



# STRATEGIC VISION

for Taiwan Security

Volume 4, Issue 20 ♦ April, 2015 ♦ ISSN 2227-3646

## Nuclear Proliferation

Yuan Jingdong

## Cross-Strait Transparency

Jonas Greher

## PRC Military Budget

Nkosinathi S. Dlamini

## Losing Myanmar

Bradley Wu

# Arming Taiwan:

## Should US Rethink Offensive Weapons?

Martin Wagener





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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 [dkarale.kas@gmail.com](mailto:dkarale.kas@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. On the cover, the altered photograph of an ROC honor guard is courtesy of Tai Gray.

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## From The Editor

THE EDITORS AND staff of *Strategic Vision* would like to wish our readers well as the spring season blooms upon us. This year has seen a continuation in major developments in 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 second issue of the year with an analysis of recent developments in global nuclear arsenals and the prospects for nuclear reduction by Dr. Jingdong Yuan of the Centre for International Security Studies at the University of Sydney. Dr. Yuan argues that the prospects for meaningful reductions in nuclear stockpiles are slim due to increased friction between Russia and the United States.

Nkosinathi S. Dlamini, currently a master's student from Swaziland studying at the ROC National Defense University, provides an overview of PRC defense budget increases and how the region is responding to these developments. Jonas Greher, a research intern at the Center for Security Studies at the Institute of International Relations in Taipei, Taiwan, looks at the impact of Taiwan's recent Sunflower Movement, and how the government could improve communication with the younger generation.

Dr. Martin Wagener of the Federal University of Applied Administrative Sciences in Bruehl and Munich, Germany, argues that the distinction between offensive and defensive weapons is no longer meaningful and that Taiwan defense planners should take a broader view of weapon systems which can potentially contribute to Taiwan's defense. Finally, Bradley Wu, an independent commentator and researcher on foreign affairs, and a former research consultant for the China program at the World Security Institute in the United States, offers an insightful analysis of why relations between the PRC and Myanmar have deteriorated.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and look forward to bringing 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

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# Outdated Distinction

## Rethinking deployment of offensive and defensive weapons in Taiwan Strait

*Martin Wagener*



The Aqua Luna Junk passes by Victoria Harbour near one of six AV-8B Harrier Attack Planes on the USS Peleliu during a recent port call in Hong Kong.

**F**OR MANY YEARS, China has been trying to weaken the security relationship between the United States and Taiwan. The government in Beijing claims that American arms sales to the “renegade province” are an illegal interference in its domestic affairs and are not allowed under the US-China Communiqués of 1972, 1978, and 1982.

The US position, in contrast, follows the provisions of the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act. It states: “It is the policy of the United States ... to provide Taiwan

with arms of a defensive character.” Accordingly, US President Barack Obama in 2010 and 2011 pledged the delivery of weapons worth a combined US\$12.3 billion. However, out of consideration for China, the United States has refused to sell Taiwan arms that could be categorized as offensive weapons.

This approach is outdated. Given the dramatic changes in the balance of power in the Taiwan Strait, the United States should reconsider its position. The distinction between offensive and defensive weapons

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systems is no longer useful in this part of East Asia—except for China, which adeptly uses this argument to weaken Taiwan’s defenses.

Historically, the distinction between offensive and defensive weapons systems in the Taiwan Strait was justified. During the 1950s and 1960s, Republic of China (ROC) President Chiang Kai-shek and the leadership around him seriously considered retaking the mainland, which would have required offensive weapons.

Furthermore, the Chinese position through to the

clearly been settled in China’s favor.

Today, the distinction between offensive and defensive weapons systems is outdated for three reasons. First, Taiwan has no intention to attack China; retaking the mainland is impossible. China could respond to any provocation with massive force.

Second, Taiwan’s armed forces are exclusively geared toward defensive scenarios. Every weapons system in their inventory serves to extend the island’s survival in case of a Chinese invasion. The goal is to hold out for as long as possible in a purely defensive position



ROC army tanks make advances during the Han Kuang military exercises simulating an invasion by China on an island in the Taiwan Strait. photo: TC Lin

1990s is understandable. Then, the balance of power was more even. Frequently, it was even advantageous to the ROC, especially in terms of military technology. In 1990, Taiwan’s defense budget of US\$8.55 billion considerably exceeded that of China, at US\$6.13 billion.

### *An arms race lost*

After the 1990s, China’s advantage began to quickly increase as its dynamic economic development allowed it to invest more in its military. In 2014, China officially reported a defense budget amounting to US\$129 billion. Taiwan, in contrast, could only earmark US\$10.1 billion for military spending. Over the past years, Beijing has also modernized its armed forces considerably. Consequently, the arms race has

and to hope for US assistance. While Taiwan today does have weapons of an offensive character, the ROC Armed Forces’ mission is simply to defend Taiwan.

Third and last, Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz’s argument that, in war, offense and defense are closely linked should be remembered. As he notes in his principal work *On War*, first published in 1832: “We can ... in a defensive campaign fight offensively, in a defensive battle we may use some divisions for offensive purposes.” In other words, defensive weapons systems can be used for offense, and vice versa. This continues to be the case today.

For Taiwan’s military, the offensive or defensive nature of a weapons system is of secondary importance. Rather, a weapons system’s conceivable use matters: does the weapon contribute to the deterrence of China and thus the defense of Taiwan?

In the coming years, the ROC Armed Forces will have an ever harder time meeting their defensive task. According to Pentagon figures, more than 1,100 Short-Range Ballistic Missiles (SRBM) of the Chinese Second Artillery were aimed at targets on Taiwan in 2012. The ROC Ministry of National Defense puts this number at 1,400 in 2013. Moreover, according to numbers available for 2014, of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force's 2,100 operational combat aircraft, 330 are within range of Taiwan and could conduct combat operations without refueling. Furthermore, China's naval forces have enough submarines to blockade Taiwan. It is with good reasons then, that the military leadership in Taipei strikes a gloomy tone in the National Defense Report 2013: "The PRC plans to build comprehensive capabilities for using military force against Taiwan by 2020."

To expand the PLA's capabilities further, Beijing is eyeing weapons systems that are considered game changers. According to press reports, China and Russia signed in 2014 an agreement for the delivery of advanced S-400 surface-to-air missiles. Although the

S-400 is conceived as a defensive system, China can be expected to deploy the S-400 in Fujian province, in close proximity to Taiwan. There, the long-range missile defense system would serve both defensive and offensive purposes. Reportedly, the S-400's range is up to 400 kilometers. If war breaks out, China could directly target aircraft in flight throughout Taiwan and potentially secure immediate air superiority

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*"The Ministry of National Defense addressed innovative and asymmetric ways to strengthen major warfighting capabilities."*

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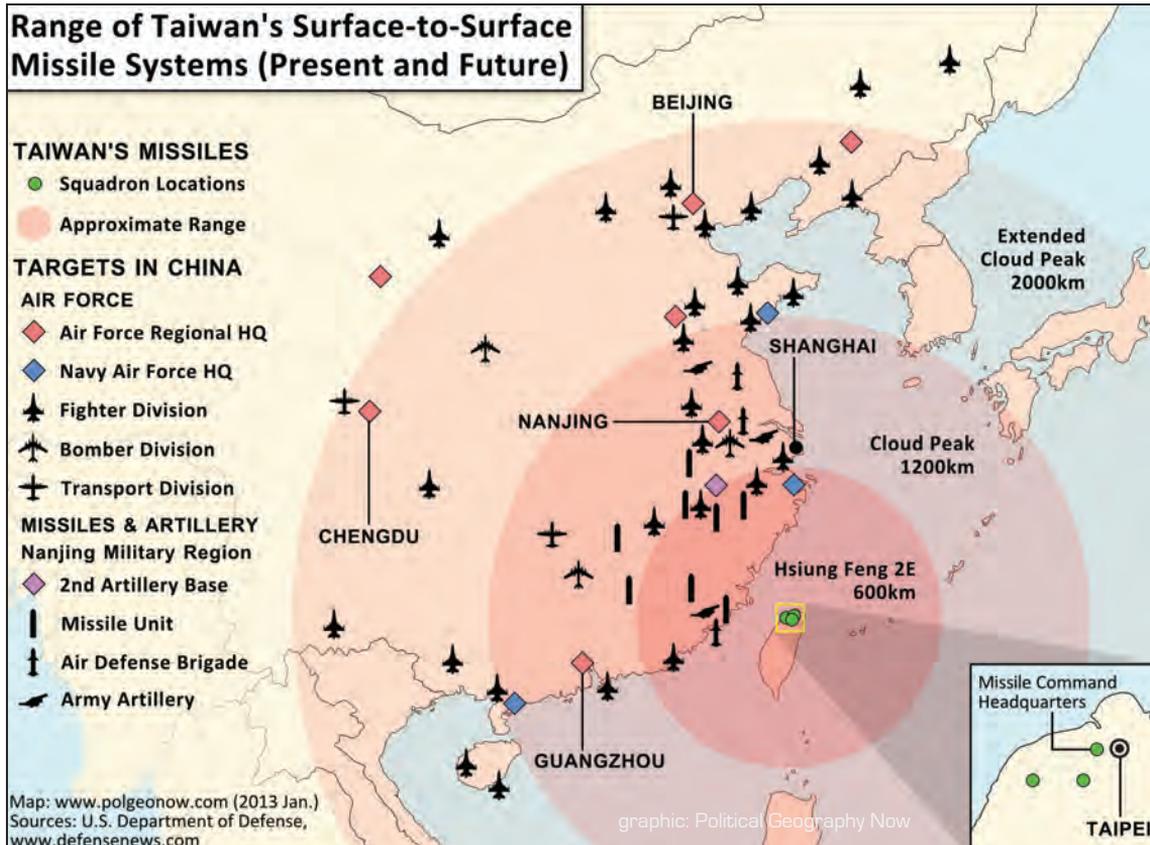
without deploying fighter aircraft.

Against this backdrop, John J. Mearsheimer, professor of political science at the University of Chicago, paints a bleak picture of the future in a 2014 article in *The National Interest*: "Not only will China be much more powerful than it is today, but it will also remain deeply committed to making Taiwan part of



photo: UMNICK

A transporter erector launcher, or TEL, of an S-400 Triumf makes an appearance during the 2009 Victory Day Anniversary Parade rehearsal in Moscow.



China. Moreover, China will try to dominate Asia the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere, which means it will seek to reduce, if not eliminate, the American military presence in Asia.”

### *Asymmetric warfare*

China’s military buildup has caused Taiwan to consider new ways in defense policy. In the 2013 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR), the Ministry of National Defense addressed “innovative and asymmetric” ways “to strengthen major warfighting capabilities.” The military strategy of “asymmetric warfare” has also been mentioned in the 2009 QDR.

This form of warfare could be realized with weapons systems such as the Hsiung Feng (Brave Wind) III, an Anti-Ship Cruise Missile (ASCM). It was developed by the Chung-Shan Institute of Science and Technology (CSIST) and entered service in

2007/2008. The Hsiung Feng III’s speed exceeds Mach 2 and has a range of about 150 km. Experts assume that it is superior to the Russian ASCM SS-N-22 Sunburn, which China’s naval forces use. The Hsiung Feng III is deployed on frigates and patrol boats.

At the end of the day, however, fighting asymmetrically entails much more. Taipei must become entirely unpredictable for Beijing in case of war, thus deterring it further. The 2009 QDR suggests that the government in Taipei is working on putting together an elite force “to strike at the enemy’s weaknesses or critical vulnerabilities, limit the enemy’s warfighting capabilities or movements, and allow us to attain greater freedom of movement and secure military victory.” The overarching goal here would be raising the political costs of a war for China.

To this end, the ROC Armed Forces would require weapons systems that could also target the mainland. The CSIST has already succeeded in this: The Hsiung

Feng IIE, a Land-Attack Cruise Missile (LACM), could, for example, be launched against missile defense positions in Fujian, should the S-400 be deployed there. This subsonic cruise missile has a reported range of 600 km, with some claiming as much as 1,000 km. It is unclear whether the Hsiung Feng IIE has already entered service. ROC President Ma Ying-jeou is said to have ordered the production of 300 LACMs in 2008. In 2015, the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London assessed that 12 Hsiung Feng IIE had been deployed.

### *Asymmetric tools*

Media reports also mention ongoing work on the surface-to-surface missile Yun Feng (Cloud Peak). It is said to have a speed of Mach 3 and a reach of up to 1,200 km, which would allow it to strike the Three Gorges Dam in Hubei province. Upgraded variants of the Yun Feng are expected to reach up to 2,000 km. In 2004, the Pentagon speculated about such a scenario should Taiwan acquire a long-range surface-

to-surface missile. The government in Taipei has not officially confirmed the missile's existence. Either way, it would precisely meet the requirements dictated by the logic of asymmetric warfare.

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*"A state which sees itself as too weak because of limited defensive capability could feel compelled to put everything on one card. In Taiwan's case, this could mean acquiring nuclear weapons."*

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What does this mean for the administration in Washington? Of course the United States has to adhere to its one-China policy and maintain its neutral position of non-support for Taiwan independence. At the same time, however, it cannot be denied that the balance of power in this part of East Asia continues to shift dramatically. This is also partly because Taiwan has been unwilling or unable to increase its defense budget. The United States must thus consider new ways of strengthening Taiwan's defensive capabilities. This should include no longer making



A Hsiung Feng III missile on display at an aeronautics show in Taipei, with a background illustration of several such missiles assaulting an aircraft carrier.



A US Marine Corps variant of the F-35B Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter after a vertical landing aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Wasp. photo: Tommy Lamkin

strict distinctions between “offensive” and “defensive” weapons systems.

Given the shifting balance of power in the Taiwan Strait, it would be appropriate to supply the ROC with additional weapons systems to help offset this imbalance. Submarines (or submarine-related technology) would be ideal to counter a blockade or amphibious operations. The Joint Strike Fighter F-35Bs would also bolster Taiwan’s defensive capabilities. The F-35B’s short take-off and vertical-landing capability would allow it to be used after the destruction of runways by SRBMs. The United States—and also other states in Asia and Europe supporting the ROC’s efforts—would not jeopardize peace in the Taiwan Strait, but would strengthen it. Washington should also think about new ways to integrate Taipei in its policy of rebalancing to Asia.

Should the United States continue its wait-and-see position in the Taiwan Strait, Mearsheimer might end up being right. As structural realists claim, imbalances of power are dangerous. This is supported

by offense-defense theory, according to which wars become more likely as attacks become easier, and vice versa. As MIT professor Stephen Van Evera argued in *International Security* in 1998: “When conquest is hard, states are dissuaded from aggression by the fear that victory will prove costly or unattainable.”

### *The perils of imbalances*

In practice, however, another development is conceivable: A state which sees itself as too weak because of limited defensive capability could feel compelled to put everything on one card. In Taiwan’s case, this could mean acquiring nuclear weapons. To date, the leadership in Taipei has, for good reason, decided to forgo such a move. In 1995, ROC President Lee Teng-hui last raised the possibility of acquiring nuclear weapons in the future to credibly deter China. Shortly thereafter, however, he backtracked and stated that Taiwan would not build nuclear weapons.

If Beijing were to take over the “renegade province”

it would have enormous strategic consequences for the rest of Asia. By occupying Taiwan, China could not only directly threaten Japanese sea lanes of communication. It would also have the long-sought direct access to the western Pacific. This could put limits on US naval forces' freedom to maneuver in East Asia, exacerbating the regional arms race.

Such a scenario would be relevant for Europe, too. Governments in London, Paris, and Berlin would have to react if a militarily weak Taiwan were to be invaded by the PRC. Would they be prepared to respond? If they showed solidarity with Taiwan and the United States, China could sever ties with them. That would have tremendous economic consequences.

In the worst case scenario, should the United States support Taiwan militarily in case of war, Beijing could launch a retaliatory strike against US territory. Washington could then invoke NATO and would presumably ask London, Paris, and Berlin for military assistance. This may seem like a far-fetched scenario, but Europeans also considered the possibility

of Russian annexation of Crimea to be a thing of the past.

The outcome of a war between Beijing and Taipei would be a foregone conclusion: Taiwan does not stand a chance. Depending on the scenario, analysts assume that the island could withstand the PLA's assault only several weeks. Therefore, two things are decisive to maintain peace in the Taiwan Strait: On the one hand, China must expect that Washington will help Taiwan defend itself. The ROC Armed Forces, on the other hand, must have the capabilities to make an invasion of the island as costly as possible. If the Chinese leadership expected a war of attrition, and even military strikes against the mainland, the price of a blockade or invasion attempt might seem too high.

This concept should factor in to all arms deliveries to Taiwan. In the end, they are not meant for fighting. Rather, they serve to influence the political cost-benefit-analysis of the Chinese leadership. As Sun Tzu advised, it is best to win without fighting. ■



Analysts predict that Taiwan could withstand a PLA assault for only several weeks, necessitating a rethink of sales of offensive weapons for defensive use.