

# The Implications of U.S. Nuclear Strategy for Taiwan's Security

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This article explores the long-term impacts of the current U.S. nuclear strategy on China and Taiwan. Instead of traditional concept of “nuclear deterrence”, the author develops a framework for analysis of the U.S. nuclear strategy based on the *Nuclear Posture Review 2002*, which will determine U.S. nuclear forces planning over the next five to ten years. This nuclear strategy, which is composed of the offence strike systems, missile defense systems, and refined infrastructure, does

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provide the United States a wide spectrum of military options and greater operational flexibility. Yet it may also incur nuclear risks that result from arms race, crisis instability, and preemption for both China and the United States.

These nuclear risks would have negative implications for Taiwan's national security insofar as Taiwan remains a flashpoint between China and the United States. While the Nuclear Posture Review 2002 and the intensification of U.S.-Taiwan military cooperation would lead China to undertake a more robust defense policy, Taiwan's security would be endangered for lack of clear and firm defense commitment from the United States. The author explains why the U.S. policy of "strategic ambiguity" is a strategic fallacy. A war or even a nuclear war across the Taiwan Strait would be more successfully prevented by a policy of "strategic clarity."

**Key words:** Taiwan's security, triangular relations, strategic ambiguity, NPR, nuclear strategy

## I. Introduction

A nuclear war between the United States and the People's Republic of China (PRC) for the sake of Taiwan seems to go beyond any thinkable war scenario in the future. Abram N. Shulsky (2000: 52) asserts that nuclear deterrence will have “little role to play” in future conflicts over Taiwan unless Sino-U.S. relations deteriorate to Cold War-like levels. We can certainly argue that a nuclear exchange between China and the United States is very unlikely, but it would be naïve and even dangerous to ignore this issue totally, because any war between nuclear powers could theoretically lead to nuclear war. In reality it is also not difficult to outline several convincing scenarios for the outbreak of a nuclear war. The Nuclear Posture Review 2002 (hereinafter NPR) has already identified two contingencies, in which the United States may use nuclear weapons against China in a military conflict over the status of Taiwan.

Indeed, nuclear war could break out due to regime change, escalation spirals, unauthorized attacks, misperception and miscalculation or even the irrationality of state leaders. To some extent these nuclear risks can be incurred from the triangular relations between Taiwan, the United States, and China. With respect to conflict modalities in the Taiwan Strait, two prominent American strategists recently asked, “Can any one be confident that Beijing would not dream of using a nuclear weapon against the Seventh Fleet? And then what? (Betts and Christensen, 2000/2001: 27)” Indeed, the Chinese naval strategy is to deter U.S. intervention in the Taiwan Strait by attacking U.S. aircraft carriers in the Pacific with the option of nuclear usage in the strategic framework known as “limited deterrence” (Dodge, 2005: 419-422).

More recently a Chinese general Zhu Chenghu has warned that *China might respond with nuclear weapons against the U.S. if Washington attacks his*

*country over the status of Taiwan.*<sup>1</sup> Bruce Blair (2005: 22) noted that Zhu's version of a preemptive nuclear attack would arguably increase the danger of full-scale nuclear war erupting in the event of a conflict over Taiwan. In the end, a nuclear war is not inevitable if states could establish and maintain robust nuclear forces, improve weapon's safety, make clear and firm commitments, a nuclear catastrophe is most likely to be prevented.

Under the guidance of the NPR 2002, the United States has taken a more robust nuclear strategy to meet the future threats and uncertainties, while China has been modernizing its strategic forces over a decade in order to assert and expand its influence in East Asia that merits its cumulative economic power. Should any war occur between the United States and China, Taiwan would most likely be a flashpoint for an outbreak of war. The relations between China and Taiwan have been historically complex, structurally unstable and essentially explosive. In addition, the trend that the Taiwanese identity has been increasing recently along the successful democratic process since late 1980s will make an aspiration for a formal statehood more likely. In the long term, Washington and Beijing must come to terms with the development one way or another. Thus, the central question in this strategic context will be: how can the United States maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait without deluding China into invading Taiwan. In short, how can the United States prevent a war (or even a nuclear war) with China over Taiwan in the future?

This article examines one important aspect of this question, the implications of the new U.S. nuclear strategy for the triangle relationship between the United States, China, and Taiwan. The article unfolds as follows.

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1. Major General Zhu said literally, "If the Americans draw their missiles and position-guided ammunition onto the target zone on China's territory, I think we will have to respond with nuclear weapons." (BBC, 2005/07/15).

First, I will develop a framework for analysis of future nuclear strategy. The distinction between the NPR and traditional nuclear deterrence will be made. Second, the framework developed in this article will be applied to analyze the new U.S. nuclear strategy—based on NPR 2002. The advantages and disadvantages of the NPR and its indications to China are explored. Third, the nuclear risks that may result from the new strategy will be explored in the strategic context across the Taiwan Strait. The question of deterrence of a rising China is raised and discussed. Because any war between China and U.S. in the Taiwan Strait *could possibly* lead to a nuclear war, it is imperatively necessary to analyze the U.S. policy of “strategic ambiguity” for war prevention and explain why it is a strategic fallacy and therefore counterproductive to Taiwan’s national security. The overall evaluation of the NPR suggests that it would incur more risks than serve as a useful hedge against China’s military actions. And if the United States cannot adopt a policy of “strategic clarity” towards both sides of the Taiwan Strait, this new strategy would go from bad to worse for Taiwan’s security.

## II. Nuclear Posture Review: A new Framework for Future Nuclear Strategy

The thought of how to prevent a war is as old as war itself. The causal mechanism between war and weapons has been ambiguous, because the role of weapon is always paradoxical. As Osgood and Tucker (1967: 32) points out, weapons are both the primary instrument of order and the primary source of threat to security. In conventional world, weapons are more the source of threat; in nuclear world, nuclear weapons are more the source of peace preserved by the threat of force. Ideally, all wars, whether nuclear or conventional, should be

abolished, because any war *could* possibly lead to a nuclear war. Since a total abolishment of armament in international anarchy is unlikely, deterrence by means of threatening use of force is indispensable for the purpose of avoiding a war. This is the strategy of nuclear deterrence during the Cold War.

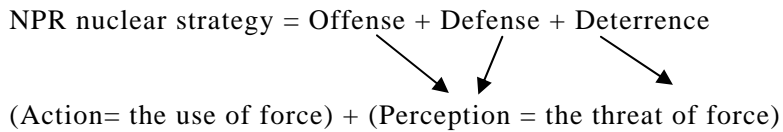
With the end of the Cold War, many scholars assert that we now enter the second nuclear age (Iklé, 1996; Payne, 1996; Bracken, 2003; Freedman, 2003: 436-457). The label “second nuclear age” was first coined by Colin Gray to describe the emerging security environment in the post-Cold War period (Payne, 1996: 9). Payne (1996: 14) characterizes second nuclear age as an international environment fraught with increasing incidence of regional challenges, and greater access by regional powers to Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The second nuclear age has been generally used to describe the strategic environment after nuclear bipolarity dominated by the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Bracken (2003: 399) stated that the defining feature of second nuclear age is the spread of nuclear weapons to countries for reasons having nothing to do with the first nuclear age, namely the Soviet-American confrontation during the Cold War. Moreover, the second nuclear age is actually a multiple-player game, its nuclear programs are rooted in nationalism and there are tremendous differences in strategic culture.

Compared to the first nuclear age lasted until 1990, the second nuclear age is, in my view, generally characterized by the fact that the numbers of international nuclear actors are expanding, and they are not homogeneous, their intentions not clear, and their capabilities not calculable. Since nuclear threats are not so obvious and rationally manageable than before, nuclear deterrence is to be integrated into, rather than replaced, by the new strategic framework developed and adopted in this article as the future nuclear strategy.

In this article, I develop a framework so that we can better understand the

*NPR 2002* and its advantages and inherent risks. In comparison with the old nuclear strategy restricted almost exclusively to nuclear deterrence, I develop a framework for analysis of the nuclear strategy composed of *offence, defense and deterrence*. *This strategic design is aimed at preventing a war in a more efficient and flexible way*. This nuclear strategy embedded in *NPR* is actually a response to a new strategic environment, in which states have to face multiple potential opponents, sources of conflict and unpredicted security risks. Both the disintegration of Soviet Union and the rise of China have led to a paradigm change in strategic thinking after the end of the Cold War. The security risks from “rouge states” and terrorism are deeply imbedded in this context.

In this new strategic environment, deterrence remains important and essential, but it is only one component of the *NPR*. More substantially, deterrence is here augmented both by offence if preventive strikes are necessary for taking military initiatives and by defense in ensuing hostile attacks if deterrence fails. The concept of defense value— so argued Glenn Snyder (1975: 3-4)—is broader than the mere capacity to hold territory, which may be termed “denial capability”. Defense value is denial capability plus capacity to alleviate war damage. In this regard, a good defense can provide some deterrence effects in ways that the damages inflicted by enemy are expected to be insignificant. In sum, the *NPR 2002* is a combination of action by use of force (offence and defense) and perception by threat of force (deterrence). In this sense, this strategy is both a proactive and reactive strategic design. The *NPR* strategy can be anatomically divided into three parts as below:



**Fig. 1. Analytic Framework of the U.S. Nuclear Strategy based on NPR 2002**

**Source:** author.

Like nuclear deterrence, this new strategic design is aimed at preventing a war, but it is designed to work in a more flexible and efficient way. Thus the main difference between deterrence and this NPR strategy lies not in their political goal, but in their operational components and systems. A comparison of deterrence and the new strategy is drawn in order to illustrate the clear distinction.

**Table 1 Comparison between Traditional Deterrence and New NPR Strategy**

	<b>Deterrence</b>	<b>NPR Strategy</b>
<b>Goal</b>	Prevention of war	Prevention of war
<b>Components</b>	Threat of massive nuclear retaliation	Synergy of offense, defense and deterrence
<b>Operational systems</b>	Massive nuclear forces for retaliation	Offensive strike systems (nuclear and non-nuclear), missile defense systems and robust nuclear force for retaliation

**Source:** author.

While traditional deterrence relies exclusively on large amount of nuclear weapons for the retaliation after being attacked, the NPR nuclear strategy



requires additional nuclear/non-nuclear weapons for military actions before being attacked and missile defense systems to neutralize missile attacks.<sup>2</sup> In so doing, the deterrent effects will be increased. From strategic point of view, the NPR has many advantages. First, the addition of non-nuclear strike forces to nuclear forces will provide offensive deterrent capability, because the credibility of military action will be obviously increased through the actual use of conventional weapons. It also means that the dependence of large nuclear arsenal will be decreased. Second, the missile defense will reduce the enemy's capability to inflict casualties that could be a nuclear catastrophe to national security. Furthermore, the defense element of this nuclear strategy, if successful, can relieve the deterrent side from dependence on the rationality of the enemy, which is indispensable in traditional deterrence thinking. Taken together, this strategy can extend the strategic space in exploiting its nuclear and conventional advantages for purposes of dissuasion, deterrence and defeat of aggression for all eventualities.

On the other hand, the new triad strategy may also incur security risks. This policy may change the power juxtaposition of major nuclear states negatively by consequent security dilemma in form of arms race and crisis instability.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, NPR strategy will undermine the international nuclear non-proliferation regime such as Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). It may also erode the international norms regarding to the use of nuclear weapons including

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2. On January 2, 2002 the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense Organization (BMDO) was renamed Missile Defense Agency (MDA) to avoid the confusing usage of different kinds of missile defense concepts in which National Missile Defense (NMD) and Theatre Missile Defense (TMD) are most discussed in literature.

3. Crisis instability is defined as a measure of country's incentive to preempt in a crisis. For more details see James J. Wirtz (2000: 137-165).

No-first use principle (NFU) and negative security assurance (NSA). In short, the nuclear strategy is a sword with two blades. It can enhance the war capability and increase operational flexibility; however, it may be sources of risk and uncertainty in the strategic relations between nuclear powers. How can the *NPR* tilt the strategic balance between the nuclear powers and possibly contribute to regional insecurity? The current *NPR* towards China is a good example for us to illuminate this research question. I begin with examining *NPR* with the framework developed above.

### III. U.S. Nuclear Strategy and China: Offence, Defense, and Deterrence

Under the administration of George W. Bush, the Pentagon has undertaken a series of fundamental adjustments and renovations in its defense planning in response to a new strategic environment after the end of the Cold War. Among them, the *NPR*—submitted to Congress on December 31, 2001—is a new direction for American nuclear forces over the next five to ten years. From the viewpoint of Chinese military, this new nuclear posture will have not only negative effect on strategic stability between China and U.S. but also on China's security environment (Roberts, 2004; Dunn et al., 2006: 27).

Although the key characters of nuclear weapons have not ever changed since 1945; the strategic environment in the second nuclear age has fundamentally changed. Hence, the United States needs a more flexible nuclear strategy. Based on principles laid down for U.S. defense planning in the *Quadrennial Defense Review 2001*, the *NPR* shifts defense planning for U.S. strategic forces from the threat-based approach to a capabilities-based approach. This new approach should provide, over the next five to ten years, a credible

deterrent at the lowest level of nuclear weapons consistent with U.S. and allied security (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 2). Preparation of the NPR also involved the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)—the civilian government agency charged with development and oversight of U.S. nuclear weapons (Preez, 2002: 67). With regard to the future role of U.S. nuclear weapons, the NPR puts it unequivocally as follows (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 3):

Nuclear weapons play a critical role in the defense capabilities of the United States, its allies, friends. They provide credible military options to deter a wild range of threat, including WMD and large-scale conventional military force. These nuclear capabilities possess unique properties that give the United States options to hold at risk classes of targets that are important to achieve strategic and political objectives. *Nuclear attack options that vary in scale, scope, and purpose will complement other military capabilities* (emphasis added).

The NPR creates a new Triad composed of offensive strike system (nuclear and non-nuclear), defenses (both active and passive) and a revitalized defense infrastructure that will provide new capabilities in a timely fashion to meet emerging threats (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 1). The NPR nuclear doctrine is to offer the President a wide range of policy options if a nuclear war occurs. I shall analyze this strategy in the framework developed above and its indications to China.

## (I) Offence

The best defense is offence. The first component of NPR strategy reflects this old military axiom. In plain words, “attack them before they attack us” is the underlying rationale of this strategy. Under the NPR, the Cold War triad of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), submarine-launched ballistic missiles

(SLBM) and long-range nuclear-armed bomber will be integrated into an offensive component of the NPR. Hence, this component will enhance the credibility of the offensive defense (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 2). In this regard, a clear distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons no longer exists. Nuclear warheads now become a weapon of *choice* in the NPR, not a weapon of *the last resort*. This also implies that a nuclear war on *operational* level can be successively realized and duly controlled.

To settle the requirements for nuclear strike capabilities, the NPR differentiates three kinds of contingencies, in which the United States must prepare for the use of nuclear weapons. These contingencies can be categorized as *immediate*, *potential* and *unexpected*. The NPR underlines China's strategic forces that "due to the combination of China's still developing strategic objectives and its ongoing modernization of its nuclear and non nuclear forces, China is a country that could be involved in an immediate and potential contingency" (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 5).

Furthermore, "a military confrontation over the status of Taiwan" is one of the scenarios that could lead the United States to use nuclear weapons against China (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 5). As NPR was nearing completion, the Pentagon wrote a new war plan OPLAN (Operations Plan) 5077 for defending Taiwan against a Chinese attack. This war plan was then revised in May 2006, known as Pacific Command OPLAN 5066-04, to include maritime interception operation in the Taiwan Strait, attacks on the target of Chinese mainland and even the potential use of U.S. nuclear weapons (Arkin, 2006; Kristensen et al., 2006: 19). Moreover, Bolkcom et al. (2006: 18-19) examines four scenarios, in which U.S. conventional and nuclear forces might be involved in a war with China: 1) Chinese Special Forces infiltration of Taiwan 2) Maritime conflict between China and Taiwan 3) Full scale, combined Chinese attack on Taiwan 4)

Preemptive attack by Taiwan on Chinese forces.

In fact, China has been a potential target of U.S. nuclear war plan since January 1998 after a hiatus of 20 years (Blair, 2005: 16). The occasion could be an on-going conventional conflict involving China or even a pre-emptive nuclear attack on that country (Butfoy, 2002: 152). Beijing has been critical of this kind of statements in NPR, *because this document for the first time discusses the conceivable use of nuclear weapons by the United States in the event that America is drawn into any future military conflict between Taiwan and China* (emphasis added) (Ward, 2003: 41). The warning of the PLA general Zhu about the Chinese use of nuclear weapons sends a clear signal to Washington that the nuclear use over Taiwan is not a privilege of the United States.

The option of pre-emptive use of nuclear weapons is deeply embedded in the offence component, because any offensive strike system (nuclear or conventional) includes a pre-emptive military option.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the NPR was followed in September 2002 by the release of the related *National Security Strategy* (NSS) of the United States. This document declares that the United States “cannot longer solely rely on reactive posture” and would “not hesitate to act alone” and “preemptively” against other states that it perceives as hostile given the “inability to deter a potential attacker (The Whitehouse, 2002).” Taken together, *the use of nuclear weapons is no longer a taboo, but a military option; in the NSS, military pre-emption is no longer an option, but a military doctrine.*

The nuclear counter-force capabilities in NPR, especially the Earth Penetration Weapons (EPWs) could destroy harden and deeply buried targets (HDBTs) that could be used to protect WMD, C3 systems and other strategic

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4. More details on U.S. preemptive military strategy, see Keller and Mitchell (2006).

assets. China is suspect of having a number of HDBTs capable of protecting his leaderships and strategic capabilities, therefore is a potential target of U.S. nuclear planning. For instance, the U.S. offensive capabilities could neutralize the cave-based DF-4 missiles. And depressed-trajectory, silo-busting SLBMs can be more effective against any DF-5 missiles silos that are placed on heightened alert (McDonough, 2006: 77). Indeed, the shift of American SLBM forces to the Pacific seems to indicate renewed interests in such targeting scenarios. The “primary goal of this shift is to increase coverage of targets in China” (Smith, 2006: 3; McDonough, 2006: 77).<sup>5</sup>

Since a military offensive strike cannot guarantee the total destruction of enemy’s war potential, especially ballistic missiles armed with biological, chemical or even nuclear warheads. For this reason, the missile defense system seems be the best answer to the challenges of ballistic missile threats from adversaries. In this regard, missile defense constitutes a central component of the modern nuclear strategy of the United States.

## ( II ) Defense

Nuclear weapons occupy the top of the pyramid of threats. Until now nuclear-armed ballistic missiles remain the most fearsome weapon systems ever devised. According to Glenn Snyder (1975: 3-4), defense reduces the enemy’s capability to damage or deprive us; the defense value of military forces is their effect in mitigating the adverse consequences for us of possible enemy moves.

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5. According to Smith (2006), the United States, until 2002, maintained 10 SSBNs in the Atlantic, and four in the Pacific. Toady there are nine in the Pacific and five in the Atlantic. By 2008, the fleet of 14 SSBNs will share 336 Trident II 5 SLBM armed with 2,000 nuclear warheads. These ballistic missiles deliver their deadly weapons faster than land-or air-launched missiles.

Since the German invention and employment of V2 (*Vergeltungswaffen*, weapons for retaliation) missiles against England near the end of World War II, there are still no effective defense measures to counter ballistic missile threats. Although strategic environment since the end of nuclear bipolarity has fundamentally changed, a central question remains: can the defense enjoy more military advantages over the offence without incurring a security dilemma in form of an arms race? If not, why?

On this point, the NPR gives a clear answer. It indicates that the mission for missile defense is to protect the United States, its deployed forces overseas, and his allies and friends against ballistic missile attack. An effective missile defense system will be able to intercept ballistic missile of any range in all phase of their flight. The United States pursues effective defenses against attacks by “small numbers of longer range as well as defenses against attacks by larger numbers of short- and medium-range missile” (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 6-7). Although this missile defense system cannot be perfect, yet it can still make a “significant contribution to security by enhancing deterrence and saving lives if deterrence falls” (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 6-7).

The new strategic environment in post-Cold War era gives a decisive impulse to the U.S. for reactivating its missile defense system. In 1972, when ABM Treaty was signed, only two nations outside the geographic boundaries of NATO and the Warsaw Pact had operational missile—Israel and China. At the present, it grows to sixteen. Eight of these nations are known to have nuclear weapons (Arms Control Association, 2002). According to the Rumsfeld Report 1998, the emerging intercontinental-range ballistic missile threat to the United States appears to be real, acute, and imminent. The threat to the United States posed by emerging missile capabilities is broader, more mature and evolving more rapidly (Federation of American Scientists, 1998: 3-4, 19-20). Shortly

after the release of this report, North Korea launched a three-stage Taepo Dong missile over Japan. This surprise launch seemed to convince the U.S. intelligence community and confirmed the assessment of his report. A new release of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) made the following assessment: “Most Intelligence Community agencies project that before 2015 the United States most likely will face ICBM threats from North Korea and Iran, and possibly from Iraq, in addition to the longstanding missile forces of Russia and China” (Federation of American Scientists, 2001). For the above reasons, President Bill Clinton signed the *Missile Defense Act of 1999* which states: “It is the policy of the United States to deploy as soon as is technologically possible an effective National Missile Defense System capable of defending the territory of the United States against limited ballistic missile attack (whether accidental, unauthorized, or deliberate)” (Center for Defense Information, 1999).

Since the U.S. missile defense system aimed at defending “small numbers of longer range as well as defenses against attacks by larger numbers of short- and medium-range missile,” this defense system furthermore “can bring into better balance U.S. stakes and risks in a regional confrontation” (GlobalSecurity.org., 2002: 4-7). According to Robert Powell’s observation, missile defense can make U.S. more resolute. As a result, “the United States become more likely to oppose a nuclear adversary and more willing to tolerate a higher risk if other state does not back down” (Powell, 2003: 106-109). In this case, missile defense poses a larger and more immediate security challenge to China. Stephen Hard argued as follows (Glaser and Fetter, 2001: 62):

[T]he United States should have no need to deploy an NMD system against China. But if China continues to insist that it is free to use force against Taiwan, continues to deploy more ballistic missiles aimed at Taiwan and the United States, and continues to threaten to use those missiles against both, then the United States may simply have no choice.



Among the five established nuclear power, the United Kingdom and France are U.S. alliance partner; Russia possessed enough nuclear warheads to penetrate U.S. missile defense system. The only great power that concerns the U.S. nuclear strategy most is the People's Republic of China.

### ( III ) Deterrence

The deterrence of China is one of the most important tasks for the whole U.S. deterrent posture in the Western Pacific. The United States has been extending its security commitments to Japan, South Korea, to some extent also to Taiwan. In the NPR, the clear indications of China as potential target of U.S. nuclear weapons are deliberate efforts of the United States to deter China from attacking Taiwan. Thomas Schelling (1966: 7-11) makes a clear difference between conventional weapons and atomic weapons: this is the use of force and threat of force. Nuclear deterrence is essentially to make a threat in order to prevent an adversary from doing something undesirable by fear of punishment with retaliation. If a nuclear threat is successful and an adversary is deterred, nuclear weapons will not be used.

To make such a nuclear threat credible, two elements are indispensable: *capability* and *resolve*. To begin with nuclear capability, the nuclear force of the United States is second to none among all nuclear powers. According to *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientist* published in January 2007, the United States possesses around 5,736 nuclear warheads, including 1,050 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), 2,016 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), 1,995 bomber weapons, and 500 nonstrategic warheads. Further, there are 4,230 intact warheads are retained in reserved or inactive stockpiles (The Bulletin Online, 2007b). In comparison, Russia owns 5,670 nuclear warheads (The Bulletin

Online, 2007a) and China has only 200 (The Bulletin Online, 2006). This is a nuclear capability no other country matches or even comes close to matching. This implies that the United States could theoretically wipe out all Russian and Chinese nuclear warheads in a disarming first strike.

Under the NPR 2002 the emphasis of nuclear offensive strike systems will make deterrence more credible as many assume that offensive doctrines are best for making threat (Posen, 2004: 35). Furthermore, offence system will work not in isolation; it will work in conjunction with missile defense system and a revitalized defense infrastructure that will respond the future threats. This new triad in the NPR will provide a greater flexibility and capability in “supporting an effective deterrence strategy.” More precisely, this combination of offence, defense and new defense infrastructure can “provide the range of options needed to pose a credible deterrent to adversaries whose values and calculations of risk and of gain and loss may be very different form and more difficult to discern than those of past adversaries” (GlobalSecurity. org., 2002: 3). In this sense, the rationale and design in NPR provide the U.S. a very powerful deterrence effect towards China.

The other key factor of deterrence is the resolve, because deterrence relies on the punishment with retaliation in the future. To make one’s resolve work in a deterrent situation is not easy, because resolve has more with perception and value systems to do than with numerical capability. The salient part of this strategy is to communicate intentions and influence perceptions between adversaries. Thomas Schelling (1960: 187) indicates: “As a rule, one must threaten, that he *will* act and not he *may* act, if the threat fails. To say that one may be act is to say one *may not*, and to say this is to confess that one has kept the power of decision—that one is not committed” (emphasis in original).

More technically, nuclear capability here in numerical terms is a “property

concept,” which can be defined and measured in numbers without reference to other countries. These assets are in a sense possessed by and under control of the country to which they belong. In contrast to such properties, resolve belongs to “relational concepts” that cannot be determined by property alone but by perception and value systems of other countries (Baldwin, 1985: 22-24).

#### (IV) Security Commitment and Extended Deterrence

The best policy to demonstrate resolve in military relations between states is to make security commitment within alliance formation such as U.S. military alliance with Japan and South Korea. The purpose of the military commitment is to tie oneself with his allies in a way that one can hardly retreat in contingencies in order to make his allies and adversaries believe his resolve to fight a war (*burning bridges*), if necessary, a nuclear war. If commitments can be easily escaped, they would not be credible and reliable. In term of nuclear strategy, it is more important to make extended commitment in alliance with extended deterrence. Without nuclear weapons, extended deterrence could be more difficult, because attacks on the territories of one’s homeland are quite different as attacks on allies.

However, as Charles Glaser and Fetter (2001: 69) observe, U.S. interests in regional conflicts generally “are not truly vital, making it hard to justify pursuing foreign policies that increase the probabilities of attacks with weapons of mass destruction against U.S. cities.” The concept of *homeland sanctuaries* allows the major nuclear powers to inflict damage on each other’s allies but not each other (Freedman, 2003: 402). Nuclear weapons are more important in extended deterrence if protector and its allies face a common nuclear opponent. In other words, nuclear commitment is one of the requirements for an extended

deterrence (Lübckemeier, 1989: 32). Daniel Gouré (2002/3: 22-24) argues that extended deterrence may be even more important today than it was during the Cold War lest the potential aggressor would resort to nuclear weapons in regional conflicts and the U.S. allies and friends would be tempted to pursue nuclear options.

The NPR emphasize that nuclear weapons play a critical role in the defense capabilities of the United States, its allies, friends. The U.S. *National Security Strategy* 2002 (The Whitehouse, 2002: 32) continues to underline the importance of international security commitment and articulate four goals in this new strategy: assuring friends and allies; dissuading future military competition; deterring threats and coercion against U.S. interests; and defeating any adversary decisively if deterrence fails.

In this regard, the United States is committed to use nuclear weapons to protect its vital interests including its “allies and friend” in order to demonstrate the resolve to use nuclear forces. The current U.S. administration justifies its nuclear superiority as a response to three types of threats: terrorists, rouge states and great powers rivals such as Russia and China (Perkovich, 2003: 5). So far the United States possesses the absolute nuclear superiority and appears to stress the security commitments to protect friends and allies in its important strategy documents and fulfill the basic requirements for an effective nuclear deterrence.

Taken together, the NPR strategy—consisting of offence, defense, and deterrence—is to provide a large, flexible, responsive, and credible nuclear force for all eventualities in an uncertain strategic environment in second nuclear age. This new strategy, however, is always accompanied with some inherent nuclear risks, because a wide spectrum of nuclear capabilities does not necessarily guarantee a powerful nuclear deterrence. On the contrary, the abundance of policy options does not really comply with deterrent principle and

cannot make a deterrent threat credible (Schelling, 1966: 44). Indeed deterrence usually fails if policy options are to be perceived by opponent as loophole for escaping commitment. Furthermore, it is reasonable that the U.S. administration's "emphasis on tactical use" of nuclear weapons increases the motivation of targeted states "to improve and extend their own nuclear force, or to get one if they don't have it" (Perkovich, 2003: 5).

As to missile defense, even it can ever work, then a rational adversary of the United States would either try to emulate or, more cheaper, develop new offensive weapons to overwhelm the system, if possible both. This kind of chain reaction might lead to a classical security dilemma characterized by arms race in this context. Furthermore, the United States still leads in the development in military technology and weapons production. This may put the United States in a position of being totally responsible for every major escalation of the arms race (Bottome, 1971: 15-16; Freedman, 2003: 321). It is very likely that this missile defense cannot escape the fate of all technological innovations in military strategy: the greater the increment of strength they offer when originally introduced the greater the disturbance of the prior equilibrium and therefore the greater the reactions evoked, which reduce the net effect of the new weapon over time (Luttwak, 2001: 179). It is not surprising when missile defense can do good thing if it won't work; it can do bad thing if it did work (Waltz, 2004: 347).

More badly, missile defense "does not eliminate an adversary's uncertainty about U.S. resolve." As matter of fact, missile defense simply 'shifts' the uncertainty that would exist about U.S. resolve absent NMD to higher levels" (Powell, 2003: 106-109). In short, the credibility problem at the center of nuclear deterrence theory cannot be solved simply by missile defense.

Given the fact that China is the key to understanding the power distribution

in East Asia and has an ambition—in the long term also a potential—to challenge the U.S. dominant position in the Western Pacific, the Nuclear Posture Review has bluntly specified that China could be the potential target for the U.S. nuclear weapons. In February 2006, for the first time Pentagon elevated China to the top of the list (above Russia) of large-scale military threats facing the U.S. (U.S. Department of Defense, 2006b: 29). The QDR noted that “China continues to invest heavily in its military, particularly in its strategic arsenal and capabilities designed to improve its ability to project power beyond its border” (U.S. Department of Defense, 2006b: 29). These security concerns accruing from the rise of China are reflected in the future U.S. nuclear strategy.

In this case, nuclear risks could arise from the mutual arms race, escalation spirals, misperception, and most importantly the lack of a clear and firm U.S. extended deterrence to the Taiwan Strait where China intends to change the status quo and the United States wants to defend it however the status quo is defined (Goldstein, 2002: 85).<sup>6</sup>

#### IV. Taiwan’s National Security: Nuclear Risks under “Strategic Ambiguity”

The third section of discussion focuses on the nuclear risks across the Taiwan Strait. In the first place, these nuclear risks would emerge in part from the nuclear unbalance between the United States and the PRC, in part from the tensions between the PRC and Taiwan associated with the policy of “strategic ambiguity” of the United States. I begin with the first part.

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6. Steven M. Goldstein defines status quo as follows: “The term *status quo* refers to things as they are in any political alignment; it tell us nothing about stability and durability” (emphasis in original).

## (I) U.S. Nuclear Strategy and its Implications for China

Why does the NPR matter to China? First, China did not have the means to attack the continental United States (CONTUS) until its first ICBM the DF5 entered the service in 1981. At present, China has only around 32 ICBMs (24 DF5/5A and 8 DF-31) which can reach U.S. continent (Goldstein and Erickson, 2005: 66, 114). Another estimates shows that China has about 20 ICBM capable of reaching the continental U.S. and that the United States has more than 830 missiles that can reach China (Kristensen et al., 2006: 2). In either way the United States has an overwhelming nuclear capability that no other country matches or even comes close to matching. It follows that the United States could *theoretically* wipe out all Chinese nuclear warheads in a disarming first strike. Moreover, the modernization of the traditional nuclear arsenals- the first leg of “new triad” will not only give these cold-war strategic weapons an extended service life, but will also surely expand the capabilities to enhance the “hard-target-kill” capabilities of these systems against such established (and potential rival) major nuclear powers as China and Russia (McDonough, 2006: 8).<sup>7</sup> These strategic capabilities can surely neutralize the most threatening strategic facilities like road-mobile and relocatable missile launchers that China’s military is trying to modernize and improve (McDonough, 2006: 46-48, 69).

If the United States should launch those strikes preemptively, the survivability of these missiles would be low. To make matter worse, it is not likely for China to launch a retaliatory second strike on the United States after

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7. “Hard-target-kill” capability refers mostly to the military capability to destroy the ICBM-silos of an adversary.

suffering the first strike if the missile defense system functions well. In this sense, China could be nuclear blackmailed by the United States (Mcdevitt, 2000: 181-182). The current unbalance of nuclear strike forces between China and the United States is the key to understanding the instability of their precarious strategic relationship. Because the U.S. nuclear arsenal far more outnumbers China's strategic weapons, it is virtually impossible for China to disarm the long-range nuclear arsenals of the United States with a nuclear *first strike*, in which the retaliation nuclear forces should be totally neutralized. If China were to do so, it means nothing but a suicide attack. However, it is important to distinguish *first strike* from *first use*, in which disadvantages in conventional weapons should be compensated by the use of nuclear weapons (Freedman, 2003: 365-366).

Second, if Taiwan is fully integrated in the planned missile defense system in the Western Pacific, China would be deprived of its best instrument to put pressure on Taiwan. Taiwan could take a more assertive foreign and security policy. That is the last thing that Beijing wants to see. From China's point of view, the planned missile defense project is at best an overreaction to the threat of rouge states or terrorist, and most plausibly a veiled attempt to neutralized China's nuclear retaliatory capability (Roy, 2003: 60). Third, if China's nuclear forces should be totally neutralized, his established nuclear status and bargaining position in international affairs, which match his rising economic and military strength, would be marginalized. These reasons can explain why China has been opposing the U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and the U.S. missile defense system, especially its deployment on Taiwan.



## ( II ) China's No First Use Policy

China's perception of NPR in general and the offensive leg of NPR by using conventional and nuclear weapons in particular raise serious challenges to China's NFU policy (Preez et al., 2002; Dunn et al., 2006: 28). Until now, the U.S. and the NATO refuse to adopt the policy of nuclear no first use, because deterrence rest upon this very possibility. The Alliance does not determine in advance how it would react to aggression (Butfoy, 2002: 150).<sup>8</sup> China also believes that U.S. has a First Use Policy (Dunn et al., 2006: 39). In this regard, it cannot be entirely excluded that China *could* use nuclear weapons first instead of launching a first strike in order to compensate his disadvantages in conventional weapons especially in a conflict with the U.S. over Taiwan. As China's conventional options loose its edge, nuclear weapons may be seen as the last resort to win or to save face. China would be locked in the dilemma between defeat and nuclear usage (McDonough, 2006: 79-80; Dodge, 2005: 416). How could China's first use (not first strike) be possible? The analysis follows.

A strategic stability between the Soviet Union and the United States embedded in their mutual fear of assured destruction capabilities does not, at least not yet, exist between China and the United States. Crisis instability matters in this context. Some scholars like Lyle Goldstein (2003: 762), Lieber and Press (2006: 10) points out that asymmetric configuration of power in the nuclear balance can be destabilizing. The limited nuclear arsenal may lead China to strike what he perceives to be America's centre of gravity: sensitivity to casualties.

The same unbalance between China and the U.S. in conventional forces

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8. NATO does not follow either First Use Policy or No First Use Policy (NATO, 2007).

may also beguile China to respond with nuclear weapons in a military conflict with the U.S. over Taiwan. That is the rationale of the general of PLA, because China can not win a conventional war with the U.S. despite that this kind of nuclear attack would violate Chinese nuclear doctrine since 1964, which pledges not to use nuclear weapons first. In *China's national defense* (OSS.NET.,2006: 7), Chinese government proclaims the pursuit of a self-defensive nuclear strategy. The fundamental goal of Chinese military is to deter other countries from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons against China. Moreover, China remains firmly committed to the policy of no first use of nuclear weapons *at any time and under any circumstances*.

Although China reaffirms this no-first-use policy as his official position; however, it cannot not really mean it will last forever. Betts and Christensen (2000/2001: 19) argue that China might threaten the use of nuclear weapons to deter U.S. military operation on behalf of Taiwan. Moreover, as Disarmament Ambassador Sha Zukang said in 1996, “As far as Taiwan is concerned it is a province of China [ ... ] *So the policy of no first use does not apply*” (Betts and Christensen, 2000/2001: 19). More recently, when asked about the potential tactics if conflict arouse over Taiwan, General Zhu Chenghu stated that due to China’s limited conventionally capabilities compared to the overwhelming U.S. military power, the use of nuclear weapons should be considered in the event of war with the United States. When questioned further, Zhu stated that China’s *long-held no-first use policy could be changed*, noting that the policy had really applied to *non-nuclear weapon states*. Zhu’s remarks could be interpreted as a sign that China may rethink its NFU policy and prepare a war with the United States (Lieggi, 2005). In reality, China “unconditionally undertakes not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapons states [ ... ]” (OSS.NET., 2006: 7). Taken together, it is important to make a difference between

China's official rhetoric in the declaratory policy and the practical thinking of his military planners.

To make matters worse, the NPR nuclear strategy, including offensive strikes and defensive system, would make the offensive and pre-emptive options more attractive, or even necessary, for the PLA. Lin Bin (Dunn et al., 2006: 31) once stated that if U.S. tended to believe that a nuclear first strike plus a NMD would be capable of disarming China's retaliatory strategic forces, the U.S. could become incautious in risking nuclear exchanges with China in a crisis. Goldstein (2003: 763) argues further that if China considers the possibility of nuclear first use, which is plausible, the United States would logically be prepared to pre-empt the pre-emption. The small size and low alert status of China's nuclear force increase this temptation.<sup>9</sup> Bernard Brodie (1966: 25) asserts that the "need to strike *first* in a strategic exchange was too overwhelming to permit delay." The same logic can also explain the U.S. temptation for launching a pre-emptive strike on North Korea's nuclear facilities during the nuclear crisis in 1993-1994 (Lin, 2004: 59-62).

### (III) China's Response to U.S. Nuclear Planning

Apparently Beijing cannot wait and see the exact realization of American nuclear strategy. With respect to nuclear forces modernization, the Pentagon makes the observation that "China is qualitatively and quantitatively improving its strategic missile force. This could provide a credible, survivable nuclear deterrent and counterstrike capability" (U.S. Department of Defense, 2006a: 26). As matter of fact, with long-term aspiration to improve its position in world politics, Beijing sees nuclear weapons playing a fundamental role in its defense

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9. For more analysis about surprise attack, see Schelling (1960: 207-229).

planning and attributing its nuclear arsenal to its only reliable assurance of military supremacy.

From the viewpoint of the strategic relationship between China and the U.S., the deployment of DF 31 and the newest nuclear missile submarines, known as type 094, would be a great hedge against U.S. intervention in the Taiwan Strait. China will soon field (or has fielded) the new road-mobile; solid-propellant ICBM DF-31 and an extended range DF 31 A to replace the old silo-based CSS-4 ICBM. The mobility of DF-31 series ICBM will enable these systems to operate in a greater theater and make them more difficult to locate and neutralize (Military Power of PRC 2005: 29). As a platform for the new SLBM JL 2, the new developed SSBN 094 may well be able to hit the U.S. continent from the Chinese territorial waters. According to U.S.-media, the 094 has been launched in July 2004, although not yet operational. The second- generation nuclear missile submarines will likely to carry 16 JL-2 SLBM with a range between eight and twelve thousand kilometers and they will have MIRV (Goldstein and Erickson, 2005: 10, 110). In sum, China has been trying to improve its nuclear survivability by employment of DF-31 and 094 SSBN in order to attain a more secure second-strike capability without being disarmed by a U.S. first strike.

China has continually developed its capacity to wage a nuclear war. Some officials of the People's Liberation Army, Major General Yang (1998: 132), for instance, advocates research about making nuclear weapons more useful in "actual fighting" in local wars (Kane, 2003/4: 106). Another PLA officer, Major General Wu Jianguo (1998: 144), argued that the immense effect of nuclear weapons is that it can serve as a deterrent force and, at the same time, as *means of actual combat* (emphasis added, Kane, 2003/04: 107). China is also making efforts in developing land-attack cruise missiles, known as Chang Feng and

Hong Niao series LACMs, which would make U.S. missile defense system useless in defending land targets if U.S. is unable to develop a cruise missile defense (CDM) system (Goldstein and Erickson, 2005: 82).

In addition, Beijing's initial response to U.S. missile defense was signaled by its October 1999 announcement of a program embarking an additional US\$9.7 billion to enhance its second-strike capabilities (Roberts et al., 2000: 59). As some scholars observe, "Beijing will almost certainly regard the plans for the deployment of NMD as a challenge to its own nuclear deterrent. As a result, Chinese decision-makers may even now have begun worst-case planning to offset what they perceive to be an emerging threat" (Roberts et al., 2000: 54).

China has been modernizing its modest nuclear forces for twenty years and will continue to do so regardless of the actions of other nations. However, external developments, most notably the U.S. new triad strategy and the military relationship between Taiwan and the United States, will surely influence the speed, quality, and quantity of this modernization. In fact the increase of China's military budget by 17.8% in 2007 also raises doubt about its state's goal of "peaceful development" (BBC, 2007/03/04). China's rapid expansion and ongoing deployment of some 710-790 short-range ballistic missiles (mobile CSS-6 and CSS-7) opposite Taiwan continues to grow at an average rate of about 100 missile per year. This force structure reminds us of China's refusal to renounce use of force against Taiwan (U.S. Department of Defense, 2006a: 3, 38). In addition, the formation of information warfare units has been discussed since at least 2000. The active offense is seen imperatively necessary to enhance information warfare capabilities in order to gain the initiatives in a crisis (U.S. Department of Defense, 2006a: 35-36).

Having discussed the implications of U.S. nuclear strategy for China's strategic choice and force structure, it is needed to bring Taiwan into analytic

focus in the triangular relationship between China, U.S, and Taiwan, because China must prepare a war with the United States in the event of military conflict in the Taiwan Strait. The enduring cross-Strait tension will still continue to dominate the Sino-U.S. relation in the future.

#### (IV) Chinese Threat and Use of Nuclear Force in the Taiwan Strait

Essentially, the threats of China that Taiwan must face stem simply from its growing national power, geographic proximity, offensive capabilities, territorial ambition, and more recently, its growing economic power. Chinese advantages of his geographic proximity to Taiwan will never change. This is a geo-strategic reality that Taiwan must keep in mind and act accordingly.<sup>10</sup> The growing economic strength and ongoing military aggrandizement of the PRC coupled with its territorial ambition towards Taiwan make a war in the Taiwan Strait very likely. More importantly, the bare use of force is not the only way that China can solve the “Taiwan Problem.” With China’s growing economic power, the flexible employment of diverse policy tools of economic clout, diplomacy and military power will likely dominate China’s foreign policy toward Taiwan. The diplomatic and economic isolation of Taiwan in Southeast Asia through bilateral and multilateral measures of China is a striking example (Shambaugh, 2004/5: 86-89; Economist print edition, 2007). In the long term, the rise of China will be the most important security challenge that Washington must deal with.

Recently China has began to employ “non-peaceful means” to prevent Taiwan-Independence that codified in its so-called Anti-Secession Law (more

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10. For more details on this point, see Michael Mcdevitt (2004: 411-413).

correctly, Anti-Separation Law) in March 2005. The codification of the use of force against Taiwan has spoiled the relation with Taiwan, abated the drive to lift arms embargo against China by EU and reinforced the doubt about Chinese modernization of military power. U.S. defense planners also assume that the wish to deter the United States from any future intervention over Taiwan is a key factor guiding China's strategic modernization drive (Ward, 2003: 44).

Moreover, China would not be easily deterred only by the ambiguous security commitment and greater flexibility of U.S. nuclear options in NPR. Many factors could also lead to a Chinese offensive against Taiwan, including worldwide diversification of U.S. forces, geographic advantages for China, and the lack of U.S. resolve and willpower illustrated by Somalia intervention 1994 (Christensen, 2001). Abram Shulsky (2000: 33, 35-54) asserts that China is difficult to deter and the deterrent value of overall U.S. military superiority might be diminished by a Chinese belief that various political constraints will inhibit the ability of the United States to use it. In terms of Chinese strategic culture, Alastair Johnston's analysis (1995/96: 124-126, 128-134, 143-148) shows a consistent emphasis on offensive action mediated by flexibility in Chinese military thinking. After reviewing China's use of force from 1950-1966, Allen Whiting asserts that seizing the initiative would prompt the PLA to follow precedent to gain the advantages by striking first. This is more important in high-technology warfare, where the initial engagement can determine the ability to continue fighting after suffering possibly serious retaliatory casualties. Pre-emption becomes an increasingly attractive option under these circumstances (Whiting, 2001: 125). The U.S. deterrent threat will be capable, then, if and only if the threatened player—in this case the PRC—prefers status quo than conflict; when the relationship is reversed, the threat will be said to lack capability (Zagare and Kilgour, 2000: 82).

## (V) The Role of Nuclear Weapons in the Taiwan Strait

China's primary goal in any contingency in the Taiwan Strait would be to deter and, if necessary, to defeat any U.S. intervention force. U.S. defense analysts recently call it an "antiaccess" strategy—actions by an opponent that would slow the U.S. force deployments into combat theater, prevent them from operating from certain locations within a theater, or force them to operate from location farther from the center of conflict than they would normally prefer (Cliff et al., 2007: 11).

There is an array of methods and tactics from submarines to anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons to nuclear weapons (Dodge, 2004: 391).<sup>11</sup> Since the U.S. wields the most powerful sea and air forces in the Pacific, China has developed a strategy of "limited deterrence" to deter the U.S. intervention, in which nuclear weapons play a crucial role (Johnston, 1995/96: 12). Put simply, limited deterrence is a strategy that includes the willingness and capability to use nuclear weapons at the tactical, theater, and regional level aimed at deterring potential opponents and control further conflict escalation. It combines deterrence with conventional and warfighting components (Johnston, 1995b/96: 11-13; Dodge, 2004: 396). The incorporation of nuclear weapons into actual operation plan enables PLA to enhance the deterrent power, warn or even defeat U.S. intervention through demonstrative nuclear usage (Dodge, 2005: 421).

The use of tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) plays a crucial role in this strategy. If used adeptly and sparingly, tactical nuclear weapons can compensate

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11. China has confirmed that it carried out a test that destroyed a weather satellite. A Chinese Feng Yu 1 C polar orbit weather satellite had been destroyed by an anti-satellite system launched from or near China's Xichang Space Center on 11 January 2007 (BBC, 2007/01/23).



for the qualitative inferiority of PLA (Dodge, 2004: 397). China is estimated to possess 100 tactical nuclear warheads (The Bulletin Online, 2006: 62).<sup>12</sup> One the one hand, PLA can use TNWs simply to deter U.S. forces in the war theater near Taiwan. Yet the PLA also expects that nuclear weapons can be actually detonated in a not-so lethal fashion. Warhead could be detonated in order to show the resolve of Chinese military, or might be exploded near U.S. forces aimed to utilize the crippling effects of electromagnetic pulse (EMP).

In addition, the PRC could also employ an enhanced radiation weapons (ERW) against U.S. forces. Such weapons could utilize a relatively low-yield explosion to generate greater radiation effects designed to kill the enemy personnel but spare equipment. Ideally, the PLA will use its TNWs to maximum tactical advantage; while simultaneously put U.S. commander in a difficult position of how to respond, especially to an indirect or ERW attack. All these situations could convince Pentagon to withdraw its forces (Dodge, 2005: 421).

Dodge (2004: 403) claims that the PRC, in case of U.S. intervention, may use an ASAT weapon to attack U.S. satellite in the region. Ballistic missile strikes on U.S. radar and communication facilities will further aggravate the sensor blackout. At a perfect timing, China could detonate a nuclear weapon near a U.S. base or fleet with the intention to warn, not to damage. The U.S. commander may not be willing to risk large casualties because of China's readiness to escalation and of U.S. inability to detect incoming nuclear or conventional attacks from PLA due to sensor blackout. These actions could also erode the public support in U.S. for military operation against the threat of

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12. There is a bitter controversy among U.S. defense analysts about whether China has tactical nuclear weapons or not. The latest report of Kristensen et al. (2006: 98-104) asserts that there is no "hard evidence" for the existence of such weapons, but the report estimates that "China maintains a small inventory of tactical bombs for a couple of dozen fighter-bomber aircraft".

China's nuclear usage.

Once the tactical weapons come into play in this context, the introduction of strategic nuclear weapons could not be categorically excluded. Although the Chinese strategic forces are relatively small and inaccurate, but its new missiles are survivable and capable enough to establish a credible second strike capability (Dodge, 2004: 403). Since China's current ICBMs are inaccurate against U.S. strategic nuclear forces, they can only serve as countervalue weapons, namely the killing of civil population. Even the 20 Chinese DF-5A ICBM (operational) could kill approximately 15 million to 40 million U.S. population in 20 cities (Kristensen et al., 2006: 190). A PRC military official one warned his American counterpart, "In the end you care more about Los Angeles than you do about Taipei" (Kane, 2003/04: 106). From the viewpoint of Chinese nuclear planner, the destruction inflicted by just a few DF-5A ought to represent a robust deterrent. It is no wonder why China's relatively small number of ICBM could serve as an adequate deterrent against the United States and anyone else (Kristensen et al., 2006: 194).

In short, China is not a status quo power to Taiwan and would be difficult to be deterred. And China would very possibly take military initiatives in the future conflicts over Taiwan. That is why both the U.S. and Japan for the first time identify the security in the Taiwan Strait as a "common strategic objective" codified in *Joint Statement U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee* in February 2005. We can assume that the future competition between China and the United States together with Japan in the Western Pacific will become more intense. This structural competition will be persistent, substantial and unstable if Taiwan remains flashpoint between the two great powers.

## (VI) U.S.-Taiwan Security Relations: Alliance à la carte

The *Taiwan Relations Act* (TRA) stipulates that the United States will provide defense articles and services necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability. Further, the TRA considers “any effort to determine the future of Taiwan by other than peaceful means, including by boycotts or embargo, a threat to the peace and security of the Western Pacific area and of *grave concern* to the United States”(USINFO.STATE.GOV., 1979. emphasis added). The mutual military exchange between Taiwan and the United States has been intensified since the missile crisis in 1996. This intensification of military cooperation helps the United States balance China’s military power projection. It is worth noting that the “Foreign Relations Authorization Act (FRAA), Fiscal Year 2003,” signed into law in October 2002, for the first time states that, for the purposes of transfers of defense articles, Taiwan “should be treated as though it were designated a major non-NATO ally” (MNNA). This designation is a specific term that allows much closer military cooperation, including the sale of specific weapons which reserved normally only for other countries. Australia and Japan are also MNNA countries (Pacific Northeast Center of Global Security, 2003: section 1206).

As a matter of fact Taiwan is legally no alliance partner of the United States. The United States treated Taiwan as ally only in terms of arms sales and military assistance, not necessarily in terms of defense obligation, which a formal alliance should fulfill. The TRA does not contain the full military commitment towards Taiwan. Moreover, the TRA gives the U.S. government much room to maintain a deliberately ambiguous position regarding the *extent* of U.S. military commitment to Taiwan, and the *circumstances* under which it

would be involved, because the U.S. President and Congress shall determine “appropriate action” in response to the danger. In other words, the United States *cannot* be dragged into a military conflict over Taiwan because there is no *binding security commitment* between Taiwan and the United States.

In this sense, the United States would not *legally*—or perhaps *actually*—face entrapment in alliance security dilemma developed by Glenn Snyder (1984). Entrapment means, according to Snyder, being dragged into a conflict over an ally’s interests that one does not share, or shares only partially. Entrapment occurs when one values the preservation of alliance more than the cost of fighting the ally’s interests (Snyder, 1984: 467). Insofar the term “grave concern” in TRA seems not able to demonstrate U.S. resolve to deter China. Admittedly, the United States cannot *legally abandon* Taiwan in terms of the TRA due to the lack of binding defense obligation. In alliance dilemma, abandonment occurs when the cost of fighting the ally’s interests too high to preserve alliance relationship. In reality, Taiwan can be only *morally* abandoned by the United States.

However, it would be still very costly for American credibility and reputation in the region under current bilateral security arrangement because of *interdependence* of security commitments. If we tell Chinese we have to intervene here because, if we not, they would not believe us when we say we will intervene there (Schelling, 1966: 55-59). That is to say those bilateral security relationships in this region between the United States and allies such as Japan and South Korea would be strong called into question. Therefore, the American security arrangement in East Asia would be in jeopardy.

## (VII) The Fallacy of Washington's "Strategic Ambiguity"

As Fang Hsu-hsing (2004: 552) correctly indicates that American interest in Taiwan begins and ends with maintaining regional peace and security. This point must be made very clear that "maintaining regional peace and security" may have an extremely high cost, and it means nothing but to deter China from taking military actions against Taiwan in this context. The current U.S. policy of "strategic ambiguity",<sup>13</sup> put simply, is designed to deter Chinese use of force against Taiwan without committing the United States to defend Taiwan in any given situations, and without running the risks of encouraging Taiwanese to take actions that the Chinese would see as "provocative," and without letting Taiwan to dictate U.S. China policy. This strategy is to deter both Beijing and Taipei from taking unilateral actions that would change the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, which the United States opposes. It can be also called a strategy of "double deterrence." In reality, this policy design is too attractive and cheap for Washington to attain its goal of successful deterrence towards China and Taiwan.

Why are both concepts of "deterrence" and "ambiguity" a matter of strategic fallacy? Put simply, these two strategic concepts are theoretically contradictory and practically infeasible. I begin with U.S. deterrence towards

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13. The author does not agree that the Bush administration has shifted its policy from "ambiguity" to "clarity", because the U.S. governments since 1979 have refused to spell out what they will do in the event of hostilities between Taiwan and China. Besides, there is no rhetoric continuity about "clarity policy" in Bush administration. Although Bush has once said to do "whatever it takes" to defend Taiwan in April 2001, he soon modified his wording by "help Taiwan to defend itself". It can be called "strategic incoherence" at best, but not "strategic clarity". According to Taiwan Relations Act, the U.S. has no defense obligation toward Taiwan. More details about the origins of and arguments for "strategic ambiguity", see Tucker (2005: 186-211).

China. Theoretically, deterrence means nothing but a threat that is to be made credible to be efficacious. A deterrent threat works only because the other player expects us to do in response to his choice of actions, and we can afford to make the threat only because we expect it to have an influence on his choice (Schelling, 1960: 10).

A policy of “strategic ambiguity” is surely not able to communicate to the other player as to what one can exactly expect from us. Glenn H. Snyder (1975: 247) asserts that the credibility of threats is, in general, enhanced by clarity and reduced by ambiguity. The essential purpose of ambiguity is to create at least some anxiety in the opponent, allowing the deterrer to renege on his commitment with minimal losses to this prestige and honor and to the credibility of his future threat. However, if we are already sure how to respond to given enemy’s moves and if we think the enemy will be deterred if he is aware of our intention, we will want to threaten with *maximal clarity*. In our case, it is unlikely that the United States *does not know* how it will respond to China’s attack in Taiwan. The nature of the problem is that China is not aware of American intent with respect to the defense of Taiwan because the United States does not reassure Taiwan that he *will* intervene, but only he *may* intervene. Therefore, China cannot expect *whether* the United States would respond to military conflicts over the Taiwan Strait, and China’s choice of military action against Taiwan may not be influenced by America’s strategic ambiguity.

As Thomas Schelling (1966: 44) asserts that “the *commitment* process on which all American oversees deterrence depends—and on which all confidence within the alliance depends—is a process of *surrendering and destroying options* that we might have been expected to find too attractive in a emergency.” This description can also be applied to Taiwan. Therefore, “strategic ambiguity” as a policy aimed at deterring China is too attractive and cheap to be achieved.

Moreover, it is very dangerous if this ambiguity misleads the Chinese leadership into doubting the U.S. resolve to defend Taiwan. In sum this strategic ambiguity may not be transformed to an effective deterrent power towards China.

Let us now consider another aspect of “double deterrence”—the U.S. deterrence of Taiwan. In December 2003, President Bush has made clear in his remarks that Taiwan does not have “blank check to be filled out in American blood” (Fang, 2004: 57). Yet few would deny that Taiwan and the United States share the value of maintaining peace and security in East Asia, which simply means preventing China’s use of force against Taiwan in particular. Insofar as this goal is commonly shared and taken very seriously by both sides, the U.S. deterrent threat to Taiwan would not be credible, because the U.S. punishment of Taiwan—say; giving China free hand to attack Taiwan—is likely to hurt U.S. interest as much as it threatens (Schelling, 1966: 11).<sup>14</sup> Conversely, if American interests were not compatible to those of Taiwan, the U.S. deterrent threat would be more credible, because the abandonment of Taiwan would not hurts U.S. interests in the region. In the end, the existence and strength of common stakes weakens the credibility of deterrent stakes. This conclusion is seldom recognized and mentioned in the debates over the strategic relationship between Taiwan, China, and the United States.

The U.S. deterrence of Taiwan has another big policy bias—conflation of causes of war and pretences of war. According to Chinese authority, war over Taiwan would be inevitable in occasions such as formal declaration of independence, development of nuclear weapons in Taiwan, foreign intervention,

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14. Consider a metaphor that Washington and Taipei sit in the same boat. Washington’s threat to Taipei to sink the boat by rocking it would be incredible because both sides will sink at the same time. If Washington were not on the boat, the threat would be more credible. In our case, if Washington should repeal the Taiwan Relations Act, the deterrence of Taiwan would be more effective and credible.

internal unrest, or indefinite delays of resumption of bilateral talks. Let us consider the most notable case of Taiwan's independence. The term "Taiwan's independence" has been abused and given a bad name not just by the PRC, as everyone knows, but also by a (major) part of Taiwan's society, last but not the least, by the United States.

Yet it would be a strategic blunder if the United States believes that it must deter Taiwan from declaring independence or steps in this movement for trading China's renounce of military means against Taiwan, because the causal mechanism between Taiwan's independence and China's use of force against Taiwan is very complex. In fact it is a deliberate *decision* of Chinese government that leads to a war against Taiwan, not a decision of Taiwanese for pursuing independence. Put simply, independence does not have tripwire effect, and therefore cannot *automatically* cause a war in the Taiwan Strait. The 1996 missile tests by China against Taiwan are actually a *deliberate military action* on the grounds that China suspected an intention of Taiwan to put independence into practice. The general policy confusion lies in misunderstanding the distinction between *cause* of war, *threat* of war and pretence that could be abused to wage a war.

Therefore, the United States must concentrate on deterring China from making a war decision against Taiwan, not deter Taiwan from pursuing *the option of* independence by self determination along with its democratic principles whose values the United States has been trying to spread and advocate around the world. Alan Wachman (2002: 201) is right when he argues that U.S. policymakers will determine U.S. interests and nothing Taiwan *does* or *fails to do* will lead the United States to act in a way that Washington judges to be contrary to those interests (Chen, 2003: 215).



## (VIII) The Art of Commitment: “Strategic Clarity”

Strategic clarity is actually an articulate communication of intentions aimed at influencing perception of both opponents and allies. Communication can take many forms, in words or in actions. Commitment is a form of such communications that enables to send a clear signal to involved parties. By making a clear security commitment to ally, one makes both a threat and an assurance to an opponent: a threat that one will respond, once ally being attacked; an assurance that no response will ensue if no attack occurs. If so, the initiative is up to the opponent. He has to make a critical decision to incite a clash. A policy of “strategic clarity” in this context means that the United States should make it very clear to China that it will intervene in case that China launches attacks on Taiwan. China has to decide whether to attack Taiwan or not.

The new U.S. nuclear structure in NPR will no doubt influence China’s defense planning. It is needless to say that the combination of nuclear offence and missile defense will make the U.S. military commitment to its allies and friends more plausible and credible. Yet the NPR will also stir Chinese defense planner to accelerate its military aggrandizements in order to counter or balance U.S. military power. Moreover, the United States has been upgraded the military cooperation and enlarged the weapons sales towards Taiwan since 1996. Under the circumstances, the United States should not remain to circumvent its responsibility to defend Taiwan; on the other hand put Taiwan in such a military tension by provoking China into a military adventure towards Taiwan by its more comprehensive nuclear strategy and strengthening of its military relationship with Taiwan.

The “Republic of China” (ROC)—the official name of Taiwan—is a pariah state in international politics since the time as it was “expelled” from the United Nations in 1971. Taiwan is currently independent *de facto* but enjoys only limited sovereignty *de jure*. The so-called “status quo” in Taiwan Strait is never static and differently understood, defined and to some degree abused by Taiwan, the United States, and the PRC. China has been trying to challenge the status quo by denying the statehood of Taiwan, which preposterously—albeit officially—includes the territory of the Mongolian Republic and the PRC. Without a formal statehood, a formal alliance between Taiwan and the United States is very unlikely. The entrenched policy of “strategic ambiguity” can hardly satisfy the deterrent needs towards China, while the robust U.S. nuclear strategy could mislead China into taking military adventure at expense of Taiwan’s national security. “Strategic clarity” will help the United States solve a dilemma between provoking China and defending Taiwan as well as its vital interests in the Western Pacific. Those who argue that a policy of “strategic clarity” will be abused by Taiwan to take steps in direction of independence miss the point. As discussed above, the United States *cannot abandon* Taiwan or be *dragged* into a war for the sake of Taiwan because there is no binding security commitment between the two parties. In the end, the United States will act according to U.S. national interests in this region and will not let Taiwan to dictate U.S. China policy.

If a policy of “strategic clarity” were adopted, the United States can still simultaneously keep options open as to *how*, not *whether*, it would intervene. The argument is not that U.S. “strategic ambiguity” is completely obsolete, but rather that with a clear and firm commitment the United States would be more credible to deter a war in the Taiwan Strait. Paraphrasing Schelling’s words, a deterrent threat to China would be very costly for the United States when the

threat fails; a promise to defend Taiwan would be very costly when the promise succeeds. A successful threat is one that is not carried out. “Strategic clarity” is the key to this successful threat in preventing China to resort to war against Taiwan. However, given the growing China’s power assets in economic development, diplomatic clout, and military power, it is hard to imagine that the U.S. would make a clear security assurance to Taiwan as it did before 1979, not to mention that Washington has recently implemented a preventive diplomacy toward Taiwan.

## V. Conclusion

Since the terror attacks on September 11, 2001, the U.S.-China relationship seems more cordial and constructive than at any time over the last decade. They are essentially only “partner of convenience” for each other, because the structural differences between them, including basic values and global economic/political competition, are unlikely to overcome in the short term. The first joint war game “Peace Mission 2005” between China and Russia in August 2005, which imbedded in their strategic partnership, seems to show Washington and Japan that they could respond to any eventualities in the Western Pacific, most notably North Korea and Taiwan.

The current U.S. defense posture in general and its NPR strategy in particular reflect these basic conflict lines between the two major powers after the end of the Cold War. The nuclear unbalance between the United States and China and the conventional unbalance between Taiwan and China would complicate, or more likely, jeopardize the strategic relations between these three main actors. Coupling with its overwhelming nuclear capabilities, the U.S. nuclear strategy based on its Nuclear Posture Review will no doubt exert a

powerful deterrent effect and increase operational flexibility. Yet this nuclear planning may also entail nuclear risks. It may lead to arms race, increase crisis instability and make a pre-emptive option more attractive to the United States and also to China. In fact, China has been improving its strategic capabilities to overcome the current U.S. nuclear planning.

Insofar as Taiwan remains a flashpoint in the future Sino-U.S. strategic relations, the U.S. nuclear strategy could more likely result in a Chinese offensive or pre-emptive strike against Taiwan due to misperception by Chinese leadership if the United States cannot make both China and Taiwan believe that the United States *will* intervene, not *may* intervene. Unfortunately, Taiwan's government and society have also failed to recognize a clear and present danger from China for reasons of domestic party struggles between the pan-Green and pan-Blue camps. Taiwan does not simply react to this real and imminent threat from China, or respond in paltry and imprudent ways. To apply Randall Schweller's (2004: 159-201) theory, Taiwan is now unbalancing China. Taiwan's current failure to put the arms procurement program offered by the United States on agenda in parliament, let alone to pass it, is a good example.<sup>15</sup>

After all, it is the prime task of the United States to deter China from making war decision and taking military action against Taiwan in ways that Washington adopts a policy of "strategic clarity." An ambiguous strategy does create anxiety in China, but it cannot be transformed to be a powerful deterrence and would more possibly mislead China. In this sense, the art of security commitment in nuclear strategy towards China is lack of ambiguity. If both Taiwan and the United States share the goal of maintaining peace and stability

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15. The weapons include 6 Patriot III anti-missile batteries, eight diesel electric submarines and a squadron of 12 anti-submarine aircraft. The sum of proposed NT\$ 6108 billion will be paid for over 15-year period starting in 2005.

in the Western Pacific and take it seriously, they must be honest to face the security challenges from the rise of China. Honesty may not always be the best policy in social life, but in the realm of nuclear strategy it may be.

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# 美國核戰略與台灣國家安全

林泰和\*

本文探討美國未來核戰略對中國與台灣安全的影響。作者揚棄傳統「核子嚇阻」的觀念，而發展出一套分析架構對 2001 年美國「核子態勢評估」加以分析，這份報告將是未來美國核子武力與核戰略的指導方針。

美國「核子態勢評估」中主要包含攻擊的武器系統、飛彈防禦系統以及加強的核武基礎設施，這三大要素構成所謂新核武三元，取代傳統以陸基洲際飛彈、潛射洲際飛彈及戰略轟炸機所構成的舊核武三元。這種新戰略規劃的確使美國擁有更廣泛的軍事選項及更大的作戰彈性；但同時亦會引發核子風險。這種風險可能來自美中雙方的軍備競賽，危機不穩定性與先制攻擊。

因為任何美、中兩大核武國家的戰爭，都有可能導致核子武器的使用，進而引發核子戰爭，所以只要台灣一天持續成為美中軍事衝突的引爆點，這種核武風險將對台灣國家安全有負面的影響。美方的新核戰略與美台的軍事合作將導致中國採取更強勢的防衛政策，此時台灣的安全將因為缺乏美方清楚而堅定的防衛承諾而陷入危險。作者同時解釋美方「戰略模糊」的政策為何是一種戰略的謬誤，相對的，「戰略清晰」將會使台海的戰爭，甚至是核戰更有效的避免。

關鍵詞：台灣安全、三角關係、戰略模糊、核子態勢評估、核戰略

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