The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters

Volume 43
Number 3 *Parameters Autumn 2013*

Article 5

Fall 9-1-2013

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Abstract: This study outlines present US policy on arms sales to Taiwan. It also examines options an American administration may wish to consider to address the growing military imbalance in the Taiwan Strait. The author argues that some new thinking may be required if Washington, Beijing, and Taipei hope to realize a peaceful resolution of the "Taiwan question."

Although the United States has long recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the legitimate government of all China, it maintains a robust military relationship with the Republic of China on Taiwan (ROC or Taiwan). Indeed, in 2011, Taiwan was the largest purchaser of US defense items and services in the world.[1] Despite America's support, however, the military balance across the Taiwan Strait—in terms of personnel, force structure, arms, and developments in military doctrine—continues to shift in China's favor. This study outlines the present US policy on arms sales to Taiwan; it also examines several options a US administration may wish to consider to address the growing military imbalance between Taiwan and the PRC. Some new thinking may be required if Washington, Beijing, and Taipei hope to realize a "peaceful resolution" of the Taiwan issue.

US Policy

On 15 December 1978, the United States announced the establishment of full diplomatic relations with the PRC, which became effective 1 January 1979.[2] To guide "unofficial" relations with Taipei, the United States enacted the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA). The TRA "plus the so-called Six Assurances and the Three Communiqués, form the foundation of our overall approach [to Taiwan's security]."[3] In some respects, these documents appear contradictory. When one adds official US statements, proclamations, and secret assurances to the mix, American policy appears more confusing. This confusion has contributed to quarrels over policy—particularly arms transfers. The TRA commits the United States to sell Taiwan the weapons and defense services necessary to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. However, in the 1982 US-China Joint Communiqué, Washington promised to reduce its sales of arms to Taiwan gradually, leading to a final resolution. The TRA also mandates that the President *and* the Congress shall determine the nature and quantity of arms transfers; however, members of

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1 William Lowther, "Taiwan Still a Top Buyer of US Arms," *Taipei Times*, December 22, 2011, http://www.Taipeitimes.com.

2 To achieve normalization, Washington acquiesced to Beijing's three long-standing demands: (1) termination of formal diplomatic relations with the ROC, (2) abrogation of the 1954 US-ROC Mutual Defense Treaty, and (3) removal of all US troops from Taiwan.

3 Kurt M. Campbell, Assistant Secretary of the US Department of State's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Testimony before the US House Foreign Affairs Committee in *Why Taiwan Matters*, Part II, October 4, 2011, http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov/.

Congress often complain they have not been consulted.[4] Meanwhile, the "Six Assurances," a series of commitments made by President Ronald Reagan, appear to abrogate the 1982 US-China Joint Communiqué. However, some experts charge that recent US administrations have violated the pledge not "to hold prior consultations with the PRC regarding arms sales to Taiwan."[5] For example, on 16 July 2008, Admiral Timothy Keating, then PACOM Commander, reportedly confirmed that he had engaged in "discussions with PRC officials about their objections" to arms sales.[6] Since that time, other high-ranking US officials have made similar statements when discussing which weapons might be sold to Taiwan.[7]

The TRA does not obligate Taiwan to allocate a specific amount of the resources for its own defense. Taiwan's military budget as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has dropped from 3.8 percent in 1994 to 2.1 percent in 2013, and from 24.3 percent of total government spending to 16.2 percent in the same period.[8] A Congressional study observed that the influence of Taiwan's domestic politics over defense decisions was "undoubtedly unforeseen at the time of the TRA's enactment [and] raises potentially consequential questions for Congress."[9] As one exasperated US official complained, "we cannot help defend you, if you cannot defend yourself."[10]

Perhaps most contentious is the accusation that America has "abandoned" Taiwan. A former US Department of State official has charged that the United States has "cut Taiwan loose."[11] Others quarrel with such claims. One study contends that "'the Obama administration has been a solid friend of Taiwan in support of this policy, including selling unprecedentedly (sic) large packages of arms sales.[12] Moreover, Hillary Clinton, then US Secretary of State, boasted that "we've strengthened our unofficial relationship with Taiwan."[13]

Naturally, PRC analysts share these assessments. They charge that "US arms sales to Taiwan during Obama's eight years in office (2009-2017) will account for one-third of total arms sales to Taiwan since China and the United States established diplomatic relations in 1979. Obama

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4 Shirley A. Kan, *Taiwan: Major US Arms Sales Since 1990* (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, July 3, 2013), 43.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid.

7 For more information, see William Lowther, "F-16 Sale Subject to PRC Sensitivities: Gates," *Taipei Times*, June 4, 2011, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2011/06/04/2003504919; William Lowther, "Panetta's Praise of PRC Raises Concern," *Taipei Times*, October 27, 2011, www.taipeitimes.com.

8 Shirley A. Kan, *Taiwan: Major US Arms Sales Since 1990* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, July 23, 2013), 33-34.

9 Kerry Dumbaugh, *Taiwan's Political Status: Historical Background and Ongoing Implications*, (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, June 4, 2009), 4.

10 Kan, *Taiwan: Major US Arms Sales Since 1990*, 28.

11 See testimony of John Tkacik, Senior Fellow and Director of the Future Asia Project, International Assessment and Strategy Center, in *Hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Investigating the Chinese Threat, Part One: Military and Economic Aggression*, in *Federal News Service*, March 28, 2012, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

12 Jacob Stokes and Nina Hachigian, *US-China Relations in an Election Year: Taking the Long View in a Season of Heated Rhetoric* (Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, March 2012), 26.

13 William Lowther, "US Has 'Strengthened' Relationship with Taiwan: Clinton," *Taipei Times*, March 9, 2012, http://www.taipeitimes.com.

is the only US president to twice approve arms sales to Taiwan."[14] Yet, ROC military authorities often express concerns about "delays and price increases" for various defense programs, and claim Washington is treating Taipei like a "sucker" and a "fool" by "jacking up" the prices for military hardware and trying to sell "piles of junk."[15]

US Arms Sales and the Military Imbalance

Relations between Taipei and Beijing have improved enormously since Ma Ying-jeou was elected ROC president in 2008; and US military authorities are "encouraged" by recent developments. Admiral Robert F. Willard, Commander of the US Pacific Command, said that, "as they (PRC and ROC) improve their relationship economically and diplomatically, we think it should lower the likelihood of coercion or conflict taking place."[16] He cautioned, however, that "there is very impressive combat power across the Strait on mainland China . . . they continue to improve their capabilities, so in terms of a balance of power, it's generally one-sided."[17] The US Department of Defense's 2013 report on China's military confirms that "dealing with a potential contingency in the Taiwan Strait remains the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) primary mission despite decreasing tensions there."[18] It warns that "preparation for a Taiwan conflict with the possibility of US intervention has largely dominated China's military modernization program."[19]

Indeed, the PLA budget has been trending upward for decades. In 2012, the US Department of Defense estimated that China's military budget could have been as high as $180 billion in 2011—double the stated budget (the declared budget is $116.2 billion for 2013).[20] In 2010, Robert Gates, then US Secretary of Defense, characterized the military build-up directly opposite Taiwan as an "extraordinary" deployment.[21] It represents the highest concentration of missiles anywhere on earth, and holds the potential to "destroy key leadership facilities, military bases and communication and transportation nodes with *minimal advance warning* [emphasis added]."[22] The PLA is also boosting its military prowess by developing new anti-ship ballistic missiles, torpedo and mine systems, and combat aircraft. Such considerations led one study to warn that "the PLA's air and conventional missile capabilities could now endanger US military forces and bases in the region should Washington decide to intercede on Taiwan's behalf."[23]

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14 Xiao An, "US' Arms Sales to Taiwan Impede Sino-US Relationship," *China.org.cn*, January 17, 2013, http://www.china.org.cn/opinion/2013-01/17/content_27716480.htm

15 Kan, *Taiwan: Major US Arms Sales Since 1990*, 18; "US Assessing Sale of Fighters, Subs to Taiwan," *China Post*, February 1, 2010, http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2010/02/01/243094/US-assessing.htm.

16 "US Commander Predicts Stable Cross-Strait Relations," *China Post*, March 4, 2012, http://www.chinapost.com.tw/taiwan/national/national-news/2012/03/04/333538/US-commander.htm.

17 Ibid.

18 Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments involving the People's Republic of China* (Washington, DC: US Department of Defense, May 2013), p.4.

19 Ibid., 57-58.

20 Kan, *Taiwan: Major US Arms Sales Since 1990*, 33.

21 Ibid, 30.

22 Ibid.

23 US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2010 Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: US GPO, November 2010), http://www.uscc.gov/annual_report/2010/annual_report_full_10.pdf.

Nonetheless, Taiwan's defense budgets have remained flat. The shift to an all-volunteer force will mean that a large share of military resources must be allocated to cover personnel costs. Military equipment is growing old and obsolete. Particularly worrisome is the state of the ROC Air Force. Its inventory includes 56 Mirage 2000, 145 F-16 A/B, 126 IDFs, and 60 F-5E/F fighters. According to a Defense Intelligence Agency study, many of these warplanes "are incapable of operating effectively."[24] Another report estimates that "by 2020, Taiwan's fighters would drop in number by 70% without new F-16s, and by 50% with 66 new F-16s."[25] It is clear that Taiwan's defense capability relative to that of the PRC has not been maintained.

There is a range of options available to a US administration that wishes to address the growing military imbalance. This study examines the four most obvious options and their consequences: (1) reduce or terminate arms sales and security ties with Taiwan, (2) maintain the present policy of boosting Taiwan's defensive capabilities, (3) increase those capabilities with new arms transfers, and (4) broker a deal with the PRC to reduce military deployments in the Taiwan Strait.

Option 1: Reduce or Terminate Security Ties

Some are calling on Washington to terminate security support for Taiwan. Admiral Bill Owens (ret.), former Vice-Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, has criticized arms sales to Taiwan as "not in our best interest" and suggested that "a thoughtful review of this outdated legislation [the TRA] is warranted."[26] Ambassador Chas Freeman (ret.) has argued that the TRA compels US decisionmakers to "confront the necessity to choose between the self-imposed shackles of longstanding policy and the imperatives of our long-term strategic interests."[27] Others have suggested "the US should consider backing away from its commitments to Taiwan."[28]

Admittedly, terminating arms sales and reducing America's security commitment to Taiwan would benefit US interests in some ways. The change in policy "would remove the most obvious and contentious flash point between the US and China and smooth the way for better relations between them in the decades to come."[29] The likelihood for US conflict with China would decrease, while possibly increasing the prospects for cooperation in numerous fields—ranging from global warming to nuclear proliferation. Editorials in the PRC press even laud the "increasing number of far sighted Americans calling for repeal of the TRA."[30] This option would also reduce the likelihood that sensitive US military technologies or weapons systems might fall into the hands of the PRC.

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24 See Dean Cheng, "Getting Serious About Taiwan's Air Power Needs," *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder*, Number 2616, October 14, 2011, 5

25 Kan, *Taiwan: Major US Arms Sales Since 1990*, 23.

26 Bill Owens, "America Must Start Treating China as A Friend," *Financial Times*, November 17, 2009, http://www.ft.com.

27 Chas W. Freeman, Jr., *Beijing, Washington, and the Shifting Balance of Prestige* (Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, May 10, 2011).

28 Charles Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism," *Foreign Affairs,* March/April, 2011, 87.

29 Ibid.

30 Peng Guangqian, "US should abolish 'Taiwan Relations Act," *People's Daily* (Overseas Edition), September 26, 2011, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90780/7605019.html.

As some Pentagon officials admit, military exchanges with Taiwan are riskier "in an environment of improving Taiwan-PRC ties."[31]

However, this option might jeopardize America's credibility with important allies—particularly Japan or South Korea. It could also raise questions about America's commitment to democracy in other countries or regions of the world. Ironically, the move could raise questions about America's trustworthiness. As President Ronald Reagan explained in 1984, "I myself have said to some representatives of the PRC that we would think that they would have more confidence in us if they knew that we didn't discard one friend in order to make another. That should indicate to them that we'd be a good friend to them too."[32]

Any move to downgrade military links with Taiwan would surely generate domestic political fallout. Even PRC authorities acknowledge the Obama administration is under pressure to sell arms to Taiwan and cannot easily cut off the island.[33] Coming at a time when members of both major political parties are calling for Washington to enhance ties with Taipei, and when public opinion polls show many Americans still hold negative views of the PRC, an administration would have to be prepared for criticism. Conceivably, terminating America's security support for Taiwan could cause some independence activists in Taiwan to take more aggressive steps to achieve their goal. In other words, the problem with this option is that there could be many unintended consequences.

Option 2: Maintain the Present Policy

The Obama administration has no plans to cut defense ties with Taiwan. US officials have reiterated this position repeatedly. In June 2013, President Obama reiterated his commitment "to Taiwan under the TRA including providing defensive weapons."[34] Officials acknowledge a "fighter gap" between Taiwan and the PRC, and the "growing military threat to Taiwan."[35] Thus far, Obama has approved two arms sales packages, and his "administration has sold over $12 billion in arms to Taiwan," which compares favorably to any period in US-Taiwan relations since the TRA.[36] He will not rule out future sales. Sales in 2010 included much-needed PAC-3 "Patriot" missiles for Taiwan's air defenses, while the most notable portion of the 2011 package was its provision for an upgrade for Taiwan's F-16 A/B fighter fleet. US officials explain the upgrade package is extensive and will "provide improved combat capability, survivability, and reliability to Taiwan's 145 F-16 A/B

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31 Kerry Dumbaugh, *Taiwan-Us Relations: Recent Developments and Their Policy Implications*, (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, January 7, 2009), 18.

32 Dennis Van Vranken Hickey, "America's Two Point Policy and the Future of Taiwan," *Asian Survey*, 28, no. 8 (August, 1988): 895.

33 Andrew Jacobs, "Arms Sale Draws Angry, But Familiar, Reaction," *The New York Times*, September 22, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com

34 Kelven Huang and Jamie Wang, "Defense Ministry Urges US to Continue Arms Sales to Taiwan," *Focus Taiwan*, June 9, 2013, http://focustaiwan.tw/news/aall/201306090005.aspx;"Xi Urges US to Cease Taiwan Arms Sales," *Taipei Times*, June 10, 2013, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2013/06/10/2003564416.

35 Viola Gienger, "Taiwan Weighed for US Jet Sale at Risk of Riling China," *Bloomberg*, April 27, 2012, http://www.bloomberg.com

36 US Department of State, *Background Briefing: Notification to Congress on the Sale of Arms to Taiwan, Special Briefing via Teleconference* (Washington, DC: September 21, 2011) http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/09/172936.htm.

aircraft" and point out the deal also includes "an extension of the F-16 pilot training program."[37]

Critics suspect that the F-16 upgrade decision was adopted to limit the political fallout from China at a time when the United States seeks Beijing's cooperation on a range of international issues. In fact, Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R.-FL), then Chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, claimed the agreement is "woefully inadequate" and that it "has Beijing's fingerprints all over it."[38] Representative David Rivera, (R-FL), charged that the administration was "kowtowing" to China, and "has clearly been pressured by the Chinese to control Taiwan and Taiwan policy in every way possible."[39] Senator John Cornyn (R.-TX) said the upgrade decision reflected the administration's "capitulation to Communist China."[40] Legislation has been introduced in Congress to compel the administration to sell additional arms—including F-16 C/D fighters—to Taiwan. Such measures are included in both the Taiwan Policy Act of 2013 and the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014.

On the other hand, officials claim that the upgrade decision was "a smart defense policy—it makes a real and immediate contribution to Taiwan's security."[41] The deal was described as a low-cost alternative for what is "essentially, the same quality" warplane as the F-16 C/D and notes that "we're obviously prepared to consider further sales in the future."[42] It is also noteworthy that reaction to the F-16 upgrade was so low-key in Beijing (and Taipei) that Lin Chong-pin, a leading authority on cross-strait relations, speculated that "the whole thing suggested that Washington, Beijing and Taipei in a way all have consulted with each other."[43] While that is unclear, what is clear is that, under the current policy, obsolete warplanes will not be replaced, while F-16s will be pulled out of service for extensive periods of time to be upgraded.

Option 3: Increase Military Support

This option is attractive to those who believe the Obama administration's provisions for Taiwan's security cannot meet the island's defense needs. Representative Ros-Lehtinen and others are pushing the Taiwan Policy Act of 2013 (TPA) in an effort to strengthen American military support for Taiwan. If the TPA (or similar legislation) is passed and signed into law, it would almost provide Taiwan with *carte blanche* for procurement of US arms. The TPA's provisions include the sale of F-16 C/D warplanes (in addition to the upgrade of the F-16 A/B fighters), modern surface-to air-missiles, vertical and short take-off and landing

37 Kurt M. Campbell, Assistant Secretary of the US Department of State's Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Testimony Before the US House Foreign Affairs Committee in *Why Taiwan Matters*, Part II, October 4, 2011, http://www.state.gov/p/eap/ris/rm/2011/10/174980.htm.

38 William Lowther, "Taiwan to Receive US Arms Package," *Taipei Times*, September 23, 2011, www.taipeitimes.com.

39 Shaun Tandon, "US Lawmakers Press for Jets to Taiwan," *Google News*, June 16, 2011, http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gmEFoHVmRMs005btF9KevBUH1VhQ?docId=CNG.e0a7053e6c093f750ec8db0f1cc01cc0.311.

40 Stokes and Hachigian, *US-China Relations in an Election Year,* 26.

41 William Wan and Keith B Richburg, "Administration Defends Arms Package for Taiwan," *The Washington Post*, September 20, 2011, in Lexis/Nexis.

42 Ibid.

43 Shih Hsiu-chuan, "Analysis: F-16 Decision Shows "Balanced Strategy," Analysts Say," *Taipei Times*, October 9, 2011, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2011/10/09/2003515301.

(V/STOL) combat aircraft, "cost effective" submarines, three guided missile frigates, mines, anti-ship cruise missiles, global positioning system (GPS)-guided short-range rockets, unmanned air vehicles, radar, and jamming equipment.

If the United States opted to provide Taiwan with all the weapons the ROC desires, one of America's oldest friends might be assured of a "sufficient self-defense capability." This could enable Taipei to negotiate with Beijing from a position of strength, not weakness. The additional military muscle would also give any potential adversary, including the PRC, cause to calculate whether an attack on Taiwan is worth the risks—deterrence would be enhanced. Should deterrence fail, the new arms would provide Taiwan with a boost during any military campaign. Moreover, American lawmakers and defense contractors have speculated that substantial economic benefits would accrue to the United States in the event of a massive arms sale. Finally, proponents of massive arms transfers assert that, while Beijing might complain or temporarily suspend military-to-military contacts with Washington, "past behavior indicates that China is unlikely to challenge any fundamental US interests in response to any future releases of significant military articles or services to Taiwan."[44] "The Perryman Group estimates that the Lockheed Martin Taiwan F-16 program would generate some $8.7 billion in output (gross product) and more than 87,651 person-years of employment in the US."[45]

To be sure, a sharp escalation in arms sales could advance US interests in some ways. However, any US administration must be prepared for a negative reaction from the PRC. This response could range from a suspension in US-PRC military-to-military contacts to a break in diplomatic relations. Beijing might even sell arms to states unfriendly to American interests. After the US sold 150 F-16 A/B fighters to Taiwan in 1992, for instance, "China transferred M-11 missiles to Pakistan and reached a formal agreement with Iran to cooperate on nuclear energy, thus breaking its February 1, 1992 promise to abide by the terms of the MCTR."[46]

In addition, Taiwan may not have the resources to buy the weapons. Taipei apparently finds it difficult to purchase the arms sales offered in 2010 and 2011. Adding 66 new F-16 C/D fighters to the tab would not make it any easier to pay the bill.[47] Moreover, where will the submarines and U/STOL aircraft come from? The United States stopped manufacturing diesel submarines decades ago, and it could be a decade before F-35-B Joint Strike Fighters are available for export. Finally, US

44 US-Taiwan Business Council and Project 2049 Institute, *Chinese Reactions to Taiwan Arms Sales*, (Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, March 2012), http://project2049.net/documents/2012_chinese_reactions_to_taiwan_arms_sales.pdf.

45 Perryman Group, *An Assessment of the Potential Impact of the Lockheed Martin Taiwan F-16 Program on Business Activity in Affected States and Congressional Districts* (Waco, TX : Perryman Group, May 2011), http://www.us-taiwan.org/reports/2011_may_perryman_group_taiwan_f-16_economic_impact_report.pdf.

46 Robert S. Ross, "The Bush Administration: The Origins of Engagement," in *Making China Policy: Lessons from the Bush and Clinton Administrations*, eds. Ramon Myers, Michel Oksenberg, and David Shambaugh (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2001), 32.

47 J. Michael Cole, "Difficult Choices Faced on F-16 Deals," *Taipei Times*, May 7, 2012, www.taipeitimes.com; J. Michael Cole, "Abandon F-16s, Seek F-35s: Senior Military Officials," *Taipei Times*, May 8, 2012, www.taipeitimes.com; Wendell Minnick, "Taiwan Might Delay F-16 Upgrade," *Defense News*, May 5, 2012, http://www.defensenews.com/article/20120505/DEFREG03/305050002/Taiwan-Might-Delay-F-16-Upgrade.

officials must consider domestic politics in China. As Gary Locke, US Ambassador to China, observed, the political situation in the PRC is "very, very delicate."[48] Decisionmakers must consider whether a spike in arms sales might create tremors in Chinese politics, perhaps weakening the position of the present leaders in Beijing.

Option 4: Negotiation, Compromise, and Arms Control

If a US administration opted to pursue this option, it could use arms sales as bargaining chips.[49] The administration might explore the possibility of reaching an agreement similar to that proposed by then-President Jiang Zemin when visiting with President Bush in Crawford, Texas, in 2002. Namely, Washington would agree not to sell new fighters, submarines, and other advanced arms to Taiwan in exchange for the removal of the missiles (and their infrastructure) that China has deployed directly opposite Taiwan. According to media reports, Chang Wanquan, PRC Defense Minister, raised a similar proposal when meeting with Chuck Hagel, US Secretary of Defense, on 19 August 2013.[50]

This initiative may yield numerous dividends. First, it is likely Beijing would consider this proposal because removal of the missiles would generate goodwill among the Taiwanese, and the weapons could no longer be cited by local politicians as evidence of Beijing's hostility. Public opinion polls reveal that a large percentage of Taiwanese believe Beijing is hostile to both the ROC government and the island's population.[51] President Ma has stated "the mainland should remove or actually dismantle all the missiles that are targeted against Taiwan, otherwise we won't be interested in making further steps to negotiate a peace agreement with them."[52]

Second, it is clear the PRC will consider removing the missiles as part of a deal with the United States. As noted, President Jiang first raised the idea with President Bush. According to Chinese media accounts, the PLA has been debating the question of whether to withdraw the missiles opposite Taiwan for years. On 22 September 2010, Premier Wen Jiabao conceded that the missiles would "eventually" be removed. Prominent PRC political analysts with links to Beijing have responded favorably to such a proposal.[53]

Third, Washington has telegraphed its willingness to reduce arms sales if Beijing removes its missiles. For example, in 2004, one high-ranking US official said that if the PLA's military "posture" opposite Taiwan appears more peaceful, "it follows logically that Taiwan's defense

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48 Josh Rogin, "US Ambassador: Political Situation in China 'Very Very Delicate,'" *Foreign Policy*, January 18, 2012, http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2012/01/18/us_ambassador_political_situation_in_china_very_very_delicate.

49 The author first raised this idea in an editorial. See Dennis V. Hickey, "How a Few F-16s Can Buy Peace in the Taiwan Strait," *Los Angeles Times*, November 11, 2009, A23.

50 "Beijing Should Renounce Use of Force to End US Arms Sales to Taiwan," *Want China Times*, August 27, 2013,http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?cid=1701&MainCatID=17&id=20130827000004

51 Mainland Affairs Council, Republic of China, *Summarized Results of the Public Opinion Survey on "the Public's View of Current Cross-Strait Relations*, *(March 30 to April 2, 2012)*, http://www.mac.gov.tw/public/Data/2579302271.pdf.

52 "No Peace Unless China Removes Missiles: Ma", *China Post*, April 7, 2010, http://www.chinapost.com.tw.

53 Xu Shiquan, "US Arms Sales to Taiwan: Better to Assess the Costs and Recalculate," *China–US Focus,* September 15, 2011, htttp://www.chinafocus.com/print/?id+10136

requirements will change."[54] Indeed, Mark Stokes, a former Pentagon official has observed that, "it just makes sense: if the military threat was reduced, of course it would have an effect on arms sales."[55]

Fourth, Taiwan has indicated that it might not have an interest in purchasing so many US arms if the PRC missiles are removed. After all, they claim that arms purchases are linked directly to the threat posed by the mainland. Removing the missiles could be considered a "confidence building measure" because it promotes stability and "would increase warning time and thus build confidence."[56]

If a US administration chose to negotiate a deal to reduce arms deployments in the Taiwan Strait, it would have prepare the stage. The American armaments industry would oppose such an initiative. Arms sales to Taiwan are viewed by some as an economic stimulus plan, and lawmakers unabashedly describe the weapons transfers in terms of jobs generated for American workers. In short, the arms merchants and their allies will employ a full court press to derail any movement toward arms control in the Taiwan Strait.

Some politicians, academics, and media pundits will condemn any discussions between the United States and the PRC about arms sales to Taiwan, a reduction in arms sales, or any concrete moves toward arms control. The fact the United States has repeatedly held such discussions with China is ignored, and there is no mention of the pledge in the 17 August 1982 US-China Joint Communiqué to reduce arms sales. Rather, the administration will be told "it can't be done." The fact that a fourth US-China Communiqué might be drafted, the TRA amended, or yet another "assurance" provided, is likewise ignored.

Some analysts claim any agreement is useless because the missiles will not be destroyed. After all, the missiles could be returned to the coast, or the PLA could attack Taiwan with longer range missiles. Some high-ranking PLA military brass agree on this point. As Major General Luo Yuan (PLA-ret.) and other retired high-ranking Chinese military officers explained, "they could not understand why people in Taiwan care so much about the withdrawal of missiles from China's coastal areas as Chinese missiles are capable of hitting Taiwan even if launched from Xinjiang in China's northwest."[57]

Another issue associated with removal of missiles from China's coastline is where will the missiles will be redeployed. During conversations with the author, PRC academics and officials repeatedly raised this issue. As one analyst observed, no matter where the Chinese missile brigades and their infrastructure are sent—closer to South Korea, Japan,

54 Kan, *Taiwan: Major US Arms Sales Since 1990*, 29-30.

55 "Missile Move Could Cut Arms Sales," *Taipei Times*, September 30, 2010, www.taipeitimes.com.

56 Mark A. Stokes and Ian Easton, *Evolving Aerospace Trends in the Asia Pacific Region: Implications for Stability in the Taiwan Strait and Beyond* (Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, May 27, 2010), 36, http://www.project2049.net/documents/aerospace_trends_asia_pacific_region_stokes_easton.pdf.

57 For more information, please see Liu Ping, "Removal of Missiles Linked to Taiwan's Military Purchases: Chinese General," *Want China Times*, April 9, 2011,http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20110409000073&cid=1101.

India, or Russia—"you are going to have some extremely antagonized neighbors."[58]

Conclusions

In recent years, the military balance across the Taiwan Strait has shifted steadily in Beijing's favor. In 2011, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense acknowledged that the PLA now possesses the capability to blockade the Taiwan Strait or conquer the ROC's offshore islands. Pro-Beijing publications in Hong Kong boast that "the PLA has long had absolute strength to seize the command of the air over the Taiwan Straits and is also strong enough to blockade the Taiwan Strait with its shore-based long-range anti-ship and ground-to-air missiles."[59]

Unfortunately, the growing military imbalance across the Taiwan Strait presents decisionmakers with a situation in which it is difficult to arrive at a balanced policy. According to the 2010 National Security Strategy, the United States, "will continue to pursue a positive, constructive and comprehensive relationship with China. . . . [and it] will encourage continued reduction in tension between the PRC and Taiwan."[60] The Obama administration also stated that "in the period ahead, we seek to encourage more dialogue and exchanges between the two sides, *as well as reduced military tensions and deployments*, and we have and will continue to meet our responsibilities under the TRA [emphasis added].[61]

Since American policy regarding Taiwan's security is based upon a network of laws, joint communiqués, assurances, statements, and secret promises, decisionmakers must take care to ensure this network does not become a system of "self-imposed shackles."

Sponsoring legislation to amend or revoke the TRA is not the answer to the predicament confronting Washington. The exercise of this option would undermine American credibility and possibly create tension within the US Congress. Although the prospects for conflict appear dim, cutting US military support for Taiwan "could create opportunities and incentives for Beijing's political and military leadership to assume greater risk in cross-strait relations."[62] It might also prompt Taipei to accelerate development of its own anti-ship missiles, surface-to-air, air-to-air, and ballistic missiles. Even the long-dormant program to develop weapons of mass destruction might be revived.

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58 "Missile Move Could Cut Arms Sales," *Taipei Times*, September 30, 2010, http://www.taipeitimes.com.

59 Lu Li, "Arms Sales to Taiwan Bring Nothing But Harm," *Ta Kung Pao* (Hong Kong), September 27, 2011 in "Arms Sales to Taiwan to Harm Sino-US Ties—Hong Kong Article," in *BBC Monitoring Asia-Pacific*, October 3, 2011, in *Lexis/Nexis*.

60 The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: US GPO, May 2010,), 43, http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/rss_viewer/national_security_strategy.pdf.

61 Kurt M. Campbell, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of East Asian Affairs, *Asia Overview: Protecting American Interests in China and Asia, Testimony Before The House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific* (Washington DC: March 31, 2011), http://www.state.gov/p/eap/rls/rm/2011/03/159450.htm.

62 Mark A. Stokes and Ian Easton, *Evolving Aerospace Trends in the Asia Pacific Region: Implications for Stability in the Taiwan Strait and Beyond* (Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, May 27, 2010), 25, http://www.project2049.net/documents/aerospace_trends_asia_pacific_region_stokes_easton.pdf.

Similarly, providing Taiwan with *carte blanche* for procurement of US weaponry is risky. Many of those supporting this option view arms sales as an economic stimulus plan. One newspaper headline even trumpeted, "Selling F-16s to Taiwan Equals Jobs."[63] The military imblance in the Taiwan Strait is also employed as a means to launch partisan political attacks.

Selling scores of expensive military hardware to Taiwan—including submarines, F-16 C/D fighters, F-35-B Joint Strike Fighters, and a wide array of missiles—would solve little. As noted, the island is having difficulties purchasing the equipment offered. Moreover, it is not clear whether Taipei really wants these weapons.[64] This option would not encourage cross-strait dialogue and exchanges or reduce military tensions and deployments—declared objectives of US foreign policy. Rather, it would likely do the opposite.

For the reasons above, the United States should pursue *both* Option 2 and Option 4. The present policy (Option 2) enables Taipei to bolster its air defenses with upgraded F-16 A/B fighters, PAC-3 "Patriot" missiles and other arms. It also sends a powerful message to Beijing without being too provocative while retaining the option for future arms sales. However, Option 2 does not go far enough toward reducing the military imbalance or promoting reconciliation. Washington should immediately seek to negotiate a reduction in military deployments with Beijing (and Taipei). It should agree not to sell new fighters, submarines, or other advanced arms to Taiwan in exchange for the removal of the missiles (and their infrastructure) that China has deployed directly opposite Taiwan. The redeployment would increase warning time and help build confidence. It might even be considered as the first step toward a global ban on short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) and intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs).

In short, Option 4 helps reduce the chances for conflict and increases the prospects for the development of peaceful relations between Taiwan and the PRC. It might even help lay the groundwork for other confidence building measures. To be sure, it would require some new thinking—particularly among some US bureaucrats and those in the arms industry. And it would also require new thinking in China—especially among officers in the PLA. Such an initiative, however, could yield handsome dividends and is worth the effort.

63 "Senators: Selling F-16s to Taiwan Equals Jobs," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 12, 2011, http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire.

64 Ralph Jennings, "Taiwan Offers Mixed Response to US Rejection of F-6 Fighter Sale, *Christian Science Monitor*, September 22, 2011, in *Lexis/Nexis*