Heritage Lectures

Published by The Heritage Foundation

No. 808
Delivered February 7, 2003

November 14, 2003

U.S.–Taiwan Defense Relations in the Bush Administration

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The Taiwan Strait is one of the most dangerous military flashpoints in the world, and perhaps the most complex and challenging future foreign and defense policy issue facing the United States in the Asia–Pacific region. Considering the gravity of the situation, the powers involved, and the stakes at hand, it is arguably more important than the current situation regarding North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

There is no more sensitive issue in the Sino–American relationship than Taiwan. Moreover, the U.S.–Taiwan defense relationship is probably the most controversial aspect of the relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC). The Bush Administration's policy toward Taiwan is markedly different from the Clinton Administration's position. On defense issues, President Bush's policy has clearly moved from one of "strategic ambiguity" to one of greater "strategic clarity." The Bush Administration has been quite clear about its view of Taiwan's security.

Statements by senior Bush Administration officials are instructive in framing how the White House views Taiwan's security. Even before the election, the Republican Party platform, which was ratified by the GOP in Philadelphia in August 2000, stated:

> Our policy is based on the principle that there must be no use of force by China against Taiwan. We deny the right of Beijing to impose its rule on the free Taiwanese people. All issues regarding Taiwan's future must be resolved peacefully and must be

Talking Points

- The U.S.–Taiwan defense relationship is probably the most controversial aspect of the relationship between the United States and China. The Bush Administration has been clear that the United States is committed to helping Taiwan defend itself.
- Confronting a threatening military buildup from China, Taiwan must do its share in providing for its own defense through a robust defense budget for personnel, readiness, and arms purchases as a well as reforming the defense establishment to meet the rapidly evolving challenges across the Taiwan Strait.
- Taiwan also should develop a civilian-controlled defense establishment as part of its admirable democratic transition to an open society.
- Washington's commitment to Taiwan's security is strong because it is in the U.S. interest, the interest of democracy in Taiwan, and in the best interest of the entire region.

This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:
www.heritage.org/asiaandthepacific/hl808.cfm

Produced by the Asian Studies Center

Published by The Heritage Foundation
214 Massachusetts Ave., NE
Washington, DC 20002–4999
(202) 546-4400 heritage.org

> agreeable to the people of Taiwan. If China violates these principles and attacks Taiwan, then the United States will respond appropriately in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act. America will help Taiwan defend itself.

The platform added in a separate section of the document that: "Taiwan deserves America's strong support, including the timely sale of defensive arms to enhance Taiwan's security." Furthermore, Secretary of State Colin Powell, in his confirmation testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January 2001, affirmed: "The United States will maintain the capacity to resist any form of coercion that jeopardizes the security of the social or economic system of the people of Taiwan."

Early in his tenure as Chief Executive, President Bush clarified the U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan. On ABC's *Good Morning America* television show on April 25, 2001, the President stated that if the PRC attacked Taiwan, the U.S. had an obligation to defend the Taiwanese. He declared that the U.S. would do "whatever it took to help Taiwan defend itself." In a February 2002 speech to the U.S.–Taiwan Business Council meeting in St. Petersburg, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz noted that, "As President Bush and others have said, the United States is committed to doing whatever it takes to help Taiwan defend itself. Our position is clear. We don't support Taiwan independence, but we oppose the use of force." At this same conference, Wolfowitz and Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs James Kelly each met with the Taiwanese Defense Minister, Tang Yao-ming. This was the first visit of a Taiwanese Defense Minister to the United States since the breaking of official relations with Taiwan in 1979. This meeting established a new precedence in the defense relationship, and publicly demonstrated a strong interest in issues related to Taiwan's security. Other high-level defense visits have also taken place.

On Taiwan defense issues, the objectives of the Bush Administration are quite clear. There is much less equivocation in policy regarding Taiwan's security than in the past. The Bush Administration believes that the United States has a strong interest in the security of Taiwan's democracy. Taiwan, along with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand, represent Asian societies that have embraced democracy, respect for human rights, and free markets. Therefore, the Administration believes that it is in the fundamental interest of the United States to ensure that these governments are secure and prospering. Any moves that threaten the progress made by these societies in terms of freedom and democracy would be considered a significant setback for U.S. interests in East Asia and undermine American credibility in the region. It is hoped that these governments will further serve as examples to other peoples in the region still living under authoritarian regimes. Arguably, Taiwan serves as an example to the PRC undermining the myth that Confucian societies and democracies are incompatible.

Bush Administration Policy Toward the PRC and Taiwan

The views of the Administration regarding the U.S.–Taiwan–PRC trilateral relationship are an important foundation for U.S. defense policy toward Taiwan. In some ways, the current approach to the trilateral relationship is consistent with long-standing U.S. policy. In other ways, the Bush Administration's stance is a recycling of previous Republican administration policy, and in some aspects it is new. The Administration has embraced the following elements in its China-Taiwan policy:

First, the Bush Administration still supports a "One China" policy in the context of the three Sino–U.S. joint communiqués. This means that the United States will have diplomatic relations only with the government in Beijing, though it will maintain all other forms of relations with Taiwan. Washington also understands that Beijing views Taiwan as a part of "China," but it does not itself accept that view.

Second, adherence to the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act (TRA, Public Law 96–8) is fundamental to Bush Administration policy. The TRA mandates arms sales that allow Taiwan to "maintain a sufficient self-defense capability." More specifically, in terms of the U.S.–Taiwan defense relationship, the Administration believes that this means maintaining a military balance across the Taiwan Strait through the provision of arms, military services, and training to Taipei. The TRA also states that any attempt by the PRC to settle the Taiwan issue by

military means, including by boycott or embargo, would be considered a threat to the peace of the region and a matter of grave concern to the U.S.

Third, many in the Administration believe that fulfilling President Reagan's 1982 "Six Assurances" to Taiwan is an important element of U.S. policy. This is perhaps the largest change from the policy of the previous Administration. The Six Assurances were conveyed to Taipei as a result of the August 17, 1982, Sino–American joint communiqué, in which the U.S. pledged 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 quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years…and that it intends to reduce gradually its sales of arms to Taiwan, leading over a period of time to final resolution."

On this basis, the PRC argues that the United States should no longer be selling arms to Taiwan at all. The U.S. replies that the terms and validity of the 1982 communiqué depend upon PRC assurances of resolving "the Taiwan question" by peaceful means only.

On July 14, 1982, the United States assured Taiwan that it:

- Had not agreed to a date for the ending of arms sales to Taiwan;
- Had not agreed to hold prior consultations with the PRC regarding arms sales to the Republic of China;
- Would not play any mediation role between the PRC and the Republic of China
- Would not revise the Taiwan Relations Act;
- Had not altered its position regarding sovereignty over Taiwan; and
- Would not exert pressure on the Republic of China to enter into negotiations with the PRC.

It has further been revealed in recent years that President Reagan also assured Taipei that if Beijing ceased its commitment to peaceful resolution of the Taiwan question, the August 17, 1982, U.S.–PRC communiqué would become null and void. Interestingly, the PRC has not rejected the use of force as a means in resolving the Taiwan question, calling into dispute in some circles the current validity of the 1982 communiqué.

Moreover, the Bush Administration has declared that there should be no unilateral change in the *status quo* by either party. This policy entails three elements: Taiwan should not declare independence; there should be no use of force by either side; and Taiwan's future should be resolved in a manner mutually agreeable to the people on both sides of the Strait. In addition, the U.S. has said that it does not "support" Taiwanese independence. This means that although Washington does not support Taiwanese independence at this time, it would support Taiwanese independence should both Beijing and Taipei mutually agree to it at some point in the future.

The Bush Administration also believes that Washington should maintain robust (albeit unofficial) diplomatic relations with Taipei. This is because peace across the Taiwan Strait is an important U.S. interest and Taiwanese actions—especially provocative ones—fundamentally affect American interests. Regular dialogue and contact with Taiwanese officials will improve communications and limit political surprises.

The Administration has been clear that it expects the parties on both sides of the Strait to act responsibly in support of regional stability. Furthermore, Washington will continue to encourage dialogue between Beijing and Taipei on political as well as security issues. The Bush Administration also believes that the U.S. should assist in finding opportunities for greater international representation for the Taiwanese people in such organizations as the World Health Organization (WHO). One reason for this belief is the fundamental argument that it is the right thing to do for the 22 million people of Taiwan, who deserve representation in the international community, especially on issue affecting their health, economic welfare, or the security of their planes and ships. The second reason is that the less the Taiwanese feel politically isolated and the more they feel part of the international community, the less likely they will be dissatisfied with the *status quo* and less likely to undertake provocative actions that could undermine peace and stability across the Strait. Finally, it is U.S. policy to encourage political liberalization on the Mainland, as this is the best hope for a peaceful resolution of the

cross-strait relationship. The more open and free that PRC society is and the closer the political systems of Taiwan and China are to one another, the greater the chances for a peaceful settlement to Taiwan's future.

The Challenges to Taiwan's Defense

In meeting the requirements of the TRA and the policy statements of President Bush, the Administration has a number of challenges in dealing with Taiwan's security. These include:

- An ambitious PRC force modernization program;
- Elements resistant to reform within Taiwan's defense establishment;
- A stovepiped Taiwanese government bureaucracy; and
- A restrictive Taiwanese economic environment.

PRC Military Modernization. The first and foremost challenge that Taiwan faces is a concerted PRC program to gain the ability to use force decisively in determining Taiwan's political future. This aggressive military modernization program is designed to gain this capability sooner rather than later.

China is working toward multiple military options for coercion, compulsion, or invasion and physical occupation of the island. The PRC's force modernization program appears to be outpacing Taiwan's force structure improvements. Buttressing the Chinese military buildup is a determined buying campaign of advanced Russian military systems such as *Kilo* class diesel submarines; advanced Su-27/30 fighter/bombers; SA-10 *Grumble* surface-air missiles and *Sovremennyy* class destroyers equipped with supersonic SS-N-22 *Sunburn* anti-ship missiles.

China is also rapidly improving its indigenous military industrial base, and over the next 10 years will acquire the capability to build advanced conventional and strategic systems. The PRC also has a top-notch ballistic missile program. China has a large arsenal of short-range M-9/11 ballistic missiles facing Taiwan and is aggressively pursuing a powerful mobile intercontinental missile program. It is developing a cruise missile program, as well. The Chinese buildup, though ostensibly for self-defense, is considered by many to be destabilizing.

The dynamic equilibrium in the cross-strait military balance is unquestionably shifting toward the PRC. Taiwan's qualitative military edge is quickly eroding in the face of China's military modernization efforts, which will result in both a quantitative as well as a qualitative advantage for Beijing. This will happen in the next five years unless Taiwan undertakes a significant defense modernization effort. Moreover, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is striving to be able to carry out its attack before American forces can intervene. If Beijing does choose a military option, the PRC will likely make every effort to deter, deny, or delay U.S. intervention and military operations for as long as possible, hoping for a quick political capitulation by Taiwan. This places a new series of requirements upon Taiwan's military, as well as upon American defense planners and operational forces. It is believed that China's military modernization and strategy are focused on exploiting vulnerabilities in Taiwan's national and operational level command and control (C^2) systems, its integrated air defense system, and its reliance on air and sea lines of communication as an island nation.

Military Conservatism. Taiwan's international political isolation is related to a second challenge—overcoming resistance within Taiwan's defense establishment to make the requisite changes to improve Taiwan's fighting efficiency and effectiveness. Concepts such as joint operations will be critical to ensuring Taiwan's ability to deter and counter PRC coercion and other forms of aggression. Increased contact with modern foreign militaries might improve Taiwan's receptiveness to new military concepts.

While transformation appears to be the buzzword of the moment in U.S. military circles, almost every military organization, including many in the U.S., resists change, even when such change is necessary. Initiative, innovation, and evolution in the Taiwan military are critical to its future viability as a deterrent to provocative or aggressive Chinese actions. Although Taiwan should be applauded for its broad defense reform efforts, the historical dominance of the defense establishment by the ground forces and the uniformed military have made large-scale changes in its defense establishment culture difficult, especially as regards civil–military relations. Taiwan's unwillingness to pursue needed changes

will increase the rate at which the PRC's military closes the gap with, and surpasses, the Taiwan armed forces.

Stovepiped Bureaucracy. Another challenge for Taiwan is a defense establishment that operates in relative isolation from the rest of Taiwan's governmental bureaucracy and operations. Until the passage of the defense reform legislation, the armed forces reported directly to the President. Today, the Taiwanese armed forces report to the President of Taiwan through a civilian Minister of Defense. This is a positive step for the development of civil society and consolidating democracy in Taiwan. But the Ministry of National Defense (MND) must also be an integral part of Taiwan's broader governmental bureaucracy. A greater degree of cooperation between the military and other departments within the government would enhance Taiwan's ability to react rapidly and efficiently to crisis situations or even natural disasters. A unity of purpose and synergy of effort between the civilian bureaucracy and the Taiwan defense establishment is needed and, indeed, required in the event of a Taiwan Strait contingency.

Economic Pressures. The administration of President Chen Shui-bian also faces challenges stemming from the island's economic downturn. Taiwan's economic stagnation has created a more constrained budget environment that requires Taipei to think more innovatively about its defense needs and develop a more efficient, rational acquisition process that marries national and military strategies with defense system development and procurement, thereby ensuring a comprehensive defense posture for the island nation.

Taiwan's indecision on key issues such as increasing the defense budget, C^4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance), naval assets, maritime surveillance aircraft, integrated air defense systems and personnel, equipment and logistics readiness is giving some the impression that Taiwan does not take its defense seriously. Some of this indecisiveness is the byproduct of the flourishing of democracy in Taiwan. The budget process features bitter struggles in the Legislative Yuan, particularly over prioritizing guns versus butter.

The Bush Administration has emphasized to Taiwan that it believes, and expects, that Taiwan will take the necessary steps to provide for its own security in the face of the significant improvements by the People's Liberation Army. Taiwan's defense budget and weapons systems procurement programs must also reflect a commitment to its own security. A failure to do so may encourage misperception or miscalculation on the part of the PRC, potentially leading to conflict.

To expedite the arms sales process, Washington has made some significant changes in policy guidelines for Taiwan. It has established a "normal, routine consideration" process for Taipei's requests for defense articles and services. Taiwan is now treated the same as any other foreign military sales customer in terms of process. Taiwan is no longer restricted to annual arms sales talks and can make application for arms sales from the United States whenever desired. This change in policy depoliticizes the process significantly and removes the gamesmanship that previously characterized the annual Taiwan arms sales process. This will hopefully lead to a more rational, efficient arms sales relationship and ultimately improve Taiwan's defense and security.

Toward this end, in April 2001, the U.S. offered Taiwan a number of significant combat systems, including P-3 anti-submarine warfare (ASW) patrol aircraft, diesel submarines and *Kidd*-class destroyers, reflecting Bush Administration concerns about Taiwanese deficiencies in naval power, especially anti-submarine and anti-surface warfare. Assessments of Taiwan's future defense needs will be shaped by how Taiwan undertakes decisions in all the above areas.

The Imperatives for Taiwan's Defense

The challenges posed to Taiwan's defense by the People's Liberation Army are serious, but they are not insurmountable. To overcome these challenges, the Bush Administration is encouraging Taiwan to undertake fundamental reforms and to commit the necessary financial resources to maintain a rough parity in the cross-strait balance of power. The ability to withstand any PRC attempt at military coercion, at least until friendly forces can intervene, is key to Taiwan's national security.

The Bush Administration considers that there are at least four imperatives that should guide Taiwan's approach to defense. Some of these imperatives are already being addressed through implementation of Taiwan's National and Defense Reorganization Laws. If faithfully executed, these laws may hold the key to Taiwan's ability to ensure stability in the Taiwan Strait. Fortunately, some progress has already been achieved in reforming Taiwan's defense establishment.

Among the most important imperatives that the Bush Administration is encouraging Taipei to undertake are:

- Greater focus on countering coercive scenarios by the PRC;
- Prioritization and rationality in Taiwan's defense planning;
- Force modernization; and
- Enhancement of civil–military relations.

Greater Focus on Coercive Scenarios. Taiwan should place greater emphasis on preparing for PRC coercive uses of force, short of a full-scale amphibious invasion. In coercive scenarios, the PRC would attack Taiwan's strategic center of gravity—meaning Taiwan's political and military leadership—in hopes of a quick victory. PRC coercion or compulsion would seek to undermine national will, morale, and resolve, forcing Taiwan to the negotiating table quickly, on terms favorable to the PRC, and before concerned governments or forces could intervene diplomatically or politically.

The PRC may seek to affect Taiwan's national resolve in a number of ways, including targeting its international support, undercutting or denying its military capabilities, attempting to provoke a severe downturn in the Taiwanese economy, sowing dissent within the domestic polity, or "decapitating" Taiwan's political leadership in a military strike. Coercive uses of force could take many forms, including information warfare attacks, air and missile strikes, or a naval blockade. One school of thought continues to assert that the PRC's ability to successfully coerce Taiwan is dependent upon its ability to mount a credible threat of a full-scale military invasion. Not surprisingly, the PRC is increasingly able to undertake such an invasion and, therefore, more able to influence Taiwan in the event of a crisis.

While holding this larger threat over Taiwan, other coercive scenarios, short of a full-scale invasion, can be just as dangerous and are probably even more likely. But the Bush Administration reminds Taipei that even with a greater focus on limited uses of force in a coercive context, it does not mean Taiwan should not be prepared for a worst-case scenario—i.e., an amphibious invasion by the PLA. Taiwan has been encouraged to be ready for a wide range of military scenarios and pursue a comprehensive defense posture to be able to deal with the full spectrum of military and non-military threats presented by Beijing.

Prioritization and Rationalization in Defense Planning. The Bush Administration is also encouraging the Ministry of National Defense to efficiently prioritize defense needs, including planning, acquisition, programming, and budgeting methodologies. The establishment of offices within the Ministry of Defense responsible for strategic planning, integrated analysis, and the acquisition function is a positive step in this direction. Taiwan has also been encouraged to develop national security and national military strategies. These national strategies, similar to those produced by the executive branch for the Congress here in the United States, will provide the basic outline for acquisition of new weapons systems. It follows then that acquisition programs will be developed that will allow national command authorities to fully execute defense plans and operations in relation to the threat posed by the PLA.

Force Modernization and Strategy. The Bush Administration, in light of its assessment of PRC military modernization, has spurred Taiwan to undertake a number of initiatives related to defense planning and modernization.

First, the Administration believes that it is imperative for Taiwan to construct a survivable national command and control (C^2) system, which is capable of providing sufficient strategic and tactical warning of hostile action. Durable national and defense information infrastructures must be acquired or developed. The island must be able to withstand initial air and missile strikes by the PRC and have the ability to regain an operational military capability quickly and efficiently.

Second, Taiwan's three military services must be interoperable and able to function as a team. Joint operations are vital to the modern battlefield and Taiwan is no exception. Jointness must not only be part of force structure, it must be vigorously exercised in field training exercises to be effective when needed.

Third, Taiwan must be able to protect its critical civil infrastructure from military or cyber attacks and ensure there is a continuity of services to the government, military, and general populace in times of crisis. Critical infrastructure protection will support military operations as well as buoy political resolve and national will during a military contingency with the PRC.

Fourth, Taiwan must be capable of defending against a Chinese air and missile campaign. Taipei must understand that an integrated approach to air defense—meaning both active and passive measures—is critical. Considering the emphasis by the PRC on offensive ballistic missiles, Taiwan should begin now to develop an autonomous missile defense capability to defend against the growing number of PRC ballistic missiles opposite Taiwan. However, Taiwan has been cautioned that while active missile defenses are important, there should be no misconception that it is the perfect solution to air and missile threat posed by the PRC. Missile defenses are most effective if they are part of an integrated, layered approach for defending against air and missile threats. Taiwan must also ensure that its military facilities can endure air and missile attacks through such passive means as facility hardening.

Fifth, some in Washington—and Taipei—believe that Taiwan should move in the direction of a defense strategy that contains a limited offensive element. This is a very controversial issue. Advocates believe this would improve the chances of deterring any PRC use of force and, if necessary, deny, or at least complicate, execution of a PRC campaign against the island. According to its proponents, instead of absorbing initial PRC air and missile strikes without countering, and potentially having to meet Chinese offensive forces at the Taiwan beaches, the Taiwanese armed forces should maintain a limited—or even robust—offensive counterforce capability. This would mean that following the initiation of hostilities by the PRC, Taiwan would have the capability to strike at participating PRC ports, airfields, logistics depots, and attacking forces located on the Chinese mainland, or even transiting the Taiwan Strait, using Taiwanese ballistic and cruise missiles and manned aircraft.

In the years ahead, effective self-defense, particularly against the growing PRC military punch, may require counterstrikes to disrupt the pace and scope of Chinese offensive military operations. To be effective, considerable intelligence, training, and practice in certain scenarios are essential (e.g., anti-surface ship missions by manned aircraft.) This is a counterforce strategy, not a countervalue strategy, which conceivably would require the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the targeting of civilian populations. But no one is advocating a countervalue strategy or WMD development by Taiwan.

One of the concerns about the offensive option is the possibility that Taiwan might decide to initiate hostilities or take preemptive action against what it perceives as an imminent military strike by the PRC. If Taiwanese perceptions are wrong, this could lead to unnecessary hostilities, escalation, and the involvement of U.S. forces in a cross-strait contingency. But if Taiwan possessed a limited offensive capability, it could deter Chinese actions by raising the costs to the PLA of any military adventurism as well as providing time for friendly forces to intervene should China initiate hostilities.

Sixth, the backbone of any armed force remains its personnel. The Bush Administration has emphasized to Taipei that in order to effectively operate its weapon systems and execute its defense plans, Taiwan must foster a highly competent, professional officer and non-commissioned officer (NCO) corps and enlisted ranks. The lack of a strong NCO corps undermines Taiwan's military effectiveness and creates a dearth of leadership for the enlisted forces. Taiwan must therefore develop incentives for young Taiwanese to join the armed forces and find ways to retain them after the end of their initial service commitment. Taiwan also requires a progressive military education system that ensures professionalism and promotes prudent risk-taking, creative thinking, and innovation on the battlefield.

Enhancement of Civil–Military Relations. Finally, the Bush Administration has been promoting democratic civil–military relations in Taiwan. Although a long-standing tradition, Taiwan's armed services can no longer operate in isolation from the rest of the Taiwanese government, especially the Ministry of National Defense. Political considerations will define the nature of conflict in the Taiwan Strait, including its scope, intensity, and duration. These political decisions will be made by Taiwan's civilian leaders in consultation with the senior leadership of the armed forces. The uniformed armed forces must work with the civilian leadership in their pursuit of national security objectives.

Taiwan needs a transparent and accountable unformed military that is fully responsive to its democratically elected political leadership. Unity of purpose, maintenance of discipline within the military leadership, and the seamless interplay between the political and military leaders is critical for resisting PRC coercion or aggression. Many PRC strategies would seek to divide the political leadership from the military to create confusion and foster weakness and indecision critical to military success.

There is no doubt that the Taiwan military would obey the direction of its democratically elected leadership. Problems in civil–military relations, thus, are not only questions of civilian control of the military, but civilian participation in the defense policy process. But there is a dearth of qualified civilians who are prepared to assume senior leadership positions within the Ministry of National Defense. Through educational programs and on-the-job training, Taiwan must invest in a cadre of civilians capable of managing national security and defense affairs. The argument often heard in Taiwan that civilian defense specialists are not qualified to comment or work on defense matters is not credible in the U.S., Japan, and other countries, all of which rely heavily on the expertise of civilian defense professionals. Taiwan must provide incentives for young people to enter national service in the national security field.

In addition, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense must be capable of executing combined operations with civil agencies and law enforcement authorities, especially during times of national crisis such as a military contingency or even natural disaster. The Ministry of National Defense must also be responsive to media scrutiny and oversight by the Legislative Yuan, and it must be accountable to its citizenry. These are all hallmarks of an open, democratic society. Strengthening civil–military relations and building public trust will allow Taiwan to undertake the necessary steps required for its defense modernization.

Last, it is essential that Taiwan also develop laws that will establish a common means of protecting classified information, holding people accountable, and meting out appropriate punishment to offenders and spies. Frequent leaks of sensitive defense information, especially by the uniformed services, undermine Taiwan's national security as well as any relationship with current or future defense partners.

Conclusion

The prospects for stability across the Taiwan Strait over the next several years are uncertain. The People's Liberation Army is involved in a significant military buildup that strengthens China's ability to determine Taiwan's future militarily if it chooses. The United States maintains a strong interest in assisting the democratically elected government of Taiwan to deter the PRC's use of force and in ensuring that Taiwan has a sufficient defense capability to defeat PRC efforts should deterrence fail. Taiwan must do its share in providing for its own defense through a robust defense budget for personnel, readiness, and arms purchases as a well as reforming the defense establishment to meet the rapidly evolving challenges across the Taiwan Strait.

The United States expects the Taiwan armed forces to be able to fight efficiently and effectively should they be called upon to do so. Taipei fundamentally understands this. Toward this end, the United States also has an interest in ensuring that Taiwan develops a rational, civilian-controlled defense establishment as part of its democratic transition from authoritarianism to an open society. This transition is currently more fully developed in the political arena than in the national security and defense sector. But progress is being made.

Moreover, Beijing can have no illusions with regard to America's commitments to Taiwan's security. Public statements to this effect by the Administration have been clear on this account, and there is far less ambiguity in America's defense relations with Taiwan than in the past. The greater degree of strategic clarity by the Bush Administration will hopefully

add to the stability across the Taiwan Strait. Washington's commitment to Taiwan's security is strong because it is in the U.S. interest, the interest of democracy in Taiwan, and in the best interest of the entire region.

—Peter Brookes is Senior Fellow for National Security Affairs and Director of the Asian Studies Center at The Heritage Foundation. He delivered this lecture at the U.S. Naval War College.