

## CPAS Perspectives on Chinese August Exercise 2022<sup>1</sup>

October 2022

### The Situation

In response to U.S. Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan, China's armed forces, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) conducted a series of unprecedented military exercises near Taiwan (hereafter referred to as the August exercise). In addition to ballistic missile launches similar to those during the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996), 4 out of the total 11 (or 16, depending on different official accounts) missiles fired actually overflowed Taiwan's airspace and landed off the east coast of the island. Beijing had designated a total of 7 exercise areas, with notices to mariners and airmen issued, which caused a number of commercial flights to be canceled and shipping diverted. Even worse, three of the seven areas encroached on Taiwan's territorial waters, and during the four days of announced exercises, there were dozens of Chinese combat aircraft crossing the median line in the Taiwan Strait, and dozens of Chinese warships trying to enter Taiwan's contiguous zone. Furthermore, the pattern of the exercises was obviously attempting to simulate a blockade of Taiwan whilst denying third-party intervention.

In short, the median line of Taiwan Strait, long maintained with tacit mutual understanding by both sides of the Taiwan Strait has been broken as a result. Hence, the status quo of Taiwan Strait has been changed. A new normal emerged, imposing a clear and present danger to Taiwan and creating unprecedented tensions in the region. New thinking, new concepts, and a new operational plan must be developed as soon as possible to deal with this "new normal" and the future use of force against Taiwan or elsewhere in the region. It's an urgent matter not just for Taiwan but also for other major stakeholders, especially the US and Japan.

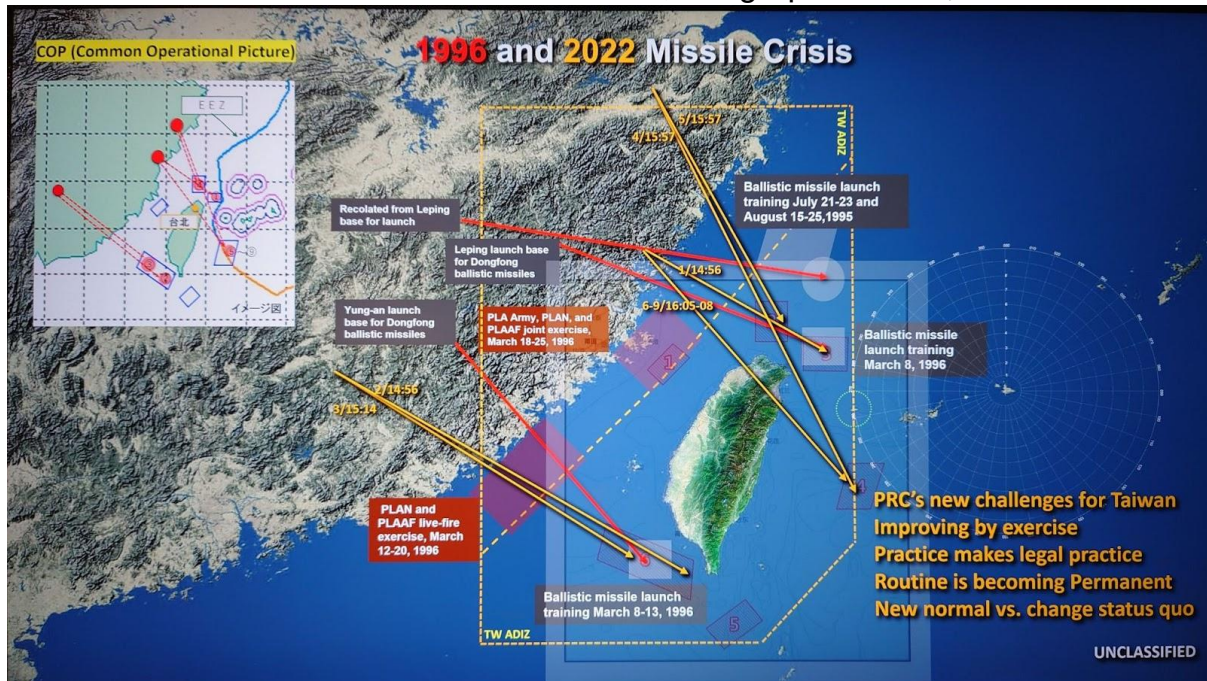
The Center of Peace and Security was founded with the mission of contributing to maintaining peace and security in the region. Hence, in addition to commending Taiwan's armed forces' duties of protecting our security from PLA's coercive and provocative activities in the last couple of months, we would also like to offer suggestions to the Ministry of National Defense as follows, to ensure that we can deal with future challenges and continuing uncertainties more effectively.

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<sup>1</sup> CPAS (Center for Peace and Security), funded as research center on September 1, 2022, and belongs to Taipei School of Economics and Political Science Foundation (TSEF). The Chief Executive Officer of the research center is the former Chief of General Staff, Admiral Lee, Hsi-Min.

## The Exercise

Speaker Pelosi's flight landed in Taipei at around 11pm on August 2. In the early morning of August 3, Chinese official news agency, Xinhua News Agency announced that PLA will conduct a series of joint military exercises and live-fire drills from 12pm of August 4 to 12pm of August 7. It also published the coordinates of 6 exercise sectors, which cover the areas of Taiwan's northwest, north, northeast, east, southeast, and southwest. (See graphic below)



Courtesy of Admiral CHEN, Yong-Kang (ROC Navy, retired)

Of the seven announced exercise sectors, one is located in the northern part along the median line of the Taiwan Strait, right between the coast of Hsinchu County (新竹縣) on Taiwan and Pingtan Island (平潭島) of Fujian Province. It's the narrowest part of Taiwan Strait. The PLA conducted precision strikes with their long-range artillery rockets. The drills indicated that the PLA is capable of attacking targets on the west coast of Taiwan with such rockets.

There were two sectors of exercise located right off Taiwan's two major ports, Keelung, and Kaohsiung, implying PLA's ability to blockade the two harbors with their missile and naval forces. The exercise area east of Taiwan is located some 70 nautical miles off the coast of Hualien County (花蓮縣) and partially overlapped the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) claimed by Japan. The ballistic missile that overflew Taiwan's airspace demonstrated that the PLA possessed the ability to deny foreign military intervention from the eastern approaches to Taiwan.

The other two sectors, one was located about 20 nautical miles off the northeastern coast of Taiwan, and the other one was located southeast of Taiwan in the eastern entrance of Bashi Channel, were clearly meant to highlight the PLA's capability to blockade the Bashi Channel and hedge against foreign intervention forces approaching from the north.

In the afternoon of August 4<sup>th</sup>, the PLA Eastern Theater Command (ETC) first conducted its ballistic missile live fire drills. From 1pm to 4pm, 11 missiles were fired and splashed down in the exercise sectors in the north, northeast, east, and southwest. All the missiles were launched by the Units of Base 61 of the PLA Rocket Force, which were stationed individually in Fujian, Zhejiang, and Jiangxi provinces. Based on news reports, in the northwest sector, which was designated as long-range artillery rockets firing range, the PLA fired a barrage of PHL-191 rockets. Later that day, ETC's news release said that the missile drill in the east sector had already reached their goals, and that control of the air and sea spaces were lifted.

Starting from August 5<sup>th</sup>, ETC expanded the scale of the naval and air forces in their exercises due to the end of missile drills. Based on Ministry of National Defense (MND) news release, there were 7 of J-10 fighters, 6 of J-11s, 10 of J-16s, 24 of Sukhoi-30s, one of Y-8 electronic warfare aircraft and one of Y-8 anti-submarine warfare aircraft flew cross the median line of the Taiwan Strait. In response to the intrusion, the ROC air force sent its fighters to prevent the possible further intrusions. At the same time, there were 7 US aircraft monitoring the situation in the vicinity or possibly collecting intelligence.

On August 6<sup>th</sup>, based on MND's news release, 20 sorties of PLA warplanes and 14 warships conducted exercises in the Taiwan vicinity. On August 7<sup>th</sup>, there were 66 sorties of warplanes (22 sorties of them crossing the median line) and 14 warships operating in the Taiwan vicinity. On August 8<sup>th</sup>, there were 39 sorties of warplanes (21 sorties of them crossing the median line) and 13 warships operating in the Taiwan vicinity. On August 9<sup>th</sup>, there were 45 sorties of warplanes (16 sorties of them crossing the median line) and 10 warships operating in the airspace and waters near Taiwan.

On August 10<sup>th</sup>, the day that ETC announced the conclusion of the joint military operation exercises in the Taiwan area, there were also 36 sorties of warplanes (17 sorties of them crossing the median line) and 10 warships operating in airspace and waters proximate to Taiwan. The ETC also declared that the PLA will be continuously monitoring the development of the Taiwan situation and conducting routine combat patrols around Taiwan accordingly. The MND then expressed that the ROC Armed Forces will deal with the situation by deploying its forces intelligently and agilely to ensure that the status quo of Taiwan

Strait remain unaffected, that the median line be respected, and the boundary of Taiwan's territorial water and sovereignty protected.

As a matter of fact, the PLA had not stopped its military action after its announcement of the end of the exercise. On August 12<sup>th</sup>, there were 24 sorties of warplanes (10 sorties of them crossing the median line) and 6 warships operating in the Taiwan vicinity. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, there were 22 sorties of warplanes (11 sorties of them crossing the median line) and 6 warships operating in the Taiwan vicinity. On August 15<sup>th</sup>, there were 30 sorties of warplanes (15 sorties of them crossing the median line) and 5 warships operating near Taiwan.

In short, the August exercise is not like the 1995/6 exercises, which ended all activities after the conclusion of the exercise and returned to the original status quo. Up through the end of September 2022, there were 10 PLA sorties of warplanes and 4 PLA warships operating in the Taiwan vicinity airspace and waters every day.

## Comparison

The August exercise was unprecedentedly provocative. As was the 1995/6 exercise, which created the third Taiwan Strait crisis 26 years ago, this basically represented military coercion. Yet its scale of force and firepower, the manner of its execution, and the pressure it imposed on Taiwan's armed forces are far beyond the ones of the 1995/6 crisis. Hence, we shall look deeper into the August exercise and draw lessons learned from it in order to prepare for the future and prevent the worst eventuality.

### 1. **Both exercises are rehearsals of the PLA's use of force against Taiwan**

During the 1995/6 crisis, the PLA was trying to demonstrate their ability to conduct precision strikes with their ballistic missiles against Taiwan, aimed at areas right off the two international harbors, Kaohsiung, and Keelung. China also wanted to showcase their amphibious assault capabilities, which were exercised on the Dongshan Island (東山島) and Pingtan (平潭島) located along the coast of Fujian Province across Taiwan Strait. The exercise was originally planned with an intention to turn the exercising force into an invasion force to take one of the offshore islands controlled by Taiwan should the situation required it.

The August 2022 exercise covered a total of 7 announced exercise areas (one was added later). It was meant to showcase the PLA as capable of striking and blockading Taiwan and denying foreign forces from

coming to the island's aid. Particularly noteworthy was the exercise sector located in the north of Taiwan Strait, which was designated as long-range artillery rocket firing range. Within this sector, the PHL-191 artillery rocket system was used. With its range of 300 kilometers, The PHL-191 can strike all the targets on the west coast of Taiwan.

In short, both the exercises were practicing the prepared plans for invading Taiwan. What is important is that the PLA was showing through its August 2022 exercises the capabilities and intention for blockading Taiwan, directly striking Taiwan, as well as denying foreign intervention efforts in the future. And this deserves deeper analysis.

## 2. **The August exercise redeemed PLA of the frustrations from the 1995/6 crisis**

The Chinese military learned its lessons from the 1995/6 exercises. The PLA had found there was nothing it could do to stop the US Navy Carrier Battle Groups (CVBG) from coming to Taiwan's aid. To some extent, it was a source of humiliation and a syndrome for the PLA. Ever since then, whatever action it undertook, the PLA had to first think about what the US response would be.

Immediately after the 1996 crisis, China began negotiating the purchase of 10 improved Kilo submarines (project 636), 4 Sovremenny destroyers, and 72 Su-30 fighters from Russia, together with a license to produce the Su-27SK in China. And eventually, whether through technology transfer or reverse engineering, PLA was able to build its own advanced fighters like J-11B, J-16, J-20, and its own Aegis-type warships as well as rather quiet diesel-electric submarines like Type 039 and 039A. In addition, the PLA's anti-ship ballistic missile development has also been improved dramatically. First the DF-21D, then the DF-26, were all branded as carrier killers. More recently, a hypersonic missile was made operational, the DF-17, which was designed to neutralize the missile defense assets of the US. Along with the Beidou Navigation Satellite System (BDS), all formed parts of the core capabilities in Beijing's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) network.

The PLA has also demonstrated its capability of implementing coercive action via ballistic missiles, which fulfilled the concept written in the book of **"Coercion War, thoughts on ballistic missile coercive operations"** published in 2003. It says: *"to initiate launching ballistic missiles precisely aiming at its front and the sides of the intruding carrier group, to scare the carrier group to withdraw... and stop short of taking any further moves."*

In these two exercises, the PLA used mainly the DF-15 series missiles. The original DF-15 was launched in the 1995/6 exercise with its CEP (Circular Error Probable) around 300 to 600 meters. Yet, after 26 years of improvement as well as benefiting from the BDS guidance, the DF-15B/C missiles used in the August exercise are a lot more precise than their predecessors. The CEP is now less than 50 meters. The more accurate missile also meets the requirement of “*ensuring the precision of the missiles to avoid accidentally hitting the target, which would then lose the just cause and cost the strategic initiative.*”

Similarly, in addition to the missile tests, several live fire exercises and amphibious exercises were also conducted in both 1996 and 2022. The difference between the two is that the live exercise in 1995/6 was conducted on the west side of Taiwan Strait, and the August exercise was held towards the east side of Taiwan Strait close to Taiwan proper with PLA’s most advanced forces, such as the J-20 stealth fighter and the Type 055 missile destroyer.

Hence, even though the scale and scope of the August exercise were larger than the one in 1995/6, the PLA forces encountered almost no direct US military interference. It seems that the PLA was able to reverse the syndrome and the frustration.

**3. The August exercise erased the median line of Taiwan Strait and the military status quo across the Strait has been changed.**

After the 1995/6 Taiwan crisis, both sides of the Taiwan Strait maintained a rather long period of military balance across the Strait. Though occasionally violated, the median line was generally respected. At the end of the August exercise, however, violation of the median line has become routine.

From August 4 to August 10, the duration of PLA exercises, there were up to 300 sorties of warplanes and around 70 warships intruding Taiwan’s surrounding waters and airspace. About half of the sorties crossed the median line, and almost all the warships closed in Taiwan’s contiguous zone. In his statement on ending the exercise, spokesperson of the PLA Eastern Theater Command said that the routine combat patrol around Taiwan will continue depending on how the Taiwan situation evolves. Hence, PLA’s combat patrols in the vicinity of Taiwan would now become a routine and the gray zone activities would be even more exacerbated from now on.

**4. Both the US and Taiwan have been neglecting China's intentions and actions of the August exercise, resulting in losing the strategic initiative.**

To compare the measures of dealing with the 1995/6 crisis and the August exercise, both the US and Taiwan weren't able to predict precisely the pattern, the scale, and the magnitude of the August exercise. Especially, the PLA warplanes crossed the median line of Taiwan Strait and its warships tried to get into Taiwan's contiguous zone with the strategic goal of changing the status quo and defining a "new normal." Additionally, the US did not make a public announcement, like it did in the 1995/6 crisis, to send aircraft carriers to the Taiwan region to deter China from taking further aggressive moves.

In her interview with the Voice of Germany on August 5, Ms. Bonnie Glaser, an American China specialist says that China was trying to create a new normal. While she believes the U.S. government would like to see the Taiwan Strait situation return to the status quo after the exercises, that would be very difficult.

In his interview by CNN on October 2, the US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin answered a question by saying that China is now trying to establish a "new normal," the same as what Ms. Glaser said earlier. Yet, facing this "new normal," there has not been anything in the US Government's public statements on how to deal with this situation, except to continue conducting freedom of navigation operations in the Taiwan Strait. In short, the US military was focused on ensuring the safety for Speaker Pelosi's Taiwan visit, rather than deterring China's exercise to change the status quo following Pelosi's visit. As a result of that, the US lost its strategic initiative.

As to Taiwan itself, its force development, training, and combat readiness, have all been geared towards defense against direct attacks by the PLA. Even though the PLA's gray zone activities and China's cognitive warfare were mentioned in its recent defense reports, a concrete concept of operations has not been formulated, and the required preparedness and investment not yet budgeted, let alone designing scenarios for major war gaming exercises and publishing doctrines for dealing with such threats. Hence, failing to predict the PLA's moves wasn't really a surprise. In addressing questions in the parliament on October 5, Defense Minister Chiu, Kuo-cheng stated that the mutually respected median line in the Taiwan Strait has already gone, and it is hard to get it back. It was truly an accurate conclusion for the negative impact of the August exercise.

Additionally, during the August exercise, due to not being able to predict the PLA's intentions and actions, Taiwan government's public affairs also suffered unprecedented criticism. Unlike the 1995/6 crisis, while then government was able to obtain sufficient intelligence about the PLA's exercise plan and Taiwan military was well prepared with 18 courses of action, which was announced proudly by President Lee. Not to mention the US also directly intervened, which prevented the crisis from escalating, unfortunately, this time was different. Except for the MND web pages and the press conferences after the exercise, there was no governmental announcement at all. People were only able to glean indications of China's possible military response to Pelosi's visit through a variety of news outlets and social media apps. Most people were not able to distinguish real information from disinformation due to the bombardment of information from the cyber world, which exacerbated the proliferation of disinformation and helped the PRC's cognitive offensives. Not to mention it caused lasting damage to the government's credibility and undermined the people's trust in the government.

#### **5. Close contact between China and Taiwan forces was unprecedented in the August exercise**

There was no close contact between the PLA and Taiwan naval and air forces in the 1995/6 exercise. Basically, both sides still observed the median line in the Taiwan Strait. There were very few cases where the median line was violated. However, in the August exercise, China considered the whole of Taiwan Strait, based on "One China Principle," to be under China's jurisdiction. Therefore, the PLA Air Force's objective was to cross the median line, and the PLA Navy's goal is to get into its designated exercise areas, which are all located within Taiwan's contiguous zone. Hence, under MND's directives, Taiwan's air force has to ensure that the Chinese fighters do not cross the median line (守中線). And the Navy was tasked to fend off incursions into Taiwan's territorial waters (護領海). In this way, close contact between both forces became inevitable. It was reported there were occasions that warships from both sides came close to less than 100 yards. It's obvious how tension intensified during those occasions. Concurrently, US-China relations also deteriorated.

Even though the crisis in 1995/6 lasted for eight months, there was no negative aftermath as far as the US-China relations or cross-Strait military balance was concerned. President Jiang Zemin visited the US in



1997, followed by President Clinton's visit to China in 1998. It was not the case this time, the tension between the US and China stemmed from the trade war during the Trump Administration and worsened in the Biden Administration. Let alone the "Taiwan Policy Act", a bill on how the US might better assist Taiwan to defend itself against China's aggression was to be reviewed by Congress a month after the conclusion of the August exercise. In short, all the developments are fueling the conditions set by the PLA to continue its routine combat patrol in the vicinity of Taiwan.

In other words, close contact between the forces on both sides of Taiwan Strait would not stop. Instead, it has become routine. Tension in the Taiwan Strait would persist. And Taiwan's naval and air forces would surely have to endure a very long war of attrition, which wouldn't be in the interest of Taiwan due to its forces being inferior not just quantitatively but also qualitatively.

#### **6. Cognitive and cyber operations were conducted throughout the exercises**

In the 1995/6 Taiwan Strait crisis, there was also fake news or disinformation like today. For example, after the exercise the PLA news branch released that during the crisis, "*once the US CBGs heard that there were submarines in the nearby waters, they withdrew immediately from Taiwan waters about 200 nautical miles away.*" It has become common practice in recent years that all the PLA actions were accompanied by elements of cognitive warfare. Especially in the era of mobile communications and the information age society, social media is so convenient and enabling that fake photos or news could be very widely distributed over a short period of time. During the August exercise there were fake photos showing how close the PLA warships were near Taiwan, trying to undermine the morale of Taiwanese people and the credibility of Taiwan's government. Later, it was reported that during the exercise there were totally 272 fake news being sprayed around Taiwan.

Another offensive action in the August exercise was also no stranger to anyone. That is, the cyber-attacks during the physical exercises, which did not exist in the 1995/6 crisis. While the PLA was conducting exercises in Taiwan's surrounding waters, the cyber offensive was waged silently on Taiwan's government website, including the Ministry of National Defense, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Presidential Office. It was reported on August 4, the volume of attack was 23 times greater than the highest day prior to that point.

### **The Implications**

**1. Status quo in the Taiwan Strait couldn't be reversed easily**

The status quo has been changed in the Taiwan Strait after the August exercise has been recognized publicly. There was not sufficient deterrent power to dissuade Beijing from flying its combat aircraft across the median line nor to prevent the PLA warships from intruding into Taiwan's contiguous zone. And there was no other way to deal with the "new normal" except to conduct continued freedom of navigation operations by the US and the other like-minded countries. Yet, the implications for the future are too significant to ignore. If Taiwan Strait should become quasi-internal waters of China, or China is able to dominate air and sea supremacy in the Taiwan Strait/Bashi region, then Taiwan's future would be doomed. If so, Taiwan Strait would indeed become the most dangerous area among all four flashpoints in East Asia.

**2. The "new normal" would generate tensions and regional crises more frequently**

The PLA's declared plans to conduct routine combat patrol after the August exercise clearly signaled its intention to fully control the Taiwan Strait. It might not mean denying the freedom of navigation rights to everyone, but China certainly means to assert its jurisdiction and sovereign right over these waters. Hence, Beijing would not allow any third country to interfere with its right of freedom of navigation around Taiwan's surrounding waters. Additionally, Defense Minister Chiu, also said in Parliament that "*Taiwan armed forces had not retreated, we are still conducting patrols and training in the east side of the median line, The policy has not been changed.*" Therefore, one could see that the closed contacts should become a routine matter. And the Taiwan Strait crisis and potential conflicts could easily erupt between PLA warships and Taiwan's warships.

**3. Cyber and cognitive warfare would be waged along with military operations with both coercive and offensive purposes**

The cognitive warfare was waged across the whole period of the August exercise as well as in the 1995/6 crisis. Its impact on the morale and people's hearts and minds cannot be ignored. Yet, in the information age, the cognitive war waged in cyberspace has even stronger proliferated effects, which is also too important to ignore. If the August exercise could be interpreted as China's rehearsal of its attack plan and a test of our

defense, the cyber-attack in the August exercise would be a significant warning. Though we were able to deal with all those maligned activities properly this time, we couldn't be sure how large would be the scale and magnitude of the offensive in the next crisis. Hence, we should think seriously about how to counter this kind of intrusion in the future. Since purely passive or reactive defenses may not be sufficient to defend against such (combined cyber/cognitive) attacks, active defense countermeasures might be needed. The countermeasures should be responsive in kind, to be proportional and be effective. Taiwan might be inferior in military terms, but that does not necessarily mean Taiwan is also weaker in cyberspace.

## **Recommendations**

It is generally believed that the August exercise had long been in the plans and that Speaker Pelosi's visit was merely a pretext. The context of the August exercise simply foretells the concept and scenario as to how the PLA would use its forces against Taiwan in the future. To deal with the situation, the Ministry of National Defense needs to prepare for these future uncertainties and rethink how to deal with the new situation. New concepts must be applied on how to revise current doctrines, war plans, rules of engagement and on how to employ forces to defend Taiwan's territorial waters, economic zone, and sovereignty, as well as to continuously maintain peace and security of the region. The following suggestions are for the government's reference.

### **1. To establish a joint mechanism between US and Taiwan to be able to accurately predict PLA's coercion and invasion actions**

In comparison with the 1996 Taiwan Strait Crisis, there was evidence that Taiwan was better prepared, with 18 courses of action having been developed by the MND and the National Security Council, which suggests that there was a rather robust intelligence estimate. Also, Taiwan had enjoyed the qualitative advantage on the military balance at the time, and China's defense budget was only twice that of Taiwan's. Today, China's defense budget is 22 times higher than Taiwan's, with their naval and air forces many times larger and more advanced.

Similarly, unlike in the 1996 crisis, there were two aircraft carrier strike groups in the vicinity of Taiwan surrounding waters, there was only one strike group nearby, the Reagan Carrier Strike Group, which was in the east of Taiwan around 500 nautical miles away. And the Reagan CSG did not prioritize deterrence effects like the two CVBGs did in the

1995/6 crisis and was not able to prevent the change in status quo in the Taiwan Strait.

In short, in dealing with the August exercise, Taiwan was at best unable to meet its intelligence needs. At worst, it was a failure as far as the function of intelligence estimate is concerned. Therefore, we strongly suggest that the government needs to review the current US-Taiwan intelligence exchange mechanism. Instead of just strengthening the mechanism, a more robust and permanent platform is required. Instead of being limited to only exchanging information, we suggest expanding the cooperation to the exchange of personnel. We also recommend that a common operational picture (COP) platform be installed within both command posts, one in Taipei's JOCC and one at the Indo-Pacific Command, and both platforms would be manned by US and Taiwan personnel. By doing so, the two sides can share Taiwan area related intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR) information with each other on a real-time/near real-time basis and understand each other's intentions on force deployment and employment. This would also greatly facilitate better interpretation and prediction of likely PLA activities, thus allowing for more effective counteractions to be made effectively and efficiently.

**2. To prepare for a long attrition conflict as Taiwan faces the "new normal"**

Based on publicly available information so far, we have had very little information on the size of naval and air forces available for the Eastern Theater Command since the beginning of the August exercise, not to mention what their tactics for crossing the median line of the Strait and penetrating our defense screen to enter Taiwan's contiguous zone. Would they come with several single units making individual moves or coordinated moves, or would they have come organized under a unified command or each unit had its own objectives? Additionally, did all the PLA forces come from Eastern Theater Command or some were drawn from Southern Theater Command? How is the PLA deciding the size of force to send into the vicinity of Taiwan's surrounding waters? Would the size of forces be growing gradually, or would it fluctuate over time? Questions such as these remain unclear to date. But one thing is certain, which is that the status quo of the Taiwan Strait has changed. Surely, it would be a new type of game between both sides of the Strait, and it would be a long attrition campaign for our armed forces. Hence, we suggest that the government must be prepared for a persistent grueling military competition in our

surrounding waters and airspace. And it would be a long resources attrition type of campaign. Our armed forces need to be prepared materially, physically, and mentally.

At the same time, we can also foresee the bilateral defense cooperation between Taiwan and the US becoming closer and more upgraded, China's responses will equally escalate over the August exercise. As we now know that the "Taiwan Policy Act" has already passed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and it will be put on a priority list to be discussed in the Senate as well as the House of US Congress. If the bill is passed and signed into law, we can expect that a far stronger military exercise both in the scale and the size of force will be forthcoming. We suggest that both governments of the US and Taiwan pay more attention to this development and make necessary preparations for such an eventuality.

**3. Revise operational plans to confront the "new normal" in the Taiwan surrounding waters and airspace**

On the matter of future force employment to deal with the PLA's intrusions, economy of force should be a major consideration. Considering that we are currently the inferior side in this long competition, we shall avoid using our capital ships to deal with PLA's major combatant ships. Unless circumstances prohibit the use of smaller units, we should consider assigning mainly the second-tier forces to deal with the situation. Currently, among six destroyer flotillas in the PLA Navy, all together, they operate more than 80 major surface combatants. Their Type 055, Type 052D destroyers and Type 054A frigates are still growing in number. Not to mention, there are around 50 Type 056A missile corvettes. There is a high likelihood that in the future standoff situation in the vicinity of Taiwan surrounding waters, we would face a situation like what Ukraine had confronted before Russia decided to send its forces into Ukrainian territory. The routine combat patrols, which the PLA Eastern Theater Command has announced, could easily convert into foray attacks. If we continue to follow this force-on-force material attrition, Taiwan's limited resources would not be able to last long. If the so-called combat patrols turned into a sudden attack, Taiwan would have little time to react. As such, we suggest that Taiwan's military need to develop new thinking on this matter and that new operational concepts and asymmetric, innovative tactics need to be merged into our Gu-An Defense Plan as well as our Combat Readiness Regulations.

**4. Adjust RoEs to empower frontline commanders greater authority to exercise their duties as well as self-defense**

During the PLA's August exercise, it was reported by a news media that our naval and air force will always stick to the principles of Three Nos, which are not to be provocative, not to escalate the situation, and not to fire the first shot. We should consider these principles as no longer relevant and already obsolete in dealing with the "new normal" situation we are about to confront. The routine combat patrols are already provocative in nature. As mentioned earlier, the combat patrols could be quickly turned into a sudden attack. We, therefore, recommend that MND revise the rules of engagement (RoEs) so as to better suit the new situation and prevent the worst-case scenario in case China should adopt such a move. Not to mention we need to preserve our precious warfighting personnel and assets to prosecute a rather longer and more violent conflict in the future.

Defense Minister Chiu's testimony on October 5 in the Parliament says that "*if the PLA forces intruding into our territorial sea and airspace would be considered they are firing the first shot.*" Yet, he did not mention how we would respond to the situation. In practice, proper responses to situations like this would have to consider many factors, like the size of forces, the course, the speed, and most importantly, the intention. It would never be a decision based on any one single factor. Therefore, to provide the frontline warfighters a rather clear rule on how to respond to the PLA's intrusion is an urgent requirement.

**5. Adjust the mentality of Taiwan's military in managing public affairs in crisis**

Despite the free and vibrant information environment that Taiwan society now enjoys, information regarding the August exercise remains limited. So, the government must realize that, in the information age the public could easily receive disinformation and might always be under PRC cognitive offensives. Therefore, Taiwan's military news authority must be empowered, in special circumstances (crisis situations), to assess if more facts about a military situation could be revealed to maximize the greater good or how best to sanitize the information to ensure operational security. In other words, Taiwan's government and military need to become more sophisticated in striking a balance between operational security and keeping the public informed to hedge against or even preempt the enemy's cognitive attacks.

The bottom line is that the government needs to keep an open mind and respect the general public's legitimate (and often pressing) need for correctly understanding the situation in a crisis. The cliché language of

putting confidence in government is no longer sufficient nor suitable to calm the public let alone to ask for support from the people. Hence, we suggest that the government adopt a more open-minded and sophisticated approach to sharing the relevant information to retain public trust and gain popular support. We believe that, only if this is realized could the public be more supportive and more appreciative of the government's national security efforts.

**6. Ensure Taiwan's cyber superiority and ability to prevail in cyberspace**

Taiwan has long been viewed as one of the leading countries in the ICT industry. Therefore, Taiwan clearly enjoys advantages of its ICT industrial base in developing prowess in cyberspace, to become superior, dominant, or even supreme. As mentioned, in dealing with the future PLA's coercion and invasion, though we are inferior in the quantitative and qualitative terms of physical assets, we still could relatively easily gain superiority in cyberspace. To maintain superiority in cyberspace not only could control the narrative and bolster morale, but also could contribute to military success in combat.

Hence, to ensure that we could enjoy cyber superiority and realize the policy goal of pursuing information supremacy, the government should take advantage of our capacity of the existing information education system and the robust information industry base and invest greater resources, to optimize our cyber warfare organization(s), build cyber training facilities, recruit more manpower, nurture more talents, and train more specialists, so as to develop robust combat power in cyberspace.

In short, cyber supremacy is asymmetric as well as cost-effective. Hence, we recommend that MND increase investment (funding) and talent pool (people) in this area. With the policy of "All-out defense" in mind, expanding the recruitment of civilian talents could be a good starting point for this effort.

**7. Manage our expectations regarding US military intervention and forward deterrence**

The Reagan CSG was positioned about 500 nautical miles away to the east of Taiwan. It is a couple of hundred miles away compared to the 1996 Taiwan Strait Missile Crisis. In addition to that, the US has not only postponed a Minuteman ICBM test flight, but also delayed reviewing a Taiwan friendly bill, the "Taiwan Policy Act." All these moves are for one purpose, which was to de-escalate the tension. Hence, we should bear in

mind that the complicated US-China competitive relationship between the US and China is not always quite what one might imagine. We should not take it for granted that the US armed forces will come to our assistance when needed. Deterrence against China's aggressiveness and assertiveness should be based mainly on our own strength and determined will to fight.

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