

The Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review

Implications for U.S. – Taiwan Relations

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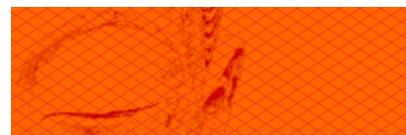
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ROC Army personnel training. Source: Taiwan Today.

Taiwan must currently contend with many pressing security and military challenges. Although the recent cross-Strait political climate has improved, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has steadfastly refused to renounce the use of force against Taiwan while shifting the cross-Strait military balance in its favor. Faced with such challenges, the Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review is meant to increase military transparency while convincing Taiwanese legislators, the Chinese PLA, and U.S. policy makers and analysts alike that the Ministry of National Defense is firmly dedicated to creating new strategies and engaging in reforms that will prepare the military for future challenges. The major themes of the Quadrennial Defense Review are prevention and transformation. It is a defense-oriented strategy that aims to shape the regional security environment and deter conflict while overhauling the military into a leaner, more efficient fighting force with sustainable capabilities.

By including the viewpoints of a diverse group of policy experts, this paper provides a nuanced and holistic account of the complexities faced by Taiwanese defense planners and government officials. It argues that despite any deficiencies, the publication of the QDR represented a positive first step toward creating a road map for future national defense planning. It also signifies a fresh opportunity for facilitating constructive dialogue between defense officials in the Ma Ying-jeou and Barack Obama administrations. In the end, fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, and demonstrating a commitment to solving common security challenges will enhance regional ties and protect the interests of all parties.



Introductory Overview

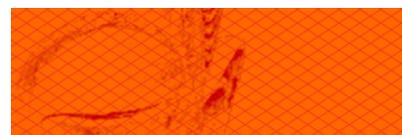
The Taiwan Ministry of National Defense published its first Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) in early 2009. The QDR is an overarching strategic review meant to inform domestic policy debates, U.S.-Taiwan private bilateral discussions, and Taiwanese military officials ultimately charged with its implementation. This policy memorandum will consider contemporary security challenges for Taiwan; summarize the QDR framework and its relevance to domestic and international policy debates; present the issues currently at stake; examine debates among military analysts; identify potential areas of cooperation and conflict for both domestic as well as friendly foreign actors; and discuss how to set a positive tone for future U.S.-Taiwan bilateral dialogue.

Security Challenges for Taiwan

Taiwan currently faces a number of daunting security challenges in the political, economic, diplomatic, and military realms. While Taiwan experiences increasing international isolation and decreasing diplomatic clout, China continues to assert greater influence in the Asia-Pacific region and around the globe. Taiwan thus finds it more and more difficult to achieve meaningful participation in international organizations and defend its agenda abroad, as traditional friends and allies of Taiwan are loath to overtly anger China. Arms sales to Taiwan are an increasingly sensitive issue, despite the legal obligations of the United States under the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act.

Although the recent cross-Strait political climate has improved, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has steadfastly refused to renounce the use of force against Taiwan while shifting the cross-Strait military balance in its favor.

The Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense must contend with many pressing security and military challenges. Although the recent cross-Strait political climate has improved, the People's Republic of China (PRC) has steadfastly refused to renounce the use of force against Taiwan while shifting the cross-Strait military balance in its favor. At the same time, the absence of a mutual defense treaty with the United States signifies that Taiwan



cannot readily assume that the U.S. or other actors would come to its defense if an enemy attacks the island. Taiwanese defense planners must therefore maintain the ability to launch an independent defense. They must also prepare for the possible contingency of forming or joining an ad hoc coalition during a wartime scenario. Even if the United States decided to come to Taiwan's aid in the event of a conflict, not only are American military assets and resources increasingly strained, but many analysts also argue that U.S. power projection capabilities are diminishing vis-à-vis the Chinese military as China's anti-access/area denial capabilities grow.¹

The United States and Taiwanese government share many common beliefs and goals, including a shared commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The United States strongly believes that Taiwan requires robust, capable defense forces that act as a strong deterrent measure against an attack. A vibrant and healthy Taiwan military will contribute to the maintenance of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, as it would allow Taiwan to enter into negotiations with the PRC from a position of strength.

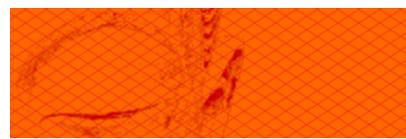


The People's Liberation Army. Source: Getty Images.

Nevertheless, the United States firmly maintains that the future of Taiwan must be resolved in a peaceful manner with the assent of the Taiwanese people. It is within this context that both sides desire to achieve a situation in which Taiwan “is autonomous and prosperous, retains its de facto sovereignty, and allows its people to decide their future in an environment in which coercion is minimized.”² The United States has remained a steadfast friend of Taiwan and a great supporter of its democratic achievements. Similarly, the U.S. is devoted to encouraging democratic reform, the promotion of human rights, the establishment of a firm rule of law, and a more open and transparent government in the PRC. It is in the best interests of the United States and Taiwan to maintain friendly, productive relations while working towards these goals in China.

¹ Dan Blumenthal, Michael Mazza, Gary Schmitt, Randy Schriver, and Mark Stokes, “Deter, Defend, Repel, and Partner: A Defense Strategy for Taiwan’s Future,” AEI, 2009. For more detailed information regarding Chinese military strength, please see the 2009 U.S. Department of Defense annual report to Congress regarding the “Military Power of the People’s Republic of China.” One can download a copy by visiting http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/China_Military_Power_Report_2009.pdf

² Blumenthal, et al., “Deter, Defend, Repel, and Partner.”



Summary of Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review

The Taiwan Legislative Yuan (LY) revised article 31 of the National Defense Act on July 17, 2008, mandating that the Ministry of National Defense (MND) submit a Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) to the legislature once every four years, within ten months of each Presidential Inauguration.³ The QDR allows the incoming President the opportunity to review existing defense policies and determine a future course of action based on his or her own strategic vision. It also provides lawmakers with an opportunity to review and oversee MND policy implementation. These steps further consolidate civilian control over the military. Yet, most importantly, the QDR is meant to provide a road map for future national defense planning.

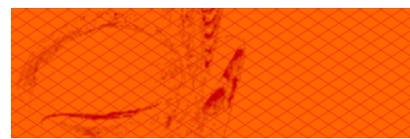
The major themes of Taiwan’s first Quadrennial Defense Review are prevention and transformation. It is a defense-oriented strategy (a “rock-solid and impregnable defensive force,” or “Hard ROC”) that aims to shape the regional security environment and deter conflict while overhauling the military into a leaner, more efficient fighting force with sustainable capabilities.⁴

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The QDR framework comprises of four parts: (1) core defense challenges; (2) defense strategic guidance; (3) planning for defense transformation; and (4) guidance for joint warfighting capability development. First, the QDR recognizes that although cross-Strait tensions have recently decreased and regional actors are increasingly economically intertwined, threats to regional security and stability remain. In particular, it cites growing Chinese political, economic, and diplomatic influence as well as the increasing People’s Liberation Army (PLA) military threat as creating security challenges for Taiwan. The Armed Forces must make use of limited resources to restructure defense organization and capabilities, transform joint warfare capabilities, retool military strategies, and develop ways to accrue national economic benefits from defense technologies. Moreover, the Armed Forces should search for more “partners and avenues for military exchanges, proactively participate in regional security cooperation

³ Conversely, Article 30 mandated that the MND must publish a National Defense Report. In practice the MND has published this report once every two years, and it describes recent policy deliverables and achievements.

⁴ Quadrennial Defense Review Editing Group, Ministry of National Defense, [Quadrennial Defense Review 2009](#) (Ministry of National Defense, March 2009).



activities,” and reduce cross-Strait tensions through the promotion of military confidence building measures (CBMs) to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and beyond.⁵

Second, the QDR defense strategy contains the following objectives: war prevention, homeland defense, contingency response, conflict avoidance, and regional stability.⁶ It advocates the creation of a “Hard ROC” defense and participation in a regional security paradigm to prevent conflict. Furthermore, an operating strategic principle of military planners is one of “resolute defense and credible deterrence.” In the event of war, the Armed Forces should take measures to “deter, defeat, and annihilate” the invading force and protect Taiwan’s national security interests.⁷



The Ministry of National Defense (MND).
Source: MND website.

Third, the QDR advocates reforms that signal comprehensive defense transformation and the desire to streamline and organize the defense structure for greater efficiency. It calls for the creation and staged implementation of an all-volunteer force (AVF) while maintaining conscript training and reserve services, reinstating the ROTC program, and retooling existing NCO programs. The rationale is to recruit competent career personnel and mold them into a more elite fighting force.⁸ Other key aspects of the reforms address armaments

acquisition systems, mechanisms for joint operations command, human resources development, defense expenditure management, and the need to combine defense with civilian needs.⁹

Fourth, the QDR provides guidance for joint warfighting capability development under the aegis of the “resolute defense and credible deterrence” strategic concept. By consolidating and improving the efficiency of joint operations, the Armed Services can secure “strategic sustainment and tactical decisiveness,” thwart enemy attempts to win rapid victories, and reverse the tide in any conflict. The following elements are crucial: joint C4ISR, joint information operation (IO) and electronic warfare (EW), joint counter air, joint sea control, joint ground

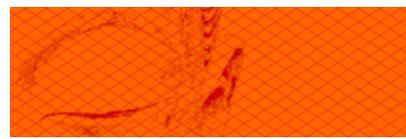
⁵ QDR 5.

⁶ QDR 5-6.

⁷ QDR 6.

⁸ Michael Swaine also points out that the establishment of an AVF is important as conscription is increasingly unpopular in Taiwan. Michael Swaine, Commentator, Taiwan's Quadrennial Defense Review and Defense Strategy, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2 April 2009.

⁹ QDR 6.



defense, asymmetric warfare, reserve mobilization, joint logistics, and intangible combat capabilities.¹⁰

Examining the Issues at Stake

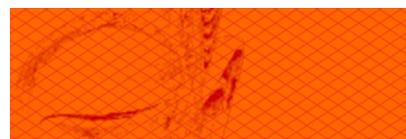
From 2001-2008, officials in both the George W. Bush and Chen Shui-bian administrations grew frustrated with the overall poor state of U.S.-Taiwan relations. On the one hand, U.S. officials saw President Chen and his fellow Democratic Progressive Party leaders as squandering American goodwill. They had hoped that Chen would not engage in “reckless symbolic political gestures that would anger China and undermine stability across the Taiwan Strait.”¹¹ “Provocative” election referenda were deemed unnecessary and counterproductive, and the United States similarly blamed the Chen administration for destabilizing cross-Strait relations.¹² Moreover, the U.S. interpreted the repeated failures of the Legislative Yuan to pass an arms procurement bill as an indication that partisan rancor could trump Taiwan’s commitment to its own defense. On the other hand, the Chen administration argued that it was elected to protect Taiwanese sovereignty and increase Taiwan’s international diplomatic space. It repeatedly stated its willingness to open negotiations without preconditions with the Chinese, but its efforts were largely rebuffed. Furthermore, the DPP argued that it was strongly in favor of passing the arms budget and it was the KMT-PFP voting bloc that was responsible for the legislative deadlock. Once the LY finally passed the budget, it was the Bush administration that subsequently froze arm notifications to Congress until October 2008.

During their respective presidential elections, the Taiwanese and American electorate voted decisively for change. Ma Ying-jeou, the new President of Taiwan, was ushered into office based in part on a platform that sought to reduce cross-Strait relations tensions by

¹⁰ QDR 6-7.

¹¹ Ralph A Cossa, Brad Glosserman, Michael A. McDevitt, Nirav Patel, James Przystup, and Brad Roberts, “The United States and the Asia-Pacific Region: Security Strategy for the Obama Administration” (Washington: Center for a New American Security, February 2009) 23-24.

¹² The Chen administration was extremely disheartened that U.S. officials such as Secretary Rice censured its election referenda. It countered that referenda represent the most basic form of democratic participation. Moreover, it argued that none of the referenda questions dealt with sensitive issues such as sovereignty or independence. During the 2004 elections, the Chen administration put forth two referenda questions. The first asked whether Taiwan should acquire more advanced anti-missile weapons should China refuse to renounce the use of force and withdraw its missiles. The second asked whether the government should enter into negotiations with China to establish a “peace and stability” framework. During the 2008 elections, the DPP and KMT each put forth referenda questions regarding Taiwan’s bid to join the United Nations and other international organizations.

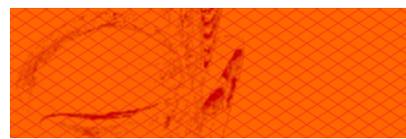


strengthening economic ties. The United States has welcomed warmer relations and increased dialogue between Taiwan and China, arguing that regional stability is in the best interest of all parties. However, the Ma administration's new policies have also encountered a great deal of criticism from the United States and within Taiwan. Taiwanese opponents argue that the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) is willing to slowly erode Taiwanese sovereignty to achieve its goal of stronger ties – both economic and political - with China, while tampering with human rights and the legal system at home. Some detractors in the United States fear that if Taiwan moves too quickly into China's orbit, it will unnerve U.S. allies in Japan and South Korea and negatively affect American security interests in Asia.

The Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Report seeks to allay fears that Taiwan lacks the resolve or commitment to successfully strengthen its own defenses. The QDR serves as an important baseline for future reforms, by creating a strategic framework that is flexible enough to contend with an array of regional security risks while not falling prey to the periodic ebbs and flows of domestic policy changes. It likewise allows the government security bureaucracy to pinpoint what it perceives as outside threats to Taiwan. Although it arguably provides strategic guidelines rather than specific recommendations or directives for implementation, it represents an essential first step towards substantive reforms and consequently more productive, enhanced US-Taiwan dialogue. The document intentionally eschews discussion of specific weapons systems, as the QDR is an overarching aspirational strategic review that should inform future domestic debates, U.S.-Taiwan private bilateral discussions, and the recommendations of Taiwanese military officials who are ultimately charged with implementing the QDR.¹³

The QDR is meant to convince Taiwanese legislators, the Chinese PLA, and U.S. policy makers and analysts alike that the Ministry of National Defense is firmly dedicated to creating new strategies and engaging in reforms that will prepare the military for future challenges. Experts in both the U.S. and Taiwan agree that the stakes are high for the civilian leaders in the Ma administration, MND, and officers in the Armed Forces to come together and make the difficult decisions that would ultimately benefit Taiwan's security situation. After years of strained relations with the United States, the successful implementation of reforms would send a strong, positive signal to its allies and a warning to potential foes.

¹³ Rupert Hammond-Chambers (President, US-Taiwan Business Council), interview by Julia M. Famularo, 23 April 2009.



Whither Deterrence? Concerns regarding the Quadrennial Defense Report

Critics of the Quadrennial Defense Review view it as a vague strategic vision that fails to provide any real substance or address key issues that could have dramatic implications for Taiwan’s ability to repel or defeat an enemy attack. Commander (retired) William Murray, an expert on Taiwan security issues at the Naval War College and creator of the “porcupine” defensive strategy, raised concerns before the QDR’s publication about elements of the assumptions and thinking underpinning Taiwan’s defense strategy, although he is not a critic of the QDR per se.¹⁴ Murray is concerned that Taiwan’s air force and naval bases might be largely destroyed by missile strikes before the Taiwanese can ever react.¹⁵ Murray questions whether the Ma administration and the MND have properly considered these issues, as President Ma has already indicated that he would like to prioritize purchases of American F-16 C/D fighter aircraft.¹⁶ According to Murray, such military hardware will have little utility if the PLA decides to employ military force against Taiwan. “Even with the advantages of receiving strategic and tactical warning,” it might prove extremely difficult for Taiwan to prevent China from destroying its airfields or naval bases with short-range ballistic missiles (SRBM).¹⁷

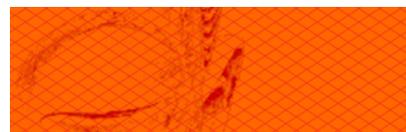
According to Murray, one must subsequently ask how Taiwan can “achieve effective deterrence and resolute defense without a functioning air force, and with a Navy that might be destroyed, incapacitated, locked in a harbor, or locked out of harbors?” He argues that some in Taiwan believe they can combat these problems by procuring expensive weapons systems, including

¹⁴ Murray states that “the porcupine strategy seeks to deny to China the objectives of coercive force while recognizing that much of Taiwan’s critical civilian and military infrastructure can be destroyed by PRC missiles. This could be accomplished in part by hardening and building redundancies into key infrastructure and mastering the arts of camouflage, concealment and deception so that Taiwan can withstand a bombardment; through stockpiling of key materials to outlast a blockade; and by acquiring mobile, lethal defensive weapons that can defeat an invasion.” William S. Murray, Personal communication with author, 21 June 2009.

¹⁵ William S. Murray, Personal communication with author, 16 April 2009. For more specific information on CDR Murray’s views, please see William S. Murray, “Revisiting Taiwan’s Defense Strategy,” *Naval War College Review* 61 (Summer 2008): 13-38.

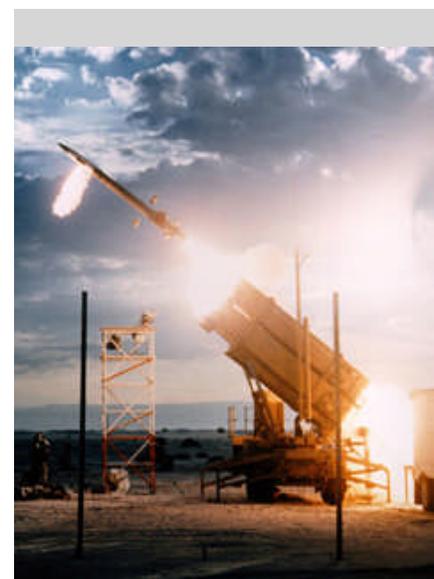
¹⁶ The Ministry of National Defense is appearing to move forward on a plan to develop indigenous diesel submarines with the help of foreign technical advisers. Sources say that the MND has lost hope that the United States will act on its 2001 pledge to sell eight diesel submarines to Taiwan. Building the submarines in Taiwan will spur job creation in the struggling domestic shipbuilding industry.

¹⁷ Murray, communication. CDR Murray proceeds to argue that even if Taiwan successfully brought its naval forces out to sea, it would have to defeat the Chinese PLA Navy in battle, return to port to rearm, refuel, and make repairs. If Taiwan’s air force and land-based radars are destroyed, he is skeptical that Taiwan’s ports will remain open, as China could easily mine them from the air or sea.



submarines, F-16 fighter aircraft, land attack cruise missiles (LACM), anti-ship cruise missiles, and Patriot Surface-to-Air missiles (SAM). One problem with employing LACM is that those weapons are unlikely to effectively counter the mobile transporter-erector-launchers (TELs) that the Chinese 2nd Artillery would use to launch SRBM attacks against Taiwan.

Conversely, Taiwan would have to procure a large number of expensive missiles with the hope of destroying Chinese targets. An inherent risk for the United States is that the Chinese might mistake the attacks as originating from a U.S. ship or plane, and therefore escalate in a way that reduced margins or options for the United States. Likewise, Murray argues that one problem with submarine procurement is that Taiwan could achieve its goals as effectively with other less expensive weapons systems. If Taiwan intends to destroy PLAN amphibious ships, it can also do so with naval mines, mobile coastal defense cruise missiles, attack helicopters, and other weapons systems. Yet Murray believes that during an outbreak of hostilities, the potential failure of existing strategies could put the United States in the extremely detrimental situation whereby it would perceive that it might have to “use force immediately or lose Taiwan now.”¹⁸ As for Patriot SAMs, such weapons are useless if the guiding radar systems are destroyed by Chinese attacks. The PLA has also acquired homing anti-radiation missiles and other anti-radiation systems, such as the Israeli *Harpy*. Furthermore, although PAC 3 SAMs can destroy SRBM and cruise missiles, intercepting one SRBM requires two PAC 3 missiles at a cost of \$ US 9 million each. Finally, Murray argues that the problem with procuring F-16 fighter aircraft is that by employing runway penetrating submunitions in SRBM attacks against Taiwan’s airbases, the PLA’s 2nd Artillery can prevent Taiwan’s air force from defending its skies, which raises the question of the aircrafts’ wartime utility.¹⁹

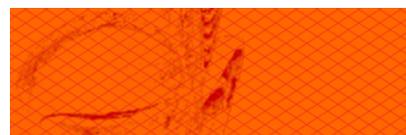


The PAC-3 surface to air guided missile.
Source: Boeing.

Despite concerns that Taiwan’s air and naval capabilities are vulnerable to Chinese missile attacks, the threat of a high-intensity conflict is only one potential scenario. A robust air force and navy could serve Taiwan’s needs during lower-intensity conflicts. Such capabilities are likewise particularly valuable for use in peacetime operations. For example, maritime patrol aircraft and submarines can serve as intelligence collection platforms. Taiwan has also demonstrated its commitment to providing humanitarian relief and assistance during natural

¹⁸ Murray, communication.

¹⁹ Murray, communication.



disasters; the military can use aircraft and ships to expedite relief efforts by transporting aid workers and supplies.

There are other critical reasons why the Taiwanese government might attempt to procure more aircraft, such as the F-16 C/D fighter jets. First, the air force desperately needs to replace its aging fleet. Needless fatalities have occurred during training exercises because some planes and helicopters are no longer safe to fly. Second, procuring new aircraft would make it clear that Taiwan is committed to not only the long-term viability of its air force, but also the modernization of its defense forces as a whole. Third, the purchase of new F-16 C/D aircraft would serve as a symbol of continued U.S.-Taiwan defense cooperation and stronger bilateral ties. Although Taiwan has mentioned that it may eventually wish to procure the F-35 and F-22 fighter jets in the future, it is quite possible that such remarks are meant to gain leverage for the more realistic purchase of F-16 C/Ds, which seem much less provocative in comparison. Some experts have also speculated that the public would support the domestic production of

submarines, rather than procure them from the United States, as such efforts would help create or maintain jobs for Taiwanese workers.²⁰ This approach might help garner greater domestic support for the military. One could make the argument that the “porcupine” strategy advocated by some scholars actually shares a number of commonalities with the Hard ROC strategy. Nevertheless, it is clear that there are also compelling reasons why the Taiwanese government is likely to continue to maintain robust air force and naval capabilities.

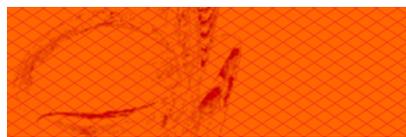


The F-16 C/D. Source: Ministry of Defense, Singapore

In response to Commander Murray’s analysis, Project 2049 Institute Executive Director Mark Stokes points out that Murray outlines many problems but fails to provide enough plausible alternatives and solutions of his own. For example, what would he propose to substitute for the F-16 fighter aircraft or the submarines? Could submarines still prove cost effective under certain conditions and for specific missions?²¹ It appears that despite the Quadrennial Defense Review’s ultimate rejection of the “porcupine” defense strategy, Murray nevertheless believes that as fighter aircraft and submarines are expensive and extremely susceptible to Chinese 2nd Artillery missile strikes, it is still better to consider other solutions. In planning for the

²⁰ As previously mentioned, it appears that the MND has indeed embraced the idea of domestic submarine production.

²¹ Mark Stokes, Personal communication with author.



contingency of successful PLA attacks on Taiwan’s navy and air force bases, Taiwanese leaders should take measures to harden critical facilities and incorporating redundancies into essential infrastructure.

Taiwan thus faces some critical security challenges and pressing questions that the Quadrennial Defense Report fails to address. The United States Department of Defense should engage in comprehensive dialogue with the Taiwanese Ministry of National Defense to raise these questions and determine plausible solutions. Only then should the two sides determine which types of weapons systems are most appropriate for Taiwan’s defense needs. If an objective of the QDR is to enhance deterrence, then Taiwan’s military planners must counter recent weapons acquisitions that have effectively undermined many Taiwanese military advantages.²²

At this time deepening US-Taiwan defense relations and making arms decisions may prove difficult, especially given that Chinese “temper tantrums” suggest uneven play in the Taiwan-US-China triangular relations.

Moreover, the two sides must continue to address other persistent problems. PLA analyst James Mulvenon argues that defense coordination between the United States and Taiwan remains both inconsistent and sub-optimal, which consequently impedes intelligence and technology sharing. Scholars also argue that U.S. officials are reluctant to transfer valuable technology systems to Taiwan based on fears that in the event of a Chinese attack or Taiwanese unification with China, such systems will fall into the hands of the People’s Liberation Army.²³ Moreover, Mulvenon emphasizes that the United States must consider the security implications of the cross-strait rapprochement and greater economic integration. At this time deepening US-Taiwan defense relations and making arms decisions may prove difficult, especially given that Chinese

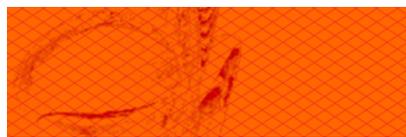
“temper tantrums” suggest uneven play in the Taiwan-US-China triangular relations.²⁴ U.S. and Taiwanese officials should continue to enhance bilateral communication, which will lead to greater mutual trust and resolve issues of concern to both parties. Discussing common security challenges and finding constructive solutions will also allow the Taiwanese to improve future versions of the QDR.²⁵

²² Murray, communication.

²³ June Teufel Dreyer, Personal Communication with Author, 1 June 2009.

²⁴ James Mulvenon. “The TRA: Continuing Relevance and Challenges Going Forward,” presented at “The Taiwan Relations Act at 30: A Seminar on Capitol Hill” and sponsored by The Project 2049 Institute, April 2, 2009.

²⁵ Mulvenon, “The TRA: Continuing Relevance and Challenges Going Forward.”



Identifying Potential Areas of Cooperation and Conflict

The release of the Quadrennial Defense Report has potentially positive benefits for Taiwan's relations with not only the United States, but also friendly nations in Northeast Asia. Rupert Hammond-Chambers argues that the QDR serves as an essential baseline for future dialogue. It is a document upon which the United State can quietly comment over the next few years, enabling new bilateral reports to add contextual layers of substance and meaning. The QDR also expands Taiwan's efforts at military transparency, enabling the country to better articulate its goals and visions for the future. Taiwan has far more to gain by working in tandem with de-facto regional allies; isolation means that Taiwan's ability to draw from the experiences of others is limited. For example, if the Republic of Korea subsequently articulates its desire to procure *Aegis*-based missile defense systems (Japan already possesses two *Aegis*-equipped destroyers), then that might help further consolidate regional positions and strategic planning through arms sales.²⁶

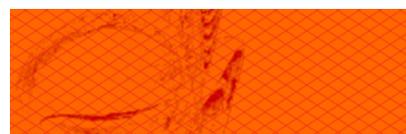
At the same time, another Taiwan policy expert argues that the United States should remain critically engaged by asking questions about the respective defense policies and reforms debated by the KMT, President Ma, and the Ministry of National Defense.²⁷ A number of U.S.-based Taiwan experts have discussed and debated whether President Ma and National Security Advisor Su Chi disagreed with the Ministry of National Defense over the content of the QDR. Some sources believe that Su Chi preferred a “porcupine” defense strategy that would focus on hardening critical facilities and incorporating redundancies into essential infrastructure and processes to survive sustained PLA bombing campaigns.²⁸ However, others indicate that any perceived tensions are merely the by-product of normal bureaucratic negotiations and competition, the limited time frame in which the MND had to produce the document, and the heightened degree of communication between the political leadership and the MND.²⁹ Nevertheless, according to one Taiwan policy expert, the U.S. should carefully examine the

²⁶ Rupert Hammond-Chambers (President, US-Taiwan Business Council), interview by Julia M. Famularo, 23 April 2009, US-Taiwan Business Council, Arlington, VA.

²⁷ Taiwan policy expert, Personal communication with author, 16 April 2009.

²⁸ Please see William S. Murray, “Revisiting Taiwan’s Defense Strategy,” *Naval War College Review* 61 (Summer 2008): 13-38.

²⁹ Such viewpoints were shared with the author by a number of Taiwan politics and security experts.



resulting KMT administration national security strategy and determine whether there is any chance of forging a critical consensus in Taiwan.³⁰

The KMT seems reluctant to listen to the voice of the opposition, which makes it extremely difficult to bridge the policy gaps that exist between the two parties. The Democratic Progressive Party has raised concerns regarding how the KMT cross-Strait policy will affect future defense cooperation between the United States and Taiwan. According to party officials, the increasingly close relations between the KMT and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) have led the Ma administration to not only deliberately underplay the threat from the Chinese PLA, but also undermine Taiwan's national defenses.³¹

The DPP worries that the KMT will not objectively consider the military threat posed by Beijing, subsequently creating self-imposed restrictions prior to requesting future arms packages from the United States. Such actions ultimately affecting the types of weapons procured, both in terms of capabilities and quality. Furthermore, it argues that during a time of financial turmoil, the Obama administration needs the support of China in the short-term. Between the American economic troubles and the KMT's friendly overtures towards China, it is unlikely that the U.S. can bear to risk upsetting China by expanding arms sales to Taiwan.³²

The Democratic Progressive Party believes that the periodic publication of the QDR will contribute to the transparency of national defense policy. However, it asserts that the document fails to adequately address developing trends pertaining to the threat of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. The KMT made election pledges to strengthen Taiwan's defenses, yet the new QDR does not adequately discuss military strategies or capacities. The QDR should make specific policy recommendations for defense planners.³³ In the future, despite past partisan bickering or bureaucratic infighting, it behooves all sides to work together to find constructive solutions to security challenges.

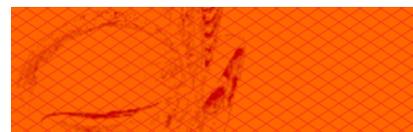
The Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review reflects a professional, comprehensive attempt by the MND to identify security threats and put forth a solid defense strategy. Both the Chinese Nationalist Party and the Democratic Progressive Party believe that it is essential to create a robust defense posture, as it underpins Taiwan's ability to negotiate from a position of strength. The DPP opposition sees a strong defense posture as the cornerstone of Taiwan's

³⁰ Taiwan policy expert, Personal communication.

³¹ Democratic Progressive Party Headquarters, Personal communication with author, 16 April 2009.

³² Democratic Progressive Party Headquarters, Personal Communication.

³³ Democratic Progressive Party Headquarters, Personal Communication.



ability to represent its sovereign status abroad. A certain percentage of the Taiwanese population likewise suspects KMT motives vis-à-vis China, and worries about the potential impact on U.S.-Taiwan relations.³⁴ It is beneficial for Taiwanese of opposing viewpoints to engage in healthy dialogue about Taiwan's strategic security planning, and officials should encourage constructive debate.

Setting a Positive Tone for Future Bilateral Dialogue

The publication of the Quadrennial Defense Review represented a positive first step towards creating a road map for future national defense planning. It also signifies a fresh opportunity for facilitating constructive dialogue between defense officials in the Ma Ying-jeou and Barack Obama administrations. The United States Department of Defense is still currently in the process of bringing new assistant secretaries of defense into government and gaining Congressional approval. Over the next two to three months, senior non-cabinet level officials from Taiwan will come to the United States to discuss arms sales and a broad range of ties.³⁵

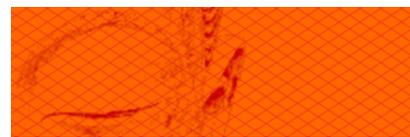
While Ma is publicly prioritizing the procurement of U.S. F-16 C/D fighter aircraft, some lend credibility to the notion that there exists a lack of consistency between what the KMT advocates in public and in private.³⁶ The MND will put forth its draft budget in June, which remains a challenge because some offices within the Ministry will not yet be fully staffed. Nevertheless, the Taiwanese should prepare for senior level defense meetings with the United States, even if they have limited time to discuss budgetary issues.³⁷ The United States DOD and DOS should work towards arriving at a consensus by this summer regarding Taiwan's specific defense needs. It must also ascertain what the KMT administration is actually willing to purchase. Having learned from the mistakes of the Bush administration, the Obama administration is unlikely to expend political capital offering expensive and comprehensive weapons packages to the Taiwanese only to subsequently witness them balk at actually procuring the systems. Asia-Pacific security expert June Teufel Dreyer adds that the U.S. government requires Chinese support for numerous priorities on its international agenda, such as the global economic downturn, climate change, and the perceived nuclear ambitions of the

³⁴ Rupert Hammond-Chambers, interview.

³⁵ Rupert Hammond-Chambers, interview.

³⁶ Rupert Hammond-Chambers, interview.

³⁷ Alexander Chieh-cheng Huang, "Taiwan QDR 2009: Defense Policy of Ma Ying-jeou," Taiwan's Quadrennial Defense Review and Defense Strategy, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2 April 2009.



DPRK and Iran. Many U.S. officials will thus remain wary of engaging in actions that unnecessarily anger the Chinese or upset the cross-Strait balance.³⁸

However, the United States must also recognize the glaring fact that the Taiwanese possess a great many indigenous defense fighters (IDFs), F-5, Mirage 2000s, and F-16 fighter aircraft that require servicing and replacement. The Taiwanese have previously requested UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopters. However, the Bush administration failed to include the aircraft when it finally sent a formal notification to Congress regarding the arms package in October 2008.³⁹ The



The UH-60 Black Hawk utility helicopters
Source: aerospaceweb.org

French appear increasingly loath to sell the Taiwanese their Mirage fighter aircraft, and the same applies to other friendly nations under increasing pressure from China to cease arms sales to Taiwan. In this light, the United States should carefully consider aircraft procurement requests that Taiwan deems necessary to maintain a robust air force.⁴⁰ If the U.S. fails to make available appropriate fighter aircraft, then Taiwan might need to consider relying increasingly upon domestic industries.⁴¹ Such a solution is in line with QDR recommendations to combine defense needs with civilian technological expertise to benefit the entire economy.

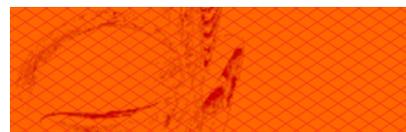
Thus, although the Taiwan Quadrennial Defense Review represents an extremely useful starting point for dialogue between the Obama and Ma administrations, it is up to both sides to seize this opportunity to improve defense ties. Both Taiwan and the United States remain firmly committed to maintaining a stable, peaceful security situation in the Asia-Pacific region. The United States should adopt the strategy of creating an informal bilateral and multilateral framework in which the U.S. and its Northeast Asian allies can discuss regional security issues with Taiwan. Fostering an atmosphere of mutual trust, respect, and demonstrating a commitment to solving common security challenges will enhance regional ties and protect the interests of all parties.

³⁸ June Teufel Dreyer, Personal communication with author, 19 April 2009.

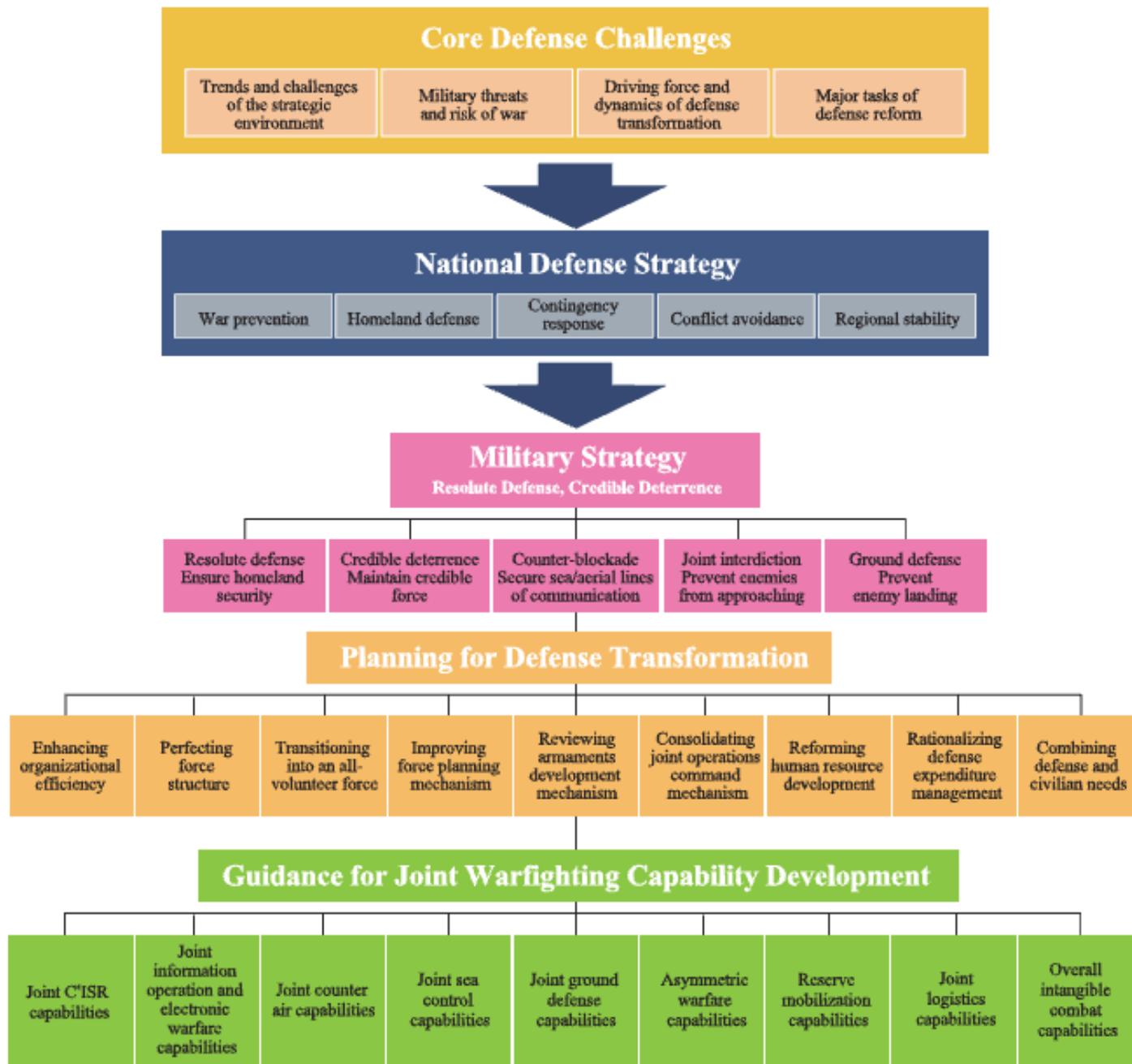
³⁹ It now appears that Congress will receive notification regarding the proposed sale of 60 UH-60 Black Hawk helicopters to Taiwan in fall 2009.

⁴⁰ Rupert Hammond-Chambers, interview.

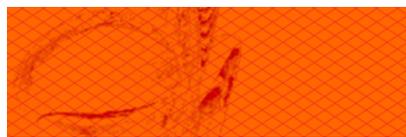
⁴¹ Mark Stokes, Commentator, Taiwan's Quadrennial Defense Review and Defense Strategy, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2 April 2009.



Framework of the ROC Quadrennial Defense Review

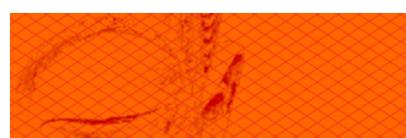


Source: Quadrennial Defense Review Abstract, p. 17.



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