

## **Posing Problems Without Catching Up: China's Rise and the Challenge for American Security\***

Since the early 1990s there has been a debate about whether or not China will pose a security threat to the United States and its regional interests in East Asia in the next few decades. Although many in the debate have focused on intentions as well as capabilities, the most prevalent component of the debate is the assessment of China's overall future military power in comparison with that of the United States and East Asian regional powers. Accordingly, a large number of conferences have been held and papers written discussing whether China would become a peer competitor or near peer competitor of the United States in the military arena, or a regional hegemon towering over its cowed neighbors and threatening American interests in a region of increasing importance to the United States.<sup>1</sup>

The debate was most intense in the early years of the post-Cold War era. In the early 1990s, the American economy was suffering and the American military downsizing while China's economy was growing quickly following the brief post-Tiananmen slump. Moreover, in those years China began increasing its military spending sharply for the first time since 1978. As a result, there were concerns about America's ability to maintain its global military presence and supremacy, particularly in East Asia. Most recently, however and despite a turnaround in the American economy, a slowdown in defense cuts, and the clear persistence of American alliances and internationalism the idea that China will become a peer competitor or near peer competitor of the United States in the next few decades still motivates the thinking of many American strategists.<sup>2</sup>

If China were indeed on track to becoming a peer competitor, China's economic growth and increasing technological sophistication must allow China to close the gap with the American military, create power projection capabilities that would threaten the American position in East Asia, and replace the former Soviet Union as a global security threat. Given the great leaps in economic and military power that this would entail, it seems incredible to many including to this author that China might achieve such an outcome any time in the next several decades.

Of course, it is possible that China might accelerate its progress greatly by enjoying the "advantage of backwardness" in a quickly changing world of high technology. By being from necessity more innovative than the United States, China might leapfrog levels of technological development in the ongoing revolution in military affairs (RMA) and quickly close the gap with a United States that

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is too self-confident and too bureaucratically hide-bound to maintain a healthy lead against such a newcomer. Those who reject this scenario point to the low starting point for China's military modernization, China's own impressive institutional, bureaucratic, and political cultural obstacles to innovation, and its continuing reliance on outsiders to develop new defense technologies that, themselves, are of late Cold War vintage. In fact, the common argument among this group of analysts is not only that China is not likely to close the gap quickly between itself and the United States, but that the American technological lead will likely expand in the next few decades. As Robert Ross puts it, it appears so far that, if there is going to be a revolution in military affairs in East Asia, it will be an American revolution.<sup>3</sup>

The debate about China as a peer competitor often revolves around simple realist notions of how international politics work: power is what matters; and what matters in power is one's relative capabilities compared to others. In a nutshell, for the pessimists the Chinese military of the early twenty-first century is replacing the Soviet military of the pre-Gorbachev years and the Japanese economy of the 1970s as the next big purported threat to American global leadership. For the optimists, this is not the case; therefore the United States is safe from the largely hyped China threat. The same underlying logic of the peer competitor debate is often found in debates about future security relations across the Taiwan Strait. These debates frequently focus on the overall balance of power across the Strait and the prospect of mainland China closing the gap with a technologically more sophisticated Taiwanese military. An oft-discussed scenario in these debates is the mainland's future ability or inability to defeat and occupy Taiwan in a traditional D-Day style invasion.<sup>4</sup>

There is little doubt that it is important and useful to determine whether or not China is catching up with the United States or other states in overall military power or whether or not the mainland will be able to invade and occupy Taiwan effectively and with ease. The world would be a fundamentally different place if the answer to either question were affirmative. But answers to those questions are only of limited utility. In this paper I discuss why such debates miss many of the important questions regarding a China with increasing, but still quite limited military capabilities. My thesis is that with certain new equipment and strategies, China can pose major problems for American security interests, and especially for Taiwan, without the slightest pretense of catching up with the United States by an overall measure of national military power or technology. Although I firmly agree with those who are skeptical about China's prospects in significantly closing the gap with the United States, I believe that certain Chinese military capabilities combined with the political geography of East Asia pose significant security challenges for American security strategy in the region. As commonly defined, the basic elements of that U.S. strategy are: (a) deterring attacks on allies and friends; (b) maintaining East Asian bases for global power projection; and (c) preventing spirals of tension among regional actors whose relations are plagued by both historical legacies of mistrust and contemporary sovereignty disputes.<sup>5</sup> This holds particularly true in the case of maintaining peace in the Taiwan Strait, an issue receiving focus below.

Along the lines argued here, a June 2000 Pentagon report to Congress on the military power of the PRC is a big improvement over the arguments made in the peer competitor debate (though it is still too sanguine in my opinion). Instead of simply addressing China's ability to counter the United States as a peer competitor, the report focuses on Chinese efforts to handle specific security challenges in the region, particularly regarding Taiwan, in a manner that Beijing elites believe might preclude or complicate effective American intervention.<sup>6</sup> If Beijing elites become convinced that such weapons and tactics might allow for politically effective use of force against Taiwan and, if necessary, American forces, then war between the United States and China becomes a very real possibility regardless of whether China's military force is generally backward in comparison to the United States and its allies or whether China would be defeated in a toe-to-toe, full-scale war with the United States.

Some Chinese strategists seem to recognize this reality. No matter how much Beijing might wish it could develop capabilities that could match or defeat American military power, China's strategy for the next twenty to thirty years appears more realistic: to develop the capabilities to dominate most regional actors, to become a regional peer competitor or near peer competitor of the other great powers in the region (including Russia, Japan, and, perhaps, a future unified Korea), and to develop politically useful capabilities to punish American forces if they were to intervene in a conflict of great interest to China. As one recent internally circulated Chinese military education book argues:

Our weaponry has improved greatly in comparison to the past, but in comparison to the militaries of the advanced countries (*fada guojia*), there will still be a large gap not only now but long into the future. Therefore we not only must accelerate our development of advanced weapons, thus shrinking the gap to the fullest extent possible, but also [we must] use our current weapons to defeat enemies... [We must] explore the art of the inferior defeating the superior under high-tech conditions.<sup>7</sup>

In the shorter term, China's strategy seems devoted to developing new coercive options to exert more control over Taiwan's diplomatic policies, and to threaten or carry out punishment of any third parties that might intervene militarily on Taiwan's behalf, including both the United States and Japan.<sup>8</sup>

### **Problems with the Peer Competitor Logic**

There are important issues about politics and geography that are missed by debates about China's alleged future peer competitor status. The first is that U.S. forces are spread thin in more than one theater. America's difficulty in covering the globe is particularly acute in times of major operations in other parts of the world. In the past several years, Washington has all but abandoned its initial post-Cold War hope of being able to prevail in two simultaneous regional wars in different parts of the globe. American difficulties on this score are noted in China. In interviews in 1993 Chinese military officers pointed out that Beijing recognized two important things about American military

power: first, that it was unrivaled and likely to stay that way for a long time; and second, that during the Gulf War, the United States moved many of its most important assets, especially logistics assets, out of East Asia. This would have made it difficult to fight simultaneously in Korea, for example.<sup>9</sup> So, even if Western analysts were to focus exclusively on relative military power in East Asia, they should start with the understanding that overall American national assets are often not a useful basis of comparison to judge whether or not Beijing will perceive itself as able to use force effectively against American interests in East Asia.

A second important and related factor is the geography of potential conflicts with China. With the exception of the seas near the southernmost Spratly islands, most potential points of conflict are very close to China geographically, and all are very far from the United States. American bases in Okinawa and other parts of Japan make areas of potential dispute such as Taiwan, the Senkaku islands, and the northeastern Spratlys (near the Philippines) much more accessible to American forces than they otherwise would be. But even under politically optimal circumstances, an American response from these areas would take time. Moreover, tight political coordination and intellectual consensus between the United States and Japan on whether and how the alliance should respond to such crises cannot be assumed. In the future, China might attempt a *fait accompli* strategy to gain political or military control of the situation before the United States can respond effectively. In a more protracted struggle, Beijing might employ a mixture of carrots and sticks to attempt to separate the United States from its important regional allies.

A third and more abstract failing of the peer competitor debate is the often implicit and invalid assumption that relative material strength means security because significantly weaker powers would not openly challenge the security interests of the stronger. Diplomatic and military history shows that this argument applies poorly to reality. A study by John Arquilla at the Rand Corporation suggests that much more often than not the loser of a great power war is the initiator. Other research helps explain why small states initiate and often win wars against much greater powers.<sup>10</sup> This and similar studies imply either that real-world actors misperceive the actual international distribution of power and behave in ways consistent with that misperception, or that they discount the importance of that distribution and for a combination of political and psychological reasons decide to fight stronger powers anyway.

Famous examples of misperception of relative fighting capacity include widespread European predictions that Austria would defeat Prussia in the Austro-Prussian war of 1866 and that France would defeat Prussia in the early phases of the Franco-Prussian war four years later.<sup>11</sup> But leaders sometimes decide to attack even when they know full well that their nations are not as strong militarily as their opponents. Examples of conscious decisions to fight despite perceived national weakness should be seared into American strategic thinking: Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and China's crossing of the Yalu in October 1950 immediately come to mind. By almost any measure, Japan had only a small fraction of the national power assets of the United States in 1941.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, Japanese elites seem to have understood the hopelessness of a long war against the United

States at the time. Yet, out of a combination of wishful thinking about American lack of resolve and largely self-imposed desperation about the implications of not fighting the United States as soon as possible, they ordered an attack anyway.<sup>13</sup> One can only assume that, if one ran the numbers, China in late 1950 was much worse off in comparison to the United States than was Japan in 1941. Yet, Chinese forces too attacked American forces in Korea when Chinese leaders convinced themselves that war was eventually inevitable anyway and that a bold stroke on land might drive the United States entirely off the peninsula, thus improving China's long-term prospects. In these real world examples some combination of geography, beliefs about American distraction elsewhere, beliefs about American resolve, the enemy's own risk acceptance, and the enemy's strategic desperation, however justified, led to the use of force.<sup>14</sup>

This is not to suggest that Sino-American war is inevitable or that American power can not deter Chinese use of force under many or even most circumstances. It is rather to say that what will determine whether or not China takes actions that will lead to Sino-American conflict will likely be politics, perceptions, and coercive diplomacy involving specific military capabilities in specific geographic and political contexts not the overall balance of military power in the region or across the Pacific. Especially if one wants to prevent conflicts with China not just design ways to win them on the battlefield it is important to study why politics, perceptions, and new capabilities might encourage China to use force against a stronger United States and its friends and allies. This should hold true even if one assumes optimistically that the more powerful United States will certainly prevail against China in an armed conflict, regardless of the political and geographic context (a very dangerous assumption in my opinion).

### **Perceptions and Politics: Why a Weaker China Might Use Force Against Stronger American Forces**

Four related beliefs or perceptions, in some combination, could cause the leaders of a relatively weak China to use its military power to challenge American interests and, if deemed necessary, to attack American forces in East Asia:

1. If Chinese leaders believe that they are backed into a corner and that refraining from force is prohibitively costly to the regime. In such an instance, China's high degree of concern about a particular issue, such as Taiwan, and its perception, probably correct, that it cares much more about the issue than does the United States, might lead Beijing elites to decide to use force.
2. If Chinese leaders believe they can deter U.S. intervention or compel U.S. withdrawal by raising the prospect of casualties or actually killing or wounding American service personnel.
3. If Chinese leaders perceive the U.S. military as sufficiently distracted or tied down in other parts of the world that the United States could not or would not take on a belligerent China effectively.

4. If Chinese leaders believe that the United States can be separated from its regional allies by political persuasion or military coercion targeted at those allies.

Each of these conditions will be discussed below.

### *China Backed into a Corner*

Nothing in my argument is meant to suggest that the contemporary Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is as aggressive as Tojo's Japan or even as internationally ambitious as the highly ideological founder of the PRC, Mao Zedong. In fact, it may be precisely because Beijing, rightly or wrongly, might feel so defensive and view the prospects of foregoing the use of force as being so dismal that CCP elites might decide to launch an attack, particularly against Taiwan. Americans might not understand the psychological and political reasons for desperation in Beijing over the Taiwan issue, but it would be dangerous and naive to project our values and sense of security onto them and then deem war unlikely. Especially if one considers not only Chinese national security more broadly, but regime security more specifically, then the CCP's use of force to attempt to dissuade a real or perceived move by Taiwan toward formal independence and to get Taiwan back into the box seems much more likely.

Given the near gutting of any other ideological justification for their rule during the baldly capitalistic reform program, besides economic performance the Chinese Communists have little else to bolster their mandate for power than nationalism and the maintenance of national stability and integrity. So, from the perspective of state-society relations, the Chinese Communist Party must demonstrate effectiveness and resolve on the Taiwan issue. The loss of Taiwan to a previously inferior Japan in 1895 stands alongside the Nanjing massacre as perhaps the greatest humiliation in Chinese history. As a result, individual leaders must be tough on Taiwan independence not only to protect their current positions against potential rivals within the Party, but also to protect their historical legacies as patriots and to avoid the opprobrium cast on historical figures, such as Li Hongzhang, accused of negotiating away Chinese sovereign territory in the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki.<sup>15</sup>

According to interlocutors in Beijing on two research trips in 2000, the Chinese government is extremely sensitive to criticism and the possibility of social unrest, despite frequent public displays of great confidence and achievement by the Chinese Communists. The interlocutors said that not all of the complaints about the government relate to economic change, layoffs in the state sector, and the lack of a developed social safety net for displaced and retired workers. They noted that increasingly popular criticism is focused on the government's inability or unwillingness to stand up to foreigners and to Taipei, particularly after the NATO bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in May 1999 and President Lee Teng-hui's enunciation of his two-state theory in July 1999. One highly placed government analyst said that the Communist Party had grown accustomed to hearing criticism about the economy. But never before in the history of the CCP, he argued, had anyone accused the party of being traitors (*maiguo zei*: a term that literally means criminal who

sells out his country). He said that now such criticism is commonplace and of great concern to the CCP elite, partially because it would be an easy theme around which currently disparate opposition forces could quickly congeal and perhaps join disaffected hardline nationalists in the Party, including the military. He said that especially after the unsuccessful Zhu Rongji visit to the United States and the subsequent events mentioned above, there had been a growing popular perception that the Party is more interested in making money than standing up for China's national interests. For this reason alone, he believes, the Chinese leadership will likely launch a war in the next several years against Taiwan if Taipei continues to stonewall on reunification talks, regardless of the economic damage that would follow or the likelihood of American military intervention. He stated that the time was not yet right on the military side, but that he viewed a cross-Straits war and a Sino-American military confrontation as not only possible but as nearly inevitable in the next seven years. Most other interlocutors, including current and retired military officers, appeared only somewhat more sanguine than this analyst. Although few saw war as likely in the next few years, true words of optimism regarding peace over the longer term appear rare in Beijing in 2000. That being said, few of the interlocutors seemed to have many illusions about the ease with which the mainland could effectively defeat Taiwan, about the incredibly large gap between the PLA and the U.S. military in overall fighting capacity, or about the potential damage to China's economy of a cross-Straits conflict.<sup>16</sup>

### *The Somalia Analogy*

Perhaps the most dangerous element in U.S.-China relations is the fairly widespread belief in America's limited national willpower. If leaders believe that their enemy lacks the willingness to fight once a situation gets very dangerous for that enemy's personnel, then those leaders need not acquire weapons that can defeat that enemy militarily before deciding to use force. They need only to cross the much lower technological and numerical threshold of being able to hurt the enemy, or at least convincing themselves that they can do so.

Just what costs do Beijing elites believe the United States is willing to pay in order to support Taiwan in a shooting war? It is difficult to assess Chinese perceptions on this score, especially from open-source information, but it is clear that there is at least an important strand of thinking in Beijing elite circles that suggests that the United States cannot withstand many casualties. In fact, many of my interlocutors and the colleagues to whom they refer seem to differ not on whether the United States can be compelled to back down over Taiwan, but how quickly and at what cost to China. Some seem to believe that the United States can be deterred from entering the conflict at all; others believe that a small number of American casualties will lead the Americans to withdraw; while others believe it will require hundreds and perhaps as many as 10,000 American casualties to drive the United States out.<sup>17</sup>

Chinese strategic writings in the recent past have often emphasized America's unwillingness to fight against foes that can fight back even in rudimentary ways. One National Defense University

Professor, Zhang Zhaozhong, writes: “Americans usually give the impression that they are chivalrous and generous [people] who want to help when they see something unjust, [but] underneath this superficial image, they are in fact extremely selfish...Americans can never afford to take a beating, not even a light one....” He concludes that “the United States is unlikely...to fight a large-scale war for the sake of Taiwan.”<sup>18</sup>

The most common analogy raised in print and in interviews in China over the past several years is Somalia. A September 1999 article in the PLA daily, the *Jiefang Junbao*, argues that: “Hegemonists fear, first of all, personnel casualties....The strong reaction of the American public to the death of 16 Rangers (sic) during the U.S. invasion of Somalia forced the U.S. Army to withdraw its troops from Somalia.... The defensive side should make a good use of the dread of the enemy, and choose the right methods of operation...including distant air attacks, long-range raids, concealed sabotage by secret service personnel, network break-in, and sneak attacks against enemy warships.” The author faults Saddam Hussein for not striking American and Saudi bases in the multiweek staging process prior to Desert Storm.<sup>19</sup> Fu Liqun, a colonel at the prestigious Academy of Military Sciences in Beijing, argued in a September 1997 article: “After a war has started, [American strategy tries] every means to escape, regardless of any effects on the nation’s face....The United States was aggressive and arrogant at the start of the military intervention in Somalia....However, after the body of a killed U.S. serviceman was paraded through the streets, things became unbearable for the government as well as people outside the government in the United States, and the government could not but declare the withdrawal of U.S. forces. This incident can be regarded as a typical example in the recent years. The reason for all that is closely related to the U.S. society’s humanist cultural tradition centered around the human person....”<sup>20</sup>

Because there were few American casualties in the Gulf War and some Chinese strategists blame Saddam’s passive strategy for this fact, that encounter does not seem to mitigate some analysts’ disrespect for U.S. resolve. Neither does the NATO war in Kosovo, which is read in two ways in China, neither of which serves U.S. interests: the United States is seen as a bully, willing to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries; but it is seen as a weak bully, only willing to attack the weak from a safe distance.<sup>21</sup> One Shanghai researcher points out that when one compares U.S. belligerence toward Belgrade in putting down Kosovo separatism with American acquiescence to Russia’s resolute attack on Chechnya, one sees that “the essence” of the United States and Western powers is “bullying the weak and fearing the strong.”<sup>22</sup> In an article entitled, “Don’t Fear U.S. Intervention” (*Bu Pa Meiguo Ganshe*) in a leading Chinese political newspaper, one prominent CCP America watcher, Niu Jun, opines that a condition that would prevent American intervention in a Taiwan conflict is the ability to raise casualties to an unacceptable level. He points to the “zero casualty” (*ling shangwang*) war fought in Kosovo as demonstrating that America’s “ability to bear cost” (*chengshou li*) is “extremely frail” (*jidu cuiruo*).<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, on core sovereignty issues for China, such as Taiwan, the perceived “balance of interests” may be much more important than the “balance of power.”<sup>24</sup> Even for those who are

less sanguine than Niu Jun about the likelihood of foreign intervention over issues like Taiwan, the most important issue for China is not how to become as strong as the United States, but how to become strong enough to hurt the United States. For example, Chu Shulong of the Chinese intelligence agency, the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, adopts the gross national power measures often found in the peer competitor debate. He first recognizes that: “Now and for quite a long time from now, China has no interest, no necessity, and no capability to compete with the United States and its Western allies in a direct confrontation and power struggle (*zhengmian dui kang he jiaoliang*). But because he believes in the advantages of geography and resolve favoring China as a defensive actor fighting on what it perceives to be its own turf, he argues: “If China’s strategic power (*zhanlüe lilian*) and advanced conventional weaponry (*xianjin changgui wuqi*) reaches 1/10th of the enemy’s, we then can fairly effectively contain (*ezhi*) enemy armed intervention....”<sup>25</sup>

### ***American Forces Tied Down in Other Theaters***

Chinese analysts sometimes emphasize not only the political geography of the region, but also the political geography of the globe as another advantage that China has in settling problems such as Taiwan by force. The United States as the sole superpower often finds its military assets tied down elsewhere. So, one strategy for addressing the Taiwan problem would be to wait until the United States is politically and militarily distracted elsewhere in the world. This, some Chinese analysts believe, would reduce both America’s capability and willingness to intervene against China in a meaningful way. In the early 1990s, Chinese military analysts recognized this weakness of the United States when they observed just how many Asia-based assets were used to defeat Saddam Hussein in the distant Persian Gulf. In June 2000 two civilian analysts made a similar argument, stating that the United States cannot handle the burden of two simultaneous military engagements in separate parts of the world.<sup>26</sup> In the above-mentioned article, Niu Jun of CASS argues that if the United States is in an intense conflict elsewhere and a war broke out across the Straits, the United States might then “give up on implementing military intervention in Taiwan.... Though American power is great, its power has limits.” He describes American “strategic lines” as “too long,” and its power as “scattered” (*fensan*).<sup>27</sup> Hence, one way a non-peer competitor, such as China, might challenge American interests would be to wait until the United States cannot bring its full military assets to bear on the problem in question.

### ***Separation of the United States and Its Allies***

Since the era of Mao, Chinese security analysts have understood and often even exaggerated American dependence on its regional allies to achieve strategic goals.<sup>28</sup> While recognizing American power, one internally circulated military analysis of the United States that was written just after the Gulf War stated that the United States was so dependent on allied assistance that it had become “the

beggar policeman (jiaohuazi jingcha).<sup>29</sup> One major strategy of a weaker China would likely be to weaken America's ability to intervene militarily by isolating the United States from its key regional allies, especially Japan. This could be done by political persuasion or by putting at risk personnel at American bases.<sup>30</sup> Such strike capabilities might be designed to deter allied cooperation. If deterrence failed, attacks on U.S. bases might be designed to slow America's military response or, by raising casualties, to compel the United States and its allies to back down after initial intervention.<sup>31</sup>

Attacking military bases effectively with missiles, especially conventionally tipped ones, is a very difficult task. But for deterrence to fail and for there to be severe risks of escalation, Chinese elites might only need to believe that such attacks would damage American willpower or undermine the willingness of Japanese citizens to support American war efforts.

### **China's Current and Developing Capabilities: A Counter-Revolution in Military Affairs?**

Through foreign purchases and domestic developments, China seems to be acquiring capabilities to better attack Taiwan and to complicate any American effort to enter a cross-Strait conflict. Many of these acquisitions are last generation weaponry; but they can be significant if Taiwan or the United States lacks means to counter them effectively, or if the methods of countering them are politically unpalatable, overly risky to American forces or American alliances, and therefore are or seem unlikely to be employed. It is not enough to ask whether the United States can sink a new Chinese battleship or submarine or whether the United States can preempt against missile sites with strike weapons. In an actual crisis, the president might avoid taking such provocative actions in order to maintain crisis stability, to avoid escalation of an armed conflict with a nuclear power capable of striking the United States, or to avoid a rupture in regional alliances in the face of nervousness in Tokyo, Canberra, Seoul, or Manila. If, in the absence of American preemption, these systems posed real risks to American service personnel, then China might have significant political leverage in a crisis or conflict without the slightest capacity of defeating American forces in a toe-to-toe war. Of equal importance, and perhaps much more likely, Chinese elites might perceive that they have such leverage even when they do not. This alone can lead to a tragic escalation of conflict.

In its efforts to counter the United States, China will likely attempt to use old and new technologies to solve the Taiwan problem and to complicate America's attempts to respond. Some of these methods, like laser blinding of American satellites, might be very high tech, while others, such as laying mines near ports and in sealanes with submarines, will not be very new nor high-tech in nature. By developing such methods, China seems bent not so much on winning the revolution in military affairs, but on launching a counter-revolution in military affairs to weaken and coerce more

advanced powers who are increasingly dependent on high-tech command and control and information gathering systems for power projection purposes. None of the high-tech or low-tech methods discussed above will allow China to close significantly the overall gap with the United States in military power, nor will they necessarily enable the PRC to invade and occupy Taiwan, but they might prove effective at achieving certain political goals regarding Taiwan at acceptable costs. At a minimum, they might prove extremely dangerous if Chinese elites believe them to be effective when they are not.

### **Some Potential Chinese Offensive Strategies Other than a D-Day Style Amphibious Assault<sup>32</sup>**

#### ***Challenging Taiwan's Air Superiority and Threatening American Bases***

Some of the high profile systems that China is acquiring are Russian Su27 and Su30 fighter jets with medium-range air-to-air missiles. If employed effectively in sufficient numbers and that is always an important qualifier in regards to the Chinese military these systems could pose major problems for Taiwan in its efforts to maintain air superiority over the Taiwan Strait, a critical asset in breaking blockades and preventing eventual invasion. The problem of maintaining air superiority might be particularly nettlesome if China is able to damage Taiwan's air defense assets through dedicated and massive attack on command and control nodes and airstrips with special forces or with cruise and accurate ballistic missiles assets that the Chinese military are working hard to develop. In an excellent 1999 study which cites numerous open-source Chinese publications, Major Mark Stokes of the United States Air Force first raised the hypothesis that China was working hard to move beyond the use of missiles as terror weapons and to obtain such a militarily useful, accurate missile force.<sup>33</sup>

One recent internally circulated Chinese military publication strongly suggests that Stokes's study accurately reflects PLA thinking about missile strikes. In almost every type of scenario for future warfighting (always against unnamed foes with superior technology) from blockade to invasion, the authors viewed as essential concentrated attacks on enemy military assets with accurate missiles. Moreover, the current conventional missile force under the Second Artillery, though limited in number, is portrayed as already having sufficient range and accuracy for such attacks on critically important enemy assets as regional naval bases, air strips, and command and control centers, if the targets are well selected and the missile firings are sufficiently concentrated.<sup>34</sup> The text argues that a concerted deep strike attack on important enemy assets, can seize battlefield initiative (*zhanyi zhudongquan*) and establish the conditions for victory; moreover in politics it can frighten his [the enemy's] psychology, shaking his will to fight a war (*dongyao qi zhanzheng yizhi*), and accelerating the progress of the battle (*jiasu zhanyi jincheng*).<sup>35</sup> It is clear from these sections of the text that the authors are not arguing that the PLA has an upper hand, nor that it is closing the gap significantly with the West in any of these areas in the near term. Rather they are arguing that through some improved capabilities, a higher level of morale and resolve than the enemy, careful

targeting, and innovative methods of early strike, China might be able to use accurate missiles to fight and prevail politically in a regional war over issues related to Chinese sovereignty, such as Taiwan.<sup>36</sup>

Because the book mentioned above and analyzed in greater detail below is edited by two very high ranking military officers at China's premiere military academy and is apparently used in national level training courses for high-ranking CCP cadres, the opinions expressed in it carry more importance than do the very dramatic, much discussed, but much less authoritative text entitled, *Unrestricted Warfare*, penned for a much wider audience by two lesser known colonels.<sup>37</sup> Even if the plans outlined in General Wang and General Zhang's more cautious work are themselves still far too optimistic, and I believe that they generally are, they are of concern if Chinese military officers reading such assessments and the civilians they advise come to believe them to be efficacious as Chinese capabilities improve over the coming years. Moreover, the plans are especially of concern because the notion that China must strike hard, early, and by surprise in order to carry out the plans effectively might make crises very volatile and hard to contain in the future. In this limited sense, China's weakness and inability to become a peer competitor may make it a more dangerous opponent in a future crisis than a more secure and powerful China might be. This is especially true if Chinese elites feel desperate and are banking on opponents with limited resolve and willingness to bear costs.

### ***Information and Electronic Warfare***

Another concerning aspect of China's hope for an effective asymmetric strategy against a more powerful foe is information and electronic warfare. Here is the clearest example of Chinese military elites accepting the PLA's inferior overall capabilities but trying to create problems for others with more advanced command and control systems and surveillance assets.<sup>38</sup> The aforementioned PLA educational text argues that, in order to fight more advanced foes, China needs to develop the following capabilities and tactics, all of which fit well with the notion of a counter-revolution in military affairs: special forces operations against enemy command and control; precision guided missiles, including anti-radiation (*fan fushe daodan*) missiles; electromagnetic pulse weapons (*dianci maichong wuqi*); lasers (*jiguang*); and computer viruses and computer hackers (*hei ke*) to attack information networks.<sup>39</sup>

Again, in none of this discussion do the authors suggest that China will somehow surpass or catch up to the United States or other advanced powers in information systems or in the ability to attack them. Rather the argument is that more advanced countries might be vulnerable precisely because they depend on more advanced, high-tech systems than less advanced countries like China currently have. The authors write that early infowar attacks can harm the enemy's psychological

conviction (xinnian xinli), and can achieve the goal of breaking of the enemy military's willingness to fight (dou zhi) and [its] ambition (zhi qi) and of reducing its combat effectiveness (zhandouli).<sup>40</sup> As with the notion of missile strikes, the target is as much the enemy's resolve as it is its military might. Moreover, a premium is placed in these writings on attacking the enemy's information net before the enemy attacks one's own. The authors of the PLA text write that, while offense and defense in information war are both indispensable, offense is dominant (jingong zhan you zhudao di wei). Without an effective offense, China will be unable to defend its own information networks efficiently from attack by enemies, who, the authors imply, will be more technologically advanced and powerful than China.<sup>41</sup>

The combination of an emphasis on early attack, the danger of being struck first, and the potential effect of an early concerted strike on the enemy's resolve and fighting spirit, rather than just its capabilities, all suggest that a moderate increase in Chinese information war capabilities may pose a major challenge in the context of a Taiwan crisis. Chinese elites will likely view such a crisis primarily as a battle of wills. Moreover, if they accept the logic above, they might convince themselves that an early, concerted attack, however risky, is less risky than the alternatives. In such circumstances, again, China's overall inferiority could actually encourage, rather than discourage, escalation.

We cannot be certain from open-source data how developed the Chinese information warfare capability really is. Unlike those relating to missile warfare, the Chinese writings on information warfare do not betray a high degree of confidence in China's current capabilities. But, as James Mulvenon argues in an excellent study: "behind all the rhetoric and hype, IW presents the Chinese with a potentially potent, if circumscribed, asymmetric weapon. Defined carefully, it could give the PLA a longer-range power projection capability against U.S. forces that its conventional forces cannot currently hope to match."<sup>42</sup> Even if China currently lacks key capabilities, Beijing might develop more impressive capabilities over the next several years. Moreover, Beijing elites might overestimate China's IW attack capability as it develops or exaggerate Taiwanese and American vulnerabilities. Such miscalculations might have important implications for crisis management and conflict escalation.

### ***Blockade Strategies***

One of the options for coercing Taiwan that geography affords the PRC is blockade of Taiwan's trade through a combination of physical destruction of ports and shipping or deterrence of civilian shipping companies. Sea blockade provides a wide range of options for the PLA, including direct attacks on shipping with ship-to-ship missiles, air-launched missiles, land-based cruise missiles, and submarine-launched torpedoes. In addition, key ports such as those in Kaohsiung and Keelung are subject to missile attack or missile blockade, if fear for physical safety or soaring insurance rates keep merchant ships out of harbor. In addition, China might be able to use a vast array of methods to lay sea mines, including surface ships, aircraft, and submarines. Always nettlesome to even the most powerful navies, sea mines are more sophisticated and harder to detect than ever. They can be pre-positioned and remotely controlled, or they can lie on the ocean floor until they are activated

by the motion of ships. The proximity of Taiwan to the mainland (roughly 100 nautical miles across the Strait), Taiwan's massive trade dependence (more than half Taiwan's GNP), the inherent difficulty in clearing mines, and the extreme weakness of American mineclearing capacity particularly in the theater (the United States has only two mineclearing ships deployed in the Seventh Fleet), all make blockade a tempting and potentially effective strategy for a China that does not close the gap with either Taiwan or the United States in technology or overall military power.<sup>43</sup>

New PLA Navy capabilities that should soon be integrated into the active forces and that increase the threat of blockade to Taiwan include four Kilo submarines with guided torpedoes and two Sovremenny destroyers with supersonic Sunburn SS-N-22 missiles. These assets will supplement a larger but more technologically backward PLA Navy with dozens of louder, slower submarines with more backward offensive systems that are either still active or mothballed for future use. The more modern ships might greatly complicate the ROC (Taiwan) Navy's ability to keep shipping safe. Kilos and Sovremenny destroyers might also be used, along with sea mines and cruise missiles, by the PRC as coercive tools designed to deter the intervention of or limit the nature and geographical deployment of American forces.

American naval experts and officers have pointed out that it is very difficult to defend against the Sunburn missile, designed by the Russians to attack U.S. carrier battle groups protected by Aegis air-defense systems. But they also claim that the U.S. Navy can easily destroy a Sovremenny destroyer long before American surface ships come into range of the Sunburn.<sup>44</sup> However, as in the case of long-distance strikes on mainland missile sites, one must question whether, in a political and military crisis over Taiwan, naval commanders in the theater would be allowed to operate under such politically provocative rules of engagement.<sup>45</sup> If not, then the Sunburn becomes a potentially powerful coercive tool to make Americans think twice about the possible costs of loitering in waters near Taiwan. Again, even if Beijing falsely concluded that it could deny access to certain waters through such coercive measures involving Kilos and Sovremennys, the risk of crisis escalation and the security problems posed by these Cold-War era systems are still very real.

Military and civilian elites in Beijing recognize both the advantages and disadvantages of a blockade scenario. They are aware of American and Taiwan vulnerability, particularly to sea mines. This provides a potentially useful asymmetric tool to coerce technologically superior forces. As the PLA educational text points out, sea mines are economically damaging, last a long time, are hard to detect, and are viewed with seriousness by every country's military.<sup>46</sup> The text points out that there have been major advances in sea mines, particularly in their stealthiness, and that one great advantage of mine warfare is that one can supplement mines as they are cleared by the enemy, thus further complicating the enemy's challenge and extending the duration of the blockade. While PLA minelaying assets in the air, on the surface, and under the sea are all vulnerable to attack by a technologically superior enemy's defensive forces, methods of deception, timing, and joint operations are being designed to reduce this risk. In clear but only implicit references to Taiwan, the aforementioned PLA text discusses using forces in one area to distract the attention of the enemy while PLA submarines lay mines in other areas. Another tactic is to lay mines with submarines

during or just after extreme weather, so that enemy ASW patrol craft on the surface and in the air cannot be effectively deployed against PLA submarines. (This reference is almost certainly to Taiwan because of the weather patterns in the Strait and because Taiwan, unlike the United States, lacks submarine-based ASW capabilities.)<sup>47</sup> In more general weather conditions, it is argued that minelaying and attacks on surface shipping might be combined in joint operations with information war and missile strikes on air and naval assets to complicate the enemy's ability to conduct effective ASW and mineclearing operations.<sup>48</sup>

Blockade scenarios have obvious downsides, in addition to the danger that they will simply fail on military grounds because of Taiwan's antisubmarine, mineclearing, surface warfare, and air defense capabilities combined with the limited punch of the PLA's conventionally tipped missiles. The biggest additional danger, and the one most cited by my interlocutors and in military writings, is the protracted (*chi jiu*) nature of blockade warfare, which allows time for third country assistance and military intervention.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, because the editors of the aforementioned PLA text envision blockade as a form of joint warfare with complex challenges, there is great concern that enemy counterattacks will reduce the sustainability of a blockade. Again, in a fashion that does not bode well either for crisis stability or controlling wartime escalation, the authors' suggested solution is early, large-scale attack using missile strikes and submarines at the high end, and large numbers of civilian ships for mine-laying at the low end, to achieve battlefield superiority relatively quickly.<sup>50</sup>

The PLA authors might be overreaching their current and near-term future capabilities in designing some of the tactics discussed above. American naval experts have argued to this author that accurate and safe deployment of sea mines near harbors with submarines is no easy task even in good weather and that it is extremely dangerous to plan to do so during or just after foul weather, especially with submarines that must snorkel periodically, as do most in the PLA Navy. Moreover, supplementing minefields after the initial mines are laid is very tricky. This is true not only because minelaying submarines and surface ships are working against a fully alerted enemy but also because those submarines and ships themselves are endangered by mines laid in the initial round. Finally, complex joint operations, such as simultaneous minelaying, missile strikes, and infowar attacks, are hardly the forte of the PLA.

That being said, if Chinese elites are willing to risk casualties and setbacks, then a blockade strategy involving missiles and mines, especially mines laid by submarine, might seem quite attractive. This is particularly true if those elites assess negatively the willingness of merchant shippers to travel in harm's way, the economic and political staying power of Taiwan under blockade conditions, and the willingness of third parties to intervene in a concerted and protracted way to protect Taiwan's sea lanes.

### **Defensive Strategies: Limiting Damage from Attack**

Another aspect worthy of consideration is the PLA's growing air defense capabilities. Again, the issue is not whether China can develop a system that can defeat American air power or counter all

American cruise missiles. The key issue is whether the PLA might be developing the active and passive air defenses its generals believe necessary to limit the offensive punch of its potential enemies while raising the costs to the attacking nation of air assault. In his important study, Major Stokes argues that China has an impressive program of passive defense, including the development of a military communication network that relies increasingly on underground fiber optic cables. These are difficult to destroy and relatively hard to tap for intelligence gathering purposes.<sup>51</sup> Encouraged by the survival experience of Yugoslav forces in Kosovo, in particular the survivability of high value targets such as mobile SAM missile sites, the PLA also apparently is working to improve concealment and increase survivability for its offensive forces and air defense assets through the use of dummy targets, camouflage, smoke and water screens, and so forth. Some attention apparently is also being spent on improving damage assessment, repair, and recovery operations to get damaged sites up and running again after successful enemy strikes.<sup>52</sup> Finally, the sheer size and large number of potential targets might constitute China's greatest passive air defense asset. As one U.S. naval officer put it, China is a "cruise missile sponge" capable of exhausting even America's large arsenal of strike weapons.<sup>53</sup>

On the active defense side, it appears that China is attempting to import and to build indigenously a fairly impressive layered air defense system to counter cruise missiles and advanced aircraft. In addition to reported clandestine acquisition of Patriot technology, China has purchased and is seeking to purchase from Russia an undisclosed number of SA-10 (S-300) and SA-15 (TOR-1) SAM systems. Some of this technology might be successfully integrated into China's own domestically produced SAM systems, such as the HQ-9.<sup>54</sup> China is also working to develop anti-stealth and anti-satellite capabilities.<sup>55</sup>

Even if the Chinese programs are only of limited effectiveness against more technologically advanced foes, they may still pose a future security challenge to Taiwan and the United States. If Beijing elites see themselves in a protracted war of wills over an issue they care about much more than the Americans, such as Taiwan, those elites might be emboldened by the perceived capability, however limited, to increase costs to American and Taiwanese forces and to reduce costs to mainland assets in such a struggle. This problem is only exacerbated by any perceptions they might have about America's limited willingness to suffer casualties and to fight protracted wars.

### **Problems for America's Traditional Alliance Commitments**

A final and more abstract way that the improvement in Chinese capabilities might complicate American security strategy is in its effect on the traditional reassurance role that the United States has played in the East Asia region. By providing a robust security presence in Japan and thereby reassuring Tokyo that Japan was secure without its own nuclear weapons and power projection capabilities, the United States was, at the same time, able to reassure China and Korea that Japan was unlikely to fulfill its impressive military potential. Especially given the bitter and still largely unresolved historical legacies between the two countries, the largely unilateral American provision

of security to Japan was a fine bargain for both sides: allowing the United States bases from which to secure access to the region and allowing Japan to concentrate on other pursuits besides domestically controversial and internationally provocative ones such as projecting power abroad, large-scale joint operations with the United States, or the development of weapons of mass destruction and related delivery systems.<sup>56</sup>

Various factors unrelated to China have threatened this arrangement in ways that augur a more active burden-sharing role for Japan in the alliance, an outcome feared by Chinese security elites. These factors include: reductions in American defense spending, the collapse of the Soviet Union as a legitimizing force for American unilateral protection of Japan, and changes in Japan's society and politics as the Pacific War becomes a more distant memory. But when considering the forces that increase the likelihood of a more assertive Japan within the U.S.-Japan alliance, one must also factor in the growth of Chinese power and the increased difficulty that the United States will face in terms of straightforward military effectiveness and domestic political backlash if Japan does not play a larger role in regional contingencies involving China. This is especially true for defensive and rear-area support roles that might be needed in Taiwan scenarios, such as logistics support, intelligence gathering, minesweeping, and missile defense.

American development of mobile, sea-based theater missile defense systems (Navy Theater Wide) is expensive and complicated. For both reasons the United States has sought a degree of allied cooperation in the system's development. Washington approached Japan in the early 1990s, and U.S.-Japan cooperation was pushed as part of the *Nye Initiative* launched in 1994. Doubtlessly, North Korea's August 1998 missile test across Japan's territory helped create the domestic political cover for Japanese elites who were interested in participating in the system all along, but the major long-term international concern of most of those Japanese security elites is apparently China, not Korea.<sup>57</sup>

Chinese elites in turn are very concerned about Tokyo's September 1998 decision to participate in joint research and development of upper-tier TMD with the United States, particularly naval systems that can travel to the Taiwan area. At a more abstract level, Beijing security experts worry that Japan will become more assertive generally as it increases its role in the U.S.-Japan alliance as part of the revised Guidelines crafted by Tokyo and Washington from 1994-1997 and breaks out of some of the self-imposed restraints on its military activities in the post-war era. One particular area, mineclearing, could further stress U.S.-Japan-China triangular relations if China continues to develop blockade strategies and the United States, Taiwan, and Japan begin more assertively to counter such strategies. As stated above, mineclearing may be the single biggest weakness in the U.S. Navy. Japan, on the other hand, has over thirty minesweepers and a good deal of experience in mineclearing exercises.<sup>58</sup> Over time, the American temptation to rely more heavily on Japan in planning and executing mineclearing operations in and around Taiwan might grow.<sup>59</sup> Japanese refusal to assist in such operations could strain U.S.-Japan security relations, while Japanese acceptance of such a role, particularly in a crisis or military conflict, would be extremely damaging to crisis management and

to long-term Sino-Japanese relations. So, it is clear how even moderate increases in Chinese capabilities and adjustments in doctrines can pose serious challenges to America's traditional military strategy in the region: which involves both assuring predictable and stable relations with Japan and, at the same time, quelling mutual security concerns between Tokyo and Beijing.

If anything, this problem is more severe in the case of Taiwan. Since 1979 the United States has been able to maintain a posture in which it recognized Beijing as the sole legitimate Chinese government, broke all formal alliance relations with Taipei, but still offered a vague security guarantee to Taiwan in the form of various statements including the Taiwan Relations Act demanding a peaceful settlement of cross-Straits disputes. This posture was relatively easy to maintain in an era in which Washington and Beijing were cooperating in countering the Soviet Union, in which China simply lacked the capacity to coerce Taiwan militarily, and in which Taiwan's KMT leadership still adhered strictly to a "one China" principle. The United States could guarantee Taiwan security at a distance without taking actions that were overly provocative to the mainland, especially arms sales or military coordination with Taiwan that suggested the restoration of the U.S.-ROC military alliance or an unconditional commitment to Taiwan's security, including under conditions where Taiwan has declared formal independence from the Chinese nation.

Much of this has changed with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the democratization of Taiwan, the election of leaders such as Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian who apparently do not accept a "one China" principle, and the increasing capacity of the mainland to threaten Taiwan with various forms of attack outlined above. China's increasing military capability is making it tougher for the United States to guarantee that it can assist in Taiwan's security without significant new arms sales and, perhaps eventually, greater coordination between American and Taiwanese forces in preparation for real military contingencies.

Although China opposes all arms sales and military contacts between the United States and Taiwan, the transfer of systems that require direct military linkages will be the most sensitive. If the United States not only sells weapons to Taiwan but transfers systems that must be operated jointly between the two sides, such an outcome would carry strong political meaning in Beijing, suggesting the restoration of the alliance and a commitment to Taiwan's security that might seem to Beijing to be so strong and unconditional that it could encourage pro-independence forces on the island. Where the United States is likely to face its biggest challenge is in the developing upper-tier theater missile defense system. When this complex regional system is developed by the United States and Japan, will Taiwan be included as an active participant? As the number, type, and accuracy of Chinese missiles improve over time, it will be increasingly tempting for the United States to include Taiwan in the system, particularly when domestic politics in the United States is factored into the equation. For example, existing and future lower-tier systems will have a difficult time intercepting China's DF-21 missile, one of China's options for missile attack on Taiwan. Given the fact that any member of the regional system would have to rely heavily on American satellites, sensors, etc., membership would resemble a defacto alliance of Taipei not only with Washington but with Tokyo as well.

The United States has already transferred less sophisticated lower-tier systems to Taiwan, such as the Patriot- PAC 2 plus, and is likely to transfer the next generation lower-tier system, the PAC 3.

With the proper ground-based radars, which the United States has already agreed to transfer to Taiwan, these systems can operate as a counter to the PLA's short-range ballistic missiles without direct coordination between the American and ROC militaries. It is doubtful, however, that the missile defense debate in America's Taiwan policy will stop there, particularly if China continues to develop more accurate, faster, medium- range ballistic missiles, like improved DF-21s, which only upper-tier systems will be able to engage. If the United States were eventually to go ahead with inclusion of Taiwan in a future regional upper-tier system, this would severely undercut America's reassurance role in the region by harming not only U.S.-China relations but also Sino-Japanese relations. Moreover, the prospect of Taiwan's inclusion in a future upper-tier system might create a closing window of vulnerability for Beijing, which might attempt to coerce Taipei into a settlement of the Taiwan problem before the regional system exists.

In this very direct sense, China's military modernization, though hardly a challenge to American regional or global supremacy, will likely pose a huge headache for America's security strategy. The United States might find it increasingly difficult to reassure Taiwan on the security front at the same time that it reassures China on the political front that Washington does not and will not support Taiwan independence.<sup>60</sup>

## Conclusions

A news article exemplifies well the problem that this paper seeks to address. In it the journalist discloses internally circulated Chinese military writings from the President of the PLA National Defense University stating that China is decades behind the advanced militaries of the world and requires a long-term and very arduous military modernization program in order to close the gap. Given the works cited above, none of this surprising. What is disturbing, however, is the journalist's conclusion from this data. He states, "the Taiwan authorities can take a breath in the face of military threats from across the strait, and rest a little easier for at least 10 years."<sup>61</sup> Such a conclusion fully disregards the potential for military conflict despite PLA inferiority if the factors discussed above combine to make military action appear to Beijing elites as more prudent than inaction. By way of emphasis, these factors include:

- ☞ rising political concern on the mainland about trends in cross-Straits relations
- ☞ geography
- ☞ the distraction of the United States in other theaters
- ☞ Beijing's perceptions and misperceptions about enemy military vulnerabilities and enemy resolve

any related belief in Beijing, false or real, about the ability to reach an acceptable political conclusion to an armed conflict without dominating all of one's enemies militarily.

I am not suggesting that net assessments are useless and that actual Chinese military capabilities do not matter. It is quite likely that the PLA will go to great lengths to avoid the use of force until at least the middle of this decade under almost all political circumstances, because the PLA has not yet fully developed many of the capabilities necessary even to carry out some of the limited coercive scenarios discussed above. Nor am I suggesting that once China has sufficient force to carry out some of these limited campaigns with more assurance that Beijing will be eager to do so. Quite to the contrary, judging from the military writings cited above. Even though they do appear dangerously overconfident at times, the Chinese officers writing the various chapters fully recognize the high degree of difficulty and uncertainty involved not only in invasion, but in blockades, information warfare, and other operations. And this is not to mention the huge economic costs that China would suffer if it attacked Taiwan and, in the process, alienates its two biggest trade partners, Japan and the United States. Although they do not see any military operations as easy, the PLA authors do not conclude that force is not an option. Instead, they say that China must design asymmetric strategies for when they are absolutely necessary.<sup>62</sup> It would, therefore, be folly for Taipei to believe itself safe for ten years because of PLA weakness in comparison to either ROC forces or U.S. forces in the region. This is especially true if this conclusion is drawn for all projected political scenarios, including ones in which Taipei has taken diplomatic steps that aggravate Chinese nationalism, threaten CCP legitimacy, and augur near-term or eventual Taiwanese independence if PRC action is not taken.

For the same reasons, it would also be folly for Washington elites to use balance-of-power analysis to draw similar conclusions about the low likelihood of war across the Taiwan Straits, the ability of Taiwan to prevail quickly and easily in such a war either with or without American help, or the ability of the United States to avoid dangerous degrees of escalation in a military conflict with China over Taiwan. We should take both China's political concerns and military modernization seriously and attempt to find the best possible balance of deterrence and reassurance possible so that war can better be avoided and so that the likelihood and costs of escalation of any war that should occur can be limited.

On the deterrence side, it might be helpful whenever possible to develop more military capabilities that can blunt Chinese coercive capacities in credible ways that do not require provocative measures such as preemption and massive attacks on the mainland. Future upper-tier theater missile defenses for American bases and for American allies are a good concept when the alternative for the protection of bases and forward-deployed forces might be provocative preemptive strikes against missile sites on the mainland. The United States has never unleashed anything so aggressive against the homeland of a nuclear-armed state in the past, and it is doubtful that an American president will be eager to become the first to do so. For similar reasons, it would be extremely helpful if better active fleet

defenses could be created against systems like the Sunburn missile so that preemption against Chinese surface ships would not be necessary to improve the safety of the U.S. Navy near Taiwan. The alternative of preemptive strike against the Chinese Navy risks not only escalation with a nuclear power, but Washington's alienation of allied and world opinion. Another good investment would be more minesweepers and other mineclearing assets stationed in the Seventh Fleet to better counter mainland mine warfare tactics without relying on Japan. Reliance on Japanese forces for either mineclearing or missile defense near Taiwan would be extremely provocative and would be more likely to lead to short-term escalation and long-term instability in the region than would the deployment of Taiwanese and American assets alone. This is due to the high degree of mistrust and animosity felt in China toward Japan and the emotional historical legacy regarding Japanese imperialism in the Taiwan case in particular. Also damaging would be a Japanese refusal of an American request to provide such military services in a crisis. Such an outcome would severely undermine domestic support for what arguably is America's most important alliance.<sup>63</sup> Finally, to enhance deterrence, the United States should transfer to Taiwan the defensive capabilities it needs to withstand a Chinese fait accompli strategy and to afford the United States time to intervene on Taiwan's behalf if it so chooses. Those capabilities include limited point defense against missiles (such as PAC 3 or similar lower-tier missile defense systems), much more robust mine clearing assets, and more advanced anti-submarine warfare assets, especially P-3 aircraft.

Such enhanced American and Taiwanese capabilities should help on the margins by reducing the chance of war and by limiting the dangers of escalation if war did occur. On the deterrence side, Beijing elites must consider the difficulties they would face in using force to coerce Taiwan to the negotiating table if the United States had more robust, politically usable military options to protect American forces from PLA coercion. Beijing elites are clearly debating their chances of deterring American intervention or coercing early American withdrawal. Therefore, America's ability to defend its forces against PLA attack reduces China's ability to achieve those critical goals easily and should make China less likely to choose the risky option of force.

At the same time, the United States should work hard to disabuse Chinese elites of any belief they might have about American unwillingness to suffer casualties and pay economic costs in war. This is difficult, but not impossible to achieve. It would be helpful if American officials, scholars, and business people pointed out to their Chinese counterparts the stark differences between Somalia and China in American strategic thinking. Increased military-to-military contacts can expose more Chinese military elites not only to our state-of-the-art military equipment but also to a very dedicated and professional U.S. military rank and file and officer corps. Visits to war memorials at Pearl Harbor and Gettysburg for Chinese leadership delegations should help in driving home the anomalous nature of the Somalia experience and the dangers of underestimating American resolve and staying power. Finally, getting Chinese visitors out of cities such as Washington, New York, and Boston and into small towns in rural America with their many American flags and hometown war memorials should reduce Chinese perceptions of an apathetic and indifferent American public interested only in money and comfort. Any subsequent reduction in Chinese beliefs about the

PLA's ability to coerce an early American withdrawal from the Taiwan theater should all things being equal increase deterrence and reduce the likelihood of war over Taiwan.

But all things are not always equal. There are certain conditions under which Beijing will likely be fully undeterrable. If, for example, Taiwan were to declare independence, it is hard to imagine that China would forego the use of force against Taiwan, regardless of the perceived economic or military costs, the likely duration or intensity of American intervention, or the balance of forces in the region. But even if it only appears in Beijing that Taiwan is moving in the direction of such a declaration with increasingly clear and powerful American and Japanese military backing then China might perceive a closing window of opportunity to reverse that trend before the military and political conditions are even less favorable to the mainland. Under these conditions, deterrence of Chinese military action might be increasingly difficult.

Therefore, on the reassurance side of the equation, it is important for the United States to attempt to avoid, as much as possible, backing China into a corner on the Taiwan issue. If the above argument is correct, then what makes Beijing so hard to deter despite its relative military weakness is a sense of political desperation, however justified, not aggressive intent or expansionism. It would therefore be constructive for the United States to draw a line in the sand not only for the mainland, but also for Taiwan, in advance of hostilities, letting Taiwan know publicly and clearly that a move on its part from de facto to legal independence is not worth a war in which it might lose both and, in the process, drag American forces into an otherwise avoidable war with China. Such a war would not only set back the prospects for healthy U.S.-China and Chinese-Japanese relations, but would also likely hinder any long-term progress toward democratization on the mainland by hardening Chinese nationalism and anti-Western thinking. Voices of democratic reform inside and outside the Chinese Communist Party might be repressed even further as dupes or even agents of the United States, Japan, and the Taiwan traitors. War would also severely damage Taiwan's economy and, probably, its fledgling democracy as well, since civil liberties and freedoms would likely be curtailed or abolished in the setting of war mobilization and an extended emergency. Therefore, the United States should publicly reassure Beijing by warning Taiwan that American soldiers will not be asked to defend Taiwan if it declares independence. At the same time, the United States should warn China and reassure Taipei that an attack on a Taiwan that remains legally Chinese and holds out the prospect of eventual unification under mutually acceptable conditions will meet an American military response.<sup>64</sup>

Given the analysis above, the most dangerous period in cross-Straits relations may be between the years 2005-2010. In those years, many important political and military events might come to pass that could destabilize cross-Straits relations. Jiang Zemin will almost certainly not serve in any high office past 2007, so if he wants progress on unification as part of his legacy and wants to avoid being tarred in the history books as a leader who lost a grip on Taiwan, then Beijing might take dangerous actions to coerce Taiwan to the negotiating table before 2007. By the second half of this decade, China may have many more of the tools necessary to attempt a campaign of coercion against Taiwan,

the United States, and U.S. regional allies, even if such an attempt might still appear incredibly imprudent on purely military grounds. Moreover, Chinese interlocutors often state that for both political and military reasons, Beijing sees this decade as a closing window of opportunity for China on the Taiwan issue. A combination of social and political trends on the island are leading Taiwan further away from the mainland while regional and global military developments seem to be working against China. These developments include: the development of American and Japanese upper-tier theater missile defense capabilities (slated for completion around 2007); the development of an American national missile defense systems; the transfer of more sophisticated weapons to Taiwan; the potential for inclusion of Taiwan in the U.S.-Japan regional upper-tier system; and the political implications this would carry for Taiwan's ability to rely on those quasi-allies in a fight.<sup>65</sup>

For these reasons, the United States needs to take Chinese military developments seriously and to deter any potential adventurism by Beijing by developing politically realistic countermeasures to new PLA systems and tactics. At the same time, the United States needs to avoid, whenever possible, unnecessarily creating a feeling of desperation in Beijing, however warranted, about the prospects for eventual Taiwan independence. As PLA capabilities improve, this will likely be a difficult balance to find.

### Notes

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1. The peer competitor debate, for example, was the focus of two major conferences in 1993-1994, one at Harvard University's Center for International Affairs entitled "The China Threat?" the other at the Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, entitled "China: Strategic Partner or Peer Competitor?". For examples of concerns about China's rise to great power status, see Nicholas Kristof, "The Rise of China," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 72, No. 5 (November/December 1993), pp. 59-74; and Denny Roy, "Hegemon on the Horizon? China's Threat to East Asian Security," *International Security* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 149-168. Richard Bernstein and Ross Munro even predicted that China will become a global rival of the United States in the next two decades. See their "Coming Conflict with America," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 76, No. 2 (March/April 1997), pp. 18-31; and especially their book, *The Coming Conflict with China* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997). For predictions of China as a peer competitor in line with previous power transitions in history, see Peter T.R. Brookes, "Strategic Realism: The Future of U.S.-Sino Security Relations," *Strategic Review* (Summer 1999); Fareed Zakaria, "China: Appease or Contain?; Speak Softly, Carry a Veiled Threat," *New York Times Magazine*, February 18, 1996; and Stephen-Götz Richter, "Repeating History: In Dealing with China, the United States Can Learn a great Deal from British-German Relations in 1880," July 11, 2000, found at <http://www.theglobalist.com/nor/news>. For counter arguments emphasizing China's persistent weaknesses in comparison to the United States and other militaries, see Michael C. Gallagher, "China's Illusory Threat to the South China Sea," *International Security* Vol. 19, No. 1 (Summer 1994), pp. 108-148; Paul Godwin, "The PLA Faces the Twenty-First Century: Reflections on Technology, Doctrine, Strategy, and Operations," in James R. Lilley

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and David Shambaugh, eds., *China's Military Faces the Future* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1999), pp. 39-63; Robert Ross and Andrew J. Nathan, *The Great Wall and the Empty Fortress: China's Search for Security* (New York: Norton, 1997); and Robert Ross, "Beijing as a Conservative Power," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 76, No. 2 (March/April 1997), pp. 33-44.

2. See, for example, the report on the drafting of the Pentagon's Joint Vision 2020 in Thomas E. Ricks, "For Pentagon, Asia Moving To Forefront: Shift Has Implications for Strategy, Forces, Weapons," *Washington Post*, May 26, 2000, p. 1.

3. Robert Ross "The Geography of the Peace: East Asia in the Twenty-First Century," *International Security* Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 101-102. For a concerned view about what a non-transparent China might be doing in the fields of military high-tech, see Wendy Frieman, "The Understated Revolution in Chinese Science and Technology," in James R. Lilley and David Shambaugh, eds., *China's Military Faces the Future* (Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, 1999) pp. 247-267. For much less rosy assessments of trends in China's technological capabilities in comparison to the United States and others, see Bernard D. Cole and Paul H.B. Godwin, "Advanced Military Technology and the PLA: Priorities and Capabilities for the Twenty-First Century," paper presented at the 1998 American Enterprise Institute Conference on the People's Liberation Army, Wye Plantation, Aspen, Maryland; and Bates Gill and Lonnie Henley, *China and the Revolution in Military Affairs* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1996).

4. For a balance-of-forces analysis which states that Taiwan will be safe from mainland attack long into the future, see James Nolt, "The China-Taiwan Military Balance," January 7, 2000, available at <http://www.taiwansecurity.org>. For a counter argument that, over the course of the next decade, the balance of power will shift gradually but decisively from Taiwan's favor to that of the PRC, see David Shambaugh, "A Matter of Time: Taiwan's Eroding Military Advantage," *The Washington Quarterly* Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 2000), pp. 119-133.

5. For an explication of American strategic goals, including the reassurance role, see Department of Defense, *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region, 1998*.

6. Department of Defense, "Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act," June 22, 2000 available at <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2000/china06222000.htm>.

7. Lieut. General Wang Houqing, and Maj. General Zhang Xingye, chief eds. *Zhanyi Xue (Military Campaign Studies)* Beijing: National Defense University Press, May 2000 (military circulation only), p. 28.

8. For an explanation of this two-pronged strategy, see You Ji, "Chinese Military Security/Foreign Policy Challenge in the New Century," a paper presented at the conference on

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Chinese Foreign Policy Facing the New Century, June 10-11, 2000, Beijing, China.

9. Author's not-for-attribution interviews with PLA officers and with Western military attaches in Beijing, 1993. A similar theme was repeated by two civilian strategic analysts in interviews in Beijing in June 2000. For a written version of this thesis regarding the Taiwan issue, see Niu Jun's *Bu Pa Meiguo de Ganshe*, (Don't Fear U.S. Intervention) *Huanqiu Shibao* (Global Times), September 24, 1999. Mr. Niu is an America watcher at the state think-tank, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

10. John Arquilla, *Dubious Battles: Aggression, Defeat, and the International System* (Washington: Crane and Russak, 1992). I am grateful to Michael Pillsbury for bringing this work to my attention. See also Andrew Mack, 'Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict,' *World Politics* Vol. 27, No. 2 (April 1975), pp. 175-200; T.V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiations by Weaker Powers* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and Ivan Arreguin-Toft, *Arts of Darkness: Guerilla Warfare and Barbarism in Asymmetric Conflict* (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1998).

11. See Thomas J. Christensen, 'Perceptions and Alliance in Europe: 1865-1940,' *International Organization* Vol. 51, No. 1 (Winter 1997), pp. 65-98.

12. See, for example, Paul Kennedy's figures which place Japan's 1937 national war potential at less than ten percent that of the United States. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 332. A much more generous national power ranking for Japan in the interwar period still grants Tokyo less than half of Washington's war-fighting potential. See Randall Schweller, *Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 203-208.

13. Michael Barnhart, *Japan Prepares for Total War: The Search for Economic Security, 1919-1941* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), ch. 13; Scott Sagan, 'The Origins of the Pacific War,' *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* No. 18 (Spring 1988), pp. 911-912; and Jack Snyder, *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1991), pp. 148-149.

14. Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1960); Chen Jian, *China's Road to the Korean War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and Thomas J. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-58* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), ch. 5.

15. For more detailed discussion of this point, see Thomas J. Christensen, 'Chinese Realpolitik,' *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 75, No. 5 (September/October 1996), pp. 37-52.

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16. Author's not-for-attribution interview with civilian and military security analysts in the Chinese government, June 2000. One senior Chinese military officer said that the United States and China might very likely fight a war (da yi zhan) over Taiwan in the next several years. He seemed to be implying that this was regrettable, but preferable perhaps to fighting an even larger war in the more distant future.

17. Author's not-for-attribution interviews with civilian and military government advisors in Beijing and Shanghai, 1995-2000. In a June 2000 interview in Beijing one government analyst pointed out that belief in the high likelihood of war with the United States over Taiwan in the next ten years had become so widespread that strange fault lines had emerged in the party. He claimed that now the soft-line elements in the Party are the ones who believe the United States will likely not get involved militarily in Taiwan scenarios or will leave quickly if it does, while hardliners are preaching for more strike capacity against U.S. forces and U.S. bases. His point was that in normal conditions, where war is not considered inevitable, one would expect only hardliners to be stating that war could be won cheaply, and soft-liners to be arguing for the hopelessness of the use of force.

18. Will Foreign Armed Forces Be Involved in a War Between the Two Sides of the Taiwan Strait, Hong Kong *Ta Kung Pao* in Chinese, 18 August 99, A3, in Foreign Broadcast and Information Services (hereafter FBIS), Document FTS19990819001047.

19. Author's interviews in China 1993-2000. Zhou Shijun, Try as Far as Possible to Move Battlefields Toward Enemy Side, *Jiefang Jun Bao* in Chinese, 14 September 99, p. 6, in FBIS, FTS1999092701808.

20. Fu Liqun, Several Basic Ideas in U.S. Strategic Thinking, in *Zhongguo Junshi Kexue (Chinese Military Science)*, 20 February 1997, in FBIS.

21. See the views of General Li Jijun as reported in Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), p. 76. Also see James D. Perry, Operation Allied Force: The View from Beijing, *Aerospace Power Journal*, Summer 2000, pp. 79-91.

22. Zhang Zuqian, National Defense Modernization and the Taiwan Problem, *Zhanlüe yu Guanli (Strategy and Management)*, No. 6 (1999), pp. 45-49.

23. Niu Jun, Bu Pa Meiguo de Ganshe, (Don't Fear U.S. Intervention), *Huanqiu Shibao (Global Times)*, September 24, 1999.

24. For this theoretical distinction, see Richard K. Betts, *Nuclear Blackmail and Nuclear Balance* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1987).

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25. Chu Shulong, 《Zhongguo de Guojia Liyi, Guojia Liliang, he Guojia Zhanlüe》(China's National Interests, National Power, and National Strategy), in *Zhanlüe yu Guanli* (Strategy and Management), No. 4 (1999), pp. 17-18.
26. Author's not-for-attribution interviews with two government think-tank analysts, Beijing, June 2000.
27. Niu, 《Bu Pa Meiguo Ganshe》.
28. One Chinese diplomatic historian wrote that before the Gulf of Tonkin Incident, Mao believed that the United States would be incapable of intervening in Vietnam alone and would have to rely on Japanese and South Korean assistance. See Li Danhui, 《Zhong Su Zai Yuan Yue Kang Mei Wenti shang de Maodun yu Chongtu, 1965-72》(Contradictions and Conflicts in Sino-Soviet Relations over the Aid Vietnam and Resist America War, 1965-72), unpublished Chinese language manuscript presented at the conference on 《New Evidence on China, Southeast, and the Indochina Wars》, Hong Kong, January 11-12, 2000.
29. Cai Zuming, chief ed, *Meiguo Junshi Zhanlüe Yanjiu* (Studies of American Military Strategy) (Beijing: Academy of Military Sciences Publishers), January 1993 (internally circulated), pp. 218-220.
30. One internally circulated military strategy book from the early 1990s emphasizes the political means to separate attackers from their alliances. See Huang Yuzhang, chief editor, *Junshi Zhanlüe Gailun* (Introduction to Military Strategy) (Beijing: National Defense University Press, December 1991), pp. 264-265 (internally circulated). You Ji similarly discusses China's need to be able to attack Japan if Japan decides to give assistance to American efforts in Taiwan. See his 《Chinese Military Security/Foreign Policy Challenge in the New Century》. Several of my interlocutors in China in 1999 and 2000 similarly argued that Japanese assistance to U.S. forces in a Taiwan scenario would amount to a Japanese declaration of war on China and that China is developing its capability to attack U.S. bases in Japan, especially Okinawa.
31. Over the past few years Chinese interlocutors have emphasized that the PLA is developing better means to strike Japan and U.S. bases in Japan with conventional weapons. An internally circulated military text discusses the conventional arm of the Second Artillery, the PLA's rocket force, in the following terms: 《The surface-to-surface missile weapons of the second artillery's conventional missile battle groups (*changgui daodan junyi juntuan*) have the special characteristics of being long-range, highly accurate, high-speed, powerful (*weili da*), etc. This is an extremely abundant (*jifu*) high-tech deterrent capability》. Wang and Zhang, eds, *Zhanyi Xue*, p. 379.
32. Amphibious assault using conventional and unconventional assets, such as an armada of fishing and merchant vessels, has been discussed in my interviews and in PLA writings (see, for

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example, Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, ch. 17 on amphibious landing.) But, because a direct successful amphibious assault would likely require a great deal of military might that China currently lacks, for the purpose of this paper, I would like to focus on other scenarios that might be alternatives to or precursors of a direct amphibious assault.

33. Maj. Mark Stokes (USAF), *China's Strategic Modernization: Implications for the United States* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, September 1999), ch. 4.

34. In April 1998, the Second Artillery formally raised to the PLA its concept for surprise conventional attack. Wang and Zhang, eds, *Zhanyi Xue*, p. 369, and pp. 375-378, 411-412, 430-433.

35. Wang and Zhang, eds, *Zhanyi Xue*, p. 376.

36. It might take most of this decade or even longer for China to develop a ballistic missile and cruise missile force of sufficient size and accuracy to convince Beijing elites that such an attack could be politically effective. But since the targets of such a campaign would not only be military but also psychological, Beijing's standards for sufficiency might be quite a bit lower than what an objective military assessment based on brute force capabilities alone might prescribe. Moreover, any combination of Chinese overestimation of the power of PLA missiles or underestimation of Taiwanese, American, or Japanese resolve could make missile attack much more likely than we would otherwise expect.

37. Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Chao Xian Zhan: Dui Quanqiuhua Shidai Zhanzheng yu Zhanfa de Xiangding* (Unrestricted Warfare: Scenarios About War and War-fighting Methods in the Era of Globalization) (Beijing: PLA Arts and Literature Publishers, August 1999). The book analyzed here, Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, has no preface, but the cover places it in a series for National Level Education on key topics (Guojiaji zhongdian jiao cai). The chief editors' positions as PLA NDU leaders and the book's limited distribution status, for military circulation only (*junnei faxing*), make it plausible to surmise that it is used in training elite military officers at the national academies.

38. For two excellent studies of these RMA themes in Chinese open-source writings, see Stokes, *China's Strategic Modernization*, section II, and Michael Pillsbury, *China Debates the Future Security Environment* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2000), ch. 6, entitled forecasting future wars. For recent confirming analysis of these themes from an internally circulated PLA textbook on battlefield doctrine, see Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, ch. 6 and passim. As with missiles, there is no military activity that does not call for some information war activities in the campaign, from blinding enemies during all-out invasions, to incapacitating the enemy's ability to track mine-laying submarines and to clear mines in blockade scenarios.

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39. Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, pp. 174-175. See also Stokes, *China's Strategic Modernization*, ch. 3.
40. Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, pp. 174-175.
41. Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, p. 172.
42. James Mulvenon, "The PLA and Information Warfare," in James C. Mulvenon and Richard H. Yang, *The People's Liberation Army in the Information Age* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 1999), pp. 175-176. Mulvenon's article offers an excellent review of the current literature and thinking in China on information war.
43. For an interesting discussion of a scenario involving a PLA blockade of Taiwan, see Paul H.B. Godwin, "The Use of Military Force Against Taiwan: Potential PRC Scenarios," in Parris H. Chang and Martin L. Lasater, eds., *If China Crosses the Taiwan Straits: The International Response*, (New York: University Press of America 1993), pp. 15-34. For PLA writings on blockade scenarios of unnamed foes, see Wang and Zhang, eds., *Zhanyi Xue*, pp. 320-324, and ch. 16. America's general weakness in minesweeping is widely recognized. Although the United States recently has developed new minesweeping and minehunting equipment, much of this equipment is kept in bases in the United States and would require a significant amount of time to be sent to the theater. A new naval plan, "the fleet engagement strategy," backed by Secretary of Defense Cohen, calls for increased "organic" minehunting and minesweeping capabilities within battle groups that would involve airborne (helicopters), surface, and submarine-based capabilities. It is unclear how effective these initiatives will be in providing American forces in East Asia with readily available capability in a crisis. See Captain Buzz Broughton and Commander Jay Burton, "The (R)evolution of Mine Countermeasures," *Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1998, pp. 55-58; "Cohen Expected to Respond This Week to Navy Brief on Mine Warfare," *Inside the Navy*, August 17, 1998, p. 3; and "Cohen Directs Navy to Add \$53 Million to Develop Minehunting System," *Inside the Navy*, August 31, 1998, p. 1.
44. Author's not-for-attribution discussions with naval officers and civilian experts on the Navy. For a concise and illuminating discussion on the Sovremenny and the Sunburn, see Bates Gill, "China's Newest Warships," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, January 27, 2000, p. 30.
45. Author's not-for-attribution discussions with U.S. naval officers and civilian experts working on naval affairs.
46. Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, p. 64, and pp. 415-416.
47. Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, p. 64, and pp. 415-416.
48. Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, ch. 16.

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49. Author interviews with security experts in Beijing and Shanghai, 1998-2000; Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, pp. 410-411. Interestingly, while the word “Taiwan” is never mentioned in the text, it is fairly clear what the editors have in mind when discussing blockade. Yet, related to the protracted nature of blockade warfare, they discuss the danger of assistance from “third countries” (*di sanguo*), a term that would be politically incorrect in discussion of Taiwan scenarios since Taiwan can never be afforded the status of a state in Beijing’s official parlance.
50. Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, p. 411.
51. Stokes, *China’s Strategic Modernization*, chs. 3-5.
52. Wang and Zhang, *Zhanyi Xue*, ch. 17, esp. p. 450.
53. Author’s not-for-attribution discussion with a U.S. naval officer.
54. Stokes, *China’s Strategic Modernization*, pp. 112-113.
55. Stokes, *China’s Strategic Modernization*, ch. 5.
56. For more extensive discussion, see Thomas J. Christensen, “China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia,” *International Security* Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999), pp. 49-90.
57. Author discussions with a Japanese military officer, with a civilian Japanese Defense Agency analyst, and with Harvard Professor Alastair Iain Johnston, who did extensive interviews in the Japan national security community on these matters in October 1998.
58. For a more detailed discussion, see Christensen, “China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia.”
59. In May 2000, one senior Pentagon official stated to me that he saw no reason why Japan would not be asked to help clear mines near Taiwan in a future conflict, especially since mineclearing is a defensive not an offensive operation. This fits precisely the hypothetical scenario laid out in Christensen, “China, U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia,” pp. 64-69.
60. I explore these issues at greater length in Thomas J. Christensen, “Theater Missile Defense and Taiwan’s Security,” *Orbis* Vol. 44, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 79-90.
61. Xu Yufan, “China’s military brings up the rear.” (Special to *Asia Times* Online, June 13, 2000, at <http://www.atimes.com>). The author cites a report by General Xing Shizhong.
62. Almost every chapter of the Wang and Zhang book, *Zhanyi Xue*, recognizes China’s

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relative backwardness compared to unnamed advanced potential enemy nations and discusses the extreme complexity and difficulty for China in carrying out all forms of warfare.

63. For further discussion, see Christensen, China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia.

64. I develop this argument further in Clarity on Taiwan, *Washington Post*, March 20, 2000.

65. Multiple interviews by the author during 1995-2000 in Beijing and Shanghai.