

ONE CHINA

The China / Taiwan Crisis
by Tim Price



Background¹

China has held its biggest-ever show of military force in the air and seas around Taiwan, including the firing of ballistic missiles. The military exercises followed a visit to the island by the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi.

China sees Taiwan as a breakaway province that will eventually be under Beijing's control again. However, the self-ruled island sees itself as distinct from the mainland, with its own (albeit problematic) constitution and democratically-elected leaders. China's President Xi Jinping has said "reunification" with Taiwan "must be fulfilled" - and has not ruled out the possible use of force to achieve this.

Taiwan is an island, roughly 100 miles from the coast of south east China. It sits in the so-called "first island chain" (including Japan (and the US Base in Okinawa), Taiwan, and the Philippines), which includes a list of US-friendly territories that are crucial to US foreign policy. If China was to take over Taiwan, some western experts suggest it could be freer to project power in the western Pacific region and could possibly even threaten US military bases as far away as Guam and Hawaii.

But China insists that its intentions are purely peaceful.

Historical sources suggest that the island first came under full Chinese control in the 17th Century when the Qing dynasty began administering it. Then, in 1895, they gave up the island to Japan after losing the first Sino Japanese war. China took the island again in 1945 after Japan lost World War Two.












But a civil war erupted in mainland China between nationalist government forces led by Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong's Communist Party. The communists won in 1949 and took control in Beijing. Chiang Kai-shek and what was left of the nationalist party - known as the Kuomintang - fled to Taiwan, where they ruled for the next several decades. China points to this history to say that Taiwan was originally a Chinese province. But the Taiwanese point to the same history to argue that they were never part of the modern Chinese state that was first formed after the revolution in 1911 - or the People's Republic of China that was established under Mao in 1949.

The Kuomintang has been one of Taiwan's most prominent political parties ever since - ruling the island for a significant part of its history. Currently, only 13 countries² (plus the Vatican) recognise Taiwan as a sovereign country. China exerts considerable diplomatic pressure on other countries not to recognise Taiwan, or to do anything which implies recognition.

China could attempt to bring about "reunification" by non-military means such as strengthening economic ties. But in any military confrontation, China's armed forces would dwarf those of Taiwan. China spends more than any country except the US on defence and could draw on a huge range of capabilities, from naval power to missile technology, aircraft and cyber-attacks. Much of China's military power is focused elsewhere but, in overall terms of active-duty personnel for example, there is a huge imbalance between the two sides.

In an open conflict, some western experts predict that Taiwan could at best aim to slow a Chinese attack, try to prevent a shore landing by Chinese amphibious forces, and mount guerrilla strikes whilst waiting for outside help. That help could come from the US which sells arms to Taiwan. Until now, Washington's policy of "strategic ambiguity" has meant the US has been deliberately

Chinese and Taiwanese armed forces

	 China	 Taiwan
Total active forces	2,035,000	169,000
Ground forces 	965,000	94,000
Navy 	260,000	40,000
Air force 	395,000	35,000
Reserves 	510,000	1,657,000
Tanks 	5,400	650
Aircraft 	3,227+	504+
Submarines 	59	4
Naval ships* 	86	26
Artillery 	9,834+	2,093

*Only includes ships classified as principal surface combatants, such as aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers and frigates

Source: The Military Balance 2022, IISS

BBC

¹ Source: BBC, Greek Reporter and Militaryleak.com (edited slightly).

² Belize, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Paraguay, St Kitts & Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent & Grenadines, Tuvalu.

unclear about whether or how it would defend Taiwan in the event of an attack. Diplomatically, the US currently sticks to the "One-China" policy, which recognises only one Chinese government - in Beijing - and has formal ties with China rather than Taiwan.

But in May, US president Joe Biden appeared to harden Washington's position. Asked whether the US would defend Taiwan militarily, Mr Biden replied: "Yes." The White House insisted that Washington had not changed its position. Relations between Taiwan and China appear to have deteriorated sharply following Ms Pelosi's visit, which Beijing condemned as "extremely dangerous".

China has held military exercises, focused on six danger zones around Taiwan, three of which overlap the island's territorial waters. Taiwan says the move, which forced ships and planes to find routes around those areas, violated its sovereignty and amounted to a blockade.

Taiwan is economically hugely important to the rest of the world. Much of the world's everyday electronic equipment - from phones to laptops, watches and games consoles - is powered by computer chips made in Taiwan. By one measure, a single Taiwanese company - the Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company or TSMC - has over half of the world's market. TSMC is a so-called "foundry" - a company which makes chips designed by consumer and military customers. It is a vast industry, worth almost \$100bn (£73bn) in 2021. A Chinese takeover in Taiwan could give Beijing some control over one of the world's most important industries.

The world is already suffering from a shortage of microchips. Technological advancement means that chips are required in almost all products from a microwave oven or car to the latest military equipment. The increase in demand for microchips and the COVID-19 pandemic has made it challenging to attain chips. Any invasion or blockade would further exasperate the issue. Like every country, China relies heavily on chips made from Taiwan, damaging their manufacturing capacity and economic development, so this may make China think twice before any invasion.

In any invasion attempt, the weather and terrain are critical factors; Taiwan's best defences are perhaps its natural environment. The coastline, torrential rains, tides, and mud would significantly deter the would-be invaders.

The western coast of Taiwan is comprised of mud flats that can spread between two to five miles out to sea, and landing force getting stuck in the mud could potentially spell certain death. The tides rise and drop considerably, and low tide can expose the coast to several miles of mud, making military equipment impossible to transverse. This leaves very few landing spots available for a Chinese invasion; these are obviously known to the Taiwanese military and are heavily fortified.

Most formidable is the length of the Taiwan Strait and the effect of the winds on the sea. The strait is around one hundred miles wide and could take up to ten hours to transit. Transport ships and boats will be vulnerable to missiles and artillery. More importantly, the seas and wind are often very stormy. Taiwan has two rainy and typhoon seasons (August to September and November to April). This limits the window of opportunity for an invasion to just two openings throughout the year that would provide favourable weather conditions. Any troops that survive the barrage across the strait would no doubt suffer from extreme seasickness and fatigue. Then, facing the struggle to subdue a mountainous island nation with a population of 24 million who appear willing to defend their way of life, this could seem an insurmountable challenge.

The PLA however has recently revealed to be investing in air cushioned landing craft, which could have advantages under these circumstances, as well as more conventional utility landing craft. Utility landing craft would have over twice the payload and six times the range of their air cushioned alternatives.

Despite the recent tensions between China and Taiwan, research suggests that many Taiwanese people are relatively untroubled. In October 2021 the Taiwan Public Opinion Foundation asked people whether they thought that there would, eventually, be war with China. Almost two thirds (64.3%) replied that they did not. Surveys conducted by the National Chengchi University since the early 1990s indicate that the proportion of people who identify as Chinese, or both Chinese and Taiwanese, has fallen and that most people consider themselves as Taiwanese.

Many analysts believe that China is not about to invade Taiwan. They also believed that Russian was not going to invade the Ukraine – and they were wrong. Dismissing authoritarian regimes as “bluffing” is a dangerous game...

The Matrix Game Construction Kit

The ultimate matrix game design kit

In a "matrix game" there are few pre-set rules limiting what players can do. Instead, each is free to undertake any plausible action during their turn. The chances of success or failure, as well as the effects of the action, are largely determined through structured argument and discussion. This process allows for imaginative game dynamics that are lively and open-ended, and yet also grounded in reality.



Matrix games are particularly well-suited for complex conflicts and issues involving multiple actors and stakeholders, varying interests and agendas, and a broad range of (diplomatic/political, military, social, and economic) dimensions. The game system crowdsources ideas and insight from participants, thereby fostering greater analytical insight.

First developed by Chris Engle, matrix games have been played by hobbyists for years. They have also been used as serious games for training at the US Army War College, National Defense University, the Central Intelligence Agency, and elsewhere; for defence planning, capability assessment, and acquisitions in Australia, Canada, the UK, and US; for security planning for the Vancouver Olympics; as a research and analytical support tool at the UK Foreign Office; and as an educational method in various universities. They are particularly well-suited for multi-sided conflicts or other issues that involve a broad range of capabilities and interaction.

MaGCK contains everything that is required to play two different matrix games, or to design your own matrix games addressing almost any aspect of modern conflict:

- A core set of matrix game rules.
- Player briefings and supplementary rules for ISIS CRISIS, a matrix game that explores the rise and decline of the so-called "Islamic State" insurgency in Iraq. Two scenarios are included: "The Caliphate Reborn?" (set in September 2014) and "Road to Mosul" (starting January 2016).
- Player briefings, map tiles, and supplementary rules for A RECKONING OF VULTURES, a game that explores coup plotting and political skullduggery in a fictional dictatorship.
- 255 large blank game tokens in eight colours, together with over 700 stickers depicting various unit types, other assets, capabilities, and effects. The stickers are used to customize the game tokens, offering enormous flexibility for matrix game designers.
- 80 smaller discs in the same colours as above, which can be used to indicate damage, supplies and resources, political influence, or other characteristics.
- 10 two-sided tracking mats, with various scales (+/-3, 1-3, 1-10, days, months, and so forth)
- Assorted dice.

In addition, purchasers of MaGCK gain access to templates so they can print additional stickers using readily-available sticker sheets and any laser printer—thus making it possible to produce an unlimited number of games and scenarios. See: <https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/magck-matrix-game-construction-kit>

Abbreviated Matrix Game Rules

How to Play a Matrix Game

In a Matrix Game, actions are resolved by a structured sequence of logical "arguments". Each player takes turns to make an argument, with successful arguments advancing the game, and the player's position. There are a number of ways you can do this, depending on the size of the game and the purpose (each has their own strengths and weaknesses), but the one recommended for this game is:

The "Pros and Cons" System

In this system, each argument is broken down into:

- The active Player's states: Something That Happens and a Number of Reasons Why it Might Happen (Pros).
- The other Player's state: A Number of Reasons Why it Might NOT Happen (if they can think of any) (Cons).

The game needs a Facilitator to adjudicate on the arguments, but if you have a limited number of players, you can take it in turns to be the Facilitator – this works out much better than you might imagine and helps reinforce the idea that your role in the game might be in conflict with others, but you are all working together to generate a credible narrative.

The advantage of this system is that you formalise the Pros and Cons of an argument and the role of the Facilitator becomes that of ensuring that the Pros and Cons carry equal weight - perhaps making compelling reasons worth two Pros and two or three weaker reasons against only worth one Con. You need to ensure you don't end up with a laundry list of trivial reasons, or the player re-stating a reason already accepted in a slightly different way in a desperate attempt to gain points.

One very useful benefit of the "Pros and Cons" system is that it provides reasons for failure should the dice roll not succeed. You can also more easily run the game with very knowledgeable players.

Notes about arguments

The important thing to remember in a Matrix game is that arguments can be made about anything that is relevant to the scenario. You can argue about your own troops or about the enemy, the existence of people, places, things or events, the weather, plague, disease or public opinion. The actions and consequences of arguments are reflected in the placement of the generic counters on a map (examples are enclosed below), forming narrative

markers for the game; or by writing the results on a whiteboard or flipchart so the players can keep track of what is going on.

Some things can seem a little odd to new players – "how can he argue about my troops?" – It is true, he can't give them orders, but he could argue that their morale and motivation are low because they haven't been paid in months. The only criteria for judgement is the likelihood of the event taking place. With a bit of imagination, common sense and rational thinking, it is possible to present persuasive arguments as to what should happen in any scenario - from traditional military campaigns to the strange world of defence procurement.

A common error in Matrix games is for a player to argue about another player being influenced by something or them agreeing to a course of action. The player is present and can simply be asked – so that a little time between turns to allow the players to negotiate with each other (in secret if necessary) makes for a better game. It might be that a player wants to argue that all parties come to negotiations – in which case let them state their case, then ask the other players if they want to come along. If they agree then the argument is an automatic success. Arguments are for measurable actions – if the players want to negotiate with each other, they can do that in between turns.

Sometimes players get carried away with their arguments and try to do several different things. This isn't allowed in a Matrix game – you only get to do one action a turn because part of the insight comes from deciding what the highest priority is. The action itself could be large (like a general mobilisation of the Militia), but it must be a single action, so mobilising the Militia and providing the Police with heavy weapons would be two separate actions – which one do you want to do first?

If two arguments are in direct opposition ("This happens" - "No it doesn't") they represent a Logical Inconsistency since they cannot both be true. The earlier argument has already happened, so it is impossible for it not to have happened. The later player may argue that the event is reversed, but this tends to make for a poor narrative in the game and should be discouraged.

Reasonable Assumptions and Established Facts

It is important that the Facilitator understands the difference between "reasonable assumptions" in the game, such as the proposition that well trained and equipped Special Forces soldiers are going to be much more effective in combat than untrained protestors;

and "established facts" which are facts that have been specifically mentioned in the game briefings or have become established during play as the result of successful arguments.

The former can be deployed as supporting reasons (Pros and Cons), but the latter need to have been argued successfully in order for them to be included. Many inexperienced players will make vast all-encompassing arguments full of assumptions that are not reasonable. For example: It is not a reasonable assumption that an unarmed Protestor counter could fight off trained Police. It is reasonable to assume that the Police are trained, armed, equipped and quite capable of dealing with a group of protestors (after all, that is their job). It would be necessary to argue for large number of Protestors, argue that they had weapons of some sort or argue that they were especially devoted or fanatical about their cause, for them to have a reasonable chance of beating the Police.

Of course, you might argue that your Protesters undergo special training, get access to firearms, or are simply fired up with enthusiasm by the powerful and impassioned speech from their leader, so they get a bonus. In this case, you should mark the counter with a +1 or something similar (depending on the strength of the argument) to show their improved status.

Game Length and Turn Length

The game should last a minimum of 6 turns as it is essential that sufficient turns are allowed to develop the narrative and force the players to have to live with the consequences of their actions from earlier in the game. Each turn represents a deliberately vague period defined by the game Facilitator and the arguments are the "headline events" that took place in the period.

End of Turn "Consequence Management"

At the end of each game turn (a cycle of player arguments) the Facilitator should go over those successful and failed arguments that have generate new "established facts" in the game. They should also review situations that are on-going, such as the generation of refugees from fighting or the arrival of new recruits to a popular cause. If these have not been countered during the turn by a successful argument, the Facilitator should make them continue until someone does make an argument to stop them.

It might also be that some of the arguments, when considered as a whole, will have additional or even unintended consequences that are reasonable to expect to arise. It is therefore worth taking time to consider the consequences of the players' arguments

beyond their immediate results. Invite the players to consider the events of the turn, suggest possible consequences and then agree on the most likely that should be taken forward to the next turn.

In some games, it is worthwhile having an individual (if you have one to spare) who is particularly experienced about the sort of subject that the Matrix Game is focussed on, make "the law of unintended consequences" arguments at the end of a turn. This can help to formalise the process and provide good examples to widen the players' understanding of the consequences of their actions.

Inter-Turn Negotiations

As we have already said, the actual "arguments" of the Matrix Game are about actions that take place in the course of the game. In most cases, the actors represented by the players may well want to engage in face to face negotiation with each other in an effort to strike a deal. Players attempting to make Arguments saying that they want to "influence the Prime Minister" are essentially pointless if the Prime Minister is represented by another player. If they want to strike a deal, then they had better head off to a quiet corner of the room and try a little influence in real life. Of course, if a player wants to make an argument about a position or group not represented by another player, they are welcome to do so in the normal way.

In analytical games, it is important to record the essential elements of these discussions. What was suggested? Was agreement reached and why? If no agreement was reached what were the private and public reasons why the negotiations were unsuccessful? Analysis of these "off-table" negotiations and the reasons the players felt why they were successful or failures can provide important insights.

Secret arguments

There will be some cases where you want to hide from the other players the thing you want to argue about. It could be that you have booby trapped a piece of equipment you think your opponent will use, or that you have swapped the vital blueprints for a set of fake ones in case the safe is broken into. In this case, you simply write down your argument on a piece of paper and present it to the Facilitator announcing to the other players that you are making a secret argument. The Facilitator will make a judgment and you will roll the dice normally, but the other players have no idea what it is about.

You should be careful, however, that the players don't make too many secret arguments. This can ruin the

game's atmosphere and reduce the focus, so that the game drags on unnecessarily. They also depend on the judgement of the Facilitator as to their success or failure, rather than being decided on a consensual basis from the participants. They must only be permitted when they refer to quite specific things or events. An argument about gathering information from a spy, in most games, will be quite a generic argument and should be argued openly. Similarly Arguing about the placement of an IED to catch forces moving down a route should be made openly as the results will take effect the same turn. It is only really for secret things you need to establish several turns in advance.

Measures of Success

In many arguments success or failure may not be a simple "Yes" or "No" proposition. There might well be a sliding scale of success or failure in terms of numbers or the quality of the outcome, which is usually represented by the score on the dice. If you needed a 7+ to succeed and rolled a double-six (12), this can indicate an especially notable success. Conversely, a roll of a double-one, it could represent a disastrous failure.

Full rules here: <https://www.thegamecrafter.com/games/pdf-only-magck-matrix-game-construction-kit-user-guide>

Game Turn Length:

The length represented by a game turn may be variable during the game based on the events taking place, but are intended to be over a period of about 2-3 years per turn. This is in order to look at a longer-term view of the future of Taiwan, rather than knee-jerk military invasion considerations.

With game turns of this length it will be necessary to decide on a few additional things during the game: What is the general outcome for the War in the Ukraine (and the effect on global economics), and what will happen in American politics (will Trump or a similar figure be re-elected, or will US international relations return to the pre-Trump era)?

I would recommend that a brief discussion as to the alternatives are proposed, and voted upon, and the game proceed as normal.

Actors in the Game and Order of Play:

- Chinese Government
- The USA
- Taiwan
- Chinese Military
- Australia
- Japan

Russia was proposed as an Actor, but the current situation in the Ukraine led most participants to believe that this circumstance would keep Russian distracted for at least several years. This means that Russia could be a player later in the game, depending on how the war in the Ukraine is resolved.

Cover Poster

The cover is from The Japan Times.

More information

There has been quite a lot of discussion about Matrix games, on the "PAXsims" Blog that are worth reading: <https://paxsims.wordpress.com/?s=Matrix+Game>

Professor Rex Brynen was interviewed by the "GrogCast" Podcast here (31-minute mark): <http://grogheads.com/?podcast=grogcast-season-2-episode-12> w.

Conduct of the Game:

The players should be formed into teams around the Actors in the game. They should be provided with the introductory background (above) and their Actor brief; and provided with a short period in which to study the brief. They should then write down a few (3 or 4) short, pithy, objectives they would wish to achieve in the game in accordance with their briefs. One of these should be a longer-term objective, in order to ensure that the players address something other than short-term goals and reactions to other player's actions in the game. Play should then commence in the normal way. The final turn should be followed by a discussion of the objectives, and comparison made with the Actor's achievements during the game.

Taiwanese Islands³

When most people think of Taiwan, they probably think of a large island in the South China Sea. But the nation of Taiwan also includes a smattering of other islands including several just off the mainland coast - these include Kinmen and, further north, Matsu.

This anomaly goes back to the Chinese Communist revolution of 1949. When Mao Tse Tung's Communist forces overran the mainland, the nationalist forces of the Kuomintang party fled offshore to Taiwan and a flotilla of other islands. For those who live in Taiwan, China may loom large on their consciousness but geographically it's still some way over the horizon – 160 kilometres distant. Not so for the 120,000 residents of the island of Kinmen; China looms large both figuratively and geographically. This outpost of Taiwan is so close to the Chinese mainland, just 10 clicks as the crow flies, islanders can clearly see the twinkling lights in the skyscrapers of the city of Xiamen on the mainland.

More ominously, this symbol of capitalism and democracy on Beijing's doorstep is also within easy shelling distance. The tank traps that line Kinmen's beaches aren't for show – China has tried to invade before. With Beijing ratcheting up the sabre rattling over a possible forced unification with Taiwan, an expert on cross strait relations has said Kinmen is very "vulnerable".

Not only to military action though. Beijing is also trying subtler means to bring the island into its orbit and further away from Taiwan's.

Residents of Kinmen share a dialect and a history with those that are now just a 22-minute ferry ride away across the bay. On some streets Taiwanese and Chinese flags flutter side by side. There are also some grumbles with Taipei. The 2013 withdrawal of thousands of troops from the island and a cutting back of the civil service rocked the local economy. Tourism from mainland China has kept Kinmen afloat.

Nonetheless, the people of Kinmen value the democracy being part of Taiwan brings.

As tensions ratchet up across the strait, the fear is Beijing may make good on its threat to take Taiwan by force. Kinmen and Matsu are vulnerable; Taiwan could not defend them with conventional weapons. It is feasible they could be invaded but many don't think there's a benefit to China to taking them.

Beijing however has benefits for the people of Kinmen. As well as the scores of tourists with big wallets visiting from the mainland, China now also supplies Kinmen with drinking water. There are plans for electricity and gas links and even a bridge to Xiamen. It is assessed that this will have the effect of a greater Chinese civilian presence on Kinmen and will mean the island will be more dependent on the mainland.

The speculation that if Beijing was to occupy any Taiwanese controlled islands, it would probably be Taiping Island, in the Spratly Islands group far away in the south China Sea, or the Pratas Island, located about half way between mainland China and the Philippines, which are inhabited almost entirely by soldiers.



³ News.com.au

The Senkaku Islands⁴

The Senkaku Islands are a group of uninhabited islands in the East China Sea, administered by Japan.

The islands are the focus of a territorial dispute between Japan and China and between Japan and Taiwan. China claims the discovery and ownership of the islands from the 14th century, while Japan maintained ownership of the islands from 1895 until its surrender at the end of World War II. The United States administered the islands as part of the United States Civil Administration of the Ryukyu Islands from 1945 until 1972, when the islands returned to Japanese control under the Okinawa Reversion Agreement between the United States and Japan. The discovery of potential undersea oil reserves in 1968 in the area was a catalyst for further interest in the disputed islands.

Despite the diplomatic stalemate between China and Taiwan, both governments agree that the islands are part of Taiwan as part of Toucheng Township in Yilan County. Japan administers and controls the Senkaku islands as part of the city of Ishigaki in Okinawa Prefecture. It does not acknowledge the claims of China nor Taiwan, but it has not allowed the Ishigaki administration to develop the islands.

As a result of the dispute, the public is largely barred from approaching the uninhabited islands, which are about a seven-hour boat ride from Ishigaki. Vessels from the Japan Coast Guard pursue Chinese ships crossing the maritime boundary in what one visiting journalist described in 2012 as "an almost cold war-style game of cat-and-mouse", and fishing and other civilian boats are prevented from getting too close to avoid a provocative incident.

As far as Japan is concerned, there is no territorial dispute over the Senkakus. Any claims to the islands by other countries can only be described as pretexts for securing oil. The Japanese allege that Republic of China and China only started claiming ownership of the islands in 1971, following a May 1969 United Nations report that a large oil and gas reserve may exist under the seabed near the islands.



On 22 June 2020, the Ishigaki City Council voted to change the name of the area containing the Senkaku Islands from "Tonoshiro" to "Tonoshiro Senkaku". Republic of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded that the islands belong to Republic of China, and any moves to deny this fact are invalid. The Kuomintang also condemned the council's move, saying the Islands are ROC territory and the nation would not give up even "an inch" of its sovereignty.

⁴ Source: Wikipedia with additional comments.

Chinese Landing Craft

The PLAN has experimented with Chinese merchant vessels, such as the Bang Chui Dao, a 15,560-ton roll-on roll-off ferry. This has been used to support military transportation exercises.

But where such ships might have been limited to accessing port terminals before, the ferry's stern ramp had been converted to enable it to launch and recover a 26-ton ZTD-05, an amphibious armoured vehicle.

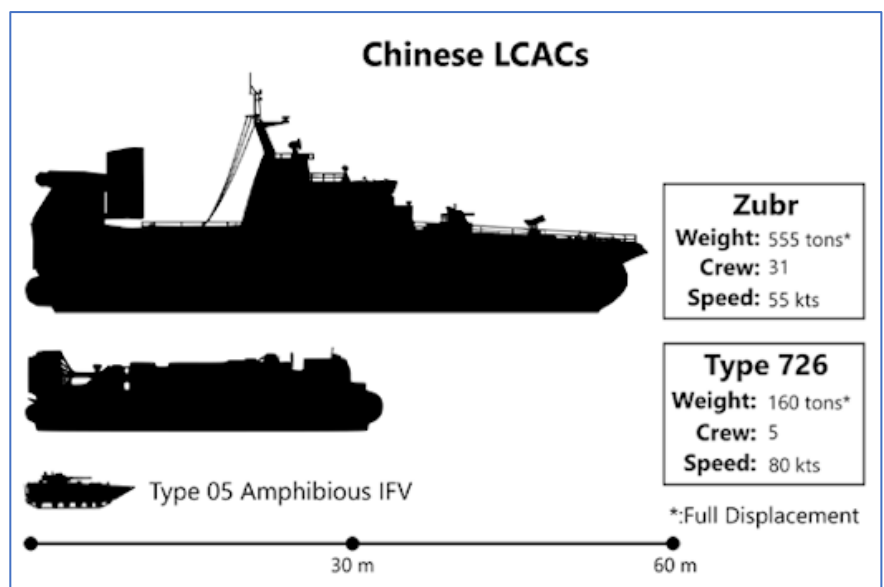


The Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) recently conducted landing drills featuring a new type of utility landing craft in the East China Sea, with observers saying that this kind of craft can carry armoured vehicles and troops, and complement air cushioned landing craft in large-scale landing missions.

Compared to air cushioned landing craft, which can land on tougher terrain, utility landing craft have higher requirements for favourable landing grounds, but they are often cost-friendlier than air cushioned landing craft, meaning that more can be produced. Utility landing crafts are heavy lift craft and have over twice the payload and six times the range of air cushion type landing craft. Both types of craft can play important roles in large-scale landing missions. Landing craft are also used to support civilian humanitarian/maritime operations.



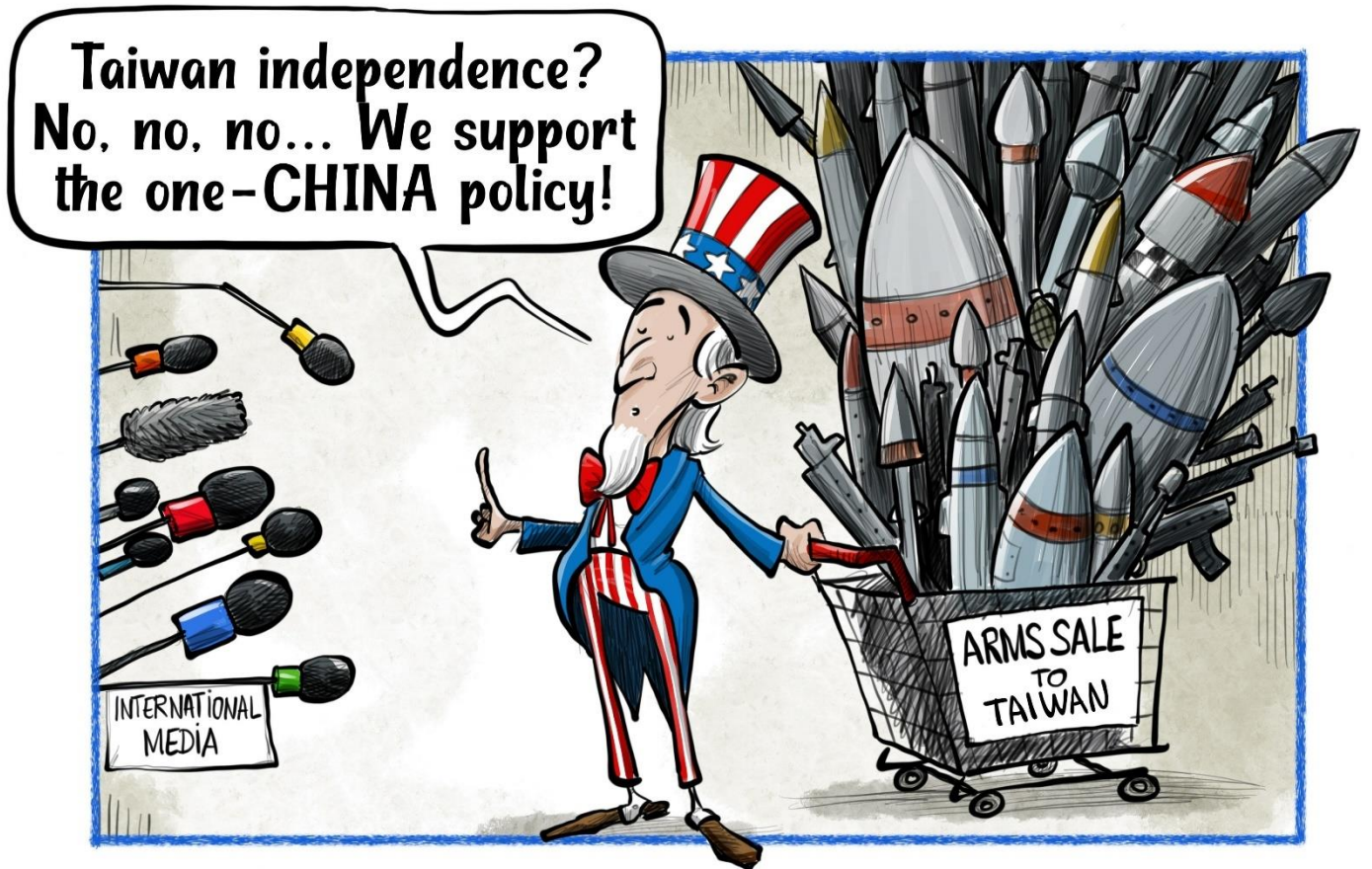
The air-cushion landing boat hovercraft is an amphibious landing transport craft that uses high-pressure air to form an air cushion between the bottom of the ship and the water surface (or the ground), so that the hull is fully or partially raised to reduce the resistance of the hull during navigation. The unique performance gives the air landing craft a higher speed and a unique amphibious landing capability. It is estimated that only 25% of the world's beaches suitable for landing ships, and air-cushion landing crafts do not have such restrictions. This is especially important for the



approaches to Taiwan because of the presence of mud flats reaching out some 2 to 4 miles from the Western coast.

It is estimated that the PLAN could generate a credible landing capability in 3 to 5 years with the right investment and training.

Political Cartoons



Chinese Government⁵

On the 100th birthday of the ruling Communist Party, in July 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged to complete “reunification” with self-ruled Taiwan and vowed to “smash” any attempts at formal independence.

Democratically-ruled Taiwan is part of China, and the Chinese Government, has stepped up efforts under Xi to assert its sovereignty claims, including regular flights by fighter jets and bombers close to the island.

Xi said “Solving the Taiwan question and realising the complete reunification of the motherland are the unswerving historical tasks of the Chinese Communist Party and the common aspiration of all Chinese people. All sons and daughters of China, including compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, must work together and move forward in solidarity, resolutely smashing any ‘Taiwan independence’ plots.”

While China has never renounced the use of force to bring Taiwan under its control, Xi called for a process of “peaceful reunification”. Still, he said that nobody should “underestimate the Chinese people’s strong determination, firm will, and formidable ability to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity”.

However, there is seems to be a dangerous obsession with this idea among some of the people of mainland China, and in foreign policy analysts in the USA. It is that China, the Chinese nation and the Chinese dream can only count as risen, rejuvenated and fulfilled respectively if reunification across the Taiwan Strait is accomplished and territorial integrity thus complete. Anyone who casts doubt on it risks being denounced as traitorous or unpatriotic, and many countries have fallen into the trap of firmly accept it as the only truth.

Promoting peace and development and defending the multipolar international system with the United Nations (UN) at its core have been China’s main foreign policy objectives since the late 1970s. Initially, Western countries warmly welcomed China’s shift to economic development from the chaos of the Cultural Revolution by investing profusely in China, and helping China integrate into the international system including the World Trade Organization. China followed the ‘tao guang yang hui’ strategy to keep a low profile in international affairs so as to concentrate on domestic development.

This strategy largely succeeded and catapulted China to a top spot in the global economy. By 2010, China had displaced Japan to become the world’s second largest economy, a position Japan had held for decades. As China continues to narrow the gap with the US, Americans become increasingly anxious about the prospect that China will unseat the US as the world’s dominant power.

Relations with Taiwan have, in fact, contributed to the Chinese nation’s rejuvenation. The early establishment of the Special Economic Zones saw two of the four orientated to relations with Taiwan and investment helped to kick start Chinese economic reforms. One may say that Taiwan’s businesses made great contributions to China’s development. The labour-intensive industries in which the investments were concentrated changed the fate of countless poverty-stricken farmers, and fundamentally altered the economic structure of the mainland’s mix of urban and rural areas, as well as China’s place in the global geoeconomic forum.

Playing the armed reunification card comes with many side effects, and could undermine or even derail China’s national rejuvenation. It is unnecessary and the steady march of progress for the Chinese people will bring about the inevitable national reunification in due course.

Apart from damaging relations with other major powers, and making China the target of vexed international opinion, the passionate reactions and collective fury with regard to Taiwan independence pose a threat to domestic political stability and puts those in Government on edge. The flares of nationalist sentiment triggered by the Taiwan-related “taboo” are difficult to manage. They compel the government to react, so as to pacify the anger of the populace.

A careful line is therefore necessary. The USA’s overreaction is only because it seeks to throw some obstacles in the path of China’s ascendancy. Support for the international legal framework, economic advantage and the ability to take a longer view, will see Taiwan’s inescapable return to China in due course. But challenges to China’s rightful place in global politics cannot be ignored.

⁵ Source: Global Village Space, Think China, with additional comments.

The United States of America⁶

As a leading democracy and a technological powerhouse, Taiwan is a key U.S. partner in the Indo-Pacific. Though the United States does not have diplomatic relations with Taiwan, we have a robust unofficial relationship. The United States and Taiwan share similar values, deep commercial and economic links, and strong people-to-people ties, which form the bedrock of our friendship and serve as the impetus for expanding U.S. engagement with Taiwan.

The United States approach to Taiwan has remained consistent across decades and administrations. The United States has a longstanding one China policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three U.S.-China Joint Communiqués, and the Six Assurances. We oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side; we do not support Taiwan independence; and we expect cross-strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means. We continue to have an abiding interest in peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. Consistent with the Taiwan Relations Act, the United States makes available defense articles and services as necessary to enable Taiwan to maintain a sufficient self-defense capability — and maintains our capacity to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security, or the social or economic system, of Taiwan.

Taiwan is a highly advanced economy producing an estimated \$786 billion in goods and services in 2021. The United States and Taiwan have deep and growing commercial, financial, and trade ties, which advance U.S. interests and help create economic opportunities in the United States. Since 2020, the United States and Taiwan, have held the Economic Prosperity Partnership Dialogue to enhance economic and commercial ties, including supply chain security and resiliency, investment screening, health, science and technology, and the digital economy. The Department of Commerce launched the Technology, Trade, and Investment Collaboration framework with Taiwan in 2021 to provide a platform to develop commercial programs and explore actions to strengthen critical supply chains.

Taiwan is the United States' eighth-largest trading partner, and the United States is Taiwan's second-largest trading partner. U.S. exports of goods and services to Taiwan supported an estimated 188,000 American jobs in 2019.

Taiwanese cumulative investment in the United States was nearly \$137 billion in 2020. Taiwan's direct investment in the United States is led by manufacturing, wholesale trade, and depository institutions. These investments directly support an estimated 21,000 jobs in the United States and \$1.5 billion in U.S. exports.

People-to-people ties between the United States and Taiwan are strong and continue to grow. Through 2019, travel for business and pleasure from Taiwan to the United States had increased 70 percent since Taiwan became a member of the U.S. Visa Waiver Program in November 2012. Taiwan is the United States' seventh largest source of international students, sending more than 20,000 students to receive a high-quality education each year for the three decades leading up to the pandemic. The United States also sponsors study abroad opportunities in Taiwan for U.S. students from the high school to post-graduate levels, with a particular focus on Mandarin language learning. Since 1957, the Fulbright Program has supported 1,700 individuals to study and teach in Taiwan and 1,600 to come to the United States. In December 2020, AIT and TECRO, with participation from the U.S. Department of Education, launched the U.S.-Taiwan Education Initiative. The goal of this initiative is to provide increased opportunities for more Americans to teach and study in Taiwan, and for more Taiwanese to pursue education and Mandarin teaching opportunities in the United States.

The United States will continue to support Taiwan's membership in international organizations where statehood is not a requirement and encourage Taiwan's meaningful participation in organizations where its membership is not possible.

Taiwan and the United States are members of several international organizations and bodies, including the World Trade Organization, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, and the Asian Development Bank. In June 2015, AIT and TECRO established the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, a platform for showcasing Taiwan's technical expertise to the world. Under the framework, Taiwan and its partners offer technical trainings in fields as diverse as public health, supply chain resiliency, energy, women's rights, and disaster relief. Japan joined the GCTF as a global partner in 2019 and Australia joined in 2021.

⁶ Source: US Department of State Website (Edited to remove some text to fit on one page, but no text has been changed).

Taiwan⁷

Beijing grabbed headlines in March when it banned imports of Taiwanese pineapples, alleging a pest infestation. The action fit a pattern of China's weaponization of trade for political purposes elsewhere in the world through informal actions, rather than explicit trade barriers.

The ban ultimately proved fruitless as the 40,000 tons of pineapples originally destined for mainland Chinese tables were snapped up by other buyers. But the incident was a reminder of how deep the trade and investment ties are between Taiwan and China—and how, for the most part, they've remained surprisingly insulated from increasingly fraught cross-strait politics.

Cross-strait trade hit a record in 2020, including indirect trade through Hong Kong and Macao, with Taiwan's exports representing some 70 percent of the total. Much of the increase was due to strong global demand for made-in-China goods in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. It also helped give a lift to Taiwan's economy causing growth to exceed China's—2.98 percent versus 2.3 percent—for the first time since 1990.

While the increasing flow of trade—and more than \$188 billion of Taiwanese investment into China since 1991—serves Beijing's long-standing goal of integrating Taiwan's economy with its own, the situation isn't as favourable to China as it might seem. The two sides of the strait are locked in a state of economic co-dependence, with China increasingly reliant on Taiwan for technology. The largest proportion of Taiwanese exports is sophisticated electronics, especially cutting-edge semiconductors that China lacks the ability to produce. And with the United States imposing restrictions on sales to China of both semiconductors and the technology to make them, Beijing is facing vulnerabilities that make economic relations with Taiwan even more important. China's share (including Hong Kong and Macao) of all Taiwanese exports reached nearly 44 percent in 2020, a record high.

Beijing's reluctance to punish Taiwan economically stands in sharp contrast to hard-line Chinese diplomatic and military actions toward the island in response to Taiwanese policies that Beijing finds objectionable. During Tsai's first four-year term, Beijing poached seven of Taipei's diplomatic allies. Despite the pandemic, it has blocked Taiwan from participating in the World Health Assembly, the decision-making body of the World Health Organization. Since March 2019, Chinese jets regularly trespass into Taiwan's air defence identification zone and frequently cross the centreline of the Taiwan Strait, which the People's Liberation Army Air Force had tacitly respected for 20 years. And threats of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan often appear in China's state media. Some observers view China's growing pressure as a sign that Beijing is no longer confident that time is on its side and that Chinese patience for reunification may be growing thin.

The defence of Taiwan is up to the military and its reserves. Currently, Taiwan has 169,000 active-duty military personnel. That's a figure dwarfed by the PLA's 2-million-strong military, with more than 2,400 combat-capable aircraft, and the world's largest navy, including two aircraft carriers with a third on the way.

To bolster its defence forces, Taiwan has mandatory four-month military service for men—compared to 18 months in South Korea, and about two years in Israel and Singapore. The service was reduced from one year in 2013. The Russian attack on Ukraine has people increasingly worried about a cross-strait conflict, so legislators are calling to change the service back to a year or longer. A recent poll showed 78% of respondents support the idea, and 56% want to include women. "Four months is too short; that's like summer camp," said one commentator, "A year is sufficient, but China is so much stronger than us. We can only do our best to hold out."

However, even if Taiwan's military grows, most analysts say that the island would not be able to stop a full-scale invasion on its own—and Ukraine's situation has sparked debate over whether anyone would come to Taiwan's aid. The opposition Kuomintang Party, has publicly predicted, despite the recent visit by Nancy Pelosi, the Speaker of the US House of Representatives, that the U.S. would send weapons, but not troops to defend Taiwan.

Taiwan also has a problem with its constitution. It was intended for, and lays claim to, the whole of China. This creates serious problems with the UN and other bodies, but the "old guard" Nationalists/KMT feel that ROC is the rightful government for both China and Taiwan and object to any change.

⁷ Source: Foreign Policy and Time (Edited to fit on one page).

Chinese Military⁸

Despite commentators in the West saying “the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) has now grown into the world’s largest fighting force, with more than two million active personnel”, the size of the PLA has steadily reduced in from 5.5 million in 1949 (with an officer to soldier ratio of 1:1) to only 2 million more recently (with an Officer/ NCO/ Soldier ratio of 1:1:1) (The US military in contrast has about 15% officers).

Under President Xi Jinping, China has, quite rightly, become more diplomatically assertive and shown an increased willingness to back up its claims over disputed territory with demonstrations of its military prowess.

Neighbouring countries and the United States, afraid of China taking its rightful place in the world, have been watching closely. In recent months, the navies of the US and its diplomatic allies have sailed regularly through Asia Pacific waters – including the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait – to assert navigational rights in international waters. In October 2021, the US announced AUKUS — a new security alliance with the UK and Australia — that will lead to Australia acquiring nuclear-powered submarines from the United States. Washington has also stepped-up weapons sales to Taiwan, which is modernising its military and developing so-called asymmetric warfare capabilities to thwart any attack from Beijing, which claims the island as its own.

The PLA has been stocking its arsenal with increasingly high-tech weapons. In 2019, the DF-41 intercontinental ballistic missile, was unveiled during the National Day military parade. But it was a DF-17 hypersonic missile that caught most people’s attention. It was reported China had actually tested hypersonic weapons twice – with a top US general describing the breakthrough as almost a “Sputnik moment”, referring to the 1957 satellite launch by the Soviet Union that signalled its lead in the space race.

With the South China Sea emerging as a flashpoint, the PLA is also developing its navy. China claims the sea almost in its entirety amid competing claims by Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei. The People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is now the largest navy in the world, according to the government’s defence white paper, and its submarines have the capability to launch nuclear-armed missiles. To support the navy, China also has so-called maritime militia, funded by the government and known as “little blue men”, which are active in the South China Sea, while this year Beijing authorised its coastguard to fire on foreign vessels.

The air force has also grown into the largest in the Asia-Pacific region and the third largest in the world, with more than 2,500 aircraft and roughly 2,000 combat aircraft. Most notably, the air force now possesses a fleet of stealth fighter jets, including the J-20, China’s most advanced warplane. It was independently developed and designed to compete with the US-made F-22.

Over the same time period, China has also been one of the world’s leading exporters of armed unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), commonly known as drones, with customers including the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

However, there have been accusations of an opaque command system, endemic corruption, and questions over the quality of PLA recruits. The corruption stems largely from a tradition of nepotism and favouritism, and a general lack of oversight, while recruitment is suffering because despite some incentives, the younger, well-educated Chinese that the military wants are more attracted to the booming private sector. This has left the PLA reliant on conscription for about a third of its manpower, with each conscript required to complete two years’ service.

Potentially more of an issue, however, is that the PLA themselves refer to as “the Peace Disease”, in that the PLA simply lacks contemporary combat experience. It was 1979 when China last engaged in real world conflict – and that was in Vietnam. Without experience in fighting real wars, some might argue that the PLA might not be able to live up to its expectations.

Other commentators say a lack of real-world combat experience is not necessarily detrimental, because the military power of the Chinese army in modern conflict will mostly depend on technology, which has been steadfastly marching in the right direction.

⁸ Source: Aljazeera

Australia⁹

Australia has a substantial relationship with Taiwan including trade and investment, education, tourism and people-to-people ties. Australia, however, recognised the Government of the PRC as China's sole legal government, and acknowledged the position of the PRC that Taiwan was a province of the PRC. The Australian Government does not recognise the ROC as a sovereign state and does not regard the authorities in Taiwan as having the status of a national government. Dealings between Australian government officials and Taiwan, therefore, take place unofficially.

The Australian Government strongly supports the development, on an unofficial basis, of economic and cultural relations with Taiwan including a range of two-way visits, state, territory and local government contacts, trade and investment opportunities and people to people links. Australia supports Taiwan's participation in international organisations and conferences where appropriate.

Despite the Australian government not having an official diplomatic relationship with Taiwan, an official Bilateral Economic Consultation is held annually by high-ranking Ministry of Economy officials of both sides and there is a substantial unofficial relationship has developed through cultural and trade links. On international trade, Australia and Taiwan are seen as complementary.

From the perspective of Taiwan, Australia was its eighth largest source of imports and thirteenth market for exports in 2000, making Australia its eleventh largest trading partner. The current relationship between Australia and Taiwan functions on two fundamental understandings. First, both Australia and Taiwan recognise it is an unofficial relationship. Secondly, Taiwan is 'careful not to embarrass Australia' and to adhere to the mutual understandings that have been agreed upon.

Relations between the China and Australia began to deteriorate in 2018 due to growing concerns of Chinese political influence in various sectors of Australian society including the Government, universities and media as well as China's stance on the South China Sea dispute. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated issues and tensions between the countries, especially after Australia called for an international, independent inquiry into the origins of the disease. The subsequent changes that China made to its trade policies have been interpreted as political retaliation and economic coercion against Australia.

In August 2021, Australia announced a long-range plan to purchase a fleet of powerful American nuclear submarines. Although China was not specifically mentioned in the news announcements, critics interpreted it as a major blow to Australian-Chinese relationship, by firmly allying Australia with the United States in military terms in the region. China was additionally critical of the formation of AUKUS in September 2021, a trilateral security pact between Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom for the Indo-Pacific region.

The Australian Defence Force is technologically sophisticated but relatively small. Although the ADF's 60,330 full-time active-duty personnel and 29,560 active reservists as of June 30th 2021 make it the largest military in Oceania, it is smaller than most Asian military forces. Nonetheless, the ADF is supported by a significant budget by worldwide standards and has deployed forces in multiple locations outside Australia.

Politics in Australia is changeable, where short 3-year terms, compulsory voting (majority-preferential instant-runoff voting in single-member seats for the lower house, and single transferable vote proportional representation for the upper house) lead to two major political Parties, Coalition policies, and a number of minor parties and independents (that can hold the balance of power).

Research conducted by the Australian Academy of science indicated that Australians want a future of sustainable self-sufficiency and a healthy environment, supporting a robust democracy – free of poverty and inequity. Equally, Australians fear a future in which the stability of day-to-day life has been eroded by a degraded environment, depleted resources, lawlessness or warfare, limited access to health-care and education, extreme (or even increased) economic or political inequity and the fragmentation of social cohesion.

⁹ Source: Australian Government, Wikipedia, BBC and The Conversation.

Japan¹⁰

The rise of China threatens Japan's once dominant position in Asia, not least in terms of disputed territories, which if Beijing succeeds in retaking, would strategically checkmate Tokyo. While the East China Sea and the disputed Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands is one thing, the biggest and most urgent flashpoint is the island of Taiwan.

Japan has made it publicly known that the continued autonomy of Taiwan is critical to its own survival, because a reunification of the island with mainland China would result in Beijing gaining maritime dominance around all of Japan's southwest periphery.

As a result, Japan is upping its own stakes concerning Taiwan. Both before and during the current streak of lawmaker visits to the island, parliamentary delegations from Japan have made similar trips of their own. The recently assassinated Abe Shinzo, an architect of Japan's current revisionist foreign policy, was a huge supporter of Taiwan and was set to visit the island himself. Similarly, Taiwan, once under the colonial rule of Japan, which annexed it from China, has also increased its pro-Japan sentiment significantly. The extent of the public mourning it pushed following Abe's murder was very significant.

There is also growing speculation as to whether Japan would actually defend Taiwan militarily if China invaded it, given the limitations imposed by the Japanese constitution. A recent report suggested that Japan's government was considering positioning over 1,000 ballistic missiles aimed towards China, a move that would mark a major escalation in tensions between Tokyo and Beijing.

If it wasn't obvious already, Japan can't afford to lose Taiwan, despite the One China Policy being a key condition of the resumption of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1976. This has put Tokyo in a race against time to try to find loopholes around its current peace-oriented constitution in order to increase its defence spending and attempt to balance against China's growing military might. In doing so, it finds support from the other members of the 'Quad' group (India, Japan, Australia and the USA), especially the United States and Australia, who are coordinating to try and contain China.

India is also a critical partner. While New Delhi has distanced itself from the Taiwan issue in a bid to avoid aggravating tensions with China over the disputed border, it nonetheless sees Japan as a long-term strategic partner with a view to Beijing.

Japan also seeks to woo South Korea into this game, a move that is being encouraged by the US. While new right-wing President Yoon Suk Yeol is more willing to cooperate with Japan on the issue of North Korea, expectations of him being an ultra-hawk on China have in fact fizzled out, and he has continued with the cautious approach of his predecessors. When Nancy Pelosi visited after her notorious Taiwan trip, the Korean president avoided meeting her, even as Japan nonetheless fully embraced her visit.

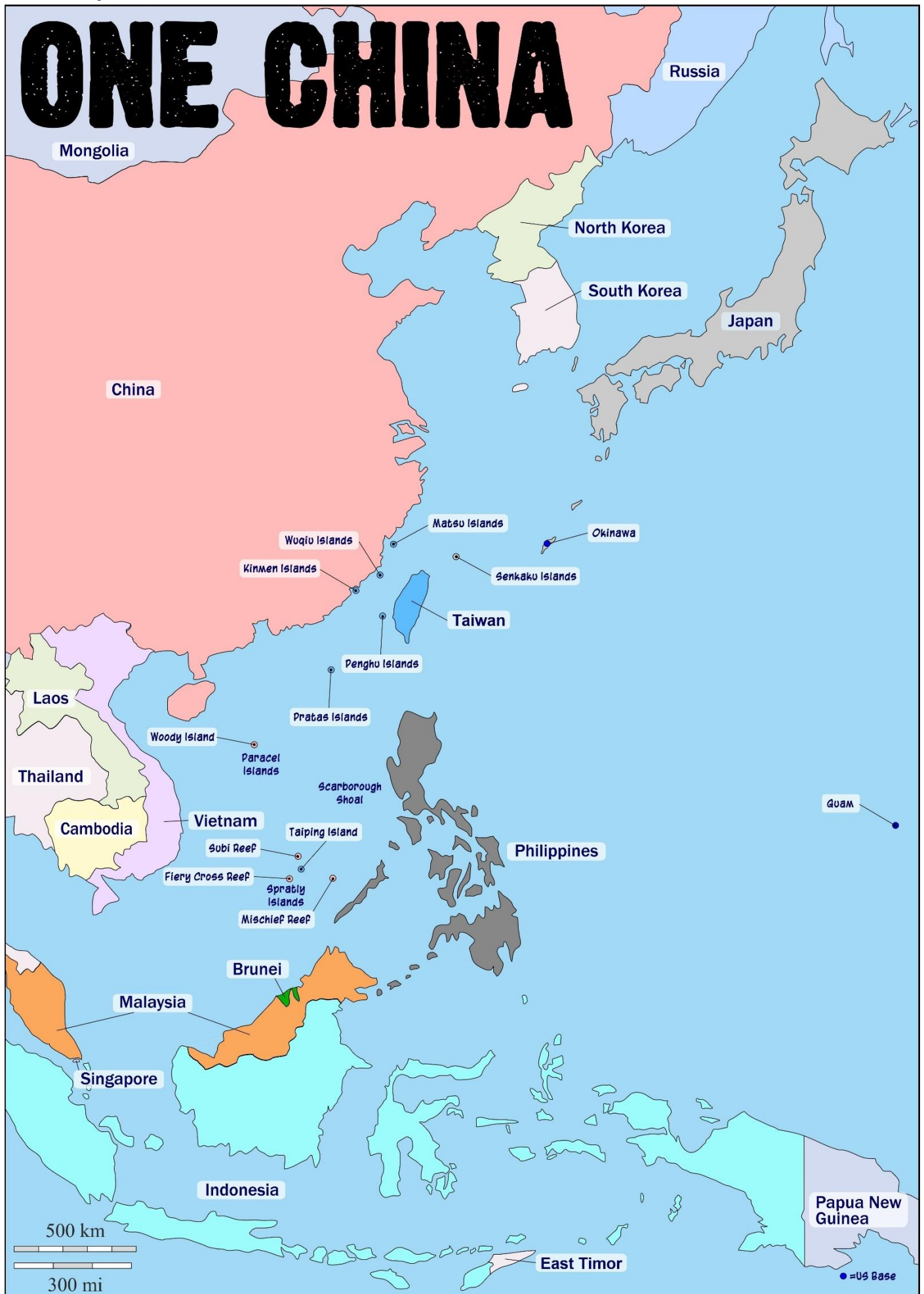
Japan is undoubtedly the number one and most forward country in support of the United States in Asia, despite some real concerns during the Trump administration.

Yet despite all of this, there are limits to how far it can rock the boat with Beijing, which remains a neighbour, as well as a critical trade and investment partner. Despite the historical enmity between the two, their business ties are very deep. Any hit to the Chinese economy hurts Japan too. Japan can't afford to lose the Chinese market either, especially when it comes to the export of cars, electronics and other consumer goods.

The Chinese government can be devastatingly effective in whipping up anti-Japanese sentiment on a whim, which can result in mass boycotts and even destruction of property. Such protests last occurred in 2012 over the Senkaku Islands. This reminds us that despite the backing of the US, Japan is in some ways in a delicate position. China's economy has long outgrown it; the continuing expansion of its military capabilities is unparalleled.

¹⁰ Source: www.rt.com, and author's additions.

Main Map:



Taiwan Map¹¹:



¹¹ Source: <https://www.ezilon.com/maps/asia/taiwan-physical-maps.html>

Random Events¹².



Radiation Leak



Eco Terrorism



Economic Downturn



Rare Mineral Discovery



Toxic Spill



Extreme Weather



High Level Corruption Scandal



Shipping Disaster



Economic Upturn

¹² Note: Each Actor is given a random event card at the start of the game. It can be use as an additional Argument at any time during the game, either to advantage that Actor, or to disadvantage another Actor.

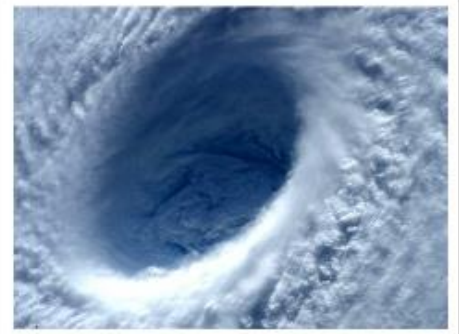
Random Events¹³.



Anonymous Hacking Attack



Fishing Dispute



Extreme Weather



Native People's Protest



Political Upheaval



Wildlife Protection Agreement



Air Disaster



Submarine Accident



De-Extinction Breakthrough

¹³ Note: Each Actor is given a random event card at the start of the game. It can be use as an additional Argument at any time during the game, either to advantage that Actor, or to disadvantage another Actor.

Example Counters:

