



# Strengthening Taiwan's Integrated Deterrence Posture

## Challenges and Solutions

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As Xi continues to consolidate his political power and pushes for military reform, he himself bears full responsibility should the People's Liberation Army (PLA) launch an armed attack against Taiwan.

Despite recent warnings of a potentially imminent war between China and Taiwan the reaction from the Taiwanese public has been rather temperate. Some commentators therefore assert a perception gap between the international community and the Taiwanese people.<sup>1</sup> The Taiwanese people are certainly aware of the threats that China poses, but do not see the situation as dire. Acclimatization explains the people's mindset, but the nature of the Chinese threat is also an important factor. China's goal is the realization of national unification. Successive Chinese leaders pledged unification by peaceful means, but never renounced the use of force or employment of "non-peaceful means and other necessary measures."<sup>2</sup> Xi Jinping, for one, reiterated that peaceful unification "works best for the people on both sides [of the Taiwan Strait] and for our whole nation" and that the use of force and all necessary measures aims to "guard against external interference and a tiny number of separatists and their separatist activities for 'Taiwan independence'."<sup>3</sup> For many in Taiwan, the Chinese military threat is real and increasing, but it is China's intensifying pressure on Taiwan below the threshold of conflict that is more pressing.

Instead of saying that the Taiwanese people are nonchalant about China's military threat, it is more accurate to say that they in fact have been engaged in a form of political warfare against China for decades. Political warfare in the Chinese context generally means "the continuation of armed conflict by other means."<sup>4</sup> It seeks to induce the adversaries to think and act in a manner that favors China's objective through such means as persuasion, subversion, intimidation, and coercion, so as to achieve the goal of "winning without fighting."<sup>5</sup> Deterring China in this sense inherently requires a multi- or even cross-domain approach.

## The blessing of geography in conventional deterrence

Since coming to power, Xi Jinping has promoted the idea of "national rejuvenation," which takes unification as a symbolic goal. As Xi continues to consolidate his political power and pushes for military reform, he himself bears full responsibility should the People's Liberation Army (PLA) launch an armed attack against Taiwan. An assault on Taiwan without taking or "recovering" the island, then, is hardly a success. It amounts to a failure of the PLA's modernization and the vanishing of the "Chinese dream." This in turn will most likely trigger an intra-CCP power struggle and potential domestic unrest, leading to a legitimacy crisis for Xi's leadership.

The task for the PLA in a conventional military conflict with Taiwan is, hence, to have sufficient capabilities to conduct an amphibious warfare. In this regard, the geographic factors are in Taiwan's favor. Taiwan is separated from the mainland by the Taiwan Strait. The Strait has an

1 Cf. Shelley Rigger, et al., "How are people feeling in the 'most dangerous place on Earth'?" Brookings Institution, October 13, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/fjxb6zk>; Liam Gibson, "Taiwan Says it is 'Preparing for War,' But Are Taiwanese Mentally Ready?" *The Diplomat*, October 25, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/zfyrfhx2>.

2 Article 8 of China's Anti-Secession Law, March 15, 2005, <https://tinyurl.com/8e9avm34>.

3 Xi Jinping, "Working Together to Realize Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation and Advance China's Peaceful Reunification: Speech at the Meeting Marking the 40th Anniversary of the Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan, January 2, 2019," Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee and Taiwan Affairs Council of the State Council, April 12, 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/mrjk7kzf>.

4 Kerry K. Gershaneck, *Political Warfare: Strategies for Combating China's Plan to "Win without Fighting"* (Quantico, Virginia: Marine Corps University Press, 2020), pp. 13-14.

5 Toshi Yoshihara, "Evaluating the Logic and Methods of China's United Front Work," *Orbis*, Vol. 64, No.2 (February 2020), p. 231.

average width of 180km, and its narrowest part is 130km wide. While this may not provide Taiwan with enough defensive depth in the face of the PLA's fighter jets and missiles, it poses difficulties for the PLA to transport massive troops, landing vehicles and logistics. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense holds that after the PLA obtains superiorities in counter-air, sea-control, and counter- electromagnetic operations, it will deploy amphibious vessels flanked by commandeered commercial container ships to conduct joint landing operations.<sup>6</sup> Several reports, however, point out that while China's armed forces are growing in their prowess, currently their amphibious capability remains limited. One report released by the Ministry of National Defense (MND) in 2020 concluded that the PLA "is still restricted by the natural geographic environment of the Taiwan Strait, and its landing equipment and logistics abilities are insufficient."<sup>7</sup>

In addition, it is claimed that there are only 14 beaches in Taiwan suitable for a PLA amphibious assault. This leads the PLA to aim at capturing one or more Taiwan's ports—instead of airports and beaches—as the fulcrum of an invasion of Taiwan, because the port(s) can be used to surge reinforcements and heavy armor onto the island.<sup>8</sup> Some also claim that the weather in the Taiwan Strait, particularly the high winds and torrential rainfalls during the typhoon/monsoon seasons, poses great difficulties for the PLA to sail and land.<sup>9</sup>

With this geographic edge and as the gap of military power between Taiwan and China continued to widen, in 2018 Taiwan's MND altered the definition of victory for an armed conflict with China. Taiwan no longer seeks to destroy the enemy but to attack its missions - victory now means "forcing the enemy unable to seize Taiwan."<sup>10</sup> Consequently, Taiwan's military strategy emphasizes "multi-domain deterrence," with developing asymmetric capabilities being a means of defense as well as deterrence by denial. The idea is to attack the enemy troops when they are gathering or halfway through the Strait. The procurement of 11 "High Mobility Advanced Rocket System" (HIMARS) from the US in October 2020, for instance, is supposedly able to upgrade Taiwan's precision-strike capabilities, destroying the source of the attack before its launch.<sup>11</sup>

## The challenge of grey zone/ hybrid threats

While the geographic factor is in Taiwan's favor in terms of conventional deterrence, geographic proximity renders Taiwan exposed to China's grey zone or hybrid threats. Since September 2020, PLA warplanes trespassing the southwestern corner of Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) has nearly become a daily routine. According to Taiwan's MND, these infringing activities aim to compress Taiwan's reaction time and maneuvering

6 ROC National Defense Report 2021 (Taipei: Ministry of National Defense, October 2021), p. 44.

7 "Taiwan says China still lacks ability for full assault on island," *Reuters*, August 31, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/7c4jezu6>.

8 Ian Easton, "Hostile Harbors: Taiwan's Ports and PLA Invasion Plans," Project 2049 Institute, July 22, 2021, p. 8, <https://tinyurl.com/5h4tb7tw>.

9 David Shambaugh, "A Matter of Time: Taiwan's Eroding Military Advantage," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 2000), p. 122.

10 Chao-lung Lu, "New definition of victory: Force the enemy to fail to seize Taiwan," *China Times*, April 25, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/z3rv6yu2>; Lee Hsi-min and Eric Lee, "Taiwan's Overall Defense Concept, Explained," *The Diplomat*, November 3, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/yc2tja88>.

11 David Brunnstrom and Mike Stone, "U.S. State Department approves \$1.8 billion in potential arms sales to Taiwan – Pentagon," *Reuters*, October 22, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/ybbxaf69>.

Taiwan no longer seeks to destroy the enemy but to attack its missions - victory now means "forcing the enemy unable to seize Taiwan."

space.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, others point to attempts to exhaust Taiwan's defense resources, demonstrate Chinese military power, respond to alleged "Western provocations" or actions by so-called "Taiwanese independence" forces, collect data for anti-submarine warfare, and simulate attacks on US ships in the region.<sup>13</sup> In addition, large amounts of fishing vessels and sand dredgers have constantly gathered and operated in waters around Taiwan's outlying islands, in particular the Matsu islands that are located along the coast near Fuzhou in China's Fujian province. The presence of these vessels created an impression that Matsu is encircled and generated fear among local residents. Taiwan's Ocean Affairs Council maintained that there are no Chinese maritime militia units deployed in the Fujian province and that illegal fishing and sand dredging are out of Chinese local people's profit-seeking motivation.<sup>14</sup> However, these activities should be taken as part of the strategy China uses to constitute an environment conducive to its revisionism and expansionism, as reflected in its land reclamation and militarization in South China Sea.

The MND takes PLA's incursion into Taiwan's airspace— alongside with cyber warfare and cognitive warfare— as instances of 'grey zone threats,' but does not seem to worry about them. The *ROC National Defense Report 2021* suggested that these threats aim at "seizing Taiwan without a fight,"<sup>15</sup> implying that they are taken as an alternative to conventional warfare, rather than a prelude to or integral part of it. Consequently, they are not the primary concerns for the MND and the armed forces, as the *ROC Report* only vows to improve cybersecurity and enhance propaganda in response. This is understandable and justified for three reasons. The first is an issue of jurisdiction. Since China's grey zone tactics are not categorized as military by nature, they are a matter of political warfare and should be tackled by other governmental bodies. The second concerns the logic of PLA operation against Taiwan. The PRC cannot rule out the possibility that the US and its allies (in particular, Japan) will come to assist Taiwan if there is a war across the Strait, and hence the best strategy for the PLA in that scenario is something like a *Blitzkrieg* or what it propagates "first battle as decisive battle."<sup>16</sup> Current Chinese grey zone tactics and those outlined by the media require a lot of time to be effective,<sup>17</sup> so are not logical for the PLA. The third is a geography-related calculation. Whatever grey zone tactics China may employ, it ultimately needs amphibious operations to seize Taiwan. For the MND and the armed forces, deterring the PLA by developing Taiwan's conventional and asymmetric capabilities is logically a priority.

However, taking grey zone tactics or hybrid threats only as an alternative to war may create a blind spot in Taiwan's defense planning. From China's perspective, its interests are best suited to disrupting the functioning of Taiwan society and weakening Taiwan's armed forces as much as possible before an armed attack. It can be inferred that grey zone tactics or hybrid threats will form an integral part of China's armed attack on Taiwan, but how these two forms of threat are related as well as what scenarios look like remain to be developed.

12 *ROC National Defense Report 2021*, p. 45.

13 Tzu-Chieh Hung, "PLAAF breaching Taiwan's airspace and the PLA's military intimidation in 2020," in Tzu-Chieh Hung and Kuan-Chen Lee (eds.), *Annual Assessment of PRC's Political and Military Developments 2020* (Taipei: Institute for National Defense and Security Research, 2020), pp. 75-78 (in mandarin Chinese); Thomas J. Shattuck, "Assessing One Year of PLA Air Incursions into Taiwan's ADIZ," *The Global Taiwan Brief*, Vol. 6, No. 20 (October 20, 2021), <https://tinyurl.com/4thj2xb7>.

14 Hsin-buo Huang, "Chinese speedboats clashing with Taiwan's coast guard patrolling boat; Ocean Affairs Council: the case a warning sign," *Liberty Times*, April 17, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/3y86a3wz> (in Mandarin Chinese).

15 *ROC National Defense Report 2021*, pp. 45-47.

16 Ying-Yu Lin, "China's Military Actions Against Taiwan in 2021: What to Expect," *The Diplomat*, December 18, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/2p8nh859>.

17 David Lague and Maryanne Murray, "T-DAY: The Battle for Taiwan," *Reuters*, November 5, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/vjp4untr>.

For the MND and the armed forces, deterring the PLA by developing Taiwan's conventional and asymmetric capabilities is logically a priority.

Apart from the grey zone tactics or hybrid threats outlined above, Taiwan has been under a threat of China's united front work for decades. The united front work seeks to co-opt targets to the policy and authority of the CCP.<sup>18</sup> Here, Taiwan's fierce identity politics provides fertile ground for its operation. In terms of cultural identity, the latest survey indicates that about two thirds (63.3%) of the public now identify themselves as Taiwanese, and only 2.7% identify themselves as Chinese. In terms of statehood, however, more than half the public (55.7%) opt for maintaining the status quo, with about 31% for independence and 7.5% for unification.<sup>19</sup> The struggle between unification and independence, Chinese and Taiwanese, and the pan-Blue and the pan-Green,<sup>20</sup> turns out to be the fault lines that divide the society.

China exploits Taiwan's identity politics and democratic institutions in three major ways. First, the freedom of expression and freedom of association are used to promote a narrative of unification and related political activities. For instance, in 2018 a member of the pro-unification New Party was charged with others of developing organizations for the CCP, even if he was cleared in the first trial because he was not judged to be a clear and present danger. Second, Taiwan's economic dependence on China is used to promote the idea that the people's prosperity and wellbeing lie in the vast and vibrant Chinese market. Third, the fact that many Taiwanese people are descendants of Chinese immigrants is further utilized to justify a Chinese nationalism that centers around common ancestors, blood, language, customs, and historical memories. Together, the targets of China's united front work include Taiwanese businessmen and students living in China and their relatives; Chinese spouses in Taiwan; religious groups and organizations; media; military personnel; overseas Taiwanese, and so on.

It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of the Chinese united front work. If judged by the configuration of the people's identity, then it has largely failed because the trend has been that more and more people identify themselves as Taiwanese only. More importantly, China under Xi Jinping has become more assertive towards Taiwan, and this is counterproductive to the united front work. The almost daily intrusions of the PLA into Taiwan's Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ), China's objection to Taiwan seeking international space, its diplomatic and economic coercion, among others, make the Taiwanese society in general resentful at China. A latest survey indicated that only about 11% of the public holds a positive attitude towards China.<sup>21</sup> Consequently, the idea of cooperating with China has become unpopular, and this also limits the space in which the main opposition party maneuvers and promotes its discourse of cross-Strait relations.

It is fair to say that an assertive or aggressive China certainly poses great security challenges to Taiwan, but in doing so it discredits its own 'one country, two systems' formula, pushing Taiwan further away from it.

18 Alex Joske, "The party speaks for you: Foreign interference and the Chinese Communist Party's united front system," Australian Strategic Policy Institute, June 9, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y6jwy2fj>.

19 "Taiwanese / Chinese Identity (1992/06-2021/06)," Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, July 20, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2u7jvbjb>; "Taiwan Independence vs. Unification with the Mainland (1994/12-2021/06)," Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, July 20, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/9a2cebep>.

20 The pan-Blue refers to the nationalist party, the KMT, which advocates unification when certain conditions are met. The pan-Green refers to the ruling Democratic Progress Party (DPP), which now holds that Taiwan in the name of the Republic of China is already a de facto independent state and should remain so.

21 Jin-yu Tsai, "What are Taiwanese people's feelings about China?" *United Daily News*, July 1, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/e6djtwsb>.

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## The US factor in cross-Strait relations

The US factor is an integral part of cross-Strait relations in general and Taiwan's security and defense posture in particular. US security commitment to Taiwan is based on the *Taiwan Relations Act* and manifested in arms sales and training programs, among other things. In military terms, US support bolsters Taiwan's self-defense capability. In socio-political terms, US commitment is a crucial source of many Taiwanese people's sense of security. One recent survey indicated that 65% of the public believed that the US is likely to assist Taiwan if China launched an armed attack against Taiwan.<sup>22</sup> That Taiwan's political and military leaders emphasized repeatedly on self-help and self-defense indicates an effort to change the people's mindset of over-relying on the US.<sup>23</sup>

A hot issue regarding US commitment to Taiwan is the debate between strategic ambiguity and strategic clarity. The US has deliberately maintained a stance of strategic ambiguity across the Strait by stating that it has followed the *Taiwan Relations Act* to make sure that Taiwan has the means to defend itself, while refusing to clarify officially whether it will come to Taiwan's defense if attacked.<sup>24</sup> This first part of the stance seeks to deter China from attacking Taiwan, and the second part aims to deter Taiwan from unilaterally altering the status quo, in other words declaring de jure independence. With the Chinese threat to Taiwan looming large and the notion of US power in decline widely circulated, some in the US and Taiwan campaign for a policy shift from strategic ambiguity to strategic clarity,<sup>25</sup> while others contend that strategic ambiguity remains a better choice.<sup>26</sup> It seems that the Biden Administration's reaction is to maintain ambiguity at the strategic level, but move towards clarity at the tactical level. The Administration has been "internationalizing the Taiwan issue," raising the issue of peace and security in the Taiwan Strait in various regional and international occasions.<sup>27</sup> It also supports Taiwan's participation in the UN system; enhances bilateral cooperation with Taiwan at different levels; and allows or encourages its officials, Congress members and Senators to visit Taiwan. All of these contribute to reduce the anxiety people in Taiwan may have regarding strategic ambiguity, but the US remains careful not to give Taiwan a blank check. They also signal greater deterrence credibility to China.

There is a downside of the US strategic ambiguity, however. As indicated above, Taiwan is very much a split society, and views on important issues such as US policy towards Taiwan diverge significantly. Those who prioritize cross-Strait relations over Taiwan-US relations tend to argue that the problem is not that the US will not come to Taiwan's defense but that it cannot because its power is in decline. Commenting on the US-China Alaska meeting held in March 2021, one newspaper editorial argued:

22 "Taiwan's public opinion in a cross-Strait crisis," Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation, November 2, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2p845c8w> (in Mandarin Chinese).

23 Cf. Shelley Rigger, et al., "How are people feeling in the 'most dangerous place on Earth'?", Lee Hsi-min and Eric Lee, "Taiwan's Overall Defense Concept, Explained."

24 Cf. Antony Blinken, "Secretary Antony J. Blinken with Dana Bash of CNN State of the Union," US State Department, October 31, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/9dr9huh4>.

25 Richard Haass and David Sacks, "American Support for Taiwan Must Be Unambiguous," *Foreign Affairs*, September 2, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/yxr5y7yv>.

26 Bonnie S. Glaser, et al., "Dire Straits: Should American Support for Taiwan Be Ambiguous?" *Foreign Affairs*, September 24, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y4d7ldug>.

27 Cf. Melissa Conley Tyler, "The Road Ahead for Taiwan-US Relations," *The Diplomat*, July 17, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/mt2p3d7>; "Readout from the Biden-Xi Virtual Meeting: Discussion with National Security Advisory Jake Sullivan," Brookings Institution, November 16, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/bdef5fbn>; Michael Mazza, "Internationalizing Security in the Taiwan Strait," *The Global Taiwan Brief*, Vol. 6, No. 9 (May 5, 2021), <https://tinyurl.com/5exvewew>.

The Administration has been "internationalizing the Taiwan issue," raising the issue of peace and security in the Taiwan Strait in various regional and international occasions.



“The root cause of US-China rivalry is the rapid narrowing of the gap between US and Chinese power. The US is worried, while China is confident. The situation may favor Taiwan in the short term, but with US strength in decline and other countries having divergent interests, the transition of international relations is not dictated by US will and cannot be determined fully by the US.”<sup>28</sup>

In this line of reasoning, US policy coordinator for the Indo-Pacific Kurt Campbell's statement that strategic clarity carries “significant downsides” and other similar views from US officials were interpreted that there is a limit for the US to support Taiwan, as the US remains unwilling to alter the status quo in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>29</sup> Some even went further to argue that strategic ambiguity amounts to the US withholding its “one-China policy,”<sup>30</sup> implying the meaning of strategic ambiguity was shifted from deterring to assuring China. Currently those who question the US' ability to intervene in a cross-Strait contingency may be in the minority, but the cause of this US skepticism and its development require close attention.

For China, US security commitment to Taiwan forms an important part in its strategic calculation. It is generally held that the stake of losing Taiwan is too high for the US, and so it is in US interest to assist if not defend Taiwan. Hence there seems to be a question as to whether Taiwan or the US should be China's primary target. Conquering Taiwan seems relatively easy, but it risks a war with the US and its allies. Alternatively, outmatching the US will resolve the Taiwan question and realize China's national rejuvenation altogether, but that is a systematic competition and will take a long time. The latter view is held by hawkish PLA retired major general Qiao Liang, who is one of the authors of *Unrestricted Warfare*. In a 2020 interview, he contended that taking Taiwan is not a priority for China at the moment. It is the rivalry against the US that matters. If China can outmatch the US, then taking Taiwan, whether by force or other means, will come naturally.<sup>31</sup>

To prevent the US from intervening in a cross-Strait contingency, China needs to construct a strategic environment in its favor. Diplomatically, China engages in legal warfare (lawfare) to accuse the US or the West at large of interfering in what it calls domestic affairs.<sup>32</sup> It also leverages its influence on some third world countries and EU member states to drive a wedge within the UN and the EU, respectively, to prevent the international community from forming a unitary stance unfavorable to China.<sup>33</sup> Politically, China seeks to discredit the strength of

28 “Editorial: Seeing through the fog of reliance on the US to ensure Taiwan security,” *China Times*, March 22, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/23wrhfp6>.

29 David Brunnstrom and Michael Martina, “Strategic clarity on Taiwan policy carries ‘significant downsides’ - U.S.,” *Reuters*, May 5, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/5ebv7zs5>.

30 Chen-lung Kuo, “Dire Taiwan Strait, the US preventing military confrontation and reiterating opposition to unilateral alteration of the status quo, and speaking to both sides of the Strait.”

31 Qiao Liang, “The Taiwan question vital to China's destiny and no space for reckless and imprudence,” *US-China Perception Monitor*, May 4, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/2peerw65>.

32 Dean Cheng, “Winning Without Fighting: Chinese Legal Warfare,” *Heritage Foundation Backgrounder* No. 2692, May 21, 2012, <https://tinyurl.com/59wcu8xw>.

33 Cheng-Chia Tung and Alan H. Yang, “How China Is Remaking the UN In Its Own Image,” *The Diplomat*, April 9, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/jb6znctk>; Yaroslav Trofimov, Drew Hinshaw and Kate O’Keeffe, “How China Is Taking Over International Organizations, One Vote at a Time,” *The Wall Street Journal*, September 29, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/8tymrhuh>

It is the rivalry against the US that matters. If China can outmatch the US, then taking Taiwan, whether by force or other means, will come naturally.

the US commitment. For instance, following the US pullback from Afghanistan in August, there was speculation about US credibility, and China took the opportunity to launch a propaganda campaign of “Afghanistan today, Taiwan tomorrow.” This prompted President Biden and several US officials to reassure Taiwan (and other US allies).<sup>34</sup> Militarily, China continues to develop A2/AD capabilities such as long-range cruise and ballistic missiles that are in the service of deterring the US, but the effectiveness of the strategy is debated.

In response to the growing Chinese threat, the Trump administration redefined the bilateral relationship as one of “strategic competition.”<sup>35</sup> The Biden administration takes a similar stance with crucial differences.<sup>36</sup> Among the US strategies towards China there is one that may provide a clue for cross-domain deterrence. The US under the Trump Administration had tried to distinguish between the CCP and the Chinese people.<sup>37</sup> In response, Xi claimed on behalf of the populace that “the Chinese people will never allow any individual or any force to separate the CPC [CCP] from the Chinese people or counterpose the Party to the Chinese people.”<sup>38</sup> The Biden Administration once stated that the strategy of negating the CCP’s legitimacy will not be followed. However, Rick Waters, deputy assistant secretary of state at the Bureau of East Asia and Pacific Affairs, claimed in a conference that China “has misused [UN General Assembly] Resolution 2758 to prevent Taiwan’s meaningful participation [in the UN system],”<sup>39</sup> touching upon the sensitive issue of whether the People’s Republic of China represents Taiwan in the UN. Similarly, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken urged UN member states to support Taiwan’s “robust” participation in the UN system on October 26,<sup>40</sup> further bringing the issue to the international arena. The Chinese government and state media reacted fiercely and condemned the US for playing the “Taiwan card.”<sup>41</sup>

The three instances indicate that the issue of legitimacy strikes a nerve of the CCP and is one of its vulnerabilities. The US demonstrated that it could challenge the political basis on which the CCP claims to represent its people, as well as the legal basis on which China claims sovereignty on Taiwan. A strategy centering on the legitimacy of the CCP hence has the potential to be developed as a means of deterring and countering China. If carefully designed and orchestrated, the US and Taiwan may leverage the issue to deter and counter China’s aggressive behavior. For instance, when China steps up its military coercion on Taiwan, the US

34 Cf. “Biden says US will defend Taiwan if China attacks,” *BBC News*, October 22, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/znutscpu>.

35 “Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America,” US Department of State, January 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/2p8rxu3y>.

36 Alex Leary and Bob Davis, “Biden’s China Policy Is Emerging—and It Looks a Lot Like Trump’s,” *The Wall Street Journal*, June 10, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2p8bhj3e>; Morgan Chalfant, “Biden holds Trump’s line when it comes to China,” *The Hill*, October 19, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/4mxxbkrs>.

37 Cf. Robert O’Brien, “The Chinese Communist Party’s Ideology and Global Ambitions,” Arizona Commerce Authority, June 26, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/ybawd5xp>; Christopher Wray, “The Threat Posed by the Chinese Government and the Chinese Communist Party to the Economic and National Security of the United States,” Hudson Institute, July 7, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/ya9dkj6j>; William Barr, “Remarks on China Policy,” Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, July 17, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/y5ppep3f>; Michael Pompeo, “Communist China and the Free World’s Future,” Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, July 23, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/yyopp98c>.

38 “Xi Focus: Xi stresses carrying forward great spirit of resisting aggression,” *Xinhua Net*, September 4, 2020, <https://tinyurl.com/84fyndnk>.

39 Mark Magnier, “US official says Beijing’s block of Taiwan from United Nations harms international community,” *South China Morning Post*, October 22, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/v6j8cu77>.

40 Antony J. Blinken, “Supporting Taiwan’s Participation in the UN System,” US Department of State, October 26, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/6brjw83>.

41 “Chinese expert refutes attack from US and Taiwan politicians against UN Resolution 2758,” *Global Times*, October 25, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/2p8346t3>; “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian’s Regular Press Conference on October 27, 2021,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, October 27, 2021, <https://tinyurl.com/nhev2r24>.

The US demonstrated that it could challenge the political basis on which the CCP claims to represent its people, as well as the legal basis on which China claims sovereignty on Taiwan.

(and Taiwan) can raise the issue to gain international support, thereby forcing China to rethink its approach to Taiwan. Admittedly, questioning the CCP's legitimacy may generate domestic resentment in China, and politicizing the UN Resolution 2758 may not be in Taiwan's long-term interests. It is also imperative for the act of deterrence not to be interpreted by China as provocation and escalation. But as far as developing a cross-domain deterrence strategy is concerned, this line of reasoning may be worth a try.

## Conclusion

The paper suggests that China's threat to Taiwan is political by nature, as it seeks for national unification. As such, Taiwan's security and deterrence posture cannot be viewed from a purely military lens, although the military dimension is a crucial part of it. Some items are highlighted and discussed below.

First, use of force is certainly one of China's options, and the gap of military strength between Taiwan and China keeps widening. To take over Taiwan, however, China needs to enhance its amphibious capability, and this provides Taiwan with a window of opportunity to develop prepare militarily in the service of deterrence by denial -in other words, capabilities that can foil the PLA's mission of landing and occupying Taiwan.

Second, China also uses means below the threshold of conflict to intimidate and coerce Taiwan, pushing the latter to a defensive position. Facing PLA's air incursion, Taiwan takes measures such as scrambling combat patrol aircraft, issuing radio warnings, and deploying air defense missile systems. Facing large amounts of fishing vessels and sand dredgers in waters around Taiwan's outlying islands, it enhances the coastguard's capability to maintain law and order in the maritime domain while preventing incidents from escalation. When it comes to China's united front work, Taiwan amended its national security laws and seeks to raise awareness with the public. Currently, Taiwan lacks effective countermeasures, and deterrence by defense or resilience (i.e. to absorb and adapt to the challenges) is the option at hand.

Third, the US has adopted a stance of strategic ambiguity towards both sides across the Strait. It seeks to deter both sides from altering the status quo while providing Taiwan with a certain degree of assistance. The Biden administration seems to maintain ambiguity at the strategic level but is moving towards clarity at the tactical level. This bolsters many Taiwanese people's sense of security, but there is also a peculiar US skepticism, the development of which deserves further examination.

Fourth, the US-China strategic competition has its own dynamics and is not entirely driven by the Taiwan issue. Yet the US practices of questioning the CCP's legitimacy of representing the Chinese people, and challenging the PRC's legitimacy of representing Taiwan in the United Nations, seem to offer a clue for cross-domain deterrence. The US support for Taiwan's international participation may serve as a leverage to deter and counter China's intimidation and coercion in the military domain and others. This strategy requires a careful planning and good communication among key players, though.

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