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Strategic Ambiguity vs. Strategic Clarity *The Defense of Taiwan*

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ABSTRACT: The United States has long endorsed strategic ambiguity to deter Taiwan from declaring its independence and China from taking Taiwan by force. The United States sells defensive weapons to Taiwan but does not commit to its' defense. Now there is debate as to whether strategic ambiguity should be replaced by an explicit commitment to defend Taiwan. This paper assesses the arguments in this debate, their appeal to different audiences, and ability to deter conflict.

KEY WORDS: China, hegemony, strategic ambiguity, strategic clarity, Taiwan, U.S. defense

Most argumentation textbooks emphasize the importance of offering clear and readily understandable arguments to reduce misunderstandings and guide hearers toward better decisions. In pragma-dialectics, for example, ambiguity may violate the language use rule, which requires “that the participants do not create pseudo differences or pseudo solutions by not expressing or not interpreting their own and each other’s intentions as accurately as possible, without relying on not transparent, vague or equivocal formulations or inaccurate, sloppy or biased interpretations” (van Eemeren & Garssen, 2023). There are times, however, where clarity is not a priority. In a study of foreign policy arguments, David Zarefsky (2019) argued, there were situations and contexts where productive argumentation was better served by “strategic ambiguity.” Zarefsky (2019, p. 106) explained that “ambiguities may serve not so much to mask intentions but to keep options open.” Thus, “we cannot accept the assumption that ambiguity is necessarily a fallacy. It may be, but so far from always being a misuse of language, it sometimes may be a very creative and constructive use of language that enhances the interests of all participants and contributes to resolving a disagreement” (Zarefsky, 2019, p. 113). Zarefsky concluded that ambiguity may be an especially useful argument strategy in instances where arguers are addressing heterogeneous audiences.

This paper considers the paradigm case for strategic ambiguity in U.S. foreign policy, the arguments offered to express the U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan. As Boon and Sworn (2020) noted:

To achieve strategic ambiguity, the U.S. purposely creates uncertainty about the conditions for, or nature of, its possible intervention in a conflict between China and Taiwan. This uncertainty introduces the possibility of a U.S.-China war if Beijing were to invade Taiwan. Simultaneously, it is possible that America may

abandon Taiwan in a China-Taiwan conflict if Taiwan were to go too far in pursuing independence.

The policy of strategic ambiguity may have been less purposeful than the above quotation suggests. Throughout World War II the United States was allied with the Republic of China ruled by Chang Kai-Shek. When the Communists closed in on him and captured the mainland, Chang and the remnants of his forces retreated to Taiwan and continued to govern as the Republic of China. Chang claimed he would someday recover all of China, and he retained the support of the United States and the China seat in the United Nations. In 1972, however, President Richard Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger visited Beijing and met with Chairman Mao and Premier Chou En-Lai. Nixon and Kissinger sought to establish diplomatic relations with China and open the Middle Kingdom to investment and trade. The main sticking issue in these conversations was Taiwan. On October 26, 1972, Kissinger came up with language on Taiwan that was acceptable both to the United States and to the PRC: “The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China. The United States Government does not challenge that position” (MacMillan, 2008, p. 214).

The United States and China agreed to a framework for consensus of the One China policy in the Shanghai Communique in 1972, the Joint Communique on the Establishment of Diplomatic Relations between United States and People’s Republic of China in 1978, and the 817 Communique in 1982 (Ye, 2021). The United States agreed to no longer recognize the ROC as the legitimate government of China and supported denying Taiwan membership in the United Nations. Yet, even as relations thawed between Washington and Beijing, Taiwan continued to enjoy support in Washington. As a result, almost from the beginning, the U.S. government obfuscated any signs that made it appear it had abandoned Taiwan. In 1979, the U.S. Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) that:

Declares it to be the policy of the United States to preserve and promote extensive, close, and friendly commercial, cultural, and other relations between the people of the United States and the people on Taiwan, as well as the people on the China mainland and all other people of the Western Pacific area. Declares that peace and stability in the area are in the political, security, and economic interests of the United States, and are matters of international concern. States that the United States decision to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China rests upon the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means and that any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargoes is considered a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of grave concern to the United States . . . the United States shall provide Taiwan with arms of a defensive character and shall maintain the capacity of the United States to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or social or economic system, of the people of Taiwan (H.R. 2479, 1979-1980).

As demanded in the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States continued to express its commitment to the “One China policy” and the conviction that the future of Taiwan would be decided peacefully by the people of greater China, while simultaneously offering

brisk arm sales to Taiwan and opportunities for Taiwan's military to actively train with U.S. forces to enhance military readiness. Each new arms sale provoked angry responses from Beijing that the United States risked war in the region and interfered with China's sovereignty (Wu, 2021). For the most part, these protests did not risk escalation into actual conflict. In 1996, however, China deployed approximately 150,000 troops to Fujian Province across the Strait from Taiwan and began conducting exercises that appeared to be in preparation for an invasion. Taiwan went on high alert, and President Clinton declared China's actions "provocative" and "reckless" and dispatched two U.S. aircraft carrier groups to the Taiwan Strait (Chen Qimao, 1996). Rather than risk a confrontation with a far superior force, the PRC backed down.

The conditions that defined the relations between the United States, China, Taiwan, and the American allies in the region in 1996 are different today. These new developments have caused many foreign policy experts, military leaders, diplomats, and elected officials in the United States to begin to openly debate the merits of strategic ambiguity. Some, especially on the right, have questioned whether the United States should continue to serve as a global peacekeeper and as Taiwan's protector. For example, President Trump was skeptical about the U.S. commitments to its treaty partners and openly inconsistent in his attitudes toward Taiwan. He signaled support for the island when he broke diplomatic norms and accepted a congratulatory phone call from Taiwan's President Tsai-ing Wen following his own election in 2016 (Grzegorzewski, 2022). But a few days later in an interview with Fox News, Trump said he saw no reason to be "bound by the One-China policy unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things" (Jennings, 2016). In other words, Trump was willing to use Taiwan as a bargaining chip to win economic concessions from China (Jennings, 2016).

More frequently, however, have been the calls to make explicit the commitment to defend Taiwan, even at the risk of provoking conflict with China (Kuo, 2023). President Biden flirted with the idea of redefining the U.S. security commitment when he told an interviewer on the national news program *60 Minutes* that the United States would defend Taiwan if China attacked (Ruwitch, 2022). The statement marked the third time since 2021 that Biden had suggested the United States was abandoning "strategic ambiguity" toward Taiwan, even though a follow up statement from a White House spokesperson muddled the waters, and returned to ambiguity, "The president has said this before... He also made clear then that our Taiwan policy hasn't changed. That remains true" (Ruwitch, 2022).

1. THE EVOLUTION OF THE U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONSHIP

When President Nixon and Henry Kissinger agreed to the "One China" policy, China was a weak and impoverished nation, suffering through the Cultural Revolution, and only recently emerging from one of the worst famines in modern history (Dikotter, 2016). Taiwan was experiencing its own trauma and was governed by a corrupt and authoritarian regime. Chang Kai-shek was remembered in Washington as a somewhat unreliable partner in the battle against Japan on the Mainland, and he governed Taiwan with an iron-fist. He persecuted, arrested, and even murdered his political opponents in the period known as the "White Terror" (Shattuck, 2017). Nixon and Kissinger likely saw little difference between the two regimes, and thus dealt away Taiwan's independent future without considering

anything beyond their own domestic political objectives. Access to a developing Chinese economic market would more likely win Nixon votes in the upcoming presidential election than would faithfully supporting a regional ally. Today, however, the conditions are very different. China now boasts the second largest economy in the world, it has vastly strengthened its military capabilities, and it is now perceived as a threat to U.S. hegemonic authority in the region and beyond. Meanwhile, Taiwan has transitioned into a vibrant democracy. Taiwan has a highly developed and technologically capable workforce, strong universities that are contributing to solving global problems, and it produces most of the cutting-edge computer chips that are essential for the manufacturing of everything from cell phones to automobiles, aircraft, and the next generation of military weapons and spacecraft (Hollihan & Riley, 2023). It is not simply that the United States and its allies need access to these chips to keep their economies growing, it is also that the United States seeks to deny such access to China to contain its growth and development, especially its military capabilities (Ye, 2021).

As an emergent democracy, it is difficult for the United States to dismiss the achievements of Taiwan. Should, for example, Taiwan's scientists and medical specialists be denied the opportunity to participate in the international conversations regarding the COVID pandemic, when Taiwan's early success in controlling the transmission of the disease suggests that other nations could benefit from Taiwan's experience? Despite being very close to China and having many of its citizens moving back and forth regularly to the mainland, Taiwan better controlled the spread of the virus in the early period of the disease than almost any other nation. This success was regularly touted in U.S. media outlets as an argument for why Taiwan should participate in the World Health Organization meetings on the pandemic (for a full discussion of Taiwan's pandemic soft power see Hollihan & Riley, 2023). Others made a similar case regarding Taiwan's ability to contribute to possible solutions to the climate crisis (Liu & Chao, 2023). China's efforts to completely isolate the accomplished, well-educated, and democratic people of Taiwan seem out of step with America's values, public opinion, and attitudes in the U.S. Congress.

It is not only the democratic evolution and achievements in Taiwan that have altered the U.S.-Taiwan relationship, but also the deterioration of U.S.-China relations. Hostility toward China may be the only issue in Washington on which both Republicans and Democrats agree. After the United States shot down a Chinese spy balloon that had traveled across the country, including over highly sensitive military sites, congress unanimously passed a resolution condemning China (Demirjian, 2023). Why would they not? A recent Pew survey reported that 90 percent of Americans held negative views of China (American's unfavorable views, 2022).

There are many reasons for this hostility toward China. Former President Trump certainly stirred up hostility when he accused China of "stealing American jobs," and not competing fairly for trade. His attacks led to his imposition of tariffs, many of which remain in place even though Trump is not (Hollihan, 2019). Trump's focus on trade was only one of many issues that served to drum up hostility toward China. Media coverage of China in the United States was almost entirely hostile around a variety of different issues (Carpenter, 2020). First, coverage focused on China's expansive claims to shoals in the South China Sea. The PRC turned the contested reefs into islands and began to build airstrips, docks, and military bases on them, even though Xi Jinping explicitly promised this was not his intention (Panda, 2016). Second, the media extensively reported the detention and

persecution of Muslim Uyghurs in Xinjiang Province, which Human Rights Watch declared a form of genocide (Break their Lineage, 2021). Third, stories reported on the prosecution of human rights activists and attorneys who received long prison sentences for defending their clients' claims against the central government (Wang, 2023). And, finally, and perhaps most significantly impacting Taiwan, stories reported on the draconian new national security law Beijing imposed on Hong Kong in 2020 that violated China's "one country, two systems" promise that Hong Kong would retain its democratic liberties for fifty years after unification (The End of One Country, Two Systems, 2020). Even media narratives on these issues, however, may not have matched the public anger that surfaced after Xi Jinping visited Moscow and embraced Vladimir Putin, pledging that China and Russia would remain close allies despite Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. "The two leaders referred to each other as dear friends, promised economic cooperation and described their countries' relations as the best they have ever been" (Putin, Xi, 2023). Thus, while the United States and most of its allies were condemning the Russian invasion, leveling harsh sanctions against Russia, and sending weapons so Ukraine could defend itself, China was standing with the aggressor.

2. STAKEHOLDERS/AUDIENCES IN THIS CONTROVERSY

Forceful arguments have been offered in U.S. media outlets and by diplomats, elected officials, and international relations scholars regarding the future of strategic ambiguity. Some argue that strategic ambiguity may have been appropriate for an earlier era, but that given the rise of China both militarily and economically, and the consolidation of power in the hands of one man, Xi Jinping, who has recently extended his term of office, this policy is outdated. They cite the Russian invasion of Ukraine as an instance where ambiguous security commitments failed to stop an aggressor. Others, argue that for a variety of different reasons, soon to be considered, strategic ambiguity continues to be the best policy and that the United States should not change course. Before exploring these arguments in greater detail, we will consider the multiple audiences/stakeholders to whom these foreign policy arguments are directed. Some of these stakeholders are directly addressed, others are not specifically addressed but have a status as likely participants in a potential conflict, and others may serve as gatekeepers who transmit news and perspectives to other stakeholder audiences (Palmieri & Mazzoli-Lurati, 2021).

First, the arguments are clearly directed to persuade Xi Jinping and his government that hostile actions against Taiwan would entail significant risk of military escalation leading to the loss of many lives and military assets, would be financially devastating to China, and to the global economy, would cause China to be viewed as a pariah in the community of nations, and that Taiwan would be so thoroughly devastated by the conflict that it would not prove to be a valuable asset to the Motherland.

Second, an implicit audience for these arguments is the Chinese public. Although the Communist Party exerts intense control over media coverage, and Chinese citizens are exposed to few media narratives that do not conform with the official party viewpoints, the United States hopes its discourse regarding its commitments to Taiwan will cause the regime to temper some of its fiercely nationalistic discourse so that it does not inflame public passions to a point where they cannot be easily managed or controlled. Regulating

the intensity of this hyper-nationalist fervor so that it does not result in violent public protests as have occurred in the past is an important objective of the regime.

Third, the government and people of Taiwan are an important audience for this discourse. Although the United States celebrates the progress toward democracy in Taiwan, it does not want to encourage the current or a future regime—at least now—to declare Taiwan’s independence. The fear is that such a declaration would so provoke the Chinese public that the regime would be all but compelled to bring Taiwan back into the fold. Taiwan’s military leadership is also an audience for this discourse. The U.S. does not presume that Taiwan could muster the personnel or weapons systems to fully counter and repel an invasion from the mainland. The goal is to assure that Taiwan can make such an invasion costly and potentially embarrassing to China. This means the Taiwanese must continue investing in expensive weapons systems, must train to assure mission readiness, must be willing to accept tremendous sacrifices (think what is happening in Ukraine), and must have a stream of young people willing to heroically step forward to serve.

Fourth, the American public, members of congress, and American diplomats and academics are an audience for these arguments, and sometimes participate in their creation and communication. Some believe an open debate about the extent of the U.S. commitment to Taiwan is the best way to prevent a conflict we may lack the will, resources, and stamina to conduct.

Finally, the governments and publics of our allies in the region and beyond are an audience. U.S. hegemonic influence in the Asia-Pacific is important to the security and economic stability of all our partner nations, but especially to Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand. Likewise, all these nations harbor suspicions and anxieties about a rising China.

3. ARGUMENTS FOR STRATEGIC CLARITY VS. AMBIGUITY

Advocates for an explicit security commitment to Taiwan often begin by referencing traditional foreign policy literature that evasive or slippery texts in international agreements can lead to conflicting interpretations and may result in serious miscalculations (Friedman, 2017). They argue that an expression of clarity regarding how far the United States was willing to go to defend Taiwan is the best strategy to help “avoid a fatal strategic blunder” (Wu, 2021, p. 182). They note that “U.S. and European officials spoke resolutely in support of Ukraine but did not match words with commensurate actions. As Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in 2014 highlighted, muscular rhetoric did little to deter Putin’s attempts to claw back greater control over Ukraine’s destiny” (Hass, 2022). They also observe that evasion strategies “inevitably serve the interests of the side who wields hegemonic power,” and that they are effective if the hegemon can “maintain a status quo based on power asymmetry” (Friedman, 2017, p. 398). If the power gap shrinks it is less likely that the rising power will be restrained by the ambiguous efforts to deter its’ actions. Advocates of strategic clarity argue that “the global balance of power has undergone a shift characterized by the rise of China and a relative decline of U.S. hegemonic power” (Boon & Sworn, 2020). As China has gained prosperity it has invested in its military. A Rand Corporation study in 2015 revealed the decline in U.S. military dominance over China. The study predicted China would outperform or equal the United States in 6 out of 9 areas of conventional force

capability, and as a result the ability of the United States to contain conflict in the Taiwan Strait was diminished (Grzegorzewski, 2022). China's military capabilities have been further enhanced since this study was conducted, while the U.S. contributions of weapons and armaments to support Ukraine may have further diminished U.S. dominance (Townshend & Crabtree, 2022). These experts also argue that China's rise has been so great that the United States can no longer deter China by itself. It needs the participation of its allies, especially Japan, Australia, and NATO partners. Winning such participation will be difficult with an ambiguous policy toward Taiwan, and easier if the commitment is clarified, becomes a shared goal, and is understood as important by these allied governments and their often-skeptical publics (Townshend & Crabtree, 2022). The United States and the United Kingdom have agreed to share nuclear powered submarines with Australia and should support Australian and Japanese efforts to "build long range missiles on home soil by sharing intellectual property, provide more U.S. weaponry to India, and beef up foreign military financing in the region starting with a dedicated fund to boost Taiwan's deterrence capabilities" (Townsend & Crabtree, 2022).

Advocates of clarity argue the second purpose of an ambiguous policy toward Taiwan's defense, was to deter Taiwan from trapping the United States in an unwanted war by declaring independence and provoking China. They argue that this is an outdated concept and that today no Taiwanese elected officials advocate a declaration of independence, and the Taiwan public does not favor such a declaration, because they know doing so would spark a conflict in which they would bear the brunt of the suffering (Kuo, 2023). Furthermore, they claim that an explicit security commitment could contain language that specifically outlined conditions under which the commitment of aid would not be guaranteed, as is the case in the NATO security agreements (Kuo, 2023). Finally, Senator Chris Murphy (D-CT) tweeted that China "has already priced in a full U.S. defense," as a result, "China's operational plans assume Washington will intervene. U.S. and allied power—not ambiguity—is what deters China. Ambiguity by itself offers little additional benefit" (Kuo, 2023).

Advocates of strategic clarity argue Taiwan is uniquely valuable as an ally because of its democratic politics, vibrant economy, high quality human and technological resources—think cutting edge computer chips, and its strategic location (Wu, 2021). Robert Kaplan, for example, "argues that Taiwan plays a crucial role in the containment strategy because China could break the 'First Islands Chain' if reunification occurred, which may substantially weaken America's geopolitical predominance in the Asia-Pacific region" (cited by Ye, 2021).

Other advocates disagree and argue that we should maintain a policy of strategic ambiguity. Most do not deny the value of Taiwan as an ally or the importance of containing China's military ambitions. They are, however, more optimistic about future relations between the two nations. They believe if direct confrontation is avoided it is more likely these nations can find issues upon which they can agree so that the relationship either improves or at least does not further deteriorate (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021). They argue that strategic clarity is more likely to provoke Beijing into acting quickly to seize Taiwan, because it sees the United States as now intractably committed to thwarting China's rise and denying its rightful place in global affairs, and because they see the need to act before the United States is able to further buttress Taiwan and its other allies in the region (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021). More explicit claims that the United States will defend Taiwan will

merely “legitimize the claims by China’s hardliners that the United States has adopted a more hostile attitude” (Wu, 2021, p. 182). Such experts see the moment of transition from ambiguity to clarity as a period of significant risk that “would not solve the fundamental security problem and might provoke an attack from China” (Wu, 2021, p. 182).

Advocates of strategic ambiguity also warn that U.S. allies might prefer that the United States not clarify its commitment to Taiwan, because doing so would put them under political pressure to do the same. The historically pacifist Japan, for example, faced significant public opposition when former Prime Minister Abe sought to revise the Constitution to permit a more active role for Japan’s military (Suzuki & Okuda, 2023). How likely is it that the current administration in Japan would win sufficient public support for a clearly expressed commitment to defend Taiwan from Chinese aggression? Rather than sending a definitive message to China that the United States and its allies would defend Taiwan, the shift to a message of clarity might reveal how divided the allies really are, and how much public opposition there was to support a war over the island.

Those who advocate sticking to strategic ambiguity also argue that shifting to a policy of clarity could intensify the pressure by hardliners within the United States to openly reject the One China policy. Many such hardliners in the U.S. congress, for example, believe that China wants to dominate global affairs and undermine the United States. An ambiguous policy of exchanging weapons is justified because it is called for in the Taiwan Relations Act, and it enhances Taiwan’s self-defense. A commitment to defend Taiwan as a treaty ally, however, appears to undermine the United States commitment to the One China policy. Some legislators have already called for the passage of a resolution to end the “outdated” One China policy (U.S. Lawmakers urge, 2022). China would certainly see this as a provocation. As Bonnie Glaser (2017) wrote:

With the return of Hong Kong to Chinese control in July 1997, Taiwan remains one of the few areas over which Beijing claims sovereignty but does not control. It is widely viewed by Chinese on the mainland as the last vestige of the century of humiliation that began with the Opium Wars in the middle of the nineteenth century. The persisting separation of the mainland and Taiwan is also portrayed as a hindrance to China’s reemergence as a great power, which President Xi Jinping has dubbed the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Chinese Communist Party’s legitimacy is linked to its pledge to achieve reunification of Taiwan with the motherland. A commonly held view on the mainland is that no Chinese leader could remain in power if he allowed Taiwan to separate from the PRC and be recognized by the international community as an independent sovereign state.

Xi Jinping would thus be under tremendous political pressure to act boldly to reclaim China’s renegade province, even at the risk of all-out war with the United States and its allies. Advocates of strategic ambiguity argue pragmatically that an ambiguous commitment gives the United States freedom to act as it wishes or needs to in response to the situation at hand. They argue that given the risks and costs, it is unlikely Beijing would launch a rapid invasion of Taiwan or attempt a total boycott to strangle its economy. Instead, Beijing would likely use a “gray zone” strategy to achieve their desired outcome. “By combining attacks on IT infrastructure, imposing economic sanctions, and employing paramilitary agencies, gray zone coercion is likely to achieve battlefield results similar to military operations” (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021). As this paragraph was written, the *New York Times* reported Microsoft had detected computer code “installed by a Chinese government hacking group” in Guam, which “would be the centerpiece of any American military response to an invasion or blockade of Taiwan” (Sanger, 2023).

China is already conducting military incursions into Taiwan's territory by air and sea. Taiwan must scramble its fighter jets and defensive ships to counter the violations of its sovereignty which saps the resources of the army and navy and contributes to a "war of nerves" that erodes national security (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2022). China also undertook a misinformation campaign during Taiwan's last presidential election to undermine public confidence in their government (Applebaum, 2022). How should the United States respond to such "gray zone" aggressions? Strategic ambiguity may be a more effective strategy than strategic clarity in the face of actions that remain below the threshold of direct military confrontations (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021). Advocates note that President Obama's declaration in 2014 that the Diaoyu/Senkaku islands came under the U.S. defense treaty with Japan did not reduce tensions in the region. Instead, China flooded the area with ships and flights, in a strategy like the one used in the South China Sea, establishing de-facto control of much of the area (Chang-Liao & Fang, 2021).

4. CONCLUSION

The future of Taiwan is arguably the most intractable foreign policy problem in the world today. Certainly, it poses the greatest challenge in Sino-US relations. Strategic ambiguity bought time for Taiwan to make itself impossible to ignore (Wu, 2021). Taiwan transitioned to democracy, developed its human and economic capital, and became a model of resiliency and self-governance. Given the different values, historical experiences, and goals of the varied audiences evaluating these arguments about deterrence, we believe strategic ambiguity may continue to best serve U.S. and Taiwanese interests. Frankly, regardless of which policy is embraced, there is a strong risk, and perhaps even a likelihood, that China will not be deterred from seizing control of Taiwan and the United States and China will someday be at war over Taiwan. Four-star U.S. General Mike Minihan, who heads the Air Force's Air Mobility Command, wrote in a January 2023 memo "that his gut told him the United States would fight China in the next two years, comments that Pentagon officials said were not consistent with American military assessments" (U.S. Four Star, 2023). Hopefully, the general is wrong, and the Pentagon denial is correct. It is clear, however, that conflict between two nuclear powers and the world's two largest economies is now alarmingly possible.

Hopefully a conflict, if it comes about, will remain a gray zone confrontation that does not escalate to total war. War gamers believe that the best defensive strategy for Taiwan is to assure Taiwan access to "mobile munitions—such as shoulder-held anti-aircraft and tank missile launchers and attack drones—before conflict . . . Like the porcupine, this strategy enables the smaller party to have the potential to inflict enough damage that it deters actions of the larger aggressor" (Protecting the Porcupine, 2023). Experts argue that this is essentially the strategy that has permitted Ukraine to hold off the Russian aggression and allow time for the United States and its allies to respond to the crisis (Protecting the Porcupine, 2023). War games conducted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies suggest that:

A Chinese invasion of Taiwan in 2026 would result in thousands of casualties among Chinese, United States, Taiwanese and Japanese forces, and it would be unlikely to result in

a victory for Beijing . . . A war over Taiwan could leave a victorious US military in as crippled a state as the Chinese forces it defeated.

At the end of the conflict, at least two US aircraft carriers would lie at the bottom of the Pacific and China's modern navy, which is the largest in the world, would be in "shambles" (London & Lieberman, 2023).

The war games also predicted that Taiwan's economy, industrial capacity, and infrastructure would be destroyed, it would be left without water or power, and it would take many years to recover (London & Lieberman, 2023). It is also likely that a war over Taiwan would destroy the global economy and have repercussions for nations around the world (Milmo, et. al, 2023). This crisis must be averted, and the United States and China must find a way to peacefully resolve this conflict, hopefully with a resolution that respects the liberties and well-being of the people of Taiwan and welcomes their contributions to the global system.

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