



# Taiwans National Security, Defense Policy and Weapons Procurement Processes

*Michael D. Swaine*

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# Taiwan's National Security, Defense Policy and Weapons Procurement Processes

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This report examines Taiwan's national security decisionmaking structure and process and the primary factors guiding its defense strategy, force structure, and military procurement decisions. It attempts to explain the motives and interests determining Taiwan's national security policy and defense plans and its decisions to acquire major weapons and related support systems from foreign sources, including the United States. The author has determined that Taiwan's national security policy process is poorly coordinated, both within the top levels of the senior leadership and between the civilian and military elite. As a result, Taiwan lacks a strategy that can integrate and guide its foreign and defense policies. He also concludes that Taiwan's defense policy and procurement decisionmaking process are significantly influenced by a variety of nonmilitary criteria that complicate efforts to ascertain the motives and objectives of Taiwan's requests for U.S. arms and call into question Taiwan's ability to effectively absorb such arms. He recommends that the United States continue to acquire more and better information about Taiwan's strengths and weaknesses in these areas and especially to more accurately assess Taiwan's requests for military sales from the United States. He also recommends that the United States (1) avoid providing arms and assistance to Taiwan in ways that provoke greater tension with China without appreciably improving Taiwan's defense capabilities, (2) continue to strengthen contacts with the ROC military but avoid interacting with the Taiwan armed forces in a way that suggests the establishment of joint U.S.-Taiwan operational capabilities, and (3) develop and maintain close contacts with Taiwan's key decisionmakers.

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