



Taiwan: Invasion is not likely, but deterrence remains vital

By Charles Parton

In May 2022, Lord Hague, the former British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, devoted his weekly column to the need to militarily deter the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from launching an invasion of Taiwan.¹ He is not the first – or last – to worry about an imminent threat. In March 2021, in testimony to the Senate Armed Services Committee United States (US) Admiral Philip Davidson saw the threat of invasion ‘manifesting’ itself by 2027.²

This Primer argues that, despite its increasingly bellicose rhetoric and its reaction to the visit of Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the US House of Representatives, to Taiwan, the CCP will not invade Taiwan in the next decade. Nor will it impose sustained blockades. The main restraint upon the CCP is the economic consequences. The resultant cratering of the global and Chinese economies would go beyond ‘lifting a stone and dropping it on one’s foot’, in the Chinese expression. An economic crash would follow, leading to large-scale unemployment in the People’s Republic of China (PRC). Without an adequate social security net, unemployment would lead to unrest, which would be directed

¹ William Hauge, ‘US must make clear it would fight for Taiwan’, *The Times*, 30/05/2022, <https://bit.ly/3TuyevE> (checked: 05/09/2022).

² Adela Suliman, ‘China could invade Taiwan in the next 6 years, assume global leadership role, US admiral warns’, *NBC News*, 10/03/2022, <https://nbcnews.to/3TkoJPh> (checked: 05/09/2022).



against the party. So far, the CCP has always managed to keep protest confined to local issues; but the likelihood is that a post-invasion depression would lead to demonstrations on a scale which cross city and county boundaries. They might well become an existential threat to the party. This is something which the CCP, for whom survival in power is paramount, will not risk.

Even if all-out blockades and invasion do not happen – but the CCP has vowed that invasion would follow a Taiwanese declaration of independence – the next decade will be witness to geopolitical typhoons across the Taiwan Strait. Moreover, foreign governments would be wise to prepare for the worst, even if the chances of the worst coming to pass are small. Thus, a strategy of military deterrence is a necessary one.

Necessary, but not sufficient. More important is political and economic deterrence. Yet this is an area largely neglected by policymakers.

This Primer rehearses why invasion will not happen; looks at likely measures to be taken by the CCP in coming years against Taiwan and against countries which it perceives as supporters of Taiwan; and makes suggestions as to how the governments of free and open countries should react. Economic deterrence is more important than military deterrence. But both are required.

Two preliminary points

Too many commentators unthinkingly reproduce CCP lines on Taiwan. Two claims in particular should be challenged: ‘The one-China principle represents the universal consensus of the international community’ and ‘Taiwan has belonged to China since ancient times. This statement has a sound basis in history and jurisprudence.’ Neither is true.³

Many democracies (amongst others, the US, United Kingdom (UK), Australia, Canada, the Netherlands) have *not* signed up to the CCP’s ‘One China Principle’; instead, they maintain a ‘One China Policy’. The CCP deliberately blurs

³ ‘The Taiwan Question and China’s Reunification in the New Era The People’s Republic of China’, The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and The State Council Information Office, 08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3TiMhnR> (checked: 05/09/2022).

this important distinction.⁴ In the 1972 communiqué put out when the UK and the PRC established diplomatic relations, Britain ‘acknowledge[ed] the position of the Chinese Government that Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China’.⁵ The US position was more explicit: ‘[It] acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China’ and ‘does not challenge that position.’⁶ The UK and other countries were making the point that they neither accepted nor rejected the Chinese viewpoint; they noted it, and took no position on it. 50 years later, such countries should not allow the CCP to put them on the back foot, by distorting their position and accusing them of backing away from signed agreements.

Secondly, locking horns with the CCP over its interpretation of the history of Taiwan is less important than continuing to point out that 24 million Taiwanese have a right to enjoy their democracy and to choose their own path without coercion. Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CCP, has declared: ‘The Party leads everything.’ History is no exception: it serves the CCP, not truth. But, while it is not difficult to show that the CCP’s history of Taiwan is bunk,⁷ values matter more than debating confected and infected history – and it is not unreasonable to suspect that the CCP would rather distract with a debate on history than one on the power of the Taiwanese people to choose their own destiny.

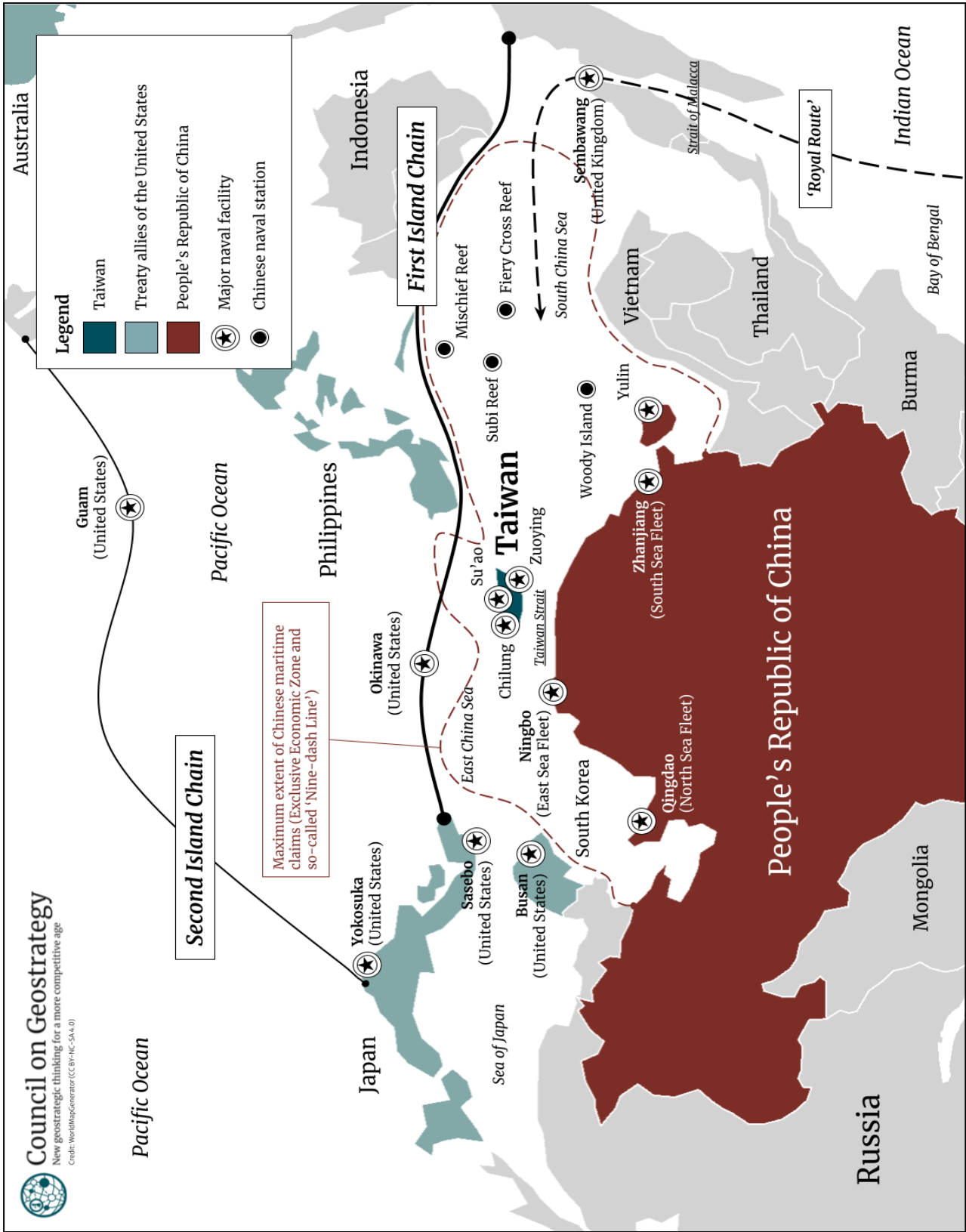
⁴ The CCP’s ‘One China Principle’ states that there is only one sovereign state under the name China, with the PRC serving as the sole legitimate government of that China, and Taiwan is a part of China. Under the ‘One China Policy’ countries accept that there is only one China; however they ‘acknowledge’ (i.e. note) the CCP position on Taiwan, but take no position on the question themselves. For an instance of the CCP deliberately blurring this distinction, see: Zheng Zeguang, ‘The Chinese side firmly opposes and strongly condemns the wrong remarks of the UK Side on the Taiwan Question’, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 10/08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3cpJXLe> (checked: 05/09/2022). For a rebuttal of the CCP blurring of the distinction, see the statement by Nick Price of the US Department in May 2022: Jonathan Chin, ‘US not bound by Beijing’s ‘one China’ principle: State Department spokesman’, *Taipei Times*, 22/05/2022, <https://bit.ly/3Tm4WPu> (checked: 05/09/2022).

⁵ ‘China (Exchange of Ambassadors)’, Hansard, 13/12/1972, <https://bit.ly/3CzOplo> (checked: 05/09/2022).

⁶ The US language was based on discussions with the UK and its negotiations with the PRC. In the event the Chinese accepted the more explicit language in their communique with the US, but refused for the UK. Conversation with a retired FCDO official who participated in the negotiations.

⁷ For excellent summations of the arguments, see: Bill Hayton, ‘How Chinese is Taiwan?’, *UnHerd*, 5/08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3wtMRFl> (checked: 05/09/2022) and Gerrit van der Wees, ‘Beijing twists history to its own end’, *Taipei Times*, 13/08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3wAdKYy> (checked: 05/09/2022).

Map 1: The Indo-Pacific from a Chinese perspective



The military reasons which make invasion unlikely

There are good military reasons why invasion is unlikely. Seaborne invasions are difficult undertakings for an experienced military, which the People's Liberation Army (PLA) is not. The Taiwan Strait is 100 nautical miles wide, its waters and weather unpredictable. Taiwan's topography would not make invasion easy: there are perhaps only fourteen beaches where significant quantities of men and materiel could be landed; once ashore invaders would be faced with mountainous and narrow terrain, more favourable to defence than attack. The US will know in advance of an attack and might intervene. Taiwan cannot match the CCP in conventional weaponry, but it is building up asymmetrical responses, with its so-called 'porcupine defence' (such as sea mines, drones, portable air-defence and anti-armour systems, fast attack craft armed with missiles). Taking out small, mobile detachments before they inflict large casualties is difficult.

Even if the PLA managed to get ashore in sufficient numbers, the island's topography lends itself to guerrilla resistance. Whether or not the Taiwanese people will defend their homeland with the tenacity shown by Ukrainians is unknowable before the event, not least in Beijing. If they showed determination, they could inflict significant casualties.

A second unknown is whether or not the US would come to the defence of Taiwan. The Taiwan Relations Act obliges the US to provide arms of a defensive character and to maintain a capacity to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion which would jeopardise the security, or the social and economic system of the people of Taiwan. If the US did not come to Taiwan's aid, it would lose its hold on the Western Pacific. Taiwan is an integral part of the 'first island chain' (See: Map 1). Possession of that chain would allow the PLA to dominate the 'second island chain' and threaten US bases in Guam and Okinawa. Moreover, a failure to help Taiwan would be likely to convince American allies in the region that they too could not count on support in the event of a crisis. Japan would be particularly concerned.

The economic reasons which would make a full blockade or invasion a disaster for the CCP

The PRC's economy is currently not doing well. The reasons are as much systemic as temporal. The CCP wishes to rely on increased consumption and the

internal market for growth. But consumption has remained stubbornly low, and will continue to be so in the absence of the political reform necessary to give power and money to consumers. The old model of reliance upon investment is unable to solve the problem of diminishing returns and productivity. The third pillar of the economy remains exports. An invasion of Taiwan would knock that pillar down.

An estimated 30% of the world's trade passes through the South China Sea.⁸ Apart from goods going to South Korea and Japan, nearly all of the PRC's seaborne trade must pass near Taiwan or American bases in Okinawa. A blockade or invasion would cause shipping insurance and hiring rates to spike. At least for a period of time, ship owners would be reluctant to move cargoes near the area.

In 2021 Taiwan exported US\$188.9 billion (£160.5 billion) of goods to the PRC and Hong Kong.⁹ Much of that figure is made up of electronic and other components. These in turn are built into Chinese products, which are exported globally. It is difficult to know what proportion of the PRC's US\$3.5 trillion (£2.9 trillion) annual exports would be hit if war disrupted PRC-Taiwan trade, but the figure would be far higher than the US\$188.9 billion (£160.5 billion) of Taiwanese exports.

But it is not just exports which would suffer. Semiconductors are vital components for products in both the PRC's domestic and export markets. The Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation (TSMC) supplies over 60% of the world's advanced semiconductors. It has significant operations in the PRC. In the event of blockade or invasion it is very unlikely that either Taiwan or the US would allow its capabilities to fall into the hands of the CCP.¹⁰ At the very least the TSMC's Taiwan based manufacturing facilities would be shuttered, if not deliberately destroyed; the US and the Netherlands would ban future use of their intellectual property, equipment, and support. The effect on the Chinese (and global) economy would be immense.

The degree to which free and open countries would apply sanctions to the PRC is at the heart of the deterrence issue. But even if no sanctions or embargoes were imposed, consumers in the democracies would cut back on or boycott Chinese products; foreign investment would dry up; and shipping would be disrupted, with its costs rising significantly. In response to public outrage, politically, it would be very difficult for the governments of free and open countries not to impose sanctions, including financial sanctions. Given the mood

⁸ 'Review of Maritime Transport 2016', United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 4/11/2016, <https://bit.ly/3Kqg3CU> (checked: 05/09/2022).

⁹ Evelyn Cheng, 'Taiwan's trade with China is far bigger than its trade with the U.S.', *CNBC*, 04/08/2021, <https://cnb.cx/3R9jyQs> (checked: 05/09/2022).

¹⁰ Matthew Mazzetta, 'TSMC "non-operable" if China invades Taiwan: Chairman', *Focus Taiwan*, 01/08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3dZLtEj> (checked: 05/09/2022).

in Washington, the level of sanctions could be serious and there would be pressure upon European countries to follow a US lead.

Finally, the CCP is rightly concerned with food and energy security. Around 80% of its oil imports come from countries whose geography necessitates using the transport route of either the Malacca or Sunda straits.¹¹ The US, Canada and Australia are major food suppliers. If the PRC invaded Taiwan, the US could blockade the straits, as well as constrict food (mainly soya) supplies. Little wonder that the PRC sees a need to build a blue water navy and is interested in naval bases to support its presence in the Indian Ocean. It currently is not able to challenge the US in these areas.

The CCP can work out the consequences of blockade or invasion for its own survival

The economic consequences of blockading or invading Taiwan would be catastrophic for the CCP. The direct effects on its own economy would be magnified by a vicious global recession, further restricting its exports. Decoupling – financial, technical, commercial, geopolitical – would become stark. Unemployment, already just under 20% for youth, would rise substantially. In the absence of a social security net, the masses would protest and demonstrate. Hitherto, the CCP has kept unrest localised. But if unemployment and poverty became pervasive, the chances of riots crossing city and county borders would be high. This could constitute an existential threat to the CCP.

Why should the CCP take this risk, if it believes that the ‘east is rising, the west declining’? A sensible policy would be to wait until the geopolitical situation and its military capabilities favour its intentions more than they do today. A failed or botched invasion would destroy the ‘China Dream’, the chances of achieving the ‘second centennial goal’ of the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Even a successful conquest of Taiwan might derail what Xi sees as ‘historically inevitable’. Kicking the can down the road is sometimes a sensible policy.

Nevertheless, might the CCP invade?

The Delphic prophesied that, ‘If Croesus goes to war, he will destroy a great empire.’ He did: his own Lydian empire. Leaders do not always act wisely. Hubris

¹¹ ‘Crude Petroleum in China’, Observatory of Economic Complexity, <https://bit.ly/3CEvwhb> (checked: 05/09/2022).

or desperation are not unique to the ancient world.

In Article 8 of the 2005 Anti-Secession Law and elsewhere the CCP has promised that if Taiwan declared independence it would invade.¹² It is fair to assume that it would carry out its word, even if that would destroy the CCP myth about Chinese having no war genes and would shatter the image of the unity of the ‘sons and daughters of China’ (中华子女). The CCP has stoked nationalistic fervour; not to carry out its threat would destroy credibility with its own people and be more dangerous to the CCP than invasion. It is worth noting that Taiwanese Government and its people are aware of this; support for declaring independence is very low.

Other arguments are less secure. The CCP is surely clear that the United Front Work Department (UFWD) and other forms of interference and influence have failed to attract or undermine Taiwan. Many see increasing levels of air, missile and naval activity as a prelude to combat. Certainly, the PLA is intent on achieving a capability to invade successfully. The military everywhere trains to achieve desired capabilities, and the PLA must train for the possibility of Taiwan declaring independence. But that is the extreme. Current activity is designed to wear down the Taiwanese will to resist, to degrade defence, not least psychologically. It is part of the battle to convince the people of Taiwan that ‘reunification’ is ‘inevitable and irresistible’.

And, even if, in the coming years, the PLA became overwhelmingly strong, capable and confident (not just in carrying out an invasion, but in deterring or beating back American help to Taiwan), the economic arguments for restraint hold.

Finally, some argue that leaders do not always act logically. They cite a parallel with Vladimir Putin, the Russian President. But there are crucial differences. Russia is declining; the PRC is not. Putin is more of an autocrat than Xi, who for all his power must still take account of other CCP leaders. Whether or not Xi’s decision making has always been correct, it has at least a logic, a rationality. Ultimately that logic is based on the uncompromising need to survive in power. Invading Taiwan is an unnecessary risk.

¹² ‘In the event that the “Taiwan independence” secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan’s secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan’s secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.’ See: ‘Anti-Secession Law (Full text)(03/15/05)’, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the United States of America, 03/15/2005, <https://bit.ly/3ApKSDl> (checked: 05/09/2022).

So what will the CCP do about Taiwan? – Overall strategy

If a full blockade or invasion is not on the cards, the CCP has little choice but to continue with the current strategy: to try to break the will of Taiwan's people and to convince them that 'reunification' is 'irresistible and inevitable' using the measures set out in the section below. The 'One Country, Two Systems' idea has long been on a life support machine; events in Hong Kong switched that off. Support for unification in Taiwan is 6.5%, according to the latest poll.¹³

The measures which the CCP may take (see below) are intended to show the Taiwanese people that it is their government and its fruitless policies which are bringing suffering to them. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) is the main culprit in CCP eyes. If the DPP is re-elected in January 2024, a fiercer CCP reaction is likely. Indeed, if towards the end of 2023 a DPP election victory looks likely, that timetable may be advanced. Yet a Kuomintang (KMT) victory may not bring the CCP comfort. To be electable, the KMT will need to take account of the very low numbers of Taiwanese who support unification.

The CCP will also try to convince global opinion of the correctness of its stance. It will seek to mobilise developing nations further, which for many of these countries means an eye to the value for the PRC's money rather than to democratic values.

Possible specific actions over the next few years

If the CCP cannot afford to launch an invasion, it will nevertheless increase the pressure on Taiwan and on its perceived supporters, both to advance its overall strategy and to convince its 1.4 billion citizens that progress is being made.

Measures which could be directed at Taiwan over the next decade:

- Xi is wedded to the idea that youth can be moulded. Attempts to 'educate' or inveigle the young will continue. There is little reason to expect that they will be successful.

¹³ John Feng, 'Taiwan's Desire for Unification With China Near Record Low as Tensions Rise', *Newsweek*, 07/14/2022, <https://bit.ly/3Kr72da> (checked: 05/09/2022).



- The CCP will continue to finance opposition to the DPP, especially via temples and religious foundations where oversight is less stringent.
- The UFWD will try to play an even bigger role, for example in capturing the media and influencing the internet. So far, polls are evidence of the signal failure to persuade.
- Increasing Taiwan's isolation. Taiwan currently has diplomatic relations with fourteen foreign countries, including the Vatican. Efforts to reduce that number will continue. The CCP may seek to inhibit foreign travel by Taiwanese citizens by declaring Taiwanese passports to be invalid documents and by pressuring other countries not to recognise them.
- More prosecutions of Taiwanese living in the PRC on charges of secession. One was reported on 3rd August 2022.¹⁴
- Revamping the 2005 secession law. The current law is general in language and has done little to inconvenience Taiwan. The experience gained from the National Security Law (NSL) imposed upon Hong Kong might be drafted into a NSL to be applied to Taiwan. A clause similar to Article 38 of the Hong Kong law, which gives the NSL extraterritorial effect, would threaten Taiwanese who challenged Beijing wherever they were located (estimates for Taiwanese resident on the mainland vary from 404,000¹⁵ to 1.2 million¹⁶). This reworking of the law has already been spoken of several times by Chinese legal experts.¹⁷
- Pressuring Taiwanese companies. This is already happening. 'Businesses and financial sponsors associated with supporters of Taiwan independence will be penalised according to law', a Taiwan Affairs Office spokesperson said in November 2021 when Taiwan's Far Eastern Group was fined for

¹⁴ Liu Zhen, 'China detains a suspected Taiwanese separatist following Nancy Pelosi's trip', *South China Morning Post*, 04/12/2022, <https://bit.ly/3crKfkQ> (checked: 05/09/2022).

¹⁵ In 2019: 'Number of Taiwanese working in China hits 10-year low', *Taiwan News*, 18/12/2019, <https://bit.ly/3AkxU9U> (checked: 05/09/2022).

¹⁶ In 2020: Kunshan, 'Why commercial ties between Taiwan and China are beginning to fray', *The Economist*, 19/11/2020, <https://econ.st/3cmmESx> (checked: 05/09/2022).

¹⁷ At the 'Two Sessions' political meetings in March 2022, a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference urged that a new Secession Law be drafted. See: Amber Wang, '"Two sessions" 2022: senior Beijing adviser proposes reunification law amid Taiwan tensions', *South China Morning Post*, 09/03/2022, <https://bit.ly/3CxHiJU> (checked: 05/09/2022) and 'PLA drills around Taiwan continue to "rehearse reunification operation" after Pelosi's visit, "exercises blockading island to become routine"', *Global Times*, 03/08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3Km3d8S> (checked: 05/09/2022).



donating to the DPP.¹⁸ It has become routine for the CCP to impose restrictions on sectors of Taiwan exports (apples in September 2021, pineapples in February 2022, and sand and other agricultural produce after Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August), although these are more symbolic than harmful, and are an encouragement to Taiwan to diversify its markets further.¹⁹

- Cyber harassment is a reality of Taiwan's co-existence with the PRC.²⁰ Interference in power and communication networks in Taiwan would be a way of increasing pressure.
- Pressure could be put on Middle Eastern countries to suspend energy supplies to Taiwan. But given PRC-Taiwan economic interdependencies, Beijing would need to be careful not to go too far.
- More frequent and threatening military activity. So far, the PLA has not crossed into Taiwan's territorial sea (12 nautical miles from the coast) or flown over the island. Live fire exercises in areas close to Taiwan have the effect of a temporary blockade. However, since blockades also inflict economic losses on the PRC as well as Taiwan, there will be a limit to their intensity.
- 'Reunite' Jinmen and Mazu, the islands belonging to Taiwan, but situated close to the mainland. The CCP would not use force, but rather 'persuasion' reinforced by a threat to cut supplies of water or power. Would the US react? Would it consider this an attack on Taiwanese territory?
- Occupy the Pratas Islands, located around 200 miles southeast of Hong Kong and 270 miles southwest of Taiwan. They are occupied by a small detachment of Taiwanese troops. The CCP might consider that this 'salami slice' would not provoke a strong international reaction.
- An attempt to capture the Penghu islands, which are close to the west coast of Taiwan. This would require air and naval superiority. Such an attack

¹⁸ 'China warns firms on backing Taiwan independence', *Taipei Times*, 24/11/2021, <https://bit.ly/3PSA4mM> (checked: 05/09/2022).

¹⁹ The goods hit form only a tiny part of Taiwan's trade with the mainland. See: Zhao Ziwen, Ralph Jennings and Ji Siqu, 'China ramps up trade sanctions on Taiwan in wake of Nancy Pelosi's visit, bans sand exports, fruit and fish imports', *South China Morning Post*, 03/08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3QUf4gY> (checked: 05/09/2022).

²⁰ Attacks rose during the Pelosi visit, see: Amber Wang, 'China cancels range of US exchanges after slapping sanctions on Pelosi and family over Taipei visit', *South China Morning Post*, 05/08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3wBxbjx> (checked: 05/09/2022).



would differ little from an invasion of the main island of Taiwan. It is therefore an unlikely escalation.

Measures which may be directed at foreigners in the coming decade:

- There will be increased political pressure on countries to adopt the CCP's position on Taiwan. For most small countries supporting the 'One China Principle' is not a big issue compared to the perceived economic benefits to be gained from the PRC. This is evident from the recent joint statement issued by the PRC and African countries after the recent 'Forum On China Africa Cooperation' meeting.²¹
- Pressure will increase on other countries which try to pursue relations with Taiwan in the manner in which they had in the past. This predates the August visit of Nancy Pelosi to Taiwan. Although Lithuania is the 'shidian' or experimental example, this tightening of the CCP's reaction was advertised in its December 2018 white paper on European Union (EU) relations, whose notably harsher language included phrases such as 'no official contact or exchanges in any form' and 'No institutions of an official nature should be established.'²² Visits by parliamentarians to Taiwan will continue to be a particular focus.
- The CCP is likely to make increased use of sanctions imposed on foreign politicians, academics and others who cross its 'red lines'. Sanctions ban the targets and their families from travelling to the PRC and from doing business with Chinese companies.
- Force foreign companies to choose between the markets of the mainland or Taiwan. For some years now, companies have been made to describe Taiwan in CCP designated terms. This pressure may be increased in more intrusive ways.
- The CCP objects to overflights and sailing through waters around Taiwan by the air forces and navies of free and open countries. While the US, by virtue of its greater military power is treated less harshly, the likelihood is that other nations will meet a more intrusive and dangerous response. In

²¹ Paragraph 3 of: 'Joint Statement of the Coordinators' Meeting on the Implementation of the Follow-up Actions of the Eighth Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation', Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 19/08/2022, <https://bit.ly/3pOceOE> (checked: 05/09/2022).

²² 'China's Policy Paper on the European Union', The State Council of the People's Republic of China, 18/12/2018, <https://bit.ly/3TIWHmA> (checked: 05/09/2022).



recent months, Chinese military aircraft have deliberately flown in front of Canadian and Australian aircraft.²³ The possibility of an accident has grown.

- Although not directed at foreigners, there are likely to be an increasing number of instances of live fire exercises, which would cause temporary problems for shipping (this will fall short of a prolonged and full blockade for reasons adduced earlier).

Conclusions and policy recommendations

How should free and open countries react?

The first step towards sensible policy is understanding: of our own policy, of the CCP's policy and its deliberate misrepresentations, and of what the Taiwanese people themselves want (this last is too often overlooked). We should be aware of the difference between our 'One China Policy' and the CCP's 'One China Principle', to which we have never subscribed. It is for our governments to decide the nature of our relations with Taiwan and not for the CCP. We should be aware of the CCP's distortions of history and not be seduced by them. And above all we should value values. Nearly 24 million Taiwanese have the right to decide their own future. Only 6.5% favour unification.

Secondly, we should understand better the bullying nature of CCP foreign relations. Giving in to it will only lead to further aggression. We should stand firm with Lithuania and other countries who incur the CCP's wrath over Taiwan. There is a need for greater unity of policy between the UK and the EU, and between Europe and our allies in the region, the US, Japan, South Korea, Australia and others. And we should study carefully the tactics and measures used by the UFWD to interfere in Taiwan, because they differ little from those used against other free and open countries. Governments should discuss with Taiwan the CCP's use of 'grey zone' warfare.

Thirdly, we should continue diplomatic efforts to persuade other countries to vote for Taiwan's membership of international bodies such as the World Health Organisation and the International Civil Aviation Organisation.

Fourthly, we should gradually build up relations with Taiwan. This should go beyond just cultural and people-to-people relations. Trade requires the right

²³ 'China accuses Australia and Canada of "disinformation" over jet encounters', *The Guardian*, 07/06/2022, <https://bit.ly/3KnPcre> (checked: 05/09/2022).



framework, including investment and free trade agreements. We should not shrink from parliamentary relations or visits: it is right that our parliamentarians obtain first-hand knowledge and experience of the region. While ministerial visits at the highest levels might be over-provocative, ministers whose portfolios cover the environment, trade, health, and other issues of global concern should visit.

Deterring invasion: belt and braces

However the most important part of the reaction of free and open countries should be deterrence. Even if blockades and invasion are very unlikely for the reasons given, they should do their utmost to deter future, and possibly, desperate CCP action toward these ends. Hitherto the emphasis has been on military deterrence. It has its place. Largely, military deterrence is a US responsibility: European forces are unlikely to be available in sufficient time or numbers. Nevertheless, other free and open countries should be willing to help Taiwan improve its 'porcupine defence', if they have the capability and if the Taiwanese request specific help. That would include training.

But the economic braces are more important. The CCP needs to know now, well in advance, that attempts to impose forceful unification in whatever form will lead to sanctions and embargoes. Warning should be given quietly, but with conviction, and in the near future. Like the nuclear deterrent, this would be Mutual Assured Destruction. And similarly, it would need to be believable.

Governments, encouraged by business, are likely to prevaricate. If they do, they will be at odds with their own publics, parliamentarians and press. In the event of invasion or forceful unification the clamour for sanctions will prove irresistible. Governments need to recognise this now and persuade the CCP of the inevitable.²⁴

Faced with a Taiwan which is significantly better prepared militarily to resist invasion and with the knowledge that invasion or unification against the will of the Taiwanese people will be met with sanctions, the CCP will desist. Its own survival in power is its paramount aim. It understands the inevitable and irresistible logic that sanctions will lead to economic disaster, which in turn will lead to unrest and large-scale protests directed against the CCP. 1989 was a close-run thing: the party nearly fell. That look over the precipice is scarred on its memory. It will not want a second look.

²⁴ Even the Swiss government has said that it would impose the same sanctions on the PRC as the EU, see: Michael Shields, 'Swiss set to match EU sanctions if China invades Taiwan - agency chief', *Reuters*, 30/07/2022, <https://reut.rs/3Kl4JIt> (checked: 05/09/2022).

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