

February 3, 1983

THE U.S., CHINA AND THE SECURITY OF TAIWAN

INTRODUCTION

During the first two years of the Reagan Administration, constructing a coherent China policy has posed a vexing problem. The United States regrettably has allowed demands by the People's Republic of China (PRC) concerning Taiwan to dominate U.S. China policy, and even U.S. relations with Asia in general. In particular, Washington felt compelled to react positively to Peking's demands that all arms sales to Taiwan be terminated. In the five months following a Joint Communiqué of last August, it has become increasingly obvious that the major concessions made to Peking have led to neither a more conciliatory PRC attitude toward the U.S., nor a diminution in demands that the U.S. place additional pressure on Taiwan (Republic of China) to succumb to the PRC. Rather than pacifying the PRC or protecting vital U.S. interests, these unnecessary unilateral concessions, as they had in the three previous administrations, only stimulated more exorbitant demands in subsequent negotiating periods.

Through the provisions of the August Joint Communiqué, the Reagan Administration has substantially undermined the character of U.S. China policy carefully crafted by Congress in the course of passing the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) in 1979. That act provided a workable foundation for dealing with the fundamental reality of the two hostile Chinese authorities governing the Republic of China and the PRC. Moreover, the TRA protected the close ties established over nearly three decades between Taiwan and the U.S., as manifested in the Mutual Security Treaty and a wide range of economic, social, and cultural bonds as well.

The August Joint Communiqué, more than the actions of any previous administration, threatens the continued integrity and security of Taiwan. By asserting more carelessly than ever before that Taiwan is China's internal affair and that the U.S.

"has no intention of...interfering in China's internal affairs,"¹ the Reagan Administration has logically undermined Taiwan's already precarious legal position. This invariably leads to endless demands from Peking to further degrade the status of Taiwan, such as the recent assertion that Taipei should be expelled from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). Taiwan is a founding member of the ADB and has fulfilled all of its obligations there. Therefore the United States should not act on behalf of Peking's political aggression to expel Taiwan, particularly since such action would violate both Section 4(d) of the Taiwan Relations Act and Section 25 of the Foreign Assistance Authorization Act (P.L. 96-259) passed by Congress in 1980.

By stating that the U.S. "understands and appreciates" Peking's "peaceful overtures" to Taiwan, the Reagan Administration in effect ignored the PRC's political history for the past thirty-four years. The implication arises therefore that only recalcitrance in Taipei prevents an accommodation between the two Chinese political authorities. Clearly the terms of any currently possible agreement have been set in Peking and require nothing less than the obliteration of the de facto sovereignty of Taiwan. By thus bending toward Peking's rhetoric on Taiwan, the U.S. makes any mutual accommodation of interests far less likely.

The principal provision in the Communiqué reduces, and presumably will terminate, arms sales to Taiwan. By placing stringent military sanctions on Taiwan that adversely affect both its military and psychological strength, the U.S. gratuitously applies pressure on behalf of Peking that can ultimately be fatal to Taipei. If, as reported, Washington were considering providing the PRC with detailed information on the defensive equipment supplied to Taipei over thirty years, the U.S. would be committing an unprecedented action toward an ally--turning over information to a hostile communist regime. The PRC will likely press for the information during the upcoming Shultz visit to Peking.

In the face of the obviously escalating potential PRC military threat to Taiwan, the U.S. should have pursued exactly the opposite course of action and provided advanced fighters to Taipei along with other new military equipment. Only a military balance across the Taiwan Straits can preserve peace in the area. If the Reagan Administration fails to reverse the direction of its China policy, the possibility of open military conflict between an increasingly powerful and aggressive PRC and an increasingly desperate and insecure Taiwan can only be enhanced. Further, such a betrayal of an ally will seriously erode U.S. credibility in Asia and ultimately diminish its security capabilities in East Asia generally. Finally, the futility of basing U.S. political and military policy on Peking's reliability is amply demonstrated by the current prospect of a modest rapprochement between the PRC and the Soviet Union.

¹ The language of the entire Communiqué appears in Appendix I.

THE U.S. POLITICAL RETREAT FROM TAIWAN

The August 17, 1982, Communiqué marked a possibly decisive political turnaround in the decade of discussions between Washington and Peking. President Ronald Reagan and Assistant Secretary of State John Holdridge both issued statements that downplayed the significance of the Communiqué, implying that it merely continued previous policies. Analysis of the text of the agreement and its obvious implications indicates that the agreement seriously tilts U.S. policy in favor of Peking's efforts to obliterate Taiwan as a viable independent political entity.

President Reagan stated on August 17 that "This document preserves principles on both sides and will promote the further development of friendly relations between the governments and peoples of the United States and China." Similarly, in testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Assistant Secretary of State John Holdridge asserted that "The present wording evolved from ten months of intense negotiations in which fundamental principles were at stake on both sides."

However, as in all previous negotiations with the PRC, U.S. objectives dissolved, and the process led to simply resolving the extent of additional U.S. concessions. The PRC sought several interrelated objectives: an immediate oversight role in sale of arms to Taiwan, termination of such sales by a date certain, U.S. pressure on Taipei to negotiate its "reintegration" into mainland China, alteration of the strict provisions of the Taiwan Relations Act, and an explicit U.S. affirmation of Peking's legal sovereignty over Taiwan. The U.S. entered the negotiations with the principal objective of modifying PRC demands sufficiently to quiet Peking's threat to downgrade relations with Washington, mounting since the Reagan inauguration. Consequently, on every point they sought, the PRC gained either explicit, implicit, or deferred concessions from Washington. On the other hand, U.S. negotiators claimed that Peking's retreat from some of its original bargaining positions constituted PRC "concessions."

A review of these issues reveals that, however adroitly the language of the eventual Communiqué was manipulated, Peking made major gains of which President Reagan himself was perhaps not sufficiently aware. This was evidenced by the President's peculiar telephone call to Dan Rather at CBS News denying that the agreement had seriously altered the status quo.

There has been no retreat by me. We will continue to arm Taiwan. We have a moral obligation to Taiwan. I am concerned about what the reports will do to our international relations. The Taiwan question is a matter for the Chinese people, on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, to resolve, we will not interfere in this matter or prejudice the free choice of, or put pressure on, the people of Taiwan in this matter.²

² Washington Times, August 18, 1982.

On numerous occasions in private conversations with conservatives, the President has continued to deny adamantly that the Communiqué constituted retreat from his previous position on Taiwan. Only by severely straining the meaning of the language and context of the agreement, however, can it be construed that the U.S. did not retreat significantly on some fundamental issues. Greater care must be exercised in future discussions with Peking.

PEKING'S MEDIATING ROLE IN ARMS SALES

The specific language of the Taiwan Relations Act makes no provision for the PRC's having a role in the determination of arms sales to Taiwan. The language of the act [Section 3(b)] reads as follows:

The United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such a quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability....(and) the President and the Congress shall determine the nature and quantity of such defense articles and services based solely upon their judgement of the needs of Taiwan, in accordance with procedures established by law.

Moreover, throughout the legislative history of the passage of that act, Members of Congress made clear that consulting Peking about such matters would be totally inappropriate. Nonetheless, the record of the past two years clearly indicates that, rather than consulting Congress as provided by the law, the U.S. State Department in fact consulted Peking. No reasonable review of the record can overlook that, each time the U.S. appeared on the verge of selling arms long promised to Taipei, Peking raised protests, which led to additional delays in concluding the arms sales. Then two days after the Communiqué was issued, the U.S. formally announced the sale of 60 F-5E fighters (worth \$240 million) to Taiwan. Nonetheless, Secretary Holdridge ironically testified that the Communiqué which promised to reduce arms sales "should not be read to imply that we have agreed to engage in prior consultations with Beijing on arms sales to Taiwan." Secretary Holdridge had just concluded ten months of negotiations with the PRC precisely on such arms sales. The U.S. should refuse to allow the subject to be placed on the agenda for discussions between PRC and U.S. authorities, as such an action in effect would include the PRC in the U.S.-Taiwan arms sales process.

TERMINATION OF ARMS SALES AND PEKING'S "PEACEFUL INTENTIONS"

From the beginning of the Reagan Administration, the PRC was determined to force the U.S. to abandon its military support for Taiwan. Even Secretary Haig's efforts in June 1981, when he offered military equipment to the PRC, failed to quell Peking's demands that arms sales to Taiwan end. In fact, U.S. arms sales to Taiwan fell from \$800 million under Carter in 1979 to only \$225 million under Reagan in 1981. But by its singleminded

demand that all sales end, the PRC eventually succeeded in extracting point 6 of the Communiqué from the U.S.:

Having in mind the foregoing statements of both sides, the United States Government states that it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that it intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution. In so stating, the United States acknowledges China's consistent position regarding the thorough settlement of this issue.

The heart of the Communiqué resides in this provision. To again quote Secretary Holdridge, the U.S. "did not agree to set a date certain for ending arms sales to Taiwan." At the same time Peking promised in the "foregoing statement," alluded to in point 6 above, that it is a "fundamental policy [of the PRC] to strive for a peaceful solution to the Taiwan question" (point 4 of the Communiqué).³

In the first place, even if no agreement existed on a termination date, the PRC extracted a pledge from the U.S. to freeze Taiwan forces at existing levels, an unprecedented U.S. agreement. The New York Times editorialized on its obvious implication:

The practical significance of the American pledge should not be minimized. The limit on qualitative improvement means the equipment Taiwan gets from the United States will be increasingly obsolete. Should Peking ever change its mind about a peaceful resolution, Taiwan's ability to defend itself directly, or even to negotiate liberal terms of autonomy directly within a unified China, would be impaired.⁴

The second point to note is that the PRC has already interpreted "final resolution" of this issue to mean, in the words of their foreign ministry spokesman, that U.S. arms sales "must be completely terminated over a period of time." Thus, the U.S. agreed to ambiguous language that indubitably will limit its latitude of action in future arms sales to Taiwan. In order to verify American adherence to the language of this provision, the

³ It should also be noted that the U.S. interpretations of the key words "fundamental policy" differ from Peking's Chinese term. Rather than "fundamental policy" the Chinese text actually translates to "major policy" or only "guideline."

⁴ New York Times, August 17, 1982.

PRC has already demanded detailed confidential information on precisely the character and quantity of all arms previously supplied to Taiwan. Of some immediate military value, the information could then become a "benchmark" for judging future reductions in sales.

Finally, Peking denies making any substantive concessions to extract Washington's unilateral disarmament of Taipei and has insisted since that no linkage exists between arms sales to Taiwan and a peaceful method of resolving the Peking-Taipei conflict. On the day of the Communiqué, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party boldly stated in an editorial:

The United States has no right to demand that China undertake any obligation as to the methods it chooses in solving the Taiwan problem, nor should the United States put forth as a prerequisite condition for the cessation of arms sales to Taiwan that China commit itself to not solving the Taiwan problem by any means other than a peaceful one....⁵

Similarly three days later the official PRC news agency Xinhua stated: "Here, it should be pointed out once again that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan and China's efforts for peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue are two separate questions of an entirely different nature...."⁶

"PEACEFUL RESOLUTION" FOR TAIWAN AND PEKING'S INTERNAL AFFAIRS

In his official report to the XIIth Communist Party Congress, Chairman Hu Yaobang reiterated that the Taiwan question is an internal Chinese affair and thus arms sales mean that the U.S. is "treating Taiwan as an independent political entity." The report reads in part, as follows:

As the Chinese Government has repeatedly stated, these are acts of infringement on China's sovereignty and of interference in China's internal affairs. Not long ago, after nearly a year of talks, the Chinese and U.S. Governments issued a joint communique providing for a step-by-step solution of the question of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, leading to a final thorough settlement.

We hope that these provisions will be strictly observed. Sino-U.S. relations can continue to develop soundly only if the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty

⁵ Renmin Ribao editorial, Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), August 17, 1982.

⁶ Xinhua, August 20, 1982; FBIS, August 23, 1982, p. B1.

and territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs are truly adhered to.⁷

Unfortunately the plain language in the Communiqué provides American acquiescence to the Chinese interpretation of the issue as an internal affair. Every allusion in the Communiqué to the term "peaceful resolution" derives from the PRC's position linking such a "peaceful" resolution of the PRC-Taiwan conflict to Peking's internal solution of the problem. Thus, in paragraphs 4 and 5, references appear three times to Peking's "fundamental policy" of a peaceful solution. But each of these references relates to "peaceful reunification" of the PRC and Taiwan under either the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan issued by the PRC on January 1, 1979, or the Nine Point Proposal made by the PRC on September 30, 1981.

This point was reinforced by the PRC Ambassador to Washington Chai Zemin in an interview on CBS News and later reprinted in Peking. He referred to the "peaceful settlement" under the 1979 and 1981 proposals and then said, "However, we are not to make any commitment to any country on the peaceful settlement of the Taiwan problem. We consider the Taiwan problem to be China's internal affair. It is up to us to decide how to solve this problem."⁸

In other words, Peking's peaceful policy consists only of a willingness to accept "peacefully" a surrender of Taiwan's sovereignty. Thus, U.S. enthusiasm for a so-called fundamental policy of peace obviously will be interpreted in Peking as support from Washington for their demands concerning Taiwan. The Communiqué even explicitly states that "The U.S. Government understands and appreciates the Chinese policy of striving for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question as indicated in China's Message to Compatriots...and the Nine Point proposal."

Although construed as a "new situation," according to Holdridge, the breakthrough for the agreement consisted of nothing more than a reaffirmation of Peking's previous proposals. Moreover, while embracing Peking's proposals without qualification, the U.S. completely ignored Taipei's proposals. A speech by Premier Sun Yun-hsuan on June 28, 1982, proclaimed Taiwan's three conditions for reunification: "The goal of the Principle of Nationalism is a government of the people. The goal of the Principle of

⁷ Hu Yaobang's Report to XIIth Party Congress. Xinhua, September 7, 1982; FBIS, September 8, 1982, p. K19.

⁸ The China Daily, 2, Peking, People's Republic of China, August 27, 1981, p. 1.

People's Rights is a government by the people, and the goal of the Principle of the People's Livelihood is a government for the people." In a separate statement, the Premier indicated that "if the political, economic, social, and cultural gap between the China mainland and Free China continues to narrow, the conditions for peaceful reunification can gradually mature."⁹

President Reagan seemed in support when he stated on the day the Communiqué was issued "We will not interfere in this matter [the Taiwan question] or prejudice the free choice of, or put pressure on, the people of Taiwan in this matter." But the actions of his Administration speak louder. Beyond embracing Peking's reunification proposals, the U.S. has promised to end arms sales to Taiwan and may even initiate a military sales program to the PRC.

The Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on Separation of Powers has launched a formal inquiry into the possibility that the Communiqué violated the authority of Congress. For again, as when President Carter broke relations with Taiwan without consulting Congress and during the 1978 Christmas recess, the Reagan Administration has contravened the clear intentions of the Congress.

THE GROWING PRC MILITARY THREAT TO TAIWAN

Peking's policies in the defense area cannot seriously challenge Soviet military forces in Asia. Nonetheless, the PRC has augmented significantly its military power, particularly in terms of new fighter aircraft. While this buildup can only have a modest deterrent effect on the Soviets, its strengthened air power can pose a substantial military threat to Taiwan.

The August 17th Communiqué completely ignores the vital military needs of Taiwan. Rather than relating future military sales to Taiwan to the potential military threats to the island, the Communiqué pledges to downgrade, and presumably end, military sales on the basis of Peking's peaceful rhetoric. Unfortunately, as so many other nations have discovered, rhetoric can change daily, but military capabilities cannot. Thus, the security of a country, such as Taiwan, can only be adequately maintained if it can be defended against the most likely adversaries. An examination of the current military capabilities of the People's Republic of China, coupled with prospective force improvements, indicates that the plan to downgrade the military capabilities of Taiwan will create a dangerously unstable situation. In fact, in order to maintain military balance in the region, and hence a stable environment for deterrence of war, the United States should supply Taiwan with a more advanced fighter, either the F5G (sometimes

⁹ Takashi Oka, Christian Science Monitor, August 10, 1982.

designated the F-20) or the F16/79.¹⁰

Present Chinese military developments threaten obsolescence for the current Taiwanese inventory of U.S. supplied aircraft. While Taiwan's Air Force at the moment has a qualitative superiority over most of the PRC combat aircraft sufficient to guarantee its security, it is not clear that this will continue to be the case. The PRC is acquiring at least three new aircraft that are significantly more capable than its imitations of the Soviet MiG 15/17/19/21.¹¹

These three aircraft, the F-8/12, A-5, H-8,¹² alone pose a significant threat to Taiwan's increasingly outdated planes, for they will close the qualitative gap between the two air forces and the PRC's greater numbers will tip the balance in their favor. Moreover, other more advanced aircraft are being developed at research institutes on the mainland or possibly being purchased abroad. Should they be deployed, without a parallel deployment by Taiwan, the PRC would have total air supremacy over the Straits.

Thus, there is an overriding need to rearm Taiwan now. It takes, on average, at least two to four years, from the time of ordering, for a new aircraft to be delivered in significant numbers; then it takes another couple of years for an air force to become accustomed to the new aircraft and develop the tactics best suited to it.

THE BASIS OF PRC AIR STRENGTH

Careful examination of the three new PRC aircraft reveals how large the advances of the Chinese Communists really are. The least advanced is the A-5, a totally redesigned MiG-19 with tactical strike as its primary mission. It has new wings with 30 percent increase in surface area as well as side air intakes, thus leaving the nose free for a new targeting radar radome. This aircraft is generally considered to be underpowered with its two copies of the Soviet Tumansky R-9BF/R-9B-811 engine (the Chinese designation is Wopen 6A). There are, however, reports that new engines might be provided by the Rolls Royce Spey, which

¹⁰ For a detailed study of the military situation in the PRC and Taiwan, see Martin Lasater, The Security of Taiwan: Unraveling the Dilemma (Washington, D.C.: The Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University, 1982).

¹¹ The MiG-21 (F-7) is currently being produced at a rate of 280-300 units per annum. Cf. Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, July 14, 1980.

¹² There are numerous designations for PRC military aircraft, and they are constantly being updated. This paper employs those of Jane's All the World's Aircraft: A = attack, fighter-bomber aircraft; F = fighter, air superiority aircraft; H = bomber.

would afford significantly more thrust for its weight and size. This, of course, would greatly increase the plane's capabilities by solving what were first thought to be serious design problems. The A-5 is now being produced in significant numbers, 500 having been built by mid-1981 at the main arsenal at Shenyang (see Table 1 for performance characteristics).¹³

The F-8/F-12 is the principal fighter in production for the People's Liberation Army Air Force.¹⁴ The F-12 is a PRC designed plane powered by two souped-up 20,000+ lb. thrust Rolls-Royce RB-168 Spey engines (the same engine that powers the Royal Air Force Buccaneer and the RAF F-4 Phantom aircraft). It is primarily a fighter and secondly a tactical strike aircraft. It is believed to have the same, or slightly more advanced, radar fire control system and navigational aids as the A-5. Consequently, it commands an advanced all weather day/night capability that has not previously been available to the PRC.

The F-12 was based on the design concept of the MiG-23 Flogger. The Chinese have examined an Egyptian Flogger and apparently have incorporated many of its advanced features, with the exception of the swing wings (the PRC plane has delta wings). The Spey engines give the F-12 a speed of Mach 2.4. New electronic systems also are being developed for this and other aircraft. New ECM pods have been sighted indicating other internal electronic improvements. The F-12 is believed to have been in full-scale production since 1981¹⁵ at the PRC's largest aircraft facility in Chengtu, the capital of the southwestern province of Szechuan.¹⁶ There could be increasing numbers facing Taiwan in the very near future.

The twin-engined bomber, the H(Hong)-8, is supposedly similar to a Backfire in configuration. There is little information available about this aircraft at the moment, except that it is likely to be a multi-role swing-wing bomber, with a prime role

¹³ Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, July 22, 1980. These and other modifications have given the A-5 a 25 percent increase in range and much improved poor weather performance compared to the copy of the MiG-19.

¹⁴ There is some confusion concerning the designation of this aircraft. Defense & Foreign Affairs, Jane's, and Aviation Week & Space Technology indicate that the F-12 is currently in production and that the F-8 is still under development. The International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) says, however, that the F-8 is in production implying that it is the F-12 which is under development. Whichever is the case, it is the aircraft that is based on the MiG-23 which is currently being produced. Hereafter, this MiG-23 type aircraft will be referred to as the F-12. Cf. in particular Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, April 22, 1980; and J. B. Linder and A. James Gregor, "Taiwan's Troubled Security Outlook," Strategic Review, Fall 1980, p. 53.

¹⁵ Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, July 22, 1980.

¹⁶ Ibid. Cf. also Lasater, op. cit., p. 62.

as an anti-shipping and precision, medium-range strike on military land targets.¹⁷

SUPPORTING PRC MILITARY STRENGTH

The Chinese have not limited themselves to designing/producing new planes. They have also developed new weapons systems. William Perry, Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, visited China in late 1980 and said that he saw a complete disassembled IR (infrared) guided Sidewinder missile.¹⁸ A conventional or nuclear tipped, radar guided stand-off missile with an estimated range of 50km has apparently been developed for the H-8.¹⁹ An infrared homing air-to-surface bomb has also been developed for the F-12. These new systems give the PRC Air Force an accuracy and an all-weather capability they did not have five years ago--one that will eliminate the advantage Taiwan heretofore enjoyed.

As alarming as these developments are, there is no sign of their abating. The Spey engine plant at Xian, set up in 1976, is now, after some delay, producing 20 engines a month,²⁰ enough for 240 planes a year. At that rate it would take only two years to exceed the entire inventory of Taiwan's Air Force. Furthermore, the Chinese are gaining full mastery of the new technology as 70 of their technicians and engineers went to England to be taught about the Spey. Rolls Royce also sent some of their experts to the PRC to train additional scientists. As an extension of this effort the Chinese Government has started to pump funds and additional expert personnel into the premier scientific research institution, the Institute of Aeronautical Design in Peking. The PRC has also obtained U.S. technology through 400 U.S. export licenses and advanced French aeronautical technology through the purchase of the Super Frelon and the SA-365N Dauphin 2 helicopters. A plant is being constructed to build the latter in Northeast China. In addition, Marconi Avionics is to upgrade the electronics in the F-6 and F-7 in a \$90 million contract. Marconi is also competing for a \$500 million contract for added avionics systems.²¹

Thus it appears that, with the initial breakthrough of signing the Spey contract in December 1975, the stagnation of Chinese aircraft production and design ended. In view of the obvious Chinese needs in the field of new advanced aircraft, these production and design efforts will continue to escalate.

¹⁷ Most of this information is drawn from Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, July 22, 1980.

¹⁸ Jane's All the World's Aircraft 1981-1982, p. 32, and Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, August 1, 1980.

¹⁹ Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, August 1, 1980.

²⁰ Ibid., and Jane's, op. cit., p. 32.

²¹ Cf. Defense & Foreign Affairs Daily, July 9 and 14, 1980.

Examples of this threat are the F-8A and the F-8B, both of which are currently being produced by the Chinese aircraft industry. The latter aircraft is a swing-wing attack plane and the former is a delta-wing interceptor.²²

RELATIVE STRENGTH: PRC AND TAIWAN

The qualitative threat posed to Taiwan by the F-12, A-5, and H-8 is obvious. Along with the existing numerical advantages, it casts serious doubt on the future security of Taiwan. The PRC has over 6,000 combat aircraft to Taiwan's 484, a 12 to 1 ratio; and 528,000 air force personnel to 77,000, giving the PRC an advantage of 6.8:1 in this category.²³

The PRC's current inventory should not be underestimated. Though the old MiG-19/21s are of limited range and growth potential, they have impressive maneuverability and dogfight potential. The MiG-19 is reported by Jane's All the World's Aircraft to outmaneuver all aircraft in the Asian theater with the exception of the F-86. The MiG-19 (F-6) reportedly can outclimb the F-104, a plane renowned for its rate of climb. The U.S. Air Force uses the F-5E to simulate MiG-21 performance characteristics when it practices air-to-air combat. The additional F-5E aircraft being supplied to Taiwan will do nothing to redress the growing qualitative imbalance between the two Chinese Air Forces.

As is evident from the data assembled in Table 1, all of the advanced Chinese aircraft, the A-5, F-7 (MiG-21), and F-12 (MiG-23), possess capabilities equal or superior to those of the F-5E, the mainstay of the Taiwan Air Force. The PRC planes, in general, are faster, have a greater thrust-to-weight ratio and approximately equal or better radar fits and rates of climb.

Recent reports claim that the PRC has contacted France concerning the procurement and possible production in China of large numbers of Mirage 2000 jet fighters. This is the most modern plane currently produced by France and is considered to be on rough parity with the F-16A. The Mirage 2000 would be a quantum leap for the PRC in terms of airframe design, power-plant, and avionics. It would easily outperform any aircraft in the Taiwan inventory. The 2000 would provide the PRC with an all-weather, day/night fighter that is equipped with advanced, radar guided, medium range air-to-air missiles. Since Taiwan lacks an equivalent system or the potential for developing one, its air force would thus be at the mercy of the PRC.

²² Aviation Week & Space Technology, June 15, 1981.

²³ IISS, The Military Balance 1982-1983, London, 1982. PRC figures include combat aircraft and personnel assigned to the Navy.

TABLE I
ADVANCED FIGHTER DATA

This table lists the specifications and performance characteristics for the various fighter aircraft:

	F-5G	MIG-21*	F-5E	F-16/79**	MIG-23	A-5/F-9/F-6
MAXIMUM SPEED AT ALTITUDE	M 2.1	M 2.1	M 1.63.	M 2+ç	M 2.3+	M 1.35
MAXIMUM CEILING	55,000 ft.	50,000+ ft.	51,800 ft.	50,000 ftç.	61,000 ft.	52,000 ft.
MAXIMUM TAKE-OFF WEIGHT	26,140 lb.	20,725 lb.	24,676 lb.	35,400 lb.	33,000+ lb.	23,566 lb.
MAXIMUM PAYLOAD	7,000+ lb. 4xASMs, 2x MG, 2+x bombs	3,300+ lb. 4xAtoll AAM, 1xMG	7,000 lb. 2xAIM-9s, 2x20mm MG, 1-4 bombs, dated targetting radar.	15,200 lb. 2xAIM-9s, 1x20mm GM, 6xASM/bomb v. adv. target/ radar.	4,400+ lb. 1x23mm MG, 2xIR ASMs, adv. all weather rad.	n/a, include ASMs, iron bombs & 2 machine guns
ELECTRONICS FIT	Adv. all weather multi-mode radar.	search & track radar.				Fire control radar
SUSTAINED TURNING RATE	9.7 d/s	7.5 d/s	7.8 d/s	12.8 d/sç	n/a	n/a
INSTANTANEOUS TURNING RATE ²	14 d/s	13.4 d/s	14 d/s	17.3 d/sç	11.5 d/s	n/a
RATE OF CLIMB ³	46,000 fpm	21,000 fpm	26,000 fpm	60,000 fpm	41,300 fpm	19,685 fpm
THRUST-TO-WEIGHT RATIO	0.96	0.8	0.63	0.78 ⁴	0.89	n/a
COMBAT RADIUS	415 miles with medium payload (CAP mission).	350 miles with medium payload	553 miles max. with medium payload	575+ miles with medium payload	600-700+ miles with medium payload	350-400 miles

Abbreviations: d, degrees

s, seconds

fpm, feet per minute

AIM-9, Sidewinder ASM

rad, radar

* These figures are very similar to the Chinese F-7

** Where ç the figures apply to the more sophisticated F-16 in the U.S. inventory

Foot Notes

1. Figures pertain to actions at 15,000 ft. at Mach 0.9

2. Ibid

3. From sea level to 36,000 ft.

4. In these categories the performance characteristics are very similar to those of the F-16/79

With the possible acquisition of Mirage 2000s and the other planes now being designed and produced in the PRC, Peking would have an overwhelming numerical and technological advantage over the Taiwan Air Force and its increasingly obsolescent F-5A/Es. It would no longer be prohibitively costly for the PRC to destroy the Taiwan Air Force and gain air superiority over the island itself and the surrounding seas.

Once the Taiwanese lose the ability to dominate their own airspace, especially the seas and the Straits, the PRC will gain an increased capability to either invade the island or to implement an effective naval blockade. An invasion might be too costly a manner to destroy Taiwan as an independent entity, but the PRC still refuses to rule it out. A blockade would cripple the economy and bring Taiwan to its knees. Then Taipei would be forced to eventually surrender, failing significant outside military assistance.

These actions are not so remote as they might seem. In recent years, PRC leadership has been chronically unstable. It is conceivable that the leadership could change again or that domestic political pressure could lead to vigorous pursuit of the repeatedly avowed goal of reintegration of the island with the mainland. The military would be eager to redeem itself after the recent humiliation in Vietnam and to try out new equipment. By 1984/85, it is estimated the PRC will have 700+ A-5 attack aircraft, several hundred F-12 fighter aircraft and perhaps some Mirage 2000s as well as the thousands of aircraft that they already possess. In addition, the PRC will have advanced air-to-air missiles (AAMs) and a superb all-weather capability, which Taiwan will lack. Given this, the Taiwan Air Force would probably last less than two weeks under an intensive attack by the PRC.²⁴

Only with the prospective acquisition of an advanced fighter such as the F-5G, F-16/79, or even the F-16A can Taiwan hope to maintain a military balance in the area. By 1984-1986, Taiwan will have a maximum of 250 to 260 F-5E aircraft; all other aircraft, such as the F-104, F-5A, and the F-100 will likely be obsolete. Taiwan would need the F-16A or possibly the F-16/79 to guarantee its security as both planes constitute advanced, all-weather fighter fitted with advanced AAMs. Even with the F-5G, Taiwan might be at a slight disadvantage vis-a-vis such a plane as the Mirage 2000. However, with the superior training of its pilots, Taiwan could probably discourage PRC attack. The F-16A/F-16/79 and the F-5G could be ready for Taiwan by late 1984 or early 1985; at least 160 to 200 would be needed. Even fewer would dramatically restore military balance and substantially boost the morale of Taiwan.

²⁴ Cf. estimate given by Admiral Edwin K. Snyder before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in February 1979, Taiwan Hearings, p. 586.

Objections to the sale of these planes have centered on their range as posing a threat to the PRC. According to Jane's All the World's Aircraft 1981-1982, when both planes are carrying two AAMS and at least two bombs, the present F-5E has an equal or greater range than the F-16/79. Thus no new threat would be posed to the PRC in terms of increased ability to strike further inland. The F-16/79 would offer more to Taiwan's security than the F-5G in its ability to patrol and interdict the sea lanes and the Straits, a prime U.S. concern. With it, Taiwan could use its superior piloting capabilities to better advantage, whereas the F-5G would be easier for Taiwan to maintain because of extensive experience with the F-5E. However, the F-16/79 would not in any way be beyond Taiwanese operational capability.

Because the F-16/79 is a better plane, some degree of additional threat to the PRC would exist, but certainly not enough to raise significantly Taiwan's offensive capability. If the objective is to eliminate any possible threat that Taiwan poses to the PRC, the answer is quite simple--disarm Taipei. Unfortunately, this is the policy implicit in the August 17 Communiqué.

But if the aim is to safeguard the security of Taiwan, the U.S. should provide Taipei with an advanced fighter. The F-16/79/A is the best plane. The F-5G cannot be adequately equipped as an all-weather interceptor and retain its combat maneuverability. The F-16/79 has this potential, and the F-16A is already so fitted. The F-5G will be outdated sooner than the F-16/79, as the latter is inherently more advanced and has more room for growth. The costs of the F-16/79 and the F-5G are comparable and both planes could be available at approximately the same time.

Even if the F-16/79 or the F-5G were construed as a threat to the PRC, Taiwan is threatened far more by the PRC. Taiwan cannot even consider an invasion of the PRC; not only would it be doomed to military defeat, but such an action would guarantee the end of its political support from other nations. Consequently, the only reason for denying Taiwan an advanced fighter aircraft is that the PRC opposes the sales for primarily political reasons.

CONCLUSION

As Ronald Reagan campaigned for president in 1980, he promised, to restore balance and integrity to U.S. relations with Taiwan. Specifically he pledged that, unlike the Carter Administration, he "would not impose restrictions which are not required by the Taiwan Relations Act and which contravene its spirit and purpose." Moreover, he stated that, among the provisions of that act, the "most important...spells out our policy of providing defensive weapons to Taiwan." Finally candidate Reagan criticized Carter for making "concessions that were not necessary and not in our national interest."²⁵

²⁵ Ronald Reagan, "Campaign Statement on U.S. Policy Toward Asia and the Pacific," Los Angeles, California, August 25, 1980.

Unfortunately President Reagan, like his three predecessors in the White House, has continued to pursue a policy of successive concessions to Peking at the expense of the future security and integrity of Taiwan. The August 17th Communiqué made more drastic concessions to the PRC than had any previous agreement. By conceding that Taiwan is an "internal problem" of China, the U.S. has undermined morale in Taiwan and compromised its future legal status. By specifically negotiating with the PRC concerning Taiwan, the U.S. has, in fact, conceded to the PRC oversight authority of this aspect of U.S.-Taiwan relations. By using the same argument (that arms sales violate Peking's sovereignty over internal affairs), future dealings with Taiwan in trade, tourism, investment, social and cultural relations can similarly be challenged by Peking.

Numerous U.S. concessions to Peking over the last decade have neither satisfied the PRC demands concerning Taiwan, nor significantly affected their conduct of foreign policy. The U.S. has misinterpreted a serious split between the PRC and the Soviet Union as only a minor dispute that could end abruptly without constant U.S. cultivation of Peking. The PRC has effectively played upon these American fears of a Sino-Soviet rapprochement and American hopes for a peaceful PRC-Taiwan rapprochement as well. But Taiwan, like other noncommunist countries in Asia, distrusts the PRC on the basis of bitter historical experience. Before giving support to implicit PRC pledges to resolve disputes peacefully, the U.S. should make the same demand of Peking that the PRC made recently of Moscow. In his official report to the XIIth Party Congress, Hu Yaobang, said Soviet "deeds, rather than words, are important."

In the 1951 Agreement on Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, Peking promised that "The central authorities also will not alter the established status, function, and powers of the Dalai Lama." The Dalai Lama had to flee Tibet and has never returned. Most recently the PRC has not even been able to assuage the suspicions of the Chinese in Hong Kong that prospective Peking sovereignty would not lead to disaster.

It should be noted as well that even the PRC denies any explicit connection between pursuing a peaceful policy toward Taiwan and resolving its differences with Taipei. This is the fatal flaw of the August 17th Communiqué. Thus, the U.S. should cease its tacit support of any "peaceful" proposals from Peking until such time as the PRC actually demonstrates genuine tolerance for diversity within the domain it currently governs. If the PRC refuses to concede genuine regional autonomy to areas such as Tibet that they now control, should the U.S. give credence to its vague promises for Taiwan or Hong Kong?

Given the PRC's political hostility to Taiwan coupled with its military buildup, any reduction of arms sales to Taipei would be both inappropriate and dangerously destabilizing. Maintaining a reasonable military balance over the Taiwan Straits, on the other hand, has effectively deterred war between the two Chinas for the last three decades.

In view of the continued reliability of Taiwan as an authentic ally of the U.S. and the growing potential PRC military threat to Taiwan, the Reagan Administration should be upgrading, rather than downgrading, the sophistication of equipment being sold to Taiwan. Specifically, the U.S. should sell a more advanced all-weather fighter to Taiwan to counter the new generation of aircraft being deployed by Peking. Though the August Communiqué unfortunately complicates such an action, the U.S. should revert to sound military and political principles and provide the equipment necessary to ensure the continued survival of Taiwan. Failure to do so can only lead to the eventual destruction of one of America's oldest and closest allies in the postwar era.

Jeffrey B. Gayner
Counselor on International Affairs

The author wishes to acknowledge the invaluable assistance of Greerson McMullen, Research Assistant at the Heritage Foundation.

United States Arms Sales to Taiwan

Joint Communiqué of the United States and the People's Republic of China.
August 17, 1982

1. In the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations on January 1, 1979, issued by the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the People's Republic of China, the United States of America recognized the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China, and it acknowledged the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China. Within that context, the two sides agreed that the people of the United States would continue to maintain cultural, commercial, and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan. On this basis, relations between the United States and China were normalized.

2. The question of United States arms sales to Taiwan was not settled in the course of negotiations between the two countries on establishing diplomatic relations. The two sides held differing positions, and the Chinese side stated that it would raise the issue again following normalization. Recognizing that this issue would seriously hamper the development of United States-China relations, they have held further discussions on it, during and since the meetings between President Ronald Reagan and Premier Zhao Ziyang and between Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig, Jr., and Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Huang Hua in October, 1981.

3. Respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in each other's internal affairs constitute the fundamental principles guiding United States-China relations. These principles were confirmed in the Shanghai Communiqué of February 28, 1972, and reaffirmed in the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations which came into effect on January 1, 1979. Both sides emphatically state that these principles continue to govern all aspects of their relations.

4. The Chinese government reiterates that the question of Taiwan is China's internal affair. The Message to Compatriots in Taiwan issued by China on January 1, 1979, promulgated a fundamental policy of striving for peaceful reunification of the Motherland. The Nine-Point Proposal put forward by China on September 30, 1981, represented a further major effort under this fundamental policy to strive for a peaceful solution to the Taiwan question.

5. The United States Government attaches great importance to its relations with China, and reiterates that it has no intention of infringing on Chinese sovereignty and territorial integrity, or interfering in China's internal affairs, or pursuing a policy of "Two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan." The United States Government understands and appreciates the Chinese policy of striving for a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question as indicated in China's Message to Compatriots in Taiwan issued on January 1, 1979, and the Nine-Point Proposal put forward by China on September 30, 1981. The new situation which has emerged with regard to the Taiwan question also provides favorable conditions for the settlement of United States-China differences over the question of United States arms sales to Taiwan.

6. Having in mind the foregoing statements of both sides, the United States Government states that it does not seek to carry out a long-term policy of arms sales to Taiwan, that its arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China, and that it intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to a final resolution. In so stating, the United States acknowledges China's consistent position regarding the thorough settlement of this issue.

7. In order to bring about, over a period of time, a final settlement of the question of United States arms sales to Taiwan, which is an issue rooted in history, the two governments will make every effort to adopt measures and create conditions conducive to the thorough settlement of this issue.

8. The development of United States-China relations is not only in the interests of the two peoples but also conducive to peace and stability in the world. The two sides are determined, on the principle of equality and mutual benefit, to strengthen their ties in the economic, cultural, educational, scientific, technological and other fields and make strong, joint efforts for the continued development of relations between the governments and peoples of the United States and China.

9. In order to bring about the healthy development of United States-China relations, maintain world peace and oppose aggression and expansion, the two governments reaffirm the principles agreed on by the two sides in the Shanghai Communiqué and the Joint Communiqué on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations. The two sides will maintain contact and hold appropriate consultations on bilateral and international issues of common interest.

United States Arms Sales to Taiwan

*Statement by the President.
August 17, 1982*

The U.S.-China joint communiqué issued today embodies a mutually satisfactory means of dealing with the historical question of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. This document preserves principles on both sides and will promote the further development of friendly relations between the governments and peoples of the United States and China. It will also contribute to the further reduction of tensions and to lasting peace in the Asia/Pacific region.

Building a strong and lasting relationship with China has been an important foreign policy goal of four consecutive American administrations. Such a relationship is vital to our long-term national security interests and contributes to stability in East Asia. It is in the national interest of the United States that this important strategic relationship be advanced. This communiqué will make that possible, consistent with our obligations to the people of Taiwan.

In working toward this successful outcome we have paid particular attention to the needs and interests of the people of Taiwan. My longstanding personal friendship and deep concern for their well-being is steadfast and unchanged. I am committed to maintaining the full range of contacts between the people of the United States and the people of Taiwan—cultural, commercial, and people-to-people contacts—which are compatible with our unofficial relationship. Such contacts will continue to grow and prosper and will be conducted with the dignity and honor befitting old friends.

Regarding future U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, our policy, set forth clearly in the communiqué, is fully consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act. Arms sales will continue in accordance with the act and with the full expectation that the approach of the Chinese Government to the resolution of the Taiwan issue will continue to be peaceful. We attach great significance to the Chinese statement in the communiqué regarding China's "fundamental" policy, and it is clear from our statements that our future actions will be conducted with this peaceful policy fully in mind. The position of the United States Government has always been clear and consistent in this regard. The Taiwan question is a matter for the Chinese people, on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, to resolve. We will not interfere in this matter or prejudice the free choice of, or put pressure on, the people of Taiwan in this matter. At the same time, we have an abiding interest and concern that any resolution be peaceful. I shall never waver from this fundamental position.

I am proud, as an American, at the great progress that has been made by the people on Taiwan over the past three decades, and of the American contribution to that process. I have full faith in the continuation of that process. My administration, acting through appropriate channels, will continue strongly to foster that development and to contribute to a strong and healthy investment climate, thereby enhancing the well-being of the people of Taiwan.