

A Clausewitzian Appraisal of Cross-Strait Relations

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This article uses the strategic theory of Carl von Clausewitz to analyze how the 2008 elections in Taiwan and the United States may influence cross-Strait relations. The elections will affect governments, citizens, and armed forces, and thus the value Taiwan and the United States attach to preserving the island's de facto independence from the mainland. Surveying likely interactions across the Taiwan Strait, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the China-Taiwan-U.S. strategic triangle includes one power, China, whose Clausewitzian "trinity" remains uniformly locked on eventual unification with Taiwan and whose patience is finite; a second, Taiwan, whose government and people are ambivalent and whose military preparations are lagging; and a third, the United States, whose government and people have priorities that do not include a clash with China, whose military is shrinking, and whose officer corps wants to avoid fighting in the Strait. This mismatch in political commitments and capabilities suggests that, far from bringing about an enduring rapprochement, the elections have done little to dispel potential conflict in East Asia.

KEYWORDS: cross-Strait relations; elections; Ma Ying-jeou; Carl von Clausewitz; strategic theory.

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Asia's maritime destiny cannot be divorced from the standoff across the Taiwan Strait. The Strait is an intrinsically maritime theater, while historical events have dramatized the geostrategic value of Taiwan—showing China's leadership what can happen if the island is in unfriendly hands and what Chinese forces could accomplish if based there.¹ Admiral Ernest King believed seizing the island would let the U.S. Navy "put the cork in the bottle" of the South China Sea during World War II, severing Japan's communications with its Southern Resource Area—and thus cutting off its supply of oil and raw materials.² General Douglas MacArthur thought Taiwan furnished U.S. forces with an "unsinkable aircraft carrier and submarine tender" from which to radiate power along the Asian periphery, bolstering the aerial and undersea components of U.S. containment strategy.³ For MacArthur and Secretary of State Dean Acheson, furthermore, Taiwan anchored a U.S. "defense perimeter of the Pacific" in the Cold War, hemming in an expansionist Soviet bloc.⁴

Regaining control of Taiwan would shift these advantages to the mainland, allowing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to invert MacArthur's and Acheson's logic of containment. Once it subdues the island, that is, China can at once push its own defense perimeter outward into Pacific waters, fending off threats from the sea, and establish a forward base to control events in surrounding expanses such as the East China Sea

¹Alan M. Wachman, *Why Taiwan? Geostrategic Rationales for China's Territorial Integrity* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007), esp. 69-81.

²Ernest J. King, in Samuel Eliot Morison, *The Two-Ocean War: A Short History of the United States Navy in the Second World War* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1963), 476.

³Douglas MacArthur, in Courtney Whitney, *MacArthur: His Rendezvous with History* (New York: Knopf, 1956), 378-79. See also Jonathan R. Adelman and Chih-yu Shih, *Symbolic War: The Chinese Use of Force, 1840-1980* (Taipei: Institute of International Relations, National Chengchi University, 1993), 174, 178-79, 182-83, 186.

⁴Dean Acheson, "Remarks by the Secretary of State (Acheson) before the National Press Club, Washington, January 12, 1950," in Raymond Dennett and Robert K. Turner, eds., *Documents on American Foreign Relations*, vol. 12: *January 1—December 31, 1950* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1951), 431; and Adelman and Shih, *Symbolic War*, 174. The classic work on containment is John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

and the Yellow Sea.

China's larger aspirations to economic and military great power also depend in great part on the oceanic domain. Chinese industry's seemingly insatiable appetite for energy resources has applied domestic political pressure on Beijing to seek out supplies of oil and gas as far away as the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa. Energy, then, compels Beijing to cast anxious eyes on the sea lines of communication (SLOCs). The security of the waterways stretching from China's coastline to the Indian Ocean has taken on special policy importance for Beijing. Once it secures the East, Yellow, and South China seas to its satisfaction—an enterprise that relies on neutralizing and ultimately recovering Taiwan, Beijing will vector its nautical energies not eastward but toward the south and southwest, where its interests in energy security and economic development lie.⁵ Chinese officials have already hurled themselves into soft-power diplomacy in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, garnering a fair measure of success.⁶

To reverse Admiral King's metaphor for Taiwan, Beijing must uncork the bottle of the South China Sea to fulfill its grand aspirations in southern waters. Thus the island's fate has ramifications far beyond East Asia. Probing how the 2008 elections in Taiwan and the United States may

⁵Admiral Liu Huaqing (劉華清), who commanded the PLA Navy in the 1980s, envisioned a phased maritime buildup predicated on achieving parity with the U.S. Navy in Pacific waters. His advocacy displayed a strong eastward focus that has molded Chinese thinking about naval power ever since. See Liu Huaqing, *Liu Huaqing huiyilu* (The memoirs of Liu Huaqing) (Beijing: Liberation Army Publications, 2004); Ai Hongren, *An Inside Look into the Chinese Communist Navy—Advancing Toward the Blue-Water Challenge*, trans. Joint Publications Research Service, Washington, D.C. (Hong Kong, 1988), 31-32, JPRS-CAR-90-052 (July 16, 1990); Jun Zhan, "China Goes to the Blue Waters: The Navy, Sea Power Mentality and the South China Sea," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 17, no. 3 (September 1994): 193; Jeffrey B. Goldman, "China's Mahan," *Naval Institute Proceedings* 122, no. 3 (March 1996): 44-47; Swaran Singh, "Continuity and Change in China's Maritime Strategy," *Strategic Analysis* 23, no. 9 (December 1999): 1493-1508; and Bernard D. Cole, "The PLA Navy and 'Active Defense,'" in *The People's Liberation Army and China in Transition*, ed. Stephen J. Flanagan and Michael E. Marti (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2003), 136.

⁶Joshua Kurlantzick, "China's Charm Offensive in Southeast Asia," *Current History* 105, no. 692 (September 2006): 273-74; Renato Cruz De Castro, "The Limits of Twenty-First Century Chinese Soft-Power Statecraft in Southeast Asia: The Case of the Philippines," *Issues & Studies* 43, no. 4 (December 2007): 80-99; and Toshi Yoshihara and James R. Holmes, "China's Energy-Driven 'Soft Power,'" *Orbis* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2008): 123-37.

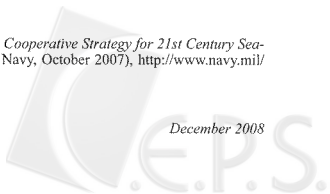
reconfigure political and military power across the Strait will furnish important guidance as the U.S. sea services implement the 2007 *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, a strategy document predicated equally on prevailing in naval war and on enlisting foreign partners to help protect the global system of maritime trade and commerce.⁷ Striking up partnerships with prospective antagonists—especially prickly ones like China—is no easy task.

Strategic theory offers a useful prism to glimpse the effects of the Taiwanese and U.S. elections on cross-Strait relations and, in turn, on Asia's larger seafaring future. It also lets us speculate about the foreign policies of President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) of Taiwan and President-elect Barack Obama of the United States. The U.S. and Taiwanese vertices of the strategic triangle will be examined here, treating the third vertex—a China mindful of national unity as well as bigger economic and geopolitical imperatives—primarily as an analytical backdrop. The following hypotheses offer one framework for tracking and adapting to events in the Strait:

- Ma Ying-jeou's presidency will likely ease tensions in the Taiwan Strait for a time, improving prospects for near-term Sino-U.S. maritime cooperation. Deferring a military showdown between China and Taiwan represents a welcome development for all parties to the dispute, but any improvement in relations could prove short-lived. Ma's policy does not imply abandonment of the cross-Strait status quo. Quite the opposite: judging from his campaign speeches and statements, and despite his efforts to restore economic and cultural ties with the mainland, the president's stance on independence differs less from that of his predecessor, Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), than is commonly assumed. In the final analysis, Taiwanese and Chinese goals may remain irreconcilable despite the recent upswing in relations across the Taiwan Strait.

- China will press ahead with its naval and military buildup during Ma's tenure, holding open the option of forcible unification. The geopolit-

⁷U.S. Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard, *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Navy, October 2007), <http://www.navy.mil/maritime/MaritimeStrategy.pdf>.



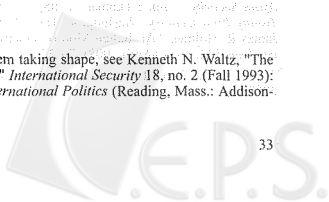
ical, economic, and nationalist logic behind unification remains inescapable for China's leadership. Beijing will find it difficult to tolerate indefinite postponement of its ambitions and thus will view Ma's standoffish attitude toward unification with extreme skepticism. The prudent guiding assumption for Taipei and Washington is that Chinese patience is finite. To Chinese eyes, deferring national union indefinitely may seem little short of conceding the island outright independence.

- An interval of calm in the Taiwan Strait will allow Beijing to cast its gaze on important interests elsewhere while still pursuing preponderance over Taiwan and deterrence vis-à-vis the U.S. Navy. Of special importance is the security of shipping carrying vital resources from Middle East and African suppliers to Chinese seaports. The South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, then, will increasingly hold Beijing's attention. Myopic focus on the Strait may obscure China's southward turn, misleading Taiwanese and Western strategists. Military might can serve a dual purpose for Beijing.

- Taiwan thus needs to arm itself in order to defend even Ma Ying-jeou's relatively moderate, wait-and-see policy toward union with the People's Republic of China (PRC). In this industrial age, military forces cannot be upgraded as quickly as an adversary's intentions can change. Nor, given the relative decline of American military supremacy in Asia, can Taipei trust to U.S. forces to succor the island in time to stave off defeat. Keeping Chinese ambitions in check thus requires the existence of Taiwanese forces, even in an era of apparent good feelings across the Strait.

- Damping down Sino-Taiwanese enmity will not stop larger forces impelling the United States and China toward competition at sea. Whether the emerging order in Asia resembles European realpolitik, a Sinocentric system reminiscent of the tributary system, or a spheres-of-interest configuration evoking the United States' Monroe Doctrine, China's bid for primacy will collide with U.S. maritime dominance.⁸ While averting a

⁸For more on the debate over the Asian system taking shape, see Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Emerging Structure of International Politics," *International Security* 18, no. 2 (Fall 1993): 44-79; and Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-



cross-Strait war will certainly improve matters in East Asia, some degree of nautical friction is certain.

On balance, then, the Taiwanese and U.S. elections should put off but will not end the prospects of war in the Strait, and they may attenuate but will not put an end to competitive forces in maritime Asia. It would be premature for Taipei and Washington to succumb to euphoria about Chinese intentions.

Taiwan, it bears repeating, represents the common denominator between cross-Strait relations and the maritime order in Asia. Should war break out in the Strait, a vengeful China would likely deploy its leverage in Asian capitals to deny the U.S. Navy access to East Asian waters. Conversely, keeping a lid on cross-Strait animosities and managing nautical competition with the Asian titan will enhance the United States' efforts to secure partners, access, and bases in the region—the determinants of U.S. strategic effectiveness. Adroit diplomacy on both the "micro" and "macro" geographic levels will be a must, consequently, as Washington seeks to convince China to acquiesce or join in the constabulary enterprises U.S. leaders hope to orchestrate.

Baseball philosopher Yogi Berra observed that "it's tough to make predictions, especially about the future."⁹ Such counsel notwithstanding, the effort to discern possible futures in maritime Asia will help Taiwanese leaders anticipate emerging dangers and opportunities while allowing U.S. policymakers and strategists to shape their own endeavors in the region. The hypotheses advanced here may offer useful parameters for thinking

Wesley, 1979). See also Aaron D. Friedberg, "Ripe for Rivalry," *International Security* 18, no. 3 (Winter 1993/94): 5-33; Richard K. Betts, "Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War," *ibid.*, 34-77; Avery Goldstein, "Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival," *ibid.* 22, no. 3 (Winter 1997/98): 36-73; David C. Kang, "Getting Asia Wrong: The Need for New Analytical Frameworks," *ibid.* 27, no. 2 (Spring 2003): 57-85; David C. Kang, "Hierarchy in Asian International Relations: 1300-1900," *Asian Security* 1, no. 1 (January 2005): 53-79; Chen Jian, *The China Challenge for the Twenty-First Century* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 4-8; and James R. Holmes, "An Indian Monroe Doctrine—But What Kind?" *Naval Institute Proceedings* 134, no. 4 (April 2008): 20-25.

⁹"The Perils of Prediction; Uncertainty," *The Economist* (London) 383, no. 8531 (June 2, 2007): 96.

about the strategic environment in maritime Asia.

Clausewitz Goes to Sea

Despite the aquatic nature of this inquiry, it is the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, not a sea-power theorist such as Alfred Thayer Mahan or Sir Julian Corbett, who provides the most useful analytical gauge to monitor how various stimuli affect nation-states, and thus to appraise East Asian maritime affairs in this election year. While he wrote primarily for operational-level commanders, much of Clausewitz's wisdom applies throughout the continuum from peacetime diplomacy to full-blown combat. Not only is war an extension of policy with the admixture of violent means, he says, but political intercourse between belligerents does not cease even in wartime.¹⁰ To cite Mao Zedong (毛澤東), an Asian practitioner and theorist of statecraft, "politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed."¹¹ If Mao and his forebears like Sun Tzu (孫子) are any guide, the dividing line between peace and war is blurrier than Americans typically assume.¹²

Clausewitz presents three concepts of special relevance to the triangular pattern of interactions among China, Taiwan, and the United States. First, he observes that, "Since war is not an act of senseless passion but is controlled by its political object, the value of this object must determine the sacrifices to be made for it in magnitude and also in duration. Once

¹⁰Noted Clausewitz: "War itself does not suspend political intercourse or change it into something entirely different." See Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), 69, 605.

¹¹Mao Zedong, *On Protracted War* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1972), 226-28.

¹²Sun Tzu deemed winning without fighting the supreme excellence for kings and commanders. Americans tend to look askance at such notions, conceiving of war as something that happens "should deterrence fail." For them, diplomacy halts when the shooting starts and resumes when the guns fall silent, presumably after the overthrow of an enemy. See Sun-tzu's *Art of War*, in *The Seven Military Classics of Ancient China*, trans. Ralph D. Sawyer (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1993), 161; Carnes Lord, "American Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 5, no. 3 (1985): 276; and Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), xvii-xxiii.

the expenditure of effort exceeds the value of the political object, the object must be renounced and peace must follow."¹³ For him, rational cost-benefit calculations govern—or ought to govern—how statesmen and strategists regard political and military ventures.¹⁴ Electoral outcomes will shape value-of-the-object calculations compiled by leaders of each vertex of the China-Taiwan-U.S. strategic triangle.¹⁵ The more value China, Taiwan, or the United States attaches to a particular objective, in other words, the more lives and treasure it will be willing to expend for that objective—and for longer. Conversely, lesser objectives warrant lesser, shorter-term efforts or, perhaps, inaction. According to Clausewitz, Washington should renounce the political object of de facto Taiwanese independence if it estimates that the effort and costs involved exceed the value of defending Taiwan.

Second, Clausewitz develops a novel taxonomy for analyzing belligerent powers, highlighting the roles governments, peoples, and armed forces—his "trinity" of war—play in the interactive milieu of war. Like much of his writings, his theory of the trinity applies in large measure to peacetime international competition and thus is worth quoting at length:

As a total phenomenon, its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity—composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.¹⁴

Reason, contends Clausewitz, resides primarily with policymakers entrusted with imposing rational direction on the warmaking process, a process that tends strongly toward entropy. The people are "mainly" the repository of passion, lending—or refusing to lend—statecraft their support. "The passions that are to be kindled ... must already be inherent in the people," observes Clausewitz, sounding a cautionary note for leaders of apathetic or overly bellicose societies. Managing popular sentiments—rousing passions while also keeping them in check—is one of the chief tasks of political leaders. For its part, the army inhabits the realm of chance

¹³ Clausewitz, *On War*, 92.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.



and creativity, its commander ideally displaying the versatility, or "military genius," of a Napoleon.¹⁵

Nation-states do not exist in isolation, especially when striving with one another in zero-sum fashion. Consequently, declares Michael Handel, the "interaction of the warring states, each searching for a comparative advantage, defines the unique nature of each war."¹⁶ The feat demanded of statesmen under such conditions, proclaims Clausewitz, is to keep the three elements of the trinity in balance, "like an object suspended between three magnets."¹⁷ This template applies to the standoff across the Taiwan Strait. Indeed, the Pentagon's 2008 report to Congress, *The Military Power of the People's Republic of China*, depicts the situation in the Strait as "largely a function of dynamic interaction between the United States, the mainland, and Taiwan"—replicating Handel's terminology almost exactly.¹⁸

Elections in a democratic society give voice to the popular will, setting the direction for the government's grand strategy and molding strategy and force structure for the armed services. The 2008 election results, accordingly, may adjust or reshape the Taiwanese and American trinities of politics and war. Examining the impact of the elections will let observers catch sight of possible futures for cross-Strait relations and, on a broader plane, Sino-U.S. maritime relations. Since the PRC recently underwent its own leadership transition, ushering in Hu Jintao's (胡锦涛) final term of office, the Chinese trinity will not be analyzed separately here. The mainland will be treated as part of the surrounding context—the critical part with regard to cross-Strait relations, perhaps a bit less consequential but still crucial to the region's maritime future.

Such analysis is no simple matter. Clausewitz confesses that "Newton himself would quail before the algebraic problems" posed by an en-

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Michael Handel, *Masters of War: Classical Strategic Thought*, third revised and expanded edition (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 117. Emphasis added.

¹⁷Clausewitz, *On War*, 89.

¹⁸U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China, 2008* (Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008), 40.

vironment such as the Taiwan Strait, where multiple players are involved, vital interests are at stake, and passions run hot.¹⁹ Efforts to apply principles, rules, and systems to human affairs, he says, often neglect "the endless complexities involved," since politics "branches out in almost all directions and has no definite limits."²⁰ This third concept from the Prussian theorist—infinite change and complexity—conveys the dynamism of disputes like the one between China and Taiwan. A Clausewitzian exhortation for practitioners of East Asian affairs: there is no substitute for constant scrutiny of cross-Strait affairs and adaptation to new realities.

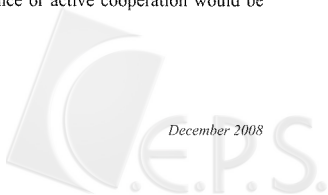
The Levels-of-Analysis Conundrum for Beijing and Washington

How do the requirements for defending seagoing trade and commerce—the fruits of globalization—relate to the seemingly unrelated controversy in the Taiwan Strait? Both the United States and China confront an acute levels-of-analysis quandary in East Asia. On the micro geographic level, both Washington and Beijing would like to see the question of Taiwanese independence neutralized—China to fulfill its nationalist and geostrategic objectives, freeing up resources for pursuits elsewhere in Asia; the United States to liberate itself from a troublesome, potentially costly dispute in which its only stake is a pacific outcome. The interplay between the Taiwan Strait and larger strategies and interests thus could imperil these larger Chinese and U.S. interests, potentially embroiling the two nation-states in a war no one wants. Clearly, then, the Chinese and U.S. trinities intersect on more than one level.

On the macro, regional and global level, both China and the United States harbor aspirations far beyond East Asia. SLOC security, counter-proliferation, and other system-maintenance functions envisioned in the U.S. sea services' *Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*—missions in which Chinese acquiescence or active cooperation would be

¹⁹Clausewitz, *On War*, 585-86.

²⁰*Ibid.*, 134.



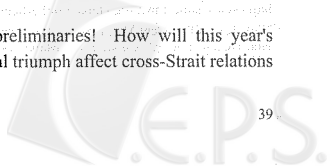
helpful if not essential—are uppermost in the minds of U.S. strategists. Dispersing effort among many maritime theaters—and among many missions, from high-intensity warfighting to delivering supplies to disaster-afflicted nations—will strain U.S. seagoing forces at a time when escalating acquisition costs are consuming finite acquisitions budgets, driving down numbers of platforms and thinning the U.S. global maritime presence. This warrants concern. And Beijing? Assuring shipments of fuel and other resources from Middle East and African suppliers beckons Chinese strategic attentions inexorably southward, along the Indian Ocean and South China Sea SLOCs conveying these resources to Chinese users.

For the United States and China, then, the China-Taiwan deadlock impinges on maritime interests more broadly construed. Managing the interactions among the vertices of the strategic triangle and between the micro and macro levels constitutes a pressing national interest for both powers. Cross-Strait relations will be a neutral factor at best at the macro level. It is hard to see how even an amicable settlement between Beijing and Taipei would improve overall Sino-U.S. maritime ties, while Sino-U.S. relations would suffer grievously should the U.S. Navy intervene in a contingency in the Taiwan Strait, win or lose. If China lost in a trial of arms, Chinese sentiment would see it as the latest debacle in China's century of humiliation—an affront to be avenged. If China won, it would view the United States as a determined yet beatable foe bent on thwarting China's rightful goals at sea. Relations between the leading Asian powers would remain combustible.

Either way, then, an armed encounter would embitter relations between Asia's leading powers, gutting efforts to devise a seagoing partnership conducive to U.S. strategic objectives in Asia. U.S. grand strategy would suffer on both the micro and macro levels.

Ma Extends the Olive Branch ...

So much for the theoretical preliminaries! How will this year's Kuomintang (KMT, 國民黨) electoral triumph affect cross-Strait relations



and Sino-U.S. maritime relations? The common wisdom after President Ma Ying-jeou's victory was that tensions in the Strait would subside, making for a more tranquil East Asia. Some accommodation among Taiwan, China, and the United States would become thinkable. Writing during the campaign, a Taiwanese analyst foreshadowed "the potential for a dramatic shift in the tone and trajectory of cross-Strait relations, and with it the opportunity for decreased risk that the United States could be drawn into an armed conflict with China."²¹ One Western commentator reported that cross-Strait contacts resumed in a "relaxed atmosphere."²² Another implored Beijing and Washington to "seize the opportunity presented by the change of government and attitude in Taipei," citing the "olive branches" Ma had proffered.²³

And indeed, President Ma did assert himself quickly. "As President of the Republic of China," he declared in his inaugural address, "my most solemn duty is to safeguard the Constitution. In a young democracy, *respecting the Constitution is more important than amending it.*"²⁴ This carefully chosen wording signaled that, unlike Chen Shui-bian, the new president will refrain from pursuing de jure independence under the guise of constitutional reform. The president declared, moreover, that negotiations with Beijing "should resume at the earliest time possible" under the "1992 consensus," also termed "mutual non-denial," under which Taipei and Beijing affirm the existence of one China but agree to disagree on precisely what that means.²⁵ Ma had earlier applauded the sixteen-character guideline formulated by President Hu Jintao of China to govern cross-Strait

²¹Yun-han Chu, "Taiwan in 2007: The Waiting Game," *Asian Survey* 48, no. 1 (2008): 131.

²²David G. Brown, "China-Taiwan Relations: Dialogue Resumes in Relaxed Atmosphere," *Comparative Connections* 10, no. 2 (July 2008).

²³Ralph A. Cossa, "Time to Seize the Cross-Strait Opportunity," *PacNet* #30 (May 21, 2008), <http://www.csis.org/media/csic/pubs0830.pdf>.

²⁴"Full Text of President Ma's Inaugural Address," *China Post* (Taipei), May 21, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/print/157332.htm>, emphasis added; and Russell Hsiao, "Ma's Inaugural Address as President of Taiwan," *China Brief* 8, no. 11 (May 21, 2008), http://www.jamestown.org/china_brief/article.php?articleid=2374186.

²⁵"Full Text of President Ma's Inaugural Address"; and Dimitri Bruyas, "Ma Repeats 'Mutual Non-Denial' Policy," *China Post*, March 24, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/print/148519.htm>.

relations. Hu called on both sides to "build trust, lay aside differences, seek consensus while shelving differences, and create a win-win situation" (建立互信、擱置爭議、求同存異、共創雙贏).²⁶

To promote "one hundred years of peace in the Strait," Ma set forth an ambitious list of priorities.²⁷ Among the priorities he has mentioned in various forums are (1) persuading China to loosen its grip on "Taiwan's international space," or diplomatic liberty of action, which the mainland has sharply constricted using economic and political inducements to convince governments to switch diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing; (2) a cross-Strait peace accord; and (3) initial steps such as liberalized travel and trade that act as a precursor to a "cross-Strait common market."²⁸ These modest measures include relaxing restrictions on Taiwanese firms investing or conducting business on the mainland and opening the island to Chinese exports, direct flights from the mainland, and Chinese tourism.²⁹ President Ma defended the apparent meteoric pace of his cross-Strait diplomacy, insisting that such measures were long overdue and indeed should have been initiated under Chen Shui-bian. By moving quickly, Ma sees himself as correcting past failures.

... But Says No to Unification

All in all, from Beijing's vantage point, this represented a promising start to the post-Chen era. However, the Chinese communist leadership

²⁶See note 22 above. See also Ko Shu-ling and Flora Wang, "Ma Welcomes Beijing's Reaction," *Taipei Times*, May 23, 2008, 1.

²⁷Willy Lam, "Ma Ying-jeou and the Future of Cross-Strait Relations," *China Brief* 8, no. 7 (March 28, 2008), http://jamestown.org/china_brief/article.php?articleid=2374064; and "President-Elect Ma Calls for 'Diplomatic Truce' with China," *China Post*, May 11, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/print/155861.htm>.

²⁸"Full Text of President Ma's Inaugural Address"; and Lam, "Ma Ying-jeou and the Future of Cross-Strait Relations."

²⁹Shelley Rigger, in Jacques deLisle, *Elections, Political Transitions and Foreign Policy in East Asia: A Conference Report*, Foreign Policy Research Institute website, <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200806.delisle.electionseastasia.html>.

may find Ma Ying-jeou a less agreeable interlocutor than early post-election commentary seemed to assume. Take for example the "three no's"³⁰ slogan on which Ma campaigned, which rules out unification with the mainland, formal independence for the island, and any use of force to settle the dispute. It softens the tone of Chen Shui-bian's pronouncements, which aimed more or less openly at formal, de jure independence from the mainland.³¹ At the same time, though, it in effect rejects Beijing's nonnegotiable demand for eventual unification while restating Taiwan's own nonnegotiable demand for de facto independence.

This is a formula for politico-military stasis across the Strait. "Taiwanese people would like to have economic interactions with the mainland," observed Ma, "but obviously they don't believe [China's] political system is suitable for Taiwan."³² That is, Taiwanese citizens prefer to wait until the mainland liberalizes, rendering union more palatable, before deciding their future course. As noted before, Clausewitz maintained that passion was mainly, but not wholly, the dominion of the people. It often tinges government and military discourses as well—witness the vehemence of Chinese official statements and PLA commentary on Taiwan. That is also the case in Taipei. A steadier, less passionate hand at the tiller in Taipei doubtless represents an improvement from Beijing's (and Washington's) perspective. Even so, the foreign policy differences between Ma and his predecessor may be more apparent than real. And Ma is a strong anticommunist despite his China-friendly public visage.³³ While this does not vitiate a pragmatic approach to cross-Strait relations, it will undoubtedly bias him against high-stakes initiatives dependent on Chinese trustworthiness. Ma is no pushover.

³⁰Ma's "three no's" policy refers to "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" (不統、不獨、不武).

³¹See, for instance, Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, Republic of China, "The Government's Position Paper on Ma Ying-jeou's Stance about 'Taiwan's Pledge of Not Seeking Independence in Exchange for China's Commitment of Not Using Force Against Taiwan'," November 3, 2006, <http://www.mac.gov.tw/english/english/macpolicy/951103e.htm>.

³²Peter Enav, "Unification with China Unlikely 'In Our Lifetimes': President-Elect," *China Post*, May 16, 2008, <http://www.chinapost.com.tw/print/156644.htm>.

³³Lam, "Ma Ying-jeou and the Future of Cross-Strait Relations."

Whether Beijing can live with stasis remains to be determined. Rancor may again suffuse the interactive relationship across the Taiwan Strait—and soon. For Chinese leaders, Ma's policy imparts additional uncertainty and risk to the Taiwan question. The "three no's" approach to cross-Strait relations should prove politically sustainable in Taiwan, since it essentially codifies the attitudes of a commanding majority of the Taiwanese populace, one of the three elements of the Clausewitzian trinity, toward the mainland. While sizable minorities prefer either eventual unification or eventual independence, respondents routinely voice willingness to defer the matter indefinitely, taking a wait-and-see attitude toward political developments on the mainland.³⁴ This worsens matters further from Beijing's vantage point, since Chinese leaders must worry not only about Ma but about who will follow him and whether that individual will exercise similar restraint on the topic of independence.

If he manages his public outreach astutely, President Ma can presumably count on popular backing for his China policy. While less erratic than Chen Shui-bian's ad hoc approach—and thus preferable for all three vertices of the China-Taiwan-U.S. strategic triangle, the "three no's" approach would indefinitely push back the date for the national unity Chinese sentiment craves.³⁵ Indeed, Ma has declared that unification is unlikely "in our lifetimes" because it must await political liberalization on the mainland. Under his doctrine of mutual non-denial, moreover, he has at least intimated that the Republic of China is already a sovereign state.³⁶ And while the president has moved to improve economic and cultural ties across the Strait, he has also proclaimed that "Taiwan doesn't just want security and prosperity; it wants dignity."³⁷ International relations commentators from

³⁴Cal Clark, "The Paradox of the National Identity Issue in Chen Shui-bian's 2004 Presidential Campaign: Base Constituencies vs. the Moderate Middle," *Issues & Studies* 41, no. 1 (March 2005): 53-86; and T. Y. Wang, "The Perception of Threats and Pragmatic Policy Choice: A Survey of Public Opinion in Taiwan," *ibid.*, 87-111.

³⁵Chen-shen Yen, "Only Ad Hoc Politics, Not Adhocracy, under the DPP," *Issues & Studies* 43, no. 3 (September 2007): 238-42. See also Jih-wen Lin, "The Institutional Context of President Chen Shui-bian's Cross-Strait Messages," *ibid.* 44, no. 1 (March 2008): 1-31.

³⁶See note 32 above; and Lam, "Ma Ying-jeou and the Future of Cross-Strait Relations."

³⁷"Full Text of President Ma's Inaugural Address"; Keith Bradsher, "Discipline First for

Thucydides forward have observed that motives such as honor, dignity, or prestige, which cannot be easily quantified or subjected to cost-benefit calculations, readily give rise to intractable conflict or war.³⁸

Whatever relaxation of tensions the early months of the Ma Ying-jeou administration have seen, then, it is far from clear that much has changed among the popular and governmental elements of the Taiwanese trinity. What about the armed services, the remaining element? In his inaugural address, complementing his many conciliatory words, Ma vowed to "rationalize our defense budget and acquire necessary defensive weaponry to form a solid national defense force."³⁹ This perspective, emphasizing military preparedness amid relative good times in the Strait, echoes the emerging wisdom among many U.S. officials and analysts. For instance, James J. Shinn, the assistant secretary of defense for Asian and Pacific security affairs, recently told the U.S. House Armed Services Committee that the overall outlook for cross-Strait relations remains mixed.⁴⁰

On the diplomatic level, observed Shinn, resuming cross-Strait ties will reduce the likelihood of conflict in the Strait—a welcome development all around. However, goodwill is more transient than capabilities, which evolve slowly and cannot be swiftly rebuilt if allowed to languish for too long. By neglecting its defenses, Taipei is in danger of letting an unbridgeable chasm open among political ends, strategy, and military means.⁴¹ Too great a military mismatch across the Taiwan Strait could have grave consequences. In Clausewitzian parlance, Beijing attaches the highest possible value to recovering the island, and it is assembling the naval and military

Taiwan's New Leader," *New York Times*, March 24, 2008, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/24/world/asia/24taiwan.html?_r=1&n=Top/Reference/Times%20Topics/People/B/Bradsher,%20Keith&oref=slogin.

³⁸*The Landmark Thucydides: A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, ed. Robert B. Strassler, intro. Victor Davis Hanson (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 43.

³⁹"Full Text of President Ma's Inaugural Address."

⁴⁰James J. Shinn and Phillip Breedlove, "China: Recent Security Developments" (Prepared joint statement before the House Armed Services Committee, June 25, 2008), http://armedservices.house.gov/pdfs/FC062508/Shinn_Breedlove_Testimony062508.pdf.

⁴¹Andrei Chang, "Taiwan's Defense Priorities," UPI Asia Online, July 25, 2008, http://upiasiaonline.com/Security/2008/07/25/taiwans_defense_priorities/1237/.



means to realize this political aim. Chinese leaders may be tempted to attempt to resolve the dispute by force, accepting the attendant risks of U.S. intervention and damage to China's international standing, if they estimate the magnitude and duration of the effort as manageable and the pitfalls of inaction as unacceptable.

On the strategic and operational levels, then, the real and growing military imbalance between the mainland and the island presents imposing political challenges for both Taiwan and its chief protector, the United States.⁴² Jim Shinn's analysis recalls the remarks of Thomas J. Christensen, the deputy assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, who in 2007 told the U.S.-Taiwan Business Council that

A strong Taiwan is, very simply, one that maintains the military capacity to withstand coercion for an extended period of time. To the extent Beijing knows it cannot subdue Taiwan swiftly—before the international community would be able to react—deterrence is reinforced.... A Taiwan that can defend itself is a major factor for peace [and] can also negotiate with Beijing with greater confidence and thereby pursue more effectively durable, equitable arrangements for cross-Strait peace.⁴³

The cross-Strait equilibrium will not preserve itself if China sees the need and the opportunity to disturb it. Having elected a president who rejects formal independence, Taiwan now needs to restore its ability to defend its de facto independence. While ships, tanks, and planes are by no means the island's only sources of national strength, Taipei's ability to maintain the status quo resides to a large measure in adequate military power, placed at the service of wise grand strategy.

Sensing this, candidate Ma campaigned in part on raising the Taiwanese defense budget to at least 3 percent of gross domestic product (GDP)—some analysts advocate 4 percent—correcting the real decline in defense spending Taiwan experienced in recent years. And what are the specific purposes of a defense buildup in this apparent era of good feelings?

⁴²Central News Agency, "Cross-Strait Dialogue Reduces Risk of War, Says Pentagon Official," June 26, 2008.

⁴³Thomas J. Christensen, "A Strong and Moderate Taiwan" (Speech to U.S.-Taiwan Business Council, Annapolis, Maryland, September 11, 2007), U.S. State Department website, <http://www.state.gov/p/epap/rls/rm/2007/9/1979.htm>.

Reasons bruited about include enhancing Taipei's ability to negotiate with confidence, mending relations with the United States, bolstering deterrence vis-à-vis the mainland, and creating an all-volunteer force.⁴⁴ Military preparedness begets political and strategic flexibility.

Can President Ma persuade his constituents to devote more treasure to defense? Look back for a moment. From a Clausewitzian standpoint, the Chen Shui-bian era witnessed a failed attempt to reshape the Taiwanese trinity in favor of formal independence from the mainland. The Taiwanese electorate, however, assigned too little value to the object of de jure independence to sustain Chen's approach. In theory a majority of Taiwanese citizens might prefer ultimate independence. However, this would assume that China withdrew its threats to use force—drastically reducing the costs of independence for the island. Barring such an improbable change of heart, latent or real Chinese coercion will remain a constant in cross-Strait politics. Thus the Taiwanese electorate reached a wise collective judgment that the prudent course was to accept the status quo—de facto statehood without the dignity of de jure statehood—rather than incur the high costs of cross-Strait war.

With his mercurial temperament and leadership style, Chen was unable to remake this reasonable public calculus in favor of a more radical policy such as a declaration of independence (or constitutional reform, which Beijing deemed a proxy for independence). Nor was he able to rally government bureaucracies—the second component of the Clausewitzian trinity—behind policies geared to independence. Officials appointed during the long era of KMT supremacy remained in place, with the capacity to impede or reinterpret—and thus to modify or even negate—the presidential will.⁴⁵ Without support from these officials, pushing through pro-independ-

⁴⁴Michael S. Chase, "Taiwan's Defense Budget Dilemma: How Much Is Enough in an Era of Improving Cross-Strait Relations?" *China Brief* 8, no. 15 (July 17, 2008), http://www.jamestown.org/china_brief/article.php?articleid=2374311.

⁴⁵On the capacity of large organizations to obstruct the will of political leaders, see Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff and others, 3 volumes (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), 215-23; Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration," in *Basic Literature*

ence policies ranged from difficult to impossible for the Chen administration.⁴⁶ And finally, the Taiwanese armed forces languished during the Chen years, with budgets declining in real terms until 2003 amid bickering between the Presidential Office and the KMT-controlled Legislative Yuan (立法院).

The island's ability to uphold a pro-independence policy—indeed, even to defend the status quo short of independence—atrophied. Most prominently, the Legislative Yuan voted down an arms package offered by the George W. Bush administration in 2001 some sixty times before finally relenting, approving a much-reduced purchase of American weaponry.⁴⁷ This is not to pass judgment on the wisdom of particular acquisitions—good arguments have been advanced for a defensive-minded Taiwanese "porcupine strategy" instead of the Bush administration's symmetrical approach to China's military buildup—but it is safe to say that declining defense budgets bespeak a national lack of will to seek *de jure* independence or to defend *de facto* independence.⁴⁸ Notes one perceptive American analyst, William Murray of the U.S. Naval War College:

These diminished efforts hardly seem commensurate with the increased threat that Taiwan confronts. They suggest either a state of denial about the threat, a misplaced faith in current systems and geographic advantages, or perhaps most disturbingly, a belief that the United States is certain to provide timely military assistance.⁴⁹

of American Public Administration, 1787-1950, ed. Frederick C. Mosher (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1981), 71-77; Graham T. Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, second edition (New York: Longman, 1999); and Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1986).

⁴⁶Yen, "Only Ad Hoc Politics, Not Adhocracy, under the DPP," 238-42.

⁴⁷William S. Murray, "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy," *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 16-20.

⁴⁸"The ideal image for Taiwan's defensive posture is a porcupine," declared John Bih Chung-ho, editor-in-chief of *Defense Technology Monthly*, in 1995. "It looks like easy prey, but inflicts a stiff price in pain for any tiger that tries to eat it." See John Bih Chung-ho, in Anthony Spaeth, "War Games: Despite Jitters, No One Expects a Taiwan Invasion Scenario Because Beijing Might Rue the Outcome," *Time*, August 28, 1995. See also Ivan Eland, *The China-Taiwan Military Balance: Implications for the United States*, Cato Institute Foreign Policy Briefing no. 74 (February 5, 2003), http://www.cato.org/pub_display.php?pub_id=1598.

⁴⁹Murray, "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy," 15.

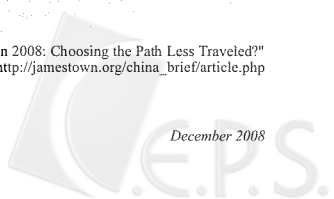
In short, Chen Shui-bian never managed to realign the Taiwanese trinity to further his political ends. As Clausewitz might have foretold, Chen was unable to surmount Taiwanese ambivalence in the face of Chinese doggedness.

What is the outlook for the Ma Ying-jeou presidency? President Ma's prospects appear good: he embodies the consensus of the electorate on cross-Strait affairs, he evidently enjoys the support of KMT-dominated government agencies, and his party commands a supermajority in the legislature (81 of 113 seats), seemingly allowing him to fashion an assertive defense policy.⁵⁰ The trinity would seem to conform nicely to Ma's vision of rebuilding economic and cultural ties across the Strait, mending fences with the United States, and upgrading the military.

The risks for Taiwan's defense are twofold. First, Ma could fall victim to his own persuasiveness. Having moved to expand relations with the mainland, and in times of relative economic malaise, he may find justifying an increase in the defense budget to 3-4 percent of GDP difficult with lawmakers and voters. Key constituencies will be tempted to breathe a sigh of relief owing to improved relations with the mainland rather than stand to the island's defenses. Even the modest expense of hardening Taiwanese forces and critical infrastructure in keeping with a porcupine strategy may appear wasteful vis-à-vis a China that has seemingly resigned itself to the status quo (an impression the Chinese leadership will undoubtedly try to perpetuate). Public skepticism will be even more acute if Taipei tries to match the PLA in fourth-generation fighter aircraft, diesel attack submarines, and other costly platforms. A deficit in the government's and the people's sense of urgency—and their impatience with what may seem like unnecessary military expenditures—will pose a daunting political challenge for Ma.

Or, second, there are pragmatic reasons for concern, even if public opinion backs Ma. Large institutions like military services are not remade

⁵⁰Michael Hsiao, "Taiwan Presidential Election 2008: Choosing the Path Less Traveled?" *China Brief* 8, no. 6 (March 14, 2008), http://jamestown.org/china_brief/article.php?articleid=2374036.



overnight, and it takes time for them to incorporate new hardware into doctrine, operations, and tactics.⁵¹ The lag between deciding to upgrade forces or institute new strategy and having these new forces and strategy in place may well open a window of Taiwanese vulnerability to Chinese coercion. While Ma stands a far better chance than his predecessor of managing the governmental and popular elements of the trinity, the military element could represent a fatal defect in his cross-Strait policy. If so, the United States cannot assume it has extricated itself from the cross-Strait imbroglio. Taiwanese reliance on American intervention will persist at a time when swift American intervention is no longer certain.

In all probability, then, assumptions that cross-Strait amity will ameliorate Sino-American competition at sea are at once exaggerated and premature. Shen Dingli (沈丁立), an outspoken Chinese commentator on military affairs, has stated this in the frankest of terms: "we compete." And China and the United States will do so, even leaving the Taiwan question aside.⁵² Assume the best case, that Beijing has genuinely resigned itself to the status quo. As long as there is little chance of an outright declaration of independence or of "foreign forces" returning to the island, Chinese leaders may be able to live with a prolonged period in which the island maintains de facto sovereignty while refraining from pushing for more. National unity remains in sight, while outside powers will not use this geostrategic asset to inhibit movement along the mainland's periphery or project power inland.

This, it would seem, would satisfy China, Taiwan, and the United States. What would happen after this stable condition had been reached? Beijing would probably exploit a period of relative quiet to do two things. It would hedge, working to shift the increasingly lopsided military imbalance across the Strait further in its favor. This would position the PLA

⁵¹The Taiwanese military is no exception; see, for instance, Bernard D. Cole, *Taiwan's Security: History and Prospects* (London: Routledge, 2006), 152-85.

⁵²Shen Dingli, "Future Missions for the PLA Navy and Implications for the U.S." (Paper presented at China Maritime Studies Institute Annual Conference on "Defining a Maritime Partnership with China," Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island, December 6, 2007).

to deter U.S. intervention in any cross-Strait contingency while dictating terms of unification to Taipei. Taiwan's next president might not be as convivial a partner for the mainland as Ma Ying-jeou appears. Keeping the option of forcible unification open, then, constitutes simple prudence for China.⁵³

That China's military buildup would abate amid better diplomatic circumstances in the Strait, then, represents a doubtful premise for U.S. and Taiwanese strategy. Having neutralized the island for the time being, Beijing would turn its geostrategic attentions and energies southward, pursuing military acquisitions that could perform double duty in the Strait and farther afield. For example, logistics ships and tanker aircraft—capabilities in short supply in today's PLA Navy—would provide new tactical options against Taiwan while extending the PLA's geographic reach into South Asia. A strategic holiday, then, would suit Chinese interests on both the micro and macro levels.

In short, improved cross-Strait relations may hasten the onset of China's "day after Taiwan" era, freeing up military and naval resources for other pressing priorities. In Clausewitzian parlance, Chinese communist leaders likely place as much value on the object of sea-lane and energy security in Southeast and South Asia as they assign national unification. They have staked the legitimacy of their rule on recovering lost Chinese territory and avenging China's century of humiliation; they have also staked it on economic development that mollifies public animosities toward the communist regime. China's "peaceful rise," or its ascent to "peaceful development," to quote the latest Chinese mantra, depends on secure shipments of seaborne resources.⁵⁴ Consequently, a potent PLA Navy able to roam southern waterways is critical to SLOC security and ultimately to regime survival.

⁵³Wachman, *Why Taiwan?* esp. 153-64; and James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, *Chinese Naval Strategy in the 21st Century: The Turn to Mahan* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁵⁴Zheng Bijian, "China's 'Peaceful Rise' to Great-Power Status," *Foreign Affairs* 84, no. 5 (September/October 2005): 18-24, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20050901faessay84502/zheng-bijian/china-s-peaceful-rise-to-great-power-status.html>.

Surveying likely interactions across the Taiwan Strait, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the China-Taiwan-U.S. strategic triangle includes one power, China, whose Clausewitzian trinity remains locked on the goal of eventual unification with Taiwan; a second, Taiwan, whose government and people are ambivalent and whose military preparations are lagging; and a third, the United States, whose government and people have priorities that do not include a clash with China, whose military is shrinking, and whose officer corps wants to avoid fighting in the Strait. This mismatch in political commitments and capabilities among the United States, Taiwan, and China suggests that, far from bringing about an enduring rapprochement, the 2008 Taiwanese elections have done little to dispel potential conflict in East Asia. At best they have postponed it. Taiwan must not fall into the plight of the Melians, Greek islanders unable to withstand the blandishments of imperial Athens—or maintain their independence—because of too great a disparity in physical power.

Since the American and Chinese trinities are jostling against one another not only in the Strait but elsewhere in maritime Asia, deteriorating conditions in the Strait could reverberate throughout Sino-U.S. nautical relations. Managing relations on multiple levels is the task confronting Washington and Beijing.

Drift under George W. Bush

The upshot of the foregoing analysis is that the situation in the Taiwan Strait will likely be a neutral factor at best in Sino-U.S. relations, and it could be a decidedly negative one. The outcome of last fall's U.S. elections could prove at least as consequential for the maritime relationship, since the elections will affect all elements of the American trinity. The people voiced their views at the ballot box, electing Senator Barack Obama to the White House by a wide electoral margin (though by a fairly narrow margin in the popular vote). Democrats increased their majority in Congress, as most pre-election analyses had forecast. The Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review will be published early in the new administration, shaping

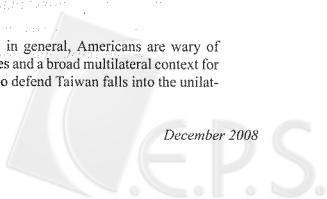
U.S. Asia-Pacific strategy for the next presidential term.

To begin with, the Bush administration will remain in office until January 20, 2009. A bit of trinitarian analysis of President Bush's final days will help establish a baseline to evaluate possible futures for U.S. foreign policy and maritime strategy. While the administration retains the capacity to undertake significant foreign policy initiatives after the November 2008 elections, it evinces scant enthusiasm for doing so. The remaining months of President Bush's tenure have gone to consolidating successes such as the surge strategy in Iraq and the burgeoning partnership with India while attempting to ward off failures in such signature initiatives as counter-insurgency and nation-building in Afghanistan and the effort to face down an Iran seemingly intent on manufacturing nuclear weapons.

Unsurprisingly, Bush and his advisers have had a weary feel about them in the administration's waning months. The sense of relief was palpable in Washington when Ma Ying-jeou and the KMT prevailed in the Taiwanese elections, postponing a reckoning with China that would upend U.S. policy toward Asia during Bush's term. In Clausewitzian terms, the governmental element of the American trinity entertained few illusions about China's determination to recover the island or the dangers entailed in Taipei's past efforts at *de jure* independence. For the remainder of the Bush presidency, it appears, the United States will be spared a conflict instigated by Taipei that might have cost the lives of American servicemen. Washington has welcomed this respite.

With regard to the popular element of the trinity, few citizens in the United States know much about Taiwan or pay the island much attention. Asked whether they perceive a serious threat to the island, most citizens polled respond in the affirmative, but their support for investing U.S. resources to counteract that threat appears thin. Majorities typically oppose sending U.S. forces into harm's way to defend the island. One survey of American attitudes toward the world makes the following observation:

Much previous research has shown that, in general, Americans are wary of using military force without benefit of allies and a broad multilateral context for [U.S.] actions. The possibility of having to defend Taiwan falls into the unilat-



eral category—and it does so much more unequivocally than do most of the possible conflicts into which the United States could be drawn. Thus it is not surprising that the polls give no suggestion of majority support.⁵⁵

Consequently, it seems safe to say there is little public ardor for waging war against China, a valuable trading partner, on Taiwan's behalf—especially if Americans see the island as a free-rider on the U.S. military, unwilling to provide for its own defense. In all likelihood, tough economic times and financial upheaval will harden public opposition to a new military engagement. Now, if the United States estimated the magnitude, duration, and costs of a cross-Strait war as minimal, the public might regard sustaining the island's *de facto* independence as a worthwhile undertaking, but the prospect of a long, costly conflict disproportionate to the value of the object inspires tepid enthusiasm at most. A president able and willing to rally popular support might change that, but only by applying sustained, personal effort to trinitarian management.

And finally, while the U.S. military arguably remains capable of intervening effectively in the Strait, it evinces little appetite for doing so. Jealous of their institutional interests, officers and civilian defense officials routinely question whether Taiwan is worth the human and material costs of war. From the standpoint of the national interest, they understand that permanent Chinese enmity would result from a cross-Strait war—especially if the United States prevailed. Making an implacable enemy out of Asia's foremost power is a price they would prefer not to pay. The caustic quip by Admiral Dennis Blair, a former commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, that the island represents "the turd in the punchbowl" of Sino-U.S. relations, accurately conveys a sentiment pervasive in the officer corps.⁵⁶ Needless to say, the costs of defeat would be even more unbearable for the military establishment.

⁵⁵"American Attitudes: Americans & the World," World Public Opinion.org, http://www.americans-world.org/digest/regional_issues/china/china7.cfm, emphasis added. See also Pew Global Attitudes Project, June 12, 2008, pp. 34-44, <http://pewglobal.org/reports/pdf/260.pdf>.

⁵⁶Ross H. Munro, "Taiwan: What China Really Wants," *National Review*, October 11, 1999.

In short, U.S. value-of-the-object calculations relating to cross-Strait relations are increasingly complex. Washington assigns high priority not only to Taiwan's defense but also to forging good relations—including a maritime partnership—with Beijing.⁵⁷ Seagoing cooperation with China might prove elusive in the best of circumstances, but it would be unattainable following U.S. interference in a Taiwan Strait conflict. Loyalty to a kindred democracy would apply a powerful impetus for U.S. action, but the imperative to maintain cordial ties with Asia's dominant power would apply a brake. Nor can the United States expect to prevail easily and quickly in a cross-Strait contingency, as it could so long as the PLA remained weak at sea. At some point the likely costs of war in the Taiwan Strait will exceed the value Washington places on the object of de facto Taiwanese independence.

Because of competing priorities, in short, the United States' trinitarian geometry may or may not work in favor of Taiwanese security. It may take U.S. leaders some time to debate the magnitude and duration of effort they are willing to expend—especially should conditions sour between Taipei and Beijing in the early months of the new U.S. administration, when the administration is choosing the officials who will staff important posts and is finding its footing on international affairs. Taipei should no longer bank on an instant U.S. decision to intervene in times of crisis. To the extent Taiwan can help itself, it can reinforce deterrence while keeping the costs of a Taiwan contingency manageable for the United States—easing Washington's decision to step in should strife ensue in the Strait.

This analysis may help explain the Bush administration's erratic policy toward arms sales to Taiwan. Shortly after taking office, the administration offered Taipei an arms package featuring high-end systems like P-3C maritime patrol aircraft, diesel submarines, and Patriot missile defenses. After pushing this sale for some seven years, and after Taiwan

⁵⁷Witness the conference convened at the U.S. Naval War College in December 2007, entitled "Defining a Maritime Partnership with China." Held under the auspices of the College's China Maritime Studies Institute, the conference featured high-level representation from the mainland for the first time.

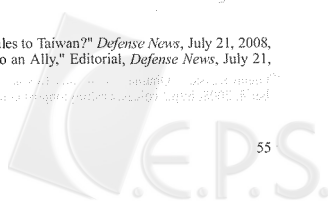
elected a KMT president amenable to increased defense spending (and agreeable to the KMT parliamentary majority), Washington suddenly reversed course. "There have been no significant arms sales from the United States to Taiwan in relatively recent times. It's administration policy," declared Admiral Timothy Keating, commander of the U.S. Pacific Command, in July 2008. The last major transfer came in 2001, when four retired *Kidd*-class guided-missile destroyers went to Taiwan. KMT opposition stymied the arms package in the Legislative Yuan until 2007. After Ma's election, Taiwan had a president and a legislature committed to rebuilding Taiwanese defenses. Transfers of F-16C/D fighters, AH-64D Apache Longbow helicopters, Patriot PAC-3 missile batteries, and other capabilities were nonetheless on hold.⁵⁸

Explaining this policy reversal, Admiral Keating told an audience at the Heritage Foundation that "it is our view that the situation is significantly more stable" after the election of Ma. "The people of Taiwan have spoken [and] are all embracing a philosophy that is—in my words, not theirs—demonstrative of a desire to be more cooperative, less confrontational with the People's Republic of China."⁵⁹ In other words, having urged Taipei to obtain the wherewithal to defend itself, Washington now seemed content to let a—perhaps temporary—thaw in cross-Strait relations curtail Taipei's effort to amass military means commensurate with its political ends.

The Bush administration again reversed course in October 2008, announcing that it would proceed with a reduced, US\$6 billion arms package comprising 30 Apache Longbows and 330 Patriot PAC-3 missiles. Two capabilities sought by Taipei, namely diesel-electric submarines and F-16 fighters, were conspicuously absent from the package submitted to Congress. (Admittedly, the F-16s were not part of the package offered to Taiwan in 2001.) Senator Obama welcomed the news. A spokesman for

⁵⁸Wendell Minnick, "Could U.S. End Arms Sales to Taiwan?" *Defense News*, July 21, 2008, 6; and "U.S.-Taiwan Relations: An Elbow to an Ally," Editorial, *Defense News*, July 21, 2008, 28.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*



his campaign pronounced the action "fully consistent with U.S. obligations under the Taiwan Relations Act," declaring that it would promote "the maintenance of a healthy balance in the Taiwan Strait."⁶⁰ This leaves aside the question of whether air superiority over the island and nearby waters is necessary to the defense of Taiwan. Without modern aircraft, Taiwanese pilots will find it difficult to oppose their PLA counterparts. A strategic decision of potentially vast import to Taiwan, then, is evidently being taken out of Taiwanese hands.

How the Obama administration handles arms sales will provide important clues to U.S. policy in the Strait. The cross-Strait military imbalance will worsen if Washington reverts to the late Bush administration's practice of basing its policy on perceptions of Chinese intentions and diplomatic expediency vis-à-vis Beijing, rather than equipping Taipei to hedge against Chinese capabilities. Prospects for a peaceful equilibrium will worsen.

The U.S. Trinity under Barack Obama

How the U.S. trinity will shift under an Obama administration, then, is a question of potentially serious import for cross-Strait relations. An outright abandonment of the longstanding U.S. commitment to deter China and help Taiwan defend itself is improbable in the extreme. The real question is how speedily and forcefully the new administration would react in times of crisis. If the Obama administration places high priority on conciliating China, a valuable trading partner as well as a permanent factor in Asian and world politics, it could waver in a situation that threatens to bring the U.S. military to blows with the PLA—and give rise to lasting antagonism between the United States and China. In Clausewitzian parlance, Washington must decide how much value it assigns the objectives of good

⁶⁰ Glenn Kessler, "Obama Commends Taiwan Arms Sale," *Washington Post* (online), October 8, 2008, <http://voices.washingtonpost.com>.



relations with China and preserving Taiwan's de facto independence.

Barack Obama's foreign policy views are a work in progress and figure to undergo considerable refinement during the transition phase, as the new president assembles his foreign policy team. It seems safe to say, however, that he falls into the liberal-internationalist school of foreign policy thought, prizing international law and multilateral institutions over traditional geopolitics. An August 2008 summary of the candidate's views toward Asia declared:

Barack Obama believes that the U.S. needs to strengthen our alliances and partnerships and engage more broadly in the regional trend toward multilateralism in order to build confidence, maintain regional stability and security, restore our international prestige, and promote trade and good governance in this crucial region.⁶¹

Obama will probably pursue a more circumspect foreign policy than did George W. Bush, abjuring high-risk ventures like the invasion of Iraq. Indeed, an argument circulating in liberal foreign policy circles over the past few years holds that the United States should retire to an "offshore" foreign policy, in effect cordoning off trouble spots like the Middle East and reducing the U.S. ground commitment in such places to the maximum extent possible. Whether this latter-day "containment" policy will take hold in the Obama years, and whether such an outlook will influence U.S. policy toward East Asia, bears monitoring.

The one safe bet this early in the new administration is that Washington will look skeptically on hazardous foreign policy enterprises, especially when such enterprises are unilateral in nature—as intervention in the Taiwan Strait could be, given the ambivalence traditional allies like Japan and Australia have expressed. With regard to China policy, Obama has endorsed the standard, noncommittal U.S. interpretation of the one-China principle. He has referred to Beijing as "neither our enemy nor our friend.

⁶¹Barack Obama, "Strengthening U.S. Relations with Asia," August 2008, reprinted in "Occasional Analysis: U.S. Presidential Candidates' Views on Relations with Asia," *Comparative Connections*, Pacific Forum, Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2008, <http://www.csis.org/pacfor/ccejournal.html>.

They're competitors." To avoid destructive competition between the United States and China, he says, Washington needs to foster formal and informal arrangements that promote "enough of a relationship with them that we can stabilize the region." He has vowed to be "clear and consistent with China where we disagree," whether on human rights, economics, or international controversies such as Iran or Sudan.⁶²

Following Ma Ying-jeou's election victory, Senator Obama urged Chinese leaders to respond "in a positive, constructive, and forward-leaning way," reciprocating "the practical and non-confrontational approach that President-elect Ma promises to take toward the Mainland." In practical terms, this means that China should reduce its military deployment opposite the island while allowing Taipei "greater international space" in the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international forums.⁶³ With regard to defense policy, Obama pledged to "continue to provide the arms necessary for Taiwan to deter aggression."⁶⁴ As noted before, he subsequently applauded the Bush administration's October 2008 decision to supply Taipei with attack helicopters and Patriot air-defense missiles.

This is standard fare. What value will President Obama assign the defense of Taiwan in a shooting war with the mainland? There is little doubt that he wishes Taiwan well, but how much cost would he be willing to incur, measured in American military lives and treasure? Despite his liberal-internationalist inclinations, Obama struck a realist note during his presidential campaign. His signature foreign policy issue is putting a swift, "responsible" end to operations in Iraq in order to free up forces for Afghanistan and funds for his domestic priorities. (Interestingly, George W. Bush campaigned in 2000 on conducting a more "humble" foreign policy

⁶²Issue Tracker: The Candidates on U.S. Policy toward China," Council on Foreign Relations website, April 14, 2008, <http://www.cfr.org>.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴"Obama Statement Congratulating Taiwanese President-Elect Ma Ying-jeou," Barack Obama '08 website, <http://my.barackobama.com/page/community/post/samgrahamfelsen/gGBnPT>.

following the supposed excesses of the 1990s.) Why the difference between the two campaigns? Obama has declared that he favors Afghanistan over Iraq because deteriorating conditions there could allow the Taliban and al Qaeda to reestablish themselves, mounting a direct threat to the security of the American people. Iraq, he says, poses no such unequivocal threat and does not warrant the time, lives, and public funds the Bush administration expended on that country. This is even truer now, given the exigencies of the ongoing financial crisis and economic downturn.

By that strategic logic, Taiwan bears closer resemblance to Iraq. A PLA invasion of the island would pose no direct threat to the United States. Extrapolating from this, the Obama administration might think twice in times of crisis in the Taiwan Strait, questioning whether the benefits of rescuing a fellow democratic nation justified the magnitude of the effort—not to mention the lasting diplomatic repercussions—entailed in a cross-Strait conflict. The distances involved in a conflict in the Taiwan Strait would demand an almost instant decision to deploy U.S. forces. Otherwise, U.S. intervention would come too late to do any good, short of trying to dislodge Chinese forces from the island. If indecision prevailed in Washington, even for a short time, Beijing might well present the world the *fait accompli* of national unification.

Admittedly, this is conjecture. Obama campaigned on a platform of "change," signifying a willingness to modify or even jettison longstanding policies. While this could apply to U.S. policy toward Taiwan, continuity should not be underestimated as a force behind U.S. foreign policy and grand strategy. Certain themes in American diplomatic history have commanded widespread consensus, in principle if not always in execution. A hands-off attitude toward outside powers with ambitions in the Western Hemisphere, embodied in the Monroe Doctrine, is one mainstay of U.S. foreign policy. So is the conviction that the United States cannot permit a single hegemonic power to dominate either Europe or Asia, posing a threat to the Americas. So is the notion of working with fellow powers to maintain balances of power in Europe and Asia, leveraging partners and forward bases to assure U.S. commercial and military access to regions far from American shores. Containment represented bipartisan policy during the

Cold War, despite differences of opinion on how containment strategy ought to be prosecuted. Judging from past experience, then, President Barack Obama will be less cavalier about departing from venerable American foreign policy axioms than his lofty rhetoric of change implies.⁶⁵

While spreading democracy remains controversial in U.S. policy circles, working with existing democracies is another staple of U.S. diplomacy. During his campaign for the presidency, for example, Senator John McCain backed the concept of a "League of Democracies" that would take responsibility for international peace and security, augmenting (or replacing, depending on whom you ask) the efforts of the UN Security Council.⁶⁶ McCain took a skeptical stance on China's rise. "Until China moves toward political liberalization," he contended, "our relationship will be based on periodically shared interests rather than the bedrock of shared values."⁶⁷ McCain portrayed the Sino-U.S. relationship as episodic, its foundations flimsy. He cited Theodore Roosevelt's "League of Peace," which would have denied entry to authoritarian states vanquished in World War I, as a precedent for a democratic alliance.⁶⁸ This concept also finds favor in former Clinton administration officials' vision of a "Concert of

⁶⁵Barack Obama, "Renewing American Leadership," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no 4 (July/August 2007), <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20070701faessay86401/barack-obama/renewing-american-leadership.html>.

⁶⁶Thomas Carothers, "A League of Their Own," *Foreign Policy*, no. 167 (July/August 2008): 46.

⁶⁷John McCain, "An Enduring Peace Built on Freedom," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 6 (November/December 2007), <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20071101faessay86602/john-mccain/an-enduring-peace-built-on-freedom.html>.

⁶⁸*Ibid.* In his speech accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, Roosevelt told the Nobel committee that in "any community of any size" on the domestic level, "the authority of the courts rests upon actual or potential force," that is, "on the existence of a police, or on the knowledge that the able-bodied men of the country are both ready and willing to see that the decrees of judicial and legislative bodies are put into effect." Consequently, he prescribed "the establishment of some kind of international police power," entrusted to a multinational League of Peace made up of "those great nations which sincerely desire peace," that would be "competent and willing to prevent violence as between nations" and enforce the decisions handed down by international tribunals. For more on this vision, see Theodore Roosevelt, "International Peace," Address before the Nobel Prize Committee, Delivered at Christiania, Norway, May 5, 1910, in *Memorial Edition: Works of Theodore Roosevelt*, ed. Hermann Hagedorn (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923-26), vol. 18: *American Problems*, 410-11.

Democracies." Some of these officials will doubtless find positions of responsibility in the Obama administration, helping set the tone for U.S. foreign policy. The notion that liberal regimes make decisions similarly—and that authoritarian regimes like China's are unreliable—is clearly a bipartisan one in the United States, the rancor of presidential politics notwithstanding.⁶⁹

What of the U.S. trinity under unified Democratic leadership? Consider the popular, governmental, and military elements in turn. Few rank-and-file Americans can muster much enthusiasm for the Taiwanese cause in peacetime. The island's fate simply is not an everyday concern for them. Thus this element will remain more or less constant, even after the Oval Office has changed hands. Despite Democratic foreign policy experts' advocacy of a League of Democracies, Barack Obama evidently regards democracy promotion as tainted owing to the supposed failures of George W. Bush. He will probably be warier about using the military instrument, furthermore, not only because of his own inclinations but because Washington must husband resources to rejuvenate the ailing U.S. economy and financial system. Either way, it is difficult to see the island assuming high priority for the American people or their government unless the mainland actually attacks, prompting a public outcry like the one that greeted Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

In the absence of strong, sustained presidential leadership, consequently, the U.S. government will remain largely apathetic toward the situation in the Strait, placing at least as high a priority on conciliating China as on defending Taiwan. Neither Obama nor McCain made cross-Strait relations a core issue during the 2008 campaign, but again, defense of liberal allies is too powerful a strain in American foreign relations for many presidents to resist. President Obama would probably order intervention in a cross-Strait war, but it remains an open question whether popular

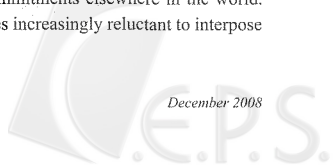
⁶⁹Indeed, it should be noted that advisers to both campaigns are proponents of this idea. Ivo Daalder, a former Clinton administration official and a foreign policy adviser to the Obama campaign, and Robert Kagan, a *Washington Post* columnist and adviser to the McCain campaign, co-authored an op-ed last year calling for such a body. See Ivo Daalder and Robert Kagan, "The Next Intervention," *Washington Post*, August 6, 2007, A17.

passions or U.S. military capacity would support a protracted, costly engagement with Asia's leading power. Such a contingency would put Obama's formidable rhetorical skills to the test.

Maintaining adequate military means will be a central concern. Obama pledged to keep the U.S. military strong enough to fortify stability and deterrence in Asia. This connotes the wherewithal to safeguard Taiwan against attack. How the budgetary picture shapes up, constraining force structure and strategic decisions, and how vigorously the new administration pushes defense spending in tight economic times will be important indicators of Washington's capacity and willingness to risk war in East Asia. It bears repeating, moreover, that China's swift military ascent primes the Pentagon to look askance at any conflict involving Beijing. Such a conflict would run afoul of the military's institutional interests, provoking skepticism if not outright hostility to such an endeavor. Strong presidential leadership may be required to impose direction on the defense bureaucracy should the new administration opt to use force in the Taiwan Strait.

Whither the Triangular Relationship?

Applying Clausewitz's trinitarian logic, it appears that all three parts of the Chinese trinity attach enormous value to unification, and Beijing's patience has limits; the Taiwanese government and people prefer to put off the question of unification indefinitely, but their relative military capacity to uphold their preference for the status quo is slipping badly; and the American government and people want a peaceful resolution to the dispute, but they attach far less value to Taiwan's defense than China does to unification. That the U.S. military can intervene effectively in the Strait, furthermore, is an increasingly uncertain proposition in view of China's geographic advantages, downward budgetary pressures on the U.S. force structure and operations, and U.S. commitments elsewhere in the world. The cumulative effect is a United States increasingly reluctant to interpose itself in China-Taiwan controversies.



One implication, then: a clear asymmetry of political commitment favors the mainland, while the asymmetry between Chinese and Taiwanese military capabilities is real and growing. These factors are distorting the strategic triangle to Taiwan's detriment. This inquiry nevertheless leaves off with few firm conclusions in light of the interactive nature of the cross-Strait impasse and the youth of the Ma and Obama administrations. There is no substitute for remaining watchful and adapting as the strategic context changes. To test the hypotheses ventured here, analysts should monitor several key factors:

- *Ma Ying-jeou's firmness.* Much will depend on individual statesmanship in Taipei, namely how steadfastly President Ma prosecutes his "three no's" policy. In turn, deft management of popular sentiment, government agencies, and the armed forces will help determine whether Taiwan can effectively deter or reverse Chinese aggression—preserving its de facto independence indefinitely. Whether 3 percent of GDP constitutes an attainable sum for defense spending in light of fiscal stringency remains to be seen. Whether such a sum is enough to outfit and train the Taiwanese military also remains to be seen, considering the annual double-digit increases in the PLA's budget and China's vastly superior resources. Ma must arrange Taiwan's Clausewitzian trinity to uphold the status quo.

- *The cross-Strait military balance.* Taipei (and Washington) could allow the military imbalance to tilt to a point where Beijing can dictate the terms and timing of unification while deterring U.S. involvement. The Taiwanese military may find it impossible to sustain a traditional symmetric military strategy, now that the PLA distinctly outmatches it in resource terms and sales of high-tech U.S. aircraft appear to be off-limits. If so, Taipei must pursue asymmetric capabilities inventively, putting the island's advantages to good use. Such efforts will not only buttress deterrence but also mollify Americans inclined to see Taiwan as a free-rider on the U.S. Navy. By helping itself militarily, Taipei can reduce the perceived costs and duration of a conflict for the United States—skewing American cost-benefit calculations in favor of swift wartime intervention.

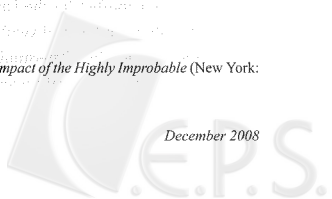
- *Chinese sincerity.* Determining whether Beijing wants to relax tensions in the Strait or is merely maneuvering for advantage represents an

important analytical task. If China matches words with deeds, slackening its force buildup opposite the island, this would lend credence to Beijing's professions. Officials and analysts should watch for evidence that Chinese leaders are in effect making near-meaningless political gestures—signs of goodwill that can be withdrawn on a moment's notice—in hopes that Taiwan will make tangible concessions in return, further reducing its military capacity vis-à-vis the mainland's.

• *U.S. policy, strategy, and forces.* Now that a cross-Strait rapprochement seems to be in the offing and new leadership is poised to assume power in Washington, it is possible that Taiwan could slip on the United States' list of foreign policy priorities. There is little reason to expect the American electorate or the Obama administration to raise Taiwan's profile, so these two elements of the American trinity will likely remain static with regard to the cross-Strait dispute. The Bush administration evidently released the U.S. hold on arms sales, but it is far from clear that the weaponry it has offered Taipei will meet the island's defense needs. A serious effort on the part of the Obama administration to evaluate Taiwan's needs and provide the necessary hardware would represent a hopeful sign for cross-Strait relations. On the other hand, the longevity of U.S. naval primacy in East Asia, and thus the ability of the United States to prevail in the Taiwan Strait, is increasingly doubtful in the face of downward budgetary trends and steep upward trends in the cost of designing, procuring, and maintaining high-tech armaments. Tracking trends in U.S. defense budgets and force structure is crucial to evaluating this vertex of the China-Taiwan-U.S. strategic triangle.

• *"Black Swans."*⁷⁰ It is important to guard against assumptions that events in the Taiwan Strait will unfold in linear fashion, and to bear in mind the wider strategic context in which the cross-Strait dispute is embedded. While the concept of a strategic triangle among Taiwan, China, and the United States helps isolate factors influencing each government, and thus

⁷⁰Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (New York: Random House, 2007).



is useful for projecting possible futures, the international geometry of East Asia is more complicated than the triangle metaphor suggests. Nearby Japan, for instance, possesses territory close to Taiwan and could well be drawn into a cross-Strait conflict should its territory be violated in the course of military operations. Or, Australia has voiced ambivalence about supporting the United States in a military clash in the Strait. Canberra might well wait until a conflict actually erupts before deciding whether to offer or withhold assistance. And so on. Unexpected events can intervene, confounding analyses that project current trends into the future. There is no substitute for watchfulness and analytical flexibility.

Understanding and accommodating the strategic needs of allies is critical to alliance upkeep, just as knowing an adversary and knowing oneself is critical to victorious war. Some trinitarian management is clearly in order on the part of the Ma and Obama administrations as they find their voices in strategic affairs. If it wants a durable status quo, Taipei must arm itself even as relations with China brighten. This will keep strategy in alignment with policy. Taiwanese leaders must also understand the multiple planes on which Sino-U.S. nautical interactions take place, the larger U.S. interests in play in maritime Asia, and how events in the Taiwan Strait figure into American strategic decisions involving China.

For its part, Washington must manage events in the Strait if it hopes to maintain maritime access to Asia and cultivate new partnerships, especially with China. Bolstering cross-Strait deterrence is essential to maritime coexistence on a grander scale. The United States has a real interest in helping Taipei maintain credible defenses, enhancing its confidence vis-à-vis the mainland, and steadying the China-Taiwan equilibrium. U.S. leaders too must look to Clausewitz, matching strategy with policy in this multifaceted strategic environment.

After a year of electoral flux, Washington and Taipei must comprehend and adjust to the strategic dynamics confronting each other—and their potential antagonist in Beijing.



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