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# Detering Conflict and Preserving Peace in Asia

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CENTRE ON ASIA  
AND GLOBALISATION

# **Detering Conflict and Preserving Peace in Asia**

**Edited by  
Drew Thompson and Byron Chong**



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The editors hope that this report informs perspectives and discourse on the sparsely discussed intersection of Northeast and Southeast Asian security interests.

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# Introduction

*Drew Thompson*

Despite a high degree of regional economic and political integration, the security perspectives of Northeast and Southeast Asia are disparate. Northeast Asian security dynamics are dominated by North Korea threatening the South, the China-Japan territorial dispute in the East China Sea, and the cross-Strait relationship, where China and its rapidly expanding and increasingly capable military threatens to unify Taiwan by force should peaceful means be exhausted. Southeast Asian security is dominated by inter-state rivalry between ASEAN member states, South China Sea territorial disputes with China, and a range of non-traditional security threats including terrorism. While China and the United States (US) are key actors in both Northeast and Southeast Asian security calculations, there are few obvious variables that overlap, or directly tie Northeast and Southeast security interests together, despite the clear recognition that a conflict in either Northeast or Southeast Asia would negatively impact the other region.

No countries in Northeast or Southeast Asia want to see crises or conflicts emerge anywhere in the Western Pacific, but the degree to which states are willing to act to prevent crises or deter aggression varies widely between the two regions. Northeast and Southeast Asian states have divergent perspectives and are responding quite differently to China's rise under Xi Jinping. Japan, in particular, is responding to the rapid expansion of China's military power by increasing defence spending, acquiring new military capabilities, and strengthening the US-Japan alliance. Australia is likewise strengthening its existing alliance with the US, deepening security cooperation with Japan, engaging in multilateral security activities, as well as developing unprecedented military power-projection capabilities. Other states stand firmly on the periphery, such as India and South Korea, whose security interests are distinctly narrow and focused primarily on geographically contiguous threats.

Southeast Asian states, on the other hand see the preponderance of their interests in closer economic relations with China, while simultaneously hedging by encouraging the US to maintain its military presence in the region. Put broadly, China is not seen as a military threat in Southeast Asia the same way it is in Northeast Asia. Southeast Asian states have made their desire to avoid antagonising China clear, as they have also made clear their desire to avoid entanglement in US-China competition. "Don't choose sides" is the dominant mantra in Southeast Asian capitals as they seek to maximise benefits from both powers. Following US Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022, and the subsequent display of military might by China, there is new appreciation of the potential for conflict, as well as the broad awareness of the risks and potential effect on Southeast Asian interests that a conflict in the East China Sea or across the Taiwan Strait would have.

Great power dynamics as well as great distances make Northeast Asian security issues remote for Southeast Asian states who lose little sleep over North Korean provocations, or China-Japan posturing over the Senkakus. Likewise for Seoul, tensions in the South China Sea pale in comparison to the daily threat they face from Pyongyang. As US politician Tip O'Neil once quipped, "all politics is local," Asian security concerns likewise are geographically parochial.

This project seeks to explore the intersections of Northeast and Southeast Asian security, which is understudied and infrequently discussed. For Southeast Asia, where national security interests are increasingly defined by what a country will not do, we challenged contributors to consider what countries might do when confronted by the prospects of a conflict in the region. Some participants were asked to consider what conditions would prompt their respective country to actively respond to conflict, and whether there were conditions under which smaller states might take a more proactive stance to prevent or contribute to efforts to deter conflict. The findings of this report make clear that there are diverse views. Some states are bandwagoning together to deter aggression while building their own military capabilities. Others express a strong aversion to taking any measures to prevent conflict that might make them subject to coercion or retaliation from China, regardless of the indirect cost of the conflict itself. Some Southeast Asian states may strengthen their non-aligned posture, and even take tangible measures to deny the benefits of cooperation to parties to a conflict, such as not permitting passage or overflight to military planes and vessels. Stimulating this pervasive non-alignment is China's tremendous economic influence and willingness to use economic sanctions and diplomatic coercion. China's most powerful tool of deterrence in Southeast Asia is economic coercion, and it is clearly effective.

As the US develops and implements its strategy to enrol allies and partners to counter China and deter Beijing from using force on its periphery, Washington must better understand the security perspectives of Southeast Asian states in order to recognise its increasingly clear limits. Southeast Asian states do not view China itself as a military or a security threat, but are increasingly aware of the risks of a conflict in Northeast Asia affecting their economic and political interests. A key finding of this project is that the awareness of the impact and undesirability of a conflict on its immediate periphery is not sufficient to move Southeast Asian states to either take active measures to prevent a conflict, or work overtly with the United States to deter China from using force against its neighbours.

### **Project Design and Intentions**

This project was intended to bring together experts from Northeast and Southeast Asia as well as the US, India and Australia to exchange views on common and divergent interests in maintaining peace and stability in the region. Participants were asked to consider how the risk of conflict in the East China Sea or over Taiwan affects security calculations throughout the region, and whether there are conditions in which countries in Southeast Asia might take tangible, proactive steps to avert a conflict. At the outset of the project, it was apparent that many Southeast Asian foreign policy experts had very little exposure to Northeast Asian security issues, particularly Taiwan and cross-Strait relations. Several contributors commented to the editors that they had never analysed cross-Strait security dynamics before, or visited Taiwan previously, despite their deep experience as academics or practitioners in Southeast Asia.

An online roundtable with all contributors was convened in March 2022 to stimulate their thoughts and inform their papers.

The essays in this compendium are intended to reflect the diverse views of the authors. The editors consciously wielded a light pen and avoided compelling contributors to conform to a specific style or outlook, seeking to preserve their original voice to the greatest extent possible in order to underscore the diversity of perspectives and interests in the region.

## Key takeaways

- Southeast Asian states seek to avoid becoming entangled in US-China competition, frequently articulated as, “not choosing sides.”
- Southeast Asian states are meticulous at avoiding antagonising China even when their own interests are affected, underscoring the effectiveness of China’s use of economic and political coercion to deter Southeast Asian states.
- Southeast Asian elites are fully cognizant of the consequences of a conflict in the East China Sea or across the Taiwan Strait, but they are reluctant to take active measures to prevent conflict, and are unlikely to respond forcefully if conflict erupts.
- Northeast Asian states do not look to Southeast Asian states for security benefits, but do seek to build their capacity and maintain access for reasons beyond conflict prevention.
- US policy-makers lack appreciation for the depth of Southeast Asian preferences for non-alignment, high tolerance for inaction, and disinterest in having agency or taking overt measures to prevent a conflict around Taiwan and the East China Sea.
- Japan’s and Australia’s perception of the threat that China presents to regional stability and their own political, economic, and security interests have shifted considerably in the last five years, resulting in a more proactive approach to deterrence, including strengthening alliances and access in Northeast Asia, and the acquisition of advanced military power-projection capabilities.

# 1 Taiwan Scenarios and the Future of Southeast Asian Security: The Hard Reality for ASEAN

*Michael Green*

It is almost a cliché now for international relations scholars to note that the member states of ASEAN do not want to have to choose between the United States (US) and China. That truism guides the US, Japanese and Australian approaches to diplomacy with Southeast Asia. All three governments seek through policies such as the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF) and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) to be partners-of-choice rather than partners-of-exclusion. But this nuanced framework may be sustainable only for as long as peace lasts in the region. Any contest of arms over Taiwan would quickly evaporate the space for nuanced consideration of ASEAN centrality and leave far less room for Southeast Asian agency in the geopolitics of Asia.

The stakes for China and for the US or Japan in a Taiwan conflict would leave little room for ASEAN-centered institutions like the ASEAN Regional Forum or East Asia Summit to play a role. Military calculations would overwhelm established diplomatic practices. For Beijing, any threat of *de jure* separation of Taiwan from the mainland would be existential for the Chinese Communist Party and Southeast Asia will not likely escape Beijing's operational gaze. As the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has expanded its offensive military planning to deter Taiwanese separation or compel unification, the battlespace has expanded as well—from a conventional naval and air war directly across the Taiwan Strait in the 1990s, to a multi-front conflict involving space, cyber, ballistic missile attacks on US bases and facilities, and military operations along the entire First Island Chain—well into the Philippine Sea and Southeast Asia. For the US and core allies like Japan and Australia, this threat in turn would be close to existential. Chinese domination over Taiwan would pierce the First Island Chain, flank and isolate Japan and cut-off Australia, and position China for significant power projection towards Guam, Hawaii and the West Coast. The US has fought major wars to prevent such an outcome in the past. Meanwhile, the coercion of a free people by Beijing would send shock waves through the US alliance system. The Obama administration's failure to enforce the redline against Syria in 2012 and the Biden administration's bungled withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 undermined allied confidence in US competence and security commitments. Failure to respond to Chinese force against Taiwan would be exponentially more damaging to the US strategic position. Finally, China's control over Taiwan's industrial base—particularly Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC)—would be a blow to the democracies' lead in advanced semiconductor technology needed to compete over the next decades on artificial intelligence. If Taiwan is the Fulda Gap of Asia, it is also the Ruhr Valley in geo-economic terms.

Other historical precedents are also compelling. The expansion of PLA military planning for Taiwan contingencies into new domains like cyber and space, and a broader geographic flanking movement into Southeast Asia is evocative of the dynamic between Nazi Germany and Britain and France in 1939–40. Developments in military technology, particularly amphibious operations and air warfare, meant that Germany expanded the map of its war plans against Britain and France beyond the Western Front of the First World War to far away North African and Scandinavian frontiers. Norway had remained neutral in the First

World War and assumed the same would be possible in the Second World War. But Germany required iron ore from Norway and sought to flank Britain on the North Sea—a maneuver Britain could not ignore. The British, French and Germans all moved into Norway, culminating in a major German invasion in April 1940 that toppled the democratically-elected Norwegian government. The Philippine archipelago will lie in the direct path of any PLA flanking movement to the south of Taiwan while Singapore and Malaysia sit along strategic choke points critical to any US reinforcement effort and are thus tempting targets for Chinese force or coercion. As Norwegian King Haakon VII found in 1940, and Thucydides emphasised during the Peloponnesian Wars, “the strong will do what they can and the weak suffer what they must.” Or as a phrase commonly attributed to Leon Trotsky puts it, “you may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you.”

### **Thinking About ASEAN Agency in a Taiwan Crisis**

Does this mean Southeast Asian agency must completely evaporate in the transition from peace to war? Not necessarily. Military planners consider the evolution of conflict over five phases. We are currently in Phase Zero, which is peace time; Phase One is the flow of combat forces in preparation for hostilities; Phase Two is the initial commencement of hostilities; Phase Three is exploitation of openings; Phase Four is the destruction of the enemy, and Phase Five is the peacekeeping, disarmament and rebuilding mission (if the previous phases are successful, of course). In Phase Zero—or peacetime—ASEAN has demonstrated agency by compelling the major powers to play by the rules of ASEAN centrality or lose strategic influence in their competition with each other. However, by Phase Two—commencement of hostilities—ASEAN’s agency and internal cohesion is likely to disintegrate. This makes Phase One—the time when governments are actively preparing for hostilities—a critical moment for ASEAN to affect its member states’ geopolitical interests. And this will be possible only with advanced strategic foresight while we are still in Phase Zero—particularly since Beijing might seek to reduce the timeline for Phase One to make it more difficult for the US to respond (a potentially dangerous conclusion Beijing might draw from Russia’s lengthy preparation and eventual failures in Ukraine).

Any scenario for conflict would begin with China initiating the use of force. The *casus belli* could range from provocations by Taiwan such as a declaration of independence, to a pre-emptive attack if Beijing worries that domestic politics in Taiwan are irrevocably drifting away from unification. Isolated incidents could also lead to escalation as Beijing increases its military operational tempo around Taiwan to pressure Taipei. The US response would likely be calibrated depending on the scenario, but President Joe Biden’s inadvertent admission that he would definitely defend Taiwan in response to a hypothetical question from the media in May 2022 indicates how determined most US presidents and certainly Congress would be to prevent a Chinese victory.

For ASEAN member states, the more important question therefore becomes: what could Southeast Asian governments do to dissuade *China* from using force? The key is in shaking PLA planning assumptions. Beijing seeks to isolate its adversaries—if possible, to isolate the Taipei government from its people; or Taiwan from the US; or Japan from the US. Those wedge strategies are all proving more challenging for Beijing. Until recently, Beijing probably had confidence it could separate the US and Japan from Europe and other major economic powers, minimising the geo-economic and geopolitical risks of military options. Ukraine may have changed that assumption now as well. Even before Russia’s attack on Ukraine, the Biden administration had successfully incorporated references to Taiwan in G-7

and US-EU summit statements, and while the Ukraine crisis has focused European capitals on their own security, the crisis has also illuminated the potential for global coalitions of democracies to punish future aggressors—including possibly, China. Just as Japan, Australia, Singapore and other East Asian states stood up to support Ukraine and punish Russia, so might Europeans do the same for US allies and democracies under attack in Asia. Beijing’s non-kinetic support for Moscow has only helped tighten alignment between trans-Pacific and trans-Atlantic alliances. In Taipei, there is a growing recognition that Europe matters to Taiwan’s security too. That has given European capitals an increasing voice in the security of the Indo-Pacific and reinforced the dissuasion message to Beijing while encouraging Taipei not to isolate itself with brash or provocative moves.

ASEAN has yet to play a similar role shaping security expectations around Taiwan. The internal entropy over Myanmar and the unwillingness of any ASEAN member state other than Singapore to stand up to Russia in the Ukraine crisis certainly does not bode well for Southeast Asia’s agency in a crisis over Taiwan. But collectively, ASEAN economies could represent a significant force in geopolitics, while the ability to sanitise Southeast Asia against external coercion might complicate offensive planning by Beijing and contribute to stability. Strategic foresight and planning now could position ASEAN states better to shape decisions in the critical Phase Two of any crisis—before hostilities commence. Specifically, ASEAN member states should:

- *Enhance Maritime Domain Awareness.* If the PLA Navy concludes it can move with impunity through the Philippine or Sulu Seas, then flanking maneuvers will figure prominently in Beijing’s Taiwan contingency planning. But if the Philippines, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian maritime states accurately spotlight such maneuvers in peacetime, this will complicate Chinese assumptions.
- *Enhance Capacity-Building.* It is difficult for Southeast Asian states other than perhaps Vietnam to plan for warfare with China, but in a Taiwan contingency, PLA forces would be distributed in ways that the offense-defence formula becomes more manageable for Southeast Asian militaries. If maritime states have the ability to defend their territorial waters and create non-permissive environments for the PLA, then Beijing will have to contemplate open warfare with the entire region and perhaps adjust expectations that force would work.
- *Police Regional Security Agreements with Beijing.* The recent controversy over China’s security agreement with the Solomon Islands is instructive: first, Beijing clearly sought strategic and military access to Australia’s back yard; second, Australia and other US allies were caught napping; but third, Chinese diplomats clearly oversold what agreements and access they had achieved to their leadership and had to dial back expectations after other states in the region protested. Vigilance by ASEAN member states over Chinese dual-use military access agreements (for example, Kyaukpyu in Myanmar or Ream in Cambodia) can dissuade Beijing from thinking it will have easy access to military facilities in Phase One of a crisis.
- *Demonstrate That Neutrality Is Not Guaranteed—At Least Theoretically.* This one is more difficult for Southeast Asia and of course for ASEAN as an organisation, but signaling in Phase Zero that China could possibly ‘lose’ Southeast Asia is useful. The ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute surveys of Southeast Asian thought leaders indicates that

if forced to choose, most would prefer a US-led order in Asia to one dominated by China. The number of Southeast Asian states that signed on to the Biden administration's still unformed IPEF is further indication that the more powerful Southeast Asian states prefer US leadership, or at least fear US retreat. In early 2022, Western Europe may have inadvertently signaled to Russia that neutrality would again be the default position, as it was after the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Southeast Asia has a chance to at least raise some doubts in the minds of Chinese planners.

- *Shape Taipei's Thinking.* Taipei's New Southbound policy has essentially meant following Taiwanese manufacturers reshoring of manufacturing to Southeast Asia with a modest diplomatic initiative. But the quiet high-level dialogue that has resulted, has clearly reinforced for the government of President Tsai Ing-wen, the value of strategic exchanges over symbolic trappings of diplomatic ties. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky's non-provocative self-defence stance has also resonated with Taipei. The more Taipei's leadership is quietly connected with leaders of the democratic world and international community—including not only the US, Japan and Europe, but also Southeast Asia—the more steady and predictable Taipei will remain and the more coordinated will be the international community's signals to China disclaiming force as an option.
- *Shape Washington's Thinking.* The Biden administration's Asia team actively seeks sustained engagement with ASEAN, but official pressures on Washington and the US Congress from elsewhere, including Europe, the Middle East, and Northeast Asia, are relentless. The US-ASEAN Summit was a very good start, as was the significant Southeast Asian participation in IPEF. However, most ASEAN governments (with Singapore and Vietnam the notable exceptions) tend to think of their missions as reacting to US initiatives on regional security, focusing their limited access on narrower bilateral issues with Washington. ASEAN would do well to play a more proactive role in sustaining initiatives like the ASEAN Summit and encouraging US engagement on trade, capacity-building, and diplomacy.

To conclude, an ASEAN ostrich strategy on Taiwan will be self-defeating. Most experts in Washington would argue that the danger of a crisis in the Taiwan Strait has increased, though the chances of conflict are still remote. Southeast Asian governments have every interest in doing what they can to ensure that the possibility remains as remote as possible. Though limited in scope, ASEAN does have agency.

## **2 Building Credible Deterrence, Coordinate Defence and Overcoming Political Obstacles—Recommendations for Trilateral Security Cooperation of Taiwan, the United States, and Japan**

*Chenwei Lin and Yoichi Kato*

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has fundamentally altered the geopolitical and strategic landscape of the post-Cold War era. Its implications are yet to be determined since the outcome of war in Ukraine remains to be seen. And yet in this stage, we can already identify important lessons for the Taiwan Strait. The most important one is that deterrence can fail and democratic but relatively weaker nations can suffer unbearable tragedies, even when supported by powerful allies.

The stability of the Indo-Pacific region cannot afford to be built on wishful thinking that the People's Republic of China (PRC) will respect and adhere to the rules-based liberal international order. To ensure that deterrence does not fail, there is a real need for change.

This paper discusses key lessons and makes specific recommendations for Japan to enhance deterrence and preserve peace and stability in the East China Sea, and the broader Indo-Pacific region. We must begin with the premise that a democratic Taiwan and the current status-quo of the rules-based international order possesses essential strategic values for the stability and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region including the security of Japan and that of the Japan-United States (US) alliance. Taiwan's strategic importance is central to that order and the costs to maintain Taiwan's autonomy is not as self-evident as some strategists and critics would like to believe. We must be cognisant of this before delving into how to strengthen deterrence and defence of Taiwan, otherwise there will never be enough incentives to overcome the political obstacles to the recommendations made in this paper.

Difficult policy adjustments can only come from uncompromising commitment based on full recognition of the threat and the risks to Japan if those adjustments are not made. This cannot be more true since we propose fundamental changes in Japan's strategic and defence directions, which currently has a unique and constraining structure. We are facing possibly the most powerful state in the region and a rapidly evolving threat, the PRC and the People's Liberation Army (PLA).

### **The Lesson from Ukraine**

The most important lesson from Russia's invasion of Ukraine is that while a more credible deterrence strategy is essential in preventing conflict, it is potentially not sufficient for stopping a non-democratic regime from going to war for reasons antithetical to the rules-based liberal international order.

Putin's decision to invade Ukraine clearly demonstrates that for autocratic regimes such as

Russia and the PRC, the calculus for the costs of war and the legitimacy of waging war are entirely different from that of democratic countries. Therefore, the lesson is that we need both a more credible deterrence strategy but also prepare for the failure of deterrence by building a better coordinated defence strategy. Obviously, these two strategies, deterrence and defence, are inter-connected. The better and more robust the defence strategy is, the more credible deterrence strategy becomes. And yet, a credible deterrence strategy should also include clear ability to build coalitions to execute policy instruments other than military intervention and assistance, such as international condemnations and economic sanctions so that malign actors' aggression is rejected and hampered both domestically and internationally.

### **Credible Deterrence**

What then allows for a credible deterrence against the PRC? While not directly related, the war in Ukraine is of utmost importance because of its demonstrative effect on the PRC. Be it the military assistance provided by NATO members, or the humanitarian assistance by many others, it has an immensely profound demonstrative effect that cannot be overstated.

Coercive credibility is one of the most important elements for deterrence. If the US and NATO can continue to demonstrate resolve in military assistance and maintaining the economic sanctions in a protracted conflict in Ukraine, the PRC would perceive US and its allies' statements of commitment to deterring aggression and maintaining peace in the Indo-Pacific as very credible resolve.

This certainly is not a panacea for a comprehensive deterrence strategy for the Taiwan Strait but serves as a clear benchmark for how the US can rally support from allies and partners to provide denial capabilities for Taiwan and signal a credible measure of "extended deterrence" that the US and its allies such as Japan will provide for the Taiwan Strait.

### **Coordinated Defence Strategy**

A credible deterrence strategy must also have a strong military defence strategy. A meaningful defence strategy for the Taiwan contingency should not be limited only to what would be the best way to defend Taiwan against an all-out amphibious invasion by the PLA. Balancing Taiwan's requirement to field a conventional force for peacetime deterrence that counters PRC grey zone activities with the necessity of developing an asymmetric capability for homeland defence is a subject for heated debate within Taiwan. The PRC can conceivably seize Taiwan through a variety of scenarios such as a hybrid warfare strategy combining occupying outlying islands and inciting insurgencies within the island of Taiwan to topple the government, or imposing a blockade without causing physical damage to Taiwan's main island. Other probable scenarios include a salami-slicing strategy through malign grey zone activities to erode Taiwan's control of air and sea around the main island, or cyber-attacks to paralyse Taiwan's critical infrastructure and financial institutions, effectively coercing the civilian population to pressure Taiwan's political leaders to surrender before an invasion is necessary.

In short, the PRC has a wide range of options to either invade or coerce Taiwan into capitulation. The much discussed "porcupine strategy" addresses the challenge of a full-scale invasion but is insufficient to deter aggression or defend Taiwan against hybrid and grey zone operations. Therefore, to truly strengthen deterrence with meaningful defence strategies, stakeholders in the region would need to better coordinate defence strategies to counter

various scenarios. Table 1 lays out threat scenarios and the need for coordinated, coherent defence strategies relying on combinations of international support, asymmetric force development, and conventional forces, which mirrors the debate within Taiwan’s defence planning community. Assuming that Taiwan does pursue a “porcupine strategy” emphasising asymmetric forces that can survive prolonged bombardment by a superior force, it would still only be effective in an all-out invasion scenario. Other strategies to address the challenges brought about by other forms of conflicts, particularly grey zone operations necessitate both international support and a conventional military capability that is perceived to be comparable to PRC forces seeking to intimidate Taiwan. Regardless of the scenario, international support is a necessary condition for Taiwan’s security.

Table 1: Threat Scenarios and Counter Strategy

<b>Threat scenarios</b>	<b>Defence Strategy</b>
All-out amphibious invasion	Porcupine Strategy
Hybrid warfare involving capturing of outline island and internal insurgency	Resiliency and conventional force development
Blockade with precision strikes and cyber-attacks of critical infrastructure	Resiliency and asymmetric force development
Blockade without kinetic attacks	Both conventional and asymmetric force development
Salami-slicing through encroachment of air and sea control	Conventional force development

For the all-out amphibious invasion scenario, if Taiwan’s survivable asymmetric military forces were to prevail after the initial phase of joint firepower strikes and hold-off PLA’s amphibious landing operations, it still needs to continue fighting indefinitely if the war becomes protracted.

In other words, what roles could other stakeholders such as the US and Japan play when the conflict moves into mature phases of protracted conflict? As the saying goes, “amateurs talk about strategy and tactics. Professionals talk about logistics and sustainability in warfare.” If the US and Japan are willing to participate in the logistics and sustainability of defending Taiwan under an all-out invasion scenario, it is more than obvious that a coordinated defence strategy is essential.

In scenarios other than the all-out amphibious invasion, the obvious priority is to increase Taiwan’s resilience in critical infrastructure protection, power and water supply, provisions of basic commodities, and public health services, in addition to maintaining the conventional forces necessary to balance coercion by PLA conventional forces. But resilience measures alone are far from sufficient. Coordinated military operations with stakeholders such as the US and Japan are essential in Taiwan’s survival even in these low-intensity conflict scenarios. And yet, there exists no coordination to counter grey zone coercion, or conventional military attacks.

Given Taiwan’s limited resources in strengthening defence capabilities, the US faces new challenges on the European continent, and Japan’s legal and political constraints, it is of utmost importance that the US, Japan and Taiwan begin discussions on how to develop a coordinated defence strategy to address challenges that are cross-domain by nature. The scope of this paper cannot cover the entirety of this objective but the authors offer several

suggestions to stimulate discussions around possible courses of action for Japan.

### **Some Options for Japan**

As the war in Ukraine becomes protracted, the National Defence Strategy of the United States must account for security in Europe as well as the current China-focus, amounting to a two-front defence strategy. Such a trajectory most probably requires substantial changes in the structure of deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region and also deeper involvement and commitment from allies and partners of the United States, including Japan.

In light of the complex nature of a Taiwan contingency discussed in previous sections, the authors propose four options as policy proposals for Japan to enhance its deterrence and response capabilities in the regional context, and to begin planning for a coordinated defence strategy.

- (1) Japan needs to consider altering the basic nature of its defence strategy from the current “exclusive defence” approach, which does not articulate any specific adversary, to a threat-based one with a clearer description of the threat and challenge, and the national security objectives Japan seeks to preserve. Both the more aggressive attitude of PRC and the limited assets and resources of Japan necessitate a more focused defence strategy. The ongoing review process of the three strategic documents of Japan (i.e., National Security Strategy, National Defence Program Guidelines, and Medium-Term Defence Program), would be the ideal opportunity to officially articulate and initiate such a strategic shift.<sup>1</sup>
- (2) Japan needs to consider a substantial increase of its defence budget. Some members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party have proposed to double Japan’s defence budget to 2 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) to match the emerging trend among the other leading democracies in Europe, including Germany. It would be a clear manifestation of Japan’s commitment to having more robust military capabilities and also a credible message of deterrence against potential adversaries, particularly China.

Accepting the Liberal Democratic Party’s proposal, Prime Minister Kishida Fumio instructed the Finance and Defence ministers at the end of November 2022 to increase defence spending to 2 percent of GDP by the 2027 fiscal year.<sup>2</sup> However, there is no discussion about how to finance it. There remains the problem of how to win the public’s understanding and secure stable financial resources.

- (3) Japan should pursue trilateral defence cooperation with the US and Taiwan. Increased defence resources would be wasted without a realistic assessment of what roles Japan could and should play in different scenarios. While there is a prevailing perception in the defence policy circle that in a Taiwan Strait contingency, Japan and Taiwan belong to the same operational theater, discussions of how each stakeholder should plan for the contingency remain dormant. A trilateral coordination amongst the US, Japan and Taiwan is essential in a meaningful defence strategy and extremely effective as deterrence.

Current Japanese official thinking is that Japan’s defence planning ends geographically at the territorial border between Japan and Taiwan. That way of restrictive thinking is outdated in light of China’s growing aggressiveness and needs to be revised. The scope of the defence strategy should be expanded at least to “theater-wide,” and preferably to the entire area along the First Island Chain. This “First Island Chain Defence” concept includes not just Taiwan, but also the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries on

the Island Chain. Such a shift would also bring Japan's defence planning into greater alignment with US security perspectives, further strengthening the US-Japan alliance.

Given the possible political, legal and bureaucratic challenges against such over-the-border defence planning, one of the realistic and feasible ways to innovate is to develop a trilateral deterrence regime, adding Taiwan to the existing Japan-US alliance framework.

- (4) Japan and the US should consider modifying the "Guidelines for Japan-US Defence Cooperation" to include regions and areas within its third-country clause. This would allow Japan to overcome certain legal and political obstacles to be more involved in contingencies involving the Taiwan Strait.

Japan and the US already have an established set of rules for defence cooperation set in place as defined by the Guidelines. The Guidelines itself has a third country clause that stipulates an operational basis for joint deterrence and response operations to deal with an armed attack against a third country.<sup>3</sup>

This part of the Guidelines could be modified to include regions that are essential for Japan and US security cooperation so that it can be applied to Taiwan, which is not a "country" according to the Japanese government's definition. This adaptation would provide the legal foundation for Japan to coordinate with the US and Taiwan in planning for a Taiwan contingency.

The US has the "Taiwan Relations Act" that defines and legalises its commitment to the defence of Taiwan. Together with this US-Taiwan framework, on top of an expanded Japan-US defence mechanism, de facto trilateral defence coordination for a Taiwan contingency should be formed, with the US as a hub. Through such a mechanism, Japan can expand its defence role and make more substantial contributions to the peace and security in the region and beyond.

Discussions in this paper are obviously far from exhaustive. Even if Japan were to adopt the four recommendations made by the authors, significant planning would still be needed to strengthen deterrence and defence. The old proverb says that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, but the authors hope these four proposals would help Japan begin a critical journey to ensure peace and stability in the region by focusing on the China threat and incorporating Taiwan into Japanese defence planning constructs.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Reiko Miki, "Japan to align with U.S. on space, cyber in security strategy revamp," *Nikkei Asia*, January 27, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Japan-to-align-with-U.S.-on-space-cyber-in-security-strategy-revamp>

<sup>2</sup> "Kishida orders funds to raise Japan's defense budget to 2% of GDP," *Kyodo News*, November 29, 2022, <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2022/11/e947219658ac-kishida-orders-funds-to-raise-japans-defense-budget-to-2-of-gdp.html>

<sup>3</sup> The third country clause of the current Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation is as follows, "Actions in Response to an Armed Attack against a Country other than Japan When Japan and the United States each decides to take actions involving the use of force in accordance with international law, including full respect for sovereignty, and with their respective Constitutions and laws to respond to an armed attack against the United States or a third country, and Japan has not come under armed attack, they will cooperate closely to respond to the armed attack and to deter further attacks." See "The Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/guideline2.html>

### 3 Consolidating Taiwan's Multi-Domain Deterrence

*Andrew Yang*

In 2016, the Taiwanese government replaced 'Effective Deterrence' with 'Multi-Domain Deterrence' as the country's self-defence policy, following the principle of an asymmetric strategy for defence transformation. Major efforts were placed on developing and acquiring high-tech advanced defence systems such as indigenous submarines, advanced missile boats, long-range cruise missiles, supersonic anti-ship cruise missiles, advanced missile defence systems, F-16V Block 70 fighter jets, M1A2T main battle tanks, self-propelled artillery systems, anti-aircraft stinger missiles, and Javelin anti-tank missiles. These massive advanced defence system acquisitions were supported by a special defence budget and will be delivered between 2025 and 2030 in order to deter, delay and deny a future invasion by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) across the Taiwan Strait.

Upgrading and improving hardware defence weapon systems are indispensable in strengthening defence capabilities. However, in addition to hardware acquisition, there are other crucial dimensions that need to be addressed to achieve realistic multi-domain deterrence defence capabilities.

Taiwan is incapable of fighting a war of attrition against PLA attacks. Advanced precision-strike munitions would be quickly exhausted in early operations; maintaining external supply chains would be very difficult should the PLA employ anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) or blockade tactics to prevent commercial or military vessels and aircraft from resupplying Taiwan. Therefore, the top priority for Taiwan's defence operations is to protect and preserve its defence capabilities. The PLA has improved its long-range precision strike capabilities with multiple satellite guided missiles and drones. Taiwan should constantly examine and improve its current protective measures for critical defence assets and infrastructure so as to be able to sustain effective counterattacks against a PLA invasion. For example, Taiwan's key defence research, development and production institution, the National Chung Shan Institute of Science and Technology (NCSIST), is the only domestic provider and supplier of advanced missile defence systems, cruise missiles and supersonic anti-ship missiles. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense should make extra effort to protect the NCSIST's missile production lines and supply chains to ensure reliable and effective supply support for Taiwanese war fighting.

The second dimension Taiwan needs to pay great attention to is reinforcing and upgrading its capabilities in C4ISR—command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance. A critical lesson learned from Russia's invasion of Ukraine is that precise, effective and real time ISR information is a key force-multiplier for conducting military operations. In the course of implementing its Multi-Domain Deterrence policy and building asymmetrical defence capabilities, Taiwan should place greater emphasis on improving its C4ISR capability to ensure effective integration of its air-sea-land military assets to better defend its high-value installations and capabilities.

In recent years, Taiwan has also made considerable efforts to reform its reserve system and

improve training for reserve veterans. For example, training for Army reservists has been extended from seven days to fourteen days with improvements made to training programmes. However, current measures have yet to achieve effective air-sea-land joint operations, which was the objective for Taiwan's defence transformation. Taiwan should place greater emphasis on reviewing and examining current service doctrines, not only paying attention to developing new doctrinal concepts and measures to integrate newly acquired advanced systems, but also develop principles and practices of jointness to achieve truly joint operations in the near future. In addition to creating ground force joint operation brigades, Taiwan should speed up its progress towards air-sea-land joint operational capabilities as soon as possible. Regarding improvements to Taiwan's reserves, the armed forces should consider establishing reserve joint operation ground force units that train along-side with active joint operation units to become familiar with joint operations and increase the effectiveness in war fighting.

In terms of fending off the PLA Navy's attempts to achieve sea control in the waters surrounding Taiwan, Taiwan should engage both Japan and the US to develop new initiatives to develop maritime security cooperation. For example, the Taiwanese coast guard could consider cooperating with Japanese and US coast guards to conduct joint drills and training exercises near the Senkaku (Diaoyutai) islands and the surrounding waters in the East China Sea, where they could regulate and protect fishery activities and maintain peace and stability in the area. In addition, coast guards from the three sides could also conduct joint tabletop war game exercises to improve mutual understanding and increase the ability to collaborate on maritime security in the East China Sea.

Last but not least, Taiwan's Ministry of National Defense should continually invest in self-defence capabilities, taking into account the uncertainty of warfighting, the growing PLA threat, and the challenges presented by new technologies appearing on battlefields around the world, including in Ukraine. Most importantly, Taiwan must maintain credible deterrence, including counterstrike weapons that enable Taipei to deliver devastating counterpunches in the event that China launches an invasion against Taiwan.

## 4 How to Deter China’s Military Invasion of Taiwan

*Bonji Ohara*

Russia’s armed invasion of Ukraine has placed China in a difficult position. China’s national goal is to achieve a dominant position on the international stage alongside the United States (US), and as such, has sought to implement its own standards, rules, and norms in the international order. However, these efforts have been jeopardised by Russia’s attack on Ukraine. Due to its continued support for President Vladimir Putin’s military campaign, Beijing faces growing international criticism and isolation.

### **Wang Yi’s ‘Four-Point’ Proposition**

During a press conference on March 7, 2022, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi listed four points that in his view, were essential for resolving the Ukraine crisis.<sup>1</sup> They illustrate China’s contradictory positions on the conflict, and China’s dilemma as it seeks to become a globally respected leader without giving up its support for pariah states or its own use of diplomatic, economic, and military coercion in pursuit of its national interests.

Wang Yi’s first point was “to respect and protect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations, in compliance with the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.”<sup>2</sup> This principle had been regularly asserted by China due to its fear of aggression by the US and Russia (and in the past, the Soviet Union), and due to its territorial disputes with neighboring countries. Based on this principle, Ukraine’s sovereignty and territory should be protected.

The second was “to adhere to the principle of indivisible security and accommodate the legitimate security concerns of the parties concerned.”<sup>3</sup> The concept of indivisible security—that security of one nation should not be strengthened at the expense of others—is a narrative that Putin has repeatedly raised, arguing that the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) violated this principle with its eastward expansion which increasingly threatened Russia’s security. This was the pretext Russia used to move troops to the Ukraine border before it launched its invasion.

The third was “to persist in resolving disputes peacefully through dialogue and negotiation,”<sup>4</sup> which China claims is a founding principle. The fourth was “to build a balanced, effective, and sustainable European security mechanism,” that focuses on the “long-term stability of the region.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Supporting the Putin Regime**

Wang Yi’s four points demonstrate a clear desire to support and protect Putin, even at the cost of China’s own international standing. There are three reasons for this.

First, China does not want to see the Putin regime toppled. With the damage done to Russia’s economy by economic sanctions, the next leader in the Kremlin might well choose to focus on rebuilding the economy, and decide that improved relations with the US and its European

neighbours would better serve this purpose. If Russia sides with the West, China could find itself isolated in the UN Security Council and other major international groupings.

Second, if China rejects Putin's request for support, or imposes sanctions against Russia in concert with the West, it would turn Moscow into an enemy—something China wants to avoid amidst its own intensifying strategic competition with the US.

Third, and most important, the greatest threat to the political leadership of an authoritarian state exists in its own domestic society. If Putin is toppled by the Russian people, social movements within Russia could possibly spill over into Chinese society (just like how revolutionary fervour spilled into China after the 1917 October Revolution in Russia), which would be a nightmare scenario for the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

### **Lessons from Ukraine**

In Japan, some have raised concerns that Russia's attack on Ukraine could embolden China to launch its own invasion of Taiwan. While this remains to be seen, the conflict in Ukraine has undoubtedly provided China with several important lessons.

First, the threat of nuclear war could be used as an advantage. The international community is unlikely to undertake direct military intervention against a nuclear-armed state, due to the fear of nuclear escalation.

Second, even if the aggressor makes careful preparations, and the defender appears much weaker militarily, defeat is still a possibility for the aggressor. This is particularly true if military operations are not completed quickly and the invasion gets bogged down, or military resistance is stronger than expected. Global opinion could easily turn against the aggressor, uniting the international community to provide arms support and other assistance to the defender, and the US might even decide to intervene militarily. Even if there is no direct military intervention by third parties, heavy economic sanctions could still be imposed, and could have a devastating effect on the aggressor.

Third, the effectiveness of hybrid warfare should not be overestimated. Russia's cyberattacks performed below expectations, failing to disrupt Ukraine's network infrastructure and isolate the country. Due to the effectiveness of Ukraine's cyber defences and cyber support from the US, Russia had to rely on cruise missile attacks to degrade Ukraine's critical infrastructure. A similar outcome could happen in China's invasion of Taiwan—Chinese hybrid warfare could fail to turn public opinion in Taiwan, and Beijing could find itself facing stubborn and aggressive resistance from the Taiwanese people.

Fourth, and most important, the aggressor must maintain firm control over its own domestic public opinion. To prevent an anti-war atmosphere from building up, it is important to carefully control the flow of information to the public, particularly on sensitive issues like casualty numbers. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy demonstrated the importance and effectiveness of information warfare in wartime.

### **Military Options**

Based on these lessons, and the lack of Taiwanese public support for unification, China can only hope to annex Taiwan in the near future by military force without over-relying on non-

military means like hybrid warfare, or grey zone coercion, which can only discourage Taiwan from declaring *de jure* independence.

Presently however, the ability of the Chinese Navy to ferry and land troops is limited, making an invasion to force unification a very risky venture for the CCP. According to one estimate, their entire amphibious fleet is only able to land around 20,000 troops in a single lift.<sup>6</sup>

To address this weakness, it was believed that the Chinese Navy had been accelerating the construction of the Type 075 amphibious assault ship. However, after the last of three Type 075s were launched in January 2021, there has been no new information about further construction.

Given that China has not abandoned the option of an armed invasion of Taiwan, it may be planning other means of attack. One possibility may be mass unmanned attacks, which would be consistent with the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) vision of "intelligentisation," i.e., the integration of artificial intelligence and automation into warfare. However, it will likely be some time before the PLA is ready to conduct intelligentised warfare.

### **Parallels to Taiwan**

For China, which is not ready to undertake an armed invasion of Taiwan, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has come at an inopportune time. It has drawn international attention to the possibility of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan before China is militarily ready, spurring Taiwanese and US preparations to deter and counter it. China's militaristic response to US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to Taiwan in August 2022 also focused world attention on China's stated policy and intention to use force to coerce and ultimately unify Taiwan, raising concerns globally about the long-term implications of sustaining economic relations with a militaristic China that threatens its neighbors.

China is also wary of the effect of international sanctions on Russia, and will carefully analyse their impact in the event of its own armed invasion of Taiwan. The Chinese leadership fears that if China's economic development is impeded or a military attack on Taiwan fails to achieve Beijing's political objectives, it would be detrimental to their goal of ascending to a dominant position in the international community and realising Xi Jinping's "China Dream," and could even threaten the CCP's political legitimacy.

However, China is not likely to give up on the annexation of Taiwan, which is seen as a matter of national interest, and vital to the legitimacy of the CCP. Although Xi Jinping has made clear that his preference is for peaceful unification, China will certainly seek to annex Taiwan by any means necessary, using military force if peaceful means fail. The two biggest challenges for China in the event of an armed invasion of Taiwan would be the widespread use of economic sanctions by a united international community led by the US, and the threat of US military intervention.

### **Undermining the US**

To prevent the international community from uniting, China will likely attempt to undermine the authority of the US in the international community. Indeed, following Russia's armed invasion of Ukraine, China's *Xinhua* news agency published a series of six commentaries between March 31, 2022 and April 5, 2022, that placed the blame for the crisis

unquestionably on the US.<sup>7</sup>

The first of these commentaries blamed the US for, “accusing China on the Ukraine issue, reversing black and white, confusing right and wrong, spreading rumors and slander, and attempting to divert attention and blame China.” It underscored that the aim of publishing the commentaries were “to clarify the facts, counter the false remarks of the US side, and expose the hegemonic nature of the United States in provoking war and profiting from it.”<sup>8</sup>

The commentaries would go on to accuse the US of, among other things, masterminding plans that “ignited” the “Ukraine crisis,”<sup>9</sup> of “adding fuel to the fire” in the conflict to benefit US defence contractors,<sup>10</sup> and of using the situation in Ukraine to exaggerate the danger in the Taiwan Strait.<sup>11</sup>

## **Southeast Asia**

China has also sought to strengthen its influence over Southeast Asian countries to undermine their cohesion, and prevent them from taking a unified stance in the event of an armed invasion of Taiwan. Yet, the huge amount of Chinese foreign direct investment in Southeast Asian countries have raised concerns over China’s political leverage over the region. Though such information is often downplayed or even restricted by regional governments to prevent domestic backlash against China, economic relations with China are now under greater political scrutiny in several Southeast Asian states concerned about preserving their own sovereignty and interests. The preference of most Southeast Asian states to hedge and balance their relations between China and other states creates greater opportunities for Japan to invest in regional economic projects, as well as cooperate to improve regional security, particularly the ability of Southeast Asian coastal states to protect their rights in their Exclusive Economic Zones.

To counter China’s weaponisation of economic interdependence, the US is launching the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)—a partnership of countries working toward a strong and fair economy based on the pillars of trade, supply chain enhancement, decarbonisation, and international taxation. However, since it does not include tariff reductions and market access provisions, Southeast Asian countries will be disinterested, and China will actively promote economic frameworks that it has joined such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

## **Conclusion**

Both Japan and the US must build effective nuclear and conventional deterrence against China, as well as continue to engage economically in the Indo-Pacific. In addition, we must continue to watch the progress of China’s arms buildup in order to understand by what means China intends to conduct the use-of-force or an armed invasion of Taiwan.

Additionally, it is necessary to convince China that if it carries out an armed invasion of Taiwan, the international community will unite to condemn Beijing and impose economic sanctions. To achieve this, a framework of cooperation with Southeast Asian countries will need to be established.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Wang Yi talked about the four-point proposal to resolve the Ukrainian crisis,” *Xinhua*, March 7, 2022, [http://www.news.cn/world/2022-03/07/c\\_1128446483.htm](http://www.news.cn/world/2022-03/07/c_1128446483.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Lonnie D. Henley, “Civilian Shipping and Maritime Militia: The Logistics Backbone of a Taiwan Invasion,” *China Maritime Report* 21, May 2022, [http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CMSI\\_China-Maritime-Report\\_21\\_Civilian-Shipping-and-Maritime-Militia-Logistics-Backbone-of-Taiwan-Invasion\\_Henley\\_202205.pdf](http://www.andrewerickson.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CMSI_China-Maritime-Report_21_Civilian-Shipping-and-Maritime-Militia-Logistics-Backbone-of-Taiwan-Invasion_Henley_202205.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Jing Zhan, “The United States ‘took advantage of the fire’ from the Ukrainian crisis,” *Xinhua*, March 31, 2022, [http://www.news.cn/world/2022-03/31/c\\_1128519580.htm](http://www.news.cn/world/2022-03/31/c_1128519580.htm); Hangen Zheng, “The United States is behind the escalating crisis in Ukraine,” *Xinhua*, April 1, 2022, [http://www.news.cn/2022-04/01/c\\_1128522662.htm](http://www.news.cn/2022-04/01/c_1128522662.htm); Binbin Xie, “The United States is the ‘initiator’ of the Ukraine crisis,” *Xinhua*, April 2, 2022, [http://www.news.cn/world/2022-04/02/c\\_1128526457.htm](http://www.news.cn/world/2022-04/02/c_1128526457.htm); Liang Han, “The Myth of the United States’ ‘Cold War Paranoia’,” *Xinhua*, April 3, 2022, [http://www.news.cn/2022-04/03/c\\_1128529111.htm](http://www.news.cn/2022-04/03/c_1128529111.htm); Jihong Qiao, “Rendering ‘using Ukraine to plot Taiwan’ is doomed to play with fire and self-immolation,” *Xinhua*, April 4, 2022, [http://www.news.cn/2022-04/04/c\\_1128530907.htm](http://www.news.cn/2022-04/04/c_1128530907.htm); Liming Wu and Bing Han, “Raising the flag for US hegemony without integrity,” *Xinhua*, April 5, 2022, [http://www.news.cn/world/2022-04/05/c\\_1128532785.htm](http://www.news.cn/world/2022-04/05/c_1128532785.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Zhan, “The United States ‘took advantage of the fire’.”

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Zheng, “The United States is behind the escalating crisis in Ukraine.”

<sup>11</sup> Qiao, “Rendering ‘using Ukraine to plot Taiwan’.”

## 5 Policy Lessons for Indo-Pacific Nations from the War in Ukraine

*Watanabe Tsuneo*

Russian troops retreated from the siege of the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, evacuated Kherson and face winter offensives by Ukrainian forces all along the front from Luhansk and Donetsk to the southern banks of the Dnipro River. President Vladimir Putin's blitzkrieg plans for dominating Ukraine have gone awry, and social tensions in Russia have been exacerbated by a chaotic mobilisation of civilians being sent to the front with poor equipment and little training. The Russian economy is suffering from economic sanctions from the West and entering a recession, despite continued oil and exports to Russia's remaining trading partners including India and China. Russia's unilateral change of the status quo and rebuke of international order might be rational in terms of cold calculation of national interests by Putin, but the end of the war in Ukraine is not in sight, and the outcome is unknown, other than the massive cost to Russia's global standing and future social, economic, and political development.

The lesson from Ukraine for Indo-Pacific states is the necessity to convince all countries, including China and North Korea that any action that unilaterally changes the existing order, by force, is an act that is not worth the geopolitical and economic cost.

This outcome makes Ukraine's courageous resistance at a tremendous cost in blood and treasure valuable for future world peace. In his address to the Australian Parliament, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, "[e]verything that is happening in our region due to Russia's aggression and that is destroying the lives of our people has already become a real threat to your state and your people. Because this is the nature of evil—it can instantly overcome any distance and any barriers. Destroy life."<sup>1</sup> The nature of the war in Ukraine suggests the direction in which the future international order in the world and the Indo-Pacific region should head.

### **US Support Prevented the Fall of Kyiv**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine is proving difficult, largely because of international support and substantial military reforms in Ukraine following the 2014 invasion of Crimea. Considering the scale of troops Russia committed at the beginning of the conflict in February 2022, President Putin likely sought to capture the capital city of Kyiv and establish a pro-Russian government through a blitzkrieg, rather than occupying all of Ukraine. However, the Russian army abandoned the siege of Kiev in April 2022, and withdrew from the area to concentrate its forces in the eastern Donbass region, which borders Russia, leading to a protracted war of attrition.

There are many possible reasons for the failure of Russia's military operations, including the provision of weapons by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries including artillery, anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, financial support, training by the US military and other countries, sharing of military information, and defence cooperation in cyberspace by the US and NATO. The Biden administration is providing considerable cooperation and support

to Ukraine except for the deployment of US and NATO troops to the country.

However, it is not likely that Russia will stop its military operations in Ukraine and move toward a cease-fire agreement. Rather, the top priority is to concentrate military power in the eastern part of the country, centered on the Donbass region and southeast of the Dnipro River. An important part of the war is economic sanctions, mainly from the US and Europe, imposing a heavy burden for Russia to continue the war against Ukraine, which is receiving massive support from the US at a high military cost estimated at hundreds of millions of dollars per day.

The US has thus far been effective at restraining China from providing direct military support to Russia. For example, at the March 18 online summit between the US and China, President Biden explicitly warned President Xi Jinping not to support Russia militarily or economically and declared that it would impose sanctions on China if it supported Russia. Iran, already under considerable sanctions from the West has been undeterred, however, and provided war materiel including unmanned aerial vehicles and loitering munitions to Russia.

Meanwhile, on March 28, the Biden administration sent the National Defense Strategy to Congress, which positioned China as the “most important strategic competitor” and Russia as a threat next to China. In other words, Russia is an “existential threat” to Europe, but not directly to the US if the worst-case scenario of a nuclear exchange of intercontinental ballistic missiles can be avoided. It is also clear that Russia’s current military operations in Ukraine cannot financially continue indefinitely due to the effects of the economic sanctions already in motion.

On the contrary, in the Indo-Pacific the Chinese threat is far more serious. The Biden administration has discouraged China from becoming a loophole for avoiding sanctions against Russia, but if China backs Russia, the war in Europe will be protracted, which no one supports. On the other hand, even if China supports Russia and prolongs the war in Ukraine, it will potentially sap China’s strength and alienate trading partners in Europe, worsening China’s diplomatic relations. China understands this and is trying to maintain a delicate distance from Russia, which is a positive factor for the US strategy toward China.

At present, the Biden administration’s strategy, which early on ruled out direct US military intervention in the Ukraine war, seems to be working. While the US preserves its own forces, the US is strengthening trans-Atlantic unity and strengthening economic sanctions against Russia, while a growing sense of crisis among Asian allies such as Japan is strengthening its own defence capabilities and its alliance with the US. Despite criticism of the restrained US posture in the Ukrainian crisis, the long-term US strategy in the Indo-Pacific, centered on competing with China and strengthening alliances to preserve existing international norms and the rules based order makes sense for Japan and other like-minded countries in the region.

### **Progress in Military-Technical Cooperation with the United States in the Indo-Pacific**

On September 21, 2021, the United States (US), the United Kingdom, and Australia formed AUKUS, and announced that they would cooperate in the development of military technology in eight areas, including hypersonic weapons and the development of submarines and other underwater technologies such as unmanned submersibles. The agreement clearly demonstrates the US’ competitive stance towards China and its long-term commitment to

allies by increasing the areas of cooperation from the provision of nuclear submarines to Australia, giving the Australian Navy the ability to project power to Northeast Asia. The AUKUS joint statement in April 2022 called for “unwavering commitment to an international system that respects human rights and the rule of law,” and repeatedly opposed Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.<sup>2</sup>

AUKUS also identified quantum technology, artificial intelligence (AI), cyber capabilities, electronic warfare capabilities, defence technology innovation, and information sharing as key areas of cooperation. All of these capabilities and technologies are necessary for next-generation warfare that makes full use of advanced technology. The US and Australia have in mind the need to counter China’s growing military power in the Western Pacific.

One of the factors that enabled the Ukrainian military to mount an effective defence against the Russian invasion, particularly preventing the fall of the capital city of Kyiv and causing the Russian troops to withdraw was cyber capability, electronic warfare capability, and information sharing. This approach and the experience gained in the Ukraine conflict makes AUKUS cooperation particularly relevant for deterrence in the Indo-Pacific. In addition, cooperation in hypersonic weapons, autonomous unmanned submarines, quantum technology, AI, and shared defence technology innovations will be an important means of stabilising the Indo-Pacific region and deterring Chinese military adventurism in the future.

Naturally, these issues should be considered as priorities for Japan’s cooperation agenda with AUKUS and the US bilaterally. At the January 22 summit meeting with President Biden, Japanese Prime Minister Kishida reaffirmed their commitment to work closely together to deter Russia’s aggression against Ukraine, and that the two leaders will promote cooperation on advanced technologies, in addition to space and cyber and information security, indicating that the lessons of Ukraine were not lost on Tokyo and Washington.<sup>3</sup>

### **Lessons for the Indo-Pacific from Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine**

Ukraine’s resistance to Russian aggression has impressed upon all peoples of the world the need for readiness and investment in the effort to defend themselves. It is an important precedent that even smaller countries can fight against the aggression of a great power with support from a network of allies and partners who share fundamental values with the US when their defence is justified under international laws and norms. Effective global narratives and discourse, as Ukraine’s President Zelenskyy has so deftly demonstrated, is another critical factor for garnering world support.

The images via internet on the massive destruction of Ukraine cities and the massacre of Ukrainian civilians by the Russian military generated negative reactions from around the world and reflects poorly on Russia’s conduct of the war. Global companies cutting business ties with Russia, not only because of economic sanctions, but also out of awareness of the sentiments of their customers who sympathise with Ukraine and abhor Russian crimes against humanity, is a key phenomenon in the internet age, and a potential factor should China choose to use force against its neighbours in the future. Any national leader should think twice about the political and economic impacts of negative global public opinion should they plan to wage a war of aggression against a neighbour.

The lesson of the war in Ukraine is that the cost of changing the status quo unilaterally by military force is excessively high, and it is a major rebuttal to the proposition that

authoritarian states are more efficient and superior to democracies, which require more time and cost to build popular consensus. Can we say that a state system that failed to prevent President Putin from starting a war that has resulted in a clear strategic mistake and caused great damage to the Russian people as well, is better than democratic approaches to making policy?

In China, President Xi Jinping, has begun his third term as the leader of the Communist Party of China, and has completely ended the collective leadership system associated with the post-Mao Reform and Opening period, indicating that Xi has not learned the lessons of the past, and he remains intent on creating a system of governance centered on his personality. Is this the right course of action in terms of achieving China's national interests? Will the nature of Putin's failures be appreciated, and will the advantages of democracy be reevaluated? This could be another lesson the Indo-Pacific region will learn from the war in Ukraine.

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Volodymyr Zelenskyy, "Speech by President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the Australian Parliament," *President of Ukraine*, March 31, 2022, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/promova-prezidenta-ukrayini-volodimira-zelenskogo-v-parlamen-73993>

<sup>2</sup> "AUKUS Leaders' Level Statement," *The White House*, April 5, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/04/05/aukus-leaders-level-statement/>

<sup>3</sup> "Japan-U.S. Summit Video Teleconference Meeting," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, January 22, 2022, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/page1e\\_000372.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/na/na1/page1e_000372.html)

## 6 Economic Deterrence for Peace in the Indo-Pacific

*Xue Gong*

The greatest challenge for the Indo-Pacific nations in the twenty-first century is managing the region's ever-evolving conflicts and tensions, as well as the meddling interests of extra-regional powers like the United States (US). Regional hotspot issues such as cross-Strait relations, North Korean nuclear and missile issues, the East and South China Seas disputes, and Sino-Indian border skirmishes continue to serve as potential sources of miscalculation among regional players, and could lead to military escalation or even large-scale conflict. For many of these regional security issues, the US-China relationship remains the most crucial factor. With its expanding blue-water navy and rising political and economic influence, China is challenging the US-dominated global order as well as America's long-held security preponderance in Asia. In this context, the question of how to use deterrence to preserve peace and prevent conflict becomes ever more salient.

The rich strategic studies literature almost exclusively links deterrence to military power. During the Cold War, Washington was driven to pursue a grand strategy that at times relied upon its vast nuclear weapon capabilities to deter Soviet aggression. However, the strategic studies literature that primarily focuses on military and nuclear deterrence is unable to explain the full spectrum of deterrence if we take into consideration the scope of global economic engagement that we see today.<sup>1</sup>

### **Economic Deterrence Through Engagement**

This paper defines deterrence as a strategy that seeks to prevent aggressive actions with explicit and clear signal of retaliation. Therefore, deterrence is also about the threat of severe punishment in addition to making it more difficult for the other party to accomplish its objectives or mitigating the consequences of the other party's aggressive actions.

With the spread of neoliberalism after the end of the Cold War, states have become increasingly interdependent with each other through global linkages in production, trade, as well as the spread of information technology. The complexity of economic interdependence has changed the deterrence environment for many states. As such, the heavy reliance on military power to achieve deterrence goals has to be modified.

For one thing, economic interdependence may erode the deterrence capacity of the deterring country. This is because a potential enemy can apply its accumulated wealth to improve its military capabilities, undermining the deterring state's ability to adequately halt or punish any act of aggression.<sup>2</sup> For instance, it is generally believed that the military supremacy that the US has enjoyed vis-à-vis China, is now being eroded as China has been using the wealth accumulated from decades of trade and investments to beef up its military power.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, increasing economic interdependence between the aggressor and the deterring state may make the former take the deterrence less seriously as the deepening economic interests may limit the latter's ability to mobilise domestic resources in face of an aggression.

For the other, integrated commercial ties also enable states to weaponise interdependence for deterrence where military prowess is in shortage. Deterring countries could use these ties to credibly communicate reassurance and commitment to its partners and allies.<sup>4</sup> To aggressors, collective economic deterrence may not generate much fear or anxiety, compared to military deterrence. But economic weapons, if well designed and sharply deployed, could be unquestionably painful to those heavily reliant on the interdependence.

To make economic deterrence work, at least four conditions should be met. The first and most important premise is that the level of economic interdependence has to be extremely high between the deterring party and the aggressor. Such interdependence is measured not merely in trade or foreign direct investment (FDI) dependence, but more importantly, the hegemon should be perceived as being able to provide an open economic system that produces the ‘lock-in’ effect of the interdependence. In this context, economic punishment exerted by the deterrer produces far more significant economic and political risks and costs for the target.

Second, under this highly interdependent and open system, the aggressor should assumably believe it can obtain significant gains from such a system. And it should anticipate insurmountable costs to its long-term economic, political and security interests if it takes unilateral aggressive actions. If penalties for aggression can be made severe and credible enough, aggressors could be deterred.

Third, to prevent aggression from occurring, the deterring party should have the capacity to form a political and economic coalition to strengthen its retaliatory response. Such capacity requires the deterring country to use a variety of tangible incentives to persuade its partners and allies to be committed to the coalition. Other than relying on the economic and institutional power of the deterring party, it should also presumably be able to provide not only a justified but also appealing vision for others to support deterrence. Otherwise, the threat of using secondary sanctions to force unwilling countries to cooperate may lose its appeal in creating a more destructive web of networks.

Last but not least, economic deterrence works best when the deterring state has the credibility and capability to influence powerful domestic constituencies in the target country to exert domestic pressure on the decision-makers in aggressor state. Facing both international and domestic pressures, political leaders in the target state will be more averse to taking risks. But when political leaders in the domestic context have wide public support to defy the economic or even military deterrence, the target country will not only be in a better position to extract and mobilise domestic resources, but its government will also be more willing to bear the accompanying risks and costs.

Recently events however, have challenged many of the aforementioned conditions for economic deterrence. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 reflected the breakdown of the international order. The United Nations Security Council was unable to act collectively against Russia. An open and liberal economic order is equally being challenged and even rejected in many parts of the world. Even before the outbreak of the war, the deliberate dismantling of global supply chains was already exacerbated by the global coronavirus pandemic that has shaken decades of faith in globalisation.

Against this backdrop, prevalent techno-nationalism has given rise to nationalist rulers who link their nation’s technological capabilities to national security, economic prosperity, and

social stability. Their nationalist credentials make them less willing to compromise internationally, while they also have few domestic checks to restrain their behaviour. Furthermore, these nationalist leaders manipulate interdependence by securitising economic activities, limiting incentives or appealing values to solicit partners in economic deterrence.

### **Sanctions on Russia: A Warning for China**

These changes above have made the use of economic tools to deter aggressors more challenging, but not impossible. In particular, the unexpectedly stringent sanctions, i.e., the Western powers' decision to deny Russian banks' access to the SWIFT system in response to the invasion of Ukraine, provided a warning message to countries with economic and financial vulnerabilities.

The economic sanctions on Russia have had an immediate impact, which can be seen in the sharp fall in value of the Russian currency and dramatic decrease in confidence in the Russian market. The impact of these sanctions is still unclear but it is generally believed that the exodus of capital and isolation from US economic networks will have long-term repercussions for Russia's economic growth.<sup>5</sup>

What has happened to Russia ostensibly places renewed pressure on China to use decoupling and de-Americanisation to reduce its economic and financial vulnerabilities over a Taiwan contingency—the number one flashpoint security challenge between China and the US. Russia's economic suffering because of the Ukraine war clearly provides new motivation for China to seek greater self-reliance.

Prior to the Russian sanctions, Beijing had already begun to speed up its efforts in strengthening self-reliance. China had faced harsh economic coercion from the Trump administration, which applied sanctions and export controls, as well as other punitive measures, including the placing of Chinese technological companies into the US Entity List, which prevented them from using US technology or operating in US markets, and restricting Chinese mega-platforms such as TikTok and WeChat based on the Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act in 2020.

In response to Washington's sweeping coercive measures, China launched a series of countermeasures from 2019, including announcing its own Unreliable Entity List, passing the Export Control Law, and Anti-Foreign Sanction Law that would affect a broad range of industries. In addition, it has also pushed for self-reliance through its 'whole of state' system in key areas of technology including digital payment systems, as part of its dual circulation economic strategy to minimise its economic vulnerability.

Also, to strengthen the resilience of its critical supply chain, Beijing has in recent years ramped up efforts to diversify import sources through international engagement. It ratified the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and applied to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), along with stepping up bilateral economic diplomacy to strengthen its food and energy security, and minimise disruptions to trade.

As the global impact of the financial sanctions on Russia have unfolded, a major concern for China has been its heavy reliance on the US dollar for its international transactions. Thus, Beijing has already started to de-Americanise by exploring alternative options, including

establishing its own currency payment settlement system—the Crossborder Interbank System (CIPS). China also has sought to internationalise its currency through bilateral currency swaps with countries like the United Kingdom (UK) and Singapore, or through its Belt and Road Initiative and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

So, what does China’s self-reliance capacity building and diversification of stakes mean for the effectiveness of economic deterrence that Washington and its allies may be pondering in the Indo-Pacific?

### **Economic Deterrence in the Indo-Pacific**

Since the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war, obvious parallels have been drawn between the conflict and China’s possible moves against Taiwan, raising the pertinent questions: Has the conflict emboldened China, or made it more cautious? And consequently, how can peace in the region be preserved?

For one thing, economic isolation remains too risky for China’s ruling Communist Party and President Xi Jinping who have been using economic performance to justify their legitimacy and authority in China. In particular, the Chinese dream of “national rejuvenation” is clearly associated with domestic economic development<sup>6</sup> that cannot be separated from global stability and peace. China still heavily depends on the networks gravitating around the US in terms of the dollar, technology, and global economic networks despite its plan to pursue greater self-reliance. In addition, as the world’s largest trading nation, China has a much more integrated economy with the world than Russia does. Therefore, severe sanctions or isolation from the US and its allies are likely to make China’s defiance against economic deterrence more difficult.

But we also have to bear in mind that Beijing has never renounced the possibility of using military means to take Taiwan. The Chinese leadership is highly motivated to prevent Taiwan’s independence and take over the island to fulfil its mission of national unification.<sup>7</sup> With the popular support of Chinese citizens, the Chinese leadership is likely to be more risk tolerant despite the high stakes associated with a military conflict and the possible draconian sanctions from the US and other countries.

Therefore, China would not remain passive in the event of an expanding US military presence (through “strategic ambiguity” and strengthening defence ties) around Taiwan. Washington’s de facto alliance in the Indo-Pacific through the development of the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) grouping in fact irritates Beijing. In response, Beijing has not only increasingly stepped up military exercises near the island,<sup>8</sup> it has also been using a variety of diplomatic, economic, technological and political means to deter arms sales and defence cooperation between Taiwan and the US.

Unlike Russia, the level of integration between China and regional economies is far higher. China is a major trading partner with almost all Indo-Pacific economies, including the US and Taiwan, with intricately linked production and supply chain networks that contributes significantly to regional prosperity and stability. While the invasion of Ukraine saw key regional countries like Japan, Australia and even Singapore standing together to impose sanctions on Russia, China is unlikely to encounter the same level of economic pressure if it chose to pursue a military conflict over Taiwan. This is not only because of the high level of economic interdependence with its regional partners, but also because none of the Asian

countries recognise Taiwan as an independent sovereign country, at least not officially. This largely changes the perception of the nature of the conflict—a civil war instead of a foreign invasion.

Also, the Russo-Ukraine war has been largely framed as an ‘attack on a democracy’ by an authoritarian regime. Such story telling may not be appealing in Asia. In fact, ASEAN’s diverse<sup>9</sup> and lukewarm attitudes<sup>10</sup> towards the US-led coalition based on the concept of gathering “like-minded” partners<sup>11</sup> shows that the region lacks an appealing vision for the creation of a more menacing web of networks in the event of an escalation in cross-Strait tensions.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that regional aggression is altogether undeterrable economically. Economic interdependence allows other powers to consider a painful but more civilised way to respond to possible aggression. If fully utilised and unleashed, economic deterrence can produce a ‘weapon of mass destruction’ effect to the aggressor as severe economic punishments can destroy the latter’s supply chain, technology and financial institutions that an aggression relies on. Expectedly, it will have long-term socio-economic impact on the lives of people in the target country and even a legitimacy crisis for the regime.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Dong Jung Kim, “Economic Deterrence Through Economic Engagement,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 15, no. 2 (April 2019): 176–186.

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<sup>3</sup> Jared M. McKinney and Peter Harris, “Broken Nest: Deterring China from Invading Taiwan,” *Parameters* 51, no. 4 (2021): 23–36, doi:10.55540/0031-1723.3089

<sup>4</sup> Steve Chan, “Commerce between rivals: realism, liberalism, and credible communication across the Taiwan Strait,” *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 9, no. 3 (September 2009): 435–467.

<sup>5</sup> “How new sanctions could cripple Russia’s economy,” *The Economist*, February 27, 2022, <https://www.economist.com/finance-and-economics/2022/02/27/how-new-sanctions-could-cripple-russias-economy>

<sup>6</sup> “A key step in realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation,” *People’s Daily*, July 3, 2021, <http://politics.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0703/c1001-32147527.html>

<sup>7</sup> Shirong Zhang, “Unswervingly complete the great cause of the reunification of the motherland,” *Qiushi*, April 1, 2020, [http://www.qstheory.cn/llwx/2020-04/01/c\\_1125798897.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/llwx/2020-04/01/c_1125798897.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Derek Grossman, “Why China Is Intensifying Its Military Flights Against Taiwan,” *Nikkei Asia*, February 20, 2022, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Opinion/Why-China-is-intensifying-its-military-flights-against-Taiwan>

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<sup>10</sup> Evan Laksmana, “Whose Centrality? ASEAN and the Quad in the Indo-Pacific,” *The Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 3, no 5 (2020): 106–117, <https://media.defense.gov/2021/Mar/12/2002599864/-1/-1/0/6-LAKSMANA.PDF/TOC.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Prashanth Parameswaran, “Washington’s Southeast Asia Commitments Must Look Beyond the ‘Like-Minded’,” *The Diplomat*, February 21, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/washingtons-southeast-asia-commitments-must-look-beyond-the-like-minded/>

## 7 **Deterring Conflict in the Taiwan Strait: The Role of South Korea**

*Yongwook Ryu*

This paper discusses the importance of the Korean peninsula as well as the role South Korea can play in deterring aggression by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in the Taiwan Strait. It advances three points which are premised on the following supposition: military conflict over Taiwan will not be a stand-alone issue, with its causes and dynamics being significantly driven by the strategic competition between the United States (US) and China. First, if the US wants to deter China from aggression in the Taiwan Strait, it must get its Asia policy right and first seek to achieve stability in other parts of the region before it formulates its China/Taiwan policy. In this regard, the Korean peninsula is most critical, as it is the only area in the region where trouble could occur independently of US-China rivalry and thereby derail America's effort to deter Chinese aggression in the Taiwan Strait. And second, the US must work to promote and strengthen trilateral security cooperation with Japan and South Korea, to demonstrate to Beijing that China is up against not just the US but its entire system and network of regional allies and partners. This requires the management of the bilateral relationship between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and Japan. And lastly, in a potential military conflict in the Taiwan Strait, South Korea could play a useful role, although its involvement is likely to fall short of direct military engagement unless it is attacked by Beijing. The ROK can serve important purposes for logistical and intelligence support for the US, and its naval base in Jeju Island can be used to restrict the operation of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) out of Liaoning and Shandong. This can be done in the framework of trilateral security cooperation involving Japan, and hence it is imperative that the US clearly conceptualise the division of labour for its regional allies in a potential military conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Let me discuss each point in more detail below.

### **Getting the US Asia Policy Right: The Importance of the Korean peninsula**

For some time, Washington's Asia policy has been little more than an extension of its China policy. While China is admittedly the most important aspect of the US Asia policy, it is still just one part of a larger whole, and must be formulated within the bounds of the US Asia policy. Simply put, the US Asia policy must precede her China/Taiwan policy, not the other way around.

This is particularly important for the goal of deterring potential PRC aggression in the Taiwan Strait, for the Taiwan issue is not a stand-alone issue, nor can it be contained only to the Taiwan Strait. If trouble occurs in the Taiwan Strait, it will have far reaching ramifications for the entire region, and what happens in other parts of the region will also significantly affect the dynamics over Taiwan.

In this regard, the Korean peninsula is most critical for two reasons. First, it is the only area of the region where there could be political and military trouble independent of US-China strategic rivalry. In all other areas of the region such as the East China Sea, South China Sea, India-China border, or Afghanistan, China will have to get directly involved in local conflicts, should they ever occur, but the Korean peninsula is different. It is the only area of

the region where there could occur politico-military dynamics that are independent of US-China rivalry. North Korea is a de facto nuclear state with hostile, albeit contained, intentions toward the outside world, including South Korea and Japan. If North Korea initiates military conflict on the Korean peninsula for whatever reasons, it will consume both American resources and those of its regional allies, which will automatically diminish America's deterrence capacity in the Taiwan Strait. This is why the US must formulate its Asia policy before it decides on its China/Taiwan policy, and in this regard, achieving peace and stability in the Korean peninsula is of utmost importance if the US seeks to deter potential PRC aggression against Taiwan.

In my opinion, the US and the newly inaugurated Yoon government of South Korea should continue to pursue the Trump administration's North Korea policy. The Trump administration adopted a policy of patient and consistent engagement with the North while maintaining firm pressure on Pyongyang, and the Biden and the Yoon administrations should continue the same approach, with the aim of driving a wedge at two levels. On one level, they must drive a wedge between the North's pursuit of nuclear weaponry and delivery capabilities and its desire for economic development. Kim Jong-un is genuinely interested in socio-economic development, and hence there is a small but real window of opportunity to nudge him to the path of denuclearisation in the long run by offering the right mix of pressure and incentive. No one expects the path to denuclearisation to be smooth, or say with certainty that the goal can even be attained, but it is the only non-military policy option on the table.

At the same time, at another level, the US and the ROK should drive a wedge between Pyongyang and Beijing. Essentially, this is turning what Pyongyang and Beijing have been doing toward Seoul on its head. Despite Beijing's status as the patron of Pyongyang, the bilateral relationship has deteriorated over the years with a declining level of shared strategic interests and mutual trust between the two communist nations. If Pyongyang can be enticed to move away from Beijing, it will be a significant blow to Beijing's regional strategy and could derail Beijing's attempt to unify Taiwan by all means.

Like the goal of denuclearisation, enticing Pyongyang to move closer to the US or the ROK won't be an easy task, but as summit diplomacy in Singapore and Hanoi demonstrated, Kim Jong-un appears interested in finding an alternative path to the nation's survival and development. For now, he does not consider giving up nuclear weapons, which have become an integral part of political legitimacy and national pride, but given his genuine interest in socio-economic development, he could be persuaded to develop relations with the US through a right kind of incentive package. The challenge will be how to keep domestic politics out of diplomatic games that requires a great deal of patience and consistency as well as coming up with the right mixture of incentives and pressure.

There are other aspects of the US Asia policy on which the Biden administration needs to place more emphasis. Let me mention just two of them. One concerns US economic policy in Asia. In the past, successive US administrations emphasised too much on political and security issues in its interactions with regional countries. China is an economic reality that no regional country can ignore, and thus, if the US wants to entice regional countries closer to its side, thereby enhancing its deterrence capacity vis-à-vis China, it should offer regional countries a viable economic alternative to what Beijing has been offering through the Belt and Road Initiative.

And secondly, the US must sustain its interest and commitment to the region based on shared,

not unilateral, interests and values. There is a perception of declining US leadership in the region and a lurking doubt that the US is losing interest in promoting multilateralism. The kind of approach that the Trump administration took based on its “America First” slogan did no good for US leadership in the region, which was only saved by an even more ethno-centric and narrow-nationalistic approach adopted by Chinese President Xi Jinping. Japan under Prime Minister Abe Shinzo did its part to sustain regional multilateralism by reincarnating the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) into the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), but is unlikely to exercise much leadership due to its perennial constitutional and normative limitations on the use of force. The region is desperate for leadership that upholds rules-based multilateral regional order, and if Washington can provide such leadership, that in itself will boost the US ability to deter China in the Taiwan Strait.

### **Trilateral Security Cooperation Between the US, Japan, and the ROK**

Managing regional peace and stability must be part of the US effort to deter aggression across the Taiwan Strait. The US has already initiated different minilateral arrangements such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or Quad) and the Australia-United Kingdom-United States (AUKUS) Partnership, which would boost US deterrence capacity. A useful addition in this regard could be trilateral security cooperation between the US, Japan, and the ROK.

Successive US administrations have pushed for closer security cooperation between the three countries for more than a decade, but the myopic concerns and ill-guided policies of both Tokyo and Seoul resulted in a worsening bilateral relationship, which made it practically impossible to attain meaningful trilateral security cooperation. Consequently, even signing an innocuous agreement such as the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) proved to be rather difficult, and Seoul and Tokyo only managed to conclude an ad-hoc GSOMIA that needs to be renewed every year.

Every crisis brings its own opportunities. As the ROK-Japan relationship hit its lowest point under the leadership of President Moon Jae-in and Prime Minister Abe Shinzo, the new administrations under President Yoon Suk-yeol and Prime Minister Kishida Fumio will desperately want to find ways to improve the bilateral relationship. This presents an opportunity for Washington to enhance trilateral security cooperation. To do so, two considerations must be taken into account.

First, the so-called “history problem” between the ROK and Japan must be taken seriously. The “history problem” refers to a set of historical issues, the understanding of which, does not converge between Seoul and Tokyo. The past conservative administrations in South Korea under President Lee Myung-bak as well as President Park Geun-hye attempted to enhance bilateral cooperation with Japan through the GSOMIA in 2012 and the “comfort women” agreement in 2015, but these efforts were made with neglect of the “history problem,” and the end result was that the attempt to further develop bilateral ties inadvertently ended up damaging the relationship and only deepened anti-Japanese sentiments and public resistance in South Korea. Therefore, one must not treat the “history problem” as a nuisance and tackle the issue upfront if one is to promote bilateral cooperation between the ROK and Japan.

Secondly, Seoul and Tokyo must find areas of mutual benefit where bilateral cooperation will fall short of a military pact but will still require serious commitment and devotion of

considerable resources. One such area could be maritime security. Both countries are energy-importing nations and essentially face the same strategic environment. As such, both share the need to uphold the same maritime rules and principles such as the freedom of navigation and overflight. To date, the ROK has ‘punched below its weight’ and has been content to free-ride on others’ effort to uphold and enforce these principles in the region. But with the inauguration of the new conservative administration in May 2022, there could be opportunities to get Seoul to do more for regional maritime security, both diplomatically and operationally.

### **South Korea’s Contribution in a Potential Military Conflict in the Taiwan Strait**

Even while he was president-elect of the ROK, Yoon had already shown a willingness to strengthen the alliance with the US and its policy coordination. He proposed that the ROK cooperate with the Five Eyes to enhance intelligence sharing, participate in working groups of the Quad, and provide ‘strategic clarity’ for South Korea in standing up against Chinese pressure (ex, THAAD incident) and aligning with universal values and international law. All this bodes well for South Korea’s closer security cooperation in promoting regional peace and stability, which will extend to the Taiwan Strait.

However, one must be realistic here. Regardless of which political party is in power in South Korea, the country’s involvement in a potential military conflict in the Taiwan Strait will fall short of military participation, unless the ROK is directly attacked by China. Although the ROK may not get directly involved in the military conflict, it could still play a critical role. If the US wants to focus on China and the Taiwan Strait, with the aim of successfully deterring Chinese aggression and defeating the PLA in a potential military clash, the last thing it wants is another major military conflict in the region that would consume US resources and political capital. Hence, the single most important role South Korea can play to assist US military effort in the Taiwan Strait would be to manage North Korea to make sure the North would not coordinate its policy with the PRC and launch a military conflict in the Korean peninsula.

In addition, South Korea can provide logistical and diplomatic support as well as naval access and military intelligence. Here, the ROK’s naval base in Jeju Island, the southernmost island in South Korea, can serve useful functions. The naval base is capable of simultaneously docking up to twenty combat ships and two large cruise ships, and can host more than 3,000 troops. The base can increase its current capacity, if both Seoul and Washington would like to do so. Located strategically at the entry of the East China Sea, the naval base in Jeju Island can easily check and restrict Chinese naval operations out of Liaoning and Shandong.

The US and the ROK can initiate military exercises from Jeju Island, and this can be done in the framework of trilateral security cooperation as well, combining with the already significant naval presence in the Okinawan islands. Such cooperation will complicate China’s military planning and naval operations in the Taiwan Strait.

The challenge will be how to convince the South Korean public about the necessity of military cooperation that could involve Japan. Any suggestion of military cooperation with Japan is fraught with all sorts of political trouble, but this does not necessarily make it impossible. Despite a high level of anti-Japanese sentiment, over 52 percent of South Korean respondents in a 2019 public opinion survey acknowledged the need for closer security cooperation with Japan.<sup>1</sup> In addition, anti-Chinese sentiments are at an all-time high in South Korea due to the THAAD scandal. Hence, the South Korean public might be persuaded to

tolerate security cooperation between Seoul and Tokyo that target China's military expansion and aggression.

Furthermore, the two countries can start their security cooperation in a place far from the region. One option could be the Indian Ocean where the two could sign an agreement for mutual assistance if vessels from the other country come under attack by pirates or face difficulties at sea. Such cooperation will ease the wary South Korean public to an extent and give them an opportunity to see the benefit of closer security cooperation with Japan.

## **Conclusion**

If a military conflict ever occurs in the Taiwan Strait, it will not be an isolated and localised conflict. What happens in Taiwan will be affected by broader regional strategic trends, particularly the US-China strategic rivalry, and will in turn, have an impact on other regional dynamics. This is why we must approach the Taiwan issue with a broader regional strategic viewpoint and plan. And in this regard, this paper has argued that the critical importance of the Korean peninsula cannot be overstated.

The US must closely coordinate with the ROK to promote peace and stability in the Korean peninsula, and this requires managing North Korea with the aim of enticing Kim Jong-un to be closer to the US through a mix of incentives and pressure.

At the same time, the US must strive to promote trilateral security cooperation with Tokyo and Seoul, which will complicate China's military planning by signaling that there will be far greater economic and geopolitical costs if Beijing initiates aggression against a democracy in the region.

Finally, Washington needs to clearly conceptualise and coordinate the potential role that the ROK can play in a potential military conflict in the Taiwan Strait. This also requires a division of labor for different roles for America's regional allies and partners.

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## **Notes**

<sup>1</sup> J. James Kim and Chungku Kang, "South Korean attitudes about ROK-Japan relations on the rocks," *Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Issue Brief*, October 14, 2019, <https://en.asaninst.org/contents/south-korean-attitudes-about-rok-japan-relations-on-the-rocks/>

## 8 Southeast Asian Responses to Military Contingencies in the Taiwan Strait and East China Sea

*Ian Storey*

If China were to launch an unprovoked invasion of Taiwan, or a military operation to annex the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the East China Sea, the consequences for the whole of the Indo-Pacific would be catastrophic. In the Taiwan Strait, the United States (US) would be compelled to intervene militarily on Taipei's behalf, both to defend a fellow democracy, and to uphold its strategic credibility in the region. In the East China Sea, America would be obligated to come to the defence of Japan as the atolls are covered by the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty. America's involvement in either conflict could quickly escalate into a wider conflagration that would see fighting between US and Chinese armed forces across East Asia.

It would be impossible for Southeast Asia to insulate itself from either of these two conflicts, but especially a cross-Strait war. Although Taiwan is often classed as being in Northeast Asia, geographically speaking, it could just as well be considered part of Southeast Asia too. The Taiwan Strait and the Luzon Strait are contiguous with the South China Sea which would quickly become a part of the wider theatre of military operations, especially for submarines seeking to interdict enemy shipping. The economic fallout for Southeast Asia would be ruinous. Both China and Taiwan are major investors in the region, critical to the component trade which employ millions of workers in manufacturing plants across the region. Supply chains would be shattered, and transportation links severed. Southeast Asian governments would struggle to repatriate hundreds of thousands of their citizens working in Taiwan. China's use of force would have grave implications for the territorial disputes in the South China Sea dispute which involves China (and Taiwan) and four Southeast Asian countries (Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam). Existing geopolitical divisions among the ten members of ASEAN would widen, threatening the already fragile consensus on the South China Sea and further undermining the organisation's claim to "centrality" in the regional security architecture.

Southeast Asian elites understand full well the stakes, risks, and potential consequences of a cross-Strait war or a Sino-Japanese confrontation over the Senkakus. However, it is questionable whether any regional state or ASEAN itself would play a meaningful role in deterring a conflict or, should China decide to use military force, adopt hard line responses in the face of Beijing's aggression. Southeast Asia's diplomatic preferences, economic engagement with China, the long-running South China Sea dispute, and regional responses to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, all suggest that Southeast Asia would not take a strong stand against Beijing in either of the two conflict scenarios.

### **Southeast Asia and Deterrence**

A China-Taiwan conflict would presumably be preceded by escalating political tensions between the two parties, possibly including Beijing issuing Taipei with an unreasonable ultimatum to reunify with the mainland or face military action (just as Russia issued a series

of unrealistic ultimatums to the US and NATO prior to its invasion of Ukraine). In the East China Sea, it is hard to conceive that Beijing would present Tokyo with an ultimatum to hand over the atolls, but any operation by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to seize them would likely be preceded by rising Sino-Japanese tensions over a range of issues, including the sovereignty of the Senkakus themselves.

Southeast Asian countries are not without agency and influence. In the run-up to a cross-Strait conflict, we might expect Singapore to adopt the most proactive stance among the ten ASEAN members, given its thick economic ties with both China and Taiwan. Singapore might therefore offer its good offices as a mediator. On two occasions—in 1993 when officials from the two sides' semi-official bodies held talks, and in 2015 when President Ma Ying-jeou and President Xi Jinping met—Singapore has been a venue for Chinese and Taiwanese officials to meet. However, as Beijing considers cross-Strait relations to be China's internal affair, it is quite likely that it would reject Singapore's mediation offer—or from any country for that matter.

As tensions between China and Taiwan increased, Southeast Asian governments would probably restrict themselves to issuing statements expressing concern, urging restraint and a peaceful resolution of the dispute through diplomatic negotiations. But it is difficult to see how any Southeast Asian government, or ASEAN itself, could influence the decision-making process in Beijing, especially if the Chinese leadership had determined—after weighing up the pros and cons, including the threat of sanctions, reputational damage, and US military intervention—that using force was the best way to resolve the Taiwan issue.

It should be borne in mind that after more than two decades of discussions between China and ASEAN aimed at lowering tensions in the South China Sea, Southeast Asia has failed to prevent China from becoming more assertive, for example by transforming the seven features under its occupation in the Spratly Islands into large military bases, harassing survey ships and drilling rigs chartered by state-owned energy corporations and occupying Philippine-claimed Scarborough Shoal in 2012. Consider too that the Chinese government accords Taiwan a much higher priority than the South China Sea. All things considered, Southeast Asia, either as individual countries or collectively as ASEAN, would be unlikely to play a major role in deterring a China-Taiwan conflict—they would look to the US to fulfil that role.

### **Southeast Asia in a Cross-Strait Conflict**

Southeast Asian responses to Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine have varied considerably.<sup>1</sup> Singapore condemned Russia by name and imposed sanctions and export controls on Moscow. At the other end of the Southeast Asian spectrum, Myanmar's junta endorsed Russia's actions. Indonesia, Brunei, and the Philippines condemned the invasion but without naming Russia as the aggressor. Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Laos expressed varying degrees of concern and called for a peaceful diplomatic solution. Due to the disparate positions of its member states, ASEAN issued a lowest-common denominator response that was widely criticised as being weak and tepid.<sup>2</sup> However, eight ASEAN member states voted in support of a non-binding UN General Assembly resolution which deplored Russia's invasion, while Vietnam and Laos abstained.<sup>3</sup>

Except for Singapore, why have Southeast Asia's responses been so subdued, even non-committal? After all, Russia's invasion is a clear violation of international norms and principles which Southeast Asian countries consider sacrosanct: respect for the independence,

sovereignty, equality, territorial integrity, and national identity of all nations; non-interference in the internal affairs of another country; settlement of differences and disputes by peaceful means; and the renunciation of the threat or use of force.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Russia's economic footprint in Southeast Asia is tiny—US\$13.6 billion in two-way trade in 2020<sup>5</sup>—and regional states would suffer negligible economic impact if they were to follow Singapore's lead and impose sanctions (though all regional states are suffering from rising commodity prices triggered by the war).

Southeast Asian responses have been determined by a variety of factors. As it has done in the past during similar crises, Singapore took a very principled stand—that large countries should not coerce or attack small countries and that international law should be upheld lest the international system become Darwinian. Myanmar was returning a diplomatic favour to Russia because it was one of the first countries to recognise the result of the February 2021 coup has since been discussing providing arms to the country's armed forces. Vietnam and Laos have sought to protect their decades-old friendship with Russia, especially their defence ties. Nearly all Southeast Asian countries—Singapore's actions were unprecedented—eschew the imposition of non-UN mandated sanctions; Malaysia has said they cause hardship for ordinary people while Indonesia has warned that sanctions will impede the world's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. A recurring theme in Thailand's foreign policy is not to take sides in great power politics.

A Chinese invasion of Taiwan would likely elicit an even more cautious response from Southeast Asia, for two main reasons.

The first is that unlike Ukraine, none of the ten ASEAN member states recognise Taiwan as a sovereign state. All adhere to the one-China policy—that there is only one China and that Taiwan is a part of it. Over the past three decades, as China's political, economic, and military clout have grown, all of the Southeast Asian states have tightened their one-China policies. While they maintain economic and cultural links with Taiwan, and most play host to Taiwan representative offices which fulfil a semi-official diplomatic role, no senior Southeast Asian leader has visited Taiwan since the early 2000s (Singapore Prime Minister-designate Lee Hsien Loong was the last, in 2004). Only Singapore maintains any kind of defence relationship with Taiwan, through Operation Starlight by which Singapore National Servicemen undertake training on the island. Some governments have explicitly stated their opposition to Taiwanese independence. Therefore, while a Chinese attack on Taiwan would violate the principle of settling disputes through peaceful means, it would not violate the independence and sovereignty of Taiwan, nor constitute interference in its internal affairs because Southeast Asian governments consider the island to be part of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The second reason is the high-levels of economic interdependence between Southeast Asia and the PRC. China is every regional state's main trading partner, and an increasingly important source of foreign direct investment (FDI). While two-way trade between Russia and the region is paltry, in 2020, China was Southeast Asia's number one trade partner at US\$503 billion (China also invested US\$7.7 billion in the region).<sup>6</sup> Were any Southeast Asian state to condemn a PRC invasion, let alone impose sanctions, Beijing would respond with punitive economic measures, as it did with Australia in 2021 for less serious perceived infractions. Singapore, China's largest source of FDI, would be particularly exposed.

As noted earlier, an unprovoked attack on Taiwan by China would likely result in a US

military intervention on behalf of Taipei. This could pose serious dilemmas for three ASEAN member states. The Philippines and Thailand are US treaty allies, while Singapore has a close strategic partnership with America. For operational reasons, the US would probably not call on Thailand and the Philippines to contribute military personnel but would in all likelihood request logistical support for US forces such as military aircraft and naval ships.

Geographically adjacent to the conflict, the Philippines would be put on the spot. How Manila would respond might depend on who occupied Malacañang. The former incumbent, President Rodrigo Duterte, has a personal dislike of the US and threatened to cancel the US-Philippines Visiting Forces Agreement. Duterte, or someone like him, would be inclined to refuse any US requests for military support. And given its close ties with China, Thailand would also probably turn down any US requests for logistical support. Singapore has no defence obligations with the US, but a cross-Strait war would place it in an invidious position: to refuse a request for US ships and aircraft to transit through the island would damage its relationship with America; to accept American requests would damage its ties with China. Ironically, although Singapore is not a US treaty ally, it would be harder for it to declare its neutrality than either the Philippines or Thailand given its more pro-active and principled foreign policy.

So how would Southeast Asian countries respond to a Chinese invasion of Taiwan? As we have seen with Ukraine, there would likely be a spectrum of responses. While most countries would call for a cessation of hostilities and a peaceful resolution to the conflict, it is questionable whether any ASEAN member state would condemn a PRC invasion. Some would probably declare their neutrality and hope that the conflict ends quickly. Under their current governments, Cambodia and Myanmar might be sympathetic to China or even support its actions. No country would impose economic sanctions. ASEAN itself might restrict itself to a statement of “serious concern.”

### **Potential Southeast Asian Responses to a PRC Seizure of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands**

If China were to use military force to annex the Senkakus, we can anticipate an even less robust response from Southeast Asia than if a cross-Strait conflict erupts.

While Japan has expressed growing concern at China’s assertiveness in the South China Sea, Southeast Asian countries have remained largely silent on rising Sino-Japanese tensions in the East China Sea. Although ASEAN regularly expresses concern at tensions around the world, it has never mentioned the East China Sea dispute in any of its statements or communiques. Perhaps Japan is content with this state of affairs: after all, according to Tokyo, there is no dispute with China over the Senkaku Islands.<sup>7</sup>

In contrast, Japan sees itself as a stakeholder in the South China Sea dispute. It has vocally expressed support for freedom of navigation in the sea and was one of the few countries to immediately endorse the 2016 Arbitral Tribunal ruling which rejected China’s nine-dash line claims in the South China Sea as incompatible with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). Tokyo regularly raises the dispute at international forums, has encouraged ASEAN to take a united stand, discusses the problem bilaterally with the Southeast Asian claimants and has provided Vietnam and the Philippines with capacity-building support.

Japan sees the East China Sea and South China Sea disputes as two sides of the same coin: the dangers of Chinese assertiveness in the maritime domain and how its actions undermine

international law. But Southeast Asian countries do not appear to view the two disputes as being linked in any meaningful way.

If China were to occupy the Senkakus, Southeast Asian countries would express concern and call on the two parties to resolve their disputes peacefully and in accordance with international law. ASEAN would likely issue a statement to the same effect.

Both China and Japan are crucial to the economic well-being of Southeast Asia, and regional states would not wish to pick sides for fear of offending Tokyo or Beijing, particularly the latter which is apt to impose punitive economic measures when countries question its behaviour. However, as with the Taiwan scenario, the PRC's use of force would set a worrying precedent for the South China Sea and unnerve the Southeast Asian claimants.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Ian Storey and William Choong, "Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Southeast Asian Responses and Why it Matters to the Region," *ISEAS Perspective* 2022, no. 24, March 9, 2022, [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2022\\_24.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ISEAS_Perspective_2022_24.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> "ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Situation in Ukraine," *Association of Southeast Asian Nations*, February 26, 2022, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/ASEAN-FM-Statement-on-Ukraine-Crisis-26-Feb-Final.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Aggression against Ukraine*, A/RES/ES-11/1, UNGAOR, 11th emergency special session, March 2, 2022, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3965290?ln=en>

<sup>4</sup> These principles are contained in both the UN Charter and the 1976 ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, which Russia acceded to in 2004. See "Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia," February 24, 1976, <https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/20131230235433.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> ASEAN Secretariat, "ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2021," December 2021, [https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ASYB\\_2021\\_All\\_Final.pdf](https://www.aseanstats.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ASYB_2021_All_Final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> ASEAN Secretariat, "ASEAN Statistical Yearbook 2021."

<sup>7</sup> "Senkaku Islands," *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan*, May 8, 2013, [https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/basic\\_view.html](https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/basic_view.html)

## 9 Singapore and the Cross-Strait Security Dynamic

*Lynn Kuok*

When asked about Taiwan, Singapore's leaders have taken the position that war overnight is unlikely, but that the situation is concerning given the potential for a mishap or miscalculation.<sup>1</sup> What Singapore will do in the event of a Taiwan contingency is unclear. Its leaders have held its position close to its chest, refusing to be drawn into any discussion of a "hypothetical" scenario. How Singapore responds, they say, will depend on the circumstances.

### **Singapore's Interests**

What is clearer, however, are Singapore's interests in this respect. Amongst the most important of these is upholding international law and the principles enshrined in the United Nations (UN) Charter, including the mandate to "refrain...from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state."<sup>2</sup> Singapore considers international law to be critical to the security and survival of small states; amongst them, Singapore is a Lilliputian.

Second, Singapore has an interest in good ties with its large and powerful neighbor—China. China has been Singapore's largest trading partner since 2013 and its foreign direct investment in Singapore is fast growing. In Singapore and in the broader region, China is regarded as the engine of economic growth. A 2022 Institute of Southeast Asian Studies report found that 76.7 percent of respondents considered China to be the most influential economic power, while the United States (US) trailed at 9.8 percent.<sup>3</sup> In October 2019, after years of internal deliberation, Singapore signed an enhanced defence agreement with China.

Third, Singapore desires continued economic and military ties with Taiwan. In 2013, it became the first member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to sign an economic partnership with the island. The armed forces of Singapore are permitted to train in Taiwan by virtue of the Starlight Project. This deal, which was struck in 1975, offers Singapore the opportunity for division-level training, and is considered critical for the defence and security of a country that suffers from land and airspace scarcity. The programme has become an "open secret," though parties have sought to keep it quiet to avoid attention from Beijing.<sup>4</sup> The deal has come under some Chinese pressure recently, particularly after Taiwanese President Tsai Ing-wen took office.

Last, but not least, Singapore has an interest in seeking to meet the expectations of the US. The US is Singapore's largest investor and most important security partner. Perhaps more than any Southeast Asian state, Singapore believes a strong US presence in the region is vital for peace, stability and prosperity. In 1990, when the Philippines decided that it would close the Clark and Subic bases, and Malaysia and Indonesia were against US basing in the region, Singapore stepped up to offer it the use of its air base and port. Since then, Singapore has sought to anchor the US to the region through a series of agreements: a 1998 addendum to its 1990 Memorandum of Understanding allowing the US use of the then new Changi Naval

Base, purpose-built to accommodate an aircraft carrier; a 2005 Strategic Framework Agreement for Closer Cooperation Partnership in Defence and Security, including within it a Defence Cooperation Agreement; and, in 2015, an Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement.<sup>5</sup>

### **Difficult Balancing Act**

Balancing these interests have proven to be thorny, as a few examples will highlight, though Singapore has thus far managed to enjoy defence and security relations with both Taiwan and China—a state of affairs a senior civil servant recently described to me as a happy “accident of history.”

In July 2004, China responded angrily when it learnt that then Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was intending to make an unofficial visit to Taiwan before becoming prime minister on August 12, 2004, and pressured him to cancel the trip. Lee went anyway, and China was only mollified when, in his first National Day Rally on August 22, 2004, Prime Minister Lee declared unequivocally that, “we stand for one China and are opposed to Taiwan independence” and that Singapore’s “one-China policy will not change.”<sup>6</sup>

When Singapore brokered a historic meeting in Singapore between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Taiwanese President Ma Ying-jeou in 2015, China objected to a planned bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Lee and President Ma, though that too eventually went ahead.

On November 23, 2016, about half a year after President Tsai took office, nine Singapore Armed Forces’ Terrex vehicles were impounded in Hong Kong. The Chinese foreign ministry and Chinese state media criticised Singapore’s relations with Taiwan and its negative impact on Beijing’s preferred “one China principle.”<sup>7</sup> The incident led some local analysts to conclude that “China has changed and Singapore must now exercise care so that its actions cannot be seized upon by its detractors as unfriendly acts vis-à-vis Chinese foreign policy.”<sup>8</sup>

Singapore will be placed in a serious bind if there is a sharp downturn in cross-Strait relations and if, for instance, China warns Singapore to stop training in Taiwan and offers the city-state the southern island of Hainan to train in instead (as it has done in the past).

### **A Taiwan Contingency**

Such dilemmas, however, pale in comparison to the pickle Singapore would be in in the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan.

Singapore has not weighed in on a specific time frame on this contingency, which Admiral Philip Davidson, then US Indo-Pacific Commander, put at six years when he was testifying to Congress in March 2021, and which his successor, Admiral John Aquilino, a week later described as “much closer to us than most think.”<sup>9</sup> The US Chief of Naval Operations Mike Gilday echoed this sentiment in October 2022, stating at an Atlantic Council event, “[w]hen we talk about the 2027 window, in my mind that has to be a 2022 window or potentially a 2023 window.”<sup>10</sup> Singapore’s assessment, at least for the moment, is that war is more likely by mishap or miscalculation.

Still, quite apart from calling for prudence on all sides—Singapore’s defence minister, for instance, has urged the US to “stay very far away” from physically confronting China over Taiwan<sup>11</sup>—Singapore’s leaders who are known for meticulous planning have almost certainly discussed Singapore’s response to a Taiwan contingency, even if they have remained publicly quiet on this issue. Some among the foreign policy elite have in private conversations highlighted broad factors that will influence Singapore’s response: the state and trajectory of economic relations (with China and the United States), “where the world is heading,” etc. Others will only say that Singapore’s response will depend on the exact circumstances, without elaborating on relevant factors or how their constellation might affect Singapore’s decision.

The war in Ukraine has led to parallels being drawn to the situation on Taiwan. Social media users have, for instance, coined the slogan “Ukraine today, Taiwan tomorrow!” Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio at the International Institute for Strategic Studies Shangri-La Dialogue in June 2022 warned that “Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow.”<sup>12</sup> The suggestion is that an emboldened China might attempt a forceful reunification of Taiwan with the mainland.

However, unless the US becomes bogged down in Europe, which it does not appear likely to do having made clear that the Indo-Pacific is its priority theatre, the war in Ukraine is unlikely to change China’s calculations about whether and, if so, when to take military action against what it sees as a renegade state. This decision would largely be determined by China’s assessment of whether the US will come to Taiwan’s aid militarily and if China will be able to win a quick war against it. At present, it looks like the answer to the first question is yes—US President Joe Biden has made several assurances along these lines—and to the second, no, making a Chinese attack on Taiwan in the near- to medium-term unlikely.

Though the analogy fails in terms of the likelihood of a Chinese attack, Singapore’s strong response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine begs the question whether it might respond in a similar fashion to any Chinese aggression against Taiwan. Singapore adopted a principled response to Russia’s actions: it voted in favour of the UN resolution condemning Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, and determined to act in concert with many other like-minded countries to impose appropriate sanctions and restrictions against Russia, although it rarely acts to impose sanctions on other countries in the absence of binding Security Council decisions or directions. In explaining its position, Singapore’s foreign minister gave a speech in parliament categorically stating that “the sovereignty, the political independence and the territorial integrity of all countries, big and small, must be respected,” and that “Singapore must take any violation of these core principles seriously, whenever and wherever they occur.”<sup>13</sup>

It would be tempting to infer a similar response to a Chinese attack on Taiwan. Yet, what a principled response to such an event might look like is unclear. Singapore, like other countries in Southeast Asia, maintains a one-China policy. While I am told that this does not preclude assisting Taiwan, other considerations, most notably the state and trajectory of economic relations with China and the United States, will also factor into Singapore’s response. Singapore could very well limit itself to calling for restraint on all sides and keeping any criticism muted.

Another factor that Singapore will have to contend with is its 75 percent ethnic Chinese population which Beijing has made inroads into influencing. Singapore’s principled stance

against Russia has met with vocal opposition from Singaporeans who do not want Singapore to stick its neck out on matters that do not appear to concern it and/or who see what is happening in Europe through the lens of China, namely, that the “West” is ultimately responsible for provoking this crisis and is bullying the “East.”

A critical question for Singapore in a Taiwan contingency would be whether it would allow US military assets on deployment to the country to operate against China—a Singaporean diplomat has referred to this as a “nightmare scenario.” In the near-term, the answer would likely be in the affirmative, but beyond that it is difficult to say.

A desire to avoid these difficult decisions would at least have been part of the reasoning behind taking a firm stance on Ukraine—warning against what the Singaporean foreign minister described as “[a] world order based on ‘might is right,’ or where ‘the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must’.”<sup>14</sup> Such a statement, whilst hardly a deterrent, would at least sound a note of caution to those contemplating the use of force. Singapore would undoubtedly like to see the cross-Strait status quo continue, and if any changes are to occur, these “must not take place forcibly or non-peacefully.”<sup>15</sup>

## Avoiding Conflict

Given the heavy costs of conflict, Prime Minister Lee has urged that the Asia-Pacific think seriously about “the path into conflict and how it can be avoided.” He has encouraged the region to look at “what structures can you build; what processes; what engagements; what strategic accommodations can be made, in order to head off such a failure of deterrence.”<sup>16</sup> Singapore, however, does not consider itself a major player and regards itself as being able to do little or nothing to prevent a Taiwan contingency. Indeed, while not an official stance, many in the Singapore intelligentsia regard relations between China and Taiwan as predominantly a function of US-China relations, with it rising or falling with the trajectory of US-China relations.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “PM Lee Hsien Loong at the Bloomberg New Economy Forum 2021,” *Prime Minister’s Office*, November 17, 2021, <https://www.pmo.gov.sg/Newsroom/PM-Lee-Hsien-Loong-at-the-Bloomberg-New-Economy-Forum-2021>

<sup>2</sup> *United Nations Charter*, United Nations, June 26, 1945, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/un-charter/full-text#>

<sup>3</sup> Seah et al., “The State of Southeast Asia 2022,” *ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute*, February 16, 2022, [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/The-State-of-SEA-2022\\_FA\\_Digital\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/The-State-of-SEA-2022_FA_Digital_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> I-wei Jennifer Chang, “Taiwan’s Military Ties to Singapore Targeted by China,” *The Global Taiwan Brief* 5, no. 9, May 6, 2020, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2020/05/taiwans-military-ties-to-singapore-targeted-by-china/>

<sup>5</sup> Lynn Kuok, “The U.S.-Singapore Partnership: A critical element of U.S. engagement and stability in the Asia-Pacific,” *Brookings*, July 13, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-u-s-singapore-partnership-a-critical-element-of-u-s-engagement-and-stability-in-the-asia-pacific/>

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<sup>7</sup> “Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang’s Regular Press Conference,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China*, November 28, 2016, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/fyrbt\\_1/201611/t20161128\\_8525956.htm](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/nanhai/eng/fyrbt_1/201611/t20161128_8525956.htm)

<sup>8</sup> Alan Chong and David Han Guo Xiong, “Foreign Policy Lessons from the Terrex Episode,” *RSIS Commentary*, February 2, 2017, [https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co17022-foreign-policy-lessons-from-the-terrex-episode/#.Yj82\\_ZoRX0o](https://www.rsis.edu.sg/rsis-publication/rsis/co17022-foreign-policy-lessons-from-the-terrex-episode/#.Yj82_ZoRX0o)

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<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Mallory Shelbourne, “Military Takeover of Taiwan is Top Concern for INDOPACOM Nominee Aquilino,” *USNI News*, March 23, 2021, <https://news.usni.org/2021/03/23/military-takeover-of-taiwan-is-top-concern-for-indopacom-nominee-aquilino>

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Robert Delaney, “US Navy should prepare for an invasion of Taiwan as soon as this year, fleet chief says,” *South China Morning Post*, October 20, 2022, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/military/article/3196553/us-navy-should-prepare-invasion-taiwan-soon-year-fleet-chief-says>

<sup>11</sup> Aqil Haziq Mahmud, “US should ‘stay very far away’ from physically confronting China over Taiwan: Ng Eng Hen,” *Channel News Asia*, November 4, 2021, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/taiwan-china-us-tension-ng-eng-hen-2290256>

<sup>12</sup> Kishida Fumio, “Keynote Address,” *International Institute for Strategic Studies, 19<sup>th</sup> Regional Security Summit, Shangri-La Dialogue*, June 10, 2022, <https://www.iiss.org/-/media/files/shangri-la-dialogue/2022/transcripts/keynote-address/kishida-fumio-prime-minister-japan-as-delivered.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Vivian Balakrishnan, “Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan’s Ministerial Statement on the Situation in Ukraine and its Implications,” *Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, February 28, 2022, <https://www.mfa.gov.sg/Newsroom/Press-Statements-Transcripts-and-Photos/2022/02/20220228-Ministerial-Statement>

<sup>14</sup> Balakrishnan, “Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Vivian Balakrishnan’s Ministerial Statement on the Situation in Ukraine and its Implications.” The US–Singapore Leaders’ Statement takes a similarly strong stance on Ukraine. See “U.S.-Singapore Joint Leaders’ Statement,” *The White House*, March 29, 2022, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/29/u-s-singapore-joint-leaders-statement/>

<sup>15</sup> “In full: PM Lee’s dialogue with the Council on Foreign Relations,” *Channel NewsAsia*, March 31, 2022, <https://www.channelnewsasia.com/singapore/pm-lee-hsien-loong-dialogue-council-foreign-relations-2597991>

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

## 10 Armed Conflicts Over East Asian Flashpoints: Impossible Choices for Vietnam

*Hoang Thi Ha*

As the Russo-Ukraine war grinds on, the world is fast forwarding towards a new era of strategic disorder with old power politics, characterised by the blatant use of force by a big country against its smaller neighbour and the underlying great power contest for spheres of influence. The Vietnamese leadership is acutely aware of these systemic changes and the world's increasingly fraught security environment. In 2016, the Political Report presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Vietnam Communist Party (VCP) noted that despite complicated developments, “peace, respect for national independence, democracy, cooperation and development remain predominant trends.”<sup>1</sup> In 2021, the 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress's assessment was far bleaker: “The world is undergoing profound, complicated, rapidly changing and unpredictable developments. Peace, cooperation and development remain major trends but they are confronted with numerous challenges and difficulties. Strategic competition among great powers and local conflicts continue to intensify, further jeopardising the international political, economic and security environment.”<sup>2</sup> With this bleak assessment in mind, how prepared is Vietnam for open conflicts in its own broader neighbourhood (i.e., over the Taiwan Strait and/or the Senkaku Islands)? What would be the possible repercussions for the country and how would Hanoi likely respond?

### **Definitely High-Stake Issues for Vietnam**

Maintaining regional peace and stability to secure a conducive regional environment for national construction and development is a central goal of Vietnam's foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> That may sound like a truism, but for many Vietnamese who had shed blood and squandered many development opportunities in one war after another through the twentieth century, peace is the most important virtue of the post-Cold War era. When commenting on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh, Vietnam's former deputy defence minister, said, “World peace is imperiled. That means the peaceful environment for Vietnam is jeopardised.”<sup>4</sup> Closer to home, a conflict over the Taiwan Strait or Senkaku Islands would unravel decades of inter-state peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific, upending the entire regional ecosystem within which Vietnam has pursued its national development since the launch of its “Reform and Open-up” in 1986.

Economically, Vietnam would be one of the most severely affected in Southeast Asia because of its deep economic interdependence with China, Japan, Taiwan and the United States (US). Vietnam is a critical node in the region's extensive web of free trade agreements and production networks. Its economic growth over the past three decades heavily relied on the steady inflows of trade-oriented investment from Japanese, Taiwanese, American and Chinese firms. In 2021, the US was Vietnam's second largest trading partner and eleventh biggest foreign investor,<sup>5</sup> for Japan the fourth largest trading partner and second biggest foreign investor,<sup>6</sup> and for Taiwan the eighth largest trading partner and fourth largest foreign investor (in terms of FDI stock).<sup>7</sup> China is Vietnam's largest trading partner, and is catching up fast in terms of investment, becoming the third largest source of FDI inflows into the country in 2021. Any disruption to the regional supply chains and international trade as well

as mutual US-Sino economic sanctions will seriously imperil Vietnam's growth prospect, which is a key source of the VCP's legitimacy. The ongoing war in Ukraine, which is pushing global economies to the brink of recession, provides a scary preview of how disastrously a conflict in Taiwan would wreak havoc on the world economy. A 2022 Rhodium Group study commissioned by the US State Department estimates that a Chinese blockade of Taiwan would cause US\$2.5 trillion in annual economic losses.<sup>8</sup>

On the security front, a conflict in Northeast Asia would have profound ramifications for Vietnam. As with what is happening now in the war in Ukraine, Hanoi would closely examine any aggressive Chinese action, especially over the Senkaku Islands, and draw possible parallels and precedents for the ongoing South China Sea disputes. Back in 2013, after China's announcement of an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) over the East China Sea, Vietnam actively pushed for the inclusion of "freedom of navigation and overflight" in all ASEAN statements related to the South China Sea. The Joint Statement of the ASEAN-Japan Commemorative Summit in December 2013 titled, "Hand in hand, facing regional and global challenges" stated that both sides "agreed to enhance cooperation in ensuring the freedom of overflight and civil aviation safety in accordance with the universally recognised principles of international law, including the 1982 UNCLOS, and the relevant standards and recommended practices by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)."<sup>9</sup>

Furthermore, a forceful capture of Taiwan or the Senkaku Islands is a clear violation of the principle of non-use of force or threat to use force and peaceful settlement of disputes. This is a key tenet in international law that Vietnam holds as critical to its national security. The 2019 National Defence White Paper included this principle as another "no" in addition to its classic "Three Nos"—no alliance, no foreign military base and no aligning with one country against another.<sup>10</sup> While being evasive and ambiguous on the question of who is right or wrong in the Russia-Ukraine war, Vinh made it clear that, "Russia's military offensive has created a bad precedent in the use of force in inter-state relations and jeopardised international peace."<sup>11</sup>

From the balance-of-power perspective, maintaining a multipolar regional order with the presence and engagement of multiple major powers is in Vietnam's economic and strategic interests. If China overpowers Japan in the control of the Senkaku Islands or captures Taiwan with little or unsuccessful resistance from its opponents, the regional order would be fundamentally altered, "potentially marking the end of US hegemony in Asia and the passing of regional leadership to China."<sup>12</sup> In that event, China's resurgence as the region's single hegemon would seriously shrink the space of Vietnam's strategic autonomy and limit its foreign policy choices. An emboldened and invincible China would almost certainly mean a more forceful Chinese posture in the South China Sea, further jeopardising Vietnam's territorial and maritime interests in this body of water.

### **Likely Low-Profile Response by Hanoi**

Despite the high stakes of these possible conflicts, Vietnam would likely keep a low profile and be circumspect in its response should they happen—arguably not dissimilar to its risk-averse reaction to the Russia-Ukraine war.<sup>13</sup> Granted, Vietnam's official statements would refer to the canonical principles of peaceful settlement of disputes, non-use of force, freedom of navigation, self-restraint, and humanitarian assistance for civilians. But Vietnam would refrain from making value judgment on or public criticism of China's forceful action.

On the Taiwan issue, Vietnam—like all other Southeast Asian countries—is strictly bound by the one-China policy which is aligned with Beijing’s interpretation, i.e., there is only one China, Taiwan is part of China, and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is the sole legal government representing China.<sup>14</sup> Vietnam’s public statements, individually or jointly with China, have always underscored its adherence to the one-China policy, support for the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and China’s great cause of unification, and resolute opposition to actions for an “independent Taiwan” in any form.<sup>15</sup> As such, Hanoi would have little choice but to defer to Beijing on the latter’s most vital “core interest.” If there is a circumstance under which Vietnam might be more vocal against the use of force over Taiwan, it is probably only when China launches its assault on Taiwan-controlled Itu Aba island. Even then, Vietnam’s protest would likely be qualified and confined to the issue of the sovereignty of Itu Aba within the Spratly Islands which is claimed wholly by Vietnam, China and Taiwan.

On the East China Sea, Vietnam may have a slightly larger latitude to take a more robust and principled position in the name of regional peace and stability. China’s use of force in the East China Sea would seriously unnerve Hanoi, given the direct parallels it may draw with the South China Sea. However, like many other countries, Vietnam does not take a position on the sovereignty of the Senkaku Islands, and would be neutral in expressing its concerns. For now, Vietnam’s approach is to keep this controversy in abeyance. A de-briefing by Japan’s foreign ministry about the visit by Vietnam’s Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in November 2021 mentioned that, “Prime Minister Kishida stated that he strongly opposes the unilateral attempts to change the status quo in the East and South China Seas.”<sup>16</sup> The joint statement on the occasion of the visit, however, had no mention of the East China Sea, suggesting Vietnam’s caution and preference to stay away from this issue.

Vietnam’s heavily guarded approach is driven by its deference towards China, which is both an embedded mindset and a rational calculation based on the geographic proximity, power asymmetry, and to a lesser extent, ideological affinity between the two countries. This deference mindset was encapsulated in the words of the late VCP General Secretary Le Kha Phieu: “We live adjacent by a big country; we cannot afford to maintain tension with them because they are next door to us.”<sup>17</sup> As pointed out by Derek Grossman, China is “the unavoidable partner” that maintains “the preponderance of influence” over Hanoi, and “barring a major turn of events in the South China Sea, it is difficult to see how Vietnam might begin favouring the US over China.”<sup>18</sup> Keeping friendship and good relations with China is the top priority of Vietnam’s foreign policy and essential to its goal of maintaining a stable external environment. While Vietnam’s approach to China also includes other policy choices such as hedging, enmeshment and balancing, deference remains deeply embedded in Hanoi’s strategic thinking, especially among the more conservative quarters.<sup>19</sup> Given their close geography and the party-to-party channel between the VCP and the Chinese Communist Party, Beijing has more levers of influence over Hanoi than Washington and Tokyo. Even the designation of Vietnam-China relations as a “comprehensive strategic partnership,” versus the “extensive strategic partnership” between Vietnam and Japan, or the “comprehensive partnership” between Vietnam and the US, suggests an apparent order of influence of these powers over Vietnam.

Vietnam’s cautious response could also be a function of its ambivalence about the resident power and security commitment of the US in the region, which is informed by its own historical experience. American abandonment had left South Vietnam helpless in their battle

against China over the Paracel islands in 1974. Meanwhile, Hanoi's alliance with far-afield Soviet Union in the 1980s brought on disastrous outcomes for the country, including hostilities with China, and over a decade of international isolation. The idiom "distant water will not quench the fire nearby" has since made its way into Vietnam's strategic parlance. Therefore, unless and until China infringes upon Vietnam's core interests in a forceful way, for instance invading Vietnam-occupied islands in the South China Sea, maintaining good relations with Beijing still trumps all other considerations.

The specific circumstances that lead to the use of force and the proportionality of the use of force, *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*, would also inform Vietnam's responses to some extent. For example, in the event of a Taiwan conflict, is China provoked by Taiwan's declaration of independence? In the East China Sea, does China's hostility spiral from an incident out of miscalculation or is it intended as an act of war in the first place? If it is a miscalculation, have the parties involved taken proactive measures to de-escalate tensions? The scope and intensity of the armed attack—whether it is a naval blockade, or an occupation of an offshore island or an all-out invasion—and the extent of the US military involvement in these contingencies would also influence the considerations of the Vietnamese leadership as they calibrate their response. However, it is argued that these factors would not fundamentally alter the general direction of Vietnam's strategic choices.

### **Preventive Diplomacy: The Only Hope?**

Vietnam has and will continue to engage in preventive diplomacy to lower the risks of misunderstandings, miscalculations, and conflicts over the flashpoints in Northeast Asia.

While it maintains robust economic engagement with Taiwan, Vietnam is emphatic about its adherence to the one-China policy and urges Taiwan not to provoke China by declaring independence. Like other ASEAN member states, Vietnam supports improvement of cross-Strait relations which will in turn relieve China's pressure on Hanoi's Taiwan policy. According to a study on Taiwan-Southeast Asia relations, when cross-Strait relations are improved, Taiwan's relations with Southeast Asian countries also improve. Conversely, "[tense] cross-Strait relations forced Southeast Asian countries to side with China" due to more intense Chinese scrutiny and pressure.<sup>20</sup>

For the Senkaku Islands dispute, it is hopeful that Japan's military power—together with its alliance with the US and its ever-growing security partnerships with India and Australia—will continue to have a deterrent effect on China. As one of the most forward-leaning Southeast Asian countries to root for America's offshore balancing role in Asia, Vietnam is arguably a quiet supporter of US-led unilateral coalitions such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or Quad) and the Australia-United Kingdom-United States defence pact (AUKUS).<sup>21</sup> According to the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute's 2020 State of Southeast Asia Survey (SSEA)—a barometer of the region's foreign policy establishments on regional affairs—Vietnam and the Philippines displayed the highest level of strategic comfort with the Quad, with 65.8 percent and 70.8 percent of their respective respondents thinking that the Quad has a positive impact on regional security.<sup>22</sup> In the SSEA 2022 edition, 46.5 percent of Vietnamese respondents believed that AUKUS will help balance China's growing military power—after only Singapore (50.9 percent) and the Philippines (60 percent).<sup>23</sup> However, it is important to note that Vietnam's quiet support for American military presence in the region's maritime domain is mainly intended to counterbalance China's growing power projection in the South China Sea. In the event of an armed conflict over Taiwan or the East China Sea, it

remains unthinkable that Vietnam would accommodate any request from the US and its allies to provide logistical support for their military operations. Instead, Hanoi would exercise extra caution and strict neutrality to avoid antagonising China.

Another pathway of preventive diplomacy for Hanoi is through ASEAN-led mechanisms. Vietnam has actively supported the participation of all major powers in the regional multilateral outfits, including the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM-Plus) and Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). Through these institutions, ASEAN can exercise its diplomatic leverage and create a situation of complex interdependency to mitigate the risk of great power conflicts. In the latest Taiwan Strait crisis following the visit by the US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi to Taipei, ASEAN has issued a strongly worded—yet strictly neutral—statement that calls for “maximum restraint, refrain from provocative action” and indicates ASEAN’s willingness to facilitate peaceful dialogue between all parties.<sup>24</sup> Although ASEAN has little leverage to influence the dynamics in these flashpoints, its voice would amplify the international appeal for cool heads to prevail.

## Conclusion

An open conflict in the East China Sea or the Taiwan Strait would seriously undermine the peaceful regional environment and complicate Vietnam’s relations with its most important economic and security partners. These situations would open a Pandora’s box and present impossible choices for Vietnam between China and Taiwan, China and Japan, and China and the US. Although maintaining good relations with China is arguably a *sine qua non* for Vietnam’s foreign policy, strong ties with Japan and the US have been critical to Hanoi’s efforts to enhance its comprehensive national power. Japan is Vietnam’s biggest infrastructure development partner while the US is its largest export market. Hanoi’s defence cooperation with Tokyo and Washington has also been on the upward trend, which is important for Vietnam’s deterrence against Chinese coercion in the South China Sea. Should a great power conflict break out in East Asia, Vietnam would find itself in a “damned if you do and damned if you don’t” situation: there would be no hiding from the opportunity cost to be incurred no matter how carefully Hanoi calibrates its position.

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# 11 Not the Deterrence You're Looking For: Indonesia and Northeast Asian Security

*Evan A. Laksmama*

What will Indonesia do if there is a conflict over the Taiwan Strait? Can Indonesia contribute to deter a regional aggression, and will it? The short answer is no. The long answer is maybe, but not in a way that many would hope for.

## **Wide-Ranging Interests**

First of all, while Indonesia occasionally pays attention to Northeast Asian security flashpoints—including the Taiwan Strait, the Senkakus, and the Korean peninsula—its strategic policymakers are uninvested in playing a significant role in any of them. These issues are not what they wake up every morning thinking about.

To be clear, there is significant interest in Taiwan; there are thousands of Indonesian students and workers there and Taipei has invested in projects employing thousands of Indonesians. It goes without saying that any regional conflict in Northeast Asia will undermine Indonesia's strategic interests. But there are at least a dozen other daily priorities—from pandemic recovery to great power politics—that come before these security concerns.

At best, Indonesia has relied on ASEAN-related mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum, East Asia Summit, and ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus as performative engagement tools. They give the impression of shaping the Northeast Asian security complex without putting in any strategic resources or capital to be impactful.

Additionally, Indonesia has focused on expanding economic ties with major and middle powers over the past two decades—China, the United States (US), Japan, Australia, and South Korea. This has contributed to an increasingly complex bilateral dependence—and by implication, strategic vulnerability. Indonesia's political and economic elite have been particularly dependent on some public goods and plenty of private benefits from China—which the pandemic has deepened.

More importantly, Indonesia's defence policy remains stuck at modernising aging equipment, rather than embracing full spectrum capability transformation. Indeed, Indonesia's defence policy for the past fifteen years has been guided by the so-called "Minimum Essential Force" (MEF) blueprint, a shopping list of items that would allow the military to complete its daily operational tasks, rather than deterring a future strategic challenge.

## **Incoherent Strategic Policymaking**

Secondly, Indonesia's strategic policymaking has become haphazard and incoherent under the current Widodo administration. President Joko Widodo does not seek to, nor is he particularly interested in, managing daily geopolitical policy challenges. Consequently, Indonesia's strategic policymakers tend to go about their own ways in responding to external challenges.

The defence ministry obsesses over the latest arms sales, while the foreign ministry can only offer normative statements or ASEAN-related options. Maritime law enforcement agencies, meanwhile, are seeking to expand their bureaucratic and budgetary spheres and have therefore, increasingly invested in publicly confronting operational challenges. These actors, however, do not always formulate and coordinate, let alone integrate, their policies and strategies. After all, there is no ‘strategic hub’ or National Security Council (NSC) equivalent under the president to do so.

In short, Indonesia does not have the strategic policy ecosystem and toolkits necessary, nor the political will to be entangled in the Northeast Asian security complex.

### **Anti-Access Deterrence?**

Finally, if there is any potential Indonesian ‘contribution’ to a general collective deterrence, it might have to be indirect at best. This can be seen in the small but growing discussion within Indonesia’s defence establishment over developing the country’s anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) strategy in the future.

Civilian analysts and some within the defence establishment have been debating in recent years about a replacement for the MEF framework. They have also been trying to renew the country’s revolutionary-era “Total People’s Defence” doctrine and the decades-old “Defence of Major Islands” strategy. Drawing lessons from how China and Russia have developed their anti-access warfare capabilities, they are interested in whether Indonesia be developing its own A2/AD.

Indonesia’s waterways and airspace would be critical arteries in any regional conflict involving China against the US and its allies. Given Indonesia’s professed need to stay neutral, some in Jakarta are wondering how it can secure the country’s waterways and airspace from being exploited by regional belligerents. There is a debate whether Indonesia should exercise a ‘wartime judgement’ to close off the two-way traffic across the archipelagic sea-lanes connecting the Indian Ocean to the First Island Chain, for example.

Anti-access warfare is, of course, more than just a defence procurement framework or even military strategy alone. It requires a holistic reorientation of strategic policy over a wide range of tools, from diplomatic to economic and military. But assuming Indonesia could develop the capabilities and infrastructure necessary to implement its own A2/AD, regional countries—both China and the US and its allies—might have to reassess any wartime scenarios that takes Indonesia’s absence for granted.

In other words, Indonesia’s future A2/AD capability might contribute towards ‘detering’ regional aggression, even if it is not directed specifically at China. Indonesian defence planners have also been intrigued by the prospect of developing a more limited A2/AD to deter China from encroaching into the North Natuna Sea. But for now, there is no serious indication how far the current administration is contemplating a wider anti-access strategy development.

### **Conclusion**

Indonesia is interested in paying close attention to Northeast Asian security flashpoints. But it

does not currently have the will or capability to significantly contribute to their management or strategic response. If Indonesia successfully develops and implements an A2/AD strategy in the future, then perhaps it could provide some indirect ‘armed neutrality’ deterrence over the use of its waterways and airspace. But for now, Northeast Asian policymakers would be safe in assuming that in any regional conflict involving major powers, Indonesia is off the board.

## 12 The Philippines and the Cross-Strait Flashpoint: Laws, Capabilities, and Outcomes<sup>1</sup>

*Julio S. Amador III*

The flashpoint in the Taiwan Strait region is emerging as a profound source of new instability between Northeast and Southeast Asia. This instability is both political and economic. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimates about 70 percent of global trade in terms of value is maritime trade, with 60 percent passing through Asia.<sup>2</sup> Maritime trade has slowed down in 2020 for most of the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but Asia continues to post high maritime trade activity.<sup>3</sup>

More than US\$3 trillion in trade passes through the South China Sea.<sup>4</sup> This important region branches out to two equally significant waterways—the Straits of Malacca in the south,<sup>5</sup> and the Taiwan Strait in the north.<sup>6</sup> If conflict were to erupt between China and Taiwan, the United States’ (US) alliance model in Asia would be tested at the seams and a variety of actors would be compelled to take action, including the Philippines. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) would also be keen to seek a peaceful conflict resolution. However, the extent of Chinese economic influence will also play an important role in shaping ASEAN’s response.

Keeping the waterways in the South China Sea, and by extension, the Taiwan Strait, free and navigable is an economic incentive for many, especially the Philippines, which maintains significant trade ties with its Northeast Asian neighbours.<sup>7</sup> As such, the question of whether or not Manila will be drawn into conflict over Taiwan will be dependent on three important factors. First, is the perception of Taiwan in the grand scheme of Philippine foreign policy. This will reflect the value that Manila places on the small island-nation and its willingness to be involved in a cross-Strait conflict. Additionally, a brief overview of cross-Strait relations will be made from the perceptions of Beijing, Taipei, Washington, and Manila. This paper will also provide an analysis of the Philippines’ military capacity and capability, which will serve as an indicator of how much assistance Manila could render during such a crisis. Lastly, the overall functionality of security partnerships and alliances in the regional security architecture will determine how much of a role Manila would play. Examining these three factors will provide greater insight as to whether the Philippines would be drawn into a cross-Strait conflict, should it occur in the near future.

### **How Taiwan is Viewed**

Different countries in the region all have varying perceptions on the status of Taiwan as a nation-state. This subject matter is rife with political-historical complexity since the end of the Second World War up til the present. The events of more than half a century have shaped the global narrative of Taiwan’s status as an independent country, and with it, other countries’ association with the small island. Today, the differing narratives on Taiwan’s status is still apparent in Beijing’s, Washington’s, and Taipei’s policies. The Philippines, on the other hand, finds itself in a unique position between this prevailing historical issue and its new geopolitical reality with China.

### *Beijing: Chinese Taipei*

The position of the People's Republic of China (PRC; China) over the Republic of China (ROC; Taiwan) is definitively summarised in the one-China principle where it does not diplomatically recognise Taiwan's sovereignty. This position stems from two legal bases—China's 1982 Constitution and its Anti-Secession Law.<sup>8</sup> The Preamble of the 1982 Constitution states:

Taiwan is part of the sacred territory of the People's Republic of China. It is the lofty duty of the entire Chinese people, including our compatriots in Taiwan, to accomplish the great task of reunifying the motherland.<sup>9</sup>

The Anti-Secession Law of 2005 is an operationalisation of the Constitution, criminalising arguments for Taiwanese independence and effectively labeling independence supporters as secessionists. This tactic, however, is aimed at the movement rather than the country itself, and is focused on stymying Taiwanese sovereignty.

Beijing recently celebrated the 40th anniversary of the very first message issued to Taiwanese sympathetic to China titled, "Letter to Compatriots in Taiwan."<sup>10</sup> Beijing has publicly stated that its position on Taiwan is non-negotiable.<sup>11</sup> It deems Taiwan as part of its territory and actively undertakes efforts to diplomatically isolate the island-nation.<sup>12</sup> Through its policies, it seeks to unite the island with the mainland by any means necessary.

### *Taiwan: An Independent Nation-State*

Taipei does not recognise Beijing as the true China, unlike how the latter sees the former as just a province. Perceptions among the local Taiwanese population has also evolved over time. Sympathy towards Beijing and reunification has been dwindling, while support for a distinct "Taiwanese" identity has been growing stronger over the years.<sup>13</sup>

The election of President Tsai Ing-wen in 2016, and her subsequent re-election in 2020, has underscored this trend. Now, more and more Taiwanese support independence and show a greater willingness to fight for it.<sup>14</sup> Recent polls now estimate more than 72 percent of Taiwanese are willing to fight if China attempts to seek reunification by force.<sup>15</sup> Because of Beijing's persistent attempts at isolating Taiwan and meddling in Taiwanese affairs, as well as its continued incursion into Taipei's air defence identification zone, locals now hold negative views of mainland China.<sup>16</sup>

The Tsai administration has pushed back against Beijing's coercive efforts to deter the home-grown independence movement, maintaining that only the Taiwanese people can determine their own future.<sup>17</sup> Likewise, President Tsai has publicly stated that while "[Taiwan] will not provoke disputes, and [will] exercise self-restraint...it does not mean that [Taiwan] will not counter."<sup>18</sup>

### *Washington: Taiwan As Leverage*

For Washington, Taiwan is an effective leverage against Beijing. The US formally recognises the PRC as the "sole legal government of China" while maintaining informal relations with Taiwan through the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act.<sup>19</sup> The law allows the US to establish informal ties in spite of the absence of official diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The US has

made good use of the disparate interpretations between Beijing and Taipei's understanding of "one China" of the 1992 Consensus, effectively allowing engagement with one and the other while maintaining a policy of strategic ambiguity over Taiwan.<sup>20</sup>

This strategic ambiguity has been used not just to quell concerns from both Beijing and Taipei,<sup>21</sup> but also to deter China from advancing on the island. The same policy is pursued by the Biden administration and "strategic clarity" over Taiwan remains off the table despite significant geopolitical shifts over the last decades.

### *Manila: Strategic Ambiguity in ROC-PRC Relations*

The Philippines' position on Taiwan is similar to that of Washington with a notable exception: limited engagement. Although Manila and Taipei hold an informal relationship, the Philippine government has strictly observed the one-China policy. A joint statement made in 2017 between Manila and Beijing reaffirms the commitments to observe and uphold the principle.<sup>22</sup> An internal memorandum made by the upper echelons of the Philippine executive branch has directed all government agencies to comply with the one-China policy while maintaining unofficial people-to-people relations with Taiwan.<sup>23</sup>

This is explained by the Duterte administration's relatively cordial ties with Beijing and not discounting the economic gravitas Beijing holds in the region.<sup>24</sup> For this reason, Manila's economic and cultural ties with Taipei has remained informal and relatively conservative. In 2016, President Tsai Ing-wen stated that it would prioritise ties with the Philippines in its "New Southbound Policy," covering cooperation in areas like trade and investment, agri- and aquaculture, fisheries, small-medium enterprises (SMEs), information and communications technology (ICT), climate change, education, and culture.<sup>25</sup>

The ever-looming tensions between China and Taiwan remains a hotly contested issue in the Philippines. In December 2021, President Rodrigo Duterte laid out his government's position on the issue stating that the Philippines would remain neutral if a cross-Strait conflict erupts.<sup>26</sup> This pronouncement, however, did not account for the strategic importance that the cross-Strait region has for the West. The Philippines, an important regional ally of the US, cannot easily renege on its security commitments should Washington deem a Chinese invasion of Taiwan a threat and call upon Manila to participate in deterring that threat. Manila's security commitments with Washington, i.e., the 1951 Mutual Defence Treaty, the 1998 Visiting Forces Agreements, and the 2014 Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement, will all be potentially activated in the event of a regional conflict, especially because Taiwan and the Philippines share a very close maritime border.<sup>27</sup>

### **Military Capacity of the Philippines**

The Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) has an estimated strength of 143,000 active personnel, and was ranked by 51st among 140 countries in terms of military strength in the 2022 Global Firepower report.<sup>28</sup> However, the legal limits of the Philippine Constitution towards warfare, on top of its already muddled priorities, will likely make for a limited response in the event of a conflict. Article 2, Section 2 of the 1987 Constitution states that the Philippines "renounces war as an instrument of national policy."<sup>29</sup>

Be that as it may, the Philippines remains committed to ensuring "minimum credible deterrence."<sup>30</sup> To achieve this, the AFP's fifteen-year modernisation program that started in

2012, is set to continue until 2027 under the Revised Armed Forces Modernization Act.<sup>31</sup> There is also keener attention to external defence planning and acquisitions.

The Philippine Navy continues to acquire submarine equipment such as the Spike-ER (extended range) surface-to-surface missile system, the AgustaWestland AW-159 Wildcat, anti-submarine warfare capable helicopters as well as Hanwha Techwin amphibious assault vehicles (AAVs), among others.<sup>32</sup> Some acquisitions are specifically meant to deter Chinese aggression. Such assets include the acquisition of the Indian-made BrahMos medium-range ramjet supersonic cruise missiles.<sup>33</sup> The BrahMos project is worth almost US\$375 million (around PHP19 billion).<sup>34</sup> More recent additions include four brand new Cessna 172S Skyhawk Trainer Aircraft donated by the US<sup>35</sup> and Black Hawk combat utility helicopters procured from Poland worth US\$624 million (PHP32 billion).<sup>36</sup>

However, the security umbrella of the Philippines faces several challenges. The military modernisation program as a whole has come under scrutiny, since funding for the program is primarily aimed at equalising the force branches rather than a genuine issues-based upgrade of capabilities.<sup>37</sup> Asset acquisition is but one aspect of the modernisation thrust. The Philippines has not prioritised the development of other systems necessary to effectively use its assets—an example would be the various technological needs to maximise the use of the BrahMos missiles.<sup>38</sup> Other modernisation problems include misplaced security priorities, lack of resources, ever-shifting developments in the political environment, and the onset of non-traditional threats such as the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, addressing land-centric internal threats appears to remain a major strategic priority for the AFP. In his last State of the Nation Address in 2021, President Rodrigo Duterte downplayed the potential of a conflict with China, focusing instead on internal issues.<sup>40</sup> In 2019, the Philippine government committed to undertaking a “Whole-of-Nation approach” to resolve the country’s decades-long communist insurgency.<sup>41</sup> This effort was further emphasised by Lieutenant General Andres Centino, who in his first directive as the AFP Chief of Staff, pledged to bring an end to local armed conflict before the end of President Duterte’s term in June 2022.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, the AFP has shown signs that it is revamping its strategic outlook and posture. The Philippine Navy is slowly incorporating and implementing the archipelagic coastal defence paradigm.<sup>43</sup> This was advocated by the Philippine Navy as early as 2013 but has only recently been implemented. The turn to archipelagic coastal defence will effectively impact and modify the force structure and capability development not just of its ground forces (i.e., the Philippine Marine Corps), but of the entire AFP as an organisation. This development comes at the height of geopolitical uncertainties stemming from Beijing directly and the potential flashpoint between China and Taiwan to the north.

## **Views on Alliance Roles**

The overall functionality of security alliances and partnerships in the regional security architecture will determine how much of a role Manila would play. The Philippine alliance with the US has served both states operationally and strategically since its inception.<sup>44</sup> The alliance’s resilience in recent years owes to its embedded nature seen in the networks and linkages that survive political turbulence, from both within the US and the Philippines.<sup>45</sup> But there are certain expectations and standards that have to be reached in order for this alliance to flourish.<sup>46</sup>

Should the Philippines be dragged into a cross-Strait conflict, the US will expect support. The extent of such support may be limited. The Philippines could, at best, provide defensive, deterrent, and medical aid capabilities, but not offensive ones. It would send a large force whereas its more offensive forces would be kept closer to home primarily due to domestic constraints including the constitutional limits on waging war, the Philippine government's China policy, and the persisting South China Sea dilemma on the Code of Conduct.

The balancing act conducted by the Duterte administration has resulted in closer ties with China; one that China will not want to jeopardise if it means to keep the Philippines from becoming a US ally in the vein of South Korea or Japan. Beijing will be cautious not to allow the conflict to spill over into the northern regions of the Philippines. Such aggression would, at the least, trigger a negative response from the Philippines, and carry the risk of alienating all of ASEAN. In addition, given how Southeast Asian countries have remained steadfast to their long-established principles of respecting other countries' sovereignty and not resorting to force to resolve disputes, Manila is unlikely to want to deviate from these principles by getting involved in a Taiwan Strait conflict.

### **Will the Philippines Be Drawn Into a Cross-Strait Conflict?**

In summary, the likelihood of the Philippines being drawn into a cross-Strait conflict is low, at least in terms of offensive commitments. This is primarily due to three important factors. First, is Manila's policy of maintaining friendly and cordial ties with China, which includes a strict adherence to upholding the one-China policy. Indeed, should a conflict arise, whether this be through the US activating treaty obligations or due to a spillover, the Philippines will be hesitant to jeopardise its economic ties with China.

Second, the Philippines lacks the capabilities to respond to Chinese aggression head-on, as its priority has been on self-defence. Despite the aggressive modernisation of its armed forces, its efforts have been hampered by competing priorities. In addition, the Philippines is constitutionally prevented from committing to offensive measures that may bring about loss of life or may be tantamount to a war. This is likely to drive Manila to champion diplomatic and peaceful resolutions at all cost.

Third, any significant action on Manila's part will need the support of the US and its allies. If a cross-Strait conflict spills over to the northern borders of the Philippines, potentially threatening the lives of civilian and military personnel, Manila (or Washington) can activate their security pact—the 1951 Mutual Defence Treaty.<sup>47</sup> Classifying these spillovers as an “armed attack in the Pacific area” activates the treaty and compels both Manila and Washington to hold joint consultations on taking the next steps.<sup>48</sup> The necessity of defending Philippine territory, and all those within its jurisdiction, bears constitutional weight and merit before the 1987 Constitution and international law as this does not outrightly seek war or transgress another country's sovereignty. However, this course of action will not be immediate as the Philippines will likely be hesitant to put the lives of its people at risk by sending assets into the region.

In the event that the Philippines does respond by providing assistance to its alliance and security partners in the region, China may retaliate economically, whether through trade disruptions or through endangering Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) and nationals in China *and* Taiwan.<sup>49</sup> The Philippines will prioritise its OFWs. One of the three Philippine

foreign policy pillars is the safety of Filipinos overseas. Manila will undoubtedly spearhead initiatives to denounce the escalation of conflict between China and Taiwan and would seek to secure the safety of the more than 150,000 Filipino diasporas living in Taiwan by tapping on its official channels with Beijing and Taipei.<sup>50</sup> If Manila should positively respond to requests to help Taipei, Washington must provide more asymmetric defence capabilities to its Philippine ally.

For the Philippines to receive more assistance, Manila can actively implement its logistical agreements with Washington, chiefly its 1998 Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) and its 2014 Enhanced Defence Cooperation Agreement, to bring Filipinos home. The VFA, for example, has helped the Philippines in its dire moments of need (i.e., disaster risk response and humanitarian aid).<sup>51</sup>

A cross-Strait conflict between Taiwan and China represents a direct confrontation between democratic and non-democratic forces. The Philippines finds itself in a similar position with Beijing on the South China Sea dispute. The endgame lies in the risk that comes with the erosion of international rules and norms in the region—as recently seen in Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine—an unviable outcome for the Philippines, which deems international law a fundamental law of the land. For Manila, upholding its commitments is constitutionally binding, and it will, in its best abilities, assist countries concerned to stave off conflict escalation. But if the Philippines does rise to the occasion and decides to meet the offensive needs of Taiwan, or its regional allies, in the event a conflict breaks out, it is because it only sought to uphold its commitments and obligations before international law, more than anything.

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## 13 Taiwan's Rising Profile in Australia's Defence and Security

*Euan Graham*

Australia's political and military interest in Taiwan is intensifying under the influence of China's increasingly threatening behaviour, including its openly hostile treatment of Australia. Taiwan is also rising up the agenda of the Australia-United States (US) alliance and a deepening Australia-Japan security partnership.

### **Past Ambiguity**

Taiwan did not feature regularly in Australian defence and security policy debates until the last couple of years. Whenever Taiwan surfaced previously, it did so episodically, mainly on narrow questions concerning Canberra's alliance commitments and whether the 1951 ANZUS mutual defence treaty with the US legally obliged Canberra to commit military forces to support the US in case of an armed attack by China on Taiwan. Australian academics have reflected this somewhat defensive mindset, adopting a rather legalistic approach when considering Australia's hypothetical role in a Taiwan conflict.<sup>1</sup> This bears comparison with an earlier debate, around 2013, in regard to Australia's policy dilemma in case of an East China Sea contingency between China and Japan that also triggered US involvement.<sup>2</sup>

In 2004, Australia's then-Foreign Minister Alexander Downer was criticised after he implied that Australia was not automatically bound by its bilateral defence treaty with the US to join a US-led military intervention to defend Taiwan.<sup>3</sup> This was no more than a statement of fact based upon the wording of the ANZUS treaty.<sup>4</sup> But it was noteworthy coming publicly from the incumbent foreign minister of an Australian conservative government, and during a visit to China. Downer's comment reportedly drew an American diplomatic response,<sup>5</sup> but did not cause serious friction within the alliance because of Washington's preoccupation with, and Canberra's strong support for, the global war against terrorism, as underscored by Prime Minister John Howard's invocation of the ANZUS treaty in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks.<sup>6</sup> US-China relations were also on a congruently positive track at the time. Yet Downer's remark about Taiwan was a signal of Australia's shift towards a more diplomatically 'hedged' position between China and the US, during a period when Australia's trade with China was growing rapidly.<sup>7</sup>

In the ensuing decade, Australia's relations with China deepened further, propelled by the exponential growth of Australia's exports to China. The high-point in Australia-China bilateral relations arrived around 2014–15. President Xi Jinping addressed the Australian federal parliament on his state visit in November 2014. Beijing and Canberra signed a bilateral free trade agreement (FTA), which entered into force in December 2015, while Australia upgraded its bilateral relations with China to the status of a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

## Greater Clarity

Downer's deliberate hedging of Australia's alliance commitments in case of a conflict over Taiwan contrasts starkly with the position of Australia's conservative government in November 2021, when Australia's former Defence Minister, Peter Dutton, said it was "inconceivable" that Australia would not join the US to defend Taiwan from an attack by China "if the US chose to take that action."<sup>8</sup> This evolution in Australia's position on Taiwan, from strategic ambiguity to something more like clarity—at least in terms of Canberra's alliance commitments—can be largely explained by the downward spiral in Australia-China relations since 2016, especially after China targeted Australia with an overtly punitive trade campaign during 2020–21.<sup>9</sup> Beijing's campaign was nominally a response to the Australian government's April 2020 call for an international inquiry into the origins and initial handling of the coronavirus outbreak. But in reality, China was punishing the Australian government for its various 'push-back' policies since 2017. When Chinese officials in Australia leaked a list of fourteen grievances against Australia in late 2020, it included a specific complaint about "incessant wanton interference" in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Taiwan, among Beijing's numerous complaints about Australia's perceived hostile stance towards China.<sup>10</sup>

The new Labour government in Australia, in place since the general election of May 2022, has retained the same basic China policy settings from its predecessor. When China launched missiles across the Taiwan Strait in August 2022, Foreign Minister Penny Wong branded Beijing's actions as "disproportionate and destabilising."<sup>11</sup> Yet, Taiwan continues to be approached cautiously and indirectly as a policy issue in Australia. It is still largely perceived through the lens of the Australia-US alliance, and weighed against the risk of "war with China."<sup>12</sup> What is missing is a direct consideration of Taiwan as it relates to Australia's broader national interests, including Taiwan's role within the 'international rules-based order,' as a stable, parliamentary democracy (with a population similar in size to that of Australia), as an economy that constitutes Australia's twelfth-largest trading partner, and as a critical source of advanced technology for Australia and its allies. China-Taiwan diplomatic rivalry has long been present as a geopolitical risk factor in the Southwest Pacific—a strategically important sub-region for Australia. Canberra officially takes no position on the Pacific island countries' respective diplomatic orientation towards Taipei or Beijing. But it is increasingly concerned about Beijing's growing political influence in the sub-region and potential interest in a military presence there.<sup>13</sup>

## Low Knowledge Base

If Australia's Taiwan debate remains somewhat under-developed, this is because the island was virtually absent from Australia's public discourse for decades, in deference to Beijing's "one China" sensitivities and the somewhat myopic attention devoted to China by successive Australian governments and Australia's business elites. Australia's 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper mentions Taiwan only once, via a passing reference to the Taiwan Strait, not as a political or even geographical entity in its own right.<sup>14</sup> Until recently, Canberra approached Taiwan with an abundance of caution because its overriding priority was to avoid upsetting Beijing.

This reticence is now changing in step with the greater willingness demonstrated by the US to engage Taiwan within the constraints of its one-China policy, which is similar to that of Australia.<sup>15</sup> Canberra is also showing more inclination to identify direct connections between

Taiwan's security and Australia. As a result of the downward spiral in Canberra's relations with Beijing, there is no longer a political taboo attached to raising Taiwan in public. Fear of offending Beijing has lost its sting for Australia because China froze high-level contacts for more than three years. There have been limited attempts to open up foreign-policy space for engagement between Australia and Taiwan, including by Canberra's recent representatives in Taipei. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute, notably hosted an online address by Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wei, in 2020.<sup>16</sup> Some commentators have called for an expansion of economic relations and civil-society ties.<sup>17</sup> However, official caution still remains: currently there does not appear to be any appetite in Canberra to pursue a Taiwan-Australia FTA.

Prominent Australian voices continue to advocate for greater distancing from the US and caution towards Taiwan. Speaking in November 2021, former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating (1991–96) asserted that Taiwan is not a vital Australian interest and that Canberra bears no obligations to defend it under the ANZUS treaty. Keating has gone as far as to assert that “the whole world regards China and Taiwan as one country” and urged Taipei to submit to Beijing's “one country, two systems” terms for reunification.<sup>18</sup> One of Australia's best-known international relations academics, Professor Hugh White, has consistently advocated for Australia to shun military involvement in Taiwan, arguing that the US and its allies would be best served by reaching a pre-emptive accommodation with China.<sup>19</sup> Such opinions no longer reflect the mainstream, however.

Meanwhile, Taiwan is steadily rising up the policy agenda of the US-Australia alliance. The two most recent ‘2+2’ joint statements from the annual meetings between foreign and defence ministers, in 2020 and 2021, have referenced Taiwan to an unusual degree, including a commitment “to strengthen ties with Taiwan, which is a leading democracy and a critical partner for both countries.”<sup>20</sup> According to media reports in April 2021, US and Australian senior officials have engaged on joint strategic planning on Taiwan.<sup>21</sup> This suggests intensified pressure by the Biden administration on its key allies in the region, as Washington seeks to implement a vaguely defined policy of “integrated deterrence,” but with Taiwan clearly uppermost amongst its regional defence concerns.

### **Australia-Japan Cooperation**

A similar dynamic with regard to Taiwan applies to recent joint ministerial statements released by Australia and Japan.<sup>22</sup> Australia's defence and security relationship with Japan has long been seen in the US as the most promising candidate for “cross-bracing” between Washington's most important US defence allies in the Pacific. There is a well-established trilateral framework in place for Australia-Japan-US defence cooperation. Japan's symmetry to Australia as a close US ally, its value as a key economic partner of Australia and converging threat perceptions in Canberra and Tokyo towards Beijing's strategic intentions have combined to make it Australia's closest Asian partner. Canberra and Tokyo have upgraded their bilateral security relations at a fitful rather than a spectacular pace. Setbacks have occurred, such as Australia's rejection of Japan's bid to design its future submarines, in 2016. Even after the existing bilateral Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) was upgraded in 2017,<sup>23</sup> it took five years for Tokyo and Canberra to conclude their Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA), in large part because of Australia's concerns about capital punishment in Japan. The RAA was finally signed in early 2022.<sup>24</sup> But it still requires ratification by both countries' parliaments before it can enter into force.

The RAA will eventually have clear, practical significance in a Taiwan context. Once in force, it will make it much easier for Australian Defence Force (ADF) platforms and personnel to enter Japan systematically, without the need for ad hoc diplomatic clearances, thus enabling a smoother military response to any developing security crisis across the Taiwan Strait. Forward deploying ADF assets to Japan could be a useful deterrent signal during a more serious repeat of the Taiwan crisis of August 2022.<sup>25</sup> If Australia decides to send a contingent of forces to assist the US in an armed conflict over Taiwan, they will be able to refuel, repair and rearm at Japanese or American military bases.<sup>26</sup> Japan is significantly closer to Taiwan than Guam, and much closer than Australia. Under the RAA, its value as a rear area in a Taiwan scenario will be broadly similar, in legal and military terms, to a Korean Peninsula contingency (which is governed by separate set of specific basing access arrangements).<sup>27</sup> However, this does not mean that Japan would be a safe rear area during a Taiwan conflict, since much of Japan falls within tactical missile range of the Chinese mainland, as well as for ships and aircraft of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) deployed near Taiwan.

One option under the RAA would be for Australia to preposition equipment and munitions in Japan, given that US and Japanese weapons stocks could be in short supply during a conflict. Any ADF physical contribution would probably be concentrated in naval and air platforms and under US operational command. Given Australia's high level of inter-operability with US forces, as repeatedly demonstrated in the Middle East, even a modest contingent of Australian combat aircraft and surface warfare ships would be seen as a desirable contribution by US commanders. Australia's advanced airborne battle management and electronic warfare capabilities would act as force multipliers. Australia's navy and air force could also play supportive military roles. Australia's defence acquisitions since the July 2020 Defence Strategic Update (DSU) are designed to boost the ADF's lethality, including in roles such as maritime strike that would be central to repulsing a PLA invasion or blockade effort. The DSU has refocused Australian defence planning away from the Middle East to Australia's "immediate region,"<sup>28</sup> but deterring China is clearly a continuing focus for alliance military planning and, arguably, Australia's future defence acquisitions, including nuclear-powered submarines.<sup>29</sup>

## Conclusion

In sum, Australia is demonstrating greater interest in Taiwan's security, including crisis planning and preparations for a potential military contribution to any future US-led defence of the island against China. The Australia-Japan defence and security partnership is directly relevant to any Taiwan scenario, and reflects an alignment of threat perceptions between Canberra and Tokyo, as well as the importance of their trilateral cooperation with the US. Australia needs to move beyond its low base of knowledge and habits of caution about engaging Taiwan, which tend to corral the policy debate around alliance considerations, inhibiting a broad-based, first-principles assessment of Taiwan's importance to Australia's security and its potential as a partner below the level of state-to-state relations.

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## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Nick Bisley and Brendan Taylor, “Conflict in the East China Sea: Would ANZUS apply?” *Australia-China Relations Institute*, November 2014, <https://www.uts.edu.au/sites/default/files/18924-acri-anzus-booklet-web.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> “Downer denies Taiwan blunder,” *The Age*, August 20, 2004, <https://www.theage.com.au/national/downer-denies-taiwan-blunder-20040820-gdyho5.html>

<sup>4</sup> “Security Treaty between Australia, New Zealand and the United States of America,” opened for signature September 1, 1951, *Australasian Legal Information Institute, Australian Treaty Series 1952 No. 2*, <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/treaties/1952/2.html>

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<sup>7</sup> “Australia’s Exports to China, 2001-20110,” *Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australian Government*, December 21, 2012, p. 2, <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/australias-exports-to-china-2001-2011.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> “‘Inconceivable’ Australia would not join U.S. to defend Taiwan—Australian defence minister,” *Reuters*, November 13, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/inconceivable-australia-would-not-join-us-defend-taiwan-australian-defence-2021-11-12/>

<sup>9</sup> John Lee, “How China Overreached in Australia,” *Hudson Institute*, August 29, 2021, <https://www.hudson.org/research/17228-how-china-overreached-in-australia#>.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Hurst, “China’s infamous list of grievances with Australia ‘should be longer than 14 points’, top diplomat says,” *The Guardian*, November 19, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2021/nov/20/chinas-infamous-list-of-grievances-with-australia-should-be-longer-than-14-points-top-diplomat-says>

<sup>11</sup> Penny Wong, “Cross-Strait tensions,” *Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australian Government*, August 5, 2022, <https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/cross-strait-tensions>

<sup>12</sup> Natasha Kassam and Mark Harrison, “Stoking fears of war could serve China’s goals. Australian policy needs rethinking,” *The Guardian*, May 3, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/03/stoking-fears-of-war-could-serve-chinas-goals-australian-policy-needs-rethinking>

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<sup>15</sup> Clive Williams, “Does Australia have a ‘one China’, ‘two Chinas’, or ‘one China, one Taiwan’ policy—or all three?” *The Strategist*, August 2, 2021, <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/does-australia-have-a-one-china-two-chinas-or-one-china-one-taiwan-policy-or-all-three/>

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<sup>17</sup> For example, John Fitzgerald, “What Australia must do next on Taiwan,” *Australian Financial Review*, August 8, 2022, <https://www.afr.com/policy/economy/what-australia-must-do-next-on-taiwan-20220807-p5b7yh>

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<sup>21</sup> “US, Australia discuss Taiwan defense,” *Taipei Times*, April 2, 2021, [taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2021/04/02/2003754939](https://www.taipeitimes.com/News/front/archives/2021/04/02/2003754939)

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- <sup>22</sup> Miki Okuyama, “Taiwan features in Japan-Australia 2+2 statement,” *Nikkei Asia*, June 10, 2021, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Taiwan-features-in-Japan-Australia-2-2-statement>
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- <sup>25</sup> Because Australia is a UN “sending state” under the 1954 UN Command Status of Forces Agreement, the ADF has been able to make use of a number of US bases in Japan, but such deployments must be demonstrably related to Korean Peninsula security.
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## 14 Deterrence in Northeast Asia: No Indian Role

*Kanti Bajpai*

Can India strengthen deterrence in Northeast Asia to prevent mainland China from attacking Taiwan? Given its own military difficulties with the mainland, Delhi certainly wants to check Chinese power and any aggressive actions by the People's Liberation Army (PLA). However, India will not commit to or get involved in any military operations in Northeast Asia, for at least three reasons: (i) India's support of a one-China policy, its own use of force to integrate 'renegade' provinces, and the fate of Indian students in China; (ii) Delhi's fear of war with China and its limited military capabilities; and (iii) its aversion to alliances and coalition defence.

### **One-China Policy, India's Use of Force, and Domestic Constraints**

India has always supported a one-China policy, and its own history after 1947 is one of violent means to integrate those it feels are part of India. The two policies have combined make it difficult for India to justify to the world at large, but crucially to its own people, the credibility of opposing a Chinese attack on Taiwan.

India was one of the earliest countries to support a one-China policy, and it has stuck to this position despite conflict with China. At least part of its commitment arises from the fear that China could question India's integration of various populations and could aid insurgencies in India's northeast states adjoining China. Indian wariness in opposing a Chinese invasion of Taiwan arises also from its own history of forcible integration. In the aftermath of partition, India used police and military actions to integrate Junagadh (1947), Hyderabad (1948), and Goa (1960). In the case of Kashmir, it sent troops to the state in 1947–48 after the state was invaded by tribal groups from Pakistan and the ruler of the state acceded to India. And in 1975, it absorbed Sikkim (by peaceful means).

Any Indian decision to get into a fight with China must consider another domestic factor. Thousands of Indian students are enrolled in Chinese universities, and this will likely be the case for many years ahead given the lack of high-quality, affordable educational opportunities in India. Delhi will worry that these students could become hostages if India were to get into a serious conflict with China. The pressures on Delhi to protect the lives and interests of Indian students abroad are substantial and growing. India has mounted large-scale operations to rescue Indians abroad—Libya (2011) and Ukraine (2022), come to mind. As a result of COVID-19, thousands of Indian students at Chinese universities were unable to return to their programmes due to Beijing's restrictions. Despite the fracas at Galwan in 2020 and the continuing tensions with China, Delhi was forced to ask Beijing to allow these students to return. It is undignified for India to plead with China for their return, but Delhi does not want to alienate domestic opinion by adopting a stiff-necked posture on the issue.

### **Fear of War with China and Limited Force Projection**

India does not want to get into a fight with China on land or sea. Indian military involvement in Northeast Asia would be in a maritime role. It could ferry supplies to United States (US)

and allied forces operating in the area. An Indian naval presence in the South China Sea could serve as a distraction to the PLA Navy (PLAN) and help US and allied forces by drawing away Chinese boats. The Indian navy could also be asked to choke the Malacca Straits.

Is India capable of these kinds of assignments, and what are the risks to it? India's ability to project force beyond the Malacca Straits is limited—a point that the Indian Navy has publicly acknowledged. It may not therefore be able to sustain even a supply role. The risk for India even in the passive role of deploying its navy as a feint is that it would be drawn into hostilities by a Chinese attack on its naval forces. As for choking off traffic through the Malacca Strait, India probably cannot do this by itself. In any case, a full-blown conflict in the Taiwan Strait would likely stop commercial maritime traffic through Malacca (which private operators would risk going into a war zone?) and there would be little therefore for the Indian navy to do.

Assuming India can indeed play a military role, there is the danger that Indian involvement at sea could trigger a Chinese attack in the Himalaya. Given China's superior infrastructure in Tibet, its command of the heights, and its strength in numbers and equipment (and advanced military technologies), India will be hard pressed to stop a Chinese advance. Also, Beijing could instigate Islamabad to open a second front against India. Indian forces will have their hands full enough in dealing with a solo Chinese attack; a two-front war will be perilous. The Indian army has suggested that it is prepared to deal with a “two and a half front war” (i.e., China, Pakistan, and an insurgency at home). That it can do so is highly debatable given Indian logistical weaknesses. All major Indian weapon systems are foreign, many being Russian, and its repair and maintenance capabilities as well as ammunition supplies are constrained by the lack of an indigenous production base.

The implication of India's inability to project force and to deal with a strong Chinese land attack is that no Indian leader will risk his or her political survival on confronting China in what would be a ‘war of choice.’

### **Aversion to Alliances**

India does not do coalition defence, that is, alliances. This is partly due to a genuine military worry: Delhi fears being chain-ganged into a fight that is out of theatre and not directly related to its own defence. Even more importantly, its reluctance relates to political culture and national identity. Indians across the partisan divide agree that they do not want their country to be part of an Asian NATO. As a former colonial country, India deeply values its autonomy, and any tethering of itself to an alliance would suggest loss of independent decision-making. At a deeper level, India's self-image is that of a great civilization on the verge of recovering its greatness, and it is uncomfortable with the role of a junior partner, particularly to a Western state.

At the same time, India is sceptical about the US (and others) coming to its aid in a war against China—and therefore it feels no pressure to reciprocate. Realistically, only the US can make a military difference to India's defence. In the 1962 India-China war, the US air force flew supply missions to Indian troops at the front. As the war turned increasingly against India, Delhi requested the US to transfer military aircraft that the Indian air force would use to attack Chinese ground forces. Before the US could take a decision on the request, Beijing called a halt to the war. During the war, the US sent its carrier, the *USS*

*Enterprise*, into the Bay of Bengal in a symbolic show of support. The US promised subsequently to sell arms to India.

However, despite cooperation in 1962, Delhi came to view Washington as an unreliable partner. US arms to India after 1962 stopped in 1965 during the India-Pakistan war when the US became unhappy that its arms might be used by the two combatants against each other. In 1971, during the India-Pakistan conflict over Bangladesh, the US sided with Pakistan and sent the *USS Enterprise* into the Bay of Bengal, this time against India. Also in 1971, just days before Henry Kissinger went to China, he assured India that the US would support it in a war against China. Soon after his return from Beijing, however, Kissinger told Delhi that Washington could no longer get involved in an India-China war. During much of the Cold War, the US was a close partner of Pakistan, and in the second half of the Cold War, of China as well—in effect, the US sided with India's most mortal enemies.

In the 1990s, relations with Washington improved, but India became one of the chief targets of US non-proliferation efforts. Despite a post-Cold War rapprochement and strategic convergence on the China threat in the 2000s, Delhi feels that the US has never quite delivered in terms of a crucial aspect of the relationship—advanced arms and technology transfers. In short, in the Indian strategic mind, the common thread running through the sixty years of India-US relations is that the US has seldom been on India's side and that it is a fickle partner (and not just to India).

While India is averse to coalition defence, it does value coalition diplomacy. It uses the Indo-Pacific/Quad grouping to enhance its bargaining position with China by suggesting that it will defect from a more neutral position between Beijing and Washington to join a US-led alliance if the Chinese push too hard. In essence, Delhi is signalling that it has powerful friends who could come to its aid *in extremis* (especially with weaponry and perhaps, in the wake of the Ukraine war, with economic sanctions). Its calculation is that the mere threat of Indian defection and third-party assistance to India will help deter China. In the Indian view, this threat to defect to a US-led alliance does not require India to commit anything to deterrence in Northeast Asia, nor does it require the US, Japan, and Australia to commit anything in advance to India's defence. That India *could* defect and that the US and its allies *could* come to India's aid is thought to be a sufficient deterrent to China.

In the event of sharpening conflict in the Taiwan Strait and actual hostilities, what would India's attitude be? Delhi's stand on the Ukraine war is indicative. In essence, India will be neutral on the prospect and actual occurrence of a Chinese attack on Taiwan. Delhi will decry worsening relations between the mainland and Taiwan, will avoid blaming Beijing altogether, and will voice worry over the possibility of a widening conflict involving the US, Japan, and Australia. In the United Nations, if it comes to resolutions and voting, Delhi will abstain. If China were to mobilise the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) grouping and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to side with it diplomatically, India would find itself in an awkward position and would most likely demur from going along with a criticism of Taiwan and the US-led coalition. The Indian media will be allowed to run a negative campaign against China (as long as it does not criticise India's policy in the conflict), but Delhi itself will be circumspect.

Militarily, the one thing India would likely do is to honour the logistics agreement with the US, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA). Both India and the US can invoke LEMOA to access each other's facilities. If US forces were to request access to

Indian facilities to refuel and to replenish other supplies during hostilities in Northeast Asia, India would find it almost impossible to refuse. However, even on LEMOA, everything depends on context—the circumstances leading up to the crisis and war. If Delhi decides that Taipei and Washington were provocative or escalatory, it might well renege on honouring a LEMOA request from the US. In addition, America’s fickleness in the past with India will be invoked to suggest that Delhi looks after its interests as does Washington.

## **Conclusion**

If Taipei, Tokyo, and Washington have any thought that India will be a military or even much of a diplomatic support in a Taiwan crisis and conflict, they should think again. Taiwanese, Japanese, and US forces will have to respond to the mainland on their own, backed most likely by Australia and perhaps by France, Germany, and the United Kingdom. India’s participation in the Indo-Pacific and Quad partnership is a cold-eyed one, and it does not imply Indian participation in a Taiwan conflict beyond some minimal ship-calling facilities at Indian ports—and even this is not certain.

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## Other CAG Publications

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- *Failure to launch? Indonesia against China's Grey Zone Tactics* by Evan Laksmana (IDSS Paper No.37, July 2022)
- *Remodelling Indonesia's Maritime Law Enforcement Architecture: Theoretical and Policy Considerations* by Evan Laksmana (Contemporary Southeast Asia 44(1), 2022)
- *India-Australia-Indonesia Maritime Partnership: Shared Challenges, Compelling Opportunities* by Premesha Saha, Natalie Sambhi, and Evan Laksmana (ORF, 2022)
- *A Fragile Fulcrum: Indonesia-U.S. Military Relations in the Age of Great-Power Competition* by Evan Laksmana (Asia Policy 16(4), October 2021)
- *Winning the Fight Taiwan Cannot Afford to Lose* by Drew Thompson (Strategic Forum, 2021)
- *Built for Trust, Not for Conflict: ASEAN Faces the Future* by Drew Thompson and Byron Chong (USIP Special Report 477, August 2020)
- *The Rise of Xi Jinping and China's New Era: Implications for the United States and Taiwan* by Drew Thompson (Issues & Studies: A Social Science Quarterly on China, Taiwan, and East Asian Affairs 56(1), March 2020)



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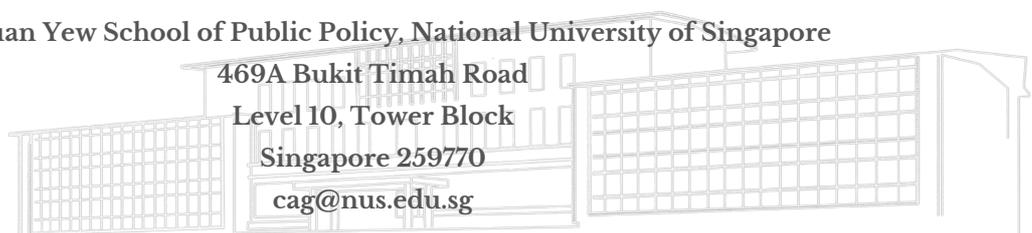
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