



STRATEGIC VISION

for Taiwan Security

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Vietnam's Strategic Relations

Tran Thi Duyen

China's Cyber Operations

Ying-Yu Lin

Taiwan Air Defense

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Religious Struggle in China

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No Seat at the Table?

Taiwan and the South China Sea

Hon-Min Yau





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Submissions: Essays submitted for publication are not to exceed 2,000 words in length, and should conform to the following basic format for each 1200-1600 word essay: 1. Synopsis, 100-200 words; 2. Background description, 100-200 words; 3. Analysis, 800-1,000 words; 4. Policy Recommendations, 200-300 words. Book reviews should not exceed 1,200 words in length. Notes should be formatted as endnotes and should be kept to a minimum. Authors are encouraged to submit essays and reviews as attachments to emails; Microsoft Word documents are preferred. For questions of style and usage, writers should consult the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Authors of unsolicited manuscripts are encouraged to consult with the executive editor at xiongmu@gmail.com before formal submission via email. The views expressed in the articles are the personal views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of their affiliate institutions or of *Strategic Vision*. Manuscripts are subject to copyediting, both mechanical and substantive, as required and according to editorial guidelines. No major alterations may be made by an author once the type has been set. Arrangements for reprints should be made with the editor. Cover photograph is courtesy of Jonathan Jiang.

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From The Editor

THE EDITORS AND staff of *Strategic Vision* would like to wish our readers well as the winter season nears its end. The forces of change continue to shape the Asia-Pacific Region. We hope that students and scholars in the academic community have the chance to keep-up with these events. In support of that effort, we offer our latest edition of *Strategic Vision*.

We open our first issue of the year with Lieutenant Colonel Hon-min Yau who analyzes how developments in the South China Sea are challenging Taiwan's position in the region and how the ROC government should respond. Lieutenant Colonel Yau is assigned to the Air Command and Staff College at the ROC's National Defense University.

Next, Dr. Ying-yu Lin examines the growing cyber threat from the PRC and offers policy recommendations to strengthen Taiwan's cyber defense. Dr. Lin is an assistant professor in the International Affairs & Diplomacy Department at Ming Chuan University in Taipei, Taiwan.

Tran Thi Duyen looks at how Vietnam is seeking to balance relations with the United States and China as tensions build in the South China Sea. Tran is a PhD candidate at National Chengchi University in Taipei, and a researcher at the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

Strategic Vision's own Aaron Jensen looks at alternative approaches to Taiwan's air defense and argues that strengthening Taiwan's surface-to-air missile capability is a better alternative to purchasing expensive and vulnerable fighter aircraft.

Finally, Dino Tramontani, a student at Ming-Chuan University, examines the lack of religious freedom in China.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and we look forward to the next year—the Year of the Monkey—and continuing to bring you the finest analysis and reporting on the issues of importance to security in the Taiwan Strait and the Asia-Pacific region.

Dr. Fu-Kuo Liu
Editor
Strategic Vision

Finding a Voice

Taipei seeks to defend its interests in South China Sea legal challenge

Hon-min Yau

IN JANUARY 2013, an almost year-long maritime confrontation around Min Zhu Jiao (also known as Huangyan Dao or Scarborough Shoal) between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Philippines finally ended with the Philippines' formal submission of an arbitration against China to the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in the Hague, according to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which was ratified by both China and the Philippines. China tried to protest against the appropriateness of the case and

the competency of the court's authority, arguing that UNCLOS doesn't have a mandate to address sovereignty-related issues. The Philippines meticulously adopted a creative strategy, steering toward the disputes at the exploitation right within the UNCLOS framework and repackaging the issue as a maritime delimitation/entitlement case. The legal hurdle was overcome by the Philippines in October 2015 when the PCA finally ruled that it had jurisdiction and admissibility over the case. Tensions and instability continued to increase along with China's facility



US and Japanese vessels in the South China Sea as part of Pacific Partnership 2010. The US and Japan have steadily increased operations in the region.

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build-up and military investments in 2015. However, as the case has developed so far, Taiping Island, controlled by the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, is suddenly placed by these events in a critical position, which requires Taiwan to defend its own entitlement to an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). How does an escalated confrontation between China and the Philippines suddenly become an important matter for Taiwan's interests, which is 1,600 kilometers away from the disputed area?

Taiwan was the earliest actor in Asia to claim sovereignty over the Spratly islands and adjacent waters in the South China Sea. Multiple military garrisons were established during the late 1940s within the so-called U-shaped line. Among them, the biggest naturally formed island, Taiping Island (also known as Itu Aba) with sustainable fresh water and permanent inhabitants, is still manned by Taiwan's Coast Guard. As Taiwan maintains the position of shelving disputes and pursuing peace, as detailed in the South China Sea Peace Initiative, Taiwan always maintains the principle of joint development and does not seek to obstruct the right of transit passage according to international law, while maintaining freedom of navigation in the area. Based on this policy, Taiwan does not exclude maritime activities of other nations by claiming the entitled privilege of an EEZ based on the current ownership of Taiping Island. However, such peaceful efforts were misinterpreted, and goodwill was undermined by the Philippines' latest assertive claim to the Tribunal, which claimed that Taiping is no more than a "rock."

Rising challenges

Taiping Island was not part of the arbitration when the Philippines started the case in 2013. But, the Philippines' lawsuit strategy suddenly shifted to focus on the status of Taiping Island. This is due to the following two reasons. First, China's position paper in

December 2014 basically claimed that its right in the area originated from various occupied territories, as well as ROC-owned Taiping Island. Secondly, based on China's claim, as UNCLOS offers different entitlement for the adjacent waters around an island, shoal or reef, China's claim would allow it to maintain substantial legal leverage, and claim an EEZ in the area which could cover a vast area of the South China Sea to the west of the Philippine Islands. In response to the Tribunal's question regarding China's position, the lead counsel for Manila, Paul Reicher, stated in one of

"Taiwan maintains the position of shelving disputes and pursuing peace as detailed in the South China Sea Peace Initiative."

the jurisdiction hearings on 7 July, 2015, "... if the largest of the Spratly features is incapable of generating an EEZ and continental shelf entitlement, then it is most unlikely that any of the other 750 features will be able to do so." Since then, Taiping Island, as the biggest naturally formed island, has become engulfed in the legal dispute between China and the Philippines. In the Hague, the Philippines vigorously asserted that "the larger features in the South China Sea, including Itu Aba, Thitu, and West York ... argued that none are more than rocks under the Convention," according to the PCA's ninth press release on November 30, 2015.

The Philippines' intention is not to validate any sovereignty claim in the area, but rather to fundamentally void any assertions of an EEZ based on the ownership of the Spratly islands. If the Philippine effort succeeds, then the right of exploitation of the natural resources in the South China Sea would belong to the adjacent Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, and the Philippines would enjoy the largest share, since the Spratly Islands are about 200 nautical miles (NM) west of Palawan Island. In December 2015, in an interview with the Center



A Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft takes flight during air-ground combat training at Twentynine Palms, California.

for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Paul Reicher claimed that if the Philippines wins the case, China would have no exploitation rights in the area, and no country would be able to claim more than 12 NM of water based on the existing controlled islands. The arbitration case now moves from the sticky issue of sovereignty, toward the problem of resource exploitation rights.

Affirming interests

Although Taiwan has long stood in the position of resolving disputes via peaceful means, the Philippines approach presents multiple inequalities to Taiwan. First, Taiwan was limited by the statist culture hegemony established by great powers via the instruments of the United Nations and its subsidiary International Organizations, and the PCA has continually refused to recognize Taiwan's international legitimacy. It is questionable how a case concerning ROC territory can be handled properly while Taiwan is not even al-

lowed to present its position in the Hague, and has no direct say to the Tribunal.

Second, Manila's delegation used quotes from Taiwan literature to support its argument that Taiping Island has no fresh water and arable soil. However, there are also documents overlooked by Manila, which talk about the water supply and agriculture on Taiping Island. Information can serve either constructive or destructive interests. Taiwan's peaceful approach in the South China Sea, which does not emphasize its 200 NM EEZ, was interpreted by Manila to suggest that Taiwan did not recognize Taiping as an island according to the UNCLOS. Manila's selective use of information casts strong doubt over the validity and fairness of its argument.

Finally, academic writing frequently represents a critical stance or perspective that is related to a particular time and space. In the case of the South China Sea dispute, there was no dispute when the U-shaped line was first created in 1947. However, different perspectives and interpretations were gen-

erated based on the UNCLOS definition in 1982. This is a case where a later rule (UNCLOS) has failed to interpret and understand the 1947 U-shape line. Poststructuralist scholars in international relations teach us that history has no truth, but truth has its history. The problem is that Manila is using selective information to create a position which favors its claim. Can the international tribunal and international audiences really understand the power and knowledge relations of this case, and also that the Philippines is presenting a biased position?

While the Philippines pursues its legal effort to resolve its dispute with China regarding the overlapping EEZ entitlement, Taiwan, of course, would like a peaceful resolution to the conflict. However, Taiwan's request to send a delegation was not granted by the tribunal. This creates a problem because the PCA's judgment should not be based on unilateral, partial and misinformed materials. How can the ROC make its voice heard while it is not invited to participate in a critical decision concerning its own territory? How can Taiwan provide critical information for clarification when Taiwan is not solicited by the PCA for consultation?

Executive action

On January 28, 2016, ROC President Ma Ying-jeou, a number of government officials, and international scholars visited Taiping Island to reveal the actual situation on the island, not only with words, but with real-time broadcasting and credible images. The trip was detailed in the Manila Bulletin by a Philippine diplomat and the American think tank CSIS posted pictures of the event. After international media out-



Overlapping claims in the South China Sea illustrate the complexity of regional challenges.

lets highlighted Taiping Island's vibrant ecosystem, abundant agricultural production, sufficient supply of fresh water, and comprehensive infrastructure, there can be no doubt about the island's capability to sustain human inhabitants. Taipei effectively leveraged public diplomacy to deliver trustworthy information, thereby offsetting its lack of recognition by the PCA. Such a message was not requested by the Hague, but Taipei has successfully made sure that its position is presented to the international community. The question on Taiping Island now would be a competition of credibility.

Although Taipei clearly understands that it is fighting for Taiping Island, domestic and international opinions reflect different positions. By adapting Leon Trotsky's famous statement, "You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you," one could thus observe, "you may not be interested in the Philippines' arbitration case, but the Philippines' arbitration case is interested in you." Taipei needs

to make sure its people understand where the ROC government stands, and where the government is taking the narrative. While the general public still has the impression that the arbitration case is more about a sovereignty dispute with China, Taipei needs to communicate with domestic audiences with a clear stance and explain to the people of Taiwan that the evolution of the issue has led to a debate about who has the right of exploitation in the area, instead of who owns the islands. Taiwan is sending out a message of clarification, not provocation.

Standing ground

Although the ROC has refrained from making provocative military overtures in the South China Sea, the United States and ASEAN expressed disagreement with President Ma's visit to Taiping Island. The international community saw the visit only as an act of reaffirming sovereignty,

but it is clear that they overlooked Taipei's primary purpose of clarifying Taiping's status as an island according to UNCLOS. A strategy which seeks to influence the international narrative is necessary because it illustrates the Philippines' false assertions about Taiping Island. Taiwan is a responsible actor in the region, and Taiping is a natural island which has sustained permanent inhabitation for a long time.

To sum up, as the PCA will conclude the Philippines' case in 2016, the ROC is at a crucial moment to safeguard and defend its interests. However, due to the complex political situation, both domestically and internationally, Taipei should establish clear strategies for domestic and international audiences. Internally, Taipei needs to foster consensus in order to act decisively, and concentrate its resources on this important effort. Internationally, Taipei must present a strong and trustworthy narrative in order to win this new war of credibility. ■



photo: Massimo Bova

US Army paratroopers descend near Pordenone, Italy. While traditionally maintaining a large presence in Europe, the Army is increasingly active in Asia.

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Cyber Challenges

Rising Chinese cyber capability calls for stronger defensive measures in Taiwan

Ying-yu Lin



photo: Corey Lewis

Sailors in Norfolk, Virginia detect and respond to unauthorized intrusions into the U.S. Navy's information systems and computer networks.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND impact of information technology and the Internet continues to grow at a dizzying pace. While these developments greatly increase convenience and opportunities for people around the globe, they also open a wide range of new threats which can affect economic transactions, political relations, and military security. With its rising cyber-capability, China is harnessing the power of the Internet to help achieve its political and military ambitions. As China's global interests increase, so too will its use of cyber-activity to

further its goals. This activity and capability will be strengthened further by China's rapidly improving technological capability. As one of Beijing's primary targets, Taiwan must utilize all of its assets to better protect itself against China's increasingly sophisticated cyber-operations.

China's cyber-capability has been steadily increasing, and this capability is reflected in increasingly sophisticated attacks. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) makes extensive use of cyber-warriors and is known to run training centers in Shanghai and

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Shandong which are thought to incorporate a rigorous academic curriculum. In addition to offensive operations, China is also strengthening its cyber-defense capabilities with the development of a “blue team” division, which specifically evaluates network systems to identify vulnerabilities that could harm military readiness.

“China is tapping into civilian cyber talent by recruiting large numbers of patriotic hackers.”

The People’s Republic of China (PRC) is tapping into civilian cyber-talent by recruiting a large number of patriotic hackers who possess a high degree of computer literacy. These non-government personnel are willing to launch cyber-attacks against adversaries. Although the government can hire such professionals to serve as full-time staff, China uses these patriotic hackers for independent network operations. In

this way it can be argued that criminal behavior is being conducted by private individuals, and not the PLA. This kind of action is encouraged by the PLA through its association of 250 independent hacker groups. Due to the popularity of information technology and network facilities, this “people’s militia” has created a new type of threat to other countries. This new people’s cyber-war also helps achieve links and synergy between the military and society.

Advanced Persistent Threat

A common PLA hacking method known as advanced persistent threat (APT) emerged in 2005. This tactic uses human nature and social engineering to gain the victim’s trust and gain access to a system directly. It can be utilized through persistent, latent, and highly aggressive attacks.

When used for espionage, professional cyber-teams gather information over a long period of time to



photo: Amber Grimm

An F-16, F-22 and F-15 are displayed during a ceremony at Osan Air Base in South Korea. US presence serves to warn North Korea against provocations.



photo: Cole Pielop

An MH-60S takes off from the deck of the *John C. Stennis* as crew members conduct round-the-clock exercises while underway in the Pacific.

identify vulnerabilities. Once suitable vulnerabilities are identified and exploited, information is usually gathered over a longer period of time.

Due to the complex nature of cross-strait relations, Taiwan has become the test platform for new PLA cyber-tactics. Given the PRC's political and military efforts to exert influence over Taiwan, it should be expected that China will utilize cyber-operations against the island.

In 2006, PLA cyber-units took advantage of a well-known legislator's account in Taiwan and sent out e-mails to military media reporters. Many reporters mistakenly thought that the e-mail was a press release and unwittingly infected their own computers by opening the attached file. Although the sender's address and name showed subtle discrepancies, most people were not diligent enough to identify the threat.

In addition to legislators, PLA cyber-forces also systematically collect information on relevant national defense, foreign affairs, and political academic issues from targeted parties. In August 2012, the PLA Cyber-Force even posted faked ROC Defense

Ministry documents directly on university Internet websites, which attempted to spread false information and also contained Trojan horse viruses in the attached file. These practices take advantage of trust, as well as lack of observation and carelessness when downloading files directly.

Growing capability

In recent years, PLA cyber-forces have launched several APT attacks which have increased the scope of their international operations. According to Google's Operation Aurora report from 2010 and McAfee's Night Dragon report from 2011, PLA cyber-forces were responsible for 10 APT attacks against energy companies. PLA cyber-forces used a sophisticated mix of measures and techniques to compromise the systems. First, they employed external host web servers to start the attack, then utilized structured query language (SQL) code injection attacks to gain entry. Once access was obtained, they made repeated attacks via the intranet. The attackers made use of re-



photo: Nate Grigg

Participants at a hacker convention simulate offensive and defensive cyber operations. Such simulations can help identify threats and improve security.

mote access tools (RAT) to return a lot of important information from WORD and PDF files.

Another major cyber-operation was discovered in 2011 which compromised a number of targets in the United States, several Asian nations, as well as the United Nations, ASEAN and several major news media companies. The operation, dubbed Shady RAT, was based on a complex remote access tool approach and lasted five years. It was widely suspected that PLA cyber-forces were also behind this attack.

Utilizing resources

In light of the growing sophistication of cyber-threats against Taiwan, the government must vigorously address problems and skillfully utilize all resources in order to build a sound cyber-defense apparatus. Although Taiwan is well known for its information technology industry, especially its achievements in computer hardware, there is a lack of security consciousness among some in the general public. Increasing public awareness and understanding of existing and emerging cyber-threats should be the first step to strengthening defense. Several private

cyber-security organizations in Taiwan now offer threat reporting to the public. While this is a positive development, Taiwan must work to foster cooperation between government security agencies and private security organizations.

Cyber-security research is another key area where Taiwan must make greater efforts. Although Taiwan has been strong in the field of information technology research, it has over-emphasized theoretical research and pure science pursuits. More emphasis must be placed on research which addresses practical problems and challenges. Taiwan must develop a better national cyber-strategy plan which matches national research efforts to strategic priorities. Furthermore, Taiwan should strengthen cyber-security cooperation with friendly countries. Despite Taiwan's difficult diplomatic situation, it is still possible to strengthen international cooperation. Cooperation in cyber-security is less visible than other activities, such as military exercises. Thus, cyber-security is an area where Taiwan can develop stronger cooperation with allied countries. With the ever-increasing range of cyber-threats, Taiwan cannot afford to waste resources and opportunities in this area of defense. ■

Balancing Act

Vietnam seeks to strengthen US ties amid continuing frictions with China

Tran Thi Duyen

THE SOUTH CHINA Sea (SCS) dispute is now the biggest challenge in terms of security, defense and foreign affairs for Vietnam, and it will doubtless have a tremendous impact on the future of peace and development of the country. The settlement of the SCS dispute requires Vietnam's wisdom, ingenuity and perseverance over strategy, especially as the dispute is increasingly complicated and involving not only Vietnam and China, but also other countries in the region and beyond.

Basically, the SCS dispute is ongoing at three intertwined layers. The innermost layer is the overlapping claims of sovereignty over the geographic features among coastal states involving The People's Republic of China (PRC), the Republic of China (ROC) on Taiwan, and four ASEAN countries, in which tensions are growing between the PRC and individual ASEAN claimant states, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Brunei. Unlike Malaysia and Brunei, Vietnam and the Philippines have experienced a number of incidents with China. At the innermost layer of the SCS disputes, confrontation between China and Vietnam, and between China and the Philippines, is the most active, and thus Hanoi and Manila have called for ASEAN solidarity in handling the SCS issue.

Meanwhile, the middle layer of the SCS disputes involves confrontation between China and Southeast

Asian countries as a block, namely ASEAN itself. Although not all ASEAN countries are party to these disputes, ASEAN itself has an interest in resolving tensions between claimant states and China to ensure peace, security, and freedom of navigation in the region, as well as seeking to safeguard ASEAN's political position in the international arena. Strategic issues in the middle layer are also very complicated, as ASEAN non-claimants have different stances regarding the SCS disputes.

Indonesia and Singapore have taken firmer positions with China, mainly because of fears over China's ambitions in the region. Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos do not have direct interests in the SCS, so they rarely take a stance. At the other end of the spectrum, Cambodia has close political and economic ties with China, and to a certain extent, supports Chinese efforts, promoting a compromise with China's excessive maritime claims in the SCS. As a block, however, ASEAN is trying to show a united role and proactive stance for dealing with the SCS disputes and its relationship with China, such as in the ASEAN chair negotiations for building a code of conduct on the SCS.

In the past, SCS disputes have been mainly taking place in the two layers mentioned above. However, the recent SCS situation shows that momentum of the dispute also arises from a new relationship layer—the outermost layer. This layer is characterized by the

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US Navy CAPT Andrew St. John poses with Vietnamese Senior Colonel Le Van Cau during a visit to US Pacific Command Headquarters.

newly emerging strategic competition between the United States and China over SCS issues. Although the United States is a non-claimant state, China's excessive maritime ambitions and its assertive approach to land reclamation in seven reefs in the SCS, which threaten the peace and stability of the region, provides Washington with an excuse to get involved in these disputes. What the United States wants to ensure through its involvement is not just to maintain order at sea, especially over freedom of navigation and protecting the interest of its allies, but more profoundly, it seeks to contain China's rise and not upset the present the US-dominated system.

With overlapping claims over Hoang Sa (Paracel Islands), Truong Sa (Spratly Islands) and the maritime boundaries, Vietnam and China are the two main opposition parties in the SCS disputes. Vietnamese people perceive ample evidence of China's expansionism. Examples include the country's loss of Hoang Sa to China in 1974, and the naval clash with China in Truong Sa in 1988. Moreover, Beijing's maritime claim based on the nine-dashed line, and China's recent assertive behavior such as its establishment

of Sansha city, are seen as overly provocative. The ongoing land reclamation, as well as Beijing deployment of an oil rig HD 981 into Vietnam's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) in early May of 2014, touched a raw nerve in Hanoi.

Concerns for stability in the SCS continues as the Chinese military has deployed two batteries of surface-to-air missiles on Woody Island, one of the Paracel Islands. This escalation by Beijing has meet with intense criticism from the international community. This action also creates new tensions between Vietnam and China. On February 19, Vietnam's Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted a diplomatic note to the United Nations Secretary General, as well as the Chinese Embassy in Hanoi, to protest China's infringement on Vietnam's sovereignty over Hoang Sa. China's deployment of the missile system goes against Chinese President Xi Jinping's commitment, which he voiced at the White House in September 2015, to refrain from militarizing the South China Sea.

Beijing's action takes place against the backdrop of the US-ASEAN Leaders' Summit in Sunnylands, California and illustrates China's efforts to unilat-



photo: Paul Labbe

Soldiers secure an AH-64 Apache attack helicopter aboard a C-17. US Army Apache units have increased engagement with Asia-Pacific counterparts.

erally change the *status quo* in the SCS, as well as sending the message that it will not allow any US military presence near its occupied islands. This is very alarming because the Spratly Islands could be China's next target, especially since it constructed an airstrip and harbor which would most likely be used to enforce a future Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the SCS. At the Sunnylands Summit, Vietnam's Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung urged the United States take a stronger voice and more practical measures to deter activities which change the *status quo* in the SCS.

Converging interests

Due to China's growing assertiveness in the SCS, Hanoi has found it increasingly difficult to manage relations with Beijing. While the strategic interests of Vietnam and China are more often coming into conflict, the strategic interests between Vietnam and the United States have been gradually converging, for which further involvement by Washington in the SCS disputes is a typical case. Therefore, the US move is obviously consistent with Vietnam's interests, which seek to move the dispute with China from the

innermost layer to the outermost layer, in order to neutralize the negative impact of the power asymmetry between China and Vietnam.

Even though Washington is only indirectly involved, US involvement is likely to make China act more prudently and less willing to use force in the SCS. ASEAN's role and voice carry greater weight in handling disputes with China when backed by the United States.

China's rapid military modernization is occurring on a much larger scale, and the military gap between Vietnam and China continues to widen. So even though Vietnam has repeatedly emphasized a self-reliant defense policy, the country still needs to deepen strategic relations with major powers to compensate for its considerable weakness in relation to China. Vietnam and the United States have recently taken steps to strengthen bilateral relations, especially in the economic, political, and military domains.

The two former enemies of the 20th century are now holding annual security, defense and human rights dialogues. The year 2015 marked the biggest milestone in Vietnam-US relations since these two countries re-established diplomatic relations in 1995. A visit to Washington by Vietnam General Secretary

Nguyen Phu Trong in early July has erased most of the strategic distrust which hampered multiple cooperative processes between these two countries. In late November of 2015, the White House announced that the United States had lifted its embargo on the sale of maritime-related lethal weaponry to Vietnam in order to allow development of the country's maritime capacity and encourage interoperability with other forces in the region. Washington is also expanding its maritime assistance to Hanoi by offering over US\$19 million worth of support in 2015, with that figure reaching US\$20.5 million in fiscal year 2016, to help develop Vietnam's maritime capabilities as part of a larger package to several Southeast Asian countries.

It may be said that Vietnam and the United States have basically improved their normalization process. US President Barack Obama will visit Vietnam in May 2016, a visit that will be largely symbolic, yet contributing to a stronger relationship between these two countries. Therefore, to explain US interest in Vietnam, as well as the impressive development of the Vietnam-US relationship over the past years, it is necessary to frame the relationship in the context of changes in US policy toward China and the region.

Opportunity and risk

However, the US global strategic adjustment as well as the country's increasing involvement in the SCS dispute—on the one side, bringing Vietnam significant strategic interests, on the other side, the US-Vietnam rapprochement in the context of deepening geo-political rivalry between the US and China—also presents Hanoi with a number of risks, the most serious of which is dragging Vietnam into a new power game. If the US-China strategic competition continues to deepen, Vietnam, as a southern neighbor



Marines conduct training while underway aboard the aircraft carrier USS Truman.

of China and party to the SCS dispute, would have great difficulty maintaining a balance and avoiding the pitfalls in any confrontation between these two great powers.

With the US strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific and its deeper engagement in the economic, political, security, and geostrategic issues of the region in general, Vietnam in particular, and China, will not stand still. For example, as US involvement in the South China Sea issue deepens, and US-Vietnam relations become warmer, China will try to deter Vietnam using various means, including economic, military, and diplomatic measures to remind the country of the importance of being a good neighbor to China. To illustrate, China recently limited the importation of Vietnam's major goods for reasons that remain unclear. It also established a military garrison in the so-called "Sansha City." China also seems to have been undertaking a diplomatic campaign in Cambodia during the 45th ASEAN foreign ministers' meeting which took place in Phnom Penh in 2012. This move led to the failure of ASEAN to produce a

joint statement at a regional summit for the first time in its 45-year history. This could be seen as a move by China to split the relationship between Vietnam and Cambodia (a long time friend of Vietnam, and also an essential partner in the country's security).

Vietnam has been a victim of the Cold War of the 20th century, so it should be careful to not become a victim of a new cold war. Nevertheless, the possibility of Vietnam being dragged into a new power game between China and the United States should not be inflated, because its prospects still depend on the development of other factors in the future. The most important of these is the level of tension in the strategic competition between the two great powers. Unlike the Cold War era, extensive economic interdependence between China and the United States today tends to discourage them from engaging in comprehensive confrontation, as the United States and the Soviet Union had in the 20th century.

In addition, the development of US and Chinese foreign policy, as well as Vietnam's own policy, will also have important implications. Should Beijing make concessions in the South China Sea disputes,

such as conducting a review of its nine-dashed line claim, or adopting a Code of Conduct, for example, could cause China's image to become less threatening, and the US deterrent policy against China will become less compelling. Accordingly, the risk of strategic confrontation between the United States and China, as well as the possibility of small countries like Vietnam being drawn into such a confrontation, will also decrease.

In short, these three intertwined layers in the SCS dispute are gradually creating new developments, and deepening the involvement of major outside actors, especially the United States. In this context, the United States is playing the role of balancer against China. The outplay of these three layers could force China to restrain itself, and help the SCS dispute to be resolved peacefully. Alternatively, the dispute could become more complex if China continues to act tough and deepen the China-US strategic rivalry. Vietnam is torn between two choices. It seeks to maintain a good relationship with its northern neighbor while simultaneously promoting stronger ties with the United States. ■



US and Japanese service members on a Combined Joint Task Force test their radio equipment to ensure it is compatible with each other.

Air-Defense Alternatives

PLA growth necessitates new approach to missile defense in Taiwan Strait

Aaron Jensen



photo: Vitaly V. Kuzmin

Mobile surface-to-air missiles, such as this Buk-M1-2 (NATO SA-11), are difficult to counter and pose a deadly threat to all types of aircraft.

TAIWAN'S ABILITY TO defend the airspace over the Taiwan Strait is rapidly eroding in the face of growing People's Liberation Army (PLA) might. The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) is purchasing and producing a growing number of modern fighters which are surpassing Taiwan's air force in terms of quantity and quality. Additionally, the growing number of ballistic and cruise missiles in the People's Liberation Army's arsenal could seriously degrade operations at Taiwan's fighter bases, or render these bases temporarily inoperable at critical times.

These challenges are further magnified by the fact that the United States, Taiwan's primary source of foreign weapons, appears to lack the necessary po-

litical will to supply the island with the advanced F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, or even newer models of the F-16. Unless substantial changes are made, Taiwan will likely have serious difficulty defending its airspace for any significant period of time in the event of a cross-strait conflict. If the PLA were to gain air superiority over the strait, Taiwan's ability to defend itself against a blockade or an amphibious invasion would be seriously compromised.

Given this difficult situation, Taiwan's defense planners must consider alternative approaches to air defense. One practical alternative would be to spend less money on fighter aircraft and base Taiwan's air defense primarily on a vast network of mobile surface-to-air

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missile (SAM) batteries linked to an integrated system of active and passive Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) -based sensors. This strategy could build on Taiwan's existing SAM network, while increasing its lethality and survivability. Additionally, Taiwan could bolster its anti-aircraft artillery (AAA) pieces and man-portable air-defense systems (MANPADS) to complement its SAM network, making low-altitude operations perilous for enemy pilots.

Effective alternatives

Surface-to-air missiles are a serious threat to any type of aircraft and have served as the basis for effective Integrated Air-Defense Systems (IADS). Historically, surface-to-air missiles have performed effectively against even the most capable air forces in the world, especially when paired with a large number of AAA units. The Israeli Air Force is reported to have lost 303 aircraft to SAM and AAA fire during the 1973 war with Egypt. In 1999, Serbian forces were able to down an American F-117 stealth fighter with an 1960s vintage, Russian made SA-3 (S-125) SAM system by modifying their tactics.

Modern SAM systems are increasingly easy to operate and enable their crews to monitor and defend large sections of airspace. Moreover, SAM systems are able to rapidly target a large number of enemy aircraft. A common SAM system such as the Norwegian Advanced Surface to Air Missile System (NASAMS) is able to engage up to 54 targets simultaneously.

Maturing technologies could enable Taiwan to increase the effectiveness and survivability of its SAM network. The one key weakness of SAM systems is their reliance on organic target detection and target tracking radars. While target tracking radar enables a missile battery to engage enemy aircraft, it can also be detected and destroyed by an enemy with anti-radiation missiles or anti-radiation drones. Anti-radiation missiles target and destroy SAM radar by homing in on emissions. When the target-tracking radar is destroyed, the SAM battery is rendered inoperable. Essentially, SAM batteries are put back on the defense by an attacker equipped with anti-radiation missiles.

However, this vulnerability could be greatly mitigated by mounting active (radar) and passive sensors on UAVs. A fleet of stealthy UAVs, equipped with both active and passive sensors could augment Taiwan's



Photo: Brian Abel

A Phalanx Close-In Weapons System (CIWS) aboard the USS *George Washington*. These systems form the last line of defense against aircraft and missiles.

existing radar network, and even serve as the primary sensor network for Taiwan's air-defense missile batteries in time of conflict. Small, stealthy UAVs would be difficult to detect and destroy. With their low cost, Taiwan could field a large fleet of UAVs with sufficient reserves, giving it the ability to maintain persistent coverage over the Taiwan Strait.

Leveling the playing field

The key to increasing the survivability of a sensor system is to emphasize and employ passive sensors (as opposed to active radar sensors) as much as possible. The maturing capability of infrared search and track (IRST) sensors could provide this capability. IRST sensors are used in a wide variety of civilian and military applications and have recently become more effective due to upgrades in software.

These upgrades enable IRST systems to better calculate range, as well as provide better detection and tracking. IRST sensors detect infrared energy and do not emit energy like radar systems. With their small size and passive detection ability, IRST systems are virtually undetectable by an enemy. This is a crucial factor in survivability, which gives IRST systems a critical advantage over radar. For this reason, nearly all new fighters are being equipped with IRST systems.

IRST sensors have recently become much more effective tools in air combat. Due to the high temperature of aircraft surfaces and exhaust, IRST scanners are highly effective in detecting aircraft, particularly high-performance fighters. Recently, even the US Navy has conceded that IRST systems are challenging stealth technology. Advances in processing have improved IRST sensors so that they can now provide target-range information, and no longer produce false alarms based on natural phenomenon. Significantly, the Eurofighter's IRST system (Pirate) was reportedly able to track the US fifth-generation

fighter, the F-22 Raptor, at significant ranges during an exercise in 2010.

Given that IRST systems have greatly improved detection capability, and are impervious to detection by the enemy, they constitute an ideal sensor to support

"A robust, survivable SAM system could provide effective air defense over the Taiwan Strait."

air defense operations. A network of UAV-based IRST systems could provide target detection and tracking capability to SAM batteries on the ground. A modest network of UAVs with IRST sensors operating over Taiwan's west coast could provide enough coverage and range to monitor this crucial airspace in time of crisis or conflict.

By relying on passive sensors, and utilizing mobility, Taiwan's SAM systems would be virtually undetectable by PLA reconnaissance assets. Mobile ground-based units are notoriously difficult to detect and track at long ranges. By employing shoot-and-scoot tactics, as well as utilizing camouflage, concealment and deception (CCD), Serbian forces were able to frustrate suppression of enemy air defenses (SEAD) missions conducted by North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and thus preserve much of their SAM force during the conflict. By applying similar tactics, Taiwan could largely preserve its air defense forces against even the most determined PLAAF SEAD efforts.

A robust, survivable SAM system could thus provide effective air defense over the Taiwan Strait and the west coast of Taiwan, which would bear the brunt of a PLA assault. Taiwan's fighter force could be used to conduct other missions, such as anti-surface warfare, in lower threat areas to the east and south of Taiwan. These areas of Taiwan could come under increased threat if China were to deploy aircraft carriers to the east or south of Taiwan.



Photo: Paul Sale

A Slovenian soldier tracks an aircraft with a man-portable air-defense system (MANPADS). The system is highly effective against low-flying aircraft.

In addition to combat effectiveness and survivability, a SAM-based air defense system would hold other advantages for Taiwan. Perhaps most importantly, Taiwan already possesses most of the key technologies necessary to develop and field such a system. The Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology (CSIST) has already produced some impressive missile systems, including the Tien-kong III (Sky Bow) surface to air missile system, and the Hsin-feng series of cruise missiles. Developing stealthy UAVs and capable IRST sensors is also well within Taiwan's technical capacity.

Secondly, a SAM-based air defense system would be much more affordable to develop and maintain than a fleet of expensive fighters. A single F-35 reportedly costs as much as US\$108 million. In comparison, a capable SAM battery like Norway's NASAMS costs US\$50 million. Beyond the initial purchasing costs, SAM systems are cheaper and easier to maintain than fighters. Modern fighters require a large crew of maintenance and airbase support personnel. Furthermore, modern SAM systems are much easier to operate than fighters, and crew training is much faster and more affordable. Creating a fleet of

UAV-based sensors would also be highly affordable. For comparison, an operating unit of four MQ-1B Predator UAVs, with a ground control station and data link system, costs just US\$20 million.

Other technologies are also appearing on the horizon which could enable Taiwan to blunt the threat of China's ever-increasing arsenal of ballistic missiles. The US Department of Defense is working to develop "smart projectiles" which can be used to shoot down incoming missiles. Essentially, smart projectiles incorporate a guidance system onto an artillery shell, which can be fired from common artillery systems such as the M-109 Paladin self-propelled howitzer. If they are proven successful, smart projectiles could provide Taiwan with another layer of ballistic missile defense, at affordable prices.

As difficult as Taiwan's air defense challenges are, they are not insurmountable. Fielding an effective air defense system will require non-traditional thinking, and likely challenge entrenched bureaucratic interests in Taiwan's military services. With the rising power of the PLA, and Taiwan's limited defense budget, there is little room for error in defense strategy. ■

Religious Wrongs

International community shirks duty to pressure China on religious rights

Dino Tramontani

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN China has long been an issue of concern for organizations that seek to promote stable civil societies. Studies have been providing alarming facts about the situation in the Middle Kingdom for years; China was rated “Not Free” in the 2014 report by the independent organization Freedom House, having scored a dismal 4/16 on “Freedom of Expression and Belief.” Similarly, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom placed China on its list of countries of particular concern.

The Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) view of religion as the opiate of the masses derives from the Marxist-Leninist ideology upon which the party is

based, and history has seemingly made Chinese officials weary of opium and its effects on society. The CCP’s crackdown on religious groups is no longer based on ideological grounds, but rather on an excessive fear of losing its grip on China’s vast population.

Religious groups and institutions do exist in China, and freedom of religion is guaranteed under Article 36 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China (PRC). There is a peculiar addendum in this article, however, which maintains that the state protects normal religious activities, wherein the conveniently ambiguous term “normal” refers only to government-sanctioned patriotic religious associations. Only these groups can worship legally, provided



Uighurs protest conditions in East Turkestan outside the White House. Uyghurs do not identify as Chinese, and the relationship with Beijing is uneasy.

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they have registered their places of worship and allowed the CCP to regulate their activities. Failure to register and follow authorities' guidelines can lead to sanctions of varying degrees, from fines and confiscation of land, to overt discrimination, imprisonment, forced labor and torture.

The government's true concern lies on the challenges that an organized group of people with a common cause could generate, which might indicate that the wounds of Tiananmen Square are still fresh. This becomes more palpable when analyzing certain underlying reasons behind the repression of some of the most persecuted religious groups in China. These include Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and the Falun Gong.

The troubling relationship between Uyghur Muslims and the Chinese government has geopolitical implications at its core. Throughout history, Uyghur territory (now Xinjiang Province) has been recurrently under Beijing's control, officially becoming a PRC province after the military penetrated the region in 1949. This brought a major influx of Han Chinese people—the dominant ethnic group in China—to the area, and the integration between Uyghurs and Han Chinese has not been a smooth one. Due to a cultural and historical distinction, many Uyghurs still refuse to identify as Chinese and the relationship between them and the central government remains uneasy at best.

Cultural differences

According to official numbers, there are about 21 million Muslims throughout China. The two largest Muslim groups are the Hui, who are concentrated primarily in the Ningxia Region (though Hui communities exist in many cities across China) and the Uyghur Muslims, who are mostly concentrated in the Xinjiang region. Although these two groups practice virtually the same religion, the repression and discrimination of Uyghur Muslims has been much more

severe and overt than that of the Hui. The reason lies primarily in the ethnic differences between the two groups: While the majority of Hui people communicates in Chinese and share many ethnic and cultural traits with the Han Chinese, Uyghurs are of Turkic descent and speak mostly the Uyghur language (a branch of the Turkic languages), making them more

"The troubling relationship between Uyghur Muslims and the Chinese government has geopolitical implications at its core."

disconnected from the traditional Chinese lifestyle of most Han people. It is this ethnic and cultural distinction, rather than their practice of Islam, which makes the CCP vehemently persecute Uyghur Muslims, to whom government officials have referred on many occasions as separatists, and terrorists. Hui Muslims, being much more integrated with the dominant Han culture, are allowed more freedom in their practice of Islam, whereas Uyghur Muslims have been actively discouraged from adopting many of the precepts of Islam, such as growing long beards, wearing hijabs, veils, and other clothing representative of the way the religion is practiced. They have also been banned from fasting during Ramadan in past years and from praying at the times established in the Qur'an.

The government's use of religious repression as a means to control the Uyghurs, however, has had the opposite effect. Conflicts in Xinjiang province have been escalating rapidly; in one of the last major incidents reported in July 28, 2014, almost 100 people were killed in a civilian attack perpetrated by masked militants, and this type of violent demonstrations are far from few. These attacks have indiscriminately been regarded as terrorist acts by the government, and President Xi Jinping has vowed to take decisive action against the militant groups, even appealing for a joint US-Chinese effort against them.



photo: Thomas Hawk

A protestor calls on the global community to support freedom for Tibet during a leg of the 2008 Olympic torch run in San Francisco.

The situation for Tibetans is quite similar to that of the Uyghurs. The geopolitical conflict between Tibetans and the Chinese dates back to Imperial China and this historical clash still fuels fear that “separatist forces” will rise and defy the central power of the CCP. The very date on which Tibet became a part of China remains a contested issue, and the culture and lifestyle of the Tibetan people are also markedly distinct to that of the Han Chinese. Consequently, Chinese officials have attempted to control all aspects of Tibetans’ lives to a great extent; Lhasa (the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region) and its citizens are under constant military surveillance. Likewise, since religion plays an essential role in Tibetan culture and daily life, the government dare not disregard its influence, and has gone a long way to controlling the Tibetan Buddhist traditions which, in their view, remain a barrier to China’s goal of complete assimilation.

As a consequence of a Tibetan Uprising in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama (the central figure in Tibetan

Buddhism) fled to India, where he still lives in exile, but continued to be represented in Tibet by the Panchen Lama, the second-highest ranking Lama. Following the death of the 10th Panchen Lama in 1989, the Dalai Lama, as the figure in charge of appointing the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama (and vice-versa), named Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, a boy just six years old, as the new Panchen Lama in 1995. The CCP disputed the choice of the Dalai Lama and, days after the boy’s designation, he disappeared along with his entire family, becoming the youngest political prisoner in history. The Chinese government assigned its own Panchen Lama—an individual whom many claim is merely a puppet figure that the CCP can use in turn to determine the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama himself. This turn of events led the Dalai Lama to claim that, though unprecedented, it is possible he could reincarnate outside of Tibet, or perhaps that he will be the last reincarnation altogether. Chinese officials, however, have declared that not only must the Dalai Lama reincarnate but

also that the reincarnation has to be approved by the CCP. To that end, the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs passed Order No. 5, to “regulate the management of living Buddha reincarnation affairs,” but mostly to create a legal rationale for making the next Dalai Lama one that can be controlled by the party.

Raising awareness

Since 2009, more than 100 Tibetans have self-immolated to protest communist meddling in their religious and cultural affairs, which prompted many international organizations to pressure the Chinese government to give Tibetans more autonomy. From his position, the Dalai Lama has attempted to spread global awareness to what he calls the genocide, cultural and otherwise, of the Tibetan people by attending international forums and meeting with world leaders. The CCP, however, continuously threatens governments that agree to meet with the Dalai Lama, as they did with Austria in 2013, when they threatened to take away the pandas they had leased to the Austrian Zoo. Similarly, British Prime Minister David Cameron recently found himself in a muddy situation; after being barred from visiting China due to his 2012 meeting with the Tibetan leader, Cameron chose not to meet with the Dalai Lama on his next visit to the UK: a decision for which he was heavily criticized. Currently, the Chinese leadership shows no signs of loosening their grip, and the situation on the Tibetan plateau remains tense.

The case of the Falun Gong serves as a contrast to the previous two groups, but it clearly demonstrates the CCP's uneasiness with a large, organized body of people uniting for a common cause. Falun Gong is a spiritual movement which incorporates a combination of breathing, meditation, and body movements meant to stimulate the flow of energy through the body. It was founded in 1992 and, since

it blends elements from ancient Asian traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, it quickly amassed a vast number of followers. People from all social strata could be seen in large groups practicing in public parks all throughout China. The movement was even popular among government officials, with the number of practitioners estimated at between 70 and 100 million, making the movement almost as big as the party itself, in terms of membership numbers.

This booming of the Falun Gong and its increasing number of followers worried the government and prompted the CCP to outlaw the movement, labeling it a dangerous cult which deceives its practitioners and threatens social stability. Practitioners were dissuaded from partaking in the movement, and high-ranking officials carried out investigations to search for evidence that supported the supposedly detrimental effects of Falun Gong. However, an analysis in 1998 by Qiao Shi, Chairman of the National People's Congress, concluded that “Falun Gong has hundreds of benefits for the Chinese people and China, and does not have one single bad effect.”

Falun Gong followers staged peaceful demonstrations to protest the government's sudden animosity toward the movement. Protests were organized in many cities across China, including Shanghai, Tianjin, Dalian, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Wuhan. The scale and turnout of the protests were of such an extent that then Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin worried the protests would assume Tiananmen Square-like proportions. To avoid the disastrous consequences of previous mass-demonstrations throughout Chinese history, thousands of Falun Gong practitioners were detained and incarcerated in forced-labor camps, officially known as “re-education centers.” Police would stop people from practicing in public spaces, even by force if necessary, after Jiang created the 610 Office in 1999 which provided legal authority to imprison Falun Gong practitioners on the spot.

The most gruesome aspect of government perse-

cution against Falun Gong practitioners is that of organ-harvesting. After substantial evidence emerged proving initial allegations to be accurate, the US congress passed House Resolution 281 on 30 July, 2014, “expressing concern over persistent and credible reports of systematic, state-sanctioned organ harvesting from non-consenting prisoners of conscience, in the People’s Republic of China, including from large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners.”

Despite this expression of concern, the persecution of Falun Gong has not yet ceased in China, and the group continues to work to spread awareness and to push for CCP accountability over their oppression of practitioners.

Action needed

Rather than an issue of ideological discrepancy, this is an issue of struggle for control for the CCP. The central government pays lip service to accepting different religions and identities, so long as they do not challenge the authority of the Party. Whether these are the Uyghur Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, Falun Gong practitioners, or any other religious or unaffiliated minority, what the CCP is most afraid of is

the separatist and destabilizing threats they perceive within these camps, which must be either contained or eliminated at all costs.

China has experienced massive economic and military growth in the last few decades, yet it has failed to keep up in the social and political realms, and the CCP seems to have no intentions to relinquish its monopoly on political power any time soon. As China becomes an increasingly influential regional and global player, the international community must put more pressure on the Beijing government to abide by the regulations of the international treaties to which it is signatory, including those on freedoms of religion, assembly, press, and other basic civil rights. Many countries are reluctant to put due pressure on China to improve its humans rights record, mostly because of trade and economic concerns. Economic interests must never be held above the rights of the people, however.

The message China is receiving from this lack of international pressure is that it can do whatever it wants within its borders as long as it puts proper economic incentives in the right hands. This is a very dangerous message to send to a potential regional and global power. ■



photo: Cory Doctorow

In the streets of Hong Kong, Falun Gong adherents simulate prisoner organ-harvesting by the Chinese government to raise awareness of their persecution.



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