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SPECIAL COMMENTARY:

***MONTEREY TALKS — BIDEN ADMINISTRATION NEEDS STRATEGIC CLARITY IN THE
FACE OF ITS ENFORCED GAPS IN TAIWAN'S DEFENSE***

As the Biden Administration directs Taiwan to procure weapons to deal with only a single contingency — a D-Day style attack on the island — the U.S. government must accompany this direction with strategic clarity over the role the U.S. military will play in filling the gaps American policy will now create.

June 21, 2022

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While visiting Japan on May 23, when asked if the United States would “*get involved militarily to defend Taiwan,*” President Biden answered unequivocally “*yes.*” In so doing, Mr. Biden clarified for the third time in his presidency that the U.S. policy of strategic ambiguity regarding the defense of Taiwan was on the move to a clearer statement of American intent.

Mr. Biden is right. His comments decisively strengthen American interests in North Asia. Unfortunately only for a brief moment, as his staff quickly walked back his statement, thereby exchanging a policy win for greater confusion on America’s stance in the region.

President Biden’s inclination to be clear about American policy toward Taiwan is both timely and necessary. His comments come at a time when his State Department and National Security Council are working to upend the security assistance process for Taiwan. They are re-imposing heavy restrictions on arms sales – normalized for the last 5 years – by narrowing what the U.S. is willing to provide in order for Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability across all phases of conflict.

The Administration is focusing on a so-called “asymmetric” approach to Taiwan’s defense. Support will now only be provided if it fits the U.S. government definition of the term, and if it conforms to American assessments of what Taiwan can afford. The definition of “asymmetric” is a moving target. Others in the U.S. hold differing views of the definition, and on how this policy should be applied to an overall Taiwan defense strategy. On affordability, it’s worth noting that Taiwan is also one of the world’s wealthiest countries, with currency reserves of over US\$545 billion.

This approach is designed to focus solely on a D-Day style attack on Taiwan. All other phases of conflict — including grey zone activities, reported near daily in Taiwan’s air and sea space, and blockades of the island’s air and seaports — have been downgraded in importance. Indeed, Taiwan’s ability to handle challenges under these scenarios as time passes will be significantly degraded by this new U.S. policy. Far from sharpening Taiwan’s spear, this policy will quickly open new vulnerabilities for the PLA to prey upon.

The arms sales process has been plunged into confusion at the very time when we need clarity and purpose. The U.S. has cancelled three arms sales to Taiwan since March, because they don’t meet the new “asymmetric” definition and are seen as



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too expensive. The policy is paternalistic and directive, stripping Taiwan of its democratic agency. In addition, communication on this to date appears to be one-way only. The practical ramifications of this new approach have yet to hit Taiwan's defense and national security establishments.

The Administration is committed to pursuing this approach, so the challenge now is how to ensure that it doesn't accelerate an attack on Taiwan's new vulnerabilities but contributes to deterrence.

The White House recently proclaimed that the U.S. pursues a policy of strategic ambiguity toward Taiwan. That includes ambiguity on whether and how it would come to Taiwan's aid in the event of an attack. If the U.S. does not allow Taiwan to acquire a full range of capabilities to defend and deter China in all phases of battle, it is unclear whether U.S. military forces would fill the capability gaps created by this new policy approach – one that will leave the island in a deeply vulnerable position.

On June 22-24, the U.S. and Taiwan will meet for a combined meeting of the annual Special Channel and Monterey Talks in Washington, D.C., a gathering of the political and military leadership within each government. The Biden Administration is expected to present its new policy to Taiwan and direct it to upend its present plans for an all-phases approach to the island's defense, and replace it with a narrow "asymmetric" focus on a D-Day style invasion.

The U.S. should follow President Biden's direction and present the Taiwan delegation with strategic clarity over American intentions. If the U.S. is directing Taiwan to only acquire certain capabilities, then it should accompany that approach with clarity on when and where the U.S. would be willing to step in and fill the gaps its new policy is creating. If we refuse to sell submarine hunting helicopters or command and control aircraft to Taiwan, then the Administration should be crystal clear that the U.S. Navy will fill this requirement for Taiwan's defense. It would also mean training with the Taiwan military to ensure interoperability, while forging a clear division of responsibility to ensure the best utilization of collective resources.

If the Biden Administration intends to dictate specific arms sales to Taiwan, they should immediately and publicly end the legacy policy of strategic ambiguity, replacing it with clarity on when and where the U.S. would be willing to step in and fill the gaps created by their new strategy. This would permit Taiwan to focus on a narrower defensive posture, as demanded by Mr. Biden's government, with the clear expectation that the U.S. would fill any resulting gaps if necessary. Otherwise, Taiwan's vulnerability to Chinese attack will increase and not decrease.

拜登總統的回應是對的：我們需要戰略清晰來修補拜登政府安全協助政策的缺陷

拜登總統於5月23日訪問日本時，曾被問到美國會不會以「軍事介入保衛台灣」，當時拜登明確地回答「會」，這是拜登在總統任期內第三次針對美國會否保衛台灣作清楚地回應，將這項美國戰略模糊的政策，推往更為清晰的方向，同時展現了美國的意圖。

拜登總統的回應是對的，他的答覆決定性地強化了美國在北亞洲的利益。但可惜的是，政府幕僚很快地又退回原位，使這個原本可謂政策的勝利，反造成外界對美國在區域的立場有更多的困惑與不解。

拜登總統意圖將美國對台政策清晰化，實為必要且及時，尤其是在國務院及白宮國安會更改協助台灣安全程序之際。這兩個單位限縮了美國提供台灣在各種情境下維持自衛的裝備，並對過去已正常化五年的軍售過程，再度施加嚴格的限制。



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拜登政府將台灣的國防聚焦於所謂的「不對稱」措施，僅有符合美國政府對這個詞彙定義的能力項目、或是美國評估台灣可以負擔的裝備，才可以被提供。事實上，「不對稱」的定義不停地改變，在美國也有許多人對這個詞彙的定義、以及新政策如何運用在台灣整體防衛，持有不同的立場。至於可負擔性(affordability)部分，其實台灣是世界上最富有的國家之一，擁有逾五千四百五十億美元的外匯存底。

新政策僅單單聚焦於對台發起攻擊的作戰日(D-Day)情境，其他各階段衝突情境的重要性都被降低，包含在台海周圍及空域附近頻繁的灰色地帶行動，以及對台灣空域及海港的封鎖行動等。在美國的新政策下，台灣因應前述情境的能力將嚴重地退化。新政策不僅沒有強化台灣的國防，反而為人民解放軍提供更多易攻擊的破口。

新軍售政策已造成各界極度困惑，我們需要釐清及提供明確的目標。自本年三月以來，美國已經取消三項對台軍售，只因為這些裝備沒有符合「不對稱」的定義，而且被認為過於昂貴。這個政策不僅是家長式主義(paternalistic)而且具相當主導性，使台灣悖離其民主機關。此外，迄今美方對此都只有單向的溝通，所幸新政策衍生的實際問題目前尚未衝擊到台灣的國防或國家安全基礎。

拜登政府致力於採取此新政策，所以現在問題不在如何確保台灣的弱點不會快速地遭受到攻擊，而是在如何強化嚇阻。

白宮近期宣布美國對台戰略模糊政策，即不表明如果台灣遭受攻擊時美國會否提供協助。如果美國不讓台灣籌獲全方位的能力裝備來防衛或阻止與中國的各種衝突，也不表明美國軍隊能否填補新政策所致台灣的能力缺口，這將使台灣處於極度易受攻擊的位置。

台美政軍領導階層將於6月22日到24日，在美國華盛頓進行年度的特殊管道會議及蒙特瑞會談。屆時美方官員料將介紹對台新政策、主導台灣放棄現有全面防衛台灣各階段衝突的計畫，並以狹隘聚焦作戰發起日的「不對稱」構想取而代之。

美國應遵循拜登總統的指示，向出席會議的台灣代表團展現美國戰略清晰的意圖。如果美國主導台灣只籌獲部分的裝備，則應清楚說明美國將在何時願意介入、並且如何介入，以填補新政策所致台灣的能力缺口。如果美方拒絕售予台灣反潛直升機，或指揮及控制(command and control)的機型，則拜登政府應清楚說明美國海軍將會滿足台灣這些防衛的需求，包含訓練台灣軍隊以確保互相操作性(interoperability)，以及劃分明確的責任與分工，確保整體資源被充分地運用。

如果拜登政府想主導台灣購買某些特定的軍售項目，則應該立即且公開地終止傳統的戰略模糊政策，並明確地表示美國將在什麼樣的情境下介入，以填補新政策所致之能力缺口。如同拜登政府所推動的，新政策將使台灣聚焦於更狹隘的防衛態勢，但同時應有更清楚的預期美國將在必要情況下填補這些缺口，否則台灣只會更容易受到中國的攻擊。

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