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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLEGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES  
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MASTERS OF DEFENCE STUDIES RESEARCH PROJECT

**CHINA'S MILITARY SOLUTION TO ACHIEVE TAIWANESE REUNIFICATION:  
MARITIME BLOCKADE.**

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## ABSTRACT

Beijing has a long and well-documented history of utilizing military force in pursuit of its political objectives. The Taiwan Straits is one of the most potentially volatile flashpoints of our time, where the different governments Beijing, Taipei and Washington, all are pursuing their own unique agendas. When Beijing perceives that the political costs of passivity outweigh the potential costs of military action over the Taiwan Strait issue, it is likely that Beijing will opt to use military coercion in an effort to achieve its aims. However, it must always be remembered that China's ultimate objective is reunification with, and not the destruction of, Taiwan.

Should Beijing decide to exercise its' military option against Taiwan: political imperatives, strategic considerations and operational military factors will all have to be taken into consideration. Politically, Beijing will strive to find a military option that is robust enough to effectively pressure the Taipei into reunification negotiations on terms favourable to China, while not being so provocative as to trigger direct U.S. and/or Japanese military intervention into the conflict. Militarily, Beijing currently has the military capacity to succeed against an unaided Taiwan but would be hard pressed to win against a Taiwanese military with U.S. support. Therefore ensuring non-intervention by Washington is a crucial element in determining the choice of Beijing's military option against Taiwan.

Should China decide that coercive diplomacy is required, a submarine based maritime blockade of Taiwan is Beijing's best and most likely military option. It has the best potential of accomplishing Beijing's political objective, compelling negotiations, while limiting the requirement to inflict damage on the mainland.

*There has never been a protracted war  
from which a country has benefited.*

- SUN TZU<sup>1</sup>

The possibility of a military conflict across the Taiwan Strait remains one of the most complex and potentially dangerous security issues of our time. Such a conflict would have a profound impact on peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region. It would provide a real threat of a direct military clash between China and the United States or between China, the United States and Japan. Such a military clash between these large economic and military powers would have profound global political and economic repercussions. Recent developments on both sides of straits indicate that the final resolution of Taiwan's international status is moving inexorably closer. In Taiwan, the March 2000 election of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate, Chen Shui-bian seemed to be a direct challenge to Beijing's plans for reunification. In February 2000, Beijing's White Paper on Taiwan indicated that if Taiwan indefinitely refused to negotiate reunification with the mainland, this refusal might ultimately result in the use of force to resolve the issue.

There are those, such as Michael O'Hanlon from the Brookings Institution, who maintain that China does not pose a threat, and in a head to head competition that the United States would win hands down. He argues that China does not currently have the military capability to successfully invade Taiwan as well as that the international political and economic price would be too high for China.<sup>2</sup> Others, like former U.S. Ambassador to China James Lilley, have argued that China has ambitions for Taiwan that superior American conventional forces cannot

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<sup>1</sup> Griffith, Samuel. Sun Tzu The Art of War. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 73.

<sup>2</sup> O' Hanlon, Michael, "*Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan*," International Security, Vol 25, No. 2 (Fall 2000): pp. 51-86.

deter.<sup>3</sup> When such widely divergent opinions of a countries strategic capabilities and goals exists, the potential for strategic miscalculation is high. Whether China will resort to the use of force in attempting the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland is certainly a worthy subject for debate, a review of past history clearly establishes that China is certainly willing to use force in order to achieve specific political goals. As stated by Dr. Andrew Scobell, "since 1949, China deployed force in ways that reveal a tendency to take significant, albeit calculated risks."<sup>4</sup> This position is supported by Professor Allan Whiting who convincingly argues that, "The political-military pattern of PLA deployment from 1950 to 1996 showed certain consistent characteristics, such as early warning for deterrence, seizure of the initiative, risk acceptance and risk management."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, given China's recent military history, it is both proper and prudent to analyze China's military options with regards to the issue of Taiwanese reunification with the mainland. This paper will examine the military options available to China should Beijing determine that military conflict across the Taiwan Straits is necessary to resolve the issue. Should China decide to exercise its military option against Taiwan: political imperatives, strategic considerations and operational military factors will likely cause these operations to be centered on a form of maritime blockade.

This paper's examination of China's military options will focus on political as well as military factors. First, it will review the historical background of the issue focusing on recent events, which may directly impact upon the crisis and bring the issue to a head. This review will show a complex political situation filled with contradictory national positions, which may

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<sup>3</sup> Hays Gries, Peter, Christensen, Thomas, "*Power and Resolve in U.S. China Policy*" International Security, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 156.

<sup>4</sup> Scobell, Andrew, "*China and Strategic Culture.*" *Strategic Studies Institute*", U.S. Army War College. (May 2002): pp. 23.

<sup>5</sup> Whiting, Allen, "*China's Use of Force 1950-1996, and Taiwan*" International Security, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 124.

lead to a strategic miscalculation by one of the involved parties. Second, it will briefly analyze the strategic culture, goals and concerns of the four primary actors involved in this conflict: Beijing, Taipei, Washington and Tokyo, with particular emphasis being placed on the Chinese view of the other main players. As this paper is focused on China's choice of a military option, the emphasis on the Chinese perspective of the other nation's interests and possible responses to a crisis in the Taiwan Strait is deliberate. Beijing must find a military option that is both robust enough to influence Taipei, yet restrained enough to avoid direct military intervention by Washington. Third, it will compare the capabilities and limitations of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) military, the Republic of China (ROC) military, as well as potential U.S. military forces that may become involved in the conflict. This comparison will demonstrate that with its current military capabilities, Beijing poses an immediate and credible military threat to Taipei. Fourth, it will examine Taiwan's strategic economic situation, focusing on Taiwan's economic vulnerabilities to Chinese military action. This examination will show that Taiwan is almost completely reliant upon its vulnerable maritime trade for its economic survival. Finally, this paper will examine the Chinese options for military coercion of Taiwan, which range from the threat of offensive military action to attempting a full invasion. It will measure these options against the following criteria: China's capability to conduct the operation; Taiwan's capability to defend against it; the probability of whether such an action would trigger United States military intervention; whether the United States would have the capability to intervene in a timely fashion; and finally, the likelihood of the option achieving Beijing's overall political objectives, compelling Taiwanese authorities to enter in to reunification negotiations on terms favourable to Beijing. In conclusion, this paper will demonstrate that if Beijing decides to utilize a military option to force Taipei's compliance with

regards to reunification, Beijing's most likely and most effective course of action would be a maritime blockade.

## **BACKGROUND**

Taiwan has endured a long and troubled history. It has repeatedly been the target of invasion, conquest and subjugation by a variety of imperialistic nations. To examine the current issues facing Taiwan, it is worthwhile to conduct a brief review of Taiwan's recent historical background, in order to provide some insight into the varied perspectives of the four main actors involved in the conflict Beijing, Washington, Tokyo and Taipei.

### ***The PRC Perspective.***

In the late 1940's the Chinese Communist Party lead by Mao Zedong defeated the Kuomintang (KMT) government led by Chiang Kai-shek. Following it's defeat in the civil war, the KMT fled to Taiwan and in December 1949 established Taipei as the 'provisional ' capital of the Republic of China (ROC) government. For over the next 50 years, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has sought the reunification of Taiwan, which it considers to be a break away province, with the rest of the Chinese nation. In its 21 February 2000 PRC White Paper--*The One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue*, the PRC repeatedly asserts it's right to sovereignty over Taiwan. It states that:

"Taiwan is an inalienable part of Chinese territory and, after replacing the government of the Republic of China in 1949, the government of the PRC has become the sole legal government of China, enjoying and exercising sovereignty over the whole of China, including Taiwan."<sup>6</sup>

In pursuit of this goal China has indicated that: "To safeguard China's sovereignty and realize reunification of the two sides of the Straits, the Chinese government has the right to resort to

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<sup>6</sup> "*PRC White Paper--The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue*" The Taiwan Affairs Office and The Information Office of the State Council, (21 February 2000): Section 4. <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/white.htm>

any necessary means."<sup>7</sup> Although the White Paper emphasizes that China is striving for peaceful reunification with Taiwan, it states that under certain compelling circumstances China "will only be forced to adopt all drastic measures possible, including the use of force, to safeguard China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and fulfill the great cause of reunification."<sup>8</sup> The White Paper identifies the following three situations as compelling circumstances:

- a). if a grave turn of events occurs leading to the separation of Taiwan from China in any name;
- b). if Taiwan is invaded and occupied by foreign countries; or
- c). if the Taiwan authorities refuse, sine die (indefinitely) the peaceful settlement of cross-Straits reunification through negotiations.<sup>9</sup>

The new inclusion of the threat that the use of force may result from an indefinite refusal of Taiwan to negotiate reunification represents a change to a more militaristic Chinese approach to the Taiwan question. It suggests that Taiwan's time to reach a peaceful resolution with China may indeed be running out.

### ***The Role of the United States.***

Immediately following World War II, there was a foreign policy split within the U.S. government on how to deal with political developments in China. By 1947 Chiang Kai-Shek's KMT party was now engaged in a life and death struggle with Mao Tse-tung's Communists. As the civil war raged, it became increasingly apparent that the KMT regime was about to be overthrown by Mao's Communists. In late 1948, Major General David Barr of the U.S. Military Advisor Group to the Government of China reported that, "The military situation had deteriorated to the point where only the active participation of United States troops could effect

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid. Section 2.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. Section 3.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Section 3.



a remedy."<sup>10</sup> Such a proposal was deemed unacceptable by the Truman administration and only limited economic aid continued to flow to the KMT regime. This policy was attacked by pro KMT supporters in the U.S. Congress who advocated sending massive U.S. economic aid and as many as 10,000 military advisors to work with KMT troops.<sup>11</sup> On 1 October 1949, the victorious Mao Tse-tung established the Peoples Republic of China and the Truman administration was blamed by the conservatives of the U.S. Congress for losing China to the communists.

The fall of China to the communists did not change the Truman governments approach towards the remnants of Chiang's regime now garrisoned on Taiwan. On 5 January 1950, Truman stated that, "he did not have any plans at this time to set up military bases on Taiwan and that U.S. military and economic aid would not be sent to Chiang."<sup>12</sup> However, this position was rapidly changed with the onset of the Korean War. The conservatives of the U.S. congress charged that "all of this (the Korean War) could have been avoided if the Truman administration had been willing to commit U.S. troops and greater aid to save China and support anti-communists such as Syngman Rhee."<sup>13</sup> President Truman reversed his position regarding Taiwan and on 27 June 1950 announced that; "the U.S. opposed any communist attempt to occupy Taiwan and ordered the U.S. Seventh Fleet to seal off Formosa from Mao's troops."<sup>14</sup> By the end of 1950, U.S. military and economic aid to the KMT government in

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<sup>10</sup> Nathan, James and Oliver, James. United States Foreign Policy and World Order. (Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989) pp. 77.

<sup>11</sup> LaFeber, Walter. The American Age: U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad 1750 to the Present. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994),pp. 464.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 517.

<sup>13</sup> Nathan, James and Oliver, James. United States Foreign Policy and World Order. (Boston: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1989), pp. 103.

<sup>14</sup> LaFeber, Walter. The American Age: U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad 1750 to the Present. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1994),pp. 517.

Taipei had been restored. A formal security agreement was signed between Washington and Taipei in 1954. For the next twenty years, Taipei was a recipient of strong bipartisan American support for its struggle against the mainland.

During this period, Beijing and Taipei competed for international recognition as the legitimate government of all China. With the rise of the Soviet Union in the 1970's, Washington sought to improve relations with Beijing. On 27 February 1972, China and the United States issued the Shanghai Joint Communiqué in which the United States acknowledged, "all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China."<sup>15</sup> As American relations with mainland China continued to improve during the 1970's, Washington slowly began to distance itself from the Taipei government. In the Second Joint Communiqué of 1978, the United States recognized that "the Government of the People's Republic of China as the sole legal government of China and that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China."<sup>16</sup> This revelation shocked not only Taipei, but also the U.S. Congress. As characterized by Steven Levine that on the 1978 Joint Communiqué "all was d Je

diplomatic expectations that the Taiwan issue would be resolved peacefully. The TRA outlines United States policy regarding Taiwan's security as follows:

- a). to consider any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including boycotts or embargoes, a threat to peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States;
- b). to provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character;
- c). to maintain the capacity of the United States 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
- d). the United States will make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability.<sup>18</sup>

The TRA remains the basis of today's security arrangements between Taipei and Washington. It establishes the possibility of U.S. military intervention, should Beijing attempt to use other than peaceful means to force Taipei to accept reunification with the mainland. It also highlights continuing strong congressional support to protect Taiwan's security.

### ***Japanese Involvement.***

Over the last century, Japan has been the most destructive external influence on China. In 1895, the Japanese were the victors of the First Sino-Japanese War. As a result, under the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the Chinese province of Taiwan was ceded to Japan. In 1931, the Manchurian Incident resulted in the Japanese seizure of Manchuria and the formation of Japan's Manchukuo province in February 1932. The second Sino-Japanese war raged from 1937-1941 which included the infamous rape of Nanking, where over 200,000 civilians were massacred, and resulted in most of China's eastern coastal plain being seized by the Japanese. The bombing of Pearl Harbor merged the Second Sino-Japanese war into World War II when China declared war against Japan, Germany and Italy. At this time, the Chinese government

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<sup>18</sup> "*Taiwan Relations Act*" United States Code Title 48 Section 3301, 10 April 1979.  
<http://www.taiwandocuments.org/tra01.htm>

declared that, "all treaties, agreements and contracts concerning Sino-Japanese relations, including the Treaty of Shimonoseki, had been abrogated, and that China would recover Taiwan."<sup>19</sup> As part of the Cairo Declaration of 1943, China, Britain and the United States agreed, "that all the territories that Japan has stolen from the Chinese, such as Manchuria, Formosa (Taiwan), and Pescadores shall be restored to the Republic of China."<sup>20</sup> The Potsdam Proclamation of July 1945 stipulated that as part of the terms for unconditional surrender, Japan had to comply with the Cairo Declaration of 1943. On October 25, 1945, the Chinese government resumed sovereignty over Taiwan. To date, Tokyo has honoured this agreement and can be expected to continue to do so. Although Tokyo has intentionally distanced itself from the Taiwan straits issue, the revision of its Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation Agreement of 1999 to include "cooperation in situations in areas surrounding Japan that will have an important influence on Japan's peace and security,"<sup>21</sup> greatly angered Beijing by failing to exclude Taiwan from the scope of 'areas surrounding Japan'. It remains an open question as to what degree Tokyo might support U.S. military intervention in a crisis between China and Taiwan.

### ***The Rise of the ROC in Taipei.***

In 1949, the KMT established the provisional government of the ROC in Taipei. From Taiwan, Chiang Kai-shek sought to continue the struggle against the Chinese Communist Party for the control of mainland China. The KMT's claim of governing all China continued until

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<sup>19</sup> "PRC White Paper--The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue" The Taiwan Affairs Office and The Information Office of the State Council, (21 February 2000): Section 1. <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/white.htm>

<sup>20</sup> The Cairo Declaration Nov 27, 1943. <http://list.room.ne.jp/~lawtxt/1943Cairo-English.html>

<sup>21</sup> Rahman, Chris, "*Defending Taiwan, and Why it Matters*" Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 4. (Autumn 2001): pp. 80.

1991 when the KMT finally abandoned this effort and shifted its focus to governing Taiwan.<sup>22</sup> This change of focus led to a process of constitutional reform that over the next 5 years paved the way for the introduction of a multi-party political system with a directly elected president and vice president. There are now four main parties on Taiwan's political landscape. The DPP and the Taiwan Solidarity Union (TSU) both favour Taiwanese independence from the mainland. The KMT and the People's First Party (PFP) both favour reunification with the mainland. In March 2000, Chen Shui-bian of the DPP was elected President after running a very aggressive pro-independence campaign and forcefully advocating a referendum on Taiwan's status.<sup>23</sup> Since his election, as a result of both internal and external political pressures Chen Shui-bian has moderated his pro-independence stance and sent mixed messages to both the mainland and the people of Taiwan. Current estimates suggest that only forty percent of the Taiwanese electorate currently support independence.<sup>24</sup> This level of support is both a source of strong political debate within Taiwan and a source of grave concern for Beijing.

The current situation across the Taiwan Straits is both complex and filled with contradictory national positions. China has indicated that it is striving to achieve a peaceful reunification with Taiwan but has also threatened to use force should Taiwan choose to indefinitely refuse to negotiate reunification with the mainland. Beijing intends to fulfill its great cause of reunification. The United States has recognized both the 'one china principle' and that the PRC is the legitimate government of China, while at the same time supplying arms to Taiwan and leaving open the possibility of military intervention on Taiwan's behalf.

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<sup>22</sup> "Taiwan: Country Forecast." The PRS Group. 4 December 2002. pp. 3/20.

<<http://www/prsgroup.com/download/yearbook/TAIWAN.pdf/file:TAIWAN.pdf>/

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. pp. 30.

<sup>24</sup> Marti, Michael, "Taiwan Election Results: Continued Stalemate on 'One China'." Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, National Defense University. (26 January 2003): <<http://www.dsis.org.tw/peaceforum/papers/2002-04/TP0204001e.htm>

Washington defines a threat to peace and security in the Western Pacific area as a grave concern to the United States. Japan has honoured its requirements under the Potsdam Proclamation but also has an agreement in place to support U.S. military forces operating in areas surrounding Japan. The current DPP government in Taipei, which strongly advocated independence before it's election, has now moderated and obfuscated it's position on the issue, to great dismay of all concerned on both sides of the straits. In such a confused political situation, there is a strong possibility of strategic miscalculation, which may lead to a provocative use of force and unwanted military escalation.

### **STRATEGIC CULTURE, GOALS AND CONCERNS**

Having reviewed a brief synopsis of the historical situation surrounding the Taiwan Straits issue, this section will examine the potential influence of the various national strategic perspectives of the nations involved and how these strategic perspectives may influence future events. It will analyze the strategic culture, goals and concerns of the four primary actors involved in this conflict: Beijing, Washington, Tokyo and Taipei, with particular emphasis being placed on the Chinese perspective of the other main players intentions. It will conclude that Beijing is well prepared to risk the use of force in pursuit of political objectives.

#### ***Chinese Strategic Tradition.***

As the lead actor in any drama involving the Taiwan Straits, specific attention must be paid to China's strategic outlook. Dr. Andrew Scobell, of the Strategic Studies Institute, argues that in order to understand China's strategic disposition, one must examine both: "the nature and impact of China's assessment of its own strategic culture and the nature and impact of

China's depictions of the strategic cultures of Japan and the United States."<sup>25</sup> To be able to accurately predict the Chinese response to events in the Taiwan Strait, we must understand both how the Chinese view themselves and how the Chinese view their potential competitors.

In his article, *Posing Problems without Catching Up*, Professor Christensen provides a broad overview of China's pragmatic near term strategy. He maintains that, "China's strategy for the next twenty to thirty years appears more realistic: to develop the capabilities to dominate most regional actors, to become a regional peer competitor or near peer competitor of the other great powers in the region (including Russia, Japan, and perhaps a future united Korea), and to develop politically useful capabilities to punish American forces if they were to intervene in a conflict of great interest to China."<sup>26</sup> Of note, such a strategy does not require Beijing to become Washington's military equal, before potentially challenging American interests in South East Asia.

In his article, *China and Strategic Culture*, Dr. Scobell argues that China has a dualistic strategic culture with which it pursues its national objectives. He maintains that this "*Chinese Cult of Defense* disposes Chinese leaders to pursue offensive military operations as a primary alternative in pursuit of national goals, while rationalizing these actions as being purely defensive and last resort."<sup>27</sup> This position is supported by professor Alan Whiting's findings, which show that, "From 1950 to 1996, Beijing gave priority to political goals of deterrence and

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<sup>25</sup> Scobell, Andrew, "*China and Strategic Culture. Strategic Studies Institute*", U.S. Army War College. (May 2002): pp. V.

<sup>26</sup> Christensen, Thomas, "*Posing Problems without Catching Up*" International Security Vol. 25, No. 4, (Spring 2001): pp. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Scobell, Andrew, "*China and Strategic Culture. Strategic Studies Institute*", U.S. Army War College. (May 2002): pp. V.

coercive diplomacy in PLA deployments."<sup>28</sup> Whiting maintains that specific limited political goals can be attributed to every PLA military action since 1950. Whiting argues that, "China's primary motivations included preemption of perceived attack (Korea), deterrence (the United States in Vietnam and the Soviet Union along the Sino-Soviet border), coercion (India, Vietnam), and coercive diplomacy (Taiwan)."<sup>29</sup> Whiting further maintains that, "in the past the PLA has been constrained not by a power imbalance favoring the opponent but by risk management through closely supervised rules of engagement in an attempt to control escalation."<sup>30</sup> In all of the above instances, a limited and strictly controlled application of military force was intended to reinforce China's political objectives.

Scobell argues that China perceives its strategic culture to be based around three main principles:

- a). that Chinese strategic culture is pacifistic, defensive-minded and nonexpansionist;
- b). that threats to China's national security are very real and domestic threats are as dangerous as foreign threats; and
- c). that national unification is a traditional Chinese core strategic cultural value.<sup>31</sup>

In China, reunification is a vital national interest. "It is an immutable principle in part because of China's history of division and inability to stop exploitation and oppression by foreign powers."<sup>32</sup> In its February 2000 *PRC White Paper--The One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue*, China clearly states, "Settlement of the Taiwan issue and realization of the complete

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<sup>28</sup> Whiting, Allen, "China's Use of Force 1950-1996, and Taiwan" International Security, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 130.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. pp.104.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. pp. 126.

<sup>31</sup> Scobell, Andrew, "China and Strategic Culture. Strategic Studies Institute", U.S. Army War College. (May 2002): pp. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. pp. 11.



reunification of China embody the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation."<sup>33</sup> Chinese resolve with regards to reunification with Taiwan should not be underestimated.

Apart from the overall goal of the reunification of China, China also considers Taiwan strategically important to both its international and domestic security. Since the late 1980's, China has been transforming its defensive strategy from one of a coastal defence force to the existing strategy of 'offshore active defence'.<sup>34</sup> This new strategy envisages an extended defence-in-depth encompassing the entire ocean space within the 'first island chain'--running from the Kuriles through Japan, the Ryukyus, Taiwan, and the Philippines to the Indonesian archipelago (thus including the entire expanse of the South and East China Seas.<sup>35</sup> See map 1 at Annex A. While the above strategy does not specifically require the reunification of Taiwan with the mainland, such a reunification would certainly enhance its viability and effectiveness by placing one of the critical locations of 'the first island chain' under Beijing's control. There is also the Chinese perception that reunification with Taiwan is vital to China's domestic security. As described by Chris Rahman, a research fellow at the Australian Centre for Maritime Policy, "There is a real, if exaggerated, fear in Beijing that should a formal Taiwanese declaration of independence go unpunished, restive regions in China may also try to break away."<sup>36</sup> Although, one could credibly argue that the issues regarding Tibet and Inner Mongolia are fundamentally different from the issues regarding Taiwan's reunification with the mainland, all that really matters is how deeply the political elite in Beijing holds this

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<sup>33</sup> "PRC White Paper--The One-China Principle and the Taiwan Issue" The Taiwan Affairs Office and The Information Office of the State Council, (21 February 2000): Section 1. <http://www.taiwandocuments.org/white.htm>

<sup>34</sup> Rahman, Chris, "Defending Taiwan, and Why it Matters" Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 4. (Autumn 2001): pp. 73.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp. 73.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. pp. 76.

conclusion. Professor Whiting argues that such a belief could induce a military response to a Taiwanese declaration of independence, "When the calculation of political cost from passivity out weighed the economic and military costs of taking action, Beijing moved against the United States in Korea and in Vietnam, against India, and against the Soviet Union."<sup>37</sup> This strategic perspective is critical to any examination of possible Chinese courses of action regarding Taiwan. It speaks to both the probability that Beijing may resort to the use of military force to achieve reunification if it encounters any of the three compelling circumstances listed in its 2000 PRC White Paper as well as providing some insight as to what level of risk Beijing may be willing to tolerate in pursuit of its political objectives.

Any discussion of Chinese strategic thinking regarding Taiwan, must also examine the Chinese perception of its two main rivals, the United States and Japan. The United States is regarded by the policy elite in Beijing as China's leading rival and that a Taiwan separate from China is a key part of America's Asian strategy. Professor Shambaugh cites many publications and interviews, which indicate, "the United States is by far the greatest security concern for PLA leaders and analysts, both generally and in the particular contexts of Taiwan, Korea and Japan. Numerous Chinese military analyses portray the United States as hegemonic, expansionist, and bent on global and regional dominance."<sup>38</sup> Scobell cites one group of Chinese military researchers who maintain that, "Since the end of the Cold War, Taiwan has increasingly been used by the United States as an extremely important chess piece to contain

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<sup>37</sup> Whiting, Allen, "*China's Use of Force 1950-1996, and Taiwan*" International Security, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 131.

<sup>38</sup> Shambaugh, David, "*China's Military Views the World,*" International Security, Vol 23, No. 3 (Winter 1999/2000): pp. 61

China."<sup>39</sup> China feels that the United States is deliberately continuing to support Taiwan militarily in order to advance its own regional interests at the expense of China. Professor Robert Ross of Boston College indicates that, "Chinese policymakers must now assume that regardless of the source of a future crisis, including a formal declaration of sovereign independence, the United States will now almost certainly intervene militarily against Chinese use of force (against Taiwan)."<sup>40</sup>

Historically, U.S. presence on and involvement with Taiwan has been a matter of strategic concern for China. Professor Ross maintains that, "From the days of the Korean War until 1979, Taiwan loomed in Beijing's eyes as a kind of American 'Cuba'. Beijing believed that the U.S. presence on Taiwan enabled the United States to threaten China's borders directly."<sup>41</sup> Although this was withdrawn in 1979, Beijing still considers it a key strategic interest to exclude any great power strategic presence on Taiwan.<sup>42</sup> This is the leading reason why Beijing is against any U.S.-Taiwan cooperation on Theatre Missile Defence (TMD). China views the prospect of Taiwan's participation in TMD development as symbolic evidence of the defacto reestablishment of a U.S.-Taiwan military alliance.<sup>43</sup>

Chinese strategic perceptions of the United States are also critical in determining how China may approach a potential military confrontation with the United States over Taiwan.

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<sup>39</sup> Scobell, Andrew, "*China and Strategic Culture. Strategic Studies Institute*", U.S. Army War College. (May 2002): pp. 16.

<sup>40</sup> Ross, Robert, "*The 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation*" International Security Vol. 25, (Fall 2000): pp. 119.

<sup>41</sup> Ross, Robert, "*The Stability of Deterrence in the Taiwan Strait*" The National Interest, (Fall 2001): pp. 68.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. pp. 69.

<sup>43</sup> Feigenbaum, Evan, "*China's Challenge to Pax Americana*" The Washington Quarterly, (Summer 2001): pp. 39.

What price does Beijing think America is willing to pay in order to support Taiwan in a shooting war? After a series of interviews, Christensen cites one strand of thinking amongst Beijing's elite that maintains that the U.S cannot withstand many casualties. These thinkers believe this question centres on, "not whether the United States can be compelled to back down over Taiwan, but how quickly and at what cost."<sup>44</sup> He quotes China's National Defence University professor Zhang Zhaozong as saying, "Americans usually give the impression that they are chivalrous and generous people who want to help when they see something unjust, but underneath this superficial image, that are in fact extremely selfish....Americans can never to afford to take a beating, not even a light one."<sup>45</sup> Whether well founded or not, this is potentially a very destabilizing and dangerous belief. According to Chinese political scientist Colonel Ming-shih Shen, "the focuses of China's military strategy against Taiwan are to obtain key combat power to respond to the rising forces of Taiwan and other countries in the region and get prepared for possible U.S. intervention, and to equip its troops with the capability of rapid deployment and win regional wars in its peripheral areas under high-tech conditions."<sup>46</sup> To accomplish this objective, over the last decade China has embarked on a large-scale modernization programme of its air, naval and ballistic missile forces to enable them to function effectively in a high tech operational environment against both Taiwanese and American opposition.

China regards Japan as a once and potentially future enemy. Professor Christensen argues that, "Although Chinese Analysts presently fear U.S. power much more than Japanese

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<sup>44</sup> Christensen, Thomas, "*Posing Problems without Catching Up*" International Security Vol. 25, No. 4, (Spring 2001): pp. 17.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. pp. 18.

<sup>46</sup> Shen, Ming-shih, "*China's Military Strategy and Security in the Taiwan Strait.*" (4 February 2003):  
<<http://www.dis.org.tw/peaceforum/symposium/2002-07/CM02070013e.htm>

power, in terms of national intentions, Chinese analysts view Japan with much less trust and, in many cases, with a loathing rarely found in their attitudes about the United States."<sup>47</sup> This view is coupled with a fear of the return of Japanese imperialism and a challenge to Chinese regional leadership. Major General John Landry, U.S. Army (Ret.); National Intelligence Officer argues, "China for one, fears the reemergence of Japanese power and Tokyo's imputed desire for a more expansive leadership role both in Asia and in the international arena."<sup>48</sup> This position is widely held by PLA analysts who, "uniformly express deep suspicions about Japan's 'militarist' tendencies, potential for an expanded regional security role, possible intervention in Korean and Taiwan contingencies, and strengthened defense ties with the United States."<sup>49</sup> The PLA considers renewed Japanese militarism to be a long-term security threat.

The PLA is concerned with the expansion of the U.S.-Japanese defence alliance and how it might affect the Taiwan issue. Beijing views "Japan as having both stronger emotional and practical reasons than the United States for opposing Taiwan's reintegration with the mainland and a greater stake than the United States in issues such as sea-lane protection far from the Japanese home islands."<sup>50</sup> The new revised guidelines of the U.S.-Japanese defence alliance calls for the Japanese Self Defence Forces (JSDF) to provide greater operational support (i.e. intelligence gathering, surveillance and minesweeping) to U.S. forces in the areas surrounding Japan. This seemingly benign commitment is seen as potentially provocative by Beijing. "In particular, if Japan ever decided to deploy minesweepers there, this would have

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<sup>47</sup> Christensen, Thomas, "*China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia*," International Security Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999): pp. 52.

<sup>48</sup> Landry, John, "*The Military Dimensions of Great Power Rivalry in the Asia-Pacific Region*." Asia Pacific Forum: Naval War College. (11-12 June 2000): pp. 84.

<sup>49</sup> Shambaugh, David, "*China's Military Views the World*," International Security, Vol 23, No. 3 (Winter 1999/2000): pp. 68.

<sup>50</sup> Christensen, Thomas, "*China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia*," International Security Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999): pp. 63.

the potential to reduce the PLA's ability to coerce Taiwan in a cross-strait crisis or conflict by playing the purely defensive role of helping to break a real or threatened PLA blockade of shipping."<sup>51</sup> Overall, Beijing remains suspicious of Japan's future regional intentions and is specifically concerned about the possibility of direct U.S.-Japanese military intervention on behalf of Taiwan.

In China's White Paper on Taiwan, Beijing indicated that reunification with Taiwan is in the fundamental interests of the Chinese nation. China anticipates that U.S. military forces, supported by Japan, will intervene on behalf of Taiwan in the event that China utilizes force against Taiwan. As a result, as will be detailed in section three, China has been modernizing its forces over the past decade to function in a high tech operational environment, in order to provide both a credible deterrent to third party intervention and effective combat capability in the waters surrounding Taiwan. Although officially still seeking a peaceful resolution to the Taiwan issue, China is both capable of and willing to use military force to achieve reunification should all other methods fail.

### ***The American Strategic Perspective***

America's current strategic goals in South East Asia are outlined in *United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region, 1998*. Professor Christensen has condensed this lengthy document into three basic elements of American strategy, which are:

- a. deterring attacks on allies and friends;
- b. maintaining East Asian bases for global power projection; and
- c. preventing spirals of tension among regional actors whose relations are plagued by both historical legacies of mistrust and contemporary sovereignty disputes.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid. pp. 66.

<sup>52</sup> Christensen, Thomas, "Posing Problems without Catching Up" *International Security* Vol. 25, No. 4, (Spring 2001): pp. 7.

To support this strategy the United States "intends to maintain a robust overseas military presence of approximately 100,000 in the region, while harnessing new technology to retain our lead in capabilities."<sup>53</sup> As part of its overall security strategy, Washington remains committed to maintaining a U.S. military presence within the Asia Pacific region.

The keystone of Washington's strategy in the Asia-Pacific is the maintenance of its alliance with Tokyo. This relationship is critical to insuring that the United States maintains its main regional forward operating bases that strengthen its ability to exert power and influence there. The operational utility of this alliance with Tokyo was enhanced in 1997 with the Revised Guidelines for Japanese and U.S. Defence Cooperation. Professor Nobuo Okawara of Kyushu University postulates that these somewhat ambiguous guidelines provide two new defence interpretations for the alliance; first that U.S.-Japanese cooperation in combat is obligatory only in situations involving the defence of Japan's home island and second, that the revised guidelines free Japan to provide logistical and other forms of support to the United States, falling short of military combat, as long as the crisis is politically construed as constituting a serious security threat to Japan.<sup>54</sup> He also maintains that these guidelines support both nations strategic interests concerning Taiwan, "The United States has an interest in enhancing the deterrent effect of its alliance with Japan against China; Japanese officials have an interest in leaving undefined Japan's response to a possible crisis over Taiwan."<sup>55</sup> Although Tokyo's response to a Taiwanese crisis has been deliberately left ambiguous for both

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<sup>53</sup> "United States Security Strategy for the East Asia-Pacific Region, 1998" U.S. Department of Defence. 13 November 1998.

< <http://www.usconsulate.org.hk/ushk/others/1998/1123.htm>

<sup>54</sup> Okawara, Nobuo, "Japan, Asian-Pacific Security, and the Case for Analytical Eclecticism," International Security Vol. 26, No. 3, (Winter 2001/02), pp. 171.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 179.

Washington and Beijing, the increased possibility of U.S.-Japanese cooperation in support of Taiwan, has not been well received in China.

In order to support the maintenance of the status quo over Taiwan, the United States has also adopted a position of strategic ambiguity. American policy is deliberately noncommittal; it provides tacit support and approval to both Beijing's and Taipei's positions as well as pledging an unspecified degree of military and political support to Taipei in the event of a military confrontation. Its noncommittal nature is designed to neither provoke Beijing nor embolden Taipei to drastic actions that may precipitate a military confrontation. However, as Richard Betts, Director of the Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University notes, "because Taiwan is more independent than either Washington or Beijing might prefer, neither great power can fully control developments that might ignite a crisis. This is a classic recipe for surprise, miscalculation and uncontrolled escalation."<sup>56</sup>

The strategic problem of how to deal with the Taiwan issue becomes significantly more complicated should China or Taiwan directly challenge the status quo. One of the problems that Washington faces is that nations within the region have begun to question the degree of Washington's commitment to the region. Professor Dibb has noted that, "there is a growing perception that the United States tends to carry out its military duties only after armed conflict has broken out."<sup>57</sup> Dibb suggests nations within the region are coming to believe that the United States:

"may, depending on the degree of strategic interest and the nature of domestic reaction turn up quickly, and it might ultimately restore the status quo ante, but this is little comfort for nations whose territory has been threatened in the meantime. Moreover,

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<sup>56</sup> Betts, Richard and Christensen, Thomas, "*China: Getting the Questions Right*," The National Interest. (Winter 2000/01): pp. 26.

<sup>57</sup> Dibb, Paul, "*Strategic Trends: Asia at a Crossroads*." Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 1. (Winter 2001): pp. 32.



the manner in which the United States intervenes will be strongly shaped by domestic considerations: it will seek to respond to an armed conflict in the most domestically acceptable way--in other words, with airpower."<sup>58</sup>

If the United States failed to militarily support Taiwan in a confrontation with China, it would reinforce this concern amongst its current Asian partners. In effect, it would be an acknowledgement of Chinese regional dominance. Chris Rahman is more forceful regarding this issue and argues that, "If Taiwan were to be abandoned, the entire U.S. policy and strategy framework for Asia would become defunct and the relationships would be refined in ways as yet unknowable, bringing into play further unwanted, unpredictable, nonlinear consequences."<sup>59</sup> The cost of a U.S. non-response to a confrontation across the Taiwan straits could have a profound long-term impact on American strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

If Washington chose to support Taipei militarily against Beijing, it would naturally expect support from its allies within the region. Strategic analysts agree that,

"War between the United States and China in the Taiwan Straits might well draw in America's allies, including Australia. Washington would expect its other allies, particularly Japan and South Korea, to support it, and such expectations could seriously damage alliances in the region."<sup>60</sup>

Understandably, each nation involved in this issue can be expected to make their decision based on their own national self-interest. However, eliciting the long-term enmity of a powerful regional neighbour over the prospect of support from a powerful, but non-regional nation is a different question entirely. When placed in such a precarious position, the other lesser South East Asian nations, like Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines, may prefer to

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid. pp. 32.

<sup>59</sup> Rahman, Chris, "*Defending Taiwan, and Why it Matters*" Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 4. (Autumn 2001): pp. 87.

<sup>60</sup> Dibb, Paul, "*Strategic Trends: Asia at a Crossroads*." Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 1. (Winter 2001): pp. 27.

adopt a strategically neutral, wait and see position. Thereby pleasing no one, but hopefully reducing regional friction.

The issue of military intervention in the Taiwan Straits is a double-edged sword for Washington both internationally and domestically. A non-reaction would result in a loss of global political standing by reinforcing the perception that Washington was an unreliable ally focused on its own national interests, and might be heavily criticized domestically within the congress for not supporting democracy and America national values abroad. An overreaction would result in a dangerous military confrontation with China, disrupt the region's economy, force nations within the region into the difficult situation of choosing between the United States and China, and could be heavily criticized domestically for spending precious American blood and treasure on what was perceived to be a particularly Asian problem. Should a military confrontation over Taiwan force Washington to abandon its position of strategic ambiguity, then the level of intervention it chooses will be crucial to determining America's long-term standing within the Asian Pacific region.

### ***The Japanese Viewpoint.***

It is an uncontested fact that Japan is one of the major regional players in South Asia. A major economic power, Japan's "economy accounts for 60 percent of Asia's gross national products."<sup>61</sup> It possesses both excellent technological capability as well as a strong industrial capacity. It is also a regional military power. "Japan spends more on defense than any other Asian country, and it has the most modern navy (both surface combatants and submarines) and air force in the Asia-Pacific."<sup>62</sup> However, in part due to its World War II legacy, Japan has been unwilling to exert leadership in the Asia-Pacific region commensurate with its economic

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. pp. 27.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. pp. 27.

and military power. As a result, Japan has largely focused on its defence alliance with the United States to aid in addressing its major security concerns. The continued viability and overall utility of this defence alliance is one of the key elements of Tokyo's strategic debate.

Japan is a maritime nation that is reliant upon maintaining its Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs). As documented by Professor Okamoto, "In the 1980's, Japan pledged to develop a defence capacity to protect the Asia-Pacific sea lanes extending 1,000 nautical miles outward from Japan."<sup>63</sup> Over 70% of Japanese imports transit the South China Sea and are therefore vulnerable to Chinese military interception. Tokyo is greatly concerned with the expansion of Beijing's maritime capabilities and has not forgotten Japan's strategic vulnerability to maritime interdiction of vital imported natural resources that was so effectively exploited by its enemies during World War II. With the growth of Chinese naval power astride Japan's vulnerable SLOCs, Tokyo has recognized that, "China is increasingly the primary threat, and Taiwan a more pressing interest."<sup>64</sup> Therefore, the maintenance of peace and stability in the waters surrounding Taiwan is an area of particular strategic concern for Japan.

As already discussed, in 1997 Japan indicated that it would "play a greater role in assisting the United States to underpin regional security."<sup>65</sup> This position places Tokyo in an extremely difficult strategic position should war breakout between the United States and China over Taiwan. As described by Professor Paul Dibb, Head of the Australian National Universities Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, "the United States would naturally expect its allies quickly to provide tangible and useful military contributions. If Japan were to refuse

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<sup>63</sup> Okamoto, Yukio, "*Japan and the United States: The Essential Alliance*" The Washington Quarterly, (Spring 2002): pp. 69.

<sup>64</sup> Rahman, Chris, "*Defending Taiwan, and Why it Matters*" Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 4. (Autumn 2001): pp. 81.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. pp. 80.

to do so, it would put at risk its relationship with the United States.<sup>66</sup> This view is supported by Professor Christensen's opinion that, "if Japan chose not to help the United States in such a purely defensive role, especially if that refusal placed U.S. forces at added risk, this would have severely negative implications for the U.S.-Japan alliance."<sup>67</sup> However, Christensen also adds that the probable result of a Japanese intervention over Taiwan would be the loss of any hope of building a stable, long-term China-Japan security arrangement.<sup>68</sup> The main issue for Japan would be whether permission to use U.S. military bases in Japan and the provision of logistical support would be regarded as a sufficiently useful military contribution to satisfy Washington without greatly angering Beijing? However, it is likely however that any form of Japanese intervention would be regarded as provocative by Beijing and would more likely to lead to an escalation of the crisis.<sup>69</sup> Should it choose to support the United States in a war against China over Taiwan, regardless of the eventual outcome of the military confrontation in the Taiwan Straits, Japan would then be faced hostile regional power directly astride it's SLOCs.

Ultimately, strategic decisions are made on the basis of national self-interest. For Japan, national self-interest clearly lies with securing her SLOCs. Currently, Tokyo is at a strategic crossroad and must decide whether "Japan will be as willing to rely as totally on U.S. protection against these new threats as it was with respect to the Soviet threat" or develop its

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<sup>66</sup> Dibb, Paul, "*Strategic Trends: Asia at a Crossroads.*" Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 1. (Winter 2001): pp. 28.

<sup>67</sup> Christensen, Thomas, "*China, the U.S.-Japan Alliance, and the Security Dilemma in East Asia.*" International Security Vol. 23, No. 4 (Spring 1999): pp. 67.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. pp, 67.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. pp. 67.

own military strength and own regional defence agreements to counter these threats.<sup>70</sup> Japan has both the technological and industrial capacity to significantly upgrade its offensive military capabilities over a relatively short period (5 to 10 years) should it so desire. However, until it decides to do so, its national security interests are best served by maintaining its current alliance with the United States. Should a cross-strait conflict erupt in the near future, Tokyo's response will be directly tied to Washington's. Currently, Tokyo does not have the requisite offensive military capability to successfully confront Beijing unilaterally in the waters surrounding Taiwan. If Washington chooses non-intervention, so will Tokyo. If Washington chooses military intervention, the most probable Japanese response is that, "Tokyo would be unlikely to get involved in a direct military sense, but it might do so indirectly, by assisting the United States in accordance with the new guidelines."<sup>71</sup> By choosing this response, Tokyo would be seeking to both satisfy the expectations of its closest ally, while attempting to mitigate the anger of its strongest regional competitor.

### ***Taipei's Position.***

Ironically, in the drama surrounding the Taiwan Strait, the government in Taipei is in reality a minor player with a potentially decisive role. Strategically, Taipei is caught between the proverbial 'rock and a hard place'. China regards reunification with Taiwan as a 'great cause' while the United States has stated that peace and security in the region is of 'grave concern' to Washington and it has remained ambiguous on the issue of supporting actual independence for Taiwan. A unilateral declaration of independence by Taipei would most

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<sup>70</sup> Shulsky, Abram, "An Assessment of the 'Objective' Political Conditions That Pertain in the Asia-Pacific Region." Asia Pacific Forum: Naval War College. (11-12 June 2000): pp. 29-49.

<sup>71</sup> Rahman, Chris, "Defending Taiwan, and Why it Matters" Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 4. (Autumn 2001): pp. 81.

probably elicit a military response from Beijing. A military response from Beijing would inevitably elicit a political response and potentially military intervention by Washington in support of Taiwan. The issue of Taiwan's status would then largely depend upon the results of the military conflict between Beijing and Washington, with Taipei essentially forfeiting its ability to control its own destiny.

Domestically, political opinion in Taiwan regarding reunification/independence remains deadlocked. The results of the December 2001 legislative elections were as follows: the pro-independence parties, DPP and TSU respectively received 37% and 8% of the vote; while the pro-reunification parties, KMT and PFP respectively received 31% and 20% of the vote.<sup>72</sup> Currently, for a variety of reasons nearly 60% of Taiwanese voters, "not only reject full independence, but support eventual reunification with China".<sup>73</sup> However, within the 60% of the electorate who support of reunification with China, there is great debate as to the specific details and timeline for such a reunification. In all probability, it is unlikely that Taiwan will produce a clear domestic decision favouring either independence or reunification in the near future.

Strategically, Taipei is still trapped in a quagmire of international ambiguity and domestic indecision. Currently there is no domestic consensus favouring independence over reunification. If Taiwan were to declare independence, it is likely that the issue would be resolved following a military confrontation between Beijing and Washington, with the victor dictating the final terms of the settlement, with or without Taipei's input. Therefore, from a

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<sup>72</sup> Marti, Michael, "*Taiwan Election Results: Continued Stalemate on 'One China'.*" Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, National Defense University. (26 January 2003): <<http://www.dsis.org.tw/peaceforum/papers/2002-04/TP0204001e.htm>

<sup>73</sup> "*Taiwan: Country Forecast.*" The PRS Group. 4 December 2002. p. 31.  
<<http://www/prsgroup.com/download/yearbook/TAIWAN.pdf?file:TAIWAN.pdf/>

strategic political standpoint, Taipei's most probable course of action is to bide for time and strive for more international and domestic clarity regarding this issue.

The strategic climate surrounding the Taiwan Straits issue is extremely complex which results in an environment that is particularly susceptible to political miscalculation. The one position that can be maintained with a high degree of certainty is that there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding this issue. How long is China willing to wait for the beginning of what it considers to be meaningful negotiations towards reunification before it decides that it must resort to the use force to resolve the issue? How much military force is Beijing willing to use and how much it is willing to risk a direct military confrontation with Washington? On the other hand, is an independent Taiwan of enough economic and political value to Washington that it is worth a direct military confrontation with Beijing? Or is it even possible for Washington not to intercede on Taipei's behalf and still maintain the same level of national prestige and influence that it currently exercises within the region? Where will the other nations of the region lend their support, Beijing, Washington or neither of them? The answer to these questions are all unknowns, that will be heavily influenced by the chain of events that lead up to any potential military confrontation. If the issue of Taiwan comes to a climax, China's strategic challenge will be to develop a military option that is sufficiently robust to effectively pressure Taipei into accepting its political demands, while not provoking Washington to intervene militarily. Non-intervention by Washington would both greatly improve Beijing's chances to succeed militarily as well as most likely limiting the international political damage Beijing would suffer for such an action.

## **CURRENT MILITARY SITUATION**

Having reviewed the strategic climate surrounding the Taiwan Straits issue, this paper must now examine the military assets available to the primary military competitors of any potential military confrontation; China, Taiwan and the United States. This examination will focus on comparing the current status and relative military capabilities of China and Taiwan to combat each other. It will also investigate China's military capability to deter both American and Japanese military intervention, as well as America's military capabilities to intervene on behalf of Taiwan.

Since the Taiwan Straits missile crises of 1995 and 1996, both Beijing and Taipei have laboured to modernize their respective militaries. Beijing is in the process of reforming its forces towards being able to win a local war under high-tech conditions.<sup>74</sup> This approach organizes the PLA into 3 main formations:

- a. troops in small numbers outfitted with high-tech equipment that are rapidly deployable and able to respond to regional contingencies;
- b. troops in large number with mid-level to low-tech equipment for domestic security; and
- c. a moderate nuclear arsenal to deter competitors with nuclear weapons.<sup>75</sup>

As a result, Beijing has focused on modernizing its air, naval and ballistic missile forces with an eye towards winning a high tech military confrontation in the Taiwan Straits. Taipei, on the other hand has worked to maintain its qualitative edge over Beijing's numerically superior forces "premised on sufficient air-sea superiority to counteract any Chinese air-sea blockade or amphibious assault."<sup>76</sup> Taipei has focused on modernizing its three pillars of defence strategy, air defence, sea control and anti-landing operations.<sup>77</sup> It has concentrated on updating its air,

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<sup>74</sup> Shen, Ming-shih, "*China's Military Strategy and Security in the Taiwan Strait*." (4 February 2003): pp. 4.

<<http://www.dis.org.tw/peaceforum/symposium/2002-07/CM02070013e.htm>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. pp. 4.



naval, and ballistic missile defence forces. Both sides have made significant military advances over the last decade, however Beijing is slowly and inexorably narrowing the qualitative advantage that the ROC military enjoys over the PLA.

A military conflict between Taiwan and China over the Taiwan Straits may be accurately characterized as a classic David versus Goliath or quality versus quantity confrontation. China enjoys a vast numerical superiority over Taiwan. However, given its other ongoing security concerns, China could not utilize its entire armed forces in military operations against Taiwan. Military analysts agree that in the event of a major military campaign against Taiwan, the majority of Chinese forces would come from the Nanjing Military Region (NMR).<sup>78</sup> American military analysts assess that at a minimum the following Chinese forces would be available for operations against Taiwan:

- a. the three Group Armies in the NMR (295,000 men);
- b. elements from Group Armies based in adjacent military regions (Guangzhou and Jinan MRs);
- c. Chinese airborne (10,000 men) and marine (28,000 men) forces;
- d. Air assets from the NMR augmented by mission critical aircraft from other parts of China;
- e. Naval assets from both the East and South Sea Fleets as well as mission critical assets from the North Sea Fleet; and
- f. all deployed Short Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBMs).<sup>79</sup>

Even with these tailored forces, China continues to enjoy a numerical advantage both in personnel and platforms over Taiwan's 385,000 man armed forces. Beijing also has the

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<sup>76</sup> Austin, Greg. Missile Diplomacy and Taiwan's Future: Innovations in Politics and Military Power. Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 122. (Canberra: Australian National University, 1997): pp. 148.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid pp. 148.

<sup>78</sup> The Nanjing MR includes Shanghai and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Fujian, Jiangxi and Anhui. "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 51

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. pp. 51.

advantage of both strategic depth and a complete arsenal of both offensive and defensive capabilities. China has six main air force bases within the NMR and by utilizing dual use airports within the region, could accommodate up to 2,000 combat aircraft within 400 km of the Straits.<sup>80</sup> Taiwan on the other hand is limited by a lack of strategic depth, vulnerable military and civilian infrastructure, and minimal offensive capabilities with which to counterattack China. Taiwan's most modern fighter aircraft are concentrated at three main airfields, all of which are vulnerable to SRBM attack. As well the Taiwanese air force also have a limited offensive strike capability due to a lack of precision-guided munitions and an emphasis on defensive counter-air mission training for its fighter pilots.<sup>81</sup> In an unsupported military encounter against Chinese forces, Taiwanese forces would be at a distinct disadvantage and would have great difficulty defeating determined Chinese aggression.

In his article *Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan*, Michael O' Hanlon correctly argues that China does not currently have sufficient amphibious and logistical capacity to successfully invade Taiwan. However, O' Hanlon further argues that Taiwan would be able to maintain air superiority over the waters surrounding Taiwan. This portion of his analysis is highly suspect. His analysis of the question of air superiority both exaggerates Taiwanese capabilities and

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<sup>80</sup> Austin, Greg. Missile Diplomacy and Taiwan's Future: Innovations in Politics and Military Power. Canberra papers on Strategy and Defence No. 122. (Canberra: Australian National University, 1997), pp. 146.

<sup>81</sup> "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 55.

underestimates Chinese capabilities.<sup>82</sup> O' Hanlon then relies upon this suspect air superiority to inflict heavy losses upon both Chinese naval and amphibious forces. Since O' Hanlon's analysis of the air superiority question over the Taiwan Strait seems to be based upon questionable data, the ultimate veracity of his findings remains doubtful. As the next section will clearly document, Taiwan's capability to maintain air superiority over the straits is already in question.

### ***The Question of Air Superiority.***

In any direct military confrontation with Taiwan, China's most clear advantage may be found in her SRBM forces. These forces would form an integral part of China's military strategy should Beijing decide to launch a direct assault on Taiwan. The PLA's probable ballistic missile strategy against Taiwan would be to "use the missiles for deep, rapid strikes directed at an opponent's air and naval forces, and at radar, naval and air bases, without first requiring air superiority."<sup>83</sup> Against this type of assault, American military analysts have

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<sup>82</sup> In his article, O' Hanlon conducts his analysis based on the assumption that the PRC possesses only 200 or more very inaccurate (300M CEP) SRBMs. Therefore he argues that China's SRBM would have a very limited impact on Taiwan's airbases. However, analysts such as the Rand Corporation, the Pentagon, and Jane's Group all assess that China possesses over 500 reasonably accurate (30-45M CEP) SRBMs. These sources all agree that Taiwan has a limited capacity to successfully defend against such an attack. He also overstates the overall strength of the ROCAF, crediting them with more than 600 combat aircraft when again the sources listed below place the ROCAF's actual strength at between 400 and 430 combat aircraft.

O' Hanlon, Michael, "*Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan*," International Security, Vol 25, No. 2 (Fall 2000): pp. 51-86. Shlapak, David and Orletsky, David and Wilson, Barry. "Dire Strait? Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy" Rand. Santa Monica, California, (2000). "*Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China*" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. Lennox, Duncan. Jane's Strategic Weapon Systems 2002-2003. Coulsdon: Jane's Information Group Ltd, 2002.

<sup>83</sup> Hughes, James, "*China's Ballistic Missile Threat*" The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies, (Spring 2002): pp. 3.

assessed that Taiwan's current ballistic missile defences would have little effect.<sup>84</sup> As part of a combined arms assault, these analysts assess that, "China likely will be able to cause significant damage to all of Taiwan's airfields and quickly degrade Taiwan's ground based air defences and associated command and control through a combination of SRBMs, LACMs, special operations forces, and other assets."<sup>85</sup> As can be seen at figure 1, China's ballistic missile inventory is both extensive and continues to grow.

**PLA Ballistic Missile Systems:**

<b>Chinese Designation</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Warhead</b>	<b>Accuracy</b>	<b>Inventory</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
CSS-2	1750 nm	2150 kgs or 3 MT	1000m CEP	60-80	Able to attack Taiwan and Japan. Currently being removed from service.
CSS-3	3000 nm	1000 kgs or 3 MT	1500m CEP	35	Able to attack Alaska, Guam, Diego Garcia and Japan. Currently being replaced by DF-31.
CSS-4	7500 nm	3 MT	500m CEP	30	Strategic Nuclear Deterrent.
CSS-5	1500 nm	500 kgs	50m CEP	100	Able to attack Taiwan and Japan.
CSS-6/M-9	375 nm	500 kgs, EMP, Chemical	30-45m CEP	500+	Additional 50 missiles being added each year.
CSS-7/M-11	190 nm	500 kgs, Cluster Bombs and Fuel Air Explosives	200m CEP	300	Annual production rate unknown.
DF-31	6250 nm	3 MT, 3-6 MIRV, 1200 kgs	300m CEP	20+	Replacing CSS-3 and CSS-4 missiles. Annual production rate unknown.

CEP = Circular Error of Probability

Source: Janes Strategic Weapon Systems 2002-2003.

**Figure 1.**

<sup>84</sup> "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 51.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. pp. 52.

Any SRBM assault on Taiwan would be conducted with the numerous, modern and increasingly accurate CSS-6 and CSS-7 missiles. It is worth noting that China is continuing a rapid building of these missiles as well as establishing additional missile bases in the NMR.<sup>86</sup> However, in the event of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait, China may not only use its ballistic missiles to attack Taiwan, it could also use its ballistic missiles to deter both U.S. and Japanese intervention. When discussing the development of China's Ballistic missile programme CIA Director George Tenet warned that, "This is aimed not only at Taiwan but also at increasing risk to the United States itself in any future Taiwan contingency."<sup>87</sup> The PLA's CSS-3 and DF-31 ballistics missiles provide Beijing with a credible military threat the U.S. forward operating bases in both the Pacific and Indian oceans. Beijing could utilize this threat to either completely deter or restrict any American military intervention on behalf of Taiwan. China's ballistic missile forces are a very capable military asset that can be used to either overwhelm or deter an opponent.

The centerpiece of Taiwan's defensive strategy against China has always been its Air Force. Through a qualitative edge in aircraft and high pilot proficiency, the Republic of China Air Force (ROCAF) has enjoyed air superiority over the Taiwan Strait for many years.<sup>88</sup> As can be seen at figure 2, ROCAF fighter aircraft enjoy a qualitative advantage over the vast

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**ROCAF Air Order of Battle:**

<b>Aircraft</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Inventory</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
F-16A/B	Fighter/Bomber	AAW/ASuW	145	Hualien, Chiayi	Superior to PLA J-8,J-7,J-6,J-5,Q-5
Mirage 2000-5	Fighter	AAW	60	Hsinchu	Superior to PLA J-8,J-7,J-6,J-5,Q-5
F-CK- 1A/B	Fighter/Bomber	AAW/ASuW	130	Tainan, Ching Chuan Kang,	Superior to PLA J-8,J-7,J-6,J-5,Q-5
F5E/F	Fighter/Bomber	AAW/FGA	90	Taitung	Equivalent to PLA J-7
S-2T	Maritime Patrol	ASW	26	Pingtung	Poor serviceability record.
E-2T	Early Warning	AEW	4	Pingtung	
C-139H	Transport	Transport	20	Pingtung	
AH-1W	Attack Helo	Anti-Tank	62	Lung Tan, Shinsur	Direct Support to land forces

Source: "Taiwan." International Air Force Directory 1999/2000.

**Figure 2.**

Over the past decade Taiwan has extensively modernized its air force by incorporating modern aircraft (F-16A/B and Mirage 2000-5) with modern weaponry (AIM-120C and R550 Magic II) in an attempt to maintain its qualitative edge over the PLAAF.<sup>89</sup> If air combat is strictly limited to an air battle over the Taiwan Strait between the ROCAF and the PLAAF, the ROCAF will likely be able to maintain air superiority over the near term. However, as noted above, if China utilizes SRBMs to disrupt air operations by damaging or destroying airbases, then the ROCAF's ability to maintain air superiority over Taiwan becomes very much in doubt. The findings of the Rand Corporation's analysis of a military confrontation across the Taiwan Straits indicate that Taiwan has only a 30 percent chance of retaining air superiority against China if the United States does not become involved.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>89</sup> "Republic of China Air Force (ROCAF)." Pentagon Website. 8 December 2002.

<[http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/2815/af\\_main.html/](http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/2815/af_main.html/)

<sup>90</sup> Shlapak, David and Orletsky, David and Wilson, Barry. "Dire Strait? Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy" Rand. (Santa Monica,

Currently, the vast majority of the PLAAF are of obsolete Soviet design. As can be seen from figures 2 and 3, although numerically superior to the ROCAF, their ROCAF counter parts out class most PLAAF aircraft.

**PLAAF Air Order of Battle:**

<b>Aircraft</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Inventory</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Xian H-6	Bomber	ASuW/Strike	120	Maritime attack, Mine Laying or Strategic bombing
J-11	Fighter	AAW	96+	Superior to all Taiwanese aircraft. Yearly production 10-20,
J-10	Fighter/Bomber	AAW	10+	Under development Yearly production 8 -10.
Su-30MKK	Fighter/Bomber	AAW/ASuW/ Strike	76	Superior to all Taiwanese aircraft. Additional 38 ordered.
J-8II	Fighter/Bomber	AAW/ASuW/Strike	400	100 are being extensively upgraded with Zhuk phased array radar for BVR engagements
JH-7	Fighter/Bomber	ASuW/Strike	40	Maritime Strike Yearly Production 5
J-7	Fighter/Bomber	AAW	700	Equivalent to ROC F5
J-6	Fighter/Bomber	Attack	2800	Obsolete
J-5	Fighter/Bomber	Attack	600	Obsolete
Q-5	Fighter/Bomber	Attack/Strike	100	Rockets and Iron Bombs
A-50	Early Warning	AEW	1	4 on order from Russia
IL-76	Transport/Tanker	Transport/Tanker	18	
H-5	Maritime Patrol	ASuW/ASW	150	
H-6	Maritime Patrol	ASuW/ASW	30	

Source: "*China*." International Air Force Directory 1999/2000.

**Figure 3.**

However, over the last fifteen years, the PLAAF has made a concerted modernization effort through the purchase of J-11 and SU-30MKK Flanker aircraft from Russia and a license agreement to produce additional J-11s in China.<sup>91</sup> Beijing is equipping these new aircraft with

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California, 2000): pp. 39.

<sup>91</sup> "*Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China*" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 51.

advanced Russian weaponry such as the R-77 air-to-air missile and the supersonic KH-31 anti-ship and strike missile. Beijing has also continued to significantly upgrade some of its aircraft with advanced radar and air to air weaponry, mostly notably some of their J-8II with the Russian Phaztron Zhuk-8II look-down, shoot-down radar paired with the sophisticated AA-10 Alamo air to air missile.<sup>92</sup> According to American military analysts, "By 2010, the PLAAF will have all the elements of a modern air force and should have developed the operational concepts and the training needed to fight as an integrated force."<sup>93</sup> Taking these developments into account, both the Pentagon and the Rand Corporation agree that the PLAAF is beginning to erode the ROCAF's qualitative edge.<sup>94</sup> As further J-11 and SU-30MKK aircraft enter operational service, the ROCAF's ability to win the air battle over the Taiwan Straits will significantly decrease.

### ***Control of the Seas.***

The second main pillar of Taipei's defensive strategy, the maintenance of sea control in the Taiwan Straits, is the focus of the Republic of China Navy (ROCN) forces. Like the ROCAF, the ROCN has enjoyed a qualitative advantage over the numerically superior People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) and has instituted a modernization programme in an effort to maintain its advantage. Most recently this programme has been focused on the planned addition of Kidd Class destroyers from the United States in an effort to improve the ROCN Anti-Air Warfare capabilities. However, a comparison of figures 4 and 5 reveal two main

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<sup>92</sup> "Chinese Military Aviation." JetFight2000. 8 December 2002.

<[http://www.stormpages.com/jetfight/J-10\\_J-11\\_FC-1.htm](http://www.stormpages.com/jetfight/J-10_J-11_FC-1.htm)

<sup>93</sup> "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 18.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. pp. 52.



areas of weakness for the ROCN. First, its qualitative advantage over the PLAN is being eroded as modern Russian built platforms, the Sovremenny Class destroyers and Kilo

**ROCN Major Naval Combatants:**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Inventory</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Hai Lung	SSK	ASW/ASuW	2	Limited operational sea time
Guppy	SSK	ASuW	2	Obsolete, in reserve
Kidd	Destroyer	AAW/ASuW	4	Taiwanese purchase still under negotiation. Superior to Luhu, Luda, Jianghu, and Jiangwei
Wu Chin III	Destroyer	AAW/ASuW	7	In reserve, paying off. Non-operational.
Cheng Kung	Frigate	ASuW/ASW	7+1	Equivalent to Luhu Superior to Luda, Jianghu, and Jiangwei
Kang Ding	Frigate	ASuW	6	Superior to Luda, Jianghu, and Jiangwei
Knox	Frigate	ASW	8	Poor operational status

Source: Jane's Fighting Ships 2002-2003, Edition 105.

**Figure 4.**

class submarines, enter into operational service. Second, the PLAN has a much larger number of submarines, which American military analysts assess "could pose a considerable torpedo and mine threat to both the ROCN and commercial shipping."<sup>95</sup> Without foreign intervention, the ROCN's capability to gain and maintain sea control in the Taiwan Straits is currently debatable and will further reduced as the PLAN continues its modernization programme.

The PLAN is currently undergoing a comprehensive modernization programme. This programme involves the introduction of modern soviet designed platforms as well as significant upgrades to command and control and weapon systems of existing classes. As can be seen by comparing figures 4 and 5, the PLAN enjoys a large numerical advantage over the ROCN, especially in the category of submarines. The PLAN's submarine forces will be the key capability that, in the event of a direct military confrontation, will enable

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid. pp. 51.

**PLAN Major Naval Combatants:**

<b>Class</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Inventory</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Han	SSN	ASuW	5	4 operational, 1 in refit Midlife refits completed 1998-2002
Kilo	SSK	ASuW/ASW	4	State of the Art 8 Additional on order Mine laying capable
Song	SSK	ASuW	3	2 under construction Equivalent to Hai Lung Mine laying capable
Ming	SSK	ASuW	21	2 under construction Mine laying capable
Romeo	SSK	ASuW	31	9 already in reserve Obsolete, being paid off
Sovremenny	Destroyer	AAW/ASuW	2	2 additional on order Superior to all Taiwanese surface platforms
Luhai	Destroyer	ASuW/ASW	1	Superior to all Taiwanese surface platforms.
Luhu	Destroyer	ASuW/ASW	2	Equivalent to Chung King. Superior to Kang ding and Knox.
Luda	Destroyer	ASuW	16	Superior to Knox
Jiangwei	Frigate	ASuW/ASW	7	1 under construction Superior to Knox
Jianghui	Frigate	ASW	30	Limited operational capability

Source: Jane's Fighting Ships 2002-2003, Edition 105.

**Figure 5.**

Beijing to gain and maintain sea control in the waters surrounding Taiwan. Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) in the littorals is one of the most complex challenges facing today's navies. In its concept paper on Littoral ASW, the USN states that, "The littoral battle space's complex, noisy environment undermines the effectiveness of acoustic ASW sensor optimized for deep water, open ocean ASW. In this environment increasingly quiet and capable submarines operated by potential adversaries further erode the position held by open-ocean ASW forces."<sup>96</sup> The Rand Corporation's assessment of the Taiwan Strait supports this outlook, "The Taiwan

<sup>96</sup> "*Littoral Anti-Submarine Warfare Concept*" Naval Doctrine Command, 1 May 1998.  
<http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ship/docs/aswcncpt.htm#2>

Strait is a notoriously poor environment for ASW operations. The waters are shallow, heavily trafficked and generally provide unreliable acoustic predictions."<sup>97</sup> A key aspect of a forces operational capability is determined by its proficiency and training. U.S. military analysts assess the PLAN submarine capabilities as follows, "China will continue to produce capable nuclear submarines that will operate in both the open ocean and littoral waters and that Chinese submarine forces are large with a core group of submarines that are relatively well maintained and operate routinely at sea."<sup>98</sup> It further outlines that, "diesel-electric submarines constitute a growing threat, one that can be difficult to detect and defend against in shallow water. Uncountered, these submarines can disrupt shipping and shut down vital sea lanes in littoral areas."<sup>99</sup> As outlined by the Rand Corporation, this a threat that the ROCN is ill equipped to deal with, "the ROCN will have tremendous difficulty coping with China's modernizing submarine fleet."<sup>100</sup> These submarines are also capable of playing a key role in denying port usage to the opposition through mining. U.S. military analysts assess that, "China has likely enough mine warfare assets to lay a good defensive and a modest offensive minefield using a variety of launch platforms."<sup>101</sup> Taiwanese Mine Counter Measures (MCM) forces can best be

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<sup>97</sup> Shlapak, David and Orletsky, David and Wilson, Barry. "*Dire Strait? Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy*" Rand. Santa Monica, California, (2000), pp. 40.

<sup>98</sup> "*Littoral Anti-Submarine Warfare Concept*" Naval Doctrine Command, 1 May 1998. <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ship/docs/aswcncept.htm#2>

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Shlapak, David and Orletsky, David and Wilson, Barry. "*Dire Strait? Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy*" Rand. Santa Monica, California, (2000), pp. 46.

<sup>101</sup> "*Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China*" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 23.

described as "limited in number and mediocre in quality and condition."<sup>102</sup> The PLAN's submarine force constitutes the most serious and direct threat to Taiwanese maritime interests.

The PLAN's submarine forces would also play a key role in countering or deterring any USN intervention in a military conflict between China and Taiwan. The USN is extremely realistic in its assessment of its own ASW capabilities. It states that, "Today's ASW operations remain inefficient, sequential, asset intensive and require operational pauses (sometimes lengthy) to prepare a limited area to support maritime operations at an acceptable level of risk."<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, USN analysts maintain that, "the disproportionate effect of a single enemy submarine may be enough to ensure failure. The reality or merely the threat of enemy submarine operations undermines the ability of joint forces to project power ashore. Some examples of the potential impact of enemy submarine operations include the loss of or delays in the arrival of carrier based air power or equipment and supplies prepositioned for the Air Force, Army or Marines."<sup>104</sup> As already mentioned above, the USN considers the PLAN submarine force a capable opponent and credible threat both in open ocean and the littoral region. China has also been working diligently over the last decade to improve its surveillance capabilities over the Western Pacific Ocean. U.S. military analysts assess that "Its procurement of new space systems, airborne early warning aircraft, long range unmanned aerial vehicles, and over-the-horizon radar will enhance its ability to detect, monitor, and target naval activity in the Western Pacific Ocean."<sup>105</sup> With these improvements, Beijing has

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<sup>102</sup> O' Hanlon, Michael, "Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan," International Security, Vol 25, No. 2 (Fall 2000): pp. 78.

<sup>103</sup> "Littoral Anti-Submarine Warfare Concept" Naval Doctrine Command, 1 May 1998. <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/sys/ship/docs/aswcncept.htm#2>

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 28.

drastically improved its capability to detect, track, target and attack USN Carrier Battle Groups (CVBGs) operating in the Western Pacific. Beijing hopes that this heightened level of risk to American forces, will serve as a deterrent to Washington's intervention on Taipei's behalf in the event of a military confrontation between China and Taiwan.

***Land Force Capabilities.***

A cursory examination of the PLA and the Republic of China Army (ROCA) reveals a huge numerical advantage for the PLA. As can be seen at figure 6, the PLA currently enjoys roughly a 9 to 1 advantage over the ROCA. However, the large numerical advantage enjoyed

**Balance of Land Forces:**

<b>Unit Type</b>	<b>China</b>	<b>Taiwan</b>
Total Ground Forces	1,870,000 pers	200,000 pers
Main Battle Tanks	14,000+ total, including 6,000 T-59, 1,000 T-69, 500 T-80, 800 T-85, 1,200 T-63 amphibious, 800 T-62, small numbers of T-90	1500+ total, including 100 M-48 A5, 450+ M-48H, 169 M-60A3, 230 M-24, 675 M-41/T-64
Armoured Personnel Carriers	5,500	950
Towed Artillery	13,000+	1,400

Source: The Washington Quarterly, Spring 2000, pp. 124.

**Figure 6.**

by the PLA is offset by the geographic advantage the Taiwan Strait gives the ROCA. The requirement to cross the Taiwan Straits effectively removes the PLA's numerical advantage over the ROCA.

The third main pillar of Taipei's defensive strategy, the conduct of anti-landing operations, is the focus of the ROCA. The ROCA consists of 200,000 personnel organized into combined arms brigades, which continue to focus on counter landing operations.<sup>106</sup> Over the past decade, the ROCA has continued to modernize its force structure with the addition of

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid. pp. 54.

M-60 A3 main battle tanks; M-109 A5 towed artillery; Avenger and Stinger surface to air missiles; and AH-1W attack helicopters from the United States.<sup>107</sup> Although facing a numerically superior foe, U.S. military analysts assess that, "Taiwan's ground forces will maintain an edge for combat on the main island unless China expands significantly its fleet of medium and heavy lift amphibious ships and develops a robust amphibious logistics infrastructure."<sup>108</sup> It is likely that the ROCA will retain the ability to successfully defend the main island of Taiwan in the near term.

As identified earlier, the PLA has an estimated 295,000 men available in the NMR with which to attack Taiwan. Of these 295,000 men, the 31st Army Group has three infantry divisions (30,000 men) capable of conducting amphibious operations.<sup>109</sup> The PLAN possesses about 40 medium and heavy amphibious lift ships, 1200 T-63 amphibious tanks, and an additional 28,000 marines with which it could support an assault against Taiwan. However the Rand Corporation estimates that, "The PLAN owns enough amphibious lift to move about a division of troops at a time, hardly enough to establish and sustain a firm foothold in the face of determined Taiwanese resistance."<sup>110</sup> There is also the PLA's 15th Airborne Army, China's primary strategic rapid reaction unit that consists three divisions (30,000 men). Although an impressive force, it is unlikely that this group of 88,000 men would be able to gain and maintain a successful beachhead against Taiwan's 200,000 defenders. U.S. military analysts

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<sup>107</sup> Shambaugh, David, "A Matter of Time: Taiwan's Eroding Military Advantage." The Washington Quarterly, (Spring 2000): pp. 126.

<sup>108</sup> "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 52.

<sup>109</sup> Southby-Taylor, Ewen. Jane's Amphibious and Special Forces 2002-2003, Issue 8. (Coulson: Jane's Information Group Ltd, 2002), pp. 99.

<sup>110</sup> Shlapak, David and Orletsky, David and Wilson, Barry. "Dire Strait? Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy" Rand. Santa Monica, California, (2000), pp. 11.

assess that, "In order for such a campaign (the invasion of the Taiwanese mainland) to succeed, Beijing would have to possess the capability to conduct a multi-faceted campaign, involving air assault, airborne insertion, special operations raids, amphibious landings, maritime area denial operations, air superiority operations and conventional missile strikes."<sup>111</sup> It is further assessed that the PLA will likely be unable to successfully conduct such a sophisticated campaign before the end of the decade.<sup>112</sup> This opinion is further supported by the analysis of that Rand Corporation, "Our analysis suggests that any near-term Chinese attempt to invade Taiwan would likely be a very bloody affair with a significant probability of failure."<sup>113</sup> However, these forces are currently capable of conducting limited offensive operations against Taiwan, such as seizing the island of Quemoy (Kinmen) and other islands close to the mainland and conducting special operations raids against the mainland.

### ***American Military Intervention.***

The possibility of American intervention in any military confrontation between Beijing and Taipei is a key planning consideration that must be accounted for. This approach is well considered as President George Bush declared in April 2001, "that America would do everything it took to help Taiwan defend itself."<sup>114</sup> The critical question then arises, how far is the United States willing to go in defence of Taiwan? USN Rear Admiral Michael McDevitt maintains that there would be serious restrictions placed upon an U.S. response. He states that, "were I still director for strategy, war plans, and policy for Pacific Command, I would certainly

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<sup>111</sup> "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 48.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid. pp. 48.

<sup>113</sup> Shlapak, David and Orletsky, David and Wilson, Barry. "*Dire Strait? Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy*" Rand. Santa Monica, California, (2000), pp. xvii.

<sup>114</sup> Rahman, Chris, "*Defending Taiwan, and Why it Matters*" Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 4. (Autumn 2001): pp. 83.

consider in planning for any military intervention in support of Taiwan that land-attack options were off the table, that the only engagements that would be permitted by the National Command Authority would be on, over or under the water."<sup>115</sup> He supports this position by maintaining that, "there is a fifty-year old strategic tradition of unwillingness to permit direct application of U.S. military power to the Chinese mainland. Now that China has a credible nuclear arsenal, it seems even less likely that the United States would attack China directly."<sup>116</sup> This viewpoint is echoed by the Rand Corporation's assessment, "Whether or not the United States would initiate such a campaign (air strikes on Chinese territory) against a vast and nuclear armed- opponent--and, if so, what sorts of limitations would be imposed on targeting and collateral damage--is a deeply vexing question."<sup>117</sup> Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that any direct U.S. military intervention would be limited to USN CVBG's, surface ships, submarines, tactical aircraft from the U.S. forward base in Okinawa, and the possible, yet unlikely, reinforcement of Taiwan with U.S. ground troops. U.S forces operating in support of Taiwan, would find themselves subject to the 'tyranny of distance' posed by the Pacific Ocean.<sup>118</sup> As outlined by Chris Rahman, "U.S. Naval forces at sea would have to sustain themselves from a small number of bases in the Northeast Asian theatre, vulnerable to political unreliability among host nations and to ballistic missile attack."<sup>119</sup> China's ability to deter a

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<sup>115</sup> Taylor, Paul, "*Asia & the Pacific: U.S. Strategic Traditions and Regional Realities.*" Asia Pacific Forum: Naval War College. (11-12 June 2000): pp. 105.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. pp 105.

<sup>117</sup> Shlapak, David and Orletsky, David and Wilson, Barry. "*Dire Strait? Military Aspects of the China-Taiwan Confrontation and Options for U.S. Policy*" Rand. Santa Monica, California, (2000), pp. 54.

<sup>118</sup> Taylor, Paul, "*Asia & the Pacific: U.S. Strategic Traditions and Regional Realities.*" Asia Pacific Forum: Naval War College. (11-12 June 2000): pp. 103.

<sup>119</sup> Rahman, Chris, "*Defending Taiwan, and Why it Matters*" Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 4. (Autumn 2001): pp. 83.



U.S. military intervention into a conflict over Taiwan is directly related to its ability to pose a credible threat to these forces.

As has already been discussed, the PLA has embarked on an extensive modernization programme over the past decade in preparation to win 'a local war under high tech conditions.' U.S. military analysts assess that in response to a U.S. or Japanese intervention in the Taiwan Straits, "the PLA would attempt to weaken the third party's resolve by demonstrating the capability to hold at risk - or actually striking - high value assets. The PLA would leverage emerging asymmetric capabilities to counter or negate an adversary's superiorities."<sup>120</sup> The PLA could utilize its ballistic missile capabilities to threaten the governments of Japan and South Korea as well as U.S. forward operating bases. If successful this would eliminate the USAF's ability to support the intervention with tactical aircraft and compound the USN's logistical problem. The PLAN's submarine force would provide a direct and credible threat to U.S CVBGs and other surface forces. As previously noted, the USN has stated that the presence of a credible submarine threat could seriously undermine a joint forces ability to project power. Currently, Beijing has the military capability to provide a credible threat to any U.S. and allied forces that may intervene on behalf of Taiwan, the question is how much risk would Washington and her allies be willing to assume in order to support Taipei?

With its current military capability, Beijing is able to pose an immediate and credible military threat to Taipei. Within different scenarios of force employment, Beijing has the capacity to establish air superiority and sea control of the waters surrounding Taiwan, given that there is no outside intervention by a third party. Furthermore Beijing has the amphibious capability to successfully carry out limited offensive actions against Taipei, such as raids

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<sup>120</sup> "*Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China*" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 49.

against port facilities or Taiwan's outer islands, although it has yet to obtain the capacity to successfully invade the main island. While conducting operations against Taipei, Beijing also has the military deterrent capability to provide a credible threat to any third party forces that may choose to intervene on Taipei's behalf.

### **TAIWAN'S ECONOMIC VULNERABILITY**

Taiwan is an insular trading democracy that is reliant upon its maritime trade for its economic survival. Presently, the population on Taiwan overwhelmingly supports the status quo, which enables them to enjoy a high degree of economic prosperity. However, analysts agree that, "any coercive measures that threatened the island's livelihood likely would subject Taiwan's leadership to substantial internal pressure."<sup>121</sup> In response to 1996 crisis, the Taiwanese stock market fell 1,000 points in three days and 15 billion dollars in investments reportedly fled the island.<sup>122</sup> Beijing is well aware that Taiwan's economy is susceptible to any overt Chinese military challenges to the status quo across the Taiwan Straits.

Taiwan's total GDP for the year 2001 was 302 billion dollars. During this period, Taiwan's exported over \$151 billion of predominately industrial goods (98%) while importing over \$136 billion of predominately raw materials (90%).<sup>123</sup> Furthermore, Taiwan depends on imported energy, food and raw materials for 80% of its overall requirements.<sup>124</sup> As can be seen at figure 7, Taiwan's largest strategic economic vulnerability is its requirement to import

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. pp. 47.

<sup>122</sup> Shambaugh, David, "A Matter of Time: Taiwan's Eroding Military Advantage." The Washington Quarterly, (Spring 2000): pp. 129.

<sup>123</sup> "Taiwan. Country Analysis Brief." The American Institute in Taiwan, 15 November 2001. <<http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/taiwan.html>

<sup>124</sup> "China and Taiwan-From Flashpoint to Redefining One China." Department of Parliamentary Library Research Paper No. 15 2000-01, 7 November 2000. <<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/2000-2001/01rp15.pdf>.

energy. Taiwan's economy is totally dependent upon imported energy.

**Taiwan's Primary Energy Consumption:**

Source	% of Energy Consumption	Total Consumption	Net Imports	National Production	% of Energy Imported
Oil	49%	782,000 Bbl/d	778,700 Bbl/d	3,300 Bbl/d	99.5%
Coal	32%	44.9 Mmst	44.8 Mmst	0.1 Mmst	99.7%
Nuclear	11%	-	-	-	0%
Natural Gas	6%	220 Bcf	203 Bcf	31 Bcf	92.2%
Hydro-Electric	3%	-	-	-	0%

Bbld = Barrels per Day

Mmst = Million short tons annually

Bcf = Billion cubic feet annually

Source: American Institute in Taiwan

**Figure 7.**

This vulnerability is further exacerbated by the following factors:

- a. Taiwan's strategic reserve of oil has been reduced to only 18 days;
- b. Taiwan's refiners are under regulatory requirements to maintain stock of no less than 60 days consumption; and
- c. China is one of Taiwan's two major coal suppliers.<sup>125</sup>

Due to its small size, Taiwan is forced to concentrate its shipping interests in a small number of ports. The Taiwanese Port of Kaoshiung is the fifth largest container port in Asia, Taiwan's largest oil terminal and Taiwan's only liquid natural gas receiving terminal.<sup>126</sup> In 2002, it handled 66% (8.1 million TEU's) of Taiwan's foreign trade.<sup>127</sup> Taiwan's second major port is the Port of Keelung, which is the primary shipping port of Taipei and in 2002 transferred over 1.8 million TEU's of containers.<sup>128</sup> Beijing possesses a number of viable military options with which it could shut down operations at these two ports. Any extended closure of these ports

<sup>125</sup> "Taiwan. Country Analysis Brief." The American Institute in Taiwan. 15 November 2001. <<http://www.eia.doe.gov/cabs/taiwan.html>

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> "Ports in Asia Business Briefs" The Taipei Times. 1 January 2003. <<http://taipeitimes.com/news/biz/archives/2003/01/01/189392>

<sup>128</sup> Keelung Harbor Bureau. 3 March 2003. <[http://www.klhd.gov.tw/e\\_index.html](http://www.klhd.gov.tw/e_index.html)

would have serious repercussions for Taiwan's economy and would therefore generate substantial internal pressure on Taipei to resolve the issue.

### **CHINESE MILITARY OPTIONS**

*Generally, in war, the best policy is to take a state intact; to ruin it is inferior to this.*  
- SUN TZU.<sup>129</sup>

Beijing's overall strategic goal for a military confrontation with Taipei is to achieve reunification with, not the destruction of, Taiwan. As Chinese military capabilities continue to improve, Beijing will be provided with an expanded set of military options with which to achieve its political goals. U.S. military analysts maintain that PLA strategists are increasingly examining the efficiency of limited applications of force to achieve political goals and that this will sustain a trend in which China's war fighting strategies will increasingly favour coercive over annihilative approaches.<sup>130</sup> These analysts maintain that, Beijing's primary political objective in any Taiwan-related crisis would be to compel Taiwanese authorities to enter in to negotiations on Beijing's terms and to adopt a war fighting strategy that would both contain and limit the geographic scope of the conflict.<sup>131</sup> So what sort of military operations might Beijing employ in order to force Taipei into compliance over the issue of reunification? Such a military operation would have to account for the following factors:

- a. China's military capability to conduct the operation;
- b. Taiwan's military capability to defend against such an option;
- c. the probability of whether such an action would trigger third party military intervention;
- d. whether third party intervention would have the capability to intervene in a timely fashion;
- e. the likelihood of the option achieving Beijing's political objective;

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<sup>129</sup> Griffith, Samuel. Sun Tzu The Art of War. (New York, Oxford University Press, 1963) pp. 77.

<sup>130</sup> "Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 11.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. pp. 47-49.

- f. Beijing's ability to control the situation through either escalation or de-escalation;
- g. the amount of military risk that China would have to accept; and
- h. the potential reaction of world opinion to the operation and the potential for long-term consequences.

Although these factors may not necessarily have an equal amount of influence over Beijing's final decision, all of them would probably be considered to some extent.

There are great number of military options and possible variations of military options that Beijing may choose to employ against Taiwan. For the purposes of this analysis, the four most likely military options will be examined:

- a. a repeat of Chinese missile exercises as practiced in 1995 and 1996;
- b. the institution of a Chinese maritime blockade of Taiwan;
- c. the combination of a ballistic missile assault followed by a Kosovo style air campaign against Taiwan; and
- d. a large scale Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

### ***The Return of Missile Diplomacy.***

The first option that will be examined is a repeat of Beijing's attempt at coercive diplomacy by firing ballistic missiles into the waters surrounding Taiwan. Obviously the PLA has the military capability to conduct such an operation and Taiwan currently has no Theatre Missile Defence capability with which to counter it. Based on historical precedent, it is unlikely that there would be any direct third party military intervention to stop it and that there would be minimal long-term international consequences for China. Beijing would be able to enjoy direct control over the situation and would be able to limit its level of military risk, as it desires. However, it is unlikely that this option would achieve Beijing's political objective of compelling Taipei into reunification negotiations. Although the 1995 and 1996 missile firings were accompanied by large drops in the Taiwanese stock market, Dr. Jean Pierre Cabestan, Director of the Taipei Office of the French Research Centre on Contemporary China argues

that, "to a large extent, in both the December 1995 legislative and March 1996 presidential elections, Taiwanese politics remained determined by domestic and often local factors."<sup>132</sup>

He maintains that, "the elections showed that 87% of the electorate is still opposed to unification with the PRC in the medium term and 75% of it would be ready to resist the PRC if it maintained a policy of confrontation with Taiwan."<sup>133</sup> Arguably, China's 1995 and 1996 missile firings were not sufficiently robust enough to achieve Beijing's political objectives. It is unlikely that a repeat of this type of missile operation would achieve more coercive results if it were employed today; therefore it is unlikely that Beijing would select this military option.

### ***Maritime Blockade.***

A second option to be examined could be the establishment of a maritime blockade of Taiwan. A maritime blockade has been identified by U.S. military analysts as one of the possible coercive military options that, "China may choose to gradually escalate the level of military pressure in order to compel Taiwan's political leadership to adopt policies favourable to Beijing's interests."<sup>134</sup> As previously identified, the PLAN has the required military capability to implement such a blockade and Taiwan's economy is extremely dependent upon maritime trade and energy imports. Although there are many different tactics that the PLAN could employ to blockade Taiwan, to be the most effective the blockade would focus on denying access to the major ports of Kaoshiung and Keelung as well as denying the importation of energy resources. Additionally, if the operational plan for the blockade were

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<sup>132</sup> Cabestan, Jean-Pierre. "*The Mainland China Factor in Taiwan's 1995 and 1996 Elections: A Secondary Role*," Missile Diplomacy and Taiwan's Future: Innovations in Politics and Military Power. Canberra papers on Strategy and Defence No. 122. (Canberra: Australian National University, 1997) pp. 49.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. pp. 49.

<sup>134</sup> "*Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China*" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000. pp. 47.

centered upon the use of submarine laid mines for port access denial operations, reinforced by the threat of submarine interdiction of blockade-runners, it would greatly complicate the ROCN's ability to counter the blockade. Michael O'Hanlon, a Senior fellow at the Brookings institute assesses that, "even with an imperfect, 'leaky blockade,' China could sink enough commercial ships to scare off others, and possibly do so for weeks if not months. Should China convince most commercial shippers not to risk trips to Taiwan, it could effectively begin to strangle the island."<sup>135</sup> Once in place, such a blockade would inflict significant damage to the Taiwanese economy, which would likely be accompanied by increasing internal pressure on Taipei to resolve the issue.

The strengths of this military approach primarily lie in its flexibility and its risk versus reward calculations. This option allows the possibility of applying effective economic pressure to Taipei while not automatically escalating the level of violence. As long as shots were not being fired, it is probable that the international community would strive to find a 'peaceful resolution' to the conflict, during which time the economic effects of the blockade would have an increasingly greater impact on the people of Taiwan. Such a blockade would be relatively easy for the PLAN to control, thereby allowing Beijing greater ability to mitigate its level of military risk. Beijing could choose whether to enforce the blockade or not, and could limit what type of military assets it utilized. Any direct military confrontation between China and Taiwan would likely be limited to the maritime environment and when compared to option three and four, would be probably generate less of a negative international response. Although there would almost certainly be a diplomatic response from the United States, the imperative

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<sup>135</sup> O' Hanlon, Michael, "*Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan*," International Security, Vol 25, No. 2 (Fall 2000): pp. 75.

for immediate direct military intervention would be arguably less likely than in options three and four.

However, the main weakness of this approach, as with any maritime blockade, is time. By definition, blockades take time to be effective. Taiwan is extremely vulnerable to a maritime blockade but it is unlikely that it would immediately comply with Beijing's demands. With this time, Taipei would be able to lobby the international community for political, economic and military support against Beijing. More importantly, as Dr. Gary Klintworth suggests, such a blockade may provoke Taipei into declaring independence in an attempt to garner international support.<sup>136</sup> Obviously, such a reaction would run counter to Beijing's overall political objectives.

However, a maritime blockade may be the preferred military option for Beijing to employ against Taipei. It has the good potential of accomplishing both of Beijing's strategic objectives concerning Taiwan; to compel Taiwanese authorities to enter in to negotiations on Beijing's terms and to adopt a strategy that limited the geographic scope of the conflict. It does not require any damage to be inflicted upon the Taiwanese mainland to be successful. Furthermore, because the blockade would develop over an extended period Beijing would have time to pursue diplomatic efforts for an agreement on reunification. If such efforts were not initially successful, Beijing would still have the initiative and would have the option of escalating the military pressure to achieve its desired result. Finally, if Taiwan did declare independence, Beijing would have the option of escalating to direct attacks on the Taiwanese mainland to force Taipei's compliance.

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<sup>136</sup> Klintworth, Dr. Gary, "*China and Taiwan-From Flashpoint to Redefining One China*" Research Paper NO. 15 2000-01, Department of the Parliamentary Library, (7 November 2000).  
<<http://www.aph.gov.au/library/pubs/rp/2000-01/01RP15.pdf>



### *An Air Assault on Taiwan*

The third option to be examined is the combination of a ballistic missile assault followed by a Kosovo style air campaign against Taiwan. U.S. military analysts have also identified a missile assault, followed by air and naval attacks, as a possible coercive military option where, "China may seek to deter or punish Taiwan through the sudden application of violence."<sup>137</sup> As indicated in option one, the PLA possesses a significant ballistic missile capability that is able to strike Taiwan with minimal warning and against which Taiwan has very little defensive capability. If the missile attack were intended as a prelude to further air operations, then such an attack would be directed against Taiwanese military air bases, air defense sites and command and control locations. If, on the other hand, such an assault were to be restricted to only ballistic missile forces, then attacks would probably be carried out against population centers over an extended period in order to achieve maximum psychological effect. Regardless of the tactics selected, these missile attacks would also enable Beijing to once again increase internal pressure on the Taipei government to resolve the issue.

The main strength of this approach is speed. Beijing would be able to inflict a great deal of damage, and therefore exert a great deal of internal pressure on Taipei in a short amount of time. To be successful, American military analysts assess that, "Such an approach would necessitate a rapid collapse of Taiwan's national will, precluding the United States from intervening."<sup>138</sup> This opinion is shared by Martin Lasater, of the Taiwan Security Research Association who writes, "If Taiwan quickly folded, the wisdom of U.S. intervention would be

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<sup>137</sup> *"Annual Report on the Military Power of the People's Republic of China" Report to Congress Pursuant to the FY2000 National Defense Authorization Act 2000.* pp. 47.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 47

questioned in American government circles."<sup>139</sup> However, he also maintains that, "If Taiwan resisted effectively and appeared determined to fight on, then American military and political support might increase dramatically."<sup>140</sup> Taking the Kosovo air campaign as the most relevant recent historical precedent, it is unlikely that Taipei would immediately capitulate under such an assault as long as the possibility of American military intervention remained.

The main weaknesses of this approach is that it allows Beijing less room for international diplomatic manoeuvring and due to its increased amount of violence, it is much more likely to cause direct third party military intervention on Taiwan's behalf than either of the previous two options. In the event of military intervention, Beijing's ability to control the situation would be significantly reduced and the possibility of dangerous unintended military escalation would be heightened. This could increase the risk to both Chinese military forces and the mainland itself beyond levels that Beijing had originally intended. The increased amount of damage caused to the main island of Taiwan by this option would serve to isolate Beijing in the international community and would probably be accompanied by long-term geopolitical consequences.

The launching of ballistic missile attacks upon Taiwan is a viable but risky military option. This option has poses the allure of a potentially quick and easy victory against the heightened possibility of military defeat and long-term global isolation. Given Beijing's historical precedence of selecting military options that afford the possibility of a greater degree of control being exercised over the situation, it is unlikely that this option would be Beijing's preferred military solution.

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<sup>139</sup> Lasater, Martin, "*Taiwan Independence and the U.S. Response*," Taiwan Security Research. (31 July 2002).

<<http://www.dsis.org.tw/peaceforum/symposium/2002-07/CM0207001e.htm>

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

### ***Invading the Taiwanese Mainland.***

The final option to be examined is a large scale Chinese invasion of Taiwan. As previously discussed Beijing's military capability to successfully complete such an operation remains very much in doubt. The PLAN's capacity to conduct an amphibious landing is insufficient to land a large enough force to be able to challenge Taiwan's 200,000 well-organized troops with modern equipment. Even if such a force were able to gain a foothold on the mainland, the PLAN could not provide sufficient logistical reinforcement to sustain it.<sup>141</sup> Such a brutal campaign, with its resultant high casualties, would in all probability be widely condemned by the international community and result in long-term geopolitical consequences. It would also likely trigger robust third party military intervention, which would be more conducive to including strikes against the Chinese mainland, than any of the other options. Beijing would have a limited ability to control the situation and would be submitting itself to a high degree of military risk. Furthermore, even if successful such a campaign would inflict significant damage to Taiwan's infrastructure. Such a result would run counter to Beijing's overall strategic objective concerning Taiwan. Professor Whiting supports this position, "Taiwan is a valuable economic asset to be acquired with minimum damage. Its destruction in reunification would be a Pyrrhic victory."<sup>142</sup> At this time, a full Chinese invasion of Taiwan represents an extremely high-risk military option with only a marginal chance of success. Therefore it is not a viable military option for Beijing.

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<sup>141</sup> For a detailed analysis see. O' Hanlon, Michael, "*Why China Cannot Conquer Taiwan*," International Security, Vol 25. No. 2 (Fall 2000): pp. 62-74.

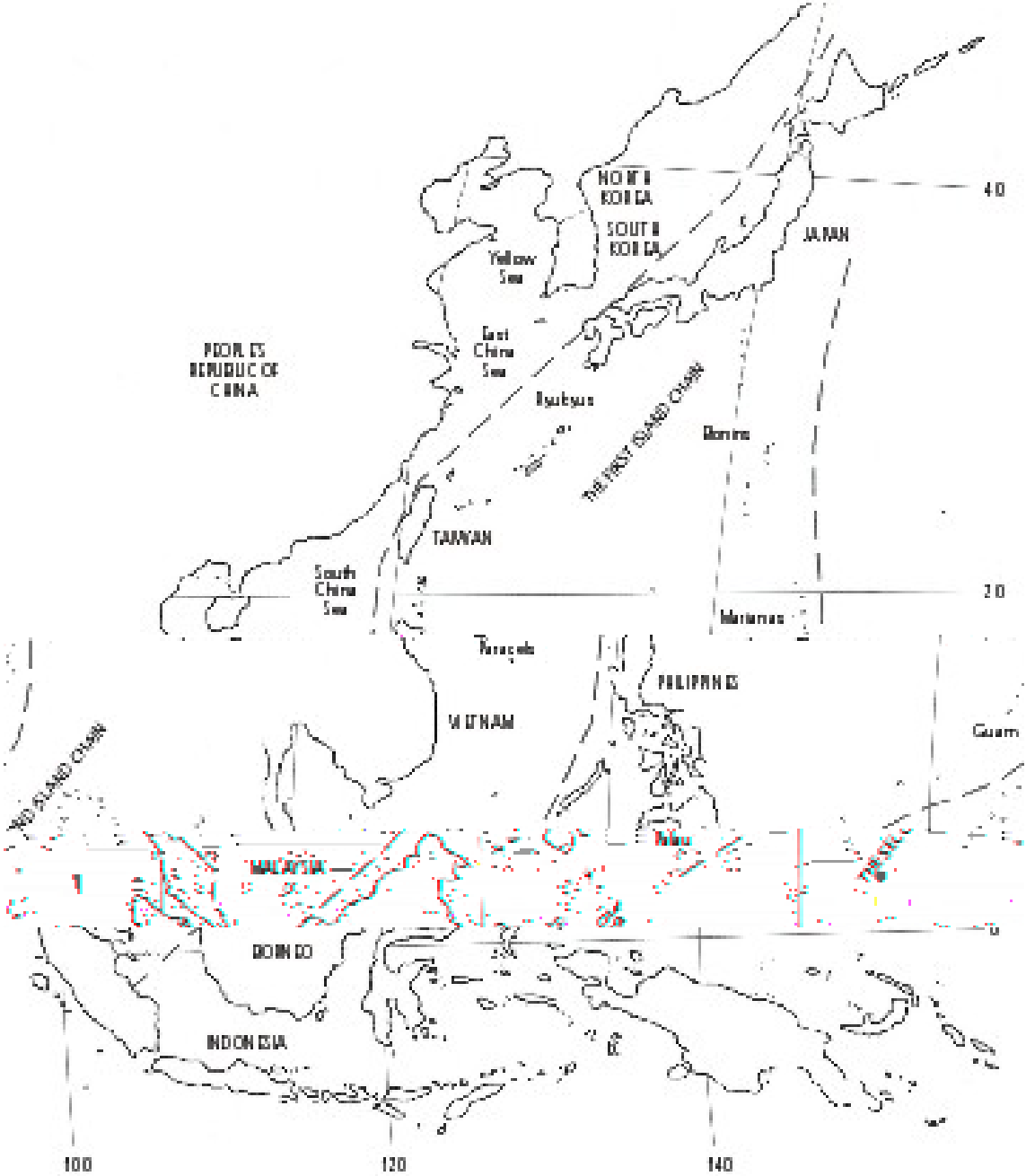
<sup>142</sup> Whiting, Allen, "*China's Use of Force 1950-1996, and Taiwan*" International Security, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Fall 2001), pp. 124.

## **CONCLUSION**

Beijing has a long and well-documented history of utilizing military force in pursuit of its political objectives. The Taiwan Straits is one of the most potentially volatile flashpoints of our time, where the different governments Beijing, Taipei and Washington, all are pursuing their own unique agendas. In such a confused political situation, there is a strong possibility of strategic miscalculation, which may lead to a provocative use of force and unwanted military escalation. When Beijing perceives that the political costs of passivity outweigh the potential costs of military action over the Taiwan Strait issue, it is likely that Beijing will opt to use military coercion in an effort to achieve its aims. However, it must always be remembered that in keeping with strategic philosophy of Sun Tzu, China's ultimate objective is reunification with, and not the destruction of, Taiwan.

Should Beijing decide to exercise its' military option against Taiwan: political imperatives, strategic considerations and operational military factors will all have to be taken into consideration. Both Washington's and Tokyo's deliberate ambiguity regarding their response to a Chinese military operation against Taiwan must be accounted for in Beijing's overall strategy. Politically, Beijing will strive to find a military option that is robust enough to effectively pressure the Taipei into reunification negotiations on terms favourable to China, while not being so provocative as to trigger direct U.S. and/or Japanese military intervention into the conflict. Politically, U.S. intervention would strengthen Taipei's resolve in the face of Chinese pressure. Militarily, Beijing currently has the military capacity to succeed against an unaided Taiwan but would be hard pressed to win against a Taiwanese military with U.S. support. Therefore ensuring non-intervention by Washington is a crucial element in determining the choice of Beijing's military option against Taiwan.

Should China decide that coercive diplomacy is required, a submarine based maritime blockade of Taiwan is Beijing's best and most likely military option. It has the best potential of accomplishing Beijing's political objective, compelling negotiations, while limiting the requirement to inflict damage on the mainland. Taiwan has a massive maritime trade dependence and is economically extremely vulnerable to any interruptions in shipping. The PLAN currently enjoys a wide advantage over the ROCN both in submarine and mine warfare capability. Given the operational and tactical complexities of ASW, it would be very difficult for the Washington to effectively intervene militarily on Taipei's behalf without subjecting its forces to a high degree of risk. The relatively small amount of military action required to enforce such a blockade, would provide Beijing with more ability to control the situation and escalate or deescalate tensions as required. This would also influence the initial international response to such an action towards calls for a peaceful resolution, vice direct military intervention. The extended period of time would allow Beijing the opportunity to apply additional political pressure to Taipei as well as conduct diplomacy in an to attempt limit third party support, while also making its case to the international community. A maritime blockade of Taiwan accommodates all of the tenets of Chinese strategic military tradition, it would be a limited and closely controlled military operation intended to achieve a specific political objective. Therefore, it must be considered Beijing's most likely military option should coercive diplomacy be required.



Source: Naval War College Review Vol LIV, No 4. (Autumn 2001): pp. 71.  
**Map 1.**

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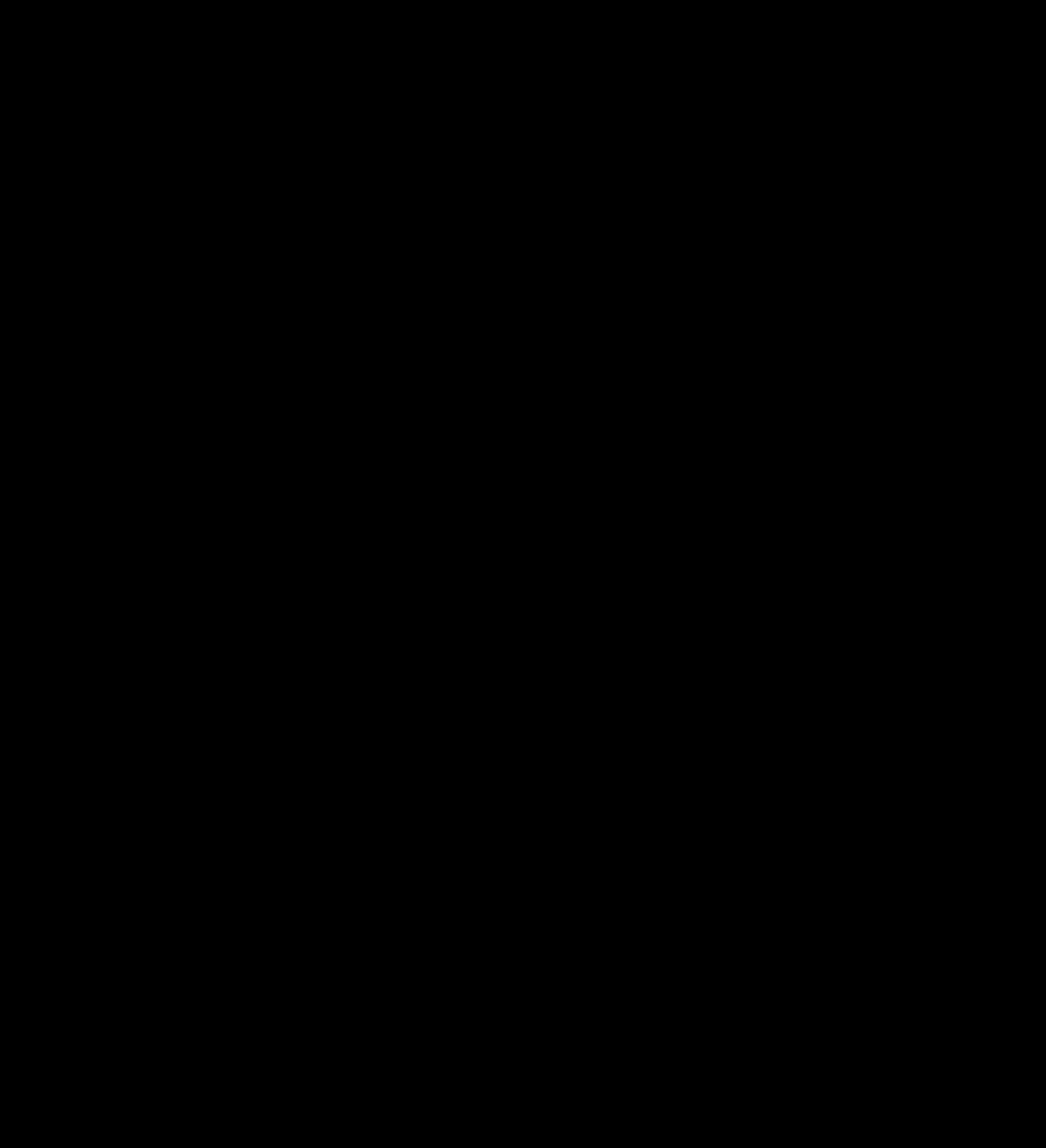
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