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## The Balance of Powers in the Taiwan Strait and the Role of the United States

by

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I won't start addressing this serious subject with a joke but rather an announcement—what may be a news bulletin for some of you. The Chinese military, the People's Liberation Army (PLA), is in the midst of an unprecedented modernization of its missile, naval, and air forces. This "new PLA," as I refer to it, can readily overwhelm Taiwan and may soon be able, at least, to threaten the ability of the U.S. to intervene in a timely and effective manner.

- I rush to add that, despite the new PLA hardware, Beijing is not itching for a fight with Taiwan and the U.S.; quite to the contrary, Chinese leaders expect that this more capable PLA will serve to avoid a path leading to conflict by curbing intolerable actions by Taipei and encouraging Washington to help keep Taipei under control—as Beijing sees it.
- Furthermore, this new PLA is expected to deter, delay, or complicate a U.S. decision to intervene, thus allowing Beijing, if it decides it must act militarily, to bring about very rapid capitulation by Taipei and make reunification with Taiwan a *fait accompli*.
- Consequently, Washington, as the Chinese envision it, would have to decide belatedly to fight for a Taipei that was not defending itself and possibly already negotiating with Beijing to see what it could retain of Beijing's current offers for one China, two systems.
- Many observers believe that Beijing is highly unlikely to decide to use force against Taiwan, but there is no question that it has prepared to do so if it feels it must.

I will cover the forces of Taiwan, the U.S., and the PRC that are meant by the three capitals to aid in deterring conflict, that could instead be factors in a decision that results in conflict, and that would fight in a conflict across the Taiwan Strait.

ROC forces. In examining the balance of forces, a quick overview of Taiwan's forces will serve to set the scene. These are forces intended not for long-term defense but rather to hold on during a Chinese attack for a matter of days or maybe weeks until U.S. forces can become effective in intervention. It should be kept in mind that Beijing will be attempting to portray Taipei as the provocateur or culprit so as to complicate, delay, and confuse Washington's decision process.

- *Ground forces.* The ROC active and reserve army forces are large in numbers, but there are persistent issues with respect to how to defend Taiwan against invasion:
  - o Lack of attention to doubtful reserve mobilization plans and a questionable activation schedule to have forces in place to meet the PLA crossing the beaches and floating down in parachutes.
  - o Where should tight money go: to enhance the capability to stop an invasion force at sea or on the beaches? There are longstanding squabbles about whether money spent on tanks, helicopters and other such ground force equipment and arms really goes toward useful defense of the island or more to satisfy the anachronistic appetites of traditional proponents of the army as the premier service—or, worse, just to line the pockets of the corrupt, of which Taiwan, as well as the Mainland, still has more than its share.

In this vein of unpleasant, sensitive subjects, let me interject right at the outset, that there are troublesome lingering concerns about civilian control of the military and, more directly, about whether, or for how long, the military would fight for President Chen, especially if he is perceived to have provoked or precipitated a conflict or otherwise acted imprudently; e.g., inadvertently undermined U.S. support or made it complicated for the U.S. president readily to decide to aid Taiwan fulsomely. Even if the military fought at first under these circumstances, there are concerns among some observers that loyalty might then flag if the conflict goes very poorly. The DPP battering in the elections earlier this month may further complicate President's Chen's status in a crisis.

- *ROCAF*. In the air, as in other critical areas—as I noted at the outset, the balance has shifted decidedly to China. F-16s provided by the U.S. in the 1990s and Mirage 2000Vs (some said to be mothballed) of the same vintage are good—as are the pilots. But when I later tell you what the PLAAF has built and bought, you'll see why I am not encouraged and enthusiastic in describing the Taiwan AF. To add a few details for flavor, Taiwan has some very good air-to-air missiles, but the supply would be meager in an intense conflict. The opportunity to use these missiles and other air force capabilities might be very short-lived because of the recently greatly enhanced ability of the PLA to disrupt operation of Taiwan's airfields by missiles and follow-on air attacks.
- *ROCN*. The situation with the Taiwan Navy is not unlike the plight of the TAF. The source countries for the important weapon platforms are even the same: the U.S. and France. The frigate force, composed of ships of U.S. origin and the LaFayettes from France, are good ships with good weapons—if the ships are properly maintained and crews properly trained; that is not a foregone conclusion. However, the primary development is that the PLA Navy has simply surged in the last year or so to supremacy, overmatching any previous firepower and technology edges that Taiwan had. That alarming trend continues.
- *US arms offers*. It might seem that at least a partial solution, or at least a response, to the PLA modernization surge would be for Taipei to act quickly and purchase the major arms requested by Taipei and offered by Washington almost five years ago. Instead, as most are aware, Taiwan has not acted on any significant recent arms offers other than the Kidd-class destroyers—two of which should be in Taiwan soon, if not already there.
  - o Washington is exasperated about Taipei's failure so far to decide on the items in the 2001 arms package offered by the Bush administration; the primary items are diesel submarines, P-3C maritime patrol aircraft, and Patriot Advanced Capability 3 defenses against ballistic missiles.
    - In my view, but not that of the U.S. administration and specifically not that of Deputy Under Secretary of Defense Richard Lawless—whose opinion, unlike mine, counts in this contentious issue, Washington is being unduly and somewhat thoughtlessly impatient.

- On occasion, Washington has seemed more than impatient. At least one strident speech on the issue seemed to say: buy these items to help to defend yourself if you expect us to aid in your defense.
- Decisions by Taiwan on these weapon systems is, in my view, far from simple, and calculating their utility and cost-effectiveness is far from straightforward.
  - Yes, the issue has indeed become a political football in the LY: Pan-Blue vs. Pan-Green; neither side wants the other to appear to have had the leading role in accomplishing anything significant in defense. Additionally, dealing with those issues has been complicated by having a DPP administration that is just building experience in military hardware and strategic issues.
  - However, there are difficult substantive issues as well.
  - Looking at the issue of ballistic-missile defense first, the gloomy situation is that the best of the world's missile defenses, as they exist now and are likely to be developed for some time to come, are not very useful against the awful missile threat Taiwan faces—many times over the greatest real missile threat on the globe.
    - China's roughly 700 increasingly accurate SRBMs (Dongfeng-15s and 11s) pointed at Taiwan can overwhelm any conceivable defenses, including Patriot defenses (PAC-3 if obtained as well as existing PAC-2 missiles). These are ballistic missiles with conventional explosive warheads—not nuclear missiles (that China also has in ample supply).
    - There is a new conventional-warhead version of an old MRBM, called the (DF-21C). This new version is virtually untouchable by any foreseeable defenses and could be employed in an initial wave to give all those 700 SRBMs, or as many as China wanted to launch, essentially a free ride to strike their targets—and these are ballistic missiles with militarily useful accuracy.
    - The missile threat doesn't stop there. Near deployment are the DH-10 long-range GLCMs or LACMs (as one may choose to call them) that are under development.
  - That triple threat of MRBMs, SRBMs and GLCMs, very deliberately developed and assembled by Beijing, is a daunting prospect, even if each missile's warhead is viewed (correctly) as a just a big bomb.
    - A thousand, or even far fewer, very accurately placed weapons can decapitate the government, disable command and control (C2) facilities, disrupt air defenses, disable airfields, etc.
    - Those few in Taiwan who have realistically concluded that arming Taiwan further with missile defenses is for the most part futile, or at least of marginal utility (as well as very expensive), advocate an offensive counter-strike capability: missiles to deter China.

- The sensational version of this concept translates into missiles to hit Shanghai and the Three Gorges Dam.
  - Possibly the more realistic version is to envision these missiles as either pin pricks to annoy a dragon or, worse, that the new threat could bring on Chinese preemption—thereby starting the very conflict the counter-strike missiles are intended to deter.
  - I leave it to you to choose the side of the argument you prefer with respect to an ROC missile force with unspecified warhead type to deter the PRC.
- New submarines for the ROCN: Three major concerns attend the issue of procuring the eight diesel-electric submarines proposed in the US package: acquisition delay, cost, and likely utility to defend Taiwan.
  - There would be a very long lead-time after a decision was made to spend US\$10-12 BILLION. The estimate is 10-12 years to design and construct these submarines—but that is only after finding a willing country and a capable shipyard plus sources for the weapons, sensors, and other sensitive equipment. That search is almost five years old already and no end is in sight.
  - Then we must ask what will eight slow, snorkeling, diesel-electric submarines do for Taiwan in 2015 and beyond against a very large, modern, and imposing PLA Navy conventional- and nuclear-powered submarine fleet.
  - Beijing, of course, is working very hard to discourage all countries from building submarines for Taiwan. That may not be an important factor now as this seems the least likely of the offered items to be approved by the Legislative Yuan.
- There are other complications with respect to arming Taiwan.
  - Taiwan is a hard place to have a realistic debate on security. No political party wants to alarm the citizenry that has been, for the most part, badly misled or misinformed on the growing PLA threat. No party wants to accept blame for past lack of candor or failure to meet that mounting PLA threat.
  - There was a time, not so long ago, when Taiwan's technology advantage seemed adequate to hold off the PLA long enough for the Americans to arrive in force.
  - The reversal of the technology advantage is not, however, attributable altogether to Taiwan's failure to keep up. The reason for Taiwan's falling behind is rather that huge, prosperous and determined China has, as I noted at the outset, undertaken a sweeping surge of military growth in order to overcome any disadvantage vis-à-vis Taiwan and simultaneously to threaten the ability of the U.S. to intervene promptly and effectively.

- *Taiwan must rely on the U.S.* Taipei, despite the military superiority and strategic depth of China, has its “secret weapon,” or, maybe I should use Beijing’s term, *shashoujian* or assassin’s mace—or maybe “trump card” imparts the meaning. I am referring to the role of the U.S. in defense of Taiwan. Taiwan has the need for, and excellent prospect of, U.S. help—up to the level of full-scale intervention by major combat forces.
  - o Beijing, as I noted earlier, will attempt to convince Washington and the world that the crisis has been precipitated by Taipei.
  - o My counsel to Taipei is to avoid stringently actions that may undermine the ability of the U.S. president to decide to aid Taiwan.
  - o It is conceivable that, if Taiwan has been perceived as acting imprudently and Beijing has made a compelling case to that effect, the U.S. could act slowly and ineffectively. Maybe, as the conflict confusingly develops, Washington, for example, offers first only intelligence and logistic support.
  - o The point is that, given Taiwan’s plight, Taipei actions should fully take into account its needs for a prompt decision by Washington to provide appropriate combat forces. Taipei should also keep in mind that Tokyo will be making momentous decisions one way or another with respect to the conflict. The only effective strategy for defense of Taiwan is to ensure adequate American intervention.

*US forces pertinent to a cross-Strait conflict.* So, I turn now to the forces that, of necessity, would have to act to deter or defeat the PLA. Describing US forces in a cross-Strait context is anything but a straightforward undertaking. To what extent would U.S. forces based in Japan and South Korea be engaged or constrained operationally? The U.S. Global Posture Review introduces new factors in an already complex situation. How effective will this new posturing of U.S. forces be in a conflict against legacy forces—major conventional military forces, not terrorists?

*The familiar question said to be asked by U.S. presidents in a time of crisis: “Where are the carriers?”* The US will soon have the nuclear-powered carrier George Washington homeported in Yokosuka—a step up in capability, but a single carrier is hardly an effective intervention force in a Taiwan crisis. The tyranny of geography, as some refer to the problem of distance, is, of course, a major factor in determining how soon this single carrier strike group (CSG) and other US forces in the Western Pacific can be reinforced and augmented. The complexity does not end there. The question of whether US combat operations would be conducted directly out of bases in Japan and South Korea is obviously unanswerable in advance—and may remain difficult to answer in a crisis.

- For that and other reasons, US carrier strike groups (CSGs) generally get thought of first.
  - o A CSG is nominally composed of a carrier and supporting cruisers, destroyers, frigates, and nuclear submarines—plus maritime patrol aircraft flying from land bases as much as a 1,000 miles from the CSG to look for submarines and provide other surveillance.
  - o These CSGs are supported by underway replenishment ships that provide fuel, ammunition, parts, food, etc.
  - o A major crisis will not likely arise without warning; so additional CSGs could be on the way or even already in the area. It is worth noting that in a combat situation several carriers increase effectiveness by more

than the multiple of their numbers; they are mutually supportive offensively and defensively. Nominally, three to five CSGs might be employed east of Taiwan—not, by the way, exposed to attack in the Taiwan Strait. That means an imposing force of several hundred tactical aircraft plus the other capabilities of the accompanying ships. These U.S. aircraft and other weapons are capable of devastating a PLA invasion force and are at least a match for anything the PLAAF and PLANAF is flying, but, as you will see shortly, it is not the intention of the Chinese to engage in air battles with the carrier air groups.

- With all this attention to carrier aviation, I do not want to neglect that USAF tactical and strategic aircraft are based in the region and that these forces can also be augmented on short notice. In addition, the U.S. has global strike capabilities that can be launched and recovered in the US—or elsewhere.
- This is an appropriate time to emphasize two points: (1) that distant Guam is the closest U.S. territory where forces are based, and (2) that the use of US bases in Japan and Korea and anticipated routine use of other Japanese seaports, airports, and logistic facilities is a matter of uncertainty—unless, I offer mostly jokingly, Prime Minister Koizumi and President Bush have, as part of their touted friendship, made a secret deal.
- Some might want here to go so far as to speculate about the prospect of JSDF involvement in a cross-Strait conflict. I have heard some Japanese diplomats and retired military people suggest unofficially Japanese readiness to undertake combat roles. I say frankly that I consider it imprudent to try to guess at how this political decision might turn out. I wonder about the potential effect on that decision of the recently exacerbated tensions between Japan and China. It may now be easier for Tokyo to decide to support or join the fray, and it may be easier for Beijing to decide to attack U.S. bases in Japan.

PRC forces pertinent to attacking Taiwan and confronting US intervention. China is not faced with the tyranny of geography—anything but! Everything it wants its forces to hit with respect to Taiwan is close. It does face the problem that the PLA Navy has traditionally operated largely in the littoral, only recently venturing into the blue water in which it would likely have to confront a U.S. Navy highly competent in these waters. Similarly, the PLAAF has only in recent years begun regularly to fly over water. The Chinese army (ground forces) and Marines Corps have units devoted to amphibious operations and exercise these forces regularly. Beijing, cleverly, has given great attention to what is essentially a fourth service within the PLA: the strategic and ballistic missile force or 2<sup>nd</sup> Artillery Corps. I start there in examining the pertinent Chinese forces.

- *Ballistic missiles and long-range LACMs (or GLCMs).* It may seem that, in talking of Taiwan, I have already said quite enough about the Chinese ballistic and land-attack cruise missiles. Unfortunately, I have not. Taiwan is not the only target for these missiles.
  - o A significant number of the ballistic and cruise missiles described previously can reach Okinawa, with the major U.S. airbase at Kadena the target that always is at the forefront in war games. For the time being, the PLA does not have a missile with a conventional warhead

that can reach Guam—only nuclear-tipped missiles have the required range, and we certainly do not foresee early use of WMD.

- The most ominous prospect of the missile forces is the Chinese ongoing effort to hit ships at sea with ballistic missiles. They are writing about, and apparently aggressively pursuing, ballistic missiles with maneuvering warheads and seekers.
  - These MaRV'd missiles would maneuver on reentry both to avoid missile defenses and to hit the ships their seekers would detect and identify.
  - This is not something to come sometime in the indefinite future. I would be surprised if the missile capability (or at least a troublesome threat thereof) is not achieved in less than five years.
  - Rudimentary targeting (e.g., fishing boats with satellite phones) could be used when these missiles first become operational, with more reliable and consistent detection and targeting techniques available later.
  - This could become a real complicating factor for a prompt American decision to send several CSGs to the region in a hurry. It is not that these warheads would sink a carrier or a cruiser but rather that air defense radars and systems, and the carrier flight deck could be damaged. In other words, the CSG's air and missile defenses would be degraded.
  
- *Submarines and very lethal anti-ship cruise missiles.* There is another significant impending threat to the CSG's access to the theater. The PLA Navy is currently (and rapidly) assembling an impressive new fleet of both nuclear and conventional submarines—complementing in a big way its large but far less capable and far noisier (easier by far to detect) older submarine force.
  - Atop the stunningly long list of the new and capable classes of PLAN submarines are the eight new Kilo-class diesel submarines being delivered from Russia. In addition to being quiet and armed with advanced torpedoes, they carry what many consider to be the most capable anti-ship cruise missile in the world: the SS-N-27B/Sizzler. This missile makes a subsonic transit to the target area, finds its target, accelerates to supersonic speed, and conducts an evasive, sea-skimming attack with a big lethal warhead. Salvoes of these from several Kilos on multiple attack axes arriving simultaneously with the ballistic missiles I have described would truly be a daunting missile defense problem. Effective defense will require an imaginative combination of deception, decoys, defense, and the ability to preclude the launching of such attacks.
  - If any or all of these ballistic and cruise missile attacks succeed in degrading the CSG's air and missile defenses, as they are intended to do, then the odds go up for success of anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs) from three more classes of modern, quiet submarines: the Yuans and Songs, and the new class of nuclear-powered attack submarines that many know as Project 093 but that the West is now calling the Shang class.
  - Putting this another way, the PLA Navy is putting to sea a remarkable new submarine force: three classes being built in China and one in

Russia. And it is buying and building the ASCMs to go with them. In light of this, it is hard to get excited about Taiwan's pending (but now unlikely) acquisition, with delivery a decade or more from now, of eight diesel submarines—to add to the ROC Navy's already outdated, although well maintained, four submarines (two WWII US Guppies and two '70s vintage Dutch Zwaardvis class).

- *Air.* As with the submarine force, the most modern and most important components of the PLAAF and PLANAF are a combination of Russian and indigenous airplanes.
  - o This modernization started in the early '90s with the initial deliveries of China's first Russian Flanker aircraft: the Su-27. That model is now counted in the hundreds, including a domestically assembled version called the F-11. These are fourth-generation interceptors with advanced air-to-air missiles and systems that can hold their own in a modern air war environment.
  - o More recently both the PLA Air Force and Navy have procured even more capable Flankers: multi-role Su-30s, these by the score so far. It is noteworthy that the Navy version is not only the best fighter in China but also functions in a maritime interdiction role armed with new ASCMs.
  - o China has built its own fighter, the F-10 that is roughly comparable to an F-16, and its own maritime interdiction airplane, the FB-7 (not to be confused with the very numerous older F-7s, based on the MiG-21). China retains many hundreds of these F-7s plus F-6s and A-5s that have value essentially as a result of their numbers.
  - o Other aircraft not to be overlooked include the B-6 bomber based on the old Soviet Tu-16 but now being built in modern versions by the Chinese. A version of these aircraft is also used for aerial refueling, something Chinese pilots could soon finally be getting the hang of as an operational capability. AEW and eventually AWACS capability are being fitted into other Russian airframes (the Il-76), and a version of that is also employed to deliver the airborne forces that I'll mention in a moment.
  
- *Surface combatant ships.* You may think I am at the end of this tale of the impressive modernization of PLA forces, but there are a few more stunning surprises to come.
  - o The PLA Navy is in the midst of building, buying, and significantly upgrading more *classes* of destroyers and frigates than previous experience suggested they would acquire individual combatant *ships* through the coming decade or more. It is now putting to sea a modern surface combatant force comparable to the modern submarine force.
    - Heading the list with respect to firepower is the large Sovremennyy-class destroyer from Russia (soon to increase from two to four ships) with an SS-N-22B/Sunburn cruise missile very similar to the ASCM I described for the new Kilo submarines—also supersonic, sea-skimming, evasive, and with a large and potent warhead.
    - Luyang I and II classes of guided-missile destroyers are in the water or on the way. These ships all have subsonic but very

capable ASCMs and are increasingly capable in air defense using very modern surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). Some of these ships have what is called the “Chinese Aegis” system, meaning a phased-array radar and the capability to handle and shoot at many air and missile tracks at one time.

- An even newer class of destroyer, the Luzhou, is a-building.
  - Several already modern destroyers are being upgraded. All these and the others I have mentioned will have long-range ASCMs; some will provide air and missile defense for the fleet—a former serious shortcoming.
  - The new class of frigate is called the Jiangkai. Other frigates are being built and upgraded so they will have modern armament and other systems; most important, as you might guess, will be new, lethal ASCMs.
  - There are also fast patrol boats, including an impressive new class, that might be especially useful against Taiwan’s naval forces, once more armed with excellent ASCMs.
- *Adds up to a large, modern cruise-missile navy.* There is no question now that the PLAN has, across the board, made the transition from a rather backward cruise-missile navy to a modern cruise-missile navy with some of the best cruise missiles in the world.
- *Amphibious and airborne forces.* The PLA Navy surged a few years ago in construction of amphibious lift ships and then stopped abruptly. It now has modern LSTs and other ships and craft, but this amounts to the limited capability for lifting only a division or so across the strait, probably less than 15,000 troops using gray hulls.
- Conventional planning for an amphibious assault of Taiwan, defended by a force of the order of magnitude of 100,000 troops, would require an attacking force of two or three times that. Such thinking led me to make a bad joke a decade ago that such an effort to cross the Strait would, as the U.S. and Taiwan attacked the conglomerate of amphibious, merchant, and fishing vessels, become a “million-man swim.” (I had with a friend visiting from Zimbabwe joined the “Million-Man March” in Washington shortly before using that expression.)
  - One cannot help but wonder if a more reasonable option for the PLA might be to use a much smaller-scale combination of its amphibious and airborne forces.
  - Both the amphibious and airborne assaults conceivably could be tailored to match the navy and air force lift capabilities (a total in the tens of thousands rather than the hundreds of thousands). Such an assault would be preceded by extensive softening and demoralizing attacks with the intent to begin to land troops only when Taiwan is already decapitated and paralyzed by attacks by MRBMs by the dozens, SRBMs by the hundreds, LACMs by the score (at least), Special Forces actions, Fifth Column sabotage, information warfare to cripple such things as the electric power grid and public transport and broadcast facilities, and intense air attacks made feasible because the air defenses have been severely degraded.

- Follow-on forces could then use ports and airfields captured by the amphibious and airborne forces and make essentially unopposed landings.
  - This possible option would reduce strategic and tactical warning and eliminate cumbersome and time-consuming preparations needed for an assault four or five times as large.
- *The two sides of C4ISR (command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance).* Chinese strategists write of taking advantage of U.S. over-reliance on very advanced technologies. The PLA is accused of the opposite, lack of the ability to use modern technology for these purposes.
- The Chinese point to vulnerability in the form of extensive (even excessive) American dependence on such things as satellites and computers so that, for employment of U.S. intelligence and weapon systems, the battle space is a digitized electronic network. Not all observers would share the view that this is as exploitable a vulnerability as suggested by the Chinese, but the PLA's intent is temporarily to blind the U.S., disrupt communications, activate pre-positioned viruses in computer networks, etc.
  - The other side of C4ISR concerns the question of adequacy of the PLA's capabilities in these areas: whether the PLA can exercise command and control, communicate and coordinate, provide intelligence, and conduct the needed surveillance and reconnaissance to operate effectively that modern force of missiles, ships, submarines, and aircraft I previously described. And, even before evaluating those capabilities, there are serious questions about whether the PLA is training and exercising its new platforms so as to achieve an operational capability—especially against a challenger as capable and currently experienced in combat as the U.S. armed forces.
  - There is another exceedingly important factor: In a Taiwan scenario, PLA leaders with no combat experience would be planning and executing a complex dual campaign—recall all the components of the operations I described—to overwhelm ROC forces and confront U.S. forces.
  - Both aspects of this undertaking would be complex, requiring extensive joint operations and coordinated actions by diverse forces. These are things the PLA has talked and written about but has not done. To review that just a bit:
    - Against Taiwan, for example, initial missile and follow-on air attacks would be followed by assessing the results, re-attacking as necessary, and carrying out simultaneously all the other described complex operations—while defending China.
    - The confrontation with U.S. Navy CSGs would mean locating the targets, employing ballistic missiles, having certain submarines positioned for near-simultaneous cruise-missile attacks, assessing results, and following up with air and other attacks—all this with a navy unaccustomed to blue water and leaders who would be novices with new systems in combat. And the task of defending the Mainland from attacks by U.S. forces would be very demanding.

- My guess is that, even if the PLA improves greatly in the C4ISR area and begins to exercise to make these forces operational, it will succeed against Taiwan and falter against U.S. forces. But it is hardly prudent to dismiss all the capability that the PLA is amassing based on the prospect that the Chinese cannot put it all together and coordinate complex operations when needed. After all, Beijing is obsessed over the Taiwan issue. Clearly, China's best military minds are devoted to making this work.
  - So there is legitimate concern that this more modern and capable PLA will embolden Beijing and make a decision to react to some perceived provocation by Taipei easier.

*Real solutions:*

- Possibly the most important implication of the surge in PLA modernization is that all who can influence thinking in Beijing should work quietly and seriously to convince the Chinese leaders that an attack on Taiwan would not serve China's interests and hardly ensures reunification with Taiwan. We must make a compelling case that an attack on Taiwan is almost certain to result in great harm to China, the Chinese economy, the PLA, and stability and progress in the region. Specifically:
  - China should, without our resorting to bombast and threat, be helped to realize that its national economic growth would be badly disrupted by such things as interruption of FDI and trade.
  - Beijing should be concerned about the consequences of attacking Taiwan on its coveted perception of itself as a constructive member of the community of nations, a key player in the region, and a country that has justifiable pride in a new and positive foreign policy.
- From a broader perspective:
  - We can encourage all involved to act responsibly, as over the past decades, to keep the lid on and let the impressive and still growing economic ties across the Strait be the prevailing factor in resolving the "Taiwan problem."
  - If the world, and especially Washington, can cope well with emerging China, there is the real prospect that the next generation of leaders in Beijing will reflect upon a military solution with respect to Taiwan as an anachronism hard to conceive of as an option.
  - *Although it would be imprudent to ignore the implications of the remarkable surge in PLA modernization, the current relaxation of tensions across the Taiwan Strait offers promise that there is already diminished consideration by Chinese leaders of a PLA attack on Taiwan—that concern for the consequences of conflict and economic and cultural ties, rather than the balance of military power and the role of the U.S., are the important factors in determining the future of Taiwan and the Mainland.*