear advantage over a militarily weak China. That is no longer the case. Several recently published assessments of a U.S.-China conflict over Taiwan have sobering conclusions: America’s lead is shrinking, victory is less certain, and the damage inflicted on the U.S. military would be substantial. In China’s Military Power, Roger Cliff of the Atlantic Council writes, “Although China’s leadership could not be confident that an invasion of Taiwan in 2020 would succeed, it is nonetheless possible that it could succeed.... Even a failed attempt, moreover, would likely be extremely costly to the United States and Taiwan.” The RAND Corporation reached a similar conclusion: “At a minimum, the U.S. military would have to mount a substantial effort—certainly much more so than in 1996—if it hoped to prevail, and losses to U.S. forces would likely be heavy.” It is impossible to determine exactly how many American ships, aircraft, and lives would be lost to defend Taiwan from a PLA attack. But given the improved quality of PLA weapons systems and training exercises, it is safe to assume that the U.S. military would have to cope with losses that it has not experienced in decades.

Of course, it is important to note that high costs do not flow one way. In a war, the United States and Taiwan would make an invasion very costly for China, which reduces the credibility of Beijing’s threats to use force. However, U.S. military superiority in a Taiwan Strait conflict was nearly absolute until very recently. This superiority made victory relatively cheap, which enhanced the credibility of the American commitment. Improvements to already formidable Chinese weapons systems, combined with recent reforms that enhance command and control for fighting modern war, continue to ratchet up the costs the United States would have to absorb.

If the PLA continues to improve at the rate it has done over the last 20 years, the United States could be in the unpleasant position of fighting a very costly conflict over a piece of territory that China has a much stronger interest in controlling than the United States has in keeping independent. Close economic ties between the United States and China (bilateral trade in goods was valued at \$598 billion in 2015 in nominal dollars) would likely suffer as well. The

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

high costs the United States would face in a conflict over Taiwan undermine U.S. credibility. China's stronger interests and ability to inflict high costs on the United States could encourage Beijing to take risks that until recently would have been considered unacceptable.

Three Policy Options for the United States

Broadly speaking, the United States has three options for dealing with the diminishing credibility of its implicit commitment to defend Taiwan. In this section I explain what kinds of policies would most likely accompany each option and present favorable arguments for each.

Restore U.S. Military Superiority

The most straightforward way to bolster American credibility would be to increase the U.S. military presence close to Taiwan and clearly demonstrate the political will to honor the defense commitment. The combination of increased military presence and unequivocal political support would be a clear break from dual deterrence. Instead of directing warnings and reassurances toward both Taiwan and China, the United States would only warn China and only reassure Taiwan. The United States would welcome a stronger Taiwan, but U.S. support would not be preconditioned on Taiwan's willingness to develop its defenses. The ultimate goal of this policy option would be the establishment of a decisive and durable U.S. military advantage over the PLA. The clearest indicator of the U.S. commitment is military resources. Increasing the survivability of American air power in the area around Taiwan would send a clear signal of support. The American forces currently deployed in Japan would be the first to respond in a Taiwan conflict. Increasing the number of hardened aircraft shelters at U.S. bases in Japan, especially at Kadena Air Base on Okinawa, would protect aircraft from ballistic missile attacks. Additionally, the United States would revive the annual arms-sale talks with Taiwan that occurred from 1983 until 2001. Advocates for returning to annual talks argue that moving away from scheduled talks resulted in arms sales becoming less frequent. Future arms sales would include more advanced equipment that Washington is currently unwilling to sell to Taiwan, such as the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and diesel attack submarines.

Politically, American policymakers would clarify that U.S. military intervention in a Taiwan conflict is guaranteed. They would interpret the TRA as a serious commitment to Taiwan's security, and, according to Walter Lohman of the Heritage Foundation, "[make] abundantly clear to Beijing the consequences that will ensue from the use of force." The TRA would not be modified in any way that reduces the scope of America's commitment.

Supporters in Congress would regularly issue resolutions that reaffirm support for the TRA, especially the parts related to the defense of Taiwan. Strict interpretation of the TRA would be a clear demonstration of American willpower to take a hard line against China.

Public statements by American officials about U.S. intervention would not carry any preconditions or caveats. Such statements would be similar to the one made by President George W. Bush in April 2001 that the United States would do "whatever it takes" to defend Taiwan. Bush eventually walked back this statement, but successful implementation of the restore-superiority option would require similarly categorical shows of support. Removing preconditions from the commitment would bolster credibility by removing an off ramp the United States could take to avoid intervention. Additionally, Taiwan would not be expected to spend a certain percentage of its GDP on defense to secure U.S. arms sales or intervention. Finally, the U.S. government would actively support de jure Taiwanese independence. As Weekly Standard editor William Kristol warns, "Opposing independence ... might give Beijing reason to believe that the U.S. might not resist China's use of force against Taiwan or coercive measures designed to bring about a capitulation of sovereignty."

However, supporting Taiwanese independence would be risky. In 2005, China passed the Anti-Secession Law (ASL) in response to the growing political power of the pro-independence movement in Taiwan. Article 8 of the ASL states that "non-peaceful means and other necessary measures" will be employed if "secessionist forces ... cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China." The increased American military presence resulting from the restore-superiority option would have to be strong enough to prevent China from invoking the ASL.

Advocates of the U.S. military commitment to Taiwan argue that the island's success as a liberal democracy is linked to the regional security interests of the United States. For example, during his failed campaign for president, Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) said that "Taiwan's continued existence as a vibrant, prosperous democracy in the heart of Asia is crucial to American security interests there and to the continued expansion of liberty and free enterprise in the region." In the U.S. Congress the ideologically driven, "pro-democracy" camp of Taiwan supporters is large and influential. Proponents of a strong U.S. commitment to Taiwan also argue that Taiwan's political system is evidence that Chinese culture is compatible with democracy. According to John Lee of the Hudson Institute, "Taiwan terrifies China because the small island represents a magnificent vision of what the mainland could be and what the [Chinese] Communist Party is not. This should be a reason to reaffirm that defending democracy in Taiwan is important to America and the region." Supporters of a strong U.S. defense commitment to Taiwan through restoring America's military superiority want to send a clear message to Beijing that the security commitment has not been shaken by China's growing military power.

Sustaining a Minimum Advantage

The second option, sustaining a minimum advantage, would maintain the current U.S. military commitment with some slight modifications. This option is much less resource-intensive than the restore-superiority option. The United States would maintain its implicit military commitment, but with preconditions that encourage Taiwan to invest more in its own defense. Importantly, the United States would reserve the right not to intervene if Taiwan provoked an armed conflict with China. The overarching themes of this option are balance and moderation. It has taken the United States years of effort to create what appears to be a relatively stable status quo, so, its supporters ask, why risk destabilizing it by significantly altering the U.S.-Taiwan relationship without very good reason? Under this option, the United States would improve the military assets for defending Taiwan, but at a much smaller scale than with the restore-superiority option. The PLA's steadily improving capabilities diminish the credibility of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan by raising the costs of conflict. Maintaining a qualitative advantage over the PLA as it continues to develop will enhance the credibility of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan by keeping the costs of war high for the PLA. However, such improvements would be tempered to mitigate the chance of overreaction by Beijing and possible damage to U.S.-China relations.

American arms sales to Taiwan would continue under this policy option. Arms sales create tension in the U.S.-China relationship, but three benefits of arms sales mitigate the costs they create. First, arms sales complicate PLA planning and raise the costs of conflict for China. Second, damage done to U.S.-China relations as a result of the arms sales is relatively small. A joint report from the Project 2049 Institute and the U.S.-Taiwan Business Council on China's reactions to arms sales concludes, "Past behavior indicates that the PRC is unlikely to challenge any fundamental U.S. interests in response to future releases of significant military articles and services to Taiwan." Finally, arms sales demonstrate the commitment to Taiwan's defense, especially in times of political transition. Arms sales to Taiwan would also be adjusted to counteract the PLA's quantitative advantage and operational strengths. Expensive items such as AV-8B Harriers, F-16 fighters, and Perry-class frigates would no longer be sold because they are highly vulnerable to Chinese weapons systems. Instead, arms sales would prioritize cheaper, more numerous precision-guided weapons and advanced surveillance assets that would prevent Chinese forces from achieving a quick victory and buy time for the United States to come to Taiwan's rescue. Such weapons systems are, generally speaking, much cheaper and easier to maintain than aircraft and ships. A report from the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments argues that by "forego[ing] further acquisitions of costly, high-end air and naval surface combat platforms" Taiwanese policymakers can focus their economic resources on more "cost-effective platforms" better suited to Taiwan's defense.

The United States would expect Taiwan to make serious defense investments by increasing military spending and developing indigenous weapons systems. Taiwan's military spending has increased in nominal terms after a precipitous drop in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but since 1999 defense spending has not risen above 3 percent of GDP. Taipei's unwillingness to spend more on defense has upset some officials in Washington. In a November 2015 letter to President Obama calling for a new arms sale to Taiwan, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) and Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) wrote, "We are increasingly concerned that, absent a change in defense spending, Taiwan's military will continue to be under-resourced and unable to make the investments necessary to maintain a credible deterrent across the strait." Thankfully, Tsai Ing-wen and the DPP have made increased defense spending a major policy goal. The development of Taiwan's defense industry would provide an additional source of high-quality military equipment for the island's defense. Taiwan has experience designing and manufacturing sea and air defense weapons. James Holmes of the U.S. Naval War College notes, "[In 2010] Taiwanese defense

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

manufacturers secretly designed and started building a dozen stealthy, 500-ton fast patrol craft [Tuo Chiang-class] armed with indigenously built, supersonic anti-ship missiles.” Indigenously produced air defense systems include the Tien Kung (TK) family of missiles, the Indigenous Defense Fighter, and anti-aircraft guns. Importantly, “Made in Taiwan” is not a byword for poor quality. According to Ian Easton of the Project 2049 Institute, the TK surface-to-air (SAM) missiles are “comparable to [U.S.-made] Patriot systems in terms of capability,” and the Hsiung Feng III anti-ship missile “is more capable than any comparable system fielded by the U.S. Navy in terms of range and speed.”

Sustaining a minimum advantage would be the easiest of the three policy options for the United States to implement. Inertia is a powerful force. The United States has invested a considerable amount of resources and effort to reach a stable status quo in the Taiwan Strait, creating an “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it” mentality. Advocates of maintaining the status quo, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies, argue that it is “critically important to U.S. interests” to deter Chinese coercion of Taiwan, lest instability spread in East Asia. In prepared testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Susan Thornton said, “The United States has an abiding interest in cross-Strait peace and stability.” Congress, historically a strong bastion of support for Taiwan, shows no indication of changing America’s Taiwan policy anytime soon. Buttressing support for this policy option is the belief that America’s commitment to Taiwan is a bellwether for the U.S. position in East Asia. According to John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, “America’s commitment to Taiwan is inextricably bound up with U.S. credibility in the region ... If the United States were to sever military ties with Taiwan or fail to defend it in a crisis with China, that would surely send a strong signal to America’s other allies in the region that they cannot rely on the United States for protection.” Advocates of maintaining the U.S. commitment argue that East Asia would become more dangerous if other allies lose faith in the United States and start building up military capabilities of their own. Supporters of the U.S. commitment also contend that backing down on Taiwan would embolden Chinese aggression in other territorial disputes.

Stepping Down from the Commitment

The final policy option would do away with America’s commitment to Taiwan’s defense on the grounds that military intervention to preserve the island’s de facto independence has become too costly and dangerous for the United States. Stepping down from the commitment to come to Taiwan’s rescue would be a major change in U.S. policy. However, other factors unrelated to the U.S. commitment would still make the use of force unattractive for Beijing. Taiwan would therefore not be defenseless or subject to imminent Chinese attack if the United States chose this policy option.

Without a U.S. commitment, Taiwan would have to improve its self-defense capability to deter an attack by China and fight off the PLA if deterrence failed. Taiwan does face an unfavorable balance of power vis-à-vis China, but this does not doom Taiwan to military defeat. In fact, research by Ivan Arreguín-Toft of Boston University indicates that large, powerful actors (such as China) have lost wars against weaker actors “with increasing frequency over time.” However, in order to have the greatest chance of success, the weaker side must have the right military strategy. A head-on, symmetric fight with the PLA would likely end in disaster for Taiwan, but Taiwan could successfully deny the PLA from achieving its strategic objectives through the same kind of asymmetric strategy that China uses to make it difficult for the United States to defend Taiwan. A military strategy emphasizing mobility, concealment, and area denial would both raise the costs of war for China and be sustainable, given Taiwan’s limited means.

Changing Taiwan’s defense strategy would not be a quick or easy task. The most immediate roadblocks to change are the equipment and mindset of Taiwan’s military. The upper echelons of the military have resisted implementing changes that could improve their ability to fight a war against the modern PLA. For example, James Holmes points out that Taiwan’s navy “[sees] itself as a U.S. Navy in miniature, a force destined to win decisive sea fights and rule the waves.” This is a dangerous mindset given the PLA Navy’s dominance in fleet size, strength, and advanced equipment. The Taiwan Marine Corps (TMC) is also ill-suited to meeting the threat posed by China. Instead of being a light, agile force, the TMC is “heavy, mechanized, and not particularly mobile,” reflecting “a glaring failure by Taiwan’s defense establishment to recognize the TMC’s essential role in national defense.” Overcoming the forces of bureaucratic inertia will be very difficult, but doing so is necessary if Taiwan can no longer count on the United States.

Stepping down from the U.S. defense commitment would likely involve reductions in U.S. arms sales.

Reductions in the size, quantity, and frequency of arms sales would likely precede any reductions to the defense commitment because arms sales are a measurable signal of American support for Taiwan. Lyle J. Goldstein of the U.S. Naval War College points out, **“Arms sales have for some time taken on a purely symbolic meaning.” This implies that the negative effects of reducing arms sales would be relatively small, since China’s extant military advantages are not being offset by U.S. weaponry.** Additionally, **stopping the arms sales would not have to be instantaneous. The United States could reduce arms sales incrementally to give Taiwan time to improve its self-defense capabilities.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

One common argument made by opponents of stepping down from the commitment is that it is the only thing preventing China from attacking Taiwan. This argument ignores several important factors that make the use of force unattractive for Beijing. First, China's reputation and standing in East Asia would be seriously damaged. Other countries in East Asia would harshly criticize China's use of force, and would likely take steps to defend themselves. For example, countries involved in territorial disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea have responded to Chinese aggressiveness by improving their military power and pushing back politically and diplomatically. China's reputational costs for attacking Taiwan would be very high. Additionally, any military operation against Taiwan would tie up a great deal of resources. Other states could take advantage of a Taiwan-focused Beijing to push back against other Chinese territorial claims.

Second, the PLA has problems with both "hardware" (equipment) and "software" (experience) that would restrict its options for using military force against Taiwan. The modern PLA has no experience conducting large-scale amphibious landings, which are complicated operations that would be very costly to execute against a dug-in defender. On the hardware side, the PLA still lacks the amphibious-lift capabilities and replenishment ships necessary to mount a successful invasion attempt. China has made big strides shifting the relative balance of power in the Taiwan Strait, but it still faces significant challenges that will take time to overcome. Presently, the PLA is more prepared to push back against American intervention than to initiate an invasion of Taiwan.

How the United States goes about stepping down from its commitment is important. Suddenly abrogating the TRA would be practically impossible given the entrenched support for Taiwan within Congress. The most realistic, feasible approach requires incremental reductions in U.S. support for Taiwan. Examples of such reductions could include setting a cap on the value and/or quality of military equipment that can be sold to Taiwan, changing the TRA to more narrowly define what constitutes a threat to Taiwan, or requiring Taiwan to spend a certain percentage of its GDP on defense in order to receive U.S. military support.

Incremental reduction would be easier to sell to U.S. policymakers because it buys time for Taiwan to improve its defenses, thus increasing the credibility of the island's military deterrent. As discussed earlier, Taiwan's defense industries have proven they can make high-quality military equipment that meets the island's defense needs. Taiwan has the ability to develop a robust and effective military deterrent, but it needs time to overcome existing challenges and address unforeseen obstacles. If the United States were to reduce its commitment incrementally, Taiwan's political and military leadership would have the time to address such challenges.

Incremental implementation of this policy option would also provide the United States with opportunities to learn about Chinese intentions, based on Beijing's reaction. Stepping down from the defense commitment to Taiwan would be a major accommodation on a core Chinese security interest. American policymakers should demand some sort of reciprocal actions from Beijing that reduce the military threat the PLA poses to Taiwan. In Meeting China Halfway, Lyle J. Goldstein explains how "cooperation spirals" in the U.S.-China relationship can build "trust and confidence ... over time through incremental and reciprocal steps that gradually lead to larger and more significant compromises." However, if Washington takes accommodating policy positions and Beijing responds with obstinacy or increased aggression, then American policymakers would likely want to adjust their approach.

Stepping down from the U.S. defense commitment to Taiwan, regardless of how it is implemented, is a controversial policy option that would face significant opposition. However, there is a strong case to be made for the benefits of such a policy. Taiwan's fate carries much more significance for China than the United States, and American military superiority over China is eroding. Although Taiwan faces serious challenges, it would be capable of maintaining a military deterrent without American support, especially given the other factors that rein in Chinese aggression. A self-defense strategy emphasizing asymmetric warfare could raise the costs of military conflict for China to unacceptably high levels. Most important, the risk of armed conflict between the United States and China would be significantly reduced.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Sustainability: The U.S. should reduce military support to Taiwan to avoid unsustainable costs and risks, given the imbalance in stakes between the U.S. and China.

Gomez 16 - [Gomez, Eric. "A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship." Cato Institute. September 28, 2016. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/costly-commitment-options-future-us-taiwan-defense-relationship>.] Elene.

[Eric Gomez is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on the U.S. military budget and force posture, as well as arms control and nuclear stability issues in East Asia. In 2020, Gomez was a member of the Project on Nuclear Issues Nuclear Scholars Initiative program, where he conducted research on the impacts of U.S. intermediate-range missiles on U.S.-China strategic stability]

Increasing American support for Taiwan without any preconditions regarding Taiwan's role in its own defense would be detrimental in the long run. Taiwan and the United States' other East Asian allies are willing to cheap-ride on American security guarantees. **Taiwan is not disinterested in self-defense, but if someone else is shouldering the burden there is less urgency to do more, especially if increasing military spending means reducing social spending.** China could exacerbate Taiwan's "guns vs. butter" dilemma if it restricted economic exchanges (trade, investment, and tourism) with Taiwan as a result of a stronger U.S. posture.

Increasing the American commitment to Taiwan carries significant risks and costs for a benefit that would likely be fleeting. The likely negative consequences of restoring U.S. military superiority would not be worth the benefits. American policymakers should not go down this path.

Sustaining a Minimum Advantage

The biggest weakness of sustaining a minimum U.S. military advantage is that it does not resolve any of the underlying issues in the cross-strait dispute, most important of which is the fact that Taiwan matters more to China than it does to the United States. Since the United States cannot equalize the imbalance of stakes vis-à-vis China, credible deterrence will require the United States to maintain military superiority over a steadily improving PLA. **The United States is capable of absorbing these costs in the short run, but the recent history of the U.S.-China military balance suggests that China will be able to narrow the gap eventually.**

Maintaining stability in the Taiwan Strait will become more complicated as a result of two trends in cross-strait relations and one higher-level trend. First, a distinct identity is taking hold in Taiwan; the people living there see themselves as Taiwanese instead of Chinese. Surveys conducted in 2014 showed that "fewer than 4 percent of respondents [in Taiwan] self-identified as solely Chinese, with a clear majority (60 percent) self-identifying solely as Taiwanese." A unique Taiwanese identity is dangerous to Beijing because it makes China's ultimate goal of reunification more difficult, especially if the identity issue leads to greater political support for independence. Thankfully, the Taiwanese people have been very pragmatic and have not yet made a significant push for de jure independence.

Second, if China's economy continues to slow down Beijing could become more aggressive toward Taiwan. A parade of doom and gloom headlines reveal the weaknesses of China's economic miracle. The Chinese stock market experienced downturns in August 2015 and January 2016 that affected global financial markets. China Labor Bulletin, a Hong Kong-based workers' rights group, recorded more than 2,700 strikes and worker protests throughout China in 2015—more than double the 1,300 recorded the year before. In February 2016, Reuters reported that 1.8 million workers in China's state-owned coal and steel companies will be laid off in the coming years. This is not to say that China's economy is in imminent danger of a catastrophic collapse. However, the political instability resulting from economic troubles could create an incentive for Beijing to act aggressively to burnish the Chinese Communist Party's image at home. Exacerbating this risk is the rise of nationalist forces within Chinese society that could push the government into a more aggressive cross-strait policy. Such forces played an important role in the government's heavy-handed response to 2014's Occupy Central protests in Hong Kong. Economic problems coupled with aggressive ideology could prompt China to back away from any rapprochement with Taiwan. This could make the task of deterring a Chinese attack harder for the United States.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Third, **America's other security commitments could draw attention and resources away from Taiwan. Keeping pace with the PLA in the Taiwan Strait will require investments in military power that will become more difficult to sustain, barring either a reduction in global commitments or a significant decrease in China's own economic and military power.** The fight against ISIS in the Middle East and North Africa, the Russian threat to Eastern Europe, and Chinese island-building in the South China Sea are all vying for the attention of the U.S. military. The military has been able to cope with these contingencies, but there are signs of strain on the force. **Given America's current global security posture, it will be difficult for the United States to sustain a minimum advantage over the PLA in perpetuity.**

Sustaining a minimum U.S. military advantage is growing more difficult and costly over time as these above trends develop. Fortunately, the costs are likely to increase slowly and could be mitigated by advances in U.S. military technology. However, **ultimately the United States will be stuck in the unenviable position of trying to defend Taiwan from a China that has growing military power and a strong interest in prevailing in any dispute.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

End Defense Commitment

End Defense Commitment: the US commitment to defend Taiwan in case of an invasion—however ambiguous or vague—is costly. The US should step down from this commitment, while simultaneously extracting large concessions from China in exchange.

Gomez 16 - [Gomez, Eric. “A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship.” Cato Institute. September 28, 2016. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/costly-commitment-options-future-us-taiwan-defense-relationship>.] Elene.

[Eric Gomez is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on the U.S. military budget and force posture, as well as arms control and nuclear stability issues in East Asia. In 2020, Gomez was a member of the Project on Nuclear Issues Nuclear Scholars Initiative program, where he conducted research on the impacts of U.S. intermediate-range missiles on U.S.-China strategic stability]

The United States should step down from the implicit commitment to use military force to preserve Taiwan’s de facto independence. **American credibility is slowly eroding as China becomes more powerful, and the commitment will be more costly to maintain for a relatively minor benefit.** Broadly speaking, the United States has two options for how it could implement this policy option: **it could try to draw concessions from China to get something in return for stepping down from the commitment, or it could unilaterally drop the commitment.** In either scenario, **Taiwan would have to take on sole responsibility for deterring Chinese military action.**

A policy that wins concessions from China would be the more desirable of the two options. Concessions could include resolution of other territorial disputes involving China and American allies or dropping the Chinese threat to use force against Taiwan. This would be characteristic of what Charles Glaser calls a grand bargain, “an agreement in which two actors make concessions across multiple issues to create a fair deal ... that would have been impossible in an agreement that dealt with a single issue.” **Making the end of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan contingent upon Chinese concessions to resolve its other territorial disputes peacefully would benefit both the United States and China. The United States would free itself of an increasingly costly and risky commitment to Taiwan’s defense, but only if China compromises in ways that align with U.S. allies’ interests in the South and East China Seas.** China would have to limit its objectives in the South and East China Seas, but in return would earn a major policy concession from the United States on a core national interest that has much more importance than the other territorial disputes.

If China proves unwilling to make concessions across multiple issue areas, the United States could still push for concessions on China’s military posture toward Taiwan. Instead of demanding a concession on the South China Sea dispute, U.S. policymakers could press China to take actions that reduce the military threat it poses to Taiwan via an incremental, reciprocal process of concessions. Refusing to sell Taiwan any new military equipment would be a good way to initiate a cooperation spiral.

Stopping the sale of new equipment would not significantly reduce the Taiwanese military’s ability to defend itself for three reasons. First, most equipment sold to Taiwan by the United States does not represent the latest in U.S. military technology and is not necessarily superior to new capabilities fielded by the PLA. Second, Taiwan’s domestic defense industry is capable of producing new equipment that is well-suited to asymmetric defense, although it will take time for Taiwan’s relatively small and underdeveloped defense industry to reach its full potential. Finally, stopping the sale of new weapons still gives the United States the latitude to sell spare parts and ammunition for weapons systems that have already been sold. Halting the sale of new types of weapons systems will signal a reduced U.S. commitment to Taiwan’s security that would not be overly disruptive to Taiwan’s self-defense.

One of several ways that Beijing might respond to this U.S. concession on arms sales would be to reduce the number of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) within firing range of Taiwan. Currently there are more than 1,000 conventionally armed SRBMs (with a maximum range of approximately 500 miles) in the PLA arsenal that

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

could strike Taiwan. Improvements in guidance technology have transformed these missiles from inaccurate “terror weapons” that would likely target cities to precision munitions better suited for strikes against military airfields and ports. Stationing the SRBMs out of range of Taiwan would be a low-cost, but symbolically important, action. The missiles are fired from mobile launchers that could be moved back into range of Taiwan. However, the act of moving the missiles out of range would, according to Lyle J. Goldstein, “show goodwill and increasing confidence across the Strait and also between Washington and Beijing.” If China agrees to America’s demand to relocate its ballistic missiles, then additional steps could be taken to further reduce the threat China poses to Taiwan.

If China proved unwilling to make any concessions, either in other territorial disputes or in cross-strait relations, the United States could still unilaterally withdraw from its military commitment to Taiwan. No demands or conditions would be placed on Chinese behavior. American policymakers are unlikely to accept such a course of action given recent shows of Chinese assertiveness. Charles Glaser explains, “China appears too likely to misinterpret [unilaterally ending the U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan], which could fuel Chinese overconfidence and intensify challenges to U.S. interests.” **Unilateral withdrawal would reduce the likelihood of U.S.-Chinese armed conflict, but the dearth of other benefits would make the policy difficult for policymakers to implement. Extracting some kind of concession from China, either in cross-strait relations or in other territorial disputes, should be a priority.**

Finally, stepping down from the commitment to defend Taiwan with military force does not remove America’s interest in keeping the Taiwan Strait free of armed conflict. **The United States would retain the ability to punish China in other ways should it attack Taiwan. Diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions may not inflict the same kinds of costs on Beijing as military force, but they are additional costs that would have to be absorbed.** Additionally, U.S. arms sales are separate from the implicit commitment to defend Taiwan and could continue, albeit in some reduced or modified form. **Continuing to sell arms to Taiwan while stepping down from the implicit commitment to use military force to defend the island allows the United States to demonstrate support for Taiwan’s defense without taking on the risks associated with direct intervention.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Inventory

The US has a large shortage of munitions, and doesn't have the military inventory necessary to fight a war with China

Beaver & Fein 2/24— [Beaver, Wilson. 2024. “America Must Remedy Its Dangerous Lack of Munitions Planning.” The Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/america-must-remedy-its-dangerous-lack-munitions-planning>.] Joel.

[Wilson Beaver is the Policy Advisor for defense budgeting in The Heritage Foundation's Allison Center for National Security. In this role, he conducts research, writes and engages audiences on the adequacy, composition, and character of the U.S. defense budget and associated policies, and supports the center's mission to promote a strong U.S. national defense. Wilson has a master's degree in foreign service from Georgetown University and a bachelor's degree in international studies from Louisiana State University with a minor in German.

Jim Fein is a Research Assistant for National Security and European Affairs at The Heritage Foundation.]

Since the end of the Cold War, the U.S. has not bought and built enough munitions to keep pace with the military operations the President and Congress have tasked the Department of Defense (DOD) with conducting. In 2014, the U.S. discovered that it lacked enough precision-guided missiles to take on a non-state actor, ISIS, in a limited campaign. Less than a decade later, it has become apparent that the problem persists, as the effort to arm Ukraine has dangerously depleted America's stores of artillery shells. This deficiency in munitions planning harms America's warfighting capability, endangering its ability to fight future wars. It is vital that the U.S. remedy this deficiency by increasing munitions spending, coordinating with allies, shoring up industry, and doing a better job of husbanding resources.

The Past: Operation Inherent Resolve and Operation Unified Protector

In 2014, the United States launched Operation Inherent Resolve to degrade and destroy ISIS. Two years of operations later, the Pentagon was raiding stores worldwide for munitions. The current Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Charles Brown, stated at the time that the U.S. would “have to do some analysis of where we take risk, implying that the depletion of munitions stockpiles by some 45,000 bombs risked the ability of the U.S. military to conduct operations in other potential theaters of war.

Based on a 2019 presentation by the Department of the Air Force, by the end of the operation, U.S.-led coalition aircraft had used around 112,458 munitions against ISIS.

This, despite Operation Inherent Resolve being a limited campaign against a non-state actor.

The Pentagon began rebuilding its missile stores in 2016, but it took until 2021 before Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) War Reserve Materiel inventory hit “acceptable” levels, as indicated by JDAM procurement returning to pre-2016 levels.

The Present: Ukraine and Israel

Less than a decade later, the Pentagon finds itself in a similar scenario. Ukraine is using about 110,000 155-mm artillery shells per day, with a stated minimum need to fire 356,400 shells per month, and a capacity of firing 594,000 per month.

The U.S. has shipped about 2 million shells to Ukraine since Russia invaded in February 2022. In contrast, the U.S. Army only procured around 500,000 M795 155-mm artillery shells in the preceding decade, about one-fourth the amount.

During this time, America has made progress in addressing its deficit in artillery shell production, increasing production to 28,000 per month today from about half that in early 2022. The U.S. is on pace to increase production to 100,000 shells per month in 2025.

But even with a complete pause in shell expenditure, it would take nearly two years—20 months—to reach pre-Ukraine levels of artillery shell reserves at the 100,000 shells-per-month level.

In addition to Ukrainian requirements, Israel needs munitions from the U.S. to deal with existential threats, including Hamas and Hezbollah. Some of those requirements overlap, such as a need for 155-mm artillery rounds, but Israel also requires precision-guided munitions, such as JDAMs and Small Diameter Bombs (SDBs).

The Pentagon was—dangerously, unacceptably, and unwarrantedly—caught off guard by the amount of artillery shells needed by the Ukrainian and Israeli militaries. During Operation Desert Storm in 1991, in a four-day ground war, the U.S. used more than 60,000 artillery shells.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

That is a pace of 465,000 artillery shells per month against a comparatively weak adversary, further weakened by 43 days of extensive aerial attack. But Congress, the executive branch, and the DOD made commitments to Ukraine before running this basic math.

The Pentagon also should not have been caught off-guard by Israeli requirements after the shortfalls, mentioned above, experienced during Operation Inherent Resolve. Instead, U.S. procurement lagged so far behind the number of munitions required to replenish Israeli stockpiles that the number of JDAM and SDMs procured in 2022—3,000 and 2,000, respectively—totaled less than the 6,000 bombs that Israel used in the first six days of conflict in Gaza last year.

There is clearly a gap between what Congress and the President have been asking of the Pentagon and the means they have provided. **America's own munition problem is compounded by U.S. allies' munitions shortages.** During Operation Unified Protector—the 2011 NATO-led intervention in Libya—allied countries lacked enough precision-guided munitions to sustain operations and had to rely on the U.S. for resupply. The French and British ran short on precision-guided munitions less than a month into the conflict, and the U.S. stepped in to fill the capability gap (something the U.S. would be even harder pressed to do in a comparable situation today).

Since Unified Protector, the problem has not improved much. In 2022, Great Britain had enough artillery shells to fire at Russian rates for only two days.

It has so few Tomahawk missiles that it turned the vertical launching system (VLS) cells on its Type 45 destroyers into gyms filled with exercise equipment for personnel. Germany only has approximately 150 operable Taurus cruise missiles, and the situation is not much better throughout the rest of Europe.

The (Possible) Future: Taiwan

The Pentagon's munitions planning problems are not just in the past; they will shape the way that America can fight the next war. For example, wargames have indicated that the Pentagon only has enough critical munitions to fight China, if it launches an invasion of Taiwan, for about a week. That is clearly not enough munitions to engage in a prolonged conflict with China, not to mention maintaining the capability necessary for deterrence, or, if necessary, to go to war in other theaters.

A fight over Taiwan would primarily require high-end anti-ship weapons, ship-defense missiles, and ground-attack munitions to destroy anti-access area-denial systems. The U.S. does not currently have an adequate supply of any of these munitions. Judging by publicly available defense documents, **the U.S. has only about 4,000 Tomahawk missiles, around 100 to 200 long-range anti-ship missiles (LRASMs), fewer than 2,000 extended-range joint air-to-surface standoff missiles (JASSM-ERs), and fewer than 1,306 Standard Missile-6s (SM-6s).**

Current procurement plans will not solve the problem, either. Hypersonic missiles, a key emerging technology and military breakthrough, have yet to move past development. Meanwhile, the 2024 Presidential Budget Request calls for no Navy-ordered Tomahawks and only 118 LRASMs, 550 JASSM-ERs, and 125 SM-6s.

To put that into perspective: This is only enough for the 111-strong U.S. bomber force to launch 4.95 JASSM-ERs and 1.06 LRASMs per bomber and the Navy's conflict-active destroyers, cruisers, and submarines to fire zero Tomahawks and its destroyers and cruisers to fire 1.76 SM-6s each.

Comparing U.S. munitions inventory with the target set that the U.S. would need in order to engage in a future armed conflict exposes this deficiency. The U.S. has suffered from munitions shortages because of limited operations against non-state actors and would be even less equipped to deal with a state actor with a substantial military.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Lost Cause

Budget & Timeframe: Taiwan spends only 2.4% of its GDP on defense, and is only slowly preparing for war with China—the gap between China and Taiwan is growing larger

Brands 11/23— [Brands, Hal. 2023. “U.S. Deterrence in Taiwan Is Failing.” Foreign Policy. September 8. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/08/us-military-deterrence-china-taiwan-war-east-asia/>.] Joel.

[Hal Brands is the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). He is also a scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a columnist for Bloomberg Opinion. He is the author or editor of several books, including, most recently, *The Twilight Struggle: What the Cold War Teaches Us About Great-Power Rivalry*, *Danger Zone: The Coming Conflict with China*, co-authored with Michael Beckley, and *The New Makers of Modern Strategy: From the Ancient World to the Digital Age*.]

In fairness, Taiwan faces an epic task in hardening itself against its hulking neighbor. To do so, it has adopted a smart, asymmetric defense concept that emphasizes using “large numbers of small things,” as former U.S. defense official David Helvey termed it—sea mines, anti-ship missiles, mobile air defenses—to slow and attrite Chinese forces; it is building an army that can surge troops to invasion beaches; and it is raising a reserve force that can fight guerrilla-style in Taiwan’s complex terrain. The United States is selling—and, now, simply giving—Taiwan missiles, drones, and other weapons to hasten this transformation. It is quietly increasing its training and advisory presence on the island. **Given time, Taiwan can make itself a prickly porcupine. The question is how much time that will take.**

Taiwan’s promising defense reforms have been dogged by political and bureaucratic opposition, just as U.S. arms sales have lagged for years due to backlogs in the military supply pipeline. Yet the underlying problem is more fundamental. **It is hard to claim that a country that spends just 2.4 percent of its GDP on defense, that is only slowly preparing the sort of all-of-society resistance that has sustained Ukraine, and whose military spends precious dollars on expensive, easy-to-kill capabilities that could be useless in the event of war is entirely serious about its own defense.** According to the Rand Corp., **Taiwan’s ability to hold out until help arrives is becoming more tenuous—which will make it a more tempting target for Beijing.**

The United States reportedly lacks enough anti-ship missiles and other munitions to blunt the first Chinese attack, let alone keep fighting after a few days or weeks.

Taiwan has immense structural problems, including unprofessionalism, defeatism, and Chinese nationalism within its own ranks, that would prevent its military from being effective in a war against China—without whole-force structural overhaul, any outside help from the US will be ineffective—but time is running out, and Taiwan shows no signs of taking the immanent risk seriously

Liao 23— [Liao, Holmes. 2023. Nationaldefensemagazine.org. <https://www.nationaldefensemagazine.org/articles/2023/5/12/taiwans-intangible-potentially-disastrous-defense-problems/>.] Joel.

[Holmes Liao has over 30 years of professional experience in U.S. aerospace industries. He previously served as an adjunct distinguished lecturer at Taiwan’s War College.]

Upgrading Taiwan’s defense has become a pressing priority for the United States. Washington reportedly plans to quadruple the number of troops deployed to Taiwan from roughly 30 to between 100 and 200 personnel to train its armed forces.

Congress passed the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act in December, which budgets \$10 billion in financing and grants over five years for Taiwan’s weapon procurement beyond the traditional direct military sales. Moreover, the Chairman of the House China Select Committee, Rep. Mike Gallagher, R-Wisc., recently vowed to “arm Taiwan to the teeth” to deter Chinese invasion. Former U.S. National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster has

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

pushed to speed up weapons delivery to Taiwan. There is an apparent urgency in Washington to help Taiwan defend itself.

Despite these commitments, **Taiwan remains recalcitrant to conduct a much-needed military reform to transform into a modern fighting force. Three intangible yet ubiquitous problems must be tackled: unprofessionalism, defeatism and Chinese nationalism for outside assistance to be effective.**

In the book “The Soldier and the State,” Samuel P. Huntington’s definition of military professionalism includes three characteristics — expertise, responsibility and corporateness. The responsibility is associated with the “peculiar skill” as the “management of violence but not the act of violence itself.”

If we use expertise and skills to measure Taiwan’s military professionalism, the score will be low. For example, though the Ministry of National Defense requires system analysis and operational requirements before weapon procurement, the process is a perfunctory checkmark after making the decision. Subsequently, its general staff never quite understands the substance of the practice and masters its techniques.

The ministry desperately needs to update its policies and training curriculum. The last few defense ministers under President Tsai Ing-wen have advocated the return of outdated bayonet charge training — this technique dates to 200 years ago in France and can only have a negligible effect, if at all, in the age of standoff precision munitions. Meanwhile, many of Taiwan’s newly acquired weapons are locked up in armories and warehouses, leaving soldiers with few tools for training.

Extending the length of conscription from four months to one year barely seems adequate, but the ministry incomprehensibly plans to require soldiers to practice goose steps. The goose step originated in Prussia in the 18th century and was later adopted by the Russian Empire in the 19th century. Though impressive in military parades, the practice cannot improve combat effectiveness. Russia, China, North Korea and Cuba are notable countries where this practice has persisted.

Taiwan’s annual Han Kuang Exercise, due to begin in May this year, typically starts with computer wargaming, complete with state-of-the-art hardware and software. One of the purposes of warfare simulation at the tactical, operational or strategic levels is to identify gaps in war planning. Nevertheless, **the ministry rarely attempts to implement and improve from lessons learned, insights gained and corrections recommended from simulation results.**

The second phase of the exercise comprises troops in the air force, navy and army following pre-scripted, repetitively rehearsed scenarios to imitate red-blue opposing forces, making it useless to train commanders to adapt, improvise and make decisions under stress to vanquish the enemy in the fog of war. The field wargaming scenarios have been very unrealistic, to say the least.

The above are just a few examples to show not only the unprofessionalism of Taiwan’s military leadership, but also its culture of emphasizing formalism over substance. Consequently, **most conscripted soldiers are forced to spend most of their time cutting grass, painting buildings and answering several roll calls every day.**

In an environment where everyone does pointless routines, soldiers eventually become nonchalant, develop predisposed defeatism and just “swim with the tide.” Those who exercise independent thinking and deviate from the norm to excel are suppressed. A case in point is that none of Taiwan’s dozens of West Point graduates in the last few decades have been promoted to flag officer. Like Gresham’s Law in economics, bad money drives out good in the armed forces.

After retirement, a former chief of general staff urged the ministry to boost combat readiness, implement deep military reform, build a civil defense force and prioritize asymmetric warfare. None of these problems are new, and he was not alone in calling for rectification.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Some retired top brass expressed privately to the author that their attempt to reform would be futile, given the overwhelming resistance. The fact that top military leadership understands the challenges but does not act while in power manifests institutional unprofessionalism and defeatism that prevents the military from building an effective fighting force.

Having been isolated diplomatically from the rest of the world since the 1970s, Taiwan has had virtually no formal exchange with other militaries. Its officer corps has not learned modern methodologies, techniques and mindsets commonly practiced and seen in the U.S. and other major militaries. Consequently, the military lacks modern warfighting tactics and skills, and many of its doctrines and training are outdated, unrealistic or both.

Though Taiwan's general staff imitates the organization of the Directorates of the U.S. Joint Staff, from J1 to J6, the similarity ends there. The culture and practices largely retain the lineage from the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangzhou, China, in the 1920s.

Without a scrupulous transformation from the top, Taiwan's military will continue to prepare to fight the last war they lost to the Chinese communists more than 70 years ago.

As a start, the Pentagon could dispatch a cadre of experienced mid-grade officers to be stationed in Taiwan to conduct on-the-job training for the general staff to master the modern ways of force planning (J1), intelligence (J2), operations (J3), logistics (J4), strategy (J5), C4 and cyber warfare (J6) and joint warfighting (J7). Rigorous training will undoubtedly foster professionalism, boost morale and weed out defeatism among the soldiers. Taiwan's troops have not conducted joint exercises or training with other countries in decades. The Pentagon's training for Taiwanese soldiers is a much-needed move. But the scale and intensity should be boosted to the level where both militaries can conduct large-scale, bilateral, multi-domain military exercises involving air, sea, land, electronic and cyber warfare to institute interoperability.

In time, Japan's Self-Defense Forces, the Australian Defence Force and the Canadian Armed Forces could join the multi-national exercises.

There are political obstacles to overcome, but if U.S. allies and friends ignore the obvious and continue to leave Taiwan alone to fend off China's invasion, the expectation would be a tall order, if not outright impossible. Meanwhile, despite democratizing for more than a quarter century, Taiwan's equivalent of the political commissar system, also with its lineage from Whampoa, is still infusing Chinese nationalism and ideology in the military. Consequently, **the percentage of officer corps identifying as Taiwanese rather than Chinese is much lower than the public. The identity crisis, compounded by the Chinese Communist Party's united front work and influence operations, leads many retired and active officers to claim they do not know what they are fighting for.**

Subsequently, **a glaring issue concerning Taiwan's national security is its intelligence capability, or the lack of it.** As the communists infiltrated Chiang Kai-shek's army to bring about the latter's rapid downfall in China in 1949, there is no reason why the CCP will not do it again in the 21st century.

In fact, **a Taiwan National Security Bureau's estimate said China has sent and recruited more than 5,000 spies on the island, presumably both in the civilian government and the military.**

Due to the indoctrination of Chinese nationalism, the military has no shortage of China sympathizers. In intelligence, ideology is one of the most crucial motives for people to become traitors. China is undoubtedly aware of that and has taken advantage of it. Not coincidentally, Xi Jinping's call to rejuvenate China resonates with Chinese nationalists in the military, who at times loathe U.S. intervention.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Meanwhile, Taiwan's counterintelligence capabilities have diminished to ineffectual levels. A retired general of Taiwan's Military Intelligence Bureau said in 2020 that the agency has not dispatched operatives to or recruited spies in China for at least a decade to avoid being captured. There could be many reasons for such inaction, one of which is that operatives in the bureau ostensibly refuse to risk their lives for the current ruling party — the Democratic Progressive Party — as it aims to demote Chinese nationalism.

Another reason is that China has effectively recruited turncoats in Taiwan's intelligence community, and they, in turn, exposed Taiwan's spies in China. As offensive intelligence operations are the best counterintelligence tactics, Taiwan's lack of counterintelligence initiative corroborates the conjecture.

Reconstituting Taiwan's intelligence and counterintelligence apparatus is more urgent than ever. The United States has installed listening antennae on Taiwan's west coast to gather signal intelligence, electronic intelligence and communications intelligence. In recent years, U.S. surveillance in Asia has uncovered a few Chinese moles in Taiwan's security apparatus. Washington could further help Taiwan rebuild its human intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities.

Taiwan must reclaim the intelligence battleground with U.S. assistance before it is too late.

Unprofessionalism, defeatism and Chinese nationalism are but a few deep-rooted problems in Taiwan's armed forces. Acutely aware of the difficulties, **the ruling party — despite having been in power cumulatively for almost 16 years — dares not reform the military, presumably due to formidable, intertwined challenges and the associated political risks.**

Procrastination is not a solution, however. Political elites must call for U.S. assistance to embark on the fundamental reform to cultivate a professional officer corps and non-commissioned officers. With preliminary success, more young people with intellectual prowess and loyal to Taiwan will join the military to become well-versed in military science and technologies and benefit to build a professional Taiwanese fighting force.

Time may not be on Taiwan's side for the complicated, long-term endeavor. The challenges are formidable, and the solution will be tantamount to shock therapy for the fundamental transformation. But moral courage from its political leadership to institute the reform will instill hope in the Taiwan Strait and, in time, alleviate the burden on the United States for sending its brave men and women into harm's way.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Nukes

Military Exercises: China, the US, and Taiwan all engage in activities that permanently suspend us on the brink of nuclear war

Khan 7/24— [Sulmaan Wasif Khan. 2024. “U.S.-China Conflict: Will There Be a Nuclear War over Taiwan?” Foreign Policy. May 12. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/05/12/china-us-taiwan-strait-war-nuclear-weapons-military-biden-xi-history/>.] Joel.

[Sulmaan Khan holds the Denison Chair in International History and Chinese Foreign Relations at the Fletcher School, Tufts University. He is the author of HAUNTED BY CHAOS: CHINA'S GRAND STRATEGY FROM MAO ZEDONG TO XI JINPING (Harvard University Press) and MUSLIM, TRADER, NOMAD, SPY: CHINA'S COLD WAR AND THE PEOPLE OF THE TIBETAN BORDERLANDS (University of North Carolina Press). He holds a B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. from Yale University.]

On the morning of April 5, 2023, Taiwan’s president, Tsai Ing-wen, met with then-U.S. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy in Simi Valley, California. This was a meeting Beijing had warned against in the strictest of terms. It was therefore a meeting that both sides found necessary to have. China had to be shown that it could not dictate whom either Taiwan or the United States met with. On this, both Taipei and Washington were agreed.

China delivered on its promised forceful response by engaging in military drills and sending warships and planes scudding around Taiwan. The median line and Taiwan’s air defense identification zone were breached. One aircraft carrier, the *Shandong*, entered the waters just south of Japan. **Violations of the “One China” principle, Beijing had to make clear, were not going to be taken quietly. And in seeking to make that clear, it deepened the risk of war.**

Commentators dismissed Beijing’s response to the Tsai-McCarthy meeting as less intense than the one that had attended then-U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in 2022. But the dismissal itself highlighted the gravity of the problem. A certain level of military activity had become normalized. It was as though the world now took for granted the presence of missiles and aircraft carriers, the shows of force that demanded a response in kind. The week after the meeting in California, the United States and the Philippines launched their largest joint military exercise to date. It was a way of showing China that there were other militaries that could operate in the region. The new normal meant more ships and planes operating in close proximity to one another, mutual recrimination, and mutual suspicion.

Beijing and Washington have become desensitized to the risk these circumstances pose. But in the militarization of foreign policy and the failure to grasp the full significance of that militarization, the pair are one accident and a bad decision removed from a catastrophic war. Mathematicians speak of the “edge of chaos”: the final point separating order from doom. A system operating at this edge has no room for error. This is where the accumulated weight of the past has brought the United States, China, and Taiwan. They walked right up to the edge of a war that could go nuclear several times in the past: in 1954-55, 1958, and 1996. Now, they seem to be living on that edge permanently.

In recent years, China’s policy has alienated Taiwan completely. As China has bullied, threatened, and displayed force at home and abroad, it has made unification unacceptable to much of the Taiwanese electorate. And it has enjoyed only mixed success in trying to isolate Taiwan diplomatically. It has managed to buy off many of Taiwan’s erstwhile allies, but its conduct over COVID-19 and support for Russia despite the invasion of Ukraine have cost it friends, too—and those former friends have turned to the island across the strait.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Arms Control: China recently suspended arms control and nuclear-nonproliferation talks with the US because of continued arms sales to Taiwan

Cadell & Hauslohner 7/24— [Cadell, Cate, and Abigail Hauslohner. 2024. “China Suspends Nuclear Talks with the U.S. Over Taiwan Arms Sales.” Washington Post. The Washington Post. July 17. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/07/17/china-nuclear-taiwan-trump-biden/>.] Joel.

[Cate Cadell is a national security reporter for the Washington Post, where she covers the U.S.-China relationship. She joined The Post in 2021 after almost eight years based in Beijing, including five years covering technology and politics with Reuters News.

Abigail Hauslohner is a Washington Post national security reporter focused on Congress. In her 12 years at the newspaper, she has been a roving national correspondent, writing on topics ranging from immigration to political extremism and Guantanamo Bay, and has served as the Post's Cairo bureau chief. Education: University of Michigan, BA in anthropology and Arabic studies; Columbia University, MA in journalism]

China on Wednesday said it has suspended arms control and nuclear nonproliferation talks with Washington, blaming the diplomatic stall on ongoing U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. The freeze comes just eight months after the two countries held their first formal dialogue on the matter in almost five years.

“Over the past weeks and months, despite China’s firm opposition and repeated protest, the U.S. has continued to sell arms to Taiwan and done things that severely undermine China’s core interests and the mutual trust between China and the U.S.,” said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lin Jian on Wednesday.

U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller called the decision “unfortunate” and said Washington would continue to bolster the security of allies and partners in the region in the face of Chinese threats.

“China has chosen to follow Russia’s lead in asserting that engagement on arms control can’t proceed when there are other challenges in the bilateral relationship. We think this approach undermines strategic stability. It increases the risk of arms race dynamics,” he said at a regular press briefing Wednesday.

The Chinese announcement comes as U.S. policy on Taiwan hangs in the balance ahead of the November election. Former president and Republican nominee Donald Trump on Tuesday called into question Washington’s long-standing policy of arming Taiwan, the democratic, autonomous island that China claims as its territory.

In an interview with Bloomberg Businessweek, Trump accused the “immensely wealthy” Taiwan of swindling America out of its role in computer chips manufacturing, and suggested that it ought to “pay us for defense.” Taiwan has “done nothing” for America, Trump said.

The United States has a long-standing policy of providing arms and training to Taiwan, a relationship that the Biden administration and U.S. lawmakers from both parties have sought to expand in recent years.

Congress in 2022 authorized the U.S. government to spend \$2 billion in annual security funding for Taiwan from 2023 through 2027, and in April this year approved \$2 billion in security grants for the Asia-Pacific region as part of a larger supplemental national security spending bill.

Lawmakers and administration officials have also pledged to accelerate a years-long backlog of weapons sales to Taiwan that includes critical upgrades to its fleet of F-16 fighter jets. Last month, the State Department approved new sales of **missiles and drones** worth an estimated \$360 million.

All of this has drawn fierce criticism from Beijing. Chinese President Xi Jinping has vowed to take Taiwan by force if necessary, and the People’s Liberation Army has executed a series of escalating military exercises around the island in recent years.

The Biden administration oversaw the rare talks between the two countries’ top nuclear arms officials in November as part of a broader shift to reopen high-level communication channels between Beijing and Washington. While some Republican lawmakers have criticized the renewed engagement — accusing the White

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

House of softening on China — the administration maintains that the communication, particularly between the two countries' militaries, is critical to manage the threat of conflict.

“The goal was not to paper over our differences. Our aim instead was to address misperceptions and miscommunication, to avoid major surprises,” said U.S. national security adviser Jake Sullivan at a Council on Foreign Relations event in January where he discussed the rationale behind the talks with Beijing.

But China's refusal to continue engagement on nuclear proliferation over U.S. arms sales to Taiwan highlights the limitations in the scope of that engagement, as Biden heads toward a precarious election.

“[T]he Chinese side has decided to hold off discussion with the U.S. on a new round of consultations on arms control and nonproliferation. The responsibility fully lies with the U.S.,” Lin said.

The foreign ministry's statement was China's first public confirmation that talks have stalled, though U.S. officials indicated earlier this year that Beijing's commitment had waned.

In March, under Secretary of State Bonnie Jenkins told a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that despite the promising initial discussions, **Beijing had declined follow-up meetings and had not provided “substantive” responses to risk-reducing suggestions proposed by Washington.**

She said the rapid buildup in China's nuclear warheads — alongside Russia's own sizable arsenal — raised concerns that the U.S. could soon be facing two “expansionary and significantly-armed peers.”

A report released by the Pentagon last year estimated that China had more than 500 operational nuclear warheads and is likely on track to double that figure by 2030. The United States has an arsenal of roughly 3,700 nuclear warheads, according to estimates by the Federation of American Scientists.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Preferable Strategies

NOTE: Be careful with these—Counterplans aren't allowed in PF, but examples are

Dissuasion: A campaign of dissuasion can sow doubt in the minds of Chinese military planners without focusing on maintaining a military advantage in the Pacific—a goal that's increasingly doomed to fail

Clark & Patt 11/23— [Clark, Bryan, and Dan Patt. 2023. "US Deterrence against China Is Dangerously Outdated." Foreign Policy. September 5. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/05/us-military-china-deterrence-taiwan-defense-war-east-asia-indo-pacific-strategy/>.] Joel.

[Bryan Clark is a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute and Director of the Hudson Center for Defense Concepts and Technology. Dan Patt is a Senior Fellow at the Hudson Institute.]

For more than three decades, the U.S. military's global preeminence has been the rock on which U.S. strategy and security policy are built. But technology diffusion, growing global challenges, and antiquated force design have eroded the United States' military edge against China, which could exploit its geographical proximity and advancing capabilities to win a regional war against Taiwan. Without the certainty of continued military dominance that, until now, gave Washington the ability to simply deny and suppress aggression in East Asia, U.S. leaders seeking conventional deterrence will need to devise a different strategy.

Despite the rhetoric in parts of Washington, war with China is not imminent, and an invasion of Taiwan carries many risks for the Chinese Communist Party as it faces mounting economic, demographic, and diplomatic challenges. To make an invasion unattractive for Beijing, the U.S. military may merely need to raise China's perception that any conflict would be drawn out and exceedingly costly. Instead of optimizing the U.S. military for an invasion that may never come, Washington should therefore mount a long-term campaign that undermines Beijing's confidence in a range of violent paths to realizing its ambitions in Taiwan and the region. This campaign should involve military and nonmilitary means that seek to steer China toward more responsible and peaceful paths to its foreign-policy goals.

Proponents of an unchanged strategy of deterrence through denial argue the best way to deter Beijing is to make an invasion of Taiwan infeasible by massing sufficient strike capability in the region to convince Chinese President Xi Jinping that an attack would fail. With China now operating the world's largest navy, army, rocket force, civilian fleet, and industrial base (which builds new ships and missiles at more than twice the U.S. pace), this plan has become simply unrealistic over the long term. Furthermore, some scenarios—such as a Chinese blockade, quarantine, or operation against Taiwan's smaller islands—may prove impossible to completely deny.

What denial really means under these new conditions, then, is to create uncertainty in the minds of Chinese leaders that their plans could succeed on terms acceptable to Beijing. An invasion that bogs down and drains resources like Russia's war in Ukraine or sinks China's faltering economy could quickly lose support, and any victory would be pyrrhic. However, U.S. defense planning and decision-making still focus on whether an operation succeeds or a system works on an East Asian battlefield—not whether the result is sufficient to make Xi and other Chinese leaders think twice about aggression as they consider launching it.

To gain that understanding and restore the role of strategy in defense planning, the U.S. Defense Department should begin by following its own directives. One of the 2022 National Defense Strategy's main components is the notion of campaigning, which in military doctrine describes an orchestrated series of military and nonmilitary actions designed to achieve specific objectives. But in Pentagon practice, the campaigning element of U.S. strategy has become little more than a bucket for various budget items related to military readiness that don't easily fall under the defense strategy's other headings.

A more promising strategy would focus on lowering Xi's preference for aggression in the first place, making other paths more attractive.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Rather than using campaigning as a budget justification for a motley collection of training programs, maintenance, deployments, and exercises, **the Defense Department should take its own definition of campaigning seriously—and build a strategy to reveal and eventually shape the perceptions of Chinese leaders.**

China is already engaged in its own campaign, exemplified by sustained air and maritime intrusions into Taiwan’s airspace and waters, as well as invasion rehearsals featured on WeChat. The numbers of troops, ships, aircraft, missiles, and vehicles involved fall far short of what would be needed to subdue an island of 23 million people, but the operations are not intended to test either the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) or Taiwanese forces. Instead, these events are part of a campaign to shape perceptions at home and abroad.

This is not to say the Defense Department has been idle in its broader effort to shape Chinese decision-making. In the last two years, the establishment of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) security pact, expanded military cooperation with the Philippines and Japan, and continued support for Ukraine have all undoubtedly eroded Chinese leaders’ confidence.

As we recently outlined in a Hudson Institute report, a proper strategy of campaigning would build on these initiatives. Big moves like AUKUS cannot be repeated at will or be timed to best effect, which reduces their utility as a signal. But small military actions, such as new force compositions, capabilities, tactics, postures, and allied operations, can elicit diverse and frequent signals from the way China responds; test hypotheses regarding areas of Chinese concern or confidence; and provide opportunities to shift Beijing’s beliefs.

During the Cold War, U.S. national security leaders practiced a similar approach to expose and exploit Soviet neuralgia regarding issues such as homeland missile defense and submarine vulnerability. Today, new information technologies, from open-source satellite imagery to algorithmic analysis, can empower and accelerate the process. Instead of the traditional use of technology to serve an operational plan, it would be used to build and orchestrate the campaign plan.

U.S. campaigns will need surprise to elicit useful revelations about the PLA and other Chinese security forces. Predictable actions such as freedom of navigation operations will draw formalized responses that show nothing about Chinese leaders’ real concerns or levels of confidence. However, **an unexpected multinational exercise or a new, previously experimental military capability showing up in East Asia could yield insights via the words and actions of China’s security establishment.**

A deep magazine of surprise is already available to the U.S. military, both in the field and on the shelves of the Pentagon’s laboratories, warfare centers, and agencies. New combinations of existing and emerging U.S. and allied units or systems, as well as the accompanying operational concepts, offer almost endless options for eliciting unanticipated new signals and reactions from China. The Pentagon’s Joint All-Domain Command and Control initiative was intended to enable this kind of interchangeability, but the effort has fallen short. Recent efforts by the U.S. Congress to help U.S. military commanders combine sensors, operators, and weapons from the bottom up hold more promise.

To maximize their impact on Chinese leaders’ beliefs, campaign surprises should come in two main flavors: those that undermine the PLA’s strategy of attacking perceived U.S. communications and logistics vulnerabilities and those that undermine Chinese hopes for a quick or cheap victory by demonstrating U.S. and allied readiness for a protracted conflict. **By defeating the PLA’s strategy and showing that China’s opponents are prepared for the long haul, U.S. campaigns can increase the perception in Beijing that an attack on Taiwan or a U.S. ally could become as messy, costly, and entangling as Russia’s misadventure in Ukraine.**

Washington’s current military strategy aims to prove to Xi that an invasion would be defeated in battle—a notion that presupposes continued U.S. military dominance in the region. Instead, **campaigning would focus on lowering his preference for aggression in the first place, making other paths more attractive.** This strategy of dissuasion would require U.S. leaders to accept that **China will not fade away, Xi will not give up on his goals, and U.S. military preeminence is no longer guaranteed.** **But focusing on a campaign of dissuasion may be the only path to peaceful coexistence in a world no longer dominated by the United States.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Politics: Political solutions to cross-strait relations should be preferred to military solutions— such military framing is likely to lead to war

Daniels 4/24— [Daniels, Rorry. 2024. “Should the United States Change Its Policies toward Taiwan?” Brookings. April 16. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/should-the-united-states-change-its-policies-toward-taiwan/>. Conveners: Kimball, Emilie, Patricia M Kim, Ryan Hass] Joel.

[Rorry Daniels is the Managing Director of Asia Society Policy Institute (ASPI), where she leads and oversees strategy and operations for ASPI's projects on security, climate change and trade throughout Asia. She is also a Senior Fellow with ASPI's Center for China Analysis. She was previously with the National Committee on American Foreign Policy where she managed the organization's Track II and research portfolio on Asia security issues, with a particular focus on cross-Taiwan Strait relations, U.S.-China relations, and the North Korean nuclear program. Her most recent research project audited the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue to evaluate its process and outcomes. She earned her M.S. in International Relations at NYU's Center for Global Affairs, where she focused her studies on East and South Asia. She is proficient in Mandarin and holds a B.A. in Media Studies from Emerson College.]

The United States has never had a static Taiwan policy but always ebbed and flowed with shifting dynamics between Washington, Beijing, and Taipei. After switching recognition from Taipei to Beijing in the late 1970s, U.S. policy toward Taiwan has been shaped by U.S.-China communiqués, congressional acts, and executive branch statements and codified by “transit” visits of key Taiwan leaders to the United States, a growing list of arms sales, and even sending the U.S. Navy's 7th Fleet toward the Taiwan Strait during the 1990's missile crisis. **Taiwan policy is best seen as an ongoing process underpinned by the United States' de facto neutrality— namely, the United States takes no position on the sovereignty of Taiwan but wants to see the issue resolved without the use of force or coercion.**

This political ambiguity has allowed a stable status quo in the Taiwan Strait—one of no unification, no independence, and no use of force—and enabled Taiwan to exercise considerable autonomy from Beijing despite Taipei having very few formal diplomatic allies. It has been one of the most successfully durable and flexible U.S. foreign policies in the modern era and it is still the best hope to forestall global catastrophe arising from a conflict over Taiwan.

U.S. de facto neutrality on the settlement of Taiwan's sovereignty has accomplished two things: first, it leaves open the door for the sovereignty issue to be resolved in either side's favor, therefore allowing all capitals to kick the can down the road until circumstances most favor their preferred resolution; **second** and relatedly, **it keeps Taiwan's status in the realm of a political, rather than a military, dispute.**

It remains in the U.S. interest to support Taiwan's thriving democratic system and its political autonomy from Beijing—as well as to forestall or reduce the risk of conflict in and around Taiwan. This is a difficult balance to achieve. Too much unilateral support for Taiwan increases the risk of conflict, and too little erodes Taiwan's ability to exercise autonomy.

This balance is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain as the Chinese Communist Party modernizes its military and continuously emphasizes the imperative to resolve the Taiwan issue by mid-century. The question for the United States becomes, how can it remain neutral on the overall question of Taiwan's sovereignty while still pushing back against the PRC's use of coercion and implied threat of force against Taiwan?

The more Washington leans into a preference for Taiwan independence, the more the threat of force against Taiwan increases. As the United States erodes its neutrality with policy changes, it hardens views in Beijing that there is no hope for a political settlement and that the PRC must rely on military means to achieve its Taiwan goals.

Such policy changes in recent years have been numerous. A non-exhaustive list includes:

- Language shifts in regular policy statements that replace support for an outcome acceptable to both sides of the Strait with an outcome acceptable to (only) the people of Taiwan.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

- The declassification in 2020 of the Six Assurances the United States privately provided to Taiwan in the 1980s, which declared no U.S. commitment to stop arms sales at a specific date after agreeing in the third U.S.-China communique to reduce such sales.
- **Sloppy references to Taiwan as a “country” in national security policy documents and State Department fact sheets.**
- **Deletion and reinsertion of language on the State Department website on not supporting Taiwan’s independence.**
- The liberalization of the State Department’s Taiwan guidelines governing how officials engage in the unofficial relationship, including allowing officials from both sides to meet at government buildings.
- **Very high-level political visits to Taipei, such as that of former U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, who was third in the presidential line of succession at the time of the trip.**

Supporters of the above policy moves tend to put military competition above all other considerations and see the political support as a necessary deterrence strategy. However, **recasting Taiwan as a military problem with political dimensions, rather than a political problem with military dimensions, is a major mistake. It undermines all sides’ ability to handle the sovereignty issue, creating a path dependence toward conflict, by devaluing the effects of political maneuvering and changes.**

A security dilemma has developed in the Taiwan Strait in which all sides see their own actions as defensive or deterrent in nature and see the other side’s actions as aggressive enough to warrant a response. Beijing builds up its military capabilities in ways it sees as preparatory defense against a Taiwan declaration of independence, Washington interprets the capabilities as intent to attack Taiwan and strengthens its support for Taipei in ways it sees as necessary defense (including the policy changes referenced above), Beijing reacts to those actions with its own “defensive measures,” and the cycle continues.

This cycle moves ever closer to the fundamental red lines on all sides: the PRC’s red line on independence and permanent separation, Taiwan’s red line on coerced or forced unification, and the U.S. red line on the outbreak of conflict. And the closer the three sides get to crossing each other’s red lines, the more likely that a single action sparks an uncontrollable escalation of conflict—one that is not in the national interests or the public appetite of Taiwan, the United States, and presumably even China.

Pushback is necessary but **using U.S. force as a blunt instrument to confront the PRC’s military threat or use of coercion does little to support U.S. and Taiwan interests in peace and stability across the Strait. The optimal approach is not to attempt to meet these threats on Taiwan’s behalf through U.S. guarantees of military support or political showmanship but to help Taiwan prosper under threat by materially supporting Taiwan’s economic and social linkages around the world. In other words, the best defense is to diffuse the power of the threat by complicating the stakes of the conflict.**

Successfully supporting Taiwan’s prosperity under threat includes using Taiwan’s economic autonomy to strengthen its resilience and to network its industries with partnerships around the world. Taiwan faces unique challenges as an island economy, particularly as one that has eschewed nuclear power in the wake of the Fukushima disaster. Helping Taiwan through international partnerships with its land, water, and power resilience will further embed other economies in the risk of cross-Strait conflict, raise international awareness about the PRC threat to Taiwan, buy the United States time to explore policy options in the event of a blockade, and prove that democracies can work together to manage shared challenges.

The more uncertain the conflict environment, the less confident Beijing will feel in launching a successful attack. The Taiwan issue’s importance for Beijing’s domestic political legitimacy is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it pushes Beijing toward policy responses, including threats of force or the use of coercion, to

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

bolster and self-justify its position on Taiwan's sovereignty. But on the other hand, no Chinese leader can risk a failed attempt to settle the sovereignty issue once and for all. Even a more risk-tolerant Xi Jinping is unlikely to shoot for the moon by launching an attack on Taiwan that is not guaranteed to succeed.

In short, the more international attention and support for stability across the Taiwan Strait, due to deepening linkages between today's Taiwan and the international community, the higher the cost to China for breaking the peace.

This approach may not be satisfying to those who see the Taiwan issue as a mere facet of the U.S.-China great game, or whose exclusive interest is American military advantage. But it does support U.S. interests in regional peace and prosperity, as well as what polls show the majority of Taiwan people want—a durable status quo, officials who can solve economic problems at home, and the continuation of Taiwan's autonomy and dignity as a self-organized and self-governing body politic.

Self Defense - Sea Mines: Sea Mines could help prevent a successful invasion—especially when combined with drones, anti-ship missiles, and torpedoes

Dorsey, Grieco & Kavanagh 3/24— [Dorsey, Jonathan. 2024. "Delay, Disrupt, Degrade: Mine Warfare in Taiwan's Porcupine Defense - War on the Rocks." War on the Rocks. March 21. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/03/delay-disrupt-degrade-mine-warfare-in-taiwans-porcupine-defense/>.] Joel.

Commander Dorsey graduated with merit from the U.S. Naval Academy in 2004 and in 2013 earned an Executive Master of Business Administration from Naval Postgraduate School. He was designated a Naval Aviator in July 2006 has accumulated 3,000 flight hours flying the SH-60F, HH-60H, and MH-60S helicopters and proudly deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Inherent Resolve, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, and Operation Allies Refuge, serving with the finest Sailors in the Fleet.

Kelly A. Grieco is a Senior Fellow with the Reimagining US Grand Strategy Program at the Stimson Center. She has held fellowships from the MIT Center for International Studies, the Smith Richardson Foundation, and the Tobin Project, and participated in the German Marshall Fund's Young Strategists Forum. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she was an affiliate of the Security Studies Program.

Jennifer Kavanagh was a senior fellow in the American Statecraft Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. A political scientist by training, she has spent her career studying national security threats and their consequences for U.S. foreign policy and defense strategy. Kavanagh received an AB in government from Harvard University and a PhD in political science and public policy from the University of Michigan.]

Protective mining operations would allow Taiwan to deny a Chinese *fait accompli* through three primary mechanisms: delaying the amphibious assault, disrupting the attacker's plans, and degrading the advancing forces.

Operations to Delay: For Taiwan, delaying the arrival of the People's Liberation Army on its shores with the use of naval mines would give its forces additional time to organize a defense and require China to divert significant resources to costly and personnel-intensive minesweeping operations.

Taiwanese mines — or suspected mines — would provide one of the “outer layers” of a defense in depth, requiring the People's Liberation Army to fight its way past each layer. By combining different types of mines, employed at different water depths and varied distances from shore, Taiwan could create a multifaceted and hard-to-solve problem for China. The People's Liberation Army Navy would have to deploy assets to neutralize the mines or find alternate routes, both time-consuming processes. With many types of mines, China's minesweepers would need to employ different types of countermeasures, multiplying the time required to clear or neutralize the threat. For example, Taiwan could employ bottom mines and a series of moored influence and moored contact mines to create a vertical “curtain” — varying both threat types and depths of placement to make it especially difficult for China to sweep the area.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Minefield density could also be leveraged as a tool to protract timelines. China has about 60 mine countermeasures ships, but not all vessels are able to clear all types of mines. Estimating based on historical averages and assuming that a third are not operationally ready due to maintenance, each of China's 40 available minesweepers might clear 0.8 to 2 mines per day, for a total of 32 to 80 mines. **Creating a Q-route**, or cleared passageway, typically requires removing 10 percent of a minefield. Doing so **through even a small minefield of 600 mines**, therefore, **could delay Chinese forces at least 0.75 to 1.8 days, and possibly longer if mines are laid close together.** Large numbers of decoy mines, intermixed with real ones, could also be a cheap way for Taiwan to increase the time and effort required for Chinese mine clearance operations. Taiwan could cause further delays by targeting the minesweepers, which work in predictable patterns, with anti-ship missiles and loitering munitions.

North Korea's mining of Wonsan Harbor in 1950 offers a model. After landing at Inchon on Sept. 15, Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the commander-in-chief of U.N. forces, ordered an amphibious assault on Wonsan to encircle enemy forces retreating from the south. With "mines too numerous to count" blocking the assault path to the beach, the U.S. Navy began a complex sweeping operation, resulting in the loss of four ships and a delayed start to the amphibious attack. "Those damn mines cost us eight days' delay in getting troops ashore," Adm. Forrest Sherman concluded, warning, "I can all too-easy think of circumstances when eight days' delay offshore could mean losing a war."

Operations to Disrupt: **Mine warfare also offers Taiwan a low-cost way to interfere with China's military plans, increasing the risk of operational failure.** Any military operation — and especially one as complex as an amphibious invasion — is meticulously planned and choreographed ahead of time, but the People's Liberation Army's preference for highly scripted operations leaves it particularly vulnerable to disruptions and inhibits the battlefield adaptation needed for success.

First, **protective mining would deny China one of the attacker's main operational advantages — the element of surprise.** Chinese mine-clearing efforts would be easily detected. China likely lacks sufficient minesweeping capabilities to conduct multiple feints, making the location of Chinese clearing efforts one of the most reliable indicators of Chinese operational intentions. **This early warning would allow Taiwan's defenders to reinforce the one or two beaches where Chinese forces are sweeping the waters for mines.**

Second, **mines will impede the movement of advancing forces and upset even the best-laid plans.** Mines provide a concealed threat, lurking below the surface, ready to strike. A ship damaged by an uncleared mine creates a collision risk for advancing ships, forcing the formation to redirect its route — a challenge exacerbated by the narrowness of Taiwan's beaches and the approaches to them — and diverting other assets to support rescue efforts. **Remote mines that can be activated at a time of Taiwan's choosing could be especially effective for disruption operations, targeting vessels at key places within the invasion fleet's formation.** As other ships work to clear the obstruction and address the threat, the attention of the fleet is distracted from its primary mission. It can also trigger a cascading effect, leaving ships out of sync with the pre-planned movements of the amphibious assault.

The threat of sea mines can even be enough to halt an entire operation — the ultimate disruption. During the Great Retreat of the Russian army in World War I, Russian sea mines, supported by artillery and a naval squadron, were sufficiently dangerous to cause the Germans to end a naval operation threatening the Russian army's seaward flank. "Operation against Gulf of Riga broken off in view of the presence of very powerful minefields, one following another," the German commander reported. His minesweepers later managed to clear a passage through the mines and enter the gulf, but after spotting a floating mine he ordered the fleet to retire for the night. When the German ships returned the next day, they discovered the Russians had used that time to seed new minefields. The Germans called off the attack and withdrew.

Operations to Degrade: **Finally, naval mines can degrade China's capabilities to invade Taiwan, damaging or sinking Chinese ships, inflicting significant physical and psychological attrition to its invasion forces, and helping to offset an unfavorable balance of forces.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Mines can contribute to the degradation of Chinese forces in two main ways. First, they can inflict direct damage on Chinese vessels and landing forces approaching Taiwan's beaches. Since World War II, for example, 15 U.S. Navy ships have been sunk or damaged by mines, amounting to about four times the losses of all other threats combined. **Second, mines can indirectly contribute to damage by leading adversary forces into shallow and rocky waters and shaping the littoral environment. Taiwanese minefields arranged in strategic locations or patterns — for example staggered in tiers or overlapping bunches — could create barriers that, together with Taiwan's inhospitable geography, channel the People's Liberation Army into kill zones, allowing Taiwan's anti-ship missiles, torpedoes, gun batteries, and drones to multiply their destructive effects and attrit China's invasion forces.**

Self-defense - Artificial Reefs: Artificial concrete reefs would provide a cheap, no-maintenance layer of protection to the Taiwanese coast, with multiple benefits for defending the island and beyond

Savitz 5/23— [Savitz, Scott. 2023. "Waiting to Impale: Defending Taiwan with Artificial Reefs." Rand.org. RealClearDefense. May 10. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2023/05/waiting-to-impale-defending-taiwan-with-artificial.html>.] Joel.

[Scott Savitz is a senior engineer at RAND. Much of his research focuses on how to improve the effectiveness and resilience of operational forces through the use of new technologies and modified tactics. He has developed numerous models and simulations in support of such analyses. Savitz earned his bachelor's degree in chemical engineering from Yale University, and master's degree and Ph.D. in the same field from the University of Pennsylvania.]

If China is to conquer the island, it needs to be able to rapidly move vast quantities of personnel and equipment across a 100-mile strait and onto the island itself, despite opposition from Taiwanese and perhaps American forces. This requires a seaborne invasion, since the required mass of materiel greatly exceeds what could be delivered by air. Moreover, the armada will be restricted to only a few potential landing sites with appropriate water depths for ships and landing craft, as well as vehicle-accessible routes for ground forces to exit the landing area.

Taiwan can target incoming Chinese forces using an array of systems, such as missiles, bombs, naval mines, explosive uncrewed surface vessels, and artillery. However, even physical barriers without explosive payloads can effectively complement these weapons. Emplacing artificial reefs near potential landing beaches could help to deter or defeat a Chinese invasion while also providing environmental and economic benefits, all at extremely low cost. Ships and/or landing craft that tried to operate in those areas would run aground or even impale themselves on reefs, rendering themselves ineffective, stationary targets. They would also clutter a crowded operating area, impeding the movements of other ships and landing craft. Anticipating this damage and disruption, China would be less tempted to attempt an amphibious assault.

This is not a new idea. When Athenian forces invaded Sicily 2,400 years ago, the defenders of Syracuse implanted underwater stakes in their harbor to impale and ground Athenian vessels. These pre-explosive equivalents of naval mines played a supporting role in the catastrophic defeat of Athens, culminating in the death or capture of nearly the entire invasion force.

More recently, ships running aground on reefs have been immobilized and experienced large-scale damage. The USS *Guardian* had to be dismantled after it ran aground on a Philippine reef in 2013, and a U.S. Military Sealift Command vessel was stuck on a reef near Okinawa for over a week in 2015. Just in the last year, two large cargo ships have run aground on reefs—one in Jordanian waters in September 2022, and another east of Belize in March 2023. All of these incidents took place in well-charted waters in peacetime, whereas ships and landing craft operating under fire in waters where they had never been before would likely be more prone to risk. Even if a ship can eventually free itself from a reef, the initial impact can damage equipment both on the hull and inside the ship, particularly if saltwater is able to intrude.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

China could try to bombard the reefs in an effort to diminish the hazard they pose to the invasion forces. However, bombardment would likely result in chunks of reef being displaced from one place to another, creating new hazards in unknown locations. Any unexploded ordnance would also pose a risk to the Chinese vessels moving through it. In addition, bombardment of the reefs would reveal the intended landing site. **If China tried to avoid tipping its hand by bombarding reefs in a range of locations, this would divert substantial airpower and missiles from other targets, including Taiwan's military forces,** during the critical opening days of the conflict.

Reefs could even have military benefits well before a conflict, as Chinese forces sought information about the physical environment. Chinese scouting of the approaches to the landing site using uncrewed undersea vehicles (UUVs) or low-profile uncrewed surface vessels (USVs) would be inhibited by reefs and the sea life that they support, particularly entangling plants. Making the environment more complex with reefs would necessitate more Chinese scouting, while also requiring that uncrewed vehicles have advanced autonomy to avoid collisions and groundings. UUVs and USVs that became stuck in the reefs would provide valuable intelligence regarding Chinese technologies and intentions.

Compared with the costs of military hardware, artificial reefs are inexpensive. Pyramid-shaped or spherical concrete reef substrates can cost just a few thousand dollars; dozens of them could be purchased and emplaced for less than it costs to operate a single fighter jet for an hour. They can last for decades or longer, with no maintenance costs whatsoever. Ancillary environmental benefits include providing habitats for various creatures, some of which attach themselves to the reef, expanding its size and impact. Reefs also reduce coastal erosion and vulnerability to storms by dampening extreme waves. For this reason, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency is investigating the use of artificial reefs to help protect coastal military bases from rising, increasingly intense seas. **Artificial reefs can also serve as attractions for divers and recreational fishing boats, stimulating local economies.**

Overall, **building artificial reefs near potential Taiwanese landing beaches could provide an array of benefits at a very low cost. These physical barriers would complicate China's intelligence preparation of the battlespace, then severely impede an actual invasion.** Attempts to bombard the reefs on the eve of an invasion would cost orders of magnitude more than the reefs themselves, whether China used missiles or aircraft with guided munitions. More importantly, bombardment of the reefs would divert precious Chinese assets at a critical time, and the reefs would retain much of their ability to stymie the attackers. Chinese decisionmakers would know all this in advance, diminishing their ardor for aggression. In short, artificial reefs could help to deter China simply by waiting to impale any potential invasion force.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

US Military Buildup - Drones: swarms of robot drones could effectively prevent China from taking Taiwan

Rogin 6/24— [Rogin, Josh. 2024. “The U.S. Military Plans a ‘Hellscape’ to Deter China from Attacking Taiwan.” Washington Post. The Washington Post. June 10. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2024/06/10/taiwan-china-hellscape-military-plan/>.] Joel.

[Josh Rogin is a columnist for the Global Opinions section of the Washington Post and a political analyst with CNN. He is also the author of *Chaos Under Heaven: Trump, Xi, and the Battle for the 21st Century*, released March, 2021 by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Previously, Josh has covered foreign policy and national security for Bloomberg View, Newsweek, The Daily Beast, Foreign Policy magazine, Congressional Quarterly, Federal Computer Week magazine, and Japan’s Asahi Shimbun. His work has been featured on outlets including NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, MSNBC, NPR, and many more.]

President Xi Jinping has called on China’s People’s Liberation Army to be ready to take Taiwan by force by 2027. **The United States, together with regional partners, must ensure a Chinese invasion can’t succeed. That plan hinges on quickly building and deploying thousands of new drones that would swarm the Taiwan Strait and keep China’s military busy until more help can arrive, according to the top U.S. military official in the Pacific.** But time is running out to turn these plans into a reality.

Under its long-standing policy of “strategic ambiguity,” the United States has never committed to coming to Taiwan’s defense if China attacks. President Biden has repeatedly said he would send the U.S. military to defend Taiwan, although he added a new caveat in his latest interview with Time, saying, “It would depend on the circumstances.” President Donald Trump seems less likely to intervene on Taiwan’s behalf, having told a GOP senator while in office that if China attacks, “there isn’t a f----- thing we can do about it.”

For any U.S. president, to send American men and women to defend a small democracy on the other side of the world would be a very tough call. That’s why Plan A is to deter Xi from ever attempting an invasion, by making sure that he never looks across the Taiwan Strait and sees an easy victory, Adm. Samuel Paparo, the new head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, told me in an interview.

“They want to offer the world a short, sharp war so that it is a *fait accompli* before the world can get their act together,” Paparo told me on the sidelines of the annual Shangri-La Dialogue, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies. “My job is to ensure that between now and 2027 and beyond, the U.S. military and the allies are capable of prevailing.”

China’s likely strategy is to overwhelm Taiwan with a massive attack with little warning, Paparo said. Xi doesn’t want to repeat Russian President Vladimir Putin’s mistake in Ukraine in 2022, when Russia’s initial full-scale invasion failed and devolved into a long war of attrition.

The key to thwarting Xi’s assumed strategy is a U.S. strategy called “Hellscape,” Paparo told me. **The idea is that as soon as China’s invasion fleet begins moving across the 100-mile waterway that separates China and Taiwan, the U.S. military would deploy thousands of unmanned submarines, unmanned surface ships and aerial drones to flood the area** and give Taiwanese, U.S. and partner forces time to mount a full response.

“I want to turn the Taiwan Strait into an unmanned hellscape using a number of classified capabilities,” Paparo said. “So that I can make their lives utterly miserable for a month, which buys me the time for the rest of everything.”

“I can’t tell you what’s in it,” he replied when pressed about details. “But it’s real and it’s deliverable.”

There are some public signs the Hellscape plan is making progress. In March, the Defense Department announced it would spend \$1 billion on a program called “Replicator” to build swarms of unmanned surface ships and aerial drones for this very mission. Paparo said the Replicator program shows that the United States is also learning lessons from the Russia-Ukraine war, where Ukraine has innovated with drone technology.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Grand Bargain: The US should agree to end military support of Taiwan in exchange for large concessions from China

Glaser 15— [“A U.S.-China Grand Bargain? The Hard Choice between Military Competition and Accommodation.” 2015. The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/us-china-grand-bargain-hard-choice-between-military-competition-and-accommodation.>] Joel.

[Charles L. Glaser is Professor of Political Science and International Affairs. His research focuses on international relations theory and international security policy. He is also Director for the Institute of Security and Conflict Studies. Professor Glaser holds a Ph.D. from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. He received a B.S. in Physics from MIT, and an M.A. in Physics and an M.P.P. from Harvard. Before joining the George Washington University, Professor Glaser was the Emmett Dedmon Professor of Public Policy and Deputy Dean at the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago. He has also taught political science at the University of Michigan, was a visiting fellow at the Center for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford, served on the Joint Staff in the Pentagon, was a peace fellow at the United States Institute of Peace, and was a research associate at the Center of International Studies at MIT.]

Despite the intense focus on China's rise, the United States has yet to confront the most challenging question posed by this power shift: Should it pursue a strategy of limited geopolitical accommodation to avoid conflict? U.S. policy continues to focus almost entirely on preserving the geopolitical status quo in Northeast Asia. Given the shifting power balance in Asia, however, there are strong theoretical rationales for considering whether significant changes to the status quo could increase U.S. security. **A possibility designed to provide the benefits of accommodation while reducing its risks is a grand bargain in which the United States ends its commitment to defend Taiwan and, in turn, China peacefully resolves its maritime disputes in the South China and East China Seas and officially accepts the United States' long-term military security role in East Asia.** In broad terms, the United States has three other options—unilateral accommodation, a concert of Asian powers, and the current U.S. rebalance to Asia. Unilateral accommodation and the rebalance have advantages that make the choice a close call, but all things considered, **a grand bargain is currently the United States' best bet.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Public Support

American public support for deploying troops to defend Taiwan has declined since its peak in 2021, likely due to war fatigue and the impact of the Ukraine conflict

Hsiao 23 - [Hsiao, Russell. “Recent Trendlines in American Public Opinion on the Defense of Taiwan.” Global Taiwan Institute. November 1, 2023. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2023/11/recent-trendlines-in-american-public-opinion-on-the-defense-of-taiwan/>.] Elene.

[Russell Hsiao is the executive director of the Global Taiwan Institute and the editor-in-chief of the Global Taiwan Brief.]

Since Joseph Biden began his presidency in January 2021, the 46th president of the United States has stated on four occasions that he would come to Taiwan’s defense if Chinese Communist Party (CCP, 中國共產黨) General Secretary Xi Jinping (習近平) ordered the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) to invade the island. Amid growing concerns about China’s increasingly “acute” military threats to Taiwan—coupled with the geopolitical turmoil caused by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and renewed kinetic conflict in the Middle East—Biden’s incremental clarity on the US commitment to Taiwan’s defense underscored the need for stronger assurances, both for deterrence and in response to intensifying People’s Republic of China (PRC) coercion of Taiwan. Yet, as China’s military threats against Taiwan have become ever more severe over the last decade—especially since August 2022—and as the possibility of war in East Asia looms on the horizon for many senior defense planners, a crucial question must be asked: what does the American public think about coming to the defense of Taiwan against the PRC?

While the views of US leaders are routinely expressed and parsed from policy statements and official pronouncements, the sentiments of the American public are less readily observable, generalizable, and therefore less well-understood within the broader policy discourse. To address this issue, the US-based think tank Chicago Council on Global Affairs (hereafter “Chicago Council”) provides an invaluable contribution by conducting the most consistent and rigorous opinion polls in the public domain that cover the views of the American public on pressing international issues—including their views on Taiwan and US policy on Taiwan’s defense. This and other opinion polls provide important gauges of how Americans think about the potential for military conflict over Taiwan, and their views on US responses. In the last several years, as the possibility of a potential military conflict over Taiwan has become more pronounced, the Chicago Council—alongside other independent survey-takers—have conducted and released more opinion polls on the subject. This article will provide a cursory summary of these survey results, particularly as it relates to US support for the use of the troops.

In the polls conducted by the Chicago Council—which the organization has been conducting since 1982—**there was a noticeable and significant increase in the number of Americans who support the use of troops if China invaded Taiwan, rising from 35 percent in 2018 to a historic high of 52 percent in 2021—versus just 19 percent in 1982.** This sharp increase tracks with the noteworthy improvement in bilateral relations between the United States and Taiwan in recent years, with American favorability ratings of Taiwan hitting record highs. However, **another poll conducted a year later in 2022 showed a sharp drop in support for committing troops to the defense of Taiwan, plummeting from 52 percent to 44 percent.** A further decline was observed in a separate Reuters poll in 2023, with only 38 percent expressing support. What then could account for the sharp increase and subsequent decrease in support for the use of troops to defend Taiwan?

Nocember 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

One plausible interpretation is that the March-July 2021 spike in support for the deployment of US troops in Taiwan’s defense was in fact an anomaly in the historic trendline. This momentary surge may have been the result of residual US appreciation of Taiwan’s support during the COVID-19 pandemic, coupled with widespread animosity toward China for its heavy-handed response to the virus. Indeed, the drop back to around 44 percent in 2022 was more likely a return to the pre-pandemic average and is more consistent with historic rates.

Furthermore, the subsequent drop may be further attributable to the outbreak of war in Ukraine in February 2022. The Russian invasion sparked heated—and ongoing—debates over the United States’ readiness to respond to the “pacing challenge” of China’s rise as a result of the diversion of finite resources to Ukraine and more broadly about America’s military footprint in the world. The proximate drop in support corresponds to the beginning of the Ukraine War, and there appears to be a correlation between the two. This may be attributable to a rising feeling of war fatigue in the United States, which was amplified by the 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan. **With kinetic military conflict reigniting in the Middle East, it remains unclear how public support for the defense of Taiwan will shift in the coming months. However, it is worth bearing in mind that correlation is not the same as causation.**

Nevertheless, another Chicago Council survey released recently in October 2023 provided support for the notion that the war in Ukraine has contributed to declining US support for militarily intervening in Taiwan’s defense. Specifically, the poll “finds evidence that US involvement in the war between Russia and Ukraine has played a role in American attitudes on foreign policy, from dampening public support for defending US allies and maintaining US military bases abroad to continued financial and military assistance to Kyiv.” It thus stands to reason that the ongoing war in Ukraine has had a measurable impact on American support for Taiwan, and is likely dampening the American public’s willingness to commit troops to come to Taiwan’s defense. However, the reasons for such views are not precisely clear.

It is perhaps worth pointing out that debates continue to rage within the US Congress about whether supporting Ukraine is a vital US interest, with some arguing that doing so serves as an unnecessary drain on resources. This divergence in opinion suggests that overall opinion toward US foreign policy is far from monolithic. Such diversity of thought could have significant impacts on public support for Taiwan’s defense.

Despite the overall downward pressure on US public support for committing troops to a war over Taiwan—among both Republicans and Democrats—a silver lining for the island is that support for the use of troops to defend Taiwan when use of force is the only option remains exceedingly high among Republican leaders at 73 percent. While support for Taiwan remains strongly bipartisan, it is also true that the issue has traditionally received stronger support from Republicans due to its GOP’s conservative base, which is staunchly anti-communist and supportive of democracies based on ideological grounds.

Despite this traditional Republican position, polls have increasingly found a distinctive generational difference in support for defending Taiwan. Notably, a survey conducted by Morning Consult in 2022 showed that Republican-leaning respondents under 50 are equally supportive (42 percent) and opposed (42 percent) to the statement that it would be in the US interest to defend Taiwan against China, whereas there are significantly more Democratic-leaning respondents from the same age group who are supportive (47 percent) than opposed (22 percent) to the statement. Moreover, according to the same Morning Consult poll, members of Generation Z (those born between 1997 and 2012) were most supportive of sending US troops to Taiwan, with 37 percent expressing support and 35 percent expressing disapproval. All other generations were more opposed than supportive.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

According to one American political observer, the shift in younger Republicans' views on foreign affairs is emblematic of a broader trend. Indeed, “[t]his isn’t just about views on Ukraine. In fact Ukraine may be one of the areas where there’s the least generational divide on the Right. It is about a general shift in young voter views away from supporting an assertive (or muscular, choose your preferred adjective) foreign policy in general.”

With hindsight, the 2021 Chicago Council poll, which saw a historic high in US public support for the use of troops to defend Taiwan, was likely more an aberration than a new baseline. However, against the backdrop of China’s increasing aggression against Taiwan and growing unfavorable views toward China within the United States and across the world, support for Taiwan remains substantial, especially when compared to the paltry 19 percent who supported involvement in 1982.

It is important to note that there is still bipartisan support among policy elites for Ukraine. However, even though the mainstream of the Republican Party remains generally in support of Ukraine, there are still strong populist currents within the Party—and in the American public in general—who view Ukraine as a distraction from the strategic competition with China or a symptom of the United States’ general over-commitment internationally. It bears watching whether these dynamics will shape the policy deliberations within the party over its position on other foreign policy issues.

While Taipei should feel reassured by President Biden’s statements, they cannot and should never be taken as a given, and certainly not in unqualified terms. Biden’s clear statements concerning his commitment to come to Taiwan’s defense do not have the legal force of a defense treaty—and even a treaty is not itself unconditional. The key has always been whether—absent a defense treaty—there is a sufficient level of clarity necessary to satisfy a minimum threshold of reciprocal commitments to establish a division of labor between the United States, Taiwan, and other potential allies.

As always, **American public support will be an important factor. As Bonnie Glaser, a China analyst at the German Marshall Fund, wrote, “public support for Taiwan’s defense [...] is also critical. It demonstrates a robust commitment to overseas partners, which in turn serves to bolster peace and stability in the region.”**

At this point, it is too early to say whether American public opinion is at a tipping point. But this much is increasingly clear: there appears to be a degree of fatigue in US public opinion over Ukraine settling in, which could in turn exert a dampening effect on support for Taiwan. Whether this trend continues will also depend on the course that the war in Ukraine takes over the coming months and years.

While the apparent downward pressure exerted on American public support—especially among Republicans—for the deployment of troops to defend Taiwan should be worrisome for Taipei, the Chicago Council survey from October 2023 ends with an important caveat: “[T]he data show that Republicans who want to stay out of world affairs do not differ so much from those who prefer active engagement when it comes to issues such as the rise of China or immigration policy.

Given recent trends in both public and private exchanges between the United States and Taiwan, there should be no doubt that Taiwan remains a “top concern” for all Americans.

The main point: **As several recent polls have shown, US public support for committing troops to Taiwan’s defense has declined significantly since its 2021 peak, potentially as a result of rising war fatigue and the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, Taiwan continues to enjoy strong bipartisan support, suggesting that the island remains a major priority for many Americans.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Russia-Sino Relations

US support for Taiwan could encourage Russia to strengthen its ties with China

Yanovsky 24 - [Yanovsky, Oleg. "For Russia, US Aid to Taiwan Is More Concerning than \$61 Billion to Ukraine." n.d. Thediplomat.com. <https://thediplomat.com/2024/04/for-russia-us-aid-to-taiwan-is-more-concerning-than-61-billion-to-ukraine/>.] Elene.

[Oleg Yanovsky is a lecturer at MGIMO, Russia's leading foreign affairs and diplomacy university, at the faculty of political theory.]

The United States made a major move on April 24. When U.S. President Joe Biden signed a military aid bill into law, it provided \$95 billion in war aid to U.S. partners – \$61 billion to Ukraine, \$26 billion to Israel, and \$8 billion to Taiwan and other Indo-Pacific countries. Amid clamoring for air defense and a steady Russian advance, Ukraine naturally received the largest allocation. Israel's share is understandable too, given the ongoing conflict, but the Taiwan money is the real escalation – at least from a Russian perspective.

Western media raced to highlight Russian frustration with the Ukraine aid. The BBC covered Russian mainstream media, while Bloomberg discussed disgruntled official responses. However, for Moscow and its partners in Asia, the United States' commitment to Taiwan meant much more. The additional weapons to Ukraine pale in comparison to the \$278-billion treasure chest already handed over by the West.

The Kremlin thinks the latest round of U.S. aid will give Ukraine limited respite but will not change the larger trend. As Ukraine enacts the most draconian mobilization law in its history, the Russian army is 15 percent larger than it was before the conflict. So, Moscow sees the latest round of supplies as a sign of desperation that will be a tactical inconvenience – but not a strategic danger.

The Israel aid, too, will buttress the country but given the pressure it is under, may not be sufficient for a strategic turnaround. Rather, the extra \$26 billion in the current circumstances is a maintenance cost not out of pattern with the cadence of peacetime support at \$3.3 billion per year.

Taiwan is the real gamechanger. The \$8 billion package – directed at Taiwan as well as other U.S. partners in the Indo-Pacific – will have major effects that will require a concerted effort from Moscow to shore up its interests. The Indo-Pacific region is Russia's rear and a priority destination for commerce as well as diplomacy. So, it cannot be underestimated.

First, the military aid shows that the West's full-scale shuttle diplomacy to Beijing is not changing the bottom line of fraying ties. No red carpet was rolled out for U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on his recent visit. Beijing does not have a track record of responding to threats, and despite "stern warnings" China rebuffed Blinken's warnings not to trade with Russia.

Off-ramps with Beijing are being cut. Before the presidential election in Taiwan, China (and Russia) could hope that the Kuomintang (KMT) would emerge victorious and embark on a rapprochement with Beijing. Instead, the victory of Vice President Lai Ching-te ensured Taiwan will stay the course. Now, emboldened by direct aid, the tightening Japan-U.S. alliance and its focus on the Taiwan Strait, and encouraging statements from the U.K., Taiwan is continuing to de-Sinicize by cutting down statues of former President Chiang Kai-shek as it drifts West.

For Russia, this means Beijing is less likely to bend to Western pressure, given that its critical interests are now threatened with no short-term solution – a consequential effect indeed.

Second, the latest installment of HIMARS and F16s will be oil to the fire of the trend toward regional blocs. **The provision of powerful U.S. weapons reasserts strategic commitments, invigorating local allies.** In this way, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, for instance, feels safe to push China on the South China Sea, tearing up a Duterte era "gentlemen's agreement." That marks a significant shift from Marcos' 2023 words of not wanting to be in a new Cold War.

Third, the importance of the \$8 billion really crystallizes when it is considered in context. Amid the tightening of the Five Eyes, a Korea-U.S. shipbuilding entente, speculations about NATO involvement in the region, and the

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

all-important AUKUS Pillar 2 (focusing on hypersonic technology), the latest aid really is an accelerant as it projects force onto China now – and in the hypothetical future.

Regional non-alignment is crucial for Russia. Southeast Asia is a foreign policy priority for tech supply chains and critical as an interlocutor with the West on commodities including oil. Yet, countries will find it tough to stay neutral as militarization takes hold.

The crux of the matter is that pre-April Southeast Asia was a region of competition, loose groupings, and trade. Now, Moscow sees a threat of an unpredictable escalatory spiral with alarming lucidity. An arms and tech race as well as intensifying blocification are unwanted processes for Moscow.

Unsurprisingly, Moscow will see the need to deepen the partnership with China, which is likely to be announced during President Vladimir Putin's upcoming meeting with Xi. Preliminary statements are already being made by defense officials.

Thus, Russia will have another military theater to think about in its rear, which takes precedence over what Moscow believes to be a manageable situation in Ukraine. Contrary to popular belief, the new U.S. aid package to Ukraine is of less concern than the emerging bloc confrontation to Russia's east.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Taiwan's Significance

The United States should reduce military support for Taiwan because its strategic significance does not justify the risk of war with China

Ashford & Kroenig 21 – [Ashford, Emma & Kroenig, Matthew. “Is Defending Taiwan Worth the Risk?” Foreign Policy. October 8, 2021. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/10/08/taiwan-china-incursions-us-military-war/>] Elene.

[Emma Ashford is a columnist at Foreign Policy and a senior fellow with the Reimagining U.S. Grand Strategy program at the Stimson Center, and Matthew Kroenig, a columnist at Foreign Policy and vice president and senior director of the Atlantic Council's Scowcroft Center for Strategy and Security.]

MK: China's threats against Taiwan are not a reaction to the United States; they are an outgrowth of the long-standing desire of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to take control of the island by force if necessary. I agree that an invasion is not likely tomorrow, but China's recent aggression is still concerning, and it advances several of China's revisionist goals. At the strategic level, it may help create the impression globally that Taiwan is indefensible and that China already has military dominance over the island and the region. It is useful training for Chinese pilots for a future conflict and helps them probe and plan for Taiwan's likely air defense response. And it puts a lot of stress on Taiwan's small air force, as its leaders need to scramble aircraft to intercept the incoming Chinese jets.

EA: That's pretty accurate. China has a really strong interest in persuading the public in Taiwan to reunify with the mainland peacefully, and this kind of activity might help it do that. It might also be signaling to the United States to withdraw those troops.

But let's take a step back here and talk about the broader question. The Biden administration has obviously expressed diplomatic concern about these flights. But when it comes to the actual defense of Taiwan, things are a lot less clear. Since the 1970s, the United States has maintained ambiguity on the question of Taiwan's independence and acknowledged that Taiwan is a part of China. The big question currently ratcheting around Washington is whether to change that position and make a clearer commitment to Taiwan's defense. Even training Taiwanese forces is a step in that direction and could be a sign that the U.S. government is considering abrogating its commitments under the 1982 U.S.-China communique on Taiwan. Do you have an opinion?

MK: Aren't we paid the big bucks to have an opinion in this column?

EA: If I wanted big bucks, I wouldn't have gone into policy work.

MK: Fair enough. I'll offer an opinion despite the modest compensation. I think it does make sense for the United States (and Washington's allies and partners) to make a clearer commitment to defend Taiwan and for Taipei and Washington to invest in the right military capabilities (like anti-ship missiles) to deter and if necessary deny any Chinese invasion of the island.

The clearest path to a war over Taiwan in my view would come if CCP leaders miscalculate; they might assume that they can get away with a successful takeover of the island, when, in fact, they cannot. So by clarifying the U.S. commitment, Washington would be doing Beijing a service—President Joe Biden would be helping them not to miscalculate.

But I suspect you're not ready to sign up to fight for Taiwan?

Taiwan's strategic significance to the United States is not even remotely enough to risk a war with China.

There are countries in Asia—Japan and South Korea, for example—that are important enough for the United States to commit to defend. But **in the case of Taiwan, the imbalance in interests and capabilities is just too high.** China views Taiwan as a historic part of China; reunification has been a core demand of the CCP government for its whole existence. **Taiwan is 100 miles offshore the Chinese mainland. Meanwhile, it's 7,000 miles away from the United States, whose population is at best ambivalent about defending it. So, no, the United States shouldn't commit to going to war to defend Taiwan.**

MK: The CCP's view that any territory ever controlled by Beijing needs to be reincorporated into China is aggressive and unreasonable. Washington doesn't go around saying it must take back the Philippines.

EA: No, but Americans did conquer most of a continent, slaughter the native inhabitants, and then fight the neighboring states for more land. You should ask Mexico how it feels about the United States' historical claims to territory!

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Obviously, though, that doesn't justify what China is trying to do in Taiwan. But **the reason I raised the strength of feeling in China about reunification is to highlight the imbalance between U.S. and Chinese interests in Taiwan.**

Taiwan is far, far more important and significant to China than it is to the United States. And China's citizens feel strongly about Taiwan, while defending Taiwan isn't particularly popular among Americans. In short, it's going to be extremely difficult for the U.S. government to fight a war that isn't particularly popular or strategically important against a state where it is popular and important. That's why I say we have an imbalance of interests.

MK: I wouldn't be so quick to cede the balance of interests to Beijing. The United States and its allies have built and defended a rules-based system over the past 75 years that has produced unprecedented peace, prosperity, and freedom globally. I don't want to trade that in for a world in which Americans stand by as revisionist autocracies like China gobble up neighbors by military force—or, worse, lose a hegemonic war leading to the end of this order and the rise of a Chinese-led system. (Just look at the way Beijing treats its own people for a vision of what that system might look like.) Those are both pretty dark futures. I think it is worth fighting for the preservation of the current system.

Put that way, the U.S. stake is much greater than China's interest—which essentially boils down to reclaiming an island.

And, even better, if Washington gets the deterrence equation right—with the right commitments and capabilities—Americans don't have to fight to defend it. Washington can convince the CCP that it is not in its interest to attack.

EA: Or perhaps a **war over Taiwan might cause that international system to collapse.** After all, **there's plenty of evidence that the United States might well lose such a war, costing the lives of many Americans and potentially demoting the United States to a second-tier power.** And any deterrent that's plausible enough to be credible might end up leading to actual conflict.

MK: Right. That is why it is important that the United States make the necessary investments to deter the war and, if necessary, win it.

EA: I simply don't believe that Taiwan is important enough to take that risk. That's probably why a recent Eurasia Group Foundation poll found that only 42 percent of Americans believe the United States should defend Taiwan against a Chinese attack.

MK: As we've discussed before, I think public opinion polling on foreign policy is generally pretty meaningless. A different recent poll from the Chicago Council on Global Affairs shows that Americans support defending Taiwan. It is up to political leaders to decide what is in the national interest and make the case to the American people.

EA: Look, Americans don't have to abandon Taiwan's people: Washington can help by providing them with arms and support so they can defend themselves. As Patrick Porter and Michael Mazarr recently put it, **"the United States should act as armourer, but not guarantor"** in the case of Taiwan. The training forces are a more risky proposition, as they put Americans on the ground, and there is always the concern that a future policymaker might view them as a so-called tripwire force. **And a concrete commitment by the United States to actually defend Taiwan is far too risky.**

MK: I think it is both/and, not either/or. **Taiwan should do more for its self-defense. But the United States and other countries worried about China's aggression should help.** U.S. forces on the ground is a good next step toward strengthening the U.S. commitment to Taiwan.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Aff Blocks

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: Chips

Neg Argument: The US needs to defend Taiwan so that China doesn't seize the island's semiconductor industry

Taiwan's semiconductor industry is unlikely to survive a war

Bandow 4/23— [Bandow, Doug. "Are You Willing to Die for Taiwan?" 2023. Cato Institute. April 23. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/are-you-willing-die-taiwan>.] Joel.

[Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan and editor of the political magazine *Inquiry*. He writes regularly for leading publications such as *Fortune* magazine, *National Interest*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Times*.]

Finally, **Rachman pointed to “the implications of Chinese dominance of the Indo-Pacific would also be global, since the region accounts for around two-thirds of the world’s population and of gross domestic product.” He is particularly concerned about Taiwan’s world-spanning semiconductor chip industry.** Yet so far the PRC reigns supreme economically, not militarily. To the good, greater regional wealth will enable China’s economic partners to assert and defend their interests too. **Taiwan’s dominant semiconductor is unlikely to survive a war, and the product can be manufactured elsewhere with sufficient investment,** the argument behind the \$53 billion 2022 CHIPS and Science Act.

TSMC is building 3 chip manufacturing facilities in the US – this reduces the impact of a war on semiconductor supply

Jasper 24— [Jolly, Jasper. 2024. "TSMC to Make State-of-The-Art Chips in US after Multibillion Subsidy Pledge." *The Guardian*. The Guardian. April 8. <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/apr/08/tsmc-make-chips-in-arizona-us-multibillion-subsidy-pledge-taiwan-semiconductor>.] Joel.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company is to build its most advanced chips in Arizona after receiving a pledge of as much as \$11.6bn in US government subsidy as part of Joe Biden’s efforts to attract computer chip production.

TSMC, the world’s most valuable chipmaker, says it **aims to start producing the two-nanometre chips at a new factory** in Phoenix, Arizona, **by 2028.**

It already has two factories under construction in Arizona but will build a third under the latest deal with the US government. The Taiwanese company will receive up to \$6.6bn (£5.2bn) in direct funding from the US government and could get up to another \$5bn in the form of loans.

The funding is tied to the 2022 Chips Act, a flagship policy of the US president to try to re-establish chip manufacturing in the country after decades of migration to Asia. The US manufacturer Intel received a promise of support worth almost \$20bn in grants and loans to support its efforts to reinvent itself as a US chipmaking champion. It is to build sites in Arizona, Ohio, New Mexico and Oregon.

Lael Brainard, Biden’s chief economic adviser, hailed the election year news as “a new chapter for America’s semiconductor industry”.

Chip fabrication plants, known as fabs, are highly valued by governments because of advanced semiconductor production to the global economy as well as military applications. TSMC has become one of the key players in

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

the chip industry, running the fabs that make the most advanced computer chips on behalf of other “fabless” companies that focus on design.

Chips with transistors measuring only three nanometres across are used in Apple’s latest iPhone. Nvidia uses TSMC for some of the highly coveted chips used for training artificial intelligence systems. For comparison, a single coronavirus particle measures between about 45nm and 110nm across.

The US commerce secretary, Gina Raimondo, said: “For the first time ever, we will be making at scale the most advanced semiconductor chips on the planet here in the United States of America. These are the chips that underpin all artificial intelligence.”

The fabless model allows many more companies to access advanced manufacturing facilities without investing billions of dollars to build cleanrooms and buy advanced lithography machines, which use extreme ultraviolet light to etch transistors on an almost impossibly small scale.

However, TSMC’s dominance has meant that large parts of the world economy are reliant on products from Taiwan, which is claimed to be a renegade province by China. The Biden administration has been keen to diversify the supply of the most advanced chips to prevent it being cut off if China were to invade.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: Deterrence by Denial

Neg Argument: US military support ensures deterrence by denial

Deterrence by denial is a foolish strategy in Taiwan

Sisson 5/22— [Sisson, Melanie W. 2022. “Taiwan and the Dangerous Illogic of Deterrence by Denial.” Brookings. May 5. [https://www.brookings.edu/articles/taiwan-and-the-dangerous-illogic-of-deterrence-by-denial/.](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/taiwan-and-the-dangerous-illogic-of-deterrence-by-denial/)] Joel.

[Melanie W. Sisson is a fellow in the Foreign Policy program’s Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy, and Technology where she researches the use of the armed forces in international politics, U.S. national security strategy, and military applications of emerging technologies. Sisson’s current work focuses on U.S. Department of Defense integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning capabilities into warfighting and enterprise operations. She also serves on the advisory council of the North Rhine-Westphalian Academy for International Affairs based in Bonn, Germany, and as a consultant to STR, a national security AI firm based in Boston. Sisson earned a doctorate in political science from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and a master’s from the Columbia University School of International Affairs. She is a consultant to the U.S. Department of Defense, lectures regularly with universities nationwide, and is published in national media outlets and academic journals.]

What strategy should the United States use to deter China from using force against Taiwan? Some argue that deterrence requires convincing China that it would lose in a military contest, a strategy known as deterrence by denial. An alternative strategy, deterrence by punishment, attempts to convince China that even if it could win, the costs of trying would be so great that they would outweigh any possible gains.

Policymakers should choose a strategy by analyzing its costs and risks, balanced against the extent of the U.S. interests at stake. This policy brief concludes that **the costs and risks of deterrence by denial are not justified on the basis of U.S. interests. Although there are many compelling reasons to prefer that Taiwan remain democratic and retain its affinity with the West, these outcomes are not so vital as to merit a strategy for which the immediate consequence of failure is high-end war with a nuclear-armed adversary.**

A strategy of deterrence by punishment, by comparison, is pragmatic. It retains options for U.S. policymakers even if it fails — it neither produces immediate war, nor precludes a subsequent decision to go to war either to defend against or to expel an aggressor. So too is there reason for measured optimism that deterrence by punishment will work. The United States has real leverage, and an increasingly resolute set of partners, with which to convince China that aggression will be enormously costly.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: Democracy

Neg Argument: The US needs to defend Taiwan to protect Taiwan's democracy

Losing a democracy would be worrying, but not worth a war with China – even if Taiwan ‘won’, it would be decimated in the process, and would still have an angry neighbor 100 miles off its coast

Bandow 4/23— [Bandow, Doug. “Are You Willing to Die for Taiwan?” 2023. Cato Institute. April 23. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/are-you-willing-die-taiwan>.] Joel.

[Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan and editor of the political magazine *Inquiry*. He writes regularly for leading publications such as *Fortune* magazine, *National Interest*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Times*.]

His first concern was political freedom. For instance, he wrote, **Taiwan, as “a thriving and prosperous society, is living proof that Chinese culture is completely compatible with democracy. Its existence keeps alive an alternative vision for how China itself might one day be run.”** Maybe, but today, at least, few Chinese appear to look at Taiwan as a political model. Moreover, most Chinese who I have met believe that Taiwan is part of China and should return to Beijing’s rule, a sentiment held by otherwise liberal-minded students as well as Chinese Communist Party apparatchiks.

Rachman also worried that allowing Beijing to entrench “autocracy ... across the Chinese-speaking world would have bleak political implications for the world.” Yet the widespread democratic retreat has little relation to China. Moreover, backsliding by India, Pakistan, Nigeria, South Africa, Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico probably matter much more in their respective regions than anything China has done or likely will do.

In any case, neither of these arguments are serious *casus belli*. **A negative impact on democracy would be worrisome, but would not justify waging a destructive war, which likely would have far more harmful impacts on democracy.** As Randolph Bourne famously warned, “war is the health of the state,” illustrated in recent years by the rise of the expansive national security state. **Taiwan likely would be effectively destroyed even if nominally victorious.** A conflict could not help but adversely affect America’s other friends in East Asia. Even if the US prevailed, Beijing likely would prepare for a rematch, leaving the region unstable and endangered.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: Invasion

Neg Argument: China is poised to invade Taiwan

China is unlikely to invade Taiwan

Roy 4/24—[“Why China Remains Unlikely to Invade Taiwan | Lowy Institute.” 2024. Lowyinstitute.org. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/why-china-remains-unlikely-invade-taiwan>.] Joel.

[Denny Roy is a Senior Fellow at the East-West Center in Honolulu specialising in Asia-Pacific strategic and security issues. He holds a PhD in political science from the University of Chicago and is the author of four books and many journal and op-ed articles.]

The United States, and Washington DC in particular, is awash with expectations of war against China in the near future, most likely caused by a Chinese decision to forcibly annex Taiwan.

Plenty of Americans — including senior military officers, academics, and politicians — think Chinese leader Xi Jinping sees war as the best option. Those making this argument typically say Xi is tired of waiting for unification to happen peacefully, sees a military window of opportunity, or has set a deadline for finishing the job. Some think China’s recent economic problems create an incentive for Beijing to launch a diversionary Taiwan war.

We cannot know Xi’s priorities with certainty. Nevertheless, from what we can observe, **an elective war against Taiwan is hardly a compelling proposition for Xi’s government.**

Even with China’s massive arsenal of modern warships, combat aircraft and missiles, **Beijing is nowhere near the level of superiority that would guarantee a successful invasion given the probability of US and Japanese military resistance. Xi would need to worry about more than ferrying enough forces and their supplies across the Strait through the gauntlet of Taiwanese, US and Japanese ships, missiles, submarines, mines and drones. A cross-Strait war would disrupt regional economic activity, threatening the livelihoods of millions of Chinese.** The resulting social turmoil could endanger Xi’s rule.

A Chinese blockade of Taiwan’s ports would be less risky, but would have disadvantages. Taiwan’s government may choose to resist. **Beijing’s action would stimulate increased anti-China cooperation around the world; China could expect to suffer sanctions over a long period. And the United States would have ample time to surge forces into the region to assist Taiwan.**

Beijing’s attempts to intimidate the US government into abandoning support for Taiwan have failed. Helping Taiwan to defend itself remains bipartisan US policy, even supported by Republican Party politicians who want to stop arming Ukraine. Despite the longstanding US policy of “strategic ambiguity”, President Joe Biden has publicly stated four times that US forces would intervene in Taiwan’s defence.

Xi doesn’t necessarily need to solve the Taiwan problem during his tenure to earn a legacy in Chinese history. Xi has three huge domestic projects. The first is restoring the primacy and authority of the Communist Party, which prior to Xi’s tenure as general secretary had suffered a decline in prestige due to rampant corruption, decentralised governance and the empowerment of civil society. The second is what Xi sees as ideological purification, including cleansing China of “Western” ideas and values. Third, Xi must oversee the transition of China’s economy from reliance on exports and investment in infrastructure to a new model that can maintain robust growth and advance China from a middle-income to a high-income country. Success in these projects would be enough to secure glory for Xi, who already enjoys a section in the Party’s constitution honouring “Xi Jinping Thought.”

A struggling economy does not make Beijing more likely to launch a war. China’s economic malaise appears to have dampened the Chinese public’s enthusiasm for a Taiwan campaign. The natural reaction

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

to a lack of strength at home is to be more cautious in foreign affairs, not more aggressive. Thus, the appearance of serious issues in China's economy in 2023 led to Xi trying to lower tensions with the United States, and a direct appeal to the business community to invest more in China during Xi's visit to California last year.

Several US commentators and politicians raised alarm about Xi purportedly "warning" Biden during the California summit that China plans to forcibly seize Taiwan. A more accurate summary of Xi's remarks would be that he **restated the decades-old mantra that unification will happen. He gave no timeline, he said he hoped it would occur by peaceful means, and he denied that his government has a plan to attack Taiwan.**

Like any People's Republic paramount leader, Xi must repeat the promise of eventual unification, build up a military machine that deters independence, insist that the international community adheres to the "one China" principle, and maintain pressure on Taipei to enter negotiations with Beijing. **There is no indication that Xi's position in China is in jeopardy due to a perception he is not tough enough toward Taiwan.**

Xi needs merely to avoid Taiwan declaring formal independence. If Taiwan did do so, Xi would probably opt for war. But even Taiwanese governments controlled by the Democratic Progressive Party, which rejects the idea of Taiwan being part of China, have shown that they will not cross this line.

Xi reached the pinnacle of the Party hierarchy through a career of careful positioning and quiet ruthlessness, not by taking grand gambles. Since then, he has shown a preference for grey-zone tactics. **There is no convincing reason to expect him to rush to a military showdown over Taiwan.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: Invasion Success

Neg Argument: China would be successful in an invasion of Taiwan

Corruption: the PLA suffers from corruption, poor training, and poor quality of conscripts, which may affect its ability to fight wars

Gomez 8/23— [“What the PLA Rocket Force Shakeup Means for Taiwan.” 2023. Cato Institute. August 7. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/what-pla-rocket-force-shakeup-means-taiwan>.] Joel.

[Eric Gomez is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on the U.S. military budget and force posture, as well as arms control and nuclear stability issues in East Asia.]

Although it has not been confirmed as the cause, corruption is a plausible explanation for the PLARF leadership shakeup. **Corruption has long been a serious problem within the PLA**, especially during the “reform and opening up” period, which saw meteoric economic growth and, by Xi’s reckoning, lax discipline. Rooting out corruption has thus been one of the major goals of Xi’s military reforms.

While anti-corruption campaigns have undoubtedly removed potential rivals to Xi’s hold on power, they have also been essential for emphasizing the Communist Party’s control over the PLA and enabling organizational changes necessary to turn the PLA into a modern military. In other words, Xi has made an explicit link between combatting corruption in the PLA and the military’s readiness to fight wars.

Indeed, since the 20th Party Congress in October 2022, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection has arrested nearly 40 officials, including members of the armed forces, in a new anti-corruption campaign. **China is in the midst of a large expansion of its nuclear arsenal, which has meant a big influx of cash for the PLARF to expand its missile forces and supporting infrastructure. That’s fertile ground for officials looking to make a quick buck on the side.**

The PLARF leadership shuffle also comes at a time of growing concern about China’s designs against Taiwan. Senior U.S. military and civilian officials have repeatedly called attention to the PLA’s expanding military capabilities. Depending on one’s point of view, the year 2027 — the PLA’s centenary — is either a deadline for invasion or the year that Xi believes the military will be ready to launch a future attack on short notice. Fears of a looming Chinese attack on Taiwan are influencing policy debates on the pace of U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan, the prioritization of sending weapons to Taiwan or Ukraine, and the merits of dropping “strategic ambiguity” in favor of a clearer U.S. defense commitment to Taiwan.

Undergirding many of the debates and handwringing among U.S. policymakers and analysts is the assumption that the PLA is well on its way to becoming a highly capable fighting force. On the surface, this assumption appears correct. The quantity and quality of the PLA’s material capabilities — ships, aircraft, missiles, etc. — has improved very rapidly. Highly publicized war games present worrying scenarios where the PLA uses its large numbers of high-quality weapons systems to quickly inflict massive pain on both Taiwan and forward-deployed U.S. forces.

The PLARF shakeup, **however**, is a valuable reminder that **counting ships or analyzing missile accuracy only tells us part of the story. While they are more difficult to measure, intangible factors like training, morale, and organizational culture are equally if not more important than weapons systems.** The collapse of the U.S.-equipped Afghan military and Ukraine’s effective defense against Russia’s invasion demonstrate the importance of intangible factors and shows how better equipment on its own is not decisive.

While **the PLA has made impressive strides in fielding advanced capabilities, it is still contending with disciplinary issues at high levels** despite almost a decade of concerted effort by military and civilian leadership to root out corruption. **The PLA faces other challenges despite many years of reform, including a lack of realism in training exercises, poor quality of conscripts, and difficulty of integrating various commands and systems responsible for wartime mobilization.** The PLA has undoubtedly improved in all of these areas, but per a recent RAND study, “The PLA’s views of the [China-U.S.] military balance should be viewed as a story of mixed success, continued challenges, and unrealized potential.”

The recent PLARF leadership shuffle should curb the recent threat inflation around a looming Chinese attack on Taiwan. Although China’s military has made big strides in a short period of time, it faces persistent challenges such as corruption that hinder both its ability to reform and its ability to effectively fight wars. American policymakers and analysts alike should thus widen their aperture when considering the PLA’s strengths and weaknesses.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: US Support Unique

Neg Argument: US military support can uniquely defend Taiwan in case of attack—Taiwan wouldn't be able to deter against an invasion alone

Taiwan Deterrence Strategy: there are actions Taiwan can put in place alone to deter against an invasion

McKinney & Harris 2/24— [McKinney, Jared M. 2024. “Understanding the Deterrence Gap in the Taiwan Strait - War on the Rocks.” War on the Rocks. February 12. <https://warontherocks.com/2024/02/understanding-the-deterrence-gap-in-the-taiwan-strait/>.] Joel.

[Dr. Jared Morgan McKinney is a scholar of international relations with a focus on East Asia and great power peace. He holds a PhD from Singapore's Nanyang Technological University. In addition to master's degrees from Peking University and the London School of Economics, he is also a graduate of Missouri State University's Defense and Strategic Studies program.

Peter Harris is an associate professor of political science at Colorado State University. His research encompasses everything from U.S. foreign policy to global relations and international security. He earned his Ph.D from the University of Texas Austin, his master's from the University of London and his undergraduate degree from the University of Edinburgh]

In a previous article published in *Parameters*, we proposed **a strategy for Taiwan to deter a Chinese invasion, one that did not rely on an uncertain U.S. military intervention. This comprised four main elements: A pre-planned resistance campaign, multilateral economic sanctions, regional balancing behavior, and a targeted campaign of scorched tech that would see Taiwan threaten to destroy or disable their semiconductor industry if China were to invade. These are all deterrents that Taiwan and its friends could develop quickly.** Even if not as severe as a U.S. threat to intervene on Taiwan's behalf, **they are credible deterrents in the sense that China could have a high degree of confidence in these threats actually being carried out in response to an armed attack.**

Beyond these ideas, **what else can be done to repair deterrence, bolster reassurance, and avoid war?**

The most important point, as we argue in our follow-up monograph, Deterrence Gap, is that Taiwan and its partners should not repeat the mistakes of the past by assuming deterrence to be fixed and immutable. It is not. All deterrents decay over time, and deterrence across the strait will be in a state of peak decay this decade. **Taiwan and its friends should realize the gravity of the situation. They need quick fixes** — potent and credible deterrents that will cause China's leaders to question their ability to seize Taiwan in a *fait accompli*. Betting too heavily on deterrents that will come online next decade might actually increase risk this decade by generating a “better now than later dynamic.” And all concerned should avoid the siren call of symbolism, which provokes, over substance, which deters.

This decade, there is still low hanging (substantive) fruit that should be exploited. Taiwan's political leaders should consider allowing the Taiwanese air force to change its intercept doctrine so it does not wear out its pilots and airframes by intercepting every Chinese flight into its Air Defense Identification Zone. The Taiwanese air force could also prioritize its air defense mission: denying the People's Liberation Army Air Force command of the air would be vital in a conflict, and ground-based launchers will be more suitable for this than expensive fighters. As well, procuring and training across services to achieve massed precision fires will be key to challenge the People's Republic of China's defensive systems in an invasion.

Unfortunately, given the huge cost and long timeline for entering service, Taiwan's much ballyhooed submarine program is likely a distraction from the fundamentals of developing the hardware and software for an effective “anti-navy.” **Taiwan's armed forces should instead prioritize the acquisition, production, and employment of mines, drones, and missiles. Mines are likely Taiwan's best way to “buy time” with minimal risk to Taiwan's armed forces,** while drones could bolster Taiwan's defenses via decentralized and attritable systems that could wreak havoc on an invading force, and missiles — especially if road-mobile — combine resilience with lethality. Russia's war in Ukraine has shown that such systems would need to be accessible in mass (i.e., thousands not scores).

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Neg

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Alliances

Preserving Alliances: US should raise its military support for Taiwan because doing so is crucial for maintaining international order and preserving alliances in the region.

Masters & Merrow 24 - [Masters, Jonathan & Merrow, Will. "U.S. Military Support for Taiwan in Five Charts." 2024. Council on Foreign Relations. 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-military-support-taiwan-five-charts>.] Elene.

[Jonathan Masters leads writers and editors who produce wide-ranging content for CFR.org, including Backgrounders, visual stories, and events. He also writes on foreign policy and national security and his work has appeared in Foreign Affairs, the Atlantic, and Bloomberg. He is a term member of CFR and a member of the Overseas Press Club.

[Will Merrow creates data visualizations for a range of CFR content. He previously worked at Graphicacy designing visualizations for mission-driven clients. He holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from Tufts University and a master's degree in data analytics and visualization from the Pratt Institute.]

The United States has been arming Taiwan since the mid-twentieth century, a trend which has increasingly irritated China since Washington broke official ties with Taipei and normalized relations with Beijing in 1979. China considers the self-ruled island of twenty-four million people a breakaway territory that must be brought under its control, by force if necessary. The United States views Taiwan's status as undetermined and opposes any unilateral changes to the status quo. **It regards Taiwan as a vital economic and security partner that, if conquered by China, could precipitate an unraveling of U.S. power in the Pacific and a broader destabilization of the international order.** Foreign policy experts worry a crisis over Taiwan could trigger a war between China and the United States.

U.S. military support comes primarily through the sale of weapons systems but Washington has in recent years begun to use other tools to bolster Taipei's defensive capabilities.

Since 1950, the United States has sold Taiwan nearly \$50 billion in defense equipment and services, with a number of large sales during recent U.S. administrations.

Only Israel, Japan, and Saudi Arabia purchased more from the United States during that period. However, as of August 2024, Taiwan was reportedly waiting on more than \$20 billion worth of U.S. weapons deliveries, including dozens of F-16 fighter jets approved for sale in 2019. (Arms trade experts say that on average it takes from two to five years between purchase and delivery for U.S. weapons.)

Taiwan was also a significant recipient of U.S. economic and military aid during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, up until the United States normalized relations with China in 1979 and abrogated its mutual defense treaty with Taiwan. However, in late 2022, Congress passed historic legislation enabling Taiwan to receive U.S. military aid once again—up to several billion dollars a year in loans and grants. Notably, it also allowed Taiwan for the first time to obtain weapons directly from U.S. defense stocks (via Presidential Drawdown Authority), although some of the early transfers have gone poorly. Ukraine is the only other partner receiving this type of aid.

The United States does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan. It handles relations with the island not through an embassy but via the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), a nonprofit corporation. The United States describes Taiwan as a "key partner in the Indo-Pacific." It does not have a treaty obligation to defend Taiwan and has not clarified as a matter of policy whether it would come to Taiwan's direct defense if the island were attacked by China, although President Joe Biden has said on four occasions that he would. Washington maintains an intentionally vague policy in this regard—known as "strategic ambiguity"—in contrast to its explicit defense commitments to U.S. treaty allies in the region, namely Australia, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, and Thailand. Without direct U.S. military intervention, most security analysts say China would be able to conquer Taiwan by force, albeit at a potentially considerable cost.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

It is also unknown the extent to which regional U.S. allies would help defend Taiwan in such a scenario, though Chinese aggression against Taiwan would raise acute security concerns for them as well. The United States maintains major military bases in both Japan and South Korea, which collectively host more than seventy-five thousand U.S. service members. “Japan is both the most essential and potentially willing ally because a Chinese attack on Taiwan poses the starkest threat to its security,” reported a 2023 CFR independent task force.

Supporting Taiwan’s self-defense capabilities and preserving peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is important to the United States for a number of reasons:

Security. The fall of Taiwan to Chinese forces could lead to a serious erosion of U.S. power in the region, including a weakening of its alliances, many analysts say. Some argue that if the United States does not defend Taiwan, U.S. allies could come to question their reliance on Washington and either pursue strategic autonomy, potentially including nuclear weapons, or bandwagon with China. “It is not only Taiwan’s future at stake but also the future of the first island chain and the ability to preserve U.S. access and influence throughout the Western Pacific,” writes CFR’s Taiwan Task Force.

Economic. Taiwan is a critical hub in the global manufacturing industry, producing more than half of the world’s semiconductors, including nine out of ten of the most advanced chips. Analysts estimate that a Chinese blockade or war over Taiwan could do as much as \$10 trillion in damage to the global economy (or 10 percent of global gross domestic product [GDP]).

Political. Taiwan began its transition away from military rule in the 1980s and has since become one of the region’s most robust democracies, according to watchdog groups. A takeover by China would almost certainly deprive the people of Taiwan of many of their rights as well as extinguish a thriving democracy, Western analysts say.

International Order. If China used force to try to annex Taiwan, coming on the heels of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, it would be another example of an authoritarian power attempting to unilaterally redraw borders. If China were to succeed, it could significantly undermine a pillar of international order.

Ally Doubt: Reducing support for Taiwan could lead US allies to doubt America's commitment to their security and undermine global alliance systems.

Nagao 23 - [Nagao, Satoru. “Is the U.S. Preparing for the Defense of Taiwan?” Institute for Security and Development Policy. July 26, 2023. <https://www.isdp.eu/is-the-u-s-preparing-for-the-defense-of-taiwan/>.] Elene.

[Dr. Satoru Nagao is a fellow (non-resident) at Hudson Institute, based in Tokyo, Japan. Dr. Nagao’s primary research area is US-Japan-India security cooperation. He was awarded his PhD by Gakushuin University in 2011 for his thesis, “India’s Military Strategy,” the first such research thesis on this topic in Japan.]

The U.S. has been warning that a crisis on Taiwan is nearby. In 2021, the then-Chief of the United States Indo-Pacific Command, Philip Davidson, said that China may try to attack Taiwan by 2027. And in 2022, the Central Intelligence Agency Deputy Director, David Cohen, stated that Chinese President Xi Jinping wants the People’s Liberation Army to have the capability to take control of Taiwan by force by 2027. Air Mobility Command head Gen. Mike Minihan also delivered a memo within the Air Force that predicted that China would attack Taiwan in 2025. Given the increasing landing ship capability, it is true that Chinese troops will more easily be able to land in Taiwan.

Therefore, the prediction by informed U.S. personnel is that China will soon attack Taiwan. If that happens, will the U.S. really risk soldiers’ lives to defend it? And how? Is there some way to prepare for this potential conflict now?

Taiwan is remote from the U.S. When Germany bombed London in 1940, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt was planning to join the war to support the British. However, he needed legitimate reasons to persuade the U.S.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

citizenry to mobilize and equip their military to join a war across the Atlantic. Before Germany's ally, Japan, attacked Pearl Harbor at the end of 1941, the U.S. could not justify direct intervention in the British-German war. By extension, it would also seem unnatural for the U.S. to risk soldiers' lives for faraway Taiwan. However, **in such a situation, I am confident to say, America will defend Taiwan.**

First, **if America abandoned Taiwan, U.S. allies and partners would be skeptical of the U.S. commitment to their security. This would affect the alliance system not only in Northeast Asia but also throughout the whole world.**

And second, **if the U.S. loses Taiwan, it will lose a vital card in dealing with China.** Nearly 250 years ago, the U.S. was just a colony of the British Empire. However, the U.S. has changed from a colony to a major superpower since then. And during the process, the U.S. defeated and disbanded all rivals, including Japan, Germany, and the Soviet Union. **If President Biden says that China is its "most serious competitor," it is natural to conclude that the U.S. will not allow China to gain too much of an advantage. Taiwan is located off the coast of China, a core area of the Chinese economy, and is in a strategic location for deterring Chinese aggression. If Taiwan is collaborating with the U.S. and Japan, it can exert military pressure on China's coastal area.**

In addition, when reporters asked in September 2022 whether U.S. forces would defend the democratically governed island claimed by China, President Biden replied, "Yes." Another question was asked to clarify the meaning of his remarks: Would American men and women defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion? Biden replied, "Yes." Again, clearly. Will the U.S. abandon Taiwan? Given the above reasons, we cannot imagine such a situation.

A January 2023 report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies titled, "The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan," predicted that China's invasion would fail and that "Taiwan remains autonomous," even if "this defense comes at a high cost." This report was the result of many simulations. Currently, the U.S. and its allies, such as Japan and Australia, are preparing long-range strike capability against the Chinese mainland. These strike capabilities will raise the cost for China if it invades Taiwan.

However, if the U.S. wants to guard Taiwan as a vital asset in order to compete with China, war is not the only threat it faces. For example, in one wargaming scenario, China could blockade Taiwan and forcefully persuade the Taiwanese people to accept unification with China. Even if this does not constitute a war, such a condition is not acceptable for Taiwan or the U.S. **The U.S. needs to support the courage of the Taiwanese people to reject a Chinese takeover.** What should the U.S. do in this case?

To defend Taiwan militarily, the continental (or west) side of Taiwan is vital. All the big cities of Taiwan are located on its continental side, and a military attack would most likely come from this side. However, the Pacific side of the island is also vital because it is there that Taiwan hides ammunition and other supplies. China could deploy forces on the Pacific side that could attack the entrance of these ammunition and supply dumps. As a vulnerable point to Taiwan's defense supply, the Pacific side is important.

Also, if China deploys enough military forces on the Pacific side, the Taiwanese people will be cut off from Japan, the Philippines, and the U.S. Such an isolated situation would test the courage of the Taiwanese people and could make them more vulnerable to accepting China's unification offers.

Recently, China has been testing out its military presence on the Pacific side of Taiwan, and its aircraft carriers, surface warships, and bombers have repeatedly conducted exercises there. Chinese submarine activities are also a matter of concern. If China deploys enough submarines, it could blockade Taiwan by attacking and deploying sea mines.

If the U.S. wants to secure the Pacific side of Taiwan, the amount of firepower it can deploy in this region will be critical. Recent U.S. weapons exports to Taiwan indicate that the U.S. is focusing on air power. Since the Biden administration was sworn in, **the U.S. has provided missiles for jets such as AGM-84 Harpoon, AGM-88B**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

HARM, AIM-120 AMRAAM, and AIM-9X Sidewinder missiles. These missiles are for air-to-surface and air-to-air combat purposes.

However, this air power relies on secured air bases. China is increasing missile and bomber arsenals and extending its ranges. Any air bases that fall within the range of China's missiles could be attacked. Therefore, the 2023 Han Kuang exercises, Taiwan's major war games, which have been held annually since 1984, focused on such a situation. In 2023 (May 15-19 and July 24-28), Taiwan simulated a scenario in which Taiwan's military airports and airstrips are severely damaged by enemy fire, requiring fighter jets to land at civilian airports or on the highway.

Recent U.S. moves also indicate plans to be involved in the case of Chinese bombardment. For example, the U.S. has repeatedly trained B-1B strategic bombers to deploy from Guam and other air bases far from northeast Asia. B-1B is a long-range bomber and carries long-range cruise missiles with conventional warheads. Therefore, these bombers can deploy and attack from an airbase outside the range of Chinese missiles. It could be a valuable tool to pressure China and provide encouragement to the Taiwanese people.

The U.S. Marines have also taken steps to enhance readiness. They have formed small groups that equip new anti-ship missiles and can mobilize from island to island very rapidly. Even if China identifies the location of these Marine units, they can move to different places immediately and launch their missiles to destroy Chinese ships. These Marine units can be operational even if they are within the range of Chinese missiles.

As an ally of the U.S., Japan has deployed missiles to deter China on the Pacific side of Taiwan. And the Philippines has opened three more bases near Taiwan for U.S. use. That can help in deploying more forces to attack Chinese ships on the Pacific side of Taiwan. Under the AUKUS security pact, Australia is equipping nuclear submarines with cruise missiles. Conventional submarines cannot deploy in the East China Sea from the submarine base in Perth, Australia, which is located outside of the range of major Chinese missiles. However, if Australia uses nuclear submarines, these submarines can come to the sea near Taiwan, operate for 73 days, and return to Perth. Even if they are under the range of Chinese missiles, they can still be active.

Therefore, the U.S. and its allies are preparing not only for war but also for coercive diplomacy with China. If the U.S. can maintain deterrence on the Pacific side of Taiwan, China's intimidation will fail.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Chinese Expansion

Countering China's Influence: Raising military support is essential to effectively counter China's influence, as a strong military presence and capability are necessary to deter aggression, protect strategic allies like Taiwan, and maintain the US's role as a stabilizing force in the region.

Colby 22 - [Colby, Elbridge. "Why Protecting Taiwan Really Matters to the U.S." Time. October 11, 2022. <https://time.com/6221072/why-protecting-taiwan-really-matters-to-the-u-s/>.] Elene.

[Elbridge Colby is an American national security policy professional who served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy and Force Development from 2017 to 2018 during the Trump administration. He is the author of The Strategy of Denial: American Defense in an Age of Great Power Conflict from Yale University Press.]

At this point, there is widespread agreement among Americans that China is a major threat and that U.S. policy needs to address it. At the same time, though, most Americans are rightly opposed to the forever wars of the past two decades and skeptical of more military interventions.

In brief, there is agreement that China is a major challenge, but not on how far to go in confronting it. Indeed, there is a rising strain in American politics that advocates seeking to avoid confronting Beijing in Asia while focusing on reducing our economic dependence on China through reshoring and industrial policy.

But, while steps to strengthen our economy at home make abundant sense, this approach will not suffice for Americans' concrete interests. We cannot let Asia go.

It's worth starting with first principles. What is the rightful purpose of American foreign policy? We can wish others well, but it's not about pacifying or democratizing the world, as we learned over the last twenty years. Rather, a "small r" republican foreign policy should focus on protecting and promoting Americans physical security, our liberties, our prosperity, and economic security.

If we identify the threats to those goods, by far the most dangerous is a very great power that could attack or undermine them. "Hard" power, namely economic strength and the military might it can provide, is the main thing. Lesser threats by definition can be dealt with more easily. America is roughly 20% of global GDP, and economic productivity is the root of power in the modern world, so this means that only a very great state could hope to become so strong as to menace us. And the only state today that matches up to that description is China.

But China on its own is not strong enough. It too is roughly 20% of global GDP. So how could China pose such a threat to our interests? By dominating Asia. Asia is now again the center of the world, upwards of 50% of global GDP going forward. If Beijing could dominate Asia, it would be in a very strong position to dominate the world—and us.

Now is China actually going to pursue this goal? This could have been the topic of a good debate a decade ago. But now the answer seems fairly clearly to be yes. Beijing's behavior, and at a deeper level China's interests, **all point in the direction of Beijing pursuing a form of soft imperial control—what we might call hegemony—over Asia.** This would likely take the form of formally independent states in Asia orienting their economic, foreign, and security—and ultimately even their domestic affairs—around Beijing's preferences. Beijing would not directly control them, but it would be the center and leader of the system, and would have immense leverage to enforce its will.

If China becomes dominant in such a way over Asia it will have a controlling influence over roughly half of the global economy. With this power, it will undoubtedly ensure that it is the center, the prime beneficiary, and effectively the director of the global economy. And why not? In this context, Beijing could ensure that China is the richest, most economically secure, and most influential country in the world.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

In such a scenario, **global trade and commercial flows will gravitate toward and around China. China will have a scale and power to ensure that its companies are the world leaders, that its universities are the best, that its standards are met, and that its rules are followed.** It will be the gatekeeper to the world's largest market area, with unmatched scale—which is of course key to economic development.

To those who play ball with such a China, falling into line in its value chain, following its rules, and toeing its diplomatic line, there will be rewards. But for those who resist, there will be penalties: exclusion from access, tariffs, and sanctions. Think of the economic power America can now wield against Russia in Beijing's hands, and at even greater scale.

In this world, American autarky just will not work. First of all, America will be at best roughly 20% of global GDP, a far smaller base for competition, making it likely our economy would be outclassed and left behind by China's much larger area over time.

Even more, though, China will very likely seek to diminish the U.S. This is just basic power politics: America is the only country that can possibly stand up to China. So, to secure its ascendancy, China will seek to weaken and by extension impoverish us. And Beijing will have many instruments to use against the U.S. Meantime, we will be unable to count on our allies. The Asian ones will have fallen under Beijing's dominance. Fractious and economically anemic Europe will likely cut a deal.

In this world, **Americans might be physically secure, given our two oceans and our nuclear arsenal, but we would be much less prosperous and economically secure, and thus also much less free.** Most Americans would effectively be working for Chinese companies or their subsidiaries in one way or another, answer to Chinese regulators, and read and consume information curated in Beijing. We'd all be compelled to dance to Beijing's tune.

To make it concrete: Many if not most Americans agree that there are huge problems with our social media companies and the way they are regulated today. But we are all assuming that *Americans* have the power to remedy the problem. But if Beijing is dominant over the world economy, that will not be the case. The social media companies will ultimately be answerable to Beijing, and the situation will be even worse.

The fact is, though, that we do not need to speculate. Beijing is already showing us what this world will look like. Observe the way China wields economic sanctions not only against their neighbors but even far off Canada and Lithuania. And as for the nature of their rule, observe Hong Kong, and bear in mind that China is a famously nationalist country and that is how it treats its own people. We have little reason to expect we would get better treatment.

These are the stakes, then. The reader might notice perhaps that neither Taiwan nor China's military has yet come up. That is not an accident. The stakes here are economic and political: about who has power in the future world economy. And, as has again become increasingly clear in recent years, political power – especially geopolitical power – matters a very great deal for economics. Free and fair markets do not just spontaneously emerge. They are created, sustained, and shaped by politics, and thus by power.

But the *means* that China will need to use to achieve its ascendancy over Asia *are* military. And Taiwan occupies a central position along Beijing's path to this goal.

This is because countries are unlikely to accept Chinese hegemony just due to economic sanctions and suasion. Witness the difficulties Beijing is facing with its Belt and Road Initiative, and how even Australia, dependent on China's imports for its economy, has stood up to China's daunting economic pressure over the last year. Beijing appears to agree with this assessment, as it is embarking on an historic military buildup of both its conventional

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

and nuclear forces. This is clearly a military buildup designed not only to resolve the Taiwan issue but to project power throughout the region and ultimately the globe. Meantime they are actively preparing for a conflict with us.

In this context, America's goal should be to prevent China from dominating Asia *without a war*. That is the optimal aim: a decent peace without war. But the only prudent way to achieve that goal is to be prepared to fight in a way that shows Beijing it just will not gain if it starts a conflict. This is a cliché: if you want peace prepare for war. But the reason it is so clichéd is that it is deeply rooted common sense.

The key to achieving this goal—of blocking China from dominating Asia—is a coalition. The need for this coalition is not rooted in anything about “sacred” alliances or the rules-based international order. It is practical reality necessary to achieve this aim. The U.S. needs a coalition because it is neither realistic nor fair for Americans to take on the enormous task of blunting Beijing's ambitions alone. Fortunately, there are many countries in Asia that have the will and the way to help stand up to China, like India, Japan, Australia, and Taiwan itself.

The key, though, is to make sure this coalition works—that it stands up and holds together in the face of Chinese pressure and, if necessary, aggression. But we cannot take that for granted. Countries in Asia are quite reasonably wondering whether it is prudent to stand up to China. Most do not want to live under Beijing's thumb, but if the alternative is disaster and exclusion from all the goods Beijing has to offer, they are much more likely to cut a deal.

Thus the key to making this coalition work is the conviction that it is prudent—that the coalition, by necessity led by a strong and purposeful America, is powerful and resolute enough to hold together and stand strong in the face of Chinese pressure or aggression.

It's in this hard-nosed context that Taiwan takes on such importance. We might admire its democracy and entrepreneurial spirit, but those are not enough to justify Americans going to war. Instead, **Taiwan is important to Americans for two reasons: because it is militarily critical and because it is a bellwether.**

First, **Taiwan is vital to the defense of Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. If China occupied Taiwan, it would pose a much greater threat to these countries and be able to project power deep into the Pacific, a very real possibility as we can see from China's activities in Solomon Islands and its construction of an enormous oceangoing navy, including aircraft carriers.**

Second, **Taiwan is the canary in the coal mine.** Credibility arguments always deserve to be met with skepticism. But it is only rational for Taiwan's neighbors to look at how we treat Taiwan as an indicator of how we would treat them. Whether we like it or not, **Taiwan's fate will play a major role in whether countries think America is reliable as the cornerstone of the coalition.** Indeed, as a result, **if Taiwan fell we would probably have to do far more aggressive things to prove we were reliable at all.**

This all adds up to a very significant American interest in Taiwan. But it is not existential. Taiwan is not American territory.

This is where a denial defense comes in. Americans cannot rationally rely on a strategy of total war or prosperity-crashing economic warfare to defend what is, for us, a significant but not existential interest. Rather, Americans need a strategy that is keyed to the importance of the interest. **This is what a denial defense does: it focuses on defeating a Chinese invasion of an ally, ensuring Beijing cannot seize and hold their key territory.** If that can be done, as Ukraine has commendably shown, then the aggressor basically cannot bring it to heel. And if we can do that for Taiwan, essentially by definition we can do that for our other allies in Asia like Japan, the Philippines, and Australia. And if we can do this, the coalition should stand strong and succeed in its ultimate goal: denying China's hegemonic aims in Asia.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

This is actually a relatively low strategic standard—just denial of the invasion, not conquest, dismembering China, or changing its regime. But it is very demanding in practice because of how strong China is, how near it is to Taiwan and our other allies, and how focused it is—while we are distracted.

But the good news is that it is feasible: *If* we actually focus more on walking the walk than talking the talk. Taiwan, is after all an island a hundred miles off the coast of China. And America’s military strong suits are in the areas of aerospace, maritime, and high technology—exactly the kinds of things we need we would need to defeat a cross-Strait invasion. These are also areas of strength for Japan, Taiwan, and Australia.

The bewildering—and indeed infuriating—thing is that we are not doing what is needed to build an effective denial defense. The best way to avoid war on decent terms is to show China that we have the ability to defeat their invasion in a manner that is not crazy for us to implement. Yet that is not what our government is doing.

Defending far-off Taiwan and our allies seems to many like yet another foolish military misadventure for our country. But it is not. This strategy is rooted in a practical, hard-nosed assessment of what is in Americans’ concrete economic and political interests. It is not about ending evil in the world or making it safe for Wilsonianism. It is about defending Americans’ security, liberties, and prosperity from a very real—and, in terms of China’s gigantic scale, unprecedented—danger. For that reason, Americans should support it.

Balance of Power: Taiwan's strategic location is vital for maintaining the balance of power, and U.S. military support can enhance its defense capabilities against potential Chinese aggression while also helping to prevent a global economic depression.

Sacks 23 – [Sacks, David. “Why Is Taiwan Important to the United States?” Council on Foreign Relations. June 20, 2023. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/why-taiwan-important-united-states>.] Elene

[David Sacks is a fellow for Asia studies at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), where his work focuses on U.S.-China relations, U.S.-Taiwan relations, Chinese foreign policy, cross-Strait relations, and the political thought of Hans Morgenthau. In 2023, Mr. Sacks served as the project director for CFR’s Independent Task Force on U.S.-Taiwan Relations.]

China is intensifying its military, economic, and diplomatic coercion of Taiwan, which it considers a piece of lost territory that must be returned, by force if necessary. While a war between China and the United States over Taiwan is neither imminent nor inevitable, rising tensions raise important first-order questions that need to be addressed: Why does Taiwan matter and why should Americans care about its fate? How would Chinese aggression against Taiwan impact the United States? What, if anything, can and should be done to protect U.S. interests?

While the United States is thousands of miles from Taiwan, the island’s fate will have major implications for U.S. security and prosperity. What happens in the Taiwan Strait will also bear on fundamental questions of international order and the future of democracy. Our recent Council on Foreign Relations-sponsored Independent Task Force Report, U.S.-Taiwan Relations in a New Era: Responding to a More Assertive China, explains that the **United States has vital strategic interests at stake in the Taiwan Strait and examines how the United States should protect these interests.**

Taiwan sits in an important position in the world’s most economically consequential region. As Assistant Secretary of Defense Ely Ratner noted, “Taiwan is located at a critical node within the first island chain, anchoring a network of U.S. allies and partners—stretching from the Japanese archipelago down to the Philippines and into the South China Sea—that is critical to the region’s security and critical to the defense of vital U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific.”

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Taiwan's inherent military value cannot be wished away. Instead, **its location dictates that its fate will in large part determine the balance of power in the region.** With Taiwan outside of its control and U.S. allies and partners arrayed throughout the first island chain, China's military will struggle to project power far beyond China's shores. However, **if China were to annex Taiwan and base military assets, such as underwater surveillance devices, submarines, and air defense units on the island, it would be able to limit the U.S. military's operations in the region and, subsequently, its ability to defend its Asian allies.** **With Taiwan under China's control, it would be far more difficult for the United States to maintain a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific or prevent a Chinese bid for regional dominance.**

What happens in the Taiwan Strait will have enormous implications for the future of U.S. alliances in the region, which constitute Washington's most important asymmetric advantage over Beijing. If the United States chose to stand aside in the face of Chinese aggression against Taiwan and China successfully annexed the island, it would be only seventy miles from Japanese territory and 120 miles from the Philippines. U.S. allies would come to question whether the United States would or even could come to their defense. Having lost confidence in the U.S. commitment to their security, allies would contemplate either accommodating China or hedging against it by growing their militaries or even developing nuclear weapons. Either outcome would result in diminished U.S. influence and increased regional and global instability.

A Chinese attack on Taiwan, regardless of its success or whether the United States chose to intervene, would also trigger a global economic depression and shave trillions of dollars off global economic output. Taiwanese companies manufacture nearly 70 percent of the world's semiconductors and around 90 percent of the most advanced chips. **If the world loses Taiwan's production capacity, no other company will be able to fill the gap in the short term.** During a Chinese blockade or attack, **the production and shipment of semiconductors would come to a halt, leading to a shortage of nearly every product that contains technology, from smartphones to computers and cars. Companies across a range of industries would have to reduce or even halt production.**

Taiwan's fate also has implications for the most fundamental tenets of international order. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, if China were to successfully absorb Taiwan despite Taiwanese resistance, it would establish a pattern of authoritarian countries using force to attack democratic neighbors and change borders. One of the most basic pillars of international relations—that countries cannot use force to alter borders—would be severely undermined.

Politically, Taiwan is one of Asia's few democratic success stories and by some measures the region's freest society. Its open political system demonstrates to China's citizens that there is an alternative path of development for a majority ethnically Chinese society. If China were to take Taiwan by force, Taiwan's democracy would be extinguished, and its twenty-three million people would see their rights severely curtailed. As this would come in the wake of China's crackdown on democracy in Hong Kong, the ramifications would be even greater.

The stakes are clear, which is why the United States needs to redouble its efforts to deter China from using force or coercion to achieve unification with Taiwan. While a military confrontation in the Taiwan Strait is neither imminent nor inevitable, the chances of one are increasing. U.S. policy toward Taiwan needs to evolve to contend with a more capable, assertive, and risk-acceptant China that is increasingly dissatisfied with the status quo.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Pacific: The US should continue Taiwan's military support to limit China's access to the Pacific and to prevent Chinese military and trade expansion.

Walker 21 - [Walker, Trey. "No, but the US Should Continue to Support Taiwan through Military Aid - Left Middle Right." 2021. Left Middle Right. September 19, 2021. <https://leftmiddleleft.org/2021/09/19/no-but-the-us-should-continue-to-support-taiwan-through-military-aid/>.] Elene.

[Trey Walker is a Republican political advisor in the state of South Carolina. As of April 2021, he was the chief of staff for Gov. Henry McMaster (R), a position he took on in January 2017 when McMaster became governor of South Carolina.]

The issue of Taiwanese independence presents a major identity crisis for the People's Republic of China (PRC). When the Chinese Civil War ended in 1949, key members of the PRC fled to the island of Taiwan. Ever since, Chinese leaders have wanted to take back the island, asserting that Taiwan is historically part of China. China views the island as a key part in maintaining Chinese territorial integrity and its notion of "One China." Thus, the US officially recognizing them as a state would be viewed by the PRC as a major affront to Chinese sovereignty. There is no reason for the United States to needlessly antagonize Chinese interests by establishing diplomatic relations and recognizing Taiwan as a country. With rising tensions on trade and human rights, the US should avoid adding strain to this relationship by elevating Taiwan to country status. Additionally, in recent months, Chinese military activity in the region of Taiwan has given rise to fears of increased tensions which could transform into hostile actions by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) against the island. This increase in force presence adds another reason for the United States to avoid adding more tension.

While the United States should not establish official diplomatic ties with Taiwan, **the question of military support is another consideration altogether.** The United States has been a key military ally to Taiwan since 1950. During the 1950s, the security guarantee of the United States Navy played a huge role in ensuring that the PRC did not attempt to take back Taiwan. But why should the United States continue to maintain such a strong defense relationship with Taiwan? While a lot of this may seem like abstract defense posturing, **Taiwan occupies a very important strategic position for China.** Taiwan is a part of the first island chain, which is a group of islands spanning from the southern end of Japan down to the Philippines. This island chain effectively seals China from the Pacific Ocean, limiting Chinese force projection capabilities. **These limits would hinder China greatly in any future conflict as they could easily be blockaded with nowhere to expand and no access to the Pacific Ocean.** **Additional strategic consideration arises with issues of trade and territorial disputes. A Chinese military and commercial position on Taiwan would open a gateway to the Pacific that could be used for military or trade purposes such as expanding control over the South China Sea or dominating Pacific markets. With these expansions would come a rise in Chinese regional power at the expense of the United States. Thus, it is in the best interests of the United States to ensure that Taiwan remains a military ally of the United States and stays out of Chinese hands.**

Taiwan's independence from China is one of the United states' toughest geopolitical issues. **While it is important that we do not raise tensions with China over the unnecessary issue of diplomatic relations with Taiwan, it is also critical for us to maintain our strategic interests in the region.** Thus, the United States should not pursue a formal diplomatic relationship with Taiwan. However, it is important that we maintain a strong military partnership in order to maintain a foothold in the region and to limit Chinese force projection power.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Chips

Reliance: The U.S. is highly reliant on TSMC for AI, military applications and consumer electronics

Shivakumar & Wessner 22- [Sujai Shivakumar, and Charles Wessner. 2022. "Semiconductors and National Defense: What Are the Stakes?" Csis.org. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/semiconductors-and-national-defense-what-are-stakes>.] Joel.

[Sujai Shivakumar directs Renewing American Innovation (RAI) at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), where he also serves as a senior fellow. Dr. Shivakumar brings over two decades of experience in policy studies related to U.S. competitiveness and innovation. During his tenure at the National Academies, he contributed to over 50 assessments of U.S. and foreign innovation programs.

Charles Wessner is currently a research professor at Georgetown University, where he teaches global innovation policy. He is active as a speaker, researcher, and writer with a global lens on innovation policy and frequently advises technology agencies, universities, and governments on effective innovation policies. Reflecting his expertise in global innovation policy, he closely cooperates with the director of CSIS's Renewing American Innovation (RAI).]

At present the United States is currently reliant on facilities located in Taiwan for production of the most advanced AI-enabling semiconductors "that power all the algorithms critical for defense systems and everything else." The United States is one or two generations behind, if not further. As the chair and vice chair of the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence (NSCAI) put it in 2021, "We do not want to overstate the precariousness of our position, but given **that the vast majority of cutting-edge chips are produced at a single plant separated by just 110 miles of water from our principal strategic competitor**, we must reevaluate the meaning of supply chain resilience and security."

Taiwan, a stable democracy, is closely aligned with the United States and its allies in the Pacific Rim and is dependent on somewhat ambiguous security guarantees for its continued existence as a political entity independent of rule by the Chinese Communist Party. Given that reality, there is virtually no possibility that TSMC or the government of Taiwan would willingly restrict or manipulate the flow of advanced chips to its de facto allies, particularly the United States and Japan.

At present, **China is two or more generations behind the U.S. semiconductor industry technologically** and will find it virtually impossible to leapfrog the United States—unless it can acquire the foreign technology and know how to do so. This is an objective that China is actively pursuing through multiple channels with a vast deployment of resources.

Notwithstanding Taiwan's close alignment with the United States and its allies and China's lagging technological position in microelectronics, **the degree of global dependence on semiconductor production facilities in Taiwan for leading edge chips is a major strategic vulnerability.** Geopolitical risks are often, and rightly, mentioned in this context. However, natural disasters such as earthquakes, droughts, or pandemics, all of which have occurred in the recent past, could shut down Taiwan's semiconductor production for a protracted period. Also, China might eventually find a way to coerce TSMC or the government of Taiwan into supporting its development of AI chips or supplying those chips to China. **In an extreme case, China could take a variety of military actions, which would disrupt production and delivery of advanced chips.**

U.S. dependency on Taiwanese production of chips for defense systems extends beyond AI. **TSMC makes semiconductors used in F-35 fighters and a wide range of "military-grade" devices used by the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).** Many U.S. defense systems use field-programmable gate arrays (FPGA) which are similar to commercial versions but introduce certain specific militarily relevant features, such as higher levels of heat and radiation tolerance. The major designers of FPGAs are U.S. firms that depend on Taiwan for much of their production. The U.S. firm Xilinx, for example, invented the FPGA, but most of its semiconductor wafers are manufactured by TSMC and United Microelectronics Co., another Taiwanese firm. **The full extent of U.S. reliance on Taiwan for the manufacture of chips for military applications is unknown, but it is an important factor underlying U.S. government pressure on TSMC to move its production of military devices to the United States.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Invasion / Blockade: China could plausibly invade or blockade Taiwan to gain control of Taiwan's chip industry

Barth 22- ["THE MOC - Navy League of the United States." 2022. Navy League of the United States. September 22. <https://www.navyleague.org/programs/center-for-maritime-strategy/the-moc-chip-diplomacy/>] Joel.

[Michael Barth is a Strategy Senior Associate within JPMorgan Chase & Co.'s Commercial Banking Strategy team and serves as an officer in the United States Coast Guard Reserve. Mr. Barth graduated magna cum laude from Columbia University, majoring in financial economics with a concentration in East Asian studies, and was previously decorated as the Coast Guard's 2019 Auxiliariist of the Year.]

In the most extreme scenario, **China could attempt to forcibly take over Taiwan's intellectual and physical semiconductor manufacturing capabilities – or bluntly, to invade the island of Taiwan and attempt to take over its facilities.** President Xi Jinping has made declarations about the desire for reunification of Taiwan and the PRC, stating in his July 1 address to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the CPC's founding, "Resolving the Taiwan question and realizing China's complete reunification is a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the Communist Party of China... We must take resolute action to utterly defeat any attempt toward 'Taiwan independence,' and work together to create a bright future for national rejuvenation." However, a direct military invasion is unlikely. In addition to the complexities involved in staging an amphibious invasion and potential for major casualties, many (if not all) of Taiwan's semiconductor foundries would be rendered inoperable, causing irreparable damage to China's economy which is reliant on Taiwanese chips. Additionally, China is likely taking note of Russia's blunder in which Putin significantly underestimated the amount of support the US and others provided to Ukraine. The US has publicly declared that it would support Taiwan militarily if China were to invade and would no doubt provide large amounts of military equipment and financial backing. A head-to-head confrontation with the US and the destruction of the very industry China is reliant on makes this scenario improbable.

In a more likely case, **China may decide to blockade Taiwan to disrupt shipping routes and force more favorable trading terms for Beijing or put pressure on Taiwan and its allies.** Since US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan and met with both political and semiconductor industry leaders, **the PRC has significantly ramped up military drills around the island.** In August of 2022, the Chinese military conducted exercises in which it encircled Taiwan, engaged in live fire exercises, and deployed fighter jets and warships. Although China has long had the ability to encircle Taiwan, the message was clear – **China may use such tactics to force negotiations or cause damage to the Taiwanese economy.** Admittedly, a prolonged naval blockade is incredibly challenging to maintain. However, the PRC could announce military exercises around Taiwan for distinct periods of time to disrupt commerce and shipping, which could have highly detrimental effects to importers of Taiwanese goods and Taiwanese industry. To prevent this, Taiwan could launch exercises of its own and demonstrate its ability to prevent a full-scale blockade. Taiwan could also participate in regular military operations in which it operates close to Chinese military assets and monitors their behavior. Additionally, **the US could increase its military presence in the region to show full commitment to defending Taiwan, rather than keeping a single aircraft carrier in the area**—and away from the Taiwan Strait. Although such measures risk escalation, there are limited other options if Taiwan and the US want to return to the pre-August 2022 status quo and demonstrate their mutual commitment and resolve.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Coast Guard

The US should expand its Coast Guard deployments in the Pacific to counter the growing threat of Chinese grey-zone tactics in using its own Coast Guard to quarantine Taiwan

Johnstone & Lin 6/24— [Johnstone, Christopher B, and Bonny Lin. 2024. “Responding to a More Coercive Chinese Coast Guard and a Potential PRC Quarantine of Taiwan.” Csis.org. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/responding-more-coercive-chinese-coast-guard-and-potential-prc-quarantine-taiwan>.] Joel.

[Christopher Johnstone is senior adviser and Japan Chair at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington, D.C. Bonny Lin is a senior fellow for Asian security and director of the China Power Project at CSIS.

Bonny Lin is a senior fellow for Asian security and director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Dr. Lin holds a PhD in political science from Yale University, a master’s degree in Asian studies with a focus on China from the University of Michigan, and a bachelor’s degree in government from Harvard College.]

Beijing could take advantage of international perceptions that the coast guard is a nonmilitary, civilian actor to implement a de facto quarantine of Taiwan, where Beijing seeks to impose control over Taiwan by disrupting or cutting off air or maritime traffic to the island. The CCG would be at the frontlines, supported by China’s civilian Maritime Safety Administration (MSA), the PLA, and China’s maritime militia (a force of organized, trained, and armed personnel that supports China’s maritime law enforcement and military operations). China would try to make the case that the CCG activity is a normal law enforcement and domestic operation—and therefore legitimate. Beijing would argue that its actions constitute neither a military blockade nor a declaration of war against Taiwan. This casting of a quarantine as a law enforcement operation, below the threshold for armed conflict, would be meant to deflect and dilute international criticism and pressure.

Second, **the PRC could tailor a CCG-led quarantine of Taiwan to try to minimize international involvement and complicate decisionmaking.** For example, **China would not have to close off the Taiwan Strait to encircle Taiwan. It could selectively isolate certain ports or Taiwan-bound shipping without disrupting maritime traffic as a whole.** Doing so would complicate the decisions of the United States and other countries on how to respond—and even whether a response is warranted at all. The United States and many other countries would, on the basis of international law, view any complete closure of the Taiwan strait as blocking an international waterway that is “absolutely essential for global commerce and prosperity.” This would be a direct challenge to “freedoms of navigation, overflight, and other rightful uses of the sea and air.” But a selective or partial PRC quarantine that does not significantly impact international trade in the Taiwan Strait would be more ambiguous and pose challenges to the United States and other Taiwan partners.

China could also engage in selective and periodic enforcement of its quarantine rules. Beijing would not have to force total compliance from shipping companies to achieve its desired effects of punishing Taiwan, creating market disruptions, and demonstrating significant control over the island. Thus, Chinese law enforcement could avoid targeting shipping vessels belonging to the United States or key allies and partners such as Japan to avoid their direct intervention.

Third, **the CCG is the largest coast guard force in the world.** Taiwan’s coast guard forces, though very capable, are significantly outnumbered and outsized by the CCG. Taiwan also cannot match the ability of the CCG to draw resources from China’s MSA, which has at least three dozen oceangoing vessels as well as hundreds of smaller patrol craft. Taiwan also lacks a large maritime militia force, whereas the PRC maritime militia comprises potentially hundreds or thousands of fishing vessels that can be organized to support Beijing’s maritime claims. **Faced with a CCG-led quarantine, Taiwan’s only recourse would be to consider responding with naval forces—a step that could be seen by the international community as escalatory.**

Similarly, **the United States does not have sufficient forward-deployed coast guard forces in theater to respond in kind.** The U.S. Coast Guard’s 14th district has responsibility for a vast area that encompasses much of

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

the western Pacific, including Hawaii, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, and American Samoa. Just four ships are homeported in Guam, the closest location to Taiwan.

For its part, Japan has one of the larger and best-trained coast guard forces in the region. The Japan Coast Guard (JCG) boasts more than 100 large- and medium-sized patrol vessels, including 17 with embarked helicopters. Around 20 vessels are based in Okinawa alone—the prefecture closest to Taiwan—to enforce Japanese interests in the East China Sea and the waters around the contested Senkaku Islands.

However, JCG operations are tightly constrained by domestic laws that limit its activities to law enforcement operations in defense of Japan’s territorial waters and exclusive economic zone, and Japan maintains a strict firewall between the JCG and Maritime Self Defense Force. Indeed, information sharing between the two services historically has been poor. Even if the Japanese government wanted to assist Taiwan, the JCG has no legal authority today to respond to a quarantine of Taiwan by escorting foreign ships into or out of Taiwan’s ports, for example.

Given the growing plausibility of a quarantine scenario, Taiwan, the United States, and U.S. allies and partners (especially Japan) should develop more effective tools and strategies for responding.

Taiwan should expand its coast guard to be a more effective counterweight to the CCG. In 2018, Taiwan launched important measures to build up its coast guard by 2027, including building 141 coast guard vessels. President William Lai’s administration, which took office on May 20, should ensure that this program continues with minimal disruption, and it should consider other options to enhance its coast guard forces.

The U.S. government needs to take measures as well. First, Washington should designate China’s coast guard as an arm of the PLA and launch a major diplomatic campaign to persuade allies and partners to do the same. This effort should be aimed at ensuring that China is unable to benefit from international perceptions that the CCG is a nonmilitary organization and to leverage those perceptions to engage in illegal, coercive, and aggressive CCG activities. Washington should state clearly and publicly that a military response to CCG coercion is on the table and legitimate.

Second, **the United States should increase its coast guard presence in the region. The U.S. Coast Guard has a sizeable overseas presence, but its Pacific forces cover a vast area of responsibility.** A greater concentration of forces in the Western Pacific would provide Washington with increased capacity for training and regional engagement, including with Taiwan—which it could undertake as a law enforcement function under existing policy. A larger U.S. Coast Guard presence would also give the United States more tools for responding to a gray zone contingency involving the CCG. Doing so would require an explicit decision to expand the role of the U.S. Coast Guard as a foreign policy instrument.

Finally, the United States does not have to act alone to deter and respond to a Chinese quarantine operation. Washington should encourage allies and partners to make similar decisions about designating the CCG as an arm of the PLA and authorizing military responses accordingly. **Washington should also seek to solidify and increase cooperation with Taiwan’s coast guard and to encourage other allies and partners such as Japan and the Philippines to do the same.** It should engage allies and partners in a dialogue on the authorities necessary to respond to PRC coercion below the threshold of military conflict that involves the CCG. Japan, for example, should consider giving its coast guard greater authority to assist Taiwan during a gray zone quarantine, in consultation with Washington. As part of this, the United States and Japan can share best practices on how to respond to CCG and PLA activities and should also conduct joint exercises that explore how to break a quarantine or establish a preventive corridor.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Supply Chains and Global Economy

The U.S. should raise support for Taiwan to protect global supply chains and not to jeopardize the stability of the global economy.

Center for Preventive Action 23 - [Center for Preventive Action. "Confrontation over Taiwan." Global Conflict Tracker. July 26, 2023. <https://www.cfp.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/confrontation-over-taiwan>.] Elene.

[The Center for Preventive Action (CPA) aims to help policymakers devise timely and practical strategies to prevent and mitigate armed conflict around the world, especially in places that pose the greatest risk to U.S. interests. CPA accomplishes this by commissioning in-depth reports, convening meetings of experts, and consulting with representatives of governments, international organizations, civil society groups, corporations, and the media.]

Tensions between China and the United States over Taiwan amount to a classic security dilemma: both are taking actions they view as defensive that the opposing side views as escalatory. **A potential conflict between China and Taiwan has significant implications for U.S. security interests, as the United States would need to balance its desire to support Taiwan against the risks of a broader war with China.** The United States has objected to China's efforts to isolate Taiwan, which include blocking its participation in international organizations, interfering in its elections, pressuring Taiwanese firms to oppose independence, and sanctioning its industries.

Military activities near Taiwan have grown significantly in recent years. China is developing the military capabilities of the People's Liberation Army (PLA)—the U.S. Department of Defense's 2021 Military Power Report highlighted China's prioritization of "joint long-range precision strikes across domains, increasingly sophisticated space, counterspace, and cyber capabilities, and accelerating the large-scale expansion of its nuclear forces." Moreover, China has integrated emerging technology into its military strategy through an approach known as "intelligitized" warfare. The Department of Defense's aforementioned report notes China seeks to dominate technologies associated with the "Fourth Industrial Revolution," such as artificial intelligence and quantum computing. The PRC increasingly sends aircraft into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone as a show of force, and in 2020, Taiwan reported a Chinese cyberattack on ten government agencies to steal information. **As the military balance in the Taiwan Strait has deteriorated, competition between the United States and China has intensified, and the prospect of China using force against Taiwan has risen.** In an attempt to ensure Taiwan has the ability to defend itself and in response to a growing military gap, the Donald Trump administration sold more than \$18 billion in arms to Taiwan, and in 2020 the State Department eliminated long-standing restrictions on U.S. diplomatic engagement with Taiwanese officials. Moreover, officials now acknowledge that a small but expanding contingent of Marines has been secretly training Taiwan's forces since at least 2021.

Taiwan is the leading global producer of advanced semiconductors. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company produces 65 percent of the world's semiconductors and 90 percent of the most advanced chips. If conflict between China and Taiwan were to break out, global supply chains would be severely disrupted to the detriment of U.S. interests. Speaking in 2022 alongside MI5 General Director Ken McCallum in London, **FBI Director Christopher Wray warned that an invasion of Taiwan would "represent one of the most horrific business disruptions the world has ever seen," as a potential sanctions regime against China would harm the global economy "at a much larger scale" than the current sanctions response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.** Bloomberg reports that the U.S. National Security Council anticipates that a Chinese attack and the corresponding loss of the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company would cause a \$1 trillion disruption to the global economy.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

A potential conflict in the Taiwan Strait also has implications for the territorial dispute between China and Japan in the East China Sea. The PRC views the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands as a part of “Taiwan province” and may seek to take the islands during a conflict. If the PLA Navy were to occupy Taiwan, the Council on Foreign Relations’ David Sacks argues that Japan would struggle to defend its westernmost islands, as well as the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and even Okinawa. During its August 2022 military exercise aimed at Taiwan, China launched ballistic missiles over Taiwan that landed in Japan’s exclusive economic zone, in an attempt to warn Japan not to get involved during a Taiwan conflict. The late Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo stated that Japan and the United States could not stand by if China invaded Taiwan. Current Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio has pledged to double Japan’s defense spending in response to the tense security climate. Taiwan’s and Japan’s islands form a crucial link in the so-called first island chain; if China were to take these islands, it would constrain U.S. naval movements and its ability to contain China in potential future conflicts.

In response to China’s growing assertiveness toward Taiwan, the Joe Biden administration has maintained many aspects of the Trump administration’s approach. In a seeming departure from strategic ambiguity, **President Biden remarked in May 2022 that the United States had a commitment to come to Taiwan’s defense, if necessary, and that his administration would uphold that commitment.** While the White House denied any formal change in U.S. policy, **the president’s remarks reflected a move toward “strategic clarity,” a policy of explicit commitment to defending Taiwan against the use of force by the PRC,** rather than strategic ambiguity. President Biden has made at least three similar statements since 2021. Beijing, on the other hand, has accused Washington of breaching its sovereignty and abandoning its One China policy [PDF].

In a further demonstration of support for Taiwan, U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) visited Taipei in early August 2022 and met with President Tsai Ing-wen and democracy and human rights activists. Speaker Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan provoked severe condemnation from PRC officials. The PLA launched a four-day military drill and surrounded Taiwan, simulating a blockade. The live-fire exercises were more extensive than those performed during the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis. Chinese military aircraft crossed the median line over three hundred times during the demonstration and continue to cross it on a near-daily basis, effectively erasing the status quo. The PRC applied additional pressure through sanctions, halted exports, and, allegedly, cyberattacks.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Increase Military Support

Increase Support: The US needs to increase arms shipments to Taiwan to prepare for the looming eventuality of a 3-front World War for which the US is woefully unprepared – a massive preparation for such a war, including arming Taiwan and other US allies, could ensure a lasting peace

Mitchell 12/23— [A. Wess Mitchell. 2023. “America Is a Heartbeat Away from a War It Could Lose.” Foreign Policy. November 16. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/16/us-russia-china-gaza-ukraine-world-war-defense-security-strategy/>] Joel.

[Dr. A. Wess Mitchell is a senior advisor for USIP’s Center for Russia and Europe. He previously served as assistant secretary for Europe and Eurasia at the U.S. Department of State, where he was responsible for U.S. relations with the countries of NATO, the European Union, Russia, the Caucasus and Turkey. His areas of expertise include international security, transatlantic relations, regional conflict management and strategic stability and arms control. Mitchell holds a doctorate in political science from the Otto Suhr Institut für Politikwissenschaft at Freie Universität Berlin.]

The United States is a heartbeat away from a world war that it could lose. There are serious conflicts requiring U.S. attention in two of the world’s three most strategically important regions. Should China decide to launch an attack on Taiwan, the situation could quickly escalate into a global war on three fronts, directly or indirectly involving the United States. The hour is late, and while there are options for improving the U.S. position, they all require serious effort and inevitable trade-offs. **It’s time to move with real urgency to mobilize the United States, its defenses, and its allies for what could become the world crisis of our time.**

Describing the United States’ predicament in such stark terms may strike many readers as alarmist. The United States has long been the most powerful nation on earth. It won two world wars, defeated the Soviet Union, and still possesses the world’s top military. For the past year and a half, the United States has been imposing gigantic costs on Russia by supporting Ukraine—so much so that it seemed conceivable to this author that the United States might be able to sequence its contests by inflicting a decisive defeat-by-proxy on Russia before turning its primary attention to strengthening the U.S. military posture in the Indo-Pacific.

But that strategy is becoming less viable by the day. **As Russia mobilizes for a long war in Ukraine and a new front opens in the Levant, the temptation will grow for a rapidly arming China to make a move on Taiwan.** Already, Beijing is testing Washington in East Asia, knowing full well that the United States would struggle to deal with a third geopolitical crisis. If war does come, the United States would find some very important factors suddenly working against it.

One of those factors is geography. As the last two U.S. National Defense Strategies made clear and the latest congressional strategic posture commission confirmed, **today’s U.S. military is not designed to fight wars against two major rivals simultaneously. In the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, the United States would be hard-pressed to rebuff the attack while keeping up the flow of support to Ukraine and Israel.**

This isn’t because the United States is in decline. It’s because unlike the United States, which needs to be strong in all three of these places, each of its adversaries—China, Russia, and Iran—only has to be strong in its own home region to achieve its objectives.

The worst-case scenario is an escalating war in at least three far-flung theaters, fought by a thinly stretched U.S. military alongside ill-equipped allies that are mostly unable to defend themselves against large industrial powers with the resolve, resources, and ruthlessness to sustain a long conflict. **Waging this fight would require a scale of national unity, resource mobilization, and willingness to sacrifice that Americans and their allies have not seen in generations.**

The United States has fought multifront wars before. But in past conflicts, it was always able to outproduce its opponents. That’s no longer the case: China’s navy is already bigger than the United States’ in terms of sheer number of ships, and it’s growing by the equivalent of the entire French Navy (about 130 vessels, according to the French naval chief of staff) every four years. By comparison, the U.S. Navy plans an expansion by 75 ships over the next decade.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

A related disadvantage is money. In past conflicts, Washington could easily outspend adversaries. During World War II, the U.S. national debt-to-GDP ratio almost doubled, from 61 percent of GDP to 113 percent. By contrast, the United States would enter a conflict today with debt already in excess of 100 percent of GDP. **Assuming a rate of expansion similar to that of World War II, it's not unreasonable to expect that the debt could swell to 200 percent of GDP or higher.** As the Congressional Budget Office and other sources have noted, **debt loads on that scale would risk catastrophic consequences for the U.S. economy and financial system.**

A global conflict would bring on other perils. Two U.S. rivals—Russia and Iran—are major oil producers. One recent report found that a prolonged closure of the Hormuz Strait amid a broader Middle Eastern conflict could push oil prices beyond \$100 per barrel, substantially increasing inflationary pressures. China is a major holder of U.S. debt, and a sustained sell-off by Beijing could drive up yields in U.S. bonds and place further strains on the economy. It's reasonable to assume that Americans would face shortages in everything from electronics to home-building materials.

All of that pales alongside the human costs that the United States could suffer in a global conflict. Large numbers of U.S. service members would likely die. Some of the United States' adversaries have conventional and nuclear capabilities that can reach the U.S. homeland; others have the ability to inspire or direct Hamas-style terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, which may be easier to carry out given the porous state of the U.S. southern border.

The United States has committed to keeping the peace but isn't doing enough to stop the war.

If all of this sounds dreadful, well, that's the point. As the biblical proverb says, fear is the beginning of wisdom. **Global war is no longer a theoretical contingency debated by policy wonks, nor is it a fever dream of supposed hawks and militarists. It is a real and foreseeable, if not imminent, possibility.**

The United States should be straining every nerve to prepare for this scenario in hopes of deterring conflict but ensuring that Americans are ready for it if it comes. Effective preparation is the path to improved deterrence; **steps to increase readiness for war send a clear signal to adversaries that aggression is riskier to themselves than stability and peace.**

The immediate priority for the United States has to be to ensure that Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan have the weapons they need to defend themselves. These are the players with the most skin in the game at present. **The best hope for avoiding a general conflict is that these frontier states will be so plucky and prickly that aggression is stopped or deterred before it can spread.**

That won't be possible unless the United States gets its defense-industrial base in order. Since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war, total U.S. defense production has increased by a mere 10 percent—even as the war demonstrates the staggeringly high consumption of military ammunition in a major conflict between industrial powers compared to the limited counterinsurgency operations of the recent past.

The situation is serious enough that Washington may need to invoke the Defense Production Act and begin converting some civilian industry to military purposes. Even then, the U.S. government may have to take draconian steps—including the rerouting of materials intended for the consumer economy, expanding production facilities, and revising environmental regulations that complicate the production of war materials—in order to get the U.S. industrial base prepared for mobilization.

It's obvious that Washington will have to increase defense spending. The Biden administration's flatlining of defense outlays, loading defense bills with domestic pork-barrel spending, and insistence on matching every dollar spent on the military with a dollar for climate policy or social spending is the wrong approach. To prepare for war without exploding the debt, Washington will have to pare back expenditures on social programs that enjoy broad popular support.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Laundry List: the US should force Taiwan to adopt an asymmetric defense posture, revitalize training, “radically upgrade its civil defense preparations”, and make future arms sales conditional on meeting these requirements – in the meantime, it should tell American defense manufacturers to prioritize Taiwan contracts, transfer technology needed for Taipei to make its own weapons, and vastly increase training for Taiwanese forces

Kuo, Hunzeker & Christopher 5/24— [Kuo, Raymond, Michael Hunzeker, and Mark Christopher. 2024. “Taiwan-U.S. Relations: Time for Meaningful Action.” *Foreign Policy*. May 20. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/05/20/taiwan-us-washington-foreign-policy-serious-partner/>] Joel.

[Raymond Kuo is the inaugural director of the RAND Corporation’s Taiwan Policy Initiative and a senior political scientist at RAND. He is an expert in international security, international order, and East Asia. He holds a Ph.D. in politics from Princeton University.

Michael A. Hunzeker is an associate professor at George Mason University’s Schar School of Policy and Government, the associate director of the Schar School’s Center for Security Policy Studies, and a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. He has also coauthored monographs on conventional deterrence in northeastern Europe and the Taiwan Strait. Michael served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2000–2006 and holds an A.B. from the University of California, Berkeley as well as a Ph.D., M.P.A., and A.M. from Princeton University

Mark Christopher is a nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council’s Global China Hub. He has worked in and around China issues for more than twenty years. He began his career researching China natural resource demand and foreign policy issues at the Council on Foreign Relations, then spent more than a decade in corporate intelligence and risk consulting]

But the military balance has changed dramatically. China now spends nearly as much on its military as the United States does. The PLA has grown massively in size and capability. The PLA Navy is now the largest in the world, and over the next five years it will grow by nearly 20 percent while the number of U.S. combat ships is set to decrease.

It is now Chinese military power, not U.S. admonition, that deters Taiwanese adventurism. Washington has been slow to grasp this new reality.

First and foremost, the United States must make clear that Taipei needs to play a meaningful role in its own defense. The United States must stop applauding perfunctory attempts at increasing Taiwan’s defense spending and implementing defense reform. These halfhearted atta-boys tell the Taiwanese people that they are helpless bystanders who must depend on the United States, while also incentivizing Taiwanese politicians to act helpless while slow-rolling politically and financially costly changes.

Instead, **the bar should be set as high as it would be with any respected partner. U.S. officials should make clear that they expect Taiwan’s military to adopt a genuinely asymmetric defense posture, revitalize training for ground and reserve units, and radically upgrade its civil defense preparations.** While Taipei has recently raised its defense budget, those increases do not make up for years of underinvestment in security, nor do they keep pace with China’s growing and modernizing capabilities. Accomplishing these goals quickly will require Taiwan to spend far more on defense than the 2.6 percent of GDP it plans for 2024. But serious challenges require accepting painful trade-offs. **Washington should be willing to hold Taipei to account by making future foreign military financing and sales deals conditional on verified progress toward these goals.**

The United States could also get American defense firms to prioritize their contracts with Taiwan over other foreign sales in order to clear the \$19 billion arms backlog that Taipei already paid for.

Washington could also support Taiwan’s own defense industry (in areas where it makes strategic sense to do so) **with co-production and technology transfers.** That would help Taiwan rapidly acquire the things it really needs to counter a Chinese invasion: parts; munitions; anti-air, anti-armor, and anti-ship missiles; and drones.

Washington should also make clear that it will not support Taiwan’s continued pursuit of capabilities that are ill-suited for defending against a full-scale attack. For all the high-profile coverage of Taiwan’s asymmetric initiatives, the fact is that Taiwan’s MND still spends far too much money on main battle tanks, frigates, amphibious assault ships, and indigenous diesel submarines. Taiwan simply cannot afford to waste

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

its limited defense budget on small numbers of expensive platforms—most of which are vulnerable to being destroyed by a qualitatively and quantitatively superior PLA in the earliest stages of a war.

The Pentagon should be empowered to radically increase the size and scope of its training efforts with Taiwan's military. A hundred or so American trainers there and a handful of Taiwanese battalions in Hawaii is a good start. **But given how much the United States struggled to train Iraqi and Afghan military units despite thousands of trainers on the ground, the Pentagon's existing efforts with Taiwan are probably orders of magnitude too small.**

Finally, Washington should do more to leverage its most important asymmetric advantage: the powerful network of allies and partners that share its concerns about China. **In response to Beijing's increasingly aggressive economic and military actions, Japan, Lithuania, the Philippines, India, and Australia have responded with increased interest in supporting Taiwan. The United States should take advantage of these tailwinds to facilitate more robust combined military planning among regional allies and partners for Taiwan contingencies,** to include maintaining command and control and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, providing material support in contested air and sea domains, and possibly even combat roles.

Critics will argue that these steps are more likely to provoke an attack than to deter one. Indeed, some U.S. experts have called to do more to assure Beijing. They argue it is rational for China to seek security, and Washington must convince Chinese leaders that a peaceful path to their preferred outcome still exists. This assurance-focused formulation is appealing because it puts Washington in the driver's seat: If the United States dials down its aggressive actions and doesn't offend Chinese sensibilities, Beijing will respond in kind. Unfortunately, the facts suggest otherwise. Chinese President Xi Jinping's intentions are clear from his speeches and statements. He wants to control Taiwan, he is willing to use force, and he does not intend to pass this problem to a successor.

Drones: Taiwan wants to buy loitering munitions from the US to fend off a Chinese invasion

Detsch 5/24— [Detsch, Jack. 2024. "Taiwan Wants U.S.-Made Loitering Munitions to Deter a Chinese Invasion." *Foreign Policy*. May 8. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/05/08/taiwan-loitering-munitions-suicide-drones-china/>.] Joel.

[Jack Detsch is *Foreign Policy*'s Pentagon and national security reporter. He was previously a staff writer for *Al-Monitor* covering intelligence and defense.]

The United States is a heartbeat away from a world war that it could lose. There are serious conflicts requiring U.S. attention in two of the world's three most strategically important regions. Should China decide to launch an attack on Taiwan, the situation could quickly escalate into a global war on three fronts, directly or indirectly involving the United States. The hour is late, and while there are options for improving the U.S. position, they all require serious effort and inevitable trade-offs. **It's time to move with real urgency to mobilize the United States, its defenses, and its allies for what could become the world crisis of our time.**

Describing the United States' predicament in such stark terms may strike many readers as alarmist. The United States has long been the most powerful nation on earth. It won two world wars, defeated the Soviet Union, and still possesses the world's top military. For the past year and a half, the United States has been imposing gigantic costs on Russia by supporting Ukraine—so much so that it seemed conceivable to this author that the United States might be able to sequence its contests by inflicting a decisive defeat-by-proxy on Russia before turning its primary attention to strengthening the U.S. military posture in the Indo-Pacific.

Taiwan is looking to buy U.S.-made loitering munitions—also known as suicide drones—which have become one of the signature weapons on the modern battlefield, from Nagorno-Karabakh to Ukraine, hovering over fighting for hours at a time before swooping in for the kill.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Taiwan—which has faced near-daily Chinese military exercises for the past three years, including People’s Liberation Army fighter jets flooding the island’s air defense identification zone and virtually erasing the median line that sits across the Taiwan Strait—is said to covet both variants of the AeroVironment Switchblade drone, according to four people familiar with the situation.

The Switchblade, which can fit in a backpack in its smallest form and also has a much larger variant that can be used to take out tanks and armored vehicles, costs about \$50,000 per drone, according to the manufacturer. The U.S. Army has stopped buying the smaller variant, known as the Switchblade 300, but the new supplemental budget passed by Congress gives the Defense Department about \$72 million to buy several hundred more of the larger variant, the Switchblade 600, and the service is expected to begin fielding the drones next year.

Taiwan’s interest in the U.S.-made drones is an increasing sign that Taipei is bowing to the U.S. push—which dates back to the Trump administration—to focus on buying munitions that would help deter or ward off a Chinese invasion of the island.

“This is all part of the U.S. push for asymmetry,” said Ivan Kanapathy, a nonresident senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and former National Security Council official during the Trump administration. “We were telling them, ‘You guys need to buy a lot more munitions.’”

Early loitering munitions date all the way back to the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, but they really came into fashion during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, when Israeli-made loitering munitions supported a lightning Azerbaijani ground offensive that overwhelmed a less technically savvy Armenian military that fought out in the open.

The AeroVironment Switchblade is the U.S. version. Manufactured in California and Utah, the Switchblade is fired out of a tube and has been used extensively by the Ukrainian military. About 1,100 U.S.-made Switchblades have been sent to Ukraine since the early days of Russia’s full-scale invasion. The Kremlin has countered that with its production of the Lancet drone and supplemented it with Shahed drones from Iran that use satellite navigation instead of a radiation-seeker.

All of these variants have been effective on the battlefield and are now almost ubiquitous—although pocket-sized jammers used to disable them have become almost equally as ubiquitous. Their uses have been evolving, too. For years, China has fielded the so-called “Harpy,” an Israeli-made loitering munition that is designed to take out enemy radars. (The second generation of that weapon, known as the “Harop,” was Azerbaijan’s weapon of choice in the 2020 war.)

And over time, **China’s advantage in the skies has only grown, as Chinese strategists have come to believe that the weapon can be effective in modern attrition warfare.** Sky News recently reported that China now has tens of thousands of drone variants. The Taiwanese have about four drone types of their own.

But **Taiwanese officials increasingly believe that the U.S.-made suicide drones—which are only good for one shot—would be effective at plunking Chinese ships if they come across the Taiwan Strait or hitting Chinese tanks and vehicles if they come ashore,** said the people familiar with Taiwan’s interest in the drones, who spoke on condition of anonymity to talk about a pending military sale.

Taiwan has submitted a letter of request to the Defense Department for a drone that the Switchblade 300 would fit, although the people familiar with the request said AeroVironment was not specifically named. Taiwan has sent a second letter of request to the Pentagon for a larger drone variant, with competition between the Switchblade 600 and Anduril’s Altius-600, which can loiter over a target for four hours, longer than AeroVironment’s model. A spokesperson from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the United States, Taiwan’s de facto embassy in Washington, declined to comment, citing a practice of not talking about details of U.S. defense cooperation.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

In an email, Lisa Lawrence, a Defense Department spokesperson, said the agency would not comment on proposed defense sales before they were notified to Congress. Anduril declined to comment, and AeroVironment did not respond to an emailed request for comment.

The Biden administration has started to make a dent in the \$19 billion in backlogged military sales to Taiwan in the past several years, approving 13 congressional notifications for weapons sales since 2021. But the deals have been almost exclusively focused on items on the Pentagon's integrated capabilities list, a register of cost-effective weapons that includes mostly munitions, and sustaining the weapons that they already have.

Taiwan's outgoing president, Tsai Ing-wen, has made it a requirement for the island to field more than 3,000 military drones, and some 50 Taiwanese research teams are competing for more than \$300 million in government contracts. Much of that money is focused domestically.

That investment has already had an impact. Taiwanese companies have unveiled their own home-built loitering munitions, which can hit targets up to 93 miles away. Taiwan has also started a quasi-government agency that is meant to function like the Pentagon's Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, a defense technology incubator that claims at least partial credit for modern inventions such as GPS and the internet.

Heino Klinck, a former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense, said Taiwan's long-term goal is to build weapons that are easily expendable and could be produced on the island, not just buy fancy U.S.-made weapons. "The Taiwanese have to be selective in how they invest," Klinck said. "You need to be able to contend with the new normal that the Chinese have established and are continuing to establish almost on a daily basis."

Air Defense: supplying air-defense systems to Taiwan would significantly raise the chances of foiling a Chinese invasion

Halem & Freymann 22— [Halem, Harry. 2022. "Ukraine Shows Why Taiwan Needs More Air Defense - War on the Rocks." War on the Rocks. April 7. <https://warontherocks.com/2022/04/ukraine-shows-why-taiwan-needs-more-air-defense/>.] Joel.

[Harry Halem is a Senior Fellow at Yorktown Institute. He holds an MA (Hons) in Philosophy and International Relations from the University of St Andrews, and an MSc in Political Philosophy from the London School of Economics. Mr. Halem worked for the Hudson Institute's Seapower Center, along with multiple UK think-tanks. He has published a variety of short-form pieces and monographs on various aspects of military affairs, in addition to a short book on Libyan political history.

Eyck Freymann is a Hoover Fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. He is also a non-resident research fellow at the China Maritime Studies Institute at the US Naval War College.]

Taiwan also has geographic disadvantages compared to Ukraine. It has no land border with any country, let alone a U.S. ally like Poland. At only 6 percent of Ukraine's size, it also lacks strategic depth — territory behind the front lines in which to organize its forces. Taiwan can therefore learn from Ukraine's success, but it needs to calibrate its approach to reflect its different geography and its quantitatively larger, more sophisticated adversary. Taiwan will need significantly better air defenses than Ukraine, organized in the form of a resilient and geographically dispersed network.

Today, **Taiwan's air defenses are materially and technologically lacking.** Taiwan's military has a handful of U.S. Patriot and indigenously-developed Sky Bow batteries, some of which may have inferior, Chinese-compromised equipment. It also has an unclear number of aging surface-to-air missiles, and towed short-range anti-air cannons and missiles. In a crisis, Taiwan would use these ground-based weapons alongside its fighter aircraft. But Taiwan has just over 400 fighter aircraft in 17

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

squadrons. China likely has around 300 fighter aircraft in the Eastern Theater Command, and around 400–450 fighter aircraft capable of rapid deployment from the Central Theater Command, along with squadrons it could pull from throughout the country. Thus, Taiwan is likely to face around a two-to-one numerical disadvantage in the air. **In fighter combat, concentration provides increasing returns to scale, giving China a decisive advantage after mobilization.** Moreover, **Chinese cruise and ballistic missile batteries can saturate Taiwanese airfields and exposed air defenses in a manner of hours.** Of course, China will need to build up its forces before attacking, giving Taiwan time to harden its airfields and hide mobile air defenses. However, China's thousands of ground-launched missiles, along with its surface- and air-launched missiles, make sustained defense unlikely without years of preparation. By destroying Taiwanese aircraft, air defenses, and probably warships in several days to a week, China can seize cross-strait air superiority, enabling a follow-on amphibious assault or naval blockade.

Without air control, however, China would be incapable of executing almost any military plan against Taiwan. This means that **if Taiwanese air defenses can survive China's initial scripted bombardments, China would need to shift to a traditional mission of suppression or destruction of air defense and would have to redirect tactical and strategic air forces towards ensuring air control over the Taiwan Strait.** The longer this air battle lasts, the more likely the United States and its allies would be able to mobilize and intervene to support Taiwan in a broader war. Anticipating this likely course of events, the United States should expand Taiwanese air defense capabilities by any means possible.

Three Forms of Support

First, the United States can sell additional Patriot missile systems to Taiwan in its standard arms transfer packages. A Patriot battery costs around \$1 billion — expensive, but not prohibitively so in the context of Taiwan's \$17 billion annual defense budget. Taiwan has shown interest in Patriots historically and the Ukraine war may convince it that additional batteries are a good investment. Covering the entire island would take 10 Patriot battalions, or around 75 percent of the American force. Taiwan as it stands has two battalions. By prioritizing large urban areas and airbases, Taiwan could reduce its requirements and improve performance with layering. If the United States provides batteries annually, it could triple Taiwan's air defense capabilities by 2024. **Washington could also offer the ground-launched advanced medium-range air-to-air missile and the Norwegian-built national advanced surface-to-air missile systems, which cost around \$50 million per unit.** The latter uses technology from the MIM-23 Hawk, making it easy to integrate into the Taiwanese military.

Another way to achieve a similar outcome would be to encourage allies to sell older equipment to Taiwan at reduced cost. NATO will begin to phase out Patriot in the next few years, replacing it with a next-generation system known as the Medium Extended Air Defense System, while also upgrading PAC-3 systems to the more capable PAC-4. Once this transition begins, **NATO countries can sell their older Patriot batteries to Taiwan directly. If these countries fear Chinese retribution, they could transfer phased-out Patriot batteries back to the United States, which in turn could pass them on to Taiwan.** PAC-3 upgrades will take time, however, and these sales would not begin until the mid to late 2020s. Thus, resale is a reasonable longer-term option, but cannot be the only policy choice.

Second, the United States should help Taiwan develop domestic missile defense programs. Taiwan's Sky Bow missile defense system is an effective indigenously developed weapon, and Taiwan has proposed producing it jointly on an accelerated timeline. Producing parts of this system

Nocember 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

in the United States, specifically missiles and launchers rather than Taiwan's proprietary radar systems, could enable more rapid deployment at scale in the next 18 to 24 months, improving Taiwanese credibility in high-end combat.

Third, the United States could help Taiwan create an integrated tracking and fire control system, akin to Northrop Grumman's Integrated Air and Missile Defense Battle Command System. This system draws on data from multiple aircraft- and ground-based air defenses and enables commanders to engage air targets at greater range than provided by the standard Patriot battery. **Taiwan's F-16s could be upgraded with sensors to feed into a similar network. Even without aerial integration, linking together Taiwanese air defenses would increase their coverage, range, and effectiveness.**

These options can be combined. The integrated-style system would contribute the most to Taiwan's defense, but it would also be the hardest to implement. Integrating legacy units into this new network would take time. The United States also may not want to provide Taiwan with an American-developed system, given the possibility that Chinese intelligence operatives could compromise it or that the Chinese army could seize it if Taiwan falls. Thus, **the most straightforward course of action would be to increase Patriot sales in the next arms package while working with European partners to ease contracts with Taiwan and offload older equipment.**

Taiwan faces formidable geographic and technological disadvantages in the face of a looming military threat from the mainland. **Air defenses are not a silver bullet, but Ukraine has proven that they are a valuable asymmetric tool. By helping Taiwan build a resilient and layered network of air defenses, the United States won't just help Taipei gain the capacity to buy time in a direct confrontation. It will also go a long way toward deterring such a confrontation in the first place.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Deterrence

Capabilities: By strengthening Taiwan's defense capabilities and enhancing deterrence against potential aggression from China, the US can help it better resist threats.

Nye 24 - [Nye, Joseph S.. "How to Prevent a War over Taiwan | by Joseph S. Nye, Jr." Project Syndicate. April 8, 2024. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/us-china-war-over-taiwan-how-to-prevent-it-by-joseph-s-nye-2024-04>.] Elene.

[Joseph S. Nye, Jr., Co-Chair of the Aspen Strategy Group, is a former dean of the Harvard Kennedy School, a former US assistant secretary of defense, and the author of Do Morals Matter? Presidents and Foreign Policy from FDR to Trump (Oxford University Press, 2020) and A Life in the American Century (Polity Press, 2024).]

For years, the US policy was known as “strategic ambiguity,” but it could be better described as “double deterrence.” The US wanted to deter China from using force, but also to deter Taiwan from provoking Beijing by declaring formal independence. That meant providing Taiwan with weapons for its self-defense, but not issuing a formal security guarantee, since that might tempt Taipei into declaring independence.

Thus, when I visited Beijing in 1995 as an official in the Clinton administration and was asked whether the US would really risk war to defend Taiwan, I replied that it was possible, though no one could be sure. I pointed out that in 1950, US Secretary of State Dean Acheson had declared Korea to be outside our defense perimeter; yet within the year, Chinese and Americans were killing each other on the Korean Peninsula. The lesson of history was that China should not take the risk.

The next year, after I had left government, I was asked to join a bipartisan group of former officials to visit Taiwan. We met with President Lee Teng-hui, whose previous “unofficial” visit to the US had caused a crisis in which China fired missiles into the sea and the US deployed carriers off the coast of Taiwan. We warned Lee that if he declared independence, he could not count on American support. Such was “strategic ambiguity.”

For a half-century, despite differences of interpretation, the “one China” formula and the US doctrine of strategic ambiguity kept the peace. But now, **some analysts are calling for greater strategic clarity about the defense of Taiwan.** They note that China has become much stronger than it was in 1971 or 1995, and that it is objecting more vociferously to episodes like then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Taiwan in 2022. Adding further to the potential for instability, Taiwan’s two most recent presidents are from the Democratic Progressive Party, which officially favors independence, and polls show that most Taiwanese do not consider themselves Chinese. Can double deterrence still work?

For his part, US President Joe Biden has made four statements suggesting that he would defend Taiwan if China were to use force. But each time, the White House has “clarified” that America has not changed its policy. The administration thus has tried to bolster its military deterrence against a Chinese attack, while not provoking China into riskier behavior by questioning the “one China” policy. The goal is to extend the status quo indefinitely.

Will it work? According to Henry Kissinger, who brokered normalization in the 1970s, Mao Zedong told Richard Nixon that China could wait a century for the return of Taiwan. But China’s current leader, Xi Jinping, has sounded much more impatient. His primary concern is control of the Communist Party of China and ensuring the CPC’s continued control of China. Though a failed invasion of Taiwan could jeopardize both, a declaration of Taiwanese independence also could make him feel threatened at home and more willing to take big risks.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Public officials' words can affect this delicate balance. But in diplomacy, actions speak loudest, and there are several moves that the US could make to increase deterrence. **Since an island of 24 million people can never militarily defeat a country of more than one billion, Taiwan must be able to mount resistance that is strong enough to change Xi's calculation.** He must be made to understand that he cannot possibly pull off a quick fait accompli. **To that end, Taiwan needs not only advanced aircraft and submarines, but also shore-to-ship missiles that can be hidden in caves to outlast a Chinese first strike. It must become a porcupine that no power can swallow quickly.**

As an island 100 miles (161 kilometers) off the Chinese coast, Taiwan does benefit from a vast moat that makes an invasion difficult. But the sea also means that China could enforce a naval blockade to squeeze Taiwanese into submission. Taiwan therefore needs to boost its stockpiles of food and fuel, and **the US and its allies must make clear that they would not respect a Chinese blockade. That means positioning American military systems in Japan, Australia, and the Philippines that can reach Taiwan within a week.** This would reduce the ambiguity in US deterrence.

At the same time, the US should not give up the basic features of double deterrence. **Preventing a war requires showing China that the US and its allies have the capacity to defend Taiwan,** and reminding the island's leaders that a de jure declaration of independence would be provocative and is unacceptable. Much has changed since Nixon and Mao invented the "one China" formula. But that formula, if combined with the other steps outlined above, can still help avert a war over Taiwan.

Morale: U.S. support can boost Taiwanese determination to defend themselves by reassuring them that their security is a priority for America.

Harris 24 – [Harris, Bryant. "Congress Funds Taiwan Military Support as Foreign Aid Bill Stalls." Defense News. March 28, 2024. <https://www.defensenews.com/congress/2024/03/28/congress-funds-taiwan-military-support-as-foreign-aid-bill-stalls/>.] Elene

[Bryant Harris is the Congress reporter for Defense News. He has covered U.S. foreign policy, national security, international affairs and politics in Washington since 2014. He has also written for Foreign Policy, Al-Monitor, Al Jazeera English and IPS News.]

The fiscal 2024 State Department spending bill Congress passed on Saturday includes \$300 million in Foreign Military Financing, or FMF, for Taiwan. The funding to buy more military equipment comes more than a year after Congress first authorized the cash assistance for Taipei. But the \$300 million falls far short of the cumulative \$4 billion in Taiwan military assistance in the foreign aid bill that remains stalled in the House.

"It provides new tools to use to try and contribute to the deterrence effort and get weapons to Taiwan more quickly and in larger quantities," Bonnie Glaser, the managing director of the German Marshall Fund's Indo-Pacific program, told Defense News. **"Another benefit of it is that it signals to the people of Taiwan that the United States prioritizes their defense and is willing to put our money where our mouth is."**

The \$300 million figure represents a halfway point between House appropriators – who sought \$500 million in Taiwan FMF – and their Senate counterparts who only wanted \$113 million.

Taiwan must spend most of that \$300 million in FMF grants or loans to procure weapons from U.S. defense contractors but could use \$45 million of that money to purchase equipment and services on-island – a privilege called offshore procurement that only Israel has enjoyed so far.

Of the 25-plus countries that receive FMF yearly, the largest recipients are Israel with an annual \$3.3 billion, Egypt with an annual \$1.3 billion and Jordan with an annual \$425 million. The State Department has asked for \$100 million in Taiwan FMF as part of its FY25 budget request. It provided Taiwan with \$55 million in FMF last year from a portion of Egypt aid frozen over human rights concerns.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Appropriators initially were wary of allocating large FMF sums for Taiwan given pressures on the State Department budget and the relative wealth of the island, whose GDP came in at an estimated \$800 billion in FY23.

Glaser noted that **Taiwan has increased its defense spending consecutively over the past several years and now spends 2.6% of its GDP on defense, “which is still not enough given the nature of the threat they face.”**

The U.S. hopes that rushing an influx of weapons into Taiwan will help deter a potential Chinese invasion. China considers Taiwan to be a rogue province and has threatened to take it by force if necessary. President Xi Jinping has set 2027 – the 100th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Liberation Army – as the date he hopes the Chinese military will have the capabilities to take Taiwan.

“Yes, it’s our taxpayer money and they should be paying for more themselves, but there’s also some value in signaling that this is a priority for the United States,” said Glaser. **“It does help to boost the determination of the Taiwanese to defend themselves because they know that the United States cares about their defense.”**

The Taiwan FMF in the FY24 State Department spending bill pales in comparison to the \$3.9 billion in additional military assistance for Taipei that the Senate’s foreign aid bill. The Senate in February passed the bipartisan bill, which primarily provides \$60 billion in economic and security aid to Ukraine and another \$14 billion in military aid to Israel, in a 70-29 vote.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., has so far refused to put it on the floor amid opposition to the Ukraine aid from former President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican presidential nominee, and the right-flank of his caucus. Meanwhile, some progressive Democrats oppose the additional Israel aid in the bill amid the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Johnson has told Republican defense hawks the House will hold foreign aid votes in April after it returns from its two-week recess, though it will not necessarily take up the bipartisan Senate bill, which hews closely to President Joe Biden’s request.

The Senate bill includes an additional \$2 billion in Taiwan FMF and another \$1.9 billion that would allow the Defense Department to rush weapons to Taipei from U.S. stockpiles and replenish it.

Using Presidential Drawdown Authority from U.S. stockpiles would allow the U.S. to move materiel into Taiwan faster than through FMF-funded arms sales. The Biden administration has primarily armed Ukraine through drawdowns of U.S. stockpiles since Russia’s 2022 invasion.

“That makes it easier to deliver something if we already have it in our own stockpiles, and we can just give it to Taiwan,” said Glaser. “That seems to cut through quite a bit of the red tape that might be involved in using other methods.”

Lawmakers estimate that there is a roughly \$19 billion backlog in U.S. arms sales to Taiwan due to a confluence of issues, including industrial base constraints, a sometimes slow pace of contracting and acquisition and a medley of lengthy technology and security reviews in the Foreign Military Sales process.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Prioritize Taiwan

Authoritarian Countries: The US government should prioritize democracies like Taiwan over autocracies like Egypt in fulfilling arms orders – thus, reducing the likelihood that the weapons will be used for human rights abuses while increasing global security

Cohen & Allen 9/23— [“Taiwan Needs Our Weapons – Instead, We’re Sending Them to Bad Guys.” 2023. Cato Institute. September 22. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/taiwan-needs-our-weapons-instead-were-sending-them-bad-guys>.] Joel.

[Jordan Cohen was a policy analyst in defense and foreign policy at the Cato Institute. His research interests include arms sales, alliances, foreign policy entanglements, and Middle East politics.

[Johnathan Allen is a Graduate of the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, a freelance writer and a research associate.]

On September 13, the United States announced that it would redirect \$85 million in foreign military financing from Egypt to Taiwan due to the former’s human rights abuses. Egypt’s disregard for human rights is an ongoing problem, with the government having recently detained a French journalist covering civilian bombings. While only a start, the Biden administration’s policy shift is long overdue: we cannot treat all weapon recipients as equal priorities.

Many countries in the greater Middle East, including Egypt, not only use the arms they receive to abuse human rights but also face few security threats. Yet, they still often receive weapons over Taiwan due to the frequency of their major purchases. By prioritizing Taiwan – a democratic country facing a huge security threat – Washington will reduce the chance of US weapons being used to abuse human rights and simultaneously help Taiwan deter Chinese aggression.

Despite Barack Obama’s “pivot to Asia,” Donald Trump’s antagonism towards China, and Joe Biden’s statements about an American commitment to Taiwan’s security, the three successive administrations did little to ensure they sent Taipei the weapons it needs to defend itself from a potential attack. **Instead, they have sent weapons badly needed in Taiwan to some of the world’s most oppressive dictators.**

While Biden has framed much of his foreign policy as creating a coalition of liberal states to fight back against the rising tide of global authoritarianism, his actions have shown otherwise. He has consistently cozied up to some of the world’s most brutal dictators at the cost of aiding democracies. Many think tanks agree with this assessment: **according to Freedom House, Taiwan currently scores a 94 out of a possible 100, while Egypt has an abysmal score of just 18.**

The Human Freedom Index likewise ranks Taiwan as the 14th freest country or territory in the world; meanwhile, Egypt places 161st (out of 165 ranked countries and territories). Moreover, the Cato Institute’s Arms Sales Risk Index ranks Egypt as the 17th riskiest weapons recipient in the world while Taiwan is the fifth safest. But even with these widely diverging scores and rankings, the Biden administration has notified Congress of arms sales to Egypt worth nearly double those to Taiwan.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, both Taiwan and Egypt have ordered anti-ship and anti-tank missiles from the United States. Since the start of the Obama administration, Egypt has received 100 per cent of its requests for such systems and is only awaiting shipments of 3.3 per cent of all total weapons it has ordered. **Conversely, Taiwan** is awaiting the delivery of 1,886 anti-tank and anti-ship missiles and **has only received 42 per cent** of the total number of weapons it has ordered from Washington since 2008.

Ultimately, Taiwan and Egypt are competing for weapons. Some argue that the United States should simply increase defense spending to improve its defense industrial base, but this misses three important facts. First, instability in defense contracts means that workers are often let go and expensive to bring back and retrain, shrinking the workforce in the defense industry.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Second, it is not possible to quickly boost production because the United States has not spent enough in recent years to increase defense production to the level required to quickly deliver weapons to all customers. Finally, the least-cost incentive process encourages companies to offer the cheapest contracts possible, which means they are not designed to build weapons quickly. Relatedly, this process means that companies fulfill those contracts in order of the largest and most consistent customers. Therefore, frequent purchasers of major systems, such as Egypt, tend to receive priority over Taiwan.

For the United States to arm Taiwan to the point where it can deter Chinese aggression, prioritization is key. The best way to prioritize would be to send weapons to customers that pose little risk to US security and are strategically important before agreeing to sales worth billions of dollars every year to some of the world's worst human rights abusers.

A Chinese war with Taiwan would run contrary to global interests due in large part to the massive costs – with US intelligence estimating it could cost the world \$1 trillion and the Center for Strategic and International Studies estimating that tens of thousands would be dead within the first weeks of war.

The move to send military aid initially bound for Egypt to Taiwan is a sign that the Biden administration is moving in the right direction. **Prioritizing weapons transfers to freer countries facing massive security threats over repressive autocrats facing few external risks will increase global security while reducing Washington's role in human rights atrocities.**

Israel: The US government should prioritize arms shipments to Taiwan over shipments to Israel—this is true even given Israel's new land war in Lebanon, or in a future direct conflict with Iran

Cohen & Kavanagh 11/23—[“The True Military Assistance Tradeoff Is between Israel and Taiwan.” 2023. Cato Institute. November 21. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/true-military-assistance-tradeoff-between-israel-taiwan>.] Joel.

[Jordan Cohen was a policy analyst in defense and foreign policy at the Cato Institute. His research interests include arms sales, alliances, foreign policy entanglements, and Middle East politics.

Jennifer Kavanagh was a senior fellow in the American Statecraft Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. A political scientist by training, she has spent her career studying national security threats and their consequences for U.S. foreign policy and defense strategy. Kavanagh received an AB in government from Harvard University and a PhD in political science and public policy from the University of Michigan. She is also a term member of the Council on Foreign Relations and an adjunct professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University.]

Scenario 2: An Expanded War with Hizballah

An expanded conflict that includes Hizballah, however, would dramatically increase Israel's military requirements and potential requests for assistance from the United States. This would put real but not unmanageable strain on aid to Ukraine. However, **in this scenario, the impact on military assistance and deterrence in the Indo-Pacific should be the primary concern.**

Hizballah is thought to have somewhere between 20,000 and 50,000 fighters and a stockpile of around 150,000 missiles, including relatively advanced precision-guided and short-range ballistic and anti-ship missiles and drones that could overwhelm Israeli air defenses and devastate critical infrastructure. In its 2006 war against Hizballah in southern Lebanon, Israel relied primarily on long-range fires — hitting as many as 7,000 targets using 19,000 bombs and 2,000 missiles — supplemented by a more limited ground campaign and naval blockade with sea-based strikes. Facing a stronger and better armed Hizballah today, the Israel Defense Forces would almost certainly respond with increased airstrikes and artillery fire, creating additional demands for precision-guided munitions and ammunition. Israel has also surged tank units to its northern border, suggesting a ground operation might be possible as well.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

The United States could probably supply Israel with the short-range weapons it would need to take on Hizballah. But a **longer or more intense campaign** than in 2006 — a likely reality, given that Hizballah is stronger than in 2006 — **could strain existing stocks, especially for systems like the Hellfire that have relevance in both Ukraine and Taiwan.** Tradeoffs would become more difficult if Israel requests longer-range air-launched systems such as the joint air-to-surface standoff missile or the joint standoff weapon to strike Hizballah targets in Syria, where more modernized air defenses are capable of intercepting Israel's fighter jets and air-launched munitions. **Israel might not need many of these longer-range missiles. But they would be central to any Indo-Pacific campaign, and U.S. stockpiles are quite limited — by some estimates already below what would be needed for a Taiwan contingency — so even a minor diversion could detract from both deterrence and warfighting capability in the Indo-Pacific theater.**

Meeting additional demand for 155mm ammunition would be harder. Over the course of the 34-day 2006 war with Hizballah, Israeli forces fired nearly 150,000 artillery rounds, including 155mm and other variants. With Hizballah stronger now, the Israel Defense Forces might need to increase their rate of artillery fire. At the very least, a ground operation that takes several months could increase Israel's 155mm ammunition needs by over 100,000 rounds, which would undoubtedly force tradeoffs with supplies sent to Ukraine. Once again, the stalemate in Ukraine and Israel's smaller needs should be factors in allocating resources across the two countries.

Israel's need for air defense is also likely to increase if the war expanded to include operations against Hizballah. To protect against Hizballah's larger and more advanced arsenal of missiles, Israel relies on layered air defenses that include the David's Sling and the Arrow 3 anti-ballistic missile. But even these advanced systems might be overwhelmed by Hizballah's likely high rate of fire and cruise missiles. Both systems are produced in Israel, so the United States would not be able to backfill these systems directly. To fill any gap, however, **Israel might request U.S. Patriot air defense systems — which are already in short supply. Not only are they needed in Ukraine, but they are also high on the list of capabilities required in the Indo-Pacific, whether for Taiwan's asymmetric defense or for U.S. installations in the region. Sending them to Israel instead would leave both vulnerable.**

Finally, as it did in 2006, Israel also might try to blockade Lebanese ports to limit the flow of weapons into Lebanon. Israel has a supply of domestically produced anti-ship missiles it could use to support this operation, but depending on the scope, it might request more, like the Harpoon missiles that Israel previously purchased from the United States. **With Taiwan waiting for 800 Harpoon missiles and other allies in the Indo-Pacific region interested in this capability, meeting an Israeli request for this or similar systems would create difficult tradeoffs.**

Scenario 3: A Direct Conflict with Iran

Iran has traditionally relied on proxies like Hizballah, but as Israel's operations against Hamas intensify, there is a risk the Israeli-Iranian "shadow war" may become more open. If this occurs, additional Israeli military needs — for example long-range strike and air defense capabilities — would impact some U.S. military assistance to Ukraine but could have devastating implications for Washington's Indo-Pacific allies and partners.

Iran arguably has the most versatile and largest arsenal of rockets and missiles in the Middle East. This is comprised of cruise and ballistic missiles, long-range missiles that can reach Tel Aviv, a large land- and sea-based paramilitary force, and possibly advanced air defense systems acquired from Russia.

To overcome Iran's advanced air defenses, Israel could request additional long-range precision-guided munitions (most likely air- and sea-launched) from the United States, including the joint air-to-surface standoff missile, Tomahawk, or Standard Missile-6, among others, along with advanced uncrewed aerial systems with strike capabilities. To counter any threats from Iran's sea-based paramilitary forces, Israel might need additional uncrewed surface and underwater vessels and a sizable stock of anti-ship missiles, including possibly

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

the long-range anti-ship missile and Harpoon missiles. Finally, **a direct conflict with Iran would pose further air defense challenges. Since Israel would require time to build up its stockpiles of Arrow 3 missiles, it might request U.S. Patriot systems or even temporary use of a U.S. terminal high-altitude area defense system to protect against Iran's arsenal of ballistic and cruise missiles.**

Except for the Patriot air defense system, **these capabilities are not in high demand in Ukraine, but they are essential for the Indo-Pacific theater and in short supply there.** For example, U.S. forces and allies and partners would rely heavily on long-range strike assets to target Chinese air, naval, and potentially mainland assets. **The Pentagon has prioritized increasing its production of these weapons, in particular the joint air-to-surface standoff missile and long-range anti-ship missile, but these efforts would be undone by a diversion of substantial quantities of either to the Middle East.** Uncrewed air and naval systems will also be valuable for U.S. forces to counter a Chinese invasion fleet in the Taiwan Strait or Chinese forces in the South China Sea. The same systems will be central to Taiwan's asymmetric defense. Finally, given China's large stockpile of advanced weapons, **air defense of all kinds will be at a premium in the Indo-Pacific, and the loss of even moderate numbers of these systems to the Middle East will have a negative impact on the U.S. posture in Asia.**

The Rationale for Prioritizing Taiwan

There are two main reasons why military assistance to Taiwan should be prioritized over aid to Israel. The most important is that the U.S. interests at stake in the Indo-Pacific are much greater than those in Middle East. The Biden administration has repeatedly identified China as the most significant U.S. competitor and prioritized the goal of deterring Chinese aggression in the Indo-Pacific as the focus of U.S. defense policy. The United States has significant economic interests in the region and a strategic interest in deterring China from seizing Taiwan, which could shift the balance of power in Asia and put pressure on U.S. alliances in the region. In contrast, U.S. economic and strategic interests in the Middle East are considerably narrower, especially given greater U.S. energy independence. **A deterrence failure in the Indo-Pacific will have more severe consequences for the United States** and should be more strenuously avoided.

In addition, U.S. assistance is both more needed in the Indo-Pacific and likely to have a greater impact on regional deterrence and escalation risks than it would in the Middle East. **The military challenge China poses to Taiwan and other Indo-Pacific allies is substantially greater than the threat presented to Israel by Hizballah or Iran** — especially since neither has shown much interest in escalation with Israel to this point. This is true not only because China's military capabilities greatly exceed those of Iran and its proxies but also because Israel has an advanced and well-stocked arsenal of its own supplemented yearly by nearly \$4 billion in U.S. military assistance while Taiwan's military capabilities are substantially weaker and in need of much investment before they will be sufficient to defend against Chinese attack. In this context, **it makes sense to prioritize scarce resources toward the greater threat and need.**

A Sustainable Path Forward

Instead of open-ended military assistance, Washington should provide narrowly tailored aid to help Israel increase its capacity for self-defense and reduce the most pressing threats presented by Hamas. Policymakers should make clear to Israel that capabilities defined as central to Indo-Pacific deterrence will not be provided. This would include all long-range strike systems, anti-ship missiles, air defense systems including Stingers, Patriot, and terminal high-altitude area defense, and a large portion of uncrewed air and naval platforms.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Reputation

Allies: If the U.S. were to withdraw its military support for Taiwan, it would undermine trust among its allies in East Asia, potentially leading to increased regional instability.

Gomez 16 - [Gomez, Eric. "A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship." Cato Institute. September 28, 2016. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/costly-commitment-options-future-us-taiwan-defense-relationship>.] Elene.

[Eric Gomez is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on the U.S. military budget and force posture, as well as arms control and nuclear stability issues in East Asia. In 2020, Gomez was a member of the Project on Nuclear Issues Nuclear Scholars Initiative program, where he conducted research on the impacts of U.S. intermediate-range missiles on U.S.-China strategic stability.]

Advocates of the U.S. military commitment to Taiwan argue that **the island's success as a liberal democracy is linked to the regional security interests of the United States.** For example, during his failed campaign for president, Sen. Marco Rubio (R-FL) said that **"Taiwan's continued existence as a vibrant, prosperous democracy in the heart of Asia is crucial to American security interests there and to the continued expansion of liberty and free enterprise in the region."** In the U.S. Congress the ideologically driven, "pro-democracy" camp of Taiwan supporters is large and influential.

Proponents of a strong U.S. commitment to Taiwan also argue that Taiwan's political system is evidence that Chinese culture is compatible with democracy. According to John Lee of the Hudson Institute, **"Taiwan terrifies China because the small island represents a magnificent vision of what the mainland could be and what the [Chinese] Communist Party is not. This should be a reason to reaffirm that defending democracy in Taiwan is important to America and the region."** Supporters of a strong U.S. defense commitment to Taiwan through restoring America's military superiority want to send a clear message to Beijing that the security commitment has not been shaken by China's growing military power.

Sustaining a Minimum Advantage

The second option, sustaining a minimum advantage, would maintain the current U.S. military commitment with some slight modifications. This option is much less resource-intensive than the restore-superiority option. The United States would maintain its implicit military commitment, but with preconditions that encourage Taiwan to invest more in its own defense. Importantly, the United States would reserve the right not to intervene if Taiwan provoked an armed conflict with China. The overarching themes of this option are balance and moderation. It has taken the United States years of effort to create what appears to be a relatively stable status quo, so, its supporters ask, why risk destabilizing it by significantly altering the U.S.-Taiwan relationship without very good reason? Under this option, the United States would improve the military assets for defending Taiwan, but at a much smaller scale than with the restore-superiority option. The PLA's steadily improving capabilities diminish the credibility of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan by raising the costs of conflict. Maintaining a qualitative advantage over the PLA as it continues to develop will enhance the credibility of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan by keeping the costs of war high for the PLA. However, such improvements would be tempered to mitigate the chance of overreaction by Beijing and possible damage to U.S.-China relations.

American arms sales to Taiwan would continue under this policy option. Arms sales create tension in the U.S.-China relationship, but three benefits of arms sales mitigate the costs they create. First, arms sales complicate PLA planning and raise the costs of conflict for China. Second, damage done to U.S.-China relations as a result of the arms sales is relatively small. A joint report from the Project 2049 Institute and the U.S.-Taiwan Business Council on China's reactions to arms sales concludes, "Past behavior indicates that the PRC is unlikely to challenge any fundamental U.S. interests in response to future releases of significant military articles and services to Taiwan." Finally, arms sales demonstrate the commitment to Taiwan's defense, especially in times of political transition. Arms sales to Taiwan would also be adjusted to counteract the PLA's quantitative advantage and operational strengths. Expensive items such as AV-8B Harriers, F-16 fighters, and Perry-class frigates would no longer be sold because they are highly vulnerable to Chinese weapons systems. Instead, arms sales would prioritize cheaper, more numerous precision-guided weapons and advanced surveillance assets that would prevent Chinese forces from achieving a quick victory and buy time for the United States to come to Taiwan's rescue. Such weapons systems are, generally speaking, much cheaper and easier to maintain than aircraft and ships. A report from the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments argues that by "forego[ing] further acquisitions of costly, high-end air and naval surface combat platforms" Taiwanese policymakers can focus their economic resources on more "cost-effective platforms" better suited to Taiwan's defense.

The United States would expect Taiwan to make serious defense investments by increasing military spending and developing indigenous weapons systems. Taiwan's military spending has increased in nominal terms after a precipitous drop in the late 1990s and early 2000s, but since 1999 defense spending has not risen above 3 percent of GDP. Taipei's unwillingness to spend more on defense has upset some officials in Washington. In a November 2015 letter to President Obama calling for a new arms sale to Taiwan, Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) and Sen. Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD) wrote, "We are increasingly concerned that, absent a change in defense spending, Taiwan's military will continue to be under-resourced and unable to make the investments necessary to maintain a credible deterrent across the strait." Thankfully, Tsai Ing-wen and the DPP have made increased defense spending a major policy goal. The development of Taiwan's defense industry would provide an additional source of high-quality military equipment for the island's defense. Taiwan has experience designing and manufacturing sea and air defense weapons. James Holmes of the U.S. Naval War College notes, "[In 2010] Taiwanese defense manufacturers secretly designed and started building a dozen stealthy, 500-ton fast patrol craft [Tuo Chiang-class] armed with indigenously built, supersonic anti-ship missiles." Indigenously produced air defense systems include the Tien Kung (TK) family of missiles, the Indigenous Defense Fighter, and anti-aircraft guns. Importantly, "Made in Taiwan" is not a byword for poor quality. According to Ian Easton of the Project 2049 Institute, the TK surface-to-air (SAM) missiles are "comparable to [U.S.-made] Patriot systems in terms of capability," and the Hsiung Feng III anti-ship missile "is more capable than any comparable system fielded by the U.S. Navy in terms of range and speed."

Nocember 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Sustaining a minimum advantage would be the easiest of the three policy options for the United States to implement. Inertia is a powerful force. The United States has invested a considerable amount of resources and effort to reach a stable status quo in the Taiwan Strait, creating an “if it isn’t broken, don’t fix it” mentality. Advocates of maintaining the status quo, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies, argue that it is “critically important to U.S. interests” to deter Chinese coercion of Taiwan, lest instability spread in East Asia. In prepared testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Susan Thornton said, “The United States has an abiding interest in cross-Strait peace and stability.” Congress, historically a strong bastion of support for Taiwan, shows no indication of changing America’s Taiwan policy anytime soon. Buttressing support for this policy option is the belief that America’s commitment to Taiwan is a bellwether for the U.S. position in East Asia.

According to John J. Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago, “America’s commitment to Taiwan is inextricably bound up with U.S. credibility in the region ... **If the United States were to sever military ties with Taiwan or fail to defend it in a crisis with China, that would surely send a strong signal to America’s other allies in the region that they cannot rely on the United States for protection.**” **Advocates of maintaining the U.S. commitment argue that East Asia would become more dangerous if other allies lose faith in the United States and start building up military capabilities of their own. Supporters of the U.S. commitment also contend that backing down on Taiwan would embolden Chinese aggression in other territorial disputes.**

Stepping Down from the Commitment

The final policy option would do away with America’s commitment to Taiwan’s defense on the grounds that military intervention to preserve the island’s de facto independence has become too costly and dangerous for the United States. Stepping down from the commitment to come to Taiwan’s rescue would be a major change in U.S. policy. However, other factors unrelated to the U.S. commitment would still make the use of force unattractive for Beijing. Taiwan would therefore not be defenseless or subject to imminent Chinese attack if the United States chose this policy option.

Without a U.S. commitment, Taiwan would have to improve its self-defense capability to deter an attack by China and fight off the PLA if deterrence failed. Taiwan does face an unfavorable balance of power vis-à-vis China, but this does not doom Taiwan to military defeat. In fact, research by Ivan Arreguín-Toft of Boston University indicates that large, powerful actors (such as China) have lost wars against weaker actors “with increasing frequency over time.” However, in order to have the greatest chance of success, the weaker side must have the right military strategy. A head-on, symmetric fight with the PLA would likely end in disaster for Taiwan, but Taiwan could successfully deny the PLA from achieving its strategic objectives through the same kind of asymmetric strategy that China uses to make it difficult for the United States to defend Taiwan. A military strategy emphasizing mobility, concealment, and area denial would both raise the costs of war for China and be sustainable, given Taiwan’s limited means.

Changing Taiwan’s defense strategy would not be a quick or easy task. The most immediate roadblocks to change are the equipment and mindset of Taiwan’s military. The upper echelons of the military have resisted implementing changes that could improve their ability to fight a war against the modern PLA. For example, James Holmes points out that Taiwan’s navy “[sees] itself as a U.S. Navy in miniature, a force destined to win decisive sea fights and rule the waves.” This is a dangerous mindset given the PLA Navy’s dominance in fleet size, strength, and advanced equipment. The Taiwan Marine Corps (TMC) is also ill-suited to meeting the threat posed by China. Instead of being a light, agile force, the TMC is “heavy, mechanized, and not particularly mobile,” reflecting “a glaring failure by Taiwan’s defense establishment to recognize the TMC’s essential role in national defense.” Overcoming the forces of bureaucratic inertia will be very difficult, but doing so is necessary if Taiwan can no longer count on the United States.

Stepping down from the U.S. defense commitment would likely involve reductions in U.S. arms sales. Reductions in the size, quantity, and frequency of arms sales would likely precede any reductions to the defense commitment because arms sales are a measurable signal of American support for Taiwan. Lyle J. Goldstein of the U.S. Naval War College points out, “Arms sales have for some time taken on a purely symbolic meaning.” This implies that the negative effects of reducing arms sales would be relatively small, since China’s extant military advantages are not being offset by U.S. weaponry. Additionally, stopping the arms sales would not have to be instantaneous. The United States could reduce arms sales incrementally to give Taiwan time to improve its self-defense capabilities.

One common argument made by opponents of stepping down from the commitment is that it is the only thing preventing China from attacking Taiwan. This argument ignores several important factors that make the use of force unattractive for Beijing. First, China’s reputation and standing in East Asia would be seriously damaged. Other countries in East Asia would harshly criticize China’s use of force, and would likely take steps to

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

defend themselves. For example, countries involved in territorial disputes with Beijing in the South China Sea have responded to Chinese aggressiveness by improving their military power and pushing back politically and diplomatically. **China's reputational costs for attacking Taiwan would be very high. Additionally, any military operation against Taiwan would tie up a great deal of resources.** Other states could take advantage of a Taiwan-focused Beijing to push back against other Chinese territorial claims.

Second, the PLA has problems with both “hardware” (equipment) and “software” (experience) that would restrict its options for using military force against Taiwan. The modern PLA has no experience conducting large-scale amphibious landings, which are complicated operations that would be very costly to execute against a dug-in defender. On the hardware side, the PLA still lacks the amphibious-lift capabilities and replenishment ships necessary to mount a successful invasion attempt. China has made big strides shifting the relative balance of power in the Taiwan Strait, but it still faces significant challenges that will take time to overcome. Presently, the PLA is more prepared to push back against American intervention than to initiate an invasion of Taiwan.

Enemies: Reducing support for Taiwan could undermine US reputation and credibility, as both China and US allies would view such a change as a sign of American weakness and an unwillingness to fulfill commitments.

Gomez 16 - [Gomez, Eric. “A Costly Commitment: Options for the Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Defense Relationship.” Cato Institute. September 28, 2016. <https://www.cato.org/policy-analysis/costly-commitment-options-future-us-taiwan-defense-relationship>.] Elene.

[Eric Gomez is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute. His research focuses on the U.S. military budget and force posture, as well as arms control and nuclear stability issues in East Asia. In 2020, Gomez was a member of the Project on Nuclear Issues Nuclear Scholars Initiative program, where he conducted research on the impacts of U.S. intermediate-range missiles on U.S.-China strategic stability]

The two most important potential negative consequences of stepping down from the defense commitment to Taiwan are the reputational and credibility costs to the United States and the worsening of America's military position in the region.

Advocates of maintaining the U.S. commitment also contend that Chinese control over Taiwan would lead to a substantial PLA presence, which would pose a serious threat to American and allied interests. The military dominance that the United States has enjoyed since the end of World War II would be called into question. Advocates of U.S. primacy in East Asia consider such an outcome dangerous and unacceptable. Opponents of stepping down from the commitment argue that both China and the United States' Asian allies will view such a change as a sign of American weakness and unwillingness to live up to other commitments. **If the United States does not show strong resolve as China grows more powerful, Beijing would take advantage of American weakness to more forcefully pursue objectives that are detrimental to U.S. allies and partners.** The Brookings Institution's Richard Bush argues that “[the United States] cannot withdraw from the cross-Strait contest altogether because U.S. allies and partners would likely read withdrawal as a sign that the U.S. security commitments to them are no longer dependable.” **Stepping down from the commitment to Taiwan would have two mutually reinforcing harmful effects: China would grow bolder in threatening U.S. allies and the allies would presume that the United States would not fulfill its commitments as the threat from China grows.**

Fears over these negative consequences stem from a popular misconception of credibility in which the past actions of a state are considered indicative of how the state will behave in the future. As noted earlier, academic research indicates that states take other factors into account when making judgements of credibility, but the dogmatic adherence to this misconception among the American policymaking elite makes stepping down from the commitment an uphill battle. Formal treaty commitments to states like Japan and South Korea carry more weight than America's vague commitment to Taiwan, but fears of abandonment will likely weigh heavily on the minds of policymakers in Seoul, Tokyo, and Washington. Overturning the assumptions that credibility is bound up in upholding past promises will take a great deal of time and effort.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Ending the U.S. defense commitment to Taiwan could be detrimental to the U.S. military's broader goals in East Asia. Taiwan lies in the middle of an island chain that runs from Japan to the South China Sea. Control of Taiwan has important strategic implications because of this location. The PLA could use Taiwan as a staging area to more easily project power into the South China Sea, the East China Sea, and the western Pacific. Keeping this island chain free of Chinese military bases and friendly to the United States is therefore seen as essential for America's position in the region. Indeed, Taiwan has loomed large in American military strategy in the region for decades. In 1950 General Douglas MacArthur described Taiwan as “an unsinkable aircraft carrier and submarine tender ideally located to accomplish offensive strategy and at the same time checkmate defensive or counter-offensive operations” from the surrounding area. If Taiwan becomes the PLA's ‘unsinkable aircraft carrier,’ it would make U.S. military actions in support of other regional interests more difficult.

Fears over China's improved military position that would follow seizing control over Taiwan are valid, but there are roadblocks to this outcome that exist independent of the U.S. defense commitment. As mentioned earlier in this analysis, China would face numerous hurdles and negative consequences if it tried to invade Taiwan, given the difficulty of conducting amphibious invasions, the high likelihood of regional backlash, and the materiel and training limitations of the PLA. Taiwan could also do more to raise the costs of conflict for China through changes in military technology and warfighting doctrine. For example, Taiwan's fleet of fighter aircraft is costly to maintain and outclassed by PLA fighters and surface-to-air missile capabilities. Reducing the size of Taiwan's fighter fleet and redirecting funds to build up mobile missile forces that could support ground units fighting against a PLA invasion attempt would improve Taiwan's ability to resist the PLA and inflict heavy losses on Chinese forces. If President Tsai and the DPP can deliver on their promises to increase defense spending and develop Taiwan's defense industries, Taiwan could be capable of mounting an effective self defense without American intervention in the coming decades.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Stability

Funding Taiwan is important for deterring threats from China and ensuring peace and stability in the region.

Bodeen 24 — [Bodeen, Christopher. “\$8 Billion US Military Aid Package to Taiwan Will ‘Boost Confidence’ in Region: President-Elect.” AP News. April 23, 2024. <https://apnews.com/article/china-taiwan-us-lai-congress-funding-8571139dd8cd1d069a53cfcbaccf99c6>.] Elene.

[Christopher Bodeen is a Beijing correspondent for The Associated Press]

A \$8 billion defense package approved by the U.S. House of Representatives over the weekend will “strengthen the deterrence against authoritarianism in the West Pacific ally chain,” Taiwan’s President-elect Lai Ching-te said Tuesday, in a reference to key rival China.

The funding will also “help ensure peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait and also boost confidence in the region” Lai, currently Taiwan’s vice president, told visiting Michigan Representatives Lisa McClain, a Republican, and Democrat Dan Kildee at a meeting at the Presidential Office Building in the capital Taipei.

In the face of “authoritarian expansionism,” Taiwan is “determined to safeguard democracy and also safeguard our homeland,” Lai said.

Also known as William Lai, U.S.-educated former medical researcher is despised by Beijing for his opposition to political unification with the mainland. In recent elections, the pro-unification Nationalists won a narrow majority in the legislature, but their influence on foreign policy and other national issues remains limited.

The Senate will vote Tuesday on \$95 billion in war aid to Ukraine, Israel and Taiwan.

The package covers a wide range of parts and services aimed at maintaining and upgrading Taiwan’s military hardware. Separately, Taiwan has signed billions in contracts with the U.S. for latest-generation F-16V fighter jets, M1 Abrams main battle tanks and the HIMARS rocket system, which the U.S. has also supplied to Ukraine.

Taiwan has also been expanding its own defense industry, building submarines and trainer jets. Next month it plans to commission its third and fourth domestically designed and built stealth corvettes to counter the Chinese navy. as part of a strategy of asymmetrical warfare in which a smaller force counters its larger opponent by using cutting edge or nonconventional tactics and weaponry.

Lai, of the pro-independence ruling Democratic Progressive Party, won the January election handily and takes over next month from President Tsai Ing-wen, whom Beijing has sought to isolate for the past eight years.

China is determined to annex the island, which it considers its own territory, by force if necessary and has been advertising that threat with daily incursions into waters and air space around Taiwan by navy ships and warplanes. It has also sought to pick away Taiwan’s few remaining formal diplomatic partners.

While Washington and Taipei have no formal diplomatic ties in deference to Beijing, McClain emphasized the need for the entire world to observe the strength of the relationship.

“Peace is our goal. But to do that, we have to have relationships and we value your relationship. Not only militarily, but economically,” she said.

Kildee said the timing of the visit was especially significant given the recent passage of the funding bill to “provide very important support to insure security in this region.”

“It’s important for the people of Taiwan, it’s important for the people in the United States, it’s important for the entire world,” Kildee said.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Subsidiarity

US Allies like Taiwan should handle their own defense, and the US should equip them to do so with “abundant and advanced capabilities”—concerns about the US losing its technological edge and fears of US allies escalating situations with US weaponry are misguided

Grygiel 6/22— [Grygiel, Jakub. 2022. “Why Arming Allies Is America’s Smartest, Safest Strategy.” Foreign Policy. September 28. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/28/us-russia-china-ukraine-war-arms-weapons-defense-strategy-geopolitics/>.] Joel.

[Jakub Grygiel is a professor at the Catholic University of America (Washington, D.C.). In 2017-2018 he was a senior advisor in the Office of Policy Planning at the U.S. Department of State. Previously, he was a Senior Fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis and on the faculty of SAIS-Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C. His writings on international relations and security studies have appeared in Foreign Affairs, The American Interest, Security Studies, Journal of Strategic Studies, Orbis, The National Interest, Commentary, Parameters, as well as several U.S. and foreign newspapers. He earned a Ph.D., M.A., and an MPA from Princeton University, and a BSFS Summa Cum Laude from Georgetown University.]

Ukraine’s defensive war—and its current counteroffensives to free its lands from Russian forces—demonstrate that **directly affected countries are the best keepers of the balance of power.** Because of the immediate and existential effects that war and occupation have on their daily life, such states have an acute interest in maintaining and, when needed, restoring the status quo. But motivation is not the same as capability: **To keep the regional balance of power, these states need abundant and high-quality weapons. The United States should be the principal supplier of these capabilities,** not least to control the proliferation of high-tech weapons, which Washington fears may be destabilizing. The outbreak of the most significant war of conquest since World War II makes plain that war is not a relic of a bygone age but a feature of the frontier. **The United States should embrace geopolitical subsidiarity and arm allies with abundant and advanced capabilities.**

Subsidiarity—the idea that nothing should be done by a larger entity that can be done by competent authorities closer to the problem—is rarely associated with international relations. Usually it describes a domestic structure of authority: Educating children is done most effectively at the level of the family and a local school rather than a centralized, national bureaucracy, just as safe streets are best provided by local police rather than a distant entity with expansive powers but limited knowledge and interest. The job of higher authorities, such as the state, is to support the locus of responsibility below. This is, of course, the basic idea behind federalism and other decentralized forms of governance.

But the logic of subsidiarity applies just as much to international stability and should guide U.S. grand strategy going forward. **The United States cannot hold by itself the entire perimeter around the revisionist authoritarian powers, especially as that frontier ignites in both Europe and Asia. Washington should not attempt to do what can be done more effectively and successfully by local actors, as the principle of subsidiarity suggests.** Ukraine’s successful defense against Russia is a potent reminder that the most effective guardians of the balance of power are those countries most directly affected by it: the frontier nations near Russia, China, and other aggressive states. As the central state should aid local communities, the United States should help nations on the frontier maintain stability and, if necessary, defend themselves. **It should arm them speedily and lethally.**

Ukraine is the most immediate example, and it still needs large quantities of artillery shells, rockets, armored vehicles, and a list of other weapons. In its vicinity, NATO’s eastern frontier from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea constitutes the next layer of countries that will hold the line of Europe’s equilibrium. **Similarly, in Asia, Taiwan and Japan are the most effective balancers against China. They are the most vulnerable and therefore the most interested in preserving the status quo.**

Washington remains overly fearful of the risks associated with well-armed allies, in the mistaken belief that a proliferation of weapons would destabilize the geopolitical frontier.

But although these states have the motivation to act, they often lack the capability to do so. Some of Washington’s allies, especially in Europe, have been irresponsible, lured into a decadeslong stupor by liberal internationalist wishful thinking, expecting the progressive march of history to embrace their adversaries close by. It is unlikely

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

that Washington can change the minds of some of these countries. Recurrent U.S. badgering of those NATO allies that have not allocated the promised 2 percent of GDP to defense spending is not a sufficient stick to alter their internal calculus. Neither is the United States' abandonment of these allies (more fashionably called retrenchment or restraint), despite the assumption of its advocates that a small or absent U.S. presence will incentivize allies to take responsibility for their own defense and end their free riding. No matter what the United States does or does not promise, these allies make their calculations on the basis of domestic dynamics and leadership, even in moments of grave external danger. In brief, Washington has limited control over whether allies and partners on or near the Eurasian front line will arm or not.

The key question then becomes not what the United States can do to change the calculations or motivations of allies and partners, but what it can do to help those that want to arm. This is where **Washington's long-standing reluctance to expedite the sale of the most advanced weapons becomes an obstacle: It inhibits the necessary hardening of the frontier in Europe and Asia.**

There are signs that the U.S. Defense Department is seeking to ease the process of arms sales to allies. This is a welcome development, because **the war in Ukraine has demonstrated the need for large quantities of weapons—and even larger quantities of both conventional and state-of-the-art ammunition—right on the front line with the United States' rivals.** But the goal should go beyond merely tweaking the bureaucratic paper-pushing that has slowed down arms sales. **The problem is more fundamental: Washington remains overly fearful of the risks associated with well-armed allies, in the mistaken belief that a proliferation of weapons would ultimately destabilize the geopolitical frontier. Ukraine has exposed this as a fallacy of the first order. Had the country been well armed, it might well have deterred a Russian attack and maintained the peace in Europe. It's as if the United States has forgotten the most important lessons of the Cold War.**

Three factors, in particular, drive Washington's reluctance to supply plentiful and advanced armaments to front-line states.

First, the United States, and its military echelons in particular, fear that spreading arms across the frontier will lead to a loss of U.S. technological superiority. The risk is certainly there. Sending highly capable Javelin anti-tank missiles containing modern optics to Ukraine, for instance, is likely to result in a few units ending up in the hands of Russia—and passed on to China and Iran. But if the latest technology can only be entrusted to U.S. soldiers, they would need to be placed into every hot spot where such technology can arrest enemy attacks. **For the United States, it is better to spread its weapons than its soldiers.**

The second factor preventing Washington's embrace of geopolitical subsidiarity and its consequent acceptance of arms proliferation is the aspiration to control escalation. **Well-armed allies, with the capacity to strike the enemy's rear and inflict heavy losses, may escalate the local conflict without direct U.S. approval.** As a result, a rival, such as Russia in Ukraine, may choose to ratchet up its own military effort to tilt conditions on the battlefield in its favor. **The ultimate fear is that escalation will spin out of control and cross the nuclear threshold.** Russia, for instance, could use its vast arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons to reverse a conventional setback.

But Washington's desire to stay in apparent control of regional escalation is misplaced. In fact, deterrence of rivals will be more easily achieved by embracing higher risks on the frontiers, letting local allies and partners make the difficult decisions where and how hard to strike an invader. Moreover, **it is presumptuously wrong to assume that front-line states are incapable of assessing the probabilities of escalation—and that only Washington has the prescience necessary to manage it. Small powers near Russia or China are not suicidal. Bearing the greatest costs of a potential escalation, they are capable of evaluating the risks and benefits of their own actions.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Taiwan Nukes

Nuclear Weapons would allow Taiwan to determine its own destiny, without risking the American homeland and people over an escalatory conflict with China

Bandow 2/23— [“Do Ukraine, Taiwan and South Korea All Need Nuclear Weapons?” 2023. Cato Institute. February 9. <https://www.cato.org/commentary/do-ukraine-taiwan-south-korea-all-need-nuclear-weapons..>] Joel.

[Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, specializing in foreign policy and civil liberties. He worked as special assistant to President Ronald Reagan and editor of the political magazine *Inquiry*. He writes regularly for leading publications such as *Fortune* magazine, *National Interest*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and the *Washington Times*.]

A similar issue is bedeviling U.S. policy toward Taiwan. The main island is barely 100 miles off China’s coast and thus vulnerable to attack. Although the Carter Administration abrogated America’s mutual defense treaty with the longstanding Republic of China when recognizing the People’s Republic of China, Washington continued to maintain an ambiguous defense commitment to Taipei. Doing so seemed easy during the early years since the PRC lacked the military means to threaten Taiwan seriously.

Even when China brandished missiles in advance of the reelection of ROC President Lee Teng-hui during the 1995–96 Taiwan Strait crisis, the threat was modest. The Clinton administration responded by sending two aircraft carriers and accompanying ships to the region as a show of force, against which Beijing had no recourse. The result was humiliating impotence for Beijing, creating a powerful incentive for the PRC’s ensuing military buildup.

Today the Chinese military is much more capable. **The consensus in Washington is that the U.S. should still defend Taiwan, but how remains unclear,** given the latter’s distance and lack of certain allied support. **Some policymakers imagine verbal threats deterring PRC intervention, which vastly underestimates the intensity of China’s commitment to reunification.** The main debate in Washington appears to be over whether the U.S. should move from “strategic ambiguity” to “strategic clarity,” making America’s commitment explicit.

Yet the U.S. could lose such a conflict. Its forces would lack air superiority over the island, be dependent on access to allied bases, and face enormous losses if operating near the coast of China. In wargames, **China has most often triumphed. The less frequent U.S. victories have been dearly bought. The Center for Strategic and International Studies recently completed a series of tests, reporting success in saving Taiwan but warning that “this defense came at high cost. The United States and its allies lost dozens of ships, hundreds of aircraft, and tens of thousands of service members. Taiwan saw its economy devastated. Further, the high losses damaged the U.S. global position for many years.”**

Particularly fearsome is the prospect of escalation. Taiwan is an existential issue for Beijing, which the former cannot afford to lose. The PRC would rely on mainland bases, ensuring American attacks on such facilities, which in turn would trigger retaliation against U.S. territory. **If neither Beijing nor Washington was prepared to yield, escalation would be difficult to halt, short of the use of nuclear weapons. The prospect of moving down this path would force any president to hesitate, and perhaps pull back and decide not to get involved, despite Washington’s long, ambiguous commitment to do so.**

So how should Taiwan be defended, whether or not the U.S. is prepared to act?

Korea Has its Adversary

That’s not all. The Republic of Korea is another long-time security dependent, despite possessing some 50 times the economic strength and twice the population of the North. Once reliant on American defense welfare, always reliant on American defense welfare, it seems. At least, similar to the case of Taiwan, American “extended deterrence” was relatively costless when the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea only had conventional arms,

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

meaning a capable army. Any U.S. casualties would be limited to the Korean peninsula and Washington could use its entire arsenal in response to a North Korean attack. This situation is no longer the case, however.

The DPRK has been rapidly building up its nuclear arsenal and missile inventory, with Kim calling for an “exponential” increase in nuclear weapons. The Rand Corporation and Asan Institute warned: “by 2027, North Korea could have 200 nuclear weapons and several dozen intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) and hundreds of theater missiles for delivering the nuclear weapons. The ROK and the United States are not prepared, and do not plan to be prepared, to deal with the coercive and warfighting leverage that these weapons would give North Korea.”

Facing such a force, which could target American cities, would an American president be willing to defend South Korea? By all evidence, Pyongyang is a rational actor and wouldn’t launch a suicidal first strike on America. However, even what begins as a conventional conflict could go nuclear, since the North might respond to the possibility of regime change by the U.S. with a threat to attack America’s homeland. Imagine an allied defeat of North Korean conventional forces and an allied plan to march north, ala late 1950, followed by a demand from the DPRK that American and South Korean forces desist or face nuclear annihilation. Imagine such an ultimatum backed by a demonstration nuclear explosion on the outskirts of Seoul.

Nuclear Weapons and Keeping the Peace

In all these cases **possession of nuclear weapons would benefit America’s clients, giving them control over their own security. Only then would they enjoy some certainty.** For instance, Ukraine might have to wait a long time, and perhaps forever, for either the U.S. or Europe to offer to fight on Kyiv’s behalf. **An ambiguous American commitment to defend Taiwan might be better than nothing for Taipei. Still, there is no certainty that a future U.S. president would risk America’s survival on Taiwan’s behalf.**

In contrast, South Korea enjoys a treaty commitment. However, paper guarantees look increasingly fraught as the DPRK continues to expand the size and accuracy of its nuclear and missile arsenals. Moreover, though war over Taiwan would not directly threaten the survival of the Chinese regime; a conflict on the Korean peninsula would put Pyongyang’s existence in doubt. Would future U.S. administrations forever risk everything for the ROK? Ukraine has no easy path back to nuclear status, but Taiwan once had a nuclear program and could resume its effort, as some analysts suggest. Even more so in Seoul, as ROK actively sought nuclear weapons a half-century or so ago. And there is substantial public support for the acquisition of nuclear weapons today, with President Yoon Suk-yeol recently mooted the possibility.

The consequences of even friendly proliferation would be serious, of course, but U.S. security should come first. Risking the American homeland on behalf of anything short of an existential threat—an attack on the U.S. itself—is not just foolish, but also a betrayal of Washington’s responsibility to its own people. Moreover, the promise to risk destruction on behalf of other nations is becoming less believable.

Noted Foreign Policy’s Stephen Walt: “convincing people you might use nuclear weapons to defend an ally isn’t easy.” With the potential of American involvement in hot conflicts involving Russia, China, and North Korea, possibly simultaneously, **the U.S. should rethink its commitments, especially to fight nuclear wars for other nations.**

There are obvious downsides to proliferation, but only the second-best security solutions are available today. Instead of arbitrarily ruling out what might be the most realistic option, the relative costs and benefits of friendly proliferation and extended deterrence should be compared and debated. And the interests of the American people should be emphasized. For they are who Washington’s foreign policy elites are supposed to serve.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Timeframe

Taiwan needs a war-winning arsenal *before* the war starts—once an invasion begins, further arms transfer will become impossible

Herzinger 9/22— [Herzinger, Blake. 2022. “Taiwan Needs Weapons before China Invades.” *Foreign Policy*. September 8. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/08/taiwan-needs-weapons-for-day-1-of-a-chinese-invasion/>] Joel.

[Blake Herzinger is a Pacific Forum Non-resident WSD-Handa fellow and US Navy Reserve officer. He has spent 13 years in service with the US Navy as an intelligence officer, with experience across the Indo-Pacific and Middle East. Blake’s research is interested in Indo-Pacific security, with emphasis on security assistance dynamics, maritime security, and seapower. His analysis has been published in *Foreign Policy*, *War on the Rocks*, *The Diplomat*, and ASPI’s *The Strategist*. Blake is a graduate of the Strategic Studies MSc program at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies and received his BA at Brigham Young University.]

In Ukraine, donor states continue to pour in increasingly large and sophisticated equipment via air and overland delivery to the country’s western reaches, which remain beyond Russia’s ability to effectively target them. With this support, Ukraine’s military has actually incorporated new equipment and capabilities while defending against Russia’s invasion. But **Taiwan lacks Ukraine’s strategic depth and is only about 90 miles across at its widest point, and the entirety of the island and its maritime approaches are well covered by Beijing’s missile force, which remains the world’s largest.** While Beijing’s abilities to conduct accurate long-range missile strikes against targets beyond the so-called first island chain may be somewhat inflated, its ability to inflict massive damage only 200 miles from its own coastline is surely considerable. **Taiwan will have no safe haven, unlike Ukraine, for resupply and storage, and any airfield or port of any significance is sure to come under attack given Taiwan’s limited territory and proximity to mainland China.**

Critics of Taipei’s defense strategy have observed that, traditionally, Taiwan’s defense forces have prioritized construction and acquisition of high-tech platforms to demonstrate capability, rather than sufficient munitions to make those platforms credible. Compounding the problem, Taiwan is far too reliant on large, expensive platforms like tanks and advanced fighter planes, which are designed to respond symmetrically to a threat, rather than asymmetric forces that might be more survivable and able to exploit the inherent strength of the defense in amphibious operations. Given the size advantage of Taiwan’s primary adversary, this is not a workable solution. Self-propelled artillery and mobile cruise missile launchers are the types of equipment Taiwan should prioritize but has yet to incorporate into its defense forces.

Taiwan has been a customer of the U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program for over 40 years, meaning that the Taiwanese government identifies systems of interest, obtains approval to purchase them, and then pays for them with national funds. However, for a government that ostensibly feels threatened by the prospect of a Chinese invasion, Taiwanese defense budgets have been insufficient and improperly allocated for years, resulting in poor readiness and in acquisitions that do not support the hoped-for reorganization into an asymmetric, survivable force under the Overall Defense Concept.

While Taiwan is entirely responsible for its acquisition choices and the prioritization of high-end systems over asymmetric capabilities, constraints in the U.S. system are getting in the way of Taiwan’s efforts to correct course. The Sept. 2 announcement of the U.S. State Department’s approval to sell Taiwan 60 Harpoon anti-ship missiles and 100 Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, along with associated equipment, joins a backlog extending back beyond a 2020 approval to sell Taipei 400 missiles, 100 mobile launch vehicles, radar trucks, and other equipment.

But the intended delivery date for the weapons approved in 2020 is already sliding further into the future, moving from 2024 to 2025, with the last of the order arriving by 2028. Taiwan’s Defense Ministry has worried publicly that Washington’s frantic airlift of Stinger missiles to Ukraine would disadvantage Taipei, and Ukraine has (perhaps understandably) received Harpoon missiles while Taiwan waits. **As tension builds in the Taiwan Strait, announcements of missile sales are a somewhat limp signal of support when those missiles and the more critical mobile launchers cannot be fully delivered in the period that Adm. Phil Davidson, former head of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, claimed that Beijing might make its play for Taiwan.**

This problem is not unique to Taiwan, nor is Taipei necessarily suffering more acutely than other customers of U.S. security cooperation programs, but a wicked confluence of problems ranging from red tape and industrial base capacity to the COVID-19 pandemic has created a \$14 billion logjam of arms transfers intended for Taiwan since 2019. The Taiwan Policy Act, which has yet to be passed into law, seeks to transition Taiwan into a Foreign Military Financing recipient for the first time since the Chiang Kai-shek era.

This would mean that Taiwan would receive \$4.5 billion in military aid, rather than be left to select and purchase equipment for itself, as well as become eligible for other types of equipment transfers that might move faster than a traditional sale. If enacted, the bill would also expedite shipments for Taipei, likely at the expense of other customers. While the United States is unlikely to transfer too much key equipment (such as Harpoon missiles) from its own stocks, given their vital role in a possible maritime contingency vis-à-vis China, these positive developments may be a start to ensuring Taiwan is prepared if the balloon ever does go up.

Pledges of game-changing asymmetric weapons will matter little if Beijing elects to send an invasion force across the Taiwan Strait before U.S. defense corporations can fill their backlogged orders. Taiwan’s friends must not be seduced by the idea that because an after-the-fact effort worked in Ukraine, it can work in Taiwan too. **Geography is working against Taipei, not for it, and years of strategic misalignment and inattention have left Taiwan’s defense forces ill-suited for the challenge they are facing. To survive, Taiwan needs its weapons prepared ahead of time—and ready on Day 1.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Values

Democracy vs. Autocracy: The U.S. should support Taiwan militarily because its democracy challenges the authoritarian model of the Chinese regime, and defending Taiwan is essential for upholding the values of freedom and democracy against autocratic threats.

Buruma 23 – [Buruma, Ian. “Is Taiwan Worth Defending?” Project Syndicate. April 11, 2023. <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/why-taiwan-must-be-defended-by-ian-buruma-2023-04>.] Elene.

[Ian Buruma is the Paul W. Williams Professor of Human Rights and Journalism at Bard College and former editor of the New York Review of Books. His work largely focuses on the culture of Japan and China.]

China’s leaders have long been obsessed with Taiwan because its very existence as a thriving liberal democracy refutes the central premise of the Chinese authoritarian regime. That is why the United States must come to Taiwan’s defense in the event that Chinese President Xi Jinping decides to attack the island.

No one seems to know how the United States would react if China were to invade Taiwan. For decades, US leaders did all they could to avoid this question. Then, in September of last year, President Joe Biden seemed to have ended Washington’s policy of “strategic ambiguity” when he said that US troops would defend the island in the event of “an unprecedented attack.” But almost immediately after Biden spoke, White House officials backtracked, insisting that US policy on Taiwan had not changed.

While the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty obliges America to go to war if Japanese territory is attacked, the US has no such treaty with Taiwan. If China decided to attack the island, it would have to guess how the US would respond. But while strategic ambiguity is meant to serve as a deterrent, the real question is whether it is enough anymore. After all, China is far more powerful now than it was when it tried to “liberate” Taiwan from Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalists by shelling the islands of Quemoy and Matsu during the 1958 Taiwan Strait Crisis. The US still had a mutual defense treaty with Taiwan back then, and American military leaders pushed to launch a nuclear strike on the mainland.

Today, China has the world’s largest military in terms of personnel and a substantial nuclear arsenal. Chinese President Xi Jinping knows that the US cannot risk a nuclear war, which is why it has not intervened directly in Ukraine, and that emboldens him. **After all, if the US does not want to fight the far weaker Russia, it will certainly not go into battle against China.**

A political shift in the 2024 US presidential election could bolster China’s hopes of taking Taiwan by force. A Republican president, whether former President Donald Trump or a like-minded figure, might choose to isolate the US from quarrels in faraway countries. This is a good reason for locking in place a security commitment to Taiwan now.

But is Taiwan really worth defending, even at the risk of a devastating war? I believe it is. **An attack on Taiwan would also be an attack on Japan and South Korea. If allowed to dominate the South and East China Seas, China would have a stranglehold over the economies of both countries. If Japan and South Korea lose confidence in America’s ability or commitment to defend their security, they would either have to submit to Chinese domination or start acquiring nuclear weapons – and fast.** Both options could have disastrous consequences.

Then there is the matter of Taiwan’s strategic importance as the producer of more than 90% of the world’s advanced semiconductors. A Chinese takeover of Taiwan and its chip industry would help tip the global balance of power in favor of China, with far-reaching economic and strategic implications.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

None of this would be a serious problem if China were a liberal democracy, or at least a relatively open society. Alas, it is not, and that is perhaps the most important reason to defend Taiwan.

Ironically, when the US was obliged to defend Taiwan in the 1950s, the island was still ruled by an oppressive autocratic regime, not the democracy it is today. At the time, however, America's support of Chiang Kai-shek made sense: Mao Zedong's China was far worse. Fortunately, even though Maoism was popular for a while among revolutionaries, mostly in poor post-colonial countries and on Western university campuses, Mao's bloody tactics had little global appeal.

The current Chinese model has a great deal more credibility these days. Unlike the Soviet Union, the Communist Party of China has managed to confound liberal expectations by achieving remarkable economic success while maintaining a Leninist dictatorship. Liberals previously assumed that the combination of a growing middle class and a free-market economy would inevitably result in democracy. The transformation of South Korea and Taiwan from military dictatorships to liberal democracies seemed to lend support to this thesis. But we now know that capitalism can thrive under "socialism with Chinese characteristics."

China's success has inspired many autocrats in developing countries, where large Chinese investments in infrastructure have bolstered the regime's image as a more efficient, more powerful, and more reliable partner than the often messy and meddlesome Western democracies. This is a dangerous trend, particularly at a time when liberal democracies are under attack by radical populists at home. A Trump victory in 2024 would galvanize dictators and authoritarians around the world, including Xi.

A pernicious form of cultural propaganda has long fostered strongman rule in China and in other parts of Asia. Its central idea, effectively promoted by Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's founder and long-serving former prime minister, is that "Asian values" are incompatible with democratic governance. In Confucian societies, the argument goes, individual interests must be subordinated to the collective interest, obedience to authority is sacrosanct, and social order trumps freedom.

Members of China's increasingly wealthy middle class often subscribe to this view. Ordinary Chinese, one is often told in certain circles in Beijing and Shanghai, are not yet ready for democratic governance and still need the firm hand of authority to keep them in line.

That is why Taiwan matters. **Aside from nationalist pique, China's rulers seem obsessed with Taiwan because its very existence refutes the premise of the authoritarian Chinese model. Because Taiwanese democracy might give Chinese people the "wrong" ideas, China wishes to crush it, as it has done in Hong Kong. Biden has repeatedly vowed to protect democracy against the threat of autocracy. If he is serious, he must ensure that Taiwan remains free.**

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Global Peace & Democracy: The U.S. should raise military support for Taiwan to protect its vital economic ties and to ensure it contributes to global peace and democracy.

O'Dell 23 - [O'Dell, Hope . 2023. "The US Doesn't Recognize Taiwan as a Sovereign Nation, so Why Is It Arming the Island?" Globalaffairs.org. November 7, 2023. <https://globalaffairs.org/bluemarble/us-doesnt-recognize-taiwan-sovereign-nation-so-why-it-arming-island>.] Elene.

[Hope O'Dell joined the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2023 as real-time reporter. In this role, they cover global politics and policy daily. They previously covered Michigan politics at the 'Gander Newsroom and Title IX at the State News. They graduated from the James Madison residential program at Michigan State University with an additional degree in journalism.]

In short: In August, President Joe Biden approved \$80 million for Taiwan to buy U.S. military equipment, marking the first time in four decades that “America is using its own money to send weapons to a place it officially doesn't recognise,” according to the BBC. China is against the funding – for decades it has maintained that Taiwan, a self-governing island, is part of China. **The U.S. has maintained a delicate balance between not officially recognizing Taiwan as a sovereign nation and arming the island to fend off any Chinese aggression.** The U.S. is concerned that an expanding China could threaten its own political and economic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Before and during World War II, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) led by Mao Zedong, and the Nationalist Party (KMT), led by Chiang Kai-shek, were fighting for control of China. The U.S. backed the KMT but eventually stopped giving it military aid, and in 1949 Mao “announced the establishment of the People’s Republic of China (PRC).” Chiang fled to Taiwan, “bringing two million KMT troops and supporters with him,” and declaring Taipei “the temporary capital of the Republic of China.”

For two decades after 1949, international actors, including the U.S. and the U.N., considered Taiwan to be the PRC. But in 1971, the U.N. voted “to admit the People’s Republic of China (mainland China) and to expel the Republic of China (Taiwan).” In 1979, the U.S. changed its “diplomatic recognition” from Taiwan to mainland China.

China sees Taiwan, which has been self-ruled for nearly 75 years and a democracy since 1996, as a “breakaway province that will eventually be under Beijing’s control.”

Taiwan’s defense minister, Chiu Kuo-cheng, said in February that China has been ramping up its efforts to control Taiwan following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

What is the U.S.’ relationship with Taiwan?

According to the U.S. State Department, “Though the United States does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, we have a robust unofficial relationship.” **In 1979, the U.S. established the Taiwan Relations Act, which requires the U.S. to “provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character,” and to “maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan.”**

In July, President Biden announced a \$345 million arms package for Taiwan. The equipment was directly transferred from the Pentagon to Taiwan – the first time this type of transfer has occurred between Taiwan and the U.S.

Tensions between Taiwan and China in the South China Sea – an area between China and Taiwan – have increased since the beginning of the year. In April, China performed “large-scale combat exercises around Taiwan” that included a simulated blockade. And in October, the U.S. and the Philippines finished military exercises in the South China Sea.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

In February, the U.S. and the Philippines struck a deal that allows U.S. forces access to four additional military camps in the Philippines; two of these are near Taiwan, giving the U.S. access to a total of nine military camps. Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said he told China that the military bases available to the U.S. military wouldn't be used for any "offensive action," only to aid the Philippines.

Taiwan and the U.S. also have a strong economic relationship. "Taiwan is the United States' eighth-largest trading partner, and the United States is Taiwan's second-largest trading partner," according to the State Department.

Taiwan matters to the U.S. for both political and economic reasons.

In 2020, Taiwan invested almost \$137 billion in the U.S. while the U.S. invested \$31.5 billion in Taiwan the same year.

Taiwan is also a key manufacturer of semiconductors and computer chips. It produces so many of them that if it stops "no other company will be able to fill the gap in the short term," according to the Council on Foreign Relations.

It's also important to keep Taiwan a functioning democracy because it "helps keep peace and stability in the world," political scientist Lev Nachman told NBC News.

Taiwan is among a string of islands, including Japan and the Philippines, that are allied with the U.S. This makes Taiwan essential to ensuring the security of the region and U.S. interests, like capping China's power and maintaining an "asymmetric advantage" over China, the CFR stated.

If China can't control Taiwan in a region with U.S. allies, "China's military will struggle to project power far beyond China's shores," the CFR wrote. **But if China were able to take Taiwan, "it would be far more difficult for the United States to maintain a balance of power in the Indo-Pacific or prevent a Chinese bid for regional dominance."**

Building up Taiwan's arms to stave off any Chinese military action also prevents a costly conflict that would lead to thousands of deaths and risk global financial harm, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Indo-Pacific Security Affairs Ely Ratner told the House Armed Services Committee in September.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Neg Blocks

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: Assurances

Aff Argument: the US needs to offer China assurances to ensure that China's security—real and perceived—remain intact

China is the aggressor in this situation – offering “assurances” to China amounts to offering concessions, which “will only invite further aggression”. If anyone needs to offer assurances, it's Beijing.

Kuo, Hunzeker & Christopher 2/24— [“Scared Strait.” 2024. Foreign Affairs. February 20. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/scared-strait>.] Joel.

[Raymond Kuo is the inaugural director of the RAND Corporation's Taiwan Policy Initiative and a senior political scientist at RAND. He is an expert in international security, international order, and East Asia. He holds a Ph.D. in politics from Princeton University.

Michael A. Hunzeker is an associate professor at George Mason University's Schar School of Policy and Government, the associate director of the Schar School's Center for Security Policy Studies, and a Senior Non-Resident Fellow at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments. He has also coauthored monographs on conventional deterrence in northeastern Europe and the Taiwan Strait. Michael served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 2000–2006 and holds an A.B. from the University of California, Berkeley as well as a Ph.D., M.P.A., and A.M. from Princeton University

Mark Christopher is a nonresident fellow at the Atlantic Council's Global China Hub. He has worked in and around China issues for more than twenty years. He began his career researching China natural resource demand and foreign policy issues at the Council on Foreign Relations, then spent more than a decade in corporate intelligence and risk consulting]

But the authors make several errors that together generate counterproductive policy recommendations. The first and most important error is that they claim that China, the United States, and Taiwan are caught in a so-called security dilemma. Such a scenario transpires when a defensive-minded state tries to strengthen its own security in a way that inadvertently makes another state feel less secure. That dynamic results in an escalating spiral that leaves both sides primed for war.

China and the United States may be trapped in such a vicious cycle, but China and Taiwan certainly are not. Beijing's intentions, particularly under its leader, Xi Jinping, are clear and unequivocal: China wants to assert political control over Taiwan. Offering concessions to a determined revisionist such as Beijing will only invite further aggression. Instead, clear redlines reinforced by credible threats of unacceptable pain are needed. Taiwan does not need to assure China. It needs to show strength.

The authors also draw a false equivalence. They make the common but illogical suggestion that political moves by the United States and Taiwan—including visits by senior U.S. officials to Taiwan and rhetorical gaffes by U.S. officials who accidentally describe Taiwan as a country—are somehow as damaging to cross-strait peace as Chinese belligerence. **In truth, Beijing is the actor threatening and carrying out military provocations, including large-scale offensive exercises and simulations of blockades, as well as massive air and naval intrusions.**

These actions undermine and violate the agreements that frame the status quo in the Taiwan Strait. Implying that the United States and Taiwan must shoulder the onus of assurance serves only to legitimize China's preferred narrative that Beijing is blameless while others are responsible for damaging cross-strait relations. It also loses the plot. The main issue is not errant American or Taiwanese rhetoric but the mounting threat of very real Chinese violence.

Moreover, Washington has already tried an “assurance first” approach. Decades of economic, political, and even security engagement from the 1990s on failed to mollify Chinese concerns about Taiwan. Instead, these policies set the stage for a militarily powerful China that increasingly violates international security norms.

Of the three parties, China is the least constrained and the most able to renege on its commitments, and it has made the fewest binding agreements. It is therefore incumbent on Beijing to present assurances that it will follow the rules. Without those assurances, the appropriate response is punishment or ostracization.

Nocember 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

Washington could support more bilateral military coordination with Taiwan, as well as between Taiwan and other regional partners; push for further internationalization of cross-strait security issues; and further clarify that the United States demands a peaceful resolution to Taiwan's status. Conditional, credible consequences are now essential to encouraging a less bellicose Chinese policy.

The authors' analytic errors matter: **misdiagnosing the problem can lead to inappropriate, perhaps even counterproductive, solutions. In this case, providing more assurances will simply embolden Beijing to continue its threatening behavior.**

U.S. policy to date has helped avert a cross-strait conflict and by this measure is a success. But the foundations of Washington's long-standing approach to cross-strait relations are crumbling in the face of growing Chinese military power and aggression. As a result, Washington can no longer rely on its existing policies in the hopes that what worked in the past will yield success in the future.

Where there is a security dilemma, assurances can indeed help to assuage tensions while reinforcing deterrence. But **when deterrence is needed against a determined and capable rival, assurances that are not reciprocated can quickly become concessions.** In the process, a policy intended to de-escalate will serve only to appease.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: China Cooperation

Aff Argument: reducing military support for Taiwan could enhance cooperation between the US and China

The US can continue appropriate military buildup in the Pacific while also expanding diplomacy and confidence-building measures with China

Hanson 4/24— [Hanson, Thomas. 2024. “Should the United States Change Its Policies toward Taiwan?” Brookings. April 16. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/should-the-united-states-change-its-policies-toward-taiwan/>. Conveners: Kimball, Emilie, Patricia M Kim, Ryan Hass] Joel.

[Thomas Hanson is a former U.S. Foreign Service Officer with the Department of State whose diplomatic postings included East Germany, France, Norway, the Soviet Union, Sweden, and the former Soviet Republic of Georgia. He also participated in the opening of new U.S. embassies in Mongolia and Estonia, worked on the Foreign Relations Committees of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and served as Director for NATO and European Affairs at the Atlantic Council of the United States in Washington, D.C. Mr. Hanson currently is Diplomat in Residence at the Alworth Institute for International Affairs at the University of Minnesota – Duluth and has taught diplomacy at Carleton College. He also serves as Chair of the Minnesota Committee on Foreign Relations and as Co-Chair of the Minnesota China Business Council.]

The military balance around Taiwan should be addressed within this context. The escalation of China’s military buildup, including toward Taiwan, has coincided with the unfolding of the U.S. “pivot” to Asia since 2010. For both sides, military distrust has come to dominate bilateral relations in the region. **Xi has urged the Chinese military to be prepared to seize Taiwan, if necessary, as early as 2027**, although decisions will depend on future developments. U.S. defense planners must also prepare for more likely scenarios involving Chinese quarantines, blockades, or seizure of islands off Taiwan. **In addition, China has embarked upon a diversification of its nuclear arsenal, moving away from a “minimum deterrence” posture toward a credible nuclear second-strike capacity based on launch on warning and new strike options such as the fractional orbital bombardment system.**

This dangerous escalation should occasion not just spiraling countermeasures but a return to active diplomacy on arms control. In tandem with diplomatic initiatives and confidence-building measures, the United States should take adequate steps to address shifting military balances that are the premise of this discussion, including through a far greater emphasis on naval preparedness within the U.S. defense budget.

The need for cooperation between the United States and China is growing in the face of shared global threats such as climate change, pandemics, and arguably artificial intelligence that are beyond the capacity of any individual country or fragmentary alliance to address. Younger generations are likely to prioritize these global challenges over Cold War paradigms from an outdated threat environment.

Accumulating crises elsewhere are already having some effect. Chinese cooperation could be welcome on Ukraine and the Middle East, as well as on unaddressed nuclear provocations from North Korea. Accordingly, there has been a slight easing of U.S.-China tensions in the wake of the November 2023 meeting between Presidents Biden and Xi and a phone call between both leaders in April. Mixed results from the January 2024 Taiwan elections may also have a mitigating effect. However, cooperative “gestures” that have resulted from this mild thaw, including the resumption of military-to-military contacts, rest on shaky foundations and should be reinforced through active diplomacy, especially in the management of issues concerning Taiwan.

The U.S. commitment to Taiwan’s security and prosperity remains essential to any prospect of a peaceful resolution, however long it may take, of Taiwan’s future status. **A combination of returning to “strategic ambiguity,” proactive confidence-building measures, and credible naval preparedness in the Indo-Pacific region could reduce the likelihood of sleepwalking into a disastrous conflict.** Such a balanced approach could also benefit a Taiwanese population for whom the sufferings of Ukraine may now loom as a cautionary tale. And a renewed emphasis on diplomacy might even lessen our geopolitically questionable urge to push Beijing and Moscow together, the very dynamic that motivated our turn toward China in the first place, a half-century ago.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: China Nuke Fear

Aff Argument: China won't invade due to fears of nuclear escalation

The PRC believes it can control nuclear escalation in case of a conflict – this optimism could lead to escalation

Kaufman 2/23— [“Planning for Escalation: PRC Views on Controlling Escalation in a Conflict | the National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR).” 2023. Nbr.org. <https://www.nbr.org/publication/planning-for-escalation-prc-views-on-controlling-escalation-in-a-conflict/>.] Joel.

[Alison Kaufman is an Asia analyst in CNA's China Strategic Issues Group of the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) in Alexandria, Virginia. At CNA she has worked on issues related to China's and Taiwan's military culture, Chinese foreign and security policy, and cross-Strait relations. Her personal research focuses on the historical origins of and current trends in Chinese strategic and foreign policy debates. Before joining CNA, Dr. Kaufman worked for the World Bank's China program and at China Radio International in Beijing. She also worked as a subject matter expert on Chinese affairs for a well-known consultancy. Dr. Kaufman holds a Ph.D. in political science with a focus on Chinese political philosophy from the University of California, Berkeley, and a B.A. in East Asian studies from Harvard University. She has also studied Mandarin Chinese in Beijing at Capital Normal University and in Taipei at the International Chinese Language Program]

PRC civilian and military writings over the last two decades display a shared confidence that conflict escalation can be controlled with the right tools and conditions. Effective escalation control is depicted as resting in large part on a country's ability to manage uncertainty—suggesting that PLA planners are not risk averse so much as uncertainty averse. This desire to reduce uncertainty rests on the belief that the eruption and progression of crisis and conflict can be forecast, calculated, and managed using systematic and quantitative approaches to evaluate all possible courses of action and eliminate human error. PRC writings on controlling escalation exhibit a number of persistent blind spots with alarming implications. There is scant acknowledgment that operational principles and specific activities the PLA regards as de-escalatory may be interpreted differently by an opponent. It is also unclear how PLA actors would handle a situation that they have not put through the elaborate evaluation process described in these writings. These blind spots could cause Beijing to become overly confident in the PLA's ability to control escalation in a crisis or conflict.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- **PRC and PLA decision-makers may overestimate the clarity of their signaling and their ability to accurately interpret U.S. activities. This optimism, combined with divergent views on acceptable uses of force and a persistent PRC confirmation bias about U.S. intentions toward China, could lead to inadvertent escalation.**
- U.S.-China discussions about crisis management should identify behaviors that each side considers unambiguously escalatory. While there may be compelling reasons on both sides to maintain a degree of ambiguity about thresholds, each side needs to be aware of divergences that could lead to particularly dangerous misinterpretations.
- As PLA capabilities continue to mature, it is likely that PRC confidence in the ability to control escalation will grow, including a possible reassessment of the controllability of nuclear weapons. This should remain a topic of discussion between the U.S. and PRC, even if Beijing's official “no first use” nuclear policy does not change.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: End Ambiguity

Aff Argument: the US should end its policy of strategic ambiguity toward Taiwan

Maintain Ambiguity: Ambiguity ensures that Beijing can't make a simple choice about a Taiwan invasion, because it will never be clear who would win

O'Hanlon 4/24— [O'Hanlon, Michael. 2024. "Should the United States Change Its Policies toward Taiwan?" Brookings. April 16. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/should-the-united-states-change-its-policies-toward-taiwan/>. Conveners: Kimball, Emilie, Patricia M Kim, Ryan Hass] Joel.

[Michael O'Hanlon is a senior fellow and director of research in the Foreign Policy program at the Brookings Institution, where he specializes in U.S. defense strategy and budgets, the use of military force, and American national security policy. He directs the Strobe Talbott Center on Security, Strategy and Technology, and is the inaugural holder of the Philip H. Knight Chair in Defense and Strategy. He co-directs the Africa Security Initiative as well. He is an adjunct professor at Columbia and Georgetown universities, and a member of the Pentagon's Defense Policy Board; he was also a member of the external advisory board at the Central Intelligence Agency from 2011-12.]

Should the United States end its long-standing policy of "strategic ambiguity" about whether it would defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese attack? Known more politely as a policy of "dual deterrence," the idea of maintaining uncertainty about any American role in a future war has been intended to persuade both Taiwan and China not to take actions that the United States would find unacceptable. For Taiwan, that would mean unilateral pursuit or a declaration of independence (or perhaps the development of a nuclear bomb); for China, that would mean a military attack on Taiwan designed to force reunification with the mainland. Such deliberate muddying of the deterrence waters has generally been thought to be a bad idea in modern American foreign policy—with an unredeemed legacy from Korea to Kuwait and beyond. For Taiwan, however, such a policy has enjoyed support for four decades.

A number of American scholars and officials now want to end the ambiguity, which they say is bad for deterrence. Given China's greatly increased power in modern times, the traditional logic of a policy that sought in Goldilocks-style to perfectly balance between hot and cold options is no longer compelling, these critics say. The danger of an emboldened China lashing out has become substantially greater than the risks of Taiwan leaders throwing caution to the wind and pursuing independence recklessly in the false belief that America will always grant them a get-out-of-jail-free card.

At one level, these critics make a valid case. Beijing cannot be allowed to develop the misimpression that the United States might truly do nothing if the People's Liberation Army (PLA) attacked Taiwan.

However, it is not that simple. Asserting that the United States should defend Taiwan under any circumstances presupposes that we could do so successfully. It also risks causing a huge crisis just by the simple declaration of Washington's new stance on the situation.

As authors like Christian Brose have argued, in his recent book, "The Kill Chain," **it is far from clear who would win a fight over Taiwan—and far from clear how escalation would be avoided once the shooting starts.** As Ryan Hass points out, this uncertainty is a powerful argument against China undertaking aggression; **Beijing cannot be sure it would win, and it can be quite sure there would be serious costs associated with even making the effort.** In particular, **amphibious assault in the modern era remains a daunting military task.** But that said, the United States should not assume that it will be able to regain unambiguous military dominance in regions near China's own shores just because it develops a National Defense Strategy with that goal.

Indeed, China would likely begin any aggression against Taiwan at much lower levels of warfare, including deniable operations and other "gray-zone" tactics. Because limited attacks, such as a blockade, or gray-zone operations, such as deniable cyberattacks against Taiwan's infrastructure, are the most likely kinds of aggressions that China would undertake against Taiwan, the United States and allies need better and more proportionate tools to address such eventualities.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: Taiwan Self-defense

Aff Argument: Taiwan is capable of defending itself

Training: Taiwan's military training program is notoriously slow & under-equipped – this applies to reservists, drone operators, missile training and other areas

Shepherd & Chiang 8/24— [Shepherd, Christian, and Vic Chiang. 2024. "Taiwan Is Reaching Citizens for a Chinese Invasion. It's Not Going Well." Washington Post. The Washington Post. August 3. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/08/03/taiwan-china-war-invasion-military-preparedness/>.] Joel.

[Christian Shepherd is China correspondent for The Washington Post. He previously covered the country for the Financial Times and Reuters from Beijing. Education: Oxford University, BA in Philosophy & Psychology; University of Nottingham Ningbo, MA in Contemporary Chinese Studies; Tsinghua University, diploma in Mandarin Chinese

Vic Chiang joined The Washington Post's China Bureau in 2022. He was previously a reporter at Deutsche Welle in Taipei, where he covered news of China and Taiwan with a focus on politics and human rights.]

Taiwan's government has been trying to improve its defenses by extending mandatory military service and revamping ongoing training for reservists as part of a broader shift in defense strategy designed to make Xi think twice before taking a gamble on using force.

But young Taiwanese are not answering the call, and Defense Minister Wellington Koo recently acknowledged that **a lack of equipment and instructors has slowed attempts to professionalize reservist training**. "I must honestly say that we need to quickly strengthen [training] as **there is still a lot of room for improvement**," he told the legislature in June.

Such admissions may concern Donald Trump, who has signaled a more transactional approach to American support for Taiwanese defense if he wins a second term as president in November.

Taipei wants to create a professional backup force to support 155,000 active-duty soldiers. All Taiwanese men born in or after 2005 are required to enlist for a year of service, while about 2 million former soldiers are supposed to complete refresher training every two years.

But **officials have acknowledged being behind schedule with plans to teach reservists and draftees how to supplement front-line troops in the event of a war. Only 6 percent of eligible conscripts — 6,936 people — took part in the newly implemented 12-month program this year.** Most deferred military service to first attend university, meaning the 2005-born intake cohort won't be fully trained until 2027.

Those doing military service this year are not undergoing the anticipated training. A select group of one-year conscripts were supposed to be learning to use drones, Kestrel antitank rockets and surface-to-air Stinger missiles, but there were not enough of them this year to begin the training, according to a Defense Ministry officer.

Taiwan's slow progress on boosting training concerns military experts in Washington and Taipei, who are urging authorities to move faster to deter Xi and prevent a war.

"The last thing that Taiwan wants is for Xi Jinping, as the key decision-maker in China, and for the United States, as the key ally of Taiwan, to doubt Taiwan's commitments to its own defense," said Matt Pottinger, who was U.S. deputy national security adviser in the Trump administration and is now a visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Pottinger said Taiwan needs the political will and foresight to dedicate some of its best military officers to recruitment and instruction. "I'm really hoping that Taiwan makes these sacrifices," he said.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

China’s military, the largest standing army in the world, has 2 million active personnel and recruits about 400,000 conscripts every year. Its defense budget of \$230 billion was 13 times as large as Taiwan’s in 2023, and its military regularly trains to take the island in a sudden overwhelming assault.

The United States is required by law to help Taiwan strengthen its own defenses, including through arms sales, but it isn’t formally committed to intervening against a Chinese attack, a policy known as “strategic ambiguity.”

While President Biden has repeatedly said he would send the U.S. military to defend Taiwan, Trump has made no such promises. Asked what he would do in an interview last month, Trump said that Taiwan was “9,500 miles away” and should pay for American defense.

Taiwan must be “mentally prepared” for a Trump victory in November — and the scrutiny that will come with that, said Mei Fu-hsing, director of the Taiwan Security Analysis Center, a New York-based research center.

Trump would “certainly demand Taiwan to significantly increase its own defense spending and be more proactive in preparing for war,” Mei said.

Improved training is a key way for Taiwan to show it is taking military readiness seriously, analysts say. But **new programs have continued to face shortages of funding, instructors and equipment, leading to regular complaints from attendees about the quality of instruction**, according to reservists as well as official statements acknowledging setbacks.

“It was a complete waste of time,” said Vincent Tsao, a 30-year-old scuba diving instructor who spent most of his five days of reservist training last week sitting idly inside, being taught by retired soldiers who openly acknowledged they weren’t prepared to lead the program.

Taiwanese men who completed mandatory service within the past 12 years are theoretically called back for refresher training every second year, although in practice many attend far less frequently. **Only a fifth of the reservists who went through refresher training last year completed the newly extended two-week course**, with the majority doing only five or seven days.

Preparing 2 million reservists for “immediate combat readiness” as a second line of defense is “very important for defending Taiwan,” said Han Gang-ming, former director of Taiwan’s All-out Defense Mobilization Office, which oversees reservists.

“Since the reserve force is not the primary combat unit, we are always placed last whenever budgets are allocated,” Han said.

November 24: The United States should substantially reduce its military support of Taiwan.

AT: Useless Weapons

Aff Argument: Taiwan has classically preferred expensive and easily-attributable weapons platforms like fighter jets and tanks, which would be taken out during the early stages of any conflict

Porcupine Strategy: Recent funding changes mean that the US now has more influence to ensure Taiwan is purchasing lower-cost and more-effective platforms

Detsch & Gramer 4/24— [Detsch, Jack, and Robbie Gramer. 2024. “Congress Military Aid Package Gives Taiwan \$2 Billion to Deter a China Invasion.” *Foreign Policy*. April 25. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/04/25/congress-helps-steer-taiwan-toward-the-porcupine-strategy/>.] Joel.

[Jack Detsch is *Foreign Policy*'s Pentagon and national security reporter. He was previously a staff writer for *Al-Monitor* covering intelligence and defense.

Robbie Gramer was a staff writer at *Foreign Policy* from 2016-2024.]

For years, the United States has tried everything to get Taiwan onto a “porcupine strategy,” making the island a pricklier target that might make China think twice about attacking it.

U.S. officials have urged Taiwan to buy an asymmetric toolkit of coastal defense cruise missiles, loitering munitions, and shoulder-fired weapons that could sink Chinese boats before they land and bog down the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in a block-by-block fight if it gets ashore. Taiwan has instead mostly opted for a more conventional diet of submarines, fighter jets, and tanks.

On Tuesday, Congress passed a massive foreign aid bill after a grueling six-month political battle that allocates \$8 billion for the Indo-Pacific, including a sizable chunk of change—to the tune of \$2 billion—for Taiwan and other allies to purchase weapons. While the package doesn't legislate what will be heading over, **the Biden administration might manage to finally get Taipei to go along with the porcupine strategy for good.**

Defense diet. “The U.S. has more say—a lot more say—in how the money will be spent because it's U.S. taxpayer money,” said Ivan Kanapathy, a nonresident senior associate at the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former National Security Council official during the Trump and Biden administrations.

A congressional aide who spoke on condition of anonymity to talk about ongoing military sales told *Foreign Policy* that **the United States has managed to speed up some of the \$19 billion in military sales to Taiwan that have been backlogged for years—a list that includes 66 F-16 fighter jets, Patriot air defense batteries, and other big-ticket items, some of which have caused concern in Washington for being decidedly un-porcupine.**

New pot of money. But now, **Taiwan will be getting more military aid through presidential drawdown authority**—the same mechanism that the Biden administration has used to give Ukraine weapons right off of the Pentagon's shelves—as well as **through Foreign Military Financing, a program run by the State and Defense departments that provides grant money to fund foreign militaries.**

Shifting Taiwan onto the U.S. military's dole will give the Pentagon more leverage to focus on providing Taipei weapons from Washington's priority list. The U.S. government is also looking into building more weapons on the island, as Taiwan has done with its attempts to build itself a fleet of submarines.

“The challenge that Taiwan has is, in essence, they need two types of militaries,” said Heino Klinck, a former U.S. deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia. “One to deal with steady-state operations such as contending with PLA incursions into the [air defense identification zone]. And then they need a different type of military to deal with the worst-case scenario—an invasion.”