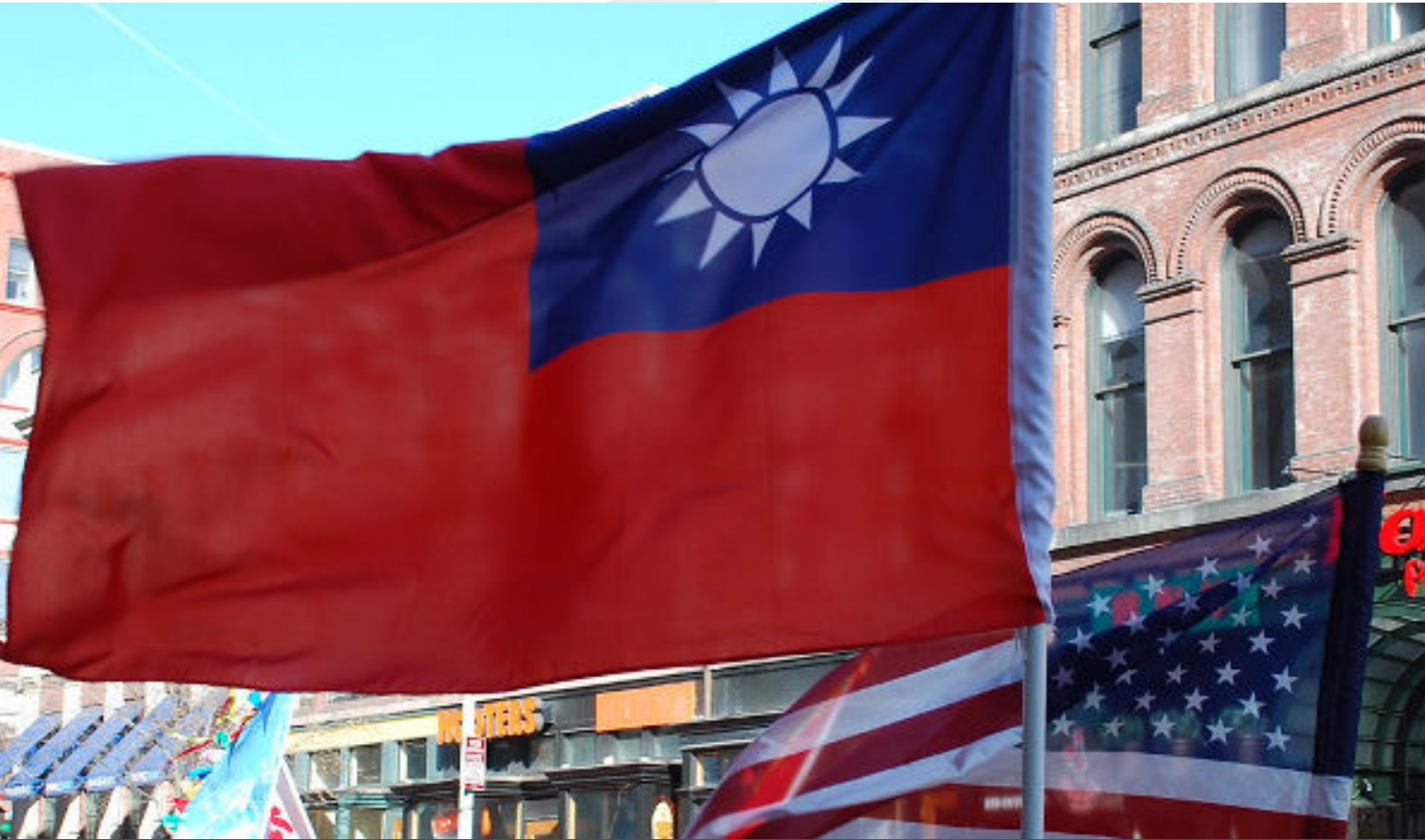




**David and Goliath:  
Strengthening Taiwan's Deterrence and Resiliency**



Lieutenant General Chip Gregson (ret.), Russell Hsiao, and  
Ambassador Stephen M. Young (ret.)

November 2020



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## Preface

Joseph Biden was elected president of the United States in November 2020 and a new cabinet will take office in January 2021.

As the administration is being formed it will have to think through and grapple with the challenge of setting out an agenda for critical issues facing US vital interests in multiple regions of the world. Nowhere are the potential opportunities as well as challenges greater for US interests and the rules-based order than in the Indo-Pacific region. Within this broad expanse that stretches from the Indian Ocean to California, the narrow Taiwan Strait remains a critical flashpoint of instability as tensions continue to rise as the People's Republic of China (PRC) ramps up its pressure campaign against Taiwan and around the region.

As the new American administration sets out its agenda with US allies and partners to preserve and promote the rules-based order, it will have a natural partner in Taiwan. Tsai Ing-wen was reelected President of Taiwan in January 2020—formally known as the Republic of China (ROC)—with a popular mandate. As a democratically and vital security partner of the United States, Washington and Taipei have many reasons to deepen their ties. It's clear that in the face of the rise of revisionist authoritarian powers<sup>1</sup> and the existential threat they pose to Taiwan's democratic system and the serious challenge to the rules-based order, the United States, Taiwan, and other like-minded nations will need to work closer together—but how?

We hope that this report will provide policymakers in Washington and Taipei a common reference point that both identifies the challenges as well as propose some recommendation to ensure common purpose and policy objectives going forward.

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1 Office of the President of the United States, and Donald J. Trump, National Security Strategy of the United States § (2017).

## Introduction

**B**ureaucracies, polices, strategies, standard operating procedures, doctrine, laws, and all manner of things critical to good governance and order are necessary and stubborn things. Change and adaptation are hard. Yet, history reveals dire consequences when nations and governments fail to adapt to new conditions. In an era “awash in change,” the United States and Taiwan should review all of their security organizations and practices to ensure they remain fit for purpose in this new security and geopolitical environment.

Taiwan is a vibrant, capitalistic, liberal democracy of over twenty-three and a half million people 180 kilometers (111 miles) away from an ascendant China<sup>2</sup> implacably dedicated to its incorporation—by force if necessary. Taiwan’s continued security and prosperity requires agile and effective security organizations, policies and strategies well-suited to this era of exponentially expanding information technologies, invasive surveillance, and weaponized social media across all elements of national power. The threat is full-spectrum and centrally directed. It must be met by a full-spectrum, agile, and democratically organized response.<sup>3</sup> To provide Taiwan with the means and ability to defend itself is not only a legal obligation for the United States as stipulated by law in the Taiwan Relations Act. It also requires ensuring that Taiwan’s democracy maintains its autonomy from the PRC. This is in-

<sup>2</sup> We refer to China and People’s Republic of China interchangeably without political prejudice.

<sup>3</sup> By “democratically organized” means empowering military and civil leaders and all citizens throughout Taiwan to exercise initiative and respond as needed to any threats.

creasingly a moral and national security imperative for the United States—especially in an era of great power competition.

The most recent US National Security Strategy (NSS)<sup>4</sup> released in December 2017 represents an example of this adaptation to new conditions. The 2017 NSS underscored the rise of revisionist authoritarian powers and the return of great power competition with China. In the context of Taiwan policy, it’s worth pointing out that for the first time since the White House began producing the NSS in 1990, the 2017 NSS mentioned Taiwan specifically by name and clearly reaffirmed the United States defense commitment to Taiwan.

Specifically, the 2017 NSS was clear-eyed about Chi-

**“This study seeks to understand the use by the PRC and its organs of sharp and hard power—specifically in terms of how it strives to undermine Taiwan’s status and influence—and make recommendations on how Taiwan and the United States can better counter those efforts collectively under the new geopolitical and security environment in the 21st century.**

na’s military rise and international behavior. As former senior National Security Council (NSC) official Mike Green comments, “There is one element in this NSS that represents a clear departure from the past and may

well inform American strategic thinking well into the future: the emphasis on great power competition with China.”<sup>5</sup>

There are essentially two key prongs to China’s strategy: sharp and hard power. Any effective response to

<sup>4</sup> Office of the President of the United States, and Donald J. Trump, National Security Strategy of the United States § (2017).

<sup>5</sup> Hsiao, Russell and David An. “Taiwan Is Ready to Serve as an Indo-Pacific Partner.” *The National Interest*. The Center for the National Interest, January 4, 2018. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/taiwan-ready-serve-indo-pacific-partner-23936>

this threat must therefore address these two elements of Chinese strategy.

“Hard power” is a continuation of this process through the employment of economic and military power, including aggressive coercion to dictate outcomes on an

opponent. This can include coercive diplomacy, economic sanctions and certainly military power.

This study seeks to understand the use by the PRC and its organs of

sharp and hard power—specifically in terms of how it strives to undermine Taiwan’s status and influence—and make recommendations on how Taiwan and the United States can better counter those efforts collectively under the new geopolitical and security environment in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**“In an era ‘awash in change,’ the United States and Taiwan should review all of their security organizations and practices to ensure they remain fit for purpose in this new security and geopolitical environment.”**

The term “sharp power” was coined in 2017 by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) to describe aggressive and subversive policies employed by authoritarian governments as a projection of state power, especially but not only in democratic countries, policies that cannot be described as either hard power or soft power. NED specifically named the Chinese-sponsored Confucius Institute educational partnerships as examples of this sharp power.<sup>6</sup> In this context, it is informative that the USG has recently begun to curb these organizations as essentially Chinese government extensions.

Sharp power can include “attempts by one country to manipulate and manage information about itself in the news media and educational systems of another country, for the purpose of misleading or dividing public opinion... or masking or diverting attention away from negative information about itself.” Sharp power, as employed by an authoritarian regime, seeks to take advantage of the asymmetry between free and unfree systems, allowing authoritarian regimes to limit free expression and distort political environments while shielding their own domestic public spaces from democratic appeals. Harvard scholar Joseph Nye stated: “Power is the ability to affect others to get the outcomes one prefers, and . . . *soft power is the ability to affect others by attraction and persuasion rather than just coercion and payment.*”<sup>7</sup>

6 Cardenal, Juan Pablo, Jacek Kucharczyk, Grigorij Mesežnikov, and Gabriela Pleschová. “Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence.” National Endowment for Democracy, 2017.

7 Nye, Joseph S. “Power: Hard, Soft, and Smart.” *In The Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology*. American Cancer Society, 2011. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470672532.wbep216>.



## Defining the Threat, Trajectory, and Pace

As we consider the frightening possibility of military conflict in this oft-described “interdependent world,” it’s well worth heeding historical analogies and remembering that war was also considered unlikely in 1914. That era of “globalized” trade was believed to be so successful—as to render future wars unprofitable. Yet a single assassination in Sarajevo quickly triggered a massive and unexpected war. Popular, unexpected revolutions toppled governments, including that of Tsarist Russia and Imperial Germany. Today’s challenges come at greater speed over a wider variety than those of the last century—injecting a great deal of complexity. Modern technology exerts an ever-accelerating rate of change within and among all spheres, means of coercion, competition, and even armed conflict. A potential military conflict in the Taiwan Strait should not be considered the exception.<sup>8</sup>

In highly informatized commercial and military ecosystems, information technology is particularly effective in attenuating and amplifying power—perceived or otherwise. In its earlier form, we celebrated the power it brought on the scale of small business owners and individuals. Inevitably, it also empowered those with malign interests. In the wrong hands, it can be manipulated to excite mob actions for malicious reasons, inspire political violence, and accelerate false information about everything from vaccines through politics to the shape of the earth. Taiwan knows well the democratic government dilemma here between free speech and damaging false narratives as external state actors are utilizing technology to intervene or even subvert the country’s democratic operating system.

Taiwan—and Hong Kong to a different extent—stand

<sup>8</sup> Winnefeld, James A., and Michael J. Morell. “The War That Never Was?” *Proceedings* 146, no. 146, August 2020. <https://www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2020/august/war-never-was>

on the frontlines of threats from China’s “sharp power,” in the form of malign authoritarian influence that takes advantage of open democratic systems to subvert its enemies and build support for China. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under General Secretary Xi Jinping has stepped up its political warfare, which is inclusive of United Front work and other

“In highly informatized commercial and military ecosystems, information technology is particularly effective in attenuating and amplifying power—perceived or otherwise.”

efforts to infiltrate and subvert Taiwan’s social and political system, following CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping’s hardline speech on unification with Taiwan in early 2018. Moreover, Beijing is conducting an aggressive political

propaganda campaign in Taiwan, through its penetration into Taiwan’s open information and political environments. In this information war, Chinese agents have sought to influence Taiwan’s political leaders and society through the distortion of information on social media—all to ultimately benefit CCP interests and objectives.

Democratic societies exert great care to ensure their military establishments remain subordinate to established government authorities. A “man on horseback” must never be allowed to assume powers that surpass the elected government. Taiwan and other nations that made the move to democracy from military authoritarian rule are especially careful here. Yet authoritarian governments, particularly China, have adopted a different view.

China’s sharp power and political warfare<sup>9</sup> challenge is backed by massive and rapidly modernizing military and paramilitary forces. The intimidation they demonstrate by their very existence and conduct across air, land, sea, space, cyberspace and the information do-

<sup>9</sup> Hsiao, Russell, and Mark Stokes. Publication. *The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics*. Washington, DC: Project 2049 Institute, 2013.

main are central foundation stones of China's psychological pressure against all nations—but particularly Taiwan.

China's military buildup and its weaponization of economic measures, diplomacy, cyber, space-based capabilities, information technologies, maritime law enforcement and social media under an autocratic, centralized organizing and coordinating structure, all pose significant challenges for liberal, democratic societies that conceptually separate "peace" and "war."

Taiwan must ensure its ability to integrate security efforts, including "hard power" deterrence, across all threatened elements of national life, and strength to better respond to Chinese "sharp power" and protect Taiwan's democratic institutions and liberal values.

The great American poet Maya Angelou famously said: "When someone shows you who they are, believe them the first time." We haven't followed that advice with China. Fascinated with Deng Xiaoping's reform and opening campaign following the death of Mao, four successive American administrations, from the late 1970s to the fall of the Soviet Union and into the Xi era, believed that China would liberalize and become more democratic as it became more successful. The decision to help the People's Republic of China reintegrate into the international system may have been right at the time. The tragedy of Tiananmen in 1989 removed some, but not all, misconceptions from our eyes.

But with the Cold War over, the United States and our allies were reluctant to designate a new threat requiring continued Cold War policies, strategies and spending so soon after the defeat of the existential Soviet threat. Therefore, we perhaps took too long to realize that China was not about to ful-

fill our sunny vision for their political development. It took many rhetorical statements and actions by Chinese leadership over many years to disabuse us of our hopeful assumptions. Even Henry Kissinger, the architect of US rapprochement with China during the Cold War, admitted in 2019 that the United States and China were in the "foothills of a Cold War."<sup>10</sup>

General Secretary Xi's invocation of the "China Dream," calling for "socialism with Chinese characteristics" under the guidance of the Chinese Communist Party, made his intentions clear. His dubious claim of undisputed historical sovereignty over the South China Sea, illustrated by embrace of the famous "nine-dash line" image, made Chinese intent regarding Taiwan, Ti-

bet, Hong Kong and Xinjiang Province quite clear. Beijing declared this a "core interest" and therefore in their view unchallengeable. China dredged tons of coral and seabed with ex-

**“Taiwan—and Hong Kong to a different extent—stand on the frontlines of threats from China’s “sharp power,” in the form of malign authoritarian influence that takes advantage of open democratic system to subvert its enemies and build support for China.**

tensive damage to the environment to build massive garrisons on previously inundated features.

This was a clear signal by Beijing that it wanted the United States to cease its naval and air activities in the region—a message Washington has ignored. The U.S. cites a 2016 decision by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) that denied Beijing's claims, as do various littoral countries with conflicting claims to the zone. Despite this international ruling, and a pledge by Chinese President Xi Jinping to then President Obama to avoid militarization of islands in the sea, China has proceeded to build artificial military bases on

10 Mayger, James, Peter Martin, and Shelly Banjo. "Kissinger Says U.S. and China in 'Foothills of a Cold War.'" *Bloomberg*, November 20, 2020. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-11-21/kissinger-says-u-s-and-china-in-foothills-of-a-cold-war>.

some of the islands there. All of this has unnecessarily raised tensions with many of its neighbors.

China now seeks to manifest a “community of common destiny,” while shaping world opinion to see these features as minor specks of low-lying land in a large sea.<sup>11</sup> Many assume that these places would be a liability in conflict. But they are not small, and they present a coercion threat in peacetime and a sea control threat in conflict.

Most of the District of Columbia inside the I-495 Beltway could fit inside the lagoon at Mischieff Reef. Pearl Harbor Naval Base could fit inside Subi Reef. The airstrips, deep-water ports, hangers, command post facilities and such built across these features support China’s Maritime Militia as well as all branches of the People’s Liberation Army. The military and paramilitary forces operating here, supported by the vast surveillance capabilities and missile arsenal across China’s massive land sanctuary, present a credible threat. Already, fishermen from The Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei find access to their rightful fishing areas restricted or denied. Access of all nations to a free and open South China Sea is threatened.

The character of an authoritarian leader and the characteristics of that leader’s government decisively affect events. Xi has been declared the “core leader,” and term limits on his tenure have been removed, vesting in him more personal power than that enjoyed by any leader since Mao. Use of force, even invasion, are regularly and explicitly cited in relation to the forcible unification of Taiwan. As “core leader”, with at least one more “election” to win at the next Party Congress scheduled

to be held in 2022, General Secretary Xi’s success must continue if he is to remain in power.

Leaders in his position in China’s system cannot be seen to compromise on any issue. He faces challenges, including a decline in the workforce due to demographic factors, economic slowdown exacerbated by COVID-19 with a debt overhang, environmental degradation, and trade friction. He also must be wary of the ambitions of other top Chinese leaders, who under his newly unlimited tenure see no avenue for their own ambitions to occupy

the top position in Beijing leadership. It is worth noting at the time of this publication that no clear successor is yet in sight. His accretion of power and his threats will continue, as will the psychological pressure.

**“Taiwan must ensure its ability to integrate security efforts, including “hard power” deterrence, across all threatened elements of national life, and strength to better respond to Chinese “sharp power” and protect Taiwan’s democratic institutions and liberal values.**

<sup>11</sup> Rolland, Nadège. “China’s Vision for a New World Order.” *NBR Special Report*, January 27, 2020. <https://www.nbr.org/publication/chinas-vision-for-a-new-world-order/>.

## Sharp Power

Chinese and other authoritarian regimes were using sharp power long before the term itself came into popular usage. Propaganda was a fundamental tool of the Soviet, Fascist and Chinese communist systems through much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rise of the internet and social media have only intensified the battle over propaganda, as opposed to attempts to provide a more balanced and fact-based source of information for readers and viewers around the world.

Putin's Russia famously employed sharp power by hacking into the emails of the Democratic National Committee and candidate Hillary Clinton during the 2016 Presidential election, and then distributing them widely on the internet as part of a deliberate information operation to affect the US presidential election. Many have attributed these efforts as decisively managing to tilt the U.S. elections in favor of Donald Trump.

The National Counterintelligence and Security Center has assessed that malicious actors such as China and Russia again attempted to influence the 2020 U.S. elections.<sup>12</sup> Earlier, a group of figures including Australian citizen Julian Assange, operating out of Sweden and then the UK, publicized hundreds of thousands of U.S. State Department cables on the internet. The apparent goal of this exercise was to embarrass the United States, in the hopes of undermining American foreign policy objectives.

Though heralded by some for exposing American "secrets," these disclosures may have caused the per-

secution of previously shielded "sources" that spoke confidentially with American diplomats over the years, having erroneously assumed their comments would never be publicized. What is without doubt is that Wikileaks has hampered the ability of diplomats around the world to protect their sources, given the new fear that anything shared confidentially could well end up splashed across the internet.

### *CCP Influence Operations as Ideological Competition*

Since its creation in 1921, the CCP has set as its primary objective to seize and maintain political power.

Since capturing power by brute force in 1949, the CCP has successfully maintained and even asserted greater control over the political, legal, economic, and military instruments of power in

**“The threat is full-spectrum and centrally directed. It must be met by a full-spectrum, agile, and democratically organized response.**

the Chinese state. While the party-driven ideology of the state shifted over time from communism to pseudo-capitalism, the nexus of this political ideology has always been and remains the unquestionable primacy of the party's authoritarian rule at home and, increasingly, abroad.

As the PRC rises on the international stage, the CCP is also being exposed to increasing challenges to its authority and political risks both at home and overseas. As a consequence of the latter, the strict ideological controls that the CCP exerted internally within China have extended outward. This has taken the form of subtle and sophisticated influence operations via the United Front and political warfare activities that aim to protect and promote its governance system internally by shielding it from external threats. These efforts ultimately underpin the self-preserving ideology of the CCP-state. And as China's economic clout has grown with its integration into the global economy, the CCP's authoritarian-capitalistic system is increasingly coming into conflict with democratic-capitalistic systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

12 “Statement by NCSC Director William Evanina: Election Threat Update for the American Public.” William Evanina, August 7, 2020. Director of National Intelligence. <https://www.dni.gov/Index.php/Newsroom/Press-Releases/Item/2139-Statement-by-Ncsc-Director-William-Evanina-Election-Threat-Update-for-the-American-Public>.

In its “2019 Worldwide Threat Assessment,” the United States intelligence community (IC) highlighted this looming ideological battlefield and assessed how “Chinese leaders will increasingly seek to assert China’s model of authoritarian capitalism as an alternative—and implicitly superior—development path abroad. This has exacerbated great-power competition and could threaten international support for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.”

The IC predicted that this competition would be marked by “a period of increased Chinese foreign policy activism and a Chinese worldview that links China’s domestic vision to its international vision.” While pointing out the fact that China was engaging in ideological competition, the assessment stopped short of explaining how the CCP was doing so.

More public discourse on the means by which the CCP engages in malign influence operations is necessary to ensure that societies, especially open societies, have the information to gauge the challenge, diagnose the threat, and judge the proper responses.

CCP influence operations as a form of ideological competition are not categorically different from the tactics pursued by the Soviet Union during the Cold War. While the CCP no longer overtly supports communist political parties, it is promoting its form of authoritarian-capitalism as a legitimate system to reinforce its authority at home. Perhaps most striking, the CCP has significant advantages in this competition that the Soviet Union never had. Indeed, it has unprecedented access to global economic and cultural institutions and those of the host countries that the Kremlin would never have imagined during the Cold War. The CCP’s approach can be subtle and sophisticated. It utilizes all political, economic, and military measures short of war to serve the Party’s interests.

Not only are CCP influence operations intended to promote its political interests and undermine perceived political challenges in the target countries. Beijing is

also engaging in influence operations as a means to diminish U.S. influence in countries that are strategically important to Washington. Primarily, it exploits the asymmetries with other systems, whether political or economic, to serve the Party’s objectives. This approach appears informed in part by General Secretary Xi Jinping’s careful study of the Soviet Union’s failures.

Unlike the Soviet Union’s confrontational style of competition, the dangers of the CCP’s method are more subtle. While it lacks the more seductive covert and confrontational aspects of Soviet Union “active measures”—perhaps deceptively so—it is no less subversive and influential over the longer-term in the post “Cold War” framework of international relations.

**“China’s sharp power and political warfare challenge is backed by massive and rapidly modernizing military and paramilitary forces.**

As suggested in the U.S. intelligence assessment, the broader ideological competition underway may be seen as an extension of the CCP’s longstanding effort to seize and maintain political power.

As China rises and the CCP’s exposure to risks expands, the Party is extending the strict ideological controls that it exerted internally outward through influence operations via United Front and political warfare activities. Its aim is to protect and promote its governance system externally to ultimately support the self-preserving ideology of the CCP-state back home.<sup>13</sup>

The CCP has employed a form of sharp power from its very inception. It used radio and loudspeaker systems to project its view of the world directly to neighbors on Taiwan’s offshore islands, the people of Hong Kong, and other adjacent populations since the 1950’s. Radio Beijing broadcasts to larger audiences around the world, learning from their big brothers in the Soviet Union.

13 Hsiao, Russell, “Chinese Communist Party Influence Operations Are Ideological Competition.” *Japan Forward*. August 30, 2019. <https://japan-forward.com/chinese-communist-party-influence-operations-are-ideological-competition/>.

Today the variety of tools, and the ability to mask their true intent, has only expanded.

False flag publications and broadcasts, planted stories—the platforms are only accelerating the volume and number of attempts to influence vast populations with China's slanted conception of “the truth.”

*Contemporary CCP Influence Operations against Taiwan and “One China”*

As applied to cross-Strait relations, Beijing has devoted considerable time and resources to seek to influence perceptions among Taiwan's 24 million citizens. Particular examples over the past year have been attempts to smear the DPP Administration of President Tsai Ing-wen with false narratives, while promoting China's preferred party, the Kuomintang, and its candidates, during recent presidential and legislative elections. The goal may not even be to definitively dominate the thinking processes of its listeners, so much as to confuse them into questioning what the truth really is. On no other issue is this practice more in plain sight than with its so-called “One China Principle.”

Donald Trump stirred a hornet's nest when as president-elect he stated on American television in December 2016 that “I don't know why we [the United States] have to be bound by a One-China policy unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things, including trade.”<sup>14</sup>

Like reactions to the president-elect's brief phone conversation with the democratically-elected president of Taiwan, most pundits' comments ranged from fear, to disbelief, and contempt. Some observers were shocked

that Donald Trump had the audacity to question the seemingly sacrosanct “One China” policy. Others scornfully mocked the president-elect for wading into a destructive change of U.S. policy that they believed risks igniting World War III. Some critics expressed concern that the president-elect was exploiting the Taiwan question as a bargaining chip.

Yet, the “One China” policy is neither static nor should anything in the president-elect's statement be conclusively read as a shift in the U.S. “One China” policy in one direction or another. The overwhelming reactions to Mr. Trump's comments referred to the “One China” policy as if it came from the pages of the Bible. Every

“Even Henry Kissinger, the architect of US rapprochement with China during the Cold War, admitted in 2019 that the United States and China were in the “foothills of a Cold War.”

U.S. president (except Teddy Roosevelt and John Quincy Adams) swore their oath of office on the holy book, and even the Bible is open to interpretation. Similarly, the “One China” policy is neither law nor even clearly defined. The prevailing misperceptions throw into sharp relief the liability that exists within the U.S. “One China” policy: No one really knows what it is.

Indeed, according to then-Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly in 2004:

*In my testimony, I made the point "our One China," and I didn't really define it, and I'm not sure I very easily could define it. I can tell you what it is not. It is not the One-China policy or the One-China principle that Beijing suggests, and it may not be the definition that some would have in Taiwan. But it does convey a meaning of solidarity of a kind among the people on both sides of the straits that has been our policy for a very long time.*<sup>15</sup>

14 Bohan, Caren, and David Brunnstrom. “Trump Says U.S. Not Necessarily Bound by 'One China' Policy.” *Reuters*. December 11, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-china/trump-says-u-s-not-necessarily-bound-by-one-china-policy-idUSKBN1400TY>.

15 Committee on International Relations House of Representatives, and Richard C. Bush. Document, The Taiwan Relations Act: The Next Twenty-Five Years §. No. 108–107 (2004). <http://commdocs.house.gov/committees/intrel/hfa93229.000/>

Seemingly too taboo to even touch, the confusion is understandable, because the U.S.’ “One China” policy is ambiguous at best and indecipherable at worst. That the policy continues to be shrouded in mystery creates dangerous myths that make the policy susceptible to manipulation and misapplication.

The official U.S. position has tried to be purposely flexible when addressing the relationship between the PRC and Taiwan. To directly quote the Shanghai Communique of 1972: “The

US side declared: The United States *acknowledges* that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China” (emphasis added). And, to “acknowledge” does not mean the United States accepts that position.

How Washington conducted its policy towards Taiwan had been manipulated by a fallacy of false choices due in part to gradual and excessive—public and private—deference to Beijing’s “one-China” principle.

Beijing’s discursive warfare rests on the power of definitions and, more generally, broadening the applications of its “One China Principle.” At the same time, it strives to narrowly limit the applicability of core elements of Washington’s Taiwan policy such as the Taiwan Relations Act, Six Assurances, and the 1994 Taiwan Policy Review, in both the public mind and in how policymakers’ conduct policy. America’s practice of containing Taiwan policy with self-imposed restrictions by excessive deference to the “One China Principle” has shown decreasing returns. Meanwhile the United States is increasingly frustrated by amorphous Chinese promises of engagement that have not been particularly substantive or practical.<sup>16</sup>

[hfa93229\\_of.htm](#)

16 An, David, and Russell Hsiao. “What Is the U.S. ‘One China’ Policy?” *The National Interest*, December 28, 2016. <https://nationalinterest.org/print/blog/the-buzz/what-the-us->

### *Framing the Issues*

Kerry Gershaneck, a former Marine officer and currently an educator with extensive experience in East Asia, wrote in a study while on fellowship at the Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies College of International Affairs at the National Chengchi University:

“**Influence Operations** are designed to influence foreign government leaders, and those in business, the media, industry, academia, news media and other key leaders to behave in a manner that benefits the PRC.

**While the party-driven ideology of the state shifted over time from communism to pseudo-capitalism, the nexus of this political ideology has always been and remains the unquestionable primacy of the party’s authoritarian rule at home and, increasingly, abroad.**

**Political Warfare** has been variously described as “Sharp Power”, “United Front Work”, and “Influence Operations”. It is an extension of armed conflict by other means, and a critical component of PRC security strategy and foreign policy. PW includes those operations that seek to influence emotions, motives, objectives, reasoning, and behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups, and individuals in a manner favorable to the PRC’s political-military-economic objectives and are generally conducted with hostile intent.

**PRC Political Warfare** is all encompassing: it is “Total War” that goes beyond traditional Liaison Work (building coalitions in a “United Front” to support the PRC and to “disintegrate” enemies) and the “Three Warfares” (strategic psychological warfare, overt and covert media manipulation, and use of law or “Lawfare”). It also includes use of “active measures” that include violence and other forms of coercive, destructive attacks.<sup>17</sup>

[%E2%80%9Cone-china%E2%80%9D-policy-18882.](#)

17 Hsiao, Russell, and Mark Stokes, “The People’s Liberation Army General Political Depart-

The “Three Warfares” are *Psychological Warfare, Media Warfare, and Lawfare*.

Psychological warfare aims to disrupt decision-making, sow doubts about leadership, and deceive. It specifically includes diplomatic pressure, rumors, false narratives and harassment to express displeasure, assert hegemony, and convey threats.

Media warfare is public opinion warfare, something we’re becoming familiar with in every society.

Law exploits laws to achieve political or commercial objectives. The South China Sea issues are examples of this, as are efforts to block U.S. military construction activities in the region.

Lastly, Active Measures are a part of the Chinese efforts. This is as ominous as it sounds. They include use of force, kidnapping, extortion, bribery, and other low tools.”<sup>18</sup>

### *The Case of Hong Kong*

While the focus of this study is Taiwan, the backdrop to our discussion about the character of CCP leadership and its sharp power should rightfully begin with Hong Kong. A year before Taiwan’s 2020 presidential elections, Beijing’s political leadership had reason to be confident that it could help make Tsai Ing-wen a one term president of Taiwan. Her economic management was under question, the pro-Beijing Kuomintang registered significant victories in Kaohsiung and other

local elections, and early polls suggested a number of potential challengers might be able to unseat the DPP incumbent. Tsai’s hold on the Legislative Yuan was even shakier, with pan-Blue candidates looking to regain a majority there that could effectively throttle DPP policy.

The critical turning point was the rise of youthful protests in Hong Kong last summer. To be fair, these demonstrators were standing on the shoulders of their compatriots from the 2014 street protests against ham-

“Similarly the “One China” policy is neither law nor even clearly defined. The prevailing misperceptions throw into sharp relief the liability that exists within the U.S. “One China” policy: No one really knows what it is.

handed local and PRC-instigated policies, seen as attempting to undermine the core principles of “one country, two systems.” This was the policy Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping had promised

Hong Kong nearly 40 years ago to allay fears of the impending return of the British colony to PRC rule in 1997.

Attempts in the summer of 2019 to pass an extradition law mandating shipping Hong Kong residents accused of certain crimes off to the tender mercies of PRC courts led to massive demonstrations, and put paid to the lie that “one country, two systems” would shelter the former colony from communist jurisprudence. These events resonated far beyond Hong Kong, though not in the manner anticipated by the leadership in Beijing, which had directed the obedient Hong Kong government to launch the legislation.

Let us recall that an earlier attempt to force an unpopular anti-secession bill on Hong Kong back in 2004 had also been soundly defeated when massive protest crowds took to the city’s streets until Beijing backed down. This more recent swirling controversy over the extradition law effectively turned what had initially appeared to be a KMT advantage in the January 2020’s Taiwan legislative and presidential elections into a DPP landslide victory.

ment: Political Warfare with Chinese Characteristics.” Project 2049 Institute, 2013. 5–6.

18 Gershaneck, Kerry. “To Win Without Fighting: Defining China’s Political Warfare.” *Expeditions with Digital MCUP*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.36304/expwmcup.2020.04>.



The arsenal utilized by communist propagandists included planted stories that sought to embarrass DPP candidates and their party, while lauding the seeming skills of their KMT opponents; and it might well have worked. But when the tsunami of stories started pouring in from Hong Kong, detailing the youth-led popular surge of protests against this ill-considered attempt to negate the letter and spirit of “one country, two systems,” the mood in Taiwan shifted sharply.

The KMT’s standard-bearer, Kaohsiung Mayor Han Kuo-yu, was hoisted on his party’s petard. He had famously visited Hong Kong, and even ventured into southern China, earlier last year in an attempt to highlight his ability to work with the Beijing regime. Xi Jinping probably wasn’t thinking about any of this when he instructed the compliant Hong Kong Government to crack down heavily on the protestors, while simultaneously dismissing demonstrators’ concern over the extradition legislation. But we suspect even the thuggish Xi’s attention was turned when he observed crowds of 4 and 5 million protestors taking to the Hong Kong streets in opposition to this clear violation of the spirit and letter of “one country, two systems.”

What are the implications of what’s unfolding in Hong Kong for Taiwan and why should the United States care? As former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley unequivocally stated: “We should always use the power of our voice to fight for people who are fighting for their own freedoms, and that whole protest in Hong Kong is about ‘if Hong Kong falls, Taiwan is next.’”<sup>19</sup> Indeed, in many respects, Hong Kong is the proverbial canary in the coalmine. We cannot reason-

19 “Hong Kong Unrest: ‘If Hong Kong Falls, Taiwan Is next,’ Nikki Haley Says.” *Taipei Times*, November 15, 2019. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2019/11/16/2003725946>.

ably expect the CCP to treat other country’s citizens any better than they treat their own oppressed people.

As this paper is going to press, events in Hong Kong continue to swirl, making it difficult to predict just where all this will end. One thing is certain: Beijing’s brutal and ham-handed mismanagement of Hong Kong serves as a stark reminder to Taiwan and the international community of the danger of trusting any promises proffered by the authoritarian leaders of Beijing. The always shaky pledge of “one country, two systems” has been exposed for what it always was; an unreliable

**“How Washington conducted its policy towards Taiwan had been manipulated by a fallacy of false choices due in part to gradual and excessive—public and private—deference to Beijing’s “one-China” principle.**

catchphrase masking the inability and unwillingness of the leadership of China to abide by any promises it might put forward. Taiwan must look to its close political and military ties to America, and continue to upgrade its defensive capabilities to counter

China’s sharp and hard power with Washington’s assistance.

#### *China’s Impact on Taiwan’s Democracy*

The link between sharp power and authoritarian rule is simple. The aim of authoritarian sharp power to take advantage of the asymmetry between free and un-free systems to limit free expression and distort public opinion in open societies. This while simultaneously sheltering their own population from democratic appeals originating abroad. China has become adept at slipping unflattering news of open societies into news media, while projecting fanciful news of the allegedly content population in their own system. In Taiwan’s case, the PRC’s influence was heightened by exaggerated pan-Blue media portrayals of the supposed economic and commercial benefits of closer links between China and Taiwan.

China was hard at work during earlier local

elections in Taiwan, assisting “pro-reunification” candidates by means of a variety of underhanded tactics. These included planting unfavorable reporting pieces in the Taiwan media aimed at diminishing pan-green candidates, while supporting the candidacies of pan-blue candidates. Employing what the Soviets called *dezinformatsiya* (literally, disinformation), the PRC planted false stories seeking to diminish pan-green candidates, while building up pro-reunification candidates.

It is true, PRC tourism and commerce have played a role in Taiwan’s economy now for some time. These links were particularly flourishing during the eight-year rule of KMT standard bearer Ma Ying-jeou as Taiwan’s President (2008-16). But President Tsai, recognizing the high cost of such dependence, has sought—since her first election over four years ago—to wean the island from this two-edged weapon by emphasizing greater focus on trade with Southeast and South Asia, as well as the U.S. and Europe. The “Go South” campaign is still unfolding, but holds promise of creating a more balanced trade picture than had earlier been championed by Beijing and its pan-Blue allies in Taiwan.

It is just as true that huge numbers of PRC and Hong Kong citizens have come to the U.S., to study, work and live. At the end of last year, there were a reported 369,000 Chinese studying in the U.S. Since this trend began, in the early eighties, there are vastly more than that who have at some point been enrolled in American schools and colleges. Some of them stay on and become successful contributing members of our society. But many others have taken their skills—and hopefully some of our values—back with them when they finished their studies. Add to that the tourists and businessmen and women,

numbering roughly three million annually in the latest statistics – from 2018, and it amounts to an enormous flow of people, and their ideas, passing back and forth.

If experience elsewhere is any guide, those that take their excellent American education home with them often bring a new appreciation for the openness and diversity of our society back too. This is not to paper over the many flaws in American society. But there is probably nowhere else in the world where people are more willing to criticize—and strive to improve—things at home, than in the U.S. We know firsthand how many Taiwan and Hong Kong leaders in politics, academics and business had at one point studied in America.

**“As the PRC rises on the international stage, the CCP is also being exposed to increasing challenges to its authority and political risks both at home and overseas. As a consequence of the latter, the strict ideological controls that the CCP exerted internally within China have extended outward.**

We are certain the same holds true in the PRC, though political opportunities in that closed system are

significantly less merit-based than in most other places. We know, for example, that President Xi Jinping has a son and daughter who studied recently in the United States.

The fact of the matter is that open societies like the United States are engaged in an unequal contest when battling sharp and hard power from our adversaries around the world. True to our values, we welcome a free exchange of people and views. Chinese writers can publish their views in the mass media in America, even when displaying open hostility to our values. Imagine an American academic trying to publish something openly critical of the Chinese Communist Party or its leaders in *People’s Daily*. It just wouldn’t happen.

The solution is certainly not to emulate the authoritarian controls of the People’s Republic within U.S. borders. We can only hope that an informed and active American public, and the multifaceted media they enjoy, will

see through PRC propaganda and continue to rely on a fact-based media and their open access to a broad range of information

Taiwan faces a somewhat more difficult challenge at home. Events since the November 2018 elections and lead up to the 2020 presidential and legislative elections have shown some members of the KMT more than willing to encourage efforts by the PRC to interfere in Taiwan domestic politics.<sup>20</sup> Pan-blue newspapers, radio and television offer a comfortable home for such activities. Under the philosophy that anything that helps the KMT and other pro-reunification parties is welcome, we should expect continued access by the PRC to the island's abundant and open media outlets, particularly those that lean toward the pan-blue camp. We doubt the courts—many still partial to the Kuomintang—would stand in the way, though we would be happy to be proven wrong.

One of the most pervasive forms of CCP influence operations in Taiwan is in the form of information operations spreading propaganda and disinformation through human networks, as well as traditional, and social media. As part of these growing malign influence operations, there is an expanding volume of propaganda and disinformation circulating in Taiwan's information space. Some of this is the product of PRC "content farms" that generate fake news online. This then gets circulated into the bloodstream of Taiwan's information ecosystem through various channels of media influence and control, such as sympathetic pan-blue media outlets.

One of the most telling disclosures about the extent of

<sup>20</sup> Schmidt, Gary and Michael Mazza. "Blinding the Enemy: CCP Interference in Taiwan's Democracy." Global Taiwan Institute, October, 2019. <http://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/GTI-CCP-Interference-Taiwan-Democracy-Oct-2019-final.pdf>.

China's information operations in Taiwan was revealed against the backdrop of China's intensifying pressure campaign against Taiwan over recent years. The country's National Security Bureau (NSB)—the equivalent of the Central Intelligence Agency—in May 2019 confirmed that one of the sources of fake news and disinformation in its information space is in fact local media that has been co-opted by China. This is the first confirmation by an official intelligence source in Taiwan that China has infiltrated some local media and is spreading fake news through these presumably credible mediums into the island's information bloodstream.

At a legislative hearing on May 2, 2019 about the influence of Chinese fake news on Taiwan, Lieutenant General Vincent Chen, who serves as the NSB's Deputy Director-

General made a startling statement. He confirmed that these CCP-directed media outlets—including online and print media, social

influencers, and Facebook fan pages—which Chen described as "fellow traveler media"—are actively spreading fake news and disinformation within the island. Chen described the problem of China buying social influencers and fan pages as particularly severe.

In response to a question by a DPP legislator, Director General Chen also reported that opinion-editorials published by some local media outlets were first being sent to Beijing for approval. A Financial Times report that cited employees from the media outlets publicly confirmed this account. This media outlet has significant business interests in China and its journalists are being censored by the corporation's management, which may be receiving direction from the PRC's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO).

A summary report provided by the NSB to the

**“As former US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley unequivocally stated: “We should always use the power of our voice to fight for people who are fighting for their own freedoms, and that whole protest in Hong Kong is about ‘if Hong Kong falls, Taiwan is next.’”**

Legislative Yuan reportedly stated: “Through the specific content and direction of Chinese media in Taiwan or fellow traveler media, they engage in disseminating controversial messages that divide the hearts of the Taiwanese people and encourage other media to circulate the reporting.” More alarming is that the NSB assessed that “some of the media’s propaganda content, reporting methods, channels, and tone were the same as the mainland’s [sic] threatening rhetoric against Taiwan.”

The deputy director-general of the NSB made several explicit confirmations at a forum in Washington, DC that The Jamestown Foundation organized and GTI co-sponsored, which bears repeating here for purposes of the broader discussion:

CCP has pursued a united front interaction and infiltration in Taiwan for decades, having reached quite widely and deeply in our island, developed a complex network with local government

across the Strait as well as 24 business media and semi-official representatives in Taiwan, cultivating a wide connection, some of them

have engaged in activity beyond their publicly stated mission. There are at least 22 pro-China organizations, political parties, and we have identified a number of them with connection to organized crime for extending their networking to local temples, businessmen, youths.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, the Taiwan intelligence agencies and the US government’s assessments are consistent with a growing body of publicly available evidence indicating that

“The always shaky pledge of “one country, two systems” has been exposed for what it always was; an unreliable catchphrase masking the inability and unwillingness of the leadership of China to abide by any promises it might put forward.

China is interfering in Taiwan’s democratic process, and not only Taiwan’s, through multiple channels. This was made abundantly clear following last year’s local elections, through increasingly sophisticated and complex information operations that potentially involved party, civilian, and military assets.<sup>22</sup>

The mechanism for disinformation spreads through social media and traditional media. However, transmission alone is not effective. While transmission “amplifies” disinformation, it has to be “legitimized” by traditional media and proxy united front groups to be effective. Even local restaurants in Taiwan have allegedly been paid to only play pro-China media outlets. Moreover, hotel operators in Taiwan catering to Chinese tourists also block access to media outlets that are pro-green, supporting the ruling DPP party. Within its broader propaganda efforts, China is also investing in media programming companies and not just broadcasting companies; more importantly it is utilizing United Front groups to amplify its propaganda and disinformation.

*United Front and Political Warfare*

While traditionally and for most part not “covert” in the sense that it is intended to be “not openly shown,

engaged in, or avowed” (at least not internally within China since there is quite a good deal of literature on this topic in Chinese), “United Front” is still little understood outside the world of Chinese historians and students of the Bolsheviks and the Soviet Union. It is, however, worth pointing out that the CCP is now masking the association of organizations known to be affiliated with the United Front Work Department from its public interfacing websites.<sup>23</sup>

21 The Jamestown Foundation. “Lt. Gen. Vincent W. F. Chen - The Unique Status Shall Not Perish.” *Youtube* video. October 15, 2019. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLRcKaIDL7H4ndApv5-KYgL3VktypKe\\_Zg&v=yVvOhJ2P6n0&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?list=PLRcKaIDL7H4ndApv5-KYgL3VktypKe_Zg&v=yVvOhJ2P6n0&feature=emb_title)

22 Huang, Paul. “Chinese Cyber-Operatives Boosted Taiwan’s Insurgent Candidate.” *Foreign Policy*. June 26, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/06/26/chinese-cyber-operatives-boosted-taiwans-insurgent-candidate/>.

23 Joske, Alex. Twitter Post. March 12, 2020, 7:33 PM. <https://twitter.com/alexjoske/status/1238246692950093825>.

In the Chinese context, United Front is a means for waging political warfare that involves the use of non-kinetic instruments that organize and mobilize non-CCP masses in pursuit of the Party's domestic and foreign policy objectives. According to a declassified study conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency, United Front is a "technique for controlling, mobilizing, and utilizing non-Communist masses." Indeed, since the CCP was founded in 1921, the Party has used United Front as an organizing principle to establish a foothold among the masses, exploiting conflicts within society to undermine the influence of its adversaries, defeat warlords, gain support of the victims of Japanese aggression, and aid in the seizure of state power.<sup>24</sup>

Since forming the PRC government in 1949, the CCP has employed the United Front to extend its control over non-Communist masses and to mobilize these masses to shore up its domestic legitimacy and undermine threats to state security.<sup>25</sup> In the post-Tiananmen period, the overseas diaspora community became an important focal point in CCP United Front activities. General Secretary and President Xi Jinping has described the United Front as one of the CCP's "Magic Weapons."<sup>26</sup>

According to a Taiwan government estimate, China

24 "Prepared Testimony of Russell Hsiao Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission: 'China's Relations with U.S. Allies and Partners in Europe and the Asia Pacific,'" 2018.

25 Prepared Testimony of Russell Hsiao Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission: 'China's Relations with U.S. Allies and Partners in Europe and the Asia Pacific,'" 2018.

26 Brady, Anne-Marie. "Magic Weapons: China's Political Influence Activities under Xi Jinping." Wilson Center, September 18, 2017. <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/magic-weapons-chinas-political-influence-activities-under-xi-jinping>.

spends at least \$337.8 million per year on United Front Work Department (UFD) recruiting efforts in Taiwan. This is likely a conservative estimate, as it is believed there might be more "invisible funding."<sup>27</sup> Various non-governmental estimates place the CCP's budget to range from \$2.6 billion<sup>28</sup> to \$10 billion per year for projecting its influence into the politics of overseas democracies.<sup>29</sup>

Wang Sheng, who was the director of the General Political Warfare Department from 1975-1983, in a conversation with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad in 1982 said: "The United Front means to unite secondary

**“A clear commitment by the United States to at least engage in negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with Taiwan would certainly be helpful. In the first instance to counter China’s effort to create economic dependency and thereby enhance its leverage to politically coerce Taiwan. It would also ensure that Tsai’s order can be implemented with greater public support.**

enemies to attack primary enemies, attempting to achieve the optimal result by paying the lowest cost, or rather, to beat your own head with your own hands. By internally differentiating our society and externally isolating Tai-

wan's international status, the Chinese Communists sought to destroy us and break us into pieces."<sup>30</sup> For these measures to be effective, the CCP must have access, control, and knowledge.

27 Li-hua, Chung, and Sherry Hsiao. "China Targets 10 Groups for 'United Front'," January 14, 2018. <http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2018/01/15/2003685789>.

28 Fedasiuk, Ryan. "Putting Money in the Party's Mouth: How China Mobilizes Funding for United Front Work." Jamestown Foundation, September 16, 2020. <https://jamestown.org/program/putting-money-in-the-partys-mouth-how-china-mobilizes-funding-for-united-front-work/>.

29 The Hudson Institute. "Chinese Influence Operations in the Democratic World" *YouTube* video. June 20, 2018. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUHZcySlkjo&feature=emb\\_title](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUHZcySlkjo&feature=emb_title)

30 "Minutes of the Meeting between Wang Sheng (Director of the Central Political Warfare Department, Ministry of National Defense, Taiwan) and Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad." Wilson Center Digital Archive, April 3, 1982. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/123460>.

In the case of Taiwan, CCP political warfare and influence operations have a long history, particularly with and against the Nationalist Party (KMT).<sup>31</sup> In Taiwan today, CCP United Front targets a broad range of constituencies of 10 groups. To be precise, these constituencies include: pro-China politicians, retired generals and military officers, businessmen, aboriginals, farmers, fishermen, students and youths, religious organizations, village and township elders, and clan associations.

The object of CCP political warfare extends beyond Taiwan. Guided by the doctrinal principle of “uniting with friends and disintegrating enemies,” political warfare adopts active measures to promote the rise of China within a new international order and defend against perceived threats to state security. Political warfare employs strategic

psychological operations as a means of leading international discourse and influencing policies of friends and foes alike.

Active measures, carried out both during peacetime and in armed conflict, amplify or attenuate the political effects of the military instrument of national power.<sup>32</sup>

#### *Creating Economic Dependencies to Reinforce Influence Campaigns*

Reinforcing Beijing’s united front and political warfare operations, especially in the current context as opposed to before reform and opening up, are the economic dependencies that it created by controlling access to its massive market and people. This allows it to exert greater political leverage over foreign governments and businesses. This was made painfully clear in the COVID-19 global health crisis that exposed China’s domination of the world supply chain for pharmaceutical

drugs. For instance, according to one estimate, “Chinese pharmaceutical companies have supplied more than 90 percent of U.S. antibiotics, vitamin C, ibuprofen and hydrocortisone, as well as 70 percent of acetaminophen and 40 to 45 percent of heparin in recent years.”<sup>33</sup>

In the case of Taiwan, Beijing has utilized its leverage over the substantial amount of Taiwanese investments going into China and weaponized its millions of tourists by limiting the number of group tours—as well as persons visiting Taiwan—whenever there is a political impasse. Taiwan has received over 10 million tourists per year since 2015, of which tourists from China have comprised over 30 percent. In 2017, even as the number of Chinese tourists dropped by around 700,000 from the previous year, it was still 2.7 million out of a total of 10.7 million. The drop hit hard the parts of

Taiwan’s economy that had come to rely on Chinese tourists. China remains the largest market for Taiwan, 40% of total export and 23% of all ag-

ricultural exports goes to China.

Beijing utilizes a mix of carrots and sticks to achieve its political goals. In addition to punitive measures, China is also attempting to entangle Taiwanese people and businesses more deeply with the PRC’s economy through generous economic incentives. The most visible form of these enticements was launched in February 2018 when Beijing announced a raft of 31 measures aimed at providing equal—and in some cases preferential—treatment for Taiwanese persons and businesses operating in China. These include measures designed to incorporate Taiwan into the PRC’s “Made in China 2025”—a wide-ranging industrial policy aimed at moving the Chinese industrial base up the value chain. Other incentives include generous tax breaks for Taiwanese high-tech corporations, as well as equal intellectual property rights protection for Taiwan-owned legal entities registered in China.

31 “Prepared Testimony of Russell Hsiao Before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission: ‘China’s Relations with U.S. Allies and Partners in Europe and the Asia Pacific,’” 2018.

32 Stokes, Mark, and Russell Hsiao. “The People’s Liberation Army General Political Department.” Project 2049 Institute, October 14, 2013, 81. [https://project2049.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/P2049\\_Stokes\\_Hsiao\\_PLA\\_General\\_Political\\_Department\\_Liaison\\_101413.pdf](https://project2049.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/P2049_Stokes_Hsiao_PLA_General_Political_Department_Liaison_101413.pdf)

33 Swanson, Ana. “Coronavirus Spurs U.S. Efforts to End China’s Chokehold on Drugs.” *The New York Times*, March 11, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/11/business/economy/coronavirus-china-trump-drugs.html>.

Economic dependencies include co-optation of the knowledge economy—and the key pillar of the knowledge economy is academic and cultural institutions.<sup>34</sup> Other measures include recruiting Taiwan citizens to participate in the national “thousand-talents program”—a CCP-managed project designed to attract foreign talent to help with the country’s national development goals. Most importantly, Taiwanese professionals are now eligible to apply for various state-provided funds for the promotion of science and arts. These measures are worrisome over the long term, since they could further exacerbate Taiwan’s “brain drain” and facilitate traditional espionage activities. Furthermore, in early November 2019—just two months before the 2020 presidential elections—Beijing announced an additional 26 preferential economic measures.<sup>35</sup>

The appropriate response to counter such efforts—and also on its own merits—should be with economic measures.<sup>36</sup> For Taiwan watchers in the United States, it was clear that President Tsai Ing-wen’s decision<sup>37</sup> on August 28 to lift the Taiwanese government’s longstand-

ing restrictions on the import of US pork and beef due to alleged food safety concerns was bold and unprecedented. Supporters of Taiwan within the US Congress and in the private sector immediately jumped in and called on the US government to begin negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with Taiwan.<sup>38</sup>

It is also notable that a broad range and bipartisan group of current and former US officials applauded

**“The object of CCP political warfare extends beyond Taiwan. Guided by the doctrinal principle of “uniting with friends and disintegrating enemies,” political warfare adopts active measures to promote the rise of China within a new international order and defend against perceived threats to state security.**

the Taiwanese president’s decision. Notably silent, thus far has been the Office of the US Trade Representative (USTR), which would ultimately be in charge of initiating, negotiating, and concluding a bilateral

trade agreement. Highlighting this absence, a bipartisan group of 50 senators in the US Congress sent a letter to the US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer on October 1, encouraging him to begin negotiating a comprehensive trade agreement with Taiwan.<sup>39</sup>

President Tsai’s executive decree on August 28 to remove the government’s longstanding restrictions on the import of US pork and beef was a bold and unprecedented move—and it will come at a political cost. In light of countervailing public opinion and significant mobilization expected by the opposition KMT to the order, there is no guarantee that this decision will be politically sustainable over the longer-term. A clear commitment by the United States to at least engage in negotiating a bilateral trade agreement with Taiwan

34 Tiffert, Glenn. “Compromising the Knowledge Economy Authoritarian Challenges to Independent Intellectual Inquiry.” National Endowment for Democracy, May 2020. [https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Compromising-Knowledge-Economy-Authoritarian-Challenges-Intellectual-Inquiry-Tiffert.pdf?utm\\_source=forum%20landing%20page&utm\\_medium=site&utm\\_campaign=intellectual%20inquiry](https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Compromising-Knowledge-Economy-Authoritarian-Challenges-Intellectual-Inquiry-Tiffert.pdf?utm_source=forum%20landing%20page&utm_medium=site&utm_campaign=intellectual%20inquiry).

35 “China’s ‘26 Measures’ Seek to Influence Elections: Taiwan Government.” *Focus Taiwan*, November 4, 2019. <https://focustaiwan.tw/cross-strait/201911040014>.

36 Blumenthal, Dan, and Michael Mazza. “A Golden Opportunity for a U.S.-Taiwan Free Trade Agreement.” Project 2049 Institute, February 14, 2019. <https://project2049.net/2019/02/14/a-golden-opportunity-for-a-u-s-taiwan-free-trade-agreement/>.

37 “President Tsai Issues Remarks Regarding International Trade.” Office of the President of the Republic of China (Taiwan). Accessed November 13, 2020. <https://english.president.gov.tw/NEWS/6033>.

38 Hsin-yin, Lee. “Coalition Formed to Facilitate U.S.-Taiwan BTA Talks.” *Focus Taiwan*. Focus Taiwan - CNA English News, September 16, 2020. <https://focustaiwan.tw/business/202009160006>.

39 Inhofe, James, Robert Menendez, James Risch, et al. Letter to Robert Lighthizer. “Letter to United States Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer.” Washington, District of Columbia: 600 17th Street NW, October 1, 2020.

would certainly be helpful. In the first instance to counter China's effort to create economic dependency and thereby enhance its leverage to politically coerce Taiwan. It would also ensure that Tsai's order can be implemented with greater public support.<sup>40</sup>

The launch of the new bilateral US-Taiwan economic dialogue framed as the Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue<sup>41</sup> led at the Undersecretary level within the State Department is a step in the right direction. But the proof will be in the results, and whether it will lead to substantive discussions in the future remains to be seen.<sup>42</sup>

#### *Development of Counter-Measures*

Sharp power and hard power have been widely used together in deliberate campaigns. They are often effective tools on the part of the PRC, aimed at influencing and intimidating opponents of closer cross-strait ties with Taiwan. This is a vulnerability of open societies, especially in this multimedia era. Hopefully the desire to preserve and extend the democratic and open system of governance in Taiwan will allow its people and their elected leaders to counter and defeat these efforts. The stakes could not be higher.

40 Hsiao, Russell. "As PLA Military Probes Increase Around Taiwan, Taipei Tests New Missiles." Global Taiwan Institute, October 8, 2020. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2020/10/vol-5-issue-19/>.

41 "The United States and Taiwan to Convene Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue." American Institute in Taiwan, November 11, 2020. <https://www.ait.org.tw/us-taiwan-economic-prosperity-partnership-dialogue/>.

42 "The United States, Taiwan, and the World: Partners for Peace and Prosperity - Remarks by David Stillwell, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs." U.S. Department of State. U.S. Department of State, August 31, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/The-United-States-Taiwan-and-the-World-Partners-for-Peace-and-Prosperity/>.

The first step to adapting U.S. and Taiwan's security organizations and processes and ensuring their effectiveness is to reach a common understanding of the threat. It's helpful to realize we have been in a similar situation before.

Again, according to the Gershaneck study:<sup>43</sup>

**“The fact of the matter is that open societies like the United States are engaged in an unequal contest when battling sharp and hard power from our adversaries around the world.**

“If, as Clausewitz wrote, “war is the extension of politics by other means”, then it's fair to say that the PRC's political warfare is “an extension of armed conflict by other means”. This point was initially posited by George Kennan, who is best known for

his delineation of Western grand strategy during the Cold War in the famous *Long Telegram* of February 22, 1946. Two years after proposing the ultimately successful policy of “containing” the Soviet Empire to end this totalitarian regime, this remarkable diplomat drafted another memorandum, entitled ‘The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare’.<sup>44</sup>

Kennan's second landmark of strategic thinking makes the point, strikingly from the perspective of 2020, that:

*“(We) have been handicapped by a popular attachment to the concept of a basic difference between peace and war, by a tendency to view war as a sort of sporting context outside of all political context...and by a reluctance to recognise the realities of international relations, the perpetual rhythm of [struggle, in and out of war].”*

Kennan briefly laid out the nature of the threat from the

43 Kerry K. Gershaneck “Peoples Republic of China Political Warfare in the Kingdom of Thailand and the Republic of China: Assessment and Pathways for Effective Response” Graduate Institute of East Asian Studies College of International Affairs National Chengchi University Taipei 115, Taiwan, Republic of China

44 George Kennan, “The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare.” Office of the Historian of the State Department, May 4, 1948. <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1945-50Intel/d269>.



Soviet Union, and defined “political warfare” as follows:

*“In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures . . . and “white” propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of “friendly” foreign elements, “black” psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.”*

#### *Cold War Redux and New Forms of Warfare?*

There are many subtle differences between Kennan’s Cold War with the Soviet Union and today’s challenge from the PRC, but it is worth remembering the intellectual difficulty American security institutions endured while working to understand what, in the wake of World War II, was a profoundly new situation.

While we were celebrating total victory in the largest war in history, luxuriating in our sole ownership of the ultimate weapon, and returning to business as usual because there was “nobody left to fight,” the Soviet Union and the Chinese Communist Party were on the march with new forms of warfare. The geopolitical and ideological schisms exposed by the COVID-19 global pandemic, however, may accelerate a new cold war between the United States and China.<sup>45</sup>

Between 1945 and 1950 the Soviets blockaded Berlin, subverted nations of Eastern Europe and detonated their own atomic weapon. The Chinese Communist Party subverted the ROC, putting “paid” to Franklin D. Roosevelt’s United Nations vision of the USSR and the ROC being two of the four “policemen”—along with

<sup>45</sup> Auslin, Michael. “Has the U.S.-China Cold War Now Begun?,” March 26, 2020. [https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2020/03/26/has\\_the\\_us-china\\_cold\\_war\\_now\\_began\\_142778.html](https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2020/03/26/has_the_us-china_cold_war_now_began_142778.html).

the United Kingdom and the United States—to maintain world peace. With Soviet backing North Korea invaded South Korea, inaugurating a new era of global limited proxy war under the nuclear umbrella.

The U.S. and other nations struggled to rebuild not only their armed forces but all national security organizations to accommodate a new era of existential global competition conducted across all instruments of national power under the nuclear umbrella.<sup>46</sup> The days of unconditional surrender and no substitute for victory were gone. In many ways we’re still coming to grips with that.

The threat environment did not stop changing after the United States adapted to the Cold War with the Soviet Union. We were forced to reorganize our security structures again following the terrorist attacks of Sep-

**“One of the most pervasive forms of CCP influence operations in Taiwan is in the form of information operations spreading propaganda and disinformation through human networks, as well as traditional, and social media.**

tember 11, 2001. After nearly two decades, we are now undergoing a slow but necessary adaptation of our security structures with the return of great power rivalry, as clearly outlined in the 2017 NSS, with China. Taiwan similarly needs its own national security strategy to align its security structures, doctrines, and policies to the new realities.

<sup>46</sup> Any bio of George Kennan, President Truman, President Eisenhower would be helpful. Anything on the Solarium Project Eisenhower launched in 1953. The best might be any history of NSC 68, approved by President Truman in April 1950. It mapped out our political, economic, and military strategy. See *American Cold War Strategy, Interpreting NSC 68* by Ernest R. May.

## Hard Power

The PRC's efforts in the gray zone—below the level of conventional military combat operations—are less effective without the psychological pressure produced by the size, power, progress, and activities of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) and its associated paramilitary arms. This pressure continues to grow as China becomes wealthier.

When America rushed forces back to Asia in 1950 the PRC had no ability to project force beyond the mainland. Taiwan enjoyed at least a qualitative advantage in 1979. With China's burgeoning economic success following the death of Mao, the PLA has grown apace, in both quality and quantity.

Only days after the Pacific Island country of Solomon Islands announced it was switching diplomatic ties from Taipei to Beijing in September 2019—a secret memo that President Ronald Reagan had sent to then secretaries of state and defense about US policy towards Taiwan appeared on the *de facto* US embassy in Taiwan's website.<sup>47</sup> The declassified memo, dated August 17, 1982, was signed by Reagan and sent to Schultz and Weinberger. In it, the 40<sup>th</sup> president stated:

*The US willingness to reduce its arms sales to Taiwan is conditioned absolutely upon the continued commitment of China to the peaceful solution of the Taiwan-PRC differences. It should be clearly understood that the linkage between these two matters is a permanent imperative of US foreign policy. In addition, it is essential that the quantity and quality of the arms provided*

*Taiwan be conditioned entirely on the threat posed by the PRC. Both in quantitative and qualitative terms, Taiwan's defense capability relative to that of the PRC will be maintained.*<sup>48</sup>

While President Reagan ultimately agreed to sign the Third Communiqué of 1982 with the PRC, it was not without qualifications as he was seriously concerned<sup>49</sup> about its potentially deleterious impact<sup>50</sup> on Taiwan's security. The existence of the secret memo was known by some but not many in the policy community. It had been covered in a number of books, articles, and reports, but the original copy in its entirety had eluded the public eye since it was classified until only recently.

While serving as internal guidance for successive administrations, the influence of Reagan's directives waned over time as China's military, economic, and political rise affected US policy considerations. Indeed, what had led to a protracted practice of undue deference by Washington

to Beijing's sensitivities gradually eroded some of the original commitments made under the Taiwan Relations Act and President Reagan's directives as well as assurances.

This creeping adjustment<sup>51</sup> in how Washington met

“Now clearly and visibly in the public discourse, the memo qualifies and, in the process, clarifies the letter of the US position as it relates to the Third Communiqué's place in US policy towards Taiwan.”

47 Reagan, Ronald. “Arms Sales to Taiwan” [Memorandum]. Office of the President, August 17, 1982. <https://www.ait.org.tw/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/08171982-Reagan-Memo-DECLASSIFIED.pdf>

48 Reagan, Ronald. “Arms Sales to Taiwan” [Memorandum]. Office of the President, August 17, 1982. <https://www.ait.org.tw/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/08171982-Reagan-Memo-DECLASSIFIED.pdf>

49 Feldman, Harvey. “President Reagan's Six Assurances to Taiwan and Their Meaning Today.” The Heritage Foundation, October 2, 2007. <https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/president-reagans-six-assurances-taiwan-and-their-meaning-today>.

50 Hsiao, Russell. “Reassessing the ‘Quantity’ and ‘Quality’ of Taiwan's Defense Needs.” Global Taiwan Institute, January 10, 2018. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2018/01/10-gtb-3-1/>.

51 Kan, Shirley. “Overdue Arms Sales to Taiwan: End of ‘Packages?’” Global Taiwan Institute, July 5, 2017. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2017/07/05-gtb-2-27/>.

its commitments to Taiwan over time—as prescribed by the Taiwan Relations Act and conditioned by other policy considerations—was manifested in a number of ways. For instance, US arms sales to Taiwan were a) generally “packaged” to minimize friction with the PRC, and b) armaments that Taiwan’s armed forces determined it needed for self-defense were sometimes denied by the United States because it would presumably be seen by Beijing as being too provocative.

The significance of the memo’s declassification, which had been signed off by the former national security adviser, John Bolton, is that it shifts Reagan’s directives

from an internal guidance to a public policy document. By releasing it into the public, it inserts a degree of public accountability on executive decisions by ensuring that the guidance is publicly known by both American and Taiwanese people. Furthermore, it also reminds Beijing that these were, in unambiguous terms, the American intent. Now clearly and visibly in the public discourse, the memo qualifies and, in the process, clarifies the letter of the US position as it relates to the Third Communiqué’s place in US policy towards Taiwan.<sup>52</sup>

#### *Hard Power Supports Sharp Power against Taiwan*

The unmistakable message, often stated in Chinese professional journals, is that Taiwan’s situation is hopeless. That simplistic interpretation often finds support in other places. Countering that narrative and reducing its effectiveness requires that Taiwan must maintain a significant ability to blunt any PRC aggression toward it, with the expectation that the U.S. would weigh in at some point and in some capacity.

China’s Hard Power forces include an estimated 2.3

<sup>52</sup> Hsiao, Russell. “USG Declassifies Reagan Memo Clarifying US Policy Towards Taiwan.” *Global Taiwan Brief*, March 11, 2020. <http://globaltaiwan.org/2019/09/vol-4-issue-18/>.

million Chinese under arms. It is rapidly modernizing, expanding, and professionalizing, thanks to seemingly limitless state resources. It has access to the most advanced technologies, with power to intimidate and coerce.

Taiwan’s hard power, its armed forces, and the deterrent those forces provide, are challenged by both the PLA and the same changing conditions that confront the United States and like-minded countries. The doctrine, organizations and structure of Taiwan’s armed forces, and those of the U.S., must be critically examined to ensure they are fit for purpose in the face of new threats.

“One quick conclusion is that ground forces, widely distributed along the littoral, must not be merely left on the beach with fixed bayonets awaiting the arrival of survivors of a naval and air fight. They must be full participants in the long-range fight for air and sea control supporting air and sea components.

The emergence of new domains of conflict is often discussed, but full understanding has yet to emerge. At a minimum, the existence of pervasive surveillance, coupled with weapons accurate at distance, makes “mass” a critical vulnerability. Ever-present cyber-attacks can

be expected to have an impact on our command and control capabilities every bit as much as they affect our banking networks and our elections.

The United States is at the beginning of an effort to learn how to mass our power at time and places of our choosing without creating massed forces, massed logistics, critical nodes, and other vulnerabilities. Experiments being conducted with up to 10,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines in the operating area are exploring how to protect, and reconstitute if necessary, our communication and logistics networks. We’re also exploring ways to ensure effectiveness, and survivability, through widely distributed and agile maneuver forces equipped with precision strike weapons able to engage at range. Finally, we are also pursuing increased integration of maneuver, fires, and effects across all domains of conflict—land, sea, air, space, cyberspace, electromagnetic spectrum, and information.

One quick conclusion is that ground forces, widely distributed along the littoral, must not be merely left on the beach with fixed bayonets awaiting the arrival of survivors of a naval and air fight. They must be full participants in the long-range fight for air and sea control supporting air and sea components.

China deploys a wide toolkit of hard power tools aimed at intimidating Taiwan and other East Asian neighbors. Its aggressive naval and aerial tactics in the Taiwan Strait, including close approaches by PRC fighter planes to Taiwan planes, have become more common as tensions between the two sides have heightened since Tsai Ing-wen's election in 2016. PRC bomber flights that circumnavigate Taiwan are another tactic increasingly in play as Xi Jinping's government grows frustrated at the inability to advance its aims vis-à-vis the island. Transits of the Taiwan Strait by PRC warships have increased, including some crossing the median line in the Taiwan Strait, previously honored as an important dividing point.

These same tactics have been deployed against Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam and other neighbors of China, when relations are poor and the government in Beijing wants to flex its muscles. It doesn't make much of a play for friendly relations, but evidently that is not a diplomatic tool overly prized by the small cabal of authoritarian leaders at the top of the Chinese Communist Party.

Most observers do not think Beijing is ready to provoke an armed conflict with Taiwan, or any of its other neighbors, yet. That said, the current confrontation on the Sino-Indian border can easily lead to active combat. Tensions with Vietnam have eased, but we should remember past clashes reflect an on-going tension between the two communist neighbors. China's aggressive claims in the South China Sea also pit it against a number of neighbors, though none of them has the military capability to effectively challenge Beijing. In this context, the longstanding Ameri-

can commitment to Taiwan's security is one important check on any such PRC plans, as are our alliances and friendships with other Asian countries.

But as its economic and military might have advanced, China has been less cautious in its dealings with bordering countries. India, Russia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Japan, Mongolia and South Korea have historically been rivals with China, so one cannot discount the possibility of frictions reemerging with these neighbors. But for now, China has, for the most part, focused much of its saber rattling on Taiwan, as Xi Jinping seeks to pursue strategic policy objectives to bolster his standing back home.

Growing Chinese military power across air, land, sea, space, cyberspace and the electromagnetic spectrum threaten Taiwan, the United States, and other nations. General Secretary Xi has made his intentions clear. Advancing technology accelerates new threat capabilities faster than that seen in the early industrial revolution. This rapid growth of Chinese as well as North Korean power projection capabilities means Taiwan is

“But as its economic and military might have advanced, China has been less cautious in its dealings with bordering countries.

no longer the only nation under a clear and present threat from the continent.

The destructive potential of China's modernizing and rapidly expanding armed forces and their menacing activities is purposely and openly displayed. On land they publicly practice assaults on replicas of Taiwan's government buildings and hold amphibious drills. Rockets are regularly rolled out for admiration and intimidation. At sea the PLA Navy makes clear its objection to lawful activities of other nation's naval forces, including those of Taiwan and the United States.

PLA Navy forces are always present nearby as the People's Armed Forces Maritime Militia, Coast Guard and armed fishermen challenge other nations' sovereignty claims in the East and South China Seas. Bullying Vietnamese and Malaysian ocean drilling operations and ramming Philippine fishermen are standard tactics. The PLA Air Force conducts frequent aerial intrusions into

sovereign airspace, including Taiwan's, imposing costs on those nations to defend their interests. Lest we forget the 2001 EP-3 incident between a U.S. surveillance airplane and a PLA fighter jet over the South China Sea, close approaches over international airspace also present the ever-present danger of collisions.

Should there be any doubt about the strength of Chinese power projection, their will to use it and China's ability to coerce nations both big and small, we need only to look at the South China Sea. Beginning in December 2013 and continuing for nearly two years, through a massive and well-organized industrial campaign, China

dredged up sand and gravel from the bottom of the South China Sea and deposited it on seven coral reefs. The operation created nearly 3,000 acres of new territory in an international waterway. The world took note but little action beyond expressions of concern. Many minimized the military potential of these arti-

ficial features, deeming them a "wall of sand". Reportedly, Chairman Xi, at the U.S.-China Sunnylands summit in September 2015, promised President Obama that he would not militarize these features.

That was then. Now these new features host 3,000-meter runways and deep-water ports, extending China's surveillance and defense network far into the sea. They are military, naval and air outposts guarding the approaches to the Chinese coast, home to its vast wealth. They are more a "wall of SAMs (surface to air missiles)" than a wall of sand. Nor are these small encampments on semi-submerged rocks as many assume. Most of the area inside the I-495 beltway could fit inside the lagoon at Mischief Reef. Pearl Harbor Naval Base could fit inside Subi Reef. "The People's Liberation Army has therefore invested in facilities and deployments in the Spratly Islands that not only support its current peacetime coercion but also favorably shift the balance of

power in any future conflict.

As a result, the islands not only guarantee China air and surface dominance in the South China Sea in the opening stages of a conflict, but they are also far more difficult to neutralize than conventional wisdom suggests."<sup>53</sup> On the South China Sea's eastern border, Philippine President Duterte raises serious questions about U.S. forces' continued access to that boundary of the South China Sea under our Visiting Forces Agreement. This raises the real possibility that U.S. forces could well be shut out of The Philippines in a crisis. Given that, then the nearest U.S. bases are in

Japan. China's air and sea dominance here would isolate Taiwan in the opening stages of any conflict.

This aggression into the global commons of the South China Sea created a profound change in the security situ-

ation of Taiwan and the United States. Comfortable with what we knew from the past, we became complacent about changes in China's capabilities, and chose to draw no public conclusion about China's intentions.

For decades the PRC had no ability to project force beyond the mainland. Nor did it wish to, as it had troubles and threats on all 14 land borders. The USSR posed a nuclear threat, and internal consolidation of the revolution through the "Great Leap Forward" and the "Cultural Revolution" periods were all-consuming. Taiwan enjoyed at least a qualitative advantage over mainland forces through 1979. China's inability to project meaningful power beyond its shores - coupled with the often-

**“Countering that narrative, resisting coercion, and strengthening deterrence requires Taiwan, with U.S. collaboration under its obligations and in support of its vital national interests, to establish and maintain an undoubted ability to prevail against armed attempts at subjugation. Demolishing the myth that Taiwan has no hope is critical.**

53 Poling, Gregory. "The Conventional Wisdom on China's Island Bases Is Dangerously Wrong." *War on the Rocks*, January 9, 2020. <https://warontherocks.com/2020/01/the-conventional-wisdom-on-chinas-island-bases-is-dangerously-wrong/>.

stormy weather in the Taiwan Strait - offered a certain comfort. We failed to draw unpleasant conclusions from activities in plain sight over the subsequent years.

China's burgeoning economic success following the death of Mao allowed the PLA to grow rapidly, in quality and especially in quantity. Deng Xiaoping's "hide and bide" went away as the Cold War ended and took with it into the dustbin of history the last serious threat to China on its land borders (though more several more limited border disputes continue). China gained the ability to apply its military resources to its seaward frontier, and to coercing Taiwan. Now coercion and intimidation are continuous fare.

Chinese military and paramilitary forces project power globally and regionally at will, often violating the sea and air space of Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia and other nations. Access to a free and open South China Sea and East China Sea, promised often by China following its South China Sea seizure, is threatened by Chinese bullying tactics on fishermen and others engaged in lawful activities. U.S. Freedom of Navigation (FON) operations challenge Chinese claims, but are of little benefit to fishermen of other nations. "The People's Liberation Army has therefore invested in facilities and deployments in the Spratly Islands that not only support its current peacetime coercion but also favorably shift the balance of power in any future conflict."

#### *Demolishing the Myth*

The unmistakable message, often boldly stated in Chinese professional journals, is that the U.S., Japan, and other democratic states dare not challenge China, that Taiwan's situation is entirely in China's hands, with unification inevitable, by force if necessary. That simplistic interpretation finds support in many places, leading to exceptional deference to

China to forestall precipitate action.

Countering that narrative, resisting coercion, and strengthening deterrence requires Taiwan, with U.S. collaboration under its obligations and in support of its vital national interests, to establish and maintain an undoubted ability to prevail against armed attempts at subjugation. Demolishing the myth that Taiwan has no hope is critical. In light of Beijing's continued refusal to renounce the use of force against Taiwan, it is incumbent upon their leaders to at least question and consider the consequences if they were to use force against Taiwan.

For instance, if China uses force, what would prohibit Taiwan from declaring *de jure* independence? If Taiwan declares *de jure* independence because China uses

**“Simply stated, the strategic concept, the organization, and the resources of Taiwan’s armed forces need to be modernized to meet the current threat and to present a compelling case to friend and foe alike that Taiwan can prevail.**

force, what would prevent the U.S. from recognizing its independence? And, if U.S. recognizes the independence of Taiwan, what would prevent US allies and partners from doing the same? In other words, if Beijing

uses force, it could and would in all likelihood ultimately “lose” Taiwan.

One has to wonder if these questions ever occurred to Beijing leaders.

#### *A New Strategic Concept for Taiwan*

Simply stated, the strategic concept, the organization, and the resources of Taiwan's armed forces need to be modernized to meet the current threat and to present a compelling case to friend and foe alike that Taiwan can prevail. In this era “awash in change”—a phrase coined by former Secretary of State George Shultz of the Hoover Institute—that is no easy task.

Past global revolutionary change was not as complex, but was very powerful nonetheless. The agricultural revolution around 10,000 BC affected combat on land.

It was the only domain available at the time. The later industrial revolution from the late 18th Century indelibly altered combat on land and sea, and in the 20th century introduced combat to the air. Historical and professional military literature is replete with fascinating tales of innovation and clever tactics that established temporary superiority and dominance.

Less visible are accounts of successful adaptation of national military and defense establishments to sustained periods of major change. Doctrine is a necessary way of standardizing tactics, techniques and procedures. Doctrine also exerts a strong influence on material and weapons procurement. The danger is that doctrine is a stubborn thing. It morphs easily into dogma as strong as religious liturgy. In the meantime, the problem any specific doctrine was designed to address assumes a new form, rendering existing doctrine not only obsolete but deadly.

One example of many will serve as an illustration. Following the Franco-Prussian War of the 1870s, France adopted an entirely new offensive doctrine to fix what went wrong in the previous fight. The new doctrine proved stronger than their vision, causing a failure to notice many industrial age developments, such as mass standardized production, the machine gun, barbed wire, poison gas, airplanes, and other things. The result from 1914 to 1918 was four years of grinding slaughter. One of every six French men (we only drafted men in those days) of military age at the beginning of the war became a casualty.

Now changes to the ways of warfare and combat are appearing at an ever-increasing pace. In addition to the familiar combat domains of land, sea and air, we must deal with space, cyberspace, the information space, artificial intelligence, and the electromagnetic spectrum domains. Some scholars list more. Unexamined, unquestioned, ritually-followed doctrine is even more deadly now. Our explicit and implicit assumptions,

most critically “the things we think we know that just ain’t so” in the words of Mark Twain, must be vigorously examined.

Taiwan, as a democracy, should have a competitive advantage in this.

### *Limits of China’s Hard Power*

To highlight China’s capabilities is not to say that Xi’s China doesn’t face its own litany of problems. An aging population,<sup>54</sup> a gender disequilibrium in large part resulting from the “one child policy,” slowing growth, widespread environmental problems, ethnic and religious tensions, the list of issues could go on. In a sense,

**“President Tsai presents a strong contrast to General Secretary Xi. Perhaps no statement is stronger than the results of Taiwan’s recent election. Her strong victory refuted determined mainland political work to tip the election to her opponent.**

this is precisely why Mr. Xi might be tempted to trigger international tensions, particularly with Taiwan, in an attempt to distract his own people from focusing on their many discontents. He appears to have spent some time contemplating his quiver of sharp and hard power tools, as he considers foreign policy goals

that might enhance his standing at home, and gain fear—if not respect—from his neighbors.

Xi and his ruling clique have spent considerable capital on their ability to manage relations along their periphery, but not always with much success. To the extent that PRC citizens are aware of it, events in Hong Kong’s subjugation are certainly not an example of deft policy implementation within the walls of power in Beijing. Between mainland visitors to the former British colony, the internet, and second-hand accounts, there is probably a fairly broad understanding within China that Hong Kong did not go well, and that no easy off-ramp to the continuing demonstrations, unrest, fi-

54 Eberstadt, Nicholas. “China’s Demographic Outlook to 2040 and Its Implications: An Overview.” American Enterprise Institute, January 22, 2019. <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/chinas-demographic-outlook-to-2040-and-its-implications-an-overview/>.

nancial fight, and brain drain exists.

One question is whether the long-suffering citizens of the PRC might take a leaf out of Hong Kong's playbook, and begin demonstrations and protests themselves, aimed at the myriad problems they face at home. The recent coronavirus gives new cause for concern on the part of the Chinese people, that their government is not always adept in addressing their problems. Certainly, the lack of transparency contributed to this health emergency.

Furthermore, Xi's clumsy handling of Hong Kong played a significant role in Tsai Ing-wen's crushing victory this January, as she gained a second term in office and retained her party's majority in the Legislative Yuan for another four years. Tracking polls in Taiwan suggested that this turn of events was in no small part the result of Chinese threats and the chaos in Hong Kong. Lest we forget, Deng Xiaoping's famous "one country, two systems" was aimed at both Hong Kong and Taiwan. Chinese leaders used to boast that their deft handling of Hong Kong after its turnover to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 would make similar arrangements with Taiwan that much more attractive. "Deft" is no longer a description of China's policy and strategy.

President Tsai presents a strong contrast to General Secretary Xi. Perhaps no statement is stronger than the results of Taiwan's recent election. Her strong victory refuted determined mainland political work to tip the election to her opponent. The victory reflected her steady role during her time in office, maintaining the status quo and endorsing Taiwan's ideals. Her call, that "When freedom and democracy are challenged, we must stand up and defend ourselves", was clearly heard and endorsed. Her fundamental responsibility to protect national sovereignty was clearly endorsed by the electorate. Against the background of a Hong Kong teeming with pro-autonomy demonstrations, Taiwan indeed became "the first line of defense for democratic values."

*A Great Step Forward: Taiwan's Overall Defense Concept*

Taiwan's Overall Defense Concept (ODC) is a great step forward and it presents a very realistic view of Taiwan's challenges.<sup>55</sup> It's a hard problem, as indicated above, but hard is not impossible.

The ODC describes the threat as an "Anaconda Strategy," and the metaphor seems apt. It combines forcible coercion, market seduction, isolation from international organizations and compressing Taiwan through manipulating Washington. Defeating this "anaconda" demands defeating the strategy, Chinese diplomacy, and their operational plan. Attacking fortified areas and positions would be least productive and a poor use of resources.

The ODC stresses asymmetry, cyber capabilities, media actions, managing battle space, and coping with uncertainty and the unexpected as pervasive conditions. Cultural asymmetry and its effect on information operations is given prominent consideration. Computer operations, powerful algorithms, "big data" and most importantly talented people are required. Psychological operations, legal warfare and media warfare are lines of effort.

The ODC calls for fully integrated and resilient air and missile defense systems. Sea Lines of Communication operations, neglected for years, are cited as an area needing attention. Noteworthy is the emphasis on asymmetric thinking, and integration of Direct Commercial Sales and Foreign Military Sales from the U.S. with indigenous production in procurement of defense articles and equipment.

The ODC way forward includes:

**"The United States has a clear and compelling vital interest in Taiwan's undoubted ability to prevail over China's "Anaconda Strategy."**

55 Hsi-min, Lee, and Eric Lee. "Taiwan's Overall Defense Concept, Explained." *The Diplomat*, November 3, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/taiwans-overall-defense-concept-explained/>



- Review current force structure
- Enhancement of reserve force capability
- Improvement of military medicine
- Revision of military law
- Coherent joint doctrine and education

This is a solid starting point, but more needs to be done to respond—not just to China’s growing military capabilities—but other capabilities as well. The United States has a clear and compelling vital interest in Taiwan’s undoubted ability to prevail over China’s “Anaconda Strategy.” Moreover, the United States and Taiwan now face the same strategic and operational challenge, that of how to ensure sea and air superiority—or at the least deny the same to an enemy—in the face of the Chinese threat. It’s the same problem faced by Japan. We will not be able to protect the 6,852 islands of that nation, spanning the littoral from near the Arctic Circle to south of Taipei, under current doctrine. We’re outnumbered and outgunned. All of Asia’s maritime nations face the same challenge. This challenge must be met by all in a combined effort.

A very cursory look at our mutual challenge might posit that ground forces, whether U.S., Japanese, or Taiwanese, must no longer be limited to merely awaiting the arrival of a hostile landing force. Of course, the ground forces will retain their prominence in any fight on the ground with robust support from air and naval components, but they must also assume meaningful roles in support of air and naval forces before the ground fight is engaged. They must be integrated and effective in the joint battle for air and sea supremacy. The numerical odds are such that this fight cannot be won by air and naval forces alone, no matter how capable.

Another initial conclusion might be that we must protect our networks, and our leaders at all levels must have the authority and ability to act independently if communication is lost. Constant review, exercise and revision of plans are necessary to ensure all understand

what’s expected, with and without serviceable communications. All forces should be widely distributed, in small, agile, mobile formations to ensure survivability. This places a premium on the capabilities, education and training of our most junior leaders, something that should be an advantage for a democracy.

On first look, it appears that low cost, lethal air and ground unmanned platforms, unmanned long range surface and subsurface vessels, mobile, rapidly deployable rocket systems, long range precision fires, loitering munitions across the echelons, mobile air defense and counter-precision guided munitions capabilities, signature management, electronic warfare and expeditionary airfields may be useful.

Taiwan’s training and exercise opportunities are limited by Taiwan’s geography. Without rigorous exercises involving force-on-force action, the needed modifications will be impossible. A full application of realistic simulation capabilities linked and integrated across the Pacific with Indo-PACOM

simulation engines is necessary to test concepts and capabilities in a realistic and exacting manner. Observations and conclusions from exercises involving varying combinations of live, virtual and constructive forces aided by modern simulation capabilities will indicate future directions while greatly enhancing the training of leaders at all levels. Force structure building, doctrinal development, professional military education and training must all proceed together.

The U.S. and Taiwan should find ways to collaborate much more deeply on appropriate redesigns of our respective national security establishments to ensure effectiveness and responsiveness. Similarly, the U.S. and Taiwan must reduce the isolation of Taiwan’s armed forces. An appropriate level of cooperation, education, experimentation and training must be found as Taiwan looks to modernizing doctrine, organi-

**“The U.S. and Taiwan should find ways to collaborate much more deeply on appropriate redesigns of our respective national security establishments to ensure effectiveness and responsiveness.”**

zation and training of its forces. U.S. personnel should be embedded with Taiwan's forces in a manner that can enhance needed development and adaptation to meet the common threat.

This is not the end, of course. It's not even the end of the beginning. Pressure will continue, across the spectrum of threats, all employed simultaneously in support of comprehensive political warfare. Pressure will be applied on all fronts, looking to advance where opportunity allows. A unitary autocratic government will exploit total control of all elements of national power to gain dominance. This includes weaponization of diplomatic, political, economic, social and informational elements greatly empowered by growth of cyberthreat capabilities, social media vulnerability to control, space-based capabilities, and others.

#### *Toward a Holistic Approach to Defending Taiwan*

While Beijing's growing influence and the means of its influence in Taiwan have long troubled some national security experts on the island, the United States—whose primary concern had been the prevention of military conflict in the Taiwan Strait—has become increasingly aware of and concerned about Chinese political warfare in Taiwan. Washington also focuses on its implications for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the Western Pacific as well. In an interview for Reuters in April 2019, Ambassador James Moriarty, chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), sounded the alarm: “They’ve [China] obviously stepped up campaigns of disinformation and direct influence against Taiwan ... I do worry greatly about attempts to influence Taiwan’s democratic processes and I believe many Taiwanese share that concern.”<sup>56</sup>

Since 2018, the United States and Taiwan have con-

56 “U.S. Says China Steps Up Campaign to Influence Taiwan, Including Vote.” *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, April 18, 2019. <https://fr.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-usa-idUSKCN1RU1BE>.

ducted close consultations to combat the challenges emanating from CCP influence and information operations. The issue was the focus of an international forum co-hosted by the two governments on promoting “media literacy” in the Indo-Pacific region. As an indicator of the concerns, the two governments co-organized a follow up forum in September 2019 in the inaugural U.S.-Taiwan Consultations on Democratic Governance in the Indo-Pacific Region, which Deputy Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in the Department of State, Scott Busby, traveled to Taiwan to participate. In his speech,

**“The robust web of ties between the two countries and societies have been hugely beneficial to both sides and will likely grow even more so in the new era.”**

Deputy Assistant Secretary Busby highlighted:

We also are working to counter disinformation that seeks to undermine the credibility and outcomes of democratic elections. It is an ongoing challenge that the U.S. faces. Taiwan’s 2020 elections are just a few short months away, and China once again seeks to use disinformation to undermine the vote, divide the people, and sow seeds of doubt in the democratic system itself. China has invested heavily to develop ever-more sophisticated ways to anonymously disseminate disinformation through a number of channels, including social media. As their malign methods evolve, the motivation remains the same – to weaken democracy and end the freedoms that the citizens of Taiwan have come to enjoy after many long years of struggle.<sup>57</sup>

Statements such as the aforementioned reflect broader US policy considerations that are featured in significant policy documents and intelligence assessments. For example, the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency’s *China Military Power Report* (CMPR), released in January 2019, disclosed the agency’s official assessment that

57 “Opening Remarks by Deputy Assistant Secretary Scott Busby at the GCTF Workshop on ‘Defending Democracy through Media Literacy II.’” American Institute in Taiwan, March 23, 2020. <https://www.ait.org.tw/opening-remarks-by-deputy-assistant-secretary-scott-busby-at-the-gctf-workshop-on-defending-democracy-through-media-literacy-ii/>.

the PRC is conducting “political warfare” against the United States and Taiwan, among other countries.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, in the most recent US Department of Defense’s 2019 *China Military Power Report*, the Office of the Secretary of Defense also confirmed: “China conducts influence operations against cultural institutions, media organizations, and the business, academic, and policy communities of the United States, other countries, and international institutions to achieve outcomes favorable to its security and military strategy objectives.”<sup>59</sup>

As the CCP rises on the world stage, it is increasingly employing both military and non-military tools to influence foreign governments and societies to achieve its party objectives. Chinese pressure and coercion for political purposes involves the use of diplomatic, economic, and even military instruments. The tools in the toolkit now includes the use of “sharp power” that utilizes propaganda, disinformation, and other information operations that aim to undermine democratic institutions, and exploit cultural institutions to affect political intercourse in ways favorable to the interests of preserving the absolute authority of the Chinese party-state.

The U.S. and Taiwan should find ways to collaborate much more deeply on appropriate redesigns of our respective national security establishments to ensue ef-

fectiveness and responsiveness. Similarly, the U.S. and Taiwan must reduce the armed forces isolation. An appropriate level of cooperation, education, experimentation and training must be found as Taiwan looks to modernizing doctrine, organization and training of its forces.

Meanwhile there have been recent positive signs of improved U.S.-Taiwan relations. These are grounded first

“Reflecting the growing bilateral ties, the United States and Taiwan should take further steps to enhance “extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations.” This would be consistent with the language of the Taiwan Relations Act as well as the Taiwan Travel Act, Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA) and the TAIPEI Act

and foremost on American respect for democratic processes, and the governments they produce. We also have strong historic ties to the island and its people, dating from at least 1950. These ties have included security cooperation, trade, tourism, as

well as the huge number of Taiwan citizens who have studied and worked in the United States. Some of them took their skills back to Taiwan, others have become productive U.S. citizens and champions of ties back home. The robust web of ties between the two countries and societies have been hugely beneficial to both sides and will likely grow even more so in the new era.

Reflecting the growing bilateral ties, the United States and Taiwan should take further steps to enhance “extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations.”<sup>60</sup> This would be consistent with the language of the Taiwan Relations Act as well as the Taiwan Travel Act,<sup>61</sup> Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA)<sup>62</sup> and the TAIPEI Act.<sup>63</sup>

58 “China Military Power 2019: Modernizing a Force to Fight and Win.” Defense Intelligence Agency, 2018. [https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China\\_Military\\_Power\\_FINAL\\_5MB\\_20190103.pdf](https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf). Pg. 99.

59 “Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2019.” United States Department of Defense. Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2019. [https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/2019\\_CHINA\\_MILITARY\\_POWER\\_REPORT.pdf](https://media.defense.gov/2019/May/02/2002127082/-1/-1/2019_CHINA_MILITARY_POWER_REPORT.pdf).

60 “Taiwan Relations Act (Public Law 96-8, 22 U.S.C. 3301 Et Seq.)” American Institute in Taiwan, July 10, 2018. <https://www.ait.org.tw/our-relationship/policy-history/key-u-s-foreign-policy-documents-region/taiwan-relations-act/>.

61 Senate - Foreign Relations. Bill, Asia Reassurance Initiative Act of 2018 §. S.2736 (115AD).

62 House - Foreign Affairs. Bill, Taiwan Travel Act §. H.R.535 (115AD).

63 Senate - Foreign Relations. Bill, Taiwan Allies International Protection and Enhancement Initia-

The March 2020 passage and signing of the TAIPEI Act was in response to China's aggressive diplomatic offensive campaign of poaching Taiwan's diplomatic partners and obstructing Taiwan's ability to participate in international organizations.

When the Bill was first introduced by Senator Cory Gardner of Colorado in May 2019, Taiwan had already lost five diplomatic ties to Beijing since January 2016. While most provisions of the TAIPEI Act and other legis-

lations do not establish mandatory obligations on the executive branch, they nonetheless contribute to broadening the foundation of Taiwan policy and reinforce key commitments of ex-

isting policy. In that sense, they expand the scope of Taiwan policy and also provide some broader oversight authorities for Congress, as a co-equal branch of government, to ensure that American interests and values as defined by the [Taiwan Relations Act] TRA and these complementary laws, such as the ARIA and the TTA, are faithfully implemented by the executive branch in the current as well as successive administrations.

The most important implication of TAIPEI Act on US-Taiwan relations will be in the longer term rather than in the immediate future. While support for Taiwan policy remains a bipartisan issue and has seen steady improvements in recent years—as evidenced by the fact that the TRA, ARIA, TTA, and TAIPEI Act are all bipartisan Congressional foreign policy initiatives—a robust legislative framework militates against the ebbs and flows that inevitably come with presidential transitions within a democracy and the possible effects that

future presidents could have in attempting to

tive (TAIPEI) Act of 2019 §. S.1678 (2019).

limit ties with Taiwan so as not to anger China or even, as some observers have suggested in the past, abandoning Taiwan.<sup>64</sup>

When read together with the TRA, ARIA, and TTA, the TAIPEI Act builds out, through congressional initiative, a broader foundation for U.S. policy that imposes normative constraints on executive action toward Taiwan. Especially at a time when China has been on a full court press of squeezing Taiwan's international space, it widens the aperture of U.S. policy options toward Taiwan and will last beyond this presidency.<sup>65</sup>

“... a robust legislative framework militates against the ebbs and flows that inevitably come with presidential transitions within a democracy and the possible effects that future presidents could have in attempting to limit ties with Taiwan so as not to anger China or even, as some observers have suggested in the past, abandoning Taiwan.”

As this study goes to print, a change in administrations in Washington is approaching. The incoming Biden Administration will be tasked with formulating a new foreign policy globally. It should include—in consultations with Congress—continuing efforts to bolster

our Taiwan friends both politically, economically and militarily. China should not mistake the fluidity of our politics with any lessening of our long-standing commitment to the people of Taiwan.

64 Kane, Paul V. “To Save Our Economy, Ditch Taiwan.” *The New York Times*, November 11, 2011. <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/11/opinion/to-save-our-economy-ditch-taiwan.html>.

65 Kuo, Mercy A. “Trump and the TAIPEI Act.” *The Diplomat*. *The Diplomat*, April 21, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/04/trump-and-the-taipei-act/>.

## Policy Recommendations

1. Taiwan must ensure its ability to integrate security efforts, including “hard power” deterrence, across all threatened elements of national life, and strength to better respond to Chinese “sharp power” and protect Taiwan’s liberal values and democratic institutions.
2. A strengthened National Security Council operational role to integrate all elements of national power and a fundamental armed forces redesign to meet today’s challenge are necessary.
3. Taiwan’s ground forces must be integrated in the fight for air and sea supremacy. That conclusion leads to what kind of weapons may be needed.
4. This gathering storm demands a redesign of Taiwan’s national security structure, a revised force structure, new automated training and professional military education systems, and new ways to ensure effective deterrence.
5. Cooperation with the U.S. and other nations in the region that face the same threat is essential. An Alliance of Democracies in the region and beyond must be energized to support democratic ideals and demonstrate the appeal of representative government to all captive populations in China and the region.
6. A jointly developed powerful simulation system is needed to test force structure options, operational concepts and doctrine to ensure effective deterrence and to support improved training at all levels.
7. The unmistakable message, often boldly stated in Chinese professional journals, is that the U.S., Japan, and other democratic states dare not challenge China, that Taiwan’s situation is entirely in China’s hands, with unification inevitable, by force if necessary. That simplistic interpretation finds support in many places, leading to exceptional deference to China to forestall precipitate action. Countering that narrative, resisting coercion, and strengthening deterrence requires Taiwan, with U.S. collaboration under its obligations and in support of its vital national interests, to establish and maintain an undoubted ability to prevail against armed attempts at subjugation. Demolishing the myth that Taiwan has no hope is critical.
8. Simply stated, the strategic concept, the organization, and the resources of Taiwan’s armed forces need to be modernized to meet the current threat and to present a compelling case to friend and foe alike that Taiwan can prevail. In this era “awash in change”—a phrase coined by former Secretary of State George Shultz of the Hoover Institute - that is no easy task.
9. A holistic approach to enhancing Taiwan’s resiliency should include economic measures. This is the appropriate response to counter Beijing’s strategy to create economic dependencies to enhance its coercive leverage over Taiwan. The Biden administration should continue the newly launched Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue and consider pursuing a bilateral trade agreement.
10. While the United States has managed to deter Beijing from taking destructive military action against Taiwan over the last four decades because the latter has been relatively weak, the risks of this approach inches dangerously close to outweighing its benefits. Greater clarity of U.S. commitments to defend Taiwan is critical for purposes of deterrence and stability. As the PLA grows stronger, a perceived lack of commitment by the United States to defend Taiwan may further embolden Beijing to use force to resolve the Taiwan issue. The ultimate deterrent is political.
11. The incoming Biden Administration, in close consultation with the U.S. Congress, should review current policy toward Taiwan with an eye on strengthening the scope and breadth of our cooperative relationship, economically, politically and militarily. This should include an early signal that we will not tolerate threats or actions aimed at intimidating or attacking Taiwan. It should also continue to closely monitor the growth of PLA threats to the island, and send unmistakable warning that the U.S. will stand by our commitments to the people of Taiwan and their government.