

Chinese Views On U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan

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Official Chinese protests over American arms sales to Taiwan have increased greatly since the innauguration of President Reagan. In this article, Ho Veng-si analyzes the causes and motivations behind these protests as well as the importance of this issue to the Peoples' Republic of China. She examines and criticizes explanations for Chinese policy, arguing that several of these contribute to an understanding of the policy, and then concludes that China must maintain good relations with the United States in order for Chinese reunification with Taiwan to occur.

After the Sino-American normalization of 1978, Chinese-American relations moved forward rapidly, ostensibly progressing to the satisfaction of both parties. Yet, since the second half of 1981, relations have become enshrouded in an atmosphere of crisis. The center of contention since 1981 has been the continued U.S. arms sales to Taiwan. The Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) raised protests against the U.S. weapons sales through diplomatic channels and the public media and even warned of a possible diplomatic break if the arms sales were continued. The Joint Communiqué was the product of efforts on both sides to prevent such a break and reach a solution to the arms sales issue. The purpose of this essay is to analyze both the importance of the issue to the PRC and the causes of the increasingly vociferous Chinese protests of the past few years.

The Prestige Theory of Chinese Foreign Relations

According to many from the PRC, the arms sales issue is essentially one of prestige.¹ This argument calls attention to the Confucian concept of the correctness of names or forms which stresses the clear definition of names and titles and the adherence to the hierarchical relationships implicit in these names and titles. In its modern form, this concept emphasizes the accordance of proper respect appropriate to one's status and on not "losing face."

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1. Private interviews with PRC exchange scholars and a junior official of the Chinese Foreign Ministry in the United States reveal that the prestige issue is considered important by some Chinese.

In the 1978 Normalization Communiqué, the United States "acknowledged the Chinese position that there is but one China and Taiwan is part of China."² The United States also recognized "the government of the Peoples' Republic of China as the sole legal government of China."³ Within this context, the agreement allowed the people of the United States to "maintain cultural, commercial and other unofficial relations with the people of Taiwan."⁴

Since normalization, U.S.-Taiwan relations have taken on a new form. Many of the ties established on a nominally unofficial basis are in essence government-to-government relationships. So far, the PRC has reluctantly tolerated these ties. The PRC, however, sees arms sales to Taiwan as "clearly different from the maintenance of normal commercial relations with the people of Taiwan."⁵ To the PRC, such arms sales constitute recognition of Taiwan as a *de facto* government and make a mockery of the 1978 Normalization Communiqué.

According to the prestige argument, another cause for PRC protests is the congressional approval required for arms sales exceeding \$50 million.⁶ Had the Reagan Administration split the 1981 arms sales into smaller packages, the sales could have easily been carried out without much public attention. Congressional approval of the arms sales is seen by the Chinese as a legal sanction by the national legislature of the United States, making the sales more than simply an executive initiative. Such congressional approval constitutes a loss of face more severe than that caused by the arms sales themselves. In short, actual U.S.-Taiwan relations do not accord with the PRC's title as the sole government of China. The PRC has no face-saving alternative other than vocal and strident opposition to the sales.

Despite the intrinsic appeal of the prestige argument to anyone familiar with Chinese cultural values, it fails to provide an adequate explanation for the timing of the arms sales and PRC statement on the arms sales issue. Reagan's arms package was not the first to be submitted for congressional approval since normalization, yet it created greater opposition in the PRC than had arms sales under Carter. In 1979, the year of the moratorium on new weapons sales, the Carter Administration delivered \$800 million worth of weapons to Taiwan, roughly equivalent to the total

2. Chiu Hungdah, ed., *China and the Taiwan Issue* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), p. 225.

3. *Ibid.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. Peoples' Republic of China Mission to the United Nations, "Commentary: Do No Harm to Sino-U.S. Relations," *Press Release* no. 61, 20 June 1980.

6. Embassy of the Peoples' Republic of China, "Reagan Administration Formally Requests for Congressional Approval of Military-Related Spare Parts Sale to Taiwan," *Press Release* no. 82/007, 21 April 1982.

arms deliveries to Taiwan for the previous four years.⁷ Yet there were no Chinese protests in 1979. In January 1980, the Carter Administration announced the sale of \$280 million worth of arms to Taiwan.⁸ Again, the PRC registered no protest. In the course of 1980 the United States sold Taiwan \$489 million in new weapons (nearly twice the amount sold in any year prior to normalization) and delivered a total of \$835 million worth of arms.⁹ The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute reports that in 1980 Congress approved the sale of 280 MIM-23B Hawk mobile surface-to-air missiles to Taiwan and was notified of the sale of 1,013 BGM-71A TOW anti-tank missiles and two Gearing-class destroyers. In addition, 284 Sea Chaparral ship-to-ship missiles and fifty M-110-A2 self-propelled howitzers were also submitted for congressional approval.¹⁰ These weapons systems received congressional approval as part of the \$280 million package sold to Taiwan in 1980.¹¹ Amidst all these approvals and notifications to Congress by the Carter Administration of weapons sales to Taiwan, the Chinese were remarkably subdued registering only one protest against the sales throughout 1980.¹²

While it can be argued that the Chinese were unaware of the 1979 figure of \$800 million until it was first publicly revealed in June 1980, this does not explain why they delayed for six months their protest against the \$280 million arms package announced in January 1980.¹³ If the issue were one of losing face and prestige, the Chinese would have strongly

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7. Statement by Richard Holbrooke in U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Review of Relations with Taiwan*, Current Policy No. 190, 11 June 1980; and U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan*, January 1979.
 8. Reports appearing in "Taiwan On Its Own: Unease Amid Boom," *US News and World Report*, 14 January 1980, p. 49, and in Barry Kramer, "Taiwan Still Thrives A Year After the Loss of U.S. Recognition," *Wall Street Journal*, 8 February 1980. Clearly, the PRC could not have failed to take note of the sale, whose public nature would certainly constitute a loss of face under the prestige argument.
 9. Defense Security Assistance Agency, *Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Construction Sales and Military Assistance Facts As of 9/1981*, p. 2. Data Management figures do not include commercial export licences which, combined with further pipeline deliveries, explains the total deliveries of \$835 million. See also U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan*; Bernard Gwertzman, "Reagan Reassures Taiwan Its Needs Weren't Undercur," *New York Times*, 18 August 1982.
 10. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *World Armaments and Disarmament SIPRI Yearbook 1981* (Cambridge, Mass.: Oelgeschlager, Gunn and Hain Inc., 1981), p. 240.
 11. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, *Review of Relations With Taiwan*, Current Policy no. 190, statement by Richard Holbrooke, 11 June 1980.
 12. Peoples' Republic of China, "Commentary: Do No Harm to Sino-U.S. Relations." The rest of the PRC public protests were directed against presidential candidate Ronald Reagan and his associates or the Taiwan Relations Act.
 13. The efficiency of Chinese intelligence with respect to American arms sales to Taiwan is not entirely clear. The Chinese often seem to respond to new arms sales once these have been announced in the American public media and frequently quote U.S. public sources as their information sources for figures of U.S. arms sales. See Peoples' Republic of China, "Commentary: Do No Harm to Sino-U.S. Relations."

protested against the Carter Administration, which conducted those sales, instead of attacking candidate Reagan.¹⁴ It is also perplexing that the PRC would so vigorously protest against the Reagan Administration's 1981 sales of \$220 million and deliveries of \$380 million when it had silently suffered the humiliation of \$1.6 billion in deliveries and \$489 million in sales under the Carter Administration.¹⁵ For that matter, how could the Chinese have tolerated the humiliation of implicitly recognizing, in the Joint Communiqué of August 1982, that U.S. arms sales to Taiwan would continue for the indefinite future? The willingness, albeit grudging, of the Chinese to accept the distinction between form and substance in their relations with other nations, such as in accepting a measure of informal government-to-government relations between Taiwan and the United States, belies the notion that the issue of prestige is of critical importance to PRC decisionmakers.

The Issues of Nationalism and Incomplete Revolution

The prestige theory misses an important point: the consideration of the intrinsic importance of Taiwan to the PRC as a motivating factor in Chinese foreign policy on the arms sales. The importance of the reunification of Taiwan and mainland China to the PRC leadership can be understood in terms of nationalistic sentiment and incomplete revolution. The strength of nationalism in China is not to be underestimated; it first brought an end to the "heavenly" dynasties and then carried the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to power. The CCP understands the appeal of a unified and strong China to the Chinese people and has striven hard to be the sole governmental representative of all the Chinese people, both nationally and internationally.¹⁶ Since the Chinese people have long considered Taiwan a part of China, the separation of Taiwan and mainland China since 1949 is considered unacceptable. Claiming to be the sole representative of all the Chinese people, the PRC considers the reunification of all Chinese territory to be its nationalistic duty.

Nationalistic sentiment, however, is not the only motivation for the PRC's determination to reunify Taiwan and the mainland. In an interview with Edgar Snow in 1936, Mao Zedong did not consider either Korea or

14. Peoples' Republic of China Mission to the United Nations, "Regression Is No Way Out — Comment On Reagan's Statement On Sino-U.S. Relations," *Press Release* no. 59, 13 June 1980, *See also* Doak A. Barnett, *The FX Decision* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1981), pp. 14-15.

15. James P. S. Sterba, "Peking Says Force Might Be Used to Reunite Taiwan and Mainland," *New York Times*, 4 July 1981. "Ludicrous and Stupid," *Beijing Review*, 20 July 1981, p. 12.

16. For example, the Chinese census of 1982 counts Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macao residents as part of the population of China. From 1953 to 1964 even overseas Chinese were counted as part of China's population in the official census.

Taiwan to be part of China's lost territories that had to be regained. Mao stated quite explicitly that "if the Koreans wish to break away from the chains of Japanese imperialism, we will extend our enthusiastic help in their struggle for independence. The same thing applies for Taiwan (Formosa)."¹⁷ One cannot hold Mao to this one statement, since, admittedly, CCP and Kuomintang (KMT) statements of the time did identify Taiwan as part of China.¹⁸ Nonetheless, after fifty years of Japanese occupation, having received considerable Japanese cultural influence and with a sizeable population of native aborigines, Taiwan need not have been considered undeniably a part of China in 1949.

From the perspective of political culture, the reunification of Taiwan and China had a far greater significance to the CCP from 1949 onward. The Chinese civil war between the Communists and the Nationalists did not end the retreat of the KMT to Taiwan in 1949 — the war was only halted indefinitely. For more than thirty years, neither side has been either militarily or politically capable of overthrowing the other and uniting China under one political, social and economic system; the Communist revolution is thus rendered incomplete.

Taiwan not only exists as an independent national entity, it is the base from which the avowed enemies of the Chinese Communists have been preparing to take back mainland China. The KMT emphasizes its historical links with Sun Yat-sen, "the father of the Chinese revolution." It claims to represent the values and traditions of China and charges the Chinese Communists with destroying China's ways and customs. Fundamentally, the KMT is a challenge to the legitimacy and nationalistic base of the PRC regime. It is impossible for the CCP to tolerate such a challenge to its authority indefinitely.

One could argue that the two elements outlined above, nationalistic sentiment and incomplete revolution, interact with one another. If the KMT had fled to an island in the Pacific Ocean never considered a part of China and ruled that island today, would there still be a reunification issue? If there were no KMT on Taiwan, is it conceivable that the CCP in the post-revolutionary period might have accepted an independent non-challenging Taiwanese nation? The fact that the KMT fled to an area where it could be considered a part of China provided it with a certain measure of credibility as an opponent to the CCP regime. This power of political opposition in turn "clarified" Taiwan as undeniably a part of China proper, thereby reinforcing the nationalistic element of the issue. Now, it is no longer possible for the PRC to accept an independent Taiwan

17. Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China* (New York: Grove Press Inc., 1961), p. 110.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 421.

because a whole generation on both sides of the Taiwan Straits has been raised on the doctrine that China must be reunified. To the PRC, the continued existence of a separate KMT Chinese government on Taiwan is an important political and nationalistic issue.

Is Time Running Out for Reunification?

For a long time, the PRC leadership has displayed considerable patience over the reunification issue. When Henry Kissinger visited China in 1972, Mao told him: "We can do without them (Taiwan) for the time being. Let it come after 100 years."¹⁹ In 1980, however, the PRC leadership's attitude seemed to change. In that year Deng Xiao-ping counted reunification as one of the three major tasks facing China in the 1980s, and since then the PRC has made great efforts to present proposals to the Nationalists to accommodate the Taiwanese political and economic system within a unified China. The PRC has also tried to develop ties with Taiwan on less formal levels through the establishment of postal and telecommunications contact, the conduct of indirect trade via Hong Kong, the acceptance of foreign ships carrying PRC cargo and crews to call directly at Taiwanese ports and the encouragement of the Taiwanese to visit the mainland.

The sudden intensification of reunification efforts can be attributed to the feeling of the PRC leadership that time is running out. Almost forty years after the KMT fled to Taiwan, foes on both sides of the Straits are growing old. In the past decade the aging leaders of both sides have died — first Zhou En-lai, then Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek. Among the present Communist and Nationalist leadership remains a diminishing group who lived in and fought for the Chinese mainland. Some of the old guard CCP and KMT leadership attended the same schools (such as the Whampoa Academy) back in the 1920s, and all of them are motivated by the same desire to make China an independent and unified nation.

In ten or twenty years a new generation of leaders in Taiwan and China will emerge. The PRC leadership fears that the new generation of Taiwanese leaders will lack personal emotional ties to China and will not share the sense of mission to unify China common to the generation of the 1920s. In addition, the new Taiwanese leadership would be unwilling to negotiate with the mainland if reunification would curtail either their authority, independence or economic prosperity. Evidence for this perceptual argument can be drawn from the personal "old friend" nature of recent PRC statements to the KMT.²⁰

19. Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979), p. 1062.

20. For example, a close friend of Chiang Ching-kuo's mother, during an interview with *Peoples' Daily* expressed her eager desire to see Chiang again and asked Chiang to visit his childhood home.

According to the "time is running out" argument, the Chinese began to protest vociferously against the U.S. arms sales in 1981 because they saw the weapons sales as an obstacle to their reunification efforts. This attitude is repeatedly and explicitly expressed in Chinese statements. For example, a *Beijing Review* article argued: "The continued supply of weapons by the United States will only make the Taiwan authorities more arrogant and obstruct the peaceful reunification of Taiwan with the motherland."²¹ The arms sales increase Taiwan's power as an independent state and prolong its ability to remain independent from the mainland. The logical course of action for the PRC leadership would be to escalate pressure on the United States for an early end to the arms sales.

One could argue that a new leadership situation could be more, rather than less, conducive to negotiations for reunification. Leaders on both sides of the table would not have memories of decades of mutual enmity. The Taiwanese side would not suffer the humiliation of negotiating with the "bandits" who drove them from the mainland and, thus, the chances for fruitful negotiations might be increased. Whatever the logical appeal of the "time is running out" argument, its weakness lies in its attempt to gauge the perceptions of the PRC leadership, on which there is little reliable information. Given the lack of compelling evidence in favor of this theory, it is not an adequate explanation of the motivations behind the PRC's foreign policy on the American arms sales to Taiwan.

China's Domestic Political Pressures

Another perspective attributes the sense of urgency in the PRC's attempts to stop U.S. arms sales to Taiwan to Chinese domestic political struggles. Beijing is still engaged in the post-Maoist succession struggle which involves conflicts over domestic and foreign policy. In this struggle Deng Xiao-ping has championed a pragmatic approach to modernization, including the decentralization of economic decision-making, the acquisition of technology and capital from Japan and the West, and the use of Sino-American relations as a counterweight to Soviet power in Asia. Although Deng's power has remained predominant in China over the past few years, it is

Relatives of Taiwan's Premier Sun Yun-Suan have appealed to him through the PRC mass media to return home and visit his old relatives who miss him, *Aomen Ri Bao*, July/August 1982. In the summer of 1982 Liu Cheng-zhi sent a personal letter to President Chiang Ching-kuo through the public media. In this letter Liu suggested that they had been fighting for too long and that it was time to forget their differences. He invited Chiang to return to the mainland for a visit where they could have a good drink and a nice chat. *Ming Bao*, Hong Kong, July 1982.

21. "U.S.-Taiwan Relations Act," *Beijing Review*, 12 January 1981, p. 9. See also Christopher S. Wren, "China Again Makes Its Point on Taiwan," *New York Times*, 25 January 1982; Huan Xiang, "On Sino-U.S. Relations," *Foreign Affairs* 60 (Fall 1981), p. 47; Peoples' Republic of China Mission to the United Nations, "Retgression Is No Way Out."

not without limit. As the purging of the Gang of Four, the forced resignation of Hua Guo-feng and Deng's warnings against subverters of his modernization program indicate, many oppose Deng's pragmatic modernization program and pro-American foreign policy.

According to the domestic politics arguments, Deng Xiao-ping cannot afford to lose ground on the arms sales issue at the same time that he is seeking to consolidate his power and push through his domestic and foreign policies. Therefore, as Washington comes closer to implementing its promise to satisfy Taiwan's defense needs, Deng must act tough even at the risk of breaking with the Americans in order to maintain his authority and leadership in China.

Yet the historical development of Deng Xiao-ping's power and of the PRC's protest against the American weapons sales belies the validity of this domestic politics argument. The escalation of the PRC's protests against the arms sales did not begin until late 1980, and threats to break relations only began in late 1981. Since 1981 Deng has apparently been in relatively firm control, with the Gang of Four and most other radicals in major central positions purged and Hua Guo-feng only nominally functional. Deng has placed his subordinates Hu Yao-bang and Zhao Zi-yang in key political and military positions. Deng was actually freer to pursue his policies in 1981 than ever before.

Even if one assumes that Deng's power in 1981 and 1982 was extremely shaky and that his Taiwan policy was a response to domestic criticism, this does not explain how the Chinese government could first hint of dire consequences if the United States sold more weapons to Taiwan in late 1981 and then, early in 1982, passively accept the 1982 \$60 million arms sale to Taiwan.²² Threatened by domestic criticism, how could the Chinese government drop its demand for a timetable for the termination of U.S. weapons sales to Taiwan, sign a joint communiqué which specified an indefinite time frame for the final resolution of U.S. weapons sales, and formally announce that its fundamental policy was to pursue a peaceful resolution of the Taiwan issue? A position of domestic weakness would not have allowed for such compromise; a position of domestic strength, on the other hand, would explain why Deng was able to make short-term compromises, yet would not obviate the need to deal with the Taiwan issue. Any Chinese government proclaiming itself the sole government of China eventually has to demand an American commitment to ending or restraining arms supplies to Taiwan.

22. Embassy of the Peoples' Republic of China, "Reagan Administration Formally Requests for Congressional Approval of Military-Related Spare Parts Sales to Taiwan," *Press Release*, 21 April 1982, p. 3.

Changes in the International Positions of China and Taiwan

One could analyze the increased "impatience" of the PRC leadership over the Taiwan issue since 1980 and China's protests against American arms sales to Taiwan in terms of changes in the international positions of the PRC and Taiwan. In the late 1960s, the PRC was considered the "rebel" regime while Taiwan had a seat in the United Nations and was recognized by most of Asia and the Americas as "China." By 1980 the PRC was recognized by most of the world as "China" and Taiwan was defined as a part of China. China can now negotiate with Taiwan from a position of strength. It can afford to be generous and flexible, offering to allow Taiwan to retain its own political, economic and social system within a unified China.²³ By 1979 China had also acquired an important tool to bring about reunification — diplomatic relations with Taiwan's main supporter, the United States. China is now not only in a psychologically superior position but also has acquired the power to influence the flow of physical support which helps Taiwan remain independent.

Since 1979, China has actively begun to push reunification because it has acquired the psychological and diplomatic tools needed to force the Taiwanese to the negotiating table as mere provincial leaders. The PRC is now in the position to isolate Taiwan diplomatically and physically by exerting pressure on Taiwan's allies. It also is able to defeat Taiwan psychologically by opening up trade and communications contacts and by treating the island as a province. Although this policy would call for maximum pressure in isolating Taiwan, it does not preclude flexibility and accommodation.

The strength of this "international position" argument lies in the fact that it is based upon easily observable changes in the international positions of Taiwan and China. It is also not incompatible with the domestic policy perspectives outlined earlier, as the two forces — domestic momentum and new international capabilities — could work together in formulating foreign policy.

China and the Reagan Administration

Much as people in the United States separate the PRC leadership into pro-American and pro-Soviet groups, the Chinese perceive that in the United States there are pro-PRC and pro-Taiwan groups. It is, of course, a well-known fact to the PRC that the powerful influence of the Taiwan lobby on the American Congress has been well-established since the 1950s. Whereas the Carter Administration was seen as pro-PRC, the Chinese

23. "Text of Statement by Peking," *New York Times*, 1 October 1981.

saw other groups as trying to maintain a two-China policy.²⁴ Certainly, the PRC saw the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act as a victory for the pro-Taiwan/two-China group.²⁵ The subsequent development of U.S.-Taiwan "unofficial" relations, such as the reciprocal granting of diplomatic privileges by American and Taiwanese unofficial organizations conducting U.S.-Taiwan relations in October 1980, could not have failed to alarm the PRC.

The PRC viewed Reagan's candidacy as the focal point of a new conservative trend in the United States.²⁶ It feared that, were Reagan elected, he would pursue a two-China policy. Certainly, Reagan's actions both during the campaign and after his election have done little to alleviate this Chinese fear. In this context, one can better understand why the PRC attacked candidate Reagan rather than the Carter Administration. The Chinese have not, however, shown unbending opposition to Reagan. Just after his election, an article appeared in *Beijing Review* which, in a noncommittal tone, outlined Reagan's views on Taiwan.²⁷ What is most interesting about the article is that it did not criticize Reagan but instead emphasized the common strategic interests of both the United States and China. The main point of the article was that, regardless of what Reagan said out of office, once in power his policy could be guided and restrained by the common interest of the United States and China. Clearly, despite fears that Reagan was part of the pro-Taiwan group, the PRC was looking for common ground on which to maintain and continue to develop Sino-American relations.

Nevertheless, whatever hope the PRC may have held of establishing some kind of understanding with the Reagan Administration gradually dissolved under the impact of Reagan's persistent pro-Taiwan statements. The PRC now saw itself facing both a pro-Taiwan Congress and Administration. The final *coup de grace* came with the F-X decisions.

The term F-X (Fighter Experimental) applies to the F16/79 and the F5-G American combat aircrafts. Currently Taiwan possesses a large number of the F5-Es, which are superior to the best fighter in the PRC. With the increased payload of the F16/79, Taiwan would be able to destroy the

24. Zhuang Qubing, Zhang Hongzeng and Pan Tongwen, "On the U.S.-Taiwan Relations Act," *Beijing Review*, 7 September 1981.

25. Whereas the Mutual Defense Treaty (MDT) only provided security guarantees to Taiwan, the TRA guarantees the "security of the social and economic system" of Taiwan as well. The MDT provided for U.S. support of Taiwan in the event of "any use of force" against Taiwan; the TRA counted "other forms of coercion" "including boycotts or embargos" as sufficient reason for active U.S. intervention in support of Taiwan. See "Capitol Hill Jazz," *Beijing Review*, 1 June 1981, p. 10.

26. "Why Reagan Won," *Beijing Review*, 17 November 1980, p. 10.

27. *Ibid.*

Chinese air bases near the Taiwan Straits and roll back the PRC air force three hundred kilometers, thus acquiring air superiority not only over the Taiwan Straits but over a significant part of the Chinese mainland.²⁸ This clearly would cause alarm on the mainland. How can the PRC hope to gain leverage over Taiwan in negotiations if the Taiwanese have the capability to control the PRC's air space? The PRC recognizes that Taiwan's military capability helps to sustain its independence. PRC military superiority over Taiwan would be of great importance in the complicated psychological and physical processes that surround international negotiations. China is now producing fighter aircraft almost as good as the F-5E. Given ten or twenty years, the PRC has the hope of producing significantly more advanced aircraft. Yet if the Taiwanese are receiving more and more advanced aircraft (and weapons in general), the PRC will not be able to develop military leverage over Taiwan. In this context, it is not surprising the PRC has so vociferously opposed the sale of the F-X or any new more advanced weapons to Taiwan.

The Joint Communiqué in a New Perspective

The argument outlined above in many ways complements the international situation and the "time is running out" arguments. All of them allow a measure of flexibility in negotiating weapons sales and should be kept in mind when discussing the Joint Communiqué. The Joint Communiqué's statement "that arms sales to Taiwan will not exceed, either in qualitative or in quantitative terms, the level of those supplied in recent years since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the United States and China," was a gain for the PRC.²⁹ However, no timetable was set for the termination of American arms sales and the Americans have linked the termination of the sales to China's efforts at peaceful reunification.

In many ways, one can argue that the Joint Communiqué, by reflecting the limitations of Chinese influence on the United States, provides us with two interesting observations. First, the Chinese move to a more balanced position between the Soviet Union and the United States, and the use of a triangular bargaining relationship will probably increase China's leverage vis-à-vis the Americans. Second, people often ask whether China values her strategic relations with the United States more or less than her desire to expedite reunification. This distinction is actually fatuous. In the absence of Sino-American relations, i.e., in a period of Sino-U.S. confrontation, China has very little influence that it can bring to bear on

28. Wang Chi-wu, "Military Preparedness and Security Needs: Perceptions From the Republic of China on Taiwan," *Asian Survey* 21 (June 1981): 651-63.

29. PRC Press Release, *Joint Communiqué*, 17 August 1982, p. 3.

the United States to reduce arms sales to Taiwan. In such a situation, the Americans would do everything they could to build Taiwan up as a counterweight to the PRC. China's desire for reunification cannot take precedence over its relations with the United States because it is these relations which would allow reunification eventually to occur and which give China leverage to reduce the flow of material support to Taiwan. This is perhaps the most significant lesson of the Sino-U.S. conflict over the American arms sales to Taiwan.