

# Chinese Tyranny in South China Sea

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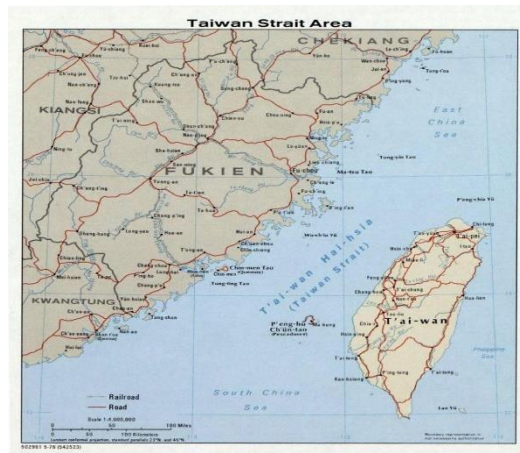
## ABSTRACT

The Taiwan Strait Crisis, a complex geopolitical issue, stems from the unresolved Chinese Civil War, where the Communist Party of China (CPC) established the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland, and the Kuomintang (KMT) retreated to Taiwan.

This paper examines the crisis's historical evolution, tracing its roots from the Chinese revolutions and the subsequent involvement of Japan, the United States, and Russia. The "One China" policy, a cornerstone of cross-strait relations, is analyzed, highlighting its varying interpretations. The study also explores the significant military developments impacting the region, including China's modernization efforts and Taiwan's asymmetric defense strategies. Furthermore, the paper addresses the growing role of legal warfare, information operations, and economic coercion in shaping the dynamics of the crisis. By synthesizing historical context with contemporary developments, this abstract provides a concise overview of the multifaceted nature of the Taiwan Strait Crisis and its implications for regional and global stability.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Taiwan Strait, a waterway 180 kilometre wide between mainland China and the island of Taiwan, is now a testing ground of 21st-century geopolitics, where a pair of two convergent plates are waiting for an earthquake. The ghost of unresolved civil war, imposed by the unstable mid-20th century, continues to hover over the relationship between Beijing and Taipei, poisoning it with deep-seated and explosive tension. The origins of this crisis were in the final stages of the Chinese Civil War, when defeated Kuomintang (KMT) armies fled to Taiwan and set up an independent government, while victorious Communist Party of China (CPC) formed the People's Republic of China (PRC) on the mainland. This historical rift, fueled by ideological differences and rival visions of national identity, has endured for more than seven decades, passing through phases of military conflict, diplomatic maneuvering, and economic interdependence. The IndoPacific,



a significant region of multiple nations and vital trade corridors, has become the focal point of international power rivalry. Within this intricate complex of geopolitics, the Taiwan Strait is in a central position, its stability having a direct bearing on the security and well-being of the entire region. The growing tensions over Taiwan are not just a bilateral matter, but a make-or-break test of the Indo-Pacific order. This paper will examine the core issue of how the Taiwan Strait Crisis shapes the Indo-Pacific future of power relations through the complex interactions of historical scores, current rivalries, and rising technological tensions.

The paper argues that the growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait are structurally remaking the strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific, compelling states to accept the realities of a rising China and the prospect of a large-scale conflict. My research will use an exhaustive review of the literature, incorporating academic journals, government reports, and policy analysis, to explore the historical, political, economic, and military aspects of the crisis. Case studies of pertinent regional dynamics will be utilized to show the implications of a wider nature for Indo-Pacific security. This assignment will be written to initially present a historical background of the crisis, followed by the current state of cross-strait relations being analyzed. It will then discuss the United States' role and other actors in the region, prior to determining the influence of technological development and military power. Lastly, it will consider possible future outcomes and their implications for Indo-Pacific power dynamics, leading to an examination of potential avenues for de-escalation and conflict resolution.

## 2 CHINESE REVOLUTIONS

Both Beijing and Taipei share the same history and speaks the same mandarin language, but the real difference lies in the ideologies and the political system of the two nations. China's unification as a single state first happened during the Warring states period, which went on from 475 BC to 221 BC; the Qin state embarked on a series of strategic conquests on other six states and in 221 BC, Qin Shi Huang became the first emperor of China. The Qin abolished all the vassal states that had existed throughout the preceding Xia, Shang and

Western Zhou dynasties, and established a two-tier local administrative system known as Jun-Xian system, which had served as a model for government throughout the history of imperial China. Despite being a brief dynasty, Qin greatly impacted Chinese history. Once the Qin collapsed, imperial China progressed for more than 2000 years. Even though political institutions of various dynasties were different, there were some underlying principles that remained constant. In a way, the institutional norms that have developed and accumulated over Chinese history are a unified multi-ethnic nation, a centralized state, a county-based local government system, a writing system that has remained largely unchanged, and ritual codes transmitted over generations.

### CHINESE REVOLUTION OF 1911

The Qing Dynasty's decline in the 19th and early 20th centuries stemmed from a confluence of internal and external pressures. Foreign incursions, notably the Opium Wars and the Sino-Japanese War, resulted in territorial losses and economic concessions, fueling widespread resentment against the foreign Manchu rulers. This frustration, coupled with a burgeoning sense of Chinese nationalism, spurred revolutionary sentiments. Facing mounting challenges, the Qing made belated attempts at reform, abolishing the traditional examination system, modernizing the military, and initiating limited decentralization. However, these efforts proved insufficient to stem the tide of discontent. Overseas Chinese communities, particularly in Southeast Asia and the Americas, became vital hubs for revolutionary activity. Leaders like Kang

Youwei and Liang Qichao advocated for a constitutional monarchy, while Sun Yat-sen's Revolutionary Alliance sought a republican government. The Alliance, drawing support from southern China, launched numerous unsuccessful revolts. However, the 1911 Wuchang Uprising ignited a nationwide revolution. As provinces declared allegiance to the revolutionaries, the Qing court, under pressure, appointed Yuan Shikai as premier. Sun Yatsen, returning from a fundraising tour, witnessed the revolutionaries capturing Nanjing. He was then elected provisional president of the newly declared Republic of China, marking the end of the imperial era. The 1911 revolution, driven by nationalism and dissatisfaction with Qing rule, ushered in a new chapter in Chinese history.

### CHINESE REVOLUTION OF 1949

The Chinese started sharing the same hate as the Russians towards the west and Japan as well due to the unequal treaties after the World War 1. Then started the final civil war between the Guaomindang (KMT), which was the Nationalist party founded by Sun Yat-sen and Gōngchǎndǎng (CCP) which was the Communist party. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP), initially a study group within the Nationalist Party's First United Front, participated in the 1926-27 Northern Expedition. However, the 1927 "White Terror" ended this collaboration, with Nationalists purging Communists from the party, later the 1931 Japanese invasion of Manchuria forced a fragile Second United Front in 1937, but mutual distrust persisted. Nationalists focused on containing Communists, while the CCP expanded rural influence, and finally during World War II, CCP support grew due to land reform and resistance against Japan, contrasting with Nationalist corruption and suppression. Post-war, despite US support for the Nationalists, the CCP's grassroots strength and superior military organization led to civil war resurgence. Talks between Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Zedong failed, and by 1946, fighting resumed, and from 1947 to 1949, Communist victories mounted. The Nationalist government, plagued by corruption, considered Taiwan as a retreat. Despite US aid, Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China in October 1949, forcing Chiang Kai-shek and his forces to flee to Taiwan.

### 3. EARLY RELATIONS WITH RUSSIANA, JAPAN AND AMERICA

The **United States of America**, along with the **Soviets** have had diplomatic relations with both Beijing and Taipei and they even pledged their support to the Chinese parties during the revolution of 1949; and **Japan** remained an adversary during and before the world wars.

During the early 1920s, Marxist scholars from whom the likes of prominent Chinese leaders like Mao Tse Tung were inspired advised the young Chinese Marxists to go into the countryside in order to liberate the exploited Chinese proletariat, which were the class of Chinese peasants, the Comintern (Communist International) sent their representatives along with communist literature which were further translated to Chinese, also supported by the soviet government's assurance of giving up their Russian held Chinese territories, which was the Chinese eastern railway, back to China. Russia was at that time headed by Vladimir Lenin, who believed that the Russian revolution might be perished without similar successful revolutions in other countries, thus becoming the socialist ally of the Russians. This thinking of Lenin made him interested in the anti-imperialist Guomindang (KMT) movement; and in the early 1920's, the soviets provided Sun Yat-Sen's KMT military, political and organisational help along with the previously promised Russian controlled Chinese territories In Tianjin and Hankow. Lenin as well as Stalin in the later period ordered the CCP to join the KMT, which many significant leaders like Mao Tse Tung and Zhou Enlai did until, and the CCP-KMT cooperation went on till general Chian Kai-shek's triumph in the Northern expedition of 1927.

Americans first entered China, when the empress of China sailing for 18,000 miles sailed up the pearl river into Guangzhou in 1784, after which Americans maintained some diplomatic relations, but the work done was less, with most of the tenures of all the 17 ministers posted between 1844 and 1900 ending before two years only. United States support for China increased dramatically soon after the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War (1937–45). After Japan launched an all-out offensive in China in the summer of 1937, American popular opinion shifted overwhelmingly in China's favor. During the KMT-CCP conflict, the Americans favoured the KMT, because of the communist ideology of the latter; Americans even tried to broker a truce between the KMT and CCP later abandoned in 1949 due to several cease fire violations, and when CCP overpowered the KMT in October of that same year, America's failed Chinese policy under Truman administration costed him the remarks of 'loosing' China to Communism. During the Korean war, which took place in June 1950, US dispatched its seventh fleet to prevent hostility and preventing the conflict from spreading south and then there was renewed cooperation between the United States and KMT. Later, PRC was successful in removing KMT led Republic of China from the UN General

Assembly and in 1972, US president Nixon visited China and the first of the 3 joint US-Sino Joint Communiqué, also known as the Shanghai Communiqué, which was the first written statement where both US and China expressed their views on Taiwan. The ping pong diplomacy, where the American table tennis team was invited to visit China along with the signing of other 2 Communiqué showcased the developing diplomatic ties of both the countries.

There are various concerns between Japan and China, as they are neighbouring countries; at the same time, the relationship with China is one of Japan's most important bilateral relationships. The two countries have close economic relations, as well as people-to-people and cultural exchanges. In 2021, trade between Japan and China demonstrated a significant flow of goods, with Japan exporting \$206.2 billion worth of goods to China and importing \$165.9 billion. Regarding direct investment in 2020, there was a notable disparity: Japan's direct investment into China amounted to \$3.4 billion, while China's direct investment into Japan was considerably lower at \$0.5 billion. Before normalization in 1972, Sino-Japanese relations were marked by deep historical hostility and minimal diplomatic interaction. The impact of Japanese aggression in China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, reaching its peak in the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945), loomed large over their bilateral relations. The creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 added to the complexity, as Japan initially upheld connections with the Republic of China (ROC) in Taiwan. The relationship was significantly shaped by the Cold War context. Japan, in alignment with the Western bloc, stayed cautious of the communist PRC. There were few trade and cultural exchanges, yet formal diplomatic relations were lacking. The Korean War deepened this separation, with Japan acting as a vital logistical hub for United Nations troops. During the 1960s, as the PRC's global status enhanced, especially following its nuclear test and growing acknowledgment, Japan started to reassess its position. Economic interests, along with an increasing recognition of the importance of regional stability, led to a change in Japanese policy. Nonetheless, the legacy of past grievances, such as matters of war reparations and the understanding of wartime occurrences, continued to pose major challenges. After normalization, Sino-Japanese relations have been filled with contradictions. Notably, three paradoxes have emerged prominently over the last four decades. Initially, even though China and Japan have numerous common geopolitical and economic interests, they have never established true strategic collaboration, and since the 2000s, they have shown a tendency towards either implicit or overt competition. Second, time, instead of mending the scars of previous conflicts, has since the mid-1980s

produced a more intense and resentful memory of history that has troubled both formal and casual interactions. Third, the diplomatic and commercial relationships, alongside “strong” societal connections established since normalization, have not succeeded in closing a considerable gap in values.

#### 4. ONE CHINA POLICY

The "One China" policy, a cornerstone of cross-strait relations, evolved from the Chinese Civil War and the subsequent division of China, during the Cold War, the ROC held China's seat at the United Nations, receiving recognition from many Western nations. However, as the PRC gained international prominence, the landscape shifted. The PRC asserted that there is only "one China" and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of it, demanding that any nation wishing to establish diplomatic relations with Beijing must acknowledge this principle. Over time, different interpretations of the "One China" principle emerged. The PRC insists on "One China Principle" that Taiwan is a part of China, and unification is inevitable. Taiwan, especially after its democratization, has increasingly emphasized its separate identity, with some advocating for formal independence.

Both Russia and the US stand firmly in support of the One-China policy but, US has at the same time maintain good relations with Taiwan as well which might be the sole reason for Taiwan's sovereignty in the current times. During Reagon administration, US gave six assurances in 1982, which clarified their policy while negotiating with the PRC on arms sales to Taiwan; stating the United States maintains a policy of robust support for Taiwan, evident in its refusal to set a date for ending arms sales or consult with the PRC on these sales, emphasizing its commitment to Taiwan's self-defense. It will not mediate between Taipei and Beijing, nor revise the Taiwan Relations Act, which forms the basis of its relationship with Taiwan. The US also maintains neutrality on the issue of Taiwan's sovereignty and will not pressure Taiwan to enter negotiations with the PRC, thereby reinforcing its stance of upholding Taiwan's autonomy and its right to determine its own future. In 1979, the Congress passed the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA), mainly because the members believed that President Carter struck a bad bargain in establishing relations with the People's Republic of China.

They felt that by giving into Chinese demands that he terminate diplomatic relations with Taiwan and end the mutual defense treaty, Carter had left the island profoundly vulnerable. They also were angry that the administration had pursued its China initiative without proper consultation with the Congress and they therefore used the TRA to shore up Taiwan's position and demonstrate their desire to play their proper role in the making of foreign policy. During Biden's Japan visit in 2022, his answer when asked “Are you willing to get involved militarily to defend Taiwan, if it comes to that?” was a yes, which clearly states current stance. After the re-election of trump, on 17<sup>th</sup> February , a small yet significant change was opposed by the Chinese, which was the removal of the phrase “we do not support Taiwan independence” from the State department's fact sheet on Taiwan relations.

#### 5. CURRENT STATE OF CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

The Taiwan Strait is experiencing renewed friction, fueled by contrasting viewpoints. Beijing severed communication with Taipei and intensified economic and political pressures following the DPP's landslide win in the 2016 elections, led by presidential candidate Tsai Ing-wen. Her time in office overlapped with President Donald J. Trump's administration, during which he and his cabinet interacted with Taiwanese officials to an unparalleled extent. For instance, in December 2016, President-elect Trump had a

conversation with President Ing-wen; in August 2020, former U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar traveled to Taipei. China, in response, increased military pressure on the island. In 2019, China flew military aircraft across the Taiwan Strait median line for the first time in many years, and began rejecting the line's existence in 2020

### **5.1- MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN TAIWAN STRAIT**

Over the past five years, there has been a substantial rise in incursions by Chinese military planes into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ), heightening worldwide concerns about the possibility of a conflict in the Taiwan Strait. Japan and Taiwan's ADIZs operate within a confusing international legal framework regarding the regulation of airspace beyond national jurisdiction. Since the United States established the first ADIZ in 1950, these zones have gained broad acceptance, yet there is no international treaty or formal body of international law that regulates their creation or the particular conditions they impose on aircraft flying within them. This has resulted in conflicts among states regarding their locations and methods of enforcement.

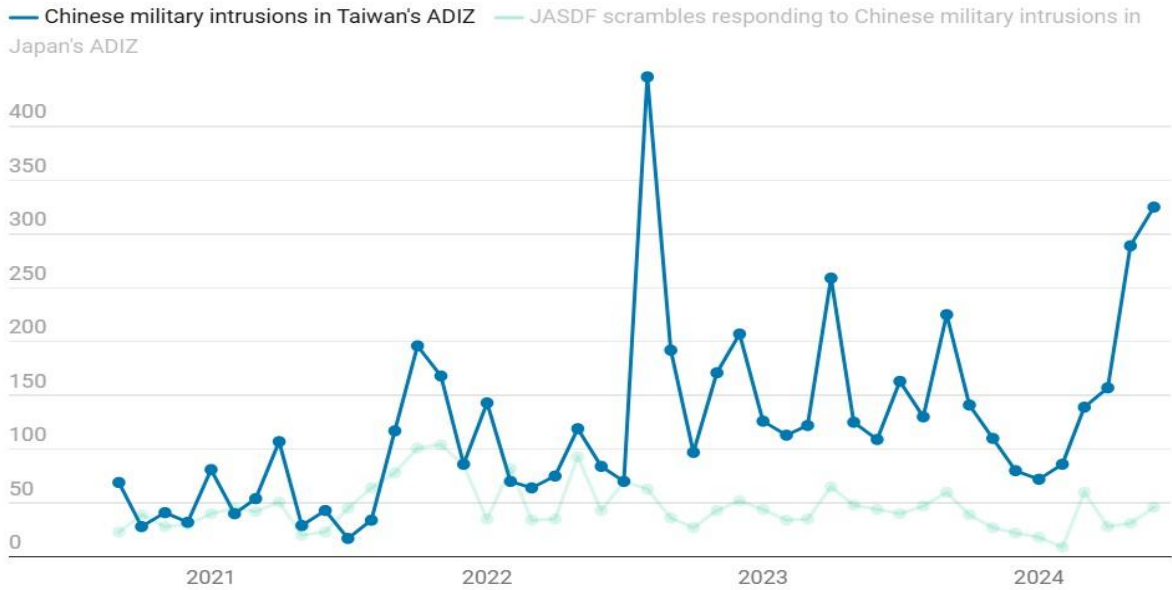
Intrusions in Taiwan's ADIZ have significantly surged since Taiwan started recording data, climbing from a monthly average of 81 intrusions in 2021 to 178 in the first half of 2024. The most significant change and the greatest surge in activity took place in August 2022 after Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi visited Taipei. Intrusions in Japan have taken a different path, decreasing from a monthly average of 58 in 2021 to merely 32 during the first half of

2024. At first glance, this change appears to bolster a theory that heightened activity near Taiwan has redirected available aircraft and resources from operations in Japan's ADIZ. However, throughout the most significant surge in Taiwan intrusions in August 2022, incursions in Japan's ADIZ (63) stayed above average (46), indicating that the PLA Air Force and PLA Navy possess latent capability to execute extensive operations near both Taiwan and Japan.

Taipei, under the current President Lai Ching-te, asserts the need for explicit recognition of its independent governance to counter Beijing's growing dominance. This stance is perceived by Beijing as a provocative rejection of its attempts at conciliatory engagement. In response, China is escalating military demonstrations and seeking novel methods to undermine Taiwan's autonomy. While immediate conflict is improbable, prolonged antagonism threatens to limit future diplomatic solutions. In his initial 100 days, President Lai has responded to Beijing's assertiveness toward Taiwan with a firmer approach, intensifying the already elevated tensions in the process. His inaugural address established the atmosphere, with Lai expressing his party's enduring belief that Taiwan is an independent state distinct from China.

He accomplished this, nonetheless, with clearer language than earlier presidents from Lai's Democratic Progressive Party had when they took office

### Chinese ADIZ Intrusions: Japan and Taiwan



He also eliminated the ambiguities that his predecessor Tsai Ing-wen had upheld to reconcile her claims of Taiwan’s sovereignty and avoid deteriorating relations with China. While Tsai cited Taiwan’s constitution as a nod to Beijing’s belief that both sides of the strait are part of “one China,” Lai leveraged it to dispute China’s stance. By doing this, he established what he sees as the appropriate terms of the cross-strait relationship, which represent the reality of Taiwan’s actual autonomy. Certainly, the increasing pressures from Beijing throughout the Tsai administration have reinforced beliefs in Taipei that greater diplomacy will not lead to a more moderate approach from China. Even if Lai had followed Tsai's stance, China would have still reacted unfavorably to him, but his speech resonated with Beijing. To express its anger towards both Taipei and Washington, the Chinese government made vehement condemnations and conducted a prominently reported military drill. The fact that China spent an entire day ramping up its rhetoric and several days showcasing its military strength implies that Beijing might have expected Lai to adopt a more measured tone and had to adjust its response after reflecting on the meanings of his speech. Since Lai's inauguration, China has markedly increased its military operations near Taiwan, sustained maritime law enforcement pressures, and started to utilize its legal mechanisms to prosecute ordinary Taiwanese for "acts of secessionism."

## 2022 ENCIRCLING TAIWAN MILITARY EXERCISE (August 2022)

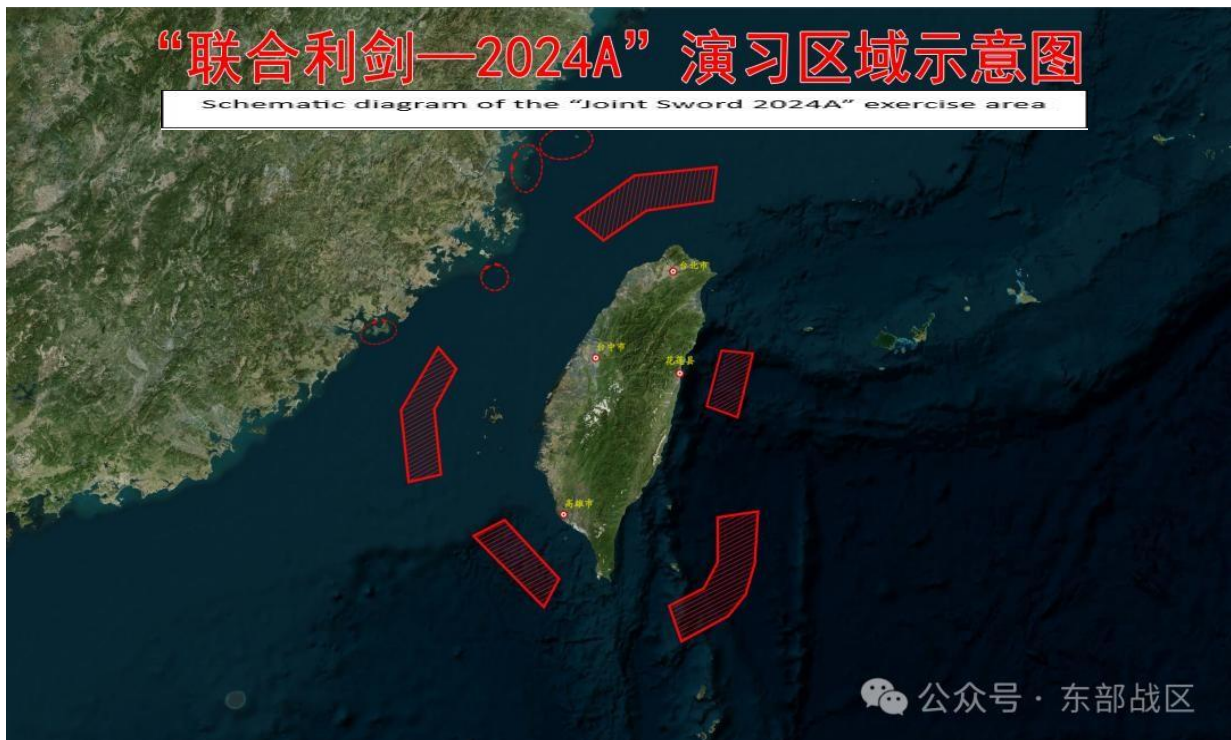


The PLA military drills around Taiwan in August 2022 were the most provocative to date, featuring missile launches over Taiwan and into Japan's exclusive economic zone, and initiated the series of (at least nominal) blockade exercises that the PLA has carried out in the past two years (refer to earlier articles here and here). The first Joint Sword (聯合利劍) exercise took place in April 2023—according to PRC accounts, it was a response to then-President Tsai's meeting with then-US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy—and included both a symbolic blockade of Taiwan and a series of simulated attacks aimed at critical targets on the island. The Joint Sword-2024A drill took place on May 23-24 this year—according to PRC assertions, in response to Lai's inaugural speech—and included a further symbolic encirclement of the island, along with a heightened involvement of patrols by the PRC Coast Guard (中國海警) (which functions under military command, governed by the Communist Party Central Military Commission).

## 2024A JOINT SWORD EXERCISE

Following three days of relative calm after President Lai Ching-te's inauguration, the PLA began its series of military exercises on the morning of May 23. The PLA Navy (PLAN), Air Force, Rocket Force, and Army participated, along with the China Coast Guard. The drill included 19 PLAN ships, 16 coast guard boats, and 49 aircraft (with 35 crossing the median line of the Taiwan Strait). The military training operation was segmented into five primary





operational zones—areas in the southwest, west, north, east, and southeast. Alongside these areas, the coast guard carried out exercises around Taiwan's peripheral islands. Although the military drills did not encroach upon Taiwanese territorial waters (12 nautical miles from the shore), the areas designated for exercises by the PRC off Taiwan's eastern coast and to the southwest seemed to extend into Taiwan's contiguous zone.

PLA Platforms Involved in Joint Sword-2024A :-

The drill included all four combat divisions of the PLA (army, navy, air force, and rocket force), and the PRC created propaganda visuals showcasing six primary platforms and weapon systems that the PLA utilized for the drill. These platforms featured the J-20 stealth fighter jet, the J-16 jet, the Type 052D destroyer Kunming, the Type 071 amphibious transport dock, Dong Feng series ballistic missiles, and the PHL-16 Multiple Rocket Launch System (MRLS). Nevertheless, although the PLA showcased all these platforms in promotional content, it seems that it did not carry out any missile live-fire drills.

The Role of the PRC Coast Guard:-This marked the first occasion that the PLA significantly employed the coast guard in its military drills surrounding Taiwan. The main emphasis of

PRC Coast Guard operations was centered on Taiwan's peripheral islands of Kinmen, Matsu, Wuqiu, and Dongyin. PRC communications characterized this operation as a “thorough law enforcement drill... to evaluate its joint patrol, quick response, and emergency readiness skills.” As a component of this, the coast guard conducted simulated inspections of foreign ships. Alongside performing law enforcement drills around Taiwan’s peripheral islands, the PRC coast guard dispatched four ships to the eastern exercise area and three ships to the southern entrance of the Taiwan Strait. This implies that the PRC was employing the coast guard as an auxiliary force for military actions near Taiwan.

In conclusion, Similar to the earlier Joint Sword exercise, Joint Sword-2024A was also brief and narrow in focus. Instead of continuing for an entire week as the exercise did in 2022, both the drills in 2023 and 2024 spanned just two to three days and included little to no live fire activities. Due to the relatively limited nature of the Joint Sword exercises, the PLA requires less time for their planning. This will enable the

PRC to conduct future Joint Sword operations with less advance notice, framing them as “punishments” for ROC actions that the CCP considers “separatist.” To support this claim, PRC Defense Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian (吳謙) remarked about the recent drill that “Whenever ‘Taiwan independence’ challenges us, we will escalate our responses step by step until the total reunification of the motherland is realized.”

## 2024B JOINT SWORD EXERCISE

The one-day Joint Sword-2024B exercise was comparatively small in scope, regarding both its length and the number of units participating, when compared to earlier versions.

This establishes a trend: the 2023 Joint Sword exercise was broader in scale than Joint Sword-2024A; and Joint Sword-2024A was broader than Joint Sword-2024B. (Joint Sword-2024B, nonetheless, seemed to feature a greater number of aviation sorties compared to its predecessor in May.) The factors behind the declining scale of the Joint Sword exercises are still unknown.

The exercise maintained the encirclement and hypothetical blockade scenarios set by its forerunners, with air and naval operations seemingly focused more on this scenario than on an amphibious assault. According to Su Tzu-yun (蘇紫雲), who is the director of defense strategy and resources at the MND-affiliated Institute for National Defense and Security Research (INDSR, 國防安全研究院), “There was a unique element this time, known as quarantine or blockade, where they honed their blockading skills.”



The significant trend of the exercise—and arguably the most prominent one—was the persistent movement of PRC military operations toward both the main island of Taiwan and Taiwan’s smaller peripheral islands. The six designated exercise areas bordered and/or extended into Taiwan’s contiguous zone (the area of 12 to 24 nautical miles from the shoreline) (refer to here and here). This marks a notable increase in the PRC's

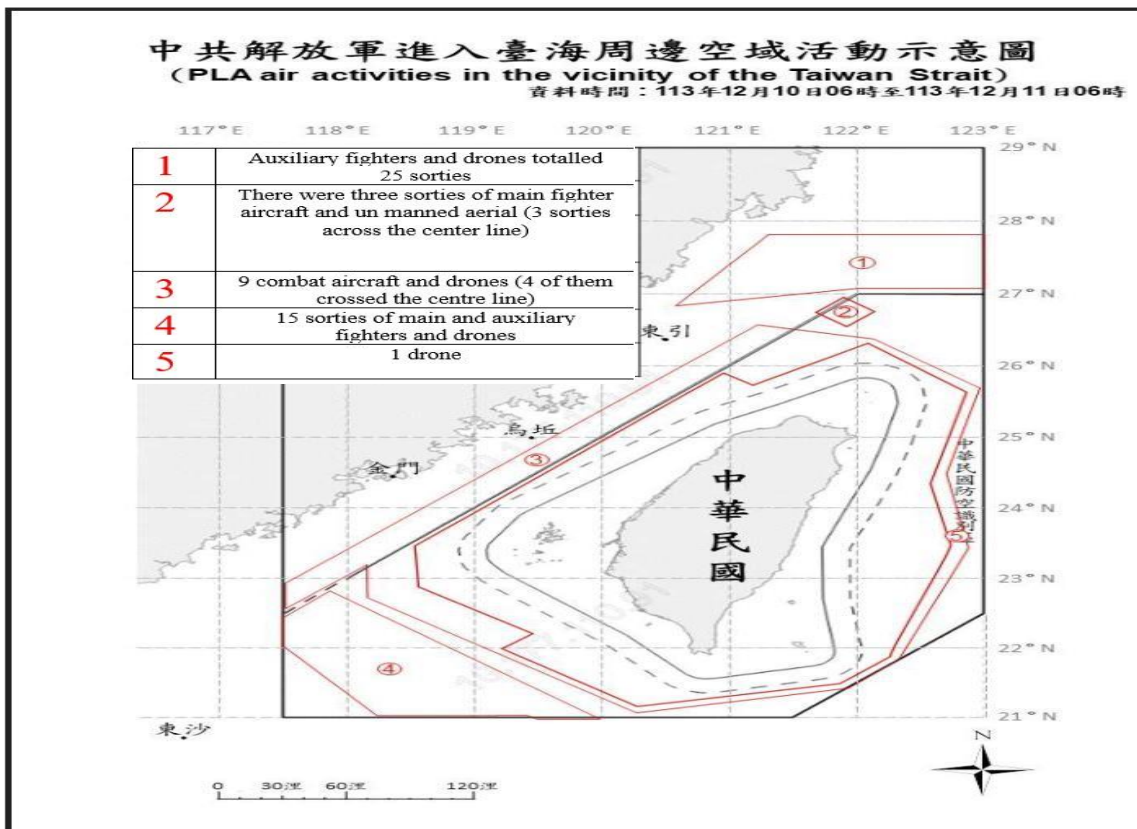
military pressure aimed at Taiwan's territorial sovereignty—and another advance in the gradual approach toward the 12 nautical mile boundary of territorial waters.

According to information from the ROC Ministry of Defense, the PLA carried out 153 flight missions around Taiwan on the exercise

day, across six extensive operational zones (refer to Figure 2, below), categorized into three main types: "main fighters" (主戰機), "support aircraft" (輔戰機), and helicopters. According to this information, the distribution of the flights was as detailed below:

Naval operations:-

Given the restricted information accessible to the public, many aspects concerning the exact activities carried out by the PLA during Joint Sword-2024B remain uncertain. As per the information from ROC Ministry of National Defense (MND, 國防部), on October 14, there were x14 PLA Navy ships (class and individual types not specified) and “12 official ships” (公務船)—not detailed further, but likely referring to PRC Coast Guard ships— active near Taiwan. According to information released by the Japanese Ministry of Defense, the PLA Navy ships comprised the aircraft carrier Liaoning (遼寧), functioning within a task group of no fewer than four vessels—including the Type-055 destroyer (NATO classification Renhai-class cruiser) Anshan (鞍山). During Joint Sword-2024B, the Liaoning was said to be active to the east southeast of Taiwan, close to the Bashi Channel, and the



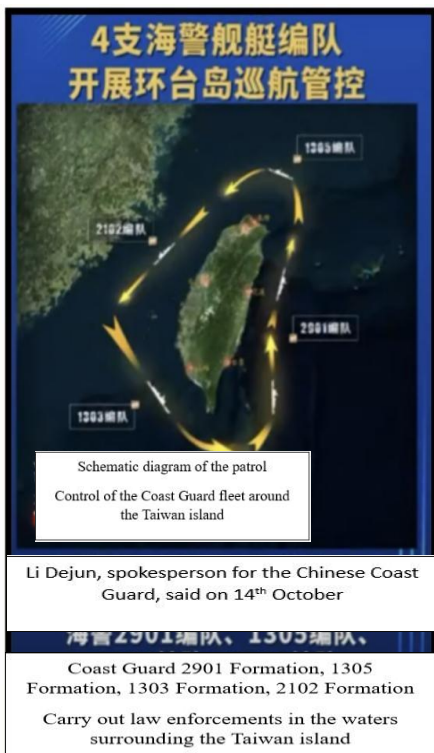
carrier along with its supporting naval forces likely explains the reported PLA flight activities east of Taiwan

Aviation Operations:-

According to information from the ROC Ministry of Defense, the PLA carried out 153 flight missions around Taiwan on the exercise

day, across six extensive operational zones (refer to Figure 2, below), categorized into three main types: "main fighters" (主戰機), "support aircraft" (輔戰機), and helicopters. According to this information, the distribution of the flights was as detailed below:

1. A total of x6 support aircraft (not otherwise identified, but likely patrol and/or airborne early warning aircraft) operated to the north-northeast of Taiwan.
2. A total of x47 support and fighter aircraft (not otherwise delineated) operated in the Taiwan Strait. Of these, x28 crossed the Strait centerline.
3. A total of x41 support and fighter aircraft (not otherwise delineated) operated to the southwest of Taiwan, in the southwest corner of Taiwan’s declared air defense identification zone (ADIZ).
4. A total of x8 support and fighter aircraft (not otherwise delineated) operated further to the southwest of Taiwan, outside the ADIZ, in the Bashi Channel.
5. A total of x9 fighter aircraft and helicopters operated southeast of Taiwan, outside the ADIZ. This likely correlates with aircraft of the Liaoning aircraft carrier and its associated surface group.
6. A total of x42 fighter aircraft operated east of southern Taiwan, inside the ADIZ. This likely correlates with aircraft of the Liaoning aircraft carrier.



**Coast Guard Encirclement of Taiwan :-**

Similar to the Joint Sword-2024A held in May, the exercise included a broadened involvement of the PRC Coast Guard, in both operational and propaganda aspects. The state media of PRC highlighted that PRC Coast Guard task groups ("formations,") numbered 2901, 1305, 1303, and 2102 (specific vessels not specified) completed a circumnavigation of Taiwan on the exercise day: following a route through the Bashi Channel, moving northward alongside the eastern coast, then shifting westsouthwest across the northern part of the island and into the Taiwan Strait. Striving to portray the circumnavigation as a caring and safeguarding action, PRC government-backed social media posts asserted that “[Our] patrols resemble loving you” (refer to images below). Although clumsy—and exuding a distinct unsettling stalker ambiance—the communication also resonates with PRC propaganda in another way: the rising

deployment of the coast guard for patrols nearer to Taiwan's shores and surrounding islands, aiming to characterize PRC maritime activities as standard practices of domestic law enforcement.

The exercise marks another phase in what seems to be a developing series of PLA military drills aimed at maintaining the PRC's progressively escalating coercive military pressure on Taiwan. Even though the PRC has sought to depict these as impulsive responses to the actions or remarks of Taiwan's political leaders, they are more accurately viewed as meticulously orchestrated expressions of anger. These drills correspond with—and might encompass—the spring and autumn aircraft carrier group training missions carried out by the PLA Navy in recent years. The aspect of political warfare is crucial for comprehending these and other recent military drills by the PLA. The gradual increase of PLA naval and air operations—a “boiling the frog” approach of slowly moving in, step by step—is designed to instill fear in Taiwan's citizens and political leaders while undermining the real sovereignty that Taiwan's government holds over its land.

## 5.2 CHINESE LEGAL WARFARE

For an extended period, China's legal warfare strategy seemed to go unnoticed by Taiwan's allies. Ultimately, it seems that this is shifting. Washington contests Beijing's efforts to reinterpret Resolution 2758, and the Biden administration has been resisting. In August, the Australian Senate unanimously approved a motion declaring that Resolution 2758 does not affect Taiwan's status and does not endorse China's assertions regarding the island and its people. Shortly after, the Dutch Parliament supported a comparable proposal. Although these resolutions may not be legally binding, they establish a strong basis for contesting China's viewpoint.

Since 2016, China has progressively utilized legal strategies to diplomatically isolate Taiwan and justify its territorial assertions regarding the island. This method aligns with the People's Liberation Army's (PLA) interpretation of legal warfare as outlined in its 'Three Warfares' framework, aiming to establish a legal basis for potential future military or law-enforcement actions by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) against Taiwan. Over the past year, China's attempts to manipulate the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and merge the one-China policy with the one-China principle have garnered significant attention, prompting the Taiwanese government to launch its own diplomatic initiative regarding Resolution 2758.

In 1971, the U.N. General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758, which awarded the People's Republic of China the position as the sole legitimate representative of China in the U.N.

From 1945 to 1971, the Republic of China, now commonly referred to as Taiwan, occupied that seat, including on the U.N. Security Council. In 1971, Taiwan remained firmly under the strict control of President Chiang Kai-shek, who unyieldingly thought that he ought to have emerged victorious in the Chinese Civil War that concluded in 1949 instead of his rival, Mao Zedong, the leader of the Chinese Communist Party. The shared belief between the two autocrats was their claim that there existed only one China to govern, that each was its exclusive legitimate ruler, and that the other held no authority to represent China internationally. Prior to the U.N. vote, Chiang's obstinacy caused him to dismiss suggestions—even from Washington—aimed at obtaining a distinct U.N. seat for Taiwan. If that effort had succeeded, it would have placed Taiwan on a much more secure foundation as the independent and democratic nation it has effectively become. Ultimately, both Koreas are members of the U.N., just like the two Germanys were.

Since then, China has leveraged its status as a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council and its increasing influence in different U.N. entities to advocate for its twisted understanding of the U.N. resolution, which, from Beijing's perspective, denies Taiwan any rights to engage in international organizations and relegates it to a province of China. Resolution 2758 is concise, it exclusively pertains to the rights to represent China at the U.N., shifting those rights, along with the Security Council seat, to Beijing and removing "the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek." There is no reference to Taiwan's status, and the terms

"Taiwan" or "Republic of China" are absent. Provided it does not refer to itself as "China," Taiwan could potentially be represented at the U.N. without breaching Resolution 2748. Therefore, when the U.N. Office of Legal Affairs yielded to Chinese pressure and consented to classify Taiwan as "Taiwan, province of China" in official U.N. documents, this interpretation was not addressed by the resolution.

Beijing employs the resolution as a reason to inhibit any communication between U.N.

agencies and Taiwan representatives. This results in trivial, absurd outcomes, like Taiwanese students being prohibited from U.N. facilities and Taiwanese labor delegates being excluded from participating in events at the International Labor Organization. It also carries significantly more perilous real-world implications. Due to China's success in preventing Taiwanese experts from joining the World Health Organization (WHO), there was no communication when the COVID-19 pandemic emerged. Taiwan implemented one of the most effective global strategies to curb the disease's spread, starting with the examination of travelers from Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Nevertheless, because of Beijing's stubbornness, Taiwan was unable to provide vital information to the WHO in the critical early phase of the pandemic, which aided the disease's worldwide transmission.

## 6. Conclusion

To mitigate the risk of an armed conflict, Taipei should adopt a more restrained approach in asserting its sovereignty, Beijing should de-escalate its military activities, and Washington should underscore the mutual benefits of such actions. Although China has made swift advancements in its military, it is improbable that it will deploy large-scale force against Taiwan in 2025. The worries of the Chinese leadership regarding military command quality, economic decline, uncertain social stability, and the implications of the Trump administration will probably prevent any major military action.

Nonetheless, China will persist in increasing pressure on Taiwan in 2025.

On January 6, the new U.S. defense secretary, Pete Hegseth, informed the Senate Armed Services Committee that he considered a Chinese Communist Party fait accompli invasion of Taiwan to be the primary risk scenario for the Department of Defense. He reminded the committee that "Xi Jinping has clearly stated his goal of incorporating Taiwan into mainland China" and "has instructed his military to stand ready to employ force to realize this aim by 2027."

Similar to its achievements in artificial intelligence, advancements in China's military should not be overlooked. In various domains, China's armed forces are now achieving levels comparable to those of the US military. China's navy is undergoing swift transformation, and by the conclusion of 2025, it is projected to possess 395 vessels, which will include three active aircraft carriers. China is enhancing its amphibious fleet by acquiring assault ships capable of transporting numerous landing craft, personnel, fixed-wing drones, armored vehicles, and helicopters. In early 2025, reports emerged about China constructing specialized barges to assist in landings in Taiwan. China's military currently possesses the largest air force in the area, featuring new fighter jets and stealth planes that enhance its capability to

function further from its coasts. It is also expanding its stockpile of nuclear arms and currently possesses the globe's most advanced collection of hypersonic missiles. The military has augmented the troop levels in the Taiwan Strait and enhanced its firepower, mobility, and rapid assault abilities. During 2024, China's military and coast guard persisted in practicing Taiwan invasion and blockade situations. In May, after Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te was inaugurated, Beijing initiated extensive military drills, encircling Taiwan within 48 hours. In October, it conducted a second round of exercises, completing a simulated blockade or quarantine of Taiwan in only one day. In December, China conducted its most significant display of military power in years, demonstrating to the world its ability to fend off an external threat near Taiwan.

The military has significantly enhanced its capacity to carry out a blockade or invasion, yet Beijing will continue to harbor skepticism. At the launch of the 2024 China Military Power Report, high-ranking Pentagon officials stated, "even with its swift advancements, the military has not yet shown the level and extent of advanced urban warfare or long-range logistical abilities that would probably be necessary for actions against Taiwan." Insufficient combat experience poses a major challenge for a force aiming to conduct complex amphibious operations across the Taiwan Strait.

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