

an initial period of panic on Taiwan before it became evident that the losses the Chinese interference caused would remain in the tolerable range. In the future, this may become more difficult for the reason given above.

Retaliation. The U.S. capability to retaliate with nuclear weapons would seem assured for the foreseeable future. However, this raises all of the "extended deterrence" issues with which the United States struggled during the Cold War. In particular, could a U.S. threat to run the risk of Chinese nuclear retaliation in defense of Taiwan be made credible, given the vast difference between the weight of Taiwan, on the one hand, and Western Europe, on the other, with respect to the global balance of power?

In addition, the United States will likely retain the ability to inflict serious damage on Chinese military and economic targets using conventional air and cruise missile attacks, although the United States would probably not be able to "collapse" the Chinese air defense system the way that it rendered Iraqi air defenses ineffective in Desert Storm. Thus, the ongoing costs of a U.S. retaliation campaign are likely to be relatively high. The size of such a campaign would be affected by the amount of available basing in the region (especially whether basing on Taiwan was feasible).

In addition, political constraints would limit the range of Chinese targets to be attacked: There could be a strong desire to avoid collateral damage, and targets might be limited to military facilities directly involved in the Chinese action against Taiwan. Thus, military targets that the Chinese leadership might care about most, such as nuclear facilities in northwest China, might not be targetable.

Finally, methods of retaliation other than air and missile strikes would be possible. For example, a Chinese attempt to blockade Taiwan could be answered by a U.S. blockade of Chinese ports. This could have wider international repercussions than air strikes on military targets (or a trade embargo by the United States and any other states that chose to join the United States), since it would interfere with other countries' trade with China, but it might otherwise be preferable as a less escalatory (more "tit-for-tat") option.

Retaliation could also take nonmilitary forms, for example, trade sanctions, imposition of strict export controls, or downgrading of diplomatic relations. How successful this would be would depend