**Response to “A new plan to take Asia by surprise,” by Scott Bates, President of the Center For National Policy**

By Rick Fisher, Senior Fellow, International Assessment and Strategy Center

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First I would like to thank the Sigur Center, Ed McCord and Michael Yahuda for this generous invitation to respond to Scott Bates’ proposal concerning the security of Taiwan, and to join this panel with two experts with admirable records of public service.

Joe Bosco has produced a rigorous but honest list of political and military concerns about Scott’s proposal. Joe understands well what is at stake and is a well scarred veteran of countless Taiwan and Asia policy debates. However I also think we should view Scott’s proposal as one made with the best of intentions, to increase the security of the people of Taiwan. As he stated in his remarks, his concern is how both Taiwan and the United States can continue to deter China as its military strength grows apace, a concern also reflected by the Center for National Policy’s program. Considering how our current political and fiscal volatility could quickly affect policies and priorities intended to meet this threat, the right side of the argument needs all the friends it can get.

Ed asked me to concentrate on the military dimensions of Scott’s proposal. My plan is to offer some big picture comments on China’s strategic challenge and then respond to one of Scott’s proposals especially as a means of pointing the way toward a new U.S.-led system for deterrence in East Asia, the building blocks for which have in part been advanced by the Center’s former Chairman of the Board, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta.

The American strategic position in Asia is being challenged more today than at any point since the end of the Cold War and China is really only getting started. After a steady 20 year buildup on the Taiwan Strait made possible by broad military transformation, China now feels it has the sufficient strength to impose its territorial claims on Japan and the contiguous states of the South China Sea. China, Japan and the United States are now engaged in the preparatory moves for what could become an air battle over the Senkaku/Daiyoutai islands, a battle that could quickly expand to sea and space conflict. My first slide shows the conflicted zone and forces coming into play. Just last week the U.S. Air Force deployed its latest group of F-22A 5th generation fighters to Kadena Airbase on Okinawa. Japanese F-15s have shadowed Chinese aircraft, Chinese J-10 fighters have responded to Japanese F-15 fighters and Chinese fighters have shadowed U.S. surveillance aircraft. At the end of last week Chinese sources revealed that China had deployed its new YJ-12 supersonic anti-ship missile, launched by bombers, and possibly by ships, greatly complicating any potential naval battles. This is seen at the bottom of Slide #1 along with Taiwanese and Japanese supersonic anti-ship missiles.

Is Xi Jinping looking for a short glorious war that would secure his internal position and expand China’s strategic leverage at the expense of the US, much as Deng Xiaoping did in 1979 against the Soviet Union? Deng’s so-called disastrous short war against Vietnam in 1979 was also a finely calculated move to secure his power position and shift the balance of power in the Asian region, especially against the former Soviet Union. At about that time, Deng’s execution of strategy was observed by a much younger Xi Jinping, who was an intern working near the top of the Central Military Commission. Today Xi Jinping’s PLA has and will soon have more tools to effect such a short war, tools that Deng and Admiral Liu Huaqing could only dream of in the late 1980s.

Slide #2 lists other major growing Chinese challenges. China’s proliferation of missile and nuclear technology has made Pakistan a nuclear missile state and will soon do the same for North Korea and Iran. I consider this part of a Chinese strategy to tie down the U.S. in “permanent wars” the President referred to on Monday. A new North Korean ICBM on a Chinese 16-wheel truck was just reported last Friday to be disbursing around North Korea, and beyond a few press leaks, the Obama Administration has said practically nothing about this threat. There are unsettling questions about what we really know about the current and future size of China’s nuclear arsenal, as it develops its second missile-defense system. If unconstrained by internal political or economic crises, by the mid-2020s China could be projecting military power on a global scale while moving to build a military presence on the Moon.

But in January 2013 we see the President embracing with renewed vigor a domestic progressive agenda that could be expensive, that it may seek to fund with military spending cuts. In his second Inaugural Address President Obama spoke of “remaining the anchor of strong alliances” and that “we will renew those institutions,” but also warned against “permanent wars,” even though our adversaries are only growing stronger. Which tendency will prevail, especially in Asia? Will this second term see the U.S. build on the tentative blocks set out during its first term, which offers the potential to sustain non-nuclear deterrence in that region? Or will this turn, call it a Pivot or a Rebalancing, peter out or at least lose credibility quickly on the face of defense spending cuts or premature reductions in U.S. nuclear forces?

In this mix I do not foresee U.S. policy toward Taiwan becoming any less difficult to manage or any real change in as Scott put it, Taiwan’s “perilous strategic position.” There will continue to be U.S. policy perspectives that view Taiwan as a policy success, as an asset to American goals in Asia. On the other side you will continue to have policy elements that view Taiwan as a liability. While I do not consider those voices that call occasionally for U.S. “abandonment” of Taiwan as nearing the mainstream, it is inevitable that the pressures from China’s increasing strategic might and the potential for relative American weakening in specific circumstances, will force questions about the viability of the Rebalancing, the advisability of alliance commitments, indeed the cost of implied or ambiguous commitments, such as in the case of the Taiwan Relations Act.

And so with this background, I want to approach Scott’s proposal from a practical perspective. What are its good points and where, from my perspective, how can it be made better? So what is good? First, we have to start with what has been stated, and Scott has chosen to comment on what Taiwan by itself can and should do. What the United States should do is not addressed, but is certainly implied. For example, Scott’s proposal does not appear to require a diminishment of U.S. security relationships with Taiwan or a wholesale review of the Taiwan Relations Act. The “hornet’s nest” military posture would require increased arms sales in many categories, thus requiring that TRA arms sales relationships improve rather than diminish.

Second, Scott proposes a political and a political-military posture for Taiwan that has to potential to support American interests in manners both substantive and profound. It would be amazing if the American government could devote $100 million a year to support a “democracy offensive,” which Scott implies, could be aimed at China, or support with “urgency” a plethora of track-two negotiations aimed at China-centered territorial disputes, or the many military and proliferation challenges posed by China. As for his suggestion that Taiwan’s military become far more engaged in humanitarian assistance/disaster relief exercises, I say we can use the help. But as Joe stated, these suggestions also raise political and policy challenges for Taipei and Washington. For example, while vigorous promotion of democracy by Taiwan would be cheered in many quarters, Beijing’s fear of Taipei would redouble.

However, there are military posture suggestions made by Scott, that while attractive to some in Taiwan, may detract from the goal of a more secure Taiwan. I rather doubt that by constraining the use of its missile forces, or its military forces in general, that Taipei will impress Beijing. I have never regarded China’s goals toward Taiwan as related to any status quo or even its modification; it wants total control. While Taipei may have little choice but to probe for opportunities to reduce threats, Beijing’s goal for any political or peace agreement will be to advance its quest for control, not to safeguard the legitimate aspirations of the Taiwanese people.

So I would not advise that Taiwan cut its army in half. While this suggestion would be consistent with Scott’s larger proposal, it would be my assessment that Taiwan still requires a powerful army to deter China. Numerous Taiwanese sources have commented to me how over the last decade the balance of strategic gravity has shifted to the anti-invasion battle and away from the extended range air/naval battle. This is because PLA missile and air forces are reaching the point where they can overwhelm Taiwan’s air and naval forces, meaning that by effectively deterring the far more risky and complicated PLA invasion, Taiwan has a better chance of deterring a Chinese decision to start a war in the first place. Taiwan has in place a number of army modernization programs and there have been suggestions to purchase excess U.S. M-1 *Abrams* tanks, which while controversial, would speak directly to the still Army-dominated PLA leadership. All Asian states may need better armies. According to Phill Karber of the Potomac Institute, the PLA has spent much of the last decade studying Japan’s record of conquest from 1940 to 1942, and has come up with many suggestions about how to do it better. Slide # 3 illustrates some of the growing PLA invasion forces.

I would also not advise that Taiwan give up its surface-to-surface missiles. Missiles happen to be a real bi-partisan defense policy success in Taiwan, and after years of opposing them, it is my observation that Washington is quietly coming to accept Taiwan’s missile program. Don’t expect any supportive press releases from the State Department, but we do not hear so much of the previous opposition. In fact, the U.S. now supports South Korea’s intention to develop new long range missiles, so how could we oppose Tokyo should it someday opt for similar capabilities? So far Japan only has solid fueled space launch vehicles, but its proposed *Epsilon* second-generation solid fueled space launch vehicle could form the basis for an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM).

As I explore in Slide #4, missiles would allow Taiwan to confront the “mass” of PLA invasion forces at far less expense, especially if you can arm them with thousands of smart munitions, like the Sensor Fused Munition (see Slide #5). This hockey-puck sized projectile can find a target with its sensors, and then fire an explosively-formed molten metal disc that can slice through most armor. One U.S. ATACMS short-range ballistic missile armed with Sensor Fused Munitions could potentially take out 30 tanks or 30 invasion ships. For the cost of about 15 new F-16s you might be able to pay for up to 1,000 ATACMS. This is compelling math that might deter the PLA into the next decade. This math gets even better when you consider rail guns and laser weapons.

Finally, as Joe also mentioned, I do not think that Taiwan will be able to ensure deterrence or even defend itself alone, which is at least an implication of Scott’s “Hornet’s Nest” proposal. It is fair so say that a consistent goal of US policy has been to sell Taiwan the means it requires to deter and to defend itself without immediate U.S. assistance, but China’s military reach and capabilities mean that it is far better that Taiwan be positioned to benefit and contribute to a new regional deterrence architecture.

The basis for such a new U.S.-led regional deterrence architecture has been created by the Administration’s evolving missile and missile defense policies (see Slide # 6), but it has not yet decided to move in the direction proposed here. First to enhance missile defenses, it has agreed with Tokyo to place new long-range X-Band radar in Japan, while it suggests it want to do the same in the Philippines. Japan has other X-Band radar, South Korea is developing its own, and Taiwan’s new X-Band radar reportedly observed North Korea’s December 12, 2012 missile launch. The U.S. could lead the creation of a regional long-range radar network that could create for all of its members, a shared intimate picture of all Chinese military air and naval activities. If Taiwan was receiving inputs from US radar in Japan and the Philippines it would not matter if China attacked Taiwan’s radar, in fact, China might be more deterred from contemplating such an attack.

With such a picture, it would be easier to cue forces required to deter Chinese military moves, or to disable or dispatch them quickly with new non-nuclear missiles. China will protest, but it should be noted that China is well on its way to creating its own sensor-missile network to include the world’s only anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM). Some U.S. military officials may want the same capabilities, inasmuch as their preference is to stress inexpensive “payloads,” or weapons, over expensive stealthy “platforms,” or new fighter aircraft. The U.S. Navy may be seeking new long-range missiles to place on new submarines with many more missile tubes. When cued by U.S. or allied regional radar, a new U.S. and allied regional missile force may go far to create a new basis for deterrence in East Asia. If the Chinese leadership could be assured that if they used their new navy, they might lose it very quickly; they might see the wisdom of seeking their goals via diplomacy over military intimidation or war.

Again, while I do not suggest it is this Administration’s intention to create such a system of deterrence, its decisions so far have offered the option of this direction in strategy. Taiwan would benefit, as would Washington and its allies, as China would be challenged to choose diplomacy over intimidation or war. Now this is has led to a far different set of suggestions than Scott has proposed, but I hope that I have offered both a specific and broad suggestion for addressing Scott’s principle concern, that of increasing Taiwan’s security and deterring China.