

Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies

November 7-8 Conference Keynote Speech

Modern Deterrence and Public Policy

AIT Director Douglas H. Paal

I would like to thank Dr. Richard Yang and the Chinese Council of Advanced Policy Studies for this opportunity to speak to you this morning. For the past ten years, CAPS has been Taiwan's pre-eminent private, public policy research institute focusing on the PLA and Taiwan's security interests. Under the leadership of Dr. Richard Yang and Secretary General Andrew Yang, CAPS has consistently provided an excellent venue for discussing security issues. I am confident that this conference will follow in that tradition.

I commend Dr. Yang for bringing together such a distinguished group of international scholars to discuss one of the most crucial issues that confronts this region today. We are all watching the current modernization of the People's Liberation Army for indications of the capabilities and future intentions of the PRC. I am confident that our discussions today and tomorrow will provide valuable insights into what lies ahead.

Although China's leaders stress their strong commitment to peace and stability, the unprecedented and sweeping modernization of the PLA suggests that Beijing has a dual strategy. The PRC seems determined to exploit its economic strength to entice Taiwan into unification. At the same time, it seems determined to build up its armed forces to deter independence or reunify the island if deterrence fails. The implications of China's military development go beyond Taiwan. The direction the PLA takes following the 16th Party Congress will have a profound effect on the security of the Asia-Pacific region, and of the United States as well.

For the 23 million people of Taiwan, the implications are enormous. Is time on Taiwan's side? Does the PLA's modernization increase the likelihood that Beijing will use force or the threat of force to resolve cross-strait issues on its terms? What should Taiwan do to counter a growing threat posed by PLA missiles? How much should Taiwan spend in the face of the PLA's increasing naval and air capabilities? What steps should Taiwan take to offset improved PLA capabilities to conduct special operations and asymmetrical warfare? Is the PLA acquiring the amphibious capability to invade Taiwan? And if so, what should Taiwan do about it?

While the questions are posed by the threat Taiwan faces from China, the responses will be crafted in a Taiwan that is also undergoing fundamental changes. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the area of national security policy. Far-reaching reforms in Taiwan's national security system, ranging from greater civilian control of the military to doctrinal and manpower changes, will greatly affect Taiwan's ability to respond to the challenges posed by PLA modernization.

Today, I would like to examine some of these reforms. In so doing, I promise to avoid reciting the well-known laundry list of items that Taiwan seeks to acquire from the United States. National security reform and military modernization are more than the acquisition of hardware, or rearranging boxes in organizational structures, they are about causing real people to adjust their thinking and their patterns of interaction with each other. These moves will determine the way that authority is delegated, the manner in which people interact with each other, the core practices that underline excellence and teamwork, and the policies that foster talent. Yet it is entirely too easy to overlook the challenges that come with making changes in the national security structure.

First, the remarkable evolution of Taiwan's democratic institutions has led to welcome change in two areas: a greater role for civilians within the Ministry of National Defense, and an increasingly assertive role by the Legislative Yuan in setting defense priorities. In short, civilian participation in the national security process has expanded dramatically.

Just as the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act mandated significant changes in the way the U.S. Department of Defense plans, commands, and executes military operations, the year 2000 amendments to the Ministry of Defense Organization Law

provided a blueprint for change in Taiwan. Like Goldwater-Nichols, these changes will be no less difficult and painful to bring about. Like Goldwater-Nichols, these amendments made fundamental changes in the command structure. First, the Minister of Defense was brought clearly into the chain of command, between the president and the chairman of the joint staff. No longer was Taiwan's top military officer, in theory if not in practice, independent of the MND.

But the amendments went further, requiring the MND to "civilianize" one third of its workforce within three years. This means that by early next year the number of civilian positions at MND must increase from the current 32 to 204. To meet this goal, it is likely that many of the first tranche of "civilians" will be recently retired military officers. The long-term task is to create a core of professional civilians skilled in identifying and promoting Taiwan's defense needs. While the advantages of having a professional cadre of civilians able to talk to Taiwan's political leadership and work smoothly with military officers are readily apparent, important questions have yet to be answered. Where will these individuals come from? How will they be trained? In what specific areas of MND can their talents be most effectively utilized?

There are a number of hopeful signs. Taiwan's National Defense University has just conducted its first course for civilians. Other training programs designed for Taiwan's military have been expanded to include civilians as well. That said, more needs to be done along these lines to ensure that Taiwan cultivates the best and the brightest in the field of national security affairs.

The expanded role of the Legislative Yuan is even more intriguing. If the recent discussions of the LY Defense Committee are any indication, gone are the days when the Defense budget would sail through the LY unquestioned. It is a healthy sign for Taiwan's democracy that its elected representatives are asking the tough questions about what level of security Taiwan can afford and what Taiwan is getting in return for taxpayer dollars. It is incumbent on the MND to find the means regularly to provide legislators with the best data and information available, in response to their questions, and even before they ask. The challenge is for legislators to keep their eyes fixed on Taiwan's security interests while avoiding the temptation that exists in every free society to use national security issues to seek partisan political advantage.

As if these challenges were not enough, Taiwan's military is confronted with the daunting challenge of changing its doctrine and internal culture to be ready to fight a modern adversary. To be frank, Taiwan needs to make up for years of near isolation during the global revolution in military affairs. Advanced weapon systems offer only a partial solution. Taiwan's security ultimately is a political, not a military, issue. Taiwan's first line of defense, as always, rests on a mix of political, economic, diplomatic and military means. These must be carefully selected and coordinated so that the pursuit of, say, a new military capability, does not undermine other aspects of policy. Recent conflicts have shown that the strategy and force structure which integrate air, sea and land operations, while maintaining command and control in all these areas, has a tremendous advantage. Taiwan's military recognizes this need for "jointness" and has begun to make the changes in training and doctrine to make joint operations part of its SOP.

One of the paradoxes of the relationship between warfare and technology is that just as technology advancements improve the situational awareness of senior commanders and their ability to influence the battle at the macro level, so does the premium increase on the judgment and initiative of junior leaders at the micro level. Technological advances increase the pace of battle -- what is sometimes referred to as "battle rhythm" -- by several orders of magnitude. Vital decisions must be made in seconds by young leaders on the ground, in the fog of war, rather than waiting minutes or hours for critical decisions to be rendered by senior officers in command posts. Fortunately, Taiwan does not lack bright, dedicated and professional officers. On the contrary, it is blessed with an abundance of them. In fact, the Taiwan military has an exceptional number of officers at the company and field grade level who have advanced degrees, and are well read and knowledgeable in the profession of arms. The question is how best to empower these young leaders to take the initiative at the lowest practical level. The Minister of Defense has outlined a pragmatic approach to cultivating future generations of talent.

Another dilemma is how to operate sophisticated weapons systems while maintaining an enlisted corps composed of draftees who serve only 22 months in the military. One possible solution, currently being explored, is increasing reliance on non-commissioned officers. Elsewhere, NCO's are the backbone of the military. They could be so in Taiwan as well, if they are provided the right mix of incentives, responsibilities and respect.

Like all democratic societies, Taiwan's security relies on the dedication of a professional military, accountable and responsible to civilian executive authority, with appropriate legislative oversight and informed public scrutiny. To accomplish these objectives, Taiwan is creating an effective national security structure staffed by a mix of well-trained, professional civilians and military counterparts. These reforms in national security software, perhaps not as visible as new weapons systems, can in turn increase Taiwan's security exponentially.

The software of deterrence cannot be overlooked as national security structures reform. It is crucial if military hardware is to perform as intended. My goal today, in the context of this conference on this subject – not as a broad compendium of issues -- is to invite your attention to this component of national security and highlight four issues that, in the face of China's apparent dual strategy, Taiwan is working to address:

- Attracting and training a pool of civilians skilled in national security affairs;
- Improving legislative understanding and public debate on security issues, while resisting the temptation to use them for partisan advantage;
- Empowering young military leaders to take initiative at the lowest practical level; and
- Changing doctrines, internal culture, and the integration of force operations to achieve effective deterrence, at an economic and political price acceptable to the people of Taiwan.

These are big challenges to any people and any organization. Taiwan deserves our sympathetic support. Thank you.