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破巢策略：阻止中国入侵台湾

Jared M. McKinney

Peter Harris

Broken Nest: Deterring China from Invading Taiwan

破巢策略：阻止中国入侵台湾

摘要：通过量身定制的一揽子威慑方案，阻止中国入侵台湾而不鲁莽地以一场大国战争相威胁，既是可能的，也是必要的，而不仅仅是为了台湾而战或放弃台湾。本文将对威慑的前沿理解与中国战略思想和文化的经验证据相结合，以构建这样一种战略。

Introduction

简介

如果中华人民共和国 (PRC) 冒着与美国及其盟友开战的风险，它会入侵台湾吗？过去，很明显北京没有兴趣就其军队无法取胜的台湾发动战争。然而如今越来越多的美国分析人士怀疑能否通过武力阻止中国统一台湾。他们声称，中国领导人不再对美国保卫台北的前景感到恐惧，因为北京的高层越来越相信它会在台湾的战争中获胜。

台湾一些最坚定的支持者主张美国加强承诺，以应对中国日益增强的信心和自信。一个熟悉的建议是，华盛顿将其长期存在的“战略模糊”政策（意在让中国大陆和台湾都猜测美国在发生战争时将如何应对）换成有利于台北的“战略清晰”政策。这种观点声称，中国入侵的威胁之所以增

加，只是因为美国未能跟上中国崛起的步伐。如果北京确信任何针对台湾的行动都会遭到美军的全力打击，那么战争的风险就会急剧下降。

尽管美国无疑有强烈的兴趣阻止中国接管台湾，但依靠大国战争的潜在威胁是错误的做法。随着地区军事平衡向有利于中国的方向转变，这种战略不仅变得不那么可信，而且还要求美国和台湾都接受不必要的高风险，作为维持脆弱和平的代价。相反华盛顿和台北的领导人应该制定一项通过惩罚来威慑的联合战略，以说服他们的中国同行相信，虽然台湾可能在短期内被征服，但夺取它会引发北京不可接受的经济、政治和战略代价。如果实施得当，这样的战略可以阻止中国入侵台湾，同时减少大国之间不必要冲突的可能性，特别是如果与美国的善意努力相结合，使中国和台湾两国都更易容忍现状。

The Threat of War

战争的威胁

美国在防止中国入侵台湾方面的利益是直截了当且令人信服的。如果台湾落入中国手中，一个成功的民主制度将被消灭，北京在东亚的地缘政治地位将以美国及其盟友的利益为代价得到加强。甚至那些警告不要夸大台湾战略重要性的分析人士也承认这一事实... 在所有条件都相同的情况下，放弃台北给中国会带来巨大的成本和风险。然而美国显然因得不偿失而有意避免与北京开战。即使美国赢

了，这样的冲突也将是毁灭性的——这也许是一个误导性的术语，因为即使成功避免了中国接管台湾的军事行动，仍会让美国处于成为“台湾永久防御力量”的尴尬境地。毋庸置疑，随着东亚军事平衡的变化，美国完全有可能输掉。当然如果美中战争“演变成核战争”，那么其结果对美国、台湾、中国和其他地方的人民来说简直就是一场灾难。

无论美国多么希望维护台湾事实上的独立，战争的代价都意味着美国的回应会面临严重的可信度问题。依靠明或暗的战争威胁来威慑中国甚至可能适得其反，如果它导致北京评估台海两岸的军事平衡允许入侵的话。例如，如果中国领导人有情报表明美国不会战斗——或者会战斗但会失败，那么下令进攻可能是合理的。

在过去的几十年里，美国对中国享有明显的军事优势，因此美国的威慑能力更加可信。例如，1950年6月，杜鲁门总统在中国大陆和台湾之间派遣第七舰队以“中和”台湾海峡，并阻止中国军队进行两栖攻击。40多年后，比尔·克林顿总统向该地区派遣了两个航母战斗群，给中国领导人留下了美国军事优势的印象——这种武力展示虽然在短期内取得了成功，但长期影响了中国领导人寻求对反舰弹道导弹进行大规模的投资。

今天，美国更难进行这种“拒止威慑”演习。人民解放军现在已经足够强大，即使美国介入保卫台北，它也可能占领台湾。双方都知道这一点——或者至少强烈怀疑这一

点。一位与解放军海军有关系的中国分析人士告诉我们，**解放军成功入侵的目标是 14 小时，而它预计美国和日本需要 24 小时做出反应。**如果这种情况接近准确，一旦中国政府对其相对能力充满信心，它很可能会倾向于使事实既成。这一观点与中国人民解放军 2013 年《军事战略学》提出的思路一致，即“**力争出其不意夺取和控制战场主动权，麻痹和摧毁敌人的作战体系，震慑敌人的战争意志**”。

即使美国在中国能够确保既成事实之前进行干预，中国战略家也越来越相信美国会输掉关于台湾的战争。如果出现这种情况，中国将在国内和国际声望方面取得重大胜利——这对任何领导人来说都是一个诱人的前景，尤其是那些打算彻底重建中国大国地位的领导人。中国的战略思想强调有限战争的可能性和效用，并投射出对战争处理者将这种参与带来有利政治结果能力的信心。这一战略正是中国在 1962 年的中印战争、1969 年的中苏边界冲突和 1979 年的中越战争中试图执行的战略。所有这些行动在军事上都是成功的，但在政治上的失败似乎没有引起注意。

中国的地缘优势和技术进步使美国难以恢复拒止威慑战略(Deterrence-by-Denial)的可信度。增加该地区美军的数量和类型充其量可能有助于降低中国对速胜的期望。面对美国在台湾扩大军事足迹，北京不会保持被动。为了保持长期战略优势，美国必须愿意参加与北京的全面军备竞赛——这是一场不容易获胜的竞赛，而且这将大大降低找到外交解决争端的机会。这种可能性并不意味着中国完全

不可阻挡。它的意思是威慑必须更多地基于对入侵做出反应的惩罚威胁（以惩罚威慑 Deterrence by Punishment），而不是阻止在军事征服上取得成功的威胁（以拒止威慑 Deterrence by Denial）。如果对侵略台湾的惩罚能够足够严厉和可信，北京可能不会选择这样的行动方案。

当然，美国目前的对台政策已经部分基于以惩罚威慑的逻辑——即暗示对中国发动可能不仅限于台湾海峡的战争威胁。例如“空海一体战”概念包括对中国大陆进行大规模打击。然而从美国的角度来看，这种以军事为重的惩罚威慑完全没有吸引力。中国不仅有充分的理由怀疑美国是否会继续升级攻击，而且即使中国对此类攻击作出非对等或对等回应，中国是否会成为最大的输家也不一定。此外即使赢得这样一场战争也不会给美国和台湾提供永久可持续的两岸关系问题解决方案。我们同意 Andrew Scobell 的观点，“为了一劳永逸地解决台湾问题，结果必须让北京满意。”下面我们提出一个不取决于美国信誉的惩罚威慑战略。威胁对中国发动大国战争，虽然没有提供永久解决方案的路线图，但至少可望降低所有相关方维持现状的成本。

Beijing's Changing Calculus 北京不断变化的权衡

如果华盛顿不必威胁发动大国战争就可以阻止中国的入侵，这对美国和台湾会更好。下面我们认为在这方面还

有其他选择——值得探索的选择。但首先，有必要考虑一下为什么中国近年来对台湾采取了更加强硬的立场。消息灵通的分析人士现在评估，中国在未来十年内入侵的可能性并非微不足道。为什么呢？

原因之一是台湾海峡两岸和周边地区的军事平衡已经向对北京有利的方向转变。中国大肆吹嘘的反介入/区域防御能力意味着解放军现在比过去更有可能将美军拒之门外，从而使解放军能够夺取其所谓的“三大优势”：（1）局部制海权（2）制空权（3）制信息权。如果发生战争，中国先进的雷达系统和压倒性的导弹火力现在可能足以在中国战略家预测的“信息化条件下的局部战争”中取得胜利。中国战略家将这种冲突判断为高概率和高危险性的冲突，因此二十多年来，解放军一直致力于为这种情况做准备。从北京的角度来看，这些准备大大降低了对台行动的成本。随着解放军继续现代化并获得相对于东亚其他行为体的优势，此类行动的成本将继续降低。

另一方面，中国的约束成本增加了。克制成本是威慑的一个关键但理论不足的方面。它表明了现状的可接受性——在目前情况下，是对台湾政治地位争端的长期悬而未决的可接受性。对于中国来说，**随着台湾与大陆的距离越来越远，特别是在其核心国家认同方面，克制成本正在增加。台湾民进党的自信和中国国民党的衰落是这种转变的具体表现。**由于台湾人对中国大陆和香港的事态发展——尤其是中国的反民主政策持警惕态度，越来越难以想象台

湾和中国“携手并进”，正如习近平和其他中国领导人所坚持的那样。难怪越来越多的台湾人不愿与北京政治联盟，但**如果中国认为台湾拒绝和平统一的原则，其领导人可能别无选择，只能寻求军事解决方案。**

中国的鹰派指责美国鼓励台湾背离了他们认为的 1992 年“一中各表”共识。对他们来说，美国的保证政策似乎越来越具有挑衅性。美国曾表示有兴趣维护台湾海峡的现状，而中国现在怀疑美国采取更激进的政策，将台湾置于其防御保护伞之下，就像 1979 年之前那样，再次成为“自由世界”的有用前哨。

推动中国入侵的因素不是美国可以轻易阻止的。中国的军事成果可以被削弱，但不能逆转。华盛顿也不可能改变台湾的国内政治或中华人民共和国反对台湾无限期独立的热情。然而美国领导人可以利用一些手段来降低中国对入侵台湾的兴趣。首先美国可以通过威胁北京的惩罚威慑战略来增加中国的行动成本，不是通过战争，而是通过挫败其他国家优先事项。

其次，通过善意努力践行美中在台湾问题上和解的精神，可以降低中国克制的成本。这两个目标可以同时实现，以加强威慑力，促进两岸关系的长期稳定，从而促进美国和台湾乃至中国的国家安全利益。接下来，我们依次使用每个杠杆。

The Broken Nest

破巢策略

中国谚语说：“覆巢之下，焉有完卵？”这句谚语的意思是，如果美国不能阻止中国用武力夺取台湾，它应该制定一项战略来说服中国领导人，入侵会产生比和平现状更有害。如前所述，美国已经将惩罚威慑逻辑纳入其对台总体战略。破巢方式与其他惩罚威慑方案的区别在于，它不依赖于美国使用武力的意愿；该战略是独一无二的，因为它有可能阻止中国入侵台湾，同时也让各方放心，美国不会威胁一场大国战争。

如果不进行军事报复，美国可以对北京实施多项惩罚。最明显的第一步是让台湾更能抵御入侵，例如通过从美国购买合适的防御性武器（例如鱼叉飞弹、机动火箭系统和海浪区水雷）。最近在这方面取得了进展。台湾越是可自信地威胁发动一场必要的自卫战争，美国就越不会威胁要发动自己选择的战争。台北领导人还必须让北京相信，镇压台湾 2350 万公民将面临一场漫长而代价高昂的斗争。至少北京必须预见到广泛的公民抗争。更严重的是，中国可能会期待在台湾进行游击战，甚至可能将暴力输出到大陆。目前，台湾人在多大程度上支持打一场“必要的战争”来保卫他们的岛屿举棋不定。为使威慑发挥作用，台北领导人必须巩固国内对抵抗中国侵略的支持并建立抵抗能力。

然而就其本身而言，面对强大但最终失败防御的预期不太可能阻止中国的入侵。还必须让北京相信，征服台湾在满足中国国家核心目标的同时，不可能在不危及其他核心利益的情况下完成。实际上这一战略意味着向中国保证，入侵台湾会在大陆造成重大经济危机，而不是某些人认为的中国吸收台湾强大科技产业会带来的技术优势。

首先，**美国和台湾应该制定有针对性的焦土战略计划**，这将使台湾在被武力夺取时不仅没有吸引力，而且维护起来成本也很高。**最有效的方法是威胁摧毁台积电的设施**，台积电是世界上最重要的芯片制造商，也是中国最重要的供应商，韩国（美国的盟友）的三星是尖端设计的唯一替代选择。尽管中国为“**Made in China**”芯片产业做出了巨大努力，但 2020 年中国使用的半导体中只有 6% 是在国内生产的。如果台积电的工厂停产，全球公司将难以继续运营。这一发展意味着中国的高科技产业将在国家卷入大规模战争的同时停滞不前。即使正式战争结束，经济成本也会持续数年。从中国共产党的角度来看，这个问题将是一种危险的鸡尾酒，其合法性取决于国内安宁、国家复原力和持续经济增长的承诺。

当然，挑战在于让中国决策者相信这种威胁。他们必须相信台湾的半导体产业在入侵时会被摧毁。如果中国怀疑台北不会兑现这样的威胁，那么威慑就会失败。**可以设计一个自动机制，一旦确认入侵就会触发**。此外台湾领导人现在可以表明他们不会让这些产业落入对手之手。美国

及其盟国可以通过宣布计划为在该行业工作的高技能台湾人提供庇护、与台北制定快速疏散和处理经营实体半导体代工厂人力资本的应急计划以来支持这一努力。

这种“破巢”的做法并非没有先例。瑞典在第二次世界大战期间就其铁矿——工业战争材料的主要来源——提出了类似的选择性焦土威胁，作为其反纳粹威慑总体战略的一部分。**如果台北制定并公开计划使用巡航导弹和弹道导弹瞄准大陆的芯片生产线，包括中芯国际在上海的工厂，那么台湾的威胁将比瑞典的威胁更大。**由美国牵头但得到韩国和其他盟国支持的针对任何向中国出口芯片预先计划的制裁行动将加强这种做法。

毫无疑问，台湾人会非常担心用一场可能无法取胜的防御战来威胁中国大陆。实施焦土和游击战术的前景同样没有吸引力。因此让中国相信这些威胁将是一个重大挑战，尽管或许没有说服北京相信台美愿意冒因台湾政治地位而引发大国战争的风险那么困难。然而自相矛盾的是，只有让这些威胁变得可信，它们才永远不必实施。无论如何，上述威胁——即使在最大程度上实施——对台湾人民的破坏性远不及美国发动大国战争的威胁，后者将在台湾上空和台湾附近发生大规模和持久的战斗。

然而，谨慎的做法是制定一种不完全依赖台湾威胁的惩罚威慑战略。此类战略的其他方面可能包括与美国的地区盟友，尤其是日本（东亚区潜在力量 and 实际力量差距最

大的国家）协同实施经济制裁和威胁，以恶化中国的长期区域安全环境。至少美国政府应该带头制定可信的经济制裁和政治孤立威胁，特别关注半导体行业——许多必要的高科技投入来自少数美国公司——让北京的领导人不要对入侵台湾会带来的惩罚抱有幻想。更严重的是，美国可能会发出信号，攻击台湾将为日本、韩国和澳大利亚等盟国发展自己的核武库开绿灯。如果能让中国相信入侵台湾会导致一个或多个核大国联合起来反对它，那么这种可能性应该是一种有效的威慑。

这种威胁的优势在于，台湾问题不仅是美中之间的意志之战，而且是中国希望其在该地区和更广泛世界中的安身立命的根本问题。中国是想激怒其亚洲邻国，还是更愿意推进其地区领导与和平合作的雄心？同样必须说服中国领导人，入侵台湾将以国家核心目标：经济增长、国内安宁、安全边界，甚至可能是维持政权合法性为代价。

就其本身而言，这些惩罚预期都不足以阻止中国入侵台湾。不过将它们放在一起可能会证明是有效的。如果调整得当，从中国的角度来看，通过惩罚来威慑的战略将使攻击变得不合理。这个结果一定是美台联合战略的目标。

Reducing the Costs of Restraint

降低约束成本

对我们论点的一个可能反对意见是，由于与台湾统一

是中国国家的长期目标——一个由民族主义、收复领土和共产党不断寻求国内合法性所推动的目标——当中国领导人权衡入侵台湾的决定时，不会停下来计算成本和利益。如果这种观点是正确的，那无论是通过拒止还是以惩罚相威胁，阻止中国入侵台湾的可能性确实微乎其微。

美国的分析人士不能排除中国有朝一日不计代价入侵台湾的可能性。然而，如果美国将其台湾政策建立在中国领导人非理性的信念之上，或者将自己锁定在一个如果中国鲁莽行事将是灾难性的战略中，那将是错误的。过去中国一直被说服，台湾海峡的现状是可以容忍的，尽管中国战略家将台湾描述为无“回旋余地”的“核心利益”。如前所述，北京还认识到其他核心利益，例如国家发展、追求国际声望和维护国内稳定——所有这些都可能因错误判断的征服台湾而受到危害。

中国共产党有两个有期限的主要目标：到 2035 年基本实现“社会主义现代化”和到 2049 年成为“社会主义现代化强国”。鉴于中国内部的人口、生态、社会和经济挑战，中国将难以实现这些目标。如果侵台成功，鉴于上述惩罚，它们将成为不可能的目标。“中国梦”的其余部分将同样陷入混乱。战略就是平衡关键利益——中国领导人对此深有体会。在 1975 年的一次会议上，亨利·基辛格 (Henry Kissinger) 和毛泽东讨论了台湾何时回归大陆。毛说：“一百年后。”基辛格回答说：“用不了一百年，少得多。”毛接着说：“还是在你们手里比较好。如果你现在把它还给

我，我也不会想要它，因为它是没人要的。那里有一大群反革命分子。”考虑到中华人民共和国更广泛的利益，破巢战略的目标应该是让台湾变得不受欢迎。

不过必须让北京放心，选择放弃入侵台湾并不等同于失去台湾。提高中国入侵的成本肯定只是解决当前战略困境的一部分；台湾和美国也必须采取行动，减轻中国的克制成本。华盛顿必须明确重申台湾地位未定，美国无意支持台湾独立建国，也不会使用违反中美精神的灰色地带策略寻求改变和睦的现状。同时华盛顿必须坚决反对武力解决台湾问题。

与以军事报复威胁为核心的战略不同，惩罚威慑战略不依赖于美国加强其在东北亚的军事力量。这种做法为美国留下了一些空间，可以采取一种能够让日本和韩国等盟国对其集体防御感到放心的武力态势，同时也让台湾和中国相信美国真正致力于维持台海现状。它还使美国军队能够摆脱在日基地的脆弱性，减少中国在主动防御情况下先发制人地攻击它们，而增加大国战争的可能性。将威慑负担从军事报复转移到非军事惩罚也可能会降低因误判而引发战争的可能性，同时也消除了中国集结应对美台挑衅的借口。

当然减少美国在台湾周围的军事足迹也存在危险。必须与区域合作伙伴一起进行仔细的研究和规划，以确定需要何种水平和类型的美国前沿部署来安抚盟友，同时减少

战争的可能性。在可靠的惩罚性威慑战略到位之前不应缩编军队；否则，**北京可能会察觉到发动成功攻击的机会之窗**。此外如果台湾不再相信美国将会（或能够）对此进行干预，那么它可能不会那么努力独自跟中国进行战争。也就是说，鉴于有关台湾武装部队士气低落以及国防开支低（约占 GDP 的 2%）的报道，对现状的冲击可能正是形势所需要的。无论如何，减少对武力威胁的依赖并不等同于完全排除使用武力。如果中国入侵台湾，美国是否会使用武力，这一点始终存在模糊性。

Conclusion: Deterrence and Reassurance 结论：威慑和保证

美国的政策必须是阻止使用武力来颠覆台海两岸的现状。然而，美国的外交政策还必须考虑现实情况：军事威慑正变得不像过去那样可信。此外依靠军事力量来阻止中国的侵略，需要美国和台湾政府让他们的公民承担高风险。需要一种新的威慑方法，一种不像目前那样依赖于危险军事力量威胁的方法。

提高破坏台湾巢穴的成本同时忠实地保持未破坏巢穴价值的双重策略是阻止中国入侵台湾从而避免大国战争的最谨慎方法，并且也因此避免了大国战争。必须让中国相信，军事入侵台湾不会带来任何总体利益，而维持现状却有相当大的好处。归根结底，纯粹——甚至主要——基于军事威慑的战略无法实现这些目标。除非美国领导人真的

愿意为保卫台湾而参加第三次世界大战，否则他们最好考虑不依赖军事报复威胁的威慑战略。我们认为可以想象这样一种替代性威慑战略——一种依赖于非军事手段的严厉惩罚，而不是期望能够在军事上击退中国的入侵。

也就是说，我们清楚地认识到通过惩罚来制定可靠威慑战略的困难。尤其重要的是，如果中国选择这样做的话，破巢战略意味着接受它可能会征服台湾。这也意味着要制定计划，以巨大的经济代价摧毁台湾的关键基础设施。尽管如此我们认为即使美国介入，中国也有可能征服台湾。此外大国冲突的社会和经济成本将使台湾半导体产业针对性的破坏或叛乱造成不可避免的危害相形见绌。

总而言之，**破巢战略取决于美国不采取任何被中国领导人解读为战争行为的行动。**在这种情况下，如果北京真的认为美国是一个积极的交战国，它可能会对美军发动先发制人的打击。必须认真考虑这种可能性。**几乎没有什么方法可零冲突风险地阻止中国大陆入侵台湾。在接下来的十年左右，阻止中国侵略并降低大国冲突可能性的最佳方法是遵循上述路径：如果发生战争，则破巢；如果能和平，则容忍现状。**

附录：原文

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Broken Nest: Deterring China from Invading Taiwan
Jared M. McKinney
Peter Harris

ABSTRACT: Deterring a Chinese invasion of Taiwan without recklessly threatening a great-power war is both possible and necessary through a tailored deterrence package that goes beyond either fighting over Taiwan or abandoning it. This article joins cutting-edge understandings of deterrence with empirical evidence of Chinese strategic thinking and culture to build such a strategy.

Introduction

Would the People's Republic of China (PRC) invade Taiwan if it meant risking war with the United States and its allies? In the past, it was clear Beijing had no appetite for starting a war over Taiwan its military could not win. Today, however, a growing number of US-based analysts are skeptical China can be deterred from attempting unification with Taiwan by force. They claim Chinese leaders no longer tremble at the prospect of the United States coming to the defense of Taipei because Beijing's top brass increasingly believes it would prevail in a war over the island.

Some of Taiwan's staunchest supporters argue for a strengthening of US commitments in response to China's growing confidence and assertiveness. One familiar recommendation is for Washington to trade its long-standing policy of "strategic ambiguity" (meant to leave both China and Taiwan guessing as to how the United States would respond in the event of war) for "strategic clarity" in favor of Taipei.² This view claims the threat of a Chinese invasion has grown only because the United States has failed to keep pace with China's rising power. If Beijing were convinced any move against Taiwan would be met with the full force of the US military, then the risk of war would drop precipitously.

While the United States no doubt has a strong interest in deterring a Chinese takeover of Taiwan, relying on the latent threat of a great-power war is the wrong approach. Not only is such a strategy becoming less credible as the regional military balance shifts in China's favor, but it also requires both the United States and Taiwan to accept unnecessarily high risks as the price of maintaining a fragile peace. Instead, leaders in Washington and Taipei should develop a joint strategy of deterrence by punishment to convince their counterparts in China that, although Taiwan might be conquerable in the short term, its capture would trigger the imposition of unacceptable economic, political, and strategic costs upon Beijing. If done correctly, such a strategy could discourage a Chinese invasion of Taiwan while simultaneously lessening the chances of an unwanted great-power conflict, especially if combined with good-faith efforts by the United States to make the status quo more tolerable for both China and Taiwan.

The Threat of War

The US interest in preventing a PRC invasion of Taiwan is straightforward and compelling. If Taiwan fell to China, a successful democracy would be extinguished, and Beijing's geopolitical position in East Asia

would be enhanced at the expense of the United States and its allies.³ Even analysts who caution against inflating the strategic importance of Taiwan accept the fact that . . . all things being equal, there are substantial costs and risks attached to abandoning Taipei to China.⁴ Yet, the United States obviously has a countervailing interest in avoiding war with Beijing.⁵ Such a conflict would be ruinous even if the United States won—a misleading term, perhaps, given even a military action that successfully averted a Chinese takeover of Taiwan would still leave the United States in the unenviable position of “becoming the permanent defense force for Taiwan.”⁶ Needless to say, with the changing military balance in East Asia, it is entirely possible the United States would lose.⁷ Of course, if a US-China war “went nuclear,” then the outcome could be nothing short of cataclysmic for people in the United States, Taiwan, China, and elsewhere.

No matter how much the United States wishes to preserve Taiwan's de facto independence, the costs of war mean US responses suffer from serious credibility problems. Relying on an explicit or implicit threat of war to deter China might even be counterproductive if it leads Beijing to assess that the military balance across the Taiwan Strait permits an invasion. For example, it might be rational for Chinese leaders to order an assault if they had intelligence suggesting the United States would not fight—or would fight and lose.

In previous decades, the United States enjoyed clear military supremacy over China, and thus, American deterrence capabilities were more credible. For example, in June 1950, President Harry Truman interposed the Seventh Fleet between mainland China and Taiwan “to ‘neutralize’ the Taiwan Strait” and to discourage Chinese forces from attempting an amphibious attack.⁸ More than 40 years later, President Bill Clinton impressed America's military superiority upon Chinese leaders with the dispatch of two carrier strike groups to the region—a show of force that, while successful in the short term, had the long-term effect of convincing China's leaders to pursue massive investments in anti-ship ballistic missiles.

Today, the United States has more difficulty engaging in such exercises of “deterrence by denial.”¹⁰ The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is now powerful enough it probably could overrun Taiwan even if the United States intervened to defend Taipei. Both sides know this—or at least strongly suspect it. A Chinese analyst with connections in the PLA Navy told us the PLA's goal for a successful invasion was 14 hours, while it projects the United States and Japan would require 24 hours to respond. If this scenario is close to being accurate, China's government might well be inclined to attempt a *fait accompli* as soon as it is confident in its relative capabilities. This perspective is consistent with thinking expressed in the PLA's 2013 Science of Military Strategy, which exhorts the nation “to strive to catch the enemy unexpectedly and attack him when he is not prepared, to seize and control the battlefield initiative, paralyze and destroy the enemy's operational system and shock the enemy's will for war.”

Even if the United States intervened before China could secure a *fait accompli*, Chinese strategists have growing confidence the United States would lose a war over Taiwan. If such a scenario played out, it would offer China a major victory in terms of domestic and international prestige—an enticing prospect for any leader, especially one intent on definitively reestablishing China as a great power. Chinese strategic thinking emphasizes the possibility and utility of limited wars and projects confidence in the ability of war handlers to bring such an engagement to a favorable political outcome. This strategy is precisely what the PRC attempted to execute in the Sino-Indian War in 1962, the Sino-Soviet border conflict in 1969, and the Sino-Vietnamese War in 1979. The fact that all of these operations were successful militarily but failures politically seems to go unnoticed.

China's geographic advantages and technological advances make it difficult for the United States to restore the credibility of a deterrence-by-denial strategy. At most, bolstering the number and type of US forces in the region could help reduce China's expectations of a quick and decisive victory. Beijing would not remain passive in the face of an expanded US military footprint around Taiwan. To maintain long-term strategic advantage, the United States must be willing to participate in an all-out arms race with Beijing—one that could not easily be won, and which would substantially reduce the chances of finding a diplomatic solution to the dispute. This possibility does not mean China is altogether undeterrable. What it does mean is deterrence must be based more on threats of penalties in response to an invasion (deterrence by punishment) rather than threats to prevent conquest from succeeding militarily (deterrence by denial). If penalties for invading Taiwan can be made severe and credible enough, Beijing could still be deterred from choosing such a course of action.

Of course, America's current policy toward Taiwan is already partly based on the logic of deterrence by punishment—that is, an implicit threat to wage a war against China that might not be limited to the Taiwan Strait. The “AirSea Battle” concept, for example, included extensive strikes on the Chinese mainland.¹³ From the US perspective, however, this military-heavy version of deterrence by punishment is grossly unattractive. Not only does China have good reasons to doubt whether the United States would follow through with escalatory attacks, but it is not clear that China would emerge as the biggest loser even if such strikes were meted out and China responded, either asymmetrically or in kind. Moreover, even winning such a war would not provide the United States and Taiwan a permanent sustainable resolution to the issue of cross-Strait relations. We agree with Andrew Scobell's point that “for the Taiwan issue to be resolved once and for all, the outcome must be satisfactory to Beijing.”¹⁴ Below, we propose a deterrence-by-punishment strategy that does not hinge upon the credibility of a US threat to wage a great-power war against China and which, while not offering a roadmap to a permanent resolution, at least promises to lower the costs of the status quo for all concerned.

Beijing's Changing Calculus

It would be better for the United States and Taiwan if a Chinese invasion could be deterred without Washington having to threaten a greatpower war. Below, we argue there are other options in this regard—options worth exploring. But first, it is useful to consider why China has adopted a more assertive position toward Taiwan in recent years. Informed analysts now assess there is a nontrivial chance of a Chinese invasion within the next decade. Why?

One reason is the military balance across and around the Taiwan Strait has shifted in Beijing's favor. China's much vaunted anti-access/areadenial capabilities mean the PLA now stands a greater chance of keeping US forces at bay than was feasible in the past, allowing the PLA to seize what it calls the “three dominances”: (1) localized command of the sea, (2) command of the air, and (3) command of information. In the event of war, China's advanced radar systems and overwhelming missile firepower would now likely be enough to clinch victory in what Chinese strategists predict would be a “localized war under informationized conditions.”¹⁵ Chinese strategists have judged such a conflict as one of both high probability and high danger, and so for more than two decades the PLA has focused on preparing for such a scenario. From Beijing's perspective, these preparations greatly reduce the cost of action against Taiwan. As the PLA continues to modernize and gain relative advantages over other actors in East Asia, the costs of such action will continue to decrease.

On the other side of the ledger, the cost of restraint has increased for China. The cost of restraint is a critical, but undertheorized, aspect of deterrence.¹⁶ It indicates the acceptability of the status quo—in this case, the acceptability of a prolonged irresolution to the dispute over Taiwan's political status. For China, the cost of restraint is increasing as Taiwan moves further away from the mainland, particularly in terms of its core national identity. The assertiveness of Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party and the associated decline of the Chinese Nationalist Party are concrete representations of this shift. Since the Taiwanese view developments in mainland China and Hong Kong with alarm—especially the PRC's anti-democratic policies—it is increasingly difficult to envisage Taiwan and China “com[ing] together and mov[ing] forward in unison,” as Xi Jinping and other PRC leaders insist must happen.¹⁷ It is small wonder growing numbers of Taiwanese recoil at the idea of political union with Beijing, but if China perceives Taiwan as rejecting the principle of peaceful reunification, its leaders might see no option but to pursue a military solution.

Hawks in China blame the United States for encouraging what they see as Taiwan's shift away from the 1992 consensus of “one China with different interpretations.”¹⁸ To them, US policies of reassurance seem increasingly provocative. Whereas the United States once professed an interest in upholding the status quo across the Taiwan Strait, China now suspects a more aggressive policy that places Taiwan back under the US defense umbrella, as it was before 1979. This perception is fueled by talk of Taiwan once again serving as a useful outpost for the “free world.”

The factors pushing China toward an invasion are not ones the United States can easily forestall. China's military gains can be blunted, but not reversed. Nor is it possible for Washington to alter Taiwan's domestic politics or the fervor with which the PRC opposes the idea of indefinite Taiwanese independence. Yet there are levers US leaders could pull to make an invasion of Taiwan less desirable to China. First, the United States can raise the costs of action for China via a deterrence-by-punishment strategy that threatens Beijing, not with war, but with the frustration of its other national priorities.

Second, it can reduce the costs of restraint for China by making good-faith efforts to fulfill the spirit of the US-China rapprochement vis-à-vis Taiwan. These two goals can be pursued in tandem with a view to strengthening deterrence, enhancing the long-term stability of cross-Strait relations, and thereby furthering the national security interests of both the United States and Taiwan—and, perhaps, even the PRC. In what follows, we take each lever in turn.

The Broken Nest

A Chinese proverb asks, “Beneath a broken nest, how (can) there be any whole eggs?”²⁰ The proverb means if the United States cannot prevent China from seizing Taiwan by force, it should instead develop a strategy to convince China's leaders an invasion would produce a peace more injurious than the status quo. As noted previously, the United States already incorporates the logic of deterrence by punishment into its overall Taiwan strategy. What distinguishes the broken nest approach from other deterrence-by-punishment proposals is that it does not rely upon America's willingness to use military force; the strategy is unique in the sense that it has the potential to deter China from invading Taiwan while also reassuring all sides a great-power war is not being threatened by the United States.

Short of military reprisals, the United States could levy a number of penalties on Beijing. The most obvious first step is to make Taiwan more resilient to an invasion, such as through the purchase of the right kind of defensive weapons from the United States (for example, truck-mounted harpoons, mobile rocket

systems, and surf-zone sea mines).²¹ Progress has been made recently in this regard.²² The more Taiwan can credibly threaten to wage a war of necessity to defend itself, the less the United States will have to threaten to wage its own war of choice. Leaders in Taipei must also convince Beijing it would face a long and costly struggle to repress Taiwan's 23.5 million citizens.²³ At minimum, Beijing must anticipate widespread civil disobedience. More seriously, China could be made to expect guerrilla warfare in Taiwan and perhaps even the prospect of violence being exported to the mainland. At present, Taiwanese vary by how far they support fighting a "war of necessity" to defend their island.²⁴ For deterrence to work, it will be important for leaders in Taipei to consolidate domestic support for resisting Chinese aggression and to build resistance capabilities.

On its own, however, the expectation of facing a robust but eventually unsuccessful defense is unlikely to deter a Chinese invasion. Beijing must also be made to believe conquering Taiwan, while satisfying one core goal of the Chinese state, cannot be done without jeopardizing other core interests. In practice, this strategy means assuring China an invasion of Taiwan would produce a major economic crisis on the mainland, not the technological boon some have suggested would occur as a result of the PRC absorbing Taiwan's robust tech industry.

To start, the United States and Taiwan should lay plans for a targeted scorched-earth strategy that would render Taiwan not just unattractive if ever seized by force, but positively costly to maintain. This could be done most effectively by threatening to destroy facilities belonging to the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, the most important chipmaker in the world and China's most important supplier. Samsung based in South Korea (a US ally) is the only alternative for cutting-edge designs. Despite a huge Chinese effort for a "Made in China" chip industry, only 6 percent of semiconductors used in China were produced domestically in 2020.²⁷ If Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company's facilities went offline, companies around the globe would find it difficult to continue operations.²⁸ This development would mean China's high-tech industries would be immobilized at precisely the same time the nation was embroiled in a massive war effort. Even when the formal war ended, the economic costs would persist for years. This problem would be a dangerous cocktail from the perspective of the Chinese Communist Party, the legitimacy of which is predicated on promises of domestic tranquility, national resilience, and sustained economic growth.

The challenge, of course, is to make such a threat credible to Chinese decisionmakers. They must absolutely believe Taiwan's semiconductor industry would be destroyed in the event of an invasion. If China suspects Taipei would not follow through on such a threat, then deterrence will fail. An automatic mechanism might be designed, which would be triggered once an invasion was confirmed. In addition, Taiwan's leaders could make it known now they will not allow these industries to fall into the hands of an adversary.²⁹ The United States and its allies could support this endeavor by announcing plans to give refuge to highly skilled Taiwanese working in this sector, creating contingency plans with Taipei for the rapid evacuation and processing of the human capital that operates the physical semiconductor foundries.

Such a "broken nest" approach is not without precedent. Sweden made an analogous threat of selective scorched earth during World War II with reference to its iron ore mines—a key source for industrial war materials—as part of its overall strategy of anti-Nazi deterrence.³⁰ Taiwan's threat would become even more potent than Sweden's if Taipei made and publicized plans to target the mainland's chip-fabrication lines using cruise and ballistic missiles, including the Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corporation facility in Shanghai. A preplanned sanctions campaign against any chip exports to

China, led by the United States but supported by South Korea and other allies, would enhance this approach.

No doubt the Taiwanese will have grave concerns about threatening China with a defensive war that likely cannot be won. The prospects of implementing scorched-earth and guerilla-warfare tactics will be similarly unappealing. It will therefore be a major challenge to make these threats credible to China, though perhaps not as difficult as convincing Beijing that Taiwan and the United States are willing to risk a great-power war over Taiwan's political status. Paradoxically, however, it is only by making these threats credible that they will never have to be carried out. In any case, the threats outlined above—even if carried out to the maximum extent—will be far less devastating to the people of Taiwan than the US threat of greatpower war, which would see massive and prolonged fighting in, above, and beside Taiwan.

Nevertheless, it would be prudent to develop a deterrence-by-punishment strategy that does not entirely rely upon threats made by the Taiwanese. Other aspects of a this type of strategy might include economic sanctions and threats in coordination with America's regional allies, especially Japan (the actor in East Asia with the greatest disparity between latent and actualized power), to worsen China's long-term regional security environment.³¹ At minimum, the US government should take the lead in developing credible threats of economic sanctions and political isolation, focusing especially on the semiconductor sector—where many necessary high-tech inputs originate from a handful of American companies—leaving leaders in Beijing under no illusions about the punishments that would flow from an invasion of Taiwan. More severely, the United States might signal an attack on Taiwan would lead to a green light for allies such as Japan, South Korea, and Australia to develop their own nuclear arsenals. If China can be made to believe invading Taiwan will result in one or more additional nuclear powers aligning against it, then this possibility ought to be an effective deterrent.

Such threats would have the advantage of making the Taiwan issue not just a battle of wills between the United States and China, but a fundamental question of what China wants its place in the region and wider world to be. Does China want to provoke the ire of its Asian neighbors, or would it prefer to advance its ambitions of regional leadership and peaceful cooperation? Again, the purpose here must be to convince Chinese leaders invading Taiwan will come at the cost of core national objectives: economic growth, domestic tranquility, secure borders, and perhaps even the maintenance of regime legitimacy.

On their own, none of these expected punishments would suffice to deter a Chinese invasion of Taiwan. Taken together, though, they might prove effective. If calibrated properly, a deterrence-by-punishment strategy would make an attack irrational from the Chinese perspective. This result must be the goal of a US and Taiwanese joint strategy.

Reducing the Costs of Restraint

One possible objection to our argument is, since reunification with Taiwan is a long-standing objective of the Chinese state—a goal motivated by nationalism, irredentism, and the Chinese Communist Party's perpetual quest for domestic legitimacy—China's leaders will not pause to calculate costs and benefits when weighing a decision to invade Taiwan. If this view is correct, the possibility of deterring a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, whether by denial or by threats of punishment, is minimal indeed.

Analysts in the United States cannot rule out the possibility China might one day embark upon an

invasion of Taiwan regardless of the costs. It would be wrong, however, for America to base its Taiwan policy upon the belief China's leaders are irrational, or to lock itself into a strategy that would be catastrophic if China acted recklessly. In the past, China has been persuaded the status quo across the Taiwan Strait is tolerable, despite Chinese strategists describing Taiwan as a "core interest" that admits no "room to maneuver."³² As noted previously, Beijing also recognizes other core interests such as national development, the pursuit of international prestige, and the maintenance of domestic stability—all of which might be jeopardized by an ill-judged conquest of Taiwan.

The Chinese Communist Party has two principal objectives with deadlines: to "basically realize" "socialist modernization" by 2035 and to become a "great modern socialist country" by 2049.³⁴ Given China's internal demographic, ecological, social, and economic challenges, these goals will be difficult for the PRC to accomplish. They will become impossible targets if a successful invasion of Taiwan is met with the punishments described above. The rest of the "China Dream" will similarly be thrown into disarray. Strategy is about balancing key interests—something Chinese leaders understand well.³⁵ In a 1975 meeting, Henry Kissinger and Mao Zedong discussed when Taiwan would return to the mainland. Mao said: "In a hundred years." Kissinger replied: "It won't take a hundred years. Much less." Mao then rejoined: "It's better for it to be in your hands. And if you were to send it back to me now, I would not want it, because it's not wantable. There are a huge bunch of counter-revolutionaries there."³⁶ The goal of the broken nest strategy should be to make Taiwan, given the PRC's broader interests, unwantable.

Still, Beijing must be reassured that choosing to forgo an invasion of Taiwan would not be tantamount to losing Taiwan. Raising the costs of a Chinese invasion must constitute only one part of the solution to the current strategic quandary; Taiwan and the United States must also move to ease China's costs of restraint. Washington must restate in unambiguous terms the status of Taiwan is undetermined, that the United States has no plans to support independent statehood for Taiwan, and it will not seek to shift the status quo using gray-zone tactics that violate the spirit of Sino-American rapprochement. Simultaneously, Washington must remain implacably opposed to a forcible resolution of the Taiwan question.

Unlike strategies placing the threat of military reprisal at their core, a deterrence-by-punishment strategy does not rely on the United States bolstering its military forces in Northeast Asia. This approach leaves the United States some room to adopt a force posture capable of reassuring allies such as Japan and South Korea about their collective defense, while also convincing both Taiwan and China the United States is truly committed to maintaining the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. It also frees the US military to divest itself from vulnerable bases in Japan that may on balance make great-power war more, rather than less, likely—via a preemptive Chinese attack in an active-defense situation. Shifting the burden of deterrence from military reprisal to non-military punishment might also reduce the likelihood of a war caused by miscalculation, while also removing the pretext that China's buildup is a response to US and Taiwanese provocations.

Of course, there are dangers associated with reducing the US military footprint around Taiwan. Careful research and planning must be conducted in conjunction with regional partners to ascertain what level and type of US forward deployment would be necessary to reassure allies while also lessening the chances of war. There should be no drawdown of military forces until such a time as a credible deterrence-by-punishment strategy has been put in place; otherwise Beijing might perceive a window of opportunity to wage a successful attack. Additionally, Taiwan might be less encouraged to stage an independent fight against China if it no longer believes the United States would (or could) intervene on its behalf. That said,

given reports about low morale in the Taiwanese Armed Forces, as well as low defense spending (around 2 percent of GDP), a shock to the status quo might be just what the situation requires. Regardless, relying less on threats of force is not the same as ruling out the use of force altogether. Ambiguity will always exist about whether the United States would use force in the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan.

Conclusion: Deterrence and Reassurance

The policy of the United States must be to discourage the use of military force to upend the status quo across the Taiwan Strait. US foreign policy, however, must also consider the reality of the situation: military deterrence is becoming less credible than in the past. Additionally, relying on military power to deter Chinese aggression requires the US and Taiwanese governments to burden their citizens with high risks. A new approach to deterrence is needed, one that relies less on the dangerous threat of military force than is presently the case.

A twofold strategy of raising the costs of breaking Taiwan's nest while faithfully maintaining the value of an unbroken nest is the most prudent way to deter a Chinese invasion of Taiwan and, thus, avoiding a great-power war. China must be made to believe there are no overall gains to be had from a military invasion of Taiwan, whereas there are considerable advantages to maintaining the status quo. In the final analysis, a strategy based purely—or even mostly—upon military deterrence cannot achieve these goals. Unless US leaders are truly willing to fight World War III in defense of Taiwan, they would do well to consider strategies of deterrence that do not rely upon the threat of a military reprisal. We have argued it is possible to imagine such an alternative strategy of deterrence—one that relies on nonmilitary means of severe punishment rather than an expectation of being able to repel militarily a Chinese invasion.

That said, we are clear-sighted about the difficulties of orchestrating a credible strategy of deterrence by punishment. Not least of all, a broken nest strategy means accepting China can likely conquer Taiwan if it chooses to do so. It also means laying plans to destroy key Taiwanese infrastructure at great economic cost. Nonetheless, we maintain China could probably conquer Taiwan even if the United States intervened. Moreover, the social and economic costs of a great-power conflict would dwarf the targeted demolition of Taiwan's semiconductor industry or the inevitable harms produced by an insurgency.

To conclude, the broken nest strategy hinges on the United States not taking any action that China's leaders would interpret as an act of war. In such a situation, if Beijing did consider the United States an active belligerent, it might initiate first strikes against US forces. This possibility must be considered seriously. There are few ways to deter a Chinese invasion of Taiwan that involve zero risk of conflict. For the next decade or so, the best way to deter Chinese aggression while lowering the chance of a great-power conflict is to follow the path outlined above: if war, a broken nest; if peace, a tolerable status quo.