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Taiwan in the Shadow of a Rising China

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It is a great honor and pleasure to be here in Taiwan talking to the annual conference of the Association of International Relations. I would like to thank Professor Tzong-Ho Bau for inviting me to give this address and, of course, I would like to thank all of you for coming out to hear me speak.

My topic for today is "Taiwan in the Shadow of a Rising China." I would like to cut into this subject by focusing on a simple question that is profoundly important for everyone in the audience: what are the implications for Taiwan of China's continued rise?

Let me begin with two framing points.

First, I am simply assuming that China's economy will continue growing at an impressive rate over the next few decades. It is still an open question whether that will happen. Indeed, there are intelligent people who think China will face major economic problems in the future and that it will grow slowly at best. As I will make clear, we should all hope that prediction comes true. But I am assuming it will not and China's rise will continue.

Second, my focus is not on the situation Taiwan faces today or even in the next few years. Instead, I am interested in assessing the situation Taiwan will confront in the decades ahead, when China is far more powerful than it is today. The fact is that present-day China does not possess significant military power; its military forces are inferior to those of the United States. Beijing would be making a huge mistake to pick a fight with the American military nowadays. Contemporary China, in other words, is constrained by the present global balance of power, which is clearly stacked in America's favor.

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But again, I am not concerned with the present situation. Instead, my focus is on a future world in which the balance of power has shifted sharply against Taiwan and the United States, where China controls much more relative power than it does today, and where China is in roughly the same economic and military league as the United States. In essence, I want to talk about a world in which China is much less constrained than it is today.

My argument is that the continuing rise of China will have huge consequences for Taiwan, almost all of which are bad. Not only will China be much more powerful than it is today, but it will remain deeply committed to making Taiwan part of China. Moreover, China will try to dominate Asia the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere, which means it will seek to reduce if not eliminate the American military presence in Asia. The United States, of course, will resist mightily, and go to great lengths to contain China's growing power. The ensuing security competition will not be good for Taiwan, no matter how it turns out in the end.

Let me begin by briefly describing Taiwan's core interests as I see them and then talk about how an increasingly powerful China is likely to think not only about Taiwan, but the broader region as well. I will then consider the U.S. reaction to a rising China, paying special attention to how American policymakers are likely to think about Taiwan. Finally, I will put all these different pieces of the story together and assess how Taiwan is likely to think about its long-term security.

Taiwan's Goals

In an ideal world, most Taiwanese would like their country to gain de jure independence and become a legitimate sovereign state in the international system. This outcome is especially attractive, because a strong Taiwanese identity – separate from a Chinese identity – has blossomed in Taiwan over the past 65 years. Many of those people who identify themselves as Taiwanese would like their own nation-state, and have little interest in being a province of mainland China.

According to the Election Survey Center, in 1992, 17.6 percent of the people living in Taiwan identified as Taiwanese only. By June 2013, that number was 57.5 percent, which is obviously a clear majority. Only 3.6 percent of those surveyed identified as Chinese only. Furthermore, the 2011

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Taiwan National Security Survey found that if one assumes China would not attack Taiwan if it declared its independence, 80. 2 percent of Taiwanese would in fact opt for independence. Another recent poll found that about 80 percent of Taiwanese view Taiwan and China as different countries.

However, Taiwan is not going to gain formal independence in the foreseeable future, mainly because China would not tolerate that outcome. In fact, China has made it clear that it would go to war against Taiwan if it declares its independence. The "Anti-Secession Law," which China passed in 2005, says explicitly that "the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures" if Taiwan moves toward de jure independence. It is also worth noting that the United States does not recognize Taiwan as a sovereign country, and according to President Obama, Washington "fully supports a one-China policy."

Thus, the best situation Taiwan can hope for in the foreseeable future is maintenance of the status quo, which means de facto independence. In fact, over 90 percent of the Taiwanese surveyed this past June by the Election Study Center favor maintaining the status quo indefinitely or until some later date.

The worst possible outcome is unification with China under terms dictated by Beijing. Of course, unification could happen in a variety of ways, some of which are better than others. Probably the least bad outcome would be where Taiwan ended up in a situation where it had considerable autonomy, much like Hong Kong enjoys today. Chinese leaders, as you well know, refer to this solution as "one country, two systems." Still, it has little appeal to most Taiwanese. As Yuan-kang Wang reports: "An overwhelming majority of Taiwan's public opposes unification, even under favorable circumstances. If anything, longitudinal data reveal a decline in public support of unification."

In short, for Taiwan, de facto independence is much preferable to becoming part of China, regardless of what the final political arrangements look like. The critical question for Taiwan, however, is whether it can avoid unification and maintain de facto independence in the face of a rising China.

China's Goals

What about China? How does it think about Taiwan? Two different logics, one revolving around nationalism and the other around security, shape

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its thinking about Taiwan. Both logics, however, lead to the same end game: the unification of China and Taiwan.

The Nationalism Story

The nationalism story is straightforward and uncontroversial. China is deeply committed to making Taiwan part of China. For China's elites, as well its public, Taiwan can never become a sovereign state. It is sacred territory that has been part of China since ancient times, but was taken away by the hated Japanese in 1895 – when China was weak and vulnerable. It must once again become an integral part of China. As Hu Jintao said in 2007 at the Seventeenth Party Congress: "The two sides of the Straits are bound to be reunified in the course of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

The unification of China and Taiwan is one of the core elements of Chinese national identity. There is simply no compromising on this issue. Indeed, the legitimacy of the Chinese regime is bound up with making sure Taiwan does not become a sovereign state, and that it eventually becomes an integral part of China.

Chinese leaders insist that Taiwan must be brought back into the fold sooner rather than later, and that hopefully it can be done peacefully. At the same time, they have made it clear that force is an option if they have no other recourse.

The Security Story

The security story is a different one and it is inextricably bound up with the rise of China. Specifically, it revolves around a straightforward but profound question: how is China likely to behave in Asia over time, as it grows increasingly powerful? The answer to this question obviously has huge consequences for Taiwan.

The only way to predict how a rising China is likely to behave towards its neighbors as well as the United States is with a theory of great power politics.

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The main reason for relying on theory is we have no facts about the future, because it has not happened yet. Thomas Hobbes put the point well: "The present only has a being in nature; things past have a being in the memory only, but things to come have no being at all." Thus, we have no choice but to rely on theories to determine what is likely to transpire in world politics.

My Realist theory of international relations says that the structure of the international system forces countries concerned about their security to compete with each other for power. The ultimate goal of every major state is to maximize its share of world power and eventually dominate the system. In practical terms, this means that the most powerful states seek to establish hegemony in their region of the world, while making sure that no rival great power dominates another region.

To be more specific, the international system has three defining characteristics. First, the main actors are states that operate in anarchy, which simply means that there is no higher authority above them. Second, all great powers have some offensive military capability, which means they have the wherewithal to hurt each other. Third, no state can know the intentions of other states with certainty, especially their future intentions. It is simply impossible, for example, to know what Germany or Japan's intentions will be toward their neighbors in 2025.

In a world where other states might have malign intentions as well as significant offensive capabilities, states tend to fear each other. That fear is compounded by the fact that in an anarchic system there is no night watchman for states to call if trouble comes knocking at their door. Therefore, states recognize that the best way to survive in such a system is to be as powerful as possible relative to potential rivals. The mightier a state is, the less likely it is that another state will attack it. No Americans, for example, worry that Canada or Mexico will attack the United States, because neither of those countries is strong enough to contemplate a fight with Uncle Sam.

But great powers do not merely strive to be the strongest great power, although that is a welcome outcome. Their ultimate aim is to be the hegemon – which means being the only great power in the system.

What exactly does it mean to be a hegemon in the modern world? It is almost impossible for any state to achieve global hegemony, because it is too

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hard to project and sustain power around the globe and onto the territory of distant great powers. The best outcome a state can hope for is to be a regional hegemon, to dominate one's own geographical area. The United States has been a regional hegemon in the Western Hemisphere since about 1900. Although the United States is clearly the most powerful state on the planet today, it is not a global hegemon.

States that gain regional hegemony have a further aim: they seek to prevent great powers in other geographical regions from duplicating their feat. Regional hegemons, in other words, do not want peer competitors. Instead, they want to keep other regions divided among several great powers, so that those states will compete with each other and be unable to focus their attention and resources on them. In sum, my theory says that the ideal situation for any great power is to be the only regional hegemon in the world. The United States enjoys that exalted position today.

Enough said about the nuts and bolts of my theory. What does it say about how China is likely to behave as it rises in the years ahead? My theory tells me that it will try to dominate Asia the way the United States dominates the Western Hemisphere. It will try to become a regional hegemon. In particular, China will seek to maximize the power gap between itself and its neighbors, especially India, Japan and Russia. China will want to make sure it is so powerful that no state in Asia has the wherewithal to threaten it.

It is unlikely China will pursue military superiority so it can go on a rampage and conquer other Asian countries, although that is always possible. Instead, it is more likely that it will want to dictate the boundaries of acceptable behavior to neighboring countries, much the way the United States lets other states in the Americas know that it is the boss.

An increasingly powerful China is also likely to attempt to push the United States out of Asia, much the way the United States pushed the European great powers out of the Western Hemisphere in the nineteenth century. We should expect China to come up with its own version of the Monroe Doctrine, as Japan did in the 1930s.

These policy goals make good strategic sense for China. Beijing should want a militarily weak Japan and Russia as its neighbors, just as the United States prefers a militarily weak Canada and Mexico on its borders. What

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state in its right mind would want other powerful states located in its region? All Chinese surely remember what happened in the previous two centuries when Japan was powerful and China was weak.

Furthermore, why would a powerful China accept U.S. military forces operating in its backyard? American policymakers, after all, go ballistic when other great powers send military forces into the Western Hemisphere. Those foreign forces are invariably seen as a potential threat to American security. The same logic should apply to China. Why would China feel safe with U.S. forces deployed on its doorstep? Following the logic of the Monroe Doctrine, would not China's security be better served by pushing the American military out of Asia?

Why should we expect China to act any differently than the United States did? Are Chinese leaders more principled than American leaders? More ethical? Are they less nationalistic? Less concerned about their survival? They are none of these things, of course, which is why China is likely to imitate the United States and try to become a regional hegemon.

The Pursuit of Regional Hegemony and Taiwan

What are the implications of this security story for Taiwan? The answer is that there is a powerful strategic rationale for China – at the very least -- to try to sever Taiwan's close ties with the United States and neutralize Taiwan. However, the best possible outcome for China, which it will surely pursue with increasing vigor over time, is to make Taiwan part of China.

Unification would work to China's strategic advantage in two important ways. First, Beijing would absorb Taiwan's economic and military resources, thus shifting the balance of power in Asia even further in China's direction. Second, Taiwan is effectively a giant aircraft carrier sitting off China's coast; acquiring that aircraft carrier would enhance China's ability to project military power into the western Pacific Ocean.

In short, we see that nationalism as well as realist logic give China powerful incentives to put an end to Taiwan's de facto independence and make it part of a unified China. This is obviously bad news for Taiwan, especially

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since the balance of power in Asia is shifting in China's favor and it will not be long before Taiwan cannot defend itself against China. Thus, the obvious question is whether the United States can provide security for Taiwan in the face of a rising China. In other words, can Taiwan depend on the United States for its security?

Let us now consider America's goals in Asia and how they relate to Taiwan.

U.S. Goals in Asia

As noted earlier, my theory says that regional hegemons go to great lengths to stop other great powers from becoming hegemons in their region of the world. The best outcome for any great power is to be the sole regional hegemon in the system. It is apparent from the historical record that the United States operates according to this logic. It does not tolerate peer competitors.

During the twentieth century, there were four great powers that had the capability to make a run at regional hegemony: Imperial Germany from 1900 to 1918, Imperial Japan between 1931 and 1945, Nazi Germany from 1933 to 1945, and the Soviet Union during the Cold War, which ran from 1947 to 1989. Not surprisingly, each tried to match what the United States has achieved in the Western Hemisphere.

How did the United States react? In each case, it played a key role in defeating and dismantling those aspiring hegemons.

The United States entered World War I in April 1917 when Imperial Germany looked like it might win the war and rule Europe. American troops played a critical role in tipping the balance against the Kaiserreich, which collapsed in November 1918. In the early 1940s, President Roosevelt went to great lengths to maneuver the United States into World War II to thwart Japan's ambitions in Asia and especially Germany's ambitions in Europe. The United States came into the war in December 1941, and helped destroy both Axis powers. Since 1945, American policymakers have gone to considerable lengths to keep Germany and Japan militarily weak. Finally, during the Cold War, the United States steadfastly worked to prevent the Soviet Union from dominating Eurasia and then helped relegate it to the scrap heap of

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history in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Shortly after the Cold War ended, the first Bush Administration's controversial "Defense Guidance" of 1992 was leaked to the press. It boldly stated that the United States was now the most powerful state in the world by far and it planned to remain in that exalted position. In other words, the United States would not tolerate a peer competitor.

That same message was repeated in the famous "National Security Strategy" issued by the second Bush Administration in October 2002. There was much criticism of that document, especially its claims about "pre-emptive war." But hardly a word of protest was raised about the assertion that the United States should check rising powers and maintain its commanding position in the global balance of power.

The bottom line is that the United States – for sound strategic reasons – worked hard for more than a century to gain hegemony in the Western Hemisphere. After achieving regional dominance, it has gone to great lengths to prevent other great powers from controlling either Asia or Europe.

Thus, there is little doubt as to how American policymakers will react if China attempts to dominate Asia. The United States can be expected to go to great lengths to contain China and ultimately weaken it to the point where it is no longer capable of ruling the roost in Asia. In essence, the United States is likely to behave towards China much the way it acted toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

China's neighbors are certain to fear its rise as well, and they too will do whatever they can to prevent it from achieving regional hegemony. Indeed, there is already substantial evidence that countries like India, Japan, and Russia, as well as smaller powers like Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam, are worried about China's ascendancy and are looking for ways to contain it. In the end, they will join an American-led balancing coalition to check China's rise, much the way Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and even China, joined forces with the United States to contain the Soviet Union during the Cold War.

How does Taiwan fit into this story? The United States has a rich history of close relations with Taiwan since 1949, when the Nationalist forces

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under Chiang Kai-shek retreated to this island from the Chinese mainland. However, Washington is not obliged by treaty to come to the defense of Taiwan if it is attacked by China or anyone else.

Regardless, the United States will have powerful incentives to make Taiwan an important player in its anti-China balancing coalition. First, as noted, Taiwan has significant economic and military resources and it is effectively a giant aircraft carrier that can be used to help control the waters close to China's all-important eastern coast. The United States will surely want Taiwan's assets on its side of the strategic balance, not on China's side.

Second, America's commitment to Taiwan is inextricably bound up with U.S. credibility in the region, which matters greatly to policymakers in Washington. Because the United States is located roughly 6,000 miles from East Asia, it has to work hard to convince its Asian allies – especially Japan and Korea – that it will back them up in the event they are threatened by China or North Korea. Very importantly, it has to convince Seoul and Tokyo that they can rely on the American nuclear umbrella to protect them. This is the thorny problem of extended deterrence, which the United States and its allies wrestled with throughout the Cold War.

If the United States were to sever its military ties with Taiwan or fail to defend it in a crisis with China, that would surely send a strong signal to America's other allies in the region that they cannot rely on the United States for protection. Policymakers in Washington will go to great lengths to avoid that outcome and instead maintain America's reputation as a reliable partner. This means they will be inclined to back Taiwan no matter what.

While the United States has good reasons to want Taiwan as part of the balancing coalition it will build against China, there are also reasons to think this relationship is not sustainable over the long term. For starters, at some point in the next decade or so it will become impossible for the United States to help Taiwan defend itself against a Chinese attack. Remember that we are talking about a China that has much more military capability than it has today.

Plus, geography works in China's favor in a major way, simply because Taiwan is so close to the Chinese mainland and so far away from the United States. When it comes to a competition between China and the United States over projecting military power into Taiwan, China wins hands down.

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Furthermore, in a fight over Taiwan, American policymakers would surely be reluctant to launch major attacks against Chinese forces on the mainland, for fear it might precipitate nuclear escalation. This reticence would also work to China's advantage.

One might argue there is a simple way to deal with the fact that Taiwan will not have an effective conventional deterrent against China in the not too distant future: put America's nuclear umbrella over Taiwan. This approach will not solve the problem, however, because the United States is not going to escalate to the nuclear level if Taiwan is being overrun by China. The stakes are not high enough to risk a general thermonuclear war. Taiwan is not Japan or even South Korea. Thus the smart strategy for America is to not even try to extend its nuclear deterrent over Taiwan.

There is a second reason the United States might eventually forsake Taiwan: it is an especially dangerous flashpoint, which could easily precipitate a Sino-American war that is not in America's interest. U.S. policymakers understand that the fate of Taiwan is a matter of great concern to Chinese of all persuasions and that they will be extremely angry if it looks like the United States is preventing unification. But that is exactly what Washington will be doing if it forms a close military alliance with Taiwan, and that point will not be lost on the Chinese people.

It is important to note in this regard that Chinese nationalism, which is a potent force, emphasizes how great powers like the United States humiliated China in the past when it was weak and appropriated Chinese territory like Hong Kong and Taiwan. Thus, it is not difficult to imagine crises breaking out over Taiwan or scenarios in which a crisis escalates into a shooting war. After all Chinese nationalism will surely be a force for trouble in those crises, and China will at some point have the military wherewithal to conquer Taiwan, which will make war even more likely.

There was no flashpoint between the superpowers during the Cold War that is as dangerous as Taiwan will be in a Sino-American security competition. Some commentators liken Berlin in the Cold War to Taiwan, but Berlin was not sacred territory for the Soviet Union and it was actually of little strategic importance for either side. Taiwan is different. Given how dangerous it is for precipitating a war and given the fact the United States will eventually reach the point where it cannot defend Taiwan, there is a reasonable chance

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American policymakers will eventually conclude that it makes good strategic sense to abandon Taiwan and allow China to coerce it into accepting unification.

All of this is to say that the United States is likely to be somewhat schizophrenic about Taiwan in the decades ahead. On one hand, it has powerful reasons to make it part of a balancing coalition aimed at containing China. On the other hand, there are good reasons to think that with the passage of time the benefits of maintaining close ties with Taiwan will be outweighed by the potential costs, which are likely to be huge. Of course, for the near-term, the United States will protect Taiwan and treat it as a strategic asset. But how long that relationship lasts is an open question.

What Is Taiwan To Do?

So far, the discussion about Taiwan's future has focused almost exclusively on how the United States is likely to act toward Taiwan. However, what happens to Taiwan in the face of China's rise also depends greatly on what policies Taiwan's leaders and its people chose to pursue over time.

There is little doubt that Taiwan's overriding goal in the years ahead will be to preserve its independence from China. That aim should not be too difficult to achieve for the next decade, mainly because Taiwan is almost certain to maintain close relations with the United States, which will have powerful incentives as well as the capability to protect Taiwan. But after that point Taiwan's strategic situation is likely to deteriorate in significant ways, mainly because China will be rapidly approaching the point where it can conquer Taiwan, even if the American military helps defend the island. And, as noted, it is not clear the United States will be there for Taiwan over the long-term.

In the face of this grim future, Taiwan has basically three options. First, it can develop its own nuclear deterrent. Nuclear weapons are the ultimate deterrent and there is no question that a Taiwanese nuclear arsenal would markedly reduce the likelihood of a Chinese attack against Taiwan.

As most of you know, Taiwan pursued this option in the 1970s, when it feared American abandonment in the wake of the Vietnam War. The United

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States, however, stopped Taiwan's nuclear weapons program in its tracks. And then Taiwan tried to develop a bomb secretly in the 1980s, but again the United States found out and forced Taipei to shut the program down. It is unfortunate for Taiwan that it failed to build a bomb, because its prospects for maintaining its independence would be much improved if it had its own nuclear arsenal.

One might argue that Taiwan still has time to acquire a nuclear deterrent before the balance of power in Asia shifts decisively against it. The problem with this suggestion is that both Beijing and Washington are sure to oppose Taiwan going nuclear. The United States would oppose Taiwanese nuclear weapons, not only because they would encourage Japan and South Korea to follow suit, but also because American policymakers abhor the idea of an ally being in a position to start a nuclear war that might ultimately involve the United States. To put it bluntly, no American wants to be in a situation where Taiwan can precipitate a conflict that might bring down a massive nuclear attack on the United States.

China will adamantly oppose Taiwan getting a nuclear deterrent, in good part because Beijing surely understands that it would make it difficult – maybe even impossible – to conquer Taiwan. China will also recognize that Taiwanese nuclear weapons would facilitate nuclear proliferation in East Asia, which would not only limit China's ability to throw its weight around in that region, but would also increase the likelihood that any conventional war that breaks out would escalate to the nuclear level. For these reasons, China is likely to make it manifestly clear that if Taiwan decides to pursue nuclear weapons, it will strike its nuclear facilities, and maybe even launch a war to conquer the island. In short, it appears that it is too late for Taiwan to pursue the nuclear option.

Taiwan's second option is conventional deterrence. I am sure you are wondering how Taiwan can make deterrence work without nuclear weapons in a world where China has clear-cut military superiority over the combined forces of Taiwan and the United States. The key to success is not to be able to defeat the Chinese military – that is impossible – but instead to make China pay a huge price to achieve victory. In other words, the aim is to make China fight a protracted and bloody war to conquer Taiwan. Yes, Beijing would prevail in the end; but it would be a Pyrrhic victory. This strategy would be even more effective if Taiwan could promise China that the resistance would

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continue even after its forces were defeated on the battlefield. The threat that Taiwan might turn into another Sinkiang or Tibet would foster deterrence for sure.

This option, I might note, is akin to Admiral von Tirpitz's famous "risk strategy," which Imperial Germany adopted in the decade before World War I. Tirpitz accepted the fact that Germany could not build a navy powerful enough to defeat the mighty British navy in battle. He reasoned, however, that Berlin could build a navy that was strong enough to inflict so much damage on the Royal navy that it would cause London to fear a fight with Germany and thus be deterred. Moreover, Tirpitz reasoned that this "risk fleet" might even give Germany diplomatic leverage it could use against Britain.

There are a number of problems with this form of conventional deterrence, which raise serious doubts about whether it can work for Taiwan over the long haul. For starters, the strategy depends on the United States fighting side by side with Taiwan. But it is difficult to imagine American policymakers purposely choosing to fight a war in which the U.S. military is not only going to lose, but is also going to pay a huge blood price in the process. It is not even clear Taiwan would want to fight such a war, because it would be fought mainly on Taiwanese territory – not Chinese territory – and there would be death and destruction everywhere. And Taiwan would lose in the end anyway.

Furthermore, pursuing this option means that Taiwan would be constantly arms racing with China, which would help fuel an intense and dangerous security competition between them. The sword of Damocles, in other words, would always be hanging over Taiwan.

Finally, although it is difficult to predict just how dominant China will become in the distant future, it is possible that it will eventually become so powerful that Taiwan will be unable to put up major resistance against a Chinese onslaught. This would certainly be true if America's commitment to defend Taiwan weakens as China morphs into a superpower.

Taiwan's third option is to pursue what I will call the "Hong Kong strategy." In this case, Taiwan accepts the fact it is doomed to lose its independence and become part of China. It then works hard to make sure that the transition is peaceful and that it gains as much autonomy as possible from

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Beijing. This option is unpalatable today and will remain so for at least the next decade. But it is likely to become more attractive in the distant future if China becomes so powerful that it can conquer Taiwan with relative ease.

Let me now try to summarize where I think Taiwan stands with regard to the three options I have put forth. Please remember that these options are based on the assumption that Taiwan can no longer defend itself in a conventional war with China – even with help from the American military.

I believe the nuclear option is not feasible, as neither China nor the United States would accept a nuclear-armed Taiwan. Conventional deterrence in the form of a risk strategy is far from ideal, but it makes sense as long as China is not so dominant that it can conquer Taiwan with relative ease. Of course, for that strategy to work, the United States must remain committed to the defense of Taiwan, which is not guaranteed over the long term.

Once China becomes a superpower, it probably makes the most sense for Taiwan to give up hope of maintaining its de facto independence and instead pursue the Hong Kong strategy. This is definitely not an attractive option, but as Thucydides argued long ago, in international politics "the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must."

It should be apparent from this discussion that whether Taiwan is forced to give up its independence largely depends on how formidable China's military becomes in the decades ahead. Taiwan will surely do everything it can to buy time and maintain the political status quo. But if China continues its impressive rise, Taiwan appears destined to become part of China.

Conclusion

Let me conclude by pointing out that there is one way Taiwan can avoid the bleak future I have described in my talk. But Taiwan has no way of influencing events so that this outcome becomes reality. Specifically, all Taiwanese should hope there is a drastic slowdown in Chinese economic growth in the years ahead and that Beijing also has serious political problems on the home front that work to keep it focused inward. If that happens, China will not be in a position to pursue regional hegemony and the United States will be able to protect Taiwan from China, as it does now. In essence, the best way for Taiwan to maintain de facto independence is for China to be

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economically and militarily weak.

When China started its impressive growth in the 1980s, most Americans and Asians thought this was wonderful news, because all of the ensuing trade and other forms of economic intercourse would make everyone richer and happier. China, according to the reigning wisdom, would become a responsible stakeholder in the international community, and its neighbors would have little to worry about. Many Taiwanese shared this optimistic outlook, and I would guess that some still do.

But they are wrong. They are thinking about international politics in a fundamentally flawed way. By trading with China and helping it grow into an economic powerhouse, Taiwan has helped create a burgeoning goliath with revisionist goals that include ending Taiwan's independence and making it an integral part of China. In sum, a powerful China is a nightmare for Taiwan. Thank you.

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