

The 1995–96 Taiwan Strait Confrontation

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Coercion, Credibility, and the
Use of Force

On May 22, 1995, the White House approved a visa for Lee Teng-hui to visit the United States in early June to attend his graduate school reunion at Cornell University. The decision to allow Taiwan's most senior leader to enter the United States reversed more than twenty-five years of U.S. diplomatic precedent and challenged Clinton administration public policy statements and private reassurances to Chinese leaders that such a visit was contrary to U.S. policy. Equally important, the visa decision followed a three-year evolution of U.S. policy toward Taiwan. In 1992 the Bush administration, in violation of its pledge in a 1982 U.S.-China arms sales communiqué to reduce the quantity of U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, sold Taiwan 150 F-16 warplanes. In 1994 the Clinton administration revised upward the protocol rules regarding U.S. "unofficial" treatment of Taiwan diplomats, which had for the most part been in effect since 1981. Then the next year, the administration allowed Lee Teng-hui to visit the United States. From China's perspective, Washington seemed determined to continue revising its Taiwan policy, thus encouraging Taiwan's leaders to move closer toward a declaration of sovereignty from mainland China. Given China's credible forty-five-year commitment to use force in retaliation against Taiwan independence, such a declaration would likely lead to war.

During the ten months following Lee's visit to Cornell, the United States and China reopened their difficult negotiations over U.S. policy toward Taiwan. The negotiations reached a climax in March 1996, when China displayed a dramatic show of force consisting of military exercises and missile tests targeted near Taiwan, and the United States responded with an equally dramatic deployment of two carrier battle groups. The 1995–96 Taiwan Strait confrontation was the closest the United States and China had come to a crisis since the early 1960s. It was a critical turning point in post-Cold War U.S.-China relations and

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in the development of the new regional order. The confrontation continues to influence Chinese and American security policies and the bilateral relationships between the United States, China, and Taiwan.

Many scholars have argued that China's use of force in 1996 coerced the Clinton administration into reversing the trend toward improving U.S.-Taiwan relations and into opposing Taiwan independence. They have also argued that the United States needs to adopt a stronger posture against Chinese policy toward Taiwan.¹ This article challenges these views. It argues that both China and the United States achieved their strategic objectives as a result of the confrontation.

The Taiwan Strait confrontation reflected the interaction of Chinese coercive diplomacy and U.S. deterrence diplomacy. China used coercive diplomacy to threaten costs until the United States and Taiwan changed their policies.² The United States used deterrence diplomacy to communicate to both Chinese and regional leaders the credibility of its strategic commitments. Washington used force not to defend its Taiwan policy, but to defend its strategic reputation by influencing perceptions of U.S. resolve.³

1. See, for example, John W. Garver, *Face Off: China, the United States, and Taiwan's Democratization* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); and Arthur Waldron, "How Not to Deal with China," *Commentary*, Vol. 103, No. 3 (March 1997), pp. 44–49.

2. The distinction between coercive diplomacy and compellence is not obvious. Thomas C. Schelling's description of compellence is nearly identical to Alexander L. George's later definition of coercive diplomacy (i.e., action that aims to "persuade an opponent to stop or reverse an action"). See Schelling, *Arms and Influence* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1976), pp. 69–72; and George, "Coercive Diplomacy: Definition and Characteristics," in Alexander L. George and William E. Simons, eds., *The Limits of Coercive Diplomacy* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1994), p. 7. Either term can capture Chinese behavior. This article uses the term coercive diplomacy rather than compellence to describe Chinese policy, if only because coercive diplomacy has become the more familiar term.

Moreover, the difference between coercion and deterrence is often not clear. As Schelling observes, when a state seeks to end the continuance of another state's policy, there are elements of both deterrence and compellence (coercion). Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p. 77. It can be argued that there are elements of both deterrence and coercion in Chinese behavior. But compellence/coercive diplomacy better captures Chinese behavior, because China took the initiative and maintained its policy of threatening the use of force until it received a response from Taiwan and the United States in terms of concrete policy change. Paul Gordon Lauren calls this pattern "defensive coercion." See Lauren, "Theories of Bargaining with Threats of Force: Deterrence and Coercive Diplomacy," in Lauren, ed., *Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy* (New York: Free Press, 1979), pp. 192–193. See also Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 195–196; and Lawrence Freedman, "Strategic Coercion," in Freedman, ed., *Strategic Coercion: Concepts and Cases* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 15–20.

3. The relationship between reputation, credibility, commitment, and deterrence follows Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp. 42–43. For an extensive discussion of the relationship between reputation and deterrence, see Jonathan Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), chap. 1.

China's objective was to coerce the United States into ending its indirect yet increasingly significant support for Taiwan independence by forcing the Clinton administration to reassess its relationship with the Taiwan leadership and to revise its position on Taiwan's role in international politics. China also aimed to coerce Taiwan into abandoning its effort to redefine the "one China" principle and Taiwan's status in international politics. The use of force was a crucial element in Beijing's coercive diplomacy. China's large-scale military exercises and missile tests were intended to signal to the United States and Taiwan the tremendous risks inherent in their policies.⁴ The use of force made the potential costs of U.S. and Taiwan policy more credible and China's coercive diplomacy more effective.⁵

Initially the Clinton administration did not use force to defend U.S. policy against Chinese coercion. Instead it relied on diplomacy to bolster the credibility of the United States' deterrence posture to discourage future Chinese military action and to influence the behavior of its allies. The missile tests, however, challenged the commitment of the United States to impose costs on any attempt to resolve the Taiwan issue with force and to defend its strategic partners from future military threats. In the end, the United States was pressed into using force to deter prospective challenges to its interests and to maintain its reputation for loyalty to its security partners.⁶

4. Author interview with Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Peter Tarnoff. Much of the following analysis of Chinese policy is based on the author's extensive interviews conducted during visits to Beijing between 1996 and 2000 with senior civilian and military specialists on U.S.-China relations and Taiwan in government think tanks and universities. These policy analysts are advisers to such government agencies as the state council, the ministry of foreign affairs, the ministry of security, and the People's Liberation Army. They frequently participate in government meetings regarding policy toward the United States and Taiwan. For obvious reasons, I have not disclosed their identities.

5. On the role of the use of force in coercive diplomacy, see Alexander L. George and William Simons, "Findings and Conclusions," in George and Simons, *Limits of Coercive Diplomacy*, pp. 273–279; and Freedman, "Strategic Coercion," pp. 20–23.

6. This use of deterrence follows the definition of deterrence found in Glenn H. Snyder, *Deterrence and Defense: Toward a Theory of National Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 3. Washington believed that its commitments were "interdependent," so that its follow-through in March 1996 on its commitment to Taiwan would affect the credibility of its future commitments to both Taiwan and other regional actors. On the interdependence of commitments, see Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, pp. 55–59; and Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics*, pp. 36–37. On the difficulty of managing allies' perceptions to maintain a reputation for loyalty, see Glenn H. Snyder, *Alliance Politics* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997). On the role of force in signaling reputation to both adversaries and allies, see Robert Jervis, *The Logic of Images in International Relations* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970). For a more general discussion of the political use of force, see Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, *Force without War: U.S. Armed Forces as a Political Instrument* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1978). On the role of the U.S. Navy in signaling intentions, see James Cable, *Gunboat Diplomacy, 1919–1979* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981), pp. 81–83.

Because China and the United States pursued two different types of strategic objectives, each was able to achieve its purpose. China influenced Taiwan's assessment of the costs of independence and succeeded in curtailing the evolution of U.S. policy toward Taiwan, thus reestablishing U.S. constraint on Taiwan's independence diplomacy. For its part, the United States secured its reputational objectives. Following U.S. deployment of two carrier battle groups, China, Taiwan, and U.S. regional allies concluded that the United States remained committed to the defense of Taiwan and to using its military power to preserve the East Asian strategic order. The United States thus succeeded in maintaining its prefrontation reputation, leaving the credibility of U.S. deterrence intact.⁷

The first section of this article addresses the origins of the U.S.-China confrontation. It examines, first, why China considered Lee Teng-hui's 1995 visit to the United States a major challenge to its interests and, second, Beijing's initial efforts to affect U.S. and Taiwan behavior. The second section examines the March 1996 confrontation and explains why each side used force to achieve its objectives. The third section assesses the consequences of the confrontation, including the costs and benefits for U.S. and Chinese interests and for U.S.-China relations. The conclusion argues that because both the United States and China achieved their objectives and were content with the restoration of the status quo that existed before Lee's visit to the United States, the confrontation itself was unnecessary and avoidable. Both countries could have achieved their interests without putting their relationship under such intense pressure. The lesson of 1996 is not that the United States requires a tougher China policy, but that its policymakers must avoid the mistakes of 1995 to prevent similar costly and unnecessary confrontations in the future.

From Ithaca to New York City

Between May 1995, when Lee Teng-hui received his visa to visit the United States, and October 1995, when President Clinton and President Jiang met in New York for an unofficial summit, Washington and Beijing negotiated the restoration of their pre-visa agenda. Beijing pressed Washington to affirm its opposition to Taiwan independence and to reassure Chinese leaders that there

7. As Mercer, *Reputation and International Politics*, points out, leaders sometimes believe that commitments are interdependent when, in fact, they are not. This case, however, is one in which U.S. behavior in March 1996 clearly affected China's assessment of U.S. future resolve on the Taiwan issue and likely affected the assessment of other countries of their own security, so that U.S. policy was appropriate and successful.

would be no further erosion of U.S. policy toward Taiwan, as agreed in three U.S.-China communiqués.⁸ Washington resisted Chinese pressure. After offering China informal and ambiguous assurances, American officials insisted that U.S.-Taiwan relations were no longer at issue as they sought to shift the focus back to three issues of long-standing interest: Chinese arms proliferation, trade, and human rights policies. This period ended with China's failure to achieve its objectives through diplomatic persuasion.

CHINA'S RESPONSE TO LEE TENG-HUI'S VISIT TO CORNELL

President Clinton's decision to issue a visa to Lee Teng-hui did not reflect considered analysis of U.S. interests, but rather White House acquiescence to congressional pressure. As late as April 1995 U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher had told Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen that a visa for Lee would be "inconsistent with [the United States'] unofficial relationship" with Taiwan. Further, National Security Council (NSC) officials had argued against issuing a visa to Lee. However, when in May the Senate voted 97–1 and the House of Representatives 360–0 in support of a visa, the president acquiesced.⁹

Leaders in Beijing considered the U.S. decision to grant a visa to Lee a serious challenge to China's opposition to Taiwan's independence movement. A Chinese foreign ministry statement charged that this was just the latest step in Lee's efforts to create "one China and one Taiwan."¹⁰ When Lee returned from Cornell, a Xinhua news agency commentary observed that he and his pro-independence supporters were "now very swollen with arrogance." A joint Xinhua–*People's Daily* commentary argued that Lee had used his visit to gain U.S. support for Taiwan's independence. At the same time, Taiwan seemed to dare Beijing to stop its drive for independence. Just before his departure for

8. The three are the 1992 Shanghai communiqué, the 1979 normalization of relations communiqué, and the 1982 communiqué on U.S. arms sales to China. The text of the communiqués can be found in Robert S. Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation: U.S.-China Relations, 1969–1989* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995).

9. Although Christopher had pointed out to Qian that support for a visa was growing in Congress, he did not suggest that policy might be reversed. Warren Christopher, *In the Stream of History: Shaping Foreign Policy for a New Era* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 286–287; author interviews with Robert Suettinger, director of Asian Affairs, National Security Council, and Winston Lord, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs. On the role of Congress and domestic politics in U.S. policy toward Taiwan, see Robert G. Sutter, "Domestic Politics and the U.S.-China-Taiwan Triangle: The 1995–1996 Taiwan Strait Conflict and Its Aftermath," in Robert S. Ross, ed., *After the Cold War: Domestic Factors and U.S.-China Relations* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1998). Technically, Lee did not receive a visa, but rather permission to enter the United States.

10. "PRC Foreign Ministry Statement (May 23, 1995)," Xinhua, May 22, 1995, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service–China (hereinafter FBIS–China), May 23, 1995, pp. 2–3.

Cornell, Lee had observed military exercises in which Taiwan forces practiced defense against a People's Liberation Army (PLA) attempt to land on Taiwan. Then Taiwan announced that it was prepared to spend \$1 billion to secure admission to the United Nations.¹¹

Chinese officials believed that the evolution of U.S. policy had encouraged Lee Teng-hui to seek sovereignty for Taiwan. The visa decision followed a succession of similarly important decisions made in Washington since the end of the Cold War. In 1992 President George Bush approved the sale of 150 F-16 warplanes to Taiwan. The sale not only violated the August 17, 1982, U.S.-China communiqué on U.S. arms sales to Taiwan, but also suggested increased U.S. support for Taiwan in its conflict with China.¹² Then in 1994 the Clinton administration revised its policy on U.S. government contacts with Taiwan, raising the protocol level for U.S. treatment of Taiwan officials. Thus, as a leading Chinese authority observed, Washington's decision to issue the visa was not an isolated incident. Rather it was the latest step in a dangerous post-Cold War trend that could lead to a Taiwan declaration of independence.¹³ The *People's Daily* observed that if the trend continued, "Lee Teng-hui will have less to fear in colluding with 'Taiwan independence forces.'"¹⁴

Lee's visit also had implications for other countries' Taiwan policies, including those of Japan and countries in Western Europe. Lee had already engaged in "golf diplomacy" in Southeast Asia and soon might begin traveling further

11. Commentary, "Where Does the United States Really Want to Lead Sino-U.S. Relations?" Xinhua, June 17, 1995, in FBIS-China, June 19, 1995, pp. 10-12; and Commentary, "A Self-Vindication of Advocacy for Splitting the Motherland," Xinhua and *People's Daily*, July 23, 1995, in FBIS-China, July 24, 1995, pp. 91-93. See also, for example, Ren Fan, "The U.S. Government Should Change Its Course Immediately," *People's Daily*, June 13, 1995, in FBIS-China, June 16, 1995, p. 7. Taiwan's military exercises are reported in *Lien-Ho Pao* (Taipei), May 26, 1995, in FBIS-China, June 5, 1995, pp. 89-90; and Agence France-Presse, May 30, 1995, in FBIS-China, May 30, 1995, p. 85. For China's reaction to the exercises, see Xinhua, June 27, 1995, in FBIS-China, June 27, 1995, p. 90. Taiwan's effort to enter the UN is discussed in Di Xiangqian, "Money Diplomacy Goes against the Popular Will in Taiwan," *People's Daily*, July 12, 1995, in FBIS-China, July 18, 1995, p. 77-78; and in Central News Agency (Taipei), June 28, 1995.

12. For a discussion of the arms sales communiqué, see John H. Holdridge, *Crossing the Divide: An Insider's Account of the Normalization of U.S.-China Relations* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997), chaps. 13, 14; and Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*, chap. 6. See also James Mann, *About Face: A History of America's Curious Relationship with China, from Nixon to Clinton* (New York: Knopf, 1999).

13. See the remarks by Wang Jisi in *Wen Wei Po*, August 29, 1995, in FBIS-China, September 13, 1995, pp. 6-7. See also the discussion of U.S. policy in 1994 in Wang Li, *Bolan Qifu: Zhong Mei Guanxi Yanbian de Quzhe Licheng* [Roaring waves: the tortuous process of the evolution of U.S.-China relations] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1998), pp. 297-298. On the new U.S. policy toward Taiwan officials, see also Steven Greenhouse, "U.S., Despite Critics, Is to Expand Taiwan Ties," *New York Times*, September 7, 1994, p. A5.

14. Author interviews with Chinese analysts. Ren, "The U.S. Government Should Change Its Course Immediately"; and *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, May 29, 1995, in FBIS-China, June 2, 1995, p. 5.

afield to gain greater legitimacy for himself and Taiwan independence. As a Xinhua commentary explained, Lee was “chief behind-the-scenes backer” of Taiwan’s independence movement. He aimed to use his visit to the United States to “boost Taiwan’s status with the help of foreigners and to achieve a ‘domino effect’ leading to the international community’s recognition of Taiwan’s ‘political status.’”¹⁵

Leaders in Beijing understood that the catalyst for Washington’s changing policy was domestic political pressure on the White House. Regardless of the impetus, however, “China [could not] help but show great concern and vigilance” for this trend.¹⁶ As a Chinese foreign ministry statement noted, there were indeed “stubborn anti-China elements in the U.S. Congress.” Nevertheless, the U.S. government had to “exercise its power and influence to . . . honor the international commitments it has made.” The statement went on to observe that if policymakers “only attach importance to pressure from certain pro-Taiwan forces, Sino-U.S. relations will . . . regress.”¹⁷

To complicate matters, a couple of months after Christopher’s April statement to Qian that a visit by Lee would be inconsistent with the United States’ unofficial relationship with Taiwan, the administration reversed its position. On June 8 President Clinton told Chinese Ambassador Li Daoyu that the issuance of Lee’s visa had not signaled a major change in U.S. policy. The State Department held that the decision was “completely consistent with the . . . three communiqués that form the basis” of U.S.-China relations. Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord seemed to dismiss the significance of the decision when he characterized it as a mere “tactical change.” And in early July, Christopher said that the visit was not “violative” of the U.S.-China “basic relationship,” but rather was “quite compatible” with unofficial U.S.-Taiwan relations. Although the administration might oppose additional high-profile visits by Lee, Lee would continue to visit the United States, and U.S. policy allowed room for ongoing policy change.¹⁸

15. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts; and Commentary, “The Protective Umbrella and Chief Behind-the-Scenes Backer for ‘Taiwan Independence,’” Xinhua, August 2, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 3, 1995, pp. 43–44.

16. For a sophisticated analysis of the domestic politics of U.S. China policy, see Niu Jun, “Perspective of U.S. Policy toward China,” *Guangming Ribao*, September 14, 1995, in FBIS–China, September 26, 1995, pp. 4–6.

17. “PRC Foreign Ministry Statement (May 23, 1995),” p. 3. See also Commentary, “Where Does the United States Really Want to Lead Sino-U.S. Relations?” p. 11.

18. Author interviews with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger and Assistant Secretary of State Lord; Department of State daily press briefing, May 24, 1995; and on-the-record briefing by Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord, May 30, 1995. Christopher’s remarks were made on the

Beijing, however, sought more than mere U.S. reaffirmation of the three U.S.-China joint communiqués. The Chinese leadership was determined to compel the Clinton administration to formally commit the United States to the one-China policy and to reaffirm the status quo in its relationship with Taiwan. In a July meeting with former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Foreign Minister Qian insisted that “what is imperative is that the United States make concrete moves to eliminate the disastrous effects of its permitting Lee’s visit.” Prime Minister Li Peng demanded that Washington “take practical measures” to correct its mistaken decision.¹⁹

Beijing retaliated to the visa decision by canceling the imminent visits to Washington by Defense Minister Chi Haotian and State Counselor Li Guixian, and by cutting short a visit to the United States by the Chinese air force chief of staff. It also suspended bilateral discussions over arms proliferation and human rights. Following Lee’s visit, Beijing called its ambassador home for “consultations” and rejected U.S. suggestions that the two sides hold high-level talks to restore pre-visit cooperation.²⁰

China’s diplomacy also included a show of force. Its leaders were united in their belief that force was necessary to signal their position that the Taiwan issue was a “question of war and peace” and that the United States “could be dragged into military conflict” over precisely this issue.²¹ On July 18, 1995, China announced that from July 21 to July 28 it would conduct missile tests and naval and air exercises in the waters near Taiwan. It launched six surface-

News Hour with Jim Lehrer, July 11, 1995. See the Chinese analysis of U.S. “ambiguity” in He Chong, “Will the Talks between the Chinese Foreign Minister and the U.S. Secretary of State Improve Sino-U.S. Ties?” *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, August 1, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 1, 1995, p. 6. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

19. Qian Qichen’s and Li Peng’s remarks are in *Xinhua*, July 4, 1995, in FBIS–China, July 5, 1995, pp. 8–9. See also the July 8, 1995, statement by the Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson in *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, July 13, 1995, in FBIS–China, July 14, 1995, p. 1; and Chen Dawei, “To Make Amends for the Damage Done to U.S. Relations with China, the United States Must Give Up Its Cold War Mode of Thinking,” *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, June 23, 1995, in FBIS–China, June 29, 1995, pp. 3–4.

20. On the cancellations, see Department of State daily press briefings, May 24 and 26, 1995, and the May 30 press briefing by Assistant Secretary of State Lord; and *Xinhua*, May 26, 1995, in FBIS–China, May 26, 1995, p. 3. For subsequent Chinese moves, see *Xinhua*, June 16, 1995, in FBIS–China, June 19, 1995, p. 1; and Agence France-Presse, June 22, 1995, in FBIS–China, June 22, 1995, p. 1.

21. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts. For a discussion of the politics of China’s hard-line policy preferences, see Michael D. Swaine, “Chinese Decision-Making toward Taiwan, 1978–1997,” in David M. Lampton, *The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform: 1978–2000* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, forthcoming); and You Ji, “Changing Leadership Consensus: The Domestic Context of the War Games,” in Zhao, *Across the Taiwan Strait*.

to-surface missiles approximately 100 miles from Taiwan.²² A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson explained that “what we are going to do is make the U.S. realize the importance of U.S.-China relations to prompt it to take the right track.”²³ The tests and exercises concluded three days before Qian Qichen and Warren Christopher would meet in Brunei for the first high-level U.S.-China talks since Lee Teng-hui had received his visa. The meeting would be Washington's first opportunity to inform Beijing whether it would take practical measures to end its support for Taiwan independence.

China's use of force had a second target: Lee Teng-hui and public support in Taiwan for his pro-independence activities.²⁴ The Chinese leadership believed that its earlier, relatively conciliatory overtures—including Jiang Zemin's January 1995 eight-point proposal for mainland-Taiwan cooperation and Beijing's tolerance of Lee's pragmatic diplomacy—had succeeded only in eroding the credibility of Chinese deterrence.²⁵ From China's perspective, the missile tests and naval exercises were thus necessary to signal Beijing's determination to curtail Taiwan's march toward independence and to make clear that a formal declaration of independence would result in war.²⁶

U.S. RESISTANCE TO CHINESE DEMANDS

The agenda for the Christopher-Qian meeting in Brunei on August 1 was clear: The two sides would attempt to reach sufficient agreement on U.S. policy toward Taiwan so they could redirect their focus to other issues, including arms proliferation, trade, and human rights. Prior to the meeting, Qian told the press that China appreciated U.S. statements that Washington would continue to abide by the one-China policy, but he recalled the Chinese expression that “words must count and deeds must yield results.”²⁷ Qian wanted Washington to adopt new commitments that would limit U.S. policy and constrain Taiwan.

22. Xinhua, July 18, 1995, in FBIS–China, July 19, 1995, p. 13; and Agence France-Press, August 11, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 11, 1995, p. 13.

23. Quoted in *South China Morning Post*, August 1, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 1, 1995, p. 5.

24. For a discussion of the domestic politics of Taiwan's mainland policy, see Steven M. Goldstein, “The Cross-Strait Talks of 1993—The Rest of the Story: Domestic Politics and Taiwan's Mainland Policy,” in Suisheng Zhao, ed., *Across the Taiwan Strait: Mainland China, Taiwan, and the 1995–1996 Crisis* (New York: Routledge, 1999).

25. See Suisheng Zhao, “Changing Leadership Perceptions: The Adoption of a Coercive Strategy,” in Zhao, *Across the Taiwan Strait*; and Swaine, “Chinese Decision-Making toward Taiwan, 1978–1997.”

26. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

27. See the State Department text of the August 1, 1995, press availability of Christopher and Qian, released in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei, on August 1, 1995.

Christopher presented Qian with a confidential letter from President Clinton to President Jiang in which Clinton wrote that the United States opposed Taiwan independence; did not support a two-China policy, or a policy of one China and one Taiwan; and did not support Taiwan membership in the UN. Although Washington expected that such assurances would mollify the Chinese, these were basically the same confidential commitments that American presidents had made since President Richard Nixon visited China in 1972.²⁸ Christopher also tried to assure Qian that the U.S. decision to issue a visa to Lee did not indicate that future visits would be routine. Although he did not rule them out, Christopher said that Lee's visit had been a "special" situation and that future visits would be personal, unofficial, and rare, and would be decided on a case-by-case basis.²⁹ While trying to reassure China with well-established U.S. commitments, Christopher adopted a low-key posture toward Chinese military activities: He merely reiterated the State Department position that such activities do not contribute to "peace and stability in the area."³⁰

Beijing was not satisfied with confidential and vague U.S. assurances, however. Following the Brunei meeting, Qian said that although Christopher's statements were helpful, the "true value of a promise is shown in real action." Prime Minister Li explained that although Christopher and Qian had held a positive meeting in Brunei, "it is not enough to make oral statements. . . . What is important is to translate the statements into actions." The Chinese foreign ministry insisted that Washington's main concern should be to translate its assurances into "concrete actions."³¹

Chinese diplomacy had failed to curtail Lee Teng-hui's "adventuresome" foreign policy, including his call for Taiwan admittance to the UN. In late July, just a few days after China had begun its July military maneuvers, Taiwan conducted its own missile and naval exercises, and announced that it would conduct live artillery tests in August. Rather than succumb to Chinese pressure, Lee was "still stubbornly challenging the 'one-China' principle." Liu Huaqing, vice chairman of the Chinese Central Military Commission, observed that be-

28. Mann, *About Face*, p. 330. On the commitments of previous administrations, see also Ross, *Negotiating Cooperation*. See also the Chinese account of the meeting in Xinhua, August 1, 1995, in FBIS-China, August 2, 1995, p. 4.

29. Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, p. 289. See also Christopher's July 28, 1995, speech to the National Press Club, Washington, D.C.; and Michael Dobbs, "U.S., China Agree to Talks on Relations," *Washington Post*, August 2, 1995, p. A27.

30. Department of State daily press briefing, July 14, 1995, and author interview with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger, August 11, 1995.

31. Xinhua, August 1, 1995, in FBIS-China, August 2, 1995, p. 4; Xinhua, August 17, 1995, in FBIS-China, August 17, 1995, p. 5; and Xinhua, August 24, 1995, in FBIS-China, August 24, 1995, pp. 1-2.

cause Taiwan's leaders had purchased foreign weaponry, they could be “cocky” and resist reunification.³²

China's next opportunity to press the United States occurred during Undersecretary of State Peter Tarnoff's visit to Beijing in late August. On August 15 China began a second round of missile tests and naval exercises near Taiwan that were scheduled to last until August 25, the day of Tarnoff's arrival in China. The Chinese media explained that China's July military operations had been effective in undermining support for Lee and his efforts to gain UN membership for Taiwan. Nonetheless Lee had continued to be stubborn, and the United States had yet to make new commitments in opposition to Taiwan independence. Thus, to underscore its position, China carried out live artillery exercises and missile tests. The Chinese-influenced Hong Kong media reported that the August exercises simulated a naval blockade of Taiwan and China's likely response to U.S. military intervention.³³

Prior to Tarnoff's arrival, Chinese leaders had also laid out their demands for a U.S.-China summit. In particular, they argued for the issuance of a fourth U.S.-China communiqué that would address the subject of future visits to the United States by Taiwan's leaders and would commit the United States to opposing Taiwan independence.

Once again, however, the United States adopted a low-key posture. A State Department spokesperson simply repeated the now common refrain that China's missile tests “do not contribute to peace and stability in the region.” During his visit, Tarnoff privately conveyed previous U.S. assurances regarding Taiwan independence and its membership in the UN, and reiterated that future visits to the United States by Taiwan's leaders would be rare. But China wanted a commitment that there would be no more visits, and it wanted a fourth communiqué. The Chinese foreign ministry stated that although the talks were useful, “whether Sino-U.S. relations can be restored to normal depends on whether the U.S. side will take actions to honor its commitments.”³⁴

32. Commentator, “Lee Teng-hui Stubbornly Challenges the ‘One-China’ Principle,” *Xinhua*, August 23, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 23, 1995, p. 50. On Taiwan's maneuvers, see Agence France-Presse, July 25, 1995, in FBIS–China, July 25, 1995, p. 41; and Voice of Free China, August 1, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 2, 1995, p. 78. Liu's comments are in *Ta Kung Pao*, September 4, 1995, in FBIS–China, September 7, 1995, p. 32.

33. Agence France-Presse, August 26, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 28, 1995, pp. 81–82; *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, August 15, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 17, 1995, p. 57; and *Ming Pao*, August 16, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 18, 1995, pp. 27–28.

34. Gong Li, *Zhong Mei Guanxi Redian Toushi* [Perspective on hotspots in China-U.S. relations] (Harbin: Heilongjiang Chubanshe, 1996), p. 159; Department of State daily press briefings, August 11 and 28, 1995. *Xinhua*, August 27, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 28, 1995, p. 3; and *Xinhua*, August 29, 1995, in FBIS–China, August 30, 1995, p. 1.

President Jiang later told former President Bush that “oral undertakings are not enough; we demand . . . practical and effective measures” to address the consequences of Lee's visit and to “avert the recurrence of big ups and downs” in U.S.-China relations. Prime Minister Li told Bush that China wanted “concrete actions.”³⁵

The dispute over Taiwan had thus become enmeshed in negotiations over a U.S.-China summit. At issue was the summit's agenda. China wanted to focus on negotiations over the Taiwan issue. State Department officials believed, however, that Washington had made sufficient concessions on this issue and that a summit with Taiwan as the main focus would be tension-ridden, would only serve Chinese interests in one-upping Taiwan, and would not address the issues that most concerned the United States.³⁶

Before Vice Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing flew to Washington to resume discussions with Undersecretary of State Tarnoff, the State Department declared that the United States would not agree to any communiqué that mentioned visits to the United States by Taiwan leaders or “that deals in any way, shape, or form with the subject of Taiwan because our position on Taiwan is clear,” and it “is not going to change.” In effect, the United States would no longer try to mollify Beijing's concerns over the Taiwan issue.³⁷ On September 13 President Clinton met with the Dalai Lama at the White House, revealing his continued willingness to consider domestic politics when making China policy.

Although U.S. officials remained interested in a U.S.-China summit, they insisted that “whether or not it takes place will depend on how much progress we make in U.S.-China relations.” Progress meant Chinese willingness to reach agreement on human rights, arms proliferation, and trade.³⁸ After Li's talks with Tarnoff and a brief meeting with Christopher on September 22, the State Department explained that a summit meeting required a “stable” relationship in which the two sides could “get beyond” the Taiwan issue. Li described his talks with Tarnoff as “very frank and useful.”³⁹

China faced a *de facto* U.S. ultimatum: either drop its contentious position on the Taiwan issue or forgo a summit. On September 27 Christopher and Qian met in New York to discuss the terms for a summit. Four days earlier, the

35. Xinhua, September 8 and 11, 1995, both in FBIS-China, September 11, 1995, pp. 13-15.

36. Author interviews with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger, Undersecretary of State Tarnoff, and other administration officials.

37. Department of State daily press briefings, September 18 and 21, 1995.

38. Department of State daily press briefing, September 18, 1995.

39. Department of State daily press briefing, September 22, 1995; and Xinhua, September 23, 1995, in FBIS-China, September 25, 1995, p. 7.

United States had delivered two E-2T early airborne warning and command aircraft to Taiwan. The timing of the delivery may have been coincidental, but it underscored U.S. determination to resist Chinese pressure.⁴⁰

Without receiving any U.S. concessions on Taiwan, Qian told Christopher that China would suspend assistance to Iran regarding nuclear energy. He also explained to the press that China appreciated U.S. commitments regarding Taiwan and that it was ready to work for greater cooperation with the United States. Notably absent from Qian's remarks were any complaints regarding U.S. Taiwan policy or demands for "practical measures." China had apparently decided to follow U.S. advice to get beyond the Taiwan issue. Christopher then instructed Tarnoff to continue discussions with Li regarding a summit. Finally, after three more rounds of Tarnoff-Li meetings, on October 2 the two sides announced that Presidents Jiang and Clinton would meet on October 24 in New York for an unofficial summit. Beijing then announced that its ambassador would soon return to Washington. Following the summit, China agreed to resume the U.S.-China military dialogue and to hold discussions on trade and other bilateral issues.⁴¹

THE OCTOBER 1995 NEW YORK SUMMIT

Events leading up to the October 1995 summit suggested that the Clinton administration could withstand Chinese pressure to make significant concessions regarding Taiwan and, at the same time, secure an important Chinese concession on nuclear energy cooperation with Iran. Regarding visits by Taiwan's leaders to the United States, Clinton reaffirmed to Jiang that such visits would be "unofficial, private, and rare" and decided on a case-by-case basis. And as in the past, Clinton offered confidential assurances that Washington would oppose Taiwan independence and membership in the UN. Otherwise the summit agenda paid scant attention to the Taiwan issue. Instead it focused on issues including trade disputes, arms proliferation, human rights, international crime, and environmental protection.⁴²

40. Central News Agency, September 25, 1995, in FBIS-China, September 25, 1995, p. 73.

41. On the Chinese suspension of the nuclear energy agreement and the decision to move ahead with summit discussions between Tarnoff and Li, see Department of State daily press briefing, September 29, 1995. Qian's remarks are in Xinhua, September 27, 1995, in FBIS-China, September 28, 1995, pp. 11–12; and Xinhua, October 1, 1995, in FBIS-China, October 2, 1995, p. 11. The return of the ambassador is reported in *Kyodo*, October 17, 1995, in FBIS-China, October 17, 1995, p. 1. On military exchanges, see *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, October 31, 1995, in FBIS-China, November 1, 1995, p. 1.

42. See the October 24, 1995, postsummit briefing in New York at the Warwick Hotel by State Department and NSC officials; Zhu Chenghu, ed., *Zhong Mei Guanxi de Fazhan Bianhua ji qi Qushi* [De-

The administration had achieved its goals while retaining its negotiating leverage in summit diplomacy. Beijing had wanted a state visit, replete with a state banquet and military honors. But the White House had agreed only to hold an unofficial meeting in Washington. Thus it could use Beijing's continued interest in an official Washington summit to extract additional concessions. The State Department explained that an unofficial summit "most appropriately reflects the current standing of U.S.-China relations."⁴³

Administration officials were pleased with the summit and the direction of U.S.-China relations. They believed that they had persuaded Chinese leaders that the decision to allow Lee to visit the United States was a "tactical shift" in U.S. policy, and that Beijing understood that it could not pressure Washington to make any additional concessions. The visa issue was a "bump in the road" and was no longer an obstacle to improved relations on other issues. Assistant Secretary of State Lord publicly reported that Chinese leaders agreed with the U.S. position that the two sides can discuss issues sensitive to China (i.e., Taiwan), but still "get on with the broad agenda." Director of Asian Affairs for the National Security Council Robert Suettinger similarly believed that the summit enabled the two sides to make "significant progress."⁴⁴ After the disruptions caused by Lee's visit to Cornell, China and the United States had at last resumed momentum toward resolving other problems.

The summit was followed by a meeting between Secretary of State Christopher and Foreign Minister Qian in mid-November in Osaka. During the meeting, Qian reported that China was prepared for a constructive discussion on the Taiwan issue. Later, however, Assistant Secretary of State Lord expressed confidence that China's leaders "understand" that administration officials had "reaffirmed as much as we're capable of doing" on U.S. Taiwan policy.⁴⁵ Chinese leaders were not satisfied, however, because the United States still had not made any commitments on the Taiwan issue since Lee's visit. China had agreed to the summit and made the concessions necessary for a successful meeting. Beijing had not accepted Washington's Taiwan policy, however, nor

veloping change in China-U.S. relations and its trend] (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Chubanshe, 1998), pp. 190–191; Xinhua, October 25, 1995, in FBIS—China, October 25, 1995, p. 18; and author interviews with administration officials.

43. Department of State daily press briefing, October 2, 1995; and author interview with an administration official. The administration also refused to hold a state visit in Washington due to its concern for the congressional and public reaction to a grand White House welcome for Jiang Zemin. Interview with Assistant Secretary of State Lord.

44. Author interviews with Undersecretary of State Tarnoff and Assistant Secretary of State Lord; and October 24, 1995, postsummit briefing in New York.

45. Press availability of Christopher and Qian at the New Otani Hotel, Tokyo, and briefing by Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord at the Royal Hotel Osaka, Japan, November 16, 1995.

had it lowered the priority of the Taiwan issue on the U.S.-China agenda.⁴⁶ Rather China had decided to shelve the issue until its leverage improved. To underscore China's position, after announcing Beijing's willingness to attend the New York summit, Qian Qichen said that "we do not think that this is enough because a complete agreement . . . has not been reached." Immediately following the summit, Qian said that Clinton and Jiang had held a "positive and useful meeting," but "this does not mean that the Taiwan issue will not again be the main issue affecting U.S.-China relations." And whereas in Osaka Christopher had been upbeat about U.S.-China relations, Qian said that the "differences and contradictions" between Washington and Beijing still "need to be addressed."⁴⁷

China agreed to the New York summit because it had turned its focus toward Taiwan's upcoming elections to the legislative assembly scheduled for December 2, 1995, and it needed stable U.S.-China relations if it was to coerce Lee Teng-hui into stopping his pro-independence activities. Despite China's repeated military exercises and missile tests, Lee had continued to defy Chinese warnings. In September Taiwan carried out its own missile tests, and in early October it held ground, air, and naval exercises simulating a response to an enemy attempt to land on Taiwan. In addition, Taiwan insisted that Tokyo invite Lee to attend an upcoming Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Japan. After visiting the United States, Lee was now aiming for Japan.⁴⁸ Moreover, Taiwan leaders had been closely watching U.S.-China diplomacy. They stressed U.S. refusal to consider a fourth communiqué, emphasized U.S. criticism of China's military activities, and minimized the importance of the U.S.-China summit. China observed this pattern and suggested that Lee was creating a domestic environment supportive of his independence efforts.⁴⁹

46. Gong, *Zhong Mei Guanxi Redian Toushi*, p. 160; and author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

47. Xinhua, October 1, 1995, in FBIS-China, October 2, 1995, p. 11; Xinhua, October 26, 1995, in FBIS-China, October 27, 1995, pp. 2–3; and November 16, 1995, press availability of Christopher and Qian at the New Otani Hotel, Tokyo.

48. *Chung-Yang Jih-Pao*, September 15, 1995, in FBIS-China, September 18, 1995, p. 53; and Central News Agency, October 4, 1995, in FBIS-China, October 4, 1995, p. 91. For a Chinese analysis of the exercises, see Tang Zhengshui, *Zhong Mei Qiju zhong de Taiwan Wenti: 1969.1–1999.12* [The Taiwan issue in U.S.-China chess: 1969.1–1999.12] (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 2000), pp. 413–414. On the APEC meeting, see Central News Agency, October 18, 1995, in FBIS-China, October 18, 1995, p. 89.

49. Central News Agency, August 17, 1995, in FBIS-China, August 17, 1995, p. 58; *Chung-Yang Jih-Pao*, December 1, 1995, in FBIS-China, December 6, 1995, p. 101; and Central People's Radio, November 4, 1995, in FBIS-China, November 6, 1995, p. 60.

From Summitry to Confrontation

China responded to the failure of its U.S. policy by escalating its use of force. In October, following the announcement of the New York summit, Jiang Zemin, accompanied by China's senior military leadership, observed PLA Air Force and Navy exercises and boarded a command ship to observe a "high-tech war game" of submarines and destroyers, and missile launchings. Also on display were China's bombers and nuclear and conventional submarines. The focus was Chinese military modernization, but the foreign ministry stressed that the maneuvers also demonstrated China's resolve to safeguard its sovereignty and territorial integrity.⁵⁰ Equally important, Jiang had directly associated himself with China's determination to militarily resist Taiwan independence, underscoring the unity of the Chinese leadership on this issue.

The October maneuvers were a prelude to more serious coercive diplomacy aimed at Taiwan's December election. China was concerned that the mere holding of elections might enhance the international legitimacy of Taiwan's independence movement. The elections would also be an opportunity for the people of Taiwan to pass judgment on Lee's Teng-hui's mainland policy. Given Lee's recent successes and the impression of U.S. support for Taiwan, China feared that public optimism might result in a victory for the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), Taiwan's pro-independence party. Finally, Lee might use the elections and the pressures of campaign politics as an excuse to take another step toward establishing formal sovereignty for Taiwan.

On November 15, just as the two-week campaign period before Taiwan's legislative elections began and when Assistant Secretary of Defense Joseph Nye was in Beijing to resume the U.S.-China military dialogue, China began a third round of military maneuvers. This time, however, Beijing explicitly declared that the exercises were aimed at Taiwan and were designed to maintain the "unity" of China and to resist the "splittist" activities of Taiwan's pro-independence forces. It also declared that the Nanjing military theater, rather than the Nanjing military region, was responsible for the exercises, suggesting that China had gone on war footing. The exercises, which comprised Chinese land, naval, and air forces, also included a simulation of an amphibious PLA landing on a Taiwan-held island and attacks on a mock-up of Taiwan's largest airport. China's actions demonstrated the "military's resolve and capability to

50. Xinhua, October 18, 1995, in FBIS-China, October 18, 1995, pp. 25-26; and *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, October 19, 1995, in FBIS-China, October 20, 1995, p. 2.

defend national sovereignty and . . . safeguard the motherland's unity."⁵¹ They were also the "most serious warning" to that point of China's "determination to firmly oppose and contain Taiwan independence" through "so-called 'democratic procedures' with the support of foreign sources."⁵²

Beijing could draw considerable satisfaction from its coercive diplomacy. Lee Teng-hui's Nationalist Party, which had been expected to win an easy victory, held onto its majority by only two seats. The most surprising outcome was the success of the New Party, composed of candidates highly critical of Lee's provocative mainland policy. Although the New Party had been formed only two years earlier, all of its candidates were elected, and its number of seats in the legislature increased overall. The outcome had apparently vindicated Chinese forceful opposition to Taiwan independence.⁵³

Although China's latest round of exercises were by far the largest and most threatening, the United States responded with conspicuous silence. Neither the White House, the State Department, nor the Defense Department discussed the maneuvers with the media or in public speeches. In his mid-November visit to Beijing, despite strong Chinese warnings to him against U.S. "interference" in the Taiwan issue, Assistant Secretary of Defense Nye privately reiterated U.S. advice that China's exercises were counterproductive. The focus of Nye's visit was briefing Chinese leaders on the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan alliance (which he stressed was not aimed at China) and on expressing Washington's interest in renewing the U.S.-China military dialogue. When a Chinese foreign policy analyst asked how the United States would respond to a mainland attack on Taiwan, Nye replied that it would depend on the immediate circumstances. He observed that in 1950 the United States had said it would not become involved in Korea, then quickly reversed itself. Other than this cautious response to a question from a think-tank analyst, Nye did not press China on its military activities.⁵⁴

51. Tang, *Zhong Mei Qiju zhong de Taiwan Wenti*, p. 414; Xinhua, November 25, 1995, in FBIS–China, pp. 95–227; *Ping Kuo Jih Pao*, November 27, 1995, in FBIS–China, November 27, 1995, pp. 24–25; and author interview with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger. On the Nye visit, see *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, November 15, 1995, in FBIS–China, November 16, 1995, pp. 4–5.

52. See the comments of Xin Qi in *Wen Wei Pao*, November 27, 1995, in FBIS–China, November 28, 1995, p. 72.

53. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts; and *Hong Kong Standard*, December 4, 1995, in FBIS–China, December 4, 1995, p. 15. For a full discussion of the elections, see Shelley Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan: Voting for Democracy* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 172–174.

54. Author interview with former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Joseph Nye; Patrick E. Tyler, "China-U.S. Ties Warm a Bit as China-Taiwan Relations Chill," *New York Times*, November 18, 1995, p. A3; and "Perry Voices Concern for Taiwan," *New York Times*, February 7, 1996, p. A3. Cf., Garver, *Face Off*, pp. 85–86.

On December 19 the U.S. aircraft carrier *Nimitz* passed through the Taiwan Strait, the first such transit by a U.S. aircraft carrier since the normalization of U.S.-China relations in 1979. The transit was intended neither as a political gesture nor as a quiet warning to Chinese leaders. Rather it was an unpublicized detour to avoid delays caused by bad weather. U.S. officials believed that Chinese leaders were unaware of the carrier's presence.⁵⁵

Thus far, the administration's response to China's military exercises had been intentionally low-key. With the first round of exercises in the summer of 1995, U.S. officials began to understand that the White House had contributed to U.S.-China conflict by failing to keep its pledges regarding Taiwan, and they did not want to aggravate the situation further by overreacting to China's subsequent attempts to flex its muscles. They also believed that as the "offended party," Beijing needed to vent its anger. Moreover, as one NSC official later explained, the United States wanted Taiwan to understand that its "actions have consequences," that provoking China is not cost free. Thus, so long as China did not threaten Taiwan with war, the United States would not be anxious to rise to Taiwan's defense.⁵⁶

China was not simply blowing off steam, however. Nor were its exercises targeted only at Taiwan's independence diplomacy. They were also intended to coerce the United States to change its Taiwan policy. In this respect, U.S. silence suggested disinterest in Chinese capabilities and threats as well as Washington's intention to continue resisting Chinese demands. To leaders in Beijing, the White House had yet to get the message that its Taiwan's policy challenged a vital Chinese interest. China's leaders thus concluded that the next round of PLA activities should be even more provocative, to show the United States its determination to use force against Taiwan independence.⁵⁷

COERCION VERSUS DETERRENCE IN THE TAIWAN STRAIT

Chinese planning took on considerable urgency as Taiwan began preparing for its first democratic election for president. The election, scheduled for March 23,

55. Central News Agency, January 27, 1996, in FBIS-China, January 29, 1996, p. 83; and Department of State daily press briefing, January 26, 1996. The State Department and the NSC were persuaded by the Pentagon that its interest in sending the *Nimitz* through the strait was to avoid bad weather, rather than to send China a quiet yet persuasive signal, and thus they did not object. Author interviews with former Assistant Secretary of Defense Nye, NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger, and other administration officials. Cf., Garver, *Face Off*, pp. 87-89; and Li Yihu, ed., *Zhengzhi Dubo zhong de Taiwan* [Taiwan in a political gamble] (Beijing: Youyi Chuban She, 1999), p. 224.

56. Author interviews with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger and former Assistant Secretary of Defense Nye.

57. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

concerned China not only because it would add domestic and international legitimacy to Taiwan's quest for sovereignty, but Taiwan's campaign politics might encourage Lee to use the independence issue to raise support for his candidacy. Also, China had to worry about the possibility of a victory for Peng Ming-min, the outspoken pro-independence DPP candidate for president.

In the lead-up to the presidential election, the candidates insisted that Taiwan could challenge mainland threats. Lee declared that of all the presidential candidates, only he had the “capability, wisdom, and guts to handle cross-strait relations.” Two weeks later he said that the effect of the PLA exercises was “diminishing” and that the mainland was “not pleased with our foreign trips, but we must also say that we are not pleased with their military exercises. Shall we say that we have broken even?”⁵⁸ DPP candidate Peng promised to adopt a more friendly policy toward the mainland, but only if it “recognizes Taiwan as a sovereign and independent state.” If the PLA carried out aggression against Taiwan, however, Taiwan's military would inflict a “heavy price” on the mainland.⁵⁹

At the same time, Taiwan seemed intent on using the United States to resist mainland pressure. In late January it revealed to the media the December *Nimitz* transit through the Taiwan Strait, expressed its appreciation to the U.S. Congress for appealing to the White House to expedite delivery of Patriot missiles to Taiwan, and announced forthcoming antisubmarine exercises. In early February Taipei revealed that it had accepted delivery of a missile frigate, which would contribute to Taiwan's antisubmarine and air defense, and that it would substantially increase its defense budget to deal with the greater military threat from the mainland.⁶⁰

Washington appeared to support Taiwan's independence drive. On January 6, despite China's “solemn representations,” the Clinton administration approved a visa for Taiwan Vice President Li Yuan-zu to transit through Los Angeles on his way to Guatemala, insisting that the decision was not inconsistent

58. For Lee's remarks, see the English translation of his speech distributed by Nationalist Party campaign headquarters, in FBIS–China, February 12, 1996, pp. 83–84; and live telecast of Lee Teng-hui news conference, China Broadcasting Corporation (Taipei), February 23, 1996, in FBIS–China, February 26, 1996, p. 55.

59. “Taiwan Election Candidate Gives China Ultimatum,” Reuters, February 23, 1996.

60. On Taiwan's publicizing the passage of the *Nimitz*, see Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, p. 426; and Central News Agency, January 27, 1996, in FBIS–China, January 29, 1996, p. 83. On Taiwan's defense policies, see Central News Agency, January 27, 1996, in FBIS–China, January 29, 1996; and Central News Agency, February 2, 1996, and *Chung-kuo Shih-pao*, January 28, 1996, both in FBIS–China, February 5, 1996, pp. 76–77. See the extensive discussion of this period in Taiwan's U.S. policy, in particular, Taiwan's alleged manipulation of the passage of the *Nimitz*, in Tang, *Zhong Mei Qiju zhong de Taiwan Wenti*, pp. 417–421.

with U.S. unofficial relations with Taiwan. China expressed its “strong displeasure” at the decision.⁶¹ Then on January 31, the White House again ignored Chinese warnings by approving two additional transit visas for Li to travel round-trip between Taiwan and Haiti. En route to Haiti, Li planned to spend two nights in the United States, visiting San Francisco and Miami. On his return to Taiwan, he planned to stay one night in Los Angeles. Although the administration needed more than a week to make the decision, it insisted that the visa was a “routine matter” that should not affect U.S.-China relations.⁶²

Dismayed by Washington's actions, China warned Taiwan to go no further toward independence. In late December 1995, the director of the Institute of Taiwan Studies wrote that the people of Taiwan should “warn [Taiwan's] separatists in all seriousness . . . to rein themselves in at the brink of the precipice.”⁶³ In January 1996 Prime Minister Li stated that China's commitment to use force was “directed . . . against the schemes of foreign forces . . . to bring about ‘Taiwan independence,’” and that since Lee's visit to Cornell, China had demonstrated its “determination and ability to safeguard . . . [its] sovereignty and territorial integrity.” In early March Jiang Zemin told China's National People's Congress (NPC) that if Taiwan did not abandon its independence activities, “the struggle between China and Taiwan will not stop.” Qian Qichen told NPC delegates that the main danger was Taiwan independence with international support.⁶⁴

China continued to back up its verbal threats with coercive diplomacy. From late January through February, the PLA amassed more than 100,000 troops in Fujian Province.⁶⁵ The size of China's deployments got Washington's attention. Administration officials stressed that they did not believe that the exercises were a prelude to an attack, but they warned Beijing not to adopt provocative actions. When Vice Foreign Minister Li visited Washington in early February,

61. “U.S. Visa to Taiwan Aide,” *New York Times*, January 7, 1996, p. A9; Department of State daily press briefing, January 5, 1996; and Xinhua, January 9, 1996, in FBIS–China, January 11, 1996, p. 2.

62. Department of State daily press briefings, January 23 and 31, 1996; and China Radio International, February 2, 1996, in FBIS–China, February 2, 1996, p. 1.

63. Jiang Dianming, “Safeguarding State Sovereignty Is the Greatest Public Opinion,” *Wen Wei Pao*, December 24, 1995, in FBIS–China, February 5, 1996, pp. 68–69.

64. Xinhua, January 30, 1996, in FBIS–China, January 31, 1996, pp. 75–77; and *Zhongguo Xinwen She*, March 8, 1996, in FBIS–China, March 11, 1996, p. 10. See also Yan Xuetong, “U.S. Policy toward Taiwan and Tension in the Taiwan Strait,” *Liaowang*, March 4, 1996, in FBIS–China, March 15, 1996, pp. 5–6.

65. Associated Press, February 6, 1996; Department of State daily press briefing, February 14, 1996; R. Jeffrey Smith, “China Plans Maneuvers off Taiwan,” *Washington Post*, February 5, 1996, p. A1; and Steven Mufson, “China Masses Troops on Coast Near Taiwan,” *Washington Post*, February 14, 1996, p. A16.

U.S. officials told him that China should not try to intimidate Taiwan and should instead work to reduce tension in the strait. The administration also used military signals to weigh in against Chinese policy. On February 6 Secretary of Defense William Perry said that he did not yet consider China's use of its military a threat to Taiwan, but he did express concern. The same day, the Pentagon reported that a U.S. naval vessel was passing through the Taiwan Strait. The next day, Assistant Secretary of State Lord told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that the administration had stressed to Beijing its "deep concern" over the PLA's activities. He warned that the administration was closely watching developments and that if hostilities broke out, the "impact . . . would be extremely serious." In mid-February the State Department announced that since January 26, the administration's senior national security advisers had been holding a series of meetings to assess Beijing's activities and that these meetings would continue.⁶⁶

Nonetheless, China pushed ahead with its plans for military maneuvers. Leaders in Beijing believed that China had to raise the stakes to make the United States understand the risks of its Taiwan policy.⁶⁷ It also wanted to lay to rest suspicions that Washington had become so accustomed to Chinese military exercises that U.S. silence amounted to acceptance of Chinese actions.⁶⁸ Moreover, Taiwan seemed unfazed by China's threats. During the first months of 1996, Taiwan held its own military maneuvers, reinforcing its resistance to the mainland's "anti-splittist, anti-Taiwan struggle."⁶⁹

On March 4 China announced that the PLA would conduct surface-to-surface missile tests from March 8 to March 18. The target areas were waters just off the coast of Taiwan's two largest port cities, one of which was barely twenty miles from the northern port of Keelung. After careful study, Chinese leaders had concluded that if the target zones were not close to Taiwan, the tests would be ineffective in opposing Taiwan "splittism" and U.S. policy toward Taiwan.⁷⁰ When asked whether the likelihood of a mainland attack on Taiwan had increased, a foreign ministry spokesperson responded that "if Tai-

66. Associated Press, February 6, 1996; testimony by Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord before the Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, February 7, 1996; and Department of State daily press briefings, February 13 and 14, 1996.

67. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

68. *Ibid.*

69. See the discussion in Tang, *Zhong Mei Qiju zhong de Taiwan Wenti*, pp. 421–422.

70. Xinhua, March 4, 1995, in FBIS–China, March 5, 1996, p. 68; and Central News Agency, March 7, 1995, in FBIS–China, March 7, 1996, p. 81. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

wan declares 'independence' or if foreign forces meddle, the Chinese Government will not sit by idly."⁷¹

On March 7, despite vigorous and repeated discussions between U.S. and Chinese diplomats and U.S. advice that China not proceed with its missile tests, the PLA fired three M-9 missiles into the waters near Taiwan.⁷² That day, Defense Minister Chi Haotian explained to the Fujian delegates to the NPC that "we have more troops stationed in Fujian because we are facing a grim situation, in which Lee Teng-hui and his gang are vainly attempting to split China. . . . We must heighten our vigilance." A March 8 joint editorial warned of the danger of allowing Lee to continue advocating Taiwan independence, stating that China retained the right to use force to oppose "interference by foreign forces . . . and their attempt to promote 'Taiwan independence'. . . . [We will] exert all our efforts to defend our country's reunification. We mean what we say."⁷³

Clinton administration officials believed that the PLA was not preparing to attack Taiwan—or preparing to attack smaller offshore islands, carry out a blockade, and harass Taiwan shipping—but instead was trying to influence Taiwan's upcoming presidential election and independence movement. As Secretary of State Perry explained, attacking Taiwan would be "a dumb thing" for China to do, observing that it was not capable of launching an invasion of the island. Although Perry believed that China had the ability to harass Taiwan, he observed that it would not make any sense to attack. The State Department maintained that the missile tests were an exercise in the political use of force and did not "presage any broader military effort." Moreover, following the March 7 missile launches, China, through various diplomatic channels (including Vice Foreign Minister Liu Huaqiu's discussions in Washington), had assured the United States that it did not intend to attack Taiwan.⁷⁴

71. China Radio International, March 5, 1996, in FBIS-China, March 6, 1996, p. 1.

72. Agence France-Press, March 8, 1996, FBIS-China, March 8, 1996, p. 37; Department of State daily press briefings, March 7 and 8, 1996; and White House press briefing, March 7, 1996. Note that throughout the period, Chinese missile tests did not interfere with shipping in or out of Taiwan. See Central News Agency, March 8, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-47; and Central News Agency, March 13, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-50.

73. *Wen Wei Po*, March 9, 1996, in FBIS-China, March 11, 1996, p. 15; and editorial departments, "Lee Teng-hui Practicing Taiwan Independence Is the Biggest Danger for Taiwan," *People's Daily and Liberation Army Daily*, March 8, 1996, in FBIS-China, March 11, 1996, pp. 83-84.

74. Author interviews with Undersecretary of State Tarnoff and Assistant Secretary of State Lord; and comments by Secretary of Defense William Perry at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C., February 28, 1996; Department of State daily press briefing, March 5, 1996; and Department of Defense news briefing, March 14, 1996. See also Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, p. 427; Patrick E. Tyler, "China Signaling U.S. That It Will Not Invade Taiwan," *New York Times*, March 13, 1996, p. A3; and author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

Nonetheless, Washington had to react. China had ignored U.S. warnings, and its missile tests challenged U.S. credibility. Administration officials believed that if the United States did not respond forcefully, Beijing would doubt Washington's commitment to a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan conflict and would be encouraged to escalate its military activities in a future confrontation—thereby increasing the likelihood of hostilities and a far more serious U.S.-China crisis. The Defense Department explained that Washington needed to communicate its determination that China resolve its differences with Taiwan peacefully. It could not allow Chinese leaders to conclude that “the U.S. had lost interest in that area of the world.” As Secretary of Defense Perry later recalled, the United States had to demonstrate the military resolve behind its Taiwan policy.⁷⁵

Equally significant, American leaders believed that failure to respond to China's actions would call into doubt the U.S. commitment to remain an active player in East Asia and to fulfill its bilateral security commitments to its regional allies. Secretary of State Christopher, for example, explained that “because Asian and Pacific nations looked to the United States to preserve stability in the region, we had to take action to calm the situation.”⁷⁶

Also on March 7 Vice Foreign Minister Liu visited Washington to hold pre-arranged discussions with National Security Adviser Anthony Lake. Earlier that day, China had tested its M-9 missiles. Liu's visit offered the administration an opportunity to press China to end its missile tests. To strengthen the administration's message, Christopher and Perry joined Lake for his evening meal with Liu. As secretary of defense, Perry delivered the administration's tough message: He publicly reported that he had told Liu that the Chinese missile tests “bracketing Taiwan” were “reckless” and “aggressive” and could be seen as a threat to American interests. He warned Liu that the United States has “more than enough military capability to protect its vital national security interests in the region and is prepared to demonstrate that.” Perry then said that China would be making a serious mistake if it continued the missile tests. Lake then told Liu that the exercises threatened vital U.S. security interests in the western Pacific and that China should resume cooperation with Taiwan.⁷⁷

75. Author interviews with Undersecretary of State Tarnoff and Assistant Secretary of State Lord; Department of Defense news briefing, March 14, 1996; and Ashton B. Carter and William J. Perry, *Preventive Defense: A New Security Strategy for America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1999), pp. 92–93.

76. Christopher, *In the Stream of History*, p. 427. See also Department of Defense news briefing, March 14, 1996; and author interview with Assistant Secretary of State Lord.

77. See Perry's comments at the Department of Defense news briefing, December 8, 1996; and Carter and Perry, *Preventive Defense*, p. 96.

Ignoring Washington's warnings, China announced on March 9 that from March 12 to March 20 it would conduct air and naval exercises with live ammunition in waters near Taiwan.⁷⁸ China and the United States had become engaged in a test of wills, but their respective objectives were very different. China had three aims: to coerce Taiwan leaders to abandon their independence activities, to coerce the Taiwan electorate to vote against independence, and to coerce the United States to adopt a more public and determined stand against Taiwan independence. Washington, on the other hand, however much it may have opposed Taiwan's movement toward independence, aimed to uphold the credibility of its commitment to a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan conflict and to remain a reliable security partner to its regional allies. Despite their different objectives, China and the United States both had important interests at stake.

Meanwhile, following the dinner with Vice Foreign Minister Liu, Perry decided that China's missile tests required the United States to conduct a show of force. He suggested that a carrier battle group sail through the Taiwan Strait. But after consultations with NSC and State Department officials, who advocated a less provocative course, and with the chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Gen. John Shalikashvili, who preferred to keep the carrier groups farther away from China's coastal weaponry, Perry agreed to a more cautious plan. In a March 10 meeting in Perry's office, Director of Central Intelligence John Deutch, National Security Adviser Lake, Secretary of State Christopher, General Shalikashvili, and Perry agreed that the United States should send two carrier battle groups to the vicinity of Taiwan.⁷⁹ Perry then ordered the *Independence* battle group from Okinawa to the waters east of Taiwan and the *Nimitz* carrier group from the Persian Gulf to the Philippine Sea, which would allow it to join the *Independence* on short notice. Perry stated that China's insistence that its missile tests were routine was "baloney" and that they were meant to intimidate Taiwan. He said that the deployment of the two carriers would signal to the Chinese that "the United States has a national interest in the security and the stability in the western Pacific region. We have a powerful military force there to help us carry out our national interests." The State Department con-

78. Xinhua, March 9, 1996, in FBIS-China, March 9, 1996, p. 54.

79. Author interviews with Undersecretary of State Tarnoff, Assistant Secretary of State Lord, and NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger. See also Mann, *About Face*, pp. 336-337. Cf. Carter and Perry, *Preventive Defense*, pp. 96-99; and Patrick Tyler, *A Great Wall: Six Presidents and China* (New York: Public Affairs, 1999), p. 33.

curred, explaining that the carriers indicated U.S. interest in a peaceful outcome to mainland-Taiwan differences.⁸⁰

The United States was determined to protect its credibility in defending its interests, but China was determined to protect its territorial integrity. Indeed, Beijing feared that the U.S. carrier deployments and Washington's commitment to defend Taiwan might encourage Lee to take another step toward independence. The Chinese foreign ministry warned the United States that the deployment was unwise: "If this . . . is regarded by the Taiwan authorities as . . . supporting and conniving" with Taiwan's "splitting the motherland, that would be very dangerous." Foreign Minister Qian said that the United States, not China, was being "reckless."⁸¹

On March 13, China launched a fourth M-9 missile test. Then on March 15, it announced that from March 18 to March 25 the PLA would conduct joint air, ground, and naval exercises near Pingtan Island, within ten nautical miles of Taiwan-controlled islands. On the same day, a joint editorial warned that if Lee Teng-hui "insists on going his way and clings obstinately to promoting 'Taiwan independence' . . . or if foreign forces interfere in China's unification," then China would "make every effort to safeguard the motherland's reunification."⁸²

80. American Forces Press Service, March 11, 1996; Department of Defense news briefings, March 12, 14, and 16, 1996; Department of State daily press briefing, March 11, 1996; and author interviews with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger and other administration officials. Although the *Nimitz* was ordered to proceed to waters near Taiwan, it was also ordered to sail at a deliberate pace, never reaching the vicinity of Taiwan, but coming close to the Philippines. Author interview with U.S. official. Note also that Chinese leaders were aware of the deliberate pace of the *Nimitz*. Author interview with Chinese policy analysts.

81. Central People's Radio, March 12, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-50; and Xinhua, March 8, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-47. See also He Chong, "Amassing U.S. Warships Is an Act of Playing with Fire," *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, March 13, 1996, in FBIS-China, March 14, 1996, p. 3.

82. Agence France-Press, March 12, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-50; Central News Agency, March 13, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-50; China Broadcasting Corporation (Taipei), March 15, 1996, in FBIS-China, March 15, 1996, p. 92; Central News Agency, March 20, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-55; and editorial departments, *People's Daily* and *Liberation Army Daily*, "Safeguarding the Motherland's Unity Is the People's Army Bound Duty," March 15, 1996, in FBIS-China, March 18, 1996, pp. 78-79. China apparently did not carry out two of its planned missile tests. It did not target the closure zone of the east side of Taiwan. These tests would have been the most provocative, because firing missiles into this zone would have required China to send the missiles directly over Taiwan. Author interview with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger. See also Tyler, *A Great Wall*, p. 31, which notes that China readied "more than a dozen missiles" for firing. Chinese leaders did not carry out these tests, probably because they had determined that the prior tests had accomplished China's political objectives and/or because the U.S. show of force had made them more cautious. The final missile test reportedly carried a dummy warhead. China Broadcasting Corporation, March 13, 1996, in FBIS-China, March 13, 1996, p. 103.

Despite China's succession of exercises and missile tests, the Clinton administration remained confident that the PLA would not attack Taiwan. Having deployed the two carrier groups, the administration believed that its credibility was secure. Thus, with the exception of some verbal boasting about U.S. naval prowess, Washington did not engage in further escalation of military signaling.⁸³ The United States observed the remainder of China's exercises, Taiwan conducted its first presidential election, and neither war nor a Taiwan declaration of independence was forthcoming.

The Aftermath: Assessing Coercive versus Deterrence Diplomacy

The United States and China had two very different objectives in the 1995–96 confrontation over Taiwan: China used force to achieve tangible policy gains; the United States used force to achieve reputational gains. Because they sought different goals, both were successful, but each also paid a price for its success.

THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF CHINA'S USE OF FORCE

Following the confrontation, the United States exercised caution in its relations with Taiwan. Although it did not automatically deny visas to Taiwan officials, it issued only transit visas and limited the time and activities of Taiwan leaders in the United States. When Washington issued a transit visa for Taiwan Vice President Lien Chan in January 1997, it insisted that he agree not to conduct any public activities. When his spokesperson held a meeting with reporters at the Los Angeles airport, the White House required him to cut short his visit. When Lee Teng-hui requested a transit visa in September 1997, he was permitted to transit through Hawaii, but he was told not to schedule appointments with Hawaiian state officials. China appreciated Washington's efforts to con-

83. White House press briefing, March 12, 1996; and author interview with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger. Despite the lack of tension, the NSC worked with the Defense Department to prepare a number of scenarios in which U.S. forces would engage the PLA. Regarding U.S. bravado, Secretary of Defense Perry used China's ongoing exercises to remind Beijing that the United States had the "best damn navy in the world." See Rupert Cornwell, "Taiwan Fans Flames in the War of Words," *Independent* (London), March 20, 1996, p. 9; and Department of State press briefing, March 19, 1996. See also Mann, *About Face*, pp. 337–338. China displayed its own bravado after the dispatch of the carriers. See the interviews with PLA generals in *Ta Kung Pao*, March 13, 1996, in FBIS–China, 96-50. Also, on March 22 the Defense Department and China reported that each had taken the initiative in delaying a visit to the United States by Minister of Defense Chi Haotian. Department of Defense news release, ref. no. 149–96; and Xinhua, March 22, 1996, in FBIS–China, March 25, 1996, p. 3. See also Carter and Perry, *Preventive Defense*, p. 99.

trol Taiwan's independence activities.⁸⁴ Its silence on subsequent visas for Taiwan officials suggested satisfaction with U.S. sensitivity to Chinese interests. Washington signaled its caution in other ways as well. When Taiwan's leaders traveled to Washington in late March 1996 to purchase arms, the Clinton administration would not agree to the sales. Later, in mid-1997, during his Senate confirmation hearings, Stanley Roth, the Clinton administration's nominee for assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, acknowledged that the 1995 decision to grant Lee Teng-hui a visa was a "serious mistake."⁸⁵

Most important, China made gains in influencing U.S. policy toward Taiwan's status in world affairs and in bilateral U.S.-China relations.⁸⁶ As discussed, prior to March 1996, the Clinton administration had followed the practice of U.S. presidents since Richard Nixon by making only confidential assurances regarding U.S. opposition to Taiwan independence. It refused to change its declaratory policy on Taiwan's role in international politics, and insisted that negotiations over Taiwan be removed from the agenda of U.S.-China summits. The administration had also been reluctant to exchange state visits between U.S. and Chinese leaders.

Following the March 1996 confrontation, there was widespread recognition in the administration that the U.S.-China relationship had been damaged and needed to be repaired. Secretary of State Christopher's May 1996 speech on China policy reflected the administration's first effort to place the U.S.-China relationship and the Taiwan issue within a larger, comprehensive strategic framework. In addition, State Department officials now believed that a state-level U.S.-China summit could help to put the relationship on the right track. In July 1996, during his visit to Beijing, NSC Adviser Lake suggested that the two countries exchange summits. Then, in a November 1996 meeting in Manila, Clinton and Jiang agreed to exchange state visits in 1997 and 1998.⁸⁷

84. Interview with Richard Bush, director, American Institute in Taiwan; Central News Agency, January 15, 1996, in FBIS-China, 97-011; Central News Agency, January 8, 1996, in FBIS-China, 97-06; and Keith B. Richburg, "Taiwan Again an Issue in U.S.-China Relations," *Washington Post*, July 27, 1997, p. A24. China's appreciation of U.S. management of Taiwan's transit visas is reflected in He Jixiong, "Lee Teng-hui's 'Transit Diplomacy' Can Hardly Succeed," *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, September 4, 1997, in FBIS-China, 97-248. China's protest of the Lien transit visa is reported in Agence France-Presse, January 7, 1997, in FBIS-China, 97-04.

85. *Lien-Ho Pao*, March 27, 1996, in FBIS-China, April 11, 1996, pp. 88–89. On Roth's statement, see his nomination hearing before the Foreign Relations Committee, United States Senate, July 27, 1997.

86. This is the consensus among Chinese policy analysts. See, for example, Zhu, *Zhong Mei Guanxi de Fazhan ji qi Qushi*, pp. 195–196; and Tang, *Zhong Mei Qiju zhong de Taiwan Wenti*, pp. 447–448.

87. Author interviews with Undersecretary of State Tarnoff, Assistant Secretary of State Lord, NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger and other administration officials. See Warren Christopher,

Although pleased with the U.S. initiatives, China remained concerned about the Taiwan issue. From November 1996 until the Washington summit in October 1997, China publicly pressed the United States to strengthen its opposition to Taiwan independence. In a June 1997 meeting with Secretary of State Madeleine Albright to plan for the summit, Foreign Minister Qian insisted that Taiwan was the most important and sensitive issue in the U.S.-China relationship. In August he repeated this position to National Security Adviser Samuel Berger and warned that the issue had the potential to set back U.S.-China relations.⁸⁸

In contrast to the October 1995 negotiations over the Clinton-Jiang meeting in New York, in 1997 not only did the Clinton administration not insist that China drop its demands on U.S. Taiwan policy as a precondition of a summit meeting, but it also made a concession: Clinton assured Jiang that the United States did not support a two-China policy, Taiwan independence, or Taiwan membership in the UN or in other international organizations requiring sovereignty for membership. White House and State Department officials, including Secretary of State Albright, then publicly reaffirmed these assurances. Although China was unable to get the United States to agree to include Clinton's assurances in an official summit statement, this was nonetheless the first time that the U.S. government publicly and explicitly stated that it did not support Taiwan independence. For its part, the administration made important gains on arms proliferation, human rights, and other issues, but in a clear break with the past, it had negotiated and compromised on the Taiwan issue.⁸⁹

Taiwan remained on the negotiating agenda during the preparations for President Clinton's 1998 visit to Beijing. This time China wanted Clinton to make a public announcement in China of U.S. policy toward Taiwan independence. China's concessions included allowing the president to deliver an

"American Interests and the U.S.-China Relationship," speech presented to the Asia Society, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the National Committee on U.S.-China Relations, May 17, 1996. *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, July 8, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-133; and Central People's Radio, June 8, 1996, in FBIS-China, July 9, 1996, pp. 6. On the Clinton-Jiang meeting in Manila, see Xinhua, November 24, 1996, in FBIS-China, 96-228.

88. Xinhua, June 30, 1997, in FBIS-China, 97-181; and Xinhua, August 12, 1997, in FBIS-China, 97-224.

89. Background press briefing by senior administration officials, the White House, October 29, 1997; Department of State daily press briefing, October 31, 1997; and author interview with an administration official. Albright made her statement in her press conference at the Beijing International Club Hotel, April 30, 1998. Note that the president's August 1995 letter to Jiang Zemin stated that Washington "opposed" independence for Taiwan. By the time of the 1997 summit, the administration had shifted to "does not support" independence for Taiwan. See Mann, *About Face*, pp. 330, 355-358.

unedited speech on Chinese television and agreeing to a nuclear nontargeting pact. In return, the president attended an open forum in Shanghai in which he said that the United States did not support independence for Taiwan.⁹⁰ The summit did not produce a written U.S. statement on Taiwan or a fourth communiqué, or require change in U.S. behavior—and the president's statement of the “three no's” contained nothing new regarding actual U.S. policy toward Taiwan. Yet this was the first time that a U.S. president had publicly stated that the United States did not support Taiwan independence. In the aftermath of China's coercive diplomacy, the Taiwan issue had become an undisputed element in U.S.-China summit negotiations.

China was only partly successful regarding Taiwan. On the one hand, the DPP had fared poorly in the March 1996 presidential election and subsequently adopted a cautious mainland policy to increase its appeal to voters.⁹¹ In addition, immediately after the elections, Taiwan postponed plans for live-fire military exercises based on Mazu, an offshore island close to the mainland, and Lee Teng-hui indicated that he would limit his travel abroad. Having just been elected president, Lee explained that a “full agenda” would preclude any overseas visits for some time and that he had no plans to visit the United States. His foreign minister explained that Lee would only make trips that did not create trouble and that he did not want “to bring damage” to Taiwan.⁹²

On the other hand, Lee had won a significant presidential victory, capturing 52 percent of the popular vote.⁹³ Moreover, it was clear that Lee's postelection caution was only a tactical response to the U.S.-China confrontation and Chinese pressure. He soon restarted Taiwan's efforts to gain admittance to the UN, while his subordinates resumed transit diplomacy. In 1999 Lee sought a transit

90. See the president's remarks at the Shanghai Library, the White House, Office of the Press Secretary (Shanghai, People's Republic of China, June 30, 1998); and author interview with NSC Director of Asian Affairs Suettinger.

91. For a discussion of the outcome of the 1996 presidential election and shifting party policies on independence, see Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan*, pp. 175–177; and Yu-Shan Wu, “Taiwanese Elections and Cross-Strait Relations: Mainland Policy in Flux,” *Asian Survey*, Vol. 39, No. 4 (July–August 1990), pp. 565–587.

92. “Taiwan Postpones Wargames off China,” *New York Times*, April 3, 1996, p. A9; Central News Agency, April 3, 1996, in FBIS–China, April 3, 1996, p. 85; Central News Agency, March 28, 1996, in FBIS–China, March 28, 1996, pp. 92–93; and Agence France-Presse, March 19, 1996, in FBIS–China, March 19, 1996, p. 96. See also the text of Lee's interview with *Newsweek* magazine, in Central News Agency, May 13, 1996, in FBIS–China, May 14, 1996, pp. 70–71.

93. Rigger, *Politics in Taiwan*, pp. 175–177. Note that the outcome of the elections was likely influenced by the deployment of the two carriers, an implicit signal of U.S. support for Lee Teng-hui. This is a widespread view in China. See Wang Jisi, “Dui Hua Zhengce” [Policy toward China], in Wang, ed., *Gaochu Busheng Han: Lengzhang hou Meiguo Quanqiu Zhanlue he Shijie Diwei* [Lonely at the top: post-cold war U.S. global strategy and status] (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1999), p. 263.

visa from the United States. Then in July of that year, just before an important meeting in the cross-strait dialogue, he provocatively described the mainland-Taiwan relationship as a "special state-to-state relationship." His aides explained that: the state-to-state formulation had been under discussion for more than a year, Taiwan could no longer adhere to the one-China formula, and the reformulation signaled Taiwan's new status in its relationship with the mainland. Outraged by Lee's actions, Beijing canceled the upcoming meeting between senior leaders Wang Daohan and Koo Chen-fu, conducted extensive military exercises in Fujian, and repeatedly sent its military aircraft over the midline of the Taiwan Strait.⁹⁴

China's new relationship with the United States paid off, however. Concerned that Lee's statement could lead to renewed tension, Washington pressured him to modify his policy. In addition, the State Department indicated that it held Lee responsible for the suspended mainland-Taiwan dialogue and that it expected Taiwan to make the necessary clarification to allow the dialogue to resume. Immediately following Lee's announcement, President Clinton called Jiang Zemin to reassure him that the administration remained committed to the one-China policy, effectively aligning the United States with China in opposition to Taiwan's policy. The president also declared that he had postponed an arms sales mission to Taiwan by Defense Department officials to avoid exacerbating the situation. When Clinton met with Jiang in New Zealand in September 1999, he cautioned China not to use military force against Taiwan, but he also used the occasion to reassert U.S. support for its one-China policy and to say that Lee's statement "had made things more difficult for both China and the United States."⁹⁵

China's successful coercive diplomacy came at a price, however. Its missile tests increased concern about Chinese power in Southeast Asia. After the March 1996 confrontation, the region was forced to intensify its focus on "the rise of China" and its implications for regional stability. Surprisingly, however, this was a short-lived phenomenon. Some countries in Southeast Asia held

94. "Taiwan Foreign Minister Vows No Halt to UN Push," Reuters, June 10, 1996; Central News Agency, July 14, 1999, and *Chung-Yang Jih-Pao*, July 14, 1999, in FBIS-China, 1999-714; and Lien-Ho Pao, July 13, 1999, in FBIS-China, 1999-715. On the exercises, see Agence France-Presse, August 5, 1999, in FBIS-China, 1999-805; *Ta Kung Pao*, September 10, 1999, in FBIS-China, 1999-910; and Wen Wei Po, September 11, 1999, in FBIS-China, 1999-912. See also Department of State daily press briefing, August 3, 1999.

95. Department of State daily press briefings, July 13 and 14, 1999; testimony of Deputy Secretary of State Susan Shirk before the House International Relations Committee, Asia and Pacific Subcommittee, September 15, 1999; Philip Shenon, "U.S. Cancels Military Aides' Visit to Taiwan," *New York Times*, July 22, 1999, p. A8; and David E. Sanger, "Clinton and Jiang Heal Rift and Set New Trade Course," *New York Times*, September 12, 1999, p. A1.

Taiwan's diplomacy responsible for China's missile tests and for the ensuing regional tension. In addition, Beijing's currency policy following the onset of the Asian financial crisis in late 1997 earned widespread praise for China's responsible use of its financial power. Since then, although the region remains concerned about Chinese power in the evolving regional order, China's reputation is no worse than it was before the March confrontation.⁹⁶

China incurred a greater cost in its relationship with the United States. The confrontation exacerbated controversy in the United States over U.S. policy toward China and Taiwan and gave Taiwan's supporters a greater voice in U.S. policy debates. Having learned a lesson from China's reaction to Lee's visit to Cornell, members of Congress have become more reluctant to force the president's hand on potentially provocative issues. They have grown increasingly eager, however, to use the United States' China policy to score political points with the American electorate and weaken the White House. This has made it more difficult for the president to develop cooperative policies toward China and to manage the U.S. arms sales relationship with Taiwan.

The 1996 confrontation focused the Pentagon's attention on the U.S.-China conflict over Taiwan as the most likely source of U.S. involvement in a major war. Since then, planning for war with China has become a Pentagon priority, with implications for budgets and weapons acquisition. Pentagon and congressional interest in theater missile defense, including cooperation with Taiwan on this system, has to a significant degree been a reaction to China's March 1996 missile tests. In addition, during the confrontation, the Pentagon became alarmed at how little communication existed between Taiwan and American defense officials. Since then, it has sought greater coordination between the two militaries in preparation for U.S.-Taiwan cooperation in a war with China, with implications for U.S.-Taiwan military relations and for China's effort to isolate Taiwan.⁹⁷

96. See Yuen Foong Khong, "Singapore: A Time for Economic and Political Engagement," and Amitav Acharya, "Containment, Engagement, or Counter-Dominance," in Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross, eds., *Engaging China: The Management of an Emerging Power* (New York: Routledge, 1999), pp. 124–125, 138, 145; and Jusuf Wanandi, "ASEAN's China Strategy: Toward Deeper Engagement," *Survival*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (Autumn 1996), pp. 124–127.

97. For a discussion of U.S. missile defense cooperation with Taiwan, see Thomas J. Christensen, "Theater Missile Defense and Taiwan's Security," *Orbis*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (Winter 2000), pp. 79–90; and Michael O'Hanlon, "Star Wars Strikes Back," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 6 (November/ December 1999), p. 77. See also Department of Defense, "Report to Congress on Theater Missile Defense Architecture Options for the Asia-Pacific Region," May 4, 1999. For a discussion of the implications of the March confrontation for U.S.-Taiwan military relations, see Steven M. Goldstein and Randall Schriver, "An Uncertain Relationship: The United States, Taiwan, and the Taiwan Relations Act," *China Quarterly* (forthcoming).

Chinese leaders acknowledge the costs of their coercive diplomacy. But they believe that if they had adopted less provocative policies, they would have failed to get Washington's attention, independence sentiments in Taiwan would have remained high, and U.S. policy would have continued to encourage Taiwan independence. Shortly after the confrontation, Premier Li Peng gloated that Americans in and out of government "have come to realize the importance of China." He observed that this is "progress because before they miscalculated the situation. They thought that . . . China was no longer important. . . . But facts have negated these ideas." Chinese leaders accept the costs of coercive diplomacy as the necessary trade-off for the gains they made in influencing U.S. policy toward Taiwan and the resulting caution among the Taiwan electorate.⁹⁸

Chinese threats made the people of Taiwan less likely than ever to consider unification. The New Party has become irrelevant in Taiwan politics, and the victory of Chen Shui-bian (the DPP candidate in the 2000 presidential election) suggests Taiwan's growing resentment at mainland threats. Greater threat perception has also encouraged Taiwan to develop its political and military relationship with the United States. Thus China's ability to expand mainland-Taiwan economic relations and to develop the cross-strait dialogue on the basis of the one-China principle has been more difficult since March 1996. China, however, never predicated its Taiwan policy on the assumption that diplomacy could win the affection of the people of Taiwan or persuade Taiwan to reduce its ties with the United States. Rather, China expects that economic cooperation will make Taiwan increasingly dependent on the Chinese economy, deterrence will prevent independence in the short term, and diplomacy will help maintain stability over the long term (during which time Taiwan would be absorbed into the mainland). Hence, from China's perspective, coercive diplomacy did not hurt the prospects of unification, but it did reduce the momentum toward independence.

THE COSTS AND BENEFITS OF THE UNITED STATES' USE OF FORCE

The United States benefited from its deterrence diplomacy. It maintained its reputation for resisting Chinese use of force against Taiwan and buttressed the confidence of its allies that it was prepared to use force to ensure regional stability. Many Chinese leaders were surprised by the U.S. deployment of the two carrier groups, underscoring their miscalculation of U.S. resolve to resist Chi-

98. Author interview with Chinese policy analysts. Li Peng's comments are in the *Financial Times*, June 11, 1996, in FBIS-China, June 11, 1996, pp. 1-2.

nese use of force. This miscalculation affected not only U.S.-China relations, but also the outcome of the Taiwan presidential election. The U.S. response offset any impact China's use of force might have otherwise had on Beijing's effort to curb Taiwan's independence movement. Following the confrontation, uncertainty in China over U.S. intentions significantly diminished. Chinese policymakers must now assume that regardless of the source of a future crisis, including a formal Taiwan declaration of sovereign independence, the United States will almost certainly intervene militarily against Chinese use of force.⁹⁹

Greater Chinese certainty regarding U.S. intervention has injected an element of uncertainty into China's Taiwan policy. Now that the costs for China of military retaliation against Taiwan independence are better understood—military conflict with the United States and thus derailment of China's economic modernization program and reduced ability to manage its complex and troubling societal issues—Beijing has begun to more carefully consider retaliatory measures that would reduce the likelihood of U.S. intervention. A few well-informed Chinese even question China's commitment to retaliate militarily against Taiwan independence and suggest less costly options, including the political use of force.¹⁰⁰ Although all Chinese recognize that the alternatives to military retaliation are fraught with danger—including negative consequences for Chinese strategic credibility in Asia and for the government's domestic legitimacy—the fact that even a quiet and limited discussion exists underscores the success of U.S. use of force to support its deterrence posture.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, regional uncertainty over the U.S. role in Asia and concern over the “rise of China” have increased considerably. Together, they challenged the United States' commitment to defend its regional strategic partners. The United States' show of force in March 1996 bolstered its

99. Shi Yinhong, “Kunnan yu Xuance: Dui Taiwan Wenti de Sikao” [Difficulty and choice: thoughts on the Taiwan issue], *Zhanlue yu Guanli* [Strategy and management], No. 5 (1999), pp. 3–4; Ye Zicheng, “Zhang yu He, Jiaogei Taiwan Dangju Xuan [War and peace, give the choice to the Taiwan authorities], *Huanqiu Shibao* [Global times] (published weekly by the *People's Daily*), October 22, 1999, p. 14; and author interviews with Chinese policy analysts. Regarding the outcome of the election, this is the suggestion of Wang, “Dui Hua Zhengce,” p. 263. This analysis is challenged by reports that China's deployment of its strategic and attack submarines on March 13 compelled the United States to redeploy the carrier *Independence* an additional 100 miles from the Chinese coast. See Su Ge, *Meiguo dui Hua Zhengce yu Taiwan Wenti* (Beijing: Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, 1998), p. 750. Yet this report is at best unreliable, because it based on an uninformed U.S. Chinese-language newspaper account. See “Zhonggong Shisi suo He Qianting Chu Hai” [Fourteen Chinese communist nuclear submarines go to sea], *Shijie Ribao* [World daily] (New York), March 19, 1996, p. 1; Su, *Meiguo dui Hua Zhengce yu Taiwan Wenti*, p. 750, n. 4. U.S. officials uniformly disagree with this and similar reports.

100. This is the argument of Shi, “Kunnan yu Xuance,” p. 4; Ye, “Zhang yu He, Jiaogei Taiwan Dangju Xuan”; and author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

strategic position in the region and increased confidence in Washington's commitment to its Asian allies. This heightened confidence of course reflects many factors, including the strengthening of the U.S.-Japan security treaty. Nonetheless, the U.S. response to Chinese use of force made an important contribution to sustaining regional confidence in U.S. resolve.¹⁰¹

The costs for the United States of deterrence diplomacy mirrored China's costs for its coercive diplomacy. Although Washington achieved its immediate policy objectives, U.S. policy affected perceptions of the United States among China's political leadership. The United States' ability to threaten China without risk angered, frustrated, and embarrassed many Chinese. U.S. deterrence diplomacy reminded them of the humiliation they suffered under imperialist "gunboat diplomacy" during the nineteenth century. Some Chinese policymakers were especially angry insofar as the United States had been assured that China would not attack Taiwan. They therefore believed that the deployment of the aircraft carriers was not only unnecessary but was aimed at humiliating China. The net effect of U.S. policy was to establish a consensus among China's urban citizens and elites that the United States is China's "semi-enemy."¹⁰² Just as the United States' reaction to China's "missile diplomacy" strengthened opposition in the United States to U.S.-China cooperation, U.S. "gunboat diplomacy" hardened Chinese attitudes toward the United States, making it more difficult for Chinese policymakers to cooperate with U.S. foreign policy interests, even as they understand the imperative to avoid U.S.-China conflict.

U.S. deterrence policy also influenced the PLA. Chinese leaders believe that the deployment of the two carrier groups increased the U.S. commitment to defend Taiwan, tying U.S. credibility to Taiwan's security. They are now convinced that mainland-Taiwan conflict will compel the United States to inter-

101. Countries throughout the region adopted a cautious attitude toward the U.S. response, lest they alienate China on a sensitive issue in Chinese foreign policy. Their reaction reflected the common concern of allies of entrapment versus abandonment, and they chose to split the difference. They were concerned that although an increased U.S. commitment to the defense of Taiwan might enhance their security vis-à-vis China, it might also drag them into a conflict with China over Taiwan. See the discussion of entrapment and abandonment in Glenn H. Snyder, "The Security Dilemma in Alliance Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. 36, No. 4 (July 1984), pp. 461-495. Beneath the caution, there was evidence of general support for the U.S. response. Author interview with Secretary of State Lord; transcript of the March 12, 1996, Japanese foreign ministry press conference, in FBIS-East Asia, March 13, 1996, pp. 7-12; Nigel Holloway, "Strait Talking," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, March 21, 1996, p. 16; "Asians Laud Us Privately," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, April 4, 1996, p. 17; and *Strategic Survey, 1995/96* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1996), pp. 178-179.

102. Author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

vene.¹⁰³ Thus the PLA is planning for war against the United States, with implications both for the domestic politics of China's U.S. policy and for PLA hardware acquisitions. China's increased deployment of M-9 missiles in Fujian Province and its cruise missile program reflect its understanding that missiles may be the only weapon China can use to deter Taiwan independence, because it is the only Chinese conventional weapon that the United States cannot defeat.¹⁰⁴ China began negotiations to purchase Russian Sovremennyi destroyers in 1996 after the confrontation. One important mission for the destroyers and their Sunburn missiles is to give pause to the United States before deciding to intervene in any future confrontation in the Taiwan Strait. Although China's military modernization program might have led to such deployments anyway, the pace, quantity, and quality of China's deployments have been affected by the assumption that war with Taiwan means war with the United States.¹⁰⁵ U.S. policy has thus contributed to the development of a more capable and determined Chinese adversary.

Finally, while U.S. deterrence diplomacy reduced uncertainty in Beijing over U.S. policy toward Taiwan, it increased confidence in Taiwan that regardless of the source of conflict, the United States will intervene to protect it. Since 1979, U.S. policy toward mainland-Taiwan relations had been characterized by considerable ambiguity. Washington had opposed mainland use of force, but it had also implicitly opposed provocative Taiwan diplomacy that promoted sovereign independence. These two policies created ambiguity over how the United States would respond to mainland use of force against a Taiwan declaration of independence, which in turn promoted caution in both Beijing and Taipei. Although Washington retains considerable leverage over Taiwan, it is now more difficult for the United States to persuade Taiwan to forgo destabilizing diplomacy.

103. Shi, "Kunnan yu Xuance"; and author interviews with Chinese policy analysts.

104. Ibid. For discussions of post-March 1996 Chinese strategy and military acquisitions relevant to the Taiwan theater, see You Ji, *The Armed Forces of China* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), pp. 99–100; and Tai Ming Cheung, "Chinese Military Preparations against Taiwan over the Next Ten Years," and Bates Gill, "Chinese Military Hardware and Technology Acquisition of Concern to Taiwan," in James R. Lilley and Chuck Downs, eds., *Crisis in the Taiwan Strait* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1997).

105. On the Sovremennyi destroyer, see Interfax, April 18, 1997, in FBIS–Central Eurasia, 97-108; and He Chong, "China's Purchase of Russian-Made Sovremennyi-Class Destroyer Attracts Attention," *Zhongguo Tongxun She*, February 12, 2000, in FBIS–China, 2000-212. For a discussion of China's military modernization program and its implications for the Taiwan Strait, see Bates Gill and Michael O'Hanlon, "China's Hollow Military," *National Interest*, No. 56 (Summer 1999) pp. 55–62; and Larry M. Wortzel, *The Chinese Armed Forces in the Twenty-first Century* (Carlisle, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 1999).

The benefits of Washington's policy outweighed the costs, however. The United States increased both Chinese caution and regional confidence in its presence in Asia. On the other hand, the costs of inaction could have been very high, including greater Chinese militancy against Taiwan and less cooperation from the United States' Asian security partners. At stake was the post-Cold War regional security order. Administration officials also believed that the deployment of the two carrier groups was the minimum display of force that would have succeeded in demonstrating U.S. resolve. Just as China had to use missile tests to get the attention of U.S. leaders, Washington's response had to get the attention of Chinese leaders as well as leaders throughout Asia. In the context of China's 1996 coercive diplomacy, U.S. deterrence diplomacy was necessary and justified the costs.

Conclusion: The Lessons of 1995–96

U.S. policy drift in the Clinton administration and the March 1996 U.S.-China confrontation reflected White House susceptibility to congressional pressure, which in turn reflected Taiwan lobbying on behalf of its independence diplomacy. Administration policymakers understood that U.S. interests lay in the rejection of a visa for Lee Teng-hui, and they resisted further change in U.S. policy toward Taiwan, but they were unable to sway the president's thinking. Following the confrontation, the White House readily returned U.S. policy to the status quo of 1994, which suggests that the intervening U.S.-China confrontation, including the U.S. show of force, was unnecessary and avoidable. The missed opportunity and the resultant costs are thus all the more deplorable.

The source of instability in U.S.-China-Taiwan relations was Taiwan's revisionism and its effect on U.S. policy. After coming to power, Lee Teng-hui sought a new international role for Taiwan that was destined to provoke the mainland and cause U.S.-China friction. He was also determined to use Taiwan's relationship with the United States to further his goals. In responding to Lee's efforts, the Clinton administration not only deviated from its understanding with Beijing regarding U.S.-Taiwan relations, but also implicitly abetted Taiwan's attempt to move the United States toward abandoning its one-China policy and establish for itself an independent status in international politics.

Beijing used coercive diplomacy in an attempt to compel Taiwan to curtail its independence activities and to accept China's position that Taiwan is under Chinese sovereignty. Beijing also adopted coercive diplomacy to end the trend in President Clinton's Taiwan policy and compel him to return to the Taiwan

policy of his predecessors. Beijing understood that domestic politics was the source of U.S. policy change, including the 1992 F-16 sale, the 1994 Taiwan policy review, and the 1995 decision to issue a visa to Lee Teng-hui. But it was the policy, rather than its sources, that mattered to China. The Chinese used force to persuade the Clinton administration that appeasement of the “Taiwan lobby” was not risk free and to compel it to incur the domestic costs of returning to the status quo ante in U.S. policy toward Taiwan. The 1997 and 1998 U.S.-China summits and the administration’s statements on Taiwan—the “three no’s”—reflected the changes in U.S. policy.

The 1996 Taiwan Strait confrontation further reveals how easy it can be for the United States and China to stumble into a collision. The United States is committed to the defense of Taiwan, but it found itself in a confrontation with China that originated over a conflict of interest peripheral to U.S. security—the international legal status of Taiwan. The United States and China will deal with the Taiwan issue well into this century. If they are to avoid similar confrontations, Washington cannot permit American ideological support for Taiwan’s democracy or Taiwan’s democratic politics to undermine the politics of war and peace between the United States and China.¹⁰⁶ Nor can the United States allow its China policy to be determined by Taiwan’s diplomacy. To avoid policy drift, future administrations will have to make policy that is in the interest of the United States, not Taiwan.

106. Proving a negative is difficult, yet it is clear that the origins of the 1996 confrontation lay in Taiwan lobbying of Congress and congressional pressure on the president. It is also important to stress that Taiwan’s lobby did not reflect the pressure of Taiwan’s democracy, which is a constant in U.S.-Taiwan relations. Taiwan’s electorate has been cautious regarding independence diplomacy and the risk of war with the mainland. Lee Teng-hui was not responding to public opinion, but rather leading it, and Chen Shui-bian had to abandon his support for independence to win the presidency in 2000, suggesting that a confrontation over Taiwan was not inevitable. This further suggests that Taiwan public opinion can be influenced by cautious U.S. policy toward Taiwan. On DPP policy and the politics of the 2000 campaign, including public attitudes toward Taiwan independence, see Wu, “Taiwanese Elections and Cross-Strait Relations”; and Shelly Rigger, “Taiwan Rides the Democratic Dragon,” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 2000), pp. 107–118.