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China's Forbearance Has Limits: Chinese Threat and Retaliation Signaling and Its Implications for a Sino-American Military Confrontation

by Paul H.B. Godwin and Alice L. Miller



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Executive Summary

Since its founding in 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has employed military force in defense of China's security and territorial integrity. In many such instances, Beijing implemented a calculus of threat and retaliation signals intended first to deter an adversary from taking actions contrary to Chinese interests by threatening the use of military force and, if deterrence failed, to explain and justify Beijing's resort to military force.

This deterrence calculus was applied in each of the major instances in which Beijing has resorted to military force—in Korea in 1950, in the Sino-Indian border dispute in 1961–1962, in the Sino-Soviet border dispute in 1968–1969, and in China's attack on northern Vietnam in 1979. It was also applied in instances in which Beijing's effort at deterrence apparently succeeded and China ultimately stopped short of using military force. Examples include China's responses to the intensifying American combat effort in Vietnam in 1965–1968 and to the 1991 debates in Taipei about delimiting the Republic of China's sovereignty claims.

Beijing implements this deterrence calculus by a carefully calibrated hierarchy of official protests, authoritative press comment, and leadership statements. If the crisis persists and Beijing perceives its interests are not satisfactorily taken into account, its statements escalate in level and may include at first implicit and thereafter increasingly explicit warnings that it may use military force to achieve its goals. This approach has been employed consistently despite the sweeping changes in the PRC's place in the international order, the proliferation of foreign policy instruments at its disposal, the more complex crisis decisionmaking process and domestic political environment, and the dramatic evolution in the Chinese media over the decades.

Significant improvements in China's military capabilities, particularly in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) naval and air arms, have enhanced Beijing's ability to press its territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. Chinese actions, often in response to challenges by other claimants, have raised regional tensions. Moreover, Beijing has at times hardened its objections to U.S. military exercises, aerial surveillance, and intelligence collection in China's exclusive economic zone and in international airspace off its coasts. Aggressive maneuvers by Chinese military aircraft, fishing vessels, and civilian agency ships have led to serious incidents, including a collision between a PLA Navy (PLAN) fighter and a U.S. Navy reconnaissance aircraft that led to the death of the PLAN pilot.

The question for U.S. policymakers is whether improving military capabilities will lead Beijing to substitute sudden or surprise attack for the politically calibrated deterrence signaling it has employed prior to its past use of force. This study assesses the problem in four ways.

It first reviews China's use of force since 1949 to determine the motivations driving Beijing's employment of military coercion. Second, it assesses China's crisis decisionmaking process and crisis management. Third, it assesses the prospects for China's more aggressive use of military coercion in Asia's emerging security environment. Finally, Beijing's signaling of China's intent to employ military coercion is assessed in detail using a series of crisis case studies covering the years 1961–2004.

Although China's military capabilities are continuing to improve and its standing and involvement in the world have changed quite dramatically, this study concludes that the traditional calculus of threat and retaliation statements remains a central tool in Beijing's array of foreign policy and security instruments for responding to and managing tensions and disputes.

The historical instances where China has used military power can be divided into those cases when Beijing has employed significant military force and those cases when lesser military coercion has been employed. As one would anticipate, the forces employed reflect the immediacy of the perceived threat, the importance of the interest being threatened, and the capabilities of the opposing military forces.

Deterrence signaling has been more systematically and directly applied when Beijing has perceived a major military threat or strategic trend placing a high value interest in jeopardy. This includes all four of the Taiwan cases examined (in 1991, 1995–1996, 1999, and 2003–2004).

China's recognition of the power asymmetry between itself and the United States partially explains why none of the post-Korean War crises involving the United States evolved into direct military conflict. Chinese and American scholars agree that one characteristic of Sino-American crises is China's consistent policy of seeking to avoid a military confrontation with the United States even as it employed or threatened the use of military force.

This record does not, however, necessarily transfer to a potential Taiwan crisis. Here, some Chinese hold the view that whereas Taiwan involves a core interest for China, it is only of marginal strategic interest to the United States. Consequently, China should not be fearful of employing military force to deter Taiwan's *de jure* independence because the United States could well decide that a war with China over Taiwan is simply too costly given the island's low strategic value to the United States.

This view of the asymmetric importance of Taiwan to China and the United States reflects a broader Chinese perspective on past Sino-American crises. From a Chinese perspective, Sino-American crises did not occur in locales where core U.S. security interests were at stake. Whether in Korea, China's offshore islands, Vietnam, or Taiwan, China's interests were under greater threat because the locales were on or near China's national boundaries. More-

over, in crises over the offshore islands and Taiwan, China's territorial integrity and national sovereignty were at stake. These perceived asymmetries of interest contribute to China's view that U.S. policies and strategies are similar to those conducted by imperialist and hegemonic powers in the past.

This same perspective of asymmetric interests applies to China's maritime territorial claims in the South and East China Seas. Whereas Beijing recognizes a U.S. interest in freedom of navigation, any U.S. involvement in how these territorial disputes should be settled is unacceptable because the disputes do not involve U.S. strategic interests. For Beijing, these territorial disputes are sovereignty issues extending back to the 19th century when Japanese and Western imperialists began their violations of China's sovereignty. In China's view, they are not a matter where the United States has any legitimate interest.

Despite its commitment to the restoration of its own sovereignty over islands in the South and East China Seas, Beijing is reluctant to employ direct military coercion when its claims are challenged. These disputes do not constitute a direct threat to Chinese security, and the political, economic, and security consequences of a military confrontation between China and its neighbors, including those with mutual defense treaties with the United States, are evident. Beijing's resolve to avoid a military confrontation is particularly manifest with regard to the United States. Given the potentially grave consequences, if China does consider using military force, Beijing is almost certain to employ the same deterrence calculus it has maintained since the founding of the People's Republic. It would do so to minimize the possibility that it will have to use the military force on which the deterrence calculus ultimately rests and to reduce the costs if force is used.

China's application of the deterrence calculus in a future crisis would likely have the following characteristics:

- *Systematic integration of political and diplomatic action with military preparations as the signaling escalates through higher levels of authority.* Such preparations are often, if not always, overt and integrated into the political and diplomatic messages designed to deter the adversary from the course of action Beijing finds threatening.
- *Stating why China is justified in using military force should this prove necessary.* The message targets both domestic and international audiences. In essence, Beijing declares that it confronts a serious threat to its security and interests that if not terminated will require the use of military force.

- *Asserting that the use of military force is not Beijing's preferred resolution to the threat it faces, but one that will be forced upon it should the adversary not heed the deterrence warnings sent.* In short, Beijing's signaling strategy seeks to grant China the moral high ground in the emerging confrontation. Such an argument supports China's self-identification as a uniquely peaceful country that employs military force only in defense and when provoked by adversaries threatening its security or sovereignty. Presumably, Beijing believes that asserting the moral high ground in a confrontation can ease international response to any military action China might take and thereby reduce the political costs of employing military force.
- *Emphasizing that China's forbearance and restraint should not be viewed as weakness and that China is prepared to employ military force should that be necessary.*

Introduction

Since its founding in 1949, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has employed military force in pursuit of its national interests in security and territorial integrity. In many such instances, Beijing has deployed a calculus of threat and retaliation signals, first to deter an adversary from taking actions contrary to Beijing's interests by threatening use of Chinese military force, and then, once deterrence has failed, to explain and justify Beijing's resort to military force. Beijing has carefully sustained this calibrated hierarchy of official protests, authoritative press comment, and leadership statements despite the sweeping changes in the PRC's place in the international order, the proliferation of foreign policy instruments at its disposal, and the dramatic evolution in the Chinese media over the decades.

This study assesses the context and motivations of the PRC's use of military force since 1949. It then extracts Beijing's use of its calculus of warning statements in detail from several instances in which it has threatened and, in some cases, actually followed through with the use of military force to resolve a dispute. It offers several points to take into account in watching for and analyzing Beijing's use of this warnings calculus in contemporary contexts, and it offers a hypothetical scenario in which this calculus might appear in the context of China's claims in the South China Sea.

The Record: Beijing's Use of Military Force

Across the decades of the Cold War, Beijing faced dire threats to its security, first from the United States, then from the United States and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) together, and finally from the Soviet Union alone. In addition, the People's Republic inherited boundaries from the Republic of China regime that it defeated on the Chinese mainland in 1949. Those boundaries derived from the creation of national boundaries out of what before 1911 had been the frontiers of an empire—the Manchu Qing empire, which established hegemony over a vast stretch of East and Central Asia in the 18th century that included China itself. As such, the PRC inherited a roster of maritime territorial disputes with many of its neighbors. In that respect, Beijing shares similar security concerns with other nation-states that have emerged out of the international relations of empires in modern times, such as India and Indonesia.

Where China differs from most other states is a consequence of the yet-to-be-resolved civil war between the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Kuomintang (KMT), which established a government on Taiwan in 1949 following military defeat on the mainland. Beijing views Taiwan, together with any territory the government in Taipei administers, as properly

the sovereign domain of the PRC. The Taipei government is viewed simply as “the Taiwan authorities.” Preventing the permanent separation of Taiwan from China is one of Beijing’s “core interests” together with retaining Tibet and Xinjiang as inalienable parts of China. Taiwan, however, differs from these two regions in four critical ways. First is the reality that while those two regions are integral components of the PRC, Taiwan has functioned as a *de facto* independent state since the KMT’s retreat to the island. Moreover, beginning in the late 1980s Taiwan’s political system transitioned into a flourishing democracy providing a Chinese model of democratic political process contrasting sharply with the CCP’s political monopoly in the People’s Republic. Second, Taiwan has its own defense establishment and armed forces defending an island separated from the mainland by some 100 miles of water that even today provide a protective moat difficult for China’s armed forces to overcome with an amphibious assault. Third, from Beijing’s perspective, Taiwan is a potential security threat should the island ever ally with a hostile power. Fourth, and perhaps most significant for Beijing, is the relationship Taiwan has with the United States. Beijing views the American commitment to Taipei stemming from the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) of 1979, which was legislated following the U.S. shift of diplomatic recognition to the PRC, as totally unacceptable to China. It was this connection to the United States that provided the focus for China’s mid-1990s defense modernization programs that continue to this day.

Taiwan’s unique status in Beijing’s perception of threats to its security and national interests leads us to assess China’s employment of military force from two perspectives. The first perspective assesses China’s use of military force in circumstances not involving Taiwan as that of any state seeking to defend itself and its security, sovereign territories, and political interests from predatory adversaries. These security and national interest issues have varied in their degree of perceived threat, with the United States and the Soviet Union providing the most severe confrontations. Challenges to China’s territorial claims in the East and South China seas, on the other hand, have become important concerns for Beijing, but these sovereignty clashes are not major security threats requiring the allocation of significant military resources. The second perspective takes into account Beijing’s absolute commitment to preventing the permanent separation of Taiwan from the mainland. Any indication that Taipei may be moving toward *de jure* independence or that U.S. policy toward Taiwan is changing is always perceived by Beijing as an extremely serious risk requiring the threat or application of extensive military force. Consequently, although the deterrence signaling pattern will likely not change, the intensity of Beijing’s dedication to preventing any potential move toward the *de jure* independence of Taiwan and the reasons for this commitment are distinct enough to divide China’s use of military force into two categories, with Taiwan occupying a significantly different category from other cases.

The summaries and analyses below provide the contextual background and demonstrate the primary motivations for Beijing's employment of military coercion since 1949. They are not intended to provide detailed assessments of each event. In addition to treating Taiwan as a distinct case, we divide China's use of its military power into assessments of when Beijing has employed significant military force and when lesser military coercion has been employed. As one would anticipate, the forces employed reflect the immediacy of the perceived threat, the importance of the interest being threatened, and the capabilities of the opposing military forces. Deterrence signaling has been more systematically and directly applied when Beijing has perceived a major military threat or strategic trend placing a high-value interest in jeopardy.

China's Non-Taiwan-related Use of Military Force

Deterrence has provided the primary driver for China's application of significant military force since 1949. Beijing has overtly deployed major elements of its armed forces four times as a component of a deterrent strategy.¹ In each case, the intent of openly deploying and threatening the use of military force was to deter the adversary from continuing a course of action Beijing believed threatened high-value Chinese security and political interests. Three of these deterrent strategies failed and China went to war. China's October 1950 entrance into the Korean War followed Beijing's failure to deter U.S. forces from crossing the 38th parallel and entering the territory of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Beijing's objective was to preserve a bordering communist ally and thereby prevent the United States, commanding the United Nations coalition resisting the DPRK's invasion of the Republic of Korea (ROK), from unifying the peninsula and subsequently having forces poised directly on a Chinese border.

The brief 1962 border war with India was fought for more than preserving China's territorial claims along the Sino-Indian boundaries. A central issue for China was preservation of Tibet as an integral part of China. Tibet had become a target of U.S. subversion in the early 1950s. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operations supported insurgents and contributed to the Tibetan revolt of 1959, which together with the Dalai Lama's flight to India, Beijing saw as threatening China's control of the region. To improve access to Tibet, China had completed a road in 1957 from Xinjiang through the Aksai Chin border area claimed by India but designated Chinese on China's maps. This road provided the only military transport route to Tibet. Ultimately, beginning in 1958, negotiations over several years failed to resolve territorial disagreements that extended along major sectors of the Sino-Indian border. Failed negotiations together with minor border clashes led to a Chinese deterrent strategy that also failed to convince New Delhi to retreat from its military pressures to assert claims along the border. People's Liberation Army

(PLA) attacks began on October 20, 1962. Following Beijing's unilateral ceasefire in November, Chinese troops withdrew from whatever Indian territory they had entered during combat operations and returned to the positions they held prior to the war. Beijing was demonstrating that it sought no Indian territory but was defending Chinese territory. For Beijing, however, the core issue was ensuring China's continued control of Tibet.

The context of China's 1965–1973 deployment of military forces into the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) was similar to Korea in 1950. The core objective was to preserve a bordering communist ally against a common enemy. Beijing feared that with the buildup of its forces to 500,000 troops the United States would invade the DRV. The intent of China's overt deployment of PLA units into the DRV was to demonstrate China's willingness to go to war with the United States to preserve North Vietnam. This deterrent commitment was reinforced by the antiaircraft artillery units deployed into the DRV suffering casualties while engaging attacking U.S. aircraft, by PLA construction units keeping communication routes open under repeated U.S. air attack, and by Chinese fighters engaging U.S. aircraft that strayed into China's air space. Because the United States did not send ground forces across the 17th parallel into the DRV, Beijing could view this aspect of its deterrent strategy as successful.

The last major commitment of non-Taiwan-related military force was China's February 1979 attack on Vietnam.² The core issue driving this attack was Beijing's sense of growing geopolitical vulnerability. The newly unified Vietnam was viewed as functioning as a Soviet ally seeking to dominate Indochina even as the USSR was poised threateningly along the PRC's extensive northern border. To this sense of strategic vulnerability must be added Beijing's intense anger that North Vietnam—a communist ally that China had supported for more than two decades in its wars for independence and the unification of Vietnam—had turned against its most loyal benefactor. Vietnam's invasion of China's ally Cambodia in December 1978, after more than a year of escalating Sino-Vietnamese tensions, including armed provocations along their border, triggered what Beijing announced as a limited punitive cross-border assault, but the drivers were far more important than the trigger itself. If China did nothing to assist the Khmer Rouge, then Beijing would be viewed as rendered impotent by the emerging Vietnam-Soviet alliance. But China had no land border with Cambodia and thus chose to “punish” Vietnam. It is unlikely that Beijing expected Vietnam to withdraw from Cambodia, and Hanoi did not do so until September 1989. The decision to “teach Vietnam a lesson,” however, was directed as much to Moscow as it was to Hanoi.

China has employed lesser military resources for what (with one exception) were less demanding political and military objectives. That exception was the two firefights between Soviet

and Chinese forces in March 1969 on a contested island known as Zhenbao to Chinese and Damansky to Russians in the Ussuri River, which forms the local Sino-Russian border.³ Mounting military tension along their mutual border over the previous year, including minor border confrontations, led to Moscow's January 1969 warning that continued provocations would lead to the employment of military force. The first major firefight occurred on March 2 and was initiated by China. Although Beijing had made clear to Moscow its willingness to defend China against any Soviet military attack, the March 2 action was deliberately generated by China as some 300 Chinese troops purposely ambushed a Soviet patrol on Zhenbao Island. The second clash came on March 15, evidently initiated by Moscow in response to the Chinese ambush. This second firefight was much larger than the first, perhaps inflicting as many as 1,000 casualties on both sides. Minor military confrontations then continued along the extensive Sino-Soviet border throughout the year, apparently generated by Soviet forces. Moreover, Moscow redeployed a bomber squadron from Eastern Europe to a Central Asian base where it conducted exercises seemingly designed to prepare for an attack on China's Lanzhou nuclear facility.⁴ Tensions continued to build until a September 1969 meeting in the Beijing airport where Premiers Kosygin and Zhou Enlai agreed to reopen the border talks cancelled in 1964. The driver for the Chinese ambush remains unclear. There are two potential explanations. First, increasing Sino-Soviet tensions joined with the build-up of Soviet forces along the border, the Soviet Union's 1966 defense arrangement with Mongolia, the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the announcement of the Brezhnev doctrine, which led Mao Zedong to initiate a small military skirmish as a demonstration that China was not intimidated by the USSR's military power—a deterrence strategy. Second, this open resistance to the USSR was designed to lay the groundwork for a Sino-American rapprochement. No matter which explanation is valid (and they are not mutually contradictory), Beijing could not have anticipated the Soviets extending the military clashes throughout the year until the two premiers met in September.

Confrontations over Maritime Claims

Other Chinese employments of non-Taiwan-related, small-scale military force have primarily occurred in the South China Sea where two sets of issues are involved: sovereignty and resources. China claims sovereignty over all South China Sea land features including the two major island groups contained in those waters—the Paracel and Spratly Islands—a claim paralleled by Taiwan as the Republic of China. China's claim to the Paracels is contested only by Vietnam. Beijing's Spratly claim is contested by other Southeast Asian maritime states. Vietnam claims the entire island group, the Philippines claims 53 of its land features, and Malaysia claims

12. Brunei does not claim any of the islands, but does claim part of the South China Sea nearest to it as part of its continental shelf and exclusive economic zone (EEZ). In 1984, Brunei declared an EEZ that includes Louisa Reef. Resource issues revolve around fisheries and energy deposits in equally contested EEZs. China has vigorously objected whenever foreign oil companies have acquired exploration rights to blocks in contested areas of the South China Sea, to include threats against these companies.

Seizure of the southern Paracel (Xisha) Islands from South Vietnam in 1974 was triggered by Saigon's September 1973 all-encompassing claim to the Spratly Islands, which it underscored by sending troops to occupy two of the Spratlys' largest islands. Beijing responded in January 1974 by reasserting China's claim to all South China Sea islands and threatening the use of military force if Saigon did not withdraw its occupying troops from the Spratlys. Although both governments claimed all the Paracels, China occupied the northeastern group of islands known as the Amphitrites while South Vietnam occupied the southwestern or Crescent Group. To affirm its January claim to all South China Sea islands, Chinese troops placed flags on several lightly defended Crescent islands in January 1974. Tensions accelerated from that point on.⁵ Chinese troops had occupied Duncan (Chenhang) Islet in the Crescents. Vietnamese forces attempting to recover the island on January 19 were thrown back, so supporting naval vessels began a shore bombardment. These ships were engaged by a PLA Navy (PLAN) flotilla of small ships that forced the Vietnamese away. On January 20, China landed some 500 troops to take control of remaining Crescent group islets held by the Vietnamese, thereby occupying all the Paracels. MiG fighters based on Hainan provided air support for the Chinese assaults. Following the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese border war, Hanoi dispatched three small gunboats to observe the Paracels. Chinese naval vessels interdicted and captured them. The year 1988 saw another small Sino-Vietnamese military engagement, this time over a contested islet in the Spratly (Nansha) Islands. A PLAN flotilla of three frigates was patrolling the Spratlys with the intent of chasing off any Vietnamese ships landing forces on the islets. On March 13, while pursuing a Vietnamese transport ship near Johnson (Chigua) Reef where China was building an ocean surveillance facility, a PLAN frigate spotted Vietnamese vessels in the area. On March 14, both Chinese and Vietnamese troops attempted to land on Johnson Reef. A Vietnamese transport ship providing fire support for the Vietnamese troops bombarded the Chinese forces. The PLAN frigates then sank the transport ship and an accompanying landing craft while damaging another transport vessel. The engagement lasted perhaps 90 minutes with some 70 Vietnamese casualties.

Beginning sometime in 1994, China started building structures on Mischief Reef in the Spratlys, which were also claimed by the Philippines. This was the first time China had occupied

a reef claimed by one of the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member states. These construction activities, perhaps under the direction of China's navy, were discovered by the Philippines in January 1995. Other than a possible PLAN connection with the construction, there was no direct use of military force by China. Despite the friction created by China's occupation and construction on Mischief Reef, Beijing and Manila agreed to a diplomatic resolution, no matter how tentative, when on August 10, 1995, they signed "A Joint Statement on PRC-RP [Republic of the Philippines] Consultations on the South China Sea and other Areas of Cooperation." Nonetheless, territorial and maritime disagreements with occasional confrontations have continued (including the 2012 confrontation over Scarborough Shoal).

Even as Chinese naval exercises in the South China Sea have increased over time with improving PLAN capabilities, Beijing has sought to avoid excessively provocative naval presence by handing responsibility for regular patrolling of politically sensitive waters and land features to vessels and aircraft from civilian agencies such as the State Oceanic Administration, its subordinate Marine Surveillance Force, and the Bureau of Fisheries Administration.⁶ It is these civilian vessels that have been employed to challenge and detain fishing boats from other states operating in Chinese-claimed waters, to identify oil rigs Beijing claims are exploring in Chinese waters, and to harass non-Chinese seismic vessels searching for energy-rich locations. Charges of illegal energy exploration are also raised through diplomatic channels. China has employed similar methods in the waters surrounding uninhabited islands in the East China Sea known as the Diaoyus to China and the Senkakus to Japan, which administers the islands and contests Beijing's claim.

China's assertion of its territorial and resource claims led to ASEAN's effort to establish a "code of conduct" to discourage aggressive behavior and minimize the probability of armed clashes among the South China Sea claimants. Established in 2002 as a political declaration, this nonbinding commitment has made little progress in transforming into a legally binding document, which is ASEAN's intent. It should not be assumed, however, that all South China Sea armed clashes have been generated by China's behavior. Vietnamese soldiers have fired on a Philippine fishing boat, Chinese fishing boats have been rammed and sunk by Philippine naval vessels, and Vietnamese have fired on a Philippine reconnaissance aircraft. Although undoubtedly primarily focused on constraining China's behavior, the code of conduct sought would encompass all ASEAN members.

Harassment of U.S. Sea and Air Intelligence Missions

Beijing has frequently expressed objections to U.S. aerial reconnaissance missions off China's coast and intelligence-collection ships operating in China's EEZ, and also to U.S. Navy exercises

in China's EEZ. Meetings of the U.S.-China Military Maritime Consultative Agreement (MMCA) have often been used to raise objections to American surveillance operations. With equal frequency the United States has stated that U.S. reconnaissance aircraft are operating legally in international airspace and the ocean surveillance ships are equally free of legal restraint when operating in China's EEZ, as are U.S. naval exercises. Although Beijing has selected interpretation of international law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), as China's tool to challenge the U.S. position, the tension is more based on Beijing's quest to establish greater control over what it perceives as threatening military operations close to China. From Beijing's point of view, U.S. aircraft and ships conducting these missions are collecting military intelligence that threatens China's security and are doing so in sea and air space critical to China's defense. Indeed, the Yellow, East, and South China Seas are referred to by Beijing as China's "near seas." These two conflicting perspectives show no sign of being resolved and suggest that incidents such as the 2001 PLAN F-8 collision with a USN EP-3 aircraft and harassment of United States Naval Ship (USNS) ocean surveillance ships by aircraft and vessels of China's civilian maritime agencies and fishing boats will continue.⁷

Nonetheless, there have been no reported incidents of confrontations between U.S. air- and sea-based intelligence collectors and Chinese aircraft or ships since the 2009 incident with the USNS *Impeccable* in the South China Sea. Moreover, Beijing has evidently decided that, as with its patrolling of politically sensitive waters created by competing territorial claims in the South China Sea, it will not protest USNS intelligence-collection missions with Chinese naval vessels as it did in 2001 and 2002 when challenging the USNS *Bowditch* in the Yellow Sea. Since those two incidents, ships and aircraft of civilian law enforcement agencies from the State Oceanic Administration's China Marine Surveillance Force and the Ministry of Agriculture's Fisheries Law Enforcement Command have performed this task, suggesting Beijing seeks to limit the possibility of escalation even as China demonstrates its objection to U.S. intelligence collection. It is unclear whether Chinese commercial fishing vessels involved in harassment actions are under the direct command of these agencies when they interfere with USNS ships, but it is reasonable to assume that some form of direction and communication is involved. Lack of data does not allow any assessment of the degree of "shadowing" of U.S. aerial intelligence that is currently undertaken by the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF) or PLAN aviation.

China's Taiwan-related Use of Force⁸

Following their 1949 defeat on the mainland and the transfer of the seat of the Republic of China's (ROC) government to Taiwan, KMT forces continued to occupy islands close to

the PRC coastline. These islands were used as bases for harassing actions against the mainland, including coastal raids, attacks on coastal shipping, seizing fishing craft, and firing on and sometimes seizing foreign shipping headed for mainland ports—essentially a blockade strategy. Beijing's ultimate objective was to conclude the civil war by eliminating the KMT's control of Taiwan. But before an assault on Taiwan could be undertaken, the PRC had to gain control of the offshore islands. As the operations to seize control of the offshore islands and preparations for the assault on Taiwan got underway, the outbreak of the Korean War in June 1950 put both into suspension. In 1953, even as the armistice that ended the fighting in July was being negotiated in Panmunjom, PLA operations to eject KMT forces from the offshore islands began once again.

As the second sustained effort to gain control of the offshore islands began,⁹ Beijing's concern was that the United States was committed to the permanent separation of Taiwan from China. President Truman's deployment of U.S. 7th Fleet warships into the Taiwan Strait at the opening of the Korean War and their basing in Taiwan was but one indicator. Beijing saw further evidence in Truman's 1950 statement that the occupation of Taiwan by "Communist forces" was a direct threat to the United States and the Pacific, and in 1951 that the future status of Taiwan had yet to be determined. The PLA's August–November 1954 artillery bombardment of Jinmen and Matzu islands off Fujian Province was in part designed to deter Taiwan and the United States from concluding a mutual security treaty by demonstrating Beijing's commitment to the "liberation" of Taiwan in the face of American military power. It had the opposite result. In September the United States dispatched major elements of the 7th Fleet close to Jinmen and Matzu in response.

Although neither President Eisenhower nor Secretary of State John Foster Dulles initially favored such a treaty, in December 1954 China's military pressure on Jinmen and Matzu, followed by successful assaults on the Dachen Islands and Yijiangshan Island, led to just the mutual security treaty Beijing was trying to avoid. Later in 1955, the United States included in its commitment the threat to use nuclear weapons in the defense of Taiwan.¹⁰ The single plausible successful political outcome for Beijing was that the treaty did not commit the United States to defense of the offshore islands. KMT forces continued to use the islands it did occupy as bases to harass the nearby coast of Fujian Province, so in 1958 Beijing resumed the artillery bombardment of Jinmen. In essence, the PLA was attempting an artillery blockade of the island. Despite the deliberate limitation included in their mutual security treaty, the United States assisted Taiwan by escorting its resupply ships to Jinmen harbor. Chinese artillery fired on the Taiwan ships but not U.S. vessels or aircraft. Nor did U.S. ships and aircraft fire on Chinese targets. U.S. forces, like those of the PLA, followed

strictly enforced rules of engagement (ROE) designed to prevent clashes. Ultimately, the artillery blockade of Jinmen became too burdensome for China. Beijing, however, continued a bizarre artillery shelling campaign of Jinmen on odd days of the month until the January 1, 1979, normalization of Sino-American relations, but with explosive ordnance usually replaced by propaganda leaflets. Beijing's perspective was that the future liberation of Taiwan was far more important than risking war with the United States to gain control of what few offshore islands remained in KMT hands. Nonetheless, for the four decades and more following the Jinmen-Matzu confrontation, whenever China employed military force to coerce Taiwan it resulted in American military and political responses detrimental to Beijing.

The most dramatic Chinese demonstration of military force to influence Taiwan and the United States since 1958 took place in 1995 and 1996 through a series of military exercises that included the test firing of unarmed ballistic missiles into waters off Taiwan.¹¹ The July–August and November 1995 displays of military capabilities were in response to the United States granting a visa to Taiwan's President, Lee Teng-hui, for a private visit in June to speak at his alma mater, Cornell University, where his speech repeatedly praised the virtues of the “Republic of China on Taiwan.” Beijing had understood the visa would not be granted, but congressional pressure resulted in its issue.

The March 1996 display of military strength was evidently intended to warn President Lee, who was expected to retain the presidency in the coming election (he did), to cease what Beijing perceived as political moves toward Taiwan's independence. Both sets of exercises were also deterrence messages intended to warn Washington and Taipei that China was ready and willing to employ military force to prevent Taiwan independence with or without U.S. military intervention. To ensure its military exercises were not misunderstood and seen as preparations to invade Taiwan, on March 5 Beijing announced both the impact areas of its missile tests and the times and locations of the military exercises. As added insurance against such misperception of the second series of military demonstrations, Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu used his scheduled visit to Washington in March at the invitation of the United States to assure his hosts that missile tests were routine exercises. Unfortunately for Vice Foreign Minister Liu, the first missile shots were fired the day before he arrived in Washington on March 8. As a consequence, he confronted a somewhat hostile audience and a particularly angry Secretary of Defense in William Perry.

Washington had issued only a somewhat muted response to the 1995 exercises. The USS *Nimitz* aircraft carrier battlegroup had transited the Taiwan Strait in December, but no U.S. statement accompanied the transit. Despite the assurances given by a high-ranking Chinese

official, the U.S. response to the March 1996 exercises was distinctly different. The U.S. Department of State described the missile firings as “reckless and potentially dangerous,” and two aircraft carrier battlegroups were dispatched to the Taiwan area. Beijing had anticipated one battlegroup, but two were seen as an overreaction to what were declared normal exercises.

Assessment

Over the past 62 years, certain patterns have emerged in China's periodic employment of military force to achieve security and political objectives. Beijing has exhibited a consistent approach to threats viewed as high level and of immediate strategic importance to China's security. China's responses to lower level and less immediate threats have shown a different and not necessarily consistent pattern. Whenever Beijing has perceived immediate major threats to security issues of high-level importance to China, it has sought to deter the adversary by warning of its commitment to go to war to protect these interests. Overt deployment of military forces has been an integral component of this deterrent strategy. Korea 1950, India 1962, Vietnam 1965–1973, and Vietnam 1979 are the principal examples. At no time, with the possible exception of the 1969 border clashes with the Soviet Union, has China risked major war without warning the adversary of this consequence should it not cease the course of action identified as threatening in Beijing's deterrence signals. Having the most militarily powerful state in the world poised as an adversary on China's border, which was the situation Beijing confronted in 1950, was a major threat to China's security. Neither was Beijing's concern over Tibet's future a minor security issue in the 1962 border war with India. Nor was a potential U.S. invasion of the DRV in 1965–1968 a marginal issue, for it was seen in much the same perspective as U.S. forces crossing Korea's 38th parallel. A Vietnam-Soviet alliance dominating Indochina was threatening to China's security in 1979.

Lesser threats to Chinese security and political interests have shown a systematic if not necessarily consistent pattern of responses. From Beijing's perspective, China's maritime interests and sovereignty claims have been clearly stated for many decades. What Beijing has perceived are challenges to these territorial claims and to associated interests in fishing and energy resources. In this sense, given the effort China has made to publicly assert these claims, such challenges are deterrence failures which require a response. Beijing has responded to each challenge individually and with only limited and rare military coercion. Because the challengers have been relatively weak militarily and the use of force was not expected to draw in the major powers, Beijing could tailor its military response to what was judged as necessary for the immediate challenge. Although in January 1974 Beijing did warn Saigon to withdraw its

troops who had recently occupied the Spratly Islands or confront China's use of military force, Beijing's immediate action in seizing the Paracels can best be described as a response to a weak Saigon's claim to the Spratlys. The Republic of Vietnam was facing the DRV's military power alone following the withdrawal of U.S. forces 10 months earlier. Beijing probably judged the United States as unlikely to come to the DRV's assistance in part because of the withdrawal and in part because of the Sino-American rapprochement underway since 1972. The use of military coercion in China's occupation of the Spratly's Johnson Reef in 1988 was a function of Chinese and Vietnamese forces clashing over control of the reef. Both were prepared to fight but neither had planned the confrontation. China's 1994 occupation and construction on Mischief Reef did not involve the application of military force. When the construction activity was discovered in January 1995 by a Filipino fisherman, Manila raised strong objections but chose a diplomatic agreement rather than trying to eject China with military force.

China's occupation of Johnson and Mischief reefs had definite political costs, but Beijing was evidently willing to accept them. Nonetheless, Beijing was sensitive to the political costs of being perceived as aggressive in asserting its territorial and resource claims; this sensitivity can be seen in the passing of responsibility to vessels and aircraft from civilian agencies for regular patrolling of politically sensitive waters and enforcement of Chinese jurisdiction over waters it claims. At times, but particularly during the years 2009–2011, these civilian agencies have aggressively asserted Chinese claims. They have detained Vietnamese fishing boats and harassed Vietnamese and Philippine seismic ships conducting hydrocarbon surveys in their claimed EEZs. However, for the past 24 years Beijing has not used its armed forces to enforce China's territorial claims or eject other states from islets and other South China Sea land features they occupy. But even as Beijing has delegated to civilian agencies the responsibility for policing and upholding China's claims, it does so under the protective shadow of China's navy. PLAN exercises in the East and South China Seas, including naval aviation, are no doubt designed in part as a clear demonstration of China's military capabilities and readiness. It is thus plausible to assess these responses to what Beijing perceives as infringements on China's sovereignty as tactical reactions to an immediate incident with the possibility of military coercion present but not actually threatened. China's support for ASEAN's "code of conduct" for all parties with territorial and maritime claims in the South China Sea suggests there is a diplomatic path Beijing is willing to pursue. Beijing's support, however, appears dependent on perceiving the United States as neutral in these disputes. At this time, Beijing publicly states it doubts U.S. neutrality.

A similar assessment can be made of Beijing's responses to U.S. oceanic and aerial intelligence-collection missions. Although Beijing views these missions as security threats, they

are not deemed sufficiently dangerous to warrant a military confrontation with a military as powerful as the capabilities deployed in the Western Pacific by the United States. Consequently, because the United States conducts them despite China's protests, Beijing's reactions are tactical responses to individual intelligence-collection missions asserting China's continuing objections. With the possible exception of China's reaction to aerial sorties (because we have no real data on them), these reactions have minimized military involvement, leaving the task primarily to civilian agency law enforcement vessels and aircraft joined with fishing boats, which we assume are in some way directed by the agency vessels.

Beijing's opposition to the permanent separation of Taiwan from China is based on both nationalist and security grounds, with nationalism being the strongest driver. Beijing's willingness to risk major war to prevent such a separation has been made eminently clear since the PRC was founded in 1949. The 1954 mutual security pact between Taiwan and United States did not give Beijing reason to retreat from this stance. Nor did the 1955 U.S. threat to use nuclear weapons in the defense of Taiwan give pause to Beijing's commitment.¹² Moreover, the United States post-normalization 1979 Taiwan Relations Act is viewed as an extension of the original security treaty and has had little if any effect on Beijing's resolve. Beijing's commitment to risking major war with the United States to prevent separation cannot be doubted, as the military exercises of 1995 and 1996 were intended to remind Taipei and Washington. Beijing is now most concerned with preventing or reversing any perceived trend by Taipei to seek *de jure* independence.

Prospects

China's military capabilities have increased significantly over the past 30 years to the point where it is now militarily the most powerful Asian state. With its strategic nuclear deterrent undergoing modernization together with the PLA's conventional general purpose forces, and a defense industrial base becoming increasingly technologically proficient, there can be no doubt that China will remain Asia's leading military power. The most difficult question is whether this will lead necessarily to a more aggressive use of military force than China has demonstrated over the past 62 years. There are, nonetheless, indicators suggesting that changes in China's security environment have reduced rather than increased the possibilities for military confrontation with the United States. Moreover, within PLA doctrinal development, increasing capabilities are as much related to deterrence as they are to offensive operations.

China's growing military power over these years has been accompanied by a radical change in its security environment—a change that has potential for considerable effect on Beijing's use

of military coercion. Far from the revolutionary state it was in 1949, China is now part of, even if not fully integrated into, the global and regional institutions of trade, commerce, and security. Much of China's dramatic economic growth can be attributed to its extensive involvement in the global economy. China's continued economic expansion and industrial sophistication depend on its continued participation in the globalized economy and the multilateral institutions that guide it, such as the World Trade Organization. As a permanent, veto-wielding member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), China has considerable influence on that institution's decisions. China is also equally present in Asia's multilateral regional security institutions such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, thereby exercising influence on their decisions. The consequence of these changes is that China's economic future and security depend extensively on a continued effective working relationship with global and regional institutions.

China's growing dependence on the globalized economy joined with its active membership in Asia's multilateral security organizations mean that any employment of military coercion will be assessed by the members of these institutions as an indicator of Beijing's strategic intentions. Applying military coercion in the Asian region would confirm the views of those who see China's growing military capabilities as leading to a more aggressive use of military force in the future. Such a perception would not serve China well. Should China be perceived as a major threat to regional security and stability, then the accommodating international environment Beijing needs to achieve its economic objectives could well fade.

With these changes in its security environment and dependence on a globalized economy and its institutions, Beijing is also well aware that its growing military capabilities are viewed with some concern across much of the Asian region. In particular, Beijing is fully aware of apprehension in Washington that its strategic intent is to displace the United States as the leading military power in the Western Pacific. Moreover, it is aware that U.S. regional alliances have been strengthened partly as a consequence of regional concern over China's increasing military power. Adding to these sources of tension, Beijing confronts the reality that the United States, no matter how restrained the actual transfers are, continues to serve as the primary source of Taiwan's advanced military acquisitions and that the AirSea Battle (ASB) concept recently incorporated into U.S. military planning was originally devised as an operational concept to offset China's military capabilities in a Sino-American confrontation over Taiwan.

These developments are taking place even as Beijing's relations with Taipei in recent years have improved to the best they have been since 1949. Trade and commerce are expanding; Taiwan citizens operate businesses and live on the mainland; communications and travel are now easier; cross-strait tourism is growing; academic contacts are increasing; and in all ways except

political and military Taipei and Beijing are more accommodating to each other than at any time since the KMT's defeat in the civil war. Certainly China continues to assert its right to employ military coercion against Taiwan should Beijing perceive such action necessary and China's defense modernization programs continue to enhance the PLA's capabilities to do so even in the event of U.S. military intervention. Nonetheless, the chances of a cross-strait military confrontation are now among the lowest they have been since 1949.

Across the Asia region, China's continental borders are basically quiet with territorial issues either resolved or subject to mutual management, as is the case of Beijing's territorial disputes with New Delhi.¹³ There can be no doubt that India views China as a very dangerous potential adversary, but New Delhi and Beijing have mutually accepted that diplomacy rather than military coercion is the most effective way of responding to their longstanding territorial claims. This conflict management approach is sustained even as India upgrades the capabilities of its conventional general purpose forces and strategic nuclear deterrent, and establishes a working relationship with the United States. Beijing must view these developments with interest if not concern, particularly given the attention India now receives from the United States. Nevertheless, Beijing evidently and cautiously accepts that diplomacy is the most effective approach to manage what otherwise could become a disruptive security relationship.

The most problematic security and sovereignty issues for Beijing other than Taiwan are the far-from-resolved maritime territorial and resource disputes China has with its neighbors. While insisting that its sovereignty claims cannot be negotiated away, Beijing's strategy over the past couple of years has been to lessen military coercion even as its civilian agencies have become aggressive in their monitoring and enforcement of China's maritime claims. PLAN exercises in the South and East China Seas and in the Yellow Sea and Western Pacific are designed at least in part as a deterrent strategy complementing the enforcement roles of civilian agency ships and aircraft, but they are also intended to minimize active military participation in conflicting maritime claims.

The question emerging from this set of circumstances is whether they increase or decrease the probability of a military confrontation between China and the United States. Given the relationship between Taipei and Beijing that has developed over the past 4 years, and the potential economic, political, and security costs to China of an attack on Taiwan, the probability of a Sino-American military confrontation over Taiwan appears slim at best. Taipei clearly has no intent of declaring Taiwan's *de jure* independence and has every intent of sustaining the status quo. The employment of military coercion by Beijing under these circumstances, particularly an attempt to suppress Taipei's defenses with a massive missile and

air attack before the United States could bring sufficient forces to bear, would confirm the views of those who see China's long-term strategic objective as replacing the United States as the Western Pacific's leading military power. Such a perception would significantly undermine Beijing's longstanding effort to be perceived as a constructive, responsible member of the international community. This in turn would certainly have undesirable consequences for China's global economic and commercial links. The potential costs of being perceived as an active threat to regional security and stability when compared with working within the current Beijing-Taipei relationship reduce to a minimum the probability of a Sino-American military clash over Taiwan.

A Sino-American military confrontation emerging from China's territorial and resource claims in the South and East China Seas appears equally improbable. Although sovereignty is at stake and the resources involved in the competing claims are important, they do not reach the same level of significance for China as Taiwan. It is improbable that Beijing would reverse a strategy that has minimized the employment of military coercion for 24 years unless its claims are challenged with military force by another claimant. That seems extremely unlikely. Nor is an effort by Beijing to control the Malacca Strait in order to protect China's ship-borne commerce at all probable. All of Southeast, East, and Northeast Asia are dependent on secure sea lines of communication (SLOCs) through the South China Sea. Apart from piracy problems, such security exists. What incentive would China have to raise regional apprehension and what would be an immediate U.S. response to a freedom of navigation challenge to a critical international SLOC?

A military confrontation over U.S. military exercises and surveillance in China's EEZ and aerial reconnaissance missions in international air space off China's coast also seems improbable. Beijing's objections to these activities have been strongly and repeatedly stated. Thus far, however, harassment of USNS ships conducting ocean surveillance has been conducted by Chinese fishing trawlers and civilian agency patrol vessels and maritime surveillance aircraft. Chinese fighters have shadowed U.S. reconnaissance aircraft, which led to the accidental collision between a USN EP-3 and PLAN F-8 and the death of the Chinese pilot. This collision, however, was attributable to an aggressive PLAN pilot rather than a deliberate ramming. Similarly, the collision of a Chinese submarine with the towed array of a U.S. Navy destroyer was certainly inadvertent. No submarine commander would risk the danger to his boat and crew by conducting a deliberate submerged collision.¹⁴ For the past decade Beijing has not backed up its objections to what are essentially U.S. military intelligence missions with a systematic program of military harassment. Doing so would raise Sino-American tensions to a level that would not serve either

China or the United States well. What is most noticeable is the absence since 2009 of any confrontations between USNS ships operating in China's EEZ and either PLA navy or civilian law enforcement ships and aircraft.

Whether it is possible to come to an arrangement whereby both U.S. and Chinese interests can be accommodated is uncertain. What is clear is that China has not risked a military confrontation with the United States over the issues of aerial reconnaissance, ocean surveillance, and naval exercises. China's strategy, if there is a systematic strategy behind what have thus far been tactical responses to specific U.S. actions, takes the following pattern:

- Sustain the legal campaign challenging the U.S. position that international law and UNCLOS allow military-related freedom of navigation (FON) in a state's EEZ.
- Sustain a diplomatic component where Beijing raises U.S. military-related activities in its EEZ as a constant source of friction in Sino-American relations, particularly the relationship between the two defense establishments.
- Maintain the threat of a tactical campaign tracking and harassing U.S. military activities in China's EEZ and the international airspace off China's coast.

Assuming such a strategy is in place, the chances of a military confrontation stemming from a Chinese action are minimal. Other than the 2001 and 2002 incidents with the USNS *Bowditch*, harassment of USNS ocean surveillance ships has been undertaken by Chinese fishing trawlers and civil agency patrol vessels, not by PLAN ships. Certainly accidents such as the 2001 USN EP-3 collision with a PLAN F-8 and the June 2009 submerged Chinese submarine collision with the towed sonar array of a U.S. destroyer can occur, but accidents do not necessarily lend themselves to shooting wars, particularly when both sides are aware that accidents can occur. Nonetheless, such incidents do contain the possibility of escalating into political crises neither government desires, and the 1998 MMCA has not proven to be effective in this realm. It would be prudent therefore to seek an arrangement with China similar to the 1972 Incidents at Sea Agreement (INCSEA) that the United States arranged with the Soviet Union.¹⁵ A major purpose of such an arrangement would be to prevent collisions and other incidents from escalating into unwanted political crises.

Whereas the circumstances surrounding Beijing's security environment and the policies China has pursued argue against the possibility of a military confrontation, there is an underlying Sino-American mutual strategic distrust that is potentially dangerous. That danger is

the transformation of what is now a strategic rivalry to a relationship of mutual hostility. The United States has been the principal figure in the Asia-Pacific security environment since the close of World War II with an established structure of regional alliances and security agreements throughout the region. Despite Beijing's declarations to the contrary, Washington is apprehensive that China's strategic intent is to replace the United States as the leading power in the Asia-Pacific region. Beijing fears Washington's intent is to prevent China from assuming the role of the region's principal power as its military capabilities increase. These apprehensions exist even as Beijing and Washington recognize the need for cooperation if Asia is to remain stable—a need recognized across the region. What both Washington and Beijing have yet to achieve is a mutual understanding and acceptance of what military capabilities each needs to protect its legitimate regional defense requirements. Thus whereas the current and near-term circumstances forming their respective security environments suggest only a minimal chance for China and the United States to become involved in a military confrontation, the future remains at best uncertain.

The Surprise Attack Option

Although this assessment has discussed the global and regional political and economic dynamics that lessen the probability of Beijing moving toward a more aggressive use of military force as its capabilities increase, one further query must be addressed: will China's expanding military capabilities lead Beijing to move from a political-military signaling strategy designed to deter an adversary from a course of action prior to the use of force to a strategy seeking to exploit the military advantages of surprise attack without such prior warning? Before briefly exploring this question it is necessary to provide a working definition of surprise attack. In this assessment, *surprise attack* is defined as an attack the adversary does not anticipate or, if anticipated, that occurs at an unanticipated place or time. Operational surprise is a longstanding core component of the PLA's "active defense" doctrine extending back to the 1930s. The military objective of a surprise attack is to seize the initiative in the opening phase of a military operation. To cite but two examples, Beijing's October 1950 entrance into the Korean War following its deterrence failure was not anticipated by the United States. Chinese forces implemented a planned operational surprise by crossing the Yalu River at night to cover their movement. In 1979, Beijing's signaling had made clear to Vietnam that an attack was imminent but not where and when it would take place. The PLA's February multiple axis attack across the Sino-Vietnam border was designed and implemented as an operational surprise.

Surprise attack is not only a central component of PLA military doctrine, but the mobilization of military forces frequently used as an element of Beijing's signaling strategy also serves this military purpose. Should Beijing conclude that its deterrence signaling is failing and military coercion will be necessary, the forces mobilized as a component of the deterrence signaling can provide the PLA the capability to conduct a surprise attack. The forces that crossed the Yalu River in October 1950 and those conducting the multiple axis assaults into Vietnam in 1979 were overtly mobilized prior to their employment in a surprise attack. The question emerging from this longstanding practice is what conditions would cause Beijing to conclude that the military advantages provided by surprise attack exceed those sought by deterrence signaling?

This is an inherently difficult query to assess because for the 63 years since the People's Republic of China was established Beijing has employed a deterrence signaling strategy whenever it perceived a major military threat to China's security or sovereignty. Similarly, in Beijing's maritime territorial disputes with its neighbors where China's security does not confront a major threat but rather a dispute over sovereignty, Beijing has chosen to police its sovereignty claims with ships from civilian law enforcement agencies. Certainly the shadow of China's navy is omnipresent, but the PLAN is not responsible for policing or enforcing China's claims. Even the future of Taiwan, the PRC's most sacrosanct sovereignty issue, is dealt with through a process of deterrence signaling that integrates political, diplomatic, and military actions. Beijing has consistently sought to convince Taipei and Washington that military coercion will be employed should Taiwan move toward *de jure* independence, but this threat provides the underpinning for the far more prominent political, diplomatic, and economic strategy designed to bind Taiwan closer to the mainland.

The single condition where Beijing could conceivably conclude that the military advantages of a surprise attack exceed those sought by deterrence signaling appears to be where military success can be swiftly achieved and the adversary politically and militarily neutralized. The only potential example of this choice is China's seizure of the Crescent Group in the Paracel Islands from the Republic of Vietnam in January 1974. The withdrawal of U.S. forces from the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) in March 1973, joined with Washington's commitment to the 1972 Sino-American rapprochement, left Saigon with no viable ally as it fought Hanoi's invading forces. Beijing could properly conclude from these conditions that South Vietnam was on its way to isolation as the January clashes took place. Even in this example, however, it must be recalled that Beijing threatened military coercion in early January if Saigon did not remove its forces from the Spratly Islands it had occupied following the RVN's September 1973 sovereignty claim.

Whereas operational and tactical surprise will remain a core component of PLA doctrine, it is unlikely Beijing will conclude as the PLA's military capabilities increase that, in responding to threats to high-value security or sovereignty interests, the advantages of surprise attack exceed those sought by deterrence signaling that includes the mobilization of military forces. It is possible, for example, to develop a scenario where Beijing chooses to launch a massive surprise missile and air attack on Taiwan to crush the island's defenses before the United States can intervene with forces sufficient to offset China's military advantages. Such a scenario, however, has to ignore past Chinese responses to anything Beijing perceives as a move toward independence or a change in the U.S. policy of not supporting Taiwan independence. In each case, China has quickly if not immediately threatened military coercion. In each case, the United States has made clear to China that its policy has not changed and Taipei has ultimately backed down from the statements or actions that led to Beijing's forceful response. Moreover, neither China nor the United States seeks a military confrontation over Taiwan. Both seek to avoid such a confrontation because the consequences, although not known, are potentially so severe for the security interests of both.

The threat of surprise attack seems limited to those situations where Beijing can realistically expect a quick military success followed by the neutralization of the adversary. Any such attack on U.S. forces, even if it achieves initial military success, is unlikely to be followed by the political and military neutralization of the United States. The more probable result, as Beijing no doubt appreciates, is the creation of a state of war between China and the United States. That probable consequence is enough to convince Beijing that in an emerging potential military confrontation with the United States, the deterrence signaling it has practiced for decades has far better promise of an acceptable outcome than surprise attack.

China's Crisis Decisionmaking Process and Crisis Management

Although defining a political-military "crisis" can become extremely complicated, this analysis will employ a simple definition. A *crisis* is defined as an unanticipated event perceived as threatening high-level interests of at least one set of decisionmakers while providing only a limited time for response.¹⁶

Dynamics Influencing Crisis Behavior

- elite perceptions and beliefs

- perceptions of the international environment

- domestic politics and public opinion
- decisionmaking structure and processes
- information and intelligence receipt and processing
- distinctive features that may be unique to one of the participants.¹⁷

It is entirely plausible that decisionmakers confronting a political-military crisis may have distinctly different perceptions and beliefs from their counterparts on the other side, and that these will lead to different perceptions of the international environment within which the crisis is evolving and the influence of domestic politics and public opinion on their decisions. That is, even before the crisis decisionmaking process is activated and the information and intelligence on the events leading to the crisis evaluated, the parties to the crisis could be approaching each other with distinctly different understandings of what the events entail for their interests. In some cases, the perceived importance of the interest will vary considerably between the two countries. Negotiating a resolution to the crisis therefore requires some understanding of each other's beliefs about what is at stake for what particular interests.

Sino-American Asymmetries: Chinese Views¹⁸

From a Chinese perspective, Sino-American crises did not occur in locales where core security interests of the United States were at stake. Whether in Korea, China's offshore islands, Vietnam, Hainan, or Taiwan, China's interests were under greater threat because the locales were on or near China's national boundaries. Moreover, in crises over the offshore islands and Taiwan, China's territorial integrity and national sovereignty were at stake. The same was true of the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. These perceived asymmetries of interest contribute to China's view that U.S. policies and strategies are similar to those conducted by imperialist and hegemonic powers in the past. This gives rise to China's tendency to view its position in these crises in a self-righteous manner that grants the United States little moral ground in Asian security issues, particularly those that involve what are perceived as China's core interests.

These same crises are seen as demonstrating the asymmetry in national power between the United States and China. That is, Beijing recognized that the United States could apply more policy instruments to affect a crisis than could China. The United States could

select from or integrate economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, military power, and the mobilization of allies, even in the United Nations. With only limited effective instruments of power, China had to either accept the compromises offered by the United States or use or threaten force even though its military capabilities were far less than those of the United States. Despite its overall military inferiority, China could inflict great costs on the United States as it did in the Korean War. From this came the belief that resolve and determination joined with a limited nuclear deterrent could in part compensate for military inferiority. Nonetheless, China's recognition of the power asymmetry between itself and the United States partially explains why none of the post-Korean War crises involving the United States evolved into direct military conflict. Indeed, Chinese and American scholars agree that a characteristic of Sino-American crises is China's consistent policy of seeking to avoid a military confrontation with the United States even as it employed or threatened the use of military force.¹⁹

This record does not, however, necessarily transfer to a potential Taiwan crisis. Here some Chinese hold the view that whereas Taiwan involves a core interest for China, it is only of marginal strategic interest to the United States. Consequently, China should not be fearful of employing military force to deter Taiwan's *de jure* independence because the United States could well decide that a war with China over Taiwan is simply too costly given the island's low strategic value to the United States.²⁰

Two fundamental guidelines are seen as governing China's confrontation with a strategic rival, both originating in the mind of Mao Zedong in 1930s and 1940s.²¹ In those years, the Chinese Communist Party faced much stronger adversaries in Japan and the Kuomintang. The first guideline is to despise the enemy strategically but take him seriously tactically. Wang and Xu assess this guideline as directing China to be politically principled but tactically flexible. The second directs China to fight on just grounds, to its advantage, and with restraint. From these components stem the following principles:

- China will not attack unless it is attacked. When attacked, China will certainly counter-attack.
- China must never fight unless victory is assured through planning and preparation.
- When the attacker is repulsed, China must bring the fight to a close. China must not be carried away by success.

These guidelines and associated principles were applied in the 1962 border war with India and the 1979 invasion of Vietnam. Both were declared to be defensive counterattacks. They have also been applied in confrontations where no fighting occurred. China assumed the moral posture in the confrontation that stemmed from the U.S. Navy's EP-3 collision with a PLA Navy F8-II, arguing that the EP-3 was spying on China. Morally, therefore, China was in a defensive posture. A similar interpretation is applied to the negotiations following the U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, which Beijing could not accept as accidental.

Crises and China's Learning Curve²²

Wang and Xu discuss what they identify as a learning curve in China's approach to Sino-American crises over the years since 1950, including methods of crisis management. Mao Zedong together with Zhou Enlai and other senior leaders could make authoritative decisions at both the strategic and tactical levels with little or no opposition. Lower level officials and the general public would not be informed, and the Chinese people could be easily mobilized because they followed official direction without much opposition. Chinese leaders today face a different decisionmaking environment. Political leaders at all levels are much better informed of state matters, nationalist sentiments have risen, and freedom of expression through the Internet is now widespread. Consequently, decisionmaking has become increasingly complicated as crisis management has demanded greater cooperation and coordination across the Chinese government.

The increasing complexity of China's decisionmaking process reported by Chinese scholars is found also in the research conducted by Western academics.²³ Whereas the always opaque Politburo Standing Committee remains at the apex of any foreign and security policy decision, the number of official actors seeking to influence the decision has dramatically multiplied. This expansion reflects China's greater and expanding diplomatic, military, commercial, trade, tourist, and academic interaction with the world together with vastly expanded knowledge of world affairs among the general public. China's foreign and security policy formulation now includes not only the apex of Chinese Communist Party organs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but additionally a variety of government agencies, departments of the PLA, Chinese think tanks, and China's multinational corporations. To these actors it is essential to add the expansion of Chinese public awareness of the world beyond China and the far from passive generation of "netizens" willing to express their opinions over the Internet on domestic and foreign policy issues. Whereas it is true that Beijing can make decisions without excessive concern for public opinion, where the decision involves the United States, Japan, or Taiwan, China's increasingly

nationalistic netizens (450 million by one estimate²⁴) will be heard from. These expressions of public opinion can then raise questions about the CCP's ability to govern and potentially restrain the leaders' freedom of action.

When viewed from the perspective of a potential Sino-American political-military crisis, the complexity created by the variety of forces seeking to influence the decisions as they evolve creates a major analytic problem. Not the least of the problems encountered is the inability to know or measure the degree of influence wielded by the PLA through its General Staff Department (GSD) or the considerations within the CCP Central Military Commission (CMC) headed though it is by the General Secretary of the CCP—currently Xi Jinping. One aspect of this analytic dilemma is clear, however. Not only do PLA authors now publicly debate foreign policy and security issues, but the PLA appears increasingly willing to demonstrate its improving capabilities no matter how much this antagonizes China's neighbors and the United States. Moreover, in coming years as PLA capabilities continue to improve, China's reluctance to confront the United States military that has marked past crises may dissipate.

Despite the number of Sino-American political-military crises of varying intensity that have taken place over the past 62 years, including most recently the 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait political-military confrontation, the 1999 bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, and the USN EP-3 collision with a PLA Navy fighter near Hainan Island, there is as yet no effective crisis management mechanism in place that has contributed to emergency communication between high-level officials of both countries. A “hotline” linking the presidents of the two countries was established during the Clinton administration, but no use of it was made during the naval aircraft collision. More recently, in 2008 a direct telephone link or “hotline” was established between China's Ministry of National Defense (MND) and the U.S. Secretary of Defense. The first and largely ceremonial conversation between China's Minister of National Defense, General Liang Guanglie, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates was held on April 10, 2008.²⁵ These direct telephone communications between the heads of the respective governments and militaries will be beneficial only if they are used and there is someone in authority to talk with. The procedure for making a telephone link is that the side wishing to talk must notify the other of the time and proposed topic. If the other side agrees to talk, then the staffs of both sides will arrange the specific time for the call. Despite these arrangements, China has twice closed the military hotline in response to U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. Following announcement of the October 2008 arms sale, China severed the hotline until 2009 when the Vice Chairman of the CMC, General Xu Caihou, visited the United States, and again in January 2010 when the United

States announced another Taiwan arms sale.²⁶ How well the two hotlines would serve to ease any political-military crisis is therefore open to question.

Consequently, an analytic framework designed to enhance understanding and anticipation of diplomatic indications that China may be planning to employ military force in a crisis is limited by the absence of any certain understanding of China's crisis decisionmaking processes. Judgments will have to be made based on indicators drawn from previous crises where China has threatened or employed military force. Given the increasing complexity of China's crisis decisionmaking process, it is improbable that firm conclusions can be drawn other than in a crisis emerging from an effort by Taiwan to receive international recognition of its *de jure* independence—an extremely unlikely event.

Signaling the Intent to Employ Military Force—China's Warnings Calculus

In past responses to an international crisis or dispute that directly affected Chinese interests, Beijing has deployed a hierarchy of authoritative leadership statements, official protests, and press commentary intended to assert its claims and to deter its antagonists. If the crisis persists and Beijing perceives its interests are not satisfactorily taken into account, its statements escalate in level and may include at first implicit and thereafter increasingly explicit warnings that it may use military force to achieve its goals. This was the case in each of the major instances in which Beijing has resorted to military force—in Korea in 1950, in the Sino-Indian border dispute in 1961–1962, in the Sino-Soviet border dispute in 1968–1969, and in China's attack on northern Vietnam in 1979. It was also true in instances in which Beijing's effort at deterrence succeeded and ultimately stopped short of using military force, as, for example, with respect to the American combat effort in Vietnam in 1965–1968 and to the debates in Taiwan in 1991 about delimiting the ROC's sovereignty claims.

That Beijing uses such a warnings calculus should not surprise anyone. Most countries, including the United States, deploy a hierarchy of escalating statements intended to warn of use of force and so deter adversaries in disputes and crises. Through public statements by authoritative spokesmen from the State Department up to and including the President, Washington may escalate from statements that make no explicit or implicit reference to potential use of force to statements that advise that “no option has been taken off the table.” It may then take deterrence up a notch by admonishing that “all options are on the table.” From there, Washington may advise more explicitly that “the military option is on the table.” Finally, if its previous warnings have gone unheeded, Washington may declare that it may have “no other option but military force.”

Beijing's Hierarchy of Warning Statements

The official and leadership statements and media commentary Beijing deploys in international crises and disputes fit into a hierarchy based on the relative authority of their origin. The authority of leadership statements reflects the relative standing of each leader in CCP or PRC government institutions. A statement by a provincial party chief in the CCP hierarchy or governor in the state hierarchy, for example, is less authoritative than a statement by a member of the CCP Politburo or Secretariat or State Council minister, respectively. The statements by the latter officials, in turn, are less authoritative than those uttered by a member of the Politburo Standing Committee in the party hierarchy or the State Council premier in the state hierarchy, respectively. And all such statements are less authoritative than statements by the party general secretary (or chairman in Mao Zedong's day) or the PRC president.

Similarly, the authority of statements made by military leaders reflects their relative standing in the People's Liberation Army structure. A statement uttered by, say, a military district commander or political commissar is outranked in authority by a statement by the commander or political commissar of a military region. In turn, those statements are outranked by those issued by the director of the General Staff or General Political Departments, which are themselves of less authority than statements by the Central Military Commission and its chairman or vice-chairmen.

All statements and speeches by leaders are authoritative within this hierarchy of authority. These include:

- statements by Politburo members, PRC officials, and PLA leaders in meetings with foreign guests
- speeches by any of these leaders at welcoming banquets, press conferences, and while traveling abroad
- interviews with PRC and foreign media.

Which leaders make statements on foreign policy issues normally reflects policy responsibilities and protocol. All leaders are expected to convey a unified position of foreign policy issues and so normally may be taken as reflecting the leadership's consensus on the issue at hand.

Attention must be paid, however, to the source in assessing leadership statements. Leadership statements that are *publicized in PRC media*, whether in Chinese or as translated into Beijing's foreign-language channels, are always authoritative because they have been officially vetted and translated. Leadership statements reported by foreign media are authoritative but require caution because their rendition and translation have not been vetted by Beijing for publication.

The statements and protests of foreign crises and disputes issued in the name of institutions—normally the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)—also feature a deliberate inherent hierarchy of authority. The bottom rung in authority is the statements uttered by the MFA spokesman at his routine press conferences. Before the MFA began the practice of routine weekly and then daily press briefings in Beijing, such statements were ascribed simply to the “MFA spokesman.” Above that in authority is the “Ministry of Foreign Affairs statement,” the top level of authority in MFA utterances. All MFA statements are in turn outranked by “PRC Government statements,” the top of the official state utterances.

Finally, the only channel for authoritative media commentary on international disputes and crises is *People's Daily*, which speaks in the name of the CCP Central Committee. *People's Daily* publishes a wide range of reporting (often from the Xinhua News Agency), commentary, signed articles, and editorial comment, and not all of such vehicles are authoritative. In this context, the term “authoritative” refers only to commentary that speaks for *People's Daily* as an institution and, by extension, for the party Central Committee. Such authoritative comment fits into a deliberate hierarchy. The most authoritative vehicle historically has been the “editorial department article” (本报编辑部文章). Historically, these are extremely rare and have been reserved for the most significant issues in intercommunist relations—Khrushchev's “secret speech” and de-Stalinization in 1956, issues in the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, the question of “joint action” with Moscow against the United States in Vietnam in 1965, and Albania's critique of Mao Zedong's “theory of the three worlds” in November 1977. Beneath that level, and far more common, are “editorials” (社论) and, at the bottom rung, “commentator articles” (本报评论员文章).

In addition, there are occasional vehicles for comment that do not clearly speak for the *People's Daily* as a whole but are clearly more significant than ordinary commentary in the paper and so are sometimes referred to by propaganda analysts as “quasi-authoritative.” These include articles under such bylines as “observer” (观察家) and “special” or “contributing commentator” (特约评论员). As discussed below, these have come and gone in *People's Daily* from period to period and so analysts must be alert to changing patterns in media commentary over time. All other content in *People's Daily*—including lower-level commentaries, signed

articles, and reporting—is not considered authoritative in the sense of speaking for the regime as a whole and so is not relevant to Beijing’s hierarchy of warning statements.

Other media often feature an inherent hierarchy of commentary and often publish or broadcast commentary on foreign crises or disputes in which Beijing has a stake. The PLA newspaper *Liberation Army Daily*, published by the General Political Department, for example, publishes “editorials” and “commentator articles” which speak for the paper as an institution, as do other nationally circulating dailies such as the united front and intellectual affairs newspaper *Enlightenment Daily* and all provincial party newspapers, such as Shanghai’s *Liberation Daily*. The authority of such comment, however, is a step or more removed from the core authority of *People’s Daily* and so is not normally relevant to Beijing’s hierarchy of warning statements. Finally, commentary issued by the Xinhua News Agency, the official mouthpiece of the PRC State Council, is not authoritative except in instances when Xinhua transmits an issuance as an “authorized” comment or statement.

The hierarchies of authoritative leadership statements, official protests, and media comment fit together in a three-tiered array. The structure of each hierarchy as deployed in the post-Mao period is shown in the table below.

These hierarchies also establish a ladder of increasingly authoritative responses that Beijing has used to convey increased urgency and weight and thus intended significance to its responses in an escalating crisis or dispute. At the lowest levels of statement or commentary, Beijing may

Hierarchies of Authoritative Statements (Highest to Lowest)

Leadership Statements	Official Protests	<i>People’s Daily</i> Commentary
Chinese Communist Party general secretary and People’s Republic of China (PRC) president or premier	PRC government statement	Editorial
Politburo member and PRC vice premiers	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) statement	Commentator article
Central Committee department chief or PRC minister	MFA spokesman statement	Observer article
Provincial party chief or governor	MFA press briefing comment	Quasi-authoritative commentary

simply be putting its position on record concerning the issue at hand and without connotation of a potential response by force. If there is such a connotation, it is usually expressed vaguely—stating, for example, that the opposite party “must bear responsibility for all of the consequences” that ensue. Higher level statements and commentary carry far more weight, underscoring the seriousness with which Beijing views the evolving situation. They need not convey an implication of a threat of military force, but if they do, such warnings are increasingly explicit and usually unmistakable.

When Beijing wishes to convey a potential use of force, it deploys a lexicon of threat and retaliation warnings. It is the presence of these warnings in authoritative statements and commentary with increasing explicitness that conveys Beijing's readiness to use force. The following list presents this lexicon in roughly ascending order of threat:

- X is “playing with fire” and may “get burned”
- Beijing so far has “exercised the greatest restraint and forbearance” but this “should not be taken as weakness and submissiveness”
- Do “not turn a deaf ear to China's warnings”; China “cannot stand idly by”
- “How far will you go? We shall wait and see”
- “China's forbearance has limits”; X is “deluding itself in thinking we are weak and can be bullied”
- If X does not cease its behavior, it “will meet the punishment it deserves”
- “Do not complain later that we did not give you clear warning in advance”
- We have been “driven beyond forbearance” and are “forced to counterattack”; our “restraint was regarded as an invitation to bullying”; our “warnings fell on deaf ears”
- “We will not attack if we are not attacked; if we are attacked, we will certainly counterattack.”

By tracking the level of authority and content of leadership statements, official protests, and *People's Daily* comment, and taking note of the threat and retaliation warnings they contain,

therefore, analysts may assess the intent and seriousness of Beijing's response to an escalating dispute or crisis and detect any implication of potential use of military force.

Beijing's calculus of warnings was deployed during many of the crises it faced since 1949. It was deployed in rudimentary form in the summer and early fall months of 1950, preceding China's intervention in the Korean War after U.S. and UN forces crossed the 38th parallel and moved up to the PRC-Korean frontier on the Yalu River. It was used again during the 2 years preceding the brief war with India over the territorial dispute. It was used in 1965 as U.S. forces intervened in Vietnam, presenting Beijing with a crisis that resembled in their eyes the American threat in Korea in 1950. It was deployed in sharply escalated fashion in the Sino-Soviet border crisis of 1968–1969 and again in the contest over Vietnamese regional ambitions in 1978. The following discussion shows how Beijing deployed this calculus of threat and retaliation in two of these past examples.

A Classical Example—The Sino-Vietnamese Border Crisis, 1978–1979

Beijing's use of its hierarchies of leadership statements, official protests, and authoritative *People's Daily* commentary is clearly visible in its escalating treatment of its border crisis with Vietnam beginning in July 1978, culminating in its military attack on northern Vietnam on February 17, 1979.²⁷ The Sino-Vietnamese border emerged in the context of a larger Chinese effort, begun openly in early 1978, to blunt what it perceived to be Vietnamese efforts, abetted by the Soviet Union, to consolidate “regional hegemony” over its Indochinese neighbors Cambodia and Laos and, by extension, in Southeast Asia generally. In the context of escalating tensions between Hanoi and Phnom Penh in 1977 and early 1978, Beijing began to protest what it characterized as persecution of ethnic Chinese in a registration drive in southern Vietnam. In parallel with Chinese criticism of Hanoi's policies toward Cambodia, Chinese leadership statements, official protests, and authoritative *People's Daily* comment complained about Vietnamese mistreatment of ethnic Chinese. Chinese steps along the way included the dispatch of two ships to Vietnamese ports in mid-June to pick up “victimized Chinese nationals” (an effort that Hanoi blocked by not allowing the Chinese ships to dock), a total cut-off of Chinese economic and technical aid to Vietnam (announced in early July 1978), and the opening first of ambassadorial and then vice foreign ministerial talks on the issue. In this context, the Sino-Vietnamese border crisis emerged in July as a means to bring additional pressure on Hanoi over the larger contest over Cambodian and Vietnamese power.

After detailing incremental steps in Beijing's approach to the larger issues of Vietnamese-Cambodian tensions and Vietnamese treatment of ethnic Chinese (the Hoa people) in which

the border crisis was embedded, appendix 1 charts Chinese leadership statements, official protests, and authoritative *People's Daily* commentary in the escalating border crisis; the appendix tracks statements from late July 1978, when Xinhua began reporting local Yunnan and Guangxi officials lodging a joint protest over Hanoi's forcing ethnic Chinese across the border into China, down through February 17, 1979, when PLA forces launched their "punitive" strike on northern Vietnam. Appendix 1 does not include corresponding statements by Vietnamese officials and authoritative commentary by the Vietnamese Communist Party's newspaper, *The People (Nhan Dan)*, which would be useful in analyzing the crisis overall. Only the Chinese side is needed to dissect Beijing's warning signals.

Several fundamental points emerge from appendix 1's compilation of authoritative Chinese warning statements. First, the level of authority of statements concerning the border crisis in each tier rises, reflecting the escalating seriousness with which Beijing portrayed the crisis. PRC protests began with low-level regional officials protesting border incidents on July 26 and 29, 1978. Such incidents were then taken up by PRC Vice Foreign Minister Zhong Xidong in successive sessions of talks in Hanoi in August and September, supplemented in early September by statements by the State Council Overseas Chinese Affairs Office and by the MFA's Asia Department Director Shen Ping. In late October, the MFA began issuing "strong protests" in its own name, until a PRC Government statement declared on February 17, 1979, that Beijing was "forced to counterattack" Hanoi's activities with military force.

Authoritative *People's Daily* commentary shows a comparable pattern of escalation. Its first authoritative comment on the border crisis came on September 4. Thereafter, *People's Daily* notched up the level of its authoritative comment by publishing editorials, beginning with its first on November 10 and ending with its fourth on February 18, 1979, marking the launch of the PLA's strike on northern Vietnam.

A second point for attention is the escalation in language used in official protests and *People's Daily's* commentary and, in particular, the introduction of higher levels of phrases intended to convey the potential for a military response. On November 7, 1978, the MFA's "strong protest" over an "extremely serious bloodshed incident" on November 1 on the border noted for the first time that Beijing has so far "exercised the greatest restraint and forbearance," warning that Hanoi should not mistake Beijing's restraint as "weakness and submissiveness." Thereafter, a *People's Daily's* editorial on November 10 warned that Hanoi's "arrogant hostility to the Chinese people" had become "quite intolerable" and "sternly" warned Hanoi to pull back from Chinese territory and "not to turn a deaf ear to China's warnings." "How far will you go?" the editorial concluded, adding that "we will wait and see." On December 13, another MFA "strong protest"

over “incessant” Vietnamese encroachments and provoking “serious incidents of bloodshed” charged that Hanoi had “turned a deaf ear” to Beijing’s repeated protests and warned that “there is a limit to China’s forbearance and restraint.” On December 24, a new MFA “strong protest” over a December 23 Vietnamese border intrusion into Guangxi noted that local Chinese militiamen were “compelled to return fire in self defense.” And on December 25, a *People’s Daily’s* editorial, entitled “Our Forbearance Is Limited,” declared that Hanoi had “gone far enough.” China, it stated, “will not allow itself to be bullied by others,” will “certainly counterattack if attacked,” and “means what it says.” If Hanoi continued its border intrusions, it would “meet the punishment it deserves.” “Don’t complain later that we did not give you clear warning in advance,” the editorial concluded.

The pattern of escalating language in the Sino-Vietnamese border crisis suggests significant turning points. Up through early November, Chinese protests and commentary had been vague regarding the consequences of what it was depicting as continuing Vietnamese provocations on the border. The shift to sharper warning language in the November 10 *People’s Daily* editorial appears to reflect Beijing’s implicit public warning that it was prepared to use military force. And the statements in the December 25 *People’s Daily* that Hanoi had “gone far enough” and that Beijing had now given “clear warning” conveyed Beijing’s decision that it had now decided to use force. Subsequent statements by Chinese leaders—such as Deng Xiaoping’s in Washington—about the need to “teach Vietnam a lesson” bear this judgment out.

Finally, it is noteworthy that turning points in Beijing’s escalating statements on the border crisis coincide with major turning points in the larger contest that Beijing was waging against Vietnamese expansion in Indochina. The November 10 *People’s Daily* editorial on the border crisis immediately followed the signing in Moscow of the USSR-Vietnam security alliance, an event that Deng Xiaoping denounced during a visit to Bangkok as confirming Soviet-Vietnamese complicity in Hanoi’s expansionist agenda and as an event to which “we will attach importance.” And the *People’s Daily’s* December 25 editorial declaring that Hanoi had “gone far enough” in its border provocations coincided with the full-scale assault of Vietnam’s army against Cambodia.

Another Classical Example—The Sino-Indian Border Crisis, 1961–1962

As sketched in the first section of this paper, the brief Sino-Indian border war in October–November 1962 was rooted in Beijing’s larger concern of consolidating its claims to sovereignty over Tibet. Its construction of a road accessing western Tibet from Xinjiang in 1957 and the road’s discovery thereafter by India led to failed border negotiations over subsequent years and

eventually to New Delhi's "forward" policy in 1961 of advancing Indian Army sentry posts into the zone disputed with China. After more than a year of successive official protests and authoritative *People's Daily* commentary, Beijing moved with military force on October 20, 1962.

As the details in appendix 2 show, the protest calculus employed by the PRC's MFA and *People's Daily's* hierarchy of authoritative commentary was different in the 1960s than the practices of the post-Mao period exemplified in the 1978–1979 Sino-Vietnamese border crisis analyzed above. In particular, following media practices of that day, *People's Daily* published authoritative "observer" articles instead of commentator articles. But the same pattern of escalating authority and language was evident in the 1961–1962 border crisis with India.

Signaling Case Studies—Taiwan

Over the past two decades, Beijing has deployed its classical hierarchy of warning signals at least four times regarding Taiwan. These were:

- in 1991, as the opposition Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) made explicit its Taiwan independence platform and the ruling Kuomintang (KMT) moved to convene the first session of the ROC National Assembly since 1946
- in 1995, after Washington surprised Beijing by issuing ROC President Lee Teng-hui a visa to visit the United States
- in 1999, when ROC President Lee Teng-hui described the relationship between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland as a "special state-to-state relationship" in the early months of campaigning for March 2000 general elections
- in 2003–2004, when ROC President Chen Shui-bian and DPP politicians pressed passage of a referendum law and then put referenda on the ballot for March 2004 general elections.

In none of these instances did Beijing ultimately use military force against Taipei, although once Beijing's efforts to deter Lee Teng-hui from actually making his trip to the United States in June 1995 failed, Beijing did stage over the ensuing 9 months a series of three military exercises—including missile "test" firings into the East China Sea in August 1995 and off Taiwan in March 1996—to underscore its readiness to use military force to achieve its objectives. And in 1999, Beijing's warnings about potential use of military force reached the highest levels

of authority and sharpness. Each of these case studies therefore offers insight and clarity into how Beijing would respond to cross-strait tensions relevant to today. Appendix 3 offers detailed chronologies for each of these cases.

1991

The context for Beijing's deployment of its classical hierarchy of warning statements in 1991 was, first, KMT steps to revise the 1946 ROC constitution and hold elections for a new National Assembly; and second, escalation of public advocacy on behalf of Taiwan independence. An extraordinary session of the National Assembly in April 1991 mandated an end to the period of national mobilization and elections for a new National Assembly in 1991 and for the Legislative Yuan in 1992. The new National Assembly elections held on December 21—the first since November 1946—were a critical step in the evolution of ROC politics because they ended the 45-year tenure of mainland members who were elected in 1946 (having migrated to Taiwan at the end of the Chinese civil war), and installed a new membership that was overwhelmingly Taiwanese in origin. This transition from decrepit mainland holdovers to Taiwanese politicians enabled long-suppressed advocacy of Taiwan independence to move to the forefront of the political agenda.

Advocacy of Taiwan independence was in particular the agenda of the Democratic Progressive Party, which was founded in 1986 before the KMT lifted the longstanding ROC ban on political parties other than the KMT itself in 1987 and that operated under a continuing threat of prosecution under a statute that banned advocacy of Taiwan independence. As Taiwan's politics liberalized, however, public agitation on behalf of independence escalated. As the KMT and ROC dropped enforcement of the ban, the DPP in 1991 moved to write a new party platform that explicitly incorporated a plank on independence. In August 1991, a DPP seminar produced a draft for a new state constitution that declared Taiwan a "democratic republic" and renamed the ROC the "Republic of Taiwan." The following October 13, 1991, the DPP formally adopted a platform calling for the establishment of a "Republic of Taiwan" by popular referendum.

In the narrower cross-strait context, Taipei had begun to respond to Beijing's decade-long pitch to begin cross-strait exchanges that might lead to what Beijing hoped would be a "peaceful unification" and resolution of the Taiwan question. After the KMT lifted the ban on Taiwanese tourist travel and business investment in the PRC, a million Taiwanese a year were visiting the mainland and Taiwanese investment on the mainland coast skyrocketed. In November 1990, Taipei established the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF), an unofficial body that would coordinate issues arising from the growing cross-strait exchanges. The rise of the DPP and advocacy

of Taiwan independence and the concurrent Taiwanization of ROC politics put Beijing's long-term goals in jeopardy.

The broader international context in which these developments in Taiwan unfolded included the wave of new democracies created among some of the states of the former East European Soviet bloc, the independence of the three Baltic states from the Soviet Union, the evolving collapse of the Soviet Union itself, and the relaxation of tension between the two Koreas, leading to the December 1991 bilateral nonaggression and denuclearization pacts. The PRC continued to suffer from the blackened international image it received from its brutal suppression of the Tiananmen demonstrations in June 1989, although the G7 countries had already begun in 1990 to roll back the economic (but not military) sanctions they had imposed the year before.

Through the early months of 1991, PRC media reported on political trends in Taiwan and commented only at low-level, nonauthoritative levels. Finally, on June 3, an authoritative *People's Daily* commentator article warned that Taiwan's politics were on "a dangerous path" and warned advocates that they were "playing with fire" and to "rein in at the brink of the precipice." Two more commentator articles—one blasting the DPP's draft "Republic of Taiwan" constitution and another condemning any international support for "one China one Taiwan"—followed over the ensuing months.

Meanwhile, speeches by top PRC leaders on important anniversaries—by CCP General Secretary Jiang Zemin on the CCP's 70th founding anniversary, by Premier Li Peng on National Day, and by President Yang Shangkun on the 80th anniversary of the 1911 Revolution that created the Republic of China—incorporated warnings against pursuit of Taiwan independence. Yang Shangkun's warnings, delivered 2 months before the National Assembly elections, were the sharpest, advising that Beijing would "not sit idly by" in the face of efforts to "split" China and urging Taiwanese not to make "a wrong appraisal."

Finally, in a speech marking the 60th anniversary of the 1936 Xian Incident (which formed a CCP-KMT coalition against Japan) and 10 days before the Taiwan elections, Jiang Zemin renewed calls for cross-strait talks and reiterated Yang's warning to Taiwanese not to make a "wrong assessment." Five days before the elections, Beijing announced formation of its own unofficial body corresponding to Taipei's SEF, the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS).

The December 21 elections gave KMT candidates an overwhelming majority in the new National Assembly, marking a signal defeat for the DPP. The PRC media immediately reported the election's results as rejection of Taiwan independence by Taiwan's electorate.

In summary, Beijing's invocation of its warnings hierarchy was relatively restrained. There was no press comment above the level of *People's Daily* commentator articles—the lowest rung of authoritative commentary—devoted specifically to Taiwan events; the sole *People's Daily* editorial was not aimed specifically at Taiwan trends but rather was pegged to the 20th anniversary of the PRC's seating in the United Nations. High-level leadership statements came only in broader speeches marking major anniversaries. Finally, leadership and *People's Daily* warnings focused on political themes, advising Taipei not to go too far without raising the prospect of military intervention.

1995

The 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait crisis was triggered by the decision of the Clinton administration—after months of advising Beijing that it would *not* do so—to grant Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui a visa to visit his alma mater, Cornell University, where he had earned a Ph.D. in 1968 in agricultural economics. Several of Lee's friends in Taiwan donated money to Cornell to endow a Lee Teng-hui chair in agricultural economics, with the stipulation that Lee be invited to attend the chair's inaugural ceremony in Ithaca, New York. Lee's visit was thus billed as private, although it was widely expected that he would plump for greater acceptance of Taiwan in the international community. The Clinton administration vowed it would not issue Lee a visa because granting a visa to a sitting Taiwan president would violate the 1978 agreements that normalized U.S.-PRC relations. The administration relented, however, when first the House of Representatives and then the Senate passed nearly unanimous nonbinding resolutions demanding that the administration give Lee a visa. On May 22, the State Department announced that it would grant Lee a visa after all. Lee's visit proceeded on June 8–12. Beijing appears to have regarded the Clinton decision as the last straw in a slow, incremental effort by Washington to upgrade ties with Taipei. In 1992, the Bush administration decided to sell 150 F-16s to Taipei. In 1994, the new Clinton administration completed a Taiwan policy review that upgraded the level of cabinet contacts with Taipei. In U.S.-PRC relations, the administration had in May 1993 conditioned renewal of PRC most-favored-nation trading status in 1994 on performance in several categories of human rights improvements, a threat that the administration ultimately backed away from even though Beijing did little to meet Washington's conditions.

Beijing's initial response was immediate and authoritative, pressing Washington to reverse its decision. As the appended chronology shows, Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen the next day delivered a “strong protest” to U.S. Ambassador Stapleton Roy, warning of “grave consequences” unless Washington reversed itself. A Foreign Ministry statement—the

top level of Foreign Ministry utterances—repeated the same warning. Two days later, the Foreign Ministry announced that two ongoing visits by PRC leaders were cut short. On May 26, a *People's Daily* commentator article, entitled “A Serious and Dangerous Retrogression,” advised that Beijing “absolutely would not tolerate” violation of its sovereignty. And a nonauthoritative editorial in the PRC-controlled Hong Kong communist newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* urged Washington “not to turn a deaf ear” and “miscalculate,” forcing Beijing to “react further.”

Once Beijing's effort to press Washington to reverse itself failed and Lee's trip began, Beijing then moved to levy consequences in both U.S.-PRC and cross-strait relations. On June 9 (the day after Lee's trip began) in a meeting with President Clinton, PRC Ambassador Li Daoyu stated that Washington had “seriously damaged relations.” A *People's Daily* commentator article the same day reiterated Li's assessment and that Washington would “pay a price” for its actions. On May 16, a Foreign Ministry spokesman announced that Li Daoyu had been called home indefinitely “for consultations” and that a long-planned second session of SEF-ARATS talks was postponed indefinitely. In early July, Beijing announced a series of “missile tests” in the East China Sea, the first of a set of three military exercises that unfolded over the following 8 months. These included live-fire amphibious landing exercises on Dongshan Island off the Guangdong coast in November 1995 and a second round of “missile tests,” this time into waters immediately off Taiwan's largest ports, Kaohsiung and Keelung, in March 1996—on the eve of Taiwan's presidential election.

In summary, Beijing deployed its warnings hierarchy at a high, authoritative level in reaction to a U.S. reversal of policy that clearly surprised and embarrassed it. Its warnings were calculated to press Washington to reverse itself, and when that failed, it responded with political steps to express its displeasure, complemented by a prolonged series of military exercises intended to underscore its readiness to defend its sovereignty against further slight.

1999

Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui's statement during an interview with the German news agency *Deutsche Welle* on July 9, 1999—that the relationship between Taiwan and the Chinese mainland was a “state-to-state, or at least special state-to-state” relationship—triggered the most intensive invocation of Beijing's warning calculus. Over the ensuing 2 months, Beijing's warnings escalated in level and clarity with regard to a potential use of military force. Tensions abated and Beijing's warnings receded only in late September after repeated assurances from the Clinton administration that it continued to adhere to a “one-China” policy and after it became clear that Taipei's bid for greater international recognition had failed.

Several contextual factors catalyzed Beijing's escalating response to Lee's statement. First, Lee made his statement as the campaign for the March 2000 presidential election was getting under way. Lee himself was not running, so his remark was perhaps an effort both at shaping his political legacy and at shaping the politics of the election. U.S.-PRC relations had been put on an improved footing during the bilateral summits of October 1997, when Jiang Zemin visited the United States for the first time, and June 1998, when President Clinton visited China. But more recently relations were troubled first by President Clinton's last-minute rejection of a bilateral accord on PRC accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) during Premier Zhu Rongji's visit to Washington in March 1999 and then in April by the American bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade during the Kosovo war. In addition, in March Congress began debate of a Taiwan Security Enhancement Act, intended to beef up American military collaboration with Taiwan. In this period, the Clinton administration was also debating whether and how to extend theater missile defense to Taiwan. Finally, Nicaragua and a few other member states introduced a motion in the UN General Assembly calling for the seating of Taipei in the United Nations.

As the chronology in appendix 3 shows, Beijing's initial response to Lee's July 9, 1999, statement came in the form of a joint spokesman statement issued on July 11 by the CCP Central Committee and State Council Taiwan Affairs Offices that warned Taipei "to pull back before it is too late and to stop playing with fire." On the 12th, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Zhu Bangzao warned Lee Teng-hui that he "had gone too far down the dangerous road of playing with fire" and urged him to "rein in at the brink of the precipice." Wang Daohan, chairman of Beijing's unofficial cross-strait exchanges organization ARATS, declared the same day that Lee's statement "undermined the foundation" necessary for continued cross-strait contacts. On July 14, a *People's Daily* commentator article blasted Lee's statement as exposing his "secessionist ambitions."

On July 20, a report in the PRC-controlled Hong Kong communist newspaper *Wen Wei Po* complemented these official warnings, citing Su Jing, deputy chief of staff of the Nanjing Military Region—the region charged with primary military responsibility over the Taiwan Strait—on the progress of a PLA exercise on the Fujian coast and predicting that Lee Teng-hui will "ruin himself by playing with fire" and will "drown in an ocean of people's war." On July 27, Xinhua cited PLA Chief of the General Staff Fu Quanyou denouncing Lee as "lifting a great rock only to drop it onto his own feet" and declaring that the PLA has "the determination and strength" to defend China's sovereignty. Defense Minister Chi Haotian similarly warned Lee "not to underestimate" the PLA's determination. Over the same period, *People's Daily* published three more commentator articles denouncing Lee's statement.

In late July and early August, SEF chairman Koo Chen-fu and Taipei's Mainland Affairs Council proffered elaborations of Lee's statement, prompting an escalation in Beijing's response. On August 10, *People's Daily* published an article under the byline "Observer," a highly authoritative vehicle that had disappeared since the 1960s, calling on Taipei "to stop before the brink of the precipice." On the 18th, the military newspaper *Liberation Army Daily* published a commentator article declaring that the PLA would rather lose a thousand men before ceding an inch of territory. Over the next 2 weeks, low-level reports in PRC and Honk Kong communist media laid out Beijing's military options in the event of a war in the Taiwan Strait and played up China's missile capabilities. On September 2, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Sun Yuxi warned that Lee Teng-hui's efforts to incorporate his "two-state theory" into the KMT's platform were "pushing the Taiwan people nearer to the abyss of war."

Over the first 3 weeks of September, Beijing's warnings of potential war sharpened further. In comments aired by Xinhua, CCP chief Jiang Zemin, Fu Quanyou, and Chi Haotian in succession renewed promises that the PLA stood ready to defend Chinese sovereignty. CMC Vice Chairman Zhang Wannian on September 10 was reportedly "keeping a close eye" on Taiwan developments while monitoring PLA exercises off Zhejiang and Guangdong, declaring that the PLA was "ready to crush" any attempt at splitting the country. On September 13, the Hong Kong communist newspaper *Ta Kung Pao* reported a CMC resolution ordering steps to mobilize for war over Taiwan. Between September 7 and 16, *People's Daily* carried six commentator articles on the crisis.

As rapidly as Beijing's warnings intensified over the weeks down through mid-September, they dropped off sharply after September 16. On that day, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Sun Yuxi noted Beijing's satisfaction at the defeat of the proposal to seat Taipei in the UN. In addition, President Clinton conveyed American assurances of a continuing "one-China" policy to Jiang Zemin during a meeting in Auckland, New Zealand, on September 11, an occasion that Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan praised as having produced "positive and constructive results."

The level and clarity of Beijing's warnings regarding the prospects for military confrontation in the 1999 crisis exceeded those attending any other in the post-Cold War era. Beijing capped the episode in February 2000 when it released a new white paper on the Taiwan question that added a new condition under which it might be forced to resort to military force. In addition to its two longstanding bottom lines—if Taipei were to declare independence or if foreign forces intervened in Taiwan to promote Taiwan independence—Beijing now added the refusal of Taipei to negotiate "*sine die*" (without a date certain) peaceful resolution of the unification question.

2003–2004

The most recent deployment of Beijing's warning calculus was in response to the efforts of Taiwan President Chen Shui-bian and the DPP to push through the Legislative Yuan a referendum law that could provide the mechanism for a plebiscite on independence for Taiwan. In this instance, Beijing dealt with a favorable context in U.S.-PRC relations. In 2002, Washington explicitly reaffirmed its "one-China" policy and its opposition to Chen Shui-bian's statement that "there is a country on each side" of the Taiwan Strait (一邊一國), a formulation that recalled Lee Teng-hui's "state-to-state" cross-strait relationship. Throughout the referendum law debate in Taiwan, Washington renewed its insistence that it did not support Taiwan independence and reaffirmed to Beijing its "one-China" policy.

In this context, Beijing could respond to the debate in Taipei in the summer and fall months of 2003 with low-level authoritative protests issued by the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office that branded Chen's and the DPP's referendum push as "a dangerous trend" and that warned Taipei that Beijing would not "tolerate" steps toward Taiwan independence. In November, in response to comments by American politicians that blurred Washington's opposition, Beijing's warnings notched up as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman began to call on the Bush administration "to be crystal clear" in its commitment to one China and its opposition to a referendum.

Also in late November 2003, Taiwan's Legislative Yuan passed a watered-down referendum law, and Chen Shui-bian moved to put two referenda on the agenda for national elections scheduled for March 20, 2004. Beijing's warnings thereafter escalated as the elections approached. On December 25, Hu Jintao met with 200 businessmen from Taiwan and stressed common interest in stable cross-strait relations and warned that Beijing would not tolerate Taiwan independence. In early January, State Council Taiwan Affairs Office deputy Wang Zaixi warned that Beijing's "restraint has a bottom line" and Beijing would not "waver or compromise" with regard to Taiwan independence. In mid-January, while visiting New York, Wang recalled that the February 2000 PRC white paper had set a third condition under which Beijing would consider use of military force—if cross-strait negotiations did not begin *sine die*—adding that Beijing would have to "move up its timetable" if Taipei made the "wrong judgment."

High-level leadership statements on Beijing's opposition to the referendum continued down to the eve of the election. Finally, on March 20, 2004, Xinhua reported the defeat of Chen's and the DPP's referenda, and a joint Central Committee and State Council Taiwan Affairs Office statement pronounced the referenda as "illegal acts that went against the will of the people."

Analyzing Beijing's Signals—Things to Consider

Beijing's traditional calculus of threat and retaliation statements remains a critical tool in its array of foreign policy and security instruments in responding to and managing tensions and disputes in which it engages. Analysts seeking to assess its use in contemporary contexts, however, must take into consideration several points that bear on its interpretation.

First, due account must be taken of the fact that PRC media have evolved dramatically. Commentary formats come and go, including those that are authoritative. *People's Daily* editorial department articles—long the most authoritative format in the party's newspaper—have disappeared, and “observer” articles have become exceedingly rare. Editorials and commentator articles remain reliable indicators of authoritative commentary in *People's Daily*, but analysts must remain aware of the ongoing evolution in media practices.

Second, much of the vocabulary employed in China's warnings calculus is not unique to authoritative commentary and may be found in low-level commentary that does not speak authoritatively for the regime, as authoritative commentary does. Warnings to “rein in before the brink of the precipice,” not to “turn a deaf ear,” to “make a correct assessment,” or that Beijing cannot “stand idly by” frequently occur in low-level, nonauthoritative comment. Such warnings may be regarded as low-level expressions of Beijing's concern about a situation, but they do not carry the weight of the same themes expressed in authoritative commentary. It is the authority of the source, not the themes themselves, that merits attention.

Third, as China's engagement with the world has advanced over the past four decades, the foreign and security policy institutions and the instruments available to Beijing to shape pursuit of its interests have proliferated. This means that the range of institutions and voices that may respond with some authority in any international dispute has broadened correspondingly. In the 1950s and 1960s, when the People's Republic was recognized by a small minority of countries in the international order, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was an underdeveloped mechanism for engaging China's interest through ordinary state-to-state diplomacy, while the party's International Liaison Department (ILD) served as a primary mechanism in international affairs, especially with fraternal Soviet bloc states and foreign communist parties and revolutionary movements. Since Beijing's admission to the United Nations in 1971 and as the PRC was increasingly recognized diplomatically, the ILD receded in significance and took on new foreign relations tasks.

In addition, as Beijing's economic and military relationships have flourished abroad, new institutions and sub-bureaucracies now take part in Chinese foreign policy. The consequence of this proliferation of actors and instruments has been to deepen the hierarchy on institutional

authority. It also adds to the sophistication of Beijing's means to respond to an international dispute. When the National People's Congress (NPC) Foreign Relations Committee protests a U.S. congressional resolution on a Taiwan issue, its statement should not be discounted, because the NPC is really an instrument of policy made in the party, the real seat of power. It should be seen instead as Beijing's use of the corresponding institution by protocol in responding to the specific source on the U.S. side, and so be taken with due regard for its authority, not its actual power and policy influence within the Chinese system.

Conclusion—A Hypothetical South China Sea Signaling Scenario

Nothing would be more destructive of Sino-American relations and Asia's security dynamics than a decision by China to threaten a military confrontation in order to change a U.S. course of action Beijing perceived as threatening its interests in the South China Sea. It would create a political-military crisis far exceeding those that erupted from the accidental 1999 bombing of China's Belgrade embassy or the 2001 collision between two U.S. and Chinese military aircraft. Such a crisis would stem from two conditions. The United States would view such a threat as the first Chinese effort to challenge American military supremacy in Asia's maritime periphery. Second, all of Asia would perceive the potential military confrontation as possibly determining the future security dynamics of the region. Beijing's decisionmakers would recognize the probable strategic implications of such a decision. Conceiving of events that could lead to such a perilous decision is in itself confounding. Consequently, the suggested scenario will focus on a low level of coercive diplomacy that goes beyond the harassment which U.S. intelligence-collection missions have faced over the past decade, but which is far less threatening than an outright military confrontation.

The Scenario

The core of this scenario is based upon the proposition that Beijing perceives closer military ties among the United States, the Republic of the Philippines (RP), and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (SRV) as a threatening strategic trend much as it did Hanoi's November 1978 security treaty with Moscow. It is a trend Beijing identifies as originating in U.S. Secretary of State Clinton's firm position on U.S. South China Sea interests at the Hanoi-hosted ASEAN meetings of July 2010. Whereas Beijing saw the Hanoi-Moscow treaty as confirming its perception that Vietnam and the USSR were colluding to establish "regional hegemony" over Hanoi's Indochina neighbors and possibly over all Southeast Asia, the closer links it sees emerging among Washington, Hanoi, and Manila are viewed in this scenario as potentially

presenting a military coalition designed to offset China's growing military presence in the South China Sea. The existing U.S. mutual defense treaty with Manila is seen as providing expanding access to RP military bases and, Beijing fears, presumably allowing a buildup of logistic support for American regional military operations. U.S. port visits and closer political links with the SRV are suggesting a level of cooperation that would include improving combined operational capabilities between Vietnamese and U.S. forces. These developments could possibly lead to the United States gaining access to SRV military facilities, including its air bases, even as Hanoi improves its own military capabilities with acquisitions of advanced submarines and fighter aircraft from Russia. China's signaling is designed to indicate the seriousness with which Beijing views this strategic trend.

The United States finds its position in this scenario problematic for several reasons. It is not seeking to build a regional alliance against China. As part of its strategic "rebalancing" toward Asia, however, Washington seeks to assure regional friends and allies that the United States will maintain a strong regional military presence. An aspect of this strategy is to guarantee freedom of navigation through the South China Sea. In support of this objective, at the time Beijing initiates signaling China's concerns, the USS *George Washington* carrier strike group (CSG) has been scheduled to conduct a FON exercise in the South China Sea. As part of U.S. regional assurance policy, Vietnamese political and military officials have been invited aboard for a couple of days to observe flight operations. A long-planned, combined exercise between U.S. and Philippine marines is also about to get underway. For the purpose of illustrating the full range of Chinese signaling behavior, we postulate disagreements among U.S. policymakers about whether to cancel or postpone these activities in response to Chinese concerns or whether such actions would be interpreted as signals of weakness that would damage the U.S. reputation in Beijing and in the region. In the scenario, these policy disagreements delay clear substantive U.S. response to Chinese signals, prompting policymakers in Beijing to move up the signaling ladder.

Beijing's signaling begins at the lower level of authority with a commentary by a PLAN political commissar at the South Sea Fleet Yulin naval base on Hainan Island. His commentary includes a military assessment of developments in the South China Sea stressing the increasing military cooperation between the United States and the naval forces of the Philippines and Vietnam. He details the port calls made by U.S. naval ships to Vietnam and the Philippines as part of his assessment. This review is paralleled by a *Liberation Army Daily* article on the same topic stressing China's commitment to cooperation and stability in the South China Sea even as it safeguards its national maritime rights. During a visit by the commander of the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) to PLAN headquarters, China's naval commander makes similar points

in his discussion stressing the need for cooperation between the U.S. and Chinese navies and with their regional counterparts. This first step is signaling the United States that China's maritime interests, particularly in the South China Sea, are a matter of importance requiring discussion between the two defense establishments.

Failing to receive a U.S. response in a week, China takes the next step upward by including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the signaling process. At a weekly press conference, an MFA spokesperson includes a comment about the importance of China's national maritime rights in terms of sovereignty and access to maritime resources. Sovereignty and resources are the core of these remarks, not security or defense issues. *Liberation Army Daily* carries a signed article discussing what was said to be a regular PLAN exercise in the South China Sea and the importance of a powerful navy in defending China's maritime interests. Less emphasis is placed on the need for regional cooperation to ensure maritime security.

Not receiving any positive U.S. response, the next step up is taken by Beijing. An MFA statement and a *People's Daily* commentator article focus on China's maritime interests and the need to avoid military tensions through diplomacy and discussion to ensure that each party's interests are understood. To this end, where military tensions emerge the parties should agree to high-level discussions designed to ease if not eliminate the tensions.

With no definite U.S. response to the suggestion that a meeting should be held at a high enough level where Beijing can express its concerns directly, China's signaling escalates with more direct language. A vice foreign minister expresses China's intent to defend its sovereignty and maritime interests against any threats. This statement is paralleled by a *People's Daily* contributing editor article assessing U.S. strategy in the South China Sea. The article emphasizes what it sees as U.S. efforts opposing China's maritime rights and sovereignty by providing support, including military support, to Vietnam and the Republic of the Philippines. Both are declared to be pressing unwarranted and illegal claims against China's well-established and legal sovereignty rights in the South China Sea. This strategy is declared as undermining the tranquility of the South China Sea and creating unnecessary regional military tensions. Moreover, the United States is defined as an outside power creating regional tensions to serve its own hegemonic objectives through power politics. Unless the United States agrees to a high-level meeting with China to resolve their differences, it will have to accept the consequences of its ill-conceived strategy.

Just as the United States resolves its dilemmas and is about to propose a meeting at the Under Secretary of State and Under Secretary of Defense level, China takes the next escalatory step in its signaling strategy. The Minister of Foreign Affairs calls a press conference where he first declares that China's exercise of restraint in the face of U.S. provocative actions in the

South China Sea should not be viewed as weakness. China's forbearance should be recognized as demonstrating its commitment to building and sustaining a tranquil regional security environment. However, there is a limit to China's forbearance and restraint in the face of U.S. power politics seeking to maintain its hegemonic position. China has already urged the United States to agree to a senior-level meeting where their respective interests and policies can be discussed and differences resolved. Failure to schedule such a meeting will leave China no choice but to reinforce its military deployments in the region and the South China Sea to counter U.S. power politics and military strategy. This is not China's preferred choice, but a just response against U.S. bullying and power politics. Shortly after the Minister of Foreign Affairs makes his statement, China's most senior general, a vice-chairman of the CMC and a member of the Politburo, makes his own statement. He declares that the PLA is dedicated and prepared to defend China's sovereignty and national interests against all adversaries.

Comment

The signaling employed in this scenario reflects a basic pattern Beijing has demonstrated since its first signaling exercise in 1950 when China sought to deter U.S. forces from crossing the 38th parallel into North Korean territory. The core of these signaling patterns consists of the following:

- *Systematic integration of political and diplomatic action with military preparations as the signaling escalates through higher levels of authority.* Such preparations are often, if not always, overt and integrated into the political and diplomatic messages designed to deter the adversary from the course of action Beijing finds threatening.
- *Stating why China is justified in using military force should this prove necessary.* The message targets both domestic and international audiences. In essence, Beijing declares that China confronts a serious threat to its security and interests that if not terminated will require the use of military force.
- *Asserting that the use of military force is not Beijing's preferred resolution to the threat China faces, but one that will be forced upon it should the adversary not heed the deterrence warnings sent.* In short, Beijing's signaling strategy seeks to grant China the moral high ground in the emerging confrontation. Such argument supports China's self-identification as a uniquely peaceful country that employs military force only in defense

when provoked by adversaries threatening China's security or sovereignty. Presumably, Beijing believes that asserting the moral high ground in a confrontation can ease the international response to any military action China might take and thereby reduce the political costs of employing military force.

- *Emphasizing that China's forbearance and restraint should not be viewed as weakness and that China is prepared to employ military force should that be necessary.*

Appendix 1. Chronology of the 1978–1979 Sino-Vietnamese Border Crisis

*Note: Beijing's calculus of warnings regarding the Sino-Vietnamese border that culminated in the PRC's "punitive" attack in February–March 1979 was embedded among Beijing's protests and statements over other issues in the broader Sino-Vietnamese tangle over regional power. The border warnings are therefore indicated in **bold type** in the following chronology (appendix 1 only) to distinguish them from Beijing's protests over other issues.*

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1977				
12/31				Xinhua reports contending Vietnamese and Cambodian government statements on border clashes—first PRC media attention to escalating SRV (Socialist Republic of Vietnam)-DK (Democratic Kampuchea) dispute
1978				
4/30	Liao Chengzhi statement: first PRC public reference to SRV treatment of Hoa people			
6/9		FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT on SRV expulsion of Hoa (Chinese) people; responds to May 27 SRV Foreign Ministry statement		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
6/10			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on Hanoi provoking SRV-Cambodia border crisis	
6/15				PRC ships <i>Minghua</i> and <i>Changli</i> depart Guangzhou to pick up “victimized Chinese nationals” from Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City
7/3		PRC GOVERNMENT NOTE to Hanoi suspends economic and technical aid to SRV		
7/11			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE links SRV “persecution” of Hoa people and SRV instigation of Viet-Cambodian border tensions to Hanoi’s “expansionist” ambitions	Joint Guangxi-Yunnan communiqué protests SRV driving Hoa people across border, establishes regulations for entry of Hoa people into PRC along SRV border
7/15		PRC chargé at Hanoi embassy says talks over Hoa people deadlocked in 16 th session		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
7/16			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on Hanoi stirring up anti-China fever	
7/19		Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) note to Hanoi proposes vice foreign min- isterial talks on Hoa people issue		
7/22			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on SRV ingratitude for PRC aid	
7/25		PRC Embassy "strong protest" over SRV slander of embassy		
7/26 and 7/29				PRC border of- ficials in Guangxi and Yunnan pro- test continuing SRV pushing Hoa people across bor- der
8/1			<i>Red Flag</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE attacks Soviet complicity in SRV's anti-China activities	
8/8		1 st session of PRC-SRV vice foreign ministerial talks open in Hanoi		Guangxi border officials protest Peilun Bridge incident

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
8/9		PRC Hanoi chargé “strong protest” rejects SRV protest over August 8 border incident		
8/14		PRC FOREIGN MINISTRY Asia Department delivers “strong protest” over August 10 border incident: “infringed” Chinese sovereignty		
8/19		PRC Vice Foreign Minister Zhong Xidong puts forward four-point proposal at 3 rd session of Hanoi talks		
8/25		PRC Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Haifeng delivers a “strong protest” to SRV envoy on August 25 “provocative incident” at Youyi Pass, an “extremely serious step” and “new crime” in effort to sabotage ongoing Sino-Viet talks in Hanoi		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
8/25 (cont.)		PRC vice foreign minister Zhong Xidong protests same at 4 th session of Hanoi talks		
8/29		PRC chargé in Hanoi issues “strong protest” over August 12 Guangxi border incident		
9/4		PRC State Council Overseas Chinese Office statement denounces SRV’s “engineering” August 25 Youyi Pass incident	<i>People’s Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on SRV’s escalating anti-China activities	
9/5		FOREIGN MINISTRY Asia Department Director Shen Ping delivers “strong protest” over SRV suspending rail traffic at Yunnan border		
9/7		Vice Foreign Minister Zhong Xidong complains about lack of progress at 5 th session of Hanoi talks		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
9/12		Vice Foreign Minister Zhong Xidong puts forward new proposals at 6 th session of Hanoi talks		
9/19		Vice Foreign Minister Zhong Xidong complains of SRV bad faith at 7 th session of Hanoi talks		
9/26		Vice Foreign Minister Zhong Xidong suspends talks at 8 th session of Hanoi talks; departs for Beijing on 27 th		
10/20				Xinhua reports Le Duan inspecting SRV-Cambodia border zone
10/26		FOREIGN MINISTRY “strong protest” over repeated SRV border incidents in September and October		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
11/3				Soviet Union-SRV security treaty signed; Xinhua reports SRV preparing "large-scale aggression" against Cambodia
11/7		<p>PRC FOREIGN MINISTRY "strong protest" over November 1 "extremely serious bloodshed incident" on border; notes Beijing has so far "exercised the greatest restraint and forbearance"; and warns that Hanoi should not mistake Beijing's restraint as "weakness and submissiveness"</p>		
11/8	<p>DENG XIAOPING in Bangkok denounces USSR-SRV treaty and Soviet global and SRV regional hegemonism; "we will attach importance" to this event</p>			

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
11/10			<p><i>People's Daily</i> EDITORIAL entitled "What are the Vietnamese Authorities up to?" warns that November 1 incident shows that Hanoi's "arrogant hostility to the Chinese people" has become "quite intolerable"; links Vietnamese border provocations to Soviet support for Vietnamese aggression in Cambodia and signing of Soviet-Vietnamese alliance; and "sternly" warns Hanoi to pull back from Chinese territory and "not to turn a deaf ear to China's warnings." "How far will you go? We will wait and see"</p>	<p>Xinhua reports continuing SRV border intrusions</p>
12/6				<p>Xinhua reports Hanoi setting up Cambodian liberation front body</p>
12/10				<p>Xinhua reports new SRV border intrusions</p>

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
12/11	<p>Guangxi CCP chief Zhao Xiaoguang speech at Nanning rally denounces continuing SRV border intrusions; warns that China will “certainly counterattack” any enemy’s encroachment</p>			
12/13	<p>Vice Premier Li Xiannian tells Thai delegation that “China’s forbearance has limits and the Vietnamese authorities are deluding themselves by thinking that we are weak and can be bullied”</p>	<p>FOREIGN MINISTRY “strong protest” over “incessant” Vietnamese encroachments and provoking “serious incidents of bloodshed”; charges that Hanoi has “turned a deaf ear” to Beijing’s repeated protests; warns that “there is a limit to China’s forbearance and restraint” and Hanoi must bear responsibility for the consequences if provocations continue</p>		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
12/16			<i>People's Daily</i> EDITORIAL on USSR-SRV collusion in planned aggression in Cambodia, Southeast Asia	
12/20				Xinhua reviews SRV border intrusions in Guangxi since August; notes PLA “did not return fire” even when SRV troops opened fire
12/24		FOREIGN MINISTRY “strong protest” over December 23 SRV border intrusion in Guangxi, notes Chinese militia “compelled to return fire in self defense”; FOREIGN MINISTRY “strong protest” over December 10–16 Guangxi border intrusions		Xinhua reports repeated September–December SRV border intrusions, firing at people in Yunnan
12/25			<i>People's Daily</i> EDITORIAL entitled “Our Forbearance is Limited” reviews SRV aggression against China and states that Hanoi “has gone far enough”; (cont.)	

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1978				
12/25 (cont.)			China “will not allow itself to be bullied by others,” will “certainly counterattack if attacked,” and “means what it says”; if Hanoi continues, it “will meet the punishment it deserves”; “don’t complain later that we did not give you clear warning in advance”	SRV invasion of Cambodia begins
12/28	LI XIANNIAN at overseas Chinese affairs conference warns that SRV provocations have become “intolerable” and that if Hanoi does not cease, it “will meet the punishment it deserves”			
1979				
1/5	DENG XIAOPING in meeting with U.S. journalists denounces SRV invasion of Cambodia, pledges “various forms of material assistance” to Phnom Penh			

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1979				
1/7		PRC GOVERNMENT STATEMENT denounces SRV invasion of Cambodia, pledges support to Phnom Penh		
1/12				Xinhua report reviews SRV border intrusions in early January, firing on Chinese people
1/14		PRC GOVERNMENT STATEMENT denounces SRV continuing invasion of Cambodia; China “will do its utmost” to support Phnom Penh		
1/19		PRC FOREIGN MINISTRY note denounces SRV stoppage of border rail traffic		
1/20				Xinhua reports new SRV border intrusions in Guangxi

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1979				
1/31	DENG XIAOPING at Washington press conference declares that “we mean what we say” and that Hanoi must be taught “some necessary lessons”			
2/1				Xinhua reports new SRV border intrusions, Chinese border guards “firing back in self defense and giving the intruders due punishment”; says SRV actions have “aroused the deep indignation of the Chinese army and people”
2/11	LI XIANNIAN in talks with Pakistani defense minister warns Hanoi “not to turn a deaf ear to what China has said”			

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary	Other
1979				
2/17		<p>PRC GOVERNMENT STATEMENT declares PRC forces have been “driven beyond forbearance” and “forced to counterattack”; PRC does not want “an inch” of SRV territory but neither will it tolerate “wanton incursions”; pledges to reopen negotiations if Hanoi ceases provocations; attack on northern SRV begins</p>		
2/18			<p><i>People’s Daily</i> EDITORIAL entitled “Rise in Counterattack in Defense of Frontiers” declares that in Hanoi “restraint and forbearance were regarded as invitations to bullying” and “advice and warnings fell on deaf ears”; calls PRC counterattack a “just action in defense of our frontier”</p>	

Appendix 2. Chronology of the 1961–1962 Sino-Indian Border Crisis

Date	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary
1961		
8/12	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) protests repeated Indian encroachments on border since May 19	
10/7	MFA protests repeated Indian encroachments on border	
11/2	Two MFA “strong protests” of new encroachments and violation of airspace; New Delhi should not take Beijing’s “restraint and tolerance as weakness”	
11/30	MFA note urges New Delhi to cease “unlawful actions,” otherwise it must be “held responsible for new tensions”	
12/6	MFA note discloses several previous protests; says Beijing has “exercised self restraint” in face of Indian “war clamor”	
12/7		<i>People’s Daily</i> EDITORIAL advises that New Delhi will be held responsible for new border tensions
1962		
1/24	MFA “serious protest” against new Indian air intrusions; New Delhi “mistaken if it thinks it can profit from unscrupulous provocations” against Chinese border posts	
2/26	MFA note renews call for negotiation of boundary dispute	
3/22	MFA note again calls for negotiation of boundary dispute	
4/21	MFA “serious protest” on new Indian border intrusion	
4/30	MFA “strongest protest” over Indian troops establishing posts on PRC territory; warns that if they are not withdrawn, PRC border guards would be “compelled to defend themselves”	

Date	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary
1962		
5/11	MFA “serious protest” of new intrusion and “provocative firing” by Indian troops in eastern sector; notes that PRC forces “firmly maintained a coolheaded attitude of self restraint”; situation on border “very grave”	
6/18	PRC Government “strong protest” of “atrocities” in which Indian troops shot four Tibetans; demands compensation and end to such incidents	
6/28	PRC Government “serious” protest of 59 Indian air intrusions in May	
7/8	PRC “strongest” protest of “serious intrusion” of Indian troops into Xinjiang; commends PRC forces’ self-restraint but warns that China “will never yield to deeper advances by India, nor will China give up its right to self defense when attacked”	
7/9		<i>People’s Daily</i> EDITORIAL, entitled “The Indian Government Should Rein in at the Brink of the Precipice,” warns that China will exercise right of self-defense in the face of unprovoked attacks
7/13	MFA “strongest protest” says New Delhi “turning a deaf ear” to past protests; warns that PRC has exercised forbearance and self-restraint but will be compelled to defend itself if Indian forces provoke an armed clash	
7/21		<i>People’s Daily</i> observer article, entitled “The Indian Authorities Should Not Miscalculate,” warns that if India continues to provoke armed clashes and compels Chinese forces to defend themselves, it will be “lifting a great stone only to drop it on its own foot”

Date	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary
1962		
7/22	MFA "strongest protest" over clash in Xinjiang in which PRC forces were compelled to defend themselves; while China has exercised "greatest forbearance and restraint," it could not "sit idly by"	
8/4	MFA note calls for border talks as soon as possible	
9/7		<i>People's Daily</i> EDITORIAL calls on New Delhi to cease border provocations and enter negotiations
9/13	MFA note proposes opening border talks on October 15; notes that New Delhi has rejected Beijing's August 4 call for talks	
9/21	PRC Government "most serious and strongest" protest on new Indian border clashes	
9/22		<i>People's Daily</i> EDITORIAL entitled "Is This Tolerable?" warns that "Beijing's patience is limited" and that Beijing will be forced to "take necessary measures" to protect its border guards if New Delhi does not cease its provocations; New Delhi "cannot now say that warning has not been given in advance"
10/3	MFA note reiterates call for border talks to open on October 15; notes continuing clashes	
10/6	MFA note protests new "incidents of bloodshed" in the eastern sector, says New Delhi "continuing to play with fire"	

Date	Official Statements	Authoritative Commentary
1962		
10/11	MFA “strongest and most serious protest” over October 9 clash, killing several PRC troops; warns that if Indian forces do not cease, Chinese troops “will surely act in self defense”; second “strongest and most serious” protest over new Indian attacks in Tibet; warns that if New Delhi “does not rein in before the precipice and continues to spread the flames of war,” it will bear all the consequences	
10/13	MFA “strong protest” over new intrusions; notes Indian side moving more troops “in preparation for war”	
10/14		<i>People’s Daily</i> EDITORIAL entitled “Mr. Nehru! It’s Time to Pull Back from the Brink of the Precipice!”
10/17	Two MFA “serious” protests over continuing intrusions	
10/20	MFA “most urgent, most serious and strongest” note declares that New Delhi has refused to negotiate and launched broad attacks on PRC territory and so China has “no choice but to rebuff these frenzied attacks resolutely”; Ministry of National Defense spokesman states that “all-out attacks” by Indian forces compelled PRC forces to “strike back” and “recover territory occupied by Indian troops”	

Appendix 3. PRC Signaling Over Taiwan: 1991, 1995, 1999, 2003–2004

1991: Taiwan Debate Preceding National Assembly Elections

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1991				
5/6				Long Liaowang article describes rising Taiwan independence (TI) issue in Taiwan's politics
6/3			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE warns TI is "a dangerous path"; warns advocates to "rein in at the brink of the precipice" and by "playing with fire" one will "get burned"	
7/1	JIANG ZEMIN Chinese Communist Party (CCP) anniversary speech notes that rise of TI "calls for special attention and vigilance"			

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1991				
7/9		State Council (SC) Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) spokesman TANG SHUBEI denounces Legislative Yuan (LY) proposal to join United Nations as Republic of China (ROC), notes some Kuomintang (KMT) legislators support; requires “high vigilance”		
8/25				Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) meeting on constitutional revision to change name of ROC to Taiwan
9/7			<i>People’s Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE blasts DPP draft constitution	
9/12		MFA spokesman at weekly briefing denounces TI advocates, Ramsey Clark remarks as “foreign interference”		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1991				
9/30	LI PENG national day toast says PRC “will never tolerate” Taiwan independence			
10/7				<i>Wen Wei Po</i> EDITORIAL chides KMT leaders for accommodating DPP TI demands; warns Beijing will not “stand idly by and remain indifferent”
10/9	PRC President YANG SHANGKUN warns those seeking to split China: Beijing “will not stand idly by”; should not make “wrong appraisal”; “those who play with fire will perish by fire”			
10/10			<i>People's Daily</i> EDITORIAL on PRC national day warns Beijing “will not tolerate” TI advocates colluding with “foreign powers”	
10/13				Zhongguo Xinwenshe reports DPP adopting TI plank in party constitution

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1991				
10/15		SC TAO spokesman TANG SHUBEI statement condemning DPP constitution plank on TI: “If they turn a deaf ear” to PRC warnings, Beijing “will not stand idly by”		
10/17			<i>People’s Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on 20 th anniversary of PRC entry into UN: “we resolutely oppose any attempt to create ‘two Chinas’ or ‘one China and one Taiwan”	
11/6-7	Vice President WU XUEQIAN meets Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) delegation in Beijing, calls for talks			
12/11	JIANG ZEMIN speech on 55 th anniversary of Xian Incident: renews proposal for talks; urges TI advocates “not to make a mistaken assessment,” turn back			

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1991				
12/16	Vice President WU XUEQIAN at ARATS (Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait) founding meeting applauds some Taipei officials for taking stronger stand against TI, acts to speed up cross-strait ties			Xinhua reports founding of ARATS
12/22				Zhongguo Tongxunshe reports KMT dominance, TI rejection in National Assembly elections

1995: Lee Teng-hui U.S. Visit

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1995				
5/22				Xinhua reports U.S. decision to grant Lee Teng-hui (LTH) a visa
5/23	VP/MFA Qian Qichen lodges "strong protest" with Ambassador Roy; will result in "grave consequences" unless U.S. reverses decision	MFA STATEMENT warns relations may "retrogress" and cause "severe damage" to relations		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1995				
5/24		National People's Congress (NPC) Foreign Affairs Committee statement: U.S. entirely responsible for consequences; Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) Foreign Affairs Committee statement		
5/25		MFA spokesman Shen Guofang says SC Li Guixian, PLA Air Force Deputy Commander Yu Zhenwu cutting U.S. visits short		May 25–30: Taiwan forces hold anti-amphibious landing exercises on Taiwan coast
5/26		MFA spokesman Shen Guofang says Minister of National Defense (MinND) Chi Haotian U.S. visit postponed	<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE, "Serious and Dangerous Retrogression," says PRC "absolutely will not tolerate" U.S. violating sovereignty, "will resolutely defend" its national interests	Xinhua reports ARATS Vice President Tang Shubei departing for Taipei to set 2 nd summit between SEF and ARATS; says Wang-Koo talks to be in mid- or late July

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1995				
5/28		MFA spokesman Shen Guofang announces postponement of Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) talks and visit by U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency chief		
5/29				<i>Wen Wei Po</i> (Hong Kong) EDITORIAL notes PRC responses so far in diplomatic arena; other areas could be affected; in Taipei, Tang Shubei announces agreement on Wang-Koo talks for July 20
6/1		MFA spokesman Chen Jian warns "serious damage" to PRC-U.S. relations if U.S. does not reverse Lee Teng-hui visa		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1995				
6/2				Winston Lord announces Clinton administration's renewal of "most favored nation" status for PRC
6/3				<i>Ta Kung Pao</i> (Hong Kong) editorial urges U.S. Government "not to miscalculate" and "turn a deaf ear" or PRC will "react further"
6/6		MFA spokesman Shen Guofang calls U.S. visa for Lee a "grave affair," says PRC will "react further" if not reversed		
6/8-12				Lee Teng-hui visit to Los Angeles, Ithaca, Anchorage
6/8				Xinhua publishes "Ai Zhonghua" article stating PRC will "adopt all necessary measures" to defend sovereignty

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1995				
6/9		PRC Ambassador Li Daoyu meets Clinton: U.S. action has “seriously damaged” relations	<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE says U.S. has “brought serious consequences” to relations and will “pay a price”	
6/10				<i>People's Daily</i> “Bu Wen” article entitled “U.S. Is Playing with Fire,” says Taiwan issue is a “powder keg” — “be careful!”
6/16		MFA spokesman Shen Guofang announces Ambassador Li Daoyu called home “for consultations”; SC Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman announces 2 nd Wang-Koo talks postponed		
6/17				Xinhua commentary says PRC-U.S. relations “at a crossroad,” and “we will wait and see” which way U.S. wants to go

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1995				
7/21				PRC begins missile firings into East China Sea
7/31	Minister of National Defense CHI HAO-TIAN Army Day toast says PRC will “not give up use of force” or “stand idly by” in face of foreign interference in Taiwan issue			

1999: Lee Teng-hui on Cross-strait Exchanges as “Special State-to-State Relations”

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
7/9				Lee Teng-hui says cross-strait ties a “special state-to-state” relationship in <i>Deutsche Welle</i> interview
7/11		Central Committee (CC)/State Council (SC) Taiwan Affairs Office spokesman on Lee statement: “We solemnly warn Taiwan splittist forces to pull back before it is too late and stop playing with fire”		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
7/12		<p>MFA spokesman Zhu Bangzao urges Lee Teng-hui to “size up the situation soberly, rein in at the brink of the precipice” and cease all separatist activities; has “gone too far on the dangerous road of playing with fire”; ARATS President Wang Daohan says Lee Teng-hui’s statement “undermines the foundation” of cross-strait exchanges</p>		
7/13		<p>ARATS Vice-President Tang Shubei elaborates on Lee Teng-hui undermining basis for cross-strait exchanges</p>		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
7/14			<p>People's Daily COMMENTATOR ARTICLE denounces Lee Teng-hui's "secessionist ambition"; expresses confidence in people's support for unification</p>	<p>Zhongguo Xinwenshe interview with Institute of Taiwan Studies researcher Li Ji-aquan: Lee Teng-hui's statement "a declaration of war against peaceful unification and pushes cross-strait relations to the brink of war"</p>
7/15		<p>MFA spokesman Zhang Qiyue urges Taiwan authorities to "size up the situation soberly, rein in at the brink of the precipice," and cease splittist activities; CC/SC Taiwan Affairs Office Director CHEN YUNLIN: Lee Teng-hui's remarks "destroyed the foundation" of the one-China principle</p>		
7/17				<p>Xinhua long article by "GUO TAIWEN" on meaning of Lee Teng-hui's "two-state" theory</p>

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
7/18		CPPCC Hong Kong/Macao/Taiwan/Overseas Chinese (OC) Committee statement: Lee Teng-hui "should stop playing with fire"		
7/20				<i>Wen Wei Po</i> cites Nanjing Military Region Deputy Chief of Staff Su Jing comments on Fujian military exercise, says Lee Teng-hui will "ruin himself by playing with fire" and will "drown in the ocean of people's war"
7/21		Xinhua reports ARATS forum denouncing Lee Teng-hui for destroying basis for cross-strait exchanges	<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on upholding "one-China principle"	Xinhua Commentator on Lee Teng-hui "doomed to be pinned on the pole of humiliation in history"

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
7/25	Xinhua reports Foreign Minister TANG JIAXUAN denouncing Lee Teng-hui "splittism" in Singapore talks with U.S. Secretary of State Albright; stresses U.S. abiding by three communiqués critical to stability in the Taiwan Strait			Xinhua Commentator on Lee Teng-hui's "sophistry"; must "rein in before the brink of the precipice and cease all splittist activities"
7/26			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on Lee Teng-hui's removal of basis for cross-strait exchanges	
7/27	PLA Chief of General Staff FU QUANYOU says Lee Teng-hui "lifting a great rock only to drop it on his own feet"; PLA has "determination and strength" to defend China's sovereignty			
7/29			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE warns Taipei to "rein in at the brink of the precipice," restore basis for cross-strait ties	

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
7/30		Xinhua reports ARATS rejecting Koo Chen-fu letter responding to WANG DAOHAN call on SEF to clarify its position		
7/31	Minister of Defense CHI HAOTIAN warns Taipei "not to under-estimate" PLA resolution to defend China's sovereignty			<i>Wen Wei Po</i> (Hong Kong) says Wang Daohan will not visit Taipei until it retracts Lee Teng-hui position
8/1			<i>People's Daily</i> and Xinhua SPECIAL COMMENTATOR ARTICLE blasts Koo Chen-fu speech "clarifying" Lee Teng-hui view; <i>Seeking Truth</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE calls on Lee Teng-hui to "ward off disaster at the critical moment"	<i>Wen Wei Po</i> (Hong Kong) article by Li Jiaquan dissects Koo Chen-fu response on "clarifying" Lee Teng-hui position
8/2				Xinhua Commentator blasts Koo Chen-fu speech responding to Wang Daohan demand for clarification

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
8/3				Ta Kung Pao (Hong Kong) cites PLA sources that Fujian PLA forces on alert; 3-stage military exercises like 1995–1996 “likely”
8/4		CC & SC TAO director’s speech rebutting 1 Aug Taiwan Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) explanation of “two-state” theory		
8/9				<i>Wen Wei Po</i> (Hong Kong) editorial raises possibility of blockade
8/10			Long <i>People’s Daily</i> OBSERVER ARTICLE on Lee Teng-hui’s two-state theory; blasts July 30 Koo Chen-fu speech, August 1 MAC explanations as showing Lee Teng-hui not willing to “stop before the brink of the precipice”	<i>Ta Kung Pao</i> (Hong Kong) editorial notes warnings of CHI HAOTIAN, ZHANG WANNIAN, sees prospect of war

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
8/16				Xinhua reports various PLA elements denounce Lee Teng-hui's two-state view; pledge "not to sit idly by" to preserve territorial integrity
8/18		Xinhua repots TAO office directors meeting reiterating readiness to open talks if Taipei retreats from two-state position	<i>Jiefangjun Bao</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE blasts two-state theory; says PLA would rather lose 1,000 men than an inch of territory	
8/19		UN representative QIN HUASUN meets UN deputy secretary-general on Nicaraguan proposal to seat Taipei; Amb. LI ZHAOXING blasts "some U.S. politicians" urging that U.S. protect Taiwan by force	<i>Jiefangjun Bao</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE #2 on Lee Teng-hui's two-state theory	

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
8/20		MFA spokesman ZHU BANGZAO calls for the U.S. “to make a clear commitment to not supply TMD” to Taiwan so as “not to undermine peace and stability” in the Taiwan Strait		
8/21				<i>Wen Wei Po</i> (Hong Kong) article by NDU professor on likely military alternatives in event of Taiwan Strait war; Zhongguo Tongxunshe report on accuracy of PRC cruise missiles, other capabilities in Taiwan conflict; “The PLA will teach Taiwan a lesson” and “cause heavy losses”
8/23				<i>Liaowang</i> commentator article warns Lee Teng-hui “not to turn a deaf ear”

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
8/26				Zhongguo Xinwenshe interview with 2nd Artillery engineer on PLA readiness to defend PRC sovereignty
8/27			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE attacks new Lee Teng-hui remarks; notes Lee Teng-hui finds himself increasingly isolated internationally	
8/28	VP QIAN QICHEN warns Taipei "not to underestimate the firm determination" of PRC to uphold sovereignty; do not "lift a stone only to drop it on one's foot"			
8/31		CC TAO statement blasts KMT resolution endorsing Lee Teng-hui's two-state theory		
9/1				<i>People's Daily</i> runs long Li Jiaquan article on Taiwanization of KMT

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
9/2		MFA spokesman Sun Yuxi blasts Lee Teng-hui pressing two-state theory in KMT platform, “pushing the Taiwan people nearer to the abyss of war,” “playing with fire”		AFP reports PLA exercises off Xiamen
9/3	Chief of General Staff FU QUANYOU tells Uruguay guest PLA “will foil any conspiracy to split the mainland”			Xinhua reports PRC missile experts blast Lee Teng-hui, boast of new generation of missiles
9/4	JIANG ZEMIN in Bangkok calls Lee Teng-hui’s two-state view “a dangerous step,” reiterates PRC as “firm in its determination” to defend sovereignty			
9/5				<i>Guangzhou Daily</i> notes upcoming PLA exercises off Guangdong to “deflate Lee Teng-hui’s arrogance”

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
9/6	Chief of General Staff FU QUANYOU tells Czech army leader PLA backs PRC government stance on Lee Teng-hui's two-state theory, has "strong determination and sufficient strength" to defend sovereignty			
9/7	Minister of Defense CHI HAOTIAN tells Czech army leader Beijing will not give up use of force against Taiwan splittists	MFA spokesman Sun Yuxi urges U.S. officials not to say things that encourage Lee Teng-hui's "arrogance"	<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE blasts Lee Teng-hui's efforts over the decade to pursue two-state idea	
9/8	JIANG ZEMIN in Canberra says PRC will not give up use of force in event of Taiwan independence or foreign intervention in Taiwan issue		<i>People's Daily</i> 2 nd COMMENTATOR ARTICLE attacks Lee Teng-hui claim that public supports his two-state theory	

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
9/9	FM TANG JIAXUAN meets Secretary of State ALBRIGHT in Canberra, calls on U.S. not to encourage Lee Teng-hui's "arrogance," nor supply theater missile defense (TMD)			Zhongguo Xinwenshe reports Academy of Military Science (AMS) researcher Wang Baoqing stating that "there is a limit to Beijing's patience" on unification; PRC has military superiority because of missiles; U.S. may intervene but will ultimately retreat
9/10	Reports ZHANG WANNIAN observing PLA "joint landing" exercises off Zhejiang and Guangdong in early September; PLA keeping a "close eye" on developments, "ready to crush" separatist acts			
9/11	JIANG ZEMIN in Auckland reiterates Beijing will not renounce use of force to defend sovereignty		<i>People's Daily</i> 3 rd COMMENTATOR ARTICLE blasts Lee Teng-hui's two-state theory	<i>Liberation Army Daily</i> commentary on why PRC will not renounce use of force; <i>Wen Wei Po</i> (Hong Kong) on significance of recent joint exercises

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
9/13	<i>Ta Kung Pao</i> reports CMC RESOLUTION on mobilizing for war			
9/14			<i>People's Daily</i> COMMENTATOR ARTICLE, "Lee Teng-hui Is Pushing Taiwan to Disaster," says cross-strait relations "at a vitally important moment"; PRC will not renounce use of force; prospect of peaceful unification "in danger of being wiped out"; "Chinese people keep their word" and Lee Teng-hui will suffer "fatal attacks"	
9/15		ARATS Vice Chairman TANG SHUBEI in Los Angeles warns "a small number of anti-China forces in the U.S. not "to be drawn into . . . a head-on collision with China" over Lee Teng-hui's splittism	<i>People's Daily</i> 4 th COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on Lee Teng-hui's two-state theory	

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
9/16		MFA spokesman Sun Yuxi notes United Nations General Assembly rejection of effort by “a small number of countries” to seat Taiwan	<i>People’s Daily</i> 5 th COMMENTATOR ARTICLE on Lee Teng-hui’s two-state theory’s “trouble-making” in the international community	
9/20				<i>Wen Wei Po</i> (Hong Kong) article on PLA preparations for war against Taiwan
9/23	Foreign Minister TANG JIAXUAN tells Secretary ALBRIGHT that JIANG-CLINTON meeting in Auckland produced “positive and constructive results”; now need “concrete actions”			
9/30	Premier ZHU RONGJI national day toast notes campaign against Lee Teng-hui’s two-state theory; pledges aid to Taiwan earthquake victims			
10/15				SEF Chairman Koo Chen-fu renews invitation to ARATS Chairman WANG DAO-HAN to visit Taipei

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
1999				
10/16		ARATS deputy ZHANG JINCHENG rejects Koo invitation as “insincere” in absence of retraction of Lee Teng-hui two-state view		
10/25	JIANG ZEMIN interview with <i>Le Figaro</i> says PRC “will not sit idly by” at attempts to split China; but renews Beijing interest in peaceful approach			

2003–2004 Taiwan Referendum Law

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2003				
3/26		SC TAO spokesman Zhang Mingqing blasts Legislative Yuan push to adopt referendum law		
7/18		SC TAO deputy director WANG ZAIXI says push for referendum law “a very dangerous trend”		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2003				
8/7	State Councilor (SCLr) TANG JIAXUAN tells Taiwan media delegation Beijing “opposes people using a ‘referendum’ to split the country”			
8/26		SC TAO deputy director WANG ZAIXI again says push for referendum law “a dangerous trend”		
9/28				DPP and Chen Shui-bian (CSB) call for new constitution and 2006 referendum
10/2				Xinhua reports People’s University professor denouncing CSB’s call for new constitution, referendum a “provocative move” that is “extremely dangerous”
10/9		SC TAO STATEMENT blasts CSB’s September 28 “provocative” remarks favoring TI referendum		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2003				
10/13				<i>People's Daily</i> article by Sun Shengliang attacks CSB's push for TI referendum
10/24	HU JINTAO in Canberra says Beijing "will not tolerate" Taiwan independence			
10/28	SClr TANG JIAXUAN says PRC "will not tolerate" TI promotion "by any party or person in Taiwan"			
10/29		SC TAO spokesman Zhang Mingqing "firmly opposes" TI referendum; "Chinese nation will not tolerate" TI "in any form"		
10/30				<i>Ta Kung Pao</i> (Hong Kong) attacks CSB, mass rally promoting referendum on new constitution; notes U.S. "concern" about CSB abandonment of "4 nos.," reviewing Taiwan policy

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2003				
11/4				<p><i>Ta Kung Pao</i> (Hong Kong) reviews CSB's push for TI referendum, warns it will lead to an "extremely perilous situation and a catastrophe" for the Taiwan people</p>
11/12		<p>SC TAO spokesman Li Weiyi warns CSB is moving "closer and close to the brink of TI," will bring a "huge disaster"</p>		
11/17		<p>SC TAO spokesman says CSB and DPP efforts to push TI referenda "a very dangerous splittist act," calls on them to "rein in before the precipice"; otherwise, face a "head-on blow by 1.3 billion Chinese people"</p>		
11/18		<p>ARATS Chairman WANG DAOHAN says TI advocates pushing "situation in the Taiwan Strait to a dangerous brink"</p>		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2003				
11/19		SC TAO deputy WANG ZAIXI blasts referendum as “an extremely dangerous move”; if TI declared, “armed force will be hard to avoid”; “TI means war”		Zhongguo Xinwenshe reports AMS research director LUO YUAN says changing ROC constitution is a “bottom line for the mainland to resort to force”; urges CSB to “think twice”
11/20				<i>Ta Kung Pao</i> (Hong Kong) EDITORIAL notes remarks in recent days by TAO leaders “most strongly worded since CSB came to power; Taipei should “not misinterpret Beijing’s words”; TI will lead to “war and disaster”
11/21		MFA spokesman Liu Jianchao calls on U.S. to honor commitments; “send no more wrong signals” regarding TI		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2003				
11/23	Premier WEN JIABAO tells <i>Washington Post</i> editor PRC “will not sit idly by and do nothing” in face of referendum and TI efforts; urges U.S. side “to be crystal clear” in opposition to the referendum” and other CSB tactics			
11/26		SC TAO spokesman Zhang Mingqing states Beijing “will not stand idly by” in event of TI		
11/27				ROC Legislative Yuan passes watered-down version of referendum law
12/2		MFA spokesman Liu Jianchao notes recent U.S. statements affirming one-China principle, opposing referendum		
12/9	Premier WEN JIABAO meets BUSH in Washington, DC: affirms Beijing’s “determination” to uphold national unity; notes Bush’s commitment to one-China principle and opposition to TI			

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2003				
12/11		MFA spokesman Liu Jianchao reiterates November 11 Wen Jiabao, Bush statements		
12/17		SC TAO spokesman Li Weiyi calls CSB's call for a "defensive referendum" along with the March elections a "serious provocation" against Taiwan Strait peace		
12/25	HU JINTAO meets 200 Taiwan businessmen; affirms interest in cross-strait exchanges but says will not tolerate TI			
12/30		MFA spokesman Liu Jianchao applauds Tokyo statement against referendum, TI		
12/31		SC TAO spokesman Zhang Mingqing blasts CSB for stirring up anti-China feelings		Reports CSB signing referendum law

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2004				
1/3		SC TAO deputy WANG ZAIXI in Canberra says CSB's referendum vote, new constitution in 2006 means it seeks TI by 2008; PRC's "restraint has a bottom line"; will not "waver or compromise"		
1/14	CMC Vice Chairman CAO GANGCHUAN tells U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff MYERS that "clearcut stand and resolution opposition" needed in face of TI activities; hopes U.S. "will play an active part in this"	SC TAO spokesman Li Weiyi: PRC "has firm resolve and necessary preparations" and "determination and confidence" to defend sovereignty		
1/15		SC TAO deputy WANG ZAIXI in New York tells 400 overseas Chinese three conditions under which PRC will use force (from February 2000 White Paper), adds that process cannot be set precisely; if Taipei makes "wrong judgment," timetable will be moved up		

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2004				
1/19	SCLr TANG JIAXUAN at forum calls referendum “can only cause confrontation and animosity” and lead to “the brink of danger”			Long <i>Renminwang</i> article by Peng Weixue on CSB’s March 20 referendum as a stepping-stone to TI
1/20		MFA spokesman KONG QUAN urges U.S. to keep its promise to oppose TI		
1/26	HU JINTAO in Paris reiterates PRC “will by no means allow anyone to separate Taiwan”			
1/30	WEN JIABAO meets U.S. Deputy Secretary of State ARMITAGE in Beijing, says Taiwan situation “very sensitive,” hopes U.S. will explicitly oppose CSB referendum; Armitage affirms Bush statements			
2/4				Long <i>Renminwang</i> article by Peng Weixue says CSB seriously misjudges PRC stake in TI issue

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2004				
2/11		SC TAO spokesman Zhang Mingqing urges Taiwan people, international community to recognize “dangers caused by the adventurist activities of TI advocates”		
2/17	CMC VC CAO GANGCHUAN reiterates “willingness and strength” to “guarantee unification”			
2/25		SC TAO spokesman Li Weiyi calls referendum “very harmful,” Beijing “watching developments closely”		
2/27		NPC spokesman Jiang Enzhu blasts referendum as “immoral” CSB campaign tactic		Singapore press says Fujian PLA “on high alert” because of February 28 rebellion anniversary demonstration led by Lee Teng-hui

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2004				
3/6	FM LI ZHAO-XING NPC press conference reiterates Beijing will “not allow Taiwan separation by any means”			<i>Wen Wei Po</i> (Hong Kong) says Fujian PLA holiday leave cancelled, preparing for war
3/11	JIA QINGLIN in talks with Taiwanese NPC delegates reiterates Beijing will not “allow Taiwan separation by any means”			
3/12		SC TAO deputy WANG ZAIXI tells Taiwan media reps Beijing ready for any election outcome, “has already drafted 2 separate statements”		
3/14	WEN JIABAO in NPC press conference reiterates Beijing will never allow Taiwan separation, appreciates international community and U.S. rejecting referendum			

Date	Leadership Statements	Official Statements	Authoritative Press Comment	Other
2004				
3/20		CC and SC TAO STATEMENT says failure of referendum “proves” it was “an illegal act that went against the will of the people”; any effort toward Taiwan independence “is doomed to fail”		Xinhua reports failure of CSB referendum in March 20 election

Notes

¹The now classic study of China's deterrence strategy for Beijing's intervention in the Korean War is Allen S. Whiting, *China Crosses the Yalu: The Decision to Enter the Korean War* (RAND Corporation, 1960). Whiting's assessment has been updated through newly released documents by Thomas J. Christensen, *Worse Than a Monolith: Alliance Politics and Problems of Coercive Diplomacy in Asia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), chapter 2. Whiting's study of China's deterrence strategy for the 1962 border conflict with India and involvement in the Indochina war was originally published in 1975 and has been reprinted with a new foreword. In his foreword, Whiting reflects upon the implications for his earlier assessments of China's deterrence strategy by later publications exploiting sources not available to him. His reflections include the Korean War case and Beijing's 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait military exercises. See Allen S. Whiting, *The Chinese Calculus of Deterrence: India and Indochina* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 2001).

²See Andrew Scobell, *China's Use of Military Force: Beyond the Great Wall and the Long March* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), chapter 6, for a very interesting assessment of China's motivation for attacking Vietnam.

³For details, see Thomas Robinson, "The Sino-Soviet Border Conflicts of 1969: New Evidence Three Decades Later," in *Chinese Warfighting: The PLA Experience Since 1949*, ed. Mark A. Ryan, David M. Finkelstein, and Michael McDevitts, 198–216 (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2003).

⁴Barbara Barnouin and Yu Changgen, *Chinese Foreign Policy during the Cultural Revolution* (London: Keegan Paul International, 1998), 88.

⁵For details, see David G. Muller, Jr., *China As a Maritime Power* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 152–154.

⁶For a useful view of China's civilian maritime enforcement agencies, see Lyle Goldstein, *Five Dragons Stirring Up the Sea: Challenge and Opportunity in China's Improving Maritime Enforcement Capabilities* (Newport, RI: China Maritime Studies Institute, U.S. Naval War College, April 2010).

⁷For a recent look at these issues, see Mark E. Redden and Phillip C. Saunders, *Managing Sino-U.S. Air and Naval Interactions: Cold War Lessons and New Avenues of Approach*, China Strategic Perspectives, no. 5 (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, September 2012).

⁸For a detailed and insightful assessment of Sino-American relations and the Taiwan dilemma, see Alan D. Romberg, *Rein In at the Brink of the Precipice: American Policy Toward Taiwan and U.S.-PRC Relations* (Washington, DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2003).

⁹For details of these operations see Xiaobing Li, "PLA Attacks and Amphibious Operations During the Taiwan Strait Crises of 1954-55 and 1958," in *Chinese Warfighting*, 143–172.

¹⁰See Chalmers M. Roberts, "Dulles Sees General Use of A-Arms," *The Washington Post*, March 16, 1955, 1; and the discussion in Thomas E. Stolper, *China, Taiwan, and the Offshore Islands* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1985), 89–90.

¹¹For a useful assessment of China's deterrence strategy and the PLA's military exercises, see Scobell, chapter 8. For a detailed assessment of the exercises and the U.S. responses, see Robert L. Suettinger, *Beyond Tiananmen: The Politics of US-China Relations 1989–2000* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), chapter 6.

¹² Roberts, 1; and Stolper, 89–90.

¹³ See Taylor Fravel, *Strong Borders, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁴ We are grateful to Professor Bernard Cole of the National War College for bringing this reality to our attention.

¹⁵ For a detailed assessment of this arrangement and its applicability to potential U.S.-China incidents, see Redden and Saunders.

¹⁶ Adapted from Robert L. Suettinger, "U.S. 'Management' of Three Taiwan Strait 'Crises,'" in *Managing Sino-American Crises: Case Studies and Analysis*, ed. Michael D. Swaine and Zhang Tuosheng, 251 (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006).

¹⁷ Adapted from Michael D. Swaine, "Understanding the Historical Record," in *Managing Sino-American Crises*, 37–64.

¹⁸ Draws from the discussion in Wang Jisi and Xu Hui, "Pattern of Sino-American Crises: A Chinese Perspective," in *Managing Sino-American Crises*, 137–146.

¹⁹ See, for example, Allen S. Whiting, "U.S. Crisis Management Vis-à-vis China: Korea and Vietnam," in *Managing Sino-American Crises*, 215–249; and Niu Jun, "Chinese Decision Making in Three Military Actions Across the Taiwan Strait," in *Managing Sino-American Crises*, 293–326.

²⁰ It must be noted here that a primary driver for China's military modernization programs is in fact preparation for a military confrontation with the United States over Taiwan. Some Chinese undoubtedly do hold the views expressed by these authors, but caution leads Beijing and China's armed forces to prepare for the worst plausible case scenario.

²¹ The following discussion is taken from Wang and Xu, 140–141.

²² *Ibid.*, 145–146.

²³ To cite but two sources among many, see David M. Lampton, "Testimony before the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission," Hearing on China's Narratives Regarding National Security Policy, March 10, 2011; and Linda Jacobson and Dean Knox, *New Foreign Policy Actors in China*, SIPRI Policy Paper No. 26 (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, September 2010). Much of this discussion is drawn from these sources.

²⁴ Lampton, 5.

²⁵ Jiefangjun Bao, April 15, 2008.

²⁶ Hu Yanan, "Military Hot Line Smooths Rocky Relationship," *China Daily Online*, November 12, 2011.

²⁷ The following case study analyses of the 1978–1979 Sino-Vietnamese war, the 1960–1961 Sino-Indian border war, and Taiwan Strait confrontations from 1991 through 2004, as well as the appended chronologies, derive from relevant Foreign Broadcast Information Service Daily Reports and from the Chinese Communist Party's newspaper *People's Daily*.

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