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**President and Commander-in-Chief Hu Jintao's New
Initiatives in Foreign, Military and Reunification Policies**

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This draft paper looks at China's security and foreign policy – including tactics toward the “renegade province” of Taiwan – after President Hu Jintao has consolidated his power in the wake of the full retirement of ex-president Jiang Zemin. The relatively speedy grip with which Hu has imposed his stamp on the People's Liberation Army (PLA) brass attests to the predominant influence that the president, together with allies such as Premier Wen Jiabao, will exert on foreign, security and reunification policies in the foreseeable future. Hu's departures from the foreign-policy line laid down by late patriarch Deng Xiaoping and ex-president Jiang will be examined. And discussion will be conducted on initiatives that Hu is taking toward advancing the cause of national unification.

I. Hu Jintao consolidates his position in the foreign-policy and military establishment

After the unexpected retirement of ex-president Jiang Zemin from the Central Military Commission (CMC) chairmanship, President Hu has made swift moves to consolidate his grip on the foreign policy, security and defense establishments.

Since becoming the Head of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Leading Group on Foreign Affairs (LFGA) and Leading Group on Taiwan Affairs (LGTA) in March 2003, Hu has played a key role in China's foreign and security policy. The 61-year-old supremo's dominance over this crucial area has been enhanced after he took over the CMC chairmanship from Jiang at the 4th CCP Central Committee plenary session last September. According to the division of labor in the Politburo Standing Committee (PSC), Premier Wen Jiabao mainly looks after economic matters, However, Wen also sits

on the LGFA, and given the growing impact of economic and trade policy on foreign affairs, Hu's main PSC ally is also making a large contribution to diplomacy.

While Hu was made First Deputy CMC Vice-Chairman in 1999, he had been practically kept out of high-level military decision-making by Jiang. However, it is not anticipated that Hu will have problem running the commission or getting the support of professional officers. As with Jiang, Hu will rely on party and political discipline as well as material inducements to ensure the loyalty of the top brass. Stress will continue to be made on the party's "absolute leadership" over the army. And Hu will keep the senior officers happy through large annual budget boosts, and through promotions and other perks. Moreover, PLA officers will be allowed a considerable say in foreign and security policy, including questions surrounding the Taiwan Strait. Hu has continued with the policy, first laid down by Chairman Mao Zedong, of the "interchangeability between [the requirements of] peace and war." And top generals including Gen Cao Gangchuan – one of the first senior officers to profess loyalty to "Chairman Hu" – have indicated that cadres in civilian sectors ranging from infrastructure and transport to telecommunications should have war-time needs in mind when drafting long-term plans.

The new-look and enlarged CMC consists of combat-hardened professionals. For the first time, the heads of the Navy, Air Force, and Missile Forces were inducted into the policy-making organ. Most of the CMC members have had ample experience serving in "frontline" regions under the Nanjing Military Region, which has responsibility for Taiwan. Chief of the General Staff Gen Liang Guanglie, for example, is the author of a book on amphibious warfare that is required reading in military academies. Others have directed annual war games along the Fujian and Jiangxi coast. And both Gens Li Jinai and Jing Zhiyuan are experts of missiles, the weapon of choice in a possible "liberation warfare" against Taiwan. It is expected that apart from national reunification, the PLA under Hu will also play a substantial role in security and foreign policies.

The CMC after the 4th Central Committee Plenum

Current Post	Office-bearer	Probable capacity during a Taiwan Strait conflict
CMC Chairman	Hu Jintao	Commander in Chief and Political Commissar
CMC Vice-Chairman	Gen Guo Boxiong	Deputy Commander (warfare/strategy)
CMC Vice-Chairman	Gen Cao Gangchuan	Deputy Commander (technology/logistics)
CMC Vice-Chairman	Gen Xu Caihou	Deputy Political Commissar
Chief of the General Staff Department	Gen Liang Guanglei	Chief of Staff; Commanding officer over the Taiwan Strait theater

Chief of General Political Department	Gen Li Jinai	Chief officer in charge of wartime personnel and propaganda
Chief of Logistics Department	Gen Liao Xilong	Logistics supervisor over the Taiwan Strait theater
Chief of Armaments Department	Gen Chen Bingde	Chief of Armaments and weapons procurement
Air Force Commander	Gen Qiao Qingchen	Air warfare supervisor in the Taiwan theater
Navy Commander	Adm Zhang Dingfa	Naval warfare supervisor in the Taiwan theater
Missile Forces Commander	Gen Jing Zhiyuan	Missile warfare supervisor

Hu will likely carry forward military reforms begun by Jiang more than a year ago. This includes further mobilization of ground forces as well as non-combat personnel. More efforts will be made in “digitization” of weapons as well as coordination of the various PLA branches. As Hu indicated in the first CMC meeting that he chaired soon after the 4th Central Committee plenum, “the defense forces must seek innovation while remaining *shi* [‘substantial and reliable’] and it must seek progress in the midst of maintaining stability.”

II. Hu Jintao’s “New Diplomacy”

Hu is not expected to deviate markedly from foundations in diplomacy laid down by Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin. For example, the long-standing goal of “ensuring a benevolent, advantageous global environment for China’s economic take-off” will remain intact. However, there will also be significant modifications and fine-tuning of foreign and security policies introduced by Deng and Jiang. The Hu-lead LFGA will also make full use of China’s much stronger economic, diplomatic and military prowess (compared to the 1990s) to press foreign-policy goals. Deng’s famous dictum of “taking a low profile and never taking the lead” will be replaced by a more proactive if not aggressive security policy particularly vis-à-vis the U.S. and Taiwan.

The cornerstone of Jiang-style diplomacy – *daguo waijiao* (“great power diplomacy”) – is based in large measure on the establishment of a “constructive strategic partnership” with the U.S. While Hu will continue to give top priority to Sino-U.S. relations, he has made it clear that at most, China could only cement a “cooperative partnership” with America. Hu’s diplomatic team will devote unprecedented attention to boosting China’s links with the European Union, Russia, ASEAN – and to a considerable degree, Africa and South America. Moreover, for Hu, security and foreign policy is being assessed and pursued in a wider context that includes areas such as trade and currency stability, energy sufficiency and the projection of Chinese “soft power.”

Highlights of Hu-style diplomacy include:

a) Policy of balance, multi-polarity and multilateralism.

This means boosting links with great powers and power blocs such as the EU, Russia and ASEAN to construct a multi-polar global order, or one rid of U.S. predominance. One new departure under Hu is that ample resources are being earmarked for developing ties to Africa and Latin America.

Further, the leadership under President Hu and Premier Wen will make more solid commitments to multilateral pursuits such as sponsoring the six-party talks on the North Korean crisis. Beijing has also made substantial contribution to international peace-keeping missions. China's role in the United Nations will also be enhanced.

b) Massive use of the economic/foreign trade card.

Beijing is relying on the foreign trade – particularly the import – card to secure the friendship of countries ranging from rich countries such as France, Germany and South Korea to poorer ones such as Thailand and Cambodia. The Hu-Wen leadership is contemplating a Chinese-style Marshall Plan to aid infrastructure building in countries occupying the PRC's southwestern backyard.

c) Policy of good neighborliness and “the peaceful emergence of China.”

Beijing has mended fences with erstwhile enemies including India, Vietnam and Russia. It has reassured neighbors, in particular ASEAN countries, that China is a “benevolent elephant” – and that its economic prowess will engender a win-win situation in the Asian region. PLA generals visiting Asian capitals have reiterated that Beijing does not harbor territorial ambitions.

d) Energy – in particular – petroleum diplomacy.

Chinese state oil companies and government departments are all guns blazing pursuing reliable and long-term oil and gas supplies in Russia, Asia, the Caspian Sea area, the Middle East, Africa and South America . Political and diplomatic implications of this energy imperative are immense.

e) Countering a Washington-led “anti -China containment policy” in the wake of the global war on terrorism.

Beijing anticipates that President George W. Bush may in his second term pursue even more vigorous, unilateralist measures to ensure U.S. world dominance – and that the Bush White House will may target Iran, Syria and/or North Korea.

f) A *yiren weiben* (“putting people first”) diplomacy.

More efforts will be made to reflect public feelings, including nationalistic sentiments, in diplomacy. This will have somber implications for relations with the U.S. and Japan – as well as for cross-Taiwan Strait dynamics.

Obviously, some of these goals may be mutually incompatible. For example, Beijing's bid to prospect for and exploit oil and gas in disputed territories such as the Spratly Islands and the East China sea has resulted in diplomatic wrangling with countries including the Philippines, Vietnam and Japan. As such, the Hu-Wen leadership's

petroleum imperative runs counter to its effort to spread the gospel of the “peaceful rise” of China. It seems clear that Hu’s foreign policy need further fine-tuning given the multiple challenges facing the country at home and abroad.

III. Hu’s New-look Taiwan Policy

President and Commander-in-Chief Hu is not expected to substantially depart from the Taiwan policy laid down by Deng and Jiang, which could be described as seeking peaceful reunification while using military threat to put pressure on both pro-independence elements in Taiwan as well as “hostile foreign powers” that back *taidu* (“separatism”) from behind the scenes.

However, there are shades of difference between the Taiwan strategies of Hu and those of Jiang. Outside of the formerly dominant Shanghai Faction, Jiang is known and sometimes decried for his “pro-U.S.” proclivities. Particularly given the relatively smooth working relationship between Jiang and former president Bill Clinton, the former set a lot of store by relying on the Americans to rein in Taipei’s pro-independence gambit. It was said in the Jiang days that “the fastest route from Beijing to Taipei is through Washington.” Another saying went like this: “In times of yore, the CCP put its hope on reunification on cooperation with the Kuomintang; later on, Beijing vested its hopes on the Taiwan people; now the Chinese leadership relies on the Americans to prevent Taiwan from breaking away.”

In general Hu seems to have a more realistic appraisal of the tricky China-Taiwan-U.S. triangle. The Hu leadership will continue to put pressure on the U.S. “not to send the wrong signals to Taiwan.” However, Hu will be seeking other means and channels to deal with Chen and his Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) colleagues. There are suggestions among both Chinese and Western analysts that other things being equal, Hu may adopt a more hawkish line toward Taipei. One reason is that Hu is not as susceptible as predecessor Jiang to Washington’s admonishment or threats regarding the use of force against Taiwan. For example, Hu has asked his generals to factor in a sizeable degree of U.S. interference – in the likely form of dispatching aircraft carrier battle groups to the region – when the PLA officers draw up scenarios of the “liberation warfare.”

Moreover, being a new CMC chief, Hu has to some extent to conciliate the top brass by giving a thorough hearing to their arguments for using military tactics against *taidu* elements. Equally important is the rise of nationalistic sentiments among the populace. At a time when the legitimacy of the CCP is in doubt, the Hu-Wen team may have no choice but to go some distance toward meeting the expectations of the people. And if public opinion is overwhelmingly in favor of “teaching A-Bian a lesson,” the Fourth Generation leadership has to do something to show it is tough enough to take on Taiwan – as well as the Americans. Moreover, a Taiwan adventure may divert the attention of the public away from ingrained socio-economic problems such as unemployment and the polarization between rich and poor.

Hu's Taiwan policy may consist of the following. On the one hand, "war preparation" will continue relentlessly. While no senior civilian cadre really wants to pay the price of a war, high-profile preparations for a military option and a certain degree of saber rattling are seen as necessary to put pressure on Taiwan – and to some extent the U.S. and Japan – regarding Beijing's goal of thwarting President Chen's perceived *taidu* gambit. Particularly after the March 20 Taiwan presidential election, there is evidence that "war preparation" against Taiwan has intensified. For example, the production of missiles has increased, and the stockpiling of missiles in the three main bases in Fujian and Jiangxi Province has gone on relentlessly. Procurement of weapons from Russia has centered on hardware that may be used in a Taiwan Strait conflict such as submarines and jet fighters. PLA strategists have also studied ways and means to deal with U.S. aircraft carriers that may be sent to the Taiwan Strait should hostilities break out.

At the same time, however, "war preparation" will mainly sub-serve the goal of *nengzhan caineng yanhe* ("only if we are combat-ready are we in a position to talk peace"), a strategy that was endorsed at a Politburo meeting last July. In fact, if only for propaganda purposes, Hu has the past few months tried to project the image of a moderate on Taiwan affairs. Take for instance, the new supremo's instructions when he chaired a national meeting on Taiwan called by the LGTA one month before he took over the CMC chairmanship.

The gist of Taiwan policy recommendations in the conclave, which was not reported in the public media, was: "We should strive for dialogue; we must get ready to fight; but we don't mind waiting." Sources close to the meeting said Hu wanted to send a "conditional olive branch" to the people of Taiwan – but not necessarily to President Chen, on whom the CCP leadership has given up hope. Hu and other LGTA members pointed out that since the majority of Taiwan people did not want independence, Beijing should do more to show them the benefits of unification. Hu also instructed Taiwan-related cadres to mothball discriminating policies toward "green," or pro-DPP, businessmen or entertainers.

More significantly, Hu scrapped the so-called "20-year reunification timetable," which had been cited by hardliners in the past year to put pressure on the Chen regime. The meaning of "we don't mind waiting" was that since time was on the side of the mainland, Beijing was under no hurry to use drastic measures such as liberation warfare to absorb the island. Of course, the underlying criterion for using force – a declaration of *de jure*, full-fledged independence by Taipei – still holds.

Indeed, essential to Hu's strategy is the belief that given the leaps-and-bounds growth of the mainland's economic and military clout, time is on the side of Beijing. While not letting up on "war preparation," the Hu-Wen leadership is mainly relying on the economic or business card to ensure that in the words of the CCP leadership, the Chen Shui-bian regime will soon be deprived of the economic means to pursue independence. This is a reference to the fact that in just a matter of a few years, the Taiwan economy will become so dependent on the mainland that it will be impossible for the DPP regime

to bring about full independence. Hu is convinced that Taiwan's economic dependence on the mainland will increase because Chen's cold-war stance toward the PRC will necessarily lead to the weakening of the island's already problematic economy.

Indeed, a few diplomatic think-tank members in Beijing have even argued that provided that the U.S. is only selling second-rate weapons to Taiwan, Taipei's purchase of more and more U.S. military hardware will only contribute to the early bankruptcy of the Taiwan economy. Seen from this perspective, owing to the lopsided discrepancy between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, a ferocious arms race between mainland China and Taiwan will only work to this disadvantage of the DPP government.

At the same time, Beijing is waging a kind of "smokeless diplomatic warfare" to isolate and marginalize the Chen regime. A recent case in point was Hu's trip to Latin America in mid-November, the first trip made by the Chinese leader to this part of the world. Apart from attending the APEC meeting, the Chinese leader's main purpose was to consolidate ties with major South American countries such as Brazil, Chile and Argentina. Beijing is convinced that as China's influence – backed by massive investment and imports of raw materials and other goods – grows, it will be in a position to persuade practically all Central and South American countries to dump Taiwan.

Already, the 13 Central and South American countries that still recognize Taipei are facing intense pressure from their businessmen, all of whom are barred from the lucrative China market because of the Taiwan factor. The next country in this region that may drop Taiwan in favor of the PRC may be El Salvador. Recently, the El Salvador Foreign Minister Francisco Lainez admitted that his country was considering establishing diplomatic links with China owing to lobbying by the local business community that is anxious to profit from the China market.

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