1

Introduction

The Question: Why Taiwan?

The enduring rivalry between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Republic of China (ROC) has hinged on the question: what polity exercises sovereignty over Taiwan?[1] It is a dispute about legitimate control over territory. While the PRC has negotiated—without resort to violence—a resolution to other territorial disputes, the contest about Taiwan's status has been fraught from the start by threats of, and use of, military force.[2]

After several decades of emphasizing peaceful means to resolve the cross-Strait dispute, the PRC began in the early 1990s to threaten more forcefully a willingness to use military means. Since then, the PRC has been enhancing its capacity to influence the controversy about Taiwan by force, a development that some observers conclude is a "response to central leadership demands to develop military options."[3] Whether and to what extent the leadership will decide to use military means are questions about which reasonable analysts differ.[4] None can know with certainty because, contingency planning notwithstanding, the PRC leadership is unlikely to make an unambiguous and irrevocable decision to use force too long before it is unleashed.

That the PRC is engaged in a program to accelerate development of greater military means should also not be understood to imply that from the 1990s onward the PRC has been implacably bellicose in its dealings with Taiwan. In fact, Beijing's diplomatic mien has varied, apparently in response to assessments of the long-term implications of what are identified as recent significant turning points or newly emerging trends associated with Taiwan's status. At some moments, Beijing has appeared to glower in pique across the Taiwan Strait, while at other moments it seems intent to discipline its emotions and project a semblance of patience, self-assurance, and magnanimity. Its demeanor apparently reflects a collective, even if not unanimous, prognosis among the political leadership about whether trend lines extending from the present bode well or ill for Beijing's objectives in relation to Taiwan.

Although Beijing's diplomatic posture toward Taiwan varies, since the mid-1990s some observers have identified evidence of what appears as a fixed

strategy "to field a force that can succeed in a short-duration conflict with Taiwan and act as an anti-access force to deter U.S. intervention or delay the arrival of U.S. forces" sent to assist in the defense of Taiwan.[5] To be sure, the expansion of PRC military power in an era of intensified and, in some dimensions, revolutionary transformation is intended to address a multitude of security concerns.[6] It is not driven exclusively by the expectation that there will be violent conflict over Taiwan.[7] Nevertheless, it appears that the prospect of a near-term battle for Taiwan has dominated the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) "reform, modernization, procurement and training," exercising an overriding influence on choices made by the PLA.[8]

Although a fragile calm has generally prevailed in relations across the Taiwan Strait, the condition is often depicted as if it could easily give way to sudden and, perhaps, consuming violence.[9] Even more worrisome is the widespread belief that the cross-Strait controversy is "the only issue in the world today that could realistically lead to war between two major powers," the PRC and the United States.[10]

That contingency, should it come to pass, could very well implicate Japan and would likely inflict severe consequences on the population of Taiwan.[11] Even assuming that the PRC might employ force for limited objectives, it is easy to imagine that "the fallout of a war would be region-wide."[12] That fallout would have to be measured not only in terms of destruction resulting from violence, but in terms of political and economic repercussions flowing from a change in Taiwan's status or a loss by the PRC in its efforts to bring about such a change.[13] "So, this is serious stuff, and those making policy had better know what they are doing."[14]

In contrast to its handling of the Taiwan issue, in almost every other respect the foreign policy of the PRC since the 1990s has been self-consciously crafted to project abroad an impression of Beijing as peace preserving, not war prone, judicious, not reckless, measured, not rash, and equitable, not iniquitous.[15] Even as it has appreciably increased expenditures for defense, Beijing has accentuated its peaceful intentions in hopes of countering anxieties about a "China threat."[16] In the context of the diplomatic demeanor the PRC has so purposefully fashioned, Beijing's juggernaut to ready the means of affecting or resolving the dispute about Taiwan by force is apparently anomalous. Indeed, even by comparison to its approach to most other territorial disputes, the intensity of Beijing's fixation on the status of Taiwan is exceptional, in that it "increasingly shapes China's entire approach to the big questions of international relations."[17]

This study is animated by a deceptively difficult question: why? Why has the PRC acted as if Taiwan is of such paramount importance? Why has the PRC articulated with such fervor its determination that Taiwan be encompassed by China's sovereignty when the same regime has relinquished sovereignty over large tracts of what was China's territory, settled for less than it claimed in negotiations over other tracts, and ignored land that was once a part of China, about which nary an irredentist word has been uttered? Why, at a juncture when the PRC is objectively more secure from foreign aggression than at any moment since early in the nineteenth century, is the PLA surging with such resolve to prepare for the possibility of combat to prevail in a contest about the status of Taiwan? Why is Taiwan worth fighting for? What does Beijing feel is at stake?

From Hard to Soft: Beijing Shifts Strategy Toward Taiwan

The political leadership of the PRC has, at least since 1949, unwaveringly expressed its view that Taiwan is part of China and China must be unified. That has been the bedrock of its policy. However, twice since 1949 its long-term strategy for dealing with the division it seeks to repair has shifted significantly—once at about the time that the PRC and the United States normalized diplomatic relations in 1979 and a second time in the early 1990s.

For the first thirty years of this dispute, the PRC used the rhetoric of liberation, implying that its strategy for achieving unification was to free Taiwan—by force—from domination by the United States and its ally, the rump ROC regime headed by Chiang Kai-shek [Jiang Jieshi]. A *Xinhua* editorial of March 15, 1949, titled "*Zhongguo renmin yiding yao jiefang Taiwan*" [the Chinese people certainly will liberate Taiwan] set the tone as the first official use of a slogan that was to be the rallying cry for the following three decades.[18]

Use of force was the PRC's dominant paradigm in the period following the establishment of the PRC.[19] A military campaign to take control of Taiwan planned for the summer of 1950 was derailed first by anxiety about insufficient training of troops and preparations and then by the outbreak of the Korean War. However, two "offshore island" crises in the 1950s, when the PRC attacked islands under the control of the ROC, underscored Beijing's willingness to initiate military conflict in furtherance of its ambition to unify China. The second of these crises began when the PRC initiated a bombardment of the Jinmen islands on August 23, 1958, and ended with Mao Zedong's "Second Message to Compatriots in Taiwan," issued on October 25, 1958, in the name of Defense Minister Peng Dehuai.[20] With impudent pugnacity, the

message announced a suspension in the shelling of the ROC-held island of Jinmen—but only on even-numbered days of the month.[21]

Thus, it remained until January 1, 1979. The PRC's strategy was to recover Taiwan by force, even though its tactics varied. Use of military force was actively contemplated and repeatedly employed in the period from 1949 to 1958. For the twenty years that followed, Beijing's political and diplomatic posture conveyed a sense of militancy even though Mao was content to sustain "an atmosphere of war, not war."[22] However, Mao pointedly reserved the right to use force against Taiwan, explaining to Nikita Khrushchev:

> Our relations with Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek] and with the Americans are two different things. With the United States we will seek to resolve issues by peaceful means. If the United States does not leave Taiwan, then we will negotiate with them until they go from there. The relationship with Jiang Jieshi is our internal question and we might resolve it not only by peaceful, but also other methods.[23]

By the early 1970s, though, a fundamental and palpable shift in the geopolitical balance was under way that affected Beijing's strategy for dealing with Taipei. Sino-Soviet friction led to armed conflict between the erstwhile allies in 1969 and the dissolution of relations. The PRC supplanted the ROC in the United Nations in 1971, and the number of states recognizing the PRC dramatically increased at the ROC's expense.[24] In the same period, cold war contention with the Soviet Union and pressure on the United States government to extract its troops from Southeast Asia contributed to willingness in Washington to overcome historic animosities toward Beijing. Ultimately, an agreement between the PRC and the United States to establish official diplomatic relations was finalized in December 1978. This too had a bearing on Beijing's strategic outlook in dealings with Taiwan.

On January 1, 1979, the PRC announced the end to every-other-day shelling of Jinmen and a decidedly less bellicose approach to Taiwan.[25] The "hard" strategy with which Beijing persevered since 1949 was displaced by a new "soft" strategy under the rubric of "peaceful unification" [*heping tongyi*].[26] Beijing undoubtedly concluded that after Washington severed diplomatic ties with the ROC and recognized the PRC, Taipei would feel increasingly isolated and would succumb to pressure to unify. Force would no longer be needed to induce Taiwan's compliance with the PRC's demand for unification.[27] Desperation would drive Taiwan into Beijing's arms. This marked the first discernible adjustment to the PRC's long-term strategy for achieving its aim of unification.

From 1979 to 1993, the PRC's stance toward and rhetoric about Taiwan was noticeably less confrontational than it had been. In a sequence of overtures from 1979 to 1983, Beijing signaled its willingness to define unification

in terms that would enable Taiwan to enjoy a "high degree of autonomy" [*gaodu de zizhiquan*] within the framework of "one country, two systems" [*yiguo, liangzhi*], which Deng Xiaoping promulgated as the principle that would guide interaction between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait following "peaceful unification."[28] When they reversed course and embarked on a strategy devised to bring about peaceful unification, the PRC leaders may have anticipated that efforts to be more yielding would lead to a satisfactory resolution of the dispute about Taiwan before the end of the decade.

The realization of this ambition was greatly complicated by the liberalization of politics in Taiwan during the 1980s, a process that utterly transformed the political dynamics of the ROC. Chinese nationalists in the ruling Guomindang [the Nationalist Party of China] lost the monopoly on political power they had had as Taiwanese nationalists increasingly asserted their views and influenced the policies of the government. In that domestic transition, and in cross-Strait relations, the ascension of Lee Teng-hui [Li Denghui] from vice president to president of the ROC after the death of Chiang Ching-kuo [Jiang Jingguo] on January 13, 1988, was a defining moment.

Lee's Guomindang bona fides were solid.[29] However, his identity as the ROC's first Taiwan-born president aroused the suspicions of Chinese nationalists. In time, Lee did reveal a greater determination than did the Chiangs to consolidate and expand international acceptance of Taiwan's autonomy as a sovereign actor. With apparently limitless moxie, he challenged Beijing's reflexive sense of entitlement to establish unilaterally the parameters of the cross-Strait relationship.

The PRC has operated from the premise that China's sovereignty is indivisible and that it resides in the government of the PRC, headed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Even on the basis of the "one country, two systems" framework that Beijing proffered, unification necessitates a renunciation by Taipei of any claim to sovereignty. In contrast, Lee Teng-hui accepted that Taiwan is part of China, but viewed China as a divided state. He asserted that the sovereignty of the ROC over territory it controls is no less legitimate than is the sovereignty of the PRC over territory it controls. Lee apparently believed it was possible to consider ways to unify the two portions of China, but only if the sovereignty of both governments was regarded as equal.

This was quite a departure from the longstanding view of the Guomindang leadership that the CCP—derided as "communist bandits" [*gongfei*]—was illegitimate and that only the ROC government had any justifiable claim to sovereignty over China. Taking account of what territory each side genuinely controlled, Lee Teng-hui adopted the stance that Beijing and Taipei should

acknowledge that the other governed legitimately a portion of China and was sovereign in that portion, but in that portion only. Ultimately, when Lee's view became apparent, Beijing denounced him as a "separatist" [*fenlie fenzi*] seeking to divide the nation and despoil China's territorial integrity. At first, though, it appears that the PRC leadership was not certain how to regard Lee and the developments he ushered in.

Even before Chiang Ching-kuo died and Lee became president, there were indications that Taipei was entertaining thoughts of how to adjust its posture toward the PRC to accord with pressure from within Taiwan and enticements by Beijing to undertake measures that would encourage trade across the Strait, build confidence, and advance the aim of unification.[30] After clinging since 1979 to a policy of "no contact, no compromise, and no negotiation" with the PRC—a policy known as the "three noes"—Chiang relaxed restrictions on cross-Strait trade and travel in October 1987. In July 1988, seven months after Lee assumed the role of president, the Guomindang's Thirteenth Party Congress endorsed a policy of lifting additional restrictions on travel across the Strait. On October 7, 1990, Lee established the National Unification Council [*Guojia tongyi weiyuanhui*] that devised a three-stage program embodied in the National Unification Guidelines [*Guojia tongyi gangling*] by which the ROC would work toward unification. The preamble states

> The unification of China is meant to bring about a strong and prosperous nation with a long-lasting, bright future for its people; it is the common wish of Chinese people at home and abroad. After an appropriate period of forthright exchange, cooperation, and consultation conducted under the principles of reason, peace, parity, and reciprocity, the two sides of the Taiwan Straits should foster a consensus of democracy, freedom and equal prosperity, and together build a new and unified China.[31]

On May 1, 1991, Lee terminated the "Period of National Mobilization for the Suppression of the Communist Rebellion," by which the Guomindang had, since 1947, justified a sustained war footing against the CCP, with "Temporary Provisions" [*Dongyuan kanluan shiqi lingshi*] adopted in 1948, that established a state of national emergency warranting suspension of certain constitutional provisions.[32] In other words, Lee removed the stanchion that had supported institutionalized hostility toward Beijing and dictatorial control in Taiwan.[33] At a symbolic level, this meant that the ROC no longer sought to "suppress the Communist Rebellion." It formally accepted the reality of CCP control over the mainland. At a practical level, it eliminated the most imposing barrier to democratization.[34]

These adjustments in Taiwan unfolded alongside efforts by the PRC to ease tensions across the Strait. After Lee Teng-hui became president in 1988,

the PRC president, Yang Shangkun, quietly initiated contact with Lee through confidential channels. Between December 1990 and August 1992, emissaries of the PRC and ROC presidents met secretly to talk nine times in Hong Kong, Beijing, and Taipei.[35]

In addition to the confidential channel, the cross-Strait relationship was advanced during the same years by a sequence of meetings between representatives of two formally unofficial organizations. On November 21, 1990, the ROC government established the Straits Exchange Foundation [*Hai xia jiaoliu jijinhui,* hereinafter SEF] to facilitate interactions between Taiwan and the mainland, limited though they then were, and on December 16, 1991, the PRC founded the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait [*Hai xia liang'an guanxi banhui,* hereinafter ARATS] as a counterpart agency. Beginning in November 1991, representatives of the two agencies met in Beijing and the following year in Hong Kong. In November 1992, after an arduous year of negotiation, they reached what both sides then accepted as a spare, but vital, modus vivendi.

Even in the absence of a formal written agreement, awareness that there was a coincidence of views was nontrivial. First, each side stated an intention to adhere to the "one China principle" [*yige Zhongguo yuanze*] and committed itself to work toward unification. This, the PRC represented as its sine qua non. For Beijing to trust that the intentions of the ROC government were at least minimally compatible with its own on the matter of eventual unification, Taipei had to invoke the "one China principle" explicitly in a manner evaluated as genuine by the PRC.[36] Second, each side understood that a common definition of the "one China principle" would not be specified and each was prepared to tolerate that. Indeed, for months, they had wrangled in vain to establish a definition on which they could concur.[37] Third, negotiators from both sides understood that each side would express orally its own interpretation of the "one China principle," rather than issue a jointly authored, culminating document. In the end, this meant that Beijing and Taipei would characterize differently the conclusion of the negotiations—not just the substance to which both sides presumably were in accord.[38]

Ambiguities notwithstanding, what was subsequently dubbed the "1992 Consensus" provided sufficient cover to both sides that it was possible to hold a high-level and much publicized meeting in Singapore between SEF Chairman Gu Zhenfu (Koo Chen-fu) and ARATS Chairman Wang Daohan, from April 27 to April 29, 1993.[39] These were among the hopeful signs of an emerging constructive relationship between the PRC and the ROC.[40]

However, the PRC may have underestimated the implications of transformations on Taiwan. Lee aimed to reform the political system by which Taiwan

was governed and rationalize its external relations. This entailed breaking the throttlehold that mainland-born Guomindang loyalists had had on politics and, in the name of democracy, enfranchising the Taiwanese majority who was not then inclined to see the island as a part of China or to favor unification. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), then in opposition, comprised people with more radical objectives, including one faction eager to declare Taiwan—not the Republic of China—an independent and sovereign state. The liberalization of Taiwan politics and the liberalization of cross-Strait relations were utterly intertwined.[41]

From the start, Lee and his administration pledged allegiance to the notion of unification. However, to ensure that an end to hostilities across the Taiwan Strait and eventual unification progressed in a manner that accorded with Taiwan's interests, Lee pressed the PRC to view the ROC as retaining a share of sovereignty over a portion of China's territory. He challenged the diplomatic cordon that Beijing had sought to impose on Taiwan and engaged in a multifarious campaign—known as "flexible diplomacy" or, literally, "elastic diplomacy" [*tanxing waijiao*] and "pragmatic diplomacy" [*wushi waijiao*]—to assert the ROC's international personality and, to the degree possible, expand its "international living space" [*guoji shengcun kongjian*].

"Pragmatic diplomacy" flowed from Lee's notion of China as a divided state. If one viewed the state as divided, then neither Beijing nor Taipei could justly claim the exclusive right to represent all China in the international arena, only that portion of China it actually governed. Hence, Lee sought to reframe the way in which the ROC was regarded abroad. Among the hallmarks of this approach was a challenge to the prevailing practice that the ROC was necessarily to be excluded from international organizations in which the PRC was a member. Consequently, the ROC began to apply for representation in international organizations and, starting in 1993, at the United Nations.

Lee also sought to undermine the taboo associated with foreign travel by ROC leaders. Under the guise of taking private vacations, Lee Teng-hui and other key leaders of the ROC visited states that did not have diplomatic relations with the ROC, as well as some that did, to make the point that Beijing's effort to blackball Taipei was only as effective as other states permitted it to be.[42] From these actions, as well as statements made in Taipei about the ROC's sovereign status, Beijing saw what it took to be signals that Lee Teng-hui was deviating "more and more brazenly from the 'one China' principle."[43]

Meanwhile, in the PRC, Jiang Zemin assumed the post of CCP general secretary in June 1989, following the lethally maladroit reactions of the PRC leadership to the massive political demonstrations that spring. For the next sev-

eral years, Jiang's role and influence gradually expanded. He became chairman of the powerful party Central Military Commission (CMC) in November 1989 and was elected president of the PRC in March 1993. Thereafter, the imprint of Jiang Zemin was perceived in Taipei as discernibly unyielding on the matter of divided sovereignty.

The transition by Jiang from partial to full power within the apparatus of both the CCP and the state mirrored a comparable transition that Lee Teng-hui made. After he assumed the presidency, Lee confronted a challenge from within the Guomindang by party stalwarts who had come to Taiwan from the mainland.[44] Ultimately, Lee won out and was only thereafter able to consolidate control over policy toward the PRC. So, during the period 1989–93, Jiang Zemin and Lee Teng-hui were both in the process of consolidating their power at home while striving to shape a path for cross-Taiwan Strait relations in response to divergent views within their own political systems. Though they may not have understood it at the time, the two men were on course for a collision.

Between April 1994 and March 1995, eighteen then-secret interactions between representatives of Lee Teng-hui and Jiang Zemin were held in Zhuhai and Macao. At what was to be the final meeting in this sequence of confidential consultations, Lee Teng-hui's representative—Su Chi-cheng—told his counterpart—Zeng Qinghong—that Lee was planning to visit both the United States and Japan.[45] Thereafter, the PRC closed down this channel.

Lee's notion that China is a divided state was anathema to the CCP leadership and Jiang Zemin, whose idée fixe it was that Beijing's "one China principle" was incompatible with any form of shared sovereignty of the sort Lee articulated. While Beijing later charged that Lee was intent on separation all along, the reality may have been that while he was president, Lee reacted to what he perceived as Beijing's intransigence by ever-more aggressive challenges to what the PRC understood as the "one China principle."[46] As Richard Bush writes, this does not support the conclusion that Lee was opposed to unification, only that he was opposed to unification on the terms Beijing struggled to enforce.[47]

Both Soft and Hard: Beijing Shifts Strategy Toward Taiwan Again

A second fundamental shift in PRC strategy occurred in the early 1990s. Having persuaded itself in the late 1970s and early 1980s that it would gain through Sino-U.S. normalization the capacity to isolate Taipei and prevail in its effort to unify the mainland and Taiwan, the PRC leadership in the early 1990s must have been exceptionally disappointed by and agitated about the

way relations with Taiwan were evolving. Despite oaths of fealty to eventual unification, Taipei's words and actions increasingly left the impression in the PRC that Taiwan was seeking to consolidate an identity in the international arena that was separate and enduring.

On January 8, 1993, the ROC Foreign Minister Qian Fu [Frederick Chien] made explicit the ROC's objective to extend "our hands to seek for wider diplomatic space."[48] On January 21, 1993, the ROC Ministry of Foreign Affairs released its first *Foreign Affairs Report*, in which it explained, among other things, its view that

> "one China" is based on the common notion of all Chinese people, and this refers to the sovereign and independent Republic of China (ROC). The ROC government opposes "two Chinas," "one China one Taiwan," and "an independent Taiwan." In (the) future, the focus of our nation's diplomacy is to strengthen ties with countries maintaining diplomatic relations, elevate ties with countries having no diplomatic relations, and actively participate in the activities of international bodies, particularly, rejoining the United Nations as soon as possible.[49]

The leadership in Beijing could not abide Taipei's efforts to insinuate a view of the ROC as equivalent in sovereignty to the PRC. Where Taipei saw—and wanted other international actors to see—parity between the ROC and PRC, Beijing saw hierarchy. Where Taipei saw shared sovereignty in a divided state, Beijing saw indivisible sovereignty despoiled by an arrogant and shameless squatter regime. The PRC leadership was prepared to tolerate unification under the rubric of "one country, two systems" for the sake of achieving its objective peacefully, but it acted and spoke as if it expected Taiwan to accommodate itself to a condition Beijing had never considered as anything other than settled: the PRC is China.[50]

Jiang Zemin had given voice to this sentiment all along. Apparently striking back at the National Unification Guidelines issued in August 1992, Jiang said in his report to the CCP's Fourteenth Party Congress of October 1992,

> we are resolutely opposed to, in any form, the notion of "two Chinas," "one China, one Taiwan" or "one country, two governments" and *any acts aimed at bringing about the independence of Taiwan* [emphasis added] . . . on the premise that there is only one China, we are prepared to talk with the Taiwan authorities about any matter, including the form that official negotiations should take, a form that would be acceptable to both sides.[51]

The problem was that the ROC leadership *had* committed itself to the premise that there is only one China, but not in a manner that Beijing found acceptable. To Beijing, it seemed Lee Teng-hui was being duplicitous. He and his administration were saying "one China," when they acted as if they really

meant something rather different—at least different from the way that the PRC understood the construct of "one China."

Even though the ARATS-SEF meeting between Gu Zhenfu and Wang Daohan of April 1993 seemed a high point of détente, Beijing was anxious. In August, the PRC issued "The Taiwan Question and the Reunification of China," a "white paper" in which it methodically laid out its view of Taiwan's status as part of China, how the "Taiwan Question" [*Taiwan wenti*] materialized, how the PRC proposed to unify the state, why relations across the Strait remained unsettled, and how other international actors should deal with Taiwan.

Talks using both the official and secret channels continued, but Beijing was disheartened by what it took as evidence of Lee Teng-hui's determination to create a permanent division. The distemper the PRC leadership felt was aggravated by publication in March 1994 of an interview Lee gave with a Japanese writer, Ryotaro Shiba. In the interview—reportedly conducted in Japanese—Lee spoke of "the grief of being Taiwanese." He said that the word China [*Zhongguo*] is confusing. He spoke disparagingly of the Guomindang regime, stating "Taiwan has always been ruled by power that came from abroad. Today I say this kind of thing without hesitation. Even the Nationalists are a foreign power. They are nothing more than a political party that came to rule the Taiwanese. We must make this a Taiwanese Nationalist Party. . . . I aspire to build a nation state and a society for 'the public.'" In the course of the interview, Lee suggested that his role in Taiwan was analogous to the role of Moses, leading the children of Israel out of bondage.[52] This, the PRC heard as a renunciation of Lee's commitment to unification and a signal of his plan—now revealed—to work for Taiwan's independence.

Jiang Zemin fired back on January 30, 1995, with a speech titled "Continue to Promote the Reunification of the Motherland." Much of the speech seemed to address the people of Taiwan directly, as opposed to the white paper of 1993, which seemed aimed at an international readership. Jiang summarized the logic of Beijing's posture toward Taiwan. However, there were new wrinkles. Jiang said:

> There are only two ways to settle the Taiwan question: One is by peaceful means and the other is by non-peaceful means. . . . We consistently stand for achieving reunification by peaceful means and through negotiations. But we shall not undertake not to use force. Such commitment would only make it impossible to achieve peaceful reunification and could not but lead to the eventual settlement of the question by the use of force.

The speech became known as "Jiang's eight points" [*Jiang badian*], a reference to eight assertions concerning Beijing's strategy to counterbalance inducements

to Taiwan with the threat of military consequences for straying from the goal of unification. Hence, the PRC strategy had emerged as one entailing both "hard" and "soft" elements.[53]

Lee Teng-hui appeared to respond to Jiang Zemin in an address to the National Unification Council on April 8, 1995. In it, Lee made six major points, reaffirming his belief that China is a divided state and, nevertheless, that it can be unified under appropriate conditions. In the fifth point of a speech that came to be known as "Lee's Six Points," Lee objected to the PRC's invocation of military force. He explained that he had renounced the use of force in 1991 but that Beijing had refused to follow suit. Lee stated:

> We hold that the mainland authorities should show their goodwill by renouncing the use of force against Taiwan, Penghu, and Jinmen and Mazu, and that they should refrain from any military actions that could cause suspicions, thereby laying the foundation for ending the situation of hostile confrontation through formal cross-Strait talks. I must emphasize that using the so-called "Taiwan independence forces" or "foreign interference" as a pretext for refusing to make the commitment to not use force against Taiwan is disregarding and distorting the founding spirit and policy of the ROC, which will only deepen suspicions between the two sides and hinder mutual trust.[54]

By then, during the last of the confidential meetings between representatives of Taipei and Beijing, the PRC had learned of Lee's plan to visit the United States and Japan. The view that Lee was promoting independence had been brewing in Beijing but became an article of faith for the PRC when he succeeded in engineering a visit to the United States in 1995. The visit to Cornell University was, for Beijing, the final straw. Whatever hope the PRC leadership had had of fostering through private and unofficial channels a foundation for unification became unrecoverable as the PRC officials and commentators turned in fury on Lee. Détente was dead.[55]

Holding Lee Teng-hui personally responsible for taking advantage of the "soft" policies to promote independence while stringing the PRC along with talk of unification, Beijing vented with torrents of vilification in the press. A litany of Lee's presumed misdeeds and what PRC commentators took as duplicitous statements were strung together to make the case that Lee Teng-hui was an inveterate separatist.[56]

In the same period, no longer burdened by doubts or distracted by hopes, Beijing intensified its use of coercive measures and redoubled its commitment to a military buildup that would enhance its capacity to succeed in the use of force to attain its political objectives in relation to Taiwan. The missile exercises in which it engaged in 1995 and 1996, dramatic though they may have been, were acts of public political theater. The more unsettling and, perhaps, insidious development is the PRC's escalating effort to prepare military

options to settle the Taiwan issue. This process, described in the following section, began before Lee went to Cornell and has become ever-more apparent with the passage of time.

However, despite Beijing's display of military prowess, Lee Teng-hui was reelected to the presidency of the ROC in 1996 and was perceived as no less provocative in his second term than he was in his first. Moreover, U.S. reactions to the missile "crisis"—dispatching two aircraft carrier battle groups to the region—may have chastened those in Beijing who might have preferred a continued tightening of the screws on Taiwan through military means only.[57] As a result, Beijing has maintained a two-handed approach since then, brandishing both "hard" and "soft" measures.

Interactions between ARATS and SEF continued, and a second meeting between Gu Zhenfu and Wang Daohan occurred in October 1998, implying a willingness to find a modus vivendi with Taipei. Yet, Beijing was deeply suspicious of Lee Teng-hui, and its mistrust plummeted to a new nadir in 1999.

First, on May 19 an autobiography of Lee was published in Japanese as *Taiwan no shucho* [Taiwan Viewpoints]. In it Lee makes the point that Taiwan exists as an international actor and Beijing's hegemonic efforts to will Taiwan into nonexistence is a threat to the stability of Asia. In one passage, the focus of subsequent PRC denunciations, Lee considers the merits for stability of dividing China into regions based on identity. He writes that Taiwan—like Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and the northeastern provinces that were once a part of Manchuria—all have a distinct identity. "Ideally," Lee writes, "If each one were allowed to affirm its own existence, we would see Asia's regional stability enhanced. For purposes of effective management alone, 'Greater China' would be better off divided into perhaps seven autonomous regions which could then compete among themselves and with the world for progress."[58]

Provocative though that comment may appear when taken out of context, Lee's book affirms his commitment to unification. It reiterates points Lee made in a speech before the NUC on July 22, 1998, in which he said, "We must take this opportunity to once again state clearly and solemnly: China must be reunified."[59] Lee further asserts, "although there will be only one China in the future, at present there is one divided China. . . . That the two sides are ruled by two separate political entities is an objective fact that cannot be denied." Finally, Lee elaborates a view he had expressed before, that "Taiwan faces mainland China in a relationship that transcends the 'internal affairs of China' thesis, placing the two political entities on a *de facto* equal footing."[60] The PRC response at the time was comparatively tepid.

Then, an interview *Deutsche Welle* [Voice of Germany] conducted with Lee Teng-hui on July 9 was broadcast. Expanding on the notion that China is a divided state and that the ROC, like the PRC, retains sovereignty in one portion of China, Lee explained, "The 1991 constitutional amendments have designated cross-strait relations as a state-to-state relationship or at least a special state-to-state relationship, rather than an internal relationship between a legitimate government and a renegade group, or between a central government and a local government. Thus, the Beijing authorities' characterization of Taiwan as a 'renegade province' is historically and legally untrue."[61]

This, Beijing labeled Lee's "two state theory" [*liangguolun*], elevating a view he had long espoused in other public pronouncements to a theory and acting as if his reformulation revealed something new. The PRC press ignited with a barrage of inflamed denunciations that lasted weeks. Lee was disparaged in ad hominem assaults as a "sinner condemned by history," as "scum of the nation and an eternally condemned person!" and compared to "a pig looking at himself in the mirror, neither himself nor the image he sees is a human being."[62] A signed commentary carried by the overseas edition of *Renmin Ribao* [People's Daily] and, reportedly, by *Jiefangjun Bao* [Liberation Army Daily] deprecated Lee as a "rat running across the street with everybody shouting 'smack it.'" [*laoshu guojie, renren handa*].[63]

If Beijing was then rewarding flamboyant reproval, first prize would surely have been collected by Major General Peng Guangqian of the strategy research department of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences. General Peng characterized Lee Teng-hui as an "abnormal 'test-tube baby' bred by international anti-China forces in their political lab."[64] Peng's outlandish slur came against the backdrop of unsettling suggestions in the PRC press that the PLA was itching for a fight.[65]

Military exercises, enraged commentaries in the *Jiefangjun Bao*, and hints in the Hong Kong press that an attack was planned on one of the ROC-held offshore islands were all cast as reactions to Lee's "theory." The tone of the military's rhetorical contribution is captured by the statement, "The mighty armed forces of the . . . PLA will absolutely not sit idly by and permit even one inch of territory from being split from China!"[66]

Conditions worsened after Chen Shui-bian was elected in 2000 as president of the ROC. Despite an avowed policy to suspend judgment while "listening to his words, watching his actions" [*ting qi yan, guan qi xing*], in hindsight it seems likely that Beijing never held out serious expectations that Chen Shui-bian would act in any way other than the way it feared: to promote de jure independence. The "chance" it offered Chen to prove himself was a

cynical effort to give Chen time to demonstrate to the United States and others that he was as bent on stirring up trouble for cross-Strait relations as Beijing knew he would be. Beijing has, in the years since, made the case that it did everything it could to promote peaceful resolution but was impeded at each step by Chen Shui-bian. It reflects no self-awareness concerning the way its responses to Chen and Taiwan's political dynamics since 2000 have helped to create precisely the situation it claimed an interest in avoiding.

For most of the period since 1949, the PRC vacillated between sticks and carrots, hard and soft policies, to deal with Taiwan. It did not often present both. By 2005, with the passage by the PRC National People's Congress of the Anti-Secession Law [*fan fenlie guojia fa*], President Hu Jintao had become associated with an approach to dealing with Taiwan embodied in the dictum "*ying de geng ying, ruan de geng ruan*" [the hard harder, the soft softer].[67] With this strategy, the PRC has signaled its intention to make its sticks more menacing while offering carrots that it hopes will be more alluring.

PRC Military Buildup: Making the Hard Harder

Early in the 1990s, the PRC intensified its program to upgrade the quality and augment the capacities of the PLA. So, even before the PRC began to adopt a harder stance toward Taiwan, it embarked on a program of military reform and modernization. In part, this reflects the PRC's palpable increase in wealth, making possible concerted efforts to realize long-standing ambitions for a greater sense of security, power, and status.

This accelerated program of reformation was prompted by several developments. First, the collapse of the Soviet Union, the demise of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, the end of the cold war, and the resulting status of the United States as the "sole superpower" were part of a rapid transformation in the strategic environment—a transition that the PRC experienced, initially, as a threat to its security. This occasioned a thorough evaluation of the PRC's long-range strategic objectives and likely vulnerabilities in an era of shifting power relations and expanding economic interdependence in the world beyond its borders. What resulted was a commitment to transform the PLA from a force that was exclusively concerned about defense of the motherland to a force that could be deployed farther afield to secure access to vital resources and ensure the state's economic competitiveness and strategic influence.[68]

PRC military analysts digested data and impressions derived from observations of the performance of U.S. forces and weaponry in the Desert Storm campaign of the 1991 war in the Persian Gulf. They concluded that the PRC's own capabilities lagged perilously behind those of the United States, a gap

that Beijing was determined to begin closing. They also internalized a lesson, long in coming, that to be a powerful state capable of securing its interests and exerting influence beyond its borders, the PRC needed to field a "modern" military that was structured, equipped, and trained in ways very different from those that had prevailed up to that point.

A fundamental doctrinal shift occurred early in the 1990s. Jiang Zemin endorsed the view that the PLA should be capable of doing more than fighting to defend China's territory in "local wars" only. Instead, it would have to prepare itself to fight "local wars under modern, high-tech conditions," [*gao jishu tiaojian xia jubu zhanzheng*], a shift that signaled Beijing's understanding that the PLA must be a more sophisticated and professional fighting force able to deploy not only on the PRC's boundaries, but in the region beyond.[69]

From Beijing's vantage, the end of the cold war and collapse of the Soviet Union had the salutary effect of prompting Moscow to see the sophisticated weaponry it had developed to confront the United States as marketable commodities and a ready source of much-needed capital. Unable to develop efficiently its own aircraft industry and with a willing seller in Moscow, Beijing was able to circumvent the arms embargo imposed on it in 1989 by the United States and European countries. Hence, in 1990, during the twilight of the Soviet Union, the PRC purchased seventy-two Sukoi Su-27 fighter aircraft, twenty-six of which were delivered in 1992.[70]

Thereafter, the PRC stepped up the purchase and indigenous production of weapon systems at a pace that has fueled concerns about the intentions of the PRC. The PRC's defense budget has risen precipitously, albeit from a comparatively low point of departure in 1990.[71] As Beijing bought and built better equipment and as the PLA adjusted doctrine and training to accommodate its newly assigned roles, the PRC has gradually eroded the security of Taiwan and elevated the cost to the United States of defending the island, should it come under attack.

This was not incidental. The particular choices Beijing has made as it has acquired weaponry and reconfigured its military suggest that early in the 1990s it decided to establish a credible military deterrent that would restrain Taiwan from pursing "independence" while readying the means to fight if deterrence fails. Anticipating that a battle for Taiwan will draw in the United States—and possibly Japan—Beijing has had to devise means of securing its objectives in an asymmetric competition with an adversary that enjoys unrivaled military might and benefits from extensive combat experience.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Defense has warned, "China is pursuing long-term, comprehensive military modernization to improve its capabili-

ties for power projection and access denial. Consistent with a near-term focus on preparing for Taiwan Strait contingencies, China deploys its most advanced systems to the military regions directly opposite Taiwan."[72] It concludes, "The cross-Strait military balance is shifting in the mainland's favor."[73]

In addition to inferring a shift in Beijing's intentions toward Taiwan from the weapons the PRC has added to its arsenals, from the early 1990s onward one detects in the timing and character of the PRC's military exercises, certain public statements by PRC officials and agencies of the government, and commentary by scholars and journalists a menacing belligerence that was largely absent from 1978 to 1993. Certainly, by 1994, it became clear that the PRC was determined to balance amicable diplomatic and economic overtures to Taiwan with unsubtle military threats.

Prominent among the evidence for this conclusion is the PRC's expanding arsenal of short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs) capable of striking Taiwan from launch sites on the mainland.[74] In 1994, the PRC established the first brigade of conventionally tipped SRBMs across from Taiwan and has increased the number of missiles annually.[75] In 1995 and again in 1996, the PRC staged missile exercises interpreted as signals of the central leadership's displeasure with developments on Taiwan. Thereafter, the determination to develop and deploy missiles that threaten Taiwan from the PRC's coastal regions proceeded apace.[76]

In its *Annual Report to Congress* concerning the military power of the PRC, the U.S. Department of Defense reported in 2006 that the PRC had by then deployed 710–790 SRBMs in garrisons opposite Taiwan and was adding to those batteries at a rate of about 100 additional missiles each year.[77] Moreover, the PRC is reportedly devising means to use these missiles for "anti-access/sea-denial missions" that would complicate naval operations by an adversary—say the United States or Japan—in a region surrounding Taiwan. In addition, the PRC is expected to deploy "a new road-mobile, solid-propellant, intercontinental-range ballistic missile (ICBM)."[78] As of 2006, it also had 400,000 troops stationed in the military regions opposite Taiwan and was steadily upgrading the equipment and capabilities of those units.[79]

The PRC has also been augmenting naval aviation and air force capabilities with purchases of sophisticated vessels, weaponry, and detection systems from Russia, and has sought systems to "detect, track, target, and attack U.S. carrier battle groups" that might be deployed by Washington in defense of Taiwan.[80] The Pentagon's report of 2006 states that the PRC then had in excess of 700 aircraft "within un-refueled operational range of Taiwan" and was purchasing from and coproducing with Russia other advanced fighter aircraft.[81]

While the exact configuration of the PLA Air Force (PLA[AF]) is subject to dispute, it is evident that Beijing is engaged in a significant transformation of both air force and naval aviation.[82] The PRC is dramatically improving its capacity to field "advanced precision strike munitions, including cruise missiles and air-to-air, air-to-surface, and anti-radiation munitions," enhancing its capabilities in the air and at sea.[83] The Defense Intelligence Agency—an arm of the Pentagon—is also concerned that the PRC may be developing "a combat air wing for a future aircraft carrier," indicating that debate within the intelligence community about the prospect of a PRC aircraft carrier persists.[84]

The PRC is vigorously expanding the PLA Navy (PLA[N]), which has based approximately two-thirds of its rapidly expanding force in the East China or South China Sea Fleets.[85] The PRC's purchase and deployment of "Russian-made Sovremennyy-II guided missile destroyers (DDGs)" to the East Sea Fleet and the expectation that the PRC will soon acquire more has drawn attention, as has the PRC's program to enlarge its fleet of nuclear and diesel electric submarines.[86] To be sure, the protection of commercial shipping, combating terrorism, or thwarting blockades aimed at disrupting passage on sea-lanes of communication (SLOC) and defending territorial claims contested by Japan and Southeast Asian states might all be seen to justify the expansion of the PRC's naval power. However, given that any battle for Taiwan will, because of geography, have a significant naval dimension, these developments must also be understood in the context of Beijing's policy to "make the hard harder."

This buildup of forces corresponds to persistent political signals that elements of the foreign policy establishment in the PRC are determined to do whatever is necessary to resolve the Taiwan matter to Beijing's satisfaction. Not everyone in the PRC who is able to inform the choices ultimately made by the leadership believes that military force ought to be a choice of absolute final resort. Some itch more for a fight than others.

For the most part, though, one has the impression that the PRC leadership has adopted the view that force should be used only after every reasonable effort has been made to effect a solution by other means. The problem, of course, is that there are different evaluations in the PRC of what is reasonable and what constitutes the exhaustion of other options. These views are now aired more publicly than they had been, and some are quite strident.[87] In days past when the military balance across the Strait unambiguously favored the ROC and rendered an initiation of hostilities by the PRC an exercise in futility, one could be less concerned about rumblings of jingoism in Beijing. However, those days are gone.

The keenest minds have contended, without reaching consensus, about the significance of a state's capabilities, versus its professed or ascribed intentions, as a measure of its likely future behavior. That is not a controversy anyone is expected to settle. Measuring capability alone is surely not a sufficient way to determine how a state will act as long as one must also account for deception, indecision, internal disagreement, unanticipated constraints, and shifting priorities. Conversely, a single-minded determination to do something cannot overcome the absence of means, even when self-deception, ingenuity, zeal, and a willingness to waste resources by inviting defeat are taken into consideration.

In the PRC, it appears that a segment of the foreign policy elites may be committed to the use of military force to resolve the Taiwan issue. Although it is difficult to discern how broadly this view is held and how influential it is, one thing is clear. The PRC leadership has adopted the view that the PRC must develop the *capacity* to use force, even if it has not reached a consensus about when and in what way to use it. With an emerging capacity to confront not just the forces of Taiwan but those of the United States, too, one must be vigilant about the possibility that restraint provided by Beijing's more prudent statesmen and analysts will, one day, fray. Those in Beijing who favor militarization only as a deterrent against untoward actions by Taiwan's leaders or as a hedge against the possibility that the PRC must be *prepared* to fight, even though it hopes not to, may some day find themselves marginalized in a policy debate dominated by those who are more determined to use newly acquired capabilities that the PRC has been developing.

Just as one would not wish to ignore Beijing's professed interest in stability and a peaceful international environment as one calculates the PRC's intentions for the foreseeable future, one should not ignore its expanding arsenal. Moreover, one must attend to the implications of what weapons, specifically, the PRC has decided to add to its arsenal. Nobody questions that the PRC's military capability is becoming more lethal. However, the degree to which that lethality is being developed with a battle for Taiwan in mind has been a source of concern and a subject of some dispute. Evidence that since the 1990s Beijing has been focused on developing the military capability to settle the question of Taiwan's status by force triggers a determination to understand why Taiwan is evaluated as having such importance to the PRC.

It is not difficult to understand why the political elites in Beijing are exasperated about the continued autonomy of Taiwan and why that exasperation has intensified since the early 1990s. Not only has the "soft" strategy put in place after 1978 done little to increase the prospect of unification, but Beijing cannot escape the conclusion that Lee Teng-hui and Chen Shui-bian have

both exploited Beijing's softness to advance the cause of independence in ways that make the military confrontation more likely. Overall, Beijing's economic development and international stature have benefited from the absence of war, but in terms of deterring independence—to say nothing of promoting unification—the PRC may feel it has gained little from its restraint.

The question remains: Why is Taiwan worth a fight? Why has a leadership frustrated by the inability to rein in Taiwan by "soft" measures turned with such resolve to prepare "hard" military options? Considering that it has managed other territorial disputes without resort to force, why does the prospect of using force against Taiwan seem a rational option to Beijing? Considering all the PRC would reasonably expect to lose in a battle to assure itself that Taiwan is part of China, what is it that Beijing expects to gain? In what ways will the PRC be better off having settled to satisfaction the question of Taiwan's status than it has been with that status contested? If Taiwan were to "declare independence," what is it the PRC has had since 1949 that it would then lose?

Naturally, it would be unwise to expect that there are single, simple answers to each of these questions. There are a number of reasons why Taiwan is important to the PRC and, perhaps, Taiwan is evaluated differently by different segments of society. This book highlights one rationale—the geostrategic salience that some PRC analysts and strategists attribute to Taiwan in the context of the PRC's long-range economic, political, and security objectives.

This is not a rationale *ascribed* to what is said or written about Taiwan by PRC commentators and strategists. It is a rationale that certain PRC commentators and strategists, themselves, assert as vital. One may disagree with the reasoning that contributes to a view of Taiwan as having geostrategic importance—as, in fact, others in the PRC have—but it is already too prominent a view to be ignored. A measured analysis of the PRC's evaluation of Taiwan must take the geostrategic perspective into account.

Organization and Objectives

The PRC—and the CCP prior to 1949—has evaluated Taiwan's salience in various ways and has framed its strategy for dealing with Taiwan differently at different moments. Beyond the primary objective of explaining why the PRC views Taiwan as worth fighting for, a secondary aim of this book is to place Beijing's militarized strategy in historical context. Consequently, the book reviews the variations in attitudes toward Taiwan to demonstrate the conditional nature of PRC claims to the island.

The point of this is to offer a corrective to views of the Taiwan issue that stem from the notions that the PRC's position reflects a consistent and

straightforward interest in righting the injustices of history, satisfying popular nationalist ambitions, ensuring regime legitimacy, providing a bulwark against the division of China's territorial integrity, or demonstrating resolve in opposition to Taiwan's independence as a way of discouraging independence movements in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet.

A third prominent feature of this book is the idea that the contemporary phase of the cross-Strait dispute cannot be correctly perceived without a consideration of geography and the effects of history prior to 1949. Chapter 2 considers the utility of thinking about geography, geopolitics, geostrategy, issue salience, and the comparative dynamics of territorial disputes. It also elaborates the difference between security, safety, and strategic advantage.

Chapter 3 looks back before the threshold of 1949 to address the question: why does the PRC claim Taiwan is China's territory in the first place? It begins by tracing the relationship between China and Taiwan since the seventeenth century.[88] It explains how Taiwan became a part of the "mental map" of China and how its status as part of China has been contingent on other factors, chief among them the relationship between China and external powers. It is in this context that Taiwan's territorial salience—a product of its location—mattered to Chinese strategists well before the establishment of the PRC.

Taiwan was viewed often by Chinese strategists as a bridgehead or a buffer, much the way some PRC strategists have described it since the 1990s.

Reviewing this history helps to expose a pattern of rivalry over territory that is evident in the record of international relations in Asia, a pattern that bears on the contemporary manifestations of the Taiwan issue. The relevance of this pattern pertains to the present largely because both the ROC and the PRC have operated from a "mental map" of China that approximates the realm of the Qing empire. Moreover, the PRC's rationale for territorial integrity has much to do with the geopolitical lessons about security and regional power that flow from the Qing.

Although Taiwan has been viewed repeatedly as having territorial salience, it has not consistently been seen that way. Indeed, before 1942, neither the Guomindang that governed the ROC nor the CCP expressed much of an attachment to Taiwan. The island was then still firmly ensconced in the Japanese empire, as a colony that the Chinese equated with Korea and Vietnam. Accordingly, Chapter 4 traces the evolution of Guomindang and ROC attitudes about Taiwan's salience—from indifference to strategic imperative—in the period prior to 1945.

Chapter 5 chronicles the attitude of the CCP and its leadership in the same period. From 1921 until 1942, the CCP evinced little concern for Taiwan.

Then, the CCP suddenly reversed itself, thereafter depicting Taiwan as a part of China. The chapter makes the point that the CCP's volte-face about Taiwan was occasioned by the ROC's decision to demand that Japan return Taiwan to China after the war. For the CCP, it was a derived policy, not one that the communist leadership was led to by ideology or a distinctive worldview.

More importantly, neither the ROC's position nor the CCP adaptation of it was simply an outgrowth of irredentism. The ROC's wish to recover sovereignty over Taiwan had more to do with a wish to take back China's due from a defeated adversary than with Taiwan itself. Depriving Japan of ill-gotten gains and of the means to menace China again, rather than reuniting what had been perceived of as disunited, motivated the Chinese elite who pressed for a return of Taiwan to China. It was a quest justified in geopolitical terms.

Chapter 6 considers the CCP's attitude toward Taiwan in the period immediately prior to and soon after the outbreak of the Korean War. While Taiwan was then certainly viewed as a part of China's territory, it is striking the degree to which the CCP leadership expressed its determination to subordinate Taiwan in geostrategic terms. It certainly felt itself entitled to consider Taiwan as Chinese, but the communist leaders were also highly anxious about the risk of failing to take the island. This was not a risk expressed solely in terms of abstract principles such as sovereignty, territorial integrity, and nationalism. The pronouncements of the CCP leadership reflected a concern about geopolitics and national security.

Chapter 7 offers evidence that geostrategic considerations feature prominently in the expressions of contemporary PRC foreign policy elites about the salience of Taiwan. The end of the cold war has prompted a strategic realignment that has led to a reassessment of the PRC's relationship to major powers, especially the United States and Japan. The realignment of the international system has occurred in a period when the PRC's material power is increasing and when the PRC is comparatively safe in the international arena. This has inspired adjustments in the PRC's grand strategic vision and confidence that the long-term aim of developing a wealthier and more powerful state is feasible.

One index of power is military strength. Accordingly, the PRC has been engaged in the wholesale reform and modernization of the PLA, as this introductory chapter has already made clear. The naval dimension of this program is intended to expand the PRC's maritime domain, creating a wider realm in which it can exclude hostile forces and ensure safe passage of cargo—including oil and gas—that sustains international trade and economic growth.[89] The effort to expand the PRC's maritime domain, though, is an aim that is highly

vulnerable to the competing expectations and ambitions of other states, notably the United States and Japan.

In view of Taiwan's location, the island is assessed by some PRC analysts to have special geostrategic significance. Taiwan in hostile hands is presumed, by some observers, to deprive Beijing of a platform that would enable it to have unfettered access to the Pacific Ocean. PRC naval strategists wish to develop the capacity to deny access by hostile forces to seas abutting the Chinese coast—the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, the Taiwan Strait, and the South China Sea. Taiwan is situated in just such a way that the passage of PRC surface and subsurface vessels to its north or south could be jeopardized by rival forces based on the island.

While there are analysts who question the operational soundness of this evaluation, the notion of Taiwan as a gateway to the Pacific has taken hold. As long as it remains outside the PRC's sphere of influence—or, worse still, within the U.S. sphere—Taiwan is seen as the westward edge of an insular cordon that flows through Japan to the Philippines, putting the PRC's maritime ambitions at risk. As part of the PRC's domain, though, Taiwan becomes the easternmost edge of an oceanic arena in which the PRC can exercise "sea control" in coastal waters and with which it can puncture the belt of strategically located islands that the United States, as the maritime hegemon, is perceived to be using to check the expansion of PRC power. This is a theme expressed by outspoken and high-ranking military officers, defense intellectuals associated with military academies, strategic analysts at highly esteemed universities, editorialists and commentators in national journals, as well as anonymous keyboard warriors tapping their defiance and national chauvinism into online chat room screeds and blogs.[90]

Fueling the geostrategic concerns that some PRC analysts express are anxieties about the PRC's international stature. The domestic political developments on Taiwan since the early 1990s have sparked concern in the PRC that hopes of drawing the island back to the motherland peacefully may go unfulfilled. Liberalization and democratization have unleashed on Taiwan a period of compensatory nationalism, a reaction to decades of authoritarian rule and to political and cultural suppression. To Beijing, though, the inability to frame and set the terms for resolving the dispute with Taiwan exposes the PRC as impotent in a critical contest at a moment when it is, otherwise, determined to be viewed as ever-more powerful. Taiwan's defiance of Beijing's insistence that Taipei recognize the PRC's "one China principle," coupled with the prospective defense of Taiwan by the United States and possibly Japan, creates in the PRC seething indignation and frustration.

The final chapter explains how the geostrategic rationale has emerged in the PRC as the confluence of several factors. It considers the influence of the geostrategic argument on PRC policy and addresses the implications for bilateral relations across the Taiwan Strait as well as for international politics in Asia. The chapter underscores the point that the cross-Strait relationship cannot be disentangled from the Sino-U.S. and Sino-Japanese relationships because a grand rivalry for access to space is at issue in the waters off China's coast. That strategic competition is complicated by Beijing's view that Taiwan should be part of China's dominion in a period when the island remains in the orbit of the PRC's chief rivals. Hence, for some strategists in the PRC, the quest for national rejuvenation, power, and international prestige makes the subordination of Taiwan a strategic imperative.