

1NC --- Assurances

Asian alliances stand strong.

Suh 8/21 [Elisabeth Suh, research fellow @ DGAP's Center for Security and Defense, 8-21-2024, Trump II and US Nuclear Assurances in the Indo-Pacific, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik (SWP), <https://www.swp-berlin.org/10.18449/2024C36/>] leon + BZ

While heated debates in Europe have focused on how to respond if Donald J. Trump is re-elected to the White House, discussions in Australia, Japan, and South Korea reveal a greater sense of confidence in Washington's commitments. The fear that the United States would withdraw its nuclear assurances is much less pronounced in the Indo-Pacific than in Europe. This serenity appears primarily grounded in a shared understanding that a bipartisan consensus is driving the US commitment to contain China's rise – a goal that requires reliable allies across the Pacific. At the same time, US allies want to maintain the regional status quo and are willing to support Washington's efforts. Trump's potential return does little to change these structural incentives. Instead, Pacific allies fear challenges to the East Asian regional order, challenges that are also relevant for Europe's security and prosperity.

Taiwan is at the heart of this.

Bosco 15 [Joseph A. Bosco, served as China Country Desk Officer in the Office of the Secretary of Defense and is a nonresident senior associate @ CSIS, 5-15-2015, Taiwan and Strategic Security, The Diplomat, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/05/taiwan-and-strategic-security/>] BZ

To summarize, Taiwan's strategic importance from a military, economic, and humanitarian assistance standpoint is clear, even though there have been historical periods when U.S. administrations of both parties have seemed to minimize it for what they saw as the greater goal of accommodating the Chinese government. Since the 1980s, however, the people of Taiwan have added an entirely new dimension to the country's value to the West. Taiwan's political opposition, and eventually its leaders, recognized that once official U.S. diplomatic relations had shifted from Taipei to Beijing because of considerations of realpolitik, its salvation as a viable de facto independent entity depended on moral and political values. Taiwan's phased, planned transition to democracy meant that Washington and the West no longer had the easy "realist" rationale – that is, that the Taiwan policy dilemma was merely a matter of choosing a small, friendly dictatorship or trying to improve relations with a larger, formerly hostile one. Now Americans, and Japanese, could look at Taiwan as a moral and political soul mate, certainly by contrast to a country ruled by the Chinese Communist Party. For the same reason, Taiwan now became even more of a bone in Beijing's throat as a model of democratic governance in a Chinese society, undermining the myth that democracy and Confucianism are incompatible. The potential internal pressure for political reform in China increased during the 1980s, culminating in the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. Given those geopolitical stakes regarding the future of Taiwan, the U.S. commitment enshrined in the Taiwan Relations Act took on even greater strategic significance for the United States. When President Barack Obama announced what he called the U.S. "pivot to Asia" before the Australian parliament in 2011, he linked America's strategic interests to the success of democracy in the region and pledged "every element of American power" to achieving "security, prosperity, and dignity for all." That places Taiwan and its democratic future at the strategic epicenter of America's moral and political commitment to the region. U.S. credibility is now tied inextricably to Taiwan's fate, with or without an explicit defense commitment in the TRA. Any weakening of American resolve to ensure Taiwan's continued security would significantly undermine that credibility throughout the region among friends, allies, and most critically, our adversaries. Those who argue that the Taiwan game is not worth the candle fail to grasp how much weight other countries in the region place on America's commitment to Taiwan as a bell-weather of U.S. reliability should any of them come under increased coercive pressure or outright hostility from China. They

see the U.S. as the necessary balancer to China's military buildup and expansionist policies and Taiwan is the number one test case of U.S. will.

However, reducing support to Taiwan stokes our allies' worst fears.

Blonder 17 [Brian Blonder, political analyst with the Eurasian Conflicts Studies Project at the ERA Institute, 10-6-2017, ERA Institute, The Importance of United States' Arms Sales for Taiwan's Defense – ERA Institute,

<https://web.archive.org/web/20210121201227/https://era.institute.org/the-importance-of-united-states-arms-sales-for-taiwans-defense/>] TM + leon + BZ

On June 29, 2017, the Trump administration announced a new round of arms sales with Taiwan worth \$1.42B, sparking Chinese ire. This is first such arms sale under President Trump and the first sale since former President Barack Obama

announced a \$1.83B deal in 2015. China demanded that the U.S. revoke the deal, claiming that the sale violated the consensus on good relations reached between Trump and Chinese premier Xi Jinping. It is unlikely that the United States would honor

this demand, as it views the arms sales to be incredibly important. To understand this importance one must first

understand the history of the sales. In 1979, the United States and China normalized relations, forcing the United States to sever official relations with Taiwan in the process. Immediately, Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act, which stated that the "United States shall make available to Taiwan such defense articles and defense services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability as determined by the President and the Congress." This act serves as the bedrock of the continued arms sales. **The**

United States is virtually the only country providing Taiwan with weapons. The arms sales continued, with some sort of a sales agreement every year between 1980-2010. The 1982 August 17 Communiqué, which stated that the United States would gradually reduce arms sales to Taiwan, and the Six Assurances to Taiwan, which stated that the U.S. wouldn't set an end date for the arms sales, alter the Taiwan Relations Act, or consult China in advance of making decisions about the arms deals set the stage for a contentious and confusing arrangement. The support for arms sales has been bipartisan, with every U.S. president since Jimmy Carter announcing arms sales. While some presidents have sought to reduce the visibility of the sales, no president declined to sell

Taiwan arms. However, the erratic timing has caused lawmakers such as Arizona Senator John McCain to push for a more regularized process for arms sales to ensure that Taiwan always receives arms. All U.S. arms sales to Taiwan are virulently opposed by China. The sales, which include weapons ranging from decommissioned U.S. Navy frigates and surface-to-air missiles to early warning radar, are viewed by China as an infringement on its sovereignty. China views Taiwan as a breakaway province and has stated that it would retake it by force if necessary. The U.S. providing Taiwan with weapons is viewed by China as interference in its domestic affairs and a prolonging of the process of reunification. China's actions, including its 2015 announcement that it would sanction the U.S. firms selling arms to Taiwan, reveal its anger. While angering China has a negative effect of the arms sales, the importance for the United States that they continue consistently outweighs it. By 2011, China had nearly 2,000 missiles aimed at Taiwan, and more recently in March of this year, it was revealed that Dongfeng 16 (DF-16) medium range ballistic missiles were added to the mix of missiles. Most Taiwanese prefer the current status quo of no independence or reunification. China's policy of eventual reunification runs counter to this. The provision of arms by the United States ensures that Taiwan can continue on its current path, and that it can resist China's attempts at "Finlandizing" it. The status quo has kept the peace between China and Taiwan, and the arms sales have played a key role in sustaining this. Along with U.S. troops in Japan and South Korea, the sales are one of

the most visible signs of American commitment to its allies in the region. The arms sales go beyond verbal support and show the United States providing an ally with tools of hard power. The United States exports arms to several countries in the region. American weapons account for around 90% of Japan's weapons imports, 60% of Australia's, 59% of South Korea's and 41% of the Philippines'.

Each sale holds weight because it signals this same commitment to them as it does for Taiwan. The status quo upheld by the arms deal extends beyond Taiwan. Ending an almost 40 year policy would send shockwaves through

the region and could very well encourage Chinese aggression. If the United States ended the sale of arms, China and American allies in the region would likely view it as U.S. appeasement of China. The perceived weakening of the U.S. could encourage China to take more aggressive actions, potentially sparking a dangerous crisis. Furthermore, it could greatly erode the confidence of America's Asia-Pacific allies, namely South Korea, Japan and the Philippines, who all have defense treaties with the U.S. These allies may worry that

their own arms deals are in jeopardy and that the U.S. is not seriously committed to their defense, forcing them to pursue other options and eroding American influence in the region. The arms sales to Taiwan have been one of the most consequential foreign policy actions by the United States in recent history. They have kept the peaceful status quo and have publicly displayed America's commitment to its allies. With China's continued rise, the arms sales are more important now than ever before to keep the tensions in the Asia-Pacific from boiling over.

Thus,

Herzinger 21 [Blake Herzinger, research fellow @ the United States Studies Centre in Sydney, 5-3-2021, Abandoning Taiwan Makes Zero Moral or Strategic Sense, Foreign Policy, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/05/03/taiwan-policy-us-china-abandon/>] leon + BZ

How could that possibly be considered the truth? Abandoning a 70-year commitment to Taiwan's continued freedom in the face of risk the author himself deems "small" could not possibly be viewed positively by Tokyo and Seoul. Instead, it would beg the question of Washington's price for its freedom as well. Japan's Senkaku Islands, vigorously disputed by China, would certainly be next on the menu. It is ludicrous to postulate that abandoning Taiwan would not raise fears of abandonment among Washington's other Asian allies. It could just as easily bring down the entire hub-and-spoke system of alliances that U.S. policy relies on in the region.

Without a reliable US and fearing for their security, these frightened allies will move to acquire nuclear weapons in self defense.

Brands 24 [Hal Brands, senior fellow @ the American Enterprise Institute and the Henry A. Kissinger Distinguished Professor of Global Affairs @ the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 8-28-2024, If South Korea Goes Nuclear, So Will the World, American Enterprise Institute, <https://www.aei.org/op-eds/if-south-korea-goes-nuclear-so-will-the-world/>] BZ

For decades, the US has threatened potential proliferators with sanctions, isolation and even military action. It has cultivated international norms and agreements meant to keep the nuclear club small and elite. Most important, America has offered its allies military protection that makes it unnecessary for them to acquire nuclear arms. In doing so, it has held back the international anarchy in which countries everywhere might conclude that those weapons represent their only means of survival. That only nine countries have nuclear weapons — of the dozens that have the technological capacity and other resources to build them — is a marker of this strategy's success. But a scan of the contemporary international landscape highlights three factors that could eventually rupture that regime. One is the shifting military balance. The US and its allies still dominate their enemies conventionally in Europe and the Middle East. But in Asia, an epochal change is underway. China's buildup is putting frontline states under ever-greater pressure. If that expansion of Beijing arsenal continues for another decade, key countries — perhaps Japan or Australia — could reluctantly conclude that conventional resistance is hopeless and nuclear weapons are a vital means of defense. A second factor is aggression by nuclear-armed predators against non-nuclear prey. Russia has brutally assailed Ukraine, which gave up its nuclear weapons in the 1990s. Moscow then used its arsenal to deter the US from intervening directly. That Ukraine has held its own in this war has limited the global fallout. But a world in which countries with the bomb repeatedly brutalize countries without it will quickly become a far more nuclearized world. If China was to invade Taiwan — and the US was unable or unwilling to stop it — proliferation pressures could increase dramatically. The final factor, and what most concerns South Korean officials — a potential American withdrawal — is what would most devastate the non-proliferation regime. As long as US alliances are strong and credible, US allies have better, cheaper options than nuclear self-help. Even if Iran goes nuclear, for instance, stronger US security guarantees for Saudi Arabia — and support for the kingdom's civil nuclear program — can probably keep it from doing likewise. But if the US pulls back, erstwhile allies from Eastern Europe to East Asia might feel that they face a choice between nuclear proliferation

and national suicide — which is why debates about acquiring those weapons have gotten louder in the age of Trump. If Trump wins in November, he probably won't actually quit US alliances: Then he would lose the ability to gripe about them. But he will continue to sow doubt about America's geopolitical commitments, and some of his once-and-perhaps-future advisers say proliferation by US allies wouldn't be so bad after all.

It's only a step away.

Sokolski 20 [Henry Sokolski, Executive Director of the nonproliferation policy education center and a senior fellow for nuclear security studies @ University of California, 2-21-2020, The NPT turns 50: Will it get to 60?, Taylor & Francis, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00963402.2020.1728964>]

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Fortifying these **nuclear proliferation trends** **is widespread** international **enthusiasm** for **"advanced" reactors**, most of which demand the **recycling of plutonium** and the **enrichment of uranium to nearly 20 percent**. India, Japan, and South Korea are eager to pursue these "peaceful" activities in collaboration with the United States. China and Russia, meanwhile, are building and operating fast reactors and spent fuel recycling plants and have plans to build more. **None of these activities is economical**. All are **useful for making bombs**. Individually, each of these trends is hardly fatal. Together, however, they portend a nuclearized world without precedent. **Instead of it taking years or even decades to ramp up nuclear arsenals by hundreds or thousands of warheads**, nuclear weapons **states would be able to do so in less than 12 to 36 months**. Meanwhile, **would-be** nuclear states, such as **Japan and South Korea**, **could acquire not one or 10, but score to hundreds within the same time period**.

Devastatingly, this risks catastrophic conflict.

Jackson 22 [Van Jackson, professor of international relations @ the Victoria University of Wellington with a focus in East Asian security, 2022, Reducing or Exploiting Rusk? Varieties of US Nuclear Thought and Their Implications for Northeast Asia, Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/25751654.2022.2056356?needAccess=true>, Willie T. + BZ]

Ally Near-Proliferation **Japan and the ROK have both positioned their national nuclear capacities and supporting military infrastructure in such a way that either could develop its own nuclear weapons in a reasonably short time frame**⁶ **Proponents of nuclear weapons** in both countries **relate their rhetoric about** the possibility of **going nuclear to perceptions of US unreliability** and the fear of US abandonment. Although US policymakers have worked with both governments to advance a policy of extended nuclear deterrence as a way of foreclosing their perceived need for an independent nuclear capability, the waning credibility of extended deterrence commitments are not the only source of nuclear aspiration — the perception in both governments that extended deterrence is askew of the actual threats they face has also given rise to their respective nuclear latency positioning (Jackson 2015). **The period of greatest danger from ally proliferation is arguably during the window before either country has an operational nuclear capability but after geopolitical rivals have concluded they are going nuclear**. Although **ally proliferation would not directly trigger US nuclear use, how the DPRK or China reacts could**⁷ **Nuclear adversaries have heightened strategic incentives to conduct preventive attacks against non-nuclear rivals as they move closer to developing nuclear weapons** (Goldstein 2006). This explains Israel's attack on Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981, the US-Israeli attack on Syria's nuclear reactor construction in 2007⁸, and America's posture toward the DPRK since the 1990s. Prior to conducting preventive non-nuclear strikes, **the DPRK could resort to an atmospheric nuclear test as a coercive signal** aimed at convincing either US ally from proceeding with nuclearization; in addition to the threat of escalation, a high-altitude nuclear burst's electromagnetic pulse risks direct damage to electronic-reliant infrastructure. If that fails to deter further ally proliferation, or if DPRK officials determine they would prefer to retain the strategic surprise of a preventive attack, then **the DPRK or China could conduct preventive strikes** or covert operations with little forewarning, **making it a**

decisive point of escalation. The question is how the United States would respond.

1NC --- Deterrence

It's undoubted that China would like to take Taiwan, but weakness hands them a golden opportunity to do so. Scholars agree:

Beckley 24 [Michael Beckley, associate professor @ Tufts University with a focus in East Asia defense and China, 7-23-2024, "Countering Chinese Aggression in the South China Sea", War on the Rocks, <https://warontherocks.com/2024/07/countering-chinese-aggression-in-the-south-china-sea/>] nw + leon
The new data, however, suggests that this view is outdated, if it were ever true. Since at least 2012, China's behavior in the South China Sea and East China Sea could be more accurately described as unprovoked aggression. **Only 12 percent of China's coercive acts were preceded by any sort of perceived hostile foreign move**, such as when then Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan in August of 2022. **The remaining 88 percent of Chinese coercive acts were opportunistic, employed against vulnerable targets at times and in places of China's choosing**. More often than not, that place was the Philippines' exclusive economic zone, a fact that underscores the grand geopolitical ambitions behind China's fierce contestation of uninhabited rocks.

Looking to history,

Wang 18 [Yuan-Kang Wang, professor of political science @ Western Michigan University with a PhD in political science and a focus on East Asian security, xx-xx-2018, Rethinking US Security Commitment to Taiwan, Springer, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-77125-0_10] leon + BZ
We have evidence that **accommodation encourages more aggressive behavior by China**. **In the early years of the Obama administration, the United States attempted to accommodate China by** refraining from criticizing China's human rights records, **postponing arms sales to Taiwan**, demonstrating willingness to respect China's "core interests," and delaying meeting with the Dalai Lama. **Instead of moderating its foreign policy aims, China took these unilateral concessions as "signs of American weakness, and proof that China could get away with more assertiveness."**

Which is why,

Mastro 15 [Oriana Skylar Mastro, assistant professor of security studies at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University, 11-4-2009, Why Chinese Assertiveness is Here to Stay, The Washington Quarterly, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0163660X.2014.1002161>] recut mac

These efforts are commendable—the United States rightly works to preserve its military superiority and retain its ability to project power in the region. During the Cold War, when the greatest pacing threats were land conflicts, forward deploying U.S. forces in Europe and Asia were sufficient to demonstrate the credibility of the U.S. commitment to peace in those regions. But **China is currently testing the waters not because its leaders are uncertain about the balance of power, but because they are probing the balance of resolve**. This means that staying ahead in terms of military might is insufficient in contemporary East Asia. China's strategists are betting that the side with the strongest military does not necessarily win the war—the foundation of the deterrent pillar of its A2/AD strategy. Indeed, China's experience in fighting the Korean War proves that a country willing to sacrifice blood and treasure can overcome a technologically superior opponent. **The belief that balance of resolve drives outcomes more so than the balance of power is the foundation of China's new, more assertive strategy**; but U.S. responses to date have failed to account for it.

Canned demonstrations of U.S. power fail to address the fundamental uncertainty concerning U.S. willingness, not ability, to fight. The U.S. focus on de-escalation in all situations only exacerbates this issue. The Cold War experience solidified the Western narrative stemming from World War I that inadvertent escalation causes major war, and therefore crisis management is the key to maintaining peace.⁷⁴ This has created a situation in which the main U.S. goal has been de-escalation in each crisis or incident with Beijing. But Chinese leaders do not share this mindset—they believe leaders deliberately control the escalation process and therefore wars happen because leaders decide at a given juncture that the best option is to fight.⁷⁵ China is masterful at chipping away at U.S. credibility through advancing militarization and coercive diplomacy. It often uses limited military action to credibly signal its willingness to escalate if its demands are not met. Strategist Thomas Schelling theoretically captured this approach when he wrote it is “the sheer inability to predict the consequences of our actions and to keep things under control ... that can intimidate the enemy.”⁷⁶ Because China introduces risk for exactly this reason, the U.S. focus on deescalation through crisis management is unlikely to produce any change in Chinese behavior—if anything it will only encourage greater provocations. Beijing has identified the U.S. fear of inadvertent escalation, and is exploiting it to compel the United States to give in to its demands and preferences. In this way, the U.S. focus on de-escalation may actually be the source of instability by rewarding and encouraging further Chinese provocations. To signal to China that the United States will not opt out of a conflict, Washington must signal willingness to escalate to higher levels of conflict when China is directly and purposely testing U.S. resolve. This may include reducing channels of communication during a conflict, or involving additional regional actors, to credibly demonstrate that China will not be able to use asymmetry of resolve to its advantage. The current mindset—that crisis management is the answer in all scenarios—will be difficult to dislodge, given the tendency among U.S. military ranks to focus on worst-case “great battle” scenarios. While realistic in Cold War operational planning, decision makers should consider instead the less violent and prolonged engagements that characterize Chinese coercive diplomacy when evaluating risk and reward, such as the 1962 Sino-Indian War or the 1974 Battle of the Paracel Islands. The idea that any conflict with China would escalate to a major war, destroy the global economy, and perhaps even escalate to a nuclear exchange has no foundation in Chinese thinking, and causes the United States to concede in even the smallest encounters. While the Chinese leadership has proven to be more risk-acceptant than the United States (or perhaps more accurately, to assess the risks to be less than those perceived by U.S. strategists), Xi still wants to avoid an armed conflict at this stage. In his November 2014 keynote address at the Central Foreign Affairs Work Conference, he noted that China remains in a period of strategic opportunity in which efforts should be made to maintain the benign strategic environment so as to focus on internal development.⁷⁷ Ultimately, the U.S. regional objective must be peace and stability at an acceptable cost. Given this, it is critical to understand the four components of China’s A2/AD strategy, the strategic foundation for China’s recent assertiveness, and how best to maintain the U.S. position as a Pacific power. In addition to regularly attending meetings in the region and developing new technology, new platforms, and new operational concepts designed to defeat China’s A2/AD strategy, the United States needs to break free of its Cold War-based paradigm paralysis and rethink conceptions of limited war, escalation, and risk. Scolding China and imposing symbolic costs for each maritime incident is unlikely to inspire the corrective change U.S. thinkers are hoping for. The United States needs to fundamentally change its approach by accepting higher risk and allowing for the possibility of escalation—both vertically in force as well as horizontally to include other countries. This admittedly is a difficult balance, especially given the need to avoid emboldening U.S. allies to take actions that run contrary to U.S. interests. But only by mastering these two balancing acts—focusing on balancing resolve, rather than forces, and prioritizing stability over crisis management—will the United States be able to maintain peace and stability in East Asia without sacrificing U.S. or allied interests.

Luckily, US deterrence has kept Beijing’s ambitions at bay.

Henley 23 [Lonnie Henley, Intelligence officer of 40 years specializing in East Asian security & Professor @ Georgetown University, 12-12-2023, Deterrence and Dissuasion in the Taiwan Strait, Foreign Policy Research Institute,

<https://www.fpri.org/article/2023/12/deterrence-and-dissuasion-in-the-taiwan-strait/>, cy + recut-WT]

Deterrence Is Working Many commentators advocate measures to convince China that a military attack on Taiwan cannot succeed, strengthening deterrence by denial. Recommendations include stronger and more explicit expressions of US resolve to defend Taiwan; increased military preparedness, with emphasis on defeating a Chinese amphibious landing; and helping Taiwan improve its own defenses and societal

resilience. Some have even recommended stationing tactical nuclear weapons in Taiwan to ensure that any conflict would quickly escalate. Other prescriptions center on deterrence by punishment, raising the anticipated cost of a military conflict in the mind of Chinese decision-makers. Discussion of “cost-imposition strategies” peaked in the second Obama Administration, then evolved in recent years to broader “all-of-government” strategies against China. These discussions have two unstated assumptions: that our ability to deter attack on Taiwan is waning as China’s military and economic power grows, but that deterrence is sufficient to avoid conflict if we employ the right combination of denial and punishment. I take issue with both those premises. Deterrence is working in the Taiwan Strait, as it has for seventy years. Clearly, Chinese forces would have seized Taiwan long ago if it were easy and cheap. But it is not, and nothing on the horizon will change that. Today’s People’s Liberation Army (PLA) is vastly more capable than even a decade ago, and it will continue improving. But invading Taiwan in the face of US military opposition remains among the most daunting military operations any country has considered. The risk of failure will remain high even with the next generation of PLA hardware, and the one after that. (I have argued elsewhere that China can win despite a failed invasion, but at a very high cost to all involved.) Even more important, however, is the recognition by Chinese leaders that war over Taiwan would have a devastating impact on all China’s other strategic priorities, whether they win or lose militarily. China’s economy and international status would suffer enormously, both from the conflict itself and from the enduring hostility between the United States and China thereafter. The regime’s 2049 goals for the centennial of the People’s Republic would be delayed for decades or more. The Communist Party’s hold on power would be at severe risk, particularly if it could not spin the military outcome as a strategic victory. Even if deterrence by denial is undermined by ongoing PLA modernization, deterrence by punishment will remain extremely strong for the foreseeable future. Deterrence Is Not Enough For most of the past half-century, Chinese leaders have believed that as long as they can prevent breakout moves by “Taiwan independence splittists,” abetted by perfidious US hegemonists, then there is a reasonable prospect that China’s growing power and prestige will eventually bring Taiwan back into the fold without military conflict. “Peaceful reunification” remains the official policy articulated by Xi Jinping and the Chinese government. If they decide that a long-term approach cannot succeed, however, that time is not on China’s side and war is the only way to achieve unification, then there is a high risk that they will attack despite the extreme cost and uncertain prospects for success. Additional deterrence does not affect this calculus. The likelihood of military success has never been decisive in Communist Chinese decision-making. The question has always been whether the use of force can achieve the regime’s strategic objectives, rather than whether the PLA can achieve specific operational objectives. So deterrence by denial—“your military operation cannot succeed”—gives way to the strategic imperative not to allow Taiwan’s permanent separation. That leaves deterrence by punishment—“this will cost more than you can possibly gain.” The problem here is that the economic and political cost of a Taiwan conflict is already enormous, endangering every one of China’s other strategic objectives. Nothing we can do will materially increase the deterrent value. That meter is pegged; it is at eleven. This is not to say that deterrence is of no use. Deterrence is enormously important, having prevented a war over Taiwan for over seventy years and being likely to continue doing so for decades to come. We must continue building the capacity to defeat a Chinese invasion, and also build new and different capabilities to deny them victory through a prolonged blockade. The United States should continue actions and policies that make a conflict as expensive for China as possible, never allowing any prospect that a war would be affordable in the short term or long term. That will maintain deterrence at its present, highly effective level.

As a result,

Ford 22 [Christopher A. Ford, Visiting Fellow @ Stanford University’s Hoover Institution & former US Navy intelligence officer, February 2022, *Defending Taiwan: Defense and Deterrence*, National Institute Press, <https://nipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Vol.-2-No.-2-Ford.pdf>, Willie T.]

All this being said, however, there is at least one sense in which the CCP’s potentially existential investment in the “Taiwan question” might be a source of strength for Taiwan and the United States. It is true that the importance of Taiwan to the CCP is such that it might actually imperil the Party’s hold on power in China were it to give up on the dream of “reunification.” Nonetheless, for this same reason, the CCP also cannot afford to fail in invading Taiwan should it try to do

SO. (The same might also be said of a situation in which the PRC initially succeeded in occupying the island, but thereafter faced a widespread, effective, and well-publicized insurgency there. In such a guerrilla conflict, "a largely ethnically Chinese resistance in Taiwan ... would be able to invoke the PRC's own mid-20th-century propaganda tropes and doctrinal pronouncements about 'People's War' against the CCP - a scenario in which, moreover, the PRC would be cast in the role of Imperial Japan."¹²⁵) The Party therefore finds itself in a tough situation: it cannot abandon its Taiwan dream, but it faces huge risks if it attempts actually to bring that dream to fruition. This insight about the CCP's potentially existential vulnerability on all Taiwan-related questions can be the foundation of a "denial" strategy vis-à-vis PLA aggression against Taiwan.

The CCP has in the past proven itself willing to display a striking degree of strategic patience and caution in deferring passionately-desired objectives for so long as it still seems too costly or risky to try to

achieve them. This was, after all, the centerpiece of Beijing's overall strategic policy for a quarter century, during which it hewed to Deng Xiaoping's admonition to "bide our time and hide our capabilities" - that is, putting off the self-assertion that would ultimately be necessary for China to seize for itself the dominant place in the international system it intended all along eventually to obtain, deferring such efforts until

Beijing had quietly become strong enough to manage the counter-reactions that such aggressiveness would likely provoke.¹²⁶ Moreover, such strategic patience has been, in effect, China's policy vis-à-vis Taiwan for even longer, ever since Mao Zedong failed quickly to invade after Chiang's KMT government set up shop on the island in 1949. As

Elbridge Colby has noted, a "denial" strategy does not require that the United States or Taiwan be able comprehensively to defeat the PLA war machine.¹²⁷ Significantly, moreover, it also does not require that Beijing give up its Taiwan dream of "reunification." It merely asks Beijing to continue with its traditional "strategic patience," first by leading CCP leaders to the conclusion that today is not the day for full

vindication of their self-aggrandizing geopolitical agenda, and thereafter by keeping China in that "almost but not quite" position on an ongoing basis. In effect, a successful "denial" strategy allows a sort of implied strategic "agreement to disagree." Beijing would preserve its "reunification is inevitable" position and political posture vis-à-vis Taiwan, but it would continue to defer execution of its plans, in practice indefinitely. In return, the United States and Taiwan would work together to ensure a continuation of the island's fundamental "indigestibility" while also - and this would have to be an important part of the shadow bargain - avoiding a situation in which Taiwanese officials risk unnecessarily forcing Beijing's hand by declaring formal independence. In return for some perhaps uncomfortable political circumspection on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, this implied bargain might allow both the CCP and Taiwan's democracy each to achieve at least their core objective of survival.

Conversely, reducing military support invites an invasion.

Wuthnow 23 [Joel Wuthnow, Senior Research Fellow in the Institute for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University, 3-24-2023, How to Out-Deter China, Foreign Affairs,

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/deter-china-taiwan>] TIM + leon

But in the years since, China has worked to make a U.S. intervention less likely through an approach it calls "strategic deterrence," which relies on, among other things, using nuclear signals to dissuade a potential adversary from entering the fray. China's deterrence efforts are intensifying even as the Biden administration moves ahead with its own plans for the "integrated deterrence" of Chinese aggression, which involves threatening military and economic penalties in concert with a coalition of allies to convince China of the tremendous costs of war. These two competing models of deterrence are at odds with each other in ways that could destabilize the Taiwan Strait and the region at large. China,

spurred by its perception of U.S. decline, emboldened by its rapidly expanding nuclear arsenal, and inspired by Russian President Vladimir Putin's apparent success in using nuclear threats to limit U.S. support for Ukraine, could become overly confident and spark a conflict in the belief that Washington will stay out of the way. Washington must avoid this kind of escalatory spiral by undermining Chinese optimism in its own capabilities; in other words, by out-detering China.

This requires delivering an unequivocal message to Beijing that any conflict between the two nuclear-armed powers could quickly become calamitous, far outweighing the potential benefits of an armed reunification with Taiwan. If deterrence fails—if China grows more convinced of its military superiority and underestimates the U.S. commitment to the island—both countries could end up embroiled in a war between great powers armed with nuclear weapons.

An invasion would be devastating.

Feng 24 [Emily Feng, international correspondent @ NPR covering China and Taiwan, 10-17-2024, China repeatedly threatens to invade Taiwan. What would an invasion look like?, NPR, <https://www.npr.org/2024/10/18/nx-s1-5147096/china-repeatedly-threatens-to-invade-taiwan-what-would-an-invasion-look-like>] BZ

EMILY FENG, BYLINE: The groundwork for a Chinese invasion might start like this. A Chinese helicopter goes down and the Chinese military uses it as a pretext to surround Taiwan, creating an international blockade that stops most international shipping. (SOUNDBITE OF TV SHOW, "ZERO DAY") UNIDENTIFIED ACTOR: (As character, speaking Chinese). FENG: Then a Chinese disinformation campaign stokes fear in Taiwan, prompting bank runs and looting. Gangs run amuck. Don't worry, this is not real. These are scenes from the 17-minute trailer for "Zero Day," a new television show. But even watching these scenes is stressful, perhaps even traumatic, for people in Taiwan. After all, a Chinese invasion could kill millions of people, devastate the global economy and risk nuclear war. So why make this kind of show?