



**Università
di Genova**

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE POLITICHE
E INTERNAZIONALI

Corso di Laurea Magistrale in:
Relazioni Internazionali – Security Studies

**Central Role of Taiwan in Shaping the Indo-Pacific
Security Dynamics**

Security Studies

Relatore

Chiar.mo Prof. Fabrizio Coticchia

Candidata

Gloria Bellati

A.A 2024/2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	3
CHAPTER 1: THE INDO-PACIFIC AND THE SECURITY THEORIES	1
1.1. The Evolution of the Term «Indo-Pacific»	1
1.2. The security dilemma in the Taiwan Strait	4
1.3. The Evolution of the U.S. Strategy in the Indo-Pacific: From the Pivot to Asia to Integrated Deterrence	13
1.4. The Rise of «minilateralism»	17
CHAPTER 2: THE STRATEGY OF THE PEOPLES' REPUBLIC OF CHINA TOWARDS TAIWAN	21
2.1. The «Chinese Dream» and reunification as an existential objective of the Chinese Communist Party	21
2.2. The modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities.	29
2.3. Beyond kinetic conflict: operations in the “grey zone”, cognitive warfare, and cyber pressures.....	37
CHAPTER 3: TAIWAN RESILIENCE: ASYMMETRIC DEFENSE AND THE «SILICON SHIELD»	47
3.1. The Evolution of Taipei's Military Doctrine: The Overall Defense Concept and the «Porcupine Strategy»	47
3.2. Economic security as a deterrent: TSMC's global role and dependence on semiconductors.	53
3.3. The New Southbound Policy: Economic Diversification And Reduction of Vulnerability to Beijing.	56
CHAPTER 4: REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTORS	62
4.1. The Synchronization of Japan's Strategy with Taiwan: The Defence of the Sakishima Islands	62
4.2. The Australian dilemma: between economic dependence on China and a security alliance with the United States.....	67
4.3. The European Union and Italy in the Indo-Pacific: economic interests and the protection of freedom of navigation.	73
CONCLUSION	79
REFERENCES	81

INTRODUCTION

Over the past two decades, the progressive reorientation of the global strategic centre of gravity toward the Indo-Pacific has rendered the Taiwan Strait one of the most salient and volatile loci of great-power competition between the People's Republic of China and the United States. In this context, Taiwan's centrality transcends the strictly military domain and encompasses identity-related, technological, and economic dimensions which, taken together, contribute to recasting the traditional security dilemma between Beijing and Washington as a regional security spiral that increasingly entangles allies and partners. The evolution of U.S. strategy from an Asia-Pacific to an Indo-Pacific paradigm, the far-reaching military modernisation of the PRC, and Taipei's asymmetric resilience intersect with the growing strategic significance of semiconductor value chains, the proliferation of minilateral arrangements, and competing narratives of internal and external legitimacy.

Against this backdrop, the thesis investigates how Taiwan's positioning within the emerging Indo-Pacific architecture contributes to the transformation of the Sino-American security dilemma into a regionalised security spiral. More specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions: to what extent does Taiwan's strategic, economic, and identity-based centrality in the Indo-Pacific exacerbate or mitigate the dynamics of the security dilemma between China and the United States? How do the evolving strategies of Beijing, Taipei, and Washington interact with the agency of regional allies and partners in turning a bilateral dilemma into a wider regional security spiral? The core hypotheses advanced by the thesis are threefold. First, it posits that Taiwan's growing strategic centrality, particularly in the semiconductor sector, functions less as an absolute «shield» and more as a catalyst that heightens the stakes of great-power competition, thereby deepening the security dilemma. Second, it hypothesises that the shift from an Asia-Pacific to an Indo-Pacific framework, combined with the rise of strategic minilateralism, structurally favours the regionalisation of the security spiral by embedding the Taiwan question within a denser network of alignments and counter-alignments. Third, it contends that identity-based transformations in Taiwan, especially the consolidation of a distinct Taiwanese identity, act as a key ideational driver that reduces the feasibility of peaceful accommodation and increases the likelihood that coercive instruments will be privileged over cooperative ones.

At the theoretical level, the study mobilises realist approaches — in particular defensive and offensive realism — in conjunction with a constructivist lens, with the aim of capturing both

material power dynamics and the constitutive role of identity, historical discourse, and *status* representations in the production of (in)security in the Taiwan Strait. Methodologically, the research adopts an in-depth case study design, grounded in qualitative analysis of open-source material and official Chinese, Taiwanese, and U.S. documents, and supplemented by think-tank reports, wargaming studies, and longitudinal public opinion data.

The work is organised into four substantive chapters. The first reconstructs the genealogy of the Indo-Pacific concept and examines its implications for security theory and practice, with particular reference to the articulation of the security dilemma in the Taiwan Strait and the progressive reconfiguration of U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. The second chapter analyses the PRC's strategy toward Taiwan, situating it within the broader framework of the «Chinese Dream», the Chinese Communist Party's existential objective of reunification, and the modernisation of the People's Liberation Army, including its A2/AD capabilities and grey-zone operations. The third chapter turns to Taiwan's response, scrutinising the Overall Defense Concept, the porcupine strategy, the notion of the «silicon shield», and economic diversification initiatives such as the New Southbound Policy, conceived as instruments of deterrence and as mechanisms for the mitigation of structural vulnerabilities vis-à-vis Beijing. The fourth and final chapter explores the contribution of regional and extra-regional actors — in particular Japan, Australia, strategic minilaterals such as the Quad and AUKUS, and the European Union — to the transformation of the security dilemma into a regional spiral, thereby showing how the Taiwan case illuminates, beyond the Strait itself, the structural challenges to stability in the contemporary Indo-Pacific security order.

CHAPTER 1: THE INDO-PACIFIC AND THE SECURITY THEORIES

1.1. The Evolution of the Term «Indo-Pacific»

The concept of «Indo-Pacific» has transformed from a mere geographical label to a central strategic paradigm in international relations, reflecting the redefinition of global balances of power and the increasingly central role assumed by this area on the world stage¹. The term «Indo-Pacific» combines the Indian and the Pacific Oceans into a singular regional construct². Prior to the 18th century, the geopolitical concept of «Indo-Pacific» did not exist as a formal strategic or analytical category³. Nevertheless, the space that would later be conceptualized under this label was already deeply integrated through dense civilizational, commercial, and cultural linkages dominated by the Indian and Chinese worlds⁴. These two systems functioned as the main economic and demographic barycentre of pre-modern Asia, together accounting for more than half of global Gross Domestic Product (GDP)⁵. Their economic preponderance bolstered extensive networks of trade, migration, and political influence that connected the Indian Ocean and East Asian regions into a *de facto* integrated territory⁶. In this sense, while the «Indo-Pacific» as a geopolitical conception is a modern coinage, its underlying civilizational foundations long precede its contemporary strategic articulation⁷.

The formalization of this «Greater Indo-Pacific» space was pioneered in the 1920s by the German geopolitician Karl Haushofer, who hypothesized that this maritime continuum could facilitate unprecedented trans-regional cooperation, particularly with emerging Asian powers⁸. By leveraging the demographic and cultural density of the Chinese and Indian spheres,

¹ Gurpreet S. Khurana, “The ‘Indo-Pacific’ Concept: Retrospect and Prospect,” *CIMSEC*, November 14, 2017.

² Hansong Li, “The ‘Indo-Pacific’: Intellectual Origins and International Visions in Global Contexts,” *Modern Intellectual History* 19, no. 3 (2022): 807–833.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Anthony Reid, *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680, Volume One: The Lands below the Winds* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

⁵ Angus Maddison, *Contours of the World Economy 1–2030 AD: Essays in Macro-Economic History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁶ Sabba Choudhary, “From Samudra-Manthan to SAGAR: Civilisational Foundations of India’s Indo-Pacific Vision,” *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research* 7, no. 2 (2025): 906–911.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Encyclopædia Britannica Online*, s.v. “Indo-Pacific,” by Kenneth Pletcher, accessed December 21, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Indo-Pacific>.

Haushofer predicted a resurgent Asia capable of dismantling the established hegemony of Western colonial powers and of reshaping future international power relations⁹.

Historically, the socio-political heterogeneity among the coastal states of the Indian and the Pacific Oceans precluded a unified political delineation of the region¹⁰.

It was not until the 21st century that the term underwent a significant intellectual and diplomatic revival¹¹. The year 2005 marked a critical juncture in this resurgence, as the concept began to gain traction among maritime strategists and regional analysts¹². This shift was accelerated by a growing recognition of the geo-economic indivisibility between the Indian and the Pacific Oceans. As Rory Medcalf wrote in 2017,

By 2005, there was a breakthrough in the expansion of diplomatic architecture tying Southeast Asian countries with various other powers. This led to the establishment of the so-called East Asia Summit. But from birth, the summit was misnamed. It was in fact an Indo-Pacific institution, an early reflection of the changes in the regional system of economic and strategic links¹³.

In the same year, the New Zealand strategic analyst Peter Cozens published a seminal contribution in the journal *Maritime Affairs*, providing a retrospective analysis of six decades of maritime evolution in the «Indo-Pacific». He argued that the region should be viewed as an indivisible and interconnected theatre of geopolitical activity that «extends from the northern extremities of the Indian Ocean to include [...] South Asia, Southeast Asia, Australasia, the islands of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia, and the eastern countries of Asia»¹⁴. He therefore spoke about the «Indo-Pacific» as representing the «non-Atlantic view of the world»¹⁵, rejuvenating Karl Haushofer's view.

In contemporary academic and diplomatic discourse, the Indo-Pacific construct achieved significant momentum following Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's paramount address to the Indian Parliament of August 2007, which persists as a key political moment. The speech,

⁹ Axel Berkofsky and Sergio Miracola, eds., *Geopolitics by Other Means: The Indo-Pacific Reality* (Milan: ISPI, 2019), 14.

¹⁰ Gene Helfman, Bruce B. Collette, and Douglas E. Facey, *The Diversity of Fishes* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1997), 274–76.

¹¹ Hansong Li, "The 'Indo-Pacific': Intellectual Origins and International Visions in Global Contexts," *Modern Intellectual History* 19, no. 3 (2021): 807–833.

¹² David Scott, "The Return of the 'Indo-Pacific'," *Asia Maior* 34 (2023).

¹³ Rory Medcalf, "Goodbye Asia-Pacific. But Why the Sudden Buzz over Indo-Pacific?," *South China Morning Post*, December 17, 2017.

¹⁴ Peter Cozens, "Some Reflections on Maritime Developments in the Indo-Pacific Region" (paper presented at the CSCAP Working Group on Maritime Cooperation, Delhi, India, 2005).

¹⁵ Peter Cozens, "E-mail Interview," by Axel Berkofsky and Sergio Miracola, in *Geopolitics by Other Means: The Indo-Pacific Reality*, ed. Axel Berkofsky and Sergio Miracola (Milan: ISPI, 2019), August 20, 2018.

titled «The Confluence of the Two Seas» provided one of the first formal articulations of the Indo-Pacific as a unified strategic arena¹⁶. By framing the two Oceans as a singular, interconnected space, Abe underscored the necessity for strategic stability and a rules-based maritime order¹⁷. Moreover, Abe proposed the establishment of an «Arc of Freedom and Prosperity» within a «broader Asia», envisioning an expansive strategic network that integrated the United States and Australia, rooted in a robust «Strategic Global Partnership» between Japan and India¹⁸. Abe's thesis posited that Japan and India served as the geographic and strategic «bookends» of this vast region and argued that the security of Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) was a vital mutual interest, necessitating an open and transparent framework to facilitate the unhindered flow of human capital, commerce, and knowledge¹⁹. The Indo-Pacific paradigm represents a significant analytical evolution over the traditional «Asia-Pacific» framework, that — according to Abe — advances a normative and strategic reimagining of regional space by linking the Pacific and Indian Oceans into a single, coherent theatre, that enables it to politically connect distinct subregions to support specific visions of order, alliance configurations, and perceived threats. Scholars have subsequently expanded on these premises, amongst whom Matteo Dian, who understands the Indo-Pacific as a «discursively constructed or politically engineered region», rather than a simply ascribed geographical definition²⁰.

Whereas the term «Asia-Pacific» has frequently marginalized or entirely omitted the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), the Indo-Pacific concept explicitly integrates the IOR into Asia's broader geopolitical and security architecture. In consequence a more comprehensive analysis of regional power dynamics is achievable, one which acknowledges the strategic interdependence of these two maritime domains reflecting the contemporary realities of trans-regional security and commerce²¹. As D. Gnanagurunathan writes,

¹⁶ Ashley Townshend, "The Indo-Pacific," in *The Alliance at 70: The Story of the Alliance between Australia and the United States*, ed. United States Studies Centre (Sydney: United States Studies Centre, 2021), chapter 8, <https://www.ussc.edu.au/books/the-alliance-at-70/chapter-8-the-indo-pacific>.

¹⁷ Shinzo Abe, "Confluence of the Two Seas" (speech, Parliament of the Republic of India, New Delhi, August 22, 2007), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html>.

¹⁸ Shinzo Abe, "Confluence of the Two Seas," speech to the Parliament of India, New Delhi, August 22, 2007, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

¹⁹ Abe, "Confluence of the Two Seas."

²⁰ Dian, Matteo. *The Evolution of the "Indo-Pacific": Power Shifts, Geopolitics and the Future of Regional Order*. Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2019.

²¹ David Scott, "The 'Indo-Pacific'—New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence," *Asia-Pacific Review* 19, no. 2 (2012): 85–109.

Japan and Australia promoted the term «Asia Pacific» in the 1970s and 1980s to draw them closer to the United States and the economically burgeoning East Asia. India was far, geographically, from the region, and politically, economically and strategically remained uninvolved for inherent reasons²².

The conceptual emergence of the Indo-Pacific is intricately linked to the rising geopolitical prominence of India at the turn of the 21st century. As Donald Berlin argued in 2006, the rise of India functions as a primary facilitator for the increased strategic significance of the Indian Ocean²³. Consequently, India's expanding economic and naval impact has rendered its exclusion from any regional security architecture untenable. This shift has necessitated a transition beyond the traditional Asia-Pacific framework — which historically peripheralized the Indian subcontinent — toward a more inclusive model that recognizes India as an indispensable actor in the broader Asian geopolitical and maritime standing²⁴.

1.2. The security dilemma in the Taiwan Strait

Taiwan's history is a succession of dominations that have forged its exceptionality. Originally inhabited by Austronesian peoples²⁵, the island saw the passage of several European powers before being annexed in the 17th century by the Qing Dynasty, that initially treated Formosa²⁶ as an unremarkable continental periphery²⁷. The Qing Dynasty administration of Taiwan lasted for about two centuries and represents the historical foundation on which Beijing rests its current territorial claims²⁸. However, this continuity was drastically interrupted in 1895, when China's defeat in the First Sino-Japanese War forced the Island's cession to Japan through the

²² D. Gnanagurunathan, "India and the Idea of the 'Indo-Pacific'," *East Asia Forum*, October 20, 2012.

²³ Donald L. Berlin, "India in the Indian Ocean," *Naval War College Review* 59, no. 2 (Spring 2006).

²⁴ Felix Heiduk and Gudrun Wacker, *From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific: Significance, Implementation and Challenges*, SWP Research Paper 9 (Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2020).

²⁵ Once the island's only inhabitants, Indigenous Taiwanese now make up just 2.38% of the population. See James Rogerson, "A Vibrant Celebration of Taiwan's Little-Known Original Inhabitants," *BBC*, January 26, 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20240125-a-vibrant-celebration-of-taiwans-little-known-original-inhabitants>.

²⁶ A large island named "Formosa" by the Portuguese in the 16th century; the Japanese name is Taiwan, while the Chinese name is T'ai-wan. See *Enciclopedia Italiana*, s.v. "Formosa," by Roberto Almagià, accessed December 28, 2025, [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/formosa_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/formosa_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/).

²⁷ See Jonathan Manthorpe, *Forbidden Nation: A History of Taiwan* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008).

²⁸ Catherine Lila Chou, "Decolonizing the 'One China' Narrative: The Case of Taiwan," *The Historical Journal* 67, no. 1 (2024): 161–168, discusses how the People's Republic of China retrospectively reframes the Qing administration of Taiwan as evidence of an unbroken line of historical continuity linking the political configurations of the old Middle Empire to the present-day Chinese state.

Treaty of Shimonoseki²⁹. This manoeuvre directly affected the psychological vulnerability of China, which had been historically anchored to a continental vision of power, forcing it to abruptly confront the need to project itself beyond its land borders³⁰.

The fifty years of Japanese rule (1895-1945) marked a profound and irreversible deviation in the Island's evolutionary trajectory. The colonial regime was not limited to a military occupation, but carried out a radical revolution of local customs, aimed at modernizing society according to Tokyo's parameters³¹. Besides the sociocultural dimension, the Japanese administration intervened massively on the infrastructure and the aesthetics of the territory, making Taipei's urban landscape a tangible witness of the historical stratification that separates Taiwan from mainland China³².

During the Second World War, the Cairo Declaration established the principle of restoring Chinese sovereignty over the territories occupied by Japan which officially came under the administration of the Republic of China in 1945³³. With the conclusion of the Chinese Civil War in 1949, Taiwan became the last stronghold of the Kuomintang³⁴. Heirs of a centralist vision and convinced that they were the sole custodians of the legitimacy of Chinese civilization, the nationalists imposed a systematic Sinicization of the local population³⁵, meeting with resistance from the local population that was often discriminated against, leading to the outbreak of the repressive season known as the «White Terror»³⁶. Despite the harshness of the regime, the pre-existing culture was never completely removed from the social fabric of the island. Internationally, the Republic of China received immediate diplomatic recognition from the United States, as part of Washington's broader anti-communist strategy in East Asia

²⁹ Dario Fabbri, "Taiwan l'anti-Cina," in *L'altra Cina: Chiave della competizione globale*, *Limes* 9 (2021): 10.

³⁰ Feng Lin, "Recovery of Taiwan: Echoes of WWII Justice and National Rejuvenation," *China's Diplomacy*, August 17, 2025.

³¹ Kate Allanson Conlon, "The Rise and Fall of Chánzú: A Short History of Footbinding in Taiwan," *Taiwan Insight*, June 24, 2024, <https://taiwaninsight.org/2024/06/24/the-rise-and-fall-of-chanzu-a-short-history-of-footbinding-in-taiwan/>.

³² Chan, Angel. "Asian Colonisation: The Case of Japan and Taiwan." *Insight Publication*, no. 3 (February 27, n.d.). UCLA Asiatic Affairs. <https://www.uclasiaticaffairs.com/publications-list/asian-colonisation-the-case-of-japan-and-taiwan-d95na>.

³³ U.S. Department of State, "The Cairo Conference, 1943," Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs, released January 20, 2001, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/107184.htm>.

³⁴ Mahlon Meyer estimates that approximately one and a half million Chinese nationalists led by Chiang Kai-shek—referred to as waishengren, or "people from outside the province"—crossed the Taiwan (Formosa) Strait to establish the island's current governmental structure after the Chinese Civil War. Mahlon Meyer, *Remembering China from Taiwan: Divided Families and Bittersweet Reunions after the Chinese Civil War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012).

³⁵ Fabbri, "Taiwan l'anti-Cina," 12.

³⁶ Mary Brandt, "The 228 Incident: History, Memorialization, and Collective Memory," *CSS Taiwan*, March 12, 2025, <https://taiwanccss.org/the-228-incident-history-memorialization-and-collective-memory/>.

and retained China's permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council³⁷. However, at the dawn of the Cold War, the U.S. administration considered the option of abandoning Taiwan to concentrate resources on the Korean Peninsula. This orientation changed radically when American strategic apparatuses reworked the so-called «Japanese Lesson»: The understanding that only joint control of both the Korean Peninsula and Taiwan would allow Russian and Chinese influence to be contained simultaneously³⁸. This reassessment translated rapidly into concrete military measures. The United States naval intervention in 1950 — following the outbreak of the Korean War — implemented by positioning the Seventh Fleet in the Strait of Formosa, effectively neutralized any ambitions of the People's Republic of China to proceed with a military resolution of the Taiwanese question³⁹. Mao Zedong faced the obvious impossibility of competing with American technological and aeronaval supremacy and was forced into a radical reconfiguration of his strategic axis, crystallizing a predilection for the land dimension that would shape Chinese foreign policy for decades⁴⁰. This structural limitation emerged clearly during the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1958, when despite the heavy bombing of Kinmen and Matsu Islands, the PRC proved itself of being incapable of launching an effective amphibious attack and challenge the US naval blockade⁴¹. The historical inability of Communist China to develop a credible maritime projection during the Cold War allowed the consolidation of the *status quo* of Taiwan, and created a maritime power vacuum that the United States has permanently occupied.

In 1971, the architecture of relations in the Pacific was shaken by a strategic repositioning of the United States that aimed to exploit the People's Republic of China for anti-Soviet purposes, and therefore began normalizing the affiliation with Beijing⁴². This change resulted in the cessation of official recognition of Taipei and the subsequent expulsion of the Nationalist government from the United Nations Glass Palace in favour of the PRC⁴³. The United States

³⁷ U.S. Department of State, "The Chinese Revolution of 1949," Office of the Historian, accessed January 15, 2026, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev>.

³⁸ See Dario Fabbri, "Stati Uniti e Giappone, destini intrecciati," *Limes: Rivista italiana di geopolitica*, no. 2, *La rivoluzione giapponese* (2018).

³⁹ U.S. Department of State, "The Taiwan Straits Crises: 1954–55 and 1958," Office of the Historian, accessed January 15, 2026, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/taiwan-strait-crises>.

⁴⁰ Fabbri, "Taiwan l'anti-Cina," 13.

⁴¹ André Munro, "Taiwan Strait Crises," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified August 13, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Taiwan-Strait-crises>.

⁴² Henry A. Kissinger, "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," January 12, 1971, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, vol. XVII, *China, 1969–1972*, ed. Steven E. Phillips (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), doc. 101, <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/70142.pdf>

⁴³ Shun-Hsing Chou, "United Nations Resolution 2758 and Taiwan's Diplomatic Prospect," *UCL Diplomacy Society*, October 15, 2024, UCL Diplomacy Society, <https://www.ucldiplomacy.com/post/united-nations-resolution-2758-and-taiwan-s-diplomatic-prospect>

operated on the understanding that Mao's China, at the time, did not possess the technological and military capabilities for a forced annexation of the island⁴⁴. In this context, the «One China Policy» was formalized, leading to the Washington's official endorsement of the PRC while still maintaining a relevant defensive link with Taiwan due to President Jimmy Carter's signature of the Taiwan Relations Act, which committed the United States to «make available to Taiwan such defence articles and defence services in such quantity as may be necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defence capability»⁴⁵. The TRA, however, does not obligate the United States to come to Taiwan's defence, and for decades U.S. Presidents have refused to say whether they would intervene on Taiwan's behalf — a policy known as Strategic Ambiguity⁴⁶. Tensions culminated in the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis (1995-1996), sparked by Beijing's demonstration missile launches to protest Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui's visit to the United States, which was perceived by the PRC as a provocation and a violation of the «One China Policy»⁴⁷. The American response was immediate and resolute: The dispatch of the aircraft carriers *USS Nimitz* and *USS Independence*⁴⁸. This episode exposed once again China's structural inability to challenge American maritime dominance and project force beyond its shores. Furthermore, over the decades, not only did Taiwan maintain political autonomy, but it also developed a distinct, indigenous cultural identity, which still acts as a powerful deterrent against annexation attempts and represents a strategic obstacle for Beijing as significant as the presence of American fleets⁴⁹. Moreover, the erosion of Hong Kong's autonomy and civil liberties since 1997, culminating in the imposition of the National Security Law in 2020, has further undermined Beijing's «one country, two systems» proposal, that from Taiwan's perspective results into widespread fear that «today's Hong Kong» could become «tomorrow's Taiwan» if unification was accepted⁵⁰.

⁴⁴ Hsu Chung-mao, «The Taiwan Strait Crises of the 1950s and the Evolution of Sino-US Relations [Photo Story],» Think China, October 30, 2020.

⁴⁵ Taiwan Relations Act, Pub. L. No. 96-8, 93 Stat. 14 (1979) (codified as amended at 22 U.S.C. §§ 3301–3316).

⁴⁶ Center for Preventive Action, «Confrontation Over Taiwan,» *Global Conflict Tracker*, Council on Foreign Relations, last modified October 30, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/china-taiwan-confrontation>.

⁴⁷ Randall G. Schriver, *A Perfect Storm: Managing Conflict in the Taiwan Strait* (Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, October 2023), <https://indopacificsecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/A-Perfect-Storm-Managing-Conflict-in-the-Taiwan-Strait.pdf>.

⁴⁸ R. C. Lutz, «Third Taiwan Strait Crisis,» in *EBSCO Knowledge Advantage*, EBSCOhost, last modified 2023.

⁴⁹ Election Study Center, «Taiwanese/Chinese Identity (1992/06–2025/06),» National Chengchi University, last modified July 7, 2025, <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7800&id=6961>.

⁵⁰ «Hong Kong National Security Law: The View From Taiwan,» *The Diplomat*, July 7, 2020.

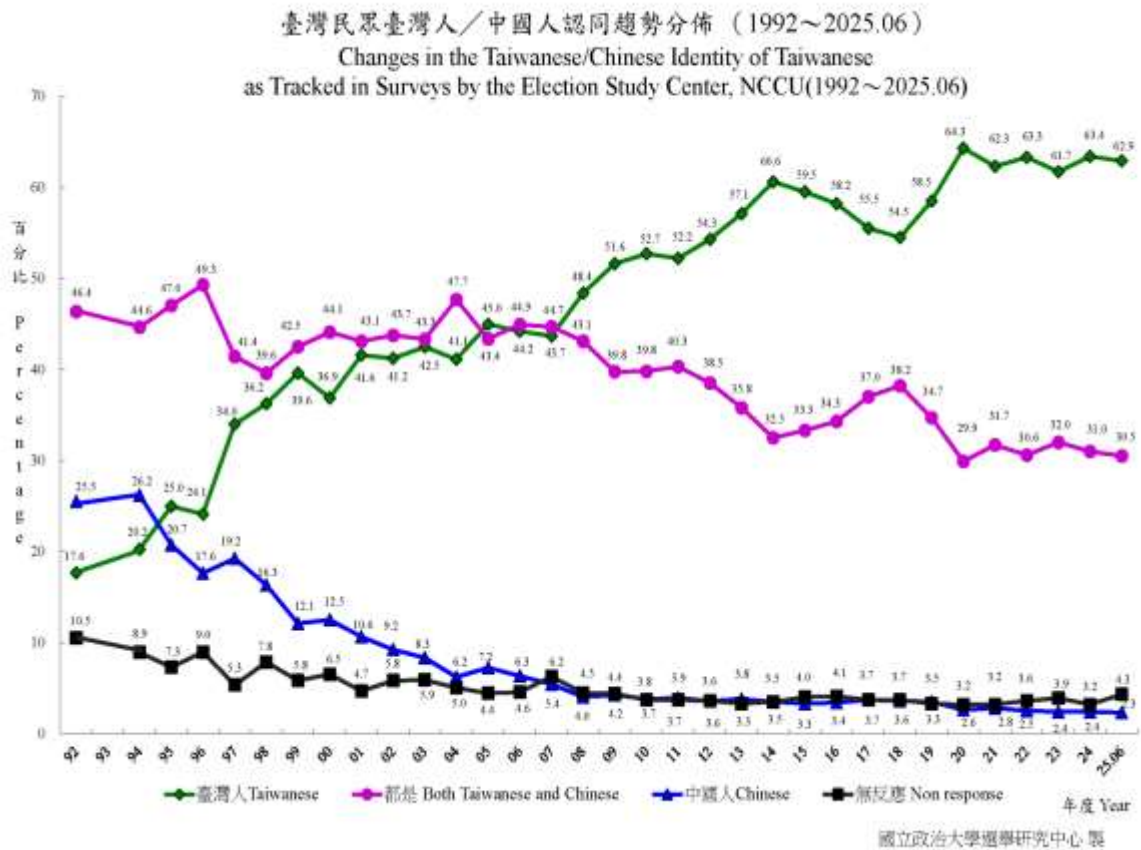


Fig. 1. Taiwanese/Chinese Identity (1992/06–2025/06). Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University (2025).

Building on these findings, it becomes clear that the rise of a distinct Taiwanese identity complicates Beijing's strategic calculus. If the population no longer identifies as Chinese, the prospect of a peaceful «reunification» becomes increasingly dubious, potentially leading to a shift toward more coercive measures⁵¹. This sociopolitical transformation is the result of a long-term historical evolution that began with a starkly different vision: According to Chiang Kai-shek — the nationalist leader who arrived in the island in 1949 — Taiwan was not just a refuge, but it was the location of a future revived Chinese State, destined to serve as a model for the reconquest of the Mainland⁵². From this perspective, the Japanese influence that occurred in previous decades was dismissed as a form of humiliating «slavery» to be eradicated

⁵¹ Davide Campagnola, “The Status Quo between Taiwan and China: The Inevitability of a Dramatic End?,” Taiwan Politics, November 26, 2024.

⁵² Jay Taylor, *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 395–401.

through «re-sinicization»⁵³. Nevertheless, the incentive for the modern identity shift was, paradoxically, the geopolitical realism of the 1970s. The American recognition of the People's Republic of China hence forced Taipei leadership to abandon its ambitions for a return to the Middle Empire and accept its own strategic otherness emphasizing its historical and social specificity⁵⁴. The abolition of martial law in 1987 and the conclusion of the «White Terror Period» paved the way for a process of democratization, marking the beginning of the period known as «Taiwanization»⁵⁵. By the early 2000s, this anthropological alteration resulted in a crisis of consensus for the KMT, which was increasingly perceived as too tied to an outdated Sino-centric vision⁵⁶. The leadership of this identity refurbishment passed to the Democratic Progressive Party, later symbolized by figures like Tsai Ing-wen, whose mixed genealogy — Hakka and Aboriginal — perfectly embodied the Island's new multicultural identity⁵⁷. Ultimately, this transition to a «sovereign multicultural democracy» represents the most significant challenge to the cross-strait *status quo* because, from Beijing's perspective, the consolidation of a Taiwanese identity is not merely a domestic sociological shift, but a definitive move toward permanent separation⁵⁸. This perception transforms an internal cultural evolution into a primary driver of regional instability, acting as the spark of a classic structural tension in International Relations: The Security Dilemma. In international Relations Theory, the Security Dilemma occurs when a State's attempts to enhance its own security — such as through military buildup or strategic alliances — are perceived as a threat by another State, leading to a reactive spiral where both sides end up less secure than before⁵⁹. In the Taiwan Strait, this logic has evolved into a «vicious cycle» involving three primary actors: The People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and the United States. China presents its massive military modernization as a necessary defensive response against the Taiwanese separatism movement and foreign interference⁶⁰. However, from the perspective of Taipei and

⁵³ Steven E. Phillips, *Between Assimilation and Independence: The Taiwanese Resistance Movement, 1945–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 70–75.

⁵⁴ Shelley Rigger, *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011), 61–65.

⁵⁵ Denny Roy, *Taiwan: A Political History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 174–177.

⁵⁶ Bi-yu Chang, *Place, Identity, and National Imagination in Post-war Taiwan* (London: Routledge, 2015), 145–150.

⁵⁷ Chang, *Place, Identity, and National Imagination in Post-war Taiwan*, 145–150.

⁵⁸ Dean Chen, "The Taiwan Issue and Mismatching Identities: An Ontological Security Perspective," *Identity Hunters*, December 24, 2017.

⁵⁹ Anders Wivel, "Security Dilemma," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, last modified September 18, 2024, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/security-dilemma>.

⁶⁰ Sean Monaghan, "The Risks of Rushing to Denial in the Taiwan Strait," *CSIS*, March 24, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/risks-rushing-denial-taiwan-strait>.

Washington, these same capabilities are interpreted as a preparation for a deliberate invasion⁶¹. For decades, the U.S. relied on a posture of Strategic Ambiguity, designed to deter both a Chinese invasion and a Taiwanese declaration of independence, however, as China's military capability expands, Washington starts wondering whether that ambiguity is no longer enough to deter Beijing, therefore, under the Biden and the subsequent Trump administrations (2024-2025), the official rhetoric has shifted toward Strategic Clarity⁶². High-profile visits and increased funding for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative are viewed by Beijing as an estrangement from the One China Policy, leading China to believe it must show resolve through force⁶³. Notwithstanding, Liberalism (or Neoliberal Institutionalism) argues that economic interdependence and International Organizations should mitigate the Security Dilemma⁶⁴. Previously, the deep economic ties between China and Taiwan acted as a stabilizer as both sides stood to lose too much from conflict, indeed the Silicon Shield Paradox entails that the fact that China and the U.S. both rely on Taiwan's semiconductors, represents a deterrent by cost⁶⁵. Nonetheless, in 2025, security concerns have begun to override economic logic and a «Weaponization of Interdependence» is currently taking place⁶⁶. Economic interdependence is increasingly being turned into a tool of pressure and control, with China using trade restrictions as «Gray-Zone» coercion, while Taiwan seeks to de-risk its economy by moving semiconductor manufacturing to the U.S. and Japan⁶⁷. This economic decoupling removes a major incentive for restraint, deepening the Security Dilemma.

The Defensive Realism approach emphasizes the primary objective of States to be the assurance of their security rather than the aggressive maximization of power⁶⁸. It underscores the importance of the balance of power in International Relations, which leads governments to form alliances and partnerships to counterbalance perceived threats⁶⁹. The issue is that neither Beijing nor Taiwan can prove their weapons are purely defensive: When Taiwan buys long-

⁶¹ Monaghan, "The Risks of Rushing to Denial in the Taiwan Strait."

⁶² Austin Hornig-En Wang et al., "Strategic Ambiguity, Strategic Clarity, and Dual Clarity," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 20, no. 3 (July 2024): orae010, <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orae010>.

⁶³ Center for Preventive Action, "Confrontation Over Taiwan."

⁶⁴ Abdullah Alhammedi, "The Neorealism and Neoliberalism Behind International Relations during COVID-19," *OALib Journal* 9, no. 2 (February 2022): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1108411>.

⁶⁵ Viktor Šimov, "The Silicon Shield Erosion: Fortifying Taiwan Against Geopolitical Shocks," *Institute for Security & Development Policy*, May 6, 2025, <https://isdpeu/publication/the-silicon-shield-erosion-fortifying-taiwan-against-geopolitical-shocks/>.

⁶⁶ Henry Farrell and Abraham Newman, "The Weaponized World Economy: Surviving the New Age of Economic Coercion," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2025, published August 19, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/weaponized-world-economy-new-age-economic-coercion>.

⁶⁷ Farrell and Newman, "The Weaponized World Economy: Surviving the New Age of Economic Coercion."

⁶⁸ Joseph Frankel, review of *Theory of International Politics*, by Kenneth N. Waltz, *International Journal* 35, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 600.

⁶⁹ Ian Bremmer, "Balance of Power," *Foreign Policy*, no. 193 (May/June 2012): 14–16.

range missiles for defence, Beijing perceives them as tools for building a future sovereign State, while when China builds «Mock Taipei»⁷⁰ training grounds, it claims they are needed for peaceful reunification insurance, but Taipei sees an imminent scheme of war⁷¹. The result is a spiral of fear where defensive measures are interpreted as offensive intents, leading to the very conflict both sides are trying to avoid.

Offensive Realism argues that since the only way to be truly secure is to be the most powerful, states behave as power maximisers⁷². Therefore, according to this perspective, China isn't just reacting to fear but it is attempting to secure regional dominance⁷³. From the Offensive Realism's perspective controlling Taiwan would allow the PLA to project power into the deep Pacific and push the U.S. out of Asia. The result is that security is a zero-sum game, where any gain for China is a permanent loss for U.S. and Taiwanese security⁷⁴. In this framework, the Security Dilemma is impossible to solve. Recent developments have significantly exacerbated this dilemma. In late 2025, the People's Liberation Army has transitioned toward a more operational «Encirclement Geometry» suggesting a shift from conventional deterrence to compulsion, as demonstrated by the Justice Mission 2025 exercises, consisting of a total maritime and aerial blockade that had been rehearsed, showing an attempt of Beijing to force a change of the *status quo*⁷⁵. Consequently, this pressure compels Taipei and Washington to accelerate the deployment of asymmetric capabilities, thus validating Beijing's threat perceptions and further tightening the security spiral⁷⁶.

⁷⁰ Full-scale architectural replicas of Taiwan's most important government and strategic sites built by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) in remote areas of China, specifically in the Inner Mongolian desert. "China-Taiwan Weekly Update, October 10, 2025," *Institute for the Study of War*, October 10, 2025.

⁷¹ "China-Taiwan Weekly Update, October 10, 2025," Institute for the Study of War, October 10, 2025, <https://understandingwar.org/research/china-taiwan/china-taiwan-weekly-update-october-10-2025/>.

⁷² John J. Mearsheimer, "War and International Politics," *International Security* 49, no. 4 (Spring 2025): 12, https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00507.

⁷³ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, updated ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).

⁷⁴ John J. Mearsheimer, "Say Goodbye to Taiwan," *The National Interest*, no. 130 (March/April 2014): 28–39, <https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Taiwans-Dire-Straits.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Global Taiwan Institute, "The PLA's 'Justice Mission-2025' Exercise Around Taiwan," *Global Taiwan Brief*, January 2, 2026, <https://globaltaiwan.org/2026/01/pla-justice-mission-2025/>.

⁷⁶ "China-Taiwan Weekly Update, January 2, 2026," *Institute for the Study of War*, January 2, 2026, <https://understandingwar.org/research/china-taiwan/china-taiwan-update-january-2-2026>.

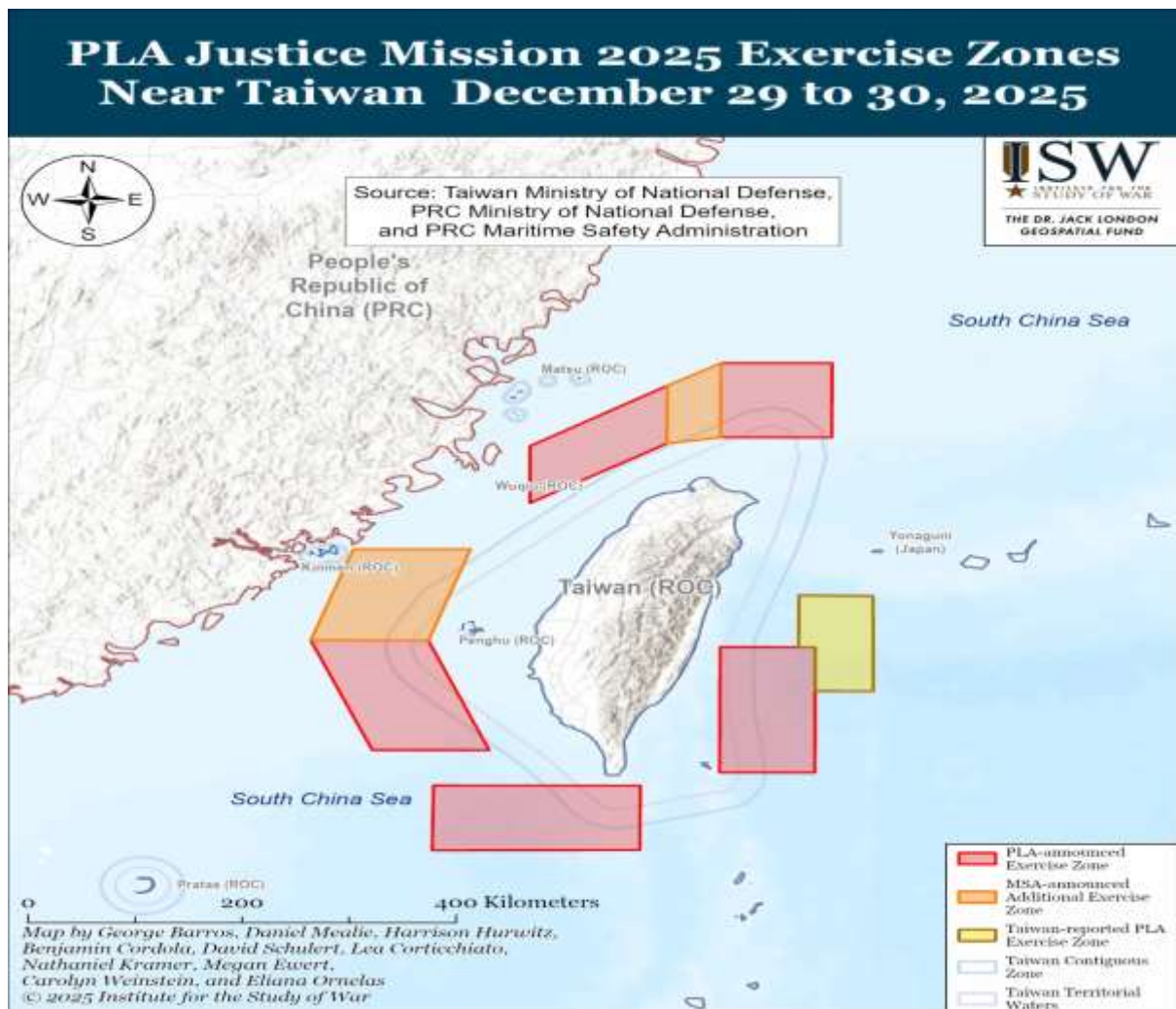


Fig. 2. PLA Justice Mission 2025 Exercise Zones Near Taiwan, December 29 to 30, 2025. The spatial distribution of these zones demonstrates a shift toward "Encirclement Geometry," specifically targeting the maritime "choke points" of Keelung and Kaohsiung to rehearse a total blockade of the island. *Source: Institute for the Study of War (ISW), 2026.*

However, since Realism attributes the main determination of state behaviour to the international structural context, it tends to neglect internal factors — such as political dynamics, ideological orientations, or economic interests — that can influence the choices of a hegemonic power⁷⁷. In response to these limitations, Constructivism asserts that the Security Dilemma isn't just about weapons; it's about ideas, history, and identity⁷⁸. From this standpoint, security is not simply a reflection of power balances or geopolitical facts, but it is actively produced

⁷⁷ Arash Heydarian Pashakhanlou, "The Past, Present and Future of Realism," *E-International Relations*, January 15, 2018, <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/15/the-past-present-and-future-of-realism/>.

⁷⁸ Nawid Aria, "The Power of Ideas: A Constructivist Reinterpretation of Security in International Relations," *Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities* (Kabul University), accessed January 5, 2026, <https://jssh.edu.af>.

through shared understandings shaped by discourse, culture, and historical circumstances⁷⁹. This theoretical lens explains why the Taiwan Strait has become a site of deeply securitized identities. For the People's Republic of China, the annexation of Taiwan is not merely a geopolitical objective, but rather an indispensable component of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation — a sacred narrative of national restoration⁸⁰. Conversely, the sociopolitical landscape in Taiwan has evolved from a competing «Republic of China» claim toward a distinct, democratic identity⁸¹. Simultaneously, the Taiwanese polity increasingly regards reunification as a threat to the democratic values and civil liberties that define their contemporary existence.

Ultimately, the transition from an Asia-Pacific to an Indo-Pacific framework not only expanded the geographical scope of the theater, but it intensified the complexity of the Security Dilemma, making the management of this vicious cycle a fundamental challenge for regional stability in the decades ahead.

1.3. The Evolution of the U.S. Strategy in the Indo-Pacific: From the Pivot to Asia to Integrated Deterrence

U.S. Grand Strategy has undergone a significant transformation, mirroring changes in power dynamics, technological rivalry, and regional security challenges. What began under the Obama administration as the *Pivot to Asia* has evolved into a comprehensive, multi-domain strategic framework that emphasizes deeper integration with allies and partners and aims to deter conflict across the entire Indo-Pacific⁸². The announcement of the *Pivot to Asia* in 2011 marked a conscious shift in U.S. foreign policy priorities. After decades dominated by the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, policymakers under President Barack Obama sought to re-orient U.S. diplomatic, economic, and military attention toward a region that was rapidly growing in global

⁷⁹ Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391–425.

⁸⁰ State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, *The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era* (Beijing: Xinhua, August 10, 2022), http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2022-08/10/content_78365819_2.htm.

⁸¹ Catherine Lila Chou, "Decolonizing the 'One China' Narrative: The Case of Taiwan," *Modern Asian Studies* (January 2024): 1–25, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X23000377>

⁸² Hillary Rodham Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, no. 189 (November 2011): 56–63.

importance⁸³. The central logic was straightforward: The Asia-Pacific was at the heart of global economic growth, with several key U.S. alliances, and was the arena of an emerging strategic rival — the People’s Republic of China⁸⁴. Strategically, the Pivot was not simply about increasing U.S. military presence; rather it was framed as a comprehensive adjustment of U.S. policy across security, diplomacy, trade, and institutional engagement⁸⁵. Within this framework, longstanding treaty commitments to Japan and South Korea were complemented by renewed emphasis on joint capabilities, interoperability, and modernization initiatives with allies such as Australia and the Philippines, including new force posture arrangements, rotational deployments, and enhanced maritime cooperation⁸⁶. Economically, the administration cast the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) as the central trade pillar of the rebalance, intended both to lock in high-standard trade rules and to signal long-term U.S. commitment to the region’s economic architecture⁸⁷. Longstanding treaty obligations with Japan and South Korea were complemented by renewed focus on joint capabilities and interoperability⁸⁸.

Despite this ambitious agenda, the Pivot soon attracted criticism regarding both its strategic coherence and its implementation. Analysts argued that the United States systematically overestimated its capacity to sustain an Asia-first focus while simultaneously managing acute crises in the Middle East and Europe, and never fully committed the political capital and resources necessary to realize the Pivot’s goals⁸⁹. Building on these critiques, a growing body of scholarship characterizes the period from the announcement of the Pivot in 2011 through roughly the early 2020s as a «lost decade» in U.S. Asia policy⁹⁰. Authors such as Robert Blackwill and Richard Fontaine argue that while U.S. officials correctly diagnosed the strategic

⁸³ Mira Rapp-Hooper et al., *Counterbalance: Red Teaming the Rebalance in the Asia-Pacific* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, November 14, 2016),

<https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/counterbalance-red-teaming-the-rebalance-in-the-asia-pacific>

⁸⁴ Marco Clementi, “*Il Pivot to Asia e l’incerto ruolo degli USA nel mondo*,” in *Atlante Geopolitico 2014* (Roma: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2014), Treccani, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/il-pivot-to-asia-e-l-incerto-ruolo-degli-usa-nel-mondo_%28Atlante-Geopolitico%29/

⁸⁵ Kenneth G. Lieberthal, “The American Pivot to Asia,” *Brookings*, December 21, 2011.

⁸⁶ “The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, ‘Fact Sheet: Advancing the Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific,’ November 16, 2015

⁸⁷ “U.S. Embassy Jakarta. ‘Fact Sheet: Advancing the Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific.’ November 2015. <https://id.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-advancing-the-rebalance-to-asia-and-the-pacific/>”

⁸⁸ Alessia De Luca, Guido Alberto Casanova e Paola Morselli, “Usa2024: Ancora e sempre ‘Pivot to Asia’?,” *ISPI*, 2 ottobre 2024, <https://www.ispionline.it/it/publicazione/usa2024-ancora-e-sempre-pivot-to-asia-185533>.

⁸⁹ “The U.S. Pivot to Asia and American Grand Strategy,” *Center for International Relations and Sustainable Development*, accessed February 10, 2026, <https://cirsd.org/horizon-article/the-us-pivot-to-asia-and-american-grand-strategy/>.

⁹⁰ “The U.S. Pivot to Asia and American Grand Strategy.”

centrality of the Indo-Pacific, they did not translate this recognition into a sustained, integrated strategy capable of arresting or shaping China’s accelerating power projection in the region⁹¹. Under the Trump administration, the language of U.S. strategy shifted from «Asia-Pacific» to the *Indo-Pacific* — a deliberate choice that extended the strategic frame to encompass the Indian Ocean and South Asia, thereby integrating India as a key partner in balancing regional power⁹². This geographic reframing was not merely semantic; it embodied a broader strategic purpose: recognizing the interconnectedness of maritime and economic corridors stretching from East Asia through the Indian Ocean and reinforcing the U.S. role not only in the Pacific but also in the Indian Ocean region⁹³.

In February 2022, the Biden administration released the *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*, articulating a long-term, comprehensive commitment to the region that wove together traditional security concerns with economic, institutional, and governance dimensions⁹⁴. Unlike the earlier Pivot to Asia, the more recent Indo-Pacific strategy places greater emphasis on structured cooperation with allies and partners across multiple levels. Rather than relying predominantly on traditional bilateral treaties, it seeks to embed U.S. engagement within a denser web of multilateral arrangements⁹⁵. In this context, forums such as the Quad (bringing together the United States, Japan, India, and Australia) and the security partnership AUKUS (linking the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia) are designed to foster coordination on defence capabilities, emerging technologies, and maritime security⁹⁶. These formats signal a shift from a hub-and-spokes model of alliance management toward a more networked approach to regional order-building.

Traditional alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, and others form the backbone, while newer or revitalized mechanisms — like the *Quadrilateral Security Dialogue* — deepen interoperability and signal collective will⁹⁷. Such partnerships also reflect a strategic insight:

⁹¹ “A Real Pivot to Asia Is Critical to U.S. Interests, Blackwill and Fontaine Argue in New Book,” *Center for a New American Security*, press release, June 11, 2024.

⁹² Gong Ting, “The US ‘Indo-Pacific Strategy’: Concept, Action and Evaluation,” *Regards géopolitiques* 11, no. 1 (2025), Centre québécois d’études géopolitiques (CQEG), April 22, 2025, <https://cqegheulaval.com/2025/04/22/the-us-indo-pacific-strategy-concept-action-and-evaluation/>.

⁹³ Gong Ting, “The US ‘Indo-Pacific Strategy.’”

⁹⁴ U.S. Department of State, “The Indo-Pacific Strategy,” archived content (released online January 20, 2021–January 20, 2025), <https://2021-2025.state.gov/indo-pacific-strategy/>.

⁹⁵ “U.S. Mission Korea, ‘Fact Sheet: Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States,’ February 11, 2022.”

⁹⁶ “*Elements of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy: A Qualitative Primer on the Quad, AUKUS, and Partners in the Blue Pacific*, with foreword by Joseph S. Nye Jr. (Cambridge, MA: Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School).”

⁹⁷ *White House, Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*, February 2022.

deterrence in the Indo-Pacific cannot rest on U.S. force alone but must integrate regional actors into a coherent security framework⁹⁸.

The concept of integrated deterrence has emerged as a central concept in U.S. defence planning. It was formally articulated in the 2022 National Defence Strategy and later refined in associated strategic documents, including the Nuclear Posture Review, the Missile Defence Review, and the National Military Strategy⁹⁹. Integrated deterrence seeks to unify all elements of U.S. power — military capabilities, economic tools, technological acumen, data-sharing operations, and alliances — to present a consolidated deterrent which is resilient, adaptable, and credible¹⁰⁰. The U.S. has widened its cooperation, intelligence sharing, and interoperability with its allies, increasingly weaving these elements into operational planning that has been tested through combined exercises, shared technology development, and coordinated responses to threats¹⁰¹. While the core recognition — that the Indo-Pacific is central to U.S. interests — has remained constant, the operational frameworks, conceptual tools, and emphasis on cooperation represent meaningful evolution. As competition with China deepens and the regional strategic environment grows more complex, the U.S. Strategy of Integrated Deterrence seeks to ensure that coercion is discouraged not just by American power, but by collective, resilient, and adaptive power shared with allies and partners throughout the Indo-Pacific¹⁰².

⁹⁸ “Allies, Partners Central to U.S. Integrated Deterrence Effort,” by C. Todd Lopez, *DOD News*, Defense Security Cooperation Agency, March 1, 2023.

⁹⁹ U.S. Department of Defense. 2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, Including the Nuclear Posture Review and the Missile Defense Review. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2022.

¹⁰⁰ Pacific Forum, “YL Blog #100 – Integrated Deterrence and Minilateralism: Three Years of Indo-Pacific Security in a Networked Way,” *Pacific Forum*, January 31, 2025, <https://pacforum.org/publications/yl-blog-100-integrated-deterrence-and-minilateralism-three-years-of-indo-pacific-security-in-a-networked-way/>.

¹⁰¹ Christopher Lee, “Integrated Deterrence, Integrated Friends: Countering China’s Aggression in the Indo-Pacific with Multilateralism,” *Modern War Institute at West Point*, September 18, 2024.

¹⁰² Matthew F. Fleming, “YL Blog #100 – Integrated Deterrence and Minilateralism: Three Years of Indo-Pacific Security in a Networked Way,” *Pacific Forum, Young Leaders Blog*, January 31, 2025, <https://pacforum.org/publications/yl-blog-100-integrated-deterrence-and-minilateralism-three-years-of-indo-pacific-security-in-a-networked-way/>.

1.4. The Rise of «minilateralism»

In the current phase marked by global instability, international cooperation continues to adapt and reconfigure itself. As observed by Børge Brende, World Economic Forum President and CEO, «Cooperation is like water. If it sees it's being blocked, it just finds other ways because cooperation is a necessity and not a luxury»¹⁰³. As a new and more competitive order is emerging, one pattern of cooperation is gaining momentum, a model in which smaller and more flexible groups of nations try to address specific challenges together¹⁰⁴.

The post-Second World War international order had been structured around traditional forms of multilateralism, embodied by institutions as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, and World Health Organization which rest on formal treaties, consensus-driven procedures, and international law¹⁰⁵. However, this architecture has recently been retreating due to the rise of a multipolar configuration of power, accompanied by what Karlsrud and Reykers describe as «conflict management à la carte», in which states increasingly resort to ad hoc coalitions and «coalitions of the willing» — rapid, flexible and task-specific arrangements of like-minded actors — to bypass multilaterals' deadlock, often at the cost of institutional learning, accountability, and the long-term strengthening of UN-centred peace operations¹⁰⁶.

Within this changing scenario, minilateralism has gained prominence. The international political economist Miles Kahler coined the term «minilateralism» in 1992, even though such mechanisms could already be traced back to earlier 20th-century arrangements¹⁰⁷. ASEAN itself was originally created as a minilateral in 1967, when Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore and Thailand joined forces to confront perceived communist threats¹⁰⁸. However, minilateralism takes multiple forms in the Indo-Pacific and does not appear as a single model. Analysts distinguish between functionally focused minilaterals — centred on maritime security, health, and climate — those orchestrated by great powers, and «like-minded» democracies and middle powers that accentuate shared values and common threat

¹⁰³ Børge Brende, LinkedIn post, «Dialogue is not a luxury in times of uncertainty», January 12, 2026, accessed February 11, 2026.

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Stewart, «The New 'New Multilateralism': Minilateral Cooperation, but at What Cost?», *Global Summitry* 1, no. 2 (2015): 115–16.

¹⁰⁵ G. John Ikenberry, «The Liberal International Order», in *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, ed. Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 711–723.

¹⁰⁶ Karlsrud, John, and Yf Reykers. «Integrating Ad Hoc Coalitions in International Conflict Management.» *International Affairs* 101, no. 6 (2025): 2085–2101.

¹⁰⁷ Patrick Stewart, «The New 'New Multilateralism': Minilateral Cooperation, but at What Cost?», *Global Summitry* (2015): 116.

¹⁰⁸ Miles Kahler, «Multilateralism with Small and Large Numbers», *International Organization* 46, no. 3 (1992): 681–708.

perceptions¹⁰⁹. Notwithstanding smaller groups can bypass bureaucracy inertia and political deadlock, allowing countries to act expeditiously on urgent challenges and provide more targeted and effective responses — a dynamic referred as to as an «age of flux» in the Indo-Pacific institutional order by Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim¹¹⁰. Concurrently, the growing number of coalitions could fragment the international order, and gradually undermine universal institutions¹¹¹. These dynamics are especially visible in Southeast Asia, where the rise of Indo-Pacific minilaterals overlaps with debates over ASEAN centrality, since its consensus-based enforcement has struggled to generate resolute outcomes on issues as the Myanmar crisis, the Rohingya situation and the South China Sea disputes¹¹². As a result, some observers remark increasing frustration with ASEAN’s structural constraints and vulnerability to external pressure, which encouraged pragmatic, results-oriented states to pursue deeper cooperation in minilateral formats, including the Quad and AUKUS, which — if properly connected to regional structures — could serve as flexible complements rather than substitutes of ASEAN¹¹³.

Within this broader landscape, «Strategic» minilaterals — first identified as a distinct category by Kei Koga – such as the Quad, AUKUS, and the TSD, stand out. They are predominantly oriented toward strategic competition across various domains, including military, defence, economic, technological, ideological, and informational arenas, with the aim of preserving the balance of power and uphold a rules-based security order in the Indo-Pacific¹¹⁴.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) is among the most prominent strategic minilateral partnerships in the Indo-Pacific. Although it lacked sufficient forward-looking vision by the end of 2004 – partly due to «Australia and India’s strong aversion to provoking China»¹¹⁵ — it has experienced a revival since 2017 and has succeeded to adapt to an era of sharper power competition. Precisely, «Quad 2.0» aims to promote a normative international order in support

¹⁰⁹ Association of Southeast Asian Nations, “The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration), Bangkok, 8 August 1967,” ASEAN official document, <https://agreement.asean.org/media/download/20140117154159.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ M. Patrick Stewart, “The New ‘New Multilateralism’: Minilateral Cooperation, but at What Cost?,” *Global Summitry* 1, no. 2 (2015): 115–130.

¹¹¹ Prime Minister’s Office of Malaysia, “Keynote Address by YAB Dato’ Sri Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia, at the 36th Asia-Pacific Roundtable,” Kuala Lumpur, 10 August 2023.

¹¹² Poornima Vijaya, “Signaling in Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific: The Cases of Quad and AUKUS (2017–2022),” *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2024).

¹¹³ Mingjiang Li, “ASEAN’s Responses to AUKUS: Implications for Strategic Realignments in the Indo-Pacific,” *China International Strategy Review* 4 (2022): 268–287.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Wilkins, “What Is the Future of Strategic Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific? The Quad, AUKUS, and the US-Japan-Australia Trilateral,” *Australian Outlook* (Australian Institute of International Affairs), December 20, 2024.

¹¹⁵ Shinya Oguma, “The Revival of the Quad amidst Great Power Competition,” in *The Shifting Dynamics of Great Power Competition* (Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies, 2023), 129.

of a «Free and Open Indo-Pacific», and since 2021 it has progressively broadened its agenda beyond maritime security to cover issues such as cybersecurity, outer space, and climate change¹¹⁶.

Whereas AUKUS — announced in 2021 — is a trilateral security and technology partnership between Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom that further illustrates the rise of strategic minilateral configuration. According to analysis by the United States Studies Centre, AUKUS aims to «support Australia in acquiring nuclear-powered submarines and the necessary infrastructure to upkeep them», marking a crucial shift in deterrence dynamics in the region¹¹⁷. Furthermore, the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue — launched in 2002 between the United States, Japan, and Australia — similarly demonstrate the potential for enduring strategic coherence and provides an alternative to the traditional US «hub-and-spokes» alliance system that was established in the Asia-Pacific in the aftermath of the Second World War¹¹⁸.

Building on this, research by Felix Heiduk and Thomas Wilkins explores possible future trajectories of strategic minilaterals applying a range of International Relations theories to assess how the institutional configuration of the Quad, AUKUS, and TSD might develop¹¹⁹. With respect to the Quad, the analysis suggests that the creation of a formal quadrilateral military alliance is unlikely to emerge unless India was faced by a far a more direct and threatening confrontation from China¹²⁰. India intends to safeguard its strategic autonomy and therefore remains unwilling to openly align with the United States or its closest allies in any potential dispute with Beijing¹²¹. Reflecting this stance, the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has emphasized that «the Indo-Pacific is for something — not against somebody», hence signalling New Delhi desire to balance Chinese power without overtly provoking the People’s Republic of China¹²². Even so, the Quad’s growing engagement on governance-related issues could gradually position it as an alternative provider of regional security governance that might compete with ASEAN’s role¹²³. Such development would, however, require both further

¹¹⁶ Thomas Wilkins, “What Is the Future of Strategic Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific? The Quad, AUKUS, and the US-Japan-Australia Trilateral,” *Australian Outlook*.

¹¹⁷ United States Studies Centre, “What Is the AUKUS Partnership?,” July 11, 2023.

¹¹⁸ William Tow, “The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, Minilateralism, and Asia-Pacific Order Building,” in *US-Japan-Australia Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2015).

¹¹⁹ Thomas Wilkins and Felix Heiduk, “Minilateralism and Pathways to Institutional Progression: Alliance Formation or Cooperative Security Governance?,” *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (2024).

¹²⁰ Sarah Tzinieris, Rishika Chauhan, and Eirini Athanasiado, “India’s A La Carte Minilateralism: AUKUS and the Quad,” *The Washington Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2023), published online December 19, 2023.

¹²¹ Thomas S. Wilkins, *The Quad Process: The Evolution of Diplomatic and Maritime Security Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*, policy brief (Tokyo: The Japan Institute of International Affairs, 17 December 2019).

¹²² Thomas Wilkins and Felix Heiduk, “Minilateralism and Pathways to Institutional Progression.”

¹²³ Ibid.

institutionalization as well as an enlargement in membership which has been fostered by ongoing «Quad-plus» discussions¹²⁴.

AUKUS, together with Quad, is often inaccurately described as an «alliance» despite the absence of a trilateral defence treaty underpinning the agreement. Nevertheless, the outstanding alignment between the three participants — and the extent of their existing bilateral security ties — make this misrepresentation less problematic than in the Quad’s case¹²⁵. Accordingly, the prospect for an evolvement of AUKUS into a formal alliance is reinforced by the consolidation of defence integration and pre-existing alliance commitments – namely NATO and ANZUS¹²⁶.

The TSD, by contrast, has gradually acquired many of the features associated with a military alliance, despite lacking a formal treaty instrument¹²⁷. As strategic competition in the region has intensified and threat perceptions have converged among the United States, Japan, and Australia, the TSD has attracted growing attention. It is sufficiently institutionalised through political and defence consultation mechanisms that enable the three governments to coordinate their responses to potential crises and align their strategic attitudes¹²⁸. During a Trilateral Defence Ministers’ Meeting was announced the establishment of a dedicated «Trilateral Defence Consultations» instrument to support policy and operational alignment among the Japan Self-Defence Forces, the Australian Defence Force, and US forces from peacetime through contingencies, integrated by trilateral exercises aimed at warfighting¹²⁹. However, both the TSD and AUKUS still lack an explicit treaty commitment obliging the parties to respond collectively to an armed attack, even though their network of bilateral alliances is solid and thus underpins strong expectations of mutual assistance¹³⁰.

As a result, these minilaterals are likely to preserve a degree of constructive ambiguity, avoiding unnecessary tensions while deepening integration in order to operate as effective military coalitions in times of crisis. In this sense, «alliances» as traditionally understood —

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ William T. Tow, “The Trilateral Strategic Dialogue, Minilateralism, and Asia-Pacific Order Building,” in *US-Japan-Australia Security Cooperation: Prospects and Challenges* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2015).

¹²⁸ Wilkins and Heiduk, “Minilateralism and Pathways to Institutional Progression,” 15.

¹²⁹ Australia, Department of Defence, “Australia–Japan–United States Trilateral Defence Ministers’ Meeting, November 2024: Joint Statement,” November 17, 2024.

¹³⁰ Thomas Wilkins, “What Is the Future of Strategic Minilateralism in the Indo-Pacific?”

rooted in formal treaty constraints — may increasingly be eclipsed by more flexible forms of security cooperation, of which strategic minilaterals constitute key illustrations¹³¹.

CHAPTER 2: THE STRATEGY OF THE PEOPLES' REPUBLIC OF CHINA TOWARDS TAIWAN

2.1. The «Chinese Dream» and reunification as an existential objective of the Chinese Communist Party

«States with different identities have different world-views, which, in turn, make different impacts upon foreign policies and strategies»¹³².

Pröpper tried to explain — in his article «The “Chinese Dream”: An Analysis of the Belt Road Initiative» — why it is hard for the outside world to comprehend the concept of «Chinese Dream» and why there is no formal definition of it.

To understand a vision is to unravel its history and its future. An answer to the question being raised all over the world, “What does China think?” should therefore start in its past. ‘What past?’ one may ask, since due to what Edward Said famously named “Orientalism” (the idea of Western “natural superiority” and the perception of inferiority or even unimportance of the East) most have deemed this past unworthy of serious study¹³³.

Pröpper contends that the understanding of Chinese contemporary political thought is tied to China’s traditional self-perception, since it represents the precondition for grasping both the discourse of «national humiliation» and the one of «national rejuvenation»¹³⁴.

Since the 19th century and persisting into the present, China has conceived itself as the cultural and moral centre of the world, a perception encoded in the term «zhongguo», literally «central

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Qin Yaqing, “Struggle for Identity: A Political Psychology of China’s Rise,” in *China’s Rise in Historical Perspective*, ed. Brantly Womack (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

¹³³ Henrik Pröpper, “The ‘Chinese Dream’: An Analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative,” *International Social Science Review* 96, no. 1 (2020): 3.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 3.

state»¹³⁵. Moreover, China's physical and symbolic horizons expanded across Asia and beyond due to the Silk Road, reinforcing designations such as «Middle Land»¹³⁶. However, the penetration of Western and Japanese imperial powers into China fractured this sense of civilizational centrality and generated the so defined «century of national humiliation»¹³⁷.

William A. Callahan contends that emotions such as humiliation, guilt, and victimhood have been systematically lifted from individual experiences to collective national sentiments, resulting in what he calls a «Guilt of Nations» that shapes both domestic politics and international relations¹³⁸. In the contemporary official narrative, China's «century of humiliation» is understood to have concluded in 1949, when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) came to power and «rescued» the nation by reasserting sovereignty¹³⁹. In the post-Cold War era the disintegration of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, together with the 1989 protest movement in China, generated what Zheng Wang describes as three intertwined crises of belief in socialism, in Marxism, and in the CCP itself¹⁴⁰. In response to this ideological deterioration, CCP leaders reconfigured the humiliation and the rejuvenation narratives in order to rebuild the Party's claims of legitimacy and portrayed their rule as the necessary condition for national survival and revival¹⁴¹.

In the early 1980s, Deng Xiaoping promoted the slogan of the «invigoration of China», arguing that the country still stagnated behind global standards of modernization and therefore a broad national regeneration was required. This formulation anticipated the Chinese Dream by explicitly linking national strength and prosperity to the material advancement of individual citizens¹⁴². Within the Chinese Dream, there is a clear connection between the people and the nation, therefore, rejuvenating China must start with the enhancement of its citizens¹⁴³.

This logic was sharpened under the rule of Jiang Zemin, in the early 1990s, through the adoption of «the great rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation» as its core mission¹⁴⁴. From this

¹³⁵ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁷ William A. Callahan, «National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism,” *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 199–218.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Torsten Weber, «Zheng Wang. *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012,” *Journal of International and Global Studies* 5, no. 1 (2013): article 11.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Xi Jinping, *The Chinese Dream of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2014), 15–17.

¹⁴⁴ Zheng Wang, «The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, no. 3 (2013): 1–16.

moment forward, the national-humiliation narrative became a justification for territorial claims, particularly in relation to Hong Kong, Macao, and disputed maritime areas¹⁴⁵.

Within Xi Jinping's articulation of the «Chinese Dream» of national rejuvenation, the realization of this process explicitly posits the unification of all Chinese territories as necessary, with Taiwan occupying a pivotal position¹⁴⁶. In Xi's discourse, failure to achieve reunification would not simply signify an incomplete foreign policy agenda, but a deterioration of the Chinese Dream itself and, by implication, a direct challenge to the CCP's historical mission and political survival. It is precisely in this context that Beijing's contemporary cross-Strait strategy must be addressed.

In January 1979, the National People's Congress issued the «Message to Compatriots in Taiwan», formally renouncing the previous policy of «military liberation» and calling for peaceful reunification¹⁴⁷. Deng Xiaoping's 1982 articulation of «one country, two systems» provided an institutional formula under which Taiwan would be incorporated as a Special Administrative Region retaining its socio-economic system, a high degree of autonomy and its own armed forces¹⁴⁸. This condition was subsequently written into the PRC Constitution and reaffirmed under Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao as the official pattern for the resolution of the Taiwan issue, thus weaving unification into the legal and ideological architecture of national rejuvenation¹⁴⁹.

Chunlong Lu describes the Chinese Dream as the «natural result of a long-lasting discourse of national rejuvenation, victim mentality and rising nationalism», characterizing it within a longer genealogy of humiliation and revival¹⁵⁰.

Since 1949, the CCP has never abandoned its aim of «reunifying» Taiwan, officially defining the island as an «inalienable part» of China whose «liberation» constitutes a sacred duty of the party-state¹⁵¹. Xi's rhetoric thus embeds Taiwan into the finalism of the China Dream by asserting that only once territorial integrity has been restored and great-power status achieved can rejuvenation be considered complete¹⁵².

¹⁴⁵ William A. Callahan, «National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism,” *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 199–218.

¹⁴⁶ Yiu-chung Wong, «Independence or Reunification? The Evolving PRC–Taiwan Relations,” 103.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 103–106.

¹⁴⁸ Deng Xiaoping, *Jian she you Zhongguo tese de shehui zhuyi* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishers, 1987).

¹⁴⁹ Yiu-chung Wong, «Independence or Reunification? The Evolving PRC–Taiwan Relations,” 105–106.

¹⁵⁰ Chunlong Lu, «Urban Chinese Support for the Chinese Dream: Empirical Findings from Seventeen Cities,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 20 (2015): 1–22.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² Yiu-chung Wong, «Independence or Reunification? The Evolving PRC–Taiwan Relations,” *Baltic Journal of European Studies* 9, no. 2 (2019): 116–120.

Under Xi Jinping, the rejuvenation motif has been further elevated, while explicit invocations of humiliation have become less prominent, though remaining embedded in educational and commemorative practices. As Sørensen observes that «Rather than on foreign invasion and exploitation, the focus is on the positive elements and strengths in Chinese history and in Chinese ancient civilization with strong calls to revive and be proud of Chinese cultural values, strengths and achievements»¹⁵³.

The Chinese Dream can therefore be conceptualized as an enduring aspiration to recover a lost civilizational centrality¹⁵⁴.

Moreover, the Chinese Dream aims at achieving two major objectives, which are encoded in its agenda «Two Century Goals»¹⁵⁵. The first centenary goal was to establish a «moderate well-off society» by 2021, when the CCP made its 100th birthday, objective declared as achieved by Chairman Xi Jinping; the second one is to create a «rich and strong socialist country» by 2049, when the PRC will mark its 100 years¹⁵⁶. In this sense, the Chinese Dream operates as a narrative tool that purposely shifts attention away from present challenges and redirects it toward a promised future. Accordingly, as Camilla T. N. Sørensen explains, the Chinese Dream is an effort to ensure China's domestic stability and CCP's legitimacy, shifting public anger and protests toward a vision for China's development over the next decades¹⁵⁷.

For Xi Jinping, hence the main context for promoting the Chinese Dream narrative is domestic politics, even though its implications inevitably extend beyond China's borders¹⁵⁸.

Xing Li — in his article «Interpreting and Understanding “The Chinese Dream” in a Holistic Nexus» — underlined the international scope of such concept, emphasizing that «The Chinese Dream is a dream of peace, development, cooperation and mutual benefit for all. It will not only benefit the Chinese people, but also people of all countries in the world»¹⁵⁹.

¹⁵³ Camilla T. N. Sørensen, “The Significance of Xi Jinping’s ‘Chinese Dream’ for Chinese Foreign Policy: From ‘Tao Guang Yang Hui’ to ‘Fen Fa You Wei,’” *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015): 53–73.

¹⁵⁴ Torsten Weber, “Zheng Wang, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2012,” *Journal of International and Global Studies* 5, no. 1 (2013): art. 11.

¹⁵⁵ Tang Jun, “China’s Two Centenary Goals: Strategies Ahead,” *The Diplomatic Insight*, October 1, 2021, 10:41 a.m., accessed February 20, 2026, <https://thediplomaticinsight.com/chinas-two-centenary-goals-strategies-ahead/>

¹⁵⁶ Tang, “China’s Two Centenary Goals: Strategies Ahead.”

¹⁵⁷ Camilla T. N. Sørensen, “The Significance of Xi Jinping’s ‘Chinese Dream’ for Chinese Foreign Policy: From ‘Tao Guang Yang Hui’ to ‘Fen Fa You Wei,’” *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015): 53–73.

¹⁵⁸ Zheng Wang, “The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, no. 3 (2013): 1–16.

¹⁵⁹ Xing Li, “Interpreting and Understanding ‘The Chinese Dream’ in a Holistic Nexus,” *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 8 (2015): 1–20.

A major challenge for this concept lies in whether it is understood abroad, particularly since current debates about China are polarized between two opposing views that convey that its rise will either destabilize the balance of power or, alternatively, that growing interdependence will further integrate China into the existing international order¹⁶⁰. However, the leading interpretation of the Chinese Dream portrays it as a nationalistic doctrine focused on regaining — through military force if necessary — China’s great power status and dignity¹⁶¹.

Beijing’s Taiwan policy illustrates the tension between peaceful and coercive rhetoric. The 1993 White Paper «The Taiwan Question and the Reunification of China» simultaneously presents peaceful reunification as the preferred path while affirming China’s right to employ «whatever means», including force, to safeguard sovereignty¹⁶². The 2000 White Paper «The One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue» further codifies this duality by specifying three conditions for military action — a formal declaration of independence by Taiwan, «uncontrollable» internal turmoil on the island, or the indefinite postponement of peaceful talks¹⁶³ — thus legally circumscribing, but not removing, the possibility of force. The 2005 Anti-Secession Law deepens this logic by explicitly legalizing the use of «non-peaceful means» against Taiwan independence, indicating both domestically and internationally that armed unification remains a legitimate, if last-resort, option for protecting core interests¹⁶⁴. This framework was reaffirmed and updated in the 2022 White Paper «The Taiwan Question and China’s Reunification in the New Era», which reiterates peaceful reunification as the CCP’s first choice while refusing to renounce to the use of force¹⁶⁵. In the Paper China repeatedly insisted on its right to take «all necessary measures» to safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity, explicitly grounding this claim in the UN Charter principle of state sovereignty, thereby reinforcing the codified tension between professed peaceful intent and the retained option of coercive force¹⁶⁶.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Camilla T. N. Sørensen, “The Significance of Xi Jinping’s ‘Chinese Dream’ for Chinese Foreign Policy: From ‘Tao Guang Yang Hui’ to ‘Fen Fa You Wei,’” *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015): 53–73.

¹⁶² Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, *Taiwan wen ti yu Zhongguo tongyi [The Taiwan Question and China’s Reunification]* (Beijing: Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council, 1993).

¹⁶³ Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, *Yi ge Zhongguo yuanze yu Taiwan Tongyi [The One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue]* (Beijing: Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council, 2000).

¹⁶⁴ Yiu-chung Wong, “Independence or Reunification? The Evolving PRC–Taiwan Relations,” *Baltic Journal of European Studies* 9, no. 2 (2019): 108

¹⁶⁵ People’s Republic of China, Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and State Council Information Office, *The Taiwan Question and China’s Reunification in the New Era* (Beijing, August 2022).

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

Simultaneously, Beijing has pursued a strategy often summarized as «economics first, politics second», using trade, investment, tourism and social exchanges to deepen cross-Strait interdependence while keeping political leverage in reserve¹⁶⁷. A strategy that was particularly evident during the Ma Ying-jeou era but has since been complemented by growing military and diplomatic coercion under Xi Jinping.

While military and legal instruments signal the hard-edge of this existential commitment, the CCP also deploys the «Chinese Dream» as a soft-power narrative to cultivate international acceptance of China's rise and, indirectly, of its claims to national reunification.

Alex Berkofsky, in his article «The “Chinese Dream” and Chinese Foreign and Security Policies — Rosy Rhetoric versus Harsh Realities» clarifies that China's perspective of its own regional foreign and security policy represents a mere reclamation of what has belonged to China since «ancient times»¹⁶⁸.

Chinese foreign policy is guided by the «Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence» created in 1954 by Zhou Enlai that were presented at the Bandung Conference of 1955: «Following the principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, the peaceful coexistence of countries with different social systems can be realized»¹⁶⁹.

In the 2000s, Weissmann highlighted the fact that China's underlying foreign policy had been reworked within the «new security concept» structure, which extended these principles delineating Beijing's code of conduct in the post-Cold War order. The new security concept reaffirmed the adherence to the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, and advocated mutually beneficial economic cooperation, confidence-building measures, and the development of «strategic partnerships», which were explicitly not to be constructed with the aim of negatively targeting any third country¹⁷⁰. This approach affirmed a new tendency in China's foreign policy, one which would establish China's «peaceful rise» (the term was

¹⁶⁷ Yiu-chung Wong, “Independence or Reunification? The Evolving PRC–Taiwan Relations,” *Baltic Journal of European Studies* 9, no. 2 (2019): 115–116

¹⁶⁸ Axel Berkofsky, “‘The Chinese Dream’ and Chinese Foreign and Security Policies—Rosy Rhetoric versus Harsh Realities,” *Asia-Pacific Review* 23 (2016): 109–128.

¹⁶⁹ Zhou Enlai, “Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, Head of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China, Distributed at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference,” in *China and the Asian-African Conference (Documents)* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1955), 9–20, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121623>

¹⁷⁰ Mikael Weissmann, “Chinese Foreign Policy in a Global Perspective: A Responsible Reformer ‘Striving for Achievement,’” *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015): 151–166.

subsequently changed to «peaceful development» owing to the negative connotation of the term «rise») and reassure the international community of China's peaceful purposes¹⁷¹.

When Xi Jinping assumed Party leadership in 2012, China began to shift from a «low profile strategy» to one of «striving for achievements»¹⁷². As Weissmann's analysis emphasized, «The overarching goal is to ensure prosperity in China, to open up new paths for the nation's rejuvenation, and create conditions that benefit the Chinese people»¹⁷³. To accomplish so, Xi's foreign policy focuses on the development of China's relationships with its «old friends».

China has been trying to widen its impact in the emerging developing world, trying to increase its presence and influence in Central Asia, South Asia, Latin America and Africa. It is also trying to develop its cooperation with other emerging major states, such as India, Mexico, South Africa and Russia¹⁷⁴.

Drawing on this concept, Demir identifies the launching of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)¹⁷⁵ as one of the most important aspects in Xi's presidency, indeed through the project the leader sought to overcome its domestic economic and security problems by improving connectivity with the Eurasian region¹⁷⁶. As stated by Marc Lanteigne, «(...) identifying a clear separation between China's domestic political interests and its foreign policy can be a complicated process»¹⁷⁷. In fact, China's foreign policy is regulated to pursue the country's national interests which are defined in the White Paper published by the Information Office of the State

¹⁷¹ Ibid. This approach involved deepening trade and investment ties, especially through initiatives such as regional free trade agreements and large-scale infrastructure financing, while simultaneously portraying China as a «responsible major power» committed to providing public goods and contributing to global governance. Rather than openly challenging the prevailing order, China sought to incrementally reshape it from within, using tools like development assistance, participation in UN peacekeeping, and the creation of complementary institutions to extend its influence. As Mikael Weissmann notes, these choices underpin China's self-image as a «responsible reformer» that is striving for greater achievement and status without formally repudiating the core rules of the international system.

¹⁷² Camilla T. N. Sørensen, «The Significance of Xi Jinping's 'Chinese Dream' for Chinese Foreign Policy: From 'Tao Guang Yang Hui' to 'Fen Fa You Wei,'» *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015).

¹⁷³ Mikael Weissmann, «Chinese Foreign Policy in a Global Perspective: A Responsible Reformer 'Striving for Achievement,'» *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015): 151–166.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ China launched the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013 with the stated aims of promoting international cooperation, connectivity, and trade, and of facilitating more «balanced» global economic development. At the same time, many analysts argue that Beijing's attempt to transform its growth model is no longer merely a strategy for acquiring technology and foreign reserves, but increasingly an effort to enhance China's global influence and role in international governance, thereby inaugurating a new phase of regional and economic diplomacy that links China to more than sixty-five participating states, even as Chinese officials continue to stress respect for state sovereignty and national security (Muzapu, Havadi, and Mandizvidza 2018; Ohashi 2018; Li, Lai, et al. 2019; Geeraerts 2011).

¹⁷⁶ Emre Demir, «Understanding the Transformation in Chinese Foreign Policy: A Historical Evaluation from 1949 to 2019,» *Cappadocia Journal of Area Studies* 1, no. 1 (2019): 6–24.

¹⁷⁷ Marc Lanteigne, *Chinese Foreign Policy: An Introduction*, 4th ed. (London: Routledge, 2019).

Council of the PRC in 2011 called «China's Peaceful Development» and repeatedly reaffirmed in subsequent official documents under Xi Jinping as China's «core interests»¹⁷⁸. It thus identifies six core interests of China, namely, state sovereignty, national security, territorial integrity, national unification, China's political system established by the Constitution and overall social stability, and basic precautions for safeguarding sustainable economic and social development¹⁷⁹. In this sense, the Taiwan question crystallizes several of these core interests at once: sovereignty, territorial integrity, national unification and regime security. The 1992 ARATS-SEF — the Association for the Relations across Taiwan Strait, created in 1992 in Beijing in response to the Strait Exchange Foundation, created in 1990 in Taiwan — talks produced the «1992 Consensus» of «one China, respective interpretations», which Taipei has treated as a pragmatic formula for managing ambiguity, even as Beijing mainly emphasizes the «One China» portion¹⁸⁰. Looking forward, the interplay between China's pursuit of the China Dream, Taiwan's democratic identity consolidation, and the trajectory of U.S.-China strategic competition will be decisive for the prospects of reunification. Nationalism and the narrative of rejuvenation empower the CCP but also create expectations that may become difficult to manage if unification continues to be postponed¹⁸¹. As China's military power grows, the material preconditions for a coercive campaign against Taiwan, especially under conditions of limited or absent U.S. intervention, may improve.

Beston Arif, in his article «The Role of Soft power in China's Foreign Policy in the 21st century» argued that «(...) China's aspiration to be considered as a more powerful state regionally as well as globally depends on further attention to the role of soft power in its decision making of foreign relations»¹⁸². Soft power was firstly introduced by Joseph Nye, who defined it as «(...) the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than coercion. A country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, values, and policies»¹⁸³. Chinese soft power was theorized and defined by different school of thoughts, the most prominent of which is the one identified by Courmont as the «cultural school» that

¹⁷⁸ K. G. Cai, «Constructing an Analytical Framework for Explaining Chinese Foreign Policy,» *Chinese Political Science Review* 5 (2020): 355–373.

¹⁷⁹ Information Office of the State Council, *China's Peaceful Development* (Beijing: Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, September 2011), https://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/09/09/content_281474986284646.htm.

¹⁸⁰ Yiu-chung Wong, «Independence or Reunification? The Evolving PRC–Taiwan Relations,» *Baltic Journal of European Studies* 9, no. 2 (2019): 105–106, 111–112.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 117–120

¹⁸² Beston Arif, «The Role of Soft Power in China's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century,» *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies* 3 (2017): 94–101.

¹⁸³ Joseph S. Nye Jr., «Public Diplomacy and Soft Power,» *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 94–109.

advocates for the promotion of Chinese culture abroad to improve the attractiveness of China on the world stage»¹⁸⁴.

The Chinese Dream is also deployed in both domestic and international discourse as a soft power instrument, used to justify or mobilize action not through coercion but through attraction, thereby framing assertive foreign policies as defensive rather than offensive¹⁸⁵. The Chinese Dream's impact on China's foreign policy ultimately lies in the fact that national leadership and pride are bounded to such dream¹⁸⁶. In this sense, the «Chinese Dream» turns into an existential objective for the Party's authority at home and its status abroad¹⁸⁷.

2.2. The modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities.

The modernization of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and its Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) architecture must be understood as an integral component of Beijing's broader strategic project of «great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation» and its aspiration to become a «global» military power by mid 21st century. In International Relations' theories, power is described as the ability to take actions, or control those of others. The concept of power was defined by various political scientists, among them Raymond Aron who believed that power is the «capacity of a political unit to impose its will upon other units»¹⁸⁸. However, power is connected to multiple dimensions, therefore, as Hans J Morgenthau claimed, it consists of both measurable factors — such as geography or military strength — and unmeasurable ones — such as the morale of a nation¹⁸⁹. Nevertheless, there is no formal agreement among scholars on which factor is the most influential in defining the power of a nation. Paul Kennedy claimed that it is economic power the one playing the most important role as it allows to build strong armed forces and deliver on political commitments to other states¹⁹⁰. Within this conceptual

¹⁸⁴ Barthélemy Courmont, “What Implications for Chinese Soft Power: Charm Offensive or New Hegemony?,” *Pacific Focus* 28, no. 3 (2013): 343–364.

¹⁸⁵ William A. Callahan, “Identity and Security in China: The Negative Soft Power of the China Dream,” *Political Studies* 63, no. 1 (2015): 149–165.

¹⁸⁶ Zheng Wang, “The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context,” *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 19, no. 1 (2014): 13–20.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Raymond Aron, *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 47.

¹⁸⁹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (New York: Knopf, 1978).

¹⁹⁰ Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Vintage, 1987).

framework, China's post-1978 economic transformation provides an illustrative example of how material capabilities underpin military power. In particular, contemporary PLA modernization can be read as part of a broader Chinese effort to erode what Barry Posen termed U.S. «command of the commons», namely Washington's long-standing ability to project power through key global air and maritime domains while denying similar access to others¹⁹¹.

Since the beginning of the process of economic reforms launched by Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in the early 80s, the People Republic of China has been facing a period of unprecedented economic development¹⁹². This sustained growth has provided the material foundation for the expansion and comprehensive upgrading of its armed forces that has created fractions with the United States, manifested through the development of advanced weapons systems¹⁹³. This framework has recently evolved into an arms race that affects almost all domains of offensive and defensive military power, including strategic nuclear forces, conventional forces, high-precision strike systems, land, sea and air defence, and space warfare assets. Many analysts interpret China's A2/AD investments as precisely aimed at undermining U.S. operational access in the Western Pacific and thus complicate U.S. reinforcement of allies in a crisis¹⁹⁴.

Today, with over 2.2 million soldiers, the People's Liberation Army remains the world's largest armed force in terms of number¹⁹⁵. It consists of five branches, namely Ground, Navy, Air, Rocket, and Strategic Support Forces, that together perform in China's active defence strategy which combines an overall strategic defensive posture with offensive capabilities at the operational and tactical levels¹⁹⁶. Within this framework, A2/AD is intended not simply to defend the Chinese coastline but also to raise the costs and risks of U.S. power projection into its near seas¹⁹⁷. Chinese 2019 White Paper set the national defence goals — in terms of Armed

¹⁹¹ Barry R. Posen, "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony," *International Security* 28, no. 1 (Summer 2003): 5–46.

¹⁹² Tomasz Smura, *Modernization of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and Its Impact on the Security of the Indo-Pacific Region*, Strategic Papers, no. 14 (Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, February 6, 2024), <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/Lists/ACRPS-PDFDocumentLibrary/modernization-of-chinese-army-impact-on-security-of-the-indo-pacific-region.pdf>.

¹⁹³ Marianna G. Yevtodyeva, "Development of the Chinese A2/AD System in the Context of US–China Relations," *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* 2022, no. 4: 77–92.

¹⁹⁴ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48.

¹⁹⁵ Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2022 (Washington, DC: Ministry of Defence of the United States, 2022), 34–35.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48.

Forces modernization — to be the achievement of mechanization with significant informatization and improved strategic capabilities by 2020, and the conclusion of the restructuring and upgrading of national defence and armed forces by 2035¹⁹⁸. In implementing the strategic vision of building a «modern socialist country» by 2049, the Chinese leadership has designated the centenary of the People’s Liberation Army in 2027 as a key milestone that requires an accelerated process of reform to ensure that substantial advances are achieved by the time the armed forces mark their 100th anniversary¹⁹⁹. Xi Jinping underscored this priority in his report to the 20th National Congress, stating that «achieving the goals for the centenary of the People’s Liberation Army in 2027 and more quickly elevating our people’s armed forces to world-class standards are strategic tasks for building a modern socialist country in all respects»²⁰⁰. In this framework, A2/AD approach — or what Chinese sources often describe as a «counter-intervention» strategy — emerges not as an isolated operational concept, but as a central pillar of a wider effort to secure regional hegemony in East Asia, push the United States’ military presence further from China’s periphery, and ultimately enable China to revise elements of the existing international order in ways that would benefit Beijing’s interests, consolidating a more assertive military posture in East Asia²⁰¹. Formulated in the 2000s, in anticipation of potential intervention by U.S. forces and their allies in conflicts involving the PRC, this strategy seeks to enable Beijing to assert control over strategically significant maritime areas during times of military escalation, explicitly accounting for persistent U.S. superiority in air power, major surface combatants and naval weapon systems, as well as C4ISR capabilities²⁰². The U.S. conceptual response, developed under the label AirSea Battle and subsequently rebranded as the Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons²⁰³, explicitly sought to preserve American access by combining passive defences with offensive effort to destroy or degrade the networks underpinning Chinese A2/AD²⁰⁴.

¹⁹⁸ “China’s National Defense in the New Era” (The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, July 2019).

¹⁹⁹ Liu Caiyu, “China’s centennial goal of building a modern military by 2027 in alignment with national strength: experts,” *Global Times*, October 31, 2020, accessed November 22, 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/2mrwvkmd>.

²⁰⁰ “Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects: Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China,” October 16, 2022.

²⁰¹ Smura, *Modernization of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army*.

²⁰² Marianna G. Yevtodyeva, “Development of the Chinese A2/AD System in the Context of US–China Relations,” *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost’* 2022, no. 4: 77–92.

²⁰³ Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons,” memorandum, January 8, 2015, USNI News, <https://news.usni.org/2015/01/20/document-air-sea-battle-name-change-memo>.

²⁰⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *AirSea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenges* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, May 2013), <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/ASB-ConceptImplementation-Summary-May-2013.pdf>.

The elaboration of the A2/AD concept coincided with a major doctrinal shift within the PLA away from the Maoist notion of «people’s war», enfolded on mass mobilization and conventional combat, towards the doctrine of «informatized» warfare that prioritizes high-technology forces, joint operations, and the integration of precision strike, and networked command systems²⁰⁵.

In analytical terms, the core elements of an effective denial system comprise a combination of accurate ballistic and cruise missiles; integrated, multilayered surface-to-air defences; large numbers of fourth-generation and more advanced fighter aircraft equipped with high-performance air-to-air missiles; near-real-time distributed surveillance and reconnaissance systems, as well as robust electronic warfare, anti-satellite, and cyber capabilities²⁰⁶. When combined, these assets serve a single overarching goal, that is to limit or block an adversary’s ability to access, manoeuvre, and conduct effective operations in defined air, maritime, and information spaces²⁰⁷. These modernization efforts manifest differently across each service, but they collectively underpin China’s evolving A2/AD posture. According to Biddle and Oelrich, long-range reconnaissance, surveillance, and target acquisition (RSTA) represent the core of this system, since they allow accurate engagement of mobile ships and aircraft at extended distances, whereas mobile land-based launchers remain comparatively hard to detect amidst complex terrain²⁰⁸.

Although the PLA Ground Forces continue to operate a substantial inventory of legacy Soviet-era platforms, recent structural reforms have emphasized qualitative enhancements over quantitative expansion, enabling more effective integration into joint operations²⁰⁹. The PLA force development process was assessed in the 2022 DoD report to be focused on «improving precision, multi-functional, and sustained operations capabilities, command and control, and integrated systems to promote ambitions of building a global combat capable army» to support theatre-level A2/AD campaigns more effectively²¹⁰. Nonetheless, the continued reliance on

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ David Ochmanek, “The Role of Maritime and Air Power in DoD’s Third Offset Strategy” (testimony, RAND Corporation, 2014), 12, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT420/RAND_CT420.pdf.

²⁰⁷ Sam LaGrone, “Pentagon Drops Air Sea Battle Name, Concept Lives On,” U.S. Naval Institute News, January 20, 2015, <https://news.usni.org/2015/01/20/pentagon-drops-air-sea-battle-name-concept-lives>.

²⁰⁸ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, “Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia,” *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48.

²⁰⁹ Smura, *Modernization of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army*.

²¹⁰ *Annual Report to Congress*, 47.

ageing battle tanks (such as Type-59 derivatives) and older infantry fighting vehicles underscores persistent capability gaps within the force²¹¹.

The most dynamic A2/AD-relevant transformations have occurred in the PLA Navy (PLAN), which has already become the world's largest fleet by number of surface and submarine vessels and according to estimates by the Ministry of Defence, the number of Chinese warships was expected to reach about 400 by 2025 and 440 by 2030²¹². Submarine forces constitute a central element of China's A2/AD posture, featuring a growing number of nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (Type 094/094A Jin-class) and nuclear-powered attack submarines (Type 093/093A/B Shang-class)²¹³, while older conventionally powered submarines — such as Kilo-class boats armed with Russian SS-N-27 anti-ship cruise missiles, along with China's Song, Yuan and Shang submarines — provide a significant undersea anti-ship capability²¹⁴. Power projection platforms, including the Liaoning and Shandong aircraft carriers and the indigenously designed Fujian, together with large amphibious ships such as the Yushen-class (Type 075) landing helicopter assault ships and Yuzhao-class (Type 071) transport docks, reinforce China's ability to conduct large-scale amphibious and expeditionary operations, a capability that simultaneously supports potential Taiwan contingencies, island-seizure scenarios, and presence operations in the wider Indo-Pacific²¹⁵. The PLA Air Force (PLAAF) has evolved from a force largely dependent on obsolete Soviet-derived aircraft into an increasingly sophisticated component of China's A2/AD architecture, with both defensive and offensive long-range strike tasks²¹⁶. These material improvements are accompanied by complex exercises aimed at strengthening coordination among forces into joint A2/AD-oriented scenarios. A significant share of such practices has been conducted in the air and maritime areas around Taiwan, underscoring the centrality of a cross-Strait contingency to the practical refinement of China's denial capabilities. The most recent major activity around the Island is «Justice Mission 2025» which has been described as

²¹¹ Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2022, 46; *The Military Balance 2021* (London: IISS, 2021), 250.

²¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 50-52

²¹³ Peter Suci, "China Now Has Six Type 094A Jin-Class Nuclear Powered Missile Submarines," National Interest, May 6, 2020, accessed November 22, 2023, <https://tinyurl.com/3eh58jsb>.

²¹⁴ *Annual Report to Congress*, pp. 53-54

²¹⁵ Redaccion Zona Militar, "A Type 075 Amphibious Assault Ship Joins China Navy's Shandong Aircraft Carrier Deployment in Western Pacific," Zona Militar, September 12, 2024, <https://www.zona-militar.com/en/2024/09/12/a-type-075-amphibious-assault-ship-joins-china-navys-shandong-aircraft-carrier-deployment-in-western-pacific/>.

²¹⁶ *The Military Balance 2021*, p. 255.

the largest Chinese exercise implemented in the area in terms of geographic reach²¹⁷. Concurrently, effective A2/AD control requires close operations owing to the effectiveness of radar and air defence decays with distance²¹⁸.

A particularly critical pillar of A2/AD is the PLA Rocket Force (PLARF), which provides China with dense, diversified missile coverage designed to threaten adversary assets from tactical to strategic ranges. In addition to intercontinental ballistic missiles aimed at deterring or coercing major powers, the PLARF deploys short-range ballistic missiles capable of striking targets within roughly 600–850 km, thus covering Taiwan and key facilities in the immediate region²¹⁹. Medium-range ballistic missiles such as the DF-21 family, together with intermediate-range systems like the DF-26 (with a range of around 4,000 km), extend China’s strike capability deep into the Western Pacific, enabling Beijing to threaten U.S. bases in Japan and Guam as well as naval forces operating at significant distances from the Chinese coast²²⁰. Together, these systems are designed to erode an adversary’s ability to deploy, sustain, and coordinate operations near China’s periphery, forming the core of its regional strike posture.

²¹⁷ Bonny Lin et al., “Tracking China’s Increased Military Activities in the Indo-Pacific in 2025,” February 5, 2026.

²¹⁸ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, “Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia,” *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48.

²¹⁹ Christopher J. Mihal, “Understanding the People’s Liberation Army Rocket Force: Strategy, Armament, and Disposition,” *Military Review*, special issue, September 2021.

²²⁰ *Annual Report to Congress*.

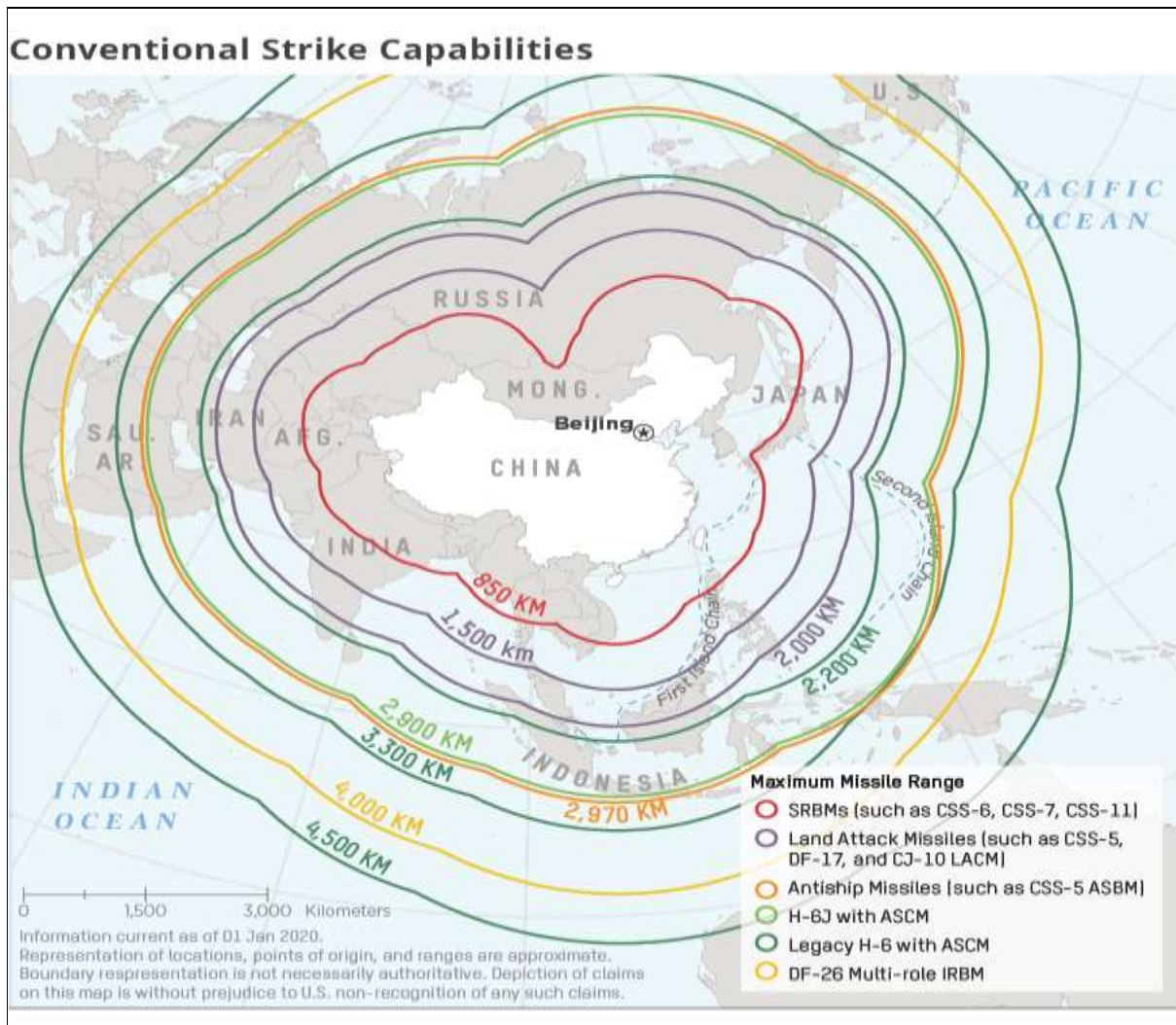


Fig. 4. Short, Medium, and Intermediate Ballistic Missile Ranges. Figure adapted from U.S. Department of Defence, Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People’s Republic of China 2020.

The establishment of the Strategic Support Force (SSF) in 2016 represents part of the PLA’s stated goal of «informatization» reflecting Beijing’s recognition that effective A2/AD requires not only dynamic operational tools but also dominance in information, cyber, and electromagnetic domains. The SSF’s Space Systems Department oversees space operations, including satellite surveillance and data processing, which are essential for targeting, missile guidance, and battle damage assessment in a contested environment. Since 2007 — when China conducted a decisive test on ground-based anti-satellite capabilities destroying the Fengyun-1C meteorological satellite — additional developments were made in the sphere of

kinetic interceptors, ground-based lasers, and orbital «space robot» technologies²²¹. This potential, together with the PLA's increasing number of anti-satellite operations training, significantly increased China's ability to threaten U.S. and allied space assets in the Indo-Pacific²²². The Network Systems Department, which oversees cyber operations, electronic warfare, and psychological operations, aims to degrade enemy command and control, disrupt communications and sensors, and shape perceptions and morale, thereby amplifying the impact of kinetic A2/AD systems by targeting the information backbone of opposing forces²²³. Military analysts highlight China's significant cyber and electronic warfare assets as key enablers of a counter-intervention strategy, allowing the PLA to disrupt adversary command, control, and communications networks at an early stage of a crisis²²⁴. By targeting military C4ISR networks and key civilian infrastructure in cyberspace, Beijing aims to manage escalation while deterring external intervention — especially by the United States and its allies — in the initial stages of a crisis. From an A2/AD competition perspective, such cyber capabilities are crucial for disrupting or degrading adversary RSTA, therefore constraining the effectiveness of either side's denial operations²²⁵.

Externally, regional actors and the United States increasingly interpret PLA modernization and A2/AD development as a structural challenge to the existing security order in East Asia. Japanese defence White Papers since the early 2010s have moved toward direct expressions of concern, highlighting both the rapid quantitative and qualitative expansion of Chinese military power and the opacity surrounding Beijing's intentions and decision-making processes²²⁶. From 2014 onward, these documents described the Chinese enhancing of A2/AD capabilities as a restriction of Japan's freedom of action in its own maritime and airspace²²⁷. By the mid-2010s, some US assessments argued that China had effectively overtaken Russia in the deployment of anti-access systems, making it the second most capable A2/AD power

²²¹ Brian Weeden, *Current and Future Trends in Chinese Counterspace Capabilities*, Proliferation Papers, no. 62 (Paris: French Institute of International Relations, 2020).

²²² U.S. Department of Defense, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019: Annual Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2019), pp. 56 <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=824747>.

²²³ John Costello and Joe McReynolds, *China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era*, China Strategic Perspectives, no. 13, ed. Phillip C. Saunders (Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies, n.d.).

²²⁴ Jinghua L., "What Are China's Cyber Capabilities and Intentions?," *IPI Global Observatory*, March 19, 2019, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2019/03/what-are-chinas-cyber-capabilities-intentions/>.

²²⁵ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48.

²²⁶ *Defense of Japan 2013* (Japan Ministry of Defense, 2013), 2.

²²⁷ *Defense of Japan 2014* (Japan Ministry of Defense: 2014), p. 4.

after the United States²²⁸. Moreover, in 2014 and 2015, China procured 32 S-400 «Triumf» systems from Russia, extending the reach of its ground-based air defences to cover the entire territory of Taiwan and much of the airspace over the South and East China Seas, with significant implications for the regional air balance²²⁹.

In the United States, the perceived challenge posed by China's emerging A2/AD prompted the articulation of the Air-Sea Battle concept in 2010, an operational framework intended to enable U.S. forces to operate in «non-permissive» environments by penetrating and bypassing an adversary's denial systems²³⁰. The maritime dimension of this response is reflected in initiatives such as the US Navy's Battle Force 2045 vision, which envisages a larger, more distributed, and more resilient fleet better suited to operating under intense Chinese A2/AD pressure in the Western Pacific. Notably, Pentagon planning documents suggest that key tasks in countering China's C4ISR and denial capabilities will increasingly be shared with regional allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, embedding the response to China's A2/AD within a broader network of coalitions²³¹.

The 2021 U.S. Ministry of Defence's report to Congress, *Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China*, expected China's consistent effort to strengthen national power to give the PRC the possibility to project power beyond the first and second island chains, including Taiwan²³². Therefore, PLA modernization and A2/AD capabilities are increasingly seen not only as instruments of territorial defence and regime security, but also as tools to support a more assertive regional policy and to underpin Beijing's long-term ambition to reshape the Indo-Pacific security architecture. As a result, under conditions of mutual A2/AD, China's most plausible path of regional coercion by 2040 may lie less in decisive invasion or devastating missile campaigns, and more in reinforced economic leverage achievable through sustained, denial-backed blockade operations²³³.

²²⁸ David Ochmanek, "The Role of Maritime and Air Power in DoD's Third Offset Strategy," RAND Corporation, 2014.

²²⁹ Marina Yevtodyeva, "Novyj jetap voenno-tehnicheskogo sotrudnichestva Rossii i Kitaja [New Stage of Military-Technical Cooperation between Russia and China]," *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 4 (2018): 68–78.

²³⁰ Michael Kofman, "Russian Maritime 'A2/AD': Strengths and Weaknesses," *Russian Military Analysis*, January 29, 2020, <https://russianmilitaryanalysis.wordpress.com/2020/01/29/russian-maritime-a2-ad-strengths-and-weaknesses/>.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

²³² *Ibid.*, 2

²³³ Stephen Biddle and Ivan Oelrich, "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia," *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48.

2.3. Beyond kinetic conflict: operations in the “grey zone”, hybrid warfare, and cyber pressures.

China’s contemporary maritime strategy in East Asia is increasingly characterized by the use of grey zone tactics, understood as coercive yet formally non-militarized activities designed to alter the legal and political status of contested maritime spaces while remaining below the threshold of open military hostilities²³⁴. In the South and East China Seas and the Taiwan Strait, Beijing has relied on a symbiotic employment of Coast Guard forces, maritime militia, and civilian actors such as fishing and dredging fleets to consolidate effective control over disputed waters, as well as to reframe its expansion as the lawful defence of its «maritime rights and interests»²³⁵. In the Chinese case, these forms of coercive gradualism are not confined to physical or legal contests at sea, but extend into cognitive and cyber domains, where Beijing similarly exploits ambiguity and deniability to shape adversaries’ perceptions and decision-makings²³⁶. Such practice is increasingly framed as a part of a broader hybrid-warfare approach, through which Beijing aims to mobilise the instruments of national power without going beyond the threshold of overt armed conflict²³⁷.

At the conceptual level, grey zone strategies emerged in U.S. strategic discourse with the 2010 Quadrennial Defence Review and were defined as multi-dimensional activities designed to influence adversary behaviour while remaining below the threshold of conventional military employment²³⁸. Subsequent conceptual work has sharpened this idea: Hal Brands defined grey zone warfare as coercive and aggressive activities «deliberately designed to remain below the threshold of conventional military conflict and open interstate war»,²³⁹ while Hoffman emphasized the use of an «integrated suite of national and subnational instruments of power in an ambiguous war to gain specified strategic objectives without crossing the threshold of overt conflict»²⁴⁰. Mazarr further stressed the formation of strategic *conundrums*, in which each

²³⁴ Kapil Bhatia, “Coercive Gradualism Through Gray Zone Statecraft in the South China Seas: China’s Strategy and Potential U.S. Options,” Joint Force Quarterly 91 (October 30, 2018), National Defense University Press.

²³⁵ Harry J. Kazianis, “China’s 50,000 Secret Weapons in the South China Sea,” The National Interest, July 30, 2014.

²³⁶ Bhatia, “Coercive Gradualism Through Gray Zone Statecraft in the South China Seas.”

²³⁷ Nils Peterson, “The Chinese Communist Party’s Theory of Hybrid Warfare,” Institute for the Study of War, November 21, 2023.

²³⁸ Frank G. Hoffman, “The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict: Protracted, Gray Zone, Ambiguous, and Hybrid Modes of War,” The Heritage Foundation (2016): 25-36, https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/2016_IndexOfUSMilitaryStrength_The%20Contemporary%20Spectrum%20of%20Conflict_Protracted%20Gray%20Zone%20Ambiguous%20and%20Hybrid%20Modes%20of%20War.pdf

²³⁹ Hal Brands, “Paradoxes of the Gray Zone” (2016).

²⁴⁰ Hoffman, “The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict,” 25–36.

action is modest in scale, yet any firm response risks escalation, gradually placing the defender in a no-win situation enabling progressive alteration of the *status quo*²⁴¹. CCP military theorists have increasingly adopted the concept of hybrid warfare to capture such strategy, portraying it as way to indirectly confront adversaries implementing kinetic and non-kinetic instruments across multiple domains²⁴².

Analysts argue that what has been labelled as «grey zone» may overlap with or resemble «hybrid warfare» leading to conceptual debate. Alessio Patalano observes that grey zone literature fails to articulate «how and when actions are *not* part of a “grey zone” strategy» and to effectively identify «what changes of the status quo» China seeks²⁴³. Reflecting this blurring of categories, Gao Wei expressed the first precise definition of hybrid warfare in 2020 in a state-sanctioned Ministry of National Defence-affiliated press outlet, and described it as «unified and coordinated act of war that is conducted at the strategic level, employing political (public opinion, diplomacy, law, etc.), economic (trade war, energy war, etc.), military (intelligence warfare, electronic warfare, special operations), and other such means»²⁴⁴.

However, China’s approach is predominantly non-militarized, sea-based, and focused on accumulating legal-administrative and geostrategic advantages in peacetime through non-kinetic forms of pressure²⁴⁵, whereas hybrid warfare — such as that practiced by Russia in Crimea — typically relies on a heavy use of military force on land, combining conventional and irregular units oriented toward territorial occupation and political destabilization²⁴⁶. Accordingly, rather than seeking direct control of populated territory, China aims to expand its authority over maritime spaces and the surrounding regional order, minimizing the risk of destructive developments and giving Beijing subtle control over escalation²⁴⁷.

The South China Sea has been the primary laboratory for this strategy. One of the earliest indicators of such emerging pattern arose with the 2009 USNS Impeccable Incident, in which Chinese vessels intimidated a U.S. survey ship in international waters, signalling a more

²⁴¹ Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015).

²⁴² Nils Peterson, “The Chinese Communist Party’s Theory of Hybrid Warfare,” Institute for the Study of War, November 21, 2023.

²⁴³ Alessio Patalano, “When Strategy Is ‘Hybrid’ and Not ‘Grey’: Reviewing Chinese Military and Constabulary Coercion at Sea,” *The Pacific Review* (January 9, 2019): 3.

²⁴⁴ Nils Peterson, “The Chinese Communist Party’s Theory of Hybrid Warfare,” Institute for the Study of War, November 21, 2023.

²⁴⁵ Michael J. Mazarr, *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute and U.S. Army War College Press, 2015).

²⁴⁶ John J. McCuen, “Hybrid Wars,” *Military Review* 88, no. 2 (March–April 2008): 107–113.

²⁴⁷ Scott Bentley, “The Next South China Sea Crisis: China vs. Indonesia?” *The National Interest*, September 24, 2014, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-next-south-china-sea-crisis-china-vs-indonesia-11342>.

assertive posture in contesting foreign activities within waters that Beijing regards as part of its jurisdiction²⁴⁸. By 2012, Chinese grey zone methods had become more evident, especially during the Scarborough Shoal stalemate, when a relatively modest flotilla of China Marine Surveillance vessels, maritime militia and fishing boats was coordinated to establish spatial dominance, implementing militia-activated fishing vessels that physically blocked access to the Shoal's inner lagoon (often described as «Scarborough Model»²⁴⁹) while the PLA Navy remained in the background, monitoring and escorting foreign warships and avoiding direct front-line engagement²⁵⁰. Since then, China has maintained *de facto* control over Scarborough Shoal and its surrounding waters²⁵¹. Beijing's actions around Scarborough Shoal and in the broader Spratly and Paracel areas have often been characterized as *fait accompli*, hence small, cumulative moves that utilize civilian agencies to maintain military-like control, granting the advantage of deniability of the usage of conventional military actions in the region²⁵².

China's grey zone campaign rests on a prolonged legal and normative efforts that reshaped how contested maritime spaces are defined and understood. In 1992, Beijing adopted the Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone, claiming all islands in the South China Sea, and announced its intent to pursue its «maritime rights and interests»²⁵³. The 1998 Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf Act extended these claims by establishing an EEZ and continental shelf measured from China's territorial seas, supported by unspecified «historical rights», reiterating Beijing's determination to safeguard the rights grounded in the Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone²⁵⁴. These domestic laws — which only partially align with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)²⁵⁵ — provided the legal foundations for two core features of China's grey zone approach: pronounced ambiguity and the reframing of expansionist aims as the protection of lawful rights. Although China acceded to UNCLOS in 1996, long refrained from officially clarify the scope and meaning of the nine-

²⁴⁸ Michael Green et al., “Counter-Coercion Series: Harassment of the USNS Impeccable,” Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, May 9, 2017, <https://amti.csis.org/counter-co-harassment-usns-impeccable/>.

²⁴⁹ Ely Ratner, “Learning the Lessons of Scarborough Reef,” The National Interest, November 21, 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/learning-the-lessons-scarborough-reef-9442>.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Michael Green et al., “Harassment of the USNS Impeccable.”

²⁵³ The Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone of the People's Republic of China, adopted at the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, February 25, 1992, https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/CHN_1992_Law.pdf.

²⁵⁴ Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf Act, adopted at the 3rd session of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress, June 26, 1998, https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/chn_1998_eez_act.pdf.

²⁵⁵ The South China Sea Arbitration (Republic of the Philippines v. People's Republic of China), Award of 12 July 2016, Reports of International Arbitral Awards, vol. 33 (2016): 153–617.

dash line — which overlaps with the EEZs of several Southeast Asian States — disorienting neighbouring States that expected Chinese claims to align with the law of the sea²⁵⁶. Beijing explicitly linked its South China Sea claims to the nine-dash line only in a 2009 diplomatic note addressed to the UN Secretary-General²⁵⁷. In August 2023, China’s Ministry of Natural Resources released a new «standard map» that converted the nine-dash line into a ten-dash line by adding a dash east of Taiwan, effectively reaffirming and visually extending its claims in the area²⁵⁸.

²⁵⁶ “United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea,” June 7, 1996 (accession by China), https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXI-6&chapter=21&clang=_en#EndDec.

²⁵⁷ Li Jinming and Li Dexia, “The Dotted Line on the Chinese Map of the South China Sea: A Note,” *Ocean Development and International Law* 34 (2003): 287–95; see also People’s Republic of China, Letter to the UN Secretary-General regarding the joint submission by Malaysia and Vietnam to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf, 2009, https://www.un.org/Depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/mysvnm33_09/chn_2009re_mys_vnm_e.pdf.

²⁵⁸ Mark Raymond and David A. Welch, “China’s New ‘Standard Map’ Does Not Mean What You Think It Means,” *The Diplomat*, September 5, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/chinas-new-standard-map-does-not-mean-what-you-think-it-means/>.



Fig. 5. Map attached to China’s diplomatic note CML/17/2009 to the UN Secretary-General showing the nine-dash line claim in the South China Sea, 7 May 2009, reproduced from: Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations, Note Verbale CML/17/2009, available at https://www.un.org/depts/los/clcs_new/submissions_files/mysvnm33_09/chn_2009re_mys_vnm_e.pdf.

This manoeuvre operates «under the colour» of domestic legislation and national jurisdictional claims but incrementally reshape the *status quo*.

Taiwan's legal framework reflects and complicates this dynamic. The 1992 Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area authorizes Taiwanese authorities to drive away, seize, or otherwise act defensively against mainland vessels entering, without permission, restricted or prohibited waters of the Taiwan Area²⁵⁹. Since China does not recognize Taipei's maritime claims, Chinese fishing boats frequently cross the median line of the Taiwan Strait, entering Taiwan's claimed zones²⁶⁰. As a result, Chinese fishing boats and associated «illegal trespass fishing» are viewed by Taiwan not merely as administrative violations but as elements of a broader strategy that erodes the authority and effectiveness of Taiwanese maritime governance²⁶¹. Illegal sand and gravel extraction constitutes a prominent tool of China's grey zone repertoire against Taiwan, characterized by large Chinese dredging vessels conducting extensive mining inside Taiwan's claimed EEZ and in waters near Kinmen and Matsu, ostensibly for commercial purposes but with significant security implications²⁶². Excessive sand dredging can gradually reshape coastlines, undermine coastal defences, and degrade marine ecosystems, thereby affecting both territorial integrity and long-term resource sustainability, directly impacting Taiwan and its fishermen.

Simultaneously, Beijing integrates lawfare, psychological warfare, and public opinion warfare — what Chinese doctrine refers to as the «three warfares» — to influence international public opinion, delegitimize opponents' claims, and present China as a victim²⁶³. These «three warfares» constitute a core component of China's emerging cognitive-warfare posture, as they systematically aim at shaping perceptions, emotions, and decision-making in target societies while remaining formally below the threshold of armed conflict. Modern Cognitive warfare draws on military strategies described by Chinese military general and strategist Sun Tzu in the 5th century BC, in his work «The Art of War», and extends them through the technological

²⁵⁹ Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area (Taipei: Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, 1992). <https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=Q0010001>

²⁶⁰ Wei-Chung Chen et al., “China's Gray Zone Actions in the East China Sea, Taiwan Strait, and South China Sea: A Comparative Study and Impact on Fisheries,” *Marine Policy* 167 (2024): 106246.

²⁶¹ Andrew S. Erickson and Conor M. Kennedy, “China's Maritime Militia,” *China Maritime Report No. 1* (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, China Maritime Studies Institute, 2019).

²⁶² Cheng-Chung Cho, Nein-Tsu Chiang, Rui-Hsin Kao, and Cheng-Chung Wu, “A Study on Influence of Illegal Sand Mining on Coastal Marine Environments: The Kinmen, Taiwan and Xiamen, Mainland China,” *International Journal of Applied Science and Technology* 11, no. 1 (March 2021): 46–64.

²⁶³ Peter A. Dutton, “Conceptualizing China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations,” in *China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations*, ed. Andrew S. Erickson and Ryan D. Martinson (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019).

domain²⁶⁴. Sloss noted that cognitive warfare is often treated as a threat to democracies because freedom of expression can be abused and undermined by disinformation-driven «information warfare», contributing to democratic decay²⁶⁵. Although cognitive warfare is a significant phenomenon, there is still no consensus on its definition, primarily because it is entangled with concepts such as information warfare and cyber warfare. Tashev, Purcell, and McLaughlin argued that the cognitive dimension represents the upmost layer of the information sphere²⁶⁶, while Lewis emphasized the cognitive effects of cyberattacks²⁶⁷. Siman-Tov underlined that cognition control is not confined to information or cyber warfare but can also be pursued through more traditional political instruments such as propaganda, public relations, and public diplomacy²⁶⁸.

China's grey zone methods against Taiwan thus increasingly blend physical coercion and cognitive operations. In the Taiwan context, military intimidation — such as intensified PLA air incursions into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone or crossing of the median line in the Taiwan Strait — serves not only operational signalling purposes, but also psychological ones, reinforcing the expectation that «independence means war» in the Taiwanese public psyche²⁶⁹. Survey data from the Taiwan National Security Studies Surveys show that by the end of 2020, 61.8 percent of Taiwanese people believed China would attack if Taiwan declared independence, suggesting China's cognitive operations have been partially effective in the sense that they considerably reduced open support for independence among Taiwanese public²⁷⁰.

²⁶⁴ NATO, *Cognitive Warfare: NATO Chief Scientist Research Report* (Brussels: NATO Science and Technology Organization, 2025).

²⁶⁵ David L. Sloss, *Tyrants on Twitter: Protecting Democracies from Chinese and Russian Information Warfare* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).

²⁶⁶ Blagovest Tashev, Michael Purcell, and Brian McLaughlin, "Russia's Information Warfare: Exploring the Cognitive Dimension," *MCU Journal* 10, no. 2 (2019): 129–47.

²⁶⁷ James A. Lewis, "Cognitive Effect and State Conflict in Cyberspace," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, September 25, 2018.

²⁶⁸ David Siman-Tov, "Disinformation Campaigns and Influence on Cognition," in *The Cognitive Campaign: Strategic and Intelligence Perspectives*, ed. Yossi Kuperwasser and David Siman-Tov (Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2019).

²⁶⁹ Tzu-Chieh Hung and Tzu-Wei Hung, "How China's Cognitive Warfare Works: A Frontline Perspective of Taiwan's Anti-Disinformation Wars," *Journal of Global Security Studies* 7, no. 4 (2022): 1–18.

²⁷⁰ Taiwan National Security Studies Surveys, 2002–2020, Program in Asian Security Studies, Duke University.

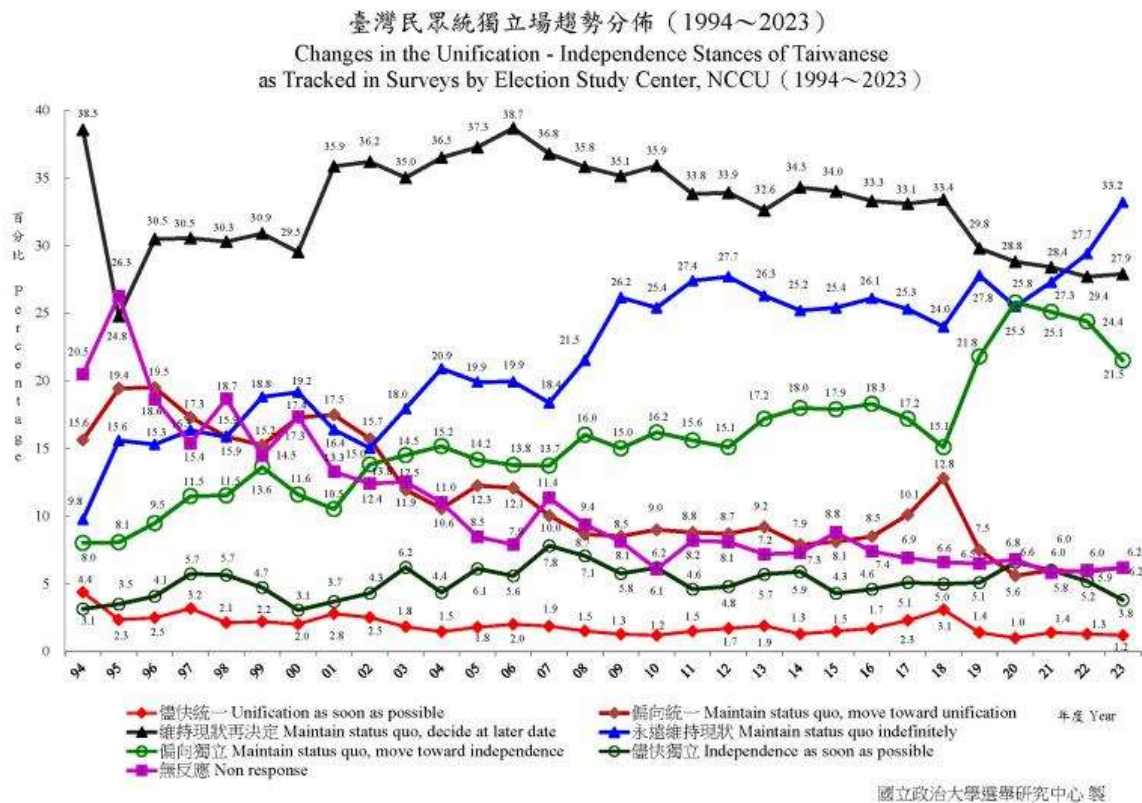


Fig. 6. Source: Election Study Center, National Chengchi University, “Taiwan Independence vs. Unification (1994–2024),” <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7800&id=6961>.

Chinese cognitive campaigns also exploit sociocultural and economic levers, using fabricated historical ties and cross-Strait Mazu religious festivals to cultivate a shared sense of cultural identity and to publicize one-China policy under a narrative of peaceful unification²⁷¹. Regarding «attracting», China simultaneously announced several policies promoting cross-Strait exchanges — such as the «thirty-one measures» (2018), «twenty-six measures» (2019), «eleven measures» (2020), and «twenty-two measures» (2021) — to attract Taiwanese youth, professional, and investors, explicitly framing these initiatives as a way to «forge closer bonds of heart and mind» and advance Xi Jinping’s stated objective of peaceful reunification²⁷².

²⁷¹ Chia-Lin Chang and Hsiu-Chin Tsai, “Dalu Fujian Zongjiaowenhua Ji Zongjiaoluyou Jieqing Zhi Zhengjingfenxi [A Political Economic Analysis of ‘Religious Culture’ and ‘Religious Travel’ Festivals in Fujian Province, China],” *Prospect & Exploration* 7, no. 7 (2009): 57.

²⁷² Taiwan Work Office of the CPC Central Committee, “Working Together to Realize Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation and Advance China’s Peaceful Reunification,” speech at the Meeting Marking the 40th Anniversary of the Issuance of the Message to Compatriots in Taiwan, Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council, Beijing, 2019, accessed June 17, 2022, https://www.gwytb.gov.cn/wyly/201904/t20190412_12155687.htm.

Moreover, China's grey zone methods extend into the cyber and information domains. Chinese hackers have been implicated in a wide range of activities, from espionage and theft of intellectual property to targeting sensitive research, as it happened in 2020 when U.S. authorities publicly warned of attempts by Chinese actors to steal COVID-19 vaccine research data²⁷³. These cyber operations complement maritime and lawfare tactics by undermining adversary resilience, acquiring sensitive information, and shaping the informational environment without crossing the military threshold. Together with economic incentives and coercion, political pressure, and diplomatic manoeuvring, they form part of a multidimensional apparatus that seeks to convince regional States that resistance is futile. The analytical literature on grey zone conflict underscores that countering such tactics is particularly arduous, especially due to the anonymity and plausible deniability inherent in cyber operations that make attribution challenging²⁷⁴. As Azad notes, despite the proliferation of grey zone interpretations, «no universally agreed-upon definition exists», which intensifies conceptual confusion and hinders practical responses²⁷⁵. The absence of clear, universally agreed definitions and the inherent ambiguity of grey zone behaviour complicate the identification, attribution, and characterization of threats, hence the fundamental requirement for effective counter-strategies is the careful recognition and understanding of the nature of these conflicts, through which revisionist powers seek to advance their aims²⁷⁶. In the Chinese case, this means recognizing how legal alteration, law enforcement, militia operations, economic pressures, propaganda, and cyber activities are orchestrated to exploit the grey area between war and peace, achieving significant strategic gains without triggering traditional thresholds for military retaliation²⁷⁷.

²⁷³ Gordon Corera, "Coronavirus: US Accuses China of Hacking Coronavirus Research," BBC News, May 14, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52656656>

²⁷⁴ Michael V. Chester and Braden R. Allenby, "Perspective: The Cyber Frontier and Infrastructure".

²⁷⁵ Hussain Azad, "Understanding Gray Zone Warfare from Multiple Perspectives," *World Affairs* 186, no. 1 (2023): 83.

²⁷⁶ National Intelligence Council, Updated IC Gray Zone Lexicon: Key Terms and Definitions (July 2024).

²⁷⁷ Carlyle A. Thayer, "China's New Wave of Aggressive Assertiveness in the South China Sea," *International Journal of China Studies* 2, no. 3 (2011): 555–83, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130696/Thayer%20CSIS%20South%20China%20Sea.pdf>.

CHAPTER 3: TAIWAN RESILIENCE: ASYMMETRIC DEFENSE AND THE «SILICON SHIELD»

3.1. The Evolution of Taipei's Military Doctrine: The Overall Defense Concept and the «Porcupine Strategy»

Taiwan's defence posture has undergone a marked transformation over the past decade and a half, shifting from a traditional, platform-centric approach towards an increasingly asymmetric «porcupine strategy» designed to deny the People's Liberation Army a rapid or uncostly victory in a cross-Strait conflict²⁷⁸. This evolution reflects a growing recognition in both Taipei and Washington that Taiwan's own force structure, operational concepts, and societal resilience are more decisive for deterrence and defence than US-China balance of power²⁷⁹.

Throughout much of the post-Cold War era, Taiwan sought to offset the PLA's numerical superiority with qualitative advantages in technology, training, and sophisticated platforms such as advanced fighter aircraft, large surface combatants, and submarines²⁸⁰. Notwithstanding, China's unprecedented military modernization — allegedly the most ambitious since the 1930s — has progressively eroded this advantage, rendering traditional Taiwanese strengths vulnerable to a PLA joint firepower strike campaign built around large inventories of precise ballistic and cruise missiles, long-range airpower, and refined cyber and electronic warfare capabilities²⁸¹. Operational analyses suggest that an initial PLA bombardment could rapidly neutralize Taiwan's airbases, naval facilities, command-and-control nodes, and logistic hubs, leaving much of its traditional air and naval order of battle «almost irrelevant» in the opening phase of a major contingency²⁸².

Taiwan's most coherent doctrinal response to this shifting balance was articulated in Admiral Lee Hsi-min's Overall Defence Concept (ODC), which reframed Taiwan's defence issue in terms of denial and endurance rather than decisive, symmetric engagements, emphasizing force

²⁷⁸ James Timbie and James O. Ellis Jr., "A Large Number of Small Things: A Porcupine Strategy for Taiwan," *Texas National Security Review* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2021/22): 83-93.

²⁷⁹ Lee Hsi-min and Eric Lee, "Taiwan's Overall Defense Concept, Explained," *The Diplomat*, November 3, 2020.

²⁸⁰ William S. Murray, "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy," *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 13-15

²⁸¹ Mark F. Cancian, Matthew Cancian, and Eric Heginbotham, *The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023).

²⁸² *Ibid.*

preservation, the deliberate exchange of space for time, and prioritizing the Strait, the littoral waters and key landing beaches as critical operational environments²⁸³. Building on earlier proposals for asymmetric defence — notably William Murray’s 2008 call for a «porcupine strategy»²⁸⁴, subsequently developed by James Timbie and Admiral James Ellis — the ODC encouraged the improvement of legacy aircraft and ships with «a large number of small things»²⁸⁵: Survivable, low-signature, mobile systems supported by realistic training, resilient logistics, and civil-military coordination that could withstand a joint firepower campaign and then degrade PLA forces²⁸⁶. In line with this conceptual shift, Taiwanese and U.S. defence analysts contend that resources should be reallocated from a limited inventory of expensive, easily targetable platforms toward more numerous, mobile, and concealable systems — road-mobile coastal anti-ship missiles, short and medium-range mobile surface-to-air missiles, naval mines, unmanned aerial systems, and infantry equipped with modern anti-armour and air-defence weapons — that, if effectively dispersed, concealed, and capable of rapid redeployment, possess a substantially greater prospect of surviving initial wave of strikes²⁸⁷. The approach characterized by a «large number of small things» has gained significant institutional support both in Taiwan and the United States, when in an October 2020 address to the U.S.-Taiwan Defence Industry Conference, Vice Minister of Defence for Armaments Chang Guan-Chung affirmed that Taipei’s ambition was the development of capabilities that are small, numerous, smart, stealthy, fast, mobile, low-cost, survivable, effective, easy to develop, maintain, and preserve, and difficult to detect and counter²⁸⁸.

Operationally, the porcupine strategy acknowledges that Taiwan is *unlikely* to prevent the PLA from inflicting severe damage, yet it aims to deny a rapid and decisive Beijing victory by increasing the probability of operational failure and protracted hostilities²⁸⁹. In most invasion scenarios, the PLA’s opening moves would comprise massed missile and air strikes on runways, hardened shelters, air-defence batteries, radars, large ships, submarines, and segments

²⁸³ Michael A. Hunzek and J. Michael Cole, “Taiwan’s Overall Defense Concept, Explained,” *The Diplomat*, November 4, 2020.

²⁸⁴ William S. Murray, “Revisiting Taiwan’s Defense Strategy,” *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 13–45.

²⁸⁵ James Timbie and James O. Ellis Jr., “A Large Number of Small Things,” *Texas National Security Review* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2021/22).

²⁸⁶ Lee and Lee, “Taiwan’s Overall Defense Concept, Explained.”

²⁸⁷ Eric S. Edelman et al., “A Large Number of Small Things: A Porcupine Strategy for Taiwan,” *Texas National Security Review* 8, no. 1 (2025).

²⁸⁸ Chang Guan-chung, “Strengthening Self-Defense Capabilities, Defending Freedom and Democracy” (keynote address, U.S.-Taiwan Defence Industry Conference, October 5, 2020), https://www.us-taiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020_october05_vice_minister_chang_mnd_keynote.pdf.

²⁸⁹ Brad Roberts, “Victory Denial: Deterrence in Support of Taiwan,” *Information Series*, no. 510 (National Institute for Public Policy, February 28, 2022).

of highways usable as emergency airstrips, complemented by cyber operations, electronic warfare, and special operations targeting leadership and critical infrastructure²⁹⁰. Such hypothesis is strongly reinforced by operational lessons acquired from the war in Ukraine, which demonstrated how large, conspicuous assets resulted to be highly vulnerable²⁹¹. Under intense Russian attack, high-value platforms, and fixed infrastructure (airbases, ships, major armor concentrations) suffered rapid destruction, while dispersed, and mobile systems proved to be far more decisive over time²⁹². Under these conditions, Taiwan's conventional prestige platforms are expected to incur severe erosion and therefore contribute only marginally to the decisive phases of the campaign²⁹³. By contrast, a variety of defence structures, including truck-mounted coastal defence cruise missiles such as Harpoons, man-portable air-defence systems like Stingers, dense minefields laid by specialized vessels, small missile craft capable of swarming larger ships, and distributed ground units equipped with anti-armour weapons, loitering munitions, and reconnaissance-strike drones have been deployed on distanced, ground-based anti-ship and anti-air systems installed on mobile launchers. This configuration is more likely to survive the initial offensive, thus imposing multiple layers of risk on PLA forces as they transit the Strait and attempt to secure landing sites²⁹⁴.

Taiwan's geographic characteristics — an island with a mountainous interior, a limited number of suitable landing beaches, hazardous strait weather, and densely urbanized coastal plains — significantly magnify its defensive advantages, enabling Taiwanese forces to canalize invading units into narrow corridors where they can impose disproportionate losses²⁹⁵. Recent assessments nevertheless underscored that in order to exploit these geographic advantages and conduct effective defensive operations once PLA units have established their presence on

²⁹⁰ Michael A. Hunzeker and Alexander Lanoszka, *A Question of Time: Enhancing Taiwan's Conventional Deterrence Posture* (Fairfax, VA: Center for Security Policy Studies, George Mason University, November 2018), 50; Ian Easton, *The Chinese Invasion Threat: Taiwan's Defense and American Strategy in Asia* (Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, 2017), 82–84.

²⁹¹ Ivan U. K. Klyszcz, ed., *Deterrence and Hybrid Warfare: Lessons from Russia's War in Ukraine for Taiwan and the Nordic-Baltic Region* (Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, February 2025), https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2025/02/ICDS_Report_Deterrence_and_Hybrid_Warfare_Klyszcz_Chan_Lawrence_Lee_February_2025-1.pdf.

²⁹² Stephen D. Olynyk, *Ukraine as a Post-Cold War Military Power* (Washington, DC: Center for Counterproliferation Research, U.S. National Defense University, 1997).

²⁹³ Mark F. Cancian, Matthew Cancian, and Eric Heginbotham, *The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023).

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁵ Mandip Singh, "A Possible Strategy for the Defense of Taiwan," *Issue Brief* (Stockholm: Institute for Security and Development Policy, June 19, 2023).

Taiwanese soil, Taipei must significantly enhance the quality, readiness, and training of its ground forces²⁹⁶.

The strategy also displays a pronounced societal dimension, linking military posture to conscription, reserve forces, and civil defence. Following various years of shortening mandatory service to four months and moving toward an all-volunteer force — trends that left many conscripts inadequately trained and reservists under-prepared — the shock of Russia's invasion of Ukraine prompted Taipei to restore one-year conscription, improve remuneration and training, and place greater emphasis on homeland and territorial defence²⁹⁷.

These reforms aim to institutionalize the porcupine concept within a broader «whole-of-society» resilience framework, signalling that any occupation would confront sustained and organized resistance rather than rapid collapse²⁹⁸. Proposals associated with the ODC and related analyses envision the creation of territorial defence forces composed of reservists trained for decentralized, locally anchored operations, particularly in urban environments where guerrilla-style tactics could further increase the costs of occupation²⁹⁹. In this conception, the porcupine metaphor extends beyond the narrow domain of battlefield attrition to encompass long-term political deterrence, by heightening the probability that an invasion would devolve into a protracted and politically damaging dilemma.

Notwithstanding sustained rhetorical endorsement in both Taipei and Washington, Taiwan's transition toward a fully realized porcupine posture remains partial and contested³⁰⁰. President Tsai Ing-wen has declared the acceleration of asymmetric capabilities under the Overall Defence Concept as Taiwan's «number one priority»³⁰¹, while senior defence officials have repeatedly articulated the objective of building forces comprised of systems that are small, numerous, smart, stealthy, fast, mobile, low-cost, survivable, and difficult to counter³⁰². U.S. officials, notably David Helvey, similarly advocated a «balanced approach» that combines

²⁹⁶ Mark F. Cancian, Matthew Cancian, and Eric Heginbotham, *The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2023).

²⁹⁷ John Dotson, «Taiwan's 'Military Force Restructuring Plan' and the Extension of Conscripted Military Service», *Global Taiwan Brief* 8, no. 3 (February 7, 2023).

²⁹⁸ Amanda Hsiao, «Whole-of-Society Resilience: A New Deterrence Concept in Taipei», *Brookings Institution*, January 12, 2025.

²⁹⁹ Justin B. (Andrew) Wagner, «Innovating Strategic Ambiguity: Empowering Taiwan's Defense Amid a Persistent Threat from China», *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 4, no. 3 (July–August 2023): 173–194.

³⁰⁰ Eric S. Edelman et al., «A Large Number of Small Things: A Porcupine Strategy for Taiwan», *Texas National Security Review* 8, no. 1 (2025).

³⁰¹ Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), «President Tsai Attends Opening of 2017 Hanguang No. 33 Exercise», February 25, 2017.

³⁰² Chang Guan-chung, «Strengthening Self-Defense Capabilities, Defending Freedom and Democracy» (keynote address, U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference, October 5, 2020).

indigenous development, targeted foreign acquisitions, and selective divestment of legacy platforms to sustain an effective and enduring military deterrent³⁰³.

However, Taiwan's budgetary patterns and procurement decisions still reveal a profound bias for high-profile conventional programs — Indigenous Defence Submarines, upgraded F-16V fighters, M1A2 Abrams tanks, and advanced air- and missile-defence interceptors — which are frequently labelled as «asymmetric» in domestic discourse but are likely to constitute priority targets in any high-intensity conflict and absorb resources that could otherwise be devoted to «a large number of small things»³⁰⁴.

After Lee Hsi-min's retirement, the Ministry of National Defence adopted a more ambivalent line, asserting in its 2021 Quadrennial Defence Review that asymmetric and «fundamental» capabilities should complement one another in a comprehensive posture³⁰⁵. Analysts attribute this partial adoption of the porcupine concept to a confluence of several factors: the perceived utility of prestige platforms for managing grey-zone coercion and signalling resolve in peacetime; the political and industrial benefits of sustaining indigenous high-technology production lines in shipbuilding, aerospace, and missile advancement; and the incentives for political elites to be associated with visible, symbolically salient programs³⁰⁶.

Although the core proposition of the porcupine strategy retains broad expert support, recent wargames indicate that the People's Republic of China could still implement a successful invasion in the absence of a U.S. intervention, especially if Taiwan falls short of a fully constructed porcupine posture³⁰⁷. These studies likewise highlight the magnitude of the underlying imbalance in material power (China is estimated to spend twelve to twenty-five times more on defence than Taiwan³⁰⁸), and further caution that, given the value Beijing places on unification, even very substantial costs may prove insufficient to deter an invasion if

³⁰³ David F. Helvey, "Closing Keynote Remarks," U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference, October 6, 2020, 3.

³⁰⁴ Michael A. Hunzeker and Joseph Petrucelli, "Time for Taiwan to Scrap the Indigenous Diesel Submarine," *The Diplomat*, November 30, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/11/time-for-taiwan-to-scrap-the-indigenous-diesel-submarine/>.

³⁰⁵ Ministry of National Defense, Republic of China (Taiwan), 2021 Quadrennial Defense Review (Taipei: Ministry of National Defense, 2021), 27.

³⁰⁶ "U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan," Forum on the Arms Trade, accessed December 6, 2021, <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/ustaiwan.html>.

³⁰⁷ Mark F. Cancian, Matthew Cancian, and Eric Heginbotham, *The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2022). The game assumed that Taiwan had received the 400 Harpoon anti-ship missiles it is procuring from the United States, even though these deliveries had not yet occurred at the time of the study.

³⁰⁸ Charles K. Armstrong and David Sacks, "Taiwan Announced a Record Defense Budget: But Is It Enough to Deter China?" Council on Foreign Relations, August 29, 2023.

Chinese leaders believe their forces can ultimately succeed³⁰⁹. A frequently noted limitation of a strictly porcupine-style posture is its limited utility in deterring or undermine a blockade in the absence of U.S. intervention³¹⁰; consequently, some analysts endorse the development of complementary forms of economic deterrence, including U.S.-led threats to terminate trade with China or to disrupt its energy imports if Beijing pursue a blockade strategy³¹¹.

Simultaneously, remains an active debate concerning the People Liberation Army's capacity to conduct a full-scale amphibious invasion of Taiwan, with several assessments — including the 2020 report of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission — arguing that the PLA has yet to achieve a fully reliable capability for such an operation, even as other analysts maintain that Taiwan would be unable to withstand a concerted assault by a far larger and better-resourced adversary³¹². Against this backdrop, the prevailing expert consensus favours a pragmatic rebalancing of Taiwan's force structure, which should preserve a limited inventory of legacy platforms for purposes of peacetime signalling and the management of grey-zone contingencies, while directing marginal defence resources toward «a large number of small things», improved training and reserve mobilization, and resilient command-and-control and logistics architectures, such that the porcupine strategy evolves from a compelling metaphor into a credible, multi-dimensional deterrent that renders Taiwan, in strategic terms, as indigestible as the analogy implies³¹³.

³⁰⁹ Brad Roberts, “Victory Denial: Deterrence in Support of Taiwan,” Information Series, no. 510 (National Institute for Public Policy, February 28, 2022).

³¹⁰ Phillip C. Saunders and Joel Wuthnow, “Crossing the Strait: PLA Modernization and Taiwan,” in *Crossing the Strait: China's Military Prepares for War with Taiwan*, ed. Joel Wuthnow et al. (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2022), 23.

³¹¹ Michael E. O'Hanlon, “An Asymmetric Defense of Taiwan,” Brookings Institution, April 28, 2021, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/an-asymmetric-defense-of-taiwan/>.

³¹² U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2020 Report to Congress of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, December 2020), 395.

³¹³ Franklin C. Miller, Keith B. Payne, and John S. Foster Jr., “Victory Denial Deterrence and a ‘Porcupine Strategy’ for Taiwan,” in *Deterring China in the Taiwan Strait*, ed. Seth Cropsey (Washington, DC: National Institute for Public Policy, 2022).

3.2. Economic security as a deterrent: TSMC’s global role and dependence on semiconductors.

Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (TSMC) has emerged as the world’s most important semiconductor foundry, a *status* built on decades of trade and investment liberalization, Taiwan’s pool of highly skilled engineers and specialized «pure-play» manufacturing model that focuses exclusively on fabrication³¹⁴. This unique positioning has entrenched a structural dependence of the global economy — and of major military powers — on «Made in Taiwan» chips, turning TSMC into a pivotal node of economic security and an indirect instrument of deterrence³¹⁵. China’s position within the global semiconductor value chain (GVC) illustrates how economic security both constrains and enables deterrence strategies within a technology-intensive sector dominated by a small set of lead firms and their strategic suppliers³¹⁶. China became active in this GVC as a latecomer during the «free market» era, offering lower-costed functions, such as assembly, testing, and packaging, while advanced design, core intellectual property (IP), and leading-edge fabrication remained concentrated in the United States, Europe, Taiwan, and South Korea³¹⁷. The result is a structurally asymmetric interdependence where China is the world’s largest market and a major assembly hub for ICT products, yet it depends heavily on foreign firms and imported technology³¹⁸. In turn, those foreign firms — including TSMC and its customers — depend on China’s market scale and manufacturing efficiency for revenue and global competitiveness³¹⁹. The complex division of labour in the semiconductor industry across stages and regions — with the US and the EU specializing in design, equipment and high-purity materials, and Asian economies dominating fabrication and device manufacturing — entails that any attempt of supply chain weaponization imposes significant systemic costs that no single actor can efficiently avoid³²⁰. TSMC’s rise was facilitated by the broader globalization of the semiconductor value chain, as US, Japanese and later European and Chinese policies encouraged the relocation and fragmentation of

³¹⁴ Min-Hua Chiang, “Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company: A Key Chip in the Global Political Economy,” *East Asian Policy* 15, no. 1 (2023): 36–46.

³¹⁵ Sujai Shivakumar and Charles Wessner, “Semiconductors and National Defense: What Are the Stakes?,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 5, 2022.

³¹⁶ Grimes, Seamus, and Debin Du. “China’s Emerging Role in the Global Semiconductor Value Chain.” *Marine Policy* 117 (2020): 103–957.

³¹⁷ Jan-Peter Kleinhans and Nurzat Baisakova, *The Global Semiconductor Value Chain: A Technology Primer for Policy Makers* (Berlin: Stiftung Neue Verantwortung, October 2020).

³¹⁸ Grimes and Du, “China’s Emerging Role in the Global Semiconductor Value Chain.”

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*

³²⁰ Dorakh, Alena. “Interdependence and Specialization in the Global Semiconductor Industry.” *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 8, no. 6 (2024): 2436.

production stages across borders³²¹. Over time, its fabrication and assembly capacity shifted heavily towards Asia, where cost advantages and targeted industrial strategies led to the countries in this region becoming recognized specialists³²². Within the area, Taiwan became the main producer of cutting-edge logic nodes, with Taiwanese foundries producing the vast majority (92%) of the global market share of sub-10 nm chips by 2019³²³.

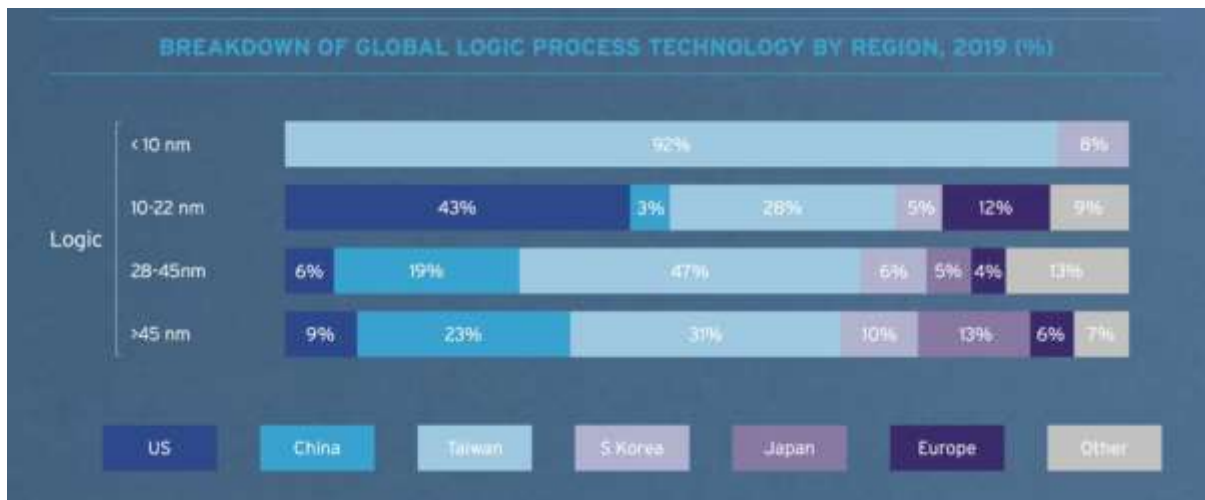


Fig. 7. Breakdown of Global Logic Process Technology by Country/Region in 2019.
Source: “2021 State of the US Semiconductor Industry”, Semiconductor Industry Association.

This technological dominance, combined with reliability, underpins Taiwan’s centrality to global supply chains and magnifies the systemic risk of any disruption in the Taiwan Strait. Within this architecture, TSMC and its dense ecosystem occupy a pivotal position that directly links technological interdependence with economic security and deterrence³²⁴. Moreover, its «grand alliance» with leading fabless firms has produced a path-dependent innovation network that is extremely difficult to replicate³²⁵. This configuration gives Taiwan a *de facto* monopoly on much of the world’s leading-edge logic capacity and positions TSMC as a critical

³²¹ Semiconductor Industry Association. *Beyond Borders: The Global Semiconductor Value Chain*. Washington, DC: SIA, 2016.

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Semiconductor Industry Association and Boston Consulting Group. *Strengthening the Global Semiconductor Supply Chain in an Uncertain Era*. Washington, DC: SIA, April 2021.

³²⁴ Jan-Peter Kleinhans and Nurzat Baisakova, *The Global Semiconductor Value Chain: A Technology Primer for Policy Makers* (Berlin: Stiftung Neue Verantwortung, October 2020).

³²⁵ Taiwan and the Global Semiconductor Supply Chain,” *Taiwan Review*, April–May 2024.

chokepoint, therefore, any disruption — whether through conflict in the Taiwan Strait, sanctions, or large-scale supply shocks — would reverberate across Information and Communication Technology, automotive, aerospace, and defence industries³²⁶. Within this configuration, Taiwan’s role is structurally crucial not only because of its advanced fabrication capacity, but also because it combines relatively low measured interdependence, reflecting its export-oriented foundry model³²⁷. Beyond the commercial function, TSMC’s output has deep security implications, especially for the United States, because advanced chips manufactured in Taiwan are embedded in sensitive systems, including F-35 fighters and a broad range of «military-grade» devices used by the US Department of Defence³²⁸. This dynamic has translated into sustained political pressure on TSMC to locate part of its high-end production on US soil, supported by substantial public incentives under the 2022 CHIPS and Science Act, which aims to return some fabrication capacity and reduce the national security risks associated with geographic concentration of production in East Asia³²⁹. Yet, even with similar initiatives in Europe (the European Chips Act³³⁰) and in South Korea (South Korea’s K-Semiconductor Belt³³¹), recreating Taiwan’s dense ecosystem of suppliers, engineers and institutional experience remains a daunting challenge. In this context, a strategy of calibrated diversification, cross-regional investment and institutionalized cooperation emerge as far more realistic, as it mitigates a single-supplier risk while preserving the stabilizing interdependence that underpins both supply chain resilience and a form of economic deterrence grounded on shared vulnerability³³².

Initiatives such as the US-led «Chip 4» framework, which aspires to formalize coordination among the United States, Taiwan, South Korea and Japan, aim to institutionalize this interdependence within a more structured architecture, yet simultaneously risking accelerating bloc formation and deepening technological decoupling³³³. Simultaneously, Taiwan’s

³²⁶ Jan-Peter Kleinhans and Nurzat Baisakova, *The Global Semiconductor Value Chain: A Technology Primer for Policy Makers* (Berlin: Stiftung Neue Verantwortung, October 2020).

³²⁷ Dorakh, Alena. “Interdependence and Specialization in the Global Semiconductor Industry.” *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 8, no. 6 (2024): 2436.

³²⁸ Sujai Shivakumar and Charles Wessner, “Semiconductors and National Defense: What Are the Stakes?,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 8, 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/semiconductors-and-national-defense-what-are-stakes>

³²⁹ U.S. Congress, CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, Pub. L. No. 117-167, August 9, 2022, Title XCIX.

³³⁰ “European Chips Act,” European Commission, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-chips-act>

³³¹ “K-Semiconductor Belt Strategy to Establish the World’s Largest Supply Network by 2030,” KBS World, May 17, 2021, http://world.kbs.co.kr/service/contents_view.htm?board_seq=403357

³³² Dorakh, Alena. “Interdependence and Specialization in the Global Semiconductor Industry.” *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 8, no. 6 (2024): 2436.

³³³ Min-Hua Chiang, “Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company: A Key Chip in the Global Political Economy,” *East Asian Policy* 15, no. 1 (2023): 36–46.

constrained physical space and fiscal resources limit its capacity to rival the large-scale subsidy regimes deployed by the United States, Europe or South Korea, thereby complicating long-term decisions on expanding fabrication capacity on the island³³⁴.

3.3. The New Southbound Policy: Economic Diversification And Reduction of Vulnerability to Beijing.

The New Southbound Policy Guidelines were formally approved and adopted on August 16, 2016, as part of Taiwan's effort to reorient its external economic relations away from excessive dependence on the Chinese market and toward broader regional integration across the Indo-Pacific³³⁵. Taiwan's New Southbound Policy (NSP), was introduced under President Tsai Ing-wen and represents a strategic recalibration of the island's external economic posture, explicitly designed to anchor Taiwan more deeply within the Indo-Pacific industrial network and to initiate a process of de-risking from excessive dependence from the PRC³³⁶. The guidelines concentrate on cultivating a sense of shared economic community, fostering comprehensive development, and pursuing mutual beneficial cooperation between Taiwan and ASEAN members, South Asian countries, Australia, and New Zealand³³⁷. In line with these principles, on September 5, 2016, the Executive Yuan, together with the National Development Council, introduced the New Promotion Plan, which called for the development of stronger bilateral relations through four main tasks, namely the promotion of economic collaboration, the conduction of talent exchange, the sharing of resources, and the forging of regional connectivity³³⁸. This framework was subsequently operationalized on December 14, 2016, when the Executive Yuan approved the New Southbound Policy Work Plan, specifying 18 policy goals, 15 concrete projects, and 48 initiatives, with the first measures entering into force

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Executive Yuan, ROC (Taiwan), "New Southbound Policy Implementation Plans".

³³⁶ Chun Chih Yang, "Taiwan's New Southbound Policy: Implications for the Relations between Taiwan and ASEAN," in 離脱の政治 [The Politics of Secession], special symposium, 法政論叢 [The Japanese Journal of Law and Political Science] 54, no. 1 (2023): 199–220.

³³⁷ Office of Trade Negotiations, Executive Yuan, ROC (Taiwan), "New Southbound Policy Promotion Plan Launched," news release, September 5, 2016.

³³⁸ Executive Yuan, ROC (Taiwan), "New Southbound Policy Promotion Plan," October 3, 2016.

on January 1, 2017³³⁹. However, as its name implies, the New Southbound Policy is not Taiwan's first attempt toward a «southbound» direction, but rather it reconfigures the earlier Taiwan's Go South strategy³⁴⁰.

Taiwan's Go South agenda reflects a sustained effort — which evolved through four presidential administrations — to deepen both economic and societal ties with Southeast Asia and address evolving regional dynamics and cross-Strait dependencies³⁴¹. Launched by President Lee Teng-hui in 1994, the original Go South Policy — formalized through the «Guidelines for Strengthening Economic and Trade Ties with Southeast Asia» — was primarily oriented toward redirecting manufacturing investments to Southeast Asian economies and was implemented in seven phases between 1994 and 2016³⁴². Under Presidents Chen Shui-bian (2000–2008) and Ma Ying-jeou (2008–2016), the strategy persisted but was adapted, hence Chen reinvigorated the emphasis on free trade agreements and lobbying for Taiwan's international visibility, while Ma shifted the focus toward ASEAN's emerging consumer markets and educational linkages, avoiding explicit «southbound» rhetoric in order to accommodate closer cross-Strait economic ties³⁴³. Despite these efforts, Taiwan's economic imprint remained heavily inclined toward China: from 1991 to 2017, approximately 59.2 percent of approved overseas investment was directed to the mainland, whereas ASEAN leaders such as Singapore (4.6 percent), Vietnam (3.1 percent), and Thailand (1.2 percent), accounted for comparatively modest shares, underscoring persistent vulnerability to Beijing's leverage³⁴⁴. Although the annual volume of approved outward FDI to China has declined significantly since 2018, the absolute scale of these flows remains substantial, indicating a gradual rather than abrupt reconfiguration of Taiwan's investment geography³⁴⁵. The temporal evolution of outward FDI flows further illustrates this structural asymmetry. While Taiwanese investment flows to NSP target countries increased gradually, capital directed toward mainland

³³⁹ Executive Yuan, ROC (Taiwan), “New Southbound Policy Work Plan Finalized, to Begin January 1st Next Year [zhengyuan: xinnanxiang zhengce gongzuo jihua paiban mingnian yiyue yiri qidong],” news release, December 14,

2016, https://www.ey.gov.tw/News_Content2.aspx?n=F8BAEBE9491FC830&s=5DF3DD7518F014BC.

³⁴⁰ Tsun-tzu Kristy Hsu, “A Review of Taiwan's Old and New Go South Policy: An Economic Perspective,” *Prospect Journal* 18 (2018): 63–87.

³⁴¹ Bo-jiun Jing, “Taiwan's Southbound Drive towards Southeast Asia,” *East Asian Policy* 15, no. 2 (2023): 5–24.

³⁴² Jing, Bo-jiun. “‘Go South’ Going South? Assessing Taiwan's ‘New Southbound’ Policy and the China Factor in Southeast Asia.” Paper presented at the international conference “Assessing Taiwan's New Southbound Policy and the China Factor in Southeast Asia,” Taipei, 2017.

³⁴³ Bo-jiun Jing, “Taiwan's Southbound Drive towards Southeast Asia,” *East Asian Policy* 15, no. 2 (2023).

³⁴⁴ Mainland Affairs Council (Taiwan), “Table 10: Taiwan Approved Outward Investment by Country (Area),” *Cross-Strait Economic Statistics Monthly*, no. 296 (December 2017).

³⁴⁵ Center for Strategic and International Studies. “Data Repository – The New Southbound Policy.” Accessed March 3, 2026. <https://southbound.csis.org/data>.

experienced repeated surges throughout the 2000-2016 period, indicating that, even when southbound investment intensified, the mainland continued to absorb the dominant share of Taiwan’s outward capital, limiting the structural impact of earlier Go South measures³⁴⁶.

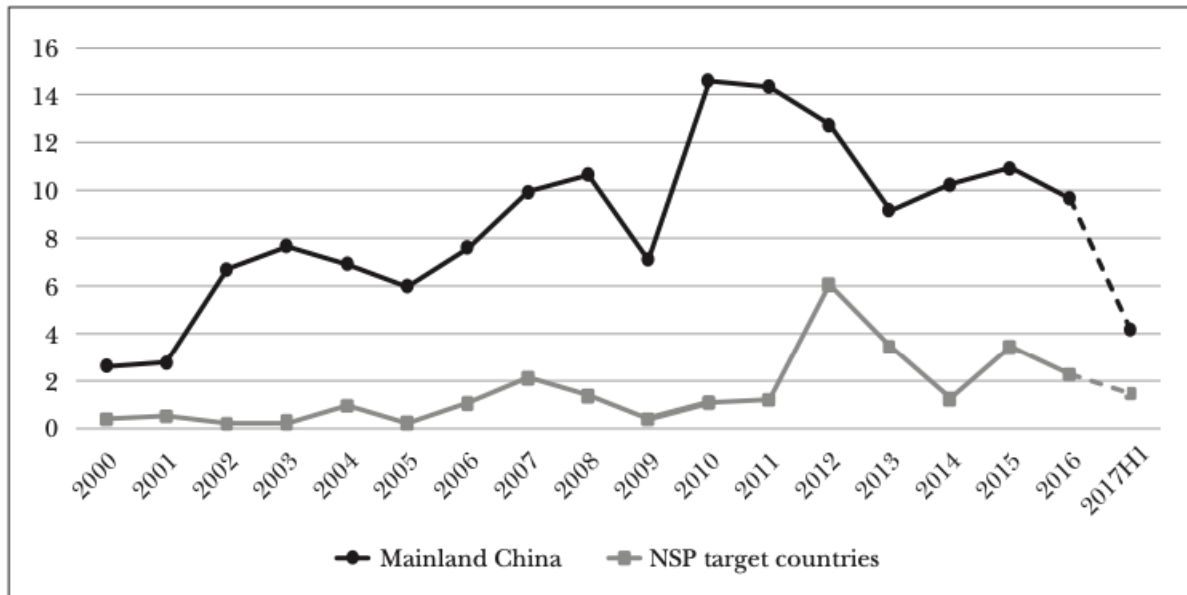


Fig. 8. Taiwan’s outbound investment into Mainland China and into NSP target countries, USD billion. Source: Glaser et al., 2018:17

Subsequent indicators suggested, however, that the NSP had begun to redirect this trajectory, showing that profits generated by Taiwanese investments in NSP countries in 2022 exceeded those derived from China for the first time, indicating a gradual but tangible rebalancing of Taiwan’s external economic profile³⁴⁷. Rather than signalling a clean rupture with the mainland economy, this shift is better interpreted as a move toward de-risking which aims at diversifying markets while not fully decoupling from China.

The strategic rationale underpinning the NSP is also rooted in the broader reconfiguration of Asia’s economic landscape, as ASEAN and India have emerged among the world’s most dynamic growth centres as a result of both their expanding consumer classes and their increasingly sophisticated industrial capacities³⁴⁸. In this context, regional frameworks such as the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) and India’s «Make in India» initiative have created

³⁴⁶ Bonnie S. Glaser et al., *The New Southbound Policy: Deepening Taiwan’s Regional Integration* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018), 17.

³⁴⁷ Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy: A Strategic Triumph, *The National Interest*, December 10, 2024.

³⁴⁸ Center for Strategic and International Studies. “The New Southbound Policy.” January 18, 2018. Accessed March 3, 2026. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-southbound-policy>.

more concrete opportunities for trade and investment, which align with Taiwan’s quest for diversification³⁴⁹. The NSP thus provides an essential channel for Taiwanese enterprises to diversify supply chains and relocate selected production stages to South and Southeast Asia, thereby mitigating risks associated with excessive dependence on the Beijing market³⁵⁰. Building on this logic, President Tsai Ing-wen articulated the short-term objectives of the NSP at the International Economic and Trade Strategy meeting on 16 August 2016, placing particular emphasis on «people-centred» multidimensional forms of engagement — encompassing education, tourism, cultural exchange, and institutional cooperation — rather than narrowly privileging trade and investment, explicitly framing the program as an instrument of surmounting Taiwan’s historical overreliance on a single market³⁵¹.

From a security and political perspective, the Tsai administration specified economic diversification as a precondition for safeguarding Taiwan’s strategic autonomy, emphasizing the fact that decades of cross-Strait economic integration had generated channels of reliance which Beijing could potentially exploit as instrument of political coercion³⁵². Such concern has been echoed in a report to the Legislative Yuan in 2024, in which Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung maintained:

Authoritarian regimes have actively used economic tools to achieve the political aim of expanding their power. Among these regimes, mainland China is the most adept at weaponising trade, resources, and the economy to coerce Taiwan. In the face of such tremendous threats from mainland China, Taiwan, which plays a crucial role in the global economy and trade, must be even more prepared to respond. Taiwan must bolster cooperation with like-minded countries, enhance the international competitiveness of its industries, and strengthen economic resilience³⁵³.

In this sense, the NSP serves a dual purpose: it operates simultaneously as a vehicle for expanding both market access and deepening regional partnerships, and also as a strategic hedge against coercive economic dependencies that might otherwise constrain Taipei’s policy

³⁴⁹ KPMG. *The ASEAN Economic Community: The Road to Realisation*. Singapore: KPMG, 2016.

³⁵⁰ Center for Strategic and International Studies. “The New Southbound Policy.” January 18, 2018. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/new-southbound-policy>

³⁵¹ Tsai Ing-wen, “Inaugural Address of ROC 14th-Term President Tsai Ing-wen,” Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), May 20, 2016, <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/4893>.

³⁵² Tsai Ing-wen. “Inaugural Address of ROC 14th-Term President Tsai Ing-wen.” Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), May 20, 2016.

³⁵³ Lin Chia-lung, Report by the Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Legislative Yuan (Taipei: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 30, 2024).

autonomy amid escalating U.S.–China rivalry³⁵⁴. Operationally, Tsai has employed a whole-of-government approach, directing the policy through a dedicated New Southbound Policy Office and coordinating implementation via the Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN) in the Executive Yuan, thereby leveraging Taiwan’s cultural, educational, technological, agricultural, and economic assets while seeking to maintain stable cross-Strait relations³⁵⁵.

Yet, despite the overall dynamism of Taiwan’s economy, significant internal vulnerabilities and external exposures persist. Domestically, the relative weakness of non-ICT sectors has generated uneven growth, reinforcing, and in some cases exacerbating, regional disparities, with northern and central Taiwan generally outperforming the southern and eastern regions³⁵⁶. Externally, economic complementarity in cross-Strait ties is eroding as the People’s Republic of China ascends the value-added chain through industrial strategies such as «Made in China 2025», heightening competitive pressures that could undermine Taiwan’s productivity, corporate profitability, and employment prospects³⁵⁷. Concurrently, the global architecture of trade and economic governance has struggled to adapt: the Doha Round has stalled; the trajectory of the Trans-Pacific Partnership was altered following the United States’ withdrawal in January 2017; and the prospects for a Taiwan–U.S. bilateral investment agreement have receded amid Washington’s concerns regarding Taiwan’s trade surplus and Washington focus on renegotiating NAFTA, revising KORUS, and pursuing new arrangements with Japan and the United Kingdom³⁵⁸. In contrast, initiatives in which the PRC occupies a central position — most notably the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) — have advanced considerably, with RCEP bringing together ASEAN, India, China, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand, while more than seventy countries have signalled interest in BRI-related infrastructure investments³⁵⁹. Within this evolving environment, the Tsai administration has underscored the imperative of embedding Taiwan more firmly within regional economic architectures³⁶⁰. This strategic orientation has

³⁵⁴ Bonnie S. Glaser et al., *The New Southbound Policy: Deepening Taiwan’s Regional Integration* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018).

³⁵⁵ Tsai Ing-wen, “President Tsai Attends 2016 Annual Conference on Southeast Asian Studies in Taiwan,” Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), September 21, 2016.

³⁵⁶ Yih-Chyi Chuang and Wei-wen Lai, “The Sources of Taiwan’s Regional Unemployment: A Cross-Region Panel Analysis,” *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics* 40 (2008): 47–65.

³⁵⁷ Jost Wubbeke et al., *Made in China 2025: The Making of a High-Tech Superpower and Consequences for Industrial Countries* (Berlin: Mercator Institute for China Studies, December 2016), 6.

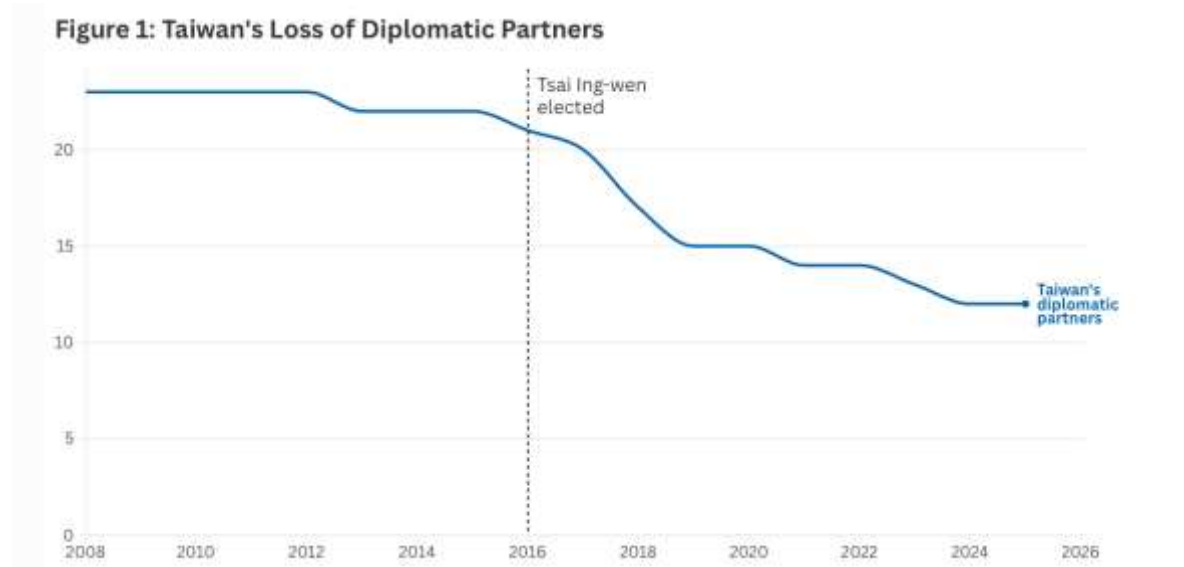
³⁵⁸ Council on Foreign Relations, “The Doha Trade Talks,” February 21, 2008.

³⁵⁹ New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, “RCEP Overview,” December 12, 2023; Congressional Research Service, *Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)*, IF11891, updated 2022; Jennifer Hillman and David Sacks, “Countries in China’s Belt and Road Initiative: Who’s In and Who’s Out,” Council on Foreign Relations, March 23, 2021.

³⁶⁰ Ministry of Economic Affairs. *Taiwan’s Foreign Trade Status and Policies*. Taipei: MOEA, 2019, 31–32.

actively boosted Taiwan’s efforts to secure participation in frameworks such as RCEP and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP), while closely monitoring the negotiation of bilateral investment and taxation agreements with NSP partner states³⁶¹. Recent trade data suggest that Taiwan’s export dependence on China and Hong Kong has fallen by more than seven percentage points since 2020, while exports to ASEAN and other NSP partners have expanded robustly³⁶².

Nevertheless, Beijing’s considerable economic and diplomatic weight continues to circumscribe the scope of Taiwan-ASEAN institutional deepening. Since the conclusion of the 2013 Taiwan-Singapore FTA, only a limited number of additional formal agreements have materialized, as many Southeast Asian governments remain cautious about steps that might be interpreted by Beijing as *de facto* elevation of relations with Taipei³⁶³. This dynamic was vividly demonstrated by China’s reaction to the 2017 Taiwan–Philippines investment accord, which highlighted the political sensitivity surrounding Taiwan’s economic engagement in the region and reinforced a pattern of cautiously calibrated, low-profile interaction on the part of ASEAN member states with Taiwan³⁶⁴.



³⁶¹ Lee, Chun-yi. “Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy and Its Geopolitical Implications in the Indo-Pacific.” National Defence and Security Research, 2022.

³⁶² Ministry of Finance (Taiwan), Statistical Bulletin: Exports to Mainland China and Hong Kong, no. 1 (January 16, 2025).

³⁶³ Pasha L. Hsieh, “Rethinking Non-Recognition: Taiwan’s New Pivot to ASEAN and the One-China Policy,” *International Relations and Diplomacy* 6, no. 3 (2018): 195–208.

³⁶⁴ Shannon Tiezzi, “Taiwan’s ‘New Southbound Policy’ Scores Win in the Philippines,” *The Diplomat*, December 8, 2017.

Fig. 9. Taiwan’s Loss of Diplomatic Partners. Source: Jonah Bock, “Why Countries Abandon Taiwan: Indicators for a Diplomatic Switch,” Global Taiwan Institute, August 21, 2024.

President Lai Ching-te, at the 2024 Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue, remarked:

Mainland China continues to suppress Taiwan’s presence in the international community, impeding us from signing trade agreements with other countries and participating in the regional economy. However, our resolve to engage with the world remains strong. Over the past several years, we have continued to expand our global economic presence and diversify our risks. We have also greatly reduced dependence on mainland China³⁶⁵.

CHAPTER 4: REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTORS

4.1. The Synchronization of Japan’s Strategy with Taiwan: The Defence of the Sakishima Islands

Japan’s strategic posture has become progressively aligned with Taiwan’s security, as Tokyo conceptualizes the island’s «long-standing *de facto* independence» as a critical buffer safeguarding essential sea lines of communication as well as its own territorial and resource interests. The erosion of this status is widely interpreted as a prelude to the obstruction of both proximate and more distant sea lanes and to the intensification of Chinese expansion in the East China Sea, «possibly leading to Chinese domination of much of that region» and economic devastation for Japan³⁶⁶. This perception is sharpened by Japan’s heavy dependence on maritime oil supplies, 90 per cent of which transit sea lanes adjacent to Taiwan, and by its position as the world’s third-largest oil consumer³⁶⁷. Reflecting these concerns, the 1996 US–Japan Joint Declaration bound Tokyo and Washington to respond to «situations that may

³⁶⁵ Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan). “President Lai Attends Opening of Ketagalan Forum: 2024 Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue.” News release, August 21, 2024. Accessed July 21, 2025. <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6797>.

³⁶⁶ Gill Bates, “Bush Was Correct, but Clumsy on Taiwan Policy,” *Financial Times*, January 2, 2003.

³⁶⁷ Raquel Shaoul, *Japan and China’s Energy Supply Security Policy Vis-à-vis Iran: Analysis of a Triangular Relationship* (Tel Aviv: Iran Pulse, Center for Iranian Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2006).

emerge in the areas surrounding Japan and which will have an important influence on the peace and security of Japan», thereby implicitly extending to a Taiwan contingency³⁶⁸. Subsequent doctrinal and institutional developments, notably the 1997 Japan-United States Defence Cooperation Guidelines and the 2003 War Contingency Law, reconfigured the Self-Defence Forces by authorizing the protection of US forces «in and around Japan», therefore enabling support to US operations related to the «security of Taiwan»³⁶⁹. The 2002 Defence White Paper additionally recast China-Taiwan relations — although regarded as «a domestic issue from the Chinese perspective» — as «a security problem which threatens regional peace and stability»³⁷⁰. Political elites have reinforced this orientation, as former defence minister Taro Aso advocated that «firm relations between Japan and Taiwan should be maintained»³⁷¹ and Japan and the US subsequently identified the security of Taiwan as a «common strategic objective»³⁷².

This strategic synchronization rests on a shared perception of the threat posed by China's pursuit of power maximization. Numerous Japanese officials contend that Beijing aims to secure control over Taiwan as a preliminary step toward predominance in the East China Sea, overturning the *status quo* premised on Taiwan's *de facto* rather than *de jure status* and triggering a «reordering of the balance of power» in the region³⁷³. From an offensive-realist perspective, China's modernization of its conventional and nuclear capabilities, its legal initiatives such as the Anti-Secession Law, and the expansion of the PLA Navy are interpreted as measures aimed at reshaping the regional order in its favour³⁷⁴. Shinzo Abe accordingly argued that Japan should avoid «sending a signal to China that the United States and Japan will watch and tolerate China's military invasion of Taiwan» and must be prepared to support US forces if «the situation surrounding Japan threatens our security»³⁷⁵. Abe's stance foreshadowed, and helped justify, the major security and political changes Japan has

³⁶⁸ Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. «Japan–US Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century.» April 17, 1996. www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html.

³⁶⁹ Axel Berkofsky, «Japan's New Army to the Rescue of U.S. Forces?», *Asia Times*, 2004; United States Embassy Japan, «Joint Statement of the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee», 2005; Andy Yee, «East China Sea Dispute: Why Japan's Era of Quiet Power May Be at an End», *Jakarta Globe*, October 2, 2010.

³⁷⁰ Japan Defense Agency, *Defense of Japan* 2002.

³⁷¹ «Japan's Aso Calls Taiwan a 'Country',» *Taipei Times*, March 10, 2006.

³⁷² U.S.–Japan Security Consultative Committee, «Joint Statement of the U.S.–Japan Security Consultative Committee,» February 19, 2005.

³⁷³ Christopher J. Pehrson, *String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenges of China's Rising Power Across the Asian Littoral* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2006): 12.

³⁷⁴ Christopher W. Hughes, «Japan's Response to China's Rise: Regional Engagement, Global Containment, Dangers of Collision,» *International Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2009): 837–56.

³⁷⁵ Anthony Faiola, «Japan to Join U.S. Policy on Taiwan: Growth of China Seen Behind Shift,» *Washington Post*, April 5, 2006.

undertaken in recent years³⁷⁶. Electoral and leadership shifts have further consolidated this strategic trajectory. Political instability generated space for leaders who openly advocated a more robust defence stance³⁷⁷. The rise of figures such as Sanae Takaichi, with a strong parliamentary majority and political mandate, has accelerated the implementation of security reforms³⁷⁸. Backed by a stable majority in the Diet, debates previously considered sensitive — revising constitutional constraints, increasing defence spending, and defining Japan’s role in a Taiwan contingency — have shifted toward the core of government decision-making³⁷⁹. In this sense, recent developments in Tokyo’s electoral landscape and party politics are closely intertwined with its evolving security strategy and with Abe’s previous insistence on Japan’s readiness to act alongside the United States in safeguarding the regional balance of power³⁸⁰. Operationally, Japan has recalibrated its capabilities and posture in ways that closely integrate its own defence with Taiwan’s security³⁸¹. The deployment of PAC-3 interceptors on Aegis-equipped vessels, the enactment of the Basic Ocean Law and establishment of the Ocean Policy Office enabling JMSDF protection of Japanese facilities around the Diaoyu Islands, the relocation of assets such as 20 F-15J fighters to Okinawa «with the veiled intent of providing enhanced air defence against China», and proposals to deploy SDF units on Yonaguni Island — just 67 miles from Taiwan — collectively embed Taiwan-contingency scenarios into Japan’s force posture³⁸². Japan’s incremental alignment of its Taiwan policy with the defence of the Sakishima Islands thus illustrates how geography and alliance dependence structurally bind Tokyo to any serious cross-Strait contingency³⁸³. Chinese missile launches during the August 2022 crisis, with several missiles landing in Japan’s EEZ, reinforced elite perceptions that «a Taiwan contingency is a Japan contingency» and highlighted that the southwest island chain — from Kyushu to Yonaguni, scarcely 68 miles from Taiwan — constitutes a central battlespace³⁸⁴. Japan’s incorporation of a Taiwan contingency into its territorial defence and alliance posture has proceeded parallel to broader debates on «active denial» and «archipelagic

³⁷⁶ Adam P. Liff, “Japan’s Security Policy in the ‘Abe Era’: Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?” *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 3 (2018): 8–34

³⁷⁷ “Japan’s Snap Election: Implications for National Security Policy,” IGCC (Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation), 23 February 2026.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ Christopher W. Hughes, “Japan’s Response to China’s Rise: Regional Engagement, Global Containment, Dangers of Collision,” *International Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2009): 837–56.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ Mike Mochizuki, “Tokyo’s Taiwan Conundrum: What Can Japan Do to Prevent War?,” *Washington Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2022): 81–107.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

defence»³⁸⁵. In this context, Japanese and allied planners increasingly conceptualize the southwest island chain as a «wall» constraining China’s capacity to project power beyond it and as critical terrain for land-based A2/AD in support of Taiwan, with Yonaguni, Ishigaki, and Miyako embedded in an operational design that links Japan’s exclusively defensive doctrine to deterrence by denial north and east of Taiwan and complements U.S. operational constructs such as JOAC, Air-Sea Battle, ACE, and EABO³⁸⁶. Japan’s geostrategic location renders it at once indispensable to U.S. intervention and acutely exposed: forward-deployed U.S. forces in Japan — including the 7th Fleet, 5th Air Force, and III Marine Expeditionary Force — would be pivotal to any defence of Taiwan, yet these same bases and adjacent Self-Defence Force facilities constitute priority targets for Chinese missile salvos intended to degrade allied capabilities in the opening phase of a conflict³⁸⁷. Tokyo has progressively reinforced the Sakishima Islands in ways that directly couple their defence to Taiwan-related denial missions: following the 2010 National Defence Program Guidelines’ identification of a «vacuum» in the southwest islands³⁸⁸, the JSDF established new bases on Yonaguni and Ishigaki and initiated deployments of Type-12 anti-ship missiles, Type-03 surface-to-air missiles, and PAC-3 batteries capable of contesting the sea and airspace China would need to control to blockade or invade Taiwan³⁸⁹, while planning the addition of a new medium-range surface-to-air missile unit on Yonaguni by 2030³⁹⁰. The emerging operational concept eschews a narrow emphasis on high-end systems and instead envisions the Sakishima Islands as a layered, high–low A2/AD bastion, closely integrated with U.S. and Taiwanese efforts³⁹¹. It entails mobile missile batteries networked with allied sensors and radars, strengthened short-range air defences against unmanned systems, and the eventual employment of

³⁸⁵ Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., “How to Deter China: The Case for Archipelagic Defense,” *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (2015): 78–86.

³⁸⁶ Jan Van Tol et al., *AirSea Battle: A Point-of-Departure Operational Concept* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, 2010); U.S. Department of Defense, *Joint Operational Access Concept (JOAC)* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2012); Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., “How to Deter China: The Case for Archipelagic Defense,” *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (2015): 78–86

³⁸⁷ Mike Mochizuki, “Tokyo’s Taiwan Conundrum: What Can Japan Do to Prevent War?,” *Washington Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2022): 81–107.

³⁸⁸ James J. Przystup and James A. Schoff, “Japan’s 2010 National Defense Program Guidelines: Coping with Strategic Change in the 21st Century,” *Asia Policy*, no. 11 (2011).

³⁸⁹ “China-wary Japan Establishes New Military Base on Southwest Ishigaki Island,” *The Mainichi*, March 16, 2023.

³⁹⁰ Japan Ministry of Defense, statement by Defense Minister Koizumi Shinjiro on the planned deployment of a medium-range surface-to-air missile unit to Yonaguni Island by fiscal 2030, cited in “Japan Aims to Deploy Missile Unit to Westernmost Island in FY 2030,” *The Mainichi*, February 25, 2026.

³⁹¹ Mike Mochizuki, “Japan and Nuclear Nonproliferation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 723–740.

unmanned platforms exploiting the islands' complex terrain to create a «hellscape» for PLAN surface forces operating east of Taiwan³⁹².

Chinese military writings and exercises increasingly portray the neutralization of the Sakishima archipelago and U.S. forces in Okinawa as a necessary precondition for blocking allied intervention «from the east side of Taiwan», giving rise to what Japanese strategists term a «strategic and tactical contradiction»: any rapid campaign to conquer Taiwan would compel Beijing to strike Japanese territory and U.S. bases, thereby ensuring alliance involvement and underscoring that the defence of these islands is inextricable from the management of a Taiwan contingency³⁹³.

The 2014 constitutional reinterpretation and the 2015 security legislation established a new category of «survival-threatening situations», under which Japan may employ force to the «minimum extent necessary» when an armed attack on a closely related state or on U.S. forces poses a serious threat to Japan's survival³⁹⁴. Concurrently, however, Article 88 of the Self-Defence Forces Law remained unchanged, thereby keeping the formal legal basis for SDF use of force anchored in the defence of Japan itself³⁹⁵. Consequently, fully exercising collective self-defence in a Taiwan conflict would require Tokyo to frame the protection of U.S. forces and outer islands such as Sakishima as ultimately integral to Japan's own defence, whereas a Chinese attack on Taiwan alone would not legally meet the «survival-threatening» threshold³⁹⁶.

The above-mentioned condition has led Japan toward what Mochizuki characterizes as a doctrine of «defensive denial», which coincide with U.S. notions of «active denial» and broader regional concepts of «defensive defence», particularly well suited to the Sakishima theatre. Rather than constructing large-scale offensive strike forces, Tokyo is prioritizing

³⁹² Mike Mochizuki, “Japan and Nuclear Nonproliferation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 723–740; Adam P. Liff, “Japan, Taiwan, and the ‘One China’ Framework after 50 Years,” *The China Quarterly* (published online 26 September 2022).

³⁹³ Wang Jixin [王继新], “Analysis of Japan's Deployment of Anti-Ship Missiles on Miyako Island” [“日本在宫古岛部署反舰导弹分析”], *Ordnance Knowledge* [兵器知识] 2 (2014): 34–37; Yasuhiro Matsuda, *Chūgoku to Taiwan: Kiki to Kinkō no Seijigaku* [China and Taiwan: The Politics of Crisis and Equilibrium] (Tokyo: Keio University Press, 2025).

³⁹⁴ “Cabinet Decision on Development of Seamless Security Legislation to Ensure Japan's Survival and Protect its People,” WARP Web Archiving Project, July 1, 2014, 3, 7–8, https://warp.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/8833367/japan.kantei.go.jp/96_abe/decisions/2014/_icsFiles/afieldfile/2014/07/03/anpohosei_eng.pdf.

³⁹⁵ Kutsunugi Kazuhito, “Genteiteki na shūdanteki jieiken no kōshi no tame no hōsei: Jitai taishō hōsei no kaisei” [Legislation for limited exercise of the right of collective defense: Revision of laws to deal with contingencies], *Rippō to chōsa* 366 (2015): 29; *Ji'eitai-hō* [Self-Defense Forces Law].

³⁹⁶ Mike Mochizuki, “Japan and Nuclear Nonproliferation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 723–740.

stand-off and air- and missile-defence capabilities, as well as the mobility, dispersion, and resilience of its bases — including those on the southwestern islands — in order to harden its posture against Chinese missile and air attacks while preserving the capacity to interdict PLA forces in the air and maritime approaches around Taiwan³⁹⁷.

Strengthening missile and air defence in and around Okinawa and Sakishima, pre-positioning fuel, ammunition, and other materiel, and augmenting the SDF's capacity to defend the outer islands are all officially presented as measures to «fend off attacks» and safeguard Japanese territory. At the same time, their geographic concentration — astride the routes PLA forces would have to traverse and in close proximity to Taiwan's eastern approaches — serves directly to increase the costs and operational complexity of any Chinese bid to seize Taiwan³⁹⁸.

In this way, the defence of the Sakishima Islands becomes the concrete military expression of Japan's strategic synchronization with Taiwan³⁹⁹.

Finally, this alignment with Taiwan is tempered by Japan's simultaneous reliance on deterrence and reassurance toward China⁴⁰⁰. Tokyo participates in joint regimes and confidence-building measures with Beijing — such as the 1997 Fisheries Agreement, prior-notification arrangements for research vessels, and roadmaps for joint resource development — to manage tensions over sea lanes, EEZs, and the Diaoyu area, even as it strengthens alliance structures and informal links with Taipei⁴⁰¹. Within a broader framework of coercive bargaining that blends credible threats with calibrated reassurances, Japan's synchronization with Taiwan thus functions both as a deterrent to Chinese coercion and to anchor a rules-based, institutionally supported management of the Taiwan question that aims to avoid the «destructive downward-spiralling security dilemma»⁴⁰².

³⁹⁷ Japan Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2022* (Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense, 2022), 193.

³⁹⁸ Mike Mochizuki, «Japan and Nuclear Nonproliferation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, ed. Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 96-96.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰⁰ Christopher W. Hughes, «Japan's Response to China's Rise: Regional Engagement, Global Containment, Dangers of Collision,” *International Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2009): 837–856.

⁴⁰¹ Mark J. Valencia and Yoshihisa Amae, «Regime Building in the East China Sea,” *Ocean Development and International Law* 34, no. 3 (2003): 189–208.

⁴⁰² Christopher W. Hughes, «Japan's Response to China's Rise: Regional Engagement, Global Containment, Dangers of Collision,” *International Affairs* 85, no. 4 (2009): 837–856.

4.2. The Australian dilemma: between economic dependence on China and a security alliance with the United States

Australia's contemporary strategic predicament is defined by a profound economic reliance on China alongside a security order anchored in its alliance with the United States, thereby generating a structural tension between prosperity and security⁴⁰³. While China's ascent has deepened the expansion of Sino-Australian economic interdependence, numerous scholars contend that such economic interconnection has exerted only a limited and predominantly indirect impact on their political relationship, failing to yield an unequivocal leverage advantage for either party⁴⁰⁴.

Historically, the bilateral relationship evolved from early Cold War antagonism marked by Australia's involvement against China in the Korean War, through pragmatic commodity trade in wool and wheat preceding formal diplomatic recognition, to a post-1972 era of multifaceted engagement⁴⁰⁵. During this period, complementary economic structures — China's demand for raw materials and technology, and Australia's abundance of resources and market needs — underpinned expanding cooperation despite periodic tensions surrounding issues such as Taiwan, Tibet, and human rights⁴⁰⁶. Across these phases, changes of government in Canberra had repercussions on the tone and emphasis of policy, with both Coalition and Labor administrations aiming to conciliate economic opportunities and alliance-centred security concerns⁴⁰⁷. Domestically, such tension has resulted in partisan politics, in which Coalition leaders foreground threat perception and sovereignty risks in their public debate, while Labor governments prioritize the need to «stabilise» ties with China to preserve the core security commitments inherited by their predecessors⁴⁰⁸.

Within this broader trajectory, Australia's security alignment with the United States — embodied in arrangements such as ANZUS, the Pine Gap facility, the rotational deployment of U.S. Marines in Darwin, and participation in the Five Eyes intelligence alliance — renders it

⁴⁰³ Hugh White, *The Limits to Alliance: Australia, the United States and the Rise of China* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2005).

⁴⁰⁴ James Reilly and Jingdong Yuan, "Australia and China: Economic Interdependence and Vulnerability," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 66, no. 3 (2012): 314–331.

⁴⁰⁵ *Australia–China Relations Before Recognition* (Sydney: Whitlam Institute, 2015).

⁴⁰⁶ Michael Wesley, "Australia and China," in *Australia and China at 40*, ed. James Reilly and Jingdong Yuan (Sydney: UNSW Press, 2012).

⁴⁰⁷ Elena Collinson, *The China Consensus: A Pre-Election Survey of Coalition Government and Australian Labor Party Policies on the People's Republic of China* (Sydney: Australia–China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, 2022).

⁴⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

widely anticipated that, in any major contingency involving Taiwan or the South China Sea, Canberra would align with Washington despite its significant economic exposure to Beijing⁴⁰⁹. Australia's contemporary strategic dilemma thus lies in balancing this long-standing alliance with a deepening economic dependence on China, a tension that has sharpened as regional great-power rivalry has intensified and as both Beijing and Washington have come to view their relationship in increasingly competitive, even adversarial, terms⁴¹⁰.

The depth of Australia's economic entanglement with China further magnifies this strategic dilemma: by 2019 China was Australia's largest export destination and import source, with exports heavily concentrated in minerals and fuels, while imports from China consisted predominantly of manufactured goods⁴¹¹. This asymmetry is further qualified by the relative availability of alternative sources and markets: while Australia can comparatively readily substitute Chinese manufactured imports — such as clothing, electronics, and toys — through other regional suppliers, China faces more constrained options for securing high-volume, competitively transported iron ore and energy resources⁴¹². Nonetheless, producers in Brazil, India, South Africa, and, increasingly, across Africa provide some degree of diversification⁴¹³. In the conceptual terms of Hirschman and of Keohane and Nye, both actors exhibit pronounced sensitivity to fluctuations in price and demand, yet this very interdependence renders their vulnerability mutual rather than unilateral⁴¹⁴. Chinese outward investment in Australia — most prominently in the mining sector — expanded rapidly under the «go global» strategy as Beijing sought to mitigate perceptions of resource insecurity⁴¹⁵. In response, Canberra strengthened its foreign investment review mechanisms, introduced refined «national interest» criteria, and imposed conditions on certain acquisitions, thereby signalling that state-affiliated capital would be permitted only within regulatory boundaries aimed at safeguarding Australian sovereignty

⁴⁰⁹ Hugh White, "The Limits to Optimism: Australia and the Rise of China," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 59, no. 4 (2005): 469–480.

⁴¹⁰ Michael J. Green et al., "The ANZUS Alliance in an Ascending Asia: A Model Alliance? The Strategic Logic of U.S.–Australia Cooperation," Centre of Gravity (Canberra: Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, Australian National University, 2015).

⁴¹¹ International Trade Centre, *Trade Map: Trade statistics for international business development – Australia–China bilateral trade, 2019* (Geneva: International Trade Centre, 2020).

⁴¹² David Uren, "Australia's Trade Diversification Away from China Picks Up Pace," *The Strategist* (Australian Strategic Policy Institute), 12 October 2022.

⁴¹³ Jeffrey D. Wilson, "Chinese Resource Security Policies and the Restructuring of the Asia-Pacific Iron Ore Market," *Resources Policy* 37, no. 3 (2012): 331–339.

⁴¹⁴ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977).

⁴¹⁵ KPMG Australia and University of Sydney, *Demystifying Chinese Investment in Australia* (Sydney: KPMG/University of Sydney, 2014–2024 series).

over strategic assets⁴¹⁶. The Turnbull and Morrison Coalition governments thus framed China-linked investments as a matter of national security, whereas the Albanese Labor government has maintained such arrangements pursuing a diplomatic «reset» in relations with Beijing⁴¹⁷. Although economic instruments and instances of coercive pressure have undoubtedly emerged, neither party has consistently weaponised economic interdependence to achieve enduring political concessions⁴¹⁸. Concurrently, Australia's public sentiment has shifted decisively toward viewing this dependence as excessive: in 2019, 74 per cent of participants in Lowy Institute polling agreed that «Australia is too economically dependent on China», a view reinforced by strategic commentators who, for over a decade, have characterized Australia's trade relationship with China as reflecting an «unacceptably high level of economic dependence» and as «far too dependent» for national economic security⁴¹⁹. However, the empirical evidence presented by Wesley and Reilly, indicates that the political ramifications of this interdependence have been more contingent and issue-specific than such portrayals suggest, with Canberra consistently exhibiting a readiness to incur economic costs rather than modify its fundamental alliance commitments or normative stances in response to Chinese preferences⁴²⁰. This exposure generates three analytically distinct categories of risk that shape Australia's strategic dilemma. The first is the macroeconomic risk that a Chinese growth shock could reverberate to Australia through trade and financial channels. Reserve Bank governors and economic analysts already caution that «if China goes down hard, there's a good chance Australia will too», echoing earlier warnings that when the United States «sneezes, Australia catches a cold»⁴²¹. The second is structural: China's «new normal» growth model, marked by a transition from investment-led to consumption-driven expansion, erodes demand for the resource-intensive exports — most notably iron ore and coking coal — that have sustained Australia's recent prosperity⁴²². The third, and most politically salient, is the coercive risk —

⁴¹⁶ Xueli Huang and Ian Austin, *Chinese Investment in Australia: Unique Insights from the Mining Industry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁴¹⁷ James Reilly, «Counting on China? Australia's Strategic Response to Economic Interdependence,» *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 4 (2012): 375.

⁴¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 369-394

⁴¹⁹ Natasha Kassam, *Lowy Institute Poll 2021: Understanding Australian Attitudes to the World* (Sydney: Lowy Institute, 2021).

⁴²⁰ James Reilly, «Counting on China? Australia's Strategic Response to Economic Interdependence,» *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 4 (2012): 369–394

⁴²¹ Jacob Greber, «Never forget; if China goes down hard, there's a good chance Australia will too,» *Australian Financial Review*, 2018, quoted in James Laurenceson and Michael Zhou, «Assessing the Risks from Australia's Economic Exposure to China,» *Australia–China Relations Institute Working Paper* (Sydney: University of Technology Sydney, 2018).

⁴²² Ross Garnaut, «China's 'New Normal' Growth and Its Implications for Australia,» in *China: A New Model for Growth and Development*, ed. Ross Garnaut, Cai Fang, and Ligang Song (Canberra: ANU Press, 2013).

the concern that extensive trade integration enables Beijing to exert leverage in response to Australian policy choices⁴²³. This fear has been voiced by figures such as Hillary Clinton, who cautioned that putting «all your eggs in the one basket» can compromise freedom of action and sovereignty, and by Australian strategists who warn that such dependence gives China a «fairly strong position» to pursue politically coercive measures given its dominant role in Australian trade⁴²⁴. Episodes of Chinese economic retaliation — such as trade restrictions on barley and beef following Australia’s call for a COVID-19 origins inquiry and its criticism of human rights violations in Xinjiang — demonstrate how concentrated reliance on a single market can be weaponised in response to perceived «unwelcome behaviour», thereby undermining business confidence and predictability⁴²⁵. During the 2010s, however, successive Australian governments repeatedly resisted specific U.S. requests on China-related matters even as they deepened economic and institutional engagement with Beijing — declining American pressure to undertake Freedom of Navigation Operations in the South China Sea, joining the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, concluding a Free Trade Agreement with China, and even signing an MOU supporting the Belt and Road Initiative in the Indo-Pacific⁴²⁶. These decisions both reflected and reinforced Australian scepticism regarding the reliability of U.S. regional commitment and contributed to «expectation gaps» in Washington over «where Australia stands» in managing China’s rise⁴²⁷.

Regarding grand strategy, however, this thesis finds that Australia has consistently attempted to reconcile its alliance obligations to the United States with the imperatives of deepening economic integration with China⁴²⁸. Yet this balancing act has not resulted in systematic foreign-policy sifts toward Chinese preferences. While certain decisions — such as withdrawing from the Quadrilateral Dialogue, declining ministerial visits to Taiwan, and managing Dalai Lama engagements with caution — have been viewed as accommodating Beijing, the broader record also features clear instances in which Canberra prioritised alliance

⁴²³ Richard McGregor, *Chinese Coercion, Australian Resilience* (Sydney: Lowy Institute, 2022).

⁴²⁴ Michael McGeough, reporting Hillary Clinton interview, quoted in James Laurenceson and Michael Zhou, “Assessing the Risks from Australia’s Economic Exposure to China,” *Australia–China Relations Institute Working Paper* (Sydney: University of Technology Sydney, 2018).

⁴²⁵ Eryk Bagshaw, reporting on China’s imposition of tariffs on Australian barley and suspension of beef imports in apparent retaliation for Canberra’s COVID-19 origins inquiry, quoted in Elena Collinson and James Laurenceson, “The Evolving Diplomacy of Australia–China Relations 2020–2021: The View from Australia,” *Melbourne Asia Review* 5 (2022).

⁴²⁶ Lai-Ha Chan, “Australia’s Strategic Hedging in the Indo-Pacific: A ‘Third Way’ Beyond Either China or the US,” *Australia–China Relations Institute Policy Paper* (Sydney: University of Technology Sydney, 2019).

⁴²⁷ James Curran, *Australia’s China Odyssey: From Euphoria to Fear* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2021).

⁴²⁸ James Reilly, “Counting on China? Australia’s Strategic Response to Economic Interdependence,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 4 (2012): 369–394.

and normative considerations⁴²⁹. These include robust support for U.S. regional strategy, explicitly critical references to the opacity of China’s military modernisation in the 2009 Defence White Paper, the rotational deployment of U.S. Marines to Darwin, the Huawei ban, and the granting of visas to sensitive figures such as Rebiya Kadeer⁴³⁰. In this context, the creation of AUKUS in 2021 — promising nuclear-powered submarines and deeper technology sharing — signals US recognition that the alliance needed renewal but also overlays rather than resolves the underlying structural problem of economic interdependence with China combined with heightened alliance expectations from Washington⁴³¹. Therefore, the Morrison government presented AUKUS as a decisive response to the deterioration of the strategic framework and as a domestic demonstration of its resolve toward China⁴³², whereas the Albanese government has portrayed AUKUS as an effort to restore ministerial-level dialogue and hence ease Chinese trade restrictions⁴³³.

Within this constrained economic environment, Australia’s strategic dilemma centres less on whether to disengage from China than on how to manage and mitigate the risks inherent in sustained exposure while preserving its security alliance with the United States⁴³⁴. On the coercive dimension, the mixed evidence of China’s capacity and willingness to convert trade and investment ties into consistent political leverage — from the Stern Hu case and iron ore pricing disputes to the 2020-21 sanctions — supports the argument that vulnerability in this relationship is reciprocal and that economic statecraft remains a blunt and at times counterproductive tool in the Sino-Australian context⁴³⁵. From this perspective, the essence of Australia’s strategic dilemma lies in maintaining mutually beneficial trade with China in areas of strong complementarity, while recognizing that Canberra’s latitude on matters of high politics — particularly its alignment with U.S.-China policy — cannot be fully shielded from potential economic repercussions. This reality necessitates resilient risk-management strategies rather than reliance on the illusion of cost-free diversification, even as Sino-Australian

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Ibid.

⁴³¹ “White House,” Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS (Washington, DC: The White House, September 15, 2021).

⁴³² Scott Morrison, “A Comprehensive National Security Strategy: Keeping Australians Safe,” ScottMorrison.com.au

⁴³³ Graeme Smith, “Caution and Compromise in the Albanese Government’s China Strategy,” *The China Story Journal*, 2024.

⁴³⁴ James Laurenceson, “Assessing the Risks from Australia’s Economic Exposure to China,” *Assessing the Risks from Australia’s Economic Exposure to China* (Sydney: Australia–China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, 2019).

⁴³⁵ James Reilly, *China’s Economic Statecraft: Turning Wealth into Power* (Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2013).

economic interdependence remains broadly balanced and reciprocal rather than structurally coercive⁴³⁶. In parallel, the emerging «Plan B» debate outlined by Dunley suggests movement toward a more diversified security posture that extends beyond exclusive reliance on ANZUS and AUKUS. This orientation envisions the cultivation of deeper middle-power security architectures with regional partners, an intensified emphasis on supply-chain integrity and economic resilience⁴³⁷. Nonetheless, it rests on the premise that any plausible future strategy will integrate alliance commitments, regional coalitions, and enhanced domestic capabilities rather than entail a complete strategic rupture with the United States.

4.3. The European Union and Italy in the Indo-Pacific: economic interests and the protection of freedom of navigation

In its EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo Pacific, the European Union frames the Indo-Pacific as a key theatre where its economic security and the principle of freedom of navigation directly intersect⁴³⁸. The Indo-Pacific is portrayed as the new centre of gravity of global politics and trade, in which the balance of power between the United States and China will shape the twenty-first century⁴³⁹. From the European Union's perspective, economic interests in such region are paramount: the area is the EU's second-largest export destination, and taken together, Europe and the Indo-Pacific account for around 70 per cent of global trade⁴⁴⁰. The region concentrates a dense network of trade and production since it hosts major advanced economies such as Australia, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore, the economic giants China and India, and fast-growing ASEAN states, that together form a key hub of global value chains⁴⁴¹. This configuration renders Indo-Pacific markets and supply chains indispensable for

⁴³⁶ Daniele Bergami, Leonid Gontmakher, and Zuzana Tichá, "Economic Power and Vulnerability in Sino-Australian Relations," in *China Story Yearbook 2020: Crisis*, ed. Jane Golley and Linda Jaivin (Canberra: ANU Press, 2021).

⁴³⁷ Richard Dunley, "Plan B?: Reconsidering Australian Security in the Event of a Post-US Alliance Era," *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (2024): 483–503.

⁴³⁸ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: *The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*(JOIN(2021) 24 final), Brussels, 16 September 2021, 3–4, 16–18.

⁴³⁹ White House. *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States*. Washington, DC: The White House, February 2022.

⁴⁴⁰ European Parliament, *Report on the Indo-Pacific Strategy in the Area of Trade and Investment* (2021/2200(INI)), A9-0170/2022, 22 June 2022, https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2022-0170_EN.html.

⁴⁴¹ Maxi Schoeman and Yi-Shan Wu, "The Evolving Indo-Pacific Region: An Introduction to External Perspectives on Africa's Role and Position," *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 44, no. 2 (2022).

Europe's economic performance and prompted the European Union, in 2021, to adopt its Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, which explicitly aims to intensify economic ties, protect supply chains, and provide trade alternatives in a context of growing Chinese assertiveness⁴⁴².

For Europe, the Indo-Pacific assumes particular salience primarily because it encompasses the principal sea lines of communication that connect European and Asian markets and sustain export-oriented economic models⁴⁴³. The majority of Europe's external trade with Asia moves by sea through Indo-Pacific chokepoints such as Suez, Bab el-Mandeb, Hormuz and especially the Malacca and Lombok Straits, making uninterrupted maritime traffic indispensable for European growth⁴⁴⁴. The EU already ranks among the principal trading, investment and development partners in the region, and the dense web of interdependence with Indo-Pacific economies implies that any disruption in the area would rapidly reverberate onto European prosperity⁴⁴⁵. The EU strategy explicitly links the deepening of economic relations to the imperative of keeping maritime routes open, while contemporary European debates on «de-risking» and economic security underscore the necessity of diversifying partnerships within the Indo-Pacific, in order to ensure that disruptions or coercive instrumentalization of interdependence cannot easily jeopardise European trade⁴⁴⁶. Initiatives such as the Global Gateway are conceived to support infrastructure and connectivity in Indo-Pacific states, providing alternatives to the Belt and Road while simultaneously reinforcing a multilateral, rules-based framework for maritime commerce⁴⁴⁷. Italy's trajectory can be suited within this broader European pattern, notwithstanding its traditional prioritization of the Mediterranean and North Africa⁴⁴⁸. Italy constitutes a particularly relevant case among EU member states due to its wide export-oriented manufacturing economy, its emerging role as energy and logistic

⁴⁴² European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, JOIN(2021) 24 final (Brussels, 16 September 2021), https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/jointcommunication_2021_24_1_en.pdf.

⁴⁴³ Abhijit Singh, "Securing Sea Lines of Communication in Asia," ORF Occasional Paper, no. 383 (New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation, November 2022).

⁴⁴⁴ Girardi, Benedetta, Paul van Hooft, and Giovanni Cisco. 2023. *What the Indo-Pacific Means to Europe: Trade Value, Chokepoints, and Security Risks*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies.

⁴⁴⁵ European Commission, "26th EU-Japan Summit: Taking Our Strong Partnership to a Higher Level," press release, April 25, 2019, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_2248.

⁴⁴⁶ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: European Economic Security Strategy, JOIN(2023) 20 final (Brussels, 20 June 2023), <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52023JC0020>.

⁴⁴⁷ Teemu Karjalainen, "European Norms Trap? EU Connectivity Policies and the Case of the Global Gateway," *East Asia* 40, no. 3 (2023): 293–316.

⁴⁴⁸ Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, *Il contributo italiano alla strategia europea per l'Indo-Pacifico* (Rome: MAECI, 2022).

hub, and its heavy reliance on sea lines of communication, which link European markets to the Indo-Pacific⁴⁴⁹. These features make the stability of Indo-Pacific trade routes and the protection of freedom of navigation especially salient for Rome, arguably more than for many other EU partners whose economic and maritime exposure to this axis is less pronounced⁴⁵⁰.

In recent years, Rome has progressively reoriented its attention toward the Indo-Pacific, articulating wide-ranging objectives that closely align with EU and other European approaches and adopting an inclusive geographical conception that encompasses all states bordering the Indian and Pacific Oceans⁴⁵¹. From a (neo)liberal perspective, Italy's growing engagement in such region can be interpreted as the product of both complex interdependence and progressive alignment of three key conditions for cooperation, namely the existence of shared interests, the material and institutional capacity to pursue them, and common systematic pressures⁴⁵². Concurrently, Italy's growing engagement in Indo-Pacific security — through its naval presence, participation in European and allied maritime initiatives, and support for EU-level policies — reflects a raising concern for the protection of sea lanes of communication that have become increasingly critical for its trade and energy security⁴⁵³. From an economic perspective, detailed trade analysis shows that Italy records an overall deficit vis-à-vis the Indo-Pacific, largely driven by its imbalance with China⁴⁵⁴. However, in several sectors — particularly machinery and higher-value manufactured goods — Italy achieves trade surpluses with other sub-regions, indicating a pattern of complementarity rather than simple vulnerability⁴⁵⁵. EU-level instruments such as the Generalised Scheme of Preferences and other preferential regimes, when used extensively by Indo-Pacific exporters, contribute to lowering input costs for Italian industry and generate mutual incentives to preserve open trade and stable, predictable maritime access⁴⁵⁶. This reinforces Rome's interest in supporting EU free-trade agreements, preferential schemes and connectivity projects that stabilise the economic

⁴⁴⁹ Gabriele Abbondanza, "Italy's Quiet Pivot to the Indo-Pacific: Towards an Italian Indo-Pacific Strategy," *International Political Science Review* 45, no. 5 (2024): 669–679.

⁴⁵⁰ Benedetta Girardi, Paul van Hoof, and Giovanni Cisco, *What the Indo-Pacific Means to Europe: Trade Value, Chokepoints, and Security Risks* (The Hague: HCSS, 2023).

⁴⁵¹ Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, *Il contributo italiano alla strategia europea per l'Indo-Pacifico* [The Italian Contribution to the European Indo-Pacific Strategy] (Rome: Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2022).

⁴⁵² Robert O. Keohane, "Twenty Years of Institutional Liberalism," *International Relations* 26, no. 2 (2012): 125–138.

⁴⁵³ Giulio Pugliese, "The European Union's Security Intervention in the Indo-Pacific: Between Multilateralism and Mercantile Interests," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 17, no. 1 (2023): 76–98.

⁴⁵⁴ World Bank, *World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS): Italy Trade Summary 2023*, accessed 30 November 2024.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵⁶ Fjoralda Lavdari, "Principle of Most Favoured Nation: Description, Modern Evolution, and Analysis of the Exceptionality of the Principle in a Contemporary World," *Extensive Reviews* 1, no. 1 (2021): 16–29.

environment along Indo-Pacific Sea lanes⁴⁵⁷. On this basis, Italy has gradually constructed a dense network of economic, normative, and security ties with Indo-Pacific partners which collectively amount to an informal yet coherent Indo-Pacific strategy⁴⁵⁸.

The protection of freedom of navigation is articulated through support for a rules-based maritime order grounded in UNCLOS, opposition to unilateral alterations of the *status quo*, and the promotion of «open and secure maritime commons»⁴⁵⁹. In this perspective, freedom of navigation is conceived not merely as a technical legal norm but as a foundational precondition for sustaining Europe's economic interdependence with the Indo-Pacific. European capitals therefore place particular emphasis on upholding a rules-based international order grounded in international law, multilateralism and cooperation with like-minded partners, especially ASEAN and its members⁴⁶⁰.

Naval deployments, presence operations, and capacity-building initiatives — ranging from Operation Atalanta in the western Indo-Pacific to the extension of the CRIMARIO maritime domain awareness programme and support for Southeast Asian coast guards — are presented as tools to uphold multilateral rules, strengthen maritime safety and law enforcement, and avoid a slide towards brute power politics⁴⁶¹. Although European naval capabilities in the Indo-Pacific are limited and often symbolic, coordinated deployments and cooperation with like-minded partners (Japan, Australia, India, among others) are presented as ways to signal commitment to free sea lanes without fully aligning with a hard-containment strategy against China⁴⁶². The Union's Indo-Pacific strategy combines support for multilateralism and the «liberal international order» with efforts to secure trade routes, promote connectivity, conclude or update free-trade and investment agreements, and export European standards in areas such as digital regulation, green transition and infrastructure⁴⁶³.

⁴⁵⁷ Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, *Il contributo italiano alla strategia europea per l'Indo-Pacifico* [The Italian Contribution to the European Indo-Pacific Strategy] (Rome: Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2022).

⁴⁵⁸ Gabriele Abbondanza, "Italy's Quiet Pivot to the Indo-Pacific: Towards an Italian Indo-Pacific Strategy," *International Political Science Review* 45, no. 5 (2024): 669–679.

⁴⁵⁹ Esa Paasivirta, "The European Union and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea," *Fordham International Law Journal* 38, no. 4 (2015): 1045–1070.

⁴⁶⁰ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*, JOIN(2021) 24 final (Brussels, 16 September 2021).

⁴⁶¹ Council of the European Union, *EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*, Council Conclusions, 7914/21 (Brussels, 19 April 2021).

⁴⁶² Eva Pejsova, "Europe's Indo-Pacific Puzzle: In Search of an Independent Foreign Policy," in *Indo-Pacific Strategies: Navigating Geopolitics at the Dawn of a New Age*, ed. Brendon J. Cannon and Kei Hakata (London: Routledge, 2021), 178–197.

⁴⁶³ European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, *Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*, JOIN(2021) 24 final (Brussels, 16 September 2021).

On the economic dimension, Brussels promotes connectivity, trade agreements and regulatory partnerships with Indo-Pacific countries, while Rome leverages naval deployments and diplomatic initiatives to support its defence industry and deepen ties with key markets such as Japan, India and Southeast Asian states⁴⁶⁴. Defence-industrial cooperation, including Italy's participation in the GCAP (Global Combat Air Programme) sixth-generation fighter programme, further entrenches long-term strategic interdependence between Italy and several Indo-Pacific partners⁴⁶⁵.

Italy's position reflects both its structural limitations as a second-tier power and its growing entanglement in the wider Indo-Pacific theatre. Traditionally oriented toward its «three circles» of Atlanticism, Europeanism and the Mediterranean as its primary spheres of autonomy, Italy has nonetheless progressively extended its strategic reach eastwards: it participates in anti-piracy missions in the Indian Ocean, has considered logistical facilities in Djibouti and Qatar, and has deployed naval units as far as the Far East and to exercises like RIMPAC as part of transatlantic burden-sharing with the United States and in support of a rules-based international order at sea⁴⁶⁶. In strategic terms, Italy's deepening involvement in Indo-Pacific security remains carefully calibrated: it responds to U.S. expectations on burden-sharing and aligns with EU-level priorities, yet it simultaneously reflects an autonomous interest in safeguarding the maritime routes that connect the enlarged Mediterranean to Asian markets⁴⁶⁷. Concurrently, European and Italian policy deliberately diverges from a purely confrontational, containment-oriented posture toward China⁴⁶⁸. Rather than replicating U.S.-style freedom of navigation operations as coercive signalling, they present their activities as upholding general principles — unimpeded commerce, peaceful dispute settlement, multilateral cooperation — while avoiding moves that could be read as openly escalatory⁴⁶⁹. European and Italian documents thus tend to frame their Indo-Pacific engagement as a «third way» between the more forceful posture of the U.S. and its closest Indo-Pacific allies and the cautious hedging preferred

⁴⁶⁴ Lorenzo Termine, *Italy's Engagement with Indo-Pacific Security: A Compass to Navigate Pitfalls and Advance Interests*, draft report (2025).

⁴⁶⁵ Italian Government. 2022. "Italy, the United Kingdom and Japan Launch the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP)." Press release, 9 December 2022.

⁴⁶⁶ Gianluca Natalizia, Pietro Baldelli, and Roberto Ferrara, *Il gioco delle grandi potenze: La competizione nel Mediterraneo allargato* (Rome: Luiss University Press, 2024).

⁴⁶⁷ Gabriele Abbondanza, "Italy's Quiet Pivot to the Indo-Pacific: Towards an Italian Indo-Pacific Strategy," *International Political Science Review* 45, no. 5 (2024): 669–679.

⁴⁶⁸ Gabriele Abbondanza and Thomas S. Wilkins, "Europe in the Indo-Pacific: Economic, Security, and Normative Engagement," *International Political Science Review* 45, no. 5 (2024): 640–646.

⁴⁶⁹ Eva Pejsova, "Europe's Indo-Pacific Puzzle: In Search of an Independent Foreign Policy," in *Indo-Pacific Strategies: Navigating Geopolitics at the Dawn of a New Age*, ed. Brendon J. Cannon and Kei Hakata (London: Routledge, 2021), 178–197.

by many ASEAN states⁴⁷⁰. In this evolving context, the Indo-Pacific has become a decisive testing ground for how the European Union and Italy can simultaneously safeguard their economic interests and contribute to the protection of freedom of navigation in a region that will increasingly shape the global order.

⁴⁷⁰ Gabriele Abbondanza and Thomas S. Wilkins, “Europe in the Indo-Pacific: Economic, Security, and Normative Engagement,” *International Political Science Review* 45, no. 5 (2024): 640–646.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has addressed the following research question: How does Taiwan's centrality in the new Indo-Pacific contribute to transforming the security dilemma between China and the United States into a regional spiral that involves allies and partners?

The author started from the hypothesis that this transformation stems from the interaction of three dimensions: the island's geostrategic position, its role in the semiconductor sector, and the gradual consolidation of a democratic political identity distinct from that of mainland China. The analysis has shown how the evolving strategies of Beijing, Taipei, and Washington mutually reinforce perceptions of vulnerability, thereby tightening the dynamics of the security dilemma. The study has demonstrated that Taiwan's growing centrality in the Indo-Pacific has transformed the cross-Strait issue from a predominantly bilateral contest into the core driver of a wider regional security spiral. Taiwan's strategic relevance is amplified by three interlocking dimensions: its geostrategic location at the junction of critical sea lines of communication, its pivotal role in global semiconductor supply chains, and the consolidation of a distinct democratic identity that undermines the political feasibility of «peaceful reunification». Together, these factors elevate the stakes of any potential crisis, increasing the incentives for coercive signalling, grey-zone pressure, and military posturing. The examination of U.S. and Chinese strategic adaptations has further highlighted how the conceptual shift from an Asia-Pacific to an Indo-Pacific framework, combined with the rise of minilateral arrangements such as the Quad and AUKUS, structurally embeds the Taiwan question within a denser network of alignments and counter-alignments. This process of regionalisation does not merely broaden the geographic scope of the security dilemma; it multiplies the actors whose security is perceived to be directly contingent upon the island's future *status*. Japan's growing identification of a «Taiwan contingency» with a «Japan contingency», Australia's deepening integration into U.S. deterrence architectures, and the European Union's gradual securitisation of cross-Strait stability all exemplify this centrifugal dynamic, showing how a dilemma that was originally bilateral has become the driver of a wider regional spiral. At the theoretical level, the findings underscore the value of combining defensive and offensive realism with a constructivist lens to make sense of contemporary security politics. Realist approaches help explain why military modernisation, alliance tightening, and efforts of domination generate spirals of threat perception and counter-reaction, while constructivism highlights how narratives of national rejuvenation, sovereignty, and democratic identity impregnate Taiwan

issue with symbolic meaning. The interaction of these logics suggests that the Indo-Pacific security order cannot be understood solely as a function of capabilities and balances; it is also established through discourse, memory, and *status* claims. Normatively, the thesis points to a pessimistic but not entirely deterministic outlook. The convergence of encirclement geometries, weaponised interdependence, and tightening alliance structures appears to reduce the space for traditional crisis-management tools and heightens the risk of miscalculation. Yet the same dense web of regional and extra-regional stakeholders that contributes to the security spiral also creates constituencies with interest in preventing open conflict. In this sense, the Indo-Pacific order is characterised by a profound tension between escalation-prone security dynamics and the continued recognition, by many actors, that a war over Taiwan would be economically devastating and politically disruptive on a global scale. The limits of the research derive primarily from its reliance on open sources, the opacity of decision-making processes in key capitals, and the focus on a single, albeit critical, case study. Future research could build on this work by adopting comparative designs that locate Taiwan alongside other contested spaces in the Indo-Pacific, such as the South China Sea or the Korean Peninsula, or by integrating more systematically the role of emerging technologies, cyber operations, and societal resilience into the analysis of the security dilemma. Nonetheless, by clarifying how Taiwan's centrality in the emerging Indo-Pacific architecture contributes to transforming a bilateral rivalry into a regional security spiral, the thesis confirms the initial hypothesis and underscores the urgency of forming mechanisms capable of managing, rather than merely postponing, the risks of this evolving order.

REFERENCES

1. Abbondanza, Gabriele. "Italy's Quiet Pivot to the Indo-Pacific: Towards an Italian Indo-Pacific Strategy." *International Political Science Review* 45, no. 5 (2024): 669–679.
2. Abbondanza, Gabriele, and Thomas S. Wilkins. "Europe in the Indo-Pacific: Economic, Security, and Normative Engagement." *International Political Science Review* 45, no. 5 (2024): 640–646.
3. Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area. Taipei: Mainland Affairs Council, Executive Yuan, 1992. <https://law.moj.gov.tw/ENG/LawClass/LawAll.aspx?pcode=Q0010001>.
4. Alhammedi, Abdullah. "The Neorealism and Neoliberalism Behind International Relations during COVID-19." *OALib Journal* 9, no. 2 (February 2022): 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.4236/oalib.1108411>.
5. Allanson Conlon, Kate. "The Rise and Fall of Chánzú: A Short History of Footbinding in Taiwan." *Taiwan Insight*, June 24, 2024. <https://taiwaninsight.org/2024/06/24/the-rise-and-fall-of-chanzu-a-short-history-of-footbinding-in-taiwan/>.
6. Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2022. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2022.
7. Arif, Beston. "The Role of Soft Power in China's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century." *International Journal of Social Sciences and Educational Studies* 3 (2017): 94–101.
8. Armstrong, Charles K., and David Sacks. "Taiwan Announced a Record Defense Budget: But Is It Enough to Deter China?" Council on Foreign Relations, August 29, 2023.
9. Aron, Raymond. *Peace and War: A Theory of International Relations*. New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2003.
10. Association of Southeast Asian Nations. "The ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration), Bangkok, 8 August 1967." ASEAN official document. <https://agreement.asean.org/media/download/20140117154159.pdf>.
11. Australia. Department of Defence. "Australia–Japan–United States Trilateral Defence Ministers' Meeting, November 2024: Joint Statement." November 17, 2024.
12. Bagshaw, Eryk. Report on China's tariffs on Australian barley and suspension of beef imports, quoted in Elena Collinson and James Laurenceson, "The Evolving Diplomacy

- of Australia–China Relations 2020–2021: The View from Australia." *Melbourne Asia Review* 5 (2022).
13. Bentley, Scott. "The Next South China Sea Crisis: China vs. Indonesia?" *The National Interest*, September 24, 2014. <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/the-next-south-china-sea-crisis-china-vs-indonesia-11342>.
 14. Bergami, Daniele, Leonid Gontmakher, and Zuzana Tichá. "Economic Power and Vulnerability in Sino Australian Relations." In *China Story Yearbook 2020: Crisis*, edited by Jane Golley and Linda Jaivin. Canberra: ANU Press, 2021.
 15. Berlin, Donald L. "India in the Indian Ocean." *Naval War College Review* 59, no. 2 (Spring 2006).
 16. Berkofsky, Axel. "Japan's New Army to the Rescue of U.S. Forces?" *Asia Times*, 2004.
 17. Berkofsky, Axel, and Sergio Miracola, eds. *Geopolitics by Other Means: The Indo-Pacific Reality*. Milan: ISPI, 2019.
 18. Bhatia, Kapil. "Coercive Gradualism Through Gray Zone Statecraft in the South China Seas: China's Strategy and Potential U.S. Options." *Joint Force Quarterly* 91 (October 30, 2018). National Defense University Press.
 19. Biddle, Stephen, and Ivan Oelrich. "Future Warfare in the Western Pacific: Chinese Antiaccess/Area Denial, U.S. AirSea Battle, and Command of the Commons in East Asia." *International Security* 41, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 7–48.
 20. Brandt, Mary. "The 228 Incident: History, Memorialization, and Collective Memory." *CSS Taiwan*, March 12, 2025. <https://taiwancss.org/the-228-incident-history-memorialization-and-collective-memory/>.
 21. Brende, Børge. "Dialogue Is Not a Luxury in Times of Uncertainty." LinkedIn post, January 12, 2026. Accessed February 11, 2026.
 22. Brands, Hal. "Paradoxes of the Gray Zone." 2016.
 23. Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Executive Yuan, ROC (Taiwan). "New Southbound Policy Implementation Plans."
 24. Cai, K. G. "Constructing an Analytical Framework for Explaining Chinese Foreign Policy." *Chinese Political Science Review* 5 (2020): 355–373.
 25. Callahan, William A. "Identity and Security in China: The Negative Soft Power of the China Dream." *Political Studies* 63, no. 1 (2015): 149–165.
 26. Callahan, William A. "National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism." *Alternatives* 29 (2004): 199–218.

27. Campagnola, Davide. "The Status Quo between Taiwan and China: The Inevitability of a Dramatic End?" Taiwan Politics, November 26, 2024.
28. Cancian, Mark F., Matthew Cancian, and Eric Heginbotham. The First Battle of the Next War: Wargaming a Chinese Invasion of Taiwan. Washington, DC: Centre for Strategic and International Studies, 2023.
29. Centre for a New American Security. "A Real Pivot to Asia Is Critical to U.S. Interests, Blackwill and Fontaine Argue in New Book." Press release, June 11, 2024.
30. Centre for International Relations and Sustainable Development. "The U.S. Pivot to Asia and American Grand Strategy." Accessed February 10, 2026. <https://cirsd.org/horizon-article/the-us-pivot-to-asia-and-american-grand-strategy/>.
31. Centre for Preventive Action. "Confrontation Over Taiwan." Global Conflict Tracker. Council on Foreign Relations. Last modified October 30, 2025. <https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/china-taiwan-confrontation>.
32. Chan, Angel. "Asian Colonisation: The Case of Japan and Taiwan." Insight Publication, no. 3 (February 27, n.d.). UCLA Asiatic Affairs. <https://www.uclasiaticaffairs.com/publications-list/asian-colonisation-the-case-of-japan-and-taiwan-d95na>.
33. Chan, Lai-Ha. "Australia's Strategic Hedging in the Indo-Pacific: A 'Third Way' Beyond Either China or the US." Australia–China Relations Institute Policy Paper. Sidney: University of Technology Sydney, 2019.
34. Chang, Chia-Lin, and Hsiu-Chin Tsai. "Dalu Fujian Zongjiaowenhua Ji Zongjiaoluyou Jieqing Zhi Zhengjingfenxi [A Political Economic Analysis of 'Religious Culture' and 'Religious Travel' Festivals in Fujian Province, China]." Prospect & Exploration 7, no. 7 (2009): 57.
35. Chang, Chun Chih. "Taiwan's New Southbound Policy: Implications for the Relations between Taiwan and ASEAN." In 離脱の政治 [The Politics of Secession], special symposium, 法政論叢 [The Japanese Journal of Law and Political Science] 54, no. 1 (2023): 199–220.
36. Chang, Guan-chung. "Strengthening Self-Defense Capabilities, Defending Freedom and Democracy." Keynote address, U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference, October 5, 2020. https://www.us-taiwan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020_october05_vice_minister_chang_mnd_keynote.pdf.

37. Chiang, Min-Hua. "Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company: A Key Chip in the Global Political Economy." *East Asian Policy* 15, no. 1 (2023): 36–46.
38. CHIPS and Science Act of 2022. Pub. L. No. 117-167, August 9, 2022, Title XCIX.
39. Choudhary, Sabba. "From Samudra-Manthan to SAGAR: Civilisational Foundations of India's Indo-Pacific Vision." *International Journal of Social Science and Education Research* 7, no. 2 (2025): 906–911.
40. Chou, Catherine Lila. "Decolonizing the 'One China' Narrative: The Case of Taiwan." *The Historical Journal* 67, no. 1 (2024): 161–168.
41. Chou, Shun-Hsing. "United Nations Resolution 2758 and Taiwan's Diplomatic Prospect." UCL Diplomacy Society, October 15, 2024. <https://www.ucldiplomacy.com/post/united-nations-resolution-2758-and-taiwan-s-diplomatic-prospect>.
42. Chou, Tsun-tzu Kristy. "A Review of Taiwan's Old and New Go South Policy: An Economic Perspective." *Prospect Journal* 18 (2018): 63–87.
43. Chuang, Yih-Chyi, and Wei-wen Lai. "The Sources of Taiwan's Regional Unemployment: A Cross-Region Panel Analysis." *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics* 40 (2008): 47–65.
44. Clinton, Hillary Rodham. "America's Pacific Century." *Foreign Policy*, no. 189 (November 2011): 56–63.
45. Clementi, Marco. "Il Pivot to Asia e l'incerto ruolo degli USA nel mondo." In *Atlante Geopolitico* 2014. Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2014. [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/il-pivot-to-asia-e-l-incerto-ruolo-degli-usa-nel-mondo_\(Atlante-Geopolitico\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/il-pivot-to-asia-e-l-incerto-ruolo-degli-usa-nel-mondo_(Atlante-Geopolitico)/).
46. Collinson, Elena. *The China Consensus: A Pre-Election Survey of Coalition Government and Australian Labor Party Policies on the People's Republic of China*. Sydney: Australia–China Relations Institute, University of Technology Sydney, 2022.
47. Costello, John, and Joe McReynolds. *China's Strategic Support Force: A Force for a New Era*. *China Strategic Perspectives*, no. 13. Edited by Phillip C. Saunders. Washington, DC: Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs, Institute for National Strategic Studies, n.d.
48. Courmont, Barthélemy. "What Implications for Chinese Soft Power: Charm Offensive or New Hegemony?" *Pacific Focus* 28, no. 3 (2013): 343–364.
49. Council of the European Union. *EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific*. Council Conclusions, 7914/21. Brussels, April 19, 2021.

50. Council on Foreign Relations. "The Doha Trade Talks." February 21, 2008.
51. Cozens, Peter. "Some Reflections on Maritime Developments in the Indo-Pacific Region." Paper presented at the CSCAP Working Group on Maritime Cooperation, Delhi, India, 2005.
52. Cozens, Peter. "E-mail Interview." By Axel Berkofsky and Sergio Miracola. In *Geopolitics by Other Means: The Indo-Pacific Reality*, edited by Axel Berkofsky and Sergio Miracola. Milan: ISPI, 2019.
53. Curran, James. *Australia's China Odyssey: From Euphoria to Fear*. Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2021.
54. De Luca, Alessia, Guido Alberto Casanova, and Paola Morselli. "Usa2024: Ancora e sempre 'Pivot to Asia'?" ISPI, October 2, 2024. <https://www.ispionline.it/it/pubblicazione/usa2024-ancora-e-sempre-pivot-to-asia-185533>.
55. Defense of Japan 2002. Japan Defense Agency.
56. "Defense of Japan 2013." Japan Ministry of Defense.
57. "Defense of Japan 2014." Japan Ministry of Defense.
58. Demir, Emre. "Understanding the Transformation in Chinese Foreign Policy: A Historical Evaluation from 1949 to 2019." *Cappadocia Journal of Area Studies* 1, no. 1 (2019): 6–24.
59. Dorakh, Alena. "Interdependence and Specialization in the Global Semiconductor Industry." *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 8, no. 6 (2024): 2436.
60. Dotson, John. "Taiwan's 'Military Force Restructuring Plan' and the Extension of Conscripted Military Service." *Global Taiwan Brief* 8, no. 3 (February 7, 2023).
61. Dunley, Richard. "Plan B?: Reconsidering Australian Security in the Event of a Post US Alliance Era." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 78, no. 4 (2024): 483–503.
62. Dutton, Peter A. "Conceptualizing China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations." In *China's Maritime Gray Zone Operations*, edited by Andrew S. Erickson and Ryan D. Martinson. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2019.
63. Easton, Ian. *The Chinese Invasion Threat: Taiwan's Defense and American Strategy in Asia*. Arlington, VA: Project 2049 Institute, 2017.
64. Edelman, Eric S., et al. "A Large Number of Small Things: A Porcupine Strategy for Taiwan." *Texas National Security Review* 8, no. 1 (2025).

65. Election Study Center, National Chengchi University. "Taiwan Independence vs. Unification (1994–2024)." <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7800&id=6961>.
66. Enciclopedia Italiana. S.v. "Formosa." By Roberto Almagià. Accessed December 28, 2025. [https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/formosa_\(Enciclopedia-Italiana\)/](https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/formosa_(Enciclopedia-Italiana)/).
67. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. S.v. "Indo-Pacific." By Kenneth Pletcher. Accessed December 21, 2024. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Indo-Pacific>.
68. Erickson, Andrew S., and Conor M. Kennedy. "China's Maritime Militia." China Maritime Report No. 1. Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, China Maritime Studies Institute, 2019.
69. European Commission. "26th EU-Japan Summit: Taking Our Strong Partnership to a Higher Level." Press release, April 25, 2019. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_19_2248.
70. European Commission. "European Chips Act." <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/european-chips-act>.
71. European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council: The EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific. JOIN (2021) 24 final. Brussels, September 16, 2021.
72. European Commission and High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Joint Communication to the European Parliament, the European Council and the Council: European Economic Security Strategy. JOIN (2023) 20 final. Brussels, June 20, 2023.
73. European Parliament. Report on the Indo-Pacific Strategy in the Area of Trade and Investment (2021/2200(INI)). A9-0170/2022, June 22, 2022. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2022-0170_EN.html.
74. Executive Yuan, ROC (Taiwan). "New Southbound Policy Work Plan Finalized, to Begin January 1st Next Year [zhengyuan: xinnanxiang zhengce gongzuo jihua paiban mingnian yiyue yiri qidong]." News release, December 14, 2016. https://www.ey.gov.tw/News_Content2.aspx?n=F8BAEBE9491FC830&s=5DF3DD7518F014BC.
75. Fabbri, Dario. "Stati Uniti e Giappone, destini intrecciati." Limes: Rivista italiana di geopolitica, no. 2, La rivoluzione giapponese (2018).

76. Fabbri, Dario. "Taiwan l'anti-Cina." In *L'altra Cina: Chiave della competizione globale*, Limes 9 (2021): 10–12.
77. Fabbri, Dario. *L'altra Cina: Chiave della competizione globale*. Limes 9 (2021).
78. Fabbri, Dario. *La rivoluzione giapponese*. Limes 2 (2018).
79. Faiola, Anthony. "Japan to Join U.S. Policy on Taiwan: Growth of China Seen Behind Shift." *Washington Post*, April 5, 2006.
80. Farrell, Henry, and Abraham Newman. "The Weaponized World Economy: Surviving the New Age of Economic Coercion." *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2025. Published August 19, 2025. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/world/weaponized-world-economy-new-age-economic-coercion>.
81. Feng, Lin. "Recovery of Taiwan: Echoes of WWII Justice and National Rejuvenation." *China's Diplomacy*, August 17, 2025.
82. Fleming, Matthew F. "YL Blog #100 – Integrated Deterrence and Minilateralism: Three Years of Indo-Pacific Security in a Networked Way." *Pacific Forum, Young Leaders Blog*, January 31, 2025. <https://pacforum.org/publications/yl-blog-100-integrated-deterrence-and-minilateralism-three-years-of-indo-pacific-security-in-a-networked-way/>.
83. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976*, vol. XVII, China, 1969–1972. Edited by Steven E. Phillips. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006.
84. Frankel, Joseph. Review of *Theory of International Politics*, by Kenneth N. Waltz. *International Journal* 35, no. 3 (Summer 1980): 600.
85. Garnaut, Ross. "China's 'New Normal' Growth and Its Implications for Australia." In *China: A New Model for Growth and Development*, edited by Ross Garnaut, Cai Fang, and Ligang Song. Canberra: ANU Press, 2013.
86. Girardi, Benedetta, Paul van Hooft, and Giovanni Cisco. *What the Indo-Pacific Means to Europe: Trade Value, Chokepoints, and Security Risks*. The Hague: The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, 2023.
87. Glaser, Bonnie S., et al. *The New Southbound Policy: Deepening Taiwan's Regional Integration*. Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018.
88. Global Taiwan Institute. "The PLA's 'Justice Mission-2025' Exercise Around Taiwan." *Global Taiwan Brief*, January 2, 2026. <https://globaltaiwan.org/2026/01/pla-justice-mission-2025/>.
89. Gong, Ting. "The US 'Indo-Pacific Strategy': Concept, Action and Evaluation." *Regards géopolitiques* 11, no. 1 (2025). Centre québécois d'études géopolitiques. April

- 22, 2025. <https://cqegheulaval.com/2025/04/22/the-us-indo-pacific-strategy-concept-action-and-evaluation/>.
90. Green, Michael, et al. "Counter-Coercion Series: Harassment of the USNS Impeccable." Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, May 9, 2017. <https://amti.csis.org/counter-co-harassment-usns-impeccable/>.
91. Grimes, Seamus, and Debin Du. "China's Emerging Role in the Global Semiconductor Value Chain." *Marine Policy* 117 (2020): 103–957.
92. Heiduk, Felix, and Gudrun Wacker. *From Asia-Pacific to Indo-Pacific: Significance, Implementation and Challenges*. SWP Research Paper 9. Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2020.
93. Heiduk, Felix, and Thomas Wilkins. "Minilateralism and Pathways to Institutional Progression: Alliance Formation or Cooperative Security Governance?" *Australian Journal of International Affairs* (2024).
94. Helfman, Gene, Bruce B. Collette, and Douglas E. Facey. *The Diversity of Fishes*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 1997.
95. Helvey, David F. "Closing Keynote Remarks." U.S.-Taiwan Defense Industry Conference, October 6, 2020.
96. Hillman, Jennifer, and David Sacks. "Countries in China's Belt and Road Initiative: Who's In and Who's Out." Council on Foreign Relations, March 23, 2021.
97. Hoffman, Frank G. "The Contemporary Spectrum of Conflict: Protracted, Gray Zone, Ambiguous, and Hybrid Modes of War." *The Heritage Foundation* (2016): 25–36. https://www.heritage.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/2016_IndexOfUSMilitaryStrength_The%20Contemporary%20Spectrum%20of%20Conflict_Protracted%20Gray%20Zone%20Ambiguous%20and%20Hybrid%20Modes%20of%20War.pdf.
98. Horng-En Wang, Austin, et al. "Strategic Ambiguity, Strategic Clarity, and Dual Clarity." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 20, no. 3 (July 2024): orae010. <https://doi.org/10.1093/fpa/orae010>.
99. Hsieh, Pasha L. "Rethinking Non-Recognition: Taiwan's New Pivot to ASEAN and the One-China Policy." *International Relations and Diplomacy* 6, no. 3 (2018): 195–208.
100. Hsu, Amanda. "Whole-of-Society Resilience: A New Deterrence Concept in Taipei." Brookings Institution, January 12, 2025.

101. Hung, Tzu-Chieh, and Tzu-Wei Hung. "How China's Cognitive Warfare Works: A Frontline Perspective of Taiwan's Anti-Disinformation Wars." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 7, no. 4 (2022): 1–18.
102. Ikenberry, G. John. "The Liberal International Order." In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, edited by Andrew F. Cooper, Jorge Heine, and Ramesh Thakur, 711–723. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.
103. Institute for the Study of War. "China-Taiwan Weekly Update, October 10, 2025." October 10, 2025. <https://understandingwar.org/research/china-taiwan/china-taiwan-weekly-update-october-10-2025/>.
104. Institute for the Study of War. "China-Taiwan Weekly Update, January 2, 2026." January 2, 2026. <https://understandingwar.org/research/china-taiwan/china-taiwan-update-january-2-2026>.
105. Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC). "Japan's Snap Election: Implications for National Security Policy." 23 February 2026.
106. International Trade Centre. *Trade Map: Trade Statistics for International Business Development – Australia–China Bilateral Trade, 2019*. Geneva: International Trade Centre, 2020.
107. Italian Government. "Italy, the United Kingdom and Japan Launch the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP)." Press release, 9 December 2022.
108. Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. *Il contributo italiano alla strategia europea per l'Indo-Pacifico [The Italian Contribution to the European Indo-Pacific Strategy]*. Rome: Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2022.
109. Japan Ministry of Defense. *Defense of Japan 2022*. Tokyo: Japan Ministry of Defense, 2022.
110. Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs. "Japan–US Joint Declaration on Security: Alliance for the 21st Century." April 17, 1996. <https://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/security.html>.
111. "Japan's Aso Calls Taiwan a 'Country'." *Taipei Times*, March 10, 2006.
112. Jinming, Li, and Li Dexia. "The Dotted Line on the Chinese Map of the South China Sea: A Note." *Ocean Development and International Law* 34 (2003): 287–95.
113. Jing, Bo-jiun. "Taiwan's Southbound Drive towards Southeast Asia." *East Asian Policy* 15, no. 2 (2023): 5–24.

114. Jing, Bo-jiun. "‘Go South’ Going South? Assessing Taiwan’s ‘New Southbound’ Policy and the China Factor in Southeast Asia." Paper presented at the international conference "Assessing Taiwan’s New Southbound Policy and the China Factor in Southeast Asia," Taipei, 2017.
115. Joint Chiefs of Staff. "Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons." Memorandum, 8 January 2015. USNI News. <https://news.usni.org/2015/01/20/document-air-sea-battle-name-change-memo>.
116. Kahler, Miles. "Multilateralism with Small and Large Numbers." *International Organization* 46, no. 3 (1992): 681–708.
117. Karjalainen, Teemu. "European Norms Trap? EU Connectivity Policies and the Case of the Global Gateway." *East Asia* 40, no. 3 (2023): 293–316.
118. Kassam, Natasha. *Lowy Institute Poll 2021: Understanding Australian Attitudes to the World*. Sydney: Lowy Institute, 2021.
119. Kazianis, Harry J. "China’s 50,000 Secret Weapons in the South China Sea." *The National Interest*, July 30, 2014.
120. Kennedy, Paul M. *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*. New York: Vintage, 1987.
121. Keohane, Robert O., and Joseph S. Nye Jr. *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1977.
122. Keohane, Robert O. "Twenty Years of Institutional Liberalism." *International Relations* 26, no. 2 (2012): 125–138.
123. Khurana, Gurpreet S. "The ‘Indo-Pacific’ Concept: Retrospect and Prospect." CIMSEC, November 14, 2017.
124. Kissinger, Henry A. "Memorandum From the President’s Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," January 12, 1971. In *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969–1976, vol. XVII, China, 1969–1972*, edited by Steven E. Phillips. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/documents/organization/70142.pdf>.
125. Klyszcz, Ivan U. K., ed. *Deterrence and Hybrid Warfare: Lessons from Russia’s War in Ukraine for Taiwan and the Nordic-Baltic Region*. Tallinn: International Centre for Defence and Security, February 2025. https://icds.ee/wp-content/uploads/dlm_uploads/2025/02/ICDS_Report_Deterrence_and_Hybrid_Warfare_Klyszcz_Chan_Lawrence_Lee_February_2025-1.pdf.

126. Kofman, Michael. "Russian Maritime 'A2/AD': Strengths and Weaknesses." *Russian Military Analysis*, January 29, 2020. <https://russianmilitaryanalysis.wordpress.com/2020/01/29/russian-maritime-a2-ad-strengths-and-weaknesses/>.
127. KPMG Australia and University of Sydney. *Demystifying Chinese Investment in Australia*. Sydney: KPMG Australia and University of Sydney, 2014–2024 series.
128. KPMG. *The ASEAN Economic Community: The Road to Realisation*. Singapore: KPMG, 2016.
129. Krepinevich, Andrew F., Jr. "How to Deter China: The Case for Archipelagic Defense." *Foreign Affairs* 94, no. 2 (2015): 78–86.
130. Kutsunugi, Kazuhito. "Genteiteki na shūdanteki jieiken no kōshi no tame no hōsei: Jitai taishō hōsei no kaisei" [Legislation for Limited Exercise of the Right of Collective Defense: Revision of Laws to Deal with Contingencies]. *Rippō to chōsa* 366 (2015): 29.
131. Lanteigne, Marc. *Chinese Foreign Policy: An Introduction*. 4th ed. London: Routledge, 2019.
132. LaGrone, Sam. "Pentagon Drops Air Sea Battle Name, Concept Lives On." *U.S. Naval Institute News*, January 20, 2015. <https://news.usni.org/2015/01/20/pentagon-drops-air-sea-battle-name-concept-lives>.
133. Lavdari, Fjoralda. "Principle of Most Favoured Nation: Description, Modern Evolution, and Analysis of the Exceptionality of the Principle in a Contemporary World." *Extensive Reviews* 1, no. 1 (2021): 16–29.
134. Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone of the People's Republic of China. Adopted at the 24th meeting of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, February 25, 1992. https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/CHN_1992_Law.pdf
135. Lee, Chun-yi. "Taiwan's New Southbound Policy and Its Geopolitical Implications in the Indo-Pacific." *National Defense and Security Research* (2022).
136. Lee, Hsi-min, and Eric Lee. "Taiwan's Overall Defense Concept, Explained." *The Diplomat*, November 3, 2020.
137. Lewis, James A. "Cognitive Effect and State Conflict in Cyberspace." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, September 25, 2018.
138. Li, Hansong. "The 'Indo-Pacific': Intellectual Origins and International Visions in Global Contexts." *Modern Intellectual History* 19, no. 3 (2021): 807–833.

- 139.Li, Mingjiang. "ASEAN's Responses to AUKUS: Implications for Strategic Realignments in the Indo-Pacific." *China International Strategy Review* 4 (2022): 268–287.
- 140.Li, Wang Jixin. "Analysis of Japan's Deployment of Anti-Ship Missiles on Miyako Island" [「日本在宫古岛部署反舰导弹分析」]. *Ordnance Knowledge* [兵器知识] 2 (2014): 34–37.
- 141.Liff, Adam P. "Japan, Taiwan, and the 'One China' Framework after 50 Years." *The China Quarterly* (published online September 26, 2022).
- 142.Liff, Adam P. "Japan's Security Policy in the 'Abe Era': Radical Transformation or Evolutionary Shift?" *Texas National Security Review* 1, no. 3 (2018): 8–34.
- 143.Lin, Bonny, et al. "Tracking China's Increased Military Activities in the Indo-Pacific in 2025." February 5, 2026.
- 144.Lin, Chia-lung. *Foreign Policy Report to the Legislative Yuan*. Taipei: Ministry of Foreign Affairs, May 30, 2024.
- 145.Lieberthal, Kenneth G. "The American Pivot to Asia." *Brookings*, December 21, 2011.
- 146.Liu, Caiyu. "China's Centennial Goal of Building a Modern Military by 2027 in Alignment with National Strength: Experts." *Global Times*, October 31, 2020. <https://tinyurl.com/2mrwvkmd>.
- 147.Maddison, Angus. *Contours of the World Economy 1–2030 AD: Essays in Macro-Economic History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- 148.Mainland Affairs Council (Taiwan). "Table 10: Taiwan Approved Outward Investment by Country (Area)." *Cross-Strait Economic Statistics Monthly*, no. 296 (December 2017).
- 149.Manthorpe, Jonathan. *Forbidden Nation: A History of Taiwan*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2008.
- 150.Mazarr, Michael J. *Mastering the Gray Zone: Understanding a Changing Era of Conflict*. Carlisle, PA: U.S. Army War College Press, 2015.
- 151.McCuen, John J. "Hybrid Wars." *Military Review* 88, no. 2 (March–April 2008): 107–113.
- 152.McGeough, Michael. Reporting Hillary Clinton interview, cited in James Laurenceson and Michael Zhou, "Assessing the Risks from Australia's Economic Exposure to China." *Australia–China Relations Institute Working Paper*. Sydney: University of Technology Sydney, 2018.

153. McLaughlin, Brian, Blagovest Tashev, and Michael Purcell. "Russia's Information Warfare: Exploring the Cognitive Dimension." *MCU Journal* 10, no. 2 (2019): 129–47.
154. McGregor, Richard. *Chinese Coercion, Australian Resilience*. Sydney: Lowy Institute, 2022.
155. Mearsheimer, John J. "Say Goodbye to Taiwan." *The National Interest*, no. 130 (March/April 2014): 28–39. <https://www.mearsheimer.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Taiwans-Dire-Straits.pdf>.
156. Mearsheimer, John J. "War and International Politics." *International Security* 49, no. 4 (Spring 2025): 12. https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00507.
157. Mearsheimer, John J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. Updated ed. New York: W. W. Norton, 2014.
158. Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS). Wubbeke, Jost, et al. *Made in China 2025: The Making of a High-Tech Superpower and Consequences for Industrial Countries*. Berlin: MERICS, December 2016.
159. Meyer, Mahlon. *Remembering China from Taiwan: Divided Families and Bittersweet Reunions after the Chinese Civil War*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012.
160. Ministry of Economic Affairs (Taiwan). *Taiwan's Foreign Trade Status and Policies*. Taipei: MOEA, 2019.
161. Ministry of Finance (Taiwan). *Statistical Bulletin: Exports to Mainland China and Hong Kong*, no. 1 (January 16, 2025).
162. Ministry of National Defense, Republic of China (Taiwan). *2021 Quadrennial Defense Review*. Taipei: Ministry of National Defense, 2021.
163. Ministry of Defence of the United States. *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019*. Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2019.
164. Mochizuki, Mike. "Japan and Nuclear Nonproliferation." In *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Politics*, edited by Robert J. Pekkanen and Saadia M. Pekkanen, 723–740. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022.
165. Mochizuki, Mike. "Tokyo's Taiwan Conundrum: What Can Japan Do to Prevent War?" *The Washington Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (2022): 81–107.
166. Monaghan, Sean. "The Risks of Rushing to Denial in the Taiwan Strait." CSIS, March 24, 2025. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/risks-rushing-denial-taiwan-strait>.
167. Morgenthau, Hans J. *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*. New York: Knopf, 1978.

168. Murray, William S. "Revisiting Taiwan's Defense Strategy." *Naval War College Review* 61, no. 3 (Summer 2008): 13–45.
169. Muzapu, Tapiwa, Tafadzwa Havadi, and Grace Mandizvidza. "Belt and Road Initiative: Positioning Zimbabwe for Investment Opportunities." *Science and Education Publishing* 8, no. 1 (2018): 18–27.
170. NATO. *Cognitive Warfare: NATO Chief Scientist Research Report*. Brussels: NATO Science and Technology Organization, 2025.
171. Natalizia, Gianluca, Pietro Baldelli, and Roberto Ferrara. *Il gioco delle grandi potenze: La competizione nel Mediterraneo allargato*. Rome: Luiss University Press, 2024.
172. National Chengchi University, Election Study Center. "Taiwanese/Chinese Identity (1992/06–2025/06)." Last modified July 7, 2025. <https://esc.nccu.edu.tw/PageDoc/Detail?fid=7800&id=6961>.
173. National Intelligence Council. *Updated IC Gray Zone Lexicon: Key Terms and Definitions*. July 2024.
174. New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade. "RCEP Overview." December 12, 2023.
175. Nye, Joseph S., Jr. "Public Diplomacy and Soft Power." *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 616, no. 1 (2008): 94–109.
176. O'Hanlon, Michael E. "An Asymmetric Defense of Taiwan." Brookings Institution, April 28, 2021. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/an-asymmetric-defense-of-taiwan/>.
177. Ochmanek, David. "The Role of Maritime and Air Power in DoD's Third Offset Strategy." Testimony, RAND Corporation, 2014. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT400/CT420/RAND_CT420.pdf
178. Office of the President Republic of China (Taiwan). "President Lai Attends Opening of Ketagalan Forum: 2024 Indo-Pacific Security Dialogue." News release, 21 August 2024. <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/6797>.
179. Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan). "President Tsai Attends 2016 Annual Conference on Southeast Asian Studies in Taiwan." September 21, 2016.
180. Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan). "President Tsai Attends Opening of 2017
181. Ohashi, Hideo. "The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Context of China's Opening-up Policy." *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies* 7, no. 2 (2018): 85–103.

182. Olynyk, Stephen D. *Ukraine as a Post-Cold War Military Power*. Washington, DC: Center for Counterproliferation Research, National Defense University, 1997.
183. Hanguang No. 33 Exercise." February 25, 2017.
184. Paasivirta, Esa. "The European Union and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea." *Fordham International Law Journal* 38, no. 4 (2015): 1045–1070.
185. Pashakhanlou, Arash Heydarian. "The Past, Present and Future of Realism." *E-International Relations*, January 15, 2018. <https://www.e-ir.info/2018/01/15/the-past-present-and-future-of-realism/>.
186. Patalano, Alessio. "When Strategy Is 'Hybrid' and Not 'Grey': Reviewing Chinese Military and Constabulary Coercion at Sea." *The Pacific Review* (January 9, 2019).
187. Patrick, Stewart M. "The New 'New Multilateralism': Minilateral Cooperation, but at What Cost?" *Global Summitry* 1, no. 2 (2015): 115–130.
188. Pehrson, Christopher J. *String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenges of China's Rising Power Across the Asian Littoral*. Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2006.
189. Pejsova, Eva. "Europe's Indo-Pacific Puzzle: In Search of an Independent Foreign Policy." In *Indo-Pacific Strategies: Navigating Geopolitics at the Dawn of a New Age*, edited by Brendon J. Cannon and Kei Hakata, 178–197. London: Routledge, 2021.
190. People's Republic of China. *Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf Act*. Adopted at the 3rd session of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress, June 26, 1998. https://www.un.org/Depts/los/LEGISLATIONANDTREATIES/PDFFILES/chn_1998_eez_act.pdf.
191. People's Republic of China. Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council and State Council Information Office. *The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era*. Beijing, August 2022.
192. Peterson, Nils. "The Chinese Communist Party's Theory of Hybrid Warfare." Institute for the Study of War, 21 November 2023.
193. Posen, Barry R. "Command of the Commons: The Military Foundation of U.S. Hegemony." *International Security* 28, no. 1 (Summer 2003): 5–46.
194. Prime Minister's Office of Malaysia. "Keynote Address by YAB Dato' Sri Anwar Ibrahim, Prime Minister of Malaysia, at the 36th Asia-Pacific Roundtable." Kuala Lumpur, August 10, 2023.

195. Pröpper, Henrik. "The 'Chinese Dream': An Analysis of the Belt and Road Initiative." *International Social Science Review* 96, no. 1 (2020).
196. Pugliese, Giulio. "The European Union's Security Intervention in the Indo-Pacific: Between Multilateralism and Mercantile Interests." *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 17, no. 1 (2023): 76–98.
197. Rapp-Hooper, Mira, et al. *Counterbalance: Red Teaming the Rebalance in the Asia-Pacific*. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, November 14, 2016. <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/counterbalance-red-teaming-the-rebalance-in-the-asia-pacific>.
198. Ratner, Ely. "Learning the Lessons of Scarborough Reef." *The National Interest*, November 21, 2013. <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/learning-the-lessons-scarborough-reef-9442>.
199. Raymond, Mark, and David A. Welch. "China's New 'Standard Map' Does Not Mean What You Think It Means." *The Diplomat*, September 5, 2023. <https://thediplomat.com/2023/09/chinas-new-standard-map-does-not-mean-what-you-think-it-means/>.
200. Reid, Anthony. *Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 1450–1680. Volume One: The Lands below the Winds*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
201. Reilly, James. "Counting on China? Australia's Strategic Response to Economic Interdependence." *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 5, no. 4 (2012): 369–394.
202. Reilly, James. *China's Economic Statecraft: Turning Wealth into Power*. Sydney: Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2013.
203. Reilly, James, and Jingdong Yuan. "Australia and China: Economic Interdependence and Vulnerability." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 66, no. 3 (2012): 314–331.
204. Rigger, Shelley. *Why Taiwan Matters: Small Island, Global Powerhouse*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2011.
205. Rogerson, James. "A Vibrant Celebration of Taiwan's Little-Known Original Inhabitants." *BBC Travel*, January 26, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20240125-a-vibrant-celebration-of-taiwans-little-known-original-inhabitants>.
206. Roy, Denny. *Taiwan: A Political History*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003.

207. Saunders, Phillip C., and Joel Wuthnow. "Crossing the Strait: PLA Modernization and Taiwan." In *Crossing the Strait: China's Military Prepares for War with Taiwan*, edited by Joel Wuthnow et al., 23. Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2022.
208. Scott Morrison. "A Comprehensive National Security Strategy: Keeping Australians Safe." ScottMorrison.com.au. <https://www.scottmorrison.com.au/morrison-government-achievements/national-security>.
209. Schoeman, Maxi, and Yi-Shan Wu. "The Evolving Indo-Pacific Region: An Introduction to External Perspectives on Africa's Role and Position." *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa* 44, no. 2 (2022).
210. Scott, David. "The Return of the 'Indo-Pacific'." *Asia Maior* 34 (2023).
211. Semiconductor Industry Association. *Beyond Borders: The Global Semiconductor Value Chain*. Washington, DC: SIA, 2016.
212. Semiconductor Industry Association, and Boston Consulting Group. *Strengthening the Global Semiconductor Supply Chain in an Uncertain Era*. Washington, DC: SIA, April 2021.
213. Shaoul, Raquel. *Japan and China's Energy Supply Security Policy Vis-à-vis Iran: Analysis of a Triangular Relationship*. Tel Aviv: Iran Pulse, Center for Iranian Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2006.
214. Shen, Taiwan National Security Studies Surveys. *Taiwan National Security Studies Surveys, 2002–2020*. Program in Asian Security Studies, Duke University.
215. Shivakumar, Sujai, and Charles Wessner. "Semiconductors and National Defense: What Are the Stakes?" Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 8, 2022.
216. Siman-Tov, David. "Disinformation Campaigns and Influence on Cognition." In *The Cognitive Campaign: Strategic and Intelligence Perspectives*, edited by Yossi Kuperwasser and David
217. Siman-Tov. Tel Aviv: Institute for National Security Studies, 2019
218. Singh, Mandip. "A Possible Strategy for the Defense of Taiwan." Issue Brief. Stockholm: Institute for Security and Development Policy, June 19, 2023.
219. Šimov, Viktor. "The Silicon Shield Erosion: Fortifying Taiwan Against Geopolitical Shocks." Institute for Security & Development Policy, May 6, 2025. <https://isdpeu/publication/the-silicon-shield-erosion-fortifying-taiwan-against-geopolitical-shocks/>.
220. Sloss, David L. *Tyrants on Twitter: Protecting Democracies from Chinese and Russian Information Warfare*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020.

221. Smith, Graeme. "Caution and Compromise in the Albanese Government's China Strategy." *The China Story Journal*, 2024.
222. Smura, Tomasz. *Modernization of the Chinese People's Liberation Army and Its Impact on the Security of the Indo-Pacific Region*. Strategic Papers, no. 14. Doha: Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, February 6, 2024. <https://www.dohainstitute.org/en/Lists/ACRPS-PDFDocumentLibrary/modernization-of-chinese-army-impact-on-security-of-the-indo-pacific-region.pdf>.
223. Sorensen, Camilla T. N. "The Significance of Xi Jinping's 'Chinese Dream' for Chinese Foreign Policy: From 'Tao Guang Yang Hui' to 'Fen Fa You Wei'." *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015): 53–73.
224. *South China Sea Arbitration (Republic of the Philippines v. People's Republic of China)*. Award of 12 July 2016. *Reports of International Arbitral Awards* 33 (2016): 153–617.
225. State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China. *The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era*. Beijing: Xinhua, August 10, 2022. http://english.scio.gov.cn/whitepapers/2022-08/10/content_78365819_2.htm.
226. Stewart, Patrick. "The New 'New Multilateralism': Minilateral Cooperation, but at What Cost?" *Global Summitry* 1, no. 2 (2015): 115–130.
227. Suci, Peter. "China Now Has Six Type 094A Jin-Class Nuclear Powered Missile Submarines." *National Interest*, May 6, 2020. Accessed November 22, 2023. <https://tinyurl.com/3eh58jsb>.
228. Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. *Taiwan wen ti yu Zhongguo tongyi [The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification]*. Beijing: Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council, 1993.
229. Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. *Yi ge Zhongguo yuanze yu Taiwan Tongyi [The One China Principle and the Taiwan Issue]*. Beijing: Taiwan Affairs Office and Information Office of the State Council, 2000.
230. Taiwan Politics. Campagnola, Davide. "The Status Quo between Taiwan and China: The Inevitability of a Dramatic End?" November 26, 2024.
231. Taiwan Relations Act. Pub. L. No. 96-8, 93 Stat. 14 (1979) (codified as amended at 22 U.S.C. §§ 3301–3316).

232. Tashev, Blagovest, Michael Purcell, and Brian McLaughlin. "Russia's Information Warfare: Exploring the Cognitive Dimension." *MCU Journal* 10, no. 2 (2019): 129–47.
233. Taylor, Jay. *The Generalissimo: Chiang Kai-shek and the Struggle for Modern China*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009.
234. "The Diplomat. Hong Kong National Security Law: The View From Taiwan." July 7, 2020.
235. "The Military Balance 2021." London: IISS, 2021.
236. "The White House, Office of the Press Secretary. Fact Sheet: Advancing the Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific." November 16, 2015.
237. Thayer, Carlyle A. "China's New Wave of Aggressive Assertiveness in the South China Sea." *International Journal of China Studies* 2, no. 3 (2011): 555–583. <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/130696/Thayer%20CSIS%20South%20China%20Sea.pdf>.
238. Timbie, James, and James O. Ellis Jr. "A Large Number of Small Things: A Porcupine Strategy for Taiwan." *Texas National Security Review* 5, no. 1 (Winter 2021/22): 83–93.
239. Townshend, Ashley. "The Indo-Pacific." In *The Alliance at 70: The Story of the Alliance between Australia and the United States*, edited by United States Studies Centre, chapter 8. Sydney: United States Studies Centre, 2021. <https://www.ussc.edu.au/books/the-alliance-at-70/chapter-8-the-indo-pacific>.
240. Tsai, Ing-wen. "Inaugural Address of ROC 14th-Term President Tsai Ing-wen." Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), May 20, 2016. <https://english.president.gov.tw/News/4893>.
241. Tsai, Ing-wen. "President Tsai Attends 2016 Annual Conference on Southeast Asian Studies in Taiwan." Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan), September 21, 2016.
242. Tzinieris, Sarah, Rishika Chauhan, and Eirini Athanasiado. "India's A La Carte Minilateralism: AUKUS and the Quad." *The Washington Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (2023). Published online December 19, 2023.
243. Uren, David. "Australia's Trade Diversification Away from China Picks Up Pace." *The Strategist* (Australian Strategic Policy Institute), 12 October 2022.
244. U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. *2020 Report to Congress of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Publishing Office, December 2020.

245. "U.S. Arms Sales to Taiwan." Forum on the Arms Trade. Accessed December 6, 2021. <https://www.forumarmstrade.org/ustaiwan.html>.
246. U.S. Department of Defense. AirSea Battle: Service Collaboration to Address Anti-Access and Area Denial Challenges. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, May 2013. <http://www.defense.gov/pubs/ASB-ConceptImplementation-Summary-May-2013.pdf>.
247. U.S. Department of Defense. 2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America, Including the Nuclear Posture Review and the Missile Defense Review. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2022.
248. U.S. Department of Defense. Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2019: Annual Report to Congress. Washington, DC: Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2019.
249. U.S. Department of State. "The Cairo Conference, 1943." Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs. Released January 20, 2001. <https://2001-2009.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/107184.htm>.
250. U.S. Department of State. "The Chinese Revolution of 1949." Office of the Historian. Accessed January 15, 2026. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/chinese-rev>.
251. U.S. Department of State. "The Indo-Pacific Strategy." Archived content (released online January 20, 2021–January 20, 2025). <https://2021-2025.state.gov/indo-pacific-strategy/>.
252. U.S. Department of State. "The Taiwan Straits Crises: 1954–55 and 1958." Office of the Historian. Accessed January 15, 2026. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/taiwan-strait-crises>.
253. U.S. Embassy Jakarta. "Fact Sheet: Advancing the Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific." November 2015. <https://id.usembassy.gov/fact-sheet-advancing-the-rebalance-to-asia-and-the-pacific/>.
254. U.S. Mission Korea. "Fact Sheet: Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States." February 11, 2022.
255. United Nations. "United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea." June 7, 1996 (accession by China). https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetailsIII.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=XXI-6&chapter=21&clang=en#EndDec.
256. United States Studies Centre. "What Is the AUKUS Partnership?" July 11, 2023.

257. Valencia, Mark J., and Yoshihisa Amae. "Regime Building in the East China Sea." *Ocean Development and International Law* 34, no. 3 (2003): 189–208.
258. Vijaya, Poornima. "Signaling in Minilaterals in the Indo-Pacific: The Cases of Quad and AUKUS (2017–2022)." *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2024).
259. Wagner, Justin B. (Andrew). "Innovating Strategic Ambiguity: Empowering Taiwan's Defense Amid a Persistent Threat from China." *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* 4, no. 3 (July–August 2023): 173–194.
260. Wang, Zheng. "The Chinese Dream: Concept and Context." *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, no. 3 (2013): 1–16.
261. Weeden, Brian. *Current and Future Trends in Chinese Counterspace Capabilities. Proliferation Papers*, no. 62. Paris: French Institute of International Relations, 2020.
262. Weissmann, Mikael. "Chinese Foreign Policy in a Global Perspective: A Responsible Reformer 'Striving for Achievement'." *Journal of China and International Relations* 3, no. 1 (2015): 151–166.
263. Wendt, Alexander. "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics." *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391–425.
264. White, Hugh. "The Limits to Optimism: Australia and the Rise of China." *Australian Journal of International Affairs* 59, no. 4 (2005): 469–480.
265. "White House. Joint Leaders Statement on AUKUS." Washington, DC: The White House, September 15, 2021.
266. World Bank. *World Integrated Trade Solution (WITS): Italy Trade Summary 2023*. Accessed November 30, 2024.
267. Wu, Mainland Affairs Council (Taiwan). "Table 10: Taiwan Approved Outward Investment by Country (Area)." *Cross-Strait Economic Statistics Monthly*, no. 296 (December 2017).
268. Wubbeke, Jost, et al. *Made in China 2025: The Making of a High Tech Superpower and Consequences for Industrial Countries*. Berlin: Mercator Institute for China Studies, December 2016.
269. Xi Jinping. *The Chinese Dream of the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation*. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2014.
270. Xing, Li. "Interpreting and Understanding 'The Chinese Dream' in a Holistic Nexus." *Fudan Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 8 (2015): 1–20.

271. Yang, Shannon Tiezzi. "Taiwan's 'New Southbound Policy' Scores Win in the Philippines." *The Diplomat*, December 8, 2017.
272. Yee, Andy. "East China Sea Dispute: Why Japan's Era of Quiet Power May Be at an End." *Jakarta Globe*, October 2, 2010.
273. Yevtodyeva, Marianna G. "Development of the Chinese A2/AD System in the Context of US–China Relations." *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* 2022, no. 4: 77–92.
274. Yevtodyeva, Marina. "Novyj jetap voenno-tehnicheskogo sotrudnichestva Rossii i Kitaja [New Stage of Military-Technical Cooperation between Russia and China]." *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, no. 4 (2018): 68–78.
275. Zeng, Li Jinming, and Li Dexia. See Li Jinming and Li Dexia.
276. Zhou Enlai. "Main Speech by Premier Zhou Enlai, Head of the Delegation of the People's Republic of China, Distributed at the Plenary Session of the Asian-African Conference." In *China and the Asian-African Conference (Documents)*, 9–20. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1955. History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/121623>.