President Tsai Calls for Dialogue with Beijing in 109th National Day Speech

Even as the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) provocatively ramps up activities in and around the Taiwan Strait and concerns over a possible limited conflict mount, Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), president of the Republic of China (Taiwan), used the first National Day speech of her second term to call on Beijing to engage in dialogue with Taipei on the basis of “mutual respect, goodwill, and understanding.” Like previous National Day speeches, which past presidents of the ROC would use to contextualize and present their cross-Strait policy, this year’s speech delivered an overview of the administration’s approach to China. However, it undeniably stood out—not because it signaled a major policy change—but because it was seemingly calibrated to carefully signal President Tsai’s even-keeled policy, especially against the backdrop of Beijing’s intensifying pressure campaign against the island-democracy. To the casual observer, Tsai’s speech may seem to simply rehash recurring themes from her previous speeches. However, when the current policy context is taken into consideration, the subtle yet meaningful signals from President Tsai’s address snap into view.

National Day (國慶日) in Taiwan—also known as Double Ten Day (雙十節)—commemorates the start of the Wuchang Uprising (武昌起義) in 1911, which led to the Xinhai Revolution (辛亥革命) that deposed the Qing Dynasty and resulted in the establishment of the Republic of China (ROC). Reflecting on this momentous occasion in the 109th National Speech, President Tsai stated:

“In addressing cross-Strait relations, we will not act rashly, and will uphold our principles. Maintaining stability in cross-Strait relations is in the best interests of both sides. We are committed to upholding cross-Strait stability, but this is not something...
“Taiwan can shoulder alone; it is the joint responsibility of both sides.”

“At this stage, the most pressing cross-Strait issue is to discuss how we can live in peace and coexist based on mutual respect, goodwill, and understanding. As long as the Beijing authorities are willing to resolve antagonisms and improve cross-Strait relations, while parity and dignity are maintained, we are willing to work together to facilitate meaningful dialogue. This is what the people of Taiwan advocate, and it is a cross-party consensus.”

While the remarks themselves do not represent anything breathtakingly new, the occasion is notable, since National Day is an important symbol in cross-Strait relations. Indeed, it commemorates the historical events that connect the formation of the ROC government in Taiwan with China. Moreover, its continued official celebration in Taiwan thus marks the continuous existence of that regime for nearly 110 years. At points in Taiwan’s past—especially in the early years of the island’s democratization—it has been a symbol of controversy within Taiwan, acting as a flashpoint in the long-running clash between those who favored outright independence and those who supported unification with China. Nevertheless, previous Double Ten speeches have included consistent themes, such as calls for unity and the overall welfare of the nation, even as the Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) and Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進黨) held starkly different approaches to cross-Strait policy. This was not an exception under the previous Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) and Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) administrations. However, as David Brown notes in his article in this issue of the Global Taiwan Brief, the two political parties’ respective positions on cross-Strait relations appear to be converging. This trend is reflected in President Tsai’s National Day speeches.

In her first National Day speech in 2016—after Beijing froze high-level dialogue with Taipei—President Tsai called on Beijing’s leaders “to face up to the reality that the Republic of China exists” and that “[t]he two sides of the strait should sit down and talk as soon as possible.” Furthermore, she stated that “[a]nything can be included for discussion, as long as it is conducive to the development of cross-Strait peace and the well-fare of people on both sides.” While Beijing continued to doggedly refuse Tsai’s overtures and insisted that dialogue be based solely on the basis of the so-called “1992 Consensus,” Tsai used her 2017 speech to implore Beijing authorities to consider “new modes” of cross-Strait relations.

However, the tone of Tsai’s speeches began to shift as China ratcheted up its multifaceted diplomatic, economic, and military pressure campaign to coerce Taipei into accepting its negotiating terms, which included poaching several of Taiwan’s diplomatic partners and significantly increasing its military encirclement activities around Taiwan. In her 2018 speech, Tsai called out Beijing’s “unilateral diplomatic offensive and military coercion [that] have not only harmed cross-Strait relations. They have also seriously challenged the status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.” Yet, she continued to maintain a steady hand in managing cross-Strait conflict escalation, even as pressure continued to build, both externally and internally. “I will not be provoked into confrontation or conflicts that endanger cross-Strait relations, nor will I deviate from the will of the people, and sacrifice Taiwan’s sovereignty,” Tsai insisted.

Those internal pressures found a release valve as political unrest in Hong Kong came to a head when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) aggressively clamped down on protests against a controversial extradition law. In her 2019 speech, the Taiwanese president underscored the unviability of Beijing’s “one country, two systems” (一國兩制) formula for Taiwan. “The overwhelming consensus among Taiwan’s 23 million people is our rejection of ‘one country, two systems,’ regardless of party affiliation or political position,” she said. According to GTI’s non-resident senior fellow, J. Michael Cole, “Tsai’s speech [in 2019], perhaps, was intended to appeal to the greatest common denominators within Taiwanese society—freedom and democracy, and opposition to ‘one country, two systems’—while wisely using a combination of “Taiwan,” “Republic of China” and “Republic of China (Taiwan)” to refer to the nation.”

What emerges from a wholistic reading of President Tsai’s National Day speeches over the past several years is the clear evolution in her approach to cross-Strait relations. Carefully calibrated signals found through-
out the speeches reflect a convergence of the positions of the major political parties. Making clear this latter point, in a press release further elaborating on the 2020 speech, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC)—the cabinet-level agency in charge of cross-Strait policy—stated: “The MAC noted that the statement conveyed not only the unanimous position and consensus of the people of Taiwan and all political parties, but a responsible approach to maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.” Moreover, in expressing its grievances against Beijing’s recalcitrant position, the MAC did not mince words on the key sticking point:

“The MAC expressed strong dissatisfaction and regret over the Taiwan Affairs Office’s consistent responsibility-shirking and criticism, refusal to join Taiwan in promoting cross-Strait peace, and coercion of Taiwan into accepting the premise of the “One China Principle” that leaves no space for the survival of the Republic of China.”

As noted earlier, concerns over a possible conflict in the Taiwan Strait are mounting. Crucially, this is provoking calls within the United States for greater clarity in its commitment to defend Taiwan, as demonstrated in a recent Foreign Affairs article authored by Richard Haass and David Sacks of the Council on Foreign Relations, which unequivocally called for clarity as a deterrent against rising Chinese adventurism. Furthermore, as Taiwan’s representative to the United States, Ambassador Hsiao Bi-khim (蕭美琴), recently stated in an interview with the Washington Post: “We need some degree of clarity.”

It is within this context that President Tsai’s measured approach snaps into strategic view. The tenor of President Tsai’s 2020 National Day speech is noteworthy, especially as debates rage in the United States over whether it should shift from its position of strategic ambiguity to clarity. While reasonable concerns remain among those in the United States who oppose such a change in policy due to a lack of predictability in Taiwan’s domestic politics or fears of provoking Beijing’s response, Tsai’s even-keeled approach seems intended to assure allies that Taiwan and, more importantly, its democracy can and should be trusted to make the right decisions.

The main point: President Tsai’s call for dialogue with Beijing in her 2020 National Day speech, even as China ratchets up tension, is a carefully calibrated signal—not only to Beijing, but also to the United States that Taiwan can and should be trusted.

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Survey: Taiwanese People’s “Will to Fight” Spikes as China Ties Deteriorate and US-Taiwan Relations Improve

In recent remarks made at a think tank event, White House National Security Adviser Robert O’Brien stated openly that Taiwan should prepare to deter a Chinese invasion. Speaking at the Aspen Institute, O’Brien stated: “I think Taiwan needs to start looking at some asymmetric and anti-access area denial strategies and so on and really fortify itself in a manner that would deter the Chinese from any sort of amphibious invasion or even a gray zone operation against them.” While not directly addressed, a subtext for the broader issue raised by the US national security adviser is Taiwan’s degree of readiness for a Chinese invasion, as well as whether the people in Taiwan are themselves ready and have the will to fight if China invaded. To that end, a recent survey conducted by the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy (TFD)—a democracy assistance and research foundation established in 2002—found that nearly 80 percent of the Taiwanese population said that they would go to war to defend Taiwan.

The survey, released on October 16, is the latest in a series of TFD polls on Taiwanese views of democratic values and governance. Though the TFD has been conducting this survey since 2011, the 2020 iteration showed a notable spike in the percentage of people who said that they would be willing to fight to defend Taiwan in the event of a Chinese invasion. In response to the survey question: “Would you fight for Taiwan if China uses force against Taiwan for unification?”, 79.8 percent said that they would—representing an increase of over 10 percentage points from the previous year’s 68.2 percent. Interestingly, according to the same survey, when asked the same question but with a twist: “Would you defend Taiwan if war breaks out due to Taiwan’s declaring its formal independence?”, a significant 71.5 percent also responded that they would—representing a 14 percent increase from the
previous year’s results.

Circumstantial scenarios notwithstanding, the will to fight is an integral component of readiness. As Lt. Col. (ret.) Mark Stokes, Yang Kuang-shun, and Eric Lee wrote in their recent report *Preparing for the Nightmare: Readiness and Ad hoc Coalition Operations in the Taiwan Strait:*

“Readiness can be viewed from both strategic and operational perspectives. [...] strategic readiness is the degree to which political leaders, their armed forces, and civil societies—individually and collectively—are prepared to counter CCP use of force. In addition to the unity of effort, strategic readiness includes national will, morale, and fiscal resources.”

The issue of readiness has been a longstanding and thorny issue for Taiwan. This controversy has been linked both to domestic concerns—especially among the military brass and political elites—about the island’s preparedness for a Chinese attack and the persistent and concerted efforts of Beijing to weaken Taiwanese resolve and “win without fighting” (不戰而屈人之兵). As one US government analyst observed as far back as in 2003:

“China places considerable reliance on breaking Taiwan’s spirit of resistance. Indeed, Beijing may overestimate the island’s weakness in this regard. An internal PLA assessment reportedly concluded that Taiwan’s population, long accustomed to a relatively high standard of living, would pressure Taipei for a negotiated surrender if their water and electricity were cut off for two days.”

To be sure, as China’s military capabilities grow—and they have done so by leaps and bounds since the early 2000s—the potential effectiveness of Beijing’s psychological warfare should naturally grow as well. Yet, while Taiwan is subjected to ever more psychological warfare, as evidenced by recent military propaganda and probing activities in and around the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan’s civilian population has only grown more resilient, as reflected in the TFD poll. What explains this phenomenon? As Stokes, Yang, and Lee noted:

“National will and morale are also related to perceived international support. The PLA expends significant resources on manipulating morale among the general population and particularly within the ROC armed forces. The degree of perceived international support is a critical yet intangible factor in morale, particularly during a crisis.”

Yet, there remains reasonable anecdotal evidence, which a survey may not be able to capture, that could cast doubt on the people’s will to fight. According to independent strategist Tanner Greer: “the greatest danger to the security of Taiwan is not the PLA Navy or Rocket Force, but Taiwan’s own demoralizing system of national service.” Greer based his blistering conclusion about the seeming lack of preparedness to fight among the Taiwanese on interviews that he conducted in Taiwan as recently as 2019.

Setting aside the issue of operational readiness, there may be a strong correlation between the TFD poll results, the general negative trend in attitudes toward China, and improved relations with the United States. Amid an escalation of cross-Strait tension over the past four years, a Mainland Affairs Council (MAC, 大陸委員會) poll from March 2020 indicated that the numbers of people on the island who think China is unfriendly toward the Taiwan government and the public have risen to 76.6 percent and 61.5 percent, respectively. Relatedly, according to a 2020 Pew Survey, 68 percent have a favorable view of the United States, with 85 percent supporting closer economic ties and 79 percent supporting closer political ties between Taiwan and the US.
Also notable in the TFD poll is that it shows that the will to fight in the event of a Chinese invasion is highest among the younger populations surveyed, with 89 percent of those aged 20-29 and 86.4 percent of those aged 30-39 stating that they would be willing to fight. Strikingly, these numbers dropped only slightly—to 86.1 percent and 82.9 percent, respectively—when the scenario in which Taiwan's declaration of independence provoking Beijing's attack was included.

Contrary to Beijing's belief in and concerns in Washington about Taiwan's internal weaknesses—chief among them Taiwan's questionable will to fight—more and more polling data indicate that a majority in Taiwan would fight if China invaded. While Taiwan faces other challenges to its defense, such as the budget, operational readiness, and manpower requirements, among others, the will to fight to preserve its cherished democracy does not appear to be one of them. Indeed, the people’s willingness to fight, coupled with society’s overwhelming preference for the status quo, bodes well for the psychological resiliency of Taiwan.

The main point: According to a recent survey, nearly 80 percent of Taiwanese respondents said that they would fight in case of a Chinese invasion. This is likely a function of improved international support, especially from the United States, and deteriorating views of China.

** Are DPP and KMT Views of China Converging? **

By: David G. Brown

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Political scientists and policy makers have long recognized that Taiwan’s divided views on China have weakened its ability to deal with Beijing. The internal differences over China have defined and divided Taiwan politics for decades. Nevertheless, Taiwan leaders have dreamed of building a consensus that would strengthen Taipei’s hand. Consensus has been elusive, but differences within Taiwan have narrowed. Have opinions begun to converge?

During Chen Shui-bian’s tenure, the struggle between the “pro-unification” Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) and the “pro-independence” Democratic Progressive Party (DPP, 民進) was seen by both as existential. [1] However, in 2008, Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九)—who personally supports eventual unification—moved the KMT toward the political center. His advocacy of “no unification, no independence, and no use of force” and his support of the “one China, respective interpretations” version of the “1992 Consensus” (九二共識) essentially sought to redefine the KMT as a party favoring the status quo. He easily won election on that platform.

In 2016, Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文), who supports eventual independence, also adopted a pragmatic approach. She stopped publicly rejecting “one China” and refrained from talking about independence. Rather than explicitly rejecting the “1992 Consensus”, she acknowledged the historical fact that talks had occurred in 1992. Furthermore, she said she would abide by agreements negotiated with Beijing and would base her cross-Strait policy on the Republic of China (ROC) Constitution and the existing cross-strait statute, both of which have a basis in the idea of “one China.” This moved the DPP toward the political center. She too easily won election that year, but her redefined policy was rejected by Beijing.

2019 was a pivotal year for Taiwan and cross-Strait relations. First, Xi Jinping’s address in January adopted a harder line on reunification. In insisting that peaceful unification will be achieved, he stated that the “one country, two systems” framework was the way it would be accomplished. He asserted that Beijing’s definition of “one China” was a given, but that discussions about how it would apply to Taiwan should be pursued. He reiterated that Beijing would not reject the possible use of force. This was a dose of cold water that was almost universally rejected in Taiwan.

Second, the demonstrations in Hong Kong against a proposed extradition law morphed into increasingly violent demonstrations against China and for greater democracy. Beijing’s insistence that the Hong Kong Government reject these demands and forcefully suppress the demonstrations only convinced Taiwanese that “one country, two systems” was not just inappro-
President Tsai decisively won reelection in January 2020 on a platform that rejected “one country, two systems” and advocated defending Taiwan’s democratic way of life and actively resisting PRC pressures on Taiwan. Many in the KMT read their defeat as a sign of the need for new leadership and a new policy toward the mainland that was more in tune with popular sentiment.

How far apart are the two main parties on China in 2020? The DPP’s record and Tsai’s policies are known. The KMT under new Chairman Johnny Chiang (江啟臣) has issued two papers on China. The first was the report of the reform committee in June; the second was the “Cross-Strait Discourse” statement announced at the Party Congress in September. These documents and other statements provide a basis for examining similarities and differences between the two parties’ policies.

President Tsai has stated that her goal is to maintain the status quo, through the “stable and peaceful development of cross-Strait relations.” She committed not to return to the confrontational policies of the Chen Shui-bian era. She has kept that promise, despite recurrent pressures from pro-independence groups, by maintaining majority DPP support for her policies. Similarly, KMT Chairman Chiang has stated that the KMT’s goal is “to strive for cross-Strait peace and common well-being.” While differences remain, both parties have now articulated the goal of maintaining stable, peaceful cross-Strait relations. This aligns with the Taiwanese public’s strong support for the status quo.

Both the DPP and KMT now categorically reject the CCP’s “one country, two systems” (一國兩制) proposal. While their views on the “1992 Consensus” remain different, they have evolved. The DPP has long stated that there was no consensus in 1992 because no joint document was issued. The KMT has held that a tacit agreement did exist and provided a basis for dialogue when the KMT was in power. The KMT describes that tacit agreement as “one China, respective interpretations.” Neither party accepts the CCP’s “One-China Principle” that forms the basis for its definition of the “1992 Consensus on one China.” Nevertheless in 2016, President Tsai stated that she “respects the historical fact” that in 1992 the two sides reached “some joint acknowledgements and understandings.” The concrete results of those understandings should be cherished and form the basis for the future, she argued. Then, in 2020, the KMT Reform Committee report broke with past KMT policy and described the “1992 Consensus” as an historical view that had provided a basis for dialogue in the past. It went on to say that the CCP had twisted the meaning of the consensus to the point that it was no longer useful. However, the subsequent KMT Congress statement took a different view, adopting a new definition of the Consensus stating that the “Republic of China (ROC) Constitution based ‘1992 Consensus’ could provide a basis for continuing cross-Strait dialogue.” However, Beijing’s silence on this language is likely an indication that this redefinition is not acceptable and that the CCP hopes that this KMT view will change. However, domestic pressure will likely require the KMT to reexamine that position and find a way to further distance itself from the “1992 Consensus” in order to better align with public sentiment. In sum, past diametrically opposed KMT and DPP policies on the “1992 Consensus” are evolving and may become closer.

Neither of the two parties have in the past been strong proponents for increasing Taiwan’s national defense effort. During Chen Shui-bian’s second term, the KMT in the Legislative Yuan (LY) and the DPP in the executive office both used defense policy for partisan purposes.[2] Over the past two years, President Tsai has begun increasing defense spending. Furthermore, both the DPP and KMT supported the adoption of a special defense budget for new F-16V aircraft in 2019. Recently, the KMT proposed and the DPP supported a unanimous LY resolution that “the President should conduct regular transfers of defense articles to Taiwan that are tailored to meet the existing and likely future threats from the People’s Republic of China.” Here again, policies are converging.

Despite this growing agreement, the two parties’ concepts of Taiwan continue to differ. The DPP continues to base its view on the Party’s 1999 Resolution on Taiwan’s Future. That document describes Taiwan and China as two separate countries. Two decades ago,
many KMT leaders still viewed unification as a *long-term goal*. However, recent *KMT documents* no longer mention unification. Although recent KMT documents do not explicitly endorse “reunification” or “one China,” the KMT continues to *base its policy* on the ROC Constitution, which the KMT maintains “links the two sides of the Strait.”

In line with their core views, the two parties use different terms to express similar views. For instance, while the DPP asserts that “Taiwan” is sovereign and independent, the KMT states that the “ROC” has always been *sovereign and independent*. Both the DPP and KMT increasingly talk about their country as “Taiwan.” However, the DPP generally uses “Taiwan” both for convenience and policy reasons. Nevertheless, since becoming president, Tsai has been careful to use the “ROC” name on *official occasions*, and she has at times reached out to KMT supporters by calling on Beijing to *accept the existence of the ROC*. The KMT also uses “Taiwan” for convenience, but prefers to use the “ROC” name, often employing it as a political rallying tool. The DPP has expanded the use of “Taiwan,” such as by *redesigning the passport cover*, highlighting “Taiwan” in English while retain “ROC” in Chinese. Conversely, he KMT has resisted efforts to denigrate the “ROC” name. Nevertheless, the two parties’ special committees handling relations with Beijing use terms in line with their core positions. The DPP’s is called its *China Affairs Committee*, while the KMT’s is called its *Mainland Affairs Council*.

In the Chen Shui-bian era, the DPP tried on more than one occasion to *promote a new constitution* more appropriate for Taiwan. Even this year, DPP members of the LY have *made proposals* to change the sovereignty aspects of the Constitution. However, President Tsai has consistently *resisted these pressures*, advocating only amendments that would not affect sovereignty. The KMT *actively opposes* any effort to change the sovereignty provisions.

In 2019, DPP members *identified enthusiastically* with Hong Kong demonstrators and President Tsai repeatedly *encouraged Hong Kong* to exercise restraint and urged Beijing to respect the people’s democratic demands. However, KMT members views on the demonstrations and subsequent violence were divided. The KMT, like the DPP, maintained that Beijing’s response demonstrated again that “one country, two systems” was *not appropriate for Taiwan*. However, the KMT was reluctant to join in endorsing the demonstrations and paid a price for that in the *2020 elections*. This year, both the *DPP* and KMT have strongly criticized Beijing’s decision to impose the Hong Kong National Security Law, as well as the manner in which it has been used to repress dissent.

The Tsai administration *criticizes the CCP* regularly on a wide variety of issues, often in harsh terms. At times, it intentionally uses terms that are known to irritate Beijing, such as referring to SARS CoV-2 as the “*Wuhan virus*.” In the past, KMT leaders have been reluctant to *criticize the CCP*, in part because the KMT wants to cooperate with Beijing and because its party leaders regularly meet with Chinese leaders. However, Johnny Chiang has been willing this year to *criticize China* on a host of issues, including blocking Taiwan’s international participation, PLA intrusions into Taiwan’s Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), and the mass detention of Uyghurs in Xinjiang. Here again, the expressed views of the two parties are converging. The clearest example of the KMT’s stronger stance toward China was its decision for the first time to *withdraw from participation* in the annual Straits Forum with the CCP after CCTV made insulting remarks about the KMT’s chief delegate to the Forum.

What the parties say they stand for has clearly become closer. As its name suggests, the DPP has from the beginning stood for Taiwan’s democratic values, arguing that its struggles led to the *establishment of democracy in Taiwan*. In seeking to reposition the KMT, Chairman Chiang has *called for maintaining* “the values of the Republic of China’s free and democratic system.” The KMT bases its democratic tradition on Sun Yat-sen’s (*孫逸仙*) *Three Principles of the People* (*三民主義*) and credits former President Chiang Ching-kuo (*蔣經國*) with *leading Taiwan to democracy*. Despite these different perspectives, both parties now see Taiwan’s democratic tradition as a core difference between themselves and the CCP.

In sum, there are still differences in the parties’ views. Party history and competitive electoral politics have and will continue to result in some differentiation. However, there is now more convergence of the views and policies of the two main parties toward Beijing...
than at any time in the past. What has been driving this degree of convergence? Over the past 15 years, both parties have sought to move toward the center in order to better align themselves with majority opinion and win elections. Recently, however, the harder line that General Secretary Xi Jinping has adopted toward both Taiwan and Hong Kong since 2019 has pushed the two parties closer together. In the face of CCP repression, both the DPP and KMT are invested in defending Taiwan’s interests.

It is also relevant that, for the first time, the third largest party in Taiwan is not further toward the extremes than the two main parties. Mayor Ko Wen-je’s (柯文哲) Taiwan People’s Party (TPP, 台灣民眾黨) is attempting to position itself between the two main parties.

To the extent that differences over policy toward Beijing are narrowed, Taiwan will be in a stronger position to protect its interests and resist CCP pressure, including Beijing’s United Front divide and conquer strategy. There is still a considerable way to go, but progress has been made toward convergence.

The main point: Despite their long history of rivalry, the DPP and KMT are increasingly finding areas of convergence in their respective policies toward China. While differences in views remain, this increasing convergence in views on a number of key issues has the potential of strengthening Taiwan’s hand in cross-Strait negotiations.


[2] Ibid.

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Taiwan and France Expand Relations in the COVID-19 Era

By: I-wei Jennifer Chang

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In late August, Taiwan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) announced that it would set up a new representative office in Aix-en-Provence, a city in southern France. “France is a core member state of the European Union, and Taiwan and France want to expand trade, aerospace, biomedical, and technology cooperation,” Johnson Sen Chiang (姜森), MOFA’s director-general of European affairs, said at a press briefing on August 25. This development is the latest in a string of diplomatic achievements for Taipei following its recent opening of overseas offices in Somaliland on August 17 and Guam on October 10, Taiwan’s Double Ten Holiday. The opening of the new office in Aix-en-Provence also comes as Taiwan and European countries have made significant strides in boosting unofficial relations. Taiwan’s successful model for combating the coronavirus, coupled with growing tensions in China-European Union (EU) relations, has created an opening for Taiwan to expand comprehensive relations with France. As discussed in earlier issues of the Global Taiwan

Coronavirus and WHO Politics

The emergence of the global coronavirus pandemic has tested China’s relations with many virus-afflicted countries around the world, including European countries. The global health crisis comes amid growing strains between China and the European Union (EU) over the use of Huawei telecom equipment in 5G networks, access to Chinese markets for European companies, and Beijing’s national security law in Hong Kong, among other issues. To add insult to injury, Chinese diplomats have employed their infamous “wolf warrior” diplomacy, attacking French and other Western governments over their coronavirus mismanagement, all the while maneuvering to advance Chinese national interests as well as Beijing’s leadership on global pandemic mitigation.

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) Embassy in France sparked controversy earlier this year when an anonymous post on its official website claimed that Taiwanese authorities, supported by more than 80 French Parliament members, had launched attacks against World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. The post accused the Taiwanese of using racial slurs against Ghebreyesus, a native of Ethiopia, including calling him “Negro.” Taipei subsequently refuted claims that it was behind the
attacks on Ghebreyesus. The post went online in April but currently is inaccessible on the Chinese Embassy’s website. The incident touched a nerve, particularly in the broader context of French-Chinese competition in Africa and Paris’ efforts to relaunch its relations with African countries.

Another post on the Chinese Embassy’s website remarked that France was leaving its elderly citizens to die amid the coronavirus pandemic. The post, presumably written by Chinese diplomats in France, criticized Western governments for not protecting the lives of their citizens by pushing for “collective immunity.” This controversial post is reflective of the broader Chinese narrative that its authoritarian model of COVID-19 containment has worked and should be emulated. Chinese diplomats have posted statements criticizing Western democracies, specifically their emphasis on individualism as opposed to concern for the collective society, for failing to curtail the spread of the coronavirus in their countries. In April, French Foreign Affairs Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian summoned Chinese Ambassador to France Lu Shaye (盧沙野), concurrently Chinese Ambassador to Monaco, to express disapproval of the PRC Embassy’s posts.

**Increased Visibility for Taiwan**

At the same time as the coronavirus pandemic has exposed the risks of engagement with China, it is also showcasing the “Taiwan Model” of pandemic management, which encompasses timely border control, smart technology, and open and transparent information. In the lead-up to the World Health Assembly (WHA) meeting in May, more than a hundred French Parliament members called on the WHO to invite Taiwan to participate in the annual conference, while also mobilizing other European lawmakers to put collective pressure on the WHO for Taiwan’s inclusion. In May, France—along with the United States, Germany, the UK, Canada, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand—issued a joint letter to the WHO that supported Taiwan’s participation in the global health body.

Taiwan’s coronavirus success, not to mention its worldwide donations of “Made in Taiwan” surgical face masks, has increased the island’s profile around the world, including in French media and politics. Taiwan’s recent media visibility in Europe is historically unprecedented, according to French scholar Antoine Bondaz. There have never been so many articles and radio and TV programs covering Taiwan in the past, he said. Taiwan’s successful containment of the coronavirus has brought new ideas and inspiration to help Europeans manage their own battles with the virus, argued Bondaz.

Furthermore, Taiwan has enhanced its presence in the French Parliament. Taiwan’s Representative to France, Wu Chih-chung (吳志中), also known as François Wu, spoke at a September 9 hearing of the French Senate on Taiwan’s COVID-19 experience. His speech marked the first time that a top Taiwanese envoy had spoken in the upper house of the French Parliament. Wu also became the first Taiwanese envoy to speak before the French Parliament’s lower house, the National Assembly, where he discussed Taiwan’s policy in the South China Sea at a hearing in January 2019. The support for Taiwan among French Parliament members runs deep, as exemplified by the France-Taiwan Friendship Group (友台小組), which has more than a hundred members from both houses of the French Parliament.

**Taiwan’s Second Office in France**

On August 25, Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) posted on Facebook: “Tonight, I want to have some... Aix-en-Provence stew!” Tsai stated that the new representative office in Aix-en-Provence would help to better serve Taiwanese people traveling in Europe, while also promoting exchanges and cooperation between Taiwan and France. Indeed, Taiwan’s second office in Aix-en-Provence—located in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d’Azur region of southern France—is in close proximity to other key science and technology centers. These include Montpellier, a major center for global environmental research; the Sophia Antipolis technology park; and Toulouse, an aerospace hub. MOFA Director-General Chiang said that the Aix-en-Provence office will strengthen bilateral economic, trade, and technological industry exchanges. The cooperation between Taiwan’s Ministry of Science and Technology (科技部) and its French counterpart is quite robust, and is second only to Taiwan’s science and technology exchanges with the United States, according to Representative Wu.

Taiwan’s main representative office, the Bureau de
Représentation de Taipei en France (駐法國台北代表處), is located in Paris in the northern and central part of the country. With a staff of more than 50 people, Taipei’s Paris office is one of Taiwan’s largest representative offices in Europe, stated Representative Wu. Several of Taiwan’s ministries have stationed personnel there, demonstrating the island’s close relations with France, Wu said. According to Director-General Chiang, planning for the opening of Taiwan’s office in Aix-en-Provence has been going on for some time. Taiwan’s government initially considered setting up a second office in Marseille or Lyon, but later decided on Aix-en-Provence. However, the opening of the office has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. MOFA recently announced that the new office will open in early December and will be headed by Taiwan’s former Ambassador to Haiti Hsin Chi-chih (辛繼志).

Economic, Military, and Cultural Exchanges

The impetus for opening the second office has come from Taiwan’s deepening relations and a broad range of exchanges with France in the past few years. According to MOFA, the number of Taiwanese citizens traveling to France jumped 62 percent between 2016 and 2019, while French visitors to Taiwan grew nearly 30 percent over the same period. Meanwhile, France is Taiwan’s fourth-largest trade partner in Europe after the Netherlands, Germany, and the United Kingdom. France is also Taiwan’s 19th largest trade partner in the world. In 2019, bilateral trade reached USD $4.7 billion, with Taiwan importing USD $3.2 billion from France and exporting USD $1.5 billion to France. Taiwan’s major imports from France include commercial aircraft, high-tech satellites, fighter jets, and frigates, as well as wine and luxury products. France, whose bulk imports from Taiwan consist primarily of electronic products, is now considering purchasing mask-manufacturing machinery from Taiwan to produce face masks domestically.

In the 1990s, France became a key European supplier of military aircraft, frigates, and weapons to Taiwan. In a recent move that angered Beijing, France refused to cancel a contract to sell arms to Taiwan, including upgrades to the missile interference system of six French-made La Fayette-class frigates that Taipei had purchased for USD $2.8 billion in 1991. Taiwan is also reportedly seeking to spend nearly USD $27 million on Dagaie decoy launchers for its navy from the French firm DCI-DESCO.

Moreover, France is a major cultural power in Europe, leading Taipei to seek deeper cultural exchanges with the French. The Taiwan Cultural Center in France (Centre culturel de Taiwan à Paris, 駐法國台灣文化中心), under the Ministry of Culture (文化部), is Taiwan’s highest-level cultural institution stationed abroad. The French also view Taiwan as a center of cultural creativity, scientific and technological innovation, and democracy and human rights, remarked Benoît Guidée, former director of the French Office in Taipei (法國在台協會) in 2018. He expressed his desire to see Taiwan become a platform for French development in Asia, while Paris could play a corresponding role as Taipei’s gateway to Europe.

Tensions in EU-China relations have sharpened in the COVID-19 era, while Taiwan’s democratic model of coronavirus management has enhanced the island’s soft power among European democracies. Taipei-Paris relations will continue to draw on shared democratic values, robust economic and trade relations, and cultural linkages, while also expanding bilateral collaboration in science and technology and pandemic management. Taiwan’s "parliament diplomacy" with the French and other European parliaments will be key arenas to enhance Taipei’s unofficial yet growing profile in Europe. Although Taipei has sustained the loss of a handful of its diplomatic allies to Beijing over the past few years, it has also made important strides this year with the reopening of its Guam representative office and a new office in Somaliland. The opening of the second office in southern France is yet another positive diplomatic development for Taipei, potentially signaling a new era of expanded cooperation with Europe more broadly.

The main point: In the COVID-19 era, France-Taiwan relations have taken a positive turn, with enhanced, comprehensive cooperation and a greater French willingness to withstand Chinese pressure regarding Taiwan.

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How China Could Decide Not to Invade Taiwan

By: Michael Mazza

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The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) does not have agency. That is now the dominant argument among analysts arguing against strengthening US-Taiwan relations. The thesis goes like this: in the event that Taiwan moves too far along the path towards permanent separation from China (just how far is not made explicit), Beijing will be forced to send the People's Liberation Army (PLA) into action. Beijing will have no choice in the matter, so Taiwan and the United States must act accordingly. It is not surprising that there has been some pushback in response to the latest developments in US-Taiwan relations and there is, of course, much room for debate. Yet much as Beijing might wish for foreign counterparts believe that Chinese actions regarding Taiwan are predetermined—indeed, that they are out of Beijing’s control—such arguments are deserving of scrutiny.

Recent Arguments

The latest round of these arguments began with a Ted Galen Carpenter article for Responsible Statecraft on September 22. Carpenter provides a master class in victim blaming. Inaccurately describing the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) now as “pro-independence,” he asserts that its 2016 “electoral triumph torpedoed the strategy that Chinese leaders had pursued of building robust economic ties with Taiwan in the expectation that such links would gradually make the Taiwanese people more receptive to political reunification with the mainland.” There are two problems here. First, the failure of China’s strategy was manifest in 2014, when the Sunflower Movement halted the Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) administration’s efforts to continue deepening economic ties with China. Second, Carpenter is guilty of a common crime: in describing the DPP as “pro-independence” and in using the phrase “reunification with the mainland,” he blindly accepts China’s preferred framing of the DPP and of cross-Strait political ties.

Carpenter explicitly pegs the blame for rising cross-Strait tensions on what he describes as “the DPP’s continued political control.” Such “control,” it should be noted, is due to the DPP performing exceptionally well in the last two national elections. No matter. That “political control” has “impelled the PRC to redouble its efforts to poach Taipei’s small number of remaining diplomatic partners and ratchet-up confrontational rhetoric against the island [and] it has led to an increasingly menacing military posture.” In Carpenter’s telling, Beijing is not responsible for its decision to resort to diplomatic, rhetorical, and military pressure on Taiwan—indeed, there was no decision at all to be made in the halls of Zhongnanhai. Taiwan’s people voted—shame on them—and the laws of cross-Strait physics took over from there.

This is, unfortunately, a common theme among those arguing for a more hands-off American approach to the Taiwan Strait. In an article published a few days after Carpenter’s, Paul Heer, a former national intelligence officer, offered this assessment on the current status of cross-Strait dynamics:

“The good news is that, contrary to the prevailing wisdom, Beijing is not in fact looking for excuses or an opportunity to attack Taiwan: it is looking for reasons not to do so. The danger is that Chinese leaders currently do not perceive Washington and Taipei to be providing those reasons.”

Heer is almost certainly correct in noting that Beijing would prefer to incorporate Taiwan into the People’s Republic without using force. Like Carpenter, however, he denies Beijing any agency in setting China’s approach to Taiwan. Taiwan and the United States are apparently moving closer to forcing Beijing to order the PLA into action—not because they are plotting military action against China or even moving definitively toward a declaration and recognition, respectively, of Taiwan’s independent statehood, but because the United States is adjusting and updating (per Assistant Secretary of State David Stilwell) its “One-China Policy” and because “Beijing suspects Taipei as having withdrawn from the ‘One-China’ framework.” China might not like these developments, but it should have options to respond beyond pummeling, invading, and
occupying Taiwan.

Heer, who at least admits that Beijing’s “views on many issues are invalid and unreasonable,” does not see things that way:

“But we should be extremely cautious about dismissing Beijing’s perspective on Taiwan, or underestimating how deadly serious the issue is to Chinese leaders. It represents the unfinished business of the Chinese Civil War and thus involves the legitimacy and the survival of the Chinese Communist Party.”

Of course, Washington and Taipei should take seriously Chinese views on Taiwan. It behooves leaders in both capitals to understand how those in Beijing define and prioritize their interests. Unification is, indeed, an issue on which the CCP has staked its legitimacy. Within the Party, it is surely not a political winner to advocate a softer approach to Taiwan. Heer fails to question, however, why that must be so.

The same goes for John Culver, also a retired American intelligence officer, who recently wrote for The Interpreter about the “unfinished Chinese civil war.” Culver shares valuable insights on the potential shape of a war that begins in the Taiwan Strait, but like other pieces of the genre, the article prioritizes Chinese over Taiwanese perspectives and denies agency to the PRC.

Indeed, Taiwanese perspectives are entirely absent from the essay. Does Taiwan consider itself to be in an unfinished civil war? Although Taipei remains preoccupied with the Chinese military threat, it is not at all clear that people in Taiwan see themselves as being in a continuing state of war with the PRC. If not, does that affect how Culver’s hypothetical war might come about and how it might be fought? Perhaps not, but highlighting Taiwanese views would at least put China’s perspective in a more complete context, allowing for better foreign engagement with it.

As with Carpenter and Heer, Culver is careful to avoid assigning any responsibility to China for a hypothetical conflict. “If military conflict comes to the Taiwan Strait in the next few years,” Culver writes, “the past will not serve as prologue for China’s modes, means, and goals.” It is difficult to imagine a scenario in which Beijing is not the first to use force, but for Culver, war is something that just happens, rather than something China chooses to set in motion.

Like Heer, Culver argues that the CCP would see such a conflict as being “about its legitimacy and survival, and the return of China as the dominant power in East Asia.” And like Heer, Culver does not see the CCP as having choices to make: “Not contesting probably would not be an option for the CCP—indeed, it seems convinced that it has an asymmetrical interest in the outcome compared to the United States.” Culver never makes clear what exactly the CCP would be “contesting” in this hypothetical scenario—but again, it seems likely he is presuming a Chinese use of force when there is no military threat to China. This would be neither defensive, nor preemptive, nor preventive. Yet Culver and others—along with the CCP—want us to believe China will have no choice but to attack should Taiwan, as Heer put it, continue to withdraw from the “One-China” framework.

Searching for Flexibility in Beijing

The point here is not to question the importance of unification to Chinese leaders. The threat to Taiwan grows more urgent precisely because it is so important to the Party. The questions are thus: is Taiwan so central to CCP interests as to deny the CCP any flexibility in how it handles Taiwan? And if so, must that remain the case? Put another way, if Deng Xiaoping, veteran of the Long March, could enthusiastically abandon communist orthodoxy, why must foreign observers accept that the CCP cannot change its tune on Taiwan?

Carpenter, Heer, and Culver might all argue that the United States and Taiwan must avoid backing China into a corner. But arguably, it is the CCP that has backed itself into that corner. The CCP chose to embrace and promulgate the narrative that the Chinese Civil War is unfinished, that Taiwan is part of “one China,” that it cannot abide independence. The CCP has chosen, as Dan Blumenthal put it, to compensate “for the absence of attractive political principles or ideologies by creating a new empire of fear, and offering ever-more strident appeals to an imperialist nationalism.” Xi Jinping has chosen to make unification a key aspect of his promised “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.” Put simply, Beijing bears responsibility for its own predicament.
Beijing has evinced little interest in extracting itself from that predicament, but that could change. Culver notes that China believes “it has an asymmetrical interest in the outcome [of a hypothetical Taiwan Strait conflict] compared to the United States.” But China also has an asymmetrical interest in the outcome compared to Taiwan, which would be fighting for its very existence. There are steps Taiwan can take—such as revitalizing its reserve forces and training its citizens to wage an insurgency—that can change Beijing’s assessment of that asymmetry and what it means.

Culver also argues, quite reasonably, that a war that began in the Taiwan Strait would not be limited to the Taiwan Strait:

“And it’s likely that, from the moment the shooting starts, it will cease being the unfinished Chinese Civil War and will become the China-US war. Taiwan would be the first battlefield of intensive combat operations between the world’s two most powerful military forces in a war that would quickly cease to be primarily about Taiwan’s autonomy, prosperity or the lives and livelihoods of its 24 million people.”

It is not at all clear that in a war for all the marbles, there is an asymmetry of interests that strongly favors China. Nor is Beijing likely to enthusiastically launch such a conflagration. The risks for China are enormous. Isn’t it possible that China would shift to a less strident approach to Taiwan rather than incur those risks? Taiwanese independence may be a threat to CCP rule. A war with the United States is likely a bigger one.

The main point: A number of recent essays suggest that China will have no choice but to launch a war should Taiwan continue to solidify its de facto independent status. The CCP, however, may not be so inflexible as to put its own rule at risk.

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Repelling a Chinese Invasion: The Critical Role of Taiwan’s Ground Forces

By: Charlemagne McHaffie

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In the most recent edition of the Military Review, the US Army’s professional journal, a raft of articles examined how the United States can respond to the Chinese threat to Taiwan. Proposals included returning American forces to bases in Taiwan and sending up to four Army divisions to the island in the event of a crisis. However, the United States may have neither the political will nor the logistical capacity to carry through on these recommendations. Therefore, Taiwanese forces may find themselves on their own in a war against China—at least at the outset. Moreover, some academics make a plausible case that American security guarantees to Taiwan should be contingent on Taiwan improving its innate defensive capabilities. It is therefore worth examining how Chinese and Taiwanese forces stack up against each other.

The success of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan would require success in the air and maritime domains. Thus, many existing analyses focus on air, naval, and missile forces. However, as former American defense official Drew Thompson notes, “the only thing that guarantees Beijing can achieve its political objective of Taiwan’s surrender is putting Chinese boots on the ground and physically seizing control of the island.” Assuming Taiwan’s resolve holds firm, whether China’s ground forces can defeat Taiwan’s is the key question in any invasion scenario.

In the land domain, Taiwan has the equipment and human capital to repel a Chinese invasion if its forces are maintained during peacetime and mobilized quickly enough to counterattack Chinese beachheads. People’s Liberation Army (PLA) air, naval, and missile forces could intervene in the ground war to change this calculus, but for now they are likely too busy engaging their Taiwanese (and/or American) counterparts.

**Manpower & Equipment**

Despite China’s massive advantage in vehicles and active-duty manpower, it can only transport a fraction of those forces across the Taiwan Strait at once. Furthermore, while Chinese forces are storming ashore, it would be difficult for them to employ many of their heavy tanks due to their small number of suitable landing craft. Instead, they would likely be forced to rely
on infantry, helicopters, and light amphibious tanks and infantry fighting vehicles. Until they could break out of a beachhead, Chinese forces would be confined to a small area and subjected to concentrated artillery bombardments. Helicopters flying over the water—which the PLA reportedly plans to use heavily—would be vulnerable to anti-aircraft weapons. The PLA would be in danger of being driven into the sea until it could either break out of its beachheads or ensure that Taiwanese forces could not successfully counterattack.

The lynchpin of these counterattacks would be Taiwan’s main battle tanks, especially the M1A2T Abrams tanks it is purchasing from the United States. Many recent analyses of Taiwan’s defense procurement have chastised Taipei for making big-ticket “vanity” purchases that have little warfighting value. While these judgments may be justified for fighter aircraft vulnerable to missile strikes, they overlook the fact that, when it comes to the Abrams, tactical and operational counterattacks are critical elements of a strategic defense. Tactically, “asymmetric” weapons like anti-tank missiles are excellent in the defense, but cannot replace tanks in the offense. This makes modern tanks a crucial component of Taiwan’s ground forces.

That is not to say that affordable, distributed weapons are not vital. In fact, some of Taiwan’s most important weapons are unguided anti-tank rockets such as the AT-4. They have a relatively short range and cannot penetrate the thick frontal armor of modern main battle tanks, but when used well they can wreak havoc on mechanized formations. Especially given its reliance on reservists, Taiwan can never have too many of these cheap weapons.

One of Taiwan’s most serious hardware deficiencies for land warfare, though, is its paucity of infantry fighting vehicles. Possibly the most versatile vehicles on the battlefield, they fill the role of armored personnel carriers while being much more lethal. Being cheaper than tanks but powerful enough to engage most targets, infantry fighting vehicles should form the bulk of a modern mechanized force.

Finally, Taiwan’s towed artillery pieces, which constitute over half of its artillery total, are not survivable. Self-propelled artillery is often armored and can “shoot and scoot”: fire a barrage then reposition to avoid return fire. Towed artillery is neither protected nor mobile. It can be entrenched, but precision-guided munitions can destroy even entrenched guns. Given the importance of bombarding Chinese beachheads, this vulnerability is a grave concern.

**Personnel Politics**

Taiwan’s problems appear to stem not from training or personnel quality, but rather from inefficient personnel policies. Demographic challenges and the move to an all-volunteer system have combined to create a manpower crunch for the armed forces. According to a Taiwanese officer, the army’s frontline units are only able to muster 60 to 80 percent of their authorized manpower. If reports are accurate, these shortfalls would not be made up even if reservists were mobilized, because all reservists are to be lumped into ad-hoc infantry brigades armed only with rifles.

Additionally, the quality of many Taiwanese reservists is due to fall sharply. Since future reservists come from former soldiers, the competency to which conscripts are trained determines how effective they will be as reservists. Taiwanese conscripts used to serve for one year, but in 2017 this was cut to four months, with just five weeks of basic training. This term of service is described as “basically a summer camp,” with conscripts treated as “guests rather than soldiers.” During a war, reservists with such little training would be of little use; and Taiwan phased out military conscription in December 2018.

**Conclusions and Recommendations for Taiwan**

Taiwan has the equipment and human capital to repel a Chinese invasion, but only if it effectively mobilizes its reserves and counterattacks Chinese beachheads early on. This would require Taiwan’s forces to avoid delays and prevent debilitating losses from Chinese air, naval, and missile forces. Units starting at reduced manpower levels, as Taiwan’s personnel policies reportedly put them at, would be at a severe disadvantage.

Counterattacking China’s beachheads would be Taiwan’s only hope for an unaided victory. PLA shortcomings and Taiwan’s dense urban, mountain, and jungle terrain mean that Taiwanese forces could stretch a battle for the island out for many months and inflict severe losses on the Chinese. However, China’s mas-
sive numerical superiority means that if it establishes secure beachheads, it can simply keep pouring troops and equipment onto the island until Taiwanese resistance is overwhelmed. In this case, Taiwan’s only hope would be to drag out the fight for as long as possible and hope for international intervention.

There are several steps Taiwan can take to maximize its chances of victory. First and foremost, it must revise its personnel policies to ensure better use of its human capital. Rather than lumping all reservists into poorly equipped infantry brigades, the Reserve Command needs to ensure that frontline units receive reinforcements. Reservists with specialist training, such as tankers and artillerymen, need to be assigned to appropriate units. Infantry units that are created from reservists should be armed with anti-tank rockets, machine guns, and grenades, not just rifles. Taiwan should prioritize acquiring large stocks of such small arms over additional fighter jets. The army should also develop and maintain a professionalized sniper corps, as skilled snipers can *ground an urban attack to a halt*.

Furthermore, Taiwan needs to ensure that its regular units can be brought up to full strength without disbanding any of them for personnel. This likely means returning to mandatory conscription terms of 18-24 months. Given the threat posed by China, Taiwan cannot afford the luxury of voluntary service if it means an undermanned military.

Equipment-wise, Taiwan should continue to invest in systems appropriate for an *asymmetric defense strategy*. The most important of these are an integrated air defense network and sophisticated anti-ship weapons, but Taiwan also needs deep stocks of anti-tank guided missiles, anti-tank rockets, short-range air defense weapons, and small arms. It also cannot totally eschew high-end platforms like main battle tanks. Taiwan’s Ministry of National Defense (國防部) should study how these valuable vehicles can best serve its unique needs and begin replacing its obsolescent first- and second-generation main battle tanks. It should also procure a greater number of *infantry fighting vehicles* and investigate converting towed artillery into self-propelled platforms. Finally, Taiwan should acquire *active protection systems* (APS) for its armored vehicles and investigate how to overcome APS mounted on Chinese vehicles.

The need to protect Taiwan’s ground forces from Chinese aircraft, ships, and missiles emphasizes the importance of anti-access investments. However, air defense networks and anti-ship missiles cannot replace ground troops. To successfully deter a Chinese invasion, Taiwan needs to be able to not only contest the air and sea around the island and degrade Chinese forces *en route*, but to defeat them when they get there. That makes Taiwan’s ground troops a crucial component of the island’s defense. With proper investment and reformed personnel policies, they can drive an invasion back into the sea.

**The main point:** Taiwan has the human capital to repel a Chinese invasion, but it will need targeted investments in its military equipment and reforms in its personnel policies to give it the best chance of victory, especially as PLA forces overcome their shortcomings in the coming years.