

RECONSTRUCTING TAIWAN'S MILITARY STRATEGY

*Achieving Forward Defense through
Multi-Domain Deterrence*

By David An



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A report from

THE STRATEGIC ASIA PROGRAM

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— FOREWORD —

Over the last three years, the National Bureau of Asian Research’s Strategic Asia Program undertook a systematic assessment of geopolitical competition in the Asia-Pacific. The 2015–16 and 2016–17 volumes in the *Strategic Asia* series examined, respectively, the capacity of major states in the region to produce material power and the ideational frames shaping each state’s understanding of its political environment and the role of coercive power therein. The current volume, *Strategic Asia 2017–18: Power, Ideas, and Military Strategy in the Asia-Pacific*, identifies what these states perceive as their greatest security threats and analyzes how their material power and strategic culture combine to shape the military strategies they adopt to deal with these challenges.

This NBR Special Report by David An supplements the 2017–18 volume and concludes a three-year study of Taiwan. Building on Steven M. Goldstein’s study of Taiwan’s strategic culture in “Taiwan: Asia’s Orphan?” and Robert Sutter and David Gitter’s analysis of Taiwan’s material capabilities in “Taiwan’s Strong but Stifled Foundations of National Power,” An examines the drivers of Taiwan’s military strategy. He argues that this strategy is designed first and foremost to deal with the threat posed by the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and has evolved in response to the changing nature of this threat to encompass not only “resolute defense” but also “multi-domain deterrence.”

The report identifies three other variables that determine Taiwan’s military strategy: the preferences of the democratically elected leadership, public perception of the PRC threat, and the level of security assistance, current and anticipated, from the United States. An shows how successive administrations in Taiwan have pursued varying degrees of aggressiveness in their military strategies, and he cautions that, especially since democratization, the country’s citizens have drifted into a sense of complacency toward the PRC threat. As this report highlights, the periods when U.S. support has waned or been unreliable have had consequences for the broader Asia-Pacific, underscoring the importance of a steady U.S.-Taiwan partnership for peace and stability in the region.

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Reconstructing Taiwan's Military Strategy: Achieving Forward Defense through Multi-Domain Deterrence

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report identifies the drivers of Taiwan's military strategy and examines this strategy in the context of the threat posed to the island by the People's Republic of China (PRC) and other key challenges.

MAIN ARGUMENT

Taiwan's military strategy consists of securing territory with resolute defense and utilizing multi-domain deterrence with joint capabilities. In pursuing these goals, Taiwan has recently begun to prioritize engaging with potential adversaries farther away from home and increasing self-reliance by developing indigenous weapons. Although Taiwan is becoming concerned about other regional security threats arising from North Korea and the South China Sea, its military strategy is still centered on the threat from the PRC and is based on three factors: the level of threat posed by China, the level of support from the U.S. and its regional security partners, and the government's and public's perception of the seriousness of the threat from China. Essentially, Taiwan's defense strategy will become more aggressive if the threat level is high, expectation of U.S. support is low, and the domestic populace identifies China as a serious threat. Conversely, it will become more relaxed if the level of threat is low, U.S. support is strong, and there is little security concern among the public. Taiwan's defense strategy will waver if there is a mix of factors, such as if the level of threat is high but U.S. support is uncertain or the public is complacent. The latter scenario most accurately describes Taiwan's situation in recent decades.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- Taiwan should explore alternative models for its military strategy, particularly the assertive defense strategy and tactics of Israel today and Finland's approach to the Soviet Union after World War II. Either of those models could be useful for managing the threat from the PRC.
- Although its military hardware is formidable, Taiwan should continue to improve military training. Increasing the realism of military exercises will help Taiwan's troops defend against the significant growth in China's military power.
- The U.S. should continue its support for Taiwan. Although Taiwan's military is becoming more self-sufficient, the U.S. and its regional partners still play an indispensable role in the island's security.

When the city of Syracuse was under siege by Carthage in 311 BCE, its leader Agathocles did not attempt to hide behind his defenses on the losing side of a one-sided war of attrition. Instead, he made the risky decision to break through the blockade, drawing the fight away from his home city in Greece and bringing it to the enemy's doorstep in Africa. Once Carthage felt threatened at home, it was quick to negotiate, leading Syracuse's attackers to conclude peace with the city in 306 BCE.¹ Taiwan has also endeavored, albeit in a more defensive manner, to draw the fight farther from its territory and closer to the home of any potential adversary.

According to Richard Bush, former chairman of the American Institute in Taiwan, "It is fair to say that the Republic of China (ROC) has been under some degree of siege" and that the "nature of that siege has changed significantly over time, both objectively and subjectively."² For Bush, the most serious threat to Taiwan's autonomy is the possibility that the People's Republic of China (PRC) will use force to achieve unification; to this end, it has sought to isolate Taiwan from the rest of the international system.³ While Beijing is willing to grant special status for Taiwan's government within a united China—a policy of "one country, two systems"—it expends considerable diplomatic energy ensuring that no country or organization takes any action that would suggest that Taiwan has sovereign status within the international system. In a report for the Strategic Asia Program published in 2016, Steven Goldstein rhetorically asks if Taiwan is "Asia's orphan."⁴ Taiwan is thus under global siege, slowly being cut off from the international space.

Like Syracuse under Agathocles, Taiwan is trying to avoid a fight on its own turf by maximizing its forward-defensive capabilities. On March 16, 2017, under questioning by the Legislative Yuan, Defense Minister Feng Shih-kuan verbally confirmed for the first time that Taiwan possesses a long-range conventional missile counterstrike capability.⁵ Shelley Rigger notes that such deterrence is directed at preventing the PRC from attempting to use force to compel unification on Beijing's terms.⁶ However, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) also suggests in its 2017 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) that Taiwan's ability to strike an adversary's ground-based assets would be limited to attacking military installations. The "guiding principle" of the QDR is to "resist the enemy on the other shore, attack the enemy on the sea, destroy the enemy in the littoral area, and annihilate the enemy on the beachhead," with no mention of civilian targets.⁷ Though these military programs have been under development for decades, the fact that Taiwan is now publicly disclosing such plans indicates a shift toward a more transparent and forward-defensive approach to deter potential adversaries in multiple domains of war—air, sea, land, and now even at a farther distance.

In formulating its current military strategy, Taiwan faces a series of problems and questions. As noted by Bush and Rigger, its greatest security problem remains the PRC's improving military capabilities and stated willingness to employ them toward the goal of "peaceful unification."

¹ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, trans. Luigi Ricci (London: Grant Richards, 1903), 32–35.

² Richard Bush, "Security Policy," in *Routledge Handbook on Contemporary Taiwan*, ed. Gunter Schubert (New York: Routledge, 2016), 530.

³ *Ibid.*, 537.

⁴ Steven M. Goldstein, "Taiwan: Asia's Orphan?" National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR), Special Report, no. 62, December 2016.

⁵ "Taiwan Says Its Missiles Can Strike China," *Straits Times*, March 17, 2017, <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/taiwan-says-its-missiles-can-strike-china>.

⁶ Shelley Rigger, "The Unfinished Business of Taiwan's Democratization," in *Dangerous Strait*, ed. Nancy Bernkopf Tucker (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 131.

⁷ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2017* (Taipei, 2017), 39.

Strengthening Taiwan's military capabilities not only will help defend the island but could benefit the region by giving Taiwan the ability to assist with other threats such as North Korea and the territorial disputes in the South China Sea. However, the biggest question for Taiwan is the uncertainty regarding the U.S. security commitment. Another question is whether Taiwan's public recognizes the threat posed by China and will enable elected officials to respond by prioritizing funding for military personnel and equipment, and perhaps even elevating the social status of military service members.

This NBR Special Report builds on two prior reports for the Strategic Asia Program as part of a three-year study of national power in Asia. In "Taiwan's Strong but Stifled Foundations of National Power," Robert Sutter and David Gitter assessed whether Taiwan's capabilities are adequate to achieve its national objectives, while Steven Goldstein's report "Taiwan: Asia's Orphan?" analyzed the country's strategic culture. In the discussion that follows, I reconstruct Taiwan's range of possible military strategies. The first section provides an assessment of the threat that China poses to Taiwan, while the second section examines the history of its military strategy. The report then describes Taiwan's material power and military capabilities. The final two sections assess the implications of the current military strategy for Taiwan itself, the United States, China, and other potential adversaries and consider four alternative strategic options.

Assessment of the Threat

In 2013, Taiwan recognized that China was developing its anti-access/area-denial capabilities, which were "increas[ing] the U.S. risk when engaging in regional affairs, causing the credibility of its security commitment to be questioned and challenged."⁸ Since then, China has continued to modernize its military and weapons systems. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) now possesses the capability to impose a blockade on Taiwan and conduct multidimensional operations to seize offshore islands. It has also "established a cyberattack capability to collect its electro-magnetic parameters, monitor, cut off, and interfere with surveillance, reconnaissance, command and control systems."⁹

Judging from recent history—particularly the Taiwan Strait crisis of 1995 and 1996—a potential threat is that China will launch a long-range missile strike against Taiwan to cause panic among its population and coerce the island into accepting China's preferred political outcome. Another reason to think that a missile strike is the main threat against Taiwan is that until recently the conventional wisdom was that China's amphibious forces were relatively undeveloped, which would constrain its options for a land invasion. However, there are limits to looking to the past to divine the future. A recent assessment by the U.S. Department of Defense that "the PLA continues to make modest gains in amphibious warfare by integrating new capabilities and training consistently" provides a rationale for Taiwan to prepare for more than merely a missile strike.¹⁰

China is developing diverse capabilities and planning for a range of scenarios regarding Taiwan. Under President Hu Jintao, the PLA had five major military priorities relative to Taiwan: establish military readiness, conduct demonstrative exercises, impose a blockade on the Taiwan

⁸ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2013*.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2017* (Washington, D.C., 2017), 83, https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2017_China_Military_Power_Report.PDF.

Strait, carry out combined firepower attacks, and conduct a cross-sea landing.¹¹ China has worked to develop amphibious invasion capabilities and has trained for this scenario.¹² Based on Taiwan's own assessment, China's preparations for an invasion of the island include the following steps: preliminary engagement, electromagnetic control operations, air superiority, sea control operations, and landing.¹³

First, China would conduct decapitation missile strikes aimed at military installations, to include naval vessels in port, fighter aircraft in bunkers, locations of military leaders, and possibly locations of civilian government leadership. This would "soften" the target to prepare the way to contest the air, sea, and then land.

Next, China would attempt to disrupt various communication links between fighter aircraft and ground stations and between aircraft pilots, naval vessels, and other key nodes of command and control. This would be a fight for the command-and-control element of the broader command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (C4ISR) between elements of a country's own military forces. China could achieve this goal through precision missile strikes, successful computer network attacks, or the actions of any possible PLA forces and saboteurs already emplaced inside Taiwan.

After much of Taiwan's aircraft, naval vessels, missile systems, and military communications have been disrupted by the first wave of missile strikes, the next step would be for China to achieve control of the skies. Sea and land dominance cannot occur without air dominance, given that naval vessels and ground troops will be an easy target from the air. There is also the possibility that air superiority could end in a stalemate, in which there is air denial for all sides as the airspace above and surrounding Taiwan becomes a no-fly zone.

Fourth, if China can either gain air superiority or create a no-fly zone such that its advancing forces are not threatened, then the next step would be to launch naval vessels and enlist civilian maritime vessels to move into the vicinity of Taiwan to support Chinese military operations. As mentioned above, it cannot do this so long as Taiwan maintains air superiority because naval vessels would be vulnerable to attack in the narrow Taiwan Strait.¹⁴

Finally, once its naval vessels can safely approach Taiwan, China could launch an amphibious invasion to deliver troops to the island's shores. The PLA already conducts regular training for amphibious landings, including under difficult weather conditions and at night.¹⁵

Taiwan's MND judges that China will seek to minimize the time between these stages. It predicts that "the PRC will aim for a short battle and quick victory before foreign forces can intervene, thus establishing a political reality that will prevent further intervention."¹⁶ As they play out in reality, these operations may resemble one swift, seamless thrust across the strait rather than occurring in discrete stages. Among China's operational concepts for an amphibious assault on Taiwan, the most prominent publicly available statement is the Joint Island Landing Campaign, which "envisions a complex operation relying on coordinated, interlocking campaigns for logistics,

¹¹ William S. Murray, "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy," *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 3 (2008): 14, <https://usnwc2.usnwc.edu/getattachment/ae650b06-a5e4-4b64-b4fd-2bcc8665c399/Revisiting-Taiwan-s-Defense-Strategy--William-S-.aspx>.

¹² Christopher Isajiw, "China's PLA Marines," *Diplomat*, October 17, 2013, <https://thediplomat.com/2013/10/chinas-pla-marines-an-emerging-force>.

¹³ David A. Shlapak, David T. Orletsky, and Barry A. Wilson, *Dire Strait? Military Aspects of China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2000), 10.

¹⁴ Michael J. Lostumbo, "A New Taiwan Strategy to Adapt to PLA Precision Strike Capabilities," in *New Opportunities and Challenges for Taiwan's Security*, ed. Roger Cliff, Phillip C. Saunders, and Scott Harold (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2011), 127–36.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, 81.

¹⁶ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2011*, 75.

air, and naval support, and electronic warfare.”¹⁷ China’s objective would be “to break through or circumvent shore defenses, establish and build a beachhead, transport personnel and materiel to designated landing sites in the north or south of Taiwan’s western coastline, and launch attacks to seize and to occupy key targets or the entire island.”¹⁸

Therefore, rather than consider only discrete scenarios in gradual steps, it would be more prudent for Taiwan to prepare for the possibility that China would launch a quick and full invasion.¹⁹ Yet although there is some logic to this worst-case scenario, insofar as seizing and holding the island is the only way that guarantees Beijing control of Taiwan when hostilities end, RAND researchers concluded that it is unlikely that China would undertake such a “desperate gamble” at the present time, given that Taiwan could “possess a robust ability to defeat an invasion attempt.”²⁰

History of Taiwan’s Military Strategy

Considering Taiwan’s relatively small size, it must utilize an asymmetrical approach to its national defense that employs asymmetric measures, dissimilar strengths, and nonconventional means utilizing high-speed stealth vessels, shore-based mobile missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, and other unique tools.²¹ The primary objective of this strategy is to avoid the enemy’s strength while using suitable tactics and tools to attack its weaknesses so that Taiwan can fight on its own terms.²² The use of asymmetric means to engage an adversary farther away from Taiwan is also necessary because the island’s compact size allows an adversary to establish air and land dominance more easily than if Taiwan instead occupied a large geographic landmass.

Nearly a decade ago, Taiwan’s military strategy was one of “resolute defense and credible deterrence,” designed to sustain a conflict and avoid a quick defeat by prioritizing the island’s defense and creating advantageous conditions.²³ This strategy aimed to “extend space to buy time,” given that Taiwan cannot trade distance for time.²⁴ The first aspect (resolute defense) means surviving the enemy’s first strike, averting decapitation, maneuvering forces for a counterstrike, and sustaining combat power to achieve the objectives of “strategic protection and tactical resolution.”²⁵ Due to limitations such as having much less military equipment and personnel than China, the MND’s reports from around that time called for asymmetry by focusing on contingency operations, force mobility, asymmetrical warfighting, and capabilities that can stop or delay the enemy offensive.²⁶

The second aspect (credible deterrence) requires capabilities that combine firepower, joint operations, and training to force “the enemy to rationally calculate the costs and risks

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, 76.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Shlapak, Orletsky, and Wilson, *Dire Strait?* 7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

²¹ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2017*, 45.

²² *Ibid.*, 249.

²³ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2009* (Taipei, 2009), 11, 71.

²⁴ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2011* (Taipei, 2011), 108–9, <http://www.mnd.gov.tw>.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2009*, 74.

of invasions.”²⁷ These are all asymmetric ways for a military with less equipment and personnel to hold its ground against a major power with greater resources.

For several years, Taiwan maintained this strategy of resolute defense and credible deterrence. In 2013, however, it began to seek the “innovative development” of its military, citing growing friction in the East and South China Seas, and tensions on the Korean Peninsula as justifications for this strategic shift.²⁸ As a result, it adopted the “innovative and asymmetric” concept to strengthen its warfighting capabilities, including joint air, sea control, and ground defense capabilities.²⁹ In addition, the 2013 QDR mentioned Article 22 of Taiwan’s National Defense Act, which calls for the development of a self-reliant defense industry and prohibits Taiwan’s military from importing products that can be supplied by domestic manufacturers.³⁰ This led to a new emphasis on indigenous development.

Taiwan’s current military strategy includes the following five goals:

- Safeguard the nation
- Cultivate a professional military
- Realize defense self-reliance
- Protect people’s well-being
- Strengthen regional stability

To achieve these goals, the 2017 military strategy continues to call for “resolute defense,” but with a new emphasis on “multi-domain deterrence.”³¹ The new emphasis combines the earlier focus on developing asymmetric capabilities with efforts to improve joint capabilities across military services to project force in unison across the air, sea, and land domains. Multi-domain deterrence imposes “multiple interdictions” and “joint fire strikes” to degrade enemy capabilities by essentially layering its defense to improve protection of the island.³² Layered defense in multi-domain deterrence supports Taiwan’s guiding principle of resisting the adversary on its shore, attacking at sea, and annihilating the enemy on its beachhead.³³ To do so, Taiwan recognizes that it must enhance information, communications, and electronic warfare capabilities and command-and-control capabilities; secure critical information infrastructure; improve force preservation; and exploit “the natural buffer of the Taiwan Strait.”³⁴ To these ends, it must continue to adopt innovative and asymmetric means and develop joint capabilities.³⁵

²⁷ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2011*, 108–9.

²⁸ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2013* (Taipei, 2013), 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

³¹ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2017*, 38.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁴ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2017*, 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

Taiwan's Material Power and Military Structure

Material Power

Taiwan's material military power is drawn from its economic power.³⁶ The stronger Taiwan's economy, and the larger its GDP, the more resources the government can direct into military capabilities, including weapons systems and payment for personnel. In this respect, Taiwan's economic resources are considerable. Its GDP is ranked 23rd in the world for 2017, at \$571.50 billion, which is \$1.18 trillion when adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP). Spread across a population of some 23 million people, this is equivalent to a GDP per capita of \$49,800 when adjusted for PPP.³⁷

Taiwan has a history of indigenously producing some weapons systems, especially those it has difficulty obtaining from other states.³⁸ Impatience with the United States' reluctance to supply certain weapons has led Taiwan to successfully design and manufacture indigenous weapons such as a defensive fighter aircraft and various Hsiung Feng missiles. It also plans to develop indigenous defense submarines. The MND has established a "development strategy for defense industries" to acquire advanced technologies and produce weapons systems and equipment indigenously.³⁹ Though developing indigenous weapons systems involves investment risk, to not do so would continue to foster excessive dependence on the United States for major weapons systems, which Washington can be reluctant or unwilling to provide at times. From 2014 to 2015, the ROC Armed Forces concluded 10,088 procurement cases at a value of \$6.2 billion. Among them, 9,970 cases (or 98.83%) were domestic procurements, totaling \$5.3 billion, while only 118 cases (or 1.17%) were overseas procurements, worth a total of \$919 million.⁴⁰ Taiwan's *National Defense Report 2015* lists specific defensive technology developments, noting that from 2014 to 2015 there were a combined 182 research programs.⁴¹ Additionally, the report mentions that there are "72 key technology R&D programs underway across 7 categories, including stealth and nanotechnologies, helping to lay a sound foundation for key national defense technologies."⁴² These numbers demonstrate the maturation of Taiwan's domestic defense manufacturers.⁴³

The Air Force as the First Line of Defense

The ROC Air Force is the first line of defense against a PRC missile coercion or invasion scenario. If the island were attacked, long-range missiles would take the fight closer to the adversary's home. Taiwan's air capability would make the attacker feel the consequences of such aggression and therefore deter potential aggression in the first place.

Taiwan's air force is in the process of upgrading its F-16 A/B fighter aircraft with new active electronically scanned array radar, avionics, and computers and is proceeding with phase-two

³⁶ Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004).

³⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook* (Washington, D.C.: Central Intelligence Agency, 2018), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/resources/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html>.

³⁸ Russell Hsiao, prepared oral testimony before the House Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific, June 15, 2017, published in *Global Taiwan Brief* 2, no. 25 (2017), <http://globaltaiwan.org/2017/06/21-gtb-2-25>.

³⁹ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2017*, 10.

⁴⁰ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2015* (Taipei, 2015), 170.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 168.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 170.

upgrades to its F-CK-1 Ching-kuo fighter aircraft.⁴⁴ The air force also requires various air-to-air, air-to-ground, anti-radiation, and anti-ship missiles to use against the growing threat from China and is interested in the F-35B short-takeoff and vertical-landing fighter aircraft. The air force further wants advanced jet training aircraft and is seeking tactical unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to monitor its periphery. Taiwan's efforts to develop UAVs and precision-strike weapons match with its plans to continue developing asymmetrical air capabilities.⁴⁵ **Table 1** shows China's missile capabilities, while **Table 2** contrasts Taiwan's and China's air capabilities and shows the portion of China's capabilities that is proximate to Taiwan's.

TABLE 1 China's missile force

China's missile force			
System	Missiles	Launchers	Estimated range (km)
ICBM	75–100	50–75	5,400–13,000+
MRBM	200–300	100–125	1,500+
SRBM	1,000–1,200	250–300	300–1,000
GLCM	200–300	40–55	1,500+
LACM	200–300	40–55	1,500+

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, 95.

NOTE: This table includes intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs), short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCMs), and land-attack cruise missiles (LACMs).

TABLE 2 Military balance: Air forces

Equipment	China		Taiwan
	Total	Within range of Taiwan	Total
Fighters	1,700	130	384
Bombers/Attack	400	200	0
Transport	475	150	19
Special mission aircraft	115	75	25

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, 95.

⁴⁴ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2015*, 175.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 92.

The Navy as the Second Line of Defense

Even if the adversary establishes air dominance, or succeeds in creating a no-fly zone, Taiwan's navy can guard against an amphibious invasion by deploying coastal defense cruise missiles, attack helicopters, mobile multiple-launch rocket systems, and ground-based air defenses.⁴⁶ Taiwan's National Defense Report also describes plans to lay mines as an asymmetrical capability in the event of a conflict.⁴⁷ The future direction for naval capabilities includes phase-two construction of a high-performance combat vessel, which is likely in reference to Taiwan's new Tuo Chiang-class corvette ships.⁴⁸

Taiwan can also counter a blockade by deploying conventional-attack submarines against the blockading ships and by stockpiling critical items such as food, energy, and medical supplies.⁴⁹ While the U.S. government approved the sale of diesel-electric submarines to Taiwan in 2001, this has been delayed because the United States no longer manufactures such submarines for what is now a wholly nuclear-powered submarine force in the U.S. Navy. As a result, Taiwan is swiftly moving forward with plans for indigenously built submarines because they are a robust conventional deterrent, difficult to detect, and less vulnerable to attack, particularly given China's relatively weak antisubmarine warfare capabilities. **Table 3** contrasts the size of Taiwan's and China's naval forces and shows the portion of China's naval forces that is proximate to Taiwan.

The Army as the Last Line of Defense

Once the adversary makes it onto the beaches, the ROC Army must keep it from gaining ground on the island. To do so, Taiwan is seeking up to four battalions of surplus U.S. M1A1 and M1A2 tanks and requires additional anti-tank munitions, such as BGM-71 TOW (tube-launched, optically tracked, wire-guided) missiles and FGM-148 Javelin missiles.⁵⁰ In 2016, the ROC Marine Corps purchased AAV-7A1 amphibious assault vehicles from the United States, with plans to acquire more.⁵¹ Taiwan also produces and maintains eight-wheeled armored vehicles and has acquired additional night vision equipment.⁵² Yet it still needs new internal communications systems for tanks, self-propelled vehicles, and armored vehicles.⁵³

The army's assets should be mobile. To survive a missile strike, the U.S. Department of Defense suggests that Taiwan acquire weapons systems that can be maneuvered between various locations, allowing the island to harden its defense structures to protect weapons against attack, and that it make greater use of decoys to deceive and conceal military assets on the ground. Taiwan should also ensure multiple redundancies in key infrastructure for the distribution of food and water, medical support, wartime command and control, radar, civil defense, and the electrical grid. **Table 4** contrasts the size of Taiwan's and China's ground forces and shows the portion of China's ground forces that is proximate to Taiwan.

⁴⁶ Murray, "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy," 26–28; and Lostumbo, "A New Taiwan Strategy to Adapt to PLA Precision Strike Capabilities," 33.

⁴⁷ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2015*, 92.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 175; and "Carrier-Killer Starts Trials," *Taipei Times*, October 28, 2014, <http://www.taipetimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2014/10/28/2003603112>.

⁴⁹ Murray, "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy," 28–29.

⁵⁰ Goldstein, "Taiwan: Asia's Orphan?" 20.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2015*, 175.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

TABLE 3 Military balance: Naval forces

Equipment	China		Taiwan
	Total	Eastern and southern theater navies	Total
Aircraft carriers	1	0	0
Destroyers	31	24	4
Frigates	56	42	22
Corvettes	23	14	1
Tank landing ships / Amphibious transport dock	34	32	12
Medium landing ships	21	15	4
Diesel attack submarines	54	34	4
Nuclear attack submarines	5	2	0
Ballistic missile submarines	4	4	0
Costal patrol (missile)	88	70	45
Coast guard ships	185	NA	25

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, 95.

Democratic Turnover and Shifting Military Strategy

Because of Taiwan’s democratic institutions and regular turnover of leadership, newly elected leaders can cause shifts in the ROC’s military and cross-strait policies. Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) president Chen Shui-bian from 2000 to 2008 was hawkish on Taiwan’s defense. He even succeeded in gaining President George W. Bush’s approval for the sale of diesel-electric submarines to Taiwan, though the Kuomintang-dominated legislature at the time hampered his efforts.⁵⁴ Chen, however, sought to internationalize the island’s domestic identity without due consideration to the relationship with Washington, resulting in some deterioration of the U.S.-Taiwan relationship.⁵⁵

Kuomintang president Ma Ying-jeou from 2008 to 2016 was more focused on promoting cross-strait reconciliation while maintaining moderate military capabilities. Taking into account how his predecessors had damaged U.S.-Taiwan relations, he pledged not to be a “troublemaker” or to spring “surprises.”⁵⁶ During Ma’s time in office, Taiwan’s official three pillars of national security included new diplomatic overtures to achieve cross-strait reconciliation, dynamic

⁵⁴ Shirley A. Kan, “Taiwan: Major U.S. Arms Sales Since 1990,” Congressional Research Service, CRS Report for Congress, RL30957, 2014, 8.

⁵⁵ Goldstein, “Taiwan: Asia’s Orphan?” 18.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

diplomacy to expand Taiwan's international space, and the demonstration of military strength to deter external threats.⁵⁷ However, he did not push hard to acquire or develop submarines and did not express interest in the possibility of acquiring F-35 vertical lift aircraft. Ma did, however, upgrade Taiwan's F-16 A/B aircraft and acquire new UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters and PAC-III Patriot missiles.

TABLE 4 Military balance: Ground forces

Asset	China		Taiwan
	Total	Taiwan Strait area	Total
Personnel (active in combat units)	850,000	190,000	130,000
Group armies / Army corps	18	6	3
Infantry divisions	12	3	0
Infantry brigades	23	6	7
Mechanized infantry divisions	7	1	0
Mechanized infantry brigades	25	6	3
Armor divisions	1	0	0
Armor brigades	17	6	4
Army aviation brigades and regiments	11	5	3
Artillery brigades	22	8	5
Airborne corps	1	1	0
Amphibious divisions	2	2	0
Amphibious brigades	3	3	2
Tanks	7,000	2,000	1,100
Artillery pieces	8,000	2,600	1,600

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, 93.

⁵⁷ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2015*, 255.

Since taking office in 2016, DPP president Tsai Ing-wen has been especially assertive about national defense, particularly with regard to spurring the indigenous defense industry. However, cross-strait relations have stalled as the mainland has demanded recognition of “one China” as a condition for the resumption of talks, which would contradict the prevailing Taiwan-centered identity on the island.⁵⁸ In these ways, democratic turnover has led to shifts in Taiwan’s military strategy and cross-strait relations.

Cultivating Talent

Taiwan’s military has maintained a strong focus on attracting talent and developing human resources, but this requires public support for young adults to choose to enlist in the military as it transitions to a volunteer force, as well as for politicians to prioritize military funding. Taiwan’s latest National Defense Report states that the military recruited 19,000 new personnel in 2014.⁵⁹ In the next four years, the MND will actively reconstruct military barracks, upgrade individual combat gear, redesign military uniforms, and improve living facilities and welfare.⁶⁰ As mentioned above, Taiwan is also planning a transition to an all-volunteer system. As part of this process, it is considering a broad range of measures to boost morale and the appeal of military service as a career.⁶¹ Measures to attract and retain personnel include designing a comprehensive career package from recruitment to retirement, improving the military educational system, refurbishing military barracks and living quarters, enhancing the image of service members, and improving career planning for veterans.⁶²

Assessment of Taiwan’s Military Strategy

Implications for Taiwan

Taiwan’s current military strategy depends heavily on its material power, which is in part a product of its economy. Military budget commitments will remain durable if moderate economic growth continues. If, however, growth slows or reverses, this could have an adverse impact on Taiwan’s recent commitment to raise defense spending from 2% to 3% of GDP and dedicate more resources to the military.

Taiwan has much work to do in continuing to develop modern, high-tech indigenous defense systems, though it has made impressive advances in missile systems and fighter aircraft. The Tsai administration has detailed its force buildup requirements, which include information security, short-takeoff and vertical-landing capabilities, domestically produced submarines, force survivability, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capabilities, the development of an optimal force structure, force integration for joint capabilities with C4ISR, enhancement of weapons acquisition with a priority toward indigenous development, and technology transfer from international purchases.⁶³

⁵⁸ Goldstein, “Taiwan: Asia’s Orphan?” 18.

⁵⁹ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *National Defense Report 2015*, 94.

⁶⁰ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2017*, 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 60–63.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 34, 61, 62, 64, 66.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 44–47.

However, as Taiwan prepares for a potential attack from China, its military exercises should continue to increase in realism to improve its ability to repel China, especially in view of the recent growth in Chinese military power. A decade ago, Taiwan's training shortfalls arose due to a lack of exercise airspace, especially for the air force; a lack of funding; and most importantly a lack of jointness in planning and operations.⁶⁴ At the time, Taiwan was already correcting these concerns, with Defense Minister Lee Jye stating in 2005 that the objective of jointness was a basic tenet of Taiwan's military performance.⁶⁵ By 2015, the Han Kuang military exercise saw the ROC Army, Navy, and Air Force demonstrate their joint operation capabilities in 63 drills—from anti-amphibious landing exercises on the shores of Hsinchu to airborne exercises in Taichung—which were major improvements over past exercises.⁶⁶

Implications for the United States

The Taiwan Relations Act states that “peace and stability in the [Western Pacific] area are in the political, security, and economic interests of the United States and are matters of international concern.” The United States passed the legislation in 1979, the same year that it normalized relations with China. Normalization of the relationship with China was based on the expectation of peaceful resolution of cross-strait differences. Any attempts to “determine the future [of Taiwan] by other than peaceful means” would be considered “a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States.”⁶⁷ Intelligent U.S. defense planning would build Taiwan into an essential link in East Asia's first island chain, thereby limiting the ability of Chinese air and naval forces to move deeper into the Pacific.⁶⁸ The United States has yet to formally build Taiwan into such strategic military plans, but it should work with the country to do this on an informal and unofficial level. The Taiwan Relations Act also states that the United States maintains the capacity “to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of the people on Taiwan” and that the United States would “provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character.”

A constant refrain is that the United States plays a major role in the future of Taiwan and the durability of its current strategy. Washington has opportunities to provide inputs on Taiwan's military strategy through regular military-to-military dialogues. The variability of U.S. planning, subject to the politics of the day, also makes Taiwan's military preparations more conservative, leading it to value indigenous development over arms purchases where possible, or at least pushing Taiwan to diversify its sources of arms, as it has procured Mirage fighter aircraft from France and submarines from the Netherlands in the past. Taiwan's current plans for cultivating the indigenous defense industry is in large part a response to its inability to acquire certain advanced capabilities from the United States. If Washington reveals itself to be a more dependable partner in providing for the island's defense, Taiwan's military strategy could shift away from this new emphasis on self-reliance. *The Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2017* reiterates that, consistent with the Taiwan Relations

⁶⁴ Bernard D. Cole, *Taiwan's Security: History and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2006), 163.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Lauren Dickey, “Taiwan's Han Kuang Exercises: Training for a Chinese Invasion One Drill at a Time,” Jamestown Foundation, China Brief, September 16, 2015, <https://jamestown.org/program/taiwans-han-kuang-exercises-training-for-a-chinese-invasion-one-drill-at-a-time>.

⁶⁷ Goldstein, “Taiwan: Asia's Orphan?” 11.

⁶⁸ Gary J. Schmitt, “It's Time to Ditch the ‘One China’ Fiction and Normalize Relations with Taiwan,” *Washington Post*, May 18, 2016, <http://www.aei.org/publication/its-time-to-ditch-the-one-china-fiction-and-normalize-relations-with-taiwan>.

Act, the United States will continue to provide defense articles and services that enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.⁶⁹

To this end, a recent report from the Center for a New American Security recommends several ways in which the United States could work together with Taiwan:⁷⁰

- Encourage Taiwan to continue hardening critical military and civilian infrastructure
- Sell weapons to Taiwan that make the best use of Taiwan's mountainous geography, such as mobile anti-ship missiles and long-range guns operated by dug-in forces
- Encourage Taiwan to acquire or develop advanced sea mines to place outside the beaches most likely to be used for amphibious landings
- Offer the personal insights and advice of U.S. officials who experienced the United States' transition to an all-volunteer force in the 1970s to officials implementing this shift in Taiwan
- Show Taiwan how to shift prestige away from military equipment toward personnel, and use marketing, aptitude testing, educational incentives, and career planning to transform military service into an elite and desirable career
- Encourage Taiwan to retain military personnel by ensuring that the work is meaningful, interesting, and fast-paced within a professional environment comprising highly motivated and capable colleagues

Even though Taiwan is becoming more self-sufficient, the United States still plays an indispensable role in its security. Washington should be aware of this important role and act accordingly.

Implications for China or Other Potential Adversaries

As discussed earlier, the durability of Taiwan's current military strategy depends a great deal on the threat it faces. In this respect, the country remains squarely focused on the threat of PRC aggression, as Beijing has not renounced the use of force against Taiwan.

However, although its military capabilities are directed at defense against China, Taiwan could easily broaden them to address other regional threats or to support the United States and its allies in the region. The Trump administration's new National Security Strategy reaffirms the U.S. commitment to Taiwan in the context of working with partners to solve problems in the Indo-Pacific region: "We will maintain our strong ties with Taiwan in accordance with our 'One China' policy, including our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide for Taiwan's legitimate defense needs and deter coercion."⁷¹ As discussed in the preceding section, Taiwan's assets include formidable anti-amphibious assault capabilities, with various indigenous missile systems, fighter aircraft, and advanced radars. While these conventional capabilities are meant to provide an interlocking deterrent against a potential adversary, Taiwan could consider putting them to use by assisting in U.S. and allied responses to North Korea or supporting freedom of navigation operations in the South and East China Seas.

Along these lines, the first chapter of the new QDR describes relevant aspects of Taiwan's current strategic environment in detail—particularly China's rapid military development, but

⁶⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress*, 82.

⁷⁰ Harry Kresja, "Seeing Strait: The Future of the U.S.-Taiwan Strategic Relationship," Center for a New American Security, May 18, 2016, 8–10.

⁷¹ White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., December, 2017), 47, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>.

also North Korea's missile and nuclear tests and China's island building in the South China Sea.⁷² Yet Taiwan has not translated this broader threat assessment into policies that engage further in regional approaches to resolving these issues; rather, its military strategy is still geared toward addressing a direct threat from the PRC. Deeper engagement on issues such as countering threats from North Korea or in the South China Sea, rather than planning solely for its own defense, would improve Taiwan's international status and strengthen its partnerships.

Taiwan's Security Options

Despite the presence of other potential threats, China's actions toward Taiwan continue to be the main driver of Taiwan's military strategy. As Defense Minister Feng famously said, "If there was no threat across the Taiwan Strait, then we do not have to purchase arms."⁷³ Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, there has been little variation in its stated determination to unify with Taiwan; and although Beijing's political rhetoric has moved away from the idea of forcibly "liberating Taiwan" toward the modern formulation of "peaceful unification," the end goal remains the same.⁷⁴ With China's rapid military modernization and growth, Taiwan can no longer speak of a cross-strait military balance.

Taiwan's sense of security also largely depends on the U.S. commitment to its defense, as discussed above. Even as the external threat facing the island continues to grow, the hope remains that the United States would come to Taiwan's defense in the event of an attack. The past four decades have seen the strength of this commitment ebb and flow. In this way, Taiwan's current strategic culture arises out of what Steven Goldstein calls an "orphan mentality," shaped by its relationship with the United States and the rest of the world. According to Goldstein, the island's sense of abandonment in the international system is at the center of its strategic culture.⁷⁵ The circumstances underlying this orphan mentality—which emerged as the ROC lost its seat in the United Nations and when the United States ceased official diplomatic relations with it in 1979—in combination with the security threats that Taiwan now faces, mean that the island must fight to survive. There is no guarantee that others will come to its assistance.

Yet even today, the defense of Taiwan ultimately depends on the United States coming to its aid. According to David Gitter and Robert Sutter, "While Taiwan alone cannot stand against China, Taiwan is not alone."⁷⁶ In addition to selling modern weapons to Taiwan, the United States deploys its military forces in the area to counter China's military buildup and to warn against military attacks or coercive changes to the status quo. Gitter and Sutter observe that "the island's defense ultimately depends on the United States coming to its aid, and Taiwan must be able to hold out at least for that long if it is to survive."⁷⁷ For Taiwan, the possibility of China gaining the conventional edge over Japan is a potential short-term concern; China gaining such an edge over the United States remains a distant prospect.

⁷² Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2017*, 13–15.

⁷³ J.R. Wu and Clarence Fernandez, "Taiwan to Build Its Own Submarine, President Vows on Visit to 50-Year-Old Vessel," Reuters, March 21, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-taiwan-defence-idUSKBN16S0IK>.

⁷⁴ Richard C. Bush, "What Xi Jinping Said about Taiwan at the 19th Party Congress," Brookings Institution, Order from Chaos web log, October 19, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/10/19/what-xi-jinping-said-about-taiwan-at-the-19th-party-congress>.

⁷⁵ Goldstein, "Taiwan: Asia's Orphan?" 2.

⁷⁶ David Gitter and Robert Sutter, "Taiwan's Strong but Stifled Foundations of National Power," NBR, Special Report, no. 54, January 2016, 3.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

Taiwan's domestic politics are also a key factor: in a democracy the electorate can support certain government policies that strengthen the military or push to divert funding toward nonsecurity priorities. Given that money translates into material power, and in turn into military power, Taiwan's security situation, as argued above, would be improved by dedicating more money to its defense budget to purchase more sophisticated weapons and improve morale among personnel. Indeed, the Tsai administration has stated that it will raise the defense budget by 50% to reach 3% of GDP in 2018.⁷⁸

However, due to ongoing economic, social, and cultural exchanges, the 2017 QDR notes that many people in Taiwan have become less aware of the fact that the two sides of the strait remain military adversaries and less cognizant that the "risk of war still exists."⁷⁹ Public perceptions have thus begun to dissociate from the reality of a growing cross-strait threat.

These three factors—the threat level facing Taiwan, the degree and certainty of U.S. support, and the public's perception of the threat level—shape Taiwan's current defense strategy. Under this strategy, the ROC continues to attempt to purchase advanced weapons from the United States, while developing indigenous weapons to fill in capabilities it cannot acquire from other countries. It also boosts personnel readiness under perceived moderate levels of threat. This occurs against the backdrop of continued U.S. ambiguity toward Taiwan in the context of China's ongoing plans for peaceful unification.

Below I suggest four alternative models that Taiwan could follow, listed from higher to lower aggression. Taiwan's current strategy can be placed in the middle of this list.

- *Sparta*. This model involves preparing for an aggressive, all-out fight in response to an extreme threat level, driven by China's military dominance and coercion. The Spartans were famous for constantly training for combat. Taiwan could opt to take this approach if China's military power were to become significantly greater than the combined capability of Taiwan's military and security partners. This would be a logical direction if conflict erupts and the populace steels its resolve.
- *Israel*. Under this model, Taiwan takes an assertive approach to safeguard its security against a high level of perceived threats. However, this model involves a lower level of aggression and intensity than that which consumed the Spartans. The likely driver for this alternative would be if China becomes more threatening, or the United States abandons Taiwan and the island chooses to strengthen itself. I address the Taiwan-Israel comparison in more detail below.
- *Finland during the Cold War*. This model assigns a lower priority to defense issues. After World War II, Finland followed the Soviet Union's foreign policy rules and was allowed to nominally remain independent and keep its own political system.⁸⁰ The relationship between China and Taiwan could develop along these lines if the public fails to perceive the threat from China and becomes effectively co-opted by it. This scenario could also happen if the United States abandons Taiwan, leaving the island disillusioned and incapacitated, with no resolve to strengthen itself.
- *Kiribati*. In this scenario, traditional international security threats are perceived as so distant that the island's small police force performs all the law-enforcement and paramilitary functions.

⁷⁸ Adela Lin and Ting Shi, "Taiwan Plans Military Spending Surge to Counter Rising China," Bloomberg, March 16, 2017, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-03-16/taiwan-plans-military-spending-increase-to-counter-rising-china>.

⁷⁹ Ministry of National Defense (Taiwan), *Quadrennial Defense Review 2017*, 28.

⁸⁰ Will Inboden, "Is Finland Rejecting 'Finlandization?'" *Foreign Policy*, Shadow Government web log, December 1, 2014, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/12/01/is-finland-rejecting-finlandization>.

This model follows the example of Kiribati, which possesses no military but instead relies on Australia and New Zealand to provide defense assistance under bilateral agreements.⁸¹ In such a scenario, improbable as it may be, Taiwan would have the luxury of attaining peace with little effort. This could come about in the unlikely event that China convincingly denounces the use of force to unify Taiwan and even politically liberalizes so that its intentions toward Taiwan become transparent and benign.

Of these four scenarios, Israel deserves special attention as providing a model for a marginally more aggressive security strategy than the status quo. Taiwan and Israel share many similarities. Like Taiwan, Israel is surrounded by threats from its neighbors. It is also geographically compact and thus cannot trade distance for time, which is to say that Israel must react to threats quickly or risk being overrun swiftly by an adversary. Both countries likewise have a close relationship with the United States.⁸² Israel purchases advanced weapons from the United States but also develops many of its own systems, as Taiwan is in the process of doing. However, the Israel Defense Forces are famously effective, and the country's external intelligence service, the Mossad, is feared by its rivals. This final aspect bears only slight resemblance to Taiwan.

Yet for all of their similarities and for all of Taiwan's apparent attempts to move toward the Israeli model, it is still evident that Taiwan is not as assertive about its defense as Israel. This disparity can be mainly explained by the different dynamics between Taiwan and China, on the one hand, and Israel and the surrounding Arab states, on the other. The first element of this distinction is that Israel is not threatened by a potential adversary that is as wealthy, advanced, powerful, and large as China. The second element is that Israel faces a constant existential threat and has ramped up its security accordingly. In contrast, because the PRC ostensibly seeks "peaceful unification," Taiwan is not regularly attacked by China in the way that Israel is routinely attacked by rocket fire from neighboring states.⁸³ The result of this distinction is one of the most troubling aspects of Taiwan's currently precarious situation: namely, its citizens do not behave as people who are under the constant and real threat of attack. There is a sense of complacency among the populace on the island because it has had the great fortune of enjoying several generations since the last casualties in the cross-strait conflict. Strong economic ties across the strait make people in Taiwan question whether China is indeed a threat or rather an economic opportunity, and China can take advantage of this situation:

Using the "Taiwanese people" and other proxies in Taiwan to bring about unification is less costly and easier to execute. This is why every time the DPP takes power, Beijing immediately shifts its policy to boost exchanges and communications with the Taiwanese people. The "Taiwanese people" Beijing is investing its hopes in are obviously not farmers on Ali Mountain, but those Taiwanese who have a soft spot for Beijing and the mainland. They do not necessarily have to be large in number. If Taiwan moves towards independence, this pro-unification force could be co-opted into action and lead the way, helping Beijing achieve the great cause of national unification.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Freedom House, "Freedom in the World 2015: Kiribati," <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/kiribati>.

⁸² John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

⁸³ Adam Chandler, " Hamas Quietly Admits It Fired Rockets from Civilian Areas," *Atlantic*, September 12, 2014, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/09/hamas-quietly-admits-it-fired-rockets-from-civilian-areas/380149>.

⁸⁴ Yang Hengjun, "China's 3 Options for 'Unifying' Taiwan," *Diplomat*, April 15, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/04/chinas-3-options-for-unifying-taiwan>.

Whereas Israel's resolve and capabilities grow stronger because its adversaries constantly jab at it, Taiwan's adversary appears relatively calm and even attractive to many people on the island. These key differences limit Taiwan's potential to follow Israel's model at this time.

The second element above, which contrasts with the Israel model, instead aligns with the Finland model. When the people of Taiwan do not perceive a threat from China, or if they are co-opted by China, then Taiwan will become Finlandized. It could choose to not resist but instead to follow China's foreign policy rules with the hopes that Beijing would allow Taiwan to remain nominally independent and keep its own political system. The problem with this surrender approach is that there is no supranational authority to ensure that China adheres to any agreement with Taiwan. In the end, China could just as easily absorb Taiwan, dilute it by transferring people from the mainland over to the island, and oppress the people of Taiwan, even if Beijing initially agreed to do otherwise. A prime example is Hong Kong, with China regularly breaking the "one country, two systems" agreement it reached with the United Kingdom two decades ago.⁸⁵

Conclusion

Agathocles successfully counterattacked those who had besieged his city, ultimately forcing a peace settlement. Nearly 400 years after Syracuse overcame Carthage's siege, hundreds of Jewish zealots spent two to three months under siege on top of the famous mountaintop fortress Masada in 73 CE. The Jews in the fortress "hoped that all of their nation beyond the Euphrates would join together with them to raise an insurrection," but in the end there were only 960 Jews trapped inside the gate and walls surrounded by an estimated 8,000 Roman soldiers building ramps and laying siege works.⁸⁶ Their hopes of receiving help were illusions. In stark contrast, Carthage was motivated to enter into a peaceful resolution because its own security was at stake. There are lessons for Taiwan in Syracuse, Masada, and countless other tales throughout history.

For Taiwan, a strong military force and effective military strategy would not only deter others from threatening it but ultimately preserve the lives of soldiers on all sides. A strong Taiwan ensures the security of the island, the safety of its partners, and even the loss of blood and treasure by China. Security on all sides is promoted by Taiwan's current strategy of resolute defense and multi-domain deterrence.

In line with this military strategy, Taiwan is upgrading its weapons systems through investing in indigenous industries and improving its military personnel, all while recognizing the importance of continued support from the United States and possibly from Japan, South Korea, and Australia. The United States has continued to express its support for Taiwan's defense by offering Taiwan advanced military equipment such as missiles, helicopters, and fighter aircraft upgrades. Japan, South Korea, and Australia all operate diesel-electric submarines and would be in a position to assist Taiwan in developing its fleet, given that the U.S. submarine fleet is all nuclear-powered and the United States has not manufactured diesel-electric submarines in over six decades. Taiwan can work with the United States and other regional partners in many other ways, such as through humanitarian assistance and disaster relief exercises, senior officer visits and exchanges, and the

⁸⁵ Howard French, "Is It Too Late to Save Hong Kong from Beijing's Authoritarian Grasp?" *Guardian*, March 21, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/21/hong-kong-china-authoritarian-democracy-one-country-two-systems>.

⁸⁶ Si Sheppard, *The Jewish Revolt AD 66-74* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2013), 83; and Abraham Wasserstein, ed., *Flavius Josephus: Selections from His Works* (New York: Viking Press, 1974), 186-300.

new U.S. National Defense Authorization Act of 2018, which instructed the executive branch to assess the feasibility of conducting U.S. naval port visits to Taiwan.

Taiwan's QDR and other military strategy documents continue to focus on the threat from China, while simply acknowledging the new and growing threats from North Korea and in the South China Sea. In determining its strategy moving forward, Taiwan can continue on its current path or look to examples from Sparta, Israel, Finland, and Kiribati. Its decisions will depend on its assessment of the threat level, public perception of these threats, institutional and external constraints, and expectations of support from the United States and other countries. These strategic decisions in turn will affect Taiwan's decisions about military equipment and personnel. Hypothetically, if the United States were to withdraw its support, Taiwan could become stronger (if it rose to the challenge) or weaker (if it grew disillusioned). Either way, however, the removal of the United States would embolden China to take active steps toward unification. The United States must not let this happen to a model democratic polity, supportive security partner, and former mutual defense treaty ally that was once on par with its other East Asian allies.

Recommendations for Taiwan include the need for the country's leaders to clarify the threat from China to the public along the lines of the clear-eyed analysis found in key policy documents such as the QDR and National Defense Report. Taiwan should also continue to work closely with the United States while making an extra effort to diversify its partnerships and arms imports from other countries in the region. In addition, it could continue to improve the realism of military training exercises.

The United States should continue to support the island's defense and strengthen the overall partnership by conducting regular arms sales to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability, inviting its military forces to participate in U.S. exercises, carrying out senior military officer exchanges, expanding exchanges for military training, conducting naval exercises in the western Pacific region, and considering the advisability of re-establishing U.S. naval port visits to the island.⁸⁷ One further recommendation is for the United States to establish a refurbishment depot in Taiwan to repair U.S.-origin military equipment.⁸⁸ Repairing equipment in Taiwan rather than shipping it back to the United States would be less costly and time-consuming. In general, Taiwan needs U.S. assistance, and the United States needs Taiwan as a partner in East Asia. History shows that for Taiwan, peace will only come through strength.

⁸⁷ See the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018, section 1259, available at <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/2810/text>.

⁸⁸ David An, "Enhancing Taiwan's Role Under the Trump Administration," Global Taiwan Institute, September 2017, http://globaltaiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/OR1701Taiwans-Role-in-Asia-under-Trump_An.pdf.



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