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Changing the Asymmetric Strategic Equation Across the Taiwan Straits

Tony Tung-Lin Wu

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About the Author

Tony Tung-Lin Wu is Colonel of Marine Corps, Dean of Faculty of Marine Corps School, graduated from the War College at Armed Forces University and the Graduate Institute of International Affairs & Strategic Studies (GIASS) at Tamkang University. He is now pursuing Ph.D. in the Soochow University (SCU). He was Research Fellow of Strategic Studies Institute & Senior Instructor of Graduate Institute of Strategic Studies, NDU. He also was Staff of Ministry of National Defense, Deputy Chief of Staff of Patrol and Escort Flotilla 168, Deputy Commander of Suao Naval Command, and Commander of Marine Corps. His areas of research are: International Politics, Interactions among the United States and Cross-Straits under International System, Military Strategy, Taiwan Maritime Strategy.

吳東林 海軍陸戰隊上校，現任海軍陸戰隊學校教育長。畢業於三軍大學（國防大學前身）戰爭學院、淡江大學國際事務與戰略研究所；目前於東吳大學政治學系攻讀博士學位。曾任國防部參謀、海軍 168 艦隊副參謀長、海軍蘇澳基地副指揮官、海軍陸戰隊主官及作戰主管、國防大學戰略研究中心研究員。主要研究領域包括國際政治、國際體系下的美國與兩岸互動關係、軍事戰略、台灣海洋戰略。

E-mail: rocmc@ms24.hinet.net

Mobil Phone: 0956801591



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Changing the Asymmetric Strategic Equation Across the Taiwan Straits

Abstract

Taiwan, together with its adjacent areas across the Taiwan Straits, holds the key to the West Pacific Ocean. It leaves little room to doubt that Taiwan should have its identity oriented toward the sea. However, as strategic depth of Taiwan is too narrow to have sufficient space for manoeuvre, ready and solid defence is hardly accessible. Hence, whenever the threat from the west arises, it is apparent that, geopolitically speaking, Taiwan is in lack of relative advantages.

In the process of China’s rising up, the resolution of the so-called “Taiwan issue” is of the first priority in China’s strategic agenda. Faced by this strong and hostile drive, Taiwan needs to accomplish a strategy that not only can transform reaction to free-will, forcing China to follow Taiwan’s initiative, but make up for deficient quality and limited quantities, as well.

From the military perspective, as Taiwan is short of sufficient strategic depth and lines of supply, and its flank protection is vulnerable, the overall strategic posture is not to Taiwan’s favour. In other words, Taiwan is subject to China’s strategic encirclement. With this unfavourable strategic situation in equation, Taiwan should adopt the idea of the detour tactics raised by Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese military strategist, and highlight the value of central position on the sea promoted by Alfred T. Mahan. To put them into practice, Taiwan should identify itself as an actor on the central platform across Western Pacific. Only through this strategic arrangement can Taiwan better position itself against China than a confrontational disposition faced by it.

An old Chinese proverb goes that, if you want to cool down the soup, taking off the firewood under a wok is more effective than scooping off the boiling soup in the wok. To substantiate this conventional wisdom, the strategy of two-tier defence is recommendable. As taking initiatives are what a strategist constantly bears in mind, administering battlegrounds earlier than the enemy moves is important to seize this initiative. Arguing in this way, the eastern front of Taiwan faced by a spatial ocean is exactly the niche that Taiwan can transform reaction to freewill, forcing the enemy to dance to Taiwan’s tune. In essence, two-tier defence is looking for means to

tactically contain Mainland China but strategically avoid confronting it. It is to make good use of the first and the second island chains in the Pacific Ocean. With strategic planning in the geographic context between the two island chains, it is expected that Taiwan can enlarge its strategic depth and freedom for manipulation.

Key words:

1. Geographic Strategy (geo-strategy)
2. Strategic Equation
3. Military Strategy
4. Two-Tier Defence

I. Foreword

An insightful viewpoint regarding essence of war used to be raised by Karl Von Clausewitz, who was of the view that war is the continuation of politics and it is carried out to serve political purpose. More importantly, all the outcomes of war have political connotation. In other words, the military is instrumental for the political. For quite a long time, nevertheless, military strategy adopted by Taiwan seems incapable of deter China from military coercion. Taiwan’s future is shadowed by PRC’s potential blockade and constraints.

For half a century after WWII, it is acknowledged that military strategy of Taiwan has transformed itself through varied stages. All the previous changes, however, failed to put Taiwan onto a strategically advantageous position. The main reason for this is that Taiwan has suffered with ambiguity in strategic orientation. Simply put, in the process of strategic planning, the Taiwanese authorities failed in identifying characteristics and interests of Taiwan’s geo-strategic position. They narrowed their potential threat down to one from the west rather than expanding their views based on maritime orientation and placing Taiwan at the centre of Western Pacific. Without this understanding, Taiwan has not only missed the good opportunity to take extensive seas as its security shield, but has been forced into a strategic dilemma ever since.

The gap between Taiwan and the PRC, in terms of defence scale, is undeniable. Qualitatively speaking, Taiwan is superior to Mainland China in respect of personnel and training effects. In recent years, however, with thriving economic conditions on the Chinese side, China has begun its purchases of high-tech weaponry and advanced know-how in large a number. To the extent that the dominant position used to be enjoyed by Taiwan has declined, if Taiwan cannot have a better military strategy, the already asymmetric posture against Taiwan will deteriorate.

It is a consensus that military strategy is deeply related to national survival and defence security in Taiwan. With this concern in mind, this paper starts with exploration of geographical strategic advantages in respect of Taiwan and the sea. Secondly, with a view to comprehending strategic utilities, i.e., advantage, disadvantage, loss and gain, across the Straits, it analyses the security environment of Taiwan and assess strategic posture across the Taiwan Straits. In the process of

this effort, the paper will seek an approach, assisted by principled beliefs of Sun Tzu and Alfred T. Mahan, to maximize gains and avoid unnecessary losses alongside the ongoing strategic developments. From a new perspective, this paper attempts to map out a military strategy, aimed at transforming reaction to freewill and changing the asymmetric posture against Taiwan across the Straits. Lastly, the paper seeks to sketch a mainstay of defence enterprise from conventional pulse of military strategy, which may happen to be a referent for decision-makers and future researches.

II. The Sea and A State’s Strategic Orientation

A proper military strategy helps secure interests in its geostrategic position. Nevertheless, military strategy is dictated by national strategy. A clear identification of national strategy, to put it thoroughly, is deeply related to issues whether a state is in an advantageous position to best guarantee its national survival and security.

i. Geographic Strategy/Characteristics of Taiwan

Geographic strategy arises as the result of, at least partially, strategic interaction between states and regions. It also comes out of concept of land power, which emphasises the central gravity of the heartlands, and notion of sea power, which stress central position at sea. Having said that, however, the paper never hesitates to point out that whether a state can obtain substantial strategic advantages will depend upon relative concern, rather than absolute calculation.

From the sea power perspective, Taiwan as well as its maritime neighbourhood is located in the bottleneck of sea route in Western Pacific. It commands the Sea Line of Communication in Western Pacific, holds the key to Chinese eastern coastlines, and links Japan, Korea, Russia’s Far East to the Indian Ocean and the Malay Archipelagos. Taiwan’s strategic location is important in the sense that it not only holds the central position alongside the First Island Chain, but also serves as a watershed between the East China Sea and South China Sea.

More significantly, ever since 1980s, Western Pacific region has increasingly turned itself as an area with fastest economic growth. Most countries, to do their economic activities, take the South China Sea and Palawan Passage as two of the main routes on the sea in Western Pacific. These two international navigation routes can be seen as economic arteries between Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, and

even Europe. It is well argued that whichever state commands this maritime area, it seizes the key to overall half of navigation channels in Asia Pacific. On the other hand, Western Pacific is where the strategic powers of US and China meet. It is also arguable that Sino-US power competition in this area seeks nothing but an access to important passages in Western Pacific. Against this geography, Taiwan displays itself as a strategic bridgehead of Western Pacific, commanding Straits of Taiwan and Bashi. In the eye of strategists going for sea power, Taiwan is a strategic location. With rich maritime sources in the neighbourhood of Taiwan Straits, how to rationally explore its natural resources and secure free passage of the Sea Line of Communication will be deeply associated with common security and shared interests between Taiwan and its neighbouring states.

The land power advocates will stress the necessity to hold internal Crescent in the process of power struggle among the powers. Taiwan in this perspective will reflect the essential point. Seeing from the Asian heartland, especially from Mainland China, Taiwan is exactly located in the internal Crescent area while Taiwan, Hainan and Zhoushan archipelagos constitute three protruding horns as natural shelters for inland China. The interesting point here is that Taiwan occupies a central position in this triangular geography. As long as China does not have Taiwan under its power domain, the natural shelter this paper draws cannot be in shape as there is an indenture. With this, the Chinese southeast coasts are under the threat from external force. Indeed, without Taiwan as a corresponding peer, Hainan's strategic significance to secure China's southern boundary has been dwarfed. Quite to the opposite, it is even more vulnerable to a blockade of the Sea Line of Communication in the South China Sea.

Seen from the above, Taiwan's geographic position is highly important to the power equation of main powers either from the perspective of sea power or from that of land power. However, in terms of Taiwan proper, things are more complicated. Geographically, Taiwan is hilly and mountainous. In terms of landscape, the central areas are of high sea levels, while the surrounding areas are low. Taiwan shapes like a spindle, 144 kilometres in breadth, 380 kilometres in length, and the measure of land area accounts for 35,750 square kilometres. From the perspective of military security, neither Taiwan proper nor the Taiwan Straits enjoys sufficient strategic depth for manoeuvre. It is well understood that offence is

easier than defence. In contrast to the arguments made by sea/land power advocates that take a positive view about Taiwan, the strategic interests available to Taiwan are insignificant. This is especially true when it comes to realities when the threat from the west is manifest and persistent.

ii. Strategic Orientation and Interests of A Ocean State

Taiwan is a typical Ocean State seen from its geographic position in the middle of the First Island Chain along Western Pacific. Ever since the ancient time, Taiwan had been active in maritime life. For four hundred years in the history of Taiwan, Taiwan’s fortune, economic life and security have been deeply related to the sea. In other words, it is undoubted that Taiwan’s strategic orientation points at the sea.

On the other hand, however, being an ocean-oriented country, Taiwan cannot take its geographic and strategic interests for granted if it has a national security strategy without maritime thinking. Taiwan ought to explore and then make good use of its geostrategic advantages by placing the notion of sea power into its overall national strategic planning so that military strategy planning can be systematically ushered in. With this effort, this country cannot survive and develop itself, nor can it break away with its security dilemma, or maximize the needed interests in the international society. If we, limited by our conventional strategic thinking, take Taiwan as one island attached to Asia Continent and have no vision for strategic development characterised by a maritime country, Taiwan will be forced into an unfavourable posture in the process of main powers going for expansion once they seek to impose their influence into the Pacific.

As Taiwan is a typical maritime state, its surrounding seas are significant barriers and natural shelters for national security. By commanding and exploiting its surrounding seas, Taiwan can enlarge its security depth and neutralise threat from the sea. Failing to do these, by contrast, will force Taiwan to have its surrounding seas a springboard of invasion; hence, it strengthens national security concern of this country. In a word, being one of the actors in the Pan-Pacific region, Taiwan is supposed to have the Pacific Ocean as an important geographic space to survival and development. The geographic position, measure of the area, sea terrains, geostrategic significance and maritime security environment of the Pacific Ocean are vital references in drawing up national security strategy of Taiwan, if Taiwan

attempts to elevate its international status and has strategic impacts on regional arrangements.

On the other hand, once being identified as a maritime state, a maritime strategy should be Taiwan’s baseline of national security strategy, and the core value of it is advancement of sea power. Rational application of sea power in terms of its conception, theory and principles will contribute to the link between a maritime state’s strategic interests and security environment. Mahan, in his *Naval Strategy, Compared and Contrasted with the Principles and Practice of Military Operation on Land*, pointed out that among various important geographic factors, the so-called “Central Line” or “Central Position” has a decisive impact on strategic values. With this, this paper argues that the principle of “Central Position” has an enlightening meaning when it comes to geostrategic interests available to Taiwan.

To be specific, although Taiwan is situated at the middle of First Island Chain, from a long term viewpoint together from geographic and threat concerns, taking the Taiwan Straits and the First Island Chain as national security shelter will render Taiwan no strategic depth at all. Simply put, in spite of the fact that Taiwan is a maritime state by nature, it does not sufficient exploit the extensive seas as its homeland security shelter. In the process of planning national security strategy with maritime strategy as the core value, if Taiwan can put Mahan’s theory of central position into practice by extending its security shelter into the Pacific Ocean east of Taiwan proper, things will change. Taiwan with this arrangement will place itself at the centre of West Pacific, a position that it can reap the geostrategic benefits and interests. It can also neutralise the threats from China’s rise, avoiding the security dilemma and the occasion when Taiwan has to cut off all means of retreat.

III. Changes of Security Environment Across the Taiwan Straits

The sea routes along the Chinese east coasts provide the main artery between Southeast and Northeast Asia. Ever since reforms and openness in China, cities and economic districts alongside the coasts have turned out to be core zone for China’s expansionist economic strategy. Looking into the developing process of China’s maritime strategy, the expansionist economic development strategy that established itself in 1979 brought forth necessary conditions for strategic change in China, who, as a result of it, became more capable of orientating itself towards the sea. The side

effect of this strategic change of China on the other hand was tremendous impacts on Taiwan’s security environment.

i. China’s Rise Up and its Maritime Initiatives

At the end of 2003, China’s leadership brought forward the discourse in respect of China’s peaceful rise, seeking to neutralise the concern about the so-called China’s threat and the coming collapse of China. No matter China is following the path of rising up in peace or that of aggressive expansion, the trend of China’s comprehensive power—political, economic, military—are fast growing and continuously rising is factual and prospective. That China’s growing influence in Asia Pacific and international society cannot be underestimated.

China’s peaceful rise, however, is not only a result, but also part of process of development with fast growing economic strength as its eye-catching hallmark. Ever since 1979, China’s comprehensive power has risen dramatically, with average economic growth rate per year being over 8%. In 2000, China’s GDP was \$1,080 billion, which amounted to 3.4% of the world GDP and ranked the sixth in the world. In 2003, China’s GDP reached \$1,400 billion and hit the fifth in the world rank. It is anticipated that China will overtake Britain, moving itself to the fourth in the world in 2004.

China’s rise in peace as a discourse can be seen as a new development strategy. It consists of three parts. First, it is the maintenance period, aimed at maintaining a secure environment, keeping the status quo, and placing the emphasis on sovereign integrity. Second, it is the constructing period, aimed at constructing a security environment favourable to China and recovering the lost territories ultimately. This is an aggressive strategy. Third, it is the administration period, aimed at strategic balance and stability by drawing up a new economic and political order that is, instead of favourable to China, widely acceptable to international society. China for this moment is at the first period.

From the above analysis, the paper admits that China’s successful advocate for the peaceful rise is, to a great extent, a result of liberal values, market mechanisms and internal development, rather than plunder through war. It is quite different from other empires on the rise in history that war and plunder seem unavoidable. However,

the paper would like to point out that, having been divided into three period as above, China’s peaceful rise, in terms of strategy, is not purely defensive or restrained. The internal nature of the rise has not digressed from the core of outward-looking and expansionist strategy *per se*. Considering the increasingly cumulative economic strength of China in recent year, the paper sees a further expansionist trend of political and military force.

From the perspective of military strategy under adjustment, the PLA’s Naval doctrine in 1989 had transformed its basis from offshore defence to active defence at sea. In 1992, China announced the Act of Contiguous Zone, attempting to justify its boundary expansion at sea by jurisprudence. Also in mid-1980s, China had mentioned about an idea of setting up a strategic boundary consisting of three tiers in its maritime strategy. That is: inner tier (150 nautical miles) , middle tier (300 nautical miles) , and outer tier (starting from the Aleutians in the north to the South China Sea in the south) . It is also reported that China wishes to have its maritime power reach the First Island China in early 21 century, and capable of commanding the Second Island China by 2050; **Figure 1. PRC’s Strategic Boundary Concept.** Moreover, China is of the view that with the unceasing improvement of standoff striking capabilities in modern maritime force, if China fails to intercept or attack enemies beyond 1,000 nautical miles, national security is hardly warranted. In light of drawing up a maritime strategy fit for twenty-first century, China is currently building up a maritime force capable of sheltering the whole West Pacific Ocean. China’s aggressive act exposes nothing but substantial threat to the sea line of communication and national security in Taiwan as well as its neighbouring countries in Asia Pacific.

ii. Crisis and Strategic Dilemma in Taiwan

China had gone through a seal-off policy close to the outside world for a long time after the end of WWII. But it has been zealously rising up to face the world at this moment. In the process of China’s making trying effort to elevate its political and economic influence and stand confidently before the eye of the world, Taiwan, as a result of its geostrategic position, can be of an exceedingly important strategic interest and value to China’s ascendancy.

From the perspective of China’s maritime development, China is admittedly an

Asian continental state bordering on the sea and it has extensive seacoast lines. Nevertheless, China’s maritime spaces in the east are geographically closed. If China attempts to enter the Pacific Ocean, looking for interests from the sea, there are still geographic barriers on the paths between its offshore areas and the Ocean. For instances, East China Sea and Yellow Sea are blockaded by Japan, while South China Sea is cordoned by Southeast Asia. China will find itself in lack of a direct access to the Pacific Ocean except via Taiwan and Taiwan’s neighbouring waters. If Taiwan is subject to foreign powers’ control, China’s efforts of carrying out its maritime strategy will be seriously obstructed.

Whereas the above induction, in the process of China’s ascendancy, a resolution of the issue of Taiwan has become the gravest concern in Beijing’s overall strategy. This is particularly true when the external environment to accommodate China’s rising is increasingly better off, Taiwan will be an obstacle in China’s geographic outlets. In other words, how to at least properly handle the issue of Taiwan turns out to be an important premise for China’s ascendancy in peace. As long as the issue can be resolved, China will open up an easy access to the Pacific Ocean, Taiwan, Hainan and Zhoushan archipelagos will go back to their assumed geostrategic relations in defence. This will boost China’s security and development to a great extent.

In fact, China, faced by the issue of Taiwan, has been psychologically prepared for the worse case. China is of the view that, even if the crisis across the Straits erupts or escalates into war, which deeply affects the Chinese benign image of rising to power and slows down its progress, it can take this opportunity to resolve the issue of Taiwan properly. The war in other words will re-shape the mechanism across the Straits, and bring in another kind of peace and stability for the peaceful rise of China. This argument, if substantiated, sows the seed of a potential risk to Taiwan’s survival and security. Looking into the future, if China gradually matures up in its rising to power, begins to enforce its maritime strategy, and attempts to resolve the issue of Taiwan alongside its exercise of power in the Pacific Ocean, the strategic equation across the Straits will be gravely threatened, judging from the imbalance of military strength between Taiwan and China. Under the condition that Taiwan has no effective measures to cope with this contextual ties, it is supposed to be forced into a strategic dilemma.

In retrospect, Taiwan is challenged by asymmetric strategic equation across the Straits. Apart from continually elevating the quality and quantity of its readiness, having quality military strategy is the first priority to change the asymmetric equation. However, in the past half century, Taiwan’s concept of military strategy has not deprived itself of the conventional thinking dominated by China’s overwhelming military threat and its initiatives. From “recovery of the mainland” before 1970s, to “integration of offence and defence” in 1980s, to “defensive defence” in 1990s, and to “effective deterrence and consolidated defence” in the early 21st century, Taiwan has been looking forward to confronting China eye to eye, which is indeed a passive form of thinking.

The question is: can the confrontational strategic thinking change the asymmetric equation across the Taiwan Straits? Can the current strategic planning address the crisis in the future or can it turn the table around by resolving the strategic dilemma we are facing? If not, what high quality military strategic planning is to the need of Taiwan? Theoretically, Taiwan needs a superior set of strategic planning to make up for qualitative and quantitative limitations by transforming reaction to freewill, forcing the enemy dictated by the initiative of this side.

IV. Assessment of Strategic Equation Across the Taiwan Straits

In doing assessment, this paper understands that methodologically, Taiwan and China are the main objectives in the observation of strategic equation across the Straits and the quality and quantity of the military strength on both sides are the basic parameters. Having said that, however, this paper is also aware that relative weight of military strength on both sides is not a necessary condition for victory as limitations of battle space and change of initiatives have profound impacts on the final result of conflict.

i. Military Personnel

• *Military Strength in China*

Despite the claim of streamlined forces, the Chinese military establishment consists of People’s Liberation Army, People’s Armed Force, Militia and Reserves. There are 2,320,000 strong personnel in the PLA, among which army (ground force) number more than 1,500,000 personnel, navy 340,000, air force 330,000,

and second artillery 120,000. In 2003, the defence budget of China accounts for \$185,300 million Reminbi, roughly about \$22,379 million dollars, which kept the edge of 9.6% on the rise. In 2002, China announced a defence budget of \$166,000 million Reminbi, about \$20,097 million dollars, rising 17.6%. According to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, China’s actual defence expenditure is three to four times higher than that of the declared amounts.

Since China is limited by time pressure in face of the issue of Taiwan, it has prioritised its order of battle toward its southeast coasts, and this re-orientation has caused great concern among the Taiwanese population. China on the other hand is continuing its R&D effort and speedy military deployment including more than 600 M-11 and M-9 modified types of guided missiles covering the whole Taiwan area. It is anticipated that when the Chinese land-based and sir-based cruise missiles will be in service in 5 to 10 years, they will gravely affect national security of Taiwan. The crisis of Taiwan is no less serious than war situation.

• ***Military Strength in Taiwan***

The total military personnel in Taiwan is 370,000 strong. After the first round of streamlining effort, advanced weapon systems are introduced with a view to elevating quality of readiness. The current development of force structure sets its priority on elevating joint warfare capability. There are 190,000 army personnel that constitute one of the main combat components in Taiwan. Automation of command and control, three-dimension operation capability and mechanisation of weaponry are major objectives of force modernisation. In order to strengthen strike capability of airborne cavalry brigades, CH-46SD Chinook transportation helicopters, purchased from the United States, have been in service after June 2003. In a loner term, when AH-64 Apache armed helicopters come into the service, the army can break away the landscape limitation, and brings its force into full play in three-dimension battlegrounds.

With respect to the navy, it has 50,000 personnel with automation of command and control, three-dimension counter submarine warfare capability, and strengthening missile systems as three main objectives in force modernisation. Surface vessels including Lafayette, Perry, Knox and Jin-Jiang class frigates are all in service. The Guang-Hua Six Plan, shipbuilding effort of a stealth missile

speedboat is under way. It is a 150-tonnage second-generation shipbuilding effort, strengthened by Shiung-Feng II anti-ship missile systems. Its prototype was launched in Qi-Jin, Kaoshiung. The Guang-Hua Six is scheduled to produce 30 vessels with a view not only to replacing the current 50-ton missile speedboats but also to achieving a comprehensive strike capability on the sea including high-tier and low-tier levels. The paper also has to report that, at the moment of this writing, eight submarines planned to purchase from the United States are proceeding as expected. According to the defence budget announced in 2003, the navy also bought 4 Kidd Class vessels, among which the first is supposed to come into service by the end of 2005, and the rest of three will arrive in 2006-7 sequentially.

With respect for the air force, it has 50,000 personnel with automation of command and control, integration of air defence, and precision of strike as three main objectives in force modernisation. The main fighters have all into service, undertaking the combat readiness with sufficient combat power. The backbone of fighters include 150 F-16 Fight Falcons, 60 M-2000 Mirage, 130 IDF Jing-Guo, 4 E-2T Hawkeye 2000. To advance the personnel quality, the air force is making great effort to strengthen its orientation training and combat readiness.

In order to cope with the threat from Chinese guided missiles, each headquarters command established Missile Command on April 1, 2004. This command unit is to integrate responsibility of air defence operation and it is subject to the operation control of the joint staff headquarters, Ministry of National Defence. The Missile Command has been equipped with Patriot, Sky Bow, Hawk SAM systems and Shiung-Feng I and II type anti-ship missile systems. It is understood that deterring and counter-attack weapon systems manufactured by Chung Shan Institute of Science and Technology are going to be in service under the Missile Command.

• **Comparison of Armed Forces Across the Taiwan Straits**

Taiwan			China (PLA)		
Item		Number	Item		Number
Defense Budgetary (2003)	Amount	7.9 billion USD	Defense Budgetary (2003)	Amount	22.379 billion USD (3 or 4 times higher)
	Proportion	16.5%		Proportion	7.82% (3 or 4 times higher)
	Grow Rate	3.8%		Grow Rate	9.6% (17.6% in 2002)
Total Force	370,000 ⁺ personnel (Main force as below)		Total Force	2,320,000 ⁺ personnel (Main force as below)	
Air Force	Force	50,000 ⁺ personnel and 510 ⁺ aircraft	Air Force	Force	330,000 ⁺ personnel and 3,600 ⁺ aircraft
	Fighter	470 ⁺		Fighter	2,300 ⁺
	Transport Aircraft	40 ⁺		Transport Aircraft	420 ⁺
	Bomber	0		Bomber	120 ⁺
	Early Warning	4		Naval Aircraft	760 ⁺
Navy	Force	50,000 ⁺ personnel and 90 ⁺ vessels	Navy	Force	340,000 ⁺ personnel and 200 ⁺ vessels
	Battleship	20 ⁺		Battleship	50 ⁺
	Submarine	4		Submarine	60 ⁺
	Amphibious Ship	10 ⁺		Amphibious Ship	10 ⁺
	FAB	60 ⁺		Missile Boat	80 ⁺
Army	Force	190,000 ⁺ personnel	Army	Force	1,500,000 ⁺ personnel
	Operations Area	5		Military District	7
	Fighting Vehicle	2,700 ⁺		Fighting Vehicle	17,000 ⁺
	Artillery	1,300 ⁺		Artillery	24,500 ⁺
	Helicopter	40 ⁺		Helicopter	220 ⁺
Missile Command	Force	7,000 ⁺ personnel	Second Artillery Corps	Force	120,000 ⁺ personnel
	Missile	30-40 units		Missile	600 ⁺

Sources : Designed by the Author; Data collected from MND, “2002 National Defense White Paper,” *Ministry of National Defense* (Taipei), August 2002, <http://163.29.3.66/whitepaper.pdf>; Federation of American Scientists, <http://www.fas.org/man/dod-101/ops/taiwan-crisis.htm>; Central News Agency, *2004 World Almanac* (Taipei: Central News Agency, Dec. 2003) .

To summarise, the total force of China is six folds of Taiwan, and the Chinese defence budget is three folds of it. If following the US pre-assumption that the Chinese defence budget has to enlarge three to four times of the announced figure, the final result of the comparison is that Chinese defence budget is nine folds of the Taiwanese one. In quality, objectively speaking, personnel and training quality as well as weapon efficiency in Taiwan are on the whole better than those of China as a result of education availability. However, when it comes to certain advanced weapon systems used by services, a part of Chinese systems are superior to those in Taiwanese forces. Having said these, the paper hastens to add that the above assessment is based upon some basic perimeters available for comparison of the total strength of the two military establishments across the Straits. The paper reiterates that in the assessment, limitation of battle spaces and change of commanders' will are also critical to strategic equation.

ii. Strategic Equation Across the Straits under China's Expansionist Move

• *The Overall Military Development in China*

After market reforms and open to the West for more than two decades, China has had firm basis for its modernisation objective in respect of agriculture, industry and technology. Looking forward to keep abreast with other main power in future multi-polar system, China is currently on the way for modernising its defence—the fourth modernisation effort. Since China fully realises that the key factor of its maritime expansion lies in resolving the issue of Taiwan, its main deployed force alongside southeast coastal lines are characterised by penetrating strike capabilities such as short range ballistic missiles, new battle ships, submarines, landing vessels, Su-fighter jets. They are also featured by offensive and compelling effect such as air force, navy and second artillery troops. Most importantly, the overall combat power is annually on the rise.

• *Threat substantiated by diversifying invasion modes and purposefully launching military exercises*

PLA is making trying effort to develop information warfare tools and asymmetric tactics. This makes its operating modes of invading Taiwan with diversification and variety. As military exercises are carried out in accordance with the highest directive—pressing unification by the military act, these exercises are

purposive. Based on the long-term observations of military exercises made by the US and related countries, there are 30 important military exercise per year in China. Among them, as high as two thirds of the number have been performed with the purpose aimed at Taiwan. The developing tendency, either in form of quantity or in extent, is on the rise. This constitutes even more serious threat to Taiwan.

• *Assessment of Strategic Equation Across the Straits*

As China is of the view that hi-tech has become the decisive factor of modern warfare, its concept of military strategy has transformed, taking local warfare won by high-tech as the mainstay of thought. Directives to PLA emphasising speedy victory in standoff attack and decisive victory in the first phase of war have been mature. It is anticipated that PLA will not stop strengthening its joint warfare capabilities in the next decade. Its defence will be characterised by a transition from being continentally based towards border-based, seeking to reach the goal of preventing foreign intervention into the Straits of Taiwan.

From the perspective of military strategy, as the Chinese military expands, it will inevitably create a dramatic change of the strategic equation across the Straits. Four dimensions including reinforcements, gravity of force, routes of supply, battle phase development will be added for an assessment of the strategic equation by this paper. This assessment is based on the premise that Taiwan can sustain and survive the first wave of missile attacks from China.

First, reinforcements. Owing to limited battle space that constrains the two sides from engaging each other by dense deployments, the combat capabilities gap between the two sides are not too distant at the initial period if military confrontation erupts into crisis across the Straits. Taiwan will be faced by the main battle troops from Nanking military district, which consists of 260,000 group troops, East China Sea Fleet and front line fighters. Undeniably, the Chinese reinforcements will be overwhelmingly beyond what the whole Taiwanese troops can afford to cope with; **Figure 2: Battlefield Space Across the Straits Demonstration.**

Second, gravity of force. As the result of limited battle space and not too dense deployments at the initial stage, it is expected that in certain combat areas, the gap of central gravity of force between the two sides will not be too distant. However, it is

admitted that China has more room of freewill and adaptability to manoeuvre its combat troops; **Figure 3: Armed Forces’ Concentrations Across the Straits Situation.**

Third, routes of supply. Seeing the fact that China has extensive boundaries, its routes of supply can be traced far back to the inlands with less likelihood of being cut off. Taiwan in contrast has narrow strategic depth. There is no sufficient depth for drawing up routes of supply if Taiwan’s defence is based on the conventionally single lineal arrangement—First Island Chain; **Figure 4: Supply Lines Across the Straits Comparison.**

Fourth, battle phase development. Taiwan’s two strategic flanks, each one on the north and the south, are vulnerable because of its lack of depth. Also, given the premise that Taiwan can sustain the first wave of guided missile attacks, the lack of routes of supply makes Taiwan look like an isolated battleground. This will subject Taiwan to strategic encirclement by another wave of attack; **Figure 5: War Development Across the Straits Trend.**

In summary, the overall strategic equation proves unfavourable to Taiwan on the grounds of the fact that Taiwan is in lack of strategic depth and routes of supply. Its vulnerable flanks will subject Taiwan to strategic encirclement and isolation from the foreign relief. Taiwan is faced by grave challenges! If Taiwan attempts to recondition the unfavourable battle environment and tip the asymmetric strategic equation, efforts have to be made. A new vision with broader perspectives in discussing military strategy of Taiwan is called for!

V. Changing the Asymmetric Strategic Equation Across the Taiwan Straits

The blind spot of those people talking about Taiwan’s military strategy lies in the emphasis of the defending Taiwan’s coastal areas in the west instead of a full understanding of Mahan’s “Central Position”, a tenet of Sea Power, although some of these people well recognise the four surrounding seas are a natural shelter of Taiwan national security. Without positioning Taiwan at the centre of the West Pacific Ocean, and without taking the whole sea boundaries as Taiwan’s strategic depth, the intention to tip the asymmetric strategic equation across the Straits and resolve the dilemma can hardly come true.

i. Two-Tier Defence

The main reason that peace and stability could exist across the Straits in the past was Taiwan’s keeping superior quality and quantity of military forces, aside from international constraints. However, with China’s reforms and openness, comprehensive power of China has speedily grown up. After the end of Cold War, China, confident in its superior economic condition and military diplomacy, began to purchase high-tech weapon systems and absorb sophisticated technologies from main weapon manufacturing countries, especially from the Commonwealth of Independent States. This development has cut short the gap between Taiwan and China with respect for military superiority enjoyed by Taiwan in the past. But the tendency bodes ill on the diplomatic front that Taiwan has long been blockaded by China in international society, with no easy access to defensive systems needed.

To summarise, seeing from the fact either based on the past, current and future, it is a natural trend that the overall development of military rise across the Straits is both asymmetric and to the interest of China. Faced by this dramatic change, Taiwan has to weigh the overall situation seriously—whether there is a need to discuss future military strategy from a fresh perspective? It is undeniable that China’s military threat has to be a necessary contextual factor in drawing up Taiwan’s military strategy, but it seems that confrontation eye to eye has not to be the sole alternative.

Admittedly, people who drew up the military strategy of Taiwan also took the Straits of Taiwan as a natural shelter in a serious manner. However, this has put Taiwan’s posture into an asymmetric equation. A detour arrangement with a view to securing national security, on the other hand, could be possibly a better and more suitable option than adopt a confrontational posture to engage China. That said, Taiwan need to rethink and ponder deeply over the concepts of Sun Tzu, the ancient Chinese military strategist. In practice, Taiwan ought to reconsider whether the extensive Pacific Ocean replace the Straits of Taiwan as starting point of discussing how to address China’s military threat. In other words, taking the Pacific Ocean as natural shelter is to put Taiwan at the centre of the Pacific Ocean which is actually in correspondence to Mahan’s tenet of “Central Position”.

By practising Mahan’s and Sun Tzu’s conceptions and principles, Taiwan

should furthermore draw up a strategy of two-tier defence characterised not only with a new vision but flexibility. This strategy seeks to effectively address the trends as a result of China’s maritime strategy in the Pacific Ocean that will eventually threaten Taiwan. To do this, the so-called two-tier strategy is to replace conventional thinking based on the design of the First Island Chain that has limited Taiwan’s military initiatives.

The purposes of two-tier defence are tactically to blockade China and strategically to avoid confrontation with China by sufficiently making use of extensive sea areas between the First Island Chain and the Second Island Chain so that the strategic depth of Taiwan proper can be enlarged. The purposes are possible in that the practical strategic moves both based upon the First Island Chain and the Second Island Chain are combined. Therefore, tactically, it is the First Island Chain to contain China since Taiwan is faced by the direct threat from China. Strategically, it is a decision to avoid making choices among the less promising options. It is, rather, long-term planning with more flexible and endurable strategic alternatives that become the focus of attention.

The paper hastens to add that strategic avoidance from being confrontational with China by no means implies shrinking back. Rather, it creates greater options for self-willing action. If the strategy of two-tier defence is adopted, its strategic interests can be illustrated as follows. First, when China attempts to trespass the First Island Chain, the Second Island Chain that has been pre-deployed, as a result of Taiwan’s looking into the Pacific Ocean and other countries’ administration in advance, will come out as a check. The previously arrangement alongside the Second Island Chain can not only integrate Taiwan’s maritime national security strategy then, but also upset China’s planning and tempo in its military entry into the Pacific Ocean.

Secondly, Taiwan has been consistently taking the First Island Chain as the sole defensive line against the Chinese military threat for quite a long time. It is also for this reason that Taiwan is left with no strategic depth. If Taiwan can adopt the strategy of two-tier defence and begin its combat preparation alongside the Second Island Chain, the strategic dilemma will presumably be greatly alleviated. The current shortcoming as the result of insufficient strategic depth will be addressed,

helping Taiwan off the hook to fight an unfavourable war.

Thirdly, aside from building up the second tier of defence line on the Second Island Chain so that Taiwan can broaden its strategic depth in military planning, there are two scenarios that will be to Taiwan’s advantage after China begins its power exercise, placing its fingers into the Pacific Ocean. One is China’s forceful invasion of Taiwan. China must seriously place Taiwan’s military deployment on the Second Island Chain and the military coalition as the result of this deployment if China is determined to attack Taiwan. The other is a possibility, though less likely, that China sails into the Pacific Ocean by avoiding Taiwan. The paper argues that it is less likely in that doing this will place China’s fleets caught between a disjoint head and tail. In short, after the strategy of two-tier defence is in shape, China not only has to be cautious about the military coalition by the US and its neighbouring countries alongside the Second Island Chain, but also concerned about Taiwan’s threat from the back.

In summary, while singular lineal defence has insufficient strategic depth, the strategy of two-tier defence can in effect broaden Taiwan strategic depth to address the coming threat. While conventional thinking opts to force Taiwan into a strategic dilemma, the strategy of two-tier defence has the strength of flexibility, capability of disturbing China’s tempo and strategic calculation when it seeks to enter the Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, the strategy of two-tier defence helps Taiwan with the likelihood of contract alliance and cooperation with its neighbouring countries, alleviating the pressure of isolation. With superior strategic moves, this strategy can be expected to trade off the inferiority of quantity and qualities of weapon systems in Taiwan, and to ease the tempo of arms race across the Straits.

Moreover, let us go back to the four dimensions analysed in previous section. If Taiwan looks into the Pacific Ocean, especially into the area west of the Second Island Chain, where Taiwan begins its combat readiness, it can trade off China’s reinforcements if invasion occurs. It can add Taiwan’s battle space and its flexibility of combat power, substantially broadening Taiwan’s strategic depth and effectively neutralising Chinese effort of strategic encirclement; **Figure 6: Changing the Strategic Equation Across the Taiwan Straits.**

ii. A Clear Mainstay in Defence Planning

The above analysis potently demonstrates that Taiwan’s homeland defence has been limped by the concept of singular lineal defence in the past half a century, and this cannot afford the threat China’s future attempt to set its foot on the Pacific Ocean. An old Chinese proverb goes that, if you want to cool down the soup, taking off the firewood under a wok is more effective than scooping off the boiling soup in the wok. To substantiate this conventional wisdom, the strategy of two-tier defence is recommendable. In the second place, a good war planner underlines initiatives. He or she seeks to administer the battlegrounds one step ahead of the enemy to secure the initiatives. This is this paper’s viewpoint that the extensive oceanic space on the east of Taiwan is the niche that can change reaction to freewill, forcing the enemy under the dictation of our initiatives. There are two dimensions that can serve as the mainstay of defence planning as the result of the strategy of two-tier defence.

• *Establishing Military Diplomacy*

In addition to the power struggle between the US and China in the West Pacific Ocean after the end of Cold War, Japan and South Korea also pay close attention to security of Sea Line of Communication in this area. Japan’s “National Defence Program Outline” of November 1995 and “US-Japan Defence Cooperation Guidance” of September 1997 stipulated that Japan Self-Defence Force extend its area of responsibility up to the boundaries covering 1,000 nautical miles.

In South Korea, as its foreign trade is nearly dependent upon maritime transportation, how to protect its sea line of communication is a vital interest. South Korea, as a result, brought forth a maritime strategic concept, attempting to move from “purple” water to blue water zones. From 1990s onwards, with the announced objective to security navigation on the sea in the Pacific Ocean, South Korea has had several exercises with allies such as the US, Australia, Japan and Canada. Taiwan, following the overall strategic development trend in the West Pacific Ocean and the so-called strategy of two-tier defence, ought to make trying effort to develop military links to neighbouring countries, among which, the US, Japan and South Korea are the main targets. By strengthening military cooperation, Taiwan can substantiate the strategic concept of two-tier defence.

• *Strengthening the combat power of submarines*

Submarines can be used in occasions such as strategic blockade, mine-laying, disturbing, and attacking the enemy’s ports from sea bottom in an all-embracing form. As Taiwan is surrounded by sea and its threat comes from a hostile country ready to use its sea power, submarines turns out to be a best option. Because, instead of the above scenarios where submarines are the answer, submarines can counter the sea blockades placed by the enemy’s submarines. That said, Taiwan should develop its submarine combat power in certain sea areas in order to boost its counter-barricade capability. By doing this, Taiwan can to a great extent make up for its vulnerability of flanks on the north and south and narrow strategic depth, neutralising China’s effort of strategic encirclement. Additionally, as a maritime country, Taiwan’s has unbounded national security scopes. Threats come from four dimensions including open air, inlands, seashore, and below the water. It is admitted that combat power from below the water is highly sophisticated. It is also one of the strategic spaces that any two military rivals will compete for. Without security force below the sea, the sea may inevitably becomes the springboard of attack, however sound the defence on the sea surface.

Taiwan currently has four submarines, among which two are sword-dragon class that have been in service in 17 years. With cruise range for 12,000 nautical miles and endurance for as long as 60 days under the sea to carry out independent missions, these submarines are capable of deterrence, indeed. Nevertheless, they are limited in number so that they fail to constitute as an manifest threat to the enemy. Another two are XXX class submarines that have been in service for sixty years. The do not have efficient batteries, nor sufficient depth in diving, which limit their striking capability. Overall, operational requirements that come from the tests of war game rooms shows that Taiwan needs at least 10 submarines to fulfil missions of security around Taiwan and effectively provide shelters across the Straits.

• ***Deploying Mobile Force on the Sea***

The purpose of deploying mobile force on the sea is to project the force out of the enemy’s anticipation so that Taiwan can achieve the effect of deterring the enemy from any potential military moves. The paper is suggesting that major force components of this mobile force is ground troops on vessels so that there is a mobile combat unit capable of fight amphibiously. To illustrate, the distinction of a mobile force on the sea and ordinary mobile units lies in the capability of the former that

can change the leverage of the sea, a natural asset, from one to enemy’s interest to one advantageous to this side. Also, because a mobile force on the sea has the priority to have access to sea-based logistics and sea-based fire support, it has the potential to seize the initiative and dictate the invading troops on the battlefronts.

The sea provides mobile force on the sea with the niche to deter the enemy from placing threat towards Taiwan. In measurement of the strategic equation across the Straits, this paper is the of the view that, if Taiwan deploys the first rate ROC marines on naval vessels as the mobile force on the sea, under appropriate air command, will prove a set of effective deterring combat power. This force arrangement will neutralise China’s intention and will to launch amphibious landing against Taiwan.

• *Transferring Missions of Ground Troops*

As mentioned above, the strategic orientation of Taiwan is to identify itself as a maritime country. Therefore, although in future war across the Straits, Taiwan proper is the main logistic base, objectively speaking, air campaigns and sea battles may prove decisive of the overall process of the military engagement. This is especially true after the purchases and deployments of advanced weapon systems. Against the ground battles heavily dependent upon dense barracks, modern weapons will be less meaningful or even irrelevant to those conventional patterns of war effort. Looking into the future, the paper argues that the ground defence on Taiwan proper should rely on strike force stationing at critical landscapes. To streamline force scale and boost combat power, coast guard, reserve or police authorities should take over the missions of offshore defence and garrison on the landscapes.

VI. Conclusions

Taiwan’s military strategy has ended with being incapable of deterring China from military coercion for quite a long time. Although having gone through several phases of transformation, the result of each phase did not improve Taiwan’s strategic equation. The failure stems from in Taiwan’s ambiguity in its strategic orientation. The following eight recommendations may be advisable.

• *Taiwan has geo-strategic values but no relative advantages*

Taiwan, together with its adjacent areas across the Taiwan Straits, holds the key

to the West Pacific Ocean. Situated at the centre of the First Island Chain, Taiwan not only commands the bottleneck of the Chain but overlooks the watershed between the East and South China Sea where maritime power states will not hesitate to compete for and whose strategic importance cannot be overestimated. Moreover, Taiwan is situated at the internal crescent belt, where theoretically is also a critical area that military rivals are jockeying for. For continental countries in Asia—especially China, Taiwan, Hainan and Zhoushan archipelagos constitute three protruding horns. Without Taiwan as part of it, i.e., if China cannot have control over Taiwan, the natural shelter for inland China will be incomplete. Having pointed out that, however, Taiwan has its limitations. Taiwan proper and the Straits are in lack of sufficient strategic depth for manoeuvre, which make Taiwan hardly defensible but easily exposed to potential attack. When it comes to the threats from the west of Taiwan, lack of geo-strategic advantage seems potently clear.

- ***Taiwan should orient itself as a maritime power strategically***

From its four hundred years of history and geographic position, Taiwan's fortune, economics and national security have been closely linked to the sea. There is little doubt that Taiwan's strategic orientation and its state identity is towards the sea. By contrast, without a maritime geo-strategic development blueprint as national vision, Taiwan will find no access to practical strategic advantages. In the process of drawing up a maritime-based national security strategy, Taiwan should refer to Mahan's tenet of “Central Position” and extend the security scope into the east of Taiwan in the Pacific Ocean. This change of perception will not only physically place Taiwan at the centre of the West Pacific Ocean, but also garner a lot of geo-strategic advantages.

- ***China's Ascendancy and Security Environment Change across the Straits***

China claims that its rising up before the eye of the world depends upon market values, change of international systems, and self-fulfilling development, rather than plunder through war. With these, it argues that China's ascendancy will be peaceful and will not be similar to the main power rising to hegemony in the ordinary history. However, this paper is of the view that China's peaceful rise is not strategically purely defensive or restrained. The internal nature of the rise has not digressed from the core of outward-looking and expansionist strategy *per se*. By adjusting strategic deployments, China harbours the wish to reach the First Island Chain in early 21st

century and command the Second Island Chain by 2050. In addition, China is looking forward to establishing a maritime force that is capable of covering the whole West Pacific Ocean according to its maritime strategic planning by mid-21st century. China’s relentless effort to enter the north and south of the West Pacific Ocean has created ominous threats to the sea line of communication and national security of Taiwan and other Asian Pacific states.

• ***Taiwan’s Crisis and Strategic Dilemma***

In the process of China’s rising to hegemony, Taiwan becomes the burning issue. Judging from the military balance across the Straits that increasingly tips towards China, if China attempts to resolve the issue of Taiwan alongside its process of strategic entry into the Pacific Ocean, the strategic equation in Taiwan Straits will be deeply affected. Without effective measures to cope with this likelihood, Taiwan will be forced into a strategic dilemma. However, From “recovery of the mainland” before 1970s, to “integration of offence and defence” in 1980s, to “defensive defence” in 1990s, and to “effective deterrence and consolidated defence” in the early 21st century, Taiwan’s concept of military strategy has not deprived itself of the conventional thinking dominated by China’s overwhelming military threats and its initiatives. Taiwan has been looking forward to confronting China eye to eye, which is indeed a passive form of thinking. Taiwan needs a superior set of strategic planning to make up for qualitative and quantitative limitations by transforming reaction to freewill, forcing the enemy dictated by the initiative of this side.

• ***The Gap between the two militaries across the Straits***

The paper brings forth the statistics that the total force of China is six folds of Taiwan, and the Chinese defence budget is three folds of it. If following the US pre-assumption that the Chinese defence budget has to enlarge three to four times of the announced figure, the final result of the comparison is that Chinese defence budget is nine folds of the Taiwanese one. In quality, objectively speaking, personnel and training quality as well as weapon efficiency in Taiwan are on the whole better than those of China as a result of education availability. However, when it comes to certain advanced weapon systems used by services, a part of Chinese systems are superior to those in Taiwanese forces.

• ***A Strategic Posture of No Choice***

From the perspective of military strategy, the paper finds out that, as the Chinese military expands, it will inevitably create a dramatic change of the strategic equation across the Straits. After exploring reinforcements, gravity of force, routes of supply, battle phase development, an assessment of the strategic equation can be summarised as follows.

First, it is found that because limited battle space that constrains the two sides from engaging each other by dense deployments, the combat capabilities gap between the two sides that are not too distant at the initial period if military confrontation erupts into crisis across the Straits. Undeniably however, the Chinese reinforcements will be overwhelmingly beyond what the whole Taiwanese troops can afford to cope with.

Second, the paper finds out that as a result of limited battle space and not too dense deployments at the initial stage, it is expected that in certain combat areas, the gap of central gravity of force between the two sides will not be too distant. However, it is admitted that China has more room of freewill and adaptability to manoeuvre its combat troops.

Third, the paper compares and finds out that China’s routes of supply can be traced far back to the inlands with less likelihood of being cut off. Taiwan in contrast has narrow strategic depth. There is no sufficient depth for drawing up routes of supply if Taiwan’s defence is based on the conventionally single lineal arrangement—First Island Chain.

Fourth, the paper observes that Taiwan’s two strategic flanks, each one on the north and the south, are vulnerable because of its lack of depth. Also, given the premise that Taiwan can sustain the first wave of guided missile attacks, the lack of routes of supply makes Taiwan look like an isolated battleground. This will subject Taiwan to strategic encirclement by another wave of attack. In a word, the overall strategic equation proves unfavourable to Taiwan on the grounds of the fact that Taiwan is in lack of strategic depth and routes of supply. Its vulnerable flanks will subject Taiwan to strategic encirclement and isolation from the foreign relief. Taiwan is faced by grave challenges!

• *Thinking about the Strategy of Two-Tier Defence*

The paper posits that seeing from the fact either based on the past, current and future, it is a natural trend that the overall development of military rise across the Straits is both asymmetric and to the interest of China. The paper therefore argues that faced by this asymmetric equation, Taiwan should apply Sun Tzu’s detour tactics and Mahan’s tenet of “Central Position”. In practice, the military strategists ought to physically place Taiwan at the centre of the West Pacific Ocean. This is a better alternative for national security policy than confronting China eye to eye.

The paper claims that the purposes of two-tier defence are tactically to blockade China and strategically to avoid confrontation with China by sufficiently making use of extensive sea areas between the First Island Chain and the Second Island Chain so that the strategic depth of Taiwan proper can be enlarged. It is expected that this strategy will provide the following interests in view.

First, when China attempts to trespass the First Island Chain, the Second Island Chain that has been pre-deployed, as the result of Taiwan’s looking into the Pacific Ocean and other countries’ administration in advance, will come out as a check. The previously arrangement alongside the Second Island Chain can not only integrate Taiwan’s maritime national security strategy then, but also upset China’s planning and tempo in its military entry into the Pacific Ocean. Meanwhile, with superior strategic moves, this strategy can be expected to trade off the inferiority of quantity and qualities of weapon systems in Taiwan, and to ease the tempo of arms race across the Straits.

Second, if Taiwan can adopt the strategy of two-tier defence and begin its combat preparation alongside the Second Island Chain, the strategic dilemma will presumably be greatly alleviated. The current shortcoming as the result of insufficient strategic depth will be addressed, helping Taiwan off the hook to fight an unfavourable war.

Third, if China decides to have forceful invasion of Taiwan, it must seriously consider Taiwan’s military deployment on the Second Island Chain and the military coalition as the result of this deployment. On the other hand, China may sail into the Pacific Ocean by avoiding Taiwan, but doing this will place China’s fleets caught

between a disjoint head and tail.

To conclude, if Taiwan looks into the Pacific Ocean, especially into the area west of the Second Island Chain, where Taiwan begins its combat readiness, it can trade off China’s reinforcements if invasion occurs. It can add Taiwan’s battle space and its flexibility of combat power, substantially broadening Taiwan’s strategic depth and effectively neutralising Chinese effort of strategic encirclement.

• *A Clear-cut Mainstays in Defence Planning*

An old Chinese proverb goes that, if you want to cool down the soup, taking off the firewood under a wok is more effective than scooping off the boiling soup in the wok. To substantiate this conventional wisdom, the strategy of two-tier defence is recommendable. As creating initiative is what a strategist constantly bears in mind, administering battlegrounds earlier than the enemy moves is important to seize this initiative. Arguing in this way, the eastern front of Taiwan faced by a spatial ocean is exactly the niche that Taiwan can transform reaction to freewill, forcing the enemy to dance to Taiwan’s tune. The paper therefore suggests four mainstays for military planning based on the strategy of two-tier defence.

The first is regarding military diplomacy. Taiwan, following the overall strategic development trend in the West Pacific Ocean and the so-called strategy of two-tier defence, ought to make trying effort to develop military links to neighbouring countries, among which, the US, Japan and South Korea are the main targets. By strengthening military cooperation, Taiwan can substantiate the strategic concept of two-tier defence.

The second is related to strengthening combat power of submarines. Taiwan should develop its submarine combat power in certain sea areas in order to boost its counter-barricade capability. By doing this, Taiwan can to a great extent make up for its vulnerability of flanks on the north and south and narrow strategic depth, neutralising China’s effort of strategic encirclement.

The third is in respect of deploying mobile force on the sea. The purpose of deploying mobile force on the sea is to project the force out of the enemy’s anticipation so that Taiwan can achieve the effect of deterring the enemy from any

potential military moves. This paper therefore strongly recommends that Taiwan deploy the first rate ROC marines on naval vessels as the exact mobile force on the sea. Under appropriate air command, the force will prove a set of effective deterring combat power. This force arrangement, as believed by this paper, will neutralise China’s intention and will to launch amphibious landing against Taiwan.

The fourth is about transfer of garrison missions. Against the ground battles heavily dependent upon dense barracks, modern weapons will be less meaningful or even irrelevant to those conventional patterns of war effort. Looking into the future, the paper argues that the ground defence on Taiwan proper should rely on strike force stationing at critical landscapes. Therefore, in order to streamline force scale and boost combat power, coast guard, reserve or police authorities should take over the missions of offshore defence and garrison on the landscapes.

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 25. To take simultaneous effort of administering both the First Island Chain and the Second is the findings of this paper after exploring Taiwan’s military strategy for quite a long period of time. It was first brought to the public in September 2003, when this paper was delivered in the conference “welcoming globalisation, going beyond 2008” or “Taiwan Go, Go, Go”, organized by Institute for National Development and Foundation of Taiwan’s Heart. In act, the concept of two-tier strategy has come out from many discussions. As it has been interacting with Vice President Annette Lu’s instruction to look into the Pacific Ocean, the idea is also integrated into her book *Taiwan’s Great Future*, published in February. Through quotations and additional remarks, this paper tries to link the historic context of military development across the Strait to Sun Tze’s strategic thinking and Mahan’s Sea Power tenets with a view to making the discourse comprehensive and systematic.
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